

## Nova Scotia Banjo Camp

By Lyle Goldberg

for the fifth straight time. A personal highlight was hearing Peter Wernick and Tim O'Brien jamming by their CD table Saturday afternoon, a perfect example of the kind of unexpected treat IBMA always has to offer. Also noteworthy, *BNL's* own **Tom Adams** won an award for best liner notes for Michael Cleveland's CD, "*Let 'er Go, Boys!*"

Nechville Musical Products announces that their 5-string necks will soon (early 2007) be able to be fitted unto a non-Nechville pot. The necks will include Nechville's Quick-cam Action adjustment. The first 25 necks sold will include free installation and a free Nechville inline tailpiece. All Nechville necks are also interchangeable for use on Helimount pots.

The Music Link will soon be offering nickel-plated reproductions of traditional pre-war Mastertone-style banjo parts. (These parts are also used on their Recording King banjos.) The parts and accessories include plated tension hoops; plated armrests, Presto-style tailpieces; truss rods; 24-bracket hook/hex nuts with American thread; mahogany resonators, unfinished; 3-ply maple rims, unfinished; dual coordinator rod set; resonator hardware set; tailpiece brackets—all available in late fall 2006. For a complete list of products, visit [www.themusiclink.net](http://www.themusiclink.net)

Also, Recording King announces their new Soloist Banjo (RK-R85-SN). It has all the features of the RK Professional mahogany model, but with a flamed maple resonator and neck, and sunburst finish. It has a bound rosewood fretboard, American Standard thread hardware, 20-hole tone ring, 3-ply rim, "style 6" floral peghead and fretboard inlay and a Mastertone-style flange. TML product designer **Greg Rich** oversaw the production, with quality control set by **Scott Zimmerman**. Listing for \$1,999, for more information visit [www.recordingking.com](http://www.recordingking.com)

**Recordings:** If you're like me, a new **J.D. Crowe** record is a cause for celebration. "*Lefty's Old Guitar*" by J.D. and the New South on Rounder is no disappointment. As Eddie Stubbs points out in the liner notes, waiting for the latest New South release (it has been seven years) is always worthwhile. Great material, tight band (with Ron Stewart on fiddle), soar-

The first-ever Nova Scotia Banjo Camp took place at the Tatamagouche Learning Centre from August 11-13. The Camp was organized by Ross Nickerson of [banjoteacher.com](http://banjoteacher.com). The Tatamagouche Centre is located just outside the village of Tatamagouche, a two-hour drive northeast of Halifax and two hours southeast of Moncton, New Brunswick. Its picturesque setting overlooking Tatamagouche Bay was inspirational, to say the least, and a great escape for those of us living in urban centres.

Forty students of varying skill levels attended the inaugural camp. The majority of students were in the beginner to intermediate level with a smaller number at the advanced level, playing semi-professionally in bluegrass bands. Most students were from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; two students travelled from Newfoundland and one from as far away as Virginia! (It's always nice to have the South represented at a banjo camp.) The students were fortunate to have three excellent banjo instructors—Ross Nickerson, Ian Perry and banjo legend Bill Keith—who all brought their own teaching styles, techniques and experiences.

Even though I consider myself an intermediate player at best, I decided to join the advanced group because of the smaller class size. We received a great deal of instruction from Bill Keith on music theo-

ry and its application to the banjo. Bill's knowledge of scales and his ability to find chords anywhere along the fret board is mind blowing, and he dazzled students and instructors alike. Because of Bill I am now beginning to understand the circle of fifths; I just have to figure out how to apply it to my level of banjo playing.

We did manage to get Bill to open up about what it was like to be on the road as a Bluegrass Boy with Bill Monroe in the early 1960s. It is hard to believe the incredible amount of travel they did by car for \$25 per day. As hard as it is today to make a living in bluegrass, it was obviously tougher back then. I should also mention that Bill was very generous with his time; he took pictures with any student that asked and installed my new Keith tuners—thanks, Bill!

