

THE OKLAHOMA SQUEEZINS

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The Oklahoma Accordion Club Newsletter

Fall Picnic

Oliver Delaney

Traditionally, the Oklahoma Accordion Club holds one major outdoor function in late summer. With the heat this year, the OAC has moved the picnic to the Fall. It will be held on Sunday, October 16. We plan to get together at 2:00 pm (a little earlier than usual).

Location

5701 Highley Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73111
405/427-3564

Food

Bring a side dish or salad (for the table)
Meat dishes will be provided

Soft Drinks

Will be provided. If you have a favorite beverage, you are welcome to bring it

Program

Very loose (you may be requested to say a few words about your musical endeavors -- be prepared)
Accordions welcome

Directions

5701 Highley Drive is on the northeast side of the city, not far from the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

1. Take I 44 (old Rte. 66) to Kelley Ave. (Kelley is between Broadway Extension and Eastern)

2. At Kelley go south to N.E. 55th St (entrance to the Wildewood addition)
3. At 55th, go east (only way you can go) to the end (approximately four blocks). That is Highley Drive.
4. Turn left. Property is on your left.
5. Turn left into the first drive and come up to the house.

This property is what is left of an old 350-acre milking farm. It was also the Decorator Show House in 1979, and now is the home of Oliver and Clare Delaney. It is seldom open to the public.

The OAC has prospered this year, with good programs, many new and enthusiastic members, and a strong presence in community playing. OAC really shines at the annual National Accordion Association Conference in Dallas. Its young orchestra grows. Internally, we have started a few projects of note that will bear fruit next year. What is needed is your company, if not every month, then at least every other month.

Come to the picnic, meet and greet old friends, and make new ones. You will love it!

Let us know if you will be able to attend the picnic: 405/427-3564.



Prez Sez

Oliver Delaney

Our annual Summer/Fall gathering is set for Sunday, October 16, starting at 2:00 p.m.

Directions to the home of Oliver and Clare Delaney are above. Again, the address is 5701 Highley Drive, Oklahoma City; zip is 73111 (for MapQuest search).

The theme is Oktoberfest (since we are gathering in October!), but it is not limited to just Oktober feasting. So, as you prepare a small dish for the feasting table (remember we are "snacking"

at 2:30 pm or so), think fruits and vegetables – light and tasty, also nuts and breads.

We would like to have some idea of your presence ("no hear = no show") so we can plan accordingly.

Accordions are welcome, along with a brief (two to three minute) introduction by you of your interest in and of the accordion. No accordion? No problem, just make up the "brief."

Let us know if you are coming by calling 405/427-3564.



The Treasurer Sez

Evie Albreski

I'm not sure that I want October to start because I become somewhat of a widow. With all the Oktoberfest parties in and around Oklahoma City, Dick is usually playing. Well, there's a good side to that as well. If he's playing out, he's not playing in (sounds like an accordion rule).

There is a sad note. Mary Cottingham, an accordion icon in the Tulsa area, passed away this month. She was 88 years young and had God, family, and the accordion as her hierarchy of life. She even had a sign in front of her studio that read "Have fun. Play the accordion." In all our travels, Dick and I never met Mary and perhaps we missed an opportunity to know and see what the accordion truly meant to this special person. She not only taught the accordion, she also taught piano and guitar for 70 years. We know she now has her greatest audience and is playing heavenly music.

In a melancholy mood, Dick began to reflect on where the accordion has been, and where it is going. In the late 50s and 60s, major accordion studios all over the United States had numerous accordion students. Dick had as many as 75 students a week. Then it happened! I can't mention names, and I don't want to slander instruments, but I will say "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog" did not help the accordion. In fact, the Rock and Roll revolution put the accordion on hold.

Fortunately for the accordion, Lawrence Welk, Myron Floren, and Dick Contino kept our instrument visible. This visibility added strength to the closet and want-to-be accordion players, so now we are enjoying a moderate rebirth of our instrument.

The start of accordion clubs has added strength to the resurgence. Like in any entity, our love to play is not enough. We must encourage the youth to play the accordion. Imagine, if each member of our Club "converted" a young student to the accordion, we would have 60+ new accordion players. Yes, 60+ new accordion players. We must continue to respect those accordion players who kept the accordion going. Treat yourself to something special. Look up "The Lawrence Welk Show: Tico Tico" on *YouTube*:

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqURmXMEGFI>)

and watch the artistry of Myron Floren play this classic (it's breathtaking). The accordion is not dead -- it just needs a little push.

