



# News of the Blues

The newsletter of the  
**Boise Blues Society**

Volume 20, No. 4  
**December 2009**

## Getting Ready for Christmas!!

### Presidents Letter

We've reached the end of our 17<sup>th</sup> year which is an accomplishment of it's own, but there are other milestones we reached this year of which we are gratified. We released another CD of local artists, Pickup The Blues; which is available for your Christmas shopping at the Sunshine Lounge or contact any board member via e mail and we'll be happy to get one to you.

We are again happy to be sending 2 local acts to Memphis for the International Blues Challenge in January. Lori B and the Blue Diamonds will represent the BBS in the band category and the BoDo Brothers will compete in the solo/duo competition. This has become an annual happening for us and it also provides an opportunity for us to interact with the Blues Foundation and other blues societies in the country. Donations to offset the cost for these bands are still being accepted, they are tax deductible.

We had a successful picnic in the park this summer, including the contest that selected these representatives to Memphis culminating with a rousing set of blues from the Coyote Kings from Walla Walla.

We have attempted to provide some good blues this fall, bringing in such luminaries as the Curly Taylor Band, a zydeco band steeped in Louisiana tradition

and The Insomniacs, an up and coming young band from Portland who is making a huge national splash including their new CD being nominated for several awards. We also had Samuel James, a young delta player from Portland Maine who is in great concert demand. Samuel is a marvelous picker and extraordinary story teller in the vein of Roy Bookbinder. We had Chicago native Studebaker John for our annual meeting and Louisiana favorite Rockin Jake who has been a favorite in Boise in the past. Despite these efforts, attendance at these events were lightly attended and have forced us to discontinue future shows for now as we have depleted much of our funds. We continue to sponsor the weekly jams Monday nights at the Sunshine for all levels of players.

Congratulations to our new board members, Jim Janoch who will be editing the newsletter and also maintaining our website; and Po O'Hara who is working on our Blues in the Schools project.

The newsletter will now be in electronic form, if anyone would like a hard copy we would be happy to provide that.

On behalf of the board of directors I would like to wish everyone a happy holiday season and remember we can't do it without all of you.

# Blast From the Past

Friend to the BBS and long-time Treasure Valley blues artist, David Green a.k.a Neighbor Dave, performed at the 2009 picnic after an impressive performance at the July 4, 1999 Waterfront Blues Festival in Portland, Oregon. The Hoochie Coochie Men also played at the festival that year.



The photo is extracted from the BBS newsletter and is believed to have been submitted by David R. Day.

## Also From 1999

by **Jim Janoch**

During the Annual Boise Blues Society (BBS) Meeting held in October, elections for members of the board of directors were held. One change the elections resulted in, I'm back.

Those BBS members keen on BBS trivia from the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century may recall that Jim served as Secretary for the 1999 year. At that time the Secretary assisted the Editor in producing the newsletter and made an attempt to maintain the membership database. Since that time, changes in the functioning of the BBS board have occurred. Jim's commitment to support the goals defined by the BBS President has not.

James M. 'Jim' Janoch is a licensed civil engineer that has resided primarily in Idaho since 1976. Arriving as a part of the now-defunct USN Nuclear Prototype Training Unit-Idaho, Jim went on to complete a Bachelor's Degree as a Vandal. After a few years in Portland, OR, Jim arrived in the Treasure Valley in 1993 and soon after found his way to the Sunny Slope Blues Festival, the Blues Police, and the BBS. Jim is currently functioning as the newsletter editor and publisher.

At the subsequent board meeting, all Board Officers were elected to continue their current position for another year.

## Newsletter Changes

Economic Woes have trickled down to the Boise Blues Society. Overall financial support for the BBS and BBS-sponsored events has decreased to the point that some changes are necessary. The first change is in distribution of the newsletter. For the foreseeable future the newsletter of the Boise Blues Society will be electronically produced and distributed via email. A limited number of print copies will be available at the BBS Jam session.

## Hagerman Blues in the Park

Our friends to the east assembled a fine show on September 12. It was a fine sunny afternoon as blues fans assembled at the park to appreciate talent from the Snake River Valley and Chicago. The BBS was represented on the stage by both the BoDo Brothers and LoriB! and the Blue Diamonds. Other regional talent included Fastback from Burley and Miles From Nowhere from Hagerman. The headliner was Eddie Shaw and the Wolfgang. This year's Wolfgang was of a slightly different flavor, as Eddie Shaw Jr. led the 'Gang while his father was undergoing surgery. Fans were appreciative of the interaction between the 'Gang and the Blue Diamonds, as Eddie Shaw augmented the vocals of LoriB! and the Diamonds augmented the 'Gang.



