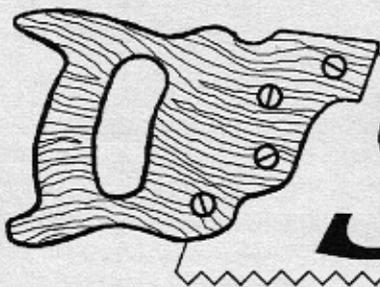


# INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL SAW ASSOCIATION



## SAW PLAYER NEWS

Vol. 9, No. 1    [www.SawPlayers.org](http://www.SawPlayers.org)    Email: [Info@SawPlayers.org](mailto:Info@SawPlayers.org)    (510)523-4649    Editor: Tanya DeBuff    Spring 2003

### Living On The Cutting Edge...



By Morgan Cowin

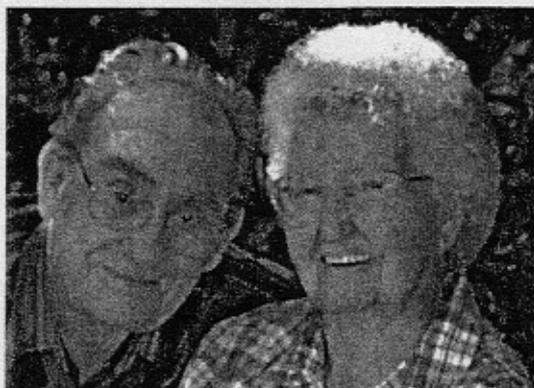
Someone once said: "Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine." Many things have changed since our last CSPA Newsletter, and challenges have arisen, but we are moving in a positive direction.

As you may know, **Charlie & Viola Blacklock** have been the heart and soul of the California Saw Player's Association since the beginning of our organization. Last November I got a call from Viola (our Secretary-Treasurer), who told me that Charlie was in the critical care unit in the hospital and was going to have to step down as our President. Charlie has since been in and out of the hospital several times, and Viola is valiantly carrying on with taking care of herself and Charlie and her family and home, but obviously she has less time to devote to the CSPA.

So, since I was the Vice President of the CSPA, I have taken on the roll of Acting President. With the help of a small but loyal group of Officers, Ambassadors and other VIP's - we are trying to step into the BIG shoes worn by The Blacklocks and move forward. We have had several meetings to consider all the responsibilities, options and ideas before us, and we are making good progress. We will be having our regular election of officers in August or September, and we hope to find members interested in helping to lead our organization.

As you know, we have members not just from California, but from many other states as well as many countries around the world. We felt the CSPA name did not seem inclusive of those members - so our officers voted to change the name. After much discussion, we decided upon the **IMSA (the International Musical Saw Association)**!

Behind the scenes, CSPA Officers **David Hudnut**, **David Weiss**, and **Patrick & Jan Weldon** have been contributing their time, ideas and efforts to ensure that we will be able to put on our next **Saw Players Picnic**



Charlie & Viola Blacklock 4/14/02

**and Music Festival on schedule (next July 19th and 20th).** We all are trying to contribute to the well-being of our Musical Saw-playing membership. CSPA Officer **Art Peterson** continues to work on our CSPA (now IMSA) website: [www.SawPlayers.org](http://www.SawPlayers.org). Art is personally very close to Charlie and Viola, and will help make our transition smoother. CSPA VIP **Bruce Bratton** will continue to help out with our publicity efforts in the Santa Cruz area. I contacted professional Graphic Designer (and musical saw player) **Robert Armstrong** (who designed the CSPA "California Saw" logo and other musical saw art), and he volunteered to design a beautiful new logo for the IMSA. **THANK YOU TO Robert Armstrong!!!** Robert is an expert in his field, so if you know of a business needing graphic design, please mail your referral or inquiry to him at 200 East "B" ST., Dixon, CA 95620 or Email: [Robert.Armstrong@omsoft.com](mailto:Robert.Armstrong@omsoft.com)

In the past, the CSPA has received monetary grants to help us put on the annual "**Saw Players' Picnic and Music Festival**", and we were successful in that because we were able to bring publicity and business to the city and county of Santa Cruz. But with the current state of the economy, and limited budgets all around, it doesn't look like this money is now available to us. The CSPA, and now the IMSA, spends money not only to

(continued on page 3)



## Sweet Music

by Patrick Weldon

It's a rainy night in late January and I and my wife Jan, the self-appointed band photographer are traveling toward Mill Valley. We started out in Redwood City, about an hour from our destination. The others are from Boulder Creek and have already been in traffic for an hour. The Sibling Brothers are heading to a gig at the Sweetwater Saloon.

