



# The Texas Fiddler



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TEXAS OLD TIME FIDDLERS ASSOCIATION  
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## The Llano Fiddle Story

*Editor's note: My thanks to John Caballero who provided this story about the Llano Fiddle Fest on short notice. The Llano Fiddle Fest never disappoints, whether you're there to hear some great Texas-style fiddle music or you're one of the many fine musicians who participate in the contest or other events surrounding it. If you've attended before, you know that the Llano is full of fiddle-crazy people who make for a great audience. The fun starts on Friday with an Air Fiddle and Anything Goes contest and continues through the weekend with the Llano Open fiddle contest Saturday morning, a concert on Saturday evening, and a Sunday service with cowboy breakfast and more fiddle tunes Sunday morning. If you haven't attended before, then 2017 is the time to start!*

This will be the 40th year Llano has held a fiddle contest. It all started in 1976, on the banks of the Llano River in Robinson Park. Llano always had a rich history when it comes to the fiddle, and it can be attributed to the many grass roots fiddlers in the Llano area such as Otis Light, Tilman Harlow, Bud Otto, Wilford Tumlinson, Armand Taylor, Harmon Ellis, Eddie McDonald, Woodrow Thomas, the Goff Brothers and J. C. Burton just to name a few!

Some of Otis Light's fiddle recordings in 1937 are stored in the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. Young Hugh and Karl Farr were playing fiddle and guitar with their father in the Llano area around 1915. Hugh and Karl later moved to California with their family and joined the Sons of the Pioneers. In the 1960s, Arthur Lee Simpson of Llano played fiddle for the Ramblin Rose band that backed up many famous country artists like Ernest Tubb, Charlie Pride, Loretta Lynn, Hank Thompson and George Jones.

The first Llano contest was organized by Armand Taylor. Boots Simpson, Ken Hazlett and Bud Otto would follow as contest organizers. During the Bud Otto years, many fiddlers would gather after the contest at the home of Hazel Overstreet and continue playing until the early morning hours. In 1997, Floyd Ratliff picked up the torch and revived the Llano Open Fiddle Contest until his passing in 2007. Bill Tuckness headed up the contest in 2008 and 2009. There was no contest in 2010. In 2011, the

Llano Fiddle Fest organization, a 501c3 non-profit entity, was formed and expanded the event to a three day fiddle festival.

I had not played my instruments in 20 years and after moving to Llano in 2010, was interested in picking up my instruments and playing again. I walked into the Llano American Legion Hall where a fiddle contest was in progress. That was my first contact with the Llano fiddle crowd and Texas fiddle music. I started to attend fiddle jams with seasoned veteran fiddlers Woodrow Thomas, Jack and Herbert Goff and a younger Bill Tuckness, along with Boots Simpson on banjo, Loma Ranne on keyboard and James Scott on guitar.

The one thing I noticed about these musicians was they played for the right reason; they just loved to play. They did not need to be paid or to play in front of a crowd. They inspired me and I started playing again. As we were talking, they reminisced about the fiddle contest and how sad it was that Llano's fiddle contest had been discontinued. They looked at me, and as gravity slowly released my right arm, it raised into the air. And that is how I became involved in Llano Fiddle Fest.

Just as important as the Llano fiddlers and musicians are the hundreds of fiddle fans who support our contest, and the businesses, individuals, and grant providers whose financial support is critical to the festival's sustainability. The tradition of Llano's fiddle contests continues, welcoming fiddlers and musicians who want to compete and share a common passion with peers and fans alike. Hopefully their passion will transfer to a young girl or boy, awestruck by the sweet melodic sound of Texas fiddle music. Oh by the way, we still jam late into the night at the Gammage House. See you in Llano on April 1st.

John Caballero

[www.llanofiddlefest.com](http://www.llanofiddlefest.com)

## **Live Oak Fiddle Camp**

The first Live Oak Fiddle Camp occurred in 2011. It focuses on advanced fiddle and guitar instruction from a variety of master instructors. This year marks the 7<sup>th</sup> annual camp, and its instructors include Brittany Haas, Tatiana Hargreaves, Jeremy Kittel and Wes Westmoreland. It will be located at the TR Ranch just outside Hallettsville, Texas. Several musical styles will be covered, including bluegrass, Texas-style, old-time, swing, jazz and Celtic. Attendance is for advanced players, 16 years or older, and this year's camp will be May 28 – June 1. Registration is limited to 30 students. The fee is \$450, which covers housing and meals. Email

Heidi Ludiker at [info@liveoakfiddlecamp.com](mailto:info@liveoakfiddlecamp.com) for registration information. You can visit the Live Oak Fiddle Camp website <http://www.liveoakfiddlecamp.com> for more information.

