



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 5, No. 4 2003

- In this Issue*
- Highlights of Bones Fest VII*
- Bones Playing on Broadway*
- Bones at the Kennedy Center*
- Bones Workshop at NEFFA*
- Wixson Wins Bones Contest*
- Columns:*  
*Executive Director's Column*
- Editorial*
- Letters to the Editor*
- Tips and Techniques*
- Websites of the Quarter*
- Recordings of the Quarter*
- Calendar of Bones Events*
- Future Issues*  
*Frank Brower and Minstrel Bones Players*
- Review of Chris Caswell's Instructional Video*

## Executive Director's Column

The highlight for Rhythm Bones Players for the year had to be Bones Fest VII. What a great time was had by all. Many new faces but most of the old timers were there too (see BFVII Story). The quality of play was better than ever and our hosts, Gil and Linda Hibben, could not have been better. Louisville and the Kentucky Theater will be remembered forever by the participants. The video of the event is great (5 hrs of bones playing) so order while they last. I also cry for any of you who missed the Sunday brunch at the Hibben Ranch and tour of Gil's workshop. It was a wonderful learning experience and lots of fun.

Our membership continued to grow in both quality and numbers with well over 100 members. Already about three-fourths of you

have renewed your membership for the 2003-2004 year. If you have forgotten please send \$25 to the Rhythm Bones Society.

As you can see by reading this Newsletter the quality and content continues to improve. What a great job editor Steve Wixson is doing. A big thanks to each of you who have contributed to it. Without your contribution to letters to the editor and newsworthy articles Steve would have little to report.

Other activities, which we are proud of this year, include participation and wining bones playing contests and teaching in classrooms and workshops where "would be" bones players are taught the fundamentals. Keep up the good work. May your bones be with you.

*Ev Cowett.*

## Highlights of Bones Fest VII

Bones Fest VII was hosted by us, Gil and Linda Hibben, in Louisville, KY, on July 25, 26, & 27, 2003 at the Kentucky Theatre. This historic theatre was a great place to hold a Bones Fest with great acoustics and side rooms for jamming and practicing.

Bones players who were here a day early were featured on 3 separate TV shows, all very early morning news programs. We also had a very good article in the Louisville Eccentric Observer which caters to the arts community...the result of the combined publicity brought quite a few people to the Kentucky Theatre for the Saturday night performance.

Friday night was a reception at the Theatre with heavy hors d'ouevres catered by Linda and her sister-in-law Sally Cochran. Former member Dr. Sandra Graves provided her original paintings and flower arrangements to set the tone for a very welcoming reception area. There was plenty of jamming and with the stage this was one of the best jam scenes we have had.

Steve Brown received the Meritorious Service award and then showed off his winning All-Ireland style. He is indeed a champion.

Saturday morning opened at the Theatre with coffee and pastries and the show

*(Continued on page 6)*



Gil and Linda Hibben, hosts of Bones Fest VII

## Editorial

Bones Fest VII was another great success and many thanks to Gil and Linda Hibben for hosting. As in previous years the highlights of the fest is the feature article.

I learned of Joe Brent from Ev Cowett. He is a Broadway musician and bones player as well and has written a most interesting story.

Ken Wolin is another new member with a great story. He lives in the DC area and hopefully will attend the next Bones Fest.

Bill Vits gave us the first quadruplet roll played at a Bones Fest. During the Sunday morning brunch, he held an informal workshop on this sixteenth note technique to a small but interested group.

Aaron Plunkett plays this lick and demonstrates it in his Bones instructional video. I asked him to write a Tips and Techniques column on it which he has done and he included a whole lot more information.

Your editor finally won the 2003 Bones Contest now in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Since I asked recent winners to write their story, I too have written an article on my journey.

