



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 7, No. 3 2005

In this Issue:  
Highlights of Bones  
Fest IX

Carl Hedrick and  
other Obituaries

Joe Birl Teaches  
Bones To Ballet  
Company

Wixson's Trip to  
Ireland

Minutes of Board  
Meeting and  
Membership  
Meeting

Committee Reports

Columns:  
Executive Director

Editorial

Letters to the  
Editor

The Young Bones  
Player

Tip & Techniques  
Bones Teaching

Bones Calendar

Recording of the  
Quarter

Website of the  
Quarter

Future Issues  
Summary of Bones  
Contest Winners

## Executive Director's Column

I am sitting here enjoying the after glow of another bones fest. Although not quite as well attended as previous fests, Bones Fest IX epitomized the cliché "Quality not Quantity." And quality in all things it was, incredible playing, abundant and delicious food, great jamming, and the kind of camaraderie we have become accustomed to at Bones Fests. Steve and Janet Wixson deserve every accolade we can bestow upon them for their hard work and organization of Bones Fest IX.

Some of my personal highlights: conversing, playing and hanging with the old masters Donnie DeCamp, Jerry Mescher, and

Johnny Perona to name a few. Seeing the continuing rise of the level of play amongst our members, and the joy it gives them to play. Watching Yirdy Machar enjoying his first (but not his last) bones fest. Watching Tim Reilly and Kenny Wolin fast becoming the dynamic duo of bones fests. Watching Olivia Lohmann glow while playing the bones. Talking with each and every one of the bones players there, Seeing the look on Everett Cowett's face when he was recognized for his hard work and inspiration, and holding ice on Walt Watkin's bump on the head while he played bones with both hands sitting in Steve Wixson's easy chair! You just can't keep a

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Highlights of Bones Fest IX

It's Sunday afternoon and Bones Fest IX is just over. Teri Davies left for the airport with Steve Brown and Jonathan Danforth. Ken Wolin and Tim Reilly drove off a few minutes earlier. It's 3:43 pm and I am bushed—a good feeling as it was an almost perfect weekend.

The Fest started on a bad note with a call from Russ Myers and an email from Mel Mercier saying that they could not make it. Then Greg Burrows had to cancel and he was scheduled to lead the Taketina/Bones Workshop. Constance Cook also had to cancel and she was to lead a new workshop for Kids. I still did not have a leader for the Real Bones Making Workshop. And it had been raining for the past couple of weeks and part of the Fest was to be outside.

The sun came out on Thursday afternoon and only now has rain returned with hurricane Dennis. Can you believe that!

Sally Carroll changed Fests with the introduction of workshops, and I continued them beginning also at 2:30 pm Friday. What I did not realize was for some people to attend meant they had to arrive on Thursday, and arrive they did—nine bones players who held a impromptu jam session in our back yard that lasted until 1:45 in the morning. This is a happening that should continue in the future.

One of the early birds was Scotsman Yirdy

Machar who lives in Denmark. He had wanted to attend a Fest but the timing was always wrong. You may remember he attended the NTCMA

*(Continued on page 7)*



Gift to Ev Cowett after stepping down as Executive Director. Bones made and scrimshawed by Tim Reilly

## Editorial

I am breaking from my tradition of printing the highlights of our annual Bones Rest in issue No. 4 and print it in this issue, No. 3. We have changed the date of our Fests from September to summertime and having the highlights in this late summer issue will tell the story while it is fresh in our minds.

There was one problem encountered at the Bones Market Place. Several bones were taken and not paid for. I find it hard to believe that they were taken by any of our members. I suspect that since Randy Seppala and Jim Lohmann had given bones for the Kid's Workshop and some to the Board, that someone did not realize the bones on the Bones Market tables were for sale. If you wound up with such bones, contact me and I will make sure things get corrected. And thanks.

Joe Birl could not make it to BFIX, but he did send me a story on how he helped the American Repertory Ballet Company. Joe plans on attending Bones Fest X. See you there, Joe.

There are three short obituaries of bones players in this issue, one many of us knew and the other two only known by their bones playing. I will continue to publish obituaries of any known bones players as one way of honoring them and the art of bones playing.

This issue is too full of me as editor, BFIX host and writer of an article on my trip to Ireland. Great vacation.

