



Voice of the Circle

The Northern California Flute Circle Newsletter

Summer 2008
Edition

Yosemite Flute and Art Festival, September 26-28, 2008

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Putting together a festival is quite a bit of work, and I was immediately inspired with what Rick had put together before I even approached him to offer my time. As such, I wanted to give Rick an opportunity to share his inspiration and a few thoughts about the upcoming event.

Cryss: Rick, what was your inspiration for starting what will hopefully become a major, West Coast flute festival?

Rick: The Yosemite Flute and Art Festival was inspired by several other festivals and the need for a festi-

val in California. My move to Oakhurst one year ago and it's proximity to Yosemite National Park made this location perfect. As soon as I finished unpacking I started talking to Stephen DeRuby about the idea and the festival was born!

Cryss: I know you single handedly tackled most of the logistical and tactical planning of this before people even knew about the festival. As such, it was quite a nice surprise. It seems that everyone jumped aboard with enthusiasm once word got out.

Rick: We are so excited

about the support from The Northern California Flute Circle and Emerson Institute, our two sponsors. We have great performers and awesome flute makers committed to the festival in it's very first year. We expect this festival to be the top west coast flute event of the year. We would love to see our community park filled with vendors and guests enjoying beautiful music and surroundings all weekend. Vendor spaces are still available with discounts for any booth paid in full before June 30th.

Continued on page 3

Exciting New NCFC Website Changes

We're excited to announce the launch of some new changes and additions to the NCFC website.

In celebration of all that Mary Youngblood has done to nurture and influence the Northern California Flute Circle we have posted a History Page, documenting our history.

This page is a living page

which will continue to track the rich history of the NCFC. Additional changes include a new interactive calendar where you can RSVP for events along with a discussion area where you can interact with and support other NCFC members.

You'll need to request an online membership to post items in the new area.

Visit the NCFC website (www.naflute.com) for complete information.

Also, please be sure to visit the official NCFC blog for ongoing dialog about all of the exciting changes: naflute.blogspot.com



Mary Youngblood interview on page 2. Mary will be one of the headlining performers at this year's Yosemite Flute Festival



Has Your Email Address Changed?

If so, please contact Mike Oitzman, at ncfc@naflute.com, so we may update the NCFC membership database, and continue keeping you informed.

“After Manuel introduced me to Wolf, he said, “Hey Mary, I have some Native Flutes and maybe you’d be interested since you play the *flute flute*” gesturing while he played “air classical flute” off to his side. And that is when I picked up and physically handled my first Native American Flute.”

“But Wolf just disappeared, and it’s been a mystery I’d like to solve. I would love to find Wolf and thank him for my first flute”
Mary Youngblood

MARY YOUNGBLOOD - A Personal Interview Part 1

By Alex Marshall

(*Editors note:* Questions were supplied by Mike Oitzman, Cryss BlackWolf, Sue Lovan, Sheree and Dan DiCicco, along with the lucky crew who actually took Mary out on Folsom Lake Friday May 9th, 2008. Alex Marshall acted as moderator and supplied the tape recorder, Mike, Mixia and Busby Ely supplied the boat, and Mary supplied the insight to our best stab at recording a snippet of what it is like to hang with Mary Youngblood.)

Transcription of the audio interview -

Alex: Alright Mary, what was your musical training and background prior to your introduction to the Native American Flute?

Mary: Well, in Fourth Grade is when you can, in the public school system, pick an instrument and be in the band. I couldn’t wait for Fourth Grade because I wanted to be in the *band*!! My father had just moved us to Tucson where he could continue his studies. We moved mid-year, and there were no instruments left but the classical flute. My mother tried to discourage me saying the classical flute was hard to play, you had to play it on the side, you couldn’t see the keys, and that it might be challenging. I didn’t care; *I wanted to be in the band*!!

So in my parents’ attempt to get me caught up to speed they got me private classical

flute lessons. I would go to school with my dad while he was taking or teaching a course at the university. I was taking private flute lessons from a master student, and that is where it all started with my classical flute training. (But I did start playing the piano at age five.)

