



Quarter Notes

Volume 22 Issue 4

Autumn 2004

Plank Road's

Regular Events:

- SING-A-ROUND 1st & 3rd Saturdays: Sept. 4 & 18, Oct. 2 & 16, Nov. 6 & 20
- DANCE BAND PRAC-TICE 2nd Saturdays. Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13
- BLUEGRASS JAM 4th Saturdays. Sept. 25, Oct. 23, Nov. 27
- LAST THURSDAY: "It's Our Turn!" Last Thursdays. Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 30
- Music By The Yard: Oct. 3
- Go to www.plankroad.org for full details!

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Help us celebrate over 20 years of Folk, Traditional and Acoustic music in the Western Suburbs!

PRMS, Two Way Street Sponsor

Lou & Peter Berryman in Concert

Keep Saturday evening, September 25th open for the return of the Berrymans in the big room at Two Way Street. This folk-comedy duo doubles as songwriters and performers to produce some of the funniest, wittiest, satirical and poignant songs and performances this side of the Mississippi.

Early influences of American and British musical comedy and folk music fed a growing, original song bag. Their brief marriage in the early seventies resolved into a life-long friendship. By the late seventies they were honing their skills playing regular weekly concerts

By the mid '80s they were traveling all across the country, still writing and singing—now with a broader perspective, finding quirks of the home state weren't so much Midwestern as human. In twenty-five years of performing, Lou and Peter have produced twelve albums and two songbooks worth of hilarious, quirky, yet oddly profound songs, rich with word play and interesting images.

Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton and Tom Lehrer count themselves among their fans. Their work has appeared in numerous compilations like RISE UP SINGING and SING OUT! Magazine.

The concert begins at 8 PM— the doors open at 7:30 pm. Admission is \$12 per person, \$10 for PRFMS members, \$6 for children 12 to 18, children under 12 are free. The Two Way Street Coffee House is at 1047 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove, across from the Public Library.

New Music Series Launched!

Small Potatoes and Sons of the Never Wrong Open the PRFMS Sunday Concert Series

The idea is to have a nice, relaxing concert on Sunday afternoons in a non-smoking room that seats about 70 for an intimate listening experience. Not bad, eh?

Small Potatoes opens the new series Sunday, October 24th with the Songs of the Never Wrong signed for November 14th. The venue is the non-smoking room at the Ballydoyle Pub and Restaurant at 5157 Main Street, The Ballydoyle offers a great menu with a fine choice of beverages.

Doors for the concerts open at 4 pm, with music beginning around 4:30 or so. The coverage charge will vary.

Small Potatoes: General Admission is \$10, PRFMS members \$8
Sons of the Never Wrong: General Admission \$12, PRFMS members \$10



From The PRFMS President

Goin' Down The Old Plank Road

Hello Friends,

As always, I'm amazed at how fast this summer has passed. We are celebrating successes of events like Music by the Yard, the Downers Grove Heritage Festival and Arts on the Prairie. We are now looking forward to one the busiest autumns we have ever had.

In addition to a late September (25th) concert with Lou and Peter Berryman we will be starting a new Sunday concert series beginning in late October. (Please see article in this issue). Our other activities such as the barn dances and sing arounds continue with usual abandon.

We would also like to offer workshops in the months ahead but we really need your input as to what your interests are. Please contact us via email, plankroad@ameritech.net, snail mail at PRFMS, P.O. Box 386, Downers Grove, IL, 60515, or drop by one of our board meetings.

We've had a lot of fun this year and with your support the best is yet to come. The world of acoustic music has always been a small one supported by a strong persistent community of talented people. The demands on our time and the varieties of entertainment available have threatened the foundation of this music genre. We encourage you to support live entertainment and the musicians that provide it. In an election year when there is so much talk of "values," we invite you to vote with your time and dollars to support the music and dance that represents the best of who we are.

I would like to leave you with a quote.

"When I hear music I fear no danger, I am invulnerable, I see no foe. I am related to the earliest times, and to the latest."
-Henry David Thoreau

See you down the Old Plank Road,
-Dave Reynolds

The Sign-up Table: Volunteers

Six Month Checkup and Everything Looks GREAT!

