

Nashville Old-Time String Band Association: Notsba

April

News

2009

Post Office Box 160038 Nashville, Tennessee 37216

www.nashvilleoldtime.org

## Summing up: *Breakin' Up Winter XIV*

Ah, it's come and gone already. Some folks arrived as early as Thursday morning to begin setting up and by that evening after the potluck dinner at Doris Fisher's, the "unofficial" first event, there were smiling faces and eager greetings in Cedar Forest Lodge as the first big jam drew people into the circle. There was musical catching up to do.

The talks during "The Roots of Old-Time Music" on Friday centered on the music of Kentucky and stories about looking for, finding and enjoying musicians who carried the tunes and playing styles of their elders. The many amusing and fascinating anecdotes about their experiences by Bruce Greene, John Harrod and Franklin George kept us smiling and laughing through the morning.

After lunch we were delighted to honor Clyde Davenport as our second Heritage Award recipient for his life-long and ongoing contributions to old-time music.

The afternoon concerts by Clyde, Charlie Acuff, Franklin George and Bruce Greene presented a remarkable and strong set by musicians who played (and sang) through parts of their repertoires. Leroy Troy added his musical style and showmanship at the end of the day.

Workshops, evening singing jams, led jams and spontaneous cries of, "Let's have a tune," kept us playing through Saturday as the weather had us shedding our coats and artist led jams in the afternoon moved outside. In fact, during the evening there were many jams throughout the park in temperatures that had us thankful for our good fortune.

Sunday morning brought the event to a close with the Gospel and Hymn Sing and the last tasty meal by *Mad Platter Catering*.

Good-byes are always a little wistful but frequently we added declarations that we will keep in touch and see each other next year (and for at least 80% of us that is true!).

Mark your calendar for March 5-7, 2010 for *BUW XV*. We're already looking forward to having a tune with you there. ~MLD

## Videos of Franklin George at *BUW XIV* available for viewing

Every day there are new videos added to *YouTube*. If you're not familiar with this amazing site yet, you can go to their home page at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). It contains thousands of videos and is a great resource for old-time music played by musicians who you might otherwise never get to see and hear.

At *BUW XIV*, one of our guest artists was Franklin George from West Virginia, absolutely one of the most delightful people you'll ever meet. Larry Dent, a good friend of Franklin's, drove Franklin to *BUW*. Larry helps Franklin out and does a great job of promoting Franklin and his music, including producing a festival dedicated to Franklin (check it out at [www.thefranklingeorgegathering.com](http://www.thefranklingeorgegathering.com)). At *BUW*, Franklin was accompanied by *Notsba's* Todd Wright and Darlyne Kent on guitar, and Chad Ashworth on banjo (when Franklin played fiddle; Franklin plays banjo on "Soldier's Joy").

After they got back home, Larry posted four videos to *YouTube* of Franklin playing at *BUW*. The links to these four are below; you should be able to click on them and they will take you to the videos. If for some reason that doesn't work, you can copy the address and paste it into your browser and it should take you there. I hope you enjoy these as much as I have:

Soldier's Joy <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQfhjXk8GZA>

Little Dog Waltz <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hbs6iPlOh1E&feature=related>

Ebenezer <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB3kNMaQFrA&feature=related>

Miss McLeod's Reel <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xt1jB20sRY&feature=related> ~RW

## INTERVIEW WITH JIM HORNSBY

By Phil Sparks

*How long have you been playing old-time music?*

I began playing about ten years ago after Janine Chamorro invited me to a 4<sup>th</sup>-Sunday jam at Martin Fisher's house. I remember watching Mike Baugh and Drew Fedak playing that fluid style they have—wow! It was great. It opened my eyes to old-time music, and I have been trying to play it ever since. I was playing guitar at the time. Soon, I began accompanying various players and working to learn other instruments.

