



Rhythm Bones Player

A Newsletter of the Rhythm Bones Society

Volume 24, No. 2 2022

In This Issue:

Dennis Riedesel

Tom Connolly

*Visit to The
Center for
Chinese Music
and Culture*

*Bones
Fest XXVI
Information*

*A Note From
Italy*

*Want to Be a
Board Member*

*Two Sides of a
Coin*

*A Visit to The
Center For
Popular Music*

Columns:

*Executive Di-
rector*

Editorial

Executive Director's Column

I've been writing this column for close to 18 years. How lucky I have been to be given a forum to write about anything on my mind, and yet difficult to come up with things that I think people want to read about.

Not so hard today, as this will probably be my last column. The stress and responsibility of living in the rehab center and taking care of our son, Jeremy, every day has taken its toll, and with no real end in sight, I have decided to step down from my position as Executive Director. It has been my great privilege to contribute to an organization that is so close to my heart. I have met some amazing people, and learned

so much about the instrument we all love. But it is time for me to Move On, although I hope to be a part of our organization for a long time.

Jeremy continues here in the rehab center. we hope to move him home soon, but we need to overcome several obstacles before that can happen. I so appreciate everyone's concern and support for him. Over the years this organization and the people within it have enriched his life beyond words, and for that I thank you. We hope in the near future to move him home where we can care for him the
(Continued on Page 2)

Dennis Riedesel

INTRODUCTION

Early in my college career, one of my professors emphasized the quote, "Be a Whole Man, Not a Specialized Splinter." That statement struck a chord and highlighted my desire to be more than a "Jack of All Trades but a Master of None." Throughout my life as I migrated from one profession, avocation, and hobby to another I realized that I could not be panurgic, a "Jack of all Trades but Master of All" . I could identify myself as "Renaissance Man" (but Leonardo da Vinci would probably turn over in his grave!) I never saw myself as that type of a polymath. I finally found a relatively new movement when I discovered that I could identify as a multi-potentialite ie., one who has many different interests and creative pursuits in life. Multipotentialites have no "one true calling" the way specialists do.

I think parents and our educational system continually strive to focus our students into one path, one profession, usually starting in middle school, through high school, and more specifically throughout college. They become a "specialize splinter". As I run my mind's eye through many of the members of the Rhythm Bones Society, I think I can intuit that many of us are in fact multipotentialites who have many different interests and creative pursuits.

BIOGRAPHY

My Great, Great Grandfather immigrated from Erndtebruck (Aunt-te-brook), Germany in 1848 and settled in Yorktown, TX. Even after my family had been in Texas for five generations, my first language

was German.

I grew up on a small farm near Yorktown, TX and graduated from High School in 1966. On the last day of school in 1966 we held our graduation, prom and by 3:30 the next morning I was in Victoria, TX where I spent most of my adult life. My wife and I lived in Victoria until 2014 when we moved to the Boerne, TX area to be near our one daughter and two granddaughters.

My childhood and young teen years were spent doing the necessary farm chores, such as chopping wood for the box stove, filling Mom's cooking stove with kerosene, making sure there
(Continued on Page 5)



Dennis Riedesel

Editorial

This issue of our newsletter has profiles of Board Member, Dennis Riedesel, and Irishman, Tom Connolly. We own thanks to Dennis for serving on the Board and numerous contributions to this newsletter, and to Tom and the Irish for what they did to keep rhythm bones alive during the last century. We have profiled some of the Irish and will profile more.

The 26th Anniversary is a different kind of celebration. You have been together for a quarter of a century or 9,490 days or 227,760 hours or 13,665,600 minutes which is over 819 million seconds! There is no flower or gem associated with this anniversary, however, there is one tradition - YOU want MORE! And RBS wants more even if it cannot be an in-person event for everyone. Check out the next column for this year's unique Bones Fest.

The Center For Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) has been a resource for your Editor. I made a quick visit recently, and check out what I found out shown on Page 8.

Periodically I make Internet searches for new rhythm bones items. One recent find was a video by Dr. Mei Han on Chinese Clappers. She is the Director of the Center for Chinese Music and Culture and to my surprise, it is also at MTSU which is only a two drive from my home. Check out the story of my visit to MTSU on Page 4.

