



# Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 9, No. 2 2007

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## Executive Director's Column

The All Ireland Bone Playing competition just concluded last night [this was written May 8] in Abbeyfeale, West Limerick, and although it was felt to be a big success with a high level of competition, I just can't understand why only 8 contestants competed. The prize money is generous at €300 for first, €200 for second, and €100 for third. The "craic" as they say is mighty with good will from the crowd and the community in general. Granted it's a bit of a distance for most of us, but well worth the visit I assure you.

In fact the number of competitors at the Missouri Valley competition has decreased to a point where the competition was cancelled last year. With only three official bone playing competitions in the world, we may be loosing them if we can't

muster more competition, in my opinion. The organizers of the Abbeyfeale contest remain optimistic about the future of their event, and even speculate that a World Bone Playing Championship would fit right in. Truly they have the highest number of bone players living in such a small area, and the level of play is strong.

The junior competition actually out drew the adult section, with nine competitors and four who could have competed in the Adult section, according to Dan Murphy. Where goes the future of bone playing competitions?

It was the Board's unanimous decision at Bones Fest X not to sponsor competition, but left the door open as to our ability to support

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Bones Played at Mercier/O'Keeffe Wedding

It was a bright and glorious day for a bright and glorious occasion, the wedding of Maura O'Keefe, prominent theater producer, and our own Mel Mercier, Professor of Music of University College Cork, and Bones Aficionado. Held in the tiny village of Innishshannon, in West Cork, approximately 20 miles south of Cork City, the wedding saw a gathering of family and friends, some of whom are nationally known in both theater and music circles, all of whom were jubilant to be at this most joyous occasion.

And RBS was represented as well, with Wilma Myers and her son David, Newsletter Editor Steve Wixson, and Executive Director Steve Brown and his wife Jennifer.

The wedding itself took place on April 21 at 3pm in St. Mary's Church in Innishshan-



Mel Mercier and Maura O'Keeffe light candles at altar



*(Continued on page 7)*

Steve Brown on bones with Recessional Band

## Editorial

This issue has a couple of stories about weddings where rhythm bones were played.

First the wedding of Mel Mercier and Maura O'Keeffe. This was the first Irish wedding that I've attended and the Irish people I spoke with before my trip filled me with expectation. They also advised me to get plenty of sleep as an Irish wedding can last for days. The wedding exceeded expectations (see story on Page 1.)

Second was the wedding of Martha Cowett and Joe Cummings (see story on Page 6.) Outdoors and beautiful.

I am sure I speak for all RBS members in wishing Mel and Maura and Joe and Martha the best in their married lives. May your bones be with you (where have I heard that before?)

After Martha and Joe's wedding, I drove to Wilma Myers' home in Brightwood, Virginia. There I captured by camera and scanner much of the history and memorabilia that Russ Myers had collected over the years. You will hear more about this in future issues. I also visited the Madison Country Historical Society and met with the people who will help us assemble a small display to commemorate Russ' and his contributions to rhythm bones playing. We've got a few ideas on how to use the donations we've received in his memory and the Board will discuss these at its meeting at Bones Fest XI.

There is another installment beginning on Page 4 from Beth Lenz's thesis titled *Bones in the US*.

## Letters to the Editor

Earlier this year my nephew (who lives in Dali, China) told me about an ancient Chinese tradition that essentially combines rap music with bone playing. I am not making this up. This is what he says about it

"Well, I have seen 'bones' here. They are used to accompany a 'rapper' as he tells a sort of rhyming story. The art is from Shandong province (literally 'Mountain East') and is hundreds of years old. It's called 'kuai ban' in Mandarin which literally means 'fast clacker' or 'kuai shu'

which means 'fast tales'. I found this article showing a guy clacking away:

<http://media.www.thelantern.com/media/storage/paper333/news/2006/01/26/Arts/The-Myth.The.Legend-1505943.shtml>

I finally found a Chinese kuai ban video clip. It is on YouTube and was recorded in a tea house. It runs just 42 seconds: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dR45ksPpqus>

It would be great to see a live example of this at a Bones Fest. All the best, *Scott Miller*

Howdy Steve, Thanks for putting the together the BFXI email, announcement and stuff. I think I can attend this year. I'll be mailing in my registration. It will be great to catch up with the Bones Society. *Mike Passerotti*

I have been watching You-tube recently and getting inspiration from your latest newsletter. I was thinking, could it not be easier and cheaper to post videos on the RBS web-site where members could see for themselves how to play 8 bones. There is one on You-tube already. Here you can see two videos of one of my Danish pupils, Jes Lund, who has been playing now for about six years. He is now 22. All the best to you and family. [www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Jes+Lund&search=Search](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Jes+Lund&search=Search). Slainte Mhath, As Aye, *Yirdy Machar*

## Bones Fest XI Update

Here is some last minute information on Bones Fest XI. First check out the Website of the Quarter in the next column not only for the RBS stage time for Irish Fest, but also for other ways to take advantage of Irish Fest.

