

# TUNE OF THE WEEK – 11/11/16

## STARS AND STRIPES WALTZ

Finding a patriotic tune on a Veteran's Day TOTW was a must for me. *Stars and Stripes Waltz* is tune #237 in R. P. Christeson's [Old-Time Fiddler's Repertory, Vol. 1](#). This is only the sixth tune out of hundreds from this 2-volume book set which I've worked on, and though an obscure one, it's a beauty. Here [R.P. Christeson plays Stars and Stripes Waltz](#) on the Slippery Hill site.



This waltz was remembered by R.P. as having been played on WOS radio, a major Missouri radio broadcasting station out of Jefferson City which catered to farmers' interests in the 1920's and 30's. (See this [article on station WOS](#) for more history.) *Stars and Stripes Waltz* is one of the few tunes he notated solely from memory. It became a common tune in central Missouri.

R. P.'s biggest accomplishment revolves about his labor of love to collect and publish fiddle tunes. Fiddlers he recorded who you may be familiar with include Bob Walters, Cyril Stinett, Bob Walters, Lonnie Robertson, Bob Holt, Bill Katon, and Bill Driver. Most of the tunes in both volumes of his books were from recordings he made in Missouri, but Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, Indiana, and Pennsylvania are also represented in his collections.

Born in 1911, R.P. grew up in a family of fiddlers, though his grandfather didn't approve at first of their fiddling. When his father and uncle were young they would hide the instrument and sneak into the barn to practice. One day their father finally relented and bought a new fiddle at "Monkey Ward" (Montgomery Ward). This eventually became R.P.'s fiddle.

This article about [R.P. Christeson](#) has evidence that he was a precocious youngster. Though R.P. played at dances through his teenage years, he left Missouri and didn't play fiddle much for about 20 years. When working in New Mexico and then Nebraska he renewed his interest in old-time fiddling and began traveling and recording the old-timers. The tunes in this extensive repertoire are currently being re-discovered and arranged for banjo. I hear some on Banjo Hangout, such as *Lantern in the Ditch*, *Rocky Road to Jordan*, *Step Up Susie*, *Bill Katon's Tune*, *Steamboat Around the Bend*, *The Drunken Wagoneer*, *Fourth of July Breakdown*, and *Oyster Girl*.

Howard Marshall's liner notes from his CD **Fiddling Missouri** reveal more detailed history of the tune: "Track 3. *Stars and Stripes Waltz*, key of C, attributed to Vee Latty (1920 – 1956) of Fulton, who made several fine waltzes and played in fiddle contests from the 1920s to the 1950s. Mr. Latty's wife, Marie,

accompanied Vee on resonophonic slide guitar and Guy Craighead played tenor guitar -- an unusual combo by late 20th century standards. Boone County fiddler Daniel Boone Jones is said to have learned it from Latty in the 1930s; Pete McMahan learned it c. 1950 from George Morris, who got it from Tony Gilmore of Jefferson City (who got it from Latty). I got it from Pete and the legendary Charlie Walden.” On this Missouri State Old-Time Fiddler’s Assoc. site you can check out a [Vee Latty CD and biographical information](#). A heroic fact about him is that he lost three fingers of his left hand from a power saw accident, but played again after just a few months.

Pete McMahan (1918 – 2000) recorded [Stars and Stripes Waltz](#) on the compilation **Ozark Mountain Waltz**. He was a prolific, well-known Missouri dance fiddler and winner of many fiddle contests. In the book/CD set [Now That’s a Good Tune: Masters of Traditional Missouri Fiddling](#) Howard Marshall described how McMahan played fiddle beginning at six years old, so entranced that he fell over in a kitchen chair while playing and broke it “into a hundred pieces.” At age 15 he entered and won his first fiddle contest.

Here’s one of the [prettiest versions of Stars and Stripes Waltz](#), recorded by Charlie Walden at R.P.’s home. Charlie is a well-known Missouri fiddler (and active Fiddle Hangout member) who has done much to promote the tunes of R.P. Christeson and who actually contributed to Christeson’s second volume.

Born in 1957, Charlie came to know and work with R.P. (whom he calls Bob, short for Robert) Christeson and is a great promotor of Missouri and Ozark fiddling. He took up violin at age 14 and was mentored by old-time fiddlers. R.P. prompted Charlie to stay focused on the old-time style and Charlie has devoted his life to it. He learned *Stars and Stripes Waltz* directly from R.P.

Charlie demonstrated his enthusiasm for Missouri traditional music in 1984 when he organized a successful reunion of several of the musicians who played on the WOS station in 1925 by identifying them in a photo. He includes *Stars and Stripes Waltz* as #88 in his [100 Essential Missouri Fiddle Tunes](#).

I wish there were more examples, but the only ones I can find on-line to share are by R.P. Christeson, Pete McMahan, Charlie Walden, and Howard Marshall. Here’s my arrangement: [Janet B’s Stars and Stripes Waltz](#).

On this Veteran’s Day I can’t help but think that veterans would feel honored by this waltz. It’s not associated with a battle or event, but by its very title connects us to our flag and country, representing our high ideals of freedom and opportunity.

Wishing you all a happy Veteran’s Day. Hope you enjoy the tune and maybe even give it a try, too. We old-time banjo pickers can’t learn enough waltzes, IMO!