



Bluegrassin'

Volume 8, Issue 1

January – February 2006

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

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Bluegrass Calendar

- ♦ **January 14, 2006 MRBA monthly jam** – I00F Hall, Florence jamming at 2:00, potluck at 5:00 and jamming til?
- ♦ **January 21, 2006 Midwinter pick** – Deerlodge, Mt
- ♦ **January 19th, 2006 - The Missoula Folklore Society - Sara Softich Band** The Crystal Theater 8:00 pm
- ♦ **February 11, 2006 – MRBA monthly jam** – I00F Hall, Florence jamming at 2:00, potluck at 5:00 and jamming til?
- ♦ **March 11, 2006 – MRBA monthly jam** – I00F Hall, Florence jamming at 2:00, potluck at 5:00 and jamming til?
- ♦ **April 15, 2006 – MRBA Annual Oldtime Bluegrass Festival**
Stevensville School noon til 11:30

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
- ♦ 2nd Friday Each Month – Bluegrass jam at the Avalanche Creek Coffeehouse, 1st Avenue East, Kalispell. Contact Vicki at 257-3935 or vbodfish000@centurytel.net for information.
- ♦ First & third Thursdays each month, Bluegrass Jam at Bert & Ernies in Great Falls. 7:00 P.m. - 10:00 p.m. 453-8003
- ♦ Every Tuesday night, – Moozoola Opry with Country Folk, Orchard Homes Country Life Club.... 2537 South 3rd St. West, Missoula music & dinner 6-8 p.m.
- ♦ Every Saturday - noon – Bluegrass jam at the Charlos Heights Clubhouse, South of Hamilton

President's Notes

We had a successful annual meeting on Saturday, November 12th. While we could have benefited from a larger turnout, we had an enthusiastic crowd. The meeting minutes and a 2005 financial statement are included later in this newsletter.

This meeting marked some important events. Jeff Campfield, Raynae Redman and Arlene Wolf gave up their positions as directors. All three made significant contributions to the MRBA since its beginnings and I want to extend my personal thanks for all their hard efforts. I am sure they will all continue to be active in the association.

We elected three new directors this year – Phyllis Erck, Caroline Keys and Curtis Rathburn. Phyllis is a dedicated bluegrass musician and a fine singer and dobro player. She has also been active in helping the

MRBA, the Bitterroot Valley Bluegrass Festival and the Missoula Folklore Society in sponsoring bluegrass activities in the area. Caroline is a member of the Broken Valley Roadshow as a vocalist and guitar player. She hails from the southeastern states and has a wonderful feel for the music. Curtis comes to us from the Massachusetts bluegrass scene, a very active scene I might add, and is a great singer and flat-picker. I welcome the addition of these fine musicians and look forward to their help.

One other important change to note is the change of editorship of the MRBA newsletter. This is the last issue for Tari Conroy. She has been the editor for the last two years and did a great job. As a former editor myself, I know how much work it takes to put out a quality product every two months. Thanks Tari for all your good work. Our new editor is Caroline Keys. Caroline is a bud-

ding writer and brings some good journalism skills to the newsletter. Of course, I can't pass up on the opportunity to continue to harass members to contribute information to the newsletter.

If you haven't done so lately, take a look at the MRBA website at www.mtbluegrass.com. Larry Gangi Jr. has taken over as website administrator from Larry Gangi Sr. and given it a new look. Thanks to both Larrys for their help.

Looking out on the calendar, we have some important upcoming events. We have set Saturday, April 15th as the date of the MRBA annual festival. It will be held in the Stevensville School Multipurpose Room. More information will be forthcoming on the festival. We are also holding monthly bluegrass jams during January, February, and March at the IOOF hall in Florence. See the calendar for the dates.

Ben

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Got Something to sell? Advertise in *Bluegrassin'*!

