

Charlie Holley and The Cripples – A HIPPA Violation

Sunday August 9, 2009

So I was in Clovis New Mexico yesterday doing another disability clinic. I took this job because I am unemployed currently as a neonatologist and neuroscientist having been relieved of my responsibilities at the major University in this state. But that is another story all together.

It turns out any licensed MD or DO can do this job, even if like me they haven't examined an adult since medical school. My job here is to examine people who need to show me that they are disabled. This is so that I can tell the State of New Mexico that they are disabled. And this is so the State of New Mexico can give them just enough money so they can pay some of their bills and maybe see a proper doctor to help them with their disabilities. Sometimes the conversation is generally.

"Look see, doc, I have no legs."

"Yes...your legs are certainly missing."

"I lost them in Vietnam. I stepped on a mine. I was the first person to serve in 'Nam from New Mexico."

"You must be very proud."

The State requires that a bona fide doctor sees these patients, or in the SSI language, the claimant, in every case to assure the state said claimant in fact has no legs, or rather, to make sure they are not surreptitiously hiding their legs on or about their person, along with their vision, their hearing, a functioning musculoskeletal or cardiovascular or central nervous system, their soul and self-worth, their mind and memory, a reason to keep living, or any reasonable hope for a survivable future. Grifters all no doubt. Almost nobody has a doctor any more. They all have no insurance and can't be seen anymore. That's why they are here to get the SSI. Many can't afford their medicines anymore. And everybody smokes. I get well paid for this job.

Clovis is about a 3-4 hour drive south southeast of Albuquerque. My wife Liz had driven to LA to pick up the kids from a brief end-of-summer back-home-in-Culver-City-see their-friends-vacation-bible-camp holiday. I'm stag in Clovis.

It was a busy clinic day...maybe 18-19 patients from 8 to 6:30. The first one was a young woman who had just started to develop symptoms of Huntington's Chorea...she had watched her dad die of it. Huntington's is what killed Woody Guthrie. She and her ex-husband shared custody of their four kids..."He's a good dad." She tells me left her last year after an affair with her best friend. My heart ached so bad for this women I nearly cried. The rest of the day was lots of the same kind of stories. Another guy told me his problem was that his doctor had told him that his teeth had traveled to his heart and made it go bad. I told another lady with a leg brace about the Shel Silverstein song, "I'm a Three legged man with a two legged woman begin chased around the country by a one-legged fool"...she said she loved Shel but didn't know he wrote songs.

"Oh yeah 'Boy named Sue'...'Cover of the Rolling Stone'...lots more"

"I only knew about his children's books"

"In the sixties he also wrote a lot for Playboy"

"That figures"

At the end of the day on my way out of town I stopped by 1313 East 7th Street in Clovis New Mexico. You need to take 7th Street to get to US84 to get back to Albuquerque, so I had to go right past it.



Apparently locked out of the gated Norman Petty Recording Compound, the shadowy cell-phone photographer with his trusty blue sienna at his side will not be deterred, even if it means semi-illegal entry.

<http://www.superoldies.com/pettystudios/pettytour.html>

In 1956, a frustrated Lubbock singer-songwriter guitar player named Charles Hardin Holley, known to his friends as Buddy Holley, locked into an unsatisfying recording situation with Decca in Nashville, was looking for a place where he could record his songs his way. Decca was only interested in making Buddy into a rock-a-billy singer. They did release one single which went no where, and to boot had misspelled his name on the 45s label as "Buddy Holly".

Through the advice of a local Lubbock DJ, Hi-Pockets Duncan, Buddy heard about this place 100 miles west in Clovis, NM that had just recorded a hit called "Party Doll" by Buddy Knox. By 1957, Buddy had signed with Norman Petty. The first 45 released Buddy had released out of Norman's studio was "That'll Be The Day". Buddy got the title from a line in the 1956 John Ford-John Wayne movie "The Searchers". Buddy had recorded a version of it back in Nashville; the Nashville producer in told Buddy that it was the worst song he had ever heard. "That'll Be The Day" was the B side of that single. Buddy recorded almost all his greatest songs in that small studio in Clovis. The rest is history.

I stopped at the "compound", the Petty studio and an neighboring building, Nor Va Jak Music Inc, above which Norman had built his experimental reverb sound chambers, that he used to make those records sound soooo great.

The whole complex was surrounded by cyclone fencing, and looked fairly deserted. No one came to the doors when I knocked. I walked around the perimeter. One of the gates wasn't locked, so I walked into the compound. I just couldn't help myself. I tried knocking on a few doors and windows on both buildings but no one answered. As I made to leave I noticed through a window a lady sitting in her living room in the back part of the Nor Va Jak building. I waved hoping she would open the door, and she and her husband did.

I told her I was a big Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison fan (Roy also recorded at Petty Studios) and just had to drive by the studio as I had never been to Clovis before. I told them their gate was open so I just couldn't help coming in...but not to worry 'cause I'm just a fan and I'm a doctor too (nothing to worry about with me...honest). I asked her husband if he was associated with the studio, and he smiled shyly and said "Yes". His name was Dan Bigham, one of the two surviving members of the vocal group "The Roses" who sang back up on Orbison and Holly records, and toured with both of them too.

<http://www.buddyhollyandthecrickets.com/related/roses.html>

Dan offered to give me a brief private tour of the Petty Recording Studio. It was all there man...an original recording console (not the original...actually a stereo upgraded one from the early sixties) THE original tape decks, THE original studio monitors. Dan turned on a reel-to-reel tape player and through the monitors came "Think it Over"...The tape was a dub off the original master...the sound was immaculate...I felt like I was in the immediate presence of an enormous force...it was really quite overwhelming.I saw the old microphones, THE original Celeste that Vi Petty (Norman's wife) played on Buddy's "Everyday"....the place still had the original curtains, Norman Petty's first microwave oven, it was very cool.



