The Newsletter of the Saline Fiddlers

Fiddlin' Around

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Fiddlers spend a busy summer entertaining

3 tours = 1 great summer

Northern Michigan:
A unique engagement

By Will Warner

The Fiddlers' travels sometimes take us off the beaten path, following invitations to perform for people who want to see the group. We go on faith, trusting it will all work out. It always does, but sometimes in unexpectedly wonderful ways.

In June, the group journeyed to the tiny town of Maple City, about 15 miles northwest of Traverse City, near the tip of the pinky of Michigan's mitten. The venue was the Maple Leaf Restaurant, owned by John and Tracy Hardy. We weren't sure what to expect, but we received a marvelous reception from the Hardys and their guests. The Hardys were generous beyond reason, serving the group a magnificent meal of scrumptious pizza, salad, drinks and delectable desserts.

The Maple Leaf Restaurant was once a school. The Fiddlers performed in what was its auditorium/gymnasium. Now wood-paneled and decorated with paintings and hanging tapestries, the

Please see **Restaurant,** *page 2*



The Maple Leaf Restaurant, Maple City

The big trip:
The New England Journal of Fiddling

By Kelsey, sophomore violist

Day one – a twelve-hour bus ride

The silence on the sidewalk outside the Saline High School orchestra room was broken bright and early on June 30th



Fiddlers enjoying New York City (from left: Stefanie, Nathan, Jordan, Marie, Michelle, Kristen, Brian, and Mary

as Fiddlers began arriving for the New England Summer Tour. Chaos reigned until some semblance of organization was put into place: instruments in one long row, suitcases in another, and personal items scattered out of the way. By 8:47 AM the Saline Fiddlers were on route to Sparta, New Jersey. Roughly twelve hours later we had reached our destination: a parking lot filled with enough families to host all the Fiddlers, including directors. After being adopted by

Please see **Tour,** *page 3*

A chaperone's chronicle:
Indiana, Illinois, Iowa: A trip to points West

By Peggy Rzepka

On Sunday morning, July 18th, all the Saline Fiddlers, new and old, boarded the bus for a twelve-hour trek to Iowa. This was to be the first bus trip for our newest Fiddler members, and nearly the last for our departing seniors. In spite of the very long ride to northern Iowa, it proved to be a very smooth trip. While eating dinner in Iowa, a gentleman even commented that he had never seen such a large group of teens in one place who behaved so well. He was of course interested in who we were, and was impressed to learn about our group. (Chaperones are often approached at rest stops along the way by travelers who express "sympathy" that we would have to endure touring with "all those kids." We happily reassure them that this is no task, but a great pleasure to be "on the road" with such an awesome group.)

Annual Winnebago gathering

We were invited to Iowa to perform at the National Winnebago Convention in Forest City, Iowa. This would be the annual gathering of RVers from across America, and they had apparently been requesting us to appear for six or so years. Forest City is the world headquarters for the assembly of the famous Winnebago, and also the home of Wharton College, who proved to be

Please see Winnebago, page 5

Restaurant / Maple Leaf has great food, fans

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On stage at the Maple Leaf

room nevertheless retains its basketball floor and even the hoops. A small elevated stage at one end was just big enough to hold the group. A hundred people watched the show from chairs in front of the stage, while others enjoyed the restaurant's gourmet fare and wine at high tables at the back of the room.

It was a great evening. An audience can make or break a show, and this one transferred a lot of energy and excitement to our kids on stage. Everyone seemed to enjoy the performance, especially owner John Hardy, who, dressed in chef's whites, bounded in and out, radiating enthusiasm while keeping one eye on the show and the other on the kitchen.

The Maple Leaf Restaurant is located in the historic Maple City Schoolhouse, 172 W. Burdickville Rd., in Maple City, MI (231-228-4688).

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Walt Byers, Executive Director
www.salinefiddlers.com



Artistically Speaking

What new things do the Fiddlers have for the show this year?

The Fiddlers have recently returned from their annual music camp, where the focus is bringing new and veteran Fiddlers together to learn new tunes, rework some of the old tunes, and basically become a polished, cohesive group. (See related story on page 6.) It is always exciting to see what new tunes and solos the Fiddlers have prepared. Artistic Director Ben Culver took time recently to give us a peek into what the group has in store for us this coming year.

Ben: I'm very excited about the talent level and music we're preparing for this year. As our students graduate from High School, our group changes completely every four years, and this is always an exciting time to see who will rise up.

