

Bonham band plans act three

By Sam Dieter

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One of the acts coming to Colby for this year's Pickin' On the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival is a family who have been playing music together much of their lives.

The Bonham Revue is a seven-member family band from Oklahoma. Virgil Bonham formed the group in 1992 after his brother Glen signed a contract in Nashville to play country music. Before the Bonham Brothers, he had played as part of Signal Mountain in the 1980s and started with the Kiamichi Mountain Boys at the age of 12, playing with family members.

He sings and plays mandolin for Bonham Revue, along with Clifford Parrett, Shilah Jerkins, Britney Fleming, Jim Blair, David Bonham and Hunter Bonham. The band has stayed more or less the same for the past 20 years, he said, adding, "The main difference between now and then is that everyone in the band is much older."

Virgil's daughter Shilah, for instance, was 4 when she first sang for the band, and started playing the fiddle when she was 9. Now she is 27, her sister Britney is 23 and Hunter is 18. Virgil pointed out that some group pictures of the band still show them much younger, an issue which came up when they were deciding



Look for family band Bonham Revue to make their third trip to perform at the Pickin' On the Plains Festival this year.

what kind of decoration to put on their CD "New and Old Favorites" in 2011.

"I actually asked the kids do we want to do a photo on the front of this disk, and they said no, because it would date us," Virgil said.

When he first formed a band with his kids in it, he said, he had been told that he would be continuing the tradition of music in his family if he started them out early. Virgil said they have learned to play and sing in harmony with each other over the years.

"I was the little kid in my dad's band ...,"

he said.

The older members of the band had played together, Virgil said, but not as an organized group until Bonham Revue was formed. Like him, they have played in other groups.

"There's a lot of history in our band that dates back into other artists," he said.

Jim Blair's mother Ramona Reed, for instance, still sings with Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys sometimes, even though she is almost 90. Blair is also the chief executive officer of the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, to which his mother was inducted in 2009.

The group will perform at 6:40 p.m. Friday

and at 1:35 and 5:15 p.m. Saturday.

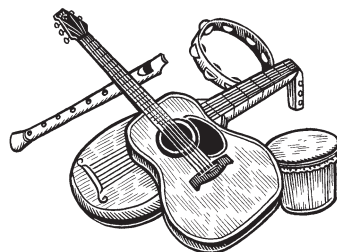
They usually play south or east of Oklahoma, where there are a lot of bluegrass festivals, he said, more than in Kansas, but this will be their third trip to Colby. He said they learned of the festival here when they met Colby favorites the McLemores in Wagoner, Okla. This will be their fourth trip here and their third to perform. The first trip they made in around 2008, not as a scheduled act, but as members of the audience.

"We just went out as a friendly visit," Virgil said.

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Banjo player and friends to play high-energy music

Music has always played a central role in Jeff Scroggins' life, and he is bringing that love of music to Colby at this year's Pickin' On the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival.

Jeff Scroggins and the band Colorado will perform Friday at 8:20 p.m. and Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 6:10 p.m. on Sunday.

The band describes themselves as a high-energy, high-mountain bluegrass explosion, featuring Scroggin's fiery banjo style and the award-winning mandolin playing of Jeff's son, Tristan.

Jeff Scroggins grew up in rural Oklahoma where his grandfather, J.M. Cary, performed old-time country music and his great uncle, Ace Sewell, played fiddle. Scroggins' grandfather gave him his first guitar and taught him to play at age 12. At 19, Scroggins bought a banjo at a garage sale and became obsessed with the instrument.

Throughout his career, Scroggins has won contests and awards, including the National Bluegrass Banjo Championship. In 1996, he was inducted into the Texas Tornadoes, an elite music society.

Tristan Scroggins began playing banjo at

the age of 9, but later switched to mandolin and won the first contest he entered. In 2007, he won the Pickin' On the Plains mandolin contest, and he became the New Mexico State Mandolin Champion that same year. He has since won the Arizona State Championship as well as a second year in New Mexico.

Tristan is an accomplished songwriter, and his and Jeff's original instrumentals support the band's unique and energetic style.

Front man Greg Blake, who does bluegrass vocals, has twice been nominated as the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music of America's Traditional Male Vocalist of the Year. His guitar skills have earned nine nominations and five consecutive wins as the society's guitarist of the year.

Annie Savage provides vocals and an aggressive fiddle style, performing bluegrass, celtic and classical music. She is a conservatory-trained musician with 15 years of musical teaching experience.

K.C. Groves, founder of the all-girl band Uncle Earl, is an accomplished vocalist, songwriter and instrumentalist, playing mandolin, guitar and bass.