



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 17, No. 4 2015

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## Executive Director's Column

I'm sitting here in Old New England in very unseasonably warm weather, very glad the rain striking the window is not snow, regardless of the festive season. Time to do my usual year end reflection, to put the year past in some kind of bone playing perspective, and maybe think about where we are today, and what the coming year might bring.

Although I'm very grateful for my own good health and that of my family, I can't help but look back on the year with out acknowledging the loss of our good friends Jerry Mescher, and Walt Watkins. Their presence at bones fests will be sorely missed, and their personal friendship to me leaves a hole that will be hard to fill. I will remember them both as great players, but better friends. As a tribute to them I persist in working toward being a better bones

player, influencing others to do so, and teaching the youngsters when I can.

One moment from the bones fest brings me great satisfaction, that being recognizing Steve Wixson for his amazing accomplishments over the years, and with Sharon Mescher's help, to give him the set of Jerry Mescher bones he sought for so many years. Too many times we have meant to tell our friends how much they meant to us, only to wait too late. This time, we didn't. His full worth to this organization, and to continuing the art of rhytm bone playing in general, is, in my opinion, monumental, and I'm glad that he is at last aware of the great debt we owe him.

(Continued on Page 3)

## Lark in the Morning

Lark in the Morning is a musician's store originally founded in 1974 by Mickie Zekley. Lark specializes in hard to find musical items, instruments, music and instructional materials from around the world.

Lark in the Morning has imported from almost 1,000 different suppliers in 70 countries, and they claim that they had the largest selection of ethnic musical instruments in the world.

Lark Camps were established in 1980 to allow traditional musicians and dancers to get together and share their music and dance. It started out before 1980 as a music party at Zekley's home, but when 100 people were camping in the yard the party needed to move to a more appropriate location. It is an annual week-long world music and dance celebration that includes dozens of instructional workshops for both professional and beginner musicians and dancers. Camp instructors come from all over the world to staff the workshops.

Lark Camp takes place in the Mendocino Woodlands State Park, a National Historic Landmark nestled in 700 acres (2.8 km2) of redwood trees, ferns, and glades, near the coastal village of Mendocino, California.

Here is their rhythm bones story as told

by Mickie.

"I first became aware of rhythm bones in 1971 when I was living in London and getting by by busking on the street with my bagpipes and banjo. I would play in Portobello Road, and I saw someone playing rhythm bones and became fascinated. I looked around the market and founds some old bones sets for sale, one made of ebony and the other of whale bone. I started selling bones that I had made in Asia in the late 70s and was able to find (Continued on Page 3)



## Editorial

There is a theme for this issue of the newsletter - rhythm bones sellers, and it follows rhythm bones maker articles that started in Vol 14, No 4. The first is Mickie Zekley's Lark in the Morning, and that has a secondary purpose of remembering Percy Danforth since Mickie produced Percy's rhythm bones instructional video that has and continues to help new rhythm bones players. My first Danforth rhythm bones were purchases from Lark. The story begins on Page 1. Mickie has given us permission to include the non-instructional parts of that video as part of the Remember Percy Project.

There are stories about other rhythm bones sellers in this issue and a few more in the next issue. While there is good information in them, do not assume these stories tell their complete story.

There is a progress report on the *Remember Percy Project*. While the project is not complete, some of the collected material is now online. Check out Page 3 and if you have Percy items that should be included, send a message via our Contact Us page.

Check out the minutes of the Board and General Membership meetings to learn more about the internal working of RBS,

We've got a host for Bones Fest XX, Gerry Hines (see the ad on Page 3), however, if you are interested in hosting a future Bones Fest, contact us via our 'Contact Us' page for a copy of the Bones Fest Host Guide.

If that is more than you want to do, then read Steve Brown's article titled "What is a Regional Bones Fest?" These are one day events for people in a smaller geographic area. Such a Fest in the western part of the country is needed.

