



Artwork by Emily Isbell

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hey there Bluegrass Buddies! School's back in session, the leaves are starting to change, and the temperatures are only in the high nineties - Fall has returned to Central Texas.

Aside from the beautiful jamming weather (I'll see y'all Sunday afternoons at **Batch!**), the big news over here at CTBA Central is the upcoming Annual Meeting & Show and (related) upcoming Board Elections. More on both below, but (1) make sure your calendars are marked for Sunday, November 16th, and

(2) if you are a CTBA member in good standing and you have not yet received your ballot for the 2026-2027 Board of Directors Election, please let us know ASAP, we'll sort it out.

As always, hit me up anytime at President@CentralTexasBluegrass.org.
I'll see y'all out there!

Jon Lundbom
President, Central Texas Bluegrass

P.S. We are up to **TWENTY member-bands**. Wild!

JOIN THE CTBA!



We can't possibly say it often enough - you (yes, you!) should **become a CTBA member** today!
#partylogo #bluegrassexplosion

The CTBA is a membership organization, we are able to do what we do only so long as our membership is strong. CTBA membership is **cheap** - starting at only \$25/year - and comes with a **ton of benefits**. With even more benefits for **band** and **business** members! You can read about it all and sign up today at CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join.

2025 CTBA ANNUAL MEETING & SHOW



SUNDAY, NOV 16, 2025

1:00 - 8:00 PM

Meanwhile Brewing Co., 3901 Promontory Point Dr. , Austin, TX 78744



Lost Patterns

1:00 pm - CTBA Sunday Bluegrass Jam

3:00 pm - Lost Patterns

5:00 pm - Volume Five

CENTRALTEXASBLUEGRASS.ORG

VOLUMEFIVEBG.COM

As I'm sure y'all know by now the **CTBA 47th Annual Meeting & Show** will take place on **Sunday, November 16th**. We'll be meeting at **Meanwhile Brewing** (3901 Promontory Point Dr, Austin) for lots of jamming and performances, headlined by the one and only **Volume Five**! Here's the schedule:

1PM CTBA Sunday Bluegrass Jam (but at **Meanwhile Brewing!**)

3PM **Lost Patterns**

5PM **Volume Five**

6:30PM Go home? More jamming? You tell me...

This year, the event will be free and open to the public. So bring your friends (and please encourage them to **join the CTBA** and **buy a shirt**)!

2026-2027 CTBA BOARD ELECTIONS

The election for the 2026-2027 term of the CTBA Board of Directors is underway! Ballots



went out at the end of September. If you are a CTBA member in good standing and have yet to receive your ballot: (1) **check your spam folder etc...** and/or (2) please let us know at CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org.

And, of course, if you have already received your ballot: vote early, vote often.

I know I just said this, but if you are not a member of the CTBA **please do consider joining**. Anyone who joins before the Annual Meeting will receive a ballot and have their say in who leads this nearly 47-year-old organization. We are only as strong as our membership, and we would absolutely love to have you as a member.

CTBA SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

Hey, it's Jon again! My 100% absolute favorite part of this whole thing is giving scholarships, and it made me so happy to receive the following letter from **CTBA Willa Beach-Porter Scholarship** recipient **Gus Lovicott**.



Dear CTBA,

Thank you so much for awarding me the Willa Beach-Porter Scholarship and giving me the chance to attend the Blue Ridge Banjo Camp. I had such a great time! I met a lot of awesome people and learned so much that will help me keep growing as a musician.

It's not often that I get to be around other kids who play the banjo, so it was really cool to spend time with other young musicians. I learned a lot, like how to play backup during songs, try out different tunings, and change the tone of my banjo.

I also really enjoyed Tony Trischka's banjo class. He's an amazing teacher, and I picked up a lot from his sessions.

Thanks again for making this experience possible. I'm really grateful for the opportunity!

*Thanks,
Gus Lovicott*

Huge congratulations again to Gus, we're absolutely thrilled you had such a great time at the **Blue Ridge Banjo Camp**! Also: **nice shirt...**

And, by the way, though summer is in the rearview mirror, we still have **ArtistWorks** scholarships available!



