

BIOGRAPHIES OF MUSICIANS FROM THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Last Updated: December 5, 2025

ASCHMANN, STEFANIE G., viola; b. Lincoln, NE, Feb. 10, 1950. Raised in musical family, mother played piano, father violin. Siblings took up different instruments, two now professional musicians. Grew up listening to musicals, Gilbert & Sullivan, Kingston Trio, Clancy Brothers, but pursued classical music. Chose violin when elementary school offered lessons on instrument of choice, having one unused at home. Switched to viola in junior high school. Played in All-California High School Orchestra '68-9.

Played in college orchestras at University of California, Davis, '68-72; Music Conservatory, Bergen, Norway '70-1; University of Washington '76-9; University of Maryland '87-8. Performed with community orchestras in California '79-82; Nebraska '98-03; Oregon '04-present; Washington '19-present. Currently playing in East County Community Orchestra, Portland, OR; Mount Hood Pops String Quartet, Portland, OR; Clark College Orchestra, Vancouver, WA; Clark County Community Strings, Vancouver, WA.

B.A. in Biological Sciences, University of California, Davis '72; M.S. in Forest Science, University of Washington '79; Ph.D. in Agronomy, University of Maryland '88. Soil Conservationist, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendelton, CA '79-82; Soil Conservationist,



Mount Hood Pops String Quartet: Stefanie Aschmann (second from right)

Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Washington, DC '82-4; Soil Conservationist, Pacific Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pearl Harbor, HI '88-92. SCS/NRCS Agronomist, Portland, OR '92-6; NRCS Sustainable Agriculture Specialist, Watershed Science Institute, Lincoln, NE '96-04; NRCS Energy Conservation Specialist, Portland, OR '04-13. USDA Honor Award for Nutrient & Pest Management Training '03; USDA Honor Award for Energy Conservation Tools '07. American Society of Agricultural & Biological Engineers Award for On-line Course Development in Air Quality & Energy '11.

AYALA PIERCE, DIEGO (aka AYALA, DIEGO), guitar, bass, cuatro, congas, bongos, whistler, composer, arranger; b. Caracas, Venezuela, Oct. 6, 1957. Surrounded by Venezuelan and Latin-American music while growing up in family of 10 siblings. Mother played piano and sang; father whistled while doing farm work, cooking, or listening to opera. First instrument was the mouth, whistling to imitate birds on the farm. Took up the laud in school string band, Colegio San Luis, Caracas. First live concert was Carlos Santana in Valencia '73. Self-taught on guitar, as Christmas present from parents at 16. Moved to USA in 1976, playing w. fellow students while attending college in Nebraska '76-81 and graduate school in Wisconsin '81-3. First 12-string guitar as a gift from college friends '79.

Formed band Cut-Across, performing at birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, local pubs including the Dew Drop Inn, Neligh, NE '93-6. Directed and played w. Blue Tassels, United Methodist Church, Neligh, NE '95-08. Played w. covers band Mean Persuasion throughout Northeast Nebraska '96-01. Performed w. jam bands Porch Rockers, Static, and Retro, Northeast Nebraska '96-08. Played w. trio Wave Motion, Neligh, NE '01-8. Composed and recorded original material as D'Yala Musica '19-present. Recordings: Diego Ayala, *Just Another Rainy Day*



Wave Motion: Diego Ayala (right)

(CD) '18; Dayala Musica, *Nylon & Wood* (MP3) '19; Diego Ayala & James Higgins, *Song Crafters Alaska/Scotland Session* (MP3); Dayala Musica, *Between Waltz & Blues* (MP3) '19; Dayala Musica, *Interpretations & Arrangements* (MP3) '20; Dayala Musica, *Infinite Possibilities with Music* (MP3) '20.

B.A. in Biology, Hastings College '81. Graduate studies in Aquatic Biology, University of Wisconsin '83. SCS Soil Conservation Technician, Ainsworth, NE '84-8; SCS Soil Conservationist, Ainsworth, NE '88-91; SCS/NRCS District Conservationist, Neligh, NE '91-6; NRCS Resource Conservationist, Neligh, NE '96-9; NRCS Detail for Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction, Nicaragua '00-1; NRCS Water Quality Specialist, Norfolk, NE '99-08; NRCS District Conservationist, Nome, AK '09-12; NRCS District Conservationist, Pago Pago, ASM '12-16.

