



# NEW PRAGUE POPS POST

**VOL. 2 -- NUMBER 1**

## **POPS Gala II set for Oct 4 – featuring ‘Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange’**

*By Den Gardner, Chair, POPS Committee*

*Editor’s Note: “It’s Time!” is a monthly column by Den Gardner, chair of the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee of the Forward New Prague Foundation. If you can read, we ask you to read it at your leisure! If you missed reading class in elementary school, an audio version may be available in the next three years. (OK, just kidding.)*

Okay you accordion/concertina experts. Pictured in this column (the guy in the bow tie playing the concertina) is Elmer Scheid (hall of fame polka band leader for a hundred years, starting back in the ‘50s). People sometimes confuse concertina players with accordion players. Not me! I’m an accordion guy, having started my career at age seven. To the world of musicians’ great relief, I quit at age 11. And having our POPS Gala II event Oct. 4 with “Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange” has brought back a ton of great memories for me from my youth.

**(See separate story elsewhere in this newsletter about the Friday, Oct. 4, POPS Gala II, 6-9 p.m., Park Ballroom.)**

My twin brother Dan and I took lessons once each week until one fateful Saturday our teacher, a great German man named Gunther Roth, quit coming to teach us at the fire barn in Delano. I think he finally found us a useless cause. But that’s another story for another time.



**Elmer Scheid**

With Mollie B and her band as our headline crew in October for POPS GALA II, the memories for me and music led me to Elmer Scheid. My parents were huge fans of his band. More Friday evenings than not, my parents and friends would haul off from Delano to Medina Ballroom (near Hamel in western Twin Cities suburbs), a 25-minute drive.

There, polka bands from across the Midwest would appear every Friday night. But Elmer Scheid and his Band were the highlights – when they would infrequently appear. Most of their appearances were in southern Minnesota and other venues in the Upper Midwest. They were BIG TIME.



Bottom line: My appreciation for polka music, notwithstanding my ill-fated career as the next Elmer Scheid with brother Dan that my parents so wanted us to be, has always been high. I still have my accordion. I can still play – I think -- the Liechtensteiner Polka. I've always enjoyed listening and learning about local bands that mostly play that genre around New Prague. And I have friends who play in some of those bands. There are too many to mention.

Anyway, back to my parents. My dad Ken owned a small business and my mom ran the State Bank of Delano as manager for decades. She worked until 7 p.m. on Friday nights at the bank. Then, off with dad and friends to Medina for the 9 p.m. to midnight dance. A midnight meal at Medina Ballroom usually meant we could hear mom and dad creep home about 1:30 a.m. or even later.

We often (especially at 72) do not remember dates or days, but we do remember memories. These are memories I'll always remember – polka/waltz music and my parents. It was “date night” every Friday in my household growing up. Or at least it felt that way. I continue date night with Sandy to this day – although it usually doesn't involve polka dancing – if you know what I mean.

Anyway, segway back to POPS. Mollie B's band is our POPS Gala II special event coming up. We'll have our silent auction again. Last year, thanks to the 250+ people who attended POPS Gala I, you helped us raise \$20,000 (SUV raffle and silent auction combined revenue) for our building.

We hope you will be as generous this year. There will be an admission fee to attend this fundraiser (amount TBD), the silent auction and plenty of entertainment. There will be no vehicle raffle this year, so this is YOUR opportunity to attend this POPS fundraiser and help us get closer to our \$1 million goal.

Originally, we were hoping to get to \$1 million by the end of 2025. Our new goal is to get there by the spring of 2025. With \$830,000 in pledges, please help us meet our goal. The New Prague City Council has selected the City Center site (west end of town – old mill pond/creamery site) as its preferred choice for POPS. Now, we just need to get to \$1 million so we can begin construction a year from now (or possibly even sooner).



## AND THERE'S MORE.

One quick additional item. Thanks to Mark Braaten (publisher of New Prague Neighbors magazine) along with Adam & Owen Schultz of 1319 Woodfire, Saturday, June 1, from 1-4 p.m., is Bourbon at the Broz, a brand new event where POPS is going to be benefitting from some of the net profits of the event.

