

PLUCK-N-POST

508 Second Street, Cove, Oregon 97824 USA

The official newsletter
of the Jew's Harp Guild



VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

SPRING/SUMMER 2005

eBoing: Plucking the web for rare finds *by Gordon Frazier*

In the early 1980s, I searched for a replacement for my (sigh) broken J.R. Smith Jew's harp by sending out hundreds of letters to music stores all over the country. No more than a dozen responded, and all of them carried a few common versions – but no Smiths. It took months. Recently a search of eBay brought up 54 Jew's harp listings from all over the world. It took five minutes. A J.R. Smith was among them; I am now its happy owner.

While there are instruments on eBay one should never buy (see sidebar, page 6) there are also old Smiths, rare antiques, delightful oddities, and a few surprises. Some recent listings are shown below.

With some exceptions, eBay is not a good place to buy new instruments. It's best to buy them from the maker, if possible, or find a good reseller. Some of both are listed at the end of this article.

But for those seeking unique or vintage Jew's harps, eBay – "the nation's garage sale" – has become the best place to find them.

Following are some tips on how to get started, and suggestions on how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

eBay 101

First, you need access to the Internet. If you don't have it at home, visit your public library – most of them offer patrons the use of a computer with Internet access, and many offer training for those unfamiliar with computers or the Internet. Public libraries, you gotta love 'em.

You also need an e-mail address. If you don't have one, you can sign up for free web-based e-mail. "Web-based" means you can access your e-mail account from any computer with an Internet connection. *Pluck-N-Post* uses Yahoo! e-mail (<http://www.yahoo.com>) because of its consistently high ratings, but lots of other companies offer this service. CNET (www.cnet.com) has a pretty good chart of comparative listings, if you want to shop around.

(Continued on page 5)



Recent eBay offerings with final bids (in US \$).
Top row: cast iron English trumpet in a guitar shape (52.50); unusual double-tongued trumpet, also English (176.32); leather-bound double album of Inuit singing and Jew's harp music (72.00); Etruscan artifacts (closing bid unknown). Left center: vintage horseshoe style from England (31.60). Bottom row: the Art Deco-ish "Dusie Harp" from the USA (36.50); Jew's harp and other instruments from Papua New Guinea (46.66); original "Jew's Harp Bill" sheet music (36.00); and a rare antique Norwegian munnharpe with carrying case (1,035.00). And no, that's not a typo.

Inside this issue

- 1 eBay Buying Tips 2 A Word from the Executive Director 3 Bulletin Board
4 Festival Update 4 Tribute: Saw Player Allan deLay 7 A Happy Harp is a Dry Harp



A Word from the Executive Director

Hello Jew's Harpers,

I hope this newsletter finds all of you doing well and enjoying summer. I know I'm savoring the feel of fresh garden soil on my hands.

NAJHF

This year's Jew's Harp Festival will soon be here ... August 5 & 6 at Bay City, Oregon. We are combining the festival with Bay City's "Pearl of Tillamook Bay" celebration and it should prove to be a lot of fun... and something different. Bay City's celebration is a fund raiser for their kid's park. Their events will include hiking and mountain biking up in the hills, kayaking on the bay, a parade, and food, art and craft vendors. Those interested in a vendor space should contact Shaena Peterson at 503-377-4171.

For NAJHF schedule, see article on page 4.

Guild News

Many thanks to Gordon Frazier for his work designing our new Jew's Harp Guild Logo. Gordon spent many hours working on this project and we are very

PLUCK-N-POST

is published quarterly by The Jew's Harp Guild, 508 2nd St., Cove, OR 97824 USA . Subscriptions and ad space are included with JHG membership. Information on the newsletter is also posted on the Jew's Harp Guild website (<http://www.jewsharpguild.org>). Newsletter submissions or comments may be sent to the above mailing address or via e-mail to plucknpost@yahoo.com.

Janet Gohring—Executive Director, Jew's Harp Guild
 Kathi Vinson—Secretary, Jew's Harp Guild
 Mark D. Poss—Webmaster
 Gordon Frazier—Newsletter Editor

Jew's Harp Guild Board: Janet Gohring, Kathi Vinson, Gordon Frazier, Larry Hanks, Denise Harrington, Mike Stiles, Gene Ralph

The Jew's Harp Guild is a non-profit organization under section 501C(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code of 1954.

