



6
Strings
Attached

A memoir of
A Life with the Guitar

Tom Rasely

Chapter I: Beginnings

The guitar came into my life when I was 13. I can remember as though it was yesterday, sitting in my parents' house looking at the Sears catalog; the guitar section was about 2 pages of beautiful instruments- the Silvertone electric model with the double horns and the speaker right in the case seemed like a monument to everything that was cool.

Then the Beatles showed up.

Christmas, 1964: a guitar was the only thing on my list. I know, I checked it twice and found that I was not naughty enough (so as to still be considered "nice"), and lo and behold a guitar was under the tree. It

wasn't the Silvertone electric in the catalog. It was a Japanese piece of plywood, with a short scale neck, that was reduced from \$29.95 to a much more affordable \$19.95. It had a fake yellow-to-brown sunburst top and a tailpiece. It was lovely.

And it was just barely playable too.



(My friend Douglas playing my first guitar, 1965)

I was given this instrument with the understanding that I would learn to play it *correctly*, and that lessons were mandatory. No posing allowed.

A LITTLE HISTORY:my earliest musical memory is around age 7. At that time I was taking piano lessons. My parents were both musical; my father was a Juilliard graduate, and a consummate musician. He understood that teaching his own kids to play piano was not going to be a success, so he found a teacher who would give us good technique and also teach us some music theory.

Around that same time, I found myself in the junior choir at our Methodist Church in Easton, PA; my dad was the director. The fact is, my parents didn't have three

kids; they had a soprano, a tenor (that's me), and a bass. My older brother eventually became a geologist, and my sister a librarian, although they are both musically inclined; but the mantle fell to me in terms of making music my life.

I wrote my first song at age 8. Let's just say it wasn't exactly Mozart.

My parents were involved in theatre, they sang duets, and performed everywhere. Dad was a singer, pianist, violinist, composer, conductor, and teacher. There wasn't much left for me. To this day, however, I am not sure if that had anything to do with the guitar becoming my instrument. We had moved from our Easton roots to Oneida, New York, and the timing was just right.

Chapter 2: Change of Venue

Historically speaking, the guitar had a slight boost in popularity because of Elvis Presley, but it didn't stick. He simply didn't play very well. But with the appearance of The Beatles, the guitar's popularity absolutely skyrocketed. These guys were musicians. And suddenly, everybody who was anybody had a guitar.

What I quickly discovered was that not everybody who had one could *play* it.

Now that I had one, I was going to learn to play it! And so I set out on a musical journey that would take me places I couldn't even have imagined at that time. What I did know was that I was going to

be a famous guitar player. It mattered little that I had no clue what that involved, and had not even the first scraps of a plan to make it happen. Hey, I was 13.

As I mentioned, my mother insisted that I was going to learn to play it "right". That meant learning to read notes, and learning to play real songs, etc. No playing just bass notes. No posing. A musical instrument was to be treated with respect, even if it was only a \$19 junker. They knew that you had to start someplace, and this was my place.

So every Saturday morning in early 1965, I went down to the local music store and sat for a half hour with my teacher Les Krieke. Les was a fine player; he had a duo with another guitarist and they specialized

in Chet Atkins' music. Sometimes during a lesson, Les would fall into a little bit of "Chet". I thought Les was pretty good, but I sure wasn't interested in all that "old" music; especially old country music. Hey, I was 13. And The Beatles were on the scene.

The problem with the Beatles in January, 1965 was that no one knew for sure whether they would be around in another year. They could just as easily have faded into obscurity as so many other bands that had come and gone before them. So Les was reluctant to spend too much time on their music. Plus the fact is that he was not a Beatles fan, and he wasn't up on that style.

This was a lesson in itself, but more on that later.

These guitar lessons went on for about 6 months, every Saturday morning. I was not allowed to miss a lesson; I didn't want to. Then summer came and I had proven that I could handle the guitar a little; enough to satisfy Mom. So I quit and started cutting lawns, with the idea of financing a better guitar. And I did. By August, I had saved up enough to cut a deal with my parents, and I was able to afford a Gibson LG-0, with a lovely deep brown mahogany body and the skinniest neck I've ever felt on a steel-string acoustic guitar.

I named it Grezelda. Don't worry: it was the last guitar I named.



