

NewsGrass

“Dedicated to the Perpetuation of an American Art Form”



January 2011

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PRESIDENT’S CORNER

by Benny Cole

As we look forward to 2011, I want to take this opportunity and look back on MABA's 2010. First, I want to thank all of you who have worked to better our association. Each of our functions was well attended and successful. We have already talked about most of our past events either in the newsletter or on the web so there is no need to go over them again.

This was the first year for the Pick Camping in October at Shelby Forest. The weather was great and so was the food.

About fifty people attended and we had several JAMS going on. We plan to make this a annual event and hope you can attend next year.

In closing, I wish each of you a Happy New Year and look forward to working with you in 2011. It will take each of us working together to build upon our accomplishments of the past to grow our association.

Thanks, Benny

Our Officers

President - Benny Cole
Vice-President - Peter Smith
Secretary - Dianna Ford
Treasurer - Clay Caver

2010 Pickcamping and Fall Picknick

By Everyone

It started with the September MABA meeting where the plans were being developed for the fall picnic. About a week later there was some chatter on the Yahoo site about having an October Pickcamping. These two ideas quickly merged into

one. Since we haven't had anyone who attended this great event jump up and write a story we dug into the archives of the Yahoo Message Board and put together some messages that kind of tells the story how this all came about. The first message was one by Bobby Holland.



Bobby Holland “Is there an Oct. camping trip this year ? If not think about one at Meemen Shelby state park, 49 camp sites elect. water dump station, enclosed shelter for our use. It is in north Memphis about a mile from Shelby Forest General Store, 13,000 acres, walking trails, 2 lakes to fish at. I have been going to this park for 40+ years, the park would love to have us. Thanks”

Bob Barnett “I'm in if its early Oct., not last week of Oct. (Beanfest)”

Jack McDivitt “I'm in”

Peter Smith “Let me jump in here for a moment. I'm not a camper, per se, but we are having, to the best of my knowledge, our MABA fall picnic at the Oakland First Baptist Church on the 9th. One thing that we would hate to see would be a group of regular dedicated pickers, such as the ones who have responded to this invitation to go Pickcamping & missing out on our annual picnic. We're hoping for a successful picnic with excellent facilities and a driving distance comparable to Ed Fleener's in Mississippi. We're trying something new this year by moving the picnic and want a good turnout. Is there a chance ya'll could move the Pickcamping to the following week and come out and support the MABA fall picnic on the 9th? We'd really miss ya'll if we had conflicting events. Just my 2 cents worth here.”

Jeannie Gentry “CAN OF WORMS OPENED” (continues on page 2)



2010 Pickamping and Fall Picknick (continued)



Jeannie Gentry “Hey guys, I've just been out to that very spot where Bobby is talking about to reminisce, and man that's a perfect place! Been going there since I was a small Lass myself; my family has reel to reel silent movies of family reunions playing guitars

and an old Kay upright on the lake. I love it Bobby!

However, I know Peter's right about losing regular pickers at the picnic. That would be sad, and I don't want to see that either. So, at the risk of messing up all the hard work you guys put into the meetings (coming from someone that doesn't go to meetings enough), can I make a suggestion that we consider moving the picnic to the lake? That's a very attractive spot to me.

But I will be supportive of whatever you guys decide.

my 2cents worth.....

Dianna Ford “And, to agree with Jeannie, because I always agree with Jeannie . . .

I think we should go with the momentum of the group; sounds like many people are interested in Shelby Forest. I love the idea. I think we should combine forces and do the picnic at Shelby Forest. Let's work together and make it great!”

[And all the MABA pickers did work together to combine the camping trip with the picnic, becoming one big happy MABA family. Is it just me or is this kind of reading like a fairytale? Here are some of the messages posted after the weekend.](#)

Peter Smith; “Big success, IMHO.

I thought we had a good turnout, considering the other events of the day, I bet we had the most fun and best time of all the Bluegrass events Saturday. The weather was beautiful, as were the surroundings and all our MABA members. Everything I witnessed went a-ok. I'd say we couldn't have asked for a better event and my vote is to have the event at Meeman in the upcoming years along with the Pickamping, which I understand was also a big success.

I specially would like to thank Benny, Beth, Ed, Faith, Loyce and Lynda for their efforts with preparation and serving our meal, procuring and clean up. We had to duck out early but we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and sincerely hope everyone else did likewise. It was good to see Gary Williams brother, Bob out for the event.

Thanks ya'll so much for coming and taking part in a fine page in MABA history.

