



Bluegrassin'

Volume 8, Issue 6

November-December 2006

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 3 – Mike & Tari Conroy, Ramblin' Rose** – The Kitchen, Hamilton. This event is a fundraiser for the Bitterroot valley Bluegrass Festival.
- ♦ **November 3 – Greensky Bluegrass** – Flanagan's Central Station, Whitefish. This Michigan-based band was this year's winner of the Telluride Bluegrass Festival band contest.
- ♦ **November 3 – Broken Valley Roadshow** – Union Club, Missoula.
- ♦ **November 4 – New South Fork**– Portneuf Valley Brewing Co., Pocatello, ID
- ♦ **November 4 – Greensky Bluegrass** – Flanagan's Central Station, Whitefish
- ♦ **November 5 – Greensky Bluegrass** – The Top Hat, Missoula.
- ♦ **November 7 – Green Mountain Grass** – The Top Hat, Missoula. Young pickers from Urbana, Illinois makes their Montana debut.
- ♦ **November 11 – Bridger Creek Boys** – Pine Creek Café, Livingston. These folks are an up and coming Bozeman band.
- ♦ **December 2 – MRBA Annual Meeting** – Ruby's, Missoula. 2pm meeting, 6pm potluck.
- ♦ **December 9 – Bridger Creek Boys** – Robin Lounge, Bozeman
- ♦ **December 15 – Broken Valley Roadshow** – Union Club, Missoula
- ♦ **December 16 – New South Fork**– Portneuf Valley Brewing Co., Pocatello, ID
- ♦ **December 22-23 – Bridger Creek Boys** – Chet's Bar, Huntley Lodge, Big Sky
- ♦ **December 31 – Mike & Tari Conroy + Fred Frank** – First Nite Celebration

Recurring Shows and Jams

- ♦ **MISSOULA**– Tuesday s ,Top Hat(134 W. Front St) - Bluegrass jam. 7pm.
- ♦ **MISSOULA**– Tuesdays, Top Hat – Pinegrass plays around 10pm.
- ♦ **GREAT FALLS** – 1st and 3rd Thursdays, Bert & Ernie's(300 1st Ave South) 7pm. Call 453-8003 for info.
- ♦ **MISSOULA** – Tuesdays, Wheat Montana – Moozoola Opry 6PM till 8PM the Cuzin Ray band plays. Admission is free we just ask that you buy a sandwich or soup from the fine folks at Wheat Montana as you sit back and enjoy an evening of music.
- ♦ **HAMILTON** – Saturdays, Charlos Heights Clubhouse – Bluegrass jam.
- ♦ **CHINOOK**– first and third Tuesdays, Past Time Bar -- Bluegrass, Old Time, and Old Country jam at 7pm. Contact: Tim Whitney 357-3840.

President's Notes

Pam and I are spending the fall in Tennessee. We came to Nashville in late September to attend the International Bluegrass Music Association award show and fanfest and stayed on to visit family for awhile. We hope to be able to return to Montana soon.

IBMA was great. We met Debbie and Dale Kerns in Nashville and had a really good time. You can read Debbie's article on the event later in this issue.

Thousand of people were in attendance for IBMA including several members of the MRBA and it is good to see bluegrass music in good health.

Don't miss the notice in this issue

about the MRBA annual meeting. All the officer and director positions are up for election.

As I said in the last newsletter, it is time for a new president. Pam has also decided to give up the secretary/treasurer position. Please consider where you can fit in one of the leadership roles. The MRBA is in good shape but we need good leaders

to continue to make this a fun organization doing good things to promote bluegrass music.

We are still planning for the winter jam sessions. Be sure to check out the January newsletter for more information on dates and location.

Hope to see you at the annual meeting.

Ben

Monthly Winter Jams Will Take Place at Ruby's in Missoula

Mark your calendar!

January 13

February 10

March 10

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MRBA Annual Meeting

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association annual meeting will be held on Saturday, December 2, 2006 at Ruby's Inn and Convention Center, 4825 North Reserve Street, Missoula, MT. The business meeting will start at 2:00 p.m. Dinner, which will be provided to members at no cost, will be at 5:30 p.m. There will be a \$15.00 cost for non-members eating dinner. Jamming starts after dinner.

The business meeting will include:

Review of previous year's activities
Annual financial report
Planning for next year's activities
Election of officers and directors

Hotel rooms are available by contacting Ruby's at 406-721-0990 or at 800-221-2057. Room rates are \$60 single occupancy and \$70 double occupancy. Mention that you are attending the MRBA annual meeting for these rates.

Please **contact** Pam and Ben Essary at 406-777-7028 or at bgessary@msn.com by Friday, November 24, 2006 if you will be attending the meeting. We need to know attendance in advance so we can plan the dinner meal.