Copyright 2005 The Jew's Harp Guild

proud of the logo he has created. I also want to thank all the Guild members who gave Gordon their ideas and input... it was a great group effort. I think the new logo better reflects the Guild's purpose, world wide, to share our enthusiasm about the Jew's Harp's "ever spreading vibrations to all points of the compass." Great job, Gordon!

A very happy 90th Birthday to Velma Bilyeu (May 12th). Velma and her husband, Tom, were very instrumental in keeping the Jew's Harp alive in America. For many years, Tom made and promoted the original "Snoopy Jew's Harp" (see "A caveat" at bottom of page 6 - ed.) and Velma was, of course, his "Girl Friday." After Tom passed away, Velma attended several



of our festivals and we always enjoyed her sunny smile and personality. We all hope your birthday was just as special as you are, Velma!

John Palmes' CD was reviewed by NPR on March 14, 2005 (see note on page 3). Pretty cool, John!

Long time Guild member and festival Attendee, Allan deLay, passed away earlier this winter (see page 4). We will miss his singing heart and saw!

I happened to meet John Weir in La Grande the other day. Many of you will remember John. He and his wife, Donna, were long-time Guild members and festival attendees. They were solely responsible for our moving the NAJHF from Sumpter, Oregon to Richland, Oregon (where it was held for 7 years). It was good to see him and he asked that I say "hello" to everyone. He also told me ...

Roger Mayhugh passed away, suddenly, last winter (the Weir's and the Mayhugh's were "snow bird" neighbors in Arizona). Some of you may remember Roger. He attended two NAJHF's. He sang "Pick A Bale of Cotton" and played Jew's Harp with Chris Towne on OPB's "Art Beat" program about our festival. He was a great poet, songwriter, singer and Jew's harpist. He will surely be missed.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter and, as always, welcome your comments and input.

Until next time, keep twangin' !!

Janet Gohring
 Executive Director
 The Jew's Harp Guild

**POST
YOUR
NOTES!**

BULLETIN BOARD

We have published a **new article written by Alice Zyetz** that profiles the delights to be found by roadtrippers who attend local special events and festivals as they travel around North America. Her article can be found at: www.roadtripamerica.com/rv/RVing-More-Than-Beautiful-Scenery.htm. Thanks,

Mark Sedenquist,

[Alice and Chuck have attended many of our festivals. – PNP]

I recently purchased this **Norwegian stamp** on eBay and would like to donate it to the Jew's Harp Guild. I am a member of the Guild and a proud owner of 21 Jew's harps, including two from Bill Gohring.



Joe Durham Saratoga,
CA

[Many thanks, Joe! – PNP]

Thank you for making an informative site about Jew's harps. I like your site and I want to contribute to it. I work with **hilltribes in Thailand**, many of whom play the Jew's harp. On our website we have this video: www.hilltribe.org/videos/08-video-english-jingnongjammin.php/small.

Jonathan Morris

Director, The Virtual Hilltribe Museum,
Chiang Rai, Thailand
jon@hilltribe.org

This July I'm presenting a **traditional music show** in Liberty, Missouri, a few miles outside Kansas City. Do you have any members in my area?

Richard Brotbeck

(Project Manager, American Music Jamboree)
816-407-7407 info@pieceoftheaction.tv

This is a **newly invented musical instrument**. It even has an online sound sample available at www.RingFlute.com

J. Johnson (Colorado)



Hi, a great web site! Can you tell me how I can subscribe to a Jew's harp magazine? I live in Sydney Australia. Look forward to hearing from you.

Margaret Bradford
margie@loyaltyisp.com.au

A CORRECTION

In "A Jew's Harp Travelogue," PNP Vol 9, Issue 3 the 1998 Molln congress was referred to as the Second International Trump Congress. Molln was the third congress (after Iowa in 1984 and Yakutsk in 1991).