The Sweetwater is a music venue with a lot of Bay Area history. Jerry Garcia, David Grisman, Dr. Elmo (Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer), Steve Miller and many others have played there. Someone said that "a lot of folks have Peeeeeeeee'd in the pool" but I like to think about the history that surrounds the musician when playing onstage. I've been in the SF/Bay Area music scene since 1967.

Larry Carlin produces something called Bluegrass Gold and showcases Bluegrass music and the bands that play it. The Sibling Brothers play Bluegrass and "Old Timey Music". Stephen Foster and Bill Monroe help round out our "sets" of reginal tunes. I'm the Saw and Dobro player of the band. In full force there are six of us all together. Dennis English plays the Fiddle, a HOT one too, and willingly shares the stage with the Musical Saw. Bruce Maurier lays down solid bass patterns and Dave Guarente pumps out a hard driving syncopated banjo. Mark Varner, the leader and mandolin player, and Page Brownton on guitar perform the "Brother Duets".

I love playing my Saw with this band. The music produced by these veteran musicians is a perfect validation for the musical saw. Mark, a true entrepreneurial showman, has legitimized this acoustic theramin and finds the willing audiences to present it to. The Otter Opry in, Santa Cruz, showcased a Vaudeville show. The Brookdale Lodge, The Cannery in SF, The San Francisco Bluegrass and Old Tyme Music Festival at the Atlas Cafe and KKUP Public Radio have all shared my musical saw experience.

I have yet to find a negative response from any audience. Surprise, at first, and delight when the audience discovers the saw player actually knows how to play the music. I've performed and presented Saw Workshops for audiences at The Wolf Mountain Bluegrass Festival and my own Lumberjack Bluegrass Festival.

The Fandango Pizza Bg. Jam, in Palo Alto, allows Saw Players to drop by and tempt fate by playing in a popular musical style. Lively, with high energy, the

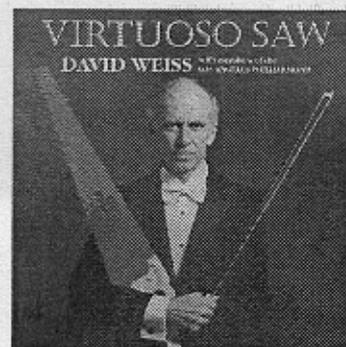
music is the test of a saw's musical agility and the player's creative flow. I host this event every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month.

### ADVERTISE In The Saw Player News!

We are now accepting both Classified and Display advertising for music-related and Musical Saw-related merchandise and services. You can now reach hundreds of saw players at a reasonable cost!

**Terms and Prices for Display ads:** Display ads should be "camera ready" (ready to print without resizing or editing). Full Page (7.5" wide X 10" high) - \$200, Half Page (7.5" wide X 4.75" high) - \$100, Quarter Page (3.75" wide X 4.75" high) - \$50, Business Card (3.75" wide by 2" high) - \$25, Flyer Insertion (8.5" wide by 11" high) - \$200

**Terms and Prices for Classified ads:** Classified ads should be typed or printed to eliminate errors. There are 36 letters and spaces per line with a two line minimum for \$13/issue. Additional lines are \$3.50 each. Space must be left between words and punctuation marks require a space also. If the word does not fit on the end of the line, please use the next line. Your area code and phone number must be included in your ad information. The Saw Player News reserves the right to refuse any ads. Send payment in U.S. Dollars with your ad payable to IMSA, 1821 St. Charles St., Alameda, CA 94501 U.S.A.



