

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? (WHY DO YOU CARE?)

After my recent revelations concerning backup guru Whitey "Mittens" Andrews (yes, you missed it!) a number of folks suggested that I plumb even deeper into the depths of musical mediocrity to satisfy their craving (alas, even on IRTRAD!) for celebrity gossip. Closely plugged into "the trad scene" as I am, I was of course happy to oblige, so here's the first edition of Zouki's "Where Are They Now"? - enjoy!

Debbie Pelnunk, harmonica (Sheboygan, Wisconsin)

14-year old Debbie had to give up a promising career in traditional music after suffering serious dental damage as a result of trying to play along with a "4 Men and a Dog" reel set without first removing her braces.

It took 3 orthodontists, 2 oral surgeons, a Roto-Rooter guy, and a pair of Home Depot's best bolt cutters to repair the damage to Debbie's chops. A spot-welder was called in, but his services were fortunately not required. "I've never seen so much tangled metal in one human being's mouth," said Dr. Walter Kasarski, chief oral surgeon at Sheboygan Hospital. "It looked like a forty-car pileup on the autobahn somewhere. My god, even some of her fillings had fallen out. It was grim. I don't know why these kids indulge in these destructive behaviors, I really don't ..."

Debbie's interest in traditional music did not diminish as a result of her tragic accident, however, and visitors to her tidy home in Sheboygan Heights are often surprised, less frequently pleased, to hear Debbie bang out what sounds suspiciously like "The Butterfly" on her collection of swiss bells while they pore through her oral surgery scrapbook (lots of color pictures). "I don't get too many visitors any more," Debbie says with a sigh. "and I wrote to 4 Men and a Dog to tell them about my accident and they never even responded, just some letter from a lawyer in Dublin telling me in effect to pound sand. It hurt at the time, but I'm past it now."

Sadly, in spite of the combined skills of the surgeons and plumber, Debbie will never in her life be able to eat turkish taffy. She would like to marry and have lots of children if she can do either without a lot of heavy kissing.

Armand "Biff" Blintnick, bodhrán (New York City)

The NYPD is still baffled by the mysterious disappearance of bodhrán player Biff Blintnick five years ago. In spite of intensive searching, no trace of the

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popular Biff has ever been found, although the remains of his famed 'mega-bodhrán' (measuring approximately 39 inches in diameter) were found in a dumpster not far from the Irish pub where Biff was last seen playing.

The drum skin (elephant, not goat) had been torn to shreds by a sharp instrument, later identified as a hunting knife. Coincidentally such a knife - with bits of skin still clinging to the blade - was found nearby with the enigmatic words "Jim 'Banjo' Flynn, 34 Carlyle Street 2-b, 212 555 6743, e-mail killdrum@aol.com, I hate f***ing bodhráns" engraved on the blade. "Maybe a lead, maybe not," said Detective Mark Logan, NYPD's man in charge of the investigation. "We're pros - we can't get worked up at every little thing. We'll check it out, see where it takes us, maybe here, maybe there. It might be something, it might be nothing. Biff had enemies, Biff had friends. maybe we'll talk to them, maybe not. Do we have an understanding here or what?"

Later theories to the effect that Biff's four-pound clapper may have been used as a murder weapon were discounted by experts called in from the Los Angeles Police forensics unit to assist the NYPD. The presence of traces of Biff's hair, blood, and skin, as well as a series of letters hastily scratched into the wood spelling out the words "the banjo player did it", were "inconclusive" to the LAPD experts. "We would have run a DNA test," said LAPD Sgt. Terry de Fazio, "but the guy on our staff who knew how to do it got pissed off with his boss and hid all the books and chemicals and stuff before he quit, so right now we're kind of stuck. I hope nobody's like in a big rush to find this Biff dude's killer..."

The "Get Biff and His Bodhrán Back Safe(ly)" reward fund accumulated a total of \$14.37, mostly from people with spare change who didn't know Biff. The fund was later disbanded for lack of interest, and the money spent on kitty treats for Arturo, the pub cat (who also was questioned by the NYPD and was later reported to have relocated to Brazil).

Rosie "Twinkle-Fingers" Dooley, piano (Port St Lucie, Florida)

Anyone who has ever heard Rosie Dooley's memorable accompaniment to Irish traditional music will, in all honesty, probably not be too saddened by her demise (mercifully due to natural causes) on October 13th at the age of 87.

While her name may not be well known in this uncaring day and age, music history will surely record the fact that Rosie, otherwise a likeable lady, left a

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big black ugly greasy indelible mark on traditional music when she founded her "Rosie Dooley School of Piano Accompaniment" in New York in the early 1920's. From this academy of insensitivity graduated some of the least qualified practitioners of the accompanist's art ever to "thump the ivories" (to use one of Rosie's daintier phrases).

One of Rosie's better-known exercises for her students consisted of pounding away at the piano for an hour or so with boxing gloves on both the student's hands, to develop "stamina" as she called it (although for reasons not clear, Rosie pronounced it "stam-EYE-na"). Unfortunately this exercise invariably took place at the end of the group lesson, by which time Rosie would have gone sneaking into her office for her bit of "refreshment", a sojourn from which she rarely emerged coherent. This repeated failure of Rosie's to instruct her students on the means of removing the boxing gloves appears to have left many of her impressionable young charges believing that the gloves were an integral part of traditional piano accompaniment. The results are, unfortunately, history.

(It may be of interest to note that the building that formerly housed Rosie's school is now owned by a company that manufactures custom-designed anvils...perhaps one of History's little ironies, or then again perhaps not.)

(By the way, the rumor that the cement piano placed lovingly atop Rosie's grave had been smashed to bits by a lightning bolt on Michael Coleman's birthday is apparently true.)

Zouki and the staff historians at the Zouki Cultural Labs - unpaid but dedicated - hope that you've enjoyed this little trip down Obscurity Lane. Remember - your name might be here next time! [Cute smiley-face punctuation-thing should appear here but I don't seriously believe that really macho guys like me are into that stuff ...?]

