



Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

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People come and go in organizations. Whether it be a burst of enthusiasm from a new experience, and the excitement of learning, people come on the scene, some stay, and others fade away. There are always people who change the environment by virtue of their presence. Just having them around inspires people, and makes not only a better event, but a better organization. This organization has always thrived on a family feeling to our events, gives us a glowing feeling, and impresses new comers. This year the Board established an award to be given to just such a person. Someone who creates a presence, and makes us better, not only as players but as people, by being who they are.

The first Rhythm Bones Society Community Enrichment Award was given to Mitch Boss. Mitch

has attended Bones Fests since 2002, and hasn't missed one since. His easy going nature, self deprecating dry humor, and excellent bone playing skills make him a joy to be around. Thank you Mitch for being you!

This year the Board also gave a Meritorious Service award to Mary Lee Sweet for her extensive work videoing Bones Fests. Mary Lee has hosted one Bones Fest, and attended many Fests, and has worked tirelessly to bring us amazing video, Thank you Mary Lee!

The Board wishes to extend our thanks to out going board member, Sky Bartlett. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors and would welcome him back. And the Board wishes to welcome Dennis (Continued on Page 3)

Bones Fest XX is History

Here I sit on Monday morning and Bones Fest XX is over. The 43 participants from 19 states and 1 Canadian Province have scattered back to their homes and I sit here in a partial coma. The last week has been a whirlwind of activity for Janet and me. Except for this report the paper work is done, the bills are paid and unless Steve Wixson thinks of

something else this one is in the bag.

Oops, he did think of something else. I forgot to publicly thank Jim Conner for the inspiration for the BF XX t-shirts. Back at Bones Fest X he made a prophesy that the shirt would have a picture of the world with twenty bones coming out like rays of the sun. (Continued on Page 6)



Bones Fest XX Group Photograph. First Row from left; Janet Hines, Ernie Duffy, Mary Carty, Annette Boss, Devin Giles, Bruno Giles, Jeremy Brown, Jennifer Brown, Steve Brown, Tim Reilly, Jim Hesch, Marie Bruschi, Sharon Mescher, Dutch Kopp, and Jonathan Danforth. Second Row; Adam Klein, Jim Runner, Skeff Flynn, Rowan Corbett, Lynda Bertrand, Bill Vits, Melissa Danforth (and Emmett Danforth), Bob Goulet, Stan Von Hagen, Michael Ballard, Kenny Wolin, Mike Korec, Katrina Mackey and Mike Ludgate. Third Row; Richard Carty, Dennis Riedesel, Spike Bones, Mitch Boss, Ben Denney, Blue Hammond, Ron Bruschi, Phil Robinson, Gerry Hines, and Steve Wixson. Photograph by Art Sands.

Editorial

Bones Fest XX is over and I am sitting at the airport waiting for a delayed flight. There are many Fest highlights and our host, Gerry Hines, writes of them starting on Page 1. The photographs in this issue were taken by Micheal Ballard and Art Sands, and thanks to both of them for their great work.

The Fest was again videoed by Mary Lee Sweet and in appreciation for that work over many years, the Board of Directors presented her with the *Meritorious Service Award*. The Board also recognized Mitch Boss with a new award, the *Community Enrichment Award*. Mary Lee's BFXX video can be seen on our homepage for the next several months.

I played a tribute to the late Jerry Mescher at the Fest. Jerry's signature song was Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* recorded by Jo Ann Castle, and I played to a 30 second shortened version. I would not have been able to do this except Mel Mercier had written down Jerry's arrangement of the song in his PhD thesis (Pages 431-39 and you can search for it online). I slowed it down on the computer and worked up to full speed over time. I was pleased with my performance, but it was not at Jerry's level.

I tip my hat (i.e., rhythm bones) to Steve Brown for the excellent job he did as Emcee of the Friday and Saturday evening performances. Also to Steve, Bill Vits, Kenny Wolin, Tim Reilly and helpers for leading interesting workshops.

