

Brockton, Mass.

October 4, 1975

Dear Don,

I got your letter, and I thank you for it. In writing my book, I was exposed enough to the world of show-biz to know that I wouldn't want to be part of it, but I retain enough innocence or naivete to find it a thrill to get a letter from someone like you.

In December 1971, I had just arrived in Lubbock, Texas and was beginning to work on a draft of my book. The first thing I did was to write a sort of introduction – a justification for writing seriously about a rock 'n' roll singer from the Fifties. After all, the prevailing orthodoxy was that early rock 'n' roll was primitive and meaningless, and that things had been improving ever since. If you've even seen collections of articles by critics put out around then, that's the attitude that emerges. But I know I didn't feel that way, and I knew that most of my friends had turned off their radios by '67 and were waiting for music that you could listen to and dance to and understand. They went to oldies record hops and Sha-Na-Na shows to enjoy the music, not to make fun of it. But it seemed like the media couldn't see that, and so I found myself writing an apology or defense for what I was doing. Then one day, I heard your song, and was absolutely floored. In a couple of lines, you had poetically made a point that I had spent fifteen pages trying to express. And by the time I was ready to approach publishers, I could scrap that introduction – it was unnecessary, because that “progressive” view that rock 'n' roll was always improving was no longer much accepted. Maybe you were just the right person in the right place, but that's what history's all about.

Like you, the most pleasure I will get from my work will be the people who get exposed to Buddy Holly through my efforts. Also, there's the satisfaction of doing something that a lot of fans have been hoping would get done for some time.

It took a long time to get the book published. I sent it to a lot of big publishers, but their attitude was, “Who's Buddy Holly?” Or more gently, they didn't think there was a market for it. One reader put it more bluntly (in a memo I wasn't supposed to see): “Rock fans don't read.” So that is why I wound up with Bowling Green Popular Press. The problem now is that it's a small publisher, and I'm not sure they can distribute or promote it adequately. (Indeed, my initial reaction when I got your letter was, “How did he find out about the book?” Because if there have been any reviews, I haven't seen them.) It's not important to me that the book “sell” - I was lucky to have the opportunity to meet the people I did and learn as much about Buddy as I did, and that's all I need. But I do hope that the book gets some exposure so that Buddy's fans will know that it exists. And I'm worried that might not happen. Writing the book was easy compared to all this stuff. (In England, of course, things have been easier. The book's been put out in paperback there and has sold 10,000 copies in a month, and has had all sorts of publicity on radio and in magazines.)

Right now, I'm working as an environmental planner. As you can probably understand, I didn't write the book in order to become a "professional" writer – I never felt the need for someone's stamp of approval, and getting a book published didn't make me a better writer. I just did it because no one else had, and it was about time. So now I'm writing reports on local groundwater supplies, and if it's not so dramatic, it has its own satisfactions.

I almost got to see you perform in Lubbock, just before I left there in March 1972, you were due to come in for a show, but then you were ill and the show was cancelled. I live about 25 miles from Boston now, so if you're ever going to be there, let me know. I'd like to meet you sometime.

Once again, thanks for writing. I like your music, and as much as that, I like your attitude towards "stardom" and your refusal to let people make something of you that you didn't want to be. Being true to yourself is such a simple notion, but the pressures to do otherwise are immense. That's one thing I'd like to have people learn from my book on Holly – that he grew with success, but was not destroyed by it. He had a sense of personal responsibility, and he wasn't scared off by how tough it was going to be to do what he wanted to do.

Thanks for singing our song, and best wishes in all you do.

Sincerely,
John Goldrosen

P.S. If it wasn't clear from the book: MCA put out that terrible set after taking it away from Boylan – it was completely contrary to everything he wanted to do. So blame it on some ignorant big exec's, not Boylan.

Please find a copy of the original letter below:

DROCKTON, MASS. 02401
October 4, 1975

Dear Don,

I got your letter, and I thank you for it. In writing my book, I was exposed enough to the world of show-biz to know that I wouldn't want to be part of it, but I retain enough innocence or naivete to find it a thrill to get a letter from someone like you.

In December 1971, I had just arrived in Lubbock, Texas and was beginning to work on a draft of my book. The first thing I did was to write a sort of introduction—a justification for writing seriously about a rock'n'roll singer from the fifties. After all, the prevailing orthodoxy was that early rock'n'roll was primitive and meaningless, and that things had been improving ever since. If you've even seen collections of articles by critics put out around then, that's the attitude that emerges. But I knew I didn't feel that way, and I knew that most of my friends had turned off their radios by '67 and were waiting for music that you could listen to and dance to and understand. They went to oldies record hops and Shs-Na-Na shows to enjoy the music, not to make fun of it. But it seemed like the media couldn't see that, and so I found myself writing an apology or defense for what I was doing. Then one day, I heard your song, and was absolutely floored. In a couple of lines, you had poetically made a point that I had spent fifteen pages trying to express. And by the time I was ready to approach publishers, I could scrap that introduction—it was unnecessary, because that "progressive" view that rock'n'roll was always improving was no longer much accepted. Maybe you were just the right person in the right place, but that's what history's all about.

Like you, the most pleasure I will get from my work will be the people who get exposed to Buddy Holly through my efforts. Also, there's the satisfaction of doing something that a lot of fans having been hoping would get done for some time.

It took a long time to get the book published. I sent it to a lot of big publishers, but their attitude was, "Who's Buddy Holly?" Or more gently, they didn't think there was a market for it. One reader put it more bluntly (in a memo I wasn't supposed to see): "Rock fans don't read." So that is why I wound up with Bowling Green Popular Press. The problem now is that it's a small publisher, and I'm not sure they can distribute or promote it adequately. (Indeed, my initial reaction when I got your letter was, "How did he find out about the book?" Because if there have been any reviews, I haven't seen them.) It's not important to me that

the book "sell"--I was lucky to have the opportunity to meet the people I did and learn as much about Buddy as I did, and that's all I need. But I do hope that the book gets some exposure so that Buddy's fans will know that it exists. And I'm worried that might not happen. Writing the book was easy compared to all this stuff. (In England, of course, things have been easier. The book's been put out in paperback there and has sold 10,000 copies in a month, and has had all sorts of publicity on radio and in magazines.)

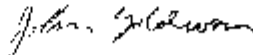
Right now, I'm working as an environmental planner. As you can probably understand, I didn't write the book in order to become a "professional" writer—I never felt the need for someone's stamp of approval, and getting a book published didn't make me a better writer. I just did it because no one else had, and it was about time. So now I'm writing reports on local groundwater supplies, and if it's not so dramatic, it has its own satisfactions.

I almost got to see you perform in Lubbock; just before I left there in March 1972, you were due to come in for a show, but then you were ill and the show was cancelled. I live about 25 miles from Boston now, so if you're ever going to be there, let me know. I'd like to meet you sometime.

Once again, thanks for writing. I like your music, and as much as that, I like your attitude towards "stardom" and your refusal to let people make something of you that you didn't want to be. Being true to yourself is such a simple notion, but the pressures to do otherwise are immense. ~~That's~~ That's one thing I'd like to have people learn from my book on Holly—that he grew with success, but was not destroyed by it. He had a sense of personal responsibility, and he wasn't scared off by how tough it was going to be to do what he wanted to do.

Thanks for singing our song, and best wishes in all you do.

Sincerely,



John Goldrosen

P.S. If it wasn't clear from the book: RCA put out that terrible set after taking it away from Boylan—it was completely contrary to everything he wanted to do. So blame it on some ignorant big exec's, not Boylan.