Mouth Bow Review

Check out the review by National Public Radio's Marika Partridge of John Palme's latest CD, *Mouthbow: Small Voices*. The review, with sound samples, is at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4534703>

WELCOME new Jew's Harp Guild member Clemens Voigt, Leipzig, Germany
(www.danmoi.de)

Ideas for articles, pictures, cartoons, or other contributions to Pluck-N-Post? PLEASE CONTACT US AT:
PNP, 508 2nd St., Cove, OR 97824 USA
or plucknpost@yahoo.com

2005 North American Jew's Harp Festival update

The 13th annual North American Jew's Harp Festival will be held August 5-6, 2005 at the Bay City Arts Center in Bay City, Oregon, on the Oregon coast just north of Tillamook.

That same weekend, Bay City's "Pearl of the Bay" festival will take place. Its main focus will be *volkssports* (hiking, mountain biking, kayaking), but will also feature food and crafts booths.

A nearby city park will be available for campers. The Guild has reserved a number of spaces for festivalgoers on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Bay City Arts Center will once again provide meals at affordable prices.

A meeting of the Jew's Harp Guild will be held Sunday morning after the festival. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.

If you wish to perform or give a workshop at the festival, or have other questions, contact the Guild at: 508 2nd St, Cove, OR 97428 USA; Ph: (541) 568-4045; E-mail: plucknpost@yahoo.com ■

Tentative Schedule (Mealtimes are estimated.)

FRI	4 pm	Kickoff ceremony; workshop and band scramble signups.
	5:30 pm	Dinner
	9 pm	Friday Night Dance
SAT	9:30 am	Brunch
	11 am	Workshops
	1 pm	"Twang Time" Sharing Circle
	3 pm	Showing of Collections
	6 pm	Dinner
	7 pm	Feature Concert / Grand Jam
SUN	Noon	Jew's Harp Guild Meeting

THROUGHOUT: Instrument and merchandise sales, children's activities, displays, reading room, and plenty of informal jamming.

NAJH Festival regular Allan J. deLay: 1923-2005



My friend and fellow saw player, Allan J. deLay has passed away.

I first met Allan in 1988 at the International Saw Players Competition at the World Forestry Center in Portland, Oregon. I had a patch on my saw case that said Unalaska on it. He walk up and pointed at it and said, "I played there in 1939." He also took some pictures of my band, The King Brothers, which we used for years for promotions.

Since then we have attended numerous saw festi-

vals in Santa Cruz, California, The Alternative Stage in Vernonia, Oregon and The Jew's Harp Festival in Richland and Bay City, Oregon. We had many occasions to get to jam together at these festivals and he will be sorely missed in my heart.

— Curtis "King" Chamberlain



Upper Left: Jules DeGiulio, Rick Myers, Curtis Chamberlain, and Allan deLay were part of a musical saw quartet at the 2000 festival in Richland. Above: Allan checks in with Janet Gohring at last year's festival in Bay City.

eBoing (cont. from page 1)

How can companies afford to offer e-mail for free? It's paid for with ads: Whenever you e-mail someone an ad is attached to the bottom of your message. If you find that annoying, you can sign up for a "premium" service without ads, but that comes with a fee.

Once you have an e-mail account, visit the eBay website (<http://www.ebay.com>). Click on "register" at the top of the screen and follow the directions.

Now you are ready to search the site. Click on **Buy** at the top of the screen. A window will open with the search screen shown below.

The image shows a screenshot of the eBay search interface. At the top, there are three tabs: "All Items", "Auctions", and "Buy It Now". Below the tabs is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "> All Categories" and a "Search" button. A checkbox labeled "Search title and description" is checked.

Be sure "All Categories" appears in the right-hand box, as Jew's harps are listed in Musical Instruments, Toys, Antiques, Collectibles, and other categories.

In the left-hand box, type the word or words you want to search for. Try this:

(jaw,jaws,jaw's,jew,jews,jew's,juice,mouth) + harp

with commas but no spaces between the words in the parentheses, and a space before and after the plus sign.

This search will find most of the English variants. Other names such as trump and gewgaw occasionally show up on eBay, but to find them you will need to create separate searches. (Note: If you search for trump, be sure to change "All Categories" to "Musical Instruments." For gewgaw you are safe searching All Categories.)

