

IdaGrass

Volume 4 Issue 1

January - February 2008

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Bluegrass Events Calendar

Southern Zone Monthly Jam - 7pm at Gerties' Brick Oven Cookery in Twin Falls.

Hot Jam, 1st Monday of the month

Slow Jam, 3rd Monday of the month

John Boyer 208-733-4552 boyerj1@mindspring.com

Middle Zone Monthly Jam –

Bill Elmer 208-466-1349 mandobil@mail2Musician.com

Al Jackson Bmbbluegrass@aol.com

Bob Greer 208-466-1719

Northern Zone Monthly Jam, The northern Zone is pleased to announce they are having two jams a month:

1st SAT at Orchards United Methodist Church, 1213

Burrell Ave. Lewiston Orchards. Noon - 5pm

3rd SAT at Highlander Community Room,

616 Warner, Lewiston Orchards. Noon - 5pm

Steve Gleason (208) 798-8280

Pete Northcutt (208) 983-2277

Bluegrass In The Barn – March 15th, 7pm, will feature The Buckhorn Mountain Boys will join the house band, Tradition

ISBA Website:

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 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

I have good news for you all. We have made it to February and it is downhill for the rest of the winter season. It is time to start planning for the events of the coming spring and summer that will soon be upon us.



The decision has been made to continue on with Bluegrass In The Barn at the original location where we can put some wood in the stove and be comfortable during these winter months. Many have expressed their desire to have Bluegrass In The Barn continue on as we are. I will admit I missed you all during our down time. We will continue having Bluegrass In The Barn on the Saturday of the second full week of the month, unless you are notified otherwise.

Al Jackson and I have decided to call a meeting of the Round Valley Festival Committee on March 15. We have a full plate of things we will have to accomplish if we are going to put on a successful Festival at Round Valley on Labor Day weekend. We have a preliminary poster made, which is meant to let people know *What, Where, and When*. We will be making a more detailed poster as soon as we can put together a more clearly defined plan of what we will be doing. I know this will be an ambitious project, and we will need the help of any and all who want to see a good bluegrass festival started in a great location.

I compliment Dennis Stokes and DBR Productions for their efforts in bringing Mike Compton to our area. Mike Compton performed at Bluegrass In The Barn to a capacity crowd. It was an evening that will be remembered as a highlight of the Bluegrass happenings in our area.

Be sure to mark your calendar for the ISBA Super Jam, April 25-27, at Lewis-Clark Resort in Kamiah, Idaho. If you can make the trip, you will be glad you did. Last year was fabulous and this year will be in the same location. It should be another 3 Glorious Days of Bluegrass.

Keeping the Tradition,
Bob Greer, President ISBA

Do you have a favorite bluegrass instructional book, CD or DVD?

I would like you to share your favorite instructional-educational picks with other members of the Association.

The other day I was speaking with Pete Northcutt and he told me about a resophonic guitar DVD he had purchased. Pete said, *It's the best instructional DVD I have ever bought. It's good for both beginners and more advanced players. The format was originally VHS, so it is not as polished as some, but the amount of knowledge given and its application to the instrument is phenomenal.* "Resophonic Guitar Instruction", by Mike Auldridge.

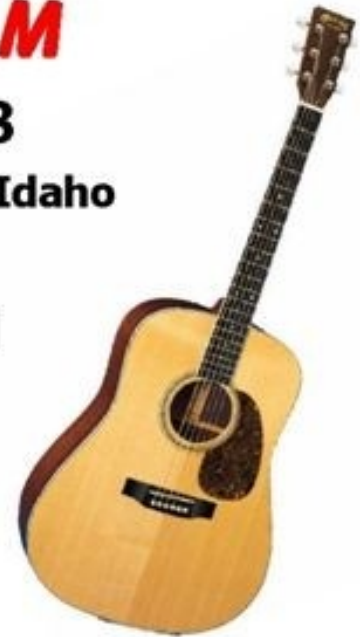
If you've found an instructional product you really like, please drop me a note and tell me:

1) The title and author, 2) Why you like it and I will publish it in the next issue. What you have found to be useful may be useful to others. Email the information to: trueblue@wildblue.net. I look forward to hearing from you.

Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association **ANNUAL SPRING JAM**

April 25, 26, 27 - 2008

At Lewis-Clark Resort in Kamiah, Idaho



Open To All

- ISBA Booth**
- Instrument Sales**
- Hats, T-Shirts, CDs**
- Annual ISBA Meeting**
- Instrument Workshops (free)**
- Sponsored by the ISBA**



Schedule of Events

Friday, 25th

Open Jam, all Day and into the night

Special BBQ Dinner Available

Saturday, 26th

9:00 AM - Annual ISBA General Meeting.