BTW, I would be remiss if I did not mention Bobby Holland and his efforts and generosity in reserving the museum shelter for us

for our picnic, thanks Bobby.”

Bobby Holland “Thanks to everyone for coming out we had a great camp excellent picnic and picking, thanks MABA. I would like to ask if you liked the park email tenn state parks and tell them so. Meeman Shelby is the last park to get money needed to keep this park going . Steve smith is the park manger and does a good job with what he has .but it might help if we just let them know how much we enjoyed it . Gee-haw”

Karen “I agree with all that's been said. The picnic was a lot of fun in a beautiful setting. We had several groups of campers, and what a great campground. Our campground picking attracted lots of folks included several groups of Yankees and a nice couple from Canada. After some quick lessons in southern lingo, we were all communicating well and having a large time. Hope folks will come out the next time.”

Jeannie Gentry “It happens every year..... So if you're missing some stools, and hmm, there was something else but i can't remember what it was.. Contact Benny to identify. No Martin Guitars or Fiddles were left behind, and any Banjos that were left, can be found at the bottom of the lake by now... .hee..hee... Just kiddin.... “

Tom George “I just signed up for SCUBA !!”



Benny Cole “On behalf of the MABA association, I would like to thank everyone who came out to the picnic and to all who helped with it. Considering the late notice and some of our bands playing

at other places, I thought it was a success and something to build on. We will discuss next year's fall picnic at our November meeting and set a date for it. I hope to see everyone there.”

[So there it is, a coming together of the minds, our first combined Pickamping and Fall Picknick. It's obvious that it will not be the last.](#)

[By the way, no banjo or banjo player was actually harmed during this event. “Banjos at the bottom of the lake” was truly just a joke. Please reframe from actually SCUBA diving in the lake.](#)



Slow-Jam



by Jean Jones and Bob Davis

Every Saturday from noon to 3 pm at Hope Church on Walnut Grove Road, musicians meet on the second floor for a weekly Bluegrass Jam Session. Although there are often two or three different Jam Sessions going on in different rooms and the hallway, one



of the highlights is our Slow Jam Room. Everyone is greeted by Ms. Erna and the Jam is usually kicked off by singer, Paul Terrell, getting the group started with a song. All musicians play along and some trying their voice in adding some harmonies. This starts the "round robin" session where each Jammer takes a turn picking and leading a song.

This jam is open to all level of musicians, ranging from the very new players to the professional band members. We even occasionally have visitors from other parts of the country.



Every week is special and draws a variety of musicians. There are so many Bluegrass Musicians that come and play in the Slow Jam Room that it would be impossible to name them all but here are some of the regular musicians that you might find in the Slow Jam room: Ron Day, Bob Davis, Lonnie Gaither, Gordon & Jean Jones, Bob McGowan, Roy Smith, Jeff Tallant, Harold Criswell, Bob



Turner, Buford Tankersly, Bob Barnett, Alton Ellis, Homer Bunker, Tom Woods, Tom Moore, Andy Rogers, Robert Williams, and Doc Adams, Wayne Walker, Benny Cole, and Jack McDivitt. With a lineup like this, sometimes Slow Jam isn't the best description, in fact "Pretty Darn Fast Jam" often comes to mind.

We who play and sing in the "Slow Jam" room enjoy all the great musicians who come and Jam with us. We sure love a challenge.



"The Lakeland Grass" Play the Desoto Rehab Center

By Jean Jones

The Lakeland Grass (Gordon & Jean Jones and Roy Smith) played the Desoto Rehab Center on Dec 9th. The residence and staff seemed to enjoy our performance and all sang along with us. It was amazing that most of the residence knew the words to all the old bluegrass songs. We had around 35 people in attendance.

FLEENER'S PICKIN' PORCH 2010

June 5, 2010

BLUEGRASS MUSIC AND POTLUCK



This year's Pickin' Porch is dedicated to the memory Cliff Albright.

By Bob Davis

In reflecting on MABA 2010 I can't help but to think about Ed Fleener and his annual Picking Porch. This was definitely a highlight for me. I had met Ed through MABA and for several months had been the lonely guitar at his weekly "Banjo Sessions". There was usually Ed, George Estes, Bob Waters and Doc Adams. For those counting, that is four banjos and one guitar and yes I do think that insanity runs in the family. I guess Ed decided since I already shown my insane side that I would be a good candidate and the next thing I know I found myself volunteering to help with the Pickin' Porch.

