



# FLAGSTAFF FRIENDS of TRADITIONAL MUSIC

May 2006

*In this Issue:*

FFOTM Spring Campout

Ken Ralston

Sirens of Wood

FFOTM 5th Annual Folk Festival

## FFOTM Spring Campout returns to Blowout Tanks

by Jessica Pope

May 6 -7, 2006

Complete with carpools to the Contra Dance

It's time for the annual spring campout! The party starts in earnest on Saturday May 6th, but the option is there for anyone wishing to come out Friday night and get a jump on the fun. This year we'll be back at Blowout Tanks. To get there take I-17 to the Willard Springs exit, about 17 miles south of Flagstaff. From the exit turn right onto the paved road that leads to the trash compactor station. Follow the Forest Service road around to the north and we will be camped within the next half mile or so, watch for signs along the road directing you to the site.

Saturday night will be our big potluck dinner with FFOTM renting the grill and providing the hamburgers and hotdogs. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Be sure and bring your own plates, utensils and something to drink.

After dinner Saturday night we will be arranging carpools for everyone who would like to go back into town for the Contra dance. Due to several scheduling conflicts and a worry that if we wait too long the forest will close, the board went ahead and decided to have the campout the same weekend as the Contra dance. After the dance we'll

carpool back out to campout for of course, more music and fun. Don't miss it!

We'll be doing our traditional pancake breakfast on Sunday morning. If you would like to volunteer to help with cooking please contact Roger Brace at 556-9123.

We can always use an extra pair of hands. Also clean-up crews are always in high demand. It is a lot of work arranging food for so many people. Please make yourself available after for clean-up.

Bring everything you need for a great time camping in the woods. Water, chairs, warm clothes, rain gear, sun protection all come in handy as do tents, sleeping bags and instruments. We will provide porta-potties and a trash container for your convenience.

The campouts are always a great time rain or shine. The forest service informed us on Monday May 1st that campfires would be allowed. With all the recent rain we're in luck, so if you have extra firewood plan to bring it. It is shaping up to be a beautiful weekend for camping, music until the wee hours of the morning and dancing. Pack up the family and come out, it's gonna be great!



# Ken Ralston

by Rusty Tweed

I was fortunate to catch up with Ken Ralston for an hour during one of his occasional trips back to Flagstaff. Ken was passing through town on his way to Las Vegas for an electronics trade show. He was hoping to find some equipment to aid him in his in-house video productions to be used for promoting his business. Avoiding the “trendy coffee shops” in town, we sipped our iced tea and pop in the local tavern Sportsman’s, on a late Monday afternoon. It was just several years earlier that I attended an informal jam at Sportsman’s, organized by Ken and others. I still remember Ken singing one of my favorite songs that evening -- Hickory Wind.

Even though Ken has moved to the eastern part of the state, to the town of Nutrioso, he still feels as connected as ever to the FFOTM community. In fact, one of the highlights of this recent return to Flagstaff was the fiddle tunes jam at the Unitarian Universalist fellowship. After our talk, Ken was headed down to the jam to catch up with old friends and brush up on his guitar playing. “I definitely miss the good friends and pickers in this community. It seemed like there were always opportunities to play and socialize; and jamming really is a social thing. So I guess it’s still a bit of a sore spot with me; it’s not a total desert where I am now, but it’s definitely pretty barren. I can probably count the number of musicians there on two hands.”

Though much of his playing time is spent alone these days, he has started a band known as Up the Creek, which consists of banjo, bass, and Ken on guitar. While playing on his own, Ken has dusted off songs of his old favorites -- singers like Gordon Lightfoot, John Prine and Nancy Griffith. “I’ve also been doing some of my favorite cowboy songs. I really enjoy story songs more than anything.”