10:30 - Instrument Workshops - Banjo, Bass, Guitar, Mandolin & Dobro.

12:00 Noon - Open Jam all afternoon

5:30 pm Catered Dinner Buffett

7-9 pm - Free Performance Of Bluegrass Bands

9:00 pm Open Jam - Until we pass out or our fingers fall off, which ever happens first.

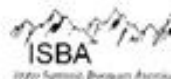
Sunday, 27th

Open Jam All Day

Motel, RV spots, dry camping, & Cafe.
 For RV/Motel reservations call 208-935-2556
 Special Bluegrass Rates- For more information- Email
 will@williamscustombanjos.com
 www.lewisclarkresort.com



3 Glorious Days of Bluegrass



From the Editor's Desk. . . .

Just a note

When my driveway drifted closed and through all the severe winter weather that most of Idaho has experienced, one of the things that has kept me going during those cold, windy, days was dreams of the coming of spring and summer bluegrass festivals. I live in hope and think that we are on the downhill side, as the Spring Super Jam is just around the corner.

I have, however, found bluegrass alive and well this winter. Just a couple of weeks ago I attended the northern jam in Lewiston. What a fun time we had. We had 15+ pickers and at least that many people who came to enjoy the music. To Steve Gleason and Pete Northcutt, and to my fellow pickers: "Thanks", for such a wonderful afternoon.

Now... for all you banjo pickers, this issue includes an interview I had with Bill Evans this past summer. It was a wonderful experience to get to visit with him. He is a fine musician and I hope you will enjoy it. This issue also contains an invitation to each of you to share information about your favorite instructional tool - book, CD or DVD. If there is a product that has increased understanding of your instrument, broadened your knowledge of bluegrass history or helped your practice, please share with others. Helen

Is your membership current?

If you don't know, you can check with Melba Walker - Membership volunteer
 grandmacooper41@peoplepc.com
 208-322-7640

If your membership has lapsed, you can renew with the form on the last page of IdaGrass, or take care of it in person at the Membership Table at the Spring Super Jam, April 25-27.

Bluegrass Happenings

- 12:00 Kids in Bluegrass
- 12:35 Chester Rudyard and Mullan Road
- 1:10 Blue to the Bone
- 1:45 Three Rivers Bluegrass
- 2:20 Bill and Verna Molenda Group
- 2:55 Leftover Biscuits
- 3:30 The Accousticals
- 4:05 Salmon Valley String Band
- 4:40 Porter Creek
- 5:15 Mike and Tari Conroy Group
- 5:50 Pinegrass
- 6:25 Too Hot to Handle
- 7:00 New South Fork
- 7:35 Will Williams and Gravel Road
- 8:10 Chick Weed
- 8:45 Gravely Mountain Boys
- 9:20 Ramblin Rose
- 9:55 Black Mountain
- 10:30 Greg Boyd Group

www.mtbluegrass.com

MRBA Oldtime Bluegrass Festival, April 12

Stevensville High School, Stevensville, MT
 Sponsored by Montana Rockies Bluegrass Assoc:

ISBA Spring Super Jam, April 25-27

Lewis Clark RV Resort, Kamiah Idaho.
 See the flyer on page 2
www.idahosawtoothbluegrass.org

Sacajawea Bluegrass Festival & Dutch Oven Rendezvous, June 13-15

Sacajawea State Park, located near Tri-Cities (Richland, Kennewick and Pasco, WA) just off Highway 12.
www.sacajaweabluegrassfestival.com

ISBA Round Valley Bluegrass Festival, Aug 29-Sep 1

Round Valley, Idaho (just south of Cascade ID on State Hwy 55)

Interview with Bill Evans

This past summer I had opportunity to interview Bill Evans, a great banjo picker, a banjo educator, and the author of "Banjo for Dummies," released just this past fall.



IdaGrass: Tell me a little bit about yourself. You're a banjo educator?

Bill: *Yes, it's one of many things that I do, but I'll claim that, sure.*

IdaGrass: Tell me about what your favorite part is about teaching banjo.

Bill: *Well, I've been doing this for 30 years now. I've always mixed it with playing and doing other things. The best thing about teaching is the friendships that you make. Those friendships can happen when going around the country teaching workshops and meeting people. You start friendships that go past that particular workshop. It's great to be able to show people how to play, but the friendships, in the long run, for me, are just as meaningful.*

IdaGrass: When you were young you played the piano and guitar before you took up banjo. Tell us about how those things unfolded in your life.

