



The Delta Strummers

Newsletter *Spring 2021*

From the Maestro

Inquiring minds need to know.....How the heck do we do a COVID video?

The Delta Strummers have created 5 COVID videos in 2020 and are about to create a 6th in the spring of 2021. The videos are not only fun to watch but are even more fun to create. The participation by many of the Strummers is the real reason for creating the videos....it helps to keep us all connected and use our latent acting and creative skills while LOCKED DOWN. Although there is a lot of effort involved, it has great rewards for the viewers as well as the participants.



Here's how the videos are created. The first task is to audit a group of songs and pick one that has both playable and viewable qualities. This selection process is done by consulting with various Strummers and then making sure that the whole band can play and sing the song.

Next, the lead sheet and basic blocking of the verses, intros, and outros is done and an outline of any script or skit to attach to the song is created.

An audio only track is now created by a small group of Strummers in a group recording session (since due to COVID restrictions, we can't record the entire band together). This Initial Audio Track can then be sent by email to Strummers for their listening and playing pleasure.

Now the tricky part begins. In order to create a large Master Backing Track for the video and for use by the video performers, the Initial Audio Track is recorded against by other Strummers and small groups who must track precisely, the song as initially recorded, and record their effort so that their track can be added to the origi-

nal track. This is called "stacking" and is done with some slick MIXPAD Multitrack recording software. This must be done by listening to the initial track with earphones and recording the effort onto a separate cell phone recorder to create an audio file for each add on performer. You have to track the initial file, or it won't stack (both rhythm and pitch) and you don't want spill over from the initial recording into your recording...thus the use of earphones.

Once the Master Backing Track is created, we now use it to lay down the video tracks by individuals who listen to the Master track and play against it as we video their efforts and then combine them into a group video using PINNACLE 23... a video editing program.

Skits and intro material are written and directed by demented Strummers and then are videoed with Strummer Thespians to be woven into the final video. The completed video is then rendered into a viewable electronic format using PINNACLE 23 and sent to our Web Master via a bulk uploader and then created as a YouTube link.

WHEW... it's a lot of work but it's a blast and has kept 25-30 Strummers well connected during the 10 months of the lockdown. The 6th video will get cranked up in March and we look for many more Strummers to participate all you need to do is raise your hand to get involved.

We'll do the geeking....you do the playing.

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Chair's Message

by Lucy Meis

Hello Fellow Strummers

I hope you are safe, healthy, and joyfully playing music during this COVID-19 pandemic.

I retired from the federal judgeship last September.

While I will maintain my license to practice in Colorado, my focus now will be to serve as a mentor to new attorneys practicing in specific areas of the law. In addition, I will continue to judge law student appellate advocacy competitions. This year, these competitions will be virtual, allowing me an opportunity to judge competitions in other areas of the country from my home.

I am enjoying more time for my hobbies - the ukulele and fabric art/quilting. As for the ukulele, I am learning new songs, as well as strumming and fingering styles. I am enjoying serving as your Chair and participating in the audio and video recordings produced by our Music Director. I eagerly await our upcoming events (stay tuned to our email notifications), playing at our regular Tuesday evening practices, performing in concerts, and teaching the Garin students. I hope to seek opportunities to provide "music therapy" to those living in nursing homes and assisted living. The Garage Band did this before COVID. I miss this outreach.



Finally, I hope to resume playing with a group of Strummers who are also parishioners at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church (IHM). This band, which we named Second Collection, plays traditional Catholic hymns and spiritual songs at a monthly mass; a few from the IHM choir accompany us.

In the last edition of our newsletter, I shared the resources I use to develop my singing voice. In doing so, I am enjoying relearning the piano keyboard and the major scales. I will now share my ukulele-related resources. I narrowed to these three resources after exploring many on the internet.

Cynthia Lin and Stu Fuchs are my favorite ukulele musicians. Both have free ukulele tutorials accessible through YouTube. For a monthly nominal fee through Patreon.com, I get access to Cynthia and Stu's music, live lesson recordings, newsletters, and email notifications of new video releases and the links to virtual live jams and webinars.

A fellow Strummer introduced me to The Austin Ukulele Society at austinukulelesociety.com. There is no fee to participate in the virtual live events and sing-alongs through YouTube or to access the Ukulele Music Library.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have resources that you would like to share, email me at nanalucy3x@gmail.com.

