



DIANE DANIEL/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The old Cleveland County courthouse in Shelby, N.C., houses the Earl Scruggs Center, a museum that explores Scruggs' career and the history of bluegrass music.

NORTH CAROLINA

Y'all Strum Back Now

*Museum puts roots
of bluegrass music at
visitors' fingertips*

The mandolin was available, so I grabbed it. Beth Cook strummed the Dobro, and her father, Glenn Reep, plucked on a banjo. Two other members of the Cook family, husband Chris and teenage daughter Emily, filled out the sound on guitar and fiddle.

My new bandmates and I had connected at Common Threads, a corner hangout of sorts at the shiny new Earl Scruggs Center in the small city of Shelby, N.C., an hour west of Charlotte. Scruggs, who single-handedly revolutionized bluegrass with his fancy three-finger picking style, grew up down

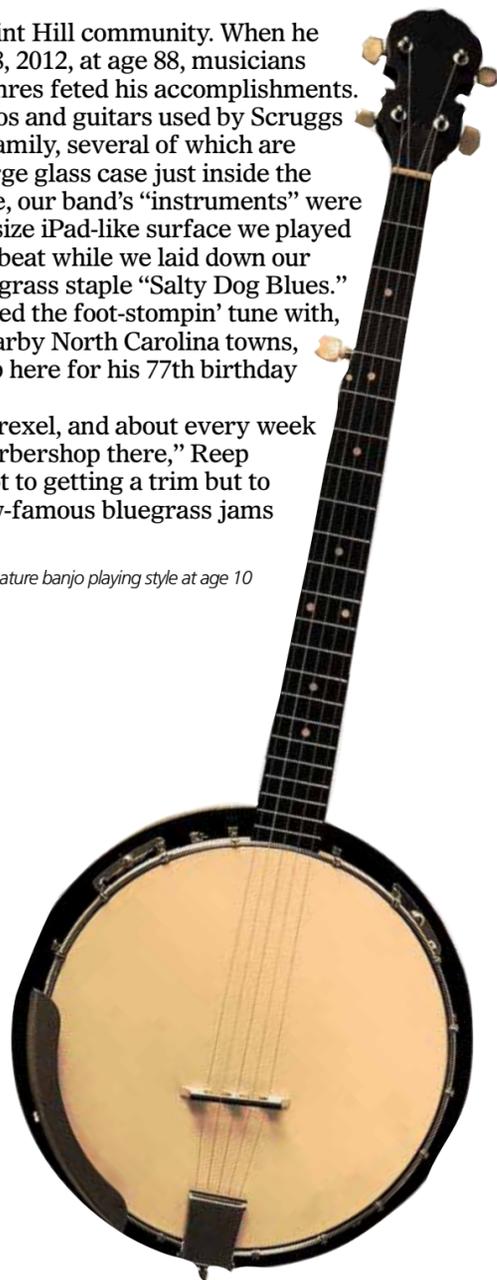
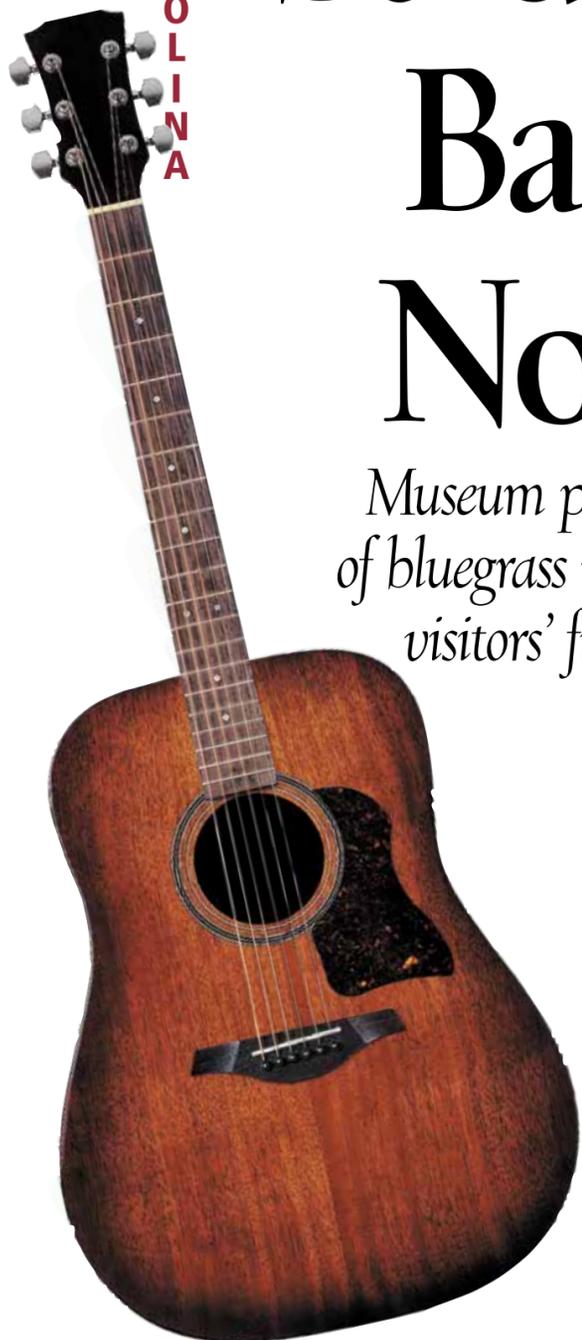
By DIANE DANIEL
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

