

Autoharp Quarterly®

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*The International
Magazine
Dedicated to the
Autoharp Enthusiast*

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1879 - 1975*

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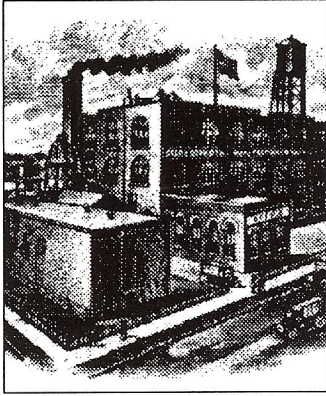
*Live with Your
Fine Tuners...
and Love 'Em*



Glen Peterson

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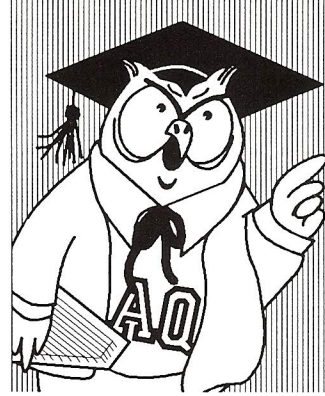
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Autoharp Quarterly
The International Magazine Dedicated to the Autoharp Enthusiast

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To And From / The Editors

Mary Lou  Wan

Dear Readers:

Ah, autumn! That time of the year when our festival schedule is winding down – when our deadlines seem to have been moved back a bit – even the seasons seem to have lost their grip on the extreme weather swings. But, whoa! Was that a Christmas ad on television today? Just 60 more shopping days –. That thought brings this scenario to a screeching halt. Back to reality. It's time to wish you, each and every one, a blessed holiday season and a happy new year. Enjoy the snow, Northland. Enjoy the snowbirds, Southland. Enjoy your autoharps, all!

We are pleased to announce that Dorothy and George Wagner are our new Festivals (Events) and Clubs Editors. They are filling the gap left by Sandy Shaner when she moved to Kentucky. We are fortunate to have these folks to carry this responsibility for us. We thank Sandy, Dorothy, and George.

And we thank you, our readers. Our family is growing steadily, and now we encompass so many countries other than the United States that we feel it appropriate to call ourselves "international." Although we have had readers from Europe, Canada, and Asia since our inception eight (Happy birthday to us!) years ago, our readership overseas has grown appreciably in just the past few years.

And, we hope you noticed our new cover. If not, turn back one page and take a look. We thought the beginning of our eighth year would be a good time for a change. It wasn't as though we didn't like the old cover; we were just tired of looking at it and decided that you were too. After all, we had to look at it a lot more than you folks.

One other thing we're thinking of changing – 'Harpers-At-Large. Actually, we were thinking of dropping it entirely. However, unlike the cover change, we don't want to make a unilateral decision on this one. So, send us your thoughts and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dear Editors:

A TRIBUTE

...I attended the memorial service for Beverly Pratton. Bev will be greatly missed. Her enthusiasm for the autoharp and her warm sense of humor touched many of us. The autoharp community has lost a truly special friend.

Tina Louise Barr

VERILY, IT WAS A BLAST!

This is a note to let you know how much I enjoyed the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering again this year. My husband is a United Methodist minister and enjoys tagging along. ...I thought you might get a kick out of his thoughts on the gathering. The following is [a portion of] his article in our church newspaper.

"[In] The beginning of July '95, people from Colorado, Texas, Japan, and various other places gathered at Newport, Pennsylvania about 20 miles north of Harrisburg. The occasion was the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering. Autoharp enthusiasts with varying levels of ability came together to share techniques, teach, and learn. The interesting thing from an observer's point of view was the harmony that resulted from the blend of experts and novice. You could not help but stamp your feet as the music lifted your spirits. The Sunday Gospel Concert reached deep within one's soul to pull out hallelujahs and amens from even the most staid individuals. I came away from that four-day event (in which I was a tagalong) feeling I had been attending a week of revival meetings under a big tent. This was not a "religious" gathering, yet there was a sense of peace and serenity, as well as a spirit of passing on knowledge in order to propagate the playing of the autoharp!..."

Diana Streeper

- AND THE BEAT GOES ON

My autoharp class (Westminster Choir College) was a hoot! They strummed, they picked, they melo-

dized, they conquered! And four strong plus myself, are The Wailing Westminster Wenches. We will try to reunion at the Mountain Laurel Gathering in '96 to perform our theme song, "Phftt! You Wuz Gone!"

Lucille Reilly

A thank you to everyone who sent notes to us concerning this event. It's a mammoth amount of work, planning, and travel. But to all of us, it is an unforgettable experience, well worth the effort.

Editors and Limberjack Productions

GATHERINGS FLOWER

I could have gone on and on with my ravings about the Willamette Valley Autoharp Gathering, but tried to keep the article down to an appropriate length [see "'Harpers-At-Large"']. I am very glad that I was able to include this gathering in my summer travel plans. Although I have been to other music festivals, this was my first experience where autoharps were the focus. I now understand why 'harpers rave so about the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering. I will certainly try to get there some summer soon!

The "Cyberpluckers" e-mail network is where I first met Cathy Britell and Les Gustafson-Zook, and I really did feel that I already knew them before seeing them in person last weekend. It was through AQ that I first heard about the network; please keep on letting people know about the Internet connections!

Fuey Herring

LONELY IN ASHEVILLE

It was good to see you at the Carter Fold in August. I enjoyed the jams. Please post this for me in AQ – Wanted: autoharp players to meet regularly to exchange songs, playing techniques, etc. Contact PO Box 15152, Asheville, NC 28813.

John Carter

DOWN UNDER

...My curiosity concerning the fact that *Waltzing Matilda* was first played publically on an autoharp has been satisfied through my research. But further intrigue is that the autoharp was only invented ten years earlier. How did it get to Australia? ...Perhaps through the Australian "Gold Rush?"

Forbes Guckel

Perhaps, Forbes, perhaps. Also, perhaps that particular "autoharp" was made in Germany before it was patented in the United States?

Editors

ANOTHER COUNTRY HEARD FROM

I want to let you know how much I enjoy *AQ*...It is quite informative...

I began playing 'harp about 25 years ago, and have been performing off and on as soloist, or with several groups for the past ten years. I also play fiddle and 5-string banjo, but since my retirement ...I have spent more time on the autoharp...In July '93, I won first place in the Smithville, Tennessee autoharp contest. Now I am focusing on 'harp even more...

In my area, (Western Canada), other autoharp players are not too numerous, and it is good to read about other Canadians who have an interest in the instrument. Although I have not made any attempts to contact any others, this could be a future project. It may be possible to form an autoharp club here in Western Canada. Perhaps *AQ* can help in this matter...

Tony Kuzmicz

Here y' go, Tony— hope you get some takers! Great hearing from you.

Editors

RE: OSI AUTOHARP HISTORY

I congratulate you and your staff for putting together not only an interesting magazine, but also a collection of information which would otherwise be difficult if not impossible to obtain by most of us...

Bob Briehl

MOUNTAIN LAUREL 'HARPS - PLUS

Thank you for helping me understand how to use the *AQ Songbook*...I do like the format now after your help.

I have enclosed a picture of me and

one of my 'harp twins, which I made last winter. It has 36 notes, eight double strings 1/8" apart plus the high F or F# double 1/4" apart. I was going to go to high C# or D, but the high end string is 10-3/8" vibrating length instead of 8-3/4". [This exceeds the standard 8" length and so exceeds the break length]. This was supposed to give me more playing room, and also have the 21st bar further from the lower bridge to damp better, hopefully. The top 5 strings broke [because they were too long]. I tried .009 or .010 size strings but the sound was poor. So please notice the false lower bridge. Thanks again to *AQ*, this made it possible to use .012 string size, which sounds much better.

As I had the chord bars made by then, I stayed with lower E to high C, thanks to *AQ* for the help (Dr. George). The wood for the tops of these 'harps is California redwood, the pinblock and frame is hard maple. One back is purple-heart and the other padouk...I have a brace from pin to spine for strength; it does not touch top or back...

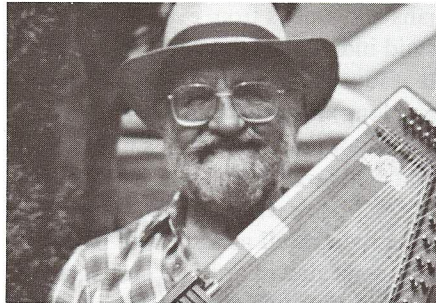
Thank you again.

Lyle E. Behrends



Lyle with his Mountain Laurel 'Harp

Here's another picture of a hand-crafted 'harp built from the Mountain Laurel 'Harp plans:



Vic Gray, England, with his new 'harp

Plus a third—

I recently finished my Mountain Laurel as a F-C-G diatonic, and it sounds like 16 church organs. I got so excited

that I put new bass strings on my old Oscar Schmidt, and replaced a few bass-area pads. While I was at it, I changed the Schmidt bar arrangement:

F6+9 Dm Em Am D7 A7 C6+9
Bb C7 F G7 C G D G6+9

To me, this is a pleasing setup, and the 'harp sounds great.

The pentatonic chords were so much fun I decided to remake an old chording psaltery into a 1-7/8 key diatonic 'harp in D-A....My bar arrangement is now: Em F#m Bm E7 D6+9

G A7 D A A6+9

I use the pentatonic bars for runs, and for a "hammer on" effect by stroking D6+9, then adding D immediately afterward. Now if only I could get a "pull off" effect by stroking D, and adding D6+9.

I had built the old psaltery quite heavily, and the sound was never very good. Now it sounds lovely. All those doubled strings were the making of this instrument, along with the true bass it now has.

All these diatonic and pentatonic ideas were in back issues of *AQ*, so thanks again. By the way, I still use Joe Riggs' thumbscrew-type picks, but I've never achieved the "bright purple fingertip" he promised. Mine always turn pale gray.

Ray Sipes

Thank you for your letters— we're happy to have helped with your music. That's our goal. But we never considered grey fingers in our scenario.

Editors

NOSE JOBS

Your latest issue of *AQ* is really good. Yours is the only publication I read from cover to cover...

I didn't realize that Meg Peterson was a classical violinist who looked in disdain at the autoharp (at first). I, too, as a classically trained "real" harpist, used to look down my nose at folk music. Now it's my job! And I prefer folk to classical, although an occasional concerto is OK.

Enclosed is our latest catalog. It was a lot of work...

*Mary Radspinner
Melody Music*

*Your catalog was worth the work!
And, thank you for the note.*

Editors

Oscar Schmidt 1879 – 1975

written by Glen R. Peterson
in 1975

Part Two

This series of articles has been taken directly from transcripts written by the late Glen Peterson and presented to Autoharp Quarterly by Meg Peterson, to document the history of the Autoharp during the Oscar Schmidt – Peterson Era. They are presented on these pages as Mr. Peterson wrote them.

This series of articles is composed of two separate reports written by Mr. Peterson in 1975. These reports have been copied verbatim, and have been interlaced with each other, allowing the articles to follow a chronological order as much as is possible. The words which are in italics, as in this paragraph, are copied from a multi-paged unnamed manuscript. The words in normal type, are copied from a report entitled "Oscar Schmidt-International, Inc. 1879-1975."

Mary Lou Orthey

In 1966, I put us into the publishing business. We put out two books on how to play the Autoharp and three song books. In the last eight years, we have sold approximately 250,000 of these books very profitably. We went into this because, strange as it seems, until that time there were no detailed instructions on how to play the Autoharp available anywhere. These books have been extremely important to the company's economic health and to its image in the industry. They have been copied but never equalled.

Cecil Null, in addition to his assistance in developing the Appalachian, made another, and undoubtedly more enduring contribution. It was he who finally triggered an interest in the Autoharp for Meg Peterson, Glen's wife. A classical violinist, she was completely negative about the Autoharp. From her perspective a poorly made thing which wouldn't stay in tune, that could play only a few chords and sold through Sears for about thirty dollars couldn't even be called a legitimate

musical instrument. A guest in the Peterson home, and later as a frequent visitor when he was working for Peterson, Cecil Null taught Meg how to hold the harp up against her chest, how to pick melody, and how to expand the versatility of the harp. He was proud that his own LP was selling, and Cecil showed Meg that the Autoharp was a much more "legitimate" musical instrument that she had ever imagined.

At that time, as a reluctant favor to her husband, Meg was trying to write "The Many Ways to Play the Autoharp." Peterson had recognized that one of the main things holding back Autoharp sales was that there were no instruction or song books available for the people who bought them. A few skimpy things were available, but they were all aimed at school teachers, and none of them even hinted at playing "Appalachian Style." She wasn't really very happy about the whole project. Meg's book wasn't coming along very rapidly. Cecil Null, in a sense, became the catalyst. He triggered her musical curiosity.

Meg's major problem had been to develop a scoring system for picking melody and other strokes and strums normally used on the harp. With input from her husband, Null, and McKay (who plays piano), a system was finally devised that enabled her to finish Volume One and then go right to work on Volume Two. (Since their publication, the "Many Ways" books have probably sold more than 300,000 copies, that they were very profitable for the company, and that it was publishing profits from these books and later the "Parade" series that enabled the company to survive the recessions of the 1970s.)

McKay provided the painting of the Autoharp for the cover of Volume One and did all the graphics for both volumes. Meg sought out Mike Seeger, Maybelle Carter, and John Sebastian,

among many other players, to expand her knowledge of the instrument. She had been won over by the Autoharp's charms and has since written or arranged more than 25 publications for the Autoharp.

While Meg continues writing and arranging for the Autoharp, she also keeps very busy with Autoharp instructional workshops across the United States and Canada.

Peterson wasn't satisfied with his improvements (of the Autoharp) and began to design a better-sounding and better-looking instrument. Realizing that much of the growing interest in the instrument was from traditional musicians and the new "folk music" fans, he consulted with the popular performers of the day – Maybelle Carter, Mike Seeger, Cecil Null, and Tom Morgan. They told him what they would like to see in the Autoharp, and by the end of 1963, the first Appalachian model harp was ready for the market. This harp did have a sound hole, but the braces inside were spaced farther apart to give a larger air cavity for increased volume. The Appalachian model also had 15 chords. The three new chords were not diminished seventh chords on the 15-chord Golden Autoharps, however. They were E, A, and D major, chords which are frequently used in traditional and folk-style music.

All of Peterson's advisors asked for a spruce top rather than the basswood. They felt that this would enhance the sound. Peterson located the company which was the major maker of piano sound boards in the United States and made arrangements to have them make the top panels for the new Appalachians.

Actually, the manufacturer was delighted to get the work because it enabled him to use the "wasted" corners which were sawed off the sound boards to conform to the grand piano shape. The closed grain spruce was the finest

in the world.

Because the spruce was much more dependable than the basswood, it enabled Peterson to design a sound hole into the Appalachian, and to enlarge the sound box internally. Very few splitting problems were encountered.

The major problem with the original Appalachians was that, because the chord bars were wood, and the new rectangular buttons were now standard (McKay assisted in their design), the buttons would sometimes fall off because the correct adhesive had not yet been found. As a matter of fact, it never was found, which is what gave impetus to the later development of aluminum/plastic chord bars to which the button could be chemically bonded.

The molds for the new chord bar holders were now available and so it was possible to put 15 chords on the Appalachian, to move the holders farther down on the body, and still leave a reasonable amount of space for playing "Appalachian Style." (To the advisors, the problem of playing space above the chord bars was probably equally as important as the spruce top, and the new styrene holders made that possible.) Cecil Null, by then working at the factory, assembled the first test models and finally found the correct location for the holders.

The advisors recommended using E, A, and D major chords rather than the diminished seventh chords, which were standard on the regular 15-chord models. Peterson, who is a great believer in taking advice from people who know more about a subject than he does, put these chords into production.

My decisions were good ones and for a couple of years we made much more money on substantially increased sales. In 1965 and 1966 the federal government poured into the school systems a staggering amount of money. Likewise into the poverty programs. (In 1974, the New York City Schools still had an inventory of un-issued Autoharps purchased by federal grants in 1966!) Some of this found its way to us and our orders went out through the roof. We became heavily back ordered and there was no immediate way out of the trap because: 1. The design of the product was such that it did not lend itself to rapid increases in output. For example, all of our top and bottom reso-

nant panels were made by one mill in Iowa, there was no other mill I could find anywhere which would cut this particular veneer, and this mill was both unwilling and incapable of increasing its output. Our plant was not big enough to accommodate more people, even if I had been able to get more materials. Everything went in and out of one tiny loading dock, we were sharing one elevator, and we were on a narrow one-way residential street in Jersey City. On repeated occasions, truckers either delivering or picking up refused to wait in a lengthy line and left – often with materials we desperately needed.

