

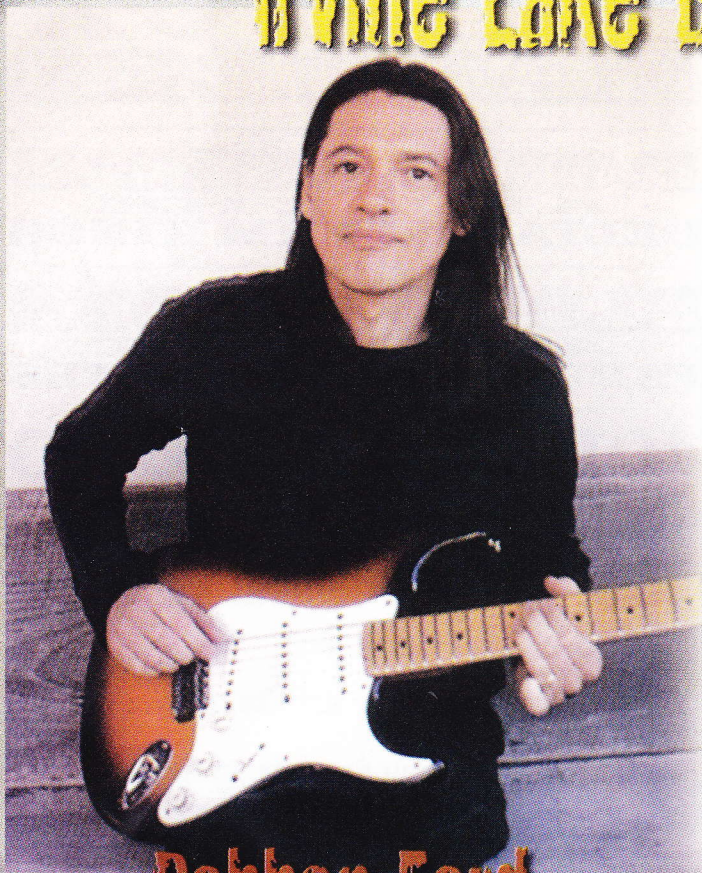
Southland

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# BLUES

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BLUES MAGAZINE SINCE 1990

*Coming to the 12th Annual*  
**Irvine Lake Blues Festival**



**Robben Ford**



**Ronnie Baker Brooks**

**The Blues Heaven Foundation**

*Keeping Willie Dixon's Dream Alive*

CD Reviews

Rod Piazza

Candy Kane

Rick Estrin

Big James

Seth Walker

## Blues Heaven Seeks Our Support to Keep Foundation Operating

It's been 25 years since the late great Willie Dixon founded the non profit Blues Heaven Foundation with its mission to promote the blues and provide scholarships, legal help, royalty recovery advice and emergency assistance to blues musicians in need. And while great gains have been made over the years, today the Foundation is in need of contributions of pro bono legal help and donations by Blues fans to continue its programs.

Willie Dixon was, perhaps, the singular most influential voice in the history of the blues. Over the course of his career, he achieved great prominence writing R & B hits such as: "Hoochie Coochie Man" for Muddy Waters, Koko Taylor's "Wang Dang Doodle," Howlin' Wolf's "Spoonful" and "Back Door Man," Little Walter's "My Babe," and the song that helped make Led Zeppelin famous, "You Shook Me," on their debut album. But while he rose to a level of success in the music business, he also experienced great injustice, as did many other blues artists, who were not paid royalties on their music.

But in 1977, all that changed when in an historic legal settlement, Dixon was granted increased publishing royalties and the gradual return of all the copyrights on his songs. In 1984, he established the Blues Heaven Foundation to help other artists properly protect their music and win



**Willie & Marie Dixon**

back their rights.

Over the next few years, Blues Heaven Foundation lobbied the City of Chicago to protect the former Chess Records building. And in 1990, as a result of its efforts, it was declared a protected Chicago Landmark. In 1993, Dixon's widow, Marie, purchased the building and donated it to the Foundation. In 1997, Blues Heaven moved into the restored building at 2120 S. Michigan Avenue, later acquiring the vacant lot next door for performances and other events.

After Willie's death in 1992, his late, daughter Shirli jumped in to carry on her father's mission. A singer, herself, Shirli brought a passion to the Foundation and a love for the Blues.

"Shirli was very diligent-

ly trying to get monies in to fund these programs in royalty recovery and copyright," says Marie. "She was a very busy person. She wanted to carry out her dad's wishes – but she died so suddenly."

In August 2003, Shirli suffered a fatal aneurism leaving behind a husband, Keith, twins Keshia and Keith Jr., and a son, David. She also left Blues Heaven without an executive director.

To help fill the void, Marie moved to Chicago to help raise her grandkids and keep the Foundation going. Her daughter, Jacqueline, also works at the Foundation, but it's been difficult to fill Shirli's shoes. Over the last six years, the Foundation has held its own with the help of blues fans' donations and volunteers to run their programs.

"We're doing okay," says Marie, who now acts as executive director. "But we need donations to help us survive and we also need lawyers who will donate their time to help artists recoup monies still owed to them.

"We also need someone to teach artists how to copyright and publish their songs. You know, we can tell people to go to the copyright website and register with the Library of Congress but that's not enough. It's not just about performing; we need to teach them the business side of the music.

Today, Blues Heaven offers just a few programs. During the summer, they hold a Blues Showcase every Thursday from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. with performances by Chicago blues artists. The shows are free to the public and occasionally feature visiting celebrities who show up to sit in.

Blues Heaven also offers "Blues in the Schools" hosted by Blues Harmonica player Dokta Rhute to teach kids appreciation for this art form.

The Foundation also offers The Muddy Waters Scholarship, a \$2,000 stipend awarded each year to a deserving, up and coming local blues artist. In the past, generous donations by Stxy guitarist James Young and singer Paul Rodgers (Queen, Bad Company) have helped keep the scholarship program alive.

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