



A Publication of Your
Nashville Old-Time
String Band Association

ASSOCIATION EVENTS

1st Thursday Jam
September 7
Slow & Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Two Rivers
Mansion
♪

2nd Thursday Jam
September 14
Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Buchanan
Log House
♪

3rd Thursday Jam
September 21
Slow & Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Two Rivers
Mansion
♪

4th Thursday
Performance Group
Rehearsal
September 28
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Buchanan Log House
♪

4th-Sunday Jam
1 to 5 PM
At the
Nashville Zoo

The Old-Time Times

SEPTEMBER 2006

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Dan Levenson to Present Banjo Workshop and Concert

~Patsy Weiler

Lovers of old-time music and fascinating stories will not want to miss Dan Levenson's appearance in Nashville on Sunday, November 5. We are announcing this information now so you can go ahead and mark your calendars and help spread the word around Middle Tennessee.

Selected by the readers of Banjo Newsletter as one of the top ten clawhammer banjo players in the county, Dan will be teaching an old-time banjo workshop from 2 to 4 PM and will then present a great and enjoyable house concert from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the newly opened Deering Showroom, 1903 Omohundro Court, right off of Lebanon Road and near the VFW Post.

Todd Wright is the Deering Artist Relations representative in Nashville. He plays old-time banjo and hammered dulcimer, and he has graciously agreed to open the Deering showroom, which is located in the basement of his home, for a nice time of learning, friends, and music. The room will comfortably hold 30 to 40 folks so please let us know early on if you can attend.

The cost for the workshop and the two hour concert is \$50. To attend just the workshop, the fee is \$40. The charge for the performance is \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door.

The concert, *An Evening with Dan Levenson*, will combine old-time fiddle, Appalachian banjo, guitar, dance and song in a storytelling format.

A modern-day troubadour, Dan has been touring for nearly two decades. Much like Will Rogers, the great writer and story teller, Dan is a keen observer of life and delights his audiences with tales from the road mixed with traditional Appalachian stories.

Following the house concert, an old-time jam is planned for folks who are at the concert or have attended the workshop.

Dan combines superb musicianship with the ability to teach what he knows in a way folks can understand and apply to their own playing. He teaches prebeginner to performance-level workshops all across the country as well as around the world.

Many of you will recognize his name from his banjo work in the Boiled Buzzard String Band. These days he is the fiddler for The Hippie-Billies String Band, one that features his wife Jennifer and other musically gifted friends.

This talented musician is the author of the Mel Bay video/DVD series called *Clawhammer from Scratch: A Guide for the Clawless*. Additionally, he has penned the Mel Bay tab book *Buzzard Banjo Clawhammer Style*. Dan is currently putting the finishing touches on *Old-Time Festival Tunes for the Clawhammer Banjo*, which will be available by his Nashville visit.

His most recent recording project, *Traveling Home*, was produced by Bob Carlin. Other releases include the well-known *Barenaked Banjo*, *Light of the Moon*, *Eat at Joes*, and *Fine Dining*.

He also is a coeditor, with Bob Carlin, of *Banjo Newsletter's* quarterly "Old-Time Way" feature.

Checks for this event should be made out and mailed to: Todd Wright, c/o Deering Banjo, PO Box 290007, Nashville, TN 37229-0007.

The Nashville area is not a regular tour stop for Dan, so this is a great opportunity to hear and meet an artist that *Fiddler Magazine's* Bob Buckingham describes as "an accomplished fiddler and one of the best clawhammer banjo players in the country."

For more information about Dan, you can visit his Web site at <http://oldtimemusic.us/>

NOTE: A Possible Fiddle Workshop

Dan is arriving in the Nashville area on Saturday, November 4. In addition to the banjo workshop and house concert scheduled for Sunday, he is willing to do a two-hour old-time fiddle workshop on Saturday evening, time to be determined. He needs at least 10 paying people for this to happen. It would be at the Deering Showroom in Nashville. The cost for the two hour workshop is \$40. For those who pay in advance to attend both workshops, fiddle and banjo, the fee is only \$75.

