



# East Bay Banjo Club

Since 1963



Sept / Oct 2017

Members Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 5

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## Events Calendar

### **Saturday, November 11, 2017**

Veterans Day Payout  
The Kensington  
1580 Geary Road  
Walnut Creek, 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

### **Sunday, November 12, 2017**

EBBC Board Meeting  
Round Table Pizza  
1938 Oak Park Blvd.  
Pleasant Hill, 5:30 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

There are lots of sayings aimed at easing people's minds about aging. A few examples: age is just a state of mind; you're only as old as you feel; age is just a number; sixty is the new forty; and on and on.

I can vouch for the fact that you're only as old as you feel. In most ways, I still think and feel like a kid. But my fingers? Boy are they starting to feel old, and the older I get, the harder it is to play banjo (or guitar or bass) for long periods of time. I now can play for about an hour at most and then I need to give the ol' digits a rest. My fingers aren't audibly creaking, but that's probably not far off. At least they haven't fallen off yet.



Speaking of aging and the passing of time, it's remarkable that we're already in mid-October and the end of the year is in sight. And for the East Bay Banjo Club, that can only mean one thing – *time to renew your membership dues for 2018!*

Our members will be receiving the 2018 membership dues form. You can use the form to send in with your payment. You also can pay in person at one of our Sunday practices – look for our membership chief, Chris Lardge, if you'd like to do so. Remember, we count on your dues to help pay the bills and keep the EBBC running like a well-oiled machine. Or like a well-tuned banjo, if you prefer.

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### Inside:

*Practicing Banjo Like Painting The Garage – page 2*  
*Halloween Banjo Practice – page 4*

# Painting the Garage and What it Taught Me About Playing Banjo

Reprinted with permission from *The Banjo Hangout* website, [banjohangout.org](http://banjohangout.org)

Abridged for space by the Editor

I recently spent a week of vacation painting the garage. I had planned to spend a few days, maybe three, and then the rest of the time I was going to watch some instructional banjo DVDs, and practice, practice, practice. Unfortunately, like all home improvement projects, painting the garage took twice as long as planned, and the weather, bees and my own clumsiness all conspired to add hours of delight and muscle soreness to the process.

Nevertheless, despite, or perhaps, BECAUSE of the heat, I found myself on the bum-ditty edge of delusion, comparing the stroke, stroke and cuss—the rhythm of painting—to the rhythm of practicing and playing the banjo. Lessons that I should have learned already, revealed themselves to be true about both the garage-painting project and my banjo-learning project. Here are the top five lessons, in the approximate order in which they manifested themselves to me.

## *Lesson One: There are no shortcuts.*

I originally expected to spend a day prepping and a day or two painting. But once I got into the project, I discovered I had to make provisions for things I hadn't counted on. The preparation ended up taking me twice as long as expected. Similarly, it always takes me much longer to learn a new song than I expect. I look at the tab, I practice a few of the harder sections, and they always end up being harder than I first thought they would be. After a month of daily practice, I realize that it will probably take me 3 months longer to play the song to my satisfaction. I also realize that I can't shortcut the process.



## *Lesson Two: Each person sets his or her own expectations.*

I learned this while teaching English as a Second Language, when some of my students would strive for perfection, while others would be satisfied (and stop bothering to learn) as soon as they could communicate a few basic things. My expectation for my garage was not that it would be perfect, but rather, that it would look substantially nicer than it had. My wife had expectations, too, by the way (that I would use paint with low or zero VOCs or Volatile Organic Compounds, that I would not trample all over, flatten, or paint the plants near the garage, and that the garage would look better than it had).

So it is with banjo, too. My expectations are not that I will jump up on stage someday soon and entertain people as a banjo artist. Instead, I expect that with steady practice and the right help, I will learn a nice batch of songs and have a solid hobby as I progress through life, while continuing to earn a paycheck working for The Man. The most important thing about expectations is this: your expectations must match your own effort. If you have high expectations, you have to be willing to put in the work to achieve them, and you may have to make a tough sacrifice or two (or many) to get to the goal. The relationship between expectations, effort and reward is true for just about everything, including painting the garage and learning banjo. --continued, next page --

## Painting the Garage, *continued*

### ***Lesson Three: Details make a difference.***

Every detail is a small decision waiting to be made. Do I really need to scrape everything I need to paint? Does it really matter if I don't paint carefully in the cracks? Do I need to sand that? Can't I just use the brush I've got in my hand to get into that tight space? Take the easy way out at your peril. There are thousands of these choices when you're playing the banjo, too, and the choices you make, the details you choose to ignore, will make a difference in the quality of your playing. Do I really need to tune so carefully? So what if I'm not holding the chord just right? Does it really matter whether I'm keeping proper time if I'm close enough? Isn't speed more important than precision? Sure, some of this seems a little tedious when you're first starting out, but attention to detail will make for crisper, more predictable and more confident playing.