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for allowing me to participate on the Board. I love you all and missed you all very much, it's never fun to miss a Fest. I understand that Dennis has been elected to fill "my" position. I think that he will be an excellent Board member. Please do not take my decision to not serve again as anything more than my desire to not interface with a computer. At any point in time if there is no one of a more agreeable and useful nature to serve on the Board I would be happy to serve again. *Sky Bartlett*

Gerry, It was as if you were never here. You inhabited and left the place wonderfully. If only all of our guests could be like you! We (the Center) and myself were pleased to have hosted this national event, and would be happy for repeat visits! Thanks again for thinking of us and don't be a stranger! *Ty Marshal*, Director, Homer Center for the Arts

Glad as ever to have made it to the Fest, not glad I couldn't stay till Saturday. Glad to talk to some new people and get interesting insight into things like reasons to need quiet bones, reasons to make bones that play well in the Skeff position. Glad to hang out with old friends again. Anyway I sold enough pairs to be making bones again, this time mostly American Chestnut - why? because I can. *Adam Klein*

Thank you, Janet and Gerry, for hosting the 20th Bones Fest in such a beautiful setting of New York State's mountains and valleys.

In planning to attend this fest, I was determined to attend as many workshops as possible. I was not disappointed. There was information for everyone: playing with the metronome, learning about Irish tunes, the history of shanty songs, and a beginner's bones class. I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated all of these "down-to-earth" workshops. Our bones society seems to be blessed with talented teachers, bones players, and characters.

Jamming with all the "characters" is one of my favorite times at the fest. And, then, I look forward to sitting back and enjoying all the performances on Saturday night. Each performance this year was a "WOW" moment for me.

I look forward to being with you next August in San Antonio. *Sharon Mescher*

Bones Fest XXI in San Antonio

The Board is happy to announce that Bones Fest XXI will be in San Antonio hosted by Dennis Riedesel. Dennis hosted Bones Fest XV, and you can search online newsletters for Vol 13, No 2. One fun event was the dinner cruise on the San Antonio river which will be repeated. The date is August 24-27, 2017, and look for details in the future newsletters.

Rhythm Bones Player

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

Rhythm Bones Central web site: rhythmbones.org



Dennis Riedesel performing at Bones Fest XX

Editorial (Continued)

Riedesel to the Board. Dennis is a past and future host of a Bones Fest and will be a great addition to the Board.

Bones Fest XX is still ringing around my head as I suspect it is with most attendees. A very big thanks to Janet and Gerry Hines for all their hard work to make Bones Fest XX a joy!

Several moments stand out to me. The facility of the Homer Arts Center was fantastic and a great environment to germinate our Fest! The stage and facilities were just amazing! Our second attempt at Community Outreach was very rewarding at both the Assisted Living Center and the Day Camp.

Saturday's performance was one of our best with stellar performances by all the participants. I have to say that the late night jamming at the hotel was my favorite, and watching Jeremy jamming with his bones brothers was thrilling!

I'm very excited at the prospect of returning to San Antonio Texas next year. Dennis Reidesel is already putting together a stellar Fest with some very interesting features which will make our stay in Texas truly memorable. I encourage all of you to watch for specific dates and plan accordingly. Yee Haw!
Steve Brown

Dr. Mel Mercier at Notre Dame

For about 20 years, Notre Dame has hosted the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies, and this year it was held April 1-3. The institute focuses on the gathering of educators and students to study Irish culture. This year, for the first time, the institute invited professors of



music and performance arts to participate. One of the professors was our own Rhythm Bones Society member, Dr. Mel Mercier, who, in March, took over as Chair of Performing Arts at the University of Limerick (refer to his story in the newsletter article, Volume 18, No.1, 2016).

Jerry and I had traveled to Ireland in 2011 to visit the Merciers, experience all things Irish, and attend Mel's PhD graduation. That was the last time Jerry and I saw the Merciers. So, because Mel was coming to Notre Dame, and close to Iowa, I took the opportunity to travel to Notre Dame to visit Mel, learn more about Irish music and culture, and meet other interesting academics.