This photo is of my brother, my sister and me (left) when I was about 7. Yes that's an honest-to-goodness Mickey Mouse guitar (well, all right, it would probably be more correct to call it a ukulele).

None of us could play anything; that wasn't the idea, but it was fun to hold these instruments. The Mickey Mouse

guitar probably ended up at a church rummage sale. Today, it would probably be worth...oh, never mind, I don't even want to think about it.

After I got the Gibson (I just can't bring myself to use the name Grezelda), I had my parents take this photo:



I think that was the last time either my brother or sister touched a guitar.

On my side, I had found an instrument to call my own. But I was floundering a little bit. I couldn't play very well, and didn't know many songs, and also didn't know anyone else who played.

Yet.

Chapter 3: High School Daze

Eventually came high school; and with high school came the drama club. The club advisor, Pat Zich was an art teacher. She was one of those wild and crazy teachers with all sorts of leftist political leanings that were very popular in the mid-60s. She was the closest thing to a hippie that I ever saw; as cool as cool could be. She also played guitar a little.

She had the whimsy to cast me in one her children's theatre productions and I found myself in the inner circle of the drama club. During those first months in high school, I met two other students, Neil Sawyer and Val Saamer, both of whom were also played guitar a little. Neil had a

guitar identical to mine, and Val had gotten himself a 12-string Martin. Val worked a job after school and was loaded. Well, I thought so.

And they were my salvation. Without these other 3 people to play with during those high school years, I surely would never have continued to play, and would never have flourished into Me.

We played, we sang. We played and sang some more; anywhere, everywhere; for large audiences, the drama club gang, or around a camp fire. It mattered little.

My academic studies (and I'm being very polite to call them that) were lackluster at best. I was failing Biology, failing Math,

failing History. What did I care? I was playing guitar.

I had my study hall privileges taken away because I was in the auditorium one day, sitting on the dark stage, playing my guitar. The administration frowned on that, so they said I couldn't do it anymore. Naturally, that only made me want to play all the more.

What was interesting (to me at any rate) was that I was getting straight A's in music theory. Apparently the administration was unimpressed. After all, they undoubtedly reasoned, "you can't make a living as a guitar player".

There was a lesson in that too, but more on that later also.

Because I had the strongest ability in music theory, the other players in the group were all giving me their records to figure out songs for them. I worked on songs by all the 60s Folk Revival guys- Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Eric Anderson, Fred Neil, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan...and Donovan.

That's right, Donovan P. Lietch. This guy was writing some of the most beautiful songs I'd ever heard; songs at least on a par with The Beatles. I may have secretly thought them better songs, if I hadn't considered that a blatant heresy.

Donovan learned guitar by hanging around with people like Burt Jansch (pronounced Yanch), John Renbourn, and Davey Graham. These guys had developed

a uniquely British style of fingerpicking that included melodic lines. The guitar had its own place, its own “voice”, in each song, with its own motifs. I was dazzled. And without knowing who any of those other players were, I devoured the music of Donovan: “Yellow is the Color of My True Love’s Hair”, “Try for the Sun”, “Catch the Wind”, etc.

My music grew with his, although I was always miles behind. But when Donovan signed with Epic Records, he produced three albums in a row that knocked anything I’d heard up to that point into a cocked hat: “Mellow Yellow”, “Sunshine Superman”, and “Hurdy Gurdy Man”.

| SIDEBAR: On “Hurdy Gurdy Man”,
| Donovan’s backup musicians included

(among others) John Paul Jones on bass, John Bonham on drums, and a guy named Jimmy Page on electric guitar. In case you didn't catch the significance of those names, that's Led Zeppelin without Robert Plant. Led Zep backing a folk singer! Of course, they weren't Zep yet. But this is where they got their start together, on studio projects during the late 60s.

One day, my art teacher/drama club advisor/friend Mrs. Z. gave me a new album by Joni Mitchell called "Song to a Seagull". She wanted to learn to play the song "Marcie", so she gave it to me to figure out. I went home and spent many, **many** hours working on it; hours that I probably should have spent on my homework, but to me this was more important. I worked out the song and

brought it back to her. She was a bit overwhelmed at how difficult it was, and she suggested that I should play it and she would just sing it.

I had no idea that Joni M. had retuned her guitar; I didn't know that was legal; so I had worked it out in standard tuning! Without realizing it, I had made my first step to becoming an instrumentalist.

