



The Island Fiddler

The Newsletter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers Society



Vol. 3, Issue 4

December 2005

Merry Christmas to all - and a Super 2006!

Emmett Hughes - The Fiddler from Dromore

By Cindy McKinnon

He comes from a family of eight, which included six brothers and two sisters. Along with his father and mother, six of them played the fiddle so you know how busy that fiddle was. He was eight or nine the first time he picked it up. "You didn't get to handle it all that often and you had to be careful. The fiddles weren't all that good at home." His father, played out for dances and parties, but his mother played at home, although she did sing at parties when she was younger. While they weren't allowed to go with their parents, even if the party was next door, until they were eleven or twelve, there was always lots of music at home. "Hardly a night went by that there wasn't a fiddler come by, unless it was storming," he says. "Everyone would play from seven o'clock to eleven. Some fiddlers would drive as far as eight or nine miles just for a night's fiddle. No one thought it was not cool or nerdy to play back then as it was the only thing you had to do. There was no such thing as a radio until I was fifteen or sixteen and there was no such thing as a television, so you entertained yourself. There were so many that could play the fiddle back then and some of them weren't that good, but they still passed the time a little bit!"

In the nineteen thirties, before the guitars started coming out, Emmett would play the fiddle with no sound system. Later, they formed a family band to play at dances, consisting of Emmett on guitar, his brother, Earl, on fiddle and his sister, Helen, on mandolin. Emmett was the only one in the group that was right after the Scotch stuff, rather than the old tunes his father, Dan, played. "It was an awful job to get tunes then. I heard a record of Angus Chisholm and from then on Cape Breton tunes it was." Before that, his favourite style was Irish, half Irish half Scotch. They all told him he was the best fiddler around for the dances as he put life in the music that the rest didn't have.

This Dromore fiddler never had a teacher. He learned to read and write music on his own, although he went to a few lessons. "Father Faber MacDonald was instrumental in the beginning, sharing his own learning techniques, such as sticking to the music from one tune until you could play it from start to finish by the notes. You thought you knew the piece until you followed along with the music. A tune like the Irish Washerwoman sounded pretty different by music compared to by ear." He started doing this with every piece of music and eventually taught himself to read. He also asked anyone who knew anything about music lots of questions. His efforts paid off as he was eventually able to write music for two books which are used by some teachers.



The first time Emmett got paid for fiddling was for school dances such as at Dromore School in Johnstons River. "This was well over sixty years ago. You travelled by horse and buggy or sleigh. You travelled as far as you could go by horse, usually within a ten-mile radius. In the winter it would take two hours to get there. They would play from nine to one with no break, sweating all night, soaking wet, then freeze for two hours on the way home." He laughs when he remembers that his fiddle and other instruments were well taken care of on the drive

home, wrapped warm and secure in horse rugs. Back, then the pay for the night was a grand total of "\$5, three, one and one. Three for the fiddler, one for the guitar and one for the mandolin." In 1942, Emmett went to work on Art Roberts' farm in Winslow. He wasn't there long before they found out he could play the fiddle. After that, he was asked to play at house parties in Brackley, where they'd take up a collection to pay him. "If there were rich that were there, you could make ten to fifteen dollars a night. That was an awful pile of money then." It wasn't just the locals who showed up at these dances. One night, Charlie Chamberlain landed at one of those parties in Brackley, and Emmett played with him, not even knowing who he was. He had heard him on the radio but he had never seen him. Emmett also remembers teaching one student about thirty tunes. She seemed to be doing great and then she "just plain quit. Didn't even call."

Wedding showers and dances could also be long affairs. Emmett would leave his house at seven a.m. one day and return home the next. He'd play first for church, then the wedding, then from dinner to supper, then play till the next day when the sun would be shining.

When he came home from the farm in Winslow in 1946, he started playing at as many as six dances a week for about the next twenty years. When he was young, there wasn't a hall he didn't enter, either for a concert or a contest. Emmett and his brother, Earl, also used to travel around with Scotty Fitzgerald when he came over from Cape Breton. At this time, Emmett was at the guitar and Earl on the fiddle. "Scotty used to come over here a lot and be at Earl's house. Around four, when the liquor would be passed around, Scotty would take one and then say, 'Okay, no more until after the concert. I'm not going on the stage drunk, and I'm not going on the stage with short sleeves.' He always started out with a coat and tie on and if it got hot he'd take his coat off. He believed it showed respect for the band."

