

Meet Chuck Thiel and His Jolly Ramblers

With a combined total of more than 200 years in the music and dance band industry, Chuck Thiel and His Jolly Ramblers of Lester Prairie, Mn., will please you with their genuine style of danceable music that is pleasing to all old-time and modern dancers and listeners alike. A steady beat and beautiful instrumental and vocal blends make this band very popular throughout the upper-Midwest.

The composition of the group allows many interesting instrumental and vocal combinations. Solid bass keyboard and percussion along with some very nice concertina fills and solos complete a really enjoyable sound.

Chuck Thiel, the concertina player, lead vocalist, and leader, is the son of the band's originator Albert Thiel, who passed away May 12, 1994. Chuck has been a Jolly Rambler since 1962. Father of Jason, Jeremy (died of cancer at age 34), and Jamison, he makes his home in Lester Prairie. After teaching high school English for 25 years, Chuck plays music and organizes and directs tours.

Ken Schmidt has been a Jolly Rambler since 1971. He plays trumpet, saxophone, and valve trombone and does many of the vocals. He also arranges much of the band's music. Ken and his wife Cathy live in LeCenter where Ken retired as a high school science teacher. They have two grown sons.

Jason Thiel is a third generation Jolly Rambler who became a full-time member in January 1995. Jason most often plays keyboard and does vocals, but occasionally will be found behind the drums and even playing trumpet. A graduate of St. Cloud State University, he now works for Bally Sports North in Minneapolis and lives in Bloomington with his wife Mary and sons Jacob, Noah and Benjamin.

Jacob Thiel, the son of Jason and Mary, was born in 2008 and made his public debut with the band on his great-grandpa's drum set in 2013. A fourth generation Jolly Rambler, Jacob is now the full-time drummer, but you'll often see him playing trumpet with the band... especially when Chuck, Jason and Jacob go out as generations 2-3-4. A freshman at Bloomington Jefferson High School, he's taking trumpet lessons and plays in the school's Marching Band as well as the Wind Ensemble.

Noah Thiel, Jason and Mary's middle son, was born in 2010 and has made various appearances on drums throughout the years. He's also playing trumpet more often and continues to add more songs to his library. Now a seventh grader, Noah also takes trumpet lessons and plays in the middle school band.

Benjamin Thiel, the youngest of Jason and Mary's sons, was born in 2012 and spent his early years as the band's roadie, always jumping in to help pack and carry equipment. Now, he's picked up the sticks and plays drums, allowing for his brothers to perform some duets on trumpet. Ben is a fourth grader and plans to begin learning another instrument soon.

The Jolly Ramblers feature a wide variety of musical styles from German/Czech old-time to modern and swing to 50's, country, and country-rock. In 1991 they added the "polka mass/service" to their library and have since released five Christian CD's/cassettes. Christian ministry through music has become a major part of their annual schedule. "It's a Family Tradition" is their latest release (August 2020). The Jolly Ramblers have recorded 20 albums/cassettes/CDs.