Dan Bigham shows me the ORIGINAL studio monitors...while playing through them REAL LOUD a reel-to-reel tape copy of the master tape of "Think it Over" - amazing! Like being in heaven!



The trusty cell phone shaking in my mitts, Dan shows me the recording console...



The back wall of the recording booth at the studio...the reel to reel recorder which Dan played for me... the 45s and sheet music of music recorded here...Dan Bigham to the right



THE CELESTE that Vi Petty played on Buddy's recording of "Everyday" - still works and is still in tune!



THE ROSES

Management
NORMAN PETTY

The vocal trio, The Roses, in the day. Dan Bigham is down front along with his kind words for me. Robert Linville (back) passed in 11/01. Ray Rush (right) is still with us somewhere in southern Texas.

I bought me a tee-shirt...Dan gave me a signed 8 X 10 of The Roses from back in the day. Handsome men. I asked Dan one last thing when I left.

“So Buddy... he was a great guy, right? Or was he a difficult man?”

“No...Buddy was great...he was great. Buddy was older than me. I was 19. He was 20. I mean, we were just kids who were messing around and wanted to hear ourselves on the radio.”

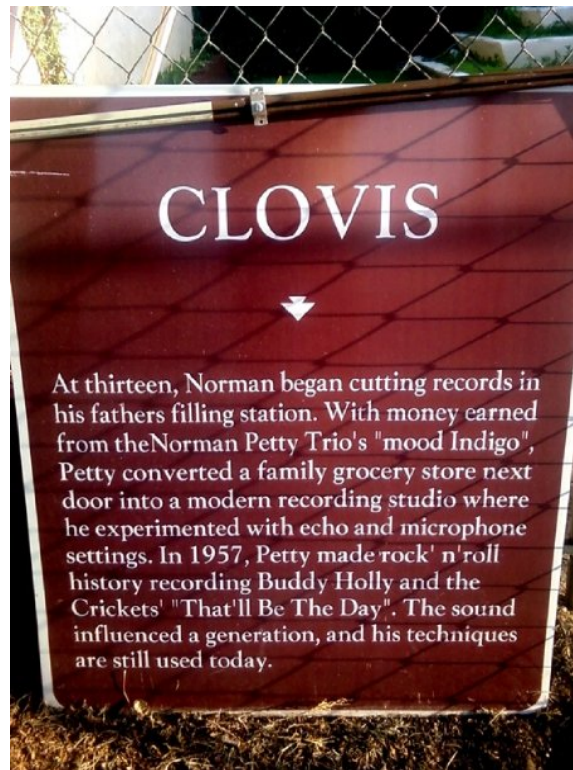
Then I drove home to Albuquerque. Next Friday I drive the 4-5 hours to do a disability clinic in Roswell NM on Saturday. No doubt the claimants their will spin their tales about how they haven't felt up to being able to work since their last alien abduction and probing.

Love, Rich

A souvenir with a young smiling Norman Petty



The historical marker...on the other side I wrote in sharpie "Rockin'K was here"



PS

Here is the final version (?) of the lyric for my newest song, probably first of many to come out of this disability clinic experience. Gonna try to record it in the next two days if I get my clinic dictations done... it is a light pop sounding song...think Jason Mraz meets Paul Simon's Graceland meets McFerrin's "Don't Worry ...Be Happy". That's to add to the banality...just like the banality of all our human sufferings...all the medical stories are pretty much verbatim from multiple different...honest...

Ain't It So Nice Outside Today

Ain't it so nice outside today?
Ain't it so nice outside today?
There's so much I still got to do.
Ain't it so nice outside today?

My back's been broke a couple times.
My neck just won't bend quite right.
Lost my left eye somewhere on the way.
My shoulder's froze up tight.

I can't mount a flight of stairs.
I can't climb out of a chair.
They said my head got busted by a 2 X 4,
And since that day it's like I got no soul no more.

And it hurts so bad,
And it's hurt for so damn long now.
The pain won't ever go away.
But I gotta live another day.
I've got to live another day.
'Cause there's just so much I've gotta do
And it's so nice outside today.

Sister been deaf since she was born.
Brother been blind since he was two
From something he got from mamma when he got born.
Whatever it was took mamma, too.

My good hand keeps dropping things.
My foot feels like it's made of wood.
Can't walk. Can't talk. Can't stand. Can't sit.
There's blood everytime I take a shit.

And it hurts so bad,
And I ain't worked for so damn long now.
Boss won't risk me comin' back.
And if you don't work, well you don't get paid
So you can't live to work another day.
And there's so much I still can do.
And ain't it nice outside today?

Where my left hand meets my arm
Is fused by a few screws.
The pills they give me they just don't see me through.
It seems like hopeless is just another word for nothing left
to lose.

The meth ran out
So I crashed real hard
February. The cops found me down
Outside an E/R that'd been shut down.

Seems I'd slept too long...
I slept too hard on my right arm.
Doctor said weren't nothin' he could do.
He told me he had to cut it off before time I'd come to.

And it hurts sometimes more than I can stand.
And it's hurt too damn long now.
I can't even feed myself.
Didn't Jesus even ask G-d himself?
Didn't Jesus ask
Why can't I live another day?
You know that there's so much I still have to do
And G-d ain't it so nice outside today.
Ain't it so nice outside today

Helpless
Hopeless
Aimless
Homeless
Pointless
Tooth-less
Limb-less
Useless
Friend-less
Worthless
Lifeless
Lifeless

But don't cry
Just don't cry
Don't cry
-July 2009

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