Ian Perry demonstrated how to use computer software to slow down fast banjo breaks and learn by ear. This was really beneficial as it showed us a way to learn fast banjo breaks without the crutch of tab which most of us (including myself) have become too dependent (I'm sure Murphy Henry would be proud!)

Ross gave us some practical tips on rolls and worked through some cool licks on the tune *John Hardy*. This was great hands-on instruction.

The facility was open 24 hours a day for jamming purposes. I was fortunate enough to get into a fun jam session with



Ian Perry, Bill Keith and Ross Nickerson at Ross's Nova Scotia Banjo Camp, Sept. 2006

continued on page 47

some other students who brought along a dobro, fiddle, mandolin and of course, a guitar—thanks Willie Joe! We ended up jamming until 2:30 in the morning.

A highlight for me was the sold-out banjo performance that Ross, Ian and Bill gave on Saturday night at the Tatamagou-

che Creamery. This facility only holds 150 people and we ended up turning people away. Each banjo player did an individual thirty minute set of original and standard material.

Ian performed first and highlighted how

*continued on page 47*

## ON THE ROAD

### IBMA 2006

#### Murphy Henry

**I**t was Monday morning and my daughter Casey and I were sitting in my van in the long queue to get into the Nashville Convention Center to set up our Murphy Method Booth for the IBMA World of Bluegrass Trade Show. It was my 17<sup>th</sup> year of boothing at IBMA. (How's that for inventing a word?) Stuck in traffic with nothing to do, I put in the CD "*Old Friends*," by Alan Munde and Wayne Shrubalsall. "Finally, a banjo album that is easy to listen to," say the liner notes. How right they are! Just the two banjos—Wayne playing clawhammer, and Alan playing his classic Scruggs-melodic style—with no singing or other instruments to clutter up the sound. Recorded "live" with no overdubs, the disc reveals how creative and capable these players are when the tape is rolling. My favorite number is *Traditional Family Breakdown* whose title comes from the fertile and twisted mind of Mr. Munde. What a grand way to start the week!

This was IBMA's second year in Nashville and many of the first-year kinks had been ironed out. Late-night showcase rooms, at reasonable rates, were offered and the Murphy Method took advantage of this in order to present two of our teachers...ahem...who just happened to be our kids Casey and Chris and their new band the Two-Stringers. Well, what are parents for? Filling out the lineup were three other groups including the hot, hot, hot Missy Raines Band (aka Missy Raines and the New Hip), Tyler Grant and Friends (with Chris Pandolfi on banjo) and, from Wyoming, Anne and Pete Sibley, a wife and husband duo. Anne had "cold-called" me for the slot, and I admired her for that! Pete plays tasteful clawhammer banjo and Anne's strong, sure voice complements

her original songs. Being enveloped in all this musical energy from 11 pm until 2 am was a pure joy.

I was staying at Casey's house in Madison, which is within walking distance of where Earl Scruggs used to live on Donna Drive. Naturally we walked by, but, unlike the Flint Hill Flash, I did not stop and pick up a rock out of Earl's former yard. I spent my down time with Casey's guest cat, Peaches, watching *Gilmore Girls* on DVD. Bluegrass content: in one episode mention was made of relatives who listened to Flatt and Scruggs CDs!

One of the Big Events this year was the opportunity to see The Man Himself, Earl Scruggs, who was tapped to unveil a new plaque at the Ryman Auditorium. Friday afternoon found Casey and me standing in the blocked-off street between the Convention Center and the Ryman. A small platform with a podium had been set up at one corner of the Mother Church and a band of teenagers were playing in front of the stage. I absolutely did not recognize Ryan Holliday, who was playing a mandolin instead of his usual banjo, and looking positively Dylanesque (the 1960s Bob) with his longish shock of black hair, his lanky teenage body, and his somber air. Filling out this pick-up group were Houston Caldwell on banjo and two of my students, Malia and Christina Furtado, on fiddle and bass. (Okay, Malia was a mandolin student and I soon had to pass her on to my son Chris!) The guitar player, from Houston's band, I did not know. The young folks acquitted themselves well on a number of Earl's tunes including *Groundspeed*, but didn't do any singing. Earl and his entourage had not appeared yet, so they didn't have the pressure of

Playing In Front Of Earl but I wondered if they knew that Bill Keith was there, practically in the front row.