### ***Lesson Four: It's really easy to want to move on before you've completely finished.***

Once I had 90% of the garage painted it was tempting to call it quits and move on. This is a problem with many home repairs: You get to the 90% stage and your motivation gets sapped because it's taken way longer than you expected it to and you're almost done anyway. Learning banjo songs is very much the same for me. I get so I can play it 90% right, then I start wanting to move on to something new. So it is when you've gotten to the point that you can almost play a song reliably. You want to move on, to step boldly into the pure snow of the new song. I'll permit this, but only if you start each lesson playing the old song first and working out the rough spots. This is how I stay motivated. Believe it or not, sometimes working on a new song gives you skills that make it easier to play the songs that came before. Let's call it the "two steps forward, one step back" method.

### ***Lesson Five: You will not shake a song that gets into your head.***

Woe unto him who listens to popular radio or watches Gilligan's Island reruns during breakfast on a day that you will be painting. You will not shake this song, I promise you. Don't even think about *The Hustle*, *Shake your Booty*, *The Barney Song*, or anything else you don't want to live with for 6 - 8 hours. I once heard an interview on the radio with a man who had tested himself by swimming from Florida to Cuba. He completed the swim, but said that the Gilligan theme had popped into his head just after starting out, and as a result, he couldn't even enjoy it. It ruined the whole experience for him. So don't tempt fate.

Better to listen to a banjo song you'd like to learn, the same one each night so it's fresh in your memory. That way you'll be working out how you might play it if your ever get done with this x\$#@ paint job. If it haunts you, you can go inside and practice a little. Even if you don't know how to play it, if it's something you like, you won't mind it so much.

So there you have it: The five banjo precepts that occurred to me as I was painting the garage. And now that the garage is 95% finished I have more time to work on applying these epiphanies to my own banjo practices. Once I called it quits on the garage, I picked up my banjo and started working on the right-hand technique I'd been trying to get to all week. I found myself wanting to be good at it right away. And I started repeating to myself one of the things that kept me going on the garage all week: There are no shortcuts, there are no shortcuts ...

***About the author:*** Kevin plays banjo and paints his garage in Michigan, battling bees, sun, humidity, and lack of motivation. For more than twenty years he's wielded his pen on behalf of factory automation, painting compelling images of productivity, improved time to market and profits. Banjo has been a refreshing change.

## **2017 EBBC Playout Participation**

Playouts to date: 8 (through September 30)

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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## **Costumes Okay For October 29<sup>th</sup> “Halloween” Practice**

Our regular Sunday evening practice on October 29 will be Halloween-friendly. If you are so inclined, feel free to come in costume. For you “non-costume” types (like your editor), regular street clothes are fine too. As always, practice will run from 7 to 9 p.m. Come as you are, or as you aren’t – whichever you prefer.

# Board members and appointed officers for 2017

## Board Members

President: John Greitzer.....johngreitzer@outlook.com  
Vice President: .....vacant  
Secretary: Sheila Welt .....weltbear@sbcglobal.net  
Treasurer: Rich Combs.....combsrichard@sbcglobal.net  
Music Director:.....vacant  
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 ..... [jblankenship@att.net](mailto:jblankenship@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@pearcechris.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

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### *Happy birthday to all!*

<b>Deb Hodson</b> – Nov 4	<b>Deborah Black</b> – Dec 1
<b>Eric Calica Jr.</b> – Nov 13	<b>Jack Starr</b> – Dec 6
<b>Tom Brunetti</b> – Nov 14	<b>Jesse DeTorres</b> – Dec 16
<b>Chuck Cook</b> – Nov 19	<b>Karen Hefter</b> – Dec 19
<b>Jim Brunetti</b> – Nov 20	<b>Diane Malucelli</b> – Dec 24
<b>Kit Nelson</b> – Nov 20	<b>Danielle Torres</b> – Dec 27
<b>Diana Starr</b> – Nov 27	<b>Michael Stein</b> – Dec 28
	<b>Phil Myers</b> – Dec 31

