



Ashley Luna With Her Guitar

Ashley Luna (her father is in the background) really wowed the folks at the February HTMA meeting with her singing and lively guitar playing. To quote Lou Beasley, who took the picture, "This young lady can belt out a song!" HTMA hopes to encourage more young people to join us both in jams and in performing. Way to go, Ashley!

Note from the Editor

Our newsletter is an important part of our organization, and I invite every member to contribute ideas and/or articles any time you want to do so. You can reach me at sylvia.s.williams@pobox.com or 256-728-2359 or 1334 Columbus City Road, Scottsboro, AL 35769. I hope to hear from you soon.

A special thanks to all of you who have helped so much while I've been ill and recovering from surgery!



The Huntsville Traditional Music Association meets on the third Sunday of each month. Our next meeting is on:
Sunday, March 16th, 2:00 - 4:30 PM
In the Huntsville Public Library Auditorium
915 Monroe Street, Huntsville, AL

Inside this Issue:

- Page 2:** HTMA President's Notes
- Page 3-4:** HTMA Nursing Home Gigs
- Page 5:** Notes from the Berry Patch
- Page 6:** Mr. Bill's Gigs; St. Patrick's Day Coffee House - Members To Perform; Calendar of Events for March; HTMA Officers and Committees
- Page 7:** February 08 Seminar on Galax Style Dulcimer and Dulcimer Playing
- Page 8:** The Madison County Ramblers: Really Good Bluegrass At The February Coffee House



HTMA President's Notes

March 2008

Dear Friends,

I'm looking forward to our March 13th Saint Patrick's Day coffeehouse. This will be the first coffeehouse this year featuring members performing, and I think that offering our members an outlet to perform their music is one of the keystones that make HTMA membership valuable to members. The performance committee is operating under deliberately loose guidelines, but those guidelines suggest that members perform in at least a quarter of our productions. That was a little repetitive fifteen years ago, when there were only a dozen or so active members, but today that ratio may not offer enough performance opportunities for our members.

George Williams and I talked some about this last week. My fondest hope is that the 501.c.3 filing to establish HTMA as a non-profit will open some doors for us, and let the association expand our performance schedule. I think our association membership and friends could easily support a weekly coffeehouse, but I've been wrong before. I'm thinking, though, that we could produce one or two open-mike coffeehouses each month, one booked to feature an HTMA member-performer, and one with an outside performer. In that system, the income from the open-mike and member performances could support more meaningful compensation for outside performers, and the open-mike gigs would bring people (artists and guests) in who might not otherwise give HTMA a try.

All this pre-supposes a fixed venue, so that long-suffering George Williams (and Steve McGehee) who have been hauling the HTMA sound system and lights to our performances, would just have to show up to run sound for a gig. Today the HTMA sound crew (you know who you are) come to each coffeehouse an hour or more early to set up the equipment, and then spend 40 minutes after the show breaking down the set and loading out. Add more time to load and unload the truck for George, who doesn't get nearly enough thanks, and he has committed over five hours to every two-hour coffeehouse. That's a situation we've lived with since I was running the sound ten years ago, and I think it's time for a change.

Please let me know what you think. How often would you each be interested in playing at, or attending an HTMA function? Are you interested in seeing, or playing at open mike gigs? How many of your friends might be interested? A stable venue could also support additional jam sessions, beyond the monthly meetings. How many members would like to come out for a non-meeting jam session once or twice a month? What other things should the association be thinking about if we decide to pursue a fixed venue? Please let me, and the rest of the board, know your thoughts about this exciting possibility. All of the HTMA officers and committee chairs volunteer for these positions to serve the interests of the membership as a whole. But we aren't mind readers - so pick up a pen, or load up your email program and write down your thoughts about the path you think we should take. HTMA really needs to be a participative democracy, and for that to happen we need your vote.

Happy St. Pete's Day!

Jerry LeCroy



A Group Of Nursing Home Gig Regulars

HTMA Nursing Home Gigs

Bill McCampbell

It is a sure bet that nobody aspires to live in a nursing home or assisted living. Actually neither fits into one's concept of "there's no place like home." It is therefore strange, I suppose, that some of our group would be so passionate about spending time at one or more of them two to four times a month.

Scene one. She is about forty and fills a wheel chair to the extreme.

Obviously not very bright. She keeps interrupting music-makers by yelling, "Why don't you go home." "What are you doing here?" Someone yells, "Why don't you shut up?" Everybody hates her. An employee finally comes and pushes her down the hall. No one remembers her ever having had a family visitor, or anyone who came especially to visit her. She is simply warehoused and forgotten, like so many who inhabit the nursing homes.

