

# BLUES NEWS



## Message from the President:

Hello and Happy New Year! I'd like to thank those on the previous boards who did not return for their support with moving CBS forward. Our biggest challenge this year is to implement the CBS Scholarship and Educational Fund initiated by John Adams. Currently most of the funding for the "Fund" comes from our annual Blues Cruise. We're looking forward to our next Cabin Fever Picnic on February 18th. This is an opportunity to meet other members and the CBS board. Hope to see many of you then.

Bill Koteles

**A** new year means another beginning. Keeping the Blues alive takes work, takes commitment, and it needs YOU. Think about helping us by becoming involved this year. Where else can you volunteer your time to bring live music to our area and have such a sweet payoff!

**CBS** is going to be ten years old in June. Stay tuned for more information.

Our newsletter will be published bi-monthly. The next issue will be in March 2018.

From all of us at CBS, all the best this New Year, and may live music be a part of your life, always!

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By **Dave  
Rolland**

# DECEMBER JAM

## MS. BUTTERSCOTCH & THE BONAFIDE BLUES BAND



"That guy still owes me \$500!"

Disappointment. Part of life's ups and downs, but not a common occurrence in the life of Miss Butterscotch. She's a woman who is used to hard work and the success it breeds. Unfortunately, she met up with a stone wall on that occasion. The legendary Robert Lockwood, Jr. held a grudge against BB King and wasn't about to introduce her...

Born in the deep south of Alabama in the late 40's, Miss Butterscotch found herself accepting a teaching position at a school on Cleveland's near westside where she spent 32 years in Special Education. Steeped in Gospel & Country, her strict upbringing hadn't allowed her to experience the musical genre that would bring her eventual fame. Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe were the staples of her youth.

"Give me Loretta Lynn, Reba, ... Patsy Cline – that's my idol."

It wasn't until the 1990s that she retired from teaching and became Miss Butterscotch. Ask why she chose that name, she replied, "It's a color and a flavor" -- fitting for someone who is more than a voice, someone who is a true entertainer.

"The women would always tell me, 'You should never tell your age'. But, I consider myself to be a role model. I'm 70 years old. Watch me move. Watch me sing. Watch me shake. Watch me flirt. Just watch me. Don't get in a rocking chair. Don't let anyone tell you that you should BE in a rocking chair. My biggest fans are the young guys!"

Okay, but Matzo Balls and Latkes? Seriously??? Yep! Christmas Day 2011, at the Beachland Ballroom along with Blue Lunch.

"You should have seen all the people that was at that latke party. I walked in there calm as can be. (laughing) I mean, they stared at me all night."

Fun times, for sure! But, it wasn't always without risk. Having been told to avoid the Parkview, deemed a racist crowd, she went anyway. Steeling herself to climb those three steep steps, she walked inside. "I had told myself, if they ask me to leave, I will leave. When I walked in it was like that Eddie Murphy movie where the guy got him out of jail & they walked in & he said "There's a new sheriff in town". That's how I felt when I went in there. Everybody stopped talking, they stopped moving...



I went over to the bar & said if they don't serve me I will just leave. But, who was up over the jam but Michael Bay. He came over & we talked. We talked about Robert (Lockwood) and how we missed him, and the band kept playing. And he got on that microphone & he made me up. He said "you ain't heard anybody sing until you heard this lady." You know I put on my A-show that night. And, everybody there treated me very nice." Later, when she reported the wonderful evening to her skeptical friend, he refused to believe it, choosing instead to brand her a "token". As she found out, her friend's "info" was a long distance from the truth. (Anybody who knows Michael Bay will attest to his sincerity & kindness, and certainly, Miss Butterscotch knows him well!)

On the other hand, is there anybody she doesn't know? Mr. Robert Lockwood Jr., is probably the most famous. Touted as the only man Robert Johnson taught to play, he was a true legend of blues. Early on, they called him "Robert Junior" Lockwood to distinguish him from Robert Johnson, a sobriquet he would later come to disdain. Mr. Lockwood, for those who don't know, played on the very first KFFA King Biscuit broadcast!!!

