



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 7, No. 2 2005

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## Executive Director's Column

I had a really great experience the other day: I lost the All Ireland Bones Playing Championship. As strange as that may seem it's quite true. It was especially great because a bones player who has placed 2nd or 3rd over the last six years came in first. Dave Murphy is not only a super guy, he is a great player and teacher of the bones and someone who truly deserved to win. He has put a tremendous effort into practicing and his playing shows it. Seeing he and his family celebrating after the contest was a great joy to me, perhaps more than if I had won myself. It was also great for me personally because it gives me something to aspire to, to work towards, and it refocuses my attention on

the Irish style of bones playing which I greatly admire, from Dave Murphy, to Paddy Donovan, to Paddy Sport himself, it truly is a marriage of bones playing and music which is inspirational to listen and watch. Losing the championship also helped me to realize that the greatest experience for me is not winning but being around other players, learning from them, and enjoying their company and friendship.

Which brings me to another topic. It is almost one month away from what promises to be another spectacular Bones Fest, perhaps the best yet. With the extremely friendly city of Chattanooga as our background and players from

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Bones Around the World: *Klepperle* and *Chlefeli*

At our annual Bones Fests, we usually hear bones played in an astounding variety of musical cultural contexts. Even in North America, bones are regularly played in minstrel music and other music from the mid-1800's, vaudeville, jazz, blues, Appalachian traditional music, bluegrass, Irish, Scottish, and English traditional music, Québécois music, music from the maritime provinces of Canada, and many more styles (including a variety of new 'traditions'). However, bones and bones-like instruments are played even more widely, and this occasional column is meant to open our eyes to traditions around the world that we might otherwise miss knowing about.

To start with, I would like to introduce to you the traditions of Switzerland and southern Germany, where an instrument almost identical to the bones is played. The Germans call them *Klepperle* (or *Kläpperle*, or *Klepperli*), and the German-speaking Swiss call them *Chlefeli* (or *Chlefele* or *Chlefelä* or *Chlätterli*).

Physically, the *Klepperle/Chlefeli* differ from the bones we're used to seeing in the English-speaking world in the following ways:

1. In general, only hardwoods are used, not bone (or pine or other soft wood, as far as I can gather).

2. The pieces are shorter than American bones typically are: generally under five inches in length.

3. The pieces are also wider than the bones and slightly thicker, up to about 2 inches wide and nearly a half-inch thick.

4. The extra width and thickness are offset by having a notch cut into the upper part of the edge of the piece; so the part that is actually gripped by the hand is really only about half that size.

5. The pieces are not curved.

However, what makes the *Klepperle/Chlefeli* close kin to the bones is the way they are held and the way they are played. In particular, they share with the bones the elements of the "tap" or single stroke, the 'duple' sometimes heard especially with Irish music, and the 'rattle' or 'triplet.' The *Klepperle/Chlefeli* are held two in each hand (either one hand or two hands may be used), held edgewise to the hand (as opposed to flat in the hand like castanets), and are held between the fingers, just as the bones are.

The *Klepperle* and *Chlefeli* are both associated with particular events in the calendar of the Catholic Church. In Germany (mainly in three towns near the Swiss border: Radolfzell, Haslach, and Gengenbach), they are played as part of the festivities of *Fasnacht* (known in the

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Editorial

Jonathan Danforth wrote the lead article for this issue on Swiss/German style of bones playing. We need more international articles and you are invited to share any Bones Around the World knowledge. It will be appreciated.

By the time you read this, Bones Fest IX will almost be upon us. This issue presents more details about this Bones Fest. Janet and I are busy with the preparations and are looking forward to a fun and memorable weekend.

The letter from Lem Bann is interesting. He is from Australia as is fellow member John Hill. Why not send Lem an email introducing yourself. His email address is lembann@winshop.com.au.

I attended a concert recently in Chattanooga where member San Slomovits and his brother Laz performed as the group Gemini. We heard San at Bones Fest VII and he has written a couple of articles for the newsletter. San played only two bones numbers—I would have enjoyed a few more. He did introduce me and the Rhythm Bones Society to his audience. Go and see them if they come to your area. Their concert is pure family musical fun.