I have always been amazed with how performers of cowboy songs, stories and poetry can remember all those words, so I asked Ken if there are any secrets or tricks. “I read a lot of cowboy poetry and stories, but perhaps more importantly, I hang around Tony Norris a lot. He was, and is, a great mentor for me, beginning with when I was first introduced to the club. I remember Tony walked into the shop where I was working at the time -- it must have been

1988 or so, and he invited me to one of the first meetings of this new club. That club, of course, became Flagstaff Friends of Traditional Music. And I think the key word there is Friends. That’s what keeps it together, and keeps it going, I believe. There have always been differences of opinion over the years, about this or that, but the thing that

stands out in my mind, is that the people in this organization always knew when to take a step back, and try to find compromise. That always impressed me, and I guess that’s why I consider so many of the people in this group to be my friends. Probably 99% of my friends are a result of involvement with FFOTM.”

Ken summarized interest in FFOTM as falling into three broad categories: contra dance events, jamming, and attending concerts. “Most people in FFOTM have an interest in at least one of those categories, and for some, it’s all three. I remember that the contra dances were really critical to getting the momentum to propel the organization forward. They really held it together, and they are still very popular today. They provide a great opportunity for the pickers to play, and the dancers to dance. I remember being a musician at one of the early dances,

and it was just me and Ron Barton for the entire night. My hands were raw from playing the guitar all night. Soon after that I tried dancing and found I liked that even more. It was a nice opportunity to give my hands a rest. Lloyd Holdeman also had the idea to start a fiddle tunes jam, so we could work on the songs for the dances, and learn to pick the melodies. That tradition continues today, with Larry Peterson coordinating this jam on Monday nights at the Unitarian fellowship.”

As many members of FFOTM know, Ken took the lead role as organizer for the first and second Flagstaff Folk Festivals. I asked what the biggest challenge in organizing the event was. “Scheduling the performers was probably the biggest headache. Just when I thought I had a full-proof schedule of performers, someone would call to change and the entire schedule would be thrown off as small changes would trickle down throughout the whole thing.” Ken is glad that the festival is still going strong, and is hopeful that it will continue. “The folks that took over the organization of the event for 2005, Jesse (Ander-



son), Mike (Reddig), and Zack (Mondry) did an excellent job. I am so appreciative of their efforts. I'm looking forward to 2006 and to catching up with many old friends."

I asked Ken about the future of FFOTM. "I am really pleased that the club's reputation has grown. It really speaks to the hard work and dedication of past and current board members, and volunteers. I think the club has made an effort to make sure that everything it does is well thought out, and in its best interest; that results in a quality presentation and very good public perception. I think the partnership with the County on the newly planned fall bluegrass festival is the latest example of that."

Ken remembered fondly that his earliest interest in playing music was inspired by his Uncle Ed. "He is alive today, and he's lucky he is -- he was a radio man in the Navy and took part in three invasions, North Africa, Sicily and Normandy. The communications people were often targeted in the initial assault so he was always under heavy fire. I stayed with him one summer when I was between

8th and 9th grade. He was a core driller and his base camp was set up just north of Safford. There wasn't much to do, so we spent the evenings playing his old Spanish guitar. His friends were pretty good players too; so that's where I first picked it up. Getting hooked up with FFOTM was also great for my playing. I spent about 20 years playing the same songs with the same mistakes until the club formed. Later, when Bill Vernieu joined the club, he showed a bunch of us what bluegrass was. That was my first introduction to bluegrass playing."

Certainly one of the things that struck me about Ken is his modesty. It seemed that every question or topic we discussed lead to Ken expressing how thankful he was for the many individuals that have helped him personally, and have made important contributions to the advancement of the organization and its mission. So if you catch up with Ken at next month's Folk Festival, remember to thank him for getting this great event off of the ground. Thanks Ken!



---

## FFOTM MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ new \_\_\_\_\_ renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone - Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Membership - \$12.00 per year

Family Membership - \$15.00 per year

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership \$12

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \$15

Make checks payable to FFOTM  
and mail to:

FFOTM  
P.O. Box 23366  
Flagstaff, AZ 86002  
FFOTM Membership Form

# Sirens of Wood

By Ken Clemmer, *The Back Porch Band*

(NOTE: For clarity, the Back Porch Bandits are Josh Tharp, banjo; Karl Maerz, dobro; Billy Parker, mandolin; Joel Dowling, bass; and my ownself on guitar)

Whether it be from Odysseus and his crew in *The Odyssey* or George Clooney and his fellow cons in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, we learn about the sweet musical temptation of The Sirens. And lots of us who play know something about the siren song of sundry musical instruments - that irresistible call that if heeded leads to rack and ruin.

