



BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

Preserving and growing bluegrass, old-time, gospel, and traditional music in California since 1974



March
2025

A DIFFERENT KIND OF 'ABCs'

CBA LAUNCHES AFTER-SCHOOL BLUEGRASS CLUB PROGRAM

by Pete Ludé, CBA Executive Director, and Jason Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Managing Editor

CBA has a long and successful history of introducing bluegrass music to kids. Our programs have primarily centered around the annual Father's Day Bluegrass Festival, where parents can enroll their children in Kids on Bluegrass, the Youth Academy or KidFest. Now, we're excited to be bringing bluegrass to youth in local communities year-round. The After-school Bluegrass Club is a new CBA initiative where we partner with local non-profits to offer weekly bluegrass music lessons to 4th- through 8th-grade students after school.



Jared Katz's bluegrass club at Cabrillo Elementary School in Pacifica. CBA file photo

Our pilot project is planned to launch in April in southern Humboldt County. CBA is partnering with a local non-profit, Help's on the Way, founded by Ilaria and Jason Ballard to support youth music education. Our ABC classes will be held on Friday afternoons at the Octagon, a beautiful, 1,800-square-foot community center hall in just 20 minutes from Garberville in Brice-land, and will source instruments from our own CBA lending library.

"At the end of each weekly class we will invite parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, and whoever in the community wants to join us, for bluegrass picking around the fire, and spend a few hours together playing and teaching the kids about bluegrass music and traditions. We will also offer affordable and healthy dinners for those who want to hang out with us until a little later," Help's on the Way shared in a recent press release.

This inclusiveness is on-brand for the region, and pulling together the resources to start this program in rural Humboldt County has been a clinic in cooperative community building. Beginnings, Inc. built the

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Way Out in Front

50 YEARS OF CBA'S WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

by the Bluegrass Breakdown

Perhaps it goes without saying that many of California's best musicians are women—and always have been. But many of the contributions offstage to the success of our organization for 50 years also came from women. Here are just a few of the names—it was impossible to include them all—who helped build the musical community that makes our lives so rich! Many have received honors from CBA from the contributions, or held thankless roles in the early development of the association.



Darby, left, crowned queen of Youth Academy in 2024.
Photo by John Woodworth.

PAT BOCKOVER

Pat was a longtime volunteer with her husband, Tom. They wore many hats as CBA super-vols, including the crucial security and hospitality role, and were regarded as "tireless and ever-present at our events."

DARBY BRANDLI

Darby has been a big part of the CBA for more than 40 years. "I surprised Bruno (my husband) with a trip to the Father's Day Festival when our children were small in the late 1980s. We loved it and joined the CBA and returned the next year and the next year. Late in the 1990's I realized that members could participate in the organization. Bruno and I helped organize the McGrath's Jam in Alameda, and Bruno led the jam for years. My first big project was getting bicycles allowed at the Festival, which took three years of a pilot program." She served as CBA president from 2005 to 2019, and has been president emerita of CBA and the director of the CBA Youth Program since.

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DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN BLUEGRASS

by Pete Ludé, CBA Executive Director

March is officially designated as Women's History Month. You might not know that this tradition originally started in 1978 as a local celebration right here in Santa Rosa, California. Back then, it was launched as a one-week event by the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, established to align with International Women's Day on March 8. Before long, other communities across the country initiated their own celebrations, which led to a national movement. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter declared National Women's History Week, and in 1987 Congress officially designated March as Women's History Month.

Just as California helped lead the nation in celebrating the contributions of women, California has

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The *Bluegrass Breakdown* is the monthly publication of the California Bluegrass Association, keeping CBA members and the world of bluegrass up-to-date with coverage of CBA events, musicians, promotions, and volunteer opportunities since April 1975. Each issue is published as both a printed and a digital newsletter and distributed to more than 7,500 readers around the world.

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SONOMA BLUEGRASS

Long-standing Sonoma festival, CBA 50th, International Women's Day, in auspicious conjunction March 8

by Ted Kuster, CBA Board Chair

We're just a few days away from a great time at the Sonoma County Bluegrass & Folk Festival, starting at noon March 8 at the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center. We can't wait to see you there!

This festival has been a labor of love for CBA's Mark Hogan since it began in 2001 as the Presidents Day Bluegrass Festival at a nearby high school. Mark was then Sonoma's new regional director, inspired to grow the bluegrass community in the area. "This one-day event is designed to give North Bay bluegrass, old-time, and folk music fans an opportunity to hear their favorite music, jam, and visit with friends in what is usually the bluegrass festival off-season," he wrote that year. With a great lineup, workshops, and jamming spaces again this year, the festival is still making its founding vision a reality!

Mark and the CBA have teamed up with the Sonoma County Folk Society from the festival's beginning. SoCoFoSo was founded in 1976 as the Santa Rosa Folk Festival Association by a small group that included the beloved folk singer Kate Wolf. "I realized that the CBA did not have a large following in this area, but that bluegrass was at times well received," Mark recalled in the March 2020 *Bluegrass Breakdown*. Partnering with the

Sonoma County Folk Society turned out to be a wise move. "They were in a transitional period regarding their own future, having been the go-to outfit for music in Sonoma County for many years, hosting a multi-day folk festival here since the 1970's," Mark said. "Our successful partnership continues today."

This year the festival falls on International Women's Day, and we'll celebrate that and the CBA's 50th anniversary with two of California's favorite performers, who have been singing together for half a century now—more about that on page six—as well as the sensational, all-female Salty Sally, and many more women performers in all the great California bands that will grace the stage.

And in keeping with our tradition of featuring the best in old-time music, Lonesome Ace is sure to surprise and delight us all with their innovative take on the genre. Come on out for a great tradition, great picking, and great hospitality in Sebastopol this month! 🐻

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Bluegrass & Folk Festival [HERE](#) ➤



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AFTERSCHOOL BLUEGRASS

cont'd from front page

octagonal-shaped community center that will serve as the first bluegrass club's home with volunteers and donated materials in the mid-2000's—much of the lumber for the building actually came from nearby residents' donations of timber from their land. Today, the site hosts dances, parties, weddings, plays, concerts, lectures, classes, workshops, fundraisers; even a school lunch cafeteria, and will be a great host for the program.

CBA's ABC program is organized by Karen Wilhoite, a long-time CBA member based in Northern California who also plays bass and sings in the Hydro-matic Drive Bluegrass Band. A rising star in music performance and education, Nick Weitzfeld leads the curriculum development. Though he's from the Eastern musical hotbed of Floyd, Virginia, and ran the Junior Appalachian Musicians program in nearby Tazewell County, you might remember Nick as the guitarist in The Tray Wellington Band at last summer's Father's Day Festival.

This program is inspired in part by the wonderful bluegrass program initiated by CBA member Jared Katz at Cabrillo Elementary School in Pacifica. For nearly 10 years, Jared has been introducing 3rd and 4th graders to the excitement of playing mu-



Karen Wilhoite plays with Hydro-matic Drive at FDF Vern's Stage in 2024. Photo by David Cupp.

sic together. Many of his past students have gone on to form great bands, or simply to embrace bluegrass and jamming as a favorite pastime. Now, CBA plans to extend this opportunity to kids in other communities, especially where there is a lack of arts education in local public schools.

