

# The Country Gentlemen Tribute Band



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## The Country Gentlemen Tribute Band

### Band Member Bio's



**Mike Phipps – GUITAR & VOCALS**

Mike began playing mandolin and singing while in high school. Later, he teamed up with dobro player, Fred Travers (currently with the Seldom Scene), as they performed out in several bands around the Washington, DC area, including the popular Southern Maryland based band, The Dixie Ramblers. Mike later performed with Southern Maryland favorite, Jay Armsworthy & Eastern Tradition, playing mandolin and singing lead/baritone. His love of Classic Country Music and the influence of Bluegrass artists, such as Charlie Waller and John Duffey, contributed highly to his current musical style. Due to his previous influences, and sounding incredibly close vocally to the famous Charlie Waller, Mike was initially invited to be a part of the "Tribute to the Country Gentlemen" recording project along with former Gents member, Bill Yates. The success of this recording later led to touring and performing shows with the Bill Yates & the Country Gentlemen Tribute Band at multiple festivals and concert venues around the country. Mike currently resides in Owings, MD.



**David Propst - MANDOLIN & VOCALS**

David first got interested in bluegrass music while listening to old 78 rpm records with his dad that was playing off of his granddad's old wind-up Victrola. They sat & listened to the likes of The Original Cater Family, The Monroe Brothers, The Blue Sky Boys, The Delmore Brothers and Ernest V. (Pop) Stoneman. He attributes his mandolin style from the influences of such greats as, Doyle Lawson, Jimmy Gaudreau, Sam Bush, Buck White, Dempsey Young and Bill Monroe. David is best known for his driving mandolin chops and expert leads, skillfully melding contemporary and traditional influences as to create a style uniquely his own. His own Bluegrass heritage and church singing background has helped him refine his vocal abilities, which range from a strong tenor, to an exciting lead, to a smooth baritone. With more than thirty (30) years of professional bluegrass experience, David has previously performed with such bands as The Puckett Brothers, Leon Morris & the Associates, Excalibur, Special Blend, Second Time Around, Paul Adkins & the Borderline Band, The Fox Family, The Travelers, Fastest Grass Alive, Line Drive, John O'Dell & Windy Ridge, Darren Beachley & the Maryland Line and The Shenandoah Blue Band. David currently resides in Martinsburg, WV .



**Rick Briggs - BANJO & VOCALS**

Rick began playing banjo at the age of 15 after initially starting out on the guitar. He grew up spending time with some of the best musicians in North Carolina . In 1980, he joined the band, Bluegrass Fever, a Charlotte , NC based group that won the band competition at Six Flags Over Georgia, then releasing one album on the Lamon Label. His next band, The Grass Strings, from Albemarle , NC , introduced Rick to working on the road as they regularly frequented festivals and college circuit gigs. In the late 1980's, Rick made a move into Country Music for a period of about 10 years. He worked professionally performing on keyboards, guitar and banjo with several east coast club circuit groups before being asked to join the Old Dominion Opry in Williamsburg , VA in 1991. He went through two different stints with the Old Dominion Opry due to management changes and finally became their performing Musical Director, Writer and Assistant General Manager before eventually leaving in 1997. Rick returned to his first love, Bluegrass, in 1999 when he joined Boston , MA based Southern Rail. In January 2005, Rick joined former Country Gentlemen member, Jimmy Bowen, in the Jimmy Bowen & Santa Fe band. Rick was also a staff member at Acutab's Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend every November in Roanoke , VA. His background in printing had also helped him assist with the cover art and photography for the original "Team Flathead – The Huber Banjos Sessions" recording in 2003 and Rick's own banjo was used on the recording played by both Sammy Shelor and Ron Stewart. Rick is grateful that his family supports his musical career. His dad, Jud, was instrumental in instilling both high values of family and music into his adolescence. Though his dad never had the chance to perform as a full-time professional, he certainly did pass the desire to do so onto his son, Rick. Rick's love and dedication for the music has been the driving force in keeping him performing "as long as the good Lord says it's ok". Rick currently resides in Duncannon , PA.



**MIKE CONNER – ACOUSTIC BASS & VOCALS**

Mike Conner is a native of Roanoke VA, and traces his bluegrass introduction to Lakeside Park's Friday night concert series, where in 1971 he heard Charlie, Doyle, Bill Emerson, and Bill Yates at age 10. He spent the next month pestering his parents for a guitar and a Mel Bay guitar chord book, and the rest is history as they say. Mike has toured and performed with Kenny Baker & Josh Graves, Herschel Sizemore, The Travelers, Bobby Hicks, The Inspirations (southern gospel), The Stacy Hobbs Trio (blues soul) Plum Sideways, Jesse Brock & Mainline Express, and filled in as a bass man for numerous traveling bands in bluegrass, blues, gospel, and classic country music. He credits time spent with Jason Moore, a true hoss-cat bass man, Marshall Wilborn, and Tom Gray as his influences on his particular style of playing. His best buddy and longtime musical sidekick John Miller is due credit for influencing his vocal style, and of course the hardest thing to learn as a player, "what notes not to play"! He likes to say he's always learning about his

instrument and music, every time he is blessed to play. Mike and his wife Annette live in Roanoke, where they operate their own automotive service center, used car sales lot, and both work as Realtors for Park Place Realty.



**MARK CLIFTON – RESONATOR GUITAR (DOBRO) & VOCALS**

Mark was born and raised in Roanoke , VA , graduating from Shenandoah Conservatory. He grew up in a musical family that played mostly old-time music. Later, Mark spent twenty-four (24) years employed as a trumpet player for the US Army Band. After retiring from the US Army Band, he returned to his roots, turning his attention to the resophonic guitar (dobro), after previously being inspired to play by his dad, whom had also played dobro. Mark later taught dobro at Picker's Supply in Fredericksburg , VA for four (4) years as a member of the artist faculty, but discontinued his teaching due to the long commute. He currently provides lessons privately at home. Mark soon thereafter starting performing out with various bands on the bluegrass circuit, to include performing with legend, Cliff Waldron, as a member of the New Shades of Grass. Since then, Mark has at least 10 CD recordings to his credit. When he's not performing out with the Bill Yates & the Country Gentlemen Tribute Band, he is often sought out for fill-in work and recordings within the greater Washington , DC area. Mark currently resides in Woodbridge , VA.