Member Randy Seppala has done something interesting—started a new bones making company. He is donating bones for the kids' workshop at this year's Fest and I wrote a brief article on his efforts.

## Letters to the Editor

GDAY. Sorry to say I won't renew my membership. I enjoy reading the newsletter, but can't relate to the people in it. The newsletter has super articles. I don't understand the technical instructions, but I appreciate the efforts. If I miss it, I will email you. Is that ok?

If you are talking to [RBS member] Gil Hibben will you let him know I throw his knives. I have 3 large knives plus an axe. I could not go to Melbourne when he was there.

On 24 November 2004, I had my

first paying GIG. We had over 380 people pay to watch the show. To put on a better act, I made a new set of bones three weeks before the event and taught myself to play them in my left hand. The number I played to was March of the Bob Cats by Bob Crosby. I danced in the middle, and played the 4 bones for a BIG finish. My second number was Baby Face, whistled with bones in one hand, danced and whistled with bones in both hands on second verse—left nothing on the stage. Wish I was 27 instead of 67!!!!

Sorry to read about the death of Vivian Cox. She looked like a DOLL and we need more people like her.

*Lem Bann*

P.S., the new Bones I adapted are 55 years old. An old mate sent them to me—he can't play any more.

[To learn more about Lem and see and hear him play, go to [www.abc.net.au/arts/adlib/stories/s916160.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/arts/adlib/stories/s916160.htm).]

Reluctantly, I can't do Bones Fest this year. However, I will be doing a bones workshop in October as well as some classes. Is it ok to photocopy articles from the newsletters for this as long as I credit them? *Carla Cantor*

[We do not have a policy on this, but copies of articles and newsletters for educational purposes are certainly 'fair use' under the copyright law. And yes, credit is appropriate. *Carla*

## Bones Calendar

As always, check out the rather complete Bones Calendar section of the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com) website.

**July 8-10.** Bones Fest IX in Chattanooga, TN hosted by Steve Wixson. If you would like to come and have not registered, contact Steve now at 423-886-1744 or [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net).

**August 29-September 4.** 30th annual National Traditional Country Music Association Festival and Contests with Bones Contest on Saturday, September 3rd. Contact [www.oldtimemusic.bigstep.com](http://www.oldtimemusic.bigstep.com) or Jerry Mescher for information. This is a great opportunity to perform for a

## *Rhythm Bones Player*

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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)

## Recorded Bones Music

Member Randy Seppala sent me a CD titled *Finnish Medley and More, Volume 1* by Wilpela & Friends Band. Randy plays bones on most of the nineteen tracks. This CD is a really enjoyable album with accordion, banjo, bass guitar, mandolin, drums, bones and spoons and a few tracks with vocals in Finnish. If you have a Finnish background, this is a must have CD. The CD will be played at the upcoming Bones Fest. To order, contact Will Kilpela at 1603 Mildred Ave, Marquette, MI 49855 or call 906-226-3685 or see Randy at the Fest.

(Exec Director's Column-continued from page 1)

California to Denmark expected to attend, the scene is set for an interesting and inspiring weekend. Building on last years workshops with several new and exciting topics, this is a rare opportunity for us to learn from some very accomplished players, both old and new. Experience both beginning and advanced playing workshops, as well as scrimshaw and Taketina, a polyrhythmic teaching technique which incorporates bones playing. Steve and Janet Wixson will open their beautiful home for a virtual feast of bones playing and literal feast of exceptional food, where jamming will abound. We'll have a chance to show the general public what bones playing is all about during our Saturday night performance at the Mountain Opry stage, with more jamming at the Wixson's until the wee hours. And don't forget the Sunday brunch with continued fun and jamming. I particularly want to encourage those of you who play instruments besides the bones to bring them along and help provide music for the week end. I can't begin to express what bones fest has meant to me personally and the effect it has had on my playing. Meeting and playing with Jerry Mescher, Donnie Decamp, Russ Myers, Mel Mercier, and all the bones players has enriched both my playing and my life. I hope to see each and

## Bones at Common Ground on the Hill

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker have performed throughout the U.S., singing songs and telling stories from the American tradition. Sparky Rucker has been performing over forty years and is internationally recognized as a leading folklorist, musician, historian, storyteller, and author.(check out [www.sparkyandrhonda.com](http://www.sparkyandrhonda.com).)

