



**Bluegrass Music
Association
of Maine**

Bluegrass Express

a publication of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

Fall 2023

INTERVIEW WITH GRACE FRENCH

By Stan Keach, with Liz Keach

Most of the first generation of Maine bluegrass stars have passed on: Fred Pike, Sam Tidwell, Al Hawkes, Jimmy Cox. Bob and Grace French, of course, belong on the same pedestal as these giants. Bob passed away in 2016, but Grace French is still alive, doing quite well, at 93 years old.

Bob and Grace played country, and then bluegrass music, from 1950 until well into the 21st century. From 1940 until 1970, their base of operation was Massachusetts (and also Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire). They bought a house in Cambridge, Maine in 1970, and by 1980, they were living in Maine full-time, performing as Bob and Grace French and the Rainbow Valley Boys (or Folks).

Liz and I visited Grace at the French homestead in Cambridge on September 23. She had spent the winter mostly at her son John's house in Nashua, NH, but John was back in Cambridge helping Grace's granddaughter Reese with some home repair and home rehab. We had a very pleasant afternoon reminiscing with Grace, with Reese and John joining in from time to time.

SK: *Out of all the first generation Maine Bluegrassers, you're the survivor.*

GF: Is that right? I guess so. Seems like everybody else is gone. I've got pictures up there of the Osborne Brothers. They used to come stay in our house when they were down in the Boston area.

SK: *Speaking of Boston, I understand you grew up in Readville . . .*

GF: Readville, Massachusetts. It's right by Dedham. Right between Dedham and Milton. It's part of Boston. There used to be a big race track up at the end of our road, Hyde Park Avenue. I graduated from Hyde Park High School in 1948.

I had three brothers and one sister. They're all gone now. My father worked at a metallurgic factory. They used to make crucifixes and things like that. He was a foreman. But they didn't wear any masks, so he got stuff in his lungs, and he passed away at 69. My parents lived in South Boston before they got married.

SK: *Do you have any favorite anecdotes or stories from when you were a young child?*

GF: Well, my mom was very funny. Of course I was the last one — the youngest child in the family. I was crying one time because one of our relatives had passed away, and she was trying to console me. She said, "You can pass away at any time; whenever God wants you back in Heaven, He'll bring you back. So I thought, evidently, He doesn't want me. Not yet, anyway. I haven't done something. And I hope I don't do that something for a while yet.

So she says to me, "He will bring you back. And I want you to remember something: always make sure, any time you're going somewhere, that you have clean underpants, because you don't want to go to Heaven without clean underpants."

SK: *You were singing professionally before you met Bob?*

GF: Well, I took dancing lessons. I started when I was eleven. I entertained the troops during the war. Once in a while I'd be singing with the dance group.

Continued on page 2.



*The Rainbow Valley Boys and Sweetheart, circa 1967
From Left, clockwise: Herb Applin, Bob French,
Bill Phillips, Grace French, Everett Alan Lilly*

OFFICIAL NOTICE!

**BMAM
ANNUAL
MEETING**



The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine's Annual Meeting will be held virtually this year on the Zoom platform, **Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.** The Board decided that again this year, we would offer our members the opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting by using the virtual option.

If you would like to attend the Annual Meeting via Zoom, please email: zoom@mainebluegrass.org to request the logon information and link at least 48 hours before the meeting to ensure you receive the link in time.

INTERVIEW WITH GRACE FRENCH *Continued from front page.*

SK: *Bob grew up in Acton, and you grew up in Readville. How did you meet Bob?*

GF: My girlfriend, Shirley Pellett, moved out to the town right beside Acton, Boxborough. She was going with one of Bob's friends, Eddie Curley, and she fixed me up with a blind date with Bob.

SK: *You met Bob, and you were married about 4 years later. When did you start doing music with Bob?*

GF: When I was in high school, I did a lot of entertaining; anytime they did musical entertainment, I was in it, at high school, and Bob was the same way. At the Women's Club in Acton, we did a lot of entertainment there. I have a picture of me tap-dancing on the stage for the kids at a school in Acton.

SK: *I made a note that you and Bob started learning to play guitar from a guy named Jack Kelly.*

GF: Oh, Gosh sakes! Jack Kelly. Yes. Where did you pick up all this information?

Liz Keach: *(Laughs) Here, there and everywhere.*

SK: *Some of it was from the Music Museum of New England. They have a biography of you and Bob online.*

GF: Is that right? Yes, Bob and I started playing guitar at the same time. His family had several musicians in it.

