



# The Gathering

*Collings*  
NEWSLETTER

## Newsletter Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Gathering Newsletter.

Every year on a weekend in November around Veterans Day a bunch of us Collings guitar / mandolin / ukulele owners and fans get together in the Austin, Texas area to partake in a weekend of good music, good food, and of course the Collings Factory tour. This year The Gathering is Thursday, November 10 through Saturday, November 12. Although the official Gathering is the previously mentioned dates, many come several days early and / or hang around several days afterward to enjoy the live music, open mics, jams, great food, and everything else the Austin area / Hill Country has to offer. This year most of the Gathering festivities will be taking place in historic downtown Dripping Springs, the new location for Hill Country Guitars.

If you have not had a chance yet, be sure to take a look at the new Colling Guitars website. The new site looks sharp and is very easy to navigate.

On a somber note, as most of you probably know, renowned guitarist Pete Huttlinger passed away on January 15, 2016. Not only was he a great influence for many guitar players, but to many as a human being. Pete overcame what many would consider insurmountable health related obstacles and continued to live his life to the fullest and play guitar. He will always be remembered as a true inspiration for all. He performed at the Austin Hill Country Guitars location last year at the Gathering. A definite highlight of last year's Gathering. Many Thanks to Dwain at Hill Country Guitars for scheduling Pete to perform.

Finally, this is my first attempt at something like this, being a technical writer, I'm more accustomed to much more instructional type writing. Occasionally I might ask folks to submit some material for future newsletters. Although the general scope will be the Gathering and Collings musical instruments, occasional concert / music reviews of artists who play Collings instruments will also be considered.

Although this newsletter is going to be short, it is full of great information. The first brief piece following this introduction is a very informative article about the evolution of the T-Series from Gregg White at Collings Guitars. That will be followed by an introduction to the Gathering and the Hill Country area by David Ely. Following that will be a schedule of Gathering events, and last but not least, an insiders piece about the Gathering from Norm Draper. Lots of great reading. Well enough of my rambling. Enjoy.

-Written by Steven Brenner



## The Evolution of the T-Series

For us here at Collings, one of the most exciting things to happen this year has been seeing the enthusiastic response to our new Traditional “T-Series” guitars! The T-Series was really born of Bill Collings’ dedication to listening. Bill and other key players here at the shop are always evaluating, experimenting, and having conversations with respected artists about what our guitars do for them. Sometimes the feedback of our artists points us in entirely new directions, and sometimes there is a spooky synchronicity between the directions we’re exploring and the insights of accomplished players. This was exactly what happened when Bill Collings began having conversations with virtuoso guitarist Julian Lage.

***“The first time I made a guitar I pretended I knew everything....but I was always listening. If you don’t listen then you’re going to learn nothing.”  
–Bill Collings***

Tone and musicality are subjective and often difficult to communicate about, however as Julian says, “Bill has an amazing way of interacting with players. His language is his own and when he interacts with musicians I think he really is able to open his whole world up to the way we as players talk about these things, and he can take that and translate that into his own language, which is key.”

Inspired by the sounds of the new Waterloo line of guitars, Bill felt that there were different tones and responses that could be explored in the Collings line, “Really the more solid we can make that midrange, the less overtones in it, the more fundamental popping out, the more exciting that can be to play”. Julian was also drawn to this strong fundamental sound and provided insights about what it could do for a player musically, “I’ve been on the hunt for a new acoustic guitar that has a lot of the qualities that I cherish so much about 1930’s guitars. There’s a directness, there’s an honesty to those guitars that really rewards when I play my strongest, and when I don’t they have a way of saying ‘that’s all you got?’”. The result of their conversations was the new T-Series, and much of the T-Series aesthetic and sound comes from

looking back to what made “Golden Era” 1930’s guitars work so well.

One of the most interesting aspects of the T-Series has been seeing the popularity of orders for torrefied tops. Orders have been split roughly half and half for torrefied vs. standard tops. For those unfamiliar, torrefication is a thermal curing process that both lightens the mass of a top and stiffens its structure, in addition to creating a warm amber “vintage” patina. Tonally we have found that torrefied tops are very responsive, often quickening and adding brightness to the initial note attack. For those looking for extra warmth and bass response a standard top may be the best choice, but both torrefied and standard tops have tonal benefits and are a matter of taste, as has been shown by the even distribution of orders!

Many players have asked us about the possibility of getting an authentic “vintage” sound from torrefied wood. While torrefication does bring wood structurally closer to its aged state, there are many elements of tone that come from the physical shape that a top takes on under string tension and the way that vibrations alter the structure of the wood over many years. While a torrefied top may not sound like a fully developed vintage guitar, it does open up new possibilities in tone and response. The history of guitar-making and design is a long one, but we’ve learned that there are always new techniques and approaches to be taken. Guided by our ears and our players, we look forward to further exploring the well-loved sounds of the past to create the best instruments we can build for the future.