Lack of arts education leaves students at a disadvantage; countless studies back this up. A UCLA study in 2022 found students who participated in an after-school music program boosted their reading and math scores. Researchers Erin Heddemann and Stacy Frazier wrote in 2017 that among the many types of after-school programs, music education is particularly well-suited for boosting youth's mental health. Music education, they noted, offered in a group format "emphasizes teamwork, cooperation, and artistic understanding and expression, making music an ideal medium for developing skills such as insight, communication, and problem solving," as well as emotional intelligence. Music education in general promotes brain development, and can increase brain power and functionality, which can improve concentration and IQ. Finally, music can also help with fine and gross motor skills, executive function, and sensory development.

This is an exciting extension of CBA's mission to bring bluegrass to the next generation, and we're very excited about the possibilities. If all goes well with our pilot project, the goal is to extend ABC into one or two additional communities starting in the fall. 

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE,
HELPING OUT, OR DONATING TO THIS
PROGRAM? CONTACT THE TEAM AT
ABC@CALIFORNIABLUEGRASS.NET**



IT'S ALL ABOUT THAT BASS ... AND WE NEED THEM!

The CBA Instrument Library is in urgent need of half- and quarter-sized basses as we launch the new After-school Bluegrass Club!

To find out how **you** can help support the start of this important youth program, please contact CBA Instrument Librarian Shannon Khadher at instruments@californiabluegrass.net



WELCOME COLUMN

cont'd from front page

also been a hot-bed of influential women in the bluegrass and old-time world. This month's *Bluegrass Breakdown* is focused on telling the stories of many women in the CBA community who made their mark either on stage as a performing artist, or behind the scenes as a CBA volunteer. In putting this issue together, it revealed a remarkable set of women that have made an indelible impact on the music we love: musicians like Rose Maddox, Laurie Lewis, Kathy Kallick, Sally Van Meter, Molly Tuttle, AJ Lee and many more. Equally important are the dozens of women volunteers who helped establish our CBA Youth Program,

produced CBA events, produced the CBA newsletter, and many other critical roles. More than one-third of the recipients of our Super Volunteer or Volunteer of Year award have been women. And one-quarter of our CBA Honorary Lifetime Members are women. You'll read about many of them in this issue.

As a further celebration, don't miss the Sonoma County Bluegrass & Folk Festival coming up March 8 in Sebastopol. This is International Women's Day, and the CBA team has put together a fabulous lineup fitting of the occasion. You can read about all the details on page two.

Winter officially ends on March 20, and we are very excited as we head into the spring and summer music season. The CBA Spring

Campout returns to Lodi on April 15-20, being organized this year by newly-annointed camp director Jimmy Jeffries. Our Julian Family Fiddle camp, May 7-11 in San Diego County, providing a unique opportunity for brushing up on your instrument skills in a stunningly beautiful part of California. Of course, the CBA Summer Music Camp and our 50th Anniversary Father's Day Festival return to Grass Valley in June, and the Golden Old Time Campout is back at the Russian River in Sonoma County in August. Music and community are the perfect way to focus your energies during what seems like an increasingly complicated world. We hope to see you at as many of these fun events as you can make time for! 

WAY OUT IN FRONT

50 YEARS OF WOMEN IN CBA

cont'd from front page

LISA BURNS

Best known as a performing and teaching bass player and founding member of Sidesaddle, today Lisa is CBA's sponsorship lead. She came to CBA through the Santa Cruz Bluegrass Association; "There'd been some issues between the CBA and the SCBS, especially when it became the Northern California Bluegrass Society. I was asked to be an emcee at Grass Valley, which I believe was a public way to say that the issues between the two bluegrass organizations were over. Then I was a CBA board member for nine years." When Dave asked what's kept her in the bluegrass scene for so long, she replied: "The community. Bluegrassers will give you the shirt off their backs. When I broke my leg and my arm—yes, both!—in 2007, some music friends organized daily delivery of food to my house, and others built a wheelchair ramp for me. I tell this story to people outside the bluegrass community and they don't believe me. They say, 'Are you Amish?' I didn't know the meaning of the word community until I started playing bluegrass."

JILL CRUEY & LYNN QUINONES

Lynn and Jill developed and produced the first children's activity at the Father's Day Festival. Darby Brandli wrote: "Lynn and Jill struggled to convince the CBA board that a specific activity for children should be an important component of our flagship event. My own children attended this educational and recreational activity in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and I can attest to the quality of the program they ultimately presented ... I still consider it the seed of what is now our very successful CBA Youth Program at our festival."

SUZANNE DENISON

Former board secretary, and longtime editor of the *Bluegrass Breakdown* who set the publication up to win the IBMA's distinguished achievement award in 2007 under Mark Varner.

FAYE DOWNS

Faye was CBA's volunteer coordinator and had been a CBA member for more than 20 years by 2000, when CBA awarded her and her husband, Bill, the "Bill and Faye Downs Super Volunteer Award" to celebrate their extraordinary contribution as volunteers. Bill Wilhelm wrote for the July 2000 *Bluegrass Breakdown* that while Bill was vol-



Lynn Quinones and Jill Cruey. Photo by Just Kidding.



Loretta Hettinger at the Folsom Opry. Photo courtesy Randy Shelton.

unteering as the festival coordinator, "Faye noticed there was a need for better organization of the volunteers, as no one seemed to know who was supposed to do what. Upon asking questions about it several times, it was suggested that she take charge of organizing them and keeping track of what the jobs were and who was available. So she did ... She has taken all the guesswork out of it and everything now runs smoothly." Starting in 2012, the award has been given annually in Faye's, and Bill's, names.

SHARON ELLIOT

Sharon worked tirelessly for 20 years with Frank Solivan Sr. to give the young people of the CBA a place to learn and perform bluegrass music while at festivals. She helped Frank at several events, including Father's Day, Good Old Fashioned, and Bluegrass in the Foothills festivals. Sharon took Darrel Johnson's idea about a Youth Instrument Lending Library, which he proposed in March 2004. He died months later, and Sharon took the proposal back to the board in March 2005 and then collected the instruments and developed this foundational resource for CBA's Youth Program.

BURNETTE GARELICK

Burney was the first editor of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*, and continued in that role as a volunteer for four years. She made a cameo appearance in the *Breakdown* later, reviewing Rose Maddox's *\$35 and a Dream* for the October 1995 issue. Burney also served as vice president for membership. Ray Edlund recently shared that in the early days of the Father's Day Festival, Burney assigned numbers to the 9,000 or so admission tickets. "Bernie stayed up all night one night and I believe she did 3,000 sets, all three tickets for three days ... hand numbered them. That's how we tried to keep track of them, but of course nobody did," Ray recalled.

DONNA HARGIS

A tireless jammer and advocate, Donna has been regional director for three Southern California regions and helps curate and promote events throughout the area. In its second year, Donna took over production of the South State 48 in Carlsbad, and leads the team of volunteers to produce impactful and memorable events enjoyed by all.

LORETTA HETTINGER

The Hettingers, John and Loretta, have been pillars of the Sacramento bluegrass community for decades, including producing the Folsom Opry house concerts at their home, complete with pies by Loretta for attendees to enjoy. In fact, Loretta may have the distinction of being the creator of the most sought-after pies in CBA history. John said, "Loretta has made at least 250 pies for the concerts, maybe 100 different kinds. She's the best pie maker in the world. My favorite is strawberry-rhubarb; hers is the one on the plate in front of her."

KATHY KIRKPATRICK

Kathy joined CBA in 1975 and was for many years the CBA's voice for fiscal responsibility. She was treasurer from 1978 to 1986, a board member after she was appointed to fill a vacancy in October 1992, and then elected to the board in 1993. Kathy was instrumental in producing the early CBA festivals at Grass Valley. Over the years, she also served as advance ticket sales coordinator, member of the FDF band selection committee, membership vice president, president, and chairman of the board. "Kathy mentored me when I first joined the CBA Leadership team," remembered CBA President Emerita Darby Brandli. "Kathy was one of the first women and first non-musician to lead the CBA. She set a standard for others of us to follow."



