



A Publication
of Your
Nashville
Old-Time
String Band
Association

UPCOMING
ASSOCIATION
EVENTS



Thursday
November 3
Slow Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Stratford High
Cafeteria



Thursday
November 10
Regular Jam
6:30 to 8:30 PM
Stratford High
Cafeteria



November 27
4th-Sunday Jam
2 to 5 PM,
Hosted by

Old-Time Times

November 2005

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EVENTS

With the cooler weather heading our way, there aren't a lot of major events on the horizon between now and our own Breaking Up Winter retreat the first weekend in March. With that in mind, here are the slim pickin's for November:

ARIZONA

November 4-6

Salome Fiddlers Jamboree

Salome, AZ

It's a pretty good bet that these folks won't be worried about the cold weather. For info:

Linda Darland - 928-859-3466 or tuffyd@tds.net

Sign up now to host a 4th Sunday in 2006

~ Darlyne Kent

If you have a preferred month to host the 4th Sunday Jam in 2006, please contact me as soon as possible. We may want to use the following months for area parks; June, July, and August, so I'm asking that you choose a different month. We could very well play at any of the following parks, under some nice shade trees: Bicentennial Mall, Moss-Wright, Warner, Two Rivers, or Centennial.

So, reserve your month early!!! Contact Darlyne Kent, dkent@davidsonacademy.com, or 860-5307, to schedule a 4th Sunday jam.

A special thanks to all who have hosted jams for 2005! We've enjoyed visiting in different homes, and sampling some mighty fine food. Sunday jams are always such a treat for me because we see some folks who are only able to come to the 4th Sunday Jams.

I hope you'll make it a priority to schedule your calendar around the 4th Sundays so that we can enjoy your contribution to the jamming sessions. Feel free to invite other musician friends, with the understanding that they know we will be playing old-time music, and all that it implies.

Bowing Technique: The Search Goes On

~Phil Sparks

For quite some time, now, I've been trying to improve my bowing technique. Here's a report on what I've learned so far.

NOTE: Let me first say a few words about "up-bows" and "down-bows." It is generally conceded that most good fiddlers use a dominant down-bow. What does that mean? One measure in 2-4 time has two beats. Each of those two beats can be divided into four eighth notes (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) with a slight emphasis being placed on the 1 and the 5. When the down-bow is dominant, the 1 is always a down-bow and the 5 is often a down-bow. (In all of the following bowing diagrams, read the 1 as a down-bow.) Any fiddler can attest to the fact that up-bows are a bit awkward, especially when they need to be emphasized. (I may be barking at the moon, but I'm determined to practice up-bows until they are as comfortable as down-bows, and I'm making a little progress.)

When I first started with the fiddle, someone showed me the classic shuffle bow, 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, and said, "That's all you need to know." (1 2 represents one bow stroke for two eighth notes, a "slur.") I took his word for it and set about mastering the shuffle bow. I eventually discovered, however, that pure shuffle bowing is both limiting and monotonous. It's limiting when a slur includes two notes played on different strings. (The notes are clearer when we change bowing direction each time we change strings.) Also, when one note lasts through the 3 and the 4 or through the 7 and the 8, the bowing pattern inverts, making the up-bow dominant. Besides, the 1 may be a down-bow, but the 5 is *always* an up-bow. Monotonous? Anything becomes monotonous after it's repeated a few million times.

Next I tried the "Georgia bow" (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8...). Notice that only the 3 and the 7 are up-bows, and quick ones at that, so the down bow clearly dominates. Another advantage is that the quick up-bows shift the slight emphasis from the 1 and the 5 to the 3 and the 7, the up-beats. (Emphasizing the up-beats gives any tune a pleasant bluesy feel.) Still, I found it extremely difficult to learn. When I finally mastered it, I just did not like it. As with the shuffle bow, it is limited when the slurs include notes played on different strings. Another thing that bothered me was that the Georgia bow seems to be used more in fancy Bluegrass fiddling than in old-time fiddling, though I know one old-time fiddler who uses it almost exclusively and with great success. (She says that she never heard of the Georgia bow. It's just "her way" of bowing.) In all fairness, Fletcher Bright, who first taught me the Georgia bow, never told us to use it all the time. He said only that it adds a nice touch at certain times in certain places.

