



Fiddler's Rag

Vol. 40, Number 12
Celebrating 39 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

December 2012
Next Jam: Dec. 2



President's Note

Our 11th annual Youth Fiddle Contest was a huge success. Mercury News photographer Karl Mondon posted some great photos online at the link (<http://tinyurl.com/b6l9ybz>).

Be sure to view the photos while they are still online. We owe a big "thank you" to our volunteers and especially to the contest chair Jaclyn Chiew and co-chair Pete Showman. It would not have happened without them.

Holiday Potluck Dinner

There's a present for everyone who comes to our annual holiday potluck dinner on December 2. The trustees approved a \$5 door admission for everyone. A meal ticket for those not bringing a dish is still \$5. Non-members benefit more, but we're hoping they decide to join this worthy organization.

As usual, we will provide the turkey and ham, sparkling cider or apple juice, and eating utensils. Bring enough food to share with 4 times the number of people coming. We need more side dishes than desserts. Invite family and friends and contribute to the entertainment. Be sure to put your name on the bottom of your serving dishes and utensils.

Not Permitted to Use Hoover School Facilities

We are not permitted to use the Hoover School's cafeteria facilities for warming or preparing food.

Equipment from Storage Locker

If **once a year or less** 10 people with cars helped the jam managers to bring supplies to and from the storage locker one mile from the jam, that would help a lot.

On December 2, we will have our usual PA system thanks to Steve Joynes. He also brought the storage locker supplies to and from the November 4 jam.

Beginners Circle (Slow Jam)

Since we only have 2 hours (1 to 3 PM) before we start our holiday dinner, the Beginners Circle or slow jam will not be organized in advance.

Holiday Entertainment

Sign up with December's jam manager Charlotte Prater if you want to provide some holiday entertainment. Charlotte is a trustee and has agreed to serve another term if reelected. Our trustee election is in February.

New Door Prize Options

Door prize winners will soon have a choice of either a CD or a voucher for a free door admission to a future jam. The vouchers will be valid for the next three months that we have a door charge. Janet Johnston, our treasurer, deserves credit for suggesting this and the trustees deserve our thanks for approving it.

CD donations for the door prize are welcome. Consider donating CDs you no longer need or listen to.

Amazon Purchases for the Holiday

Amazon gives us a small referral fee every time the link on our website is used for purchases. It adds up and costs you nothing. Contribute by using the Amazon link on the lower left side of the www.fiddlers.org website.

- Richard Brooks



Pete Showman photo

The trophies for our first-place winners were cut by Amanda Ting, a student in Mike Johnson's wood-shop class at Miller Middle School. They were colored and finished by Tom Clausen.

In This Issue:

Page

President's Message	1
Contest Volunteers; Chip and Connie Curry ...	2
SCVFA Happenings (<i>Potluck. Feb. Election, November Board Meeting Highlights, Trustee Appointee Needed</i>)	3
2012 Youth Fiddle Contest	4-5
Secret Signals of Musicians, Wayne Erbsen	6-7

The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. The first membership in a household includes the *Fiddler's Rag*; additional members sharing the newsletter are steeply discounted. To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join.

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 Newsletter Publisher Charlotte Prater
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 WebmasterPete Showman
 Youth Activity CoordinatorMary Kennedy
 Youth Fiddle Contest ChairJaclyn Chiew

Trustees

Seat 1: Pete Showman Seat 2: OPEN
 Seat 3: Paul Clarke Seat 4: Charlotte Prater
 Seat 5: Dave Williams Seat 6: Tom Clausen

To Contact the SCVFA:

Mail: P.O. Box 2666, Cupertino, CA 95015-2666
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Newsletter Submissions & Comments:

Email: newsletter at fiddlers.org

Website: www.scvfa.org or www.fiddlers.org

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Thanks to our Contest Volunteers