(Left-to-right) Bill and Faye Downs and Deb Livermore at FDF 2024. Photo by David Cupp.



Steve and Sharon Elliot show off their KOB license plates in 2008. Photo courtesy Steve Tilden.



Burney Garellick (pictured right) organizes tickets at Grass Valley in 1976. CBA file photo.



Donna Hargis rocking the jam at Great 48. Photo by David Cupp.



Lucy Smith and Laurie Lewis at FDF 2008. Photo courtesy J.D. Rhynes.



Beth Weil volunteering backstage at Father's Day Festival. Photo courtesy Rick Cornish.

VIOLET LANKFORD

Violet played a vital role in the early development of the CBA, and was a dear friend to many CBA members. Phil Boerner wrote in 2021: "Violet was the matriarch of bluegrass music in the Sacramento area during a vital, formative time. A dynamic woman who genuinely loved people, she could both squeeze honey out of an onion and tell someone how the cow ate the cabbage." In the early 1970s, her home became an essential gathering place for musical ideas and a springboard for many budding bluegrass musicians. She hosted picking parties that lasted two-to-three days; several times they included Bill Monroe singing with Vern Williams, and Tiny Moore playing twin fiddles with Kenny Baker. Violet acted as the master chef and invited shy players to join in. Violet was skilled at promoting bluegrass in California, even getting local television shows to feature bands that were to appear at upcoming festivals.

LAURIE LEWIS

In addition to her long list of accolades as a performer and band leader, Laurie's contributions to CBA have extended far beyond performance to include organizational mentorship, education, and active participation in the bluegrass community from the very beginning of the CBA. A charter member, she served as an early vice president for activities as well as entertainment coordinator for our summer festival. On top of her busy performance schedule, she was a regular board member for many years, and contributor to the *Bluegrass Breakdown*.

DEB LIVERMORE

Deb was the longtime CBA campouts coordinator until this year. During the pandemic, Deb helped keep bluegrass alive by organizing bluegrass campouts near her Lodi home and also by even taking on the reins of the CBA Father's Day Festival when



Violet Lankford upon receiving CBA Lifetime Membership in 2004. CBA file photo.

it was at its most vulnerable time. "My first was the fall of 2017, I believe," she said. "From then it was spring and fall each year until now. It was a pleasure to do these. I love putting on a party!"

CAROL MASTERS

Carol was instrumental in planning and coordinating the first Bay-Area bluegrass AM radio show, *Bluegrass Experience* with Mick Seeber, first for KSAY and then for KNEW. She was the first CBA board secretary before becoming board chair ("which frankly, may finish me for good"). She was a charter member and the only woman on the first CBA board. She served as CBA president, and was on the band selection committee for several years before, as one story has it, becoming a minister and disappearing from CBA activities.

SUE SHELASKY

Sue was a board member in 1979 and 1980, before serving as co-editor of the *Breakdown* with Done Gone bandmate Steve Pottier. A multi-instrumentalist singer, Sue was also a founding member of the Good Ol' Persons, playing mandolin.

LUCY SMITH

Lucy volunteered for the CBA for more than 25 years. She first volunteered to run CBA's kid's program for five years; then Music Camp, as an assistant instructor and as a slow-jam leader. She was a CBA regional director for over 16 years in Chico, building a jam scene, a strong concert series, and a network of members to help bands touring through the area with good food and lodging. When her region was hit by the devastating Camp Fire, she helped spearhead the CBA Camp Fire fund to replace instruments for community members. She also ran CBA's famous International Bluegrass Music Awards hospitality suite in Raleigh, North Carolina. She created top-notch showcases for CBA at IBMA, and grew the reputation of the CBA suite for jamming and as



Patty Thorpe, left, has been instrumental in the setup for Father's Day Festival. Photo by David Cupp.

one of the best places to see bands at IBMA. Lucy retired from active volunteering at 70 to spend more time jamming.

YVONNE TATAR

An official of San Diego's bluegrass organization, a go-to organizer for the International Bluegrass Music Association, a founding member of the well-known regional bluegrass act, the Virtual Strangers, and a career-long public educator, Yvonne proved the old adage that when an organization needs something important done they find the person who's got the most on their plate. When asked if she had the time to take on a column slot for the CBA website, Yvonne's understandable response was, "not really," and then she asked when her first essay was due.

PATTY THORPE

For 17 years, and for many of those as a mother of two, Patty led the crew that sets up and tears down the infrastructure of the Father's Day Festival. She also encouraged her kids to help out when needed, instilling in them the value of volunteering. Patty said she goes to the festival to volunteer, not for the music. "As a volunteer you get to talk to so many people. I know everyone. You have a more personal connection to everyone and to the festival itself because you're in charge of making the Festival a cool experience for everyone else." Patty also helped foster bluegrass in and around Sacramento, as both a performing bluegrass musician and a volunteer at area concerts.

BETH WEIL

Beside being well-known for her work on the bass with the likes of the Good Ol' Persons, Laurie Lewis and Grant Street as a founding member of the band, and the Bluegrass Suspects—before cerebral hemorrhage in 1991 left her bound to a wheelchair. That didn't stop her from helping coordinate volunteers for the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival. She also created wonderful artwork for albums by Tony Rice, Bob Wills, Kate Wolf, and The David Grisman Quintet.

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Laurie Lewis & Kathy Kallick

CELEBRATING A HALF-CENTURY OF SONG

by Ted Kuster, CBA Board Chair

California has grown some fearsome bluegrass talent over the years, but the combined might of Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick is hard to beat. Each of these powerful artists has turned out a couple of dozen albums of her own—several of them featuring the other as a guest performer. They've released two projects under both their names: 1991's *Together*, and 2014's *Laurie & Kathy Sing the Songs Of Vern & Ray*. The latter is a tribute to their mentors, the California bluegrass giants Vern Williams and Ray Park. They contributed to the Grammy and IBMA award-winning album *True Life Blues: The Songs of Bill Monroe*. They've both been awarded honorary lifetime memberships for

their contributions to our music community by the California Bluegrass Association.

Laurie Lewis remembers hearing Kathy Kallick's legendary pipes back in 1974. "Kathy caught a ride home from the Sweets Mill music camp with some friends of mine who were members of the Arkansas Sheiks," Lewis recalls. "They sang all the way, and my friends thought, what a great voice!"

Soon after that, the group started getting together at Kathy's apartment in North Beach to pick and sing. "We put together one set of music for the jam night at Paul's Saloon, and when Paul heard us he hired us for a weekly gig," Lewis

says. "So we had to turn one set into a whole night, and that was the beginning of the Good Ol' Persons." As an aside: that groundbreaking band, which went on to have an outsized influence on generations of bluegrass performers and fans, is set to come back together on the main stage at the 50th Father's Day Bluegrass Festival this June.

What explains the success of this lifelong collaboration? "Because we have sung together so much, we hone in on each other's phrasing really quickly and easily," Lewis explains. "There's a familial feeling that I get from singing with her that is different from what I get from anyone else I sing with, except

maybe Tom Rozum. We just know what we're going to do."

The two are joined this month by a multi-generational lineup of California stars to round-out the band, including Tom Bekeny on mandolin, Brandon Godman on fiddle, and Christine Wilhoite on banjo. 