All the local names spring from her lips. Wallace Coleman, Becky Boyd, Crazy Marvin, Guitar Slim, Travis Haddix... One night, while in the company of Mr. Lockwood at the old Cascade, she asked him if he was going to play. Robert being Robert, replied that there was no one who could play with him. At her urging, he reluctantly joined a couple fellows on stage, jamming with Marvin & Slim!

Favorite local blues man? Travis Haddix (Who can argue?)

Favorite to go see? Odie, who sings "Leave Her Alone"

Favorite unknown local talent? DiDi Franklyn.

Special shout out to: Becky Boyd, Ki Allen, Nancy Redd Shelton, Tom Hoven, Ray & Shawn Ramsey, and Blue Lunch.

Most memorable moment? "With Blue Lunch. For that latke thing. I got on that stage, and at that time they had five horns. ... And, when they called me up there & started my song, those horns LIT UP behind me. And, I was like in Hollywood or somewhere. WHOA!!! Then that whole band started and I was like... I never experienced something like this. It was unbelievable when those horns lit up! That was my best."

What a story! From a strict Alabama upbringing, to crazy college days with actual African royalty, to many stoic years as a Cleveland schoolteacher, to this latest chapter called Miss Butterscotch -- all done with determination and a deep, warm heart. Still, as Michael Bay is fond of saying when she steps on stage, "Ladies, keep an eye on your man!"

<https://www.facebook.com/MissButterscotchTheBonafideBluesBand/>

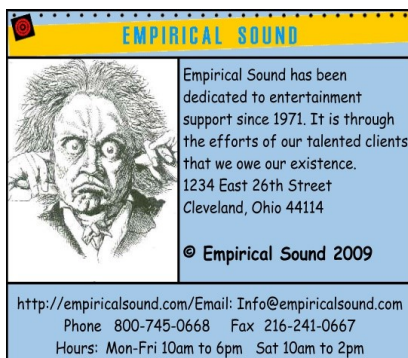




# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



YOU  
ROCK!





### Upcoming Jams

1/08/2018	Beachland Tavern	Blues Chronicles
2/12/18	Smedley's	Nightwalkers
3/12/18	Kurt's Getaway	Sam Hooper Group
4/9/18	Union House	Bluescasters

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## BECOME A VOLUNTEER

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Here's How.

If you would like to volunteer for any of the CBS committees or contribute articles to the CBS Newsletter, contact your CBS Board members.

[blues@clevelandblues.org](mailto:blues@clevelandblues.org)



# Blues You Should Know

by  
Bob Frank

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## BO CARTER AND THE MISSISSIPPI SHEIKS

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I make no bones about the fact that, for the past few years, I've been fascinated, obsessed really, with the music and particularly the guitar playing of Mississippi's Bo Carter, aka Armenter Chatmon. Carter's music is a bit like an artichoke; you have to peel away the outer layers of hokum and ribaldry to get to the inner core of song construction and technique. Carter had a

sense of harmonic complexity unlike that of any other pre-war rural blues player.

John Miller, author of a book on Carter's guitar style called *Carter*, "the most sophisticated of all country bluesmen from a harmonic viewpoint".

Yet, to most listeners Bo Carter was the all-time blues master of the double-entendre. Between 1928 and 1940, Carter recorded a little over 110 sides for Okeh, Columbia and Bluebird and about half of them were of the nature of *Don't Mash My Digger So Deep*, *Banana in Your Fruit Basket*, *Your Biscuits are Big Enough For Me*, *My Pencil Won't Write No More*, *Squeeze Your Orange*, and *Let Me Roll Your Lemon*, fruit being a particularly ripe subject for blues metaphor. Yes, the pun was intended.

The art and use of the double-entendre is certainly not new or unique to the blues. Literary examples can be found going back to the dawn of the written word. Shakespeare himself was a master of the art. In *Othello*, the villain Iago taunts Chiron with:

I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.