The handsome matronly woman that anyone could love has a daughter living thirty miles away who comes over once a month to take care of the financial details, spends maybe five minutes with her mother, and leaves.

An elderly man sits at a corner table and every few minutes calls out, "Mary, come and take me home;" no response from anyone.

A little lady calls for water every few minutes. She is just wanting someone to notice her.

Several sit along the walls of the long

hallway looking ahead. They do not know or perhaps not care that a group is in the dining room playing to an audience of six. Most likely the only notice they have had of it, if any, is marked on a calendar somewhere on the wall. Maybe they can't even read anything that far way.

It is Saturday and the activities director does not work on the weekend. She may have asked someone to get the residents to the program. The one she asks, at two dollars above minimum wage, may be two hours behind in her work anyway. And number 27 has messed his bed an hour ago and is still lying in it. Number 55A, with her bed sores, has not been turned this afternoon. Why should that employee be concerned about a bunch of musicians in the dining room? The Activities Director does not have one employee under her direct supervision and can only ask. She also may have other duties, like bookkeeping, and may well consider that bingo twice a week is sufficient for activities. There are some notable exceptions, but most will not return a call to someone offering to come and entertain the residents.

Even in the best of assisted living facilities, such as the one I lived in for a while, one's day goes from shower to TV, to getting dressed, to going down for breakfast, to TV, to laundry, to coffee, to group bible study, to pills, to the dining room for lunch, --get the picture?

At an upscale assisted living facility, the activities may be better, but still it is a fact that most of the residents resent having to be there. Mrs. Blank gave her son power of attorney, whereupon he promptly put her there against her will. She has had to spend her life savings down to \$2000 to satisfy Medicaid and everything she draws from Social Security but thirty dollars goes to the nursing home. She joins her lady friends (who outnumber men five or six to one) in the dining room between meals hours over coffee, and they talk about their pills and pains. Why not? Don't we all talk about what concerns us most?

At one end, you may be sharing one hundred square feet with a stranger. At the other end you may have as much as four

hundred square feet, with a small refrigerator and your own microwave oven. I know nobody relishes the thought of being with nobody but, for instance children, all day long. Being with even wonderful people like electrical engineers continuously does not sound exciting either. Being with nobody but old, disabled people continuously, even if you are one, can be boring.

It all boils down to this: these people need a break. And that is what we try to give them.

Now for the other face of the coin.

How can it be that some of our HTMA and others are so passionate about our residence home visits? That is, even when some who try it can not endure it? Why will one go to Regency Health Care, giving up a three or four hours of a Saturday afternoon, and drive at least eighty miles to do what we do? Maybe I can understand, or at least try.

Well, for one thing, we enjoy having another time together making music. We get to be a bit like family. Then we have the most non-critical, appreciative audiences you can imagine. If you have never experienced it, you can have no concept of the good feeling (I don't know a better way to say it) you can get from seeing a feeble person whom you did not know was aware of anything, smiling and patting his foot - or you happen to know a hymn that the elderly one has longed to hear for so long and he or she sings along.

In that context, maybe we're selfish. At least we know that we are doing it partly because we get satisfaction from it. We learn to laugh when the front door alarm sounds at about the sound level of a freight train horn in the middle of our carefully prepared song, or when a resident tries to join the band--things like that. I feel guilty about it sometimes, but I occasionally try out a new song I'm learning on nursing home residents because they will enjoy almost anything you throw at them. Just smile and make a joyful noise. You look out over your audience and see no expression of enthusiasm and then they hug you and beg you to come back. It is just something you learn about older people. They are not inclined to express their feelings openly.

And then there are occasionally ones like

Tijuana, a young woman stroke victim, who welcomes us so warmly, jokes, and sometimes sings with us. We have seen her progress from an almost helpless wheelchair case to where she now calls bingo and does other duties. You can't imagine how that makes you feel.

I have given you a bit of both sides, the pros and the cons of what we do. All in all, I pick the pros. If someone should come forth and offer to take over my little tasks, I'd just simply say "No, but thanks."

(Editor's Note: Bill schedules all our HTMA nursing home gigs, and is our "Fearless Leader" at all of the gigs. Please join us if you feel so inclined. The schedule for each month appears in the current newsletter and on our web site, www.huntsvillefolk.org. Just show up, and you will be welcomed both by the HTMA nursing home crew and by the residents who are our audience.)



