

JIMMY COX 1933 - 2021



The Bluegrass world lost Jimmy Cox on January 11, 2021.

Jimmy was, along with Al Hawkes, one of Maine's first Bluegrass stars, playing with Charlie Gilliam on "The Ken McKenzie Show" on Portland television through the 1960s and 1970s. From 1979 until shortly before his passing, Jimmy worked full-time making banjos and banjo parts, for which he was internationally famous. In fact, at times Jimmy was the sole supplier of rock maple banjo rims to the top banjo makers in the country. Jimmy was a giant in the bluegrass world and the banjo world.

We hope you enjoy reading some of the personal reminiscences about Jimmy in this issue.



Photo of Jimmy Cox with Coastline Charlie Gilliam in the 1960s.

I KNEW JIMMY COX

by Dick Bowden

Back in the mid 1960s I was just beginning to learn to play banjo, right after I saw Flatt & Scruggs live in Pennsylvania when I was 10. I was already playing the guitar and Dobro quite a bit. There was only ONE good banjo player around the Penobscot Bay region where I grew up (the town of Orland), Carl Francis from Stockton Springs who worked on the Bangor & Aroostook RR. Carl was an EXCELLENT Scruggs player, but he never played in public. My mom and dad (Mary Lee and Paul) invited him to come to our house to pick, which he did every month or so. He wasn't a teacher though; I could only learn what I could see and hear when he picked with Dad and Carl's buddy John Sanborn. But he was an inspiration!

About that time what should appear live on Bangor's WLBZ tv but a weekly bluegrass show! Charlie & Jimmy & the Blue Mountain Boys! They said they were from around Brunswick and played on WCSH TV in Portland each week too. Wow! They were GOOD! I mean REAL SOLID bluegrass. Smokey Val was the fiddler and Dobro player. I forget the bass player's name, sorry. We really liked their music and watched faithfully.

Jimmy wanted to know if there were any bluegrassers around the Bangor area, and some bluegrass folks including Al MacHale knew about us and told Jimmy how to get in touch with us. Turns out, Jimmy was a traveling salesman at the time with a big circuit around Maine selling sewing material. (Notions, I believe they were called.) So Jimmy contacted my folks and asked if he could stop in next time his travels took him down Route 1 where we lived. Sure enough, one evening after supper here comes Jimmy "paddling up the front walk" as Dad used to say, carrying a banjo case. An evening of coffee, pastries and picking and singing followed, then off Jimmy would go to his hotel, I believe in Ellsworth.

It got to be a real regular thing every month -- that Jimmy would visit. It happened to work out that his schedule fit quite well with my dad's shiftwork schedule in the paper mill, too, so Dad would almost always be home to host. I'd do my best to pick along with Jimmy, and take a break now and then. Of course he was doing a lot of things WAY over my head -- Reno stuff, chromatic/melodic licks, etc. He was always real good to me; to take time to show me what he was doing or answer my questions. This lasted a year or so, and we found out Jimmy was getting off the sales route to work in a bank in Brunswick. By then we had The Bowden Family band going in central and Downeast Maine.

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I KNEW JIMMY COX

Continued from page 1.

I had begun to sing a little. Mom played bass and sang, and Dad and John Sanborn played guitars and sang.

When Jimmy and “the gang” started up the Pine Tree State Bluegrass Music Assoc. with the monthly concerts and jamming at Gibson Hall at Bowdoin College, he made it a point to invite us to appear many times. We got written up in the Portland paper once with a photo of us performing in Gibson Hall. By then Jimmy was giving formal lessons on banjo and mandolin. I remember he used to present his students with certificates on stage at the Gibson Hall monthly shows. Bob St Pierre was one of the first, for mandolin.

During the time Jimmy was visiting our home I learned what a “tinkerer” he was. He had built a “pedal” banjo, like a pedal steel guitar, that laid on a table and had foot pedals to change the strings’ tunings to make chords without using your left hand! He had also built a thing that anticipated the Parsons/White B-Bender (for electric guitar) which was built into his banjo tailpiece, with a short chain that fastened to his belt loop!

When he’d push the banjo pot away from his body, that chain would pull on a certain string and make it tune up or down, like a Scruggs tuner at the other end of the banjo! He told us he’d done a lot of the neck work on his favorite Gibson banjo (the one with his name in it). So it wasn’t a huge surprise when he started to advertise his banjo parts business. I tell you, in those days, there weren’t many places where you could mail order banjo hardware!

My family once made the pilgrimage to the Orr’s Island/Bailey Island area to visit Jimmy in those early days. His collection of bluegrass LPs astounded me. We’d never seen any Jim & Jesse LPs in the Bangor records stores – Jimmy had ‘em all. And MANY more.

Jimmy was kind enough to invite our family band to play on the first Maine Bluegrass Festival in Phippsburg in the mid 1970s. By then we had changed our name to The Fort Knox Volunteers.

In later years after I’d gone to college and moved Downeast and then back home to Bucksport, I bought my first old Gibson banjo, with the so-called “Ball Bearing” tone ring. It was a beautiful banjo but not very loud. In 1982 I joined The Berkshire Mountain Boys in Massachusetts with Herb Applin, Bea Lilly and Butch DeForge. Man, those guys played LOUD! My ball bearing banjo wasn’t coming through. I called Jimmy because I knew he made tone rings and banjos there in Topsham and asked if he could help me convert my banjo to a louder “flat head” configuration. He said he’d sure try!