### Now on CDI

David Weiss bends steel in his bare hands, backed by members of the L.A. Philharmonic in this cutting edge CD of pop and classical favorites - "The most beguiling sounds emanated from David Weiss...heavy-metal

maestro enralls with his handsaw artistry...He came, he sawed, he conquered." (Los Angeles Times)

#### Play List:

Misty, Sweet Georgia Brown, Intermezzo from Carmen, Eleanor Rigby, The Swan, Yesterday, Habañera, Scarborough Fair, When I'm 64, Summertime, Gymnopedie, Bach Arioso, The Rainbow Connection

Credit Card orders online at [www.cdbaby.com/davidweiss](http://www.cdbaby.com/davidweiss)  
Or by check- \$14.95, payable to Cut Time Records.

#### Mail to:

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As a benefit to readers of Saw Player News, those who pay by check directly to Cut Time Records will receive FREE SHIPPING within the U.S., and Cut Time will pay any applicable sales tax!

## Cutting Edge

(Continued from Page 1)

produce and mail out our newsletters, but we need to have sound equipment, signage, publicity etc. We hope to also be able to pay some of the travel and other expenses for some of the GREAT talent that comes to the main stage at the Saw Festival. Therefore, the officers have voted to increase the annual IMSA membership fees to \$20 per individual member, and \$25 per family membership. We are implementing plans to raise the value of the newsletters, and generally increase the benefits to you - our members.

I feel a major benefit to the members is the information included in our newsletter. I have been fortunate to be able to find an outstanding new volunteer Editor/Publisher for our newsletter, and I'm sure you have noticed an improvement in the appearance already. **THANK YOU TO Tanya DeBuff of Billings, Montana!** We look forward to working with her for a long time! We are trying to make this publication something informative, educational, and even FUN to read - a newsletter that you will look forward to receiving, and one that you will keep as a reference.

We plan to bring you interviews (and photos!) with the best saw players from around the world (including the Saw-Off Competition winners from each year's Saw Festival). **David Weiss** has agreed to write a regular "Saw Tips" column. Other articles may include comparisons of musical (and regular) saws, bows, and various playing techniques to help you learn to play with less effort, more speed and accuracy, and have more fun. Someone may write an article on learning the social skills needed to play with others. Many saw players are relatively reclusive - playing along only with recorded music. Learning to play along with other musicians and/or vocalists requires sensitivity to others' efforts and feelings. Learning to play for an audience is another learning experience. "Stage presence" and showmanship, body language and eye contact affects an audience (and also impresses saw-competition judges). Perhaps there will be an article on self-promotion as a

musician, and/or what it's like working as a professional musician. And for those of you who live far away from Santa Cruz, California (the site of our annual Saw Players Picnic and Music Festival), what it is like making the pilgrimage to California and the Saw Festival.

We are all volunteers in this organization, and **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Specifically, **we need to receive your ideas and input** for articles, interviews, listings of music and/or saw-related events, cartoons and jokes. We would love to have (and NEED) your participation in helping to lead and support the Musical Sawyers around the world represented by the IMSA! **Please contact us if you have talents or skills you are willing to share!** I have heard of bands in Texas and New York and Canada and elsewhere that include excellent Musical Saw players, but I don't know them or how to contact them - Do you? Perhaps you could interview them for a newsletter article, or at least refer them to us! We need our members to send us announcements about musical saw-related events, as well as pictures of performers, winners of contests, saw and/or music cartoons, jokes, creative word play with the saw, etc. **You can help** make the Saw Player News and IMSA more interesting and valuable for us all! There is strength in our numbers, but there are thousands more who can join us! A Membership Application is included in this newsletter.

