

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

Official Publication of the
CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 1, No. 5

January-February 1976



THE CAFFREY FAMILY
Tom, Patty, Jimmy, Brenda

WHO'S WHO IN THE CBA.

The California Bluegrass Association, founded in 1975 by Carl Pagter, is dedicated to the furtherance of Bluegrass, Gospel, and Old-Time Music. Membership in the Association costs \$7.50 per person per year; information on family memberships is available on the application form on the last page of this issue. Each member family is entitled to receive a copy of each BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN newsletter without charge and to reduced admission charges to all CBA activities. Direct all membership applications and inquiries to the California Bluegrass Association, P.O. Box 11287, San Francisco, Ca. 94101. Officers and Directors of the CBA are listed below; (*) designates member of the Board of Directors.

President

Steve de Haas (*)
903 W. 3rd Street
Benicia, Ca. 94510
(707) 745-4683

Activities Vice-President

Jack Sadler (*)
19150 Overlook Road
Los Gatos, Ca. 95030
(408) 354-9359

Membership Vice-President

Jay Quesenberry (*)
1780 Via Flores
San Jose, Ca. 95132
(408) 262-8083

Secretary

Carol Masters (*)
1245 Crompton Road
Redwood City, Ca. 94061
(415) 365-0198

Treasurer

Ed Pagter
967 Perreira Drive
Santa Clara, Ca. 95051
(408) 296-3123

Editor

Burney Garelick
357½ Valley Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94131
(415) 282-5833

Assistant Editor

John Berg
467 Yosemite Avenue
Mountain View, Ca. 94041
(415) 964-5531

Roscoe Keithley (*)
3633 - 57th Street
Sacramento, Ca. 95820
(916) 452-2467

Keith Little (*)

8174 Center Parkway
Sacramento, Ca. 95823
(916) 392-4546 (school address)
(home address) Georgetown, Ca.

John Murphy (*)

2151 Old Oakland Road, Space 229
San Jose, Ca. 95120

Ray Edlund (*)

1000 Elbert Street
Oakland, Ca. 94602
(415) 530-8887

Art/Publicity Director

Lars Bourne
469 Savstrom Way
San Jose, Ca. 95111
(408) 227-4640
(408) 289-5502

Al Knoth (*)

P.O. Box 212, Rt. 6
Sonora, Ca. 95370

ABOUT THE COVER

The photo, courtesy of The Caffrey Family, was taken during a performance at the Mare Island Credit Union Meeting, near Vallejo, early in 1975. For more about the Caffreys, see the following pages.



BLUEGRASS BENEFIT
for
THE CAFFREY FAMILY



Sunday, January 11, 1976
\$5.00 donation
1:00 - 7:00

First Congregational Church
432 Mason Street (at Post)
San Francisco

The occasion of the Bluegrass Benefit for The Caffrey Family is not a happy one. Mrs. Caffrey has been critically ill for an extended period of time. She has, in fact, been hospitalized at the University of California medical complex in San Francisco for a large part of 1975. Naturally, the cost of hospitalization and medical care has accumulated to staggering proportions. The California Bluegrass Association--dedicated not only to the music, but to the security and well-being of the people who play it--is eager to do its part to help defray some of these costs.

To this end, the CBA (with the assistance and dedication of Paul Shelasky) has planned an exciting Sunday afternoon of superb bluegrass entertainment. Of course The Caffrey Family will be the featured attraction. Other bands anxious to give their time and talent include practically the entire bluegrass community of northern California. Listed in alphabetical order, they are: the Arkansas Sheiks, the Bear Creek Boys, Daydreamers Ball, Full Kentucky Load, the Good Ol' Persons, High Country, the New Tonto Basin Boys, Ray Park and Friends, South Loomis Quickstep, Sweetwater, and A Touch of Grass.

