

Cole Biasini

I was born at an early age! June 9th, 1934....the same year as Elvis Presley and Sophia Lauren.

Astrologically speaking, I am a Gemini...Twins with widely divergent personalities.

My lucky day is Wednesday and I am likable, a good talker and love challenge and excitement. To keep me happy, one must allow me to be free to be myself – whichever twin I am at the moment.

In the early thirties and in the pre-war years, our nation felt the ill effects of the Great Depression. Nearly everyone had a vegetable garden, including my family. My mother and two older sisters baked bread, made clothing that I wore to school and to church. I held part-time jobs as; a dishwasher at local restaurants, carted railroad ties to my back yard which I hand-sawed to furnace length then split into smaller pieces so they would burn more efficiently, delivered newspapers morning and evening, and worked in Frank Virtuci's glove factory in Gloversville, New York, the glove center of the nation. I was an apprentice to my father, a glove cutter, a trade that would later finance my college education.

I had an uncle named Uncle Henry! He was a musician and a shoemaker. Often he had arguments with his French bride whom he met and married in France during the First World War. He lived with my family until they reconciled. He moved in each time very ceremoniously with a few articles of clothing and his musical instruments. He was viewed as a modern day minstrel. He taught my older brother violin, my younger brother guitar and me the mandolin. We had daily lessons, one on one, for at least an hour 24/7! Uncle Henry was a fine performer, but his pedagogy was something else. He had difficulty explaining concepts and, out of frustration, he would rap our hands with a pencil whenever we made mistakes. And we made plenty of mistakes. We had calloused knuckles to prove it! But we were determined to succeed, because Uncle Henry assured us we could make a comfortable living if we could play a musical instrument, owned a blue suit and had an ample supply of deodorant!!!

In elementary school I noticed my teachers were dressed well, spoke intelligently, and appeared happy and content with their lives. It was then I decided to become a teacher. There was no question about what I would teach – MUSIC! So, in Junior High School I started private piano and trumpet lessons for 50 cents an hour. That may not seem like much, but I was only earning 31 cents an hour as a stock boy in a local five and dime store. And there was no question about which music school I would attend – The Crane School of Music in Potsdam, NY – the college my high school music teachers attended!

When I graduated from college in 1956, conscription was in force. Since I am allergic to gun fire, especially when it is aimed at me, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy as a

reservist, which committed me to two years of active duty, instead of the usual four – year enlistment period. After basic training, I was sent to Bainbridge, MD to play first trumpet in Ship Company’s band, a ceremonial band that commissioned and decommissioned ships, performed in numerous parades, and played for special events in the Washington, D.C. area.

I asked my CO if I could be transferred to the U.S. Navy School of Music in Washington D.C. as a student. My CO said yes, I could attend the school as a student if I extended my enlistment from two to four years. I wanted no part of that, so I stayed in Bainbridge. One year later, Bainbridge was decommissioned as a training center and the band was dissolved. The musicians were given a choice of three duty stations. I chose Naples, Italy, San Diego, CA and Pensacola, FL. Where do you suppose I was sent?? – to the U.S. Navy School of Music, as an instructor! Without extending my enlistment!!!!

In the summer of '59, I traveled through eight European countries with 22 other music teachers. It wasn't long before I was smitten by an attractive, intelligent, and cheerful young woman in the study tour. I dated her in Venice in a gondola, sipped wine with some Venetians served from canal-level balconies. A few days later in Germany, I proposed marriage to her, stating that we could make the balance of our tour, approximately another month, our honeymoon.

SHE TURNED ME DOWN!!

I continued to date her, and as we approached the end of our tour, I had to devise a strategy to keep me in her thoughts.

Suddenly, I had a “Eureka!” moment. I would ask her to lend me some money to pay my train fare from New York City to my home town in Upstate New York. One rarely forgets someone who owes you money!!

It worked! She lived in CT, and I lived in NY State – contiguous states, approximately an hour and a half drive. We exchanged letters, phone calls, and saw each other once a month. On one occasion we met in NYC where I took her to see “Westside Story”. I bought the most expensive seats in the theater, orchestra, front and center. The tickets cost me \$12.00. We were married the following August!!!

(I still owe Joan the money I borrowed from her the previous summer!!!)

I always say, “If it ain't broke don't fix it.” Joan says. “Forgive, and remember!!)

