



DESERT BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

Grass Clippings

Volume 26 Issue 2

June—July 2020



Homebound

By Dave Polston, DBA President

Greetings, all you pickers and grinners!

It's been a long strange couple of months since the last issue. The only thing to report is that you are all wondering when we can jam again. Wish I had the answer for that. The main factor is the venues where we hold our jams and workshops. They need to let us know when we can gather and under what guidelines.

Workshops

As of the writing of this article, the President has declared churches essential. That's a start, but we have not heard from Christ Community as to their plan to allow us to continue the eastside workshops. The Town of Marana sent me, and all other instructors in the Parks and Rec programs, a survey with a dozen or so questions on our thoughts on when and how to open up for the westside workshops. They stated that the information would allow them to make decisions in the next couple of weeks/month.

Jams

The Jams are the same, waiting on venues to allow us entry. Thirsty's and Pinnacle Peak are probably going to take a while. My band has been told by most of our venues, maybe July? Udall Park? It's hard to limit to 10 people. Who gets to pick? So can't really open that up, but it doesn't stop those of you who want to get a small group together and pick.

So . . . be safe, keep social distancing (especially with banjo players), and wash your dirty hands. If we get more information on openings before the next newsletter, we will email blast everyone to let them know. Can't wait to hear how awesome you all have become with all this extra practicing you got the last two months. Stay safe, stay healthy, and pick every day!!!

P.S. You will read in the newsletter about the passing of John David, past President of the DBA. His favorite song was Ripple from the Grateful Dead. Great tune! Take a listen and play along. RIP John!!

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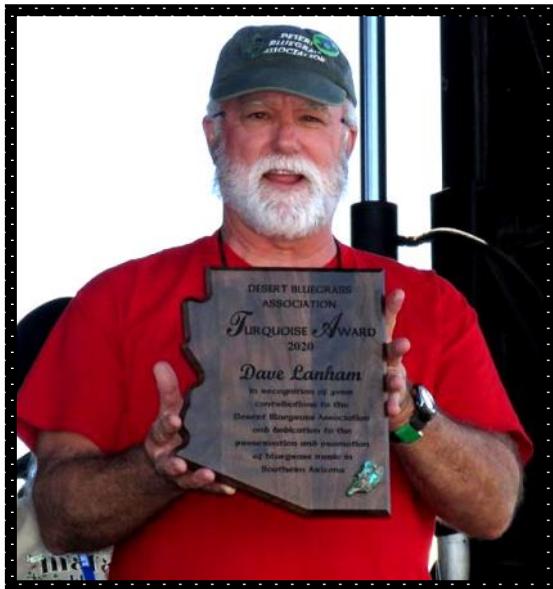
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Dave Lanham Receives Turquoise Award



All of the Desert Bluegrass Association activities thrive due to the work of our many volunteers. Each year, the DBA recognizes the outstanding service of one member by awarding them our Turquoise Award. This year, Dave Lanham received the award at the Marana Bluegrass Festival. Dave is the 9th member to receive the award and was selected by the prior recipients. He received a plaque in the shape of the state of Arizona with a piece of turquoise attached and inscribed as follows:

Dave Lanham

In recognition of your contributions to the Desert Bluegrass Association and dedication to the preservation and promotion of bluegrass music in Southern Arizona

Dave is a long time DBA member. Our membership records show that he joined in May of 1995. Dave recalls

joining at one of Ben Sandoval's White Mountain Bluegrass Festivals. During the early years, Dave got busy raising the kids, coaching soccer and the usual 9 to 5 job. Then, around '99, Dave wandered into the Udall workshop, met Rudy Mamula and according to Dave, "started my slow slide into bluegrass debauchery."

Dave was elected as the DBA Vice President in 2006. About this same time, he took over the DBA merchandise from Keith Freeman. Dave recalls that he "never saw a happier man than Keith after I loaded everything in my vehicle!" He went to numerous festivals setting up a merchandise booth and promoting our DBA. Along the way, he recalls that he "collected a few hundred bluegrass CDs, autographs of numerous artists, and scars and dings on my travel trailer. [I] just had a blast all around." Dave served as DBA President in 2007 and 2008. He also met all kinds of new friends, including Dave Polston, who "shanghaied" him into the club.

In 2017, the Marana Bluegrass Festival had a crisis. Jim Sanchez was not continuing as coordinator and Jeff Collins was considering dropping out as well. Jeff recalls: "Dave (Lanham) called me and said he wanted the Festival to continue and asked if I would help him because he had never done anything like that. We did it together for four years; every year he took over more and more of the responsibilities and leadership. If it weren't for Dave the Festival probably would have ended four years ago."