By late 1965, Peterson was in a trap. Autoharp sales were zooming, and he couldn't fill the orders. The folk music boom was part of it, but Washington and the Great Society programs were also throwing money at the schools and the schools, in turn, were throwing some of it into buying Autoharps. Plus the fact that the company was now



Lockheed and similar companies have a great appeal when they are heavily back ordered. To me, our back order position was a giant threat hanging over our heads.



making a much better harp. The basswood mill, the tuning pin supplier, the string supplier – nobody could keep up with the orders Peterson was placing with them.

Lockheed and similar companies have a great appeal when they are heavily back ordered. To me, however, our back order position was a giant threat hanging over our heads. An Autoharp isn't all that difficult to make, I reasoned. Unless I whip this back order situation it will occur to someone else in the industry (probably in Germany where they already make a variation of the instrument and where zither know-how is well established) that they can pick up a substantial part of the market with little effort because Schmidt simply can't fill all the orders it has. The

musical instrument industry is a tight little family and there are few secrets kept for very long.

Worse yet, it became obvious that the Jersey City factory was incapable of coping with this demand, Peterson subcontracted to have bodies built in Vermont and in Virginia – anything to relieve the pressure on the factory and increase production. When he took over in 1963, orders were about 20,000 harps a year. By late 1965, they were coming in at a rate of over 60,000 a year. Every customer was demanding more, more, more. But Schmidt couldn't produce this.

One answer was obvious. Schmidt had to have a better factory, and in early 1966, Peterson bought a modern plant of twice the size in Union, New Jersey. The Jersey City days, 65 years of Schmidt family involvement in that city, were ended.

Accordingly, at the first opportunity, I moved the plant from Jersey City to Union, New Jersey. This was in the summer of 1966. DiPisa laid out the new factory and moved the machinery – every thing based on the goal of making at least 100,000 harps a year. He installed new, modern paint spray booths, conveyor lines, modern equipment. For minimum front end money we obtained a good industrial building with both a first and second mortgage. This has proven to be a good investment.

Then, one day John Sebastian of the "Lovin' Spoonful" came to Peterson with an "electronic" Autoharp built for him by some craftsman in New York City. It was a horror. There were three holes cut into the bottom of the body to permit the placement of three contact pickups attached to the underside of the basswood panel. The body was terribly warped. It was not much for a musical instrument. Sebastian realized this and asked whether we, as the original makers, couldn't do better.

Peterson, who knew from his children that the "Spoonful" were at or near the top of a lot of charts, saw this as a golden opportunity. Thus began an orgy of product development and improvement such as the company had never seen.

McKay went back to his drawing board to design the all electronic Autoharp. Peterson decreed that it had to

be a solid body all-electric instrument. He also dreamed up the idea, later to be the Cutlass model, of a split channel harp with separate tone and volume controls for the lower bass strings and the higher treble strings so that each side of the harp could be played through separate amplifiers, at varying levels and tone qualities, from different sides of an auditorium – all controllable by the artist. Peterson also told Sebastian that the new harp would have wound magnetic pickups *à la* Fender guitars, not contact microphones.

What started out as an apparently simple project became very complex. Where do you hook the strings on the bottom, knowing that the current system is nothing more than zither-making going back hundreds of years? How do you keep it consistently in tune, keep the tuning pins from enlarging their holes so that it will never stay in tune? How do you put a brilliant lacquered finish on cheap basswood? How do you build an instrument that, instead of 15 chords really cries out for at least 21 chords? Where do you put the electronics? The design dilemmas were almost endless.

Peterson hired more talent for the effort – all very bright people, their purpose to build the ultimate Autoharp. And he reached deeply into the resources of his raw materials suppliers. Tapping their laboratories and scientists to assist him in doing what had never been done before. Tom Kole, for example, who was later to become Peterson's right-hand man, was a salesman for an aluminum supplier. He was extremely helpful in developing the new chord bars and the extrusion which became known as the "string anchor."

These people worked day and night. Peterson set up a charge account at a nearby motel which also had a good restaurant. Anyone on the team was authorized to eat there, sleep there, and charge it to Oscar. Eighteen hour days and nights were the norm.

The string anchor, for example, had been a major headache. McKay's lovely body design would not permit the old system, wrapping the strings around the end of the instrument and hooking them on to little pins. For six months the team struggled with the problem of how to anchor them on top of the body. Dozens of ideas were tried, models made,

and they all failed. Peterson finally conceptualized the successful design on a paper napkin at luncheon one day in that restaurant... Kole confirmed that it could indeed be extruded. With minor variations, it is still in use.

McKay and DiPisa worked more or less harmoniously trying to fit design concepts into production feasibility. McKay would design it, DiPisa would say it can't be made. McKay would go back and redesign.

But the team of Autoharp upgraders didn't work alone. Peterson, through his industry contacts, had enlisted the resources of the Baldwin Piano Company and it was their research people who, for example, suggested using a laminated maple pin block (as in their pianos) and said that it made sense to use vertical rather than slanted tuning pins. Peterson was elated when Baldwin told him that vertical pins would be OK. Vertical pins had become an obsession with him. Why? Because the

My instincts told me
that we were going to get
competition, that it would
come from Germany...

stringing operation was the biggest headache in the company. It took at least six months for a trainee to master the tricky technique, standing all day in front of a drill press with a slanted bed. Employee turnover was at least 500% a year. Every April, Peterson would have to recruit and begin training ten new stringers to be sure that, when the big demand hit in September and October, he would have, of the original ten, even one proficient stringer still working.

Peterson mandated that the new design had to be "stringable" by a person comfortably sitting down and trainable in less than one day. Only a customized homemade machine, using pneumatics, could possibly accomplish that. They knew it could not be done with slanted pins. DiPisa finally designed such a machine. They are still in use and work beautifully. But this is the real reason why the pins have been vertical since 1968 – and one of the major rea-

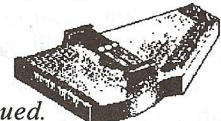
sons the old "A" models were abolished. They could not be made on the new machinery.

DiPisa made the other big breakthrough when he located a company in Ohio which could build a machine, a giant drill press, which would drill all the tuning pin holes and bridge pin holes – 72 holes in total – in one shot and every hole would be perfect. No longer would a woman stand at a drill press doing them one by one, and, when she was in a hurry, some of them became burned by the heat of the drill and could never hold a tuning pin tightly. This machine, called a Zagar, was the reason why later model harps stayed in tune so much better than any harp ever made. The Zagar cost a lot of money, but it took only 15 seconds to make 72 perfect holes. The previous system took five minutes and resulted in undependable holes.

Peterson also learned through his investigations, that contrary to traditional beliefs, spruce was not the most resonant wood. The Armour Institute at Illinois Tech had determined that hard maple was provably a more resonant wood for use in musical instruments. It was this study which finally led Peterson away from basswood and spruce panels to maple panels. This finally solved the problem of sound hole splitting and cracking. This offended many traditionalists, who were wedded to spruce, but Peterson had the facts on his side and he acted in spite of them. His goal was a better instrument for the mass market.

The team, under Peterson's guidance, then bored in on the problems of a 21-chord holder. Everything was tried, up to and including foam rubber springs to provide a soft touch and eliminate chord bar noise. He also mandated that the whole chord system be contained under a plastic cover and that the bars be movable from one position to another. His target was ultimately a hinged cover which would permit the player to either move the chords, or to change chords, quickly and easily. He never succeeded in that, but that was the goal. Again, McKay designed the cover and participated in designing the new buttons.

To be
continued.



It all started innocently enough with two little brown rabbits who took to monitoring my daily practice sessions. I would sit on the garden bench tucked in amongst columbines and lilies picking happily away, and they'd come – sometimes one and sometimes two – and crouch in the grass. With deep respect they sat absolutely immobile and unblinking, their furry sides hardly moving as they breathed, their ears erect with excitement. And there they sat, frozen with awe for sometimes half an hour at a time without even munching a blade of grass. One

site and settled down to listen. It was obvious he hadn't been taught proper etiquette, however, for I'm sorry to say he munched clover all through the performance – although he did do it quietly and seemed to enjoy the music.

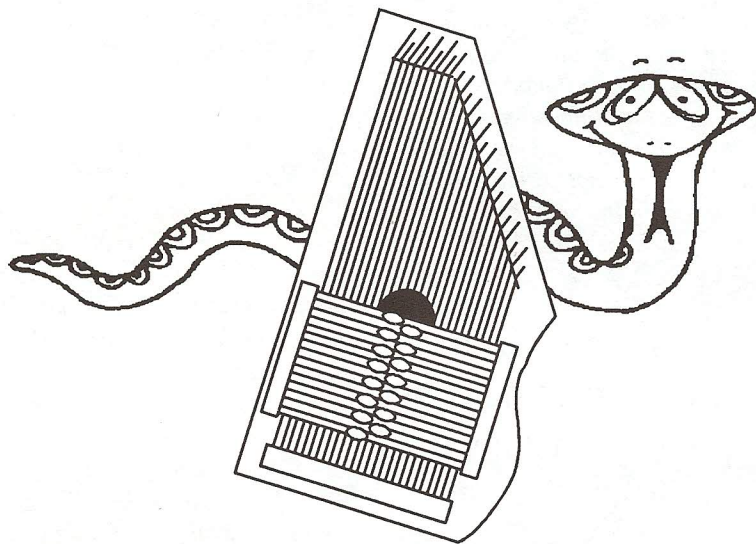
Over the next several weeks my mind occasionally turned to considering this peculiar behavior. Could it be that music really does have charms to soothe the savage beast? Certainly there must be special vibrations and overtones to the sounds of an autoharp. Or would these little animals be equally enthralled with a tuba solo?

were little heads popping up quizzically and excited high-pitched barks. One fat little fellow bounced up and down yipping with his big buck teeth sticking out between his puffy cheeks. I don't know if it was the music, or if they were mesmerized by the glittering picks waving back and forth, or maybe they are just plain curious – whatever it was, they let me get within six feet of them as long as I played the 'harp. Without the music I could get no closer than about 16 feet before they dove into their holes.

Those little fellows were certainly more civilized and had more cultivated tastes than the inhabitants of the next prairie dog village we came to near Livingston, Montana. Here the loutish little animals were downright rude – screaming with alarm at 25 feet, and scuttling down their holes to the tune of *Gypsy Lullaby*, a lovely air which I played on my resonant new Carter Gold 'harp. I tried playing *Old French* in honor of “les petits chiens.” Disaster! They disappeared pronto. To add a final insult, without my 'harp I could get seven feet closer. I can only surmise that these little wild savages had been culturally deprived, living devoid of the enriching experiences of encroaching tourist civilization with its boom boxes, and hikers whistling and singing to ward off grizzly bears.

That same evening my belief in the uplifting of animal spirits by our revered instrument was restored by a gentleman gelding in a small paddock behind our campsite. This excellent beast listened very intently with his velvety brown nose inches from the instrument, and his big eyes gazing heavenward. After three numbers he declared an intermission, trotted over to the watering trough, and then came back for more. At *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, he spun around and left, but when I struck up the *Merry Widow Waltz*, he was in ecstasy and even tried to sing along.

At Glacier National Park, the St. Mary Campground is nestled in a valley with a snow-streaked mountain rising majestically on the rim. After dinner I sat outside and played my 'harp. *America the Beautiful* seemed especially appropriate – “...For purple mountains' majesty above the fruited plains...” A family walked by – a mom, pop, four kids, and an frisky little puppy. The pup sat down to listen to the concert, so I told



Music Hath Charms

by Alex Usher

day I went out playing my 'harp as I walked down the garden path and found them playing bunny tag, a curious sport where one charges at the other, who leaps straight up in the air. One of them came charging straight at me and stopped right at my feet. Then he looked up with a rather shocked expression (perhaps because I hadn't leapt straight up in the air) and loped off down the path again.

I had forgotten about their curious bunny behavior until we were only a week into our 100-day RV trip to the great Northwest. After dinner I was sitting on the picnic table at our rather uninteresting campsite in Wall, South Dakota and playing my 'harp when a small brown rabbit crept into the edge of the

At Sundance, Wyoming, there is a very large prairie dog village. Hundreds of plump little marmots scurry about visiting at each other's holes. If a stranger approaches, however, they all rear up on their haunches and bark a shrill warning before – zip! – they dive into their burrows. That night I lay cozy under my down comforter and chuckled to myself about these amusing little critters – and made plans.

The next morning saw the birth of the Great Prairie Dog Experiment. Shortly after dawn, to avoid the curious stares of other tourists, I strapped on my finest chromatic autoharp, jammed on my finger picks and marched into the field playing *Whistling Rufus*. All the little eyes turned my way in amazement. There

his people all about the autoharp's animal devotees, and we all laughed. Rich, my husband, suggested I play a waltz since many animals seem to prefer three-quarter time. I had barely played a round of *Brahm's Lullaby* when the pup lay down right in the middle of the street and went to sleep!

The days lazed by and soon we were enjoying the beauty of the Canadian Rockies and smugly enjoying frisking around on the Athabaska Glacier of the Columbia ice fields while our family and friends in Saint Louis were sizzling in 100 degree plus temperatures. Near Jasper, Alberta, we spent the night at the Wapiti Campground, a provincial park. Wapiti (pronounced woppity) is the Shawnee word for "white rump." No sooner had I gotten my 'harp out and started to play when I noticed a herd of magnificent big elk browsing across the road. It wasn't long before three of them had migrated over to the edge of our campsite — two large does and a young stag with a single crooked antler and his ear rakishly decorated with a red tag to indicate he was a troublemaker. Soon they were joined by three others. I'm generally not nervous about playing to an audience, but doing dinner music for a gang of encircling elk munching on the underbrush — well, that was an exhilarating experience. When the stag headed toward me, I didn't stop to ask his intentions, but ducked into the RV. At least he didn't raise his head, drop his lower lip and make that strange high-pitched war whoop that any elk knows means trouble. (Are your 'harps elk-proof, George?)

By the next week, I was sufficiently calmed down to continue my research, and at Wabasso Lake Campground played to a full house of barn swallows. Their beady eyes glistening, they listened enrapt until some curious children interrupted and they all flew away.

Our return to the States was marked by a failing clutch and, after a maddening series of referrals from one car shop to another in Bellingham, Washington, we ended up at the local Ford dealer at the close of the day. He suggested we spend night on the car lot. We were parked next to a steep, overgrown, weedy slope. I got out a folding chair and my 'harp and started my usual evening practice session, which got an amused and encouraging smile from

the night watchman when he made rounds. There was also a large, round, furry, orange face with amber eyes watching and listening from the tall cattails on the slope behind me.

Now, sheep are different. I played my 'harp for a big flock and watched two rams "dukeing" it out over a whole field of ewes. They pushed and shoved, backed off and butted heads all around the pasture — but then they had serious business on their minds. The ewes didn't pay any attention to either the rams or the music. Bah! Baaa! Humbug!

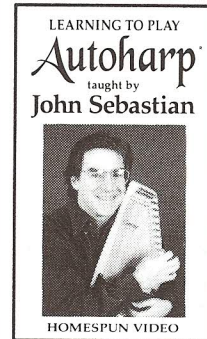
It started to drizzle a bit at Buck's Camp in the White River National Forest in Colorado. I stood hunched over my autoharp, playing in the gentle rain under a tree in the woods, and watched the mushrooms grow — clumps of pink ones and a great scaly brown one. A squirrel came by with a big treasure in his mouth, but didn't stop to listen and went scurrying along to his home. He probably had better sense than I.

I should tell you, also, of two people I talked to, who had interesting comments to make about animal reactions to music. One was a man named Lou Judd, whom I met at the Corvallis, Oregon autoharp gathering. He plays a meditative style of music on a specially tuned 'harp he set up without chord bars. He said he liked to play in rocky places in the mountains to hear the reflected sound. I asked him if animals ever came to listen and he unhesitatingly answered with an emphatic "Yes!" My other informant was Christie Olson Kennedy who works with injured wild animals in a lab at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. She mentioned another researcher who always had her radio tuned to the PBS station with its all-day classical music programming. It's a sad fact that inexperienced rabbit mothers often eat their newborns, especially if they become excited, but it was noted that this researcher's bunnies had a much lower occurrence of cannibalizing their young.