I also attended the NTCMA Festival and Contests and must report that a spoon player won the contest. No members competed and former member Harriett Anderson came in 2nd. This is an open bones competition and you might have won it if you attended. The next NTCMA

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Members, I wish to all of you a big success for Bones Fest IX. It is at a place that is even a greater distance than last year and very little chance that I can make it. But one of these years, I hope I'll be able to make

it again to one of the Bones Fests.

To Everett Cowett, to follow up your late phone call about other people I know who play bones. I have been presented to a real bones player. He is also a singer and a dancer. He used to belong to a singing group named *La Bottine-Souriante* (the meaning in English *The Smiling Boot*). It might be possible he could come with me to one of your Bones Fests.

From a Quebecois who is with you in mind at each of your Bones Fests.  
*Gerard Arseneault*

[Gerard is a member and attended Bones Fest V in MA. He, too, is a real bones player and I thoroughly enjoyed his playing at the Fest. My brother found him for us after hearing him play while dining at a restaurant in Quebec City. Hopefully Gerard will be able to attend BFX in New Bedford.]

Bones Fest IX was without question the best Fest held so far. Since Val and I are the only two folks left who have attended all or them, that makes it unanimous. Steve and Janet Wixson are to be commended for being such great hosts. I also want to extend a great deal of thanks to the RBS Board of Directors, the RBS membership and above all member Tim Rielly, for the wonderful pair of bison rhythm bones with very appropriate scrimshaw which were presented to me at the Fest (see

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Bones Calendar

Check out the calendar on the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com) website.

**Bones Fest X.** July 28-30, 2006. Hosted by Melissa and Jonathan Danforth. Details in future newsletters.

**Virginia Regional Bones Fest.** November 11, 2005. This is a tentative date and a separate mailing will be sent to people in and around Virginia if it happens. Mark your calendar.

**NTCMA and Bones Contest.** August 28-September 3, 2006. 31st Annual Festival and Contests. Bones Contest on Saturday or Sunday of that week. Contact Jerry Mescher for details.

## *Rhythm Bones Player*

Rhythm Bones Society  
Volume 7, No. 3  
Third Quarter 2005  
ISSN: 1545-1380

Editor  
Steve Wixson  
[wixson@chattanooga.com](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.com)

Executive Director  
Stephen Brown  
[Bones@crystal-mtn.com](mailto:Bones@crystal-mtn.com)

Web Site Coordinator  
Jonathan Danforth  
[webmaster@rhythmbones.com](mailto:webmaster@rhythmbones.com)

Board of Directors  
Steve Brown, Executive Director  
Everett Cowett  
Jonathan Danforth  
Gil Hibben, Assistant Director  
Mel Mercier  
Jerry Mescher  
Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer

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

**[www.sankofastrings.com](http://www.sankofastrings.com).** Hello, Bones players! This is Sule Greg Wilson, fellow bones man, just letting you know of a new string band, *Sankofa Strings*, that plays Old Time, Blues, Hokum, Jug, Rags and more. Check us out. Let me know what you think ([suleness@cox.net](mailto:suleness@cox.net)). Thanks! *SGWilson* [I've been hoping Sule would make it to a Bones Fest, but alas, he lives in Arizona. Note that the photos on his website were taken by Bones Fest IX attendee John Maeder.]

## Recorded Bones Music

It is getting more and more difficult to find recorded bones music and I was unable to find anything for this quarter.

If you have recordings that should be included in this column, please contact me. Thanks, Steve Wixson

(Executive Director—Continued from page 1)

bones player down!

I want to thank each and every participant, and those who wanted to come but couldn't, it's your desire which will fuel future fests.

Speaking of future fests, I am already getting excited about the prospect of Bones Fest X coming to New Bedford, Massachusetts next summer. Jonathan and Melissa Danforth came through with an inspiring and exciting proposal which should be a model of how to propose a Bones Fest. The ideas they put forth and the prospect of Tim Reilly, our resident sea expert bones player, collaborating with them should be a bones fest worthy of our 10th anniversary. Stay tuned for the tantalizing details as they become available.

On another note, the Board has established two committees which will examine some important issues. Distribution of bones to educational facilities, and adding instructional materials to our web site. I want to call on the membership for volunteers to join these committees and ensure their work is fruitful. Please contact me if

## The Young Bones Player

Jonathan's bones teaching report is very exciting, and I want to publicly thank him for taking on the children's workshop at Bones Fest IX for me.