We returned from camp this year with nine new tunes and a couple Fiddlers favorites from years past. This year, listeners will be delighted to hear some great banjo playing, furnished by Casey. We have several new singers, and a great new rhythm section feature, "Man of Constant Sorrow." The dancers will enjoy two new sets put together with traditional fiddle tunes. The piece of new music that sounds the most unique for our sound is Jesse Mason's "Hungry Man #1"; we hope audiences will enjoy hearing this hard-driving fiddle tune developed with some top-notch soloing for all sections.

We've had a lot of fun putting our new music together, and we're all excited about the great sound we'll be bringing to performances this year.



Left: on the bus to Iowa (from left): Dan, Dave, Scott, Emily, Pat, Jacob, Casey, Mike, David; and above: a crowd of 3000 await the Fiddlers performance at the National Winnebago Convention (See story on pages 1 and 5)

Tour / Fiddlers find New England friendly, fun

- Continued from page 1 -

our host families, we traipsed to the homes where we would be spending the next two nights.

Day two – pizza, fiddling and a movie

An 11:00 AM pizza lunch was first on our schedule, so we were allowed to sleep in this morning. A workshop with Sparta Strings at the Sparta Middle School was next, where the Fiddlers taught children of many ages. Then it was back to the host houses for some hangout time before a wonderful potluck dinner, followed by a concert opened by Sparta Strings. Evening fun involved some Fiddlers going bowling and others to a movie.



The fiddlers indeed looked small on the tall bandshell stage in Central Park, New York City.

Day three – Central Park

To make up for the gift of sleep the day before, we were required to be at the bus at 7:00 this morning for the two-hour bus ride to New York City. However, being in the city and playing an excellent show in Central Park was all worth it. A decent crowd showed up despite the heat and location, and the show seemed to be enjoyed by all. Jim, the bus driver, had to drive around the city during the concert because there weren't parking spots large enough to accommodate the bus, and therefore learned his way around New York. After the show the Fiddlers split into groups and explored Broadway, and we closed the evening by seeing *The Producers,* a treat for the entire group.

Day four – touring the Big Apple

Today was a day of enjoying the city and relaxing. We split into three smaller groups, two that went walking all over the city and one that took a boat ride around Manhattan. Lunch was at various places around the city, including some genuine New York pizza and restaurants in Chinatown. Ground Zero, Wall Street, and the Statue of Liberty seemed to be the most common destinations. Then it was back on the bus again for a four and half hour trip to Boston, where we would be spending the next three nights.


Bus driver Jim Oliver looks over the Charles River in Boston.

Day five – the Fourth of July

Like most other days on this tour it dawned incredibly hot, but that didn't dampen anyone's spirits during one of the more fun gigs of the tour. Most of our shows involve us playing to an audience situated in front of us, but due to the fact that we were playing in the middle of Quincy Market there were people on all sides, including some former Fiddlers and other Salinians who had made the journey out to see us. After the show, the Fiddlers explored Quincy Market and ate dinner before going out to the Charles River, where we would be watching the fireworks. The Boston Pops played on the other side of the river from where we were sitting before the most amazing firework display any of us had ever seen, accompanied by the fire alarms going off in some buildings around us. (Don't worry, there weren't any fires, it was just for added effect.) After the display, half of the group took the subway and the other half walked back to the bus that took us to our hotel.

Day six – Duck Boats in Boston

We woke up to rather wet weather today, so it fitted that we were going on a DUKW (Duck Boat) ride. This amphibious craft took us first on a tour of the streets of the city then plunged into the river, where many Fiddlers got the chance to actually drive the Duck Boat. We then split into groups again, with people heading off to the Harvard Campus, Bunker Hill and the U.S.S Constitution, the New England Aquarium, and the Boston Museum of Science. Then it was back to the hotel, where many of the Fiddlers did their laundry while the parents grilled up dinner.

Day seven – the haunted hotel

After bidding our home of the past two nights goodbye, we found ourselves lucky enough to be staying in the Mt. Washington Hotel and Resort, a beautiful hotel opened in 1902 that was oddly reminiscent of Steven King's *The Shining.*

Please see **Mountains,** *page 4*

Mountains / The New England Journal continues

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After a playing an afternoon show out on the back lawn we had the wonderful experience of a hotel employee, including eating in the employees-only cafeteria. Our evening show was held inside in the old ballroom, and many Fiddlers agreed that it was one of the more fun shows on the tour. Suspicions that there was a ghost story involving the hotel were confirmed after the show by both fellow guests and employees, and a few Fiddlers spent the better part of the rest of the evening hunting for the "The Princess," wife of the first owner of the hotel, who is said to haunt the halls.