New member Michael Baxter recently visited me and our story is on Page 5.

Bones Fest XXVI Preliminary Information

It has been a difficult time for RBS during the pandemic, and this year is no exception. A survey was sent by email to current members and past Bones Fest attendees to see if people would attend an in-person Fest, and the result is 12 people would attend an in-person Bones Fest, 44 would not attend though several of those said they would attend a virtual Fest (thanks to all who responded).

With this result, the Board approved a

one-day in-person event hosted by Kenny and Teri Wolin in their backyard at their home in Virginia on Saturday, August 6, and preliminary details are below. This event will be streamed. The Board also voted to hold a third Virtual Bones Fest on Sunday, August 7, patterned after our two previous Virtual Fests including a short Membership meeting to elect a Board for 2023. These two events comprise Bones Fest XXVI.

Greetings from In-Person Hosts:

Teri and I would like to welcome you to Virginia for a relaxing backyard Bones Fest at our home. We'll kick things off about noon for a post-COVID social. A short while later I'll be teaching a beginning/refresher rhythm bones workshop for friends, neighbors, family, etc. who'd like to join us. Afterwards, we can have a gather round and take turns with personal introductions and a little about your playin' style.

Once the formalities are done, we can spend the rest of the afternoon into the early evening playing together in an eclectic live music session with Old Time, Irish, and Sea Music. If you play other instruments we'll have to insist that you bring them and give us a tune! Our daughter Emmy is planning on hosting a rhythm bones-friendly, jazz jam session inside the house after dinner, so even though masks are not required, soft-position rhythm bones are!

We'll provide dinner, light snacks and refreshments. You provide us with your good company and yer rhythm bones.

12 years ago Teri and I hosted Bones Fest here and were married during our festival, surrounded by our rhythm bones family. We're looking forward to spending our BF anniversary with you, giving hugs, sharing stories, and playing music.

If you are interested in this In-Person event, let the Wolin's know using our Contact Us webpage. There will be a nominal fee to cover food.

The Virtual BFXXVI Registration Form will be sent in early July. A Program Booklet will be made with the Program and biographies of attendees. There could be a t-shirt. After 25 years, a quarter of a century, of Bones Fests, the motto is, "We Want More!"

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

Exec Director (Cont)

best, and where there is less stress and pressure on us to provide his care.

I want to thank each and every member of the organization over the years I have served, especially Steve Wixson whose passion for rhythm bones and expertise and so many areas has vastly contributed to the success of the organization. Again I hope to continue to be involved in the organization, as my life calms down and allows me more leeway. Thank you again for this opportunity, and as Everett Cowart, our former Director would say, "May Your Bones Be With You!" *Steve Brown*

Tom Connolly

Hello!

My name is Tom Connolly. I was born in 1959 and raised in Galway, Ireland, and had a magical, privileged childhood in a rural place called Horseleap about 20 miles North-East of Galway city [Tom's photograph is on Page 8].

I graduated as an Industrial Engineer from University College Galway in 1980. My first job was with Apple, for which I moved to Cork in April 1981. I have lived in Cork since then.

In 1988 I got a lucky opportunity to work in California in the Fremont manufacturing site where the first Apple Macs were built. It was a terrific experience, and my daughter Rebecca started school there, going off every day in the yellow bus.

Returning to Cork at the end of 1988, we had three more children – Daniel, Adam and Nathan. Sadly we lost Adam in 2004 in a road traffic accident just before his 14th birthday. I will never forget him.

In 2008 my marriage split up amicably and since 2009 I have lived with my soulmate Bríd and continue to have a lucky, magical life. We married in January 2020.

One of the great joys in my life has been rhythm bones – or just simply “bones” as they are called in Ireland.

I learned about bones in my native Galway in 1979 from Joe “Strokes” Stevens (brother of Padraig Stevens of a very well-known band founded in Tuam called The Saw Doctors).

I have a keen interest in music and as well as bones I have been playing bodhrán since the early 1970s. I am self-taught on mandolin, banjo, piano, and piano accordion and I have an ambition to learn ukulele.

