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President's Corner - Joe Steiner



In last month's newsletter, I mentioned that the board was still unsure as to whether we would be able to hold the Memorial Day festival. We had set a deadline of March 1 for that decision -- that was dictated by the lead time needed to complete necessary planning.

As I write these words today, unfortunately, I must with great sadness report that we have been forced to cancel the Memorial Day 2021 bluegrass festival. The decision to cancel the festival was not undertaken lightly by the NIBGA board, but we were unanimous in making that decision. It was apparent that information regarding the easing of restrictions would not be available in time for us to make definitive plans by Memorial Day weekend.

NIBGA is bound not only by state coronavirus mandates, but also the direction of the Noble County Health Department. Since, as of March 1, Noble County was in a "blue" status, we were faced with a very real possibility that gatherings of unrelated people would be limited to 250 people. That constraint would make it difficult or even impossible for us to honor any commitments to performers.

The board also considered the fact that, if lockdowns eased enough to hold the festival, there may be significant constraints as to distancing, masking, etc. That presented a possibility that many potential attendees may not yet be willing to venture out. The NIBGA board needs, first and foremost, to be good stewards of our funds, so that we can use them in the future to fulfill our mission of furthering bluegrass music. And, we felt strongly that we should protect our reputation in the bluegrass world.

This is the third festival we have been forced to cancel. However, we find comfort in the fact that things are beginning to look better for outdoor public events, and we are guardedly optimistic that we will be able to hold the Labor Day event this year. We will be watching very closely indeed as more information becomes available regarding the COVID-19 virus, the status of vaccinations, and the emergence of the country from its current lockdown.

On a brighter note, we have begun negotiations with the Noble County Fair Board, and things are looking good that we will be able to come to terms which will be amenable for holding future festivals. The Noble County Fairgrounds, and the city of Kendallville, have become "home" to us. We are certainly hopeful we can remain in

that location, especially as we begin holding festivals again in an uncertain environment.

I mentioned last time that, as we have been "locked out" of music events, my mind has begun to wander back to my earlier experiences in bluegrass music. And, helped by some old bluegrass magazines, it was a lot of fun looking back to those earlier times. How exciting that was, "discovering" bluegrass festivals and getting involved in jam sessions!

As we emerge from current lockdowns, I imagine the experience will be similar to when we first discovered this music. Whether you are a picker, listener, or both, I suspect getting accustomed again to the excitement of the festival experience will hold some of that earlier excitement.

Although some of the joy of bluegrass music comes from polishing the music, there is also a certain raw energy that comes from a more impromptu setting. And, speaking of energy, that is often what separates bluegrass from other forms of music – the performers pour heart and soul into the music, unbound by any dictated perceptions of "right" and "wrong".

As my mind wanders back to those initial bluegrass experiences, I now realize I didn't understand then what really made the music appealing – I didn't yet understand the energy or "edge" that defined the greatest bluegrass performances. But looking back, a few performers come to mind now that drew me into the music with an abundance of that energy.

Dave Evans was a powerful, express voice, holding a 5-string banjo that really helped hammer the message home. The live experience was great, but even going back now to those Vetco recordings, you can still feel the energy and conviction of his words.

And, travelling that road, let's think about Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard – wow! Going back to their original Folkways and Rounder records (which I recommend everyone have in their bluegrass library), you can just feel the "edge," and you can see the absolute perfection with which they balance the raw energy with the refinement of a rehearsed product.

Travelling further down the road, I start thinking about the New Grass Revival, especially the early version of that group with Curtis Burch on guitar and Courtney Johnson on banjo. Although they were pretty far out at their time (although not as far out by today's standards), they still had the edge and "raw" energy of the bluegrass pioneers. They believed and felt the words they were singing, and the energy came through in every note.

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 fourth 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 Motorcyclists

Right from the beginning there was a group of motorcyclists that came to the festivals. In the middle and late 1970's there was still an image of bikers, real or imagined, as being trouble makers. They camped together away from the other campers and pretty much stayed to themselves, except when they would come down to listen to the music or go to the concession stand. They never caused any serious problems but there was always a fear among some of the other bluegrassers that they would.

On one occasion a rumor got started that they were going to tear the stage down. The fears spread and before long some of the regular bluegrassers were organizing to defend the stage. Some of the wives of the regulars started talking about carrying guns and before long those that weren't worried about the bikers were worried' about getting shot accidentally. There was never an attempt made to tear the stage down. The bikers were a cross section of society, pretty much like the rest of the bluegrassers.

Fall of 1983

The original festival site, Tri-State campgrounds, near Angola, IN had a small pond on the grounds. On one occasion 3 or 4 young boys were observed fishing from the bank of the pond. One boy had a pole and the others were standing behind him stomping on the fish as they came flying over the shoulder of the one with the pole. They were doing a brisk business so it was asked what they were using for bait. It turned out to be a slice of lemon. The fish, 4 or 5 inch catfish, were biting it and getting hooked just long enough to get tossed over the boy's shoulder. Boys can sure get a lot of mileage out of a small body of water. Continued next month



PLEASE NOTE

There will be no festival guide as very few festivals have firmed up. Watch the flyer page for potential events. <https://www.bluegrassUSA.net/>

Sister Sadie Honored in "American Currents: State of the Music"

by guest columnist Alexis Goldsmith

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's annual exhibition on country music's achievements over the past year opened on Friday, March 12th, and featured an exhibit on Sister Sadie - the groundbreaking musical collaboration of women in Bluegrass. The group took home Vocal Group of the Year and Entertainer of the Year, the first all-female band to do so, at the 2020 IBMA awards.

