

# What's Been Going On... ?



When we last met at Pleasantview Community Hall, we had our regularly scheduled board meeting in the basement of the Hall while Bluegrass 101 was in full bloom upstairs. If I remember correctly, the song that we were working on that night was “I’m Lost, I’ll Never Find the Way”. How ironic that it would end up being the last song played and sung together in Pleasantview Community Hall by the dedicated members of the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society Bluegrass 101 Jammers.

How ironic that we went our different ways knowing that our Board had met to discuss the dangers of the COVID situation and risk management followed by the very difficult but obvious decision that would guide our Club for more than a year into an unknown future.

The decision was to suspend our weekly gatherings in light of Alberta’s first landed COVID infection on March 5th, 2020 that rapidly grew into 19 infected persons a week later. I remember feeling fear with respect to the danger this infection was bringing to some, and the velocity and aggressive nature of its spread. We didn’t know much as Board Members that Wednesday evening March 11th, 2020, but I would bet that each Board Member knew in their gut that this was serious and in their hearts that we were making the only responsible decision that we could that night.

How ironic that we know as much now as we did then about when we would be getting back together again. I remember thinking that 6 months seemed to be a reasonable time frame to accomplish an effective degree of management and control, I didn’t see the versions of ‘control’ (in practice) that we’ve seen thus far. I expected to at least have a clearer understanding of the outcomes we would face by then. I remember hearing speculation at subsequent board meetings of the duration of our separation from gatherings and the weekly tribute to our musical selves.

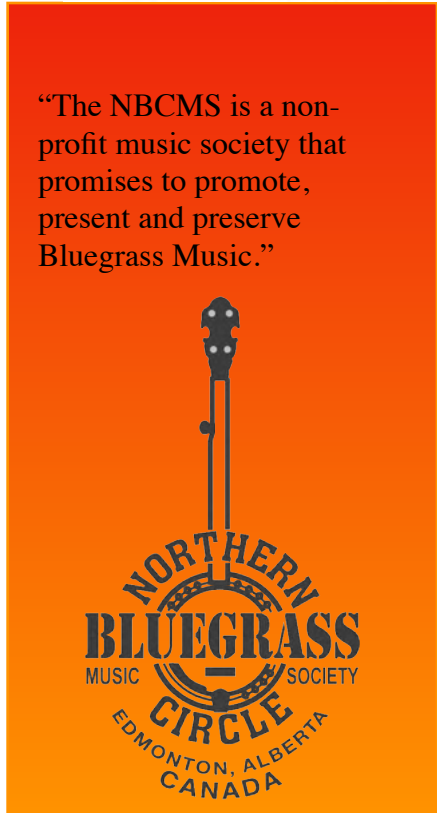
We have all witnessed the broad spectrum of response to this virus from government and from individuals. This is not my personal opinion opportunity so you won’t get that here, although I will say that I’m proud and respectful of the work that our medical community are doing to safeguard us and the work we are all doing to support them. It’s my belief that while we’re doing that we’re also supporting the opportunity for more normal life to return sooner rather than later.

Through this crazy isolation time, we’ve seen a new depth of creative expression and community social activity. We’ve realized new challenges that are engaging us in creative problem solving and that’s been happening to your board members, too. You’ll probably notice there’s not many pictures, but how many pictures of my computer screen are appropriate in a newsletter anyway... ?

BUT that’s not all that’s been keeping us busy while we’ve been keeping low profiles. Many of our NBCMS members will hopefully have enjoyed some of the latest club activities but let’s take a look...

-Celebration in isolation of the 25th anniversary of the NBCMS

- Fall Virtual Acoustic Music Workshop
- Rental agreement update with Pleasantview
- New website
- Commitment to Community
- Growth via Technology
- Fall membership drive
- Annual General Meeting and Board member updates
- Partnership strengthening
- Virtual Bluegrass 101
- Exciting opportunities



---

## Caring Community

Our club is an active, enthusiastic, passionate and caring community of folks that share the common bond of acoustic music -most (but not entirely) specifically Bluegrass Music. We love our Old Time and even older Irish and Scottish fiddle tunes and the new grass stuff too... and by we (I for sure) mean me.

Members typically enjoy many opportunities with which they can become involved in the club, for example, I can choose to:

- participate in Bluegrass 101 on Wednesdays at the club (once this temporary situation resolves)
- share music in the jamming circle later on Wednesday evenings in the open jam and / or 201
- enjoy and volunteer at the various concerts throughout the year
- engage in the personal growth opportunities of the Acoustic Music Workshop
- support the club as a volunteer at the Casino
- meet people and build relationships through the opportunities we share
- help others to enjoy these opportunities as a board member (Steward of the Club)

This club has been around for 25 years and through the kindness of a pretty substantial portion of the membership, has been completely grown and operated by volunteers. The club changed significantly over those 25 years from simply a jamming club to one that has provided many opportunities for our members. I feel proud of the legacy, traditions, evolution and growth of this club, and of my small contribution to all that.

Every February, our club hosts its Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is followed shortly thereafter by the Board Members retreat. At those meetings we get a bit more of a bird's eye view of the club than what we see week to week throughout the rest of the year. Each February we have the opportunity to recommit in volunteer roles to those board positions, or to move aside and allow others to have that opportunity. Then, throughout the remainder of the year, we typically see the club meet once a month (with a recess for the summer). Those meetings are by Zoom now of course.

In my experience, I've seen volunteers engage in new roles as board members with enthusiasm, positive focus, fresh ideas and a strong sense of stewardship, too. I've seen the passion of each board member through their dedication to their position and I've seen depth of expertise from previous life experiences (or current) that has brought great value to the club roles. I've seen smiling faces and shared in positive, enthusiastic interactions with others -always with the best of intentions for the wellness of the club. On just one rare occasion, I've seen board members so passionate with their opinions they could not come to agreement on a proposal for growth. Each with their very own concerns for the wellness of the club. These can be difficult situations but they tend to trigger evolution and forward momentum.

The bottom line is that despite our passion and personal views, the greater democratic process is in place to help guide us through challenges so that, as a small community, we move forward with a positive lens, and focus on the mission of our club. When we grow and move forward, we are striving to serve the members of this music community - our Bluegrass family!

