

Mom, Bluegrass and... Parkfield Bluegrass Festival, May 10-13

By Wendy Stockton

Are you tired of stuffing yourself and your mom with warmed-over brunch vittles on her special day? This year, why not treat mom, the lawn chairs and yourself to four days of the most earth-shaking

bluegrass music around? Invite her to the (earthquake) center of the world on May 10th –13th for the 9th annual Parkfield Bluegrass Festival.

Continued on A-22



Highway 1 plays the Parkfield Bluegrass Festival

Father's Day BG Festival! June 14-17

The tall pines of the Nevada Country Fairgrounds are bracing themselves for what is sure to be a rocking Father's Day Bluegrass Festival. The deadline for advance ticket purchases is May 31st, so please mail in the form in this newsletter or visit www.cbaontheweb.org to order your tickets at the CBA member, advance purchase bargain price.

See page A-19 for the Father's Day Festival band and workshop schedules.

Right: One of Artist Steve Johnson's designs for event T-shirts. It's Nevada Country Red!



20th annual Santa Cruz Bluegrass Faire, May 5

The Santa Cruz Bluegrass Society presents its 20th Annual Bluegrass Faire, an afternoon of free, live bluegrass music for all to enjoy. Four local bluegrass bands will be performing: Harmony Grits, The Abbott Family Band, R.E.O Haywagon, and Homefire. Faire attendees may also learn about the history of this music and information on how to pursue more of this very American art form. Raffled items will include Strawberry tick-

ets, CDs, and even a new musical instrument! So bring the family, set your blanket on the grass and enjoy a day in the sun! If you forget your picnic basket you can always order up a hot dog or garden burger and a soft drink, and finish it off with a cookie or two. The ducks will gobble up any crumbs you leave behind.

This free event takes place noon-5 PM in San Lorenzo Park near downtown Santa Cruz.



The Abbott Family: part of an all Santa Cruz bill on the Duck Pond Island

Inside this issue...



CBA Spring
Campout
-- see B-1



The Stairwell Sisters
--see B-14

• • • • •
• **New
advertising
rates** •
• see page 3 •
• • • • •

PLUS...

- Bluegrass 'n Stuff
- Feature Articles
- Calendar of Events
- Music Matters
- Luthier's Corner
- Recording Reviews
- J.D. 's Kitchen

Bluegrass Breakdown
California Bluegrass Association
P.O. Box 5037
Marysville, CA 95901

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California Bluegrass Association Membership Application

Last Name	First Name	Spouse:	Last Name	First Name
Address	Child(ren)			
City	State	Zip	Year of Birth	

Phone _____ Email: _____

Membership Categories:

Single Membership	\$25.00
With Spouse/other added	\$30.00
Children 13-18 (non-voting)	\$1.00 each
Children 13-18 (voting)	\$10.00 each
Band Memberships (3-5 Members)	Out of State Only \$40.00

Membership includes 12 issues of the Bluegrass Breakdown, and discount prices for all CBA sponsored festivals and concerts. Band memberships available for out-of-state bands. Each member is entitled to one copy of the publication. Please write names and addresses on a separate sheet of paper.

Prices subject to change without notice.

Please sign me up for the following:
 Single - 1 vote for _____ year(s) @\$25
 Couple - 2 votes for _____ year(s) @\$30
 Add _____ non-voting Children @\$1 each
 Add _____ voting Children @\$10 each
 Children's names and birthdates: _____

If Senior Citizens (65 and over), please list birth years:

New _____ Renewal of Member # _____

Membership Total	\$_____
Kids on Bluegrass Fund	\$_____
CBA Heritage Fund	\$_____
Kids Instrument Lending	\$_____
Library Donation	\$_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$_____

Please make checks payable to California Bluegrass Association (CBA). All donations are tax deductible.

Mail to: CBA Membership Vice President Carolyn Faubel

PO Box 5037

Marysville, CA 95901-8501

For information, call 530-741-1259

or email CBAMembership@syix.com



CBA seeks candidates for the 2007/2008 Board of Directors

By Suzanne Denison

The CBA seeks candidates for the 2007/ 2008 Board of Directors. If you would like to be a part of the leadership team of the California Bluegrass Association, now is your chance. Candidates are sought for the 2007/2008 Board of Directors. Each board member is charged with attending monthly meetings and taking on a leadership role in our organization. Board members volunteer their time to make our events happen and keep the association on an even financial keel, while promoting Bluegrass, Old-time and Gospel music in California. If you are interested in becoming a candidate, you will need to circulate a petition of candidacy and have it signed by at least fifteen

(15) current CBA members. Your completed petition should be sent to our Membership Vice President, Carolyn Faubel at P.O. Box 5037, Marysville, CA 95901-8501. In addition, you should send a candidate's statement and photograph via e-mail to mrvarner@ix.netcom.com or mail to Bluegrass Breakdown, P.O. Box 1245, Boulder Creek, CA 95006. Petitions should be submitted no later than August 15, 2007 to be published on the ballot in September 2007. The election will be held at the CBA's Annual Meeting and Campout in October. If you would like further information, please call or email one of the members of the current Board of Directors listed on Page A-2 of this issue.

Reminder: New CBA membership address

By Carolyn Faubel

Any time a person or an organization goes through an address change, it seems to take several months to get all the post office and "old address vs. new address" issues straightened out. And the CBA is currently experiencing some of those P.O. hang-ups. Around the first of this year the address for Membership, both in the Breakdown and the website, has been shifted over to the Marysville address instead of the old Stockton address. All Membership mail now should go to the new location at P.O. Box 5037, Marysville, CA 95901. Although we have a forwarding order in, it is not always reliable, so if you have sent something to the Stockton P.O. box and it has been returned to you, just slap a new stamp and address label on it and send it to Marysville.

Handling fees for internet transactions

By Ed Alston

Internet transactions such as CBA ticket purchases and membership renewals are now subject to modest handling fees. The board has approved these fees -- which will increase the cost of an internet purchase by about 4% -- to recoup most charges assessed by our bank on such transactions. However, the board exempted donations, which will remain exempt from handling fees.

Internet transaction handling fees

Lower	Upper	Charge	Lower	Upper	Charge
0.00	30.99	1.00	301.00	330.99	11.00
31.00	60.99	2.00	331.00	360.99	12.00
61.00	90.99	3.00	361.00	390.99	13.00
91.00	120.99	4.00	391.00	420.99	14.00
121.00	150.99	5.00	421.00	450.99	15.00
151.00	180.99	6.00	451.00	480.99	16.00
181.00	210.99	7.00	481.00	510.99	17.00
211.00	240.99	8.00	511.00	540.99	18.00
241.00	270.99	9.00	541.00	570.99	19.00
271.00	300.99	10.00	571.00	600.99	20.00

California Bluegrass Association Bluegrass Breakdown

is published monthly as a tabloid newspaper at P.O. Box 5037 Marysville, CA 95901, by the California Bluegrass Association. The CBA is a non-profit organization founded in 1974 and is dedicated to the furtherance of Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Gospel music. The views of the authors does not necessarily reflect the views of the CBA or its Board of Directors. Membership in the CBA costs \$25 a year and includes a subscription to the *Bluegrass Breakdown*. A spouse's membership may be added for an additional \$5 and children between 13 and 18 for \$1.00 per child. Children 13-18 who wish to vote will have to join for \$10.00. Names and ages are required.

Band memberships are only available for the out of state bands; cost is \$40. Subscription to the *Bluegrass Breakdown* without membership is available only to foreign locations. Third class postage is paid at Stockton, California. *Bluegrass Breakdown* (USPS 315-350). Postmaster please send address changes to: *Bluegrass Breakdown*, P.O. Box 5037 Marysville, CA 95901. Copy and advertising deadline is the 1st of the month, one month prior to publication (i.e. February deadline is January 1st, etc).

Members are encouraged to attend all board meetings. Please contact any board member or call the CBA office at 916 838-6828 for information and directions.

Please send all contributions and advertisements to:

Mark Varner, editor - P.O. Box 1245, Boulder Creek, CA 95006
831-338-0618 -- email mrvarner@ix.netcom.com

Visit our Web Site at: www.cbaontheweb.org

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PLEASE NOTE NEW ADVERTISING RATES

Bluegrass Breakdown Advertising Rates

Display Advertising	Black & White ads	Four color ads
Full Page- 10" wide X 12.75" high.....	\$255.00	\$320.00
Half Page - horizontal -- 10" wide X 6.5" tall	\$144.00	\$180.00
Half Page - vertical -- 4.5" wide X 12.75" tall	\$134.00	\$170.00
Quarter Page 4.5" wide X 6.5" tall	\$70.00	\$90.00
Business Card - 2 columns wide (3 7/8") X 2" tall ..	\$35.00	\$45.00

Flyer insertion is available. Inquire for cost.

Other sizes of advertising are available. Discount pricing is applied to pre-paid ads running 3 months, 6 months or 12 months. Please call 831-338-0618 or email: mrvarner@ix.netcom.com for further information.

Advertisements should be submitted as PDF (or other approved format) files either on disc, CD or via e-mail. Advertisements can be produced by the editor upon request if artwork and photographs are submitted in advance.

Advertising proofs can be FAXed or e-mailed upon request if typesetting and/or layout is required. Please allow at least 5 extra days for production.

Special rates are in place for festival issues, due to the greater amount of issues printed and copies distributed. This is usually 200% of the regular rate, but the Board of Directors of the CBA reserves the right to change the policy at their discretion. Please contact the Editor for more details.

Classified Advertising

The current rates for classified ads are based on 3 1/2 inches of typed copy and are as follows: \$8.00 for the first three lines and 50¢ for each additional line.

All advertising must be paid for in advance unless prior arrangements have been made for billing. A 12% late fee will be charged if advertising invoices are not paid within 60 days of billing.

Make checks payable to the California Bluegrass Association and send check and ad to:

Mark Varner, Editor *Bluegrass Breakdown*
P.O. Box 1245, Boulder Creek, CA 95006

Phone 831-338-0618 or email mrvarner@ix.netcom.com

Ads can be uploaded to the CBA FTP site at: <http://www.cbaontheweb.org/AdUpload.asp>

ADVERTISING IN THE CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER, THE BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN IS A GREAT WAY TO PROMOTE YOUR PRODUCT OR EVENT. YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY IN OUR MEDIA KIT. TO RECEIVE A COPY PLEASE CONTACT DANA THORIN AT DANATHORIN@GMAIL.COM, BY PHONE AT 626-590-5177, OR WRITE HER AT 30 HIDDEN MEADOW LANE, SCOTTS VALLEY, CA 95066.

The CBA challenge

Letter from the Association's leadership details financial plans

**By Rick Cornish, Chairman of the Board of Directors
Darby Brandli, President
Carl Pagter, Chairman Emeritus**

We three are writing to alert you to a financial challenge facing the California Bluegrass Association. First, we want to make our members aware of the causes and nature of the situation. To do that, we've prepared and enclosed a FACT SHEET which lays out the details and the numbers. Second, we want to share with you the plan our leadership team has devised to address the financial challenge. And third, we want to tell you how you can help meet this challenge and return the CBA to its previous financial health.

The Plan

Simply stated, our recovery plan has three goals:

- to be in a position to sustain a worst-case scenario for Fathers Day 2007
- to be in a position to cover the

Association's monthly expenses after Fathers Day '07
- to restore the Association's reserves to a healthy level.

To achieve these goals, the board of directors has identified the following initiatives.

Membership Donation Challenge:

Far and away the most ambitious of our initiatives for restoring CBA reserves is the Membership Challenge. Twenty-six members of the CBA Leadership Team (board members and officers) have pitched in to create a Challenge Fund of \$17,300. Sierra Nevada Brewery of Chico has contributed another \$5,000, bringing the Fund to \$22,300. With this letter, we, the board of directors and officers of the California Bluegrass Association challenge our 3400+ members to match, through individual donations, that Challenge Fund. Donations can be made on line using your credit card by clicking

the Membership Challenge button or you can mail a check or money order to:

Ed Alston
P. O. Box 6954
Santa Maria, CA 93456

All donations made to the California Bluegrass Association are, of course, tax deductible.

Fathers Day Festival Expense Reductions:

All festival coordinators have been asked to cut their budgets. Bob Thomas, our CBA Controller and Operations Director, reports that good progress in paring expenses down has been made, including rental costs, comp tickets and hospitality expenses. Bob has also made contact with the festival's more costly headliners regarding voluntary reductions in talent fees; thus far, three have agreed to help!

Monthly Operating Expense

Reductions:

Cuts have either been made or are in process. For example, the CBA's part-time Operations Director job has, at least for the interim, been made a voluntary post. We will soon switch to a new printer for the Breakdown, which will result in substantial monthly savings. At this point, we have reduced our monthly run rate from about \$11K to \$8K.

Scaled-Down IBMA Involvement:

Costs associated with the CBA's presence at the IBMA's World of Bluegrass/Fan Fest will be dramatically reduced or eliminated altogether. For at least the immediate future, luncheon sponsorship, tradeshow presence and band showcase activities will be suspended.

Move to Self-Sustaining Program Model:

The California Bluegrass As-

sociation has, for three decades, paid the lion's share of costs for its programs through annual revenue generated by the Fathers Day Festival. It seems clear that this business model is no longer viable and that we must find a way to make each of our programs (Breakdown, web site, etc.), pay for themselves. Consequently, Breakdown ad rates have been increased, we have created a new press kit for ad sales and we have engaged a commissioned salesperson to more actively pursue new advertisers. Likewise, we have revised web site ad rates and are more aggressively pursuing new sales.

Delayed Consideration of SuperGrass III:

A decision to undertake a third SuperGrass event will be put off until after the Fathers Day Festival and will be predicated on the willingness of Bakersfield civic and business interests to underwrite a significant portion of the event's

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Mary Wonderly: Tuolumne
Sally Worland: Walnut Creek
Elizabeth Wrone: Berkeley
Nancy and Henry Zuniga: Squaw Valley

The California Bluegrass Association thanks these donors for their support. It's not too late to join these angels in making a donation to ensure the future of your organization. All gifts are tax deductible. See [www.cbaontheweb.org](http://cbaontheweb.org) to contribute by internet or send check or money order to:

Ed Alston
P.O. Box 6954
Santa Maria, CA
93456



The CBA challenge

Letter from the Association's leadership details financial plans

expenses.

Special Fund-Raising Events:

As you've probably heard, in April we scheduled the first in a series of fund-raising events aimed at re-building the Association's reserves. Rhonda Vincent and her band, Rage, had offered to do a concert for the CBA. All proceeds after expenses went into a special CBA Reserve Account. Please look for more benefit concerts. We've been very, very gratified to have already heard from a number of California bands which have offered their time and talent to do additional benefit concerts. More on these events in the coming weeks and months.

How can members help?

