



Bluegrassin'

Volume 6, Issue 6

November – December 2004

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting preserving and sharing our love of bluegrass music in a spirit of family and friendship.

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Bluegrass Calendar

- ♦ **November 6, 2004, MRBA monthly jam** Florence I00F Hall 2:00 – ?
- ♦ **November 14, 2004, - Special Consensus Concert** – Chantilly Theater, Stevensville, MT 7:00 p.m.
- ♦ **December 4, 2004 – MRBA Annual Meeting** – Ruby's Inn, Missoula.
- ♦ **December 18, 2004 – MRBA monthly jam** – Florence I00F Hall 2:00 – ?
- ♦ **January 15, 2005 – MRBA monthly jam** – Florence I00F Hall 2:00 – ?
- ♦ **February 19, 2005 – MRBA monthly jam** – Florence I00F Hall 2:00 – ?
- ♦ **March 19, 2005 – MRBA monthly jam** – Florence I00F Hall 2:00 – ?

“If a man listening will let it, bluegrass will transmit right into your heart. If you love music and you listen close, it will come right on into you. If that fiddle's cutting good and they're playing pretty harmonies, it will make cold chills run over me, and I've heard it many times. If you really love bluegrass music, it will dig in a long ways. If you take time to listen close to the words and the melody, it will do something for you.”

- Bill Monroe

Recurring Show and Jams

- ♦ Every Tuesday night, 7 p.m. – Open bluegrass jam at the Top Hat, 134 W. Front Street, Missoula followed by Pinegrass around 10 p.m.
- ♦ 3d Friday Each Month – Bluegrass jam at the Avalanche Creek Coffeehouse, 1st Avenue East, Kalispell. Contact Vicki at 257-3935 or vbodfish@digisys.net for information.
- ♦ MRBA Monthly Jam, Nov. 6 – Dec. 18 – Jan. 15 – Feb. 19 – Mar. 19 I00F Hall, Florence 2:00 p. m. – ?



President's Notes

Things are heating up on the local bluegrass scene. We had another great show from Chris Stuart and Backcountry at the Crystal Theater on October 20th. The crowd was small but enthusiastic. Coming up Sunday, November 14th, the MRBA will sponsor a performance by another area favorite. Special Consen-

sus will be at the Chantilly Theater in Stevensville. See article inside for more details.

Then, you will not want to miss the MRBA annual meeting on Saturday, December 4th. We are having the meeting at Ruby's Inn in Missoula again this year. This is your chance to provide input on the functioning of the association. It is also an opportunity to socialize with the local bluegrass crowd and to hear and play some good music. See the

accompanying article for more details. Don't miss it.

We have finally located a facility to hold monthly jams throughout the winter. Beginning in November and continuing through March, we will have a monthly jam and pot luck at the IOOF hall in Florence, Montana. See the accompanying article for more details.

Hope to see you at our activities. Bluegrass on. Ben

Hi there all....this is the editor of your Bluegrass Newsletter typing at you now. If you have any ideas of what you might like to see in the paper... I would appreciate it if you would take a few moments and give me a call, write a note or send an email to let me know what it is. Or you could just write an article about something Bluegrass and send it on to me and you'll get a chance to see it in print. Thanks Tari

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MRBA TO HOLD MONTHLY JAM SESSIONS

The MRBA will hold monthly jam sessions and potluck dinners at the IOOF Hall in Florence, Montana during the winter months. The hall is the white two-story building on the west side of Highway 93 just south of the stoplight in Florence. Jamming will start at 2:00 p.m. We will have the potluck dinner at 5:00 p.m. and then jam 'til the cows come home. The first jam will be held **Saturday, November 6th**. From December on the jams will be held the third Saturday of the month. **December 18th, January 15th, February 19th, and March 19th** are the dates. Mark your calendar now and don't miss some great pickin' and singing. Call Ben Essary at (406) 777-7028 for more information.

