

Gardner Award Recipients

*“You have bettered our lives with your music,
and we are grateful.”*

2009

Charles (“Blackey”) Lemley
Elmer Rich

2010

Patty Looman

2011

Dwight Diller
Gerry Milnes

2012

Margo and Butch Neal
Kathy and Jeff Fedan



Joe Coe

2013 Gardner Award Recipient



35th Gardner Winter Music Festival
1979 – 2013
Celebrating Years of Music and Fun

February 23-24, 2013

Memories from Gardner Festivals of the Past



In the dark of winter, an idea is born...

One dreary winter afternoon in 1978, Worley Gardner and his friend Sloan Staggs from Romney, WV found themselves complaining to each other (again) about how dull winter was without the festivals and other gatherings of summer where they could swap tunes and jam with other musicians. And suddenly they realized that they could change that for themselves and all the musicians that they knew. In that excited moment, the Winter Music Festival was born.

The first winter music festival was held the last weekend of February 1979 at Marilla Center. The charming but small main room held the performances and the square dance that Worley called in his inimitable style. Musicians looking for space to jam crowded into the boiler room. Despite the near blizzard conditions raging outside, the event was a huge success. Such a success, in fact, that the festival was moved to the Morgantown Arts Center the following year. Sadly, Sloan Staggs did not live to see the festival as it grew. The joy of the third year's festival was dimmed by the news that Sloan had died the very day of the festival.

But there was no stopping a good thing. Worley and his wife Margaret spent each Christmas personally writing invitations to musicians and dancers in West Virginia and beyond. For the sixth year of the festival, Worley obtained the sponsorship of BOPARC, the local recreation board, and the festival, still growing, moved to South Middle School where it remains.

On November 10, 1992, Worley Gardner died. Worley was renowned as a square dance caller and for the hammered dulcimers that he played, designed, and built along with his brother Asel. In October 1977 he performed as a featured musician at the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife. He was also featured in a CBS radio broadcast about mountain music in 1985. Worley was sorely missed by all those who knew him. The Winter Music Festival, renamed the Worley Gardner Winter Music Festival after his death, is one of his best legacies.

Determined to keep the festival alive, Margaret Gardner, who had always hosted the festival with her husband, led the festival committee until her death on December 29, 2000. After Worley's

death, she was helped by a number of local supporters. As a result, the festival lives on and in fact continues to grow. Each year the festival is attended by over 300 musicians from several states as well as many appreciative listeners and music lovers from around the area. After Margaret's death the festival was renamed the Gardner Winter Music Festival so as to include Margaret in the name.

There are many of us who are deeply grateful to the Gardners for their contribution to keeping the rich legacy of West Virginia's traditional music alive, and for giving us all something wonderful to look forward to in the deep, dreary days of February. May it always be so!



Margaret
Gardner



Memories from the past

When I think of the Gardner Winter Music Festival my first memory is the phone call from Worley, himself. I remember him telling me that the musicians (old timers) get cabin fever in the winter. He said he needed something for them to break up the hard, cold winter months. He spoke of the summer music festivals but he felt we needed a “sinter Music festival.”



I remember a lot of planning and meetings at their home on Cain Street and Mrs. Gardner always had a delicious dessert to top the evening. Worley had such great connections with many musicians throughout the state of WV and neighboring states.



One of the earlier festivals at Marilla Recreation Center is when it snow stormed so bad that no one could go anywhere because of the snow in Morgantown. So everyone parked and played music all day long. No one seemed to mind or notice the snow storm.



Of course, Worley would call a square dance at the end of the festival. We all went to them regularly on Saturday nights anyway and many of the townspeople were there mixed in [with] WVU students. It was always his idea to put the two groups together. Both Jim and I feel very honored to have met some of the best “mountain musicians.”



Being able to help Worley and his wife was a privilege. That’s how we all met and the rest is history...

Mary Wallington



Worley was a wonderful person. I learned so many tunes from him. He said, “Learn the tune, but don’t learn my style. The melody comes first—don’t worry about embellishing.” I teach apprentices all of Worley’s music.



Patty Looman

We used to travel from Doddridge County through snow, sleet and ice. Worley’s memory is still with us.