My technique was growing too. For instance, when I started trying to learn barre chords, they were just plain hard; I wasn't sure I'd ever get them. Beatles to the rescue! "A Hard Day's Night", their first movie, came out, including such musical sequences as the baggage car scene. During this, and some of the TV studio sequences, John Lennon and

George Harrison were playing barre chords *so smoothly*; they made them look positively easy. They were doing it right there on the screen, while they were singing! A revelation: *they* were doing it, which meant it could be *done*, which meant *I* could also do it. Suddenly barre chords were mine. All right, it still took me about 6 months to really get them to sound like anything, but I had the inspiration to keep trying.

It was from this process that I developed the philosophy of “Yet”. I urge my students to insert the word Yet into their vocabulary. Like this:

- *I can't play these barre chords...yet.*
- *I don't understand finger picking...yet.*
- *I can't change chords smoothly...yet.*

“Yet” is a positive measurement of progress. It helps one to relate to accomplishment, not failure.

Also around this time, I began teaching privately. I really had no business doing that; I was not much more than a beginner myself. But it turned out that one of my first students ever was the girl I would eventually marry! Isn't Love grand?

With the help of very supportive parents, and a lot of time in Summer School, I somehow managed to scrape through high school and graduate on time, more or less. I didn't receive my diploma until *after* I had attended college for a full year!

Chapter 4: Ivy Covered Halls

In college, my buddy Val was my roommate and our playing time continued. But the group was breaking up. Pat had left Oneida for points unknown. She traveled the world, taught in Germany and Iran, worked in theatre in London and retired to Scotland. Like I said: a hippie. Neil went off to college, and eventually ended up in New York trying to make it as an actor. But after one marriage and one 15 year acting career, he went back to school to get his doctorate in botany; he teaches at the University of Wisconsin.

After 2 years, Val and I moved away from each other. He went on to study voice in Boston, later became a chef with his own

restaurant atop the John Hancock building in Chicago, and now runs a horse ranch with his wife in Oklahoma. Neither Pat nor Neil play guitar anymore, but Val does- for campfires at his horse camps. He became the Singing Cowboy!

I went on to study music at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, NY. OCC has a very strong music program, and I was lucky to study with the likes of Phil Klein (a true keyboard wizard), and Donald B. Miller (another consummate musician, very much in the style and tradition of my father). From Phil I learned more about harmony, transposition and arranging than I could have at any of the major music schools in the world. Don taught conducting and music history, but it was his total musicianship that captured my

attention; it was never a big deal; to him, it was the most natural thing in the world. For Don, just like my Dad, music was like breathing. It's just "what he did".

After graduating at the Community College, I got married and continued my education at SUNY Fredonia (part of the state university system in New York). There I came in contact with composition teacher Walter Hartley, and singing teacher Peter Zellmer. These 2 were cut from the same cloth: music was their lives.

I spent a lot of free time during college applying all my musicianship to my guitar. All I knew was that I wanted that kind of dedication to music in my life. But I was being trained to be a school teacher!

Chapter 5: Real Life?

Me? A school teacher? If I had had any foresight at all, I would have recognized that to be a very bad mix. Does the term oil-and-water mean anything to anybody? Well, I did teach for a year in a school near Syracuse and, sure enough, by the end of the 2nd week I knew I had chosen the wrong profession.

During this time I set myself the task of listening to a huge variety of music on the radio. I would spend every free hour I had listening and trying to play along with whatever I heard. Several months were devoted to easy listening music, then several more months to jazz, and again to country music. Each Sunday I was glued to

a program called "The Bluegrass Ramble" where I heard and learned all manner of old-timey and bluegrass music. This went on throughout that year I was pretending to be a school teacher.

I was also dabbling in classical music; I worked my way through the "Aaron Shearer Guitar Method Book I" in about two days. Seeing the way notes were unfolding in a horizontal fashion was so different than the vertical chording I had been used to for so long.

Then in 1974, my wife and I moved to Oneida where we began. While working at a weekly advertising publication, I picked up a lot of useful information about promotion, and ad layout and design. I didn't know it then, but this was to

become very important to me as my adventure with the guitar continued. I was playing a lot in my spare time; I began to teach privately. Over the next 7 years I built up a studio that would eventually accommodate over 50 students per week. That's a lot of lessons.