I had a set-back in 2002 when I had an injury to my right hand, but I have figured out different holds and techniques to overcome it and re-learn my instruments.

I am a member of the Rhythm Bones Society and I love the richness it has brought to my life by all the members I've met.

I competed in the annual All Ireland Bone Championship in Abbeyfeale in

2010 and 2012. My style was classed as “unusual” by the judge “Junior” Davey, who won it himself in 2016. He is a 5 times All Ireland bodhrán champion and runs a bones/bodhran summer school in Sligo.

In 2011 I began to market and sell Irish Bones online at www.irishbones.com. I've sold bones in 26 countries so far, including the Outer Hebrides in Scotland, Moscow in Russia, Ukraine, Australia, Japan, Brazil and New Caledonia.

I generally sell one or two pairs of bones per month, mostly to people who know about bones and love them and have found my website through their own efforts. I created a type of bone that I call “Shib.” They are made by splitting thick rib bones and sanding down the marrow side until it is smooth to the touch. A guy in Japan loved them so much he bought 8 pairs!

I have developed my own methods of making rib and shin bones from Irish beef, helped and guided by Steve Brown, Steve Wixson and Scott Miller. I have customers interested in goat bones, but it took ten years to find a source – I told that story at the Bones Fest XXV which was held virtually in July 2021.

I have recently created a range of wooden bones made from a local Elm tree that had to be felled as it was blocking light from a neighbour's garden. I call them Glounthaune Elm, and each pair is serial numbered and comes with a certificate.

The lady who owned the tree is called Hazel and because of her love for nature she was in tears as she listened to the chainsaw. I went in to her and suggested I make bones from the tree and she loved the idea of bits of her tree flying all over the world to make music. I told that story at Bones Fest XXII in Lincoln New Hampshire which Bríd and I had the privilege of attending back in 2018.

Every single pair of bones I make is tested by my soulmate and wife Bríd. She rattles them, looks at me, and I know if they are good.

As well as making rhythm bones, I have supplied 25 full ribs for an artist to use them in a sculpture he is creating; I've cut pieces from a thick shinbone for a musician to use as the keys of a melodica he is designing; and even selected and supplied lamb ribs to a lady in France

who wanted to recreate a human skeleton!

I also make jig dolls, and I have created two characters, Reeling Ray and Jigging Jill.

Reeling Ray is based on my dad, and on a dancer called John Conneely who appeared on the Late Late Show in the 70s <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2v2911>.

Jigging Jill was created for the late and very dear Art Sands. Art was the first Reeling Ray customer and he ordered Jill as she reminded him of a lady he knew! There are now 6 Reeling Ray's in existence one of which has made it all the way to Brazil.

Jig dolls are much easier to learn than bones but very time consuming to make so one of my projects this year is to create a 3-D printed version.

Outside of making and playing instruments, I have written a number of original songs, tunes and slow airs, and have put lyrics to a tune composed by my brother to remember my late son Adam.

Once again I want to say what an honour, privilege and joy it has been for me to discover the Rhythm Bones Society, and to be part of such a wonderful, mad, beautiful group of people.

Bríd often says “Would you rather be mad, bad, or sad?” I'll take mad every day of the week! *Tom Connolly*



Selection of Tom Connolly's bones, 2018

Visit to the Center for Chinese Music and Culture

One day while surfing the net for new rhythm bones information, I ran across this video - <https://youtube.com/watch?v=Ay7qtHL86P8> with Dr. Mei Han demonstrating several types of Chinese clappers including the paiban, the closest clapper to our rhythm bones and thousands of years old.

Dr. Han is the Director of the Center for Chinese Music and Culture at Middle Tennessee State University which to my surprise is only a two hour drive from my house. She invited me to the Center where I spent the morning with her.

When I showed her my collection of rhythm bones she figured I knew what I was doing and called her husband, Randy Raine-Reusch, who is a musician with credentials of his own who also plays rhythm bones to join us. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/user/ZaDiscs> to view videos of their various performances that includes Chinese bluegrass.