Here is an item from Sparky and Rhonda's newsletter.

"We'll be teaching the music & history of the American Civil War with our old friend, Bob Zentz and exploring the history of Old-Time Black Stringband Music. Folks who

play the traditional instruments of banjo, mandolin, guitar, and bones are urged to attend. *Class slots are still available.* Common Ground on the Hill, July 2-8, Westminster, MD, 410-857-2771 or [www.commongroundonthehill.org](http://www.commongroundonthehill.org)."

Sparky said, "Mike Baytop will be our resident bones player! [Mike attended Friday night at Bones Fest VIII last year.] He's been in our Black Stringband since its inception a couple of years ago. So we'd love to have anybody who wants to play bones to some great music. Mike is also teaching bones at Common Ground

## Corrections

The article on Ronnie McShane in last quarter's newsletter (Vol 7, No1) has a couple of errors. The caption to the photo should state he was performing at the 2003 All Ireland Bones Competition. Actually in 2004 he was the judge for the contest.

The list of records at the end of the article is not correct. Ronnie is not on the *Sa Gaiety* album.

## Bones Obituaries

RBS member Dan Dywer of the Celtic band *The Tinker's Own* died in a motorcycle accident on October 14, 2003. A tribute by the former band members is at [www.tinkersown.com](http://www.tinkersown.com).

Rhythm bones player Carlton D. Bohanan died on July 25, 2003. Carlton was not a RBS member. I met him at my first NTCMA Bones Contest in Iowa. His funeral home obituary says Carlton enjoyed dancing, singing, traveling, camping, attending country festivals, and playing the bones. *Steve Wixson*

## Rhythm Bones in Movies or TV

Let's do some research together. Let's make a list of all of the movies on screen or TV that included rhythm bones playing. I know of those listed below (with input from myself, Greg Burrows, Ev Cowett, Barry Patton and Aaron Plunkett.) If you know of others, please let me know and include details about the bones playing and the bones player if known. Thanks, *Steve Wixson*

1. *Riding High* (1950). Bing Crosby plays kitchen knives not bones. His instructor was Brother Bones.
2. *Mary Poppins*. Animated band with bones player backs up Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke.
3. *Chocolat*. Very briefly as the main characters board the boat.
4. *Gone with the Wind*. In a street scene with several bones players.
5. *Titanic*. Aaron Plunkett plays bones, spoons and bodhran with Celtic band in the background as main characters go below deck for love scene.
6. *Shaughnessy*. Aaron Plunkett plays bones, spoons and bodhran for the sound track of Louie Lamour's country western story made into a feature film for T.V..
7. *All My Friends Are Cowboys*.. Aaron Plunkett plays bones, spoons, and bodhran for the TV special feature film celebrating the American cowboy with Wilford Brimley, Johnny & June Carter Cash, Joe Diffie, Don Edwards, Ty England, Waddie Mitchell, Kristen Zang and Roy Rogers.
8. "Yes Sir, Mr Bones" a 1951 movie that does a great job reminiscing about the minstrel era. Although there is a lot of white men in blackface, the bone player is a black man, Brother Bones, dressed in white tux and top hat. ..
9. *Two For Texas*. A Ted Turner film.
10. *Pot O' Gold* which starred Jimmie Stewart.
11. *Deadwood*. 2005 Season finale for this HBO series with Barry Patton playing with Byron Berline Band.

## Bones Fest IX is Almost Here

### *There is Rhythm in Them Bones*

Bones Fest IX plans are about complete and we are ready for an exciting weekend in Chattanooga. The food and amenities will be memorable. Registrations received already include both old and new faces.

Workshops, similar to those at Bones Fest VIII, are scheduled (see below) and new is a Kid Workshop at the conclusion of which the kids will take over the Mountain Opry stage and perform for all of us.

Music for this year will be provided by tapes and CDs. We have also invited attendees to bring their other musical instruments and so far we have the expected fiddle to the unexpected xylophone. So expect some interesting rhythm bones/other instrument combinations.

