

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

The Official Publication of the
CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Vol. 1, No. 4

November 1975



THE PRESENTATION OF HONORARY MEMBERSHIP PLAQUES
TO RAY PARK AND VERN WILLIAMS
SEPTEMBER 21, 1975
FAIRFIELD

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; after July 1st membership is one-half price or \$3.75 per person for the remainder of the year. Each member is entitled to reduced admission to all CBA activities and to receive the CBA newsletter. 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.

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Editor Burney Garelick 357½ Valley Street San Francisco, Ca. 94131 (415) 282-5833	ABOUT THE COVER: At the Bluegrass Sunday, September 21, 1975, Steve de Haas and Jack Sadler presented plaques to honorary members Ray Park and Vern Williams. Special thanks to Bill Britton of Alameda for the photo.
Assistant Editor John Berg 467 Yosemite Avenue Mountain View, Ca. 94041	

SECOND BLUEGRASS SUNDAY A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

"Just Over In The Gloryland"

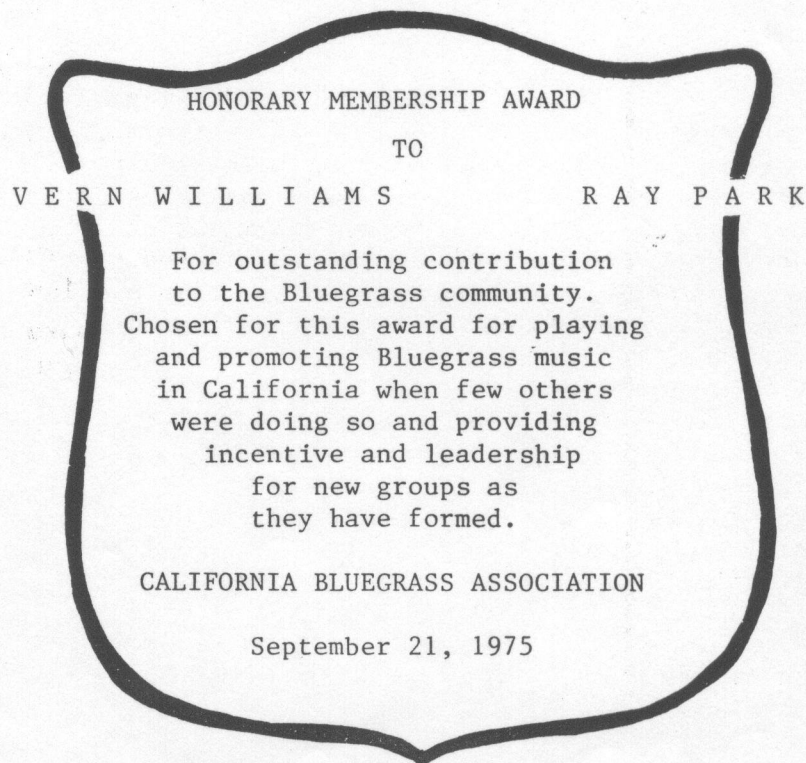
The sun shown bright on old Kentucky Street in Fairfield, Sunday, September 21, as the California Bluegrass Association presented its second super jamboree. President Steve de Haas estimated that about 1300 fans filled the Civic Auditorium throughout the course of the afternoon, while a sizable, uncounted group of pickers and gridders and picnickers enjoyed some sunshine and jamming all around the building. What an ideal setting this is for a bluegrass afternoon! If the city of Fairfield weren't so aptly named--the fields are indeed fair--the CBA would definitely go about changing its name to the "Gloryland."

Bluegrass Bands Galore

Almost all the northern California bluegrass bands arrived to perform wonderfully well--Sweetwater, The Bear Creek Boys, The South Loomis Quickstep, High Country, Smells Like Home, Full Kentucky Load, A Touch of Grass, Western Union, members of the Good Ole Persons, Skunk Cabbage, the Bluegrass Hoppers, Daydreamers Ball, Bill White (a virtuoso harmonica player), and the New Tonto Basin Boys (a premiere appearance; the old Tonto Basin Boys was the band that spawned the former and quite popular Phantoms of the Opry). It is evident that bluegrass on the West Coast is gaining a diverse and enthusiastic following, and, while it is not yet an explosion, it may well be some day. The CBA hopes to be instrumental in providing the right atmosphere for that day.

Vern and Ray

Certainly the highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of the CBA's first Honorary Memberships to Ray Park and Vern Williams for their outstanding contribution to bluegrass in California. On behalf of the CBA, Steve de Haas and Jack Sadler, Activities Vice-President, presented handsome, bronzed wooden plaques to these gentlemen grassers. The statement on each plaque reads as follows:



To say Vern and Ray were "pleased" with the honor would be putting it somewhat mildly; they were deeply touched, and they demonstrated their sincerity by performing an incredible set that, like all good things, ended too quickly. Not wishing to let them go, the crowd rose to give them a standing ovation and they returned for more songs. During that set Ray played the guitar, as he likes to do when he sings with Vern, so the dynamic pair returned later that afternoon for another set that included Ray's fiddling. (Incidentally, Ray is an extraordinary guitar picker; when someone plays the fiddle as well as he does, it is sometimes easy to overlook his other accomplishments; he's also an excellent songwriter.)