Soon the dignitaries—Earl, Ricky Skaggs, Eddie Stubbs, and the mayor of Nashville—took their places on stage. Quite a few other persons of important were seated nearby: Gary and Randy Scruggs, Curley Seckler, Everett Lilly, Jesse McReynolds, Lance LeRoy, Ray Price. I sure did miss seeing Louise Scruggs. I'm certain she was there in spirit.

Eddie spoke, the mayor spoke, and Ricky spoke, but what I was interested in was What Earl Said. As always the great man showed himself to be modest, unassuming, humble, and quite willing to cheerfully expound on the questions Eddie asked. (Earl seems shy but, really, he's a good talker. I think, Southern boy that he is, he just doesn't like to put himself forward.)

Eddie brought Earl on with a powerful introduction: "There are no boundaries for this man. This is the right hand that changed the world!" Large applause from the crowd. (We would have stood up but we were already standing.)

Earl (graciously): Thank you. That's mighty nice.

Eddie: How did it feel to come to Nashville to work for Bill Monroe and play on the Grand Ole Opry?

Earl (humbly): It was such a thrill to me to come here and do for a living what I would have done just for fun.

Eddie: I've heard Lester say that you would sometimes go for a week without taking your shoes off.

Earl (agreeably): Sure did. We were having a good time. I really loved it.

Eddie: Did you realize that you were creating something special?

Earl (modestly): It just sounded good to me.

Earl talked about meeting his wife Louise at the Opry, getting a kick out of telling us he met her in the alley. Then Eddie chimed in with a great Louise and Earl story. Eddie said that Louise wanted to impress Earl so she got one of Bill Monroe's Columbia recordings and listened to it. When they met the next time she said, "I enjoyed your banjo playing on the record." Earl's response: "That was Stringbean." The audience just howled.

In spite of his genre-building time with

Music 325 Laurelwood Dr. Pigeon Forge, TN 37863  
Phone orders: Visa/MC, Disc. 800-426-8744 or [www.hatfieldmusic.com](http://www.hatfieldmusic.com)

**J.D. CROWE CLASSIC SOLOS:** Tablature Transcriptions form all of the "Bluegrass Albums", Vol 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 64-page book. NEW "J.D. Crowe Live Show Solos" tab book. Over 50 great solos. \$25 each ppd. Bluegrass Outlet, 28 Applton St, Dieppe, NB, CANADA E1A 2H4 (506) 855-2309, (800) 651-0488, [www.bluegrassoutlet.com](http://www.bluegrassoutlet.com)

**BanjoTeacher.com** - The Banjo Cruise with Tom Adams, Ned Luberecki, Ross Nickerson and Ian Perry, January 22nd to 26th. The Nova Scotia Banjo Camp with Bill Keith Ross Nickerson and Ian Perry, August 11th, 12th and 13th. The Banjo Encyclopedia "Bluegrass Banjo form A to Z" in wire bound versions only at BanjoTeacher.com, Other Books, CDs, Accessories and great deals on Gold Tone Banjos too. [www.banjoteacher.com](http://www.banjoteacher.com) 1-866-322-6567

**BANJO LESSONS** in the SF Bay area from BNL columnist and Augusta instructor Bill Evans. All levels accepted, traditional to progressive styles taught, over 20 years of teaching and playing experience. individualized instruction to meet each student's needs and schedule, including intensive workshop-style sessions for out of town students. (510) 528-1924, e-mail [bevans@nativeandfine.com](mailto:bevans@nativeandfine.com)

**DrBANJO.COM** Pete Wernick's giant website! Free instructional articles, 80+ "Ask Dr. Banjo" entries, jamming section, Beginner's section, Tablature, secure online ordering of Pete's bestselling videos, books, CDs; details on nationwide Bluegrass Jam Camps, and Colorado winter Banjo Camps, Photos, MP3s, Calendar.

