

# **Tales from the Road**

**The Life of an Itinerant  
Musician as Lived by...**

**BOB HAWORTH**

HELLGATE PRESS



ASHLAND, OREGON

# Tales from the Road

©2023 Bob Haworth

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*“This is dedicated to the one I love...”*  
*To my beautiful wife, Meri – she’s the wind in my sails.*

## Praise for Bob Haworth's *Tales from the Road*

*“Reading Haworth's book is a revealing glimpse in to just what happened to a kid with a dream, who never let that dream die and met with a lot of success. A four-string banjo player getting work in mid-'60's L.A.? Well, he did it and dug his way in to the business that would take him around the world in several different groups, all of which you have heard the names of over the years. It is ‘the life he picked’ (to paraphrase my book title), and I wish I could have ‘borrowed’ some of his remembrances for my book! If you want to laugh, and hear about how difficult – and rewarding – the music business can be for someone with the dream and hard work ethic, (without being a ‘superstar’), check out Bob Haworth’s Tales from the Road, and you will have a fun ride.”*

—John McEuen, musician, author of *The Life I Picked*,  
member of CMA/AFM/SAG-AFTRA/IBMA/BMI

*“I saw The Kingston Trio play their very first college concert on the campus of the University of Oklahoma in '56 or '57 ( look it up!). I already loved folk music but I was untprepared for the explosive performance that blew me away that night. While leaving the field house I told my date I was going to do what the trio did. She laughed. These guys made it impossible for me to do anything else with my life, for which I thank them sincerely.”*

—Tom Paxton, musician

*“Bob Haworth is an incredibly talented performer and a great asset. I always said he saved our ass more than once. He was always there when I needed him.”*

—Bob Shane, Owner/Leader, The Kingston Trio

*“Well, he’s done it! Bob Haworth and I made music and travelled together for a fun, amazing decade and a half. He’s a magical performer, a tasty arranger and musician, and now brilliant storyteller. I guarantee this joyful book is more than just a tale of motels, sing-alongs and curtain calls! From sound-check to last call, Bob’s true stories will make you understand and chuckle as he reveals just how and why performers stay with it, night after endless night on the road. Well done, Bob...Encore!”*

—Bob Flick, Founding Member, The Brothers Four

## Bob Haworth

*“Bob’s life has been a treasure chest with so many stages, so many regal opportunities, and so many stories from behind the curtain. I met him in the ’80s when we were both playing the showrooms on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City. You’ll enjoy these iconic tales of Bob doing what he was driven to do. In the words I wrote for his pal Bob Shane, Bob Haworth was ‘singing every inch of the way!’”*

—Jim Ratts, Entertainer, Songwriter and Record Producer

*“Bob Haworth and I have been pickin’ & grinnin’ together for the past six years. He’s a cool cat and a good one to ride the river with as this entertaining read will fully attest.”*

—John Hollis, the “Hollis” in Hollis & Haworth

*“I first met Bob Haworth when he performed with The Brothers Four. When my group, The Kingston Trio, lost Roger Gambill to an untimely death, Bob Shane and I asked Bobby if he felt comfortable leaving the Brothers Four and joining The Kingston Trio. We recognized his outstanding musical ability and his dedication to both the music and an audience. Bobby was instrumental (pun intended) in returning the KT to its original instrumental approach of six-string guitar, banjo, and Nick Reynolds’ tenor guitar, an instrumental sound that was imbedded in the minds and ears of millions of fans. During my reading of Bobby’s book I was transported back to some wonderful times and memories, both personal and professional, and I heartfully (yes, I said that) recommend it to every fan of music in general, folk music specifically, and the music business.”*

—George Grove, Member of The Kingston Trio

*“I have known Bobby Haworth for 30 years and have had the pleasure of working with him for many of those years when he was a member of The Kingston Trio. I have always been amazed at his ability to play just about any known instrument, and play them all well. Bobby is funny, talented and very loyal. He has a long rich history in folk music – many years in The Brothers Four, three times in The Kingston Trio, and now on his own. I hope he continues to write and entertain us for years to come.”*

