



# East Bay Banjo Club

Since 1963



July / August 2017

Members Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 4

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## Events Calendar

### **Sunday, September 10**

East Bay Banjo Club  
Board of Directors meeting  
Round Table Pizza  
1938 Oak Park Boulevard  
Pleasant Hill  
5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

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[www.eastbaybanjo.org](http://www.eastbaybanjo.org)

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*To book the East Bay Banjo Club to play at your event, please contact booking agent Bob Ehrhorn via email at [bobehrhorn@comcast.net](mailto:bobehrhorn@comcast.net) or call (707) 731-0198.*

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## President's Message

By John Greitzer

It is amazing how quickly the summer flies by. As I write this column, school is almost in session (it may be already for some), daylight doesn't last quite as long in the evening, and there's a hint of fall in the night air (at least, as close as we get to "fall" here in the Bay Area).

The older we get, the more everything speeds up and flies by.

Speaking of speeding up, our club tried an interesting experiment at one of our recent Sunday practices. Bud Pearce brought in his MIDI ("musical instrument digital interface") via his smart phone, and we used it as a lead player and metronome to play our songs to. The MIDI



played the melody and the club played rhythm along with it. The first few times we tried it, the club kept speeding up and outpacing the MIDI melody by a couple of measures. The MIDI program keeps perfect time, so the fault was definitely ours.

By the fourth or fifth time we tried a song, we did better. This experiment was a striking reminder of how difficult timing can be. Practicing to a metronome helps, but that's just you and the metronome. In a group, it takes collective listening and patience to stay in tempo. In between our Sunday practices, you can practice to the click of a metronome, and you also can practice by playing along with a recording of a song. Practice doesn't make perfect but it sure helps, especially with timing.

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### Inside:

*EBBC's Busy Summer Playout Schedule – pages 2-4*

*Remembering Charlie Tagawa – pages 5-6*

# EBBC Entertains Military Wives' Club In Pleasant Hill

By John Greitzer and Bud Pearce

Photographs by Georgette DeTorres

The East Bay Banjo Club entertained a gathering of the Wives of Military Officers at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant in Pleasant Hill on Tuesday afternoon, June 27. Due to the limited space, a smaller-than-usual contingent of 14 EBBC members participated. The group of military wives particularly enjoyed the salute to all branches of the Armed Services. There was a representative of each branch of service in the audience. Perhaps the highlight of our performance was Jesse DeTorres's version of Louis Armstrong's "Hello Dolly"

EBBC singers and musicians who participated were Jesse DeTorres, Bob Ehrhorn, Don Granberg, Bud Pearce, Karen Hefter, Betty David, Garry Kerr, Bob Malucelli, Rich Combs, Clyde Dedmon, Ardie Jarrett, Red Higgins, Dina Malumed, and Guy Black.



Bob Ehrhorn (front row, second from left) addresses the audience as the club prepares to play. Bob is flanked by Jesse DeTorres (left) and Don Granberg (right).



The club strums away for an appreciative audience.



Bud Pearce (front row, second from right) sings one.

# EBBC Reprises Its Role At Orinda July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade

By Bud Pearce

Photos by Linda Myers / Truck photo courtesy Slavka Ruzicka

Once again, the EBBC participated in the Orinda 4th of July parade. This year the focus was on special friends of the club, the Orinda Tabor Sister City Foundation, who were so instrumental in the club's wonderful trip to the Czech Republic's city of Tabor. As a salute to our Czech Republic friends, the club played two Czech songs at the two judging stands: "Skoda Lasky" (commonly known to us as "Beer Barrel Polka"), and "Tancuj, Tancuj, Vykrucaj" (roughly translated as "Dance, Dance, Spin!").

Club participants included Bud Pearce, Karen Hefter, Terry Horner, Don Granberg, Betty David, Bob and Diane Malucelli, Phil and Linda Myers, and our very special Czech members Jan and Slavka Ruzicka. Jan and Slavka make our club practices and playouts all the better every time, with Jan on guitar and Slavka on autoharp. It's a great multi-cultural blend that really shone through on July 4<sup>th</sup>.