SK: *And Jack Kelly introduced you to Joe King, and that led to you and Bob joining the Rainbow Valley Boys and Sweetheart. Was that after you were married?*

GF: Yes, after we were married. And we started playing with Joe King in 1952. We played at the Sudbury Inn in Sudbury Mass. We played with Joe until 1955.

We went into Boston one time to the Lone Star Ranch. This kid was on-stage playing a 5-string banjo. Bob fell in love with the banjo. Hmm. I should know that kid's name.

SK: *Ernie Johnson. With Toby Stroud.*

GF: Toby Stroud. Yes. That's right. Bob said, "I'm going to buy a banjo and learn to play it." I said, "You're crazy." But Bob got a banjo, and practiced playing it all the time, and he finally got it.

SK: *And maybe while he was learning to play the banjo, you two weren't playing as much for a short while.*

GF: Yes. I think that's right. I was pregnant, and we were bringing up our kids. I remember our apartment at that time was not well heated, and someone told Bob he needed to keep the banjo warm so the skin wouldn't shrink, so Bob used to bring the banjo to bed with us.

[We all laughed.]

[NOTE: From 1957 until 1964, Bob and Grace played with Clyde and Willa Mae Joy & the Country Folks, Randy Hawkins & the Country Nighthawks, and Uncle John's Country All-Stars, with regular radio shows, and many live performances. In 1964, they reformed The Rainbow Valley Boys and Sweetheart ("Sweetheart" being Grace). In 1968, Bob briefly replaced Fred Pike on banjo with Doug Rawlings & the Twin River Boys (with Jimmy Gudreau on mandolin). When Gudreau went off to D.C. to join the Country Gentlemen, Bob started playing banjo with New England bluegrass legend Joe Val, whose band also included, Bobby Tidwell and Herb Applin, and, later, Dave Dillon.]



Grace French, about 1967

SK: *What were some of the other things you did besides playing music?*

GF: When I was growing up I worked with a modeling agency, Rolly Rogers' Agency. My modeling name was Gae Merrick. I studied at Bryant and Stratton Business College for one year. I wanted to learn how to type. After I moved to Maine, I got my CNA at one point. When I was young I worked for Liberty Mutual in Boston. When the children were young, I was a stay-at-home mom a lot of the time.

SK: *What about Bob?*

GF: Bob did a lot of things when we were first married. He sold tires, he drove a taxi. Bob was a good mechanic. He worked for garages in Massachusetts at times. After we moved to Maine, he mostly worked for himself.

SK: *When did you move to Maine?*

GF: Let's see. We were working at GenRad . . . General Radio. So we bought this place in Cambridge in about 1971.

SK: *Did you move to Cambridge after Sam and Fred moved here?*

GF: Shortly after they did, probably. We came up looking at houses, and we were fortunate enough to pick this up for a good price. Bob did a lot of work on it.

SK: *What led you to move to Maine?*

GF: Well, it was getting kind of crowded down there. I think we were living in Northborough Mass., north of Worcester, just before coming up here.

SK: *Were all your children born before you moved to Maine?*

GF: Yes. The oldest three mostly grew up in Massachusetts.

We got married in 1950 . . . in August of 1950. On October 20, 1951, my Jeanie was born. John wasn't born until '61. In 1952, I had my Bobby. Then I had my Mary in 1953. Then my husband says, "No more kids!" He said, "You gotta stop having kids!" I say, "Me?" *[We all laughed.]* Bob's mother had 11 children. When he was born, his brother was 30 years old.

SK: *John, your fourth child, was born in '61. So John was still at home when you moved to Maine.*

GF: Yes, John went to school over in Dover-Foxcroft.

SK: *When you moved up here to Maine, were you playing music up here right away?*

GF: At that time, I was working. Bob had to travel quite a bit because he was going down to Mass. After we bought this house, Joe Val called Bob and said he couldn't find a banjo player, so Bob would go down to Massachusetts to play with Joe. I was the office manager at a nursing home here in Maine.

Continued on page 3.

INTERVIEW WITH GRACE FRENCH

Continued from page 2.

SK: *By about 1975, you and Bob started playing as Bob and Grace and the Rainbow Valley Folks, based in Maine, isn't that right?*

GF: Yes

SK: *Who was in the band then? Charlie Patterson?*

GF: Yes. Charlie lives in St. Albans. He married Connie Ballard. She's a good singer. Charlie was very good. He was our bass player at one time. He played bass when we used to play at the Sudbury Inn in Sudbury, Mass. He came up to Maine at about the same time we did.