—Bobbie Childress, Wife of Bob Shane of The Kingston Trio

*“There is no more captivating storyteller than a folk singer. This candid memoir is informed by mastery of the entire body of work that is The Kingston Trio. Bob Haworth has captured the singular likeness of that legendary Grammy-winning trio who until now defied intimate portrayal. His entertaining tales are the portal to an era. The breadth of his limitless reminiscence energizes colorful prose moving with spirit and agility.”*

—Larry Crawford, Longtime Kingston Trio Fan and Good Friend

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# Acknowledgments

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And my wife, Meri, who has stood by me through thick and thin, and shared much of this adventure with me.

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Thanks to Harley Patrick of Hellgate Press for providing the means to tell my Tales.

And thanks to music fans world-wide who have begged me for years to share a glimpse of my life on the road. Naming you all individually here would require another book, but without you – well, what’s the sound of “one hand clapping”?

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# Preface

**W**HO WOULD WANT TO READ a book about my life? That's the question that's been haunting me since it was first suggested that I write such a documentary. Oh, sure – I've had some interesting adventures and I have some bizarre and hilarious stories to tell, but is it really worth committing hours and hours of time to put all of that into a book that someone might actually find interesting?

My friend and advisor, Mike Kavanagh, finally gave me the reason from the perspective of a wannabe musician who had, himself, fantasized about doing the things I've done. He assured me that there were many like himself who have dreamed of being part of a hit-producing musical ensemble and traveling the world performing in front of huge crowds. The image of bras and panties being hurled at you from teen-aged admirers seems to capture the imagination of just about any guy who has ever picked up a guitar or sung in a karaoke bar. I can't speak to the fantasies of female wannabe performers, but I know I've had my own mental images of being swarmed by adoring fans after a brilliant performance. It's this fascination with stardom that attracts the curious, and I guess there may be something to be gained by vicariously experiencing it through the eyes of one who has been touched by that lifestyle.

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To be a rock star is certainly a dream that every budding musician aspires to. I have grade-school-aged guitar students who believe that if they learn a few chords and riffs on their instrument that one day they'll stand and deliver to the cheers and applause of their peers. And more power to them for those dreams! In reality, it takes a lot more than musical proficiency to attain that position. I know hundreds of very capable musicians who have never made it beyond their local Holiday Inn lounge. And, conversely, I know of many mediocre talents who have risen to stardom on the wings of sheer luck.

In my case I wouldn't classify my success in the music business as "stardom." Nor do I consider myself a world-class musician by any means. My success was a function of being in the right place at the right time and knowing the right people. I had enough musical ability and stage presence to capitalize on my connections to get to where I wanted to be, but I know that luck played a huge role in my career. I also credit a technique called creative visualization for moving my life in the direction I needed to go to find the opportunities and open the doors.

True stardom has eluded me throughout my career, but I do count myself fortunate to have made a very good living as a working musician. I've had my ups and downs, and I guess that's part of the story I have to tell. It's not all glory and hoopla in the music business. The reality is that fame and fortune are as elusive as the dreams that produce them and you can never count on them as a foundation for your life. In that regard I've always relied on my Boy Scout motto: "Be prepared." I've learned to carry a Plan B in one hip

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pocket and a Plan 3 in the other. When those failed I somehow had the ability to fly by the seat of my pants. Life is a constant learning experience – a winding road of adventure and misadventure, and I’ve had my share of both. I guess since you cracked the cover of this book you want to hear about all that. I really have no plan A, B or 3 for writing this book. I’m taking the approach of flying by the seat of my pants, so, fasten your seatbelt and away we go...