Day eight – The Mountain Club on Loon

The Fiddlers packed up and headed to another New Hampshire resort for a day of relaxation in the swimming pool and with gondola rides up the mountain. Following dinner downtown we participated in a very exciting Fiddler adventure: it was section against section to see who could purchase their breakfast food the fastest. The violas and the rhythm section tied, procuring 30 bananas and Pop-tarts, respectively. Then back to the resort once more for an evening where we were required to do absolutely nothing productive.



Scott helps load the breakfast supplies during the food race at the Mountain Club.

Day nine – Sheldon, Vermont

It was a rather dark and dreary day for the most commonly accepted "best gig of the tour." When we reached Sheldon, Vermont, most of us were rather surprised to see not much of anything. Sheldon is a small, rural community, much as Saline once was. We were to play at Grace Episcopal Church, built 180 years ago, complete with original floors, rugs, and pews. To be honest, it is unlikely that many of us were expecting a large crowd to come to the small and stuffy church, so it was amazing to see there was only standing room left when we went on stage. Despite the pouring rain and heat, the atmosphere was excellent and we managed to put on a show where both performers and audience left happy. Then we all headed out to our host houses, some as far as 20 miles away.

Day ten – Buffalo wings

It was an early morning yet again, meeting the bus at 7:30 and on the road by 8:00 for the eight and half hour drive to Clarence Center, New York. For dinner we were treated to pizza and Buffalo wings, due to the fact that Clarence was right outside of Buffalo. As we had played six shows in the last ten days, it was rather understandable that for our last show we would have many tired Fiddlers. However, we pulled off the show in typical Fiddler fashion for the excited crowd at the Concert in the Park and then headed off to our host homes for our last overnight of tour.

Day eleven – home via Niagara Falls

At 10:00 AM it was back on the bus again for the long haul home. On the way, we stopped at the American sideof Niagara Falls for the Maid of the Mist boat ride. We leisurely enjoyed a sack lunch, provided by our host families, while looking out over the falls. We then returned to the bus, looking forward to one of the last bus rides with the seniors. They didn't let us down, and entertained us with their "TP Awards." It was rather late when we pulled into the parking lot at Saline High School, and while we were happy to be home, everyone still hugged each other with tearful eyes, professing their love and how much they would miss each other during the weeklong break before the next gig. (Seriously.)

Overall it was a very successful tour, and we owe great thanks to Mrs. Banet, Mr. Warner, and Mr. Olsen for spending countless hours working out all of the details. Thank you to all of the host families: your generosity is greatly appreciated and it was great getting to know you. Most of all, thank you all of the Fiddlers for making Summer Tour 2004 the best tour we could have had.



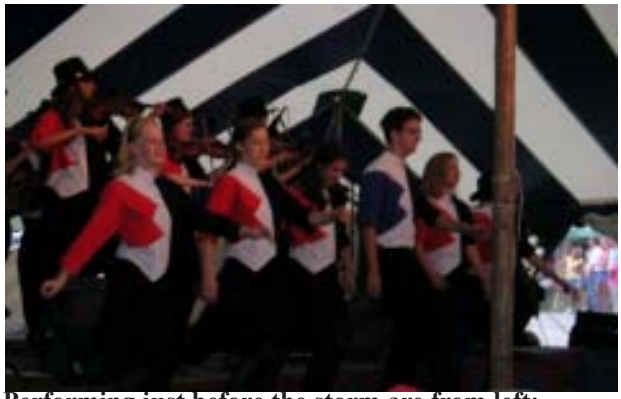
Kelsey and Andrew dance to "Buffalo Gals," at Clarence Center, outside of Buffalo, New York.

Winnebago / Fiddlers visit three states West

- Continued from page 1 -

our other very pleasant hosts. We were greeted by college staff and promptly taken to the student center and served ice cream sundaes to begin our stay. We were all pleased to be off the bus, and more than one person commented that they had never seen so much corn in all their life.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of this trip was the weather. As many of you know, this has not been a warm summer in Michigan or in many other places around the country. It seems to be the summer that never was. Well, we got our three days of summer in Iowa. Our housing at the college was in a three-story dorm and the temperatures all three days pushed 100º with no air conditioning. After a rough night's sleep, the kids completed two long rehearsals to prep for that evening's concerts. The dining hall was the one place that was air-conditioned, and lingering after meals was a pleasant, but short, luxury.