I'm a newcomer ,
About a couple years ago I attended my first camp and jam. Not knowing a whole lot about music, even though I know what types I enjoy listening to. Had tried playing a guitar years ago and learned a few cords but my timing was really off. So I just have enjoyed listening. Some friends we met had been playing for about two or three years and seemed to like it and have fun. My husband would not let me play with him due to my awful timing. Was suggested to me to try playing a bucket bass with one string. I figured that should be easy enough, so gave it a try. I loved it. I used to dance alot and I was told to play to the beat of the music. I started lis-

tening and found that I could 'plunk along'. I followed along to all kinds of tunes, and really started having fun with it. As some of you know, the camp and jam at Gibbonsville in 2003 was the clincher that I wanted to try my hand at playing the four string upright bass. got a lesson and a trial playing a bass of an acquaintance, who was very encouraging. Reminding me to practice, practice, practice and more practice. A music teacher allowed me to use the school bass, a wonderful 1950's Kay. When we traveled to Stevensville in April for the band to perform in the Association fund raiser project, we returned the bass to the school and I almost cried. That bass was such a great sound-

ing instrument.

But a happy ending to that trip was that we came home and ordered my Englehardt. since then I have played almost every day and with lots of folks. I love to play. Everyone is so helpful in giving suggestions and ideas. Thanks to a couple special people for allowing me to pick their brains for instruction and information. Most of all everyone is so encouraging and happy to help. Thank you my music family. Not everyone first learns the joy of playing an instrument at the age of 63. But later than never. A happier member of the 'Do-wop gals', and member of the bluegrass music family, lovingly, Carol Gregg

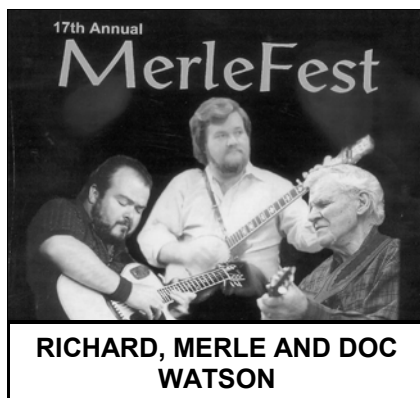
Membership Application MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION 333 Pine Hollow Road, Stevensville, MT 59870

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone No. _____

E-mail _____ Individual (\$10.00) ____ Family (\$15.00) _____



By Ben Essary

Last April our children and their families gave Pam and me a trip to Merlefest. It was a highlight of my musical life.

The festival is in honor of Merle Watson, son of Doc Watson, who was killed in a tragic accident in 1985. Now in its 17th year, the festival is held on the campus of Wilkesboro Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. It has grown from its modest beginnings in 1988 to one of the largest music festivals in this country. Attendance in 2004 exceeded 80,000 people.

Merlefest is more than a bluegrass festival, although many top named bluegrass bands were there. It is a celebration of Americana music, the core of the music of Doc and Merle Watson. Americana includes the styles of bluegrass, blues alternative country, classic country, folk, old time, roots and gospel. The festival also celebrates American dance including clogging and traditional Appalachian dances such as flatfooting and backstepping.

Performers this year included Vince Gill, Earl Scruggs, Nickel Creek, Rosanne Cash, The Indigo Girls, Bela Fleck & Edgar Meyer, David Grisman Quintet, Mark O'Connor, Patty Loveless, Gillian Welch, Kelly Willis and Tony Rice.

Bluegrass performers in-

cluded the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Pine Mountain Railroad, Big Country Bluegrass and Dry Branch Fire Squad.

The total list of performers is simply too long to list here but also included top draws in oldtime and blues music.

To handle the large number of performers and attendees, there are 15 different venues, all within walking distance of each other.

Pam and I have attended lots of bluegrass festivals over the years. I have to say that nothing compares to Merlefest. Despite its size, the festival is well organized and, believe it or not, small-town friendly.

There were several highlights. First, Doc Watson seemed to be everywhere and it was easy to get front row seating to some of his performances. I love old time music and have been a fan of Doc's since the early 70s. My favorite performance of the entire festival was one of Doc with Clint Howard. Their show featured fine old time music. Doc and Clint, along with Fred Price, Tom Ashley, Gaither Carlton and others, played together throughout the country beginning in the early 60s.

Second was the variety of music. Although I am dedicated to



Doc Watson and Clint Howard

bluegrass, I enjoy lots of styles. Merlefest featured top performers in Americana music. In my mind it's hard to beat Etta Baker, a 91 year young musician, either finger picking Piedmont blues on an acoustic guitar or singing and playing *Old Joe Clark*

on frailing banjo.

