



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 39, Number 8
Celebrating 38 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.Fiddlers.org

August 2011
Next Jam: **August 7**



President's Message

by Richard Brooks

It was a perfect day on July 3 to have our jam at the beautiful San Jose Rose Garden Park. The turnout was fantastic. Lisa Fernandez, a reporter at the

Mercury News, wrote an article about the upcoming jam and it really helped to bring out the local community.

I was delighted to see friends from as far away as Santa Cruz, Berkeley, and San Francisco. Both bluegrass and old-time music were well represented. I enjoyed playing "bluegrass swing" with Barbara Ann Barnett (accordion), Dave Magram (banjo), and Steve Swan (guitar).

San Jose Mercury News and NBC Television

The San Jose Mercury News and NBC television were both at our July jam. The result is a wonderful article written by John Boudreau (www.mercurynews.com/ci_18403767). SCVFA trustee Charlotte Prater was quoted several times. KNTV (Channel 11 / NBC) also had a short piece about the jam at the end of their 5:00 news.

August 7 in the Rose Garden Park

On August 7, we will be in the Rose Garden Park again. Tell all your friends about it. It's free for everyone since we don't pay rent. Come early to save some benches in the shade. Bring your lunch and don't forget to bring suntan lotion and water.

No More Amazon Commissions

Amazon has discontinued its Associates program because they objected to having to collect state taxes for online purchases. We were being paid a small commission on these purchases made through the link on our website. Many thanks for all who participated. It helped us a lot.

Two "Playouts" Enjoyed by Seniors

Paul Clarke, our playout chairman, deserves our appreciation for organizing two playouts in June. He lined up the musicians and arranged the set lists for both events. Playing for the community is rewarding and part of our mission. See Paul if you want to participate.



Richard Brooks photo

Jean Avram (far right) teaches Beginners Circle, with Robin Wu (2nd from right) and family on 7-3-2011.

On June 24, John Durbin (guitar), Warren Campbell (guitar, fiddle), Paul Clarke (banjo), Dave Wunsch (harmonica) and I (fiddle) played at the Cypress Senior Center in San Jose. (See photo on p.2)

On June 26, Paul and Lee Clarke, Phil and Anne Pflager, Warren Campbell, Dave Wunsch and I played at the Sunny View Retirement Community in Cupertino. (See photo on p.3)

Impromptu Beginners Circle

As you can see from the above photo, Jean Avram had her hands full teaching our beginners circle, with Robin Wu and her family. Many thanks for Jean's dedication.

Last Youth Fiddle Contest?

The 2011 Youth Fiddle Contest will be the 10th organized by Pete and Dinah Showman. If these are to continue, we need a couple of volunteers to take over the planning and organization. If you want us to have more contests, please offer to help.

- Richard Brooks

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The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. The first membership in a household includes the *Fiddler's Rag*; additional members sharing the newsletter are steeply discounted. To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join.

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 Youth Fiddle Contest Pete Showman
 Publicity Shared
 Calendar Pete Showman
 Jam MC Evelyn McCuiston

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Seat 1: Pete Showman Seat 2: Gorden Gibson
 Seat 3: Paul Clarke Seat 4: Charlotte Prater
 Seat 5: Dave Williams Seat 6: Steve Joynes


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Free Personal Ads

We plan to offer space again for personal music-related ads for members (buy/sell, services, etc.), on a space-available basis. Size is limited to 3 or 4 lines (by about this wide); text may be edited to fit. Ads can run up to 3 months. Send your text & dates to [newsletter at scvfa.org](mailto:newsletter@scvfa.org). Our deadline is the 15th.



Richard Brooks, John Durbin, Warren Campbell, Paul Clarke and Dave Wunsch performed at San Jose's Cypress Senior Center on July 24.



Tom Mitchell (see article on p.5) jams on guitar with Lee Birch (fiddle, left), Sam Morocco (bass) and Jean Avram (fiddle) at the July 3rd jam in the park.

Richard Brooks photo

SCVFA Happenings

Going, going

We still have the black music stand that someone left at the March jam. If it's yours, see Richard Brooks or Pete Showman. We may soon forget it's not ours.

Youth Fiddle Program

As you may know, for several years we have been without a volunteer to coordinate our youth activities (currently the KidFiddle workshops and the Youth Fiddle Contest). Also, attendance at the last two KidFiddle workshops was very low – two students in March, and only one in April.

