



VOL. 40  
NO. 09

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE  
TEXAS OLD TIME FIDDLERS ASSOCIATION  
3209 S. FREDONIA, NACOGDOCHES, TX 75964

SEPTEMBER  
2012

## BILL GILBERT (1935-2012)

I regret to inform the membership that one of our founding fathers of the Texas Old-Time Fiddler's Association, Bill Gilbert, passed away Tuesday, August 21, 2012 surrounded by family at his home in Millsap, Texas, after a long battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Norma, their two sons, Bart and Chris, their families, as well as many friends in the fiddle family. Many, including E.J. Hopkins, refer to Bill as the, "Father of the Texas Old-Time Fiddler's Association," because it was his vision to create an association that would promote true Texas Style fiddling. He was the first president of the association. I only had the opportunity to meet Mr. Gilbert a couple of times so without a lot of first-hand knowledge of him, I took the opportunity to talk to a couple of men who knew him well, Rex Gillentine and E.J. Hopkins, to get a little more insight on Bill. Fellow founding father, E.J. Hopkins, mentioned that when it came to the Charter and By-Laws for the association, Bill was the one who wrote about ninety percent of it. It was also Bill's house where he and the original Board of Directors recorded a TOTFA tape of Texas fiddling. E.J. remembers Bill as a good man and a fine fiddler as well as a rhythm player. Rex recalled Bill as being a fine teacher as well. Rex remembered a weekend when he, Terry Morris, and Randy Elmore stayed with Bill where he taught them no less than seventeen reels and hornpipes. Rex says Bill was a fan of and thoroughly knew, "old school," Texas Style fiddling. He felt it was important to teach the tunes and learn tunes in their originality. Bill would often host many fiddle parties at his home where all the legends of Texas fiddling would often show up for a weekend for jamming. Bill was obviously a very important figure in the history of Texas fiddling and the TOTFA and we would like to say thanks to him for all of his contributions to fiddling. On behalf of the TOTFA, I'd like to pass along our condolences to the family of Bill Gilbert.

Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association  
3209 S. Fredonia  
Nacogdoches, TX 75964

----- PLACE LABEL HERE -----

October will feature three straight weeks of contests with Bowie on October 6<sup>th</sup>, Seguin on October 13<sup>th</sup>, and the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Yamboree at Gilmer on October 20<sup>th</sup>. We will have more details on each of these contests in the next issue of the newsletter. We have had plans for a fundraiser at the RV Ranch in Burleson, Texas, for September 29<sup>th</sup> for several months. However, they have informed us just last week that we will not be allowed to sell food at their facility, which is forcing us to look elsewhere for another venue. We will inform the membership as soon as we find a solution to this issue. So, for those of you online, please stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for the latest details.

I have been in touch with the folks in Hillsboro, Texas, and they say they are very much looking forward to hosting our convention this year. The dates will be December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and will be at Hill Community College. We will have motel information in the next newsletter so you can make your reservations and join us for a great weekend of fiddling and fellowship in the friendly town of Hillsboro, Texas.

Happy Fiddlin'  
Bryan

## 2011-2013 TOTFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



The  
Texas  
Fiddler

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### Bill Gilbert

Bill Gilbert, that left-handed fiddler from Millsap, Texas, was born March 23, 1935 to Troy and Opal Gilbert. The sound of a fiddle is one of the first things he remembers. His father was an active country-swing fiddler who played for many dances around the area where he lived and often Bill was put to bed on a pallet behind the amplifiers where one of these dances was taking place. By age seven, Bill was playing right-handed guitar accompaniment and sometimes played with his father in the band. A couple of years later he was bitten by the "fiddle bug" and began sneaking a few private sessions with his father's fiddle. Soon after that, Bill surprised his dad with a rendition of "Rubber Dolly", left-handed style! The fact that he plays guitar and bass right-handed and the fiddle left-handed may seem strange to a lot of people but it is perfectly natural for him. That's how mixed up he is and if you don't believe it, watch him pat his foot sometime!