If you have a serious interest in attending a fiddle workshop, please drop Patsy Weiler an e-mail at salt27@aol.com or call her at 615-653-2069. We need to have a head count by Monday, September 18. If there is enough interest, it will be announced in Notsba's October newsletter. □

Buying and Restoring Old Fiddles

~Lex Conatser

For the past year and a half, I have been obsessed with fiddles, or so everyone tells me. I wanted one first when I was 11 years old. The cost was \$78, but my father told me it was too expensive. He was not going to buy it and pay for me to take lessons. He said I should just stick with the guitar I already had. Well, to a strong-willed child, that meant I was going to play one someday. Thirty years later, here I am. I have now restored over 20 fiddles and have several others waiting.

The first and most important thing about a fiddle is the sound. Then comes the way it looks. After buying several fiddles, I found the ones made in the 1800's are more likely to have a smooth, mellow, relaxing sound. I have been known to play such fiddles three hours nonstop, just because I can't get enough of the sound. They are the ones with the back that feels like a washboard because the wood grain has ripples. Those are the best. Several people have told me that it's because they are over 100 years old.

I have passed up hundreds of fiddles to find the right ones and have mostly picked German fiddles. They go with my German heritage. If a label says what country it is made in, that tells me it was made after 1891, and I usually am not interested in it. (In 1891, the US passed a law saying all goods coming in to America had to be labeled with the country of origin.) I like the unlabeled fiddles because thus far, they sound the best.

In talking with other luthiers, I have learned that some of my fiddles are clearly from the 1840s to 1870s while others appear to be from the 1800s. When I compared fiddles made in the 1900s to those made in the 1800s, there are major differences. Soon, I was hooked and

knew what to look for to get a historical piece made in the 1800s. Starting in the late 1800s, many fiddles were mass produced, so I look for the fiddles made one at a time.

As for restoring them, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so anything goes. Most fiddles need only a new set-up of strings and a bridge, and maybe a tailpiece, end button, and new pegs. Others need a new fingerboard, nut, or saddle. Still others need to be glued here and there.

In selecting a fiddle, I look for one with the original finish and no cracks though I have some with a crack here or there. They are easy enough to fix.

After I put a fiddle back together, I enjoy hearing it again as if it were the first time it has been played. I have a secret polish that brings out the shine, but I think it helps the sound more.

For fun, I have acquired many unique, vintage designs of inlaid flowers and other inlays to add that special touch. I have a couple of fiddles from the early 1900s with geared ivory or bone tuners, and I have purchased several lots of “pre-ban” elephant ivory from old museums. I use it to make nuts, saddles, and decorations, as well as guitar picks. Usually, I like a fiddle as plain as it can be, to give it the authentic look of an old original.

I enjoy the time it takes to find and work on a fiddle. I think about the wood when it was in a tree and about where the tree grew. The beauty of the wood grain just grabs me. I think about the person who picked out the wood, carved it, and then took the time to put it together. Restoring old fiddles is certainly a relaxing and rewarding hobby. □

The President's Corner

~Jim Hornsby

I've been writing mostly about the business side of the association. This month, I would like to tell you about the fun we've been having. Playing and singing old-time music is great fun wherever it takes place, but Notsba has been especially fortunate to have some

wonderful places to play for both our jams and our public performances.

Our Thursday night jams are held at two locations: Two Rivers Mansion on McGavock Pike, and The Buchanan Log House on Elm Hill Pike. Both are great places to play and historically appropriate for old-time music. Both facilities generously allow us to play there at no charge in return for occasional volunteer work and performances at the facilities.

Two Rivers Mansion is a part of the Metro Department of Parks and Recreation. The Department offers community classes in art and music throughout Davidson County, and we have joined in with our slow jams to be what is referred to in the department's catalogue of classes as “String Band 101.”

We meet at Two Rivers on the first and third Thursdays of each month. All ages and skill levels are welcome, and we encourage anyone with an interest in learning old-time tunes and instruments to join us. Recent newsletter articles have pointed out that one has to be careful at festivals not to join in a jam until you are sure you are welcome. That is good advice, but I want to emphasize that *everyone is welcome at the Two Rivers jams*. They are intended as learning experiences to help improve our knowledge and skills.