But it's the fiddle that is most astounding: his "Beaumont Rag" and "Lonesome Fiddle Blues" have to be among the greatest performances of all time. And Vern's singing and mandolin picking can only seriously be compared to Bill Monroe's--with its vitality and intensity. No one else can do justice to "The Prisoner's Song." And the songs they do together--"Little Birdie," "Touch of God's Hand," "Little Annie," "How Many Times," "Bluegrass Music Blues," "Mama," etc.--their style just can't be beat. (The last three of the aforementioned songs were written by Ray.) In the early, pre-bluegrass days, country duet singing was very popular and the best of it was done by brothers, e.g., the Delmore Brothers, the Blue Sky Boys, the Monroe Brothers, the McReynolds Brothers, the Louvin Brothers, and of course Ralph and Carter Stanley. Well, although Vern and Ray are not brothers by birth, they have that particular "relative harmony" that makes them brothers-in-spirit. It is no coincidence that on occasion each has said of the other, "I love him like a brother."

Vern and Ray were accompanied by Keith Little, banjo; Steve Townsend,

bass; Larry Park, guitar (and fiddle on his own inimitable "Fire On The Mountain"); Delbert Williams, fiddle and guitar. No one could ask for a better combination. Bill White also joined the group for a rousing "Under The Double Eagle." Besides being an outstanding harmonica man--he does train whistles and bird calls like no one else!--Bill is a true gentleman and a fine friend with a dazzling smile that Ray is fond of claiming "would outdo the Mona Lisa."

Hearing Vern and Ray pick and sing together is getting to be a rare experience, and, consequently, one that we will all cherish for a good while. The CBA will have to go a long way to find two such qualified recipients of their next honorary memberships; high (Ozark) standards have set a precedent of tremendous quality. Or, as old-time fiddler, bluegrass aficionado, and CBA member Bill Cummings of Roseville said, "If this isn't heaven, I don't know what is!"

More CBA Activities To Come

As was mentioned in the previous issue of Bluegrass Breakdown, the CBA is planning a three-day event in the spring of '76 in either Placerville or Nevada City. More information will be forthcoming on this. In the meantime, stay tuned for some more Bluegrass Sundays. Look upon them as practice for the three-day event--after all, think how emotionally charged that weekend will be when it triples the excitement that we experienced on September 21st!

BLUEGRASS BILLBOARD

(To be listed on "Bluegrass Billboard" please contact Carol Masters (415/365-0198) or the editor (415/282-5833), or drop a note to "Billboard," 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.)

HIGH COUNTRY

every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott St., San Francisco

GOOD OLE PERSONS

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

BEAR CREEK BOYS

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

SWEETWATER

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

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

SKUNK CABBAGE

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

SOUTH LOOMIS QUICKSTEP

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

FULL KENTUCKY LOAD

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

SMELLS LIKE HOME

every Thursday - Bohemia, Jackson & Amador, Hayward.

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

OLD-TIME FIDDLE FESTIVAL----- NOVEMBER 16 - FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER -

A special Sunday event sponsored by the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association. 1:00-7:00. \$1.50. The CBA and the CSOTFA are two separate organizations, and each serves a particular audience of the California music community. (For a few words on this, see Page 10.)

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

every other Friday afternoon (10/17, 10/31, 11/14, 11/28, etc.) 3:00-5:30, KPFA (94.1 FM) Berkeley.

"HIGH AND LONESOME" - Mel Smothers' Bluegrass Show

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

RAY PARK AND FRIENDS

October 25 - Cafe Valerian, 4218 Piedmont Ave., Oakland. 9:30, \$2.00.

(Since this publication will probably appear after the event, all interested persons would do well to check with Janice Mulcahy, owner of the restaurant, at 415/654-6321, or the editor regarding his next appearance.)

NOTICE TO ALL BANDS

Any bands wishing to participate on a general basis in future CBA events are requested to contact Carol Masters well in advance of the performing date. On September 21, there were more bands than anticipated--to our great delight. However, there was not enough time and some didn't have the opportunity to play. The CBA welcomes all bands, so, with a little more preparation and organization, that situation won't happen again. Don't be discouraged--besides, at one time or another, the CBA hopes to feature all bands.

NEW BOOKS, RECORDS, RADIO

Pickin' The Five String, Newgrass Style

A new banjo instruction book has come to the editor's attention: HOW TO PLAY BLUEGRASS BANJO IN THE NEW CHROMATIC STYLE, written and published by Fred Sokolow. The author claims this is the first complete book on melodic or Keith style, the next step after Scruggs picking. An illustrative cassette tape is included with the book, which includes 25 American and Irish fiddle tunes, scales, exercises, tablature, and guitar accompaniment. Also included are chapters on 'blues' or minor chromatic picking and harmony parts for double banjo tunes. For book and cassette, send \$8.00 to Fred Sokolow, 3500 S. Barrington Avenue, Los Angeles, Ca. 90066.

