



The Island Fiddler

The Newsletter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers Society



Vol. 4, Issue 2

June 2006

ROLLO BAY FIDDLE FESTIVAL 30TH ANNIVERSARY



Fiddlers at the first Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival July 1976

By Anne M. McPhee - -

Alexander B. Campbell is the Premier of Prince Edward Island. Toronto Maple Leafs star Darryl Sittler scores ten points in one game. Paul McCartney starts his "Wings over America" tour and "Rocky" is named Best Picture of the year. What do these events have to do with fiddling? They all happened the same year as the first Rollo Bay Scottish Concert in 1976, which later became known as the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival. 30 years ago. Where has the time gone? Why is this so significant?

Going way back, the violin was considered the leading stringed instrument in Scotland and was very popular throughout the Highlands at the end of the 18th century when emigration to the "New World" was at its peak. The tradition continued in the rural communities of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia (especially Cape Breton) while it all but disappeared in Scotland. There is some evidence that the Gaelic violin tradition might have been in trouble in Prince Edward Island until the radio brought Cape Breton music into the homes of Eastern PEI in the 1930's. The increased interaction between the Cape Breton and PEI fiddlers set off a return to the older style that was once common on PEI.

From the 1950s to the early 1970s, Prince Edward Island saw big changes; electricity, telephones and improved roads meant accessing numerous entertainment options. Where at one time there would be a fiddle-dance event every night of the week, by the mid 1970s, the barn dances and fiddle events had virtually disappeared. As the importance and visibility of fiddling declined, fewer and fewer young people were picking up the instrument and carrying on the tradition.

In 1972, a CBC documentary called "The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler", suggested that the traditional Cape Breton violin music was in a state of decline, and that it would soon disappear entirely. As a result, the first Festival of Cape Breton Fiddling was held in Glendale in July 1973 and the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association was formed.

Around this time, Joseph Simon Chaisson, a third generation Scottish fiddler known as Joe Pete of Bear River, was retiring from construction work and devoting a great deal of his time to playing and listening to fiddle music. He frequently travelled to Cape Breton to attend a number of fiddle events each year.

Rollo Bay ... Page 3



The Island Fiddler



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The Island Fiddler is the quarterly newsletter of the P.E.I. Fiddlers Society.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of *The Island Fiddler*.

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Established 22 May 1977 * Incorporated 31 March 1983

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From the President

Time to Change Our Tune

Since the year before I was born, our Society has been working diligently at promoting fiddling on PEI. The story has been told and retold of its origin - how the fiddling tradition was threatened on PEI by changes to rural life between the 1950s and 1970s, and how our founding members came together to preserve the music for future generations.



Ward MacDonald

Fast forward to 2006 — mission accomplished. Fiddling is alive and well on PEI. There are concerts, ceilidhs, and festivals every night of the week during the summer, and several year-round fiddling events. There are more young players than old players in most regions, and every Spring there is a crop of new fiddling CDs released by Islanders.

While I will be the first person to stress the importance of remembering our history, I also think it is time to expand the story. Perhaps we should be talking less about what we've done, and more about what we're doing. After all, Island fiddlers are doing great things.

The Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival will celebrate its 30th Anniversary this July, a fiddling student will receive the first Queens County Fiddlers scholarship this August, and plans are already underway for a PEI Fiddlers 30th Anniversary celebration in 2007.

I am also proud to announce that just last month, we launched our official website, www.peifiddlers.com. Thanks to the tireless efforts of our webmaster, Gerry Cheverie, you now have a site to visit for the latest news on Island fiddlers and events. You can also post your events and share your insights with other fiddlers.

It's a good time to be a member of the PEI Fiddlers Society. I encourage you to make use of your website and your newsletter; we'd love to hear from you.

Ward Allan MacDonald

President, PEI Fiddlers Society

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Rollo Bay ... from Page 1

PEI had developed a tradition of holding fiddle contests, which often brought about bad feelings and discouraged many fiddlers from playing in public as they felt they were not worth listening to.

Joe Pete believed that every Islander had a fiddle under the bed and decided he wanted to hold a festival. His family thought it was just talk since they didn't have a location but Joe Pete was able to lease the site from his sister Peg in Rollo Bay and in 1976 held the first ever Rollo Bay Scottish Concert on a Sunday afternoon in July. Thinking there would be maybe a hundred cars Peter Chaisson Jr. remembers; "Rollo Bay experienced it's first ever traffic jam. We didn't know where to put all the cars." Fiddlers came from all over Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. To name a few, there was Donald Angus Beaton and his son Kinnon, Alec Francis MacKay, Mike MacDougald, John Campbell and Billy Matheson from Cape Breton. From PEI there was Ralph Gay, Sonny Webster, George Weatherbie, Francis MacDonald, John Gauthier, Wilfred Bernard, John Dan MacPherson, Vernon Dennis, Charlie Sheehan, George Mel MacPhee, Jim Hornby and Father Faber MacDonald of Little Pond, now Bishop of the Diocese of Saint John, New Brunswick. From this event, the PEI Fiddlers Society was formed in 1977 and it was recommended that its members not participate in fiddle contests. This idea was well received and fiddlers all over the island started coming out of the woodwork.