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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Beginning

**I WAS BORN AT A** very early age at Deaconess Hospital in Spokane, Washington. I was the first child of Robert Lyle and Elizabeth Ann Haworth, or Bob and Betty Ann, as they were known to their friends. They met while attending the University of Idaho in Moscow and they married before Dad went off to Europe to fight in World War II. I came into the world on October 9, 1946, after he was discharged from the Army. I was named Robert Larry Haworth to distinguish, I guess from my Dad. Apparently my folks didn't want a Robert Jr. in the family. But, while all my brothers have names honoring other family members and ancestors, my middle name is found nowhere on the family tree. Larry? Who was Larry? Sadly my folks are gone now and I'll never know the answer.

Mom and Dad finished their educations at the U of I. Moscow was Mom's hometown and my first couple of years were spent there with my maternal grandparents, Edith and Raymond Woesner. Mom's brother, my Uncle Ray, lived at home and occupied an upstairs bedroom next to my grandparents, while Mom and Dad and I had the downstairs bedroom. Grandma raised chickens in the back yard and some-

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times she'd let me bring in a newly hatched chick to poop all over the house. And being Idaho, she grew potatoes in the parking strip along West A Street.

Mom majored in Art at the University and played violin in the orchestra. Dad majored in Chemical Engineering, ran on the track team and played on the football team. One of my early memories is seeing the crowd tear down the goal posts after the Vandals beat the visiting team one Friday night. My folks had a job cleaning a bar in town after closing and they used to take me with them. They'd play the juke box as they worked and I have another early memory of standing in front of that juke box dancing to the music. I guess I was hooked – music became a focal point of my life.

After graduation, Dad took a job as Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Weiser, Idaho. This little farming town just across the border from Oregon had one swimming pool and one city park, and Dad ran the whole shebang. I think he would have made a great entertainment promoter, because the first year he was there he put on an aquatic show that featured one of his classmates from U. of I., Ken Lyons. Ken was a champion diver and his grand finale was doing a triple tuck off the high dive through a ring of fire on the water. Dad also organized the very first Old-Time Fiddling Contest which later grew to become the National Old-Time Fiddlers Contest, attracting fiddlers from all over the country to vie for the best fiddler in various categories. Years later I returned to Weiser as the agent for ten-year-old Tiffany Paulin, who won Best Fiddler in her age group.

My brother, James Dennis, was born October 19, 1950 and I became a proud big brother. I think the addition of a new



family member put a strain on the family budget because Dad took a higher-paying job as Assistant Parks and Recreation Director for Spokane County. Spokane was Dad's hometown and growing up there in the 1950s laid the foundation for the direction my life would take.

Dad had a lot of pools, parks and events to oversee all over the County and summer brought plenty of fun times. I learned to swim in Comstock Pool and I became pretty good at it, even joining the Spokane Swim Team when I was about seven. One Saturday, Dad invited me to tag along with him to a park out east of town where a weekend music festival was happening. There was a small stage set up for entertainment and the performers were none other than Les Paul and Mary Ford. I was fascinated with their music and in later years I came to be a big fan.

The month of May brings Spokane's annual Lilac Festival. One of the events is a big parade downtown and in 1953, Mom decided to enter me in the Junior division. She dressed me up like a hobo and with my dog, Cindy, we won a prize in the pet category. I also got to meet my hero, Hopalong Cassidy and his horse, Topper, who were the parade marshals.

Two more brothers, twins Samuel Ray and Gary William, joined the family on August 10, 1953, once again impacting family finances. Dad took a night job at a local produce company, loading trucks and Mom signed on as a bus driver for the Spokane transit company. There was enough money from their endeavors for me to take piano lessons when I was eight years old, and Mom also enlisted me in the Spokane Boys Choir. Things were taking root.

Our extended family included my paternal grandparents,

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Gladys and Raymond Haworth. Grandma's father, Samuel Wimmer ("Gramp" to us kids), lived with the grandparents and he was always fun to be with. He had worked all his life as a carpenter, but had lost his eyesight in his later years. He could still play the old Cable-Nelson upright piano in Grandma's foyer, and he loved to entertain us with "That Old Rugged Cross" and "Onward Christian Soldiers." That was the same piano I practiced my lessons on and it resides in my music room to this day.

