

March 2009

www.islandsongwriters.org



# 30 Years On

## One man's songwriting journey

BY MIKE SVEZIA

Five years ago I walked through the doors of room 217 at Five Towns College for the first time. Not knowing what to expect, I was so blown away by the music and the musicians I heard that night. It had been many years since I was in a room with that much talent.

Back in high school I attended one of the first songwriting classes in the public school system run by Ted Lerhman, who had a number of small hits in addition to Soupy Sales' "Spy With a Pie" LP.

We went into the city to record demos, and made a couple of class albums. We saw plays and went backstage to meet the casts. Ted invited his "friends" to come and talk to the class. Among them were Mitch Miller, Mary Travers, Stephen Schwartz and Taro Meyer.

I'd become kind of jaded about the celebrity thing at that point. Then one day Harry Chapin came to class. We knew he was coming. The place was jam-packed with other students who were allowed to attend, and I wound up in the back of the room standing.

Well, Harry struts in like a big ole lumberjack, sits in front and starts to play and sing. What energy. Boy was he loud! I was sure they heard him all the way down the hall... and on the other floors! He spoke about his music and gave numerous tips for us budding songwriters. He sang song after song – a mini-concert. To close out the session, he said he wanted to try out a brand new song he was working on, and we were treated to a preview of "30,000 Lbs of Bananas." Wow!

Fast forward 30 years, and I'm sitting in a songwriting class given by Mel Glazer, where I meet Vinny Crici, Bill Ryan and Walt Sargent, and inform me about the Island Songwriters Showcase run by Sonny Speed, and Harry's early involvement.

Over the past five years I've had to have heard at least 1,000 original songs at meetings and public performances of my fellow writers, and I still get excited like a little kid sometimes because I know you and have access to your material.

I've learned so much from "you guys," and not just the "Did you know?" stuff but more so by your good example. Over two dozen of you have graciously swapped your hard-earned CDs for one of my homemade cassette tapes. (Long live Analog!!) That good gesture is not lost on me.

The generosity and support of this organization has been absolutely wonderful. Thanks to you all... Kudos, my friends, kudos!

**February Writer's Choice on page 2**

**Next Workshop**  
April 6 at Five Towns  
College

**Borders  
Open Mic**  
The next show is  
Friday, April 3.

**ISS at Folk  
Society**  
ISS members Tim  
Dillon, Dave Bailey,  
Frank Gambino,  
Vincent Crici, Jim  
Baron and Lois  
Morton will play  
March 21 at the Folk  
Music Society of  
Huntington's Hard  
Luck Café at the  
Congregational  
Church of Huntington,  
30 Washington Drive,  
Centerport. Says ISS  
Director Sonny  
Speed: "We are  
thankful to the Folk  
Music Society for  
having us back and  
recognizing our  
talented songwriters."

## iss

### Director

Sonny Speed

### Webmaster

Walter Sargent

### Writing Coach

Mel Glazer

## Newsletter

### Editor

Pedro Pereira

### Contributors

Dave Cook

Gerry Dantone

Suzanne Ernst

Frank Gambino

Sonny Meadows

Steve Robinson

Walter Sargent

Hank Stone

Mike Svezia

Tony Tedeschi

---

We're on the Web!

See us at

[www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org)

## Writer's Choice: 'Every Bit As Gone' By Lora Kendall

By WALTER SARGENT

The Writer's Choice award for February goes to Lora Kendall for "Every Bit as Gone." This song really lacked for nothing – songwriting craft, inspiration and delivery. Lyrics and melody went together like a dovetail joint. The subject, a woman trapped and longing to escape, was so truthful, Lora had to explain that the song was not autobiographical.

Members wrote "emotional lyrics, lovely melody...haunting" and "great all the way through." Indeed.

Tied for second were "Winter Sad Sack Blues" by Suzanne Ernst and "Easy Come, Easy Go" by Steve Robinson. Never content with one great idea per song, Suzanne's song was a mashup of blues and her own special something else. Steve's song was another very well conceived and executed piece, this time about relaxing in front of a campfire, fishing the stream.

I got a real sense of nourishment from listening because Steve knows how to get the mood across.

Comments on other songs:

"Street of Dreams" (John Finerty) also really got the mood across in a poetic and compelling piece.

"Violet Lake" (Sal Weeks): This was "out there" in a lot of really good ways.

"What's In Your Heart?" (Mark Hussey) Gorgeous and stunningly original.

## ISS Open Mic

The next open mic at **Borders Cafe**, Route 25, Syosset, is April 3. This gig is monthly, on the first Friday of the month, hosted by Vinny Crici. Signup is at 7:30 p.m and the music starts at 8 p.m.

## Who Played What

Here is a list of the performers and songs from last month's ISS workshop:

Suzanne Ernst: Winter Sad Sack Blues; Cousin Steve: How Was I To Know?; Bruce Kanin: Angry Driver; Ken Krumenacker: City of Houston; Jules Jacob: I Have A Dream; John Finerty: Street of Dreams; Marguerite Cassel: Necessary Roughness; Mark Hussey: What's In Your Heart?; John Savino: The 5 Boro; Lora Kendall: Every Bit As Gone; Steve Robinson: Easy Come Easy Go; Jim Robert: Opening Line; Sal Weeks: Violet Lake

## Monthly Workshop

Test out your songs in front of a crowd by playing them for fellow musicians who will provide constructive feedback with the goal of helping you improve as a songwriter. The ISS workshop takes place the first Monday of every month, except if it falls on a holiday, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director Sonny Speed, the workshop starts at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guitar if you wish to perform your song live, or you may bring a recording on CD or tape. A piano is available for those who write their songs at the keys. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyric sheets so the other workshop attendees can follow along while listening to your song. It is much easier to provide constructive criticism when people can read the lyrics. The ISS workshop is at the center of the organization's mission to help songwriters perfect their craft. Many performers on Long Island got their start at ISS.

## General Information

For general information about ISS or how to join the organization, contact ISS Director Sonny Speed at [mcspeed@optonline.net](mailto:mcspeed@optonline.net) or 631- 462-3300. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Pedro Pereira at [pedropereira@verizon.net](mailto:pedropereira@verizon.net). Visit our web site at [www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org).