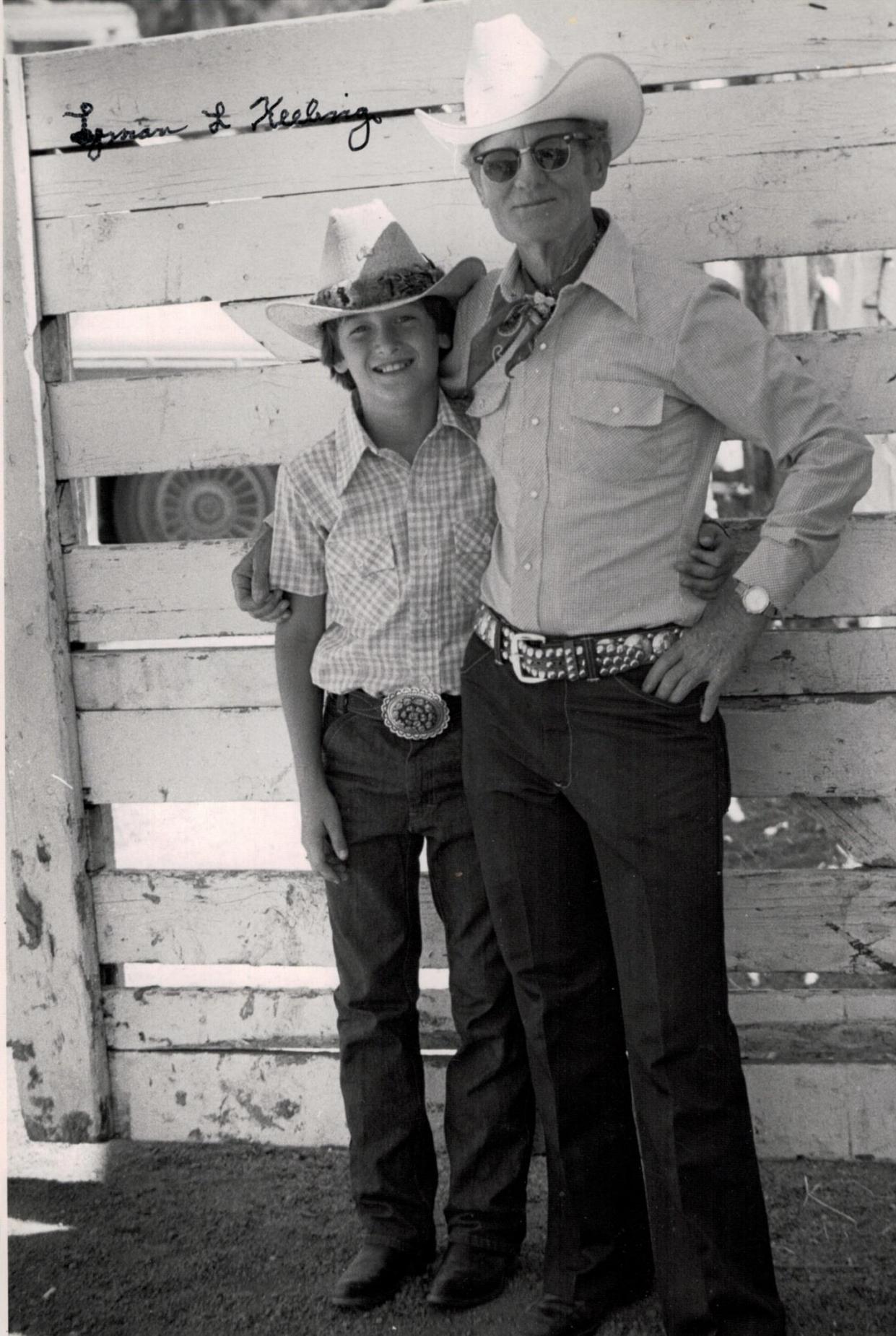


Lyman Keeling; the man, myth and Arizona Old Time Fiddle legend (Pride of the Tennessee Smokey Mountains) - My buddy and mentor

Lyman Keeling was my mentor. He gave me many palpable great fiddling memories and has had a prodigious influence on my music career and the Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association; and the music careers of many.



(4)

I first met Lyman Keeling when he was exiting the stage of an Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association performance at the Mesa Arizona Tri City Mall (circa 1976). My mother (Roberta Jean Hayden Boyett) and I stood at the back of the stage to meet this great fiddler and buck dancer (Lyman Keeling). We found Lyman both congenial and energetic. Lyman Keeling greeted my mother and me with humility and grace. I mentioned to Lyman that I had just begun taking violin lesson with the anticipation of playing the fiddle like him (I was about 9 years old at the time). Lyman unselfishly handed his fiddle to me and said “here – play me a tune.” From this point on I was hooked on Lyman Keeling and the Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association. Each day I carry both of these institutions in my mind and they both continue to have a great impact at every moment.

Lyman Keeling was not only my mentor – he was my friend and buddy. Lyman took an active role in the development of my musical career. Not only did Lyman Keeling encourage me to be a better fiddler – he made me a part of his legacy. Lyman honored me by asking that I perform with him at the City of Mesa Arizona outdoor amphitheater located at Center and University Drive for his last performance. Danny Smith (famous Arizona fiddler ‘fiddler at the Rockin R Ranch’) said to me, “that is appropriate”; he even attended the show. I think Lyman even paid me for this performance. Lyman Keeling asked me to perform at the Salt River Project event for retired employees. He bragged about his tenure ‘as a SRP lineman’ “with this fine organization.”