*Who were your influences?*

My mother was my earliest influence. At one time, her family lived in the Cades Cove area of what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but they moved to the Sweetwater Valley in East Tennessee before my mother was born. She knew the mountain music from her family. She sang and played it on the piano, but old-time wasn't really popular at the time, and she gradually stopped playing it. It was years later that I began to have some appreciation for old-time after listening to, and learning about, Bob Dylan, The Kingston Trio, Flatt and Scruggs, John Hartford and others who were significantly influenced by it.

More recently, Mike Baugh and Martin Cerjan have influenced me on guitar and banjo, respectively, and my fiddle influences include Drew Fedak, Rick Roberts, Charlie Acuff and Mary Lou Durham, who taught me most of the tunes I enjoy playing these days. There are a lot more people I should thank, of course, but I owe a special thanks to those folks.

*How did you become interested in making your own CD?*

I had thought for some time that I would like to make a CD of old-time music as a Christmas present for my kids so that some day they could show their kids what the old-man did for fun. I have an "Mbox 2" setup with my computer that allows me to record and overdub tracks, and I was playing around with that at home, but I wanted to concentrate on the music and also get a more professional sound. A friend, Alvin Tucker, has a recording studio. He agreed to help, so I gave it a try.

There were other reasons for making the CD. I am interested in teaching tools for the slow jams, and I think layered tracks that can be separated into the various instrument parts could be helpful. Also, the project helps promote old-time music, and I like to do that when I can. As you know, I recently began a new project helping Brian Buchanan produce a book and CD about traditional old-time music in East Nashville. The Wednesday night jam at the 5-Spot is attended by some remarkably talented old-time players. We want to give the music, and the musicians who play it, some well-deserved recognition.

*Sounds like a good project, but how did you develop your CD?*

I began by picking a variety of tunes that have good parts for each of the instruments. I went into the studio about four times and recorded three or four tunes each session. Eight of those tunes made it onto the CD. It was a fun project. I don't know that my playing is anything to write home about, but I think you would agree that I chose some great old tunes.

*What was the most difficult part of the project?*

Getting the first track recorded is the most difficult part; over-dubbing the other tracks is not that tough. I started each session with a comfortable tune and worked my way up to the most difficult tune of the day. For the instrumentals, I typically began with a banjo track. It gave me a firm melody to build on. When I sang, I played guitar at the same time.

"Walking in My Sleep" was my most ambitious undertaking. I played guitar and sang for the first track, trying to keep in mind where the fiddle would come in later. The fiddle part was extremely difficult for me. It's bluesy with lots of slides and double-stops, and I never did it exactly like I wanted it.

*Actually, I think it sounds fine.*

Thanks, but if you could see it instead of hear it, you would understand what I'm talking about. It has been chopped up and pieced together to cover up or remove my errors.

I should say up front that Alvin and Joel are philosophically opposed to too much technical wizardry because they don't want to create something that is simply counterfeit. But since the CD wasn't being made for release and I wanted to learn about the process, they tinkered with it for me. They can do amazing things on the technical side.

*Did you do any of the technical work?*

No, I just played the music. Alvin and his business partner, Joel Ziegenmire, produced the CD. They are both graduates of the MTSU recording industry program and really know their business. Recording and reproducing acoustic music requires special skills, and it was an education to work with them.

They arranged several microphones for each instrument—some close up, some farther away—and blended the various recordings to give the instrument a realistic reproduction. Each time I changed instruments, the microphone arrangement changed, so each day I tried to finish all the tracks with one instrument before taking up another.

Alvin and Joel also recommended the instrument mix. For instance, I recorded "Quail is a Pretty Bird" with banjo, fiddle and guitar, but for variety, they suggested that we make it a banjo solo. Similarly, I recorded a guitar track for "Hail Agin' the Barn Door," but it worked better in the overall concept of the CD as a banjo/fiddle duet.

*How long did the project take from beginning to end?*

It took about three months to go from idea to CD. It was completed just in time to give to my children as a Christmas present.

