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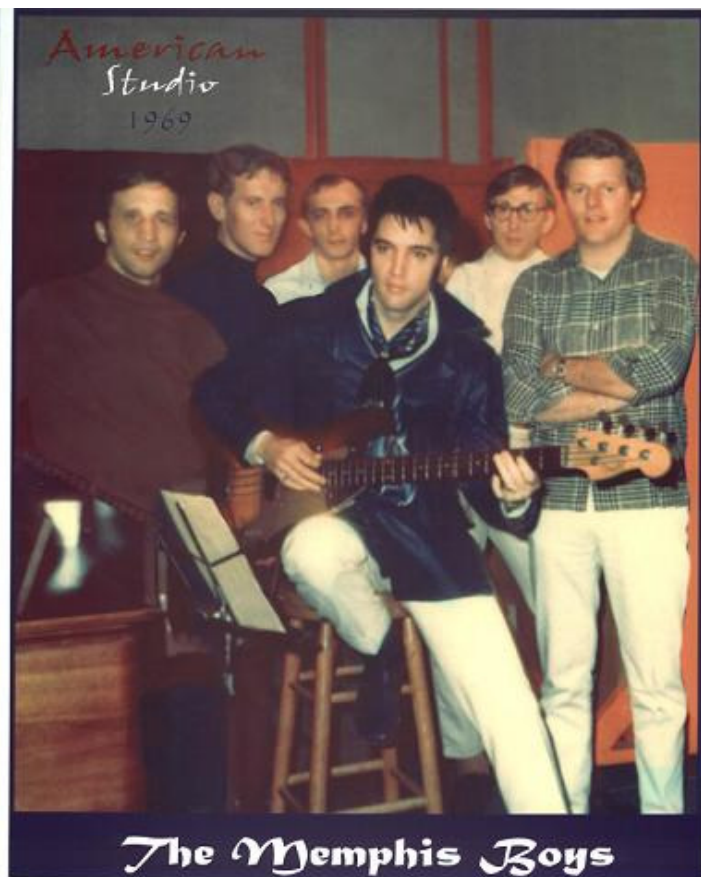
What do you think about American Idol?

- It is the best show on TV

**Featured Article**

## Program to bring musical traditions back to life

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Bobby Wood and the rest of the Memphis Boys with Elvis

Celebrating the deep roots of music in Union County brings to the forefront Pap Wood's Gospel Radio Hour and the Singing Convention of the Air that was first broadcast live from the Union County Courthouse in the late 1940s. That celebration also includes his son Bobby, a Union County man who was instrumental in establishing the style known as Memphis Soul.

From the Wood family who started this long-standing musical tradition came Bobby Wood who played with Elvis in the 1960s in Memphis, then onto Nashville to play and write music for Crystal Gayle, Willie Nelson, Garth Brooks, Merle Haggard, George Strait and a host of other well known stars. Wood was recently inducted in the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Bobby Wood and the Memphis Boys, Mandy Barnett, the WNAU Gospel Radio Hour Reunion and the up and coming Braden Gray and Loose Gravel will all be a part of the annual Down From the Hills concert on Saturday, May 24, 6 p.m. at the Magnolia Civic Center in New Albany. The Union County Heritage Museum and its community partners sponsor the event.

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You're on a roll now, graduates! This special time in your life is just the start of many more good things to come. As you move forward toward new experiences, challenges and achievements, we wish you good luck, good health and much happiness.

Congratulations and best wishes to all of our area grads!

**UCDA**

Union County Development Association  
135 E. Barkhead Street • New Albany, MS  
662-534-4354

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Turn Your Radio On was the first song of the Gospel Radio Hour in the late 40s when Ingomar's Leslie "Pap" Wood started his 50 years of gospel music. "Daddy started on WELO in 1948," said Jamie Gunter, his daughter who also has spent decades in gospel music genre starting when she was five. She now lives in Tupelo. "He took Maxine, Irene, Etoye (all Wood siblings) and Sarah Adair to that first broadcast."

It wasn't long until Tupelo station WELO's Charlie Boren decided to remotely broadcast the gospel program from New Albany, Gunter said. "We had it in the courtroom of the Union County Courthouse from 12 to 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Daddy would bring in all the singers. They came with singing convention songbooks - shaped-note books - Stamps Baxter and Vaughn - that's what I remember," she said.

The shaped - note genre goes back to another generation of the Wood Family when Walter Wood, Jamie's grandfather, taught singing schools throughout Union County using the shaped - note method. The children and grandchildren all learned to sing the different parts. When some one would ask them what part they sang, she said they would answer, "I don't know, whatever is left."

The Wood children - Maxine, Irene, Etoye, Billy, Bobby and Jamie all were expected to participate. And they did. The Ingomar family was dedicated to music. "What did we do after supper every night?" Jamie remarked. "Sing". "And it was always gospel," she said. The children's mother was also a singer but stayed in the background. "Somebody had to milk the cow and pick the blackberries," she joked.

Brothers Bobby and Billy eventually branched out into the Memphis music scene through the music of the Starlighters band and played other musical venues in Memphis. That was where Bobby Wood met Elvis and played piano on many of the recording sessions of 'the king'. Playing on more than 100 hit records between 1967 and 1971, Bobby Wood and The Memphis Boys are a part of American music history - the golden age of rock and roll - and they are still making it - music and history.

Prior to the session days, Bobby found success in his first hit "I'm a Fool For Loving You" recorded on the Joy label. The song climbed the charts and Wood's concert schedule was busy until a tragic automobile accident almost killed him and left him to recuperate for six months, derailing his career. His brother Billy's musical journey took him and his bass guitar to the stages with Ace Cannon, Charlie Rich and others and eventually back to New Albany.

While the Gospel Radio Hour continued, it too branched out to WNAU when the New Albany station opened in the mid 1950s. "When WNAU opened, we sang on their first Sunday morning program," she said. The station was then located on Bankhead Street near Bratton's Service Station (present site of Regions Bank). The Gospel Radio Hour went back to the Saturday live broadcast schedule and eventually moved to Busby Motor Company located on the Jockey Yard located near Main Street and Carter Avenue. "The Busby's would move all the cars out of the showroom on Saturdays so we could broadcast from there," she recalled.

The Wood Family Gospel Group changed through the years and children would marry and leave, but the music continued. The group won the Gospel singing competition at Tupelo. They won at Memphis. Finally they won the Southern Gospel title at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville by singing "I've Got that Old Time Religion". This song and many of the other well-loved standards will be performed at Saturday night's Gospel Hour Reunion Concert that will follow the performance of Bobby Wood and The Memphis Boys performance.

Coming to perform at this musical "Gaither -style" reunion will be members of the Wood Family as well their cousins descendants of Ben & Ruby Rogers Family who were singers as well as ministers. With deep roots in Union County, other children and grandchildren have kept this beloved musical tradition alive. For ticket information contact the Union County Heritage Museum at 538-0014 or UCDA at 534-4354 and tickets will be available at the door.

Jill Smith  
jill@uchheritagemuseum.com



*Phyllis Stanford*  
**Union County  
Circuit Clerk**

***We are  
proud  
of our  
graduating  
seniors.***



*Rhonda Dowdy  
Helen Randle  
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From left, Johnny Rodriques, Kris Kristofferson, Willie, Reggie, Cash, Dunno, Waylon, J.R. Cobb, Bobby Emmons, an unidentified engineer; back, Gene Christman, Marty Stewart, Chips Moman, Mickey Rafeal, Mike Leech, Bobby Wood, during the Highwaymen recording sessions.



Bobby, father and family ready to go on the radio



Walter and Kitty Wood

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