And there will be the POPS Stage at the event at the Broz. There will be three, 45-minute musical acts, POPS Committee people in attendance and other great stuff TBD.

Thanks again for your interest and dedication to POPS. Keep those letters and cards and emails coming. Also money. Ha! "It's Time!"

"We are excited to share a portion of our net proceeds with the POPS Committee," said event chair Mark Braaten, publisher of New Prague Neighbors. "This is yet another effort to assist POPS in raising money for the outdoor performance venue. We couldn't be happier about helping them reach their goal of \$1 million privately raised by the end of 2025." More than \$830,000 has been raised thus far for the effort.

Also leading the effort are Adam and Owen Schultz, owners of 1319 Woodfire Tavern in New Prague. It is expected that there will be sampling done with 20 or more whiskey producers. Some food also will be available.

Tickets will go on sale soon for \$50 each. Entertainment will be provided at the "POPS Stage," where local musicians will provide background music throughout the afternoon.

For more information about the event, contact Mark Braaten at 952-239-0034



The poster is designed to look like a piece of aged parchment with a dark brown border. At the top left is the 1319 Woodfire Tavern logo. To its right, the text 'VENDORS MUSIC SPONSORS \$50 TICKETS' is displayed in a serif font. Further right are logos for 'THE BROZ' and 'LUXROOMS MARKETING & ADVERTISING'. The main event title 'Saturday, June 1st 1-4pm' is written in a large, elegant script. Below this, 'BOURBON at the BROZ' is written in a large, bold, serif font. To the right of the title is a logo for 'L@B' inside a wooden barrel. Below the title, the 1319 Woodfire Tavern logo is repeated, followed by an illustration of a hand holding a glass of bourbon. To the right of this illustration, the text 'BOURBON TASTING', '1319 APPETIZERS', and 'CIGARS & MUSIC' is listed in a serif font. Below this, the 'LUXROOMS presents' logo is shown, followed by the 'MARCO V CIGAR LOUNGE' logo and an illustration of two cigars. At the bottom left, a circular badge says '\$50 each'. To its right, the text 'Get Tickets on EventBrite' is written in a large, serif font. At the bottom right is the 'L@B' barrel logo.

**Editor's Note: From time to time, the POPS Committee will note comments from community members about the POPS building project and what it means to New Prague and area families.**

### **Dara & Dan Bishop**

At a time when many people are in need of connections and mental wellness, the POPS amphitheater will bring the beauty of music and the arts to our community as a creative outlet for both performers and audiences. We look forward to enjoying this venue with our children and to discovering the variety of ways in which area residents will utilize this beneficial space.



### **Dr. Mike and Kay Wilcox**



New Prague has state-of-the-art athletic facilities like the baseball stadium, golf course and Aquatic Center to address the outdoor physical needs of the community.

The POPS amphitheater will be a great addition to the ARTS in New Prague. Historically, New Prague was known for its brass bands, orchestras, dance bands, and in general, music! The new outdoor facility will be a wonderful addition providing a venue to host music performances for people of all ages to enjoy.

That is why we fully support this project and look forward to attending its events.

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## **Fundraising takes three approaches for 2024**

The POPS (Praha Outdoor Performance Stage) Fundraising Sub-Committee is taking three approaches in 2024 as the first quarter of 2024 is already nearing an end. As you know, our three-year pledges are just north of \$830,000 on our way to our goal of \$1 million. When you include pro bono services that have or will be offered, that number exceeds \$850,000. We say thanks to everyone who has contributed.