**FREE TAB** on the Internet at Phil Mann's site. Bluegrass info and links. [www.bluegrassbanjo.org](http://www.bluegrassbanjo.org)

**MURPHY HENRY'S BOOK:** *And There You Have It!* A collection of Murphy's BNL columns. Soft-cover, 194 pages, B&W photos. Tips on practice, stories of other student, much discussion on learning by ear. \$15 plus \$3 shipping. Shipping free if ordered with a Murphy Method video/ DVD. The Murphy Method, POB 2498, Winchester VA 22604

**DWIGHT DILLER'S TAB BOOK/CD AND INSTRUCTIONAL DVDS:** Clawhammer banjo from the mountains of West Virginia. Sign up online or call for monthly specials and discounts, Dwight's reviews and news, other recordings and books. [www.morningstarfolkarts.com](http://www.morningstarfolkarts.com), [ediller@gmail.com](mailto:ediller@gmail.com) Call (304) 653-4397; or write Elaine Diller, PO Box 148, Hillsboro, WV 24946. MasterCard, Visa, Discover, checks, money orders accepted.

**LICK CARDS:** Up to 81 licks are isolated on playing cards. Endlessly rearrange them to create new solos! A great way to learn to improvise. Order Basic Scruggs, Up the Neck, Reno, Mandolin or Guitar. \$11.50 per set. Hear all the licks and song examples with a companion CD, \$10.00 per CD. Andy Cushing, 6534 Gowanda St, Hamburg, NY 14075

## • STRINGS & ACCESSORIES •

**FIRST QUALITY MUSIC** for the best prices anywhere on instruments, strings, parts and accessories. First Quality also has luthier services available for refitting tonerings, action adjustments, and repairs for banjo, fiddle, guitar and mandolin. Call today for orders and information at (800) 635-2021 [www.fqms.com](http://www.fqms.com)

**PRO BANJO PARTS**—same used by all top builders. Lowest prices—fast shipping. [www.gregboyd.com](http://www.gregboyd.com) (406) 327-9925. House of Fine Instruments

**REPAIR AND BUILD BANJOS, MANDOLINS, VIOLINS.** Free catalog packed with thousands of parts, tools, woods, kits, books and videos. Featuring StewMac tools and Waverly machines. Stewart-MacDonald, Box 900-A, Athens, OH 45701. (800) 848-2273 [www.stewmac.com](http://www.stewmac.com)

**GIBSON BANJO Owners**—want that prewar sound? Or you can ... buy an original tone ring for \$2000 - \$5000. or you can buy one of mine for \$200. Every tone ring is money-back guaranteed. Call or write for details: JLS Banjos, 711 Slate Rock, San Antonio, TX 78232, 210-495-4445

**PRO PICK** Finger and Thumb Picks. The most complete selection of picks you'll find anywhere. Choose from 50+

picks for the best in tone, comfort and performance. Free Catalog. Guptill Music, PO Box 521, Orange, CA 92856. [info@guptillmusic.com](mailto:info@guptillmusic.com), [www.guptillmusic.com](http://www.guptillmusic.com) (714) 556-8013

**T-Shirt 100% Cotton Pre-Shrunk White** lettering on Black shirt "When banjos are outlawed, only outlaws will play banjos." Medium to XL \$15.00 ea XXL + \$1.00 S&H \$3.50 Send Check or Money Order to WeeDoo T-Shirts PO Box 1651 Manchaca, TX 78652

**THE OLD-TIME WAY T-shirts**, \$18 each, L, XL. Call BNL **PRECISION WOOD** components for banjo and mandolin luthiers. Rims, soundboards, backboards, necks, fretboards, blueprints, and much more. Visit [www.siminoff.net](http://www.siminoff.net) or write Siminoff, 1159 Pradera Court, Arroya Grande, CA 93420.