Here is the program:

### **Friday**

Noon Board Meeting  
2:30pm—5:00 Workshops  
5:30—until Reception and jamming at Wixson house. Buffet dinner  
8:30-8:45 A few players play at the Mountain Opry to advertise Saturday night

### **Saturday**

All Day Bones Market Place  
8:00am—9:30 Workshops  
10:00—Noon Individual performances at Mountain Opry building  
Noon—1:30 Lunch on Mountain Opry grounds  
1:30pm—3:00 Kid/Youth workshop  
1:30—4:30 Individual performances continue.  
4:30—5:30 General Membership Meeting at Mountain Opry  
6:00—7:30 Italian dinner cooked at Wixson home plus jamming time  
8:00—11:00 Fun performances (like last year) open to public at Mountain Opry  
11:00—until Relaxing and jamming around the pool at Wixson home  
**Sunday**  
8:00am—until Brunch at Wixson's

house plus more jamming

Here is a summary of the workshops:

**Kids/Youth** (Saturday 1:30 pm) This is mostly for locals, but attendee kids are welcomed. Young Bones Player Editor, Constance Cook, and friends will lead this workshop.

**Beginner/Intermediate** (Friday 2:30 pm) This workshop will teach the basics for new bones players or those who want to improve their skills. Former Executive Director Ev Cowett will lead this workshop.

**Advanced** (Saturday 8:30 am) Ken Wolin will continue his successful workshop begun at Bones Fest VIII.

**Real Bone Making** (Friday 2:30 pm) Would you like to make your own real bones? This workshop will give you all of the techniques including selection, preparation, polishing and aging your bones. Follow it with the Scrimshaw workshop.

**Scrimshaw** (Friday 3:45 pm) Tim Reilly will teach you how to decorate your bones with scrimshaw carvings. This is scheduled so that you can also take the Real Bone Making workshop.

**Taketina/Bones** (Friday 3:45 pm). Here is a special treat by member Greg Burrows who is a certified 'Advanced' Taketina teacher (see [www.taketina.com](http://www.taketina.com).) He plans an exciting and dynamic workshop in this style applied to bones playing. It uses voice, stepping, handclaps and bones to build simple polyrhythms from the ground up.

If you haven't already decided to attend Bones Fest IX, you are not too late. A Registration Form can be printed from the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com)

## Dave Murphy wins All Ireland Bones Contest

Steve Brown reports that Dave Murphy won the 2005 All-Ireland Bones Competition. Paddy Donovan came in second and Steve Brown came in third. The event was judged by Tommy Hayes.

While in Abbeyfeale, Steve judged the Junior Bones Competition and reports that John Ford came in first (see RBP Vol 6, No 3 for a story and photograph from last year's competition) with Brian Coen second and Laura Dillon third.

## Story From Abbeyfeale

I had an interesting experience while attending the All Ireland Bones Playing Championship in Abbeyfeale, Limerick, Ireland recently. Some unlucky friends of mine had inadvertently locked their keys in the trunk of their car just outside of Murphy's Pub on the main street. Within minutes they had 30 or so well wishers giving their best advice as to how to get the keys out, all convinced they knew the best way. One such do-gooder approached me convinced that the answer was in removing the tail light and getting into the trunk. After thanking him, I changed the subject by asking if he were in town for the music. "Yes, it's brilliant!" he replied. "Are you going to the bones contest tonight?" I further enquired. "No" he said adamantly. Puzzled, I asked why not. "I think all bones players should be cremated!" he exclaimed. Not wanting to inflame him further, I changed the subject, and of course he had no idea he was talking to, at that time, the current All Ireland Champion Bones Player.

Later in the evening I was finishing up with my performance at the contest when I looked into the crowd, and who did I see but the cremator! After coming off stage, I couldn't resist.

