



# Bluegrassin'

Volume 24 Issue 5

Sept.—Oct. 2022

## Upcoming Bluegrass

*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.*

### Inside this issue:

	Page
President's Message	2
Gibbonsville Campout	4
MRBA Campout Photos	5
Goodtimes at Hardtimes	6
Hardtimes Photos	7
Memory Lane with MRBA	8-9
Acoustic is Better	10
Cripple Creek	11

**Sept. 2:** Kentucky Sky, Longstaff House, Missoula, 7pm

**Sept. 3:** Kentucky Sky, KOA, West Glacier, 6-9pm

**Sept. 4:** Kentucky Sky, Cornerstone Community Church, Kalispell, 7-9pm

**Sept. 9-10-11:** Gibbonsville Campout (see Page 4)

**Sept. 16-17-18:** Miles City Bluegrass Festival

<http://www.milescitybluegrassfestival.com/>

**Sept. 18:** Bluegrass Jam & Pot-Luck, First Presbyterian Church, Kalispell (540 S. Main Street). Jam starts at 4pm, break around 6pm for a pot-luck, and then jam until about 8pm. Bring a dish to share. Call Kate for details (406-863-9255)

**Sept. 29:** International Bluegrass Music Association Awards Show

<https://worldofbluegrass.org/awards/>

**Oct. 23:** The Steel Drivers, Newberry Theater, Great Falls

<https://thenewberrymt.com/event/the-steeldrivers/>

**Oct. 23:** Bluegrass Jam & Pot-Luck, First Presbyterian Church, Kalispell (540 S. Main Street). Jam starts at 4pm, break around 6pm for a pot-luck, and then jam until about 8pm. Bring a dish to share. Call Kate for details (406-863-9255)

**Tuesday jams in Whitefish,** North Valley Music School (432 Spokane Ave.), 6-7:30pm. Call to RSVP—[\(406\) 862-8074](tel:4068628074)

*When I was a little boy, I told my Dad, "When I grow up, I want to be a musician."  
My Dad said, "You can't do both, son."*

*Chet Atkins*

## President's Message

(Mike Conroy)

Well, here it is, September already. It has been an awesome spring and summer for bluegrass. The MRBA Spring Festival was an amazing whing-ding, in a smaller location that actually worked out great. Folks seemed to love the more intimate feel of the place. Conroy's Memorial Weekend Campout had a great turnout, with lots of pickers and gridders, and--dare I say it--another legendary potluck. The potlucks at Memorial Weekend are the kind you will remember when you are sitting in the rest home. Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival was more fun than you could shake a stick at. Gate was 1389, which was 11 people fewer than last year. With the price of gas around \$5 a gallon, that was amazing. Everyone seemed so happy, we never even had a serious problem. Lots of kids running around, which I love to see. The MRBA Campout was moved back to the West Fork because of the Elmo fire. Many folks came, did lots of pickin' and grinnin', and ate hotdogs and pies that were furnished by the MRBA. The only bummer was that I had set up a Coleman tent at the location early to save the spot. A big wind came up and wiped out my tent. Oh well, life goes on...

Looking ahead: the Gibbonsville Campout will be the weekend after Labor Day (Sept 9,10,11). See Arlene's writeup on Page 4. We will contact the Masonic Hall in Missoula to see if we can have the MRBA Christmas Party and winter jams there. Pic below is Amelia and Pam Jolly, playing in their very first ever jam at the MRBA Campout.



## Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association

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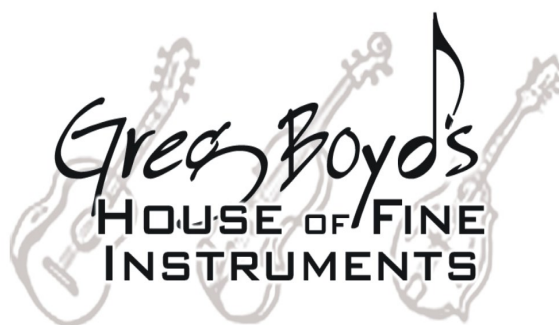
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Do you want the newsletter delivered electronically? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your application to: MRBA, PO Box 1306, Missoula, MT 59806

**27<sup>TH</sup> GIBBONSVILLE CAMPOUT**

Sept 9-10-11

**The weekend after Labor Day**

Celebrating the chance to gather once again and share the music that we love so very much! Yep, it is the Gibbonsville gathering the weekend after Labor Day, September 9-10-11. What a great chance to relax, pick, eat great food, eat ice cream, tell tales, memories, and share it all once again.

Covid continues to be our county. Please take personal precautions. The Moose Fire is not a concern, as the fire is south of Gibbonsville. The smoke has not been bad north of the fire. Gibbonsville is in great shape!

