



NewsGrass

August 2010

In this Issue: President's Corner and MABA Education, Community & Youth Involvement (P1); Bluegrass at the Country Store (P2) Bluegrass on My Breath (3); Mandolin Tasting (4); Calendar of Events (P5)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Benny Cole

Well, eight months have passed and we are still as busy as ever. We just finished an intermediate to advanced guitar workshop, graciously hosted by Kevin Wright of Jackson, Tennessee. It was very well attended! Kevin gave us all some excellent tips that could make us better pickers.

Dianna did a good job, as usual, putting on the Shelby County Music Teacher's Workshop in early August. It turned out great. There will be some follow-up with the school system; stay tuned and keep reading the Education section for more on how our youth programs are going.

MABA is also planning a fun-filled, Fall picnic. We are looking forward to seeing everyone there. The date will be announced soon. \

Mark Holder is also helping to plan an event called "Rompage on the River" that will be held at Tunica Riverpark on Saturday, October 16th. This is the first year the event will be held and two of our local MABA bluegrass groups will be performing as part of the music program. The event is hosted by local girl scout organizations and is an eco-friendly/green type event for the whole family. There will be many other types of music and entertainment represented. MABA will also have a booth at the event as will the Folk Alliance, Memphis Music Foundation and many more. Please come and join us for the day.

The August business meeting was also well attended. The meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at Hope Presbyterian at 11:00 a.m. to Noon on Walnut Grove Road in Cordova, TN. I want to encourage everyone to attend next month!

MABA Education, Community & Youth Involvement

by Dianna Ford

The MABA youth education initiative really took a great leap forward in August. MABA was invited by the lead music teacher, Jane Munsell, to participate in one of two, mandatory in-service

meetings for all of the Shelby County Music and Art teachers. Jane attended the first "Utilizing

Bluegrass Music in the Schools" teacher workshop held in Bartlett in March of this year.

It was an action packed day. The audience ranged from 70 to 100 teachers throughout the day. We had 3.5 hours on the agenda and it was challenging to have enough time to do all that we wanted to do! We had an all-star line up of speakers and performers: Louis Meyers, Executive Director, of The Folk Alliance, Dean Deyo, President of the Memphis Music Foundation, Tom Kopp, traveled from Ohio to be with us to represent IBMA and as an educator of teachers in his senior role in education at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio; we had Nancy Cardwell rejoining us for this workshop to represent IBMA.

The Clark family came back to do a band demonstration (Jed, Harry and Cindy) and they brought along their two daughters, Sophie and Sallie Anne to perform for the teachers as well.

Cass Choate, Louis Meyers and Randal Morton gave an exciting round of banjo demonstrations and lessons also; in addition, we were joined by a local Clogging team that demon-

Want to be more involved with MABA?

Not sure what you'd like to do?

Please contact Dianna Ford or Benny Cole and we'll find just the right spot/job for you!

strated dance as well as involved the teachers in an interactive step or two. It was a great success. We really appreciate Louis Meyers for stepping up and providing several nice giveaways for the teachers (bags, CDs) as well as IBMA for providing a ton of interesting literature and resources for the teachers. Peter Smith, Benny Cole and Mark and Sharrye Holder were also in attendance to help during the day. Mark was instrumental as usual in providing sound and assistance with the promotion of the event.

Stay tuned as we work more with the Shelby County music teachers to start a pilot program, potentially, with their Strings Department.

If you'd like to get involved, we can use your help; please contact Dianna Ford at dilford38@yahoo.com!

“Bluegrass at the Country Store”

Tradition in Country Commerce, good food and great music continues

It's a small country store that has been at the corner of Locke and Benjestown for over 75 years. When I was a little girl the owners of the store were Mr. Jeter and his wife, Miss Dixie. Mr. Jeter used to call the ball games at my grammar school, E. E. Jeter. Over the years there have been several owners of the store. Each one making it their own, yet it has always been a place where the locals go. I remember being able to purchase gas at pumps that looked like they were from the 1940's. My mother would go to Colleen Hannah's beauty shop in the back of the store to have her hair done. I will never forget the day that Colleen was unraveling the little bun of hair atop Mrs. Campbell's head. Mrs. Campbell was my third grade teacher.