For attendees flying into the Milwaukee General Mitchell Airport, ground transportation to your hotel is easy and can be obtained from [www.goairportconnection.com](http://www.goairportconnection.com) or by calling them at 800-236-5450. They accept most credit cards, but payment must be by telephone or at their Customer Service Booth at the airport. Make your reservations at least 24 hours in advance.

I am looking forward to another great Bones Fest. *Dave Boyles, Host*

## *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)

## Bones Calendar

**Bones Fest XI.** August 17-19, 2007.

See Page 4 in this newsletter.

**NTCMA Bones Contest.** August 27 - September 2nd. The bones contest was schedule for Sunday last year and not enough people showed up to have the contest. This year the contest will be on Saturday, September 1st. If we want this to continue, we need to support it. Lots of great music and jammin'.

## Website of the Quarter

**[www.irishfest.com](http://www.irishfest.com).** Check out the Rhythm Bones Society's stage and performance time on the Milwaukee Irish Fest website. Enter the above web address and click on *Entertainment*. Then scroll down to the *Saturday* events and then to *The Snug* stage.

This is a great opportunity to participate in the world's biggest Irish Festival (at least that's what they say.) We will perform to an Irish music lovin' crowd and maybe find a few new members.

(Executive Director Continued from page 1)

contests by contributing to prize money or ear mark contributions for other purposes. Hardly objective, I think Bone playing competitions are good for our art by focusing our energies to improving our play and bringing significant publicity to the bones.

I've been on the winning and losing end of contests, and the one I did most poorly in produced one of the finest weekends for comradery and general fun that I've ever been involved in. I would like to see more players go to Abbeyfeale and compete, as well as travel to Missouri Valley in Iowa. If nothing else you'll have plenty of chance to play and meet more bone players. And who knows, perhaps there will be that coveted "World Bone Playing Championship" in Abbeyfeale some day, I hope to see you there.

Here is news about Abbeyfeale. With the best weather and crowds yet at the Fleadh, the Bone Playing Competition put the icing on the cake Monday, by displaying a very high level of play. First place went to David Murphy of Ballaugh who played brilliantly according to Dan Murphy (no relation) of the Fleadh committee. Just one half points beneath him was perennial winner Paddy Donovan. In third place was our old friend and member Yirdy Machar. Surprise contestant Kevin Kelley of New York held his own and played well by all accounts.

The junior competition was held Sunday with nine competitors, the most so far. John Ford came in first place with stiff competition from several contestants.

Tommy Hayes adjudicated and was spot on in his results, most everyone agreed. Abbeyfeale continues to be the best run bone playing competition with the highest standard of play and judging. It is their hope that at some point the World Bone Playing Competition will be held in Abbeyfeale, although no definite plans have been set. All the best to the Fleadh committee for a marvelous job. They would love to see you all there next year competing. Especially you, Nic Dupin! *Steve Brown*

## Wixson Plays Bones on Great Wall Of China

My wife, Janet, and I went on a tour of China sponsored by the Tennessee Aquarium and the Philadelphia Zoo. One highlight was going to the Panda Breeding Center and playing with young panda bears—a once in a lifetime experience.

Other highlights included playing bones on the Great Wall of China (see photograph on Page 8), seeing the Terracotta Warriors, a cruise on the Yangtze River and a few days in Shanghai. China was not what I expected—it's gone modern in the past 20 years.

While in Beijing, I visited the *Central Conservatory of Music* and made a contact in the percussion department that may lead to learning more about early bones playing in China (see below.)

While in Shanghai, I also visited the fairly new *Exhibit Hall of Music Instruments of Chinese Nationalities* where I discovered a small display of modern looking rhythm bones. One of their staff spoke good English and provided a text on rhythm bones in Chinese that I will try to get translated.

When I talk about the history of rhythm bones, I quote an article titled *The Ancestry of Brudder Bones* that appeared in the Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1878. Here is part of that article.

"The potentate in question was named Fon Hi the First. He invented several instrument, improvements upon which have made the fortune of man an unscrupulous invader of Chinese patents in these our time.

