

Old-Time Times

MARCH 2005

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EVENTS

Tennessee

Breakin' Up Winter

Held in Cedars of Lebanon State Park near Lebanon, March 4, 5, and 6 (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). This festival is dedicated to old-time music. The honored guests include Charlie Acuff, Roby Cogswell, Chrissy Davis-Camp, Martin Fisher, Bill Mansfield, Carol Ponder, Charles Wolfe, and the world-famous fiddler and musicologist Alan Jabbour. For complete information, go to the NOTSBA Web site, www.nashvilleoldtime.org.

Sate of Tennessee Old-Time Fiddlers Championships

Held in Clarksville, March 18-19, at Rossvie High School. For complete information, call Tad Bourne (931-552-6149) or go to www.tnfiddlers.com. NOTE: This year, the prize money for old-time string bands will be increased to equal that offered to bluegrass bands.

Georgia

9th Annual Georgia Cowboy Poetry Gathering

(Includes an old-time fiddler's contest on March 12)

Held in Cartersville, March 10-13, at the Booth Western Art Musuem. For complete information call Doc Stovall (770-387-2165) or E-mail Doc at docs@boothmuseum.org.

Hosts Needed for 4th-Sunday Jams

Please E-mail Darlyne Kent (dkent@davidsonacademy.com.) to schedule your home for a 2005 4th-Sunday Jam. We still need homes for the following months: June, July, and August.

Some of the summer 4th-Sunday jams may be held in area parks. We tried that last summer, and it was well received.

Directions to March's 4th-Sunday Jam at Julie and Eddie's Home

From Nashville, go west on I-24 (toward Clarksville and St. Louis). Take the New Hope Road Exit. At the bottom of the ramp, turn left. Go through a 4-way stop with a flashing light (Clarksville Highway) and on to the next flashing light at a 2-way stop (Old Clarksville).

Turn left onto Old Clarksville, and go to the second road on the left, Park Lane. Julie and Eddie live on Park Lane in the third house on the left. The house is back in the woods, so look for the number 1015 on their mailbox.

If you lose your way, call Eddie on his cell phone, 415-6931.

Charlie Acuff to Receive 2005 Governor's Awards in the Arts

The Tennessee Arts Commission announced on February 2 that Blount County resident Charlie Acuff has been selected to receive one of the 2005 Governor's Awards in the Arts. This is the state's highest honor in the arts. It was established in 1971 to recognize those who have made significant contributions to the cultural life of Tennessee. Two awards will be presented in the Folklife Heritage area. The other recipient is fiddler Fletcher Bright, who lives on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga.

Mr. Charlie and his wife Dorothy have long been friends of the Nashville Old-Time String Band Association, having come for years to participate in the annual Breakin' Up Winter retreat. A cousin of Roy Acuff, the left-handed fiddler lives in Alcoa, in East Tennessee. For years he played with the old-time string band The Lantana Drifters, and he continues to be a part of the Museum of Appalachia Band, entertaining countless visitors with his front-porch picking and delightful storytelling skills. Interestingly, he owns five of the 30-some fiddles his father Evart Acuff made, and they are the only ones he plays. He was shown how to fiddle by his grandfather, also named Charles, who taught his grandson tunes that dated to the Civil War and earlier. Mr. Charlie guesses he knows how to play some 300 tunes.

Although, he has played on Garrison Keillor's well-known National Public Radio show *Prairie Home Companion* and for a variety of politicians and famous folks from Lamar Alexander to the late author, Alex Haley, who penned the book *Roots*, he is a gentle and unassuming man who is friendly to everyone. Still, at 85 years young he loves nothing better than to play music for hours with his many friends of all ages. During a recent telephone call, he chuckled about his thoughts regarding his recent honor.

"At first, I just sat on the couch, shocked," he said. "Then I got to thinking about all the friends that I have that said all those nice things about me to make this possible. I really think they should have this award, not me. They did the work, and all I did was just fiddle."