When we musicians hear a lilting strain from a piece of wood in the hands of an expert, we covet the ability to play That Very Thing. It's an inspiration and a lesson. But mostly it's a sickness.

Since I began in first-grade rhythm band, I've been led to a virtual crashing on the rocks by some wonderful musicians. Pete Fountain didn't start me on clarinet back in fourth grade, but he later drove me toward being a fair hand at Dixieland. I started college with a horn just like his.

The Kingston Trio got me strumming guitar and singing way back when. Then lots of other sorry folkers made me try to fingerpick a nylon-string Mexican guitar sweetly enough to make college girls swoon at my feet. I couldn't and they didn't, though they might not have if I could have.

Country boys Willie and Waylon and Ronnie and Kris had me wailing away at a Framus electric guitar for awhile, playing loud 1-4-5 chords without sounding very good. I learned lots of lyrics but very little music.

I built a few Appalachian dulcimers (which sounded prettier than they looked) from door skins, fencing lumber, and bone from cow carcasses I found in the woods. I had a Tony Norris-style beard at that time, and before I knew that pre-cut bone blanks were cheaply available, I ground out my own with a sander. It took weeks to get the bone dust and burning-bodies smell out of my hair and whiskers.

I've gone through lots of other Sirens of Wood - recorders, kalimbas, bongos, etc. - but it was a fiddle and

a beloved old dog named Charles that brought me to my senses.

Charles was a mongrel, small in size, monstrous in heart, who was with us for sixteen years. When he was about fourteen, he was crippled up and close to stone deaf. Yet when I bought a fiddle and began to saw away, Charles would wail like a banshee announcing a death. Invariably. It got so bad that he'd whine when I'd open the case. So I sold the fiddle.

When the laughing gods exposed me to bluegrass and old-time music, my ruin was complete. I heard Doc Watson and Tony Rice and Earl Scruggs and Tim O'Brien and a million more. I began to realize that I'd need five lifetimes to learn what I want, and that's only if I avoided dobro (pretty easy) and stopped listening right now (harder).

I needed to narrow my scope if I was going to gain a little instrumental expertise. Most of the Back Porch Banditboys are already better than I am, even at my chosen instrument, and one little smartass is a third my age. It's either euthanize them and snag

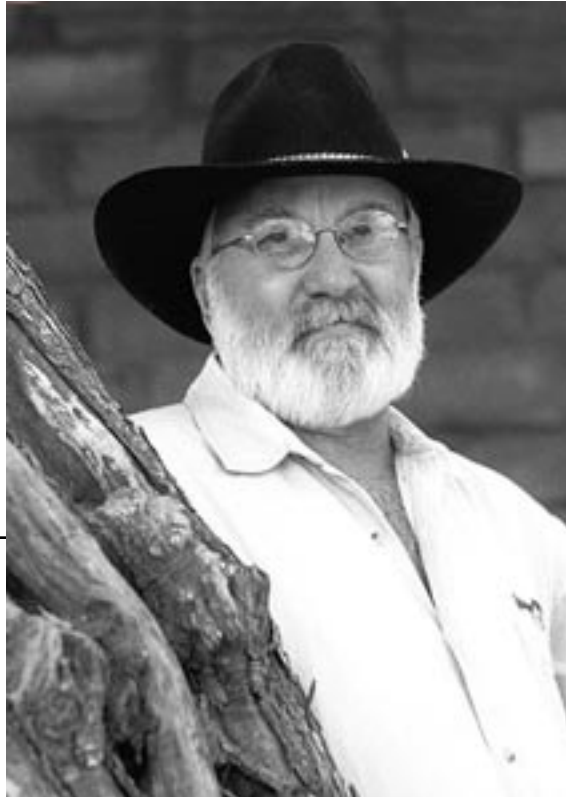
some lesser pickers or narrow down and get busy trying to keep up.