I attended the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas and what a great event! This is Barry Patton's home town and he is a featured performer. He also has a large following of people who like bones players. I enjoyed seeing Barry again and listening to his great bluegrass bones styling. I also spent some time with one of Barry's champion bluegrass banjo friends who listened to my bones playing and pointed out timing (that I was not playing) that

## Letters to the Editor

When Barry and I arrived in Louisville for our first Bone Fest, we felt like country 'bone' pkins until we were greeted at the Kentucky Theater by Gil and Linda. We immediately felt a 'bone'ified friendliness from all the participants. The Saturday morning and afternoon sessions were a 'bone'anza of great talent as each

musician demonstrated their various techniques. A 'bone'tiful lunch and supper were enjoyed at a nearby Cunningham's restaurant. The evening session was a 'bone'us round featuring some of the most talented percussionists. When all the guests played together, 'bone' demonium (according to Bill Vits) broke loose. After a delicious brunch at the Hibben's home. We bid each other 'bone'voyage til next year.*Jean Palmerton*

Dear Ev, Annette and I want to thank you for driving all the way up here to see us. We enjoyed being with you and hope to get together again soon. The web sight is [www.oldtimeband.com](http://www.oldtimeband.com) <<http://www.oldtimeband.com>>. You can order our CD on line from [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) <<http://www.paypal.com>> for \$14.95 plus mailing but if any bones players want a CD they can send me there address and \$12.00 and I will mail them one. My address is Mitch Boss 101 Culler Way, King, NC 27021.

My dad taught me how to play the spoons when I was 7. Latter after I saw a man playing the bones in a minstrel show he made me a par of wooden bones. Dad played one handed and that's how I started , but it wasn't long before I decided the only right way was with both hands. For years I amused myself playing along with whatever was on the radio and with records and cassettes. We were living way out in Stokes County 18 or so years ago and one night I heard Jerry,Ellis,Lawrence and Junior playing old time music across the pound at Al's house. I wanted to play with them but I was embarrassed to ask if I could click along . Well Annette went right over there and said "can my husband come play with you", (just like she was my mother and I was 3 years old). After

(Continued on page 4)

## Bones Calendar

**August 20-22, 2004.** Bones Fest VIII hosted by Sally and Terry Carroll in the Reston, VA area. Details in next issue.  
**September 4, 2004.** 29th Annual NTCMA Bones and Spoons contest. The festival lasts from Aug 30 to Sept 5. Look for details in spring newsletter.

## Rhythm Bones Player

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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 Player welcomes letters to the Editor and articles on any aspect of bones playing. All material submitted for consideration is subject to editing and condensation.

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

## Website of the Quarter

[artists.iuma.com/IUMA/Bands/](http://artists.iuma.com/IUMA/Bands/)

**Little Blue Heron.** Adam Klein and Constance Cook's website where you can learn about them and listen to or download two mp3 bones cuts. One of the cuts is *Pick a Bale of Cotton* from Bones Fest V. The other is *Liza Jane* performed at Bones Fest V, but this is a different performance. *Adam Klein*

## Recorded Bones Music

'BOUT TIME! CD with RBS member Mitch Boss and the Snow Creek Old Tyme Band. The CD has 16 tracts including many old time favorites with bones playing on each tract. You can listen to MP3 clip samples of each at <[www.oldtimeband.com](http://www.oldtimeband.com)> RBS members may obtain a CD by sending \$12 to Mitch Boss 101 Culler Way, King NC 27021 or you can order from the web site for a few \$ more.

## Bone Playing in the Broadway Bizarro World

Many of you, no doubt, remember the latest Broadway Musician's strike in New York. The daily news programs showed images of musicians playing for free outside of the various houses, which no doubt would have helped our cause had we not also been hampered by lousy negotiators. But what was most striking of all was surely the diversity of the musicians featured; brass jocks, woodwind doublers, string virtuosi, and percussionists of every permutation imaginable.