So it was around 1983 or 84 I toted my banjo to his shop in Topsham. I thought I was going to drop it off and pick it up weeks later. He told me to stay right in the shop and help him do it right now! (I think the “shop” was his garage then, not the more recent separate building.)



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE K. WALSH

by Jeff Trippe, March 2021



Out here on the edge of the continent, acoustic-music enthusiasts of all sorts and sizes look forward to brighter, post-pandemic dawns ahead. The recent return of a familiar figure, the acclaimed mandolinist Joe K. Walsh, may well mark the beginning of a new and even more vibrant era in the growth of string music in Maine.

Joe is originally from Duluth, Minnesota, but his long-term love for this state and the thriving music scene he once helped to create here have prompted him to move back to Portland, even though he remains on the faculty at Berklee College of Music in Boston. I recently had the chance to speak with Joe by phone and to ask him about that and other exciting prospects in his varied and still-burgeoning career, as well as his musical aspirations and methods.

Joe, I just have to start by asking you a technical question. Whenever I see you play, I’m always amazed by your technique. Your picking hand, your right hand, is so loose. How do you manage to stay so relaxed? Is it something you think about, or is it all just intuitive?

When I started, I had been playing guitar, strumming and singing folk songs. When I got a mandolin I didn’t think about technique much at first. Luckily the right hand motion I had been using for the guitar translated well to the mandolin. As I took it more seriously I tried to develop good habits - playing clean up-and-down strokes with the pick, for example. It’s definitely something I think about a lot more now than I did back then. Honestly I think it’s something all serious mandolin players are probably always reevaluating.

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An Interview with Joe K. Walsh

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What brand mandolin are you playing now? I think I've seen you recently with a Northfield.

I have a Northfield octave mandolin. My mandolin is a Nugget, which I love, and I recently bought Andrew Marlin's old Gil. A couple of years ago I had a chance to hang a few times in Michigan and with Mike Kemnitz, the man behind the Nugget mandos. He's a tremendous builder. He never lets himself think anything went well and is constantly looking for improvement. He's very inspiring.

Oh, of course. Tim O'Brien plays a Nugget, too. He's among your influences, I would imagine.

Sure, Tim is super inspiring. His mandolin playing is so groovy, inventive, melodic. He's one of my very favorites.

Who else influences you these days? Who are you listening to lately?

I generally find myself listening to records that are heavy on improvisation, ones that feel live. Bill Frisell, John Schofield, Larry Goldings, Brad Mehldau, lots of folks. I love Keith Jarrett and the way he plays ideas that so clearly develop a story, and reflect the very moment in which they are played: what the bass player played, or what he played just before, for example. Listening to inspiring folks and trying to continually improve as an improviser is my lifelong project, I think.

Speaking of improvisation, some people might say that today there is a clearer distinction than ever before between avant garde pickers and truly traditional, ultra-polished bluegrass bands. Is there a rift between those two camps?

I don't really think there's a rift. There's plenty of room for all of us, and lots of room for different interpretations. I think there's a deep mutual respect thing even with players and sounds in the bluegrass world that seem like they're from different camps. As for me, I'd say that I seldom play straight-ahead bluegrass much anymore, but I still love hearing folks who do it so well and who make space for the wildness in their music. And a lot of it still does have that wildness to it. Shawn Camp's live record from the Station Inn, for example, or Danny Paisley, or the McCourys. I'm always glad to see any of those bands play. I'm very much into the sound of a group taking risks and playing live, and that aspect of bluegrass is still very alive and appealing. As to stylistic stuff these days, I guess I'm feeling a little more wide open. A lot of musicians, especially when they're younger, try to be all things to all people, and I've realized that of course you can't do that. Some of the things that I just enjoy playing, things I used to maybe lean away from, I now lean into instead.

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I KNEW JIMMY COX

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We took a lot of measurements of my banjo. He told me I'd have to do the arithmetic, but he'd do the lathe work! Man, I double checked my arithmetic many times!!

Bottom line, he took a raw un-machined bronze tone ring and cut it on the lathe to an exact fit to my banjo. My banjo needed a tiny bit of wood added to it to make his tone ring fit right. He took an entire banjo rim, brand new, and cut it down on the lathe until it was just one-tenth of an inch thick! An entire banjo rim destroyed just to make something one-tenth of an inch thick to add to my banjo! Using our 4 hands we slid that tender little circle of maple on over my banjo's rim.

Jimmy put a little stain on it to match my banjo, then on went the custom cut tone ring and Voila! My nice quiet ball bearing Gibson became a MONSTER flat head. I played that banjo that way for about 30 years. Surprisingly Jimmy charged me almost nothing for the job. I think he enjoyed the challenge.

Another surprise that day was Jimmy showed me his wood supply in the cellar of the house! WOW! The handsomest banjo resonator veneer I had ever seen was stacked all over that cellar! Hundreds or thousands of pieces.

A few years ago at Thomas Point Beach I met Bob Bergesch who told me he was a buddy of Jimmy's, and Jimmy had asked him to invite me to come visit the shop during the festival. We went over together and had a nice visit in the very crowded shop. Not having seen Jim for almost 30 years, it was obvious he had aged and slowed down. Jimmy proudly showed me machines he had built, and all kinds of metal parts he had made; also banjo rims and necks. I was surprised to find he was the major US supplier for metal parts and rims for old time open back banjos. He told me he wanted his grandsons to run the business. I hope they do.