Full Page – \$25.00, 1/2 Page – \$15.00, 1/4 Page – \$10.00 Classified – \$5.00



Lorenzo Gangi - Fistful of Lonesome

by Caroline Keys

From the initial musical “hiccup” at the beginning of Lorenzo’s “Blue Mountain Backstep,” listeners know they’re in for a blissfully unpredictable ride with Missoula’s banjo Maverick. The album keeps a steady energy throughout the diverging line-ups of backing artists. And the list of Lorenzo’s back-up performers

includes the creme de la creme of western bluegrass musicians.

Those of us with Montanan ears will recognize John Lowell’s vibrant flat picking, Ivan Rosenberg’s masterful Dobro, Ian Fleming’s rollicking runs, the purity of Fred Kellner’s

vocals, and Mason Tuttle’s frisky mando riffs. Not from Montana (but fine pickers anyway), Megan Lynch contributes her famed fiddle and Eric Uglum (Lost Highway) shines on guitar and vocals. No one is quite sure what planet “Nashville Star” finalist Matt Lindahl is from, but he does a great job jabbering in Spanish on the album’s novelty track “La Cucaracha.”

On that novelty track, and throughout the album, Lorenzo’s

solid picking style remains straight, but never narrow. Gangi rarely takes the obvious route on any of his solos, making each an exciting journey for the listener. Not that he wanders about aimlessly, he is more of a driven explorer than a meanderer. His originals and choice of material reflect, with a sense of humor, the array of different influences that have come together to make him such an exciting young picker. And one to watch out for. You can find Larry’s CD at Greg Boyd’s and at www.ironlasso.com

1. Blue Mountain Backstep
2. Wings of Angels
3. Butter Creek
4. Lodi
5. Driving My Life Away
6. Fat Rick
7. Paper Heart
8. La Cucaracha
9. Road to Columbus
10. One More Time

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) _____

BITTERROOT VALLEY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL NEWS**Submitted by Mark Dickerson****17th Annual Festival**

Plans are underway for the 17th annual Bitterroot Valley Bluegrass Festival to be held the 7th through the 9th of July 2006 at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds. We are expecting to open on the 6th for those who wish to do some jamming before the festival begins. Earlier jamming will not be possible this year since the Fairgrounds will be used for the 4th of July fireworks and the area will have to be checked for live fireworks on the 5th for safety reasons.

Some restructuring and personnel shifting has been done within the planning committee to better utilize individual talents. There are still a couple of positions open on the planning committee in the sales and advertising areas. Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact Vickie Dickerson at 406-363-2575 or call the Festival phone 406-381-0135 and leave a message.

Thank You, We Are Listening

We would like to thank everyone who returned the questionnaires or offered verbal suggestions during the Festival this past summer. While we can't control the weather and plant more shade trees, we can make some changes to improve the festival operations in the following areas:

Dancing

This has been a difficult aspect to address and please as many people as possible. We receive about as many requests to allow dancing in front of the stage as we do complaints about the dancing. In an effort to solve the problem and please as many people as possible, we plan to have a larger dance area next year set up in front but off to the side of the stage in the general area where the sales tents were located this past summer. This will allow dancing near the stage and still allow others sitting in front of the stage to see and enjoy the performances.

Security

Unfortunately with the current environment in the world today, increased security is a necessity at all public gatherings. However, we will be working with a security staff whose primary function will be to assist visitors at the festival while being alert to and averting potential problems.

More Traditional Bluegrass

Several of you suggested having more traditional bluegrass and avoid the folksy and country flavor. The band selection committee is striving to have 75 to 80% traditional bluegrass during the festival. This will still provide flexibility for each band to develop their own set list without a 100% audition process. A 100% audition process would be very difficult to implement and could possibly negatively impact the energy and quality of a band's performance.

16th Annual Shady Grove Bluegrass and Old Tyme Music Festival

by Tim Whitney

Last August we headed north to the Shady Grove Bluegrass Festival near Nanton, Alberta. Nanton is located approximately half way between Lethbridge and Calgary. The festival grounds are on a farm 8 miles east of Nanton. Our good friends, Garry and Linda Kohn, had been urging us to come up for the past couple of years so we finally took them up on it, and we are sure glad we did!