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This edition of *The Island Fiddler* is on the internet at <http://www3.pei.sympatico.ca/~paul.cheverie/tif.htm> where you can view/print.

From the President

As I sit down to write this column, I have just returned home from the latest general meeting of the PEI Fiddlers Society (Oct 26, 2005). I am filled with enthusiasm and excitement at the renewed vibrancy of our organization. Our most well-attended meeting in a decade has brought a wave of inspiration to all involved.



Ward MacDonald

Great strides were made with all major topics of the evening including our 30th Anniversary Celebration, Life Memberships, and Bylaws. Our Society's bylaws will be reviewed by a newly-formed Bylaws Committee. Co-chairs Paul Cheverie and Peggy Arsenault along with Amy Swenson will present their recommendations for bylaw updates at our **next general meeting on Wednesday, February 22 at 6:30 pm at St. Pius X Hall.**

Attending members were proud to spark the renewal of Life Membership presentations. Our Society will once again recognize our long-time contributing members with Life Memberships in 2006, (the last Life Membership was presented in 1987). In the same spirit, our society will also recognize deserving non-members for their extraordinary contributions to PEI Fiddling with the creation of a new PEI Fiddlers Society Honourary Membership.

The largest discussion of the evening pertained to our 30th Anniversary Celebration. The discussion included the specific goals of the event along with some of the endless possibilities we have as the event takes form. The major achievement of the evening was gathering a commitment from an ambitious body of members that will make it all happen. A Celebration Committee was formed with nine enthusiastic members who will begin the planning process for our 2007 event.

Fiddling is in great shape on Prince Edward Island.

Ward Allan MacDonald
 President, PEI Fiddlers Society



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"Music makes the world a better place"

Queens County Fiddlers

Carolyn Drake

The fall season has continued to be busy for the Queens County Fiddlers. The members returned to full practices the end of September, just in time to find out that the group had been nominated for Group of the Year for the 2005 P.E.I. Music Awards in November. A few weeks later, it was announced that their debut recording, *Forty Fiddles Flat Out*, had been nominated for Roots Traditional Album of the Year.

Great excitement surrounded the gala awards night at the Harbourfront Jubilee Theatre in Summerside on Saturday, Nov. 12, and when the ballots had all been counted, The Queens County Fiddlers were named Group of the Year, beating out The Chucky Danger Band, Lazy Jacks and Jericho Road. Although the album lost out to a recording by The Lazy Jacks, the whole group was pleased with the recognition. Ward MacDonald, who was in charge of the music for the album, Father Charlie Cheverie and several other fiddlers were in attendance to accept the award. "It was quite humbling to accept the award on behalf of the group", said MacDonald. "With the year's work that went into our CD project practising, recording and performing we challenged every member of our group to set individual goals and make a commitment to achieve them. Winning this award is a recognition of each of those achievements large and small." Other Island fiddlers who were nominated for awards were Cynthia MacLeod and Nathan Condon.

The Queens County Fiddlers are also scheduled to receive another honour at the end of the month when the group will accept one of this year's Caledonian Island Petroleum Awards. The award will be presented at the annual St. Andrew's Dinner to be held Friday, Nov. 25, at Holy Redeemer Church Hall in Charlottetown.

In other group news, a new executive was named at the Queens County Fiddlers annual meeting in October. The new president is Blair Myers, the new vice-president is Wylie Hall and the new secretary/treasurer is Cindy McKinnon.

The group has been following a lighter performance schedule after the summer months. The most recent appearance was on Nov. 6 for a benefit in Charlottetown. They will also perform on Dec. 3 in a two-hour free concert at Confederation Court Mall in Charlottetown. It's a great chance to combine Christmas shopping with some great tunes.

