

# VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

*Bringing people together for the preservation, enjoyment  
and advancement of bluegrass and related acoustic music.*

## Message From the VBA Board

"The pumpkin's on the compost pile  
and the leaves lie on the ground  
The woodstove's fired up again  
for the cold days coming 'round"

When those chilly rains arrive, it usually confirms that we're into November, and it's time for the warmer coat, and pinning Remembrance Day poppies on our lapels.

However, if you were at the Orange Hall for last month's feature night, you were probably still thinking of warmer days. That's because our feature act, the Stowaways, came complete with a sailing mast stage prop, and songs and stories about boating and playing their way through the Gulf Islands this past summer. It was a great show, and a lot of us were envious not only of their musical ability, but of their opportunity to enjoy that great lifestyle.

Thanks to all who signed up for the open stage, it was excellent! This month, we will be featuring James Whittall and friends. If you know James, you know that he is one extremely talented musician, and it's a show you won't want to miss.

There seemed to be an especially nice vibe going on at the hall at our last feature night. Aside from the great entertainment, it was nice to see new faces in attendance and watch all the socializing going on. That's what the VBA is all about! We encourage you to continue to come out on regular basis, and bring someone along that may be interested in the music and in the clubs activities. You and your friends won't be disappointed - the Board is very excited about some things that we are working on. Stay tuned for announcements about future workshops, our website, and our regular Tuesday night bluegrass jams.

We also would like to extend our congratulations to Damian Ritchie, his organizing group and all the performers at the Boo-Grass Scare Dance. By all accounts it was a rip-roaring success. Let's hope that their efforts to establish oldtime dances in Victoria works out.

Inside this edition of the newsletter you will find a short article on Wade Mainer, a country music pioneer who died recently at the age of 104! He is credited with inventing the two-finger banjo picking style that paved the way for the bluegrass era, and his group influenced many, including the Monroe Brothers and Flatt and Scruggs. Make sure you check out the web links provided for the 3 part video interview with Mainer – a very informative and entertaining look at the man, the era and the music. It's not very often that someone makes their debut on the Grand Ole Opry at age 95. Maybe there's hope for some of us yet!

And remember.....**Keep on the Sunny Side!**

## Calling Young Musicians!

Each year the Victoria Bluegrass Association awards one week of tuition to a young aspiring musician to attend a BC Bluegrass workshop in Sorrento in late August. To qualify for the Young Musician's Bursary, you need to be 25 years or younger as at Dec 31st, 2011, want to take instruction in a traditional bluegrass instrument at the Sorrento Bluegrass workshop in 2012, haven't attended the subject workshops before, and be a member in good standing with the VBA. Applications are now being accepted: email [president@victoriabluegrass.ca](mailto:president@victoriabluegrass.ca) indicating who you are, and why you think you should be selected.

## Board of Directors 2011/2012

**President**  
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### **Newsletter Design/Editor**

Victoria Pang

### **Website Orchestrator**

Wendy Anthony

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### **VBA Membership**

\$ 25 single

\$ 40 couple

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**Victoria Bluegrass Association**  
c/o Old Town Strings Repair Shop  
1034 Hillside Avenue  
Victoria, BC V8T 2A5

# VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION EVENTS

## VBA Tuesday Night Bluegrass Jams

Tuesday Orange Hall Jams are at 7:30pm. Slow Pitch, Moderated Circle and Festival Bluegrass Jams at the Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Players of all levels welcome.

Players: \$2 for members, \$3 dollars for non-members. Listeners by donation. Contact Al Planiden at [president@victoriabluegrass.ca](mailto:president@victoriabluegrass.ca)

## Open Stage and Feature Act: James Whittall and Friends

**Tuesday, October 25, 2011**, Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Doors open at 7:30pm Members \$5, Non-members \$7. Contact Alan Law at 250-388-4520 for info.

Open Stage first half of evening (8:00 - 9:00 pm) with the feature act after a short intermission. To sign up for the Open Stage, contact Jeb Gordon [vicbluegrass@yahoo.ca](mailto:vicbluegrass@yahoo.ca). Open Stage performers are exempt from the admission fee.

James Whittall is a guitar and mandolin virtuoso and his passion and enthusiasm for music is evident in his performances. He's performed in several groups including Oliver Swain's Big Machine, Shearwater Bluegrass Band, and the Rock Island Ramblers. Shearwater Bluegrass Band was awarded the local M award for best roots/world/blues group, and was also awarded second place at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual IAMA (International Acoustic Music Awards).

James is partnering with a few other musicians for this special presentation. He hasn't divulged their names to us yet as at press time, but we're confident you'll see great entertainment if you catch this show.