Thanks and applause also go to the Board for establishing a committee to look into the creating a design that is appropriate and affordable for child-size bones. I have some prototypes I will be testing at my school. The children will let you know!

I hope you all got to see the DVD I sent with Jonathan of my 2 girls (students) playing 2 against 3 in Adam Klein's arrangement of "Rio Grande" for elementary chorus. They were absolutely terrific, and practiced outside the school every morning (while singing).

News from my school! (Teachers and others, please write in with your news about children and the bones...) In June, students of mine were joined by parent and community musicians (mandolin, guitar, etc., accordion) as

well as Rob Rudin and myself, appearing as The New England Children's Community Jug band (NECCJ) to great acclaim at the pre-show at the Cambridge Revels Mid-Summer show at the Boston Children's Museum. We hope to be invited back next year!

During one of the shows, a huge storm came up, forcing everyone to run inside the museum. NECCJ was undaunted, and immediately set up and played to a "captive" audience indoors, that joined the jug band in song. Our youngest player was a four year old younger sister of a jug band member who grabbed a washboard and joined in. I would send a pictures, but have not yet secured parent permission.

This year with a new principal, in my school, the jug band is attempting to expand, with the help of terrific parent volunteers Jessie Steigerwald and Kelly Tzannes, community music volunteers such as Phil Brake, who has great experience teaching young children bones, (and donated a number of sets he made to the program) and others. Rob Rudin and I will co-teach, and hope to present again at the Massachusetts Music Educators in March. Rob is commandeering didley bows for the children. A friend who is very interested in the project is making them from his design.

The success of jug band at my school is such that there is even talk of offering some kind of jug band program during recess when the weather gets bad!!!!

If you are worried that the bones will be submerged, never fear! I have serious soloists troubling the school halls during every school transition.

Join us at Bones X, where I hope to bring the NEJJC to play and teach in

## Tips and Techniques Bones Teaching

Before I went down to Bones Fest in July, I picked Constance's brain for teaching tips (knowing I was supposed to take her place teaching the children's workshop). One of the things that she suggested that really stuck in my head is that there are some

aspects of playing bones that are easier to teach when the student is not holding bones in their hand.

For example, one common mistake that new learners make (both adults and kids) is to twist the bones so that the "front" of the bones faces toward them and away from them alternately, rather than to rotate the hand "like turning a doorknob." Part of this is because of a natural desire to *see* what is going on in the hand, of course, but it still makes playing the bones a lot harder. Constance showed me that you can get a student to focus on the motion (and not the instrument) by having them practice the motion *without holding the bones*. In practice, I found that this worked very well in certain situations, and was maybe less appropriate in others. I'm guessing that's probably true of any teaching technique.

At Bones Fest, I taught six youngsters, one of whom was fairly advanced, three of whom had never played before, and two of whom played a little, but with a grip and in a style they had come up with on their own. These lessons were sort of spread out in time, so I was never really teaching more than three kids at a time. The playing-without-bones trick didn't really go over, but I did get some results from actually holding the students' hand in mine and actually moving their hand in the motion I was teaching.

I did get better results when I was giving a workshop at a library in Kew Gardens (Queens, NYC, more or less), which was part of a larger workshop on homemade instruments. Here there were about thirty kids, all of whom were kind of antsy. Individual attention wasn't possible, so I tried the bonesless bones-playing, and got them all moving in the way I wanted (mostly) before we even passed out the bones. I have no way to tell whether it sped up the learning, but at least it didn't seem to hurt, and I'm fairly sure it cut down on the amount of aimless clacking between passing out the bones and getting on with the teaching. I have since had several experiences teaching adults one-on-one, where the lesson was going nowhere until I had them put the

(Continued on page 4)

(Tips & Techniques—Continued from page 3)

bones down and try the motion without the bones. I would definitely suggest this technique to bones teachers who have the chance to try it. *Jonathan Danforth* [See a photograph from the BFIX Kids' Workshop

## Steve Wixson's Bicycle Trip to Ireland

My wife and I have taken bicycling vacations to Europe for several years. This year's trip was to Ireland.

We started a few days early with an auto trip to the Dingle Peninsula followed by a night in Abbeyfeale, the home of the All Ireland Bones Competition.

