



Fiddler's Rag



Vol. 53, Number 10
Celebrating 52 years

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association
www.fiddlers.org

October 2025
Next Jam October 5th



President's Note

By Ray Chen

Hello, SCVFA!!

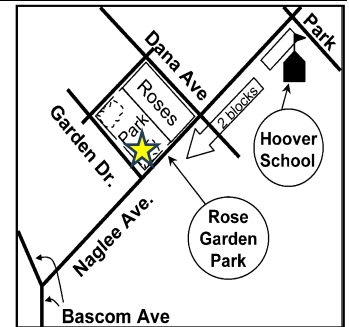
The September jam was well attended. We had a good time, even though we were hit with a perfect storm. There was an event that pulled people into the park. They shut down a number of streets. So, there were people walking, food trucks, and of course, music playing in the streets next to the park. AND there was a wedding party in the park right next to us that also played music through speakers!

Having a big party, be it a birthday party or wedding party, set up right next to us was bound to happen eventually. To have that happen at the same time that there was basically a street party in and around the park? What can I say, except maybe that I hope we got it all out of the way on one day 😊.

Some people played in our usual spot, and a number of people spread out along the Garden Drive side of the park. A few brave souls played in the sun but most people clustered into one jam in the one big patch of shade. I set up the cross-tune jam "around the corner" from the big group, using a conveniently placed wood structure as a sound barrier so the jams didn't interfere with each other.

The October jam will be another somewhat challenging jam, although hopefully, not nearly as challenging as the September jam. We will be in the Rose Garden again because Hoover isn't available. The Rock N' Roll Half-Marathon and 10K road race happens that weekend, and roads are scheduled to be closed off to everyone but residents near the Rose Garden (and Hoover) until about 12:45 pm on Sunday (see picture on last page). However, if the runners are really slow, they could keep the roads bordering the Rose Garden closed to traffic until up to 2 pm. [A brochure on the road closures](#) and a full list of [no parking](#) and [road closures](#) are online.

The good news is we should be able to start the jam on schedule or only a few minutes late since we don't have much to set up. My hands and arms are getting stronger now, so I'm hoping I can play more with everyone.



We have a special treat for November. Karen Celia Heil led the old-time jam in April. People liked it so much that we figured we should bring her back.

So, in November, we'll be back at Hoover (hurray!) and Karen will be back to lead the old-time jam from 1:30 – 5 pm. Karen will lead the jam and toward the end of the afternoon, she may teach a tune or record a few tunes for people – or both! Or she may continue to lead the jam for the rest of the afternoon. It'll depend on what the people who are in the session want to do – play, learn a tune, or get some recordings to take home and work on.

Save the date and I hope to see you, soon!!

Future Playouts / Performances

We have numerous opportunities throughout the year.

For more info visit: <http://www.fiddlers.org/open-band>

Oct 11th – Martial Cottle Park Fall Festival, 9 - 10:15 am

Oct 14th – Villa Siena, Mountain View, 2:30 – 3:30 pm

Oct 25th – Morgan Hill Farmers Market, 9 – 1 pm

Nov 8th – Our City Forest, San Jose, 9:30 – 1:30 pm

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The Fiddler's Rag is published monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association and is provided to members of the Association. The Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA), founded in 1973 in San Jose, California, is a nonprofit, volunteer-operated organization dedicated to the preservation, teaching, and enjoyment of traditional music. Membership includes electronic delivery of the Fiddler's Rag.

To join, sign up at the jam or see www.fiddlers.org/join-the-scvfa

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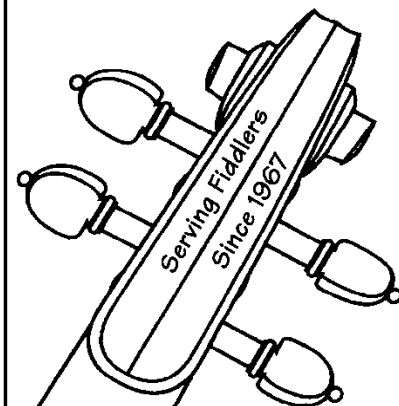
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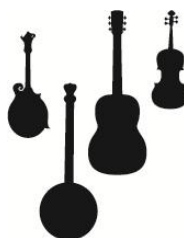
Donations to SCVFA are greatly appreciated and will assist in keeping traditional music alive by passing it on to the next generation.