## Letters to the Editor

Hello my is Gordon, I'm 56 and I've been playing the bones from around 7yrs old taught to me by my dad. Around 1999 I appeared on the Micheal Barry more show, "MY KIND OF MUSIC" Which went down a storm, I then appeared at the Bristol Old Vic, on the "loose ends" radio show, BBC (then pre-

sented by Ned Sherrin) and I performed the opening music with the bones, also a stunt on local radio, I also used to teach the blind and they loved it. To me, playing the bones is like dancing, I don't think what I do when I play, it just seems that the beats come out naturally, I was also a natural drummer at an early age, and at 12 yrs old I played Buddy Riches drums with his orchestral at Colston Hall Bristol, England, while Mr. Rich sat with my dad in the audience. Thinking about it, I wish I had taken the bones along as I'm sure he would have liked that. I've several sets of bones, I've also got a pair made of Australian hardwood made by my dad. I played with the Chieftains at the Bristol Colston Hall around 15 years ago, though it was unofficial, I just jumped up onto the stage and started playing. I stood by Paddy Moloney while he played pipes and he smiled at me all the way through and signed my bones afterwards. What a buzz!!! Anyway a big hello to all bone players; keep up this skillfully art, *Gordon Maddocks* Bristol, England

I found this on the UCSB cylinder recording audio archive: *Rap, rap, rap, rap on your minstrel bones*, Performers: Edward Meeker. Issue Number: Edison Blue Amberol: 1576. Release year: 1912. Words, Lew Brown. Year of release and songwriter credit from "The Edison Phonograph Monthly," v.10 (1912). Dance song, orchestra accompaniment. <http://www.library.ucsb.edu/OBJID/Cylinder0654>. *Kathy Whisler*

## Mike Passerotti's Youtube List Updated

If you've not looked at Mike Passerotti's collection of Youtube rhythm bones videos, you are missing out on a terrific resource. Thanks to those who contribute links to these videos, Mike has over 200 videos in his collection organized by the rhythm bones player. You will find videos here easier than doing a Youtube search. However, when you find a new video, please forward the link to Mike. Some late additions include David Holt and Rhiannah Giddens and Dave Murphy from Ireland. Click our Resource Tab, then Audio & Video.

### *Rhythm Bones Player*

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

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

Web Site Coordinator  
Steve Wixson  
[webmaster@rhythmbones.com](mailto:webmaster@rhythmbones.com)

Board of Directors  
Sky Bartlett  
Steve Brown, Executive Director  
Skeffington Flynn  
Sharon Mescher  
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)

## Renew Membership

Our fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31 meaning it is time to renew your membership for 2016. go to <http://rhythmbones.org/renewMembership.html> to pay by PayPal or send a check for \$20 to Rhythm Bones Society, 1060 Lower Brow Road, Signal Mtn, TN 37377

## Website Updates

The October update had a video of Adam Klein's performance at Bones Fest XIX and the Photo of the Month was Gerry Hines with the announcement that he is hosting BFXX. The November update was about the Remember Percy Project and the Video of the Month was about Percy produced by the University of Michigan in 1981. There was no December update.

(Continued from Page 1)

a source of bone rhythm bones.

“We were already selling and playing bones before meeting Percy Danforth, and meeting Percy was like meeting a superstar. We flew Percy out to California a number of times to be the rhythm bones instructor at Lark Camp. It was as amazing to Percy to be exposed to music that he had never heard of at Lark Camp and for people at camp to be exposed to him and learn bones from him and enjoy his stories and good companionship.

“He would jam with the people playing Middle Eastern, Balkan and French musics with rhythms that he couldn’t have imagined before and was inspired learning to play in 7s, 9s, 11s, 18s and more. It was wonderful to see him go from session to session with a sense of amazement and dive right in.

“We were having a music party at our house, and my friend Rod Cameron brought along his new video camera. We videoed Arrigo D’Albert playing the Hurdy Gurdy. When we showed the footage to Arrigo he exclaimed that that can’t be me. I am doing what I tell my students not to do.

I realized immediately what a great learning tool videos could be. I went out and bought some video equipment and immediately started producing a series of 24 how to videos.

Percy was a natural choice after seeing how people got so excited with his playing and teaching. We flew Percy out to California with the help of the local folklore society and produced a video using many of the local Mendocino musicians. Countless people have now learned how to play the rhythm bones from Percy using this video.

You can watch Mickie and family on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5o69rxh5I10>. Check out his website at <http://larkinam.com>, and also their rhythm bones page at <http://larkinam.com/BonesSpoons.html>.

## Remember Percy Project Update

While this project is not complete, there has been significant progress on data collection. Some of Percy’s memorabilia given to Jonathan Danforth

by his uncle, Mac, at Bones Fest XVIII has been scanned into the computer and uploaded to our website. This is a large file and you can check it out at (<http://rhythmbones.org/documents/PercyScannedMemorabilia.pdf>)

In one of the boxes given to Jonathan was a professional quality video tape that was converted to digital and was the Video of the Month for November. It was produced by the University of Michigan who has given up permission to use it. An additional item is the non-instructional clips of Percy talking from his instructional video given to us by Lark in the Morning.

