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Memberships: \$10 one, \$15 two w/one mailing Published 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, Mailed 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday monthly  
Next Jam: 1-5 PM, Jan. 17, SW Conservation Club, 5703 Bluffton Rd., Ft. Wayne, IN 46899

## President's Corner - Joe Steiner



As I'm writing this column, the NIBGA board continues to hope for a permanent resolution to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we hope, we are optimistically making plans to hold our two festivals as usual next year; however, the past few months have taught us to step cautiously.

Because many of the bands which were on the 2020 lineup have agreed to appear in 2021 instead, the lineups are almost complete for next year. Many of the other provisions for the festival, such as tents, stage, and portable toilets are also ready to go, having been moved forward to next year.

We will be watching very closely, and we will keep you informed through this newsletter, our web site, and Facebook as to the status of next years' festivals.

After being cooped up over the summer, and longing to get out for some live bluegrass music, I'm happy to report that we have resumed the monthly jam sessions. Attendance is, of course, down somewhat from pre-pandemic times, but it was still encouraging to see several musicians and quite a few listeners assembled to enjoy playing and listening to bluegrass music.

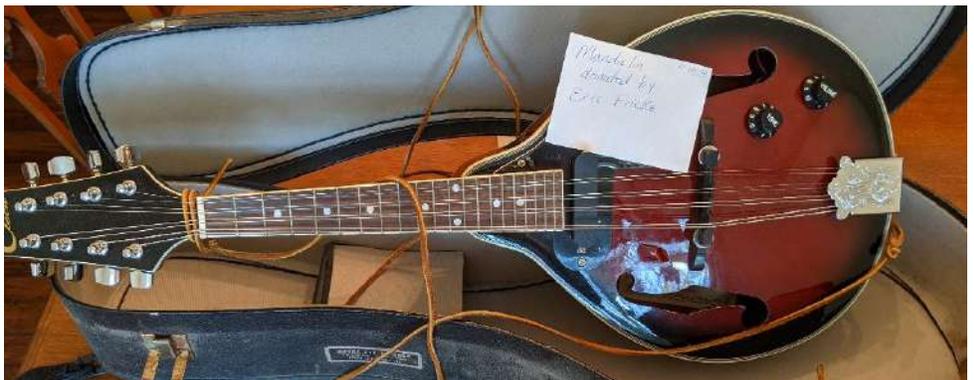
The Southwest Conservation Club has been very diligent in disinfecting their facilities, and attendees did a good job of social distancing and wearing masks. Just before the October jam session, the State of Ohio placed Indiana on their travel advisory list, recommending anyone entering Ohio from Indiana quarantine for 14 days. This likely reduced attendance from Ohio. Indiana has since dropped off that list, so I expect better attendance in November.

Thanks to Jim and Linda Winger who showed up at the jam to offer their support, and then zoomed home in time for the virtual board meeting. Due to the travel advisory between Indiana and Ohio, we opted to hold the board meeting virtually for the October meeting. With the latest news of a new vaccine being released very shortly (crossing my fingers), hopefully virtual meetings will become a thing of the past for NIBGA.

2020 has certainly been unique and challenging! While it is way too early to plan anything "post-pandemic" with certainty, NIBGA is grateful we are able to get together again, and we remain hopeful we'll be able to return to something much closer to normal in 2021. The board is ready, waiting, and chomping at the bit for next year's festivals.

## Mandolin Donation from Family of Eric Fricke

A former attendee at the monthly NIBGA jams, Eric Fricke, who loved bluegrass, passed about a year ago and had a mandolin. His sister is donating the mandolin in Eric's name for use at our workshops and instructional classes, especially for children who need a loaner to get started with an instrument. Sometimes all it takes is a session or two with an instrument to open up a whole new world to a child or individual, who can then realize they, too, can play music.



A big thank you to Eric's sister for bringing in the mandolin. It will be put to good use in the coming years.

*Contributed by Linda Winger*

## 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 second 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...

### THE CAMPGROUNDS

The Tri-State campgrounds were located just west of Angola, IN in the northwest corner of the intersection of 169 and U.S. 20. It was a small area and was entered off a gravel road that ran from highway 20. A short dirt lane ran from the road to the camping area.

The site was mostly hilly with very few level spots. If you walked up the hill and through the trees and brush on the east side you could look down on highway 69 although from anywhere else in the campgrounds you were unaware of the highway being there. There were open areas and tree and brush covered areas.

The stage sat at the bottom of a wooded area that was a natural amphitheater with the audience sitting on a hill surrounding it, except to the west which was the back side of the stage. It was said that on a spring or fall festival day you could see people sunbathing in the sun and others in the wooded area of the stage wearing sweaters.

A small pond was located on the south side of the grounds and the owner's home was on the north. The club became aware of the campgrounds through Jack Stafford who worked with the owner, Harold Householder.

At the time the club arranged for the first festival the campground was almost inactive. Brush had taken over and facilities were nonexistent. More than one member caught poison ivy in the course of clearing brush.

Club member, Neil Hike, wired the stage and campground and other members built an extra outhouse. There were no showers, very little electric, and one good outhouse, this being the one the club built.

