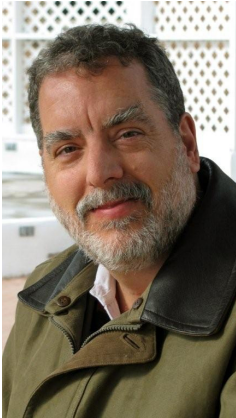


GRASS CLIPPINGS

Volume 15 Issue 3

August/September 2010

State of the Grass by President "Doc" Simpson



State of the Grass "Doc" Simpson, June 2010

Greetings Bluegrass Aficionados.

I wanted to share with you a terrific adventure I had last month. The International Bluegrass Music Museum put out a call for "ambassadors" from state bluegrass organizations to meet in Owensboro, KY. The idea was to have representatives from all over the United States meet and explore ways of strengthening our relationships between fellow organizations and also with the Museum. The officers of the DBA were kind

enough to appoint me to this position and offered financial assistance to attend.

So on June 24th the first Bluegrass Ambassadors meeting was convened at the Museum. We spent a half day doing "shake and Howdy" with each other and then proceeded to brainstorm ideas on how to improve communications with each others' organizations and to better utilize the resources of the Museum. A number of great ideas were generated. One was to have the Museum provide films from their Video Oral History Project of interviews with historic bluegrass figures for state chapters to utilize at festivals. This would allow organizations like the DBA to have educational videos being shown between band sets, or in side venues at a festival. The potential applications are as wide as our imagination.

So once the business meeting

was over, the fun began. We were all welcomed as special guests for the River of Music Party (ROMP 2010). That night we sat in a packed auditorium as over 40 bluegrass pioneers were inducted, one-by-one, into the Legends of Bluegrass. That included Doc Watson, Buck White, Roland White, and Curly Seckler. Of course, great music performances were part of the affair. But what was particularly special for me was getting to jam with many of these legends later that night at the hotel we were all staying at. Wow.

For the next two days we joined a huge crowd that was treated to outstanding performances by Doc Watson, Jimmy Martin, Jr., Pete Wernick, Claire Lynch Band, Roland White Band, and Valerie Smith. Showstoppers included The Issacs and Dailey & Vincent.

CONTINUED on PAGE 11

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Membership Secretary--Fran Riggs: To join the DBA, renew a membership or submit an address change, contact Fran via phone at (520) 490-4560, email frantriggs@aol.com or snail mail 17247 E. Peach Tree Road, Mayer, Arizona 86333-4146

Publicity--Mike Headrick: Contact Mike at (520) 760-0745 or mbheadrick@aol.com

Booking Bands--Bonnie Lohman: To book a DBA band for an event, phone 520-296-1231 or email basslady78@comcast.net

Advertising--Bonnie Lohman: To purchase advertising in our newsletter, contact by phone or email

MEMBERSHIP DISPLAY ADS

PRICES

1/4 PAGE--\$25 PER ISSUE, \$100 ANNUAL
 1/2 PAGE--\$40 PER ISSUE, \$160 ANNUAL
 FULL PAGE--\$60 PER ISSUE \$240 ANNUAL
 CLASSIFIED ADS \$5 FOR 5 LINES OR LESS
 DBA members free space permitting

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Tucson's 11th Annual

Desert Bluegrass Festival

Hi Bluegrass Fans

Well the summer is upon us - but fall is just around the corner and with fall comes our 11th Annual Desert Bluegrass Festival. It will be especially exciting this year with our new venue at the AVA amphitheater, great bands – IIIrd Tyme Out, Special Consensus, Palmer Divide, X Train, Tangled Strings and Jam Pak, the excitement of our 3rd band contest and the “drop of the hat band scramble”, vendors (including food vendors), workshops, jams and just plain fun with friends new and old. Of course, first we have to get through the summer. To help you out, I have put together the top 10 list of things to do to prepare for the festival.