*Do you plan to do more on your own?*

No. I accomplished my goal. The novelty of doing all the parts has worn off, and I prefer playing with other people. Still, I might do more if there is any interest in separate instrument tracks for learning purposes. I enjoyed the project, and I think it turned out pretty well. I am especially happy to get "You Are My Flower" recorded. It was one of my mother's favorite tunes, and it is a pleasure to pass it along to my children as one of *my* favorites.

# Scheduled Jams: We're back to our customary jam schedule for April

## FIRST THURSDAY SLOW JAM – April 2nd, 6:30-8:30 pm, Ft. Negley Visitors Center.

Jim Hornsby begins a run of three slow jams starting with this one. He will emphasize cross tuning on the fiddle in GDGD. See the accompanying article below for more information on his plan.

Keep in mind these tunes taught at previous recent slow jams to request.

D—West Fork Gals, Lady of the Lake, Over the Waterfall, Needle Case, New Five Cent Piece, Shoo! Fly, Martha Campbell, Year of Jubilo and Cherokee Shuffle

A—Booth Shot Lincoln, Hunting the Buffalo, Little Dutch Girl, Red Rocking Chair, June Apple

G—Nail That Catfish to a Tree, Seneca Square Dance (Waiting for the Federals), Shove that Pig's Foot a Little Further in the Fire, Garfield's March, Georgia Railroad, Old Yeller Dog, Cora Dye, Sweet Jenny

C —Tennessee Wagoner, The Darker the Night (& G), Texas Gales

Am—Cold Frosty Morning

**SECOND THURSDAY REGULAR JAM - April 9th**, 6:30-8:30 pm, Buchanan Log House, 2910 Elm Hill Pike. Tunes are played from moderate to up-to-speed. All skill levels are welcome and everyone's encouraged to play along. A list of tunes frequently played by the group is available on our website and a copy will be at the jam. New tunes may be brought in.

**THIRD THURSDAY REGULAR JAM - April 16th**, 6:30-8:30 pm, Ft. Negley Visitors Center. The *Nashville Sounds* baseball season starts in April and there is a home game today, April 16th, so parking is within the fencing around the Visitors' Center. Regular jam, tunes are played up-to-speed. Play the chestnuts or bring in something new!

**FOURTH SUNDAY JAM - April 26th** - at the home of Ron and Cynthia Whitlow in Brentwood. The jam starts at 2 and lasts until around 5:30. This jam is also a potluck opportunity that has us bringing out snacks to share at the break. In good weather it is pleasant to sit on the back patio. We hope to see you there. See directions below. -MLD

Ron and Cynthia Whitlow's house

5329 Stonewall Place, Brentwood, TN 37027

615-373-7914 615-500-7669 (C)

## Directions to the 4th Sunday Jam

### From Nashville

- Take I-65 South away from downtown. Exit at the Old Hickory Blvd West exit.
- At the end of the ramp, turn right and go about 2 miles on Old Hickory Blvd until coming to the intersection with Granny White Pike (light).
- Turn left on Granny White, go about 1 mile to McGavock Rd (light).
- Turn left into McGavock Farms subdivision. Go about ½ mile to stop sign.
- Turn right onto Post Oak Circle; go about 100 yards.
- Turn right on Stonewall Place (street sign is on the left side of the street). 5329 is at the end of the circle-2 story brick.
- Look for red bandana on mail box. Park in circle or in drive.

### From Pegram / Bellevue / the west

Take Old Hickory Blvd east to Granny White Pike. Turn right on Granny White and proceed as above.

If you have any questions or need directions from other points, call Ron at the numbers above.

## Slow Jams for April 2, May 7 and June 4

### Jim Hornsby

I volunteered to get back into leading the slow jam, and Mary Lou asked if I would teach for the three months of April, May and June. I am happy to do that, but it is difficult to decide how I can be helpful. I would like to try something different, something more about technique than tunes.