My interest is in the musical history of the paiban. There is a tradition even today called kuaiban where a storyteller uses them as a noisemaker between parts of the story being told. Dr Han has a contact at the Minhang Museum in Shanghai that exhibits Chinese musical

instruments, and she gave me the email address of an English speaking curator. I await the reply to my email.

Dr. Han plays several instruments including the zheng shown in the photograph below. She demonstrated playing the zheng and she and her husband played it together with one on one side and the other on the other side.

As shown in the photograph below, I got to play along with her and one of her students playing a hammered dulcimer. This was completely unrehearsed and I know nothing of Chinese percussion, but I did all right. Expect a website video Post. *Steve Wixson*

Visit to the Center for Popular Music

There are two places that receive the Rhythm Bones Player Newsletter; the Library of Congress (for which the Editor is quite pleased) and the Center for Popular Music at the Middle Tennessee State University. That Center has many resources related to rhythm bones and I have visited them on multiple occasions.

The latest visit was a quick one following my visit to the Center for Chinese Music and Culture also at this university. To my surprise, they showed me how they bind the newsletter and a photograph is on Page 8. How very nice! *Steve Wixson*

A Note From Italy

I discovered Paolo Casini in 2007. In 2011, he produced a CD titled *Nacchere Toscane*, the Italian name for rhythm bones, and was preparing for a CD release event. He asked me to join the event live via Skype which I did.

Paolo wrote a detailed historical article on the *Nacchere Toscane* that appeared in the Vol 9, No. 4 newsletter. *Steve Wixson*

Here is a recent email from Paolo Casini: "What a pleasure to hear from you. I visited your new site and found it well done, simple and with lots of resources for *Nacchere Toscane* enthusiasts. Here the tradition continues even if there are no specific events that, sooner or later, we will be able to do!

"It's true, people are still very scared, but it can't go on like this! Here the situation is almost normal with traditional concerts and events with thousands of people. The mask is still mandatory only in theaters and cinemas.

"Meanwhile, there is a Facebook page called "crotala | κρόταλα"; here you can see some videos. At this moment a particularly significant one of the piece "TIRIZZUMPELARILLALLERA" by Morbello Vergari is visible; training his nephew Marco. Check homepage Post.

"What do you say if we put our video of ten years ago on my YouTube channel? Then maybe, we will try to do some initiatives together, since the technical means have remarkably improved from 2011 onwards when we did our online connection! A greeting and see you soon." *Paolo Casini*

Want to Be a Board Member

Sharon Mescher has asked to leave the Board, and the Board is looking for a replacement. The business and affairs of the RBS are managed by its Board of Directors. Board members, who must be RBS members, serve for one year, and can be re-elected. The Board meets at least once a year, typically at the annual Bones Fest though as a result of COVID also meets via teleconferencing. The Board is particularly interested in adding young members to the Board. If interested, reply using the Contact Us Page on our website. *Steve Wixson*, Secretary



Two Sides of a Coin

Michael Baxter had a photo shoot in Chattanooga and stopped by for a visit. If you do not know Mike, he was profiled in the last newsletter, and contributed two videos to our website using his professional skills and love of rhythm bones. The following is how the two of us saw the same visit.

Steve Wixson - I knew Mike was coming so I laid out much of my Rhythm Bones Society Collection such as newsletters, historical documents, and donated rhythm bones (the most recent being Walt Watkins' collection donated by his widow, Joy). I had my working sets of rhythm bones (10 pair) that I take to jam sessions and Bones Fests, and a second collection with rhythm bones I play with occasionally.

Mike arrived at lunchtime, and I showed him all that I had set out, and played videos of the different ways I play.

After lunch what Mike really wanted was to play together. He set up his video camera while I located some legal music, and we started trying different combinations of lead/follow, solo/accompany, etc.

Mike has learned a lot about RBS members, and I was able to show him videos of people he had heard of like Joe Birl playing slow. Since Mike has not been to a Bones Fest, I showed him video highlights from several Bones Fests.

He left after 5 hours of trying lots of different rhythm bones, playing together, and talking about most every aspect of our instrument that we could think of.

Wouldn't a Bones Fest in Phoenix be great!

