



Artwork by Emily Isbell

THE GRASSY GAZETTE

Summer 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Letter from the President
- Old Settlers Music Fest Recap
- CTBA Memorial Fest Recap
- CTBA 2023 Events Update
- CTBA Willa Beach-Porter Scholarship Update
- BUSK: Christopher Melas
- CTBA Member-Bands
- CTBA Member Marketplace
- CTBA Newsletter Advertising
- CTBA Business Members
- 'Possum with the WiFi Password

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



I came to Bluegrass later in life, and my first trip to Nashville was for my 40th birthday. My wife and I spent a few days doing all the things you're supposed to do - visiting Gruhn's, seeing Michael Cleveland play Kenny Baker's fiddle at the Station Inn (and jamming with Michael the next morning), getting a banjo lesson from Ryan Cavanaugh, having Charlie Cushman set-up my banjo, etc.

We also attended the Grand Ole Opry. Was I a little miffed to find out we'd be missing Jason Isbell at the Ryman? Of course. But it ended up being well worth it, as it just so happened that Jesse McReynolds was on the bill that night. I had no idea he was still performing, no idea that he was still an Opry member. It was my first time seeing someone from that first generation of

Bluegrass.

Which I mention, of course, because (as I write this) it has been a very bad week for that first generation. We lost Jesse a few days ago, and just this morning we heard that Bobby Osborne passed.

I can't imagine that I have anything meaningful to add to the record on these giants. But I'm thankful for the music and the legacy handed down. I hope we do well by it.

Stay cool, everybody. I'll see y'all out there, feel free to drop me a line anytime at President@CentralTexasBluegrass.org.

Jon Lundbom, President, CTBA

OLD SETTLERS MUSIC FEST RECAP

Old Settler's Music Fest 2023 is in the books! Many thanks to **Talia Bryce** and the whole **OSMF crew** for including the CTBA (and being a CTBA Business Member) again this year.

We sold merch, signed up new members, and spread the bluegrass gospel in the OSMF non-profit area. And, as with last year, we were thrilled to **sponsor and run the OSMF Workshop tent** We hosted workshops from **Sol Chase, Goodnight Texas, Nigel Wearne, Thrive Yoga, Elephant Revival, Jack Barksdale, and Tommy Emmanuel (!!!!!)**. What a blast! We'll see y'all there in 2024.





CTBA MEMORIAL FEST 2023 RECAP

And speaking of super-duper fun, amazing events: wow, was **CTBA Memorial Fest 2023** great or what!?!?

We had an **amazing turnout**, tons of CTBA members **jamming** and checking out the **member performances**. We sold a TON of **CTBA merch**, too - turns out y'all like **tie-dye shirts!** Who knew? (*Answer: Celebrindal Roberts.*)



Thanks to **everybody who came out**, to **Oskar Blues** for hosting, and extra-special thanks to all of the **CTBA members** that performed: **Kyle Smith, Danielle Russell, Kevin Willette, Randy Collier, Kym Warner,** and **The Hillsiders** (Andi Huff, Devon Canady, Hunter Hollingsworth, and Dom Fisher).



CTBA 2023 EVENTS UPDATE

Some members have been asking about this year's **CTBA Band Scramble & Garage Sale**.

The big problem with our Band Scramble is the timing. Is it fun to get together, scramble, and pick in mid-July? Absolutely! But it's too hot for



outdoor rehearsal, and it's just not prudent to have seven or eight bands rehearsing indoors all at once.

So - yes! - we will have our Band Scramble & Garage Sale this year, but in the **early fall**, when (hopefully) the weather is a little more forgiving. Keep a look out, we'll have more info soon!

And in more concrete news, the CTBA is thrilled to announce that our **45th Annual Meeting** will be held at **Oskar Blues Austin** on **Sunday, November 12th, 2023**.

Much more information to come, but **please mark your calendars** for Sunday, November 12th!

CTBA WILLA BEACH-PORTER SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

The CTBA is thrilled to announce that we have awarded a scholarship to CTBA member **Harry Polly**, who is headed to **Camp Bluegrass!** Mr. Polly says:



"I am very grateful to the Central Texas Bluegrass Association for selecting me to attend Camp Bluegrass 2023.

During COVID, my daughter - who plays the mandolin - gave me a resonator banjo and said 'Dad, you need to learn to play the banjo so we can play together at family gatherings.' Thus, my banjo journey began. I took a few lessons with Eddie Collins, who referred me to Jerry Hagins for clawhammer. I focused on clawhammer for about a year, but I attended several Wernick jam camps as well. My daughter kept pointing me towards Bluegrass. And slowly, practicing every day, I got better at Bluegrass! It's so much fun to play with other musicians.

