



The Delta Strummers

Newsletter *Spring 2017*

From the Maestro



Stringed Instruments ... a primer

I constantly hear and read about the “ease of playing” that the ukulele affords to people learning to play a string instrument. Well, here’s the way I see it.

Admittedly the uke has four primary strings and since the average person has four fingers it makes sense that this instrument is easier to play than a six-string guitar or a five-string banjo...(unless you have royal blood and six (or five) fingers.....maybe a prehensile tail....but I digress).

The need to have “mind muscle memory” on chords with your left hand is fundamental to uke, guitar, banjo, mandolin, etc. Thus you must learn and teach your hand (and fingers) to form chords on the instrument as a function of the tuning of the strings. It makes no difference whether you’re learning a uke, or guitar, or mandolin....the fingers must form the chords and must switch to new chords with reflex only....no thinking or “searching” allowed. This takes concentration, practice, repetition and “voila!” you can play.....regardless of the instrument. If you want a perfect example of what happens when you learn to play a new instrument all over again....try reversing the instrument....try playing “goofy”...that is... left handed. I give a lot of credit to members of the Strummers who are natural lefties but play righty.... I have great difficulty teaching lefty.... Try it and challenge your mind muscle coordination with a new skill set.

The right hand “strum and pick” is universal to all fretted, string instruments and is easily transferred

one to another once you get the coordination on any one instrument. Picking melody lines only requires that you know the tuning of the instrument and finding the proper string and finger to run the scale. Try it....you’ll like itcongrats to all our members who work hard at melody lines....it just takes a lot of practice.

I have great respect for all string players who play fretless instruments. We uke and guitar players have the advantage of single note finger placement.... A violin, cello, bass, etc. has no frets....they have to place their fingers in the right place or the tuning is off....yikes!

I beam with pride for all of you that have learned to play from scratch and remind you all that, once you play one fretted instrument, there is nothing to stop you from learning to play another....you just need vocal friends near you to remind you what instrument you’re playing so you can reset your “mind muscle” hard drive.

So let’s get on with our new found enjoyment in music, fellowship and performing....it gives us all a large advantage in keeping our minds (and fingers) active and if I may say....giving a finger to old age.

I love the Strummers,

... *Ernie*

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Benefits of Being a Delta Strummer *by Fred Kamp, Chairman*

Looking back over the last four years of my membership in The Delta Strummers I realized how much I have learned, and not surprisingly, how much I still have to learn. Of course, I am referring to the ukulele but it can be said about the rest of my life as well (but I am definitely not documenting that!). Being a member of The Delta Strummers has benefited me in both cases.

I am amazed at the talent we have in our organization and am humbled by the talents of our members. It is not only playing the ukulele but singing, composing, finding new songs, organizing concerts (event planning, MC commentary, time-line, flow etc.) plus planning and organizing our parties and picnics. It is easy to see the benefits of being a Delta Strummer by associating with and learning from our talented members and band director.

Learning is just not a matter of playing the ukulele once a week at practice. It is repetitive playing of the ukulele or "doing." Ernie says we first must learn the chords and a simple strum. It requires one half of the brain for one skill and the other half of the brain for the other. Then he says, because the ukulele is just an accompaniment for the voice, we have to sing using, not another half of the brain - duh, but the half that is already being used for making chords. Now add to that different strumming patterns that

challenge the half of the brain that was just loping along with a simple strum. It's chaos! Thank our creator that we have muscle memory. Maybe that's the other half of a brain. So it is practice, practice, practice that allows us to do all these things at the same time.

The events that motivate us to practice, practice, practice are our concerts. We have a defined list of songs so we are not doing anything new during the weeks preceding the concert. Ernie tries to choose songs that don't have complicated chord changes so it is easy to train that muscle memory. The most important motivating force to practice is the date we must play. We can't say, "I need another week." We have to be ready to play well at the concert or be embarrassed in front of hundreds of family, friends and people who are just curious. If we play badly our families and some of our friends would probably attend another concert. The curious would say, "I paid fifteen bucks for that? I'd rather spend my money for beer at a karaoke bar."

