



# DESERT BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter



## Grass Clippings

Volume 26 Issue 4

October—November 2020



## Workshop Resumes (Sorta)

*By Dave Polston, DBA President*

**H**ey all you pickers!!! I know you've all been waiting for workshops to get going again. Well, we are one step closer — Marana's Tuesday night workshops began on September 22!! Working with the town of Marana, we began the workshop with new guidelines to keep us all safe.

The workshop is limited to **15 students** and **2 instructors**. The town created a registration form for all attendees to fill out and return. This ensures that all participants understand the new format to which we must adhere to keep us all safe. Julie Mudd from the town of Marana set us up with a kit and procedure to have a successful and safe workshop:

- ◆ Attendees must wear masks upon entering, hand sanitize, and keep social distancing while doing so.
- ◆ Students must sit in designated spots as marked on the floor.
- ◆ We must use the provided disinfecting spray on the chairs before putting them away at the end of the evening.
- ◆ **Pre-registration is required:** If you would like to attend the Marana workshop you must register with the town using the following link:

[https://apm.activecommunities.com/marana/Activity\\_Search/7325](https://apm.activecommunities.com/marana/Activity_Search/7325)

Once 15 people have registered, you will be put on a wait list. Don't fret (pun intended); some people have signed up but aren't ready to attend, and not everyone comes every week. It will be some extra work, but please let me or Jim Wagner know if you signed up, and by Monday of each week, let us know if you are planning to actually attend so we can save you a spot.

➔ Continued on **page 3**. See **page 5** for updated info about the Marana Bluegrass Festival. See **page 6** for shared stories about Covid Quarantining. And don't forget the upcoming DBA Fall Campout, Oct. 2-4: see **page 9!**

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## Workshop

*Continued from page 1*

Carole and Jerry Wothe have been stopping by Christ Community Church periodically to see how their remodeling is coming along. (Thank you, Carole and Jerry!!) The church is ready for us to come back as soon as the main room is finished. This is the only room where we will be able to have the social distancing needed to keep everyone safe.

We were hoping to start in October, but it looks like it may be November. Carole will keep me updated on the progress of the church and when a possible start date could happen for the Monday night workshop. We will take the model Marana has done to create a registration form and procedure for the Monday night workshop.

Marana has picked up where we left off last year, working on Year 2, Session 5 songs. When Monday starts up, both workshops will start with Year 1, Session 1, Bill Monroe. These songs are available on the website.

It may take a little bit of cooperation with all to get these going again, but at least we are finally starting. Be safe everyone. Wash your hands!



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# MARANA BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

## *Promoting and Preserving Bluegrass Music*

By Dave Polston, DBA President

Well, it's been 6 months (seems like 2 years) since we held our festival on the weekend the world changed. We were probably one of the last music festivals to happen before shut down. As everyone knows, we wait each day for new developments in testing and a vaccine for this virus. We are at a point where a decision needs to be made as to whether or not to hold the festival, the second weekend of March.

This next year, 2021, would be the first year the DBA would be supporting the finances 100% for the festival. In the past, we have had the assistance of the town of Marana to help offset some expenses, such as some canopies, the stage, the grounds themselves, etc. Each year, over the past five years, we have slowly added these items to our financial responsibilities. Last year, we needed to show a \$3000 to \$5000 increase to the budget for 2021. If the pandemic hadn't hit, I believe we would have covered that amount. We had an excellent team that really did a great job of marketing and promoting the festival. (Thank you to all who served on the festival committee. You did a great job!!!) So last week, via email, the DBA board and the festival committee held a discussion on what our decision should be.

With the possibility of a vaccine not happening until at least March, April, May, (keep going), June, July, etc. etc., maybe someday, we would have to add even more expense in providing additional canopies to provide enough shade for people sitting 6 feet apart. That just isn't feasible. Also, starting this late would be a hardship in finding sponsors, vendors, bands, etc., to make the festival a success. So after everyone's input, the board moved that the festival should be postponed until 2022. This motion passed.

