



Dedicated to the preservation of folk, traditional and acoustic music.

Quarter Notes

www.plankroad.org ♪ Fall Issue, September 2009

Plank Road's Regular Events

SING-AROUND

Two Way Street Coffee House
1st and 3rd Saturdays - 2:00-4:00PM

BLUEGRASS JAM

Two Way Street Coffee House
4th Saturday - 2:00-4:00PM

Plank Road All Volunteer String Band practice

Jones Family Music School
630-889-9121
2nd Saturday - 2:00-4:00PM

LAST THURSDAY: Open Mike @ Two Way Street Coffee House

7:00 - 9:30 PM
(Tuesday, Nov. 24 & December 29 - due to the holidays)

Last Thursday of every month.
A monthly unplugged open mic for high school and college age students only.

Go to www.plankroad.org and/or www.twowaystreet.org for full details!



Bob O'Hanlon

President's Message – Fall 2009

Summer is over, but fall is a great time of year in our area. Still plenty of nice days ahead, so I hope you'll enjoy them.

There is a lot of excitement within Plank Road these days as we begin the celebration of our 25th anniversary as an organization. Many members kicked off this "Season of Celebration" by attending the Fox Valley Folk Music and Storytelling Festival in Geneva.

I continue to marvel at our ability to keep going and growing for such a long period. I guess our innate love of our music is a powerful motivator which keeps us playing and singing. We will continue to celebrate and this will build to a major event in the spring, where we can all gather and celebrate as an organization.

In the meantime, we have a barn dance scheduled on October 24 in addition to our regular sing-arounds, jams, holiday events and, of course, our annual meeting in January. Also, we do participate in some of the premier folk festivals in the area, such as the Danada Festival, where we can showcase our talent and have a lot of fun. I hope you will all make an effort to come to as many of our events as you can, as these are some of the main ways we show our ongoing support of folk and other acoustic music in our area.

On a closing note, many of you are aware of the heart surgery I had in June. Thanks for all the good wishes and messages of support I have received. The whole thing was a big surprise to me; it was detected during a stress test, so take it from me, if your doctor has recommended any tests, don't procrastinate...get them done.

I look forward to seeing you all sometime soon. —Bob O'Hanlon

Upcoming Events

October 4 - 7PM
Songpainting

The Songs of Michael Smith
1245 Chicago, Evanston, IL
\$20.00-Advance, \$25.00-Door
847-492-8860

October 11 - 11:30 AM - 5 PM
Danada Fall Festival

See article on right
visit www.plankroad.org, News and Events for a schedule of performers

October 8 through 11
2009 FARM Gathering

Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites - Bolingbrook, IL
www.farmfolk.org | See article on back page

October 24 - 8 PM
Old Time Barn Dance Party

Two Way Street Coffee House, Downers Grove, IL
See page 7

December 3 - 7:30 PM
Bryan Bowers House Concert

Batavia, IL | See page 3

"To call Bryan Bowers' performance simply a 'concert' would be inadequate if not inaccurate... (it) could better be described as an experience!"

—Deseret News



Danada Fall Festival Sun., October 11

Located in the Danada Forest Preserve on Naperville Road in Wheaton (between Butterfield Road and Warrenville Road), the Danada Fall Festival is a fun annual family event! Sit back and relax and enjoy the music as you eat lunch, purchased for a modest price on the grounds, in front of the folk stage!

Entertainment at the free folk stage is provided through PRFMS, 11:30 AM to 5:00 PM, starting with the All-Volunteer String Band and followed by Sammy from Miami, Natural Bob and Micky, Acme Plumbing and Music, Gilly and Some Groovy Guys, Bruce Holmes, February Sky, Thursdays Child and the Bluegrass Escape.

See the web site, News and Events, for a schedule of the performers.

Hope to see you there!



Amy Reynolds, Brock Napierkowski and Dave Reynolds playing some Irish tunes on the folk stage last year.

