

Gary Nance

Mr. Gary Nance's interest in music began at a young age. His first attempts to play music were at 10 years of age learning a few chords on acoustic guitar. His interest grew and he was gifted his first bass guitar at age 14 for Christmas of 1972. Within just a year he started playing bass with bands in the Jefferson County area at just 15 years old. At 16, he started playing gigs with a fellow by the name of Woody Jones and recalls taking off two weeks of school his senior year to play with Mr. Jones in Effingham, Illinois. Young Nance thought he had made it to the big time so while Nance enjoyed his time at Northwest High School, he graduated at Christmas of his senior year to free up time to follow his music career. By choosing music, he gave up his Senior season of high school baseball which he sometimes regrets; however, much success awaited him in the music industry.

After graduation, Nance made connections and played with a number of local bands. He joined Ron Mabry's band and played several nights a week at a club called the Western Lounge in Saint Charles, Missouri. Music was now his living and he even moved to Decatur, Illinois, to play Bill Whyte's band. After two years, he joined Zane Grey and then later the Russ Bono band, then The Blast! All were very popular bands around the St. Louis area as Gary continued to learn and develop his skills and make connections in the music industry.

Gary moved to Nashville in 1995 where he shared the stage in smaller venues playing behind many artists such as Wade Hayes, John Rich, Marty Raybon (Shenandoah), Darryl Singletary, Kelly Pickler, Eric Church, Freddie Weller, Shelly West, David Frizzell, as well as songwriting legend Dean Dillon. His career continued to prosper and he shared stages in much bigger venues playing bass for Woody Lee, Johnny Rodriguez, Tanya Tucker, Jamey Johnson, and Colt Ford (as his band leader)!

Since moving to Nashville, he has been fortunate to slip into the recording session world. He recorded with Tanya Tucker and the infamous Jordanairens on her version of "The Old Rugged Cross." He also had the honor of playing on the songwriting legend Billy Don Burns Grammy nominated album, "Nights When I'm Sober" (portrait of a Honky Tonk Singer). He later played on his follow up CD "A Graveyard In Montgomery." He is also proud to have played on Waylon Payne's project which included him and Debra Allen creating a remake of her old song "Baby I Lied". Waylon Payne is the musician/actor who portrayed Jerry Lee Lewis in the popular movie *I Walk The Line* as well as the infamous Nashville guitar player Hank Garland in a movie called *Crazy*.

Gary Nance is a small-town Northwest graduate who struck out on his own and "made it" in the music industry. He has played on over 200 demos, not to mention on numerous aspiring to be artist's project albums. Gary is sincere and humble in all he does. He has returned to Northwest through the years and donated his time and skills to play for a local audience to raise scholarship funds. Gary Nance is well-deserving of the title "Distinguished Alumni."