Jan Ruzicka, Bob and Diane Malucelli on the EBBC float for the Orinda July 4<sup>th</sup> parade.



The club rolls by on a sunny Fourth of July. Standing at right is Slavka Ruzicka, Parade Grand Marshall and a member of both EBBC and the Orinda Tabor Sister City Foundation.



Phil and Linda Myers get ready to roll.

# Pilots' Association Receives A Dose Of Banjo Music

Photos by Bob Nelson

Capping off a busy June and July, the EBBC entertained a meeting of the Mount Diablo Pilots' Association on July 21 in Concord. Participants included Tom Brunetti, Jack and Diana Starr, Tom Brunetti, Bob Ehrhorn, Bob Malucelli, Kit Nelson, Deb Hodson, Don Granberg, Jan and Slavka Ruzicka, Doug Johnson, Chris Lardge, Betty David, Guy Black, Larry Risner, Dina Melamed and Clyde Dedmon.



Chris Lardge handles the vocals, flanked by Don Granberg and Betty David. Back row: Doug Johnson, Slavka Ruzicka, Jan Ruzicka.



Red Higgins sings while Guy Black lays down a bass line. Front: Betty David, Larry Risner.



Kit Nelson sings one.

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## A Familiar Face Spotted In Photo In Red Garter In Florence, Italy

By John Greitzer

**Red Higgins** recently mentioned to me that her son Michael was traveling in Florence, Italy this summer and stopped in at the Red Garter – yes, *that* Red Garter. The bar was opened in Florence in 1962 by a Boston native who had resettled in Florence and loved the old Red Garter vibe. The bar continues to be a popular spot for locals and tourists alike.



Once inside, Michael saw a photograph on the wall that looked familiar – it was his father, the late great **Harry Higgins**, who starred at the original Red Garter in San Francisco for 17 years during the 1960s and 1970s. Harry certainly deserves having his photo on the wall, whether in Italy or here at home, given his status as a Four-String Banjo Hall of Famer, the Red Garter's lead player and of course one of the longest-tenured members of our East Bay Banjo Club until his death in December 2015.

This story shows how far and wide traditional banjo music has spread. If you ever find yourself in Florence, stop in at the Red Garter – Via Dei Benci 33R, a few blocks north of the Arno River. If you see the photo of Harry, take a picture of it and send it to us.

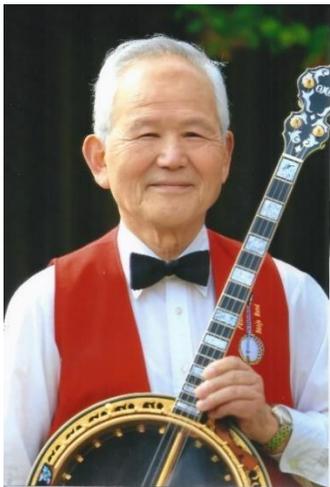
# Remembering Banjo Great Charlie Tagawa

Photos courtesy of the Peninsula Banjo Band

Biographical information from the Peninsula Banjo Band and Wikipedia

The Peninsula Banjo Band recently informed us that their longtime music director and Hall of Famer, **Charlie Tagawa**, passed away on July 30 at age 81. Bill Lowrey, President of the Peninsula Banjo Band, posted this message on the *Banjo Hangout* online forum:

*I am deeply sorry to inform you that Charlie died at his home on Sunday morning, July 30th, 2017. Those of us (most of us) who took lessons from Charlie will always be grateful to him for his passion for the instrument and for helping instill in us, a love of the banjo. As Musical Director of the PBB for 52 years, Charlie made banjo music an important part of Bay Area culture and was a global ambassador for the instrument. He last led the PBB on Wednesday evening, July 12, 2017 at Harry's Hofbrau. We are deeply privileged to have had him as the anchor of our musical family for so long.*



The EBBC extends our sympathies to Charlie Tagawa's family and friends.

Born Zenzo Tagawa in Tokyo in 1935, he was a star in Japan before coming to the United States in 1964. That year the owner of a restaurant in Mountain View, California was visiting Japan, heard Zenzo play, and offered the young man a contract to play in his Mountain View restaurant. The rest, as they say, is history.