When data collection is complete there will be a definitive article on Percy in our newsletter and the collected information, will be better organized and uploaded to our website. If you have Percy items that should be remembered, let us know via our Contact Us page.

## Editorial (Continued)

Of course Sheppardstown was a highlight of the year for me, seeing all of you, experiencing West Virginia, and watching my son thrive in the light of our organization, brings me great joy. Hats off to Skeff, and Alyssa for hosting a truly memorable fest!

My retirement this year has presented me with a variety of opportunities, both musically, and personally, including a recording project I was involved in with Marek Bennett, and Woody Pringle, of which I am very proud.

Today I’m dedicated to fighting off the physical effects of aging and keep playing the bones. Those that went before me like Shorty Boulet, and Percy Danforth are models I aspire to, and I encourage you all, never give up, never surrender!

And the coming year is full of promise. I know Skeff and Steve are planning on joining me at the New England Folk Festival this year, I’m considering a return to Ireland, and of course really looking forward to the next Bones Fest hosted by Gerry Hines in Homer, New York this Summer. Jeremy is already asking about it while playing the bones in the car with me, and I hope to see all of you there this year. Let me take this opportunity to wish you the very best New Year, and “May your bones be with you!” *Steve Brown*

## RBS Brochure

The Board has been working on a RBS brochure for some time, and this year Skeff Flynn took on the project and the result is shown on Page 8 which as you see is really well done.

We have given them to Dom Flemons and Rowan Corbett to pass out at their performances. If you would like some, use our Contact Us page to let know how many and how you will use them.

# BONES FEST

# XX



**August 4-7, 2016**

**Homer, NY**

**Gerry Hines, Host**

**Please Save the Date on  
Your Calendar**

## Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown on August 8, 2015 at 12:20 pm in the Shepherd University Storer Ballroom. All Board members were present.

Steve Wixson passed a copy of the minutes as printed in the RBP Newsletter and a motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes. He also passed the 2014 RBS Treasurer's Report and noted that there was a balance of \$6,656 in the bank as of December 31, 2014. He noted that a copy of the report and all supporting documentation had been mailed to our Executive Director. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the Treasurer's Report.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to reimburse Skeff Flynn for \$274.92 for 2000 RBS brochures he had printed. Steve Wixson noted that he did not put a copy as promised on our website for people to download. He will do that soon. An RBS business card was discussed and Skeff will investigate and circulate a design.

The rhythmbones.org website redesign was discussed and Skeff will fulfill his promise to circulate a design document so we can agree on what we want the website to do.

Sharon Mescher reported on a letter she received from Albert Fisher, producer of the Ted Mack Original Amateur TV show, offering us duped copies of former shows with rhythm bones players. The cost of his proposal was still too high for us and no action was taken.

Steve Wixson gave a brief report on the 'Remember Percy' and 'Timeline' projects.

Steve Brown called the meeting to order as the Nominating Committee. All members indicated their willingness to serve another year except Tim Reilly and a motion was made, seconded and approved to present this slate at the General Membership Meeting.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn. We adjourned at 2:02 pm. Respectively submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

## Minutes of the General Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown on August 8, 2015 at 2:15 pm in the Shepherd University Storer Ballroom.

Steve Wixson read the minutes of the last meeting and a motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes as read. He gave a brief Treasurer's Report noting that there was a balance of \$6,656 in the bank as of December 31, 2014.

The Nominating committee nominated the current Board members except Tim Reilly for reelection. Steve Brown opened the floor for nominations for Board Member at Large and Sky Bartlett was nominated. Being no other nominations, the motion was made, seconded and approved to elect the following by acclamation; Steve Brown, Executive Director, Bill Vits, Assistant Director, Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Board Members, Sharon Mescher, Skeff Flynn, Kenny Wolin and Sky Bartlett.

Steve Wixson gave a brief report on the 'Remember Percy' and 'Timeline' projects. He noted the first printout from the Timeline Database was available for inspection.

Steve Brown, after listing contributions to the RBS, presented Steve Wixson with a set of Mescher Ebony Bones noting the help of Sharon Mescher.