Jimmy Cox loved bluegrass banjo, bluegrass music and bluegrass people. He was an honest and outgoing guy. My family and I were lucky that Jimmy chose to pursue his dreams in Maine! I'm so proud that the International Bluegrass Music Museum has a major display on Jimmy and his contributions to bluegrass.



BMAM relies heavily on volunteers. We have been very fortunate to have had many bluegrass enthusiasts participate in many aspects of BMAM.

The board thanks the good folks who keep the BMAM jams running, as well as the past and present officers who meet each month.

As in most organizations, there is always room for folks to share their ideas and let us know what we can do to expand this great group.

These are some things that YOU as a member, can do to participate:

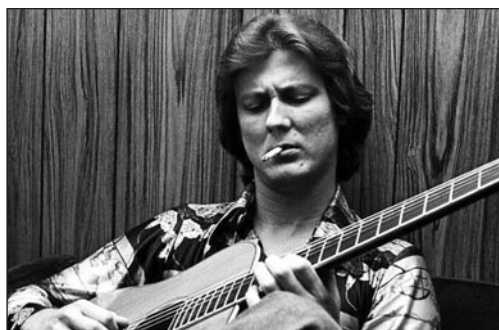
- Submit articles to the newsletter
- Help us at jams
- Volunteer to sit at the BMAM booths at festivals
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— Ricky Skaggs

THOUGHTS ABOUT JIMMY COX:

STAN KEACH

It was a great privilege knowing Jimmy and hearing the great full resonant sound of his banjos. Bill Smith's banjo, for example, which was the only raised head banjo Jimmy ever made, had a spectacular sound. I was lucky to play a few gigs with Jimmy back in the day (80s and 90s). Jimmy always had a lot of funny stories. He was a true original, and it was really remarkable what he could do with wood and metal. Besides his legendary banjos and banjo parts, Jimmy made a few ridiculously nice mandolins. Rest in peace, Jimmy Cox.

ROBERT BERGESCH

My friend Jimmy Cox passed away earlier today. Jim made banjos and banjo parts for more than 50 years. Among serious players and instrument makers his parts and instruments are considered top grade.

Jim was from eastern Kentucky; his father worked in the Jellicoe coal mine. The Air Force trained him as a jet engine mechanic during the Korean War and stationed him in Presque Isle, ME. There he met Yvette, his wife of 60+ years.

He'll be buried next to Yvette in Ste Agate, a little Maine village where French is still heard, a stone's throw from Canada.

Jim was 87 years old, and smoked like a chimney most of his life. It didn't seem to affect him much; that, plus the strong shop coffee, was maybe even part of his charm.

I'll miss him greatly. RIP, Jimmy...

JOHN WALLACE

He was a great friend of mine. I spent a lot of time at his house, actually three different houses that he lived in in Topsham. We had such great times in his basement at Garden Lane. He always had a little supply of genuine Kentucky moonshine, and boy, was it good! We played a lot of music together, he was always encouraging me.

We attended the Country Gentlemen Festival at Webster, Massachusetts, I believe it was 1972. We stayed overnight at a motel and then finished out the weekend at the festival before heading home.

Jimmy's son, Buff, was with us. It was a great time. The man sure knew his music. I am so sorry that I wasn't able to visit with him this past year because of this g-----n Covid19. One of my best friends is gone.

ROSALIND CLANCY

Such sad news, I have known him since I was a little girl. Truly was the figurehead for Bluegrass Music in new England. I took mandolin lessons from him. My Dad Tom Prindall built his first banjo with Jimmy at our home in Brunswick, Maine. For many years he and so many others, all gone now, were at my house picking and grinning, every Saturday night. I treasure those memories and will treasure Jimmy and the privilege of having him in my life. The first Bluegrass Association was formed by Jimmy with the help of several others. The Pine Tree Bluegrass Music Association in the late 1960s. And the first Bluegrass Festival held in Phippsburg, Maine.

BLUEGRASS MILESTONES

75 • 50 • 25 Years

75 Years
1945

**BIRTH OF
BLUEGRASS
MUSIC**

50 Years
1972

**FIRST MAINE
BLUEGRASS
FESTIVAL**

25 Years
1996

**BMAM
INCORPORATED**

Bobby St. Pierre Talks About Jimmy Cox

by Bobby St. Pierre as relayed to Stan Keach

Jimmy Cox was 87 when he died. Jimmy, arguably the first bluegrass star in Maine, outlived most of the other major pioneers: Al Hawkes, Fred Pike, Sam Tidwell, Bob French, Mac McHale. Many, if not most, of the musicians he played with over the years predeceased him; among them were Charlie Gilliam, Bob Carter, Smokey Val, Brian Mason.

I knew that I needed to talk to Bobby St. Pierre; along with Gilliam and Val, Bobby had a more extensive musical relationship with Jimmy than just about anyone. Here's what Bobby had to say...

I met Jimmy when I was 14. My dad took banjo lessons with him, and he brought me along now and then. Dad had given me a cheap electric mandolin, and I'd brought it along with me to a lesson. At the end of the lesson, Jimmy said, 'bring that thing over here a minute.' I had no idea that Jimmy could play a mandolin. Well, he surprised me . . . played it quite well. I asked him if he'd give me lessons, and he said, 'Sure.'

