



**Ray Beebe**  
**Fiddler**  
**(1925 - 1980)**

Ray Beebe's father died when he was three, and he was often very sickly as a child. His stepfather made Beebe's first fiddle from a cigar box, and his uncle was the one who taught him to play the fiddle. He would often walk for miles to a friend's house to learn something new on the fiddle. According to his brother, when Ray was a boy, two things could always be found in his pockets—fishhooks and a rosin for his fiddle bow. By age thirteen, he was playing for money and traveling around the state trying to learn more tunes.

Ray joined the Navy in 1943 as a way to make ends meet for his family. Even during this time, he continued to play the fiddle, playing once for President Roosevelt. After he served time in the navy, Ray held down many jobs, but continued to play his fiddle.

During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Ray continued to play barn dances, many times at an activity center for an Alexandria Catholic church. He also went to fiddle conventions in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana learning new tunes and meeting new people. On one occasion he met Roy Acuff, who is said to have had the greatest commercial influence on Beebe's style and repertoire. Ray also met Troy DeRamus in 1946. Troy later started a band with Beebe and became a close friend. DeRamus, who played music with Ray since 1951, once remarked, "I don't believe any man alive ever loved his instrument or his music more and was more dedicated than Ray Beebe." DeRamus and Beebe began a band called the North Louisiana String Band, playing the Anglo-American music tradition of "Hillbilly" or "Old Time Country". The band often performed at the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival, the Louisiana Art and Folk Festival in Columbia, the North Louisiana Arts Festival in Grambling, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the Festival of Traditional Arts and Crafts in New Orleans, the Governor's Inaugural, the Shreveport Red River Revel, and the Shreveport Blues Fest.

During his career in the North Louisiana String Band, Beebe became sick, which he attributed to an old ulcer flare up, although he later found out he had cancer. Ray continued to play, even in pain. Sadly, Ray Beebe died on Saturday, September 21, 1980, at the age of fifty-five, after a full life of fiddle playing. Because of his lasting impression on music in Louisiana, Ray Beebe was inducted into the Louisiana Folklife Center's Hall of Master Folk Artists in 1981.

Researched and rewritten by Samantha Sullivan.

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