



Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association

IdaGrass

Volume 3 Issue 1

January-February 2007

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Other NW Organizations -

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association
www.mrba.com

University of Idaho Bluegrass Club
<http://stuorgs.uidaho.edu/~bluegrass/>

Inland Northwest Bluegrass Association.
<http://www.spokanebluegrass.org>

Washington Bluegrass Association
www.washingtonbluegrassassociation.org

Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass News

To the ISBA Membership:

We are pleased to announce that by a majority vote, Bob Greer was voted as the new ISBA President, effective Jan 20th. Thank You Bob for being willing to serve in this capacity.



It's here, it's here, it's finally arrived.....
not the stork, silly,
the new ISBA website.

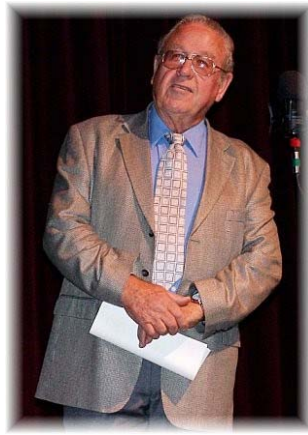
Have you been to visit the ISBA Website?

<http://www.idahosawtoothbluegrass.org/>

The purpose of the Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association:

- To preserve and perpetuate Bluegrass music as a heritage of our country,
- To promote the education and the enjoyment of Bluegrass music,
- To promote fellowship among all musicians and supporters who have a love for Bluegrass music, regardless of race, creed, color, ethnicity, or ability to play music.

Message from the President



Hello fellow ISBA members,

Thank you ISBA members for electing me President of the ISBA. I have been privileged to serve as a board member since the ISBA was founded in September 2005, and now I feel it is a great honor to be elected to serve as President of the ISBA.

I am looking forward with great anticipation toward the future of our ISBA, which is really still in its infancy. The first year has really been like "on the job training" for all of us. One thing we have learned well is if the ISBA is to be successful, it will require a broad support from a lot of our members. It has been encouraging to see the volunteers that have appeared seemingly out of the blue and are doing a great job helping to get this organization on track. The IdaGrass News Letter and our new web site are good examples, thank you Helen Smith and Carolyn Thorsen. Our first ISBA Bluegrass Festival in Payette was a real learning experience but it actually turned out to be a successful venture. We are now in the planning stage for the 2007 ISBA Bluegrass Festival and we know from last year that we will need more volunteers. Please consider getting involved, it's the right thing to do.

I am ready to work with every member of the ISBA to make this an organization that we will be proud to leave to those who follow after us. This goal is larger than the capabilities of any individual; we all will have to work together if we expect to succeed. I know that

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there are many great Bluegrass supporters in the ISBA and I ask for the support of you all in our efforts to build a Bluegrass Association of which we can all be proud.

Keeping the tradition,
Bob Greer, ISBA President

Bluegrass Events Calendar

Middle Zone Monthly Jam - 1st Saturday (following a full week) at the Bluegrass Barn.
Contact: Bob Greer or Dennis Stokes

Northern Zone Monthly Jam – 1st Saturday at the Orchards Methodist Church, 1213 Burrell Ave, Lewiston 12 Noon to 5:00pm. For more information contact: Steve Gleason (208) 798-8280 or Pete Northcutt (208) 983-2277

Southern Zone Monthly Jam -

Bluegrass in the Barn

February 17th – The Jeffries Family Band and Traditions Bluegrass Band.

March 17th – Grangeville Bluegrass Company and Traditions Bluegrass Band.

For more info or tickets contact the Barnmaster: (208)466-1719

2nd Annual Super Jam, April 27 – 29 at Lewis Clark RV Resort, Kamiah ID. See ad on page 2.

If you have calendar events, jams or festivals you would like included in the next issue of Ida-Grass, please email them to trueblue@wildblue.net

IdaGrass Classifieds

Misc. - As an ISBA member, you are entitled to one free classified per year. Do you have an unused instrument; give music lessons, looking for a piece of music. Use the ISBA classifieds.