If you are interested in the MRBA, please attend this meeting. It is your opportunity to help the association continue to be an important part of our regional bluegrass community.

Bluegrass Humor

Q: What would a Bluegrass musician do if he won a million dollars?

A: Continue to play gigs until the money ran out.

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) _____

Report from the Gibbonsville Campout

By Arlene Wolf

The 12th annual Gibbonsville campout at the Broken Arrow was once again a blast! The weather was great, the pickin' was even greater, and the companionship of friends was the greatest.

We had a real age range of musicians, with the youngest being Kelly Makela, barely 5 years old, from Twin Falls, Idaho. If you were lucky enough to hear this young one play, well, you know it was your lucky day. She played last year at Weiser in the 4 year old division. We'll look for her every year now, so Paul and Amy - - make sure you keep this weekend clear!

The senior player was the guiding light of Marian Moore, from Eagle, Idaho, who is 87 years young and still living the musician's life. He also played in Weiser in June, placing 12 out of 23 in his division. Both Marion and Kelly are inspirations to us all.

With great food at the Broken Arrow, wonderful potlucks, a low-calorie Saturday

afternoon sundae party, great picking and friends, and an inviting campfire, the weekend was the best. I finally connected with an elusive picker to complete a mission started this summer, too. To everyone who came with wall tents, food, good spirits, and warm hearts, I say a hearty thanks. And a special thanks to Del who helped us all out by organizing and handling the campers.

The almost full moon might have had something to do with all the fun, as pickers are known to howl a bit more at these times. All in all, it was a great recipe for great times (which reminds me of Leon's great salsa recipeyum). When Charlene and I walked around Saturday night, we counted about 60 camping units and 7 active jams. The wall tents were hopping, the restaurant was buzzing, and one jam even raised the house off the ground.

So those memories are good reasons to remind everyone that when you get your 2007 calendar, turn to September and mark the weekend after Labor Day as Gibbonsville 2007. We can all look forward to that, and I can't wait to see everyone at the next pick!

Arlene Wolf



Martha Scanlan plays with Travis and Trevor Stuart at Missoula's River City Roots Festival in September

Music and Mommyhood

By Carrie Stensrud

Aside from the obvious advantage of knowing a few songs about chickens and trains and mules for late night gigs at the changing table, it seems that motherhood and music are a natural fit. I am neither an experienced mother nor musician, but so far my daughter doesn't seem to mind.

The acoustic and mountain style music I love is nearly effortless to incorporate into the life

of a little one. We've had guitar sessions on the front porch, lazy mornings with the radio, and late nights listening to lullabies. She's slept at the center of pickin' circles and seen how silly things can get with a fiddle and a few friends.

I hope to provide Mia with a lifetime serenade of rough cuts and a soundtrack of scratchy fiddle tunes. My musical and mothering endeavors will acquire more finesse over time but I am less interested in perfection; I realize now I have a whole lifetime to try.



Carrie Stensrud and baby Mia enjoy the River City Roots Festival in September

A Letter from Jeff Trask

Hello to all my Bluegrass Pals: I felt I needed to write a note to all of my friends and acquaintances who may not have heard about or do not understand my situation. I violated the terms of a suspended sentence I received in 2000 for drug possession and have now been sent to Montana State Prison.

It's safe to say that I had it coming for a while as most of you know I'm a little bit "Wild by Nature". I'm doing fine here and am working

for Bill Anderson in the prison music department. I work doing guitar maintenance almost every day and have been learning new fiddle tunes. There are all kinds and levels of musicians here but no Bluegrass Pickers to speak of so I've been trying to spread the gospel!!

Also, there are no rock piles, chain gangs or steel bars here anymore. Everything is cement, bullet-proof glass and metal and is controlled by electronics. (I was kind of disappointed) However, I have seen and felt shackles and I do have a number for my name,

so that kind of makes up for it. (ha ha) I am doing what I need to do to get my life together and get this all behind me. I hope you all can understand that I am still the same "good ole boy" I've always been.

Hello to all my Missoula pals, all the Bitterrooters and all the MRBA members across Montana and Idaho. I'll be out to pick with you all again Soon! Peace!

**Jeff Trask, AO28400
700 Conley Lake Road
Deer Lodge, MT 59722**

IBMA Awards & Fanfest

By Debbie Kerns

The last time Dale and I saw many of you was in early September at the Gibbonsville, Idaho campout and pick. When we left there we were on our way to Nashville, Tennessee to attend the 2006 World Of Bluegrass which included The IBMA Awards and Fanfest. We're back home now and I'm pleased to say that we had a great time and an absolutely awesome experience.