At the invitation of Notre Dame, Micheal O'Suilleabhain and Helen Phelen, Mel was asked to take part in presenting with his two colleagues. The focus of their seminar was recognizing the importance of including the study of all types of world music along with the performing arts in the university setting. In Mel's words, "The performance part is still not fully recognized as being equal or a part with being a more traditional scholar, i.e., writing books and articles.

So, there have been issues for people like me... who would consider themselves performance scholars... or composers. I'm producing CD's, performances and competitions so I'm asking the university to value that and to accept it in the same way as they accept written works. Our panel was really about that... There is still a sense that Irish music is an outlier... This is not a music conference but there is an aspiration that Irish studies would begin to include and embrace the study of music."

Part of Mel's contribution to the presentations with Micheal and Helen focused on two themes: his musical relationship with his father, Paedar, and comparing the traditional Irish bones musician to Jerry's style of bones playing.

At this time, Mel is "in a dialogue with my father" because he is "making a radio documentary about him." Mel realizes he

had a special relationship with his father: playing the bodhran and the bones. In their relationship there was "created a certain kind of bond and empathy."

With tongue-in-cheek humor, Mel shared this: "I was a one-handed bones player. When you're an Irish traditional one-handed bones player, you always sit down. And you make yourself kind of invisible. There's a kind of apologeticness about it, (as if to say), 'I'm not in the room; or 'I'm sorry.'

"When I met Jerry Mescher at the bones fest in 2000 at Chattanooga, what I saw, what I experienced was something entirely different." At this point, Mel stands up, extends both arms outward with his bones in each hand, and imitating Jerry, says, "Here I am; and I'm not ashamed." Of course that comes out of vaudeville and minstrelsy; Brother Bones, one of the end men. So I began to learn to play like Jerry. I can tell you that through that I began to feel like Jerry. I developed an empathy with him."

The weekend flew by at lightning speed, but was worth every moment spent with Mel and many of his Irish colleagues. It was an honor to be with Mel, listen to his story about his relationship with his father, and, in many ways, learn more about Jerry from a different, personal perspective. *Sharon Mescher*

[To listen to Mel's Paedar Mercier story, search Google with RTE Radio 1 doconone Paedar Mercier and click the play button]



Sharon Mescher performing at BFXX



Steve Brown's Irish Tunes Workshop showing part of the great facilities at the Homer Center for the Arts



Newcomer Lynda Bertrand and Bob Goulet play rhythm bones and dance French Canadian style



Bones Fest XX Host Gerry Hines and band Metku. They are from the left Mike Ludgate, Katrina Mackey, and Phil Robinson



Dutch Kopp plays the bohdran with rhythm bones instead of a beater



Spike Bones gets the audience involved



Stan Von Hagen



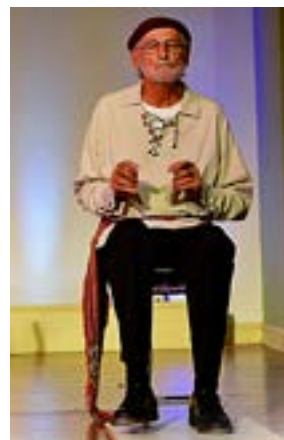
Bill Vits



Tim Reilly and Steve Brown duet



Rowan Corbett surprised us with the band ilyAIMY. From the left; Kristen Jones, Rowan, and Rob Hinkal



Bob Goulet sitting and playing and dancing



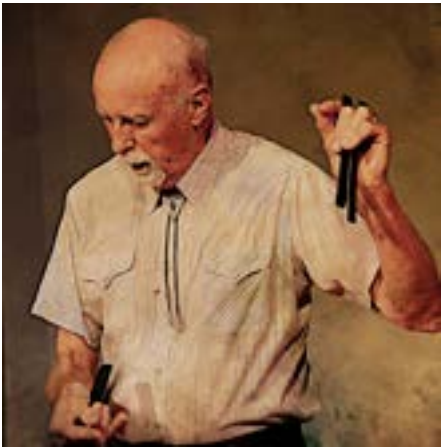
Ben Denney plays rhythm bones while Mary and Richard Carty dance



Mitch Boss (left) and Steve Brown ham it up on stage. Mitch received the first 'Community Enrichment Award' on Friday evening.