Too many of those fiddlers have now passed on but their legacy lives on and the Scottish concerts grew. A second concert was added on Sunday evening and the second event in 1977 was called the Rollo Bay Scottish Concerts. Not long after that, a Saturday evening concert was added and the event was called the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival and, thanks mostly to the media, the name has stuck ever since. Now there is a ceilidh Thursday evening, a youth concert Friday evening, workshops Friday and Saturday mornings, and an afternoon and evening concert on both Saturday and Sunday with a dance following each evening concert. All concerts are well attended and the traffic jams have been cleared up with



Offspring of Joseph (Joe Pete) & Margaret Chaisson
left to right: Shirley (Campbell), Katherine (Melanson), Peter, Kenny & Kevin Chaisson, Gloria (MacIntyre), Donna (Chaisson), Dianne (Deagle) and Darlene (Campbell). (photo 2005)

the help of a number parking attendants present at the beginning of each concert.

In 1990, the nine children of Joe Pete and Margaret Chaisson and their spouses purchased the "Fiddle Field". The facilities have continued to grow and expand ever since. The fiddlers have gone from performing on the open flatbed of a truck and outdoor toilets to a fully covered stage, a large tuning room and fully serviced washrooms. There is even a huge Ceilidh barn now, complete with a stage, a large dance floor and a removable wall facing the outdoor stage.

Joe Pete was a humble man who never looked for praise, never recorded a tape or won any awards

but thanks to his legacy, his family has gone on to succeed in ways he might never have dreamed of. Peter, Kevin and Kenny made the first Chaisson family recording in 1979 called the Chaisson Brothers. Their children were not born until after the fiddle festival was under way but it was decided that the proceeds of the fiddle festival would provide the funding for fiddle lessons for anyone who wished to learn.

Most of the Chaisson offspring have attended the fiddle lessons at one time or another. In 1995, Peter and his daughter Melanie recorded "Road to Rollo Bay" while Kenny and his daughter Darla recorded "Dance to Your Tune" in 1997. In 1998, at the age of 14, JJ Chaisson recorded "In the Genes" and in 2002 "Class Act". In 1996, the Chaisson cousins formed the band "Celtic Tide" and recorded "Kindle" in 2000. In 2001, they changed their name to *Kindle* and have two ECMA nominations under their belt. Timothy Chaisson recorded "Something Acoustic" in 2004 and Elmer Deagle's CD was released in 2005. Tim is set to release his new CD next month. This summer, eleven members of the Chaisson family will be releasing their new CD "Generations, The Chaisson Family of Prince Edward Island" with Peter, Kenny, Kevin, Stephen, Melanie, Darla, Brent, Tim, JJ, Koady and Elmer.

At the 2001 ECMA's, the Chaisson Family was honoured to received the Stompin' Tom Connors Award and in 2004 the Chaisson brothers received the PEI Music Award Association's Industry award for their contribution to the preservation of traditional music on Prince Edward Island.

What Joe Pete started 30 years ago has grown into a long and productive relationship between the PEI Fiddlers Society and the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association. There are fiddle ceilidhs and dances available all over Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton, in almost every community, every night of the week. The Gaelic violin tradition is alive and well and has expanded, not only across the Maritimes, but also the continent and the world. So much has been accomplished in such a relatively short time and it has had a significant impact on every aspect of Island life.

Congratulations to the Eastern Kings Fiddlers Association on the 30th Anniversary of the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival.



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Acadian Fiddlers

Marie Livingstone

No doubt the summer season is a busy time of year for family reunions and weddings when relatives and friends like to vacation on PEI, and many look forward to hearing the old-time fiddle tunes being played at campsites and backyard barbecues or at concerts all over the Island.

Plans are well underway for the festivals lined up in the Evangeline region, one of which is the Atlantic Fiddlers Jamboree which takes place on August 4, 5, and 6. This event begins on Friday evening with a "jam" at Expo Center in Abrams Village. On Saturday and Sunday the concerts are held in the "Stable" next door. We are pleased that award-winning Buddy MacMaster from Judique, N.S. has accepted to come and perform. He will be accompanied on piano by Kevin Chaisson from Rollo Bay. Kevin's brother, Peter, will also be there as well as other guest fiddlers from New Brunswick and Quebec, and of course, many of our local fiddlers. It's a weekend you don't want to miss. You should also mark your calendars for the first weekend of September for the Acadian Festival - always lots of fiddling there along with variety shows and agricultural exhibitions. And, there are always concerts and activities on Canada Day (July 1st) and Acadian Day (August 15th).

Louise Arsenault is enjoying being the fiddler for the group "The Dirty Nellies". Louise and H el ene Bergeron played in Riverview, N.B. on May 13th at an Ivan Hicks concert. These two former Barachois members will be performing at the Arts Guild on Monday evenings from July 10th to August 14th. Joining them on stage will be the group "Clack'azing", promising lively entertainment for sure.

On June 11th, Karine Gallant and friends will be giving a concert in Mont Carmel Hall. Karine will then travel to Ireland to take fiddle and dance instruction for one month. And in August, she will attend fiddle workshops in California.

At the end of July, Peter Arsenault will play at a festival in Aberdeen, Scotland. He will be accompanied by Ken Perlman from the United States. Peter's brother, Albert, and Chuck Arsenault will be giving several performances over the summer at the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown, and at the Jubilee Theatre in Summerside. Anyone who has seen these two perform in the past as members of Barachois will know that this will be an evening filled with lots of laughter and foot-stomping music.

The group Vishten is now recording their next CD

after a busy fall and winter of touring throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

Carole Gallant will be fiddling and stepdancing in five shows in Cheticamp, Cape Breton, N.S. from July 27th to the 30th with a troupe of young musicians.

