

# **BLUEGRASS CLIPPINGS**

January-February 2010



## Newsletter of the Yellowstone Blue Grass Association

Annual Dues: \$15.00 per individual \$25.00 per Family

### Officers

Chuck Bishop President

Currently Open V.P.

Hardees

Terry Indreland Secy-Treas.

### Board Members

Ed Pierson

Brad Sherseth

**Trent Indreland**

David Nelson

Wade Steinmetz

### Activities

Friday Night Jams 7-9 P.M. Lincoln Center  
8 PM Summers at

Band Showcases Fall and Spring

Bluegrass Sponsored Concerts To be listed

### Special Events for Members Only

Kaleva Park Pig Roast Bones Pizza Party

Newsletter Editor: Roger Koch [gdaefiddler@g.com](mailto:gdaefiddler@g.com) (406) 656-5186

### The Editor's Desk

What goes around comes around, or in the famous words attributed to Yogi Berra, "It's deja vous all over again." Ed Pierson has done a superb job editing the YBA newsletter, but he is a very busy fellow and decided to step down for the coming year. We owe him a very big thank you for all the years he has given to Bluegrass Clippings. With no one else volunteering for the job I decided to take over... once again. Around 17 years ago when Bob Massey and myself started this organization I originated the first newsletter and wrote it for a year or two. As I am now a retired widower I have more than enough time to handle the duties again. You have already noted that the format has changed somewhat. I will not be able to do the great job with graphics that Ed so ably did. But, as I have lots of time on my hands, I hope to expand the topics beyond local association activities and cover other areas of interest to the enthusiasts of bluegrass and old time music. These could include regular columns including messages from the president and/or board, CD reviews, bluegrass bands and performers, member of the month, IBMA news, jamming tips, association history, and even a bluegrass recipe or two, among other things. Editorial comments may be made in this column and will be strictly the opinion of the editor and not necessarily those of the officers or board. In reality most of the future content will involve my opinions and I have many. You are encouraged to disagree in writing for publication, too. You will also be encouraged to submit news, stories, or letters to the editor. With approval of the board I would also like to offer an opportunity for any paid up member to advertise for sale ads or want ads related to music for one time at no cost. Comments and suggestions will always be welcome. Please send them in to me and be sure to keep on pickin' and keep on grinnin'.

Roger Koch, Editor: Bluegrass Clippings

## APPEARING AT THE PRAIRIE WINDS CAFÉ 9 AM-NOON MOLT, MT

Jan. 9 Neil Logan & Memory Lane	Feb. 6 Spur of the Moment	WARNING: DO NOT
Jan. 16 Southbound	Feb. 13 Accordion Serenade	ORDER THE PANCAKES
Jan. 28 Cold Frosty Morn	Feb. 20 Southbound	Unless you are really
Jan. 30 Hwy. 302	Feb. 27 Rambling Laurels	hungry, because they
		<u>So Big and So</u>

Good!

### Jams Resume At Lincoln

Following the Christmas-New Year's closings, the Friday night jams resumed at the Lincoln Music Room at 7 P.M. According to the school district calendar it should be open until May 28<sup>th</sup> with the exceptions of being closed on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup>. Summer jamming continues at Hardee's on North 27<sup>th</sup> after 8 P.M., although attendance was quite skimpy last summer. A few "hardy" pickers head for Hardee's following the school year jams after Lincoln closes at 9 P.M. Some high endurance pickers stay there until it closes around midnight. One of those who favors old "honky tonk" tunes must still be on the old 2 A.M. closing time schedule from the heyday of the "Seventeen Bar," the "Horseshoe Club," and the "Midway" of earlier days in Billings. It was a rip roaring town back then. Dancing was prohibited at bars within the city limits and the night clubs were on the fringe of the eastern boundary near the Fairgrounds. Exceptions were made for private clubs such as the Elks or the American Legion.

### Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held on Friday, December 4, 2009. The results of the annual election of board members was announced. Barry Gum had decided to not seek re-election and has now been replaced with David Nelson. All other officers and board members have been re-elected. The board will now vote on officers for the 2010 year. Among other items discussed it was decided that the pizza party at Bones Brewing last year was a good successor to the previous meatball dinner at Molt and would likely be repeated. Attendance at Molt had dropped considerably over recent years. The summer pig roast at Kaleva Park was discussed. Mark Harmala, as a member of the Finnish Lodge, had spearheaded this event. With our great loss of Mark we needed another Lodge member to stay there. Bill Calovis fulfilled that role this past August and Terry mentioned that his wife, Jane, was also eligible to join the Finnish Lodge. Everyone seemed to enjoy the Kaleva event last summer. The concerts for traveling bands was discussed and thanks given to Hansen Music, who generously provides \$1,000 for rent on concert venues. A thanks was also given to Trent Indreland who does the majority of the promotional legwork to make these events happen. He also not only handles the PA for the concerts and the two annual showcases at the Lincoln Center, but donates the use of his personal PA equipment for these events. This provides a considerable savings for the YBA as opposed to renting or buying our own equipment. A question was raised as to whether all band members performing at the showcases needed to be members of the YBA. It was noted that there is nothing in the by-laws about this. In recent years apparently the only requirement has been that YBA membership must be present in the band in order for the band to perform. At one time all band members were association members, but the philosophy then was simply to give members an opportunity to get stage experience before a crowd. That has changed to putting on a good show for the public to enjoy. Secretary Terry Indreland was going to research the minutes to see if there was any other ruling in the past. (Editor: This just might crop up in a future editorial.)

## WARNING: WE ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING THE LINCOLN BLDG.



A TYPICAL RECENT LINCOLN JAM

Okay, that heading is a bit alarmist in nature, but in many ways it should be. As the person who came up with the idea of approaching the school district for use of their facilities, and who negotiated the deal, I do have a rather parental attitude about the Friday jams. We originally had a couple homes that could handle 10 or 12 pickers, but what would we do if 30-40 showed up? That is what we told District Two. There were two other large musical groups then using school facilities for practicing, so why not us? At least that is what I asked them. We were made part of the "Night Owls" Adult Ed program and still are. But, we were told that they could not justify keeping the Lincoln open for as few as 12 people. We even had to turn in attendance slips for a few months to show how many names signed in. Now the Friday jams are a regular occurrence that have been going for at least 15 years and are well established. There is also a new administration in charge who has no memory of the minimum of 13 musicians requirement. Nevertheless on December 18 there were only 5 of us when we started. About 7:30 2 more came and around 8 PM one more showed up for a grand total of 8. The next jam had only 7 pickers. School District 2 has big budgetary problems and it DOES COST THEM MONEY to keep the building open for us on Friday nights. The big danger is that the word might leak to the school bosses about such paltry turnouts and they might decide to dump us. IF WE EVER LOSE ACCESS TO THE LINCOLN WE LOSE IT ALL, INCLUDING THE SHOWCASES. Without these, the association would probably crumble and disappear. It is important for members to SUPPORT THE FRIDAY JAMS by showing up. Otherwise the YBA could cease to exist. I am sure no one wants that to happen. Wayne Long and Jim Southworth had bands prior to the YBA. All other local BG bands were a direct outgrowth of the YBA. Without the YBA the existing bands would lose most of their potential to "showcase" their talents to the public for paying gigs. Support the Lincoln jams by attending them or risk losing it all. It is as simple as that.

The Infamous Stringdusters return to Billings at the Railyard Ale House on Wed., Feb. 10 at 7 P.M for an all ages concert. They describe their music as acoustic/bluegrass/fusion, and they are fully capable of cranking out true bluegrass licks with great vocals and hot picking and fiddling in the style of the best bluegrass bands of all time. They play the traditional five instruments of bluegrass along with the optional dobro. They are Nashville based and received acclaim at the IBMA Awards Ceremony in October 2007 for their first album and as Emerging Artist of the Year and Song of the Year. You can search them and listen to the Stringdusters on their MySpace Music page. Advance tickets are \$10 at Ernie November, Rimrock Mall or 1111presents.com. or \$12 at the door. If you enjoy good bluegrass it should be worth that reasonable price

## **IN MEMORIAM**

RICK STROHMYER, died last summer,



Shown here playing his banjo at a YBA Showcase

WILLIAM MAX (WILL) SELF, bass and guitar player, brilliant professor, good friend and mentor to many of us, passed away on December 16, 2009

BEVERLY FAY DODD, wife of James Dodd, passed away on Dec. 18, 2009, in Fresno, CA. Services were held at the Jubilee Christian Center on Hwy 312, on Jan. 9, 2010.