All campers **MUST** check in with RoseMarie when they arrive. There is more room for tents and dry campers this year. Rates per night are tents \$10, campers without hookups \$15, and all hookups and extra-large RV's \$20. Showers are \$5 unless you rent a cabin. Cabins are \$55-\$60 unless you are a picker, then it is \$20 less per night. Water at the site is limited, so fill your tanks before coming. Please keep your dogs on a leash. No open fires.

The Broken Arrow will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon serving that delicious Mexican food that we all love. They will not be open for breakfast on Saturday morning.

And.....don't forget about the ICE CREAM SOCIAL on Saturday afternoon at 1pm. Y'all bring somethig to put on the ice cream (syrops, fruit, toppings...whatever sounds good), and we'll have another smashing round of ice cream treats! It is on for this year.

There are potlucks on Saturday night at 6pm and on Sunday morning at 10am, followed by gospel music until noon. Picking always continues until .....??? Wall tents and jam tents are surely appreciated!

Started last year by Louise Steinway, we will have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Corn Shucking Contest! This great activity will take place Saturday between the Ice Cream Social and 6pm potluck. We will again have musicians play "Shucking the Corn" in the spirit of competition. We will also have more corn than last year.....more challenging! Then we will cook the ears to have corn available at the potluck. Hone your skills and sign up for this important event!

So pack the truck, change your strings, gather your potluck and ice cream social supplies, and travel safely to this 27<sup>th</sup> gathering. Expect laughter, friends, great meals, and of course the sweet sounds of the music we love. See you there!

For more information and/or questions, contact RoseMarie Ramey at the Broken Arrow.

## Bluegrass Wheel of Fortune

### (song)

\_ \_ \_ S \_ E Y \_ E \_ \_ R E

\_ R E \_ \_ \_ S \_



## MRBA August Campout Photos



Creekside Jam



Time for Capos!



Part of the Sunday Morning Gospel Jam



In the Pines, in the Pines...



Bequia and Mark



Arlene and Doreen

## Good Times at HARDTIMES

*(Kate McMahon)*

Mike and Tari Conroy can put another successful Hardtimes Festival in the books. Postcard perfect weather, enthusiastic bands, and an ample, appreciative audience were the perfect combination for the sound of bluegrass music. As Ben Essary noted when he gazed at the scene, “This is what heaven must look like.”

It was good to see old friends and good to remember others. The t-shirts for the festival featured a photo of Verna Molenda, a long time performer at Hardtimes. She must have been smiling. As Bill Molenda said, “I can’t think of a better way to honor her.”

The Johnny Campbell Band covered the Flatt & Scruggs classic “I’ll Go Stepping Too.” As told by the band, this was the first tune that Flat & Scruggs played after they were banned from the radio. I’m sure there is an interesting story about that comment.

There was also audience participation. The group Song Dog Serenade got the audience howling (literally) to the tune “I Want to Be a Hound,” while the Darby Sirens got the crowd waving for a photo. The band contest is always a crowd favorite, with the coveted prizes of huckleberry jam. The “Good Ole Grass Hats” was voted band with the most character, and the “Where Was Rachel” band was the best band.

Mike and Tari Conroy performed a song requested by Janice Heiland. With the title, “I’m Going to Wear the Pants, Little Girl (And I’m Gonna Tell You Which Pair to Wear)”, nobody really questioned who inspired that request. Much thanks to the Heiland Family for the use of their ranch. Along with the mountain views, it was not too hot, not too cold, not too smokey, not too windy—it was just right for the hallmark Montana bluegrass festival of the year.

## Bluegrass Wheel of Fortune (song)

— — — E — — — N — F  
— E N — — — — Y

## Warning Label: Music

Mood altering, Highly addictive

Common side effects include, but are not limited to, head bobbing, toe tapping, dancing, finger snapping, humming, and persistent melody flashbacks.

Ask your Doctor if music is right for you.



## HARDTIMES PHOTOS

From Bob Carroll & Melora Neaves



Jeff Burke Hosting a Workshop



Jack Mauer, John Joyner, Britt Arnesen Waiting for a Bus



Miss Arlene on the Mandolin, Cliff on Guitar



President Mike with his Camera



Ladd Canyon Ramblers



Randy Hackworth of Kentucky Sky

# Memory Lane from Past Newsletters

*Compiled by Kate McMahon*

You never know what you'll come across when you clean out old files. Recently, this chore yielded some old copies of the MRBA newsletters going back 20 years. I thought it might be fun to take a walk down memory lane and share some of the excerpts from these buried treasures.