Pickin' The Five String On Munde

In his own inimitable way, Jimmy Martin used to remark about his banjo player, "We wanted Tuesday, but we had to settle for Munde." Well, a lot of folks will be delighted to "settle for" Alan Munde's new banjo album to be released late this year on Ridge Runner Records. Al will be accompanied by Roland White, mandolin; Roger Bush, bass; Dave Ferguson, fiddle; and Doc Hamilton,

guitar. Inquiries should be sent to Director of Marketing, Ridge Runner Records, 3035 Townsend Drive, Fort Worth, Texas 76110.

High and Lonesome Radio

Bluegrass is making great strides to be heard between radio commercials! A new bluegrass show recently took to the air waves. On October 7 Mel Smothers began the "High and Lonesome" show on KERS (90.7 FM), a non-profit educational station in Sacramento. Regular time schedule is Tuesday afternoon 1:30-3:30--perhaps even longer if public opinion desires. For more information or publicity purposes, call or write Mel Smothers, 4830 P Street, Sacramento, Ca. 95819, (916) 455-1151.

BLUEGRASS IN LOS ALTOS

On Sunday, September 28, the CBA provided some super bands for a benefit Bluegrass Festival sponsored by the American Lung Association and the Santa Clara West Rotary Club charities. A large and enthusiastic crowd filled the outdoor Adobe Creek Lodge, nestled in the hills, to enjoy featured bands--South Loomis Quickstep, the Good Ole Persons, Sweetwater, and Ray Park and Friends. Jack Sadler was the able MC, polishing the smiles of the pickers and grinners, and a good time was had by all.

The CBA is always happy to consider participation in events such as this one. With the increasing popularity of bluegrass, there seems to be a need in the community for an organization to supply such bands, and the CBA is glad to fulfill that need. Which is all the more reason for bluegrass bands to register with the CBA. If your band is registered, there's a good chance you'll be asked to perform on one of these occasions. For the Band Registry form, see Page 11.

BLUEGRASS by Bob Artis
Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York, 1975
182 pages, \$8.95, excellent photos.

If there were such a course as "Bluegrass 101," I would have to recommend this book as the main text since it is the best survey of the entire spectrum of bluegrass music, from its origins in old-time fiddle and banjo bands through its development into Bill Monroe's "bluegrass" up to its current evolution into "newgrass." Bob Artis discovered bluegrass in Los Angeles about fifteen years ago while still in his teens; he was immediately taken with the music and this affinity permeates every page of the volume. His is not an objective discussion, but then what bluegrass devotee was ever objective about his music. It's probably impossible anyway, as bluegrass is a visceral activity, more emotional than intellectual.

BLUEGRASS probably won't say anything new to the hard-core devotee, but it does manage to put the entire style into perspective in relation to country, pop, folk, and rock music, an achievement that probably hasn't been done before. While it identifies the major bluegrass personalities in a way that is helpful to the neophyte, the descriptions are probably more meaningful to those who have been exposed to the various performers. It would be difficult, for instance, to really understand his words about Bill Monroe's godlike presence of regality and arrogance without actually having seen Bill at a festival. Likewise, it would be hard to appreciate Jimmy Martin's volatile personality by simply reading about his stage behavior, i.e., the insults he throws at his band. While this is an excellent bluegrass text, it needs to be supplemented with records, live performances, and various book and magazine articles, or, best of all, memory. Folk legend Woody Guthrie used to say, "Let me be known as just the man that told you something you already knew." For diehard bluegrass fans, Bob Artis has done precisely that,

but he has written it in such a way that his book invites us to recall our most vivid experiences with bluegrass music. And the ability to evoke such a personal response is a rare and precious talent, one that should be applauded.

The book's organization is chronological, beginning with a brief history of country music, the roots of bluegrass. The point that is clearly established is that bluegrass is a more direct descendant of the old-time country music than the slick, smooth sounds of modern Nashville "country." Of course the Grand Ole Opry, the phonograph record, and radio all helped to change country music and inadvertently led to the development of bluegrass.

Following this are chapters on the foremost bluegrass personalities and the special contribution of each: Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers, Flatt and Scruggs, Reno and Smiley, Jimmy Martin, Jim and Jesse, and the Osborne Brothers. It is no surprise that bluegrass devotees are quickly on a first name basis; an intimacy was established early as almost all these people played together at one time or another before becoming "stars" in their own right.

Then there is a chapter on the difficulty of making a living playing bluegrass. Before bluegrass had a chance to become firmly established, it was inundated by rock 'n' roll, modern country, and after surfacing briefly during the folk revival, rock. Currently, it is not undergoing a revival; it is just now coming into its own. Bluegrass never had it so good, and its future seems promising.

Another chapter describes the "newgrass" sound which runs parallel to traditional bluegrass, and assimilates the best of it and of rock, pop, and folk--creating a new hybrid demonstrated by groups like Bluegrass Alliance, The Seldom Scene, and the New Grass Revival. Future developments are wide open, but it is hoped someone will carry on the "down to earth" traditional bluegrass of Bill Monroe.