This festival is first rate in every respect. The performances are held in a pavilion with a retractable roof, so weather is not an issue. It is a really neat facility. After the final performance of the evening, a large metal fireplace is lowered from the ceiling and people jam around the fire. There is a concession area set up in the back of the pavilion. The festival grounds are absolutely immaculate. There is plenty of room for dry camping, but there are no hookups. The grounds are surrounded by wheat fields with the Canadian Rockies in the distance to the west. It's a very unique setting.

The lineup included such outstanding groups as *Jeru-*

salem Ridge, Chris Stuart and Backcountry, Due West, The Kathy Kallick Band, and Junior Barber and Beartracks as well as a few local groups from the Calgary area. Bluegrass fans would be familiar with most of these groups. These groups are exceptional with some of the finest pickers, fiddlers, and singers you will hear anywhere.

I'm not going to do a review of all the groups, but the one group that people might not have heard of is *Junior Barber and Beartracks*. This is a group from Plattsburgh, NY comprised of Junior and his two cousins, Tom Venne and his sister Julie Venne Hogan. Junior has been nominated for Dobro Player of The Year eight times, which gives an idea of his talent. Tom and Julie provide the vocals as well as bass and rhythm guitar. Their harmonies are exceptional, as would be expected with families that grew up playing music together. This group would be considered to be on the edge of Bluegrass by many traditionalists, but was definitely one of the crowd favorites. I don't believe I've ever seen three people provide more music than this trio did, and their stage presence was very professional and very entertaining. A person needs to see and hear this trio to really appre-

ciate them (however, they do need a banjo!!!!). ☺

There were several workshops offered between sessions that were all well attended.

There was also an "Open Mic" time period for anyone to get up and perform who wanted to.

There was some great jamming going on throughout the weekend, of course. Our Canadian

neighbors are very hospitable and certainly love to have a good time!

We will be making this festival an annual event. For a festival to survive for 16 years, they have to be doing something right! From what we were told, the Canadian government gets a percentage from the casinos in Alberta that is used for the preservation of the arts. So, the festival receives funding to help bring in groups from all over the U.S. and Canada. Nanton is a relatively easy drive for most Montanans. Anything less than 600 miles is an easy drive, right? Crossing the border posed no problems, but they will steal the hamburger out of your cooler on the way back in if you have any. We learned the hard way. ☺

For more information, check out the Shady Grove website at <http://www.melmusic.com/sgrove/>

Tim Whitney

January 19th, 2006 - The Missoula Folklore Society is proud to present **The Sara Softich Band**, of Minnesota, as the first concert of 2006. After a successful tour around most of Montana in the summer of 2005, Softich and her music sidekick, Jason Wussow will make their Missoula debut. They will bring their high energy, alt-country banjo/fiddle/guitar music to The Crystal Theater in Missoula at 8pm on Thursday, January 19th. Tickets are \$6 in advance and \$8 at the door for MFS and MRBA members. Advance tickets are available at Rockin' Rudy's in Missoula and the Bitterroot Community Market in Missoula. For more information contact Alicia Baylor at 406.544.8788 or at mfsconcerts@yahoo.com.

Trumble Creek Campout 2005

By Ben Essary

Mary Jane Cunningham's Trumble Creek Campout, held outside Columbia Falls the weekend of September 30 – October 2, once again separated the hard core bluegrass fanatics from the mere hangers on and wannabes! The weather cool and wet – prime weather for dedicated pickers. Mary Jane's hospitality, the good music and the opportunity to spend time with good friends made this a fine weekend. Some photos:

Mary Jane, Roger and Jim



**Joanie
&
John**



**Jim
& Rudy
Would you
buy a used
car from
these guys?**



**Katie, Ben
&
Sandy**

Member Web Pages

For MRBA members who have a musical group, duo, solo artist, and would like to have a web page on the official MRBA web site you are in luck. MRBA will make you a simple page and link it to the main site. If you already have a site, let us know so that we can put a link to it.