I look forward to representing Central Texas Bluegrass Association at this year's Camp Bluegrass!"

Congratulations to Mr. Polly! And a reminder that we are still accepting applications for **2023 CTBA Willa Beach-Porter Scholarships!**

If you or someone you know is interested in **attending a bluegrass camp**, please consider applying for a scholarship! CTBA Willa-Beach Porter Scholarships are available to **any Texas resident aged 12-18**.

The CTBA and **ArtistWorks** are offering a number of



online scholarships, too. Each online scholarship recipient will receive a **one-year ArtistWorks membership** to the study track of their choice from the 30+ courses offered through ArtistWorks. ArtistWorks scholarships are available to **any Texas resident aged 12 years or older** (no age limit).



If you or someone you know is interested in a scholarship, head on over to CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Scholarship and apply today!

BUSK*: CHRISTOPHER MELAS

**BLUEGRASSER YOU SHOULD KNOW*

by Julian Root, Newsletter Editor



If you've attended any of the Tuesday night "Laz'Grass" shows at Lazarus Brewing 2 (on Airport Blvd), you've likely already seen the affable Christopher Melas play guitar and sing. You may already know why he is rapidly ascending among the ranks of local flatpickers - the guy can really play. What you may not know is how unusual his route into bluegrass has been.

Born in Washington, D.C., Christopher first picked up a guitar at six years old, after being thoroughly wowed by his older stepbrother's chops, who had been studying classical guitar at the collegiate level. Shortly thereafter, he moved to his mother's old home place in Perú. He continued studying classical guitar, which was the de facto course of study for guitar students, regardless of their goals with the instrument.

After finishing high school in Perú, Christopher wanted to study classical guitar in college. Thanks to a connection made with a renowned teacher in Perú, as well as his father's Greek lineage, Christopher had a chance to study in Greece. Trouble was, he didn't speak Greek. His mentor at the conservatory agreed to vouch for his ability to speak the language if he promised to speak it in a year's time. So, Christopher learned to speak Greek in a year's time, and was accepted into the program.

And you thought learning Tony Rice's break to Blue Ridge Cabin Home was tough.

Christopher went on to compete in several contests across Europe, with performances in

Greece, Serbia, Germany, and Holland. Throughout all this, his true love was - you guessed it - bluegrass. Having grown up much closer to the bluegrass heartland, he had been exposed to the music - particularly Bela Fleck - and got the bug early. Unfortunately, he was stuck in the highfalutin world of classical guitar in Western Europe. Upon completing his master's degree in Holland, he pushed himself to injury preparing for a competition (which he won). Immediately after competing, he found himself unable to play move his fingers in the way he needed to in order to play classical guitar. He soon learned he had developed focal dystonia.

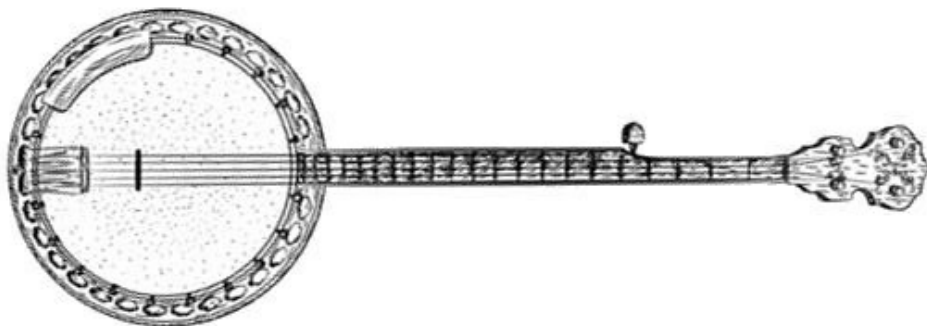


But he could still use a flatpick!

Fast forward a few years, and Christopher relocated to Austin, where he moved in with some cousins. He quickly began teaching guitar, and immersing himself in bluegrass. His first gig was at a Renaissance Festival. Now, he is happily married, gigs at least once a week, and has an ever-expanding roster of guitar students. As a matter of fact, Christopher has room on his schedule for a few more students!! Feel free to contact him at chris.melas@gmail.com.

CTBA MEMBER-BANDS

The CTBA is proud to have the following **bands** as members and wholeheartedly recommend them for all of your Central Texas bluegrass needs!



