

- **How I Became** -

Bill the Piano Tuner

- **Introduction** -

In 1971 I entered Philadelphia Community College majoring in music. I new I made the right choice the day I sat down in my first music class. That was thirty-seven years ago.

My composition teacher, Mr. Lee Silvan kept a close eye on me as he did all of his students who had as great an interest in their love for music as I.

He suggested somewhere in the middle of my first semester that I visit a career councilor to take a battery of tests to see what musical career I might be suited for.

After the testing, I met with the career councilor with the results. She then handing me a pamphlet on piano tuning and said it would be a good career move for me.

I can now honestly say thirty-seven years later that I have learned to love tuning as well as rebuilding and repairing pianos as much as I loved majoring in music at the very college that set me fourth on a life long journey. And as the old adage goes, the rest is history.

- **My Beginnings** -

For many that do not know, all music majors, no matter what college you choose to study from needs to learn the piano. The reason why is because the piano is the only instrument in the world that you can actually see theory on. Therefore I needed a piano in my home for my personal studies as well while I was in school.

Unfortunately, money was very tight and because I was putting myself through school, I didn't have much of it.

Before I knew what to look for in a decent playing piano, I thought I had landed a good deal and purchased a Story & Clark Upright for a mere three-hundred dollars, which back in 1971 was a lot of money to me as it was for many people in my generation who was trying to manage an education as well as trying to support themselves at the same time.

Unfortunately, the piano turned out to have dry rot, and breaking keys on a regular basis was a common dilemma I had sadly gotten used to soon after I purchased it.

My piano tuner at the time, Mr. Roland Albert came to my home so often for the problems I was having we soon became good friends.

Every time he came over to fix the piano, I would watch him ever so closely as he repaired and tuned away. After a while I couldn't afford to have him over because of my financial strife. Therefore, with no experience at all except my personal observation from Roland, one day I opened the piano myself and began to do my own own repair work. It's funny how fate has a way of rearing its head.

Since Roland and I had become dear friends he eventually found out through personal conversations were having over the phone that I had been doing my own repairing.

One day Roland came out to my home to tune my piano. When he was done he suggested since I had been repairing my piano myself, I should learn how to tune it as well.

Therefore, in early part of 1975 Roland taught me the basics of tuning a piano and sold me my first set of tools. He later that year suggested that I go and visit Mr. Victor Benvenuto, a very well respected piano rebuilder in the community and see if he needed an apprentice. And so on July 16th, 1976 I began as an apprentice of piano rebuilding and learned the technical art of what I have been doing now for over thirty years.

- There's No Better School than Hands on Experience -

On June 16th, 1976 I began my first day as an apprentice to piano rebuilding. My first job under Victor Benvenuto was restringing a baby grand piano. This is a job that most people in my profession never get the chance to do in their entire career; however I had the honor on my very first day.

The best part of working in Victor's shop was that he was only one of two rebuilders in the entire Delaware Valley that manufactured and installed new sound boards. Therefore, I learned every aspect of piano rebuilding from scratch.

Most of the pianos we rebuilt were Steinway Grands. However, we also rebuilt several Chickering & Sons and Mason & Hamlin Grands as well.

I also learned to restore, rebuild and tune other rare pianos that required only the finest hands and ears to restore the instrument itself back to its priceless condition.

I worked hard under Victor for over three year as his apprentice as I went from novice to master at my trade, learning every inch that made the piano the most beautiful instrument in the world to me.

During those three years I also attended I course Victor taught at night at Bucks County Community College. When I completed that course, I received a certificate of achievement in Piano Technology. Now I thought to myself, I was ready to enter the trade of piano tuning and rebuilding on my own.

- The Resume -

After receiving my certificate I began to tune and repair for many places you may know yourself such as: The Piano Shoppe, Taylor Music, Cunningham Piano Company, Jacob Music, and Rich Cheirubini's Center Stage Pianos. I also as building my own clientele base, many for whom I have been tuning for as long as I have been working on my own.

In 1980 I received a phone call from my first musical composition teacher, Mr. Lee Silvan who asked me if I would like to tune all twenty-six of their pianos from

the very community college that set me fourth on the journey that I have been on for most of my life. And so, for eleven years straight, every month on the date, I tuned all twenty-six pianos in the very same college that suggested that I would make a great piano tuner many years prior.

For over thirty-two years I have tuned, repaired and restored pianos in every kind of venue you can imagine. From pianos in homes, storefront churches to concert tuning at The Robin Hood Dell.

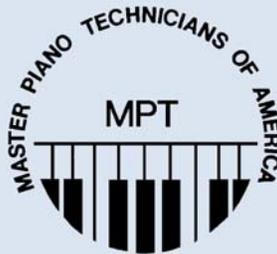
I not only enjoy the work that I do, I consider it the very part of me that gives meaning to who I am and someday how I want to be remembered by the very lives that I have touched with the skills that I have been so blessed to have been given.

Maybe someday I'll tune for you! And like the multiple dozens of clients that have used my services in the past and still do to this day, it would be my great honor and pleasure to make my mastered art a part of your life, as well as the instrument you cherish so much in playing.

Musically Yours,

William Gennaro Sdao

W. Gennaro Sdao, MPT
Registered Piano Craftsman



"perfecting each note, one key at a time"

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