Join us at the Sonoma Bluegrass & Folk Festival on March 8th and catch Laurie and Kathy backed by an all-star band!

Photos: (L) Sally Van Meter, Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick sing at Paul's Saloon in 1981; photo by Michael Jacobs. (R) Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick at Berkley Bluegrass Festival in 2024; photo by Alan Bond.

CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION



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THE FIRST LADY OF BLUEGRASS ROSE MADDOX

by Jason Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Managing Editor, and
Jon Hartley Fox, Breakdown Contributor

Way before the CBA, California had Rose Maddox. She and her family arrived in California during the Dust Bowl years, looking West for a reprieve from the grinding poverty they knew back home in Alabama. Music would be their ticket out.

Rose began performing with her brothers as the Maddox Brothers and Rose when she was 11. The band was based in the Central Valley, originally Modesto and Sacramento, playing gigs and performing on the radio. World War II saw three of her brothers (Fred, Cal, and Don) spend time in the service, but after the war, the band became one of the hottest acts on the West Coast, packing dance halls and bars wherever they appeared, dressed in flamboyant Western suits that earned the band the moniker "Most Colorful Hillbilly Band in America."

After four releases with the band and four solo albums, Rose would release *Rose Maddox Sings Bluegrass* in 1962. As noted by writer Jon Hartley Fox on these pages in 2023: "It was the first bluegrass album by a woman. It was the first time Bill Monroe ever performed as a guest musician on another person's album. It was the first bluegrass album by a California artist."

As the California bluegrass community grew in the '70s and '80s, Rose became an integral part of the scene, performing around the state regularly. Dayna Willis caught Rose performing at the Cheyenne Saloon in Stockton in 1975, and posted about it on her website:

It seemed the house band, obviously a bunch of young wannabes, had no clue as to who Rose Maddox was. I found out later that they had been given a tape of her music, which they ignored ... Rose was introduced and she quickly took control of the stage. She called the tunes and the tempos, which the band hadn't bothered to learn. Rose was not happy ... She turned to the drummer to count him into the next song, but instead of watching Rose he was flirtin' with some band-aid in tight fittin' jeans at stage left. Rose, with the flat of her hand, hit his shiny cymbal and the noise it made scared him so bad, he fell backward off the drum seat ... after that NOBODY took their eyes off Rose for the rest of the show.

With a personality like this, it's no wonder that the women of California bluegrass who would follow in her footsteps would not be afraid to take center stage as vocalists and band leaders.



Rose Maddox receives CBA lifetime membership in 1992.
Photo courtesy of Stan Dye.

Meanwhile, Rose was becoming part of the CBA family. She appeared at the 1984 Grass Valley Bluegrass Festival before about 1,000 attendees, compared with the 6,000 estimated to attend the Father's Day Festival that year. The Labor Day weekend crowd was "made up of hardcore bluegrass fans, not the beer-drinkin', whoop-it-up, KFAT type pseudo-bluegrass crowd found at some other festivals," Don Powell wrote in the November/December 1984 *Bluegrass Breakdown*. "Rose Maddox gave one of her greatest performances. Backed by Bill White and most of the finest band members at Grass Valley, she held the audience from the first word. Her gospel set was outstanding. Rose gave more of herself than any I have seen her at before. Her vocal workshop was attended by over 100 people—eager to [hear] her every word and song that she did."

J.D. Rhynes was backstage with Rose that weekend, and noticed just out of the corner of his eyes that a couple of people had their ear to the conversation he was having with Rose. Neither J.D. nor Rose could pass up a chance to have some fun with the Grass Valley rumor mill—or to get a few more folks out of the campground and into the audience.

J.D. remembered: "Rose was close friends with Merle Haggard. I said 'Rose, is it true that Merle might come down and watch you on stage?' She said, 'yes, as a matter of fact, he mentioned if he gets time he'll come down.' I said 'he's going to show up in his old green '56 Ford pickup with a white camper on it so nobody will know, because I've seen one with a truck like that driving in the parking lot.' She said, 'yeah, he said he's got an old truck like that.' These people [eavesdropping] took off and it wasn't an hour before there was a rumor spread through there that Merle Haggard was there, and about 50 people had already seen him!"

Rose recorded two albums with the Vern Williams Band in the 1980s, and her records would feature not just Bill Monroe and Vern's band, but also Byron Berline, Herb Pedersen, and Merle Haggard. She appeared at many CBA events including the Father's Day Festival, for the last time in 1995, before passing away in 1998. Today, Emmylou Harris and Dolly Parton cite her as influences, as have countless female vocalists and performers from California and beyond.



(L-R) Bill White, Keith Little, Rose Maddox, J.D. Rhynes, Kathy Kallick, Jack Lederman and Butch Waller at Grass Valley in 1982. CBA file photo.



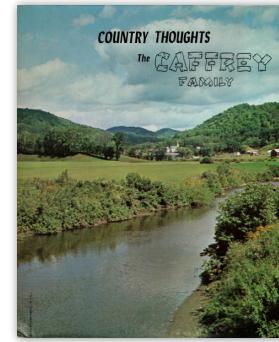
Rose Maddox and Suzanne Reynolds, Pictured at the Old Happy-Go-Lucky in Tulare in 1992. Photo courtesy of Grace Reynolds.

BAKER'S DOZEN

Thirteen Albums Highlighting California Bluegrass Women

by Jon Hartley Fox for the Bluegrass Breakdown

It all started with Rose Maddox. With her 1962 album *Rose Maddox Sings Bluegrass*, she became the first California woman to record a bluegrass album. Many female musicians from the Golden State have followed in her wake. To celebrate Women's History Month and the 50th anniversary of the CBA's founding, here are 13 albums illustrating the breadth and depth of talent of California's bluegrass and old-time women musicians. This collection of albums, presented in chronological order, is not necessarily a "best of" compendium, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive survey of every woman who's made a contribution to the music. It's meant simply as a guide to some great music over the decades.



The Caffrey Family, *Country Thoughts*, 1976

Stalwarts of the early days of the CBA, who also played at the very first CBA event in Fairfield, the Caffrey Family was a San Francisco band that consisted of father Tom on Dobro and his children Patty, Jimmy, and Brenda, all of whom played more than one instrument. *Country Thoughts*, the band's only album, mixes bluegrass and older country songs from the 1940s and '50s and showcases all three of the kids' singing. Their harmonies are excellent, and younger sister Brenda (who was about 14 at the time of this recording) flat-out gets it on "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "Thoughts," with a powerful Molly O'Day-Kitty Wells vibe. The Caffreys billed themselves as "Arkansas bluegrass from San Francisco," and this record has a definite down-home feel to it.

Any Old Time String Band, 1978

Bluegrass wasn't the only thing going on in the Bay Area traditional music scene in the 1970s, as this delightful, wide-ranging debut by the Any Old Time String Band makes abundantly clear. The free-wheeling quintet—which included Kate Brislin, Sue Draheim, Genny Haley, Valerie Mindel, and Susie Rothfield (now known as Suzy Thompson)—was basically an old-time band, with occasional detours into Cajun, jazz, blues, and early pop music. High points of this versatile album include a beautiful Brislin-Haley duet on the traditional song "Dear Companion" and Haley's bluesy takes on "Long Lost Lover Blues," "Turkey Buzzard/Chinquapin Hunting," "Let Me Fall," and "Free Little Bird." As well, the album includes rollicking old-time songs and tunes featuring driving banjo-twin fiddle arrangements, and Rothfield's French-language lament on "Valse de Orphelin."