Thanks to all those who helped make the 2012 contest a success. **Chair:** Jaclyn Chiew, **Co-chair:** Pete Showman; **Publicity:** Tom Clausen & Mary Kennedy; **Trophies:** Mike Johnson, Amanda Ting, Tom Clausen; **Check-in and Scoring:** Dinah Showman, Eric Berseth & Allan French; **Jam Manager:** Paul Clarke; **PA Transport:** Steve Joynes; **Setup:** Eric Berseth, Richard Brooks, Sarah Kirton; **Cashier and Membership Desk:** Janet Johnston & Charlotte Prater; **Shepherds:** Jaclyn Chiew & Mary Kennedy; **Judges:** Katy Bridges, Richard Brooks, Tom Clausen, Steve Joynes, Arthur Kee & Jack Sadler; **MC:** MaryAnn Clausen; **Stage Manager:** Dave Williams; **Accompanists:** Norio Kawato, Chip Curry & Kenny Blacklock; **Photos:** Richard Brooks, Steve Kirtley, Karl Mondon (San Jose Mercury News), Pete Showman & Dave Williams. See photo on back page.

And of course thanks to the contestants and their families – and to any others we've omitted.

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www.ncbs.us



Richard Brooks photo

Brother and sister act: Chip Curry and Connie Curry poised for action at the November jam.

SCVFA Happenings



Join us for the SCVFA Holiday Potluck Sunday, December 2

- Jamming and stage performances from 1-3 PM
- Special this month only: \$5 jam admission for all
- Potluck Dinner starts at 3 PM

We'll need lots of side dishes and a few desserts. The SCVFA will provide turkey, ham, beverages, eating utensils and decorations.

Bring one dish to feed four times as many as are in your group. So if you come alone, bring enough for 4 others. If you come as a couple, bring enough for 8. Please bring your own serving utensils and tape your name on your serving dishes so we know who they belong to.

Can't bring a dish? Come anyway, and buy a meal ticket for just \$5.

Note: We do not have permission to use the kitchen facilities (kitchen sinks or electrical outlets). No food warmers or electric utensils are permitted.



February Trustee Election

The annual SCVFA members' meeting will be held at the monthly jam on February 3, 2013. We will elect two trustees to serve for three years. We have two nominees: Trustee **Charlotte Prater** has agreed to run for a second term, and member **George Bradshaw** has agreed to run for the seat being vacated by Paul Clarke.

The Bylaws permit additional nominations to be made "by petition of at least three (3) members in good standing, with the written assent of the nominee, delivered to the President or Recording Secretary" at least 24 days before the election, i.e. by January 10, 2013. "A candidate nominated by petition received at least forty-five (45) days before the election [i.e. December 20, 2012] shall have his/ her candidacy included in the meeting or election notice."

Trustee Meeting Highlights

The SCVFA Trustees met on November 11, 2012 and took the following actions

- Accepted with regret Gorden Gibson's resignation as trustee and will thank him for his service to SCVFA.
- Made plans for the December Holiday Potluck.
- Agreed to reduce the door charge for the December jam to \$5 for everyone (this time only). Agreed on a \$5 meal ticket charge for people who participate in the meal but don't bring a dish.
- The nominating committee reported that George Bradshaw has agreed to run for trustee in February, for Paul Clarke's seat. Paul has decided not to run again. Charlotte Prater, also up for election, will run again.
- Discussed possible appointees to replace Gorden Gibson as a trustee for the remainder of his term.
- Discussed how to replace Paul Clarke as Playout Coordinator, and the nature of the tasks involved.
- Discussed how to get more help in transporting the P.A. equipment from the storage locker to the jams. Proposed developing a list of P.A. assistants who could be called upon to help the assigned trustee with the equipment at a particular jam. (With smaller cars it usually takes more than one person.)
- Authorized holding a KidFiddle workshop in March.
- Agreed to offer as a door prize option a coupon good for one admission to our jam within the next three jams held at Hoover School.
- Agreed that the Youth Fiddle Contest was a success and briefly discussed some possible changes that could be made in future.
- Set January 20 as the next tentative trustee meeting date.

Dinah Showman, Secretary

Trustee meetings are open to all SCVFA members. They're usually held on 3rd Sundays of odd-numbered months (subject to change depending on conflicts). If you'd like to attend a meeting, contact Richard Brooks: President at fiddlers.org.