Dave Murphy was this year's winner and he and his family were my hosts. He had a charity gig in a church and invited me along. In addition to him playing with a group from Abbeyfeale, there were Irish step dancers, a great men's choral group from Limerick, and a couple of other performers. A most entertaining evening and Dave Murphy is one great Irish bones player. After the event we returned to his home and played bones together and sipped Irish whiskey until the wee hours.

I wasn't able to meet Paddy Sport Murphy, the bones legend of Abbeyfeale (see Vol 2, No 3), but I did talk to him on the telephone. He described his style of bones playing—a style played by his student, Dave Murphy. Basically they echo every note in the melody (not something all traditional bones players do.) If I wanted to learn that style, I could get the sheet music and figure out how to order the taps, duples and triplets to match the melody. I might just give that a try.

Janet and I met up with our biking buddies and biked through County Clare. Such fields of green and quite a few hills to climb on our bikes.

Each evening I looked for a pub with traditional Irish music. I was a bit worried since I am a two-handed, non-traditional bones player with a bag full of strange bones that I play a bit eccentric. I approached the players in each session and asked if I could play. Maybe they were intrigued by the many different kinds of bones I showed them, but every group invited me to play.

I knew I was welcomed when on the first night I was asked if I could stay fifteen more minutes.

Our last two days were spent in Ennis. I found music in Brandon's Pub playing in a session lead by Eoin O'Neal. When I got up to leave, he asked if I would join them at Brogan's the next night. When I arrived to my great surprise, my name was included on the list of performers.

I talked with a lot of musicians during our bike tour. I wanted to meet bones players, but I found none in the towns that we visited. Several people came up and could play my bones, but none were performers. Many times I heard "there are so few good ones."

We biked the loop at Kilkee, Milltown Malbay, the Cliffs of Moher, Doolin, Ballyvaughn and the Burren, Galloway and Ennis. Ireland is a most beautiful country and is very rich with a booming economy. But it's the people that make the trip memorable and we were very close to them on

EARLY PLANNER

SAVE THE DATE

Bones Fest X

July 28 - 30,  
2006

New Bedford,  
Massachusetts

Details To Come

Questions?  
email

**bonesfest10@gmail.com**



Photograph of part of Jonathan Danforth's Kid Workshop at Bones Fest IX. From left to right, Jonathan, AJ Hanson, Lianna Rodrigues and Abbie Hanson.



Photograph of Dave Murphy (right) and his Abbeyfeale friends at the Church gig mentioned in the article above.

## Joe Birl Teaches Bones To Ballet Company

This past February I received a telephone call from a Graham Lustig, Artistic Director of the American Repertory Ballet. He wanted to know if I could instruct one of his ballet groups to play the bones. Several months ago, Mr. Lustig came across a painting the "The Bone Player" by W. S. Mount dated 1856. He knew nothing of the painting or the artist. Graham was working on a ballet project *Beauty and the Beast, a Gothic Romance*, and wanted to have bones playing in the wedding scene.

I told him that I would be happy to teach his group (8 male and 8 female, ages 18 to 28.) However, there was a transportation problem. I am limited in my driving and could not drive to New Brunswick, NY. He said that would be no problem—someone would drive down to Philadelphia and return me home.

After spending some time with the croup, six members started to make progress which made Mr. Lustig very happy.

Graham show me the picture of the "The Bones Player." I told him I would try and get information about the picture and the artist. *Joe Birl*

[The following is from the program notes for the ballet:]

"My research for characters from the story and for the costuming of the period led me to look at the early American portraits from the Naïve movement. One in particular caught my eye that happened to be of a "Bones Player." Bones playing, an ancient form of percussion was used as a primitive accompaniment for informal dancing. And I thought, where there is a Beast, there probably would be bones and I was fortunate to be put in touch with Joe Birl of Philadelphia, 89 years young. Mr. Birl came to New Brunswick to give the dancers a workshop in the art of bones playing and their newly discovered musical talents appear in the wedding scene as others are dancing authentic clogging steps." *Graham Lustig, Artistic Director, American Repertory Ballet. and ARB's*

## Carl Cromer Hedrick Obituary

Carl Cromer (Red) Hedrick, 77, of Fincastle, VA passed away Friday August 19, 2005 at Lewis-Gale Hospital in Salem, Va. from a heart attack. Carl was a gentleman's gentleman, a true renaissance man, story teller, humorist, and above all a Rhythm Bones Player. Carl was a Charter Member of the Rhythm Bones Society and attended Bone Fest I with his grandson Carl and several others after that.

