



Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 9, No. 3 2007

In this Issue

Highlights of
Bones Fest XI

Regional Bones
Fest

Chance Meeting
with Joe Birl

Professional Re-
cording of a Fu-
ture Bones Fest

Minutes of
Board of Direc-
tors Meeting

Minutes of Gen-
eral Membership
Meeting

Columns:

Executive Direc-
tor

Editorial

Letters to the
Editor

Website of the
Quarter

Recording of the
Quarter

Bones Calendar

Executive Director's Column

With the distant sound of bones still clacking in my ears, I attempt to regroup from my sleep deprived experience of Bones Fest XI.

From the natural beauty of the Riveredge Nature Center, to the rain soaked pavement of Irish Fest, we have experienced one of the best bones fests yet. River Edge was cozy, comfortable, and clearly one of the best settings to hang out, jam, learn, and just plain play the bones. Don Gilmore and the staff of Riveredge treated us like family, from the meals to the facilities, you just can't say enough.

Our performance at Irish Fest was perhaps the best public performance we have yet achieved. Given the excellent stage facilities and the extremely receptive audience, you have to wonder how much higher we could have gone if all our members were there.

Truly the focal point for me over the weekend was the band, Lisa Edgar and Razmatazz. I just don't have enough superlatives to express how the music and the bones intertwined and created enough synergy to power the entire country.

And of course, in the center of it all is the architect Dave Boyles. His high powered energy and can do attitude made it all work. You don't have to hang out with David too long to see how well he is respected in his community, and how he used all of his resources to compliment the fest. From our jam session at McCarthy's Bar, to the multitude of attendee's at the Saturday performance, to our performance at Irish Fest, David worked his magic and

(Continued on page 3)

Highlights of Bones Fest XI

"WOW!!!! How do they do that? What a hoot!!! I don't believe it !!! Those people are great !!! That's the most fun I had in a long, long time !!! Etc. etc. etc."

The accolades keep rolling in from folks who came to the evening shows. Most came with not a clue of what to expect, and left as believers in the rhythm bones.

In a few words--Bones Fest XI, held on August 18-20, 2007, was a magical weekend !!! What made it magical? Maybe the setting (Riveredge Nature Center is a special place), the weather, the food/drink, the organization or Irish Fest? Sure all that helped to create the atmosphere needed to make the weekend special, but the true magic was YOU !!

YOU, Rhythm Bones Society people who cared enough to come from all over the country to connect, to play, to listen, to teach and to learn. That's where the magic came from.

Many people gave many hours to make Bone Fest XI happen but a few special and very heartfelt thank yous are in order. First to the Rhythm Bones Society and the Board of Directors for having the faith that we could do this and the freedom to do it our way. Second, to Riveredge Nature Center who co-sponsored the event and provided the logistical support. Special mention needs to be given to Kathy Gordon (brochures, forms, all printing and

kept us moving), LaVonne Suring (registration), Tammy Lorge (accounting), Lynne Bergschultz (t-shirt design), Laura and Tony Kasshin (t-shirt production), Barb Gilmore (food/drink), and all the others who volunteered in the planning, running, and clean-up



Hosts Don Gilmore (left) and Dave Boyles wearing BFX t-shirts. Photograph by Sam Arndt of Ozaukee Press.

Editorial

I need my annual Bones Fix—I mean Bones Fest!

It is not that I had low expectations for Bones Fest XI, but I was sort of bone(s) tired. And hey, I missed seeing y'all this passed year.

Well, I am again juiced up both for the health of our society and for my own bones endeavors. And you will be to when you read the *Highlights of Bones Fest XI* on Page 1. For some of the attendees, the Fest lasted from Thursday afternoon until almost midnight on Sunday night.

We owe Dave Boyles and Don Gilmore and a host of their friends at the Riveredge Nature Center a big round of thanks. Now that was a Fest!

The Board of Directors meeting at the Fest was very productive. Please read the minutes on Page 6.

As I write this, I am on the airplane on my way home making plans and drafting emails to implement the things I committed to do. We need help to complete the projects, and please volunteer to be on one of the committees mentioned in the minutes. Let's raise the bar for progress this year.

