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Next Jam: 1-5 PM, Feb. 21, SW Conservation Club, 5703 Bluffton Rd., Ft. Wayne, IN 46899

## President's Corner - Joe Steiner



I wish I could report this month that we are approaching our plans for the 2021 season with more certainty. Unfortunately, though, there are still a lot of questions to be answered. Although effective COVID19 vaccines have been developed and are being distributed, we do not yet know with clarity how that will affect our events.

We continue to be optimistic that we will be able to gather in a way which approaches the "normal" we had in previous years, without being affected by regulations which will make in unattractive or even impossible to hold the festivals.

Your NIBGA board continues to make plans for the 2021 festivals while we hope for a permanent resolution to the COVID-19 pandemic. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, the lineups are almost complete because many bands agreed to carry over their contracts from 2020 to 2021. And, many other provisions for the festival, such as tents, stage, and porta-jons, are also

ready to go, having been moved forward to this year.

We will keep you informed through this newsletter, our web site, and Facebook as to the status of next years' festivals. In the meantime, though, I'm happy to report that we will be continuing to hold the monthly jam sessions. Attendance has varied, up and down, over the last few sessions, and, of course, it is lower than pre-pandemic times. But the jam sessions still provide relief when you're itching for some live bluegrass music. It's still encouraging to see musicians and enthusiasts assemble to enjoy bluegrass music.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, the Southwest Conservation Club has been very diligent in disinfecting their facilities, and the attendees have been doing a good job of social distancing and wearing masks. 2020 was unique and challenging – your NIBGA board is hoping things will turn around in 2021. I'm hoping when I write this column next month I'll be able to report that we're rolling along with more certainty toward this year's festivals.



Dear Dr. Earl,

*I don't know about you, but I'm sick of staying home, sick of not being able to attend festivals or jams with friends, and just plain sick of all the negative stuff going on. It used to be that I could pick a little with friends to help relieve penned up frustrations, but now everything is shut down. What should I do??? I've*

*been really good about following all the rules, and just picking on my own at home, but my wife has started to avoid me by hanging out in her sewing room. Even my dog is shunning me! They just don't appreciate twenty-some variations of Black Mountain Rag the way my picker friends would!*  
Signed, Just Plain Fed Up

Dear Fed Up,

I totally get it. A month or so of isolation wasn't so bad. In some ways, one might argue, narrowing down the opportunities to get out was good in some ways, since it gave us time to do things we wanted to do without feeling guilty about canceling obligations (and even work!). Coming up on a year,

though...yeah, I get it.

But, it sounds to me like your wife has worked it out. She knows that she can escape boredom by staying busy. And, if you do that creatively... big bonus! I guess it's possible that, like your dog, she is just trying to avoid you, or at least trying to avoid nineteen or so of those Black Mountain Rag variations. Who knows?

What I DO know, however, is that your attitude can make a huge difference. Turn off the TV and internet. Or at least watch entertaining things instead of negativity. Make a plan. I've seen the meme "we are each going to come out of this in one of three ways... a chunk, a hunk, or a drunk". It is your choice that will determine how you come out of this.

Me? I've decided that I'm going to use this time to build up my chops and learn new things. I've been entertaining myself (and, when the weather was warmer, my neighbors -- whether they wanted to be entertained or not). I thought I was entertaining my family, too, but it turns out they have a limitation on repetitions of fiddle tune variations (i.e. I realize why your wife and dog are hiding).

Even if you find the family or neighbors searching out havens, crank up that banjo (or whatever instrument suits your fancy)

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## NIBGA Club History

During the winter months, when bluegrass news is slow, it seems like a good time to present a little history of NIBGA. This is the third of several articles that were originally written by Charles Carnes and meticulously typed on a typewriter, not a computer. The pages were recently scanned, converted to MS Word and edited by Jim Winger, Vice-President, for the newsletter. So, in Charlie's own words...

### **THIS AND THAT**

One of the places where jam sessions were being held prior to the club's organization was Urban Steckler's. He was a member and a bartender at the Knights of Columbus and he helped arrange the first meeting there.

During the early years, [the] club did some benefit shows. I can remember at least three in the Columbia City area.

### **THINGS THAT STICK IN YOUR MIND**

After the first festival and before leaving for home, Don and Fay and Morris and Ruth were sitting in their camper counting the week-end receipts when they heard some yelling and someone saying, "I'm going to kill you." After all the work that went into his festival, that was enough to make your hair stand on end. Tensions eased when they realized it was the son of the campground owner and some of his friends. Needless to say, nobody got killed.

One Fall festival, Don McFarland's step-sister, Ruth, is sitting in her pick-up camper and getting cold. She finally decided that this was ridiculous so she turned on her electric heater. Almost immediately the electricity went off for the entire campground.

A little later Don came back to the camper cussing about the loss of electricity but in the meantime Ruth had hidden her electric heater. It was about three years later before Don learned why the electricity went off. Get a picture of that in your mind and compare that with today. One space heater shutting off the electricity to the entire campground. We've got it made today and we don't usually know it.

An after thought. The club held three festivals in 1977 but this proved to be more work than the members wanted to take on so this was not tried again.