Speaking of "push," we are getting close to the completion of our membership drive. Please continue your support of the OAC.



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September Meeting Minutes

Lois Roth

OAC Minutes September 11, 2011 Meeting

The meeting opened with Dan Orza playing "El Cumbanchero."

President Oliver Delaney called us to order. He welcomed everybody, especially the three members who had made the long trip from Tulsa. There were fourteen members and four guests present.

- We passed around an article about the OAC from the December 2010 issue of *Oklahoma Magazine* that is an interview with Dick Albreski and Frank Gesinski.
- Two accordions that are for sale were available for members to try.
- The annual club picnic will be on Sunday, October 16, at the Delaney home.
- Margaret Oldham announced that she has screen-printing equipment. If anyone has a place to set it up, we could print OAC tee shirts for the Club. Her suggestion was tabled.
- Ann Lopez led us in a musical game of *Name That Tune*. Lois R. won the chocolate prize.



- Bob Mansfield performed two original compositions: "Dance of the Gypsies" and "Mischievous Swing." He also explained his

bellows shake method to us.



- The orchestra played "Westphalia Waltz," "Schnee-Walzer" ("Snow Waltz"), and "Bohemian Polka."



- The music ended with Janet Haskin performing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."



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The Great Accordion Myth Uncovered

Joe Petosa

The purpose of this article is to explain in detail the myth about the most frequently asked question when buying an accordion: "What does the accordion weigh?" This article would be completely pointless if accordions were sold by the pound. The truth is that all accordions with the same musical features will be similar in weight, give or take only a pound or two. Many accordions have shed a few pounds due to pre-manufactured components being substituted for plastic or metal in lieu of the traditional high quality sound of unique woods. The types of material accordions are made from are an important function of balance and playability. The only way to substantially reduce scale weight is to compromise musical ability or physical size. But there are more important things to consider than weight alone. So let us begin to understand what really makes an accordion lighter or heavier.

Firstly, the accordion can be made smaller (lighter) or larger (heavier) by changing the number of playing notes and/or reed sets. The fewer notes and/or reed sets, the smaller an accordion can be made. The other alternative to obtain a smaller size accordion while maintaining the same amount of notes is by reducing the individual key width and spacing of the bass buttons. This design is for smaller statured adults or, more commonly, children. The most prevalent misconception is that fewer bass buttons means a smaller and lighter accordion. This couldn't be further from the truth. There are full-size 41-note accordions with 72 basses identical in size and weight to a 120-bass. Accordions are available with less than 39 notes, but maintain 120 basses. So let's understand what and why you should know in order to make an informed and appropriate decision.

Changes on the bass side are unlike the treble side. There is not much difference between a 48-bass and 120-bass accordion, other than the number of buttons and the spacing. The standard Stradella bass system offers a 12 note musical range using either four or five sets of reeds with a respective three or four octave musical range. The bass reeds are called: Bass, Tenor, Alto, Contralto, and Soprano (the Soprano set adds an additional approx. 4.5 oz. of weight). Whether four or five sets of reeds and 48 or 120 basses, the bass mechanics are nearly identical with 12-bass fulcrum rods and valves along with 12-chord fulcrum rods and valves running the length of the bass box. The difference is the number of additional buttons that play a duplicate note. The

purpose and advantage of more buttons is to ergonomically improve the player's ability to access different bass buttons (the same note), but without having to make huge jumps, thus making it easier to articulate.

In essence, the more bass buttons, the more accessible and efficient the fingering. The additional weight per chord button is an amazing 0.009 oz. The scale weight difference between a 120- and 60-bass accordion, everything else being equal, is a mere 6 oz.!

