



Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

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Darryl 'Spike Bones' Muhrer

One of the most entertaining members of the Rhythm Bones Society is Darryl Muhrer. Here he described himself in a recent biography in a Bones Fest program booklet.

"My first performance was as Dr. Spike in June 1978, and inspired by Percy Danforth from whom I learned to play rhythm bones, I soon changed my stage name to Spike Bones. I gather my performance lists and pieces from the period 1840-1940, an era I call pre-TV entertainment. I have developed a lot of my character and material as a street performer in Chicago and New Orleans. Although I have played with a lot of Irish, Old-Time, Folk and Jazz bands, I consider myself as much a dancer as a musician. A nineteen year old membership with RBS has provided me with great inspiration, friendships, and rhythm bones insight into the art and history of rhythm bones."

Darryl 'Spike Bones' Muhrer was born in Columbia, MO on December 15, 1943, and went to high school and college there. He earned a Master's Degree in Education from Northwestern University, and later studied educational technology and video production. He served in the Army, taught broadcasting at Northeast Missouri State University and led classes in creativity and organizational change for the Department of Energy. He has been an artist in residence and substitute teacher with the Chicago Public Schools. He has two sons and three grandkids. At times he has had to return to Columbia to help on the family farm. He now lives in Columbia.

While in Chicago, Spike put on a show in Lincoln Park Zoo performing on weekends near the lion house. For over 20 years he did his 'Bones Show' accompanied by a pianist at 240 schools across the Midwest. For a long time he wanted to convert this show to a theater piece, and he described that effort later in this article.

Spike says, "Something I learned from Bones Fests as well as the fabulous musicians I play the rhythm bones with every Sunday in Columbia, Missouri is....I'm not a musician. I am a performing artist combining with equal gravity...Music - Motion (Continued on Page 4)



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- and EMOTION! For example watch *Redwing* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyKLHmNDtY4>.”

There is a short section in a video that shows a young Spike Bones performing at a summer festival in Chicago. Go to <https://mediaburn.org/video/image-union-municipal-mirth/> and move to 14:24 in the video. It is delightful particularly for those who have only known him as a RBS member (also a Founding Member).



Children listen to Spike Bones at Pirate's Cove Children's Theme Park in Elk Grove Village. File photograph courtesy of Daily Herald, August 1982

In 1991, Spike joined the Lonie Walker's jazz band playing most weekends at the Underground Wonder Bar in Chicago. From that relationship, Spike self produced a limited release CD titled "Bones Meets Jazz."

Another recurring venue was street performers on the Chicago Transit Authority's historical rapid transit train where he was at times joined with city officials.

As for his connection with Percy Danforth, he once wrote this. "I remember the weekend I spent with Percy Danforth at a university in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The university paid Percy to come as a performer, and scheduled him for two all day street fairs, several luncheons and dinner performances as well as a evening appearance with the symphony. Percy was physically drained and his legs hurt, but he just kept on boning.

"That weekend I went along as Percy's

go-for, chauffeur, and assistant. We discussed everything from music to his life as an architect during the depression. I will always remember him saying to me: Spike, always remember an intelligent plan fulfills a need."

Spike with Scott Miller hosted Bones Fest XII in St. Louis, and to read the details search the online newsletters for the Volume 10, No 4 issue or watch 'https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fn-MegTzLeJ8.' We had great facilities and program at the University of Missouri at St. Louis with plans for a riverboat dinner, but some events got canceled for security reasons due to the 100,000 person political rally under the 'Arch' for the Obama-Biden campaign.

Spike's performances at annual Bones Fests are remarkable. One feature is getting the audience involved by passing out rhythm bones and other musical noise makers and going into the audience. His performances have included a skeleton costume with red fluorescent rhythm bones lit by ultraviolet light, rhythm bones with long red flags attached, juggling rings, limberjack doll, violin, large cue sheets for the audience, skeleton marionette, animal rhythm bones, vegetarian (wood) rhythm bones, and he has given workshops on how to perform like he does. And at a couple of Bones Fests he has put on a shorter performance of his 'Bones Show' that he describes next.

"Now I focus my professional attention on a one-act theatrical presentation titled *Skin and Bones - Hair and Guts*. I define Spike Bones as a 150 theatrical character - part fact - part fiction. This play has allowed me to bring 40 years of boning experience to share with folks in a one hour show. This is my Sunset Show.

"During the last four years, I have been focused on creating a two acre venue called "Bones Camp" sometimes called, "A Poor man's Disneyland. Thank you Mary Lee and Frank Sweet for your visit. You are my witnesses. Originally this camp was to be a venue for my show as a rhythm bones podcast.

"Some of my goals were met, however, the tail was wagging the dog. That is the main reason I've been missing the last two years from these Bones Fests.

"To see a documentary on Bones Camp, A Poor Man's Disneyland go to <https://vimeo.com/214239758>.

"I just purchased my first home and am in the process of closing down Bones Camp. I am simplifying and refocusing my life. I will see you all in Mississippi in May come hail or high water. Looking forward to hearing rhythm bones and your stories."

With such a warm and entertaining personality, it is hard to imagine Spike not on stage or on the streets delighting children and all of us. See you there, Spike Bones! *Steve Wixson*

<http://mc22.net/mc22-programs/northern-missouri/northern-newsleaders-march-2016/may-2017-northern-missouri/>



Spike Bones performing his 'Bones Show' at Bones Fest XII

Rhythm Bones Society

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Address Correction Requested