



NORTHERN BLUEGRASS CIRCLE NEWSLETTER

FALL 2018



Blueberries & Bluegrass

by Doug Eastwell

The Blueberry Bluegrass Festival was held on three consecutive days in early August, at Stony Plain's Heritage Park. The expansive site featured several buildings for musical events and related services such as a petting zoo, artisan sales and acoustic instrument vendors. These were spread throughout a large community centre, museum complex and several jamming tents. In addition, a steady stream of bluegrass music emanated randomly from several locations in the RV parking lot and adjacent campground.

Since I was working as a volunteer for several short shifts over the entire weekend, I was aware of the succession of alterations made to the programme as unforeseen situations arose. Fortunately, due to the flexibility and ingenuity of the volunteers, these glitches did not detract from everyone's enjoyment of the event.

My last shift assignment was traffic management at the main gate during the next-to-last session (ie, the penultimate) of the festival. There was little inbound traffic, and the outbound traffic knew their way home. Accordingly, staff and volunteers assigned to directing it decided to take advantage of this formerly quiet interlude with a spontaneous jam session on fiddle, banjo & ukulele. They demonstrated one advantage of traditional acoustic roots music: no need for bulky equipment or a power source other than creative energy. A key feature of jamming is the willingness of the more-skilled players to impart their knowledge to less-advanced players who are willing to learn. The common thread here is the concept of participating in, as opposed to just listening to, the music.

The fortuitous timing of my last shift also afforded me the opportunity to attend the final performance on the outdoor main stage. During the late afternoon, intermittent but intense thunderstorms had competed with heavy downpours of rain and hail. These storms had actually managed to cleanse the atmosphere by the onset



The Spirit of Bluegrass. Photo: Shauna Johnstone © 2017

of evening. At the finale, the sky was clear and the remnant of the whole day's heating lingered over the event. The setting sun revealed a sea of cowboy hats and baseball caps worn by the audience. Just as twilight faded, a full moon seemed to rise out of the tree line on a ridge just behind the stage. This moon had acquired an orange hue, likely due to forest fires burning to the west. Smoke created a hazy halo around any light source, such as the stage lights illuminating the performers and above all, the moon. As the final set progressed, headliners Blue Highway expressed their musicality through their mastery of the bluegrass idiom. While this musical form may be superficially characterized as simple in musical structure, bluegrass has the precise harmonies and flawless timing needed to produce a sublime musical experience.

The ethereal appearance of the moon, coupled with the high lonesome harmonies of the closing act, created an almost other-worldly effect over the entire main stage area. This magical scene had a strangely calming effect on me. I became completely immersed in the music—a very spiritual state to be in. I cannot wait until the next edition of this event so that I can do it all over again.



RONNIE'S RAMBLIN'S

Bluegrass in the Seventies

It was the late 1970s and bluegrass music in Edmonton was scarcer than good advice from a naked politician. The movie *Deliverance* and the album *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* by the [Nitty Gritty Dirt Band](#) had a big effect on me. Because I was going to College St. Jean, living alone, studying martial arts and working two part-time jobs, it took a while to save up enough \$\$\$ to buy my first banjo. When I did, it was a beauty: an Eaton's "Aria," a \$99 special, made in Japan. I'd been playing guitar for about a year, but somehow the banjo had really motivated me. On my regular trips to the House of Banjo I had no luck meeting other bluegrass enthusiasts—the four-string Dixieland style was very popular back then, especially at Klondike Days. Every night I studied my bluegrass instruction book, and somehow during all of this turmoil, I got married and moved to Calgary.

