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*One Man's Music: The Life and Times of Texas Songwriter
Vince Bell* (review)

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equine program that some readers may not know about, such as the Maldonados' breeding and raising of one famous thoroughbred called Assault, winner of the 1946 Kentucky Derby. Other horses trained by the Maldonados were sold to the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus.

In chapters four and five, various members of the Maldonado family describe their memorable experiences on the ranch, including daily activities, family interactions, leisure time, women's roles, Christmas celebrations, and working relations with ranch owners, and chapter six focuses on the Maldonados' notable personal achievements. While the seventh chapter assesses the significance of the ranch on revitalizing the local economy of the neighboring city of Kingsville, the final chapter gives an overview of the Maldonado family today. The book features numerous family photographs and reprints of a few small documents such as Beto and Librado's business receipts. The appendices include data on individuals interviewed and referenced for the project and list the Maldonados' extensive family tree and traditional family food recipes.

Overall, *Master Showmen of the King Ranch* vividly portrays the lives of Beto and Librado Maldonado, who were among the numerous *kineños* who played a key role in transforming the King Ranch into a highly productive and world-renowned cattle enterprise in the twentieth century. This book is a major contribution to the literature on the King Ranch because it commemorates the remarkable legacy of Beto and Librado Maldonado as an important part of Texas history.

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JAMES B. BARRERA

One Man's Music: The Life and Times of Texas Songwriter Vince Bell. By Vince Bell, foreword by Kathleen Hudson. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2009. Pp. 274. Illustrations, index. ISBN 9781574412666, \$29.95 cloth.)

Sometime in 1998, Vince Bell took a Greyhound to New York City to join Lyle Lovett, Guy Clark, and Willis Alan Ramsey for a show featuring some of the Texas songwriters whose tunes Lovett had just covered on his *Step Inside This House* CD. Nothing better illustrates Vince's credentials as an honored member of this circle of Texas musicians. His story begins in Houston around 1970, where at age nineteen he lived on the screened-in second story of a Montrose house and began his career playing every conceivable local club. Among these were one of Townes Van Zandt's haunts, the legendary Old Quarter, on the seediest part of Congress Avenue, and the venerable Anderson Fair, where the performers sustained themselves on tips, spaghetti, and beer. We learn about Vince's years on the coffeehouse circuit and his jobs in between gigs selling fireworks, doing yard work, distributing circulars, and whatever was necessary "to keep my authorship alive" (48). Vince teaches much about the songwriter's craft: sometimes the music comes first, sometimes the lyrics; he also remarks on the importance of the spaces between the words. His professional successes were modest by any standard, but he built a fan base and a respected place in the local community of artists and musicians.

In the early morning hours of December 21, 1982, Vince and his wife were

homeward bound from an Austin recording session when at Riverside Drive and I-35, they were broadsided by a drunken driver going sixty-five miles per hour. Their injuries were devastating, with the *Austin American-Statesman* actually announcing Vince's death in that day's earliest edition. Doctors at Brackinridge Hospital saved him, and he emerged from a coma a week later with brain and spinal cord damage, a mangled right arm, and partial vocal-cord paralysis inflicted by his tracheotomy. Years of lonely rehab followed as Vince struggled to regain himself. He had to cope with anger, depression, and the breakup of his marriage as well as excruciating physical pain. Vince turned part of his home space into "Music School," where he worked to relearn guitar, to remember the songs he had written, to recover a singing voice, and even to start composing again. He enrolled at Austin Community College where he got a two-year degree in commercial art, graduating "magna cum-later than most" (159). He worked at Goodwill for a period and sought day labor on Second Street, not getting hired but picking up inspiration for a new song.

Vince slowly resumed performing and recording. One of the things that makes this book so real is the extent to which Vince relates his failures. There was the show at Anderson Fair on the second anniversary of the wreck that he felt good just to get through. Or his month-long stay in the Virgin Islands where he endured several cancellations, played for tips on the street and barely made money to cover his expenses. The triumphs included having his songs covered by Nanci Griffith and Lyle Lovett, releasing his first CD—the aptly titled *Phoenix*—in 1994 (with a memorable in-store performance at Waterloo Records), and opening for the Jayhawks on a series of dates in Holland and Belgium. This is, ultimately, an incredibly inspirational story.

I saw Vince Bell play at a campaign event in 1972 in a long-defunct club across the street from the Palm Center in Houston. A loyal handful of us strained to hear him above the jabberings of the social set and the politicians. Little has changed these lifetimes later, as in this book and in his recordings, Vince's voice still rises above the din.

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Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction. Edited by Euan Hague, Heidi Beirich, and Edward H. Sebesta. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. Pp. 354. Illustrations, figures, notes, contributors, index. ISBN 9780292718371, \$60.00 cloth.)

Neo-Confederacy presents ten essays assessing the "Neo-Confederate movement," an informal alliance of organizations and activists who embrace secession, historical revisionism, and ultra-conservative cultural values. "Neo-Confederate" organizations like the League of the South (LOS), which was founded in 1994, aspire to form a new southern nation from the states of the Confederacy but do not generally advocate violent rebellion. According to the book, Neo-Confederates focus instead on "home rule" for southern states and aggressive protection of "Anglo-Celtic" southern "heritage." Neo-Confederates also espouse racial segregation,