I hope you will agree that we are moving in directions that will benefit you as saw players, and I am willing to receive your calls and emails of encouragement, suggestions, criticism and/or contributions. We may choose to include some of your comments in future newsletters. **Thank you for your support!**

Morgan Cowin, Acting IMSA President

Regular "snail" mail address:

5 Windsor Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901 (U.S.A.)

Call me at my Photography Business: (415)459-7722

or Email: info@sawplayers.org

(or: Morgan@DistinctivePhotos.com)

## WELCOME SAW NEWS SUBSCRIBERS!

Some of you receiving this issue of our new newsletter are not current members of the CSPA or IMSA. **Lillian and Luther Harris** have generously been publishing the "The Saw News" for 15 years now, and are retiring from their publishing empire. We are working together to absorb "Saw News" subscribers into our IMSA newsletter, and we have decided to do the following: "Saw News" subscribers will be receiving the "Saw Player News" at no charge until their subscriptions expire, at which time we hope you will want to continue receiving the "Saw Player News" and become a member of the IMSA. CSPA members who also subscribed to the "Saw News" will receive a one-time \$5 discount on their next IMSA membership renewal.



## SAW TIPS

by David Weiss

Many of us saw players like to help beginners get started playing the saw. This column is devoted to what I believe is the easiest (and least expensive) way. When I first started playing my saw in public, the question most often asked was, "Is that a REAL saw?" It gave me lots of satisfaction saying that is was, a true FOLK INSTRUMENT, the carpenter's tool right off the hardware store shelf!

Fortunately for beginners, there are several varieties of real saws that are easy to bend, have a good range, and can make a decent sound without too much effort. The mistake many people make is to buy a saw that's too expensive! For more money you get a saw that's better for cutting wood, but harder to bend (thicker gauge steel). I always recommend the following: Get a 25-inch saw, plastic or wood handle, that tapers to about 1½ inches at width at the top. This taper will give you greater range and flexibility.

The old STANLEY HANDYMAN that I started out on twenty years ago has changed dimensions over the years, and is NOT as good these days. Instead, I suggest the STANLEY "Thrifty" SAW. The STANLEY HARD TOOTH works almost as well, with just a tad stiffer bend to it.

Other brands that produce saws of thinner gauge metal are Nicholson, True Value, and Disston. Each brand makes a variety of shapes, so be sure to measure the tip. Pull one off the shelf, and you can also tell by the

resistance you feel when you bend it. It's a good idea to go to more than one hardware store to check out the supply. Usually it will be the cheapest 26-inch saw on the shelf that will work best!

Once you get your saw home, take some fine sandpaper (400–600 grit) and gently rub the smooth edge to rid it of any shards or rough edges that might damage your bow hairs. You can also put a strip of tape over the lowest teeth so as to avoid tearing your pantleg!

I use clear packing tape so it's not visible to people unless they look VERY closely. Another idea is to use a small steel file and file off any sharpened points that would make contact. For beginners, I recommend using a mallet at first. It is much more forgiving if you don't strike it in the exact right place. A small rubber ball on a stick works very well, and they're easy to find (toy xylophone type mallets.)

Another tip: for comfort of the left thumb as it presses on the saw, I place a 1 inch square piece of thin bulletin board cork between my thumb and the saw. It helps a lot! Regarding the bow, lots of saw players use a standard violin or viola bow.

It is easy enough to find used ones at most musical instrument shops, and even some of the new fiberglass ones aren't all that expensive—maybe \$25 or \$30. The things to look for are that the bow stays straight when you tight-

en the hair, and that there's enough clearance between the hair and the wood when it is tight (approx. ⅜ inch or more in the center). You don't want to overtighten, as this stresses the hair and may cause premature breakage. Also, you must remember to loosen the tension when you're done playing.

Rosin is a necessity to get friction between bow and saw to produce the sound. I suggest string bass rosin, as it is the softest, goes on easier, and gives more "grab." Something unusual I do: not only do I put rosin on the bow, I ALSO put rosin on the smooth edge of the saw! This helps ensure that (presuming the bow is in the right place) the sound will respond immediately.

One warning about bass rosin: it might melt a little when the temperature gets warm! "Pops" brand bass rosin comes in a small plastic cup with a lid on it, so it won't mess up your pockets. As you improve, you will find ways to minimize the bow noise.

Soon, if all goes well, you'll be ready to consider getting additional saws especially designed for music—like the Charlie Blacklock Special, or Mussehl & Wesphal, or Sandvik Stradivarius.