We do not yet have a host for Bones Fest XII. While this is a lot of work, it is also a lot of fun. Check that out with any previous host. If you are at all interested in hosting a Fest, we will send you a copy of the Bones Fest Host Guide that will fill you in on what you have to do. It is very rewarding. But request your copy now!

The outstanding on-stage performances by Bones Fest XI attendees to an almost capacity audience at our Milwaukee Irish Fest tent inspired two people to join RBS on the spot. A big welcome to Sheila Drea and Dan Brunner. Sheila also joined our Congo line finale.

I lost my bones instructor recently. He was 97 years old and could almost still play the bones. He learned from a sailor and since I learned as a one handed bones player, that sailor must have been Irish. He was a butcher and I have only one of the original bones that he gave me. He was my father and I will miss him. He never got to attend a Bones Fest.

Included in this newsletter is the annual dues renewal letter. There is one possible difference for this coming year. You will note in the Board of Directors Minutes on Page 6, that a motion was passed amending our By-Laws so that our fiscal year coincides with the calendar year. If that passes at the General Membership meeting at Bones Fest XII, you will receive five issues of the newsletter next year instead of four and a dues renewal letter that arrives in December.

Letters to the Editor

Hello to all Bones Fest XI players. I would love to be able to com to the bones fest, however I just had my right wrist replaced on July 30th. I had a half fusion on left wrist January 2005. I expect to still be able to play with both hands after 3 or 4 months recovery, and I am looking forward to being good as new.

Hopefully next year I'll make the Bones Fest. So keep up the good sounds, and keep the e-mails coming.
Mel Harvey

To everyone that I know and love and who were so gentle and friendly with me. My salutation also to all of those who have the chance to attend the Bones Fest XI. Unfortunately, I won't be with you this year as my wife is paralyzed on the left side. She is seriously paralyzed and I can't leave her alone.

I'm sending you pictures of last years Bones Fest. It is with a great pleasure that I give them to you. P.S. My special salutation to Ev Cowett and his wife, to Steve Wixson and his wife and to Steve Brown and his wife and their son. *Gerard Arseneault*
Quebec, Canada

Website of the Quarter

user.senet.com.au/~jimmc/main/art_rhythmbones.htm. On the Acoustics of Rhythm Bones. Replies to an email sent to marimba expert Jim McCarthy asking if marimba bar theory might be applied to understanding how rhythm bones produce their sound. Not a definitive work, but thought provoking.

Rhythm Bones Player

Rhythm Bones Society
Volume 9, No. 3
Third Quarter Quarter 2007
ISSN: 1545-1380

Editor
Steve Wixson
wixson@chattanooga.net

Executive Director
Stephen Brown
Bones@crystal-mtn.com

Web Site Coordinator
Jonathan Danforth
webmaster@rhythmbones.com

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

The Rhythm Bones Player is published quarterly by the Rhythm Bones Society. Nonmember subscriptions are \$10 for one year; RBS members receive the Player as part of their dues.

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

Rhythm Bones Central web site: rhythmbones.com

Recorded Bones Music

The Gillette Brothers: Many Long Miles to Ride. If you attended Bones Fest XI, you heard the Gillette Brothers play their old time cowboy music and maybe got to play bones with them as they jammed in the lobby of the Riveredge Nature Center. As you heard, their music is special.

This new CD gives you the opportunity to hear more of that music and more of Guy's rhythm bones playing.

There are twenty songs on the CD including *The Old Chisholm Trail* and *Long Black Veil* to name two. Guy plays bones on tracks 4, 7, 10, 12, 15 and 16, though there is interesting percussion on other tracks.

Check out their website at www.campstreetcafe.com. Click Camp St. Store for ordering information on this and other CDs [Note: another of their CDs was reviewed on Page 3 in the Vol 7, No 1 newsletter. *Steve Wixson*

(Continued from page 1)

the people of Milwaukee and surrounding towns opened their arms to accept us. We can only say thank you to Dave, his wife Peg, Don and Barb Gilmore, and all of our new found friends in the Milwaukee area.