The book concludes with an appendix of recommended recordings by the major artists, publications and radio stations specializing in bluegrass throughout the country, and related organizations. (The California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association and its newsletter The Sound Post are listed--matter of fact, that's how the book came into my hands--but the CBA's initiation was too recent for inclusion.)

My favorite chapter is "An Endless Festival." It describes a festival much like Bean Blossom where all the bluegrass greats and their fans come together for several days of high level picking, singing, and appreciating. This is the second last chapter and its potency of expression is a perfect climax to the others. Artis manages to capture the excitement of a bluegrass festival so well, you'll be packing your instruments and loading your cooler! (My only criticism is how, upon discovering Kenny Baker the first night of the festival, the author can leave after three short paragraphs to see what else is happening! That blasé I could never be.)

All in all, though, you will not be disappointed in BLUEGRASS. Go out and buy it; it's an excellent book.

BLUEGRASS CONTRASTS:

JIMMY MARTIN VS. NOEL COWARD

Unrequited love is a common theme in all kinds of music--from KNEW Country to the Broadway stage and even the London music hall tradition. How else could one link two such dissimilar but outstanding songwriters and performers as Jimmy Martin and Noel Coward! I realize of course that the unrequited love song is a rather precarious link, and that if I really wanted to make a substantial point I would need to narrow and specify my objectives. But I'm not entirely sure what my purpose is--except that I like the songs of both Jimmy and Noel and I sometimes find it difficult to resolve such disparate taste. So perhaps my excuse for this piece is therapeutic, an exercise in coming to grips with a multi-

faceted, somewhat schizoid personality that has always taken a kind of aesthetic pleasure in unrequited love.

However, lest the reader desert me for "Bluegrass Billboard" or some other more relevant subject, let me proceed swiftly to the two songs I wish to compare and contrast--Jimmy's "Steal Away Somewhere And Die" and Noel's "Sail Away." But first, a brief introduction. All bluegrassers know Jimmy Martin, that old "hoss" who first distinguished himself as Bill Monroe's guitar picker on the Grand Ole Opry. Noel Coward, on the other hand, may be unfamiliar as he comes from a time and place completely alien to bluegrass. (Actually, though, had he known bluegrass, I think he would have appreciated its musical structure and could have written, most likely in parody form and from an intellectual rather than an emotional point of view, a bluegrass song--just as well as Shel Silverstein writes successful country songs from a totally dissimilar background.)

Noel Coward (1899-1973) was an Englishman, born and bred in the traditions, customs, literature, and music of that country. Although London is a long way from Sneedville, Tennessee, where Jimmy was born, both men had the same instinct to perform at a very young age. Jimmy of course realized his dream to be an Opry star, and Noel became the toast of both the London and New York stages with several plays running simultaneously on either side of the ocean. His career culminated in being knighted by the Queen. Noel's music generally appeals to an uptown, sophisticated, martini-champagne-caviar crowd, while Jimmy's strikes responsive chords from the beer drinking, chicken picking, foot-stomping set. No value judgments are intended, since I love both and the lifestyle each implies. What they have in common is demonstrated in these two songs--heart, sensibility, sentimentality, unrequited love, and a strong belief in the restorative, healing power of time.

The lyrics of both songs are transcribed below. While it is important to recognize the words, because both men were ingenious lyricists, it is also necessary to remember these are songs, not poems. I wish it

were possible to include here recordings since it is difficult to talk about music without hearing it. I can only remind you that Jimmy's instrumentation is of course bluegrass (fiddle, guitar, mandolin, bass, banjo, and harmonized voices) and Noel's is pop-Vegas-New York (piano, bass, drums, and solo voice). "Steal Away Somewhere And Die" can be heard on the album TENNESSEE - JIMMY MARTIN (Decca DL 74996) and "Sail Away" can be found on THE NOEL COWARD ALBUM (Columbia Masterworks MG 30088).

STEAL AWAY SOMEWHERE AND DIE

(written by Jimmy Martin and Earle Younger)

Tomorrow's just another day to worry
To wake up, my dear, and I wonder why
Must a sea of heartaches slowly drown me
Why can't I steal away somewhere and
die?

Too many days I've spent in deepest
sorrow
Too many nights I've laid awake and
cried
O how I wish there'd be no more
tomorrows
Why can't I steal away somewhere and
die?

Now I find, my dear, that it's all over
I guess I'll live because I cannot die
Maybe the tide of time will heal all
heartaches
I guess I'll just look back and wonder
why.

I loved you even though you didn't
want me
Sometimes I think you didn't even try
And now there's nothing left but burnin'
memories
Why can't I steal away somewhere and
die?
Why can't I steal away somewhere and
die?

SAIL AWAY

(written by Noel Coward, 1949)

When the storm clouds are riding
To a winter sky

Sail away, sail away
When the love light is fading
In your sweetheart's eye
Sail away, sail away
When you feel your song
Is orchestrated wrong
Why should you prolong your stay?
When the wind and the weather
Blow your dreams sky high
Sail away, sail away, sail away.