Links: dayalamusica.bandcamp.com

CLUTE, DENNIS N., resonator guitar, lap steel, pedal steel, guitar, vocals; b. Mexia, TX, Nov. 27, 1957. Father originally from the Ozarks, played mandolin w. uncle on banjo. Lap steel at 8, as a test before family invested in buying him a dobro. Early influence on resonator guitar by Mike Aldridge. First bluegrass festival, Hugo, OK '71. Dedicated to mastering dobro after hearing Jerry Douglas perform *Sweet Georgia Brown* at Kerrville, TX '78. Competed in dobro contest, Hugo, OK, placing third '74, second '82, second '84, third '85. Later learned and performed on pedal steel guitar.

Played w. Lila & Smooth Country, Harlingen, TX '85-6; Alpha String Band, TX '90-17. Played w. East Mountain Bluegrass Gospel Band, Longview, TX '17-present, performing along w.

LYNN GRAY for many local events, including churches, nursing homes, and festivals. Played w. Augusta Road, Longview, TX '18-present, performing at bluegrass festival, Red River, NM. Favorites: Jerry Douglas, Tony Rice, J. D. Crowe & New South, Bluegrass Album Band, Alison Krauss & Union Station, Merle Haggard. Recordings: Alpha String Band, *Bluegrass Jam at the Gladewater Opry* (CD) '07; East Mountain Bluegrass Gospel Band, *Only Love* (CD) '08, *East Mountain Bluegrass* (CD) '17, *Songs We Like To Sing* (CD) '23.

B.S. in Agricultural Engineering, Texas A&M University '81. SCS Field Engineer, Greenville, TX '81-5; SCS Field Engineer, Harlingen, TX '85-7; SCS Field Engineer, Alice, TX '87-8; SCS Project Engineer-in-Training, Stephenville, TX '88-9; SCS/NRCS Project Engineer, Temple, TX '89-00; NRCS Construction Engineer, Fort Worth, TX '00-18. Project Engineer, M & E Consultants, Heidenheimer, TX '18-present.

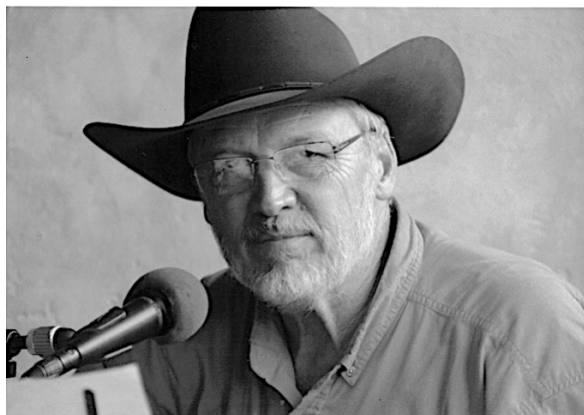
Links: eastmountainbluegrass.com



East Mountain Bluegrass Gospel Band: Dennis Clute (right), Lynn Gray (second from right)

GROTRIAN, KEITH O., guitar, vocals, songwriter; b. Lincoln, NE, Jun. 6, 1950. Exposed to music at very young age. Learned to accompany himself on tenor guitar at 9. Sang in church choirs.

Played in folk duo Randy & Keith, Lincoln, Omaha, NE '70-5. Played and sang in Country Gold Dance Band through Southeast Nebraska and Western Iowa '83-93, performing in private clubs, dance halls, Belle of Brownville and Spirit of Brownville Riverboats on the Missouri River. Started earnestly writing songs in the '90s. Moved to Nashville, gaining exposure to professional



Keith Grotrian

songwriters of Music Row '95-7. Performed solo w. own songs in coffee houses, Lincoln, NE '90s. Plays w. college friends in the RKM Trio, Lincoln, NE '20-present, performing at clubs, retirement centers, farmers markets. Currently plays and sings own songs at coffee houses, private parties, jam sessions. Board Member, Lincoln Association of Folk & Traditional Arts. Favorites: Willie Nelson, Bob Dylan, Jon Ims, DENNIS CLUTE. Writings: original musical compositions.

B.S. in Agricultural Engineering, University of Nebraska–Lincoln '87. SCS Civil Engineer, Tecumseh, NE '87-90; SCS Project Engineer, Shenandoah, IA '90-2; SCS Design Engineer, Lincoln, NE '92-5; NRCS Soil Mechanics Engineer, Nashville, TN '95-7; NRCS Design Engineer, Lincoln, NE '97-8; NRCS Geotechnical Engineer, National Design & Soil Mechanics Center, Lincoln, NE '98-16.

HELMS, DOUG (JOHN DOUGLAS), guitar, writer, record collector; b. Union County, NC, Jun. 29, 1945; d. Sep. 5, 2018. Experienced live country music during youth in Piedmont of NC. Self-taught w. brother Michael on guitar. Rural upbringing influenced passion for bluegrass music and folk culture of the South.

