



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 20, No. 2 2018

## In This Issue:

*Highlights From  
Bones Fest XXII*

*Columns:*

*Executive Director  
Column*

*Editorial*

## Executive Director's Column

Bones Fest XXII.... in a word, Spectacular! Spectacular scenery in the heart of the White mountains, spectacular performances by all rhythm bones players, and spectacular friendships, some renewed, and some made for the first time.

Bones Fest XXII came to New Hampshire for the first time, and what a time it was. With people converging from as far as Cork, Republic of Ireland, and San Antonio, Texas, it had the making of an earth shattering Fest and it truly was! Sponsored by veteran Bones Fest attendees Jessye and Sky Bartlett, who had met at a Bones Fest, and with the assistance of Ernie Duffy produced a Bones Fest that will be

long remembered by all attendees.

Nestled in the heart of Franconia Notch, a truly magical place, some of the magic of the notch rubbed off on our Fest as each event brought us closer together, and endeared Bones Fest to the many people who attended, and the residents of Lincoln and Woodstock respectively. Although starting in the murky fog well known to Notch residents, it was not long that the sun appeared, and bright blue skies graced us the entire weekend.

Some of my personal highlights, Jamming  
(Continued on Page 2)

## Highlights From Bones Fest XXII

What a weekend! I am so glad to be able to say that Bones Fest XXII was a success, due in no small part to the flexibility, patience and good energy that folks brought to the Fest. I am grateful to you all, without exception. So what did I like about the Fest? For starts, meeting some new people! I got to spend a fair amount of time on Thursday night with Bruce, Pascal, Tom and Bríd. There were several other new people, or new to me people, but it took me a little longer to find them. And, of course, I loved seeing old friends. Sharon was the first person we met up with, and what a perfect person to have be the first! She helped us set up the registration table at the hotel and stayed to greet people with us. From then on I don't remember the order of who we saw, just that it really is kind of surreal to see friends you've known for so many years and have seen in so many locations walk through the doors of a venue in your own neck of the woods. Pascal came in early on, and within a short time, it was decided that he would stay at our house as he had not booked a room. That was a fun added element of the Fest for Jessye and me. I will note that he is an excellent guest.

I got to the Thursday night reception at the Common Man restaurant a little later than at least half the crowd. It was a great way to start...being reminded that I, as the host, did not need to be present for the RBS crowd to have a good time. By the time I arrived, pizza was being served and the laughter and merriment had already begun. We had booked Ryan and Brennish Tomson as our musicians on Steve

Brown's recommendation, and while we had reviewed a couple of youtube videos, we didn't really know what we were going to get. What a great surprise! I cannot say enough wonderful  
(Continued on Page 2)



Bones Fest XXII hosts Jessye and Sky Bartlett

## Editorial

I am sitting at the airport with Dennis Riedesel reminiscing about Bones Fest XXII, and calling it the “Mountain Fest” (I called Dennis’ BFXV in San Antonio the Performance Fest as we had nine hours of stage time at the Alamo Compound and the Texas Folklife Festival).

Kudos to Sky and Jessye Bartlett on another terrific Fest. Each venue was unique and welcomed us warmly. There were many first timers who learned or improved. Sky’s highlights article begins on Page 1.

I really liked my Saturday performance. I wanted to play to something slow and quickly settled on Jay Ungar’s ‘Ashokan Farewell.’ Farewell got me thinking about rhythm bones players who have passed such the as the father of RBS, Everett Cowett, and I named as many as I could think of on the spot prior to the song. I followed that up noting how the young Sky and Jessye are picking up leadership roles such that RBS should continue after us old guys say ‘farewell.’



## Executive Director’s Column Continued

at the Common Man on Thursday, the communal breakfast at Polly’s Pancake Parlor on Friday, exploring the misty top of Cannon Mountain, playing in the bear ring at Clark Trading Post and the tremendous welcome given to us by the Clarks, One of the greatest Saturday night performances at One Love Brewery including Sky Bartlett showing us why he is the future of rhythm bone playing!

When I attended my first Bones Fest in 2000, the over whelming feeling was of attending a family reunion of a family I didn’t know I had, and true to form, Bones Fest XXII epitomized that feeling for every Bones Fest attendee. To quote first time Bones Fest attendee Pascal

Huynh from Montreal, “I had a blast, met great characters, was moved by the inclusion and friendliness of everyone!” Well put Pascal, and my exact feeling after every Bones Fest.