On the second Thursday of each month we have an open jam at the Buchanan Log House. Again, it is free and *everyone is welcome*. It is still a part of the learning experience, but we don't “teach” there. We just cut loose and have fun with the music.

On the fourth Thursday on the month, the Notsba performance group meets at the Buchanan Log House to hone our playing and singing skills for public performances. If the Two Rivers jams are “String Band 101,” the performance group meeting might be called “String Band 201.” In these meetings we take our knowledge of the tunes and instruments to the next level with an emphasis on ensemble playing and harmony singing. We put our skills to the test with public performances throughout Middle Tennessee.

Over the past year, we have had a great time playing at nifty places like the Opryland Hotel, the Bicentennial Mall, Centennial Park, the Nashville Zoo, Oaklands Mansion in Murfreesboro, Historic Granville, and Carnton Mansion in Franklin. Our public performances are fun, low-pressure events, and we have been consistently well received and appreciated.

Any money we make from these events goes to Notsba. It is an important revenue source for the Association, and we appreciate all the players who make it happen. Don Kent has been making the business arrangements for the performances, and he has done a great job organizing and expanding our playing opportunities. I am grateful that Don has agreed to continue the good work this next year.

And don't forget our 4th-Sunday jams. Once each month, we bring pot-luck snacks and meet at the home of a member who hosts an afternoon jam. Good food, good music, and good friends—what better way to spend a casual afternoon?

We try to offer a variety of playing opportunities to fit your schedules and interests. Come on out and join us. Where else can you have so much fun for free! □

The Memphis Dulcimer Gathering and Folk Festival

~Betty Westmoreland

The 2006, The Memphis Dulcimer Gathering and Folk Festival will be held at Calvary Episcopal Church, 102 North Second, Memphis, Tennessee, on Friday and Saturday, September 29-30.

The cost is \$90 per person for all events, \$45 per person for each day; \$5 admission for nonplayers, and \$10 per person for the Saturday night concert. Lunch will be available from the church at a cost of \$5 per person per day. Friday night's all-instruments jam is FREE.

Full-price admission includes two days of workshops by Janita Baker, Larkin Kelley Bryant, Lee Cagle, Larry Conger, Jim Miller, Karen Mueller, Don Pedi, Bill Taylor, and

Rick Thum to be held in The Trading Post vendor area. It also includes Friday night's all-instruments jam session and Saturday night's concert.

Day admission includes access to The Trading Post vendor area, demonstration workshops, informal jams, and Friday night's all-instruments jam.

Volunteers are needed to assist with registration, classroom set-up, and work in the vendor area. If you can help, call Lee Cagle at 901-372-0510.

Vendors at the Trading Post include Janita Baker, Larkin Kelley Bryant, Lee Cagle, Larry Conger, Dancing to the Spirit of the Wood (gift shop and art gallery), The Dulcimer Doctor (Bob Magowan); The Dulcimer House (Dennis Moran), Kathy Hellweg Jewelry, Jim Miller, Modern Mountain Dulcimers (David McKinney), Karen Mueller, Don Pedi, Bill Taylor, and Rick Thum.

The Trading Post will be open throughout the day Friday and Saturday, except as noted on the schedule.

Web sites: www.memphis-dulcimer.com; www.leecagledulcimers.com

If you have questions, please call Lee Cagle at 901-372-0510 or Carla Maxwell at 901-756-0119. □

Yet Another Mt Airy Festival?

~Phil Sparks

An e-mail from Dave Cannon recently alerted us to the existence of a second Mt Airy fiddler's convention.

I Googled Mt Airy and could find only the information dealing with the festival held in June. I then called the Mt Airy Chamber of Commerce. They told me a second festival was, indeed, being held this Friday and Saturday, September 1-2. Beyond that they could give me only a phone number, 336-786-2236, the number at Veterans' Memorial Park, the same location of the other festival. I called that number and reached an answer machine.