In order to make The Caffrey Family Bluegrass Benefit one hundred percent successful, the CBA needs you. So, don't make any other plans for Sunday, January 11, 1976, and join us for an unforgettable afternoon of bluegrass that will benefit a very deserving family. We can't think of a better way to start off the new year.

AND NOW---THE CAFFREY FAMILY. . .

It is difficult to believe that The Caffrey Family has been performing professionally for only about three years. That is not a very long time in which to develop and polish a distinct style, to play a wide variety of northern California functions, to win contests, to make three highly successful eastern tours, and to record an album. Since that time four or five years ago when Patty and Jimmy hauled out their dad's dusty dobro and insisted he play something, the Caffreys have indeed been a busy family.

We in the Bay Area are fortunate to be able to claim this fine country and bluegrass band. However, it must be emphasized that the term "country" refers to the older, early Grand Ole Opry of the 40's, before all the electronic gadgetry and Chet Atkins' string sections; the Caffreys play "hillbilly" country music, after Roy Acuff and Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper. Even their bluegrass is not the highly stylized performance of most traditional bluegrass bands. Their music, as Geoff Berne, their occasional bass player and former manager, wrote in the July issue of Pickin', "is performed by singers, not songs performed by pickers."

Tom and his children--twenty year old Patty, eighteen year old Jimmy, and fourteen year old Brenda--harmonize together naturally, and the effect is spontaneous and sincere. Their singing has that special blend rarely attained by non-family groups. But perhaps it is young Brenda whose

voice is most incredible. Tom discovered her singing for her own pleasure on a backyard swing and immediately put her to work, so that in 1973 she began to play with the band. Brenda has been known to mesmerize audiences with her version of Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors." Other often requested songs include "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "Muleskinner Blues."

Instrumentally, the four-piece band is based upon Tom's dobro, which enhances the music like another voice in the group. The children, having learned their instruments from their dad, are all quite versatile. Patty plays guitar, mandolin, and bass; Jimmy plays guitar, mandolin, and banjo; and Brenda plays both acoustic and electric bass, guitar, and mandolin. In addition, Tom is said to be a good fiddler, and Brenda is currently working on that difficult instrument.

In these days of the advent of "newgrass," the Caffrey's music has been called "oldgrass," a not inaccurate description. But however you define it, the fact remains that their music is vital, warm, and genuine. This is apparent in their live performances and most probably on there soon-to-be-available first album, COUNTRY THOUGHTS BY THE CAFFREY FAMILY.

In their publicity brochure, the Caffreys are introduced as "Arkansas Bluegrass Music from San Francisco." This seems as unlikely a combination as the two week engagement they played at The Boarding House, in San Francisco in 1974, with uptown, social satirist David Steinberg. But the combination at The Boarding House worked out well, and the Caffreys more than likely gained a whole new set of fans. Of course this didn't happen by magic; the Caffreys have great respect for every audience they play for, and they listen for what songs get the

greatest response--solos, duets, trios, instrumentals--and they give the audience what it prefers, even if it means changing a pre-established set. They are both flexible and confident in their musicianship.

The Arkansas-San Francisco combination has worked well, too. Tom came to San Francisco in 1946, and all the children, including three older, non-musical sisters, were born and raised in the City. Despite this, they consider themselves Arkies, enjoy claiming their father's hometown of Pocahontas as their own, and speak with a slight, natural Arkansas accent--just enough to make some of their fans exclaim "San Francisco?!?" But it was not always easy growing up in San Francisco. Even before they began to play music, Patty, Jimmy, and Brenda loved to listen to country and bluegrass, while their peers preferred rock and soul. Patty and a friend spent quite a while convincing the Lincoln High School radio station to play some country music--and they succeeded, even to the point of getting a little Flatt and Scruggs on the air! While those days are over for Patty, Brenda still has to contend with her soul-crazed contemporaries. But knowing Brenda, you can be sure she'll survive in tact and surpass them all. (For Patty's own impressions on bluegrass picking parties, see her own article on the following pages of this issue.)

