



Life with a Willing Heart

Jayson Berray
Columnist

With my guitar by my side

Lots of folks play the guitar. You might even say they're a dime a dozen, and they all come in novice and expert forms as well as anything in between. Such is especially the case in a place like Sisters where we readily celebrate music and have wonderful things like The Americana Project and the Sisters Folk Festival.

Me? I say the more musicians the better. I truly believe that music is perhaps the only universal medium the world over. But that's getting slightly off-topic...

My journey as a musician began in the fifth grade when I learned to play the clarinet, and continued in sixth when I moved on to the alto saxophone. Even though I continued with the saxophone all through middle and high school, I don't really count those first years because my true passion as a musician began when I was 14 years old. I initially took up playing the drums (my first love) and soon after that became interested in learning the guitar.

Upon hearing of my newfound interest, my sweet grandmother (who appropriately lives in Sweet Home) decided it was time for me to inherit the acoustic guitar she bought herself the year I was born.

That's right, the only acoustic guitar I've ever owned — and have owned for 17 years — is as old as I am. You might say that as the years have passed I have come to learn that we are kindred spirits, so to speak. We go hand-in-hand, if I can get downright cheesy with it.

In high school I played the saxophone in concert band, but the drums in jazz and pep bands under the tutelage of Jody Henderson. But during my junior year my guitar playing really took off when I engaged in the second-ever year of the Sisters Americana Project with Brad Tisdell. I learned more chords and how to write songs and actually ended up on the first album the program ever put out. Disclaimer: if you should rush out and listen to my song, please don't hold the cheesiness against me.

This instrument has literally been by my side through the awkward high school years, the explorative college years, my first marriage, moving to new towns, job after job, the births of my children, the death of my first wife (as well as other family members), and now here it is, still with me as I've returned home and have a new family.

Lots of people carry with them any number of possessions for years and years, but in my case it hasn't been something that I've hidden away in a closet or have kept on a shelf. It has always

been out where I can grab it and start playing whenever the mood strikes. Usually it's when I'm sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, but there have certainly been times when a lighter mood has inspired me to pick it up and start playing.

There is something about sitting back and playing and singing which has always centered me and helped to alleviate whatever negative feelings life may be inciting at any given moment. Over the years I've only written a handful of songs. I actually get more enjoyment out of learning other people's. Recently, I'll learn a song on guitar and then test it out at karaoke night at Hardtails.

I'm no expert guitarist. I definitely don't have the chops of a person who has played every day for 17 years, but I know all the chords and have good rhythm. I certainly am not one to gloat over whatever skills I may have, but the reason I am proud of my guitar and the skills it takes to play is because in many ways it mirrors my growth as a person over the last 17 years. Those 17 years encompass a period of life which contains many important milestones and events — some expected and others anything but.

All I know is that I'm finally on the right path to becoming who I think God wants me to be and oddly enough, my newfound quest to let go and live in the moment has enabled me to be better than I ever have been at playing the guitar, even if it amounts to nothing more than entertaining my three children with songs like Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off."

Habitat hosts weatherization event

Sisters Habitat for Humanity and NeighborImpact welcome the public to attend an informational meeting to learn more about services offered to qualified individuals in the Sisters area — including free weatherization services, free home energy audits, energy assistance, no-cost or low-cost home repair, and zero-percent loans for home or septic repairs, ramps, roof repair, and exterior painting.

The event is set for Wednesday, March 2 at 6 p.m. at the Sisters Library Community Room, 110 N. Cedar St. in Sisters.

"Habitat and NeighborImpact offer a variety of programs to help people repair and weatherize their homes," says Marie Clasen, volunteer and family services manager for Sisters Habitat for Humanity. "This is a terrific opportunity to learn more about services available to families specifically living in the Sisters area."

In addition to homeownership services, Sisters Habitat for Humanity offers affordable home repair for qualified

individuals who need assistance maintaining their home. Zero-percent loans are available for most home repairs. NeighborImpact's Home Weatherization Program provides free home weatherization to eligible clients in Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties. Clients can be renters or homeowners and live in mobile homes or site-built homes. Clients frequently report warmer homes and lower energy bills after receiving weatherization services from NeighborImpact.

“ This is a terrific opportunity to learn more about services available to families specifically living in the Sisters area. — Marie Clasen ”

For more information contact Marie Clasen at Sisters Habitat for Humanity at 541-549-1193 or email marie@sistershabitat.org.

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Science is a social, human phenomena ... an evolutionary process in which, as members of a global society, each of us has choices about the kind of lives we lead and the future we all might share. Some of us have choices that can affect billions at once, while others have much smaller ranges of choice ... choices that only affect a few, or even just our own selves in perhaps very small ways ... but each of us has choices. Understanding the natural world and the science used to investigate it is essential if we are to understand our place and make choices wisely about our next steps.

Tuesday, February 23
At The Belfry, 302 E. Main Ave., Sisters
One-hour Lecture begins at 7 p.m.



Doors open at 6 p.m. for food and beverage.

Admission: \$5;
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