When a sailor goes to sea
Though he leaves his love behind
Time and tide will set him free
From the grief inside him
Sea and sky will ease his heart
Regulate his troubled mind
Every sailor has a chart
And a star to guide him home.

When your life seems too difficult
To rise above
Sail away, sail away
When your heart feels as dreary
As a worn out love
Sail away, sail away
But when soon or late
You recognize your fate
That will be your great great day
On the wings of the morning
With your own true love
Sail away, sail away, sail away.

Now the analysis. In both songs, the protagonist has lost his loved one and is considerably unhappy about it. Let us look at some of the ways in which each attacks the problem of his grief. In Jimmy's song, the protagonist himself tells the story, using the first person singular. In Noel's the story is told by an all-knowing narrator as a kind of advisor to the poor, miserable "you" in the song. Right away this difference tends, in Noel's song, to objectify the pain of unrequited love. There is not the agony, worry, and sleepless nights of Jimmy's narrator. Deeply depressed, he wants to "steal away somewhere and die," like some fugitive from the crime of being unloved and deserted. He further invokes death by indicating the sensation of drowning in a "sea of heartaches." He seems to have little hope of ever functioning again, as he has no desire to see tomorrow. Noel's narrator has not suffered directly, at least not this time;

therefore, he can see the situation more clearly, and he advises sailing away. The sea is once more a vehicle of release only this time into another adventure in life rather than death. He explains, by the example of the sailor separated from his love, that the pain will not last, that new and rewarding experiences will occur naturally--as sailors navigate by the stars and constellations --that will enrich or replace an old relationship. In short, life is too short to wallow in self-pity; "When you feel your song is orchestrated wrong," change it, sing it, play it somewhere else, for someone else. But do something--don't let yourself drown in that "sea of heartaches." Jimmy's narrator seems to recognize this, as he says "maybe the tide of time will heal all heartaches," but he is not ready to commit himself to a future; he is still bound up in self-recrimination and "burnin' memories." But he knows he "cannot die" because somehow his instinct to survive outweighs his gloom. Yet, he is not ready to take Noel's advice, but the implication that he will one day do so is clear, and he, too, having recognized his fate, will sail away "on the wings of the morning" to new heights and experiences. Life, as they say, goes on.

I guess what I've been doing here is, as Jimmy says in another song, "toying with a toy heart." But, as Noel says in still another song, "Cocktails and laughter, but what comes after--nobody knows." So, what I try to do is look for small connections, minute meanings in places where none would seem to exist. Recherchez le temps perdue--I remember and analyze lost times, past times, good times, and bad times; discover similarities where contradictions seem apparent, differences among the apparently identical; meaning in frivolity, and nonsense in philosophy. Perhaps somewhere, serendipitously, the "truth" will out. Meanwhile, chasing rainbows and reorchestrating songs have their rewards, not the least of which is the prevention of inundation in that sea of heartaches.

(by Burney Garelick)

(Editor's Note: If you liked the previous article, the author has promised another on the ambiguities of "Footprints In The Snow." If you didn't like it, the author will be assigned back to crossword puzzles! Comments are always welcome.)

AN EDITORIAL: THE CBA AND THE CSOTFA

As stated in Bluegrass Billboard, the California Bluegrass Association and the California State Old-Time Fiddlers' Association are two separate organizations, each serving a particular audience in the California music community. The CBA's emphasis is of course non-competitive bluegrass picking, although it also exists to promote old-time and gospel music. The CSOTFA's predilection has always been old-time fiddling with an emphasis on contests. Since they are two different organizations, they are not in competition with each other and shouldn't be thought of as rivals having to outdo or exploit the other.

Not everyone agrees on the function of music associations. One great old-time fiddler and bluegrasser has often repeated that music and competition are not compatible, because the whole point of music is pleasure and competition fosters tension and hard-feelings. On the other hand, there are good fiddlers who are stimulated by competition and find it difficult to play without it. It's simply a matter of personal preference; that's why there are finally two organizations. It is true that the CSOTFA has not always been partial to bluegrass. Should this continue to be held against them--especially now that the CBA exists--or should we co-exist without hostility and hope that they "see the light"?

The CBA and the CSOTFA needn't be mutually exclusive. While there is no need to merge, it is feasible that, at some time in the future, with proper guidance, they could work together on some joint event. Old-time fiddling and bluegrass music are close enough so that, despite differences in organizational philosophy, the CSOTFA and the CBA can be of some benefit to each other.

Comments and/or rebuttals are welcome.

THE EDITOR

ATTENTION ALL PICKERS! GET YOUR NAME ON THE BAND REGISTRY.

Since its formation in January, the CBA has received numerous requests from organizations and individuals for help in planning events, and recommending or booking bluegrass bands. We've handled a few of these requests informally, but we'd like to develop a method:

- (1) To help in a comprehensive, organized way without a lot of repeated effort (i.e. phone calls) on our part;
- (2) To give more bands and individuals exposure to new, generally one-time, jobs they might not get otherwise; and
- (3) To be fair about who we recommend, not constantly steering inquiries to the same bands, or people we happen to know well.