I am one of those poor players who makes a living playing in shows. But unlike most of those hardy souls you saw braving the winter chill to demonstrate our solidarity, I don't have an easily definable instrumental category. Mostly, I play stringed instruments - violins, guitars, mandolins, ukes, banjos, etc. But because I exist in the 'bizarro' realm inhabited by a versatile few, I am also frequently called upon to play instruments you might not have seen in those news clips. I suppose the logic goes: "He's already got all those other noisemakers taking up room in the pit, what's a few more? The uppity *flautists* sure as hell couldn't be bothered."

Thus began my love affair (of convenience) with what I affectionately call my 'toys'. Bones, spoons, shakers, rattlers, rollers, and even a few doohickeys of my own invention. In a recent show I had to choreograph a quick change from violin to siren whistle to cowbell to ratchet to shaker, and finally to guitar to close the number. On the original cast recording of Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt's *Roadside*, that's me playing the spoons, just before my big clave solo. And since I also orchestrated that show, I made sure to share the bizarro duties with Barry Mitterhoff, my doubling partner-in-crime; in one number, he was using one of my egg shakers while I beat a rumba on the back of a my 'Lady Godiva' - essentially, a viola I stole from my undergraduate school, broke

the neck off of, and had painted in a mermaid motif by a scenic painter friend of mine. One day, I plan to cut some ridges on the side of it so I can scrape it with a guiro stick.

In my instrument closet, which I have named the Forbidden Closet of Mysteries (thanks to Chief Wiggam), I have musical saws, an udu, a New Year's Eve tooter which I once played in the exit music of another show, a rattle known as the kpoko-kpoko, gourds, drums, shakers and beaters, and bells and whistles to shatter the eardrums of my neighbors down the street, along with my stringed, woodwind, brass, and keyboard instruments.

But whenever I have a spare moment, and nobody else is home to complain, I always return to my bones and spoons. Say I got some food cooking on the rangetop, or I'm waiting for a ballgame to start; is there a worse feeling in the world than boredom? So I whip out the old clackety-clackers and wail away. I bought my bones several years ago in an unsanitary but well-stocked musical instrument and sundries store on Bleeker Street. By the way, if you know the one I'm talking about, help me boycott the dump, they charge you 10 bucks to get in the door, and they mostly just overcharge for the same stuff you can get at Lark In the Morning for much cheaper.

But at the time, it was well worth it to me. They're real rib bones, and had already hardened a bit, which means they had been sitting in the store for quite some time. I guess people just assumed they were what was left over of the previous owners, which is not a bad guess on Bleeker Street, but I knew what they were for, and I snapped them up.

Over the years, they have really dried out and now are capable of sorts of great sounds, from dull *thuds* to clave-like *whacks* to rim shots to whip-like *snares*. They have a greater range of sound than my rosewood claves, although they're not as loud. But for small bands, they're great; I sometimes bring them to jam sessions with folk or Irish bands. I also have wooden spoons I bought from the Chinese super-store Pearl

River (they were actually intended to be used in the consumption of food, imagine that) that have a similar sonic range, and between the two of them, I don't have to pick up a fiddle for hours. Which is great when your primary concern is finishing your beer without spilling it on your outrageously expensive Cremonese violin. Also, I get to listen to the other players, which most fiddle players don't bother to do.

The other great thing about the bones is that nobody looks at you cross-eyed when you bust them out, regardless of the musical genre. The fiddle has classical and bluegrass connotations, so nobody wants to hear me play jazz on it. I have a bowlback and a flatback mandolin, which respectively have classical and folk/bluegrass histories to overcome; thus, I get the evil eye when I break out a funk groove on it. And no matter what kind of guitar I use, some other guitar player is always suggesting a better guitar/rig combination. I hate guitar players.

But after the initial "yes, they really came out of the inside of a dead animal" shock, people pretty much give you the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the bones. I can do a clave or reverse clave, a backbeat, or even an Elvin Jones-ish jazz fill thing, and people are usually pretty receptive once they hear it. Other times, not so much. Sometimes, you just gotta be patient with people who don't want to play with a bones player. Sometimes, though, I tell them I got the bones from the last guy who didn't want to play with me, that usually gets me in.