Each year, the CTBA and **ArtistWorks** offer a number of online scholarships. Online scholarship recipients 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).

Head on over to CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Scholarship and apply today!

TX BLUEGRASS ORGANIZATIONS



We've been doing some work on CentralTexasBluegrass.org and decided that we would replace our very, very, very, very, very old and outdated Links page with a page linking to our **sister-organizations** across the great state of Texas.

If you have a second, head on over to CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Texas-Bluegrass and see what our compadres are up to!

PICKIN' FOR A CAUSE RECAP

By Hannah Giardino, CTBA Board Member

Pickin' for a Cause brought together the Central Texas bluegrass community for an afternoon of live bluegrass and giving at **Radio/East** on July 27th. With performances by local bands (including several **CTBA member-bands**) and support from generous donors and businesses, the event **raised over \$3,500** for flood relief. All proceeds were donated to the **Community Foundation of Central Texas** to help families affected by recent floods.



IBMA WORLD OF BLUEGRASS RECAP

By Roam Gunn, CTBA Secretary



Roam and Loren Gunn from CTBA member-band **Across the Way** made their first trip to **IBMA 2025** this year and had a killer time learning and watching some of the best grass out there today! The conference kicked off with a performance by **Jr. Sisk** and **Ramblers Choice**, followed by **Billy Strings'** keynote address on inclusivity in Bluegrass—a message that resonated throughout the week.

Business Conference sessions

covered everything from Social Media in 2025 to Songwriting Workshops and Tips for Emerging Artists, Tributes to Hazel Dickens and Paul Williams, plus some epic showcase performances from **Mountain Grass Unit**, **Greg Blake** and **Special C**, **Wyatt Ellis**, and many more. Wednesday night brought a jaw-dropping trio performance by **Blueridge Music Camp** instructors **Bryan Sutton**, **Bela Fleck**, and **Casey Driessen**. And **Jimmy Martin's 1942 D-28** was made available for play by his youngest son **Buddy Lee** (that alone was worth the price of admission for me).



Between sessions, we got to hang with Nully and the team from **Collings Guitars** (check out their new **Hill Country Series!**), master mandolin luthiers **Tom Ellis** and **Pava Knezevic**, and **Silas Lowe** of CTBA member-band **Lost Patterns**. It's inspiring to see some local faces out there on the national bluegrass stage!

The conference wrapped with a two-day festival featuring performances from **Trey Hensley**, **Sierra Hull**, **East Nash Grass**, **Michael Cleveland & Jason Carter**, and **Sister Sadie**. **Gillian Welch & David Rawlings** closed out the final night with an epic set. Chattanooga was a hit, and we're already planning to return next year with the whole band.



CAMP BLUEGRASS RECAP

By John Downing, CTBA Board Member



I made my first trek to **Camp Bluegrass** at **South Plains College** in the appropriately-named Levelland, TX last July. I'd been hearing stories about the legendary jams and classes from friends for years, but had never made it before. Legendary banjo sensation **Alan Munde** had been leading it for years, but this year turned it over to **Gerald Jones**. Gerald did a great job of putting together a potpourri of classes, jams, and performances from teachers.

I arrived on Sunday and checked in to my very nice dorm room, a huge

upgrade from my first college dorm in 1969. I found a large slow-jam, led by fiddle teacher Gretchen Priest, just down the hall from my room. It was a nice way to end the day after my long drive across the Texas plains.

Monday through Thursday were filled with classes, and jams in between, in the multitude of spaces to pick. We had sensational instructor performances every night. The highlight for me was seeing Munde sit in on several performances, and also perform solo.

I enjoyed the large jams in the common areas and some smaller jams with some great pickers. One of the larger, better jams included Stacy Jackson, one of our **Willa Beach-Porter CTBA Scholarship Fund** recipients, with her partner on bass (gotta love a good bluegrass bass). All-in-all, it was a great experience at a reasonable price - I spent \$830 for a private room with all meals included. An absolute steal, indeed!