Now I am very curious to know if any of you readers have had any interesting experiences or observations in relation to animals and autoharp music. Jot them down and send them to AQ. ❖



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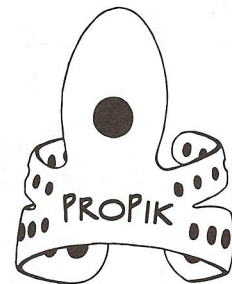
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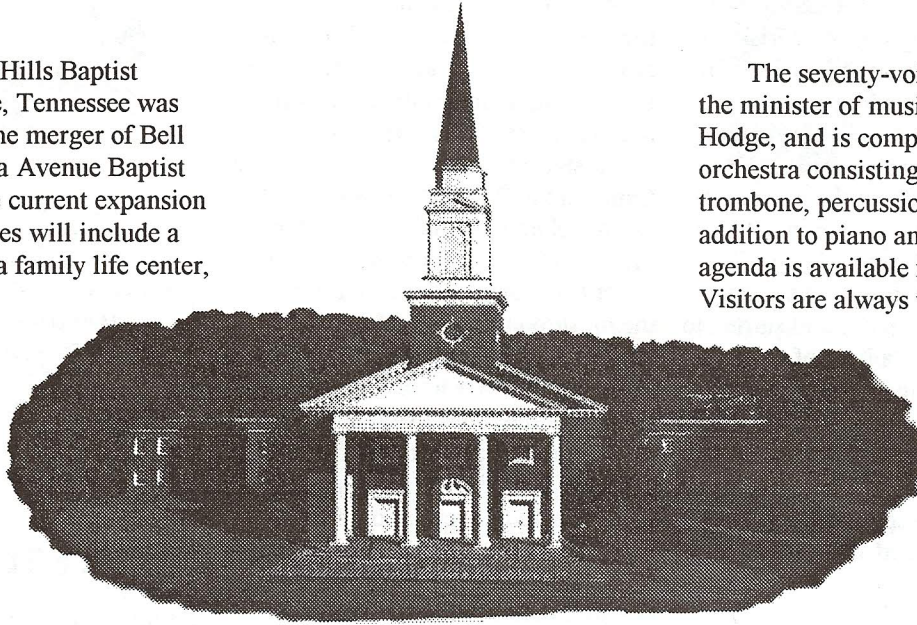
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Sacred Harp

by Bartee Kinsler

The Chilhowee Hills Baptist Church of Knoxville, Tennessee was formed in 1987 by the merger of Bell Avenue and McCalla Avenue Baptist Churches. When the current expansion is completed, facilities will include a day care center and a family life center, with kitchen.



The seventy-voice choir is led by the minister of music, Mr. Rocky Hodge, and is complemented by an orchestra consisting of flutes, horn, trombone, percussion, and tympany, in addition to piano and organ. A musical agenda is available for all age groups. Visitors are always welcome.

OH GOD, OUR HELP IN AGES PAST

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Probably by William Croft, 1678-1727



C C F C Am F G C / Am C Am D G

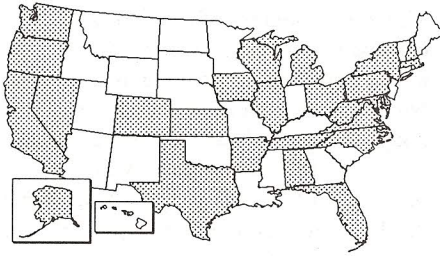
1. O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,
 2. Un - der the sha - dow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;
 3. Be - fore her hills in or - der stood, Or earth re - ceived her frame,
 4. A thou - sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone;
 5. O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,



G C F Dm G C Dm E7 C Dm C Dm G C

Our shel - ter from the storm-y blast, And our e - ter - nal home!
 Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.
 From ev - er last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.
 Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun.
 Be Thou our guard while life shall last, And our e - ter - nal home.

'Harpers-At-Large



On-Site Reports of Concerts, Workshops, Festivals, and Other Major Autoharp Events



Evart Funfest

Place: Evart, MI

Reporting: Kathy Wieland

Ann Arbor, MI

The Evart Funfest took place on July 13, 14, 15, 16. To say it was hot is an understatement. The temperature climbed to 110° on Friday, and festival goers were dropping like flies. I was told that 11 people needed ambulances. I didn't get there myself until Saturday, and the temperature had dropped to 95° by then, and an evening thunderstorm cooled the festival even further.

There were two autoharp workshops offered on Thursday – beginners taught by Hazel Meek, and intermediates taught by Carole Spicer; Friday had two workshops – all levels taught by Hazel Meek, and beginners taught by Ranka Mulkern; Saturday's four workshops consisted of a two-hour beginners' workshop taught by Carol Spicer, all levels by Hazel Meek, and beginners by Ranka Mulkern and Kathy Wieland.

This is a wonderful festival, well attended, lots of workshops and jamming. All concerts are sign-ups, so you get a real mix of talent. Except for the unbelievable heat, this was a fun time.



Workshop: Bryan Bowers

Place: Winfield, KS

Reporting: Karen Nickel

Winfield, KS

My heart was pounding when I entered the room where Bryan Bower's autoharp workshop was to take place. Everyone knows that Bryan has perfect pitch and is a maniac for tuning. Although I had tuned and retuned, I was certain that I would have one string that would be flat as I played for the group.

As I looked around, I saw people

that I had heard playing in the campground and realized that this group was comprised of some pretty good autoharp players. And it got more convincing as each person played flawlessly for the group. By the time I left the introductory session, I thought I was doomed. I knew there were two or three real beginners, me, and that everybody else seemed to be advanced. Bryan was very forceful and when Kate Bowers brought name tags the next morning, his read Atilla the Hun.

I decided I would sit through the beginning session and the intermediate/advanced session to see where I felt comfortable. But when I went into the class the next day, here were all these advanced people in the beginners class. Before the afternoon was over it was clear that most of the students were going to take both the beginner and intermediate classes. They wanted to glean every bit of information that might be shared in either class. Unfortunately, for those who didn't take both classes, it was difficult to separate the two. Once the group was started in one direction, there was no easy way to stop and start again.

I didn't really know what I would learn, or even what I expected to learn in the class. I thought I knew where I needed help with my playing, but I didn't realize all the basics I had been missing.

Bryan's class taught me a process of learning on the autoharp. Before I took the class I would pick up some music, try to pick it out and forge on forward with it. I didn't realize that I really didn't know where the correct note could be found on the 'harp, so I would play it in a hit-or-miss manner, with a broad enough stroke so that I would surely hit the one string I wanted eventually. Although I am going to have to go back and restructure my method, I have hopes that I will really be improved by next year's Winfield festival. I probably won't always go through the entire process on simple songs, but I can always fall back to it when I have difficulty or something is just not quite right.

We also did a great exercise on singing to help those of us who like to sing with the 'harp. The exercise was also helpful in learning how simple it is to change keys on the 'harp. Since I think the autoharp and singing go hand-in-hand, I was delighted with this unexpected surprise. It meant singing in front of everybody, which (although making a few folks uncomfort-

able) meant that one or two discovered they have been hiding wonderful voices.

For those of you who are wondering whether or not Bryan would share his technique of five-finger playing, of course, he did. Although I will probably never be able to master it, you may hear some Bowers-type playing someday from other class members.

Those of us who ended up taking both sections spent eight hours a day in class. The workshop was very intense and I think that some of us were pretty tired when it was over. Bryan has a lot more energy than most people and we worked very hard. One thing I learned to appreciate is his deep passion for his music and his desire for perfection. I would like to think that some of that passion rubbed off on me.

As a grand finale, the class played *Rickett's Hornpipe* at the Autoharp Styles workshop at the festival. Part of the class played the melody, while the rest of us accompanied them. What an accomplishment! Bryan was proud of his class and so were we. We had done a lot of work and finally were able to put it all together. Best of all, when everything was said and done, our class discovered what Kate had known all along, that underneath Atilla the Hun is really Atilla the Hunny Bear.



Second Annual Willamette Valley Autoharp Gathering

Place: Nofziger Farm, Albany, OR

Reporting: "Fuey" Herring

Yuma, AZ

It was an exciting autoharp-intensive weekend for the nearly fifty of us who joined Les Gustafson-Zook and his extraordinary lineup of talented musicians for 48 hours of workshops, jam sessions, and concerts. Les gives much credit for the success of the gathering to his aides, John Arthur and the ubiquitous Cathy Britell. Three national autoharp contest winners gave concerts and workshops, and yet another, Alex Usher, just "happened to be in the area." Attendees were exposed to a wide variety of 'harps, music, and picking techniques.

A grassy meadow bordered by a tree-lined stream and many flower beds, was the delightful location for the event, which included a music swap, a potluck breakfast and a gospel sing on Sunday morning. Eight different workshops covered a variety of topics at levels ranging from basic to advanced – so there was something to

challenge everyone. The outdoor stage (a converted hay wagon shaded by tall oaks) was the setting for both nights' concerts, and the open stage each afternoon.

John Doan – recording artist, storyteller, and composer – entertained on Friday evening, fascinating the audience with an intriguing collection of antique, unusual zither-like instruments, most of which he has restored to playable condition. After demonstrating these, he made beautiful music with his Harp Guitar, and stayed to jam with us into the early hours.

On Saturday evening, the spotlight was divided among Meryle Korn presenting her unique original songs, Steve Young's precise and nimble picking, and Les Gustafson-Zook, who used the guitar and vocal backup of Jon ten Broek. In his later set, he shared the stage with his wife Gwen and son Si. What an overwhelming amount of talent for one evening!

Camping facilities were spacious with much space available for a larger turnout next year; the weather was mild and comfortable. It will be very worthwhile to include this gathering in your travel plans for 1996! See you then...

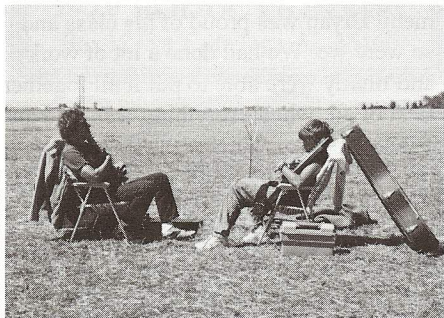


PHOTO BY RICH USHER

Peter Ludwig and Muriel Powers at the Willamette Valley Autoharp Gathering



Southern Michigan Dulcimer Festival

Place: Hastings, MI

Reporting: Kathy Wieland
Ann Arbor, MI

This festival took place on June 23, 24, 25. Attendance was down this year, probably due to date conflicts. Anyway, it was a lot of fun, and there were four autoharp workshops offered: Gail Schwandt, picking melody lead; Hayden Carruth, right hand rhythm and melody picking techniques and advanced embellishments for accompaniment; Kathy Wieland, rhythms-waltz, fiddle tunes, calypso, and blues; Lee Vaccaro, demonstration and hands on display of an amazing collection of autoharps and zithers.



The Autoschediastic Concatenation
Place: Santa Rosa, CA

Reporting: Taylor Finlay
The Sea Ranch, CA

The Autoschediastic Concatenation at Santa Rosa's Coddington Center Mall got underway Saturday morning, July 8, with a flurry of tuning, get-acquainted chatter, and autoharp show-and-tell. Almost all of the Horse & Buggy club from the Galt area came, as well as autoharps from as far away as Santa Barbara, Placerville, and Laytonville.

Afternoon on-stage autoharperly was continuous from one to five. Soloists included Star Mullins (folk), Randy Skelton (old time), Jeff Hrdlicka (pops spiritual), "Fuey" Herring (old-time, including her specialty, *Please Don't Whip Little Benny*), Barry Cole (classical and British), and Taylor Finlay (old American pop standards and British).

The Horse & Buggy ensemble played a set of its favorites. Rod and Randy Skelton, two-thirds of the Skelton crew, fiddler Andi being absent, did songs from their two recently released tapes, "Keeping on the Sunny Side," and "Smashing the Windows." (Actually, there is a fourth member of the Skelton Crew: their dog Lillie. Lillie, who had barked such a great solo break on their tape version of *Hey, Lillie-Lo*, was absent, too.) Rod led the Grand Jam final set with solid renditions of *Crawdadd*, *Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms*, and *Good Night, Irene*.

The only sad note of the day was very sad indeed. Bev Pratton was absent. She had suddenly died six days before the event. She had looked forward to the day with such enthusiasm. Bev was the heart and soul of autoharp activities in California's Central Valley. We missed, and will continue to miss her optimism, warmth, and friendliness.

The Autoschediastic Concatenation was cosponsored by the Autodidactic Autoharps and Atavistic Coastal Autoharp Club.



The 60th Annual Old Time Fiddlers' Convention

Place: Felts Park, Galax, VA

Reporting: Limberjack Productions

Once again we geared ourselves with galoshes, several folding umbrellas, pickaxes to dig trenches which divert the rivers of rain around our campsite, tarps, macintoshes, and a case of paper towels. Galax is an unforgiving taskmaster in the rain and mud department. But this year, we came home with an untouched inventory. What a great surprise!

After the autoharp contest ended on Wednesday night (3:45 AM Thursday

morning), Gregg Averett, the last of the 20-some hardy 'harpers to grace Galax's stage for that "day," joined us all as we crawled back to our assorted resting places. The miserableness of the hour and the cramps in our brains were well worth the effort, however. We learned the following Saturday night (well, really Sunday morning – but you've heard that song before) that a member of our staff (we're becoming a staff of champions!) walked off with the 1995 Galax championship! Congratulations to our *AQ Postscripts* Editor, Mary Umbarger! Second place went to Bill Burchfield, and third, Evelyn Farmer.

Mike Fenton made a weekend appearance, and we were happy to have him at our jams. Imagine a jam with Mike Fenton, Mary Umbarger, Jim Snow, Gregg Averett, Ronnie Burroughs, and the Orchard Grass Band, just to top it all off! Folks, believe me. The autoharps were heard, big time!

On Friday morning, Drew Smith conducted the annual autoharp workshop. Approximately 30 autoharps took part in this event. A special mention was made of Marty Schuman, who was an unfailing "regular." He was missed at this festival.



Carter Family Memorial Weekend

Place: The Carter Fold, Hiltons, VA

Reporting: Limberjack Productions

At the Carter Fold, where autoharps are always welcome, this year's annual festival ran on – in spite of a mind-boggling heat wave. Hot, folks. It was hot. But the crowd arrived – not as many as usual, but as we now know, mad dogs, Englishmen *and* indefatigable old time music lovers *do* go out in the midday sun. Especially when the Carters beckon.

And those souls who did brave the heat were rewarded greatly. Bryan Bowers, Bill Clifton, and of course, Janette Carter pulled out their autoharps for some very special music.

If you are a fan of old time music, this is a festival that, regardless of the weather, shouldn't be missed.



Concert: Mill Run Dulcimer Band

Place: Fairfax, VA

Reporting: Kathy Ferguson
Fairfax, VA

The Band's first fall concert was held Sunday, September 17th, in the mill at Colvin Mill Run Park. This building is small enough that they played without amplification, and the straight acoustic sound was most enjoyable.

They opened with a peppy instrumental *Prairie Sunflower*. As always,

there were many combinations of instruments and vocals. Among my favorites were Kit, Kathleen, and Neal singing *Across the Blue Mountains*. Woody Padgett's autoharp instrumentals, *Going to Scotland* and *Mark's Tune* showed his earlier shoulder problems haven't diminished his mastery of the instrument. He also sang the moving gospel song *There's a Deep Settled Peace in My Soul* with the audience joining in on the chorus.

To the delight of the young (and not so young) the limberjack Murphy danced to a new song *Metro*. Anyone who likes gospel/folk/traditional music would do well to attend their concerts. If distance is a problem, get their tapes and CDs. They're terrific.



Memphis Dulcimer Festival

Place: Memphis, TN

Reporting: Shelley Burke
Charlotte, NC

What a wonderful festival! The first thing I must mention is Idelwild Presbyterian Church in which it is held. Established in 1890, it's the most beautiful setting for a musical event. The sanctuary itself is breathtaking with great acoustics.