The result of all this is the CBA Band Registry. We will handle it like a clearing house, giving out names or a whole list of bands and contact phone numbers, but allowing the person using the Registry to do his own calling and decide whom he wishes to book. There will be no charge to anyone--the people listed on the Registry, or the people using the service--but we will request a return phone call telling us who the job has gone to. In this way, we'll keep track of who is getting jobs through the Registry, how "spread around" the jobs are--basically, whether or not the Registry is working to get people acquainted with bluegrass and old-time music and who performs it in this area.

The CBA plans to maintain the Registry for the benefit of musicians and non-musicians, members and non-members of the CBA. The Registry will list any band or single musician who wishes to be included, and will supply us with the information indicated on the form below. IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE TO COMPLETE THIS FORM!

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? _____ _____		

IN SEARCH OF A GOOD BANJO SOUND.

by Steve de Haas

If you spend any time around banjo players you will find that they spend a good amount of time and energy and money searching for that "good" sound in an instrument. At one time I figured I was going to find out what made a banjo sound good. The first approach was to tear apart every banjo in sight in search of the key or keys to the "good" sound. At one time I even cast a tone ring in attempt to set up a scientific experiment to determine what was the best type of material and shape. Perhaps the best answer is that what makes a "good" banjo sound "good" is that it is "good" and the thing to do it just hunt for one and then don't play with it. But that takes away some of the fun of it. I heard Larry Cohea (who plays with High Country) once say that the banjo is the original musician's tinker toy.

There are a few things, though, that seem to be common to good sounding banjos. One of these might be called tightness or rigidity. If you look at almost every aspect of a banjo, things need to be tight. One loose nut or screw can cause a rattle that is irritating to the ear and sometimes very hard to find. One banjo I pulled apart (an RB800) had poor laminations in the shell and this seemed to deaden the tone. A more common problem is that of the tone ring not fitting tightly on the shell. On many new banjos the necks are not fitted rightly to the shell with a resulting loss of tone--they also don't stay in tune. Even a loosely fitted resonator can affect the tone. In addition to the tightness, the quality of each of these parts is important, and, in a sense, the quality can be seen as each of these parts being solid in themselves. And, finally, the tightness of the head of the banjo has a lot to do with the sound. I used to think the tighter the better. Generally, the tighter, the more sharp the sound; however, there is sometimes volume on loosening the head slightly. I tend to think that a head that is loosened slightly tends to produce a more full

sound. In general, though, both tone and volume improve by mating surfaces carefully and bolting the instrument together snugly.

BLUEGRASS IN JAPAN (!!!?)

by Ray Edlund

Who would ever believe that some 5,000 miles from San Francisco and 8,000 miles from Galax, Virginia (center of the universe), people are picking and singing, shoutin' and grinnin', stompin' and just in general going bananas over bluegrass music?

Well, I had heard rumors to that effect, so I decided to drag my tired body away from Oakland and take it to Japan to find out for myself. Also, being a collector of bluegrass and old-time music recordings, I had been thinking of going there for years to pick up some rare albums which are no longer available here. So, armed with a stand-by airplane ticket, a list of people to see and places to go (provided by Richard Keldsen of the 5th String, who sells a lot of Japanese instruments), and a knowledge of Japan I gained when I lived there many years ago, I was finally on my way.

As it turned out, I was not the only bluegrass freak on the airplane. I had noticed a couple of sleepy-eyed Japanese fellows carrying a couple of Martin guitars and a mandolin at the airport and was glad to see them get on the same plane. Maybe the tedious ten-hour plane flight won't be so bad after all! I was able to talk with them for quite awhile before they passed out from exhaustion (they had had quite a few beers the previous night and little sleep). They were from Kobe (a large city a couple hundred miles from Tokyo), have been bluegrass fans for several years, and were in the U.S. to attend a few festivals and pick up some good instruments. The night before they had wandered into Paul's Saloon, managed to stand in with High Country for a couple of numbers, and, as I understand, almost brought the roof down. Unfortunately, I wasn't there but heard about it when I returned.

Once in Japan, the first place I headed for was the Kawase Music Store, located in the Chiyoda section of Tokyo. This was a task in itself, as Tokyo is a maze of unnamed streets and numberless buildings and shops. Street maps are virtually non-existent and worthless when you do find one. So what you have to do is take the subway to the station that you think is closest to the area you want to be and start from there by asking policemen or younger Japanese for directions--a pretty horseback method, but it seems to work and it sure beats paying for a taxi.

