

# TRUE WEST

PRESERVING THE AMERICAN WEST

JANUARY 2009

## What HISTORY HAS TAUGHT ME

**When I was touring radio stations in Texas,** I was a "Texas Red Dirt Country" artist. At a cowboy poetry gathering, I'm a "Cowboy Singer." I've been called too cowboy for country and too country for cowboy.

**The future of cowboy music** is bright. I recall a songwriting seminar that I was involved in with Hal Cannon at the 2005 Cowboy Songs and Range Ballads Festival in Cody, Wyoming. Both Hal and I were pleasantly surprised to find that most of the attendees were in their teens or younger.

**My two young sons think my music** is okay, I guess. When Quayden was a baby, I used to have to hold him and dance around to "Buckaroo Tattoo" to get him to sleep. Briggs has a few requests like "Meet Me In McCall" and "Monster On Your Back" every time I get out a guitar. But mostly, they just think of me as their "Old Man."

**A book that would make a great song** is *The Time It Never Rained* by Elmer Kelton. Elmer Kelton is one of the greatest authors of all time, and this particular book is about the life perils of a real Texas rancher. It gives a lot more insight into real ranching than most Western novels. I wonder if Elmer wants to cowrite a song?

**The best-kept secret about my home state of Utah** is Capitol Reef National Park. It's a little off the beaten path, so it doesn't get quite as much hype (see p. 76).

**The best advice my parents ever gave me:** "Count your pennies, and your dollars will take care of themselves." Fortunately, I have been able to do more on less because of the lessons they taught me about money.

**What most people don't know about me** is I love to travel in a minivan. It's a little hard on the image, but I like to be comfortable out on the big, open road.

**My favorite Western musician** is Ian Tyson. He's the greatest gift Alberta ever gave the world.

**My favorite cowboy poet** is Ross Knox . . . or is it Waddie Mitchell?

**The worst weather I've rode my horse in took place** just this year on the Hopkins drive across Deseret Land & Livestock. Casey Bitton, Rick McChris and I were out on the big flat pushing about 200 pairs. With a herd of mad mama cows runnin' at us, we had to dig in pretty hard and try to turn 'em back. In a moment of conviction, I think we all decided that dying in a lightning storm out on Deseret punchin' cows was



### BRENN HILL, WESTERN MUSICIAN

A Utah-born singer/songwriter, Brenn Hill has six albums, with his most recent being *What A Man's Got To Do*. The Western Folklife Center, which puts on the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering on January 24-31, 2009, in Elko, Nevada, has called Brenn "one of the most innovative voices in contemporary cowboy music." The 32-year-old lives in Hooper, Utah, with his wife Sylina and his two sons Quayden and Briggs. Visit [brennhill.com](http://brennhill.com) for more about his music.

better than ridin' back to tell Chris Hopkins we couldn't hold 'em. The storm blew by, and the cows made it to Heiner Canyon.

**History has taught me** to appreciate every moment that I get with the people I love. Life is fragile and quick.

**Even now, I think of Elko as the place it all began.** I first played at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering when I was about 14 or 15 years old. After a few years, I was asked to take part in the Best of the Cowboy Music Jamboree. "Sawyer" Tom Hayden hosted the event and gave me the special invitation. Don Edwards, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Ray Reed and Peter Rowan were all part of the bill. The place was packed and I was scared to death, but the audience drank it in. They were enthusiastic and supportive, and seemed to really understand what I was singing about.