There was a discussion about developing a starter kit with an instruction manual and rhythm bones for school teachers. The Board will look into this.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm. Respectively submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

## Bones Calendar

**Bones Fest XVIII.** August 4-7, 2016, Cortland, NY area, Gerry Hines, Host.

**NTCMA Bones Contest.** August 29 - September 4, 2016, LeMars, IA. Bones Contest will be on Sunday.

## What is a Regional Bones Fest?

I suppose the roots of the Regional Bones Fest lie in my first meeting with Percy Danforth. Percy and his wife Fran had traveled to Boston for a harpsichord lesson, and called me to let me know. I made a mad dash for their hotel, and spent the evening with them. A parade of bones players came and went during the evening, mostly to get bones from Percy, but I could see a sort of brotherhood existed. I only remember the name of one, Armando Bufferone, who was a member of the musician's union in Worcester!

Later that year Percy came to the Hartford Ct. Folk Festival, and I traveled down to see him. He did a workshop attended by about 50 people, and again other bones players were there. So when asked to do a bone playing workshop for the New England Folk Festival in 1980, I invited as many bones players as I could to join me, and have done that for each workshop. Over the years a whole host of players attended including: Percy Danforth, John Burrill, Johnny Muise, Ev Cowette, Shorty Boulet, Russ Myers, and many others. So the idea of bringing bones players together has deep roots, but it wasn't until after hosting my first National Fest in 2001 that I began gathering the local players for what I called a mini-Fest. The first was much like Ev Cowett's first bones fest, but even smaller, a total of 10 folks in my living room. Walt Watkins was in New England, Shorty Boulet drove down from New Hampshire, Jon Danforth came up, and we were on our way. I think I have hosted a total of 5 of this type of fest, and they have grown as large as 35 people. One was held at the Red Apple Farm, included workshops, and a public performance. Much like a regular Bones Fest, but only lasting one day, the focus has always been getting together, sharing our playing and giving encouragement.

Perhaps the largest scheduled never happened due to a hurricane and cancellation at the last minute, but I think we had some 40 people scheduled to attend. I think the essential ingredient to a regional fest is: 1. Desire- the passion to get folks together, regardless of location, to play and have a good time

2. Willing participants- people have to be willing to come, and the distance has to be reasonable, although that is about choice 3. You need a body of people you can draw from. We've always been lucky here in New England to have a good density of players with in our region, but people outside the region will come too, especially if they had to miss the national Bones Fest or can't make the long distance travel to the national. The form of it takes on the personality of the participants, workshops if wanted, or just hanging out, public performances or just jamming with folks. The location could be just your living room or a public park. I have idea's for the future Regional Fests, but have to get psyched up to do it. And there's always the New England Folk Festival in April, I know I'll be there, maybe you will too! *Steve Brown*

## **Dorothea Nelson Master's Thesis**

Dorothea Nelson's master's thesis is titled No Country For End Men: A Re-Evaluation of Small Ensemble Blackface Minstrelsy, 1843 To 1883, and it has enough rhythm bones description to be of interest to rhythm bones players. It is online at [http://www.bonedrymusic.com/v/d\\_j\\_nelson/no\\_country\\_for\\_end\\_men.pdf](http://www.bonedrymusic.com/v/d_j_nelson/no_country_for_end_men.pdf). Search for 'bones' if you are not interested in reading the entire 60 page thesis. It has an extensive bibliography.

Note that this is on Scott Miller's store website, and while you are there you might check out the rhythm bones he has for sale - he is also a rhythm bones seller.

## **The Jethros 'Shake Your Bones'**

There is a song that the trombone player in my band wrote specifically to highlight the bones; well, now a friend of the band who has a history of making great videos of our playing has posted a version of it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV-NopVYJCY>.

It's kind of too bad they cut out the intro, which gets zanier every time we play it and makes it nearly impossible for me to keep a straight face when we do the song.

These days it involves Rick (the trombonist) going on at length about how I

don only cycling shorts, carefully select a Bowie knife, and take down a buffalo after riding it down, in order to craft the bones which I'm about to play (which are usually, in fact, the buffalo ribs I got from Steve Brown), using all parts of the animal and donating the extra meat to orphanages. All this while I do quasi-bones-playing-calisthenics in order not to bust up laughing.

Anyway. I think the song is great.  
*Jonathan Danforth*

## **Rhythm Bones Player from Barbados**

I don't know if I am the only Bones Player on the Island of Barbados, but I don't know of any other one. I was taught by my grandfather, Garnet St Hill, when he was in his seventies, and I was a teenager. I am now 66.

