

HGG15 as experienced by the Tonedevil Brothers and their mom, Linda Marek

Many conversations between Tony, David and me occurred during the weeks prior to HGG #15. Here's what we concluded: 1. The timing coincided with my annual trek to Arizona for the winter; 2. Tony and David like to visit Arizona and play music there; and 3. I rather enjoy the activities and, especially the people in the Harp Guitar community. So, why not travel together and make it a memorable family journey. And that is exactly what we did.

On October 11th, the 3 of us finished loading my Subaru and hopped in with our first destination 550 miles away in Klamath Falls, OR. To make the drive as comfortable, enjoyable and cost effective as possible, we made the back seat a lounge area with pillows and blankets, listened to an audio of The Count of Monte Cristo and snacked on crackers, cheese, fruit, carrots, candy and nuts. We also took turns driving 3-hour shifts. Dave must have picked the short straw, because when it was his turn to drive, the road switched from 4-lane to 2-lane and the rain hit. But ya know, it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy. By the time we got to Klamath Falls, we were ready for a meal. We all enjoy BBQ beef brisket and found a wonderful little place, Wubba's BBQ, where we could get exactly that.



Day 2 of this journey brought us to Bend, OR where we stopped for a visit at this guitar building business' outlet store where we and had a nice chat and tour of extraordinary tonewoods. They do not build harp guitars, and so we chalked one up for us and carried on.



Our next destination was Gryphon Strings at Palo Alto, CA where Dave presented a spanking new Tonedevil Harp Guitar, and Mr. Frank Ford graciously wrote out the check for its purchase. Fingers crossed that it will sell as well as the last and be thoroughly enjoyed.



Stanford University's CoHo Coffee Shop in Palo Alto provided a stage and appropriate electronics for an evening performance by the Tonedevil Brothers. This was attended by many students who were intensely focused on their devices, looking oblivious to the fact that they were being entertained. However, because that was the weekend of alumni reunions, a few of the graduates were in attendance, as were some SU faculty. Thankfully they provided some much-appreciated applause and some of them even stayed after to try out the harp guitar.



It was on to Salinas, CA for our overnight, and arriving late, we just made it in time to have our room switched to a 2-bedroom and then crashed for the night, only to arise at what seemed like 2 hours later for the journey to Carlsbad. And what a welcome we got! The banquet was already well attended when we arrived, and we got cheers and applause when we walked in. It was like a homecoming! The German food in honor of Oktoberfest was sumptuous; the raffles and games delightful and the entertainment wonderful. And Tony built the winning Lego harp guitar. ~ LM



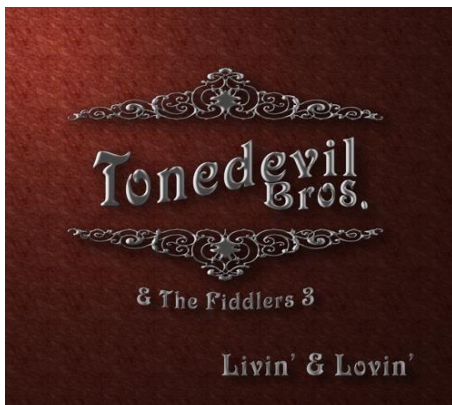
Now these are the notes of Dave continuing the tale of the journey of the Tonedevil Bros. David and Tony Powell and their mom Linda Marek to the 15th annual Harp Guitar Gathering in Carlsbad. Yes a cheerful crowd upon entering always lifts the spirits after long travels, I was reminded of those episodes of Cheers when Norm walks in. NORM! And Tone's Lego harp guitar was pretty unmistakably recognizable, not that Brad and the other participants didn't make some ingenious creations.

The party moved back to the hotel for after hour open mic for those (like myself) who didn't get a chance to play at the museum stage. It was an intimate opportunity for me to present a new piece I haven't released yet and receive the honorable feedback from seasoned players all in one place.



Saturday was a whirlwind flurry of harp guitar extravaganza, they were in every room at the museum. Tone and I set up the couple instruments on display in the luther room and immediately began reminiscing with our mentors and making new friends. I split off to check out which panel was going on and realized I'd missed Travis Bowman open up the first spot. But John Schneiderman's scholarly presentation of his use of the Russian open G tunings on his Baroque lute and harp guitar left me wanting more of the "God Saves the Czar." I like the GBDGBD tuning so he can play the same melody with the same fingering in two octaves. I use this tuning on the rare chance I'm plunking on my resonator guitar.

During lunch Tone and I took the stage to play tunes from our new release "Livin and Lovin." It was nice to be somewhat featured this year and finally have a [new CD](#) available to represent our latest works.