The recipients of these awards will be honored at an invitation-only dinner in Nashville on March 15. There, they will be recognized by Governor Phil Bredesen. In continuing his week of celebration, Mr. Charlie also will be recognized and will perform at the Laurel Theater on March 19 in Knoxville during the three-day Jubilee Festival, March 18-20. Fletcher Bright and the Dismembered Tennesseans also will be on Saturday's bill. ~Patsy Weiler

Fletcher Bright to Receive 2005 Governor's Awards in the Arts

The Tennessee Arts Commission has announced that Lookout Mountain resident Fletcher Bright has been selected to receive a Folklife Heritage Award.

Fletcher is an accomplished teacher, arranger, and musician. He has achieved international fame as a fiddle player, making bluegrass and old-time fiddle music approachable, lively, and entertaining.

Fletcher first took up the fiddle as a Chattanooga teenager in the 1940s when he and classmates at McCallie School formed a bluegrass band flippantly named "The Dismembered Tennesseans." Almost 60 years later, the band is still active.

"As a devotee of traditional Southern fiddle music, Fletcher Bright has never lost his teen-

age zeal, carefully studying the music and techniques of old-time, bluegrass, and contest fiddle masters and relentlessly pursuing opportunities to learn from and perform with other musicians. In recent decades, he has gained recognition as a master in his own right," says Dr. Robert Cogswell, director of the Folklife Program for the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Fletcher, a successful realtor-developer and a pilot, has continued to be the musical cornerstone of The Dismembered Tennesseans. "Without taking themselves too seriously, the group has amassed an incredible performance resume, remaining one of the most popular groups in Chattanooga and bringing traditional string music to geographically and socially diverse audiences," adds Cogswell.

Fletcher has entertained countless audiences with his lively performances. His appearances have included the Chattanooga Riverbend Festival, National Folk Festival, and the Kennedy Center, as well as performances with the Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra, Chattanooga Boys Choir, and the Chattanooga Ballet.

He has continued to convey his passion for fiddle music by teaching younger players in such diverse programs as the Augusta Heritage Center, Mark O'Connor's Fiddle Camps, NashCamp, and the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes.

Fletcher joins old-time fiddler Charlie Acuff in receiving the Folklife Heritage Award.

Editor's Note: Fletcher was my first fiddle teacher, during a week at NashCamp in 2002. I had been playing only one year, but Fletcher exhibited the patience of Job and an incredible ability to endure auditory pain. He heaped a world of information on us, including a book containing the music for about 250 fiddle tunes. If I have made progress at all, he deserves much of the credit. ~Phil Sparks

Rebekah Weiler and The Blue Creek

**Ramblers to perform at
MTSU Honors College**

Delmer Holland and The Blue Creek Ramblers, with Rebekah Weiler on banjo, will

perform in the indoor amphitheatre at the Paul W. Martin, Sr. Honors College, Wednesday, April 6, 4:30-6 PM. on the Middle Tennessee State University campus. The free concert is part of the college's R & R Program and is open to the public.

The spring semester series has several upcoming free programs that may be of interest to the NOTSBA including:

Sunday, March 6, 4:30-6 PM, Irish Music concert by David Coe and The Rogues

Friday, April 15, 7 PM., author Billy Kennedy of Northern Ireland, an authority on the Scots-Irish origins of American country music.

For more information, call 615-898-5645 or 898-5759, or go to www.mtsu.edu/~hcevents/calendar05.htm for more program listings.

~Patsy Weiler

And in This Corner . . . Old-Time Music

It wasn't that long ago that the only folks who played old-time music in the Nashville area were the Still House Reelers. If a person wanted folks to play old-time music with, he would have to go to Huntsville, Birmingham, or various places in Virginia or North Carolina. There just wasn't any here. This made it kind of tough for folks of Trish's and my generation to learn about the music. We got to meet a few folks at Uncle Dave Days, but back then the old-time bands in the contest were bluegrass bands with the banjo player playing without picks. It all came together for us at the Dowell's house in Athens, Alabama. We figured it out. There were people for us to play with, but they lived in a four-state area. Of course this meant we wouldn't get to play with these folks very often.