He used to perform at various concerts and shows in Barbados back in the forties. I inherited his "bones" which are made of a very dark African wood. It's a very hard wood, and very loud volume can be achieved playing them.

I play occasionally at family get togethers, after sufficient rum has relaxed my own bones and inhibition, as there is no real place that I can think of locally that would enjoy this sort of thing today. I play to tap dance music from a variety of old recordings, many of which I found online for purchase, that my grandfather used to play to. My favorite is one by Jonny Maddox. I would like to attend the next Bones Festival (2016) to share my island style with the many veterans from the US and other countries. Here is a video of me at home a few years ago (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gddf-dOH9j4>). Cheers, *Peter Sheppard*, Barbados.

## **Kenny on Tour**

The Presidents 'Own' Marine Band' was on tour in the Southeast US from September 15 to October 15 giving percussionist Kenny Wolin a chance to visit some fellow members. In Greensboro he visited Mitch Boss and Martha Cowett (and the three got some Pub stage time), and in Chattanooga, me. The band plays a variety of band and orchestra music and they are terrific. *Steve Wixson*

## **RBS Plays Part in Percy's Bones DVD**

RBS played a part in the DVD version of Percy's Bones Instructional Video. The owner, Mickie Zekley, sold Lark in the Morning, and later when he took it back he could not find the master for the Percy video. Before he sold Lark, he had given RBS a copy of the video to review for the newsletter. When asked to borrow the master, he declined noting he had loaned the master to a video editor. Being a pack rat, I saved that email and was able to return the name of that editor to Mickie resulting in the DVD version of Percy's video. Mickie gave RBS a copy of the DVD. *Steve Wixson*

## **RBP Newsletters Added To Website**

Volumes 1 through 16 of the *Rhythm Bones Player* newsletter are now on our website. Click the Resources tab and then Newsletter tab and finally the HERE link.

The last two years of newsletters are available only in paper form as a benefit of being a member. If you want the latest newsletters, join RBS.

The newsletter file is large and takes time to download. A benefit of being online is you can do an Adobe search (ctrl+F). There is an enormous library of information in these newsletters.

## **Bones Fest T-shirts Ball Caps For Sale**

The following ball caps and t-shirts were left over from previous Bones Fests. They are \$15 each including packaging and shipping. If you want one, use our Contact Us page to let us know. We will follow up with availability and shipping details.

BFIX (Chattanooga); several baseball caps

BFXIII (Louisville w/RBS Logo); 2 - M, 4 - L, 2 - XL

BFXIV (Alexandria); 5 - L

BFXVII (Leominster); 2 - S, 2 - M

BFXVIII (Grand Rapids); 3 - 2XL,  
1 - 3XL

## Playing The Bones In South Africa

Several months ago I traveled to Durban, South Africa for a performance with the Kwazulu Natal Philharmonic as a member of the Bernard Woma Ensemble. I've been a member of Bernard's group for many years and we regularly present Gyl xylophone music of Ghana, West Africa along with related drum, dance, and vocal traditions. In more recent years, together with composer David Rogers, Bernard and I have written two concerti for Gyl Trio and Orchestra. This past May we gave the African premiere of these compositions with the Kwazulu Natal Philharmonic. Unfortunately, the third member of our trio was unable to travel with us at the last minute and we weren't able to secure a visa in time for another musician to replace him. As a result, Bernard and I found ourselves in Durban faced with the serious challenge of covering three parts between just the two of us.

One of the extra percussion parts I needed to cover was for the aslatua, a small double shaker from Ghana. The aslatua is remarkably similar to the rhythm bones in both its playing and sound as it involves spinning two small gourds together (held in one hand) to create a crisp click. While I was able to play the composed rhythms in the concerti for the aslatua, one of the pieces also included an extended improvised aslatua solo. Given that I feel much more comfortable improvising on the bones, I suggested to Bernard the idea of taking a bones solo with the orchestra in place of the aslatua solo. We tried it at rehearsal and Bernard liked this substitution so much he decided it should be a permanent change in the music. The audience in Durban, South Africa enjoyed the rhythm bones as well. During my solo with the orchestra at City Hall I got at loud "Yaboo (yeah!)" shout-ed to me from the audience. *Mark Stone*

## Hank Remembers Jerry Mescher

When I saw Jerry and Bernie for the first time I was all excited to find out about their gigs and what music they played to. I found out that they only

performed to pre-recorded music at Bones Fests because it was the only way they could practice without being together. One lived in Iowa and the other in Miami.