2025 TX STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS RECAP

The Central Texas Bluegrass Association is proud to have sponsored the **2025 Texas State Championships for Guitar and Banjo** Here's what our friends at the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation had to say about it:



"The **Bluegrass Heritage Foundation** was excited to host the 2025 Texas State Championships for guitar and banjo on Saturday, August 2, 2025, in conjunction with the Farmers Branch Bluegrass Festival. The Championships were held at the DoubleTree Hotel near the Galleria in Farmers Branch and were sponsored in part by the **City of Farmers Branch Texas, Central Texas Bluegrass Association, Southwest Bluegrass Club, Paluxy River Bluegrass Association, Bay Area Bluegrass Association, Camp Bluegrass, and Huber Banjos**. The top three finishers in each contest received cash prizes of \$500, \$250, and \$100, along with commemorative plaques and other items donated by contest sponsors. Both contests had a strong field of contestants, and the winners in each category were as follows:

Guitar (1st): John-Samuel May (Waco, Texas)
Guitar (2nd): Jed Clark (Nashville, Tennessee)

Guitar (3rd): Scott Owen (Garland, Texas)

Banjo (1st): Luke Lastelick (Dallas, Texas)

Banjo (2nd): Read Horton (Savoy, Texas)

Banjo (3rd): Kalip Cole (Deville, Louisiana)

We were thankful to host so many fine pickers here in Texas and hope for another great round of contests next year!"

LOSSES

Cara Cooke, In Rememberance

By Eddie Collins



Cara Cooke, perhaps the world's foremost bluegrass harmonica player, passed away on September 9th after battling a lengthy illness. Cara's roots in the Central Texas Bluegrass scene go back nearly 40 years. Her first time playing at the Manchaca Firehall was in 1986 with the group Fighting Creek. Some of the other notable bands she played with over the years include RedEye, The Manchaca All Stars, Texas Honey Bees and Blue Country Grass. She played the upright bass in many of these groups, adding some harmonica along the way.

She was one of only a handful of harmonica players capable of playing bluegrass fiddle tunes note-for-note.

She was part of the Austin Harmonica

Club and would give workshops at festivals and national conventions. She was also a solid mandolin and guitar player. Many people commented online about how Cara was always willing to help others improve their music skills. She was an excellent harmony singer and could steer others to their parts. For years she helped Mary Hattersley with the Blazing Bows, a group of Mary's young fiddle students that performed at public events.

Originally from the Houston area, Cara worked for the City of Austin for over 30 years. An impromptu tribute to Cara was held at the New World Deli's monthly Bluegrass Open Mic on September 11th. Several harmonica players joined in and many of Cara's favorite tunes were performed with people sharing their fond memories. Over the years, Cara had served on the board of CTBA and could be seen at just about every bluegrass jam throughout Central Texas. At the time of this writing, plans for a more formalized memorial are in the works.

HAPPY TRAILS!!!!
It was a real good run
4/20/2020



*Shane Orr, In Remembrance
By Nona Mason*



The Central Texas bluegrass community lost a dear friend and CTBA member Michael Shane Orr on August 29, 2025, just one day before his 55th birthday. Shane passed away in Temple, Texas, after a brief illness, leaving behind a legacy of music, friendship, and generosity that touched countless lives.

A gifted guitarist and mandolin player, Shane made music the center of his life. For several years,

he hosted a local bluegrass jam at Suds Monkey Brewing, creating a welcoming space for players of all skill levels to gather, play, and grow. His passion for bluegrass and the Grateful Dead brought together a vibrant community of musicians who became like family. Known for his deep knowledge of musical instruments—their history, value, and craftsmanship—Shane generously mentored new musicians, sharing his expertise and encouraging their musical journeys.

A celebration of Shane's life will be held on **Sunday, November 2, 2025** at **Suds Monkey Brewing** in Austin, TX. There will be a brief memorial ceremony, followed by bluegrass music. Friends and family are invited to

gather, share memories, and honor Shane's life.

