

Musician Webb finds you can go home again

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Bob Webb is a local musician who moved to the county with his partner, Heidi Muller. The two are among the very few people in the county who can honestly say they make a living as working musicians. Webb, 71, is a classically trained cellist who also plays guitar, mandolin, dulcimer and typically plays Americana-themed music.

Earlier in his career Webb was a founding member of the genre defying group Stark Raven, one of the most popular bands in the southeastern U.S., Webb and his former bandmates reunited in August for two 25th anniversary shows.

The band started in 1982 in Virginia with Webb contributing cello, dulcimer, mandolin and some guitar to the group's efforts. The group, known for their excellent musicianship and original material, wrote songs and rehearsed eight hours a day, five days a week, for six months before setting foot on the stage.

The band had great regional success. They recorded two albums, helped found and were the house band on public television's Mountain Stage music show. West Virginia public TV did a feature on the group and turned one of the group's songs, "100 Million Pieces," into a bona-fide music video.

"We were tight, because



"Stark Raven" in their earlier days. Can you spot Bob Webb?

Contributed photo

we were really serious," Webb said. "We had kind of signed a contract among ourselves."

While the band never quite broke out of the southeast, Webb said it was the most popular folk-rock band in Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky.

In tribute to the band's versatility, it's motto was: "We play what we play; you dance if you're able." At one point, the band played to audiences of more than 10,000. However, the band's diversity of genre proved to be its undoing as record companies at the time weren't interested in bands that couldn't fit into a convenient compartment.

After nine years together the group had developed inter-personal conflicts that could not be resolved. Even two-to-three hour regular group therapy sessions with a licensed psychologist failed to heal the rifts. Webb noted that their therapist showed up at the first reunion concert and the group laughingly told him his services weren't needed as yet.

In 1992 the group decided to call it quits with a concert at the West Virginia governor's mansion, as the governor and his wife were fans of the group. The mansion served as a "green room" while the concert

was performed in a side yard. Public radio even broadcast the event.

"I was initially very resistant," Webb said. I was happy where I was and going back to playing songs I hadn't played in 25 years didn't appeal to me." He added, only partly joking, that the nine years the group performed together should be counted as dog

years.

Later, the group's lead guitarist, Ron Sowell, called Webb and made a convincing enough appeal for Webb to reconsider his initial dismissal of the project. Webb also had it in mind that the reunion wouldn't get off the ground because it was planned for months in the future, and the costs and logistics would prove insurmountable.

He couldn't have been more wrong.

A crowdfunding endeavor netted more than \$5000 to defray travel and other costs. Webb was the most expensive member to fly in because of the amount of instruments he was bringing.

The band scored a gig in West Virginia at the Clay Center for the Arts and a coveted "Live on the Levee" slot the following evening. The first concert was attended by more than 450 people, which was the capacity for the center. The state fire marshal turned away many.

Webb said that the magic and musicianship was still there after only three days of rehearsal. The band was called back for an encore during the second performance.

"When we got up on stage, it was still there. We still had it after 25 years," Webb said.

The group sold \$2000 in band merchandise and the rest

was sold the following evening. Webb, also a recording engineer, remastered a CD compilation of the group's greatest hits that sold out almost immediately but is still available as an online download. The performances were also recorded with a multi-track device and Webb, with one of the band members, will parse out the two performances into a single CD, available sometime this fall.

"We'll eventually get a check," he said.

By all accounts, the reunion was an unqualified success, and for Webb and the other band members, gratifying.

"In 1992, we brought Stark Raven in for a landing, not a crash landing," he said. "We dissolved the band, but we never resolved the band. I think this time we resolved the band because in the ensuing 25 years we've been able to step out of the stereotypes we were locked into and perceive each other in a fresh light."

Will the band consider regrouping?

"Maybe in 25 years for another reunion," Webb said with a smile.

Registration open for Walk With Ease class

A new Walk With Ease class begins Monday, Nov. 13, at the Place in Joseph, adjacent to the Methodist Church. The six-week class will meet 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday through Jan. 3, 2018.

The cost of the class is \$20 and includes all class materials, workbook and water bottle. Space is limited and registration is required.

Walk With Ease is a physical activity program for people with arthritis or other joint pain, although all are welcome. The program focuses on walking, gentle stretching and building stamina.

Call the OSU Extension Service at 541-426-3143.

The program is affiliated with the Arthritis Foundation.

Poetry classes begin at Fishtrap

Cameron Scott will lead a workshop, "Demystifying Poetry Through Imitation and Invention," 6:30 p.m. Wednes-

IN BRIEF

day, Oct. 18, and continuing for the next three Wednesdays at Fishtrap in Enterprise.

Anyone interested in learning to read, talk and/or write poetry, beginner or advanced, is invited. The purpose of the workshop is to offer a base from which to talk about and practice the craft of poetry.

Sessions include reading well-known and not so well poems, discussing them and trying to imitate them. Generative writing exercises will be built off of what is learned from each poem.

Register at fishtrap.org or call 541-426-3623.

Owyhee featured at Josephy event

"The Owyhee River Journals," a presentation by Bonnie J. Olin with the photographs of Mike H. Quigley, will be 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 21, at Josephy Center in Joseph.

The event is free, but donations are always welcome.

The presentation includes

a brief history of the region, location information, some geology of the canyon, and makes this region special and efforts to protect it.

A slideshow showing the entire Owyhee region, from Nevada to the Owyhee reservoir in Oregon, and a video of a 2006 expedition into Deep Creek and the East Fork of the Owyhee River is also planned.

Volunteers to read sought

Volunteers are sought for The Books Bridging Generations program, sponsored by Building Healthy Families. The program pairs students grades K-3 in all three Wallowa County school districts with community volunteers for weekly reading sessions.

With the goals of building positive adult and child relationships while developing reading skills and initiating a life-long love for reading, the program is modeled on a number of evidence-based reading models.

The program begins Oct. 16. Info: Tashina 541-426-9411.

Fundraiser for FCCLA ongoing

Members of the Enterprise and Joseph FCCLA chapters are conducting a wreath and greenery fundraiser. Students will sell wreaths and garlands in varying sizes, wreaths shaped as crosses and candy canes, swags and centerpieces.

All wreaths are made with freshly cut Noble Fir, Blue Berried Juniper and Cedar.

Sales continue through Nov. 7. Wreaths arrive on Dec. 3 and students will deliver.

For both chapters, this is their primary fundraiser of the year. It helps pay for events including Oregon Leadership and the national convention,

which will be held in Atlanta July 2018.

Info: 541-398-2223.

CPR, first aid sessions set

Summic CPR and First Aid Training of Enterprise will host two sessions of classes in the coming weeks.

CPR will be taught Thursday, Oct. 26, at the VFW, 800 N. River St, Enterprise. A first aid class will be the next day, both running 5:30-8:30 p.m.

The following weekend, Nov. 2-3, CPR will be taught at Cloverleaf Hall on Thursday and first aid on Friday, both at 5:30 p.m.

Info: 541-426-9999.

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Student of the Week



Keith Batten
JOSEPH CHARTER SCHOOL

Keith Batten is a sophomore at Joseph Charter School. He is actively involved in FFA and FCCLA and runs cross-country and track. The staff and administration would like to congratulate Keith for being an outstanding learner.

He is a student who engages fully in the love of learning, asks great questions and thinks outside the box. Students like Keith make our school better.

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