Of course the Meschers, Sharon, Bernie and Jerry, did their signature THING, playing a perfectly syncopated set to recorded music with perfectly choreographed moves. Truly, a thing of joy and beauty that should be seen and appreciated by bones players for generations to come. My friend, Vgo, couldn't stop talking about how blown away he was with their performance at the Orlando Bones Fest. BUT, I saw something else in the lobby of the Rosen Hotel, Orlando Bones Fest that evening. Something that will never show up on the You Tubes and videos. For the first time, I saw Jerry playing to live un-choreographed music with someone he'd never played with before. This was truly a magical moment and when the impromptu jam was over Jerry had a funny little smile on his face. Kinda like the kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar but didn't care 'cause he got the cookies anyway!

I feel blessed to have been there to see it. I am saddened that I will never have the opportunity to join Jerry in such an endeavor. But I am honored to have known him and enjoyed his performances. *Hank Tenenbaum*

## Ernie Remembers Jerry Mescher

I met Jerry Mescher at BonesFest V, the first Bones Fest I attended. I was immediately impressed with his bones playing skills and he set the bar high for those of us just learning how to play. We quickly became friends and got to know each other over the years. We enjoyed each other's company and I was glad to get to know the Mescher family. They were fun to be around and I looked forward to seeing them whenever I was able to attend a Bones Fest.

One of the things I remembered best about Jerry was at Bones Fest V when he and his sister, Bernie, played synchronized bones. I had never seen that before so it was a treat to watch. Later his wife, Sharon, joined them and they became a trio.

Jerry and Sharon were two of the people that I looked forward to seeing when I attended Bones Fest. I will miss his precision bones playing and his smile. I will also miss his slap on the back after I played at a public performance followed by "Good job, Ernie".

I am glad I had the opportunity to know Jerry and become his friend. He was a faithful member of the Bones Society. He shared his talents, served on the Board and was always encouraging. He left big shoes to fill in by those of us left behind and he will be missed by many. *Ernie Duffy*

## News from Jim Conner

Hi all! Keep up the good bone-ing out there in this nefarious & glorious world. I shook 'em at several concerts during John Denver week in Aspen CO, October 6-12 (Jim Connor in Concert on Friday, October 9th). I pick bones a time or two in each of my concerts nowadays.

I hand over my heart in memory of having Ted Goon on my paper route in Gadsden, AL when just a kid and yet had enough sense to listen and learn direct from the master! I still have a couple sets of 'Mr Goon' bones that he gave to me, and I would not take a million bucks for one of those sets!!!

By the way, who is making the best, or most usable, style of bones these days? And are they affordable? Years ago some one told me that the nicest sound and balance are made from the shin of an Ox. I have bone bones and wood bones and all and each provide distinctive soundings and rhythms. I have some aged bone from Midwest bison, but I have not made any bison ones as yet. I'd love to hear from other 'bone' folk about their variety of bone material and styles and their interpretations of sound and feel and ease of use. My rock maple ones are rich sounding, I also regularly use some persimmon ones and cow-rib ones, occasionally. I leave my original 'TED GOON' stamped sets at home.

By the way, my composition 'Grandma's Feather Bed' (a hit by John Denver) is a good un' to do rhythm bones with... naturally! Love. *Jim Connor*

[In addition to performing on banjo

with John Denver in concert, Jim was also a member of the New Kingston Trio. Jim attended Bones Fest VIII. For information about Ted Goon, go to our website and click the Resources tab, then History and then Mr. Goon-Bones. To hear him play, click on Steve Allen Show or the three links at the bottom of the page.]

## Elderly Instruments

It started back in 1971, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Sharon McInturff and I had both finished college, and we figured that if we searched for older fretted instruments then we could probably sell them, make a little profit, and have fun doing it. The shop opened on July 5, 1972 with about 15 or 20 used instruments. We called ourselves Elderly Instruments because we planned to carry only vintage instruments.

