

MY GUITAR STORY – Mark DiGennaro



Guitar League member since: sometime very early. They were meeting at SU. 2nd or 3rd year?

When did you start playing guitar?

I had my first guitar when I was in HS. Harmony Rocket acoustic/electric. Could not tune it. Tried pitch pipes, tuning forks,.... very frustrating. Needed cash for college, so I sold it. Some friends of mine tried to get a group together; I tried bass lines on my 6 string, David Fiedler played real guitar, Tom Latimer played a banjo (but we used it as a mock snare drum). We called ourselves "The X Factor". We all attended the same science high school; Bronx HS of Science. Picked up the guitar again in college (1970), because, well EVERYONE played acoustic guitar in the early '70's in college!! CSN, Lightfoot, Neil Young,..... and it was a great way to meet women! Played friends guitars (Dave Lochner had a Hoyer), but bought my own in 1973. Spanish nylon string Garcia. Traded that for a BSR turntable from my friend Dave Tiffany. He still has it, won't trade it back, as he plans on giving it to his grandson. I bought my first steel string in 1974 after getting my first job after college. An Epiphone FT155. Had it for years. My son, Peter, was interested in playing his junior year in HS. He also played sax in the HS band. One day we were at American Music Supply in Syracuse (near the MOST) for him to get his sax serviced; new pads, cleaning, etc. Whenever I was near a guitar store I would ALWAYS noodle with the ones on the wall while my wife was shopping etc. At American Music Supply they had a small room of acoustic guitars. Wanting my now 17 year old son to take control of his sax, I told him to take care of it with the rep while I went into the guitar room. There I found an Alvarez DY40, with a direct coupled bridge (you can look it up). Noodled for a while and decided to buy it. But I already had a guitar.... the Epiphone... So I went to Peter and asked him if he liked the Epiphone. Being the teenager he was, he looked at me kind of weird as we were in the store to have his sax serviced. I asked him if he would like it. After a few times of me asking him, he finally said "yes". I replied, GREAT!!! Then I can buy the Alvarez!!!! I still have it. It is my main guitar. I also have an Alvarez DY 80 (Canyon Creek), which is the same basic build, but is a 12 string. Had the DC bridge too. Peter took the Epiphone to college (SUNY Geneseo), then NC State, then Cal Berkeley, and finally to UF (GO GATORS!!!). Unfortunately it was stolen from his house there. I went to 8 different pawn shops in the Gainesville area trying to find it. No luck. He now has a mahogany Martin that he likes. I have two additional Alvarez guitars, both from online private vendors. A Regent model (Alvarez basic model) and a DY 48. The DY 48 was bought after a fellow Guitar League member offered his for a raffle. A buddy of mine (Dave Garlock) won it, but was not at the meeting. I took it home for him and played it. I offered him cash, but he said he wanted it, and is planning to give it to his grandson. But I like it so much I looked for one online and found a decent, but definitely used one. Made the deal, and it arrived safe and sound. That DY 48 is at the Florida condo, as is the other 12 string I own, a Dean, purchased by the best private guitar dealer in CNY, Terry Vickery of Beat Street Music in Manlius. (He is a supporter of Guitar League!).

A few years ago I was able to hook up with a friend from college to play music. She was the suitemate of a woman I dated for a month at SUNY Oswego (Oz - the land of horizontal snow). My buddy, Dave Tiffany, told me about a local acoustic group, Edgy Folk, and that I might like them. Found them on Fb and this woman from the past asked if I was the Mark DiGennaro from SUNY Oz. As it turned out, she was the mother of the bassist and wife of the percussionist in Edgy Folk! We reacquainted at the Red Rooster in Skaneateles Falls. It was good to see her. She and her husband had been in a "wedding band", doing covers, etc. But had stopped as they were tired of the drunks ruining the event and the schedule of rehearsing, etc. I mentioned I played some and we all decided to get together at Speno's in Auburn. There are a few studios Speno's rents out for musicians to store their equipment and rehearse. MJ sang and played keyboard, Jerry (husband) played percussion (NOT drums) their daughter (Heather) played bass. We met about once a week there. Developed a set list of over 80 songs. Had a great time, But covid hit, got us out of the routine, and Heather joined a real (paying) rock and roll cover band (Crossroads), so there was little time for us to get back together. But it was GREAT! Made me learn new songs, songs I would never have bothered to even listen to, work out music arrangements with others, and just have fun. The only rule was that we agreed never to try and play out. We only wanted to have fun. And we DID!

What was your motivation to learn the instrument?

Always wanted to learn, as I mentioned, I tried in HS. In college I had people willing to teach me some stuff and let me use their instruments. AND THEY COULD TUNE THEM!!

What style(s) do you play?

Folk rock (S&G, Lightfoot, etc.) but also Jethro Tull, Traffic, pretty much a spectrum of '70's rock. I strum, but also do a LOT of fingerpicking.

What make/model guitar(s) do you play? What kind of strings do you like?

Models are listed above (4 Alvarez). There is also the Dean 12 string and another steel string 6 that is my "camping guitar". Only use Martin Marquis light gauge. I like to keep my strings consistent in my various guitars.

Do you play out? Do you like to jam with others?

Never played out. As a matter of fact, it was only this past year that I played in front of anyone. I do like to play with others. But I find that solo guitar players all have their own styles and are used to playing alone. Makes it difficult to play together.

What is your practice routine?

I frankly try NOT to "practice". I DO, however, play a lot. Every evening just about. Some finger picking, working on flat picking, some light strumming. All while watching tv.

What are your current goals? How does GL support them?

I always want to learn more. The guitar is such a versatile instrument, you never know it all. GL is a great place to meet other guitar players with similar interests and genres.