Now I'm specialized. I own ten guitars with another on the way - NOT too many, dammit - plus a bass and an old-time banjo (which I'm slowly learning) and a rarely-used mandolin. And I'm a better guitar player because of it, though still a work in progress.

If there's a lesson herein, it's this:

Avoid scattering out too much. Deafen yourself to the Sirens long enough to reach a gratifying level of hand-making music on your favorite instrument.

But once you play something sweet, then heck, play 'em all. Life is short...



# Flagstaff Friends of Traditional Music 5th Annual Folk Festival

## Call for performers

by Jesse Anderson

Get ready for the 5th annual Flagstaff Folk Festival, June 10th and 11th, 2006 (10 am to 6 pm both days) at the Coconino Center for the Arts. Look forward to tons of great local and regional acts at four stages, special children's programs, jamming in the courtyard and parking lot, the big barn dance Saturday night and – as always – a few surprises. The folk festival this year is produced by The Flagstaff Friends of Traditional Music with the kind assistance of the Coconino Center for the Arts and sponsorship by Acoustic Music Arizona.

Musicians! If you wish to perform, there are still performance slots available. Downloadable forms and instructions are available at: <http://www.ffotm.net/folkfest>  
Email [folkfestival@ffotm.net](mailto:folkfestival@ffotm.net) with any questions.



## Bookman's Jam moves to Saturday

The monthly FFOTM jam session at Bookman's is moving. After almost ten years as a Friday evening affair, starting May 27 the jam session will take place on the last Saturday of each month, from 3:00 - 5:00 pm, at Bookman's Used Books at 1520 S Riordan Ranch St. Things are usually hopping in Bookman's on Saturdays - we're hoping many old and new pickers, and listeners, will show up.

Christina Boyd has done great work coordinating hosts for the past eight months or so - the jams have been super. With the schedule change, Rusty Tweed has volunteered to take over the coordination duties. For more information contact Rusty at (928) 774-5760 or [russell.tweed@lowell.edu](mailto:russell.tweed@lowell.edu). See you on Saturday!

## Camping Contra

By Kerri Usher

That's right! You can have it all; a wonderful camp out experience on Saturday, May 6th (at Blow Out Tank just south of town off the Willard Springs Road exit), have a potluck dinner, carpool into town Saturday night and dance to Contraceptive with Kari Usher calling. The Band consists of Jesse Anderson, Bill Hudson, Krista Straka and Byron Ripley on tuba. I know you don't want to miss any of this good time. You can carpool back to the campout to sing, play and visit into the wee hours. Then Sunday morning there will be pancakes for the lot of us.

We are not sure how much longer the forest will be open for campouts, so don't be shy - come on out and bring your tent, food, drink, your friends and a dish for the potluck. If you want to help out with meals give Roger Brace a call 556-9123.

If that was not enough ...We are planning a Prom themed Contra Dance on June 3rd with Just Desserts playing to Sherman Jensen calling. No Partner needed just your sense of adventure and the knowledge which is your left hand. Dance lesson starts at 7:30 and we dance till 11 pm. For more info call Kris 526-3020.

# Local and Regional Events

---

For events that come up after the newsletter has printed, check the website at [www.FFOTM.net](http://www.FFOTM.net).

## Wednesday May 10 8pm

Tony Norris and Friends at the Wineloft. Rumor has it Tony's guest for this set will be none other than Elvis Aaron Presley.

## Thursday • May 18 • 8:00 P.M.

Joseph Israel and the Lions of Israel from Jamaica 7-piece reggae band. Word is spreading of this Israelite youth from the U.S. whose music and prophetic message are an inspiration to all. With a band world-class musicians who have toured and recorded with the likes of Ziggy Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Lauryn Hill, Peter Tosh, Black Uhuru, and Bob Marley among others, Joseph and the Lions of Israel are promoting their new CD *Gone Are the Days*. Future Studios Live Performance Venue, 30 Hozoni Drive, Sedona. P.O. Box 4779 (86340). (928) 282-9139

