

Interview with Tom Dummer  
Co-Founder of the Hiawatha Music Festival  
December 6, 2009

**Callie:** What does Hiawatha mean to you?

**Tom:** The themes of family and friendship in relationship are deep. This is what I miss the most about being on the west coast. I do not have that here. That community is one that will never happen again in my life. It is similar to the friends you grew up with and will keep in touch with through adulthood. You are comfortable in their home and they are comfortable in yours. You have laughed together at things that no one else would understand. You have cried together about things you would laugh about later. You know each other's extended family. I don't know how it came about. We had a similar interest that created a bond. The bond transcended the interest.

**Callie:** Do the Rhythm Billies have the binary of traditional and contemporary, cross-generational fusion of Hiawatha figured out in saying "Living in the past is the best way to stay young?"

**Tom:** I would not contradict those Rhythm Billies. They seem to have summed it up well. Also, I am just beginning to wade into the cross-generational pool. Ask me in a few years when Reese is deep into choosing his own music. His current musical loves are similar to mine – Foghorn (old time), the Mammals (old time), John Williams (Irish accordion) and the Beatles. He has added theme music from Star Wars, Indiana Jones as well as Pirate music.

**Callie:** What brought you all together at the "Big House" in Deerton? You call it "an experiment in communal living. Why did you want to live together? What was the feeling at the House?"

**Tom:** As for the experiment in communal living, I was on the fringe of that. Chris, Horse and Horse's ex(-wife) Christa bought the Big House in '73. A bunch of people from Ohio, where Chris lives and Horse is from, and Munising moved in as part of the "Commune". I bought my cabin and moved up in '76. I never really lived in the Big House and while the proximity gave me the advantages of communal living, I never had to deal with the disadvantages – dishes, cleaning, shoveling snow, cutting firewood, personality conflicts or finances.

What brought me up there is a story of its own. Here are the Cliff notes. Bonnie Holland and her husband Bill were from Paducah, Kentucky, my home town, and lived in Munising. I was a good friend of Richard – Bill's brother. Richard came up to the U.P., got involved with Cindy Golisek and they both moved down to Paducah – '71ish. By '72 they had moved back to Munising and I came to the U.P. for the first time to visit. I came again in '73 and through Jayne Rousseau met the crew in Deerton. The commune was in full swing at that time – a TeePee was set up, a geodesic greenhouse, the infamous sauna and more. In the spring of '74 I left Kentucky and ended up living in East Lansing and working in a bike shop across the hall from Elderly Instruments. I finally got it together to start back to school at NMU and contacted the Deerton folks to keep their eye out for a place to rent in Marquette. They told me about the cabin next door, I checked into it and bought it. Interesting aside: the bike shop had been sold in the summer of '75. The owner sold me a hand made Italian bike for less than cost. I sold it and used the money I made for a down payment on my cabin. I moved up in January '76. Jayne's brother Pat was the idea man behind Hiawatha. Cindy Golisek left Richard in '78 and moved back to the U.P. She designed the Hiawatha Logo. She also married Lou; they moved to Alaska, have retired and now live in Autrain. Not much to do with Hiawatha, but it is how I got to Deerton.

At the time of the beginning of Hiawatha, most of the cabins were inhabited as well as the Big House. Chris, Jayne and Katrina were living in the cabin next to the Big House, Steve Heitman and I were living in my cabin, I



think a couple Mary and Scott were living next to me, John and Martha Richards were living next to them and Lee and Tim Haydon were in the cabin to the north of them. In the Big House at the time were Horse – Christa had left him by this time – Donna McLoughan, Keith Walchter and Ken Fulcher. Jack and Sue Bowers lived up the road.

It was a very appealing scene. The late '60s early '70 were full of hope that utopian communities could change the world. I think we all saw our parents working too hard for goals that didn't make sense to us at that age. Looking back, there were a lot of good values that came out of that scene, but there were also a lot of good values that our parents had working hard to feed, clothe and educate us.

**Callie:** Talk about that initial meeting of the minds post-Wheatland in the winter of 1978.

**Tom:** Several folks had been to Wheatland in '78. Sometime in the fall Pat Rousseau, Jayne's brother, got a bunch of people together to talk about doing something similar in the area. Bill and Bonnie Holland were living in Autrain after living in Europe for a year, Cindy Golisek was back in the U.P., all of the Deertonians were there as well as a few folks from Munising. I can't remember anyone from Marquette there at the initial meeting. We used to have parties frequently in Deerton and most of them included music. Chris played guitar, I played mandolin, John Richards played guitar, Martha Richards played fiddle, Jack Bowers played guitar, Tim Haydon played flute, Lee Hadon played viola, other people brought instruments and there was always random rhythm instruments around as well as a piano. Music was a central piece of our culture. Putting together a music event was within our realm of possibilities.