Trustee Appointee Needed

In addition to the trustee election, we need to appoint an SCVFA member to complete the final year of Gorden Gibson's term, until February 2014. If you are interested, or wish to suggest someone, please contact Richard Brooks.

The 11th Annual SCVFA Youth Fiddle Contest

The November 4, 2012 jam featured our 11th annual Youth Fiddle Contest, in which 21 young fiddlers competed for cash prizes, ribbons, certificates – and, for the top winner in each division, one of the fiddle trophies shown on page 1. Overall it was a great success thanks to the contestants and their families and the many volunteers who helped before and during the contest. (See the back page photo.)

The winners in the 2012 contest:

	<u>Division 1 (8 and under)</u>	<u>Division 2 (11 and under)</u>	<u>Division 1 (17 and under)</u>
1 st place	Doniella Dumont (7)	Katelyn Wong (9)	Amanda Ting (12)
2 nd place	Gilford Ting (8)	Helen Ludé (9)	Marika Blacklock (12)
3 rd place	Miles Quale (8)	Edward Ross (11)	Joseph Elhardt (13)
4 th place	Jerry Wong (8)	Andrew Shen (11)	Simone von Kugelgen (14)
5 th place	Matteo Quale (6)	Khushi Parikh (9)	–



Dave Williams photo

The Division 1 Judges (L-R): charter member #5 **Jack Sadler**, former Trustee **Steve Joynes** and President **Richard Brooks**. Our other judges were **Katy Bridges**, **Tom Clausen** and **Arthur Kee**.



Pete Showman photo

The Audience, entranced by one of the contestants as Paul Clarke (seated at the table) controls the PA system.



Karl Mondon, San Jose Mercury-News staff photo

Our youngest contestant, **Lexie Cotterel**, 4.



Richard Brooks photo

Division 1 contestants with contest chair Jaclyn Chiew. L-R: Jaclyn, Gilford Ting (8), Ronald Sit (8), Matteo Quale (6), Miles Quale (8), first-place winner Doniella Dumont (7), Sophine Wong (6), Katherine Kline (7) and Jerry Wong (8). Not in photo: Lexie Cotterel (4) and Ethan Dickson (8).



Richard Brooks photo

Division 2 contestants with contest chair Jaclyn Chiew. L-R: Jaclyn, Andrew Shen (11), Edward Ross (11), Catrina Riordan (11), first-place winner Katelyn Wong (9), Sydney Roberts (10), Helen Ludé (9), Khushi Parik (9).



Richard Brooks photo

Division 3 winners, L-R: Simone von Kugelgen (14), Joseph Elhardt (13), Marika Blacklock (12), and first-place winner Amanda Ting (12), with contest chair Jaclyn Chiew and co-chair Pete Showman.

The Secret Signals of Musicians

by Wayne Erbsen

It's Saturday night. Instead of relaxing safe at home plopped comfortably in front of your big screen TV, you're got your hind quarters parked squarely on a hard folding chair. If that's the case, chances are you're either at a festival watching your favorite bluegrass band, or perhaps you're huddled under a tarp in the pouring rain jamming with friends or total strangers at a fiddlers convention. Either way, you often witness secret or not-so-secret signals or cues from one musician to the rest of the group to alert them that a song or tune is about to end. This article will help you decode many of the secret signals that are commonly used at bluegrass and old-time jams and performances.

If you're watching a bluegrass band that's used to playing together, you might not see any signals at all. Just last night was I was chatting with Bobby Hicks, a long time Bluegrass Boy and fiddler. I asked him how Monroe signaled to the band when a song was supposed to stop. He said Bill never used any kind of signal. He explained that after you played night after night on the road with Bill, you knew exactly where and when a song was going to end. He did point out that after the song was over, Monroe often raised his white hat in the air while the audience wildly applauded.

The most likely place you'll see signals or cues is at large jams. Sometimes, the size of the jam will help determine which signal is used.

The bluegrass jam leader: In a bluegrass jam, it's normally the lead singer who becomes the "jam boss." He or she makes it their business to send signals to the rest of the group. However, if a bluegrass instrumental is being played, whoever kicks off the song usually helps guide it to a smooth ending by sending a clear signal to the other musicians.