I'm pretty sure that we first became aware of the rhythm bones in the 1970's through our old friend Percy Danforth. Elderly Instruments was in East Lansing. Percy lived in nearby Ann Arbor and was showing up at all the local folk festivals, playing the bones with just about anybody that would have him (and playing any kind of music). He was a wonderfully versatile player and a great ambassador for the bones. I was playing in the Lost World String Band so we made Percy's acquaintance pretty early on. He was having his nice bones made by a woodworker he knew and selling them wherever he went. At some point we (Elderly) approached him (or perhaps he approached us) and we worked out a deal for him to wholesale his bones to us. For many years his bones were about the only game in town. They sold very well for us and we thus helped fuel the bones revolution that was going on (and which was largely due to Percy). As time went on, more makers appeared to sell an even wider variety of bones, and we continue selling them to this day. Regards, *Stan Werbin*

[They sell Danforth, Whamdiddle and Sampson rhythm bones. Check out their website - [elderly.com](http://elderly.com).]

## House of Musical Tradition

I grew up in a home of symphony musicians. I had an interest in world music and thought it would be great to put all those unique instruments under one roof. In 1972, the House of Musical Tradition opened for business, and over the years it just expanded to what it is today ([www.hmtrad.com](http://www.hmtrad.com)).

I learned to play rhythm bones from Joe Herrmann in West Virginia. About 1977, Rick Fogel was living in the Washington, DC area making hammered dulcimers and rhythm bones from left over dulcimer wood. Some of the Celtic musicians thought that Danforth rhythm bones were too light, and preferred Rick's heavier Whamdiddle bones. I also sold triple laminate bones made by Bert Lustig.

We sold real bone rhythm bones made by Szair Bourque, and when these were no longer available found member Dave Boyles who makes *Black Bart* real bone rhythm bones.

Founding member, Deborah Brower and member Rowen Corbett have worked at HMT. Rowan was first introduced to rhythm bones while there.

I also have a background in concert production and have put on shows featuring the Carolina Chocolate Drops. In one of those early shows when Dom Flemons was in the trio, Rowan got his first stage time with them. Now he is a regular member of the CCD.

For more bones info, go to [hmtrad.com](http://hmtrad.com) and search for 'bones.' *David Eisner*

## Deborah Brower & HMT

[RBS Founding Member Deborah Brower worked for a while at the House of Musical Tradition.]

HMT not only sold instruments, but provided lessons and eventually hosted small concerts. Those concerts eventually out grew the store and became the Institute of Musical Traditions.

HMT provided invaluable support to local musicians, serving as the hub of

information on the music scene. Even providing employment for up and coming musicians who went on to become national names.

From the beginning rhythm bones players could count on HMT to have a selection of bones and instructional materials. From the old standby plastic rhythm bones, to wooden ones by Percy Danforth.

I met some fabulous bones players like Sule Greg Wislon. He and I would trade licks when we would pass each other on the street in Takoma Park. Sule Greg introduced me to rag time bones playing. That is an example of what HMT truly is, a force in the lives of many musicians that goes far beyond being a place to buy an instrument.

What most people may not know is David is an excellent rhythm bones player. *Deborah Brower*

## Andy's Front Hall

We first met Percy at The Ark in Ann Arbor, MI. Our band, Fennig's All-Stars, was playing there and Percy showed up and played with us. He said that he had gotten out his bones after hearing that Tony Barrand was playing at the Ark and he used bones for a song or two. He met Tony and his singing partner John Roberts and Percy was out and about with his bones in earnest. Our book with Percy and Sue Barber was published in 1978, so we probably met him at the Ark a year or two earlier. Actually, all this history can be found in our book. We started selling the Danforth bones back then, but we can't get a good supply of them anymore, so we dropped bones from our website. ([andysfronthall.com](http://andysfronthall.com)) *Bill & Andy Spence*

## Claude Bonang Wins

I competed in the Brunswick Rotary Midcoast Maine's Got Talent Show again which took place in Topsham, Maine on May 9th, where I was one of sixteen performances. I played my rhythm bones to a medley of "Darktown Strutter's Ball," (Continued on Page 8)



Old rhythm bones with an interesting history



New Rhythm Bones Society trifold brochure

“Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” and “Bill Bailey,” and ended up winning another Judge’s Choice Trophy. For my performance I incorporated our son Chris’ latest invention—Glowbybandz—in my attire, of which I wrapped a white one around each wrist, which went around three times, and wrapped three—one red, one white and one blue—just above the rim of a plastic straw hat that I wore. The Glowbybandz do not show up too well in the photo. I also incorporated a gray vest in my attire, which I purchased the day before.



Claude Bonang

# Rhythm Bones Society

1060 Lower Brow Road  
Signal Mountain, TN 37377-2910

*Address Correction Requested*