I haven't had the opportunity to play my bones in a Broadway show yet, but I'm sure I will soon. Recently I got a call to play the tenor banjo/snare drum book in a Dadaist opera, which, believe it or not, is actually my second experience playing banjo in opera, so Bones on Broadway wouldn't even be that weird for me. In the Bizarro

### Note from Mel Mercier

I had twelve novice bones players dressed up as Butchers chasing after pigs on the streets of Limerick last week as part of a street pageant!! *Mel Mercier*

## **Steve Brown's Bones**

### Workshop at NEFFA

Spring is always a renewing time of year, making me feel energetic and chipper, and the New England Folk Festival always helps instill some energy, and a sense of feeling younger.

Never more true than this year when the bones workshop was bolstered by the presence of a number of students from the Louis F. Angelo Elementary School in Brockton, Mass. Nothing warms the old heart like seeing kids with enthusiasm for playing the bones and these kids certainly have it. Along with their mentor Constance Cook, music teacher, and their inspiration Adam Klein, the kids were supported by the presence of RBS members Rob Rudin, Tim Reilly, Jon and Melissa Danforth, Richard Clifford, and nearly 50 or so participants, all geared toward learning, experiencing, and perhaps catching a little enthusiasm from these energetic youngsters.

Backed by the ever young Reiner Family Band consisting of Dave, Andy, and Eric Reiner, with Cindy Eid-Reiner, who are riding their recently released CD, "The Reiner Family Band -Live" provided just the right level of support and energetic music to learn and perform bones by.

Highlights were of course the six students from the Angelo Elementary School, performances by Adam Klein, and Tim Reilley, and a ground breaking rendition by Rob Rudin which can only be described as "Bebop Bones".

Although only allowed 45 minutes for the workshop this year, a splendid time was had by all, and we would thank all the participants as well as the NEFFA Performance Committees who

### Tips and Techniques

#### Quad Roll and More

This column is dedicated to my relative, the late great Irish saint, Oliver Plunkett (<http://www.louthonline.com/html/>

oliver\_plunkett.html). May his bones rest in peace.....

Bone and stone (wood, too) are the oldest instruments known to man besides the human voice and most likely were first used as tools, simultaneously doubling as instruments to the unknowing cave man using materials to survive in his/her environment some 2.5 million years ago... who knows when the tool became the instrument (art) or when the instrument (art) became the tool. There are wood/stone/and bone players from vast regions all over the world. All of the bone players play their instruments using a similar technique, mechanically speaking, yet the finger positioning/manipulation and materials used varies from region to region. In South India to Mongolia where they play with stones, to Egypt where the cult of Hathor, the avenger and daughter of Ram, has a tribe of percussionists who played in her honor, to the six Celtic regions and all the way to Panama, bone playing is alive or has lived in these vast areas of the world at some time or another.

Drums come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and each produces sound using different materials which are broken down into sub-categories. A phone is any thing that produces sound. Membranophones are instruments that are covered with skin to produce sound and bones are Idiophones which are things that make sound entirely from themselves. Russ Myers and myself are the only bones players in the U.S., let alone the world, to change pitch while playing an idiophone.

All drum and percussion instruments require a slight whipping motion to produce the sound. A piano is 88 drums and requires the same up and down wrist motion as a drumset player or a hand drummer. The motion is simply channeled to accommodate differing techniques. However, the mechanical whipping motion used by the bones to produce sound comes from a flick or rotation of the forearm. The wrist acts as a sympathetic lever and must stay in a vertical position in order to keep the bones vertical, allowing them to hit each other like a pendulum, while the fingers gently

cradle over the front rails of the bones, pulling them in, semi-snug, to the palm of the hand.