On to autoharps... I had the pleasure of meeting Will Smith and Tom Schroeder for the first time. Ron Wall, one of my favorites, also attended. Of course there's never enough time to attend all the workshops, but the ones I did was time well spent.

Will's workshop included "Substitute Chords" using *Simple Gifts* as an example, along with learning a couple Calypso songs, and O'Carolan tunes. Tom taught a workshop on canons and rounds, and also patting techniques. Ron taught some fiddle tunes while demonstrating some fancy fingering on *Whiskey Before Breakfast*. He also held workshops on playing by ear and backing up vocals/taking a break, where we learned *Ozark Hills*, written by Ron. All three performed on stage throughout the weekend. I also met Carol Stober, who was kind enough to give me a copy of her "Country Sampler" recording, which has a sweet sound, not to mention nice vocals by Carol and her daughter, Jackie.

Along with the autoharp activities, I also attended a penny whistle workshop and one on Celtic harp, both of which I am a beginner. Needless to say, there were continuous performances/workshops for both the hammered and mountain dulcimers and many other instruments.

A special treat was a performance and workshop by Tim Britton with his Uilleann

pipes, who can be heard on Karen Mueller's "Clarity" recording. Also, Margaret MacArthur was honored and performed with her famous MacArthur harp.

Very well organized, with wonderful volunteers from the Memphis area, this festival is one not to be missed.



Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering

Place: Orthey farm, Newport, PA

Reporting: Limberjack Productions

Once a year the wonder occurs with the serendipity of friendship under the umbrella of music. The autoharp community congregates every July 4th week, creating a life of its own.

First-time visitors – "We can't believe this has been going on for years, and this is our first!" A beginner – "Bonnie Phipps showed me how to cross-pick!" A real "pro" – "I'm going home with a renewed desire to play my 'harp – more than ever." Others – "Meg Peterson is fun!" – "I can't believe the friendliness I'm finding here. Everyone is so willing to help you." – "Have you tried the cherry pie?" – "Patsy Stoneman is a great lady! I'm glad I had the opportunity to get to know her!" – "The music surrounds you like a blanket. It's beautiful." – "Boy, I'm glad I wasn't a judge in that contest!" – "I was just thinking the music and excitement could get no better when the Orchard Grass Band came on stage!"...

Scheduled events were exciting as well. Saturday night, the 1995 Autoharp Hall of Fame Members were inducted: Contemporary – Meg Peterson; Posthumous – Marty Schuman. Meg was present to accept the honor, and spoke to the gathering. Marty's children, Jerry and Lorrie, accepted on behalf of their father. Lorrie sang a song she had written for Marty.

We congratulate the 1995 Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering Champion, Lucille Reilly. Second place, June Maugery, and third place, Drew Smith. Yasuo Mita and Alan Mager were the other two finalists. We applaud these fine autoharp players. The competition here is tremendous.

The workshops were outstanding in scope and information, as always. We thank the world's greatest autoharp players, (including 13 Winfield champions and all five Mountain Laurel champions), who have expertly led the workshops over these five years.

In other events, Gregg Averett won the most coveted Ptooi! award by spitting a watermelon seed 30 feet, and on Saturday afternoon, 132 autoharpers amassed to play *Will the Circle be Unbroken*. Five countries and 24 states were represented by approximately 250 souls

throughout the four days.

This year, the weather surprised us – again. The sun came out on Sunday, but hid the rest of the week. Although the rain didn't make an outrageous appearance, the humidity enabled many of us to grow mush-rooms between our toes. But never did we hear one discouraging word. (Well, Roz Brown called from Colorado a few days later to report that his towels were still wet.) But other than Roz – and that was *after* the fact.

From the letters and calls we received, a lot of people learned a lot about the autoharp, and had a lot of fun in the process. That's more than enough for us to know that we're looking forward to next year a lot!

Until Next Year



*This place exists but once a year
When this wide open field is transformed
Into a Kingdom where music reigns*

*Where friendship and harmony
Are the order of the day
And all else is banished.
This place exists but once a year
And though you wish you could
stay forever
It will vanish all too soon*



*And become an open field
Where the high grass dances
When the wind recalls the tune.*

Linda Fackeldey



Walnut Valley Festival and National Flat-Picking Championships

Place: Winfield, Kansas

Reporting: Limberjack Productions

They came from all corners of the world, and they came early. The land rush on Thursday, (a full week before the festival started), was the largest ever. And, for

Continued on page 16

Jo Brennan, "Canada's Queen of the Autoharp"



by Carole Outwater



Rick and Jo Brennan

Come along with me and let me share a day from my journal with you. This was a day in July spent with Jo Brennan, who has been affectionately dubbed "Canada's Queen of the Autoharp." I think you'll discover as I did that just sixty miles north of the United States border above Buffalo, New York,

there exists a treasure in Jo Brennan and her contributions to autoharp music. This treasure is to be found, not only in her unique style of playing developed from over fifty years of experience, but also in the originality of her wonderful compositions written for the autoharp.

Thursday, July 20, 1995

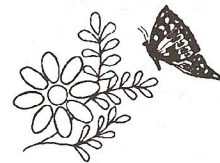
Jo Brennan lives in Mt. Pleasant, a suburb of Brantford, Ontario, Canada. That's a long way from my home in Charlotte, North Carolina, but the miles between us were reduced to a matter of hours, thanks to air travel. I left Charlotte early Thursday morning, and by that afternoon, I was standing with Jo in the beautiful gardens outside her home.

Here in the warm glow of a beautiful afternoon, Jo looked lovely in her white summer outfit, her light blond hair topped with a tiny golden head band. She is talkative and friendly, and within five minutes of our meeting, I quickly discovered that along with music, Jo has a grand passion for working in these enchanting gardens around her home. While we were visiting, we were joined by her husband, George, and their dog, Penny. Penny gave me a lavish welcome by bringing me one of her favorite socks. I could feel it in my bones that this time with Jo Brennan was going to be very special.

What a beautiful garden they have

here on this corner of the world. It was meticulously designed and landscaped by the Brennan's son, Rick. Rick died this past spring, and so it is with loving celebration of his life that Jo spends hours out here, bringing to fruition the plans Rick began some time ago. The yard is intimate. Flower beds are banked with lovely, blooming plants and with the tallest hosta lilies I have ever seen. Shrubs, flowers, and small plants drift down embankments. A small enclosed vegetable garden is bursting with a picture perfect array of plants and the juicy promise of its yield. There are no weeds in sight! Across the rear of the property is an arbor draped with succulent honeysuckle vines, and around the arbor grow ferns, Rose of Sharon, and plantain lilies. Across the road is a large expanse of corn which sways in the late afternoon breeze. The Brennans describe plans for a small pond nearby. They tell me a story about their niece bringing them several frogs to live in the garden. Lately they have been watching three new baby frogs playing around

in the yard. I never realized frog families stayed in the same area for years.



Over an informal dinner of fish and chips, we began sharing our stories which were laced together with threads of music. Jo shared some of the rough times in her childhood. Family life and times were hard, but one of the bright spots was the piano in her home, a wedding gift from her father to her mother. There were eight children born into this family, but even though she was the youngest, she recalls being the first one of the children to be drawn to the piano. She remembers so clearly playing around on that piano. She liked to fit together sounds that pleased her. When she found some keys that made beautiful sounds together, she would mark them with little straight marks and then run to her

mother and beg her to come listen. Jo was only four years old, but her family was learning early that she was naturally drawn to music.

Jo says there was always the sound of music around her home. Someone gave her a little Marine Band mouth organ when she was four or five. One of her older brothers had a large, silver, double-sided mouth harp. She loved the times they would play together. When she knew it was just about time for her brother and father to return home from work in a nearby brick yard, Jo would climb up on a chair and reach for those harmonicas, get them down, and place them on a chair while she waited. Her brother would come in and wash up. Then together they would go into the parlor and play tunes while dinner was being prepared.

When Jo was young, she always wished that she could have a stringed instrument of her very own, but times were difficult for the family, and they did not have enough money to provide for this. Once, she came close to owning a mandolin. On a day when Jo and her mother were walking in the neighborhood, they discovered a discarded mandolin that was thrown on the top of a brush pile outside a neighbor's door. Jo was very shy, but she asked the neighbor if she could have it, and the woman said she could! Jo took it to her father and even though the back had pulled away from the body, her father thought he knew someone who could repair it for them. Together, they walked five miles to an old clock maker to see if he could save the instrument for her. Jo remembers waiting and listening to hundreds of ticking clocks while he studied it carefully. Finally, he said he thought he could fix it, and they left the instrument with him. But before they could return to collect it, tragedy struck the family. Jo's father became ill and later died. She never knew what became of that mandolin.

Jo chuckles when she tells that, while still wishing for a stringed instrument of her own, how easily a violin came her way. One of her older sisters had recently married and the young couple invited her to go with them on a trip to Toronto. Now, as more of the family decided to go, space became a premium in the little roadster. Jo's new brother-in-law weighed nearly 300

pounds, and there simply was not enough room for her. She was going to have to stay home on this trip. To make her feel better, her brother-in-law asked her what he could bring her, and she said, "Well, how about a violin?" And he did! This instrument proved to be a challenge for Jo, and she never could teach herself to play it.

As the years went on, there always seemed to be more and more instruments around the house. One of Jo's brothers liked autoharps, and with her natural love of music, it was inevitable that she would pick up his autoharp and play it too. Her brother, not content with simply playing the autoharp, decided to make one for himself. The results were unique. It had 62 strings and was double-strung, much like a mandolin.

When the weather was nice, the family liked to gather outside on the lawn and sing and play music. Jo enjoyed this, except for one thing – people would pass by in their cars and would stop to listen. Jo liked to play, but not in front of a crowd because of her early shyness. She would take whatever instrument she was playing, usually an autoharp or guitar, and would hide behind the bushes and vines, still playing along. This shyness plagued her for years, even though she would muster up her courage and sing in contests every so often.

Shortly after World War II began, Jo's older sister returned home full of exciting news. She had joined a country and western variety show that entertained the Canadian troops around the territory. She wanted Jo to join her in a musical act. The girls worked hard to convince their mother to let Jo go, for she was only fifteen years old at the time. Their mother finally agreed, much to their relief and surprise. Jo's musical career was off the ground!

The variety show traveled around entertaining the troops. The girls had many exciting times, until it disbanded a couple of years later when the organizer himself joined the military. Near the end of the war, when his stint in the Canadian Air Force had ended, the show re-formed and Jo was once again singing and playing her autoharp for the troops. It was at this time that Jo met her husband, George, who was playing violin with the group.

All through the years, music continued to be an important part of Jo's

life. For thirteen years, she entertained in clubs leading sing-alongs. The front room in her home now reflects all these years of dedication to music. In recent years, this room has also become a recording studio. Here are all the trappings of a creative, working musician. For years, Rick joined her as her musical partner. In this studio, Jo composed tunes and songs, and with many other supporting instruments, they arranged and recorded a lot of autoharp music.

In this studio, in 1978, Jo and Rick recorded a song she had written called *Strawberry Wine*. Much to their joy and surprise, this autoharp piece was requested for air play so much that before Jo was even aware of its climbing popularity, it had reached the number one spot on the Canadian country music air waves. People were captivated by the sound of their autoharps in this tune and clamored to meet them. Jo and Rick spent much time making public appearances and signing copies of their work. They were eventually encouraged to produce more recordings.



Jo Brennan has a wonderful style of playing the 'harp. Since she taught herself and was not exposed to any other serious autoharp musicians, her style is completely her own. To me, her playing has the flavor of Kilby Snow, minus the drags and slurs. Perhaps this is because she holds her 'harp lap-style and plays on the right end. She likes to amplify her sound, and plays with her bare fingernails. Her picking is clean, true to the melody, and she supports this melody picking with a rhythmic bass that subtly fills out her melody. I find her sound flows very much like the style of Bill Bryant (1990 Winfield Champion). Jo enjoys playing all types of music from the old time tunes to jazz, show tunes, and popular old standards. We spent some time playing together which was a real treat for me. I especially enjoyed playing along with her on *Strawberry Wine*.

Jo has written some wonderful, catchy tunes. She has a professional tape of all original compositions. She showed

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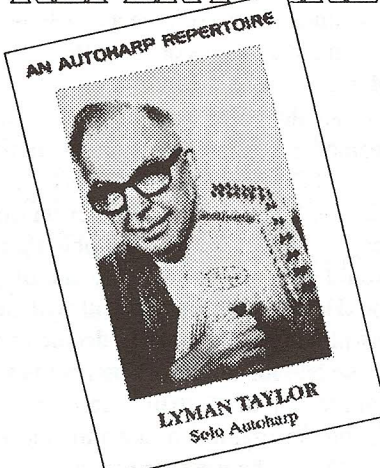
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me a couple of large boxes stowed away which are filled with tapes of her own works. I could only imagine the gems inside. The tunes I have heard of her own making are ones that linger on the mind. Jo says composing comes so easily to her. She can write music at the drop of a hat. "Each of my 'harps has its own sound, and each evokes its own piece of music." It further astounds me that she composes directly on her 'harps. She does not read or transcribe music.

Jo has quite a collection of autoharps. Most of them are vintage models and are well maintained. Her preference is for old 50s and 60s Oscar Schmidt 12-bar instruments. She has many older models that are in beautiful condition with rich mellow sounds. She has some Canadian manufactured Sterling 'harps and some "mystery" 'harps that were most likely produced in Canadian factories. She long ago figured out ways to alter and rearrange chords on these standard 'harps and has lowered her action with Q-tips in much of the same way some of us use framing tape. She also devised a method of using coffee stirrers to keep the springs in place on some of her older model 'harps.

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 "Canada's Number One Cowboy,"
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Earl Heywood, known as "Canada's Number One Cowboy," is the one who dubbed Jo Brennan "Canada's Queen of the Autoharp." He says that the title fits. Jo is quick to say that this is not a title earned from competitions.

She is pleased to be included in the Wingham CKNX Barndance Hall of Fame. What matters most to Jo are not the accolades nor the recognition she has achieved over the years, but that people will enjoy her music, and that it makes them feel good.

She looks forward to a time when she can come to a festival where other autoharpers gather. Until then, I urge you to listen to her music and visit with her if you are up her way. Fifty years of playing and composing music with the autoharp have given us a treasure in Jo Brennan ... a treasure that some of us are just now discovering. ❖

Strawberry Wine



Smooth, Lively

Jo Brennan

G D7 G / / / C / / G / / / / / / C G / C G D7 / / / /

G D7 G / / / C / / G / / / / / / C G D7 G D7 G / / / /

G / / / / / C / / G / / / C G / / / / C G D7 / / / C

G / / / / / C / / G / / / C G / / / D7 G D7 G / /

Strawberry Wine spent six weeks on the charts in Saskatchewan, was also playlisted on several radio stations in Ontario, and finally hit the number one spot on Canada's country music airways. Not since Mother Maybelle Carter

had there ever been another hit song played on an autoharp. This tune was written, performed, co-produced, financed, and distributed by Jo and Rick Brennan, a mother and son team – Canada's first and only autoharp duo.



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Continued from page 11 many autoharpers, this year's festival was the best ever, beginning with Bryan Bower's well-received pre-event workshop; commencing with an exciting contest; continuing with eight workshops at Otter Harp Heaven; and topped with nightly jams.

The contest was a fine one, with a rare "playoff" between Tina Louise Barr and Les Gustafson-Zook for third place. Lucille Reilly did what has been an impossible feat until this year – winning first place at the Mountain Laurel Gathering and claiming the Winfield Championship – all in 1995. The Grand Slam of Autoharpdom! Second place was won by Bob Lewis, third, Les Gustafson-Zook. Tina Louise Barr and Dulcimer Dan (The Autoharp Man) Arterburn rounded out the Winfield Big Five.

Approximately 120 autoharp players took advantage of the fine workshops held at Otter Harp Heaven. These sessions were presented by Les Gustafson-Zook, Bob Lewis, Alex Usher, Ivan Stiles, Fran Stal-



1995 Winfield Winners left to right: Les Gustafson-Zook (3rd), Lucille Reilly (1st), and Bob Lewis (2nd).

PHOTO BY REX FLOTTMAN

lings/Gail Huggett, and George Orthey. We thank these very able workshop leaders for giving their valuable festival time to share their expertise with others.