For information about the 25th Anniversary and more on the history of PRFMS, click on the Anniversary logo on the home page of the website - www.plankroad.org



SUSTAINING ARTIST FEATURE

Bruce Holmes

Singer-songwriter Bruce Holmes has been a touring musician for seven years, since his software business “crashed and burned,” as Bruce puts it. We’ve known him, not only for his thoughtful original lyrics and accomplished guitar work, but also for his support of and participation in the groups and organizations that foster acoustic music; the PRFMS, the Two Way Street Coffee House, and the Fox Valley Folk Music and Storytelling Festival, to name a few. I asked Bruce to tell us what’s been on his musical mind lately and to update us on his career.



Bruce Holmes

“I’ve discovered that there’s an ebb and flow to the life of a singer/songwriter. You have to be in shape to perform. Your fingertips need to be toughened up if you want to play guitar for two or three hours a night. You need to have practiced the songs extensively if you’re going to be able to do them without screw-ups. So there’s an enormous amount of preparation that goes into doing a good show. As a result, it’s best to cluster performances. Usually you do that after a new CD comes out. You schedule 6 months to a year of as many shows as you can arrange. But when that starts to wind down, you get to thinking about the next album, and then you really need to focus on songwriting and recording. Those endeavors devour vast amounts of time. So you really can’t afford to spend time getting ready for shows. So your focus shifts.

“I’m working on my third CD now. I’ve almost got enough

songs for another album. Even managed to field test a bunch of them in front of audiences. Had them fill out feedback forms and such, in other words, I’m trying to figure out which songs are working for people. So far, I don’t seem to have any lemons in the lot. But I’ve still got a ways to go. I’d like to have another 10 songs finished so I can pick and choose which songs to move forward with. But I’m slow, it takes me a month to write a song. Haven’t found a way to speed up that process.”

Bruce has produced three CDs so far. His first two and then he recently finished producing an album for his old hero, Jerry Thiel. Bruce told me that producing takes up a lot of time that you could be devoting to your own career. He said the pluses are that it’s very rewarding and you do get paid. For right now, however, he’s not looking to do more.

I asked Bruce about how the hunt for fame and fortune was coming along:

“Well, you know, you do have that fantasy. I think the fantasy is OK. If you try and make it big, maybe you’ll get lucky and make it small. Or who knows. The favorite idea I’ve run across lately is a quote from Tom Peters, ‘Success requires a persistent misreading of the odds.’ For a while there it felt like I was really making it. I got picked up by a couple hundred radio stations and got a little songwriting recognition. But it hasn’t translated into anything significant. I played a show recently where most of the audience was there to play board games with their friends. At another show the front row spent the entire concert texting. I kept thinking I could win them over and leave them spell-bound, but it didn’t happen. And yet you do have some magical nights when the audience is really with you and having fun. Some venues foster the idea of a listening room and others just don’t, they really just want background music.

“When it isn’t a listening room you realize how far you still have to go. In the folk world there are hundreds of performers in line ahead of me who’ve been at it for decades. And heck, they’re better known and can draw a bigger crowd. So they, quite rightly, get the very best gigs. It takes years to make your mark in this field. You just have to be patient, make good music, keep upping your game and hope people eventually notice.” People are indeed noticing! Check out Bruce’s CDs and live performances - you won’t be disappointed.

Website: www.BruceHolmes.com

Thanks BP!

PRFMS receives \$2,500 grant from BP through the Employee Matching Fund!

Through programs like the Employee Matching Fund (EMF) which recognizes employee involvement*, BP supports organizations that make up the fabric of America, organizations across the US that work to improve people’s lives. BP employees working anywhere in the world can access up to \$5,000 per employee per year through grants made through the BP EMF. BP values and rewards energy, enthusiasm and the time spent working with schools, charitable organizations and community groups!



*This grant recognizes the volunteer time of PRFMS secretary and past president, Cheryl Joyal, BP employee.

Thank you, Cheryl!

THANKS



I was talking to my wonderful Uncle Cliff the other day. As he’s originally from Texas, try to hear that ole Southern accent as you read this.

He was telling me that he and Aunt Jeannie have been married 59 years this year and that, yes, they still talk to each other too, on occasion. He said, “Vicki, we learned the secret to a happy marriage, yes sir. And that is, I always get the last word. And you can believe that I do, too...its ‘yes, dear.’ ”

Readers Write!