- #10 Reserve the weekend on your calendar – October 29-31, 2010
- #9 Program the AVA Amphitheater at 5655 W. Valencia Road into your navigation system
- #8 Plan on being a festival volunteer and watch for the announcement of the volunteer organizational meeting in the next issue of Grass Clippings.
- #7 Read all the information about the festival on the DBA website – www.desertbluegrass.org.
- #6 Become a friend of the festival on facebook (Tucson's Annual Desert Bluegrass Festival) Add your own photos or stories from prior festivals.
- #5 Sign up your band to compete in the band contest
- #4 Convince your favorite business to buy an advertisement in the festival program (contact me for details).
- #3 Distribute festival flyers and posters when they are available in October (Geoff Fox will be looking for you.)
- #2 Tell all of your friends, family and neighbors about the festival and invite them to come on out.
- #1 Buy new strings and tune up

Now that was not so hard and you are all set for a good time when the time comes. Keep cool and keep picking and grinning in the meantime.

Mike Headrick

News

Borders Bookstore Open Mic's - Acoustic Music

Oracle just S of Wetmore

1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 6:30 to 10:00

Sierra Vista Fiddle Contest Cancellation

Due to the uncertainty of the completion date of the brand new bandshell in Veteran's Memorial Park, the Sierra Vista Fiddle Contest Committee has decided to postpone the annual contest till next year. Alternative venues just weren't as nice or had too many logistical problems, so we'll wait till the new bandshell is finished and we have a beautiful new stage facility.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Jim at 520-678-0397 or email us at thejonesaz@cox.net.

Thanks for supporting our contest and the Cochise County Youth Orchestra for the past 5 years . We'll see you in September 2011!

17th Street Market Instrument Clinics

No Clinic in August
September Clinic to be announced--check the website
Www.desertbluegrass.org

Great Websites

Desert Bluegrass Association
www.desertbluegrass.org

Bluegrass Arizona Blog:
www.bluegrassarizona.blogspot.com

Banjo: www.banjohangout.org

Fiddle: www.fiddlehangout.com

Dobro: www.reso-nation.org or
www.resohangout.com

Bass: www.bluegrassbassplace.com

Daily Dose of Bluegrass;
www.bluegrassonthetube.com

Radio

The Bluegrass Radio Show with Milo
Saturday 10 am - 12 noon
KXCI 91.3 FM

Instruction

Bill Breen

Scruggs style banjo by ear. 520-544-2418
www.banjohangout.org/myhangout/music.asp

Corrine Cortese

Fiddle lessons 520-235-3199

Rudy Cortese

Banjo lessons 520-954-2103

Greg Morton

Bluegrass Guitar lessons 520-682-2558

Peter McLaughlin

Flatpick & bluegrass guitar: Beginner & advanced 520-529-2992

Mike Purdy

Guitar & mandolin 520-318-0659

J.P. Thom-Gronachan

Banjo, guitar, mandolin, fiddle, theory 520-682-6201

Mike Wallner

Banjo, Scruggs, melodic & clawhammer 520-327-8259

Associations

Arizona Bluegrass Association

7257 N. 50th Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85301
Rick Rhodes--Chair
623-435-8406
luvkomidy@hotmail.com
www.azbluegrass.org

International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA)

207 E. Second Street
Owensboro, KY 42303
502-926-7891

So. Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association

3020 W. Avenida Cresta
Tucson, AZ 85745
Info: Wilbur 520-743-7086

Tucson Friends of Traditional Music

Info: 520-408-6181
www.tftm.org

Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association

PO Box 26531
Tucson, AZ 85726
www.tkma.org

Tucson Old Time Music Circle

Banjo_brad@thegrid.net
Brad 520-818-0260
www.totmc.org

Jams

All DBA sponsored jams and performances are listed separately on the enclosed calendar and the DBA website at www.DesertBluegrass.org

Southern AZ Old Time Fiddlers Assn.