It turned out, while I wasn't very good in front of a class, I was very successful with students one-on-one.

In education, there is a saying that goes "by your students you will be taught". What I discovered was that, at the end of each week of 50 lessons, each one of my students had one lesson...and I had 50; fifty people every week, all wanting to play something different. One wanted to learn John Denver songs, one brought in

the Muppet Songbook, another was into Def Leppard, and still another Steely Dan. And I was determined to learn whatever it was these people wanted to learn.

Earlier, I said that my teacher Les not knowing any Beatles songs was a lesson itself. Well, here was the lesson: if I learn all that music, get that much variety into my hands and my instrument and my ears...if I can actually learn to play all that stuff, not only will I help out each one of my students, but I will become a better musician and a better guitarist.

During that time (1976 – 1981), I had several hundred students, most of whose names I have forgotten. I could probably tell you what they played but I would not be able to recall their names.

Maybe it's genetic, maybe it's a learned trait, but somewhere along the line I developed a "Tonal Memory". It's a bit of a blessing and a bit of a curse. But the fact is that I can remember chord progressions that I played with a student 25 years ago, but can't remember the name of someone I met 5 minutes ago. Some would call that selective memory, but I like my name for it better.

One name I *can* recall is Roy Coston. Roy started guitar with me when he was 11 years old. Roy was a huge Kiss fan, and wanted to play their music. Kiss is basic enough and learning their style wasn't all that hard. So I learned enough to give him a start, and taught him (and myself) a little bit about lead playing too. Little did I know that Roy would go on to become a

professional guitarist and play with several bands that had a good chance at the big time. The fact that it didn't happen is irrelevant; the fact that he made the guitar his life was the point.

It is students like Roy that give a teacher a reason to teach. You never know who might be the next really good one.



Mainly for the benefit of my growing number of students, and because I don't

give (or even like) recitals, I invented Guitar Days. For those five years, this one-day outdoor guitar festival featured many local talents. All of my knowledge of promotion was needed, and with the backing of the city of Oneida, we were able to pull it off.

It was a lot of work, and worth every bit of it. But the result was that I got burned out with private teaching.



(Roy & me in 2005, playing a "little" guitar)

Chapter 6: Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes

In 1978, two events occurred that changed my life. The first was that my beloved Gibson guitar had developed a very bad bulge on the top, causing the bridge to pull up. It looked about two months pregnant. I knew it was time to get a new guitar, and since I was leaning so heavily towards instrumental music with a strong classical influence, I thought a nylon-string guitar would do the trick.

I had attended a concert that featured the Charlie Byrd trio and Joe Pass on the same bill. It was an incredible experience; one that brought me to a crossroads. After that show, I knew that I had to go home and either practice my fingers to the bone,

or start writing the ad to sell my guitar. I went home and practiced. The bar had been raised, and I was not there...Yet.

In the late 70s, I was also handling musical instruments and equipment as a dealer, mainly to service my large student roster. One of the catalogs I ordered from regularly had a Yamaha 245s with a solid spruce top. The description was enough to make me order one. I figured if it didn't work for me, I'd simply put it on the display rack and sell it to someone else.

The moment I got it out of the box and played it, I knew I was home. This guitar felt so lovely, so natural in my hands.



And when I put a set of Augustine strings on it, it sounded even better, so now I had the instrument. That was the first event.

Then came God.

There I was just a-walking down the street (*not* singing do-wah-diddy) one day in 1978. I had a successful studio; I was a well-known, busy musician. I was also very, *very* self-absorbed. And suddenly on

that one day, it struck me that, if I was to see me coming the other way, I'd probably cross the street to avoid me. What a shocker *that* was! That triggered a life-changing religious experience. My prayer was simple: OK, God, you say you can do better, let's try it. And life was better from that day forward. I was a new creation in Jesus. Oh, but I really was. I still am.

All the while I was in church as a kid I had heard the Truth, but it hadn't set me free **yet**. It turned out that God had been trying to get my attention all along, but I was having none of it. I would always say, "I have a good relationship with God: I leave Him alone and He leaves me alone". And God was such a gentleman that he honored that. But finally I couldn't ignore Him. Long story short: I was born again.

