

CULTURE

Home to build an amphitheater

Editor's note: This is the final part of a two-part column about Pat Garrett. The first part ran in Berks Country on June 14. The full version is available online at [readingeagle.com](https://www.readingeagle.com)



Dave Kline
Mountain
Folklore

Pat Garrett left Nashville a bit discouraged, came home and thought, "Heck, why not bring Nashville to me?" He had performed at the Jamboree in the Hills, and it gave him the idea to create a place similar to that, right in his own backyard in Berks County. Pat assembled a crew, including his cousin John Zimmerman; his sons, Jeff and Dan; and his buddies Mark Rake and Randy Wilson and several other friends. They built a big stage on the northwest corner of Interstate 78 and Route 183 in Upper Tulpehocken Township. It became known as Pat Garrett's Amphitheater. Pat met Suzy Dalton, and she helped him run the place and has been his band's bass player since. From 1994 to 2004, the amphitheater hosted many country stars, including Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, Tanya Tucker, Billy Ray Cyrus, Charlie Daniels and George Jones.

The Pat Garrett Band opened just about every show, with Pat on guitar, Suzy on bass, Tom Vollmer on steel guitar, Mitch Wolfe on keys and Kerry Scanlan and Keith Brobst on drums. Heck, yours truly even performed on that stage, opening for country icon Roy Clark. Sadly, Tommy Vollmer and Crazy Elmer have both passed away, and they're missed greatly but remembered very fondly.

The amphitheater is now run by Rob Hunt and his son Robbie, under Flagship Music, and has a great lineup of shows this summer. Learn more at www.pgamp.com.

A song has a life of its own

You never know where a song might take you when you release it. It might fall flat, or it might take off and take you with it. Pat had many of the former, and a few of the latter. Here are three of the more memorable ones.

'Monica Lewinsky Polka'

Being a sort of confi-

dant to Pat when it comes to songwriting, he's run many of his original songs by me. I always remind him that he is truly one of a kind and a guy with a voice as smooth as whipped butter. I asked him to share some stories about reactions to his songs.

"One memorable experience was a song I wrote during the time of fiasco with President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky," Pat said. "When Suzy heard it she said, 'You can't do that song at the amphitheater, it's in really bad taste.' I said, 'I am going to tell the audience the title of the song and let them decide if they want to hear it.'"

"We opened for Willie Nelson that night, and I said to the audience, 'I wrote a new song that Suzy doesn't think we should perform, but I'm going to tell you the title and if you want to hear it cheer, and if you don't want to hear it, boo! The name of the song is 'The Monica Lewinsky Polka.' The crowd went wild! Needless to say, they wanted to hear it, in fact, after we did it the first time, people stood up and cheered, and wanted to hear it again, so we played it again.

"Suzy, seeing the overwhelming reaction, tells the crowd, 'Did I mention I co-wrote that song?' Afterward, I went over to the souvenir stand and there must've been 1,500 people in line wanting to buy the song. I stood on the picnic table and yelled, 'Folks, I just wrote this song yesterday and don't have it recorded yet, but I will next week. Come to the Charlie Daniels show and I'll have it on cassette for you.' People drove from every surrounding state to get a copy of this thing. I wish I would've had the internet in those days. I would've sold a million copies. You know how they say 'too late to the party'? Well, this time I was too early."

'Moose Shootin' Mama'

After it was announced that Sarah Palin was John McCain's running mate, the next morning Pat got an email with a picture of her with her foot up on a moose she shot. It was meant to be negative, but it sparked an idea for a song Pat called "Moose Shootin' Mama," and, pardon the pun, Pat says the tune took off like a shot. The day after he released the song, he got an email from the governor's office in Alaska, asking if they



COURTESY OF PAT GARRETT

Musician Pat Garrett

could use the song.

Pat contacted Mike Borchetta of Lofton Creek Records in Nashville. He loved the song, and put it out on his label. Pretty soon Pat found himself on the campaign trail, opening rallies for McCain and Palin, and he learned politics is a lot like the entertainment industry.

'I'm Gonna Stand'

Another highlight of Pat's was a song written when the NFL players were taking a knee before the game.