This is the background for Trish's idea to start an old-time class in community education. We thought that if we could stimulate some interest in old-time music, we would eventually have folks that we could play with. We thought that we might be able to create a pool of old-time players. That is pretty much what has happened.

Over the years I have been asked why we don't incorporate bluegrass music into our jam

sessions or include bluegrass information in our newsletter. I have always tried to answer this question, but lately I have noticed it popping up again. I thought this article might be the best way to address it at this point.

Bluegrass is a whole lot different from the music we play. It requires individuals to play breaks. It includes a great deal of modern music. It does not lend itself to large ensemble playing. It requires an entirely different look on how to present it as opposed to the way old-time musicians look at the music they play.

There are a lot more of them than there are of us. It isn't hard for bluegrassers to find folks to jam with. From the time Earl Scruggs walked on stage and joined Bill Monroe in 1946, old-time music declined in America. It kept declining until the late 1960s when people like Mike Seegar, High Woods, and others started sitting at the feet of senior old-time musicians like Tommy Jarrel to learn. Every year there are more and more of us out there, but there are still a whole lot more bluegrassers. It is just natural that the largest group of musicians in a jam will tend to control the jam. I have seen many circles broken up with the insertion of bluegrass musicians.

Bluegrass and old-time musicians have become very territorial in nature. There seem to be educational and other sociological differences between the two groups. They just look at things differently for the most part. At the risk of being redundant, there are more of them than there are of us. If bluegrass is played at our jams or at our festival, eventually bluegrass will take over.

A bluegrass musician does not become an old-time musician by playing an old-time dance tune. It is the way you play that tune that makes the difference. It is the way you look at it and the way you present it. I still remember a night several years ago at the Station Inn when a well-known bluegrass fiddler asked me to teach him a particular old-time tune. About half way through the session, he made the comment "You really have to know this music to play it." Quite often bluegrass musicians never have to play the

tune. It is enough for them to play variations of the tune. This is especially true with vocal numbers. This is something else that makes it hard to jam with bluegrassers.

I enjoy good bluegrass music like I enjoy good jazz and classic rock and roll. I own bluegrass recordings, and I even occasionally play bluegrass music. I prefer old-time and will always seek to promote and preserve it. The Nashville Old-Time String Band Association was founded for the purpose of promoting and preserving traditional old-time music, and it is my hope that the association will always do this. ~Dave Cannon

Black Banjo: Then and Now Gathering to Take Place in Early April

African-American banjo players, scholars, and lovers of the banjo and of traditional and contemporary African-American music and culture will come together from all over the United States and beyond at the first Black Banjo: Then and Now Gathering at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, April 7-10. It will feature lectures, jams, workshops, down-home frolics, and performances—four days to meet, mix, and mingle.

The Gathering is sponsored by [Black Banjo: Then and Now \(BBT&N\)](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BlackBanjo/) (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BlackBanjo/>), an online group founded in March 2004. The group strives to create awareness that banjo playing comes out of the African experience, to support contemporary Black banjo players, to celebrate the banjo's place in Black music and culture, and to highlight the banjo's role in cultural exchange.

Elder fiddler [Joe Thompson](#), accompanied by [Bob Carlin](#), will perform at the Gathering as will [The Ebony Hillbillies](#), [Mike Seeger](#), [Clark Buehling and the Skirtlifters](#), Tony Thomas, [Kerry Blech](#), [Allen Hart](#), [George Gibson](#), and [Dr. Joan Dickerson](#).

If you wish to perform at, present at, help publicize, and/or help raise funds for the Gathering, E-mail Blackbanjotony@hotmail.com.

For more information, registration, or to get on our mailing list, E-mail BlackBanjoGathering@hotmail.com.

~Complied from the BBT&N Web site

Overseas Travel Opportunities for Old-Time Musicians

Retired Rutherford County educator, Steve Cates has been presented with the opportunity to take his folkdance group, The Cripple Creek Cloggers to Istanbul, Turkey, this summer for two weeks, leaving Nashville on July 1.