Alex: Wow, so obviously music has been a significant part of your life.

Mary: Oh yes, absolutely.

Alex: So how much classical flute did you play in school?

Mary: I played as much as I could all the way through school: High School Concert Band, Marching Band, Pep Band, and even a Rock ‘n’ Roll Band doing the Ian Anderson Jethro Tull kind of music. And after school I continued playing in fillers and harmonies with the classical flute, some backup vocals, and a little bit of guitar. So my music took me all the way through high school.

Alex: What kind of music were your groups playing?

Mary: We were playing a lot of improvisational stuff, along with Peter, Paul & Mary, Simon & Garfunkel, James Taylor - a lot of Folk music. I was playing classical flute and doing backup vocals. We were also doing Top 40: Steely Dan, Stones, Beatles, all your standard faire kind of vocal, mellow, Rock in the 70’s.

Alex: When were you first exposed to the Native

American Flute, or Native American Music?

Mary: I had *no* exposure to the Native American Flute or even Native American music up until about 1993 - 16 years after my high school music days.

I was working at the Gallery of the American West (in Old Sacramento), and got to know many of the merchants down there. Manuel and his wife owned “Ology” across the street from the gallery, so I would go in there quite often. One day a Native guy named Wolf came through town and sold Manuel four Native American Flutes and ten cassette tapes of Native American music. After Manuel introduced me to Wolf, he said, “Hey Mary, I have some Native Flutes and maybe you’d be interested since you play the *flute flute*” gesturing while he played “air classical flute” off to his side. And that is when I picked up and physically handled my first Native American Flute.

(I have to say that it has been about 15 years since I first played Wolf’s flute, and we have lost touch with this gentleman. You, Alex, recently checked the innards of his flute and told me he made it a lot like Coyote Oldman, so maybe Wolf came into contact with him at some time and learned how to make this instrument. But Wolf just disappeared, and it’s been a mystery I’d like to solve. I would *love* to find Wolf and

Yosemite Flute Festival (cont)

Cryss: Who can we expect to see perform at the festival?

Rick: With the support of performers including two time Grammy winner, Mary Youngblood, plus Scott August, Jeff Ball, Mark Holland, and a yet to be announced guest, we will have two awesome evening concerts, both Friday and Saturday evenings. We have planned wonderful and diverse workshops with many facilitators, and we look forward to all the great openmic performances.

Cryss: What a stellar lineup! Any final thoughts you would like us to be aware of?

Rick: Directions are on the website, and the festival is quite easily accessible wherever you are coming from. We have an agreement with a local hotel for discounted rates, and there are camping spots in the area as well. Being just outside the gates of Yosemite National Park offers extra opportunities for visitors to enjoy the magnificence of the Park as well. We'd love to see festival

visitors add a day or more in the park to their travel plans. Playing the Native American flute in such magnificent surroundings is so inspiring.

We do need volunteer help to make this all happen. We need assistance both at the festival and the evening performances. We may need help with transportation for our performers.

For more information please go to our recently updated Website:
www.YosemiteFluteFest.com

How to read your address label:

The address label contains two important pieces of information:

- Your membership number is the number found in []'s
- Your membership expiration date is the date next to your name.

Mary Youngblood interview (cont)

thank him for my first flute.)

Anyway, I couldn't afford Wolf's \$150 redwood flute, but Manuel let me "put it on lay-away" and take it home that night.

Alex: So, as far as having a flute in your hand you'd never even heard it.

Mary: No, I didn't know how it was supposed to sound or how it traditionally sounded, but I didn't even think about it. I bought that flute and just started playing around with the notes. I figured it had to be easier than the classical flute; it only had six holes.

But I took it to the Gallery and played it whenever I could. I picked out a little tune, and people in the store actually clapped. (But I've been lucky with instruments like that all my life - I could pretty much pick up anything and make it play. That was fun.)

