

Welcome to  
Jazzaffair!

# THE Kaweah Commonwealth

A JOURNAL FOR THOSE WHO LABOR AND WHO THINK

50¢

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
THREE RIVERS, CA  
PERMIT NO. 20

Volume 18, No. 16

www.kaweahcommonwealth.com

April 17 - 23, 2009

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

## Then and now: Music in the mountains



ALL THAT JAZZ: A sampling of local jazz memorabilia that is on display throughout the weekend at Three Rivers Historical Museum.

### Jazzaffair: The more it changes, the more it stays the same

By JOHN ELLIOTT

If you ask any one of the legion of badge-holders who return to Three Rivers year after year, you're likely to hear that the reason they keep coming to Jazzaffair is for the music, the quaint small venues, the scenery, to enjoy the camaraderie of the musicians and their fans, to visit with old friends, and the hospitality of Three Rivers. Of course, it's all of the above and more that makes Jazzaffair a premier annual event.

The success of Jazzaffair is no accident and happens because of the hard work of a core of dedicated members of the Sierra Traditional Jazz Club (STJC). Every now and then, the musical chairs on the board of directors change slightly as members come and go.

Little tweaks and adjustments are made to Jazzaffair so that each year runs at least as smoothly as the last and that you can always count on where you will be next year — same place, same time. Probably the biggest reason that this Jazzaffair works is that there is continuity in the jazz community — the jazz club is the jazz band, and the extended High Sierra family is the nucleus of the Sierra Traditional Jazz Club. That's how this jazz thing started here in the 1970s and so it remains that way today.

Rusty Crain, formerly an assistant Jazzaffair director, is now the current director of Jazzaffair. He succeeds Mary Scharn (STJC board member) who guided the event from 2006 to 2008; before

Mary, it was Sue Mills, the former manager of High Sierra who served as Jazzaffair director for many years beginning in the 1980s until she retired in 2005.

In 2007, Rusty took over as manager of High Sierra Jazz Band after Sue Mills retired from that time-honored position. Rusty is the son of Chet Crain, who was a founding member of the local jazz club in 1974 and former manager of High Sierra Jazz Band. So the beat goes on and the song, in some most important ways, remains the same.

To learn more about the history of this Jazzaffair and its claim to being the oldest continuously running jazz festival in the West Coast tradition, be sure to take

—see JAZZAFFAIR, page 10

### Historic horn is Kaweah Country musical tradition

By BRIAN ROTHAMMER

Fred Zurcher's alphorn has been silent in Mineral King for 20 years. In times past, resonant tones emitting from the 12-foot-long horn cascaded through mountains and meadows. The effect was mystical.

"People would come out of the

woods and be fascinated to hear and see such a large instrument in such a remote place," reminisced Fred's daughter, Esther Zurcher of Three Rivers.

So charmed were all who heard it that even mules at the Mineral King Pack Station would rush to the edge of their corral to get closer to the sound when it was played near the Eagle Lake trailhead, said Esther.

So how did such an instrument, handcrafted in Switzerland of spruce strips bound with birch

—see MUSIC, page 6

### RV loses brakes on Generals Highway

A family's vacation hit a bump in the road — actually, the side of a cliff — when the 32-foot RV in which they were traveling lost its brakes on the steepest portion of the Generals Highway in Sequoia National Park. The mishap, which could have turned deadly serious, occurred Wednesday, April 8, at about 1:30 p.m., just above Amphitheater Point, 11 miles inside the park entrance.

A family consisting of parents, their four children, and a dog, was descending the steep, narrow road when the driver realized that the vehicle had no brakes.

"The driver made the quick (and very smart) decision to turn into a cliff wall on the uphill side while he was going only 10 mph before the RV picked up speed and became unstoppable," reported Alex Picavet, parks information officer.

Sequoia District Ranger Dan Pontbriand was the first on the scene. There were no injuries, yet enough damage to the RV that it had to be towed.

### THREE RIVERS LIONS CLUB RECOGNITION NIGHT HONOREES

- 1995— Sue Mills
- 1996— Sandy Owen
- 1997— Kevin Bohl
- 1998— Gaynor McKee
- 1999— Mary Staberg
- 2000— Jack and Joyce Nielsen
- 2001— Three Rivers Volunteer Ambulance founders: Beth Atherton, Frances Beutler, Ollie Craig (?-2005), Richard Langton, Pat Lauder (1920-2007), Una Stalcup (1917-2003), Bernie Wollenman (1913-2006)
- 2002— Janine Chilcott
- 2003— Kent Owen
- 2004— Trish Stivers
- 2005— John Hanggi
- 2006— Reverend Monsignor John Griesbach
- 2007— Three Rivers Hospice workers: Vera Brochini (1941-2007), Mary Cabello, Judy Fiscus, Jan Harlow, Martha Kalivas, Charlene Natoli, Pam Smera, Paul and Nancy Smith, Virpi Takala
- 2008— Estelle Christensen
- 2009— Pat Crain (see information about this year's honoree on page 4 in this issue).

KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •							WEATHER WATCH
Saturday, April 18	Sunday, April 19	Monday, April 20	Tuesday, April 21	Wednesday, April 22	Thursday, April 23	Friday, April 24	LAKE LOG (as of Thursday, April 16) 659.49 feet pool elevation 83,877 acre feet 690 cfs inflow 47 cfs outflow Lake Kaweah is currently rising approximately one foot in elevation per day.
Sunny Hi 86 • Lo 55	Sunny Hi 90 • Lo 57	Sunny Hi 95 • Lo 57	Sunny Hi 94 • Lo 57	Sunny Hi 86 • Lo 50	Mostly sunny Hi 81 • Lo 51	Partly cloudy Hi 76 • Lo 46	