

Spring 2018 Delta Strummers Newsletter



message from our traveling Maestro ...

Well, it's that time again for the semi-annual article. The difference with this one and prior articles is that Dana and I are traveling with our new RV and enjoying the change in my weekly rhythm.

I brought my uke along and am serenading whomever will listen. It reminds me of the T-shirt I read a while back that said,

(on the front)

“Will play ukulele for free ...”

and on the back it says ...

“... will stop playing for money.”

I'm still astonished by the memories of the March 9 Summerset IV Concert and how tight it was ... very few errors ... tons of energy ... and great music ... plus, the audience was extremely responsive and got into the music with us.

Soon we will have more open mic music to add to our huge song list and I'm always astonished how much talent is embedded in the Strummers. Open mic isn't just a way to get new material ... it's a very safe way to reach out of your comfort zone with all the Strummers pulling for you ... try it, you'll like it.

Well ... got to go now ... I'm getting ready to play for a small group for dinner drinks hopefully they'll be kind and serve some special Chardonnay.

Thanks for being a Strummer!

~ Ernie

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ⇒ Message from the Maestro
- ⇒ The Chairman intros the New Board
- ⇒ Getting To Know You
- ⇒ “Treasured” Thoughts
- ⇒ That Banjo-sounding Thing
- ⇒ Uke for Thought



THE CHAIRMAN RECOGNIZES THE BOARD

by **Fred Kamp**, Chairman

We have many new members and some old members that might not know the responsibilities and duties of the Board of Directors of the Delta Strummers. So, I thought the newsletter would be a good vehicle to describe their involvement and how dedicated they are in supporting all the members of the Delta Strummers Band.

Vice Chairman: Mary Jane Dukellis

The Vice Chairman, in addition to supporting the Chairman when he is not available, makes sure all new members sign our waiver form. This is an important document and necessary to limit the Delta Strummers' liability. Mary Jane is a member of the small group, "The Garage Band," where she not only plays the ukulele and the banjoke but also the accordion. She is a very busy lady and in her spare time is owner/broker of a real estate company.

Secretary: Sue Wiebe

Sue takes and publishes the minutes of the monthly Board of Directors meeting which is a challenge when the officers engage in lively discussions challenging her ability to write it all down. She is responsible for external correspondence. She also has volunteered as both chairman and member of many Delta Strummers activities. Her husband, Jerry is the Name Badge administrator. Sue and Jerry are both members of the small group, "Back Row Band."

Treasurer: Rich Alves

The treasurer's role is very defined and takes more time than any of the other officer's roles. Rich has introduced us to a popular accounting software from Quicken that allows him to produce reports almost any way the Board requests. Rich is a member of the small group, "The Office," and does all the arranging of the music. His code name is "Trouble" because he is always improving the way the music is displayed. He also has been helping Ernie with arranging the band's songs for the concert.

Fifth Board Member: Rod Flores

The Fifth Member board position was created so there would be an odd number of members to prevent a tie when a vote was taken. (Not that Board members were more odd than the other band members.) Rod is responsible for organizing all of our playouts except for our concerts. He is in contact with the schools and assisted living facilities. Rod has recently retired after 24 years of state service and looks forward to participating in more of the Delta Strummers' activities.

Chairman: Fred Kamp

The Chairman serves a term of two years. This was done to make sure there was continuity in the event all the other elected members were new (not because chairmen needs more time to do a good job!). The Chairman is responsible for running the Board meetings, persuading members to be activity chairmen, organizing audits and anything the other Board members don't do.

HONORARY MEMBERS

Honorary members are non-voting members that have been past Chairmen and are extremely useful as advisory resources. They are not required to be at the board meetings.

Ward Pinther – Special Mention – as one of the founders of the Delta Strummers, Ward holds a special place in our hearts.

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*Did you know that Astronaut Neil Armstrong, first man on the moon, was an avid ukulele player?
He had a uke with him during his three week quarantine upon returning to earth
after changing the world as we knew it ... "One small step for mankind" ...*

cont'd from page 2

Tom Jones – Tom is very active with Delta Strummer business. He is our website host, web master, archive administrator, policy cop, music editor and historian.

John Davelaar – John is my resource for anything concerning Chairmanship. He was the driving force during our application for tax exempt status under IRS Section 501 (c)(7). He is member of the Music Committee and now is working with Ernie and the Summerset IV staff to find a bigger practice area that is still affordable.