Michael Baxter - Any doctor worth his salt, knows there's a connection between bones. But what the doctor may not know, is that there's also a connection between rhythm bones players. Recently I had the privilege of

meeting Steve Wixson after a couple of years of emails and phone calls. I was in Chattanooga on business, and he was kind enough to invite me over. I was treated to a wonderful lunch, including some fresh sourdough bread, gumbo, and homemade apple sauce. I highly recommend Steve's if you're ever in the area.

But seriously, I was amazed at his knowledge of the history and key players of rhythm bones. From his mountain-side home overlooking Chattanooga, we watched historic performances, poured through his extensive collection of rhythm bones, then did some playing ourselves. For me that was the best part. To get to play bones with the 2003 World Bones Champion was a great experience, and the closest I've come to experiencing a Bones Fest. We really had fun offsetting our rhythms and taking turns in the lead.

After hearing about Steve's experiences with legends like Joe Birl and Mel Mercier, there's a part of me that feels like I'm a couple decades late to the party. It's similar to how I felt when discovered the Clancy Brothers music after they were all but gone. For this reason, I took my own children to see the Chieftains while they were still with us. Someday my kids will understand that they witnessed history in the making.

That said, it also reinforced my passion for sharing rhythm bones with the next generation. Before I left, Steve gave me a Bones Fest IV ball cap and another pair of cow ribs. You can never have enough rhythm bones. While it won't show on an x-ray, there's a strong connection between bones players, and this was a real honor for me. Thanks Steve!

(Continued from Page 1)

was enough Sears and Roebucks catalogs or soft corn cobs in the two holed out-house, tending to the farm animals and assisting with the planting, husbandry and harvesting of the farm crops. (Note: I was the slowest cotton picker one could ever find!)

As a freshman and sophomore in high school, I got my first "job" with a neighbor as an equipment operator for his hay baling service and finished out the last two years working for another neighbor as a ranch hand and carpenter's helper. After graduation I worked the summer as a roustabout at a Cadillac dealership and then used a music scholarship to start college in September of 1966. In January of 1967, I realized that I could not rely on my parents to supply necessary funds, so I started working afternoons at the nearby YMCA as a lifeguard, youth activity program Instructor and also worked evenings at a restaurant as a fountain attendant and cashier.

In September, 1968 of my Junior year, I realized I needed to make more money (I was also going to get married in November) so I secured a construction job as a welder's helper and pipe fitter's helper. After I received a Reduction In Force (the construction was completed) I went to work for the Texas Department of Transportation as an inspector.

An active duty requirement as part of my Navy Reserve enlistment occupied my time as a Signalman aboard the USS Luzerne County (LST 902) freighting supplies in all the rivers of the Mekong River Delta and the eastern coast of Viet Nam. When I got back from my one year of active duty requirement, I went back to work for the Texas Department of Transportation as a construction inspector and survey team member.

In January of 1971 I was asked to come back to work at the YMCA as a Health Club Director, then the Y's Aquatic Director, and when I got a degree in Physical Education I was asked to serve as the Y's Program/Physical Director and later as the Acting Executive Director. When the Y selected a new Executive Director, I was asked by the owner of a car dealership to work as a car salesman. This was another "Cotton Picking" job that I was not good at.

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I was asked to work as a Substitute Teacher—Extended Duty for the local school district for several months and then went back to work in the construction industry as a pipe fitter's helper, then pipe superintendent's assistant. I would have received a pipe fitter's journeyman's card if the reduction in force would have come two to three weeks later.

In 1979 I was asked to go to work as a teacher and coach in a local middle school where I held the following positions until 1996. Physical Education Teacher: 1979 to 1983; 7th Grade Coach: 1979 to 1991--7th Grade Athletic Coordinator: 1980 to 1991; Science Teacher: 1983 to 1995--Science Department Head: 1990 to 1994--Science Department Safety Trainer: 1990-1994; Title One Teacher/Team Leader--Reading & Math. (1/2 time position): 1995 to 1996; Teacher in Residence/Technology Director--Center For Professional Development and Technology, (1/2 time position): 1995 to 1996; Co-Teaching Inclusion Team Leader: 1993-1994; Effective Schools Leader: 1987 to 1992; Site Based Decision Making Team Chairman: 1992 to 1994; Victoria ISD Communication Committee Chairman: 1993 to 1994--Victoria ISD Communication Committee Member 1992 to 1993; Victoria ISD District Education Committee (SBDM)--Chairman: 1992 to 1993; Victoria ISD District Education Committee (SBDM)--Co-Chairman: 1991 to 1992.