Bill Vits leads Day Camp Outing. From left are Bill, Bob Goulet, Adam Klein, Ben Denney, Jonathan Danforth, Skeff Flynn, Stan Von Hagen and Bruno Giles



Steve Wixson played a short version of *Maple Leaf Rag* as a tribute to the late Jerry Mescher



Jeremy Brown



Blue Hammond



Jim Runner



Kenny Wollin playing a unique playing style



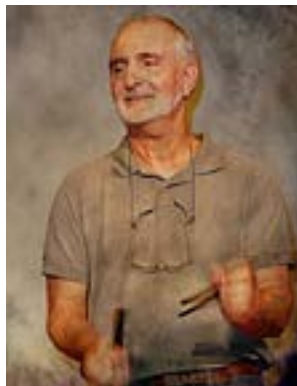
One of several Rhythm Bones Marketplace tables



Michael Ballard



Skeff Flynn with Phil Robinson and Ben Denney



Ernie Duffy



Mary Lee & Frank Smith with Ben Denney and Jonathan Danforth. Mary Lee received Meritorious Service Award

(Continued from Page 1)

Glad he came up with that as a picture of a Cortland apple playing the bones was my first thought. Thanks Jim.

A word about Steve Wixson. He is the background guiding hand that makes these festivals come to life. The Host's guide book, time line and the periodic email that says it is time for this or that keep things moving along. Between his help and the advice of Steve Brown from time to time most of the stress was of my own making. In the last week I learned not to schedule events on too tight a time line. I also learned that dealing with a group of musicians can be like herding cats. But those cats can make a Bones Fest purr. In the opinion of everyone I spoke with it was a huge success.

The Friday morning seminars by Bill Vits and Steve Brown were enlightening and confusing at the same time. Enlightening because they both touched on aspects of bones playing I struggle with and confusing because if I live to be a hundred I will never gain the skill set of either of them. It is sufficient that I pick up a tidbit here and there to move me forward in my practice.

The Friday afternoon outreach projects were my most stressful points of the weekend as I timed things too closely after lunch and did not figure on an overwhelmed restaurant. A couple of phone calls to delay things a bit and everything turned out great. The folks who entertained at the senior living center had a small but very appreciative audience. Those of us who went to the day camp at Lime Hollow Nature Center had the opportunity to teach 71 campers aged 8 to 14 to play the bones. Amazingly a few of them got it right off. Bill Vits has a way with kids and really gets in their face making them pay attention. The kids had all been on an overnight campout and were up until 1:30 in the morning (sounds like a bones jam.) and were filthy and tired. With Ben Denny, Jonathon Danforth and Adam Klein on guitar, fiddle and banjo respectively the kids were all wide awake. The Dutch Penny Bones (invented by Dutch Kopp) were a big hit. A few of the more greedy campers figured out how to loosen the pennies but most tried to play them.

Our Friday night meal was consumed with great gusto. We had gotten 7 party

sub platters from Subway. Janet and I were wondering how we were going to get rid of all that food. Our worries were in vain of course as 43 hungry bones players demolished those platters plus the 108 cookies that came with them. Evidently bones' playing is a high calorie burn.

Our Friday night rehearsal show with the live Band "Metku" was great entertainment for ourselves and gave us a chance to get the kinks out. Ty Marshall who is the director of Homer Center for the Arts sent us a sound tech, Seth Asa who has some very real skills and made us sound like the professionals that many of our leading bones players are. Speaking of professionals Adam Klein had only one day available to be with us and wowed us as usual with an acapella voice and bones routine. Moving into the planning of the Saturday night show we realized that a five minute time limit was going to be necessary to get all 24 acts into a 2 hour show.

