



EAST BAY BANJO CLUB

SINCE 1963



September/October 2015

Membership Newsletter

Editor: Karen Hefter

Volume 10 Issue 5

Upcoming Play Out Schedule

October 27th

Military Wives Club
Zio Fraedo, Pleasant Hill
1:00pm - 2:00 pm

October 28th

Wear a Halloween costume!

December 8th

EBBC Holiday Party/Election
El Tapatio Restaurant
Concord
5:30 pm

December 9th

Kaiser Permanente
Castlewood Country Club
Pleasanton
1:15pm - 2:15 pm

December 23rd

No meeting at The Greenery

December 30th

No meeting at The Greenery



East Bay Banjo Club Meets
Every Wednesday
7:00 pm– 9:00 pm
The Greenery Restaurant
1551 Marchbanks Drive,
Walnut Creek, CA

Be sure to check our website,
www.eastbaybanjo.org,
for current event information and a
blog about past performances.

For bookings, Contact
Bob Ehrhorn, Booking Agent at
bobehrhorn@comcast.net
or
Call 707-731-0198

President's Message:

Sometimes it's hard to keep in mind that our East Bay Banjo Club is a club and not a band. The difference is that, as a club, we openly welcome any and all people interested in playing a banjo to join us, whereas bands accept only advanced players that meet a given level of playing expertise. So, where does one go if one wishes to learn to play a banjo? Well, that's where our club fits in - our club has happily maintained a banjo playing and learning environment for over 50 years. It has provided, and continues to provide, our world with many professional players. Of course, not everyone has the desire to play professionally and that's okay too - it's a lot of fun to learn to play the banjo, practice the basic chords with various strumming techniques, play along with the group, and share thoughts at our club meetings/practices.



The unsung hero of our club is our music director Betty David. Betty has not missed a meeting or ployout for years and she is the glue that holds us together. Many thanks to you, Betty, and keep it up for us!

Thanks to those that haul and setting up our sound system at practices and play-outs. It's a lot of work and is greatly appreciated by all.

I'd like to give a big welcome to our new members. It's so nice to see new smiling faces and more players enjoying the good times. Since we have started welcoming guitars and ukuleles into our club, we have entered into a wonderful new phase that is helping our club grow. With this of course, is the hope that some will migrate to the banjo or banjo-ukulele. Guitar players can easily migrate to the plectrum banjo by simply tuning their banjos the same as the first four strings of a guitar and playing guitar chords. Many professionals use guitar tuning on their banjos because they also play guitars.

I encourage club members, especially our new members, to review the past issues of our newsletters for playing tips and information that I have included in the president's messages. (Note - past newsletters can be found on the 'newsletters' tab of our website, www.eastbaybanjo.org). Remember that playing any instrument with a group requires all players to become part of the whole sound and only stand out if playing the lead melody or a solo.

Continued on page 5...



Lindsay Wildlife Museum Payout October 11, 2015

by: Karen Hefter
Photos by: Bob Nelson

The Club had a wonderful afternoon helping the Lindsay Wildlife Museum celebrate their 60th anniversary. The museum is an educational center and rehabilitation hospital for local California wildlife. We performed for an hour outside, under some beautiful trees. To celebrate the museum's history, we worked a number of animal related songs into the show list. Some featured animal songs were "Jungletown," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Under the Double Eagle," and "Alley Cat." Kit Nelson sang "Alley Cat" and Dina Melamed wore cat ears, held up a cat poster, and added all of the 'meows' needed for her favorite song.

We had a great turnout from club members. Our 18 fabulous performers were: Guy Black, Tom Brunetti, Betty David, Clyde Dedmon, Bob Ehrhorn, Don Granberg, Karen Hefter, Terry Horner, Garry Kerr, Chris Lardge, Annie Lem, Diane Malucelli, Bob Malucelli, Dina Melamed, Linda Myers, Phil Myers, Kit Nelson, and Larry Risner. This was Annie's first payout and we hope she joins us for many more in the future. Club member Bob Nelson was our photographer. We also had a few spouses and other supporters join us for this performance.