The old-time jam leader: Typically it's a fiddler who rules the roost in an old time jam. Nearly always it's the fiddler who selects the tune, sets the tempo, decides how long it will last, and when it will end. If there's more than one fiddler, whoever starts the tune will take ownership of that tune and will signal the ending to the other jammers.

The shout: You often hear the bluegrass jam boss speak or shout commands like "one more," "one more time," "last time," "take it home," or "take it to the barn." In Irish sessions, the fiddler is likely to yell "hup!" Many people find it difficult or impossible to speak while they're playing, so they rely on non-verbal signals. I remember one young lady was leading a jam and I could tell she wasn't comfortable speaking and fiddling at the same time. Instead of using one of the more wordy shouts, through clinched teeth she managed to grunt the word "end," and then the tune suddenly stopped!

The nod: This is a common method of communicating either that it's someone's turn to take the next break, or that the song is about to end. Confusion about the meaning of the nod can sometimes result in a train wreck.

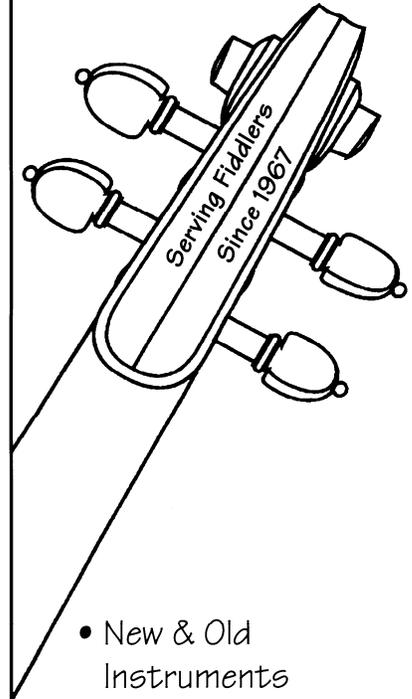
The eye: Making eye contact when the end is in sight is one of the approved signals that's used both in bluegrass and old-time jams.

The eyebrow: Be alert to the "eyebrow shrug," a sure sign that something is about to happen.

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The look: If the jam boss gives you “the look,” either the song is going to end, or your zipper is unzipped.

The leg: The most common secret signal is now so common that it’s no longer a secret. If you see the jam leader lift one leg, you can count on the song ending very soon. Sometimes called “the dogleg” (for good reason), this method does have its risks, particularly for old-time musicians who commonly sit close to each other in a tight circle. More than once I’ve witnessed someone suddenly raise their leg and accidentally kick the person sitting across from them. Ouch!

The foot: Instead of raising their leg, some people simply raise their foot. Depending on the session, this is a signal that could easily get overlooked or confused with normal foot tapping.

The pause or gap: This is my personal favorite. When I’m playing a tune, I will leave a quick pause or gap in the music right before I play the final tag or ending. For me, this never fails to bring the session to a comfortable stop.

The instrument: Occasionally someone will raise the neck of their instrument to communicate that the tune is ending. Watch out for those whirling ceiling fans!

The tag. Near the end of a tune many musicians will play a series of notes that is sometimes called a “tag.” These notes can vary, depending on the instrument and the style being played. The tag is usually followed by an ending tag, which sometimes resembles the old phrase, “shave and a haircut, two bits.”

The accent: The accent means that you play a strong or loud note or chord just before the end.

The finger: When the end of the tune is fast approaching, sometimes the jam boss will

wave their right index finger in a circle, like a flag. The problem with this method is that it’s often confused with a “turnaround.”

The turnaround: On slower, country-type songs, musicians often play a turnaround. This simply means playing the last line of the chorus instrumentally at the end of the regular chorus. Many times the leader will signal a turnaround by waving their index finger in the air. When you hear the turnaround, get ready to apply your brakes. Two fingers are a signal to play the tune twice more.

The middle finger. If you see the leader extend the middle finger of their right hand toward you, it means “that ain’t no part of nothin’,” as Bill Monroe once said.