Self-described front porch picker. Moved to Washington, DC '73; immersed in thriving bluegrass scene of the DMV area. Denizen of local bluegrass venues Crossroads, Shamrock, Cellar Door, Red Fox Inn, Birchmere. Dedicated listener and fan of local bluegrass radio stations WARL, Arlington, VA; WAMU, Washington, DC. Favorites: Don Reno, Scotty Stoneman, Ray Davis, Terry Baucom (former student). Writings: *The Murder of Patsy Beasley: The Story Behind the*

Song, North Carolina Folklore '67; *Just Lookin' for a Home: The Cotton Boll Weevil and the South*, Ph.D. dissertation '77; *He Loved to Carry the Message: The Collected Writings of Douglas Helms, 1967-2010*, Lulu.com '12.

B. A. in History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill '67; M.A. in History, Florida State University '70; Ph.D. in American History, Florida State University '77. Taught high school history, NC '67-8. Smithsonian Institute Fellowships, National Museum of History & Technology, Washington, DC '72-3 & '78-9. Research Historian, USDA Cotton Insects Research Station, Tallulah, LA '72. Research Specialist, National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, DC '73-81; SCS/NRCS Historian (first), Washington, DC '81-11. Fellow and past President of the Agricultural Historical Society.

JOYNER, RAYMOND C., guitar, bass, vocals; b. Vicksburg, MS, Aug. 15, 1960. Raised on cattle farm at southern tip of the Mississippi Delta, influenced at an early age by the blues, country music, and southern rock. Took up guitar at 12, sitting in at jam sessions on front porches, at farms shops, hay barns.

Formed first and only band Legal Tender, performing at many venues through Mississippi and Louisiana, '85-present.

B.S in Agriculture & Extension Education, Mississippi State University '82. SCS Soil Conservation Technician, Port Gibson & Vicksburg, MS '83-4; SCS Soil Conservationist,



Raymond Joyner

Port Gibson, MS '85-7; SCS/NRCS District Conservationist, Port Gibson, MS '87-04; NRCS District Conservationist, Yazoo & Warren Counties, MS '04-18. Outstanding District Conservationist, NRCS Mississippi '99. Watershed Planning Specialist, local SWCD '18-present.

LOGAN, HOMER H., fiddle, vocals; b. Coahoma, TX, Jul. 23, 1933; d. Nov. 15, 1993. Father, Benjamin Franklin Logan, Sr., old-time fiddler and violin collector, migrated from Alabama to Texas Panhandle. Learned mandolin and fiddle in family band w. brothers Russell on guitar, and Benjamin "Tex" Logan, Jr. on fiddle (composed *Christmas Times A-Comin'*, first recorded by Bill Monroe '51).

Played w. local bands, Lubbock, TX. Joined Tommy Hancock & Roadside Playboys, Lubbock, TX '50s. Played w. Circle 13 Dude Ranchers on KDUB, Lubbock, TX, first television station in West Texas '52-4. Played w. many local bands throughout West and North Texas, '50s-80s. Played w. Original Texas Playboys (former Bob Wills members), fronted by Leon Rauch '90s. Performed at SCS National Geologist Meeting, Reno, NV '92, featuring program he composed, *History of American Fiddle*. Fiddler of the Year, Terry Awards '92; Fiddler of the Year, Metroplex Country Music Association '92.

Served in U.S. Navy '50s. B.S. in Geology, Texas Tech University '50s; M.S. in Groundwater Hydrology, Texas Christian University '60s. Geologist, Federal Power Commission,



Homer Logan

Washington, DC '60s; Geologist, U.S. Boundary Commission, Del Rio, TX 60's; Geologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth, TX '70s. SCS State Geologist, Temple, TX '75-9; SCS Engineering Geologist, Fort Worth, TX '80-93. USDA Superior Service Award '81.



Julie MacSwain

MACSWAIN, JULIE, trumpet, piano, guitar, vocals; b. Madison, WI, Apr. 5, 1961. Raised on farm near Blanchardville, WI, exposed to music as part of rural community and school.

Sang in Swiss Choir, New Glarus, WI '69-7. Performed w. Pecatonica High School Concert & Jazz Band, Blanchardville, WI '76-9, playing *Taps* for Memorial Day services. Participated in High School Solo & Ensemble Competition, Wisconsin State-Line League '77-9. Encouraged by Vocational Agriculture Teacher to audition for and join 60-member Wisconsin State FFA Band, performing at Wisconsin State Fair '77-80. Played trumpet in Jazz Trio, Platteville, WI '79-81. Played for Easter and Christmas Gatherings at Lutheran Church, Blanchardville, WI. Recordings: Wisconsin State FFA Band, *50th Anniversary of FFA in Wisconsin* (LP) '78.