After I left the Georgia bow, I turned to Alan Jabbour's syncopated bowing style. On his instruction tape, he describes it as the basic 123 123 12 rhythm (triplets in 2-4 time). I tried bowing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, but it never sounded right, and the next measure always started with an up-bow. Perhaps I was applying it incorrectly. I studied the sheet music that came with Alan's instruction tape, but I could never figure out how his syncopated pattern was reflected in his bowing notations. At Breaking Up Winter, I asked Alan for help, but he was unable to explain it so that my plain brain could understand.

Later, I went to a John Harrod workshop in Bowling Green. John recommends that we make each note a separate bow stroke (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, no slurs). Let's call it the one-note, one-

stroke method. John says Kenny Baker does it that way—mostly. John is also a strong down-bow advocate. As long as every measure has an even number of notes, the dominate down-bow holds, but as soon that changes, the up-bow takes over. John says we just have to figure out how to find a way back to the down-bow. I spent several months mastering the one-note, one-stroke method but found it to be even more monotonous than the shuffle bow. It taught me to love slurs.

Next I tried an invention of my own, the “frontward-backward shuffle bow” (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8). I like it in that it breaks up the monotony and even adds a certain lilt to the music, but like the Georgia bow, it is difficult, extremely difficult, to master. I’ve found it almost impossible to apply to my tunes.

Recently, I spent a whole day running errands—with only one CD in the car, Buddy Thomas’s *Kitty Puss*. As a result, I listened to Buddy’s fiddling all day and paid close attention to his bow strokes. It seems to me that Buddy alternates the shuffle bow with the one-note, one-stroke method. I’m now trying this approach: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, using the shuffle bow in the first measure and the one-note, one-stroke method in the second measure, back and fourth, over and over again. (I ain’t claiming that’s exactly what Buddy does on his CDs.) It breaks up the monotony and is simple enough for my brain. What’s more, it appears to me that at least two of our better local fiddlers, Nell and Eddie, are doing something like that. It has, of course, all the limitations of the shuffle bow and the one-note, one-stroke method. Still, I like it, and I hope to work around those limitations—perhaps by becoming comfortable with the up-bow.

Anywho, the search goes on. □

Tennessee Heritage Days at Bicentennial Mall

~Darlyne Kent

What do Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett, Abraham Lincoln, and NOTSBA all have in common?

They participated in the Tennessee Heritage Days at the Bicentennial Mall!

We performed for the general public and we also provided music on stage between the presentations of historic re-enactors who played the roles of those famous figures. On Friday, schools from throughout the midstate brought in hundreds of students, many of whom heard real old-time music for the first time in their lives.

NOTSBA members, Dave Cannon, Mary Lou Durham, Rick Fretter, Ed Gregory, Jim Hornsby, Darlyne and Don Kent, Phil Sparks, and Ron Whitlow participated in the two day event, held at the Bicentennial Mall in Nashville, in late-September.

Several folks stopped by and listened for a while, and asked for additional information regarding our group. Thanks to Jim Hornsby, a flyer was available to encourage them to visit our website and obtain additional information regarding our kind of music.

Tennessee Heritage Days featured exhibits all along the mall walk whose historically, many of them in authentic costume and tools, crafts, and implements of the time in Tennessee’s history

that they represented. In addition to the aforementioned statesman, these included Native American tribes, early Spanish explorers, and Union and Confederate troops.

NOTSBA provided the ambiance between the various statesmen speeches. This was the second annual event, and sponsored by the Tennessee State Parks System. NOTSBA friend Ranger Buddy Ingram, of Cedars of Lebanon State Park, assisted in securing the event for us.

If you haven't visited the Bicentennial Mall, you really need to go. It's a beautiful mall area. Additionally, on the wall near the fountains you find the history of old-time tune Forked Deer, which was the first published tune in Tennessee and named after the river. Very interesting!