Grandpa's brother, Carl and his wife, Grace, lived across town and every holiday was a family get-together. Often Grandpa's other brother, Wayne and his wife, Vera, would drive over from Seattle to join the family reunions. Both Uncle Carl and Uncle Wayne played the banjo and those reunions were filled with hours of listening to my great-uncles play and sing songs from the 1920s and '30s.

Uncle Wayne played tenor banjo and during his youth he had played in several bands. One of his gigs was on a cruise-ship that sailed from Seattle to Hong Kong. He brought back souvenirs from his trips, including an amazing carved ivory art piece that graced the grandparents' mantel. Uncle Carl played plectrum banjo and had also played in several bands, mostly around the Spokane area. One of his groups included a student from Gonzaga College on drums and vocals – a kid named Bing Crosby. And in 1928, Carl landed a recording contract with Columbia Records, releasing four 78 RPM records on that label.

A good friend and sometimes band-mate of Uncle Carl's was a local banjo player named Dutch Groshoff. Dutch taught banjo, guitar and ukulele out of a studio at Blessing and Thue Music. On Uncle Carl's recommendation, Dutch took

me on as a student. I didn't own a banjo and my family certainly couldn't afford one, but Uncle Carl was kind enough to loan me his Weymann plectrum which he rarely played. His instrument of choice was a vintage Paramount Style-A.

Dutch took me under his wing and I caught on pretty quickly. Within a year I was invited to join Dutch's banjo band, a group of his students that he loved to show off around town. My first professional gig was with that band at age eleven. We played for a Kiwanis meeting at a swanky hotel downtown and we each made \$5.00. There was a revolving membership in our banjo band and one of Dutch's students that I didn't get to know very well until years later was a kid named Mark Pearson. His dad was a well-known doctor in town and they had a nice home in the ritzy part of South Spokane. I think I was probably a little intimidated by him, but as adults we became good friends when I took his place in The Brothers Four, and then he replaced me in that group when I joined The Kingston Trio.

Dutch had us all outfitted in red and white striped jackets that each of our mothers sewed for us. We looked pretty professional and apparently we played quite well. Well enough to be the grand-prize winners one year on KXLY TV's *Starlit Stairway*, a weekly televised talent show that featured all kinds of youthful talent – dancers, singers, acrobats and musicians.

Mom was a bit of a stage mother and she always coached me: "Look up at the audience and smile!" It was sound advice that no-doubt enhanced my career. She had so much enthusiasm for my ability that she would often enter me in local talent contests. I won second place in pretty much every contest only to be beat by an accordion player doing "Lady

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of Spain.” Out of frustration and revenge I finally worked up an arrangement of that song on the banjo, but to no avail. Accordions always won.

In 1958, I was in the sixth grade at Finch Elementary School, the school I’d been attending since kindergarten. One of my classmates was Dutch’s daughter, Katy and we were in Mr. White’s class. Katy’s desk was right next to mine and we often got in trouble for talking when we were supposed to be listening. I don’t think girls ever got punished, but I got busted on multiple occasions resulting in the Mr. White shake-down. He would grab my left arm, yank me out my seat and shake me like a rag doll. Once should’ve been enough, but it took me several shake-downs before I learned to keep my yap shut. The other thing I learned from Mr. White, besides the capitol of Washington, was his firm belief that someday China would dominate the world. As I watch events unfold today I can’t help but think how prescient he was.

By the mid-1950s, our family had acquired a television set and we each had our favorite programs. All of us kids loved *The Mickey Mouse Club* and Mom’s favorite was *Liberace*. Dad like to watch the Friday night boxing matches, but my favorite was *Ozzie and Harriet*. I was fascinated when little Ricky Nelson would close the show singing to a room full of giddy girls and I knew that’s what I wanted to do someday. After school I’d turn on the radio and hope to hear “Poor Little Fool,” which I had memorized and sang along with. But then one day in 1958, I heard this song that featured a banjo. My ears perked up and I listened as The Kingston Trio sang this jaunty little ditty about a guy named Tom Dooley. Every time the station played that record I

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would grab my banjo and try to play along. I eventually found the key and figured out the chords – there were only two – and soon I was hooked on this new group that featured a banjo. How cool was that? Little did I know...