Dave says "All in all, this club has been the most enjoyable experience of my life. All my new friends are fellow pickers - amateur like me or folks making their livings playing to appreciative audiences. Making music is the biggest and best club you can belong to!"

Dave Lanham has been a true leader for a very long time in developing Bluegrass Music in Southern Arizona, and is a most deserving recipient of the Turquoise Award. Congratulations, Dave!



Contributed by Mike Headrick



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In Memoriam

John Lewis David, III

John David joined our Desert Bluegrass Association in 2003 and was an active and contributing member for many years. Although John was an electrical engineer through training and education, and worked productively in the defense department for over 40 years, it was his love of music, specifically bluegrass and guitars, that brought him joy and focus in retirement. John discovered the guitar in 1963 while serving in the U.S. Navy. Legend says his first song was "Wildwood Flower" played in the style of Maybelle Carter, but his favorite song was "Ripple," by The Grateful Dead.

John served as President of the Desert Bluegrass Association for four terms, from 2013 to 2017. He also edited our newsletter, *Grass Clippings*, from 2012 through 2018. Until health issues from Atypical Parkinsonism curtailed his activities, John was a dedicated member of the Monday Night Workshops.

He also maintained a website for the Marana Festival, served as the festival's volunteer coordinator, and was a board trustee.

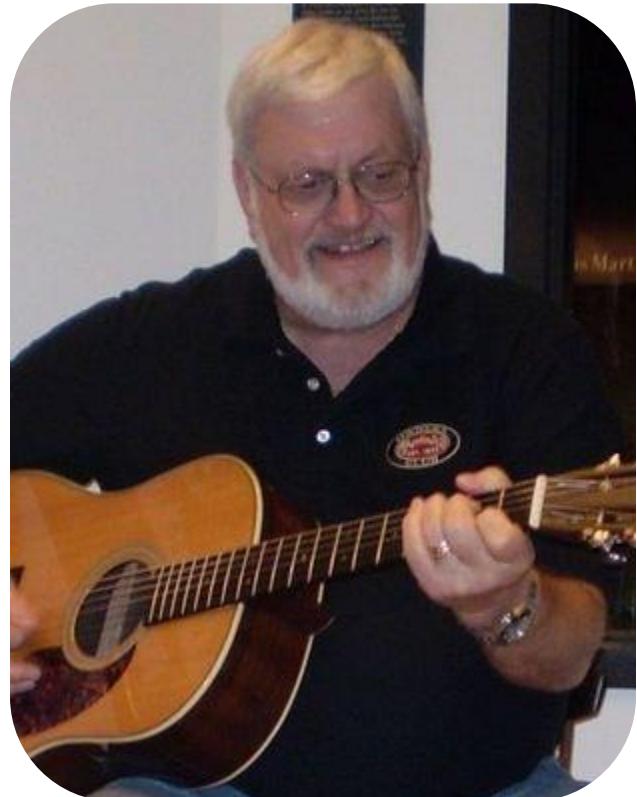
John set the bar pretty high for volunteerism with the DBA, and in recognition of his contributions to the DBA and to Bluegrass Music in Southern Arizona, John was awarded our Turquoise Award for 2018.

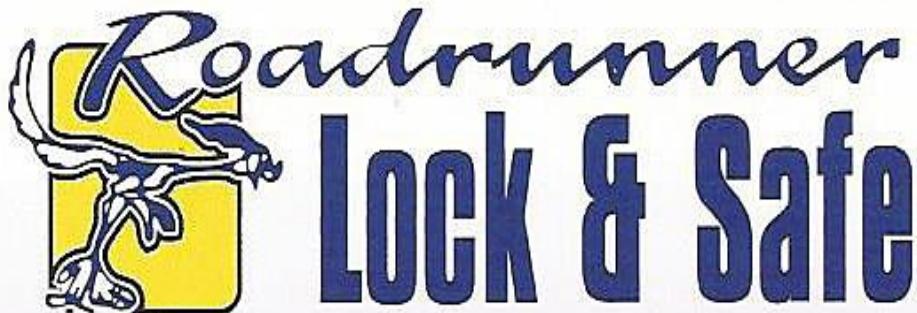
According to his obituary (available online at <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/tucson/obituary.aspx?n=john-lewis-david&pid=196063602&fhid=8278>), those who wish to remember him may donate to the Hermitage No Kill Cat Shelter in Tucson, or the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, or an animal charity of your choice.