And from the sonnet *Venus & Adonis*:

Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry / Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.

So Bo Carter didn't invent the double-entendre, he just perfected its application for the blues and added wonderfully complicated guitar arrangements to make it more interesting. All of Carter's songs aren't like this, there are plenty of standard blues about love, trouble, hard times, and even a few children's songs like *Sue Cow*, and *Beans*. He was also the composer of *Corrine*, *Corrina*, a blues standard that became a Western swing standard that eventually became a rock & roll standard.

It would be irresponsible, even derelict to talk about Bo Carter without mentioning the milieu from which he came. Carter was born Armenter Chatmon, on a plantation belonging to a Dr. Dupree, just outside of Bolton, Mississippi, a small farming community located south of Rt. 20 between Jackson and Vicksburg. To say that he came from a musical family would be the understatement the ages, for the Chatmons, the core of the Mississippi Sheiks, were one of the most important blues aggregations of the pre-war era.

The family patriarch, Henderson Chatmon,

was an extraordinary individual in himself. Born into slavery around 1840, Henderson was originally called Henderson Martin, then forced to change his name when he and his mother were sold to a man named Chatmon. Henderson was already married and the father of children when emancipation came and he fought in the Civil War, apparently on the Confederate side! Henderson married at least three times and, according to his youngest son, Sam, his final wife produced the fewest number of children. thirteen, which included Armenter (Bo), Sam, Lonnie, and Bert. In addition there were a good number of “outside” children, which may have included the man nominally considered the Father of Delta Blues, Charlie Patton, who also grew up near Bolton. Sam insisted that Charlie was his half-brother, the product of his father’s affair with Anna Patton, Charlie’s mother. Henderson, who reputedly lived to be 106, claimed to have fathered sixty children during his lifetime.

Henderson Chatmon was also said to have been a master fiddler, though he preferred not to play much around the house. Apparently he resented the way he was used during his time as a slave, having been forced to play at the whim of his master much the way the character “Fiddler” was used and abused in Alex Haley’s book and television series, *Roots*. Henderson never taught his children directly, but Sam said that they would occasionally play something incorrectly by intention, a sly way to get him to show them how it should be done.

The Mississippi Sheiks were really more of an aggregation than a family band. Their lineup usually consisted of older brother Lonnie on fiddle, Bo on guitar, banjo, or fiddle, and Sam on guitar or bass. Rounding out the group on guitar and vocals was friend and neighbor Walter Jacobs, usually referred to as Walter Vinson, or Vincson, or Vincent. Another frequent participant was Charlie McCoy who often added his mandolin or his banjo-mandolin to their recordings.



The Sheiks were enormously popular in their day, their only real competition in the area being the Memphis Jug Band. They recorded in Atlanta, San Antonio, Chicago, Memphis and New York. Their biggest hit, *Sittin’ On Top of the World*, remains a standard of both blues and

bluegrass music and has been re-recorded hundreds of times by everyone from Ray Charles to Bill Monroe to Cream. The Sheiks considered themselves to be professional musicians and played for both black and white audiences. Sam claimed that they actually preferred to play for white audiences, since they usually paid much better. For black audiences they played the blues and for white audiences they played the blues plus popular hits of the day. Oldest brother Lonnie, referred to as “the big fat one” by Houston Stackhouse, could read music and was able to teach the rest of the group songs using sheet music. The name “Mississippi Sheiks” was first suggested to them by Walter Vinson, and was likely derived from the popular song of the day, *The Sheik of Araby*, which itself was inspired by Rudolph Valentino’s 1920 film *The Sheik*.