The idea is to give members the opportunity of getting their music out there to the public, a place to advertise so to speak. If you are a group looking for bookings or have a CD for sale this is for you. Apologies,

but we'd like to limit this offer to members who are actively seeking bookings and performance venues and/or have CDs for sale.

Basically what you will need is a picture and write-up, contact information, any pictures for CDs you may have, and optional sound files. MRBA will put the web page together but it is up to you to get all the material into digital format so that you can email it to us.

Because this is free, pages will be very basic and other than the individual information you supply all the pages will all look the same. In addition, any modifications will be lim-

ited to basic items, like your contact information changes or you have a new CD out. So you'll want to make sure, up front, that your picture and other details are the way you want them.

Once your web page is put up on the MRBA site, the whole world will know about you. That means when anyone anywhere searches for say, your name, it will pop up. So anything you put on the page is out there.

For more details email
lgangi@montanadsl.net

IBMA Music Awards and Fan Fest

By Ben Essary

Pam and I attended the International Bluegrass Music Association's Music Awards and Fan Fest held October 27 – 30, in Nashville. This is one exciting bluegrass event – actually it is many exciting events. The annual awards were held Thursday evening in the Ryman Auditorium. Attending any event in the Ryman is exciting but this was the first year the IBMA held the annual convention in Nashville and the first year the bluegrass music awards were held at the Ryman. Many said it was fitting when we think back 60 years ago when Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys with a new banjo player named Earl Scruggs stepped on the stage of the Ryman and kicked off "*White House Blues*."

While we can argue endlessly about when bluegrass began, this was certainly an important day in the music.

The awards show was hosted by Allison Krause and Ricky Scaggs. I won't list all the award recipients in this article; they are all available on the IBMA's website at www.ibma.org. For me there were several exciting events of the evening. One was the sheer number of top

bluegrass performers on one stage – Krause, Scaggs, McCoury, Sparks, Vincent, Lawson and the list goes on and on. Another was the important role that emerging groups played during the event. The Grascals, a relatively new group, was picked for emerging artists of the year and also had the song of the year – "*Me and John and Paul*." Speaking of tradition, this song was written by Harley Allen, son of Red Allen, the bluegrass great who was inducted into the IBMA Bluegrass Hall of Honor during the evening. Not only that, the Grascals recorded a Red Allen penned song "*Teardrops in My Eyes*" on the same album. But, the top event of the evening for me was Cherryholmes being selected as entertainer of the year. Their competition was Allison Krause & Union Station, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, The Del McCoury Band and Rhonda Vincent & The Rage. The Cherryholmes story is an inspiring one – a family band that has only been playing for five years and grew out of the loss of one of the family. Not enough space to go into detail here but find out more about Cherryholmes if you want inspiration.

Fan fest was three days of

performances by the top acts in bluegrass today. In addition, many emerging bands were featured. Between the main stage, roots and branches stage and the grand master fiddle championships stage there was something for all bluegrass tastes. You expect the best from the top acts but other well named and emerging bands also gave rousing performances. Noteworthy, was James King, Cherryholmes, and the Grascals. The Grascals were very well received. They play a mix of traditional tunes with some on the edge. You can see they really enjoy what they are doing and all are outstanding musicians. However, I must make one observation: **(WARNING – BLUE-GRASS PURISTS HOLD YOUR NOSE BEFORE READING FURTHER)** They was playing *Takamine* guitars.