Go To:

- > www.plankroad.org > click on Favorites
- > Marion Sumner, “Fiddle King of the South,” by Ron Pen

The content of articles shared through Readers Write is the sole responsibility of the authors and not PRFMS.

MUSIC INSTRUCTION

Jam Basics for Fiddlers

By Cathy Jones

So you have been playing fiddle for a while, and you are pretty good at playing in your living room. But now you are ready to develop skills for playing with other musicians. You see a notice for a jam session you would like to attend, but you have never really played with other musicians before. Or perhaps you have been sitting in at a jam session, but are unsure of how to make the step of joining in to play. How do you prepare for your first foray into jam session territory?



Cathy Jones

First, it is helpful to understand that the goal of a jam session is for the musicians to play together. That may seem an obvious point. However, it is also a good place to start in preparing yourself as a player to play with others in a group. While guitar and banjo players can brush up on chords and strums to play along with others, this doesn't transfer as neatly to fiddle.

To develop a good "jam session" technique on the fiddle, it is important to develop techniques to join in on songs and tunes you may not be familiar with while blending in with and complementing the other instruments. This is an important skill to develop in becoming a good jam session player. A great source of ideas is to watch (or listen for) what other fiddle players do when they are not playing lead. The important thing to do is to experiment. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes can

often lead to insights - whether they are things to avoid, or new ideas of things to include.

Practicing scales can be useful for being ready to 'improvise' in jam sessions. To be familiar with scales for keys that are commonly played in jam session is very helpful. One good source for scale patterns for fiddlers is *Beginning the Old-Time Fiddle* by Alan Kaufman (Oak Publications, ISBN-10: 0825601886). Kaufman uses finger patterns to explain the scales, so you don't have to read music. If you do read music and want a wider selection there are also plenty of violin exercise books that contain scales and scale exercises. But you don't have to have a book to find a scale pattern. Many of us know what a scale sounds like. The song "Do-Re-Mi" from *Sound of Music* is a good starting place, if you need one. "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" is another good song for learning the scale. Just find a starting note (for example, the A Major scale starts on an A note) and find the intervals that make up the scale. When you are familiar with the scale patterns, you will know what notes will blend in for the songs being played in those keys. The next step is experimenting with what fits and what doesn't, but at least the scale patterns give you a starting point.

Another important aspect of playing in a jam session is to know how to adapt "chord" thinking to the fiddle. While playing chords on the fiddle is a more advanced technique, there are ways of working up to that point. I encourage my fiddle students to learn how to read song sheets with chords. An easy method for becoming familiar with hearing chord changes is to play the same note as the chord that the others are playing. This is helpful in getting familiar with hearing chord changes and provides a way to play along on any song. Add in any appropriate bowing pattern to fit with the rhythm and you are good to go. When you are ready to try chords, *The Appalachian Fiddle* by Miles Krassen, (Oak Publications, ISBN-10: 082560141X) has a nice section on double stops (or two note chords) for the fiddle.

Fall is a great time for jam sessions, so find a jam session, sit in and have a good time!

See the Plank Road web site - www.plankroad.org, Favorites, String Band Materials for tunes that you can play

Don't Miss the Thursday, December 3 House Concert with Bryan Bowers!

For nearly three decades, Bryan Bowers has been to the autoharp what Earl Scruggs was to the five-string banjo. He presents instrumental virtuosity combined with warmth, eloquence, expression and professionalism. Bryan has a dynamic outgoing personality and an uncanny ability to enchant a crowd in practically any situation.

From his rather unglamorous beginning as a street singer, Bryan Bowers has become a major artist on the traditional music circuit. Bower's creativity and talent have won him induction into *Frets Magazine's* First Gallery of the Greats after five years of winning the stringed instrument, open category of the magazine's readers' poll. This distinction put Bowers along side other luminaries, such as Chet Atkins, David Grisman, and Tony Rice, recognized for their personal accomplishments. In 1993, Bryan was inducted into the Autoharp Hall of Fame to stand only with Maybelle Carter, Kilby Snow, and Sara Carter.



“Bowers is widely regarded as the leading virtuoso on the autoharp... Bowers also has distinct gifts as a singer and songwriter.”