There is an unsung list of volunteers that help our club in many ways, for example at our concerts (greeting, serving, setting up, tearing down and cleaning), or at the Guitar Sale (setting up, greeting, serving, tearing down, cleaning), or hosting Bluegrass 101 (THANK YOU Darcy Whiteside) or trade shows, or sending out the Bluegrass 101 song sheets and a nice little message update (THANK YOU Karen Trace). I found, like many others, that as I discovered that I loved to be involved with a great group of people doing something fun, that other opportunities began to open up too, it's been a lot of fun.

Thank you to each member of this community for making our group all that it is. We're looking forward to our opportunity to get together once again, and won't we have fun!??

## Farewell and Thank-you!

At the very root of our existence as a music community, is the opportunity for people to share with each other. Exciting evolutions and events tend to happen when passionate people get involved. New people bring new ideas and on we go, so by nature we will continue to see change in the club. We aren't here forever and must allow others to share their shoulders and vision. The legacy of service is a badge of honour for all, and especially for those that have served the club through their volunteer duties.

Stewardship is an essential quality for all folks leading all organizations and the enthusiasm in this aspect of service to the club was strongly evident amongst all of our very own members as they provided their service in various positions and to the club board and through sharing of their valuable opinions. This past AGM we again saw change in several roles within the executive board structure. From that post we say farewell, thank you and see you soon to our now:

- Past President Scott Degen
- Past Secretary Robert Leitch
- Past Treasurer Diana Stanford (new role)
- Past Website Director Shawn Robinson
- Past Membership Director Pamela Johnson
- Past Equipment Director Howard Bergeron
- Past Directors at Large Donna-Mae Mohrmann
- Director at Large Mark McHale (has taken another post)
- Director at Large Daryl Reneau (has also taken another post)

## Messages from some outgoing Board Members:

### **Shawn Robinson:**

I've served on the NBCMS board under three presidents (Carolyn Hotte, Ron Mercer, and Scott Degen).

My posts on the club board were:

2011 - 2014 Website Director (took over from Noel McNaughton)

2014 - 2018 Membership Director + Website Director

2019 - 2020 Advertising Director + Website Director

I introduced the board to google groups to manage our board communications and history of conversations. I added online payments and registration for concert ticket sales, memberships, and workshop. Over the years I have also maintained the club Membership and Treasury laptops and applications. I've also answered the [info@bluegrassnorth.com](mailto:info@bluegrassnorth.com) email address forwarding queries to the various directors. As a board member, I've volunteered to represent the club at Bluegrass concert venues (Steep Canyon Rangers, Blueberry Bluegrass Festival), Edmonton Guitar Show, and the various club concerts and events. We added [nbcms.ca](http://nbcms.ca) to our website in 2015 to provide another way for members to find us.

I continue to enjoy the musical friendships I've made at the club, and look forward to jamming together again as much as possible!

I'm glad that I've been able support the club over the years, as it's provided a lot for me ; from that first time I came in and saw dozens of musicians playing in a Bluegrass Circle- together enjoying what I struggled with at home alone!

The club has helped to provide me with inspiration to work on skills and repertoire, to learn fiddle tunes and standards taught so patiently by Augie Hangartner in the basement, and most of all the opportunity to enjoy the weekly jams.

editors note: Shawn is usually the first to start / join and also usually the last to leave the NBCMS jam circles.

## Messages from some outgoing Board Members:

**Bob Leitch:** As far as the Board goes, I did enjoy the time I spent on Board activities. Certainly I met and got to know better a number of great people. Have you been able to watch some of Darcy's BG 101 on Wednesday evenings? Emily and I catch most of them. Last year he recommended the use of some recording software called "Audacity". Its free and can be down loaded easily. It's an amazing way to practice harmonies. In any case I've attached a copy of my version of "Hickory Wind" which Darcy presented in January. I had never heard of the song before but it has some great harmonies. In this case I recorded the rhythm guitar and lead singing on the first track with one pass, and then the harmony portion along with some guitar picking on the second track, also in one pass. It has lots of mistakes but for me it represents a huge amount of progress over the last year. Can't wait to get back to some live jamming.

editors note: I've enjoyed working with Bob over the past couple of years. I've been impressed by his diligence around the administrative needs of the club in both the current time period and into the future. Bob's contributions have left us in good stead with respect to the administrative focus of the club. I asked Bob if he wished to publish anything and he mostly declined, although I was able to convince him to allow me to publish a sound wave file that he produced while working up 'Hickory Wind' as introduced in Bluegrass 101 by Darcy. I'm attaching it here because I feel it's very well done, much like Bob's work on behalf of the club.

**Donna Mae Mohrmann:** Nice to hear from you Greg, and you are very kind to say 'thank you' as I feel I didn't really do anything :-). I too look forward to getting together and sharing music again at Pleasantview - it just isn't the same practising on one's own.

I miss Darcy in person and all his little tidbits of info. Hopefully the 'in person' is coming in the next few months or so... I'm still loving the bass, it's a wonderful instrument but oh so demanding physically. I am fully recovered but now spending most of my time learning clawhammer, old-time style banjo which I am loving. As Anna once said "the banjo finds you"!!!

Not sure how much I've really contributed to the Club Greg, and it is really a shame that my time just doesn't permit continuing in the role as Member at Large. My thoughts on that position of could be likened to 'invisible ears and eyes' - just kinda' listening and keeping a finger on the pulse of what the Club is thinking and doing. It's such a great past time, and am looking forward to retirement in a year or two so as to dedicate much more time to it!

As for a well-functioning Board Greg, I think the most important thing is to be a good listener and respect all points of view, on all matters. When we've got Board members that have been in the Club and on the Board probably since inception, and then brand new members/Board members, one needs to keep an open mind. It's a balancing act of experience and breaking new ground! In the end it's all about respecting others, even if opinions don't align with one's own. And complete transparency.

I think the Board last year had good intentions for the betterment of the club as a whole. People need to feel free to question in an open dialogue so the right decisions can be made for the betterment of the Club as a whole. Some times, particularly for new board members, it's just a matter of trying to get a clear picture of what is going on! And people need to understand what has transpired in the past, and reasons for past decisions, so as to move forward and just understand.

**Scott Degen:** It has been an absolute honour to serve as President of the NBCMS and a privilege to work with the wonderful people on our board these past couple of years, all the best in the years to come!