I was amazed to see that little bun of hair fall to the floor. It was as if I knew a secret about my teacher that no one else knew.

Hunters stop by to show off their deer or the fish they have caught. You can see their photos in the albums that sit around on the counters. Those photo albums hold the history of our little community. Boys and girls who shot their first deer, caught the biggest fish of their life, and memories of those who have passed on. Many of those in those photo albums are my classmates from grammar school. There is a guest book with the names of folks who have stopped by from all over the USA and other countries. When you walk into the store you may only notice the shelves stocked with food items and the deli counter. You walk up and place your order for one of those great tasting cheeseburgers and some fries. While you are waiting you begin to notice nature collections including a huge snake skin wrapped around a long cane pole, a hornet's nest, animal skulls, old fashioned metal signs advertising products from long ago. I love the old wood floor. Every morning the older gentlemen gather to tell stories and drink coffee out on the front porch.



Enjoying the welcome home feel of the Country Store!

Pictured above is (left to right) Sam Davis, Ben Hammon, John Puffinberger and Tony Butler



Ben Hammon and John Puffinberger pick together to form a sweet sound

The present day owners, Doug and Kristen Ammons, have made Friday nights a tradition at the store. \$10.00 will get you a steak dinner which includes fries, cole slaw and toasted bread to go along with that steak. Every Friday night also includes the banjo music of Tony Butler. Tony has been faithful to play there every Friday night. He sometimes gets a little help from Sam Davis who also plays banjo and on occasion a little guitar.

About four years ago Ben Hamman and his friend, John Puffinberger were in the Memphis area working a construction job. While driving down Hwy 51 they noticed the sign at Hwy 51 and Watkins Extended advertising Friday steak night and banjo music. Ben who is from Bloomery, West Virginia and John who is from Winchester, Virginia have been playing bluegrass music together for about twenty years. They said that sounded like the place for them. They drove to the store and enjoyed a steak dinner, friendly atmosphere, and some bluegrass music. While they were there they also came to the rescue of the Ammons. A hot water line had a leak and Ben and his friend were able to make a temporary repair. Ben said if they were ever in the area again they would be sure to come back.

Ben and John were in town again along with another friend, Richard Maldonado also of Winchester, Virginia. Ben's business is construction and remodeling for a clothing company out of New York. He travels all over the states and sometimes is able to find bluegrass along the way. Ben plays guitar and upright bass. His wife, Tina, also plays upright bass. Bloomery, West Virginia is about a 30 minute drive to Winchester, Virginia. There is jam on Thursday nights at Linda's Mercantile in Winchester, Virginia. Ben likes the general store 'cause it reminds him of home. He stays to busy with his construction business to play as much bluegrass music as he would like. Ben is friends with Bill Yates, bass player for the Country Gentlemen. He also gets to do some pickin' with the Johnson Mountain Boys mandolin player. John plays guitar, mandolin and bass. He has three children who all play and sing. Ben told the story of how John was over visiting one evening. John asked to see Ben's dobro and started to pick and was able to play it. It seems that John is one of those who can play just about anything. Their friend, Richard doesn't play but enjoys listening to his friends pick.

One Fateful morning at the IHOP
“Bluegrass On Your Breath” by Dianna Ford

Vacation was looming in the not too distant future; I decided to take Friday off to get the revelry started and found myself wondering . . . “hmmm, just what might I do on a Thursday night, knowing that I did not have to rise early the next morning?” JACKSON JAM, JACKSON JAM, JACKSON JAM repeated softly in my subconscious. Okay, I thought, that is an excellent idea; so, I began to round up the usual suspects (aka Wildflowers: Jeannie Gentry, Tom Becker, Craig Yarbrough and Kevin Wright). We all arrived right on time at the Casey Jones Store; it was a pleasant surprise to find Jim Phillips amongst the ranks as well!

We sang for several hours in the parking lot, meeting new people, laughing (in my case - cackling) and generally enjoying the jam. When low and behold, the clock struck 10:30 p.m. - the bewitching hour. I felt a sudden panic, and a light sweat break over my forehead. Can it be over? Is this all there is? Can't we sing *just one more*? Then, I remembered that I did not have to rise early and go to work; reprieve! So, we did sing one (or two more) and the jam began to come to a close.