The end of spring highlights students who took fiddle and dance lessons by featuring them in concerts in their own communities - one in Abrams Village (May 17th), another in Deblois (May 29th), and a third in Summerside at Ecole-sur-Mer (June 7th). These are always popular events and it's exciting to see how well everyone does at all levels. Teachers who deserve recognition for their hard work are Louise Arsenault, Tracy Arsenault, Jocelyne Arsenault, Pierrette Arsenault, Monic Gallant, Anastasia DesRoches, Myl ene Ouellette and Karine Morneau.

For the past few months, attendance at our Friday night jam has been excellent and we've been learning lots of new tunes. Our group enjoyed doing a two-hour session for an Acadian Cultural Display at the ECMA's in February at the Confederation Centre. Members who were able to take part were Edward, Jocelyne, Marcia, Claudette, Ron, Amand, Brandon (all Arsenaults) and Marie and Orrin Livingstone. Tracy Arsenault gave instructions on stepdancing.

On April 9th, we also performed at the Acadian Museum in Miscouche for an hour. Members Norman and Paula Arsenault, No ella Richard and Dorothy Farish joined us that day, as well as Anastasia DesRoches and Dianne Ouellette. Both events were great party atmospheres, with many stepdancers adding to the fun. The Friday night jammers meet year-round at the Wellington Boys and Girls Club and anyone having any questions may call Marie Livingstone (436-5532) or Norman Arsenault (854-2570).



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**John Gauthier
Appointed Life Member of
The PEI Fiddlers Society**

John Gauthier, left, Stanhope, is shown receiving his Life Member from PEI Fiddlers President, Ward MacDonald. Mr. Gauthier is a founding member of the Society, and served as its first secretary. We congratulate John on a well deserved appointment.

On Saturday, May 27, 2006, the PEI Fiddlers Society presented John Gauthier with a life membership to the Society. Society president Ward MacDonald, along with Carolyn Drake, Paul Cheverie and Anne Cheverie, spent an enjoyable couple of hours with John and his wife, Mary (and their dog, Gracie), at their home in Stanhope, where they enjoyed good conversation, a few lively tunes and some delicious food.

In John's following words to us, he is quite modest in omitting his many areas of continuous involvement with the PEIFS and the Prince County Fiddlers - including the executive

posts held in both organizations - a story for another time...

John C. Gauthier - A Fiddler's Story

Being born on the eve of the Great Depression of the Thirties, growing up in that period was nothing to brag about except that my mother's siblings were always singing, either individually or in harmony. - examples being at milking time or driving in a horse and wagon or sleigh and later by car. In addition, most of them played the harmonica and one aunt played a bit of fiddle.

My first instrument was a tenor (four strings) guitar, with which I accompanied many old-time musicians, all the while memorizing tunes.

I started to learn the fiddle when I was fifteen and within a year had a fairly good repertoire. I realized early on that my ability to learn new tunes was limited by what I could hear; so I set about to learn to read.

During this time, while working a six-day 54-hour week, I played summer dances and three 15-minute sponsored programs per week on CFCY radio station.

After joining the Canadian Forces, in 1947, my music became a hobby, but a very important hobby nevertheless! I retired from the Forces in 1977. It was about this time that Rev. Faber MacDonald began beating the bushes for Island fiddlers with the aim of forming an Island Fiddlers Society. I eagerly endorsed the stated aims of such a society, and at a meeting in October of that year, the Society became a reality. That same year, the Prince County Chapter of the Society was formed, at which I taught beginners and intermediates for fifteen years until I moved to Stanhope in 1992/93.

John C. Gauthier

The Society is pleased to have revived its tradition of honouring dedicated musicians with life memberships. Several other fiddlers will be honoured at the Queens County Fiddlers' annual spring concert on June 10. Be sure to read the next edition of this newsletter for stories and pictures from the event.

PEI Fiddlers Society - Life Members

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Anne Marie Arsenault | Lenie Bolger | Ralph Gay | George MacIntyre | Ernest Poole |
| Eddy Arsenault | Russell Bourls | Roland Jay | George Mclsaac | Charles Sheehan |
| Toussaint Arsenault | Peter Chaisson Sr. | John J. MacCormack | Joe MacIsaac | Kenneth Stewart |
| Jim Bearisto | Vernon Dennis | Rev. Faber MacDonald | Ed Matthews | Harry Wood |
| Anthony Bernard | John C. Gauthier | Hector MacDonald | Frank O'Connor | |

Eastern Kings Fiddlers

Anne M. McPhee

The Eastern Kings Fiddlers' Association has just wrapped up another successful year of fiddle lessons thanks once again to proceeds from the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival. As usual, Kathryn Dau Schmidt did a fantastic job teaching the beginner and intermediate students the basics of fiddle playing while Peter Chaisson Jr lead a small but dedicated group of more advanced fiddlers.

The Annual Family Night Concert was a huge success with a something for everyone. The beginners class played at a more advanced level than has been heard in quite some time with students ranging in age from 6 to 66 years while the intermediate class did an excellent job on a harmony piece called Cradle Song as well as a nice collection of jigs. Soloists Kaitlyn MacInnis, Beverly Harris, Linda McClumpha, Elizabeth Burke and Tracy Burke did fine jobs on their selected tunes while Samara Blakeney stumped piano player Kevin Chaisson when he was unable to accompany her with her rendition of Star Wars.

Rebecca Blakeney, a former cellist, has converted nicely to the fiddle while Caroline MacDonald got everyone's attention with how much she has progressed this year while being accompanied on the tin whistle by her dad Gene MacDonald. Gene returned to the stage to play the fiddle accompanied by his other daughter Martha on the small pipes. It was a performance to remember. 11 year old Aaron Townshend surprised everybody with his impeccable timing on the spoons when he accompanied his dad Jimmy playing the fiddle. Alton MacKenzie, look out.