Keith McManus



I remember standing outside at the foot of the steps before entering the first winter festival. And I remember Margaret inside welcoming us with her business-like pleasantries. Worley was playing his hammered dulcimer, probably Golden Slippers. He took a break from the hammered dulcimer, got his mandolin and came over to play D tunes with us. I was just learning fiddle and he didn’t like the way my E string squeaked on “Waitin’ for Nancy,” and he told me so, in his non-threatening way. But he liked the tune and asked us to play it again so he could learn it. I remember Worley’s signature red and white shirt and his white hat, and his steady manner.



Annie Williams



This has always been a nice little festival—at the time of the year when everyone needs something to get their minds off winter time. Good for beginners and old timers





alike. I don't know about those two people who have been running it for so many years though. I think it is obvious that they are only in it for the money and the fame!!!! Thanks Butch and Margo for all your hard work over the years.



Mike Furbee

I came to Morgantown in the fall of 1978 and the following spring I met Dick Kimmel, a doctoral student in the Division of Forestry. Dick told me about a traditional music event that took place in the late winter and organized by local musician, Worley Gardner. In the winter of 1979 I attended my first "Winter Music



Festival" in the old Morgantown Post Office building. I have met many of West Virginia's finest musicians over the years, having attended every festival since 1979. The list includes Worley and Margaret Gardner, Sloan Staggs, Russell Fluharty, Melvin



Wine, Wilson Douglas, Lefty Schaffer and Woody Simmons, who are no longer with us. There are many other great musicians who will regularly attend who are too numerous to name.

The festival is always a high point of my musical year and I have watched it grow and evolve from the "Winter Music Festival" to the Worley Gardner Winter Music Festival" to the "Gardner Winter Music Festival." The venue was moved from the



original building to South Middle School after a couple of years, where it has been ever since. It is entirely due to the dedication of folks like Worley and Margaret Gardner and Butch and Margo Neal that we can enjoy this



wonderful event...a festival by and for musicians. We can never thank you



enough! The GWMF has embraced young musicians (like Tim, who was 1 year old when I went to my first). As a result of the GWMF he and others like the Eddy sisters have had some rare opportunities to get to know the luminaries of West Virginia music.

Ray Hicks

The Eddy family has a strong connection to Worley Gardner.



Rachel said: "My parents attended Worley Gardner's square dances



back in the late 70s and 80s at Marilla Park. My dad was in the dance band, he played fiddle and guitar in the band and Worley called the dances. And my mom would dance the entire time she was pregnant with me. So she danced on a Saturday and had me on a Tuesday. And the next Saturday I was back at Worley's dance in my car seat." Rachel said her first performance ever was at the Winter Festival. She sang "June Apple" when she was only 4. "The



point of the Gardner Festival is a wintertime chance to get together and jam," Rachel said. "Everyone does it naturally in the





summer, but this is the only wintertime opportunity to get out and play.”

Eddy Family

Taylor Runner, local square dance caller, said Worley Gardner impressed



him when they met in the 1970s. Runner attended square dances Gardner called at Marilla Center in those days and said, “I was impressed by the simplicity, the authenticity of Worley and what he stood for. Sometimes when I call a square dance, I’ll repeat what I first heard from him.”

It’s a great bridge to bring people together and keep that music, that culture going. “I plan to keep doing some of



his original dances. He was really a unique square dance caller. He would do singing calls and have folks singing along with him.”

Taylor Runner



With Worley, it wasn’t hero music ever. It was just folks pickin’. Worley and Margaret were just the sweetest people. They melted me every time. Worley picked that time of the year because it was the deadest time of the year. He just wanted to see some of the summer people. I really loved going up there.

Alan Freeman



My memories of Worley are all good. To me, he was a true gentleman and a wonderful musician. I recall his birthday party



one year at Marilla Park, when I was asked to get him out on the floor so Margaret and friends could surprise him with a cake. They knew he’d think that my stupid actions were normal for

me...



Bonnie Collins

I started fiddling in the early 70’s, as a new West Virginian by choice. After the Gardner music festival got started, I was regular for several years, then fell away, but now I’m back! Worley Gardner and



the many musicians gathered at South Junior High have been a great inspiration.

John Lozier



I’ve only attended the GWMF 3 times but I was amazed that so much old time music & talent was assembled in one place. Great family entertainment for a reasonable price & workshops to teach & promote the playing of old time music instruments.

Clyde R. “Buck” Owens

I attended the Gardner Festival before learning how to play old time music and was struck with how much fun people were having in jams in the hallways. Then, after learning to play, I spent untold hours in the dulcimer jam room, playing, perhaps, more than 100 different songs with Patty Looman during a weekend. This music brings such happiness!



Jeff Fedan