Notes From The Berry Patch

I have had many requests from world-famous philosophers to publicly share my experiences with the coupling-pole. (In the sanctified arena of academia my riding of the coupling-pole is well known, and has been for some time.) Just today, Dr. Augustus Quattlebaum, University of Madrid, again called, urging me to write of my experience with this means of transportation. Dr. Quattlebaum, in his urging, resorted to the use of both shame and flattery, saying, “Joe, you have rare opportunity to share an important part of history with others. Should you fail, it will forever be lost to the human race. Share, my eminent scholar, share.”

His words have over-powered my sense of extreme modesty. In the interest of preserving for future generations, I will attempt, in as few words as an important subject allow, telling you of an often over-looked means of human transportation. (In the telling, I expressly waive all proprietary rights; scholars and laypersons alike may quote me without permission, but with complete comfort of truth and correctness. Dr. Quattlebaum’s urging words to me were most persuasive.) The introduction completed, now the subject: (That is the manner in which men of letters and science write.)

I was introduced to the coupling-pole at an early age by no less an authority than my maternal grandfather (“Papa”). “Son,” he said, pointing to that long, horizontal pole that connected the rear wagon wheels to the front wagon wheels, “this is a coupling pole. It plays an important part in making the wagon so useful.” Continuing his splendid instruction, Papa added, “These back wheels

can be slid backwards on this pole, making the wagon ‘long-coupled,’ or the back wheels may be slid forward, making the wagon ‘short-coupled.’ A short-coupled wagon can be turned in a tighter circle. Now you remember that, often in life we need to turn in a tight circle.” (Papa was a great teacher.)

When cotton-picking time came around, the wagon wheels would be short-coupled to accommodate the short cotton-bed with its high sideboards. Thus a few feet of the coupling-pole would extend out, to the rear of the wagon. That few feet of extended pole provided a wonderful seat for riding by barefoot boys, like me.

Of greater importance to the writer, that mule-powered, cotton wagon went to the cotton gin located in the small town five miles south of Papa’s house.

Riding the coupling-pole to town, behind a load of un-ginned cotton, was both educational and exciting. The load was heavy and the mules, going away from their barn, were slow. A boy on the coupling-pole had opportunity to see all that was along the way. He had time to think of the envy that would be generated when the town-boys saw him riding that coupling pole, wishing they, too, had a chance to ride.

I say, without fear of serious contradiction, that most of the world’s great storytellers and thinkers got the better part of their education riding on a coupling-pole. Only my extreme modesty has, thus far, kept me from so admitting. Should I, in the next life, have the privilege of knowing Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, I shall not be the least surprised to hear them say the bulk of their knowledge and wisdom was gained while riding on a coupling-pole. In a word, it is a great way to travel. I greatly pity anyone that lives in a fancy house without first having ridden the coupling-pole of a cotton wagon; their life is simply incomplete.

If you have benefited from my story, thank Dr. Quattlebaum for helping me overcome my modesty and Papa for sharing his wisdom about turning the tight circles of life.

Joe M. Berry

Mr. Bill's Gigs

March 2008 Nursing Home Gigs
Nursing Home Gigs are on Saturdays at 3:00 pm unless otherwise noted.

MARCH 1 3:00
MORNINGSIDE OF MADISON
49 Hughes Road MADISON
35758

MARCH 15 **NOTE: 3:15 PM**
HEARTHSTONE ASSISTED LIVING
8020 Benaroya Lane Huntsville 35802

MARCH 29 **NOTE: 3:15 PM**
REGENCY
2004 Max Luther Dr. Huntsville 35810

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Bill McCampbell at 882-2400 or mccampbellwm@bellsouth.net



St. Patrick's Day Coffee House Members To Perform

The March coffee house will be Thursday, March 13, in the Old Church at Burritt On The Mountain. Beginning at 7:00 PM, it will feature performances of songs Irish, Scots, and/or British by HTMA members. This is our annual St. Patrick's Day Coffee House, and is always a rollicking and enjoyable experience. Pat Long has graciously taken charge of the scheduling and producing for this coffee house, and if you would like to perform, you may contact Pat by email at plong@hiwaay.net or by phone at 539-7211.

Calendar of Events for March

March 8 - 1:00 PM - Jam session at Earlyworks Museum,, downtown Huntsville

March 13 - March Coffee House - 7:00 PM
Annual Members' Performance Coffee House featuring Irish, Scots, and old English songs. The Old Church at Burritt on the Mountain. Free; donations accepted.