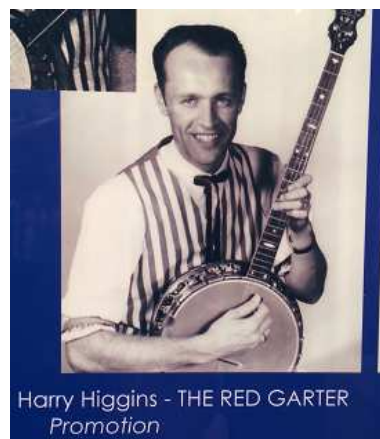


Lindsay Wildlife Museum Playout (Continued)



EBBC on the Road

EBBC Member Ardie Jarrett visited the American Banjo Museum in Oklahoma this month and she brought back a couple of photos of the exhibits of our own local Hall of Famers - Harry Higgins and Georgette Twain.



Letter to the East Bay Banjo Club From Georgette Twain

October 5, 2015

Hello and Hi and I want to thank every single one of you for the lovely card! Cee put it in my "show Biz" scrapbook. I enjoyed each and every thing that had been written. It was overwhelming to read all of your great wishes.

I'm trying to get well and it's a long road ahead, but we all have many of those. It was in 1966 that my dear mother saw a picture in the Contra Costa Times of a piano man and his dad on banjo - Red March on Banjo (Larry Risner would remember him). We went to hear them at a pizza place in Walnut Creek and Red told me about the EBBC club, so I joined! So, keep up the music and if anyone wants to write to me - great!

Love forever,

Georgette

Blast From The Past

Who do you recognize from this EBBC photo from 1963?



President's Message (Continued)

The banjo, when played as a rhythm instrument, is technically a stringed percussion instrument with harmonic pitch and care must be taken to play in the background to "support" the overall sound of the group.

All members should review the Procedures and By-Laws to see what the duties are for the various board positions. If a position is of interest to you, it may also be helpful to attend a board meeting and see how things work. Our club is a club "by the members, for the members" and the board members work together for the good of the entire club membership. All club members over 18 yrs of age should explore the possibility of joining the board – it's not a lot of work and new ideas are always welcome. A nominating committee has been formed to accept nominations for the board of directors election, which will be held on December 8th. Please let a member of the nominating committee know if you would like to seek a seat on the 2016 board as soon as possible, because we are a club and we must be open in expressing our personal intents during the nomination and election periods. It is important that anyone wishing to run for a seat on the board give notice in advance of the election, so that the voting club members have the opportunity to consider the voting options.

"Happy Banjoing"
Larry Risner
President

Halloween Costume Night

Be sure to wear your costume to The Greenery

Wednesday, October 28th!



EBBC Holiday Party and General Meeting/Election

Tuesday, December 8th at 5:30 pm
El Tapatio Restaurant, 4633 Clayton Road, Concord

Cost: EBBC members - club will pay for your meal if you **sign up by December 2nd.**
(sign up sheets will be at The Greenery during our Wednesday night meetings)
Non-members - \$12.00 per person **to be paid upon sign up** (club to pay tip and tax)

This event will also be our general election where we elect our board members for next year, so be sure to come and vote. (Note - you don't have to eat at the restaurant to vote).

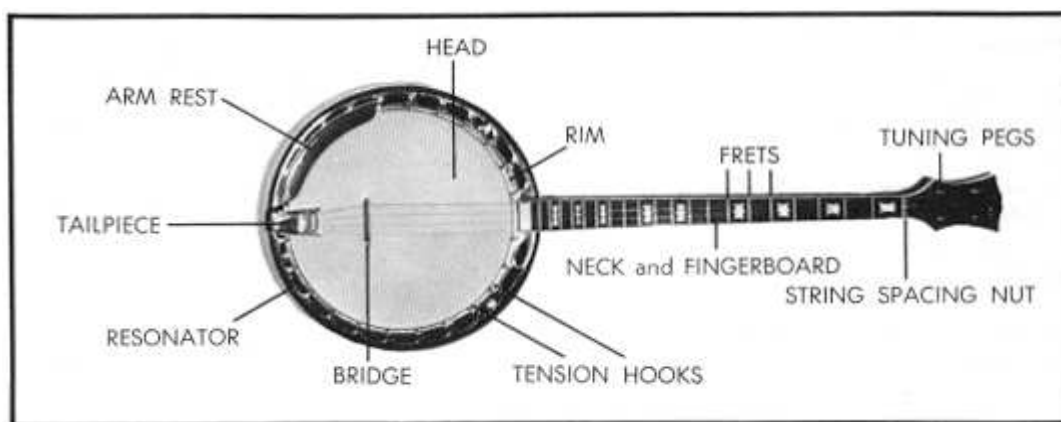
Preparing Your Banjo For Peak Performance

By Garry Kerr

With all of our performances, we all owe it to ourselves and our band to have our banjos polished and adjusted to perform their best. Here are some relatively simple things you can do that may help you improve the sound of your banjo:

How does a banjo work?