Before the "how", something about the why. We three are asking your help in restoring the Association's financial health because we believe in our hearts and souls that the California Bluegrass Association is worth supporting and keeping strong. The CBA has brought joy and pleasure and, in some cases, purpose, to the lives of thousands of people over the past three decades, and we want that to continue. Your elected board accepts full and complete responsibility for the financial situation in which we find ourselves. After some careful analysis, we now know how this happened, and we believe we know what needs to be done to correct the situation. But we also know that in order to restore the Association to the financial position it held 18 months ago, we must have the support of our bluegrass community. So, here's how you can help. First and foremost, if you can contribute to the Membership Challenge, please do so. If you believe in the California Bluegrass Association and what it has accomplished in the past 32 years, help us ensure that it will be here another three decades, and beyond. Second, please support our CBA benefit events and encourage your friends to do the same. Third, buy your tickets to the Thirty-Second Annual Fathers Day Festival now. NOW! Don't wait till later. Don't wait till you arrive at Gate Four. We need to know that last year's drop in attendance was a fluke, an anomaly. And lastly, let us know what you think. Write us (you can use the Message Board on the website), contact a board member or officer, or even speak to a volunteer at an Association event. If you've got your own ideas about raising money, or saving money, share them with us. Over its proud three-decade history, the California Bluegrass Association has encountered and overcome its share of problems. With your help, we'll get through this one and come out even stronger for it.

Fact Sheet -- The Current CBA Financial Challenge

The situation is really quite simple – we've had 3 major festivals in a row that cost us more to put on than we took in. Festivals have traditionally been our major source of operating revenue.

SuperGrass to generate substantial profit during its first few years, but had hoped that this inaugural festival, if it didn't break even, would sustain only relatively minor losses.

Instead, SuperGrass 2006 yielded a net loss of nearly \$20K. While the board of directors had hoped SuperGrass 2006 would

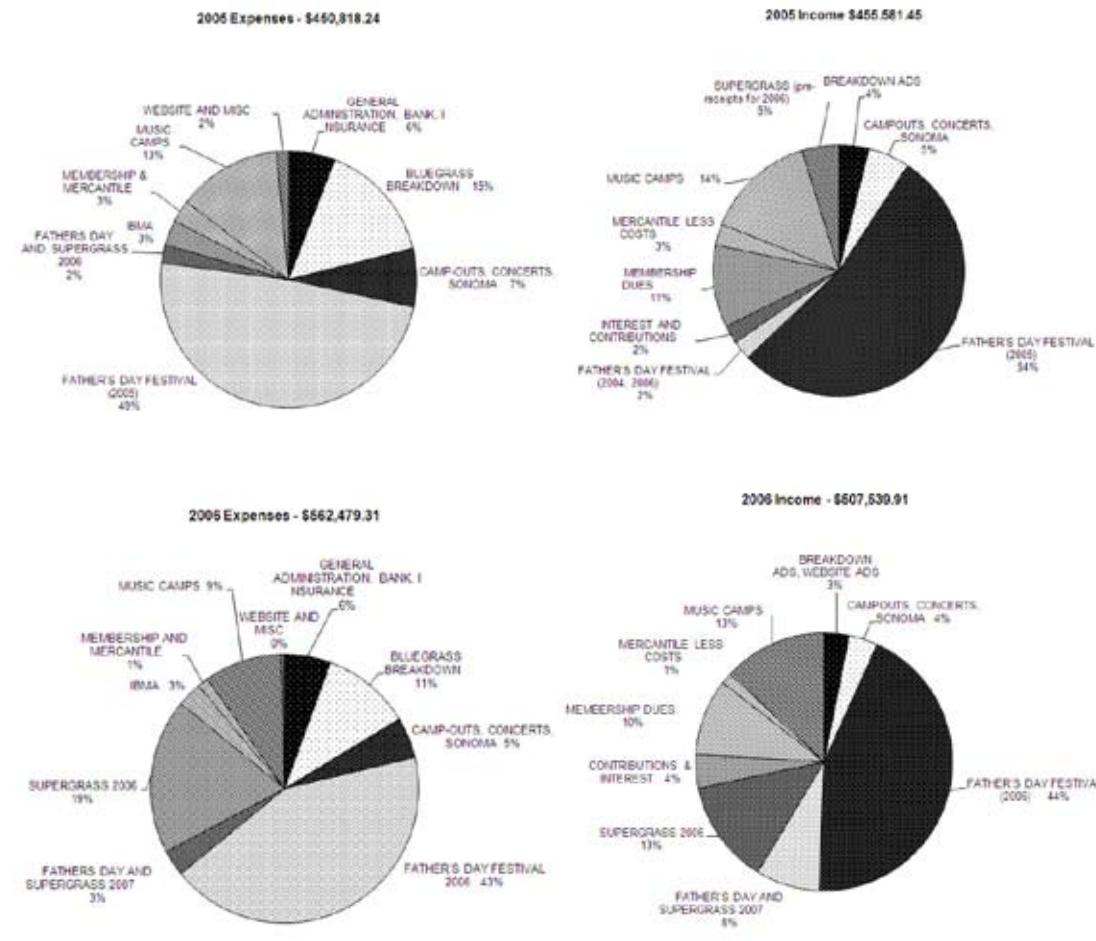
in the board's view, was largely the result of record-setting high fuel prices during the first half of 2006. (The current pace of advance ticket sales for Fathers Day Festival 2007 indicates that Fathers Day Festival 2006 indeed was an aberration.)

With SuperGrass 2006 losing nearly \$20K, and with Fa-

year – money we had built into our projected budget, and that was another mistaken assumption. The total value of donated instruments was down considerably from the previous year (we still have some instruments to sell from those donations). To offset this swing, festival attendance revenue for Su-

FACT SHEET -- THE CURRENT CBA FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

The situation is really quite simple – we've had 3 major festivals in a row that cost us more to put on than we took in. Festivals have traditionally been our major source of operating revenue. See:



* All figures shown are preliminary

See the above graphic.

First and foremost, we want there to be no mistake -- we lay the responsibility for this financial challenge squarely at the doorstep of the board of directors. In 2005, CBA's board approved an inaugural SuperGrass Festival to be held in Bakersfield the following February. This decision was made for a number of reasons. For one, a major festival in Bakersfield was seen as a way of reaching bluegrass fans in Southern California. For another, CBA had enjoyed long-term consistent success with its only major event, the annual Fathers Day Festival at Grass Valley. Fathers Day was consistently well attended and consistently generated a profit of \$35K-\$40K, which had enabled CBA to fund year-round its administrative expenses, and, over time, to build up about \$145K in cash assets. The board did not expect

break even, it felt that this loss was in line with results realized at inaugural festivals across the country, and so did not justify aborting SuperGrass 2007. The board believed that Fathers Day Festival 2006 would generate its customary profit of \$35K-\$40K, and that SuperGrass 2007, in its second year, would break even, or come close to doing so.

As it turned out, Fathers Day Festival 2006 lost money, (about \$14K), instead of earning the Association its anticipated \$35,000 in revenue a \$49,000 net "swing". The first Fathers Day Festival loss in the Association's history, it was due primarily to a dip of \$24K in attendance revenues, and secondarily, to increased expenses of around \$15K (fairground rental, insurance, talent contracts -- just about everything went up in 2006). The attendance drop-off,

Fathers Day Festival 2006 losing \$14K -- down about \$50K from its usual profit level -- CBA's balance sheet for calendar year 2006 showed a loss of about \$56K. A serious drop, but well within the Association's ability to sustain.

Then came SuperGrass 2007. Instead of decreasing artist expenses in light of the SuperGrass 2006 loss, we increased them by roughly \$38K, in the belief that

a much stronger line-up would ensure a much stronger gate. This turned out to be an erroneous assumption. Had we known that Fathers Day Festival 2006 would lose money, we would NOT have increased the artist expenses, but the contracts were in place prior to June of 2006, and CBA could not ethically renege on those contracts.

Moreover, it turned out that sponsorship revenue dropped by about \$24K from the previous

perGrass 2007 would have had to have more than doubled. Unfortunately, while attendance at SuperGrass 2007 was up considerably (actual headcount was up nearly 50%), the revenues from the additional ticket sales was not doubled, due to discount coupons and the addition of single-day tickets.

The bottom line -- our cash assets, built up over many, many years, have been nearly depleted. We are hopeful that the measures outlined earlier in this letter, along with some new policies for budgeting for festival expenses, will help us turn the corner. The CBA is a truly great organization, and we know our greatest asset – our membership, will help us get back to our usual fiscal health.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK By Darby Brandli

June is coming and so is the Father's Day Festival

It's coming and I love it! I love June! When I was growing up June meant the end of the school year and the beginning of summer vacation and, for my family when I was young, that meant Lake Tahoe. When Bruno and I finally had children of our own in the early 80's, we had to plan summer vacation for our own family. The year our children were three and six we planned a family camping trip culminating in a bluegrass festival held in an area where we had spent a lot of time in the 60's, the Nevada City/Grass Valley area. Bruno and I had both discovered bluegrass music in the early 60's in Berkeley but were not familiar with the California Bluegrass Association or this festival.

We planned a few days camping on the American River at Coloma and visiting the spot where John Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill. We saw beaver and my son Kurt almost stepped on a rattlesnake, fortunately he was still young enough to walk holding tightly to my hand and was pulled

up and over the snake.

We visited my Grandparent's old house in Georgetown, a place where I had spent lots of time in the 50's. We continued on Highway 49 through Auburn and toward Nevada City where Bruno and I had actually spent our first night as a married couple in 1969 in a wonderful old house fronting the shortest freeway in the world.

We arrived at the Nevada County Fairgrounds and were amazed to find so many people. We pitched our tent and explored the grounds and that did it! We knew, in that first hour, that we were home and have never looked back.

The children loved the festival and made friends immediately. They never became bluegrass fans but many of their friends now play in bluegrass bands and they are tolerant of the music. I believe that one day they will "rediscover" the music and become fans. They still attend festivals and are CBA members.

Bruno and I had our life transformed by our attendance at this first festival. We returned with our family for the next couple of years

and then met a group of Alaskan bluegrassers who, in turn, introduced us to local people who remain close friends. We added more festivals to the summer months and met more people. More and more people began camping with us and we began to host events at our house throughout the year. Our camp was named Camp Spam about a decade ago (another story for another time) and we somehow started "adopting" teenagers not related to us by anything other than the love of the music. (Some of these teenagers lived with us at various times when they reached their twenties and were homeless musicians).

We were always card carrying members of the CBA but never participated in official CBA business. We were totally satisfied with Father's Day and the lineup of musicians and the ambience of the CBA events. We received our reminder to renew our membership annually and sent in our check and our membership cards arrived in the mail. We purchased Early Bird tickets and the tickets arrived in the mail. We received the Bluegrass Breakdown each month and

read that wonderful publication cover to cover. We purchased festival shirts and merchandise items. We ate at the concessions. All those functions were "invisible" to us.

We immediately became interested in CBA business and decision making when the move to abolish the tent camping area raised its controversial head several years ago. The tent camping area was the center of our festival universe and that CBA business became visible and personal and all of a sudden our participation was essential. The "silent" membership group we belonged to was all of a sudden engaged and a voice emerged. That the CBA had a group that might make decisions we were not in tune with became immediately apparent where it had been invisible before. Epiphany!

We knew none of the officers or Board members of the CBA. Frank Solivan always camped across the road from us and we knew all about the Kids on Bluegrass Program. Frank's program enhanced our experience but did not introduce us to an inner circle. We knew no one who camped on the other side of the water ditch until Tom Tworek and I put together the Giant Banjo Booth about five years ago and I met some of the people who were responsible for the organization and were active decision makers. I began to meet some of the parents of the young people who hung out at our camp who had been there all along on the other side of the water ditch. I met Rick Cornish through his son, Phil, and looking back, hold him entirely responsible for what was to come.

Rick decided to run for the CBA Board. Mark Hogan, another friend and tent camper, again became active with the Board. The "anti tent camping area" wound was still raw enough to pique my interest in CBA policy. I was no longer watching small children and had time to participate at a different level in the CBA. Rick suggested I apply for the East Bay Activities Vice President position and the dye was cast.

I began to attend some of the Board meetings. Once I had met people who camped in the Heavy Metal section on the other side of the water ditch I wanted to visit with them and started questioning why bicycles were not allowed at the festival. On hot days, crossing the water ditch to socialize was something I did not want to do on foot. I found others who felt the same way and, voila, bicycles were re-introduced to the festival. I found a voice and that voice belonged to me.

CBA business became visible and I found that all the invisible actions in the past (festival planning, membership, tickets, merchandise, etc) were all made possible by an incredibly dedicated volunteer pool and they were just like me and the CBA Board was looking



Darby Brandli

for more participation and involvement. Rick was relentless (he can recruit, shame, cajole, beg) and more Spammers began volunteering and more and different CBA events became mandatory. The first CBA Music Camp marked a milestone in my involvement. We met young people who had somehow heard about the music camp and knew nothing of the CBA (some of them did not even know a festival followed the camp) and (another epiphany) I realized that we needed this group to ensure that the music remain alive and that the organization must reach out to a younger demographic.

So what is my message this month? First of all, JOIN or RE-NEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP. The second message is to VOLUNTEER. There is something for everyone to do and it is amazing what the organization accomplishes with volunteers.

Volunteers run the festivals, the campouts, the concerts, the jams, write the articles in the Breakdown, create, program and contribute to the fabulous website, choose and design and sell the merchandise, sell the tickets, manage the membership, run the absolutely wonderful children's programs and lending library and scholarship fund. Look at the electrical work that has to be done for events and the construction of the stages and the potluck planning and the entertainment selection and the IBMA event and every single small and large job that goes into making a festival occur...backstage, reservations, advertising, hospitality and security, gate work. All jobs are done by volunteers.

What we need are more ambassadors for bluegrass, old time and gospel music...we need you out in your own communities inviting people to hear about the music, to hear about the organization, to participate in this large community. We want you to bring someone "new" with you every time you attend an event. We want you to reach out to a younger demographic and be the ambassador for the music (you don't have to invite them to live with you but you can buy them a membership). We want you to join and participate in any way you choose. We want you to be a more active part of this large family.



Do you have a child who would like to participate in the Kids on Bluegrass Program?

Frank Solivan, Sr.

Currently the Kids on Bluegrass program, under the direction of Frank Solivan, Sr., takes place at the CBA Supergrass Bluegrass Festival in Bakersfield, Calif., the CBA Fathers Day Bluegrass Festival in Grass Valley, California and under the title of "Kids on Stage" also at Larry and Sondra Baker's "Bluegrassin' in the Foothills" festival in Plymouth, California.

Frank Solivan, Sr. has been directing this program for approximately 16 years and he and his kids consistently delight audiences with high quality and highly talented young people.

This program is open to children ages 3 to 18. The children must be able to sing and/or play their instrument WITHOUT parents or guardians help. Songs MUST be completely memorized (again without help). Children must have good enough understanding of their instrument to have good timing, know their chords and be able to change chords quickly, easily play 2 or three songs and the ability to play in a group.

Rehearsal takes place many hours during the day for several days at each festival and culminates in a stage production on the main stage at each festival. Parents and children must be ready to commit to all of the rehearsals.

To find out if your child is ready to participate in this wonderful program, visit Frank Solivan, Sr. at his campsite at any one of these festivals.

www.kidsonbluegrass.com

California is an island

By Chris Stuart

Early cartographers drew California as an island. Turns out they were right. The bluegrass map of the United States goes something like this.

Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia occupy most of the lands east of the Mississippi River, also known as the Great Lonesome River. At the center of these eastern lands is the metropolis of Nashville, into whose vortex whirl guitar pickers, songwriters, and others intent on slaying the Dark Lord of Country, but who, more often than not, become his servants, working long hours in Cracker Barrels whose lights can be seen at night from space.

The next largest cities are Rosine, Smith Ridge, and Shelby. In these towns, where giants once walked the earth, are incubating pods that produce generations of bluegrass artists able to sing paint off a wall and pick anything with strings for so little money that they end up having to put paint back onto walls to make a living.

Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan lie due west of the Great Lonesome River where industrial centers take in those from the eastern tribes who refer to themselves as hillbillies (translated: the people). There they churn out songs about the Old Home Place, a mythical fortress where all bachelor-relatives play the fiddle and where mothers raise fourteen children while making banjos out of Stewart-Macdonald kits ("just add squirrel innards and pumpkin outards").

West of Michigan, the fields turn brown for one thousand miles until you get to the western shore of Nevada, where the city of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, stands guard against the west, the far unseen shore of California!

But to those of the east, I say to you, there is no secret cabal conspiring to keep you away, no men in hats consorting to prevent you from the riches of the Golden Isle. Here we frolic on amber slopes to the sounds of acoustic instruments perfectly in tune, harmonizing to the music of the spheres. Here the bluebird sings of lemonade springs on the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

And here, a bluegrass musician is paid not only a decent wage, but is regarded as a pillar of the community. When you walk down the street, people will ask you to sign petitions and fruit vendors will offer you their choicest pomegranates.

Come to California and abandon the hours in unkempt buses, the miserly wages, and the disrespect by those wielding Sharpies. In California you'll be whisked from festival to festival in a private jet in which people of your preferred gender will serve you meals made fresh daily by world-renowned chefs. Your Green Room will have a Jacuzzi, lap pool, and milkshake machine. You will be greeted on stage as a hero and you will be carried on the shoulders of adoring fans from the venue to your five-star hotel with shouts of "Make way for the bluegrass artist!"

But alas, I have painted far too rosy a picture. For it has come to my attention that the lifestyle to which we artists have become accustomed is in fact balanced on the back of



California's own Chris Stuart

generations of promoters, volunteers, fried snickers vendors, and board members, all conscribed into ensuring the artists' high standard of living by the sweat of their brow and the emptying of their retirement accounts. So that we might spend our time making millions off the international tablature market, these volunteers spend their nights stringing lights, pouring chips into bowls, listening to countless hours of horrific submission CDs, and ever bending their backs to clean up used set lists left indiscriminately on stages up and down the golden coast.

I therefore call on my fellow artists to right a grave wrong. Is it not right that we should pick

up our fellow man and deliver him from the bonds of eternal checking into bogus guest passes? Do we not owe those down-trodden at least an evening of entertainment without asking that they have our payment ready in bars of gold bullion? Far too long have we neglected our brothers and sisters. Now must come a time of deprivation, a time of atonement. Yes, a time of shoveling our own money into modes of transportation, of staying in cheap hotels, of giving away recordings to DJs, promoters,

and anyone with an Internet radio show, a time of no health insurance, no retirement benefits, and no water on stage. A time of spending thousands of dollars to attend showcases in the slight chance that the proprietor of an establishment

with a liquor license might want to offer us the possibility of exposure.

The halcyon days are over. I lament with you, but we must do this. We must throw off the lobster bib of prosperity and don the wetnap of moderation. We have grown fat and lazy in our complacency. Let us help each other onto the treadmill of righteousness that we might all walk proudly in place, never going anywhere. Perhaps that is a poor analogy. A better one would have the treadmill actually getting somewhere, but then the image of a treadmill is perhaps an apt one. For aren't we all in this to stay exactly where we are? To preserve the map of bluegrass as each of us sees it in our own minds? And so, we are all in this together. We are all islanders in California. And as the great mandolin player F. Scott Fitzgerald one whinged, "We beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

AcuTab releases Bluegrass Banjo Master Class DVD - featuring Bill Evans

Bill Evans is one of the world's best known banjo teachers and players, and is also the author of the upcoming *Banjo for Dummies* from Wiley Publishing. He has taught hundreds of players from all over the world and is a frequent contributor to *Banjo NewsLetter* magazine.

Bluegrass Banjo Master Class provides the most detailed analysis of right and left hand technique in bluegrass banjo currently available on DVD. Bill begins by showing you how to fit and shape the picks and how to find the optimal position on the banjo head. He proceeds to explore how hand position and angle of attack work together to produce great tone and volume.

Bill teaches essential bluegrass roll patterns and explores such topics as straight time vs. playing with a bounce, and how to practice with a metronome. His analysis is designed to help both new pickers get on the right track, and to refocus more experienced players on the

importance of the basics - solid rhythm, big tone and bluegrass drive.

He also spends time on the most effective approach to common left hand techniques, and to things that may seem relatively unimportant - but aren't! - such as proper posture, and tips to help you stay relaxed when picking. Bill then introduces 21 essential licks, and shows how to use them to improvise and build new licks.

Finally, Bill presents 20 chordal exercises to help pickers become more familiar with the neck - all based on familiar bluegrass rolls. More skilled players will especially benefit from these exercises, as they open your ears to some new sounds while showing your fingers some new places to go.

More details are available on the AcuTab web site, including several screen shots and a number of brief sample video clips. Find them at www.acutab.com.



art by Rob Armstrong

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Offering small-group instruction for advanced-beginner to intermediate level players. The focus of the camp is to improve your skill and knowledge on your own instrument, and to work on your playing or singing in a group situation. Music Camp coordinator Ingrid Noyes has lined up an outstanding staff of instructors.



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 - Fiddle -- Eric Anderson, Jack Tuttle & Heidi Clare
 - Guitar -- Charlie Edsall, Jim Nunally, and Marcy Marxer
 - Mandolin -- David Harvey, John Reischman & Butch Waller • Vocals - Claire Lynch and Jim Hurst
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Class Sizes will be limited -- Reserve Your Space TODAY!



Got kids? Ask about our new morning class for young pre-musicians! (or see website for more info)

CBA MUSIC CAMP REGISTRATION FORM

Yes! Sign me up—

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell or work phone _____

E-mail _____

Age if under 18 _____

Please check all that apply:

I plan to buy a 4-day pass to the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival (June 14-17)

I'd like to carpool to camp. Please put me in touch with others from my area who would like to carpool.

I am under 18. My age is _____.
 My parent or guardian's name is _____

This is my first time at this camp.
 I heard about it from _____

I am a CBA member.

Instrument: check one, or indicate 1st and 2nd choice for morning classes

See instructor's page of website, or contact us, for information on each class.

- banjo, level 1
- banjo, level 2
- banjo, level 3
- banjo, oldtime - level 1
- banjo, oldtime - level 2
- bass, level 1
- bass, level 2
- fiddle, level 1
- fiddle, bluegrass - level 2
- fiddle, oldtime - level 2

- guitar, level 1
- guitar, level 2 (rhythm)
- guitar, level 2 (flatpicking)
- mandolin, level 1
- mandolin, bluegrass - level 2
- mandolin, Monroe-style - level 2
- dobro, level 1
- dobro, level 2
- vocals - level 1
- vocals - level 2

Cost of the camp:

\$ _____ Postmarked by May 1st—\$245 (sign up early!)

\$ _____ After May 1st—\$280

\$ _____ Meals (optional)—\$80 (Sun. dinner thru Wed. lunch)

\$ _____ Check here for vegetarian meals _____

\$ _____ Camping (optional)

\$25 per adult, tents

\$60 per site, RVs

\$90 per site, RVs for entire week with electrical
 - call first for availability

(No pets on fairgrounds - call for info on local kennels)

\$ _____ Contribution to scholarship fund (optional—help a low-income camper come to camp)

\$ _____ Pre-musician class for your child--\$50/child
 child's name(s) and age(s): _____

\$ _____ Total amount enclosed

Make checks payable to **CBA Music Camp**.

To register: Send this form, filled out, with payment, to:

CBA Music Camp
 PO Box 840
 Marshall, CA 94940

Scholarships available — call for information

**Questions? Contact Ingrid Noyes at 415-663-1342
 (after 9am); e-mail: info@cbamusiccamp.org or
 check our website: www.cbamusiccamp.org**

*For information on hotels, motels and bed and breakfast inns in
 the Grass Valley area, call 530-273-4667
 or web site: www.ncgold.com*

CBA Music Camp--update on class availability

By Ingrid Noyes

Registration is still open for certain classes at the 7th annual CBA Music Camp, to be held June 10-13 at the Nevada County fairgrounds in Grass Valley, just prior to the Father's Day Bluegrass Festi-



Murphy Henry

val. As we go to press, many classes are full, but there is still room in the following classes:

Bass—level 1 taught by Trisha Gagnon from John Reischman's Jaybirds; level 2 taught by Missy Raines

Dobro—level 1 taught by Kathy Barwick of Mountain Laurel; level 2 taught by Michael Witcher Oldtime banjo—level 1 taught by Andy Alexis of the Piney Creek Weasels; level 2 taught by Cathy Fink

Level 1 fiddle—taught by Eric Anderson of the Piney Creek Weasels; and

Level 1 bluegrass banjo—taught by Murphy Henry.

We offer two levels of most classes: level 1 (advanced beginner) is for people who can tune their instrument, know the basic chords and/or notes, and can already play some tunes; level 2 (intermediate) is for people who are beyond that but still have lots to learn. More complete information about the classes—detailed class descriptions, recommended prerequisites, and bios of each teacher—can be found on the Instructors page of our website (see below).

If any of these are the classes you're interested in, you're encouraged to sign up now! If any of them would work for you as a second choice, you can list your first choice as well and be on the waiting list for any other class—people do cancel and switch classes, so space often opens up here and there in the full classes, making room for those on the waiting list.

Scholarships are still available for those who need them. We have many, many people to thank for this, and will include a complete list in a future issue of the Breakdown.

but for now—you know who you are—BIG thanks to all who have contributed to this fund. You make a huge difference in people's lives, mostly young people, who just could not afford to come to camp without your help.

In case this is the first you've heard of this camp, we offer intensive small-group classes in the mornings (about ten to a class), on all the major bluegrass and oldtime instruments, and vocal classes also. In the afternoons, there is a wide variety of elective classes to choose from—songwriting, vocal harmony, music theory, instrumental workshops, clogging, and more. There are also office hours with all the instructors, where you can get some extra one-on-one time with any instructor at camp. And there are staff-led jams, both in the afternoons and the evenings. Evenings also feature staff and student concerts, dancing, and lots more jamming. The ambiance around this camp manages to be lively and relaxed at the same time, and the location, in the Sierra foothills, is lovely.

Tuition is now \$280, catered meals are optional and cost \$80 for three full days of meals, camping is also optional and costs \$25 per adult for tent camping, or \$60 per site for RV's (this amount pays for all four nights of music camp).

To register, fill out the registration form elsewhere in this issue and mail it in with payment; OR



Missy Raines

go on line and print out a form from the website; OR go on line and you can register with a credit card.

Our camp website can be found at www.cbamusiccamp.org and has lots more information about the camp. Thanks to Phil Cornish for maintaining this site! If you can't find what you need there, or want to check class availability, contact camp director Ingrid Noyes at 415-663-1342 (after 9 a.m. please) or info@cbamusiccamp.org. Hope to see you at camp!

Is your membership facing
EXTINCTION?

Carolyn Faubel
530.741.1259

CBAMembership@syix.com



Just because you love bluegrass doesn't mean you have to be behind the times.

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CD reviews and online sources.
Calendar with hundreds of events.
CBA news events.
Best of the Bluegrass Breakdown.
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Interactive message board.
Regional news.
Online tickets / membership renewal.
Radio-grass listings.
Photo gallery.



cbaontheweb.org

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Bluegrass 'n Stuff...

By Kyle Abbott

We may never know how many miles it takes to get to Little Rock, but you are just 19 words (starting now) away from reading Bluegrass 'n Stuff—which may be Little, but it Rocks! (Or so I haven't been told...)

Have you ever been in a situation where you're at a festival and you walk to the stage and see some great musical lunatics playing Flippin' the Burgers on overdrive, only to be demoralized and walk away from that intimidating performance feeling like you want to throw down your instrument and never want to play again?

Well, you are not alone. There are so many people who've become musically intimidated, they could all be piled in a ship and sail across the sea—and then sink after catching a glimpse of the great sailor Popeye popping a keel-ie (the nautical version of a wheelie) in their stern-view mirror. Intimidation can be a big downer and has made people give up. Today I will tell you how to not only enjoy professionals, but to also learn from them. First, however, we must define just what a professional is. We can gain insight from the Latin origins of the three roots: pro-fession-al. The first syllable is 'pro', which is short for 'produce'. Professionals throughout history have often produced things. Professional lute makers produced lutes, professional wine-makers (known as 'winers') produced drunks, and so on. Next, we have '-fession', which is short for 'confession'. You see, most professionals often cheated, and eventually they confessed. Finally, we have the suffix '-al'. This is short for 'all'. I think this is because in the olden days there were a lot of professionals out there, but they all died and now there aren't so many of them.

Ten years ago, we took a trip to the Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival. It was our first Bluegrass experience. Papa and Mama

were enthralled. Luke played on Kids on Stage and enjoyed watching the other bands. I just wanted to go home. As you can see, from the very beginning I was never intimidated by the pros.

However, several people I know have had a hard time listening to professionals. It's not that they have a hard time because the professionals sound bad. It's what/how they try to learn from professionals. When they hear da pros, they do one of two things. 1) They get intimidated because they compare themselves to the pros and feel like they are so far from being 'there' that trying is hopeless. 2) They try to imitate the pros by rote. This will get you nowhere.

What makes a professional is not the amount of licks the guy packs in or the number of strings he breaks. Just stringing together a bunch of licks like smoked sausages doesn't have any soul and is just noise. (Like a Twinkie without the cream filling.) No, the pros have played so long that they have the whole instrument engrained in their fingers. They no longer have to think about where to press the strings. Rather, it all comes out from the pro's mood and what he's feeling. You might call this 'soul'. I call this level of professionalism, "moodling" (that's © 2007 Kyle "Big 'K'" Abbott). You see, when you moodle, you 'doodle', but it all comes from your mood. That's what separates the pros from the... faux-proauxs.

That said, listening and playing along with recordings can be helpful. The problem with this, however, is often that they are recorded at a high tempo. So it may feel hard to learn from it because the song feels fast. The way to get around this is to realize that speed is relative. "Easier said than done," you might say. Well let me tell you a little story. When I was a little 'un, Bill Monroe was ("was" meaning "used to be") my idol and Ken-

tucky Mandolin was my favorite song. However, I hadn't been playing mandolin that long and had a real hard time playing along with the tape we had. The song was way too fast (relatively) for me to keep up. Well, I had a solution to help me cope. I had one of those cassette players where you could adjust the speed and pitch. Well, rather than slow it down, I sped it up really fast. Not so fast that it sounded like a blur, but pretty close. After five minutes of struggling to keep up—and failing to do so—I went back to the original speed, and boy! It felt so much slower than when I first did it! Therefore, it was easier. There's nothing wrong with listening to professionals. However,

there's nothing wrong with listening to average pickers or even 'noobs' (as the cool kiddies say) either. Even though one person can be a wonder on executing, say, double-stops, that same person may be a complete wingnut when it comes to individual "ticky-ticky" notes. So you can pick up a few tips by listening to the double-stop wizard, and then later you may come across a guy who is a great up-the-

neck picker. Well, you pick up a few things from him/her, as well as the tremolo guy, and so on.

