

# Bob Milne boogies from classics to ragtime

By SUSAN TAUBER

If you're a parent and you have a child ready to quit his piano lessons, don't be too disappointed. He may turn out like Bob Milne when he gets older. "I took piano lessons when I was real young," I hated them," said Milne, a north Oakland County resident. "I used to sneak out of the house when I knew the piano teacher was coming."

But 30 years later Milne, now age 36, is playing piano as a career. He plays six shifts in five days at Charley's Crab in Troy, alternating with pianist Bob Seely.

Milne didn't take to the piano, however, until he tried another musical career. "When I was at Rochester High School, I signed up for the school band. I wanted to play the drums but the director said there were already too many drum players and there weren't any French horn players. So I started playing the French horn."

The instrument took Milne to Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., where he played with the Rochester Philharmonic for a year. Then he attended the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and as a student played with the Baltimore Symphony.

"I got disillusioned with playing with symphonies. They seemed sort of calous. I had my horn stolen when I was in Baltimore and I just said, 'The hell with it.'"

MILNE'S LIFE and music, changed after that.

Though he started dabbling with the piano while still in college, he never

thought seriously about making it his career.

"I picked up piano when I was in college. I started playing in a beer hall near the dormitory in Rochester. The bar had a piano, but no piano player. So I started playing."

Milne said he tackled the piano slowly, starting with just chords in the left hand and adding progressive movements as he gained confidence. The fact that he remembered watching a friend in college practice piano, and didn't know how anyone in the world could play it, never bothered him.

Neither did the fact that he wasn't taught the techniques of piano playing. "I never practiced to get the skills in my fingers," he said.

For a while Milne stopped making music altogether. He moved from Baltimore to north Oakland County and took a job on an assembly line. But the lure of the beer hall brought him back to playing piano again.

"A friend called me and asked me to go to a German beer hall in Detroit. Again the hall had a piano but no player. So I played several tunes and the manager offered me a job."

Milne took it and hasn't stopped playing piano since.

AS A MUSICIAN, he doesn't listen to popular songs or entertainers for song ideas. He concentrates on turn-of-the-century music through the 1920's, playing works by such pianists as Jelly Roll Morton, Art Tatum, Fats Waller, Scott Joplin and "lists of other people I want to include."

He doesn't have to study to remem-

ber their music, either. If he hears a piece once, Milne can return to the keyboard and play it note for note.

"I remember one man came up to me at Charley's Crab one night and said he had a piece he wanted me to learn. He said he would get me a tape of it, that he only had the cassette for his car. I said, 'Let's go hear it on my break.' We did and when I came back, I played it for him as soon as I sat down."

PERFECT PITCH and the ability to hear the music in his mind are a big help to Milne.

"I can invent things in my head. I can write a tune whenever I am. When I write I rehearse things in my head. If I don't like the way it sounds, I can listen to it another way," said the soft-spoken pianist.

Milne has composed 25 ragtime tunes and a trumpet concerto. He also writes his own poems and sets them to music.

Milne has played for Chuck Muer restaurants since 1971, after doing a stint with Red Garter Band. He also played Cooper's Arms when it first opened.

This isn't Carnegie Hall, but on the other hand I know there are people who come to hear me and Seely play," Milne said of his job at Charley's Crab.

"If people sitting next to me are being obnoxious, I just figure I'm not playing for them. I'm playing for the people who are sitting in reserved tables where they can hear the piano."

Although Milne prefers playing a certain type of music, he'll play requests if he knows the songs.

"SOMETIMES I MIND requests, but I don't know what the tune means to the person asking. I had one man ask me to play a piece that I hate. I told myself I'm a professional and to play the damn thing. When I was done, the couple was real emotional. That piece meant something special to them."

Milne isn't a musician who eats, sleeps and dreams music. He "fools around" with music, pool and billiards, and chess.

He also writes a column for National Billiards News—in poetry form.

"Once I get the idea, it just takes me a matter of minutes to write the poem. I try to pick up on some off-the-wall type of thing." Milne likes to play billiards at Cushman in Oak Park.

The father of two young daughters, Milne isn't pushing them to be musicians.

"I hear the oldest daughter (age eight) trying to pick up a tune on the piano. It would be so easy for me to go over and show her how to play it. But if I do, she'll never learn how to do it herself."

His wife, Linda, is also a pianist. She plays—where else—at that same German beer hall in Detroit, The Dakota Inn, where Milne got his start locally.

Milne said he's gotten over the shock of his first piano teacher. She was very upset with him when he played a piece by Schubert in a major key instead of a minor one.

"I thought it sounded better that way," he said, matter-of-factly.



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## Recreation set for after-school

Adults, teenagers and children will be able to participate in after school activities at seven schools in the Farmington area.

Sponsored by the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Division, the program begins Oct. 2 and runs through Nov. 20.

Persons interested may register at either the recreation offices, 31555 Eleven Mile, or at the school site on the first day of activities.

Cost for classes range between \$7-\$9.

On Mondays, the activities will be at Eagle, 29410 Fourteen Mile; Shiawassee, 30415 Shiawassee; and Woodcreek, 28490 Harwich. Tuesday activities will be at Cull, 21195 Gill. Wednesday will be activity day at Forest, 34545 Old Timber and Thursday Kenbrook, 22180 Bonnet Hill will be the spot.

Classes offered at Eagle for children will be activities plus, fun-nastics, stunts and tumbling, ballet, exploratory art and preschool tap. Teens and adults will be able to enjoy adult art, adult disco, gymnastics and teen ballet.

Shiawassee activities will include fun-nastics, stunts and tumbling, karate, ballet, modern jazz, preschool tap, A Time for Me, creative art, exploratory art and 1-2-3 draw.

Teens and adults activities at Shiawassee will include Teen jazzistics, adult drawing, ballet, painting, stained glass, disco, slimmastics and volleyball.

Woodcreek offerings for children are fun-nastics, stunts and tumbling, creative movement, ballet, modern dance, creative art, exploratory art. Forest activities for children will include fun-nastics, stunts and tumbling, preschool tap, ballet, modern jazz, A Time for Me, exploratory art and creative art.

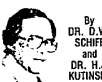
Adult and teen activities will include teen disco, jazzistics, adult disco, adult art, and creative stichery.

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