Music festivals were somewhat common, but most were rowdy rock fests – Woodstock-esque. In that era were "Beer Stock" somewhere over in Marquette County, a couple of weekend "fests" in the Kingston Plains up by Pictured Rocks, a big bluegrass fest in Crandon WI on an Indian Rez and others.

The one big difference about Wheatland was that it was not a hippie rock fest. Although it was organized by a bunch of young people, it was attended by all ages and cultures. It was originally the Wheatland Bluegrass and Old Time Festival. Bluegrass attracted a totally different demographic than any rock fest ever had. To have a gathering of such diverse people drawn together for a similar interest was amazing.

We really had no idea about the size. I don't know how many people were coming to Wheatland at that time or how many came to their first. We certainly benefited from their being around for 5 years. I don't think we did any projections audience vs. break-even point, we just hoped we could break even.

At many meetings we had talked ad infinitum about what music to present. We were certainly focused on Old Time music and dance. Clogging amazed us. Other types of traditional music were also wanted. In our first mission statement we had decided not to be focused entirely on Old Time music, but to have a blend of traditional and acoustic music. We did have in our mission Traditional American Music – which was on the first annual poster. That grew to be more diverse and included music that had influenced traditional American music. One of the groups at the first festival was the Gogebic Range Tamburitians that played Ukrainian music.

Early on we had defined a formula if you will. We talked a lot about the aural tradition of music passing down via the ear, not written. We stayed away from forms that had ever been in the "popular" genre. We wanted Old Time, Dance, Bluegrass, Ethnic, Folk, early Jazz and/or Blues, with a balanced mix of local, regional and national performers. The lineup today isn't much different.

We wanted to bring in people that we knew and had heard. We were limited by our funds and the size of the circle of the community of musician we knew. We got a lot of help contacting people outside our circle from the Wheatland folks and Phil Kucera who had organized the North Country Folk Festival.



We were hoping for an atmosphere of like-minded people who came to this event for the same reason we were there – the love of the music. We wanted camping and a family safe environment. We didn't want any presence of police or heavy-handed crowd control. We wanted a weekend of music, dance, nature and camping out with friends.

I don't know exactly what Pat envisioned. He was certainly the vision person and I think his vision was a rural event in Alger County that was family friendly, had camping with music that attracted a diverse audience. I know he was disappointed that we could never find a suitable site in Alger County. I don't think he ever wanted it to be in Marquette. To my knowledge he never attended a festival after we moved from Champion.

**Callie:** How did the Scarlet O'Hara's gig with Lost World "jump-start the effort?"

**Tom:** The gig at Scarlet's was the first exposure of old time music to the general population. Those who had attended Wheatland knew of the Lost World and got the word out about the gig. I am not sure, but I think Jayne assisted in getting the gig. It is a big room. There is a stage, large dance floor, tables around the dance floor and a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of tables looking over the dance floor. It was the hot venue in Marquette at the time. It was the place to go to dance. While the word of mouth certainly helped the attendance, it was packed every weekend. The music, clogging, clogging instruction really spread the word beyond the primary group.

I remember wearing cowboy boots to the gig. Clogging and cowboy boots do not necessarily complement each other. I remember I broke the heels off both of the boots dancing.

**Callie:** Talk about the different fundraisers that you guys did throughout the following year. Did you receive a lot of support? And what did you witness in terms of the sort of volunteerism that planning for an event like this can bring about in people?

**Tom:** We didn't really get much negative response. Looking back we had some level of hippie paranoia but any obstacles we may have encountered were probably due to a bunch of kids trying to organize something for the first time. Everyone appreciates experience and we had none. We did just about everything to raise money. I think it was Sue Bertram who knew someone with a button machine and we made buttons to sell, we had bake sales, we had a "Pigs versus Freaks" basketball game in Munising. We also had a few Quilt Raffles. One of our most successful fundraising ventures was concert/dances at the National Guard Armory. After the Scarlet's event, we thought we could have successful dances if we could afford to get a band to come up for an affordable price. On several occasions we would contract with a band to come up. We would then negotiate with different venues to cover the expense of the band for their entire stay. Then we would rent the Armory, get kegs of beer and have a huge dance. The first was with the Lost World then the something Ramblers – bluegrass mostly – and the Red Clay Ramblers. There may have been others. These made us a lot of money.

One thing that made our fundraising successful was low risk. Everything we planned was planned to be risk free. None of us had any money. None. To pull off the festival we knew we needed seed money and we tried everything that we could think of to raise it. They may have required a lot of energy and time, but were low/no investment ventures.

**Callie:** Talk about the weekend spent with Lost World and Co. at the Marquette Armory and then at the Big Bay Hotel on Saturday.

