

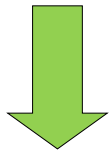
Winter Edition

Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association

December 2024

Keeping Bluegrass Music Alive in the Northern Kentucky Area

IN THIS EDITION



Happy Holidays!

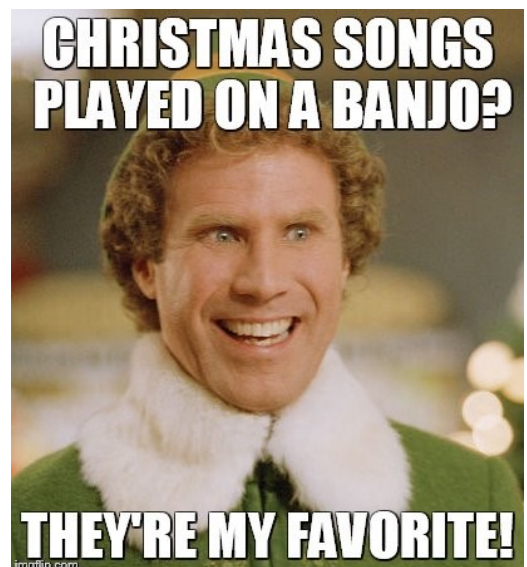
Message from the President

Tom Bushelman Jr.

Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus, right down Santa Claus Lane. The Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association is so excited about Christmas this year, we are having our annual Christmas party on the first Friday of the month, December 6, 2024 at the Hebron Masonic Lodge. We just can't wait a minute longer to start this festive season. I hope everyone had a proper triptofan powered nap after too much turkey on Thanksgiving and now on to the next party. As you might guess, there are some operating expenses to keep the bluegrass organization up and running and the Christmas party is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We have cake-walks, membership drive, and a silent auction. Auction items are brought by attendees and can be anything from an old banjo (there was one last year) to hand stitched quilts, leftover CDs, bike rack, Derby hat, stuffed squirrel, books, really anything laying around. You are liable to see

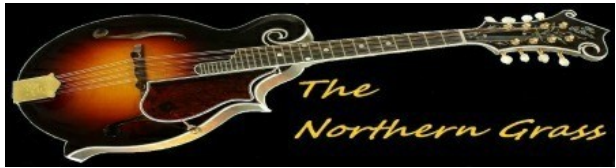
very unique items amongst the items up for auction. And the picking is second to none. Great music is always to be had at the Lodge and of course there will be lots of food. The club is bringing chicken and drinks and ask that attendees bring a side dish or dessert if you can. If baking is your thing, a cake for the cakewalk is also fun. Bring family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, in-laws, out-laws, and even your spouse. A good time will be had by all.

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IN THIS ISSUE.....Gene Thompson

I first met Gene Thompson at Willis Music at the Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association (NKBMA) Friday night bluegrass jam some 20 years ago. He ran the sound for the stage and gathered musicians together to come up on stage and perform.

He was one of the founding members of the NKBMA when they formed more than 20 years ago. They are a tax-exempt charity that fosters an appreciation for bluegrass and traditional music in the Northern Kentucky area.

Over the years, Gene became a mentor and a friend to me. He hosts a Friday night bluegrass jam at the Hebron Masonic Lodge that began so long ago pictures from the event are in black and white. I've seen him encourage young musicians to perform a song or two when they were afraid to share the spotlight. I was one of those musicians.

He sings high tenor on bluegrass and gospel songs, plays the mandolin, the banjo and the bass. He knows so many bluegrass songs by heart because he has performed them for decades.

Among the many groups he has played with over the years, Crossroads is the one I've seen him perform with many times. They are noted in the book *Images of America – Kentucky's Bluegrass Music*. Their sound is amazing. They make it look so easy. They have produced a CD, *At the Crossroads*, which I enjoy listening to. Gene has been the leader of Crossroads for many, many years.

