



## June Breakdown Intro

"The CBA is an all-volunteer organization." How many times have we heard those words?! Truly, the CBA is only as good as our volunteers. This issue takes a look at a few of our most active and dedicated volunteers, with a particular focus on Southern California. Regional Director Coordinator Ted Kuster is assembling an active team that is working hard on the new South State 48 event. The December Breakdown surveyed the rich history of SoCal Bluegrass bands. In this issue, we add another iconic band to the list and check out the Bluegrass Bus. Many thanks as always to Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow for her interviews and generous spirit! In next month's Breakdown we'll introduce you to the 2021 Honorary Lifetime and Super Volunteer awardees.

## Chairman's Report



**Pete Ludé**  
CBA Board Chair

I hope you are enjoying your summer as much as our family is! What a relief to finally be back to in-person concerts and jams. It feels like we're finally emerging from this strange and challenging year, with a wonderful, music-filled path ahead.

The Turn Your Radio OnLine fundraiser has now wrapped up, and it was a fantastic success. We produced our third and final webcast on Father's Day weekend, June 19, closing out the silent auction and announcing the winners of this year's phenomenal raffle prizes from sponsors Santa Cruz Guitar Company and Taylor Guitar. We're extraordinarily grateful for their support, as well as to all the companies and individuals who donated over 100 items for our auction, and to all of you who made personal donations. Truly an inspirational community!

Now, CBA is focused on bringing all our members and friends together for concerts, jams, and festivals. It's been too long in isolation! **The CBA Fall Campout is returning to Lodi from October 11 to 17** – with our **Annual Member Meeting on Saturday October 16**.

We are super proud to be introducing a new jamming event in Southern California – the **South State 48, being held November 5 through 7 in Carlsbad**. Information and hotel booking are now on the CBA website. *Continued on Page 2*

## President's Report



**Theresa Gooding**  
CBA President

I was recently asked the question "If you could give a quick marketing pitch for the CBA, what would you say?" I was surprised how challenged I was to quickly produce an elevator pitch!! As is often the case when a response in the moment is less than satisfying, you just wish another chance could be given. I thought I would use this column as my second chance to deliver an "8 by 10 glossy worthy" answer.

So here goes..... For over 45 years, the California Bluegrass Association has worked to build and grow a community of volunteers dedicated to the mission of promoting, encouraging, preserving, and supporting Bluegrass, Old-time, gospel, and traditional music. The CBA's volunteer spirit has created a truly special family in every sense of the word. Ours is a family that spans all generations and backgrounds, with a unique dedication to both preserving our history and forging our future. The CBA keeps traditional music in the present while passionately seeking out and supporting the next generation of musicians, leaders, and fans. All of this against a backdrop of extraordinary music and more fun than anyone deserves.

As we look forward to our careful return to normal, I hope the next time I'm offered 30 seconds to "pitch" the CBA I'll be ready; because there are jams to get back to, concerts to watch, camps to attend, and friendships to grow. **Many nonprofits have suffered declining membership numbers during Covid, and CBA is no different. We appreciate the support and dedication of our membership and look forward to growing this extended family. Help us emerge strong and bring a friend!!**



**WE WANT YOU**

It's time to submit your petition to run for the CBA Board of Directors. Ask any board member and they will tell you that it's a challenging but rewarding experience. Deadline is August 15.

<https://californiabluegrass.org/board-elections/>

**(re)JOIN CBA**

<https://www.cbaweb.org/About/Join>

## We are looking for a new Instrument Lending Librarian!



**Darby Brandli**  
CBA President Emerita

**The Kids Instrument Lending Library is looking for its 4th Librarian.** Since its opening following the death of CBA Treasurer Darrell Johnston (who inspired the idea and after whom it is officially named) in 2004, the Library has loaned countless basses, guitars, fiddles, banjos, mandolins, and dobros to CBA Youth Program kids, many of whom might otherwise have been unable to learn and play on a good instrument.

Over the years, the Library has been ably and lovingly maintained by Sharon and Steve Elliot, Bruce Long, and for almost the last decade, by Randy January. Each Librarian has worked hard to make the Library even better. During his tenure, Randy developed a digital inventory system, helped us find a climate-controlled storage area, and rehatted previously unplayable instruments. **It is time for Randy to pass the role of Librarian on to one or more volunteers.**

The inventory is currently in a storage unit in Roseville, but the CBA Youth Program team will help with moving the inventory to a unit convenient to the new Librarian.

We have developed a "pony express" system of delivering and receiving instruments using our pool of Regional Directors and other CBA members. The new Librarian(s) will check instruments in and out and determine playability and whether any "set up" is required by our pool of luthiers. The Librarian's largest annual responsibility is to get inventory to Grass Valley for the Academy and to establish a space for returns and donations.