### **THE SAGA OF THE T-SHIRTS**

It was decided shortly after the first festival that some means was needed to put the club in a better financial position. The idea of T-shirts was suggested and accepted. At the time, club member Jim Cornell, was working a summer job in a business owned by Mike Doherty. Mike was the son-in-law of Ft. Wayne attorney, Frank Gallucci.

Through these connections the club was able to use the talents of an artist employed by Frank to draw a club logo to put on the T-shirts. The design of the logo was discussed and agreed upon. There was, however, a discussion on the style of mandolin. Jim preferred the more common style and Mike liked the "Tater bug" style. Jim prevailed and the more common style was used. This has been the club logo ever since, the only difference being, a circle was put around the instruments at a later date.

Along with the logo Mike wanted "I Love Grass" put on the shirts. This had somewhat of a double meaning but Mike was putting up the money so the "I Love Grass" stayed. Everybody was finally agreed so the T-shirts were ordered and signed for by Mike.

2500 T-shirts! The T-shirts were sold at our festivals, festivals in Ohio and Kentucky, and anywhere the Moore Brothers might be playing. Some bands were given T-shirts if they would wear them on stage. More than one "weekender" bought a T-shirt just to have a clean one to wear for

the rest of the festival. The T-shirts sold for \$3.00 apiece or 2 for \$5.00. It took almost 2 years before the shirts were all sold.

The lawyer, Frank Gallucci, whose drew the logo for the club, is the same one who handled the club's legal process of incorporation.

Watch next month's newsletter for more club history, starting with "the night the pond burned down". I had to laugh about the t-shirts. Wish I had one of those early "I Like Grass" shirts now! What a keepsake!

## Over Jordan



*This is a hard one to write. Not only was Joyce a NIBGA member, she was a very close friend and band member.*

**Joyce Elaine Harrison**, 79, formally of New Madison, Ohio went to be with the Lord on Saturday, January 2, 2021 at The Ohio State University, Wexner Medical Center. Joyce had been battling Covid-19 for several weeks and fought with all her strength, but it just wasn't enough. Joyce had been a NIBGA member for several years and assisted by providing many festival workshops and helping with the

Gospel Sing. Joyce was the bass instructor for the Bluegrass Kids' workshops at the last festival. She was a current member of the Country Strings band, and Buckeye Junction. I'm not sure how to boil down into a short paragraph how much Joyce brought into our lives, except to say that our lives are much enriched because of her. She was a dear friend to many in the bluegrass and dulcimer worlds. She will be greatly missed.

~ Chris Steiner



It is with great sadness I report that **Tony Rice** passed away on Christmas Day 2020. There are very few people who have at least a passing interest in bluegrass music that don't recognize Tony's name. He was one of the true greats, a true trendsetter who altered the course of bluegrass music, and many other forms of music, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There aren't many guitar players who can say their ears didn't perk up when they first heard Tony's style when he was playing with bluegrass, country, and jazz greats like J.D. Crowe, Emmylou Harris, and David Grisman.

When I reported four years ago about Clarence White's induction into the IBMA Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame, I mentioned that Tony Rice wound up with Clarence's pre-war Martin D-28 guitar. When Tony acquired that guitar, it was unique in that the inner portion of the sound hole had been broken out, enlarging the sound hole slightly from the Martin D standard. There have now been many replicas built of that guitar, by many great builders, such that the enlarged sound hole is no longer uncommon. That fact itself speaks volumes about Tony's influence on our music and its practitioners.

Although Tony has not been active musically in recent years, due to health issues, he remains one of the main influences on younger artists, both directly and also indirectly through subsequent generations of musicians. In my previous article about Clarence White, I mused about the notes that were left unplayed in that Martin D-28 guitar when it left Clarence's hands. I wonder now about the notes that Tony left in that old "box". And, I wonder whose hands will be holding it next – that guitar carries a pedigree which is unmatched in our music, and it comes with a very large pair of shoes to fill!

So long Tony, and say "Hi" to Kenny Ingram for us!

~ Joe Steiner

## DEAR DR EARL, Continued

...sit on the porch and play for the birds. No matter how good a musician you are, there is always room for improvement.

Work on your versatility. Check for online lessons in a style you've been wanting to explore. If you don't play an instrument, sing! Crank up the radio or MP3 player and sing along. Try singing a harmony part. Actually, speaking medically here of course (since I'm a doctor, you know), singing is GOOD for your health. It keeps your lungs stronger and helps with congestion. Sing. LOUD.

And just hang in there. At least we are ALL together in this... you aren't alone. (Unless you are playing an accordion, then you might be alone. (Just kidding, the doctor loves the accordion... as much as I love the hurdy-gurdy!))



**Don't  
Forget...**

The monthly board meeting and community bluegrass jam is always the 3rd Sunday of the month. It is at the Southwest Conservation Club, 5703 Bluffton Rd., Fort Wayne, from 1 - 5 p.m. Admission is free. Food available for purchase to benefit the SWCC. Bring your acoustic instrument, or just come to listen. Social distancing and masks are required.

Northern Indiana Bluegrass Association  
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Next NIBGA Jam - Feb 21, 2021