— *People Magazine*

Batavia House Concert

Thursday, December 3, 7:30

\$15 Suggested Donation

for Reservations/Directions

lynn.garren@gmail.com or 630-761-0599

Co-sponsored by PRFMS and Fox Valley Folklore Society

The Birth of the Plank Road Folk Music Society

By Mark Dvorak

PRFMS was officially incorporated on December 19, 1984. The back-story goes like this:

I was friends with a fellow who played guitar very well, but was more into rock music; we played some together along with a few others in the Brookfield area. His parents were the late Frank and Helen Lilly of Brookfield, who were very active at St. Barbara Catholic Church in Brookfield. St. Barbara held an annual fundraising event and festival called 'Nights of the Dolphin' which was a series of performances, dancing, eating and so forth. It functioned like a First Night does in some towns, only this was held in the buildings of the church, mostly the school building.



Mark Dvorak

Frank and Helen signed up to sponsor a room for folk music at the festival and asked for our help. A few of us who knew enough on guitar were to be the entertainers in what was to be a "folk music club" modeled after the Earl of Old Town in Chicago. As much of the entertainment in 'Nights of the Dolphin' was lip-synced, our room with live music was a big hit. Maybe our popularity also had something to do with Frank installing a bar in the room??

The "folk music club" at 'Nights of the Dolphin' was repeated for several years. At some point, Father Don Hughes thought the folk room ought to continue on a monthly basis. Frank and Helen would be the sponsors, and oddly enough, it all came to be on November 14, 1981. We called our club The Old Quarter Coffee House, after the great Townes Van Zandt album, which references that club in Houston. We met in Old School Hall of the church (razed a long time ago) for a little over a year with mixed success. Coming up to the one year anniversary, Dave and Barb Reynolds, big music fans, ventured into our club with their new baby, Amy. Dave immediately took interest and took a leadership role.

When Old School Hall was torn down to build the new Parish Center, we promoted our concerts and open stages in a brand new space, The Prairie Room. At some point we relocated to the Congregational Church in Brookfield (Dave & Barb's Church) but still held occasional events at St. Barbara. In 1985 Dave and Barb purchased a store front in the Hollywood section of Brookfield and the Old Quarter became a full time folk club. Dave and Barb were open Thursdays through Saturdays with occasional events on Sunday and I started teaching classes one night per week in their space.

Jim Post, Blind Jim Brewer, Guy Carawan, Art Thieme and hoards of other musicians were presented in Dave and Barb's comfortable room. Perhaps it held eighty, but I remember nights when over a hundred crammed in. It became a musical focal point on the west suburban scene.

The story is important in this way. This was 1981. Fox Valley was six years old when we started The Old Quarter at St. Barb's. The Two Way Street Coffee House was eleven years old. The Old Town School was disappearing fast and had yet

to be reborn under the leadership of Jim Hirsch. Holstein's had opened earlier in the year and was a hot spot. The Adler Center in Libertyville, IL was run by Doug and Bonnie Miller and they had a nice concert series. This pretty much made up the scene. This was before all the coffee shops opened in the 1990s.

We were evangelizing for folk music and evangelizing for our program.

With the closing of the Old Quarter in 1987, the Plank Road Folk Music Society was ready to blossom. I want to say I was the first president, but that might not be true. Maybe it was the bass player Ray Kurek. (It was, but Mark, Ray and Paul Klonowski were the group to sign the original incorporation papers with the State of Illinois. Ray, Marianne Mohrhussen and David Reynolds composed the first board of directors.)

I remember we launched the club with a huge Woody Guthrie tribute in the park in Brookfield, got some nice press coverage and signed up a couple hundred members on the first night. Marianne took many shifts as president, as did Paul Klonowski and others. Our main concert venue became the Sokol Hall in Brookfield. Art Thieme, Jethro Burns, Ann Hills and others were presented. Sokol Hall was a multi purpose room that could be set up to seat a couple hundred people, so there were some exciting concerts there. Those were great days, my friends!

Please send any remembrances and pics you have of the early days of the PRFMS to Charley at plankroad@comcast.net or to Vicki at vingle@comcast.net - we'd love to share these with our members!



Transitions:

I'll Fly Away...