Southwest Community Center
Cardinal Ave, Tucson, AZ
Tuesday 7 PM
Info: Wilbur 520-743-7086

Tradition Acoustic Bluegrass Jam Sessions

Tempe, AZ
Wednesday 7-10 PM
Please call for confirmation of dates
Info: Howard or Susan
480-897-7425

Catalina Mountain Chapter of the AZ Old Time Fiddlers Association

3rd Monday at 7 PM
Info: Laura 520-743-9491

Autoharp jam
Glass Onion Café
1990 W. River Road
Tuesday 1-4 PM
Info: Bonnie 520-349-4812

Bands

Bear Canyon Ramblers

Marilyn 520-760-0479
bluegrassjamboree@gmail.com
www.bearcanyonramblers.com

Cadillac Mountain

Corrine 520-235-3199

Crystal Ridge

Brian Davies 520-349-9497
www.musicucson.com

Desert Sun String Band

Charlie Sides 520-579-5918
www.myspace.com/desertsunstringband

Dusty River Boys

Mary Ann McCracken 520-977-8113

Greg Morton

520-682-2558

Headline Bluegrass Band

Bill Cox 480-208-5217
www.myspace.com/headlinebluegrass

Los Hombres

Kenny Erickson 520-235-7473

Manzanita Bluegrass

Reid Griffin 520-349-4321
Manzanitabluegrass@dakotacom.net

Peter Mc Laughlin

520-529-2992

The Bost Family Tradition

Jeff Bost 520-432-5053
JeffBost@earthlink.net

The Busted Cowboy Band

Jim Kowee 520-455-5387

Titan Valley Warheads

Ed Davenport 520-622-3699

Way Out West

Emmy Creigh 520-323-0704

Whistle Stop

Carol Pearce 623-780-8414
Whistlestopbluegrass@cox.net
<http://www.myspace.com/whistlestopbluegrass>

One or more players must be a member of the DBA to list your jam or band.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST DBA MEMBERS

A Laretta Hagen
Ceylon, MN
Michael & Tanya Crownhart
Tucson
Bonnie & Terry Williams
Casa Grande

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Bonnie 520-296-1231

"Fiddlin' Sam Brown" And His S.S. Stewart Banjo in WWII

Bill Breen f

Eighty-year old "Fiddlin' Sam" Brown has been a good friend over the years as well as an enthusiastic supporter of bluegrass and old time music. Accompanied by his wife Georgia, Sam can always be found performing or participating in jam sessions around the Tucson, AZ area. Sam is well known in these parts as a very talented fiddler. Most folks, however, do not know about his skill with a banjo.

A few days ago, I happened to send Sam an email containing a banjo joke cartoon. The cartoon depicted two men stranded on a desert island. One of the men sees a banjo case floating toward the island and exclaims, "My banjo made it!" The second man in the cartoon is obviously not pleased with that discovery. The caption of the cartoon read, "Just when you think things can't get any worse."

Sam's response to that experience with a banjo WWII. I found his story his permission to share kindly agreed, so here is story of his S. S. Stewart with him in WWII:



cartoon described his in the tropics during fascinating and asked his story with you. He "Fiddlin' Sam" Brown's banjo as he carried it

"I was in the Navy enroute for my first 1943. While enroute to S. Stewart banjo in a

during WWII and deployment overseas in ship out, I bought an S. music store in Mountain

View, California, from a man named Louis Hirschbek, who was from Czechoslovakia. Mr. Hirschbek, the owner of the music store in Mountain View, was an organ maker who had learned that trade from his father.

I had seen a couple of banjos hanging on the wall of his store, and walked in wearing my Navy Blues.

I asked the price on the banjo and he said, "Fifteen dollars." I came back with, "I'll give you ten." He said, "Listen, young man, THIS IS NOT THAT KIND OF A STORE. That is an S.S. Stewart banjo, young man, and fifteen dollars is its price."

Louis Hirschbek--who came from Czechoslovakia--impressed me.

So I handed over the fifteen bucks and carried the banjo to the train depot where our outfit had a three hour layover and which we still had a couple of hours to go. I sat down, hit a

"Fiddlin' Sam Brown" And His S.S. Stewart Banjo in WWII

few chords in the "A" tuning and got a sing-along going--which lasted until the train started loading--with civilians joining in on the songs that they knew.

