

The Years Before

Musical Training:

After the seeing The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show, I bought my first 45 “I Want to Hold Your Hand” at 3.5 years old and was really knocked out with “I saw Her Standing There”. I collected Beatle records as they came out. I remember having to sell “Something New” and “The Early Beatles” in order to have money to buy the “White” album. I remember at 8 sitting in the car in the garage as it got dark listening to Copland’s “Application Spring” on the radio. This was the piece that really opened up orchestral music to me. I have over 5,000 lps. Most of them were purchased before I got married. Our first single bedroom house had lps all over the living room, kitchen and bedroom.

I started playing drums around five. I had an erector set that I opened the lid and hit as my high-hat and an Indian drum bought in New Mexico. I started taking private lessons at age 8. My first public performance was in a church talent show playing to “Dear Prudence” with only a snare drum and cymbal. My second performance was in fifth grade in the school talent show where I played on my Japanese set to “Old Brown Shoe”. I took local drum lessons and became 1st percussionist in 7th and 8th grade Band and Orchestra. We had an incredible teacher named Mr. Grantham. I don’t know why he was teaching middle school, but we all benefited from his discipline and experience. Our winter concerts were recorded direct to two-track and made into lps. We played some pretty difficult stuff for our age like Liszt’s “Les Preludes” in 12/8. I played Tympani on that one. I was 1st percussionist in 7th & 8th grade Band and Orchestra, 1st percussionist in the high school Band, Wind Ensemble, Orchestra and 2nd drummer in the Jazz Band.

Serious instruction began before I could drive. My mom used to drive me to piano (Mary S. Sabin), marimba (Lucy Muir) and more drum lessons. She drove me for over two years to Bill Douglass (Art Tatum, Red Norvo, Earl “Fatha” Hines, etc.) out in Inglewood, CA. I wanted to learn jazz from a black player. At the end of the lesson, we would jam with Bill playing vibes. This is about when I started playing with a couple of rock bands (guys older than me) and with the “Esquires”, a 20-piece big band with guys WAY older, even retired. It was a blast. Really good players and being the drummer, I felt that I was in the driver’s seat. We played nice gigs like the Queen Mary, Rancho Bernardo, Beach Club, Castaways, Charthouse, etc. At first I wasn’t yet 16, so my mom was my first roadie, using our station wagon to get me around Southern CA. We used to joke about how nice it would have been if I had taken up harmonica instead of the drums. I was usually the first one to arrive and the last to leave, having to make so many trips to the car for all my equipment and get it all set up.

I graduated from high school 2 years early and went on to study at Harbor College and Dick Grove Music Workshops in Hollywood. There I received instruction from Louis Bellson, John Guerin, Ed Shaughnessy, Roy Burns, etc. I often hung out with Larry Carlton at his Room 335 studio before or after his gigs at places like The Baked Potato, Donte’s, etc. He introduced me to many famous musicians. I became a big Jeff Porcaro

fan. I took private lessons from his dad, Joe who is one of the most prolific studio percussionists in Hollywood.

In May, 1978 I graduated from a year long recording engineering course in Hollywood. This included 35 hours lecture and 90 hours of hands-on instruction. Instructors include Doc Siegal (Buffalo Springfield), Ben Jordan and John Sisti and allowed experience working in many recording studios including Capital Records Studio A, 20th Century Records, etc. Later I recorded with my band at Love and Comfort Studios (Eagles “The Long Run”).

In northern CA, I played drums and percussion in many groups; Empire Brass Band, Alta Buena Band, Nevada City Symphony Orchestra, Sierra Philharmonic, Sierra Concert Band etc., recorded with Roger Hodgson (Supertramp), and even cut some vinyl, which will never see the light of laser. I also had a radio show for a short while at KVMR in Nevada City.

A few years ago, I was able to assist recording a band at Abbey Road Studio 2, where the Beatles recorded most of their songs. That studio definitely has a great sound and vibe to it!