This year's Picking Porch was a very special one dedicated to the memory of Cliff Albright, A dear friend to Ed, long standing member of MABA, founding member of the band Gone South and loving husband to Charlotte. At the end of the night Charlotte spoke a few words. One of the things she said is that if Cliff had been there he would have said that this was "Right On". I'm sure with just this compliment, Ed knew that all his efforts and hard work were all worthwhile. The compliments didn't stop there, everyone was buzzing. I heard many saying that it was the best one ever.



I heard the number of MABA and other Bluegrass enthusiast in attendance was around 130 people.

The music was great with a lineup of some of the most talented Bluegrass Bands in the area and probably in the country. The lineup was Gone South, Crosstown Grass, Brush

Arbor and Tennessee Wild Flowers. In addition, these band members came early and along with other MABA members we had Jams Galore.



The BIG QUESTION:

Will there be a Fleener's Pickin' Porch 2011?

Conditionally, Ed's answer to this question is YES. The conditions are: getting a commitment from four bands to play and getting help for Ed in getting the Pickin' Porch ready for the festivities. I had

the pleasure of helping Ed the day before and the morning of and I know my name is already on the list. Putting on the Pickin' Porch is hard work and Ed needs all the support we can provide.

Have you been anywhere interesting lately? Bluegrass Festival, a New Jam, Workshop , A Concert or Anything Bluegrass? If so Send us a few lines and maybe a picture or two.

Singing the High Part with Charlie Louvin

By Cecil Yancy



The biggest stars are often not the ones who shine the brightest from 200 yards away in an auditorium, but glow with genuineness when you get up close to them.

The legendary Charlie Louvin is one of those lights.

In the past year, he's been suffering from pancreatic cancer. Those in the bluegrass and country music industry have rallied around this fine gentleman.

I'm still glowing from the time I got to visit and sing with this Country Music Hall of Fame and Grand Ole Opry member.

My wife and I traveled to Memphis to hear Mr. Louvin play at the Hi-Tone Café in Memphis in November 2009. A year earlier, I had spent an hour on the phone with him while he was on tour. The article in my magazine, *The Mid-South Farmer*, recounted his storied career with his fabled brother, Ira, as the Louvin Brothers. Their music influenced the likes of Emmylou Harris, Gram Parsons, and the Everly Brothers. Before Elvis was Elvis, he opened for the Louvin Brothers.

At the Hi-Tone Café I watched as he bounced from table to table visiting with patrons long before the show began at 10:30 p.m. As he walked by our corner table, I threw up my hand and he sat down. Both my wife and I developed a rapport with him right off. As he sat down, he turned to my wife, and looking back at me, said, "You must have your head on straight if you're with this one."

I showed him the article I had done on him. "Well, bless your heart for doing the article," he said. We talked for about 30 minutes about his music career, his 60-year marriage to his wife, his growing up on Sand Mountain, and his brother, Ira.

My wife and I sing several Louvin Brothers' tunes, so in the process of the conversation, we mentioned that we sang, "When I Stop Dreaming."

Immediately, Mr. Louvin turned to my wife and grinned, "Would you sing the high part with me?"

"Well, actually, Mr. Louvin, I don't sing the high part," Linda said. "Cecil does."

On the spot, across the table, he began auditioning me. "I used to sing 'When I Stop Dreaming' in C, but now I have to do it in B flat," he told me. "I don't know if this is a B flat, but see if you can follow me."

In the period of less than five minutes, we had an arrangement worked out that suited him. Before I could process what had happened, he said, "I'll call you up on stage."

He then left to dress for the performance, returning with a tie, green sports coat and Stetson hat.

As I walked to the stage to sing with Charlie Louvin, those hauntingly high notes ran through my mind as I reflected on the times I've sang with my wife.

On stage, he turned to the band, which included his son, Sonny, and asked for a B flat. After some banter, he asked for the key again, and we started the song acapella. "When I stop dreaming, that's when I'll stop loving you." The crowd went wild.

As I was walking off stage, Louvin told the crowd that I had

done a good job. "One part where he sang we didn't do it like that on the record, but that's OK," he said. "He did a good job."

An hour or so later, after he had ended the show at 1 a.m., I handed Mr. Louvin, 82 at the time, a couple of CDs for him to sign.

"You know, we didn't do it like that on the record," he again said, reminding me of the extra harmony part that I had added to the song.

"I know, I'm sorry about that," I apologized. "That's the way I sing it with my wife."

Gracious as ever, he said, "Oh, no, no. If my brother would have heard you singing it like that, he would have started singing it like that."