Chad Mooney played a set of jigs while a gaggle of female followers looked on from behind the curtains. At 14, Chad is quite the popular fellow. Whenever he appears with his fiddle, there's a troop of young girls following him. Chad seems to take it all in stride. He returned to the stage to play for step dancers Elizabeth Burke and Calvin Mooney to the audiences' delight.

The advanced class then took the stage and when they were finished playing their sets all the students returned to the stage to play MacPherson's Lament in three part harmony as the grand finale. It was a fitting tribute to kick off the 30th Annual Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival.

Plans for the summer are well underway. In another tribute to the 30th Anniversary of the Fiddle Festival, fiddle students of all ages from Eastern Kings, Southern Kings and Central Queens will be coming together to play at a fundraising

concert called Fiddlemania Plus! at the Donagh School on June 4. Proceeds will be divided between the three food banks.

The Goose River dances have been going full tilt all winter long and plan to continue all through the summer. May and June are great months to attend since there is a chance to win a feed of lobster with the purchase of a ticket in the lobster draw every Saturday night.

Sunday night in Monticello is the place to be in the summer time where visitors from all over get a chance to share their talents. The Friday night ceilidh's in St. Peter's will be moving to Monday nights at the Circle Club while the Dundas ceilidh's will be starting up again on Friday nights at the Dundas Plowing Match Grounds. The ceilidh at the Silver Threads Seniors centre in Souris and dances at Lorne Valley will continue through the summer on Wednesday nights. There will be lots of action again on Thursday evenings in the Ceilidh barn on the grounds of the Fiddle Festival Field in Rollo Bay starting in the middle of June.

The biggest event in Eastern Kings this year is of course the 30th Anniversary of the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival. Jerry Holland is coming over from Cape Breton along with many, many others. Watch for the release of the Chaisson Family CD due out sometime this summer. With two generations of Chaissons playing fiddle, guitar and piano on 14 or 15 cuts, it is sure to be a hit.

There is an interesting quote from the collection of Island author David Weale that says; "Women who played the fiddle were once viewed as socially unacceptable, as it was felt they could entice any man they wanted." Fortunately, this view appears to have been dispelled as more than half the students in Eastern Kings are now female. More and more women are taking up the fiddle and playing it well while the men around here appear to be quite safe.



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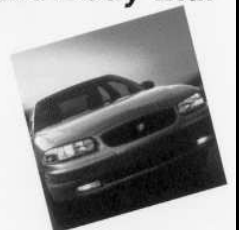
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Southern Kings Fiddlers

Amy Swenson

I am happy to report that the Murray River Ceilidhs for the QEH were a success again this year, with fiddlers Attwood O'Connor, Dylan Menzie, Bud Stewart and many others helping with the entertainment. \$21,000 was raised for the hospital at these April benefits! Dylan is hosting a benefit at Murray River Hall on June 2 for the IWK; several young fiddlers will be performing. Fifteen fiddlers aged 6 to 15 played at the Kings County Music Festival recital in April.

The Murray Harbour Ceilidhs have featured the Murray Harbour Six, with fiddlers Cecil Chapman, Amy Swenson, and Kenny Chapman (whenever he can be pried away from his new mandolin!). These ceilidhs will take place on alternate Fridays throughout the summer, and visitors are very welcome to perform. Check the Buzz for dates.

The Kilmuir Hall Ceilidhs are starting Saturday May 27th and will continue throughout the summer every two weeks thereafter. Tourists and local guests always enjoy some good fiddle music and a tasty snack at Kilmuir - we hope to see you there! There are two jam sessions in the area for guitar, mandolin and fiddle players, and anyone is welcome to participate. For information on the summer fiddle jams in Morell, call Emmett DeCoursey at 961-2962 and for information on the jams at the Plough the Waves Centre in Wood Island, call Linda Stewart at 962-3106.

Many local fiddlers young and old will be participating in the Fiddlemania Plus Concert at Donaugh School on June 4th, along with fiddlers from Rollo Bay, Charlottetown, Donagh and Sherwood Schools. This concert kicks off the 30th anniversary celebrations for the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival, and will also feature the incredible Montague Regional High School Jazz Band, led by Kirk White. All proceeds will go to local food banks.

The 30th anniversary celebrations continue at Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival and this year a keen group of Southern Kings Fiddlers will be there on Sunday, July 16th.

In my last column, I told you about Harold Dockendorff coming by for a fiddle repair. Well, Harold, 85, called up a couple weeks later and said that his fiddle was still a bit squeaky and he hoped that if I cut down the E side of the bridge, it might help. So I cut the bridge down a little and then suggested he try playing with a better bow to see if that would also help. He tried his fiddle out with my P & H bow and played tune after tune, with a lot of ornaments and double stopping...it was obvious he had been quite the player! He reminisced about playing at dances in Mt. Hope, Forest Hill and Albion when he was in his twenties and thirties, accompanied by his brother on guitar. After trying quite a few tunes, he said, well, that is better. The bridge helps and I will get a new bow, but you know, it is still a bit squeaky. Perhaps it's because I haven't been playing for a while. So I asked him how long it had been since he played, and he replied, oh, I gave it up after I came home from working in Labrador back in 1953!