By 1979 I needed a bluegrass fix. There were no bluegrass clubs in Calgary and the only cool record store was [Buckdancer's Choice](#), where I purchased over 100 albums. I got a part-time job teaching banjo at a store called HOME GROWN MUSIC. Now I began meeting acoustic musicians and playing in various bands! A giant flea market was held at the [Crossroads](#) warehouse every Sunday, so I rounded folks up to perform bluegrass music there (and network with other players). I wanted to start a bluegrass club, where we could hold regular jams, as well as concerts and events. At that time, at least six folk clubs were doing very well. When visiting these clubs I met great musicians like Al LaMonaca, Kevin Bell,* Wanderin' Ralph Roberts, Vladimir Kaitman,* Brad Lindberg and Wayne Murphy. Most other bluegrass players were older (sometimes as old as 30 or 40!) country & western guys who liked Bill Monroe or Flatt & Scruggs. We would talk about having a real club while jamming in various peoples' basements and garages, but no one had much money. Most of us were just out of school or just married. Fiddle tunes were becoming very popular, but I much preferred songs with vocals. Besides, that melodic banjo was darned hard to play. Even back then I insisted that harmonicas, autoharps and accordions should never be in the same room as real bluegrass. Bands like [Wheatland County](#) or my group [Hillbilly Heaven](#) started converting more folks over to real bluegrass music.

Eventually a formal bluegrass club with a president and an executive was formed, but by then (1984) I had moved back to Edmonton. The scene up here was just starting



Ron at 19 impressing a girl with his dobro playing.
Photo: Ron Mercer © 2018

boil. I put together a group with my sister, a cousin and a friend I'd met through The Bargain Finder. Every weekend we played on the train at Fort Edmonton, where I talked to a lot of musicians. Marty O'Byrne, a guitar player I met, formed a band with Jim Malmberg on mandolin and me on banjo. Bassists and fiddle players came and went. We called ourselves [New Fish Creek](#), and in 1985 we started the Picker's Picnic event, which morphed into the Blueberry Bluegrass Festival. In 1986, I joined a group called the [Bluegrass Gentlemen](#) (Chuck Skinner— guitar, Wally Tyrlik— fiddle, Rob Baker— mandolin, George Bayard—banjo). We played a lot of gigs and talked about having a formal bluegrass club. It took ten more years before George Bayard finally started the official NBCMS club that we are all part of today.

A friend of mine likes to say that no one started out playing bluegrass—that all bluegrass musicians switched over from other genres of music. I'd like to think that my musical history has been bluegrass from the beginning. I'm very proud of my early involvement in getting a bluegrass presence started that continues today in both Calgary and Edmonton. I am especially proud of being the President of the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society and of my executive team and directors.

—Ron Mercer, President
Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society (NBCMS)

*deceased



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Howdy!

Welcome to the third installment of the Northern Bluegrass Circle's newsletter under my editorship, as you can tell by my photograph. But enough about me!

I ask all of you to communicate stories, photos, jokes, ideas for new columns as well as beefs and bouquets to me by email at ernad@telus.net or in person at the jams (I'm often at the entrance table). What other methods might readers wish to use to submit material—regular mail or something more current? And how do people read the finished product? We want the newsletter to be accessible to the widest range of readers.

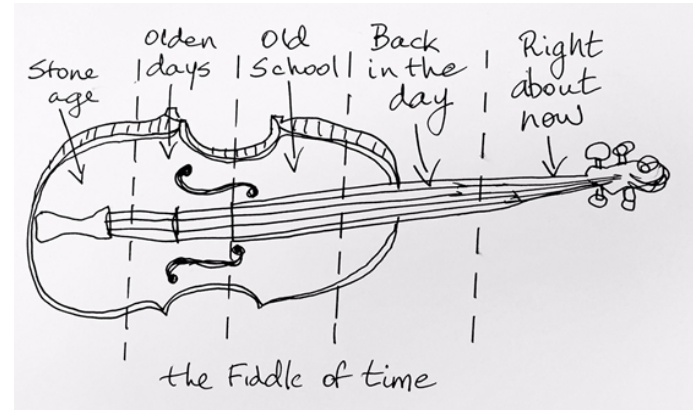
I'm all ears.

Erna Dominey
ernad@telus.net



I am a Pilgrim, seen outside the Earl Scruggs Center in Shelby, North Carolina. Photo: Jack Brink © 2017

FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT



The Fiddle of Time. Ink on paper: Bob van Schaik © 2018

Q&A

Q. What's the difference between a banjo and a chainsaw?

A. You can tune a chainsaw.

Q. How can you tell if there's a banjo player at your door?

A. They can't find the key, the knocking speeds up, and they don't know when to come in.

Q. Why do fiddlers pick on banjo players?

A. Because they can't pick on their fiddles.

Q. What do you get when you cross a mandolin and a banjo?

A. An instrument that even a bass player can tell is out of tune.

Q. Why does a mandolin have eight strings?

A. To double the chances that one of them will be in tune.

NBCMS and Uptown Together in Bluegrass

by Steve and Karen

The Uptown Folk Club, now in its 23rd year, is proud to collaborate with NBCMS. Here are some of bluegrass acts who've performed at the Uptown:

2009 First Winterfest Cabin Fever, 1st Time Out
2011 Winterfest Back Porch Swing
2012 Ida Red and Woodbend
2014 Kayla Hotte and her Rodeo Pals
2016 Matt and Kayla Hotte Uptown 20th Anniversary
2016 Lonesome Ace Stringband
2017 Winterfest Bluegrass Etc. and Molly Tuttle
2018 Slocan Ramblers

In addition, the Uptown received one of 20 citations presented at the NBCMS 20th Anniversary Awards in 2016, and participated as an exhibitor and Open Stage Host at the 2017 and 2018 Blueberry Bluegrass festivals.



Ten Songs

by Sheila Hallett

The **Ten Songs** initiative, begun in August of 2017, has brought five new tunes into our circle: Big Mon, Bowing on the Strings, Red Prairie Dawn, Cluck Old Hen and Bonaparte's Retreat. You can expect to hear these come up in the circle from time to time. Thank you to those who helped get the initiative off the ground: Augie Hangartner, Shawn Robinson, Ian Johnston and Mark McHale.



Ten Songs was a fun way for us to expand our jamming repertoire. It worked and is now morphing into a less formal arrangement. On Wednesdays from 7:30–8:30 p.m., pickers are calling many standard instrumentals, including some that we learned via **Ten Songs**. Noel MacNaughton introduced June Apple to the group (and circulated some tab to help pickers learn the tune) and Bob Leitch brought in East Tennessee Blues. Thanks fellas! To allow for more flexibility and spontaneity, we will no longer be announcing new songs in the newsletter in advance. You never know when a new song will be brought in, so don't miss a week!

See you in the circle.

Proud Members of the International Bluegrass Music Association

by Carolyn Hotte

I find many people wonder why the NBCMS has a lifetime membership to the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). In 2006, the NBCMS chose to support the IBMA in this way because we have confidence in their mission statement: "The IBMA is the non-profit music association that connects, educates, and empowers bluegrass professionals and enthusiasts, honoring tradition and encouraging innovation in the bluegrass community worldwide."

Our lifetime membership speaks directly to our belief in showing a united front to help bluegrass music achieve the recognition and appreciation it deserves. It is important that our club voice our commitment to bluegrass music, as our mission statement demonstrates: "The NBCMS is a non-profit music society that promises to promote, present and preserve Bluegrass Music."

One of the many opportunities the IBMA offers is the Leadership Bluegrass Program. This intensive three-day program pulls together a cross section of people from all areas of the music industry to explore bluegrass music and its place in the larger entertainment world. Its graduates take away a better understanding of all aspects of the music business. Three members of the NBCMS have graduated from this program: Carolyn Hotte in 2007, Kayla Hotte in 2013, and Anna Somerville in 2014.

Another opportunity the IBMA provides the bluegrass community is the annual World of Bluegrass (WOB)



conference, trade fair, and festival. Many members of our club have attended. It provides many opportunities to network with artists and agents and discover

really great bands. The awards show held during this week has honoured many of our favourite players and bands. Quite a few local and Canadian bands have had the opportunity to showcase there, either in an official capacity as an IBMA selected showcase band or on the International Showcase stage. Another facet of WOB is the International meet and greet: an event to promote networking with fellow international attendees. It is a very hectic week, during which some participants joke that "IBMA" stands for "I've Been Mostly Awake," but always a rewarding experience.

While resources and networking opportunities are perks of membership, mostly it's about reinforcing our loyalty to bluegrass music internationally. The NBCMS was the first club to become lifetime members, and we are recognised for this each year at the World of Bluegrass Awards Luncheon. We are proud to be members of our industry's professional organization. It's a great way to stay informed about bluegrass happenings while promoting the NBCMS and showing the world our strong Alberta bluegrass community.