Alex: So even though you had never heard the music, as soon as you were able to tell where the notes were you were able to get going on it, and play something that people liked.

Mary: Yeah, and my first paid performance was about a month after that. One day some friends came into the Gallery from Sac City College, and they were starting the very first "Indigenous Peoples' Day". They had heard me play and asked me if I would be interested in coming to play the flute on the Quad. I thought, "...well, I don't have any songs, I'm just kinda playing...", and they said, "It sounds good, it sounds good, just play five songs for about 20 minutes, we'll pay you 250 bucks. The drum group we were supposed to have cancelled, so can you cover for us?" I agreed.

Ely: And you came up with *five songs*...?

Mary: Well, I just played continuously, one big improvised "mousy" song. I played that song for 20 minutes, and the people *loved* it. There was a lot of "reverb" on the system, it was the first time I heard the flute "out there", and *I was mesmerized*.

Alex: And were you getting a lot of people who came to the concert who were wondering about the music? I am sure that most of them had never heard Native American Flute music before. How did they react?

Mary: It was on the Quad with college kids just passing through during lunch - I didn't have a huge sit-down crowd. I didn't even have a lot of people clapping when I was done. It wasn't like it was a venue where there is an audience. It was more like I was just playing to the

"When the flute was back in Native hands; they may have started out playing the diatonic "European" scale. But we have learned that the Native Flute was used as an extension of the voice and chanting, to be bird-like. It could not have been designed to play the European scale, because we do not hear the diatonic intervals in Nature. But now that the modern flutes are tweaked to play such a large variety of scales and modes, maybe we should just leave the controversies to others and play on."
Mary Youngblood

Mary Youngblood Interview (cont)

Spirit of the Campus.

Alex: But when you played, could you tell somewhat immediately that something special had happened? I mean, you were playing in front of these people a different kind of instrument than you'd ever *played* before....

Mary: Oh, I was having fun with it. I was really enjoying the tonality - I'd come to the Native Flute with a lot of skills from the classical flute, like vibrato, grace notes and trills, which I simply played around with. I was performing in front of a group that wasn't really a fixed group, so I was not intimidated. The whole scene was more like a practice performance and I just played around with melodies, and had a fun time doing it.

Alex: And how do you feel about your performances today?

Mary: The more I played the more gigs I got. I would play at church and at Sac State as more people heard about me. I took Wolf's flute and it would "water-out" really quickly, so I would have to shake out the condensation. While I was clearing my flute I learned to talk to my audiences, and that is how I became so "chatty". It helped me feel closer to the audiences which helped me relax which helped me play better. I developed a little routine where I would pull out from the side of the microphone, shake my flute and go, "phew, sorry, Guys". Or I'd

make some jokes about baptizing the people in the front row. That verbal rapport with my concert audiences has become an important part of my total performance. I still get nervous before a concert, but once I'm on stage and start playing, I really have a lot of fun performing.

Alex: Getting back to your Sac City College Quad gig, you said you were mesmerized by the sound of your flute. Was that the first time you used reverb?

Mary: That was the first time I used it on the Native Flute, yes. I used reverb with my classical flute for a French Rock-a-Billy album I recorded on back in school. So I had done some recording and definitely had reverb on my vocals. But this was the first time playing the Native Flute on a PA system that was *out there*, and I could really hear the music *big*.

Alex: I see a lot of people playing on the reverb for the first time; and they get this shocked expression...

Mary: "I didn't know I sounded so good!"

Alex: Exactly. But I was wondering if, at that point, you were taken back a little bit when you first heard it amplified? I know you had already gotten into a level of proficiency even with only having your Native Flute a month, but....

Mary: ...but the reverb helped. It took me to the next level. And it does that

to new students, as well. Students realize they can hear every nuance and they innately know how to breathe a little differently - they can almost hear it, feel it and sense it. So there are some students that really take to it quickly, and others will just blast themselves into the microphone, not really understanding you don't have to give it your all. But that is so fun about a microphone and a PA system with reverb - you can play with it, and you can find ways to make cool sounds using it. Often I fall away from the microphone to exaggerate a point of the song ending and dissipating. So, the sound systems are fun to work with and I think a lot of people get it right away; they have fun with it.