We had a great time and would recommend this event to anyone. If you want to be in a place where you can't swing a dead cat without hitting a great musician, go to Nashville. One helpful hint is to plan ahead. Thousands attend the convention, awards show and fan fest. The hotels adjacent to the convention center fill up fast and good tickets get scarce at the

The Annual Mid-Winter Pick in Deer Lodge is scheduled for January 21, 2006. This will be held at 511 Main. Parking is available in the alley behind the building in the bowling alley parking lot. Enter through the burgundy colored door. There will be a sign!! We will provide a scrumptious meal for the low cost of \$5.00 per person. Motel rooms are available at Scharf's Motor Inn at 846-2810. Room charges are single (one queen bed) - \$40.66 and double (2 queen beds) - \$51.36. We have also reserved the house at Scharf's for late night picking and for a few folks to spend the night. If you have any questions, email Bill Anderson at billanderson@bresnan.net or call 406-846-1843.

Hope the weather cooperates and everyone can make it!!

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association
2005 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association 2005 Annual Membership Meeting was held on November 12, 2005, at the IOOF Hall, Florence, Montana. Ben Essary, President, chaired the meeting.

Association - Update Ben Essary provided an update on association activities for 2005.

Financial Statement – MRBA started the year with \$2,814.66. There was income of \$5,588.92 and expenses of \$5,027.62. Current bank balance is \$3,375.96. A copy of the statement is included as Attachment 1.

Old Business – Last year the need for a wall tent was discussed and the association was to look into the feasibility of purchasing a tent. Perry and Edwina Vose donated a wall tent to the association and Peter Silcher gave a wall tent to Mike Conroy and this tent is also available for association activities. Therefore, the association did not have to purchase a tent for association activities.

The association funded a Kids in Bluegrass program at the Bitterroot Valley Bluegrass Festival. Arlene Wolf and Raynae Redman put together a program to feature a performance of kids 18 and under and 12 musicians performed on the stage at the festival. The association provided a gift certificate for the performers to use at any vendor at the festival.

A suggestion was made last year to let members elect whether to receive the newsletter by mail or read the newsletter on the MRBA website. Ben and Pam Essary decided that the administrative burden of maintaining the database was too burdensome to warrant changing the system where all members receive the newsletter by mail.

New Business – The participation of children in the MRBA was discussed. It was decided that the first set of the festival would be devoted to children 18 and under.

Raynae Redman discussed whether it would be feasible for the association to have a Montana specialty license plate. Raynae will investigate the feasibility and report back to the board.

Election of Officers – The membership elected the following members to the positions indicated. The officers will assume their positions on January 1, 2006

President:	Ben Essary
Vice President:	Mike Conroy
Secretary/Treasurer:	Pam Essary
Board Members:	Tari Conroy
	Phyllis Erck
	Caroline Keys
	Curtis Rathburn

2005 FINANCIAL STATEMENT	
STARTING BALANCE	\$ 2,814.66
INCOME	\$ 5,588.92
Admissions	\$ 1,206.00
Advertising	\$ 265.00
Concessions	\$ 824.95
Merchandise	\$ 1,167.00
New Member Dues	\$ 920.00
Renewal Dues	\$ 1,180.00
Bank Interest	\$ 0.97
Other	\$ 25.00
EXPENSES	\$ 5,027.62
Newsletter Reproduction	\$ 715.47
Postage	\$ 448.62
Administrative Expenses	\$ 136.94
IBMA Membership	\$ 150.00
Merchandise	\$ 292.00
Venue Rental	\$ 700.00
Band Costs	\$ 100.00
MRBA Festival CD	\$ 569.96
Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 610.10
Food	\$ 254.76
Picnic Expenses	\$ 342.86
Bluegrass Festival Sponsorship	\$ 600.00
Kids in Bluegrass	\$ 60.00
Bank Charges	\$ 46.91
ENDING BALANCE	\$ 3,375.96