And speaking of Christmas, if anyone is looking for a copy of *Forty Fiddles Flat Out* to give as a Christmas present, simply log on to www.queenscountyfiddlers.com for instructions on how to order one or come to our concert on Dec. 3. You can also order a copy by sending a cheque or money order payable to the Queens County Fiddlers at: Queens County Fiddlers, PO Box 1592, Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 7N3.



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Emmett ... From Page 1

Step-dancers also sought Emmett out at competitions. He recalls Mary Murphy who was such a good dancer, as well as a Roberts girl from town, "a terrific dancer that went on to be a nun." Years later at a contest at Johnstons River Hall she came and asked him to play for her to dance. She was surprised he didn't know her although he felt he should. She told him he had played for her at every contest she was in for years and years and told him who she was. "You went to be a nun didn't you?" She didn't say anything so he quit there.

Emmett has competed in various contests throughout his life, with a few of the highlights being Rollo Bay in 1950, where Scotty Fitzgerald was the judge, and he got first place, receiving \$30. In Tracadie, with Angus Chisholm as judge, first place for him was worth \$10. At the Maritime Fiddling Championships in 1967, he also placed first, receiving \$100. This award is Emmett's highlight in his fiddling career.

With so much fiddling to his credit, it's not surprising that he has a few favourite tunes, including Lord MacDonalds Reel, Paddy on the Turnpike, Nova Scotia Breakdown, St. Anne's Reel and Heather on the Hill. Some of his favourite waltzes are Earl Hughes' Waltz, Gary Hughes' Waltz and The Hummingbird Waltz.

His favourite fiddlers from Cape Breton are Angus Chisholm, Scotty Fitzgerald and Buddy MacMaster. In P.E.I., his favourites are The Websters, The Hughes, The Chaissons, Omar Cheverie, and Joe MacLean. "Old Peter Chaisson, you'll never get anyone quite as good as him."

The places Emmett has played are as varied as the tunes he knows. He played with The Queens County Fiddlers in 1977 and performed at the first Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival with them. He also played in Cape Breton at the Glendale Concert the same year. He stopped playing with the Queens County Fiddlers because he didn't get home until midnight and was up again at four to go to work. Driving at night also became a problem because he was afraid of losing his licence. He would still go to fiddling sprees if someone picked him up. "They're the best of the whole works" he claims, adding that fiddlers still come around to play tunes. His nephews' daughter comes by nearly every Saturday to play.

When asked if he had any advice for new fiddlers, he replies, "well, I'd say if you're going to be an entertainer, you're supposed to know how to play a tune that somebody asks you to play."

... Special thanks to **Cindy McKinnon**, a step dancing & fiddling member of the Queens County Fiddlers, for this very informative and enjoyable article on PEI's Emmett Hughes.

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Prince County Fiddlers

Barry Thompson


Since last report, the Prince County Fiddlers have not performed as a group at any public functions. However, we have all been busy playing alone or in a variety of small groups. Patsy Bulger, Jim MacDougall and Leith Thompson accompanied by Darlene Harding on piano, Guitar; Alan Crozier, Ronnie Albert, Ruth Fitzgerald, on bass Peter Robinson and step dancer Tracy Arsenault have performed at the Chez Nous Community Care Facility in Wellington and the Red Oak Court Seniors' Housing in Summerside. On the evening of Oct. 26th, Edgar Millar and Barry Thompson enjoyed participating in a regular practice with the *Queens County Fiddlers*. Lottie Locke plays regularly with a group called *The Round-Abouts*. Thelma Campbell plays at various jamborees held in the Irishtown and Sea View areas. Edgar Millar and Nathan Condon were regulars all summer at the Rainbow Room situated at Rainbow Valley.

On November 11th, Nathan Condon accompanied by Barry Thompson on guitar and Legion member Jack Trowsdale on piano entertained veterans and guests following the *Remembrance Day Banquet* held at the Col. E. W. Johnstone Branch #9 Royal Canadian Legion Kensington. Nathan's lively tunes and waltzes were very much enjoyed and appreciated. This is the second year Nathan has shown his appreciation by playing for Veterans. Several of our group also participated at the Fiddle Doo and potluck supper held in Kensington Oct. 29. This event also featured a group of *fiddlers from New Brunswick* including Ivan and Vivian Hicks.

