



Volume 24 Issue 2

Quarter Notes

Spring 2006

Plank Road's Regular Events:

- SING-A-ROUND (Two Way Street Coffee House) 1st & 3rd Saturdays.: April 1 & 15, May 6 & 20, June 3 & 17.
- Plank Road All Volunteer String Band 2nd Saturday: April 8, May 13, June 10.
- BLUEGRASS JAM Two Way Street Coffee House) : 4th Saturday. April 22, May 27, June 24 cancelled for Heritage Festival
- LAST THURSDAY: "It's Our Turn!" (Two Way Street Coffee House) Last Thursdays. April 27, May 25, June 29
- Go to www.plankroad.org for full details!

With Chris Walz, Keith Bauman and Al Ehrich

Mark Dvorak Releases CD of Own Songs At Ballydolye

One of our own returns with a brand new CD of his very own songs on April 9th at the Ballydolye (5157 Main Street in Downers Grove, IL). Mark Dvorak helped form the Plank Road Folk Music Society with friends more than 25 years ago (no, it couldn't be that long ago!).



Since then, he's criss-crossed the country and brought back hundreds of songs. He's played all over the country, including an appearance at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and virtually every premiere folk venue in the United States. He's been using that experience to bring the music to thousands of people. But he was singing other people's songs.

This month, though, Mark brings his own songs to the microphone. Filled with life, heart ache and love, his new national recording, *Every Step of the Way* on Waterbug Records debuted with critical raves (Art Thieme says, "This CD is beautiful...") the new CD showcases Dvorak's musical and writing skills in a package that ranges from blues to cowboy to straight ahead folk. Every tune comes from the heart and demonstrates how well Mark has learned his craft.

Mark will bring along Keith Bauman on the mandolin and resonator guitar who backs Dvorak's melodies with masterful musicianship. Another long time friend Al Ehrich will also appear to help ground the songs with his bass.

Concert goers can also expect a guest appearance from fellow musician and Weavermania member (and former Special Consensus Guitarist and Vocalist) Chris Walz.

Admission is \$10 per person (\$8 for PRFMS Members). Call Dave Reynolds for reservations at 630-964-0305. Doors open at 2:30pm with music getting underway around 3.



**Help us celebrate over
25 years of acoustic mu-
sic in the Western Sub-
urbs!**

Old Time Dance Party on April First!

Don't be the April Fool on *your* block! Head on over to the Two Way Street Coffee House's Big Room on Saturday, April 1. Doors open at 7:30 and dancing gets underway around 8. Not sure which foot is left or which one's the right one? Not to Worry! Caller Marianne Mohrhusen teaches each step of each dance. Once everyone has it down, The PRFMS' All Volunteer String Band strikes up to provide *live* music! Bring your honey and shake a leg! Heck, bring the family for an inexpensive, fun evening!



From The PRFMS President

Goin' Down The Old Plank Road

Dear Friends,

We've been playing and singing and dancing along the old Plank Road a good long time now. With the help of many volunteers, members, and friends we're still going strong after 20+ years (I've lost track...that's how many years it's been).

A special thanks to our immediate past president Dave Reynolds who helped our group re-focus and developed our successful Sunday concert series at the Ballydoyle- a big tip o' the hat to you, Dave!

Members, this is YOUR organization. What do you like best about Plank Road? Concerts? Sing-a-rounds? Workshops, Festivals? How can we serve you better?

My goal as president is simple....

Sing! Dance! Play! Enjoy!

See you down the Plank Road,

-Marianne Mohrhusen

This Could Be You:



But You gotta go to one of the Music By The Yard jams this year!

- ⇒ June 17th At Anna Stange's House in Blue Island
- ⇒ July 29th at Lonesome Jim Zethmayr's spread in Willow Springs
- ⇒ August 5th at Scot Witt's place in Naperville
- ⇒ All the details will be posted at www.plankroad.org and by e-mail to everyone on the Plank Road Announcements' e-mail list.
- ⇒ Wanna Host one for your own self? E-mail scotwitt@plankroad.org & we'll getcha set up!

What's Playin'?**Old Time Ensemble**

When I first became involved with Plank Road and the barn dance band a long time friend of mine asked me to take a class with her at the Old Town School of Folk Music. I resisted at first because of the drive into the city and the course schedule but, after some persuasion, I relented and one evening found myself seated in a downstairs room at the Old Town School with a group of complete strangers, (my friend aside), playing a wide variety of stringed and other instruments.

