



Open Mic, Insert Cookies

Carl Ferris (D20) and friends are regulars at the Open Mic sessions held monthly at Marnee's Cookie Bistro in Bath. A cookie shop might be an unusual venue for local musicians, but not the only unorthodox method that owner **Marnee Robinson** has employed to make her successful internet cookie business a welcoming drop-in for locals as well.

Carl first stopped by a couple of summers ago when he helped another musician carry his equipment inside. He stayed for a few songs and was soon returning regularly. Marnee said, "Over the past year, Carl has organized most of the sessions and made sure that there's at least a couple of people planning to play or sing."

If you've never thought of finding live music at a place whose fame rests on lunch plate-sized cookies with names like *Destiny* and *Euphoria*, you would be in for a surprise. On a recent Friday night, the place was filled with children coloring at a table while moms gathered in a corner over coffee, family members taking photos and leading the applause, a few people ordering soup and cookies as a hedge against the cold temps outside and several guys who stopped because they saw the lights on and stayed for the free coffee and music.

Carl's line-up of fellow BIW musicians includes **Jim Hamilton** (D86) a member of *Fiddle-icious*, a group of fiddlers and other musicians who play the Scottish, Irish, Quebecois and Acadian music of their Maine ancestors; **Bob Knowles** (D1310) from Environmental who has a jazz band named *Loco Trio*; **Dave Heath** (D40) who



Open Mic-sters, l to r: Jim Hamilton, Derrick Tisdale and Carl Ferris.

sometimes brings his Augusta-area musician-friends along, and **Rick Harris** (D20), a Facilities supervisor who premiered a new song, *Going to the Cookie House in Bath* last summer. Available on You Tube, it is a must-view example of cookie shop music, a genre whose popularity, if fully realized, will be due in part to Marnee's cookies being recognized by *Forbes* magazine as among the 10 best in the U.S.

In early February, **Derrick Tisdale**, **Jenny's** (D49) 15-year-old son, proved to be a talented, congenial musician who introduced Carl and Jim Hamilton to his Johnny Cash repertoire. His father said that Derrick has been playing various types of music for many years, but for now, is concentrating on guitar. It shows.

Summers bring in young people and sometimes there are surprises in the form of the occasional professional musicians that find their way to the open mic through little

more advertising than a sidewalk chalkboard. One September, a banjo player who frequently performs in Branson, Missouri walked into the shop and in Carl's words, "I never sounded better than the night I played with that guy."

Carl has advanced his standing as an amateur musician through the cookie shop gigs but also finds it a chance to reach out to the young people who show up with guitars. He said, "I encourage them to play and if that's not enough, I tell them to just get up and do it. Two kids later told me that playing at Marnee's got them over their initial stage-fright and when MOHIBA (the annual Morse High School Variety Show), came around, they had the confidence to play in front of a couple hundred people."

Carl said, "I've done some crazy things—this is not the most unusual by any means, and the people and the cookies are great."