

Warped

by Scott McCullar



Banjos, nature spell success to musician

United Press International
OSAGE, Ark. — Bill Mathews says his family back in St. Paul, Minn., thinks he's a little crazy to dwell in the Ozarks and make banjos for a living, but he rates himself a success — personally and professionally.

Making banjos, after all, has supported Mathews for nine years now. It allows him to stay close to music and nature, involves some travel and performing, introduces him to obscure country musicians and makes him part of America's musical history.

"We'll never run out of work. I'm not going to be unemployed," Mathews said, perched on a stool in his dusty workshop. "I'm not rich or anything, but I can continue to do what I want to do, and that's success, really."

His neighbors know him as "Banjo Bill." Any of them can give directions to his house, starting at the old stone general store near the wooden bridge at Osage and following the rutted, rocky roads for miles through the trees.

Mathews, 31, was looking for someplace that hadn't been converted into civilization yet when he settled in the northwest corner of Arkansas in 1975. His 35 acres of land support hardwoods that can be used to make banjos and also provided the raw materials for his hand-built solar home.

In a concession to civilization and business realities, Mathews finally got a telephone four years ago. He also has electricity in the house now, but he and his wife and three daughters still drink from a spring and bathe in pond water.

He works alone in a shack 50 yards from the house and does most of his business by telephone and mail order.

"Just have to go meet the mailman and there's my money," he said.

said, swatting at summer bugs flying through the shop's open doors.

In the spring and fall, Mathews travels to crafts fairs to show off his banjos and sell tape recordings of his old-fashioned banjo and fiddle music. Some people at the fairs order banjos, but the \$7 tapes usually pay for the trip.

When Mathews is home, he said, "I fill orders, cut firewood and take care of the kids."

Mathews makes just 16 banjos a year, carefully carving and polishing wood that has been kiln-dried and aged. The finished banjos have the deep gloss of fine furniture, and he said no two are alike in appearance or tone.

"I've learned a lot since I moved to Arkansas from the old-timers. Be very patient," he said. Those old-timers have also taught Mathews more about the banjo, invented in 1834 by an American improvising on a three-string African instrument played by slaves. The banjo was later adapted to ragtime and the bluegrass music that is still popular in the Ozarks.

His thinning hair tied into a ponytail and wearing torn khakis, Mathews rolled a cigarette from a can of Bugler tobacco as he recited the history of his business, officially known as the Phippsburg Banjo Co.

Always musical, Mathews said he won permission from the rarer mystified music faculty at the University of Minnesota to teach himself to play the banjo while attending school. After two years, he took his new skill to the Colorado mountains and there met John Walsh, a novice banjo maker.

They were dissatisfied with standard Japanese banjos and couldn't afford the more expensive kind that run \$2,000 to \$4,000, he said.

"We both decided we could do better," Mathews said. "We just got some wood and some parts and started doing it by trial and error."

They named the company for Phippsburg, Colo., although their

first shop was four miles away in an old mortuary at Oak Creek, he said. They sponsored jam sessions and square dances and sold their first banjos.

But Colorado land near hardwoods and sawmills was too expensive to buy, Mathews said, so in 1975, the partners finally settled on the Ozarks with its abundant walnut, cherry, ash and maple.

With Walsh back in Colorado making guitars now, Mathews goes to sawmills to buy wood — Arkansas walnut, Vermont white maple and African ebony for the fingerboards.

The metal "hardware" around the rim is made by commercial music companies along with the plastic drum heads, although Mathews will use animal skin if it is requested.

In his workshop, Mathews steams and bends four or five thin layers of wood to make the circular rim and sands it by hand. Then he reinforces wooden blocks with steel and uses a hammer and chisel to cut the smooth curve in the back of the neck. He cuts mother-of-pearl inlays by hand to place in the ebony.

His prices range from \$400 to \$950 for the "Black Beauty II," made from aged walnut and equipped with a resonator — a curved wooden back behind the banjo head. Without a resonator, the backless banjo head resembles a tambourine.

"None of them sound exactly alike because every piece of wood is different," he said. It takes two years to "age the sound" in some banjos, so they sound better after they have been used, he said. Consequently, he will offer 100 percent trade-in value on any of his banjos if the customer wants a new one.