According to his wife Virginia, "Carl never met a person he did not like" and everyone loved him. He loved sports literature and music. He could play any musical instrument he touched with his favorites being mandolin and the rhythm bones. He was recently featured on a CD of local artists rattling the bones.

Carl was a lifelong resident of Fincastle and active in many capacities.

He served as Town Councilman, Boy Scout leader, member of the Catawba Masonic Lodge, United Methodist Church, the Fincastle Ruritans, and Mayor of Fincastle. He was proclaimed an honorary Historic

## Bud Bartram Obituary

Bud Bartram, 98, of Stoneham, CO died Friday, Dec 24, 2004. He was a story teller and one of the few cowboy bones players in our database.

He was a member of Cattlemen's Association, the NRA, and was a deputy sheriff and justice of the peace.

He was a cowboy poet and entertainer and also played harmonica RBS has a recording of him talking and playing harmonica and bones.

There was a Tips & Techniques article in the Vol 4, No. 3 newsletter on how he made his real bone bones.

## George Lillard Obituary

George Lilliard died on January 5, 2005. He was one of many in our database that we did not know personally, but we knew he played bones. His niece, Betty Turner of

Chattanooga, had these comments.

"George learned to play the bones from someone in the playground of Avenue School in Chattanooga. He said the more he played them, the more he liked them. He always had them in his suitcase when he visited. He liked to play to old time jazz music and did a little dance when he played."



Photograph of Carl Cromer Hedrick from Fincastle & Botetourt County Newspaper

(*Letters to the Editor*—Continued from page 2) picture above). I understand that it took Tim more than 22 hours to do the art work on these one-of-a-kind bones. What a gift and pleasant surprise. They are not only a real work of art but have "Cowett quality" sound. Thank you all. You made my day, my year and May your bones be with you. *Ev Cowett.*

Al, Martha and I believe that this fest offered some of the best quality playing as of yet. All the players have seemed to improve so much - not a lot of technological advancement as in Bones fest VIII (w/ contributions from Wixson, Wolin and Vits) but just a lot of happy, good quality, bones playing. Most notably improved would be Tim Reilly and Mitch Boss. I guess you realize that Al and I are the only 2 people that actually sit through the entire event and listen to each and every player from start to finish - we may be obnoxious bastards - but our opinions may be worth something (not sure about that yet). That's my take on it anyway. We all had a great time. *Dan Cowett*

# Minutes of Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown at 12:24 pm in the hospitality room of the Days Inn/Rivergate motel. Those present included Steve Brown, Ev Cowett, Jerry Mescher, Gill Hibben and Steve Wixson. A large number of members were also present.

Steve Wixson quickly reviewed the minutes of the last Board meeting that were printed in the newsletter. A motion was made, seconded and approved to adopt the minutes as printed. It was noted that motions from the last meeting had not been implemented.

Steve Wixson as host of BFIX had not had time to prepare a Treasurer's report, but said there was money in the treasury. He will submit an email report to the Board as soon as possible.

Steve Wixson gave a brief outline of the Bones Fest IX program.

Jonathan Danforth handed out and then presented his proposal to host Bones Fest X in New Bedford, MA. Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept Jonathan's proposal. The Board commended him on the high quality of the proposal and would like to include it as a sample in the Bones Fest Host Guide.

The Board serving as a Nominating Committee made the following slate for presentation at the General Membership meeting; Steve Brown, Executive Director, Gil Hibben, Assistant Director, Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer and Board Members, Ev Cowett, Jonathan Danforth, Mel Mercier and Jerry Mescher.

The motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize \$300 to Dem Bones for kids' bones and to form a committee to determine the best design and how to distribute them. Steve Brown appointed himself chairman and Gil Hibben a member.

The motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize up to \$150 to upgrade the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com) website to include a forum, audio and video. Webmaster Jonathan Danforth

will implement.

A motion was made, seconded and approved on a format for motions presented to the Board via email. A copy of this format will be attached to the original minutes.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to form a committee to study how to add Bones Instruction to our website. One source of video instruction is the Fred Edmund's Instructional Video that is deteriorating and needs to be preserved. Steve Brown appointed Steve Wixson, Chair, Jonathan Danforth, Randy Seppala and Jim Lohmann.

A discussion was held on having a Regional Bones Fest soon in or around Brightwood, VA. Steve Brown will research .