Lost Highway, 1980

Lost Highway was formed in Riverside County 1974 by Lauren Seapy (banjo), Dave Dickey (guitar), Walden Dahl (mandolin), Pat Brayer (fiddle) and Nick Haney (bass). Seapy was one of the very few female banjo players in Southern California (or anywhere, really) at the time, and doubtless served as a key role model and inspiration for many young girls learning the instrument. By 1980, only Seapy and Haney remained from the original line-up. Ken Orrick was now playing guitar and singing most of the leads and Stuart Duncan, a young musician from Ventura County, played fiddle, mandolin, and lead guitar. Seapy was a rock-solid player, thoroughly grounded in Scruggs-style picking, with maybe a touch of John Hickman's bounce. An excellent album that holds up very well over the years.

The Good Ol' Persons, *I Can't Stand to Ramble*, 1983

The Good Ol' Persons, one of the foundational bands of the Bay Area bluegrass scene, was formed in 1975 as an all-woman band playing a mix of bluegrass and old-time country. By 1983, the band had gone co-ed, and guitarist Kathy Kallick was the only original member left. She was joined on *I Can't Stand to Ramble*, the band's second album, by Paul Shelsky (fiddle), John Reischman (mandolin), Sally Van Meter (Dobro, banjo), and Bethany Raine (bass). Except for three original tunes—including Reischman's classic "Itzbin Real"—this is an album of songs, most of which feature Kallick's distinctive lead vocals. Highlights include "Broken Tie" (Kallick's first original song), "You Don't Miss Your Water," and an ethereal *a cappella* trio, "I Will Arise."

Sidesaddle, *Daylight Train*, 1991

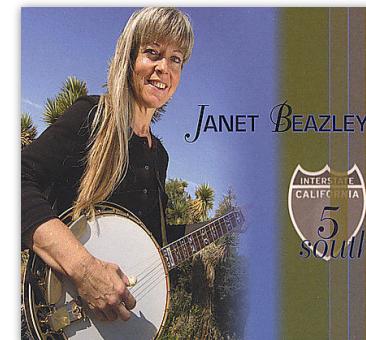
Formed in 1979 in San Jose, Sidesaddle was an all-female band until it went co-ed in 1993. *Daylight Train*, the third of the band's four albums, is the last of the all-female format and includes original members Kim Elking (mandolin), Lee Anne Caswell (fiddle) and Sonia Shell (banjo), joined on this album by Sheila Hogan McCormick (bass) and Jackie Miller (guitar). The band shared the lead vocals; among the best are McCormick's "I'll Never Grow Tired of You" and Jackie Miller's "Blue Diamond Mine" and "Parnell Square." Shell takes center stage on the banjo-led instrumental "Chief Sitting in the Rain," while Elking makes her statement with a stunning version of "Get Up, John" that would do Big Mon proud. The medley of "Morrison's/The Monaghan" is a *tour-de-force* for Caswell.

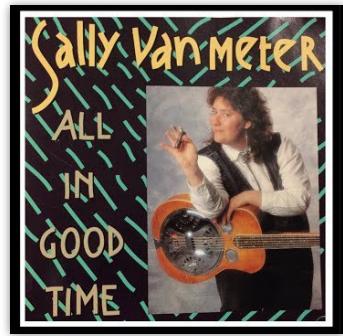
Sally Van Meter, *All in Good Time*, 1991

Grammy-winning Dobro player Sally Van Meter grew up in Butte County and moved in the mid-1970s from Chico to the Bay Area to join the Good Ol' Persons, which included Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick and a few others. She would stay with the GOP for twenty-one years and several albums, playing Dobro and banjo before launching her solo career in the early 1990s. *All in Good Time* was her solo debut, and it secured her place in the top tier of resophonic guitar players. Whether she's playing bluegrass ("Road to Columbus," a super-charged all-star romp), jazz ("Anne's Waltz"), Irish ("Damien Miley/The Idlers of Beltown"), or folk ("The Bird That I Held in My Hand"), Van Meter's playing is always confident, tasteful, and eminently musical.

The All Girl Boys, *Heart's Desire*, 1994

This popular all-female quintet was active in the 1990s in and around the Bay Area and consisted of Mary Gibbons (guitar), Debby Cotter (banjo), Chris Lewis (mandolin), Kathy Barwick (Dobro, lead guitar), and Carolyn Cirimele (bass). Strong original material was a hallmark of the AGB; there are originals from Cotter, Lewis, and Gibbons on this album. Gibbons was the featured vocalist (heard to best advantage on "I Thought I Heard You Calling My Name" and "Blues Be on Your Way"), but Cotter, Lewis, and Cirimele also contributed fine lead vocals to the album. "Heart's Desire" is a tune by Cotter that nicely illustrates her distinctive banjo playing, while Barwick's Dobro playing shines on a dynamic performance of "Powder Creek," an obscure tune by Clarence and Roland White.





Janet Beazley, 5 South, 2005

Janet Beazley, a San Diego native, is a multi-talented banjo picker, singer, songwriter, penny-whistle and recorder player, and music educator. She is perhaps best known for working with Chris Stuart and Backcountry, with whom she recorded a few albums in the early 2000s. *5 South* is the first recording under her own name, and it's a most impressive debut. Beazley's banjo work is prominent throughout; her crisp, sharp attack is powerful and bouncy at the same time, with every note cleanly articulated, nicely showcased on the tunes "5 South" and "Rufky Tufty." She's also a compelling, versatile singer—vocal highlights here include "Rose of Allendale" and a pair of *a cappella* (or mostly so) gems, "White (Long Time Travelling)" and "Sweet Prospect," a gorgeous multi-tracked duet with herself.

Laurie Lewis & the Right Hands *The Hazel and Alice Sessions*, 2016

Laurie Lewis is a two-time winner of both the California women's fiddle championship and the IBMA's best female vocalist of the year award. The Berkeley resident has recorded several non-bluegrass albums, but *The Hazel and Alice Sessions* is nothing but. With The Right Hands—Tom Rozum (mandolin), Patrick Sauber (banjo, lead guitar), and Andrew Conklin (bass)—and guests Tatiana Hargreaves and Chad Manning on fiddle, Lewis created an outstanding tribute to Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, a pioneering bluegrass duo that exerted a huge influence on most women who play bluegrass. Especially fine are "Won't You Come and Sing for Me," one of Laurie's finest vocals, and a cool duet with Aoife O'Donovan on "James Alley Blues," an old-time blues song.

North Country Blue, 2019

North Country Blue came together in 2017 when four young musicians who had come up through the CBA's Kids on Bluegrass program—Ida Winfrey (mandolin), Daisy Kerr (guitar), Megan January (bass), and Tessa Schwartz (fiddle)—joined forces and quickly became festival favorites. None of the girls could drive yet, but they created an impressive debut album that belied their young years. The four shared the lead vocals and prided themselves on tight trio harmonies. The album includes two original songs and two original tunes, not what one might expect from such a young group. This version of the band didn't last all that long, but in their time together they performed at the IBMA World of Bluegrass festivities in Raleigh on behalf of the KOB program.