The point is, don't focus on one particular prodigy and copy their every fingerboardical move. That's lame. Rather, listen to everybody of all levels and find interesting tidbits of musical information that can apply to yourself. As you pick up more and more things from different people, your playing will become more moodal, and your true feelings will be expressed. By doing that, not only can you come up with some cool, pro-sounding breaks, you will sound somewhat original and not like a audioical xeroxed copy of a particular musician/person.

In closing, if you've had reservations about your playing, I hope I have encouraged you to relax, have fun exploring your instrument, and keep on pickin'. When you think you are good enough, send me a recording of yourself and I will score and rate it.

Now for the Joke of the Month: A teacher, a thief, and a lawyer all die in the same freak accident. When they reach the pearly



Kyle Abbott

gates, St. Peter tells them that, unfortunately, heaven is overcrowded, so they each have to answer a question correctly for admission. The teacher is first, and St. Peter asks, "Name the famous ship that was sunk by an iceberg?" "Phew, that one's easy," says the teacher, "The Titanic." "Alright," said St. Peter, "you may pass." Then the thief got his question: "How many died on the Titanic?" The thief replied, "That's a toughie, but fortunately I just saw the movie. The answer is 1500 people." And so he passed through. Last, St. Peter gave the lawyer his question: "Name them."

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CBA Jam in SF's Golden Gate Park, May 12

By Chuck Poling

Mark your calendars and change your strings. On Saturday, May 12 the CBA is sponsoring its second Pickin' Picnic and membership drive in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The picnic will be held in Lindley Meadow beginning at noon and goes on until 6 pm.

Jeanie and Chuck Poling are hosting this event to help raise the CBA's profile in San Francisco and to increase membership. At the initial CBA picnic last September, approximately 60 people attended and 6 new members were signed up. Hopefully, this spring will see increased numbers in both categories.

Stay tuned for more information and directions in coming editions of the Bluegrass Breakdown. If you have any questions, please contact polingsf@earthlink.net.



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Kyle!

First, I don't think we've ever met, I'm up near Seattle and I only get down there for Supergrass. If you were there I missed you. (I did make Grass Valley and Summernight once each but those were aberrations.)

Second, just want to say that your column in the Breakdown is my fav! No kidding... it's the most entertaining thing in there. Sometimes the most informative too!

See ya some day I hope, and thanks again for the column.

Gary Wagner
Wagner Instruments
17225 Ambaum Blvd. S.
Burien, WA 98148



Dear friends,

I've been a CBA member since the earliest days, and will probably continue to renew my membership, even though I no longer live in California. I maintain my CBA connection, in order to receive the newsletter, and keep abreast of the goings-on of some of my picking pals.

I ceased attending the Father's Day festival (FDF) many years ago, however. The festival simply outgrew me. It morphed from a moderate-sized, casual affair (where one could jam, participate in the stage entertainment, and also support some performer friends) into something approximating "THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH." The audience area became more densely packed, and the motor home crowd, mostly grinners, steadily displaced the pickers and tent campers. I guess the motor home approach to camping becomes a more appealing option as we age, since quite a few of my long-time friends now own them. Nonetheless, it did seem as though the festival had transformed into a motor home jamboree, with top-name bluegrass music as an added enticement to attend. Attendance soon ballooned to several thousand, and I found it became increasingly difficult to locate my picker buddies. The final affront (for me) occurred when some inconsiderate camper pitched his tent close enough to mine, that our guy ropes actually overlapped. Quite a few of my friends ceased to attend the FDF, because of the sheer numbers

and associated congestion.

At one FDF, more than a few of the rank and file realized that not a single band from California had been represented in the lineup. We also noted that it was easier for California bands to find work playing at out-of-state festivals, than at our own event. There were hours spent discussing the ramifications of this development, and my long-time friend and former CBA member, Lance Gordon, and I decided to "get off our butts, and get involved." We attended several Board-of-Trustees meetings, and finally decided to run for the board at the annual election. When the votes had been tallied, Lance and I were informed that neither of us had won seats on the board. We accepted that, but were curious to know how close the contest had been. We were rebuffed, and told that the voting totals were a "secret." End of story. We later learned that there had even been some "proxy votes cast" by one of the directors, and still wonder about the legitimacy of that entire process.

A picture began to emerge, depicting the CBA leadership floating in the glory of trips to the IBMA events, sponsoring "hospitality suites," and schmoozing with the big name bands, in order to enlist top talent for upcoming festivals. Caution, it appeared, had been thrown to the wind, and it seemed there were developing visions progressively larger events in future years. Little thought had been given, apparently, to the potential for downside occurrences. Bands were being hired for five figures, and California-based bands continued to make only token appearances on the FDF playbills. The CBA, it seemed, had abandoned one tenet of its charter, which was to support bluegrass music at the grassroots level. The focus had obviously changed to growing the budget, but at the expense of supporting California-based bands.

To be fair, the CBA had begun to schedule mini festivals and campouts, at which the members had some opportunities for limited exposure. But clearly, those were a bit like playing for the "B" team. Even though California was home to many excellent bands, it seemed they nearly always failed to pass muster with the discriminating FDF band selection committee. Our event was taking on the appearance of a for-profit enterprise, a model which had been implemented by several private promoters. Sadly, quite a few of those festivals were "flash-in-the-pan," money-losing endeavors, and hardly good targets for emulation.

The recent letter, distributed by the CBA management to the membership, was most dismaying. It described an organization overextended, one that had outgrown its britches, and failed to keep its finger on the pulse. Three of the current board members have courageously stepped forward, and ac-

cepted responsibility for the developing debacle. They have proposed corrective actions, designed to stem some of the bleeding. Again, to be fair, the current management need not accept the entire responsibility for the current problems. These difficulties began to develop perhaps twenty years ago, when the then-directors seemed insensitive to the hazards associated with the policies they were formulating. Nonetheless, it appears pretty clear that the CBA has now slid far down the going-out-of-business curve.

Predictably, some drastic measures need to be undertaken, if the festival (and even the organization) is to survive. The most ambitious component of these measures involves begging the membership to voluntarily contribute their dollars, in order to rebuild the reserve fund that was carelessly depleted. Most of the other suggestions involve expense reduction, and all of those seem sensible. However, pessimist that I am, I'm not certain that the cutbacks are intended as anything but stopgap measures. Unless I've missed something, it seems that, once (if) the treasury is restored to health, operations could easily drift back in the direction of "business as usual."

I may be in error, but I think squeezing emergency funds from the membership, in order to prop up the CBA, will be a difficult sell, unless the basic business model is permanently altered. If I were still a California resident, I'd be disinterested in contributing, unless the bylaws were changed to insure that the band selection process would be irrevocably modified. At minimum, I'd want at least 50% of the FDF bands to be California based, and 75%, or more, to be from the western states. The number of pricy bands could be reduced to one or two, and as a consequence, the total travel budget would probably shrink significantly. These changes alone should trim the operating expenses profoundly, and might even encourage the motivated California pickers to have renewed hope that there might one day be a place for them on the FDF stage.

If gasoline continues to ratchet upward, toward \$5/gallon, many of these decisions may be made for us. Attendance by the motor home folks may diminish dramatically, and a scaled-down, more tent-friendly festival might emerge from the remains of the "Greatest Show on Earth" event of the present day, like it, or not.

John Lytle
Tucson, Arizona
Member #14

A response from CBA Chairman, Rick Cornish:

First, John thanks for your well-considered comments. It's especially helpful to hear from someone who was around 'in the beginning'. As we've become ac-

- Your letters

customed to doing, I'd like to respond to a few of your points while they're still fresh.

First, and probably foremost, I want to address what I think is the fundamental premise of your letter—that the CBA is in financial straits because, over several years—you say the past twenty—its leaders tried to make the Fathers Day event the 'greatest show on earth' and gradually outspent its resources. Or as you put it, outgrew its britches. This, John, is just simply not the case. During the twenty years of growth that you mention, the California Bluegrass Association never lost a dime on Fathers Day. Each year it saw incremental increases in attendance at Grass Valley, which translated to increases in membership and increase in revenue available to support its many other activities. No, the CBA is not in a financial crunch because of two decades of willy-nilly growth and misspending. The facts just don't bear this out. Rather, the current situation developed very, very quickly and was the direct result of three successive major festival losses.

But you make another serious assertion with which I certainly have to agree. The festival has grown. It's not the small, casual event that it was in the beginning, where pickers out-numbered 'grinners'. Grass Valley is now a major west coast event, certainly not the greatest show on earth, but a festival for which to be proud, and one that's done a lot to help the Association meet its mission. And you're right, too, that as an association we've changed.....as someone put it recently, 'the fans just took it away from us performers'. I can understand and appreciate the disappointment you and many of your friends (and mine too, I might add) felt as this transformation from small pond to big pond occurred, but in all honesty, John, I believe that the CBA is much better able to meet its charter—to promote and preserve bluegrass, old time and gospel music in California—with the growth we've experienced. Yes, we've got a lot more grinners than pickers now but, when you think about it, if our mission is to promote bluegrass, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

And not growth just in terms of our membership numbers. I don't know how much you've followed CBA happenings since you're out of state, but the CBA is far, far more than just the Fathers Day Festival. We've used the revenues from thirty-one profitable Grass Valley events to start regional festivals, to build a Kids on Bluegrass program that we're told is serving as a model for the rest of the country, to expand a stapled, smudgy newsletter into a full-fledged, 68 page award winning newspaper, and to launch a web site that's become a meeting place for thousands of our bluegrass family and that's become an important tool for California

bluegrass bands seeking to promote themselves. We've used them to start a lending library of musical instruments for children, to initiate an annual music camp that in six short years has earned national acclaim, and to finance bluegrass, old time and gospel concerts in communities within our service area that aren't otherwise served. And, yes John, we've used the profits from our Fathers Day Festival to promote California bluegrass back at the IBMA, including sponsoring luncheons at which our bands are featured and running showcases where dozens and dozens of CA bands have had a chance to show their stuff.

And then there's the California band issue. Yes, in my opinion you're right when you say that the pendulum swung way too far away from our own fine bands and toward back east bands. (I've sill got my 'Where are the California bands?' button, by the way.) About eight years ago, a few of us ran for the board with the quiet intent of remedying the problem. Within a year and a half, the CBA board of directors approved the California Band Showcase policy, which requires that at least five bands from the state appear on each Fathers Day lineup. It was a good move. It brought great California talent back to the stage at Grass Valley and, in the process, it brought a good many former CBA members back into the fold. Still, of course, the debate rages, and I suppose it always will. There is, no doubt, a perfect blend of local and imported talent for our events—we just have to find it.

Finally, John, in your letter you refer to our board of directors as "begging the membership to voluntarily contribute." I suppose begging, like roses, is in the eye of the beholder. It so happens that just a couple of days ago I wrote a piece in our website's daily Welcome column in which I shared how the idea of the Challenge Fund came about. It was during a conference call when a small group of us were heavy into contingency planning over the SuperGrass festival. Near the end of the conversation Carl Pagter spoke up and said, "Okay, the fact is we've never had to go to our members before and ask for their help. And if the worst case does happen with SuperGrass, that's just what we'll do. Because I'll tell you something, our members love the CBA, and they're going to help in whatever way they can." We all agreed that we'd go to our members, including you, John, not to beg, but to ask for help.





32nd Annual Father's Day BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

June 14 - 15 - 16 & 17, 2007

Nevada County Fairgrounds, Grass Valley, CA

Partial Line-up includes:



Rhonda Vincent & The Rage (Thurs. & Fri.)



Cherryholmes (Thursday & Friday)



Country Current, the US Navy Band



The Dale Ann Bradley Band
(Saturday & Sunday)



The Del McCoury Band (Saturday & Sunday)



The Claire Lynch Band (Thursday & Friday)



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John Reischman & The Jaybirds
(Saturday & Sunday)



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(Saturday & Sunday)



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Come and join us in our 32nd Annual Fathers' Day Weekend Bluegrass Festival at the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley, California!

Four days of family fun, jamming, workshops, Children's Programs, Luthier's Pavilion, Kids on Bluegrass, camping on site and the best in Bluegrass and Old Time Music on stage under the beautiful pine trees.

Things You Should Know

- Absolutely NO PETS allowed on the festival grounds before or during the festival.
- Camping is in the rough on the festival site beginning Sunday, June 10 through Wednesday, June 13 for a fee of \$20 per unit per night (lots of grass and big pine trees), limited hookups available, on a first-come, first-served basis. Designated tents only camping area available.
- Limited number of campsites for handicapped persons. Advance reservations required by May 1, 2007.
- Camping during the festival is included in 3 and 4 day tickets.
- Food and soft drink concessions on site, (picnic baskets and coolers permitted).
- Bring lawn chairs or blankets for seating. Audience area is a grassy lawn with trees.
- Festival is held rain or shine -- ABSOLUTELY NO REFUNDS.

Where is the Festival Site?

The Nevada County Fairgrounds is located on McCourtney Road in the town of Grass Valley, California. From Sacramento, take Hwy. 80 east to the town of Auburn. Take the Hwy. 49 - Grass Valley exit and go north about 28 miles. There are signs of the highway directing you to the fairgrounds -- about 2 miles.

~ ADVANCE TICKET ORDER FORM ~

Please send me the following Advance Discount tickets to the CBA's 32nd Annual Father's Day Weekend Bluegrass Festival:

Advance Discount Tickets (3/1/07 - 5/31/07)

CBA Member Tickets	
4-Day Adult.....	\$95
4-Day Senior (65 & over).....	\$85
4-Day Teen (13-18).....	\$48
3-Day Adult	\$80
3-Day Teen	\$40

Non-Member Ticket Prices

4-Day Adult.....	\$105
4-Day Teen (13-18).....	\$53
3-Day Adult.....	\$85
3-Day Teen (13-18).....	\$43

Single Day Tickets

No discounts available
Thursday..... Adult \$25/Teen \$13
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Saturday..... Adult \$35/Teen \$18
Sunday.....Adult \$25/Teen \$13

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4-Day Adult	\$115
4-Day Teen (13-18)	\$60
3-Day Adult	\$90
3-Day Teen (13-18)	\$45

Children 12 & Under FREE with a paid adult admission.

NO MEMBER DISCOUNTS ON GATE TICKETS.

Camping is included in all 3 and 4 day tickets. Early camping opens Sunday, June 10. Camping fees are \$20 per night per unit (RVs), \$15 per night per unit (tents) on a first come, first-served basis from Sunday, June 10 through Wednesday, June 14.

Designated tent camping area available. Special campsites with guaranteed electricity spaces @ \$90 each with advance reservations (Monday thru Wednesday).

Handicapped campers who need special accommodations must make advance reservations by May 1, 2007. Please call Steve House at 707-829-9569 or e-mail: Mr_Bluegrass@comcast.net for information and reservations.