Gil Hibben brought up a useful change to our By-laws that specifies how motions get presented at General Membership meetings. He will study how other groups handle this and recommend specific wording for our

## Minutes of the General Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown at 4:15 pm in the Mountain Opry building.

The motion was made, seconded and approved to adopt the minutes as printed in the newsletter.

Steve Wixson presented the nominees of the Board that served as the nominating committee. Nomination were opened to the floor. A motion was made, seconded and approved to close nomination and elect by acclamation.

There was no old or new business.

There were several announcements. Bones Fest X will be hosted by Jonathan Danforth in New Bedford, MA. Jonathan gave a brief summary of the excellent written proposal he submitted to the Board. He then took a survey to find a possible date for the Fest.

It was announced that the Board has authorized an order of \$300 to Dem Bones company for kid's bones and that a committee had been organized to determine how best to design kids' bones and distribute them.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38. Respectfully submitted, *Steve Wixson*,

## Committee Progress Reports

**Kids' Bones Committee.** The Committee to design and dispense bones to children has been formed with some good comments and suggestions being made. The committee consists of Teri Davies, Gil Hibben, Adam Klein, Dutch Kopp, Scott Miller, Mary Lee Sweet, Kenny Wolin and Steve Brown, Chair.

Dutch Kopp has graciously allowed the society to use his design, 'Dutch Penny Bones' which is a very cheap and effective design. 'Dem Bones' has donated several pairs of wooden bones with different designs to test on children. Plans and discussion will be underway shortly to gather information directly from children to determine their preference. Constance Cook has volunteered to be one of the testing sites, as well as Teri Davies. Both are music teachers who can bring their expertise to a ready made database of children. *Steve Brown*

**Bones Instruction on the Web Committee.** The committee consists of Michael Ballard, Jonathan Danforth, Gil Hibben, Jeff Leffert, Jim Lohmann, Randy Seppala, Walt Watkins, Ken Wolin and Steve Wixson, Chair. The first order of business was to define our goals and we are now in discussions on how to select instructors, what specific content to include, etc.. Expect results on the web before Bones Fest X. *Steve Wixson*

**Bones Fest Demo DVD.** The quality of bones playing has improved to the point that we need to find a way to share it with a national audience. Since broadcast video recording costs money, we need to submit grant applications for funding.. One way to convince people that may never have heard of rhythm bones is to include a short bones DVD. Several people shot video at BFIX and have given me copies to edit. These include Mary Barnet who did some interesting interviews, John Meadar with a big camcorder, Mary Lee Sweet and Kenny Wolin. The DVD may begin

(Highlights—Continued from page 1)

festival and won the Bones Contest (see Vol 4, No 4.) He graciously volunteered to take over Greg's time slot with a workshop on playing four bones in one or both hands. There is more to it than I ever imagined. He also used his calligraphy skills to personalize many BFIX ball caps given in place of t-shirts. Thanks, Yirby.

Then Tim Reilly volunteered to lead the Real Bones Making workshop that preceded his superb Scrimshaw workshop. More on his scrimshawing later on. I'm feeling pretty good now.

Constance had cancelled but she recruited Jonathan Danforth to lead the Kid's Workshop. That included a two hour drive to his home where she imparted her wealth of knowledge on how to conduct the workshop. Man alive—we're going to have a Fest.

The reception at our house began after the workshops and I must thank my wife, Janet, not only for the fine cooking, but for keeping me focused on what I needed to be doing. Funny as it may sound until you have done something like host a Fest, a big part of the fun is planning the event. We spent many an hour talking about what would make the Fest better. Lots of plans went by the wayside, but lots of those plans were implemented. Thanks to my dear wife.

Then out came the slow-cooked beef brisket, the slow-cooked corn beef brisket and the honey baked ham along with plenty of fixings.

I set up three areas around the house for people to jam and where did they go—jammed around the pool table. Did they play pool. No, there were maybe 10 bodhráns laid out on the pool table plus guitar, accordions, whistles, and Ken Wolin's xylophone around the room. What did I know.

It was a great night of jamming with Donny DeCamp and his banjo leading on our lower deck, Celtic/Irish around the pool table and a mixture in our music room.

As the night progressed and people started to leave, we moved out back and that continued until 1:15 am interrupted when a few neighbors came over to find out what all the noise was about and then listened to

us. The final minutes were all live and quiet and quite special. Tim Reilly noted that the cicada insect rhythms seem to synchronize with our music (or was it the other way around.) A second late night for me!