There are as many rhythms to articulate on bones as there are stars in the sky, however, to explain sixteenth notes in Russ Myers' terms - one of the worlds greatest bones player who defined the bones as making only two rhythms, the tap and a roll - sixteenth notes are produced on the bones by connecting a roll and a tap. Repeat and voila, sixteenth notes... In other words you produce a triplet and connect that to a single hit all inside of one pulse beat (this all happens very quickly). The combination of the two rhythms or movements in connection with each other produces a group of four sixteenth notes. Repeat these two rhythms over and over again and you'll have running sixteenth notes on one hand while the other hand is free to play whatever it wishes - cross rhythms, polyrhythms or simpler rhythms. Now start the sixteenth notes with the opposite hand and repeat.

*Aaron Plunkett*

Free Bones Lesson = [http://www.world-beats.com/cd\\_vid/VID\\_bones.htm](http://www.world-beats.com/cd_vid/VID_bones.htm)  
Biography = <http://www.world-beats.com/Biography.htm>  
Web Site = <http://www.world-beats.com>  
Store = <http://www.world-beats.com/>

### More Letters to Editor

(Continued from page 2)  
that first night I feel in love with "old tyme" and now when I'm playing I feel like I am 3 years old.

Ev, I would like to put access to the rhythm bones web sight on my sight if that's OK with you. It's 1130 P.M., Good night---*Mitch*

(This email was sent to Ev Cowett who forwarded it to use as a Letter to the Editor. Mitch is a new RBS member.)

I have several extra pairs of bones (expertly crafted by Ray Schairer on commission for me) that I would like to sell or trade with other members. 248-375-0044 home, 586-492-0771.  
*Jim Embach*

## Wixson wins NTCMA Bones Contest

I finally won the bones contest, but my win begins four years ago. There was a rumor about a bones contest, but no one could pinpoint it. Finally enough clues were found and the event was located in Avoca, Iowa. I borrowed a camcorder to record the contest for the next Bones Fest and took off with a CD of backup music. I was lucky to find a motel.

I paid my entrance fee and started videoing the National Traditional Country Music Association's annual Festival and Contests. If you have seen the video, there are 10 stages of music, over 600 musicians, an old time pioneer village and campers all over the place. It is not the largest event of its kind, but impressive.

I went to sign up for the bones contest only to discover that backup was live music and I had none (shucks/whew). Well since my purpose was to video the event, I would do that.

Jerry Mescher opened the contest with a demonstration and he was followed by the previous year's winner, a talented spoon player. The contest was held and member Bernie Worrell won.

After the contest, I introduced myself to Jerry and discovered he knew many people who would have backed me for the contest. Jerry and Bernie became instant friends and we and Jerry's wife, Sharon, paled around together. Jerry and Bernie put on a bones workshop and I helped with that. There are many opportunities to jam with talented musicians and I spent many hours doing that (after asking for permission to join in).

I missed the next year when Don DeCamp won, but I showed up the year after, the year that Russ Myers won (Walt Watkins was also there and came in second). Jerry Mescher made sure that I had backup. That was the year I wrote the "Legend of Mr. Bones" and I was bound and determined to perform it even though I was advised it would not be well received by the judges (another

excuse). I came in third, but I competed.

The following year I continued jamming and joined in with a group that I soon realized was practicing for a performance. Lee Muller liked my playing and invited me to join them on -stage. I discovered that while jamming is great, performing is better.

The contest that year had the largest number of competitors of any year that I have attended. Several RBS members were there including Steve Brown, Yirdy Machar who won the event, John Perona who came in second, Randy Seppala and a few spoon players. The contest began and my backup did not show. Two of Jerry's friends volunteered to help me.

Part of the scoring is appearance (the others include ability, rhythm, showmanship and audience appeal all of equal value) and at the last minute, I put on a brand new green western shirt. Steve Brown gave a great performance, but you could see the surprise in his eyes when I went on with this spiffy new shirt. I came in fourth and Steve fifth. Steve is convinced to this day that the green shirt was the reason I placed in front of him.