## Message to outgoing Board Members:

The past year has been a challenging one for us all, with just our day to day lives as they became complicated by work and adaptations to maintain our family ties and our community interactions. In many ways this time has taken from us and the same is true when considering the opportunity that we as board members would have had if normal life had prevailed during our terms in those roles.

The COVID strategy for many only increased the demands on their busy selves making the reality of being a volunteer experiencing an enjoyable opportunity in a rich and engaging community sometimes a struggle. When a musician realizes this experience it's even worse because we all know how we can be our own most harsh, least objective critic...

But there are real rewards even through the limited opportunities that we've had. We've seen our membership become fortified in a year when we would expect to have none. We've seen our membership come together by modified means and enjoy community interaction and learning opportunities. We've seen our rental agreement change at Pleasantview for the better (more on that later). We've seen our second club website come into fruition (there will be a third!). We've seen the club partner with new club friends. We hosted our annual Christmas Party in everyone's very own home. We've seen the club discover and evolve by means that allows us to engage members from both near and far, means that will likely continue and evolve well into the future.

These accomplishments happened while each of us were part of the club board. As board members, we each had a voice and the opportunity to be involved with the evolution of each of these real things. We are now a better club thanks to each of your personal contributions to the wellness of this community, your respect for the club and each other. We are better for the continuing effort through difficult times. This is in no way a small thing and apart from the defined responsibilities of each role, the voice that each member brought was the greatest contribution of all as they shared their hearts and experiences. Thus, we say thanks to all.

## Welcome and Thank-you!

To the current board members, both new and returning, we say "Welcome and thank you for your commitment of service to the NBCMS and our community". The present board structure is:

### Executive:

President Carolyn Hotte  
Vice-President Cameron Yule  
Secretary Diana Stanford  
Treasurer Maureen Winter

### Directors:

Front of House Terry Ruddy  
Workshop Anna Somerville  
Concerts Grant Symons  
Website Mark McHale & Daryl Reneau  
Newsletter Greg Winter  
Director at Large Robert Leckie  
Director at Large Kayla Hotte  
Membership vacant  
Advertising vacant  
Equipment vacant

**MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT CAROLYN HOTTE:**

Greetings Everyone, I'm back in the President seat for 2021. If you know me, I have been around a while. If you don't, I have been on the NBCMS board off and on mostly on since 1998. My kids were raised at the circle. On February 10th we held our Annual AGM & Board election, 32 people joined us via Zoom. We had some great conversations.

I look forward to taking on the President's role once again. The 2021 Board has some changes with a few members staying on or switching positions. Concert Director-Grant Symons, Front of House Director-Terry Ruddy, Newsletter Director-Greg Winter, President-Carolyn Hotte, Secretary-Diana Stanford, Website Directors-Daryl Reneau & Mark McHale and Workshop Director-Anna Somerville. I extend a "Welcome to the Board" to Cameron Yule Vice-president, Maureen Winter Treasurer, and Robert Leckie and Kayla Hotte Directors at Large, I look forward to see what we can accomplish together.

Let's take a moment to say goodbye and thank you to Scott Degen (President), Shawn Robinson (Website Director), Howie Bergeron (Equipment Director), Pamela Johnson (Membership & Merchandise Director) and Donna Mae Mohrmann (Director at Large) it has been a pleasure working with you. We send you our best wishes in your future endeavours.

There are a few vacant Board position. If you have an interest in serving your community please visit our website to see if one of the positions fits you.

Have you seen our new Website? It is fantastic - a fresh new look and easy to navigate. A big THANK YOU to Kenny Mak Designs for helping us get it updated and launched. Check it out if you have not seen it yet. [www.bluegrassnorth.com](http://www.bluegrassnorth.com)

This past year has been a real learning curve for all of us and if we think of what we were doing last year it seems like we have been living in a dream. We want to see everyone and get to jamming again and we believe this will be coming soon. I want us to wake up from this stronger and more connected. We want to keep our membership active and provide incentives to keep us engaged. Let's keep our communications and community moving forward. This year the executive wants to give you what you want. Let us know how we can assist you. Workshop ideas or lessons. We would love to help you with your wants. Probably they will be virtual for a while yet but we have an entire world of artists and mentors to choose from. Let's dream big.

When we are able to jam again, let's have a party following the rules of course and celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 25 years ago, a group of like-minded people got together to form the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society, that I am proud to be part of. I personally would like to see it grow and survive another 25 years. I love the community and fellowship; I've made some amazing friends over the years and have truly enjoyed being part of the NBCMS. I guess that's why I am still involved. I would love my grandkids to experience what my kids Kayla and Matt did from being a member of our club. Thank you to George Bayard, Willy Arsenaault, Carol Newlove, Jim Storey, Windi Scott, Jack Stout, Ian Van Dusen, and Susan & Don Frank for your community building vision to form a club for us to belong to.

Stay Safe, Carolyn

## Let's get to know each other...

One great thing about meeting new people is getting to know each other and then discovering the wonderful things that person brings from their lifetime of involvement with others.

At our Annual General Meeting, our new Treasurer Maureen Winter sent out a little homework in the form of a team building exercise. We had to answer 3 questions and be prepared to share those answers with the group at our Board Retreat held via Zoom on March 7, 2021. This simple activity caused each board member to have their voice heard in the first minutes of the Retreat and allowed us to share some laughs while we were busy building the community of our new Board.

I imagine you're wondering what those questions and answers were, and thus with the intent of helping you to get to know your club board members a little better, here they are:

### Questions:

1. What song(s) are you currently working on?
2. What is your instrument of choice?
3. If you could play an instrument perfectly tomorrow, what instrument would you choose?

### Answers:

#### **President Carolyn Hotte:**

1. 'No One to Walk Me Home'
2. Guitar
3. Mandolin

#### **Vice-President Cameron (Cam) Yule:**

1. 'Call Me Long Gone'
2. Electric Bass, Mandolin
3. Euphonium

#### **Treasurer Maureen (Mo) Winter:**

1. 'You Ain't Goin' Nowhere' -Bob Dylan
2. Acoustic Bass Guitar
3. Dobro (and LEAD GUITAR)

#### **Secretary Diana Stanford:**

1. 'All I Ever Loved Was You' -Blue Mafia
2. Fiddle
3. Banjo

#### **Front of House Director Terry Ruddy:**

1. 'It Takes One to Know One'
2. Acoustic Bass
3. Fiddle (and SINGING!)