Back at the London room in the hotel the serious (OK, maybe not serious, Mitch was there) jamming continued into the night as it did all 3 nights. These jam sessions are probably the highlight of every Bones Fest as we are not performing for anybody. We are relaxing and enjoying being with good friends and playing the bones.

Saturday morning was another outreach to the public with a beginner's bones playing class. It started with Kenny Wolin and Tim Reilly doing a "Shanty Sing" tying in the old time sailor's life and the bones. They got the audience ready for the serious (really?) teaching done by Steve Brown. Steve Wixson acting as teacher's helper had a friend of Janet's playing with 2 hands before the end. Either Steve is a great teacher or she is a natural. Both of those things are probably true. Several attendees bought bones from our vendors both after the class and during and after the evening show.

It is hard to pick "the" highlight of the Saturday show. Rowan Corbett and ilyAMY would certainly be on the list. The vast improvement of Stan Van Hagen, Kenny Wolin's disco routine, Steve Brown and Mitch with their usual antics, Ben Denny being backed by Ron and Marie Bruschi waltzing in the colored

lights against the back wall, Bob Goulet and Lynda Bertrand displaying a French Canadian Bones duel, Dennis Riedesel's bones light show. All off the acts were wonderful and different and showed off the many talents of our RBS members. I hope without mentioning all 24 I haven't hurt any feelings. I can't leave out of course our World's happiest bones player Jeremy Brown whose Superman act brought down the house. At the end of the show the crowd was on its feet in a standing ovation.

The last jam session of Bones Fest XX kept us (them) going until after 1:30 AM. I fell in a heap about 12:30. Two ladies who attended the show at Bones Fest XIX drove all the way from West Virginia for the Bones Fest XX show and stayed up until almost midnight at the jam session. They were grinning from ear to ear all evening.

Sunday morning breakfast. A bitter sweet experience. A good bye to family for another year. If any of you get to Arizona this winter look me up and we will rattle the streets of Tombstone together.
Gerry Hines

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Steve Brown called the meeting to order at 1:41PM on August 6 in the Homer Center for the Arts. All members were present except Sky Bartlett.

The Secretary read the minutes of the last meeting and they were approved. He noted that the following email motions were approved between Board meetings; approve BFXX, Meritorious Service Award to Mary Lee Sweet, creation and awarding a new award, the Community Enrichment Award, to Mitch Boss and a color cover for the BFXX Program.

The Treasurer gave a report noting that as of December 31, 2015 we had \$5,605 in the bank and it was approved.

Old Business. Skeff reported that he had not circulated a design document for a website update, but will do so soon.

We discussed the Starter Kit idea brought up at the last General Membership Meeting. In order to get an idea of what members want in a kit, Skeff will add a section to the website survey document.

New Business. We discussed the mechanics of email motions. There is a need for a separate email with the Subject: Vote: Name of Motion. Steve Wixson will formalize this and email to Board Members for approval.

Dennis Riedesel made an informal proposal to host BFXXI in San Antonio again. A motion was made, seconded and approved to ask him to submit a formal proposal.

Steve Wixson noted it was time for another Special Newsletter Issue covering Bones Fest XI to XX. Sharon Mescher, who edited the earlier special issue volunteered to edit it.

Scott Miller sent RBS a collection of rhythm bones made by the late Clif Ervin. He had received them from Clif's daughter, and he thought we could preserve them better than he could. While we have rhythm bones memorabilia, it does not seem feasible to have a real Museum though the concept of an online Museum seems possible. Steve Wixson will see what is possible. Clif's daughter also wanted RBS to gift some bones to members and the Board will discuss criteria for this.

A motion was made, seconded and approved that Board members get administrative rights to our Facebook page so they can post items.