On a serious note, there is a rumor that the string programs in schools around Charlottetown are in jeopardy from budget cutbacks at the Eastern School Board. As a graduate of an elementary school string program myself, I am greatly distressed at this news and hope that fiddlers

around PEI will voice their opposition to these cutbacks, which involve violin and fiddle programs for children in grades 4 to 9. Many of these students cannot afford to purchase their own instruments and lessons, but are very keen to learn how to play. The Eastern Board has invested a lot of money over the years in purchasing instruments for these programs. For example, the Sherwood school has 60 playable instruments - what a shame if they were to be silenced! Please join me in voicing your support of these school string programs and the fine teachers who run them.



Fiddler's Shop Talk

I received a few comments and questions on my last column, of which some of you may be interested. Two fiddlers inquired about the Tascam guitar trainer I mentioned. It is a handy if somewhat expensive tool for learning tunes by ear from a CD. (cost is approx \$225). You can set up phrase loops to replay difficult passages at a slow speed without changing the pitch. You can also learn a tune in a different key from the original so if you are planning to spend a lot of time learning new tunes by ear and are finding it difficult, the Tascam guitar trainer may be just the rig for you. It should be available by order at most music stores.



Roy Johnstone

It seems that the talk on the pentatonic scales went over a lot of peoples heads so I will revisit that in a future talk. My intent with presenting these bits of theory is to give you another way of understanding music. A better understanding of the relationship between the tunes and the theory hopefully makes it easier to learn and remember tunes, and it is very helpful if you want to compose music or improvise on a melody or chord progression; but as one fiddler stated, there are many very fine fiddlers who don't read a note although they would like to. Just keep working at it a little bit at a time.

Have you ever opened a fiddle case and found that the bow hairs were mostly broken? If you looked closely you might see little bits of sawdust like powder in the case. Well I discovered this recently and learned from Richard Lepage that I have carpet beetles. These little bugs are very hard to see but they live off things like animal hair and fur and old paper. Another tell tale sign that you have them is that the bow hair will break near the centre of the bow. This is something you want to take care of ASAP so I purchased a can of the Green Raid and sprayed all my cases and the room where they were kept. I've also removed some of my old instruments from the room. They have hide skins and horse hair strings which might encourage the beetles to stick around. Hopefully I've gotten rid of the little critters. I'll let you know in the next issue.

Summer is fast approaching so get out and play as much as you can. Go and see as many concerts and performances as you can afford. Watching and listening to other players is a very good way to develop your own playing and if there are workshops available, don't be shy, take them. They're a great way to get inspired to practice and play, which is really what will make the most difference in the end.

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/>*

A Home Full of Music

by Teresa Wilson

On evenings in the wintertime, after supper was over, my father would take down the old Stradivarius copy from its resting place on the wall in the dining room and after rosinning up the bow, he would play the old-time tunes. All of us young ones would dance and dance on the white hardwood floor. After about an hour or more, he would hang the fiddle up and say, "Now you youngsters, skedaddle off to bed."

He revealed to us many years later that his reason for this was he could not tolerate the noise and found that it was the best way to tire us out while he enjoyed practicing his music at the same time.

Dad was a very good fiddler and came from a long line of fiddlers going back to Scotland. Mom didn't have to hide behind the door when it came to playing the old-time tunes on the organ. She took music lessons when she was a child. Through the years, she played the tunes well from the *Thousand Fiddle Tunes* book. Mom also had a great interest in playing the fiddle but could never maneuver the bow that well.

Mom often told us about her mother being a tuner. A tuner was often hired or invited to attend a dance or a wedding to accompany the fiddler. Guitars and pianos were unheard of in those days. The tuner would often be a woman or sometimes the wife of the fiddler and they were very professional. They would sit beside the fiddler and do mouth music along with the fiddle music. They called it tuning or jigging. Some people called it mouth music. It was very popular years ago. You would often hear it while working in the fish plants. Someone would start jigging a tune and everyone on the line would join in with the big machinery humming in the background.

Dad often boasted about his younger sister Hilda being able to play the fiddle and that she had played at a concert at St. Margaret's when she was a little girl. This we never doubted for we are proud to say she played terrific until she died at the age of 101 (see *The Island Fiddler March 2005*).

At the same time, Dad never encouraged any of us 13 kids to learn to play. He told us he could not stand the scratching sound of someone learning to play and that when we learned to be careful with the fiddle and bow, we should go into the parlour, close the door, and never play in public until we have learned to play well.

My brother Roddie was the first to learn to play the fiddle. Matter of fact, he was able to play since I can remember. He was a good player; especially waltz tunes and slow pieces.

Almost all the family learned to play well enough for our own satisfaction, not only the fiddle but other instruments as well. When we learned how to tune up together, we generally had a ceilidh of our own on Sunday afternoons with Mom and Dad included.

George, the youngest child just learning to talk, could jig the old-time tunes. I remember Dad made him a fiddle from a shingle with a spool thread for strings. With a stick for a bow, he would sit on something low enough so his feet would be on the floor to be able to tap his toe. He would play his make believe fiddle while he jiggled the tunes perfectly.

By the age of five or six, George was playing the real fiddle and had all the signs of being a fiddler, for sure. I must say, he is an excellent player and is quite popular at the musical functions everywhere. I dare not boast any more than this for fear he will read it and will be embarrassed at his sister for giving him all the credit he deserves.

George, being a very humble man, believes his fiddle playing is just something that everyone could do if they put enough effort into it. So be it! Congratulations George, out of 13, you are the champion.