**Tom:** I want to say it was March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1979 at the Armory. We had gotten a gig for the Lost World at the Big Bay Hotel to cover the cost of the band. We rented the Armory, sold baked goods, cider and beer. It was a blowout. The place was packed. It was freezing rain in the early evening that turned to snow. And it snowed and snowed



and snowed – probably a couple of feet of fresh snow over ice. Someone had the foresight to call the State Police and ask about the road conditions. They told us that it was so bad that snowplows had been pulled in and were only doing essential roads. They further told us to tell the entire crowd to stay at the Armory and not leave. We announced that from the stage and the crowd immediately started to disperse. One of the better crowd control measures I have witnessed! As far as I know, everyone made it home okay although car doors were frozen, cars wouldn't start without a jump and it was one of those nasty early spring storms. I ended up staying in town sleeping on the floor at Sue Swaney's house. The next day it was bitterly cold.

On Saturday we did a caravan up to Big Bay. We stopped at the Wright Place to get refreshments for the drive and Paul Winder's car window shattered when he closed the door. It was cold. The gig was great fun. I can't remember if the hotel combed the room for the band, if Hiawatha got it for the band, if the band got the room on their own or if Hiawatha got it for ourselves. Anyway, it was the Henry Ford Suite, a larger room, with two beds and a large bath. There must have been 12-16 of us staying in the room. It was wall-to-wall sleeping bags. It was not much different from a junior high or high school sleepover. We were all pumped by the music and probably an array of alcohol and simple drugs. This was certainly one of those times where we were all laughing for absolutely no good reason. As I remember it your dad, Richard Anderson and I went into the closet one at a time being the Alpha Fools of the group. Can't remember the order we went in or over what period of time, but there we were. All three of us in a rather spacious closet with a light. Now we had to do something. Through the brilliance of sleep deprivation – this was night two of this marathon that we had treated like a sprint – adrenalin, alcohol, pot and improvisation (in no particular order) we had to come up with something to be able to walk out of the closet. Wa Daddy it was. We had them in the palm of our hands. For a brief period of time in the very early hours of March 25, 1979 your father, Richard Anderson and I owned the Henry Ford Suite of the Big Bay Hotel. We were Gods. Looking back on it, I really never would have expected that crown to be that enthusiastic about three guys coming out of the closet.

I didn't and don't think of it as a sneak preview. It was the moment. Yeah, it made me think we could pull off this festival thing, but I was twenty-six – everything is possible – failure wasn't seriously considered. You never know those moments that are going to stick with you, which are significant, which are trivial or which significantly trivial. This was one of those magic blends.

I think it was empowering. We realized we could organize a series of events that were fun, well attended, appreciated and profitable. What a great combination. From the beginning when we first started talking, the festival was the golden ring. This event was part of getting there. Everything we did on the way to the festival was fun.

**Callie:** You guys held a precursor/mini-festival in Munising in 1979.

**Tom:** Yes, the mini-fest was somewhat of a surprise. Sometime in the spring Pat Rousseau came to a meeting and told us he had put together the Munising fest. He had talked to the city and arranged the shorefront and he had already committed to a number of performers. It was to be a "dry run" event that could give us some additional funds. We had actually tossed the idea around, but I don't remember a consensus before Pat told us what was happening and I can't remember when we decided to do it. Since he had done a lot of the preliminary work we just had to backfill with some details – porta-johns, snow fence, stage, sound, etc. Our advertising was mostly word of mouth along with posters and fliers. This was the first real risk we had taken. We had expenses that were greater than our cash reserves.

It was held at the waterfront by the tourist boat dock and was a cold, windy weekend in June, I think. The fest at that time was in August, so in the grand scheme of things, it was all just part of the process.



The community was benignly supportive. They didn't seem to offer resistance. I don't remember a large turnout of locals. Although it was well attended and people from Munising did attend, it was not a *community* event.

In the early days, I was not a "point" person for the organization. While I spent a lot of time doing detail bits of organizing, I was not comfortable about being a liaison with the community at large. I did some accounting stuff and a fair amount of negotiating with bands, but did not get involved with municipalities. Richard Anderson was the front man. He was involved with grant writing and dealing with bureaucracy. Consequently I was not aware of those aspects and how easy, hard, acceptable, positive, negative

**Callie:** Talk about "The First Annual": Champion, 1979. It took place at the Champion Horse Pulling Grounds – what was great, good, bad, horrible about the site and its surroundings?