Music Director: Ernest Macintyre

Ernie is not an official member of the Board but his attendance at Board meetings is essential. The Board's relationship with Ernie is one of collaboration as we work together to find the best possible outcome for the band. In addition to all his Music Director responsibilities he is now working with Summerset IV staff and Board of Directors to find an affordable location for our expanding band within the facility.

Fred had another good idea...

MEET SOME OF OUR NEW BAND MEMBERS

These bio's are from people that have joined the Delta Strummers in the fall of 2017 and very early in 2018.

Sandra Castillo Alward

My experience with music has mostly been listening to wonderful songs and humming and singing, although I must admit, not very well. I have always thought that it would be fun to play a musical instrument, so my husband gave me



a ukulele as a Christmas gift a couple of years ago. Having no music background, I was very intimidated by this little instrument but I started taking a few lessons.

My lessons were not consistent and my progress very slow. I knew I had to seek an instructor that would guide me in learning to play. By chance, I learned about the Delta Strummers through a friend who lives here in Brentwood. She gave me Ernie's contact information and I started with him last July. After a few lessons, Ernie invited me to join this wonderful group and I am loving every minute! I hope to become good enough to eventually also play the banjo!

John Cadigan

Born and raised in San Francisco and now a resident of Clayton. I first picked up the ukulele at an early age, then set it aside for the guitar, playing in bands for several years. Upon seeing the Delta Strummers, my love for the ukulele was rekindled, and I am now happy to now be a part of the fun!

C J Duplessis

I was born in New Orleans and grew up singing in the local sweet shop and playing baseball. I came to CA when I was 13 on a train heading for the wild west to be a cowboy, but to my surprise I landed in foggy Oakland!!!! I lived and went to school in Alameda where I formed a band called the "Untouchables." Rock & Roll!!!!!! We were young, wild and crazy performing on Broadway in SF night clubs!!!! Performed with Glen Campbell, Bobby Freeman, The Coasters, Jan & Dean, etc. Lived in Walnut Creek for 36 years. After retiring we moved to Twain Harte for three years, but the snow ran us out, so we moved to Brentwood Summerset III (good move!). Still singing with the Untouchables (58 years) once or twice a year, sang with the Summerset Singers for six years and now, best of all, playing ukulele with the Delta Strummers!!!!



Judy Lord

As a kindergarten teacher, I always had music going in my classroom. I've always wanted to play an instrument but never took the time to learn. Now that I'm retired, the Delta Strummers has made that dream of playing an instrument possible. And I am loving it.

Randy Mitchell

I became interested in the Delta Strummers after moving to the Trilogy development in Brentwood and meeting Carlos Lopes, who was already a member. He has been a great mentor. Music has always been a part of my life, dabbling in the guitar, saxophone and piano. None of which I play terribly well. But this new experience of playing the ukulele is so different, and so far removed from the dental field from which I retired, that I find myself wanting to practice constantly to get better. It is something I now look forward to attending every week. Playing music and singing with the group definitely makes me very happy!!



Chandra Sankara

A few years ago I saw an article in the Brentwood Press featuring a local ukulele group. I thought maybe that would be an instrument I could learn to play despite having no previous musical background or experience. I promptly forgot about it until last summer when someone gifted me a ukulele. My choice was to put it in the back of the closet or learn to play. I took a few lessons from Ernie and then joined the Delta Strummers group in September. It has been a fun challenge.

Barbara Schneider

I love to travel. I have been to all seven continents, including camping on the ice in Antarctica. Adventurous is a word that describes me. I have rafted 227 miles of the Colorado River..... and kayaked Sea of Cortez for 20 days. While at home, I enjoy quilting. Some of the quilts I have made go to Quilts of Honor, an organization that gives red, white and blue quilts to Veterans.



Vinny Snyder

I've always loved music. I began to teach myself guitar when I was 13 and still continue this practice to this very day. Music is such a magical art form. I love how it parallels and compliments other art forms and chronicles our lives. It can belong to everyone and no one. Write, play, sing its yours.

Terri Texeira

Being a product of the '60s (and '70s) I loved the Beatles, Fleetwood Mac and pretty much all rock 'n roll! As such, I have always wanted to take up guitar. When I retired in 2013, I bought a guitar and took lessons and loved it but found it a little bit harder than I imagined. I heard about the Delta Strummers through a friend and decided to take some ukulele lessons and check it out. To my surprise, I love the camaraderie and fun we have. I'll keep on strumming!!!