Understand that the right-hand note range and the overall keyboard length measurement from key end to key end determine the size of an accordion. This is why we see keyboard measurements described in specifications as 19¼", 18", 17", etc. If you divide the keyboard measurement (i.e. 18") by 24 (the number of white keys on standard 41-key accordion), you will obtain the width measurement of each white key, less the amount of space between the keys. The spacing between keys will vary depending on the quality of the accordion. The least amount of space the better. Also, check out the lateral movement of the keys. See how far one can be moved side to side. A well made keyboard will not allow one key to move laterally and touch another. The bass side is designed to accompany the musical range of the right hand. Therefore, the less keyboard note range the less bass buttons necessary. Standard Right and Left combinations are 41 treble and 120 bass (shown as 120/41), 37 treble and 96 bass (shown as 96/37), 34 treble and 72 bass (shown as 72/34), and 26 treble and 48 or 12 bass (shown as, you got it, 48/26). Don't be afraid of having too many bass buttons, they don't add weight, or make the accordion larger. Besides, when the accordion is on, how do you know how many there are? How many can you see?

The second principal to understand is the accordion is something you wear, like a dress, suit, or pair of shoes. One thing we all do before buying clothing is to try the items on to make sure they fit right and feel comfortable. Most of us will try on a few different items to see which one fits best. And of course a tailor-made suit fits the best. Additional labor and skill is taken to ensure a proper fit. Accordions are made in the same way. Some have taken additional labor and skill for a better balance. Why would you buy an accordion without trying it and/or comparing it with others? Like clothing, accordions fit differently, and every accordion will fit an individual differently. Accordions should be

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compared to see which one feels the most comfortable to you. A correctly fitting instrument can help improve your learning and performance ability. The idea that accordions with the same keyboard length, reed sets, and playing notes are alike is absolutely untrue.

The most critical aspects in choosing the right accordion are: Fit, Balance and Compression. You will soon learn this is more important than the “scale weight” (this is referred to as the “playable weight”).

Fit is the first step. In order to have complete control of your accordion, it must properly fit your stature. Always try an accordion when seated. The length of the keyboard should begin just below your collarbone, and end slightly resting on the inside of your right thigh (this prevents movement when closing your bellows). Second, the accordion must remain stationary. It is important that your accordion be secure and not move while playing. With the correct fit, the accordion is locked in place with your shoulder straps and wedged with 60% of the weight on your lap and 40% on the shoulders. We know what it feels like to have a large accordion on...it is overwhelming. But too small can be just as difficult to play. If it is too short, then the accordion is not able to rest on your lap. Therefore, 100% of the weight is pressed on the shoulders, making it feel heavier. This also allows for too much movement and constant re-adjusting of the position of the accordion. Having to keep adjusting your straps to re-position the accordion back to that comfortable spot adds additional physical effort. If, over a period of playing time, the accordion starts to feel heavier, then all the extra effort takes away from conserving your physical energy in playing.

Try a back strap as well. The most important purpose of the back strap is to hold the shoulder straps together allowing no movement of the accordion. If a back strap is too low, this takes weight off the shoulders by making the straps loose on top. This allows your straps to slide and move. Keeping the back strap higher or diagonal (high on the left straps across to a lower position on the right) secures the shoulder straps from sliding; this, in turn, keeps the accordion stationary. When the straps stay in place, your accordion will stay in place. No extra energy is expended fighting your straps. Once you find the proper size accordion that “fits,” we can move on to understanding the next elements that are also important in obtaining the perfect accordion for you.

Balance is a crucial and intricate part of an accordion. For example: using a 10-pound dumbbell or object with a similar weight, hold the object in your hand against your chest. You’re holding 10 lbs. Now, fully extend your arm in front of you. Does the weight feel the same or a lot heavier? Even though the scale told us it is 10 lbs, it feels much heavier. Did the scale lie? Of course not, it’s called leverage. The further weight gets away from the center point, being you, the heavier weight feels. Another example: what would be more difficult to carry, a 10” x 10” x 10” carton (40-inch circumference) weighing 10 pounds, or a 5’ x 5’ x 5’ carton (20-foot circumference) weighing 5 pounds? If you weren’t told the dimensions, you would choose the 5 lb. carton because it is lighter. But, knowing the physical size, the 5 lb. carton would be very difficult to carry due to its large diameter. Where weight is located is more important than the weight itself. Did you ever try to bench press when one side of the bar has more weight than the other, making it more difficult to press up because you were also compensating for the imbalance of the bar. It’s much easier to press up with an equal amount of weight on both sides. Having bellows, the accordion is an instrument that is in constant motion. When weight is evenly balanced, the more control you have. The more control you have, the less weight you feel.