Finding a suitable site was a major issue. We did not want to be in the city. We needed electricity, water, space for stage, audience, camping and parking. We considered a few pieces of privately owned property, but everything we considered was missing one or more of the key elements and we just couldn't afford to invest in property improvements. When we did the Munising festival we had the performer's camp off site, and that wasn't desirable. I don't remember who brought the Horse Pulling Grounds to our attention, but it seemed to be well suited. The only serious drawback was the distance from Marquette. It had water, electricity, a nice flat audience area, room for parking and camping, bleachers and even a pavilion with bathrooms and kitchen. The pavilion was to save us from the rain on more than one occasion over our 5 year tenure. The minor drawbacks were getting the grass mowed and our fear that the horse manure from July would still be around. The Champion Volunteer Fire Department that owned the property and sponsored the Horse Pull was very accommodating. No other event had ever been held on the property except for the Horse Pull.

The first year we let people camp and park where ever they wanted, except in the audience area. It was not a problem, but we later restricted cars from the camping areas. The bleachers turned out not to be much of an asset. The main Horse Pull area was about football field size and the bleachers were on each side. The stage was at one end, so the bleachers faced the side of the audience. We moved the stage from the east end the first year to the west end for the other 4, but the bleachers still faced the wrong direction.

One negative was the lack of shade. Not a huge problem, but even for the campers there was no respite from the sun. We also had some problems with Champion locals. For the most part they had little interest in the music and came for the anticipated party. Several crashed the gate by walking down the railroad tracks, which bordered the back of the property. Quite a few became drunk and unruly. The first year was probably the worst as far as a local problem. They seemed to realize it wasn't much fun getting really drunk around a lot of people who were into a different party altogether and in subsequent years there numbers waned.

The pavilion was a godsend. We sold beer and there was an established beer area. There were bathrooms that were adequate – for the most part. The festival was held in August while we were in Champion, so the weather was more of a factor. We had several heavy rains and a couple of festivals that were bitterly cold. We were able to move the sound into the pavilion and continue the main stage show during the rain. There wasn't much we could do about the cold. I don't remember the very first year as being particularly cold, but I saw Mike Seeger last year, he performed at the first fest and his main memory was the cold. The 3<sup>rd</sup> festival I remember it being bitterly cold and I lent Ray Kamalay my fingerless gloves that he wore while playing.

All in all, the site was perfect for us. Placement of the bleachers and lack of shade were minor hindrances. There was a limit to the size of the audience due to the limited size of the property. After 5 years we were getting close to exceeding the facility due to size.



**Callie:** What was the atmosphere like?

**Tom:** Ah, the atmosphere. A large piece of property with a bunch of tents, a stage, a lot of people and good music doesn't really sum it up. I don't remember anything but pleasant things. The weather was the only negative that comes to mind – and that could certainly put a damper on the atmosphere in general. Security problems were minimal, bureaucratic problems did not exist. It was a peaceful little village of people camping together for 3 days.

The size was an unknown. We really did not know what to expect. We had advertised well across the UP and at various other places in the state. We had done it. It had worked. People had come and we made a profit. We could do it again...

**Callie:** You made special mention of the lasting traditions that began in Champion, more specifically the Children's Area. Why was this so important to both you personally and to the festival as a whole?

**Tom:** One thing we focused on early was to have a family focused event. While Wheatland encouraged families, due to its size – both in audience and acreage – it was not family focused. A number of early organizers had children and we wanted it to be an event for them as much as for the adults. We liked the idea of workshops that a number of festivals had. We figured that if we were going to do that, we should have workshops for kids. I remember at Champion your Mom organizing "New Games", Shea Holland and Allison Crockett – both under 10 at the time – organizing a number of events for kids. Shea and Allison even went to merchants and solicited donations to augment the children's area.

For me personally it was always such a positive part of the festival to include children in the event. When your dad started the Kids Parade it would always hit me. I think it was a combination of seeing the children of my friends excited about being an integral part of the festival, the general festivity of all those painted faces and decorated instruments mixed with a dash of sleep deprivation. Whatever it was, there hasn't been a Kids Parade that I haven't cried.

**Callie:** What was the significance of the original Hiawatha Logo flag being stolen?

**Tom:** The significance at the time was amazement. Why would someone take that flag? Those who would feel the significance of the flag would never think about taking it. The sad thing is that sometime later, months perhaps years, it was discarded without a thought. I think there was probably greater significance in the self initiated creation of the flag than there was with the theft.

**Callie:** Talk about the transition from Champion to Marquette Tourist Park in 1984.

**Tom:** The transition was problematic from several fronts. The driving force behind the move was Richard Anderson. I don't know his motivation, but I suspect it had more to do with advantages for Richard Anderson than for Hiawatha. I don't remember the attendance the last year at Champion, but I would imagine it was close to 2,000. One of the things Richard leveraged was the increase in attendance and for some reason 10,000 sticks in my head. It may have been 5,000, but it was a big jump from where we were. Dollar signs were the leverage. The expected increase was significant enough that our contract with the City of Marquette gave them all of our profits until we reached a threshold of \$2,000. We did not meet that threshold and all of our profits went to the City. The one good thing about our contract with the city was that any money over and above their costs was put into a segregated fund that was to be used for mutually agreed upon improvements to the park. This clause stayed into effect until 1998 when a new Parks and Recreation Director replaced the director who retired. Last I heard there was about \$28,000 in the fund.