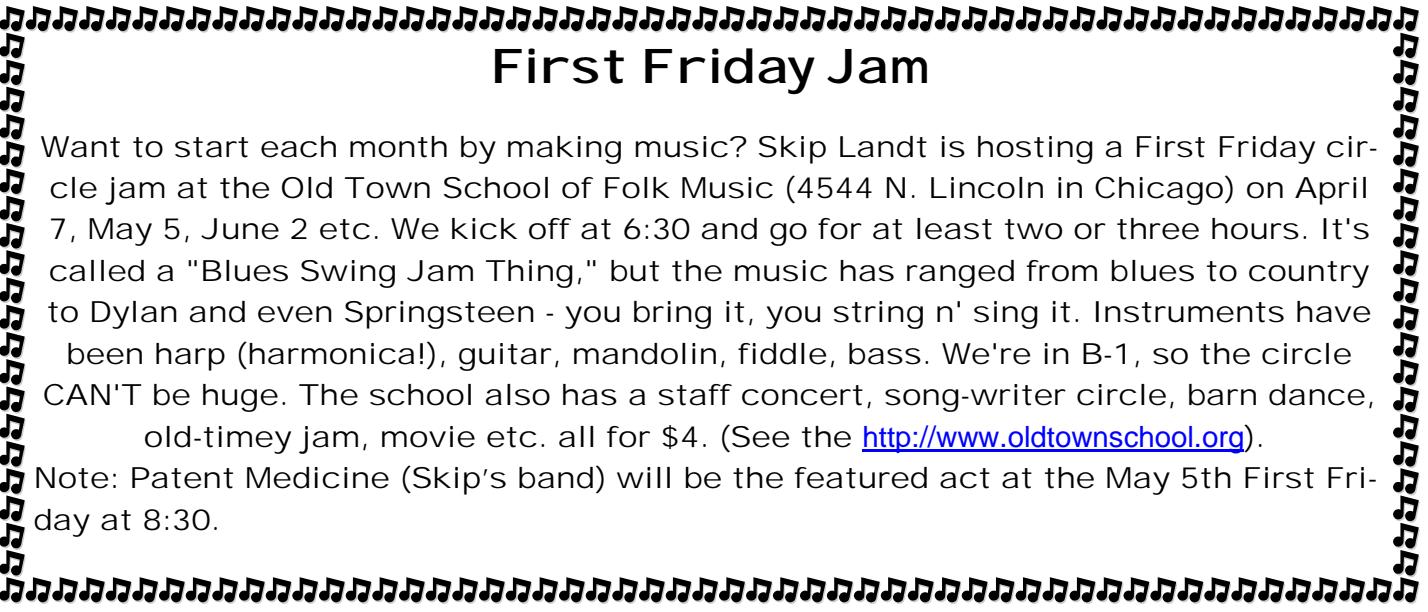
The class was listed as ³Old Time Ensemble², in which the students were all taught one song or tune per week in the first half of the class and then divided into small groups in the back half to form several ³bands² which practiced the music and then returned at the end of class to perform the tune. Our instructors, Jordan Wankoff and Steve Rosen, performed each piece at the start of class, then broke the music down part by part. I was immediately drawn to their peculiar approach which combined abundant talent and patience with equal parts of folklore, anecdotes, and irreverent musical improvisation. Their selection of old time tunes and songs was as unique as their personalities.

I found out right away that for many of the students this was a social event which they had repeated many times and, as such, asked to be assigned together to work out their ³set² for ³graduation². My curiosity piqued, I asked for clarification and was told that we had to come up with a set of three tunes and one song by the end of seven weeks of classes. Graduation was held at a local bar called the Hungry Brain where each band would perform its own set on stage. After we listened to and worked out the first tune in less than one hour, (a feat in itself!), we were sent to practice rooms to work out the tune. Personality conflicts resolved and egos set aside, we crunched out the tune and performed it fairly well at the end of class.

As the course progressed it seemed that we learned the tunes more quickly and began to develop our own style. Our particular group was committed to practicing throughout the week, and those individual efforts really paid off in class. By the time we met at the bar for our final performance our little band had become a finely tuned machine! I enjoyed this class so much that I twice repeated it to join other bands like ³The Road Kill Gourmets² and ³Curly Frye and the Tater Tots². Each session was more rewarding than the last.

To learn more about Old Time Ensemble just look up The Old Town School of Folk Music web site at <http://www.oldtownschool.org> or call 773-728-6000. The school is located at 4544 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, IL 60625.