B.S. in Agriculture Education, University of Wisconsin-Platteville '83. SCS Soil Conservationist, Monroe, WI; Chippewa Falls, WI; Juneau, WI; Fond du Lac, WI '79-82. Conservationist, Lincoln County Land & Conservation Department, Merrill, WI '83-6; Plumbing Inspector/Floodplain Inspector, Washington County Landuse & Parks Department, West Bend, WI '86-7. SCS Soil Conservationist, Sparta, WI '87-93; SCS/NRCS District Conservationist, Stillwater, MN '93-03;

NRCS State Public Affairs Specialist, St. Paul, MN '03-17; NRCS Assistant State Conservationist-Partnership Liaison, Portland, OR '17. Outstanding Service Award, SCS Wisconsin; Outstanding Civil Rights Employee Award, NRCS Minnesota; USDA Unsung Hero Award; Service Above Self Award, Rotary International. ARCSE President '23-5.

NICHOLS, CLARE L., trombone, guitar, bass, harmonica, vocals; b. Marshalltown, IA, Mar. 23, 1949. Took up trombone at 12. Joined Colonial High School Band; All-City Band and Orchestra, Orlando, FL '63. Moved to Oxon Hill, MD, playing in John Hanson Junior High School Band '63-4; Oxon Hill High School Symphonic Band '65-7; Maryland All-State Band '67. Trombone lessons from Leo Kellar, formerly of U.S. Air Force Airmen of Note Jazz Band, '63-7.

At 17, played trombone w. The Other Side rock band, Oxon Hill, MD '66-7. Took music education courses attending University of Maryland, College Park, MD '67-8, playing in the Symphonic Band, Symphonic and Theater Orchestras, Marching Band, Class Brass Band, Wind Octet. Played in local community theater orchestra '67-8; Spades & Rainbows motown band '68. Played trombone in U.S. Naval Training Base Band, Great Lakes, IL '69; U.S. Naval Base Band, Key West, FL '69. After military service, played trombone in top 40 band Shannon, Washington, DC '73-4; University of Maryland Jazz Band, College Park, MD '73; local community theater orchestras '73-7. Played trombone in Melbourne Community Band, Melbourne, FL '82-3; Joe Moniz Big Band, Vero Beach, FL '82-3; Bobby Page Seven-Piece and



Jazzmen: Clare Nichols (center)

Big Bands, Vero Beach, FL '83-91; Gus Beckman Big Band, Vero Beach, FL '90s; Dick Baker Big Band, Vero Beach, FL '00-5; Treasure Coast Symphony, Fort Pierce, FL '00s; Salsa-style band, Vero Beach, FL '04. Sang and played rhythm guitar/trombone in duo The Salty Dogs, entertaining at retirement communities, public and private venues, Vero Beach, FL '95-05. Played in Land of the Sky Symphonic Band; Blue Ridge Orchestra; Smoky Mountain Brass Band; Biltmore Brass Quintet; Saint Mathias Concert Orchestra; Jubilee Summer Orchestra; Asheville Choral Society; Asheville Symphony; Asheville, NC '05-17. Played bass and sang in Blind Lemon Phillips R&B band, Asheville, NC '08-12; Joey Moore's Dance Band, Asheville, NC '08-16. Played trombone in Smooth Sound Dance Band, Milford, DE '17; Rehoboth Concert Band, Rehoboth, DE '17-present; Delmarva Big Band, Salisbury, MD '19-present; Jazzmen Quintet, Rehoboth, DE '21-present; Southern Delaware Orchestra '24-present; Rehoboth Brass Quartet & Quintet, Rehoboth, DE '25-present. Favorites: The Beatles. Recordings: Self-Produced *Undercover* (CD) '97; *Dealing with the Past* (CD) '06; *A Guy Named Roger Did It* (CD) '09; *Stand By Me* (CD) '13; *Christmas Album* (CD) '19.

Served in U.S. Navy, Oceanographic Technician, stationed at Keflavik, Iceland '69-70, Ramey, Puerto Rico '70-2. B.S. in Agriculture, University of Maryland '77. SCS Soil Conservationist, Dalhart, TX '78-80; SCS Soil Conservationist, La Plata, MD '80-2; SCS Soil Conservationist, Vero Beach, FL '82-8. SCS District Conservationist, Vero Beach, FL '88-03; NRCS District Conservationist, Fort Pierce, FL '03-5. Consulting Conservationist, private firm '06-18; Consulting Conservationist, private contractor '19-23.