There is another aspect to our learning experience. There are a number of small groups within our membership that get together periodically and practice songs they like. They practice songs that are fun to sing and require something new to learn. We can see the results of this at "Open Mic Nights." They must practice, practice, practice before they perform the songs in front of us because they want their songs to be part of The Delta Strummers repertoire. You may want to join one of the small groups or, if you have not already, start one yourself.

So I encourage you to pick up your ukulele any time but especially during TV commercials and practice, practice, practice!

"If everyone played the uke the world would be a better place."

Jake Shimabukuro



Exploring the Ukulele World by Jinni Ciruli, Vice Chairman

I am a retired librarian, who cannot stop researching aka “Googling” on the internet.

I googled a lot before I decided which ukulele would be the “best bang for the buck for beginners.” I chose a Makala Dolphin, which is a soprano ukulele appropriate for children and adults who do not have large hands. I found good recommendations such as <http://ukulelehunt.com/buy-ukulele/tips/best-ukulele-for-beginners/>, <http://www.stringvibe.com/the-best-ukulele-for-beginners/>, and I checked out the purchasers’ ratings on amazon.com. My little Makala got 4.5 out of 5 stars, so for under \$50 (plus the cost changing to Aquila strings) I got a great deal. You’ll learn a lot by reading the product reviews on Amazon even though you do not want to purchase a ukulele through them.

When I wanted to step up to a concert ukulele, I Googled again & started to listen to YouTube.com ukulele reviews. I used this approach again when I wanted to add a banjo ukulele to my collection.

As for songs, I have googled songs by title and add the search terms “ukulele chords.” For example, in ***The Peanuts Movie*** there was a song with a ukulele ***Better When I’m Dancin’*** by Meghan Trainor. I typed in “better when I’m dancin ukulele chords.” My search results came up with the sites for the lyrics, ukulele chords and ukulele tutorials for the song. I

love watching the <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkCyfBibIbI> (Meghan Trainor video) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1l6mukhAno> (cartoon version from the movie).

You can find free sources for ukulele tablature, too. For fun, type in “Little Red Uke” and you will find lyrics and ukulele chords for a spoof of the Beach Boys’ ***Little Deuce Coupe***.

If you don’t have a specific song in mind, try typing in “ukulele songbooks free.” You will see free sources for songs with ukulele chords from all over the world. One of the more prolific you might enjoy is the Morristown Uke Jam from Morristown, New Jersey. <https://www.meetup.com/MorristownUkeJam/files/?sortBy=name&sortOrder=asc>.

On YouTube.com I found some cute ukulele songs, such as ***That Flaming Ukulele In The Sky*** and ***All I Want For Christmas Is Another Ukulele***.

I’ve searched ukulele festivals and workshops, and found a super ukulele workshop on a cruise in the western Caribbean. We went last month with Will and Mariel Taylor and had a blast.

For a real treat go to YouTube and type in “Langley Ukulele Ensemble 2015-In the Mood,” “Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain The Good the Bad the Ugly.” or “Wellington International Ukulele Orchestra I Love You Raylene.”

Hope you will enjoy exploring the ukulele world on the internet.





\$\$\$ Treasurer's Perspective \$\$\$ by Rich Alves, Treasurer

Our Treasury

All is well. I've changed our bookkeeping system from using multiple manual spreadsheets and forms to using Quicken software. Using Quicken greatly reduces the time required to maintain accurate records and makes it much easier to produce reports that can be quickly understood by others.

The audit for 2016 was carried out by Ralph Hendrix and Lucy Meis in an exemplary manner. They were extremely organized and obviously knew exactly what they were doing. Wally Coffman and I were present (and applauded when appropriate). This was my first audit and I learned a lot. My record keeping has been updated to make it more "friendly" for future auditors.

Name Badges

For a new Strummer on the block it can be very uncomfortable to be in a room with 30 to 40 people and not know anyone's name. What a welcome site it is when someone wearing a name badge approaches and starts a conversation.

For someone like me with pre-senile dementia, it can be equally unsettling to try to remember everyone's name. When I'm talking to someone without a name badge, I sometimes wonder who I'm talking to. Is it he or she? Or, could it perhaps somehow be me? I

must then go find a mirror to check my name badge.



