



RAINTREE played bluegrass at last night's Pickin' in the Pines in Look Park.

## Six bluegrass groups keep the music coming

By BARBARA STACK

Over 500 enthusiastic fans turned out between clearing skies and the still damp lawn of the Pines Theater at Look Park for the fourth annual Pickin' in the Pines Bluegrass Festival. They came in generations, sat on lawn chairs, wheelchairs, blankets and laps, ran about, danced, and heartily enjoyed their friends and neighbors making music on stage. For their part, the six local bands made everybody welcome, offered no short supply of pickin' and grinnin', as well as several particularly fine performances.

First was Tom Sample's hot and slinky fiddling on "Maple Sugar" and "Bill Cheatham" in the opening set by the Falls Road String Band. Ooee. The next band was the Ridgerunners, which has been playing bluegrass music in the Pioneer Valley for almost 25 years. Herman "Uncle Dunk" Dunklee, age 77, can still play his fiddle. He was warming up the "Orange Blossom Special" when Wynn Fay started to stamp his foot and looked him in the eye. The man moved out and took the band and the rest of us along.

Uncle Dunk doffed his cap and bowed to thunderous applause, and everybody grinned.

It was getting dark, some of the kids were getting sleepy, and the lights came on for a spirited reunion performance by Raintree. Great vocals, great picking, but oh that Deb Fish can yodel and everybody loved it. The River Valley Ramblers welcomed back Steve Stanne on visit from his new job on the Hudson River sloop, "Clearwater" (an environmental education vessel founded by folksinger Pete Seeger). Their old time music brought many dancers to their feet.

Athol songwriter Judy Carrier was an original member of the Ridgerunners in her teens and just got back from Nashville where she recorded her second album. With the Pioneer Valley Boys and Girl she shared some fine tunes and real pretty singing. The last, newest, and largest band, Billings Gap, gets better and better, right before our eyes.

Pickin' in the Pines, Wynn Fay says it's becoming a tradition here in the Pioneer Valley.