Pat said to Suzy, "If they're gonna take a knee, I'm gonna stand."

Suzy and Pat wrote "I'm Gonna Stand."

The couple says the song practically wrote itself. The next day at the sheepskin shop, Pat recorded a simple video of him playing and singing the song and put it on Facebook. By the next evening he had 45,000 shares. The following day he got a call from Fox News.

The booker said, "Mr. Garrett, we've been playing your song up here on Fox News and we want to know if you could be a guest on Fox First?"

Pat told me his answer

was, "Of course! Yes!"

Fox News sent a limo to pick up Suzy and Pat, taking them to Fox News on Fifth Avenue in New York. You can see the interview at [patgarrett.com](https://www.patgarrett.com).

Pat Garrett and the Pat Garrett Band will open for The Artimus Pyle Band on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. at the Pat Garrett Amphitheater. Tickets for the shows this summer will be available at Sickafus Sheepskins at Interstate 78 and Route 183 in Upper Tulpehocken Township, or visit www.pgamp.com.

The 2023 iteration of the Pat Garrett Band features Pat on guitar, Suzy on bass, Fister on drums, Bob Springel on steel and Mitch Wolf on keyboard. You can also catch

them at Knoebels Park on Aug. 25, 26, 27 and at the Dover Fireman's Fair on Sept. 4.

Pat Garrett and Suzy Dalton recordings are available on all the digital services such as Amazon and iTunes, and CDs are available for sale at www.patgarrett.com and at Sickafus Sheepskins. If you're a vinyl or cassette collector, Pat also has a stack of LP's and cassettes of his older recordings for y'all.

Dave Kline is an award-winning writer, photographer, show host and producer, singer-songwriter, travel guide and community advocate. Reach him at davesmountainfolklore@gmail.com.

Calendar

JUNE 22:

■ World trivia night, Muhlenberg Community Library, 3619 Kutztown Road, Laureldale, 5:30 p.m. June trivia will focus on Europe and there will be authentic snacks from this area. Winner receives a prize. Free adult program. For more information, visit muhlenberg-communitylibrary.org.

JUNE 24:

■ Church picnic, St. Michael's Church, 529 St. Michaels Road, Tilden Township, 4-8 p.m. Rain or shine. Picnic food. Music by Rick Hartman and Friends at 5 p.m.

■ Play bucket drums with Philadelphia's Music Play Patrol, Muhlenberg Community Library, 3619 Kutztown Road, Laureldale, 2:30 p.m. All ages. Program includes a door prize drawing and a craft. Free. Registration suggested. Call 610-929-0589 or email muhlmc331@gmail.com. For more information, visit muhlenbergcommunitylibrary.org.

JUNE 25:

■ Huff's Union Church food, fun and fellowship picnic, 540 Conrad Road, Hereford Township, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Picnic foods — hamburgers, hotdogs, salads including soups for sale by cups, pints and quarts. Games and kids activities will be set up. Bring a can or box of food to donate to our food bank and get a free cookie. Bring lawn chairs. Call the church office at 610-845-2626 for more information.

■ One by One Cat Rescue adoption event, Petsmart, 1183 Wyomissing Blvd., Wyomissing, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Meet adoptable cats and kittens.

JULY 8:

■ Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue open house, Golden Gateway facility, 60 Vera Cruz Road, East Cocalico Township, 10 a.m.-noon. Meet and greet the golden retrievers and dogs that are available for adoption. Staff is on hand to answer all questions, and food is available for purchase. No admission charge. No photos. Do not bring other dogs. For more information, email inf@dvgr.org, call 717-484-4799 or visit dvgr.org/adopt/monthlyopenhouse.

JULY 9:

■ Strasstown Fire Company breakfast, 50 East Ave., Upper Tulpehocken Township, 7:30-11:30 a.m. A full breakfast menu will be available. Proceeds benefit the apparatus fund.

JULY 15:

■ 25-cent sale and flea market, Calvary United Church of Christ, 1231 Route 100, Washington Township, 8-11 a.m. Clothing, shoes, books, housewares and more.

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