

OUR PREZ SEZ

BILL LOWREY

I hope that the New Year finds you well and that your efforts to keep any resolution or achieve any goal you've set are rewarded. I'm not a big fan of New Year's resolutions per se, but do find that setting a goal or forcing myself to make changes always gets me motivated. So, I've signed up for two lengthy bike rides in the next six months and have set a goal to get back to the recording studio with my guitar/bass player, Bill Sharp. The bike ride strategy usually works to get me in shape as I hate paying money for something and then not doing it. There is something about paying up front that makes the wait and the effort more rewarding.



I think this is true in life. Thomas Paine said, "That which we achieve too easily, we esteem too lightly." Certainly this applies to our individual efforts as a musician and our collective efforts as a band. Each of us has paid or will need to pay the price to get our skills to a certain level and we'll each need to give a bit more to get to the next level, whatever that level might be. I remember, about fifteen years ago, while I was between jobs, I had a bit more time to devote to practicing. I opened my Harry Reser book and commenced to read through the charts. At first, my dexterity and sight-reading abilities worked against me, but in time, and by applying many of the skills I learned as a youth – slowing down, counting out loud, learning one measure at a time – I began to see improvement. I recall driving around town with my then three-year-old daughter, Laura, while listening to a Harry Reser tape when she exclaimed, "Daddy, you play this song!" I thought, wow, she can recognize something I play, I must not be butchering as badly as I thought.

So, I hope you've set some musical goals...both individual and for your participation in the band. Maybe you need to revisit the band arrangements (ok, I started with one that applies to me), or work on a specific song. Maybe you could use some help on a tune. Let me offer my assistance

to anyone who needs pointers on any song. If you need a one-on-one we can Skype or I can load a clip up to Youtube to show you how I might approach something. Likewise, I plan to be at the Hofbrau on the second and fourth Wednesdays as my travel schedule allows. I'll try to get there by 6:30 or so and make time to answer any musical questions you may have. I hope to do more to help our musicianship.

That being said, hopefully, you have seen an email from me with some questions included. When you have the time, please read through the email and respond to the questions. I hope to gather some information that I can use to offer guidance and direction to the band for the next year. Of course, we won't be able to address all of the ideas and suggestions, but I think we should be able to pick a couple of things we can collectively do as a band to get just a little bit better. Whether it's musically, operationally or socially, it does not matter. My goal is to help us work together to do just a bit better and I welcome and encourage your input and help in accomplishing this goal.

So, with that, I think I'll sign off for now, but I want to leave you with one bit of homework. I started this thread with my thoughts on setting goals and paying the price to achieve them, if you would, when you have a moment, go to Youtube and search on "Michael Jordan Commercial". One of the first results you should see is a clip that states "Maybe It's My Fault Commercial". Watch it. In this commercial, Michael Jordan reminds us that the things he made look easy, really weren't. I think this is worth another watch.

Anyway, Happy New Year to each of you and thank you for all you do for the band.

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Charlie's Notes

CHARLIE TAGAWA

I hope that you have had a healthy, wonderful holiday season! Now it is already the middle of January and now we have to catch up on practices that we missed during the holidays.

We all play four-string banjos and there are three fundamental ways to play: 1) play single note melody; 2) play chords (harmony) as a part of accompaniment; 3) play a combination of chords and melody, called chord melody.

There are two types of four-string banjo; one is called tenor and the other is plectrum. Usually the tenor banjo has 19 frets and the plectrum has 22 frets. A tenor banjo is tuned (from low to high) C, G, D, A; while a plectrum is tuned C, G, B, D. Some guitar players tune banjos the same as the four high strings of a guitar D, G, B, E, on their banjo.

As you know three elements of music are: melody, harmony (chords) and rhythm. If you want to play mainly melody, tenor banjo is best for that purpose. If you want to play chord melody or chords, the plectrum banjo is somewhat better for that purpose. Whatever your goal, you must learn how to play chords, that is, harmony.

In general, a banjo is the one of the accompaniment instruments in a band belonging to the rhythm section. When you play accompaniment in the band you must know the family chords.

The first, fourth, and fifth chords of the key are called the family chords usually designated as I, IV, V. For instance in the key of C, the family chords are C (I), F (IV) and G (V).

Note that in jazz and pop music the fifth chord is usually played as a seventh. Thus the family chords in the key of C are: C, F and G7.

Here are the family chords in common keys:

Key	I	IV	V
C	C	F	G
F	F	Bb	C7
G	G	C	D7
Bb	Bb	Eb	F7

I think you know how to play those keys and their family chords. To be sure, practice: *Just Because*, "the Saints" and *Five Foot Two* in the first position. The first two or three times, look at the music but after that try to play by memory without music. If you want to be a melody player play the single string notes and if you want to be a chord player, practice the chords.