Mathews will also make free repairs and pay for shipping. "People can deal directly with me," he said. "That turned out to be a real good way to do it, because people trust you. Once you do an adjustment or something, they know they're secure in their investment."

A&M refs get added benefits

by Maria Gautschy
 Battalion Reporter

The Texas A&M Sports Officials Association is offering benefits for intramural sports officials to make refereeing more than just a job.

Officials will be offered free equipment, opportunities for social functions, scholarships and annual awards through the association.

With the added benefits, Tom Reber, coordinator for intramural sports, said he hopes the association will help establish a camaraderie between officials.

"These people can work anywhere for the same pay, that's why we want the job to offer them something extra special," Reber said.

Rob Larsen, president of the association, said he hopes team attitudes toward officials improve by having referees who enjoy their work and each other.

The association also has set up four pre-season tournaments for flag football, basketball, volleyball and softball. Reber said the tournaments will help officials train for the season while giving the teams an extra chance to practice.

The tournaments also will help raise money for the association. In addition to the \$20 entry fee for the season, each team will be charged \$5 to play in the tournament.

The training program for the officials involves six classroom hours of learning game rules. An additional six hours is spent on the field going over positions and problems that arise during play.

Because they do not get paid for the training period, Reber said, he

hopes the association will encourage relationships between officials that will make training more enjoyable.

The association, after three years of existing only in name, was revived this year by Reber.

Tom Weis, director of intramural sports, said he is confident that the new freshmen and sophomores involved in the association will keep the program from dying a second time.

Attention All Recognized Student Organizations

Check your boxes for a copy of the 1984 Aggieland yearbook contract. If your organization has not received a contract, contact our office at 845-2681 or 845-2682 or come by Room 0012 in the basement of the Reed McDonald Building and pick up a contract.

CatBoer's RESTAURANT

SPECIAL OF THE DAY

ALL YOU CAN EAT FARM RAISED CATFISH OR CHICKEN FRIED STEAK ONLY \$5.95

Also, Plate Lunch Specials! Choice of meat, choice of fresh vegetable, dessert, coffee or tea.

\$3.95

**Townshire Shopping Center
2025 Texas Ave.**

775-7642

Post Oak Mall shoppers can win big at auction

by Leslie Yoder
 Battalion Reporter

It's not too late for shoppers to collect some big bucks from Post Oak Mall to bid on a variety of merchandise at the mall's auction. The event will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the courtyard area between Dillard's Department Store and Zales Jewelers.

Assistant Mall Manager Maria Polites said Tuesday more than \$10,000 worth of merchandise, from a 1983 Pontiac T-1000 to a surf shirt, will be auctioned by Lloyd Joyce, a local auctioneer and former mayor of Bryan.

"We believe that this auction is a sort of back-to-school bonus for our shoppers," Polites said. Cash receipts and charge slips

from any Post Oak Mall merchant can be validated on the day of purchase at the Information Booth in exchange for "mall bucks."

Post Oak Mall bucks also can be obtained from the Ted Wilkinson, Inc. service department for service work worth up to \$200.

The bucks are equal in value to the receipts. Shoppers can redeem double mall bucks on Tuesdays as an extra bonus, Polites said.

"The Mall Bucks Auction is quite involved as opposed to other mall promotions because of the length of time and planning it takes to maintain the enthusiasm," Polites said.

All the merchants in the mall were contacted about six months ago, she said.

CBL Management, contract developer and owner of the mall, recommended having the auction because of its success at other malls, Polites said.

MEXICAN DRESSES \$24.98

Summer Clearance Sale at **ALFREDO'S**

FIRST ANNUAL HEALTH RUN
 co-sponsored by **Humana Hospital B-CS** & **Students of Texas A&M College of Medicine**

Saturday — October 22
10 K & 15 K Road Run 8:30 a.m.
Medical Mile 8:40 a.m.

Location and Course: 10K and 15K Road Races start and end at the new Medical Science Building on Agronomy Road and wind around parts of the TAMU campus on flat concrete and asphalt surfaces. GAC Sanction pending. The medical mile circles around the Medical Science Building.