The transition went smoothly. The amenities of the park were probably the greatest benefit. It was also nice because most everyone working on the festival lived in Marquette or to the east. It made festival prep an easier process.

There were some negatives related mostly to being in a much higher population density area. Problems such as people sneaking in, underage drinking and youth misbehavior were all related to being in town and close to the university. Still those things never got out of control. We have never had a *serious* security problem at any of the festivals.

Parking was not much of a problem until 1999. After the 20<sup>th</sup> festival, the new director seemed to try to find problems. His previous employment had been running a campground, so he was acutely sensitive to campground rules and regulations. The 20<sup>th</sup> was probably the largest festival to date, somewhere around 4,000. At that festival we had no camping permits, no parking permits and although it might have been a bit crowded, we did not feel it was in any way an unsafe situation. He started implementing state guidelines for campgrounds. So many square feet per campsite, so many feet between tents, limiting number of vehicles et al. The one advantage was it forced us to review our parking. If we had fewer cars, we could have more tents. We started charging for parking, which helped with the revenue. We were able to tweak his number some, but it meant we had to measure the site, start using camping tags and lobby for some flexibility.

Is it a good spot? Before the dam washed out it was an excellent spot. I can't think of another festival that has as many wonderful amenities. Even with the dam gone, it is a great site, but the lake was a big plus. It is great having shade areas for the main stage, showers, nice campsites and close parking.

As for the future, it is hard to say. I have not been involved with the City negotiations since the new Parks and Recreation Director came aboard. It seems that the City not supportive. In the early years the city was a great asset. They donated large safety lights for people crossing 550 at night, they made signs for us and they negotiated in good faith knowing what an asset the festival was to the city. It has gotten to the point where we pay for everything and then some. Even the City Fund was threatened a few years ago. They wanted to use the money to add electrical hookups in more campsites, something that has no benefit to the festival. A number of the current organizers have investigated other sites for the festival. This is the last year of our current contract, so changes may happen with the festival next year.

**Callie:** How has the community responded to Hiawatha being held in Marquette?

**Tom:** The Marquette community has always been supportive, but in a benign sort of way. We never perceived any negativity. I think when we first moved to the city it might have been lukewarm, but not negative. Some people were upset because the park was closed for 3 days. A lot of people used the park, especially when the lake was there. Also some transient campers were disappointed that the park was not available or that they had to vacate the site for the festival if they didn't want to stay. A number of businesses were very supportive because of the boost to their business. I can remember in the early days in Marquette we contacted a lot of businesses with marquees to add a welcome note for the fest and most graciously agreed. This would probably still be done, but I don't think we do much to stimulate it.

This year the Lions club held a fundraising pancake breakfast for Hiawatha. I think this is the first time that has happened. Marquette has a number of events throughout the summer and I feel like the community is supportive. Do we attract a large number of the local community? I think we do well considering it is certainly a niche market.

**Callie:** The Hiawatha Music Co-op has been active in community events, including dances, concerts, workshops, etc. Why has this been a point of focus since the inception of the organization?



**Tom:** Our mission statement is: "The Hiawatha Music Co-op is organized exclusively to provide and promote traditional American music, educate and inform society on traditional American music, and encourage the appreciation of such music through the facility of an Annual Traditional American Music Festival."

While the Festival played an important part and was the source of the majority of our income after the early years of fundraising, we have always felt that our charter is to promote this music that we all love so much. If we brought someone into the area we tried to get them into the community whether it was a school, nursing home or prison. We have always tried to broaden the exposure of this music. It is who we are as an organization.

**Callie:** Hiawatha has had a student chapter at NMU on and off since the 80s. Talk about why you think this has been so fickle. What does it say about the college-age demographic of not just Northern but across the U.S.?

**Tom:** I think this speaks more to the music we present than the college age demographic. When we started the student chapter a number of us were students. The fickleness was directly proportional to who was at the school and involved with Hiawatha at the time. The university has great facilities and funding to provide diverse programming.

**Callie:** In 1987, Hiawatha was bestowed with one of the largest grants awarded for Michigan's Sesquicentennial Celebration" and, consequentially, a series of dances and concerts were held at Presque Isle. What did this honor and money mean for the festival and the organization? Talk about this and/or other grants or funding you've received over the years.