**MINUTES: BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA**

**EAST BAY BANJO CLUB**

**DATE:** AUGUST 13, 2017 TIME 5:30 PM

**LOCATION:** ROUND TABLE PIZZA, PLEASANT HILL

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**Call to Order** – the meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

**Roll Call** -- John Greitzer, President; Karen Hefter, Music Director; Larry Risner, Past President. Guests: Bob Malucelli, Guy Black.

**Approval of Minutes from Meeting of May 14, 2017** – the minutes were discussed but no formal action was taken because of the lack of a quorum of voting Board members.

**Old Business: Vacancies (Music Director in mid-August, Vice President, Secretary).** The Board members in attendance had no news to report on these items. The club expects to carry on without appointing a Vice President and Secretary for the rest of 2017. The Music Director position can be filled informally at our Sunday practices. Having a Music Director for playouts remains an issue.

**New Business:**

- 1. (a) should our weekly practices be changed back to Wednesdays, which Round Table Pizza has offered us?** Those present preferred to keep our practices on Sundays, for consistency and to avoid inconvenience and confusion. If we switch to Wednesdays, we will have to switch again next summer when a local swim team resumes their Wednesday meeting schedule at Round Table. We also would lose one of our few lead players if we switch to Wednesdays, as Karen Hefter would be unable to attend on Wednesdays. **(b) should we switch to quarterly meetings instead of monthly?** Board members preferred to keep the meetings monthly. Bud Pearce pointed out that our agreement with Round Table Pizza is on a month-to-month basis. He needs to check with the Board and with Round Table each month to keep our Sunday schedule. It was agreed to continue the present practice of scheduling monthly meetings, and canceling if there aren't any issues that need to be discussed in a given month.
- 2. Sale of EBBC banjo.** Bud Pearce said he sold the club's lone tenor banjo to a club member for \$300.
- 3. Development of a banjo inventory management system.** Bud Pearce spoke of the need for better information and management of the club's banjo inventory. He keeps the banjos, and received a list of the banjos from the previous President, but Bud said he has not been provided with much specific information beyond that. He suggested that the inventory should be reported to the Board periodically. He recommended that two people be involved in managing the inventory. Since the banjo inventory has a financial value, John Greitzer suggested that the Treasurer be one of the two people involved in keeping track of the inventory, including any payments received for them.

The Board agreed that Bud Pearce and Treasurer Rich Combs should be involved. As a follow up, John Greitzer will email Ardie Jarrett, who may have paperwork regarding the loan of the banjo to a club member. If such paperwork exists, it should be made available to Bud and Rich.

- 4. Sound system for practices and playouts.** The Board discussed the possibility of purchasing a compact sound system for the club, similar to the one that was used at the August 6 Sunday practice since our usual sound system wasn't available that day. John Greitzer said he received an email from a club member saying the compact sound system was easy to set up, lightweight, and sounded good. Board members discussed it and said there are some advantages to having an additional sound system that is compact and lightweight, but it probably would only be usable for weekly practices, not as useful for playouts. The Board chose not to purchase a new system but may choose to do so in the future.

Regarding playouts, the Board agreed that before the Booking Agent accepts a playout offer, the Booking Agent should check with the membership to ensure enough players can attend, including lead players, singers and a bass player, and also make sure a qualified person is available and willing to serve as Music Director for the playout. Serving as MD for a playout involves a lot of work, such as choosing songs, and seeing which lead players, singers and bass player are available for the playout as this can influence which songs are chosen. When a potential client requests our services for an event, the Booking Agent will let the client know that he will get back to them after surveying the membership.

**Board Member Reports:** Bob Ehrhorn said our next playout isn't until February 2018. No other Board members had issues to report.

**Committee Member Reports:** None provided. Bud Pearce said he would try his experiment with MIDI technology at tonight's practice, as a new way of starting songs and having the club practice staying in time with the recording. (*Note: MIDI means Musical Instrument Digital Interface*).

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.

**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.**