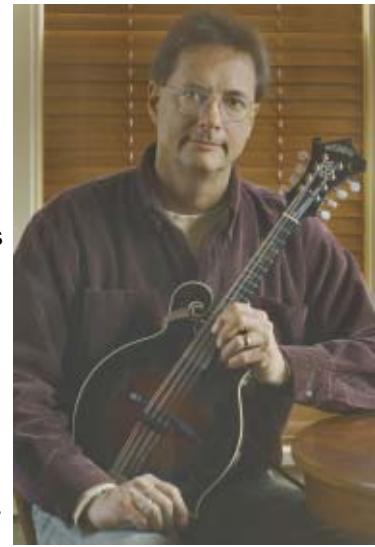
-Bob Smith



First Friday Jam

Want to start each month by making music? Skip Landt is hosting a First Friday circle jam at the Old Town School of Folk Music (4544 N. Lincoln in Chicago) on April 7, May 5, June 2 etc. We kick off at 6:30 and go for at least two or three hours. It's called a "Blues Swing Jam Thing," but the music has ranged from blues to country to Dylan and even Springsteen - you bring it, you string n' sing it. Instruments have been harp (harmonica!), guitar, mandolin, fiddle, bass. We're in B-1, so the circle CAN'T be huge. The school also has a staff concert, song-writer circle, barn dance, old-timey jam, movie etc. all for \$4. (See the <http://www.oldtownschool.org>).

Note: Patent Medicine (Skip's band) will be the featured act at the May 5th First Friday at 8:30.



Why I Like the Term ‘Folk Music’

Once upon a time the term ‘folk music’ was used by scholars who collected and documented American indigenous music. By the 1950s and 1960s, ‘folk music’ became the rage when the flood of traditional, and traditional sounding songs being performed and written, got the attention of the music industry. Pretty soon though, ‘folk music’ faded from the main stream and the term is now preserved in part, by little organizations and larger corporations all over North America.

And there are ‘folk’ festivals all over the place. Philadelphia. Even though newer terms like ‘singer-songwriter,’ ‘unplugged,’ ‘roots music’ and ‘Americana’ have been introduced, the term ‘folk music’ hangs on. It seems to have its place.

I like the term ‘folk music.’ I like that it means different things to different people. I like its suggestion of commonality, and I like its one-size-fits-all uncertainty. It’s a bit of an oddball and a leftover, and I like that too. Once, an interviewer asked blues giant Big Bill Broonzy if one of the songs he sang was a folk song. Big Bill answered, “Well, I never heard a horse sing it.”

I think what I like best about the term ‘folk music’ is it represents something so much larger and far-reaching than what the CD bins hold at the store. It represents something that flies beneath the radar of the pop charts, and flutters beyond reach of the Grammys. The music we call ‘folk music’ has less to do with a given performance and more to do with the on-going participation of many. It’s less about what we aspire to and more about what we collectively value and remember. Our folk music is something we have inherited, right along with the earth and the wind.

To be able to play ‘the blues,’ I once heard, you have to be born with ‘the blues.’ Well, I wasn’t. And the world of ‘jazz’ is filled with ‘cats’ who are ‘hip’ and ‘cool.’ I’m not. And ‘rock music’ has been forever entwined with the dazzle of celebrity life. I don’t care anymore. I like ‘folk music.’ It’s for the rest of us

-Mark Dvorak

Mark’s complete column is available at www.plankroad.org.

Good People,

Yep, it's out--- at www.folklegacy.com

I am exhilarated and happy to announce that "ART THIEME-CHICAGO TOWN AND POINTS WEST" , my first CD since 1998 is up on the Folk Legacy Records website for all who would like to secure their very own copy or copies for themselves or for their store's CD bins.

These songs and tales, folklore and jokelore, puns and whatever are all taken from a large 15-hour reservoir of never-ever-released performances of mine.

These are some of my favorites.

It's good to be working with my old friends and mentors, Sandy and Caroline Paton, at Folk Legacy Records in Sharon, Connecticut where two of my LP albums---now CDs-----are also available. Dennis Cook in Maryland made this all possible / happen---and I can't thank him and Judy enough!!!

Love to all,

Art Thieme
folkart@ivnet.com

PLANK ROAD MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM

Cut out the order form and send to address below. Please make checks payable to the
Plank Road Folk Music Society
Post Office Box 386, Downers Grove, IL 60515

Memberships

- \$10 for 1 year/Individual
 \$20 for 1 year/Family
 Other: _____

I'm interested in helping with:

- Events (ticket sales, concessions, set-up, take down, hosting, etc)
 Workshops, Community Appearances, Sing A Rounds
 Nitty Gritty: Promotion, Publicity, Finance, Archive

Membership: \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

I would like my Quarter Notes sent to me:

- Don't bother, I'll take it off the website
 By regular mail
 Email and regular mail
 By e-mail

It's Festival Time!