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Non-Member Tickets

4-Day Adult @ \$105
4-Day Teen @ \$53
3-Day Adult (Th/Fri/Sat) @ \$85*
3-Day Teen (13-18) (Th/Fri/Sat) @ \$43*
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*Please specify which 3 days

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Saturday Only @ \$35	Teen @ \$18
Sunday Only @ \$25	Teen @ \$13

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Reserved space with guaranteed electricity @ \$90 per space. (6/11/07 - 6/17/07)

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CBA Member No. _____

Date of Order _____

Total for Tickets _____

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Advance Discount Ticket Order Form -- Deadline 5/31/07

Bill Herron passes - California Bluegrass musician remembered

William Edward Herron of Corning, Ca passed away April 11, 2007. Born April 2, 1928 in Arkansas, he had been a resident of Tehama County for the past 10 years. He was a machinist by trade and had a love for playing music. He was a U.S. Navy Veteran. William will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him. He is survived by his wife, three children, seven grand children and three great grand children, and many, many friends. Bill's friend, Phyllis Fox says "Bill taught us all more about music than any one else."

Bill Herron bio by Bill Wilhelm (published previously)

It was about fifteen years ago in a late night CBA jam session that I met Bill Herron. He was playing

the fiddle and judging by his ability I supposed he had been playing it all his life. Upon talking with him for this article, I was surprised to find out that he was actually a new comer to the instrument. Although a long time guitar player, he only took up the fiddle in the late 1970s, probably a very short time before we met.

Bill was born not far from the Louisiana border, out in the country near Warren, Arkansas. He was in high school when World War II began. His father decided to move to California to do what he could

for the war effort and provide a better living for his family. They moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where his father soon had a job in the shipyard and Bill transferred to a local high school. Bill

was fifteen when a man stopped by to try to talk his father into letting Bill take guitar lessons. His father agreed to this. Bill showed a lot of interest and the lessons began. Many people were moving into the area at the time and housing was in short supply. It became a crowded place. Most were from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. A lot of them played musical instruments. At every opportunity they got together and all had a lot of fun plying and singing.

As Bill was already taking guitar lessons so he joined right in. He said he was learning more from the neighbors than from the lessons, and his instructor just gave up. Bob Wills and others came through with western swing bands and he got to see some real musicians then. That interested him even more in music. He was still going to high school when he got a night job, working in the shipyard. It was a rough schedule, but it allowed him to earn a lot of money and acquire some things he wanted. He bought a good guitar and continued to play every chance he

got. He graduated while the war was still in progress, so he joined the Navy. He continued to play then and after the war was over. He was discharged and went back to his native Arkansas. There he played for local square dances which were held mostly in people's houses.

He got married and his wife wanted to move to California. He had taken up the mandolin and considered moving to the Appalachian area to play in some good bluegrass bands.

Of the two options, California won out and they made their home in the Bay Area. Country bands played in many bars in the Bay area. Bill immediately joined one of those and played nearly every night. He made money, but found it necessary to find a day job. He became a machinist.

He had the good fortune to play with some who became quite famous later on. Bill remembered, "I played with Cal Smith for about a year. He was ready to hit the road for bigger and better things and

wanted two of us to quit our day jobs to move on with him. Neither of us saw that as being practical, considering our families, so he went on and I lost touch with him. One day I turned on the TV and there was old Cal Smith with Ernest Tubb. Then later on with his own band, he did well too and recorded several strong selling albums. I was happy for him." Bill mentions also working on occasion with Freddy Hart, a popular country singer of that time, but says it was not on a regular basis.

"I stayed with my day job as a machinist and kept playing the bars at night. I had a wife and kids to feed and a house to pay for then. That extra money I made in those bars really helped out with the family budget."

"In 1978 I learned through an article in the Concord Transcript newspaper that there was a blue grass music festival in Grass Valley. So, I went to it and was very impressed. I've been coming ever since and haven't missed more than two." Bill says that he used to hunt and fish a lot but with the onset of minor health problems it is now easier and more rewarding to spend the extra time playing music. He says that he has also made many friends throughout the years at the festivals, and he looks forward to seeing them and playing music with them at every event. He speaks of how rewarding it is to see the young ones become interested and start playing music, which he hopes that will continue. Finally, Bill says that we will come and go, but this music must never die.

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Monthly Chico jam moves to new location

By John Senior

Due to circumstances beyond our control we must move our monthly bluegrass jam to a new location. I contacted Augie's Cafe today and they said they would love to host our monthly bluegrass jam. WWW.augiescoffee.com They are located next door to the Chico Chamber 230 Salem St. 894-7409 I hope that we will have a large turn out at our new spot AUGIE'S Down Town Chico. Next jam is May 10, 6pm.

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Foxfire Bluegrass (New Mexico)**

**Southside Band (Lompoc)
Whiskey Chimp (Ventura)**

High Hills (San Fernando Valley)

**Eric Uglum & Sons (Hesperia)
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elena corey's MUSIC MATTERS - Bluegrass' History, Heritage, Gifts & Challenges

drawing: Lynn Cornish

down the road, it may look as though a thing should have been predicted -- it may even look as though the occurrence was inevitable, and seeing it should have been unavoidable.

Can we apply these insights to the paths bluegrass, old-time and gospel music seem to be traveling nationwide? Can we identify small tendrils of causality weaving themselves into the warp and woof of traditional music in our time? If we can see patterns, what insights may we gain from them?

Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, credits much of his musical direction to his own cultural heritage -- from Appalachian parents with a strong sense of their Scottish roots -- as many other early settlers of that region had. Up until Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys applied a label to the music they played, their music was not seen as appreciably different from that that most other people of the area played. But there must have been subtle details that allowed listeners to discern that he and his band were seminal innovators and not merely cover-artists of the music of their day.

Traditional mountain music and gospel music (including church hymns) intermixed freely

with other strains of the day, including even melodies derived from Italian and German operas and specially composed, or topical, songs. The strains of many a Child ballad are duplicated in songs written about special events of the day, e.g. the collapse of a mine or a train wreck. Melodies of these songs are reminiscent of each other, and many lyrics have verses borrowed from other songs. Lyric content of the songs frequently focused on: a) true love, b) lost love, c) irretrievable love, d) good-for-nothing-hope-you-get-lost love, and e) topical songs, such as tragedy songs -- about losing someone to death, which told all the gory details of the ways death arrived. The strong influence of the past was and still is everywhere evident in our music. It is up to us to discern what is the baby to keep and what is the bathwater to discard or freshen for the next folks.

Someone said, "The only thing we can know for sure from history is that people do not really learn from history." This seems to be a fatalistic version of the more famous quotation "Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it," which at least offers an option to avoid such a fate. But perhaps in our music we don't

want to avoid such a fate--in lyric content, sub-current (rather than mainstream) status, and innovative speed. After all, the cycles and issues of life are those things most emotionally relevant to us, so why shouldn't they compel our attention and be reflected in our music? Why shouldn't our music repeat its core themes and add stylistic touches indefinitely, with each generation finding relevance and significance for itself?

So, what can we learn from history, specifically our Western cultural heritage, that we can apply to our music, and yet grow, transcending that heritage? Can we take demographic festival-attendance or CD-buying information coupled with saturation point percentage of population estimates, tipping point influences on behavioral trends, etc. and use their insights to promote and preserve our music?

There are, of course, times when we don't want to focus on "learning" from our music's history—we'd rather just wallow in the luxurious pleasures of playing and listening. Some people will opt for that all the time and let someone else do the planning and retrospective gnawing regarding what works and what doesn't in getting our

music out to folks.

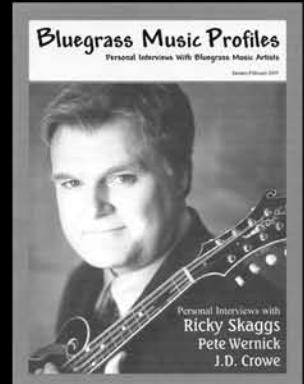
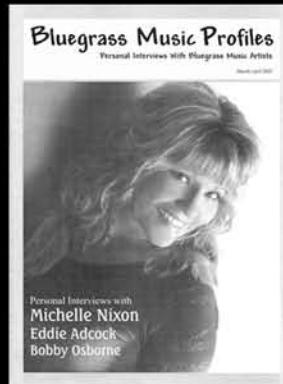
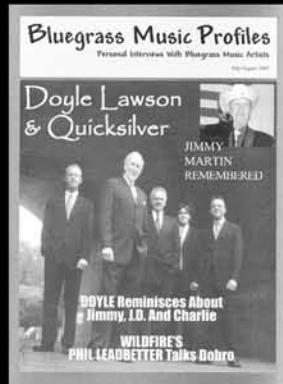
As we consciously analyze the roles our music plays we learn and build on that. Conscious thought may help our music to not only survive but also to evolve and become enriched by whatever wisdom this century and this generation produces. We can do our soul-searching without diminishing our joy in playing one whit. We can create even dizzier heights of glory in and from our wonderful music. Evidence of our passion, then, will draw new folks who seek our music's gifts for themselves.

Here's looking at our music through the window of the past into horizons of the future!

Happy Mother's Day!



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J.D.'s Bluegrass Kitchen

Howdy, Howdy, Howdy! NOW, I can wax poetic about the spring weather here on the mountain this month! For the last two editions of the Bluegrass kitchen, it's been snowing and storming when I sat down to write fer you folks! I must admit though, that it DID snow about 3" here earlier this week. (last week of March) But the Snow is all gone and it's a BEEEEEYOOTIFULLL day here today in my beloved mountains of Calaveras County, the most beautiful place in California to live! My Apple trees out back are starting to leaf out, and soon the fragrant smell of Apple blossoms will fill the warm spring days and nites, here on Bluegrass Acres. I purely love to drift off to sleep on a quiet evening, with the smell of the blossoms wafting through the room. Another nite in Paradise!

Yesterday I was going through my recipe box, wondering what to write about this month, and I found a post card from Sugar Hill Records, promoting one of Tim O'Brien's CD's, Corn Bread Nation. On one side was a picture of Tim wolfing down some corn bread, and on the other side was a recipe for the same Corn Bread. Well, I mused, I know what's fer supper! Yep, I whipped up a skillet of that recipe, and had a big bait of it along with some Beans that I'd cooked a day or so earlier. (I think that I was 20 years old when I found out that you could eat Corn Bread without Beans) I MUST share this recipe with the folks next month, I said to myself, BUT there is one ingredient that I knew some folks would object to, that being Bacon grease. Well, I thought about that fer awhile, and recalled that over the last 20 years of writing this column, occasionally, a reader would voice their objections to a certain ingredient or recipe, because they thought that it "wasn't healthy" for them. That's fine, for we are all entitled to our own opinions, and I welcome any and all comments about the contents of this column, and I bless you all that take time to read my feeble efforts herein. Then I got to thinking about an E-Mail that I got

from a friend that I've known since 1942, Bill Standley, who is now the Hon. Mayor of Farmington, New Mexico. Here's what it said; I got this E-Mail the other day, promoting a healthy life style of eating right, not smoking or drinking, exercising a lot, and other "healthy activities" that would extend my life immeasurably. It also promised me that if I would E-Mail this to a hundred of my friends, a lot of good things would happen to me. I thought, you know, I don't HAVE a hundred friends!

They ALL tried to live a healthy life style, but they're gone! Then I realized that life is not about arriving at the end of your life in an attractive, well preserved body. Rather, it is arriving in my 392 Hemi powered '56 Ford pickup, sliding in sideways, with a quart of Irish whiskey in one hand and a fine Cuban cigar in the other! Two beautiful ladies in the cab with me, feeding me Chocolate covered Strawberries, and yelling, Yahoo! What a Hell of a ride this has been! My body well used up from riding wild broncs, driving race cars, playing music till dawn for years and years, and other fun "unhealthy" activities! That's what life should be about! NOT worrying what I'm gonna look like when I'm dead! Soooo, after ruminating on that fer awhile, I opted to use the Bacon grease, and let the chips fall where they may! So, after all of that, I set here looking out at the hills and the woods, thinking of all of the times that momma fixed my Dad Bacon and Eggs and he lived to be 91, so Bacon grease it's gonna be.

That was a long winded lead in to a great recipe, and I know that you can use a cup of good 'ol Cowboy Coffee, so tie yer pony in the shed out back there, and come on in to the Kitchen here, and we'll get started swapping some good vittles fixins!

Like I said, this recipe makes some great Corn Bread, and I especially like it because there is no wheat flour in it, and it reminds me of the corn bread that my momma made when I was a little bitty red Neck in Arkansas. I call this one:

Tim O'Brien's Corn Bread

**1 cup of milk/ or Buttermilk
1 tsp. salt
1 egg
1/2 tsp baking soda
2 cups cornmeal
1/2 tsp. Baking powder
4 tbsp Bacon grease**

Heat oven to 450 degrees. Beat the egg. Add the milk and beat good. Add everything else and beat till smooth. Add grease to a 9" skillet and heat it in the oven for 5 minutes. Pour excess grease into the batter, then pour batter in the skillet. Bump the skillet on counter top to level the batter. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes till slightly browned and done in the center. Serve hot.

When you eat bread made like this, this is REAL health food. Bacon grease be damned, this is better for you than that chemical laden commercial bread that has ingredients that I cant even pronounce! I'll take Bacon grease over chemicals any time! We're getting close to festival season again, and I thought that I'd feature some of my favorite recipes that really taste good at a festival, when you're eating out doors most of the time. My favorite meal of the day is without a doubt Breakfus! There's nothing that beats a big stack of good 'ol home made Hot Cakes jes smothered in butter and swimming in real Maple syrup fer brekfus! I was digging through the "P" section of my recipe box this week, looking fer a recipe for Pecan Pie, when I ran across these next recipes. I hadn't fixed 'em fer awhile, and I thought that these would be great to feature this month, so here we go. That's how I got on the subject of Hot Cakes. I worked this recipe up over 40 years ago, and they make some of the best hot cakes you'll ever wrap a lip around! I jes call 'em:

Scratch Built Hot Cakes
**2 cups whole wheat flour
3 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt**

**1 tbsp honey
2 cups milk
1/2 cup veg. oil
3 egg yolks
3 egg whites**

Mix dry stuff together. Beat the egg yolks. Add oil, honey, and milk and beat good. Add dry stuff and beat till smooth. Beat the egg whites in a separate bowl, and then FOLD in the egg whites. Cook on a medium hot griddle that has been wiped down with Peanut oil. Serve with hot syrup and butter.

When you serve up a stack of these to a bunch of sleepy eyed Pickers that were up fer most of the nite, you'll get rave reviews every time! If they find a shady spot to sleep some more, don't be surprised. I know that when I have a big stack of these, I feel like an old hound dog that jes wants to crawl under the porch and go to sleep!

I haven't fed my 'ol pard John Murphy some of these in a few years, and every time I did, it was all that I could do to keep him from crawlin' into my bed and takin' a long Siesta! He would always say, wake me in time fer lunch! He even had the nerve to tell me WHAT he wanted fer lunch! I'd usually fix it too. Friends like John and his wife Mary are worth more than Gold to me, and I'll cook fer 'em any time! (I'll eat Mary's cookin any time too!)