This year was different. I was a regular with Lee's group and performed at all of his shows and at a few others. What a great opportunity to become more comfortable in front of people (I am not a natural performer as many of you know). And Lee was happy to back me for the contest.

I had previously selected three songs from a CD of Lee's music and had practiced them at home. Contestants draw numbers for order of performing and I was last. That gave me a few extra minutes to practice with Lee and a guitar player who joined us. By the way, Lee is a champion banjo player.

I had practiced Jerry and Bernie's style including their offset. They had won with it, so I decided to compete with it. I picked a piece that was a bit slower than when they perform and I made it through. The next two songs were played to different styles and I was finished. I had done about as good a job as I could do and was satisfied. I

left before the contest winners were announced and it was three long days before I found out I had won.

Looking back, I was not ready to win in those earlier years and I knew it. I practiced hard this past year and after a show with Lee, former member Bill Rexroad came up and told me how much I had improved. It was a process and the bones contest and our Bones Fests were the motivation to practice. Judging from the growing quality of bones playing at our Fests, most of you are improving and maybe you need to give the bones contest a try. As Steve Brown said in his article on his All-Ireland Bones Competition win, "with a dollar and the trophy you can buy a cup of coffee. It doesn't mean much except to other bones players." And me!

I thank many people for helping me; my dad who taught me to play the bones, the RBS membership who inspired me to become two-handed and introduced me to some great licks, and Aaron Plunkett's video and Fred Edmund's book and video for specific skills. It's great to be a RBS member.

Jerry and Bernie put on some outstanding shows during the week long event. Their costumes are striking and their bones playing outstanding. Their bones workshop was very well attended and you got the feeling that a few new bones players might have been born. There was also some great late-night jamming around a fire (the first part of the week was hot, but by the weekend it cooled off)..

Now that Steve Brown has won in Ireland and thinks it was a green fluke

## John Hill wins World Bones Contest

Steve Brown discovered that John Hill won a World Bones Championship held in Australia (see [www.abc.net.au/southeastsa/stories/s942940.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/southeastsa/stories/s942940.htm)). This was the first word of another World bones contest (the NTCMA event is recognized as the World Spoons and Bones Championship though in recent years it has been won by bones players.) John is now a RBS member and has been asked to write-up his event.

## Bones with John Williams at the Kennedy Center

On July 11, 2003 "The President's Own" United States Marine Band (the oldest musical organization in the country) celebrated its 205th anniversary with a gala performance at the Kennedy Center under the baton of guest conductor John Williams.

As a percussionist with "The President's Own," one of my duties is part assignments for the section. Looking over the percussion instrumentation for "Far and Away," I noticed a part for bones and eagerly dusted off the pairs that had been lying in my drawer for the last 26 years.

I originally purchased these bones from Percy Danforth during a master class he presented at the 1979 Michigan Percussion Festival.

Unfortunately, after a few weeks I still couldn't produce most of the sounds that Percy did, so, frustrated, I packed them away.

Years later, while attending the University of Michigan School of Music as a graduate student, we were fortunate to have Percy as a guest soloist with our percussion ensemble. He played so effortlessly that I seriously doubted I would ever become half as proficient as Percy.

Needless to say, seeing "Bones" listed in a John Williams score was just the boost I needed to start practicing again and really try to master this art. Fortunately, I found the Rhythm Bones Society on an internet Google search. Its list of resources were a key part in making the Kennedy Center performance successful. Thank you RBS!

Now I proudly carry my bones wherever I go and am looking to get together and share ideas with other bones players/musical groups in the Northern VA/Washington D.C. area.

Thanks for reading! - 'Kenny Bones' Wolin

## Review of Tommy Hayes Bodhrán, Bones and Spoons Video

This one hour and 44 minute video devotes one hour and 22 minutes to the bodhrán, 15 minutes to spoons and only 7 minutes to rhythm bones. Rhythm bones players will enjoy Tommy Hayes and his bones playing skill, but you will wish he had more bones instruction as he is a good teacher. If you want to learn traditional Irish rhythms, you will benefit from the rhythms taught for the bodhrán as many of them apply to bones playing.