My private teaching went on through 1981, when our family (now including a daughter) moved to Ithaca, NY, so my wife could attend Cornell University. While there, I met a lot of musicians and made a lot of friends, some of whom are still very important to me.

One of those people was Scott B. Adams. Scott's Mom introduced us when he was still a teenager; she thought I could help him out with his Christian rock band and his songwriting. I don't know if I ever did help him much, but my friendship with Scott would blossom into something bordering on the miraculous.

Chris Woodard also came into the picture. A struggling guitarist with a lovely

fingerstyle touch, Chris' story parallels mine in so many ways it's staggering.

At this period, I stopped teaching. It was "played out" for a time. And with my new outlook on life, I felt called to "go sing". So I began writing contemporary Christian songs and booking tours in churches and coffeehouses all over the country.

These new songs were heavily informed by all the music I had done before, but mostly by the British folk music of Donovan, et al. I felt that it was paramount that the guitar should have something to say in every song. You could also hear influences of Paul Simon, James Taylor, and even a little bit of John Denver, in that early music.

During my travels, I was introduced to Bud Elkin, a record producer from Orrville, Ohio; that's where they make Smuckers' jelly. Bud was also a songwriter. He couldn't sing and couldn't play, but somehow he was able to write tremendously deep and dynamic songs. He offered me the opportunity to go to Indiana with him, to Bill Gaither's Pinebrook Studios and record an album of my songs. He had a friend who was the head engineer.

On February 2, 1982 I recorded the "Cross in the Road" album, with a full compliment of backup musicians and singers, which included a 10-piece string orchestra. What an experience. It was also my wife's birthday.

The album never really did that well, mainly because we didn't pay enough to the Christian magazines to be included on their charts. Honest, I'm not making that up, that's what I was told by someone from one of those rags. Also, we had put out a record the same year that the CD was invented and it was doomed from the start.

Even so, I ended up with a really nice album that actually did get quite a bit of independent airplay.

Also during this session, I learned a great deal about record production and studio arranging. It was like a master class for me; and I was suddenly seeing that there was a practical application for all those theory electives I had taken in college:

orchestration, harmony, polyphony,
arranging.

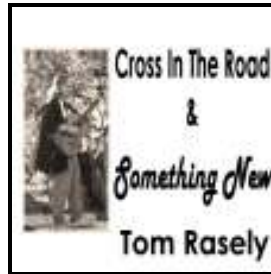
Shortly after the release of "Cross in the Road", I was offered a contract by Jon Phelps, then at Heartland Records. As I held it in my hand, I could see that what they were asking me to do would have surely meant the end of my family. I was already not making enough money to provide for them, and going on the road to promote an album would definitely have been the proverbial final nail in the coffin. So I turned it down. How do I feel about that now?

Turn the page...

Well, as Jim Croce so aptly put it:

**'Cause I've had my share of broken dreams
And more than a couple of falls; and in
Chasin' what I thought were moonbeams
I have run into a couple of walls
But in looking back at the places I've been
I would sure be the first one to say
When I look at myself today
Wouldn't have done it any other way**

The lesson: what you want is not always what you need, or what is best. I have not one regret.



Chapter 7: Paradise on a Budget

After being in Ithaca for 5 years, my wife decided she wanted to go on for her Masters Degree in Library Science.

That meant moving. She chose the University of Hawaii, partly because it had an excellent Library Studies program, and partly because it was warm. So we spent a delightful year in "Paradise". Of course, it wasn't all easy, especially financially; but we managed to lose (I mean 'spend') about the same amount of money that most people do on a 10-day vacation to Hawaii, except that we were there for a full year.

During that year, I worked overnights at a Christian radio station. There were more

politics involved in the operation of this station than I could have ever guessed, and eventually I was let go about 3 weeks before I was going to leave anyway.

The radio station had given me an opportunity to do 2 things, of equal importance. The first was that I learned radio production. Working overnight in Christian radio, means that you babysit a series of pre-recorded, half hour programs. This gives you about 28 minutes of free time, about ten times a night. I used that time to sit in the production room and practice "cutting tape".

The other thing that I had time for was to re-invent myself musically. The Christian music scene was requiring too many things of me that had nothing to do with

making music. Also, I was 6,000 miles away from anyone I knew. I could be **anybody** I wanted. But who?

