



## D.C. MINNER: ORIGINS AND LEGACIES



**D.C. MINNER** (b. January 24, 1935 – d. May 6, 2008) by Dr. Hugh Foley

**BORN IN RENTIESVILLE, Oklahoma, January 24, 1935, D.C. Minner was the only child of Helen Pearson Minner and Clarence Minner, but was raised by his grandmother, Lura Drennan, on family land where she operated a juke joint, speak-easy, grocery, and after-hours blues club beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His family came to Rentiesville from Alabama, with four Cherokee sisters and their black husbands settling in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation which was more hospitable to mixed-marriages between American Indians and African-Americans of the period. Rentiesville was close enough to the Cherokee Nation so the sisters did not have far to go to visit their relatives. As a youngster, D.C. spent hours listening to the acoustic blues played by various traveling musicians in the club, often picking up their guitars during breaks between sets and then trying to imitate what he saw on stage. Since they turned the pegs on their instruments to get in tune, so did D.C., often breaking the strings before nervously setting the guitar back down and getting out the area quickly to avoid a scolding. As for other musical influences, Minner also remembered his grandfather making everyone be quiet at noon so they could hear the broadcasts of Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys when they had come inside for lunch from working in the fields, the first place D.C. recalled hearing horns in any music.<sup>1</sup>**

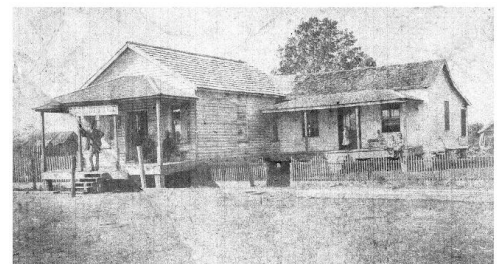


Billy Charley Lura

Billie, G'pa Charlie, Miss Lura , Grandma Lura



Young D.C. Minner



Rentiesville General Store (early 20th century)



DC and the New Breed OKC 52 - 62



in Hollywood CA late 60s – early 70s



with Selby on the road in AZ

**1950s to 1960s** After serving as an Army medic during the Korean War era where he learned to play Spanish-style guitar from fellow servicemen, he returned to Oklahoma and began playing bass for Larry Johnson and the New Breeds in Oklahoma City. Johnson and the New Breeds, with D.C. laying down the bass line, backed up well-known bluesmen O.V. Wright, Freddie King, Chuck Berry, Eddie Floyd and Bo Diddley through the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Desiring a change of artistic direction, and recognizing the country was going through some major social and cultural changes in the mid-1960s, Minner moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in California, and switched his primary instrument to guitar. While gigging around the same clubs in the Bay Area, he met SELBY who was first a competitor for work, and then a collaborator in 1976. The two married in 1979 and toured for twelve years with different drummers throughout the United States as *Blues on the Move*.

After tiring of constant life on the road, in 1988 the couple returned to Rentiesville and converted his grandmother's prohibition-era corn-whiskey hall, The Cozy Corner, into an after-hours club, THE DOWN HOME BLUES CLUB. The Minners often played until dawn after patrons came from nearby Muskogee, Checotah, and Eufalah, as well as from many rural communities in the area. The club quickly became what it had been in the first half of the 1900s, a favorite spot for after hours relaxing, socializing, dancing, and listening to blues, and rhythm and blues, played by D.C. and Selby.



PAINTING BY KEITH BIRDSONG ONHOF POSTER



CARD FOR D.C. SADLER ARTS CHILD



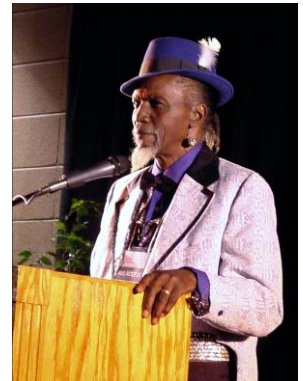
TEACHING BITS @ LOCUST GROVE ALT ED

In 1989, The Minners initiated their **BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS** program through the Oklahoma Arts Council, performing music in classrooms and educating students about blues history, form, and

instrumental techniques, as well as how to be a good team member and collaborator in a group. Additionally, children learned to express their creative ideas in a supportive environment, and communicate across generations, ethnicities, and genders by working with D.C. and Selby. For their educational efforts, the Minners won a W.C. Handy Award, and a Keeping the Blues Alive Award from the Memphis, Tennessee-based Blues Foundation.

In 1991, D.C. and Selby started the annual DUSK TIL DAWN BLUES FESTIVAL, held each Labor Day Weekend on three stages on the family property. While enduring a lot of teasing from his neighbors about being a modern-day Noah building something whose future seemed dubious, D.C. did much of the construction for the club and stages himself, with the sporadic help of various volunteers. Since then, the event has grown into one of the premier regional blues festival in the United States, featuring many artists whose authenticity often outweighs their lack of national exposure. The festival has always had a significant component aimed toward youth with many local bands, artists, and performers geared toward developing an appreciation for the blues as an art form among young people.