Miles From Nowhere



LoriB! and the Blue Diamonds



Richard Soliz Sitting In with the Blue Diamonds



Eddie Shaw w/ LoriB! and the Blue Diamonds

# Sittin' in with The Mighty Sam McClain

A Little Whiskey, Some Jesus and A Lot of Blues      Part Two

By Don Wilcock

Mighty Sam McClain

The Mighty Sam McClain is not just at peace with the chasm that once separated the sacred and the profane worlds of gospel and Blues, he has obliterated whatever line in the sand existed between them and found comfort

in his Christian beliefs, listening to God for divine inspiration in his writing. Coming from "the other side of the tracks," he has survived life with an abusive stepfather, homelessness, and racial prejudice and risen to the level of an internationally recognized Blues artist.

His recently released album *Betcha Didn't Know* finds him in the role of avuncular funk grandfather. Sounding like a younger and equally emotive singer as Bobby Blue Bland, McClain mixes horns and funky rhythms with lyrics that openly espouse a love of God with the same enthusiasm most Blues men have for women. One of the songs on the CD features a hip-hop artist who calls himself Jesse "ApeSh\*\* Lannoo and raps a positive message about beating cancer (a reference to McClain's wife's struggles with the disease) and shout outs like "It's time to silence the guns until the violence is done."

In part two of our interview, McClain eloquently describes how he kept his dignity at a time when he was forced to rummage through a supermarket dumpster for food and how his personal relationship with God eventually helped him to rise up as an international recording artist, one of the more talented soul blues singers on the circuit today. And finally he tells a chilling story of the lesson God gave him 38 years ago in Alabama when he realized that being an African American Blues artist in the south could cost him his very life.

Don Wilcock for BluesWax: When you were on the street, how did you cope?

Mighty Sam McClain: Doin' the things I had to do. Whatever was necessary and that's odd 'cause I never thought I'd eat out of garbage cans. So, that was a big one for me, Don, 'cause the very first time I saw somebody eating out of a garbage can, I said, "How the hell can you eat out of a damn garbage can?" And there I was one day years later. God was humbling my butt. I was hungry.

My wife was hungry that I was married to at the time. There was no food in the house, nothing but some stale bread and a can of tomato sauce. That's all that was in the house. I went round. We heard there was food getting thrown away from the A&P Grocery that was right around the corner from us. They would put out day old – not really old stuff in the back. You could go back there and find some good stuff. That was one of the hardest things that I ever had to make up my mind to do. I went round,

and I stood there. I stood back there by that store. I just stood there trying to make up my mind to go in. Nobody want to see me when I go. I can't let nobody see me goin' into the garbage. I can't allow this to happen. Anyway, after I stood there so long, I broke myself on down. I went there, and I scrambled and I scrambled through stuff, and you know what I found? I found an onion. A onion! One lone-assed onion. [hearty laugh]

BW: Enough to make you cry.

MSM: You know, literally. [Laugh] Look, man, somehow, by that time God had did with my little pride. I put that onion in my jacket, and I walked going back round to the corner, and this lady, Angie, whom I was married to at that time would pull down that bread that we thought would be for the birds, all that moldy bread. We pulled down that bread, and we took out that package, a sauce, tomato sauce, some

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"We've got some very pompous attitudes here in America, and I think God is not gonna let us mock him. He just not gonna allow that."

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sort of sauce, and that's what we had for supper.

I'd been angry with God about a whole lot of this stuff if he had pre-told me, "This is what we're gonna do in 1970, Sam," I'd a still been arguing with God. "Hang on, now. Let's talk. Let's see if we can talk about this." I'd still been arguing with God about some of this stuff that I've had to go through and now looking back, people have told me, "Sam, you be lookin' back laughing at this stuff," but I can't see it then, but I see it now. And I thank God for this road. It's been a very, very painful and frustrating road, especially being by myself so much and not really loving the family thing, and I was able to push that under the rug for years.

BW: We as a country are going through a very rough time right now. What do you have to say to some of our readers who may be suffering some of the same things you are? How did we get ourselves through some of the pain we're experiencing as a society right now?