-Written by Gregg White / Collings Guitars



## The Gathering / Hill Country Introduction

If you're reading this little newsletter, chances are good you've been to one of the several forums we frequent. You can see that those of us who are regulars are passionate, and I hope we appear friendly.

But flipping through the posts, you might think we resemble a bunch of boozy guitar players. True indeed for some of us, but I do believe we offer a little more depth of character than that. Besides, the area doesn't just offer music, guitars and cold beers.

First, you need to understand that the weather in Texas in November is STELLAR. Weather predictions being what they are, it could be wet, cold, dry or warm. But generally, the weather in central Texas in November is as good as it gets anywhere, any season. Usually sunny and dry, warm in the daytimes and cool to chilly in the evenings, with clear skies and endless stars at night.

So bring your families to Wimberley this year! You may be dedicated to a jam or a guitar store, but we have theme parks in San Antonio (50 miles south, which in Texas terms is a day trip), art, science and children's museums in both San Antonio and Austin, a water park (Schlitterbahn) in New Braunfels, outdoor recreation all over the rivers in the area (canoeing and tubing being the most popular), and with my recognized bias in mind, there's some pretty interesting history everywhere you turn around. For those so inclined, there's popular shopping locations (most notoriously, outlet malls) very close as well, as well as interesting arts and craft boutiques from Dripping Springs to Wimberley to Gruene. Several of the guys have brought their better halves in the past, and there's talk about the girls organizing their own day trips while we're sniffing sound holes. A winery tour of the hill country/Fredericksburg area has been mentioned ... to get away from the male bias, we've had ladies join us for the guitar-obsessed portions of the weekend as well, and we're all better off for their presence.

So if you prefer to travel with the family, there's plenty of entertainment for everyone with a rental car and Google can easily get to, and you can get in touch in person with a fine group of people that I count myself lucky to call life-long friends.

So get some new strings on your guitars and your trips booked!

-Written by David Ely

## The Gathering Schedule of Events:

### Thursday, November 10

6:30 PM – 11:00 PM: Country, Bluegrass, Folk Jam at Hill Country Guitars. Refreshments and light snacks will be provided. Although The Gathering Festivities officially start Friday, November 11, what better way to get together with other folks attending than to get together and get in some playing.

### Friday, November 11

10:00 AM: Lunch at the Salt Lick, followed by the factory tour at Collings.

7:00 PM – 11:00 PM Friday, November 11: Open mic at the Barber Shop Bar. A perfect laid back evening of good beer and tunes. An evening not to be missed.

### Saturday, November 12

11:00 AM – 4:00 PM: Hill Country Guitars. Musical performances from 16-year old guitar prodigy Emma Moseley, bluesman Sam Shepherd, and singer / songwriter Jim Halfpenny. The folks at Hill Country Guitars are great hosts. This will be a great day of good food, great performances, and possibly a bit of jamming (can't get enough of that). Food and refreshments will be served at the Barber Shop.

6:30 PM – 12:00 PM (or when everyone tires out) Saturday, November 12: Jam / Supper at the Wimberley Inn. The Saturday night grand finale for the Gathering. Again, great food, beer, and picking. Not an evening to be missed. This will be the last time Dan and Denese Washam will host the Saturday evening jam at the Wimberley Inn. Let's make it truly an evening to remember.

### Sunday, November 13

3:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Jam / get together for beers at the Barber Shop Bar.

Please note schedules and times can change. We will post all changes on the Hill Country Guitars Facebook page, the Collings Forum Gathering Facebook page, and on the Collings Forum site.



## A Word from Norm Draper

"You ask me what I like about Texas....."

That's a line from a song by the great Gary P. Nunn, and it's what I say to people in New Jersey who wonder just what it is I see in Texas that gets me down here twice a year. What is it that draws me from the Garden State all the way to the Lone Star State? Plenty!

My biannual tour of Texas is actually limited to sort of a semi-straight line between Austin (keep it weird!) and Luckenbach (where everybody's somebody!). Right in the middle of that line is Spicewood, home of the world famous (!) Poodie's Hilltop, and somewhere in that General area is Collings Guitars. Looking at the map, sort of a bit south of the line is Dripping Springs, with Hill Country Guitars and the Barber Shop. More on all this in the moment. By the way, if you're thinking of using the preceding description as any sort of an area map, don't. I'm directionally challenged.... Without my Garmin, I'm lost!!

I've been doing this Austin/Spicewood/Dripping Springs/Luckenbach run for thirteen years now, and every year I've had a Collings guitar (or two... or three!) in tow. I believe it was seven years ago I heard about this thing called The Collings Gathering.... I thought, well damn... I like Collings guitars (a lot) and I like gatherings, and I like Austin, so let's give this thing a shot! Through the ensuing years, The Gathering has become one the high points on my fall calendar. I've made real and lasting friends, got to hang out and listen to some great music, and have an occasional beer while doing all of this!