The bones section follows the bodhrán section and begins with a short bones demonstration. Tommy then shows how to hold the bones. He demonstrates both the tap and the triplet describing the wrist and arm movements involved. He describes bones playing as difficult, particularly jigs, and students should practice the demonstration until they can reproduce it. He mentions two-handed bones playing. He demonstrates using three bones in one hand something he personally enjoys. He finishes with a great three bones demonstration with accompaniment.

## More BFVII Highlights

(Continued from page 1)

began...what fun!! Everyone who wanted to get up and play had the opportunity and everyone was fantastic!! Both lunch and dinner were served at Cunningshams', a very well known Louisville restaurant, just 1/2 block away from the Theatre.

Saturday night was the public performance and it was awesome. The 200 seat theatre was packed and people were standing in the aisle. The publicity paid off, especially since the public performance was free. People who never heard of "Playing the Bones" were grinning from ear to ear and clapping like crazy after each performer finished.

The finale was great. We were up front and what a joy it was to see everyone playing bones together. Jerry

Barnett counted at least 65 people playing bones in the Congo line, so we must have some closet bones players as only 51 signed up as bones players.

Sunday morning was a brunch at our place in LaGrange, a bit of a problem for those who needed transportation from downtown, but it all worked out in the end. The brunch consisted of mostly homemade breakfast casseroles by Dr. Sandra Graves, Linda Ott and Linda Hibben.

The following is some individual highlights. There are people we didn't mention that were brilliant, but we ran out of space. Sorry.

We noticed a lot of the double beat technique this year instead of just triplets as in the previous Fests.

Shorty Boulet and Ernie Duffy played great and brought along Sky Bartlett who is one of the most awesome young talents that we have ever seen. Sky initially was very timid. Gil remembers when he came to his first bones fest in Chattanooga. He didn't know where he stood with other bones players and discovered that he could rattle with them. Anyway Gil invited Sky up when we were just warming up and when he got his feet under him he turned out to be one of the stars at least for his age.

Later this New Hampshire trio passed the bones and had such fun. More about passing bones below.

Spike Bones is such a virtuoso. He is "Mr. Bones" you know. You put him and Joe Birl together and who is the real one; that is the guy who kind of represents the vaudeville era.

We have to admit that Spike did entertain the troops. We sat next to some people who obviously hadn't ever seen rhythm bones played before and we watched them. We saw a few smiles come upon their face and people reacting to being entertained

We had John 'Mr Bones' Cahill himself. As far as we are concerned he should be in the history books.

Sally Carroll represented the ladies by playing very well.

Vivian Cox is a shining star and what a doll. She shows how long you can play rhythm bones for joy and happiness. She is indeed beautiful and played wonderfully.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

The Cowett family shined again and they were fun. They have become a tradition and a delight. To get the family involved is a fun thing. Fun stuff.

This is why Gil wanted to perform with our two sons and daughter, Tommy singing, Derek on the guitar and Lira. Gil liked playing his Abba number trying to keep up with the kids. He tried to challenge himself with a lot of syncopation.

Thanks, as in major thanks, is due to Dan Cowett, the sound man, who came from NC and took over the Theatre sound system in a matter of minutes - Dan, you are a genius!! And no Bones Fest would be complete without the effervescent personality of our MC, Al Cowett - way to go guys!! And, to Martha Cowett for the name badges.

When Jonathan Danforth got up, he whistled and played the bones. It was almost a meditation. Jonathan also brought his fiddle and provided live music for several performers. He played very well on this impromptu thing. A big hearty thanks to him.

Don DeCamp is incredible. Inspiring. This guy is one awesome bones player and I really admire him.