Performing just before the storm are from left: Marie, Kim, Sarah, Kristen, Gus, and Sally

Rows and rows and rows of the largest motor homes as far as the eye can see

It is difficult to put into words what we witnessed when we arrived at our venue. How does one describe coming through a gated entrance to see 1500 RVs housing 4000 people? Rows and rows and rows of the largest motor homes as far as the eye can see. Tailgating on a Michigan football Saturday doesn't even come close. There are groups relaxing in folding chairs, displaying flags representing the state from which they have come and the various associations they all belong to. We learned many of them travel in established groups and remain in contact year round through email. Others have sold their homes and now live around the country in their RV's, moving to reside where the weather is best. And, of course, all the RVs are air-conditioned.

We were provided with boys' and girls' dressing rooms in the form of, you guessed it, RVs. One memorable moment was when, not one, but two of our girls were locked in the very tiny bathroom. The door malfunctioned, and we were grateful for the helpful staff who rescued us twice.

As the kids dressed, ate dinner, and tuned, the audience swelled. We had to continue to move our sales table as the audience kept expanding into our area. Eventually they all settled in on lawn chairs, golf carts, bleachers, and amigos for the less mobile. Now it wasn't RVs but people for as far as the eye could see. The estimated attendance was 3000. The kids took the stage, which was very large and hot, not just from the temperatures but from the massive lighting structure. They completed a typical high-energy show and delighted another audience. At the sales table, folks from California, Texas, the East Coast, and the Midwest greeted us. They all expressed the common theme of the joy of seeing wholesome, happy teens entertain in such a professional manner.

The next morning we boarded our beloved air-conditioned bus and headed east again. We first went to Navy Pier in Chicago for some much needed relaxation, shopping, and dinner. We then drove to Valparaiso, Indiana to spend the night in, yes, an air-conditioned hotel. In the morning, the kids relaxed at the pool or slept in, then had lunch, dressed and hit the road for the last two shows of the trip at the LaPorte County Fair in northern Indiana.

Fiddlers ordered off stage

We had heard "weather" could be a problem, but little did we know how much. After set up, sound check, and the like the kids took the stage for the first of two one-hour shows. As the show progressed, so did the dark clouds and the wind. By the time they had started the closing song, the sky looked scary. The more concerned of us were suggesting stopping the show, but they were a few minutes into Orange Blossom, and it seemed reasonable to finish. When a wind gust picked up the CDs and sent them flying, we knew it had to be called. I think the kids will never forget the two moms screaming at them to CUT the show and run for the bus. As they exited, actually running from the stage, so did the whole audience. Everyone at the entire fair was running for cover as the wind whipped and the rain blew sideways, and we wondered if we were in a tornado. We all watched from the bus as Dan Klos, Ben Culver, and Will Warner stayed out in that storm trying to protect our sound equipment from damage. We were more worried they would be damaged. The storm raged for a good half hour, but no twisters were seen. We waited out the storm on the bus and the kind people at the fair delivered our food by truck in the torrential rain. The storm eventually subsided, and, amazingly enough, the tent was still standing and we had no damage to equipment or people.

Needless to say, the second show was canceled and we headed home, tired and grateful for another successful tour. *(See more photos on page 2.)*

A freshman Fiddler describes…

First Camp Phil: one of learning, belonging

By Emily

Team building, rehearsal, laughter, and love. Going to Camp Phil will probably be one of the things I remember for the rest of my days. As an incoming freshman to the Saline Fiddlers, it's hard to feel like you belong, but when you are surrounded with such loving and trustworthy people for four whole days it's like you're getting a whole new family.

This year at Camp Phil we spent *a lot* of time in the rehearsal hut, but we also played Capture the Flag, had bonfires every night, (thank you tech guys), and even had a canoe race. All of the team building activities were planned and put together by our business director Mrs. Shelly Banet. They included a student-led three-ring circus, a kite building/flying contest, and a session for all of us to let each other know how much we value one another. Awwww….

For all the time spent in the rehearsal hut we accomplished more than most could in four *weeks*. We owe this not only to the great determination of all the students, but to our absolutely incredible artistic director Mr. Ben Culver and his faithful team of assistants: Jesse Mason, Reid Smith, Kelly Mason, Lee Callender, and Sally Warner. All of the music we learned this year was composed or arranged by Ben, Jesse, and Reid. This included some good old-fashioned folk music, a mix of classical and Celtic, and a great contemporary piece. We were even taught a new dance!