Here's a 'tater recipe that was always a favorite with the boys in our deer hunting trips many years ago, back in the 1950's. I can't count the times that I've cooked up a big skillet of these fer brekfus' or supper over a wood fire in our deer camp. There wasn't enough left to feed a field mouse when the boys got through lickin that skillet! Somehow, food jes tastes better when you're out in the high country, and cookin' over a wood fire. There weren't much talking a'goin on when these were on the menu. Jes a lot of chewin' and gruntin' of how good they was!

Cowboy Tater Cakes

**2 cups mashed taters
1/2 tbsp lemon/pepper
salt 1 egg beaten
4 tbsp corn meal
1/2 cup milk
1/2 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp hot sauce
1 tsp baking powder**

Beat the egg. Add milk and hot sauce. Mix good. Add rest of ingredients, and mix good. Spoon onto a greased skillet over medium heat. Brown on both sides. Real Cowboy vittles! Good with syrup and butter, or gravy! Excellent with eggs.



J.D. Rhynes

these in a pinch with instant potatoes, and that's usually what I use when making these. It sure made it easier fer me there on top of Mount Henry, feeding 7 hungry deer hunters.

While digging through the "P" section of my recipe box, I came across this recipe for Pasta soup that I haven't fixed in a long time. It makes a great, quick, good tasting soup, that is fast to fix, and really warms you up in a hurry on a chilly day or evening. Makes for a great appetizer too, to serve at a jam session. It also doesn't cost much to fill up a Banjo picker with, and we all know how much most Banjo pickers can wolf down! I'd bet that most Banjo pickers can "Out Wolf" a real Wolf, most any day of the week!

Pasta in Chicken Broth

**4 cups chicken broth
6 ounces dry miniature soup pasta (stellete)
4 tbsp fresh chopped chives, or basil, or chervil
1/4 cup of fresh grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste**

Boil the broth, and cook the pasta in it till done. Serve, and sprinkle with the cheese, herbs, salt and pepper. Jes that simple, and oh, so good!

Well folks, there's another edition of the 'ol Bluegrass Kitchen fer you. I must start going through my recipe box more and digging out some of these recipes that haven't seen the light of day in many a moon, so to speak. (now there's an Oxy Moron fer ya!) For years, Bruce Johnson thought that an Oxy Moron was an Ox that was too dumb to pull a plow, till I knew the boy up. Hell, any 'ol country boy knows that an Oxy Moron is an Ox that can't read or write! How simple can that be?

Folks, I look forward to seeing all of you at the festivals this summer, and getting to visit with you, and maybe sharing a plate of vittles 'er two. Until then, please keep all of our wonderful service men and women in yer prayers and may GOD grant us all peace and health. Yer friend, J.D.Rhynes

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DARRELL JOHNSTON KIDS INSTRUMENT LENDING LIBRARY

By Sharon Elliott

On behalf of the California Bluegrass Association and the Darrell Johnston Kids Instrument Lending Library, we would like to thank the following people who have donated instruments since Colusa campout 2006 and others who have donated their time and money to restoring instruments for use in the lending library. Your donations and help are very much appreciated and because of the generosity of everyone that has donated, we have many kids that are using donated instruments.

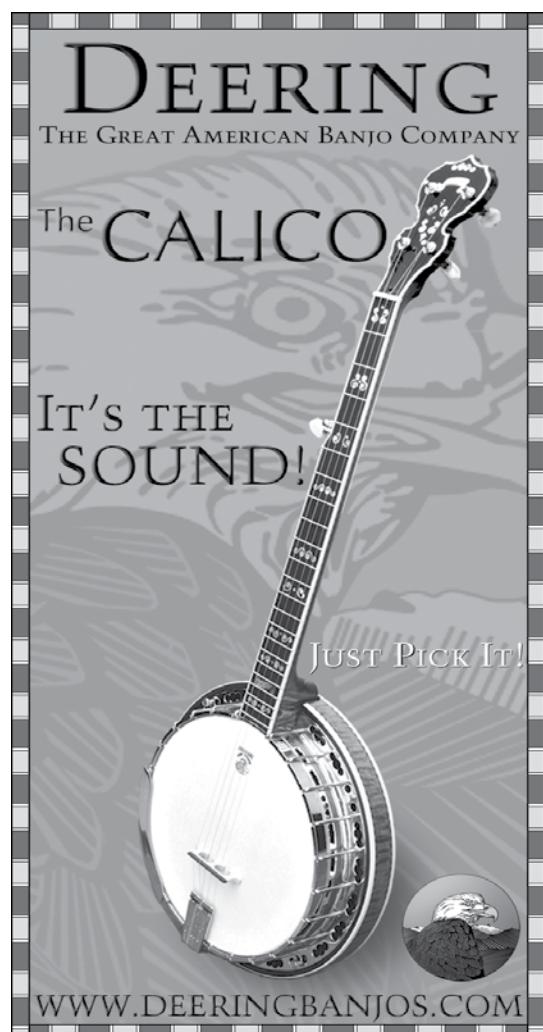
William Tobin-Harwood Music ...A-style mandolin with hard case
 John KarsmeyerDobro resonator guitar with hard case
 Veronica Varner (age 7)1/4 fiddle with bow & case
 Doug Holloway3/4 fiddle with bow and case
 Ramona Beresford-Howefull size guitar with case
 David HudspethGold Tone BG Minibanjo with hard case
 Jim Hyatt-5th String Music Store
Recording King Little Cowboy guitar with case
1 mandolin hard case
1 guitar hard case
 Howard PinkstonFranciscan Banjo with case & tuner
 Jill Cruy3/4 size fiddle with case
 Richard SmithA-style mandolin with set of extra strings
 Douglas FosterAlvarez full size guitar with case
 Tom Moore5 string banjo with case

Many thanks to Steve Joynes who came to me at the Colusa campout and offered his services to restore any fiddles in need of work. At this time, he has donated parts and his time to working on 5 fiddles. Thank you Steve, your kindness and generosity is most appreciated.

Continued thanks to Jim Hyatt of the 5th String in Berkeley for his constant help in working on any instrument I bring him and all the donations he keeps making! Jim also tells his customers about this program and offered to be a place where people can drop off instruments that are to be donated to this program. Thank you, Jim!

To all of you our most heartfelt thanks and remember that this is only half of this program so if you know of any children that are in need of borrowing an instrument please have them contact us.

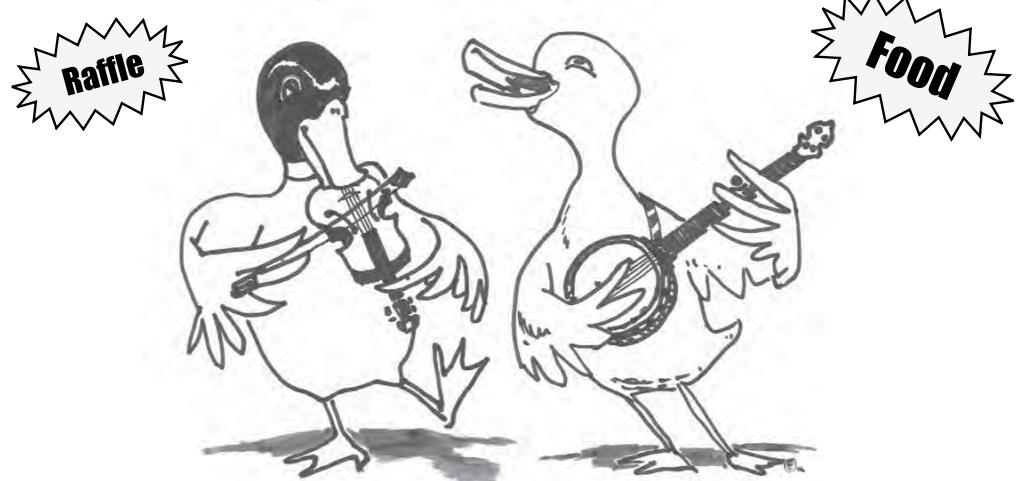
Sharon & Steve Elliott
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MC: Leigh Hill, KUSP D.J. — Sound by Bill Rains of Clarified Sound — No dogs, no alcohol, no smoking
 Presented by the SANTA CRUZ BLUEGRASS SOCIETY

BLUEGRASS MUSEUM ANNOUNCES 2ND ANNUAL MONROE-STYLE MANDOLIN CAMP

OWENSBORO, KY, MARCH 26, 2007: After the overwhelming success of its inaugural camps in 2006, the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, KY is pleased to announce The 2007 Monroe-Style Mandolin Camp.

September 7-9 bluegrass music enthusiasts from around the world will have the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the stylizations, songwriting, and multi-cultural musical influences of Bill Monroe, the "Father of Bluegrass."

Mandolin greats and Monroe authorities Frank Wakefield, Mike Compton, Roland White, Skip Gorman and David Long comprise the prestigious faculty for 2007. Instructors will give workshops on multiple facets of Monroe's style, including right-hand technique, the blues, fiddle tunes, cross-tuning, church music and songwriting.

The star-studded faculty will present a public concert on September 8th with special guest and former Bluegrass Boy, Tom Ewing. Ensemble performances will include Monroe compositions, jams, and story-telling remembrances of Bill Monroe. Tickets to the concert will be \$15.00 at the door; campers' tickets are included with their tuition.

The \$500 camp package includes all classes, 3 meals, 2 nights of hotel rooms, the concert, a group picture and a road trip to Rosine, KY, the birthplace and resting place of Monroe.

The 2006 Camp drew participants from 25 states and 4 countries and received rave reviews. 2007 camp attendance will be capped at 45 and will be sold on a first come-first serve basis.

For Reservations, call the International Bluegrass Mu-

sic Museum at 1-888-692-2656 or visit www.bluegrass-museum.org.

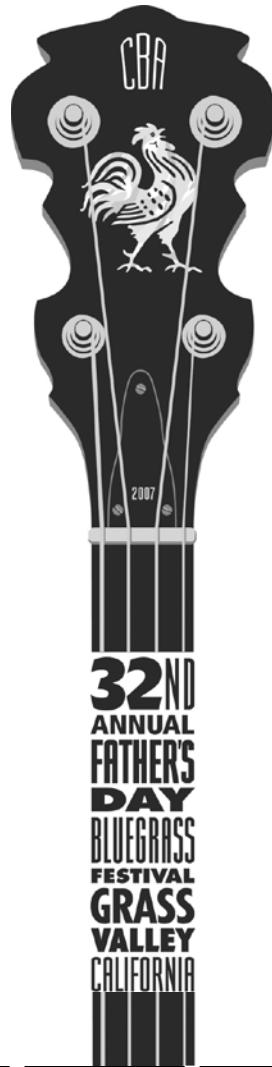
The International Bluegrass Music Museum is the only museum of its kind in the world and is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of bluegrass music for fans around the world.

Gabrielle Gray Executive Director
 International Bluegrass Music Museum
www.bluegrass-museum.org



Roland White teaches Monroe style

CBA'S FATHER'S DAY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL



Thursday -- 6/14/07
 Emcee Rick Cornish
 10:00 – 10:50 am The Piney Creek Weasels
 11:00 – 11:50 am The F-150's
 12:00 – 12:50 pm The Claire Lynch Band
 12:50 – 2:00 pm Lunch and Workshops
 Emcee Cuzin Al Knoth
 2:00 – 2:50 pm The Brombies
 3:00 – 3:50 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage
 4:00 – 4:50 pm Music Camp All Stars
 5:00 – 5:50 pm Tom Sauber, Mark Graham & Pat
 5:50 – 7:00 pm Dinner and Workshops
 Emcee Diana Donnelly
 7:00 – 7:50 pm The Greencards
 8:00 – 8:50 pm The Claire Lynch Band
 9:00 – 9:50 pm Cherryholmes
 10:00 – 10:50 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage

Friday – 6/15/07
 Emcee Angelica Grim
 10:00 – 10:50 am Monroe Crossing
 11:00 – 11:50 am The Claire Lynch Band
 12:00 – 12:50 pm The Greencards
 12:50 – 2:00 pm Lunch and Workshops
 Emcee Dianna Donnelly
 2:00 – 2:50 pm Cherryholmes
 3:00 – 3:50 pm Monroe Crossing
 4:00 – 4:50 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage
 5:00 – 5:50 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 5:50 – 7:30 pm Dinner and Workshops
 Emcee Don Evans
 7:30 – 8:20 pm The Greencards
 8:30 – 9:20 pm Cherryholmes
 9:30 – 10:20 pm US Navy Band Country Current

Saturday – 6/16/07
 Emcee Bob Thomas
 10:00 – 10:50 am John Reischman & Jaybirds
 11:00 – 11:50 am The Del McCoury Band
 12:00 – 12:50 pm Dan Paisley & Southern Grass
 12:50 – 2:00 pm Lunch and Workshops
 Emcee Ray Edlund
 2:00 – 2:50 pm The US Navy Band Country Current
 3:00 – 3:50 pm The Dale Ann Bradley Band
 4:00 – 4:50 pm John Reischman & The Jaybirds
 5:00 – 5:50 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 5:50 – 6:00 pm CBA Board Introductions
 6:00 – 6:50 pm The US Navy Band Country Current
 6:50 – 8:00 pm Dinner and Workshops
 Emcee J.D. Rhynes
 8:00 – 8:50 pm Monroe Crossing
 8:50 – 9:00 pm CBA Board Award Presentations
 9:00 – 9:50 pm The Dale Ann Bradley Band
 10:00 – 10:50 pm The Del McCoury Band

Sunday – 6/17/07
 8:00 – 9:00 am Chapel on the Children's Stage
 Hosted by Jan and LeRoy McNees
 Gospel Show
 Emcee Don Evans
 10:00 – 10:50 am Dan Paisley & Southern Grass
 11:00 – 11:50 pm The Dale Ann Bradley Band
 12:00 – 12:50 pm The Del McCoury Band
 12:50 – 2:00 pm Lunch and Workshops
 Emcee J.D. Rhynes
 2:00 – 2:50 pm John Reischman & Jaybirds
 3:00 – 3:50 pm Adobe Creek
 4:00 – 4:50 pm Dan Paisley & Southern Grass

band schedule

...subject to change

workshop schedule

...more to be added

Thursday Lunch -- 6/14/2007

Area B - Old Time Banjo – Andy Alexis - Piney Creek Weasels
 Area C – Fiddle – Eric Anderson - Piney Creek Weasels
 Area E – Bruce Johnson of F-150's
 Area G – Autoharp Tuning Basics – Tina Louise Barr

Thursday Dinner workshops T.B.A.

