

# Carol Gebert



## **GL - What do you do for a living?**

**CG** - I work in the biotech sector. My firm supplies safety testing services for vaccines, and these days that includes cancer vaccines and gene therapies. My job is sales. I work from home and put on a suit jacket for TCs when necessary.

## **GL - When not playing your guitar what else do you do for recreation?**

**CG** - In winter, I do a little watercolor painting, but I am still a beginner. In summer, I am a fruit grower. I have about 50 types of figs, grown by bonsai techniques in a greenhouse. Let me know if you want cuttings to grow your own figs. I also have grapes and apricots. I like biking along the Nahant causeway in summer, but these days my knees force me to use an e-bike.

## **GL - What got you interested in playing the guitar?**

**CG** - I really wanted to learn violin, but had no teacher and it looked hard. So I learned guitar instead, expecting it to be easier. I think I showed a desire toward playing music even as a toddler. It just looked so cool. In my teens I noticed that musicians could always be friends with another musician, no matter if they had nothing else in common. That was very motivational.

## **GL - How long have you been playing the guitar?**

**CG** - Bought my first real six string, at the five and dime....no really, I got it when I was 11 but I could not play properly until I was 14. I had stretches of time when I did not play it, but in my current stretch of play, I have been playing at least weekly for 20 years. Almost all that time was with a nylon-string classical guitar. It has a beautiful tone and a loud voice for a smallish guitar. (I learned a few years ago it qualifies as a rare guitar and a collector's piece. [See here for an article.](#))

## **GL - What music gets you excited and why?**

**CG** - When I play alone, I love to play country because I love finger-picking and because country was written for guitar on guitar. But I do not actually like country. I just like playing it. I also love to play classical tunes for the same reason. It is very physical. Modern guitaring is an exercise in accompaniment and needs a singer. I am not a strong singer. Meanwhile, classical music stands on its own. And I love it.

## **GL - Are you playing guitar as much as you would like to and if not why?**

**CG** - I am playing 3 hours a week with a band that includes other guitar club members. (Eddie and Jeanne) I also noodle a bit during the week, but these days I mostly play violin in the evenings. Yes, I finally bit the bullet and bought a violin. And you know what I discovered? It is nowhere near as difficult as I expected. Now I am mad at myself for waiting so long.

## **GL - When was the last time you listened to a new artist, band or guitar player?**

**CG** - To listen-to, I love the highly creative use of non-traditional instruments or ultra-traditional instruments. For example, I follow [Tina Guo](#), a cellist from Taiwan who often uses traditional Chinese string instruments in heavy metal arrangements. Or [The Hu, from Mongolia](#), who add throat-singing. Awesome. For a non-trad example, I get a big chuckle out of musicalizing animals, like cats. [The Kiffness](#) is a great example, and he sometimes collaborates with a [guitarist call Spaul](#). ["I Go Meow"](#) is a particularly inspiring piece. I recently learned about [Marcin](#), playing in the style of Tommy Emmanuel plus tapping. Fantastic guitar virtuosity.

## **GL - What are you practicing and why?**

**CG** - This is a big answer. When I noodle on the guitar, I practice pentatonics, or rather the "texture" I can bring to them. I realized maybe a year ago, that knowing the position of a pentatonic note was not enough. I had to know how to get there. I only got an electric guitar 18 months ago, so I am quite new to bends and slides. Classical guitar used hammer-ons but the nylon strings are not built for bends or long slides. But most of my time goes to practicing songs for the band. In addition to rhythm, I have to know some lead riffs. Once I learn them, they feel easy of course. And then there is the violin. I have to admit that when I am sitting in my rocking chair, the violin is more fun to play than guitar, because it is a melody instrument, and small.

**GL - Who are your top three musical influences and why?**

**CG** - I aim to play like Pete Townsend. I only recently had a lot of people to play with, and to split parts with. Before then, I had to play rhythm and fit-in lead riffs too. This is Pete Townsend's style. I also love playing Johnny Cash because his songs use a lot of bottom-string riffs which are easy to play and which impress the girls. Other guitarists I admire but who I do not try to emulate directly (because it is too hard!) are Glen Cambell and Roy Clark. Liquid hands. I can only admire from afar. [Watch this classic for an example.](#)

**GL - What is your greatest guitar playing challenge?**

**CG** - I recently realized that I do not need to memorize the CAGE system. I just need to memorize the root notes, and know how to calculate the 3rd and 5th etc, from there. Across the fretboard, the sequence is always 6-2-5-root-4-7-3flat. So if you know the root, the rest is calculatable on the fly. So I am memorizing the root positions.

**GL - What musical accomplishment are you most proud of?**

**CG** - In all my guitar playing, I think I rose to a 'competent' level. So I am quite proud of that. It looks easy in hindsight, but those who do not play music think it is magic. For a single event, I am most proud of memorizing certain classical pieces. I never quite finished Moonlight Sonata, but there were other pieces I played to completion. I recently memorized Bolero on violin. It is dead easy, in Am and Dm. I now just have to make it sound good.

**GL - How would you describe yourself as a musician in one sentence?**

**CG** - I am a prophet of fun. I know how to bring people together around music and leave them feeling better for it. Oops, that's two sentences! Oops, three!

**GL - Do you keep your guitar playing to yourself or do you play for audiences?**

**CG** - While I do enjoy playing classical or country music to myself, I have far more fun when I play with others. I have about 400 song arrangements printed out for live karaoke parties where I would force my friends to sing. And then there is the band.

**GL - Do you have any ambitions to form a band or duo?**

**CG** - Taste that grit in your mouth? That is my dust. Way ahead of you. My band is called "Infectious" because we aim to be that to the audience. We have a set defined for the Reading Porchfest on June 22nd. Our set has a rule: No downers or self-absorbed songs. *"Somebody that I used to know..." I feel sad for you, move along. "We'll Never Be Royal" Me neither.* No, we want the audience to have as much fun as we are having. Happy, uplifting songs. Currently, that skews toward early rock and roll, but we have plans to expand the set over summer.

**GL - What style do you mostly play and why?**

**CG** - I mostly play rhythm and a bit of lead on pop songs because that is what the band needs. Even before I formed the band, my karaoke parties required rhythm guitar. But when I have time to be alone, I go back to classical. It is more challenging. Or country because it is fun.