#### **Workshop Director Anna Somerville:**

1. 'Landslide' -Stevie Nicks
2. Guitar, Mandolin, Piano, Flute
3. Mandolin (and SINGING and TAPDANCING)

#### **Newsletter Director Greg Winter:**

1. 'Dark Angel' -Blue Rodeo and 'I'm Gonna Sleep With One Eye Open' -Thile & Daves
2. Piano, Guitar and a little woodshed Tenor Saxophone
3. Piano

#### **Concerts Director Grant Symonds:**

1. 'Tennessee Waltz'
2. Mandolin, Guitar
3. Mandolin (and FIDDLE)

#### **Co-Website Director Mark McHale:**

1. 'Coming Down from Rising Fawn'
2. Mandolin, Bass, Guitar
3. Fiddle

#### **Co-Website Director Daryl Renaud:**

1. 'Buck Fever Rag' -Fiddle Song
2. Guitar, Fiddle
3. Banjo

#### **Director at Large Robert Leckie:**

1. 'St. Anne's Reel'
2. Five String Banjo
3. Mandolin

#### **Director at Large Kayla Hotte:**

1. 'Don't Sell Daddy Anymore Whiskey' -Maddy O'Neill
2. Guitar, Mandolin, Fiddle, Piano
3. Fiddle

# Fall Acoustic Music Workshop

When Anna mentioned to me that she was putting on a Fall Acoustic Music Workshop via Zoom last fall, my eyebrows had become quite unruly due to the barbershop lockdowns and a general lack of maintenance. They were long and out of control and I could really raise ‘em if you know what I mean... the wind could whip ‘em around and make ‘em swirl. I tried to say to Anna that I wasn’t sure how well that would work because I had a bit of an attitude towards Zoom, but Anna had a vision.

I attended the workshop and became rapidly delighted with the opportunities to attend the wide variety of sessions that included insights from Instructors speaking globally about music and then diving into specifics of their instrument. I gained musically from each Teacher despite only playing Bluegrass guitar.

I also got to see many Bluegrass friends that I’ve shared experiences with over the years. My world is expanding and so is my respect for Zoom as a format for gatherings right now. I anticipate that as with most things, we can expect better from Zoom in the future.

At the end of the workshops that I’ve attended in person in the past, I’ve experienced joy and fulfillment right alongside the conflicting emotions of sadness and a little grief too as things came to a close. Last fall’s workshop provided that for me too.

The crazy thing is that the success of last fall’s workshop which allowed for participants from near and far, and artist instructors that didn’t have to cross a border, also allowed for discovery of how far reaching the potential for this type of offering could be and how it could become an aspect of how we do things and perhaps even achieve growth as a club by doing things a little differently into the future after we’re back to normal.

I think that while the entire Workshop provided the opportunity to re-connect with our extended Bluegrass family, it also provided musical enrichment.

Thank you to all and I’ve got to say that Calvin Vollrath was a standout for me, his guitar backup to fiddle workshop was amazing and is for sale on Calvin’s website.

			
<b>Alan Bibey</b> MONROE MANDOLIN Saturday...	<b>Claire Lynch</b> SONGWRITING Saturday...	<b>Tim Stafford</b> SONGWRITING Sunday...	<b>Jim Hurst</b> GUITAR Saturday...
			
<b>Scott Nygaard</b> GUITAR Sunday...	<b>Calvin Vollrath</b> FIDDLE Friday...	<b>Joe Walsh</b> DAWG MANDOLIN Saturday...	<b>Jeff Scroggins</b> BANJO Sunday...
			
<b>Mike Witcher</b> DOBRO Sunday...	<b>Jeremy &amp; Corrina</b> Traditional Brother- Style and Bluegrass...	<b>Bruce Molsky</b> CLAWHAMMER Saturday...	<b>Annie Savage</b> FIDDLE Saturday...
			
<b>Tim Stafford</b> GUITAR Sunday...	<b>Calvin Vollrath</b> GUITAR BACKING UP FIDDLE...	<b>Jenny Lester</b> INTRODUCTION TO JAMMING...	<b>Joe &amp; Scott</b> SOLOING & IMPROVISING Saturda...

Each Instructor provided some special insights to their instruments and their craft, as well as to the music we love. I believe I speak for all participants as I say thanks and stay connected to Alan Bibey, Claire Lynch, Tim Stafford, Jim Hurst, Scott Nygaard, Calvin Vollrath, Joe Walsh, Jeff Scroggins, Mike Witcher, Jeremy Stephens & Corrina Logston, Bruce Molsky, Annie Savage & Jenny Lester. You have provided us with warmth through connection at the same time you’ve provided musical enrichment and fulfillment in a time of isolation. Hard things to measure, but palpable for all nonetheless.



## We have a new website!

Perhaps you may not often go to the NBCMS website, or perhaps you visit it every day. Perhaps you are a person that only goes to the website when you want to sign up for a workshop or jam camp. Regardless of who you are or how you might use the website, you will notice a change. In fact, the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society website has been operating under the name of the club on the old website address of [www.bluegrassnorth.com](http://www.bluegrassnorth.com) for over 15 years, and that domain remains the location of the new website.

I imagine that the club went through some growing pains around the initial website, as at a point in time we may have looked upon that as not really 'essential' to what the club needs. In those early days, I would expect that there were board members that promoted the value of a website against the ongoing costs and burden to the club finances. I would also imagine some passion filled debates on both sides of that argument. I would also imagine that realizing their goal was likely like checking a task off the 'to-do list'.

In recent years it became apparent to some members of our board that the club should upgrade the website so that would be more effective tool to support the club's mission statement of "Promoting, Presenting, and Preserving Bluegrass Music". Some board members argued that a more modern image and more functional website would facilitate the view of a progressive and energetic club while reducing the burden of organizing and promoting club events and pulling timely data from the website. Other board members argued that the costs were too great.

Now I'm no IT professional, but at unmentionable personal peril I crept close and peered over the edge into the website abyss. I discovered that websites typically have a life span of 5 - 10 years. That lifespan is determined by changes in technology and changes in the operational needs of the organization that hosts the website. So by that criteria alone I say "WELL DONE" to our initial website and the credit for that achievement alone, and the day to day maintenance mostly rests with Shawn Robinson.