**Tom:** We had written a few small grants for various things and been successful. We saw the Sesquicentennial as a perfect opportunity to participate. What better way to celebrate 150 years of statehood than traditional music and dance? Although we thought we had a good grant, we had no idea it would get the maximum amount granted. Although we have not submitted a grant of that size since, I would say it gave us the confidence to submit any grant we thought might be applicable.

One of the best benefits was the dance floor that is still used at the festival. Since the concert and dances were at the amphitheater at Presque Isle, there was no space for dancing. The dance floor was written into the grant and continues to be an asset to Hiawatha and other community organizations that have used it over the years. We were not involved with the National Governor's Association conference in Traverse City. This is the first I have heard of it and now I am a bit disappointed we weren't invited.

The award we won in 1992 was a complete surprise. Diane Kordich, a former photography professor at NMU nominated the organization. We had no idea we had even been nominated until we received notice that we were to be recipients of the award. It was quite an honor. It was odd though accepting the award from John Engler – who was know to be somewhat anti arts. He had cut a lot of state funding to major art organizations throughout the state. Along with the award we received a \$10,000 grant from the Dayton Hudson Foundation. Dave Bett, Pearl Taylor and I made the trip down to the Detroit Institute of Arts to attend the black tie affair and accept the award. We were not aware that we were to receive the grant; we just thought we were getting the award. After the first recipient received their award and grant check I remember making a sarcastic remark to Dave about not giving the big bucks to the Yoopers. Well, we did get the big bucks and the lady holding the check was standing next to us when I made the remark. One of those occasions that make you feel rather small. On a higher note it made me proud that we had been recognized. It felt liked all of the work we had done was finally realized outside our own traditional music community.



**Callie:** With Hiawatha's prime budgeting and financial success, you've been able to give back to the community and "do some small granting ourselves." What has this meant to the members/organization to be able to do this?

**Tom:** After the first few years of the organization it was obvious that we did not have enough time to do everything we wanted to do. I think all of us who have been involved have always thought there was more we could do. Unfortunately jobs, school, family, etc. limited the amount of time we can dedicate. One way to extend the organization was to grant other people to do events that were in alignment with our mission. This has led to a number of successful events over the years. Not all have been without controversy. In one instance a member used an event for personal self-promotion. They hired themselves to play for the event, hired themselves to do the promotion and hired a friend to do the sound. Aside from the conflict of interest, the sound person was just poor judgment. We had someone in the organization that had volunteer countless hours doing sound for various events. When the potential arose to get paid, someone else was hired. Not a good practice in an all-volunteer organization.

My personal feeling was that some of our collaborations with the Quastone Coffeehouse were not in our best interest. While some of the programming that Quastone did was traditional music, much of it was not. We ended up co-sponsoring an event of afro-pop music that lost money. Losing money was not the issue. Promoting non-traditional music was. Some of the other events we did with them went well and were within our charter.

Marquette Arts Council also was problematic. We had a representative from MAC organized the Artists in the Round for quite a few years. We eventually learned that, they were a member of MAC, there was no input from MAC. Artist in the Round was a one person show not really MAC collaboration. We also found that the person was not being objective about who made it into the juried show. That passed and now we have a good relationship with them.

Sorry to start off with the negative. We have had some great collaborations, even with those mentioned. Delta Friends of Folk has certainly been a wonderful organization to work with. It just sort of happened and was formalized later. Several people from Escanaba had been involved running the front gate out on County Road 550. We asked them if they would like to take over running the gate. Turned out most if not all were involved with the Delta Friends of Folk. They have been doing it for a long time and it is a great effort to put it together from so far away.

WNMU has always been supportive of our events. I don't know exactly when they started recording the festival, but I am pretty sure it was while we were in Champion. I know they recorded several of our Student Chapter events of the early '80s. The only regret is that neither of us had the money to save the tapes. There were some wonderful recordings of some incredible events. For several years WNMU collaborated with WXPR in Rhinelander, WI. They would work together at the festival and share tapes for broadcast. Through both of those radio stations the tapes were shared with "Simply Folk" a syndicated program out of Wisconsin Public Radio.

I feel that both of these efforts, granting and collaboration, have greatly benefited the organization. Both have allowed us to reach a broader audience and involved more of the community while reducing the workload for the core Hiawatha organizers.

**Callie:** Discuss the role of the different artists/vendors that come to the festival every year. Were they there from its inception? Were they "part of the plan"?



Artists and vendors were there from the beginning. Starting with the food first, it was obvious that we needed to have food since we were thirty miles from town. The first few years the food vendors were primarily non-professionals and I don't think we charged them anything. We started charging the food vendors primarily to offset the cost of food and amenities for performers. We wanted to attract people from the community and early on set up a fee structure that gave non-profit organizations a financial advantage. I can't remember that we had any professional food vendors while we were in Champion. When we got to Marquette there was more interest of the area restaurants. We had to work hard to make sure it was not just hot dogs, pizza and cotton candy. Many people thought we should not have pizza at all, but year after year they were one of the top grossing vendors.