Take care and God bless,

Lucy



The Delta Strummers performing in concert at the
El Campanil Theatre June 2, 2019

Treasurer's Report

Improving Your Ukulele Skills

By Rich Alves

Covid has locked me down and separated me from my musical friends. One way that



I've maintained some sanity is by working to improve my ukulele skills. I looked back at the lead sheets in our most recent play list and found six chord progressions that were challenging for me to play. I've been playing the progressions, two times through, almost every day. I started very slowly and only increased my speed as my skill and comfort level improved.

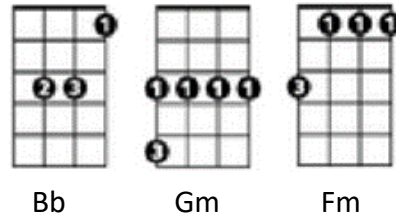
Here's how you can do it. Let's take it one hand at a time. For now, we'll start with an easy strum for your right hand so we can then concentrate on your left hand. Play each chord, down – up, for four beats. Once your right hand knows what to do, we'll move on to your left hand.

1 2 3 4 * 1 2 3 4 * etc.
D u D u D u D u D u D u D u etc.

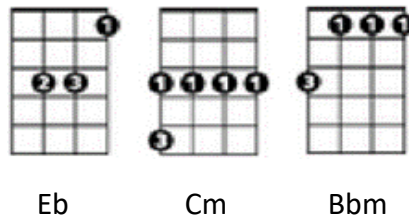
Wait a minute! What the heck does the * mean?

It's the time for you to switch chords between the 4th and 1st downbeats. On the 4th upbeat, you raise the fingers of your left hand up off the fretboard, move them into position for the next chord, and then strum the 1st downbeat. I've diagramed three of the chords that might be new for you.

Baritone Ukuleles



All Other Ukuleles



Give it a try. Play left to right from the top. Then Play right to left from the top. Start slow, sip a little Bum-bu Rum for relaxation, and enjoy. Maybe we can mess with your right hand a bit in the next newsletter.

F	Bb	C7	F		Bb	Eb	F7	Bb
A	E7	B7	E7		D	A7	E7	A7
C	G7	Fm	C		F	C7	Bbm	F
F	Dm	Gm	C7		Bb	Gm	Cm	F7
Em	Am	Bm	C		Am	Dm	Em	F
D	F#m	F	F#m		G	Bm	Bb	Bm

Playing the Uke Outdoors

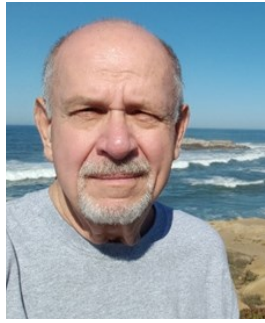
by Ralph Hendrix

This year has been difficult with all the restrictions to get together, but I have found opportunities to play that I had not contemplated before. My wife, Janet and I had decided that 2020 was going to be a year of travel around the country, including our 50th anniversary trip to Hawaii in June 2020. So, we started planning in late 2019, making reservations for flights, condo, car, even dinner reservations for Mama's Fish House in Maui for June 2020. All canceled in March & April.

We were also shopping for a new RV, taking delivery in December 2019. That has been the best purchase ever, as we have been driving around, fully self-contained for day trips, picnics, and some longer travels to visit family, but most of it has been entirely on our own. I had wanted to get a small travel trailer to pull with my truck, but Janet insisted that she wanted a vehicle with a nice comfortable, easy to access bathroom. Based on her suggestions, I sold my truck and we purchased a small Winnebago Travato. 22 feet long, easy to drive and park and economical for an RV, getting 17 MPG.

Prior to that I had purchased an outdoor travel uke made of carbon fiber to withstand abuse and extreme temperature but still having a nice sound and easy to play. It now has its dedicated storage spot in the RV and I play it everywhere, on the beach, in the forest, etc. I keep my music book up to date with our Strummer practice sheets and my personal favorites that I want to keep practicing for my own enjoyment.