the road in the Flint Hill community. When he died, on March 28, 2012, at age 88, musicians from multiple genres feted his accomplishments.

Unlike the banjos and guitars used by Scruggs and his musical family, several of which are on display in a large glass case just inside the museum entrance, our band's "instruments" were virtual. The oversize iPad-like surface we played them on kept the beat while we laid down our tracks to the bluegrass staple "Salty Dog Blues." The family I shared the foot-stompin' tune with, who hail from nearby North Carolina towns, had brought Reep here for his 77th birthday in early March.

"I grew up in Drexel, and about every week I still go to the barbershop there," Reep said, referring not to getting a trim but to attending the now-famous bluegrass jams

► SEE STRUM PAGE 10F
Scruggs developed his signature banjo playing style at age 10

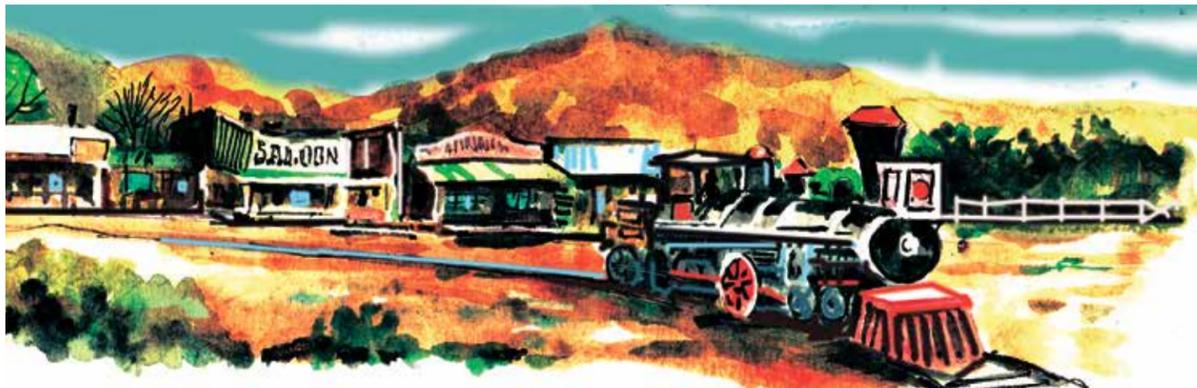


IF YOU GO



DIANE DANIEL/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST
The Earl Scruggs Center lets bluegrass fans, including Glenn Reep, strum for themselves.

Earl Scruggs Center: 103 S. Lafayette St., Shelby, N.C., 704-487-6233, earlscruggscenter.org. Open Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays-Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. Admission: \$12; seniors and college students \$8; ages 6 to 17 \$5.



MIKE MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL
Bonnie Springs Ranch features horseback riding, a replica Western village, a petting zoo, a rustic bar and restaurant and a motel.

OUT THERE



LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL FILE PHOTO
Get a close-up look at some of Red Rock's wild burros during a 1-mile hike Thursday.

Bonnie Springs remains popular draw

After more than 60 years in operation, Bonnie Springs Ranch still draws crowds year-round. The privately owned dude ranch is minutes from Las Vegas, surrounded by the arresting scenery of the Red Rock National Conservation Area.

Bonnie Springs offers country-style experiences such as horseback riding, a replica Western village with shops and entertainment, a petting zoo, a rustic bar and restaurant and the only motel accommodations in the area.

Bonnie Springs Ranch sits along the scenic loop created by West Charleston Boulevard, state Route 159 and state Route 160. The entrance is south of Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, about 5½ miles past the turnoff to the Red Rock Canyon visitor center.

Natural springs on the property attracted early native people, overland traders on the Old Spanish Trail and, in 1846, explorer John C. Fremont. Frontier times brought ranchers to springs and meadows throughout Red Rock.