Having problems with your **KEITH TUNERS**? Don't forget they are guaranteed. We will clean and relubricate your pair of tuners for \$15 (plus US return postage). Beacon Banjo, 2277 Glasco Tpke, PO Box 597, Woodstock, NY 12498, or call (845) 679-8314 (Fax: 5483) for info on these and other products. MC/VISA/Discover/AE

## • RECORDINGS •

**COMPACT DISCS, CASSETTES, VIDEOS! NEW FREE DISCOUNT CATALOG** with over 10,000 titles. Bluegrass, folk, blues, jazz, old time country, and much more, listed by category of music and by artist. **ELDERLY INSTRUMENTS**, 1100 N. Washington, PO B 14210-FH1, Lansing, MI 48901 (517) 372-7890 [www.elderly.com](http://www.elderly.com)

**APPALACHIAN BANJO & fiddle music**, storytelling, ballads & bluegrass. CDs, cassettes, DVDs, videos, and books. Write for free list. **IVY CREEK RECORDINGS**, P.O. Box 562235, Charlotte, NC 28256 or visit us on the Web at [www.ivycreek.com](http://www.ivycreek.com)

## CALLOUS from page 4

ing vocal harmonies, and, as always, incomparable banjo back-up.

The Mark Newton Band have put out "Hillbilly Hemingway" on Rebel. This enjoyable contemporary bluegrass release includes banjo player **John Wheat**'s blazing instrumental *Downforce*.

**Bela Fleck** can be heard on the EP "The Sparrow Quartet" by **Abigail Washburn** on Netwerk. These five cuts are the best examples of 3-finger and clawhammer banjos playing together that I've heard, the two styles creating more than the sum of their parts. For info go to [www.abigail-washburn.com](http://www.abigail-washburn.com). Bela can also be heard on Casey Dreissen's CD, "3D," on Sugar Hill.

It takes a special banjo player to keep up with Chris Thile, but **Noam Pikely** is clearly up to the task, on Chris's new CD "How To Grow A Woman From the Ground" on Sugar Hill. My favorite cuts are the five instrumentals, which the group performs crisply and with gusto.

Yep Roc has released "Bluegrass" by **Jim Lauderdale**, consisting of 13 originals (some of them he co-wrote), performed with a very hot band that includes **David Talbot** and **Jason Stewart** on banjos. I've always admired Lauderdale's songs, and

all the cuts on this CD are good 'uns, especially I Shouldn't Want You So Bad.

**Marcie Newhart** plays banjo in the family band The Bluegrass Thoroughbreds, and has just come out with her debut banjo release, "Dancing on the Five." Among the seven instrumentals and five vocal numbers are three Newhart originals, including the catchy title track. Marcie has real drive in her playing. Here she is joined by the Thoroughbreds, and Ron Stewart on fiddle.

**Old-Time: Riley Baugus** has released "Long Steel Rail" on Sugar Hill (produced by Tim O'Brien and Dirk Powell). This full-length CD includes some very tasty Round Peak clawhammer playing. Riley also sings, and plays fiddle and guitar.

## NOVA SCOTIA from page 6

the banjo could be adapted to world music from different countries, including Pakistan, Jamaica and Ireland. In addition he played some wonderful slow stuff, including the *Tennessee Waltz*. Ross opened his performance with the tune *El Cumbanchero* from his "Blazing the West" CD. This tune demonstrated different banjo techniques with incredible right hand speed. He also played some banjo standards such as *The Ballad of Jed Clampett* and *Dueling Banjos* which were well received. Bill took us through a retrospective of his long career, opening with a few Earl Scruggs classics, building up to a number of fiddle tunes and concluding with *Auld Lang Syne* which utilized the Keith Tuners. The concert concluded with the three pickers blazing through several bluegrass standards such. It was wonderful to watch how each player applied their own style to the lead breaks in these tunes.

There is no question that the first Nova Scotia Banjo Camp was a huge success. All the students I spoke with indicated they were looking forward to returning next year. The 2007 Nova Scotia Banjo Camp will take place at the Tatamagouche Learning Centre from August 24-26. For more information visit [banjoteacher.com](http://banjoteacher.com) or call Ross Nickerson toll free at 1-866-322-6567.

*Lyle Goldberg has been playing banjo for five years. He assisted Ross Nickerson in promoting the Nova Scotia Banjo Camp throughout Atlantic Canada and Maine.*