Christine Gaylord, February 26, 1949 - August 7, 2009

After a difficult battle with cancer, Christine passed away peacefully at home to the sound of her church praise band singing her songs. Known especially for her beautiful singing, she was a central figure in the budding West suburban folk music scene that began to flourish in the mid-1970s; she performed solo and with her group "Wildrose" (with Mike Allen & Drew



Carson), Christine was central in the early Fox Valley Folklore Society activities and played at the first Fox Valley Folk Festival in 1977. In more recent years her group "Gallimaufy" performed regularly and released a 1999 CD entitled "Dig Me a Ditch: Spirit of the Illinois and Michigan Canal." She also performed with her husband, fiddler Joe Wadz. Christine will be missed by the many folk musicians in the western suburbs whose lives she touched and enriched.

Mike Seeger, August 15, 1933 - August 7, 2009

Mike Seeger passed away peacefully after a long fight with cancer. He was a folklorist and folk musician, accomplished on many instruments including the banjo, fiddle, mandolin and dobro. He produced more than 30 documentary recordings and played on many others. Seeger, half-brother of Pete, worked to bring recognition to early musicians of the genre, who inspired him.

An Excerpt

“Fiddle King of the South” Marion Sumner, 1920 - 1997

By Ron Pen, Associate Professor of Musicology
John Jacob Niles Center for American Music
School of Music, University of Kentucky



Marion is off to the far left, next to him is Jess McReynolds, next to him is James McReynolds and on the far right is Jay Hughes. This is Jim and Jesse’s band.

The future fiddle king was born March 28, 1920 in Summersville, Florida, of parents Cisco Sumner and Ida Combs. Just six months later Marion moved back home to George’s Branch in Perry County, which is about a mile below Vicco (the coal company town whose letters were an acronym for “Virginia Iron

Coal and Coke Company”) and about twenty minutes west of the county seat of Hazard. Except for the years 1936 to 1965 when he was on the road, touring as a musician, Perry County, the only “wet” county in the southeastern Kentucky area, was Sumner’s home. I would have to guess that Sumner stayed close to his Perry County home because the local honky tonks and clubs that provided opportunities for musicians to perform regularly were mostly clustered around Hazard, the city where the railroad and the Kentucky River intersected in timber and coal commerce—and where you could buy yourself a drink.

The Sumner homestead on George’s Branch was a small self-subsistence farm with a narrow bottomland corn patch. There were nine children in the Sumner family, and just about all of them were musicians. Marion said: “I never knew a Sumner, even if it was a third cousin or a fourth, that some of ‘em didn’t play a banjo or fiddle.” Marion’s father, Cisco, was a fine square dance fiddler who played with his brother Jack on both sides of the Kentucky and Virginia border before Cisco got married. In fact, they would even stay in Norton, Virginia for months at a time working out of radio station WNVA. Marion described his father’s playing at workings, bean stringings, corn shuckings, and square dances, saying that he and his dad played “note for note.”

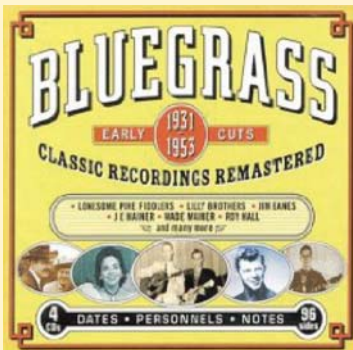
Marion naturally picked up string instruments and fiddle tunes in this musical family environment. At age ten, he was playing guitar and mandolin and one year later he picked up the fiddle. As he recalled it: “I loved the fiddle better than anything, so I talked my daddy into buying me one.” Sumner learned traditional mountain fiddle styles from his family, but his ears really opened up to catch the new sounds penetrating the mountains through radio. “Me and my brother used to walk to a cousin’s house every Saturday night before we had a radio, just to listen to the Grand Old Opry. Mostly we went to hear Arthur Smith and the Delmore Brothers. I thought he had the best fiddle style I ever heard.” It wouldn’t be many years until Sumner was actually working with Arthur Smith in Bluefield, WV, Birmingham, AL, and Knoxville, TN.

Continued on page 7

“You play old records for most people, and, if they listen at all, after the record’s over they turn to you and say, ‘So what is it you like about that old music?’ You just want to throw up your hands.”