Bill: *I'm not out of a music-playing family that sat on the front porch of the cabin eating opossum for dinner. I just grew up in a suburban area listening to all the music that came in the '60's and '70's*

The piano lessons came because there was a piano in the house. They were obligatory lessons provided by my grandmother.

I took up the guitar because I really loved the Beatles. The Beatles were very hot at that time. The guitar playing that I did was Beatles' songs, Peter, Paul and Mary songs, and folk music. I wasn't allowed to have an electric guitar in the house, which probably really influenced my decision to have an acoustic guitar. I learned folk music, all from books, never really from contact with other people.

It was just the sound of the banjo that I really liked. When I saw Roy Clark on television, he was playing Cripple Creek. He was not the best banjo

player in the world certainly, but I could hear that there was a melody. I was like, "Oh, that's the same thing that I'm doing on the guitar. There is melody on the banjo, so that's what I want to do". That's how I got interested in banjo.

IdaGrass: What kind of bluegrass opportunities did you have during your young adult life?

Bill: *When I was learning in the '70's, it was a pretty exciting time for bluegrass because there was still a lot of great traditional music and Bill Monroe, of course, was still alive and performing. There were a lot of young people that were really getting into it and they were doing things that I found to be really exciting.*

I went to college at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, which is about 20 miles away from the Blue Ridge Mountains. There I found a community of people who played bluegrass. I had been learning from books for four or five years before I made direct contact with other players. While in college, I would drive up from Charlottesville to Washington, D.C. to see "Seldom Scene." They played regularly in a little club there, called the Red Fox Inn. This was the original version of the group, John Starling, John Duffey, Tom Gray, Mike Auldridge, and Ben Eldridge. I got to know Ben pretty well. He was one of the first people that I really got to learn from, one-on-one.

While I was in the summer of my third year of college, I took a full-time job playing. In Virginia there are two theme parks; Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, and Kings Dominion north of Richmond. At the time they were both hiring bluegrass bands. There were three bluegrass bands working at each venue. One year I worked at Busch Gardens and the next year I worked at Kings Dominion. The paychecks were pretty good for a kid working in the summer.

IdaGrass: After college, what then?

Bill: *After graduating from college I played professionally for six years. I headed up a band called Cloud Valley, based out of Charlottesville. This band included Missy Raines, who has won many, many IBMA bass player of the year awards. She joined the band when she was 17.*

Then in 1994, I had the opportunity to be the Associate Director of the International Bluegrass Music Museum at Owensboro. My family and I moved to KY and were there for about 3 years.

IdaGrass

During that time I joined Dry Branch Fire Squad and toured with them until 1997.

IdaGrass: In 1996 you and your family moved back to California. You were touring nationally with Dry Branch Fire Squad and had to decide what your involvement in bluegrass was going to look like in your new location. Tell us about the transition to full-time teaching.

Bill: *I had already experienced that, even if you're on the east coast playing in a really well known touring band; it's still not really enough money to live on, especially supporting a family. And if you're going to be a national performer based off the west coast, you've got to get on an airplane every time. That eats up about what they're willing to pay you. So I looked at it and I said, "Okay, I do want to get back into this full-time and it's time to get serious now because I've got kids and I'm not getting any younger." While I love to play, I realized that I could then, at this point, really put energy into the teaching aspect of what I do. So I started teaching privately and then discovered there was a huge market for it in the Bay Area, lots of people interested in music. It was also about this time, 1997-1998, when banjo camps really started growing strong. So, I started accepting positions at these camps and really enjoying the teaching aspect of it.*

I formed or joined bands that were based in California, but again, these were bands that nobody really ever heard of because we just didn't venture out very much. There's a whole circuit of shows that you can play in California that are pretty good shows, but you don't travel far.

IdaGrass: There is another facet to your teaching, in educational materials, tell us about that.

Bill: *I had a high school friend, John Lawless, who started a company called AcuTab Publications. He had the same kind of revelation as I did, wanting to make a full-time living in bluegrass, but maybe using our talents in a different way than just touring. He and I started exploring ideas of doing some project together. We watched the market for educational materials turn from books to DVDs. We decide to do Acutab Bluegrass Banjo. It turned out to be a huge seller. People really connected with that project. I had developed a way to teach the backup Scruggs style, just from teaching people at home. So, everything that I do in my DVDs comes from the*

experience of teaching it repeatedly to people at home, to see whether or not it works.