Artists in the exhibition are Dolly Parton, Risis Plamer, Mickey Guyton, Eddie Stubbs, The Chicks, and, among many others, John Prine, who passed away from complications due to COVID-19.

Kyle Young, CEO, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, said to Bluegrass Today: "As a museum, we document and report on country music history – past and present. Each year through the *American Currents: State of the Music* exhibit, we explore the music and events that helped to shape it. Amid a global health crisis, a renewed push for social justice, and more, the powerful role of country music and the stories told through it remained constant."

This year's State of the Music Exhibit performances will be held online, but guests can visit in person to see musical artifacts. More information at countrymusichalloffame.org.

Late last month, Sister Sadie announced two new members: vocalist Jaelee Roberts on guitar, and bassist Hasee Ciaccio, as founding member Dale Ann Bradley left the group last year.

(Major Lack of) Events

Until things get back to normal, we are just listing events that have been brought to our attention. Please let me know if you have something we can include. Email News@NIBGA.com. Please contact venues before driving there.

WHEN 3/26, 4/30, etc. (last Friday March thru Oct)
WHAT Bluegrass Night at Fibonacci Brewing
WHERE Fibonacci Brewing Company,
 1445 Compton Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45231
WHAT Enjoy an evening of lively bluegrass music
 with **Vernon McIntyre's Appalachian Grass**
PRICE free admission, **TIME** 7pm til 9
CONTACT 513-832-1422, **WEB** http://fibbrew.com/

04/10 Vernon McIntyre's Appalachian Grass; Sterling
 Bluegrass Jamboree, 26 E. Main St., Mt. Sterling, OH
 43143 7:30-8:30p

WHEN April 21, 28, May 5, 12, 19, 26, etc.
WHAT Bluegrass Wednesday with **Vernon McIntyre's
 Appalachian Grass**
WHERE Vinoklet Winery, 11069 Colerain Ave. Cincinnati,
 OH 45252
PRICE free admission **TIME** 6:30pm – 8:30
CONTACT Reservations encouraged for dinner.
 513-385-9309 or vinokletwinery@fuse.net
WEB https://www.vinokletwines.com/
 post/2018/09/30/bluegrass-wednesdays-spaghetti-meat-balls

Please consider supporting your favorite bluegrass festival by becoming a **2021 Patron**. For a \$100 donation, you will receive a family membership for the 2021 year (which entitles you to discounted tickets for the festival and newsletters through April 2022), a special edition 2021 Patron T-Shirt, and your name listed on all donor publications and announcements. You can sign up to be a Patron on the regular renewal form published in this newsletter. Here is a picture of the 2021 Patron T-Shirt and the 3 colors in which it is available. If you'd like a second shirt for a family member, you can buy one for \$20. **As a "Thank you" to the renewing Patrons from 2020, they will receive their 2nd t-shirt free when they renew.**

Patrons are keeping NIBGA afloat this year and guaranteeing the survival of bluegrass in the tri-state area for the foreseeable future. Thank you for your support!!



NIBGA 2021-2022 Membership Form a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit BluegrassUSA.net

● Due by May 1, 2021* ● NIBGA, 4535 Lincoln Hwy, Lima, OH 45807 ● ph:567-371-9627 ● email: secretary@nibga.com
 * Memberships expire April 30, 2022

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ e-Mail: _____

Yes: e-Mail mine: _____ No, snail mail it _____ Canada: snail mail (1 or 2) \$15, e-Mailed(1) \$10/(2) \$15

New: _____ Renewal: _____ \$10 Single: _____ \$5 ea addl same address 16 & older _____

OR TO BE A PATRON (includes dues and one T-shirt)

I want to be a 2021 Patron and support the club: \$100 _____ T-Shirt Size? S M L XL XXL _____ color*

Additional 2021 Patron T-shirt: **OR** \$ 20 _____ T-Shirt Size? S M L XL XXL } _____ color*

For renewing 2020 Patrons - T-shirt : FREE _____ T-Shirt Size? S M L XL XXL } _____ color*

*color choices: red, light blue, gray

Patron name(s) as it should appear on recognition board: _____

(Please print clearly)

One of the best concerts I saw when I was new to this music featured several great performers, including Hazel Dickens, Don Stover, Clint Howard, Fred Price and Ron Thomason. The concert series was aptly titled "Mountain Music Homecoming", presented by the National Council for Traditional Arts. It was an experience that cemented my love for this music. The energy was unbridled, and so was my enthusiasm. It was truly a unique experience – it

was the only time I have ever seen the great Don Stover live, and to experience his playing in that context summed up what bluegrass music is all about.

I ask myself: as we emerge from these coronavirus lockdowns, will the performers again be anxious to let out the "raw" energy? Will they feel the enthusiasm of the audience and use it to heighten their performances? I can't wait to find out!



Thanks!

We received \$44.28 this quarter from the Amazon Smiles program. This is from purchases made by Amazon customers that registered NIBGA as their charity of choice. It didn't cost them a single cent extra, but benefits the club.

So far, from Amazon alone, NIBGA has received \$640.06. That donation sure helps with festival expenses! Thank you for your support.



You shop. Amazon gives.

smile.amazon.com/ch/35-1424100

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Fort Wayne, IN 46804-4946

THE TRADITION LIVES ON

20  20

TRI STATE
BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

MAKING GREAT MUSIC

SINCE 1976

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KENDALLVILLE, INDIANA

Next NIBGA Jam - Apr 18, 2021