In the spring of 1970, I completed a research project for the U.S. Office of Education entitled, “The Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project”, commonly referred as the MMCP. The music department at Western Washington University hired me to implement this unique program into its curriculum. My family of six arrived in Bellingham in August, 1970. We came here with every intention of moving back

east after three years. But we were captivated by the topography, the people, and the cultural benefits. We are celebrating our 37th year in the Northwest.

Shortly after our move to the Bellingham area, our doorbell rang on a Saturday afternoon. It was Pastor Don Clinton, who was starting a new Lutheran Church in the neighborhood. After some recruiting propaganda, he invited us to attend the opening service the next day. Since the Biasini family had been unchurched for two years, we accepted his invitation.

It was a small gathering at Carl Cozier Elementary School. After service there was a fellowship gathering. Our family was pleasantly surprised to discover that the Lutheran Service was similar to the Catholic service.

A gentleman approached me and asked, “With a name like Biasini, why are you attending a Lutheran service?” With a straight face, I told him that my family and I were sent here by the Vatican as part of the Counter Reformation to convert Protestants to Catholicism. With a puzzled look on his face, he slowly inched his way to another part of the room!

When I was teaching at Western, I attended the Thursday afternoon student recitals in the concert hall. On one occasion, the first performer was a guitar major. Since the stage manager was nowhere to be seen, the student guitarist stepped out on the stage holding his guitar in one hand, two music stands in the other hand, and his music under his armpit. He looked more like a juggler than a musician. I sensed imminent disaster. No sooner did I process this thought, when suddenly the guitarist lost his grip on the heavy music stands and they crashed on the stage floor. Instinctively, the student attempted to retrieve the music stands and his guitar fell to the stage floor as well. All I could think of was one of John Cage’s numerous compositions based on unconventional sounds!!

At that moment, I thought there had to be a better solution. That’s when I engaged in what I would subsequently call the inventive process; a step by step procedure for inventing much needed new products for musicians.

After weeks of prototyping stand extenders, a workable design emerged. With the able assistance of Claude Hill, Chairman of the Plastics Technology Department at Western, and the manufacturing capability of the Allsop Company, here in Bellingham, STAND OUTS were created, patented, and sold throughout the US, Canada, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and believe it or not, Colombia.

Currently, I have 18 patents of music related products on the market. My inventions are marketed by the Zildjian Co, the Manhasset Specialty Co in Yakama, the M/M Co., and the Shar Catalog Co.

I have a few hobbies and inventing takes up most of my productive time. But I also enjoy shooting rifles, shotguns, hand guns, sling shots, blow guns, pellet arms, darts,

and knife throwing. I do not hunt wild game; all my shooting is directed at paper targets and clay disks. I enjoy the precision and discipline the shooting arts entail.

I also enjoy reading. For Christmas Joan gave me the complete set of Will Durant's Story of Civilization, all eleven volumes. With each volume averaging 1000 pages, I will finish all eleven volumes in three years, provided I read 25 pages per day and my eyesight holds up.

I also look forward to walking with Joan. She recently purchased a pedometer to measure her stride and number of steps she takes on our outings. She usually leaves me in her dust, and continues her walk while I head for the nearest coffee stand.

I prefer more sedentary activities such as Crazy Eights, Cribbage, Set-Back, Black Jack, Three Card Poker and Scrabble. I enjoy playing the latter with Joan; it's the only way I can get a word in edgewise!!! (Just kidding!)

Aside from my modest achievements, I am proud of my four adult children. They are model citizens and gainfully employed in their chosen careers. But, aside from their achievements, the trophy goes to Joan. A supportive wife and mother, the one whose vision, morality, discipline, artistry and faith have held the Biasini family together through thick and thin. She has been and continues to be a blessing to us all.

I received the Excellence in Teaching Award at Western Washington University in 1977. I retired from teaching in 1982 after 30 years of teaching music at all levels, elementary through graduate school. My graduate degree in school administration served me well when I became the associate director and dean of the Saint Lewis Conservatory in St. Louis, MO in 1974.

In 1992, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease which precluded my performing career. PD is a progressive disease for which there is no cure. It affects my speech, balance and endurance. But, I continue to invent music products; the most current being a violin/viola chin rest insert, a malleable substance which adheres to the chin rest and takes the shape of the performer's chin and jaw, resulting in less fatigue and more accurate intonation.

My favorite Psalm is Psalm 150.

*Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!*