Tom Webster

I am a recent retiree and have resided in Brentwood with my wife, Frances, for the last 12 years. I was born and raised in the Bay Area and have four grown children and three grandchildren. My favorite activities include sports, music and travel. My wife and I have been involved with Guide Dogs for the Blind since 2001 both raising puppies and puppy-sitting as needed. Favorite places include Yosemite, Point Reyes, Thailand and Germany. Music has been a part of my life for most of my adult years. The opportunity to be part of the Delta Strummers has been a great experience both musically and socially. I am looking forward to the continuing camaraderie and performing with the group.



Sherry Wright

Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be able to play a musical instrument. When I retired I finally found an opportunity to take an adventure into music through learning to play the ukulele and joining the Delta Strummers. It's been exciting first taking lessons, then joining the band and learning together, performing for one another and performing for others. This adventure has only just begun ... the ukulele and the band offer endless fun and possibilities.





“Treasured” Thoughts by **Rich Alves**, Treasurer



Do you want to know who you are? Wearing your name tag makes it easy to look in the mirror and discover your forgotten identity.

Do you want to be counted? We routinely receive more money than is indicated by those who fill out the Practice Attendance Sheet. **If you want to be counted as attending, write something in the column with the “\$” at the top.** Forget your money? Write “0.” Pay \$5 for the practice session? Write “5.” Make up for last week? Write “10.” Tip your Treasurer? Write “15.”

Annual audit: Ralph Hendrix and Lucy Meis completed the annual audit of the 2017 Delta Strummers’ financial records. They did a terrific job! Your hardworking treasurer will be leaving town for badly needed R & R shortly before their report is given to the Board.

Strums you might enjoy from “Baritone Ukulele From Scratch” by Bruce Emery,” that will work with any size ukulele:

Basic Rock: |D-DuDuD|.

A variation on Basic Rock: |D-DuD-Du|.

The variation can also be used when there is a chord change after two beats: |D-Du <chord change> D-Du|.

Have fun and practice, practice, practice!



Jason Mraz’s 2008 single ***I’m Yours*** is the best-selling ukulele song of all time. After spending 76 weeks on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart, it broke a record for the number of consecutive weeks spent on the chart. It is also the tenth best-selling digital download of all time in the United States with over six million downloads sold.



THAT BANJO-SOUNDING INSTRUMENT by Sue Wiebe, Board Secretary

In the last few years, the Delta Strummers have seen an influx of a fun little instrument called the banjoke or banjolele. When my husband, Jerry and I first joined the Strummers only a few band members had these banjo-looking/sounding instruments. John Davelaar was one of these folks, and he started talking up the banjolele and how much fun they were. I thought, "yeah, yeah, I'm having all I can handle trying to master the ukulele."

Unbeknownst to me, Jerry had done some research on the banjolele and decided he wanted one for Christmas—here we go again. He found a little company in New Zealand that offered them at a reasonable price, so we ordered one.

A week or so later a box from NZ arrived and it was really quite light. I expected it to be pretty heavy since the banjoleles I had looked at in practice were pretty hefty. This one doesn't have a closed in back and is therefore quite light. It came with a Maori-like tattoo printed on it.

We found it to be loud, hard to tune and keep tuned, and a lot of fun. I thought it was a bit easier to play than my Luna concert ukulele because the strings were slightly higher off the neck. No one else had noticed this, so I usually keep this tidbit to myself.



It is difficult to tune because the screws are very hard to turn. It came with a little wrench-like tool to turn the tuning screws more easily. It did not seem to hold a tune for more than five minutes; so there's a lot of cranking when you first start out with it. This settles down when the strings stretch.

Well, as usual, not long after Jerry got his banjolele, I had to have one. We ordered a plain white one for me so we can tell them apart. I liked that I didn't have to learn a whole new instrument, but could use the same chords as with the ukulele. The only downside is we now carry two ukes, two banjoleles, two music stands, two I-pads and various tuners, instrument hangers, etc. to practice. We must stop the madness! But then again there's Andy and Wally. We don't even come close.

The Strummers have always played ragtime numbers and the few banjoleles would play. Now whenever we play, "Music, Music, Music," or "Down By The Riverside," or many other ragtime numbers there are a lot more banjoleles playing.