John was a good friend to many of us and we will miss him. Our condolences go out to his wife, Karen, and to his entire family.

If my words did glow with the gold of sunshine
And my tunes were played on the harp unstrung
Would you hear my voice come through the music?
Would you hold it near as it were your own?

From "Ripple" by The Grateful Dead





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A DBA Love Story

by Suzette Sommerer

There once was a beautiful senior accounting manager at U of A who slaved long hours each week, but loved nothing more than making and sharing music with others. Marlene Moldenhauer and her very good friend, Nancy Hildreth, sang beautifully together in the Southern Arizona Women's Chorus. But Nancy craved the freedom to find her own voice. Since Nancy played a little guitar, Marlene told her about the Desert Bluegrass Association, an organization she'd heard about that offered weekly bluegrass workshops. Nancy went alone that first night, lugging her guitar, a trifle nervous about what she'd find. She was impressed by the warm welcome and the encouragement she received, not least that of the gentleman who barked at her, "Are you ever gonna take that thing out of the case?" She threw herself into the challenge wholeheartedly.

It wasn't long before Nancy announced, "Marlene, I'm ditching you for Doc Simpson's workshop." Nancy enjoyed the music and people at the workshops, but she missed her weekly sessions with her friend. After some cajoling, Marlene agreed to go one night, even though she didn't yet play a bluegrass instrument. She tagged along with Nancy, and the two burst out laughing many times that night, thoroughly enjoying themselves, the easy camaraderie they found, and of course, the lively music. They marveled at being in a class where you could cut loose without a word of reproach, and everyone seemed to be having just as much fun as they were. As the pair left, the regulars were asking newcomers to come back next time. As they left, Nancy quipped, "Did you notice how nobody said you and I should come back? Maybe they don't want you back, Marlene," which sent them both into fits of helpless giggling yet again. Marlene discovered that she was developing a growing fascination with the sound of the bass, and she soon joined Nancy as a regular at the workshops.



Paul (Doc) Simpson, a renowned criminal forensic psychologist, joined DBA with his son Woody in 2007, where he honed his emerging mandolin skills under Rudy Mamula's tutelage in the Udall Rec Center workshops, sometimes just out in the hall when Rudy would slowly take him through the tricky bits.

Doc's leadership skills and enthusiasm were quickly recognized, and he was elected president of the DBA early the following year. One of his early priorities was to re-establish the workshops, which had been discontinued for financial reasons when the Udall Rec Center began charging to use the space.

Doc's vision was to "grow the next generation," to keep bringing new people of all ages into this wonderful world of bluegrass. He did what was needed, enlisting the help of an old friend to provide a venue for free, engaging others to help teach, and making sure the important elements for both group playing and individual instruments were covered. Throughout his tenure as president and as leader of the workshops, he kept an emphasis on supporting beginners, encouraging even the most timid to attempt breaks and "have the courage to play imperfectly." By the time Nancy and Marlene appeared in 2011, the workshops at Christ Community Church were well established and extremely popular.

In 2010, Doc and others had attended Camp Bluegrass, an intensive week-long educational camp for bluegrass musicians at South Plains College in Levelland, Texas. The stories they brought home about the wonderful instruction they received and the many fantastic musical and social experiences they'd had encouraged more DBA members to go, and the Tucson contingent grew each year. Nancy attended in 2011, and both Nancy and Marlene went the following year.



A typical Desert Bluegrass Association workshop—all play!

Continued on page 10

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DBA Calendar



Where's the
calendar??
[Click here to
look online!!](#)

In case you hadn't heard, there's STILL a pretty nasty virus going around!! Owing to public health concerns regarding the coronavirus outbreak, DBA has cancelled all jams and workshops until further notice.

This won't go on forever, so check the DBA online calendar for updates.

And in the mean time, wash your hands, stay at home, but mostly—keep pickin'!



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There were a few young people at the camp, and Doc was so inspired by their enthusiasm and musicianship that he resolved to make it possible for some of our own young people to go.

At Doc's urging, Michael Crownhart, Bonnie McPherson, Jo Ann Shifflet, Arlene Tomlinson, Marlene, and Nancy formed the Children's Scholarship Committee, and through a combination of generous donations, fundraising efforts such as selling buttons and bake sales, and by engaging the interested students in participating in fundraising concerts, they were able to raise enough money to send five kids to camp the following year. The scholarship committee and those who support it continue to send young musicians to camp, but 2013 turned out to be a momentous year for Doc and Marlene.



