

# Festival this year honors two faithful volunteers

By Christina Beringer

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This year's Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival is dedicated in honor of the longtime friendship and support of two volunteers who passed away this year, Janet Phelps and Bill Summers, who both contributed to and faithfully attended the festival.

Janet Anne Phelps was born June 11, 1934, in Boulder, Colo., and died in Colby June 14 at the age of 78.

After marrying her second husband, Maurice Phelps of Colby, Aug. 2, 1997, she became an avid supporter of all types of music and arts, especially the Western Plains Arts Association and Pickin' on the Plains.

She had a five-year battle with breast cancer which began when she was diagnosed in 2007. She drove to Hays for treatment with Maurice and her daughter Marcia at her side.

She is known in town for earning an associate degree from Colby Community College in 2006 alongside her daughter, Gwen. She told friends she decided to earn her degree following the death of her first husband, George Halderman, in 1991.

Active throughout Colby, she was a member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, an election worker and was the bookkeeper for the Colby Senior Center.

Bill Summers was born Sept. 14, 1939, in Penokee, and died June 15 at the age of 72 in Firestone, Colo.

"Bill was a self-taught guitar player who was a master at

blues and country," said Susan McLemore, Pickin' on the Plains committee member. "Throughout his life, he was the lead guitarist and vocalist for several bands.... He enjoyed solo performing ... and played at Pickin' on the Plains for several years with Larry Booth and friends."

He was an avid community supporter, providing sound at area events such as the Colby Rod Run, Prairie Heritage Day and Picnic in the Park events, said McLemore.

"He served on the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Committee almost since its inception," she said, "sharing his expertise and providing his sound equipment for years, running sound for the entire festival weekend, helping select bands and helping with fund raisers.

"Long before the festival had any sound equipment, Bill provided the entire setup and basically helped to get the festival up and going."

McLemore said that in tribute to Summers, a newer sound system will be purchased with proceeds from memorial money and will be dedicated to him, along with the 2012 festival, so that his memory and contributions will be with Pickin' on the Plains for years to come.

Summers and his wife Karen provided a Blueridge guitar as



Bill Summers, shown above in a photo from several years ago, was one of the founders and a long-time supporter of Pickin' on the Plains.

a fund raiser for this year's festival. His expertise, support and friendship will be greatly missed, festival committee members said.

## Bluegrass Gospel Homecoming will bring musicians together

By Sam Dieter

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Sunday at the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival will be different from years past.

Instead of a full lineup of bands, the festival will come to a close with a "bluegrass gospel homecoming."

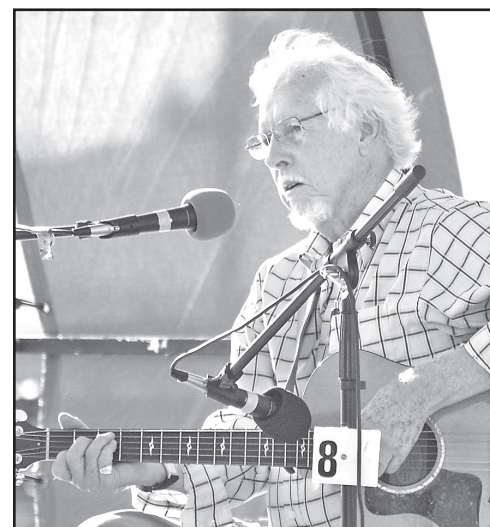
By gospel homecoming, the organizers mean "a big, controlled jam session" of 16 or more musicians, all on stage at once, said festival volunteer Mark Johnson.

"There will be one or two or maybe three of the musicians featured on a particular song, and then they'll move over, and different people will be featured on different parts," Johnson said. "Sometimes it will be one person; sometimes it will be a duet."

As many as four musicians will be featured at one time, Johnson said. The entire time, the rest of the performers will back them up.

"That's the whole theory behind the whole thing is to do things completely different," he said.

Three bands, the Sappa Strings, Triple L and High Plains Tradition, will play in the morning but not in the homecoming. Musicians taking part in the homecoming should include the McLemores, Driven and Larry Booth and festival emcee Marshal Allen Bailey and his



Larry Booth is just one of the musicians who will take the stage during the Bluegrass Gospel Homecoming on Sunday.

wife Janey.

Some musicians who were not booked in the rest of the festival will perform. Johnson will sing and act as emcee for the event, which will last from 11 a.m. to 12:40 p.m.

"That's going to be the end of the festival right there," he said.

Past festivals had music until about 3 p.m., but with the audience growing in recent years, he said, some may need longer to get home.



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