The graphic below names the parts of the banjo for reference. When an open string is plucked, the resulting vibration moves horizontally back and forth along the length of the string between the *nut* or *fret*, and the *bridge*, creating a prolonged sound (i.e. "sustain"), and up and down (or more correctly in a circular path), causing the bridge to vibrate. The movement of the bridge causes the *head* to vibrate



Strings

The strings attach at the *tailpiece*, pass over the bridge, run the length of the fingerboard, then over the nut to the *tuners*. **Strings begin to deteriorate as soon as they are installed.** Oil, dander, and dirt deaden them, and vibration causes them to become brittle. They become harder to accurately tune, and do not ring true as you proceed up the fret board. **Nothing improves the sound of your banjo like fresh strings.** Banjos usually use loop-ended strings but many tailpieces will also accept ball-end strings, such as are used on guitars. Strings typically cost about a dollar each. String diameters are a matter of personal preference. A good combination to begin with on plectrum banjos is: 1st string - .010", 2nd - .012", 3rd - .016", and 4th - .023"W. For a tenor banjo, try 1st string - .010, 2nd - .012, 3rd - .020W, and 4th - .028W. Professional players typically like heavier strings which play louder. **New strings will feel soft under your fingers and deliver the richest tone of which your banjo is capable ... for a while.**

The Head

The plastic head tends to relax over time causing the bridge to sink. The deeper the bridge sinks, the duller the sound, although what sounds "dull" to some might be considered "warm" to others. The *tension hoop* and a series of hook-shaped *brackets* around the perimeter control head tension. You may loosen or tighten the head by tightening or loosening the nuts on these brackets by means of a key or wrench. You might have to remove the *resonator* to access the nuts. To tighten the head, go all the way around the hoop once, tightening each nut one-eighth of a turn. If you need more, go around the hoop again. Everybody seems to have their own way of evaluating head tension. Some flick the head with the top of their fingernail, others press on the head with their fingertips. But, ultimately comes the \$64 question: "How tight is tight" or "how tight is right"? Some will say "JUST BEFORE IT BREAKS". My favorite way to check is to hold the banjo up to the light so that the eye line is parallel to the head surface. The reflection allows you to easily see the indentation produced by the bridge. For most banjos, there should be a slight indentation.

Continued on page 7...

Preparing Your Banjo For Peak Performance (continued)

Bridge Position

To correctly position the bridge, measure the distance from the inside edge of the nut to the center of the twelfth fret, double that number, and that is the correct distance from the inside edge of the nut to the top of the bridge. After placing the bridge at this location, you can fine tune its location by checking the results with your electronic tuner. For example, if you pick an open "D" or "A" string, the tone should be exactly one octave higher when you repeat this while fingering the 12th fret. In a situation of old strings or excessively high action, the pitch at the 12th fret will often be too high, therefore, the bridge will have to be repositioned closer to the tailpiece. Bridges of different heights can be tried in the effort to increase playing comfort or to correct "buzzing" problems. High string "action", that is, 5/32" or more over the last fret will allow you play loudly, but is hard on the fingers and, if you have old strings, can produce an improperly sharp pitch near the upper frets. Typically, string height over the last fret is about 1/8". **New strings will temporarily stretch and produce a tone that is closer to correct under these circumstances.** A taller bridge produces a louder sound and a lighter weight bridge accents high frequencies, whereas a heavier weight bridge accents lower frequencies. It does not seem to matter whether the bridge has two feet in contact with the head or three; it's a matter of personal preference. To obtain higher or lower "action" beyond that accomplished by changing bridges is best left to the Luthier.

Tailpiece Adjustment

The tailpiece anchors the strings to the rim. A secondary purpose of the tailpiece is to provide downward force on the strings as they pass over the bridge. The correct angle of the strings from the nut, over the tailpiece, to the bridge ranges from 10 to 15 degrees. Too little or too much angle will stifle a different range of vibrations passing to the bridge. When the adjustment is correct, the sound volume will be nearly the same at every fret. Most tailpieces are adjustable and can modify the angle of each string over the bridge. The procedure for measuring this angle is to align an adjustable protractor to be parallel with the string(s) on each side of the bridge. The above-mentioned angles put you in the ballpark, but again, are subjective. Your ear is the best tool. Many players assume that closer to the head is better, but that is often not correct.

