

Phil's Forum 8-6-08 Strummin' My 6-String

It was my favorite Christmas present of all time. I still have it. And I knew I was getting it all along.

December, 1985. My sister and I were both in college. She wanted a stereo for Christmas and Mom and Dad had no clue what to buy her. So they called me in for advice. And since I knew what Mom and Dad were spending on her, they turned to me and said, "What do you want?"

No hesitation. A guitar. Six shimmering strings, a shiny wood top, and a black case. I was gonna be a star.

I always had a fascination with guitars. In fact, I even tried to build one out of an old sheet of particle board. I measured it, drew it out on the board and began cutting. At eleven I just figured that once I cut out the body I could attach some strings and be good to go.

Without a jigsaw, though, I never got very far. I think that board with the drawings and a few misplaced saw cuts still sits somewhere in my parents' basement.

But then I started working summers at YMCA Storer Camps in Napoleon. Although I never saw it, there must be somewhere on the application where you check off "guitar player". Almost everyone there knew how to play guitar... except me. I wanted a guitar.

And now I had one. Mom and Dad went to Playford Music and got a perfect starter guitar, an Eterna by Yamaha with a really high action that tore through my fingertips in record time while I adjusted to this new skill.

My college roommate was not nearly as excited as I was about my new guitar. With each new chord I tried to teach to my fingers, Kraig found renewed motivation to go the library to study. And even then, by the following summer I could barely play 3 chords.

Then I met Tim.

Dr. Timothy Murnen, PhD, now a professor at Bowling Green, was just a summer camp counselor like me, with long hair, a love for the outdoors, and an ability to relate to kids. And just like me, he had a guitar. But he was doing something I had not even considered. Tim was writing his own songs. Songs I've never forgotten like "Broken Strings" - *The day is long and your feet move on/And you're never really ever gonna change your song/Broken hearts and broken dreams/You just got to live with your broken strings.*

Man, I was blown away. Now I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my guitar. Write my own music. And I did.

Over the next few years I wrote 40 or 50 songs, although I use that word loosely. With maybe two or three exceptions, none of that early work was approved for human consumption.

But when I joined a contemporary Christian music group at the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson in '93 I found a whole new outlet for my writing. Another 40 to 50 songs later I have a few more edible tunes.

Are you ready to hear them?

Yes, I'm going public. I'm going on the stage live at Nomad Bookhouse on Friday, August 29th at 7pm with my guitar, harmonicas and maybe a friend or two.

Some people ask what style of music I play. Is "Campfire" a style?

You can call it folk, country, old time rock n roll, blues, Christian, or whatever you want. I promise that there will be songs to make you laugh, songs to make you think, songs to make you tap your toes, and songs to make you want to sing along. And when I hit the wrong note or two along the way maybe even a song to make you cry.

I'm going to play a mix of Christian and secular originals with a few covers thrown in for good measure.

Will you dare to join me?

See you Friday, August 29th 7pm at Nomad!

Happy Strumming!

Phil Wrzesinski

PS I've told you my favorite present. Now I want hear about yours. Tell me the story behind your favorite gift and if I get enough responses I'll put them in an upcoming forum.