**BUT SAVE THE DATE!!!** We don't think the full festival could be held, but during our discussions we brought up other ideas for the **2nd weekend in March, 2021** (in place of the festival). Perhaps another campout, an evening drive-in concert with a few bands (similar to the concerts they are holding at the Gas Light theaters), or renting a park for several jam circles.

**Our mission is to promote and preserve bluegrass music.** We don't want this virus to kill our association, so we are working on getting events planned where we can do what we love and be safe. So keep the weekend open. We will be enjoying and/or playing some bluegrass music one way or another!!!!

*Thank you to all who served on the festival committee.  
You did a great job!!!!*

# COVID Quarantining

**Thanks to the DBA members** who wrote in your Covid Quarantining stories. We share them here:

***From new member Barb Seaton:***

I'm the newbie to DBA and saw your welcome to us to tell about ourselves and/or quarantine. I retired 2 years ago and started trying to work on singing folk songs (bluegrass, light rock, light country). I have never taken lessons but am told I can carry a tune nicely (big smile).

So, since moving to Tucson in April, I thought I might also try guitar lessons to add to my other fun things like painting the inside of our house with designer colors, getting the yard ready for raised garden beds this fall, etc. I had always promised my husband once I retired he would be getting three home-cooked meals each day instead of dining out, and Covid really put that to work!

We miss our family as everyone does but zoom meetings are fun and we phone chat often. We do miss movies at the theater but Netflix takes care of that need and is a whole lot cheaper. Can hardly wait to go to an open air music performance of any kind; just to be around music makes life enjoyable.

***From Suzette Sommerer:***

So many treasured musical experiences are not available to us right now, with the summer's extreme heat making even outdoor gatherings impossible (unless you don't mind either playing in the dark or dripping all over your instrument). I miss our workshops, jamming with friends, meeting with my jam class, and meeting with a little informal fiddle group that Bonnie Lohman started last summer. I had planned this to go to Camp Bluegrass in Texas, O'Connor Method Strings Camp in North Carolina, and Desert Night Acoustic Camp in New Mexico, as well as Pickin' in the Pines and of course, Tucson's own Folk Festival. After just over a year of attending Monday Night workshops, I was finally feeling ready to join some of the regular jams. All, of course have now been canceled, with the exception of one camp, which took things online (more on that shortly).

I am taking as many of my musical experiences online as possible. It's certainly not the same as in-person, and it's very frustrating not to really be able to play with others, so I'm using this time to try and get better at my own instrument in hopes of physical reunions someday soon with all my musical friends. I've continued my fiddle lessons with my great teacher, Nick Coventry, online via Zoom, and am also now taking Zoom voice lessons from Chris Sanders (something I didn't have time for before, but am enjoying immensely). I can never play or sing with my teachers, but they can still observe and listen and help me improve. In my (now Zoom) jam class with Dave Polston, we take turns leading, while the others mute and play along. In the fiddle group, also meeting via Zoom, we take turns playing the same tune, because it's always interesting to compare our versions. I've also signed up for an online school with a fiddler that I admire. This one has pre-recorded lessons, and then you submit videos, which then get a video critique by the teacher. The lessons are very well done, and the critiques I'm getting back are funny, encouraging, and spot-on in terms of helping me achieve what I want.

The O'Connor camp Online was much more intense than I expected. In-person camp is generally about seven hours a day of group classes, with two group classes for your instrument every day, two electives that you choose (such as Irish or bluegrass), and then one hour each of camp-wide orchestra, student performances, and a huge jamming circle often led by Mark O'Connor.

*Continued on next page*

## Covid Quarantining Stories

*Continued from page 6*

### **From Suzette Sommerer, continued:**

Online camp was only two hours per day, plus two faculty concerts webcast during the week. Each day, I'd watch and play along with the webcast at the appropriate skill level by Mark and his wife Maggie. Choosing several tunes from his books, Mark would play each one at tempo. Then they'd break it down and discuss and demonstrate techniques for that tune, and finally they'd do a slow play through. The other hour was a one-hour private Zoom lesson with a different teacher each day. These were very good, and perfectly tailored to what I need to work on. Around the edges, I was re-connecting with friends from prior years through email, phone, and Zoom, and of course practicing what I'd learned from the online sessions. At the end of the week, I was exhausted, and my fingers were plumb worn out - just like at real camp. I missed all the social interactions and playing together, but they did a good job of offering something valuable within the constraints.