On stage, we enjoyed the autoharp music of Bryan Bowers, Mike Seeger, John McCutcheon, Julie Davis, Roz Brown, and Ivan Stiles.

Winfield is one of those festivals you look forward to with great anticipation every year, and every year, and every year.



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Dubbert's Anti-Mush Bars

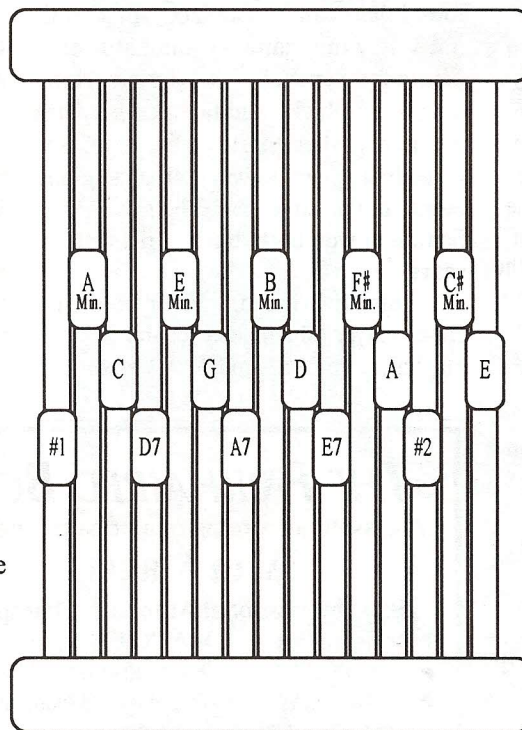
by Carey Dubbert

Editors' Note: As you know, the auto-harp is based entirely on chords and all melody notes are derived by using different chords for each note. In contrast, a piano allows one to play a continuous chord with one hand while playing a melody "over" that chord with the other hand. Up until now, it has not been possible to achieve the same effect on the auto-harp – that is, not until Carey Dubbert and his "Anti-Mush" bars.

The two special chord bars explained here provide a compromise between changing chords whenever needed to provide a given melody note and using open chording so as not to have to change the chord to provide a given melody note. With the first method, the chord structure of the piece is altered, and the chords usually progress much faster than would be called for by the piece. This can tend to sound choppy and fatigue the ear. The second method allows keeping the chord progression (mostly) that may be called for by the piece and still have the ability to play melody notes outside the current chord. What looked like an endless tunnel for me was the probability of catching an adjacent string to the desired melody note when no bar was pressed. This string will be either a minor or a major second away from the intended note and probably doesn't add much to the chord or to the melody. My accuracy some days was fair, but I wasn't satisfied, and that led to fooling around with these special bars.

The two special bars are (I think) best placed at the top and bottom of the 'harp where the thumb (oh yes, it really can move) and the little finger can

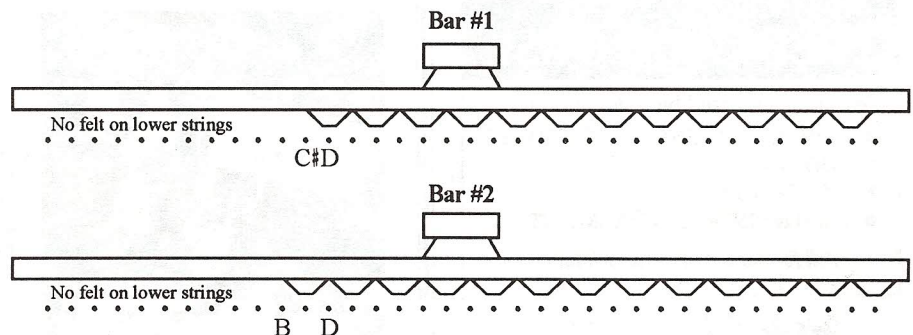
most easily press the bars. Here is a diagram of how my 'harps are laid out.



The above illustration is my D 'harp (with a compromised A and G). The special bars (#1 and #2 in the diagram) target one specific key and work

as a pair in that key. My thumb presses the #1 bar and my little finger presses the #2 bar. In the adjacent keys (up a fifth (G) and down a fifth (A)), one of the special bars will be applicable and the other occasionally. The bars are cut such that one bar accounts for every other note in the key selected, and the other bar allows for the other (also every other) notes in the selected key. Pressed at the same time, all notes would be damped in the upper couple of octaves. The above "every other note" does not apply for the entire bar. The bottom octave has all the felt cut out on both bars allowing the bass strings to vibrate and sustain. It is this bass sustain which makes the two special bars be effective. A chord is strummed or picked with a standard chord bar which includes notes in the lower octave of the 'harp (although other notes may well be sustained). Then, melody notes can be picked cleanly going back and forth on the two anti-mush bars without altering the basic sustaining chord.

So here's how it goes. For example, my 'harp is set up for the key of D as the primary key. My thumb bar is



Alternating felt cutouts should reflect your own 'harp's stringing to allow for double tuned strings where applicable.

open up to C# and then lets every other note in the key of D ring. These are: E, G, B, D, F#, A, and C#. The little finger bar has all notes open up to B (about the 10th or 11th string) and then every other note again. These are: D, F#, A, C#, E, G, B, and D). If I strum a D Major chord, the notes are D, F#, and A. If I should want to pick any of the other notes, I may do so by letting up on the D Major chord bar and depressing one or the other of the anti-mush bars. The D Major chord will still be sounding while I pick the desired melody note. Any time a melody note falls in the D Major chord I can again strum the whole or part of the chord to keep it going. In this manner the melody really can come from the chord progression and not the other way around.

On any other 'harp, I would lay it out the same in that the #1 bar would damp out the tonic note about nine to eleven strings (this could be varied to anything you might want) and would begin its every-othering there, and the #2 bar would damp out the seventh of the primary key of the 'harp and let the tonic ring and begin its every-othering there. With this setup, all 'harps work the same and nearly all fingerings are the same – a nice trick I think.

The primary limitation is that I cannot strum the chord (such as an important downbeat) and play a note out of the chord at the same time. Bob Lewis has the answer to this problem with his 'color' bars (e.g. D9, DM7, D6, etc.). With the combination, you could do anything, and the whole world would seek you out. Well – we'll see. ❖

Carey Dubbert is a Winfield Hammered Dulcimer Champion who began playing autoharp seriously about five years ago.

1995
International
Autoharp
Champion

Lucille Reilly

by Mary Ann Johnston

1995
Mountain Laurel
Autoharp
Champion

To say Lucille Reilly is having a good year is an understatement. In fact, she likens her current autoharp dilemma to having someone give her two pieces of her favorite candy and not knowing which one to eat first. What brought about this happy situation?

Lucille, who has only been serious about the autoharp for about five years, took top honors at the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Championship in July at Newport, Pennsylvania and promptly followed that with a first place win at Walnut Valley International Autoharp competition in September at Winfield, Kansas. So, the lucky and talented lady has two new Orthey 'harps to break in. She is the first person to win both prestigious events in the same year. The late Marty Schuman won both, but in different years.

This prize-winning hammered dulcimer player (she placed second at Walnut Valley in 1981 and 1991) credits

Bob Lewis with showing her some of what has developed into her style. In fact, after winning the hearts of the audience and the votes of the judges at Walnut Valley with *The Moon and Seven Stars*, *On Cessnock Bank*, *Rory O'More*, and *Rickett's Hornpipe*, she invited Bob Lewis (second place) and Les Gustafson-Zook (third place, and another of her mentors) on stage with her for a trio rendition of *Planxty Fanny Power*.

This graduate of Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey almost didn't go to Kansas this year. Scheduling conflicts made it impossible for her to be there for the entire festival, and she had decided to pass Winfield by. In talking with Mary Lou Orthey, she was reminded that part of her prize as the Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering Champion was a ticket to the Walnut Valley Festival. And the rest, as they say, is autoharp history. ❖

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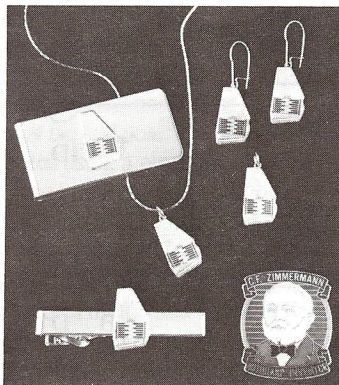
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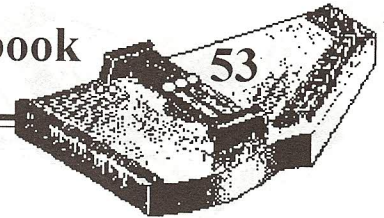
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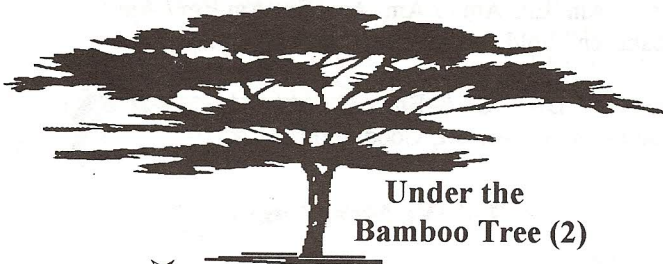
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'Round Her Neck She Wears a Yellow Ribbon (2)

F [/ F] F [/ F] [F Bb] [F Bb] [F F] [/
 'Round her neck, she wears a yel-low rib-bon,
 F] [F F] [F C7] [F F] [F F] [C C] [C F] C /
 She wears it in the win-ter and the sum-mer, so they say.
 F [/ F] F [/ F] [F Bb] [F Bb] [F F] [/
 If you ask her "Why the dec - o - ra-tion?"
 F] [F F] [F C7] [F F] [F Bb] F [C7 C7] F /
 She'll say "It's for my lov-er who is far, far a - way."
 [F C7] Bb // [Bb Bb] F // [/
 Far a - way, far a - way.

F] [F F] [F C7] [F F] [F Bb] F [C7 C7] F /
 She'll say "It's for my lov-er who is far, far a - way."



Under the Bamboo Tree (2)

G [G G] [/ G] C C [G G] [/ G] C
 If you like - a me, Like I like - a you,

C [G G] [/ C] C C G //
 And we like - a both the same,

[G D7] [/ D7] D7 // [G D7] [/ D7] D7 //
 I like to say, this ve - ry day,

[G D7] [/ D7] D7 G [G C] G / G
 I like to change your na - me, 'Cause

[G G] [/ G] C C [G G] [/ G] C
 I love - a you, and love-a you true,

C [G G] [/ G] C C G //
 And if you will love-a me,

[G D7] [/ D7] D7 // [G D7] [/ D7] D7 //
 One live as two, two live as one,

[G D7] [/ D7] D7 G G //
 Un-der the bam - boo tree.

There Is a Tavern in the Town (2)

G] G [/ G] [C G] [A7 G] G [G G] G [/
 There is a tav-ern in the town, in the town,
 G] G [/ G] [C G] [A7 G] D7 [D7 D7] [D7 D7]
 And there my dear love sits him down, sits him down,-
 [G D7] G G G G [D7 G] [D7 G] C [/
 And - drinks his wine 'mid laugh-ter - - free,
 C] D7 [/ D7] [D7 D7] [C D7] G //
 And nev - er, nev-er thinks of me.

Chorus:

[G G] [D7 D7] [D7 D7] [D7 D7]
 Fare thee well, for I must leave thee,

[C D7] [G G] [G G] [G G]
 Do not let the part-ing grieve thee,

[G G] [D7 D7] [D7 D7] [D7 D7] [C
 And re - mem-ber that the best of friends

D7] G C G [/
 must part, must part.

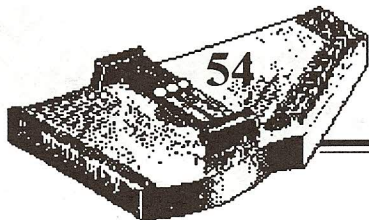
G] G [/ G] [C G] [A7 G] G [G G] G [/
 A-dieu, a - dieu, kind friends, a - dieu, friends a - dieu

G] G [/ G] [C G] [A7 G] D7 [D7 D7] [D7 D7]
 I can no long-er stay with you, stay with you -

[G D7] G G G [G G] [D7 G] [D7 G] C [/
 I'll - hang my harp on a weep-ing wil-low tree,

C] D7 [/ D7] [D7 D7] [C D7] G // [/
 And may the world go well with thee.

2. He left me for a damsel dark, damsel dark,
Each Friday night they used to spark, used to spark,
And now my love, my love once true to me,
Takes that dark damsel on his knee. Chorus:
3. Oh! Dig my grave both wide and deep, wide and deep,
Put tombstones at my head and feet, head and feet,
And on my breast carve a turtle dove,
To signify I died of love. Chorus:



Autoharp Songbook

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Pack Up Your Troubles (2)



C [C F] [C F] [C F] C C C
Pack up your trou-bles in your old kit bag,

G7 F/ F/ C///
And smile, smile, smile.

C [C F] [C F] [C F] C C C/
If you've a lu-ci-fer to light your fag,

D7 D7 G D7 G7///
Smile, boys, that's the style.

C [G7] C C [G7 C] G7/
What's the use of wor-ry-ing,

C G7 G7 C C G7//G7
It ne-ver was worth-while, so

C [C F] [C F] [C F] C C C
Pack up your trou-bles in your old kit bag,

F C/ G7/ C///
And smile, smile, smile!

Hello Ma Baby (2)



[G C] [G] C G [G C] [G] C G
Hel-lo! ma ba-by, Hel-lo! ma ho-ney,

[A7 G] [A7] G A7 A7///
Hel-lo! ma rag-time gal,

[D7 D7] [C] D7 D7 D7///
Send me a kiss by wire,

[G G] [G] D7 C D7///
Ba-by, my heart's on fire!

[G C] [G] C G [G C] [G] C G
If you re-fuse me, Hon-ey, you'll lose me,

[A7 G] [A7] G A7 A7
Then you'll be left a - lone;

A7 D A7 [G G] D7/ D7 G D7 D7 Bm G////////
Oh, ba-by, tel-e-phone and tell me I'se your own.



Good Night Sweetheart (2)



C/ C/ B7 C// B7 C B7 C F/ C/
Good night sweet-heart, till we meet to-mor-row,

G7/ G7/ B7 G7//B7 G7 B7 G7 F/ G7/
Good night sweet-heart, sleep will ba - nish sor-row.

Am/ Am/Em Am/Am F F F Dm///
Tears and part-ing may make us for-lorn,

Em Em Em Am//Dm Dm Dm C G7/ G7 D7 G7
But with the dawn, a new day is born, so I'll say

C/ C/ B7 C// B7 C B7 C F/ C/
Good night sweet-heart, though I'm not be-side you,

G7/ G7/ B7 G7//B7 G7 B7 G7 F/ G7/
Good night sweet-heart, still my love will guide you.

Am/ Am/Em Am//Am Am Em Am Em / Am/
Dreams en - fold you, in each one I'll hold you,

G7/ G7/ B7 G7/ Em C////////
Good night sweet-heart, Good night.



Till We Meet Again (3)



C / C C / C G7/[A7][G7 F] G7//
Smile a - while, you kiss me sad a - dieu,

G7/ G7 G7/ G7 C/[B7][C G7] C / C7
When the clouds roll by I'll come to you -;

F/ G7 F/ F C/ C A7//
Then the skies will seem more blue,

D7/ A7 D7/ D7 G7/ F G7/ B7
Down in Lo - vers' Lane, my dear-ie,

C/ C C/ C G7/[A7][G7 F] G7//
Wed-ding bells will ring so mer-ri-ly,

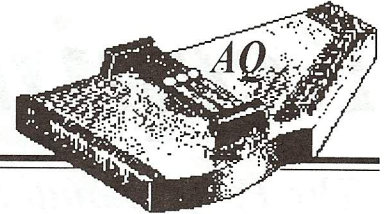
G7/ G7 G7/ G7 C [B7][C G7] C/
Ev - 'ry tear will seem a me-mo-ry;

C7 F/ G7 F/ F C/ C A7//
So wait and pray each night for me,

D7/ D7 G7/ G7 C////////
Till we meet a - gain.