Cates has approached Rebekah Weiler about organizing a small old-time band to make this trip and play music for the dancers.

The cost of this trip would be approximately \$1,000 to \$1,200 which covers everything, including airfare, with the exception of personal spending money. While in Turkey, the performers would be hosted by area families and have the rich opportunity to experience daily life in another culture, first hand.

Keep in mind, that Turkey is a country in the Middle East and is neighbored on the south by both Iraq and Iran. However, Istanbul is a modern European city in the northern part of the county, a considerable distance from the current international conflict. As with all travel, the keys to a good trip are keeping an open mind, being eager to learn, and being flexible. You should understand this is not two weeks of rest, but a rigorous trip of performing and sharing cultures.

You do need a passport for this trip.

If you think you would have a serious interest in participating in this trip, or others in the future, please contact the Weilers at 615-459-4872 or E-mail us at SALT27@aol.com

~Patsy Weiler

'Old Pal' Festival: Old-Time Music Flourishing in East Texas

Deep in the heart of the East Texas piney woods, there is a passion developing for learning and playing old-time music that is moving through that part of the country faster than a Texas roadrunner.

Instrumental in this growing interest is a group of friendly and hard-working musicians who are involved with various dulcimer groups located throughout East Texas. If you take your finger and move it on a map of Texas from the cities of Tyler to Nacogdoches to Houston, you will cover much of the area where several active dulcimer clubs are located.

While the emphasis is on dulcimer playing, both the mountain and hammered styles, and also on auto harps, these organizations are where you find many other fine old-time acoustic musicians.

An outstanding example of the old-time music alive and well there is the 'Old Pal' or Palestine Old-Time Music and Dulcimer Festival slated for March 31 through April 2 at the Museum For East Texas Culture, 400 Micheaux Street, in Regan Park. This historic building was formerly the old Palestine High School, built between 1915 and 1916. Palestine is located just south of Tyler.

Folks who will grace the stage during this event include guitarist Wayne Henderson; another fine guitar player and dance caller Beverly Smith; multi-instrumentalist Carl Jones, who has taught at the Swannanoa Gathering and Mars Hill Old-Time week; dulcimer player extraordinaire Don Pedi; fiddle player Rafe Stefanini; well-known blues and acoustic folk music entertainer Steve James; and many others.

For more information about this event go to www.geocities.com/palestinefestival/index.htm.

The masterminds behind this event and the Bayou City Old-Time Music and Dulcimer Festival set for July 21-23 at the North Houston First Baptist Church in Houston (www.geocities.com/bayoucityfestival/index.htm) are Jerry and Margaret Wright. Jerry is a retired police detective, and Margaret is an elementary school music teacher. These days, they live in a remote log cabin near Kennard. Their home is the gathering place for many wonderful jams. One of the most interesting things there is their autograph wall, which is covered with the names of musicians who

have visited and been blessed by their boundless hospitality.

The Wright's sons, Lloyd and Hollis, are also talented musicians. Lloyd won the 2000 National Mountain Dulcimer competition at Winfield, Kansas, and plays old-time banjo and guitar. Hollis plays mandolin and auto-harp. If that weren't enough, Margaret plays mountain dulcimer in a lively style that can match any fiddle player, and she plays upright bass. She has also written 12 tab books of fiddle and gospel tunes for the dulcimer. Jerry plays the pickin' or rhythm stick. Additionally, this family sings together and often teaches workshops.

Some folks in Middle Tennessee might be familiar with Lloyd, who lived in Nashville for several years and roomed with dulcimer player Steve Seifert. Additionally, he has released several CDs.

We first met the Wrights when we visited family in Texas last August. My sister, Carolyn Monroe, who is a former general manager of a newspaper, put on her Sherlock Holmes hat and discovered that the Wrights lived about an hour from her ranch. Without ever meeting us, they invited us to a day of great jamming and food.

Our family returned the favor when we went to Texas at Christmas and hosted a music party. At this jam, we had the opportunity to meet a wonderful old-time fiddler and Baptist preacher named Stafford Harris from Nacogdoches. In Nacogdoches, Steve and Sheryl Hartz are working hard to preserve old-time music and host regular Saturday jams in their historic General Mercantile and Old-Time String Shop on the town's historic square.