DBA members in Roswell, on their way to Camp Bluegrass in 2012, L to R: Jo Ann Shifflet (now Sanchez), Doc Simpson, Bonnie McPherson, Arlene Tomlinson, Marlene Moldenhauer (now Simpson), Michael Crownhart, and Nancy Hildreth.



Inaugural Class of Camp Bluegrass Scholarship Recipients in 2013, L to R: Brice, Annie, Kayleigh, Brendan, and Diego.

tering had long since faded into near-invisibility. Despite the late hour, there was still no sign of any bus, and Doc and Marlene became concerned. They called the bus company and verified that yes, they were in the right place, but the bus had been delayed, and they were advised to return around midnight.

Through the workshops, the scholarship work, and from both having attended Camp Bluegrass in 2012, they were getting to know each other. In 2013, one of the scholarship students and his dad were traveling by bus to Camp Bluegrass, and Marlene had offered to pick them up in Levelland when they arrived. Doc gallantly offered to do the driving and go with Marlene, as the bus was not due until around 10 p.m. Marlene had instructions for where they were to meet the bus, but they were woefully inadequate. They were looking for a sign on a street corner, but it was raining hard that night, and they searched fruitlessly for more than 40 minutes. As the rain became torrential, they finally found it – and maybe it had said BUS STOP twenty years earlier, but the let-

After brief naps back at the dorm, they returned to their station to keep vigil, still without result. This time when they called the company, they were told there had been a further delay, and the bus wouldn't arrive until 2 or 3! Doc and Marlene decided to just stay put and sleep in the car. But of course, they didn't sleep at all. They talked and laughed and enjoyed each other's company, deepening their friendship and letting it blossom into something more. The bus finally arrived near 3 a.m., and the student and his dad arrived safely at last. Doc and Marlene helped them move into their room in the dorm and handed them the keys they'd been given. Unfortunately, those keys didn't fit the lock – they'd somehow gotten the room numbers mixed up, and the sleep-deprived foursome had to pack up again and move to the correct room. At times, it seemed that night would never end.

Doc and Marlene had a fabulous week together, watching with pride as the scholarship students flourished in the joyous atmosphere of the camp. Their love for each other grew quickly, and they planned to marry the following summer. In addition to family and other friends, they invited everyone who attended the weekly workshops to join them in celebrating their marriage. That wedding has become a bit of a legend in our little community.

Marlene and Doc felt strongly that they did not need more possessions, so in lieu of material gifts, they asked their DBA friends to give them the gift of music. And those friends responded from the heart, devoting considerable time over the next few months to working on their contributions. During the ceremony, as Doc and Marlene pledged their love, a lone violin sounded, hauntingly sweet, gently caressing the opening phrases of Pachelbel's Canon. Nick Coventry stood and filled the church with that heavenly sound. As he played on, a second fiddler rose from the pews to add a harmony to those long, beautiful notes. Then another fiddler rose, and another, and another, in ones and twos, each starting at the beginning as those who'd gone before continued to weave the ever more complex melodies and harmonies, building in a glorious crescendo as the canon circled round and round. When every fiddler gathered there had joined in, they finished together in a breathtakingly beautiful tribute to the vows about to be spoken and to the two amazing people soon to be joined.

At the end of the ceremony, when Doc and Marlene were pronounced husband and wife, the true bluegrass nature of this celebration became abundantly clear. All those many members from the DBA scattered throughout the church pulled hidden instruments from beneath their seats and stood to play. Much to the amazement of those expecting a more conventional wedding, Doc grabbed his mandolin, Marlene dragged her bass from behind the altar, others in the wedding party and a few particularly close friends grabbed their instruments and joined them before the altar as they and the rest of the musicians all over the church struck up a rousing chorus of St. Anne's Reel.



Making a joyful noise at their wedding!

Continued on Page 13

Welcome to our new and returning members:

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They played the tune over and over, to the great delight of everyone there. At last, Marlene relinquished her bass to her good friend Arlene Tomlinson, who held the bass line without missing a beat. Marlene took her new husband's arm as he continued to play, and they led the procession down the aisle. St. Anne reeled on, with people exiting the pews and heading out the doors after the happy couple, then dashing back in through the side doors to continue listening to the music. According to one who was there, they played it at least a million times. Apparently, the bride and groom had some difficulty persuading guests to leave the church and attend the reception.