## Thursday, May 18 7pm

Matthew Henry Hall and Chuck Cheesman  
Macy's European Coffee House, Flagstaff

## Friday May 19 10pm

Nolan McKelvey & 33 Mogollon Brewing Company,  
Flagstaff CD release party

## Sunday May 21 3-6pm

**Nolan McKelvey & 33**  
Mountaineer Tavern

## Sunday May 21 at 2:00 p.m

The Burnett Family  
Bookmans, 1520 S Riordan Ranch Road, Flagstaff  
928-774-0005

## Friday May 26 - Sunday May 28

The 9th Annual Old Blue Memorial Day Bluegrass Festival, at the Doubletree Hotel in Grand Junction, CO. With special guests: The Gibson Brothers, Jimmy Bowen and Santa Fe, F-150 Bluegrass, Marty Warburton Band, The Kirbyknob Boys, Desperate Measures and the King'n Trio.

## Sunday May 28 at 2:00 p.m

Chuck Cheesman  
Bookmans, 1520 S Riordan Ranch Road, Flagstaff  
928-774-0005

## Wednesday May 17 12:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Fourth Annual Flagstaff Music Festival  
Heritage Square, Downtown Flagstaff  
This free event for music lovers of all ages features the local talent of:  
Matthew Henry Hall  
Tony Norris & The Arroyo Seco Ramblers  
The Porchlights String Band  
Nation's Ensemble

The Tommy Dukes Blues Band

*\*Performers and schedule are tentative and subject to change.*

<http://www.flagstaffmusicfestival.com/>

## Wednesday, June 7, 8-11pm

Tony Norris and guests at Wineloft First Wednesday Vintage Series

## Saturday, June 17, 8 pm

Tony and THE ARROYO SECO RAMBLERS:  
Fourth Annual Flagstaff Music Festival  
[www.flagstaffmusicfestival.com](http://www.flagstaffmusicfestival.com)

## Thursday, June 16 - Sunday, June 18

Huck Finn Jubilee  
Mojave Narrows Regional Park, Victorville, CA  
[www.huckfinn.com](http://www.huckfinn.com)

## Friday, June 24 - Saturday, June 25

25th Annual Prescott Bluegrass Festival  
Courthouse Plaza, Prescott

# Ongoing Events

---

## Every Tues 8:30 pm – midnight Charlys Open Mic

hosted by Larry Peterson 699-7068. Start calling at noon on Tuesday to get a slot on the line-up.

## Every Monday - 7:00 pm:

FFOTM Fiddle Tunes Jam Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 510 N. Leroux. Host Larry Peterson 699-7068.

## Every first Tuesday – 6:00-9:00 pm:

FFOTM jam session at the Coconino Center for the Arts.

## Every Tuesday, Friday & Saturday night -7:00

**pm:** The Collins Irish Band plays at Collins Irish Pub in downtown Flagstaff.

## Every Thursday – 7:00 pm:

FFOTM Just Desserts contra dance band rehearsal. Open to anyone who wants to play or listen to contra dance music. Any instrument and playing ability is welcome. Rehearsal starts at 7:00pm at the home of Deb Comly and Mike Reddig, 1457 W. Meade. For more information call 774-5936.

## Every last Saturday – 7:00-9:00 pm:

FFOTM jam session at Bookman's Used Books. For information, call Christina Boyd at 928-522-9269.

## Every first Saturday – 7:30 pm:

FFOTM Contra Dance at Ashurst Hall on the NAU campus. Come on out for the 7:30 pre-dance lesson. For more information call Laura at 556-8739 or email her at: [laurashearin@hotmail.com](mailto:laurashearin@hotmail.com)

**Every Tuesday at noon:** Tuesday lunch set with Chuck Cheesman at Morning Groy Cafe, 115 S. San Francisco. Check out [www.chuckcheesman.net](http://www.chuckcheesman.net) for details.

**Special Note:**

The Unitarian Universalist Coffee House that was scheduled for every last Friday has now been cancelled. Thanks to all of those who made it possible!