Rest easy, Shane. The music plays on.



THE COMING RESURRECTION (OF BLUEGRASS JAMMING AT PEARL)

By Ken Brown

I'm not sure when I started attending the monthly jam at Pearl, but I know it was at least 25 years ago. At its peak, I would guess that monthly attendance was probably well over 300 people, and if you got there late, as I usually did, you could have trouble finding a parking spot. Many of the RV hookups were taken, and some folks had to park on the fringe, without utilities. There'd be a line out the door of the kitchen for the evening meal, and empty chairs in the dining room were scarce. The lineup for the stage show was always packed, and you had to sign up well in advance. It was hard to find an empty pew in the auditorium. Late-night jams in the dining room were memorable, usually going on well after midnight. Those midnight jams with Todd Pollard, Sue Knorre, Susannah Armstrong, Roger Starnes, Ray Casper, Wayne Ross, Joe McColley and many others are memories that will linger forever. Folks came from all over: from Dallas-Fort Worth, Weatherford, Houston. Austin, Abilene, and who knows where.

Pearl is really just an obscure spot on the map



on the rolling Lampasas Cut Plain terrain of Coryell County, about an hour and 45 minutes north of my house in Austin (or about 98 miles). It's northwest of Lampasas and east of Evant. The address is 6301 FM 183, Gatesville, but there's not much there. There isn't even a gas station or convenience store. The jam is held in the former Pearl schoolhouse, built somewhere around 1907, now used as a community center. There's an auditorium with a stage, a functioning kitchen, a dining hall, four former classrooms that now serve as jam rooms, and an open-air pavilion outside.

About five or six years ago, the jam suffered a setback, first as organizational difficulties with the community center board cropped up, followed by the Covid pandemic, and for some time the jam was moribund. However, local residents wanted to resurrect the monthly jam, and it is now in a rebuilding phase. I started attending several months ago, and I try to make it every month if I can. Current attendance is a bit sparse, but if pickers keep coming and the word gets out, it should be possible to rebuild this event over time to something like its former scale.

At least for now, I don't have trouble finding a parking spot. There are good reasons to venture up to Pearl on the first Saturday of each month (except September, when the Labor Day weekend displaces it to the second Saturday). It's an indoor, all-weather jam (unless you elect to pick outside under the pavilion), and because there are four separate jam rooms, you can circulate among them to find the circle that suits you best. And there's no noise interference between the rooms. It's also an opportunity to pick with folks you might not encounter in Austin. The stage shows have resumed, and entertainment is provided either by visiting bands or by pickers recruited to just jam onstage, usually with a couple of wide-pattern mikes. The kitchen is open until about two or three in the afternoon, and food sales provide financial support to keep the lights on and the community center open.

Attendance at a jam like this is sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a few hardcore pickers keep coming, the word will get out, and the event will grow over time. On the other hand, if no one has confidence that folks will show up, they'll skip it and the jam will die. It's up to us.

GPS coordinates: N 31° 24' 37" W 98° 2' 7"

SPINNING WAX

By Simon Waxman, CTBA Vice-President

There is much in this world that doesn't make sense to me. For a start: anything communicated in a language that isn't English. I also haven't fully grasped the strange features of quantum mechanics. Sorry. And I'll never understand what possessed the higher-ups at Frito-Lay to greenlight

cappuccino-flavored potato chips.

Another curiosity is the 1974 LP *Stone Mountain Boys*, from the Dallas-based band of the same name. *Stone Mountain Boys* is a cult classic, and deservedly so. But it's hard to believe it works as well as it does. The album seems to be at crosscurrents with itself, the ensemble never lingering long on any side of that most tedious bluegrass culture war, pitting invention against so-called tradition. Rigorous Monroe-style mandolin meets exploratory banjo. The repertoires of Flatt and Scruggs, Alton Delmore, and Hank Williams provide fodder, as do those of Lennon and McCartney, Steven Stills, and Kenny Rogers. The vocal harmonies mostly are straight-ahead grass, but the guitar work is decidedly not. Nor is *Stone Mountain Boys* a smooth blend. You hear and feel all of its stylistic dissonances. It's chunky.