I would like to show you my method of playing by ear. It is a pretty simple method really. In a nutshell, I play all stringed instruments as though they are harpsichords. In other words, I make a chord and play the melody within that chord. Sort of a Maybelle Carter style. It has been a lot of fun for me, and you might like it too.

For at least two of the three months, I want to concentrate on playing with fiddles cross-tuned in GDGD. If, as a fiddler, you are missing the fun of cross-tuning, I believe you are missing much of what old-time fiddling is about. I avoided cross-tuning for years because I didn't understand the physical process of the tuning or the method of playing that way. But I can show you what I believe is an easy way into it.

By its nature, cross-tuning is a fiddler's thing. In fact, the GDGD tuning with the banjo playing in G probably goes back in history to the early fiddle and banjo duets, before guitars and mandolins were a part of the mix. But it isn't just for fiddle and banjo. Guitar and mandolin give a full ensemble sound to GDGD that is quiet beautiful; probably different from what you are used to, but beautiful. Learning how to accompany by ear will allow you to sit in when you find that kind of jam going on.

This may not be everyone's cup of tea. I will bring fiddle, banjo, guitar and mandolin for demonstration. Teaching four instruments to a group means that you will spend some time when the lesson is not specifically for you, but I believe the result will be

worth the effort. Here's the way I hope it will work:

**FIDDLES** - Plan to be in GDGD tuning when you arrive on April 2, or we'll tune when you get there, if you have a problem with it. Here's a tip to help you cross-tune to any key: When you tune to standard tuning (GDAE), try tuning the GD strings with the fine-tuners as far out as you can get them and the AE strings with the fine-tuners as far in as you can get them. That way you should be able to reach the GDGD tuning by letting the fine-tuners out on the AE strings.

**BANJOS** - Tune in the key of G. Banjo players won't have a special problem playing with the GDGD fiddler; it's just business as usual for the banjo.

**GITAR** - For the most part, guitar won't have trouble playing with the GDGD fiddler. No special tuning. One difference is that in addition to the triad of chords for the key of G - that is, the three chords it takes to play "Little Brown Jug", G, C, and D, you will be using F as a "modal" chord. But we will talk about that at the session.

**MANDOLIN** - Mandolin players will have a bit more of a challenge to accompany GDGD. What you would ordinarily play in the Key of A, you will be playing in the key of G. It will be different, but I think you will find it interesting and fun.

I am planning to use Hunting the Buffalo, Greasy Coat, Candy Girl, Huldy in the Sinkhole and Cookhouse Joe for demonstration, but that may change. As I said, it would be good to concentrate on method for a few sessions rather than just learning tunes.

It would be good if you brought a recording device. See you on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Notsba Business**

### **The President's Corner**

**Ron Whitlow**

*Breakin' Up Winter XIV* is behind us and I have that happiness tinged with sadness that always follows the end of a great time spent with friends focused on an enjoyable shared pursuit. With the spring-like weather adding the icing to the cake, it was a wonderful weekend.

I want to thank all of you who volunteered your time, your thoughtfulness, as well as donating items and services to the silent auction which played a role this year again, aiding in our keeping the fest affordable (some say it's a bargain!); there were too many donors to mention individually, but a big "Thank you!" goes to all of you. I particularly want to thank Gretchen Priest-May and the instructors at *the Musical Heritage Center of Middle Tennessee* for their generous donations of lessons and CDs.

I also want to again thank our artists, speakers, jam leaders, workshop leaders, and, especially, all of the folks who attended this year because, really, you are why *BUW* happens.

We received a grant from the *Tennessee Arts Commission* to help compensate our artists this year. I'd like to thank Roby Cogswell, who not only served as our Master of Ceremonies for Friday's *Roots of Old-Time Music* day, but who as a member also helped Notsba as an advisor on the grant application preparation. Roby has done a tremendous amount to help the arts over the years, and he is steadfast in nurturing the growth of old-time music.