Among his instruments were of course the bones, which, when rattled by Fon Hi, gave forth celestial harmony. His bones were a peculiarly prime order of article, better than those in use in these degenerate days. The lowness of the standard of national taste in America today was never more distinctly shown than in

the utter indifference of the average auditor as to what a minstrel's bones are made of, so that they rattle as lustily as any sucking dove will roar.

Fon Hi, with that nicety of taste invariably observable in the fabrication of choice article by the Oriental people, always insisted upon having his bones made of the right shank of infants of good ancestry, specially massacred in the neatest way, for the purpose of manufacture."

The date of this record was 3,408 B.C.

When I showed the drawing of him from the article to our Chinese tour guide, she read his name in Chinese characters pronouncing it *Fu Xi*, and remembering him as a legendary ancient ruler. The article unfortunately did not have a bibliography.

I talked to Jonathan Danforth about this article, and he had reason to question its authenticity suggesting that many of the things attributed to *Fu Xi* are folk legends. If anyone has knowledge of *Fu Xi*'s interest in rhythm bones, please share it in an article or a Letter to the Editor.

An internet search on *Fu Xi* produces many websites of interest. Such as [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fu\\_Hsi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fu_Hsi) that shows a color photo of *Fu Xi* and *Nuwa* and *Nuwa* appears to hold something that resembles rhythm bones. It also dates his reign to 2800 B.C.

One night while walking the streets of Beijing, I ran across a blind beggar and his wife. Rhythm bones are a great icebreaker and I would play them to change street vendors from sellers to listeners—worked great. When he heard me play, he held out his hands asking for my bones. When I gave one set to him, he started playing, dancing and singing in a rather grand style and his face lit up in joy.

He held the bones with most of the bones above his hand (as in the *Fu Xi* website photograph described above) and he played them with a combination of arm and finger movements. When I asked him what he called the instrument, it sounded like he said *jetar*. If this sounds familiar to anyone, please let me know. *Steve Wixson*

The Rhythm Bones Society  
presents

# BONESFEST

XI 2007

August 16, 17, 18 & 19

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## History of Bones in the US—Part 3

[Part I of this thesis appeared in the Vol 8, No 2 issue of the newsletter. Part II appeared in Vol 8, No 4 along with the Table of Contents of the complete thesis.]

In addition to their association with black music, bones were also associated with the nineteenth-century minstrel show. The practice of imitating blacks on stage goes back to English comic opera of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The English actor Charles Matthews came to the U.S. in 1822 to collect new material for his already popular portrayal of blacks on the stage. His impersonations of blacks helped to form the stereotype of the black slave which was to become the basis for the minstrel show.

However, Matthews was not the one to introduce the bones to the entertainment business. American Frank Brower is credited with this innovation. While engaged by the Cincinnati Circus, Brower accompanied Dan Emmett on the bones as Emmett sang "Old Tar River" during the July 4th week, 1841 in Lynchburg, Virginia. He reputedly used horse ribs sawed to the length of twelve inches. [See Vol 6, No 1 for more on Frank Brower.]

Brower later became the bones player for the first professional minstrel troupe. Organized by Emmett, the group also included Billy Whitlock and Dick Pelham. The group called itself the Virginia Minstrels and gave its first performance in New York at the Bowery Amphitheatre on February 6, 1843.

They were a huge success. Many aspects of their performance became the norm in minstrelsy. Standard instrumentation consisted of fiddle, banjo, bones and tambourine, although other instrumental combinations were sometimes used as well. Other percussion instruments were utilized, another banjo was added, or the fiddle was replaced by the accordion. Although less common, the tongs and hammer dulcimer were also used. At times smaller instrumental combinations were popular, among

them accordion and bones.

The performers arranged themselves on stage in a semi-circle with the tambourine player at one end and the bones player at the other. The tambourine and bones players became known as "endmen" due to their positions in the semi-circle. They were often hailed as "Brudder Tambo and Brudder Bones" or "Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones." They played the role of comedians as well as musicians; their use of puns became particularly popular with audiences.

In the middle of the semi-circle was "Mr. Interlocutor," the M.C. for the show. He was often the butt of the endmen's jokes, portrayed as a man of "stupid correctness" as compared to the "homely phraseology" of the endmen.

The endmen dressed flamboyantly, spoke in a heavy, exaggerated negro dialect and engaged in all sorts of antics. An endman also might be called upon to give a "stump speech," a tongue-in-cheek lecture.