MSM: Well, you know, one of the brothers who just passed said it best. One way was I think we all need to look in the mirror and see what it is we can do better. A lot of us don't ever think we can do anything better 'cause we already think we it. We've got some very pompous attitudes here in America, and I think God is not gonna let us mock him. He just not gonna allow that. We gonna take God off the money. Watcha gonna do, man? God owns this crap!

BW: I hear you. I agree with you.

MSM: You know? So, it's time that we have to humble ourselves down as a people. We're not as powerful as we think we are. We do have some powers by the grace of God, but God has the ultimate power. If he didn't, we'd all live forever. I mean, come on!

BW: Where do you think that attitude comes from? Why are so many people afraid of God that they want to take him off the money and take him out of our lives other than in some segregated church on

a Sunday morning?

MSM: Real simple. The very word that some people laugh at and make a joke of and that makes it great for him because he sneaks right up on your ass and catch you all the time. It's called Satan. It's his job to deceive us. He don't wanna see things right down here. I mean, that's it, man, but people don't wanna talk about that. "There ain't no devil. I don't believe in the devil." Well, okay. Go on with your bad ass. But it's evil, and it's good. And good is gonna win, but the price is gonna be paid, because we are very hard headed people, and we don't listen. We don't humble ourselves before God and call on his name. That's why God is engracing my music, man. I can't. I cannot talk to anybody too long without taking about God. I just don't know how to do that.

BW: And yet you're very open to things that some highly religious people would raise their eyebrows at.

MSM: Oh, definitely.

BW: In other words, by putting a rapper on Betcha Don't Know who calls himself Apeshit Lanoo.

MSM: Yeah.

BW: How do you be so open minded and at the same time have the attitudes that you do about God and the devil?

MSM: Trying not to be judgmental.

BW: There you go.

MSM: I won't let 'em judge me, so I'm not gonna judge you. I won't let you judge me. I won't let 'em. I won't let 'em. Jeff is a very good, good, good young man, a good hearted young man, believe in God with all his heart. Listen to the song. You hear him talk about it on the CD. And when you hear him talk about - love to hear about good people getting cancer, beating cancer, he was talking about the time when my wife, Sandy, went through a bout with cancer, but when Jeff first showed up at my door, he was another thing that I first rejected

because I wasn't necessarily into no hip-hop either. But he asked me if I would participate on one of his albums, and I said I would, and it turned out to be a wonderful thing.

That song we did, "Never Go Away," we did it hip-hop on his CD and it came out so good. So, I say I'm gonna do this thing myself, man. So, then, he asked me if he could do some rapping on it, and I said, "Man, I don't know 'cause I don't want you using all those words, all them be for the women." I don't want that, 'cause he does both sides. He a clean version, and then he do a home boy version. I

don't want the home boy version on mine, but I almost said no to that guy, man, but I said yeah, and I'm glad.

BW: How did that pay you back when you were open-minded to him? What did you get back out of that?

MSM: Growth and acceptance, you know? I accepted another person for what he was and when I did, I heard, they got a message just like me. I just need to open up and listen up. And not judge him 'cause he got his pants hanging down on his butt. Look where his heart is at.

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At the end of our interview, McClain told me a story about an experience almost forty years ago that offers a glimpse into what African Americans from his generation went through that I feel offers insight into the catharsis released in the best Blues. Here is that story.

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God took me to Gadsden, Alabama, when I first met that first woman, Angie, to really give me a real good test. It was a job that came along. I hadn't worked for months, and we finally got a call from a booking agent, said, "We got a opening for a gig for you up in Gadsden, Alabama. The singer walked out or something happened."

Didn't have any money to get there. We hadn't worked. I hadn't worked. Angie wasn't workin'. So, she went in one direction that day, I went in another direction that day in Pensacola, Florida, both our home town at that time, lookin' to try and borrow some money. Could borrow no money. Couldn't find nobody.

Came back that night living at the motel at the West End there in Pensacola, Florida. There was a lounge there at this motel. I went down to the lounge, and one of the singers, a band playing that I used to sing with, the female singer, they had heard about the situation. They got together and give me sixty bucks, all one dollar bills. I came back up to the room to take that little money, and this guy walked up to me named Ray Smith. Never forget his name from Birmingham, Alabama. Very rednecked, very rednecked kind of boy. Called me boy, too. Said, "Boy, hear you got a job you need to get to." He put a one hundred dollar bill in my shirt pocket, Don. He put a one hundred dollar bill in my shirt pocket. "Go to your job, boy."

