THE ARIZONA FIDDLER

Official Publication of the Arizona Old Time Fiddle Association Inc. Published bi-monthly

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Webpage: http://www.arizonaoldtimefiddlers.org/ Facebook: Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association

November/December 2026

Contact Noreen Johnston to pay your dues. fiddlerslady@aol.com See Form on p. 8

Upcoming Events

Salome Fiddle Fest Salome, Arizona. Lions Club. November 6-8, 2026. ***ANNUAL MEETING!***

Wickenburg Bluegrass Festival and Contest Wickenburg, Arizona. November 13-15, 2026.

Laveen Folk Festival. Laveen, Arizona (south side of Phoenix). November 21-22, 2026.

Yuma Contest Worthen Memorial Contest. January 8-10, 2027. ***50th Annual***

Salome Desert Fiesta. Salome, Arizona. Lions Club. January 15-17, 2027.

Ajo Fiddle Contest. Country Club north of Ajo, AZ. February 5-7, 2027. 48th Annual.

Matheson Music Festival. Safford, AZ. February 18-21, 2027.

Tucson Fiddle Contest. February 20, 2027.

Glendale Folk and Heritage Festival. Sahuaro Ranch, Glendale, AZ March 6-7, 2027.

Lake Havasu Bluegrass Festival Lake Havasu State Park, March 5-7, 2027.

Desert Bluegrass Festival Marana, AZ March 12-14, 2027.

Salome Fiddle Fest Salome, Arizona. March 19-2, 2027.

AOTFA Events List See the Arizona Old Time Fiddle Association Webpage

Annual Meeting of AOTFA

The Annual Meeting of the Arizona Old Time Fiddle Association will be held at **10:00 AM on Saturday November 7**. This is held along with the Salome Fiddlefest, held at the Lions Clubhouse in Salome, AZ. Election of Officers for 2027 will be held along with voting on other business.

State Contest Payson, AZ October 3, 2026

Small Fry 1 Amelia Hoynecki **Junior** 1 Gabriela Naiman 2 Shyla Abreau 3 Ruth Agustin 4 Lily Malone	**Adult** 1 Mike Rolland **Senior** 1 Dave Brinkman 2 Victoria McArdle	**Open Talent** 1 Dave Brinkman, banjo 2 Shyla Abreau, mandolin 3 Ruth Agustin, vocal and fiddle **Judges** Sawyer Walker David Tormala	**Grand Champion** 1 Mike Rolland 2 Gabriela Naiman 3 Dave Brinkman 4 Shyla Abreau 5 Ruth Agustin 6 Victoria McArdle 7 Lily Malone

Top finishers Mike, Gabriela, and Dave at State Contest

Dues

- Your 2027 AOTFA Dues are due any time.
- **Annual Dues $15 Family. Over 80 $10—Includes Partner**
- Send to
  Noreen Johnston
  696 S Maricopa St
  Chino Valley, AZ 86323.
- You can also pay dues to Noreen at the **Salome Fiddle Fest** November 6-8, 2026

Sponsors for Yuma Contest Needed

The **50th Annual** Worthen Memorial Old Time Fiddlers Contest is scheduled for January 8-10, 2027. Our committee is excited to be organizing a fun weekend for our fiddlers, listeners and dancers! We are so appreciative of our sponsors and will be accepting donations of any amount over the next to support the event. Thank you so much!! —Janet Shelby

Arizona Cities and Towns Quiz

Here are ten more puzzlers. Answers p. 7

1. _____ Mascot of largest Ohio university
2. _____ Part of a book
3. _____ Large House
4. _____ Big brass instrument town
5. _____ Garlic in Spanish
6. _____ Grave marker
7. _____ Rotating model of earth
8. _____ Car valet
9. _____ Standing on the corner town
10. _____ Excited to start

Percy Wenrich—Composer of *Snow Deer* and *Silver Bell*

Percy Wenrich (1880-1952) was an American composer of ragtime and popular music. He had a long career as a composer and performer. He and his wife, Dolly Connolly, performed together for years, and he also performed in a variety of vaudeville other theater acts. He later had his own publishing company. Wenrich was born in Joplin, Missouri, and was known as the "Joplin Kid."