Friday Lunch -- 6/15/2007

Area A – Guitar – Josh Williams – Rhonda Vincent
 Area B – Guitar – Charlie Edsall – F-150's
 Area C – Song Writing – JoEllen Doering - Brombies
 Area D – Play by Ear – Luke Abbott – Abbott Family
 Area E – Fiddle – Hunter Berry – Rhonda Vincent
 Area F – Great Sounding Banjo Setup- Roger Siminoff
 Area G – Autoharp Bluegrass Hot Chops – Tina Louise Barr
 Area H – How a Banjo Works – Montie Hendricks
 Area I – Hammer Dulcimer – Andy Alexis – Piney Creek Weasels
 Area K - Dual Banjo – Tom and Patrick Sauber
 Area T.B.A. - Twin Fiddle - BJ and Molly Cherryholmes
 Area T.B.A. - Guitar - Skip Cherryholmes
 Area T.B.A. - Sandy Cherryholmes

Friday Dinner

Area B – Harmonica – Mark Graham – Graham, Sauber, Sauber
 Area C – Clawhammer Banjo – Carl Pagter
 Area D - Playing by Ear – Luke Abbott – Abbott Family
 Area E – Banjo & Fiddle Old Time Band Tom & Patrick Sauber
 Area G – Photography Workshop – Tom Tworek – CBA
 Area H – Guitar Setup – Michael Lewis

Saturday Lunch -- 6/16/2007

Area A – Banjo – Benji Flaming of Monroe Crossing
 Area B – Fiddle – Lisa Fuglie of Monroe Crossing
 Area C – Guitar – Art Blackburn of Monroe Crossing
 Area E – Fiddle – Tom Sauber of Sauber Graham Sauber
 Area F – The Lore of the Loar – Roger Siminoff
 Area G – Mandolin – Patrick Sauber – Sauber Graham Sauber
 Area H – Mandolin Setup – Michael Lewis

Saturday Dinner

Area A – Mandolin – Jeff Parker – Dale Ann Bradley
 Area B – Bass – Mark Anderson – Monroe Crossing
 Area C – Bluegrass Band Rhythm – John Reischman - Jaybirds
 Area D – Guitar – Troy Engle – Dale Ann Bradley
 Area E – Mandolin – Matt Thompson – Monroe Crossing
 Area F – Song Writing – Dale Ann Bradley
 Area T.B.A. - Bass – Mike Bubb – Dale Ann Bradley
 Area G – Banjo – Ramona – Dale Ann Bradley
 Area H – Advanced Banjo Setup Topics – Montie Hendricks
 Area I – Guitar – TJ Lundy – Dan Paisley and Southern Grass
 Area J – Rhythm Guitar – Tom and Patrick Sauber
 Area K – Banjo – Bob Lundy – Dan Paisley and Southern Grass

Sunday Lunch

Area F - Recording Studio Topics - Joe Weed

Workshop Locations:

A -- Gazebo By Gate 5	G – By Senior Center
B -- Back of Stage Area	H – Luthiers Pavilion Building
C -- By Administration Bldg	I – By Ice House
D – Horseshoe Pit	J – Behind Sound Board
E – By Stage Right	K – By Stage Left
F -- Northern Mines Building	



The Luthier's Corner - Roger Siminoff

Q: I have a "Masterclone" banjo from 1976 and it sounds terrible. It has more "echo" than "ring." The banjo has what appears to be a 12-ply maple rim. I would think that the more plies you have, the more glue you have and the more sound that is absorbed. Can you comment on this?

A: There is some truth to the idea that "the more plies you have, the more glue you have," but, to answer "the more sound that is absorbed" requires a more detailed

response. Glue - if it is the right kind of glue - is a good thing and if the glue is rock hard, the rim will be denser and harder, and will help to provide more sustain. In this regard, it will not absorb energy but reinforce it. The problem with the multi-ply (8-12-plies that appear to look like plywood) rim is probably not the glue but the type of wood that was used and how well the glue joints were made. You suggested that your rim was maple, but knowing what I do of many of the multi-ply rims that have been made, there are several woods that have been used, and rarely these include hard maple. More often, they are either soft maple or woods such as poplar, cherry, ash, etc. The banjo rim needs to be dense and hard, and the best choice for construction is hard maple.

There are several species of maple and each has its place in musical instrument construction. Big Leaf (acer macrophyllum) is light and more supple than the heavier and harder species and makes a very responsive backboard for mandolins, but I'd never use it for the laminates of a banjo rim. For necks and traditional 3-ply rims, most banjo luthiers prefer "hard maple" and there are two main varieties. These are sugar maple (acer saccharum) – some folks call it "rock maple" – and red maple (acer rubrum). Both of these harder maples are great for banjo rims because of their density, weight, and stiffness.

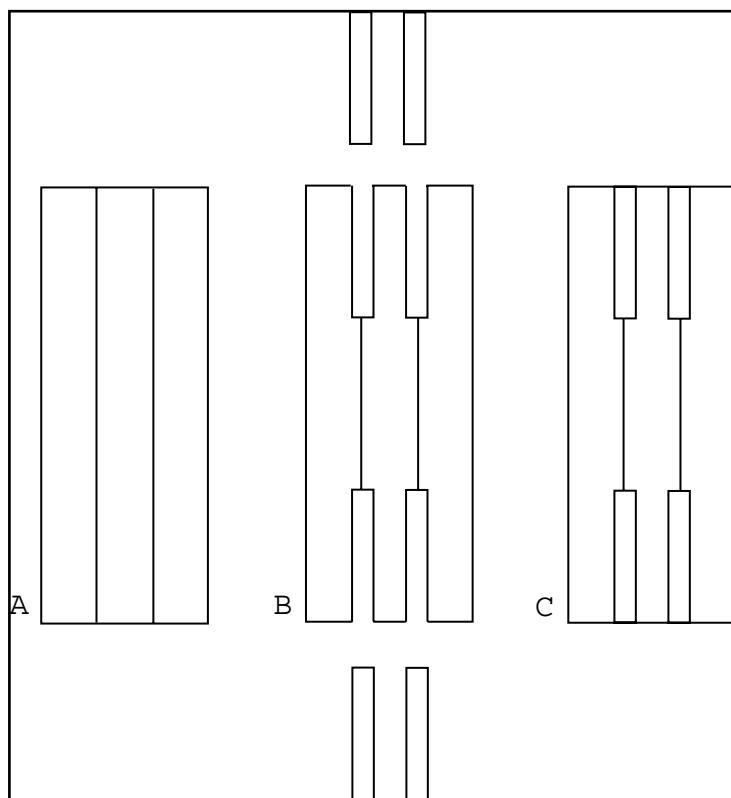


Fig. 1 Some of the original pre-war Gibson rims appear to be 5-ply but were actually 3-ply rims with inserts. To cover unsightly glue seams, Gibson would machine slots into the glue joints (B), and then glue in wood strips (C).

Gibson always made their traditional rims from three laminates of hard maple (most of it from northern Michigan). Some of Gibson's early pre-war rims have what appear to be 5-ply rims, but in fact, they are really 3-ply rims with a cosmetic adjustment. These rims initially had unsightly glue seams – either crooked or with some gaps. To save the rims and solve the problem, Gibson would turn the rims on a lathe and make a shallow cut into the two glue seams. A thin strip of wood was then glued into each cut that made the rim appear to have five plies (three wide ones and two narrower ones) but they did, in fact, begin life as a 3-ply rim. Typically, these rims were relegated to lesser models like the Style-0 or Style-1 banjos, leaving the better looking 3-ply rims for the more expensive models. I've done quite a few conversions fitting TB-0 and TB-1 banjos with either flattop or archtop tone chambers, and quickly discovered the real three plies after the upper part of the rim was machined away on my lathe.

Q: Since acoustics is a specialty of yours, I overheard some musicians talking about the infosound of their guitar, and they said you can't hear it but it is there. What is that?

A: Thanks for this great question. Actually, the word is "infrasound" and it is sound energy below 16-18Hz (16-18 cycles per second). To put that in perspective, the lowest key on most full-keyboard pianos is A27.5Hz (an A note that produces 27.5 vibrations or cycles per second).

Ultrasound and infrasound are to our sense of hearing what ultra-violet and infra-red are to our sense of sight. Ultra-violet and infra-red are colors that are outside of the human

visible spectrum (you may remember from science class that the spectrum is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). So infra-red is above red, and ultra-violet is below violet. They are components of light, and they support other colors we see (especially in sunlight), but we can't actually see infra-red or ultra-violet without the aid of electronic devices.

Ultrasound refers to frequencies above the human audible spectrum (typically above 18,000Hz). Infrasound refers to frequencies below the human audible spectrum (typically below 16Hz). Like the colors of light, the energy is there, we just can't really hear it but we can measure it with electronic devices.

Ultrasound typically comes from generators, power lines, machinery, etc. Animals are very sensitive to it, and many suggest that it is the ultrasound that cats and dogs hear when they begin to act strangely prior to an earthquake (something familiar to us here in California).

An acoustic guitar (or any instrument) is capable of producing both ultrasound and infrasound. And, while we can't actually identify those sounds separately as we might an A440Hz note, for example, the sounds are present nonetheless, and they do contribute to the overall tone we hear. Several years ago, John Berry (one of the founders of Barcus Berry – the folks who make pickups) developed a product called "Speaker Plates." These were glass or aluminum plates (they had two versions) to which they attached a piezo transducer that drove the plates as if they were speakers. The Speaker Plates by themselves produced very low levels of ultrasound signals ranging from about 17,000Hz to 30,000Hz. With just the Speaker Plates turned on, you could barely hear anything from them (and, of course, the human could only sense that part of the signal that was in the 17,000Hz to maybe 18,000 range). But when you turned them on, in addition to conventional speakers, the presence and depth of the sound was amazing! I have a set that John gave me to evaluate in the '70s, and they still work incredibly well today.

Q: Is there any quick and easy way to check the neck angle when doing a dovetail joint on a mandolin? I'm having a heck of a time trying to figure out if I'm getting the neck pitch correct.

A: There are several ways to do this, but the easiest way is to make a simple gauge that will project a line from the fretboard plane of the neck to the contact point where the bridge will sit. When you lay the gauge on the neck plane – before the fretboard is attached – you will easily see if the gauge touches the soundboard. If there is a space, then the neck pitch is too high. If the bottom of the gauge touches the soundboard before the flat part of the gauge is lying flat against the neck plane, then the neck pitch is too low.

To make the gauge, prepare a flat, straight stick that is 14-1/4" long (basically 1/4" longer than the traditional 13-15/16" string scale of the mandolin). At one end, attach a piece of wood that is 7/16" tall and 3/8" wide. Glue the 3/8" surface to the last 1/4" of the stick. This little block will act as a surrogate bridge. Now you can lay that stick on the fretboard plane of the NECK (NOT on the FRETBOARD) and the neck will be at the correct pitch when the bottom of the 7/16" piece just touches the crown of the soundboard.

Q: I've just taken a ball bearing banjo apart and didn't look carefully to see how all the spring parts came out. When I put them back together some balls were higher than the others. Yikes. What did I do wrong? Can you tell me how they go back together? Also, I found some paper punches on my dining room table (where I took the banjo apart) and they were not there before. Where the heck did they come from?

A: Yes, ball bearing banjos are a lot of fun – 96 parts in the spring actions alone (24 balls, 24 springs, 24 top washers, 24 bottom washers)! And then there are those funny little paper punches. Hmmmm.

Well, let's start backward. The paper punches tell me that probably no one has ever taken that banjo apart before. When Gibson originally put together the ball bearing banjos, they used paper punches (from the office) as shims under the bottom washer to get all the



Fig. 2 The ball bearing banjo models – Gibson's earliest "Mastertone" banjos – featured 24 ball bearings mounted on top of springs to float the tone chamber above the wood rim.

The Luthier's Corner

balls even. Usually, when folks take these banjos apart, they just discard the paper shims not knowing where they came from (as you did) or what they were for.

As to getting all the balls to be the right height, go through all of the washers, and you will notice that all the washers have a small hole drilled through them but only half of the washers have a recess in the center of one side. The washers with the recess are the top washers, and they go in with the recess up so that the ball rests in the recess.

So, the sequence of assembly is to first put in the washers that do not have the recess, then the spring, then the washer with the recess (recess up), then the ball. Once they are all in, check how level they are by placing the tone ring on the balls. If any of the balls are low, evaluate how many paper shims it will take to fill the space between the low ball and the tone chamber. Then carefully remove the ball, and use either a toothpick or a piece of wire to remove the top washer, spring, and lower washer. Place the appropriate number of paper punches below the lower washer and re-assemble. While it may seem that the paper would be too weak to act as a shim under all that pressure, it actually does a good job and does not deform or compress significantly.

If you didn't use the paper punches, it would not be terrible because the springs will compress and all of the balls will eventually come in contact with the tone chamber. However, to ensure that nothing rattles, it is a good idea to start with them level.

Ball bearing banjos make great bluegrass instruments if the heads are tuned correctly. I have my share of banjos, but my ball bearing banjo is one of my favorites.

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If you have questions you would like answered, please email: siminoff@siminoff.net, or write to Roger Siminoff, PO Box 1138, Arroyo Grande, CA 93421.

Roger Siminoff was the founder of Pickin' and Frets magazines and has written several books on instrument set-up and construction. His latest book, The Art of Tap Tuning (Hal Leonard Corporation) is a 56-page text that features an accompanying 50-minute DVD with acoustical tests, set up and use of electronic tuning gear, and an actual demonstration of the tap tuning process. The book is available at most music stores and luthier supply houses or directly from Roger's web site. For more on Roger Siminoff, Siminoff Banjo and Mandolin Parts, Gibson and Lloyd Loar history, visit his web site at: www.siminoff.net.



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Mom, Bluegrass and... Parkfield Bluegrass Festival, May 10-13

Continued from A-1

Parkfield, pop. about 18, is a rural paradise about 25 miles east of Paso Robles. Mom can sink into her chair in the meadow under tall, spreading trees--and never be far from the performer's stage. While mom relaxes, you can pull the RV into the circle right beside your favorite bluegrass performer's rig, or opt to pitch your tent in seclusion on a grassy spot under the oaks. Shower facilities are nearby—not fancy, but functional with hot water. There are also some electrical hookups available to share.

When mom does get hungry, a few steps to the north of the lawn chair will take her to the Parkfield Café. The Café serves delicious steak and burgers. A few steps westward lies outdoor bar-b-que, Mexican cuisine and a whole slew of festival vendors who cater to lovers of bluegrass music. Bring some cash and treat mom to her musical heart's desire!

Now let's talk about the music. Some people go to festivals to jam at night. Parkfield has warm days and mild evenings, so jam junkies can play all day and all night long in relative comfort. For those who also like stage performances, Fes-

tival organizers have scoured the country—locally and nationally—to capture bluegrass talent for your listening pleasure. NewFound Road, a dynamic and thrilling contemporary bluegrass band out of Ohio, headlines for Parkfield this year. The band features three soulful vocalists and plays stripped-down, undiluted bluegrass music with exciting extras: a little percussion, piano and pedal steel.

Traditionalist fans will immediately notice High Country's name co-headlining at Parkfield 2007. This Oakland, California band has delighted audiences for over 30 years with the high, lonesome sound of classics like "Highway of Pain." High Country has recently issued a double album retrospective filled with

classic bluegrass songs and tunes. You can pick up your autographed copy at the festival. Don't forget to pick up another one for mom.

And so many others: Eric

favorite who has co-headlined with the Dixie Chicks; and Highway One, a northern California band that blends traditional, contemporary and original bluegrass. Local favorites Better Late than Never (featuring "Basically Bluegrass" deejay Glen Horne) and Southside Band (Lompoc bluegrassers who have played every Parkfield festival) return to bring you double ear candy.