Alex: And you've talked about "texture"...

Mary: Definitely. If you have a little delay on there, as we found out at our flute circles, you can actually get some rhythms going and play some wonderful duets and trios, keeping in mind these techniques are more for advanced players. If one person is the rhythm keeper and their instrument is the rhythm, the other one carries the bass lines and they take turns "trading eights" (a jazz term), and it can be really fun to use that delay as a tool.

Alex: And when you are playing at home, do you play both with and without the amplification, or what do you primarily like to do?

Mary: If I am teaching individual students, I have the PA on. With new students I throw them right into playing with the PA immediately, and they sometimes really get emotional about it. And with myself I usually play with the PA. But if I have a group over and we're out in the backyard, then I usually do not use the PA. It depends on the circumstances.

Alex: How much has the quality of the flutes changed over the years?

Mary: Flutes have really changed and morphed, and that has been controversial. But I like how flutes have become more concert-pitched, because if you are going to play with other instruments, they need to be in pitch. So we've come from an aboriginal, vaguely pentatonic and sometimes diatonic scale on some of the ancient flutes to a true pentatonic scale on today's modern "Native American Flutes". But the flutes keep evolving and flute makers keep finding ways to morph and change. Now we even have dual chambered flutes, triple chambered flutes, flutes tuned to different modes, and a wide variety of scales, like Celtic, and Middle Eastern. And the woods make all the difference. A lot of flute makers are using exotic woods...

Alex: Speaking along the lines of some of the qualities, you mentioned there was some controversy as far as how the flutes are made....

Native American Flute Portal a Success!

It has been two years since construction of the Native American Flute Portal (www.fluteportal.com) was begun. It has been a slow and steady progression toward realizing our ideal, and Jeff Ball and myself want to thank and acknowledge all of you that have helped us to grow the site. We have a member base of over 1,000 users, and the discussion forums are approaching 300 registered participants, plus hundreds of guest visitors. This is growing every day and we are thrilled to see the NAFP becoming what it was always intended to be: the ultimate resource for the Native American flute on the internet! There are many

exciting things on the horizon as we gear up for our next big surge of growth. New features are coming, and we hope they will make the NAFP even more useful and user friendly. Among the features currently being worked on are the "Super Blogs". We will be attaching a number of highly interesting and educational blogs to the main site, allowing users to jump straight into other "virtual classrooms" from the portal, where they can take advantage of many fabulous resources. Among the contributors to these Super Blogs will be our own Mike Oitzman (a prodigy of blogging) and performer, recording artist and long-time blogger

Scott August. More of these will be announced as they are developed. Cryss BlackWolf of the Sierra Raven Clan will be heading up a secret project that we think will be the coolest feature ever, but you have to stay tuned to learn the details! We won't keep you in the dark long, but keep your eyes peeled toward the end of summer. The NAFP is now attracting hundreds of visitors per day from all over the world, including Europe, Canada, Asia, South America, and Australia to name just a few. If you haven't paid a visit yet, come on by and look around! Hope to see you there! *Geoffrey Ellis, Flute Portal Admin.*

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VALLEY CLAN

Contact: Lynn Peck at 707-255-7425;
email: valleyclan@naflute.com

Mary Youngblood Interview (cont)

Mary: Many of the controversies have to do with the tunings. There were always different makers who claimed the tuning was important, and that they weren't tuned quite the way they are today and the top note was up a fifth or a third, something like that. But modern flutes have morphed away from the ancient flutes. Dr. Richard Payne out of Oklahoma, who helped put the Native Flute back in Native hands, claimed that the Native Flute was traditionally *diatonic*. I want to trust Doc Payne's expertise on that, but I cannot imagine Natives would have inherently known the diatonic "European" scale: "do, re,

me, fa, sol, la, ti, do"; it just was not part of their language. When the flute was back in Native hands; they may have started out playing the diatonic "European" scale. But we have learned that the Native Flute was used as an extension of the voice and chanting, to be bird-like. It could *not* have been designed to play the European scale, because we do not hear the diatonic intervals in Nature. But now that the modern flutes are tweaked to play such a large variety of scales and modes, maybe we should just leave the controversies to others and *play on*.