The Trustees recently decided not to offer our usual October KidFiddle workshop this year, and may decide to suspend the program indefinitely unless we can find people to take on maintaining the contact list and coordinating the workshops, and better understand how to keep young fiddlers interested.

Please let us know if you want these youth activities to continue, what you think we can do to “pump it up,” and especially how you can help make it happen.

Youth Fiddle Contest in November

We do plan to conduct our 10th fiddle contest at the November 6th jam, now for ages 17 and under. Details will be on the website shortly, at fiddlers.org/contest. If you know young fiddlers, encourage them to sign up and prepare a couple of tunes.

Trustee Meeting, July 2011

Dinah Showman, Secretary

The SCVFA Trustees met on July 24 and

- Raised the upper age limit for free admission to jams to include age 17.
- Heard a report from the committee set up to choose sound equipment to replace our stolen equipment, confirmed the goals, and authorized the committee to pick a configuration and suitable components while economizing where possible, and to purchase the sound equipment as needed, for the Oct. jam.
- Discussed ways to get more families and children to participate in SCVFA. A questionnaire about what people like (or don't), and our future, is planned.
- Discussed low participation in our KidFiddle program; decided not to hold one in October 2011. We will seek ideas for more youth participation.
- Considered ways of getting more volunteer help with youth activities and in general.
- Heard reports about recent and upcoming playouts (Saratoga Community Center in August), Bylaws completion and publication, and government forms Richard filed in July (annual filings).
- Tentatively set September 18 as next meeting date. Any SCVFA member is welcome to attend; contact Richard (president at scvfa.org) for information.

Looking for Volunteers

You may get a call from one of our board members asking if you can help SCVFA. There are many ways to help that involve only occasional commitments. Please say “yes” if you can.



Lee Clarke, Phil and Anne Pflager, Richard Brooks, Warren Campbell and Paul Clarke entertained at Sunny View Manor July 26.



3-year-old Azatlan works up a tune at the July jam at the Rose Garden

Richard Brooks photo

The San Francisco Free Folk Festival

Pete Showman

Every year in June the San Francisco Folk Music Club organizes the San Francisco Free Folk Festival or SFFFF (see www.sffolkfest.org). This is usually held in a middle school in S.F., and is pretty low-key.

Dinah and I enjoy it, and as usual this year we saw a good many SCVFA members and friends there – including SCVFA President Richard Brooks. Several of our members have also led workshops at the festival over the years – as have well-known musicians such as Laurie Lewis.

The festival always runs on a Saturday and Sunday, from noon to 10 pm. This year's festival was held June 25th and 26th at Presidio Middle School.

Decisions, Decisions!

A half-dozen music and dance workshops are scheduled every hour from noon to 6 pm or so, and series of short performances are offered in two or three venues all afternoon as well.

The workshops usually include instrument technique (introductory and/or more advanced, sometimes with loaner instruments provided), various kinds of tunes and songs, singing technique and many dance styles – and basically whatever anyone is willing to teach.

In the evening featured performers continue on the main stage, while open dances are held in the gymnasium in a variety of styles. Often Saturday has an international folk dance, followed by a ballroom / swing dance. Sunday is usually a contra and square dance, with music provided by participants from Saturday's contra dance band workshop and rehearsal.

The band I'm in, **Večernica** (*Veh-CHAIR-nit-za*, which means "Evening Star" in Serbo-Croatian) often plays for the international folk dance on Saturday. (Five of our eight musicians are also SCVFA members: leader Dave Bogdanoff, Dave Barton, Gary Breitbard, Jena Rauti and me.) Our repertoire includes a variety of tunes from Russia, Scandinavia, the British Isles, Bulgaria, the Balkans, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Canada and Mexico. And, of course, the U.S.A. You can learn more about the band at www.folkdanceband.com.

Come on up and give it a try next year! And if you'd like to teach a workshop I'm sure you'd be welcome.

Oatmeal Crunchies – Dinah Showman

(By special request.) From *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, September 1968. I've made this many times and they're easy and reliable and good.

1 cup sifted all-purpose flour	½ cup shortening
½ cup granulated sugar	1 egg
½ tsp baking powder	¼ tsp vanilla
½ tsp baking soda	¾ cup rolled oats
¼ tsp salt	¼ cup chopped walnuts
½ cup brown sugar	

Sift together flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, soda, and salt. Add brown sugar, shortening, egg, and vanilla; beat well. Stir in rolled oats and walnuts. Form dough into small (1") balls. Dip tops in a little additional granulated sugar. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in moderate oven (375°) for 10 to 12 minutes. Makes about 3½ dozen cookies.