Then, out of nowhere someone mentioned IHOP (International House of Pancakes); it appears that the truly dedicated jammers head over to the IHOP after the jam ends at the Casey Jones Store. Miraculous! I could not believe my ears! I could hardly contain my excitement. I commenced to begging the wildflowers - Jeannie, Tom and Craig (who also did not have to rise early the next morning) to join me. They politely declined, citing influences beyond their control - let's remember that “influences beyond their control thing;” it will come back to haunt me later. So, they departed.

I, on the other hand, loaded up and headed cheerfully to IHOP - giddy with excitement, I might add. When I arrived, Jim Phillips and Jeff Long had the song circle moving right along. Andy Pollack and several other members of the Jackson Plectral Society were joining right in. The mood was festive and the harmony - perfect! I had recently met Jeff Long and was eager to get to sing a few with him as he is an excellent lead and harmony singer. He and Jim Phillips have a long history of singing together and I was thrilled to have an opportunity to sing with Jeff and Jim (my long time harmony mentor). Kevin Wright quickly joined us and I just knew I had died and gone to heaven. Someone pinch me - could there really be a 24-hour restaurant willing to let bluegrassers and old-time music enthusiasts take over a corner amongst the customers? Absolutely.

I lost myself in the moment; or should I say moments, OK - hours. I didn't even want to know what time it was. Surely Jim Phillips (the voice of reason) would give a queue when it was becoming too late; wouldn't he? He also had an hour plus drive home; didn't he? Well, of course he did, I told myself. Andy Pollack, sat beside me chatting, and casually asked if my staying out so late would land me in any hot water at home. (Cackling) I said, “of course not!; my husband is sooooo used to me going and singing; he knows exactly where I am; it will be no problem.” Famous last words; Remember that thing about “influences beyond one's control?”

Finally, I was confronted with facing the facts. It was 1:30 a.m. in the morning and I still had an hour plus drive back to Atoka. I reluctantly packed up my stuff and headed to the car. I drove home feeling completely fulfilled - that was a rare opportunity and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I made the journey back into Atoka, pulled into the garage and tried to quietly sneak, ummm, I mean enter door so as not to wake my sleeping family. When what do I see? - A not so happy spouse waiting up with a short lecture about the time of the morning, my responsibilities and a general lack of consideration on my part. I was shocked, but soon realized I was “GUILTY AS CHARGED.” My bluegrass bank account had been put into deficit in a matter of minutes (ok - hours).



I shared my sad story with some of my bluegrass bandit friends; in particular with Bobby Holland who in an uncanny way summed it all up; “Yes, he said; I guess you came rolling in with bluegrass on your breath again.”

Andy Pollack and I immediately locked eyes - hey, there's a song in there somewhere! And

so the cycle continues. So, to pay my penance, I have written an ode to the bluegrass widowers and widows out there who, through much longsuffering, allow us to partake in something that we love:

“BLUEGRASS ON YOUR BREATH”

Verse 1

*When we first got together
 Our hearts did beat as one
 I thought that we would never
 Stop havin' so much fun
 But then you found a new love
 And you put it in my place
 I guess that's just a cold, hard fact I'm gonna
 have to face . . .*

Chorus:

*I've paced the floor,
 And watched the door
 Just can't seem to stop
 You rolled in at three a.m.
 Said you'd been to IHOP;
 Things are gonna have to change
 Or it's gonna be our death
 If you come in just one more time
 With bluegrass on your breath*

Verse 2

*You say I just can't understand
 The way that it can be
 When you've got all three parts lined up
 In perfect harmony
 The guitar's there, the mandolin and the
 banjo's on a roll
 You say it's just so good at times
 You just can't seem to go . . .*

Verse 3

*You say it's an addiction
 Just can't help yourself
 Your needin' intervention
 Just might need some help
 But you keep right on singin'
 I'm not seein' the remorse
 So I've got twelve steps for you
 And their walkin' out the door . . .*



MANDOLIN TASTING

by Betty Westmoreland

The rules governing a mandolin tasting are really quite simple. It boils down to the notion that mandolin players who gather for such an event should load up their favorite instruments, gather at the appointed hour, and have at least a chance to play every mandolin in the room...and that everyone should have a grand time. Mission accomplished!