Many local corporations offer matched donations for non-profits. Check with your employer... they may offer this benefit.

You can easily add SCVFA as a 501(c)(3) organization;
our EIN is 51-0196154

Donate as you are able
and traditional music will reap the benefits.

SCVFA was founded in 1973 to support fiddling but supports and welcomes musicians other than fiddlers. The image to the right side of the Fiddler's Rag name on the first page includes a mandolin, a banjo, a guitar and a fiddle, to illustrate the diversity of instruments played at our jams and events.



SCVFA Happenings

SCVFA Mission Statement

Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association (SCVFA) preserves traditional music genres that feature fiddle and other acoustic instruments. SCVFA takes pride in “passing it on” to musicians and listeners of all ages and abilities.

Diversity Statement

SCVFA believes that our mission is fundamentally improved by diversity and inclusion. SCVFA is at all times committed to providing an open, safe, and welcoming environment for all our members and guests. We celebrate the varied abilities, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, gender identities, religions and cultural backgrounds of our community, and do not tolerate discrimination based upon these differences.

First Sunday Jam: October 5th – 1 to 5 pm at the **San Jose Municipal Rose Garden**. 1649 Naglee Ave. at Garden Dr. in San Jose. Suggested donation: \$5.00 – more or less as you are able. [Click here to donate online](#).

Old-Time Jam: 1(ish) – 5 pm

Bluegrass & Open Jams: 1(ish) – 5 pm

Slow jam: 1:30 – 2:30 pm – Tunes are available on our [SCVFA website](#).

Banjo-friendly Advanced Cross-Tune Old-Time Jam: 3-ish – 4-ish pm led by Ray Chen

“AFTERS” Join us at [Five Guys](#)
1205 The Alameda #10, San Jose.

NOTE: the streets around the park are likely to be closed until approximately 12:45 pm due to the Half-Marathon road race. See first and last pages for more details.

(Mostly) Old-Time Jam: Mondays, 7-9 pm, Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto: Requested donation – \$2 – \$4. Email [banjoclarka\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:banjoclarka[at]yahoo.com) for more details.

Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddlers’ Festival:

Oct 4. Suzy & Eric Thompson, The Horsenecks, Clinton Davis Stringband, Skillet Licorice. [Goleta Valley Historical Society](#).

Old-Time Campout: Oct 4-5. [Lake Cachuma Campground](#) (~30 min from the Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddlers’ Festival). Email [steveowens\[at\]cox.net](mailto:steveowens[at]cox.net) for details.

September Board Meeting Highlights:

By Jessica Ollmann, Secretary

We need a new webmaster as Matt will be stepping away.

Playouts brought in over \$550 in July and August. More are scheduled but we need more players for the Cottle Park fall festival.

Good Old Fashioned was a fun and successful way to let more people know about SCVFA. The quarter page SCVFA postcards that Ray made up seem to be very popular. We are also advertising in the Bluegrass Breakdown in September, November, and January.

Ray and Cliff are working out the priorities for website development and membership management.

Karen Heil agreed to lead the OT jam in November. The Board will discuss whether and how often to bring people in to lead the jam in future meetings.

The Board approved SCVFA presence at The Great 48 as part of the campaign to raise awareness of SCVFA in the bluegrass and old-time community. SCVFA booked a jamming room (with the CBA discount) with the plan of hosting old-time jams in that room.

The Corn Lickers: Oct 11 & 12. [Palo Alto contra dance](#), 7 – 10 pm. [Santa Cruz contra dance](#), 3 – 5:30 pm.

Walker Creek Music Camp: Oct 23-26. [Walker Creek Ranch and Conference Center](#), Petaluma. Greg Cahill, Joy Louise, Annie Staninec, the Canote brothers, Greg Blake, and more!