Erin & Kayla enjoying the World of Bluegrass. Photo: Carolyn Hotte © 2017

QUARTER NOTES

Winter Jam Camp at He-Ho-Ha

by Peter Mitchell

At first glance, swing would seem an odd choice for a feature music workshop at a bluegrass jam. All those confusing chords and rhythms! There are, however, strong similarities between swing and bluegrass. Both feature hot picking and improvisation around a strong melody. It's no coincidence that many great bluegrass players—Mark O'Connor, Tony Rice, Ricky Skaggs—are equally at home with swing music. The late Kenny Baker learned many of his licks from listening to Benny Goodman.

This year participants in Northern bluegrass circle winter jam were lucky to have Rick Moore, a fine musician in both swing and bluegrass, lead the swing workshop. With the assistance of Morningside bandmate Greg Leblanc on bass



and Kevin Jacobson and Peter Mitchell on guitar, it turns out Rick is a very competent educator as well. With Rick's teaching skills and knowledge of the swing style, those intimidating swing chords and rhythms were maybe a bit easier than we thought. It didn't take long before everyone in the workshop was punching out three-note swing chords and solid rhythm to tunes like "Lady be Good" and "Miles and Miles of Texas." Judging by the number of players who returned the next morning for a follow up (and a bonus Gypsy swing workshop with Kevin Jacobson) it appears there is a fair bit of interest in supplementing bluegrass skills with some swing chops.

A bluegrass jam can be just a little bit more fun, if that's even possible, when you can toss in a cool swing tune once in a while. So, I'm hoping that there will be a repeat swing segment at the next winter jam.

Eat, Pick, Yog

On the Saturday afternoon of the acoustic music workshop, Pamela Johnson lead a yoga session. About a dozen people stretched and breathed until some fell asleep. Next year we are calling it the Forced Nap that follows the Forced March.

Miss Pam told the newsletter, "Yoga benefits your whole being. It improves flexibility and, above all, generates smiles. Bluegrass pickers who practice yoga build jamming endurance by getting aligned and staying in the flow!"



Yogis shown here in Tree Pose are building strength, balance and confidence. Photo: Anna Somerville © 2018

Swap n Shop

by Ron Mercer

Our swap meet on May 30 was an overwhelming success. Over 110 folks showed up to buy or swap some great musical instruments and bluegrass merchandise. Stay tuned for the announcement of the next one.



QUARTER NOTES (CONT'D)

John Lowell Band July 19

The first time during the evening that Julie Elkins sang—a heartfelt treatment of The Gospel Plough—Joanne Fleming whispered to me, “Move over Allison Krauss!” Said Shawn Robinson to the both of us, “shhhh!”



Greg Blake Back in Pleasantview

by Gene Zwozdesky

Each time Greg Blake plays our club, I know three things are guaranteed to happen:

We will have a sold-out venue; we will hear incredible arrangements of bluegrass, country and gospel music; and everyone will ask “When is Greg coming back?” And so it was on May 2, 2018!



Concert photos Mark Whittington © 2018

Wide World of Workshops

by Don Lecky

In addition to attending every NBCMS workshop, I have participated in scores of music instruction camps. Here are my observations on the Foot Hills Acoustic Music Institute.

FAMI has been running for twenty years now. Starting out, their musical education events focused on bluegrass but now include folk, Celtic, fiddle and blues. There are three a year: two instructional workshops (May and August) and a jam camp (first weekend in October). All take place at Kamp Kiwanis, about a half hour's drive west of Calgary on the Elbow River. The main buildings have comfortable bunk rooms. Cabins in the woods are a bit more rustic. There is a field where you can park a trailer or motor home or pitch a tent. Most instructors are very accomplished locals. Food is ample and quite good (although not up to He-Ho-Ha standards), and the cost is very reasonable.

In the last few years I have not been able to get to FAMI's instructional workshops but I always make a point of attending the fall jam camp. I enjoy its eclectic nature and the musicians, who come from all over Alberta. Many I know from NBCMS winter jam camps. Facilitated jams feature different styles of music. Individual musicians teach classes on their own expertise. Even in the early hours of the morning, I can always find an unofficial jam to my taste somewhere among the buildings. Also, it is nice to be in Kananaskis in the autumn.