Also, from teaching people at home, I found that people have the same roadblocks. All adults get mixed up by the same things. I know what those things are and have tried to really be mindful of that when I'm teaching. I try to transfer that knowledge to the DVDs too. I show people in a way that I think will work, to start very, very simple. To build up by adding one technique and then adding another technique, so that you've got it sounding really good by the end. But you start out with a very basic way.

Now we've done 3 DVDs for Acutab and they have been really well received. The most recent one is called "Bluegrass Banjo Master Class." It is a little bit different, in that it is not only for more intermediate and advanced players, but it's for beginners also. What we really talk about, it's an in-depth study of the finger board, but also an in-depth study of right hand technique, how to get a good tone, how to fit the picks on your hand, and how to position your body in relationship to the instrument. Somebody who has never played before can actually get a lot out of this project. It talks about things I've found have been helpful to the people that I teach privately. They need information as to what works and what doesn't, so that they don't have to waste time doing stuff that doesn't help them.



Bill Evans and Jody Stecher

IdaGrass: What other things are you involved in that keep you out of trouble?

Bill: *I lead my own band, the "Bill Evans String Summit." It's a 6-piece band with two fiddles and*

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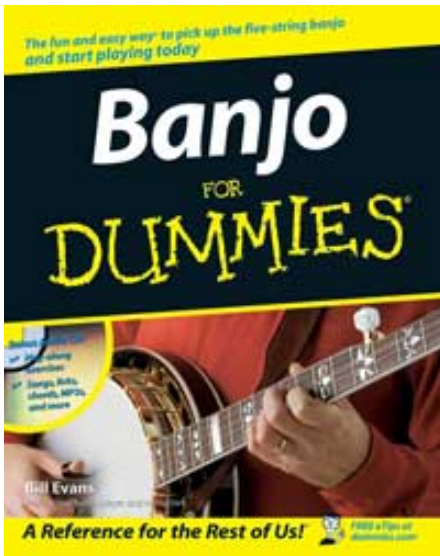
a dobro, guitar, bass and banjo. We're playing the tunes that I write.

I'm also in a bluegrass band with a real well known singer, Kathy Kallick. That band is called "Rustlers Moon." We're playing mostly Kathy's songs. They are her original tunes, but it's straight ahead bluegrass in a lot of ways.

Additionally, I'm really into historical banjo styles and I tour with Jody Stecher, who's a very well known old time musician. We have a show called "The Secret Life of Banjos." We have approximately 22 banjos on stage, and we play music from the 1800's to the current day, not just bluegrass style.

And then, I also do a show on my own that's kind of the same thing where I play music from Africa through the 19th century, through folk styles of the 20th century, and then bluegrass. When I'm touring by myself I call it "Banjo in America."

IdaGrass: Congratulations are in order! You have a book that is soon to be released (this interview was given in June 2007). Tell us about it.



Bill: *This is biggest thing that has happened to me and I'm very, very excited about it. I have written "Banjo for Dummies," the yellow and black "For Dummies" series. The release date is August 14. I'm very excited about this project because it will be widely available and I hope it will lead to things that I've never dreamed. It's going to be an exciting new chapter. It will just bring the awareness of the banjo to lots of people because it is going to be available in every Barnes & Noble and Borders (stores) in the country. Whatever happens, it's all a gift and it's all a blessing.*

IdaGrass: Give two sentences of advice for young banjo players.

Bill: *First, listen to Earl Scruggs. Second, listen to Earl Scruggs.*

If you have a mind to start learning from tablature and the written sources that are out there, that's okay, but the heart of the music is being able to listen and having it in your head. Tablature can be an aid, but can't be a crutch. In the end you have to be able to play from your head and from your heart. That's where the listening comes in really handy. If you're a young person and you want to play Bela Fleck, that's great, go for it. But, you should start with Earl Scruggs if you're a banjo player. To learn more about Bill Evans, you can visit his website: www.nativeandfine.com



Some of Our "Sugarfoot Express Friends" at the Bluegrass Jam in Haines, OR
Photo by Jim McCue

Neighboring Bluegrass Associations -

Arizona Bluegrass Association –
www.azbluegrass.org

California Bluegrass Association –
www.cbaontheweb.org

Idaho Bluegrass Association –
www.smithfowler.org/bluegrass/IdahoBGindex.htm

Inland Northwest Bluegrass Association –
www.mtbluegrass.com

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association –
www.mtbluegrass.com

Oregon Bluegrass Association –
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Washington Bluegrass Association –
www.washingtonbluegrassassociation.org

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

New Member Renewal

Date _____

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*

ISBA President

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