Durning 1995-1996 I served as a Visiting Instructor at the University of Houston-Victoria: and then was asked to apply and serve as an Assistant/Associate Professor until I retired in 2004, but then I served under a Voluntary Reduced Assignment: 2004 to 2012. Tenure was awarded September 1, 2002. During the 18 years as a professor of education I also served as: Director, Center for Professional Development and Technology: 1996 to 1998; Director of Field Based Experiences: 1998 to 2002; ExCET Coordinator: 1999 to 2004; Interim Director of Field Based Experiences and Interim Certification Officer 2008 to 2009

I also served as the Interim Education Coordinator for the Museum of the Coastal Bend, at Victoria College from Sept 2011 to September 2012.

I am currently retired after spending

seven years as a YMCA professional, 18 years teaching/coaching in middle school and 25 years as a university professor training school teachers.

EDUCATION

University of Houston: 1977 to 1989; Education Doctor: Curriculum and Instruction; Specialization - Teacher Training and Certification; Dissertation: Effects of a "Co-Teaching Inclusion Model" on the Achievement Levels of Regular Education Students in a Middle School; Dr. Howard Jones, Committee Chair

University of Houston-Victoria: 1979 to 1981; Masters of Education: Educational Administration: Specialization: Mid-Level Management

South West Texas State University: 1971 to 1973; Bachelor of Science: Education: Major: All-Level Physical Education; Minor: History; Second Teaching Field: Middle School Earth and Life Science

Yorktown High School: 1962 to 1966

PUBLICATIONS

DISSERTATION: Effects of a "Co-Teaching Inclusion Model" on the Achievement Levels of Regular Education Students in a Middle School: Dr. Howard Jones, Committee Chair

ARTICLE: Professional development school: Teachers at one middle school tell their story: Published in the Journal of the Texas Middle School Association; Spring 2000, Volume 8, Number 2, pp. 12-18--With Dr. Trowbridge, Tina Herrington, And Eloy Chapa

Book: Isaac Hamilton: Surviving Amidst the Texas Revolution: 2012, AuthorHouse, Bloomington, ID. ISBN: 978-1-4772-6946-6

MILITARY

United States Naval Reserve: NOVEMBER 1967 TO DECEMBER 1988:

US Naval Reserve Active Duty Component: United States Navy (Viet Nam Conflict) April 1969 to May 1970: Crew member aboard the USS Luzerne County (LST 902); Positions: Signalman; Operations Department Damage Control Petty Office.

Diving Navy: Member of Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 1 Detachment 110; Rank of: Signalman First Class (Second Class Diver); Duties: Unit's leading petty officer; Unit's diving supervisor; Unit's leading enlisted diver as a certified

Second class diver; Unit's training petty officer; Unit's underwater photographer..

Awards: United States Naval Reserve Readiness Command Region 10: "Naval Reservist of the Year 1981"; "Naval Reservist of the Year 1983"; Secretary of the Navy: "Navy Achievement Metal: 1983".

COMMUNITY SERVICE

CHAIRMAN: Victoria County Historical Commission 2009 to 2012; Vice Chairman ? To 2009

Charter Board Member: Victoria County American Heart Association.

INSTRUCTOR/INSTRUCTOR

TRAINER: YMCA & NAUI SCUBA Instructor; YMCA Underwater Photography Instructor; YMCA SCUBA Accident Management and Lifesaving Instructor; YMCA, American Heart Association & Red Cross: CPR Instructor Trainer; American Red Cross Instructor Trainer: Swimming, Water Safety, Life Saving, Life Guarding.

LIVING HISTORY: Re-enactor for over thirty years.