We chose to preview a new website built by designer Kenny Mak (an NBCMS member experienced with website design in this area) and were shown a website with a fresh new look. We were told that it could be a more powerful tool for the Workshop and Concert Directors. It could serve a stronger role in membership, marketing, and event promotion. The focused discussion was helpful to board members that were trying to navigate the dark waters of working with what we've got or upgrading to a new website.

The discovery was that we couldn't balance the ideals of fiscal stagnation and an upgraded website for the club, although we did recognize that from an expense perspective, this was perhaps the best time to invest in this process. Our club expenses are down due to COVID in several areas and the savings were mentioned as monies that could (without affecting the anticipated bottom line) be re-directed to the website upgrade expense.

The challenge for the board became to move responsibly in the direction of maintaining the best interests of the club while respecting our mission statement and the democratic process. This single event focused our attention on the importance of respect and quality communication and were highlighted as essential elements in the struggle to maintain respect and achieve the best outcomes for the club.

For a music club, one can easily see that sound equipment and lighting (along with computers to run the club) are tools required to do the job. The NBCMS website is another one of those tools which, with the recent upgrade, will serve the club well into the future. Eventually this too will be required to be replaced with an upgraded version. So if periodic upgrades are required, as I see it, we would be responsible to life cycle assets through our budget that need replacing into the future, including this website.

As we struggled through the process of getting this done, our board experienced some polarizing forces that we would all have preferred were not present. I would like to offer one statement that hopefully unifies us by recognizing that we are all well intentioned members of the same community, that we enjoy many of the same things and that we each need certain but different things to fulfill our roles in serving the club (and each other) well, if there's an opportunity to share and help it's an opportunity for all.

**GO CHECK OUT [www.bluegrassnorth.com](http://www.bluegrassnorth.com) or GOOGLE SEARCH 'NBCMS'** then you can bookmark our new website as a favourite page, or perhaps your home logon screen.

**MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE FROM YOUR CLUB PRESIDENT:***President Carolyn Hotte*

“Thank you to George Bayard and to all of the founding members of the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society. It's been a momentous 25 years. Many friendships and family ties have been made around the circle. Plenty of people passed through the doors and enjoyed playing music or having a visit together. Well done, my friends! Is this what you envisioned when you started the club? The NBCMS has been a huge part of “the Hottes” lives and to everyone who has been part of it over the 25 years I thank you for your commitment and community.”

- Carolyn Hotte, President

## 25 years of community and sharing...



*George Bayard with his 5 string banjo circa 1996*

Reflecting back 25 years with George Bayard “Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society EST 1996 Edmonton, Alberta” reprinted from Facebook

“Touching on some history how it started: I'd been playing 5-string banjo since mid 70's. During this time, I jammed with friends at the Fiddlers and Folk Societies. In 1994 we started using the Fiddlers Roost as a source venue for jamming. Many different groups came to jam, mostly bluegrass enthusiasts. In 1995 during a group get together people

mentioned an interest in forming a Bluegrass Society. As the interest progressed, I decided to do the ground work to form a Society which included submitting legal documents, forming a committee, developing a Mission Statement, etc.

The original members and committee were really the impetus that propelled the Society which was approved in 1996. I could not have moved forward without their help. Many thanks! For more info, please visit the society web page. Thank you. “- George Bayard

Club web page [www.bluegrassnorth.com](http://www.bluegrassnorth.com)

### Conversations with George:

**Larry Roth:** George, was Larry Seutter around then?

**George Bayard:** I remember Larry very well; he was a staunch supporter not only of our club but he always came to play at jams so a great participator. I always appreciated Larry's support.

**Larry Roth:** Larry Seutter and I were very close friends and played many years together.

**Sheila Hallett:** My family and I have benefited immensely from the club you guys formed.

Thank you for your dedication to Bluegrass.

**George Bayard:** Thanks Sheila, the best part about the club was the bond formed between club members, families, and friends over the years which I call the "Bluegrass Family" and my dedication was a joy over the years. I was very glad I had a small part in witnessing all the bands, friendships, and family participation that the club produced. So, in retrospect I have to thank you Sheila, your family and everyone involved for their dedication to Bluegrass.



Take Me in Your Life Boat Flatt & Scruggs. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFMbmJ7Sovo>

---

**CONVERSATIONS WITH GEORGE BAYARD CONTINUED:**

**Jeannette Sinclair:** Good to know about the early history of the bluegrass circle in Edmonton. It provided a great place for Sheila and I to go to for weekly jams. You were always a great leader George -- friendly, welcoming and always a smile especially pickin' so well on your banjo. By the way our family also appreciated the many times you jammed with us out at Blueberry Bluegrass Festival--we had lots of fun over the years! Always appreciated all that you gave to build a strong foundation of bluegrassers in the city & yes, very much like a family!

**George Bayard:** Hi Jeannette, I really enjoyed playing with you, your parents, and all the pickers and singers at the Blueberry Festival around the campfire. Your mother, never held back or was shy about playing and singing and your dad was just a great person. Always had a joke or 10 up his sleeve. Honestly, I enjoyed those campfire jams a lot. Fun times I'll never forget. I thank you and your family for being apart of the NBCMS over the years, it made anything I did a lot more fun and enjoyable

**Carolyn Hotte:** George all my family and our "Bluegrass Family" are very thankful for the insights you had for getting this club going Cheers to 25 years of jamming.

**George Bayard:** Hi Carolyn, I can't thank you enough for stepping in to support and contribute to the club as a board member and musician. You helped push the club to the next level. You had the tenacity to take the club reigns and did fantastic work as President. In fact, all the board members did an exceptional job as well. Have to mention as well how much your family has contributed to club with their talent. Always appreciated Cheers!!

**Denise M Arsenault:** George I believe that Willy was one of the first ones to join you in starting the club.

**George Bayard:** Absolutely Denise, both you, Willy and all the 1st original committee were the benchmark of NBCMS. Willy did a great job in helping form the 1st NBCMS house band and that took a lot of work. All the practices, organizing the open stage nights at the Roost and finding other venues to promote our club was taxing at times. I enjoyed playing in the house band with Willy too, pretty great fiddle playing. Main thing was that it was always was fun. I appreciate both of you for the help you provided. Made my work so much easier.

**Doug Ritchie:** Thank you, George. It changed my life for sure.

**George Bayard:** Thank you, Doug, you have always been a supporter of the club and very much appreciated!

**Craig Korth:** Hi George. I remember you teaching me a banjo lesson around 1975 at the House of Banjo. From what I recall, my teacher wasn't there and you substituted for him. I really was in awe of you that night.