The biggest thing for me musically this year has been that one of my friends from workshop asked if I'd like to come over to his place for a patio jam, just four people, well spaced. Well, that has turned into my very first band since I started fiddling, Hamilton Beech (we like our music well-blended). We are taking a break since mid-July when Tucson's COVID numbers spiked again, but are hoping they will continue coming down so that we can back together. Before that we were meeting to practice and explore making music together. We even had our very first gig, in truly COVID-era fashion. When the 17th St. Market had its grand re-opening as a farmer's market, we were the featured band providing live music. We four were in our own room with a camera and microphones, and our images and music were piped to a large monitor for shoppers to enjoy as they entered and left the market. It was such a wonderfully non-threatening way to begin performing, with no intimidating audience staring at us, and we had an absolute blast!

### **From Doug McMaster:**

*What day am I!??*

Like everybody, I had plans. When I came back from California last summer, I told myself I will never be spending another summer in Tucson. Yeah, right.

My relationship with Amazon has continued to grow, as we are now great friends. I even ordered things so trivial as four 2032 batteries, and two bottles of shampoo. TP is not happening. The gloves came eventually in a beat up box, and the masks were counterfeit KN 95 masks from China.

I have a small jam group of 7-8 people who got together every other Thursday, usually at my home. Not! We've been using zoom, with it's timing challenges. Since we can't play and hear each other simultaneously, all but one has the microphone muted. This has distinct advantages. One can play at the same time as the others in whatever key we want....and, our breaks are always perfect!

It's nice to see the commitment that we have when all of us can be together, and talk to one another. Still, it is not the same as playing simultaneously. I sure miss our social interaction and the results of our music when we DID play together.

*Continued on next page*

## Covid Quarantining Stories

*Continued from page 7*

### *From Mike Purdy—An Instructor's Perspective:*

#### **Teaching Music During the Pandemic**

Hope you are all doing well, staying safe, and coping with all the changes the pandemic has brought.

After so many years of having people come visit me everyday to play music, laugh, talk, and study, the disruption has come as a shock. However, we all carry on and adapt if we are fortunate enough to have a place to live, food to eat, and the means to survive this situation, and do what we can to protect and support those who do not. Giving music lessons has certainly been an odd challenge. I have mostly switched to teaching online with a few strategic exceptions. As I have never been a big computer fan, spending a fair amount of time talking to a screen has been a large adjustment.

I've learned to repeat phrases such as "third finger on the third fret of the e string, second finger on the second fret of the a string, pinky on the third fret of the high e string"; at least my students know the names of the strings well now. Despite the technology glitches and freezes, we are still having fun, learning tunes, and exploring music. I have found solace in the fact that, even in these uncertain times, we can still find connection through music, and I look forward to playing together once this has all passed.

### *From Cathy Larson—Student Response*

#### **Learning Music During the Pandemic: Looking for the Silver Lining**

As you can see from the paragraph above, I am very fortunate in having a very adaptable music teacher! Unfortunately for him, however, even in the best of times I could probably be described as "musically challenged," and Zoom has not helped that one whit! I think I may also be "distance-learning challenged," as following Mike's instructions re "third finger on the third fret of the e string" often ends with me turned backwards and upside down trying to get the directions right. (No, don't picture that!!)

Staying musically motivated has been a challenge. I am still learning chords — for me a painful and protracted process. And probably for Mike, too! However, he is so upbeat, so lavish in his praise, and so encouraging when I master even the simplest chord change, it keeps me going. I could not ask for better. (Now, if he could just come and talk me through all those house-cleaning projects I've been putting off!)