If we've learned one thing, in my opinion, from our experiences of Bones Fest XI, it is how an exceptional band like Lisa Edgar and Razzmatazz can help us to show the true potential of rhythm bones. I believe it should give us pause to think about how we use live music in the future.

While playing in Avoca with dobro legend 86 year old Tom Waddell, he said to me, "boy, you are the icing on the cake." I believe we can all be that icing, but we've got to have some incredible cake underneath, like Lisa Edgar's band, to truly make it work. If that means writing more money in our budget for music, or instilling on each host the importance of live music, so be it.

Our experiences at Milwaukee have only made it clearer that we need to bring our performances to the general public in a professional way. It is the intension of the Board to develop a broadcast quality DVD of a Bones Fest. A committee has been formed to investigate opportunities for grants and other resources which would allow us to develop a quality product which could be shown on public television. Any of you with idea's are encouraged to join this committee.

Ted Goon often talked about his belief that the bones could be recognized by the country as the amazing and exciting instrument that it is. Perhaps a quality professional DVD is the first step in making that idea a reality. *Steve Brown*

Bones Fest XII Host

Have you ever thought about hosting a Bones Fest. The Board is looking for a host for Bones Fest XII. If you are interest, send me an email and I will send you the Bones Fest Host Guide that outlines the job. *Steve Wixson*

(Bones Fest XI Highlights—continued from page 1) for Bones Fest XI. Also, thanks to the bands Finbar McCarthy, Razzmatazz, and Frogwater, who made Friday dinner, Saturday evening, and Sunday morning special happenings. But the real thanks goes to you, the Bone Fest participants, who took the time to come and share with each other your enthusiasm, your knowledge, your skill, your art. Lots of factors make an event special, but the people make the magic. Thank you. Oh yeah, on top of everything else, Bones Fest XI did even make a little money.

Check out Pages 4 and 5 for some pictorial highlights from Friday and Saturday. Check out Page 8 for pictorial highlights from Irish Fest on Sunday where the Rhythm Bones Society had almost one and a half hours of stage time. Photographs by Steve Wixson. *Dave Boyles and Don Gilmore*

Chance meeting with Joe Birl

After my two and a half years in a Montreal hospital, I was finally released with the promise from my single parent that he would make sure I would do my exercises regularly along with a daily tightening of a back brace I had to wear. I was finally going out to see the real world. I remember jumping up and down on the bed that last day in that hospital as my dad struggled to get me dressed.

I was hospitalized at the age of three with acute Infantile Paralysis, or commonly know as Polio Mialitis. During my years in the hospital, my mother died. My dad obviously had to work, and by the age of seven I had boarded out and exhausted every relative in our family. I was just a kid then, and the only avenue my father had left for me, (and I might add, my older brother as well) was boarding schools, with the Nuns, in many different convents until situations changed in future years.

At the age of seven, and having been moved from a convent in Montreal to another Nunnery convent in Beloeil, some of the Sisters there found that I became very reluctant to

(Continued on page 7)

Regional Bones Fest

I am planning on hosting another Regional Bones Fest for the fall. I'm hoping it will be on the October 27th week end at Red Apple Farm. Pretty much as we have had them before, about 9am to approximately 5 or 6pm. I'll get Al Rose to provide coffee and donuts and lunch and cost will be \$10-15.

With a public performance at 3pm or so. This obviously needs to be confirmed with Al, but he's been very enthusiastic in the past. I would certainly welcome anyone but it's really intended for the immediate New England area, that's why its one day. I may look into a place we can all have dinner together to end the day. *Steve Brown*

Bones Fest Professional Recording

The rhythm bones playing at Bones Fest XI was terrific and we need to share it with as many people as possible. The Board of Directors established a committee to organize the professional recording of a future Fest. If you have an interest or experience in this area please volunteer to be on this committee. There are artistic, technical and copyright issues that must be addressed.

The video from BFXI will be edited into a short DVD to accompany a grant application to fund this recording. If you know of any agency that would be receptive to such a grant request, please contact me soon. Grant cycles can take a long time and we need to proceed as quickly as we can if we want to record BFXII. *Jonathan Danforth*, Chairman

Bones Calendar

Bones Fest XII, Summer 2008. Looking for a host. Details in next issue.