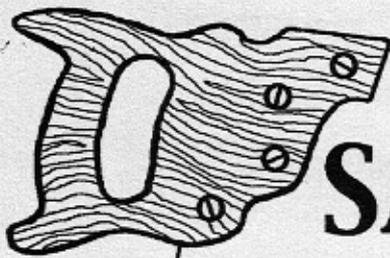
The first exercise to practice is playing a tone, then trying to get one note higher, and returning to the first tone accurately (the beginning of the scale).

Determining the degree of "S" curve and where to place the bow or mallet is the trick, and will be the subject of another day. In my next column I'll talk about some specific practice techniques that will help speed up the learning curve, and get you playing easy tunes fairly quickly.

Presented by The



International  
Musical Saw  
Association



# SAW PLAYERS

(And Friends)

## PICNIC & MUSIC FESTIVAL

To be held at

SINCE 1978!

### Roaring Camp

Old-Time Fiddlers • Bluegrass • Classical • Country • Folk  
Acoustic Instruments • Musical Saws • Harmonicas • Accordians • Singers  
Guitars • Banjos • And MORE! • (Bring YOUR Instrument!)

International  
Musical Saw  
Contest

Sunday, July 20, 2003

10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Musical Saw  
Workshop

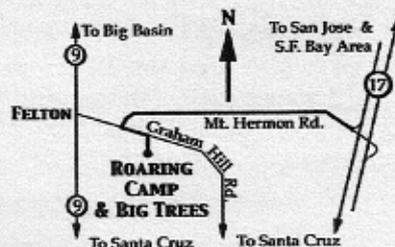
## ALL MUSICIANS INVITED!

Jamming all day - Open mike throughout the day  
Also, pot-luck dinner and jamming Saturday night July 19  
at the Roaring Camp outer parking lot (6-10PM)!

# COME AND JOIN IN THE FUN! IT'S FREE!

(there is a small parking fee)

For Festival Information:  
Call: Charlie Blacklock  
(510)523-4649  
1821 St. Charles St.  
Alameda, CA 94501



For Directions to  
Roaring Camp & Big Trees  
in Felton (just North of Santa Cruz)  
Call: (831)335-4484

Take the Mt. Hermon Exit off Hwy. 17 to Graham Hill Rd., Then Left 1/4 mile to Roaring Camp.

# 2003 "SAW-OFF" COMPETITION INFORMATION

The International Musical Saw Association (IMSA) produces the "Saw-Off" contest each year as part of our annual **Saw Players Picnic & Music Festival** at "Roaring Camp", located in the town of Felton, about 6 miles North of Santa Cruz, California. The date will be July 20, 2003.

Each year, Saw Players from around the world come to play and compete for the opportunity to receive a certificate in recognition for their skills, and a chance to play one piece with their saw on the main stage. Everyone entering the contest must be a current IMSA member.

So that we can fit everything into the program, we want everyone that is planning to enter the contest to pre-register. To assure your place in the contest, please **complete the entry form below and mail it to us by July 1, 2003.** There is an entry fee of \$5 (in addition to current membership dues) to help out with our expenses. Those planning to enter the contest should register by 10:00 AM near the main stage, and be ready to play by 11:00 at the smaller contest stage (you will be directed to the contest stage area when you register). The time allotted for the contest will depend on the number of contestants.

Each contestant is to play two songs. You may play one piece with accompaniment of any kind, and then you are asked to play "Auld Lang Syne" without accompaniment. "Auld Lang Syne" is known all over the world, but in some places it is called "Friendship Forever."

Also, at about 3:00 PM, ALL saw players attending The Festival are invited to come up on the main stage to play a few pieces together (we call it the "Massing of the Saws")



## INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL SAW CONTEST ENTRY FORM

NOTE: You **MUST** be an IMSA Member to enter the contest.

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

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

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

Country (if you live outside the USA): \_\_\_\_\_

Be prepared to play any one piece with (or without) any kind of accompaniment, and... play "Auld Lang Syne" (also known as "Friendship Forever") **without** accompaniment.

**Mail this form (or a copy) with a check or money order for \$5 US by July 1, 2003 to:**

I.M.S.A. c/o Charlie & Viola Blacklock  
1821 St. Charles St.  
Alameda, CA 94501-1118 (U.S.A.)