It's been about six months since I came aboard to help out by coordinating our volunteer efforts— so it's probably a good time to thank the board and all of our fine volunteers who have staffed recent events such as the Fonnhor Concert, Spring Barn Dance and Heritage Fest in recent days.

Response to every call has been enthusiastic and there have been new faces as well. Jim Zethmayer and Andy Malkevicz have been added to the growing list of jam leaders. Jim and Andy were jam leaders at the Arts on the Prairie Festival.

The Plank Road Folk Music Society thanks each and every person who has worked an event or volunteered for a upcoming event. Looking forward to a great fall with many events!

-Denise Davis, Volunteer Coordinator

2004-2005 Old Time Dance Party Dates Set

The 2004-2005 Old Time Dance Party dates are set! They are:

November 6, 2004

January 29, 2005

March 12, 2005

Mark your calendars because we'd like to see you, your family and several neighbors at each one!

All-Volunteer String Band

How The Band Got Started & How It Works

Editor's Note: A few months ago, the Board of Directors got thinking about a way it could recognize the dedication, sense of professionalism of the Band as well as express its appreciation for the time and energy expended in making the PRFMS Old Time Dance Parties so much fun! The Board decided to share the wealth, so to speak and a Quarter Notes article was suggested. Band Leader Cathy Jones was kind enough to provide the answers to several of our questions:



The All-Volunteer String Band started when the No-Experience Necessary Barn Dances started in the mid 1980s. Our first dance was at the Old Quarter Coffee House run by Dave and Barb Reynolds (**Ed:** *That's also why this newsletter has the name it does*). The dances provided Plank Road members an opportunity to learn the basics of playing and dancing "Barn Dance" style. The first All-Volunteer band consisted of Cathy Jones on fiddle, Mark Dvorak on banjo and Marvin Lensik on guitar. Marianne Mohrhusen figured out how to call the dances. Our first dance consisted of eight volunteers who worked with Marianne to figure out the best way to teach/learn the basics for Barn Dancing. At this point, we were all learning!

The dances at Plank Road have always been open to whoever wanted to dance and whoever wanted to play. However, there has always been a core of musicians that played regularly at dances and wanted to learn new tunes and help smooth up our playing a bit. So we decided to start getting together in between dances to work on learning tunes and figuring out what chords sounded best with those tunes. It was decided that the Jones Family Music School would be a good meeting place (since the Jones family were active members of the band), and the Barn Dance Band "Practices" started up.

These have really just been a good excuse for musicians to get together and play fiddle tunes for a couple of hours once a month. "Practices" are not mandatory for playing with the band at dances, just an opportunity for people who want to brush up on tunes and/or chords. The band consists of two types of instruments – those that play the melodies and those that play the rhythm. Sometimes the same instruments can do both. We have had everything from fiddle, banjo, guitar, mandolin and bass to harmonica, dulcimer (both fretted and hammered) and even the spoons and the washboard.

At the "practices" we work on getting a good balance of both melody and rhythm. The regular get-togethers have allowed us to become stronger players and have expanded our fiddle tune repertoire. All instruments are welcome. Anyone can join at any time, and come as many or as few times as they like.

When we have new faces at our practices, we work through some of our "standard" tunes for dances and go over chords, and the "signals" we use for starting tunes, changing tunes and ending tunes. We have also used the practices to talk about our role as musicians at the dance and the importance of keeping the music lively and rhythm even so the dancers can enjoy the evening.

The dances are a lot of fun, not only for the dancers but also for the musicians. I think one of the main things that draw people back to the dances – both the musicians and the dancers – is the sense of everyone being involved.

-Cathy Jones

Music By The Yard

Carol and John Sommer's House: Sunday, October 3, 4:00 pm - 10:00

John & Carol will provide some grill-fare, beer, wine and pop.

Please bring: Dish to share - appetizer, dessert, salad, side dish, etc., lawnchairs and instruments and stuff!

Please call (630-852-1799) or email (carol@sommersolutions.com) with reservations.



Skip Landt's Kindlin' Wood

It's a Sheer Joy

Skip and Fran Landt

For the last year, Fran and I have had great fun reviewing albums for a national magazine, an activity which constantly introduces us to new artists and new songs. One album set in particular has been a special delight – even though we've only received and listened to half of it. But our pleasure is so great, I can't resist sharing it with you.