A year later, he had just quit playing with Charlie Gilliam, and he asked me to join his new band, Maine Grass. At our lessons, he'd show me the songs and how he wanted me to play them. I stayed with the band for 7 years. It was Jimmy, me, Dick Gilmore on bass, Bob Carter on guitar, and Smokey on fiddle and dobro. We played quite regularly — maybe 3 times a month.

At that time, Jimmy worked at the First National Bank in Brunswick, and he used to cash my check from work every week.

Jimmy really took me under his wing. He took me to the first bluegrass concert I ever saw — the Osborne Brothers in Portland. I was 15 years old. Then he took me to a Ralph Stanley show at Bowdoin. Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley were with Ralph then, and they were just teenagers, about my age.

When I was 18, Jimmy took me to Kentucky to spend 3 weeks with his family. His dad, a retired coal miner who played clawhammer banjo lived in a little cabin back in the hills where Jimmy had grown up. I followed Jimmy down there on my motorcycle. I had just graduated from high school. Jimmy's mother made biscuits and gravy every morning for breakfast. She fried bacon and made the gravy from that.

That trip was my introduction to moonshine, too. Jimmy's friend, a good guitar picker, made moonshine for a living. In fact, he offered me a job working on the still. But I'd already committed to going to school, so I had to pass that up.

I went down there with Jimmy 3-4 times. Other old friends of Jimmy's would come to Kentucky for vacations at the same time, too. I got to play with quite a few really good pickers down there. Jimmy took me to my first bluegrass festival down there — the Mac Wiseman Festival in Maggie Valley.

After I played with Maine Grass for about 7 years, Jimmy decided to build instruments full-time. We still played after that, but not nearly as much anymore.

Jimmy built my first really good mandolin. He started working on it in '77 and finished it in 1980. I played that mandolin for 35 years. When I started making mandolins, of course I had to play my own mandolins to advertise. But that one Jimmy made me was a really good mandolin.

I used to drop in on him regularly, but I haven't been able to see him during the past year since he's been in assisted living, and with the pandemic going on, I wasn't allowed to visit him, which is unfortunate.

An Interview with Joe K. Walsh

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I know you like old-time tunes, too, and enjoy reinterpreting them. I've heard you take an old-time tune, something like "Rebel's Raid," give it a little twist, a fresh arrangement, and make it sound like a brand-new tune.

Oh, yeah, lots of the tunes I love the most come from the old-time repertoire. I love taking an old tune and trying to bring something new to it, every time I play it. It might not be something you'd typically hear at a bluegrass festival, but as I said, I think there's room for all of us.

So I know you're still teaching at Berklee. Any big moves planned for the near future?

Well, you know, I've moved back to Portland now, and I'm happy to be back in town. And I'm not sure whether you're aware of this, but there are some really good, young musicians moving to this area now. Some of them are Berklee grads...Ethan Setiawan and Maddie Witler are two of the best young mandolin players in the world, I think, and they're now living in the area. Some great players are drifting north and it's shaping up to be an exciting time in the musical scene here, post-pandemic.

That's great. Do you have any projects coming up? Are you writing any songs?

Sure. I'm writing mostly tunes. Mr. Sun (Joe, Darol Anger, Grant Gordy, Aidan O'Donnell) has a record to release. We cut it in a sauna in Yarmouth about three years ago, and it's now coming around to be time to release it. I love that band.

Oh, shoot, I almost forgot. I did finish another recording project, back before the pandemic started, and that will be coming out soon, too. It's a collaboration with Grant Gordy, Greg Garrison and Alex Hargreaves, called Bluegrass and the Abstract Truth.

You mentioned the effects of the pandemic on the music scene and on the lives of working musicians. How have things been changed, in your view?

We've all been isolated from each other. The folks that I think of as my musical community are all spread out, from here to the West Coast. And I guess we've all been at home making progress on our musical thinking and writing and such, but I'm really ready to get back and connect with the folks I feel musically kin with. As far as changes, I wonder about how much we'll still travel, and if the scale or amount we traveled in the past won't decrease. Maybe there will be more of a focus on regional touring and less flights. I'd like that. I sure do not miss airports.

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In addition to his solo projects and his work with Mr. Sun, Joe K. Walsh was a founder of Joy Kills Sorrow, a member of the Gibson Brothers, and he has performed with David Grisman, Sierra Hull, Molly Tuttle, and many other fine musicians.



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Zink & Company (TN).....F, S
The Baker Family (MO)F, S
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Katahdin Valley Boys (ME).....T, F
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3. Take Exit 51 (just after toll) for ME-126 to Litchfield
4. Turn right at Lewiston Rd/ME-126 W/ME-9 W
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4. Travel approximately 6.0 miles on ME-126
5. Turn left onto Hallowell Rd. travel 2.5 miles
6. Turn left onto Plains Rd.

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WE'RE ALL IN THIS PANDEMIC THING TOGETHER!

How has this past COVID year really affected Bluegrass in Maine?