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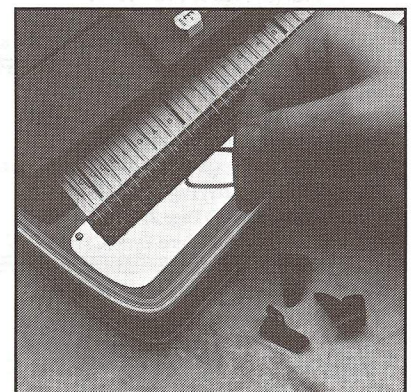
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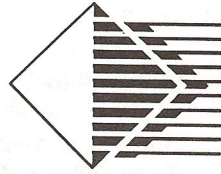
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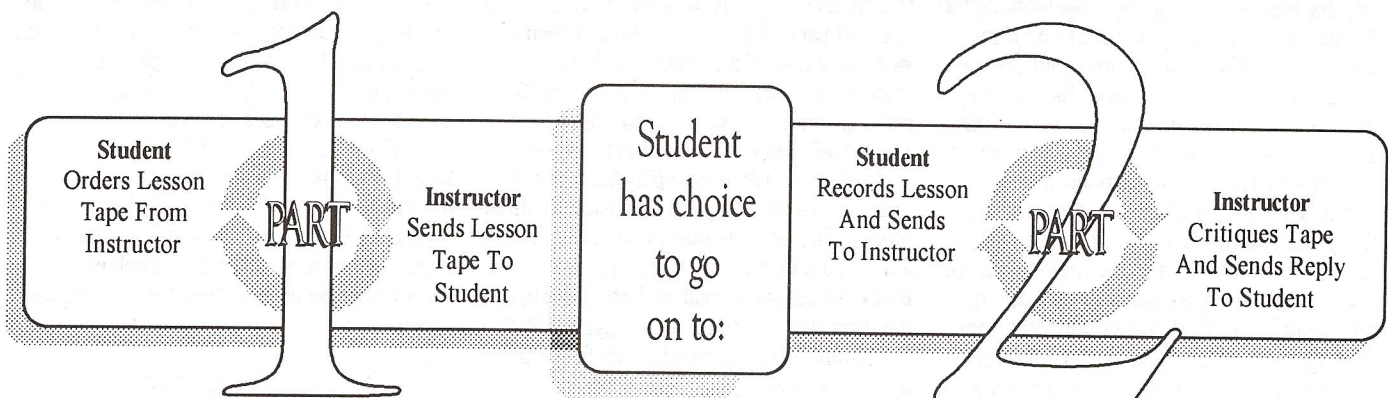


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Alan has been on the staff of *Autoharp Quarterly* as Interaction Editor since 1989. He has also contributed musical arrangements and articles to other publications.

He plays a wide variety of music on both chromatic and diatonic instruments, as demonstrated in his solo album *The Fairhaired Boy*. Another album, featuring everything from O'Carolan to ragtime, is in the works and should be released in 1996.



*Are you interested in becoming an Interaction instructor? We'd like to hear from you.
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THE INTERACTION LESSON "LISTEN TO THE MOCKINGBIRD"

Alan Mager • PO Box 1221 • Annandale, VA 22003

"Listen to the Mockingbird" is one of those great old tunes that I never get tired of playing. It's peppy and infectious and has lots of places that just seem to beg for a little innovation or playfulness. So let's just dive in and have fun with it!

The purpose of this lesson is not to teach you some fancy fingering or unusual chord progressions or substitutions. It's simply to show you exactly how I play this tune and hope that you find something worthwhile in that. Over the years, I think I've learned the most just by trying to imitate what other people are doing. I'm happy to say that I've heard all the great players, and I've stolen something from every one of them. If you order my lesson tape, you may hear a bit of Charles Whitmer, John Hollandsworth, and Lindsay Haisley in my playing of this tune. I can hear those three every time I play it.

First of all let me explain some basics of my style. I play using only my thumb and two fingers, index (1) and middle (2). All my pinches are made with the thumb and middle finger. For single-note plucks, I nearly always use my index finger, except (as you'll see a bit later) for occasional plucks with the thumb. My upward finger strums are always with the middle finger and downward ones always with the index finger. Remember that these are the things that work best for me. Something else may work better for you, so don't feel you have to do it my way if some other way is more comfortable.

I do, however, recommend that you do one thing my way, and that is to make your strokes very small whether they are pinches, strums, or whatever. If you make a lot of broad, sweeping strokes – particularly in a fast piece like this one – your music will sound very "muddy" and the melody will be lost. Try to make your pinches so that you are hitting no more than a couple of strings with your thumb and a couple more with your finger. Limit your strums to no more than about a half dozen strings. Plucks are, by definition, the playing of only one note;

try to keep them sounding that way.

Now, take a look at the music and see what's happening here. In the verse, I use a rather busy style with something happening on almost every half beat. You'll see that I use a lot of upward finger strums as rhythm fills. I find it very comfortable and easy to use this stroke in combination with melody note pinches, particularly in fast pieces like this. A lot of folks have trouble with the upward finger strum at first, because the finger pick tends to get caught in the strings. I make this stroke using the side of the pick, not the tip. It's done with a twist of the wrist, not by forcing or pushing the finger across the strings. This stroke is very quick – after all, I'm using it mostly as filler on half beats. The stroke is also quite small; the pick brushes against only 4 or 5 strings.

The real excitement in this piece comes in the chorus every time we encounter the words "listen to the mockingbird." You're going along at a pretty good clip and all of a sudden, you have to play four sixteenth notes on one beat and, of course, you'd like them all to sound clearly. Here's how I make that happen. First, you'll notice that just prior to each "listen to the mockingbird," there is a rest. When I show a rest in both the music notation and the tablature, it means that you should stop all sound coming from your autoharp. Do this by depressing the G, D7, and C chord bars all at the same time. When you stop the sound of the 'harp, you have set the stage for the clear playing of the sixteenth notes without any background interference (the "mud" I mentioned earlier).

Look at the tablature. I play the four sixteenth notes using a pinch followed by three plucks. The pinch is made with the thumb and middle finger. The first pluck is with the index finger, the second with the thumb, and the third with the index finger again. This back-and-forth thumb and index finger playing can be done very rapidly if you accomplish it by twisting your wrist and not by pushing or reaching with the finger and

thumb. Hold your index finger and thumb stationary and twist your wrist as if you were turning the channel selector knob on an old TV. If you're a child of the remote control generation, then try to duplicate the wrist motion you use to open a jar. (They still make jars, don't they?)

To play the three notes for the word "mockingbird," right after the sixteenth notes, I use a pinch, pluck (index finger), pinch. Now play all seven notes in the "listen to the mockingbird" phrase in succession. You must get to the point of thinking of all seven notes as a single unit – only then will the playing become smooth.

Start practicing by playing this phrase very slowly. I suggest playing the phrase starting on the G chord followed by the same phrase starting on the D7 chord just as it appears in the music. Play these two phrases over and over with the appropriate beats and rests in between. Try speaking or singing the words and the actions in between aloud like this: "Lis-ten to the mock-ing-bird... and... strum... rest, Lis-ten to the mock-ing bird... and... strum... rest." As your comfort with the phrase increases and your playing becomes smooth and controlled, gradually increase the speed until you can rip through these two phrases without even thinking about what you're doing. Play them 500 times and you'll have it! So now it's up to you. Practice, practice, practice, and when you can finally play that little phrase quickly and cleanly the whole tune is yours, because the rest of it is a piece of cake.

If you decide to send for my lesson tape, I'll include along with it a second written-out version of this tune which has some flourishes and embellishments to make it a little more interesting and I'll explain this second version on the tape as well. I hope to hear from you soon.



LISTEN TO THE MOCKINGBIRD

Alice Hawthorne (Septimus Winner), 1854

Verse: I'm dream - ing now of Hal - lie, sweet Hal - lie, sweet Hal - lie, I'm
sleep - ing in the Val - ley, the Val - ley, the Val - ley, She's

G D7 / C D7 G / C D7 / C G / /

dream - ing now of Hal - lie, For the tho't of her is one that ne-ver dies. She's
sleep - ing in the Val - ley, and the mock-ing-bird is sing-ing where she

D7 / C D7 G / G7 / C / / / / D7 C D7 G /

lies. Chorus: Lis - ten to the mock - ing - bird, Lis - ten to the mock - ing - bird, The

G / / / / / D7 / / / / / G / /

mock-ing-bird is sing-ing o'er her grave; Lis - ten to the mock-ing-bird, Lis - ten to the mock-ing-bird, Still

D7 / / / / / G D7 G / / / / / D7 / / / / / G / G7

sing-ing where the weep-ing wil-lows wave.

C / / / / / D7 C D7 G


TABLATURE

✕ = Pinch | = Thumb strum

○ = Pluck with index
○ = Pluck with thumb
T

↑ ↓ = Finger strums

I'LL GET THIS RIGHT YET!



Tunin' Fine, Sure As You're Born!

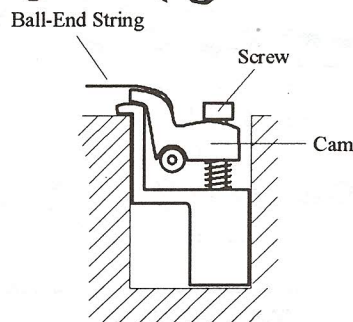
by Dr. George F. Orthey

Fine tuners are the next best thing since Gütter invented the autoharp. Unfortunately, not everyone knows how to use them properly. And some folks shy away from them altogether, still using the old familiar wrench and tuning pegs.

The fine tuners are marvelous devices that not only allow exact and simple tuning capability, but save unnecessary wear on the tuning pin holes.

The fine tuner system consists of an anchor bar and 36 individual cams and cap screws, one for each string on the instrument. On autoharps equipped with 37 strings, the fine tuners are best placed on the top 36 strings, since the high short strings are most problematic to tune to an exact note. First, let's understand —

How they work:



When the screw through the cam is tightened, the cam tips back, putting tension on the string. So the tighter the screw, the higher the note. There is, of course, a limit to how far the screw can be tightened. It should never be forced beyond its limit. When a cam has reached bottom, it should be backed up

about three or four full turns, and the string brought up to pitch with the regular tuning pin.

Some dos and don'ts with fine tuners:

1. Do use them.
2. Do *tune up* to pitch. If a note is sharp, let it *down below* the pitch you desire. *Then* bring it up to the exact pitch. If you let it down to pitch, it will tend to settle a bit flat.
3. Don't tune up with the wrench on the tuning pin, then let down on the fine tuner. This causes the fine tuners to gradually creep up. The cams will ride up out of the position and make your string bed uneven.
4. Do keep the cams down where they are within four turns of being bottomed out. The cams will stay even and the strings will come off the leading edge of the cams, reducing the chance of string buzzing.
5. Do be very careful if you have the old silver-colored aluminum anchor bar and cams. The metal is soft, and the threads can strip easily.

I normally tune a new autoharp immediately after stringing, using the wrench and tuning pins. Then I continue to tune it every time it needs tuning for about one or two weeks with the tuning pins. After that, I use only the fine tuners. When some of the fine tuners start reaching bottom, I level all the fine tuners to the correct even level position. Then tune up the strings with the tuning wrench. Now I go back to

just using fine tuners again. Using this procedure, I normally only have to level the fine tuners and tune with the wrench about once a year.

Changing a string:

Changing a string with fine tuners is a little more work than with an anchor bar or dead pins. Unwind the tuning pin approximately three to four turns and remove the string from the tuning pin. Then unscrew the cap screw in the fine tuner until it comes out of the anchor bar. Lift out the cam and screw and remove the broken wire. Replace it with a new wire. Oscar Schmidt directions tell you to clip the tail off the winding at the ball end of the string. But don't. Clip the tail off only on the middle octave large non-wound strings, and also maybe the lowest three wound strings, so they will seat up in the cam. All remaining small wire strings in the top octave and small core wire strings in the bass octave should just have the tail bent over to lie alongside the windings. See the article, "String Along with Me" in the AQ April '93 issue for a detailed description of restringing.

I have met people who are scared to death of the fine tuners and refuse to use them. I have seen instances where the chord bars will not damp properly because the string bed is so uneven. An unnamed performer I know had loosened the screws to the point where they were almost out of their seats. All these problems can be avoided by following these few simple steps. Good luck. ❖

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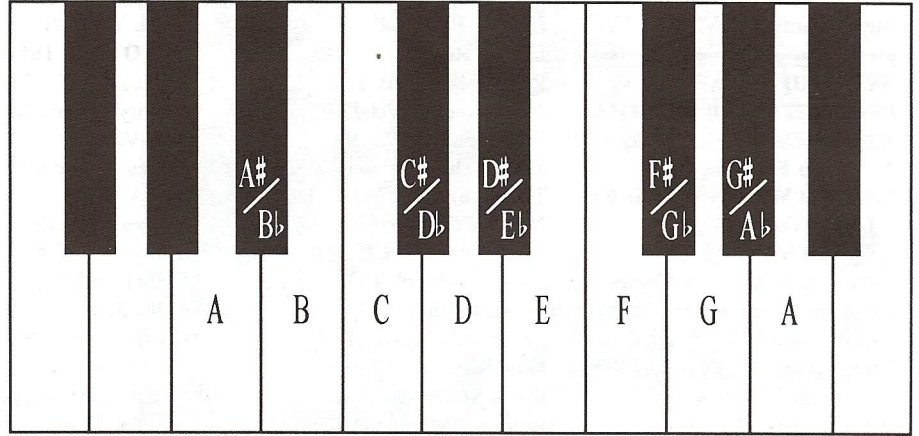
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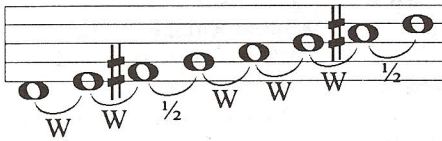
Theoretically Speaking

by "Hooter" the Owl
as told to Becky Askey

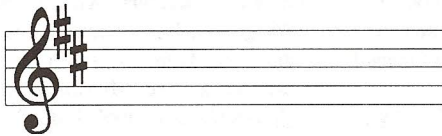
LESSON TWO



Well, did you do your homework? If you worked out the D scale and came up with the scale below you get a star.



The key signature for the key of D is:



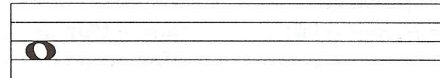
When you construct a D chord, you use the 1st, 3rd, and 5th tones of the scale and come up with D, F#, and A being the notes of the chord.

If you have the last issue of AQ handy, you will notice that you have added the C# after the F# in the key signature for D. You will continue to build on this for subsequent signatures using sharps. In the key signature, the F# will always come first and the C# will always come second. You can't change them around and stick them in any order you feel like. However, this doesn't mean that they will come in that order on the scale that you are building. For instance:

The next key will be in A. There are three sharps in this key. You know two of them already, the F# and the C#. You have to find the other one. Use the

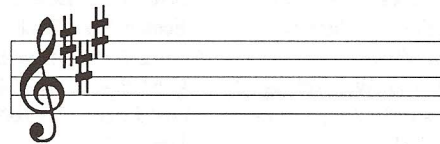
same formula of whole and half steps that you used for C, G, and D to construct the scale below.

Key of A



You There! Stop throwing the magazine against the wall! Go and pick it up and stop your crabbing. Some day someone will ask you what sharps are in the key of B and then you will be glad you did your theory homework. You will probably win two million dollars and you will be so grateful to me that you will send me half.

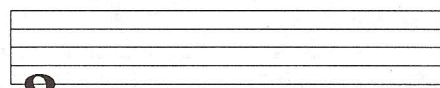
The key signature for the key of A is:



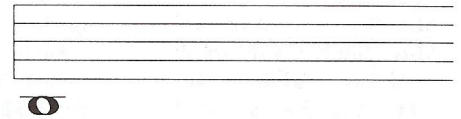
To construct the chord use the 1st, 3rd, and 5th tones in the scale and you have A, C#, and E.

Isn't this fun? Aren't you feeling smarter already? Now you can do the next two scales on your own:

Key of E



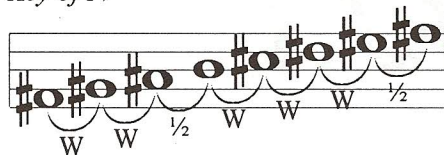
Key of B



Make sure you do them the same way, with the whole and half steps. I won't put the key signatures in this issue so that you won't be tempted to cheat. Not that autoharpers cheat (*Har!*), I just don't want you to be burdened by temptation.