The album is Joanne Hammil's *Rounds and Partner Songs*, Volume 2, and it's a sheer joy.

This CD includes twenty-six songs, serious and whimsical, with masterfully coordinated words and melodies, most by Hammil herself. Melodies are often memorable even apart from the songs which they grace. Hammil's fine instincts in combining words and music are reflected in "Now That I Know." The three brief lines of lyrics in this haunting song are a touching poem and melody. Other songs such as "Left, Right" and "Don't Give Up" reflect a finely tuned social consciousness.

Throughout their listening to this album, those who enjoy vocal music will find pleasure in the voices and rich harmonies. (These include vocals by Sally Rogers and Howie Bursen). Accompaniments are simple, but well done and nicely varied, ranging from only percussion to piano, banjo or guitar, synthesizer, or wind instruments.

Some of our favorites on the album are found in songs oriented to children and families. "Fuzzy Wuzzy was a Bear" is sung by Hammil and folk-singer/storyteller Ben Touzley in a speeded-up round with banjo accompaniment. Hammil's whimsy (and savvy on child-rearing) appear in the "Yes, No" round. In this little masterpiece, adults sing "yes," kids 12 and under sing "no," and teenagers sing "later, later, leave me alone!" Joanne, you've nailed it!

Whether to learn new songs, to enjoy the excellent music, or to savor Hammil's creative spirit, this album will be a treasure for anyone who takes pleasure in rounds. And we've heard only Volume 2! Mmmmm, do we look forward to Volume 1!

Tantalizing, isn't it? Just to think of all the wonderful music still to come. But for satisfaction, there's nothing like our old favorites. The music of Art Thieme is that category. Reading his column at this website took me back to some of the many tapes I made of his live performances, and to his 1998 album, *The Older I Get, the Better I Was*, which is still available at Chicago's Different Strummer and at Evanston's Hogeeye Music (one of our favorite stores). Hogeeye also has some of Art's earlier Folk Legacy albums, including *That's the Ticket*.

Now, fair is fair! If you hear albums – new or old – that you especially enjoy, what about letting us know? (And tell us what you enjoy about them? There's so much great music worth sharing.

Help us fling open the doors and let the music out!

-Skip

Skip Landt is a long-time harmonica teacher at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music. Skip and his wife, Fran, perform children's music and old-time sing-a-longs. Since 1987, they have held a family music workshop each year at the University of Chicago Folk Festival. Skip plays in Patient Medicine, an "electric jug band," which has one gig a year, in Harbert, Michigan, which is at the annual Outsider's Art Show. Landtfamily.org includes information on the Landts' classes and other activities.

Skip's other columns are available on the official Plank Road Folk Music Society Web Site:

www.plankroad.org

PLANK ROAD MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Cut out the order form and send to address below. Please make checks payable to the
Plank Road Folk Music Society
 Post Office Box 386, Downers Grove, IL 60515

***Please include \$1.50 shipping/handling for t-shirt**

Memberships

I'm interested in helping with:

- \$10 for 1 year/Individual
- \$20 for 1 year/Family
- Other: _____

- Events (ticket sales, concessions, set-up, take down, hosting, etc)
- Workshops, Community Appearances, Sing A Rounds
- Nitty Gritty: Promotion, Publicity, Finance, Archive

PRFMS T-shirt: \$12 each
 (Yellow/Orange Logo)

PRFMS T-shirt: \$12 each
 (Blue/Purple Logo)

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- L** Yellow/Orange
- XL** Yellow/Orange

- M** Blue/Purple
- L** Blue/Purple
- XL** Blue/Purple

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PRMS Member Mini Music Reviews

What's Playin'?

What am I listening to?

Bandwidth of late has limited my live music exposure. I am in the mechanical stages of an extensive remodeling project on our 80 year old house. I have been listening to the birds and the breeze while putting return air ducts in the attic floor joist bays and hoping to hear no drips after soldering in new copper water supply lines. And, like many of you, listening to Ron & Pat while the Cubs chug their way through another summer.

The recorded music I have been listening to during this project has been varied, and, on reflection, fairly high energy. I seem to be revisiting the Roadhouse sounds that rev up my workdays. So, now on to the music.