WHITEMUD DRIVE HAS BLUEGRASS MUSIC COMING YOUR WAY!

The Whitemud Drive band had a great spring & summer, and our busy fall includes playing at the following two cool venues. We hope that you can join us!

BLUEGRASS SUNDAY BRUNCH

Hosted by Whitemud Drive

Venue: The Mercury Room (newly renovated)

Address: 10575-114 Street, Edmonton, AB

Telephone: 780-819-9077

Dates: Sunday Oct 21 & Sunday Nov 18

Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, doors open at 9:30 AM, music starts at 10:30 AM (two sets by Whitemud Drive)

Menu: Cornbread, toasts, eggs, sausage, salad, BBQ chicken, Kentucky burgoo, veggies, fruits, bread pudding, coffee/tea

Pricing: \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door

Tickets: The Mercury Room website (<https://www.mercuryroom.ca/>) or call 780-819-9077

COOKHOUSE FALL CONCERT SERIES

Venue: Cookhouse on Main

Address: 5103-50 Street, Sangudo, AB (just over 1 hour northwest of Edmonton)

Telephone: 780-785-3494

Date: Saturday October 13, doors open at 5 PM, food service begins at 5:30 PM, music starts at 7:30 PM (two sets by Whitemud Drive) until 10 PM

Pricing: Concert only is \$20. For an additional \$23.75 (+ GST), you can enjoy the dinner buffet first. Delicious hot entrée options, vegetables, salads, and much more... plus desserts, coffee/tea. Fully licensed. **Please call Jill at 780-785-3494 to book your dinner in advance.**

Tickets: Contact Cookhouse on Main by telephone (780-785-3494), email (cookhouseonmain@outlook.com) or see their website (cookhouseonmain.com)

You can find more information on Whitemud Drive (the band) at www.facebook.com/WhitemudDrive/



IN MEMORIAM

Bev Munro, March 24, 1929–April 4, 2018

For three decades Bev Munro ruled the airwaves of the big 79er, CFCW. A DJ, singer, songwriter and comedian, his passing was a great loss to fans of country music. Bev always went over big at the Blueberry festival when he played bluegrass songs—with country music legends like Alfie Myhre, Stewart MacDougall, and the lovely Joyce Smith backing him up.

On May 27 at the Edmonton Inn, CFCW and the Canadian Country Music Legends celebrated a life well lived. Fittingly the evening show was hosted by CFCW Program Director Jackie Rae, who looked up, waaaaay up at the legendary morning man when she started at the radio station in 1989. Featured artists paying tribute to the one and only Bev Munro included:

- Eddie Chwill
- Pete Hicks
- Rick Morgenstern
- Darcy Munro & Family
- Lou Paul
- Colleen Rae
- Brian Sklar
- Joyce Smith
- Chris Nielsen & R. Harlan Smith
- Clearwater Band
- Ghost Riders Band
- Highway Patrol
- Rodeo Wind Band

One hundred percent of the proceeds of the event went to the CFCW Bev Munro Scholarship, supporting students in NAIT's Radio & Television - Radio Diploma Program. Ensure that his broadcasting legacy continues <https://ca.gofundme.com/bev-munro-scholarship-fund>.



And let perpetual light shine upon him.
Photo: Darcy Munro © 2018



Bev Munro's Traditional Tuesday Dancing

Dance like you have danced before!

Every week a live country band.

Count on having a good time. dancing or not.

Admission still only ten bucks.

Music and dancing 8 to 11 pm in the Grizzly Room.

Door opens at 6:30 pm. Food and bar service available until 11 pm.

On special occasions, why not come early for a nice dinner in the adjoining Bonaventure Restaurant, 5 to 9 pm.

Chateau Nova Yellowhead
13920 Yellowhead Trail, Edmonton



NOTES FROM ELSEWHERE

by Brian Ficht

Wintergrass 2018

The end of February once again saw the beacon of the Wintergrass Festival draw in musicians and music lovers from far and wide. Albertans were certainly not even close to winning any 'furthest from home' awards—Hashi, one of my fellow dobroists, came all the way from Japan.

It was, as in previous years, an astounding display of performances, both on and off the stage. The host hotel dedicates three-quarters of its vast capacity to this festival, and designates at least half of those rooms as jamming rooms, where the music continues all day and all night.