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Disc Space by Mike McCarthy

ISBA Member, Mike "Banjovi" McCarthy who thinks a gentleman is someone who knows how to play the banjo and plays it early and often. Mike is from Twin Falls. Mike has agreed to share his review newly released and other CDs with our IdaGrass Readers.

The Grascals Debut Album

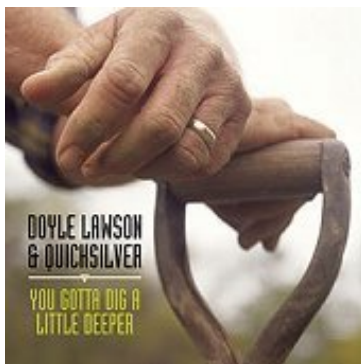
by The Grascals
(Rounder) This CD is so good I recommend it despite the fact that 2 songs have pedal steel on it !! It's easy to see why these



guys were the IBMA emerging artists of 2005 and the 2006 Entertainers of the year. Great singing (reminiscent of the Osborne Brothers), great individual picking, but also great back up, great drive, and most importantly excellent Sgrugg oriented banjo (especially Bevans Lake Crossing). There's lots of interesting new, original material in a traditional vein (Leavin Heavy, Me and John and Paul [this is not a song about the Beatles]), but also some fresh ideas on some old tunes (Teardrops in My Eyes, Saro Jane), and even a surprise or two (for you Elvis fans). Get this one.

Dig a Little Deeper

by Doyle Lawson
(Rounder) This CD has the most complicated vocal arrangements I have ever heard. And the harmonies are as tight and as flawless as it gets. These are all contemporary songs in a traditional style. As good as this CD



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is, the perfection of it leaves me a little bored. I was lucky enough to see Doyle Lawson when he first formed his own band in the 70s, and the emphasis he placed on vocals was unique. He had some great people at that time - Lou Reid, Terry Baucom (who is back with him) and Jimmy Haley. That band had an edge and was exciting. This CD is so perfect, and the band sounds so much like all the bands he has had for the last 20 years, it leaves me a little flat. I like my grass with some rough edges on it and this is a little too polished for my taste.

2nd Annual Super Jam April 27, 28 & 29



at Lewis-Clark Resort in Kamiah, ID.

Sponsored by:

Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association.

3 Glorious Days of Bluegrass

- Free concert Friday evening
- Instrument workshops Saturday morning
- Plenty jamming.

For more information - wanaB@starband.net

Onsite cabins, hotel rooms and camping available (dry as well as full hook-ups)
For reservations: call (208) 935-2556.

Summer Bluegrass Picks

The days have been snowy and cold. You can look at the calendar and think forward to the summer months that hold warmer weather and outdoor pickin'. Preparation for some of those events must be made in advance.

With this in mind, the current ISBA board members have been invited to send one of their favorite picks for bluegrass events in the summer months.

Will Williams - *"I would choose the Fathers Day Festival, in Grass Valley California, over all of the events, even the IBMA. Its usually good weather, lots of nice people, vendors of all sorts, great bands, and instrument builders. It's a full week of pickin'. The first three days of the festival offer instrument classes taught by some very well known pickers. If you go here you will get your moneys worth. It not to hard to get to from Boise"*

Pete Northcutt - *"I remember when Sandpoint hosted an annual bluegrass event. So much picking in the parking lot, who wanted to see the acts?"*

I must say, the environment offered last spring by ISBA Super Jam in White Bird truly compares. This year it will be in Kamiah with a reputation of better weather, larger parking lot facilities, with tables and shelter everywhere"

If **you** have a favorite summer bluegrass pick, and would like to send a short recommendation and upcoming dates for a bluegrass event you have attended, please send them to me at: trueblue@wildblue.net



Some fine fiddlin' from Joe Baxter
(photo by Jim McCue)

Bluegrass Fans

Meet few bluegrass fans from the Boise Area



Alyeen Strahn and friend
(Photo by Jim McCue)

Alyeen Strahan. Alyeen is from Mississippi and started coming to the Bluegrass Barn right after she moved here. She was one of the featured people from the audience on the KBCI TV coverage of Bluegrass In The Barn called "What A Great State". Pictured with Alyeen and her friend both love Bluegrass.