These Arkies-in-spirit had the opportunity to perform in Pocahontas during a couple of their eastern tours. Their mother, a native of Missouri, was able to travel with them on one of these trips; although she is not a musician, she has always loved the music. Pocahontas is a small Ozark town located near Harrison not far from the Missouri border. Tom spent his first eight years here, before his father died, and he moved to St. Louis to live with an uncle. Tom's father was a consummate musician--fiddle, mandolin, banjo,

and harmonica--and it was here Tom developed a love for music. He fooled around with his father's instruments (almost inadvertently destroying the banjo!), but was not seriously motivated to play until he joined the army and was sent to the Philippines, where he constructed his first dobro from whatever materials were available. He decided on the dobro after listening to St. Louis' country bands and Opry star Bashful Brother Oswald. In fact, it was Oswald's "Wabash Cannonball" that sold him on the dobro. After the war Tom settled in San Francisco, married and supported his growing family by working as a floor contractor and playing electric steel guitar for 15 years in local clubs. One of the groups he played with was the Arkansas Playboys. But by 1960 he was discouraged with the changing commercialization of country music, and he put aside his musical ambitions, until Patty and Jimmy resurrected them. In 1974 Tom gave up his floor contracting business to become a full-time band, and, as they say, the rest is history.

The performance credits of The Caffrey Family are extensive and too numerous to mention here in their entirety. Locally, they have performed regularly at the Straw Hat Pizza Palace in San Pablo; on Mick Seeber's "Bluegrass Experience" over KSAY and KNEW; with Vassar Clements at the Great American Music Hall; with Vassar and Buck White at the Oakland Municipal Auditorium; at the Golden State Bluegrass Festival in San Rafael; at San Quentin Prison bluegrass shows (for the last three years); and at the California State Old-Time Fiddlers Championship Contest in Madera--to name a few. They have played radio and television spots throughout the country; festivals with Jimmy Martin, Jim and Jesse, and Bill Monroe; and various clubs including Nashville's Old-Time Pickin' Parlor and Geoff Berne's Spare Room and Englishtown clubs in New Jersey. They have won awards: 1st place Band and Vocal, California State

Country Music Competition, Auburn, 1972; 1st place California State Dobro, 1972-73; 2nd place vocal, 1972-73 (Patty); 2nd place bass fiddle contest (junior division), Seattle, Wash., 1973 (Brenda); and finalists at Lakeland (Tennessee) Bluegrass Competition, 1974.

The recent tour, from which they returned this past October, included performances with Tom T. Hall at Shindig in the Barn, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Doug Tuchman's South Street Seaport Pier, New York City (where they received 5 encores); and Lester Flatt and Del McCourey at the Garden State Arts Center in Holmdel, New Jersey. This last show was especially successful as it was the first bluegrass performance ever held there, and the response, from daytime crowds of 5,000, was so good that the bluegrassers outdrew Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, who played there the same week at night! In fact, the Caffreys outshone both Flatt and McCourey in receiving encores! The festival promoter wants to make this an annual event.

If you're as breathless reading this as I am writing it, then you have some idea of how far and how fast this San Francisco-based country and bluegrass band has travelled in the last three years. The future can hold nothing but success for them. But it is clear that whatever greater glories they attain, they will always remain one of the friendliest, warmest, most genuine families it would be anyone's pleasure to know. It is with great pride and happiness that the California Bluegrass Association has organized this Bluegrass Benefit for The Caffrey Family.