When I look in the mirror my badge reads, "SEVLA HCIR." Nope, that's not me. If it's not me, I wonder if it's he or she? Is he or she me, or is me he or she? Long story short, if you were wearing your name badge, I'd know who I was talking to and we could both rest assured that you are indeed not me, nor he, nor she.

So, thank you for your consideration in wearing your name badge. Maestro Ernie is excused as his name is indelibly printed on everyone's memories. I've tried scrubbing and it won't come off.

A 🎵 from the Editor

Did you go to a ukulele concert or festival? Have you recently done something that you think your fellow Strummers would like to read about?

This newsletter belongs to all of us.

Anyone can submit an article for consideration, although submission does not guarantee inclusion. If you have something you'd like to share, please send it, in Word format, to graingerdeb@gmail.com. The next newsletter will be published in Fall 2017.

Deb Grainger, Editor

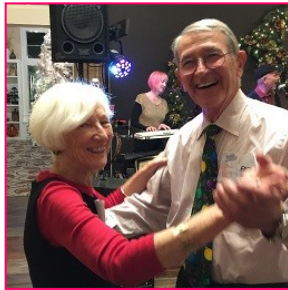




CHRISTMAS PARTY REMINISCING

by Sue Wiebe, Board Secretary

The Delta Strummers rang in the 2016 Christmas season with a dinner dance at the Orchard IV Lodge Ballroom on Tuesday, December 6, after a rousing performance at The Commons at Dallas Ranch assisted living facility. The *Golden Oldies Band* from Rio Vista played and lots of people were up and dancing.



Simple Elegance provided the food and everyone was ready to eat. There was tri-tip, chicken piccata, penne pasta, salad, vegetables, and great focaccia bread. Many compliments to the caterer were heard. Everyone seemed to enjoy the meal and there were no leftovers to deal with. Now that's success!

Dessert was a good ol' Costco cake that pretty much disappeared, too. All that dancing seemed to make people hungry.



Just before the band took their break, we had a sign-along. We sang *Jingle Bells*, *Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer*, and *Here Comes Santa Claus*.

This is when our surprise guests appeared to greet the Strummers. Santa and his elf (Ernie and wife, Dana) skipped into the ballroom with candy for everyone. Things got a little out of hand when Santa started taking handfuls of candy and tossing them at folks. I think Santa and his elf were having as much fun as the party goers.



After Santa's appearance, the CPC Band (Christmas Party Committee) played *All I Want For Christmas Is Another Ukulele*. It's a fun song and hopefully it will be included in our seasonal performances.



The evening was closed out with more dancing and fun. All in all, it seemed to be a very successful event. Looking forward to Christmas 2017!





Future Performances
by Craig Wilson, Member

As we all know, our primary focus is currently on our El Campanil concert so my efforts have been to seek out and plan for performances afterwards and look forward to our fall schedule.

A few weeks ago Tom Jones and I visited Knightsen School and met with their new principal and their music teacher. We came away with a very positive feeling for another performance at this venue. However, the timing became an issue as anything before El Campanil would interrupt our practice and after the El Campanil concert would get into the month of June, a busy time for them with graduation functions.

While we were there we all felt it would be best to do a dual assembly program, one for the younger students and one for the older students, which will require additional planning for us. After discussions with the Board and Ernie it was decided to postpone the performance until fall. This would give us adequate time to develop both assemblies.

I have emailed them regarding the timing concerns and the suggestion to perform in the October/November time frame. Since neither of them experienced our last performance at Knightsen School I also extended an invitation to both to attend our El Campanil performance so they could gain a better idea of the Delta Strummers.

Regarding our remaining season prior to the summer break, we are looking at a return visit to Dallas Ranch. Also, another possibility would be a return to Quail Lodge. I received a call two weeks after our March 8 performance there from the Activity Director hoping that we could come back during April. We were very well received by their residents and they wanted us back for a repeat performance. I explained that we could not, due to our current commitment but that we would look into a return at a later date.

—More to come.



Always be yourself
— unless —
you can be a uke player
— then —
always be a uke player!

Delta Strummers Newswire

Spring 2017 Performances

May 21: El Campanil Theater, Sunday, 3:00 p.m.

Other end-of-season performance dates/times will be announced in due course.

Directions, playlists, attire and other information will be communicated via email prior to each event.