We continue to practice on Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 at Community Connections 701 Water St West, Summerside.

On Nov 14 we held our annual meeting. The completion of another successful year was noted. Nomination of officers resulted in Barry Thompson being returned as President, Leith Thomson Vice President, and Edgar Millar agreed to serve another year as Secretary/Treasurer. Strategy for attracting new members was discussed at some length. It was noted that currently there is no one providing fiddle instruction in the East Prince Area. Ways in which we could assist new players were discussed and hopefully a plan of action will occur in the New Year.

With the Christmas Season fast approaching, we have been invited to perform as a group at the Summerset Manor in Summerside. We have also been asked to participate in a Ceilidh at the Kanata Club sponsored by the Kinkora Seniors Group on Sunday Dec.4th commencing at 7 P.M. The main purpose of the concert is to raise money for the Prince County Hospital.

The Prince County Fiddlers would like to take this Opportunity to extend our sincere holiday greeting to all. 

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Acadian Fiddlers

Marie Livingstone

Here in the Evangeline area, our "Friday night Jammers" group is beginning its sixth year at the Wellington Boys and Girls Club. We start at 8 o'clock with a one - hour workshop, then from 9 - 11 (and sometimes later) we just play as many tunes as we can fit in. It's very informal and we always welcome new fiddlers, and anyone who wants to listen. Our goal is to keep the old tunes going, as well as learning new ones especially by Island composers. The charge is \$2.00 to help pay utilities for the Boys and Girls Club.

Our group enjoys playing at the "Chez-Nous" seniors home or for local benefit concerts and we also have a great time leading the jams for the opening of the Atlantic Fiddlers Jamboree and the Acadian Festival.

In the spring we gave a concert at the Miscouche Museum, and twice this year played at the Confederation Centre in Cultural Variety shows.

There are many places to hear traditional music in our region. The "Zoo" Café in Wellington has been hosting Wednesday night "soirées" with Louise Arsenault (formerly from the group Barachois) all summer and fall. She has different guests join her weekly and it's a fun-filled evening. The "Zoo" is also where Elmer Deagle from down east launched his wonderful CD in August, which is really worth buying. What a talented player he is! Karine Gallant from Mont Carmel, who's now studying music in Quebec, also played at Elmer's launch, and again on Acadian Day with some of her Quebec friends. She's a very precise player and impressive to hear. Their performance was energetic and enjoyed by everyone. Peter Arsenault and Gary Gallant did a couple of great sets too. They have a lot of fans who enjoy their individual styles.

Jocelyne Arsenault from Wellington, along with Robert Arsenault from Charlottetown area, formerly from Abrams Village, and his daughter Nathalie played with Roy Johnstone at the Shipyard Market in Summerside several Friday evenings over the summer. Jocelyn and Nathalie fiddle with a real Acadian flavour and had members of the audience getting up to do a few steps. Robert is great on guitar and everyone is familiar with Roy's enjoyable fiddling.

Throughout the tourist season, the Mont Carmel Hall and Expo Centre in Abrams Village had dinner theatres and concerts featuring Louise Arsenault and Anastasia DesRoches as fiddlers. Both these talented ladies teach fiddling. Also teaching are members of the group "Clack'azing" who play at many events both on and off the Island and are sure to inspire other youngsters to pick up the fiddle.

The Atlantic Fiddlers Jamboree is a highlight of every summer with a weekend full of terrific music. Our special guests this year were an impressive line-up: Howie MacDonald from Cape Breton with his accompanists Joel Chiasson and Dave MacIsaac gave an amazing five-hour performance, pleasing an appreciative audience who kept calling out for more; well-respected fiddler Peter Chaisson and his brother Kevin from Rollo Bay are always enjoyed at our jamboree and we're always glad when they can attend; Bertrand Desrasp and Allain Turbide from Magdalen Islands also had the crowd on their feet with their



Fiddle Care

Cleanliness

Peter Dawson Always wipe off your violin and the strings with a soft, clean, lint free cloth, after each practice session. This is necessary, because rosin collects on the body of the instrument under the strings and if it builds up, will be difficult to get off. If you see the white rosin dust building up while you are playing, you should wipe it off occasionally during a practice session. If you do this consistently, it shouldn't be necessary to use a violin cleaner/polish. If you do use a polish, use one designed only for violins, such as Peter Dawson's Cleaner/Polish. Never use a furniture polish on your violin, as it contains oils that build up on the varnish. If rosin and dirt have built up very heavily, bring it to a violin maker for cleaning.