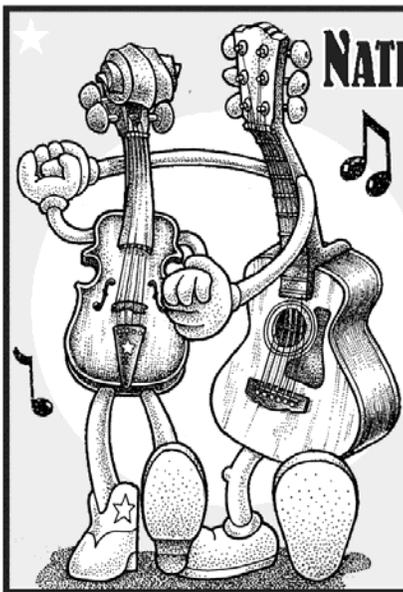
The Birch Monroe: Speaking about Bill Monroe, the most sudden stop I’ve ever witnessed took place at the old barn at Monroe’s Bean Blossom festival in 1971. Best I remember, I was in the thick of a huge jam with six or seven of us wailing away at ninety miles an hour on “Little Girl in Tennessee.” I was singing lead, and there was a crowd of thirty or forty people gathered around our little circle, five deep. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed Birch Monroe, the manager of the park, and the no-nonsense brother of Bill Monroe. I detected a fierce determination in his eyes as he

marched headlong into crowd while the song was going full blast. Since I was playing guitar and singing lead, Birch stepped directly in front of me and without saying a word, he wrapped both his hands firmly around the fingerboard and neck of my guitar. The song stopped so suddenly that we practically got whiplash! In all my days of jamming, I’ve never seen anything stop so quickly.

Not known for the subtlety of his signals, Birch then ordered us to move our jam to the stage, which was empty at that time. Since we didn’t want to tangle with Birch anymore than we already had, we obediently followed his orders, and we continued the jam from the stage of the old barn.

So now that you know the secret signals, get out there and jam your guts out.

© 2012 Wayne Erbsen. Wayne is a native Californian who has made his home in Asheville, North Carolina since 1972. A musician and teacher, Wayne has written and published over thirty music instruction books and songbooks for bluegrass and claw-hammer banjo, mandolin, fiddle and guitar on his Native Ground Books & Music label. www.nativeground.com. For the past thirty years, Wayne has hosted “Country Roots,” a bluegrass and old-time radio show that streams live on Sundays 7:00 - 9:00 EST at www.wcqs.org.



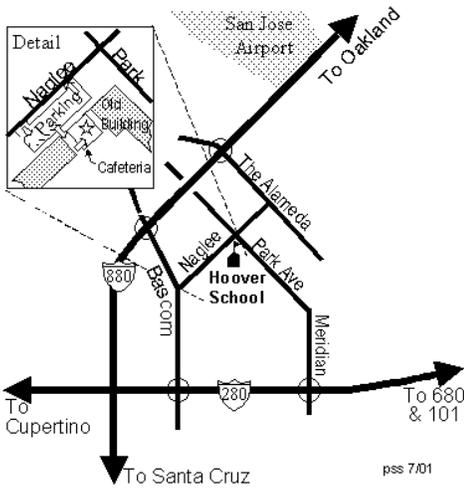
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Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
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SCVFA Jam on the first Sunday of each month.
Location: Hoover Middle School, 1635 Park Ave.,
San Jose. The school is at the corner of Naglee and
Park. Cafeteria parking is on the Naglee side

**Next Jam: Sunday Dec. 2, 1-5 pm,
Hoover Middle School.**
Jam & Open Mike 1-3, Holiday Potluck 3-5



**Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: newsletter at scvfa.org**



Steve Kirtley photo

Volunteers at the 2012 Youth Fiddle Contest L-R: Art Kee, Charlotte Prater, Eric Berseth, Mary Kennedy, Pete Showman, Janet Johnston, Dinah Showman, Chair Jaclyn Chiew, Paul Clarke, MaryAnn Clausen, Dave Williams, Richard Brooks, Norio Kawato. Volunteers not in the photo included Allan French, Sarah Kirton and Judges Katy Bridges, Tom Clausen, Steve Joynes and Jack Sadler.