If you were fortunate to be on Lyman Keeling’s good side – you were set for life. I am fortunate to be set for life. About a year before Lyman passed he asked me to go see some friends for a jam session. I could not say no to Lyman Keeling – so I acquiesced and attended the Red Mountain Bluegrass Band Jam. Little did I know I was being recruited for one of the most influential and rewarding positions in my life. In the recruiting process I was bequeathed the Lyman Keeling buck dance (Dr. Theo Heap ‘president emeritus of Mesa Community College’ arranged this and formalized this in a written document). (5) Dr. Theo Heap is the founder of the Red Mountain Bluegrass Band. This kind gesture from Dr. Theo Heap secured me for life as the Red Mountain Bluegrass Band fiddle player. I played an old time fiddle hoedown called Leather Britches at Lyman’s memorial service. Leather Britches was one of Lyman’s favorite fiddle hoedowns. The version of Leather Britches I perform was taught to me by Michael Rolland (son of Dr. Peter Rolland ‘my second fiddle instructor and really great friend and collaborator’). Lyman’s

favorite old time fiddle song was Bill Cheatham – I am humbled when I hear this song played because I remember hearing Lyman play this song and watching his famous ‘Smokey Mountain Buck Dance’. There is not a person in the world that can duplicate his unique old time fiddle sound and the motions he portrayed when he performed his buck dance.

Lyman’s memorial service was conducted at a Mormon Church in Mesa Arizona. Lyman asked specifically that I play a hoedown. As I understand this was very unusual (to be allowed at this event here). Lyman Keeling honored me with this request. I met with Lyman during his last days to discuss this arrangement. At the end of this performance – as I exited the stage Slim Smith approached me. Dr. Theo Heap was standing close and I said to Slim – you must write a news article about these folks (referring to the Red Mountain Bluegrass Band). A very influential and historical article was written in the Mesa Tribune by Slim Smith to honor the great people in this band. (1) This article inspired another historical document to be written about my family’s water purification company. (2) To top it off - my involvement in the Red Mountain Bluegrass Band performances has lead me to meet a man we call #1 (Raymond Black). Raymond is a fiddle player and writes the tablature for the musical movement group we founded. We call our movement Fast Track Music (this is the short name). (3) All these developments have occurred because of a great friend, buddy, mentor, leader and connector Lyman Keeling.

Today when I perform Leather Britches (I am fortunate this occurs at least once a week) I simultaneously perform the Lyman Keeling buck dance (in my own way). I feel Lyman Keeling is dancing with me and through me. These spectacular movements and events in my life would not occur without Lyman’s continued presence.

The moral of this story to me is that I will never know the influence of a single person – a single meeting or encounter with an individual. Because of the venerable memories I have meeting Lyman Keeling – I want to meet more people. Lyman would want this – he was very social and friendly. I feel Lyman would want his legacy to promote the continued promulgation of old time fiddle music in a social and friendly setting. I feel he will want the Arizona Old Time Fiddle Association to continue to be influential and he would want this organization to have many members. He would want for everyone to be involved in making and performing good old time fiddle music. I know in my heart of hearts I will never meet one person who has had such a dynamic presence and influence in my life as one great man named Lyman Keeling.

*In Loving Memory of*



**Lyman Lee Keeling**

*Born*

*November 11, 1915, Trenton, Tennessee*

*Passed Away*

*September 14, 2006, Mesa, Arizona*

## **bibliography**

1. [http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/opinion/article\\_c786d196-49fd-5cff-ad55-a52bd8e8b874.html](http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/opinion/article_c786d196-49fd-5cff-ad55-a52bd8e8b874.html)
2. [http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/money/article\\_dc7db6c5-0d01-5306-b4ad-fb9967a4216d.html](http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/money/article_dc7db6c5-0d01-5306-b4ad-fb9967a4216d.html)
3. <http://www.azh2o.com/fast-track-musical-instrument-and-voice-utilization-program>;  
<http://fasttrackmusic.info/Fast%20Track%20Brochure%20043014.pdf>
4. Brian Hayden Boyett and Lyman Keeling at the Payson, Arizona Rodeo Grounds (circa 1977)
5. Dr. Theo Heap arranged to bequeathed me the Lyman Keeling buck dance

Lyman Keeling ..... Tennessee Smokey Mountain Fiddler (arranged by Dr. Theo Heap)

I, Lyman Keeling, was born and raised in the Hill Country of Tennessee. In the early years of my life I often listened to the interesting style of folk music played by the people living in the Smokey Mountains and Hill Country of this part of our beloved land. I loved their fast fiddle music and decided at a young age that I wanted to learn how to play this style of fiddle.

As a young boy, I purchased a fiddle and learned to play. Later in my life, after moving to Arizona, I organized my own Blue Grass band and started participating in Festivals and performing for local groups. This has proven to be one of the great loves of my life.

In addition to playing my fiddle in the band, I also liked to perform what I call the "Smokey Mountain Buck Dance." I learned this style of dancing from the people living in the mountains and hills of Tennessee. My wife Dolly also often performed her version of this old time dance during our public performances.

In order to keep this style of dancing alive, I hereby bequeath to my good friend and fellow fiddler, Hayden Boyett, my style of the

“Smokey Mountain Buck Dance.” May you perform it often and keep this old tradition alive.....

Sincerely, Lyman Keeling.....March, 2005

6. [http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/opinion/article\\_2d2a0a3c-9221-5a54-90ab-8a5470def945.html](http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/opinion/article_2d2a0a3c-9221-5a54-90ab-8a5470def945.html)