Check your email

Email is our primary vehicle for communicating with Delta Strummers members. New or revised playlists and updated music are uploaded to our web site, and are announced via email. So be sure to check your email regularly.

Group discounts

We've negotiated the following discounts for Delta Strummers members:

Good Hawaiian Shirts will give a 25% discount off their price (ask a Board member for the Discount Code). Ordering information is on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Clothing***, but be aware there are different ordering links for men's and ladies' shirts.

Lamorinda Music in Lafayette will give a 10% discount to Delta Strummers members. They have the largest selection of ukuleles in stock of any music store within driveable distance. Store information is on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Ukulele Stores***.

Alternative ladies' performance attire

In response to member requests, the Board approved the wearing of a dress or muumuu in place of black pants. Links to the approved designs are on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Clothing***.

Delta Strummers name badges

Delta Strummers name badges use magnets for attachment, rather than making holes in clothing. However, they can also be procured with a pin attachment if folks have concerns about any effect on a pacemaker. (Check with your doctor.) Anyone needing a badge, please contact Jerry or Sue Wiebe. Let them know how you want your name(s) spelled.

Delta Strummers Polo shirts

We have a local supplier of Delta Strummers polo shirts. Ordering information is on the ***Clothing*** page of our web site.

Delta Strummers on YouTube

We have a number of videos from our past performances on *YouTube*. If your friends or relatives have video of us performing, please encourage them to either upload them to *YouTube* or send them to Tom Jones.

Questions For The Board

If you have a question or issue you feel needs to be raised with the entire Board, we make time available to discuss it. The preferred way is to document your question or issue, and submit it to our Secretary, Sue Wiebe. If you need to address the issue in person with the Board, we allocate a brief time slot in our agenda. The Board will follow up in writing to let you know the result of their discussion and any conclusions or decisions reached.

Music Selection

We're sometimes asked who makes the decision to include or exclude a song, and what's the protocol for adding them to our song book?

The process starts with our "Open mic" sessions, typically held twice a year. Members are encouraged to offer up new music for consideration, and to audition these selections at designated practice sessions. If a member is uncomfortable auditioning their song, they may delegate the audition to another member.

Most of our new music is derived from these offerings and, in fact, over 50% of the songs in our current practice list came from this source.

Music submitted for consideration needs to be in a standard 'lead sheet' format. Songs that could be too difficult for most members to sing, or too difficult for our newer members to play, may need to be transposed into a different key &/or rearranged by our Music Director, Ernie.

Following audition, music is selected for inclusion in upcoming practice lists by a Music Committee.

When a practice list is created for upcoming performances, lead sheets for all the songs are reviewed, played and sung to identify further changes and, following editing, are added to our online Song Book.

This entire process, from submission to publication, is time consuming, and some prior music offerings have not yet come out the other end; Specifically, music submitted in different formats, or which is not readily playable, gets dealt with as time permits.

As we get closer to a performance, Ernie will take note of which music we play well and which we're struggling with. This usually results in songs being removed from the practice list to eventually end up with a "playable" performance list.

Having participated in a number of groups who don't have this discipline, I can say that their group playing leaves a lot to be desired.

Tom Jones, Past Chairman/Advisor

Nominating Committee - 2018 Board

Some time after our Summer hiatus, the Board will charter a Nominating Committee to come up with a slate of officers for 2018. If someone taps you on the shoulder and asks if you'd be willing to serve, please give it serious consideration. Anyone wishing to serve as a Board member in 2018, please seek out one of the Nominating Committee members or a current Board member.

Nominations will be presented to a Delta Strummers General Meeting, and the membership.



GET TO KNOW YOUR DELTA STRUMMERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS... bios below

Fred Kamp - **Chairman**

Fred started playing the Ukulele in college and singing with his fraternity brothers but there was a 60 year ukulele void until he joined the Delta Strummers in 2013. Music has been an important part of his life, mostly as a listener of classical music. The Delta Strummers gives him an outlet to play and sing.