SK: *I remember that during the 80s, your band was Brian Mason, Bobby St. Pierre, and Howie Dearborn. That was your band from 1980 to 1990.*

GF: Yup. Bobby was so good. We had a lot of fun with that band.

SK: *Going back to your early bands in Massachusetts — once Bob started playing the banjo, you must have transitioned; you must have started playing bluegrass more.*

GF: Yes. We were just playing country before that. We still called the band the Rainbow Valley Folks, but, yes, we started playing more bluegrass music. It was an easy transition. I sang mostly harmony. And I did the train whistle.

[NOTE: Grace was known for imitating a train whistle by putting her hands up to her nose and mouth and emitting a very distinctive train-like sound that their audiences loved to hear.]

SK: *Where did that train whistle come from?*

GF: Well, we used to have a train go through Readville when I was young. There was a little center down there where the bus stopped. We'd go down there, all us kids, and we'd hear the train come by and we'd all try to imitate the train whistle.

SK: *So you just made it up yourself?*

GF: Yes. I can't do it now. Well, once in a while I can.

SK: *Joe and Nellie Kennedy said that when they came over to see you last fall, you did your train whistle.*

GF: Yup. Joe Kennedy . . . There's one song he sings every time they come over to visit . . . they'll bring their band, and they'll come with Jane and Kenny Brooks, and every time they come, there's one song he sings, and I can do the whistle just beautifully.

Liz Keach: *It must be right in the right key.*

GF: Yeah. Key of A, I believe.

SK: *Well, does it make a difference? Do you have to be in the right key?*

GF: I don't know.

SK: *You used to do it to "Orange Blossom Special".*

GF: Oh, yes.

SK: *And there were a couple of other songs you did the whistle with, I think. Was it "Wabash Cannonball"?*

GF: "Wabash Cannonball" was another one, yes. We did that on records. I have those records here somewhere.

Liz Keach: *We were at Thomas Point Beach one year, and Sam Tidwell was with our band, the Sandy River Ramblers, for that show, and you came on stage during our set and did the whistle when Sam played "Orange Blossom Special." That was in about 1990. That was so much fun. The audience loved it.*

SK: *One of your children is a musician, right?*

GF: Jeanie. She plays over in Germany, and all over. She lives in Singapore. She came over here to get her knee done, and then her other knee was bothering her, so she came over for that one. She was here almost another year.

Continued on page 4.

SEAGRASS FESTIVAL

Maine Craft Distillers - September 17, 2023

After a summer spent keeping up with the larger, multi-day Bluegrass festivals, it was nice to kick back this week and enjoy a smaller event, which offered outstanding musical performances. The 3rd annual Seagrass Music Festival 2023, was held outdoors Sunday, September 17, at Maine Craft Distillers, Portland.

The East Bayside Bluegrass Collective, a loose community of local and not-so local musicians and guests, with mandolinist Joe K. Walsh at the center, played the first set. Onstage were Steve Roy - Bass, Lincoln Meyer - guitar, Darol Anger - Fiddle, and also Celia Wordsmith (Della Mae lead singer) and Ella Jordan (fiddler with Mile 12.)

A special guest was Jonathan Edwards, who sang an inspired version of Gordon Lightfoot's "In the Early Morning Rain," with Celia taking a high backing harmony. Edwards then contributed some great harmonica breaks to Celia's forceful rendition of Dylan's "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, it takes a Train to Cry".

Ella Jordan showed her Texas roots when she played and sang a tender western swing version of Merle Haggard's "I Always Get Lucky With You".

Musicians from other sets often joined in, always producing a more joyful sound. The sound system, by the way, was dialed in perfectly for the event.

The second set was originally scheduled as "A Trio Featuring Michael Daves, Tony Trishka, and Bruce Molsky". Unfortunately, Tony Trishka had to cancel. Bruce Molsky is a multi-instrumentalist talent who is a Visiting professor in the Roots Music program at Berklee College of Music, while Michael Daves is an Atlanta-raised, Brooklyn NY-based bluegrass guitarist; banjo superstar. They played a very root-sy set: some older style Appalachian mixed with some newer compositions, and some gospel tunes, occasionally assisted by Joe K. Walsh and/or Darol Anger.

