



Submitted photo

From left, Wynona, Michael and Evan Holmes walk down Grafton Street in Dublin during their trip to Ireland in June 2019.

Continued from previous page and his spirit and his phenomenal performances that he puts on.”

Born in Portland and raised in Klamath Falls, Michael moved to Bend in 1980 and quickly became an influential member of the city’s music scene. In addition to his most recent work with Five Pint Mary, widely recognized as one of, if not the only, Irish rock and folk groups in Bend, Michael played African inspired marimba music with The Carmen Marimba Band in the ’80s and ’90s and led the punk band Jojo Beanstalk in the ’90s. Michael and Sarah also joined the Gospel Choir of the Cascades early in its history, around 2007.

Sarah, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, who moved to Bend in 1988, met Michael in 1990 or 1991. Her band at the time, Fishtail Cadillac, would often play shows with The Carmen Marimba Band. It was love at first sight, she said. The couple married in 1997.

“He was a really talented musician,” Sarah said. “And he just played with — just like all of these years. He just comes to life on the stage. He just so enjoyed music so much, and he would always just put on wonderful performances.”

In 1999, Michael and Sarah founded Be-Bop Biscotti, which they sold in 2006. They also operated Be-Bop Coffee House, which became a haven for local jazz musicians, from 2005 to 2007.

“We were holding that up on our

own, and we just took it as far as we could,” Sarah said. “But it’s Bend, and it was just very hard. ... We had a small group of people who really, really loved it there and were there every single day and night, but it wasn’t enough.”

University of Oregon Jazz Studies instructor and drummer Torrey Newhart played Be-Bop regularly while he was in high school in Bend.

“I feel like my whole life before and after Be-Bop, there really hasn’t been a thing like it again in Bend, which is kind of a bummer,” he said. “You need an actual jazz club where people go just to love that music if you’re going to have that music exist in your community in a non-trivial kind of a way. It felt real, it felt honest.”

Five Pint Mary had been Michael and Sarah’s musical focus since they formed the group in 2009.

Originally more punk-leaning, with eight members, the band released its self-titled debut album in 2011 before reconfiguring its membership and sound in 2012.

“I would call it more folk or traditional, and just a whole lot more original music,” Sarah said. “Michael was a wonderful songwriter, and he and Rick Havern, who is our banjo player, would co-write songs together.”

The band’s lineup — Sarah on vocals and Irish whistle, Michael on guitar and vocals, Evan Holmes on fiddle, banjoist Rick Havern, mandolinist

Matt Gwinup and bassist Tyler Cranor — was stable for nearly a decade. The group released two more albums, 2014’s “Carry a Song” and 2017’s “Variations.”

“This is the longest I’ve ever been in a band,” Gwinup said. “They really do become like a family. They’re my friends, but even your good friends you don’t see every week. We would meet every week for practice, or twice a week sometimes, and we were doing these projects together. It’s like a big hole is just there suddenly.”

Havern, leader of the Summit Express Jazz Band, recalled auditioning for the group.

“I went onto YouTube and saw some videos, and decided to learn one of their songs,” Havern said. “Turns out that the song I chose called ‘Whiskey Lass,’ Michael wrote it. So when I went, he says, ‘OK, what do you want to play?’ I said, ‘Well, let’s play ‘Whiskey Lass,’ and he kind of got that big old smile he always had on his face, and just said, ‘OK, let’s hear it.’ It was pretty cool. He goes, ‘That’s it, you’re in.’ ... I think he must have told me, ‘Well, that’s pretty ballsy.’”

Gwinup and Havern praised Michael’s leadership in the group, as well as his songwriting.

“He was a very humble guy,” Gwinup said. “He would always bring a new song and we’d be like, ‘Wow, this is really cool,’ and he’d be like, ‘Arrrrgh.’ Or

about his singing, he would always be self-conscious about his singing because he had a real gravelly voice. But we’re like, ‘Michael, that’s perfect, we play pirate-y, Irish songs. That’s great; that’s what we want.’”

Havern remembered Michael being open to any idea, no matter who brought it to the group.

“He was great to rehearse with. He was always energetic and always excited; he was always excited to play,” he said. “I’ve never seen anybody that gets — God, he just got so into playing, and the sweat would be rolling off of him and he’s just pounding away.”

The band is recording its fourth album, “Kings and Queens Be Damned,” at Central Oregon Recording with producer and engineer Matt Fletcher. Michael recorded most of his parts, Sarah said, and the band plans to finish.

“We’ll still continue to meet as a band,” Havern said. “... The dynamics are just going to be different. I don’t know if we can do a lot of the songs that we do just because of that dynamic, and I’m not certain if Sarah and Evan will be able to play with somebody else as a replacement if you will. There’s certainly no replacing him.”

Michael’s friend Tim Toliver set up a GoFundMe page to support the Holmes family, which can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2NMXznl>.

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