Some people when they ain't tryin' to impress somebody else, they do love an opportunity to show

another side of themselves. But let me tell ya. I went ahead and took that money, man, and we went to Gadsden, Alabama, on the bus, man. I bought me a little sack of weed. Back then, a sack of weed wasn't but about \$15, got a sack of weed. We was set, brother. We got to Gadsden, got off the bus, went to the motel, and the motel and the restaurant all the same. It's kinda built like a horseshoe. The restaurant sits right in the middle.

So, anyway, they had a room waiting for Angie and I. We went ahead, checked in the room. Next morning, she and I got up. We were goin' up to the store up the road there to get some stuff to eat, and some cigarette papers 'cause we running low on cigarette papers and stuff like that, and as we walkin' down the street, traffic started to stop, slow down, just slow down. This is a double lane highway, two lanes on this side, two lanes on the other side. Traffic started to slow down and stop, and finally if just hit me something ain't right. I felt very scared. I'm in Gadsden, Alabama, for one. This is back in '71, '72. So, I'm gonna start speaking to some black people. So, I started waving and trying to get the black people's attention and trying to speak and be friendly. Most of them that spoke were scared. They were waving from their hands down by their side. They was afraid to wave. They was afraid to speak. Okay, we still don't know what happened. We goin' to the store, get what we wanted, go back to the motel, sit around the motel.

Finally, they came over, husband and wife opened up the joint, and they called me and invited

me over. So, I go over, and they is all happy to meet me etc., etc, and we were sitting around the table talking, and while we were sitting there talking, my then wife Angie came in. I left her in the room. She came in and sat down at the table, and the lady looked at her and said, "Can I help you, honey?" Angie say, "I'm with him."

This lady's hair almost stood on top of her head. I mean she had that hard spray where the hair don't move no matter how hard the wind is blowing. It don't move. She had one of them bee hive things, but it moved. I mean, she turned pale. She turned pale. She got so nervous, she had to excuse herself and asked Herman to show us around, and that didn't take too long for him to go through his act.

After he showed us around, we went back to the room, and before I could walk in the room, the phone was ringin', and I picked up the phone, and it was them callin' me right back. "Sam, we need to talk to you right away." So, I went back over to the restaurant, and she was back there 'cause she went back to the restaurant and came back over. She said, "We cannot let you sing here with that gal with you." Her exact words. "First of all, Miss Johnson – or whatever her name was - that 'gal' just happens to be my wife." "Whatever, we can't let you sing here with her 'cause they gonna burn my place down 'cause they just killed one of you all last week 'bout this shit." "What?" "They just killed one of you last week."

When it happened, there was a soul singer. I don't know if you remember Willie Hightower. That's where he's from, Gadsden, Alabama, and his father is a minister, and he was living with his father. They was trying to kill him, but he was married to a Caucasian lady, but they was trying to shoot through the door to kill Willie, and they shot and killed his father. And this happened a week before I

got there.

And there I was walking down the street holding my woman's hand. I'm so happy in love. I'm in love, man. I'm just in love. I'm just happy, man. I'm going to work for two weeks and make some money to pay my bills. Bubblin over with happiness, man, and that's what had just taken place, and the lady said, "If I let you sing here, they gonna burn my damn place down." So, she gave me my money to go back home on a bus.

We had to stay there all that day. This was in the morning we was having this conversation. I had to stay there all that day until that evening to catch the bus to go back out of there. And when it came dusk fall and it started getting dark, that's when the fear of God really lit me up to let me know the journey I am on, this is not a game. This is for real stuff. Man, cars started coming up checking into the motel. I didn't know if they was coming there and drag us out of there or what. I knew nobody give a shit about us. We couldn't borrow a dime from anyone in Pensacola to here, coming looking for us. And all those things crossed my mind.

The most significant thing was, are you willing to die? 'Cause if you're not willing to die for this, you might not want to get off this train right now, 'cause there are some people out here that will take your life for this. God took me all the way up there to get that drilled through my head that if you want to do this, you better be sure, buddy, 'cause there are some people that will take you out, son. That's amazing how that happened, man. Took me all the way up there to each me that lesson. There was no gig. That was the lesson!

Don Wilcock is Editor-in-chief of BluesWax. He can be reached at blueswax@visnat.com.

