

This article by RoJean Loucks was first published in the September 2014 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter

You can find RoJean's PDFs at www.harpcenter.com/Loucks

Magical sounds of the harp wafting through the air drew me to this instrument. Twice in a short while. First in a shopping mall during the holidays, then at a Renaissance festival; two distinctly different harps and music genres, both so captivating I was compelled to follow the muse.



The Renaissance harper was Pamela Bruner, who encouraged me (even in my late 40s) to give it a go. She introduced me to other harp folks at gatherings in her home, a 2 1/2 hour drive away, and took me to my first harp conference in Galveston, where as a newbie harper, I actually experienced harp overload.



I only ever intended to own a small harp for my personal enjoyment, to share with family. But the same enchantment that drew me in affected everyone who heard even my early plucking attempts. It wasn't long before tunes seemed to just emerge from my harp, and I learned to notate them immediately before they faded away.

Thus, my first book -- *Reflections* -- was born. Access to local developing artist grant funds allowed me to purchase a music notation program and publish that book. Feedback from harpers who enjoyed playing those compositions encouraged another publication: *Soul Dance* (because music makes my own soul dance!) contained more original tunes.

As my harp journey expanded to include wedding gigs, I discovered I had a favorite repertoire base - my own compositions mingled with familiar music I arranged - and I published *Promises*. However, holiday music remains my absolute favorite and the Christmas book soon followed.

It was a few years before my customers convinced me to publish hymn arrangements, and when I did so, I followed Sylvia's example of an A (simple yet playable in a worship service) and a B version (fleshed out arrangement for intermediate harpers) for each tune. *Praise 1* and *Praise 2* are the titles.

Best of all, the harp, itself has taken me places I'd never imagined: to elementary classrooms in the U.S. and Japan (where my grandchildren lived); to calm fussy youngsters in an airport and in homes; to Canada for a weekend master class with Lynn Reid, which led me to Ireland for a week of study with Janet Harbison; to Norway with Beth Kolle's 2013 Harpa Tour; to many festivals, weddings, memorials, worship services and concerts, and finally to ease clients' transition from this life to the next.

All of these experiences led to the publication of *Gratitude*. I am profoundly thankful for the harp in my life. It calms me, inspires me, and brings new music into being!



-- RoJean Loucks

P.S. from Sylvia:

RoJean and I spent a day together when she was on Kauai last December. Here's a photo of her playing one of my Harpsicles on the beach at Hanalei Bay.



I also loved this photo that RoJean sent to me. She was part of her local arts council's program where musicians played at bus stops!!!! This stop was near a child care center.