From R. Crumb’s essay “To Be Interested in Old Music is To Be a Social Outcast!” *The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book*

Bluegrass Early Cuts 1931-1953: Classic Recordings Remastered by Various Artists



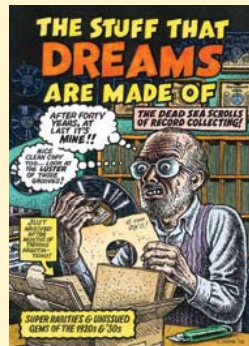
Audio CD - 2004,
JSP Records (UK) Box set

New and used copies available at Amazon.com.

Do you want to hear some early recorded fiddle tunes by great masters? Check this out:

The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of, Super Rarities and Unissued Gems of the 1920s and ‘30s

Audio CD - 2006,
Yazoo Records
Box set

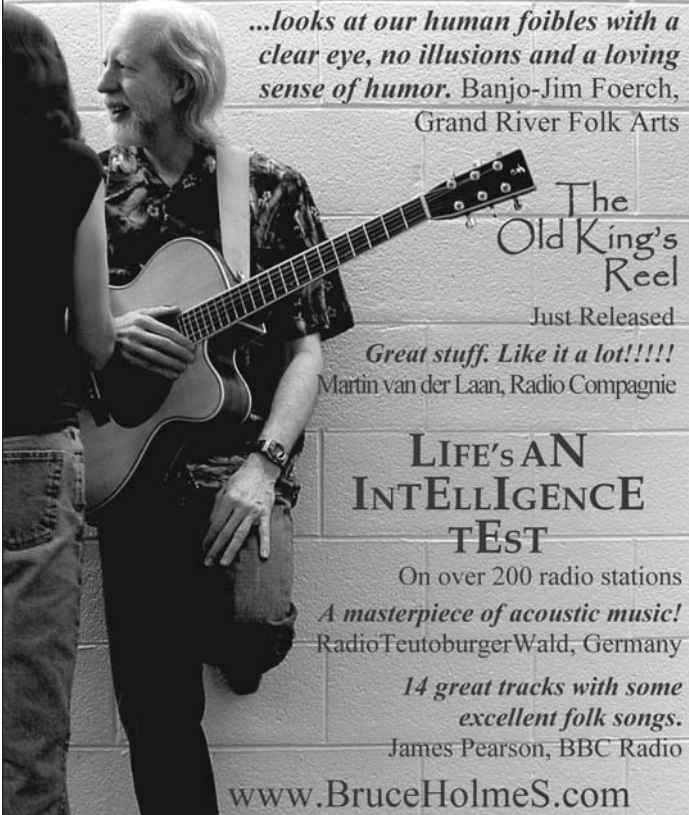


From the enclosed booklet:

“The Georgia Potlickers record - found recently in an antique store in Nebraska - features a duet performance by two of the all-time great fiddlers, Lowe Stokes and A.A. Gray, both from north Georgia. This was recorded at the same session...as the great Swamp Rooters selections (1930) which feature Stokes and Gray...”

“There is no rational explanation for the Broadway Record Company to have recorded Osey Helton and J.D. Harris, two outstanding and very backwoods fiddlers from North Carolina...They are of special interest because they are among the earliest recordings of backcountry fiddling styles.”

Thank You to our Sustaining Artists



BruceHolmeS
...looks at our human foibles with a clear eye, no illusions and a loving sense of humor. Banjo-Jim Foerch, Grand River Folk Arts

The Old King's Reel
Just Released
Great stuff. Like it a lot!!!!
Martin van der Laan, Radio Compagnie

LIFE'S AN INTELLIGENCE TEST
On over 200 radio stations
A masterpiece of acoustic music!
RadioTeutoburgerWald, Germany
14 great tracks with some excellent folk songs.
James Pearson, BBC Radio

www.BruceHolmeS.com

A Special Thanks to our Membership Contributors!!

Sustaining Artists (\$200 - \$399)

Benefits: Feature article and picture in one newsletter; 1/4 page reserved space in four newsletters for name(s), contact information and upcoming performances; individual membership(s) in PRFMS.