BOTMC 2025

By Ray Chen

Lauren and I recently spent the weekend at the Berkeley Old-Time Music Convention (BOTMC). This convention is a yearly highlight for us.

The weekend started for us on Wednesday night, when The Corn Lickers hosted the Welcome Jam in the back room of Ashkenaz, while a Cajun dance was going on in the dance hall. I was somewhat surprised to find very few fiddle players, but we wound up collecting a roomful of rhythm players. It was a rocking session and then much to my surprise, Bruce Molsky, Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus showed up, listened for a while, and then Bruce and Judy joined in. Bruce wound up sitting next to me while Judy preferred to stay on the outside.

We were only supposed to lead the jam for an hour, but people were having such a good time, I hated to end it. Then Bruce joined and I wasn't going to end it unless I had to. Two hours into the jam, I was running out of A tunes and stamina, when Bruce said he had one more left. He asked me if I played "Half Past Four" and I said "Yeessss...", so that's what we ended with. What I didn't tell him was, "Yes, but I'm reworking the bowing, so it might fall apart, and the band doesn't play it." I figured if Bruce wanted to end on Half Past Four, we were going to end on Half Past Four! We did and it was a ton of fun!

Next up came the concerts.

Suzy Thompson, the Festival Director, has long made a point of bringing top artists in from the East. Past artists include NEA Heritage Fellows like Eddie Bond, Sheila Kay Adams and Thomas Maupin, old master musicians like Benton Flippen (only a few years before he passed away), and hugely influential musicians like Bruce Molsky and Alice Gerrard. She's also made a point of arranging for some artists to play in larger groups – a full string band configuration – that a few lucky people might see in living rooms, a music camp, or late at night at a festival, but rarely see in concert.

This year was no exception. Bruce Molsky was back playing a solo set. Suzy brought in Sara Kate Morgan, a truly wonderful singer and mountain



Welcome Jam - Ray Chen, Lauren Graves, Bruce Molsky (l-r)

dulcimer player from Kentucky, and the Ozark Highballers, a 4-piece string band from Arkansas. Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus played with Jake Blount, one of Judy's fiddle disciples (his word for it!). BOTMC even paid to bring a bass player in from the East that Jeff and Judy only play with at festivals (some of you may know him, Joseph "Joebass" DeJarnette). The Black Banjo & Fiddle Fellows, three black musicians who spent two years learning from Jake Blount and Earl White, and Suzy herself rounded out the sets.

The Black Banjo & Fiddle Fellows, the Ozark Highballers, and Bruce Molsky performed Thursday night. Suzy kicked off the Friday concert and was followed by Sarah Kate Morgan, a singer and mountain dulcimer player from Kentucky. Jake, Judy, Jeff & friends closed out the evening. Both concerts were wonderful.

There was a panel led by Jake Blount Saturday morning and the band contest right after. Afternoon was jamming time. I joined the jam led by Jake, Judy and Jeff, and George Bradshaw joined the faster "Shred Sesh" jam next door.

Saturday night was the square dance with music supplied by Bruce Molsky and friends, the Ozark Highballers, and Jake, Jeff, Judy, and friends. The "friends" were local pros like Karen Heil, Evie Ladin, and Maxine and Brendan Doyle who are well regarded rhythm players in the old-time world.

The three bands were all different and great. Everyone was looking forward to it and the bands didn't disappoint.

There were a number of workshops sprinkled throughout. Bruce taught a fiddle workshop that Susan Goodis went to. I was there but missed most of it, because I also volunteered to record the concerts. Bruce's workshop was at the same time as sound check, and I needed to use the sound check to set the audio and video levels before the concert. Still, I caught the end of a pretty waltz that Bruce taught (I hope I have a recording!), and it was worth it just to record Bruce playing his version of Fortune at the beginning.

I was able to make Judy Hyman's fiddle workshop. She taught a fun tune called "Little Boy, Little Boy" that I'm going to have to work on before I completely forget how to play it.