I am spearheading the committee to replace Randy and can be contacted at [darbybrandli@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:darbybrandli@californiabluegrass.net) or 1.510.735.6364. **We would love to hear from you!**



## Thank You, Dave



**Mei Lin Heirendt**  
CBA Regional Director  
Region: 1 Sierra

I met Dave Clark, former Regional Director for the Sierra Region, in the summer of 2019 at a jam. At the time, I had been going to the annual Father's Day Festival since I was a baby and had been playing Bluegrass for years. However, I hadn't been very involved in my local Bluegrass scene and rarely went to regular jams. The second my dad and I arrived at this jam and set our instruments down, **we were welcomed by Dave; the environment he created and maintained was really special.**

Dave always took the time to patiently explain jam etiquette to newcomers or switch instruments if there were too many mandolin players or if there weren't any guitar players. I remember there was one song I couldn't quite follow the chord structure on, so I completely screwed up my break--Dave let me try it again after a few more rounds.

I know I speak for the entire local Bluegrass community when I say we will miss Dave, but we wish him the best with his move to Massachusetts so he can be closer to family. **We want to thank him profusely for the energy he put into keeping the Bluegrass scene thriving!**

*Ed: Although she was appointed as a Regional Director only a few months ago, Mei Lin has enthusiastically promoted young local musicians, led jams, and started planning events as her Sierra Region begins to open up. She serves as an inspiration for all Regional Directors. Her heartfelt "Thank You Dave" video can be viewed on YouTube.*



## J.D. Rhynes: 2009 Honorary Life Member



**Phil Boerner**  
Breakdown Contributor

J.D. Rhynes was at Jack Sadler's pickin' party that hot summer night in 1974 when plans were made to form the CBA. For decades, starting in the 1950s, he played bass or rhythm guitar with his great friends and fellow Arkansans, Vern Williams and Ray Park. He also played bass on two albums with Rose Maddox and the Vern Williams Band.

The CBA's first Director Emeritus, J.D. has made road trips, been to picking parties, and hung out with most of the luminaries in Bluegrass. He served as the backstage manager for the CBA Father's Day Festival and was on the CBA Board of Directors for



**Danny and Don and the Bluegrass Bus**



**Grateful Dudes superfan Hollyn at Vincenzo's**



19½ years. For decades, J.D. was one of the best-known emcees at the CBA and other festivals, introducing Bluegrass stars onstage and hanging out with them backstage. Select bands at the CBA festivals have been treated



to his full breakfasts that included cowboy coffee and biscuits baked in a cast iron Dutch oven.

An excellent cook, for 28 years J.D. wrote

"Bluegrass Kitchen," the popular monthly cooking column in the Bluegrass Breakdown. Some of his best recipes and tales from life were gathered in a book, *JD's Bluegrass Kitchen: Comfort Food the California Bluegrass Way*, published in 2015 as a fundraiser for the CBA's Youth Program. J.D. is a funny and masterful storyteller and has written over 100 "Welcome Columns" for the CBA's website. Read those columns and you'll learn that J.D. was there for a lot of the important moments in California Bluegrass history.

*Ed: Check out J.D.'s culinary and life wisdom in the extensive CBA website Bluegrass Breakdown collection which is accessible on the home page of the CBA website.*

## Calling all Luthiers, Bands, Teachers, and Event Coordinators

Have a band? Are you a luthier or a music teacher? **What are you waiting for?** Tell the Bluegrass and Old-time world about your group or yourself. You can post your information here:

<https://californiablugrass.org/resources/>

Got a live or video show coming up? Are you sponsoring a festival? How about a jam? You can post the details here:

<https://californiablugrass.org/calendar/community/add>

Looking for an event in your area? Go here:  
<https://californiablugrass.org/calendar/>



The CBA board of directors is sending this Bluegrass Breakdown newsletter out each month to the Bluegrass and Old-time community. We would like to thank current members for their support and we invite those who are not members to join the CBA.



# Southern California is Opening Up!

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This will be followed by the **Great 48 Bluegrass jam in Bakersfield in January.**

We're also happy to announce the **Father's Day Bluegrass Festival for next June 16 – 19, 2022** – back at our traditional venue at the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley. We've lined up some fantastic bands – both California's finest and your favorite national touring acts, which will be announced soon. Tickets go on sale 9/1.

CBA is also busy expanding our Youth Program with our new **online Youth Academy as well as the new "Bluegrass Camp!" iPad app.** It's exciting that CBA's Jam-a-Thon - which featured over 48 hours of live, non-stop music online - was nominated as IBMA "Event of the Year". We're continuing to expand the new CBA website, and update our membership management software to keep in better touch with you – our members.