LARRY PAWLOWSKI, bass and guitar player died on Dec. 28, 2009, at his home in Billings. A funeral service was held on Jan. 2, 2010, in his hometown of Circle, MT. He was active in the Old Time Fiddler's and occasionally attended YBA jams.

JOHN INDRELAND, passed away on Dec. 9, 2009. A service was held at St. Olaf's near Red Lodge. Mr. Indreland was the father of board members, Terry and Trent Indreland. The members of the YBA offer our condolences to the families of all of these musicians and friends of music.

## **THE ART OF THE JAM**

That was the title of a workshop your editor attended last summer at the Big Horn Basin Festival, conducted by the acknowledged expert on jamming, Pete Wernick. Generally speaking "jamming" consists of several musicians getting together and informally playing a few tunes. As bluegrass and fiddle jams have evolved, the sessions are based upon skill level and are often structured for learning purposes. The "slow jam" is for novices with the goal of increasing their skill levels and learning more numbers to play. This can progress to more of an "intermediate" level jam, in which the music is played somewhat faster and on to "advanced" jams with songs done at performance tempos and levels of difficulty. The local jams began with Bob Massey with his guitar (and wife, Wanda) leading everything and local pickers struggling to keep up with the chords. A few pickers began showing up who could take instrumental breaks, but most were strictly singers and strummers. After Bob moved away, it first grew into a mob like group, with some hogging the center stage, but slowly evolved into an organized circle with each picker getting an opportunity to lead a tune of choice. Other than that, YBA jams have never had much in the way of rules, structure, or level of ability. As a result the leaders are the more accomplished pickers and others remain on the periphery and pick along as best they can. Newcomers are always encouraged to perform a tune, but most are reluctant to do so and many come once and never return. This could be rectified by organizing a slow jam for novices and the shy. The editor is considering starting such a group in the near future, possibly on a day other th

## Art of the Jam - Continued

Some very bad habits also developed in the local jams. Prior to the circular seating in the Lincoln Music Room, some pickers would form a tight little circle and hog the spotlight, rudely forcing others to the outer edges. This was often true at the Pizza Hut in recent years as well as in the early jams at Lincoln. Another rude habit is starting by saying for instance, "Here's one in D," and kicking the tune off without naming it. Others just start a tune without even bothering to announce the key. Many pickers have their music books and would like to find the tune, and that is reason enough to give it's name. I recall an instance in which the picker said, "Here's one in A," and proceeded to pick an instrumental. We all jumped in and accompanied her as best we could. At the end someone asked, "What was that?" "That was Goldrush," was the reply. We all looked at one another, because it had not sounded like any Goldrush we had ever heard. If we had known the title some of us could have jumped in with a solo to keep the tune sounding a bit more on track. A jam is not a quiz show titled "Name That Tune!" It is just plain downright rude and discourteous to not give the name and key of the tune prior to beginning it. Also older musicians who do this present a bad example to newer jammers, who assume that is the way it should be done. Jamming is not about showing off skills. You can do that in your band performances. Jamming is all about assisting others in learning more tunes and increasing their skills and competencies in both playing and singing. (BTW, there is nothing wrong in saying you don't remember the name of a tune, but this is the way it goes. Then kicking it off.) The YBA board has been very liberal regarding the music that is performed at the jams. But, let us not forget this is the Yellowstone **BLUEGRASS** Association. Try to include some real bluegrass tunes in your jam selections. Subsequent editions of this newsletter will include copies of Pete Wernick's Bluegrass Jamming Pointers. We can all learn a lot from his expertise in jamming sessions and their typical organization and general rules. The most important thing to do at the Lincoln or Hardee jams is first to SHOW UP and then lead the group with a few of your tunes.

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### BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Not all readers are even familiar with the "musical instrument" pejoratively termed the "Jew's harp," but better called the "jaws harp." There was no connection at all with the Hebrews. It is held with the teeth and a thin blade is strummed with a forefinger. It was mainly a rhythm instrument in old time string or jug bands, but in the hands (or should I say mouth) of a master was capable of playing melody leads. I have heard a great rendition of "Soldier's Joy" played on one. Many of us also learned that a "mouth harp" was better called a "harmonica." Apparently, not always. Back in the era of Ludwig von Beethoven (turn of the century, 1700s to 1800s, an Austrian named Friedrich Albrechtsberger, wrote not one, but seven concertos for "mouth harp and orchestra." He was a very serious composer writing serious music, but it was not for harmonica, but for jaws harp. It plays lead over a full symphony orchestra. If there was a bluegrass version of Ripley's Believe It Or Not, this music would certainly fit right in.