- **Bruce Holmes**
www.bruceholmes.com
- **February Sky**
Phil Cooper and Susan Urban
www.februarysky.com or
www.myspace.com/februaryskyfolk

Supporting Artists (\$50 - \$199)

Benefits: Line listing in four issues with name of group, name(s) of member(s), contact information; individual membership(s) in PRFMS.

- **Comfort Food**
Vicki and Rich Ingle
708-795-0695
- **Rick Neeley**
Rickety Music - Rick Neeley, Chris McNamara
McNamara & Neeley and, "The Songs of Bob Gibson,"
www.ricketymusic.com


Supporting Members (\$50 - \$199)

John J. Allan
Midge and Dan Anderson
Sheila and Joseph Gut
Lilli and Robert Kuzma
Gregg and Elizabeth Morton
Elizabeth Weir



February Sky
Phil Cooper & Susan Urban
Traditional, Modern and Original Folk & Celtic
Music with Guitar, Cittern, Mountain
Dulcimer, Banjo & Percussion

For details and touring schedule, see:
www.februarysky.com or
www.myspace.com/februaryskyfolk



TIP: If you want to see this newsletter in color, it's worth the effort! The pictures and graphics are terrific. Go to www.plankroad.org and click on "Quarter Notes," then "Fall issue."

ON THE RADIO



90.9 FM, WDCB, PUBLIC RADIO
from College of DuPage

Online Streaming - www.WDCB.org

Folk Festival, Tuesdays 7 to 9 PM

Strictly Bluegrass, Wednesdays 7 to 9 PM

Quarter Notes

Vicki Ingle | Editor

Jennifer Shilt | Graphic Design

We welcome ideas for articles or photos you'd like to share, please send them to vingle@comcast.net

Continued from page 5

Marion's fiddle style was most heavily influenced by Smith, particularly his work with the Dixieliners and the Delmore Brothers. In years spent playing and rooming with Smith in Knoxville and Birmingham, Marion absorbed the long bow style that was so different from the "jig bow" (one note per bow stroke) style Marion's father and brother Buddy used for square dances. Sumner also made Smith's repertoire his own, learning note perfect copies of melody and harmony parts to tunes such as "Red Apple Rag" and "Hollow Poplar."



Marion Sumner and Lee Sexton

Consider Smith's Breakdown in versions by Smith and Sumner. The clean noting, the long bow strokes with multiple notes, the attacks, blues slides into melody notes, use of light vibrato, and long phrasing are very similar if you can disregard the accompaniment—Alton Delmore's rock solid guitar under Smith and Terry Tipton's bluegrass banjo under Sumner.

Marion was linked to the progressive development of bluegrass style as was Kenny Baker, Bill Monroe's longtime fiddler, who absorbed Marion's playing while growing up in the nearby coal town of Jenkins, Kentucky. Art Stamper, of Hindman, Kentucky was also strongly influenced by Marion's playing before joining the Stanley Brothers.

Marion started playing with his brothers Buddy and Bobby who were both locally famous fiddlers—Bobby later went on to play fiddle on the early Stanley Brothers recordings for Rich-R-Tone. Bobby was with the band when the Stanleys won the audition at Bristol's WCYB in 1947 but, according to Neil Rosenberg, Bobby was uncertain about making music his career and he quit the band at that point. He joined the band again, and on a 1949 WCYB transcription Carter Stanley introduced Bobby Sumner as "a bluegrass fiddler from way down in Kentucky," linking him with the "bluegrass state" and the recently emerging bluegrass style.

While Route 23 running through the Eastern Kentucky highlands certainly had more than their fair share of talented musicians, in most cases music remained an avocation rather than a vocation. Still caught in a depression era economy and with large families clustered along narrow bottomland creeks and hollers, children were put to work early tending self-subsistence gardens on the rocky hillsides before being sent off to work logging, and coal mining. Therefore, talented as Sumner was, it was really a medical condition that led him to be a professional musician rather than a miner.

As a young child he contracted granuloma, an eye infection that almost blinded him. Fortunately, he could see well enough to play fiddle professionally, but not so well that he would have to carve a living out of the coal mines or chopping down forests. His quick wit and keen ear enabled him to learn music with a single hearing...