There's something of an organizing principle to The Gathering. Some of us get here a bit early... I've been since October 1, but even I recognize that's a bit excessive.... Anyway, for the early arrivals, there's plenty to do. There's more live music in Austin in the surrounding area than you could ever possibly take in.

The real festivities actually begin on Thursday at the Barber Shop, a bar that was once a... Yep, a barber shop. They have a selection of beer and wine to please any palate.... Within walking distance is Hill Country Guitars, an establishment where guitar dreams really do come true. Dwain Cornelius, a hale fellow well met, is the proprietor, and he also happens to be one of the prime movers behind this entire event.

On Friday everyone meets up at the Salt Lick, one of Austin's more famous barbecue places. We sit outside for a bit, swapping stories (a LOT of that goes on through the weekend! LOL!), and doing what I call guitar sniffing. Nearly every size and shape of Collings guitar will be there for your perusal. Bring your guitar to the Salt Lick..... It's about then that the advance team from Collings shows up, led by the man himself, Bill Collings. To say Bill is a character is to understate the case, bit as the old rock and roll song said, to know him is to love him! And there's Steve McCreary, about as nice a man as you are ever likely to meet anywhere.

And there are the people who show up every year.... I'm not going to mention names, mainly because I'll forget someone, but folks show up from far and wide.... The east coast, the west coast, we even allow Canadians into the country! It turns out that Collings owners are much like their guitars: works of art! Great people, wonderful conversationalists, and playing levels that extend from three chord wonders (me) to professional level. And there's no ego bullshit... Everyone plays, everyone is appreciated.

I'm sitting in the Barber Shop. It's four in the afternoon. I'm finally knocking this out.... Well, I'm not sure what it is, an introduction to the event, a mental ramble about why I come to Texas and The Gathering..... There's a singer/songwriter festival going on as I type.... I am in seventh heaven. Acoustic music at a very high level, great beer, Hill Country Guitars across the street, and I'm writing about one of my favorite events. Life is very, very good....

So.... If you're coming to The Gathering, welcome! If you are thinking about it, stop the thinking and get here! Grab your guitar and get down here!!

-Written by Norm Draper

Thank You Norm for going above and beyond to write such a great piece. I asked for just five or six paragraphs and you wrote an excellent in depth insider perspective to The Gathering. Many Thanks.  
- Steven Brenner



## Final Notes & Thanks

I owe many folks a big Thank You for helping make The Gathering Newsletter possible. I would have never been able to complete this without their help. So here it is.

Written contributors:

David Ely, Norm Draper, and Gregg White. For submitting all the great writing for this newsletter.

Graphics contributors:

Graphics guru Nancy Vala (for the great looking instrument line drawings and help with the title page header). Alex Rueb at Collings Guitars for the T-Series photo

Advice and guidance (without these folks the newsletter would not have been possible): Dwain Cornelius, Alex Rueb, Dave Niemeyer, Norm Draper, Jim Kelly, and David Ely.

Editing assistance:

Dwain Cornelius, Dave Niemeyer, David Ely, and Alex Rueb.

And to all the folks who have made The Gathering the event it has become:

Bill Collings, Steve McCreary, and the rest of the Collings employees. Without Collings Guitars there would be no Gathering.

Dwain Cornelius and the rest of the gang at Hill Country Guitars for the hospitality.

Dan and Denese Washam at The Wimberley Inn for providing great lodging accommodations and a place to jam on Saturday night of The Gathering.

Dave Niemeyer for providing the Barber Shop as a place to meet, jam, perform, and enjoy a couple cold beers.

And last but not least, to Jim Kelly who has been a driving force from almost the very beginning behind The Gathering through all these years.



## Links

Collings Guitars

<http://www.collingsguitars.com/>

Hill Country Guitars

<http://www.hillcountryguitars.com/>

Here is a cool site for folks who are coming early or sticking around a bit afterwards to check out. This is a great resource for what is going on around Austin.  
<http://do512.com/>

The ABGB (Austin Beer Garden Brewery) Great food, beer, and musical performance throughout the week. Both happy hour and evening performances.  
<http://theabgb.com/>

The Continental Club. Yes that legendary Continental Club. Performances daily, quite often starting at happy hour and going into the late evening hours.  
<http://continentalclub.com/#intro>

Luckenbach. Great place for music, including picking circles that are held daily throughout the entire week.  
<http://www.luckenbachtexas.com/>

Mercer Street Dancehall. Had to include this one. It is just steps from the Barber Shop and Hill Country Guitars.  
<http://mercerstretdancehall.com/>

Poodie's Roadhouse. Great music throughout the week. Both national and local performers.  
<http://www.poodies.net/>

This is far from being an exhaustive list. Best advice, just get in the car and get out there and explore.

