

Buddy Holly Breakfast Sees Record Numbers



By Travis Fischer

The '50s came alive in Thornton as Buddy Holly fans from around the world flocked to the Chit Chat Café for breakfast on Saturday.

"I think it was a good morning," said Chit Chat owner Richard 'Pidge' Dorenkamp.

The music of the 1950s and early 1960s filled the auditorium of the Garner-Hayfield K-8 Building, Wednesday, Jan. 30. Left-right: Musicians **Ritchie Lee Luckenbill of Des Moines**, Tony Marsh of Liverpool, England, Tommy Allsup, lead guitarist with the band, The Crickets, and singer Jerry Naylor gave an informal concert for grades 3-8. Naylor was lead singer with The Crickets during the 1960s. The artists were part of the "Fifties in February" entertainment line-up at the Surf Ballroom this past weekend. LEADER photo by Rebecca Peter

Breakfast at the Chit Chat has been a long standing tradition for classic rock fans celebrating the life and music of Buddy Holly. The annual memorial doesn't just attract people from around the country, but several members of the British Buddy Holly Society "hop the pond" to visit Iowa every year.

"We've done it for eight years now," said Clive Mapstone, who says that he knows the area by heart at this point.

Ian Higham, another British Buddy Holly fan, has been making annual trips to Iowa since 1989.

"We have a good time. We really enjoy it," said Higham. "Iowa's a super state. Don't know why it's not promoted a bit more."

Ian has been collecting Buddy Holly memorabilia for more than 30 years. Gathering everything from demos to photographs to old checks, his massive collection is cataloged over dozens of pages on www.buddyhollylives.info.

Sharing the fandom with the die-hards like Ian were relatively newer fans such as Clark Schultz, a high school teacher from Wisconsin. "I just love that era of music," said Schultz. "It's a slice of history I wish I could have been part of."

To accommodate the 70+ people stopping in for breakfast, the Chit Chat staff had to set up buffet line of

eggs, biscuits, sausage, hash browns, and muffins. Menu orders had become unmanageable as the crowd kept growing.

"It just keeps getting bigger and bigger every year," said Bev Stadlander.

A special guest joining the dozens of Buddy Holly fans for breakfast this year was Peggy Sue Gerron herself. Peggy Sue doesn't make it to the memorial every year, but when she does she's always happy to take a stroll down memory lane.

"You are who you are and if I didn't appreciate the fact that I was a part of it I think that'd be pretty sad."

After breakfast, the guests were treated to a number of favorite songs courtesy of professional Buddy Holly impersonator, Johnny Rogers and guitarist Tommy Allsup.

"I love it man, I think it's great," said Rogers. "Anything that keeps Holly's music alive."

Tommy Allsup, who's life was saved with a coin flip 49 years earlier, also enjoys coming back to honor the memory of Holly and the others.

"It's a great time. It always is," said Allsup. This was Allsup's fourth consecutive year and he says he'll be back again.

Accompanying Tommy Allsup was his good friend Tommy Irvin, an up-and-coming musician who played with Allsup and Rogers at the Surf.

The Buddy Holly fans also shared stories of how Holly's life and death affected them. More than a few recounted their first hand experiences of 'The Night the Music Died' and the aftermath.

It was lunch time when the breakfast gathering finally disbursed. The event was considered a success by everybody involved.

"It's just a great thing and this is a great place to have it," said John Clemons, who is primarily responsible for organizing the gathering. Clemons says that Buddy Holly fans will return again next year, likely in even greater numbers.

"I would say it would be bigger," says Clemons. "As more people know about it they'll come."