So, while practicing at home in the bedroom can get a little boring, taking my music out at an RV park on a picnic table, even with Covid has been a lot of fun. I don't try to sing loud, but I sing quietly to myself, and tap my foot to keep time. I play primarily in the afternoon before dinner which has given me a fun



activity to do after a hike or long drive while my wife is napping or reading or playing games on her tablet. It has been fun to see people walking by, all masked up, stop to listen. They ask about the music and have even given me rounds of applause. And it's not just the seniors; Teenagers, children and families will also listen, ask questions or make comments, all socially distanced.

Music is universal and everyone enjoys hearing it in different forms. I play on my back patio a lot, and have had positive feedback from my neighbors. I have always played on the outdoor balconies of the condos we have rented in Hawaii resulting in fun conversations with neighbors from above and below.

Everyone: try playing outdoors, enjoy your favorite tunes and make the world a better place!



Delta Strummers on the web

Our website functions as a communication tool for the Strummers and the external community.

Some of the content, such as our songbook, is protected with a password that is shared only to Strummers, and shall not be further disclosed to non-Strummers. We appreciate your cooperation.

Stretching Exercises & Warm-ups for Uke and guitar players

By Tom Webster

We hear all the time about the importance of getting proper exercise to help maintain a healthy lifestyle. Well, the same can be said for playing musical instruments.



Whereas doing stretches and finger exercises can certainly help with your finger strength and dexterity on an ongoing basis. It will be even more important to help us get back into “playing shape” as we haven’t been playing nearly as much this last year.

In any event, stretching out your fingers, wrists and arms, should be an integral part of your ongoing practice and playing regimen.

There are many exercises that you can find online - I am listing just a couple of basic ones to get you started. I have suggested these to several players that have found them very useful. Try them out and see for yourself!

Stretching Exercises

NOTE: Hand “Shake Out” - After each Stretching Exercise or Warm up, relax your arms at your sides and shake your hands and wrists for a few seconds to help maintain blood flow.

Wrist Extensor / Flexor

1. Put your hand in front of you, arm fully extended, with your palm facing away (fingers up). Grab the tips of your fingers with your other hand and gently pull towards yourself. You don't want it to hurt, but you should make sure you're pulling hard enough to feel the stretch. Hold it

for 10-15 seconds then switch to the other arm. Do this twice – then Hand “Shake Out”

2. Repeat Stretch #1 but this time, with arm fully extended, point your fingers down so your palms are facing you. Grab your fingers with your other hand and gently pull towards yourself. Hold it for 10-15 seconds then switch to the other arm. Do this twice – then Hand “Shake Out”



Forearm massage (increase blood flow to your arm, hand and fingers)

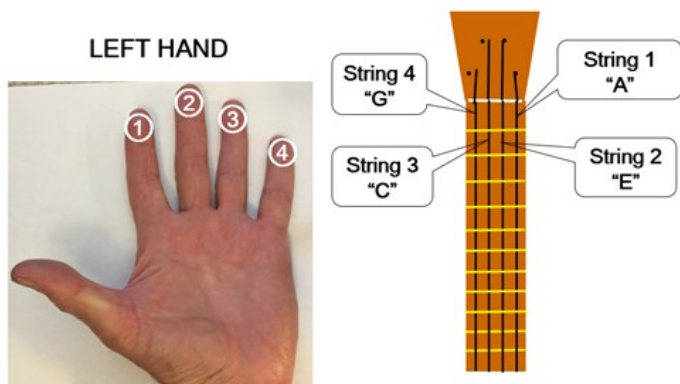
1. Extend your arm straight out, palm up.
2. With your other hand, using your thumb, press firmly (not too hard) on the inside of your forearm and slide down from the crook of your elbow to your wrist – a couple of times. At the same time make a fist and then open your hand a couple of times during the massage – do this a couple of times.
3. Repeat this on the other arm – Then Hand “Shake Out”

Warm Ups

As a warm up, many musicians suggest slowly playing through some simple scales and chord patterns to prepare for practices and performances.