He ran an annual bluegrass festival in Boone County for many years. Some of the musicians who performed at his festival are delighted to see him when he shows up at other festivals. What a gift he has been to bluegrass music in the Northern Kentucky area. What a gift he has been to me. I treasure his friendship and am grateful to have been able to share the stage with him.

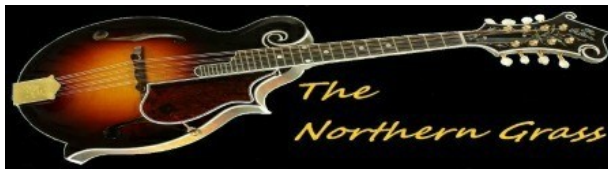
Bill Monroe is the father of bluegrass music. Gene Thompson is one of the most important founding fathers of bluegrass music in Northern Kentucky. At 95 years of age, he still performs almost every Friday night promoting bluegrass music.

- Nancy Heagney





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Gene Thompson: Still a Bluegrass Boy

I had the pleasure of sitting down and interviewing Gene at his Hebron, Kentucky home that he and his deceased wife, Annie, had built in 1955. If that seems like a long time ago, how bout this...

Gene was born on November 9, 1929, in the shadow of King's Mountain in Casey County, Kentucky. By the age of 6, he began listening to the Grand Ole Opry on WSM. He was drawn to the harmony singing of the Bluegrass Boys. Three years later he traded a 22 rifle for a banjo, which Gene still owns and played for me. At the age of 12 he walked a mighty long way to hear a banjo picked live at a pie supper. Three years later he was working on the railroad as a waterboy. (Maybe Bill Monroe was singing about him in Muleskinner Blues.) Like Monroe, Gene was stronger than a mule and soon was driving spikes with the crew. Time moved faster than a train, and Gene and Annie married in 1950 and moved to Cincinnati, where Gene found work as a candymaker with Krogers. From 1952 to '54 he served in the Army at Ft. Hood, Texas, as a Radio Operator. When he returned, he and Annie moved to Hebron. Gene was bit by the bluegrass bug once again as he listened to Paul "Moon" Mullins broadcast the brother bands like the Stanleys, Osbornes and Jim & Jesse on WPFB in Middletown, Ohio. Ten years later he began renting out the Lodge in Hebron for Bluegrass Jam Sessions, which are still going strong today. He called the group The Friday Night Pickers. Although he learned to pick Foggy Mountain Breakdown on the banjo like Earl Scruggs, Gene was soon playing the mandolin, which he still picks today. 20 years later Gene began his legendary Boone County Bluegrass Festival which ran from 1986-1999. Gene booked all the top names like JD Crowe, but when he gave Larry Sparks a spot, Larry promised him he'd never raise his rate, and he played for Gene every year after. Gene was also asked to book music for the Wool Festival in Falmouth, Kentucky. He began playing there with his band, Mixed Company, and eventually ran two stages of music. His next band, Crossroads, with Jim Moore (bass), Albert Fox (fiddle), Tom Murphy (guitar) played the Wool Festival as well. With their matching black pants, black vests, red or blue shirts, and white hats, Bluegrass legend, Melvin Goins, said they were the best dressed band in Bluegrass. Gene's involvement in Bluegrass just kept growing as he worked at most of the

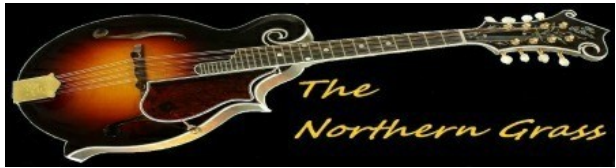
festivals doing everything from booking, promoting, stage building, ticket taking and anything else that needed to be done. Gene developed friendships that lasted a lifetime, especially with Bobby & Sonny as Gene worked The Osborne Brothers Hometown Festival in Hayden, Kentucky, where Gene still is an honored guest! Gene was a founding member of the Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association (NKBMA) in 1999. He began booking The Richwood Flea Market in 2000 with many top acts including Ralph Stanley. Gene and the NKBMA began booking acts for the Florence Willis Music Stage. They hosted 89 shows with such greats as the Lost & Found and Gene's buddy, Larry Sparks. Gene continues to be involved in the NKBMA Jam Sessions at the storied Hebron Lodge. I have witnessed his warm welcomes and encouragement for all pickers many times over the years. As a member of The Forest Hills Bluegrass Band, I have had the honor of playing alternate sets with Gene's fine band each Fall at the Boone County Craft Show Creekside Stage in Boone Woods. Gene is also kind enough to help me play Senior Centers. His fine singing and picking inspires all in attendance. Thanks, Gene, for a lifetime of dedication to Bluegrass Music. You will always be our Bluegrass Boy!

