

What's YOUR Story?

Written by [Lori Moffatt](#), published May 7, 2014



I was struggling to surmount a Friday-afternoon energy slump a few weeks ago when I received a phone call that perked me up better than a cup of coffee ever could. "My name is Louise Rowe," she told me, "and I think you might be interested in my story."

Louise asked me if I knew about the upcoming Swing on the Square: A Western Swing and Heritage Festival, to be held on the courthouse square in San Marcos on May 16-18. Yes, I told her, I had attended the event years ago when it went by a different name, and I had

enjoyed it tremendously.

"Well, you should definitely come this year," she told me. "My band, Louise Rowe and Her Texan Playboys, will be playing a few times." Louise, who will turn 82 in July and now lives in Euless, a suburb of Fort Worth, played standup bass for years with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. "I was the only woman musician to have been on Bob Wills' payroll," she told me, clarifying that while a few women had *sung* with the band, the key word here is "musician."

I settled in as she elaborated on her story. "I started my career in Dallas in 1952, doing vocal spots with my family band, the Seven Rowe Brothers. One night while Bob Wills was there, my brothers called me up on stage to sing a song. Bob whispered in my ear and asked me if I would want to go on an 18-day tour with his band. I did. On the 17th night, I got to play some rhythm guitar and standup bass, as well as sing backup harmony. On the

18th night of the tour, we were back in Dallas, and he announced to the crowd that I was going to California with them.

"While we were in California, he put me on bass and took me to Nudie's of Hollywood to get a Texas Playboys uniform. It was royal blue. Bob Wills didn't allow women to wear pants. He told me, 'Now you are a real Texas Playboy. Remember wherever you go, you will always be a Texas Playboy.' I played on and off with them for years.

"Come see my band at the festival. But also we play every Friday night at the Texan Kitchen in Euless. We start at 7 and play for a few hours. There's no cover. Every Friday night, it's packed. I've got the cutest kids out there dancing, but we have all ages, really. The dance floor is full from little grandkids all the way up to 98.

"The owner of the Texan Kitchen is happy. Boy, does he have a cook. They cook the best fried catfish in the area, and the best apple pie I've ever eaten.

"I still play in Western outfits; they are copies of the ones I wore back in the Western-swing era: fringe boots, vest with fringe, skirt or pants. They guys wear black and white. That's kind of a Western Swing color combination. Every Western Swing band I know wears black and white.

"A few years ago, I developed a tremor on my vocal chords, so I don't sing anymore. But I still play standup bass like a teenager. I want everybody in the world to know that I feel like a teenager. I dance with that bass!"

You can see Louise Rowe and Her Texan Playboys perform with other Western Swing Hall of Fame members, including John Case and L.J. Pritchett, plus 2014 inductees Jerry Case and Jim Baker of the Light Crust Doughboys, during the upcoming Swing on the Square festival (May 16-18 in San Marcos). Other band members include Mark Menton and Dexter Rowe. Special guests of the festival this year include Herb Remington, Casey Dickens, and Judy Kay. For more details about the festival, see www.smtxswingfest.com or call 512/393-8430.

Louise Rowe and Her Texan Playboys also perform most Friday nights from 7-9 at the Texan Kitchen in Euless. No cover. Call 817/358-1787.