Queens County Fiddlers

Carolyn Drake

The summer is on the way and with it comes plenty of opportunities for the Queens County Fiddlers to perform as a group and out on their own. We'll take to the stage of the Carrefour Theatre on June 10, 8 p.m., for our annual spring concert, Fiddlers and Friends, featuring a wide variety of traditional fiddle music, along with guest singers and dancers. See the story in this edition for more details. A special part of the show this year will be the chance to award several members with honorary life memberships to the group. The names of the recipients weren't finalized at press time, but there will be a full run down in the next newsletter.

Other group performances set for later this summer include our usual appearance at the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival in July and at the annual Prince County Fiddlers concert in August.

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The group has had a fairly quiet performing schedule this past few months as members concentrate on learning some new sets. Several members did perform as a group at a fundraising concert in Crapaud in April. However, individual members have been active.

Father Charlie Cheverie was honoured at a special evening, May 6, at the North Shore Community Centre in Covehead where friends and family gathered to hear stories about this well-known Islander. Several members of the Queens County Fiddlers were also on hand to provide music for the gathering at the beginning of the evening.

Later that evening, one of our young members, Mathew Reid, had a chance to share the stage with well-known Cape Breton fiddler Brenda Stubbert as part of a concert at Donagh Regional School. Mathew performed several tunes, much to Stubbert's enjoyment, as she called him a talented young fiddler to watch. Well done, Mathew.

Two of our young members were participants in the recent provincial heritage fair, Amanda Holm, whose project was on the Queens County Fiddlers, and Mathew Reid.

Young fiddler Kristyn Visser, who is also an accomplished stepdancer, has been performing at various fundraisers, including the regular ceilidhs in Winsloe.

Paul Cheverie has been playing for his daughter, Alice, while she step-danced at MacMillan Lodge in March, as well as at Bingo Country in April and May.

Marlene MacDonald did another wonderful job as host for the annual 21-Hour Equipment Drive telethon, which aired on EastLink late in April.

Courtney Hogan performed at a benefit for the Canadian Diabetes Association on April 28 and then traded in her Celtic fiddle to be a guest violinist for Charlottetown Rural High School's performance of Cinderella at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in early May. Courtney is a student at Bluefield High School but was recruited for this major performance. Still with Courtney, watch for the release of her first CD at a launch set for June 24.

Sheila MacKenzie is gearing up for another busy summer with the Celtic Ladies. Watch for their show at the Arts Guild. The group's music director, Ward MacDonald, has another summer of music planned for the Kings Playhouse in Georgetown. Details of the shows will be announced in the local media. These are just the highlights. Watch for posters, public service announcements and stories in the Island media to keep up to date on where members are playing.

Fiddle Care

Pegs

Properly fit pegs should be easy to tune and shouldn't slip or stick. If the pegs are difficult to turn, and stick, apply some "peg dope" (see your Luthier) to the areas of the pegs where they come in contact with the peg box. If the pegs slip, the problem is a bit more complicated. Take the instrument to a Luthier for an examination. It may be necessary to replace the pegs because they no longer fit the peg holes exactly.



Peter Dawson

Buzzes, Unusual Sounds etc.

Occasionally, your violin may develop a buzz or lose volume and quality of sound. There can be a number of causes for this, but the most common is an open seam. The glue that holds the violin together can dry out. Gluing a seam together is not a difficult repair for the experienced violin repairman. Buzzes can also be caused by a loose tuner as well as something metallic touching the body of the instrument. In unusual circumstances, the linings, bass bar or corner blocks can come loose. Usually the top of the instrument must come off in order to do the repairs.

Buzzes in violins are the bane of the musician's life. They might be caused by something as simple as a loose E tuner or as serious as an unglued patch on the inside of your instrument. Buzzes almost always sound as though they are coming from the left f-hole, which is why people commonly blame them on a loose bass bar. This is almost never the cause. When you begin the search--- and you should look as much as you can before you head to the shop---check the strings, since they will begin to buzz as their windings loosen. Next, check for open bouts and then for anything loose in the setup, something like a loose tuner in the tailpiece or a chin rest that isn't completely tight, or even (not uncommonly) the pegs. If you haven't found the problem by this time, you will probably have to seek help at a professional shop.

(Peter Dawson, a well-known luthier, composer, and recording artist in Ottawa, has a web site at <http://www.peterdawson.ca/>)



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Prince County Fiddlers

Barry Thompson

Since our last report the Prince County Fiddlers continue to practice and play the old tunes. We have welcomed fiddlers Norma Arsenault, Mary Smith, and Guitar Player Marie MacLellan to our practices. We are hopeful that they will continue to perform with us. Norma and Marie are two of the well known trio of step dancers know as the Arsenault Sisters.

We have entertained the residents of the Andrews Lodge, and the Wedgewood Manor. Marie and Norma step danced much to the enjoyment of the audience.

The Prince County Fiddlers have accepted an invitation to participate at the annual concert sponsored by the Queens County Fiddlers June 10.

We are also preparing for our annual concert to be held at Community Gardens Arena, Kensington on Saturday, August 12th beginning at 8 PM. The concert will include fiddlers from the three chapters of the PEI Fiddlers Society and special guest dancers. 🦋

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PEIFS General Meeting

A General Meeting of the PEI Fiddlers Society was held on 15 March 2006 at St. Pius X Hall in Charlottetown. The Bylaws committee co-chairs, Paul Cheverie and Peggy Arsenault, presented a draft proposal of the revised Constitution and Bylaws. The draft was reviewed in detail, with minor changes agreed upon.