- Wayne Luessen





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TRAVELING WITH GENE

I had the great honor to accompany Gene Thompson to the 2024 Osborne Brothers bluegrass festival in Hyden this year. Gene played that festival for over 20 years and was a genuine celebrity. As soon as we got there, Dean Osborne's mom gave us a BAND pass that let us park by the cool people near the stage.



We carried our chairs over and set them up just off the stage and near the t-shirt and hat booth. In very short order I realized I was sitting with a mandolin playing Elvis Presley. There was a constant stream of friends and fans coming up to Gene to "shake and howdy" as they say in the business. Also to take pictures. If camera film were still a thing, the local Walgreen would have sold out everything they had. Gene posed with his trademark mile wide grin with everyone from 8 to 80 years old. I would imagine he

is Facebook famous with all of those pictures. Just by virtue of proximity, I may have gotten a little fame myself and even got a free festival t-shirt. The MC insisted that Gene take the microphone in between sets, as Gene had himself been the MC for this festival on numerous occasions in the past.

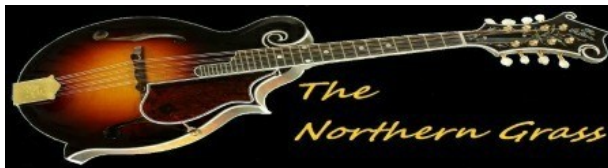
It was August and there wasn't a cloud in the sky, though there was a large pavilion that kept everyone comfortably in the shade. There was a great tie-in to a famous bluegrass song done by Patty Loveless that has the words, "the sun goes down, at 3:00 in the day". In Hyden, the hills are mighty steep and mighty close, and with official sunset (calculated for fairly flat ground) at about 9:30, the sun went over the hill and out of sight before five o'clock. A little rain cooled things off but not enough to ruin the party. It was a fantastic day all the way around.

Tom Bushelman Jr.
President
Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association





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Looking for an evening of fun entertainment and good homestyle cooking? Head south on I-75 to exit 159, Dry Ridge. The Bluegrass Mkt place has a gift shop, restaurant, and a dinner theater too, with family fun and great food!




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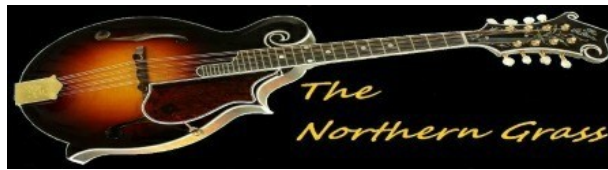
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STATUS OF LOCAL JAMS

Jams are starting back up around the area. Here are a few that we have been made aware of. If you know of more, drop us a note at nkbma.com/contact-us.html

Hebron Jam at the Lodge 1st Friday of the month 6-10pm, \$3 donation.
Hart Dr, Hebron, KY. For info: Gene at 859-689-7431

Newport Lodge jams, 2nd Friday of the month, 6-10pm \$6 donation, potluck dinner. 5th and Park, Newport, KY For info contact Russel at russturner22@gmail.com

Hebron Gospel Jam at the Lodge 3rd Friday of the month 6-10pm, \$3 donation. Hart Dr, Hebron, KY. For info: Gene at 859-689-7431

NKBMA Jam 4th Friday of the month 6-10pm, \$3 donation. Hart Dr, Hebron, KY.
For info: Gene at 859-689-7431

The Post in Fort Thomas, KY 1136 S Ft Thomas Ave. every other Wednesday at We start at 7 pm.