(Photo by Jim McCue)

Myron and Myrna Babb from Placerville, CA had their first experience with the Bluegrass Barn in January. They are planning to move to Payette. Myron is a fellow musician, a guitar picker, and found the talent at the barn incredible. Behind them are Myrna's brother and sister-in-law Dean & Shirley Weldy from Fruitland and they LOVE bluegrass!

Would you like to see an informal poll of instruments played by bluegrass musicians? Check it out this website submitted by one of our readers:

www.showcase.netins.net/web/bluegrass/

In the Spotlight

with

High Desert Band

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of Steve Kaufmann's flatpick guitar workshops back in Tennessee and has even taken voice lessons to become a better singer. He's been an inspiration to both Cathy and I.

Interviews with Idaho's Bluegrass bands

Jerry Firth will help us get to know them better.

Question: When and where did you first come in contact with bluegrass?

I began listening to bluegrass music in the 1970's. I went out and bought a banjo and guitar and began taking lessons. In the early 1980's I took an elective college class in bluegrass music. I enjoyed it so much I repeated the same class two additional times.

Question: What other musical background influences have you had in your life? *While I was in the Navy, I played guitar in a pick-up band. We mostly played country style music combined with some rock music. In the mid 1980's I played with a bluegrass band in Southern Oregon for four years. I've played with 3 different bluegrass groups in Idaho since 1991.*

Question: How long have you guys been together? *About two years*

Question: How did you guys choose your name? *Prior to playing as a group, Cathy and I recorded some songs with help from several friends. We selected the name "High Desert" for this project. When we became a band, we kept that name. Randy really liked it because he is very familiar with the desert country in Southwest Idaho and still spends a lot of time there.*

Question: Tell me a little about each band member the strengths they bring to the band.

Randy Helton sings lead and plays guitar in the band. He bought his first guitar in 1997 and began taking lessons. When deciding what style of playing to pursue, his instructor turned him on to Doc Watson and flat picking. He became addicted at the first exposure. This led him right into bluegrass, where he discovered the wonderful community of musicians who gather to jam and share this great music. He's just gotten into singing and performing in the last five years or so. Randy is extremely enthusiastic about performing and learning new things. He's attended a couple

Cathy Bourner plays bass and shares in the lead singer duties for the band. She keeps Randy and I focused and rarely complains about anything. She's been known to play her bass with blisters on her fingers and wouldn't think of stopping to put on a band-aid until the gig is over. Cathy has a beautiful voice that helps define our sound and provide variety in our performances. She has been a music lover for years and has a great musical library of books and CD's and always has suggestions for new material.

Jerry Firth brings a lifetime's experience of performing, coordinating musicians, arranging songs and booking gigs. He gently pushes us past our comfort level time after time and helps us realize the joy of sharing music far outweighs any self-consciousness or performance anxiety we might suffer.

Question: Tell us how you determine what material the band will work on and do you do any original songs?

Each of the band members contributes songs. Generally we will try them several times to see if they gel before we add them to our permanent repertoire. Randy and I both write original songs and enjoy doing them. Randy won a song writing contest last year with one of his songs.



High Desert Band

L to R – Jerry Firth, Cathy Bourner, Randy Helton

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Question: Tell us about one of the most memorable gigs you've had

Last summer we played a gig for a private party in Sun Valley. We knew we were playing for a wedding celebration party but didn't have any other details. It wasn't until after we began playing that we found out it was a wedding celebration for John Kimmel who is the brother of Jimmy Kimmel from ABC and cable television. The party was attended by cast members from Jimmy's shows as well as people from the South Park series. After the party, Jimmy spoke with Randy and I and told us he likes bluegrass music and enjoyed our performance.

Question: Tell us about one of the worst gigs you've had

Well this also occurred last summer so it creates balance for the last question. We played at BODO, the new name for the 8th Street Market area in Boise. It was a new venue intended to offer entertainment to people passing through the market area. It was a very hot day, somewhere around the century mark, and the place they wanted us to play was in full sun on concrete, with a brick building backdrop on two sides, just feet away. The "stage area" was a perfect solar heat collector. The temperature felt like one hundred and thirty and we each lost a few pounds in sweat at that gig. Whew!

Question: What is the most challenging obstacle for your band and why?