A General Meeting of the PEI Fiddlers Society was held on 11 April 2006 at Sobeys in Charlottetown. The Bylaws co-chairs reported that the proposed Constitution and Bylaws had received a legal opinion/review by Kathleen Vent and received some formatting changes, and were now ready for presentation to the next Annual General Meeting of the Society in October for adoption.

A letter from the newsletter editor Gerry Cheverie was read. Gerry described the rejuvenation of the Island fiddler, its current status, and financial shape, and in particular his request to the President to find a replacement editor, resident in PEI. It was agreed that the process of finding a new editor would begin immediately. The possibility of a newsletter "production person" or a paid position were discussed.

Secretary/Treasurer Paul Cheverie explained the immediate need for revenue for the Society to establish a regular postal box address, establishment of a website, and other miscellaneous items (photocopying, postage, supplies, etc.). The President agreed to ask each chapter for a donation of \$200.00 to fund these needs of the Society for the next year. Other longer term fund raising proposals were discussed.

A letter from Gerry Cheverie regarding a proposal for a PEI Fiddlers Society Website was read. Gerry proposed in detail the purchase of an internet account and webspace, at a very reasonable cost, from a company named 295.ca. The meeting agreed to accept this proposal.

Gerry has constructed a temporary website for the Society. As Stephen Garrity initially agreed to design a website for the Society, the President will speak with him, possibly regarding the design of a website that Gerry could update.

It was agreed that the 30th Anniversary Committee would now meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM, with Ward MacDonald acting as Chair.

Paul Cheverie, Sec-Treas. 🦋



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Keelin Wedge has Fingers on Fire - her first fiddling CD

Eric McCarthy - *The Journal-Pioneer*

St. Louis - It's a scene that has played out on stages all over Western P.E.I. and beyond: The shy smile on Keelin Wedge's face suddenly changes to a satisfied grin as she picks up the bow and draws it across the strings of her fiddle. Only 17, but already, Keelin Wedge is a seasoned stage performer. She has been step-dancing since she was three and she started learning the fiddle when she was six. She has performed in about a dozen different dinner theatre productions over the past seven summers.



She hasn't actually counted them, but Wedge estimates she knows more than 100 fiddle tunes. Sixteen of those tunes are featured on her first CD which is scheduled to be released this Sunday during the annual step-dancing concert. The concert features students from Elaine Wedge's step-dancing classes.

Elaine is Keelin's Mom. The CD is called Fingers on Fire, and the name seems to suit the talented young musician. She plays the fiddle with such ease that her forearm and wrist seem to float with the bow. "You've got to keep a swing to the bow," she explains. Fingers on Fire opens with Big John MacNeill. Wedge says that's her favourite tune on the CD, as she really enjoys it's upbeat sound. The second track is one she composed, St. Louis Jig. Next up is Sweet Journeys, performed in memory of her Meme and Pepe Wedge. Many of the tunes are familiar ones, like Orange Blossom Special, Carleton County Breakdown, St. Anne's Reel and Don Messer's Reel. The P.E.I. Jig is also there. Wedge's grandfather used to play that tune and so did her uncle. It's origin wasn't known, she said, but it became known as the PEI Jig.

The fiddle Wedge plays most of the time is one that her grandfather, Albert Perry, gave her five years ago. Proud of his granddaughter, the resident of the Rev. W.J. Phillips Residence in Alberton always tells people the fiddle she uses when she plays there used to be his.

The thought of recording a CD first entered her head early in 2005, Wedge said. Last fall she was at a celebration at the West Prince French School and Bruce Boudreau was doing the sound for the event. She learned that he had a

recording studio, Hope Studio, in Alberton, and she made an appointment to record a demo. "It just kept going from there," she said. The recording sessions, she acknowledged, were a lot of fun. Boudreau. On bass, is one of four musicians who added their own musical talents to the CD. Others are Remi Arsenault on acoustic guitar, Megan Bergeron on piano and Rodney Arsenault on drums.

We are most appreciative that our advertisers are instrumental in helping us to get The Island Fiddler to you - - they deserve your consideration.

Queens County Fiddlers Annual Concert

The Queens County Fiddlers will present their annual spring concert, Fiddlers and Friends, at the Carrefour Theatre in Charlottetown on Saturday, June 10, beginning at 8 p.m. Everyone is invited to come out and hear a wide variety of traditional fiddle music, featuring group numbers by the Queens County Fiddlers and the Prince County Fiddlers as well as guest solo performers from some of the best fiddlers on PEI, including Kenny Chaisson, Nathan Condon, Sheila MacKenzie, Courtney Hogan and John Murley. They will be joined by stepdancer Taylor Mundy from the College of Piping, the BIS Dancers and stepdancer Kristyn Visser, a Judy MacLean stepdancer, who also plays with the Queens County Fiddlers. Special guest singers for the evening will be well-known Island performer Eddy Quinn, who was recently nominated for an East Coast Music Award, and Jeff MacDonald, a Gaelic singer from Cape Breton, who will be making a rare appearance on P.E.I. Also, since our group was named PEI Group of the Year at the 2005 PEI Music Awards, we've been working on some new sets, which we'll be playing, as well as a few old favorites. We're very excited to have one of Cape Breton's finest Gaelic singers, Jeff MacDonald, with us this year. I've heard Jeff perform several times, and every time he has held his audience spellbound with Gaelic airs and milling songs. We're also thrilled to have Eddy Quinn as part of our show for the first time. This year's show will also see several Queens County Fiddlers become Life Members of the P.E.I. Fiddlers Society. Tickets for the show are \$10 and are available in advance at Capital Auto Supply, St. Peter's Road, Charlottetown, beginning Monday, May 29, until Friday, June 9. A limited number of tickets, subject to availability, will be available at the door the night of the performance. The doors will open at 7:30 p.m. There will also be a 50/50 draw and door prizes.