March 16 - 2:00 PM - March Meeting

HTMA Officers & Committees

President: Jerry LeCroy 880-6234
jelecroy@knology.net

Vice President: Jim England
jengland@knology.net

Secretary/Treasurer: Pat Long 539-7211
plong@hiwaay.net

Publicity and Outreach Committee:
Chair: Sue Charles 852-5243
scharles32@mchsi.com
Lou Beasley 859-5016
lrbeasley@mchsi.com

Public Service Chair / Pres. Emeritus:
Bill McCampbell 882-2400
mccampbellwm@bellsouth.net

Performance Committee:
Co-chairs: Steve McGehee 858-2032
catwithnotail69@aol.com
and Lou Beasley 859-5016
lrbeasley@mchsi.com
Jerry Lecroy

Newsletter Editor: Sylvia Williams 728-2359
sylvia.s.williams@pobox.com

Operations Committee:
Chair: George Williams 728-2359
george.p.williams@pobox.com
Jerry LeCroy
Steve McGehee

February 08 Seminar on Galax Style Dulcimer and Dulcimer Playing

Lou Beasley

Sunday, 17 Feb, was another very successful music seminar preceding the regular meeting and jam session. The featured musician was Terry Burcham of Huntsville.



Terry was born and raised near the small town of Galax, VA, in a family that included many musicians. As most traditional musicians know, Galax is known far and wide as the birthplace of mountain music. Among the regular and well known acoustical instruments is the Galax Style Dulcimer and dulcimer playing.

Physically, the Galax Dulcimer is somewhat different from the more familiar mountain or lap dulcimer. The Galax Dulcimer is oval shaped, and typically has a deeper body with a false back which permits better volume. A couple more differences include the four strings that are tuned to the same note (generally D, thus permits playing in either the key of D or G without capo or re-tuning), and frets for the first two strings only. The playing style for the Galax Dulcimer is also much different. The melody strings are played with a “noter”, which is typically a short wooden dowel or flat piece of wood (Terry uses a stick from a Dove ice cream bar). And the last major

difference is that the Galax Dulcimer is strummed with a quill, generally from a turkey feather. Terry also demonstrated how to make a quill from a turkey feather. Jim England passed out some turkey feathers for those who wanted one.

Terry demonstrated the Galax playing technique by playing several well known tunes which included *Simple Gifts*, *Mississippi Sawyer*, *John Henry*, *Old Joe Clark*, and a couple of lesser known pieces: *Silly Bill*, *Shine*, and played and sang what was known as George Washington’s favorite song *Good Old Colony Days*. Terry’s playing was delightful and was enjoyed by a good seminar crowd of 20-25 people. Many of the dulcimer players, including several from Marshall, Morgan and Limestone County Dulcimer Clubs, said they were so impressed with the unique sound and playing style that they just **had** to purchase a Galax Dulcimer!

HTMA would like to thank Terry for his outstanding presentation. And I would like to thank Terry for permitting me to play guitar for his Galax Dulcimer Seminar.

The Madison County Ramblers: Really Good Bluegrass At The February Coffee House

Steve McGehee



Kelly and Bob Youman, accompanied by Leilani Hammock and Mark Jones, opened for the Ramblers and gave the audience a set of very enjoyable music.



Then the Ramblers came on and gave the audience the good old fashioned bluegrass they are famous for, playing some of my favorites: Flatt and Scruggs' *Working On The Road* and Bill Monroe's *Stand On The Rock Where Moses Stood*. Clayton Burrough: banjo/flat pick guitar; *JC Wilson: upright bass; Jackie Wilson: dobro; *Randal Caldwell: mandolin; and *Doyle Kelly: guitar (* - all of these guys sing great bluegrass harmony) also brought us a few original songs, the liveliest of which was the foot stomping *Ramblers' Shuffle*.

Halfway through the concert, they called up a young man in an Auburn tee shirt, who took Clayton's banjo and gave Clayton a guitar. His

name was Mike Broadway. They all joined in, following the banjo's lead on the most appropriate song of the evening, *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*, with light rain and fog so thick outside you could hardly see the old Burritt church from the parking lot. He played so well, yet so effortlessly. Clayton, a great banjo picker himself, stunned the crowd by flat picking some outstanding lead on the guitar on the song *Who Will Sing For Me*.

Another neat surprise was when they called up Trish Wilson to buck dance to *Soldiers Joy*. That really was a hoot! Everybody enjoyed that.

It is typical of the Ramblers to give other performers a featured place in their performance. No wonder they are one of our favorite groups to perform at our coffee houses.

When the Madison County Ramblers finally closed out with *Martha White's Flour*, it made me really proud to be back home. if you get far enough away...good bluegrass is kinda hard to find.

For more information on all HTMA meetings, concerts, coffeehouses, and other events, visit our website at

www.huntsvillefolk.org