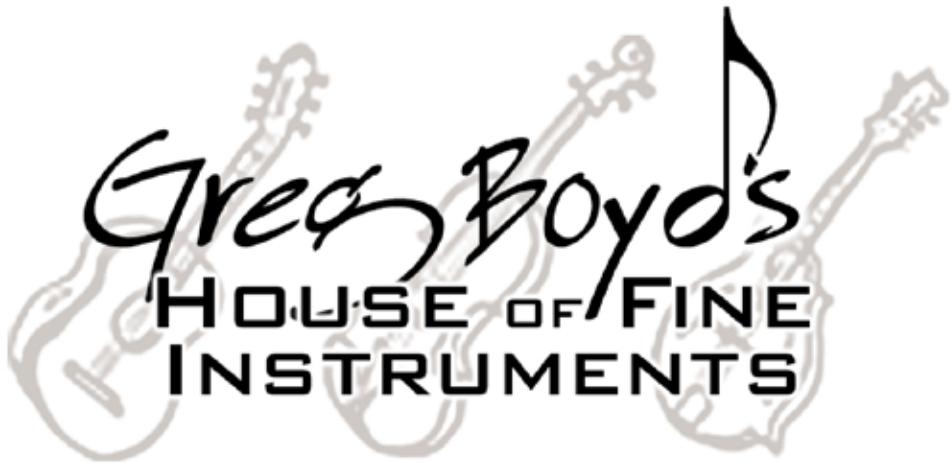
The Parkfield festival has much more to offer; workshops: crafts for kids, and Ed Alston's special family recipe ice cream. It's a wonderful, musical getaway for the whole family—and the price is probably less than you'd pay to take Mom to that lukewarm Mother's Day brunch.

If you like your bluegrass contemporary, progressive and with attitude, catch the Bladerunners at Parkfield. Smiley Mountain originated in Yosemite and plays a unique array of original and traditional music. Boys in the Woods brings over 100 years' playing experience and a variety of influences

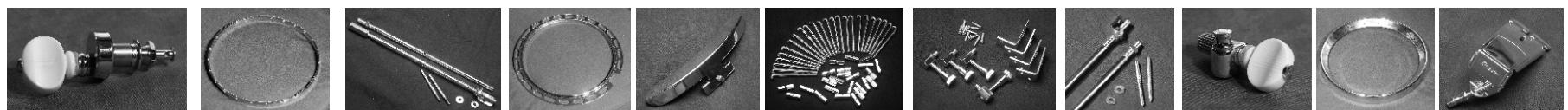


Newfound Road

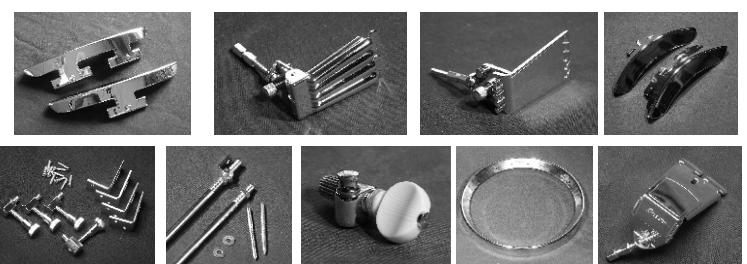
Uglam and his talented sons, fiddler Christian and bassist Austin (who have just collaborated on a new album, The Old Road to Jerusalem); High Hills, an all-female



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STUDIO INSIDER -- The Flash Recorder

In this column just a few months ago I wrote about a relatively new tool, the portable flash audio recorder. This device uses little memory cards to record and store audio, similar to the way a digital camera uses memory cards to record and store pictures. Flash recorders can be very handy for bluegrass fans who record shows and jam sessions, as well as for players capturing moments of musical inspiration.

Because I frequently use a portable device to record interviews and make field recordings, I began checking out the newest generation of flash recorders at last Fall's AES convention in San Francisco. In my December column I gave a brief overview of several units. I took advantage of an AES show discount to buy an H4 "Handy Recorder" made by Zoom (<http://www.zoom.co.jp>). Street price is usually around \$300 for the H4, but the show special was \$50 below that.

Earlier this month, I spent two weeks traveling in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Chicago, and Wisconsin. During that research trip I used my new H4 flash recorder when interviewing a variety of people and recording several musical groups. Based on that experience, I'll pass along some pluses and minuses of the H4 as I used it, and I'll contrast it with the mini disk recorder and the Digidesign MBox/ProTools rig, both of which I have also used for field recordings.

Interview tool

The H4 proved to be a wonderful tool for recording interviews. While it features a built-in pair of condenser mics arranged in an X/Y pattern (probably the best arrangement for producing real-sounding stereo), it also contains jacks for professional microphones, and provides 48 volt phantom power for mics that need it. You can re-

cord with either the built-in mics or your external mics. In controlled interviews, especially those being video recorded, I prefer to use a lavalier mic clipped to the clothing of my subject. The mic I use, which I plug into my mini disk recorder with an adaptor, plugs right into the H4 without need for an adaptor, as the H4 has two combination XLR/TRS balanced mic inputs. Setting record levels on the H4 proved much easier than on the mini disk, with both coarse and fine adjustments available. I usually use automatic level control when recording interviews, and accessing this feature using the H4's menus and information screens proved much quicker and easier than navigating through the mini disk recorder's pages of menus. The H4 has a text display that shows at least six lines of information, and this makes for quicker decision making and less squinting and furrowing of the brow when setting up to record. However, the larger and brighter display of the H4 may contribute to its shorter battery life. It uses two AA batteries, while the mini disk recorder uses one AA battery. One annoying feature of the mini disk which the H4 doesn't share is that even if you set it up for manual record level, it always defaults back to automatic level control if the machine is turned off or taken out of record mode. The engineers at Zoom have obviously done field recording and gotten this feature right. If you set manual record levels, the machine behaves, even if you turn it off.

Slower boots

With the mini disk, I could simply pick it up, slide a switch, and it would instantly begin recording. The H4 has to be powered up first, and that takes about nine seconds. Once it's up and running, getting into and out of record mode is pretty quick: from

record-ready, it drops into "record" instantly, and when you're done recording, the finalizing of the file is very quick, as the machine is writing to a chip and not a disk.

Field recordings

When making field recordings in situations that don't allow setting up and using a ProTools rig, I found the H4 to be an excellent tool. Depending on how it is configured, the unit can operate for several hours on a pair of AA batteries. On my recent trip, I needed to record an accordion and fiddle duo, and the situation wasn't right for setting up various pieces of gear, running cables, and finding electrical outlets. So I positioned the H4 between the two musicians, placing it closer to the fiddler to better pick up his softer sound, and angled it so that the built-in x/y pair of condenser mics was picking up the two musicians optimally. In this situation, it worked comparably to the mini disk recorder, except that the H4 features built-in microphones. I placed it on a foot stool, did a quick coarse level set, and pushed "record." I then busied myself with video cameras, only glancing at the H4 occasionally to make sure I was getting good levels. Checking with headphones from time to time, I was assured that the system was working well. Whereas the mini disk display is pretty much useless from a few feet away, the larger and brighter display on the H4 showed me that the unit was up and running, and that the levels I'd set for the microphones were still appropriate.

Additional features

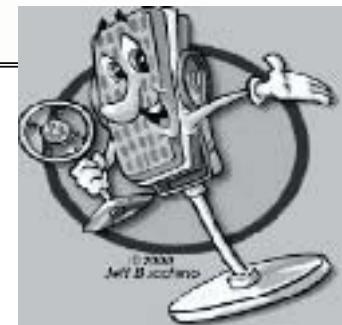
Because it is RAM-based, the H4 is quick and easy to back up a day's work. When I used the mini disk, I had to load all the audio files from mini disk to my lap top in real time. In other words, a 90-minute interview took 90 minutes to back

up. I'd have to set up my MBox, run ProTools, and play back the entire interview on the mini disk and record it into ProTools on the laptop. This meant that while I was doing that back-up, I couldn't use the laptop for email or for working on the internet. That's a big sacrifice when I'm on the road. I frequently need to use the laptop to access Google maps, book a room for the next day's travels, confirm reservations, check phone numbers and messages, etc. I can't use the computer to do these things while running a ProTools session to back up audio. (I CAN play fiddle while I wait, but my hotel neighbors other than at Supergrass might not appreciate hearing reels, polkas and waltzes from the room next door while trying to sleep.)

Backing up from the H4, however, is a different story. When it's connected to a USB 2 port on a computer, it powers itself up from the USB line, and you can mount it on the computer desktop. It's pretty easy to drag files from the H4 to the computer, and you can back up a 90-minute interview in mp3 format in just a few minutes. While the files are being copied to the computer, it's easy to access the internet, check email, and perform other operations while the computer does the copying in the background.

Format and Media

The H4 can record in standard



CD format (44.1K/16 bit), or in various higher resolutions (96K or 48K, both at 24 or 16 bit), or various MP3 formats. I bought four 2-Gig cards to take on the road, for around \$25 each. One 2-Gig card can hold almost three hours of CD-quality audio, or about 34 hours of MP3 audio. To sum it up, the aptly named "Handy recorder" H4 makes a great tool for field work.

Joe Weed records acoustic music at his Highland Studios near Los Gatos, California. He has released six albums of his own, produced many projects for independent labels, and does sound tracks for film, TV and museums. His latest production, for Woodshed Productions, is Chuck McCabe's "Sweet Reunion," featuring Chuck McCabe, Rob Ickes, Norton Buffalo, the Irrationals, and many other great artists. You can reach Joe by calling (408) 353-3353, by email at joe@highlandpublishing.com, or by visiting joeweed.com.

Do you have an instrument you're not playing that could make a child smile like this?



Luke Davisson

Photo by Bob Calkins

Many of us in the Bluegrass community have guitars, fiddles, mandolins, banjos, basses et.al in our homes that are (1) no longer being played; (2) that we never got around to learning to play; or (3) that were put aside when a new one was purchased.

If this description fits you, won't you please consider donating your usable acoustic instrument to the Darrell

Johnston Kids Instrument Lending Library? There are many families with young children that would like to learn to play the music we all love, but who can't afford to purchase an instrument for the young would-be musicians.

If you would like more information or would like to donate an instrument please contact:

Sharon or Steve Elliott at 510-728-7613 or email kidslendinglibrary@yahoo.com



Three great Bluegrass Gold shows at Sweetwater in Mill Valley

There will be a bluegrass double-header starting off the month at the Bluegrass Gold series at Sweetwater in Mill Valley, and a hot third show later in the month. On Tuesday the 1st at 8:30 p.m. The Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band will headline with Jerry Faires opening, and on Wednesday the 2nd at 8 p.m. The Dale Ann Bradley Band will headline and The Wronglers (Warren Hellman's band) will open. The show on the 22nd at 8:30 p.m. will feature the Bay Area debut of headliner Three Ring Circle, a smokin' trio starring Rob Ickes on dobro, as well as the Sweetwater debut of The Grass Cutters. Bluegrass Gold is produced by Carlton Music and co-sponsored by the Northern California Bluegrass Society.

On Tuesday, May 1st, at 8:30 p.m., the first edition of the series will take place. This show will feature The Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band and Jerry Faires. Bluegrass legend Peter Rowan has led a long and varied career. In the 1960s he played with bluegrass legend Bill Monroe and The Blue Grass Boys as well as the bands Earth Opera and Seatrain. In 1973 he formed the all-star bluegrass band Old and In the Way, with David Grisman and Jerry Garcia, and their self-titled

recording is one of the best-selling bluegrass albums of all time. He then recorded a few albums with brothers Chris and Lorin, toured with his band The Free Mexican Air Force, and he has recorded several solo albums. His song "Panama Red" was a million-selling hit for The New Riders of the Purple Sage. His most recent recording on Rounder Records is Quartet with bluegrass guitar wizard Tony Rice. Peter has lived in Marin County for over thirty years, and he is one of the most entertaining and versatile performers on the scene today. Playing with Peter tonight will be Jody Stecher on mandolin, Keith Little on banjo and fiddle, and Paul Knight on bass. Opening the show will be Jerry Faires, a Santa Fe singer/songwriter storyteller and spoken word artist. His poignant story-poems come from his life-long study, and love, of the human pageantry that flows around us all. Peter Rowan and Tony Rice featured Jerry's song (one he co-wrote with Peter) "Come Back To Old Santa Fe" on their You Were There For Me CD from 2004.

On Wednesday, May 2nd, at 8 p.m., the second edition of the series will be happening. The show will feature The Dale Ann Bradley

Band and The Wronglers. Dale Ann Bradley doesn't just sing to an audience, she mesmerizes them with stories about her life, her family, the people and the land where she was raised in Berea, Kentucky. Melodically bending notes the way an accomplished musician bends a string, she has one of the fullest, sweetest voices you'll ever hear. But she can also turn around and belt out a driving song reflecting the strength of her voice with those same tones of pure pitch. An incredibly gifted vocalist, she exudes a sweet spirit and humbleness that is both genuine and sincere. Her band consists of Ramona Church on banjo, Mike Bub on bass, Jeff Parker on mandolin, and Troy Engle on fiddle/guitar. Dale Ann's most recent CD is titled Catch Tomorrow. Opening the show will be the Bay Area band called The Wronglers (Warren Hellman, Nate Levine, Bill Martin, Krista Martin, and Colleen Browne and Chris Hellman). They made their stage debut last October at Warren's Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival in San Francisco, and they combine bluegrass, folk, and old-time techniques, producing an intelligent, intimate sound with an abundance of twang. Warren's love of blue-



Rob Ickes (shown here with his famous California relatives Pat, left and Elida, center) performs with Three Ring Circle May 22

grass and old-time music permeates every aspect of his life, and his excitement at playing on stage for an audience brings him a huge sense of involvement and satisfaction. As an added bonus, sittin' in with the band for this show will be Ron Thomason (Dry Branch Fire Squad) and Heidi Clare (Reeltime Travelers).

On Tuesday the 22nd at 8:30 p.m. you won't want to miss Three Ring Circle. TRC is a jamgrass acoustic power trio formed by three of the hottest pickers to be found anywhere – Rob Ickes (of Blue Highway) on dobro, Andy Leftwich (Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder) on mandolin and fiddle, and Dave Pomeroy on bass. Individually they are world renowned players who have worked

with everyone from Elton John to Ricky Skaggs, Earl Scruggs and Bruce Hornsby, but as Three Ring Circle they are collectively blazing a new trail for fans of instrumental music everywhere. Their music is exciting, innovative, emotional, and as Duke Ellington used to say, "beyond category." This will be their only Bay Area performance.

Opening the show will be the new North Bay band The Grass Cutters, featuring Gary Kaye on banjo, Dana Rath on mandolin, Joe Kennedy on bass, and Adam Roszkiewicz on guitar.

Sweetwater is Marin County's premier nightclub as well as the home for bluegrass music in the North Bay. For more information call the club at (415) 388-2820, or go to www.sweetwatersaloon.com.



Rhonda Vincent

RHONDA VINCENT AND THE HAGUE
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Dale Ann Bradley and her band play the Sweetwater (Mill Valley) May 2
Also perform an RBA show (Mt. View) May 5th