



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

David Smith

I was born in Detroit in 1950. We moved to Taylor when I was a child and I grew up there until I moved to Dearborn in the 1980's. Hobbies have always been a big part of my life. As a teenager and young adult I enjoyed building and flying model airplanes, either control line, free flight or radio control. I could always be found tinkering around in the garage and experimenting with electricity, chemistry set, science experiments or building things from wood.

After high school I attended Wayne State University and Henry Ford Community College. I graduated HFCC with an associated degree in Electrical Technology in 1975 and soon found employment there in the Instructional Technology Department. Our department was located in the basement of the Library and I developed a friendship with a new Library secretary. In 1993 I married my best friend and Theresa and I have been happily married for 16 years. We both worked at HFCC for 30+ years and we retired together in 2006.

While still a college student, my interest in hobbies continued and I constructed clock cases, a small sailboat, a canoe, weaving loom and many more model airplanes. For 15 years I sailed Hobbie and Nacra catamaran sailboats on lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie. I have sailed windsurfers for the past 25 years and still continue to windsurf on lakes Cass and Erie.

30 years ago I became interested in kites. After learning how to use a sewing machine, I have built and flown many different designs. My collection of homebuilt and purchased kites is now over 100. I have had several kite displays at Madonna and Henry Ford colleges.

In 2005 I became interested in model trains, and began collecting the Lionel train set remembered from childhood in the 1950's. This has grown to many more train items from the period, and I now have an operating train layout in the basement. Recently, I have had several construction articles published in Classic Toy Trains Magazine. Theresa also became interested in model trains, so I built an HO layout for her, and have modeled many Dearborn locations. We regularly attend model train shows and conventions in the area. Real trains are also an interest and we both have visited many train museums, vintage train rides and train watching sites.

In 1978 while searching the music section at the college library, I came across a book titled "How to make and play the Dulcimore". I was fascinated, and over the next year checked out the book several times. Finally in 1979 I constructed my first musical instrument, a mountain dulcimer. Hearing the first sounds of an instrument that I had made were magical to me. That was the beginning of a long list of instruments that I built from kits, plans, or from my own designs. Over the past 30 years I have built 10 Mountain Dulcimers, 9 Hammered Dulcimers, 4 Hurdy Gurdies, 3 Ukuleles, Dulcigurdy, Nyckelharpa, 2 Harpsichords, Clavichord, Folk Harp, Bowed and Plucked Psaltery, Autoharp, Kalimba and Nail Violin. I also collect Ocarinas, Recorders, Ukuleles and several Novelty Instruments. I have instruments planned for the future that include a Hungarian version of the Hurdy Gurdy called the "Tekero" and an instrument from India the "Bulbul Tarang" that is somewhat related to the Mountain Dulcimer.

In 1985 I built my first Hammered Dulcimer, using my own plans. In the fall I learned that lessons were being offered by Cecelia Webster at Greenfield Village, so I signed up for a 6 week class. The next year, I took Cecelia's 2nd class. In 1991 I took a Dulcimer class through Dearborn Adult Ed with Ranka Mulkern. It was there I met Stan Brown, who told me about Silver Strings Dulcimer Society. So in 1992 I attended my first Silver Strings meeting, and was amazed at the large friendly group that played tunes together. I even was offered to pick a tune (Rakes of Mallow) that first night! Wow, I was hooked and I've been a member ever since. Silver Strings has been a place for me to play the tunes I know, an inspiration to continue learning new tunes, and socially has allowed me to meet new people and make many new friends.