



# The Harp Herald

Volume 4, Issue 1

Spring, 2012

## Greetings!

Wow, I can't believe it has been over a year since I've put together a *Harp Herald*. And I thought I would manage to do this quarterly? The best laid plans...

Anyhow, welcome to another edition of my newsletter. Here is more than you ever wanted to know about your harp's body base frame, as well as the Moss Harp Service news that's fit to print. Onward!

## Frame by Frame

When someone asks me what condition their pedal harp is in, one of the first things I look at is the condition of the **body base frame**. The body base frame is a thick piece of wood that makes up the bottom of the harp's body. It is normally not visible when the harp is standing up, but you can see it quite well if you lay the instrument down and take the base off, as I normally do when performing an inspection or regulation. The base frame is a crucial part of the harp's structural skeleton, as it anchors both the harp's body, and the baseboard, which is the piece of wood that sits under the column.

Photo A shows the bottom of a typical pedal harp body sitting on a plywood work stand. The half-circle with a trapezoid cut into it is the body base frame, while the lower piece of wood with the curved outer profile is the baseboard. Two steel pieces called stirrups connect the two pieces together.

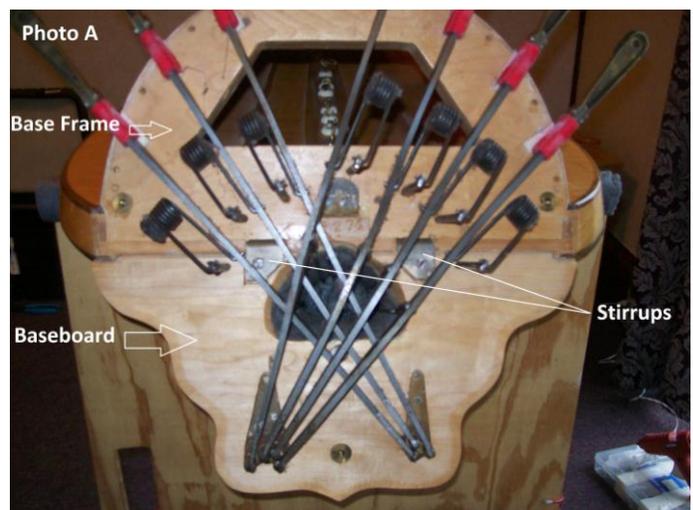


Photo B shows a close-up of the line where the base frame and baseboard meet. This view is just to the left of the D pedal. As you can see, the frame and the baseboard are flush with one another. Hopefully they will stay that way for a long time to come.

Eventually, under the 2,000 pounds of constant pressure exerted by the harp's strings things are bound to start giving a bit. The force of the strings over time tends to pull the body up in relation to the column, which in turn presses down against the baseboard, forcing it away from the base frame, as shown in Photo C.

At this point, things still aren't too bad. Although the harp's shape has been warped somewhat over time, it is still intact by and large, and should still be able to be regulated and played normally. Many harps in this condition can last for decades without getting worse. Unfortunately, though, some will continue to get worse.

As I mentioned earlier, hardened steel stirrups hold the base frame to the base board. As the baseboard is pushed downward relative to the frame, the stirrups are pulled along with it, which puts pressure on the base frame. If your harp's baseboard shows some travel, as the one in Photo C does, it is important to keep an eye on it. Sometimes we technicians trace lines where the frame meets the baseboard, along with the year. If the change starts to speed up, it is time to start saving some of your gig money to have the base frame replaced.

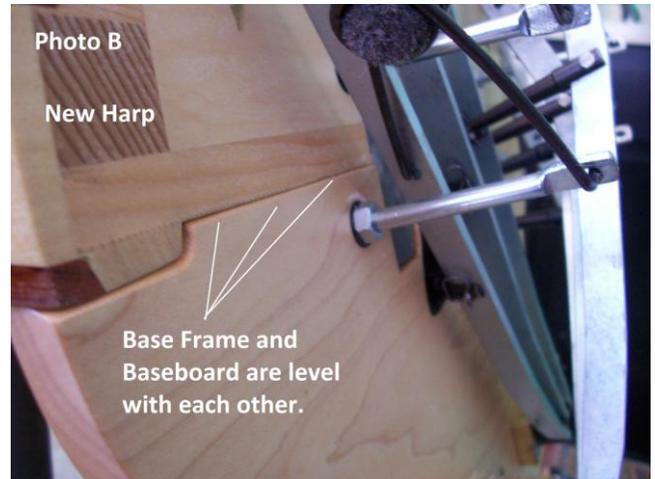


Photo D shows what can eventually happen if this situation is not corrected. Here, the baseboard has been pulled way out of alignment with the body, and it has dragged the base frame along with it. This harp's regulation is likely to be severely compromised. In addition, it will be off balance, and will tend to tip backwards much more easily than it should, leaving it open to further injury.