Austin Monday Nighters
Black Diamond
Bobby Giles & Texas Gales
Brand New Key
Four Fights Per Pint
The Greenlawn Rangers
The Hillsiders
Long Prairie

The McKinleys
MoPac Traffic Jams
Randy Collier & Grassland
The Sieker Band
Strawberry Flats
Texas String Assembly
Wayside Bluegrass

If your band is interested in becoming a CTBA member, please visit CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join or contact us at CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org to learn more.

CTBA MEMBER MARKETPLACE

We occasionally get requests from **CTBA members** looking to list **instruments for sale** in our quarterly newsletter. And while we understand this is standard operating procedure for many bluegrass clubs, we've been referring members to the **Central Texas Bluegrass Facebook group**. But - hey - we've reconsidered and are now willing to **list instruments for sale by CTBA members**.



Please note the CTBA is not involved in these transactions or the inspections/setups of instruments. Please contact the seller for any questions. And please **reach out to us** if you are a CTBA member looking for help moving that high-ticket item.

Finally, please remember that the CTBA accepts **instrument donations** for our annual Band Scramble & Garage Sale! **All donations are tax-deductible.**

THIS QUARTER'S LISTINGS

- CTBA member **Stephen Mangold** has a **Weber Sweet Pea** mandolin in perfect condition for sale. Contact at stephen.mangold@sbcglobal.net if interested.

CTBA NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING

Speaking of our marketplace, we **offer space for advertising!** As the CTBA newsletter is now 100% digital and formatted for screens, we offer advertising space by the **full-column** or **half-column**.

- **Full-column-width ads: \$30/quarterly issue**
- **Half-column-width ads: \$15/quarterly issue**



We are extraordinarily proud to play a part in the vibrant Central Texas Bluegrass community. Our newsletter is a wonderful opportunity for you to get the word out about your business or event to a highly-targeted self-

selecting market. If you are interested in advertising, please reach out to us at ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org.

CTBA BUSINESS MEMBERS

The CTBA is proud to have the following **businesses** as members, please consider supporting them as they support Bluegrass in Central Texas!

Barton Springs Mill
BartonSpringsMill.com

Central Machine Works
CMWBrewery.com

Country Guitar Online
CountryGuitarOnline.com

Lazarus Brewing Co.
LazarusBrewing.com

Madrone Coffee Co.
MadroneMountainCoffee.com

Oskar Blues Austin
Oskarblues.com/location/austin-tx-oskar-blues-taproom/

Old Settler's Music Fest
OldSettlersMusicFest.org

Shades of Bluegrass
ShadesOfBluegrass.com

St. Elmo Brewing Company
StElmoBrewing.com

Texas Bluegrass Music
TXBluegrassMusic.com

Vista Brewing
VistaBrewing.com

Woodtone Strings
WoodtoneStrings.com

If you and your business are interested in becoming a part of the CTBA, please head on over to CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join or reach out at CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org.



' Possum with the WiFi Password

*...and other juxtapositions
by your editor, Julian Root*

Thanks for mentioning the passing of Jesse and Bobby, Jon. Who among the living can lay claim to a hand in the first wave of bluegrass evolution? Bobby Hicks may now be the elder statesman - he'll be 90 on July 21. Bill Clifton, Del McCoury,

Paul Williams, and even Roger Sprung played significant roles. Jesse and Bobby lived parallel lives, in some regards. Both served in the Korean War at the same time. Both were knighted by the Grand Ole Opry the same year (1964). Heck, not only did they die a few days apart -

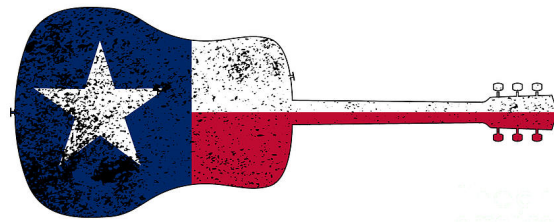
they died a few miles apart in Gallatin, Tennessee.

While detractors of Jesse and Bobby are few and far between among the most obstinate purists nowadays, both of these titans drew varying degrees of scorn from the bluegrass police of their time. Of course, the Osborne

Brothers were one of the first bands to incorporate drums and electric instruments. Both groups drew heavily from genres miles away from the bluegrass nativity.

Jesse even recorded that weird track with the Doors (Runnin' Blues, off The Soft Parade). Maybe the dogma is bound to evolve with the music, albeit at a slower pace.

Or maybe I've just had too much coffee, and should get back to work on my up-the-neck break to Stoney Creek.



Central Texas Bluegrass | P.O. Box 9816, Austin, TX 78766-0816

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