The New England-based "Twisted Pine" played the third and final set. The band played consistently driving music, and had great stage presence. Chris Sartori (bass & vocals,) Dan Bui (mandolin,) Kathleen Parks (fiddle & vocals) and Anh Phung (flute, vocals) were firing on all cylinders as a team, supporting each other's vocal and instrumental efforts in the best Bluegrass tradition.

Luke Davidson, Maine Craft Distiller's Founder/President, was quite pleased. "It was a beautiful day; there were a lot of happy, smiling people around, and everybody seemed to be having a good time. What could be better than that?"

- Bob Bergesch



IBMA is the non-profit music association that connects, educates, and empowers bluegrass professionals and enthusiasts, honoring tradition and encouraging innovation in the bluegrass community worldwide.

www.ibma.org

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The BMAM board of directors has no chairperson at this time (which is why I'm writing a short Editor's message in this issue).

It's been a good summer for festivals, with many top-flight bluegrass acts performing, and lots of enthusiastic field picking. Three monthly BMAM Bluegrass Jams will be in operation soon — the Southern Jam, in Yarmouth; the Eastern Jam, in Brewer; and the Farmington Jam. These monthly Jams are great opportunities for pickers and singers of all levels to sharpen their skills, meet fellow bluegrassers, and have a great time. We hope some of you will attend each Jam at least once. Try them out! Find out what each Jam has to offer YOU.

The Second Annual Rock Hearts Concert at the Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft is coming up soon, and ticket sales have been brisk. There are still seats available. Rock Hearts is really hot right now. This show is guaranteed to be a good one.

— Stan Keach, Editor, *The Bluegrass Express*

INTERVIEW WITH GRACE FRENCH

Continued from page 3.

SK: *But she doesn't play bluegrass.*

GF: She started a bluegrass band over there. But she does primarily blues. I've never been to Singapore. But Jean has been over here, and I've been to see my other daughter, Mary, who lives in Holland.

SK: *Bobby St. Pierre said that, when he was playing with you and Bob in the 80s, Bob always wanted to play some songs to warm up before a show, but that he never warmed up with any of the songs you guys were going to play onstage.*

GF: That's right. Bob liked the element of surprise.

SK: *Bobby told me that Bob liked to keep him on his toes, which Bobby said really helped him grow as a musician. He said that, at every show, Bob would always play one instrumental that Bobby had never played, or never even heard, before. Bob would look over at Bobby and say, "Your break." And that helped Bobby learn to play on the fly.*

GF: Yes. Bob would do that.

SK: *Were your sets consistent? Similar to the last show's set list?*

GF: Oh, no. It was always new . . . whatever Bob would come up with.

SK: *I remember that at festivals, Bob would go onstage with Smokey Greene, and Smokey would go onstage on your sets, and they had a sort of contest going — which one of them could come up with the saddest song.*

GF: We had a lot of fun with Smokey.

SK: *What were some of your favorite songs?*

GF: Well . . . I don't know . . .

Reese, Grace's granddaughter: "Jambalaya. You loved "Jambalaya."

GF: "Jambalaya". Oh, gosh. That was a good one. [Singing:] Goodbye, Joe. Me gotta go. Me, oh my-o.

Liz Keach: *It was amazing to all of us bluegrass people that this little town — Cambridge, Maine — had such a high concentration of Maine bluegrass stars — You and Bob, plus Sam Tidwell, and Fred Pike. Did that just happen? Nobody planned it?*

SK: *Did you guys ever say, "Let's all go move from Massachusetts and Connecticut and Rhode Island up to Cambridge, Maine?" Or, did you and Bob say, "Let's go live in Cambridge where Fred and Sam live?"*

GF: No. I don't think we thought of that. We came up here to one of the festivals, I think. We'd been looking at different places, different houses for sale. We went through Cambridge.

Liz Keach: *It's such a pretty little town. And back then, the prices must have been so low. That must have been a draw, certainly.*

GF: Years ago, Cambridge had the same feel as Acton . . . you know, a small town. I'm going to be buried in Acton. Bob and I have a lot there. We liked Acton. We lived on Central Street. 220 Central Street.

Liz Keach: *I'm always curious, as a mother — you have to pay attention to your kids, while you have a band on the road. Did you find it hard to juggle all that?*

GF: No. They were good. The kids were very good.