As Sam explained to Alan Lomax in 1978, "For colored and white, too. All we wanted was the money. If we would play two hours and a half, we'd get five dollars a man. When we'd get through with [our] crops, late on by June or July, we'd all get together and take a tour all up through Memphis, Chicago, and different places like that. We played *Donna, Somebody Stole My Gal, Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter*. See, we was playin' jazz music"



The fact that the Chatmons continued to farm through this period may have its origin in the social conventions of the South during that age as much as in economic need. True, income from music was likely as spotty and unreliable as it is for musicians today, and the extra income from yearly cotton crop would provide some financial stability, but it was also important for them to establish themselves as farmers to assure a safe position in their community. Blacks who didn't hold a steady job or farm a crop were looked on with suspicion by local authorities. As musicians who played for both Blacks and Whites, the Chatmons would have wanted to maintain a safe and respectable image.

Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s Bo



recorded and performed both as a member of the Sheiks and also as a solo artist. Around 1935 or 1936 the Sheiks decided to disband. Sam gave the reason for

this to be the death of some of the brothers around that time, but another contributing factor had to be Bo's continuing loss of eyesight, which resulted in his becoming nearly blind by the late 1930s.

Bo had been the business manager for the group. He booked the engagements and arranged for and negotiated the recording sessions. Bo was apparently quite good at this; other artists who knew him have invariably commented on his astute business skills. In spite of the rowdy, highly sexual nature of his music, Bo was remembered as a serious, thoughtful and sober man. He was also allegedly a teetotaler and not at all a skirt-chaser; a very different man from the one his music portrays. Bo usually dressed in suits, owned a

Model-T Ford, and taught himself the skill of phonograph repair to supplement his income.

With the breakup of the group, Bo moved to Glen Allen, Mississippi where he bought some land and attempted to grow some cotton, in spite of his blindness. His older brother Lonnie opened and operated a café there in 1936. In 1934 Bo switched from Columbia to Bluebird with whom he was to record until his final session in February of 1940. Why then, the emphasis on ribaldry and double-entendre? Quite possibly, the answer is that the records sold well, and while they may not have sold at the level that Blind Lemon Jefferson, Tampa Red, or Big Bill's did, Carter was a steady and reliable artist who made money for his record companies. Carter was a Black artist making records for a Black audience. The sharp eyes of the censors would have squinted a bit when it came to records made by Blacks for Blacks.

Another answer is that he was just plain good at it. Carter seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of images, themes, and metaphors. True, he occasionally copied himself, as all blues artists tend to do, but with each new record, he was able to twist a phrase in a completely new way and come up with one original idea after another. In a musical form like the blues that often relies on stock phrases, Carter seemed to be working from a whole different vocabulary.

Listening to songs like Pin in Your Cushion, Ramrod Daddy, Cigarette Blues, or Ants in My Pants today, the effect comes off more as quaint than as offensive. There are no "four letter words" and all the imagery is couched in metaphor. Certainly, in our modern age, Bo Carter's ribaldry is no worse or more shocking than what can be heard during the "family hours" on network television.

And, of course, there was his guitar playing. Bo Carter was a master at playing in multiple tunings. He had songs in standard tuning, Vastapol (open E or D), dropped D, Spanish (open G), and a hybrid tuning called "Half Spanish" or G6 tuning in which the lowest strings are tuned to G and D respectively. It's believed that Lonnie Johnson and



some others may have used this tuning occasionally but certainly no one used it as extensively as Bo Carter. In addition, it's often difficult to ascertain simply by a cursory listening, which tuning he was in since he was so adept at all of them and didn't resort to the type of stock licks or phrases usually associated with those tunings.

Carter wasn't a "hot" player the way Lonnie Johnson, Willie Walker or Blind Blake were. He didn't play at high speed or use a lot of flashy technique. His songs are not excessively difficult to play once you are able to figure out exactly what he's doing, but that's just the thing; he didn't play like anybody else so there's no reference point other than Bo Carter. Studying Bo's guitar style one comes across riffs and turnarounds that don't appear in anyone else's music. Carter played and recorded on a metal bodied National Model N. He was strictly a finger-style player and never recorded with a slide.

