

Volunteer Spotlight: Tom & Barb Shommer

How long have you been volunteers with MBOTMA?

Tom-22 years, Barb-10 years

What current volunteer roles do you have with MBOTMA?

T-Festivals setup, Headquarters Dispatcher, B- Shirt Shack assistant

What MBOTMA volunteer roles have you held in the past?

T-Aug Festival Staff, Handicap Services Coordinator, fill in the volunteer holes at festivals, B-Merchandise Coordinator

What occupation did you have or do you have now?

T-Retired Truck Driver, Retired Air Force (C-130 Loadmaster)

B-Retired Public Health Nurse

Both - Healing Touch Practitioners

What are some of your hobbies and interests?

Both-Skydiving (that's what brought us together), river cruising on our houseboat on the Mississippi River, Healing Touch Practitioners (Body Energy Work), traveling, bluegrass music (T-guitar, B-upright Bass), jamming once a week. Staying close to family and friends.

How long have you been part of MBOTMA and what brought you into the organization?

T-22 Years. Barb bought me a membership as a Christmas present. We've been buying family memberships ever since.

Do you have a favorite festival or activity at a festival?

No favorite festival, I love them all! I really like Bill Cagley's beginner/intermediate jams. They are inclusive and supportive and put a very positive face on MBOTMA! I'm thrilled with seeing the positive effects of the Grass Seeds Academy on both the kids and their families.

Why are you a MBOTMA volunteer?

So many really great people within MBOTMA supported me, as I was learning, that I wanted to give back and pay it forward. I found comradeship with many other dedicated volunteers and I love the



people I volunteer with.

How has being a volunteer impacted you?

I realize how important volunteers are, no matter how big or small their contributions. I learned we all have something to contribute and all the parts make a successful whole.

What's a fun fact about you?

T-I've found that all my previous life experiences led me to be in service to others. B-Started with Autoharp but graduated to upright bass.

Do you have a fun story about being a volunteer or about MBOTMA that you'd like to share?

I was sitting in my campsite at El Rancho, trying to tune my guitar (six weeks after starting lessons) when a guy with a mandolin walked by. He asked if he could do some picking with me and a jam broke out around us. I could barely put three

chords together and everyone there treated me like I knew what I was doing. I was in my first jam, and I didn't even know what a jam was!!! That was a wonderful introduction to the spirit of MBOTMA

What would you tell a new MBOTMA member/volunteer?

Ask questions, suggest better solutions if you see them, talk to other members, volunteer (this organization runs on volunteers) as much or as little as you can. Participate. JAM, JAM, JAM!