### SPEAKING OF HARMONICAS

Prior to development of the Bluegrass Boys with the addition of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs to his old time band in 1945, Bill Monroe's band featured Curley Bradshaw on harmonica and Sally Ann Forester on accordion. Others included "Stringbean" Akeman on clawhammer banjo, Chubby Wise, fiddle, Clyde Moody, guitar, and Monroe on mandolin.

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## **BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION MEMBER OF THE MONTH**



**Mike Rolison shown with new friend.**

About the time the bluegrass association was finishing it's first year, a fellow walked in with a big grin and a 12 string guitar. His name was Mike Rolison. Mike is everyone's friend, a nicer fellow you cannot find anywhere. He has attended nearly every jam and showcase since that very first time. Mike is the founder of the Rambling Laurels and had a Tuesday night jam in Laurel for many years. He has also served as president of the YBA, but stepped down due to health issues. Mike has had several of these problems which have recently prevented his attending many jams. Most recently he has had cataract surgery. I played a bit with Mike during a photo shoot on January 12, 2010, and he hasn't missed a lick. We all wish Mike the best and hope to see him back among us before too long. Keep on picking, Mike. .

## **WAY BACK WHEN . . . . .**

### **HOT PICKING IN THE BILLINGS AREA**

About 1960 the first Montana state fiddle contest was held. The Old Time Fiddler's Association began to have Sunday dances around the state. During later decades, while the fiddler's were playing their two steps and waltzes for the dancers, they became a focal point for other pickers to come out and set up a jam session elsewhere on the premises. This was the time of beginning bluegrass type playing in this region. Some of the local pickers and singters included Wayne Long, Bob Strand, Jim Southworth, Harold Matovich, Doug Ezell, Fred Buckley, Larry and LaLonnie Larson. Later many of these same musicians were asked to join in the fledgling bluegrass and old time music association when it began. They helped form the core of experienced pickers around which our association was formed. To this day they are all still very active in old time music circles in Montana.

## **BLUE GRASS BAND PAGE**

### **FORERUNNERS OF BLUEGRASS THE CARTER FAMILY**

In July of 1927 the Victor Record Company sent Ralph Peer and a disc recording machine to Bristol, Tennessee, to record some southern country style music. Many southerners had moved north to work in the mills and records were just beginning to become popular among Americans. In that recording session Peer recorded both the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, The Singing Brakeman. From that unique beginning came all the country music of the United States, right up to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Carter Family consisted of Mother Maybelle Addington Carter (1909-1979), who played guitar and sang harmony; Sara Dougherty (1898-1979), who played autoharp and sang alto lead; and Sara's husband, Alvin Pleasant (A.P.) Carter (d.1960), who played fiddle and sang bass. They eventually recorded over 300 songs based on the heritage of the southeastern country folk. Later, Mother Maybelle, who has been termed "The Queen of Country Music," continued the Carter Family with her daughters, Helen, Anita, and June (who later married Johnny Cash).

### **JIMMIE RODGERS**

Jimmie Rodgers recorded alone for Peer and did two songs: "The Soldier's Sweetheart" and "Sleep, Baby, Sleep." He became famous for his yodeling with numbers like "Blue Yodel No.1" aka "T for Texas," "Mule Skinner Blues," and "Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia." Jimmie Rodgers has often been called the "Father of Country Music." That was quite an historical recording session in July of 1927. We often hear the music of the Carters and Jimmie Rodgers being performed at the YBA jams and showcases. Their songs will live on as long as people listen to country music.

### **LOCAL BANDS: SOUTHBOUND**



Jim Southworth has been playing his version of music for many years. A native of the Park City-Laurel area his distinctive singing style has graced many stages. The first time I heard him, he described his band as an "old-time string band," and that is a good description to this day. That band featured Jim with his tenor guitar, his longtime bass player, Betty, and a young fellow with a mandolin. When Jim picked up Bruce Lee he added a very skilled guitar picker to the mix. George Kruger, bass, is in the photo at a recent showcase. Francis Russell, whose trucking job has kept his harp away is missed.. Despite this, Southbound continues to be one of this areas better old time bands.