Bill received his first fiddle as a gift from his parents soon after he began playing and Red Steeley made him a left-handed chin rest. Bill now plays a Steeley fiddle and his own first fiddle is being used by his sons, Bart and Chris, who Bill hopes will carry on the tradition of fiddling in the Gilbert family.

The summer Bill was thirteen, he and a neighbor boy, Theo Miller who played guitar, hired out as a two-piece band to play Saturday night dances at a community gathering place near their homes. This was Bill's first experience playing out on his own and his main recollection of it is "that you sure have to fiddle a lot in a band that size!" Bill continued to play with local country-swing bands at musicals and dances throughout his high school years and played with The Sunset Playboys while attending Tarleton State College and with The Aggie Ramblers at A & M.

In 1958, with graduation behind him, Bill returned to the ranch at Millsap and settled into the role of rancher, husband, father. The fiddle remained in its case for longer and longer periods of time. Finally it was silent altogether only to be replaced by the horrible amplified sounds made by a beginner steel guitar player as Bill endeavored to master that instrument! However, his interest in the steel did not last too long and after a couple of years, it was delegated to the depths of the closet.

Bill joined the faculty of the Santo Independent School District as a Science teacher in 1964. Strangely enough, it was this action which revived his interest in music and in breakdown-style fiddling in particular. He renewed an old acquaintance with B. F. Chesnut who was a member of the Santo School Board at that time and was also interested in fiddling. Though B. F. is now well-known as a fiddler, he played guitar then. He and Bill began getting together about twice a week for practice and Bill's efforts to learn breakdown fiddling began in earnest. He learned a few tunes from records and started going to every contest he heard about trying to learn more. Trouble was, he didn't find out about many; one at De Leon the first year with Alvarado added the next year. It was a frustrating period. He knew the music he wanted to learn was being played at contests somewhere but he couldn't find out where! Finally Bill called Norman Solomon, an excellent fiddler who sometimes came out to fish in the Brazos River which borders the ranch, and asked if he would play some tunes and let him tape them to learn by. Norman agreed and invited Bill over that very afternoon. Most learning fiddlers get excited at the prospect of new tunes and after taping and listening to the tunes played by Norman with Betty on piano, Bill was very excited. So excited in fact, that he was about three miles down the road before he realized that in saying goodbye to them, he had placed the tape on top of the car and left it there. A glance back down the road verified that it was no longer atop the car for it could plainly be seen lying all over the highway! Fortunately it was not broken but only a great deal of patience in rewinding restored it to its former state without damage. Bill has enjoyed many helpful sessions with Norman since then but it is doubtful, unless he happened to look out his window that day, that even Norman has known until now just how proud Bill was of that tape!

As time passed, Bill did find out about more contests and in going to them, became friends with many fiddlers who have helped him along the way, accompanists who have spent many patient hours in practice with him, and loyal fans of Texas fiddling who have always been on hand with words of encouragement when they were needed. It is the friendship of all these people that Bill values most in the world of fiddling.





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NO. 8 ROUTE 1, MILLSAP, TEXAS 76066 1974



*Bill Gilbert*  
SEE PAGE 2 FOR COVER STORY.

## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Eischen Harkins	September 1
Olaf Riewe & Charlie Wallace	September 2
Loyce Franklin & Anton Ullrich	September 3
Heidi Hughes & Linda Sammons	September 4
Larry Hendricks	September 5
Wes Westmoreland	September 10
Carl Hopkins	September 11
Nicholas Gillentine & E.L. Mathews	September 14
Eric Amundson	September 18
George Griffith	September 20
Jerry Retzloff	September 22
Melinda Stockton & Wayne Head	September 28



## DONE GONE

(contest results)