The Editor

THOSE HEAVENLY PICKING PARTIES.

by Patty Caffrey

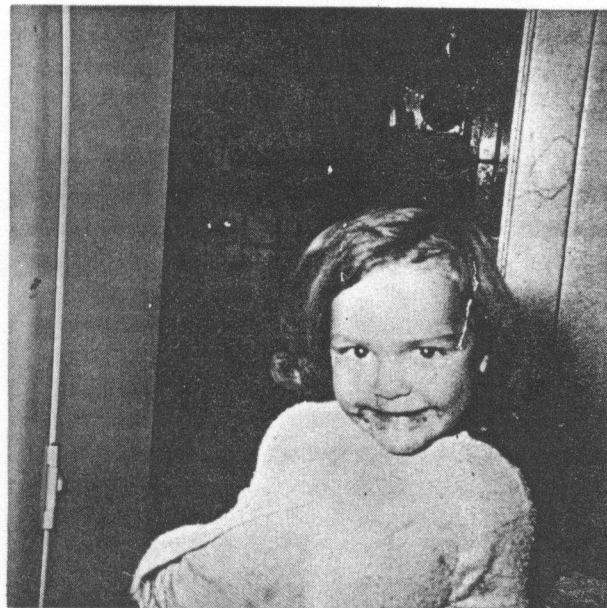
I'd just like to give due credit to some very fine people who continuously keep bluegrass on the move without even an instrument in hand, or a desire to play professionally--people like Violet and Gilbert Lankford of Sacramento, Bob and Irene Scoville of Corte Madera (Marin County), and Jack and Jan Sadler of Los Gatos, who annually hold some of the finest picking parties you'd ever want to attend.

These picking parties bring together some of the best musicians in California, along with newcomers and beginners just getting into this heart-felt music, and these parties become something to remember and treasure always.

Violet and Gilbert's parties are always lively and friendly. Their beautiful home, furnished with antiques, displays an old-timey atmosphere--providing a warm and comfortable place for the bluegrass musician. Violet's country cooking is something very much to be tasted and admired. The warmth that both Lankfords radiate to their company is unequalled.

Bob and Irene Scoville's parties are very easy-going--with pickers situated in every corner of the house trading hot licks with one another, eating a lot of good food, and just plain relaxing--forgetting easily, at least for awhile, the every day worries of life. As an additional bonus, Bob's house contains the recently remodeled Scoville Violin Shop, so fresh strings are always available to broken pickers. Like the Lankfords' gatherings, the parties of Bob and Irene reflect a good, happy, down-to-earth feeling.

I've heard many times that the parties Jack and Jan Sadler put on



Even at the age of 2½, Patty was into jam sessions.

are nothing less than fantastic. Due to our eastern tour, we were away at the time of their last get-together, but, knowing Jack, I know his party must have been one of good feeling, warmth, picking galore, and very much alive with music.

By giving these parties, the hosts are doing more than just having good ol' jam sessions--they are also keeping the musicians in contact with one another in a relaxed atmosphere, and, by this, they are helping to build a bigger and better stronghold for bluegrass music here in California.

I'm sure all of the musicians and friends of bluegrass know exactly what I am trying to say and will join my family and me in thanking these big-hearted people for helping to keep the music we love so much alive and moving!

BLUEGRASS BILLBOARD

(To be listed in Bluegrass Billboard, please contact the Editor at 415/282-5833 or drop a note to Bluegrass Billboard, California Bluegrass Association, P.O. Box 11287, San Francisco, Ca. 94101. Remember, if your band is not listed here, or is listed incorrectly, it is your responsibility to remedy the situation. The CBA exists for you and your input is not only appreciated but necessary.)

Regular Gigs:

BEAR CREEK BOYS

every Friday - Straw Hat Pizza Parlor, 41st & Capitola, Santa Cruz.

THE GOOD OL' PERSONS

every Thursday and Saturday - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott Street, San Francisco.

FULL KENTUCKY LOAD

every Friday and Saturday - Straw Hat Pizza Parlor, Mathilda & Maude, Sunnyvale.

HIGH COUNTRY

every Wednesday & Friday - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott Street, San Francisco.

HIGH ON GRASS

every Saturday - Straw Hat Pizza Parlor, 440 Capitol, San Jose.

MOUNTAIN GRASS

every Saturday - Straw Hat Pizza Palace, North Abel, Milpitas.