After much prayer and soul-searching, I came to the conclusion that I had sung myself out. The songs that I was writing came out of my personal experiences and my study of the Bible. By this time, though, I found that the things I was learning didn't shrink down to 2 verses, a bridge, and a repeated chorus. It was then that I decided to stop singing and concentrate on becoming an instrumentalist.

Chapter 8: OPR & Eutycus

After a year in Hawaii, and one degree earned, we returned to New York State.

Most people ask us why we returned. The real question was why we went. We went to get the degree. Had there been any opportunities for employment there, we probably would have stayed; but there weren't, so we came back to familiar territory.

Shortly after returning, a friend I had met during the Ohio days, Mike McFarren, called me.

I had worked with Mike on his first recording project, and now he was inviting

me to go back out to Indiana as the arranger and guitarist on his second album.

To fill out the instrumentation I took along bass player Dan Lovett (whom I had met in Hawaii) and my old Ithaca friend Scott B. Adams. Scott was a better lead player than me at that time and I needed him there.

So the three of us jumped into my car and went to Indiana to record. The session went well, with only a few bumps along the way. On the way home, Scott began to brainstorm the idea of starting his own record label, using me as a featured instrumental guitarist. The idea was to do a Christmas album. Scott had a very simple, low-tech but serviceable studio,

and I knew every Christmas carol there ever was. And Dan came along to help produce and promote the music, and provide bass parts.

From that discussion in the car, Orchard Park Recordings (aka: Orchard Beat Records) was born. For our first four recordings together, the label was called Eutycus Records.

SIDEBAR: Eutycus was my idea, because I think that the Eutycus story is the funniest part of the Bible (Acts 20). It goes like this: Eutycus was listening to Paul preach far into the night; he fell asleep in the window, fell to the ground, broke his neck and died. Paul stopped preaching and went down and revived him in the name of the Lord. Paul went back to preaching,

and Eutycus was restored. He was also the first man ever to fall asleep in church. There's hope in that.

Over the 10 year span of our partnership, Scott and I created over two dozen albums, featuring melodic instrumental music. As a result, my studio chops were built along with my arranging skills, and I was able to use all those advertising and promotional techniques that I had learned.

Our partnership lasted until December of 1998. That was the time that Scott and I played at the White House. And thereby hangs a tale.



Scott and me



Me in the East Room at the White House

Chapter 9: The White House

In 1936, a 2nd cousin of mine, Hiram Rasely was the Vice President of Burdett Business College in Boston. In one of his weekly radio talks, he said "Opportunity is a thing created". That thought hangs on the wall in my office as a reminder.

In 1994, after we produced my solo CD "Words Are Not Enough" (the last Eutycus Records production), a Logos Bookstore on Nantucket Island included a copy of that CD in a gift basket that they gave to President and Mrs. Clinton who were vacationing "next door" on Martha's Vineyard.

I thought, "Hey, if my CD could get into the White House, why not me?" So I

contacted the White House and found out that they did book musicians sometimes, during the VIP Tours at Christmas time. That's when they show off the decorations to the Washington staffers.

Over the next four years. I sent more letters, more promo materials, more CDs. Nothing happened. About this time, my partner Scott was figuring that it was a waste of time. But I kept on pursuing it, creating the opportunity, until mid-November, 1998 when I got a call from The White House asking us to play for the VIP Tours. We said yes.

Lesson learned: perseverance pays off, and the squeaky wheel *does* get the attention. From that day on, Scott has referred to me as "Mr. Squeaky".

Opportunity *IS* a thing created. This event always reminds me of the Bible story of the nagging widow and the unjust judge. You can look it up.

Scott and I still occasionally work together, and are still very good friends.

In fact, many of the people that I have met along the way are all very important to me. They are my support group, my "church".

Chapter 10: Meeting Charlie

I can't remember whether Charlie called me first, or if I called him. It matters little; we began communicating about his songwriting. Charlie writes songs like some people drink coffee- he's addicted.

A ceramic tile installer by trade, Charlie can, and will, write you a song about anything, anytime, anywhere.

He writes in an old country style, with a Gospel bent. But having said that, I must suggest that that's not a bad thing, it's just true.

In 1997, we started working on an album of his songs in the OPR studio, and we haven't stopped working together since.

