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## Review of *Cowboy Fiddler in Bob Wills' Band* By Frankie McWhorter

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*Cowboy Fiddler in Bob Wills' Band.* By Frankie McWhorter, as told to John R. Erickson. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1997. Photos, index. 168 pp. \$16.95 paper.

Reading this book, as written in Frankie McWhorter's own words, is like being out on the West Texas Plains, sitting around the campfire listening to a veteran cowboy tell his stories. It has an authentic bunkhouse feeling, deservedly so coming from a man who has spent almost fifty years as a working cowboy.

The book is written in two-part form. The first half deals with McWhorter's musical background and his time in the Bob Wills band. The latter half recounts McWhorter's experiences as a working cowboy.

McWhorter's family lived in the Texas Panhandle town of Plaska, about twenty-five miles from Turkey, Texas, where Bob Wills grew up. McWhorter's musical background on his mother's side of the family was considerable. His grandfather, an evangelist, played the organ and composed songs, which he sold.

Noteworthy among them was "Be My Life's Companion," later recorded by the Mills Brothers.

McWhorter's uncle won the Alabama State fiddle championship so many times they stopped letting him compete. Additionally, everyone in his mother's family could sing.

Bob Wills and his fiddle were in great demand for ranch house dances, and McWhorter's parents, who loved to dance, would attend Bob Wills' dances before he moved to Fort Worth. McWhorter's father was very proud of his boy when he learned to play the fiddle.

McWhorter's recollections of his years with Bob Wills and the stories Wills told him are rich and entertaining. Many were either entirely new to me or contained details I had never heard before.

I did note an error in the history of the first Bob Wills recording of "San Antonio Rose." The producer of that Columbia recording session, Art Sathersby, is referred to as Colonel Art Sutherland of RCA Victor.

The stories McWhorter relates about cowboying should be interesting even to those who have never ridden a horse or roped a cow.

You will feel you are right there in the saddle with him trying to keep those bunch quitters with the herd.

Naturally, the book is peppered with plenty of colorful cowboy expressions, such as bunch quitter. Some require no deciphering, while others may provoke a bit of head scratching. Just what are you doing when you help a man doctor screw worms?

In looking through the twenty pages of photos, I noticed a shot of Hoyle Nix and Frankie McWhorter performing at the Nebraska Country Music Hall of Fame in 1984. Wish I could have been there.

If you want to hear Frankie McWhorter's fiddle on the Bob Wills recordings, look for the recording dates of 24-25 July 1961 on Liberty Records. I believe these recordings were also included on a three CD boxed set called *Encore*.

So, if you enjoy stories about Bob Wills, ridin', and ropin' as told by a real cowboy, this book is for you. Git along little doggies.

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