Molly Tuttle and Golden Highway *Crooked Tree*, 2022

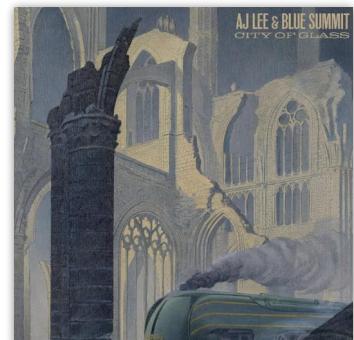
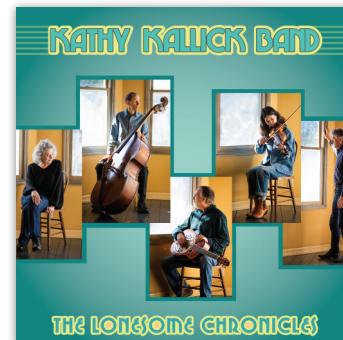
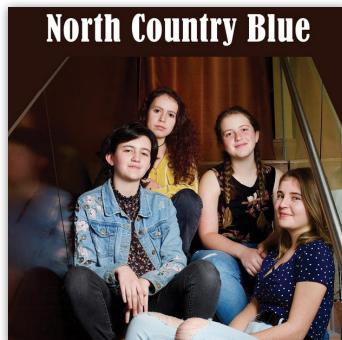
Guitar virtuoso, singer, songwriter, and bandleader Molly Tuttle, born in Santa Clara and raised in Palo Alto, is another musician who came up through the CBA's Kids on Bluegrass program, and has gone on to accomplish big things. Really big things: two Grammy Awards, IBMA awards for female vocalist of the year (twice) and guitar player of the year (twice), chart-topping albums, and numerous prestigious network television appearances. *Crooked Tree* won both the Grammy Award for bluegrass album of the year and the IBMA's album of the year award. Tuttle is on top of the bluegrass world right now, along with her madcap, fearless band, Golden Highway: Kyle Tuttle (banjo), Bronwyn Keith-Hynes (fiddle), Dominick Leslie (mandolin), and Shelby Means (bass). This album was her breakthrough.

Kathy Kallick Band *The Lonesome Chronicles*, 2023

Singer, guitarist, and bandleader Kathy Kallick has been at it for a long time. She began her career with the Good Ol' Persons in the mid-1970s and is still going strong 50 years later. This is her 23rd album and the seventh with the Kathy Kallick Band. Just about any of her records could be represented here, but *The Lonesome Chronicles* shows an excellent band—Tom Bekeny (mandolin), Greg Booth (banjo, Dobro), Annie Staninec (fiddle), and Cary Black (bass)—at the absolute peak of its powers. *Bluegrass Unlimited* has called Kallick "A true heroine in the pantheon of female vocalists in bluegrass ... one of the greatest bluegrass vocalists of her generation—or any other." *The Lonesome Chronicles* is delightful proof of her mastery.

AJ Lee & Blue Summit *City of Glass*, 2024

A native of Tracy, AJ Lee is still another gifted musician who came up through the CBA's Kids on Bluegrass program. She began her career playing mandolin with Molly Tuttle in the Tuttle family band and formed her band Blue Summit in 2015. *City of Glass* is the band's third album, and it finds the quartet—Lee, Sully Tuttle (guitar), Scott Gates (guitar), and Jan Purat (fiddle)—stretching its wings a bit. It's a wide ranging, ambitious album; a "proudly Californian" blend of bluegrass, country, soul, and Americana sounds. Highlights include Lee's confident, sultry take on Patsy Cline's "He Called Me Baby," "I Can't Find You at All" (with a guest appearance by Molly Tuttle), and "Bakersfield Clay," a show-stopping vocal performance by Scott Gates.



CBA SPRING CAMPOUT

APRIL 15-20 • LODI GRAPE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

by Jim Jeffries, CBA Campout Coordinator. Photos by Alan Bond.

It's time to grease the bearings and blow the dust out of the motorhome—we're heading to Lodi for the Spring Campout at the Grape Festival Grounds from April 15-20!

Hi all, new guy here, Jimmy from Penn Valley. All you early birds please show up on Tuesday morning. I repeat, the festival grounds will be ready for us on Tuesday. It's a day later than usual so I expect you all to be waiting for me at 9 a.m.

Camping prices have gone up this year, but we're going to add some extra value for you. We'll put coffee on twice a day to keep you picking around the clock, and we'll have something warm for you to eat in the evenings like lasagna or gumbo.

RV camping is \$50/night and tent camping is \$18/night. There are water and electric hook-ups and a dump station on site.

Contact me, Jimmy, at campout@californiabluegrass.net to let me know you're coming and who you'll be camping with so I can reserve your spot on the map. Deb always did a great job with the layout, and I want to try to show her I was paying attention when I attended the Fall Campout with her last year.

The California State Old Time Fiddler's Association is holding their annual contest at the campout on Friday and Saturday, April 18 and 19. Come see California's best musicians on stage—and maybe catch them in a jam later!

With the campout being held on Easter weekend, it is a good time to get the tradition of a Sunday gospel jam started again. Let us all worship in the church of the bluegrass jam!

I'm going to need help from a few volunteers each day to help me serve coffee and dinner and I'll need a hand wrangling you all into the right section of the campground. Please sign up to help at volunteers@californiabluegrass.net. Shifts are short, and you'll get a free night of camping which is more valuable than ever!

I hope to share a few songs with you, see you in Lodi this spring!

[Get your tickets early, scan here →](#)



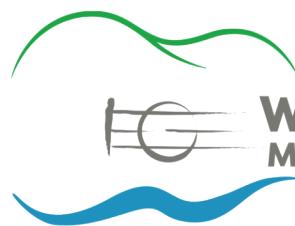
Sharing songs in the afternoon.



Playing in the CSOTFA fiddle contest.



Working on whittling skills in the campground.



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THE JULIAN FAMILY FIDDLE CAMP

AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S MUSICAL LEGACY

by Adam Roszkiewicz, CBA Music Camps Director

Although the Julian Family Fiddle Camp has been around for more than a decade, I'm often surprised when I run into someone who hasn't heard of it before. Founded by Avery Ellisman in 2011, the camp carries on the rich tradition of music making and support for roots music in Southern California, which includes the Julian Fiddle and Pickin' Contest, the Julian Music Festival, and the South State 48.

Located in the vibrant and historic mountain town of Julian, the JFFC has brought dozens of world class instructors to Southern California for over a decade. I've known about the town of Julian since I was a kid; my family would often take day trips to Julian from Orange County in search of pies—Mom's Apple Pies are a legendary Julian attraction—and an escape from suburbia. I suppose it's not surprising that when I started hearing about the Julian Family Fiddle Camp it seemed like it had been around forever. California has such a rich musical history, especially in bluegrass and acoustic music, and Southern California is no exception to this. Legendary artists like Roland and Clarence White, Tony Rice, Herb Pedersen, Chris Hillman, and Ry Cooder all called SoCal home. Southern California has also produced such prodigious talents like Patrick Sauber,

John Mailander, Gabe Witcher, Sean and Sara Watkins, Chris Thile, and countless others.

My own musical life started in Southern California. As a young person, I took guitar lessons at an acoustic instrument shop in Orange County called The Shade Tree. Not only were the proprietors, Greg and Margie, very generous and supportive, they also hosted beginner-oriented jams and concerts throughout the year. These concerts were huge for the community (and me) as they provided a venue for touring acoustic musicians to play in SoCal and an opportunity for me to see them in person. The in-person part is important—there's no substitute for actually seeing someone's right hand picking from two feet away. Especially when it's someone like David Grisman or Larry Sparks.