With 110 records released under his own name, along with the records recorded with the Mississippi Sheiks, Bo Carter was second only to Memphis Minnie in number of records made by a Mississippian.

The war years and early post-war years were not particularly good for Bo. Throughout the 1940s he worked as much as his blindness would allow but he clearly struggled. In the early 1950s Sonny Boy Williamson took him to see Lillian McMurray at Trumpet Records in Jackson, Mississippi but McMurray passed on him, citing the weakened state of his voice.

In 1960 British blues writer Paul Oliver found Carter living in shack in an alley off Beale Street in Memphis. He describes the scene in his book *Conversation With The Blues*:

"Sharing a corner in the bare, shot-gun building on South 4th Street where Will Shade lived, was an ailing, blind, light-skinned man whom the occupants knew only as Old Man. By a lucky hunch

I guessed he might be Bo Carter and the sick man brightened to hear his name. At first he could hardly hold down the strings of his heavy steel guitar with its worn fingerboard. But he slowly mastered it and in a broken voice, that mocked the clear and lively singing on his scores of recordings under his own name and with the Mississippi Sheiks, he recalled incidents from his varied life and some of the songs that had made him one of the most famous of blues singers. Baby When You Marry he had recorded nearly thirty years before (OK 8888) in 1931 and in the years since he had worked on medicine shows, farmed and begged." Oliver made some recordings of Bo at that time but they were not deemed worthy of commercial release and remain in Oliver's archives to this day. Carter experienced a series of strokes and died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1964. It was grievously unfortunate that Carter was unable to experience and enjoy the benefits of the blues revival that began around that time and benefited "rediscovered" artists like Mississippi John Hurt, Son House, and Skip James. It would be easy to imagine him at a festival or concert singing Please Warm My Weiner or Corrine, Corrina and wowing a whole new generation of fans.

Younger brother Sam Chatmon did get to experience the blues revival. He and Walter Vinson even put together a new version of the Sheiks called the New Mississippi Sheiks and recorded and played folk and blues festivals until shortly before his death in 1983.

Bo's descendants do seem to have inherited a bit of his business acumen. In 2015 they filed lawsuits against both Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton for back royalties for Corrine, Corrina.

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### **Blues Society Thank you!**

I want to thank Elaine and the Blues society for allowing me to do these interviews with the Hosts and Jammers that attend the monthly Blues Jams. Everyone has a different journey in music. It was a joy learning this first hand and sharing it with all of you. I did not want to do the usual stuff (like for guitar players)... "so what guitar did you use on this song"? "what kind of strings do you use"? "your amp" ?, "what were the settings '?...blah blah blah. I found it just as interesting to learn what these people do when not playing music, and what other interests they may have. For me, it was wonderful to reflect on some of these shared experiences, and helped me to look back and appreciate all of my wonderful journey as well. Not growing up here in Cleveland, I realized how much of a great

music scene Cleveland was and, of course, still is. I wanted to keep the interviews light and breezy...and not too long. I only wish I would have listed everybody's astrological signs. (HA HA)

Again, this was a joy for me, and one more thanks! to all that agreed to do these articles with me, and put up with all my spelling errors and all the mistaken information I may have written.

Dave Rolland will be taking over the column in January. In just talking with Dave, I'm sure he is going to a great job with the columns, while moving them forward with his own touch and direction. Thanks again....Old Blindfingers Dixon found it a gas! See you at the Jams!!

Doug Schunick

## **CBS CABIN FEVER** **MEMBERS INDOOR PICNIC**

**SUNDAY, February 18, 2018**

**Time: 2pm to 6pm**

**Parma Elks – 2250 Snow Road, Parma**  
**(Behind McDonalds in Midtown Shopping Center)**

**BAND: Anthony Lovano's Supernatural Band**  
**Band will play from 3pm to 6pm**

**Free to Members/\$10 for non-members**

**Food, pop and water are provided. Cash bar available for beer & wine.**  
**(In this location, you cannot BYOB)**

**We welcome side dishes and desserts**