Charlie was inducted into the Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame in 2003, and was the PBB's music director since the late 1960s. He is survived by two sons and three grandchildren. His wife Masako passed away in the 1990s.

EBBC's own **Tom Brunetti** had been taking lessons from Charlie for a couple of years, right up until Charlie's death. As a teacher, said Tom, "Charlie was a perfectionist, while I'm the opposite. He had to keep telling me the same things over and over. Charlie really believed in practice, and you had to practice the right way. If I didn't play something right, he'd let me know it right away."

Tom also said Charlie was "a very kind-hearted guy. Sometimes after a lesson, he would go into the kitchen and get me some warm food to take home with me," Tom recalled. "One time he gave me an orchid and told me to give it to my wife, which I did."

Tom began taking lessons from Charlie after meeting him on one of **Jack Convery's** "Snow Train" events a couple of years ago. Tom made the long drive from Berkeley to Charlie's home in Cupertino every other week for the lessons.

"He was an excellent teacher. He could play any song in any key. I'm lucky to have taken lessons from him." Tom said he will be reviewing all of his notes from his lessons with Charlie, to try to keep learning from him.

**Jack Convery** remembers Charlie Tagawa as "very enthusiastic, always with a smile on his face. He'd play anywhere, anytime."

"He played on our Snow Train this past February. We were delayed on the train for twelve hours because of the snow, and Charlie took out his banjo, we started playing, and everybody came around and listened."

## Charlie Tagawa Remembered, *continued*

“It was a long day, but Charlie would just play because he loved it so much.”

Jack noted that Charlie spread the joy of the banjo to a lot of people, young and old, during his career. “He was working five nights a week playing banjo in the San Jose Area,” Jack said. “He also created the Annual Banjo Jubilee which ran on the Peninsula for about 40 years.” Another group that owed its founding to Charlie was a collection of his younger students who decided to form a band, under Charlie’s guidance. Begun as an informal group, they eventually took on the name “Charlie Tagawa’s Junior Banjo Band” when they performed in public in the 1970s and 1980s.

“I think one of Charlie’s greatest contributions was teaching kids,” Jack said.

Jack had invited Charlie to play with his Banjo Jazz group at Armando’s nightclub in Martinez on August 9, but unfortunately Charlie passed away ten days before the date.



### *A closing thought from the Editor*

I didn’t know Charlie Tagawa, but hearing about his life and career have reconfirmed my belief in the universal language of music. He rose to fame in Japan playing American music on an instrument whose roots are in Africa, brought to the New World by African slaves.

There are a great many people playing banjo today who wouldn’t be, if it wasn’t for Charlie Tagawa. The same can be said for **Harry Higgins** and **Georgette Twain**, both of whom passed away within the past two years. We were lucky to have had them with us.

Charlie at his Hall of Fame induction in 2003 at the Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame, Guthrie, OKLA.  
(Joan Goldstein, photographer;  
Property of Peninsula Banjo Band  
Photo Archives)

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## Volunteers Will Soon Be Sought For 2018 Board Positions

Each October, the club sets up a nominating committee to help find officers (Board members) for the coming year. We will carry the current vacancies in several board positions through the rest of this year, but we hope that those of you who attend our weekly practices will consider putting your name in for one of the Board positions for 2018. The time to throw your hat in the ring will come in October and November. Board meetings are held monthly on the second Sunday of each month at 5:30 p.m. The seven Board positions are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Music Director, Booking Agent, and Immediate Past President, which is the one position you can’t volunteer for – you have to be President before you can be a Past President!  
*Over the next couple of months, give some thought to serving on our Board!*

## **2017 EBBC Playout Participation**

Playouts to date: 8 (through July 31)

Guy Black	4
Tom Brunetti	5
Richard Combs	4
Betty David	8
Clyde Dedmon	4
Jesse DeTorres	2
Alex Dongallo	2
Bob Ehrhorn	6
Barbara Findlay	3
Don Granberg	8
John Greitzer	1
Karen Hefter	7
Red Higgins	4
Deb Hodson	2
Terry Horner	5
Ardie Jarrett	6
Doug Johnson	3
Garry Kerr	6
Chris Lardge	3
Bob Malucelli	6
Diane Malucelli	1
Dina Melamed	4
Linda Myers	4
Phil Myers	4
Kit Nelson	2
Bud Pearce	7
Larry Risner	3
Jan Ruzicka	7
Slavka Ruzicka	7
Diana Starr	5
Jack Starr	5
Sheila Welt	3
Pat Warnick	3



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### ***Just For Yuks.....***

Q: What's the rarest comment ever heard at gigs?