Playing as a trio can be a challenge. It's harder to produce a full sound with less people in the band. We each have to work a little harder and be more aware of what's going on at any given time. The advantages are simpler logistics, lower gig costs, fewer band squabbles.

Question: What one goal do you hope to accomplish in the next year or so?

We'd like to complete a CD we've been working on for awhile. We have a number of new original songs to finalize for this project.

Question: What do you think bluegrass will look like in 15 years?

I think it will continue to be a mix of bands playing traditional old-time bluegrass along with those who prefer to add a more contemporary flavor to their bluegrass. I'm grateful that there

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are young players who are into the music and plan to continue this great tradition.

Question: When you've had changes in the band personal, tell us how you've gotten through those bumps.

On January 20th we played at the Barn with two guest artists and very good friends, Ron Outen and Rand Thompson. Ron played banjo with High Desert for about a year or so before moving on to play with the Dawgwood group. He is one of the best banjo players I know in this area and one of the few that is totally at home with either Scruggs style or chromatic style picking. We hated to lose him but are thankful to still be able to play music with him on occasion. Rand Thompson is a top notch bluegrass singer and great friend that I've played music with for the last 15 years. It was really fun to do a gig with both of these guys over at the Barn. Back to your question, I guess it wasn't a bump, just a lane change!



**We Need
You !**

Would you like to volunteer within the ISBA? We are looking for people willing to help with: publicity, fundraising, grant writing, obtaining sponsorship, writing articles for IdaGrass, committee members etc. Each person has abilities and talents to share. We have specific immediate needs for help for the following:

- Super Jam, April 27-19th Kamiah
- Payette Festival, October 07
- Writing article for IdaGrass
- Helping with a ISBA Scrapbook
- Publicity of Festival Dates
- Photographer

If you can think of some way you could volunteer or are willing to help in any of these ways, please contact either:

Bob Greer - bgreer15@qwest.net
Or your local board member.

Chatting with the Board

...well not the board.

The chat in this issue is with me, Helen Smith. I am the first one to admit that I am not on the board. However, as I have had opportunity to get to know many of you, I thought you might like to get to know me a little better. Carolyn Johnson, the ISBA webmaster graciously agreed to conduct this interview.

Question: How did you first become involved in Bluegrass?

As a child in rural Montana, I did not grow up tuning in to the Grand Old Opry every week; however, I have always loved the tight harmonies, instrumental interaction and sounds that define bluegrass music. About 3 ½ years ago I embarked upon a wonderful bluegrass journey. As I began to learn the bass and started playing bluegrass with some talented musicians, I became hooked on bluegrass. My friend and band leader, Will Williams, was very gracious and patient with me and my band mate Mike Schmidt, who was also a “bluegrass newbie”. Will and other band members were willing to encourage, teach, and let us play. Before I knew it, I was “on fire” for bluegrass. I wanted to play all the time – if there was music happening, I wanted to be there. The more I sang and played, the more I wanted to play and sing.

One of the national acoustic string manufacturers has saying “the only cure for bluegrass is more bluegrass.” I think that may be my personal motto, as well.

Question: What are your goals as a musician? If you could see yourself 5 years from now, what would you have accomplished?

The opportunities I have had in the past 3 years are so beyond what I could even begin to imagine when I started, that in some ways, I am almost afraid to imagine what things may happen in 5 years. However, I would like to continue to improve my skill on my primary instrument, which is bass. I would like to learn to slap. I also am working on learning the guitar and would like to become proficient enough to play rhythm guitar in a jam. Maybe a CD of my favorite bluegrass tunes

done with my friends. In 5 years I hope I am still playing with a band. Playing with a band has been one of my greatest opportunities and one of the primary factors my personal improvement.

Question: How did you become interested and then devoted to the playing and preservation of BG music?

It probably wasn't until about 5 or 6 years when I can honestly say that I even recognized bluegrass as a specific musical style. But around that time I had the opportunity to hear some good bluegrass groups live and I thought to myself “I really like this music” and as time went on I thought “I'd really like to sing and play this music.”