Links: facebook.com/JazzAmericanSongbook

PETERSON, JOHN W., baritone saxophone; b. Rice Lake, WI, Jul. 25, 1936. Exposed to music by parents at very young age. Piano lessons at 6. As musician and athlete, took up saxophone in high school while playing football and baseball. Played in high school concert and marching bands, sang in chorus, Benson, MN '50-4.

Played in South Dakota State College Band, Brookings, SD '54. Recruited by John Ludke to join Collegiates dance band, Huron, SD '55, then moved to Brookings, SD, playing weekly at dance



Collegiates: John Peterson (front, second from right)

halls and ballrooms throughout SD, ND, MN, IA '55-9. Advance band for Louis Armstrong on tour; played w. Hilltoppers at State College Field House, Brookings, SD '56. Collegiates bandmate Loren "Skinny" Johnson became Director of U.S. Air Force Band, Washington, DC. Favorites: Louis Armstrong, Trummy Young, Willie Nelson, Patsy Cline.

B.S. in Civil Engineering, South Dakota State College '59; M.A. in Public Administration, Central Michigan University '73; J.D. in Law, La Salle University '74. Served in U.S. Army '59-91, w. 10 years active duty and 22 years active reserve; deployed to Greece, Vietnam, Sinai Peninsula, Desert Shield, Desert Storm. SCS Soil Conservation Technician, SCS Hydraulic Engineer, SCS Area Engineer, MN '53-68; SCS Planning Engineer, OH '68-72; SCS Director of Watershed Planning Staff, IN '72-5; SCS Assistant State Conservationist (Water Resources), AZ '75-8; SCS Detail to Environmental Protection Agency, SCS Director of Program Integration, SCS Associate Deputy Chief (Planning and Evaluation), SCS Director of Watershed Division, SCS Deputy Chief for Administration, SCS Assistant Chief (Midwest), Washington, DC '78-94. Induction into NACD Hall of Distinction, National Association of Conservation Districts '22. Commendation for Achievements and Stewardship of the Nations and Virginia's Natural Resources, Virginia General Assembly '23.

PETIT, DIANE BAEDEKER, mandolin, fiddle, guitar, banjo, bass, vocals, songwriter; b. Providence, RI, Jul. 14, 1962. Guitar at 12, singing around campfire at summer camps. During junior high school, played fife in Pawtuxet

Rangers Fife & Drum Corps '74-7, marching in Bicentennial Parade, Bristol, RI '76. Played flute in Cranston High School West Band, traveling to perform in Italy '78. Later took up fiddle and mandolin, joining bluegrass jam sessions around Rhode Island.

Formed Ocean State Ramblers, meeting members at instructional jam sessions held by Rhode Island Bluegrass Alliance '17. Played for many local events, farmer's markets, fairs, libraries, bars, retirement communities. Performed at America's oldest continuous Fourth of July Celebration, Independence Park, Bristol, RI '22. Secretary, Rhode Island Bluegrass Alliance '15-present. Favorites: Carter Family, Hazel Dickens, John Denver. Writings: original musical compositions, including *Jerimoth Hill Blues*. Recordings: Ocean State Ramblers, *In A Circle* (CD) '18. Motif Magazine Rhode Island Music Awards, Favorite Bluegrass Band '21, '22, '23.

B.A. in Communications, Simmons College '84; M.S. in Public Affairs, University of Massachusetts '90. Communications Officer, Massachusetts Department of Food & Agriculture, Boston, MA '84-03. NRCS Public Affairs Officer, Amherst, MA '03-22. USDA Public Affairs Specialist, Strategic Communications Team, External Affairs Division, FPAC Business Center, Warwick, RI '22-present. Guy L. Paris Marketing Award, New England Vegetable & Berry Growers Association '03; Farm Communicator of the Year, Northeast Farm Communicators Association '04; Hugh Hammond Bennett Award, NRCS National Soil Health Communications Team '16.

Links: oceanstateramblers.com



Diane Baedeker Petit

TIEDEMAN, JOHN C., guitar, mandolin, vocals; b. Thief River Falls, MN, May 24, 1951. Mother played piano, took lessons from her and performed together at family parties. Guitar at 12, joining first band in elementary school sixth grade. Formed blues band during high school, playing for small town and school dances.

