

My life has revolved around music ever since I elected to play the viola in the sixth grade school orchestra. I absolutely loved practicing beautiful classical etudes and simple pieces. As a kid, I revered my hours with the instrument as a sacred time of personal peace. I still feel the same way about it but unfortunately, my friends at that point thought classical music a bit unmanly and pressured me to consider Jimi Hendrix and the ensuing Woodstock menu of artists. I abandoned the viola and requested a Sears Silvertone acoustic guitar for Christmas. My mother supported the switch but she advised that I continue reading music and find a guitar teacher. The new Silvertone was very difficult to play yet play I did for about 5 hours a day. I was essentially enduring a rite of passage to earn the freedom to purchase my first electric guitar – a white Fender Mustang.

With the white Mustang I put together a garage band of aspiring teens who copied the Allman Brothers note for note. We played church dances and cotillions. Our performance schedule became very active and we made enough money such that we didn't have to mow lawns like the other neighborhood boys. We even quit our requisite sports activities. When our lifelong career prospects began to concern our mothers and fathers we renamed the group The Parental Tears Band. Nonetheless, off to college we eventually went to make other men than musicians out of ourselves.

In my first week at the University of Georgia in Athens I searched for a music related opportunity. I was chosen to join the Student Government group that promoted major campus concerts and I enjoyed learning about the logistical and financial dimensions of presenting shows. I also used that opportunity to sell fabulous vintage guitars to the major bands that came through the UGA Coliseum. I didn't play a gig for two years but I continued to practice. I guess one could say that I gave the business end of music a good college try but the urge to play again beckoned.

I left Athens to return to my Jacksonville, Florida hometown and continue my business studies in the University of Florida system. I had formed a jazz fusion group called "Sneakers" which did well locally. I studied with Philadelphia transplant Robert Conti, a jazz guitar genius. Conti's Northern abruptness and acute commercial sense appealed to me. He effectively became my mentor and taught me how to make a living playing the guitar. I will always be grateful for his belief in me. I might have turned out a bean counter were it not for him. Bob has since relocated to Las Vegas where he remains a successful jazz educator and performer.

I foresaw that the Northeast part of the US would be the ultimate place for me to market some original rock I'd been writing but I knew such a move would be costly on many levels. Inspired by Conti's ability to combine music and commerce, I formed a tuxedo clad party group called The Wing Tips. The group

became so popular at North Florida evening events that I created a clone of the ensemble to handle the overflow. I also formed a Dixieland band to play grand openings and sales meetings that were held during the day hours. Playing an average of 20 gigs a month for 5 years I took full advantage of the free flowing corporate money during the Reagan Presidency.

From 1987-1989 I made two fine recordings with my first original group – a trio named Dear John,. After being invited to showcase at The Ritz in New York for an event organized by Tangueray and Don Kirchner of “Rock Concert” fame the group moved per my longtime plan. Unfortunately, the distractions of big city survival quickly overshadowed the inspirational aspects of being there. Logistical considerations forced me to make too many uncomfortable musical compromises and the group folded. The practical solution was to go acoustic if was to stay in New York.

In 1991, I placed a classified ad in the Village Voice in search of a cellist. Stephanie Winters answered the listing and we formed the group The Nudes. Our first performances were as buskers in Grand Central Station. We arranged our tunes to be catchy, brief and interesting so that commuters would stop, listen and tip. We quickly learned what was connecting and what wasn't. Supplementing The Nudes shows, I made ends meet by teaching guitar and played solo jazz dinner music in fancy Upper Eastside establishments. The Nudes stayed together for seven years playing folk festivals and concert series' all over the US and Canada. We had the pleasure of opening shows for respected artists like Richie Havens, Daniel Lanois, Michael Franks, Chicago and George Benson.

When the Nudes disbanded in 1998 I had left New York for Asheville, NC – the only city I've lived in that I've ever looked forward to coming home to from the road. For me Asheville still represents a place of spiritual and physical recharging perhaps because my father and grandfather grew up in nearby Swannanoa. My relation to Asheville was as a base of operations but with the Nudes finished I had no operation to base. I moved to Nashville to try my hand at writing country music but the move was a miss. Tailoring my musical instincts to fit into a mold I didn't even care for reminded me of my tuxedo wearin' days that I wanted to believe I'd risen above. I rarely performed and lost all desire to book and promote my music. Looking for a way to keep in the arts and stay afloat, I studied graphic design and I got hired to do ad layout at The Nashville Scene newspaper. My life's general direction didn't seem right so I took time off to meditate and study in a Buddhist monastery in France called Plum Village.

In 2000 I was asked to return to New York and share my music business experience helping to run an indie label owned by the talented writer/performer Rachael Sage. I tried to develop a more behind the scenes role for myself in the music industry but the urge to perform called again. I searched for musicians

who might be interested in helping me revisit my Southern musical roots. While on tour in Belgium as Rachael's road manager, I met bassist Matt Linsdey and drummer Jagoda who became my bandmates in Swamp Cabbage.

In May of 2001, I joined Richie Havens' trio at the referral of Dayna Kurtz, a magnificent jazz/blues singer for whom I had played guitar and designed CD graphics. I have since toured the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand with Richie and I have played on three of his latest records: "Wishing Well", "Grace of the Sun" and the multinational Universal/Polydor release "Nobody Left to Crown".