During our Christmas visit, the Wright family invited us to attend a Dulcimer Retreat on New Year's Eve at Huntsville, held at Sam Houston State University. Honestly, we were a bit unsure about what to expect, but went, looking forward to a new experience. We were not disappointed. We met some outstanding old-time musicians who play traditional music with an intense passion. We were delighted with these folks' friendliness toward us and their creativity. One fellow had turned

a bleached-out skull of a steer into a unique rhythm instrument. And, to hear five hammered dulcimers collectively ringing out a great old fiddle tune at the stroke of midnight was a New Year's Eve experience we won't soon forget.

Anyone who has spent much time playing traditional music knows there is an intricate web that knits together this community. It was fascinating to us to be in Texas and see the many music connections these folks share with us in Tennessee.

An example of this is how the Wright family discovered old-time music. Quite unexpectedly, they first stumbled across dulcimer music during a family vacation in Mountain View, Arkansas, in the mid-1990s. Margaret, who holds a degree in voice, was charmed by the instrument. Later, while searching for information about dulcimer player Don Pedi, they discovered the Blue Ridge Old-Time Music Week at Mars Hill College in western North Carolina.

At Mars Hill, Margaret first heard the pure and haunting singing styles of Laura Boosinger, Alice Gerrard, Shelia Kay Adams, and others and set out to learn mountain songs and ballads. After seeing the impact the Wright's love for old-time music has had on East Texas, it is hard to picture them as novices, but they will tell you that for the first three years at Mars Hills they attended as dry sponges soaking in everything they possibly could.

Always a teacher, Margaret soon was using her new skills to teach old-time music in her classroom. We were deeply moved at Huntsville to see a young lady, who was one of Margaret's students, stand up and sing a lovely a cappella mountain ballad.

Our time with the Wrights and the many other traditional musicians we met during our Texas visits was inspiring. While we don't want to knock the music of Bob Wills, we had thought that, at best, if we mentioned old-time music in Texas, that is what we would find. Indeed, we met some talented folks playing Texas Swing and enjoyed it. However, it was grand fun to hear new songs, make new friends, and see that the "Yellow Rose of

Texas" is maybe, even a little more popular, in East Texas than the bluebonnet.

~Patsy and Randy Weiler

CD Review: *Southern Summits*

By Alan Jabbour and Ken Pearlman

I am happy to announce the release of a new CD entitled *Southern Summits*. It is a gathering of 21 fiddle-banjo duets played by me on fiddle and Ken Pearlman on banjo.

Ken and I have been making music together since we met a few years ago at Rocky Mountain Music Camp. Though Ken is known to many for his "melodic clawhammer" style of playing tunes from Prince Edward Island and other places in eastern Canada, I'm proud to say that I lured him back into the Southern repertory on which he had originally learned banjo in the 1970s. We developed a way of presenting great old Southern tunes that could be called "duets," where the two instruments are balanced in conversation with each other.

All but one of the tunes on *Southern Summits* are tunes I learned from older Southern fiddlers back in the 1960s and 1970s. Fourteen are from my mentor Henry Reed. Others are from Burl and Edden Hammons and various other fiddlers in both the Appalachians and the North Carolina Piedmont. And one tune is from one of Ken's Prince Edward Island tutors, Archie Stewart.

The tunes:

1. Billy in the Low Land (G)–Henry Reed
2. Henry Reed's Breakdown (A)–Henry Reed
3. Rocky Mountain Goat (D)–Henry Reed
4. Birdie (C)–Henry Reed
5. Rocking the Babies to Sleep (D)–Henry Reed, Gene and James Reed
6. Magpie/Greasy String (G)–Vaughn Marley and Earl Shatterly/Henry Reed
7. Bonaparte's Retreat (D)–Henry Reed
8. Henry Reed's Favorite (A)–Henry Reed
9. Rose Division (C)–John Lewis
10. Chapel Hill Serenade/Green Willis (D)–Lonnie Corsbie and Tinsey Clapp/Taylor Kimble
11. Waynesboro (G)–Edden Hammons
12. British Field March (A)–Henry Reed
13. Sally Ann Johnson (D)–Henry Reed