Those three approaches are:

- **Normal Contribution Program.** We plan to continue our solicitation process to individuals, families, community service organizations, businesses, and others in the New Prague area to secure donations. Whether it's the "100 for \$100K" program (\$1,000 over three years to reach \$100,000 in total donations), a large donation through one of our giving levels in our formal fundraising plan, or simply buying a t-shirt, it all adds up. When you include donations, raffle ticket purchases for the SUV last year donated by Palmer and Susan Welcome, and the silent auction, hundreds of separate donations have been secured and we look forward to many more contributors in 2024.
- **POPS Gala II.** We're excited to announce that on Friday, Oct. 4, 6-9 p.m. at the Park Ballroom, "Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange" will perform a concert/dance. See article elsewhere in our e-newsletter. The silent auction also will be held at this time. The POPS Gala I resulted in about \$20,000 being raised for POPS! We say thanks and we hope you can be part of POPS Gala II. Thanks to the Park Ballroom for donating the space again for our event.



• **Special Fundraising Opportunities.** We are always looking for additional avenues for funding for POPS. In 2024, those will include:

- Bourbon at the Broz. This special event June 1, 1-4 p.m., The Broz, will feature bourbon tasting, appetizers from 13-19 Woodfire Tavern, cigars, music and much more. A portion of the net proceeds will be given to POPS. We thank Mark Braaten, publisher of New Prague Neighbors magazine/Best Version Media Publications, and his committee for developing this event and assisting POPS. Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased through Eventbrite. Contact Mark at 952-239-0034 for more information.
- Our silent auction will return at POPS Gala II Oct. 4. Thanks to all the businesses in New Prague and elsewhere that stepped up and to Shannon Allen (Shannan Allen Design) and Mark Braaten (New Prague Neighbors magazine/Best Version Media Publications) for chairing the auction again. We are hopeful to exceed last year's total of almost \$6,500.
- If you have a special event or fundraising idea, please let us know. We'd be glad to explore it with you.

The fundraising committee is Shannon Brusseau, Tom Vanasek and Den Gardner. Contact Den when you'd like to contribute – 612/325-3981 or dengardner@gandgcomm.com. "It's Time!"

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## **Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange To be Featured at POPS Gala II October 4**

The Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Gala II will be held Friday, Oct. 4, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the Park Ballroom featuring a concert/dance with International Polka Hall of Fame artists "Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange." The POPS Committee hopes to fill the Park Ballroom for the event.

POPS Gala II will be the year two celebration of the campaign to build the outdoor performance facility in New Prague, beginning in 2025. Thus far (as of March 1), \$830,000 has been pledged to the building effort by more than 80 individuals, families, businesses, local community organizations and others. The goal is to raise \$1 million by the end of 2025.

The New Prague City Council has recently selected City Center (old mill pond/creamery site) on the west end of the city as its preferred site for the POPS building.

POPS Gala I was held in October of 2023, with the SUV raffle and silent auction, along with band performances by the Eddie Shimota Band and Little Chicago. That event raised nearly \$20,000 for the POPS effort.

POPS Gala II will take a slightly different twist. Mollie B and her band are an internationally known group that has performed in more than 30 states and eleven countries. They have a huge following in the Upper Midwest. The band will do a three-hour concert/dance. Mollie is also in the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame.

Mollie entertaining her audience



Mollie B and Ted Lange



Mollie B and Clint Eastwood



“We are thrilled to book this very popular group for our second gala,” said Den Gardner, POPS chairman. “We hope to be celebrating our 2024 efforts to get close to \$1 million in pledged funds. It’s going to take continued work by the POPS Committee to hold a first-class event for all those in the area who support our effort. We are hoping for a crowd of 500+ in attendance.”

The POPS Silent Auction will return for its second year, headed by Shannon Allen and Mark Braaten. Details on the auction, which will be a live, online auction like last year, will be provided this spring and summer. Approximately \$6,500 was raised for POPS last year at the auction.

The POPS Committee thanks the Park Ballroom and American Legion Post for providing the venue rent-free again for the gala. Food and refreshments will be available again. Tickets will be available this summer, along with more specific details.