Alas, the little New Zealand company went under, down-under (pun intended). I guess the banjolele market isn't the hottest out there. But Jerry and I are very happy we took the leap and bought a couple banjoleles. It's really fun to stand up and play during the "banjoke breakouts!"



George Formby playing the banjolele in France during the Second World War



UKE FOR THOUGHT!

by **Rod Flores**, Member

The ukulele is a popular stringed instrument that provides a higher-pitched, smoother sound than the guitar. In fact, many famous guitarists, violinists, and cellists also play the ukulele. Many rock bands, country singers, indie groups, and even orchestras use ukuleles in their music.

Rooted originally in Hawaiian culture, the ukulele requires great skills for any musician. The ukulele is so popular because it accompanies almost any voice, any genre of music, and any instrument in a perfect way!

For example, in Rock and Roll, some of the greatest guitarists started with the ukulele, Jimi Hendrix, Dick Dale and Eric Clapton.

George Harrison and Pete Townshend of the Who, are considered some of the greatest ukulele players of all time. John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Tom Petty are known for playing the ukulele. Mike Campbell of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers is also recognized as a top uke player. In addition, Eddie Vedder, (who was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of Pearl Jam on April 7, 2017) devoted his second solo album, *Ukulele Songs*, to the uke.

The ukulele has come a long way since Don Ho, Arthur Godfrey and Tiny Tim made it famous (or is that infamous?). The uke continues to grow in popularity among the young and old. There are thousands of performances and millions of viewers documented on YouTube. Moreover, in the last several years we have witnessed a tremendous interest and an increase in membership with The Delta Strummers. As lovers of the uke, we are not surprised by its popularity and its usage in other genres of music and radio/television commercials. It seems to be everywhere in our daily lives and that is a good thing!

WARNING:

Ukulele

**A MIND ALTERING INSTRUMENT WITH THE
POTENTIAL TO INDUCE JOY, HAPPINESS,
MEMORIES, BLISS, MERRIMENT AND MIRTH.**

**Ask your doctor if ukulele is
right for you.**

**Common side effects may include uncontrolled
toe tapping, swaying from side to side, smiling,
off key singing and dancing.**



Mary Jane Dukellis, our Vice Chairman has been ill and was unable to submit an article for this edition, but your editor still wanted you to see her smiling face!

Spring!

ROCKIN' THE UKE

by **Deb Grainger**, Editor & Member

While visiting family in Mountain View, AR, Arlen and I had the delightful opportunity to attend an invitation-only music circle. Several talented local musicians were there, plus the special guests and the reason the circle was taking place — award winning musician/songwriters John Prine and Roger Cook. They were visiting the area on an annual fishing trip. I didn't just drop their names without purpose, (although I am not above that). The reason I am sharing this experience is that Roger Cook sang his music throughout the evening, including his big hit written for The Hollies, **Long Cool Woman**, accompanying himself on his concert ukulele. This was our first experience hearing the uke being played like a rock instrument. Having survived the Tiny Tim era

we were actually taken aback by the versatility and quality of the sound. After that evening we had a heightened awareness of ukes being played on TV, in commercials, etc. One thing led to another and Arlen received his first ukulele the following Father's Day. Sadly, my knowledge of ukuleles at that time was minimal and I had purchased him a soprano. He played it off and on for a few months but eventually gave it up because the frets were too small for ease of chording and it was more frustrating than fun. Eventually, I bought myself a used concert-sized uke, and after retiring, took a few lessons from the Maestro, and joined the Strummers. Within about six months Arlen had his own concert uke and we have been happily strumming together ever since.

Delta Strummers Newswire

Spring Performances

May 18, 2018: Almond Grove Elementary School

June 5, 2018: Quail Lodge Retirement Community

More details and other seasonal 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.

Where do I go for...?

We have a new online source for our Hawaiian clothing—**Aloha Outlet**. Ordering information is on our web site under **Resources/Clothing**. Please be aware that there are different ordering links for men's and ladies' items.

Many members of the Delta Strummers have had a long standing affiliation with **Lamorinda Music** in Lafayette. They have the largest selection of ukuleles in stock of any music store within drivable distance. They also are a great source for straps, cases, stands, music and just about anything else you may need or want. Store information is on our web site under **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 **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

Board Meetings

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