Camp Springs Tavern, every other Thursday, 6-10pm 7009 Stonehouse Rd, Melbourne, KY, favorite libations available. Details at campspringstavern.com

Molly Malone's Monday Night Jams, 7pm, 4th and Court St., Covington, KY. Artie Werner and the Missy Werner Band lead this popular jam. Food and beverages available.

Augusta Pub Bluegrass Jams, 3rd Sunday of the month, 1:30-4:30pm, 120 Main St, Augusta, KY 41002 For information call (606)756-9910

"Old Time Jam", Bean & Barley Coffeehouse and Taproom in O'Bryonville, 2005 Madison Rd. Cincinnati, OH. Every Sunday. Bring your acoustic instrument and help celebrate traditional music from Appalachia.

Old Time Fiddler's Jam, 2nd Sunday of the month, 1-4:30pm, Whitewater Community Center, 6125 Dry Fork Rd, Cleves, OH. All acoustic only.

Old Time Music Co. Jam, every Tuesday 7-9pm. Famous Old Time Music Co, 1196 Ross Millville Rd, Hamilton OH. Call ahead of time to ensure the jam is still on.

Member Band News

Do you have a band? We offer promotional support for our member bands. Join NKBMA as a band and members (up to 5) are members also. See Page 11 for details and visit our 'Member Band' page at <http://nkbma.com> for links to member band websites or pages on our site.

The Art Of The Pun

*How does Tammy Wynette stay cool on hot days?
She stands by her fan!*

*What is the difference between a guitar and a tuna?
You can tune a guitar but you can't guitar a tuna.*

*What happened when C, E-flat, and G walked into a bar?
The bartender said, "Sorry, we don't serve minors."*



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Updated NKBMA website now Apple Compatible

Go to www.nkbma.com for all the latest news, special events, and jams plus our huge archive of old photo slideshows, member band news and past Northern Grass issues.

Plus our own Facebook Page www.facebook.com/nkbma

Visit the page whether you have a Facebook account or not and see photos from past events and the latest event schedules Want to be part of our Event Reminder Network?

Send your current email address to KathyWolfe@kw.com

JOIN the TEAM for 2025. Please send your annual membership dues to the NKBMA , remain a member in good standing and help keep Bluegrass music alive in the area. Membership benefits:

- ** Bands are listed on our website with links to their websites.**
- ** Musical Scholarships to acoustic Instrument students**
- ** Weekly Jams supported around the area**
- ** Annual Summer Picnic, Turkey Jam and Christmas Dinner**
- ** Quarterly Newsletters like this one emailed to members**
- ** Email notification/reminder network for events**

Your membership fees help pay for our liability insurance, our PO Box, our website and domain name, and the costs of publishing this newsletter, music scholarships and more.

Send your name, mailing address, current email address and payment to:

**Northern Kentucky Bluegrass Music Association
P.O. Box 133
Hebron, Kentucky 41048**

**Current rates: \$15 Single, \$20 Couple, \$25 Band
Join the team for 2024, become a Member or Volunteer.
Enrollment forms also available at www.nkbma.com
The FUTURE of the ORGANIZATION Depends Upon YOU!**

NEW NKBMA APPAREL NOW AVAILABLE

Products looks great and are going fast! And we now have a variety of items in a variety of sizes and colors to make you the fashion talk of any group, jam or gathering. Here is a listing of items available:

- T-SHIRTS, sizes Large to 3x, 3 colors \$15.00 each
 - POLO SHIRTS, sizes L to 3x, 2 colors \$25.00 each
 - CREW SWEATSHIRTS, Large to 3x \$20.00 each
 - Zipper Front HOODIEs, Large to 3x \$30.00 each
 - BALL CAPS , 2 colors \$10.00 each
- Be sure to check the items out at the next Hebron Jam.