### **Background on Mollie B & SqueezeBox with Ted Lange**



Mollie B and Ted Lange



Mollie B, the multi-instrumentalist, award-winning vocalist, and host of the Mollie B Polka Party TV show, has been performing music all her life. Mollie started her career performing with the Jim Busta Band when she was only a child. Through hard work and dedication, Mollie now performs nationwide to live audiences, as well as TV productions and the movie screen. She has performed for several years with the award-winning Ted Lange and also serves as a guest artist with other bands. Mollie not only has performed on over 40 recordings, but she has also shared her many God-given talents with fans in over 30 states and eleven countries and continues to inspire young musicians with her love for music.

In 2005, Mollie joined Ted Lange’s Bratwurst Boys, based out of Ridgeville Corners, Ohio. In 2007, 2-time Grammy-nominee Ted and Mollie changed the name to SqueezeBox. SqueezeBox showcases Mollie’s versatility on several instruments, as well as her talented vocals.

In July of 2011, the first Mollie B Polka Party aired on RFD-TV. Mollie was a creative director and co-producer of these shows. The Mollie B Polka Party currently airs in over 55 million homes on RFD-TV on Wednesday at 6:30 pm and Saturday at 10:00 pm ET.

In 2018, Mollie B & SqueezeBox appeared as “Mollie B & her band” in a scene of the Warner Brothers movie, “The Mule,” directed and starring Clint Eastwood. Also in 2018, Mollie was the youngest person to be inducted into the International Polka Hall of Fame and she had a US Flag flown in her honor by the US Air Force in a mission in the Middle East.

In 2020, like many, Mollie and Ted had to pivot due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mollie and Ted began their YouTube channel, with weekly Tuesday night performances, and gained over 20,000 subscribers and over six million views.

In the fall of 2021, Mollie received the Sperati Award from Luther College. An award presented to one alumni musician receives this award each year for their excellence in instrumental music. And in 2022, Mollie was inducted into the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame.

Mollie has won the title of the “Favorite Female Vocalist” award numerous times, both from the United States Polka Association and the International Polka Association. She has also won multiple awards from the Polka America Corporation for her polka recordings with Ted Lange.

Ted Lange, a two-time GRAMMY nominee, International Polka Association “Hall of Fame” member, and the 2019, 2020, and 2021 IPA Best International Male Vocalist, co-leads and co-manages SqueezeBox with Mollie B. While on stage, he is featured on accordion, midi bass, button box and vocals. In addition to performing with SqueezeBox, he has become a name synonymous with quality polka music as an award winning-musician, DJ, promoter, engineer, songwriter, arranger and producer. He co-produced the “Mollie B Polka Party” on RFD-TV with his wife Mollie B, which broadcasts into over 60 million households.

Ted received his second Grammy nomination also with John Gora for his work on “Bulletproof Polkas” in 2007. In addition to performing with John Gora, Ted also performed with a Toledo-based “Polish Style” band named “Change Of Pace from 2004 through 2006 and recorded 2 CDs with them.

Ted’s reputation for being able to step in as a side musician due to his keen musical ear, in addition to his vast polka music knowledge and ability, has made him one of the “first calls” for any band seeking a quality fill-in on accordion, concertina or drums.

In the late 1990s, Ted formed the band “The Bratwurst Boys” with other members of Toledo Polkamotion, which later became the band now known as “Squeezebox”. Since 2005, the dynamic duo of Ted Lange and Mollie B have taken Squeezebox to over 100 performances a year all over the United States.

The POPS Leadership Team is working tirelessly for the New Prague community to raise money needed to build the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) facility. Thanks to its members:

- Den Gardner, Chair
- Karen Steinhoff, Vice-Chair
- Bruce Wolf, Treasurer
- Sandi Loxton, Secretary
- Shannon Allen
- Joe Barten
- Andy Beckius
- Lisa Brusseau
- Shannon Brusseau
- Tony Buthe
- Dr. Jon Colling
- Gina Fadden
- Steve Frost
- Pastor Ben Hilding
- Larry Pint
- Eddie Shimota
- Brooke Sticha



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