As an alternative to scales, a good way to warm up and to increase finger strength and dexterity is to simply “walk” the strings using all four fingers as shown below. This is particularly helpful for developing strength in your lesser used Ring and Pinky fingers. **(continued on page 6)**

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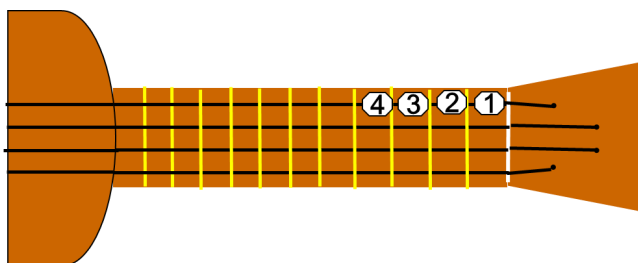


Make sure to go slowly to start with and speed up as you become more comfortable with this exercise.

1. Start by fretting the 4th string (G) on the 1st fret with your Index finger (1), then plucking the string with your thumb
 2. next fret the 2nd fret with your Middle finger (2), and pluck
 3. next fret the 3rd fret with your Ring finger (3), and pluck
 4. next fret the 4th fret with your Pinky (4) and pluck
- Then reverse and go back up the frets 3rd, 2nd and 1st using your fingers as described above so the sequence is 1-2-3-4-3-2-1.

Once you are comfortable with this, extend the exercise by continuing on to the next string (3rd string C) and repeat going up and back frets 1- 4 for all the strings. It may take a little while to develop the finger strength and dexterity but you will find this will improve your playing fairly quickly.

Note: the numbers below indicate which finger to use



A more advanced technique is called the “Spider Climb”. It’s similar to the above exercise but instead of walking up and down the frets in sequence (1-2-3-4-3-2-1), you alternate the pick to every other fret (1-3-2-4-2-3-1).

I arbitrarily started on the first fret for both of these but you can start on any fret you choose (the frets are narrower as you go down the fret board – for instance, start of the 3rd or 5th fret instead – e.g., sequence starting on the 3rd fret: 3-4-5-6-5-4-3 or 3-5-4-6-4-5-3).

You should always stretch before the warmup to make sure you have loosened up your arms and wrists and get the blood flowing to your hands and fingers.

Give these exercises and warm-ups a shot or find others online or make up your own – Stick with it and after a short while, I think you’ll be pleased with the results.



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, Carlos Lopes at Calopes23@gmail.com. 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.

Uke-picking on YouTube

by Carlos Lopes

When I started playing the ukulele I knew nothing about it. I had played the guitar but it was nothing like that. I asked a friend where I could learn more and she said “Try YouTube. There are lots of tutorials on there.” She was right! There are an immense number of tutorials available for free. I have found a number of useful pieces on learning to fingerpick the uke.



Ukulele Mike:

Michael Lynch produced an impressive number of uke lessons in an easy-going informative style. He passed away in 2018 but his lessons are still up on YouTube. Very clear and easy to follow with chord shapes provided. Here is his intro to picking:

- Tips & Advice—Fingerpicking Technique Ukulele Lesson/ Tutorial by “Ukulele Mike”

Cynthia Lin Music YouTube:

Cynthia Lin is an excellent uke player from Hawaii who also happens to be a great teacher. She has a series of lessons from beginner to advanced that are excellent. Here is her finger-picking lesson:

- Can't Help Falling in Love - fingerpicking // Ukulele Tutorial

One Music School YouTube:

Katie Denure is a music teacher on both ukulele and guitar and she has thousands of lessons on YouTube. She is very clear and precise. One of her finger-picking lessons:

- Fingerpick Any Song on the Ukulele for Beginners - Easy Fingerpicking Exercises

Ukulele Zen YouTube:

Stu Fuchs is an amazing uke teacher. He runs the gamut from basic to quite advanced but you can choose what to focus on as the videos are usually short. This is his fingerpicking lesson:

- The BEST Ukulele Fingerstyle Lesson (Classical Uke Technique) || Ukulele Zen Tips #16

Ukulele with JJ Milare

JJ Milare is a Hawaiian uke teacher with a clear easy-to-understand approach. His finger-picking lesson is very good:

- Fingerpick any song on the ukulele for beginners- 3 easy fingerpicking exercises



In Memoriam

Joan Dueming

It was with deep sadness that we reported the passing of Joan Dueming on the morning of December 26, 2020. She passed away with family members present. Joan and husband Fritz were founder members of the Delta Strummers, along with Ward Pinther and Dorothy McKellar (regrettably all have since passed). Joan was our Delta Strummers Music Leader for a few years and would whip us into shape when we practiced weekly at the Delta Community Presbyterian Church in Discovery Bay.