John French, Grace's son: That's why I'm the second section of the family. I was born 10 years after the third kid, so my 3 siblings had an entirely different life than I had. When we get together we talk about it, and, "And they let you do that? And they let you do that, too?" And I say, "And Mom and Dad did that with you? They never did that anything like that with me!" We're constantly throwing it back and forth: who had it worse. But it's all in fun. [At this point, we had an involved conversation with John about his teaching experiences; it was beyond the scope of this article, but was a lot of fun. Liz and I had a wonderful afternoon talking with Grace, a true Maine Bluegrass legend, and also with her son and granddaughter, who were also delightful. It brought back many memories. I hope this article will bring back fond memories to some of our readers who can remember the wonderful performances of Bob and Grace French and the Rainbow Valley Folks.]

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!

Visit www.mainebluegrass.org and click on the Calendar tab to submit your event.

BMAM NEW & RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS

03/01/2023 - 09/03/2023

NEW MEMBERS

Roland & Danielle Bard	Jessup Henderson
Catherine Barrows	Mark Horn
Mike & Patti Burns	Karen Jenkins
Brian Calais	Kip Kilponen
Mary Rose Callain	Christine LaPointe
Kathy Card	Joe & Linda Moore
Ellen Carlson	Tom & Marie Quigley
Wayne Clinton	Diane Rines
Tom & Thea Cohen	John & J.R. Roussel
Fred Couverette	Daniel Sowder
Steven M. Cowles	Sam Steele
Ron Cullenberg	Ed & Debbie Stubbs
Matthew Dillon	Paul Vinsel
George Donovan	Jennifer Lee Wiebe
Rebecca Doughty	Emily Wiederkehr
Martin Gitlin	

RENEWED MEMBERS

Paul Anderson	Willie Marquart
Robert & Heidi Bergesch	Peter & Lucinda McGinn
Steve Bixby	James & Dawn McGinnis
Ken & Jane Brooks	Hideaki Mizuno
Kevin R & Vera Bryant	Richard & Mimi Nangle
Kenton Chun	Alice Pacheco
Larry Corbett	Raymond Paradis
Deborah Cross	Roxy Perry
Steve Davis	Sam Pfeifle
Ben Detroy	Bill & Cathy Pollari
Carole Detroy	Dina & Joe Richards
Chauncey Devin	Don Richardson
Jay & Leslie Dicentes	Laura Richardson
David Estes	David Robison
Gene Groves	Steven A. Roys
Denise Hervieux	Scott & Evelyn Schroeder
Denise Hervieux	Richard Silver
Stan & Liz Keach	George Spencer-Green
Doreen & Frank Kimball	Nanci Stein
Peter Knight	Henry Thomson Sr
Phil LaClaire	John Wallace, Jr.
Dan LaPointe	Sam Warren
Laurie LaViolette	Kevin Welch
Raymond & Rose Libby	Arden & Shellie Williams
Laurie & Jay Littlefield-Baas	
Connie Lundy	
Connor MacLeod	



THANKS TO ALL MEMBERS WHO JOINED OR RENEWED!

NOTE: The published list (on this page) is particularly long because we neglected to print a Membership Update in the Summer edition of the Bluegrass Express. Therefore, this list includes updates dating back to about May.



EASTERN BMAM BLUEGRASS JAM at the Grange in Brewer 1286 North Main St.

Sun., Oct. 1

Sun., Feb. 3

Sun., Nov. 5

Sun., March 2

Sun., Dec. 3

Sun., April 6

Sun., Jan. 6

Sun., May 3

**Always the 1st Sunday of the month
12:00 to 5:00 PM**

**Admission: BMAM members - \$5
Non-members - \$7**

**Listeners welcome! Refreshments available for sale. All levels welcome.
2 rooms for jamming.**

July 28, 2023.....Concert Review:

BILLY STRINGS AT THOMPSON POINT

Notes to self: how to begin a review of a Billy Strings show:

Musicological approach:

“Bluegrass, like jazz, is one of the few genres that would accommodate the likes of Billy Strings. Despite earlier practitioners’ fundamentalist mentality, the form itself has only grown more flexible over time, and thus it is the perfect conveyance for Billy’s wide-ranging skills and tastes...”

Purist’s approach:

“This young man’s sins are beyond redemption. How can any real bluegrass artist use a classic such as Monroe’s ‘Southern Flavor’ as a mere springboard to an extended hippie jam? Make up your mind, BS. Are you Jerry Garcia or Jimmy Martin? And what’s with all the pedals?”

Rolling Stone Magazine approach:

“If marijuana puffs were measured in terms of chord substitutions and flatpack speed, Billy Strings fans would never have to come down again... Kudos to you and your legions, Billy, and party on!”