## Radio Programs

---

**Saturday Folk hosted by Barry Harrison** Four-hour show, Saturday mornings 6-10am on KVNA AM 600. A wide range of folk, blues, Celtic and bluegrass.

**Thistle and Shamrock, National Public Radio's Celtic music show, hosted by Fiona Richie** Saturday evenings at 8:00pm on KNAU, 88.7/91.7 FM. 523-2334.

**Celtic Connection, featuring music from the evolving traditions of Ireland, Scotland, North America, and beyond** Saturday evenings on KNAU, FM 88.7/91.7 FM. 523-2334.

**Under Western Skies, a radio program about Western music and cowboy poetry** hosted by Peter Bruce every Sunday morning at 7:00 am on 92.9 KAFF FM and AM 930 Country Classics. For more information contact Peter at 773-1346.

**Bluegrass Radio! 24/7 Listener supported bluegrass music stream at: [WWW.BLUEGRASSRADIO.ORG](http://WWW.BLUEGRASSRADIO.ORG).** New and old, lots of bands we see at festivals or concerts, no commercials or donation requests... just music!

**KJZA, 89.5 FM, Flagstaff.** Dave McNabb is providing Northern Arizona with a much needed Celtic music outlet. His Celtic Corner supplements his activities in the concert and Ceilidh areas. Saturday evenings 6-7pm. Sunday mornings 7-8am (replay). 928-771-1218

**The Folk Sessions, Live!**

*Saturdays, 7-9pm, repeated at midnight.* 89.5 fm KJZA hosted by Tom Agostino & Alexa MacDonald For more info: [info@folksessions.com](mailto:info@folksessions.com) or call Alexa at 541-0736 for more info. <http://www.folksessions.com>

**Saturday, May 6:** Best of the Folk Sessions Tonight we dip into the archives for a classic show while Tom and Alexa head to Tucson to perform at the Tucson Folk Fest

**Saturday, May 13:** Connie Fisher  
A first time Folk Sessions visit by Connie Fisher, a singer/guitarist who enjoys sharing her collection of the rich musical traditions of the world. While singing in English and other languages, Connie's voice is ethereal and lustrous. She relates poetic history in traditional and original songs and ballads, performing a repertoire of original and world music; featuring the traditional Celtic Music of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and a collection of the traditional songs of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Greece, Spain, India, Africa, Tibet, and the Middle-East.

**Saturday, May 19:** Malcolm Harris  
The Folk Sessions welcomes balladeer Malcolm Harris to the show for the first time. This Phoenix artist performs traditional folk music

**Saturday, April 29:** Iona  
This amazing quartet of Prescott area woman artists perform a repertoire of Celtic and Renaissance music combining fiddle, harp, guitar, mandolin and flute. Members of notable area groups like Wild Thyme, Crosswinds and the Granite Peak String Band, the talented ladies who comprise Iona are a joy to hear.

**The Granite Peak Folk Sessions**  
your monthly night out for fine music

*SPECIAL GRANITE PEAK FOLK SESSIONS CONCERT*

**GYPSY SOUL** critics choice in over 25 international publications: <http://www.gypsypsoul.com/>

**ALEXA MACDONALD & TOM AGOSTINO**  
Soulful, Acoustic music from the Folk Session hosts THURSDAY, May 11, 7pm \$10.00  
Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Hal  
882 Sunset Drive, Prescott off Whipple, behind True Value Hardware

Every month we bring together great music, good people, tasty treats, and lots of community spirit in a warm, welcoming environment.

# Fourth Annual Flagstaff Music Festival

Saturday, June 17, 2006  
Noon - 8 p.m.  
on Heritage Square in  
historic downtown Flagstaff

*This free event for music lovers of all ages  
features the local talent of...*

Matthew Henry Hall

Tony Norris & The Arroyo Seco Ramblers

The Porchlights String Band

Nation's Ensemble

The Tommy Dukes Blues Band

*\*Performers and schedule are tentative and subject to change.*

www.ffotm.net



FLAGSTAFF FRIENDS OF  
TRADITIONAL MUSIC  
P.O. Box 23366  
Flagstaff, AZ 86002