Kevin and Donna Thompson hosted a mandolin tasting at their home on November 21, 2009. Thirteen musicians and three guests showed up for what had to be a mandolin player's wildest dream...the chance to play their own mandolins and everyone else's, too. After warm greetings from the hosts, the mandolins and even some guitars came out of their cases and the tasting was on! Donna Thompson added solid licks on her 1961 Kay upright bass to keep everyone in time.

At one point, the mandolin players displayed all the mandolins and guitars on the couch in the den so that they could take pictures from every possible angle. Even a few video cameras were there to record the musicians as they played mandolins, switched, swapped, and played some more.

Adding to the congenial atmosphere of the mandolin tasting, Kevin and Donna had prepared hot and cold snacks and soft drinks for everyone. Musicians do love to graze between pickin' sessions, and the folks took full advantage of the delicious food in the kitchen.

The players and the instruments they brought are as

follows: **Doug Anderson:** 1976 Gibson Master Model and "The Loar" LM-600-VS; **Tim Burcham:** Custom Weber Yellowstone, "The Loar" LM-700-XS, and Breedlove Tenor Guitar; **Rick Crenshaw:** Daley Classic No. 56, Daley Standard No. 21, and the Pos'm Self-Built; **Spencer Gallarno:** Eastman 615; **John Gay:** Daley Standard No. 9; **Kevin Keen:** 2001 Summit F100; **Terry Lewis:** Ratliff A Economando and Gibson F9; **Will Mays:** 1925 Gibson A, 1995 Tucker, and Flatiron F5 Artist; **Harry McLellan:** 2001 Flatiron; **David Pierce:** Gibson No. 23 (Steffey) and Sam Bush Master Model; **Dennis Rose:** Martin D-18 Guitar; **Donna Thompson:** 1961 Kay Upright Bass; and **Kevin Thompson:** New Sim Daley Standard No. 89 (the *real* reason for the mandolin tasting), 1991 Tony Rice Model Santa Cruz Guitar, and 1985 Custom 15 HD-28 Martin Guitar.



The Mandolin Tasting was a wonderful way to "try out" many flavors of mandolin and mandolin styles.



Front Left to Right: Tim Burcham, Rick Crenshaw, Kevin Thompson, and Harry McLellan

Back L. to R.: Kevin Keen, David Pierce, Spencer Gallarno, Will Mays, Doug Anderson, John Gay, and Terry Lewis ~ Not shown: Donna Thompson, upright bass player in charge of keeping the tempo (very important!) during the mandolin tasting.

The guests were **Debi Anderson, Beth Mays,** and this writer. It was just downright amazing to hear all the mandolins and guitars going at warp speed on whichever tune came into someone's head. The players and their guests recommend that you have such a tasting very soon with your favorite mandolins, fiddles, guitars, dulcimers, or even...yes, banjos! Thanks to Kevin and Donna Thompson and all of those who attended the mandolin tasting. What a great way to kick off the 2009 holiday season!

Pick away!



Memphis Area Bluegrass Association
PO Box 171152
Memphis, TN 38187-1152

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage PAID
Memphis, TN
Permit #637

Visit Memphis Area Bluegrass Association (MABA) on the web at www.memphis-bluegrass.org

CALENDAR/REMINDERS: EVENTS

Every Month 2010

Mondays:

Flying Club Pickin'

6:30pm at the Flying Club; 5796 Eniwetok
St.; Bldg. #10; Millington, TN

Fridays:

6:30pm On the Square, Collierville, TN
Outdoors for the summer/fall season

Saturdays:

MABA Weekly Jam & Pickin'

12:00pm to 3:00 Hope Presbyterian
Church; 8500 Walnut Grove Rd., Cordova, TN 38018

Visit the MABA online store at:
www.memphis-bluegrass.org and click on
online MABA store



Get these products and more!!