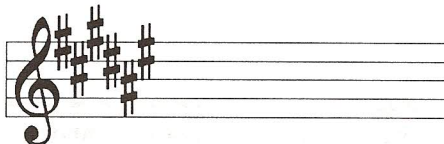
The last two keys with sharps are a little tricky and I will walk through them with you. In case you have lost your keyboard drawing (or torn it into smithereens) it's at the top of the page again.

We will be doing the keys of F# and C#. Starting with the F#, you will move a whole step to G#, a whole step to A#, a half step to B, a whole step to C#, a whole step to D#, a whole step to --- now, here's where the tricky part comes in. You will land on the F. But, remember, we have to keep things in alphabetical order. There is no black key between E and F, therefore, you must notate the F as an E#. You will indeed be playing an F natural but on the scale it will be written as an E#. Hey! I didn't make this up! You will have to blame the monks. Anyhow, from this E# (F natural) you will move the half step and end back on F#. It looks like this:

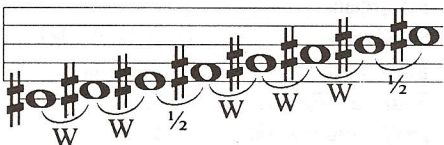
Key of F#

The chord will be: 1st-F#, 3rd-A#, 5th-C#.

The key signature for the key of F# is:

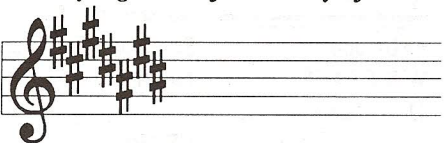


When you do the C# scale the same thing happens – only it happens twice! (Can't you just hear those little guys in the monastery cackling their heads off?) Starting with C#, move a whole step to D#, a whole step to E# (F), a half step to F#, a whole step to G#, a whole step to A#, a whole step to – here's the second one – we land on C but have to notate it as B#. Move a half step to C# and we are finished with all the sharp keys. YEA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Key of C#

The chord would be: 1st-C#, 3rd-E#, 5th-G#.

The key signature for the key of C# is:



Next time we will start working on the keys that use flats.

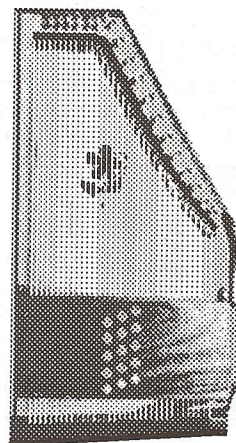
AAAAARRRRRRGGGGGHHHHHH!!!!!!
Settle down. Go drink a cup of tea.

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If you are a professional autoharper and wish to be featured, please send your photo, biography, and schedule to:

Mary Ann Johnston
RD3, Box 190-A
New Cumberland, WV 26047

NOTE: These performance and/or workshop listings are limited to those which feature at least 50% autoharp. Contact the performer for additional information. Also, cancellations and/or changes can occur. Check with the performer before traveling far.

HELEN BLACKBURN
1447 Glynn Oaks Dr.
Marietta, GA 30060
404 423-9293
Pro-File: AQ April 91
Performance
Schedule:
December 16
Emersong Coffee
House
Marietta, GA

BRYAN BOWERS
c/o Scott O'Malley
& Associates
PO Box 9188
Colorado Springs,
CO 80932
719 635-7776
Pro-File:
AQ January 89
Performance
Schedule:
November 16
Universalist Unitarian
Church
Riverside, CA
November 17
Shade Tree
Laguna Niguel, CA

November 18
Fresno Folklore
Society
Fresno, CA
November 26
Freight & Salvage
Berkeley, CA
December 1
Plumas County Arts
Quincy, CA
December 2
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Religious Science
Chico, CA
December 3
Reed Opera House
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December 9
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Bellevue, WA
January 2
Johnny D's
Samerville, MA
January 6
Focal Point
Coffeehouse
St. Louis, MO
January 10
House Concert
Rockford, IL
January 12
Friendship Hall
Mt. Prospect, IL

January 13
Unitarian Church
Evanston, IL
January 16
Public Library
Waterloo, WI
January 19
Cedar Cultural Center
Minneapolis, MN

ROZ BROWN
1549 S. Holland Court
Lakewood, CO 80232
303 969-9645

Pro-File:
AQ October 89

Performance
Schedule:
*Every Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday,
and Saturday night*
Buckhorn Exchange
Restaurant
1000 Osage Street
Denver, CO

**PAUL and
WIN GRACE**

11990 Barnes Chapel
Columbia, MO 65201
314 443-2819

Pro-File:
AQ October 88

Performance
Schedule:
December 28
"The Paul
Pepper Show"
KOMU-TV Channel 8
Columbia, MO
9-10am

December 31
First Night Columbia
with Beth Horner
Columbia, MO

LUCILLE REILLY
PO Box 49
Basking Ridge, NJ
07920
908 604-9743
Pro-File: AQ April 92
Performance
Schedule:

December 10
First Lutheran Church
Montclair, NJ
December 14
United
Methodist Church
Morristown, NJ

TOM SCHROEDER
819 W. 77th Street
Kansas City, MO
64114

Pro-File:
AQ October 88

Performance
Schedule:

November 3, 4, 5
Stringalong Weekend
Milwaukee, WI

**CHARLES
WHITMER**
25650 IH 45N #1107
Spring, TX 77386
713 367-6260
(evenings)

Pro-File: AQ April 93
Performance
Schedule:

December 9
"Lights In the
Heights Christmas"
Houston, TX

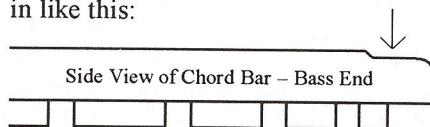
January 13
New Player/Beginner
Autoharp Workshop
The Woodlands, TX

WHAT UNCLE OSCAR LEFT OUT

by Chuck Daniels

For some time, I have worked on making Oscar Schmidt 'harps more playable by doing various things to the actions with the goal of quieting down the 21-chord button noise and lowering the chord bars closer to the string bed. I've done many 'harps using padding to achieve this, with pleasing results, but always felt there had to be a way to control and adjust the action independently of using the plastic cover with its irregular surface.

down to approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " thickness and then covered with thin felt. For these strips to fit under the cover, I had to cut a recess in the bass end of each chord bar for the hold-down strip to fit in like this:

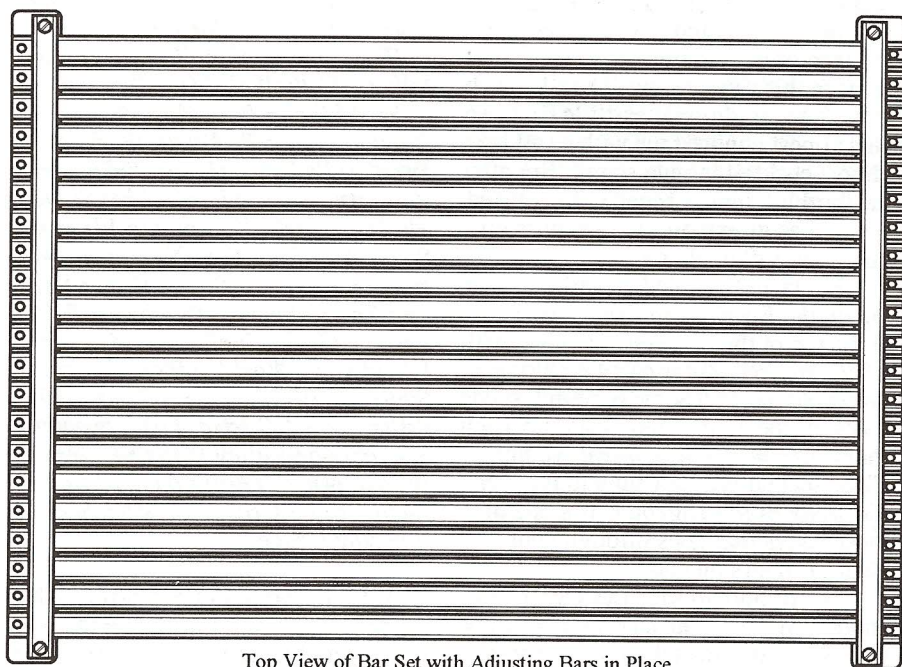


Using the felt that George Orthey and Tom Fladmark use, I needed only

punch out a new pad for the button area inside the cover using Molefoam (as in foot pads). This eliminates the clatter of the buttons against the cover. If the button is too low for your likes, you can put a small piece of leather shoe lace inside the chord bar to raise the button up a bit.

This "fine-tune" bar adjustment system has been tried by several well-known autoharp players who felt that the action has as good and tight a feel as they had seen. As one of this year's Winfield winners put it, "It feels like a real musical instrument; not a toy."

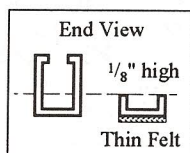
If you want to try this, you will need a belt sander and a metal band saw. Or, if you wish, I can do the job for you. Contact me at 9002 Grandview Dr., Overland Park, KS 66212. ♦



Top View of Bar Set with Adjusting Bars in Place

I have devised a system that I have installed on about a dozen 'harps with everyone being extremely pleased with the change in the playability of the 'harps. The basic idea is to use a metal strip to hold the end of each chord bar down at the proper height from the strings. These strips are screwed down on each end through the chord bar holder into the 'harp body, allowing for precise and separate adjustments at all four corners of the bars.

The strips are made from 12- or 15-chord aluminum bars that have been cut



to cut the bass end of the chord bar as the felt is slightly shorter in height than the original OS felt. If you have put a thick layer of silicone on your felts you may need to recess the high end as well in order to get the cover back on.

Something else I usually do is reduce the pressure of the springs by cutting off about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the height. Since the chord bar is closer to the strings, you can use a shorter spring. If you suffer any finger or joint problems, this makes the instrument easier to play with less pain and strain.

With the action now finished, I

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Critics' Choice

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Bob's Choice

Bob Woodcock

Gather at the River
Autoharp: Les Gustafson-Zook
 1316 S.E. 35th
 Portland, OR 97214

Shall We Gather at the River • In the Sweet Bye and Bye • In the Garden • Nearer My God to Thee • Leaning on the Everlasting Arms • When the Roll is Called Up Yonder • Let Us Break Bread Together • It is Well with My Soul • His Eye is On the Sparrow • Poor Wayfaring Stranger • What a Friend We have in Jesus • He Hideth My Soul

Let me start off by saying that this recording has been one of the most enjoyable reviews I have ever done: I found myself looking forward to getting in the car or going up to the study to put on the tape. Les' first tape, "Great Hymns on the Autoharp" was good. It brought back sweet memories and inspired lovely thoughts. His latest piece is terrific. This is great material played by excellent musicians. But enough hyperbole...lets talk about the tape.

Fourteen standard hymns are presented on autoharp, guitar, and bass. The autoharp is clearly the lead instrument, carrying the melody while the guitar and bass set the mood and support the 'harp. Les' style is primarily pinch-pluck, but he has refined his right hand so that he is able to play very accurately and very, very cleanly. The result is a delicate sound that demonstrates his intuitive understanding of the instrument, yet is never flat or boring.

Jon ten Broek on guitar is able to support and complement the 'harp, as well as providing lead-ins and turn-arounds – exactly what a good back up player should do. He plays the six-string in a variety of styles from soft and jazzy (*Shall We Gather at the River*) to down-home fingerpicking (*Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*). His timing and tuning are right on the money and

his riffs are tasteful and flawless. Like Les, Jon clearly understands and respects the autoharp. Mark Bielman provides the bottom notes with a growly, fluid acoustic bass. He is a solid musician who is familiar with chord structure and puts this knowledge to good use.

The problem with any recording that features a single instrument, be it piano, autoharp, or digeredoo, is the potential for repetition and boredom. Les, Jon, and Mark have avoided this pitfall by some masterful arranging, providing a welcome variety, both within tunes and from selection to selection. Turn-arounds, intros, and key changes keep the tape from dragging, as well. At first, some of this variety seemed a little much to my very traditional ear; the first two cuts almost annoyed me with a soft jazz, almost cocktail lounge sound. But after the third listening, I began to like it, and now it has grown on me like moss on an aging, inflexible rock.

My favorites? Glad you asked. *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* has to be at the top of the list. Folky, simple, with a fingerpicked guitar carrying along a lovely old melody. Some beautiful, subtle notes on the guitar, and clean, heartfelt 'harp playing produce a real winner. Close second is a new tune to me, *Let Us Break Bread Together*. It's one of those songs that goes through your head for hours on end.

What more to say? Les clearly had an idea for a first rate tape, and has come through. Care was taken in the arranging, taping, (some of the best quality autoharp recording I have yet heard), and execution. The result was a winner. Highly recommended.



Mike's Choice

Mike Herr

Bill and Carolyn
Playing Musical Memories
Autoharp: Carolyn Egelski
 6700 French Road
 Alpena, MI 49707

Yellow Rose of Texas/When Johnnie Comes Marching Home • Down in the Valley/When You and I Were Young Maggie/Polly Wolly Doodle • Grandfathers Clock • Pop! Goes the Weasel/Ragtime Annie/Turkey in the Straw • Drunkard's Hell • Hinky-Dinky Parlee-Voo/Little Brown Jug/Golden Slippers/My Little Girl • Westphalia Waltz • Snow Deer/Red Wing/No Place Like Home • Beautiful Brown Eyes • Sugar-foot Rag/Rubber Dolly • Sweet Allie Lee • Alabama Jubilee • Old Spinning Wheel • The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise • Silvery Bells • Waltz Quadrille/Bill's 6/8/Irish Washerwoman • Shenandoah Valley Waltz • Chinese Breakdown • Georgia on My Mind • Victory Rag • Orange Blossom Special • Amazing Grace

I think I've found one-a-them-there sleeper tapes – you know, one that half-way through listening to it you realize has a lot going for it, and then you listen real close and realize it is darn-near exciting! This tape has many more strengths than weaknesses and I'm right happy to enumerate them for you.

Far and away the best aspect of this tape is the fiddle playing of Mr. Sparrow – it's exciting, with excellent intonation, vibrato, and pacing. Bill's harmony and contrapuntal melodies are a real delight, with what must be classical training in his background, given the type of embellishments he lavishes on us. The *most* exciting tune is, of course, *Orange Blossom Special*, which any fiddler would be right proud to imitate.

There are many other qualities about this tape which rank close to each other

in being pluses. Carolyn's autoharp playing, when on rhythm backup, is an excellent example of how to play on the off beat and how to switch back and forth from the on to the off beat at just the right time in the phrasing of the tune. She also has great timing and is so very solid in keeping the tempo. Carolyn gets my vote for the closest I've ever heard an autoharp sound like a guitar while playing rhythm backup. The autoharp leads, which occur in just over half the tunes, are nothing flashy or fancy, yet clean, simple and enjoyable. The best autoharp lead, in my opinion is in *Alabama Jubilee*, a fun rag.

The two musicians do an excellent job in the transitions from tune to tune – they are seamless. The arrangements feature a lot of movement back and forth from autoharp to fiddle in the lead, and I was so happy to hear the autoharp being mixed in at equal volume level as the fiddle. The tape offers an excellent variety of musical forms, from waltzes to rags, a waltz quadrille, several jigs, and a few vocals. The progression of tunes keeps your interest up as well.

Another plus is the fact that many of the tunes are only played through once or twice, not three or four times. Thus, the musicians seem to be saying they're going to say something very important here, and move on. I like that – can you imagine only hearing *Grandfathers Clock* once through? It also allows them to put more selections on the tape.

Weaknesses? So minor and rare, I don't even think I'll go into them. (Just a few little glitches and one shaky fiddle section.)

After my minimum third time through this tape I found myself real eager to send in this report, as I think many beginning to intermediate players will want to use this tape to learn several important lessons about playing rhythm, about playing with a fiddle, about playing on the off beat and about clean, simple lead playing. This is an excellent tape for playing along. And the fiddle (or should I say violin?), is oh so exquisite. Great job, guys!