But what a reception it was! More than ten bluegrass bands performed, some professional, many newly performed from the workshops, together onstage for the very first time. As Doc announced from the stage, "If you don't like bluegrass, then this is the worst wedding you've ever been to!" That wedding is something that those who were privileged to attend will never forget. Doc and Marlene received with joy the gifts they most wanted from their DBA friends – their music, their friendship, and their support of a beautiful new union. If you would like to experience a bit of the celebration, either for the first time or to relive a fond memory, a quick search for "A Bluegrass Wedding ~ Marlene & Paul Celebrate!" turns up a delightful YouTube video showing a few highlights from that memorable day (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRs-FoXaPVE>).



Band of friends at the wedding reception: Nancy Hildreth, Doc Simpson, Marlene Simpson, Scott Warren, and Michael Crownhart

This story is just one of many I am collecting for a forthcoming book celebrating our 25 years as an organization. I will certainly hear a lot about our big events, but I'd love to hear about the hidden stories as well. DBA means many different things to so many people, and I'm finding this project to be a rich tapestry of many threads. If you're willing to share a bit of how DBA has been a part of your life, please contact me at s.sommerer@icloud.com or 240-463-1985. I have already compiled a long list of people I'd like to interview in the coming months, and I would like very much to add your name to that list.

— Suzette

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Would you like your services, band, and/or concerts listed on our website, at www.desertbluegrass.org? Current DBA members can be listed by sending their contact information to Dale Lynne Vickroy at DesertBluegrassWebmaster@gmail.com. Refer to the "Links" tab on the homepage to view current band and instructor information. We have added a second calendar on the website for other (non-DBA) concerts and events. If you have something scheduled that you would like added to the calendar: send me the date, time and address info. You may also include a link to your band's website or to a special event flyer. Info can be posted under the "Events" tab. That would need to be specifically requested since I expect that people will begin using the calendar instead. Please submit information in plain text. Varied fonts, colors, formatting, and inserted graphics are extremely time consuming to match in the webpage editor.

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JAMS & OPEN MICS

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Southern AZ Old Time Fiddlers Assn.

Unitarian Universalist Church
4831 E 22nd St, Tucson
Tuesday 6:30—8:30pm
Info: Wilbur 520-743-7086

Kibbey's Jam and Open Mic

Info: Jim Howard, 520-825-9413; Twin Lakes Drive, Catalina, AZ. Every Friday Night 6:30 –9:00 pm

1st Baptist Church Jam and Open Mic

Wilds Road, Catalina, Arizona
Info: Jim Howard, 520-825-9413. Every Saturday, 6:30 - 9:00 pm

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<https://swotgathering.com/>

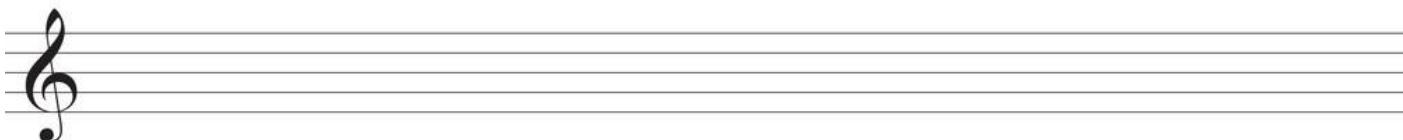
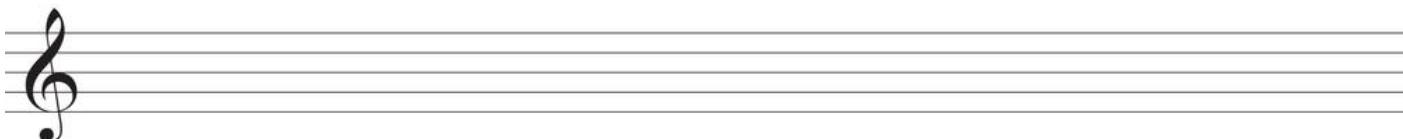
Tucson Friends of Traditional Music

<https://www.facebook.com/Tucson-Friends-of-Traditional-Music-91279619523/>
<https://tucsoncontradancers.org/>

Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association

<http://www.tucsonfolkfest.org/>
https://www.facebook.com/TucsonFolkFest/?ref=page_internal

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www.DesertBluegrass.org

MEMBER OF THE DESERT BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Membership dues for the Desert Bluegrass Association are \$20 annually per family, due March 1st, and includes bulk mailing of the bi-monthly newsletter to each member, or email delivery in color.

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

What instruments do you play? Banjo Bass Fiddle Guitar
 Mandolin Resonator Guitar Other _____

Check here if you wish to receive the DBA Grass Clippings Newsletter by mail

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

Mike Headrick (DBA Membership Secretary)
13308 Placita el Algodon
Tucson, AZ 85749