North American Comhaltas Weekend

Mayor Richard M. Daley proclaimed April 17 - 23, 2006 as Murphy Roche Irish Music Club Week Capping the this year's Irish music gathering club: the American Weekend. dancers the world Crowne



in Chicago. week will be international and dance hosted by the 2006 North Comhaltas Musicians and from around will be at the Plaza Chicago

O'Hare, April 20 - 23. People of all skill levels are invited for live music sessions, social dancing, workshops, friendship and fun. For more information, please call 630-662-8611 or visit the Club's web site at



www.murphyroche.com.

Founded in 1997, the Murphy Roche (<http://www.murphyroche.com>) (Burr musicians of all ages and skill levels Irish traditional music (630 662-8611). International organization of Irish Musicians,

Irish Music Club Ridge, Illinois) is an organization for who play, want to play, or just enjoy The club is affiliated with the interna- Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann



The Incompleat Folksinger

HEY RUBE!!!

Good people,

This was an important moment in folk revival history. I feel strongly that it was here that the seeds, that ultimately became The Folk Alliance, were first planted. In the year 1980, a bunch of us got together in the woods near Stevens Point, WI. The 1960s and the 70s were over and most of us were feeling very pinched. We needed to begin to be more business-like and/or form a union to set fees we could tell venues we had to have if they wanted us to sing at their bar, coffeehouse or concert hall. There was no local 1,000 then. Those of us who had families needed affordable, GOOD HEALTH INSURANCE. ---- Back then I wrote an article for Emily Friedman's *COME FOR TO SING* magazine out of Chicago. It was called THE FOLKSINGER'S RENDEZVOUS -- This is a portion/paraphrase of that article:

Folksingers, as a group, are a pretty independent lot. To some extent they have chosen the life they lead because of the degree of freedom the road life affords them. Like the mountain men of the early 1800s, these modern-day tune trappers revel in the essential fact of their singular autonomy. Because of hard times, (you might say that 'our beaver were almost trapped out), several score folksingers decided to hold a Rendezvous on September 2-4 at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station near Stevens Point (where that good beer comes from). Portland Gray caught a freight to get there. Tracy Schwarz came from his farm in Pennsylvania. We came together to discuss the things that are making road life so difficult in these days of \$1.50 gasoline and \$8,000 cars. We talked about sharing computer print-outs of gig lists and contact info. Possibilities of getting group rates on health insurance too. For that we had to have a GROUP.

Folks came to the rendezvous with business on their minds, and that's exactly what was transacted. We started talking at 10:00 AM each morning (after all we were folksingers) and often didn't quit until 2:00 the next morning. And we really hammered away at each other... (This added Jan. 25, '04: we had to decide if we even WANTED to form an organization at all---or just chew the fat.)

For four days we talked and argued--joked and bitched. We got to see sides of each other we'd not seen before. In the end, unbelievably, we agreed ! (Truthfully, I'm still dumbfounded.)

This group of egos, with completely different reasons for being present learned quickly the name of the game is compromise. It became obvious at some point the majority of us wanted a benevolent help group... we decided to form a permanent mutual-aid organization called "Hey Rube!"

"Hey Rube" is an old circus and carnival term. If you got in a jam, you'd yell, "HEY RUBE!" anyone within earshot would drop what they were doing and help. Here is the economic statement we hammered out:

"We engage in a trade that must generate a community and a living for the principal professionals involved. Our community and our livelihood are threatened because, in the past 20 years, our cost have gone up as much as four times while our fees have virtually stayed the same. We must solve this problem in order to survive and to perpetuate the traditional performing arts. We are dedicated to this end."

I ended my 1981 article in *Come For To Sing* saying:

In closing, I'd simply like to say that no one came to this rendezvous a bigger skeptic than I. I'm just not a joiner. I've never been one. Even causes I agree with turn me off when I go to their meetings and see everyone goose-stepping and going "Heil" even if it's in the name of brotherhood, love and peace. But I was so impressed with the way we shelved our egos and "agreed to disagree" that I can honestly say that I'm willing to give "Hey Rube!" a real chance to succeed. Most of the independents at the Stevens Point gathering came away feeling the same way. From my point of view, that's one hell of a good start.