You might also want to create a search for common non-English names such as *khomus*, *morsing*, *guimbarde*, *maultrommel*, *genggong*, or *kubing*.

Once you have entered the word or words you want to search for, click the gray **Search** button at the right and you will get a list of the current offerings on eBay that match your criteria.

More search tips

Here is a great tip: Once you have clicked on **Search**, scroll to the bottom of the screen. You will find an easy-to-miss link that says "See all items including those available from non-English speaking countries." Oh

my gosh. Click on that link. A plethora of exotica will fill your screen.

To save your search criteria, find the underlined words "Add to Favorites" in the upper right part of the screen. Click on it. Now the next time you log on to eBay, instead of choosing **Buy** you can choose **My eBay**, click on **Searches** in the left-hand column of that screen, and select the saved search you want to use.

If you are looking for recordings with Jew's harp, select the box next to "Search title and description" below the search contents box. All recordings with

Jew's harp mentioned anywhere in the liner notes will appear. Gee, there's a lot of them!

Bidding

So you have found something you simply can't live without. You may want to bid on it. The instructions on eBay are straightforward. In a nutshell: these are timed auctions with an opening bid amount. Throughout the auction (they last for days) you can check to see when the auction ends, how many bids have been placed, and if you are the highest bidder.

Be sure to check shipping charges. Sellers are allowed to set these charges themselves, so if an item is priced at a surprisingly low opening bid, it may be due to a little padding in the shipping charges.

Boinger Beware

All of the sellers on eBay I've dealt with have been honest folk. But that does not make them Jew's harp experts, so watch out for "modern antiquities."

For instance, be skeptical of instruments described as "Civil War era." Some of them might be, but others are of more recent vintage. Perhaps they were found near a battleground site and assumed to be that old.

There are also occasional listings of even older Jew's harps. One recent "Colonial era" listing probably was from that era. It was from an archaeological

(Continued on next page)

eBoing (cont. from previous page)

dig, was heavily corroded, and had no tongue. However, others described as such are 50 years old, at most.

Again, these are probably honest mistakes. Part of the confusion undoubtedly stems from modern "souvenirs" that are knock-offs of older designs.

Here are some clues that might help you gauge the authenticity of older metal instruments:

Tsk

Often sighted on eBay (and elsewhere) are Jew's harps that are not functional as musical instruments. Two examples are the Schylling Jaw Harp and the model made by Trophy Music Company (variously marketed as 1st Note, Blue Grass Jaw Harp, and Snoopy's Harp*). Especially heinous are the ones aimed at children such as 1st Note; giving an unplayable "instrument" to a child is just wrong. If you want to give a young child a jaw harp, try a bamboo version like a *kubing* or *giwong*. They are easy to play and are played against the lips, sparing the baby teeth. If you want to get a metal Jew's harp for an older child, get them a decent one they can make music with. The Whitlow Jaw Harp, available in many music stores, is a good choice; the inexpensive Austrian ones made by Schwarz or Wimmer are also fine for beginners.

***A caveat:** Older Snoopy Harps are a different matter. The late Tom Bilyeu of Molalla, Oregon, was a great promoter of the Jew's harp, and originally made an instrument marketed as Mr. Jew's Harp. At some point he acquired the rights to use the Snoopy name and image, so started selling his instrument under that name. These were perfectly playable Jew's harps. (More recently a comparable instrument has been marketed under the name Great American Jaw Harp.) Eventually, though, Tom sold the rights to the Snoopy name to Trophy Music Co., while continuing to sell his instrument under his own name. Trophy then applied the Snoopy name to the doo-daw noted above. Hence the confusion of players who fondly recall the old Snoopy Harp. But don't be fooled—it literally ain't what it used to be.



- Older Jew's harps usually have uncoated frames; knockoffs often have a shiny lacquer finish.
- Old handmade ones usually have tool marks on the crimp and the wide part of the tongue, whereas the knockoff will have none of those marks.
- Note the width of the tongue. It tapers on handmade instruments, but not on the knockoffs.
- Look at the gap between tongue and frame, which must be very small to produce a tone. Knockoffs have a huge gap and produce no tone at all; they were never meant to be played.

