

My Guitar Story – Bob Lewis, Guitar League member since 2008



My guitar story began when I was 13 years old, taking lessons with a rented guitar at Clark Music in Utica. I did not get too far with that teacher. So, when my sister began dating a guitar player in a local band, I started lessons with him. Shortly after I turned 14, my sister broke up with said local band guitar player and he took his guitar back. With two strikes by my mid-teens, I got frustrated and did not pick a guitar up again for 40 years.

I had been asking my wife to buy me a guitar for Christmas for a few years and on Christmas Day 2006 she surprised me with a Yamaha guitar. Early the next year, my wife mentioned I was looking for a teacher to a co-worker who said her husband taught guitar. What started out as weekly lessons became a friendship with GL member Bob Doolittle, a friendship which lasts to this day.

My motivation as a teenager was probably like most of us: I wanted to play songs by The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, and others (although that didn't work out too well). My motivation as an adult learner? To play the song my wife and I walked down the aisle to after we exchanged vows, "If Not For You," a Bob Dylan song but recorded by George Harrison on his All Things Must Pass triple-LP. From that one song, I now have a repertoire of over 100 songs.

I have 4 acoustic guitars: a Yamaha F325 (the one my wife bought me that Christmas), a Fender CD-60, a small body Ibanez AC240-OPN and an Eastman PCH with a cutaway. Both the Yamaha and the Eastman have pick-ups. I use a Dean Markley pick-up with my other two. I also have an electric Les Paul Epiphone ukelele that was gifted to me (I have a repertoire of about a dozen songs on the uke). My guitars are nothing fancy, but they are all serviceable instruments.

I first played in front of an audience at a Guitar League meeting with Bob Doolittle. I have done the opening set solo a few times. It's a very friendly audience. I also have some favorite open mics that I try to get to on a regular basis. Bob and I performed at a few nursing homes until he couldn't anymore. Some of you may know he had a duet with his friend Bob Bone, calling themselves Doolittle and Bone. When we performed together, it was as *The New Bobs*. Last summer, I had my first 2 paid gigs performing for a couple of different senior citizen clubs.

When watching The Beatles documentary, *Get Back*, I was surprised, at least in my view, how disjointed their practice and rehearsal sessions were. It dawned on me that my practice routine is similar (obviously without the brilliance of the music they created). My goal is to set up a more structured way to practice. The previous storytellers in this series have all given me some ideas on how to develop better habits.

The Guitar League has been a godsend for me in learning to play the guitar. The knowledge I've gained, whether from main presenters or in breakout sessions, has been immeasurable. The GL tenet of "learn - play - share" is one I have certainly lived: from learning from others to playing in front of members to leading breakout sessions. It is a welcoming, supportive group that has been and is an integral part of my guitar story.

Bob Lewis