To enjoy the festival to the fullest, you want to stay in a hotel room on a jamming floor, but failing that, the lobbies, hallways, stairwells, and even the elevators are all eligible venues for an impromptu jam. All levels and tastes are available, and if you can relate (and keep up!) you are welcome to sit in.

As with many events in recent years, there is a much higher demand for rooms in the Hyatt Regency (host hotel) in Bellevue WA, and a bit of a horse race to get one. Next year's rooms all got booked in one short hour shortly after this year's event ended. Other hotels are close by, and may still have vacancies next February, so other options are available.

Stage acts this year, once again, strayed well beyond the true Bluegrass idiom, but every show has something unique to offer. I don't think it's possible to see every act. You have to be selective (up to five stages going at once) but you will be entertained. There will be acts you recognize like the Seldom Scene, my favourites Del and Dawg, and some you've never heard of who will steal your heart.

You'll also find workshops, dances, a plethora of luthiers (with their finest instruments for those who would like something new to play), music gear, clothing makers...there is so much being offered. See <http://wintergrass.com> for more info.



Kluane Festival



The trip to Haines Junction for the Kluane Festival was a wonderful experience. We did a lot of driving, over a lot of different topography. The further north we got, the more the season changed. We were driving in spring-like conditions, with green-up still in progress in early June. Consequently,

there was an amazing amount of wildlife feeding on the verges of the road: countless (massive!) bison, many bears (some with new cubs eating dandelions), Stone sheep, elk, moose, and a few caribou. We had a nice rhythm of driving in the day and playing in the evenings. In Beaverlodge, we were joined by six local musician friends. They heard we were coming and didn't want to miss a jam. I personally fed many mosquitoes that evening.

One of the highlights of the trip was the Liard Hot Springs. In the middle of a driving day we all enjoyed the soothing waters of this relatively undeveloped northern oasis. The hot pools are natural, with ferns and trees growing on their perimeters, and not too crowded. There wasn't much traffic on the way up, sometimes we would drive for half an hour before meeting vehicles in the opposite direction. The Yukon is so wild and human habitation seems pretty sparse until you get to Whitehorse.

The Kluane Festival was really nice, with two indoor venues, and an outdoor tent for dancing. With the spectacular St. Elias Range for a backdrop, the setting reminded me of Canmore in the 1970s. There were a surprising number of familiar faces at the festival. The entertainment was great, and for my money, the local talent often stole the show from the high priced imported acts. The one downside was the lack of a dedicated camping area, so there wasn't a lot of opportunity for jamming it up with other festival attendees. Overall, no regrets!

MEMBER PROFILE

The Road to Bluegrass

by Judd VanderZalm

My earliest musical memory is the living room in our home in Holland. I am sitting on the piano bench next to Mother as she plays “The Blue Danube” waltz. How intrigued I am to watch her fingers move quickly across the keys to create this beautiful melody.

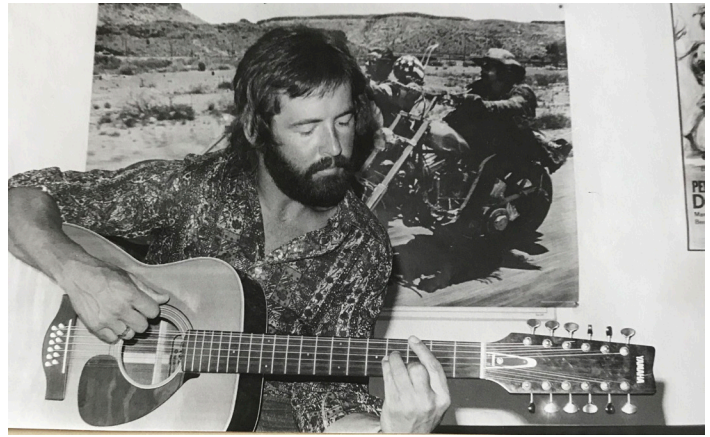
By age 13 I wanted to make music myself. We had emigrated to Australia when I was nine. Many kids at school and in the Adelaide neighbourhood were learning to play. One friend could already pick “Walk Don’t Run” by The Ventures. It was the ‘60s and the radio filled our teenage lives with new music – The Beatles, The Stones and Dylan – the floodgates had opened. That Christmas I was thrilled to unwrap my first guitar. Soon we were at a mate’s place, sitting around the kitchen table jamming. I was hooked.