With so many activities going on throughout California, **CBA is always grateful to welcome new volunteers to the team.** We have a phenomenal team of passionate folks working on everything from circulating posters to editing videos. And from helping sign up new members to grantwriting. Do you have a few hours to spare? Please contact us at [volunteer@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:volunteer@californiabluegrass.net) or call toll-free at (844) BLU-GRAS to learn how you can help. I look forward to seeing you at one of these events very soon!

## Regional Director Update



**Ted Kuster**

Regional Director Coordinator

It sure is an exciting time to be a Regional Director for the CBA! As we come back from the long layoff, our directors are busy cranking out new ideas and projects aimed at getting Bluegrass and Old-time music in front of more eyes and ears across California. Southern California is seeing a whole lot of fresh activity. So is the Grass Valley/Nevada City area, led by Mei Lin Heirendt, our newest and youngest Director. **Regional Directors organize both private and public jams; show school kids how much fun Bluegrass can be; help find venues for bands traveling through; and generally find ways to keep growing their local Bluegrass and Old-time community.**

Every part of California is its own special place and deserves its own careful, attentive Regional Director to help get the word out about Bluegrass and Old-time music. This is no time to have several key areas without

their own Director! **The East Bay needs one; so does the Stockton area, the Butte County area, and especially the Bakersfield area.** If you live in one of these regions of California and you'd like to get more involved with the Bluegrass scene, you might want to give Regional Directing a try! Drop me a line at [tedkuster@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:tedkuster@californiabluegrass.net) and we'll talk.

## Donna Hargis

Donna Hargis is the Regional Director for Region 6, Huntington Beach, which covers parts of Orange and Los Angeles County. Donna got into Bluegrass about six years ago after taking up the guitar. One day she cautiously showed up at the Mile Square Park Bluegrass Meetup in Fountain Valley and was delighted to find other beginners there. Since then, Donna has been active in local jams, volunteering at festivals, helping out at concerts, and is a member of the South State 48 planning committee.



As a middle school teacher, Donna has experience working with kids, and would like to encourage their participation in a program called "KidGrass," which she is starting in the fall. She wants to make this a family event, with both the kids and their parents joining in. **Donna believes that Southern California can learn from the successful programs that have been going on up North, such as Kids on Bluegrass.**

Orange County is starting to open up. The Mile Square Park Bluegrass Jam begins each Saturday morning at 10:00; beginners are welcome. Shutt's Fabricators in Huntington Beach has recently hosted Nu-Blu, Never Come Down, and the Get Down Boys. These events were outdoors and were well attended. Special Consensus is scheduled to play there in August.

Nonetheless, not enough venues in Donna's region are available for bands to stop by

and play at when they're traveling through. Donna is looking at coffee shops and clubs that might be willing to provide a place for live music, which she expects will attract more bands and introduce more people to Bluegrass music.

In addition, she's working to grow the CBA membership in Orange County by taking advantage of its huge population and the fine weather. **Her pitch is "Bluegrass with a Southern California twist!"**

## Robert Wheeler IV

Robert Wheeler IV is the Regional Director for Region 26, Los Angeles County East. This large area includes the Inland Empire, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Temecula. Robert lives in Claremont.

The Father's Day Festival is what enticed Robert join the CBA. He went to his first one three years ago with his children and had a great time. They started their vacation by going to the Redwoods and then to the festival. He was hooked. **The next year he volunteered at the Father's Day Festival. He wanted to help and give back.**

Robert is excited about the challenge of being a Regional Director. The area is full of Bluegrass players, so there is a great opportunity to grow the CBA community. He is working with other organizations to get together and promote Bluegrass events and concerts.

Robert believes that we can connect more folks through jams and campouts and similar events in local parks. That way, someone can walk by, hear what's going on, and be inspired to participate. It's a way of bringing people in. They can see their friends and

neighbors playing at any level, and that makes it more enticing to them.

Though he himself stumbled into Bluegrass, he feels that most people do not show up at festivals and campouts

randomly. His goal is to put Bluegrass out there – farmer's markets, open mics, street fairs. Anywhere you can get people walking by who will stop and listen. This may be the first time they hear something they may enjoy really getting into.



**Robert says “being a CBA member is to be part of a community. Music is about community. We’re not just listening, we’re playing music together.”**

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## **Danny “Hootenanny” Clark**

Danny Clark is one of the three CBA Regional Directors for Orange County, where he grew up listening to his father’s Bluegrass band, Crystal River, rehearsing in the living room. When his parents eventually retired from the family business, they went back to Owensboro every year to the IBMA. Eventually, his family settled in Nashville, where Danny went to high school and then on to East Tennessee State University, where he was involved in the Bluegrass program.