Steve Brown called the Board to order as the Nominating Committee. A motion was made, seconded and approved to nominate the current Board for next year less Sky Barlett who ask not to serve.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn, and we adjourned at 3:04.

Respectively submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

Minutes of the General Membership Meeting

Steve Brown called the meeting to order at 3:08 PM on August 6 in the Homer Center for the Arts.

The Secretary read the minutes of the last General Membership meeting and they were approved. The Treasurer gave a brief report noting we have \$5,605 in the bank.

Steve Brown reported on the Starter Kit project (see Board minutes).

Steve Wixson reported on the Remember Percy Project noting it is essentially complete and available to view on our website.

Steve Brown reported that the Board asked Dennis Riedesel for a formal proposal to host BFXXI. Dennis gave a brief overview of his ideas asking for members to comment.

Steve Brown opened the floor for nominations for the Board for 2016/17. The secretary presented Steve Brown, Executive Director, Bill Vits, Assistant Director, Steve Wixson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Board Members, Skeff Flynn, Sharon Mescher and Kenny Wolin. Mary Lee Sweet nominated Dennis Riedesel to fill Sky Bartlett's vacancy, and a motion was made, seconded and approved to elect all by acclamation.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM. Respectfully Submitted, *Steve Wixson*, Secretary

Mitch Boss Says Thanks (We Think)

I would like to take this moment to thank the Board of Directors of our great society for expressing their rather dark sense of humor by awarding me with a plaque stating that I all by myself have enriched the Rhythm Bones Society. Evidently I am the only one who has paid up dues.

I don't mean to be unthankful, but I can't help myself. Of all the other mediocre bones players (not all are mediocre, some are less proficient) why me? Is it because I try to show no disappointment when in conversation with men obsessed with sex and Pokemon.

Annette said she would hang the plaque up for me in the shower. I did not think that was appropriate so I hung it in plain sight next to the etagere with all my bones stuff on it.

You may know that I'm retired and live in an old folks home. My 'friends' are all physically and mentally detained. Some have expressed to me how much they like the way my plaque is framed; none of them can read it. The plaque gets

harder and harder to read, it is slowly erasing itself, was that intentional?

I want the Board of Directors to know how much I appreciate this award and all the laughter and knee slapping it has given so many old people....*Mitch Boss*

Mary Lee Sweet Says Thanks Too

I would like to thank Mitch Boss for thanking the Board of our great society for awarding him an elegant certificate. (Hey Mitch! I paid my dues too!)

Without his example, I may have forgotten to properly express my appreciation for the award given to me.

Exactly how many awards have you gotten, Mitch? Albert Einstein said, "Many of the things you can count, don't count. Many of the things you can't count, really count." Are you counting?

Thank you Board for presenting me with the Meritorious Service Award. (I did notice an IOU in that word! (Check the accounts! I paid my dues, just like Mitch!)

In order to receive my award, I was required to take the stage. I really didn't want the stage. Just the award. I love awards! I couldn't be happier! But like Reese Witherspoon said, "It's funny that it all becomes about the clothes. It's bizarre! You work your butt off and then you win an award and it's all about your dress.

Thank you to the Rhythm Bones Society for gifting me with a written, framed document that says I am appreciated. Receiving it in the beautiful, historic village of Homer, New York where "past and present blend like a good stew" made it memorable. Jonas Salk said "The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more." I intend to do just that! *Mary Lee Sweet*

Bones Calendar

Fleadh by The Feale All Ireland Bones Competition, May 1, 2017, Abbeyfeale, Ireland

Bones Fest XVIII, August 24-27, 2017, San Antonio, TX, Host is Dennis Riedesel,

NTCMA Bones Contest, August 28 - September 3, 2017, LeMars, IA. Bones Contest will likely be on Sunday.



The Grand Finale. A few minutes after this photograph was taken Skeff Flynn lead the traditional congo line of all rhythm bones players around the Arts Center

Rhythm Bones Society

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Address Correction Requested