Working through each new musical challenge, I am reminded of my meta-goal for being in quarantine — why not work towards being a better person? Developing a new skill, practicing patience, learning to relate to people differently and more kindly: surely these are all good things? Certainly these lessons are the silver lining that I need to focus on through these strange times, and thank goodness we all have music to bring us together and keep us together.



**DON'T FORGET THE Fall 2020 DBA Campout, October 2-4, at Patagonia Lake. IF YOU'RE HOPING TO GO, CALL DALE VICKROY RIGHT AWAY AT 520-664-0340 TO SEE IF A SPOT CAN BE RESERVED FOR YOU!**

**AND, DON'T FORGET TO TAKE SOME PICS TO SHARE WITH THE DBA NEWSLETTER!**



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# DBA Calendar

2020 OCTOBER						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Where's the calendar??

[Click here to look online!!](#)

*That nasty virus* is still going around!! Owing to public health concerns regarding the coronavirus outbreak, DBA is cautiously resuming the Marana Workshop, but all jams are still cancelled.

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'!

2020 NOVEMBER						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

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[www.desertbluegrass.org](http://www.desertbluegrass.org)

### **Arizona Bluegrass Association**

[www.arizonabluegrass.com](http://www.arizonabluegrass.com)

### **Bluegrass Arizona Blog**

[www.bluegrassarizona.blogspot.com](http://www.bluegrassarizona.blogspot.com)

### **Bluegrass Backing Tracks (Free)**

[www.fbbs.com/](http://www.fbbs.com/)

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[bluegrasslyrics.com/](http://bluegrasslyrics.com/)

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[www.alltabs.com/bluegrass\\_tabs.php](http://www.alltabs.com/bluegrass_tabs.php)

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### **Banjo:**

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 Web: Howard Anderson 480-897-7425  
 handy31@mindspring.com  
[www.cabinjohnbluegrass.com](http://www.cabinjohnbluegrass.com)

### Dan Levenson and The Cat Mountain Rounders

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 clawdan1@gmail.com  
[www.ClawDan.com](http://www.ClawDan.com)

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### Old Pueblo Bluegrass Band

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### Peter McLaughlin

520-247-1027  
<http://www.petermclaughlin.info/>

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Scott Lewis 602-265-9887  
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### Scattered Grass

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### The Sonoran Dogs

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 Brian Davies 520-349-9497  
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### The Speedway Brothers Band

Thom Gelineau  
 thardwater@yahoo.com  
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### Titan Valley Warheads

Ed Davenport 520-904-6050  
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## JAMS & OPEN MICS

All DBA-sponsored jams are temporarily cancelled due to public health warnings relating to the coronavirus. Once resumed, they will be listed on the calendar at [www.desertbluegrass.org](http://www.desertbluegrass.org).

Below is the previous list of other, related jams.

Check local contacts for current and future scheduling.

### Southern AZ Old Time Fiddlers Association

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

### ORCA Bluegrass Jam

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\$2.00/per person  
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Info: Shay Cardell 520-357-6432  
sierra1@desertsky.us

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1st & 3rd Saturday, 12:00 pm.  
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Contact Steve Hartwell  
steve@arizonabluegrass.com



# SPECTRUM

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 Phoenix, AZ 85086  
 Mark Jurich, Chairman  
 markj@arizonabluegrass.com  
 218-390-7342  
[www.arizonabluegrass.com](http://www.arizonabluegrass.com)

### International Bluegrass Music Association

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 Nashville, TN 37216  
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### Hall of Fame Bluegrass Music & Museum

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### Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association

[www.arizonaoldtimefiddlers.org/index.html](http://www.arizonaoldtimefiddlers.org/index.html)

### Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association, Southern Arizona Chapter

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

### Southwest Old Time String Band Association

[wotgathering.com/](http://wotgathering.com/)

### Tucson Friends of Traditional Music

[www.facebook.com/Tucson-Friends-of-Traditional-Music-91279619523/](http://www.facebook.com/Tucson-Friends-of-Traditional-Music-91279619523/)  
[tucsoncontradancers.org/](http://tucsoncontradancers.org/)

### Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association

[www.tucsonfolkfest.org/](http://www.tucsonfolkfest.org/)  
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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