In 2008 he worked at the International Bluegrass Museum (now the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum). During his five-year tenure there Danny concentrated on membership, marketing, and fundraising for the new Bluegrass Museum building. It took him and his team barely a year-and-a-half to secure funding for the new Museum building, which now houses a treasure trove of Bluegrass memorabilia, including a photo of the CBA Father’s Day Festival in the permanent exhibit!

**To reach out to the many local musicians, he is leading a CBA planning group that is exploring ways of getting together and brainstorming locations for events like a concert series, outdoor camping, and the South State 48. And that is just the beginning, according to Danny: “more venues for more frequent events!”**

Now that Orange County is emerging from Covid restrictions, Danny senses a yearning to get together. Most of the jams he has been going to are private invitation-only outdoor jams; but moving forward, he foresees the SoCal Regional Directors hosting multiple jams across the vast region.

Danny has helped produce numerous Bluegrass events, including talent buying for

festivals, event production, and tour management. He’s hoping to use those skills to tap into the Bluegrass market here.

**Danny will tell anyone who will listen (and with his infectious enthusiasm, everyone does!) that CBA membership helps support Bluegrass music and the structure that allows jamming and events. The CBA links this tradition together all over the state.**

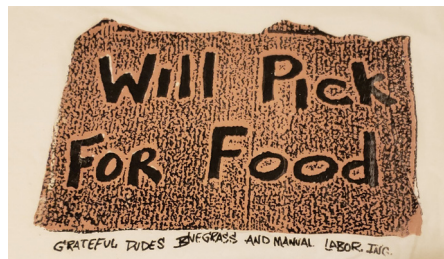
Since he became a Regional Director during the pandemic, he has been making the best of a tough situation by contributing to the Turn Your Radio OnLine series, including booking the bands. He is currently in two bands, The Greasy Spoons in Orange County and the Angel City Bluegrass Boys in Los Angeles. He plays fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and sings tenor and high baritone.

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## **The Grateful Dudes**

The Grateful Dudes started out with two dudes, Rodger Phillips and Scott Micale, who scored a gig playing at Vincenzo’s Pizzeria in Newhall for \$150 and beer and pizza in the late 80s. They never left. **Thirty years on they still perform every Saturday. This may be the world’s longest-running gig, dude.**

The group’s first name was the L.A. Dogs. Later on, High Strung. And finally in a dubious fit of inspiration, it became The Grateful Dudes. Rodger “dudifully” checked with Jerry Garcia to make sure the name was okay. Since Jerry never replied, Rodger figured it was cool. Ironically, their iconic band T-shirt “Will Pick for Food” was worn by many a Deadhead, and the bumper sticker is still occasionally seen headed down the road.



The list of the Dudes and “Subdued Sub-Dudes” reads like a who’s who of SoCal Bluegrass royalty. In the early 1990s two new players joined: Dennis Fetchet on fiddle and later Bill Bryson (who had known Rodger from the Bluegrass Cardinal days) on bass. Rodger says these two players took the band to a new level. Bill was a busy guy and always had interesting reasons that he couldn’t play some weeks. One week he was “with Tony Rice in Japan” and another week he was “at the Ryman with Emmylou.” Soon Herb Pedersen joined. Musicians passing

through Los Angeles would play with the band: Sam Bush showed up one night and Roland White another.

Their fans came every week, year after year, to be a part of the magic. Long-time fans recall that some nights you couldn’t get a seat.



The band became a family, sharing birthday parties and other happy events. At the end of each evening you would hear everyone say, “See you next week.” When Bill Bryson fell sick, they filmed a get-well message, with each of the regulars saying a few words to him. When he died, they held a memorial for him at Vincenzo’s.

The Dudes stopped playing when Vincenzo’s closed during the pandemic. As California opens up will the Dudes continue their gig? There’s nothing for sure at this moment, but we hope they continue the streak for another thirty-plus years.

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## **The Bluegrass Bus**

When Donald Roy Clark heard the opening theme song of the Beverly Hillbillies, he knew Bluegrass was his music. He immediately became a huge fan of Earl Scruggs. Over the years he saw the many publicity photos of Flatt and Scruggs standing in front of their Martha White touring bus, a 1948 Flxible. So one day Don got his own. He purchased a 1955 Flxible from a feed and tackle shop in Baldwin Park, CA. He named it The Bluegrass Bus Museum, and set out on the road, collecting the hundreds of autographs and photos from Bluegrass and Country music legends which now cover its interior.

The vault of the Museum contains videos of Bluegrass festivals, which Don started filming in the 1980s. **Don and his son Danny are currently in the process of digitizing and uploading some of the amazing “footage” to YouTube.**

Since 1987 the bus has toured the country and entertained festival goers. The Bluegrass Bus Museum can be booked to appear at festivals and other events by going to the website: [www.bluegrassbus.com](http://www.bluegrassbus.com).