Phone: (510)523-4649  
Email: [info@sawplayers.org](mailto:info@sawplayers.org)



## A Sawyer's Travels

by Ray LeClair

Traveling across the country (USA) by train to the Saw Festival was a dream come true. I was recently retired and had wanted to meet

Charlie & Viola ever since I joined the California Saw Players Association.

So in February of 2002 I purchased round-trip tickets to Santa Cruz, California from Springfield, Massachusetts. Departure day soon arrived, and on July 16th off I went down the tracks. The train took a northerly route, passing through Illinois, Iowa, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and then arriving in Portland, Oregon.

The train then traveled south down to San Jose, and I took a bus in to Santa Cruz. During my stay I did manage to get downtown and had a picture taken with the Tom Scribner statue - that is a prize souvenir. I was able to make it for the jam sessions in the parking lot and it felt so good to be among saw players from all parts of the world.

Everyone was so cordial and friendly - it was easy to just sit in with any group anytime. The following day

was a full and very satisfying day; the audience was receptive and warm and it was a pleasure to play the saw for them. My dream came true as I had my picture taken with Charlie & Viola and also with Morgan Cowin... WOW... how good can it get! Oh... the trip on the train? Well, that's a big plus because the train traveled at reduced speeds, sometimes as slow as 35mph, and it made for great picture taking. I was able to take my pictures right from my compartment window, yes... the scenery just kept sliding right by my window.

The food? Terrific... we could choose from a menu of seven dinners, (I tried them all) and it was goooood! There was always good company, wonderful people from all walks of life, many of them interesting and some entertaining. The return trip was just as breath taking. Some of the sites I photographed: Grand Canyon, Mesas, Badlands and the Rocky Mountains. If you take a trip like this by train, allow yourself a cushion of time, because due to no fault of the railroad - they run late. Was it fun? YES! Would I do it again? No! I would drive to Santa Cruz the next time... it's really not that far! But don't ever miss out on that first time train ride across the country, it really is an adventure. So, whatever way you go... DO IT!... and ENJOY! Just don't forget your saw!

### ●●●●●●●●●● CURRENT CSPA & IMSA Members ●●●●●●●●●●

#### PLEASE Take A Minute To Respond, & Return As Soon As Possible!

We want to serve our Members as well as possible, but we need to know how you feel...

1.) We have members from all over the world, and want to be a resource to all saw players. The Officers feel that to best represent everyone we should officially change our name from the current CSPA (California Saw Players Association) to the IMSA (International Musical Saw Association). **Members - Please check the following box to give us your official vote:**  IMSA

2) Please check your mailing label to see if your name and address are spelled correctly, and make any corrections you find here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please give us your 9-digit ZIP Code (USA): \_\_\_\_\_ (To help save mailing costs)

We would like to have your Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

We also would like to have your Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

In the future, would you be interested in receiving the Saw Player News by Email (PDF)? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Saw players from all over the world contact us to look for fellow saw players in their areas, but we don't want to give out your name and contact information without your permission. We do not intend to share your information with anyone but fellow saw players.

**Please check the box or boxes that best represents your wishes about your privacy:**

- I do not wish to share any of my contact information
- It is all right to give out my name and telephone number only
- It is all right to give out my name and Email address only
- It is all right to give out my name and address only
- It is all right to give out any or all of my information

NOTE: If a green dot appears next to your name, your membership has expired. To continue to receive the SAW PLAYER NEWS, you need to send a check and a completed Membership Application. Thanks!

International Musical Saw Association  
1821 St. Charles St.  
Alameda, CA 94501



## Application for Membership to the International Musical Saw Association

Annual Membership Fees are \$20/Individual, \$25/Family.

Dues entitle Members to 3 issues of the Saw Player News, and eligibility to enter (with \$5 entry fee) the "Saw-Off Competition" at our annual Saw Players Picnic and Music Festival

Please send your check with completed application to: IMSA, 1821 St. Charles St., Alameda, CA 94501



International  
Musical Saw  
Association

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

9-Digit ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #:( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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