MAGIC: Children And Adult Magic Shows where I have used magic as a manipulative in my science classes as well as teacher training courses. CONS, SCAMS, AND GAMES OF LITTLE CHANCE PRESENTATIONS: Magical illusions; Pin the Garter, Three Card Monte, Pea and Shells; SALOON/TAV-ERN GAMES: Brag, Keno, Black and Red, Spanish Monte, Faro, Chuck-A-Luck, Grand Hazard, and Hazard (Crabs-the precursor of Craps); JEFFERSON RANDOLPH (SOAPY) SMITH'S SCAMS: Soap Sales, "Baby Amber" (version of Soapy's Petrified Man), Telegraph Station; TINY TANNER SCAMS: Air and Space Museum, Squirrel Barker, Comb for Bald Men, Advice Books "All That Men Know About Women" and "All That Women Don't Know About Men".

ART: I have sold 2 landscape oil paintings, won local awards for my "Horseshoe Nail Art" sculptures, and have sold many of those sculptures.

MUSIC

CHOIR: Starting around the sixth grade (I think) I started singing in the church choir and here learned notation, singing in "key", and performing.

CORONET: I started my instrumental musical career under Mike Fassino's tutelage by learning to play a cornet when I

was in the fourth grade. In my small high school, 7th and 8th graders performed with the high school band so budding musicians received instruction while in the 4th through 6th grades.

TUBA: Jim Vanlandingham, my 10th grade band director, realized that he needed more tubas and than my embra-sure did not fit the cornet mouth piece. So during the summer between my 10th and 11th grades I taught myself to play this instrument.

BASS VIOLIN: I received a partial scholarship to Victoria Junior College and participated in the college band program with Wilber Collins and the coral program with Ruth Williams during 1966 to 1968. Mr. Collins wanted to add the sound of a "string bass" to his band so he purchased a yellow Kay bass violin and asked me to learn to play it. I remember that the only "lesson" I ever had on that instrument was when he and I sat down at a piano to find out where the notes were on the fretless keyboard.

After a one-year stint on active duty in the Navy, Mrs. Williams asked me to play a string bass part for one of her choir's performances. Dr. Harry Lyall, director of the Victoria Symphony, was in the audience and asked me to play with that organization which I did for its first ten years of its performances.

CURRENT INSTRUMENTS: The living history hobby produced the interest in 1800's instruments and music when I was at an 1840 event and saw someone playing a harmonica. Research revealed that the harmonica was invented in the 1820's and the accordion soon after, so off I was to the following list of instruments.

When visiting during my childhood, my father and Uncle Edo Heopkin would take turns playing Uncle Edo's Hohner button accordion after dinner. Uncle Edo made his last visit to Germany during the 1960's and brought back a newer accordion for my dad. When it could no longer be repaired, my siblings and I gave him another--purchased from Henry Hauschild's Music Co.

When I discovered that the harmonica was an 1800's instrument, I replaced the aluminum covers with wooden ones and learned to play several songs. While accompanying my dad's accordion playing of *Muse Dem* with the harmonica, I noticed that the pattern of notes was the

same, so I transferred the songs I knew on the harmonica to the accordion. It took about a year and a half of work to get the left hand to play the polka and waltz bass line.

Dr. Steve Trowbridge had a lap dulcimer and I learned several songs while we were attending living history events. I purchased a dulcimer kit from the Dulcimer Factory in Fredericksburg, TX and built one for my self.

Dan Overpeck from Corpus Christi brought a hammered dulcimer to the living history events and I could transpose songs I knew on the dulcimer to the hammered dulcimer--another kit from Fredericksburg.

Jimmy Driftwood's troupe of performers held a concert at the Victoria College Auditorium. His bass player had a washtub bass with a lever at the top to change the notes. Since there were no galvanized tubs during the 1840's I was stymied on building this instrument until I discovered a wooden dry goods barrel, bovine rawhide, and artificial sinew.

During the filming of the I-MAX *Thirteen Days of Glory*, one of the re-enactors was playing "bones" so Lark in the Morning provided the Percy Danforth's instruction book along with a cassette tape and his set of "bones." The curved slats from the back of a broken captain's chair provided my other set of "bones".