**George Bayard:** OMG, yes, I remember I subbed for "Damn, his name slips my mind". Alfie hired me on to teach back then. I was pretty new and nervous myself since I'd never taught banjo before, lol. I had an idea though back then that you were a serious musician Craig, and you turned out to be one of the best. Jerusalem Ridge was a very good band esp. with your musicianship. Well, it was only 1 lesson but I'm glad I made even a small impression. Thanks Craig.

**George Bayard:** I remember Don quite well and you might be right but there was another teacher that I was thinking of. Prob the best person to ask would be Craig Korth. Thanks, though Ken. Oh, I thought it might have been Ernie Nelson but again I might be wrong lol

**Craig Korth:** Gary West was my teacher I'm pretty sure when you subbed for him.

**George Bayard:** Ahh

**CONVERSATIONS WITH GEORGE BAYARD CONTINUED:**

**Carolyn Hotte:** I love this conversation. Look for it in the next NBCMS newsletter. George do you have a picture of you way back when?

**George Bayard:** The picture I liked was from a newspaper with Chuck Skinner and Wally Tyrluk, I know it ended up with Blueberry, could you check with them? I don't have a copy and I don't have too many pics myself; I'd have to dig around. I know there were a bunch of pics from playing on stage as well, but don't have those either.

**Carolyn Hotte:** Denise thought she may have one too.

**George Bayard:** I was thinking if there were any archived newsletters available in the late 90's I know I was in a few of them too.

**George Bayard:** Wow this thread is getting pretty long, lol Love it...

**Carolyn Hotte:** You all started a great community!



*The Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society proudly presents "The Bluegrass Gentlemen" back row George Bayard banjo, Wally Tylik fiddle, Ron Mercer bass, front row Rob Baker mandolin and Chuck Skinner guitar*

**Lance Arnell:** Wally Tylik's wife Helen had that picture, of him, Chuck and some others

I seen it a few times. It was always a chore getting Wally down the stairs to the Fiddlers Roost.

**George Bayard:** Yeah, I miss Wally and Chuck, they absolutely loved and supported Bluegrass. Wally always liked playing at the Roost, he had a tuff time getting back up those stairs too. He had that personality that rubbed off on you, always cracking jokes. He was a pretty big man and had heart to match. As for Chuck Skinner, I'm sure most know his involvement with the Blueberry Bluegrass Festival, as he was on the original committee. I remember playing at one of the first festivals with our band, The Bluegrass Gentlemen and it was held at a farm near Spruce Grove. Great times Lance.

**George Bayard:** God, I don't even remember this picture, Thanks for digging it up Carolyn, much appreciated!

**Craig Korth:** I subbed on banjo in your band when they played Chetwynd Bluegrass Festival in 1985

**Calvin Vollrath:** George, I remember you playing banjo in some music store in The Centennial Mall in Edmonton, west end Edmonton in the



## The Blueberry 20 in 20

A visit with Anna Somerville the President of the Blueberry Bluegrass Festival will confirm for you that she is concerned about the Bluegrass community as a whole. She was looking ahead and wondering if, when these current restrictions are lifted, there will be a community anxiously returning to all Bluegrass related things. In discussions between Anna and her circle of Bluegrass connections about the state of expired memberships for most clubs, they brainstormed initiatives to bring the membership back. This is where the 20 in 20 Workshop Series was born. For 20 mostly consecutive weeks we've shared Thursday evenings with exceptional Artist hosts that have taken us on delightful dives into their craft as they've shared their knowledge and skills showing us how they weave themselves into the web of music. This single initiative spurred a rush on memberships with NBCMS that had our Membership Director Pamela Johnson suddenly whelmed with a surge of club seekers! The following from Anna:

### **A good idea?**

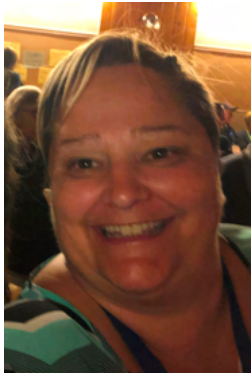
You bet, over 400 people signed up for the workshops by taking out a membership or donating to a club of their choice. The only way to get the free weekly links from Blueberry was to have an active membership with one or more of the sixteen participating clubs. The impact on the participating clubs was positive. The free workshops provided these clubs with a way to stay connected to their membership. Each week 120 – 160 people showed up to find out more about the workshop presenter.

### **Any surprises?**

We ended up building an online community. That was an unexpected, pleasant surprise. The workshop brought in people from across Canada and the US. Friendships have grown and networks, not available pre-covid, have sprung up. Organizers from clubs across Canada have had a chance to get to know one another. The benefit too, is that is we can better represent our communities if we work together to support one another. The sharing of experience and ideas between clubs has started. Plans are being made between clubs on how to support initiatives. We are sharing. This is an unexpected consequence. The zoom platform has allowed us to get to know one another and offer resources and experience to each other. I see a lot of collaboration across Canada in the future. Another unexpected consequence is exposure. Word started circulating about the calibre of workshop presenters. Musicians from other genres started tuning in to find out more. The consequences of that have been very interesting. Where once bluegrass was dismissed by some, they now find themselves discovering the high level of musicianship that populates bluegrass music. It will be interesting to see if the bridges built from the 20 in 20 workshops can be maintained.

### **Was the Blueberry 20 in 20 a success?**

Yes and No. There was a strong turnout for the workshops from people who play an instrument but what about the "lawn chair" crowd? What's been happening, during covid, for the people who don't play music but support live performances. How are all those loyal fans who never failed to show up to events. Those people look to presenters to provide them with their entertainment. What has been happening for them during covid? We were hoping that they would see the 20 in 20 workshops as an opportunity to get to know the performers in a different, more personal way. I feel the workshops didn't take care of the lawn chair people, the fans. If we do this sort of workshop again, we will have to make it more appealing to the fans AND the musicians. What is the point of a festival or event without the appreciative, supportive audience.