Bones used in the minstrel shows were usually made of animal rib bones. Later bones were made of ebony or other hard woods. Players apparently played sitting as well as standing. Playbills and the covers of sheet music used in the minstrel shows portray bones players in both postures.

During the 1840's most minstrel troupes included one tambourine player and one bones player, but thirty years later minstrels performed on a much larger scale. When touring in London in 1884, Haverly's Mastadon Minstrels reportedly had eighteen tambourine and bones players among their sixty members; six of the endmen were considered star performers.

During the height of minstrelsy, several men emerged as bones players of high skill. They included Frank Brower, Joe Murphy, George Swaine Buckley, Dan Bryant, Chuck Atkinson, Johnny Pell, E. Freeman Dixie, David Reed, Fred Huber, Eph. Horn (Evan Evans Horn), Gilbert Pell and "Pony" Moore. (For biographical details on these and other bones players, see Appendix B [not included here.]

Tunes performed by a minstrel troupe consisted primarily of songs

with texts, although some songs were performed as instrumental solos. Arthur Loesser, in Humor in American Song, gives a representative repertoire in the section entitled "Bones and Tambo." The list includes the following songs:

"Jim Crow"  
"Lip Coon"  
"Turkey in the Straw"  
"The Camptown Races"  
"Oh! Susanna"  
"Polly-Wolly Doodle"  
"Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me"  
"Noah's Ark"  
"Oh! Dem Golden Slippers"

Other songs from the minstrel repertoire may be found on Early Minstrel Show (New World Records, 1985). The liner notes include the following:

"The songs on this recording are among those that were the most frequently performed on the minstrel stage between 1843 and 1852, as indicated by a study of a large number of playbills from that period. They were chosen as particularly good representatives of the various types of popular minstrel songs."

The repertoire on the recording is as follows:

"De Boatmen's Dance"  
"Old Joe"  
"The Fine Old Color'd Gentleman"  
"Dr. Hekok Jig"  
"Stop Oat Knocking"  
"Mary Blane"  
Instrumental Medley: "Old Johnny Boker,  
"Jim Along Josey," "Back Side of Albany," and  
"Old Zip Coon"  
"Miss Lucy Long"  
"Old Uncle Ned"  
"De Old Jawbone"  
"Pea Patch Jig"  
"Lucy Neal"  
"Hard Times"

Oftentimes the lyrics to such songs mention the bones, usually in association with music making by black slaves. Below are a few examples.

"Sally Come Up" verse 3

De fiddle was played by Pompey Jones  
Uncle Ned he shook de bones,  
Joe played on de pine-stick stones;-but  
he couldn't play to Sally!  
Old Dan Roe  
Played on de ole Banjo.,  
Ginger Blue de big drum blew;  
But he couldn't blow like Sally!

"Slaves Return" words by J.H.

Collins verse 1

'Twas on the old plantation, not many years  
ago,  
Our work was done, at set of sun, we quit

the spade and hoe;

And on the green were darkies seen, in many  
a happy row,

Dancing to the music of the bones and ole  
banjo.

"Yes, in a Horn" by Cool White  
verse 6

When de work's ober, de fun will begin,  
We'll dance to de banjo and merrily sing,  
We'll dance to de banjo, de fiddle and bones,  
And when day breaks we'll return to our  
homes.

The bones are the main topic in  
"De Rattle of De Bones," a selection-  
from IM Ethiopian mtt.6.2.2k (1848-  
1850).

"It is difficult to know what the  
bones or the minstrel band itself actu-  
ally sounded like in the context of a  
nineteenth-century minstrel show.  
Lacking sound recordings, evidence is  
limited to a few contemporary ac-  
counts.?"

Olive Logan, in her article "The  
Ancestry of Brudder Bones" (1879),  
described the "frisky caper of Brudder  
Bones" during a rendition of the  
"Sleigh-bell Polka";

He stands upon his chair in his excitement  
frantically rattling the bones, he dances to the  
tune, he throws open the lapel of his coat,  
and in a final spasm of delight, as the last bar  
of music is played and the last stroke is given  
to the sleigh-bells by the others, he stands  
upon his head on the chair seat, and for a  
thrilling and evanescent instant extends his  
nether extremities in the air.

An article in the New York Clipper  
(March 3, 1877) entitled "The Min-  
strel Melodist," speaks of Stephen  
Foster's "Camptown Races" "of which  
the late Jerry Bryant, as well as Billy  
Birch made a specialty giving bone  
imitations of horse racing."