The instructor lineup at this year's JFFC boasts some homegrown talent local to Julian as we welcome Nat Copland back to teach. Nat grew up learning fiddle at JFFC; now in his third-year teaching at camp his story represents a core part of the CBA's mission to encourage and mentor young pickers as they discover roots music. Multi-instrumentalists Carolyn Kendrick and Clinton Davis also call Southern California home, Carolyn currently living in L.A. and

Clinton living just "down the hill" in San Diego. We are also lucky to have some Northwesterners on the faculty this year; Luke and Rachael Price from Portland are back teaching advanced fiddle and vocals respectively, and Eli West will be joining us for the first time teaching guitar.

We're also excited to have some East Coasters with us this summer; two-time IBMA bass player of the year award winner Vickie Vaughn is back, joined by the 2024 Steve Martin Banjo Prize winner Tray Wellington. Teaching mandolin this year we have Berklee School of Music instructor and Mr. Sun band member Joe Walsh, and teaching old-time fiddle, fresh off the road with Wille Watson and member of the band The Onlies we have the Northwest's own Sami Braman.

As Woody put it: "California is a (musical) garden of Eden," from the Bay Area to the Central Valley to Southern California. We are so lucky to be part of this musical ecosystem, and I'm excited to see you all at camp this summer!

Register for JFFC at FamilyFiddleCamp.com or by scanning here ➤



Debbie Wendt presents the membership report at 2022 annual meeting. Photo by Robin Frenette.

50 YEARS OF WOMEN IN CBA *cont'd from front page 5*

DEBBIE WENDT

Debbie is CBA's vice president for membership. Debbie scrubbed 10 years of CBA member data with computer wizardry and four days of hard work to manage the process of importing, customizing, and creating a way for members to access and update their own data. Next, Debbie took on the six-month backlog of membership communications—including creating templates to automate our new membership card program. Spending countless hours, Debbie completed this task in less than three weeks. Since then, she has methodically added new enhancements to make our member database more useful. 

JOIN OUR TEAM!

Only with many hardworking and talented volunteers is it possible to put on the CBA's many fun, engaging, and inspiring events around the state.

The CBA community welcomes you! If you would like to volunteer some of your energy and creativity, please contact: volunteers@californiabluegrass.net

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100 YEARS OF HAZEL DICKENS

Della Mae, Alice Gerrard, and Laurie Lewis celebrate the birthday of bluegrass pioneer

by Gina Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Art Director

The past few years have been momentous in the bluegrass community, with lots of 100-year birthday celebrations and anniversaries, including Bill Monroe, Earl Scruggs, and Lloyd Loar mandolins. Members of the band Della Mae realized that 2025 also would be the 100th birthday of Hazel Dickens, one of the first pioneers of bluegrass music. Hazel is best known for her strong and soulful singing, poignant songwriting, and strong guitar and bass playing. Through her music she honored the beauty of her home state of West Virginia, and fought for recognition and justice for the working class, women, and coal miners. Hazel's time working with Alice Gerrard and the albums they released together were groundbreaking, and inspired many women to forge their own paths in bluegrass music. Alice will be turning 91 this year, and enthusiastically agreed to join Della Mae on many of the shows honoring Hazel.

"It's important to remember that Hazel and Alice were first-generation bluegrass," says Kimber Ludiker, founding member and fiddler of Della Mae, "Hazel got late recognition for the trailblazing she did for women throughout her career, and because of that late recognition, a lot

of folks don't really understand that she was living in the world with all of those pioneers of bluegrass—men—who were celebrated for a lot longer."

Della Mae celebrates those who paved the way by sharing and performing their music at their shows. The band aims to connect older and younger generations in a strong lineage, which is one of the reasons why they felt called to put this tour together. "Della Mae has always had a mission statement to perpetuate women in bluegrass, showcasing women in acoustic music, and encouraging girls to play and become musicians," says Kimber.

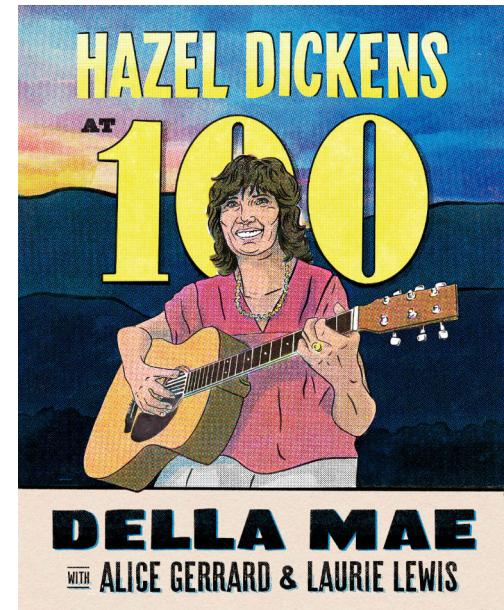
Also joining Della Mae for many of these shows is California's own Laurie Lewis, who gained much inspiration and mentorship from Hazel and Alice, and put out an album of their songs with her band The Right Hands called *The Hazel and Alice Sessions* that is worth many listens.

"When I first started listening to bluegrass, I was a teenager, and there were no recordings of women in the genre that I knew of," says Laurie. "Later, in my early 20's I was going through Ray Edlund's extensive vinyl collection and recording a cassette of stuff I liked, and he pulled out Hazel and Alice ... a revelation! With my then-favorite fiddler, Chubby Wise, no less. [It was] Recorded when I was a kid, on the other side of the country. I wish I had heard them when the albums first came out. It might have given me more of a leg up to know they were out there."

Laurie also taught Della Mae their first Hazel Dickens song: "My Own Heart's Love." She remembers, "Hazel sang it to me in the car as I was driving her to the airport in 1993 or '94. I said it'd be perfect for Tom's and my duet album, *The Oak and the Laurel*, so when Hazel got home she sat down and recorded a cassette for me."



Della Mae, photo by Laura Schneider.



Poster artwork by CBA's Gina Dilg.

Della Mae is excited to honor the music of their heroes, with their heroes. "Getting to do this tour with our mentor Laurie, and celebrating the music of our heroes is pretty big," says Kimber. "The story with Della Mae, and Laurie, and Alice, really shows how the music inspires generations of folks." And Laurie says that she's excited for all of it. "I guess I'm in the enviable position of being a conduit between the generations," she says. "I am such a fan of Alice—not just her music, but the way she has lived and continues to live her life."

Hazel Dickens at 100

Della Mae with Alice Gerrard and Laurie Lewis

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SQUARE DANCING WITH THE STARS IN L.A.

CBA's Robin Frenette brought her camera to an L.A. square dance last month, and we're glad she did. Low and behold, the stars were out! Sierra Ferrell, fresh off her big night at the Grammy's, and 311's Nick Hexum, and Water Tower's Kenny Feinstein joined the band!

CHECK OUT THE REST
OF ROBIN'S PHOTOS ON
THE CBA WEBSITE ➤



CBA SUMMER MUSIC CAMP

A TRADITION OF LEGENDARY FUN

by Adam Roszkiewicz, CBA Music Camps Director

Since it's been about 25 years since the first Summer Music Camp, I thought it would be nice to reflect on how this Northern California staple got its start.