Look forward to some great highlights, video, pictures which we hope will capture even a little bit that we experienced! Thanks to Jessye and Sky for all their hard work which makes this Bones Fest so memorable! And to all of the attendee’s, so great to see the old ones and meet the new ones!

The Board is now in the interesting position of having a number of proposals for next year, and even one for the following year! We have a few things in the works, and we hope to share them with you in the coming months! As we work out the details, consider attending a bone playing event in the next year. I guarantee you won’t be disappointed!

*Steve Brown*

## BFXII Highlights Continued

things about them both. Excellent music, a balance of genres, always on point, they were easy to work with and I’d say they really “got” Bones Fest in that intangible sort of way. I really enjoyed jamming with everyone—I am always amazed at how the RBS crowd loosens up right away; there is no slow warm-up phase, just full-speed right at the start.

Friday morning I got to sit with the Ireland contingency at the pancake house and learned a little about them, though I instantly felt as though I had known them my whole life. Something about rhythm bones does that, I think. The tram ride and top of Cannon Mountain was what it was: foggy, cold, etc. But you can’t dampen the spirit of a rhythm bones player, so there was nothing to regret there. I apologize to those of you who had trouble finding the Loon Mountain venue on property—a detail we missed. Of course no one complained at all, but I apologize just the same. I was very pleased with the way the afternoon went. Tom was the only official workshop, focused on the making of real bone bones. I have not attempted this myself, nor seen it done, so I enjoyed hearing about the process. Our open workshop, or interactive workshop or whatever you call it) seemed to go

### *Rhythm Bones Player*

Rhythm Bones Society  
Volume 20, No 2  
Second Quarter 2018  
ISSN: 1545-1380

Editor  
Steve Wixson  
wixson@epbf.com

Executive Director  
Stephen Brown  
bones@crystal-mtn.com

Web Site Coordinator  
Steve Wixson  
webmaster@rhythmbones.com

Board of Directors  
Steve Brown, Executive Director  
Skeffington Flynn  
Sharon Mescher  
Dennis Riedesel  
Bill Vits, Assistant Director  
Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer  
Kenny Wolin

The Rhythm Bones Player is published quarterly by the Rhythm Bones Society. Nonmember subscriptions are \$10 for one year; RBS members receive the Player as part of their dues.

The Rhythm Bones Players welcomes letters to the Editor and article on any aspect of bones playing. All material submitted for consideration is subject to editing and condensation.

Rhythm Bones Central web site: [rhythmbones.org](http://rhythmbones.org)

over well. I think it is much more important that we all experience a Fest the way we want. I really appreciated the honesty of the folks that I did ask about doing a work shop: every one of them said, in so many words, “I am viewing this as a vacation and do not want to.” That is what a good Fest needs: people being honest about what they do and do not want. That allowed us to move forward with what people did want—a chance to keep it interactive amongst all members. The rest of the afternoon was standard Bones Fest stuff: jamming, pass offs and the like. One fun twist was Zip’s request for a dance. Thank you to all who participated in that and helped us to fulfill his wish! (Though I wonder if Jessye might have put Zip up to it...)

When I got back to the Indian Head Resort I got the pleasure of having dinner with Skeff. We talked mostly about hosting Bones Fests (his was the last one

(Continued on Page 7)

# Photographs From Bones Fest XXII



Bones Fest XXII Group Photograph on Cannon Mountain. From the left on knees are Brannish Thomson, Quinn Sweet, Pascal Huynh, Jonathan Danforth, Emmett Danforth, Steve Brown, Bill Vits, Tim Reilly and Jessye Bartlett. Standing in back are Richard Corsa and Zip Kellogg. The remaining from the left are Tami Swartz, Adam Klein, Ryan Thomson, Frank R. Sweet, Miles Sweet, Marcia Rotondo, Sky Bartlett, Tom Connolly, Brid Connolly, Dick Lilly, Kathryn Lilly, Stan Von Hagen, Kathy Mckee, Jean Von Hagen, Bobby Mckee, Melissa Danforth, Bruno Giles, Jennifer Brown, Blue Hammond, Jeremy Brown, Gerry Hines, Janet Hines, Ernie Duffy, Marie Bruschi, Ron Bruschi, Jim Runner, Sharon Mescher, Frank W. Sweet, Mary Lee Sweet, Patricia Joy, Donald Joy, Bruce Strong and John Archibald. Not shown are photographers Art Sands and Steve Wixson, Doug Danforth, Melissa Danforth, Dennis Riedesel (off fly fishing), Rebecca Shannon, Alexis Truslow, and Parker Waite.