Protection from damage

The only place for your violin, viola, cello or bow when you are not playing, is in a closed case. Some of the most serious damage happens because an instrument was left on a chair, in an open case (with a shoulder rest on) or, worst of all, hanging from a music stand. Always be aware of what is going on around you. Serious damage can happen when a

music stand hits a part of the instrument. Especially vulnerable is the soft spruce top. The edges can chip and break with more ease than the harder maple back.

The varnish on your instrument does a great deal more than add beauty to the bare white wood. It protects it and adds to the sound. If bare wood is exposed, either because of wear or damage, it is important to have an experienced violin repairperson add color and/or varnish to those areas.

Always keep your instrument away from extremes of temperature and humidity. Keep it out of the direct sunlight and away from heaters. Avoid putting it in the trunk of a car or in a closed unoccupied car. Heat can, among other things, damage the varnish and cause cracks.

Cracks can develop, especially in the spruce top, usually the result of damage or temperature extremes. If they occur, they should be repaired as soon as possible. If not, the problem may well become worse - and more expensive to fix.

A high quality case is an excellent investment and will go a long way towards protecting the instrument. Too many instruments are damaged because of being kept in an old, poorly padded case. The best protection is provided by a "suspension" style case.

We bid welcome to our new columnist, Peter Dawson, a well-known luthier, composer, and recording artist in Ottawa. Peter has a web site at <http://www.peterdawson.ca/>

Events Forecast

Fridays	Ceilidh & Dance	St. Peter's Bay Circle Club	961-2899
Wednesdays	Square Dance	Old Lorne Valley School	687-2584
Wednesdays	Ceilidh	Souris - Seniors Silver Threads	687-2396
Saturdays	Fiddle Concert and Dance	Charlottetown - St. Pius X Hall	368-1832
Saturdays (except 24 Dec)	Dance	Goose River Building	961-2205
. . . (Goose River Christmas Dance 17 Dec; New Year's Dinner & Dance 31 Dec)			
Sundays (except 25 Dec)	Ceilidh & Dance	Monticello Log Hall	687-2547
. . . (Monticello Christmas Ceilidh 18 Dec; New Year's Ceilidh 01 Jan)			

Fiddle Practices Open To The Public

Prince County Fiddlers	Mondays 7:30 pm
'Community Connections' S'side	836-3844
Queens County Fiddlers	Wednesdays 8:15 pm
St. Pius X Hall Parkdale	569-4592
Eastern Kings Fiddlers	Mondays 7:00-8:00 pm
Rollo Bay Consolidated School	687-2584
Acadian Fiddlers	Fridays 8:00 pm
Boys & Girls Club Wellington	854-2570

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Eastern Kings Fiddlers

Anne M. McPhee

Well, with the shorter days and the cooler temperatures it's obvious that winter is not far off and like everything else, things on the music scene in Eastern Kings have slowed down - but only a little. There are still lots of things happening and plans for more to come.

Fiddle lessons have resumed at the Rollo Bay Consolidated school thanks to the proceeds from the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival. Instructor Kathryn Dau Schmidt is once again at the helm and there are about 20 new students in the beginners class and about 15 students in the intermediate class as well. The advanced class, with Peter Chaisson in the lead, has 6 regular members so far this year and anyone is welcome to come any time to play or just to listen. A variety of tunes are being played with an eye (or an ear) to putting together a few sets to be played at various concerts next spring and summer. But for now, there's time to just play and have fun.

The ladies group plans to continue meeting for some fiddle tunes, stories and North Side tea as long as the weather holds, on Thursday nights in Teresa Wilson's kitchen in Goose River. The group recently had a tune, composed by Teresa in 1995 called "Family Ties", put to note on paper by Amy Swenson and will be busy practicing that.