The place was definitely primitive but as one member described it, "A beautiful place for a bluegrass festival, with lots of atmosphere." In the early festivals being primitive was not a big problem because the majority of campers used tents. There were very few fancy RV's. Compare that with today.

There was a pole in the camping area with a light on it [and] some of those with RV's would park in a circle around it. There were three electrical outlets and one water faucet. There was also a light on a pole by the gate.

### THE FIRST FESTIVAL LABOR DAY WEEKEND 1976

What a thrill! The excitement and anticipation after all these years of bluegrass jams, get-to-gathers, and other people's festivals, we were finally going to put on one of our own.

The thought of bringing people together to enjoy what we had been enjoying for years and the idea that we might be bringing bluegrass music to many for the first time made it all the more exciting.

The only bluegrass festivals anywhere near Ft Wayne, IN were Henry's at Ottawa, Ohio and Bill Monroe's at Beanblossom, IN. There were some bluegrass shows going on at the time and the two major groups in this area were the Moore Brothers and the Fox Brothers.

For those who never got to Tri-State, there was a small mid-way that gave the appearance of a little town with stores-, selling musical instruments, books, supplies, novelties, food, etc.

This was set on either side of a short dirt lane running through the campground. The concession stand, built by club members, was built around a tree and with today's laws probably wouldn't be allowed.

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The first gate crews were Don and Fay McFarland, Ruth and Morris Walton, and Jenny Ramsey. Almost everything was donated for that first festival.

Harold Householder, the owner of the campgrounds, got half of the gate for the use of the campgrounds. The gate was \$1600. for that first festival. Two weeks before the first festival, 10,000 flyers were printed.

The bands were arranged for by Ray Moore and provided their services free of charge. I was told the bands worked free for the first 3 festivals and after that they were paid \$25 per person with a maximum of \$125 per band.

The hard work paid off and the anxiety was rewarded with beautiful weather for the entire weekend and everybody had a good time.



[Oh my goodness! Look at that motorhome! That was probably pretty stylin' back then! Does anyone recognize these fellows?]

Picture courtesy of Linda and Jim Winger

### Attention Bands, Instructors and Musicians!

Do you need to "get it out there"? I've often thought that it would be beneficial to know what other musicians, instructors or bands were in my area and never knew how to find that information. Please email me at [News@NIBGA.com](mailto:News@NIBGA.com) if you would like to be included in an upcoming list. You must be a current member of NIBGA to be included in the listing. Please send name, type of service (instructor, musician, band, etc.), and public contact information. Looking forward to seeing who my "neighbors" are!

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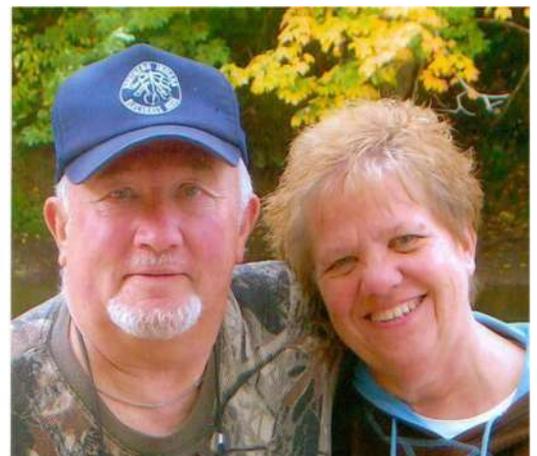
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### Over Jordan

**Richard "Dick" Neff**, 78, passed away at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital on 10/19/20. Dick and his wife, Sandra, were long-time members of the club and attended most festivals. They parked along the west fence directly south of the showers and restrooms.

This quote from Terri Grannis about sums it all up...

*"When Keith and I began attending bluegrass festivals, Dick Neff was one of the first to step up and welcome us. He didn't know us from Adam, but he gave us a hearty welcome and quickly became a treasured friend. Since that time, and for many years after, we would roll into a festival and be the happy recipient of a welcoming wave and a hug from Dick. I know Keith enjoyed so many conversations with Dick--more than once I would look over and think, "What the heck are those two up to now?" Dick has always been such a part of our summer music activities and such a wonderful friend--he was dearly loved and will be dearly missed. Much love to Sandy and all of the kids and grandkids --ohmigosh, he was so proud of his kids and grandkids...he shared so many wonderful stories with us. Our wish for Dick is that in his little corner of Heaven, he's got a fish on the line and his favorite music is helping him reel it in. Oh, and that he has a couple dozen of his favorite cookies baked by the love of his life, Sandra."*



From the very first festival - Labor Day 1976

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The Fox Brothers & The Foxtail Grass



The Moore Brothers

The board and newsletter take December off to enjoy the holidays.

The next newsletter will be mailed in January 2021.

Happy holidays to all.



Northern Indiana Bluegrass Association  
5034 Wapiti Court  
Fort Wayne, IN 46804-4946

THE TRADITION LIVES ON

20 20



TRI STATE BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

MAKING GREAT MUSIC

SINCE 1976



KENDALLVILLE, INDIANA

Next NIBGA Jam - Jan 17, 2021