The first CBA Summer Music Camp was held at the Nevada County Fairgrounds in 2000, directed by Ingrid Noyes with the help of Rick Cornish, Elena Corey, and camp advisor Bill Evans. According to Darby Brandli, part of the camp's origins stem from the fact that the CBA had access to the festival grounds for the entire week before Father's Day Festival and wanted to do something with it in-line with

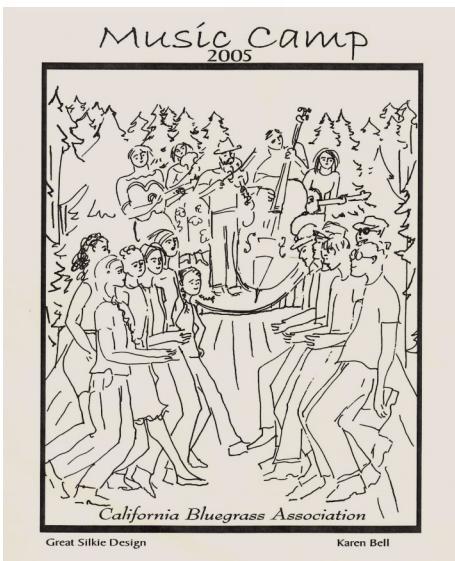
the CBA's core mission to educate and build a community for bluegrass and old-time music. It's easy to just list who originated an idea or founded a thing, but it's worth it to take a second to appreciate that these folks, and others, actually made it happen. Making the transition from "wouldn't it be nice," to having a successful event takes a lot of planning, word-spreading, and hard work. And also, the willingness of the CBA membership to take a chance on something new. I'm so glad they did!

For the first few years Rick Cornish provided campers a welcome supper and continental breakfast each morning, and a farewell barbecue at the end of camp. It wasn't long before Steven of Blue Sun started providing meals at camp, something he would continue to do for the next couple of decades. In 2001 the instructors were Bill Evans, bluegrass banjo; Kathy Kallick, vocals; Jim Nunally, guitar; John Reischman, mandolin; Markie Sanders, bass; Tom Sauber, old-time banjo; Jack Tuttle, fiddle; and Sally Van Meter, Dobro. In 2025, we have John, Jack, and Sally all returning to teach at camp. John Reischman's first time teaching at music camp was 2001, and he has been a consistent presence at every camp since.

This isn't meant to be a complete history of the music camp, just an opportunity to reflect on where this great event came from and who's been involved over the years. I've spent

the last few days looking through the old camper handbooks, the earliest I have is from 2005; the instructors that year included Alan Munde, Alice Gerrard, Todd Philips, and Brittany Haas. Not bad! When I started helping put the camp on in 2022, Janet Peterson gave me a folder full of these handbooks from past years, and I went through them then. Looking at them now, the names they contain hold a different significance for me. Obviously there are legendary names in there, but I am also struck by all the people who have helped make this camp happen for the last 25 years—folks who have been sharing their love of music and community for the last 20 plus years like Carlo Calabi, Masha Goodman-Crawford, Geff Crawford, Ernie Noyes, Paul Knight, and Steve Swan.

It's inspiring to see an event like SMC thriving, because it doesn't exist as a business venture or to make anyone rich. And when I think about 25 years of Summer Music Camp, I see it's not just an opportunity to learn from and interact with incredible musicians and teachers, it is also a place to find and nurture decades-long friendships and musical partnerships. So here's to the next 25 years of Summer Music Camp, and I'm looking forward to seeing you all this summer.



2005 Music Camp Handbook.

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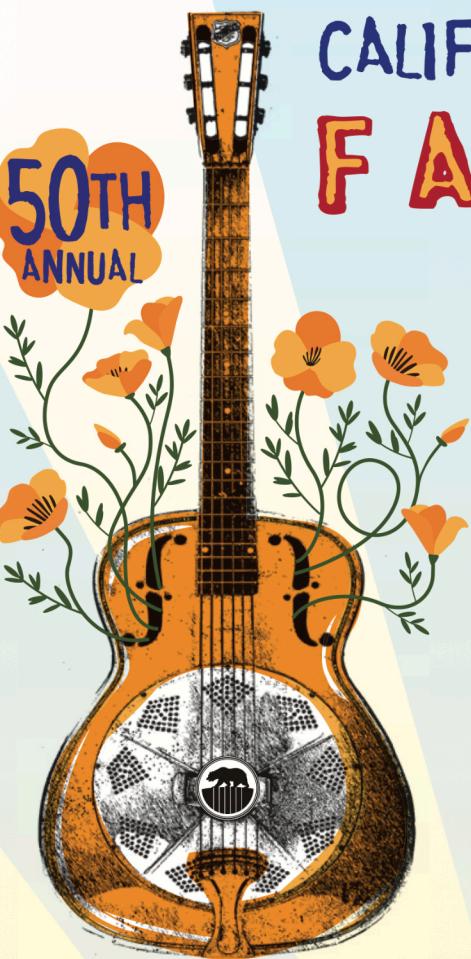
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MARCH
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50 YEARS OF WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS

Sue Shelasky (fiddle) and Lauren Seapy (banjo) at FDF '77. From Bluegrass Breakdown Jan/Feb 1978.

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN
CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
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by Bert Daniel, Breakdown Contributor

We began 2025 with a question recalling the incredible bluegrass bands that played across the Golden State in 1974—leading up to December, when CBA officially became a thing! This bounteous bluegrass bevy included Jimmy Martin & the Sunny Mt. Boys, Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mt. Boys, Jim & Jesse & the Virginia Boys, Doc & Merle Watson, Vassar Clements, Old & In the Way, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Mac Wiseman, Merle Travis, Norman Blake & Tut Taylor, Frank Wakefield, High Country, and Phantoms Of the Opry, thanks the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival.

That same year, a now legendary broadcaster took advantage of this bluegrass cauldron to found a bluegrass radio show which is still running. We asked readers to name him.

This wasn't meant to be a trick question, but it turns out there is a hitch: Not just one, but two legendary broadcasters started long-running bluegrass radio shows in 1974. **Bruce Sadownick** and **Mary Schlotzhauer** responded with the other radio show that started that year: Gary Henderson was already full-time as a broadcast technician at National Public Radio, and hosting a four-hour bluegrass show on Saturdays; "... now they wanted me to work seven days a week," he told *Bluegrass Today* in 2015 about

the proposal to launch a Sunday-morning bluegrass gospel show on WAMU-FM. "Well, I said I would think about it." When Gary realized there might not be another chance to expand bluegrass on the air at WAMU, he caved, and *Stained Glass Bluegrass* was born.

But a closer look at the artists we called out from the '74 Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival were meant as a clue that we were looking for something a little closer to home. CBA members **David Brown**, **Roy Barush**, **Laurie Lewis**, **Richard Brooks**, **Linda Bushta**—who was at the Fairfield Civic Center for the first CBA gathering, and still remembers the fun out by the pond—**Bruce Edmundson**, **Tom Payne**, and **Joel Sidney** all sleuthed the answer we were looking for: **Ray Edlund**, who launched *KPFA's Pig In A Pen*, now hosted by Allegra Thompson.

The Oracle of All That is Random has decreed that **Richard Brooks** is the lucky winner of a **silicone CBA pint glass**, perfect for festival libations!



Ray Edlund with his first Father's Day Festival ticket, in his *Pig in a Pen* radio shirt. Photo by Alan Bond.

MARCH TRIVIA CHALLENGE

We got this month's question from our friend Loraine Nichols, and it's a good one for our women's issue:

Who was the first female artist to record a bluegrass album, and who was her fiddle player?

Send your answer to:
trivia@californiabluegrass.net
no later than March 31.

This month's prize is a set of **five women from the Trad Music Superhero Sticker series**: Etta Baker, Samantha Bumgarner, Ola Belle Reed, Jean Ritchie, and Kitty Wells, created by our own Gina Dilg!

Only CBA members are eligible to win; if there is more than one correct response, the prize winner will be selected by random drawing. The winner will be announced in the May 2025 issue of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*.



Trad Music Superhero stickers by Gina Dilg.