I had seen sing-alongs like that among troops in the movies, but that was the first, the last, and the only one in a train depot that I ever got involved in.

I carried that S.S. Stewart five string overseas with me the first trip and it even went through the invasion of Vella Lavella, carrying that banjo ashore in my fond embrace.

Our invasion was unopposed by land forces. The only Japanese on the island were survivors of the Battle of Coral Sea which had happened not long before we made our beachhead. The beaches of Vella Lavella were littered wi

We used to meet together in an empty 8-man squad tent for sing-alongs. Of course, I am glad there were no recordings of the lyrics of those songs, some of which no doubt had been 'composed' by prisoners in 'various states of awareness.'

We smoked cigarettes and told stories and passed the time as pleasantly as we could with the meager musical resources we had...one banjo and one harmonica.... in an outfit of 200 or so men.

I boxed up my banjo and mailed it home when I couldn't find strings for it and all the strings I'd brought along were gone. I carried that banjo overseas with me from April of 1943 through January of 1944.

Nobody complained about my banjo. We sang and passed some time pleasantly.

The old banjo is a lot the worse for having been out in the tropics without a case to protect it. I've replaced the head, and it is strung up and playable. S.S. Stewart made a banjo that was about 2/3 to 3/4 the size of the regular banjo. The pot is about 8 inches in diameter.

My Stewart banjo originally had a set of genuine ivory pegs that got lost during the shipment home from overseas, so my brother replaced those pegs with a set of geared pegs which were given to me as a Christmas present in 1938 by an uncle. I first used those geared pegs on my original Sears Roebuck SILVERTONE five string banjo, which disappeared after my brother had removed those geared pegs and put them into service on my Stewart banjo.

"Fiddlin' Sam Brown" And His S.S. Stewart Banjo in WWII

At the time when I was playing rhythm banjo for public dances at school houses and gymnasiums around my home town in North Idaho, there were only three five-string banjos that I had ever seen and I was the proud owner of one of those three banjos.

In spite of my bravado, I am just a bashful guy who grew up with memories of what this country was like out in Idaho and Washington between 1923 and Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941, when everybody's activities and prospects suddenly changed.

"Fiddlin' Sam" Brown
Tucson, AZ
March, 2010



MISSION STATEMENT

The **Desert Bluegrass Association** was conceived in March, 1995, when a group of avid bluegrassers perceived a need for an organization to develop and promote Bluegrass music for the diverse audience in the Greater Tucson Area. The **DBA** is an all volunteer organization whose purpose is to:

-  Provide a monthly meeting place for all individuals, musicians and non-musicians alike, who are interested in bluegrass music.
-  Disseminate information about bluegrass music events.
-  Develop a workshop and concert series.
-  Develop an annual bluegrass festival.
-  Support local/regional artists.
-  Support national/international artists.