Et cetera. Suffice it to say that because Billy Strings is who he is (actually, he is one William Apostol from Muir, Michigan), he will continue to be a source of both consternation and celebration to those who care to give him a listen. Nonetheless, some aspects of his performances so far seem to be undeniable: his deep knowledge of the American songbook, his well-crafted skills as a guitarist and singer, his wisdom in having surrounded himself with some of the hottest pickers and coolest dudes around, and his euphoric addiction to making joyous noise.

Billy’s story (and I use that possessive only because “Strings’s” is a little hard to pronounce after you’ve “had a few,” and because all the groovy young people just call him Billy) is a familiar one in the history of our country’s roots music. The circumstances of his upbringing were humble, which is to say that he was probably the last one his high-school guidance counselor would have expected to succeed at anything. As his followers well know, his heroin-addicted father died young, and his mother and step-father (Terry Barber, a bluegrass guitarist and Billy’s first musical influence) also struggled with substance abuse. Somehow, with some help - most notably from the midwestern mandolin player Don Julin, who brought a sense of order to Apostol’s wildness - he was ultimately able to pursue his intended life as a musician.

Conspicuously, it has been a great ride so far atop a wave that will no doubt crest at some point but which at present is buoying the heads and shoulders of a damn good band that includes banjoist Billy Failing, mandolinist Jarrod Walker, the incredibly-together bassist Royal Masat, and fiddlist Alex Hargreaves (a fairly recent addition). Thompson’s Point in Portland was one stop among many along Billy’s Summer Tour 2023 (I also caught his show back in May at Red Rocks in Morrison, Colorado, where I stood in the drenching rain along with hundreds of other hypothermic nutcases), where he served up his trademark smorgasbord of songs ranging from standards such as the Stanley Brothers’ “Bound to Ride” and the Seldom Scene’s “Old Train” to several of his own compositions, including “The Fire on My Tongue” and (my favorite of his) “In the Morning Light.” Over it all hung a fragrant cloud - the possibility, at any given moment, of a lengthy, dynamic, virtuosic instrumental jam.

The paying crowd at Thompson’s Point, along with those bums who enjoyed the concert for free from their boats just beyond the shadow of Interstate 295, was clearly enamored. Like Billy’s song selection, there was striking disparity in the vintage of attendees - gray-haired (and non-haired) veterans of the bluegrass-festival scene, bare-shoulder to bare-shoulder with spry twenty-somethings, all of us charmed by the magical combination of youth, seemingly unlimited talent, charisma, and the childlike wonder of a guy who might just be more amazed than any of us by his star’s rapid ascension - Billy Strings himself.

Strangely, one of the most interesting moments of the evening came early in the second set, when the band stopped cold in the middle of “Pretty Daughter.” Strings had noticed a commotion in the crowd below - someone had fainted, apparently from heat exhaustion on this warm, humid Maine day.

Remember, for a true performer, every little thing that happens on stage means something, and when the singer paused mid-stroke and asked, “One sec, everybody, hold on. Is everything okay over there? We got a situation?...Let’s get some help over there. Clear a way...”

It was more than simple concern for a fan in distress; it reflected a rare awareness and a human connection. Okay, it wasn’t Mick Jagger at Altamont, trying to manage the out-of-control Hell’s Angels the band had hired to work security, but for a young star in a rowdy, volatile environment, it showed maturity.

So. Those of us who have been listening to bluegrass music for more years than we care to count, those of us who actually once saw Earl Scruggs perform, those of us who also witnessed the stunning achievements of Tony Rice and Bela Fleck and who are tracking the fresh footprints of Sierra Hull, Justin Moses, and many others... we have the right ask questions: why should I listen to this? What is new and different and valuable about it? What is there about it that will ultimately contribute to the great, ever-evolving form called bluegrass?

As with all worthy questions, the answers are still taking shape. Perhaps we do not have the foresight or the aptitude to answer all of them just yet.

I know only that people respond to the sounds Billy Strings and his bandmates make; the mandolin still chops, the bass throbs, the harmonies are high and lonesome, and the heartbeat of the music goes on.