At 26 I took off for Southeast Asia, Europe and the British Isles to take in the local colour. Music continued to play a large part in my nomadic life. I remember an evening in Vienna at an open-air stage, where eight couples in formal attire waltzed to the music of Johann Strauss. That moment on the banks of the Danube brought back my mother and her piano.

In my two years of travel I chanced upon folk music in Bulgarian villages, Cuban guitars in the streets of Havana, Mexican string bands on the beach at Mazatlan. The sound of the bagpipes stunned me on Edinburgh’s Royal Mile. In Killarney, fiddlers could both dance and play a wild Irish jig. I haven’t seen it all, but I’ve seen a bit.

Eventually it all led me to Canada, where I got married. I worked shift in Fort Saskatchewan while raising two sets of twins. A busy time, while my guitar stood in the corner. By the year 2000 I had not heard of bluegrass, had yet to see the movie “O Brother Where Art Thou” or even hear of the Stanley Brothers.

After years of chauffeuring our brood to dance, hockey and horse-riding, I once again had time for myself. I wanted to get back into playing music but didn’t know a venue in Fort Saskatchewan. One of my workmates had heard of a place in Edmonton where budding musicians gathered to listen and play. We bundled into my car and ventured out to listen to this bluegrass. After 30 years, my guitar was begging to be dusted.



Judd and his twelve-string in Sale, Victoria, Australia.

Photo: Jo Weeks ©1973

After only a few Wednesday visits to Pleasantview hall, I was excited to experience this new music. I signed up for workshops, met like-minded people, learned to use the flat-pick and appreciate fiddle tunes. The greatest insight that came to me was when the Nashville Numbering System was explained. A light went on. The basic structure of a song was laid out. We were shown a way to change a song’s key to suit the voice. Amazing! No longer did I have to stretch my voice up or down to suit the version in front of me. This was great. More weekly visits, more songs to learn and more practicing at home.

Occasionally it’s a treat to go to a performance and be entertained by people who know music; to be in the audience, sit back and absorb the talent of the finest musicians. Every year, I get tickets for Symphony Under the Sky at Hawrelak Park. To this day, 2006 was one of the best concerts. Jerusalem Ridge was the featured act (usually they are pianists, sopranos or young violinists). I never imagined a bluegrass band with an orchestra would work. The audience loved it. For many, I imagine, the sound was a new musical experience. The boys received a boisterous approval.

Because of work and travel, years went by without bluegrass or going back to Pleasantview hall. But this past August at the Blueberry festival, a friend told me he was excited to be attending Bluegrass 101. I was interested in what he told me about the lessons.

Every week Darcy Whiteside and Jim Storey explore a new song. Darcy provides the history of the song and the bands who’ve performed it. The music and the vocals are examined and discussed. To find the right key for your range, go up as high as possible before your voice cracks



OUR BACK PAGES

NBCMS Executive & Directors For 2018

and back it off half a note. It takes a few tries. Then there is the harmony, which for me is the most difficult. I tend to drift to the note that the person next to me is singing. More practice. We might play and sing one line of a chorus ten times until we get it right. And then a few more times for good measure. I find this way of learning most demanding, but most rewarding. I've been there for only a few of the 60 songs covered but have become more aware of the complexity of bluegrass and those seemingly simple compositions.

It's in listening for those subtle differences, Darcy points out, that the learning takes hold. The way a note is carried by the singer, or a word expressed. How and when to catch a breath in the middle of a line so it's unnoticeable to the listener. How to not run out of air at the end of the line in the verse. Listening with the eyes closed so the brain can register the notes of the harmony. —So many lessons, hints and tips to remember.

My picking is also improving slowly. I spend hours at home going over the pentatonic scales. My appreciation for bluegrass increases every time I attend 101. By the looks of its popularity I'll have to start coming earlier to get a good seat.

Kudos to Darcy and Jim for putting so much time into this project and to Ron Mercer and the club executive for promoting the learning of this great music. How do I become a member?