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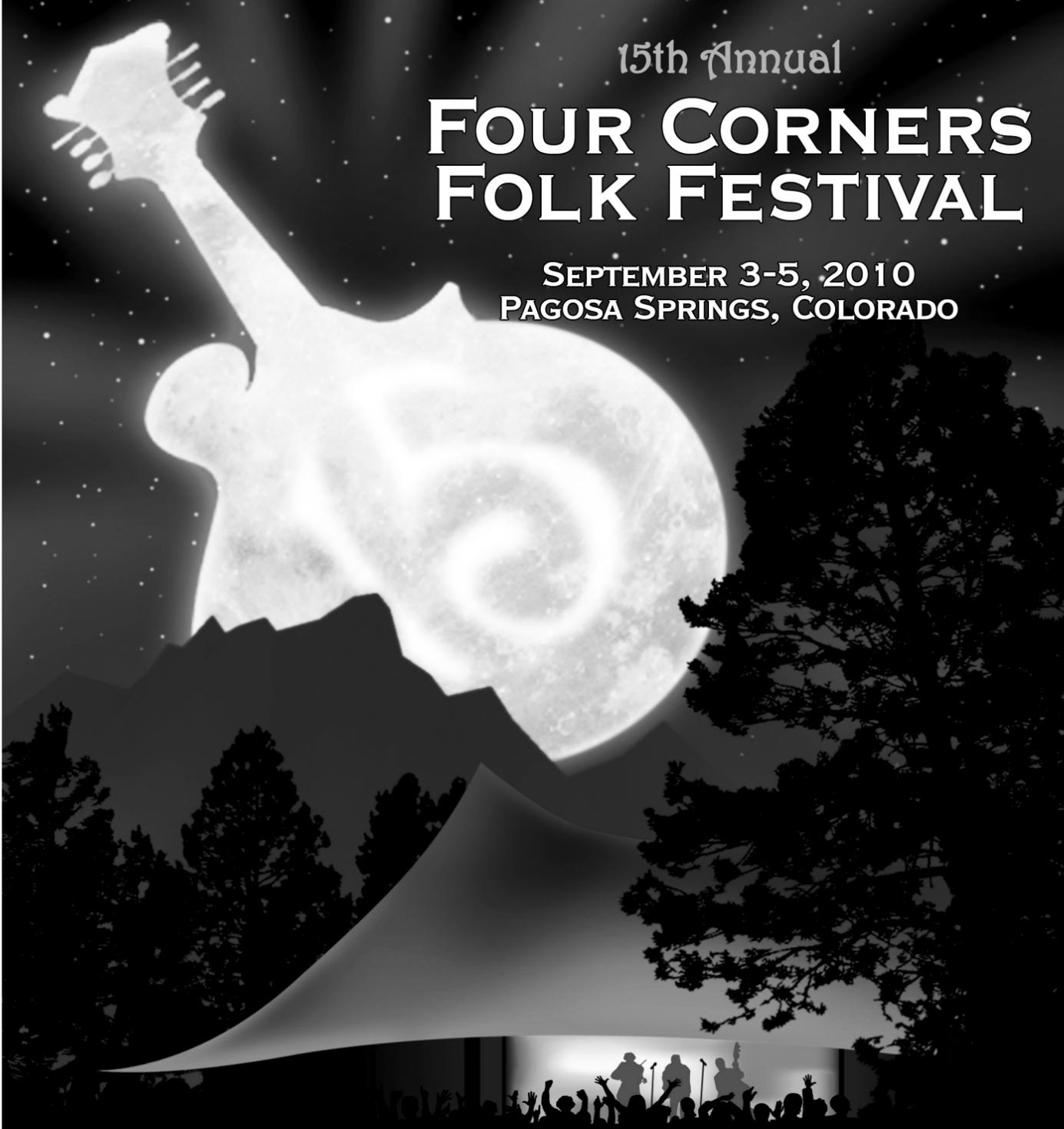


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President's Message (continued)

Along the way I forged a friendship with Steve Smith from Cumberland Acoustics. One of my favorite memories was he and I jamming with the G2 Bluegrass Band (from Sweden) till 3:30 in the morning. Bonnie Lohman will be delighted to know the band played everything in B-flat, much to Steve's and my consternation.

On my way to the airport on Sunday morning, I headed over to nearby Rosine to see Bill Monroe's childhood home and leave a pick on his headstone. In the quiet of the early morning, green trees all around, and sun coming up overhead; I thought, "What a joy to be alive and to be part of this thing we call Bluegrass."

Keep on the grass,
"Doc" Simpson

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August/September 2010 Volume 15, Issue 3
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Membership dues for the Desert Bluegrass Association are \$15 annually per family, due March 1st, and includes bulk mailing of the bi-monthly newsletter to each member.

Members joining after November of any year will have their membership extended through the next year. Those joining before November must renew the following March 1st.

First name: _____ Last name: _____
Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____
Email address: _____

Do you wish to be included in the Membership Directory? (check one) Yes ☐ No ☐

Complete this form then mail it, along with your personal check or money order payable to Desert Bluegrass Association, to:

Fran Riggs (DBA Membership Secretary)
17247 E Peach Tree Road
Mayer, AZ 86333-4146