Cleaning And Polishing

The final task, one that anyone can do, is to clean and polish your banjo. Oils and acids from your skin promote corrosion of the metal parts, hastening the need for expensive replating. Metal parts are plated in chrome, nickel, or gold. Gold often has a coating of lacquer to protect the thin plating. Don't use metal polish on your banjo! (I personally use Q-tips, pipe cleaners, and Windex for the metal parts and head). The exterior wood parts take nicely to most any kind of wax. Car wax is perfect for smooth wood surfaces and lasts a long time. For carved wood or engraved plastic, a liquid furniture polish works well and doesn't leave white residue in the nooks and crannies. Avoid polishes that contain silicones. The fingerboard will collect oil, dirt, and dander from your fingers. The fingerboard cleans well with simply a cloth moistened with Windex. Windex may contain a small amount of alcohol, which could possibly damage lacquer finishes. Wood fingerboards can dry out with age. Some players will occasionally wipe their fingerboards with a cloth soaked with lemon oil.

Conclusion

The above tips are fundamental ways to tune and clean your banjo. There are many more adjustments that can be done by those with a greater understanding and more experience in working on banjos. We are very fortunate to play an instrument that can be adjusted to produce so many modifications in sound. **The strongest possible emphasis must be placed on replacing strings.** All the techniques described above, can produce incremental, but small changes in sound. New strings produce a BIG improvement. If nothing else is learned from this article, you should be encouraged to change your strings more often than you do now. Strings are cheap. I routinely check my strings for wear by running my finger under the 4th string. If I feel indentations from the frets, then I know it's time for new strings.

Welcome to Our New Members



Rachel and Quinn Day

Education Corner

What is a Mirliton?



(Editor's Note: We are taking a little break from banjo education this month to bring you a special educational trivia feature by Don Granberg)

The mirliton is an instrument invented by Warren Herbert Frost and patented by G.D. Smith. It's also known as a Kazoo! It is a type of membranophone, an instrument which modifies its player's voice with a vibrating membrane. The patent is dated May 27, 1909. The player hums rather than blows into the instrument. Different sounds can be achieved by singing syllables such as doo, who or rrrr or brrr into the Kazoo. It was very popular in the 1920's. The most kazoos ever played together at the same time numbers 3,910 and this was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records on March 14, 2011. The Kazoo has other unrelated uses which space does not allow me to elucidate. With much practice and patience one can become an expert player. All it takes is a lot of hot air. which some have more of than others.

Martinez Ukulele Jam Club

Both experienced players and beginners are welcome. Must be age 18 or over. See the Martinez Senior Bulletin or call 925-370-8770 for information. Ukulele players are also welcome to play with the EBBC at their meetings on Wednesday nights, 7:00-9:00pm, The Greenery Restaurant.

2015 Performance Participation 2015 Playouts to date: 12

Black, Guy	11
Blankenship, Jim	2
Brunetti, Tom	9
Convery, Jack	2
David, Betty	12
Dedmon, Clyde	9
DeTorres, Jesse	1
Ehrhorn, Bob	10
Granberg, Don	12
Greitzer, John	2
Hefter, Karen	6
Higgins, Harry	2
Higgins, Red	2
Hodson, Deb	1
Horner, Terry	3
Jarrett, Ardie	8
Kerr, Garry	6
Lardge, Chris	4
Lem, Annie	1
Malucelli, Bob	11
Malucelli, Diane	10
Melamed, Dina	8
Myers, Linda	4
Myers, Phil	5
Nelson, Bob	10
Nelson, Kit	10
Neuman, Dick	1
Pearce, Bud	7
Risner, Larry	5
Starr, Jack	1
Torres, Danielle	2
Welt, Sheila	6

Participation Awards - Members who participate in at least half of the yearly playouts will receive a \$15 gift certificate for The Greenery at the end of the year.

Upcoming Birthdays...