SKUNK CABBAGE

every Friday - The Square Rigger, 65 Moraga Way, Orinda.

SMELLS LIKE HOME

every Thursday - Bohemia, Jackson & Amador, Hayward.

every Friday and Saturday - Straw Hat Pizza Parlor, Capitol & McKee, San Jose.

SONOMA COUNTY LINE

every Sunday - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott Street, San Francisco.

SOUTH LOOMIS QUICKSTEP

every Monday - The Shire Road Pub, corner of Winding Way & Sunrise Blvd., Fair Oaks.

SWEETWATER

every Thursday - The Soup Kitchen at The Factory, Campbell.

every Friday - Straw Hat Pizza Parlor, Hamilton & Meridian, San Jose.

MORE BLUEGRASS BILLBOARD

Jam Sessions:

GRYPHON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

every Saturday afternoon - 211 Lambert, Palo Alto, 2:00-5:00.

NASHVILLE WEST

every Sunday afternoon (beginning the middle of January) -
193 Commercial (off Central Expressway in Sunnyvale).
House band, High On Grass. For information about
performing, contact Wayne Dye, 415/964-1502.

PAUL'S SALOON

every Tuesday night - 3251 Scott Street, San Francisco.

Bluegrass FM Guide:

"BLUEGRASS WITH CASEY WALSH"

every Saturday morning - 9:30-11:00, KKUP (FM) Cupertino.

"HIGH AND LONESOME" - Mel Smothers' Bluegrass Show

every Tuesday afternoon - 1:30-3:30, KERS (90.7 FM) Sacramento.

"MY GRASS IS BLUE" - Phil Silvers' Bluegrass Show

every Saturday afternoon - 3:00-5:00, KRVE (95.3 FM) Los Gatos.

"PIG IN A PEN" - Ray Edlund's Bluegrass Show

every other Friday afternoon - (1/9, 1/23, 2/6, 2/20, etc.) -
3:00-5:00, KPFA (94.1 FM) Berkeley.

Special Events:

BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL BENEFIT FOR THE CAFFREY FAMILY

January 11 - 1st Congregational Church, 432 Mason Street, San
Francisco. 1:00-7:00. \$5.00 donation. See this issue
for details.

BILL WHITE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

January 3 - Cafe Valerian, 4218 Piedmont Avenue, Oakland. 9:30.
\$2.00. Featuring Ray & Larry Park, Vern & Delbert Williams,
Lawrence Hammond, and much much more.

RAY PARK AND FRIENDS

January 16 - Freight & Salvage, 1827 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley.
January 17 - Cafe Valerian, 4218 Piedmont Avenue, Oakland. 9:30.

ANNUAL FIDDLE CONTEST AND GOLD DISCOVERY DAYS

January 25 - Coloma. Sponsored by the Sacramento Fiddlers Club.
This is one contest where the emphasis is on FUN. More
people turn out for this event every year, and there are
plenty of great bluegrass jam sessions.

As you all may have noticed, may not have noticed, or may not care to notice, the end of the year is rolling around. This means different things to different people--for most of you it's just another chance to screw up the dates on your checks for a month or so; for those who are commercially into the Bicentennial, it's time to swing into high gear sales-wise (shame on you!). For Ron and me, it's time to go down to the Redwood City S.P. Depot and drive back and forth across the tracks (between trains) attempting to precipitate a 1975 tax exemption from a January 1976 expected baby.*

Seriously, the advent of 1976 means the CBA membership has some business to take care of--namely, the annual membership meeting and election of the Board of Directors. There are 9 directors--if you aren't familiar with them, their names, addresses, and phone numbers are in every issue of BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN. They also can be readily identified at all CBA events by their bloodshot eyes, harrassed looks and ability to pick/sing/enjoy while sound asleep or totally drunk.