By Laura Richardson

I started out asking, “How have you kept your bluegrass music alive during the pandemic?” I expected the perfunctory feedback about the cancellation of bookings and the closure of venues but I discovered that folks had even more to say about how their personal lives have been turned upside down, and have become almost unrecognizable. From the musicians to the venue owners alike, I was moved by their passion and resilience and they, to a person, expressed appreciation for the Maine music communities’ compassionate and supportive response to the obvious upheaval everyone was experiencing.

When just a year ago Erica Brown-Shipman (Bluegrass Connection) spent all her time promoting and booking their busy gig schedule, she and her partner and husband Matt Shipman are now teaching online and have spent significant resources on new tech equipment (and a time consuming learning curve) to set up a home studio to live-stream their shows on YouTube and Facebook. Click here to watch their blooper outtakes while trying to set up a home studio: <https://youtube.com/0wtBbnV0FcU>

With optimism in her melodic voice, Erica has found a “silver lining” in this past year, “We have learned the difficult lesson of how to pivot to survive and continue doing what we love to do; however, I hope we never have to go through this again!

Lincoln Meyers, a popular teacher at 317 Main Music School in Yarmouth and a highly sought after performing musician puts the whole COVID year into this metaphor; “It’s kind of like working out. If you don’t lift weights to challenge your muscles, you lose your strength. Removing the challenge of performing every week can diminish some of the sharpness that comes from being challenged with new music and preparation for live performances.” Even though Lincoln has leaned on his heavy teaching schedule, he said that he missed the casual and professional networking that organically occurs when performing at events and festivals.

Jane Bernier, of Backwood Roads, lost almost all their 2020 bookings in an instant when all venues had to shut down. Jane said, “It took the wind out of our sails!” Although she listened to plenty of music, in “a COVID funk” she didn’t play her guitar much. “At first it made me feel hopeless, but the progress lately has brought me optimism and a renewed creativity. I actually picked up my guitar this week for the first time since last fall.”

It was obvious as the interviewer, that this has been a very tough and emotional year for many of the musicians who pursue bluegrass music. Some have “2nd jobs”, like Richard Bernier, Dobro player in Backwood Roads. He feels fortunate that they had other income to fall back on. His personal experience was more related to losing what you love to do. Saying, “It’s was the worst summer we ever had (2020) but just about the time you think you can’t do it anymore, you pick up your instrument and like an old friend or riding a bike, it’s just there.” If that’s not a glass half full, I don’t know what is.

Susan, of Seagrass, a bluegrass inspired band in Maine, said one word in response to my question, “Therapy.” Susan said that without her music during this pandemic year, she would have gone crazy from the isolation and all the gig cancellations. “Playing at home was cheaper than therapy!”

It’s not just the musicians that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Venues have lost critical revenues. The cancellation of the Thomas Point Beach festival was a minefield of emotional upheaval for Mike Mulligan, 3rd generation owner of the festival grounds and event. “The people who come are like family, and when we finally had to decide to cancel it was like letting everyone down who have supported it for years and made it so special.” The event is so much a part of Mike’s life growing up that, “it was like canceling my birthday or New Years.” Shari Elder, festival promoter, indicated that they are in close contact with the Maine CDC about how to safely hold the festival this year. Keep your eyes open for the announcement! Shari Elder, on the board of both BMAM and 317 Main, has had a front row seat to the administrative wrangle that venue owners and a busy music school have dealt with. “There are so many stories about people finding a way to play,” she mused.

BILL Umbel, VP of BMAM and owner of “Lenny’s” in Westbrook spoke about the challenge of trying to continue to host artists outside, finally closing in November. “The numbers were way off from previous years.” He feels lucky that he has other supplemental ways to make a living unlike the gigging musicians who he has great empathy for.

Then there’s us “little people”, the students and weekend players who love the culture and social scene of circles and local jams. It’s been tough not seeing friends and learning new songs with others. Bob Bergesch, Pete Sawchuck and Ted Danforth, avid students at 317 Main, agree that the hardest thing was missing the large group jam experiences and festivals that kept them working on improving their skills.

Chin up pickers and grinners, things are going to get better!

Are there Bluegrass Bands in Maine?

Of course there are!

Name one...

hmm... well, there's that one with the banjo player...

Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

Get your MAINE BLUEGRASS BAND the recognition it deserves - a spot on the BLUEGRASS BANDS OF MAINE listing! Fill out the submission form today!

Are you a member of a Bluegrass Band in Maine? We want to know more!

The Bluegrass Music Association is working to update our Bluegrass Bands in Maine website page with up to date and accurate information about the wonderful, talented Bluegrass Bands right here in our home state. This page has been temporarily suspended as we work to update the information and prepare a new listing that will take people directly to a band's website or facebook page.

OUR GOAL IS TO COLLECT UP TO DATE BAND INFORMATION BY APRIL 15 AND RELAUNCH THE PAGE IN THE FOLLOWING WEEKS WITH THE MOST CURRENT LISTING OF ACTIVE BANDS.

Please visit our webpage and use the quick and easy online form to tell us about your band and to be sure you are included in this resource list.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by Joe Kennedy

Spring in the Central Highlands, where we live, comes a bit later than most of New England. Nonetheless, here it is in all its cold, white glory!

Good news! - Just prior to going to print, the state of Maine has relaxed some restrictions for live events. Blistered Fingers June & August and Thomas Point Beach have announced that their festivals will go on. We'll keep you posted on news of any other festivals & shows as we learn about them.