## Board Seeks Proposals for BFX

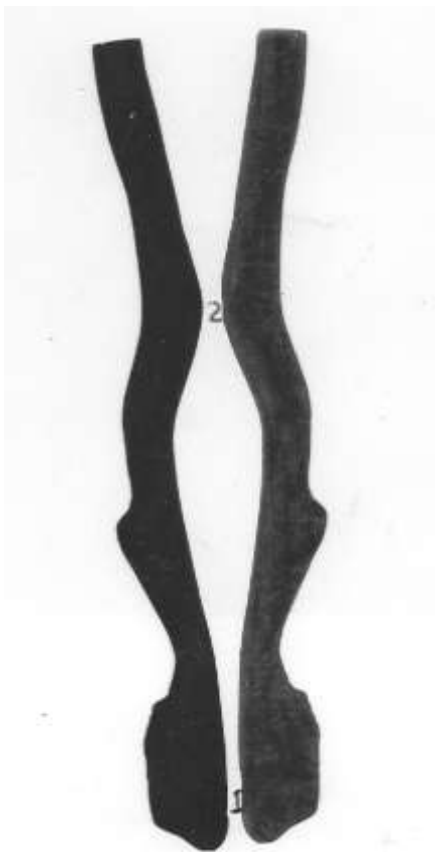
The Board is seeking proposals for hosting Bones Fest X. They hope to make a decision and announce the location during the upcoming Bones Fest IX.

Hosting a Fest takes some work, but is a most rewarding experience. A draft Host Guide is available that lays out the task and can be obtained from Steve Wixson ([wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net).) Or contact any previous host.

There is no defined format, but the proposal needs to be in writing if it cannot be presented in person at the Board Meeting that is scheduled for Noon, Friday, July 8.

## Tips & Techniques The Double Hit

They say a picture is worth a thousand words and sex sells. This can apply to the shape of bones too. I have invented another technique in playing bones and I call it a DOUBLE HIT which is when the bones concurrently hit at two spots at the same time (see



1 & 2 on the Figure.) The combination will give you three sound options of playing the bones. The single hit, hitting at spots 1 or 2 or alternating by hitting the two spots 1 and 2 on the bones at the same time giving a softer and sometimes jazzier sound

The bones I developed (again see the Figure) are just the right shape for this playing. A little adjustment in holding the bones using the conventional holding and playing techniques will give the desired results.

These collectable bones are exotic, rare hardwood and are hand carved into a girly shape. You play by holding the legs with back to back and

heads down for normal bone position playing. Place your hand up or down just a little until both spots 1 and 2 hit at the same time while you are playing. You should also be able to hit spots 1 or 2 or you can hit spots 1 and 2 at the same time or you can hit spot 1 and push off by hitting 2 getting all these alternate sounds.

It's all in the grip placement and holding bones a little loose and altering your grip tightness during playing. The way I do it is to change the pressure in my hand (fingers) and be able to hit 1 or 2 or hit spots 1 and 2 at the same time at my will. I notice that I shift the outside bone (bone facing out) to the left a little to get the 2 shot alone.

You should be able to hit all these shots without moving bones up or down except initially when you make your initial adjustment when you first put your bones in your hand. During this initial adjustment, I adjust the bones up and down until I can hit 1 and 2 together then I can hit 1 or 2 at will just by pressure in my fingers or by shifting outside bone to the left just a little for the 2 shot.

Don't try these shots on any bones as they only work on my bones. To obtain these bones or if you have any questions email me on my website [KeepQuiet.com](http://KeepQuiet.com). *Dutch Kopp*.

## Johnny Muise Dies

Did I tell you Johnny Muise died? Johnny was the bones connection to Nova Scotia. He grew up there and learned to play at an early age. I believe his Aunt played in the Inverness Seranaders during the 40's and 50's and they had a bones player, Huey something. Johnny came to several of my Neffa workshops but never to bones fest or regional meetings. He is on record playing with Joe Cormier, an old cape breton fiddler who lives in the Boston area. He came to Neffa the year Russ and Ev came. His daughter Rose also plays. *Steve Brown*

## Mr. Bones Day

Just back from Mr. Bones Day, a tribute to the late John Burrill. He was a street musician and performer who was welcomed on any stage in Boston and many across the country (See RBP Vol 3, No 1 for a feature story on John.) It was sponsored by Billie Hockett and held at her house.

A lot of fun but not a lot of people. We had a great time anyway. About 20-25 folks turned out including Jon and Melissa Danforth, Rob Rudin, Constance Cook, Paul Sedgwick, Phil Brake, Dave, Eric, and Andy Reiner, Jon Finger, Al Gregoire, and a number of other folks including some of Constance Cook's students (See photograph on Page 8.)