Top, L to R: Kinley Miller, Membership; Scott Degen, Director at Large; Ron Mercer, President; Sheila Hallett, Vice-President; Jason Baldwin, Equipment; Shawn Robinson, Website; Anna Somerville, Workshops; Leonard Swanson, Secretary

Bottom, L to R: Sheila Gurba, Director at Large; Gene Zwozdesky, Treasurer; Erna Dominey, Newsletter; Marlene Thompson, Front of House; Grant Symons, Concerts; Bob Leitch, Advertising

Tanner Myhre joined his father Byron Myhre at their pop-up shop in the pavilion at Blueberry this year.



Photo: Myhre's Music © 2018

OUR BACK PAGES

Wednesdays at Pleasantview

10860-57 avenue NW Edmonton
A donation of \$2.00 is suggested.
Free coffee and treats are available.

7:00 pm Doors open.

7:30–8:30 pm Bluegrass 101 (Main floor)

Instructors Darcy Whiteside and Jim Storey demystify bluegrass. They teach the fundamentals of playing and singing bluegrass in a safe, fun environment. Every week for an hour, Darcy and Jim break down a different song and give everyone a chance to play and sing (lead and harmony).

The lyrics (with Nashville notation) for each week's song are distributed to follow in class. Notably, Darcy's song sheets include the key (e.g., G) he plays it in and BPM (number of beats per minute = the speed), the author's name, and whose version of the song plus date recorded. The last piece of information is crucial. For example, if Darcy will be teaching "Thirty Years of Farming/Fred Eaglesmith (ver. James King, 2002)," you want to find and listen to James King, not Fred, performing it. Participants can also pick up the song sheet for the following week's tune to get a head start.

7:30–8:30 pm "No Beginners" Jam (Chair room)

Following bluegrass etiquette, jammers around the circle take turns playing solos or singing lead on the tune of their choice while others play rhythm.

8:30–10 pm General Jam Session (Main floor)

Musicians of all skill levels are welcome.

8:30–9:30 pm Bluegrass 120 (Chair room)

This new jamming initiative is for those able to play at 120 BPM (beats per minute). See Ron for details.

7:00–10 pm Ad hoc Jams (space TBA)

May form spontaneously.

10 pm Doors close

Attention Bluegrass fans!



CKUA's long-running bluegrass show has a new name and a new deejay. Darcy Whiteside plays bluegrass and old time music

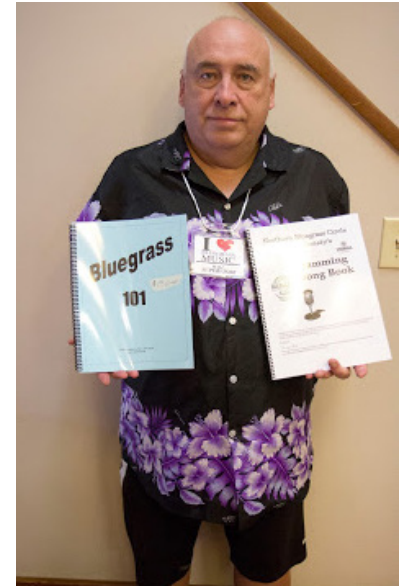
spanning approximately 60 years of the genre. "I try to introduce bands from all over the world, stuff you've never heard before but hopefully will enjoy." THE BLUEGRASS HOUR can be heard Sundays 12 to 1 p.m. and Mondays 4 to 5 a.m. at 94.9 on your radio dial or at www.ckua.com/

Frankie Rodgers



Brian Ficht is helping a friend do some research for a documentary on Frankie Rodgers, a fiddler in Edmonton from the 1950s to the 1990s. If you have personal knowledge of Frankie and/or his brother Hank (or knows someone who has), please contact brianficht@gmail.com or 780-725-2549.

Songbooks Old & New



Darcy Whiteside's new Bluegrass 101 textbook is now available! It includes a concise history of bluegrass music, an intro to the instrumentation in the genre, plus the basics of harmony for learners. The main reason to plunk down your 15 smackeroos is the lyric sheets for songs taught in BG101.

**DON'T FORGET
TO REGISTER
FOR WINTER
JAM CAMP
2019!**