I use Crisco shortening, old fashioned oats (not quick-cooking) and a little extra walnuts. Don't overcook!



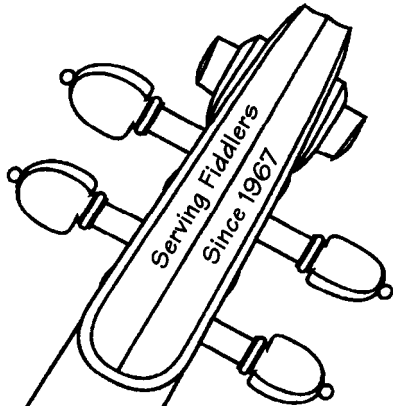
Dinah Showman photo

The Večernica International Folk Dance Orchestra plays for a dance at the 2011 Free Folk Festival, with Meryl Lee Corcoran (clarinet), Pete Showman (fiddle/mandolin), leader Dave Bogdanoff (guitar/bass/drum), Ned Gault (autoharp/vocals), Jena Rauti (vocals/accordion) & Gary Breitbard (accordion/vocals).

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Recording Some Bay Area Players

Joe Weed: *In the Studio* #43

Mandolinist Paul Indman called me recently about a project he wanted to do. “Tom Mitchell is a dear old friend, and he has enjoyed playing and singing most of his very long life. I’d like to bring him to the studio to document his great performing.”

So last Sunday morning, six musicians showed up to begin the project: Paul on mandolin and Tom on guitar; Susannah Wedgewood on guitar; Bay Area stalwart Markie Sanders on bass; Dave Magram, well-known for his great banjo and pedal steel work as well as for his organizational talents, and dobro player Dave McAnelly. Gail Reese will join us at later sessions to add her fiddling.

While some of the players had recorded before, for many of them this was a new experience. Our challenge was to find the best way to record them. We needed to meet several criteria, some of which conflict with each other. They include:

- A set-up that facilitates good performances from all players
- A set-up that sounds good
- A set-up that allows some after-the-fact editing to fix anything that might need a bit more polish.

We placed Tom in a room where he could play his guitar and sing concurrently, as he has done all his life. Most studio musicians today record instruments and vocals separately, but this can be disconcerting for somebody who isn’t accustomed to it. Tom was able to watch the other musicians in the studio through a large sound-proof window as they all played together, and he listened to them using headphones, as they did to him.

In the studio, we recorded our rhythm section of bass (Markie), guitar (Susannah), and mandolin (Paul). Keeping Tom’s vocals out of that room (other than via headphones) meant that they wouldn’t bleed into the other microphones, and if we wanted to

have him re-record any of his singing, there wouldn’t be ghosts of previous takes on the other instruments’ tracks.

In yet another room, out of sight but well connected with headphones and microphones, we placed either Dave Magram (banjo) or Dave McAnelly (Dobro), recording whichever one was more important to each tune. We’ll add the other at later sessions, along with Gail’s fiddle and any harmony vocals.

Having people sit in separate rooms may seem a bit odd when they’re “just trying to play music,” but a bit of explanation clears it up.

If everybody records while playing together in one room, then the weakest link can spoil a take. If somebody plays a bad chord or sings the wrong words, then the group has to start over and hope for the best. And if every person’s voice and instrument are “live” in the room, then all the microphones pick up sound from all the sources. Editing or re-doing trouble spots becomes difficult or impossible. So using the isolation method allows the musicians to enjoy the live feel of playing together, while preserving acoustical separation between several of the instruments and voices.

When Paul left the studio Sunday night, he had several takes of each of six tunes to listen to at home. Tom had played and sung well, he’d had a great time in the studio, and he had just participated in an activity that has changed technically in amazing, un-foreseen ways during his 87 years.

Joe Weed records acoustic music at his Highland Studios near Los Gatos, California. He has released six albums of his own, produced many projects for independent artists and labels, and does sound tracks for film, TV and museums. He recently produced “Pa’s Fiddle,” a collection of 19th-century American music played by “Pa” Charles Ingalls. You can reach Joe at (408) 353-3353, by email at joe@highlandpublishing.com or by visiting joeweel.com.