There is some magic that happens when bluegrass musician start to play together. Part of the magic is individual, when I am playing and creating to the best of my ability. Part of the magic is the camaraderie shared by individual people working very intently on a common tune. And part of the magic is in the music itself when everything is in synch and clicks. It is this magic that has kept me coming back and back. Bluegrass music makes me feel good and I guess that's why I am willing to spend my time and effort in playing and preserving it.

Another huge reason for my involvement in bluegrass, is the bluegrass community itself. The bluegrass community is filled with genuinely wonderful, down-to-earth, people. I have been involved with many different kinds of organizations and groups over the years, but I honor the goodness and friendship I have found in the bluegrassers' I have met in these last 3 or 4 years.



Helen Smith (photo by F. Fickenworth)

Question: What advice would you give people new to jamming about learning to play with others?

First, To try, go forward and give it your best effort.

Second: Do not verbally criticize yourself. If you are giving your best effort, find contentment in that moment. It doesn't mean that you have to be satisfied with your current level of skill, anyone can improve with the investment of time and effort.

Third: Recognize there will always be pickers that are hotter and pickers that are slower than you – be gracious with those who are learning and learn from those with experience.

Question: What bluegrass artist has influenced you the most?

I don't know that I can choose one individual artist. Different artists have inspired me in different areas - I look to Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver for dynamite harmonies, to Doc Watson for defining one's own style, to Jerry Douglas for excellence in musicianship, to Rhonda Vincent for powerful female vocals, and to Greg Cahill for quiet persistence and longevity and the list goes on.

Question: Why did you choose to play bass?

2 reasons, partly because I thought I could be successful on the bass and partly because I knew that the people with whom I hoped to play, needed a bass player. I have classical training in the piano and have had much musical experience in other areas. When I considered the other commitments in my life, I thought, "I think I could tackle the bass and begin playing bluegrass." So I borrowed a bass and began to play.

Question: Did you start as an accomplished vocalist or did you have to learn? If you had to learn, how and where did you learn?

I don't know that I consider myself an accomplished vocalist. I have in the past and continue to work very hard as a vocalist. Because vocal style, even within bluegrass has such a broad range and is not easily defined, it has been difficult for me to assess where I am and where way I am going. I have taken classes and workshop, read books and try to listen to and observe others. Vocals are the most challenging part of bluegrass for me. One might say, "If it is such a challenge, why do you continue to pursue

the singing?" I would quickly tell you that I would not be satisfied to not sing at all and so I continue to try and strive for improvement.

Question: How do you think the Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association can promote Bluegrass music effectively in Idaho?

I think, that if the association can connect people who love bluegrass music, it will be successful in promoting bluegrass. Connecting those who love to play with other pickers and those who love to listen with those who are playing is an important priority for the association. Jams, festival, band listings, activities that require people to work together – these are all ways to connect people.

Let the planning begin...

Planning has begun for the ISBA Fall Bluegrass Festival in Payette.



Syd Howland, Carolyn Johnson, Dennis Stokes



2007 Payette Festival Planning Committee

Clockwise; Bob Greer, Bill Elmer, Stan Strickland, Syd Howland, Carolyn Johnson, Dennis Stokes

Al Jackson

(Photos by Jim McCue)

Application for ISBA Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

IdaGrass, the ISBA newsletter is offered either in email or printed letter format. Using email saves the association the cost of postage and printing, HOWEVER, because we want you to enjoy and look forward to the newsletter, we want you to receive the newsletter in a format with which you are comfortable.

I would like to receive the newsletter Email _____ US Postal Service _____

Yearly membership - \$10/individual \$15/family

Please mail to: Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association

PO Box 123 White Bird, ID 83554

If you have *Ideas*, *Comments*, **QUESTIONS**, or *Concerns*,
the ISBA President or your local board member would love to hear from you.

ISBA President

Bob Greer: bgreer15@qwest.net

208-466-1719

Northern Zone

Steve Gleason: (208)798-8280

Pete Northcutt: pnorthcutt@mtida.net

Southern Zone

Middle Zone

Bob Greer: bgreer15@qwest.net

208-466-1719

Al Jackson: Bmbbluegrass@aol.com

2926 Sugarcane Dr. Nampa, ID. 83687

Board Chariman

Will Williams: wanab@starband.net