Punch Brothers

G'town Performing Arts Center

Punch Brothers performed at GPAC (Germantown Performing Arts Center). This is a band lead by Chris Thile, a younger mandolin player who initially was one of three that formed the group Nickel Creek. Punch Brothers is

a typical five-member Bluegrass group consisting of Chris Thile (mandolin), Gabe Witcher (fiddle/violin), Noam Pikelny (banjo), Chris Eldridge (guitar), and Paul Kowert (bass). Having the typical instruments is where typical ended. Let's put it this way, the most traditional song was "You Are My Flower" which was done as a duet with Paul Kowert playing the bass with a bow and Gabe Witcher providing a solo voice. This was an awesome arrangement, but when have you ever heard this song done with a solo voice, accompanied by just a bass, played with a bow? Not Typical but had a very traditional feel.

What talent these young musicians have. Everyone is from different musical back grounds; there is even a "Seldom Scene" connection with one of the members. During play the band is very animated, constant movement among each member. The music was precise and had the elements of a Jam Session where the lead moved from instrument to instrument. They truly appeared to be having fun. They took these traditional Bluegrass instrument to a whole different level. Some hardened Bluegrass/Old-time Music enthusiast may be put off by the break in the traditional arrangements but there is no doubt the heart and soul of the Punch Brother's music is Bluegrass.

The crowd they drew, many of the GPAC crowd, dressed in their finest, but many younger folks were wearing jeans and tee shirts. There was a lot of whooping and hollering during the performance.

MABA was allowed to place some flyers on a display table. We had flyers, business cards and an 8x11 sign in a standing picture frame. We had 75 flyers and took home 22, so there are 53 seeds out there trying to peak interest in our association. If you haven't checked out the Punch Brothers you need to. They put on an unforgettable show.

Review of Songwriters' Workshop with Claire Lynch



Gumball Studio, Hickory Withe, TN
February 11, 2006

by Betty Westmoreland

With the weather changing rapidly and winter settling in here in the Deep South, my thoughts wander back to a pleasant Saturday afternoon spent with friends in Hickory Withe, TN, in February of 2006. *Here are portions of my original review.*

Imagine a perfect setting for a gathering of songwriters. How would you picture it? A secluded location 'way back in the woods? Good for starters. A shuttle trip from a nearby church parking lot to the studio in the woods? Getting better. A nip in the air, snow on the ground and more snow falling? Oh, yeah! A world-class songwriter sharing thoughts about how this songwriting thing is done? There! That's just about perfect!

The warm, inviting Gumball Studio of Bill Weir, out in Hickory Withe, TN, was the site of just such a gathering on February 11, 2006. Twenty-three hardy souls struck out for a two-hour workshop conducted by the highly respected singer-songwriter, Claire Lynch. Armed with legal pads, pens and pencils, recorders, guitars, and CDs of that soon-to-be-released Great American Bluegrass Song, the aspiring songwriters came in boots, heavy jackets, and warm gloves. They were out in the woods that afternoon to hear Claire Lynch tell them how to write a song. Sounds simple enough, right? Wrong!

After introductions and small talk, Claire presented hand-outs of songwriting basics, sample songs, and the dollars-and-cents matter of royalties for songwriters. She began with a theme which she stressed time and again--get on the main road and stay on it! "Stay with the strand," she said, "so as not to wander off and lose the listener. Rely on the feeling or emotion that caused you to begin writing the song and be prepared to cut, trim, and pare it down to just the right words."

Lynch related a personal experience with a family member known as Granny. While visiting Granny in the woods of Walker County, AL, Claire was filled with feelings about Granny's life, the people around Granny's home, the trees in the woods, and other memories which might cause a poet or songwriter to put pen to paper. The result of that experience is Claire's current work-in-progress, "The Woods of Sipsey." Feeling. Emotion. It has to be there.

Whether words come first or the melody, or they occur at the same time, is unimportant. Different songwriters work in different ways. What is important in both techniques is the "hook," the thing that draws the listener in and holds him or her throughout the song. Develop a hook, stay with the strand, and write from feeling. Got it? Not quite? Songwriters know that there is so much more. The words make it sound easy; the task is tough. Local Memphis songwriter Charlotte Albright recalled that a song hit her brain in a home improvement store. She had to get it down on paper right then, before she lost the thought. She grabbed for brown cardboard boxes and began writing on the boxes as the thoughts poured forth. She got strange looks from employees and customers, but she also got her song. That's how it works sometimes.