Saturday morning and I'm at the Mountain Opry building turning on the air conditioning and waiting on Dan Cowett to set up the sound system (can we ever thank Dan enough for setting up and running the sound for our Fests.) By the clock he is late, but compared to everyone else he is early. We didn't get started until 11 am and the schedule said 10. I figured it was the result of a very successful and late night of jamming. Ken Wolin's Advanced Workshop also went a little long which meant it was working.

Another round of kudos for Al Cowett who has served as Master of Ceremonies for many of our Fests. He is smart, quick, funny and rules with an iron hand. Al, you make it work!

I thought that Saturday at Bones Fest VIII could not be beat, and while I'm not trying to be competitive, the performances on Saturday at Bones Fest IX were wonderful. As a result of the Society and the Fests, we have a reason to improve and improve we have. A tribute to ourselves

After lunch the individual performances inside the Opry building continued and the new Kid's Workshop on the grounds of the Opry began. Jonathan Danforth has a Tips & Techniques on bones teaching in this issue.

The Bones Market place seemed to work well. Tables were setup around the edge of the room and bones-related materials were spread out for people to see. I heard many people talking about the bones they had bought. Randy Seppala and Jim Lohmann had a big spread for their new *Dem Bones* effort. Thanks to them for donating bones for the Kids' Workshop.

After everyone who wanted to perform did so, we held our annual business meeting (see the minutes in this newsletter.) Then we went back to our house for a delicious Italian dinner prepared at our house by the chef of our local Pasteria Restaurant.

After dinner we gathered outside for a group photograph (see page 8)

and a brief gathering. Steve Brown read the names of our members who have recently departed, Will Kear, Vivian Cox and Ted Goon and other bones players, Johnny Muise, Len Davies and John Burrell. As each name was read, Tim Reilly dropped a flower into the swimming pool.

Steve then called Ev Cowett forward and presented him with a mahogany box lined with red satin. That was kind of a strange gift until Tim Reilly placed two scrimshawed bones into the box. The first read *Everett Cowett, Executive Director, RBS, 1999-2004* and the second *May your bones be with you* (see photograph on Page 1.) The bones are buffalo, one of Ev's favorites and they will soon be mounted on brackets that allow them to be removed from the box and played. Many thanks to Tim for the excellent scrimshaw carving.

A bit more jamming and then back to the Opry for another round of performances with the public invited. A gold limousine driven by our next door neighbor, Dr Frank Knight and wife Sue, took Ev and Val Cowett and a few others to the Opry building. Quite a few people showed up to watch us have fun.

It's so unfair to highlight individual performances as they were all so good (I felt pretty good about my performance.) But I must say that when Ken Wolin came out wearing a long black wig and red lipstick and bare footed and dancing and playing bones to a booming CD, the house fell apart with laughter.

I also want to thank Randy Walker and Julie Kurtz-Kunesh who attended the Fest and Robby Hilliard, part of their Chattanooga based Celtic group, Olta, for performing on Saturday night. Randy attended Friday night of Bones Fest IV and he surprised me when he said he had learned to play bones from those he met and what he learned on that Friday night. Wow!

Back to our house for some fresh peach shortcake and more jamming. One of the items that came out in Steve Brown's recent questionnaire was the desire for lots of jamming. I hope those who attended were satisfied. I got to bed again at 1:20 am.

(Continued on page 8)



Bones Fest IX attendees. Photograph by Kevin Schrupf, our chef for Saturday night's wonderful Italian dinner

*(Highlights—Continued from page 7)*

The Sunday brunch drew a smaller crowd as many people had to hit the road early. Lots of talking and sharing information. There were many touching moments of good-byes. Ev Cowett has encourage Fests to be like family reunions and this one sure was

that.

And now it is 9:24 pm and I am back to where I started. The Fest is over and I am writing down my memories before I get a junior moment and forget them.

I'm pumped up as you can tell and have a couple of song ideas for next

year, one African, one classical.

I again thank all of the bones players who stepped up to make this one heck of a Fest. But then we've come to expect this from bones players.

I look forward to Bones Fest X and hope that Melissa and Jonathan

---

## *Rhythm Bones Society*

1060 Lower Brow Road  
Signal Mountain, TN 37377-2910

*Address Correction Requested*