NTCMA AND Bones Contest. August 25-31, 2008 The bones contest was cancelled in 2006 and 2007 due to lack of competitors. This is a 30 year old competition and they need our support if it is to continue.



Jamming on the Riveredge back deck overlooking a beautiful pond are from left Michael Ballard, Walt Watkins, Randy Sepalla (almost hidden), Dennis Redisel, Spike Bones and Gil Hibben.



Jamming in the room lined with animals and native artifacts where dinner was served.



Mary Lee and Frank Sweet rehearsing in the scenic outdoors



Teri Davies and Kenny Wolin perform together. Their Saturday night performance was amazing



Spike Bones with another of his creative routines. This one in pitch black darkness and ultraviolet light where only his bones showed.



Another outstanding performance from professional percussionist Bill Vits



Dave Boyles and his big rhythm bones complete with his scrimshawed 'Black Bart' logo.



Congo line finale on Friday night. Lee Formicola in front and going back on the left ????, Spike Bones, Mitch Boss and all the rest.



Party at the local pub with the Finbar MacCarthy Band. From left, host Dave Boyles, Steve Brown, Dennis Redisel, Steve Wixson and Michael Ballard.



The first public performance of the Mescher Bones as a trio. From left are Sharon Mescher, Jerry Mescher and Bernie Worrell



Part of the bones market place. Selling on the right are Randy Sepalla in front and Scott Miller in rear.



The Beginner Bones Workshop ended with a group performance. From left, Bill Vits, teacher, Don Gilmore, ???, Lee and ??? Formicola, ??, and Michael Ballard, teacher.



Mitch Boss on left and Walt Watkins with strikingly different styles perform together in what was a great duo.



The unbelievable fast armed Sky Bartlett with Ernie Duffy and the Lisa Edgar Band from left, host Dave Boyles bones and percussion, Joe Aaron, 87 years old on clarinet, Pete Runde on trombone, Lisa Edgar on banjo and ? on tuba. What a special treat to have them on both Saturday night and Sunday at Irish Fest. Tom Los joined in with Sousaphone on Sunday.

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown at 10:00am on August 18, 2007 at the Super 8 Motel conference room, Saukville, WI. Members present were Steve Brown, Gil Hibben, Steve Wixson, Ev Cowett, Jerry Mescher, and Jonathan Danforth. Visitors present were Bernie Worrell, Sharon Mescher, and Dennis Redisel.

Steve Wixson read the minutes from the last meeting as printed in the RBP newsletter. Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes

Steve Wixson gave a preliminary Treasurer's report. We have about \$6,400 in the bank with commitment for \$400 for the Russ Myer's memorial, \$725 to print and distribute the special issue of the newsletter and about \$1,500 to reimburse Steve Wixson for newsletter and miscellaneous expenses. Motion was made, seconded and approved to approve the preliminary report. After the end of the fiscal year, the Treasurer will submit a final report to the Board.

Gil reported on his ideas for changes to the bylaws putting restrictions on motions at general membership meeting. A discussion followed on the issue. Gill will circulate specific wording changes to the Board via email for review and/or revision.

Steve Wixson reported on the Bones Instruction on the web Committee. The Edmund's Bones instructional video that the RBS holds the copyright to has been transferred to the computer, and a first web version is available. There was discussion about this project and then a motion was made, seconded and approved to put it on our website. The committee will continue to review the progress and get outside reviewers as needed.

Steve Brown lead a discussion as to where the Bones for Kids committee should go. Gil Hibben reported on the results of his gift of 45 pairs of bones to his daughter's school in Alaska. Sharon reported on her and Jerry's efforts with kids in their area. Steve will restructure the committee.

Steve Wixson reported on the spe-

cial issue titled Reflections on Ten Years of B ones Fests. The board has originally authorized \$600 for this project. Motion was made, seconded and approved to spend \$725 to print and bind 100 copies of the newsletter. One copy will be sent to current members at no cost. The Board approved the price of \$15 to non-members and for additional copies to members.

