Lloyd Doss (1920-2011)

Lloyd Thomas Doss gained fame playing with some of the best Western music bands of the 1940s and 50s. He was born in Weiser, Idaho, in 1920. The family moved to La Grande, Oregon, in 1922, where Lloyd "Tommy" Doss learned to play harmonica and guitar and, in 1939, formed his first band, Sons of the Grande Ronde. They played the local Elks Club and drove to Baker, where they earned $12.50 a week playing live radio.

Doss worked in Hermiston during WWII, married Naomi Henderson there, and returned to La Grande in 1946. In 1948, Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys came to play in La Grande's Zuber Hall. Wills heard Doss play and hired him on the spot. Doss left for California the next day, where he played with the Playboys, the Rhythm Busters, and Ole Rasmussen and his Nebraska Cornhuskers until he had a chance to join the legendary Sons of the Pioneers in July 1949, replacing the retiring legendary Bob Nolan.

For fifteen years, Doss toured with the Pioneers, cut albums, and played on TV and movie sets with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, and in two of director John Ford's westerns (*Rio Grande* and *The Searchers)* behind John Wayne.

In 1963, Doss left the Pioneers and he and Naomi bought the Imnaha Store and Tavern, running it until 1977. Naomi served as Imnaha postmaster while Lloyd operated the store, surrounded by Pioneers recordings and memorabilia. He limited his musical performances to recordings and special appearances with the Pioneers.

In 1970 the Pioneers came to Wallowa County and played a special performance at the fairgrounds in Enterprise. Cowboys and music fans from miles around came to hear Lloyd "Tommy" Doss and the sequined and fringed Pioneers croon "Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds."

Lloyd Doss was inducted into the Western Music Association Hall of Fame November 21, 2008. He died in Wallowa on October 25, 2011.

Written by Rich Wandschneider

Further Reading:

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