**JUST ONE EXPERIENCE...**

*The bright smiling face of Debbie Baich at the Fall Acoustic Music Workshop at Camp He Ho Ha in 2018*

Last fall I received an article from Debbie Baich of Rocky Mountain House within which she describes the fulfillment she experiences through her NBCMS club activities:

**Thankful for the NBCMS in the time of Pandemic**

One day when I was 25 and just finished university, I sat out camping with good friends listening to their parents play songs around the fire under the stars. I decided right there and then I wanted to learn guitar. No one in my family is musical. I think my grandfather played fiddle when he was in his 20's and one day we found it under the basement stairs the story came out that my uncle took music lessons on the fiddle to keep him out of trouble as he had been playing baseball and broke a car windshield. Yup music lessons were a bit of a form of punishment. I think that day he tried to play "Mary Had a Little Lamb" -lol. For me, to decide to take music lessons was a big deal. I had little to no encouragement from my family, my Dad asked me once after taking lessons for a while if that was all I could do and to get a bit better before I played for anyone.

I don't remember exactly when but, finding Bluegrass has been wonderful. I love how everyone at any skill level is included and made to feel welcome. I like how many events there are to attend through the year to meet new people and I really enjoy the intimate concerts. I love, love, love the camps where you can take lessons, Jam all night, make new friends and play all day.

I cannot express in words how much music has healed me, inspired me, grown me and blessed me. Looking back when I first started let me tell you I was no star. I was so pleased that I could pick "This Old Man He Had Two" that I played it for a girlfriend. I will always treasure that she was supportive and was kind to me - seriously I was a true beginner in every sense!

Fast forward to three summers ago; our regular Church musician left on holidays and we had no music Saturday nights at mass, it was strange and uncomfortable. Three little old ladies opened up the hymn book and sang in the pew trying to find hymns to sing before mass started, it was kinda sad.

Well I decided to take a leap and find out if just *anyone* could play, what I needed to play at the *bare minimum* and how to sign up. Well I figured if I can stand up at band camp with people I met Friday night and play for a crowded room full of musicians on Saturday night, then I can certainly play 4 songs for Church on a mostly empty Saturday night; while our regular musician is on holidays. Yes it was very intimidating don't get me wrong - but I did it!

Mass at Church it was very intimidating - traditional Catholic church and let me tell you - there are chords in the Catholic Hymn book I had never seen before. I scoured our hymn book for songs that I knew well enough to sing and with simple chords that I could play -this was no easy task Catholic hymn books were certainly not written for bluegrass guitar. I googled hymnals and watched a million YouTube videos. I ordered guitar books on line from Universal Church Supplies in Edmonton and spent most of the winter practicing. I am ever so thankful for the lessons and support I have received through the NBCMS and when there was a society in Red Deer.

The first time at church I played "**Just a Closer Walk With Thee**" - my inspiration was from NBCMS fall camp. I may have listened to Doni Heaton's version on 'Chasin Dreams' a 1000 times. Don't ask me what year that was but I bought their cd. By no means am I nearly as fantastic as they are. Just saying they inspired me. Father thanked me for playing and asked if the congregation would like me to continue... there was a huge round of applause! Now that was the best reward I have ever received in my whole life! I guess it sounded ok. I am so ultimately thankful for all of the help and encouragement people have given me. This certainly would not be possible without the NBCMS.

We have some pretty traditional church members and my songs were not all from the Green hymnal just ones I could play and sing to. Leading a congregation in song is beautiful and very rewarding. You realize if you are too fast or too slow almost immediately when everyone is singing. Sometimes I stop singing and listen - for just a moment...it is so beautiful when a room full of people sing together!

**JUST ONE EXPERIENCE...**



*Bandsramble or Student Concert performance? We're not sure but onstage with Debbie Baich are Collette Fluet-Howrish on guitar, Ralph Lange on bass, and Diana Stanford on fiddle at the Fall Acoustic Music Workshop in 2018*

I guess singing is what I am missing most during the Covid or the Corona as my son calls it. As of today we are still not allowed to sing at church. Last night I was listening to a lecture as part of a bible study; and Dr. Mary Healy said that online searches for God, Bible Studies, and prayer has dramatically increased during this Covid Pandemic and so I started thinking about my little Bluegrass Sunday songbook. That is what I call my collection of songs that I have figured out and sometimes play for church mass.

There are so many beautiful songs that are hopeful and inspiring and not even Catholic. I even played a song the other day on FB for a close family friend as she couldn't have a funeral for her husband of over 60 years. I thought if I was at that funeral this – "The Farside Banks of Jordan" – val story; is the song I would have heard and of course I played "Just a Closer Walk With Thee". On the outside of my Binder I have a little quote one of the ladies from Church told me "To Sing is to Pray Twice" – St. Augustine.

If you need a little pick me up during these crazy times here is a little Gem that helped me and blessed me. Thank you NBCMS! - Debbie Baich

**Just a Closer Walk with Thee (4/4)**

lyrics by Martha J. Lankton (Fanny Crosby) published in 1885

**G Am D G**  
 I am weak but Thou art strong. Jesus, keep me from all wrong.  
**C G D G**  
 I'll be satisfied as long as I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

**G Am D G**  
*Just a close walk with Thee. Grant it, Jesus is my plea.*  
**C G D G**  
*Daily walking close to Thee, Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*

**G Am D G**  
 Through this world of toil and snares, If I falter, Lord who cares?  
**C G D G**  
 Who with me my burden shares? None but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.

**Repeat Chorus**

**G Am D G**  
 When my feeble life is o'er, Time for me will be no more.  
**C G D G**  
 Guide me gently, safely o'er to Thy kingdom shore, to Thy shore.

**Repeat Chorus**

**MESSAGE FROM YOUR EDITOR:**



It's been interesting to watch my evolution of behaviour (attitude) toward Zoom as a means of participating in anything group related that's safe and fun. There may be other means but this is the one that's at the root of the stuff I've been doing. For some strange reason, I was reserved and thinking that Zoom 'wouldn't work' because it couldn't handle simultaneous speakers well or the back and forth as you sometimes see in debate. Yet, after many opportunities to use Zoom to watch a performance, or participate in a workshop, or attend a meeting, or attend events that are being put on by other clubs or organizations I'm seeing people enjoying each other's company and using Zoom in a new ways. Most significantly, I'm seeing people seeing opportunities available through Zoom that are inspiring them to establish or re-establish relationships that will bring access to opportunities outside of their normal audience. It's creative opportunity opportunism!