First I'd like to say that I was pleasantly surprised to see quite a few of our MRBA members there. As some of you may know we met up with Ben and Pam Essary when we arrived at the convention center and no sooner had we entered the lobby to check into our rooms we ran into Raynae Redman and Helen Smith. They both were beaming and had already been enjoying themselves for a week. During our stay at the convention center we also saw Chad & Vickie, Greg Boyd, Andre, Tammy and their daughters from Libby, Ian Flemming, Lorenzo Jr., and Jim Fadis.

We had arrived in Nashville a few days earlier and spent our time checking out the local music stores, Bass Pro, and other shopping hot spots. We also were able to catch a couple of Bluegrass performances prior to going to Fanfest. We watched an awesome young man debut his first album at the Ryman Auditorium, and let me tell you he had some unbelievable talent backing him up. His name is Bradley Walker and if you like a little Honky Tonk in your Bluegrass he's your man. He has a rich soulful voice and knows how to deliver a song. He was joined on stage by the likes of Larry Cordle, Kevin Grantt,

The Grascals, Clay Hess, Rob Ickes, Carl Jackson, Randy Kohrs, Alecia Nugent, Brandon Rickman, Jerry Sally, Adam Steffey, Bryan Sutton, Jim Van Cleve and Longview featuring J.D. Crowe, James King, Ron Stewart, Lou Reid, Don Rigsby and Marshall Wilburn. Quite a lineup I'd say. The remarkable thing about this young man is he was born with Muscular Dystrophy and is in a wheelchair and he hasn't let that hold him back from pursuing his dream. If you haven't heard his new CD Highway of Dreams, I highly recommend it.



Bradley Walker flanked by Mike Bub and JD Crowe

Another show we were able to see was A birthday tribute to Bill Monroe at the Grand Ole Opry. Here we got to see The Grascals, Alecia Nugent, Jesse McReynold, Jim Lauderdale, James Monroe, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, Rhonda Vincent & The Rage, Cherryholmes, and last but certainly not least Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder. What a show. It was emceed by Eddie Stubbs and was broadcast live on WSM Tuesday night's Grand Ole Opry Show. It was like we were in Bluegrass heaven but it was only getting started.

Before we went to the Convention

Center Hotel we were staying at the KOA in Nashville and the night before we were checking out to go to the hotel they had a great show at the Campground in their Music Barn. It featured Jesse McReynolds and his band and The Tennessee Mafia Jug Band. It was great entertainment that played for a relatively small audience in a very relaxing setting. All of these shows were wonderful appetizers leading up to the main course. The IBMA Awards and Fanfest.

I have to say that the IBMA Awards has probably been one of the most thrilling events of my life. Part of this is due to our fearless leader Mr. Ben Essary. The awards were held at the Grand Ole Opry.



Pam Essary congratulates the Lewis Family

I don't know how he did it but the four of us had some of the best seats in the house that night. We sat second row, center aisle and had better seats than most of the performers who were getting awards. The Lewis Family were sitting in front of us. They were the guests of honor that night as they were being inducted into the IBMA Hall of Honor. Bill Gaither and the Issacs were sitting behind us. Off to our right sat The Grascals, Doyle Lawson and his band, and Del McCoury and his

sons. Off to our left I could see The Whites and Ricky Skaggs and you name it we were right in the midst of the biggest names in the business. Of course Dale was flabbergasted because I was taking pictures and asking people to sign my program. I was shameless.



Marty Stewart, playing Lester Flatt's guitar, did a duet with Bobby Osborne

The event was emceed by Marty Stewart who did a great job and again was being broadcast live on WSM radio. The presenters, the performers and the award recipients were all in great form and dressed fitting the occasion, except Vince Gill who was a presenter and performed with Del McCoury. He joked about losing his tux on the bus.

Some of the highlights of the evening included that performance along with one from Rhonda Vincent that touched on the issues of how wars affect families at home. She was joined on stage by representatives from all branches of the US Armed Forces. It was a touching performance that brought a standing ovation.

Bill Gaither who does the Home-Coming Gospel Video series presented the Lewis Family with their award and



Debbie Kerns' story con't from p. 7

also closed the show with the Lewis', The Issacs, Marty Raybon, and Sherri & Jeff Easter. Little Roy is quite a character. Another great performance was all of last years individual instrumentalists of the year who got together and performed as a group. It was a special experience that I doubt could ever be repeated. It was a magical experience for a first time attendee.

That still isn't the end of the story though. We had several days of more shows to see, workshops to attend, jams to enjoy and I might as well tell you now so you have time to prepare for it. Dale bought a new Banjo. It's an open back for claw-hammer style and I can tell you he's practicing up a storm. The good thing is it's not as loud as his other one.