I want to start out this report to let you members know that the response to my request for a recording secretary was immediately answered by three members. A fourth came forward a couple weeks later. All were qualified candidates and I thank them for stepping up to help and ease the board's collective burden. Charlotte Pease is our new recording secretary. She has already recorded two or three meetings and is settling in nicely - thank you Charlotte!

I should mention that there might be one or two openings for new members on our board of directors this fall. Please contact me if you are interested in working with our dynamic group.

The BMAM Fund Raising Committee and Board will be launching a new program designed to increase our membership and strengthen the organization. The PLAY IT FORWARD MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM is designed to recruit new members by offering members the opportunity to invite and sponsor new members or donate to a fund that can be used by the Board to invite new members with their membership paid by the Membership Fund. Lucky recipients of this "Play It Forward" membership have the option to continue to "play it forward" by inviting and sponsoring another bluegrass friend or donating to the membership fund. This program will work kinda like when you are at a toll booth and pay for the person behind, and that person may then pay for the person behind them; continuing the process.

We are presently working out the details and with board approval hope to launch the program in April. Final details will be revealed via FaceBook, email, BMAM website and in the summer newsletter. Stay tuned! Oh, and check out the ad for the Play It Forward Membership Program in this issue. We are excited about this program and hope you will be as well!!!!

Our in-house artists are working on new T-shirt designs and we intend to have them for sale at our booth at Blistered Fingers and Thomas Point Beach.

I would like to thank Fred Frawley, attorney and chairman of the 317 Main board of directors, for offering his legal expertise to help the BMAM Bylaw Committee to draft new wording in our outdated bylaws. Our bylaws now contain wording that applies to the digital age. BMAM members will have the opportunity to vote on the recommended changes this fall during the annual election.

MAINE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME REPORT

As with our bluegrass association, the activities of the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum are severely curtailed; but we have been working on several projects and looking toward doing many things differently, but expecting, before long, to get back to some things returning to normal (whatever that may be).

As Stan Keach had previously reported, we hope to hold an induction ceremony this May for the 2020 inductees. The induction committee will be reviewing and scoring nominations for 2021 inductees and sending out ballots for voting on them.

We're working on two significant projects that will enhance our presence around the state. In December we filmed a tour of the museum which is to be presented in two versions: one for a virtual tour to be distributed to music programs at high schools and the other version to be available for the general public. DVDs will be available soon. The program is about 50 minutes long.

The other project involves presenting a program consisting of performances and speakers sharing country music and the impact our Maine performers have had nationally and internationally. This program is called "Maine Country Music: Its History at Home and Beyond." We plan on doing these shows live on stage and we have targeted two dates: April 11th and June 27th, 2021. We may have to abandon the April date.

Once it is deemed safe to do live events again we will need at least two months to get all prep work done including determining a location. We plan on doing these shows in various locations around Maine. If you saw the Ken Burns documentary on country music broadcast by MPBN in the fall of 2019, you have an idea what we hope to accomplish.

In previous years we have had a few fundraising concerts each year, small group and larger group tours, the springtime induction ceremony and show, and a few private donations and some corporate donations to raise enough money to pay our bills. With no events at all in 2020, our organization, like BMAM and other country music associations, is finding it a real challenge to continue our existence. We are pleased that the DVD which is not impeded by COVID will be ready for sale very soon. Any of our plans which include gathering of people are still, of course, tentative as far as scheduling times. We are cleared to conduct actual museum tours for as many as 15 people and, in fact, we have successfully done that. We would love to show BMAM members all of the memorabilia we have on display at the museum, including some of the instrument making skills of bluegrass performers Bob French, Dickie Pelletier and Jimmy Cox.

Some handmade items have been donated for display or to be sold to help in fundraising. On our Facebook page you can find a picture of a quilt for which we are selling raffle tickets.

I know that several performers and organizations are doing "virtual" concerts and events. So far, the tour I mentioned is the only virtual event we've done. We may do other things that way, but we all know how much we love a real live performance by our favorite pickers and singers!

I thank Joe Kennedy for inviting me to write this piece for the newsletter. As Stan had mentioned, bluegrass musicians in Maine are very well represented in our Hall of Fame. Bluegrass music has always been a vital early form of country music and has remained the purest form of real country music. Joe has indicated that there might be ongoing space in the newsletter for Hall of Fame updates so you may be hearing more from me. I think the leadership team at BMAM is doing great with the newsletter and at maintaining a vibrant association.

For information on the virtual tour DVD, quilt raffle, or event schedules contact Ken and Jane Brooks at 207-852-7060.

So long for now and keep pickin'!

Sincerely,

Ken Brooks

Chairman, MCMHOF&M Board of Directors & BMAM member

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

March 2021

Hello Bluegrass Friends

I hope this Newsletter finds you all well and ready to resume our normal bluegrass rituals in the near future! Although we will have to wait another year for some of our favorite festivals and annual shows, things seem to be starting to make strides toward a familiar summer.

Our website, mainebluegrass.org, and our Facebook page strive to keep up with any show or festival changes. Currently the Maine Bluegrass Band page on the website is being updated and this winter there has been a lot of work done 'behind the scenes' with the Maine Bluegrass Archive page making it easier to navigate. And as always, you are always welcome to donate pictures and items to BMAM to preserve Maine Bluegrass history. Thanks to Joe Kennedy, who has collected these items since our corporation's beginning, and to our webmaster Cyndi Longo for rejuvenating the website.