Artists were also there early on. We tried to focus on traditional arts and crafts, but at times that was difficult. We tried to stimulate demonstrations, which had variable success. When we moved into Marquette and started working with MAC there was a slight shift to finer arts though still leaning toward traditional. Other than the problems mentioned earlier the Arts in the Round has been a rousing success and is a very integral part of the festival.

Both areas have had a positive impact to the income of the festival. For several years the food vendors have made the difference between losing and making money. The Arts area has limited financial impact, but does help our bottom line.

One thing that is not mentioned here is beer or in fundraising are beer sales. From the very first fundraiser at the Marquette Armory we sold beer. All of the Champion fests had beer sales as did the first few Marquette festivals. It really made the difference between breaking even and losing money. I can't remember the exact year, but it was in the late '80s before we did away with the beer tent. The high cost of liability insurance blended with volunteer consumption all but eliminated the profits. Sometime between '88 and '90 we ended the beer tent and held a raffle to offset the loss. The winner of the main prize at the raffle the first year said she bought her ticket to support the end of alcohol sales. I think all of us were glad to see the beer tent go even though we never would have made it through the first few years without it.

**Callie:** Hiawatha has many traditions, eh?

**Tom:** Traditions are certainly a key part of the festival. I am sure there are many I am not aware of. People get together every year that only see each other at the festival. They camp together; they decorate their campsite; they set up their chairs together; they cook food together and they might even have secret handshakes. They are all over the site, some are obvious and some are not. An example that your father has more info on than I is the meeting of Kevin O'Hara and his brother Dennis at the fest every year. Kevin is a long time friend of your dad's and his brother Dennis flies in every year from New York for a family get together. A former Marquette musician now living in San Francisco Mike Stattler comes back to town to visit his mother every year during the Hiawatha weekend to attend the festival.

Camp 6 is an interesting phenomenon. I think it has been at least five years since they have been to the festival. Charlie Spencer who was one of the main organizers and owned the bus was at the festival last year for the first time since the bus left for good. I don't know the whole story behind Camp 6, but somehow they heard about the first festival in Champion. They had their school bus and a number of people at the festival. I don't know if they heard about it and came or were in the area and decided to come. Either way, they were at the first festival and continued to come for over twenty years. I think the Roadkill Café started in Marquette. They got the camping area behind the stage and parked the Camp 6 bus there. The accoutrements changed over the years, but key elements were always there. They had beer keg coolers built into the bus with keg taps on the outside. Most years they pulled a trailer that was a huge grill/smoker. We found out they had an old army mess tent and we rented it from them for the Musicians food tent for many years. They would bring a turkey or few,



some dogs, burgers and usually something wild that they had acquired. There were walleye cheeks, beaver stew, crawdads, venison and others. The feed was opened up to Hiawatha volunteers and became a wonderful Sunday night tradition. We would empty out the food from the Musicians tent and everyone would have a nice meal around their campfire. Somewhere along the line word got out and general festival attendees started attending. That became too much to manage and was probably the demise of the Roadkill Café.

*What traditions are you proud to see at the fest?*

Greg and Hillea put on the Friday night soiree. Gregg is an event decorator from the Twin Cities and a former Goose Chase Clogger. I don't know exactly when it started, like many of the traditions at the fest. I had my own tradition for Friday – relax at home, pack my vehicle, swim in the Laughing Whitefish River and have a late afternoon arrival at the fest with enough time to set up my camp and mosey over to the dance. But I digress. He would bring decorations left over from a recent event he had produced, add some great food and wine and create an elegant atmosphere at his campsite. The decorations would usually include a variety of exotic flowers as well as some fancy props. The food would be anything from escargot and truffles to imported goat cheese. While the food was exceptional, the presentation was overwhelming.

Like the Friday night party, I am not sure when the Tie One on party started although I know how. John Hatton, who brings up his portable music store Clef d'Ear, stopped along his way north from the Lansing area at a thrift-store and bought a box of neckties. He also had brought along a large bottle of vodka that he had inserted jalapeno peppers and allowed them to marinate for an extended period of time. He then proceeded to invite folks to stop by on Sunday, have a Hot Spicy Bloody Mary and "Tie One On". Upon arrival he had the box of ties proudly hanging on a line and encouraged everyone to don a tie before partaking of their libation. A tradition was born.