## Grassified Ads

FOR SALE: 1937 Gibson A-Model Mandolin. All original parts except case. Bound top and back. Maple with Spruce top. Sunburst finish. \$1350  
Contact: Barny 250-595-1120

FOR SALE: 2008 Gibson Granada 5 string banjo. Lifetime Gibson warranty. Gold Trim. \$5,500.  
Contact: Linda @ 250-752-0383

LOST: Olympus digital camera SP-590UZ and black case at the Sooke Bluegrass Jam on Father's Day weekend. Reward.  
Contact: Catherine 250-478-2025

## Wade Mainer

### By Al Planiden

I didn't even know of Wade Mainer until this past September, when I heard a short news report on the radio that the man who had been widely regarded as the pioneer of bluegrass banjo had just passed away at the age of 104. My musical knowledge in the area of country and bluegrass was obviously pretty limited to have missed out on a very interesting and pivotal figure in the transition to bluegrass music.

Here was a man that recorded in the early 30's, introduced a two-finger banjo style that inspired younger players like Don Reno and Earl Scruggs, performed at the White House for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and debuted on the Grand Ole Opry at the age of 95. There's even a book authored by Dick Spottswood that came out in 2010, entitled "Banjo on the Mountain: Wade Mainer's First Hundred Years" – Wow!

There's a lot of information on-line if you would like to learn more about Wade, (e.g. – he accidentally spilled a dish of ice cream over Eleanor Roosevelt's dress during that White House visit), but here are links to a three-part video interview done by musician David Holt. I think you'll find them most interesting.



Part 1 <http://youtu.be/kkexel2N6YA>

Part 2 <http://youtu.be/qxDfDg5crA>

Part 3 <http://youtu.be/PzfbXgBvSX0>

# Pickin' Interview: Who is Eric Day?

By Victoria Pang

It's hard to imagine getting this far without a feature about Eric. He's been part of the local bluegrass scene, even before there was one. He credits Alan Law with getting him involved in the VBA, as he was part of a club Alan had formed prior to the formation of the VBA.

Eric's been playing music since he was a toddler. PEI born and raised, Eric's musical introduction was influenced by his mother and older brother via Saturday night back kitchen parties. By the time he was six, Eric knew enough two finger mandolin chord positions to participate as the "novelty" act in his older brother's band (how cute would that have been!).

Eric and spouse Mary operated a 100 acre farm in PEI for 3 years before moving to Sooke in 1968. His uncle told him that BC was the place a young person should go if they had the chance. Eric made a plan that if he ever got his farm loans paid out he would move to BC as farming was a hard life. He tells me in his first year of farming, he lost money and when you don't have any to start with, that's a problem. The following year he recovered everything and then some, and the 3rd year, hit the jackpot, paid out his loans, bought a new car and still had money in the bank. He left farming and made his way out to BC.

A couple of years after his cross country move, Eric answered an ad in the local paper looking for acoustic instrument players – mandolin, guitar (don't forget his PEI accent pronounces it as a "geetar") or banjo. The person on the other end of that phone was Bo Woodward who played in the Clamtone's. They were missing a fiddle player, so Eric decided to get serious about music, picking up a new instrument and tried joining the group. He tells me they were just too good, but that didn't deter Eric from persevering and learning how to play that fiddle.

When he wasn't playing music, Eric worked for the local sawmill for 23 years before it closed down. For the next 8 years after that, music took a back seat to the businesses he ran: a mobile welding truck and then supplying overflow workers for an up island mill. The self-employment required him to work long hours and to be on call 24/7. He kept up this hectic pace until he had a wake up call in the form of his brother's heart attack. Eric retired in 1999, but he's still an active volunteer as a VBA Slow Pitch presenter and as a long time member of the Sooke Community Association. He was the driving force behind the Sooke Bluegrass Festival for the first 8 years.

Eric's been involved in a number of bands: the Tremtones (a rock n roll band in PEI), the Clamtone's (country/bluegrass), the Kemp Lake 5 (old time), Bluefox (bluegrass) and his newest band, Just Us (bluegrass). Eric's music history has included cover songs both acoustic and electric, but since meeting Pearl Lacey about 15 years ago, he's also writing original tunes.

We know Eric is a multi instrument player. He says if it has strings on it, he can get a tune out of it. He's a one man bluegrass band who can play guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, dobro and bass. I had a quick tour of his collection (Bourgeois Vintage D, Gibson J-50, Martin D28, Huber Jim Mills Banjo, Gibson and LeBlanc Mandolins, a dobro, two lovely fiddles and his upright bass, as well as his recording studio which now has the capability of producing DVDs. These days his go-to instruments are his guitars, banjo and fiddle and his routine play usually starts early in the morning and continues to late in the day. (Hands up those who are jealous!)

Every two years, Eric and Mary look through their "Bluegrass Unlimited" magazine and map out a route that takes them to the east coast to play at a couple of festivals and a return route that takes them through the States, attending a different festival every weekend. His favourite festivals are in Missouri because the people there are so welcoming. He's excited about getting back there next year.

Eric's eyes sparkled when I asked him who he liked playing with. There were lots and lots of people he mentioned, but he ended up talking about Mary the most. (Really, Mary, it was all good!). He's working at putting a new group together with a plan to play at the Lighthouse Festival next year. Can't wait!



