

History of the Hippies of Takilma: by Kindi Fahmkopf

Part 16 – Music in Takilma

During the summers, today as well as in years past, people gathered at various swimming holes along the East Fork of the Illinois to cool off and take their afternoon breaks. The river was a big part of life and the free exchange of ideas gave rise to many Takilma friendships. Most people went naked in the old days; some still do. People brought their arts and crafts to work on as they kept cool under the trees. As Maya recalls, “We spent the long, hot hours of the summer at the swim hole, along Paco’s land, with Annie, Jim and many horses, and Jane, Michael, Joe and Eli across the river. We all sang to our babes and especially the women had a lot of closeness. What we shared was unspoken, yet profound. We learned by association ‘how we do what we do,’ this mothering in a more natural, organic, loving basis.” The joys of a pleasant afternoon on a pebbly beach with friends and families, and clear cold water to swim in, with soft acoustic music wafting through the trees and the sound of children laughing, were some of the best, memories

of the early days.

Takilma does have many incredible musicians and it seems that one cannot find anyone without some sort of musical talent. The many events and parties of the past will no doubt live on in the memories of the hippies, as some of the best times of their lives. Monthly full moon parties became a tradition where people would share and teach each other their songs and music was practiced. Different types of music, like Folk, Bluegrass, Indian, Marimbas, Reggae, acoustic rock and Rap were developed and drum circle groups have flourished, as well as belly-dancing and other forms of expression. There were so many great events like the time Clan Dyken came and pulled their solar bus up to the TCA land and gave Takilma a fantastic concert, with a blanket dance benefiting the Dine Navaho people.

During the 80s and 90s there were several big dances each year, and apart from hosting a lot of other groups to the stage, the regulars like Charley’s group, Rock Robin and the Toasters were the ones to dance to. Charley’s particular type of guitar

playing, brought together the best of the hard-driving rock rhythms with the more intricate lead guitar riffs which made the music so irresistible for dancers. In more recent years Charley plays with Kenny, Donny, and Dave M. in another great dance band named Altered States.

Some of the unsung musicians of Takilma are Pat M. on piano, Michael M. on electric guitar, JD Smith who plays in bands in the Bay Area, Bruce M. playing original songs on folk guitar, Shabaka on drums, Tomas singing and playing guitar and drums at his Thursday night drum circle, Daniel S. on guitar and specializing in sound systems, Carol V. for her original songs and guitar, Terry L. for her ukulele, Terry D. for his many years playing in bands and Libby for her original songs on guitar and piano. This is only scratching the surface of those not already mentioned, and I am sure there are more closet musicians than I can name and of course the young people who are starting their own music groups as well.

Many people came up with revolutionary ideas to keep themselves busy. Radio Free Takilma was started with the desire to play music and keep people informed. You see after the Fire of ’87 people started a phone tree to communicate and for emergency preparedness. The radio station performed that role. Beyond that people wanted to perform and

play their music and have a forum for community discussion and creativity. It started small and ran for a few years as a pirate station before it was eventually busted by the FCC. People were using an empty slot on the FM dial which could only be heard in Takilma, and a continuous feed of live and DJ directed music was played. DJ’s like Little Sister, Mr. Unmentionable, Misty Rainbow, The Reverend El Sey and the Spaceman were passionate about their shows and brought a wealth of music knowledge to the table. The station eventually moved to a new location and started a legal station, streaming live over the internet, which still exists to this day. It is known as Hope Mountain Radio. Please listen in at www.takilmafam.com.

During a later period, the musicians of Takilma were developing relationships with the wider community. Robert said that “Jim N. used to rent the County Building every Tuesday night so various musicians from all over the Illinois Valley could play together. Out of that group, 3 or 4 music groups have formed. Those music groups now are very important in bringing people together.”

Today Robert plays “Americana” style music with Doug, Walt and others in his group; East Fork. The Chamber of Commerce started an annual Bluegrass Festival near Lake Selmac in 2004, and has invited groups like East Fork and Lonesome Road to have more opportunities to perform locally. “The evolution of the music in Takilma was really a big part of life here. We really dug playing together.” As Robert remembers, “There were so many talented musicians, and places we could perform.” Recently East Fork, and many of the

other music groups are planning to make a CD of the I.V. sound.

Maya once said, “We built this city on rock and roll,” referring to the numerous yearly benefits for the Takilma Community Building, Dome School and other worthy causes. She remembers, “We danced, oh did we dance, outdoors and at the Dome School.” People lovingly gave of their time, food and talents to volunteer for these events which were known for their great music, fun and creativity. The Illuminated Fools, a giant puppet troupe created by Newman, were the rage of all the parties. Today, Newman’s student puppeteer, Jill Talise, has her own giant puppets, known as Coyote Rising. Takilma was known for its, Mardi Gras Dance, Women’s Café, Barter Faire, Halloween Dance, Holiday Bazaar, and Martin Luther King Day Dance, among others.

Another of the exceptional creations of the community was the Takilma Common Ground; a newsletter about and for the people, family, friends and supporters of Takilma. Created in 1990 by a small group led by Laurie P., Dave and Cathy H., Rachel G., and a few others; it was a hand-written and illustrated journal of local interest and creativity. It was a good way for people to share what they were thinking and bring forth ideas and announcements to the residents. Many of the stories it featured were written by Robert and Delbert about early Takilma and their adventures. It has survived the years by being supported by its reader’s subscriptions and is now under the umbrella of the Takilma Community Association.

See Hippies on A-9



Music in the early days of Takilma; Charley and Robert jamming. (Photo courtesy of Robert Hirning)

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