Hey Rube lasted for several years----mostly because of the dedication of Bruce "Haywire Brack" Brackney and all of the Minnesota central office members with I.W.W. organization tools and perseverance. Personally, I wasn't ready or able to submerge the needs of me and my family to the needs of the group. When HEY RUBE got health insurance, I couldn't afford it. Later we found our own policy which we kept until the current health debacle in the USA... Oh, but that's another story !

-Art Thieme

Editor's Note: Veteran performer Art Thieme graces the Plank Road Folk Music Society's website at www.plankroad.org with his observations in his regular Unreconstructed Folksinger Column.

Art Thieme calls this The Pancho Villa Stringed Band:



Art says some one took an actual snapshot of Pancho and his cronies and inserted the instruments. Art thinks Pancho's the guy in the middle,



Attend a free concert and DVD taping with Muriel Anderson:

Mon Apr 3, Chicago, IL

Columbia College Concert Hall, 1014 S Michigan Ave, "Live Concert" full-length Warner Music DVD taping with cellist Julie Adams and percussionist. 6:45pm , Please arrive by 6:30 or earlier to be seated. Free admission, limited seating.

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

Jack Williams House Concert

John and Anne Sponzilli, in conjunction with Allan Shaw of Wind River Records, are happy to announce that the next concert at the "Brown DogHouse," as a friend called it, will feature Jack Williams. The date is Sunday, April 2, doors opening at 6pm and show starting at 6:30. Jack is a Southerner with a friendly stage presence and a lot of wonderful songs. The great Tom Paxton calls Jack "one of my all-time favorite guitar pickers" and Peter Yarrow, of Peter Paul and Mary, says that Jack is "the best guitar player I've ever heard." I guarantee that you will be moved, informed and that your funny bone will get a really good workout at one of Jack's shows. Please mark the date on your calendar and give me an email or phone call to reserve your seat; space is limited and Jack always draws a good crowd!

E-mail: jsponzi@mgsinet.net



**Post Office Box 386
Downers Grove, IL
60515**

PRFMS Contacts:

General: Dave Reynolds, (630) 964-0305
e-mail: info@plankroad.org

PRFMS Communications Questions:

Scot Witt, (630) 717-8226
e-mail: webmaster@plankroad

Plank Road Folk Music Society

Marianne Mohrhusen, President

Dave Reynolds, Past President

Scot Witt, Secretary, publicity, website

Joel Brossard, Volunteer Coordinator/Board Member

Troy LeValley, Treasurer

Jeanne Halama, Board Member

Dave Humphreys, Board Member

Rich Jacobs, Board Member

Cathy Jones, Board Member

Cheryl Joyal, Board Member

George Mattson, Singarounds

Carol Sommer, Board Member

Bob Smith, Board Member

Folk Resources Next Door:

Plank Road Folk Music Society, PO Box 386, Downers Grove, IL 60515. (630)889-9121 or (708)442-0823 Web: www.plankroad.org

Two Way Street Coffee House 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL 60515. (630)969-9720 Website: www.twowaystreet.org

Jones Family Music Studio, Lombard. (630)916-1356. Web: www.jonesfamilymusic.com

Maple Street Chapel, Main & Maple, Lombard, 60148. (630)629-2630 or (630)964-4871 Web: www.tccafe.com/msc
Acoustic Renaissance Concerts Unitarian Church of Hinsdale. (708) 802-0236 Web: www.acousticren.com
Folk Lore Center & Acorn Coffee Bar, 29W140 Butterfield Rd, POB 762, Warrenville, IL 60555. (630)393-1247

Woodstock Folk Music/Festival (815)338-4245 Website: www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

Fox Valley Folklore Society, 755 N Evanslawn Ave, Aurora, IL 60506 (630)897-3655. Web: www.FoxValleyFolk.com

Warrenville Folk Music Society, POB 248, Warrenville IL 60555 (630)717-8495 e-mail: Warrenvillefolk@aol.com

Lake County Folk Club, Box 847, Mundelein, IL 60060, (847)949-5355

HANDS (Hammers & Noters Dulcimer Society), Box 181, Morris, IL 60450 (708)331-6875 Web: www.gwdf.org
South Suburban Dulcimer & Folk Music Society, P.O. Box 455, Park Forest, IL 60466. (708)756-3857

Tune in to "Folk Festival" with George Brown Tuesdays 7 to 9 PM and "Strictly Bluegrass" with Larry Robinson Wednesdays 7 to 9 PM on WDCB, Public Radio from College of DuPage. WDCB presents many other fine folk programs, as well as jazz, classical, reggae, opera, and news and information. For a program guide, call (630) 942-4200.