

HOW TO HOLD THE BANJO

Sit upright and rest the rim of the Banjo on the right thigh. It is preferable to have the right leg crossed over the left. Tilt the Banjo enough to allow the tone to come out the back of the instrument. Don't hug it too close to your body. Support the neck between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, keeping the hand in a straight line with the fore-arm. NEVER ALLOW THE PALM OF THE HAND TO TOUCH THE BACK OF THE NECK. The ball of the thumb rests underneath the neck. Keep the fingers always above the fingerboard ready to play, also keep them close to the fingerboard when not being used. The neck of the Banjo should be held a trifle higher than the head. See Ill. 1.

THE RIGHT HAND

The right hand, with limber wrist, is one of many VERY IMPORTANT points in Banjo playing. The meaning of limber is, "all muscles relaxed". To learn how to thoroughly relax your wrist, arch same, twist it upward, carefully observing that this movement is done by the wrist only. (No fore-arm movement allowed) Then let the wrist drop, as tho' it were lifeless. Picture your wrist as a hinge, working from the thumb and 1st. finger, where the pick is held, to the wrist joint, the fore-arm remaining permanent, pressing against the Banjo and the body. Of course the movement of the wrist going up and down will cause the muscles to twist in the fore-arm, but there is no actual DOWN and UP movement of the fore-arm, just the wrist. After you have tried the "Down and Up" movement of the wrist 30 or more times, first slow and then fast, independent of the instrument, place your fore-arm just above the tail piece, and arch the wrist, until the wrist joint is elevated 2½ inches directly over the bridge. (See Ill. 2 and 3.) That will throw the picking range four inches from the bridge. The Pick (should be large, medium stiff, genuine Tortoise Shell) is held point downwards, between the thumb and first finger, (just as tho' you were picking up a piece of paper) See Ill. 4.

On the Ends of the Finger and Thumb the sense of feeling is the keenest, therefore enabling the student, after a little practice, to get the best control, by adhering to this correct way of holding the Pick. When the Pick slips out of position use the 2nd finger to straighten it. Some find it easier to control the Pick by holding it between the 1st finger and thumb, and also the 2nd finger. On single note playing the Pick strikes the string at a 45° angle. The REASON IS, so that the UP STROKE will clear its neighbor string. The Pick must also strike the string squarely; neither edge is permitted to strike the string before the body of the Pick does. If the student should hold the Pick cornerwise the tone would be weak and scraping, and also the Pick would wear on one side, and get rough. This point is important for tone and must be watched closely in the beginning especially, as BAD HABITS once formed are hard to break, and it's just as easy to start correctly as otherwise. In playing chords the Pick is held perpendicular, the reason is, so that the UP strokes will strike all strings required. In the down stroke see that you strike down far enough to rest against the next string, so that the string you have struck will have a chance to vibrate (without interference), and also your Pick will have a foundation to rest against in its downward course. TOO MUCH STRESS cannot be put

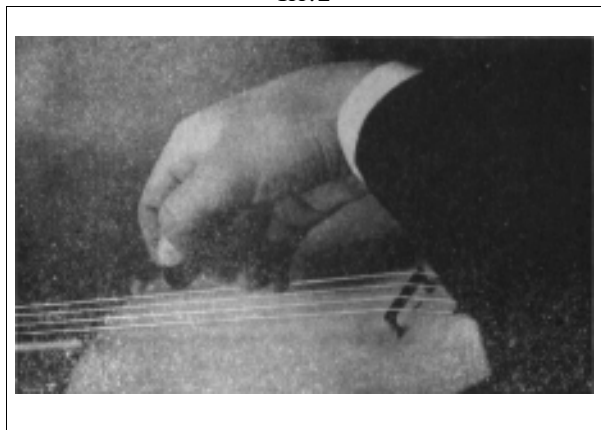
Illustrations by Frederik O. Bemm, Art Institute, Chicago, Ill.

III.1



Note in particular where the forearm of the Right Hand is placed - directly above the tailpiece.

III.2



Start of the down stroke.

III. 3



Finish of the down stroke.

III. 4



The correct way to hold the pick.

on this one point that whether you play a single note or a chord, the first step to remember is - **TO LIFT YOUR WRIST UP AND BACK FROM THE STRING TO BE STRUCK** about 2 inches, then let your wrist fall down or "slap" the string. This is necessary for complete relaxed wrist. You don't use the fingers nor the arm; the weight of the wrist falling the distance of 2 inches makes the tone, **AND THE RIGHT KIND OF TONE**. To make the UP stroke, come up with a "kick" of the wrist, in other words, to overcome gravity put a little pep in your UP stroke to make it equal in tone to the DOWN stroke, which is naturally the strongest stroke. Now that I have analyzed the "DOWN and UP" strokes, try making 16 of them, 8 down and 8 up, and these must be made at regular intervals, for instance: just like a pendulum of a clock beating back and forth. Try these 16 **TREMOLO BEATS** very slowly counting them, being sure to hold the PICK loosely and that your wrist muscles are surely relaxed. Watch this down-up movement very carefully, see that the down pick rests against the next string and your up pick comes up "in the air" and does not touch its neighbor string. This will be termed a slow **TREMOLO**, which after you have mastered, can then be increased in speed, until it is a fast tremolo. Too fast a tremolo is not advisable for the Tenor-Banjo, because a single string takes a medium fast tremolo better. This tremolo has to be learned for certain uses, but later "Ragging and Strumming" takes the place of the tremolo, when long notes have to be sustained. As soon as your Pick "sticks", you are not thoroughly relaxing. When your Pick sticks, take your hand off the instrument, relax your wrist by shaking it fast, place your arm back on the instrument, and try again. Don't get discouraged. Practice makes perfect.

DON'T practice your tremolo with a stiff wrist, **RELAX**.
DON'T place your pick on a string, and push it to make a tone; **LIFT WRIST** and **SLAP** the **STRING**
DON'T think you can make a decent tremolo without momentum.
DON'T BE AFRAID - "GET UP STEAM"
PLENTY OF WRIST MOTION WILL CARRY YOU THRU, and stop those hesitations.
HOLD THE PICK LOOSELY, and when making the tremolo, let the pick "ride the string".
 By holding the pick loosely the student learns to relax the wrist; later, he can hold the pick tightly without interfering with the relaxed wrist.