Jinni Cirulli - **Vice Chairman**

First conversations with fellow ukulele players usually include explanations of how we found our way to this fun, little musical instrument. So, here's my story: I had read that some ways to keep your brain healthy were to:

1. change your routines (like driving alternate ways home or brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand)
2. read and work crossword puzzles or Sudoku
3. learn a foreign language (I'm so not up to this one),
A. So I decided to replace this one with shopping
4. stay active with others, and
5. learn to play a musical instrument, which works several parts of your brain at once: audio, visual and motor functions (hmmm, a uke has four strings, this works)

So, now I'm working on all five (sort of).

1. Although, I don't brush my teeth at practice, Delta Strummers has definitely changed our routine.
2. We're learning to read chord charts and tablature.
3. Hey, Feliz Navidad counts as a start.
A. We're enjoying acquiring and playing different ukuleles: banjukes, low G strings, and maybe a populele in the near future.
4. We're meeting great people in the Delta Strummers. And,
5. We're learning how happy you feel while ukulele playing.

Along the way, we've learned there's a formula for the maximum number of ukuleles you need.

F = the optimal number of ukuleles

X = your current number of ukuleles

Then **F = X + 1**.

Rich Alves - **Treasurer**

He was introduced to the ukulele as a young child, but his interest waned as he grew older. He played a little mid-life crisis guitar, but his interest waned as he grew older. In 2015 he sat in front of a Strummers performance and noticed what a fun time the musicians were having. He thought, "Fun time? Count me in!"

Sue Wiebe - **Secretary**

Hi, I'm Sue Wiebe. I was born in Oakland and grew up in Castro Valley. I am married and have two kids, a boy and a girl--now a man and woman. We have two grandsons and a granddaughter. I retired from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 2006. In an effort to stay young and vital, I took up golf, expanded my sewing and crafts activities and thought taking up the ukulele would help in these efforts. Jerry, my husband, likes to tell a story about my ladies golf trip to Maui being the cause for my desire to get a uke--well, maybe.

Jer and I have been playing for three years and truly enjoy the instrument, the music, and most of all, the friends we have made. I don't know about the youthfulness and vitality, but we sure are having fun!

Craig Wilson - **Member**

I was born in the Bay Area and have been married to Mary, my wonderful wife for 43 years. We have lived in Discovery Bay for 12 years. We have four grandchildren, three girls and one boy, ages 16-22. I've had many interests that have come and gone but continue with my lifelong sport of fly fishing.

Since retiring six years ago I've kept busy:

- ◆ Fly fishing
- ◆ Learning to play golf (it plays me)
- ◆ We deliver Meals on Wheels
- ◆ Teaching fly fishing and fly tying to Veterans for Veterans First Fly Fishing, and
- ◆ Ukulele for the last 3 years (of course!)

My interest in playing the ukulele came as a teenager when my uncle played with a group of friends on water skiing trips and various family gatherings. Ever since, I wanted to learn until now finally, at 72, I'm enjoying learning and playing.

Ernie Macintyre - **Music Director**

He has a BSEE from Northwestern and is a retired Semiconductor Executive. Music is an important part of his life and he has sung in soloed and/or directed High School, College, Church and Community Choirs for over 50 years in Illinois, Scottsdale, Los Angeles, and now Brentwood. He joined the Summerset Singers in 2003 and became the Music Director and Principal Conductor in 2010. He also plays the guitar, Five-string banjo and now the Concert and Tenor Ukulele. He joined the Delta Strummers Ukulele Band as Music Director in June 2011 and is extremely proud of the group's growth, performances, fellowship, and accomplishments.

John Davelaar - **Past Chairman**

When John learned that there was a ukulele Band in Summerset, he dusted off his old concert uke and called Ernie. John had played the ukulele in high school, but never had training, or the opportunity to play in a group. He says he's not much of a singer, but loves playing the uke, especially old time Vaudeville tunes, Rag Time, and Bluegrass.

Tom Jones - **Past Chairman**

Tom joined the Delta Strummers in the middle of 2011, having never previously played a stringed instrument. He had sung a cappella since growing up in Wales. Playing the ukulele finally gave him the opportunity to accompany himself.

Board Meetings

The Board meets monthly to discuss finances, membership, payout dates & venues, music selection, public relations, and future direction of the Delta Strummers.



L to R - Tom Jones, Fred Kamp, Jinni Ciruli, Ernie Macintyre, Sue Wiebe, Rich Alves, Craig Wilson, John Davelaar

