



*Distinguished Alumni - 2025*

**Rebecca (Bye) Thompson**

**Class 1970**

Becky's singing career actually started when she was three years old, singing hymns for the church for Sunday School and the Ladies Aid meetings. She became serious at 14 when her father brought home her first guitar. In Albert Lea, her first performance was at the 9th grade talent show at Brookside Junior High. She did all the Tiger's Roars, was in a folk group as a sophomore and played at church, Edgewater Park, the Backdoor Coffee House, and Lea College.

After High School, Becky lived in Twin Cities starting her career as a folk singer, (Coffee house Extempore on West Bank and the Whole Coffeehouse at the U of M.), playing colleges, evening spots like the Camelot and ski resorts. She also played Blue Grass and joined Ted Unseth's Classic 20's Jazz Band, The Wolverines. With Becky as vocalist, The Wolverines were able to reprise the great songs of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey to add to their repertoire of preserved 1920s Jazz. The Wolverines recorded an Album in 1974 which featured Becky singing "Misery Blues," originally recorded by Ma Rainey in 1927. Becky and The Wolverines performed in the 2nd show ever with Garrison Keillor.

Becky performed on Prairie Home Companion from 1974 to 1984 doing five shows or more as a solo artist, with her trio, and with her full band. She was privileged to work with such notables as Chet Atkins, John Hartford, Ernest Tubb, Vassar Clements, and others. Becky was on board when Garrison's Show went national to a packed crowd at Northrup Auditorium. Her last appearance on the Prairie Home Companion was at the 35th anniversary of the show in 2009.

In the Spring of 1975, Becky joined the Sky Blue Water Boys. The band became the popular house band at the Minneapolis Downtown Bar. They quickly gained a following and were soon the opening act for Emmy Lou Harris, Melissa Manchester, Don Williams, Ricky Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker and many others.

In the early 1980's, Becky joined the band Minnesota Flats, which won Minnesota Music Awards for best country band and best country vocalist. Later, with producer Willie Murphy, Becky recorded her own album, "After All This Time." This album featured many of Becky's own compositions. It won three Minnesota Music Awards and led to an appearance in 1989 at one of the first South by Southwest festivals in Austin Texas.

In 1982, Becky was one of the "Women Who Cook" at the Guthrie, October 4. Becky was one of the best known performers of this program which included many notable Minnesota artists. This was one of several such programs that featured women artists of Minnesota.

In 2005 Becky and her band the Sky Blue Water Boys were inducted in the Minnesota Rock and Country Hall of Fame.

Becky has participated in The Big Island Rendezvous for 10 years or more, as well as performing in countless shows and benefits for fellow musicians such as Peter Ostroushko, and Bill Hinkley.