## **Getting to Know You...**

**(Interview with Clay Lewis by Shirley Rushing)**

**Sept.-Oct. 2000**

Clay Ammon Lewis was born September 19, 1918, in Marysville, California, the oldest child in a family with three sisters. Clay grew up during tough times. His grandfather had a ranch, and his dad mostly raised rice. Clay didn't care for ranching and farming, but the gold mining really sparked his interest.

Clay indicated that although his mother wanted him to learn to play the piano, he wasn't interested in anything except the guitar, and he's always loved the guitar. He had his first one at the age of nine. It was a flat-top and cost \$18; back then that was a lot of money. He said "I was always working, always had a job, and I was making payments on that \$18 guitar. There was no one I knew who played a guitar, so I had to teach myself. I had an old cowboy book on chords, and I spent as much time as I could on it." He said everyone except his mother made fun of him, so he did his practicing out behind the barn or in the woodshed.

After he graduated from high school, his mother suggested he go to a guitar shop to talk to the owner. He was a good friend of hers, and she felt confident he would give Clay some help. "This man told me 'there's only one guitar and that is a Martin,' so in 1936 I bought my first Martin guitar and paid \$80 for it. That was a lot of money, but I always working at some job somewhere."

It was in 1946 also that he was working for a man herding sheep. He said the man didn't have any money and never did pay him anything, so he got through the winter "playing for his food," so to speak. On Saturday nights there was a potluck at the clubhouse and he would play his guitar and entertain the people for his meals. Times were very hard, but his guitar got him through the winter.

## **The Gibbonsville Campout**

**(by Arlene Wolf)**

**Nov. -Dec, 2002**

It was another great campout at the Broken Arrow in Gibbonsville. Ya shoulda been there! The nightly rain never stopped the music—even when one of the wall tents had a major river flowing through it— and toes kept tappin and splashing' all the same! All kinds of great music was played at all hours, and the musicians and listeners enjoyed every minute of it.

A special event happened this year, and that was Bill Anderson's 40th surprise birthday party. What a great job Charlenie did at putting this together! Once the golfers got him out of Gibbonsville and onto the Salmon golf course, the decorating crew took over in the tent, and his family poured in. The wall tent never looked so nice—full of pictures of him, presents, and a cake. When Bill returned from golf, little did he know that the wall tent was full of his family from all over. I do believe that Bill was speechless—the first time I've ever seen him this way. It was great! Another special memory to add to the Gibbonsville list of fun times.



## Memory Lane from Past Newsletters (cont.)

### **A Full Night of Bluegrass**

*(Phyllis Erk)*

*Jan.—Feb. 2003*

November 14th held a full night of bluegrass in Missoula. The evening began with a dinner show at the Golden Corral with bluegrass by Mountain Groan who were joined by special guests from the Bitterroot Valley, Mike & Tari Conroy and Mark Dickerson.

From the Golden Corral we made our way to the Crystal Theater to watch a sold-out show. Rank Strangers Bluegrass Explosion kicked off the concert with some of the best young talent in the area showing off their hot licks and tight bluegrass harmonies. Joining the band for this performance were Tom Kelley (mandolin & vocals), Fred Kellner (bass & vocals), Richard Dame (banjo & tenor vocals), Ivan Rosenberg (dobro), and Mason Tuttle (guitar & vocals).

When Open Road took the stage for the main show of the evening, it felt like a step back in time to what you might imagine it would've been like to see one of the WSM live radio shows. The band played some traditional bluegrass but mostly original songs. The originals capture the bluegrass feeling so completely that you can hardly believe their songs are not 60 years old.

The most impressive thing about the show to me was the infectious humor in their song lyrics and stage banter. These guys were clearly having a ball. In fact they were having so much fun they almost forgot to take a break between their two sets. Caleb, the mandolin player, has such a big smile that you wonder how he fits his teeth back into his mouth.

After the concert, everyone was invited to an open jam at Ruby's Inn. There was a great turnout for the jam, including all of the band members from Open Road! There were 3-4 jam circles going strong for 3 hours. All in all, a wonderful evening of bluegrass and musical camaraderie. Well worth the lost sleep.

### **Lang Creek**

#### **(Bitterroot Valley Bluegrass Festival Program—2003)**

From the Flathead Valley comes another group of musicians who will surprise and please bluegrass fans. They are a blend of traditional bluegrass with rich and warm vocal work, laced with tasteful instrumental contributions. John and Sandy Campbell embellish the band with their authentic and rich harmonies; when you hear them sing, there is no doubt of their enduring bluegrass roots from Maryland. John helps with the guitar work in this band of friends, and Sandy's autoharp work adds a special sound to the rhythm of this group. (Mother Maybelle Carter would be proud to see and hear it!)