James McMurtry – Live in Aught-Three, 2004 Compadre Records
 McMurtry is from San Antonio and I can't help but conjure images of world class BBQ and cold long necks in Ice House tubs.

Eric Taylor - 1995 Watermelon Records -
 I think Eric is one of Texas' most underrated songwriters. He had a stroke earlier this year and has recently begun been doing shows again at the legendary Anderson Faire in Houston.

Old & In The Way – Acoustic Disc – recorded 1973, released 1975
 Bluegrass/Jam Band supergroup, Peter Rowan, Vassar Clements, Jerry Garcia, David Grisman and John Kahn exposed a huge audience to the music of the Bluegrass Boys, Stanley Bros. and more.

The Subdudes Live at Last – 1997 High Street Records
 New Orleans acoustic jazz gospel meets mountain states jam band. This was the swan song recorded on their going away tour 8 yrs ago. They have reunited and are touring to rave reviews again supporting their new release Miracle Mule.

And of course many, many live recordings from tape friendly bands who share their music via fans
 And semi-official sites who make these available to interested listeners. Hope you've had a great summer and continue to support live music and acoustic music where you are able.

-Troy LeValley



Mark Dvorak's Regular Practice

Another Way to Play a G Chord

(Editor's Note: This is the second of Mark's Web Columns, in condensed form— we wanted to give you a feel for the tremendous amount of work and time Mark's put into this! The whole column is up at the website: www.plankroad.org along with his introductory column)

Let's think about a G chord. When playing a G, we normally hold our fingers down in certain places on the fret board and strum one way or another, and hear the strings sounding more or less, at the same time. A long time ago, people smarter than us named that bunch of tones a G major chord. We can talk about why later. For now I'd like us to think about practicing a G chord in a different way.

For our new way of playing a G chord, we won't be clamping our hand down on the fret board in a fixed position, but rather, we'll *move through* a sequence of single tones in a rhythmic pattern. We'll be sounding more or less, the same tones as those strumming a G major chord, but this *moving figure* will add a certain character and drive to a group sound.

If you're sitting in a chair holding your guitar as you would while playing it, the string closest to the ceiling is most often called the sixth string. The string closest to the floor, the first string. The fifth, fourth, third and second strings are, of course, in between them.

And we'll call the fingers of your fretting hand by the same names that God and your Kindergarten teacher gave them: Thumb, Index, Middle, Ring & Pinky.

Now, finger a G chord in your usual way. However you do it, one of the fingers of your fretting hand is holding down the sixth string at the third fret. This might be written: 6/3.

Right?

Now release your G chord, find 6/3 again and this time hold it down with your Index finger. The tone produced while fretting the sixth string at this position is a G note, or the root of a G chord. It's good to be aware of your roots, musical and otherwise. It's the place from which we start and the place to which we return. So 6/3 is our G; our root.

While holding down 6/3 with your Index finger, find the Ring finger on that same hand. That Ring finger needs to jump all the way up to the sixth string, seventh fret, or 6/7. You'll need to let go of 6/3 to do so, 'cause it's a long jump. Do it again and again, back and forth to a steady beat, using either a flat pick or the Thumb of your strumming hand to sound out the tones:

6/3	6/7	6/3	6/7
6/3	6/7	6/3	6/7

If you use your Index finger to fret 6/3 and your Ring finger to fret 6/7, you're using the same fingering that good guitarists all over the place use. Practice again, using these two fingers to fret the first two tones, or intervals, of our moving figure. Strive for an even rhythm and a clean sound:

6/3	6/7	6/3	6/7
6/3	6/7	6/3	6/7

Get in touch if you have a question. Practice well.

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 markdv@aol.com
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Yes, there is more, and we left the cool stuff out so you can check it out up on the website! www.plankroad.org

Steve Moss' New Column**Song Writing: Yes, You Can!**

To become an expert on something, take it apart and put it back together. Many mechanics learned their way around a car this way. You can also learn a lot about a song by taking it apart. As you listen to one of your favorite songs, begin answering the following questions.

How long is it? Look at the back of the CD case, or time it yourself.

What is its form? The most common is the Verse-Chorus form. The chorus contains the song's message, and often its title. The verses advance the story and set up the chorus.