AS FOR D.C.'S MUSIC, his gospel-inflections and world-wise singing style enhanced his ability to communicate with audiences of all ethnic backgrounds and age groups. His subtle, yet expert, guitar work reflected 50-plus years of playing standard tunes and his original work on countless stages across the country. Along with Selby's easy, rolling bass work seasoned by backing many blues greats, such as Albert Collins, Lowell Fulson, and Hubert Sumlin, the Minners recorded and released several independent albums: *Live* (1991), *Love Lost and Found* (1997), *Morning Train* (1998), *I Can Tell You Got Good Loving* (2001), and *Full Moon Over Rentiesville*. Also in 1998, Minner was interviewed for the *The Oprah Winfrey Show* about growing up in one of Oklahoma's original twenty-eight (really closer to 50) "BLACK TOWNS", which were founded to provide opportunity for African-Americans leaving the South, as well as for those who were already here due to slavery among the five tribes from the Southeastern U.S. who removed to Indian Territory in the first half of the 1800s. D.C. and Selby taped two of their best known stage songs for Oprah in the Down Home Blues Club, "Hideaway" and "Shade Tree Mechanic", recorded for a program that aired nationally on CBS on March 6, 1998.



**INDUCTIONS:** For his contributions to Oklahoma music, education, and bringing awareness to the state's blues history, the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame inducted D.C. in 1999; As a testament to his investment in Oklahoma, Minner was the only person who lived in the state at the time of the induction. The Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame in Muskogee, Oklahoma, inducted D.C. in 2003, along with other significant Oklahoma artists such as Ronnie Dunn (of Brooks and Dunn), and D.C.'s long-time friend, Flash Terry. These accolades led Rentiesville townspeople to name the road running north and south by Minner's property as D.C. Minner Street. Just ¼ mile north of the club sits the historic HONEY SPRINGS CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD where African-Americans, Anglo-Americans, American Indians, and Mexican-Americans fought on both sides, both together and against each other on July 17, 1863. Appropriately, people of all ethnic backgrounds unite in a comfortable atmosphere under the banner of the blues each Labor Day Weekend at the festival.

Before and during his illness up to his death on May 6, 2008, at home in Rentiesville, Minner made many recordings in his Texas Road Studio in the club. Eventually, Selby Minner intends on releasing the rest of those recordings. Selby Minner continues performing, recording, and teaching the blues in Oklahoma, regionally, and nationally. She also maintains the Down Home Blues Club's as both a historic and active musical venue with a SUNDAY EVENING OPEN JAM SESSION each week ( over four years), LESSONS, THE FESTIVAL and the INDUCTIONS and coordinates celebrations for the Oklahoma Blues Hall of Fame. Founded and housed in the club by Selby and DC, the Oklahoma Blues Hall of Fame and the Dusk til Dawn Blues Festival create awareness about Oklahoma blues musicians, those who have made major contributions to the genre and those who are more unsung; keeping the music moving into the future. The non-profit is Friends of Rentiesville Blues Inc.

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D.C. believed in dreaming big (“that way if you don’t get everything you want, you will at least have something”)



**D.C.'ISM'S:** • LIVE MUSIC IS BEST IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THE GUITAR SOUNDS BETTER AT ABOUT 3 AM. THE AIR IS THICKER •

- I'D RATHER MAKE A LOUD MISTAKE - AT LEAST I KNOW I'M GOING FOR IT! •
- WE EACH ARE STANDING ON A UNIQUE SPOT IN THE UNIVERSE AND WE EACH MAKE A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION•
- I WOULD LOVE IT IF SOMEBODY WOULD OPEN UP A BLUES CLUB RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM MY BLUES CLUB. IT WOULD CREATE A SCENE, AND I WOULD GET MY SHARE•

- WHEN PLANNING AND YOU MONEY PLAN
- I'M A
- WITH ANY OTHER WHEN



YOU LIVE ON A PLANET THERE IS GOING TO BE SOME DONE. SLOW IT DOWN: P-L-A-N I-T. YOU KNOW IT IS YOUR LIFE HAVE TO MAKE A PLAN. IF IT IS YOUR PLAN, YOU GET THE FIRST WHEN IT COMES IN ...BUT IF IT IS SOMEBODY ELSES THEY GET THE REAL MONEY AND GIVE YOU THE CRUMBS• LUCKY MAN – I LOVE MY WIFE, MOTHER-IN-LAW & MY JOB! •

HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION YOU CAN DO ANYTHING OTHER HUMAN BEING HAS EVER DONE AND SOME THINGS NO HUMAN HAS EVER DONE. • THE ONE THING YOU CAN CHANGE YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING ELSE IS YOUR ATTITUDE•