I could go on and on about our trip to the big city but I don't think the Newsletter is big enough. I'll end with saying that if you ever have an opportunity to attend this gigantic IBMA event, do it. It's a blast.



Del McCoury and Larry Sparks

2006 IBMA Awards

ENTERTAINER: The Grascals	SONG OF THE YEAR: "Look Down That Lonesome Road" written and performed by Tim O'Brien	Daughters of Bluegrass
MALE VOCALIST: Tim O'Brien		BANJO PLAYER: Jim Mills
FEMALE VOCALIST: Rhonda Vincent	ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Celebration of Life: Musicians Against Childhood Cancer	DOBRO PLAYER: Rob Ickes
EMERGING ARTIST: Steep Canyon Rangers	GOSPEL RECORDED PERFORMANCE OF THE YEAR: "He Lives In Me" by Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver	BASS PLAYER: Missy Raines
INSTRUMENTAL GROUP: Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder		FIDDLE PLAYER: Michael Cleveland
VOCAL GROUP: Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver	INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM: Let 'Er Go Boys by Michael Cleveland	GUITAR PLAYER: Bryan Sutton
	RECORDED EVENT: Back to the Well by The	MANDOLIN PLAYER: Adam Steffey

Letter from Nate Biehl

Authors note: In the following article there are multiple references to the MRBA body of members as a whole. Though I've been a member in the past, I have strayed from the fold recently and should therefore be prohibited from counting myself amongst the flock. However, my constant references to the MRBA as 'you people', 'y'all', and 'you guys' got tedious and ugly in the text. I've cut my membership renewal check so that I can use 'we' and 'us' instead.

As you probably know, the time is at hand to select a new President for the Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association. Ben Es-sary is moving on. Through the past few years Ben has gone out of his way to make everyone I know feel welcome in Western Montana's Bluegrass community. He's made me feel as if I were a part of his family. A gentle and steadfast leader with a heart of gold, he leaves big shoes to fill. We'd have to scour the globe to find another President like him, but we only have 'till December, so we'd better stick closer to home.

The MRBA is a group with many potential leaders. Luckily, we don't have to choose from a pool of organizational maniacs who type up the minutes from their weekly pickup basketball games or whose family dinners follow Roberts Rules of order.

It would be great if choosing a new president were as obvious as choosing the next singer in a picking circle. But that's not the reality of how things go. We're music lovers, and by nature, all a little bit crazy.

For me, and perhaps many MRBA members, music is an obsession. We've been

bitten by the bug, we live and breathe our obsession. Some of us can't even tie our shoes without drifting off into a tune-filled vapidty. During meetings we draw pictures of our instruments. We drive hours and hours to pick until dawn, only to turn around and drive all those hours back home. We know what it's like to shout the words and play the notes that have been shouted and played for generations before. We danced that vocal dance where everyone finds their part just right and the sound just drops the ground right out from under your feet. We have stood off in the darkness of a festival, watching groups gather under every light post and lantern, where strangers meet and become immediate friends. In this, we've experienced community.

This music that we all love so much couldn't survive if it only existed in our hearts and daydreams. We each feel this intense passion for bluegrass music, but our passion alone doesn't necessarily help to preserve the music or create an atmosphere of family and friendship among our peers.

The MRBA is one place where the ethereal, passionate daydream of bluegrass and the concrete realities of preserving bluegrass music and creating community get the chance to interact. Good leadership is needed to make this collision of dreams and reality a productive one. December 2 is your chance to vote for MRBA leaders, or choose help our Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association by becoming a leader yourself.

Editor's note: I wasn't able to include Nate Beihl's entire letter and had to pick, choose, and rearrange his words to make them fit here. If you'd like to read his entire letter, drop me a line at caroline@brokenvalley.com, and I'll get a copy to you.





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Mike Conroy 821-3777

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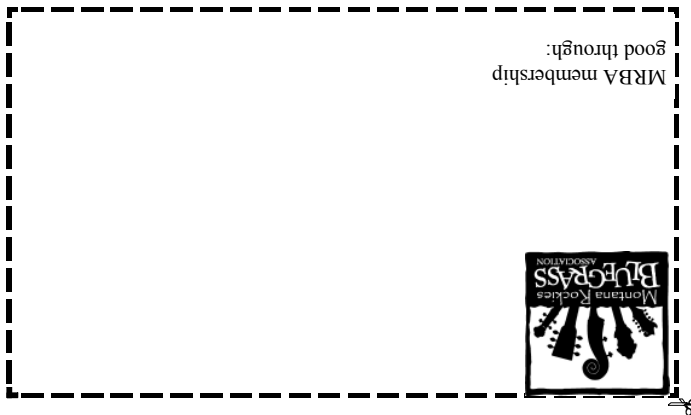
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