November

December



04 - Deb Hodson
 14 - Tom Brunetti
 19 - Chuck Cook
 20 - Jim Brunetti
 20 - Kit Nelson
 25 - Rich Boss
 27 - Diana Starr

01 - Deborah Black
 06 - Jack Starr
 16 - Jesse DeTorres
 19 - Karen Hefter
 24 - Diane Malucelli
 27 - Danielle Torres
 31 - Phil Myers



2015 EBBC Board	
President rhythmbanjo@sbcglobal.net	Larry Risner
Vice President dmalucelli@att.net	Bob Malucelli
Secretary jarjohn@msn.com	Ardie Jarrett
Treasurer weltbear@sbcglobal.net	Sheila Welt
Music Director 925-938-0126	Betty David
Immediate Past President weltbear@sbcglobal.net	Sheila Welt
Booking Agent bobehrhorn@comcast.net	Bob Ehrhorn

2015 Non-Board Positions	
Assistant Music Director entline@msn.com	Jack Convery
Assistant Music Director karenhefter@gmail.com	Karen Hefter
Assistant Music Director rhythmbanjo@sbcglobal.net	Larry Risner
Hospitality weltbear@sbcglobal.net	Sheila Welt
Librarian jplankenship@att.net	Jim Blankenship
Membership dmalucelli@att.net	Diane Malucelli
Newsletter Editor/Publisher editor@eastbaybanjo.org	Karen Hefter
Telephone Tree dmalucelli@att.net	Diane Malucelli
Uniforms—Gold Vest & Polos jarjohn@msn.com	Ardie Jarrett
Web Master bud.pearce@pearcechriss.com	Bud Pearce

A New Record!

We had 30 players and 2 members who sing (but do not play instruments) attend our weekly meeting on October 14. It was wonderful to see so many musicians. Our club is growing!

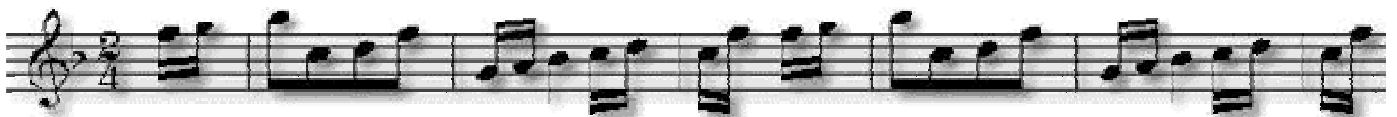
East Bay Banjo Club Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**Date:** August 12, 2015**Place:** Greenery Dining Room, Walnut Creek, CA**Board Members Present:** Larry Risner, President; Bob Malucelli, Vice President; Ardie Jarrett, Secretary; Sheila Welt, Treasurer & Past President; Betty David, Music Director; Bob Ehrhorn, Booking Agent.**Absent Board of Directors:** None**Appointed Chairs Present:** Diane Malucelli, Membership & Telephone Tree; Sheila Welt, Hospitality.**Absent Appointed Chairs:** Jim Blankenship, Librarian; Bud Pearce, Web Master; Karen Hefter, Editor.**CALLED TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Larry Risner, President.**BOD OFFICERS REPORTS:****Secretary:** The minutes were approved as presented, 6/0/0.**Treasurer:** The Treasurer's report was accepted as presented 6/0/0. This report will be filed for audit.**Vice President:** Bob Malucelli – Nothing to report.**Music Director:** Betty David – Betty was pleased at how well our group could change procedures at a playout when needed.**Booking Agent:** Bob Ehrhorn – Bob reported that we have a gig on Aug. 14th, and then nothing else until December.**Past President:** Sheila Welt – Nothing to report.**APPOINTED CHAIR REPORTS:****Hospitality:** Sheila Welt – Sheila reported that Gerry Reeves was back in the hospital with a broken bone in his foot.**Membership & Telephone Tree:** Diane Malucelli – She has sent out the new membership list and has re-done the Telephone Tree, and gave copies to the board members.**OLD BUSINESS:**

Betty David is working on going through the Music Book to determine songs that need to be removed. She has a committee that is researching possible new songs for the Music Book. This is a work in progress. Her suggestions will be presented to Larry Risner, and then to the board.

NEW BUSINESS:

It was clarified that the Holiday Gift Card is for Play-outs only. The Picnic is not included in this count.

Christmas Party: The location hasn't been determined as of yet. Bob Malucelli will start checking out places. It was suggested that we might also consider looking into possible Mexican restaurants, along with Chinese. Sheila Welt has already purchased decorations for the Holiday party.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15.**Respectfully Submitted:****Ardie Jarrett**

Concord, CA 94524

P.O. Box 5414



EAST BAY BANJO CLUB

**Meets every Wednesday
From 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

At

The Greenery Restaurant

**1551 Marchbanks Drive,
Walnut Creek, CA 94598**