In 1952, Al and Bonnie Levinson purchased the property to develop a tourist destination. They named the ranch after Bonnie and built a home for themselves as well as a bar, restaurant and stables for visitors. The Western village and the motel came later.

The petting zoo of domesticated livestock, native wildlife, birds and exotic animals grew from a collection

Margo Bartlett Pesek
TRIP OF THE WEEK



of abandoned and rescued animals that Bonnie Levinson could not turn away. They seem well cared for and adequately housed.

The paved ranch road runs a couple of miles to dead-end near the replica town called Old Nevada and the ranch-style building that houses the bar and restaurant. A side road accesses the motel and the horse corrals. The motel offers a variety of themed rooms, some with hot tubs and some with kitchenettes. A pool is open in hot weather. For room rates and reservations, call the ranch at 702-875-4191.

There is limited parking near the central facilities, which is usually adequate for weekday visitors. On weekends and holidays, when the ranch attracts larger crowds, it's best to park in the large parking area just off the main road. The lot is served by a small-sized railroad with passenger cars that makes round-trips to Old Nevada on weekends and holidays. The train ride is free up to the attractions, but if you want to complete the round-trip back to the parking area, be ready to show a

ticket stub or restaurant receipt.

Visitors are welcome to explore the ranch facilities free of charge. Restaurant patrons enjoy watching the action on and around a large pond in front of the eatery's windows. Ducks and geese swim by and turtles bask on rocks or muddy banks. Visitors walking the grounds can purchase food pellets for the waterfowl. Old-timers might remember when the pond was stocked with fish. For a fee, you could rent fishing equipment, and if you caught anything, the kitchen staff would cook it for you to eat in the dining room.

The petting zoo can be accessed from inside Old Nevada. The entrance fee for both attractions is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Visitors can browse in several shops and galleries along boardwalks. Entertainment includes occasional staged shootouts in the dusty street, a musical review and weekend karaoke and live musical groups.

The horse facilities are south of the restaurant. Guided trail rides and pony rides are available. Horses are also boarded there. The first ride starts at 9 a.m. Hourlong excursions through scenic ranch property cost \$60. Riders must be at least 6 years old. The horses can carry riders up to 250 pounds. Dress for the activity, which is out in the sun on dusty trails. Wear a hat, sunblock and closed shoes or boots. Riders can sign up in the bar or call the ranch for details.

Margo Bartlett Pesek's column appears on Sundays.

HIKES

Red Rock Canyon: On Monday, join a geologist to discuss the rock formations, plants and animals encountered on a moderately strenuous, 2-mile hike along the La Madre Fault. Tuesday through Thursday, take a ranger-led or self-guided nature walk and see what adventures and discoveries you can find. On Wednesday, join a ranger to look for and identify birds on an easy, 1-mile hike. On Thursday, observe some of Red Rock's wild burros on a moderate, 1-mile hike. On Friday, take a walk on the wild side with a moderate, 4½-mile hike in the Rainbow Mountain Wilderness. On April 20, enjoy an easy-to-moderate, 3-mile hike in the picturesque Calico Basin.

For more information or to sign up for hikes, call 702-515-5367.

Around the Bend Friends: This group of people 50 and older who are interested in hiking and related social activities plans a three- to four-hour moderate hike each Saturday. To learn more about the group and the hike, call 702-823-2355 or visit the club's website at www.aroundthebendfriends.com.

OTHER PROGRAMS

Red Rock Canyon: On Tuesday, view some of the arachnids, reptiles, birds and mammals found in Red Rock. Venomous animals will also be available. Living and preserved specimens will be on display, and discussion and questions are encouraged. On Friday, join other volunteers to help clean up trash along a designated trail. On Saturday, join local artist Maria Arango Diener at the visitor center to learn the art of wood-block printing and contribute your carved piece to a community artwork.

For more information, call 702-515-5367.

At the Earl Scruggs Center in Shelby, N.C., volunteer guide Clyde Buckner points out a statue in the likeness of the banjo virtuoso.



DIANE DANIEL/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

► STRUM: Scruggs developed his signature playing style at age 10

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9F

at the tiny Drexel Barber Shop. "It's always full of people, and it don't cost a thing."

With the multimedia table's "Pickin' Party!" conquered, we explored its other attraction, an interactive encyclopedia, with intersecting information about artists, instruments, genre, place, time and influence cleverly summoned by stroking overlapping strings.

"Look, there's George Shuffler," Chris Cook said when he landed on a photograph of the cross-picking guitar innovator and former member of the Stanley Brothers. "I know him. He's from Valdese." Cook swiped the image with his hand and slid it across the table like a hockey puck, another nifty feature, to his wife.