The group formed in the mid-1960s, with Lonnie Kraft on guitar, Mitchell Land on mandolin, Tootie Williams on bass, Eddie Shelton on banjo, and Byron Berline on fiddle. This is just about the same band that appears on the 1974 album, with the exception of Kraft, who's replaced by Bob Davis on lead guitar. (Kraft returns for the band's 1978 reunion disc.)

Berline was a star, already a Bluegrass Boy as of 1967. The rest of these names would largely drift from memory, outside the Texas and Oklahoma scenes that nurtured them. After all, these were working stiffs. Land is a revelation—a chillingly good mandolin picker, who figured out the Monroe style a lot better than I have quantum mechanics. But he was also a tree-trimmer and machinist working for Weathermatic, the manufacturer of irrigation systems. Tootie Williams drove a cement truck. Shelton worked for National Cash Register and at one point was a computer technician for the school district in Temple, Texas, his hometown. If we're fair, though, Shelton attracted at least a dim spotlight. For decades, he has been revered among banjo players for his innovations, which he shared with proteges like Alan Munde and Danny Barnes.



Stone Mountain Boys is strong out of the gate, with a confident rendition of “Forty Miles from Poplar Bluff,” the Porter and Dolly theme song. The track establishes what’s to come: stylish, even out-there, permutations on the Scruggs template; staccato guitar picking; supple and ornamented fiddling; and that bluesy, muddy mandolin. The arrangements and production quality also stand out immediately. There is lovely acoustic tone all over this track and the album as a whole. Plus, the mix is perfect, with every musical gesture articulated. Where there is space in the form, a fill subtly emerges to occupy it before shrinking back at just the right moment.

One of the highpoints is Shelton’s distinctive instrumental “Bluegrass Express,” which is probably his best-known work. He also recorded it a few years later on 1977’s *Expedition*. To my ear, the Stone Mountain Boys have the superior rendition. On *Expedition*, Shelton seems hurried, with less room to exercise his creative powers. Perhaps the electric bass just pushes too hard. And while I prefer the dry tone and rawness of Dave Ferguson’s fiddling on *Expedition*, as compared to the ornate and prettified Berline, Land’s mandolin playing is simply unbeatable. Matters of taste, you know. Given the many picking talents on *Stone Mountain Boys*—and considering that the singing, while certainly serviceable, isn’t the main draw—it’s surprising that “Bluegrass Express” is one of only two instrumentals here, the other being the novelty doodad “Boggy Creek.” Speaking of talents, Skip Connover shows up on the dobro now and again, sounding particularly nice on Williams’s “My Sweet Love Ain’t Around,” which also features the album’s most impressive vocal lead.

“Yesterday” gives the band an opportunity to flex some vocal harmonies, and Shelton—to whom the material is well-suited—plays magical backup. Land, however, seems bored. By the mid-’70s, Beatles covers were indeed old hat in the bluegrass world. More successful, and surprising, is the arrangement of “Ruben James,” Kenny Rogers’ anti-racist anthem. Alongside the many covers, the original “Living in the Past” is model bluegrass. Written by Land and Craft, the song is nothing fancy, which is part of why it’s easy to love. It’s a jammer’s delight: simple to figure out and improvise over, but with a fresh lyrical palette that also lends itself to the vigorous delivery we know and love.



Stone Mountain Boys ends with an oddball valediction: the band's take on Stephen Stills's "So Begins the Task," from the well-played but exhausting 1972 *Manassas* album. The song tries so hard for profundity that it could be a college-application essay written by dad. It's unfortunate that the Stone Mountain Boys settled on this

artless number, given all of the poetic and emotionally rich country-rock on offer at the time. To take just one example, Gene Clark's 1971 *White Light* album includes eleven originals, every one of which sounds like it might have inspired what in Stills's hands became vague, meandering, and self-indulgent.