In the September 2026 Newsletter, Wenrich's compositions, *Snow Deer* and *Silver Bell* were highlighted. He wrote several other songs that you may have heard at fiddle events.

- *Put on Your Old Gray Bonnet* (1909). Laura Barry plays the definitive version of this song! "Put on your Old Gray Bonnet with the blue ribbon on it and we'll hitch old Dobbin to the shay"
- *When You Wore a Tulip* (1914) "When you wore a tulip, a big yellow tulip, and I wore a big red rose"
- *Moonlight Bay* (1912). Doris Day had a hit with this in 1951, and sang it in the movie of the same name "We were sailing along on moonlight bay"
- *Sail Along, Silv'ry Moon* (1937) "Sail along silv'ry moon" Bing Crosby had a hit with this song. It was covered by numerous other artists such as Billy Vaughn, Gene Autry, Andy Williams and Chet Atkins.

Don Peterson

The Arizona fiddle and bluegrass community was sad to hear of the passing of Don Peterson. Don was 83, and died on September 3, 2026 in Libby Montana. Don was a wonderful bass and mandolin player, and always had a smile and a story to share. We will miss his musical contributions and his fellowship. **Full Obituary** from the Western News in Libby, MT.

Famous Fiddlers—Violet Hensley

Violet Brumley Hensley (October 21, 1916 – August 7, 2026) was an American luthier and musician who made fiddles and played the fiddle in country music, recording three albums with family members. She was inducted into the National Fiddler Hall of Fame at age 101.

Her father was a musician who had made fiddles since age 14 and she learned the craft from him, making her first fiddle, for herself, at age 15. She made three more before she was 18.

In 1935, she married Adren Hensley. The couple had nine children and she ceased to make fiddles for twenty-seven years, focusing on her family. In 1961, Hensley began building fiddles again, making 69 more instruments. In 1968, the family moved to Yellville, Arkansas, where she had her workshop. She also repaired fiddles. Her husband died in 1997.

Hensley's expertise on fiddles gave her national attention when she was featured in the magazine *National Geographic* in 1970. She was invited to television shows, to *The Beverly Hillbillies* in 1969, *The Art Linkletter Show* in 1970, *Captain Kangaroo* in 1977, and to *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee* in 1992. She was featured in *Mature Living* in 1987,, and in *Country Woman* in 1991. During the 1980s, Hensley appeared weekly on KCTT in Yellville. She was featured on *Ozarks Public Television* (KOZK/KOZJ) in 2006 in a program called *Handcrafted Musical Instruments*.

Source: Wikipedia Article **Violet Hensley** There are numerous **YouTube** interviews and examples of her playing.

Tracy O'Brien

Yuma musician Tracy O'Brien passed away on October 13, 2026 at age 76. He is survived by his wife, Carol O'Brien. Tracy and Carol have been dependable members of the Territorial Chapter of AOTFA in Yuma. Tracy's memorial service will be Tuesday November 17 at 2:00 pm at Calvary Chapel Foothills on S. Fortuna Road, Yuma, AZ.

The Guitar Behind the Fiddle

Dating, valuing and caring for vintage guitars in Arizona
By Joe Dampt, Joe's Vintage Guitars, Mesa AZ

A good backup guitar gives a fiddle tune a steady pulse and room to sing. If yours has been in the family for decades, a little detective work can help you understand what you own—and keep it ready for the next jam.

Start with identification. On many vintage Martins, the model and serial number are stamped on the neck block inside the body, visible through the sound hole. Compare the serial with Martin's official chart, which lists the last number used each year. For example, the D-28 pictured in the accompanying photos carries serial 143937. It falls after 1954's final number, 141345, and before 1955's final number, 147328, placing it in 1955.