I wanted to play *Come to the Bower* on the fife while re-enacting Sam Houston's diversionary tactics of holding marching drills the morning before the afternoon battle at San Jacinto, so I taught myself to play that instrument. When research indicated that the soldiers in Fannin's command played tin whistles the night before their execution on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836, I added the "Clarke Penny Whistle" to the fife.

Information on making Stone Age instruments came from: Carolyn Arrington, Victoria, TX--Mouth bow; Internet--didgeridoos; and I purchased a concert quality Indian Courting Flute from Butch Hall, Weatherford, TX.

Betty Bireley had a five-string banjo in her antique shop that I purchased and then built a fretless five string with a wooden head. Then I constructed a gourd five-string banjo and have built several others on consignment. I have also constructed a bass banjo.

Many people say bad things about where accordion players can go so to offset any chance of this happening' I built and play a few songs on the angel's instrument--the Greek Lyre.

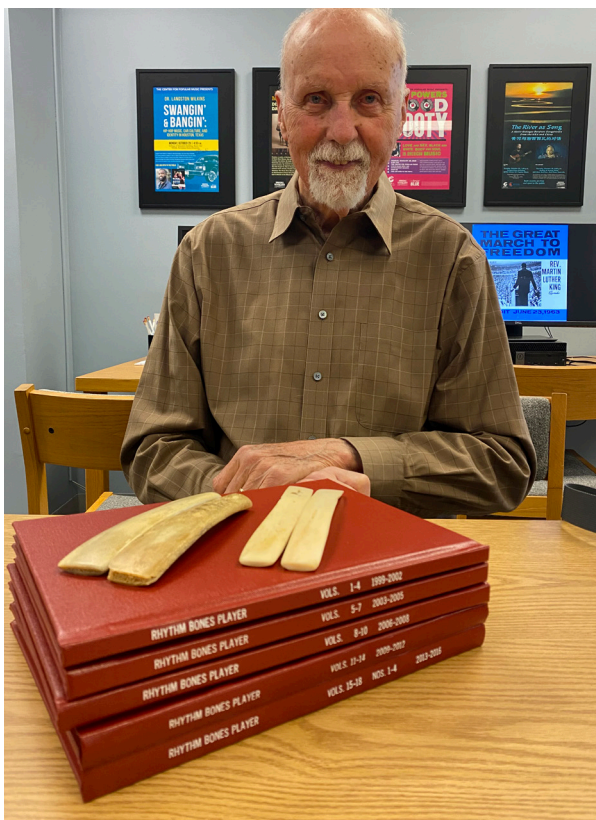
I demonstrate how fifteen or so different instruments are played (many of which I have built) at various club meetings, museums, schools, county fairs and conventions--the latest being at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas' state convention.

RHYTHM BONES: During the filming of the I-MAX *Thirteen Days of Glory*, one of the re-enactors was playing "bones." I saw the instrument a few months later at the Texas Folklife Festival and asked the performer about the instrument and where I could purchase it. Following his advice, I purchased a set along with Percy Danforth's instruction manual from Lark in the Morning and taught myself to play right handed. One day a thought occurred to me that I might be able to play left handed and after I was able to roll out a triplet on that hand another light bulb went off where I asked myself if it was possible to play both hands at the same time? The curved slats from the back of a broken captain's chair provided my other set of "bones".

I wondered if I and the one player on the movie set and festival were the only players in the world. That question was answered when Steve Wixson saw my university vita online and called me to ask if I would join the Rhythm Bones Society which I did in 2005! Currently I have hosted two bones festivals in San Antonio and serve on the society's board of directors.

During 2008 my wife and I were enjoying an Alaskan cruise when I saw a 10" long piece of Mammoth Ivory in a tourist trap in Skagway. Soon after arriving home, I was able to carve out the only (as far as I know) double set of the Mammoth Ivory Rhythm Bones in the world!

I currently play bones and the "One String Bass Banjo" professionally with the "Tanner Family Minstrels." *Dennis Ray Riedesel, Ed. D. (<R>eat'-a-zul)*



A copy of the Rhythm Bones Player is sent to the Center For Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University. I was thrilled to see how they bind and display our newsletter.



Tom Connolly and his workshop - Doing what he loves most. See his Profile on Page 3.

Rhythm Bones Society

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Address Correction Requested