



*Oregon Bluegrass Association*  
[www.oregonbluegrass.org](http://www.oregonbluegrass.org)

# Bluegrass Express

## Meet Clayton Knight: Our OBA President

*Our OBA President*

**S**hortly after Clayton Knight assumed the leadership of the Oregon Bluegrass Association in fall 2018, Chairman Chris, as he is known to his many friends, met with me to talk about his vision for a more inclusive family OBA.

Over eggs and bacon, we discussed the history of the OBA, what the OBA is doing now, what it can be, and what the OBA means. I also learned about Knight's history, his music experience and how he became involved in the OBA.

Knight's love of music began with radio and then with lessons at the age of eight. When young Clayton was eleven, one thing happened: he saw the Beatles perform on the hit television show and he wanted his first guitar. Knight became curious about how "The Beatles were making these new sounds and he started reading books of "how to play instruments." Knight returned to himself as being "the most self motivated" in their family, because "myself" motivation to play was to get girls.

### FIRST EXPOSURE TO BLUEGRASS

In 1973, a friend invited to ride from Baltimore to Virginia and during the drive, Knight happened upon the Dixie Chicks.



Bluegrass Festival in Gallopers, Virginia. The year, the festival featured legends such as Earl Scruggs, Monroe and the Dixie Chicks. Knight said he was "submerged" in the crowd. "The Bluegrass festival changed the way I listened to music," says Knight, "because I didn't have to struggle to figure out how the music is made!"

The year continued, Knight joined the Dixie, joined a band and built a career as a steel engineer, returned to school to study

By Chris Cooper  
introduction and enjoyed actively pursuing music. Knight regards the "natural opportunity" to go out to live music.

It was during a great cross-country road trip that Knight visited the Emerald Hollow Center and walked out with a mandolin. To spare the remainder of the trip, teaching himself to play his new instrument.

Soon Knight headed to Portland, where he discovered the Old Time Inn and the OBA. Another Inn, where he met Tim Sherry and April and Pat Parker. In 2001, Clayton attended "Bluegrass for the first time. It was those "Bluegrass jams" that Clayton Knight experienced many of those "I've found my people" moments.

Knight observed that these jams at "Bluegrass included" "much of what I saw in Gallopers, Virginia" - the inclusivity, the jams, the vibrancy on stage. "The inclusivity is what I'd think makes these jams fun."

Knight continued, "The foundation of Bluegrass grew up a time when if you wanted music, you had to make it, you had to sing it. Old Time played the mandolin because for me the guitar and the

*Continued on page 11*