As You Like It

Front Porch Strings

Autoharp: Mary Umbarger

1360 Tabor Road
Harmony, NC 28634

Suzannah Gal/Cindy/Ragtime Annie • Morpeth Rant • Da Slockit Light • Flop-Eared Mule • Harper's Waltz • Keel Row/Mississippi Sawyer • Ash Grovel/Amazing Grace • Whiskey Before Breakfast • Shepherd's Wife Waltz

• *100 Pipers/My Lilly/Swallowtail Jig/Scotland the Brave • Planxty Fanny Power/Miss Rowan Davies • Captain O'Kane*

"As You Like It" is, all-in-all, a good example of what happens when you take a bunch of better-than-average musicians, convince them that they sound as good or better than many string bands out there, and let them loose in a sound studio. What you get is a better-than-average recording that keeps your interest, presents a few "new" tunes, reworks some old favorites, tries some new effects and arrangements, and establishes a solid beginning in the public arena for this talented group.

For those of you in the autoharp world, you will need no introduction to one Mary Umbarger, an up-and-coming star who has won and placed in many autoharp contests and continues to find innovative ways of attacking those fabled thirty-six or -seven strings. Probably the best example on this tape of how to mix different styles into one piece can be found in *Shepherd's Wife Waltz*. She also displays several ways of keeping pace with the fast fiddle tunes while not worrying about hitting all the melody notes that you hear from the fiddle. (Those of you intimidated by the fiddle tunes should take special note of this skill.) Mary rounds out her contribution to the band by using the cat's claw, as well as the bodhran. Way to go, Mary! The Irish drum keeps the *Swallowtail Jig* moving and exciting.

The other musicians in the band are Harriette Andrews on Appalachian dulcimer, Rick Bafford on guitar and bass, Veda Bafford on fiddle and bowed bass, and Sarah Borders on hammered and Appalachian dulcimer. Perhaps the strongest point of the whole recording is the arranging which the group has worked out very meticulously. There is much interplay between the instruments, a lot of coming and going, and I think this quality adds interest and spark to a tape of mostly familiar tunes. I know it seems like a lot of work when you are sitting in the studio and wasting money when somebody forgets to come in at the right time, but believe me, it pays off in the end.

Other strong points consist of: the general consistency of the excellent bass and guitar rhythm and under-structure; the harmonies worked out between guitar and hammered dulcimer in *Da Slockit Light*, and between guitar and fiddle in *Whiskey Before Breakfast*; the autoharp intros to *Harper's Waltz* and *100 Pipers*; the "musical sandwich" of *Keel Row* and *Mississippi Sawyer* with the return to *Keel Row* for one more

time through to end the side; and the variety and timing of the tunes.

One of the few major problems I could detect was a bit of difficulty in the control of the rhythm between several instruments in four of the tunes, two of which I probably would have worked on and rerecorded. Another objection I have is that the trick of overlaying the *Ash Grove* with *Amazing Grace* is fun to do when you are the one playing and it becomes a challenge to keep on tune – but to listen to this happen just becomes confusing and frustrating. When each tune is being played separately, the band does a beautiful rendition but I think they should be kept that way, except for around the camp fire late at night when you cannot think of anything else to play. The last point I'd like to make is that the Appalachian dulcimer playing needs to be more clear and present – more distinguishable from the underlying rhythm of the bass and guitar. The band will have to use their best musical instincts to figure out how to achieve this goal, but I know they have the resources to do that.

Generally, though, you will be pleased with this tape as the hard work these folks have put into it will be apparent immediately and the musicianship will be easy to appreciate. Hopefully this group will stick together for a long and fruitful band-hood and they will continue to perform as we like it.



Cat O'Nine Tales

Prairie-Fire

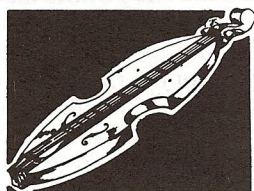
Autoharp: Fran Stallings, Gail Huggett

1406 Macklyn Lane
Bartlesville, OK 74006

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Cat lovers, attention! Here's a must-buy for you, thanks to Gail Huggett, Fran Stallings, and Moby Anderson. "Meowing" it up with a creative melange of autoharp, hammered dulcimer, bass, and vocals, these three musician/storytellers have assembled a "catchy" group of stories, songs, and instrumentals, all dealing with cats.

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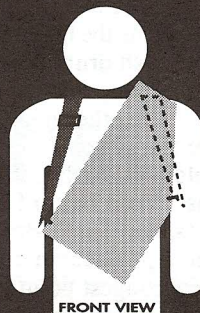
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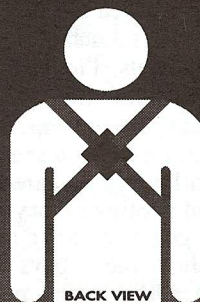
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to stand on their own as separate tunes and have definitely extended a musical claw into my ears, challenging me to learn them post-haste. These tunes provide a welcome balance to the overall predominance of songs and stories.

Fran's works feature a fascinating mix of offerings from multi-national/cultural origins, including Japan, Kashmir, Afro-American background, Syria, Lebanon, and of course, contemporary America. Fran is an entrancing, professional storyteller and has excellent command of the phrasing, diction, timing, and emotive capabilities that work to keep you hungering for the next phrase. You "hear" her facial expressions. My personal favorite is *The Cat who Became a Queen* from the Kashmir.

Fran also accompanies several of the songs on the autoharp, played at an intermediate level with some better-than-average harmony interplay with Gail's dulcimer heard especially on the opening tune of the second side, *Old Grey Cat*. Both musicians are able to utilize particular characteristics of their instruments to mimic the sound of claws scratching during this tune – very creative.

Singer/song writer Gail Huggett showcases her moderate talents on several songs, including the original *Toby Was There*. This song details the comfort afforded to the author by her feline companion when no one else was available. Gail's spirited dulcimer playing is another of the strengths of this tape, noted especially on the *Catnip Jig* and *Catnip Reel*, *Old Grey Cat*, *Toby Was There*, and the humorous, clever *Overflowin' Catbox Blues*. One recommendation I could make to Ms. Huggett is to try to overcome her tentativeness when singing solo – it comes across as a difficulty with tone and a constricted feel to her voice. This fortunately detracts minimally from the spell of the song and it all disappears when she's singing duets with Fran.

In summary, lovers of cats, dogs, pigeons, aardvarks, whatever, will warm quickly to this tape. The message here goes beyond just the particular quirks of cats and their fanciers. It is the love of our friends from other species that is the real meat of this musical chow.

I'll Buy That

Learn to Play Irish Music

You may be lucky enough to live in a community where it is easy to get musicians to jam with you. However, if you can only listen to those jam sessions, you'll find that the tunes are often played with amazing speed. This is fine for listening, but frustrating if you are trying to learn the music. Tom Parker has produced a book and recording set containing 13 Irish tunes – *Red Haired Boy, Blackberry Blossom, Swallow Tail Jig, Edmond of the Hill, Si 'Bheg Si 'Mor, The Blackthorn Stick, Lassie with the Golden Hair, Liverpool Hornpipe, Danny Boy, Sailor's Hornpipe, Rights of Man, Donny Brook Fair, and Haste to the Wedding.*

This set is to be used as a learning tool for those who wish to play these tunes and who want to learn them the best way possible – with musical accompaniment. Mr. Parker has used a computer/keyboard to make the recording, and the taped music follows the written music in the book. Each jig and/or hornpipe is played through first at a very slow speed, then at a slow-moderate rate, etc. until the music is up to a moderate-fast speed. The student plays along, following the music in the book, progressing according to his own comfort as the speed of the music progresses. The set, which was produced for "fiddle, guitar, harp, accordian, flute, whistle and dulcimer," has the accompanying chords noted in the written music. It includes a book, and tape or CD. To order, see "The Market Place." ❖

Southern Mountain Music

W.K. McNeil, resident folklorist at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Arkansas, has produced three great books of Southern Mountain songs: "Southern Mountain Ballads," Vols. 1 and 2, and "Southern Mountain Folksongs." The songs come from the Ozarks and Southern Appalachia, and span all of the indigenous cultures of that area. Tunes are printed, and songs are copiously noted. August House, PO Box 3223, Little Rock, AR 72203. ❖



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1996 NOMINATION FORM

Nominations for the 1996 inductees into The Autoharp Hall of Fame will be accepted by Limberjack Productions from September 1, 1995 until May 1, 1996. Nominees should have had a significant, long-standing, positive impact on the autoharp community. Any individual wishing to submit nominations may do so by completing this form. Copies of this form are permissible. Names may be submitted for one posthumous and one contemporary nomination. Posthumous honorees must have been deceased for three years to be eligible.

The honorees will be selected by a panel composed of knowledgeable autoharp musicians and enthusiasts, who are

proficient in autoharp history. *Envelopes must contain nominations only, and should be addressed to: The Autoharp Hall of Fame, PO Box A, Newport PA, 17074.* These envelopes shall be forwarded, unopened, to the panel. Limberjack Productions shall be informed of the decision of the panel by the third week of May, 1996. The honorees shall be installed into the Hall of Fame at the 1996 Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering, and announced in the Summer 1996 issue of *Autoharp Quarterly*. **When describing a nominee's contributions, specify the significance of those contributions, and the nominee's leadership role in the autoharp community.**

POSTHUMOUS NOMINEE

Name of nominee: _____

Use a separate piece of paper for the required description of achievement, contributions, and/or leadership in the autoharp community.

CONTEMPORARY NOMINEE

Name of nominee: _____

Use a separate piece of paper for the required description of achievement, contributions, and/or leadership in the autoharp community.

Name, address, telephone number of person submitting nomination:

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

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IMPORTANT

All parts of this Nomination Form, including description of achievement, contributions, and/or leadership in the autoharp community, must be completed to validate the nomination.



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Recordings

Events Editors:
 George and Dorothy Wagner
 155 N. Harbor Drive #1102
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Recordings Editor:
 Mary Ann Johnston
 RD3, Box 190-A
 New Cumberland, WV 26047

If you know of a new or re-released recording on which contains at least 50 % autoharp, please send the information to the Recordings Editor. It will be listed in this column.

The following are major fall/winter events which feature the autoharp in contest, workshop, and/or performance. If you know of a major event we have not included, please send the information to the Events Editors. The complete events list is published every Spring, and seasonally repeated and updated in every issue.

FEATURES AUTOHARP

Breakin' Tradition
 Autoharp: Tina Louise Barr
 322 Las Palmas Ave.
 Modesto, CA 95354

INCLUDES AUTOHARP

Mountain Fling - Over the Edge
 Autoharp: John Hollandsworth
 700 Tower Road
 Christiansburg, VA 24073

CODE:	
AC Autoharp Contest
AP Autoharp Performance
AW Autoharp Workshop

NOVEMBER

- **Stringalong Weekend**; November 3-5; Edwards Conference Center, East Troy, WI; Code: AP, AW (Tom Schroeder, Ann Schmid); UW-Milwaukee Folk Center, Fine Arts - Music 130, PO Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201 414 642-7466
- **Barberville Jamboree**; November 4-5; Barberville, FL; Code: AP, AW (Mark Fackeldey, Sue Bullock, Charley Groth); Jan Milner, PO Box 668, Crystal Beach, FL 34681 813 784-1771
- **Intermediate Autoharp Workshops**; November 21-December 19; Swallow Hill, Denver, CO; Code: AW (Julie Davis); Swallow Hill, 1905 South Pearl St., Denver, CO 80210 303 777-1003

Memories of Love
 Autoharp: Herral Long
 2027 Robinhood Ave.
 Toledo, OH 43620



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Publication dates: *Winter*, February 1st; *Spring*, May 1st; *Summer*, August 1st; *Fall*, November 1st

Material for Events, Pro-Files, Clubs, Recordings/Books, and AQ Postscripts must be received by individual editors by the following dates: Winter: December 15th • Spring: March 15th • Summer: June 15th • Fall: September 15th. All other material should be sent to AQ by the same dates. All last-minute information should be sent to AQ for inclusion if possible. Music and feature articles may be submitted at any time for printing at a future date as space permits. AQ retains first rights on all items. Thank you.

AQ

Postscripts

FROM HARPLAND

Do you have some news to share with the autoharp community? Send it to:

Mary Umbarger
1360 Tabor Road
Harmony, NC 28634

Ah – another season descends upon us with memories of summer still ringing in our hearts and expectations of football and fall jams rising in our souls! Here's what "Harplanders" have been doing this summer –

P.S.

Congratulations to **Mike Seeger**. He and **Alexia Smith** were married on the 27th of August. Many best wishes!

P.S.

After years of hard work, hundreds of Chicago's inner-city children from the Elliott Donnelly Youth Center have completed an art park, playground, and community garden. This is a result of a collaborative effort between community residents, nonprofit organizations, artists, and the children themselves. **Dorothy Wagner**, a new member of our staff, has contributed heavily to this project by writing two large and excellent music books – a Christmas and a childrens' book – with the aid of her autoharp. She has donated the entire proceeds of the sales of these books to this worthy cause. To order, see her address in the "Autoharp Events" column.

P.S.

George Foss (The Gray Baron) has recently earned his pilot's wings! His diatonic book, "Going Diatonic," will soon be available from Elderly Instruments.

P.S.

Our sweet **Mary Ann Johnston** had hip replacement surgery on October 23. Keep her in your prayers! We all wish the best for her.

P.S.

Carole Outwater had knee surgery in August. She is doing fine and should soon be out of her cast. In the meantime, she has lots of time to play her autoharp. Mountain Laurel Autoharp Gathering competitors need to beware in '96!

Marie and Loren Wells tell us that **Harps Plus** will have their Christmas carry-in dinner and meeting on December 17. Marie has been having a lot of trouble with her arthritis lately, and couldn't attend Winfield festival because of this problem. We do hope she is feeling better and is back in her busy autoharp-playing schedule again.

P.S.

The **DeBusk-Weavers** are making a live – in concert video tape. More information later.

P.S.

Betty Waldron had to miss Galax this year – probably one of the few times she has not been there. Both her mother-in-law and her husband, Irvin, were in the hospital. Hope healing continues for both. Betty holds the record for winning the most awards in competition at that festival – one of the biggest and oldest fiddlers' conventions in the country.

P.S.

Mary Umbarger's (that's me, folks) son, Patrick, was married in September. The Front Porch strings played, with Mary playing with them until time for her to be ushered into her proper place. Then at the appointed time, she sat there in the pew and played *The Lord's Prayer* using her F diatonic autoharp. How's that for different!

P.S.

I have had the privilege of previewing **Herral Long's** soon to be released CD/tape, "Memories of Love." As written on the J-card, Herral "...found solace in writing music for his wife, Marcy, during her 12-year losing battle with Alzheimer's disease." This project is well done with a variety of good musicians performing Herral's songs. There is a great deal of love and unabounding talent that went into this endeavor. I'm reminded of this verse in *Endearing Young Charms* –

*It is not the beauty and youth of thine own,
Nor the cheek unprevailed by a tear,
That the fervor and faith of a heart
can be known,*

*But with time it will make thee more dear,
No, a heart truly loved, never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower turns to her God as
he sets,*

The same look as she turned as he rose.

See information about Herral's tape in the "Recordings" section of this issue.

P.S.

We were chided by a reader of *AQ* because we printed only the first verse of *Brandywine* (Laurie's Corner) with the music in our last issue. Our apologies. Here are the other three verses –

*Pretty little girl in Brandywine;
sweet as she can be
Only one that I call mine;
sees no one but me.*

*When I get to Brandywine;
find a preacher man
Leave the ladies all behind;
be a family man.*

*Pretty little wife in Brandywine;
roses 'round the door
Fruit a-hangin' on the vine;
baby on the floor.*

P.S.

The **Capital Harpers** celebrated its 5th anniversary in October, with a gala meeting at Alan and Janice Mager's home. They enjoyed a great culinary repast followed by a round robin, each playing a tune to fit the occasion. The subject of these tunes – wood, since this was their wooden anniversary. Congratulations to this autoharp club!

P.S.

A giant *OOPs* is in order. In the last issue, we announced that **Glen Peterson** was **Oscar Schmidt's** great grandson. Not so, says a rather amused **Meg Peterson**. To get it straight, Glen was Oscar Schmidt's grandson. How's that, Meg? We'll get it right, yet! ❖

ATTENTION KILBY SNOW BUFFS!

If you are interested in owning a color VCR film of Kilby Snow playing his autoharp (solo), plus some black and white footage of Kilby from the Seattle Folklore Society, inform us of your interest before January 1, 1996. To be counted, send your name & address to:

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