Setlist for Billy Strings live at Thompson’s Point, July 28, 2023:

Set 1 – *Drifting With the Tide; New Camptown Races; Taking Water; Running the Route; Dig a Little Deeper in the Well; Bound to Ride; Red Daisy; The Old Mountaineer; Bringing Mary Home; Old Train; Leaders; Southern Flavor; Everything’s the Same; Whiskey River; Stay All Night*

Set 2 – *Little Sadie; Pretty Daughter; The Fire on My Tongue; Drifter’s Escape; Enough to Leave; Hollow Heart; In The Morning Light; Dusty Miller; The Lonesome River; Running; Hide & Seek; Ride Me High; Encore - Blue Mule*

– Jeff Tripp

BMAM BLUEGRASS JAM NEWS

There are now 3 BMAM Bluegrass Jams, and they'll all be starting up soon.

EASTERN (BREWER) JAMS

The BMAM-sponsored Eastern Jam will be held in Brewer, at the Brewer Grange, on the first Sundays of the month, starting Oct. 2, thanks to some new volunteers. Dale Canning headed this jam up for several years, doing a wonderful job, but Dale is moving south this year. We're awfully glad some new folks, including Larry Corbet, have stepped up!

This jam will run from 12:00 to 5:00.

The Brewer Grange will hold their own (non-BMAM) jam on 3rd Sundays of the month – same time, same place.

The Brewer Grange has two floors, so there's room for two levels of pickers; pickers are, of course, welcome to try both levels and find out what works best for them.

Refreshments are offered for sale by the grange.

SOUTHERN (PORTLAND AREA) JAM

The BMAM-sponsored Southern Jam will resume Sunday, October 8, at 1:00 PM at a brand new location – the First Parish Congregational Church, 116 Main St., Yarmouth.

There'll be a jam there the second Sunday of every month, October through May. Admission is \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members.

FARMINGTON JAM

This will be the second year for the Farmington Jam, the first year as an official BMAM-sponsored Jam. The jam is co-sponsored by the Farmington Recreation Department, and the Jam is held at the Farmington Community Center, 127 Middle St., Farmington. Time is 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

Admission is free, since the facilities are being donated. There are 4 different spaces we can use there, so it's a good jam for multi-levels of pickers.

Volunteers are welcome! To volunteer or for more information, contact Stan – stankeachbluegrass76@gmail.com; or text me at 207-485-0298.



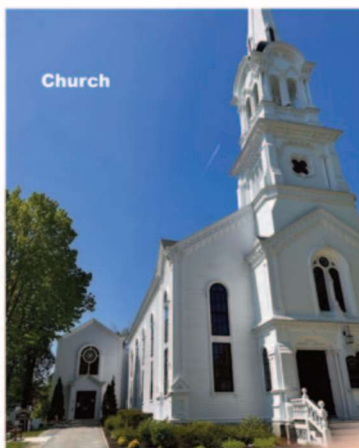
- BANDS & FANS -

WANT TO INCLUDE YOUR NEWS IN OUR NEWSLETTER?

Don't delay!

Submit your information today and beat the next deadline.

SEND YOUR INFO TO:
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BMAM SOUTHERN JAM

New venue:
The First Parish
Congregational Church
of Yarmouth, 116 Main
St., Yarmouth

JAM CALENDAR

- OCT. 8 - 1 to 4
- Nov. 12 - 1 to 4
- Dec. 10 - 1 to 4
- Jan. 14 - 1 to 4
- Feb. 11 - 1 to 4
- Mar, 10 - 1 to 4
- April 14 - 1 to 4

Always the 2nd
Sun. of the mo.

2 rooms to accommodate
all levels of jammers

Parking on church space
is limited, but there is
ample on-street parking.

Cancellations due to
weather, etc., will be
posted on the BMAM
Facebook page.

Volunteers: We're looking for folks to help with these tasks: set-up & breakdown; taking & recording admission contributions; membership sign-ups; refreshment table set-up; raffles, door prizes.

For more info, or to sign up: Bob Bergesch
rbergesch@gmail.com, or text: 207-831-8908



presents



ROCK HEARTS



Oct 21, 2023

Saturday 7:00 pm

Dover-Foxcroft, Maine

Tickets \$16-\$18

Bonus!
 BMAM
 JAM &
 Dinner at
 Mill Cafe

mainebluegrass.org

Center Theatre for the Performing Arts
 20 E. Main St. Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
www.centertheatre.org
 207.564.8943





ROCK HEARTS at
Center Theatre for the Performing Arts
20 E. Main St, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
www.centertheatre.org
207.564.8943 info@centertheatre.org

In 2022, the Rock Hearts played a sold-out show at the Center Theatre. The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine and the theatre are partnering to bring them back on October 21, 2023 at 7 pm.