A weak closer aside, *Stone Mountain Boys* is top-quality bluegrass. Throughout the album, the cleverness and precision of Shelton's playing takes center stage. It's something special, the crystalline enunciation and the innovative ascending and descending phrases he uses to hop between chords. Davis's guitar backup is also notable—highly active, with constant passing movements and near-soloing beneath the vocals. It's a comping style that recalls the Stanley Brothers in the early 1950s, when George Shuffler would crawl all over the bass, projecting a sonic lightshow energetic enough to compete with rock 'n' roll. Davis adds a lot here. And though Land is a slavish proponent of the Monroe style, he deserves his own laurels. Every picker could learn from his elastic but impeccable timing. (And by every picker, I mean me.)

You can enjoy *Stone Mountain Boys* in its entirety on several popular streaming platforms, including [Apple Music](#), [Spotify](#), and [YouTube](#). Bonus! [Live bootlegs](#) from May 1969.

LIVERMORE

CTBA Member-Band Feature

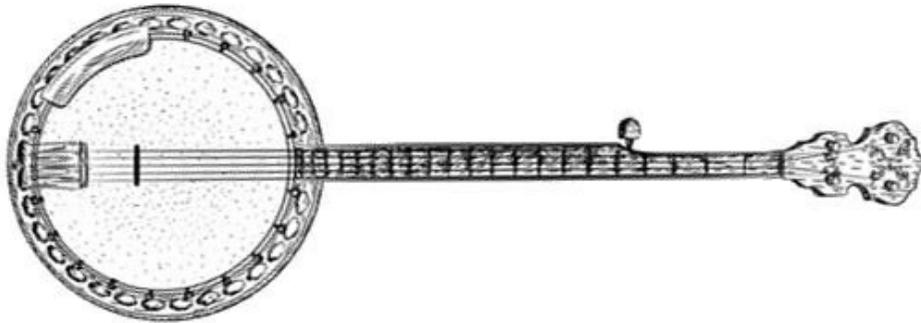


A four-piece bluegrass band based in Austin, [Livermore](#) brings energetic pickin', soulful harmonies, and classy arrangements wherever they're performing. Drawing on inspirations of old and new, the band pays homage to tradition while blending fresh arrangements.

Coming from diverse musical backgrounds, the Jacob Mink, Carter Stanley, Joslyn Boyer, and Marley Kezerian were brought together by a shared love of the grass culture - jamming, embracing the community, and keeping the traditions alive. Catch Livermore around Austin soon and keep up with us [@LivermoreATX](#) on Instagram.

CTBA MEMBER-BANDS

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



Across the Way

Bird Calls

Black Diamond

Bobby Giles & Texas Gales

BuffaloGrass

Dalton Harper Band

Four Fights Per Pint

The Greenlawn Rangers

Gus Miller & The Buzz Killers

The Hillsiders

Livermore

Long Prairie

Lost Patterns

The McKinleys

MoPac Traffic Jams

Randy Collier & Grassland

The Sieker Band

Strawberry Flats

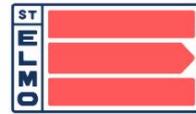
Sylvan River Band

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 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

Batch Craft Beer & Kolaches

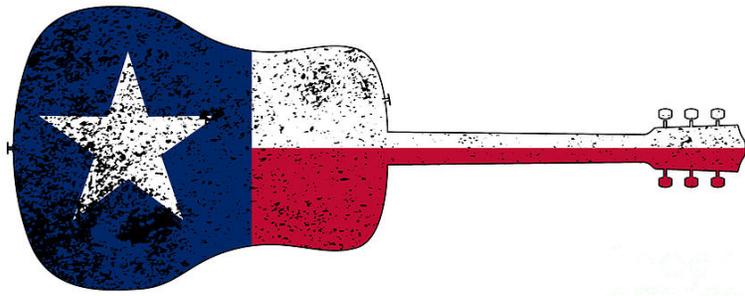
Cabin 10

Old Settlers Music Fest

Shades of Bluegrass

St. Elmo Brewing Co.

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.



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