For the love of the blues  Published: May 08, 2009 09:02 pm            - RentiesvilleBy Dave Ruthenberg, Columnist (from Detroit originally)
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**Recently I have found myself feeling a little homesick for the blues**, and, let’s be honest, while Enid has a lot to offer, blues is not among those offerings. Live music in Enid is somewhat akin to the punch line in the “Blues Brothers” movie when Jake and Elwood stroll into Bob’s Country Bunker Saloon and the bartender tells the boys not to worry because the bar has “both” kinds of music: “Country AND Western.”

So, off I went in search of some genuine live blues in Oklahoma and let me tell you, the pickings were rather scarce. So imagine my relief when I found a juke joint in a little town called Rentiesville. Better yet, the club was bringing in Lil Ed & The Blues Imperials, one of the top blues acts out of Chicago. But a pretty cool thing happened along the blues highway; I not only found some great blues but also found a genuine love story.

Rentiesville is a small community about 75 miles southeast of Tulsa. It’s so small it does not even have its own post office, but it is the epicenter of Oklahoma blues. It’s also one of only 13 towns remaining out of an original 40-50 communities that were founded in eastern Oklahoma by freed black slaves following the civil war with an eye toward making the area the nation’s first all-black state. Obviously that never materialized.

Rentiesville also is the home to D.C. Minner’s Down Home Blues Club which is run by Selby Minner, the charming, engaging and talented widow of the late D.C. Minner, a member of the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame who, aside from being an established blues star in his own right, played alongside musical greats like Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Freddie King. And for Rhode Island native Selby Minner, who has called Rentiesville home since 1988 when she and D.C. moved here after spending several years touring the nation, with a heavy emphasis on the West Coast, this has become a true labor of love in every sense of the word.

Together, D.C. and Selby (they married in 1979 after meeting in California) became the first couple of Oklahoma blues when they made the decision to renovate the property where D.C.’s grandmother operated a “corn whiskey house” several decades earlier. “It was a place with a jukebox and where people came for entertainment and bootleg whiskey,” Selby told me while taking me through a tour of the blues club. “They also made and sold choc beer,” which I learned was good old-fashioned home-brew.

The blues-loving couple completed renovating the house a few years after moving back home. “D.C. did all the work by hand,” Selby explained. But it didn’t end there.

Together, the Minners established the Oklahoma Blues Hall of Fame in 2004. “That’s what D.C. wanted — he understood he wasn’t going to get wealthy playing blues, but at the end of the day what made it worthwhile was the recognition by his peers. We wanted to share that.”

The couple went on to organize the three-day outdoor “Dusk Til Dawn” blues festival which takes place every Labor Day weekend on the grounds of the blues club and, in 1999, also were recipients of the prestigious “Keeping the Blues Alive” award.

Selby continues to do more than her part in “keeping the blues alive” through the “Blues in the Schools” program as well as offering young people a place to perform on the first Friday of each month (the club is only open the first weekend of each month), with a coffeehouse atmosphere where the bar is closed off and young people are invited to perform during their “Java Jam.” (NB: the club will also be open EVERY Sunday for jam sessions 2 pm - 2 am beginning June 7th)
On this night, Selby’s band, “Blues On The Move” opened up for Lil Ed and Selby’s engaging stage presence, on guitar and vocals, demonstrated how her love of the blues, and for D.C., (who passed away last year at the age of 73) clearly keeps her going. She sang some of D.C.’s original material — apparently there is a veritable treasure trove of unpublished D.C. Minner-penned tunes — and then later jammed onstage with the headliner.

This funky little juke joint seemingly in the middle of nowhere is not, however, just about the blues. It stands as a living, thriving testament to the enduring bond between Selby and D.C. that remains today. You can see it in her eyes and feel it in her words when she speaks about D.C. and, most of all, you feel it in her music.

**We should all be so lucky to have such a passion and purpose in life. Those of us who love the blues are fortunate to have Selby Minner.
CONTACT Selby: 918-855-0978** **dcminner@windstream.net****,** [**www.dcminnerblues.com**](http://www.dcminnerblues.com) **Bill Wax at XM Radio’s Bluesville responds:** "Dear Selby – This is so sweet and wonderful.  It is also very deserved.  I hope it brings you many patrons.Thanks for all you do for the the blues."