The highlight of the fall season so far has been the Celtic Ladies concert held at the King's Playhouse in Georgetown on October 22. It was wonderful to have these Kings County ladies (and Lester) come east and play before the "hometown" crowd. It was a great turnout and a great concert. There is just so much talent in this group and each performer is given an opportunity to showcase their gifts (and advertise their CD's). There was definitely something for everyone - Colette Cheverie's vocals, Darla Chaisson's keyboard, Lester Stubbert's guitar, Jaime Bell's drums, Sheila MacKenzie's fiddle and of course there was step-dancing done throughout the entire show. Put it all together and this group works! This is one show that is not to be missed.

All the usual events are going on at this time of year. The Monticello ceilidh goes year round every Sunday night with special celebrations being held for Halloween, Christmas and New Year's not to mention Valentines, birthdays and Anniversary's. There's always something to celebrate out at Monticello. In particular, the Christmas Ceilidh at Monticello Log Hall will be held on Sunday December 18 which usually includes a visit from Santa. There will be no ceilidh on December 25. A New Years Ceilidh will be held on Sunday January 1st.

The dances in Goose River are still happening on Saturday nights as long as the crowds continue to come - until after New Years anyway. You are best to get your tickets for the New Years dinner and dance in advance so as not to be left out. The Goose River Christmas Dance will be held Saturday December 17 - there will be no dance on December 24. A New Years Dinner and Dance will be held Saturday December 31. Advance tickets can be obtained from Dolph MacIntyre at 961-2205 or Louise MacDonald at 961-2108.

The ceilidh at the seniors club on Main Street in Souris goes year round or there is square dancing in Lorne Valley every Wednesday night. The Friday night ceilidh's have moved back to the Circle Club in St. Peter's Bay.

Bishop Faber MacDonald was in the area this fall and mentioned how much he enjoyed getting the Island Fiddler Newsletter and keeping up with what was going on with the PEI

fiddlers. He had some very fine words to say about the work Ward is doing as the current president of the PEI Fiddlers Society.

The Acadian fiddlers have so much going on in their region, Marie Livingstone has agreed to come on board and write a column for the Island Fiddler Newsletter. This is what the PEI Fiddlers Society is all about. Bringing fiddlers across the Island together to share their ideas and to "keep the old tunes going"



PEIFS General Meeting

26 October 2005

A General Meeting of Prince Edward Island Fiddlers Society (PEIFS) was held on evening of 26 October 2005 at St. Pius X Hall in Charlottetown. All chapters were represented.

President Ward MacDonald requested volunteers to contribute stories of Island Fiddlers (some names mentioned) for the December newsletter. Cindy McKinnon graciously volunteered to compose a story. Anne McPhee announced that the newsletter website has been linked to various other fiddle websites in the Maritimes and beyond.

Paul Cheverie and Peggy Arsenault were appointed co-chairs of a Bylaws Committee, to review the current bylaws and prepare a draft for discussion at the next general meeting. The Bylaws Committee will be also be comprised of: PEIFS Executive, Kathleen Vent, Anne McPhee, Barry Thompson, J.J. Chaisson, Timothy Chaisson and possibly others. The Bylaws Committee will meet on **Saturday, 14 January 2006, at the Atlantic Superstore, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.** (Storm date Saturday, 21 January 2005).

There being sufficient interest to proceed with 30th Anniversary Celebrations for September or October 2007, a tentative 30th anniversary committee was formed comprised of: Cindy McKinnon, Carolyn Drake, Blair Myers, Nathan Condon, Wiley Hall, Marlene MacDonald, and Peggy Arsenault. A chair would be chosen from among these members.

Jennifer Garrity announced that her husband, Stephen Garrity, who is a web designer, may be interested in constructing our website. The meeting was agreeable to have him start as soon as possible. It was agreed that the PEIFS web site would deliver a message of who we are, with a page or link to each chapter, the Island Fiddler Newsletter, notices of concerts, workshops, festivals, etc.