In addition to learning music and doing team activities, we also got time to just get to know each other on our own. In Fiddlers it's really important to accept everyone and be able to stand each other for long periods of time, so it's crucial that we have time for ourselves, student to student. Whether it was practicing, canoeing, fishing, or just walking around camp and talking, I really feel like I got to know everyone to the extent that I'll be comfortable with them for the next four years I'll be spending with them! ☺

All in all, I have no regrets about going to camp, and I am really looking forward to next year. I would also like to thank our wonderful and dedicated parents who were up every morning at *7:00* to make us breakfast, and did everything they possibly could to keep us safe and still let us have a good time. I'd also like to thank the music and business staff for all the hard work they put into the Fiddlers year-round: Mrs. Banet, for giving me a second family; Mr. Culver and team, for all the new music; and as for the rest of the Fiddlers, thanks for the most wonderful experience of my life.



The Fiddlers played for a large crowd at Boston's Quincy market on July 4. It was a beautiful day, reports a Fiddler, and the audience surrounded the group from every side.

Meet the new Fiddlers

We would like to introduce you to four of our newest Fiddlers. Look for the remaining five Fiddlers in the Winter 2004 issue.

By Kristen, junior violist

David



David (not to be confused with sound tech *Dave*), a sophomore this year, joined the group on the fiddle. However, David has already shown that he can bring his other musical talents to the Fiddlers through his mandolin and guitar playing and his great voice. Outside of Fiddlers, David also has recently picked up the trumpet and the viola. David's favorite song is "Mason's Ape Ron," and he is surprised at the amount of work that everyone puts into Fiddlers. So far, David has enjoyed being part of what he calls "an awesome experience!" In addition to Fiddlers, David is involved in Boy Scouts, Bible Quizzing, cross country, track, and marching band. In his spare time (if he has any!) he enjoys collecting plastic frogs and hanging out with his friends.

Casey



Another violinist, Casey, joins the Fiddlers this year. Casey, a freshman this fall, wanted to be in Fiddlers because of the fun she had watching the Hometown Concerts. Along with the violin, Casey has picked up guitar this past year and "there's always the recorder, thanks to fourth grade (music class)." So far Casey has enjoyed playing "Eastern 8," listening to Sally sing, and experiencing how friendly the Fiddlers are. Casey considers herself a "tree-hugger" and loves horses, playing soccer, archery, and photography. Casey also enjoys transcribing music. Someday, Casey hopes to become a wildlife biologist and has very specific plans to attend the University of Michigan. Casey would like to take this time to thank everyone involved in the group, especially Shelly Banet for putting up with her vegetarianism.

Sarah

Sarah, a freshman, is the only new cellist, starting the cello in fifth grade. Sarah joined the Fiddlers because of "the people (in the group)" and to have the experience of playing professionally. Sarah has liked playing at the different venues and is looking forward to more traveling with the Fiddlers – especially when they perform "Lady Be Good," her favorite song. Outside of Fiddlers, Sarah is involved in volleyball, tennis, softball, 4-H, and golf. She also enjoys painting and sculpture in her spare time. Sarah plans on attending a college close to home, perhaps Michigan State or the University of Michigan.

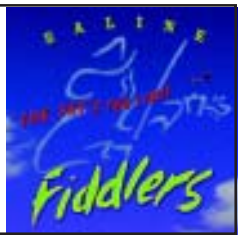


Casey

Casey is a rising sophomore this year and has joined the group on the banjo. Although he has only been playing the banjo for about a year and a half, he has been playing the violin since the fifth grade. Casey wanted to be in Fiddlers because it seemed like an extreme challenge of musical skill and "where else was I going to play the banjo?" Casey participates in Quiz Bowl at the High School and is interested in math, science, and computer games. Casey seems excited to play in Fiddlers and hopes Fiddlers will use his banjo skills because "it could sound awesome."



Our new CD is here!
The Fiddlers' sixth recording, *The Sky's the Limit*, featuring all the latest tunes in the Fiddlers' repertoire, was just released on June 28, 2004. See our website, **www.salinefiddlers.com**, to order one!



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SALINE Fiddlers

Walt Byers, Executive Director
Ben Culver, Artistic Director
Shelly Banet, Business Director

Direct booking inquiries to Shelly: 1-866-257-5333

www.salinefiddlers.com

This just in! **Mountain Heart** will join the Saline Fiddlers as their guest artist for the **November Hometown Show** Friday **November 5**, and Saturday **November 6**, 2004, at the new **Saline High School.** This **powerhouse bluegrass band** has just received five nominations for the 15th Annual International Bluegrass Music Awards, to be held on October 7.

Tickets $15 for adults and $8 for students through high school age, and are available by calling **877-538-Fiddle** (3433) or 866-257-5333. See more in the Fall 2004 newsletter.



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Camp Phil 2004