The two-level museum, with most information downstairs, is easy to maneuver. Friendly volunteer guides elaborate on displays and make sure that your earbuds, free with a ticket purchase, are properly plugged into the many audio kiosks.

I have to think that Scruggs would be proud of this place (his family remains involved in some decision-making). He was still alive when the planning was in full swing and was pleased that it was set in the old Cleveland County courthouse, built in 1907 in the center of what is now historic Shelby's attractive town square. A guide told me that Scruggs said that when he was young, the courthouse was the finest building he had ever seen — and it's still quite magnificent. Several exhibits, rich in graphics and photographs, explore Shelby's past, when the once-vital textile manufacturing industry was fed by surrounding cotton fields.

It's a good idea to start with the head-bouncing introductory film, in which Scruggs and some of his famous fans, such as Steve Martin and Bela Fleck, are interviewed. Scruggs, whose cotton-farming family all played music to relax, tells the story of how he was

noodling on his banjo — at age 10 — and developed his signature style. "All of a sudden, I started playing with that middle finger. I went through the house saying, 'I got it, I got it!'" an aged Scruggs recalls.

Several gallery stations examine the evolution of the banjo, a descendant of the African akonting, and the bluegrass sound that Scruggs created. At the "Banjo Breakdown" feature, you can view clear-front banjos being played from the inside out to compare styles. Scruggs' own musical growth is detailed, too. Although he lived for old-time music, he was no musical old-timer. He parted ways with Lester Flatt after two decades, in 1969, when the two were still the most famous bluegrass band in the country (in part thanks to major TV exposure on "The Beverly Hillbillies") because his musical mate wasn't interested in change.

One of Scruggs' quotes sums it up: "You can't encore the past. If I see a bright light shining out there, I want to go toward it." Not only did he form the rock-bluegrass band the Earl Scruggs Revue in 1969, the then-middle-age star also shared the stage with up-and-coming folk singers Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and the Byrds and jammed with Ravi Shankar and Elton John.

I learned that his wife, Louise, was forward-thinking too. With encouragement from her husband, she went on to be the Nashville music industry's first female manager, and a strong-willed one at that. (The couple met at the Grand Ole Opry and ultimately settled in Nashville.)

Near the end of my tour, I met up with Reep again in the "petting zoo," where a dozen banjos sat waiting for us. While strumming the actual instruments, Reep and I agreed between laughs that we were best suited for the audience instead of the stage.

Before leaving, I couldn't resist a last run at the "Pickin' Party," where I captivated a crowd of one with my rendition of "Little Sadie." This time I reached for the banjo.

TRAVEL CENTER

LOW FARES FROM LAS VEGAS

Published fare for a round-trip ticket on the U.S. routes most traveled as of Thursday.



Your dollar will buy...

Rates paid domestically for each dollar changed, as of Thursday. These figures are intended only as a guide. Rates might be more favorable abroad.

Argentina (peso)	8.00
Australia (dollar)	1.06
Brazil (real)	2.19
Canada (dollar)	1.09
Chile (peso)	544
Czech Republic (koruna)	19.8
Egypt (pound)	6.98
European (euro)	0.72
(Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain)	
Great Britain (pound)	0.60
Hong Kong (dollar)	7.75
Hungary (forint)	220
India (rupee)	60.1
Indonesia (rupiah)	11,355
Israel (shekel)	3.47
Japan (yen)	101
Mexico (peso)	13.0
New Zealand (dollar)	1.15
Norway (krone)	5.92
Philippines (peso)	44.4
Poland (zloty)	3.00
Russia (ruble)	35.6
Singapore (dollar)	1.25
South Africa (rand)	10.4
South Korea (won)	1,037
Sweden (krona)	6.53
Switzerland (franc)	0.88
Taiwan (dollar)	30.0
Thailand (baht)	32.3
Venezuela (bolivar)	6.29

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS
REVIEW-JOURNAL
NEVADA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Richard Eng
HORSE RACING

LAS VEGAS
REVIEW-JOURNAL
NEVADA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

John L. Smith
COMMENTARY

TOURS OF DISTINCTION
Quality Escorted Tours

MAY

- Ramona Pageant & Huntington Gardens
- Zion National Park

JUNE

- Oregon Trails & Portland Rose Festival
- Musical "Wizard of Oz" at Tuacahn
- Solvag & Lompoc Flower Festival

JULY

- Yellowstone & Glacier National Parks

CALL FOR OUR NEW SPRING BROCHURE

454-3838

www.toursofdistinctionlv.com