Back to reality. You have the privilege of electing (or re-electing) people to these 9 positions, according to the following provisions of the CBA By-Laws:

- All incumbent Directors, unless they object, will be re-nominated.
- Additional nominations may be added to the ballot by the Board of Directors nominating committee.
- Additional nominations may be made by petition signed by at least 10 CBA members.

- The deadline for finalizing the ballot will be January 31, 1976. Any nominations by petition must be postmarked by that date. Send to our San Francisco address: P.O. Box 11287, San Francisco, Ca. 94101.
- The complete ballot will be mailed to you in February along with information about the membership meeting. Other items of business, such as actions of the Board which require your approval, may also appear on the ballot.
- Every member is entitled to cast one (1) ballot, which may be done in person, or by proxy (return by mail). A quorum is 1/5 of the total membership (either present or represented by proxy).
- The nine (9) nominees receiving the greatest number of votes will be elected to the Board of Directors. Other issues on the ballot, or raised at the meeting, will require a simple majority.
- For your information, the following names have currently been placed in nomination:

Steve de Haas	John Murphy
Jack Sadler	Roscoe Keithley
Jay Quesenberry	Ray Edlund
Carol Masters	Burney Garelick
Keith Little	Joe Zumwalt

When the complete ballot is ready, we will try to include a comment or two about who/what each individual is--in case any one of them might not be a household name for you!

You have until January 31 to place any other names on the ballot.

continued.

*A certified project of the PPPP (P4) - Populate the Place with Pickers Program.

The membership meeting will be short but (obviously) important. In order to lure you out, it will be combined with a good PICKIN' EVENT! In addition, we hope to be able to reveal some of the plans for the big weekend event in the spring. So, please watch the mail for your ballot and full details on the get-together.

Suddenly, (unbelievably) we are one year old, and we would really like to start our second year off right. As CBA Secretary, the job of historian also fell to me, so I've attempted to start a scrapbook or journal for the Association. I will have it "available for your viewing pleasure" at the meeting. Any contributions (photos, clippings, etc.) you would care to make will be joyfully accepted.

I will also continue to urge musicians/bands to fill out the Band Registry form (located on the last page of this issue). This just gets you into our magic card file and you can't tell (neither can we!) when this might pay off with some really good jobs--as it has for a couple of bands already.

Hope your Christmas was good, and that you remembered that music makes the best gift of all!

Carol Masters

From the Till.

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance on Hand, 10/28/75	\$1,273.42
Disbursements & Payments (477.30)
Deposited Receipts	41.00
Balance on Hand, 12/05/75	\$ 837.12

(Anyone wishing further details is referred to me. My address and phone number are listed on Page 2 of this issue.)

Ed Pagter

LONG TERM PICKIN' AND PLANNIN'

In the next few months, the California State Old-Time Fiddlers Association will sponsor two annual contests. Don't be put off by the word "contest"--in addition to some fine fiddling there will be plenty of bluegrass jamming before, during, and after the competition. But there is something new about these contests: at each one there will be a flat-picking competition. Competing fiddlers have always appreciated their guitar accompanists; this time, however, the guitarists will have an opportunity to share the limelight. Anyone is encouraged to enter--look out Winfield!

March 6-7 at Oroville

Northern California Regional Old-Time Fiddlers Contest on Saturday, the 7th. FLAT-PICKING CONTEST on Friday night, the 6th. Location: Municipal Auditorium. (Fiddle details to appear in THE SOUND POST.) Guitar pickers' details: 2 tunes required, no more than 2 accompanists, no twin picking; four cash prizes; entry/door fee of \$2.50 for CSOTFA non-members, \$1.75 for CSOTFA members.

April 16-17 at Fresno

California State Old-Time Fiddlers Association State Championship Contest. Location: Sheraton Inn. Flat-picking contest Friday evening; fiddle contest Saturday. Cash prizes. Details next issue.

From the Editor's New Toy.