A long time musical partner of Mr. Bones, Mike (don't know his last name) was there and played along. He had numerous Mr. Bones stories as he traveled with Mr. Bones to New Orleans. Several local radio personalities from public radio including Naomi Arenberg of WGBH and Andy Nagy of WBRS were also present and very interested in the bones.

The music was great, we had a bones workshop and fun jamming. The Mr. Bones video, a documentary of Mr. Bones filmed shortly before his death and ending with a memorial to him, was played and was on sale as a DVD which I bought a copy. Jan Cornish, long time friend and associate of Mr. Bones, was there, and she was the main force behind the documentary.

All in all a fun day, I'm sure John

## Website of the Quarter

[www.davidholt.com](http://www.davidholt.com) Member David Holt has been performing with legendary folk musician Doc Watson and in their show, *Hills of Home*, he plays a bones piece with Doc on the harmonica. The crowds always love it. And wouldn't most any of us like to have an opportunity to play with Doc. Tour dates can be found at his website.

## Notes from Australia

Bob Bolton is an Aussie and a bones player. I found him several years ago while searching the internet and we have corresponded via email off and on over the years. He is not a member of RBS but is a friend having let us use the drawing of the hand holding a rhythm bones that appeared in the upper left hand corner of early newsletters. The following is his reply to one of my emails. Paragraphs shown in quotes were taken from the email I sent him.

"I have some Tasmanian blackwood bones. ..."

That highlights another aspect of 'bones sound'. I started off concentrating on the very heavy woods ... initially *lignum vitae*, because I had an old vaudeville bones player on the bill at a Bush Music Festival in the late '80s. He played, in each hand, a set of old, very worn, 'bones' made of *lignum vitae* and did wonderful monologues about trains, &c, with counter rhythms from the two sets of bones. He complained that he needed to make some new sets, but could not get the *lignum vitae* ... a tropical timber of very interesting characteristics ... never common and now rare ... and protected under legislation.

I said I could help and, through an acquaintance who worked for a dockyard, I located a supply of off-cuts from the use of *lignum vitae* as the packing in 'stuffing boxes', the glanding through which the propeller shaft passes. This uses *lignum vitae* because it is hard, tough, waterproof and self-lubricating. My contact played what he prosaically called his 'woods' ... straight pieces of *lignum vitae*, approx. 200 mm x 35 mm x 10 mm (with a shallow chamfer ... about 5 mm deep x 30 mm long ... at the tips, where they struck each other).

I passed on a supply of suitable blanks to the old vaudevillian and used some of the remainder to make 'bones' to designs that had been playing around the further reaches of my mind. These has a shallow and asymmetrical 'S' shape ... a large, fat 'belly' where they struck each other

and a fairly sharp recurve immediately above (and defining) the finger grip. They worked quite well and made a satisfyingly deep 'clonk' ... and worked well at slower rhythms, minimizing the tendency for players of lighter 'bones' to drive the tempo up.

This got the 'bones' making out of my system for a few years, until I was reading descriptions of bones in articles and reminiscences of old players interviewed by the folklorists of the 1950s Australian "folk revival". Quite a number said they could not get a good weight and sound from butchers shop bone, and so they made 'bones' from wood ... usually very heavy, hard local (dry inland) timbers ... typically nearly twice the weight of oak, or similar "Old World" timbers. Dad had made dozens of sets for the Bush Music Club musicians and for Boy Scouts (who he taught at Jamborees) and he had used 'Brush Box' (*tristania conferta*), an Australian hardwood of specific gravity (~) 1.09 (about 1½ x the density of oak) and renowned for its toughness in applications such as factory flooring.

This triggered a spell of tracking down as many of the timbers mentioned (some where only available around the home town of the informant!) and making up sets to study. The net spread to a 'wish list' of other notably heavy timbers and I ended up with something more than 70 sets of wooden 'bones', made from 30 or so different timbers ... including some not particularly heavy. Tasmanian Blackwood (*acacia melanoxylon*) is one of the less heavy ... a tad lighter than oak? ... and quite light for an Australian acacia ... but it produces a very pleasant 'bones' sound. It is not as penetrating as the super hard types, nor as 'full' as the *lignum vitae*, but is a good, all round, sound ... and the timber is relatively easy to get!