We won't know until all of the bills are paid whether this year's *BUW* broke even, but we feel we came close, as we do most years. We are committed to hosting this players' celebration of old-time music and we measure its success in other ways.

Attendance was good this year, and we were given many positive comments, which, all other considerations aside, rewards us with the thought that *Breakin' Up Winter* is a good fest and is much appreciated.

We got some good feedback on this year's *BUW* from a number of you, and we always pay attention to what you tell us. You can still email comments to me for inclusion in our review of this year's event: [rwhitlow@comcast.net](mailto:rwhitlow@comcast.net).

We are already planning for *Breakin' Up Winter XV*. We'll keep you posted as the planning for next year progresses, and we look forward to seeing and playing music with you through the year and in March 2010 at *BUW XV*. -RW

**BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED for April 20th at 6:30 PM at Buchanan Log House.** Plan to attend if you wish. Members are welcome. If you cannot make the meeting and need to have business brought up, you can reach the board through the Notsba web site.

## MEMBERSHIP

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!** We'd like to welcome new members

David Goodman, Nashville, Tennessee;  
Doug Chapman, Athens, Alabama;  
Alex Harwell, Chattanooga, Tennessee;  
John Loder, Redmond, Washington;  
Veronica Schuppan, Chapel Hill, Tennessee.

Thanks for joining us. We look forward to seeing you and we hope to jam with you soon.

**THANKS TO OUR RENEWING MEMBERS!** This month, we have nine renewing members:

Bryan Hamilton, Chattanooga, Tennessee;  
Mike Duncan, Brentwood, Tennessee;  
Randy, Patsy, and Rebekah Weiler, Murfreesboro, Tennessee;  
Lee Cagle, Moscow, Tennessee;  
Suzanne and Glenn Keldsen, Chesterton, Indiana;  
Kenneth Chastain, Seattle, Washington.

Thank you for your continued support. We appreciate having good friends like you and it was good visiting with you at *Breakin' Up Winter*.

I found it interesting that John Loder joined us from Redmond, Washington and that Kenneth Chastain renewed his membership for Seattle, Washington from Big Sandy, Tennessee (only slightly farther east). It made me wonder which of our members lives the farthest from Nashville. I checked it via Mapquest, and from the Buchanan Log House, it is 2402 miles to John's town of Redmond, Washington and 2410 to Kenneth's town of Seattle; John is currently the NOTSBA member farthest from Nashville.

They both eclipse Carl Pagter who was our member previously farthest from Nashville; Carl is ONLY 2296 miles from Nashville.

We'll be looking for all three of you to stop by when you're in the neighborhood. If you leave on Monday, you should be able to make it to one of the Thursday jams.

-RW

### The Newsletter

We'd love your input and any newsworthy information. Please email us by the 20th of the month for inclusion in next month's edition. Ron - [rnwhitlow@comcast.net](mailto:rnwhitlow@comcast.net), Mary Lou - [mldurham1@juno.com](mailto:mldurham1@juno.com).

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the ***Nashville Old-Time String Band Association***.

**Notsba** is a volunteer organization and as its seen voice, the **News** publishes material from members and others who wish to contribute to the body of knowledge we might benefit from having access to.

While we strive for accuracy, we do not ascribe any label of officialdom to content found here. We each see and hear differently and, particularly in old-time music, one can say there are as many ways of playing tunes and seeing the world! as there are people involved in experiencing them.

We hope that you will take what is useful to you and simply leave the rest; someone else might find valuable what you do not. We appreciate the generousness of our contributors; without them there would be a list of jams here ...and what else?