In 1936, at age 16, Marion took his first job playing with the Haley Brothers at WCPO in Cincinnati, OH. While there he also absorbed some of the more modern fiddle style of Charlie Linville who was working at nearby WLW radio and recording for King in Cincinnati ("Texahoma Boogie")...

The year is 1937. The streets of Hazard are packed five and six people deep behind the rows of diagonally parked cars with people leaning out of the windows of the buildings as the parade winds went down the main street of Hazard on this, the very first Labor Day Coal Carnival...There was also a fiddle contest in the square, which Marion won. More importantly, Cynthia Carver better known as "Cousin Emmy," who was entertaining at the carnival, saw him play and asked him to join her band.

This excerpt from Ron Pen's paper on Marion Sumner, delivered at national and international music conferences and revised for PRFMS, continues on to describe Sumner's 30-year music career and his semi-retirement back home in Perry County, Kentucky. The text is very rich, written by a man who has done the literal and figurative legwork and who, it is evident, loves both the music and the music-maker. (Many thanks to my daughter, Lexington, Ky resident Julie Smith, for connecting us up to her friend, author Ron Pen.) Through Marion's life, you learn more about old time, bluegrass and country-western music, the places where it was born and reared and tidbits about many other fine musicians who delivered it; Bill Monroe, Jim and Jesse, Roy Acuff, Howdy Forrester, Kenney Baker, J.D. Crowe, Ernest Tubb, Chet Atkins and Don Gibson, to name a few. —Vicki



Don't miss the rest of the story: see Favorites, Readers Write on the PRFMS web site: www.plankroad.org for the complete article.



Fall Old Time Barn Dance Party

Saturday, October 24, at 8:00 PM

Doors open at 7:30 PM - Musicians arrive at 7:00 PM to warm-up

Two Way Street Coffee House, 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL (Across from the Public Library)

Enjoy a fun-filled evening of music and dancing for the entire family. Dance the night away and/or play with the Plank Road All Volunteer String Band. Caller Marianne Mohrhusen will walk and talk you through all the dances at our No Experience Necessary Dance. Dances are informal,



with no costumes needed. In fact, you don't even need to bring a partner! Refreshments available.



\$5.00 admission for everyone 5 years of age and older

FARM

FARM Gathering in Bolingbrook - Only \$10 per day for fans!

October 8 - 11, 2009

Holiday Inn — Bolingbrook, Illinois

The annual gathering of FARM (Folk Alliance Region Midwest) is Thursday-Sunday, October 8-11 at the Holiday Inn of Bolingbrook, near the intersection of I-55 and I-355. It will include showcase concerts by twelve juried artists from across the US, plus cameo performances by more than 30 others on Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings. There will also be workshops, song circles, jamming, and other daytime activities so bring your instruments!

\$10 per day (payable at the door) will admit you to the concerts and jams; advance registration is required for certain other activities. This is an inexpensive opportunity not to be missed! Full information online at www.farmfolk.org.

FARM is the Midwest chapter of Folk Alliance International (FAI), a music industry group which fosters and promotes traditional, contemporary, and multicultural folk music and dance and related performing arts. Plank Road is a FAI member.



“MBTY Inside”
at the home of Carol
and Fred Spanuello.
A great time was
had by all!



Folk Resources Next Door

See www.plankroad.org, click on Favorites



2009 PRFMS Officers

Bob O'Hanlon - President
mimioh@hotmail.com

Charley Smart - Vice President
plankroad@comcast.net

Cathy Jones - Treasurer
cathy@jonesfamilymusic.com

Cheryl Joyal - Secretary
clmjoyal@aol.com

2009 Board Members
Jeanne Halama, Dave Humphreys,
Chris Kuhn, Jennifer Shilt,
Kristen Shilt and Carol Sommer

PRFMS Membership INFORMATION

Membership info is available online at
www.plankroad.org

You can get an individual (\$10 year) or family
(\$20 year) membership by sending a check to:
PRFMS
P.O. Box 176
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515
Thank you!

PRFMS Contact:
Bob O' Hanlon
Email: mimioh@hotmail.com

P.O. Box 176, Downers Grove, IL 60515