Practice playing without music. This is the point of this month's article. I'm not suggesting that you try to learn all the music right away. Rather just start from simple short songs in this one position. While you keep practicing this method for a while seriously you'll be surprised to find your fingers begin to move automatically. Also you are able to hear and distinguish the sound of chord progression. And keep in mind when you meet or hear some excellent musicians, they've probably been playing and practicing those songs for twenty years or more.

In Memoriam



Harry Arnold Higgins Sr.
Apr. 28, 1934 - Dec. 23, 2015

Harry passed away on December 23. He touched many lives with his outgoing, generous personality and his love of all music, mainly the banjo.

Following high school, Harry played professional baseball in the Pacific Coast League and was signed by the White Sox. He played professional baseball for two years. Harry and his wife, Elinor (also known as Ellie or Red), were married on September 10, 1955 and recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Following his baseball career, Harry was the banjo band leader at the famous Red Garter Nightclub in San Francisco for 17 years. He was a self taught, four-string plectrum banjo player and was the longest running bandleader, sitting in one chair at one nightclub in San Francisco history.

Harry's banjo career culminated into the induction to the National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, OK on April 25, 2008. In retirement, he was a well-respected golf instructor at Heather Farms in Walnut Creek and was an associate member of the United States Golf Teachers Federation. More recently, Harry enjoyed playing his banjo with his friends Tony and Chris outside the local Peet's Coffee and Tea on a daily basis.

A memorial service was held on December 30th. The family requests that donations be made to the American Banjo Museum, 9 E. Sheridan Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73104. 405-604-2793.

MERRY CHRISTMAS 2015

The PBB Christmas party was held at Mariani's restaurant on Dec 19. The food was excellent, the company was wonderful and a good time was had by all.



Jimmie Min was one winner of a door prize.



Joyce Taylor won another.



Chris Bracher thanked many members of the PBB and the Auxiliary for their contributions over the year. He also thanked the Board members for their efforts, especially outgoing Membership Chair Betty Jean Miller.



Charlie Tagawa and Sam Morocco entertained for a short while after dinner, and before the jam.



Outgoing president Chris Bracher congratulates incoming president Bill Lowrey.

And the jam began, l-r, Bill Lowrey, Galen George, Rich Boss, Jim Strickland, Chris Bracher (who borrowed Mary Horne's washtub) and Mary Horne sans instrument.



2016 Payout Attendance**Chris Bracher****Dec 1, 2015 – Dec 31, 2015****Playouts for the year: 2****Members who have played: 16**

AVRAM, JEAN	1
FAITH, TOM	1
GOLDSTEIN, JOAN	2
HORNE, MARY	1
KRAKAR, JOHN	1
LATHROP, JIM	2
LOPES, HOWARD	1
LUNDGREN, BILL	2
MCLAUGHLIN, LEE	2
McMORROW, CLYDE	1
MIN, JIMMIE	2
MOROCCO, SAM	2
OKERLUND, ARLENE	1
STRICKLAND, JIM	2
TAGAWA, CHARLIE	2
TRANBERG, CLIFF	1

PBB Giving for 2015

The Board has selected the following as recipients for 2015 Giving. \$1,000 Gifts have been given to the following

2015 Giving

- American Banjo Museum
- Hope Services
- Humane Society of Silicon Valley
- InnVision Shelter Network
- Wounded Warrior Project
- Homes for Our Troops

Personal Notes

These items come from you. Please let us know of happenings in your life or our community.

- Kitty Wilson will be joining us for the second set on Wednesday Jan 13. Be sure to come and say "hi" to Washboard Kitty.

January and February Birthdays

- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| • Rene Avigdor | 01/09 |
| • Bob Lasley | 01/11 |
| • Lee McLaughlin | 01/17 |
| • Bill Lowrey | 01/29 |
| • Elizabeth Thomas | 02/09 |
| • Don Brayton | 02/11 |
| • Ed Bellerive | 02/11 |
| • Carole Thum | 02/28 |
| • Jean Avram | 02/28 |

Announcements

- Next Board Meeting – Monday February 1, 2016, at 1598 Koch Lane, San Jose
- Next Auxiliary Meeting – No meeting planned at present
- Please respond to Bill Lowrey's questionnaire which was sent to you by email. If you need another copy, please email Bill at vegavox@gmail.com

From the morning paper: Two men were goofing off at the pottery factory yesterday and accidentally fell into the kiln. Both were promptly fired.

Our 53rd Year of Happy Music
 Appearing at Harry's Hofbrau
 260 Saratoga Ave. San Jose, Ca
 Every Wednesday 7:00 – 8:30 PM

PBB Calendar – Playouts and Other PBB Events

(Non-Playouts are shown in italics.)

Date	Day	Event	Location	Time
May 12-15		BanjoRama	Sacramento	Tbd
Aug 13	Sat.	Milpond Mobile Home Cmty.	San Jose	7:00 – 8:00 PM

PBB Board Meetings are the first Monday of the month.
 Auxiliary Meetings are the Tuesday following a Board meeting.