## **TOTFA, By the Numbers**

TOTFA currently has 121 members

Bank balance, as of February 4: \$3,190.78

## **Tax Deductible Donations to TOTFA**

The Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association (TOTFA) is a Texas nonprofit and 501(c)(3) Corporation with the goal to promote and preserve Texas fiddling, to educate about and encourage fiddling traditions, and to ensure quality and excellence in Texas fiddle contests.

Texas Style Fiddling today is a style uniquely different in that it is very colorful, “sophisticatedly cluttered”, and requires a high-degree of expertise and skill and utilizes a controlled improvisation along accepted lines without significant departure from the melody line. Those qualities along with a very precise and stylistic way of bowing and makes it instantly recognizable. Texas Style Fiddling is the pre-dominant contest style of fiddling in the US.

Donations to TOTFA are TAX DEDUCTIBLE! PLEASE consider donating to TOTFA and help us support music. If you know you will have to pay Uncle Sam when tax time comes around, any donation DECREASES THAT TAX BILL!! Your gift helps us promote fiddling, hold contests, and keep this music alive. Send your donation to the address below and we’ll provide you with a receipt. Thank you!

TOTFA Newsletter • c/o John Crawford •  
277 Diamond Ln N • Burleson, TX 76028-6729

## **Thank You for Donations!**

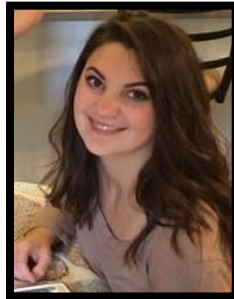
TOTFA would like to thank those who gave donations to TOTFA in 2016 and recent ones received in January 2017. It was requested by one of those donors to remain anonymous, and we certainly will respect those wishes. While we would love to thank each of you by name, I think it’s safer policy to keep those donations anonymous unless the donor gives permission. But that won’t prevent us from saying “Thank you!” You know who you are.

# January Birthdays

Vicki Raines	January 2
Karen Bowen	January 4
Pat Sadler	January 9
Robert Frost	January 11
Karissa Nugent	January 18
David Looper	January 21
Jill Baker	January 22
Morgan Norris	January 26
Sheryl Sultenfuss	January 27



*Sheryl Sultenfuss*



*Karissa Nugent*



*Jill Baker*

# February Birthdays

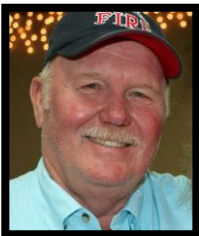
Matt Wills	February 4
Abigayle Lawrence	February 11
Ted Williams	February 21
Hyatt Hopkins	February 25
Mary Stockton	February 26
Brad Riley	February 28



*Ted Williams*



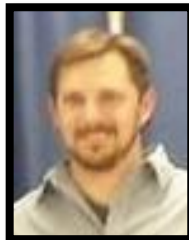
*Hyatt Hopkins*



*Brad Riley*



*Mary Stockton*



*Matt Wills*

# 2017 Calendar

Here is a listing of contest dates, such as they are known, for 2017. This list will be updated as needed as more information is known. **TOTFA contests are listed in bold.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name / Location</b>
<b>April 1 (contest)</b> <i>(Activities all weekend, Fri, Mar 31 – Sun, Apr 2)</i>	<b>Llano Open Fiddle Contest</b> <b>Llano, TX</b>
April 22-23 (contest) <i>(Activities Thu, Apr 21 – Sun, Apr 23)</i>	Fiddlers Frolics Hallettsville, TX
<b>May 6 or May 13 (TBD)</b>	<b>Southwest Fiddlers Championship</b> <b>Groesbeck, TX</b>
May 27	Athens Old Fiddlers Reunion & Contest Athens, TX
<b>Sep 8</b>	<b>Johnson Cty Pioneers &amp; Old Settlers</b> <b>Reunion Fiddle Contest</b> <b>Alvarado, TX</b>
<b>Oct 7</b>	<b>Chicken &amp; Bread Days Fiddle Contest</b> <b>Bowie, TX</b>
<b>Oct 14</b>	<b>J. Box Roberts Memorial Fiddle Contest</b> <b>Seguin, TX</b>
<b>Oct 21</b>	<b>East Texas Yamboree Fiddlers Contest</b> <b>Gilmer, TX</b>
<b>Nov 11</b>	<b>Dale McPherson Memorial</b> <b>Glen Rose, TX –</b>

## TOTFA Newsletter Email Address

Want to contact *The Texas Fiddler* newsletter? You may email **TOTFANewsletter@totfa.org**. You can also mail through the U. S. Postal service by sending to:

TOTFA Newsletter  
c/o John Crawford  
277 Diamond Ln N  
Burleson, TX 76028-6729

You can renew your TOTFA membership, or make TOTFA donations or purchases through PayPal at [TOTFAPayPal@totfa.org](mailto:TOTFAPayPal@totfa.org). We can handle checks and good old paper, too. Just send your check to the address listed above.

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