"... My father, the butcher, tells me that old ox have very hard bones ... I found an old buffalo carcass and gave the rib bones to our Executive Director, Ev Cowett. Now they are his favorite bones. ..."

As I often say, the old players reckoned the best bones were the ribs

of a working bullock that died of old age and bleached dry in the sun. trouble is, there are not many bullock teams today! "Cracker cows" and "Scrub Bulls" may be the only sources of hard, heavy rib bones today ... more research needed!

"... Nick Driver ... gave me a set of his shaped shin bone bones while at Bones Fest V. They have a good sound, but Nick prefers the politically incorrect whale bone bones. ..."

My shin bones are used only in very large gatherings, to compete with loud accordions (fortunately I don't have to compete with me playing accordion ... or they might be used more!). Their sound would be great in music halls - packed with noisy customers and no amplification. I have a friend who has a set of (old) whale bones, but they are fairly small and I have to concentrate in order to play them (but she is doing well, with her smaller hands). I saw, in a musical instrument museum (now in Nowra, south of Sydney) some bones that had been sold by Sydney music shops just before or after WW II - and they looked as if they may have been sawn from whalebone ... once again, a bit small for my tastes.

"... just got back ... Rocky Mountains in Colorado ... met a young man from Turkey who knew about them. Not only from Turkey, but from Mesopotamia where history says bones were played ... That could be most interesting ..."

Indeed!

"An article about the Australian bones players could be interesting ..."

I guess that I would know more than a dozen bones players without thinking very hard about it. Unfortunately, they won't all be at the National, this Easter, since several will be playing (lots of other instruments, I should quickly add) at gigs over that weekend. I will look at the sessions with a view to grabbing a few shots of bones players. Regards, *Bob Bolton*

(*Chlefeldi/Klepperle*—Continued from page 1)

U. S. as Shrove Tuesday or *Mardi Gras*). Over a large part of Switzerland, however, the tradition is associated with the end of Lent, with playing often focusing on the Friday or Saturday before Palm Sunday (which is a week before Easter). Both of these can be viewed as a part of larger religious observances having to do with clappers and other noisemakers.

The replacement of church bells with other kinds of rattles or clappers during Holy Thursday and Good Friday is widespread in Christian tradition (to emphasize the solemnity of the time), and in some areas was practiced during the whole period of Lent (this practice fell out of official favor after the Second Vatican Council, but is still found in many parts of Europe). As for the *Fasnacht* tradition, the use of wooden noisemakers and loud music of every kind during *Fasnacht/Mardi Gras/Carneval* is also a very old and widespread practice all over Europe, and can usefully be compared to pre-Christian ceremonies celebrating the end of winter.

References to both *Fasnacht* and Holy Week playing of *Klepperle/Chlefeldi* can be traced to the Renaissance with certainty (in documents and images from the 1500's and 1600's), and could possibly be much older. In the 1800's, however, the traditions changed somewhat and at the same time became popular emblems of regional distinction and pride. The 1800's traditions were nearly extinct until the 1960's and 1970's when they experienced a revival in both Germany and Switzerland. The Swiss Holy Week tradition is now generally focused on contests (called *Priis Chlefeldi*) of schoolchildren. In addition, the *Chlefeldi* are played throughout the year as part of *Ländlermusik*, a traditional folk music of the Alps, along with instruments such as accordion, clarinet, and double bass. More recently, they have been replaced in the *Ländlermusik* to some extent by the spoons, which are considered to be easier to learn and play. *Chlefeldi* are also played by

Swiss children as a toy instrument.

The Germans also have competitions for children (*Preiskleppern*), as well as general playing of *Klepperle* during the *Fasnacht* festivities, which also involve drinking, parades, and large costumed “fools” representing folk cultural figures—in some towns there is a “*Klepperle-Narro*,” a figure whose costume is entirely covered with *Klepperle*!

I am indebted to a number of sources (almost all online) for this learning. When I first heard about the *Klepperle* and *Chlefeldi* about a year ago, it was through a web site dedicated to the instrument and the *Preiskleppern* in Radolfzell, Germany, at <http://www.klepperle.de>. The site is very large and complete (maybe as big as our [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com)!), and includes history, a tutorial, sound/video clips, and much more. Although it is (naturally) in German, the site will be educational to any English-speaking learner who is willing to use one of the many online translation tools available. I would also like to thank Dr. Joachim Schumacher (webmaster of [klepperle.de](http://klepperle.de)) and Fabian Dieterle (who coaches the children who play and compete in the Radolfzell *Preiskleppern*) for their gracious and informative emails.