He gives me a chance to employ all my studio talents, and allows me to stretch my wings a bit on his songs. In a geographical area like upstate New York, it is people like Charlie keep people like me busy.

We've even co-written about 20 songs over the years. And though we haven't had a hit yet (there's that word again), we have had a few cuts on other people's albums.

In the music business, there's often much more business than music. And sometimes in music, you really get "the business". The truth is, sometimes it's just not as fun as it should be.

And being a musician in an area where the music scene isn't exactly jumping, you have to create your own scene.



Charlie and me

Working with songwriters like Charlie is part of the bread-and-butter of making a living, and I have learned to enjoy myself with every musical opportunity that presents itself.

Making it work requires some well-honed people skills, as well as talent. It causes as much frustration as it does success. It's a daily tight-rope walk, and often "every gig is the first gig".

Chapter 11: On My Own

On December 10, 1998, Scott Adams and I performed in the East Room at The White House. On December 12th we gave a concert in the Orchard Park studios. On December 31st Scott and I broke up the business partnership.

We had established OPR as a strong entity in the music scene all throughout the northeast, through concerts, craft shows, and stores. We spent hours on the phone with store owners, craft show presenters, and concert promoters; and miles on the road...a **lot** of miles. And it was time to diverge.

1999 saw my wife and I move to Wilson, NC where she was a children's librarian. There I did a lot of writing, but accomplished almost nothing else musically. It was very frustrating.

Really, the only good thing that came out of it for me was that I bought my first electric guitar in a pawn shop in Wilson. For the first time in 45 years of playing, I owned 2 guitars at the same time!

By good grace, we returned to New York State the next year. At this time I began working with my Hawaii friend Dan Lovett in his new studio.

“A story about Dan”

When Dan left high school, he went on the road as a sound engineer for a band, he learned to play bass, and he became a Christian...not necessarily in that order.

In 1986, when I showed up in Hope Chapel (located about 3 blocks from Waikiki Beach), Dan was in the worship band, waiting for another musician to come along. I offered my guitar services and he and I ended up playing a lot together.

When the time came to leave Hawaii, Dan asked me if I would mind if he moved to wherever I ended up (we didn't know then where that would be), and study music theory with me. I thought that was the

stupidest idea I'd ever heard, so I said, "Sure, why not?"

6 months after we settled in the little upstate New York city of Norwich, Dan moved there too. After 2 years of music study, I suggested that he move to Ithaca, where I knew that the music scene was much stronger.

By 2000, when we had returned from NC, Dan had his own recording studio, and I began to work with him, producing a series of wonderful albums for his Frolick'N Music label.

This partnership lasted until 2003 when Dan announced that he was moving to Florida. Obviously the New York winters

were not agreeing with someone who had spent 6 years in Hawaii.



Dan at work in his studio

So there I was on my own. In 2004, I began writing more than recording, although I still did demo work for

songwriter friends and an occasional full project with other artists.

Also I began participating in the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York which was a huge advantage for me, as it put me in touch with opportunities to write for, and play with, other nylon string players.



Chapter 12: Other Lessons

The story isn't over YET, and the song isn't done. In 2006 I wrote my first Guitar Concerto. And in 2007 I got my first new guitar in 28 years: a Yamaha CGX110cca.



But along the very long-and-winding-road to becoming an overnight success, I have made some very interesting and helpful discoveries.

1. Talent does not equal money. Wouldn't it be nice if it did? But it's an unfair business in an unfair world.

2. You can't make it as a musician on just a dream, and you can't make it as a musician without one.

3. Learn to build "rests" into your life. Music is created with a balance of sounds and silences. Many times what you *don't* play makes what you do *play* sound even better. Breathe.

4. Warning: Practice can make you very good at practicing. Advice: "Don't practice, Play!" No matter what you are working on, at whatever level, be aware that you are performing for an audience of at least one: you!

5. Don't worry about what other people think. You have to become your own worst critic, **and** your own biggest fan.

6. In setting goals, remember that success is measured by the attempt to reach it. It's good to have players that you look up to; but remember that those people also have someone in their own lives that they look up to in the same way.

7. If you don't want to hear "no" for an answer, don't ask a yes/no question. Instead of "Can I do this?" ask "**How** can I do this?"