Anyway--back to Kawase Music! The store was started by the elder Mr. Kawase about 25 years ago and is still run by him and his son, Tatsuo. If you're looking for quality acoustic instruments--banjos, guitars, fiddles, etc.--then it's definitely one of the finest stores of its kind in the world. The experience of walking into that store for the first time was comparable to my first visit to the Grand Canyon or to Glacier Point in Yosemite--words can't describe it! An original D-45, flanked by Herringbones, several pre-war Mastertones (RB-3's, RB-4's, Tenors), a couple of Loar F-5 mandolins, an old L-5, etc. greet you as you enter the front door. Unfortunately, these are part of Mr. Kawase's personal collection and are not for sale. However, there are many other old Martins of various sizes and styles, new Martins, old Mastertones and many fine mandolins and fiddles which are for sale, in addition to complete lines of fine Japanese guitars, banjos, etc. The prices for the American instruments are incredibly high--due to the 30% import duties--and are in very high demand by Japanese bluegrass pickers. Of the three or four bluegrass bands I saw over there, all the band members owned vintage American instruments--among the finest I've seen or heard. I was offered \$2,000 for my RB-4, sight unseen, and it's not even an original!

Tatsuo Kawase speaks excellent English and was very helpful in helping me locate other places of interest to visit. He

also treated me to a nice meal, Japanese style, and a tour of the Asakusa District of Tokyo, one of the oldest districts and richest in Japanese tradition and architecture. If you're ever in Tokyo, please drop into Kawase Music and say hello. You'll be glad you did.

While in Tokyo, I met Toshio Sugamuna, a superb flat-picker and staff member of June Apple Magazine (an excellent Japanese bluegrass publication, complete with ads for Col. Sanders KFC!). He introduced me to Tokyo's version of Paul's Saloon--a place called Time Tunnel Texas - 1871, located near the Roppongi subway station, which features bluegrass and C/W music. I was fortunate to be there when one of Japan's top bluegrass bands, the Morning Bugle Band, was performing. These guys are terrific!!! Composed of Masuo Sasabe on guitar (ex-member of Apple Seed), Harvo Kurokawa on banjo (of Bluegrass 45), Tetsu Shimomura on bass, Kim Sasaki on mandolin, and Jiro ("Do you know Byron Berline?") Moizumi on fiddle, they remind me quite a bit of the New South, with Tony Rice and J.D. Crowe. (By the way, Tony Rice is almost a national hero over there--the Japanese really go for hot licks and clean, fast picking!) One thing that takes a little getting used to, however, is the sheet music stand which all the bands use to read the lyrics to the songs, as most of the bluegrass songs are sung in English and not translated into Japanese (with the exception of some original Japanese bluegrass numbers). Masuo told me that the band is hoping to tour the U.S. next summer and play at a few festivals and clubs around the country. This being the case, watch out America!

I also met Robert Tainaka, who is the honcho in back of Towa Enterprises (promoter of bluegrass concerts by American bands, a la Jim and Jesse, Lilly Brothers, etc.) and originator of Japan's first bluegrass band, The Bluegrass Rangers. He still plays bluegrass nightly at the Suehiro Angus Ranch, an American-style steak house in Tokyo's Ginza District. (Bring lots of money.)

Another bluegrass hot spot in Japan is the Kobe-Kyoto area. In fact, the Kyoto Bluegrass Festival is scheduled for this October. If you're ever in Kyoto, be sure to drop into the Jujiyo Record Store in downtown Kyoto for an amazing selection of bluegrass LP's. In Tokyo, the Harmony Record Store, around the corner from Kawase Music, and the Yamaha Store in the Ginza are loaded with bluegrass LP's. All Japanese LP's are flawlessly pressed with no surface noise or warps, and beautifully packaged--a real blessing as I am used to returning up to 30% of the records I buy here for one reason or another.

Among the recordings available in Japan are the complete works of the Monroe Brothers (all 60 songs); a box collection of all the RCA material recorded by the original Carter Family (excellent!); early Mercury material by the Stanley Brothers; Flatt and Scruggs; etc., Star-day reissues of the Country Gentlemen, Bill Clifton, our own Vern and Ray, Jim and Jesse, etc. etc. etc. I could go on and on, but I won't. I think you've got the idea. I strongly urge all of you bluegrass fans to get a Japanese pen-pal. If you just want to listen, I plan to play most of the material I picked up in Japan on future editions of "PIG IN A PEN" on KPFA (see Bluegrass Billboard).

When not tracking down bluegrass music, I spent the rest of my eight days in Japan visiting my old home in Kamakura, looking up old family friends, and riding the trains.

Needless to say, eight days isn't much, but it was enough to re-acquaint me with a beautiful country, humble and gentle people, and, since bluegrass music has arrived, discover that it's an excellent place for a bluegrass freak to spend a little time.

GRACE NOTES

MY GRASS IS BLUE

No sooner had Cousin Al's headsets cooled off down in Los Gatos when in stepped the latest addition to the Northern California bluegrass radio retinue. His name is Phil Silvers (no relation) and he comes to us all the way from Southern California to brighten up once again the prime time radio airwaves. Bringing along an extensive library and experience as a "radio personality" on country music stations, Phil entitles his Saturday afternoon offering "My Grass is Blue". The time is 3-5 p.m. and the station is KRVE-FM, the "little giant" of the South Bay Area (even as far north as Petaluma and Vallejo) at 95.3 on the dial. Incidentally, Phil has a "Billboard" feature on the show at the midway point and is equipped to broadcast live bands to a limited extent. Within the next several weeks, KRVE will be moving to larger facilities and will be able to handle any size live production you'd care to provide, possibly including (perish the thought) Electricgrass. So give a listen and help bluegrass grow.