On Monday March 15th, the members of the NBCMS had the opportunity extended to them via e-mail to join the members of the Pacific Bluegrass Club through

Zoom. The event was a slo jam hosted by Sue Malcolm, who leads a real fun play and sing slo pitch jam. The jam had about 10 tunes that were introduced by Sue as she told what key, the tempo and the reduced tempo, the chord structure, and the verse / chorus structure of the tune. Sue played guitar and banjo on the final tune.

We had the opportunity to attend our first event with the Pacific Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Society on Monday March 1st, 2021. This opportunity came about through interest and a sponsorship that allowed our members to experience Sue Malcolm's Slo-Jam. That night there were 31 participants from NBCMS that got to participate in 10 songs led by Sue at a reduced tempo. This was fun and a refreshing 'fieldtrip' allowing us to participate in a facilitated slow jam. Let's see how this catches on with our members. It sure sounds good and it's exciting to do things with others!

On another note, COVID and the lack of use of Pleasantview created the need for negotiation of our rental agreement. President Scott Degen lead this process and in the end had some of our rental costs credited back and an increase in our use of the facility when we return! We will now have the use of the main area, the basement and the adjacent Marshall Centre which I'm officially nick naming 'the Woodshed'.

The desire to stay in touch seems to be strong with most of us. On Sunday March 21st, 2021 Carolyn Hotte hosted a Zoom Covid Coffee Checkin. This was a nice way to see some faces we all know and to share a story or two over a

CKUA's The Bluegrass Hour -hosted by our very own Darcy Whiteside plays a classic mix of Bluegrass and Old Time music spanning approximately 60 years of the genres. "I try to introduce bands from all over the world... stuff you've never heard before but hopefully will enjoy."

Darcy brings a variety of music coupled with an insightful focus on some of the history of this passion inspiring music.

The Bluegrass Hour can be heard Sundays 12 - 1 p.m. and Mondays 4 - 5 a.m. at 94.9 in Edmonton and area.

Calgary 93.7

Red Deer 107.7

Edson 103.7 Hinton 102.5

Whitecourt 107.1 Grande Prairie 100.9 Spirit River 99.5

Peace River 96.9

Athabasca 98.3 Fort McMurray 96.7 Lloydminster 97.5

Canmore Bow Valley 104.3

Drumheller Hanna 91.3 Medicine Hat 97.3 Lethbridge 99.3





**BLUEGRASS 101:**

**A new song each week!**

**A focus on where the tune comes from, who has recorded it, what version we are devoting our time to learning, rhythmic accompaniment at a reduced tempo, opportunities for lead playing, and singing in 2 and 3 part harmonies!**

**The most fun you will have outside a live jam!**



*Come online to join Darcy Whiteside on Facebook or YouTube every Wednesday evening and stay connected with our Club members and focus on a new tune each week during Bluegrass 101.*

**FIELDTRIPS!**

Who can recognize an opportunity better than people? The Zoom collaboration of folks from many different music clubs with many different musical genre backgrounds is an exciting thing.

This is a new world of opportunity that we would not have realized without the isolation experiences we've shared thanks to COVID.

We should watch for opportunities that will come to us spontaneously as one of our new partner clubs or another shares an opportunity that they've organized with us.

The full creative potential of this opportunity depends on dreamers like us. If you recognize an opportunity for hosting a specific workshop or event, please contact Anna Somerville by e-mail at [annadsomerville@gmail.com](mailto:annadsomerville@gmail.com) to share your dream. As these come together, we can share with our new club friends too.



**MR. TONY RICE**

We are deeply saddened by the loss of the most influential Bluegrass guitarist of the past 50 years (-in the praising words of Ricky Skaggs).

Tony Rice was born June 8th 1951 and enjoyed musical growth in a musical family. He had many opportunities through mentorship perhaps most notably with Clarence White, whom on his passing, left his Martin D-28 to Tony. He established musical liaisons that helped him to carve his place at the highest level as a Bluegrass and Jazz guitarist, becoming a most respected acoustic guitar giant and vocalist, truly a legend of our time. Tony lived and performed during an incredible time for Bluegrass music. His time with J.D. Crowe and the New South brought us the Rounder catalogue #0044 self titled album affectionately known as the 'Brown Album', his time with David 'Dawg' Grisman's Quintet brought Tony the opportunity to dive into Jazz music that further elevated Tony's playing. His time spent in The Bluegrass Album Band with J.D. Crowe, Doyle Lawson, Bobby Hicks and Todd Philips resulted in 6 albums that define modern Bluegrass. Tony produced 2 duet albums with Ricky Skaggs then with Norman Blake. There isn't an acoustic Bluegrass guitar player alive that hasn't been influenced and inspired by Tony's magical flat picking, cross picking, and incredible rhythm playing abilities.

Tony passed away at home on December 25, 2020.

Please spend some time in your own way paying tribute to Tony, whether you are listening to his 47 some albums he has been involved with, or reading 'Still Inside -The Tony Rice Story' -the Tim Stafford authored biography written with Tony's direct involvement. Then let beautiful music guide your way ahead.

FRIENDS OF BLUEGRASS



**Myhre's Music**

The NBCMS members enjoy a special and long standing relationship with a local music store... A cornerstone of acoustic and roots music in Edmonton... a family owned and operated store with family values that has served the Edmonton area since 1967! Myhre's Music has been a great supporter and promoter of the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society, for which we say THANKS!

Staff in the photo are left to right: Lydia Myhre, Catherine Robertson fiddle and violin luthier, daughter Haley, Byron Myhre, Alfie Myhre, Bob Potoniec, missing Thomas Slaymaker guitar luthier, George Back, and son Tanner Myhre.

**Classified Ads** -if you have an item you'd like to publish in the newsletter, please let Greg know by e-mail to: [winski.greg.winter@gmail.com](mailto:winski.greg.winter@gmail.com)

*each issue requires confirmation of your desire to re-publish your item.*

**Thanks Contributors!**

- Darcy Whiteside for keeping the wheels on the Bluegrass 101 bus and allowing our members to stay connected weekly!
- Anna Sommerville for putting the 2020 Fall Acoustic Music Workshop together
- Our Board for our new website!
- Blueberry Bluegrass Festival for the membership drive and the 20 in 20 Workshop Series.
- Carolyn Hotte for the historical perspective on the club and conversations with George Bayard
- Thanks to the NBCMS for 25 wonderful years!
- Thanks to the Internet for photos and all the truths I could find...