Another form, common in Folk Music, is the ballad. A ballad is a series of verses with no chorus. Examples of ballads include "John Henry" and Bob Dylan's "Masters of War."

A third form common in country and pop songs is the "AABA," or 32 bar chorus. The three "A" sections, traditionally eight measures long each, have identical melodies, and often contain the song's title at the beginning or end. The "B" section contains contrasting melodic and lyrical material and introduces tension that is resolved by the return of the "A" section at the end. "The Glory of Love" is an example.

How many verses does it have? Verse-Chorus songs often have two or three verses. Traditional ballads could have as many as twenty, while contemporary examples are shorter.

What is its tempo? How fast or slow is the song?

What is its time signature? Do you hear how some beats receive more emphasis than others, like the stressed syllables of speech do? Count the distance between stressed beats. A triple signature sounds like this: ONE two three ONE two three. A Duple signature sounds like ONE two ONE two. A quadruple signature sounds like ONE two THREE four.

Does it contain instrumental breaks? Where are they located?

Do this exercise repeatedly. It's fun and enlightening too. Your perceptions will sharpen as you practice. As you write your own songs, you'll find that you've been building a storehouse of effective techniques to use.

***Editor's Note:** Steve will show you how to write songs in condensed columns here in the Quarter Notes as well as in his more regular and expanded web column at www.plankroad.org. Steve also gave us permission to access his songwriting newsletter archives which we'll also post to the website when we get a chance!*

The Unreconstructed Folk Singer**Art Thieme Rants & Rambles On The Web and Surfers Love It!**

OK, Yer Editor isn't going to out pun Art Thieme- we meant *web* surfers! Your timid webmaster was flabbergasted when Art said, "Sure, I'd love to be a regular contributor to the reorganized www.plankroad.org!" Art's topics have included a goodbye to Fred Holstein, another to Johnny Cash, thinking about photography and we can't wait for the next installment! Still another way Plank Road keeps the music alive and the community vibrant!



The PRFMS Board has been busy since the Annual Meeting in January. Here are the highlights:



**Post Office Box 386
Downers Grove, IL 60515**

PRFMS Contacts:

General Questions: Cathy Jones, (630) 889-9121 e-mail: cathy@jonesfamilymusic.com

Quarter Notes/www.plankroad.org Questions:
Scot Witt, (630) 717-8226
e-mail at scotwitt@wideopenwest.com

Plank Road Folk Music Society

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Information on Local Folk Organizations



Plank Road Folk Music Society, PO Box 386, Downers Grove, IL 60515. (630)889-9121 or (708) 442-0823 Web: www.plankroad.org

Two Way Street Coffee House 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL 60515. (630)969-9720 Web-site: www.twowaystreet.org

Jones Family Music Studio, Lombard. (630)916-1356. Web: www.jonesfamilymusic.com

Maple Street Chapel, Main & Maple, Lombard, 60148. (630)629-2630 or (630)964-4871 Web: www.tccafe.com/msc

Acoustic Renaissance Concerts Unitarian Church of Hinsdale. (708) 802-0236 Web: www.acousticren.com

Folk Lore Center & Acorn Coffee Bar, 29W140 Butterfield Rd, POB 762, Warrenville, IL 60555. (630)393-1247

Woodstock Folk Music/Festival (815)338-4245 Website: www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

Fox Valley Folklore Society, 755 N Evanslawn Ave, Aurora, IL 60506 (630)897-3655. Web: www.FoxValleyFolk.com

Warrenville Folk Music Society, POB 248, Warrenville IL 60555 (630)717-8495 e-mail: Warrenvillefolk@aol.com

Lake County Folk Club, Box 847, Mundelein, IL 60060, (847)949-5355

HANDS (Hammers & Noters Dulcimer Society), Box 181, Morris, IL 60450(708)331-6875 Web: www.gwdf.org

South Suburban Dulcimer & Folk Music Society, P.O. Box 455, Park Forest, IL 60466. (708)756-3857

Tune in to "Folk Festival" with George Brown Tuesdays 7 to 9 PM and "Strictly Bluegrass" with Larry Robinson Wednesdays 7 to 9 PM on WDCB, Public Radio from College of DuPage. WDCB presents many other fine folk programs, as well as jazz, classical, reggae, opera, and news and information. For a program guide, call (630) 942-4200.