Chad Fadely, no stranger to the bluegrass influence in Montana, guides and leads the quality of Lang Creek with his crisp mandolin chops. Vicki Bodfish, one of the leaders of bluegrass promotion in Flathead Valley, provides some feisty fiddle work for Lang Creek. A native of Montana, David Hunt arrived in the Flathead Valley last year just in time for enlistment with Lang Creek. His smooth, clear, concise guitar work—marked with precision and style—delivers the punctuation needed in this bluegrass group.

Robert and Brenda Hanson classify as the R&B of Lang Creek (Rhythm and Banjo!). Robert contributes his driving, concrete, and deliberate bass along with his tenor vocal work. Brenda's contribution to the group lies in her evolving banjo work and in her pure-sounding vocal foundations, distinctive of her sister group, The Fletcher Girls.

# Why Acoustic is Better

- No electricity—No problem. Play when the power goes off, play off the grid, play all night without lights or whatever
- Much, much better for sing-alongs. (Also toe tappin, finger snappin, ....)
- One word—Rhythm (90% of guitar playing is rhythm)
- King of the road—you can carry everything you need to hitchhike or ride a bike.
- Cowboys can play music while riding a horse
- You can play in rain and not get electrocuted
- Play on the street for tips—no plug-in required
- Callouses to prove you really are a musician
- Affordable—No extra equipment required.
- You won't get kicked out of a bluegrass jam!



Name your own reason \_\_\_\_\_

## Bluegrass Question of the Month

How many bluegrass songs about trains can you name?

## Wheel of Fortune Answers

Whiskey Before Breakfast  
Blue Moon of Kentucky

## Cripple Creek

(Source: *Wikipedia & Various Sources*)

"**Cripple Creek**" is an Appalachian-style old time tune and folk song, often played on the fiddle or banjo. The tune has an unknown origin. It has become a standard among bluegrass musicians and is often one of the first songs a banjo picker learns. Its time of composition is unknown, and the tune is probably older than the lyrics.

The most famous Cripple Creek is Cripple Creek, Colorado, where a mining town was formed after gold was discovered there in 1891. However, most traditional Virginia musicians believe that the song refers to Cripple Creek, Virginia. Pickers can choose from a multiple of lyrics to create their own favorite version of the song.

The first recording was in 1924 by Sam Jones, also known as Stovepipe No. 1, a black one-man-band. The Skillet Lickers recorded the song later in the same year. Luther Strong was recorded singing the song in 1937 by the Library of Congress. Leo Kottke performed a fingerpicked acoustic guitar arrangement on his 1971 long player *Mudlark*. U.S. Senator Robert Byrd recorded the song on his album *Mountain Fiddler*. Among famous bluegrass artists to record the song include Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Reno & Smiley, The Country Gentlemen, Ralph Stanley (and many more).

## Cripple Creek

### Chorus

Goin' down to Cripple Creek, going on a run  
Goin' down to Cripple Creek, to have a little fun  
Goin' down to Cripple Creek, going on a whirl  
Goin' down to Cripple creek to see my girl

### Verses

Hey, I got a girl at the head of the creek  
Going up to see her 'bout 2 times a week  
Kiss her on the mouth, sweet as any wine  
Wrap herself around me like a sweet potato vine

Now, Cripple Creek's wide and Cripple Creek's deep  
Wade old cripple creek before I sleep  
Roll my britches to my knees  
I'll wade ole Cripple Creek when I please

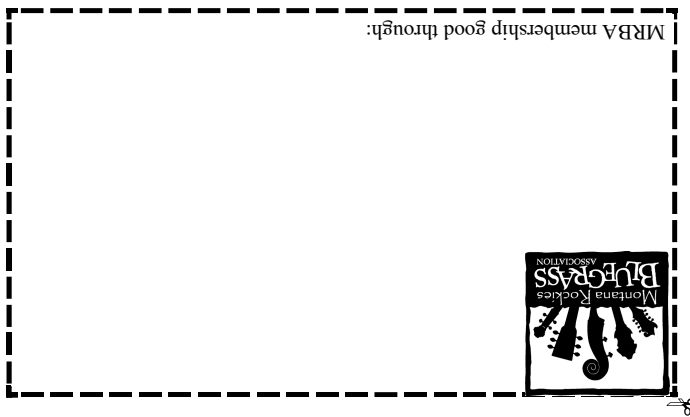
I got a girl and she loves me  
She's as sweet as sweet can be  
She's got eyes of baby blue  
Makes my gun shoot straight and true

I went down to Cripple Creek  
To see what them girls had to eat  
I got drunk and fell against the wall  
Ole corn likker was the cause of it all



***ATTENTION:***

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



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