Age Categories: Male and Female: 12 and under, 13-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50 & over. Awards: First and second place trophies for female and male winners of each event. Trophies to first place, medallions to second and third place finishers of each age category in each event. All awards distributed after the race.

Entry Fee: \$6.50 Includes Free Scrub Shirts to first 500 entrants, post race refreshments, first aid, and awards.

Deadline: Early entries must be received by October 18, 1983. Late Registration Fee: \$8.50 Race Day Registration 7:00-8:00 a.m. Race Materials: Runners may pick up numbers and scrub shirts on race day 7:00-8:00 a.m. Use of Proceeds: Proceeds to Texas Aggie Medical Student Association, '86 Race Organizers/Directors: TAMSA '86 For Information Call: Dr. McInnis-Bowers (409) 775-4200 or Ms. Frieden 845-7464

Mail Entries to: **Race Director** Make checks payable to **TAMSA '86** DETACH ENTRY
Office of Student Affairs
Medical Science Building
TAMU College of Medicine
College Station, Texas 77843

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____
 City, State _____ Zip _____
 Age As of Oct. 22, 1983 _____ Sex _____

Circle One:
 Race: 10K or 15K or Medical Mile Scrub Shirt Size S M L

Signature _____
 Parent/Guardian _____ (Signature if under 18)

WAIVER: In consideration of acceptance of this entry, I waive and release any and all claims for myself and my heirs against Humana Hospital and TAMSA '86 for any injury or illness which may directly or indirectly result from participation in this race. I further state that I have trained for this race and am in proper physical condition to participate. This entry must be signed by entrant; otherwise it is invalid. If entrants is under 18 years of age, parent or guardian must also sign entry.

LOUPOT'S 'OFF CAMPUS CORNER'

(At The Corner Across From The Post Office)

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS— YOU AND YOUR ROOMMATE

bathe and spits on the floor, keep in mind that you are learning to handle new situations and discovering more about people.

—Accept your roommate without trying to change him or her.

—All initiative will not come from your roommate. You may find yourself thinking, "She never opens up to me. I don't know anything about her." Well, have you opened up to your roommate? Have you brought him or her into your life?

—If you need a space of your own in the room or apartment, talk to your roommate about it, rather than announcing, "This is my area, keep your fat mits out of it." Ask your roommate if it is alright for an area or corner to be yours alone. Explain why you feel you need it.

—Try not to let your old friendships get in the way of your new relationship with your roommate. Your new roommate could teach you something new. Cutting your roommate out because he or she is not like you eliminates half the adventure of living with someone new.

—If you and your roommate cannot work out your differences, come see us at the Off Campus Corner. Our advisors are trained to handle roommate conflicts and will be glad to help you examine your options. We're located in Puryear Hall, directly across from the YMCA Building, or give us a call at 845-1741. Feel free to call or come by Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

COMING EVENTS

- ★ **OFF CAMPUS AGGIES:** Next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 21, 6:30 p.m. in Room 601, Rudder Tower.
- ★ **OCA APARTMENT PRESIDENT ELECTIONS:** Balloting will be held Wednesday, September 21, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the OCA office, Room 222 Pavilion and outside the Pavilion. Also, balloting will continue at the regular OCA meeting that evening at 6:30 p.m. in Room 601, Rudder Tower.
- ★ **OFF CAMPUS FISH NIGHT:** Off Campus Freshmen are invited to attend a party in their area. Hot dogs, sodas, and fun will be provided! See ya'll there!
- ★ **Tuesday, September 20** Scandia Apts. Pool 7:00 p.m.
- ★ **Thursday, September 22** Casa Del Sol Apts. Pool 7:00 p.m.
- ★ **Tuesday, September 27** Southwest Village Apts. Pool 7:00 p.m.
- ★ **Thursday, September 29** Plantation Oaks Apts. Pool 7:00 p.m.

Loupot's Off Campus Corner is sponsored each month by Loupot's Bookstore at Northgate as a service to Texas A&M students. Stories and artwork are provided by the staff of the Off Campus Center.