Indian Head Resort - the Fest hotel



Our accommodations



Thursday reception at Common Man Restaurant



Breakfast at Polly's Pancake Parlor



Tram to Cannon Mountain and group photograph



Jamming on the Observation Tower



Richard Corsa and Pascal Huynh at Adam Klein's bones market place



Steve Brown's bones market place with Jeremy Brown



Blue Hammond at Skeff Flynn's bones market place



Sky Bartlett's Open Workshop



Tom Connolly from Ireland on his rhythm bones



Ryan and Brannish Thomson (in center)



Friday night jam session at Indian Head Resort



Saturday breakfast outdoors



Steve Brown opens 1st session in the Bear Ring



Ernie Duffy and Sky Bartlett duo



Sweet Family with Mescher, Danforth & Connolly



The bear in the Ring



Sky Bartlett starts Music Merit Badge session



Ernie Duffy helps scouts make rhythm bones



Gerry Hines helps scouts make rhythm bones



Jessye Bartlett presents some music theory



Pascal Huynh helps scouts play rhythm bones



Steve Wixson coaches a scout



Clark Trading Post staff photograph of Steve Brown and scouts



Saturday public performance audience (rest of One Love Brewery could hear)



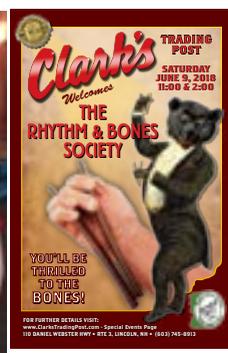
Skeff Flynn leads off 2nd session in Bear Ring



Gerry Hines in the Bear Ring



Emmett Danforth



Advertising Poster



Dennis Riedesel skit with help from Steve Brown



Bruno Giles on Saturday night



Donald Joy on Saturday night



Dennis Riedesel skipped out on Friday to go fly fishing in beautiful White Mountain rivers



Sky Bartlett dances and plays rhythm bones  
Photograph by Art Sands



John Archibald and Marcia Rotondo



Adam Klein and wife Tami Swartz's operatic performance assisted by Bill Vits, Tim Reilly and Ryan Thomson



Jamming with One Love Brewery entertainer, Ben Cook, are Skeff Flynn, Ernie Duffy, Dennis Reidesel, Art and Linda Sands



Jim Runner



Tom Connolly



Parker Waite



Ron Bruschi



Blue Hammond



Stan Von Hagen



Jeremy Brown



Steve Wixson



Ernie Duffy on the right is 'passing off,' something created by the late Walt Watkins, to Steve Brown who after a solo break passes to the next person in a circle, Bill Vits who passes to Skeff Flynn who passes to Gerry Hines and this continues until the song is finished.

(Continued from Page 2)

I had been to). It was the perfect way to decompress after the more scheduled part of the day. But really any time spent with Skeff is a treat. After dinner it was more jamming, pass offs and the like at the Indian Head with Ryan and Brennish showing no signs of fatigue or annoyance, the latter being perhaps the more impressive.

Saturday was a slightly earlier start for Gerry and Janet Hines and me than the rest of the crowd. We got to Clark's Trading Post at 9:20 AM to be briefed on Boy Scout paperwork. Gerry and I had completed an online course this winter to be able to sign off on the Boy Scout's music merit badges. We were told the online course would take 20 minutes, but it turns out it was more like 3 hours! So a BIG BIG thank you to Gerry for not only dealing with that, but also for giving up half of his Saturday at Bones Fest for the Boy Scouts and the perpetuation of the bones tradition. Before, between, and after all of our performances and presentations, Gerry was reviewing prerequisite work done by the boys, and there was quite a pile. Hopefully we get some new players out of it! And, of course, a thank-you to Steve Wixson for covering intellectual property rights for the Boy Scouts—I felt bad even asking him to do that.

And a thank-you to Steve Brown for being our ring master in the bear ring. We put that on him last minute, but really, who else has the presence that Steve does? He looks, sounds and IS the part. A crowd cannot help but love him.