George Swaine Buckley of Buck-  
ley's Serenaders became famous for  
his bones solo on the overture to  
Zampa. A program of a performance  
which included this number claims  
that such a feat was "never attempted  
by any other performer."

Sometimes during the course of a  
song the bones player took a "break,"  
a solo of several bars which showed  
off his prowess. At times the banjo  
player joined him on these breaks,  
known as symphonies. Indications as  
to where symphonies should occur  
appear in song texts found in minstrel  
songsters. Sometimes instrumentation  
is indicated for each symphony; other

(Continued on page 6)

times no indication is given. Clues may be provided by references in the text to a specific instrument or instruments.

Manuals of instruction written primarily for amateur minstrel performers were published after the turn of the century. The treatment of the bones in such manuals also gives us clues as to what the bones might have sounded like and how they might have been used. The following excerpt is taken from How to Put on a Minstrel Show (1921) by Harold Rossiter:

The end-men using the bones and tambos must be impressed with the idea that they are to make just as much motion with as little noise as possible. Motion is what you want more than noise although, of course, a certain amount of noise is necessary, but the idea is to make just as many grotesque motions while playing the instrument as possible. This feature can hardly be overdone; hitting the tambos on the head, under the arms, and behind the chair all help to make a good flash, from the front. The two outside end-men on either end (numbers 1 and 2) play the tambos and the two inside end-men on either end (numbers 3 and 4) play the bones. This brings two bones opposite two bones and two tambos opposite two tambos.

Walter Ben Hare, in The Minstrel Encyclopedia (1920) instructs the bones and tambourine players to "play the introductions to the endsongs and in the Opening and Closing Numbers, never any other time,"

In Gentlemen, Be Seated (1928), Paskman and Spaeth refer to the clever endman [who] would toss them [the bones] in the air and catch them between his fingers.

More recently, scholar Hans Nathan has, after extensive study of the minstrel show, hazarded a guess as to what the bones might have sounded like. In his estimation the bones produced "single clicks" and "trills" or "shakes" of varying duration within a wide dynamic range. According to Nathan, the bones player usually "followed the meter, but like the banjoist and fiddler, he may have occasionally disturbed it by entering on ordinarily unaccented beats." Nathan has arranged a minstrel tune for minstrel quartet. His realization of the bones part deserves some comment.

When viewed with the technical capabilities and limitations of the bones in mind, the bones part in Nathan's arrangement of "Twill Nebber

Do to Gib It Up So" has some problems. First of all, he has sixteenth notes being played by alternate hands. The tempo marking is allegro: this could be interpreted in a variety of ways. ♩=120 is acceptable by most musicians as an allegro tempo, though some would call it a slow allegro. But even at this tempo, sixteenth notes on the bones by alternating hands would be extremely awkward, at best. Most players encountered during the course of this study would not be able to play the part at all. It would have been much more idiomatic to have one hand (or both hands simultaneously, i.e., without alternating hands on each sixteenth note) play a string of sixteenths ♩♩♩♩, etc.

Another problem with the bones part is the marking for "trill" or "roll" on several sixteenth note values. Even at ♩=120, this is impossible to play. The shortest "roll" which could be played on the bones is a triplet. Nathan's ♩♩♩ (first beat, m. 1) would be played like this: ♩♩♩ At ♩=120, this is physically impossible.

A further problem with the bones part in Nathan's arrangement is that it is extremely repetitive. With the bones being capable of much more variety, it is difficult to believe that the bones followed the melodic line in such an unobtrusive way. Contemporary accounts of minstrel show performances suggest that the music was quite lively. The bones could easily add rhythmic vitality to a minstrel tune; in Nathan's arrangement, however, the bones part acts as little more than a rhythmic ostinato.

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## Beth Lenz's Thesis Copy Available

Russ Myers' copy of Beth Lenz's thesis was donated to RBS by Wilma Myers for loan to interested members. If you would like to borrow the thesis, please contact Steve Wixson (wixson@chattanooga.net.) There are 312 pages to the thesis. RBS will pay shipping, and the borrower is responsible for return postage back to Steve or to the next borrower (\$3.15.)

## Bones Played at Cowett/Cummings Wedding

Saturday, June 16th, was the day for the wedding of RBS member Martha Cowett and Joe Cummings. The wedding was held on the beautiful lawn of the Magnolia Manor in Greensboro, North Carolina under a mostly sunny sky. Pre-wedding music was North Carolina mountain music.

Martha was beautiful in her white wedding gown and her smile was dazzling. The groom and ushers (lots of bones playing Cowett brothers) looked great in their tuxes.