A: "Say, isn't that the banjo player's Porsche?"

# Board members and appointed officers for 2017

## Board Members

President: John Greitzer.....johngreitzer@outlook.com  
Vice President: .....vacant  
Secretary: .....vacant  
Treasurer: Rich Combs.....combsrichard@sbcglobal.net  
Music Director: Karen Hefter .....karenhefter@gmail.com  
Past President: Larry Risner ... .....rhythmbanjo@sbcglobal.net  
Booking Agent: Bob Ehrhorn ..... bobehrhorn@comcast.net

## Non-Board Officers

Digital Librarian: Karen Hefter..... karenhefter@gmail.com  
Hard-Copy Librarian: Jim Blankenship ..... jpblankenship@att.net  
Membership: Chris Lardge.....chrislardge@aol.com  
Newsletter Editor/Publisher: John Greitzer ..... johngreitzer@outlook.com  
Uniforms (Gold Vest & Polos): Ardie Jarrett..... jarjohn@msn.com  
Webmaster: Bud Pearce ..... bud.pearce@pearcechriss.com  
Hospitality: Sheila Welt.....weltbear@sbcglobal.net  
Telephone Tree: Diane Malucelli.....dmalucelli@att.net

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## About our newsletter

The *East Bay Banjo Club Newsletter* is published six times per year, in February, April, June, August, October, and December. The newsletter also is posted on the EBBC website at [www.eastbaybanjo.org](http://www.eastbaybanjo.org) (click on “Newsletters”). All articles are written by the newsletter editor unless otherwise noted.

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## Upcoming birthdays



### *Happy birthday to all!*

**Ardie Jarrett** – September 6  
**Red Higgins** – September 25  
**Bob Ehrhorn** – October 13  
**Barbara Findlay** – October 13  
**Connor Calimlim** – October 14  
**Ken Williamson** – October 18  
**Marco Green** – October 25  
**Bob Nelson** – October 27  
**Karen DeWeese** – October 30

# EBBC Board Meeting Highlights

August 13, 2017 Board Meeting

This section of the newsletter usually contains the minutes from the Board of Directors meetings for the two previous months. However, the Board meetings in June and July were cancelled, so we have no minutes from those months. The Board met in August and the minutes from that meeting have been drafted, but they won't be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors until the September meeting.

In lieu of the approved full minutes from August, here are highlights of the actions taken by the Board of Directors at the August 13 meeting. The full minutes will appear in the next issue of the newsletter as usual.

- Discussed the compact sound system that was used for our August 6 practice and considered whether to buy such a sound system for the club, but chose not to do so at this time;
- Decided to stick with monthly board meetings rather than reducing the frequency to quarterly;
- Agreed to develop a better system for keeping track of the club's banjo inventory, and to assign that responsibility to two people instead of just one as is currently the case. One of the inventory managers will be the Treasurer, since the banjo inventory has a financial value to the club; and
- Reconfirmed our policy on accepting playout opportunities. Specifically, before accepting any offer of a playout, the Booking Agent shall first check and see how many club members are able to attend on the requested date, and make sure we have enough lead players, a bass player, singers, and either the Music Director or someone else willing to serve as Music Director for the playout.



**East Bay Banjo Club**  
[www.eastbaybanjo.org](http://www.eastbaybanjo.org)  
P.O. Box 5414  
Concord, CA 94524

## **East Bay Banjo Club**

Meets every week to play happy music

**Round Table Pizza**

**1938 Oak Park Boulevard, Pleasant Hill**

**Sundays from 7 to 9 p.m.**