### Branson Fiddle Festival ~ Branson, MO

<u>0-9</u>	<u>10-16</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> – Tanner Marriott	1 <sup>st</sup> – Trustin Baker
2 <sup>nd</sup> – Autumn Johnson	2 <sup>nd</sup> – Katie Crawford
3 <sup>rd</sup> – Maggie Farnum	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Jessica Sell
4 <sup>th</sup> – Elijah Baker	4 <sup>th</sup> – Hannah Farnum
5 <sup>th</sup> – Kaylee Downs	5 <sup>th</sup> – Regina Scott
<u>17-59</u>	<u>60+</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> – Bubba Hopkins	1 <sup>st</sup> – Gene Banks
2 <sup>nd</sup> – Tom Weisgerber	2 <sup>nd</sup> – Gary Johnston
3 <sup>rd</sup> – Cody Marriott	3 <sup>rd</sup> – HK Silvey
4 <sup>th</sup> – Jake Duncan	4 <sup>th</sup> – Michael Meyer
5 <sup>th</sup> – Alex Depue	
<u>Accompanist</u>	<u>Grand Champion</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> – Anthony Mature	Bubba Hopkins
2 <sup>nd</sup> – Bobby Christman	
3 <sup>rd</sup> – Jim Reina	
4 <sup>th</sup> – Darrell Boen	
5 <sup>th</sup> – Tim Trawick	

## HERE & THERE

(upcoming contests)

### Guadalupe County Fair Grounds Dance Pavilion ~ October 13<sup>th</sup> ~ Sequin, TX

<u>0-12</u>	<u>13-18</u>	<u>19-64</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> - \$75	1 <sup>st</sup> - \$75	1 <sup>st</sup> - \$125
2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$50	2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$50	2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$100
3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$40	3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$40	3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$75
4 <sup>th</sup> - \$25	4 <sup>th</sup> - \$25	4 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
5 <sup>th</sup> - \$10	5 <sup>th</sup> - \$10	5 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
<u>65+19-64</u>	<u>Championship</u>	<u>Accompanist</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> - \$125	\$200	1 <sup>st</sup> - \$65
2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$100		2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$35
3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$75		
4 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		
5 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		

Contact Jesse Hart for additional questions (830) 305-4701  
Registration 12:30 P.M. Contest Begins 1:30 P.M.

## HERE & THERE

(upcoming contests)

### 2012 Grand Master's Nashville, TN ~ September 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> Nashville Convention Center

<u>Youth Division</u>	<u>Accompanist</u>	<u>Traditional Division</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> - \$300	1 <sup>st</sup> - \$300	1 <sup>st</sup> - \$300
2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$200	2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$200	2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$200
3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$150	3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$150	3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$150
4 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	4 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	4 <sup>th</sup> - \$100
5 <sup>th</sup> - \$50	5 <sup>th</sup> - \$50	5 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
6 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		6 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
7 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		7 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
8 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		8 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
9 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		9 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
10 <sup>th</sup> - \$50		10 <sup>th</sup> - \$50
<u>Open Division 1-10</u>	<u>Open Division 11-20</u>	
1 <sup>st</sup> - \$2000	11 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
2 <sup>nd</sup> - \$1500	12 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
3 <sup>rd</sup> - \$1000	13 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
4 <sup>th</sup> - \$900	14 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
5 <sup>th</sup> - \$800	15 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
6 <sup>th</sup> - \$500	16 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
7 <sup>th</sup> - \$450	17 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
8 <sup>th</sup> - \$400	18 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
9 <sup>th</sup> - \$350	19 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	
10 <sup>th</sup> - \$300	20 <sup>th</sup> - \$100	

**Judges:** Luke Bulla, Daniel Carwile, Tim Crouch,  
Deanie Richardson & Bobby Taylor

**RV Ranch Benefit ~ September 29<sup>th</sup> ~ Burleson  
CANCELLED!!!  
New benefit location and date to follow in  
October's Newsletter**