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*It's hard to remember a time when music wasn't a central part of my life. My first musical performance was at age three-and-a-half when my mother had me sing M-O-T-H-E-R at the Mother-Daughter Banquet at the church. At the time I figured all little girls sang with their mommies, so it was no big deal to me.*

*When my mother started teaching piano later that year, she had two students – my six-year-old brother and another six-year-old friend of the family. My brother was annoyed when I sat down at the piano and played his pieces by ear after he had finished practicing. One day he told mom, "She's playing my songs again, and she has the book upside down!" Mom put a stop to that by starting me on piano lessons with my very own books. I learned to read notes before I could say the full alphabet. I got confused after G . . .*



*In our family, after a minimum of two years of piano lessons, we were expected to learn a band or orchestra instrument. I chose the violin and started lessons with a private teacher. I played in the school orchestra from 4th grade on through high school.*

*I had the honor of playing violin solos in the district-wide honor orchestra concerts when I was in 7th and 8th grade. There was a girl in the orchestra who played the harp. (I now realize it was a Troubadour Harp.) I would look at it longingly but ultimately figured that my parents wouldn't let me play yet another instrument.*

*But then Dad brought home a guitar. I had already picked up my brother's ukulele, so I knew how to play a few chords. I kept borrowing Dad's guitar, and they finally bought me one for my 14th birthday. I started taking classical guitar lessons, and the guitar became my favorite pastime. I spent hours in my room singing, playing, and making up songs. My parents heard me singing through the door and decided it was time for formal voice training.*



*Mom's private piano student schedule had filled up, so she taught a few of her more advanced students the nuts and bolts of teaching. I started teaching piano and guitar at age 15, and added voice students the next year.*

*Fast forward many years – in my mid-thirties, my sister, who was teaching flute, joined with a pedal harp teacher for a joint flute and harp student recital. Following the concert, I asked if I could try out the harp. After being instructed on the red and blue strings, and where the pedals were for each pitch, I sat down and improvised long enough to fall in love. I asked, "So how much does one of these cost?" At the time, there was no way I could justify that kind of expense. Six months later, I heard Maureen Brennan at a Dickens Fair playing a small Irish harp. I thought, "Now **that** I might be able to afford – and I can probably even lift it myself."*

*I bought my first harp, a Triplett Celtic model, and using Sylvia Woods' [Teach Yourself to Play](#) book, learned to place my fingers, and to play a handful of Celtic tunes. I also played my harp in a "fingerstyle guitar" fashion to accompany my singing. My style on the Celtic harp was far from traditional; I was greatly influenced by pop, jazz, and blues.*



*It was not long before I started giving private harp lessons. I was a founding member of [Harpers Hall](#), which is a chapter of the [ISFHC](#) (International Society of Folk Harpers and Craftsmen). I started teaching workshops at harp conferences and retreats on how to arrange in a modern style, resulting in the how-to book [Cool Chords and Groovy Rhythms](#), as well as the [Tunes with a Twist](#) series.*



*I taught a five-week class called [The Sing-Along Harper](#) at the request of a Harpers Hall member who wanted to know how I knew what notes to play when we did our late-night sing-along sessions at harp retreats. That class also became a book.*

*I started playing at hospitals in 2001 and have played my Rees double-strung harp at Stanford Hospital and Clinics since 2003. I am a Certified Clinical Musician (CCM) and I now also mentor for the Harp for Healing Clinical Musician certification program.*

*Although the harp is a huge part of my life, it is not my only passion. Here's one of my poems from last year, entitled **I Play the Harp**.*

I play the harp --  
not the big clunky one  
like Harpo Marx played --  
but the small one, delicately curved,  
carved from rich maple.  
I play the harp  
because it heals me,  
restores my sanity,  
invigorates me.  
I play the harp  
because it reaches others,  
soothes, steadies, comforts them.  
And I play the harp  
with other harpers.  
When we gather,  
we call ourselves  
“Harpers Hall and Culinary Society”  
because we love to play,  
eat, and repeat.  
I play the harp,  
and I am at home --  
even when I am not at home.