Joan was an accomplished musician and singer and played the piano in addition to her ukulele. She also recognized talent in others, and openly welcomed the arrival of new members into the band.

Audiences at some of our performances enjoyed the Duemings' duet routine of "Hey Good Looking".

During the summer months, the Duemings were RVers and took along their ukuleles on their travels. Around the campfire at a campground, they'd start playing their ukes and singing and, as Fritz described, campers would "come out of the woodwork to listen and join in the singing".

Our sincere condolences to their family and friends.

-prepared by Tom Jones



Fritz and Joan doing "Hey Good Looking"



Joan Dueming performing

Delta Strummers 2021 Board

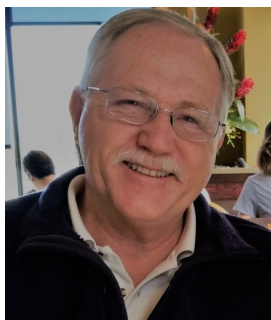
Chairman. Lucy Meis

There are two song titles that best describe my life: Music, Music, Music, and Fun, Fun, Fun. I play, sing, and listen to music daily and I am having fun, despite the current environment.



Since joining the Delta Strummers in October 2016, I converted my living room to a music area with wall mounts for the instruments, a portable piano keyboard, an amplifier, a Karaoke style singing machine, and a smart TV for access to YouTube for songs and other tutorials.

Vice Chairman. Tom Webster has resided in Brentwood with his wife Frances for the last 12 years. Born and raised in the Bay Area, Tom has four grown children and three grandchildren. Tom and his wife have been involved since 2001 with Guide Dogs for the Blind, both raising puppies and puppy-sitting as needed. Music has been a part of Tom's life for most of his adult years. The opportunity to be part of the Delta Strummers has been a great experience both musically and socially – looking forward to the continuing comradery and performing with the group.



Treasurer. Rich Alves

I had been playing backup baritone for Willie Nelson for three years. One memorable Tuesday evening we took a break between sets. I was relaxing backstage with a can of A&W No Sugar Root Beer and a box of Cracker Jack. There was a bright red prize at the bottom of the box. Large yellow letters spelled out "You Have Won a Membership In The Delta Strummers. Contact Ernie Macintyre in Brentwood CA to collect your prize!" I left Nashville the next day and rode west on my Honda lawn mower. It was a bit slow, but with four-wheel drive it could handle

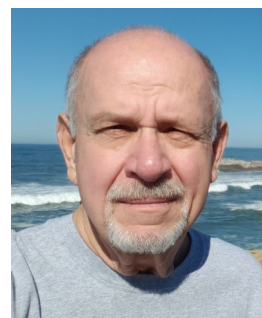


different road conditions. And it was extremely reliable. The rest is history. I'm now enjoying my thirteenth year playing backup baritone for The Delta Strummers.

Secretary. Carlos Lopes played the guitar for many years before being smitten by the ukulele during a trip to Kauai'. He joined the Delta Strummers in 2016 and enjoys every minute playing this terrific instrument with such a great group.

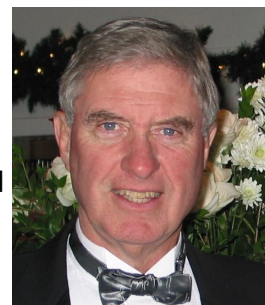


Fifth Board Member. Ralph Hendrix started his musical career with lessons on the steel guitar at age 8 along with Trombone in the school band. At age 16, he played his Fender big body acoustic guitar for his own enjoyment and sang tenor at church. Since joining Delta Strummers in 2014, he put away his guitar and is now busting out chords on any one of his six ukuleles, while still trying to keep his singing in the background. He figures that the only way he can carry a tune is in his briefcase!



Music Director.

Ernie Macintyre was born in Glasgow, Scotland and came to the U.S. as a "wee little laddie". Ernie is a talented musician and accomplished singer, and has a unique approach to teaching musical skills and leading musical ensembles. He joined the Summerset Singers in 2003 and became Music Director in 2010.



Ernie joined the Delta Strummers as Music Director in June, 2011, and has helped grow the group, both in numbers and musical skills. His 'ukulele beginners classes' have been well attended, and graduates are able to transition to the main band.