**Can't You Hear Me Callin':
The Life of Bill Monroe, Father of Bluegrass**

by Richard D. Smith

In October I was traveling to Lexington, KY for a conference and went to the bookstore to find a good read for the plane. As fate would have it, the store had on display the biography of one of Kentucky's most famous native sons, Bill Monroe. I started the book as soon as I boarded and read it non-stop. By the time I got off the plane in Kentucky, my head was filled with the songs from the father of bluegrass. The book begins with a look at a lonesome boy who's interest

in music is nurtured by his favorite Uncle Pen. It follows the rise of the Monroe Brothers and the break-up between Bill and his brother Charlie. The break-up turned out to be a fortunate turn of events because once on his own, Bill Monroe was free to develop his own unique sound that would come to be known as bluegrass music. A fixture on the Grand Ole Opry for years he influenced countless musicians. Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs are two of the most famous band members known as the Bluegrass Boys to have successful careers of their own.

The book does not make Bill

Monroe out as a saint. He was a difficult boss and didn't speak to Flatt and Scruggs for over 20 years after they went out on their own. He didn't drink or smoke but was a ladies man and the book recounts his numerous affairs. Many of what Monroe termed his "true songs" are based on these romantic liaisons. The book also describes how this music legend almost slipped into obscurity until the bluegrass festival movement gave his career a rebirth. For anyone who enjoys bluegrass music, this book is a must read.

Kate McMahon
Whitefish, MT

Sunday mornings KLCY at 930 AM on your dial is the Bluegrass Alive & Kickin segment of Sleeper's Lost and Found Show. He invites all MRBA members to send him one of their recordings and he will give you play time on the show. Also for anyone on up the Bitterroot, he suggests you could call your local radio station and let them know that you would like to hear it in the southern end of the valley and they may extent the programming to the sister station located in

New newsletter editor:

Starting January 1, 2006 Caroline Keys will be the new editor for "Bluegrassin'"
Please submit any articles and information to her for publication at jymchaak@yahoo.com

Kids in Bluegrass

To encourage and support young people who play bluegrass, the MRBA has set up a time slot during the annual festival in Stevensville on April 15th for young people to play. It will be similar to the Kids in Bluegrass set up at the Hamilton Festival in July. Students age 18 or younger are invited to attend. Depending on the number of young folks involved, they would play 1-3 songs/tunes. Adults are welcome to back-up the kids. Interested folks are encouraged to let Raynae Redman (blugrsmom@aol.com) or Arlene Wolf (awolf411@hotmail.com) know if they plan to play. The slot will be from 12 noon to 12:25. We may need to draw names before that date if we have a lot of participants. It'll be fun to once again see the proficiency of these young bluegrassers. So - - practice up, let us know, and we'll look forward to seeing you then!



Ruby's Inn
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777-0018 Stevensville

FOR SALE:

2 JBL Eon 15 P-1 speakers in nearly new condition, stands included. Asking \$800 for the pair.

Ted Lowe 880-0414

ATTENTION:

We have set up the address label on your newsletter to be your membership card, please clip it out and use if for proof of your membership to the MRBA.

MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS
FIRST MONTH FREE!

\$12.95*
PER MONTH

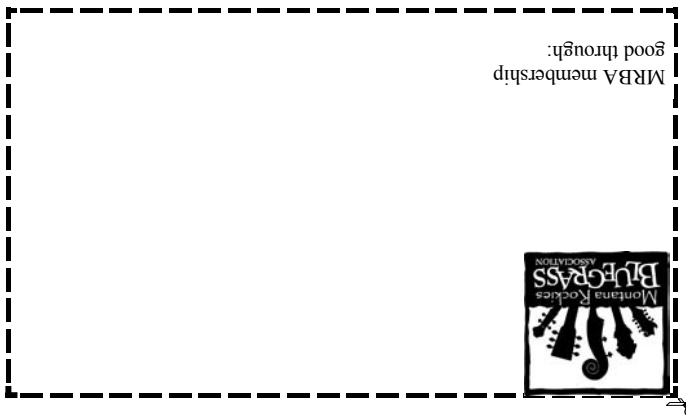
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