It is advisable not to let your harp get to this point. Once things get this bad, the forces that are no longer being contained by the failed base frame will be redistributed throughout the harp, causing warpage and bending in the neck and column. Even if you repair the base frame eventually, the other parts may be permanently misaligned, and the harp will never quite play the way it should. Generally, I encourage people to start preparing financially for a frame repair if the baseboard has traveled more than three eighths of an inch, and to send the harp to the repair

shop at the first sign of failure. No one likes to spend the money on major structural repairs, but if the harp you have now is the one you want to keep forever, it is better to prepare for necessary repairs as they start to become necessary. It's easy to ignore the body base frame, but it's crucial to monitor its condition. Doing so may save your harp's life someday!

## Have You Ordered your DVD Yet?



**Harp Care with Steve Moss**, my new DVD on basic harp maintenance, is now available. Everything you need to know about tuning, replacing strings, moving, and caring for your harp is here. 85 minutes of video are packed with step-by-step instructions, answers to your most common harp care questions, and more. A perfect gift for the new harp student, or for the intermediate harpist who has questions but doesn't know who to ask.

Want to learn more? Stop by my [Youtube Channel](#) to view some segments online. Or [click here](#) to order your own copy.

## Moving Again???

Those of you who have known me for a few years or more know that my family and I have moved around a bit. Two years ago, we relocated from Wisconsin to Oregon. This summer, we return to the Midwest, this time to the lovely town of West Lafayette, Indiana.

My wife, Jenny, has received an excellent fellowship to continue her doctoral studies at Purdue University. We are honored that she was chosen (and pretty thrilled about the funding!!). Although we have loved our time in Oregon, it will be nice to return to the Midwest, where both of our families live, and where our older daughter, Liza, is attending school.



## Moss Harp Service Upcoming Road Service Stops, 2012

<b>July 11-14</b>	Salt Lake City
<b>July 23-28</b>	Redlands Harp Camp, Redlands, CA
<b>August</b>	Michigan (Ann Arbor, St. Joseph)
<b>September 21-26</b>	Salt Lake City, UT
<b>October</b>	Omaha, NE Traverse City and Interlochen, MI
<b>November</b>	Austin, TX, Milwaukee, WI

Moss Harp Service  
975 NW Anjni Cir.  
Corvallis, OR 97330  
414-510-8448

<http://www.mossharpservice.com>

## About Moss Harp Service



**"Steve has been the harp technician at the University of Redlands Summer Harp Camp for 2010, 2011 and is scheduled to return this summer. His work is outstanding, his contributions as a clinician at the camp, discussing harp maintenance and repair, were excellent. Everyone who had him work on their instrument was exceptionally pleased with the work done; this includes the work he did on my instrument also. I have absolutely no reservations in recommending him for anyone needing repair and/or maintenance on their harps, lever or pedal."**

-- Mary Dropkin, principal harpist for the Indian Wells/Desert Symphony, the Redlands Symphony, the Riverside County Philharmonic, and the San Bernardino Symphony.

Steve Moss has been regulating and repairing harps for over 17 years. During eight years with Lyon & Healy, he trained and worked with Master Regulator Peter Wiley. Steve oversaw the company's lever harp production for two years before moving into pedal harp assembly and regulation. As a traveling technician, Steve has serviced harps across the country. Clients include the principal harpists of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Milwaukee Symphony, the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, the Utah Symphony, and the Seattle Opera, as well as the Eastman School of Music, Interlochen Arts Academy, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, the University of Washington, and Brigham Young University. He also makes frequent regulation trips to Lyon & Healy West in Salt Lake City. Steve lives in Corvallis, Oregon with his wife and two daughters.

**"It is a pleasure for me to play harps worked on by Steve Moss. They are always perfectly regulated and extremely resonant since he voices for sound as well as regulates for pitch. And he's a really nice guy, too!" –**

-Liz Cifani, Principal Harp (retired), Lyric Opera of Chicago, Professor of Harp, Northwestern University