The festival ended Sunday morning with more workshops (one of which was Judy's) and an afternoon jam at the park. Lauren and I went to the park after lunch. We wound up talking to people and saying goodbyes more than playing, and then we headed home.

It was a great weekend. For me, I'd say the highlight was the Wednesday night jam. It was so cool to have Bruce sit down next to me, even if the acoustics were weird and we couldn't hear each other well. The harmonica player from the Ozark Highballers also joined the session.

It wasn't like the rest of the weekend was all downhill, though. The concerts were wonderful, the workshops were great, and the music at dance was fun. It was just a great time.

I have to say the Saturday jam was a bit intimidating. A seat opened up next to Jeff Claus during the jam, and I moved into it. Then I realized that Jeff is all about rhythm and timing, and I was chasing tunes that I wasn't familiar with. I remember thinking, "Don't bother Jeff. Don't bother Jeff." So I wound up playing quietly and trying really hard to play right on the beat.

Lauren had a similar experience. Joebass was playing bass with Jake, Judy and Jeff in the jam, and he asked her, yelling out across the jam so that everyone heard, if she wanted to take over on bass for a while? Only Lauren couldn't play quietly – that doesn't work with the bass. She had to play super on-time. Judy gave her a big hug after the jam, so I think she succeeded!

I saw some SCVFA members over the weekend, including Susan, but I want to tip my hat to George Bradshaw. He told me that since this was Suzy's last year as Director of the festival, he wanted to go to everything. And he did. He was everywhere.

Go, George, the official festival Ironman!!!



Saturday night concert finale - Breaking Up Christmas. Evie Ladin, Sarah Kate Morgan, Jake Blount, Judy Hyman, Bruce Molsky, Suzy Thompson, Jeff Claus, Joseph "JoeBass" DeJarnette, Karen Celia Heil (l-r)

September Pictures

By Susan Goodis, Danny "Hootenanny" Clark, and Ray Chen



Jamming in Pittsburgh 2025

By Susan Goodis

I go to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to visit family and to join my jamming buddies at the Sunday weekly jam at the [Starlight Lounge](#). The Starlight lounge is famous for their pierogies, the biggest and best I have seen and tasted.

So many newer tunes are becoming part of my Pittsburgh repertoire. Just don't ask me to lead any yet. I have shared many of our regular West Coast tunes too. It's a great way to lessen the East Coast – West Coast divide. I have been included in the Thursday park jam as well as the Saturday Farmers Market. Leaving my friends here in Pittsburgh is always bittersweet, just to return to the joy of my West Coast buddies.



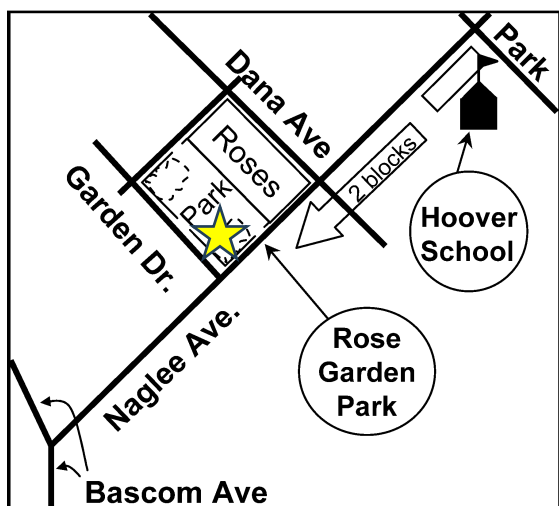


SCVFA
P.O. Box 390235
Mountain View, CA 94039-0235

Next Jam:
Sunday October 5th
1-5 pm at Rose Garden Park

Directions to San Jose Municipal Rose Garden Park

Damaged or Missing Issue? Call us,
or email to: [newsletter \[at\] fiddlers.org](mailto:newsletter[at]fiddlers.org)



The roads marked in red are part of the course and will be closed to traffic Sunday for the race.

The roads should re-open at approximately 12:45 pm, but the exact time will depend on how fast (or slow) the runners are.

The full brochure can be [found here](#).

Full information on roads and parking can be [found here](#).