Last, it was an opportunity to see some bluegrass music personalities from the early days. Earl Scruggs is still lightning fast on the banjo. Tut Taylor, a well known resonophonic guitar player from old days, hosted the Pickin' Place, a venue for various jams and workshops. George Shuffler, an innovative bluegrass flatpicker and bassist, who played with the Stanley brothers and Jim and Jesse, was in several performances.

So what was the downside? There was one. It was hard to make choices given the large number of venues and performers. Do you chose Tony Rice instead of Gillian Welch? Do you see Dry Branch Fire Squad instead of the Nashville Bluegrass Band? Thinking about it, maybe this isn't a downside – just a challenge of a great festival.

If you are considering attending Merlefest here are some suggestions:

- Plan ahead. Wilkesboro is a small town and advance planning is necessary to obtain good accommodations, whether you are staying at a hotel or camping. A year in advance is not too early.
- Talk with someone who has been there. They can give you lots of suggestions to ease your way.
- Make use of the website www.merlefest.org and don't hesitate to call people listed as contacts.
- Get the festival schedules as early as possible and plan your schedule before the festival starts.
- Take comfortable clothing and rain gear. Keep the rain gear with you even if the day starts sunny. Storms can come up fast and it really rains in North Carolina.

MRBA ANNUAL MEETING DECEMBER 4, 2004

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association Annual Business Meeting will be held on Saturday, December 4, 2004, at Ruby's Inn and Convention Center, 4825 N. Reserve Street, Missoula, Montana. The meeting will begin promptly at 3:00 p.m.

Some important items are on the agenda. Updates will be provided on association finances and activities over the last year and plans for the next year will be discussed. Changes to the association by-laws have been drafted and will be mailed to the membership prior to the meeting. These changes will be discussed at the meeting and a vote taken to keep our by-laws current. We will also elect association officers and directors for the next year. This is your chance to provide input in the functioning of the association.

The association will provide a dinner meal which will be served at 5:30 p.m. Each individual membership will be entitled to one meal and each family membership will be entitled to two meals. Other guests will be charged \$15.00 for their meal. If you intend to attend the meeting and dinner, call Ben or Pam Essary at (406) 777-7028 or email Ben at bgessary@msn.com no later than **Friday, November 26, 2004**. If you cancel plans to attend, please also notify Ben or Pam by **Sunday, November 28, 2004**. This is necessary to allow Ruby's to prepare the meal and to keep the association from paying unwarranted costs.

Besides taking care of association business, the meeting is a chance to make and hear some bluegrass music. ***Jamming starts after the meal and goes until the last note is played.***

The business meeting will be held in the Blackfoot Room and dinner will be served in the Rattlesnake Room at Ruby's.

Call Ruby's at (800) 221-2057 to reserve your room. Be sure to ask for the bluegrass rate which is \$52 for singles and \$57 for doubles or a king bed.

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 : Anyone interested in putting together their list of the 10 most essential tunes for a jammer to :
 : know in a bluegrass jam? Send yours to me for the next newsletter and we can compare what :
 : we get for the essentials. Tari

Tariconroy@hotmail.com

Tari Conroy P.O. Box 144, Conner, Mt. 59827

821-3777

.....

SPECIAL CONSENSUS

Concert

The MRBA will sponsor a concert by Special Consensus at the Chantilly Theater, Stevensville, MT on Sunday, November 14th, 2004. The show starts at 7:00 p.m. Special Consensus, now in its 30th year, tours both nationally and internationally. The band's show features compositions by band members and traditional bluegrass standards. Greg Cahill, who formed the band in 1975, plays banjo and sings baritone and tenor vocals and is one of the most dominant personalities in bluegrass music today. Ron Spears plays mandolin and fiddle and sings lead, baritone, bass, tenor and high baritone vocals. Ron began playing bluegrass music professionally in 1970. He plays all of the bluegrass instruments and has performed with numerous bluegrass and country bands, The Bluegrass Conspiracy, and the internationally acclaimed Rhonda Vincent and the Rage. In 1999, Ron reformed Ron Spears and Within Tradition, and he continues to play select dates with this band throughout the year. He joined The Special Consensus in 2004. Justin Carbone plays guitar and sings lead, baritone, bass and tenor vocals. Tres Nugent plays bass and sings lead, baritone and tenor vocals. Admission will be \$10.00 for MRBA and Missoula Folklore Society members and \$12.00 for the general public.

