

John Foreman to enter hall of fame



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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

When people talk about local music one name is sure to always pop up, John Foreman.

Foreman celebrated his 80th birthday with friends, family and fans at the Lake St. Peter community centre on Saturday, March 23. Born on March 20, 1939, Foreman's love of music started at the young age of 10 when he got his first mouth organ, also known as a harmonica. "It was a half hour walk to school every day and I used to play it on my way to school and back. The other kids would see it and want to play with it, but they would honk on it and blow the reed out or drop it in the dirt. I soon caught on to that. So I found a hollow post in the school yard fence and hid my mouth organ in that till it was the end of the school day so I could play it again on my way home."

His first instrument was the mouth organ, then he taught himself the fiddle, then the banjo "because when I was young, you'd get together to play with people you'd have so many guitars, that's why I waited so long to play guitar. There were songs to be sung and the banjo didn't do it. So I took up guitar."

Now Foreman figures that he will have to give up instruments in the reverse order he learned them. "You see my hand, well it's a bit distorted. I figure the guitar will be my first instrument I'll have to give up then banjo, and then fiddle, and then mouth organ. There are already things on the guitar that I used to be able to do that I can't do [anymore]. I can see it coming, but who knows, as long as I keep playing as long as I can."

Music has always been a major part of Foreman's life. Even when out doing log hewing demonstrations he always has a penny whistle sticking out of his jeans pocket ready to give a happy little tune to those passing by.

Foreman's work to honour local heritage and music has been recently honoured. It has been announced that Foreman is to be inducted into the Land o' Lakes Traditional Music Hall of Fame. The hall of fame honours local musicians who have put in years of work sharing their love of classic country, blue grass, Celtic and '50s and '60s bebop music.

The hall of fame is not housed in a physical building, but has a website and some memorabilia from the inducted members that are offered to museums in Tweed, Napanee, Cloyne and Hartington. The inductees receive their honorary plaque at the annual induction ceremony at the Flinton Jamboree, which takes place on Oct. 5 this year. The goal of this is to honour the performers who have contributed significantly to traditional music in the three counties of Frontenac, Hastings and Lennox and Addington.

Foreman is honoured to be recognized by his musical peers in the area. "I never made any money out of it [playing music], except maybe some gas money, but it's fun and I enjoy it and that's the important part."

Foreman hosts a monthly open mic night call the 77 to 11 Cafe at the Wattle and Daub Cafe. This charitable event helps musicians and performers who are just starting, to gain some experience and raises funds for area organizations. Each night a list of charities is created and those in attendance vote on which organization will receive the funds raised. "I like open mics because I like to

entertain, but I also like to be entertained, you never know what you might hear, and everyone has got to start somewhere.?