In 1959, Dad made a major career change and took a job as Parks and Recreation Director for the city of Medford, Oregon. So, in the summer after I graduated from grade school we packed up our 1949 Chevy and headed south. That fall opened the next chapter in my life.



“Little Bobby Banjo,” age 11.

## Tales from the Road



Me and my Great Uncles: Carl (left) and Wayne (right).

### Dutch and His Two-Beat Banjo Are Part of S

By Joe Baily Jr.

HERE'S a lanky, lean and lanky character around Spokane who is about as well known as anyone in town. Over the years his beanie arms, his sharply pointed chin and bed-cut angular nose, have become familiar sights. He's a hatchet-faced fellow who has provided about such one entertainment, all totaled up, as folks know him, and so do old men and women who are grown up and have their own youngsters, number him when they were young, their own youngsters know him the same way Mom and Pop used to know him.

His character was christened Lawrence J. Groshoff, but it's as Dutch that he's known. It seems one time when he was a boy he was fishing at the Maple river ranch his father, George D. Groshoff, a nice contractor, and his father's man, Fred (Pop) Cooper, and Pop called him "Dutch" because of a stick of dynamite beside a fire got in "dutch" for it. Anyway, it stuck with him as a nickname after that.

Dutch is a banjo player. He's been playing banjos from and drum and so on and do everything under his hand for something like 30 years around Spokane. His banjo plucks back to a class picnic in 1921 at Gonzaga high school. One of his mates, Jack O'Brien, had been convincing the gang with his banjo and it down to take a swim. Father and Lynch suggested Dutch take up the Jack left off. Dutch took up, and started the Gonzaga gang that soon that he took up from there. Of course, before he could charm Gonzaga gang he had to have some of banjo background, and that came from his father who arranged to "whenever he wasn't building logs, Dutch learned his banjo at father's knees. He was self-taught.

Dutch's career with the banjo came through lively years of orchestral playing and solo entertaining in one during which he made jobs and often helped on the way up, many young musicians who have



Groshoff, hat awry, plucks out a rollicking banjo tune.

younger brother, around 1930, got John Arnes Weekley brother as to form his own.

Dutch's script goes about his them and with them. They're in Crook's and the on in Spokane, I of everything it took real pride. There's a clip of Spokane Boy, Torch Song Crook bar Hilday of T all about King of a clipping, some "Son Makes Hit," There's the crop Handrickes, "Ope tomorrow night, a wire from. He night as an orch Dutch's banjo years from his scribbled with notes. Dutch got Jody Pesbody, V for a dance of an open for "names When a head be ered with them, a new band an names are the bit ra world, big- others, Dutch re he asked Babe I her autograph e the Babe process and sing in the g seemed to have instinct for rhyt hour or so in w high heavens bee us," didn't matt whether she i moved along w That's been th eneev along, as he found joy an written his own by Bob Crosby, I song; he's tang his own method of all it's as a j found moment, great moments, ing couples, may

## Dutch Groshoff

## Bob Haworth



Uncle Carl



These Central Lions club members are tuning up for their mid-winter dinner dance at Munro Hall and Country club Saturday, when they will stage a specialty act. In the combo (left to right) are Carl R. Haworth, banjo; Lester H. Peuck, trombone; Maxine C. Sullivan, trumpet; Harvey E. Guerrin, clarinet, and Ralph E. Goodhue, piano.

Uncle Carl (*left*) with the Lions Club Band.

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Uncle Wayne with The Westerners.  
Wayne is second from right with banjo.



Gramp's band, ca. 1919-1923.  
Gramp is second from right.



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Banjo Band on the *Starlit Stairway*. Larry Groshoff, Dutch's son, far right – I'm the chubby kid 2nd from left.