## Announcements

Hey Boise Blues folk;

Long time no talk. I trust this message finds you and yours doing well. I wanted to let you know RLS is retooling after far too much time off. After being in the scene since the mid 70's I just really needed a break back in 2005 thus pausing, for the most part, RLS productions etc. Music is calling for its itch and so I'm back itching my scratch. Little humor there... Anyway I wanted to let you know we're booking the area again. If you would like to let the talent on your side of the mountains know we have gigs available they may want to send us their info. Just an FYI. Immediately we have a regular weekend gig that we're managing calling for talent that may be looking for pickup dates coming through.

Catherine and I really hope everyone over there is happy and healthy this holiday season!

Best regards,

Robert & Catherine Sandidge

RLS Productions, LLC

P O Box 4280

Wenatchee, WA 98807

Direct: 509.669.MUSC (6872)



January 17 at the KNITTING FACTORY!



**Discount Ticket Special:**

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***Available Exclusively to the  
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Send an email to a board member or appointee listed at  
[www.boiseblues.org/board.htm](http://www.boiseblues.org/board.htm) for your promo code



**New Years Eve Event!!**

Featuring

LORI B! † *The Blue Diamonds*

Show Starts at 9:00 PM



**Jo's Sunshine Lounge  
Roadway Inn  
(Curtis/Connector exit)  
Next to St. Al's**

Doors Open 6:00 PM  
\$10.00 Admission

Admission Includes



**Party Hat &  
Horn**



**Midnight  
Champagne Toast**

***News of the Blues* is the official newsletter of the Boise Blues Society. News articles, items, and reviews are welcome from members and all other supporters of the blues. Write – Editor, *News of the Blues*, Boise Blues Society, Box 2756, Boise, ID 83701.**

*The mission of the Boise Blues Society is to bring the blues in all its forms to fans of all ages, to promote the blues as an American art form, and to educate members and the public to the history and role of the blues. The Boise Blues Society is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code of 1954.*

### Boise Blues Society - Membership Form

***Yes, I get the Blues! I want to be a card-carrying member!***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: (only for use by BBS - we will not give, sell, or otherwise relinquish our mailing or email list) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type (circle one): New Renewal (Membership #) \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$15 Family/ Family/Band - \$20

Family/ band member names & birthday , \_\_\_\_\_,

(If applicable) Name of Band: , .

Corporate - \$100 - (Includes a free business card-sized ad in each BBS Newsletter, a business card-sized ad on the BBS website at [www.boiseblues.org](http://www.boiseblues.org) & a \$5 discount per membership type for all employees of the corporation.)

Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to designate my additional donation be used for:  
(check one or more – funding will be split evenly among your choices)

"Blues in the Schools"  Concerts/shows/festivals  Musicians/projects

My company will match my gift:  
(Name of company)

**YES!** - I would like to be a Boise Blues Society Volunteer. I am interested in the following area(s):

CHECK all that apply:  Newsletter Writing -  Ad Sales -  Promotion & Fund Raising -  Special Events

### **ARE YOU ALSO A MUSICIAN? Yes / No If so, what instrument(s) do you play?**

Annual membership costs \$15 for individual, \$20 for family/band, or \$100 for corporation membership and is valid for one (1) year from date of inception and entitles the member to receipt of newsletters, eligibility for door prizes, and the prestige of belonging to and supporting the only existing blues society in the great state of Idaho! When applicable, card-carrying BBS members may be entitled to a discount on the admission price of BBS and BBS sponsored shows and events. Additional benefits may be added at any time – such as retail store discounts and other discounts offered by other state's blues societies. Check with a BBS Board Member for information regarding these benefits. A current list of Board of Directors may be found on the website at: [www.boiseblues.org](http://www.boiseblues.org). Funds raised through BBS membership will be spent on producing and promoting the Blues in the Boise area. Membership dues also cover the costs of mailing the quarterly newsletters (one per individual, family/band, corporation), membership correspondence, i.e. mailing membership cards, and maintaining the website. Corporate Membership dues also go toward (in addition to the aforementioned mailing, correspondence, and website page costs) layout and maintenance of the corporation's ad space in both the quarterly newsletter and the website. Boise Blues Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible and are gratefully received. For a copy of our Internal Revenue non-profit status letter, call 208-353-0385 or 208-440-6429.

**Thank you! Mail your completed form with appropriate payment to:**

**Boise Blues Society  
PO Box 2756  
Boise, ID 83701**

Date of Application:

Renewal Date:

Member ID # (if assigned):

Gave Member Card? Yes / No

Gave Bumper Sticker? Yes /