
East Bay Banjo Club

Since 1963

Jan - Feb 2026

Volume 1

Events Calendar

Thursday Feb 19th

Fair Oaks
1925 Risdon Rd
Concord Ca
11:45 to 12:30pm

Tuesdays (except for the 1st of the month)

Mountain Mikes Pizza
30 Golf Club Rd Suite A
Pleasant Hill Ca

EBBC Board Meeting

**Wednesday February 11th
4pm**

Join Zoom Meeting

**[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/
7446807659?
omn=89097806481](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7446807659?omn=89097806481)**

Meeting ID: 744 680 7659

President's Message

By Deb Hodson

Welcome to 2026 I am looking forward to working with each of you this year! Let's make this year fun and educational. Rich will be leading the band in developing new skills to make our band sound even better, while maintaining a fun atmosphere!

The EBBC Board is trying a new format using Zoom. The next meeting is Wed. Feb 11th at 4pm. Everyone is invited to come and listen!!

Each newsletter will have a section of banjo tips. Setting up your banjo and practice tip!! This month we are featuring Larry Risners setting up your strings. Thank you Larry!!

Officers and Board Members

President Deb Hodson

Vice-President Bob Malucelli

Secretary Diane Malucelli

Membership Ardie Jarrett

Music Director Rich Combs

Event Coordinator Paul Mack

Treasurer Chris Doan

Communication Coord Sheila Welt

Webmaster Bud Pearce

Digital Librarian Karen Hefter

Paul's Corner

By Paul Mack

Two of our songs are “Darktown Strutters' Ball” and “Banjo Picker's Ball.” Although different songs, written by different people, they both share some similarities. Shelton Brooks, who wrote “Darktown Strutters' Ball” in 1917, was born in Amherstburg, Ontario Canada on May 4, 1886 and died in Los Angeles in 1975 at the age of 89. With Darktown in the title and in the lyrics, the song has received its share of criticism. Brooks taught himself music on his church's pump organ. Later, he sang, played piano and performed on the vaudeville circuit. His other big hit was “Some of These Days.”

“Banjo Pickers Ball “was written by Jad Paul, Freddy Morgan and Norman Malkin in 1957. The three of them were in the Sunnysiders, a pop/country band, and in 1955 recorded their hit “Hey Mr. Banjo.” Jad Paul is in the 4 String Banjo Hall of Fame.

“Darktown Strutters' Ball” and “Banjo Picker's Ball” have some similar lyrics:

“Darktown Strutters' Ball”: “ I'll be down to get you in a taxi honey. You better be ready about half past eight. Now don't be late. I want to be there when the band starts playing.”

“Banjo Picker's Ball”: “ I'm gonna pick you up in my old Model T. Put on your new glad rags and be waitin' for me. Be ready at eight we mustn't be late. We're going to a ball, I mean that Banjo Picker's Ball.”

Were Jad Paul, Freddy Morgan and Norman Malkin influenced by Shelton Brooks? Probably. Both songs are upbeat and a lot of fun to play and sing. Remember, Be Ready At Eight and Don't Be late!

Settling On Strings Takes Patience, Trial And Error

By Larry Risner

Selecting strings for an instrument is a trial-and-error effort shaped by each player's personal preferences. Many factors affect the tonal quality of an instrument. An inexpensive instrument can sound good or bad just as an expensive instrument can sound good or bad. An instrument can also sound good to one person and not so good to another.

Ukuleles and guitars usually have fixed-in-place bridges that are not adjustable and wooden bodies so the strings are the only variables. Banjoleles and banjos, on the other hand, have movable bridges and plastic or calfskin heads that will affect the tuning and sound quality. It's most important to make sure the bridge is properly positioned on the head and the head is correctly tightened before experimenting with string selection and tuning.

I play a four-string plectrum banjo and I preferred using Gibson SBG-571 string sets with wound third and fourth strings. It has become almost impossible to find four-string sets of plectrum strings so I have settled on the GHS PF-180 M five-string sets that have a mellower sound than the “lighter” string sets. I discard the fifth string and use the other four. These sets are readily available online for around \$4 per set.

Tech tips

Another in a series of articles by EBBC's Larry Risner for beginning banjo players.

You have to make sure the string end that connects to your banjo's tailpiece is the correct type. The tail end of a string can be either looped, ferruled or plain and only the correct type will work on any given instrument.

To install new strings, wrap the leading end three times around the tuning nut then pass the end through the hole in the nut, pulling it tight. Tune the string to make sure it doesn't slip, then cut off the loose end leaving about one to two inches sticking out. If you are changing all the strings, do it one string at a time. If you take all four of the old strings off at once, the bridge can easily move out of place.

Here are some examples of string sets for commonly used tunings.

Tenor Banjo: (four-string tenor set)

Use standard tenor banjo tuning [c-g-d-a from the lowest-note string to the highest] or Irish tenor tuning [g-d-a-e].

Plectrum Banjo: (four- and five-string banjo set)

Use bluegrass banjo tuning [g-d-g-b-d], double C tuning [g-c-g-c-d] or C tuning [g-c-g-b-d].

Or use guitar tuning (also called Chicago tuning) [d-g-b-e].

Or use plectrum tuning [c-g-b-d].

Popular brands of banjo strings include GHS, D'Addario, Aquila, Ernie Ball, Martin, Elixir and Thomastik-Infeld. All are available from many online string sellers, such as Southwest Strings, Strings By Mail, Strings And Beyond, and Elderly Instruments, to name just a few.