Some highlights from the Clark's performances for me were: watching John Archibald and Steve Brown play together (I thought they sounded great); certainly Johnathan's whistling, as well as Gerry's harmonica routine (both of which bring a smile to my face every time and remind me of both those guys' talents beyond the bones). I thought Mary Lee Sweet did an excellent job of selecting her group and getting family to participate in Backintyme's performance. The extended Sweet family was a blast! And not half bad with rhythm bones. I will say I missed the hoop dress. It was great to be hosted by a venue whose founding father had been a rhythm bones player. I look forward to a potential article written by Steve Brown about the rhythm bones that he played in the closing

pass off, the ones owned by the Clark family.

From Clarks I went straight to One Love Brewery where I began setting up sound equipment. I was soon joined by Ernie, which was a much needed addition—not only for the physical help, but it was great to have a chance to catch up with him and discuss how the weekend was going. Ernie is a good problem-solver when it comes to an event or project. He rearranged the entire layout upstairs to accommodate our crowd. I could not be happier with how our public performance went. In discussing it with my family afterward, they all let me know that they were very impressed. What they noted the most was the diversity of styles. To have them all say that they were thoroughly entertained and anxious to see what each new performer would bring was all I needed for confirmation. If it had been otherwise, they would not have held back. Adam Klein and Tami Swartz certainly stole the show with both of their performances. I think the crowd was awestruck. Thank goodness Bruno Giles was on after their first performance—I cannot think of a better way to follow a big, loud and intense act like Adam and Tami's than with his sleek, high-quality routine. I really enjoyed the quickness between the two acts that allowed for a visible contrast; two acts so different, yet both so entertaining. Great acts all around, from Ron Bruschi to Sharon Mescher, from Ernie Duffy to Stan Von Hagen. And what a pleasure to get to see Don Joy play! His smile alone is enough to elicit applause, let alone his energetic, performance-style rhythm bones playing. It's not often we get a dancing Dog AND dancing Irishman in one evening, but we did, and were all the better off for it. I got great feedback for Dennis's jokes, but he shouldn't be too excited...I myself was getting great feedback from the microphone all night. Getting to play with Ernie was special for me, as we don't play out as often as we used to, and to get to play near home with all of our friends and family and Bones family in one room humbled us with a fresh realization of how much we have to be thankful for. I thank everyone

for indulging me with my Canned Heat routine. It is a favorite with the locals, as are most cheap thrills and camouflage pajamas. I got to have a lot of fun sharing MC duties with Steve Brown. I think it would have been even less seamless without him, if that is possible. I really did enjoy myself, though, for as haphazard as the set list was, the flow and variation seemed to work well. Steve Wixson did a great job reminding us of those who have gone before us to the great Bones Fest in the sky and what a joy each and every one of them was. Our hearts are with Tim; he played beautifully in honor of his brother. Not an easy thing. I was very glad he could make it. Tim goes way back in my rhythm bones career. I'm not entirely sure I comprehended everything offered by Blue, our newly appointed spiritual liaison, but I have no doubt we were heard by whoever is listening. Steve Brown's impromptu assembly of a pass off was spot on and just what we needed as we brought it in for a finish. I want to thank everyone for keeping their acts to a reasonable length—I really thank you for that. I think it's imperative to a good public performance, given that we all want to play.

There is much more a person could say, so many acts I haven't mentioned, people I haven't mentioned, meaningful conversations, the list goes on. What rhythm bones have offered me continues to grow. Rhythm bones have brought me to different places; I have made money playing them; they have brought me long enduring friendships; they have brought me a wife. They have allowed me to connect with music in a way I believe so many people wish they could: instead of as a passive listener, I can be an active participant. And in connecting with the music I can find depth of experience, one that goes beyond four sticks and a shaking wrist. As I sit back and view Bones Fest XXII from the other side, I find myself thinking that rhythm bones have offered me yet another stunningly beautiful experience in which I received so much more than I gave. So I say thank you to the RBS and to all who attended, not only for your support in hosting BFX XII, but also for continuing to shape my life in the most positive of ways. *Sky Bartlett*



Grand Finale in the One Love Brewery

---

## *Rhythm Bones Society*

1060 Lower Brow Road  
Signal Mountain, TN 37377-2910

*Address Correction Requested*