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Events Forecast

10 Jun	Queens County Fiddlers Ann. Concert	Charlottetown - Carrefour Theatre	629-9463
11 Jun	Karine Gallant and Friends	Mont Carmel Hall	436-5532
24 Jun-02 Sep	Celtic Festival	Summerside - College of Piping	436-5377
14-16 Jul	Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival	Rollo Bay Fiddle Field	687-2584
03 Jul	Chiquésa	Festival of Lights - Charlottetown Waterfront	854-3116
28-30 Jul	Emerald Junction Irish Festival	Emerald Junction	886-2400
31 Jul	Ashley MacIsaac	Victoria Playhouse - Victoria	658-2370
04-05 Aug	Chiquésa	Confederation Centre of the Arts - Charlottetown	854-3116
04-06 Aug	Atlantic Fiddlers Jamboree	Abram Village	854-3300
06 Aug	PEI Fiddling & Stepdancing Championships	Tyne Valley Oyster Festival	831-3294
04-06 Aug	Fiddlers & Followers Weekend	North Rustico Arena	836-3610
12 Aug	PEI Fiddlers in Concert	Kensington - Community Arena	436-9811
28 Aug	Chiquésa	Jubilee Theatre - Summerside	854-3116
02-04 Sep	Acadian Festival	Abram Village	436-5532
11 Sep - 07 Oct	Celtic Blaze - Stephanie Cadman	Charlottetown - Confederation Centre	566-1267
Daily	Island Shindig	Cavendish - Avonlea Village	963-3050
Mondays	Ceilidh and Dance	St. Peter's Bay Circle Club	961-2899
Mondays 10 Jul-14 Aug	Louise Arseneault, Hélène Bergeron, Clack'azing	Charlottetown - The Guild	436-5532
Tuesdays 10 Jul-14 Aug	Acadian Entertainment	Charlottetown - The Guild	436-5532
Tuesdays & Wednesdays	Celtic Ladies	Charlottetown - The Guild	620-3333
Wednesdays	Brackley Beach Ceilidh	Brackley Beach Community Centre	672-3555
Wednesdays	Ceilidh	Souris - Seniors Silver Threads	687-2396
Wednesdays	Ceilidh at the Corner	Orwell Corner Historic Village	368-6600
Wednesdays	Square Dance	Lorne Valley Hall	687-2584
Wednesdays	Ceilidh (21 Jun - 06 Sep)	Malpeque Hall	836-4310
Thursdays	Ceilidh (22 Jun - 28 Sep)	Stanley Bridge Hall	836-4310
Thursdays	Ceilidh (Jun - Sep)	Rollo Bay Fiddle Field Barn	687-2584
Thursdays	Close to the Ground Concert Series	Pooles Corner - Kaylee Hall	394-1115
Fridays	Ceilidh at The Irish Hall	Charlottetown - B.I.S. Hall	892-2367
Fridays	Ceilidh on the Water	Montague	838-3444
Fridays (alternating)	Ceilidh	Murray Harbour Community Centre	962-2273
Saturdays (alternating)	Ceilidh and Dance	Kilmuir Hall	962-2273
Saturdays	Dance	Goose River	961-2205
Sundays	Ceilidh & Dance	Monticello Log Hall	628-1254
Mon/Wed/Sat	Fiery Faith and Fiddles	Clinton - Red Road Country Inn	886-3154
Su/Mo/We/Th	Scottish Music Concert	Richmond - MacKinnon Homestead	854-2245

Gaelic College Fiddle Scholarship

The Queens County chapter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers Society has announced a new scholarship in support of the continued growth and perpetuation of traditional fiddle music on PEI.

The Queens County Fiddlers Scholarship will allow a traditional fiddle student to attend a one-week session (five days) at the renowned Gaelic College of Celtic Performing Arts in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, NS. The scholarship will cover the cost of tuition, room and board, as well as all fees associated with the application process (approximate value of \$805). The money awarded in this scholarship will be sent directly to the College on behalf of the student. Please note that the successful candidate must incur his or her own transportation costs to and from the college.

Interested applicants can visit the college's website for complete information on the Gaelic College and its sessions: <http://www.gaeliccollege.edu/courses.html> In order to be eligible for this scholarship, applicants must be:

- a resident of Queens County, PEI.;
- a traditional style fiddler who has been playing the fiddle for at least two years;
- between the ages of 10 and 16, inclusive;

Special consideration will be given to those with financial need. Applicants must complete an application form and submit a three-minute recording (audio cassette/CD) with a sample of their best group of fiddle tunes. Please note that recordings will not be returned. Completed application forms, along with sample recordings must be received no later than

Friday, June 16. Only the successful applicant will be contacted. Application forms can be obtained by contacting Carolyn Drake, 629-6036 (days), or can be found online at www.queenscountyfiddlers.com.

Return completed application packages by June 16, 2006, to: Queens County Fiddlers Scholarship, c/o Carolyn Drake, 13 Haviland St., Apt. 401, Charlottetown, C1A 4S7.

For additional information, contact Drake at 629-6036 (days).

New Web Site

The PEI Fiddlers Society has a new web site at <http://peifiddlers.com>

There, you will find all editions of The Island Fiddler ... and lots more!

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