Coffee house performances in Corvallis, OR '69-71. Sang in Cal University Choir, Berkeley, CA '73-6. Formed duet Part Time Passion, late '70s. Exposed to Latin and Spanish musical culture, playing in Cuernavaca, Mexico '92-5. Performed w. Mostly Stringband, Trinity County, CA '03-11. Formed Neighborhood Swing Trio, Redding, CA '12-present, playing throughout Shasta and Tehama Counties for many local events including Paesano Days, Oktoberfest, St. Patrick's Day, Farmer's Markets, and Pathway Church. Favorites: Pearl Django, Hot Club of Cowtown, Western Flyers, Luis Miguel.

B.S. in Civil Engineering, University of California, Berkeley '73; M.S. in Civil Engineering, University of California, Berkeley '76. Consulting Engineer '76-83. SCS Field Engineer, Stockton, CA; Woodland, CA; Sacramento, CA; El Centro, CA '83-92. SCS/NRCS Consultant to Government of Mexico, Cuernavaca, Mexico '92-5. NRCS Field Engineer, Santa Maria, CA '95-03; NRCS Field Engineer, Weaverville, CA '03-11; NRCS Team Engineer, Redding, CA '11-18. ACES Engineer, Redding, CA '18-present. NRCS International Development projects: Honduras '99-01, Guatemala '08, Cuba '16, Dominican Republic '18 & '24, Guyana '23. SCS Federal Engineer of the Year '91.

TOEWS, DARRYL J., fiddle, banjo, mandolin, bass, vocals; b. Enid, OK, Mar. 3, 1953; d. Aug. 31, 2013. Mother played piano, father guitar. Bass at 12, self-taught w. brother DOUG TOEWS, on guitar, mandolin, fiddle, guitar, and banjo. Early influence from original Cimarron Swingsters, Ames, OK. First bluegrass festival, Hugo, OK '71

Formed Salt Fork Boys, Stillwater, OK '71-2; joined Shirley Landrum & Bluegrass Partners, Enid, OK '73-4; Salt Pork, Stillwater, OK '73-4. Mentored by fiddler Ace Sewell, Chickasha, OK '74. Competed and placed in fiddle contests OK, KS, TX '74-93. Formed New Cimarron Swingsters, Stillwater, OK, playing dance halls



New Cimarron Swingsters: Darryl Toews (front, left)

through OK, KS '75-80. Played w. Paisanos Band at Rancheros Visitadores Trek, Santa Ynez, CA '03. Favorites: Benny Thomasson, Kenny Baker, Don Reno, Doug Dillard. Recordings: Shirley Landrum & Bluegrass Partners, *Featuring Randy Landrum* (EP) '74; New Cimarron Swingsters, *Live at Cain's Ballroom, New Years Eve* (CD) '81.

B.S. in Aeronautical Technology, Oklahoma State University '75; B.S. in Agricultural Engineering, Oklahoma State University '78. SCS Field Engineer, Oklahoma City, OK '78; SCS Field Engineer, Clinton, OK '79. Field Engineer, Halliburton Services, Burns Flat, OK '80-2; Yukon, OK '83-4; Enid, OK '85-6. Consulting Engineer, Enid, OK '87-04. Production Engineer, Linn Energy, Edmond, OK '05-13.

TOEWS, DOUG (DOUGLAS W.), mandolin, guitar, bass, vocals, disc jockey, discographer; b. Enid, OK, Dec. 29, 1949. Mother played piano, father guitar. Piano lessons at 7. Took up guitar at 13, self-taught w. brother DARRYL TOEWS on mandolin, fiddle, banjo, and bass. Played in garage band during high school. Early influence from original Cimarron Swingsters, Ames, OK. First bluegrass festival, Hugo, OK '70.

Formed Salt Fork Boys, Stillwater, OK, '71-2. Duo w. Rick Gordon, opening for Sam Chatman of the Mississippi Shieks, San Diego, CA '74. Played w. Dick Tyner & Train 45, San Diego, CA '74; joined Pacific.ly Bluegrass, San Diego, CA '74-5; joined New River Ramblers, Bellingham, WA '77-8. Played w. Don Reno at Lobero Theater, Santa Barbara, CA '78; Ming Dynasty Ramblers, Santa Barbara, CA '79-80; Almost Bluegrass, Lompoc, CA '79-83; Lickin' Good, Santa Barbara, CA '80-1. DJ for *Bluegrass*



Salt Martians: Doug Toews (second from left)