MEMBERSHIP GROWS

As expected, the second jamboree in Fairfield-by-the-Freeway helped our membership drive significantly. Over 35 new families and individuals signed up under our "half-price sale" and our rolls are now bulging with somewhere in excess of 150 souls. Renewal notices will probably be mailed to everybody in December, but then again, we may try a staggered mailing. We'll let you know.

ATTENTION 5-STRING PICKERS!

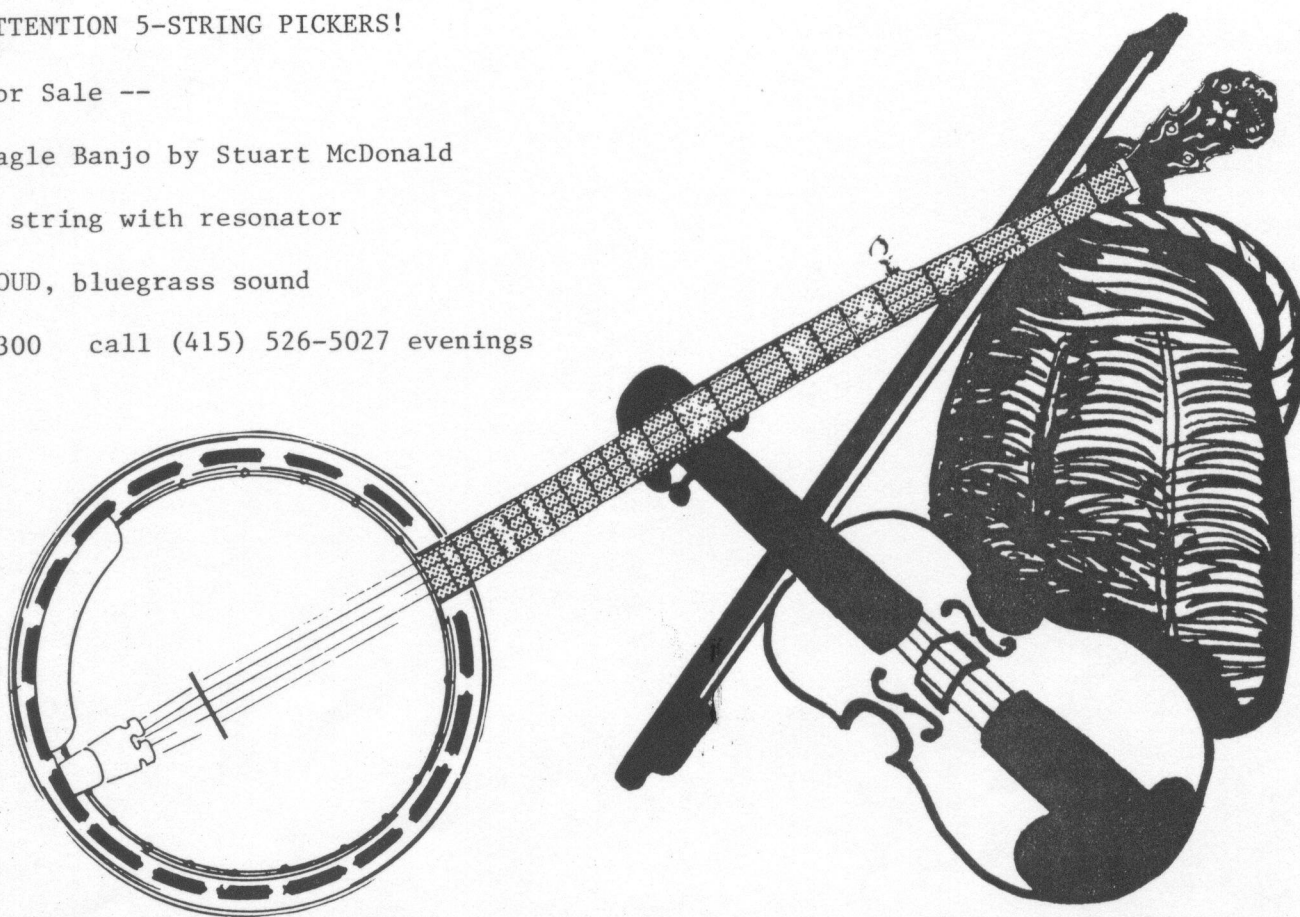
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Complete the following information (print or type):

Name _____

Address: (Street) _____

(City & State) _____ (ZIP) _____

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Other Memberships at this Address (\$3.75 each thru December):

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List instruments played: _____

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

Remit check or money order to: California Bluegrass Association, P.O. Box 11287,
San Francisco, Ca. 94101.