A fair amount of the disbursements in the Treasurer's Report went for the purchase of an official CBA portable electric typewriter--a Smith-Corona Coronamatic 2200--total price including two ribbon cartridges \$269.30. This is it, folks! Needless to say, the Editor is delighted.

Some folks like the summertime
When they can walk about;
Strolling through the meadow green
Is pleasant, there's no doubt,
But give me the winter time
When the snow is on the ground
For I found her
When the snow was on the ground.

I traced her little footprints in the snow,
I found her little footprints in the snow,
 Lord,
I bless that happy day
That Nellie lost her way
For I found her
When the snow was on the ground.

I dropped into see her.
There was a big round moon.
Her mother said she just stepped out
But 'd be returning soon.
I found her little footprints
And I traced 'em through the snow.
I found her
When the snow was on the ground.

Now she's up in heaven;
She's with the angel band.
I know I'm going to meet her
In that promised land.
But everytime the snow falls,
It brings back memories
For I found her
When the snow was on the ground.*

Since the voice is considered to be another instrument in the band, it is probably quite possible to play good bluegrass without really being aware of the words of the song. Certainly there are many excellent Japanese bluegrass bands

*As played by Bill Monroe on COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME (Decca DL75281).

that perform from music stands, reading the words as though they were notes. However, some of us are compelled to recognize, evaluate and emphathize with the lyrics.

Generally, words to bluegrass songs tell a rather uncomplicated story of love, death, good times, or nostalgia. Occasionally the words are not so clear. A case in point is "Footprints In The Snow," a bluegrass standard and a Bill Monroe favorite (though, I was surprised to discover, not his song but Rupert Jones'). I have always been puzzled by the plot of this song: what exactly happened to Nellie and when did it happen? To me, this is a real bluegrass mystery. But let me try to explain my confusion.

The first stanza sets the stage, a novel and intriguing situation. Instead of the ubiquitous joys of summer, we are confronted with winter, cold and snow. Of course some of the power of winter, both its beauty and its treachery, may be lost on temperate Californians, but that is incidental. With the frame of reference established, we encounter the dramatic questions: Who was she? How did the narrator find her? What was she doing in the snow? Now, does the song answer these questions?

The chorus tells how the narrator found her, i. e., by tracing her footprints in the snow. It also reveals her name, Nellie, and that she "lost her way." Also, she must have been very special since he blesses that "happy day" he found her. And his preference for winter is apparent: it might have been impossible to find Nellie in the summer, without the telltale prints in the snow. So far the story is clear.

After the fiddle break, the second stanza thickens the plot. There is the suggestion

that the narrator has been courting Nellie, since he stops by to see her and encounters her mother. Nellie then is probably not his wife, mother, aunt, sister, or mistress. The fact that he "dropped by" suggests he was not expected; it was a spontaneous but not unwelcome visit. If she had been expecting him, Nellie probably wouldn't have "stepped out," unless she had some secret purpose or just didn't want to see him. At any rate, she told her mother she'd come back soon. We are also told that the moon was full; this indicates the time was night, and there was plenty of natural light to guide the traveler. Then, instead of waiting for her to return, the narrator goes out looking for Nellie. Why doesn't he sit by the fire, warm up, chat with his prospective mother-in-law, and wait for his girl? Is he worried about her, or is he just anxious to see his sweetheart? All we know is that he found her prints, and they led him to her.

Then we hear the chorus again, followed by another fiddle break. Now comes the ambiguity--the final stanza. Something has happened during that fiddle break, or before, something that I would like to know.

First of all, a lot of time has gone by. Nellie is no longer in the snow; she is "up in heaven with the angel band" (bluegrass, one presumes). It is not necessary to be reminded of the "promised land" to realize she is dead. Evidently, a lot of time has passed because the narrator implies many snowfalls have occurred, and each has brought memories of the night he found her in the snow.