Like you, I have missed getting together in person to play and visit. So, with major contributions from Board Member Shari Elder and others, we're making our way into the 21st century and going online with a new venture. We are calling it the BMAM Cabin Fever Play Along, which utilizes the Zoom program (many of us have become familiar with). Due to the technical limitations of playing together online (there are electronic timing delays), we are working around this by presenting a "play along". One person will lead a song, and although everyone else will have to be on 'mute', you will be able to see the other folks playing along and hear the song leader. This has worked for many other organizations in many styles of music and we are gonna give it a go!

Our first zoom meeting (which is what the format that the play along will be using) will be on Sunday March 28th at 3pm (possibly already gone by). BUT don't fear there will be another one on Sunday April 25th at 3pm. If you do not have a computer, we hope you can find a friend or family member with one to participate. We sure wish we can play together soon, and it's looking like we may be able to, with continued social distancing, outside when the weather gets warmer. And we are hoping this BMAM Cabin Fever Play Along will help bridge the gap.

I would like to thank some of our newest volunteers Charlotte Pease, Laura Richardson and Fred Frawley for jumping right in and helping with the meetings, newsletter and the By Laws. It's the volunteers and members that make BMAM the great organization that it is!

Yours in Bluegrass,

Mama Beth Revels

Announcing new Play It Forward Program Details to be announced soon!



FOR THE LOVE OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC! ♥

PLAY IT FORWARD

WATCH FOR DETAILS COMING SOON!

By being a sponsor you will help to build a stronger, more vibrant future for BMAM. Donations to the Member Sponsorship Program will create an opportunity for increased participation in the Maine bluegrass community, relationship-building with bluegrass musicians and fans, and connection with new potential members.

WWW.MAINEBLUEGRASS.ORG





CABIN FEVER PLAY ALONG

The Bluegrass Association of Maine is excited to offer two Zoom Play Along sessions. The song leaders will be on video and audio. Guests will be on video, but will be muted while they play. It is not quite the same as a jam, but it is still a nice opportunity to visit with your bluegrass community and play along to some great music.

All registered will receive a zoom link and song list with charts that include words and chords. We hope you will play along with us!

To register for the event:
<https://form.jotform.com/210754209795058>



Bluegrass Radio Shows in Maine



BLUEGRASS on the RADIO & on the WEB from BELFAST, MAINE

ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL

WBFY-100.9 FM (Belfast Community Radio) AND www.belfastcommunityradio.org

• HOST: Resa Randolph • Wednesdays 5 - 6 PM & Thursdays 1 - 2 PM

BLUEGRASS on the RADIO & on the WEB from BLUEHILL, MAINE

BRONZEWOUND

WERU-89.9 FM (Blue Hill) AND www.weru.org

• HOST: Thursday 8 - 10 PM | Paul Anderson - Resa Randolph

BLUEGRASS on the RADIO & on the WEB from BRUNSWICK, MAINE

MAMA'S MIDCOAST BLUEGRASS

WBOR-91.9 FM Bowdoin College Radio www.wbor.org

• HOST: Mama Beth - ***STATION IS ON HIATUS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE***

BLUEGRASS on the RADIO MONTICELLO, MAINE (AROOSTOOK COUNTY)

THE ROOTS OF COUNTRY

WBCQ KIXX - 94.7 FM

• HOST: Stu Fleischhaker, Layla Cantafio • Friday 6 - 9 PM; Sunday 12 Noon - 3 PM

BLUEGRASS GOSPEL SHOW

WBCQ KIXX - 94.7 FM • HOST: Carl O'Donnell • Sunday Morning: 9 - 10 AM

BLUEGRASS on the RADIO & on the WEB from PORTLAND, MAINE

HARDLY STRICTLY

WMPG-90.9 FM (Portland) AND www.wmpg.org - Bluegrass Americana, Roots Music

• HOST: Fred | Thursday 8:30 - 10:30 AM

Bylaw Committee Prepares Changes for Vote in Fall

by Beth Revels

Over the last 20 years the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine has functioned smoothly with our Bylaws that were set up prior to incorporation. We have had minor amendments that the membership has voted on in the past, and they worked well for the organization. As BMAM has grown and made its way into the twenty-first century, we have modernized and matured. The Board of Directors realized that the current Bylaws were not reflecting our operation and need to be reviewed. A Bylaw Committee with Nellie Kennedy at the helm, was formed to go through the document with a fine-tooth comb in order to reflect our current practices becoming fully compliant to our own rules. And after a few years of working on the revisions, we were very fortunate to have the expertise of volunteer, attorney Fred Frawley to guide us to the point where we are ready to propose changes to you, the membership. One of the biggest changes has to do with the process of Elections and appointments.

When BMAM was in its infancy, we met primarily at one place, the Roost in Buxton, where Elections were done in person. To hold a legal Election, a quorum of 20% was needed. As the membership was more spread out from Southern Maine to Cambridge to Brewer, BMAM found it nearly impossible to reach a quorum at any physical location. Years ago, the Board made provisions to do the voting by mail, and it worked so well that we have continued and expect to continue the same way for the foreseeable future. Because of this we no longer need absentee ballots, additional nominations are no longer solicited prior to the vote at the annual meeting, and anticipating society and online trends, a provision will now be there to allow electronic communication in the future.

