

SHE PLAYS LIKE A MAN

LOUISE ROWE, AN UPRIGHT SWING BASS PLAYER

Louise Rowe grew up as the youngest of eight children in the Rowe family. She was the only girl. All seven of her brothers played in a *western swing* band Called **The Seven Rowe Brothers Band**. The Two oldest brothers started the band in 1929 playing for farmers "living room" dances and as each brother was old enough he was added, so in 1937 at the ripe old age of five, Louise made her debut with them.

The brothers would leave their band instruments lying around the house, and Louise would "play" around with them when the boys were gone or asleep. She learned a little about each one, but when she was just a teenager singing around Dallas her Brothers played a "Battle of the Bands" dance with "Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys" one night and when she sang a song Bob Wills asked her to join his band as a vocalist. At this time she had just been notified that she had won a beauty contest in Dallas and had to participate in some activities which would keep her home. Now she had to make a decision which she says wasn't hard to do because working with Bob Wills meant much more than any beauty contest.

One night when one of the Playboys missed the dance, Louise got to demonstrate her abilities to play rhythm guitar and also bass fiddle. That is when Mr. Wills decided she would become the first woman "Texas Playboy". He took her and got a Union Card for her and a Texas Playboy uniform and said she would to be the bassman because the bass player, Jack Loyd, had left the band. Louise said she didn't know a whole lot about the bass, but if she was going to do this thing, (this was back in 1952 when most women were still in the kitchen and washroom at home or if they did work out it certainly wasn't playing swing bass fiddle) she was going to do it right. She got to at and taught herself from recordings of the big bands. She would play when blood was running down her fingers, but soon there were calluses. She says the boys weren't crazy about holding her hand, but she would rather be able to play good than hold hands. She stayed with Wills for a year, then went on to play with some other popular western swing bands and a few jazz combo's. Loving every moment of it. She recalls the most common comment she got was, "You play like a man", which she considered a very nice compliment, because back then it was a "mans world" out there. She was referred to as a *bassman*. That was before women's lib too! It was fun then and now it's even more fun, because she's a



sassy senior citizen and STILL “plays like a man”. She married fiddler Buddy Beasley and retired to raise two great daughters, then got back in the *swing* of things. She performs periodically with a band she formed called “**The Western Swing Road Band**”. It’s made up of Western Swing musicians who are members of “**The Western Swing Hall of Fame**” which she was inducted into in 1987. Also, several of them were formerly with “**Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys**”. They are sometimes booked as “**Former Texas Playboys**”.

Louise and her husband, Buddy Beasley, invented The Buddy System, Fiddle by Color Code system for fast, easy learning of fiddle playing. She holds a patent for it and has had it on the market for about twenty years. She has undertaken other musical projects such as producing “**The Bob Wills Texas Playgirls and Boys**” album of ten songs which features all the women vocalists who were an established part of Bob Wills band along with the foremost **Texas Playboys**, Eldon Shamblin, Herb Remington, Johnny Cuvillo, and several others. Louise and daughter Marci co-wrote the theme song for the album, titled “**Some Of The Texas Playboys Wore A Dress.**” She has since produced two more albums, “**The Western Swing Road Band**” consisting of sixteen songs some old, some new, and the latest, “**The Seventy Year Celebration of The Seven Rowe Brothers**”. It is a CD which features 22 songs recorded by the brothers from the thirties through the nineties. It’s fabulous.

It may not be a “Mans World” that Louise Plays in anymore, but she still gets a kick when folks see her playing that monster bass on the bandstand and say, “Look at that woman ‘Bassman’ play.” She’s playing like any man too.

If anyone is interested in getting this “Bassman” and her band for a festival or dance, or would like info on her products you can reach her at (817) 875 2222.