8. Music is an expanding universe. The more you learn, the more you find there is to learn.

Or as John Sebastian put it in 1967:

**“But now the more I see
The more I see there is to see”**
(She's Still a Mystery to Me)



Chapter 13: Coda

A very wise teacher once said, “Guitarists have two main problems to overcome: the right hand and the left hand”.

Lesson: it’s not just what you do with each hand, but how they work together to create the sound of the guitar; how they support each other.

In my life, if I am one hand, then my wife is the other. Without her loving support, I would not be a guitarist today.

There were so many times along the way when I might have quit, and even considered it, but she constantly encouraged me to use the talent I was

given, and to continue to pursue my dreams.

One great piece of advice that she gave me was this: do something, anything, no matter how small, every day toward your career. I may have missed a few days in the last 4 decades, but I like to think I made up for them along the way.

One day I'll know. Until then, I'll keep playing.

Appendix 1: Discography

This is a complete, chronological listing of all the album projects it's been my privilege to play on over the years. The ones on which I am featured artist are listed simply as "TR". SBA of course is my long-time friend and playing partner Scott B. Adams.

Sail On- New Creations (1980)
And Angels Came Announcing- Kim Onori (1980)
Believe- TR (1981)
Cross in the Road- TR (1983)
He Is Here- The 4 of Us (1984)
Play Skillfully- TR (1985)
Ever Bless- Ray Repp (1985)
Something New- TR (1986)
Sing O Sing- The 4 of Us (1988)
Midnight Clear- Eutycus (1988)
Sunrise on the Point- Eutycus (1990)
Blue Canvas Sky- SBA (1990)
In the Window- Eutycus (1991)
Words Are Not Enough- TR (1994)

Quiet Evening Sampler- OPR (1994)
Maybe Next Time- SBA (1994)
Lakeside Christmas- TR/SBA (1995)
Celtimorphosis- Celtimorphosis (1995)
Acoustic Traditions- TR/SBA (1996)
Christmas Traditions- TR/SBA (1996)
Seasons of Life- TR/SBA (1997)
Passages- TR/SBA (1997)
Celtic Traditions- Celtimorphosis (1997)
Christmas in Ivory (1997)
Chenango County Pride- Charlie Resseguie (1997)
Horizons Sampler- OPR (1998)
An Olde World Christmas- TR/SBA (1998)
Community Album- TR/SBA (1998)
December Evening [Live concert] (1998)
Wind Song Hill- Dave Raducha (1998)
Bag O Bones- Steve Golley (1998)
Moonlight Concert- TR (1999)
Adam's Fall- SBA (1999)
Christopher the Christmas Tree (1999)
Pigeon Hill Suite- Ron Palmer (1999)
Heart Full of Country Songs- Resseguie (2000)
Winds of Christmas- TR/SBA (2000)
Dreams...Songs from the Woods- Roy Peters (2000)
Healing in His Wings- Laurie Petrisen (2001)
Holy Night- TR (2001)
County Routes & County Roots- TR (2001)
One to One- The Raze (2001)

Trophy of Grace- Nan Heckler (2002)
God's Plan Series for Jireh Foundation, Hawaii (2002)
American Push- Dan Matlack (2003)
Coffee & Guitars- various artists (2003)
Say Something Nice To Me- Mary Bentley (2003)
Leftovers- TR (2004)
Guitar Players of the Southern Tier- various (2004)
Music of Our Fathers- TR/SBA/Others (2004)
Rise Up- Laurie Petrisen (2006)
Unto Us- TR/SBA (2005)
Acoustic Intersection- TR/SBA (2007)
Shifting Sands [vocal] (2008)

Each one of these recordings has a good story attached to it, and each story has a good memory attached to it.

One thing's for sure:

They all have
6 String Attached.

Appendix 2: Book List

My first book was the cleverly titled “Basic Guitar Book”. A completely revised version of that book was published by K & R Music, a company owned by the well-known liturgical songwriter Ray Repp.

On July 4, 1999, while doing a show in New Hampshire, I was struck with the idea for an entirely new method book: “The Chord Chart Guitar Method”.

Other books include:

- **Unlocking the Upper Neck**
- **The Un-dreaded Barre Chord**
- **Circle of Fifths**
- **Stuck In a Rut**
- **Types & Uses of the Capo (Mel Bay)**