Compression is extremely important. The fit and balance help overcome several relevant weight issues. If you are not able to physically pick the accordion up off the floor, then you need to actually find the accordion that you can pick up. You would need to deal with the musical limitation based on your physical limitation. You might consider starting an exercise program in order to pick up the accordion you would like to play. If you take your playing seriously, then consider that all athletes, amateur and professional, work out to help physically support their activity and to help injury. The accordion is a physical instrument, and you should consider physical exercise in order to maintain your playing ability and help avoid some long-term injuries. Let’s assume you can pick your accordion up onto your lap without difficulty. Most complaints of weight come from playing after an extended period of time. This proves the point that it’s not the physical weight (you can pick it up, right?), but it’s the playable weight that you should be concerned with.

Compression of the accordion refers to the control of airflow utilized by the bellows. The

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Smith Sisters



The Smith Sisters (and Mom) at work!

Becca (age 6), Bria (age 9), and Maddie (age 11) performed at the *Chapel Creek Winery* in Concho, Oklahoma last September 11. They played a mini concert that included Czech, Polish, and

Jewish tunes. Becca had recently joined the previous duo, making the group a trio. The girls love to play, and their music shows it.



The Great Accordion Myth Uncovered

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most common thought is that if your accordion leaks, then there is a problem with the bellows. 90% of air leaks come from the keyboard and/or bass valves not properly seated. This article concerns new instruments without any initial problems and/or used accordions in need of repair. The main facet of compression is to show how much air is required to make the reeds respond. What is the “expression” range of the accordion? Play a simple musical phrase with a single reed selected. How little bellows movement is required to make each note play equally and in pitch? Play the same phrase softly, and then with power “forte” to see how much expression can be obtained. Think of a rating scale between one and ten, with one being the least amount of air, and ten being the hardest playing of the bellows prior to the reeds choking (stopping the reed from playing due to too much air pressure from the bellows). Do you sense a lot of expression or very little? An accordion with better expression is easier to play because it has more control. Try the same musical phrase on a few accordions using the identical register and consistent volume. Does one take less bellow movement in and out to accomplish the same phrase? Remember, the accordion is a live, breathing instrument, an extension of your own heart and lungs. Vocalists learn how to control their airflow efficiently, and they don’t run out of breath when holding a phrase. Learning proper bellow technique is a must, but the accordion should also assist you. The more air the accordion requires to play or “follow your expression,” the more physical energy used. The more physical energy employed,

the more you will experience muscle fatigue, and then the accordion becomes (feels) heavier. The weight hasn’t changed, but it sure feels like it has.

The reed and reed-leather quality has just as an important role as the compression of an accordion. The better the quality -- hand-finished versus machine, hand-made versus hand-finished -- can dictate how much air is needed to make the reed play. We won’t go into detail about reeds, which could be next, but suffice it to say that reed and, equally, reed-leather quality play an important part in playable weight. Note: the three basic categories of reeds do not necessarily mean that one class is better than the next. There are several qualities within each category, meaning that some machine reeds can be better than some hand-finished, and some hand-finished can be better than some hand-made. Don’t always be skewered by only referring to one of the three categories.

So, it’s not the weight of the accordion, but the fit, balance, and compression that play a much more important role in how much an accordion weighs. Your quest is to find a balanced, energy-efficient accordion that you can manage comfortably, play for hours, feels like an extension of your body, and allows you to express your musical ideas freely.

I hope that this discussion clarifies the essential elements you should consider in choosing the right instrument for you. Be guided by professional advice, but ultimately the choice should be yours.

• *Courtesy of Petosa Accordions and Spokane & Inland Northwest Accordion Club and their “Squeezin and Pleezin” newsletter*



Oklahoma Accordion Club Membership Form

Name _____ Date _____

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Phone (____) _____ Birthday (mm/dd) ____/____ (optional)

Newsletter

I prefer to receive the monthly newsletter, the Oklahoma Squeezins, by:

- ☐ E-mail at address (above) or at _____
- ☐ Conventional post (snail mail)

Membership Dues

The OAC membership year runs from January through December. Membership cost is prorated quarterly for new members.

- ☐ Primary Membership is \$16.00 per year per individual.
- ☐ Family Membership is \$8.00 per year for each additional family member when accompanied by a Primary Membership.
- ☐ Lifetime Membership is a one-time fee of \$180.
- ☐ Youth Membership is complimentary for accordion-playing youth through age 18.

Your Status (please check all that apply):

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