After lunch the luthier's panel was exceedingly attended. Around a dozen luthiers presented during the 2 hours and we were 2nd to last, which meant we ended up getting cut short (the final segment on our super-treble design will be available online shortly). I did update everyone on our 100th build, overseas trip to China in May 2017, our 10 city music tour there, and our new prototype of a Chinese made Tonedevil (still TBA).



I believe this was the largest attendance of registrants for the harp guitar gathering, so of course this is likely the largest group of harp guitarists that just played “The Water is Wide” at the Saturday concert finale.



It’s always the highlight of my trip to be in this photo not because I get to play “Wheres Waldo” finding myself in it later (dead center last row), but because I consider everyone here a friend and I will be later reminded about seeing them there the next HGG comes around. Also there are 4 Tonedevil harp guitars in the picture for you to find.



Sunday, I was finally able to catch up with Travis Bowman (on the left), first by seeing his clinic in the morning and then after the recital, we traded Kottke tunes back and forth into the wee hours, such a great guy and skilled player. I’d like to get him to the northwest some day when I have time to promote concerts again.

The others in the photo are one of our customers, Larry Elfenbein (left of me), and his friend Bob (right).



Another one of our customers, Steve Farmer, likes to sing his folk songs with me so I accompanied as he sang a familiar tune we both knew, "Saginaw Michigan" during the Sunday after party jam. It was one of the largest jam circles I've been in, I don't think we are all even in the panoramic here, but you can see most of them:



Part of the jam circle was of course the British Invasion, Martin Please, Tommy Loose, and Benoit. Tommy sang one of the prettiest versions of "Vincent" I've heard accompanying himself on harp guitar, there may be a video floating around of it somewhere... Also Martin's renditions of The Who songs were crowd pleasers!



The highlight of my night was getting to cross one more item off my bucket list and that was singing the unofficial national anthem of Australia, "Waltzing Matilda" with an actual Australian. Tony Barnard claimed not to be a great vocalist but humored me after realizing the significance to me and belted it out. I owe him a huge thanks (photo bomb with Hirokatsu Takai, left, from Japan accompanies us on harmonica). The line we're all singing here is "Out jumped the jumbucks 1... 2... 3!"



It's always a treat getting to play and sing with Andy Wahlberg. He's the inspiration for me to continue performing with harp guitar as he's been doing it the longest of all of us. His comedy act of satires and parodies still gets me ROFL.



The other main reason we all come to HGG is to be around Stephen Bennett, the master of harp guitar, and founder of the Harp Guitat Gathering. His virtuosity is unmatched on the instrument. The more I play harp guitar, the more I try to sound like Stephen Bennett.





I had to capture this image of our Tonedevil next to an instrument built by another of our luthier heros. William Eaton's approach to integrating a harp into a guitar is truly unique. All of his creations are works of art, and sonically rewarding to hear. It was after this I approached him and asked if we could stop by the Roberto Venn School of Luthery. He was grateful I asked and even invited us to present a harp guitar demonstration to which we immediately accepted and set a time for later that week to stop by. So upon saying our goodbyes to the 15th annual Harp Guitar Gathering attendees at the Monday breakfast, we finished the last leg of our journey from Carlsbad, California to Phoenix Arizona.



Before visiting the school we had a performance at my Mom's retirement community in Sun City West, AZ. The Boomer club and the Zymergy club hosted a happy hour concert in their new outdoor venue. It's not the clearest photo, but they did great with the lights and sound and there were around 250 in the audience! They loved our harp guitar swing tunes and originals.

The next day we booked an official Sun City West performance in their larger hall for Mar. 2019 (yes they book over a year in advanced) which holds over 800. There are a lot of performance opportunities in this area, the retirement communities are huge and most have their own concert venues and promoters.

The day we flew out of Phoenix back to the Inland northwest we stopped at Roberto Venn on our way to the airport to give a harp guitar demonstration. All the students were peaked and asked many of our frequently asked questions like: how many have you made, and what strings do you use for the harp? But they also were very technical and wanted to know about the demand for the instrument, where we get our woods, and how to play it. I ran through a bit of an instrumental tune for them [which can be seen here](#).



That was it, after the long drive to California and dropping my mom off to weather in sunny Phoenix it was relieving to take a non-stop flight back to Spokane. My friend Tyler picked us up and took us back to where I had parked in Idaho. It was one of the most eventful trips to HGG I have taken, and I hope to see everyone again at HGG16 in Milford 2018. Signing off for now but continuing to take over the world with the harp guitar!

~Dave

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