The drumming circle is not one of my favorite traditions. While it does promote group participation of a musical genre, I don't get the "traditional" link. Yes, I realize there are drumming traditions that go way back, but I am not sure the modern iteration in any way resembles the tradition. Beyond that, it is far too intrusive. The sound from a guitar will barely carry to the next tent, a fiddle will maybe carry to the next campsite and an accordion might carry to the campsite beyond that, but those freakin' drums resonate across the entire park. In many long discussions we decided to restrict the drumming to the far side of the park – where most of the drummers were already camped – and cease the drumming after 1:00 A.M. Since that time, there has been little problem with this tradition impinging on the rest of the festival.

So the traditions of this traditional music festival are wide and varied.

**Callie:** You ended your write-up in the 25<sup>th</sup> bulletin on a personal note with a look at the beauty/innocence of the Kid's Parade. How do you think this yearly event reflects upon the festival?

**Tom:** Ah, the quintessential Hiawatha moment. I know it is different for everyone. I am sure that for George Martin's dad Red it is seeing his son on stage telling joke he wrote and getting a good laugh. For Kevin O'Hara it might be sharing a beer and a hug with his brother. For Bob Bernard it could be sitting next to his mother in the audience watching his son Seth play on main stage. For someone else it could be finally getting the courage to sign up and play during open mic and be well received. Perhaps it is even someone finally getting that intricate rhythm after the fortieth time through the drumming circle. Maybe it is a dance with a once in a lifetime partner and an instant of musically induced coordination. It could be strolling around in the wee hours after the Saturday night show and hearing a group of strangers playing your favorite song in perfect harmony. Could be sitting in a session and finally getting that crooked fiddle tune you have been trying to learn for months.

**Callie:** If there was one event/one image that someone could take away from a festival, would this be it?



**Tom:** Me, I'm a sucker for the Kid's Parade. After years of watching the sons and daughters of my friends strumming away on their oatmeal box banjotars it still plucks out a sappy tune on my heartstrings. I think it symbolizes the spirit of the festival. The tradition of making instruments and playing music with a group of people for the sheer enjoyment of it. Put that into the hands of a bunch of kids and you have the future.

**Callie:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Tom:** Nope, I've talked your ear off enough already.

...friendship was deep. This is what was the most about being on ... is one that will never happen again in my life. It is ... the friends that you spend time and will keep in touch with through adulthood. You are comfortable in ... and they ... yours. You have laughed together at things that no one else would ... You have ... about things you would laugh about later. You know each other's ... family ... about. We had a similar interest that created a bond. The bond ...

**Callie:** Do the 80s seem to have the beauty of traditional and contemporary, cross-generational fusion of Hawaiian music, but in a way "living in the past is the best way to innovate?"

... I would not contradict those kitchen myths. They speak to how well it all worked. Also, I am just ... beginning to wade into the cross-generational pool. Ask me how well it works. Some is deep into choosing his ... music. He ... me ... similar to mine ... Mammals (old time), John Williams (first accordion) and the ... He has added ... years, Indiana ... as ...

**Callie:** What brought you all together in the "Big House" and what was it an experiment in communal living. Why did you want to live together? What was the feeling of the women?

... for the new model of communal living, I was on the fringes of that. Chris, Horse and Horse's ex-wife) ... brought the Big House in '74. A bunch of people from Ohio, where Chris lives and Horse is from, and ... moved up in '78. I never really lived in the Big House and while the proximity gave me the advantages of communal living, I never had to deal with the ... clearing, shoveling snow, cutting firewood, personality conflicts or finances.

What brought me up there is a story of its own. Here are the Cliff notes. Bonnie Holcomb and her husband Bill were from Paducah, Kentucky, my home town, and lived in Monterey. I was a good friend of Richard - Bill's brother. Richard came up to the U.P. just married with Cindy Rollock and they both moved down to Paducah - '71ish. By '72 they had moved back to Monterey and I came to the U.P. for the first time on visit. I came again in '73 and through Joyce's house to visit the crew in Dowton. The commune was in full swing at that time - a Teepee was set up, a geodesic greenhouse, the infamous scump and more. In the spring of '74 I left Kentucky and ended up living in East Lansing and working in a bike shop across the hall from Livery Instruments. I finally got it together to go back to school at JMU and contacted the Dowton folks to keep their eye out for a place to rent in Marquette. They told me about the cabin next door. I checked into it and bought it. Interestingly since the bike shop had been sold in the summer of '75. The owner sold me a hand made Italian bike for less than cost. I sold it and used the money I made for a down payment on my cabin. I moved up in January '76. Joyce's brother Pat was the idea man behind Havertha. Cindy Rollock left Richard in '78 and moved back to the U.P. She designed the Havertha Logo. She also married Lou, they moved to Alaska, have retired and now live in Auburn. Not much to do with Havertha, but it is how I got to Genesee.

At the time of the beginning of Havertha, most of the cabins were inhabited as well as the Big House. Chris, Joyce and Kaylee were living in the cabin next to the Big House, Steve, Mattman and I were living in my cabin, I