The Frazier family probably didn't know what they were getting into, but I think they left the Bones Fest a lot more comfortable. We felt like we had new friends in our family and hopefully they felt the same way we did. What they did was surprise father Norris by coming to the Fest without him knowing about it. They did a great job playing bones and hopefully we will see a lot more of them in the future.

Mel Mercier is one awesome bones player and another big star of the Bones Fest, both playing two-handed and one-handed. He invited Tim Reilly to play with him and Tim did extremely well. Mel is a good ambassador from Ireland and a delight to listen to and to get to know. Mel is a virtuoso.

Jerry Mescher and Bernie Worrell, both world champions, are

absolutely first class. They are elegant and the precision of their rhythm bones is outstanding.

Scott Miller performed with his kids Jake and Erica. While they didn't know how to play the bones, he did get his family involved.

Russ Myers makes it look so easy and we love his humor like his story about being in the military and being a bones player. He is like the foundation of all of us since he has been playing so long and a real fine human being.

Mike Passerotti represent rock and roll through what he called God rock. He marches to a different tune.

Tim Reilly played with Jonathan Danforth and his playing is so unpretentious and his style is inspiring.

Barry Palmerton wearing the uniform of a Civil War doctor and playing bones was very entertaining.

John Perona played to Red Wing, a very good song for the bones. He represents an old tradition except he also played silver spoons bones style. Randy Seppala played bones accompanied by Perona on the accordion. They are using music as a medium to be good friends.

Sandor Smolovits is a guy that can sing and play the bones. We got one of his CDs and he is a trained musician. He did a great job.

Hank Tennebaum got up and played the bones without any music, a difficult and impressive feat.

Kim Thounhurst is a beginner who got up and faced the audience playing well. This will make the second time a whole lot easier.

Parker Waite has improved like so many from when we first heard them years ago. Much improved.

Bill Vits is a profession percussionist with a symphony orchestra and an incredible percussionist. His playing of 16<sup>th</sup> notes on the bones was great and Gil thinks we're all going to be working on that lick.

Walt Watkins was much improved. It is a neat thing about these bones Fests is to observe people who were once a one-handed bones player now can play with both hands. He did a great job and we would put him down as much improved.

Steve Wixson came up with a whole board of different bone shapes and we

thought was another of the most improved players since we first met him. Gil also thought the tambourine thing was outstanding. We liked his tribute to Matteo, the castanet player who presented castanets so nobly and thrilled us all at Bones Fests III and IV. Matteo inspired Gil also.

What is unique about the Bones Fest are the unique personalities and different methods of playing the bones. People are holding them high and holding them low – different grips. It's so fun to get together.

We like the impromptu thing like passing the bones and we need to keep that in the future. We don't know about you, but Gil loves playing the bones to something he's never heard. He loves the challenge which adds a lot of spice and excitement.

Walt is given credit for passing the bones though it was probably an old idea from the jazz days. Maybe a variation would be to draw names to see who you would play with. Of course we did see several players rehearsing over in the corner. It would be fun to have teams.

It was fun to see world class bones players having fun with the art. The excitement, the camaraderie, and actual love that we all experienced in this medium of rhythm bones playing.

We saw a lot of people approaching world class bones playing. Bones Fests give us the opportunity to push ourselves to do better. We improve for the love of the art and we like to call rhythm bones playing an art.

It's like when we go to a knife show. When Gil sees a better knife, he wants to come home and make an even better knife.

It was a good thing to see even little kids performing. They've got a way to go on their bones playing, but to see family participation was really good. Willie Waylen is one of Gil's beginners. He has only been playing the bones for about a week and decided to get up to the microphone.

It is obvious that most of the bones players have a passion for it and Gil guesses he is one of them. It makes you connect with your inner self. What a joy rhythm bones can be.

A lot of bones playing and new friendships occurred over the



Mike Carter Montage from Bones Fest VII

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*Address Correction Requested*