Alex: As the Spirit of the Native American Flute claims more and more

"victims", and infects them with "Flute Fever", can you share your vision of where this phenomenon may be headed? I mean, it appears this "flute thing" is really growing....

Mary: As more and more people *are* drawn to the Native Flute - more listeners, more players and more makers - the whole atmosphere appears ripe for a world-class Native American Flute organization. And off the top of my head, "inclusive" is the first word that comes to my mind in beginning to define what such an organization might be - an organization that includes everyone. Of course we know there are some or-

Remember...

Check the online calendar at:

<http://www.naflute.com/calendar.html>

ganizations that are not inclusive and that is sad, because this flute community is so beautiful.

This ever-growing flute community is made up of like-minded folks, and generally, is very loving, giving and inclusive. So a world-class Native American Flute organization would be a "place" where all flute listeners, players and makers are welcomed, no matter their gender, their race, their tuning styles, their popularity, or their lack thereof. But there is room for a lot of folks, and more than one major organization. There is room for everyone.

The next 2 hours of the interview will be forth-coming in "A Personal Interview Pt. 2".

Flutemaker Discount Program

The following fine craftsmen offer discounts for active NCFC members:

Need to contact the NCFC:
Northern California Flute Circle
578 Sutton Way, PMB 184
Grass Valley, CA 95945
Phone: 530-432-2716

Earthtone Flutes, Geoffrey Ellis, (707) 839-5199, <http://www.earthtoneflutes.com>

Featherridge Flutes, Randy Stenzel, info@featherridgeflutes.com

Love Flutes, Stephan DeRuby, (800) 435-8837, <http://www.deruby.com>

RV Flutes, Russ Veneble, (505) 577-0394, <http://www.rvflutes.com>

Stellar Flutes, Tom Stellar, (888)427-8850, <http://www.stellarflutes.com>

Wine Wood Flutes, Brian Revheim, (707) 253-1325, iswinewoodflutes@sbcglobal.net.

Woodland Voices, Colyn Peterson, (402) 932-6894, <http://www.woodlandvoices.com>

Yazzie Flutes, Martin Yazzie, (951) 924-0926, <http://www.yazzieflutes.com>



Time to renew your NCFC Membership?

Please take a moment to fill out the Membership Form, or pass it along to a friend, and invite them to experience the magic of the Native American flute!

Security Guarantee:

No personal information will be given to anyone else, or used for any purpose other than sending you NCFC and other Native American flute information.

Questions?

Check out our web site at: www.naflute.com or call the NCFC at 530-432-2716 or email: nfc@naflute.com

Thank you for your support!

Membership Application for the Northern California Flute Circle

1

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY, USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

Renew New Member Newsletter opt-out: No Yes (I'll get my news from the web site)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

2

Please select only ONE of the following four categories:

Individual Membership

\$15: 1 year, or...

\$25: 2 years

Family / Household Membership

\$20: 1 year, or...

\$35: 2 years

Office Use Only 1.07
Date RC'd:
Check #:

3

Please select your HOME CLAN (you are always welcome to attend any and all flute circles or meetings):

Bay Clan (San Francisco Bay Area, Lower Marin)

Loping Wolf Clan (Sacramento, Yolo and Nevada counties)

NoNahme Clan (Garden Valley)

Sierra Raven Clan (Mother Lode and Southern Sierra)

San Joaquin Clan (Fresno and Central Valley)

Valley Clan (Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Upper Marin)

4

Please make your check payable to the "Northern California Flute Circle", and send it with this form to:

Northern California Flute Circle
578 Sutton Way, PMB 184
Grass Valley, CA 95945