## Tune of the Month

**BIG SWEET TATERS IN SANDY LAND** From *The Fiddler's Companion* ([www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers](http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers)): This is a traditional tune usually known as "Great Big Taters in Sandy Land". Another of Ira Ford's (*Traditional Music in America*, 1940) improbable tales goes: "From a fiddler who played 'Great Big Taters in Sandy Land' as his favorite tune, comes the following tradition obtained by the writer thirty years ago. The fiddler was then a man more than seventy years old, who had 'larned' the 'chune' when a young fellow of twenty, from the 'feller' who composed it (c. 1860?). It appears that Steve, the composer homesteaded 160 acres of land in the rough sandstone hills in a remote section of the country, it being the only land left open for homesteading. Steve was engaged to be married to a beautiful young girl of the community and the wedding was to take place as soon as he developed his farm and got his place built. He broke the new ground, which was all in patches on the tops of the hills, the remainder of the farm consisting of steep rocky hillsides and gullies. As his first crop he planted oats and corn. The oats only came up a few inches and the corn did not even make 'nubbins'. So the wedding had to be postponed. The boys teased Steve considerably about trying to make a living on the sandy land, but he took it all good-naturedly, as did the girl. That same year there was a shortage in the potato crop, and, as the land around there was not suitable for potato growing, the farmers had to pay exorbitant prices for the potatoes they had to ship in. Betty, Steve's girl, suggested that he plant potatoes for his next crop. The following spring he planted all his ground accordingly, to the great amusement of his friends. But their amusement was changed to astonishment when that fall Steve harvested 300 bushels to the acre of high grade potatoes and sold them to the farmers at a good price. The wedding was elaborately celebrated with a big supper, followed by a dance that lasted until morning. This tune, composed by Steve and afterwards played at all the dances, was commonly known as 'Steve's Tune', but it was Betty who originated the verses. To get even with those who had 'poked fun' at Steve and his sand farm, she invented the verses, singing them at the dance that night much to the amusement of the guests."

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Great big taters in sandy  
land,  
We'll dig 'em out as fast as  
we can.  
The folds all buy 'em from a  
foolish man,  
Raisin' great big taters in  
sandy land.

\*\*\*  
Sow them oats, but you can't  
get a stand,  
Corn won't grow in that sandy  
land.  
Folks won't think you're much  
of a man,  
If you can't make a livin' on  
sandy land. (Ford)

\*\*\*  
Gary Scheufler (Sewanee,  
Tennessee) has provided us  
with a notated version:  
"This annotation of Clyde  
Davenport's version of this  
popular tune is based on a  
recording that I made of Mr.  
Davenport teaching the tune  
at a workshop in Chatta-  
nooga, Tennessee on March 1,  
2009. To my recollection the  
phrasing is very close to Mr.  
Davenport's. However, his

bow changes are very difficult to hear. Mr. Davenport carries the moniker, "Clyde the Glide" and one characteristic of his version are the many glides or glissandi. I have attempted to notate most of them with straight lines, see mm. 1-3 etc. Unison double stops, especially the "D" are another feature of his version. I have notated these with double stems. Fiddle tunes in general do not take well to formal notation. Mr. Davenport's subtle use of syncopation, swing rhythms, glides and slight variations in pitch defy precise notation. I offer this as a starting point. Jeff Todd Titon includes a slightly different notated version based upon a field recording dated March 31, 1990 in his book, *Old-Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes*. "

An mp3 recording of Clyde Davenport playing this tune at the 2009 *Breaking Up Winter* is available at the *Notsba* web site. As regards the mp3 file, the notated version provided by Gary Scheufler and the guitar chord pattern below, I suspect Clyde would say "That's the way I played it on that day at that time." Also, Clyde would tell you that his version of the tune is properly called "Big Sweet Taters in Sandy Land."

### GUITAR CHORDS FOR BIG SWEET TATERS IN SANDY LAND

- A) GGGG GGDD GGGG GDGG (2X)  
B) GGCC CCGGG GGGG GDGG (2X)

## Big Sweet Taters in Sandy Land

Fiddle cross-tuned in G  
Use both G & D drones

Trad. from Clyde Davenport  
Arr. Gary Scheufler