Older Gibsons require more cross-checking: serial numbers, factory order numbers and features such as the logo must agree. Photograph the whole guitar, headstock, identifying marks and any repairs. A family story is a useful lead; the instrument's construction and markings provide the evidence.

Value depends on more than age. Compare recent completed sales of the same model and period, allowing for condition and originality. An ambitious asking price does not establish market value. Original finish, bridge and tuners matter, as do cracks, structural repairs and playability. Honest wear does not make a guitar worthless, and fresh paint does not necessarily improve its value. Before refinishing or replacing parts, consult someone experienced with vintage acoustics. Save repair records, old parts and the original case.

In Arizona, measure the humidity. Martin recommends 45–55 percent relative humidity. Use a reliable hygrometer in the case, and follow the instructions for a guitar humidification system. Check it regularly; adding moisture without measuring can create another problem. Keep water from touching the instrument, and store it in its closed case when you are finished playing.

Protect the guitar from direct sun, air vents and parked-car heat. A case cannot make a hot trunk safe. Allow gradual temperature changes when moving between environments. New cracks or a sudden change in playing feel deserve a repair professional's attention; do not assume the answer is simply more humidity or a quick adjustment.

The goal is a guitar that keeps doing its job: supporting the melody, holding the rhythm and bringing people together. Knowing its history and caring for its wood helps preserve that musical life.

This article is for general information purposes and is not an endorsement of this business by AOTFA.

- Martin — official serial-number chart
- Martin — care and humidity guidance
- Gibson — acoustic serialization guide
- Joe's Vintage Guitars — appraisal and condition considerations

Barbara Polka

Baruška Polka

František Kovářík
from the Shamrock Fiddlers
O'Neill, NE 1978

Barbara Polka comes from a Czech tune--*Baruška Polka.* It is widely known in the American polka band repertoire and there are recordings on YouTube by Frankie Yankovic and many others. Some versions have several sections in addition to what is printed here. Not all versions change key, but this is how the Shamrock Fiddlers of O'Neill, Nebraska played it. Ed Coufal played accordion, and he usually led the tune in their jams.

The dance we know as polka originated in the 1830s in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) as a lively, fast-paced couple's dance in 2/4 time. It quickly spread throughout Europe and came to America as European immigrants flocked to the United States in the 19th century. They brought their cultural traditions with them, including the polka. It didn't take long for this dance to become a staple at social gatherings and celebrations throughout the country.

Answers to Arizona Towns and Cities Quiz

1. Buckeye
2. Page
3. Casa Grande
4. Tuba City
5. Ajo
6. Tombstone
7. Globe
8. Parker
9. Winslow
10. Eagar

State Contest Photos—Mazatzal Ballroom in Payson

Bob Williams provided entertainment at State Contest

Shyla won 2nd on mandolin for the Open Talent division

State Champion Mike accompanied by Ben L.

AOTFA
14210 W. Kiowa Trail
Surprise AZ 85374

November/December 2026

The Arizona Fiddler

Membership, Renewal or Change of Address

Annual Dues $15 Family. Over 80 $10 Includes Partner

Please Print
Name_____

SummerAddress_____

City_____**State**_____**Zip**_____

Phone_____

Email_____

If Different
Winter Address_____

City_____**State**_____**Zip**_____

(Optional) Man's Birthday_____**Lady's Birthday**_____

Anniversary_____**Year**_____

Children Under 18 Living at Home_____

Chapters

( ) Rim Country	**Payson Area**
( ) SAOTF	**Tucson Area**
( ) Territorial	**Yuma Area**
( ) Verde Valley	**Cottonwood Area**
( ) Independent	**Anywhere**

Members may join one Principal chapter and one associate chapter.

Send dues to **Noreen Johnston, Membership Secretary**
696 S Maricopa Street
Chino Valley, AZ 86323