If any of you, our faithful readers, can tell us more about this festival, we would sincerely appreciate it. Just send your information to Phil Sparks, editor of this newsletter. □

Exciting Results from the Contests at Clifftop

One of Notsba's members and the son of one of Notsba's good friends distinguished themselves at Clifftop by excelling in the contests.

Rebekah Weiler took fifth in the Adult Banjo Contest, and Cole Holland, son of Jim Holland from northern Alabama, took *first* in the Youth Banjo Contest.

Rebekah and Cole can take a great deal of satisfaction from their victories. The finest old-time musicians of North American and Europe gather at Clifftop to compete, with 80 to 100 contestants in every category. We congratulate them both! □

David Schnauffer Passes Away

David Schnauffer, perhaps the greatest mountain dulcimer player of all time, has died at the young age of 53.

He was born in Texas, but moved to Nashville to become a professional dulcimer player. He is the only dulcimer player to earn enough recording credits to join the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS).

He had recorded with such artists as Johnny Cash, Chet Atkins, Mark Knopfler, Hank Williams Jr, Mark O'Connor, and Cyndi Lauper. He even opened concerts for the Everly Brothers. David also turned out two albums on his own, *Delcimore* and *Dulcimer Deluxe*.

In addition, David was a beloved teacher. He made an instructional video and wrote numerous articles about the dulcimer and its history. In 1995, he became Vanderbilt's first professor of Dulcimer, teaching at the Blair School of Music. □

Ole-Time Farm Festival Will Be Held at Cedars of Lebanon Park

On Saturday, September 23, from 9 AM until 6:30 PM, the Friends of Cedars of Lebanon will sponsor the Ole-Time Farm Festival at Cedars of Lebanon Park.

The attractions include antique power equipment, cloggers, buck dancing clowns,

farm animal petting, a ferrier, a blacksmith, horse-drawn surreys, handmade crafts, home-grown food and baked goods, and refreshments served by local youth groups.

Music will be provided by the Cross Fire Band, Krystal Marie, Molly and Johnny, the Wolf Creek Bluegrass Band, and the Men of Grace Gospel Band.

Informal jamming is also encouraged.

For more information, call Ken Kackley at 615-286-1390.

Y'all come! It's **FREE!** □

Appalachian Dulcimer Building Class Will Be Held at Cedars of Lebanon Park

You can build at teardrop-shaped mountain dulcimer at Cedars of Lebanon Park over the weekend of September 29-October 1.

Using pre-cut native wood, the dulcimers will be constructed using a modified mould system. Participants will assemble a dulcimer, add the frets, finish it, learn to tune it in AAD and DAD, and then learn to play a few tunes.

The class is open to individuals age 18 and over. A basic knowledge of woodworking tools would be helpful but is not required.

The class will take between 10 and 15 hours. It will start Friday evening, at 6:30 and go until 10. Saturday, it will pick up at 9 AM and go until . . . (Be prepared for a long day.) The next day, Sunday, the class will pick up again at 10 AM and conclude at 2 PM.

The fee for this workshop is only \$75. It covers the instruction, one dulcimer kit, strings, and tuners. In addition, each participant should bring a can of spray lacquer, *not polyurethane or acrylic*. Dutch Boy and Deft are good choices of lacquer, either gloss or semigloss.

To register, contact Kenny Daniel at Cedars of Lebanon Park (615-443-2769 or 1-800-713-5180). Act now! The class size is limited to 10 people. □

Notsba Members Present a Dance Workshop at Swannanoa

~Patsy Weiler

Two of our members recently traveled to Swannanoa to present a Master Workshop on the traditional buck dance.

National buck dancing champion Thomas Maupin was invited to demonstrate his unique style of traditional flatfoot buck dancing, and he took Rebekah Weiler along to accompany him on the banjo.

They gave their presentation on Tuesday afternoon, July 25, with Phil Jamison serving as moderator. Earlier in the day, Thomas visited the classes of Rodney Sutton and Gordy Hiners, who were both early mainstays of the Green Grass Cloggers.

On Monday evening, Thomas and Rebekah took the stage at the Kettredge Theater on campus to do a dance and music presentation of the tune "Snowdrop."