Country radio show on KKIO, Santa Barbara, CA '80-2. Played guitar backup at fiddle contests OK, CA '75-86. Played w. Bear Creek Ramblers, Santa Maria, CA '82-8; played w. HOMER LOGAN at SCS National Geologist Meeting, Reno, NV '92; Union Hotel Band, Los Alamos, CA '96-9. Entertained at SCS California All-Employees Meetings, San Luis Obispo, CA '91, San Diego, CA '99. Played for Rancheros Visitadores Trek, Santa Ynez, CA, w. Picadores, Paisanos, Adolfo Bands '93-present. Played w. Itty Bitty Herd Band, El Viaje De Portola Ride, San Juan Capistrano, CA '95-present. Studied slack-key guitar and ukulele w. Peter Moon, Manoa Valley, HI '01. Performed at NRCS Hawaii All-Employees Meetings, Honolulu, HI '02 & '05. Played w. Down Boys, Honolulu, HI '01-2, opening for Willie Nelson at Waikiki Shell; Bon Temps Roule, Kailua, HI '02; Squirrel Hunters, Honolulu, HI '03-6; Liwai Kuheana, Waimanalo, HI '04-6; Kekoa Kaluhiwa, Honolulu, HI '05-7; High Tide, Waipahu, HI '06-7. Entertained at NRCS Headquarters Holiday Celebrations, Washington, DC '09, '11. Joined Salt Martians Bluegrass Band, Santa Barbara, CA '12-present; Trio Grande, Santa Barbara, CA '15-19. Played w. Tortuga Band, Padre Junipero Serra Ride, various ranches CA '17-present. Favorites: Bill Monroe, Charlie Parker, Eldon Shamblin, Joao Gilberto. Writings: discographies of Hoyle Nix, Jimmy Raney, Hobo Jack Adkins, J. D. Jarvis, Buzz Busby. Recordings: mastering for Hobo Jack Adkins, *Early Bluegrass* (CD) '13; Salt Martins Bluegrass Band, *Live at the Cavern* (CD) '15.

B.S. in Agricultural Engineering, Oklahoma State University '72. Served in U.S. Navy, Naval Flight Officer, A-6 Intruders aboard USS Ranger

'72-8. Irrigation Engineer, Williams Supply Company, Saticoy, CA '79-80. SCS Field Engineer, Santa Barbara, CA '81-3; SCS Field Engineer, Santa Maria, CA '83-92; SCS/NRCS Area Engineer, Santa Maria, CA '92-00; NRCS State Conservation Engineer, Honolulu HI '00-07; NRCS National Water Management Engineer, Washington, DC '07-12. SCS West Region Engineer of the Year '92. Civil Engineering Specialist, Santa Barbara County Flood Control District, Santa Barbara, CA '18-24. Planning Committee Member, La Cumbre Mutual Water Company, Santa Barbara, CA '24-present.

Links: saltmartians.com

TORRES, PEDRO ARTURO, guitar, bass, vocals, songwriter; b. Chicago, IL, Apr. 27, 1974. Guitar at 12, composed first song after learning five chords. Joined garage bands through junior high and high school, including Switch, Miami, FL '87-92, playing talent shows, recitals, open microphone nights, backyard parties. Installed lawn irrigation system in exchange for recording five original compositions '97.

Joined Mama Nate, Pomona, CA '98-00, playing bars, backyard parties, college events. Played bass in One Drop Redemption, Claremont, CA '05-11. Performed at Bit & Spurs Saloon, Springdale, UT '05; House of Blues, Anaheim, CA '06; B.B. King's Blues Club, Universal City, CA '06; Salt Lake City Harley Davidson, Lava Hot Springs, UT '11. Since 2011, music ministry at local churches and recording studio setup at home. Favorites: Bob Dylan, Black Sabbath, Metallica,



One Drop Redemption: Pedro Torres (back, second from left)

Pearl Jam, Wailin' Jennys. Writings: original musical compositions.

B.S. in Agronomy, California Polytechnic State University, Pomona '00. Farmer, Self-Employed, Aguanga, CA '00-5. NRCS Area Tribal Liaison, Riverside, CA '06-17; NRCS State Tribal Liaison, Riverside, CA '17-23; NRCS National Tribal Liaison, Escondido, CA '23-present.

VELASQUEZ, CHUCK (CHARLES), ukulele, steel guitar; b. Nov. 4, 1933; d. Sep. 27, 2014. Took up ukulele as a child. Experienced variety of live music during youth in rural California, especially popular Hawaiian music of '40s-50s. Collected vintage ukuleles and lap steels.