Advanced tickets will be on sale at Rockin' Rudy's in Missoula and The Music Box in Hamilton.



Excerpt from America's Music, **Bluegrass** by Barry R. Willis

George Shuffler in 1949 – "I was dangerous"!

Hoke's Smoky Mountaineers included the McReynolds brothers and George Shuffler. "We didn't make a lot of money," said Mr. Shuffler. "But we had a good time. Back in the mountains, we occasionally worked a concert without electricity, but most of the places had electricity. We carried a little PA set with two little box speakers and a little amp settin' down at the bottom. And we had microphones and stands: one guy could set it up in two minutes. We plugged it in and we give it a minute to warm up and we was ready to go.

"We only carried one microphone. That was *it* back then. You run over somebody if they didn't get out of the way when it came time for your break. They was in trouble; they would end up out in the front seats if they didn't get back out of the way. You came in from behind and then bow out to the right. I'd just get right in there and I'd put the guitar up under my chin, you know, and put it right up to that little ol' microphone and let it go. And they knew to get out of the way when it was time for me to take my break. It was showmanship – it looked awful good. But a new man, Lord-a-mercy, he could get his legs kicked and everything else until he learned to get out of the way. 'Cause I was gonna come in there or bust! I was dangerous! I guarantee that I was gonna get my part."



Chuck Burrus



Jammin' in the Broken Arrow



Charlie Cairns



Jammin' outside in the sun

10th Annual Gibbonsville Bluegrass Campout



Nancy Ady

A wonderful time was had by all at the 10th anniversary (holly cow....) of the **Gibbonsville Bluegrass Campout!** The place filled up in a hurry the week before the campout, and by Thursday evening jams were underway. The weather cooperated on Friday and Saturday and it was almost magical. The Broken Arrow's food continued to satisfy our appetites. There were also great jams in the cafe until the wee hours of the morning. People came from all over - - eating, imbibing, relaxing, enjoying, playing, listening, toe-tappin' and singing. I remember walking around the camp on Saturday afternoon thinking that the campout was like listening to a 5-CD player - - - every jam was dynamite. I know that all campouts are good, and that we have lots of amazing musicians. But this was truly



magical. Maybe it was related to the sweetness of the ice cream sundaes that we had Saturday afternoon. Could all that sugar and goodies have overflowed into the fingers of the musicians? Ah! Maybe the timing was just right for everyone (literally) and the music seemed nearly perfect. Saturday evening was spent with more visiting, potlucks, and of course more music. The campfire by the pond was the final spot for a bunch of die-hards on Saturday night/Sunday morning. Some of the most beautiful music in the world

You scream, I scream,
We all scream, for Ice Cream.

Pictures courtesy of John Malikie

was played there. Somewhere in the early morning hours, the mists began to fall and the storm appeared. We awoke Sunday to water-water-water! RoseMarie let us use the Broken Arrow for our breakfast potluck (thanks so very much!) and so the weather didn't negatively influence our feeding frenzy. There was a gospel jam in the cafe after breakfast, and folks started home in the rain. It's been a great go of it, all these 10 years. Such a fun spot - - such great friends and musicians to share the time and the tunes. We gotta appreciate every day and every year. So, when Santa Claus brings you a new calendar for 2005, turn right away to September and mark the weekend after Labor Day for the Gibbonsville campout. See ya there!

Arlene Wolf



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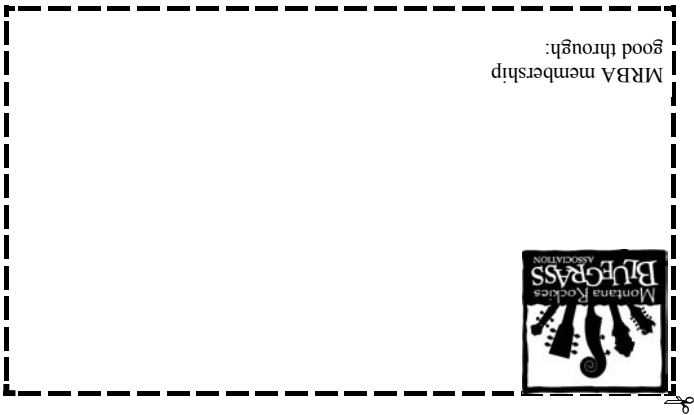
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