Ev Cowett escorted his daughter down the aisle (see photograph on Page 8.) Brother Al Cowett gave a reading. Following the exchange of vows and rings and the introduction of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cummings, they processed to *Jeremiah was a Bullfrog*. Not your normal recessional, but it reflected the spirit of the wedding.

There was a receiving line reception with light food and drink immediately following in the Magnolia Manor. This was followed by a dinner/dance at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The band played for the entire evening and could play most anything from jazz to rock. After a quite good meal, the dancing started.

Then people gathered on the dance floor for Martha and her bones playing husband to play them rhythm bones (yes, Joe plays rhythm bones and quite well.) They were soon joined by dad, Everett, and brother, Tommy, (see photograph on Page 8.) Later I got to join in with them. Many of the people at the reception had heard the Cowetts play bones before and therefore they were a receptive and appreciative audience.

As noted in Mel and Maura's wedding story on Page 1, it is unusual to have rhythm bones at a wedding ceremony. In the last couple of months there have been two. *Steve Wixson*

(Mercier Wedding Continued from page 1)

non, a small Church which was truly an ideal place for the wedding. The ceremony was befitting of two loving and very talented people, with very personal readings by a number of close friends. Music played a major role with Michael O'Suilleabhain, Professor of Music University College Limerick and long time musical partner of Mel's providing piano both individually and as accompaniment.

As would be expected from a musical renaissance man such as Mel, the program ranged from the UCC Javanese Gadon Ensemble which performed on traditional Javanese instruments to An Phaidir, excerpts from a Mass by Sean O'Raida and sung by the congregation.

As the Bride and Groom exited the church, a blast of reels accompanied them, as played by the Recessional Band consisting of the Rectory Ceili Band, old friends from University College Cork, and wouldn't you know, two old bones players, Steve Wixson and Steve Brown, invited to play along with the group.

This is news members! I wonder how many weddings have the music of rhythm bones as part of the ceremony. In modern times, I suspect very few (read Cowett/Cumming wedding article in this issue), though it would

not surprise us if they were used in earlier and ancient wedding rituals.

Following an outside group photograph of all attendees, everyone moved to the Innishshannon House Hotel located on the banks of the Bandon River and said to be one of the most romantic hotels in Ireland.

The reception began with drinks and cookies, followed by a wonderful dinner. This was followed by speeches by close friends and relatives that roasted Mel and Maura as well as wishing them the best for their married life.

Mel and Maura were the final speakers and thanked many people for helping with the wedding and rebuking much of the roasting that preceded them. Their love, expressed in words, was most touching.

One of the most moving parts of Mel's speech came when he introduced Wilma Myers and told the attendees about Russ Myers, his recent death and what he meant to rhythm bones players and Mel and Maura personally. They both spent a week with Russ and Wilma as part of Mel's research for his PhD thesis. More touching was Mel's comment that Russ had told Wilma they should get passports so they could attend the wedding. Mel said he felt Russ' presence at the wedding.

The Recessional Band less rhythm bones players assembled for some traditional Irish music and line dancing with instruction for newcomers.

Then the moment the two Steve's had been waiting for, when they and Mel formed a rhythm bones trio with Michael O'Suilleabhain on piano (see photograph at the bottom of this page.)

The main band followed with popular music and dancing mostly by the young.

Irish weddings are famous for lasting for days, however, we must admit to being old and leaving at 3 am. We wonder if it's still going on. *Steve Brown and Steve Wixson*

## Wilma Myers Attends Wedding

My son, David, and I were delighted to attend Mel and Maura's wedding and meet their family and friends. The whole affair was beautiful as was Ireland.

They are a delightful couple. We were pleased to spend a day with them in Cork and also see Steve and Jennifer Brown and Steve Wixson. *Wilma Myers*



Michael O'Suilleabhain on piano with the rhythm bones trio of Steve Wixson, Mel Mercier and Steve Brown performing at Mel's wedding reception. Photograph by David Myers



*Above.* The father of the bride, Ev Cowett, escorts his daughter, Martha, down the aisle.

*Upper Right.* Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cummings play rhythm bones at their wedding reception. On the left is Ev Cowett and on the right is her brother Tommy Cowett. Photographs by Steve Wixson. *Lower Right* Steve Wixson wearing BFVI t-shirt and BFIX hat plays rhythm bones to a small group gathered on the Great Wall of China. Note section of the Great Wall on the ridge in the background. Photograph by someone from Denmark.



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*Address Correction Requested*