Reserved seating is available. Advanced tickets are \$16, at the door for \$18. Advanced premium seating (first 2 rows – center) is available for \$18. Contact the Center Theatre for advanced tickets and info. Doors open at 6 pm.

RESTAURANTS & OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

Dover-Foxcroft and the surrounding areas offer lots of options for restaurants and overnight accommodations, including bed & breakfasts, as well as airbnb. You can find lots of information about options on the Piscataquis County website or by calling.

Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce
1033 South St.
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
info@piscataquischamber.com
www.piscataquischamber.com
(207)564-7533

Exclusive for Bluegrass Music Association of Maine (BMAM) members!

Win a basket of bluegrass goodies during intermission. You can become a member by going to the BMAM website, at a festival booth, or at the show.

Bluegrass Music Association of Maine
PO Box 9, Dexter, ME 04930
info@mainebluegrass.org
www.mainebluegrass.org

BMAM JAM & DINNER at the MILL CAFE

The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine is pleased to announce our partnering with the Mill Café in Dover-Foxcroft to provide a BMAM bluegrass jam prior to the Rock Hearts show. The café is located diagonally across the street from the Theatre. The jam event will be from 1 – 4 pm and is open to the public. The Mill Café will also offer a dinner at 5 pm, reservations required and can be made on the café website or by calling.

Located upstairs at the Mill Café, is the Mill Inn offers several rooms available if you wish to stay over. Reserve your stay early.

The Mill Cafe
5 West Main Street
Dover-Foxcroft ME 04426
thedmillcafe@gmail.com
www.dfmillcafe.com
(207)564-7966

BUILDING A STRONGER, MORE VIBRANT FUTURE FOR BMAM

FOR THE LOVE OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC!

PLAY IT FORWARD

SPONSOR A MEMBER TODAY!

WWW.MAINEBLUEGRASS.ORG

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.



**Our grass is blue.
How about you?**

www.mainebluegrass.org



272 Lewiston Road, Mechanic Falls, Me 04256
 TO SCHEDULE A TOUR CALL 207-795-1119

Bluegrass Radio Shows in Maine

BELFAST, MAINE
ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL
 WBFY-100.9 FM

(Belfast Community Radio)
 AND ALSO

www.belfastcommunityradio.org

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

BLUEHILL, MAINE

BRONZEWOUND

WERU-89.9 FM (Blue Hill)

AND ALSO www.weru.org

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

BRUNSWICK, MAINE

MAMA'S MIDCOAST BLUEGRASS

WBOR-91.9 FM Bowdoin College Radio AND

ALSO www.wbor.org

- HOST: Mama Beth
 Sunday 7 - 9 PM

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

PORTLAND, MAINE

HARDLY STRICTLY

WMPG-90.9 FM (Portland)

AND ALSO www.wmpg.org

Bluegrass Americana, Roots Music

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

Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

FARMINGTON BLUEGRASS JAM

FREE to the public.
 4th Sunday
 of the month*



Oct. 22; Nov. 26;
 Dec. TBA; Jan. 28;
 Feb. 25; Mar. 24;
 April. 28; May 26

1:00 to 4:00 PM. Several rooms,
 all levels welcome. Beginners workshops

Farmington Community Center
127 Middle St., Farmington

Volunteers welcome to help with set-up, breakdown,
 cleanup; BMAM table, flyer distribution, etc. For more info,
 or to volunteer: text Stan Keach at 207-485-0298, or email
stankeachbluegrass76@gmail.com, or text



BMAM OFFICERS

President: Beth Revels
 brevels@mainebluegrass.org

Vice President: Joe Kennedy
 jkennedy@mainebluegrass.org

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 plaramée@mainebluegrass.org

Treasurer: Nellie Kennedy
 nkennedy@mainebluegrass.org

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Board Chair: Vacant

Vice Chair: Vacant

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**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 a 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

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 an additional cost and must be sent by the 5th of the month. Payments must accompany ads when they are submitted.

SEND ALL ADVERTISING TO:

Bluegrass Express
 Re: Advertising
 PO Box 9
 Dexter, Maine 04930

The Bluegrass Express is...

a quarterly publication of the Newsletter Committee.

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

Please email any news, photos, article information, or anything you find pertaining to Bluegrass in Maine to skeach@mainebluegrass.com or mail 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



www.MaineBluegrass.org

Your source for Bluegrass information!!!

*Please check your membership status!
 Thanks!*



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

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: _____