And along those lines, other changes proposed involve allowances for Board Meetings and votes by teleconferences and video conferences as needed. Also, it gives the Board of Directors a little flexibility for the Annual Meeting date.

On occasion, over the years, Board Members and Officers have had to step down from their duties prior to finishing their year or two year term. In some cases, this has left the Board very empty at times. Our Bylaws do allow for the Board of Directors to number from 3 to 10 members, but experience has shown that it is difficult to function with utmost efficiency. The way BMAM was set up, a special election could fill the Board in those cases. But because of the extra cost and sometimes Directors are only needed to fill in for a few months that has not proven to be the best procedure. Therefore, another proposed change will allow the Board of Directors to appoint an individual to temporarily fill an open seat until the nearest Election.

The Bylaws and the proposed changes will be available for review on our website (as they are too long for the newsletter) at mainebluegrass.org. Also, for those not on the web you can request a summary of the changes by emailing bmam.secretary@gmail.com or calling 207-277-3733. Also please use the same contacts with any comments and questions you may have. In the upcoming 2021 Fall Election, these changes will be voted on.



BMAM NEW & RENEW MEMBERSHIPS 12/01/20 - 02/28/21

NEW

Sara Herter
Maggis Strickland
Gary & Jeannie Tabor

RENEWED

Slim Andrews
Franklin & Karen Holcomb
Shari Elder
Ben Detroy
Emily Detroy
Beth Revels
Scott Chaisson
Dickie Spofford
Richard Jagels
Steve & Anna Perterson
Brent Faloon
Joan & Evan Richert
Charlotte Pease
David & Kathy Harriman
Jim Raker
Robert & Joelle Ruddy
Patty Kempton
Bud & Elizabeth Godsoe
Don Depoy & Martha Hills
Don Baker
Doug Teel Sr.
Walter & Laurie Magee
Cynthia Longo

• 75 • 50 • 25 •

75 Years
OF BLUEGRASS

50 Years
OF BLUEGRASS
FESTIVALS IN MAINE

25 YEARS
OF BMAM

BMAM OFFICERS

President: Beth Revels
brevels@mainebluegrass.org

Vice President: Bill Umbel
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Secretary: Nellie Kennedy
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Charlotte Pease
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Treasurer: Robert Bergesch
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**BMAM
ARCHIVES**

Joe Kennedy
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Darwin Davidson
darwin@darwindavidson.com

**The Bluegrass Music Association
of Maine is ...**

an organization of people, listeners and players, who enjoy Bluegrass music. It was formed in March of 1995, and incorporated on July 8, 1996 as a Maine 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The BMAM, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, welcomes all Bluegrass friends, fans, and pickers to become active members.

Functions of the organization include the following:

- To educate the public about Bluegrass music, in order to foster an appreciation of its history and cultural heritage
- To further the enjoyment of Bluegrass music, for ourselves and others, through teaching, sharing, and playing;
- To encourage participation in Bluegrass music events;
- To promote Bluegrass music as family entertainment;
- To support area workshops, festivals and concerts;
- To support area musicians and bands that play Bluegrass music;
- To inform members about Bluegrass and related events around the state;
- To cooperate with other organizations to promote Bluegrass and related music;
- To preserve the memories of those who have preceded us in this field of endeavor.

COPY DEADLINE

is the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Ad rates are for camera-ready copy. Ads to be made up from scratch have additional cost and must be sent by the 5th of the month.

Payment must accompany ads when they are submitted.

Send all advertising to:
Bluegrass Express
Re: Advertising
P.O. Box 9
Dexter, Maine 04930



The BLUEGRASS EXPRESS is a quarterly publication of the Newsletter Committee.

For information on how you can become involved, contact any committee member.

Please mail any news, photos, articles, information or anything pertaining to Bluegrass in Maine to this address:

BMAM
Re: Newsletter
P.O. Box 9
Dexter, Maine 04930

Advertising Rates

25 Words _____ \$5.00
Business Card _____ \$10.00
1/4 Page _____ \$15.00
1/2 Page _____ \$20.00



Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

P.O. Box 9
Dexter, ME 04930
MaineBluegrass.org

www.MaineBluegrass.org

*Your source for
Bluegrass information!!!*

*Please check your membership status!
Thanks!*

JOIN THE BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

A one year membership includes:
Quarterly Newsletter
Discounts to BMAM sponsored events

DATE: _____ EVENT: _____

I am a: ___ Fan ___ Musician ___ Band Member

Primary Instrument:: _____

Band Name: _____

Volunteer Opportunities: (check if interested)

☐ S. Jam (Yarmouth) ☐ E. Jam (Brewer)

☐ Teaching ☐ Newsletter ☐ Festivals

Other things I can help with: _____



www.mainebluegrass.org
P.O. Box 9, Dexter, ME 04930

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

NEWSLETTERS ARE SENT BY EMAIL

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

☐ NO email? Check this box to get your newsletter via postal mail.

MEMBERSHIP DUES: Solo \$15.00 Duet \$20.00

___ NEW ___ RENEWAL

FOR ADMIN USE ONLY

Member received: ___ membership card ___ welcome letter ___ sticker ___ db updated

Payment type: check or cash

REV: 2019-06-01