# Bluegrass Happenings in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (all events in Victoria BC, unless otherwise indicated)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
<p><b>Afternoon Hootenanny</b> at <i>Logan's Tavern</i> 1821 Cook St., 4:00pm Hosted by Carolyn Mark. Free admission More info: 250-360-1832</p>	<p><b>Old-Time String Music Jam</b> at <i>Spiral Cafe</i> 418 Craigflower Rd., 7-9:30pm</p>	<p><b>VBA Bluegrass Jam</b> at the <i>Orange Hall</i>, 1620 Fernwood Rd., 7:30-10pm Slow Pitch and Circle Jams. Players of all levels welcome. Admission: players \$2 (non-members \$3), listeners by donation. More info: Al Planiden, <a href="mailto:apache@shaw.ca">apache@shaw.ca</a></p> <p><b>The Sweet Lowdown</b> at <i>The Fernwood Inn</i> 302 Gladstone Ave., 8-11pm. More info: <a href="http://www.myspace.com/the.sweet.lowdown">www.myspace.com/the.sweet.lowdown</a></p>	<p><b>Cornerstone Bluegrass Jam</b> at <i>Cornerstone Cafe &amp; Resource Centre</i> Fernwood at Gladstone 7:30-10pm. Featuring premier acoustic string band musicians. Enjoy hot coffee or chocolate while listening to local top acoustic roots musicians jam it out. Organized by the Fernwood Bluegrass Coalition, a group of local business/promoters/musicians. More info: Larry Stevens at <a href="mailto:larrystevens@shaw.ca">larrystevens@shaw.ca</a></p>	<p><b>Bluegrass Brunch</b> with the <i>Stowaways</i> at <i>Logan's Tavern</i> 1821 Cook St., 1:00 - 4:00pm every Saturday. Admission Free. More info: 250-360-1832 Brunch begins at 11:00. Great food, music and friends.</p>
<p><b>Sooke Legion Bluegrass and Acoustic Jam</b> 6726 Eustace Rd., Sooke 1st and 3rd Sunday <b>2:30-5:00pm (new time!)</b> Contact: Al Planiden, 250-642-3395</p>				
<p><b>Bluegrass Night</b> at <i>Spinnaker's Pub</i> 308 Catherine St., 8-10:30pm. Performers: Dan Weisenberger and Oliver Swain</p>	<p><b>Lee Watson and Ivan Rosenberg Concert:</b> Bluegrass, vintage country, originals and classics. Lee Watson (The Breakmen, Vancouver) and Ivan Rosenberg (Portland) will be coming to the Orange Hall on Sunday evening, Nov 13, 2011. Doors 7:40, Show at 8:00pm. Admission \$8.00. Contact: Kelly Sherwin 250-886-7108 or <a href="mailto:kelly.sherwin@gmail.com">kelly.sherwin@gmail.com</a> to reserve.</p>			
<p><b>Bluegrass Night with The Moonshiners</b> at <i>Swan's</i> 506 Pandora Ave., 8-11pm. Performers: Zev, Miriam, Chris and Cluny</p>	<p><b>Bowker Creek:</b> Friday, Nov 18 7:30 to 9:30 at Serious Coffee in the Cook Street Village, 230 Cook Street, 250-595-8010. All band proceeds that evening will go to the Mustard Seed Food Bank. If you haven't heard them for a while or not, drop by, listen a little, drink (Serious Coffee-type drinks) a little and donate what you can to a very good cause. Also playing at the Highlands Folk Club (Caleb Pike Farm, Dec.10th.</p>			
<p><b>Bluegrass Sunday</b> at <i>Ocean Island Backpackers Inn</i> 791 Pandora Ave., 8pm-12am, all ages Hosted by Doosie and Decker. Bring an instrument along and be part of the fun!</p>	<p><b>Sweet Ginger Stringband:</b> Moby's Marine Pub, Ganges, Saltspring Island. Saturday November 19, 2011. 8:30 to 11:30ish. Admission: \$5.00 SGS is Miriam Sonstenes (fiddle), Jeff Dill (guitar), Shanti Bremer (banjo) and Kelly Sherwin (bass). Playing a collection of oldtime, bluegrass and country-esque genres to have people waltzing, stomping their feet and just hanging with friends, sharing a few pints on a fall evening.</p>			

**Lee Watson and Ivan Rosenberg Concert:** Bluegrass, vintage country, originals and classics. Lee Watson (The Breakmen, Vancouver) and Ivan Rosenberg (Portland) will be coming to the Orange Hall on Sunday evening, Nov 13, 2011. Doors 7:40, Show at 8:00pm. Admission \$8.00. Contact: Kelly Sherwin 250-886-7108 or [kelly.sherwin@gmail.com](mailto:kelly.sherwin@gmail.com) to reserve.

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## Musicians Wanted

**Music Lessons with Chris Herbst:** Guitar, Dobro and Music Theory. 250-885-5999

**Guitar and Mandolin Lessons with James Whittall:** Ten years experience teaching bluegrass. Beginner to advanced players. It's never too late to sound better. 778-430-7729 or [mandolinjames@gmail.com](mailto:mandolinjames@gmail.com).

## Seen Around VBA