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Blue Ridge Old-Time Music Week (Mars Hill College)

~Pam White

Our first exposure to Mars Hill was a day trip we made to see if Mars Hill and what they were offering was "for us". We met with the Director of Conferences and Events, Loretta Shelton, and from the moment we met her we were friends. We knew that this was for us.

The Baptist college sits; quiet and secluded, on a hill overlooking the mountains and valleys of North Carolina. The campus is small and intimate. The first week in June it rings with old time music, from impromptu music jams to shape note singing. There are classes offered each morning from 9:00 to 11:30 in just about any segment of old time you are interested in (instrumental as well as vocal) and workshops each afternoon. There are workshops that last all week as well as one hour sessions (with several choices) that change with each day. As you walk the campus you will find musicians playing in large groups or intimate twosomes. Stopping and listening is irresistible.

Lamar Bascom Lunsford willed his extensive music collection to the college on his death. The Appalachian Cultural Studies Director, Cassie Robinson, is young, enthusiastic and congenial. She wants to share what the college has available about the musical history of the area. She is a part of the hour long afternoon daily workshops & will offer interesting topics to increase your knowledge of the music & the area.

There is entertainment each evening by the instructors with a concert on Thursday night by an outside group and a student showcase Friday evening before the Party that closes down the week. On Saturday there is an all day free Old Time gathering in Hot Springs, N.C. and if you want to spend the day there and spend another night at Mars Hill they will let you do that for the extra cost of a room.

This week can be as busy or as lazy as you want. The experience is what you make of it.

To plan for next year's event, visit: <http://www.mhc.edu/oldtimemusic/>

Bowling Green Old-Time Jams Resumed

The good folks up north (relatively) have resumed their Saturday evening old-time jams at the Bread & Bagle pizzeria. Smells and sounds good.

The jams run from 7-9 pm.

For information, contact Christie Burns at 270-799-3909

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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 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

(615) 797-4356

Phil Sparks
2020 Claylick Road
White Bluff, TN 37187

Directions to 4th Sunday Jam

Directions to Kitty and Phil's House: The Shorter but More Complicated Way

Take Highway 70 west toward Pegram. (You may want to go to Pegram by using I-40 West and taking the McCrory Lane/Natchez Trace Exit. Go north/right on McCrory Lane for about 1 mile to reach Highway 70. Then turn west/left on 70, and go 2 or 3 miles to Pegram.)

Drive through Pegram and keep going until you see Tip-A-Canoe canoe rentals on the left.

Just beyond Tip-A-Canoe, you will see a bridge that crosses the Harpeth River, and just before the bridge a road goes off to the right. Turn right onto that road (Cedar Hill).

Follow that curvy road for about 5 miles and you will come to Narrows of the Harpeth State Park. Stay on that road until you pass the park, go down a steep hill, and cross a bridge over the Harpeth.

About 1/4 mile beyond that bridge, you can turn either right or left. Turn right. (You are staying on Cedar Hill Road, and it looks like the main road.)

Keep following Cedar Hill Road. When you come to Griffintown Road, about 4 miles from the park, do not take it. If you pay attention, you can tell that Cedar Hill is the main road. Stay on Cedar Hill Road.

About 5 miles from the park, you will "T" into a larger highway. Across from the stop sign, is Mary Helen's Grocery.

Turn left, and go exactly 1/4 mile to our mailbox on the left. It's black and has "2020" and "Sparks" written on it.

Turn left into our driveway.

After you turn into our drive way, you will not see the house. It's way on up the hill. Just follow the drive way around and up the hill. It's a bit rough but everyone always makes it. Just stay in low gear, go 15 to 20 miles an hour, and keep a steady speed.

At the top of the hill, turn left. You will see a small bulldozer covered with a tarp and our house.

Drive up close to the house and park anywhere, but try not to block the drive.

We have 2 dogs, but they nice and are more afraid of you than you are of them.

Call us (797-4356) if you lose your way.

Phil Sparks