It was a wonderful honor for Thomas, who was the dance champion at Clifftop in 2005, to have the opportunity to show so many people his Middle Tennessee steps.

Rebekah, who was a Swannanoa Youth Scholar in 2002, said, "It was a surreal experience for me to be on stage with so many traditional artists that I admire. I appreciate Thomas inviting me to accompany him. The audience loved seeing him dance." □

Deering Banjo Opens a Nashville Showroom

The Deering Banjo Company, America's largest banjo manufacturer, opened a new showroom this spring in Nashville. Todd Wright, Deering's director of Artist Relations, will host the intimate parlor-like atmosphere of the showroom. Charlie Cushman, nationally acclaimed musician and respected banjo set-up and maintenance expert, is also on the staff.

Nestled in a lovely wooded area four miles from downtown, the showroom will display the full Deering product line, including Vega, Tenbrooks, and Goodtime banjos.

The Deering Banjo Parlor will focus on supporting the needs of professional musicians

and offering all banjo enthusiasts a hands-on experience with one of the widest selections of Deering banjos in the eastern United States. The showroom also offers workshops, group lessons, and live Web broadcasts.

To schedule a visit, contact Todd Wright at 1-800-332-2656 or todd@deeringbanjos.com.

Visit the Deering Web site, www.deeringbanjos.com for workshop schedules, upcoming events, and complete information on all of their American-made banjos. □

New Notsba Members

We extend a warm welcome to six new members:

David and Melody Johnson
Evan Johnson
David Carpenter and his wife,
Michael Ann Williams
Roger Stolen

We thank you for joining us and for supporting old-time music. We hope you will be active members and will participate in our jams, our performances, and our festival, Breakin' Up Winter. □

Directions to the Jams at Buchanan Log House

From more or less the center of Nashville, take I-40 East. From I-40 East, take the Donelson Pike Exit (Exit 216C), and merge onto Donelson Pike. Go about 0.4 mile on Donelson Pike, and turn right onto Elm Hill Pike.

Go 0.5 mile on Elm Hill Pike to the Buchanan Log House, on the left at 2910 Elm Hill Pike. □

Direction to the Jams at Two Rivers Mansion

From the south or east of Nashville, take I-40 East to Briley Parkway North.

Go about 3.6 miles on Briley Parkway and take the Two Rivers Parkway Exit. (Expect delays. This area of Briley Parkway is under construction.) Follow Two Rivers Parkway East for about 0.7 mile to McGavock Pike,

and turn left (north).

Go about 0.4 mile on McGavock Pike, past McGavock High School, to Two Rivers Mansion at 3130 McGavock Pike. It's the second drive on the left past the high school. A large sign and two stone pillars mark the entrance.

From I-65 North, take Briley Parkway East for 5 or 6 miles, and exit at Two Rivers Parkway. (The construction on Briley Parkway has closed the Two Rivers Exit that serves eastbound traffic. You will have to go on to the next exit and come back with the westbound traffic.) Then follow the directions given above. □

Directions to the 4th-Sunday Jam

August's 4th-Sunday Jam will be held at the Nashville Zoo from 1 till 5 PM in the "Historic Farm" area.

We can start at 2 PM, the regular time, but anyone who wants to arrive as early as 1 PM is welcome to do so. We are asked to park at the far end of the main lot in the "Bus Parking Area." A shuttle will come by periodically to pick up riders from that parking lot and carry them to a point near the Historic Farm area. Drinks, snacks, and restrooms are located nearby.

They have no map yet, but the Zoo entrance is at 3777 Nolensville Road. There is a master plan at their website; www.nashvillezoo.org.

The zoo will have some chairs available, but to be sure, it would be a good idea to bring one.