Claire Lynch brought examples of songs and songwriters. She used titles from Paul Fraser and Terry Stafford's "Amarillo by Morning", Bob Dylan's "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome", Tim Stafford and Bobby Starnes' "Savannah", and Mac McAnally's "Socrates," a story song with meanings on many levels. She emphasized that some good songwriting is 'literal,' in that it says exactly what it means. 'Translated' lyrics have hidden meanings which are left for the listener to figure out and understand.

Pieces of advice which the songwriter can hang onto come at odd times and odd places. Claire recalled that one such nugget of advice came at a college graduation. The speaker was a CEO with Teledyne, and he told the graduates to always pay close attention to details. While the devil may be in the details, success is often in there, too.

The songwriters got what they needed to hear that day, including a wrap-up session in which Claire listened to CDs of material that the songwriters composed. She was attentive and very positive, yet honest, in her remarks about each songwriter's efforts. Entirely approachable about her own experiences and the things songwriters need to do, Claire proved once again what a friend and true gem she is. In the music business as in other walks of life, it is the folks who are "up there" but who are willing to take the time to help others along the way who make a real difference in our lives.

For additional information:

www.clairelynch.com

www.gumballstudio.com

www.memphis-bluegrass.org

Have you been anywhere interesting lately? Bluegrass Festival, a New Jam, Workshop , A Concert or Anything Bluegrass? If so Send us a few lines and maybe a picture or two.

Bluegrass Music Jam Etiquette



Author Unknown (a common list of Bluegrass Jam Etiquette)

A bluegrass jam is a great opportunity for people to get together and play music. A jam session can be great fun, and a great way to make new friends, or it can be frustrating and aggravating. Every jam is different, but every fun and successful jam has an unspoken (usually) set of rules or conduct that makes it work. Here is a basic set of guidelines for playing at jams, for both the novice, and the experienced jammer to consider:

Do:

- ◆ Tune your instrument to standard pitch. Most people these days use electronic tuners. If you don't have one, you can borrow one for a few minutes. Tuning at a jam is done before the playing starts
- ◆ Take turns leading a song. The most common thing at jams is for each person to choose a song to play in turn either going clockwise or counter-clockwise around the circle. At some jams, there is a jam leader or host who "conducts" the jam and chooses people, but this is rare. When it's your turn, tell everyone the name of the song and what key it's in. It's also common to tell everyone if something odd happens in the song like "The off chord in the chorus is a Bm". At some jams, the song leader takes a minute to show the chord changes to people who don't know the song.
- ◆ Listen and watch the other players. The key to making good music at a jam is to listen to the song being played by all the others instead of listening to your own playing. Keeping eye contact with the other players lets you know where the song is going, if it's time for a lead break, or time to end the song. Dobro players take note: look up once in a while.
- ◆ Keep the beat. Timing is everything.
- ◆ Know when not to play. Back off when the singer is singing, or when someone is taking a lead break. It's OK to completely stop playing and just listen during a song, especially in a large jam.
- ◆ Play familiar, simple songs. Complex songs that can't be picked up "on the fly" by the other players are known as "jam-busters". Pick songs that everyone can enjoy, and save the "fancy stuff" for times when you're with people who also know the songs.

Don't:

- ◆ Noodle between songs. Noodling is the habit of continuing to play licks in between songs. It's very distracting to the other players and can really slow up a jam. Sit on your hands between songs, until the song starts.
- ◆ Steal the show. Playing on top of another player's solo is bad manners unless you have permission to play a harmony part from the person playing his/her solo. Play quiet rhythm backup while another person takes a break. This is especially true for banjo players who consider their rolls to be backup. Try to just vamp or chop the rhythm chords so that you're not playing over the break. Fiddle players should never play the melody along with the singer.
- ◆ Play too loud. Don't play so loud that you're drowning out the lead singer or the person taking a break. Some instruments are naturally loud, and some players need to learn to play softly. Play your instrument so that it blends in and allows the other instruments and singer to be heard.
- ◆ Hog the Show. In a jam, everyone takes turns picking and leading a song. Don't start a song when it's not your turn. At most jams, people will be in a circle, and the turn passes to the person sitting next to the last person who picked a song. The person who starts a tune usually ends it. Everyone should get a chance to play a break before ending the song.
- ◆ Play out of tune. Instruments will get out of tune during a jam. If you have to stop and tune, it's good manners to step out of the circle to retune, unless everyone agrees to take a tuning break.

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

CALENDAR/REMINDERS: EVENTS

Every Month 2011

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

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