Played as duo w. wife Sally Broad, former dancer on Broadway, NYC. Played in Carpinteria, CA '70s, Salinas, CA '80s, Marysville, CA '90s. Attended International Steel Guitar Conventions, St. Louis, MO '80s. Studied Hawaiian steel guitar w. Jerry Byrd, Honolulu, HI '90s. Favorites: Jerry Byrd, Buddy Emmons.

Served in U.S. Army, Korean War '53-6. B.S. Engineering, San Jose State University '60s. SCS Field Engineer, various California locations including Hollister and Santa Barbara '60s-70s; SCS Area Engineer, Salinas, CA '79-90; SCS Assistant State Conservation Engineer, Davis, CA '91-94. Lifetime member Veterans of Foreign Wars.

WARD, BILL (WILLIAM A.), guitar, vocals; b. Sacramento, CA, Mar. 20, 1952. Parents were country music fans. Took up guitar as teenager, w. father on harmonica. Then bluegrass duo w. school classmate on banjo. First bluegrass festival, Grass Valley, CA '90s. Guitars used include flat-top, arch-top, and Selmer-type models.

Formed Western Lights Band, meeting members at jam sessions held in local music store, Sacramento, CA '90-13. Performed at bluegrass festivals Hollister, CA '00; Susanville, CA '11. Played w. HOMER LOGAN at SCS National Geologist Meeting, Reno, NV '92. Produced concerts by Western Lights Band, w. children Jimmy, Jennifer, and Steven, Woodland Opera House, Woodland, CA '10-2. Composed and recorded *Bob Played Here*, tribute to Bob Wills w. nightclub Wills Point in Sacramento, CA '47-56. Established YouTube channel Western Lights



Western Lights: Bill Ward (left)

Music '10. Played for dance at Sacramento Western Swing Society, Sacramento, CA '14. Formed Western Lights Trio, Sacramento, CA '13 to present, playing for many local events, including anniversaries, retirements, birthdays. Entertained at SCS California All- Employees Meetings, San Luis Obispo, CA '91, San Diego, CA '99. Performed at California Railroad Museum for International Conference on Fresh-cut Products, Sacramento, CA '15. Favorites: Bob Wills, Bill Monroe, Merle Haggard, Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Laurie Lewis. Recordings: Bill & Jimmy Ward, *Father & Son* (CD) '98; Western Lights, *Favorites of Ours* (CD produced by BOB SNEICKUS) '99; Western Lights, *Best of Woodland 2000 Live!* (CD) '00; Western Lights, *Bob Played Here* (CD produced by Jimmy Ward) '08.

B.S. in Environmental Resources Engineering, Humbolt State University '75; M.S. in Geotechnical Engineering, Sacramento State University '83. SCS Engineering Student Trainee, Ukiah, CA '74; SCS Field Engineer, Visalia and Hollister, CA '75-78; SCS Area Engineer, Santa Rosa, CA '78-80; SCS Design Engineer, Davis, CA '80-5; SCS/NRCS Design Staff Leader, Davis CA '85-10. Ventura County Public Works Association Award for Exigency Emergency Watershed Protection Project at Santa Paula Airport, '97. ARCSE California State Representative '10-present, West Region Vice President '15-present.

Links: westernlightsband.com

WHITNEY, JOHN ROBERT, guitar, banjo, mandolin, dulcimer, autoharp, piano, cornet, recorder, harmonica, vocals, songwriter; b. Oswego, NY, May 15, 1960. Initial musical experience in church choir, school bands and choruses. First group in elementary school w. cousins' ensemble Waite For Whitneys. In high school, played for assemblies, musicals, local talent shows.



John Robert Whitney

At 16, played w. The New Beat in Belmont/Friendship, pubs, for weddings, private parties NY, '76-8. Performed in coffee houses, at Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, Ithaca, NY '78-82. Played w. The Green Tie Gang, East Aurora, NY '02-present. Performed solo and in small ensembles, Western NY State. Played w. Davey & The Goliaths, East Aurora, NY, '24-present. Writings: original musical compositions. Mary and Gil Stott Award at Roycroft Inn, '06.

B.S. in Agriculture & Life Science, Cornell University '82. SCS Laborer, Belmont, NY '79; SCS Conservationist Student Trainee, Hudson, NY '80; SCS Conservationist Student Trainee, Cobleskill, NY '81; SCS Soil Conservationist, Leicester, NY '82-3; SCS Soil Conservationist, Canandaigua, NY '83-6; SCS/NRCS District Conservationist, East Aurora, NY '86-19. Soil Conservationist of the Year, SCS New York '93; Employee of the Year, NRCS New York '05; Earth Team Employee of the Year, NRCS New York '91, '09', '11.

Links: johnrobertwhitney.com

