

Old Time Fiddlers'

Contest proves to be more than competition

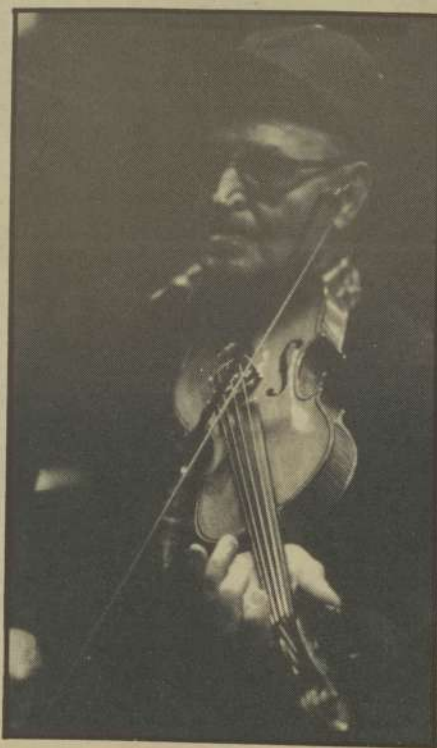
"It's a chance to get together with some old friends, make some new ones and play some good fiddlin' music."

-- Barney Alexander



"Fiddlin's just
in my blood."

-- Wes Brunson



With only a little apprehension, she mounts the stage. Then, as she's done a hundred times before, she presses the fiddle into her chin, raises the bow and begins.

Tiffany, with her parents watching, has just entered the 21st annual Oregon Old Time Fiddler's Contest held here last Saturday.

Fiddling is more than just a musical hobby. Many of those who attended the contest consider it an important part of American heritage. Unlike other musical traditions, fiddling has a uniquely American background.

Fiddling originated in the Blue Ridge and Ozark Mountains more than 200 years ago. Currently, fiddling takes up but a small part of the American music scene. Tiffany is one of only a handful of youngsters who participated in this year's contest.

The participants, including ages from 4 to 78, began by playing a hoedown song, followed by a waltz, and finished with a tune of their own choice. They were then judged on fiddling ability, tone and rhythm. The winners will go on to the championships to be held in Idaho this summer.

To the participants, though, the contest was more than just a competition. "Fiddlin's just in my blood," said 72-year-old Wes Brunson. Barney Alexander, another competitor in the Senior category, said, "It was a chance to get together with old friends, make some new ones, and play some good fiddling music."

Towards the end, a call goes out to the audience, "Junior competitors to the stage." Tiffany slowly walks up, and then waits for the announcer to speak. Sixth place may not send her to Idaho, but it's something to be proud of.



Story by Duffy Coffman and David J. Hayden
Photos by David J. Hayden