There was a discussion of the memorial for Russ Myers. \$400 was donated by members for this project. Several ideas were discussed. The motion was made, seconded and approved to purchase a television with DVD player for the Madison County, KY, Historical Society. A dedication plaque in memory of Russ from the Rhythm Bones Society will be affixed. A short DVD prepared from old Bones Fest videos will be made for the donated TV showing a living history of Russ Myers.

Gil Hibben wanted to do something more to commemorate Russ. Steve Brown reminded the Board of a CD that he has of a radio show featuring Russ. The motion was made, seconded and approved to put this CD plus the DVD prepared for the Historical Society on the rhythmbones.com website.

The motion was made and seconded to recommend the following change to the By-Laws. In Article 6.10 remove the words October to September of the following year and add in their place January 1 to December 31 of the same year." Discussion. When the society was formed, Bones Fests were held in September and this fiscal year made sense. Now with Fests in the Summer we can reduce confusion by having our fiscal year match the calendar year. Motion passed. This cannot be brought to the members until the 2008 meeting.

A discussion of a host for Bones Fest XII followed. Dennis Redisel discussed his South Texas area as a possibility. He has access to adequate facilities. A summer date would not work and he had ideas on transportation. We will send him a copy of the Bones Fest Host Guide. The Board wondered if the Hibben's would consider hosting again if no other host volunteers.

A discussion followed about professionally recording a Bones Fest and producing a CD/DVD. There are technical and copyright issues involved. The motion was made, seconded and approved to form a committee to investigate this for Bones Fest XII or later. Steve Brown appointed Jonathan Danforth to head the committee.

The motion was made, seconded and approved to purchase the rhythmbones.org domain name. We are a nonprofit society and should own this name.

The Board serving as the Nominations Committee nominated the current members to serve another the term.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25pm. Respectfully Submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

Minutes of General Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Steve Brown at 4:40pm on August 19, 2007 in the barn of the Riveredge Nature Center.

The motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the last meeting as printed in the newsletter.

Steve Wixson presents a brief review of the Board meeting.

The nominating committee presented nominations for next year's officers. The floor was opened for additional nominations. The motion was made, seconded and approved to elected the following by acclamation: Steve Brown, Executive Director, Gil Hibben, Assistant Director, Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Board members Everett Cowett, Jonathan Danforth, Mel Mercier and Jerry Mescher.

There was no old business.

There was a call for a host for Bones Fest XII. Dennis Redisel suggested his South Texas area as a possibility. No decision was reached.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 pm. Respectfully Submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

(Continued from page 3)

doing all or any of my daily exercises the doctors had prescribed to strengthen my arms and upper body. One inventive little Nun named 'Sister Marie Angele' came up with a motivational method that would keep my interest as well as get me to exercise regularly. She was a young music teacher from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Understanding music and seeing my needs to exercise more regularly and with motivation, she took it upon herself to teach me the art of playing two handed rhythm bones.

Bones were tough to get in a convent but wooden rulers weren't. I think most Nuns during these times carried a ruler under their habits used mainly for "smacking us around". Sister Marie Angele however, used it for a more constructive purpose. She simply took out two 12-inch rulers, and then cut them in half for me to play instead of real bones.

I took to them like penguins on ice and haven't stopped playing bones since.

In later years, my father always encouraged me to play. At times, he would "show me off" at get-togethers and parties as his little 'bones player'.

Up to the age of eleven I played sawed off wooden rulers. I knew nothing of real bones and knew not of any one else who played, except the little Penguin Nun from Cape Breton who taught me the art of playing bones.

In 1951, for my twelfth birthday, my dad took me to a music store in Old Montreal. Music stores were also pawnshops in those days so it was quite a treat for me to see all those marvelous musical instruments and other junk hanging about the store.

He told the clerk that I played rulers and "Did he have any real bones he could play?" The clerk, or maybe even the owner of the store, moved over a couple of feet behind the glass counter, reached under, slid the plywood panel open, then, abruptly stood up presenting my father with two pairs of black rhythm bones.