Three criteria for Life Membership in the PEIFS were recommended, namely: automatic induction of PEIFS members at 65 years of age or 20 + years a member of the Society, or exceptional/outstanding contributions to the Society. It was recommended that an Honorary Life Membership would be open to anyone in PEI on the recommendation of peers and the approval of the PEIFS Executive. These criteria will be incorporated into the Bylaws.

The actual appointment of Life Members or Honorary Life Members was deferred to the next meeting of the PEIFS. A list of potential life members was discussed, and Chapters are asked to submit further nominations at the next meeting.

The next meeting of PEIFS will be held **Wednesday, 22 February 2006** (storm date Wednesday, 01 March 2006) **at 6:30 PM at St. Pius X Hall in Charlottetown.**

Paul Cheverie, Secretary/Treasurer

Southern Kings Fiddlers

Amy Swenson

Fall fiddle classes at Vernon River and Belfast Community schools started in late September and have been taught by Sheila MacKenzie and Amy Swenson. The last ceillidh of the year at Kilmuir Hall on Oct.1st was great fun. Fiddlers Attwood O'Connor, Ambrose Casey and Bud Stewart played for the dance sets. Stepdancer Janine Chapman pleased the crowd with her large variety of steps, and Bayley Matheson, 10, played two of her favourite fiddle tunes for us.

The Murray Harbour ceillidh has continued on Friday nights every two weeks, and everyone there was glad to see fiddler Jimmy O'Connor, 78, back in action again with some of his lively tunes. On October 20th, Sheila MacKenzie and Jaime Bell of the popular new group Celtic Ladies helped to entertain a large crowd at Poole's Corner at a benefit for a Youth Mission to the Dominican sponsored by St. Mary's and St. Paul's Parishes. The Ladies and Lester Stubbert are planning to continue their summer concerts at the Arts Guild in Charlottetown in 2006, and we hear they have been asked to do two shows a week!

The Belfast School held a concert Oct. 21st to benefit a student project; brand new fiddler Grace Walsh, 7, and veteran fiddler Dylan Menzie, 11, were among the entertainers. The Murray Harbour Six, a group of three fiddlers (Kenny Chapman, Cecil Chapman and Amy Swenson) and three guitar players (Mel Giddings, Wayne Maclean and Tracy Higgenbotham) were busy entertaining at ceillidhs, at a gospel concert celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the lovely old Caledonia Church on Nov. 13, and at the grand opening of the Murray Harbour section of the Rails to Trails project on October 1st. The end of the trail development at the Harbour is in a beautiful setting and will be much enjoyed by islanders and visitors alike.

Fourteen young fiddlers and many piano students play solos at the Kings County Music Festival Fall Recital Nov. 20th, and fiddlers Dylan Menzie and Marcelenna Collings will entertain along with fiddle teacher Amy Swenson at a benefit ceillidh for the Youth Mission held at Sturgeon that evening. During the Christmas season, there will be many fiddlers young and old out entertaining at Christmas events and at senior's residences all around the area.

In early January, the Murray Harbour Community School Fiddle Classes start their ten week run, with classes at beginner and more advanced levels.

Morell Community School will also start its fiddle class in January. Emmett Decourcey informs me that the weekly fiddle jam session on Tuesday nights at 7 pm above the pharmacy in Morell has been a going concern since last spring, with the support of a dozen enthusiastic fiddlers. Anyone interested is most welcome to attend.

Best Wishes from all the fiddlers of Southern Kings for a Merry Christmas and a musical New Year!



Fiddler's Shop Talk



Roy Johnstone

Last issue we covered some aspects to help you play in tune. I went over some of the major scales and the relationships between the scale notes and where you place your fingers on the fingerboard. A major part of playing in tune is getting your hearing sense co-ordinated with your neuro-musculo skeletal system ; the pathways that carry signals to and from your brain to the muscles that ultimately move your fingers. It has been discovered that short periods of concentrated rote repetition are a very good way to "tune" up this relationship. That's why many musicians spend time playing scales but to make the best use of this time you should limit yourself to aprox. 10 minutes of focused exercise at a time.