My question is, when he found her in the snow, was she dead, and, if she was dead, why does he refer to the time as a "happy" day? (I grant the use of "day" in place of the more accurate "night" for

the sake of the rhyme.) Shouldn't he grieve whenever it snows? Shouldn't the memories be painful? If she was alive when he found her, the "happy" day is of course appropriate. But where was she going on a cold and snowy night when there was the chance her gentleman friend would stop by? What was her errand? Was she on a suicide mission, visiting a sick friend, or buying groceries? How urgent was her trip that it couldn't wait until daylight? There is definitely the suggestion that something was amiss. But if he found her alive, did they eventually get married and live happily ever after until she died? How did she die? (This seems important in lieu of the suggestion that winter connotes death.) Or perhaps they didn't marry or even cohabitate; perhaps something intervened, but he nevertheless remained true to her.

On a radio interview not long ago, I heard a fellow from North Carolina use as an expression "footprints in the snow." I understood him to mean by the phrase that he had understood some significant facet of his life and upon doing so was able to procede in some specific direction. Perhaps the song is a metaphor for a similar awareness of the writer. However, the handwriting on the wall (or, in this case, the sheetmusic) doesn't really give us a clue to the significance of the footprints in the snow, if, indeed, the expression is a regional idiom.

But perhaps it is this ambiguity, whether or not we are consciously aware of it, that makes the song a standard. I know that I will continue to enjoy this bluegrass mystery.

Burney Garelick

Editor's Note: The author is currently at work on another bluegrass mystery, a novel based on "Fox On The Run."

Mail to: Carol Masters
CBA Band Registry
P.O. Box 11287
San Francisco, Ca. 94101

Name of Band
(if group): _____

Name of Contact Individual
(or single performer): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone number(s) where you can most easily be reached:
Area Code _____ Number _____

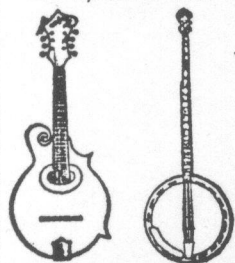
Please indicate the type
of music you play:
_____ Bluegrass
_____ Old-Time (e.g. fiddle)
_____ Gospel
_____ Other or combination
of these _____

If you are a single
performer:
Your instrument(s): _____
Do you sing? _____
Accompanist(s)? _____

If you represent a
band:
How many in group? _____
What instruments are
played? _____

Do you have regular jobs playing on certain nights, or other commitments which we
should know about before recommending you for a specific job?

California
Bluegrass Assn.



Founded in 1975 and dedicated to
the furtherance of Bluegrass,
Gospel, and Old-Time music. Each
member family is entitled to re-
ceive a copy of each BLUEGRASS
BREAKDOWN newsletter without
charge and to reduced admission
charges to all CBA activities.

TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY ALL INFOR-
MATION *****

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

This membership application is for single or
family application. A family is defined as
the two adult spouses and all children under
the age of 16 years. There must be a main ap-
plicant at \$7.50 per year, and the spouse may
be included for an additional sum of \$2.50.
All eligible children may be included for the
sum of \$1 (no voting right for children).

NEW ☐

RENEWAL ☐

Mailing Address (Street,
City, State, ZIP)

Tel. _____

MAIN APPLICANT NAME Last: _____ First: _____ \$ 7.50

INCLUDED SPOUSE (First Name Only) _____ \$ 2.50

ELIGIBLE INCLUDED CHILDREN _____ \$ 1.00

INSTRUMENTS PLAYED: _____

List any services you can offer CBA (such as printing
facilities, writing, artwork, advertising, sound systems,
instrument sales and maintenance, etc.):

TOTAL ENCLOSED (not
to exceed \$11)

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER (do not send
cash) TO: Treasurer, California Blue-
grass Assn., P.O. Box 11287,
San Francisco, CA 94101

CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 11287
San Francisco, Ca. 94101



FIRST CLASS

JAY ROSENBERG
1780 VIA FLORIDA
SAN JOSE

CA 95132