Don't worry about the weather. We will be playing in a clean barn with a brick floor. □

EVENTS

TENNESSEE

Mountaineer Festival

Held at Fall Creek Falls State Park near Pikeville, Friday through Sunday, September 9-11. Performers at this event include The Blue Creek Ramblers, featuring our own Rebekah Weiler. For more information, call 423-881-5708 or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org. □

The Memphis Dulcimer Gathering and Folk Festival

Held at Calvary Episcopal Church, 102 North Second, in Memphis on Friday and Saturday, September 29-30. For more information, call Lee Cagle at 901-372-0510 or e-mail lee@leecagledulcimers.com. Also, see the article about this festival on page 4. □

KENTUCKY

JP Fraley's Mountain Music Festival

Held at Carter Caves State Park near Olive Hill, Wednesday through Sunday, September 6-10. For more information, call 606-286-4411, or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org. □

Kentucky Folk Life Festival

Held at the Old State Capital in Frankfort, Friday through Sunday, September 15-17. For more information, call 502-564-1792 or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org. □

INDIANA

Indiana State

Picking and Fiddling Championships

Held in Princeton, Friday and Saturday, September 15-16. For more information, call Tony Rothrock at 812-789-2518, or go to "Festivals & Contests" at www.nashvilleoldtime.org. □

Hosts for 2006 4th-Sunday Jams

We now have hosts for all of the 4th-Sunday Jams to be held in 2006. Darlyne will soon be after us to sign up for 2007. □

A Penny Learned: Peghed Banjo Pegs

~Phil Sparks

Last month, Bob White and I told you what we could about Pegheds for fiddles, geared pegs that look like the standard ebony fiddle pegs.

Shortly after I purchased and installed the Peghed fiddle pegs, I ordered Peghed's banjo pegs, the ones Ron Ault had told me about. They, too, look like fiddle pegs and go well

with older banjos that have or once had friction pegs.

I had to order them directly from Chuck Herin because they are so new that they are not yet available through the normal retail outlets.

They arrived in only a few days, but came with no instructions. When I e-mailed Chuck and asked for the instructions, he said he was still working on them. I told him I could figure it out and went to work.

I used a fiddle peg reamer to fit the pegs into the headstock, and within a few minutes, they were installed exactly like I wanted them.

Then came the peg for the fifth string. The reamer wouldn't work for it because it can't pass through the hole like it does with the headstock of a fiddle or banjo.

After scratching my head for a while, I just wrapped some sandpaper around an old fiddle peg and twisted it in the hole for the fifth-string peg. I kept adding another layer of sand paper and twisting the peg in the hole. At one point, I had to drill the hole a smidgen deeper. Finally, I had it just right.

I added a drop of Gorilla Glue to each peg, twisted them into place, and left them to set overnight. The next day, I was picking with Pegheds.

I like my new Peghed banjo tuners. They look almost exactly like the friction pegs that came with it when I bought it. I had since changed over to modern (chrome) geared pegs, but they never looked right. Now my banjo looks like a pre-1900 banjo again.

I have only one minor complaint. The fifth-string peg is a bit too long. It looks a bit funny, and it barely fits in my case. I told Chuck about this problem, and he said he might make the next batch 1/4 inch shorter.

The cost was \$100 for all five pegs. You can order them by contacting Chuck at chuck@pegheds.com. He'll probably have the instructions done by now. □

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 or a book, 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. □

General Contact Information for the Nashville Old-Time String Band Association:

E-mails for All Members

friends@nashvilleoldtime.org

Jim Hornsby, President

friends@nashvilleoldtime.org

615-650-2328

Ed Gregory, Web Master

615-889-5566

edgregory@comcast.net

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 Sparks, the editor of this newsletter at:

kpsparks@msn.com

or

615-797-4356

or

2020 Claylick Road

White Bluff, TN 37187

The *submission deadline for September's newsletter is Monday, August 28.* □

Classified Ads

STRING BAND MUSICIANS FOR HIRE

Notsba members are willing to perform for the public for a small fee. All of our earnings go to the organization, none to the pickers. If you know of someone who might make use of our services, contact Don Kent at www.nashvilleoldtime.org, or call him at 615-868-9951. □

RATTLESNAKE RATTLES FOR SALE

If you need a rattlesnake rattle for your fiddle, Phil Sparks has a couple left. The price is \$1.50 per segment, and these rattles have 6 to 9 segments. Contact Phil at 615-797-4356 or at ksparks@msn.com). □