For example, let's take the pentatonic scale of C. This scale will give you all the notes for quite a few tunes , including the Scottish air Auld Lang Syne. In the key of C the notes are CDEGA. Penta means five and therefore the name penta-tonic for this five note scale. You can see from the notes in the scale that it's the same notes as the C major diatonic scale except we leave out the F note and the B note . These are called the subdominant and the leading notes but the names don't really matter if you know where to place your fingers. and you get your ear familiar with how the notes sound in the scale.

To play the C scale on the fiddle we start on the low C note , third finger on the G string (two and 1/2 tones up from the open G), then open D, then E, first finger (one full tone up), then G, third finger (a tone and 1/2 up from E) , then open A, then the octave C, second finger (one and 1/2 tones up from the open A). Try the next octave up and so on.


The penta-tonic scale often has a oriental sound to it and many Chinese and Japanese tunes use this scale but there's also more familiar tunes such as Old Lang Syne and Land of the Silver Birch, which is a beautiful Canadian folk tune. If you have access to a piano you can play pentatonic tunes by playing only on the black keys and as you will see you can switch the starting notes. On the fiddle you can try starting on any notes in the scale. When first starting to learn this scale practice in ten minute intervals, Sing the notes along while you play. This will help to develop your inner ear, Later, try to make up interesting tunes with this scale and see if you can find other familiar tunes that only need the five notes. Play slowly and get the notes sounding clearly and in tune and use a metronome to keep your timing even.

Till next time keep the bow rosined and the fiddle in tune!!!


(ECMA multi-nominee, performer and recording artist, Roy Johnstone, has a website at <http://www.royjohnstone.com/>)

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Acadian ... From Page 4

unique style of playing; Louise Arsenault and H el ene Bergeron (also from the group Barachois) performed with their super-energetic style that no one can get enough of. Other guests from eastern P.E.I. were Elmer Deagle, Timothy Chaisson, and Chad Mooney, who always impress, and Roy Johnstone from Argyle Shore who gave a nice jazzy performance.

Besides Louise, many other local fiddlers were great crowd pleasers too - the always popular Eddy Arsenault, with his brother Amand on guitar, Eddy's sons Peter and Albert, Edward P. Arsenault, Anastasia DesRoches, Jesse Francis with Grady Poe on guitar, the accordions of Roger "co-op" Arsenault and Sylvie Toupin, fiddler Jacques Arsenault and son Alex on piano, Jocelyne and Nicholas Arsenault with Pierre Poirier on guitar, Carole Gallant, Brandon Arsenault, Samantha Gallant and Janelle Richard. There were workshops given for fiddlers by Louise and Bertrand, and for piano players by Allain. Fred Horne and his dancers came to show us a few square sets which drew many participants.

The Acadian Festival is always on Labour Day weekend and is attended by several thousand people who come for the traditional music, beginning with the Friday night jam at the Expo Centre. On Saturday afternoon, the Ross Family from Charlottetown area had everyone clapping along for an hour, and then Louise performed with her son Jonathon who picks great guitar, and daughter Angie who sings like an angel and plays piano. The group Vishten gave a 1½ hour performance of unbeatable toe-tapping music. They perform all over Canada, the U.S. and Europe and are comprised of Emmanuelle and Pastelle LeBlanc from Mont Carmel, R emi Arsenault from Wellington and Pascal Miousse from Magdalen Islands. On Sunday afternoon, many local fiddlers played on stage.

At the MacKenzie Theatre in Charlottetown, Chuck Arsenault from Montague area and Albert Arsenault from Mont Carmel, (both also members from the group Barachois)

gave a musical / comedy presentation throughout the summer that was enjoyed by all who were lucky enough to attend.

Carole Gallant, from Mont Carmel performed with a group of musicians from Ch eticamp at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium in Halifax under the direction of Paul Gallant and Scott MacMillan for which they've received a nomination for an "Eloize" award.


In December, there are always the Christmas concerts to look forward to, at which there are always the "little ones" showing their progress on the fiddle

We hope to see some of you at our Friday night jams sometimes. You can call Marie Livingstone for more information at 436-5532 or Norman Arsenault at 854-2570.



Peter Mallard

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