The largest web site concerning the Swiss tradition is probably <http://www.rhythmic.ch/clappers.html> (also in German and Swiss-German) which contains pictures, an example of notation, and links to a number of Swiss sites, including those where *Chlefeldi* are for sale as well as those of the children's *Priis Chlefeldi* competitions in schools, some of which include video clips. Here, too, I'd like to thank Dr. Dieter Ringli, who works at the Ethnomusicology Archive in the University of Zurich and was very helpful to me with information on the *Chlefeldi*.

The curious will, of course, find much more on the web by careful use of search engines. I'll be posting more links on the [rhythmbones.com](http://rhythmbones.com) web page shortly, as well.

I hope, as you watch the well-rehearsed playing of the Swiss and

## Dem Bones Donates Bones for Workshop

Member Randy Seppala of the new company *Dem Bones* is donating rhythm bones for the Bones Fest IX Kids' Workshop. He is working on a special design using his co-founder's seven year old daughter. The kids who attend the workshop will be able to keep their rhythm bones.

Randy and professional master wood carver Jim Lohmann formed this new company that is located in Covington, Michigan on the Upper Peninsula on the south shore of Lake Superior. They have combined their talents to bring out a quality line of wood rhythm bones manufactured on a computerized wood milling machine (now ain't that grand.).

Randy says they have spent the last year working the bugs out of their production system and are producing bones.

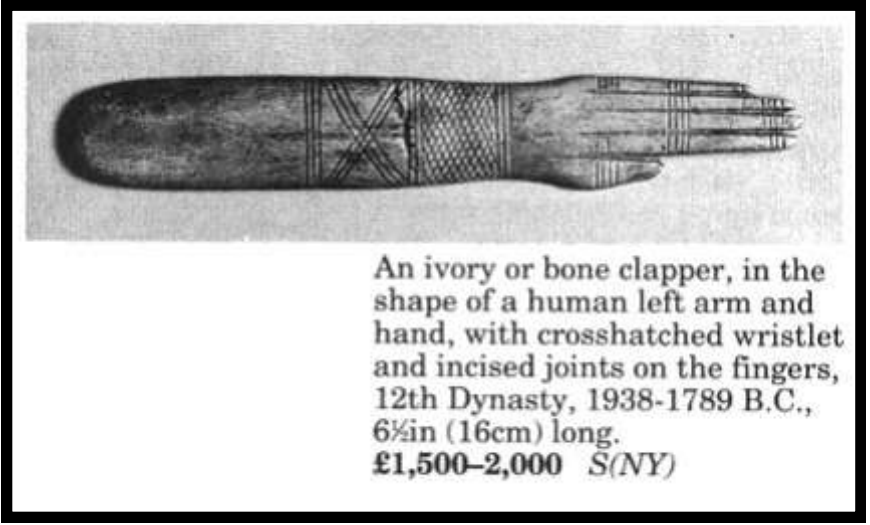
One feature that I thought our members would like is they can offer people their own personal signature line of rhythm bones made to their specifications. Randy says they can reproduce, in quantity, any style or shape required from a single bone to use as a pattern. “We can set up a computer program to mill your own style of bones and offer a complete sanded, finished and packaged set or we can mill your unsanded, unfinished bones blanks and you can complete them yourself.” He said laser printing will also be available.

Randy says they are working on a website that will be called [playdembones.com](http://playdembones.com) and it will feature their complete line of wooden bones and instructions on how to play them. For more information contact them at 906-355-2459 or [info@playdembones.com](mailto:info@playdembones.com). Or better yet come to Bones Fest IX as they will both be there. Thanks Randy and Jim for donating bones for





Photograph of a couple of really happy kids learning bones at the recent Mr. Bones Day. Photo by Mary Roeder.



Nick Driver found this ancient bone for sale and one of our members needs to buy it for our library.

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## *Rhythm Bones Society*

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*Address Correction Requested*