

This article by Jo Morrison was first published in the February 2015 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter

You can find Jo's PDFs at [www.harpcenter.com/Morrison](http://www.harpcenter.com/Morrison)

I can't remember a time when music wasn't present in my life. From the time I was an infant, my mother kept music playing in our house every waking hour. This music ranged from classical to pop and covered most genres in-between, so I was exposed to a lot of styles. We didn't have any neighbors my age when I was very young, and I can remember swinging on the swing-set and singing at the top of my lungs, and also wandering through the woods making up tunes and words as I rambled.



That said, I never set out to be a musician professionally. I enjoyed accompanying groups on piano starting in 5th grade, but always saw it as a fun hobby, not a profession. I took a break from work after we bought our house to build an addition on the house, and my husband gave me a harp during this project. I would spend all day working on anything from plumbing to plastering, and finish the day playing the harp for about an hour prior to going to sleep. I slept better then than I have ever slept before or since. The harp was a natural fit for me.

It didn't take long for me to be in demand to play for local weddings and events, since I lived in a rural area where harp wasn't known. People also started asking for recordings, which was unexpected. By that time I was having a fair bit of pain while playing. I feared my time harping would be severely limited, so I made my first recording (*The Three Musics*) to have something to remember my playing by. The recording process led me to write down my arrangements, which resulted in several well-received **music books**. I ended up finding the solution to the pain through help with Alexander Technique, and spent several years relearning to play the harp as well as relearning to walk, sit, stand, and drive.

Simultaneously there were requests for a local harp teacher. It was hard to say "no" when there weren't any nearby teachers, so I took the plunge. I found I enjoyed sharing my passion for the harp, and made it my mission to make sure no one else had to relearn to play the harp due to minor physical issues and lack of relaxation.



I also found that many adult students couldn't learn as rapidly as the existing tutor books progressed, so I started arranging pieces to meet their needs. These arrangements filled the gaps between levels with interesting folk tunes in very simple arrangements, while my students learned comfort in hand position and the coordination between two hands with proper technique. This led to my book, *The Beginning Harper's Tunebook*.

Harp will never be my only passion - I love many kinds of music (I'm currently learning to play the organ) as well as a wide variety of other things, from writing to photography. However, I could never imagine the harp not being a major part of my life.

Archimedes said that with a long-enough lever he can move the world. I've found that I can do something much harder -- with a lever harp, I can move the heart.

-- Jo Morrison