"They're Joe Birl bones made special for small fingers. See those grooves! They fit perfect for your fingers!" exclaimed the clerk. Dad handed them to me to test out. What a

thrill I got from playing REAL bones after struggling with cut rulers. Like some little fool, I 'clac-a-di-clacked' those bones all over the store, up and down the aisles. Needless to say the clerk made the sale and I got two sets of Joe Birls' patented bones. The best Birthday present ever.

I played those two pairs until 1961 when I lost them in a flood. After that disappointment, I started getting beef bones from a butcher in the neighborhood and tailoring them to my specks. Never thought much about the Joe Birl bones much after that.

Then came BONES FEST X, 2006, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Ceo, (My fiddle player accompanist) and I were sitting in the old church hall with our door prize tickets in hand, hopefully waiting for our numbers to be called. "Last three numbers -- 6 2 2" came over the speakers. Darn! I had 621, but Ceo came in just ahead of me and yelled out, "Here!" He went up to get his prize, which turned out to be a set of black bones neatly packaged in a plastic bag with instructions included.

Ceo sat down next to me and passed me the package. "Here, these are for you!" and Ceo handed me the set of bones he had just won. I was astounded to see those patented grooved bones inside and also that pale yellow instruction sheet in the package. They were the same as the package of bones my father had bought me for my birthday way back in 1951!

To my astonishment, 20 minutes later, I sat there actually listening to and watching the designer of these bones right before my eyes narrating how he struggled to have his ideas



Robert Goulet and grandson Cary Junior
Draconadis Goulet

patented in 1949. Outstanding!

Later in the evening after the Bones fest activities were over, a bunch of us 'boners' (as we name ourselves) gathered on the lawn outside our rooms of Days Inn for a couple of cold ones and a jam session.

I recognized Joe Birl as he happened by, and initiating a conversation, had the privilege of talking with him at length. I recounted my story of getting my first pair of his patented bones in '51, as well as my friend Ceo winning one of the sets he had donated earlier for door prizes.

After listening to my story he got up and left, saying, "Wait a minute, I'll be right back!" He returned a minute or two later and came straight to me. "Here," he said. "Now you can play two handed 'Joe Bones' again!" And handed me another new packaged pair. I was ever so thankful and as well as very grateful. "Thank you, Joe Birl!"

As happens in life, three weeks later I was camping out in the Ontario wilderness giving a Rhythm Bones workshop at a 5-day music festival called Blue Skies. (At the end of my workshop, there are now 51 new Bones players on that site.)

I brought along my 14-year-old Heavy Metal loving grandson. It was an eye-opening weekend for him, which allowed me the opportunity to teach him how to play two-handed bones. He was a natural. He fell in love with those two sets of Joe Birl Bones I got at Bones fest X three weeks earlier.

I listened to him click-a-di-clackating for four hours on our drive home after our long musical weekend. He was so enthused and into playing those bones on the trip home, that I gave him both sets of Birl bones to encourage and keep him playing.

Now, his idea is to introduce bones playing into his Heavy Metal group. Another bones player generation carries on the tradition.

Happy Birthday, Joe Birl, and thanks a whole hell of a lot.

P.S. Jonathan and Melissa Danforth
--- Kudos for Bones Fest X. *Robert (Bob) Goulet*

Highlights from Sunday's public performance on the RBS Irish Fest Stage



Steve Brown served as MC for all Fest events. Irish Band was Frogwater with John Nicholson and Susan Jeske. Jonathan Danforth joined in



The Back in Time duo of Mary Lee and Frank Sweet performed in period costume. Frank graciously accompanied other attendees



The Gillette Brothers performing their cowboy music. Guy playing bones and guitar and Pip on banjo and harp. Steve Wixson joined in later.



Everett and Dan Cowett and several others played to the music of the Lisa Edgar band. Finally got Dan, our sound man, on stage.



The energetic style of Don Decamp is always a crowd pleaser. Dave Boyles is in the background. Don also lead jams with his banjo.



Michael Ballard teaches rhythm bones to a young bodhrán player. Michael also played with the Irish band and taught a beginner's class

Rhythm Bones Society

1060 Lower Brow Road
Signal Mountain, TN 37377-2910

Address Correction Requested