Buying new instruments

This article has focused on rare and antique Jew's harps, because if you are looking on the Internet for a new instrument there are much better options than eBay. Here are two reseller's sites you will enjoy:

<http://www.mouthmusic.com>

<http://www.danmoi.de>

Here are a few makers with on-line presence, if you'd prefer to buy from them directly. (Be sure to ask Mr. Szilágyi for a copy of his catalog; it will amaze you.)

Bailey <http://www.claytonbailey.com>

Gohring <http://www.billgohring.com>

Hörzing <http://www.maultrommel-jofen.at>

Szilágyi <http://www.szilagyi-jewsharp.com>

Wimmer <http://www.maultrommel.at> [in German]

Finally, an extensive list of makers throughout the world, along with knowledgeable reviews of many of their instruments, can be found on the well-done Dutch website:

<http://www.antropodium.nl>

Happy surfing! ■

Thanks to Dan Gossi for insights into e-baying; also, thanks to Frederick Crane for his thoughts and for the picture of the antique munnharpe on page 1. His publication VIM (especially #11) was helpful for its depiction of early English and American trumps; serious collectors should also check out his book A History of the Trump in Pictures: Europe and America.

A happy harp is a dry harp *by Mark D. Poss*

Keeping your trumps clean and dry is very important. No one wants to put a slimy, oxidized instrument in their mouth. Here are a few hints to keep your trumps clean and dry.

- Keep a few packs of desiccant (the drying agent often packaged with electronic items— it's the stuff that says "do not eat") in your gig kit and storage boxes. Alternatively, use a few tablespoons of white rice wrapped in cooking parchment paper or cheesecloth. Replace the packs once or twice a year (or more often if you live in a moist environment).
- I use a rubberized "burnishing" wheel or a "Pink Pearl" eraser to keep the crud off my non-brass, metal trumps. This calls for a steady, light touch, so as not to damage your trump. Rub only as hard as you need to remove any oxidation or slime. Use your fingers to brace the reed as you clean it. Take care not to remove any (or at least very much) plating, lacquer, or other finish that may coat the instrument. Rinse thoroughly in alcohol after cleaning (alcohol may



damage some lacquers). Wipe dry. Apply non-toxic mineral oil to trumps that have an oil finish.

- I always advocate wiping your trumps dry after every use and try to have a clean, lint-free cloth handy for the purpose. However, most often the shirt tail or sleeve is put to the task. I recently had a "devastating" accident (stabbed my belly and broke my favorite Dan Moi) that made me think about a more conscious way to dry my brass trumps.

The point is to be careful. Most of these are fragile trumps to begin with. Clean AWAY from the pointed end of the reed, drawing your cloth (shirt or otherwise) carefully away from the trigger, on one side, then the other, while holding the reed in place with a few fingers from the opposing side (see photo). Save the thorough cleaning for a

time when you can pay ultimate attention to what you are doing. A final note: I know of folks that have used various tarnish removers to keep their brass trumps clean. But I haven't had one last long enough to try these methods. If you do, please rinse off the toxins before playing! ■

THE JEW'S HARP GUILD T-shirts and CDs

T-Shirts



Featuring our 4-color "grasshopper" design. Specify size and number when ordering.

Only \$15* each

*Plus shipping: United States \$3, Canada \$4, Other Countries \$6 (All prices in US dollars).

North American Jew's Harp Festival CDs

1997 Highlights: \$12** US each.

Features 20 of the best public domain, spontaneous music, and original performances of the 1997 festival. Limited quantity!

1998-2000 Highlights: \$12** US each.

"Twenty-two samples from three years of the NAJHF are as diverse as anyone could imagine. There are a passel of world-class players; wonderful solo improvisations; compelling duets; tradition; frivolity."

—Frederick Crane, PNP 2003

**Plus shipping: United States \$3, International \$5. (All prices in US dollars.)

The Jew's Harp Guild • 508 Second St, Cove, Oregon 97824 USA • <http://www.jewsharpguild.org>