14. Lady of the Lake (G)–Henry Reed
15. Hell up Cole Holler (C)–Henry Reed
16. Sandy Boys (A)–Edden and Burl Hammons
17. Rochester Schottische (D)–Henry Reed
18. The Honeymoon (G)–Archie Stewart
19. Henry Ford's Waltz (C)–Henry Reed
20. Washington's March (D)–Edden and Burl Hammons
21. Boatman (A)–Ross Miller and others

Hmmm. I see you'll actually be getting 23 tunes on 21 tracks. There is also an eight-page booklet with individual tune histories, banjo and fiddle tunings, and other information of interest. And it's beautifully recorded and designed.

How to Order The CD costs \$15, and I'll mail it to you for \$16.50 (\$1.50 for postage and handling). What's more, till the end of May, if you add any or all of the following items to your order of *Southern Summits*, there will be no additional shipping cost:

A Henry Reed Reunion (CD by Alan Jabbour, Bertram Levy, and James Reed, 2002)–\$15

Hollow Rock Legacy (double-CD set reissuing my 1974 Hollow Rock String Band LP and my 1981 Sandy's Fancy LP)–\$20 each set

The Hollow Rock String Band: Traditional Dance Tunes (the band's original 1968 LP, now reissued as a CD by County Records)–\$15

Learning Old-Time Fiddle Appalachian Style with Alan Jabbour (instructional video, 2003)–DVD edition \$35, VHS edition \$20

Thus, for example, you may order *Southern Summits* alone for \$15 + \$1.50 = \$16.50, or you may add *A Henry Reed Reunion* for \$15 and the VHS edition of the instructional video for \$20 with no additional shipping cost. Your total cost would be only \$51.50.

Please make checks out to Alan Jabbour and mail your order to the address given below. Or if you prefer—now that my daughter Hannah is dragging me into modernity—pay by credit card through PayPal. E-mail me with your order requesting it, and I'll E-mail you an

invoice with a link to PayPal. Whether you use check or PayPal, be sure to enclose a listing of the items you want.

Thanks!
Alan

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A Penny Learned

In the July 2004 issue of the *Old-Time Times* (see "A Penny Learned"), I read about the Amazing Slowdowner software program.

This program slows down a tune without changing the pitch. I thought, Lil, this is what you need to learn those fiddle tunes that go so fast. Specifically, I've been practicing "Jerusalem Ridge" and was having problems finding all the notes in the "B" part.

I searched on the Web site for the program—it is available at www.ronimusic.com for \$44. Hoping that I could find it at lower price, I searched some more and found it for \$40. Being the cheapskate that I am, I wanted to go lower still.

Doing additional searches, I found out that the latest version of the *Windows Media Player* program, which comes on most PCs (and is surely downloadable), has a music slow down function as well. This is not as sophisticated as *Amazing Slowdowner*, as the windows program has only one slow down speed, but it served my needs and should provide an alternative to those of you on a budget.
~Lilly Hsu

Please Contribute to Your Newsletter!

If you have information you want to submit, or if you have ideas for improving the news-

letter, contact Phil Sparks.

If you are willing to review a CD, contact Phil Sparks. If you don't contact him, he will contact you!

If you have a tidbit on picking, learning tunes, caring for instruments, etc, please submit it for the "A Penny Learned" article.

HELP!!!! If you know about an upcoming old-time music event, don't assume that we already know about it. If it's not posted on our Web site (www.nashvilleoldtime.org), we need the information desperately. ***Please help us keep our old-time community informed.***

You can reach Phil at:

kpsparks@msn.com

or

615-797-4356

or

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The ***submission deadline*** for April's newsletter is ***Monday, March 21***.

Editor's Note: The articles in this newsletter are placed according to when they are submitted. The first article I receive is placed at the top, the second goes next, and so on.