

Guitar Lessons: A Life's Journey Turning Passion Into Business

**By Bob Taylor, 2011, Wiley, 288 pages,
\$24.95, ISBN: 9780470937877**

Few people find a job during their lifetime they love so much they'd do it for free. Bob Taylor of Taylor Guitars is one of those people. The co-founder and President of the world's premier manufacturer of high-end acoustic and electric guitars knew from the moment he made his first guitar as a teenager that he'd found his passion, but little did he know the formidable challenges that awaited him and co-founder and CEO Kurt Listug. From their early struggles to stay in business to the rollercoaster ride that followed the rise, decline and eventual reemergence of the acoustic guitar industry, the business partners more than survived -- they went on to build the top-selling acoustic guitar brand in the United States. For two inexperienced "kids" with a dream of having their own guitar shop, the odds of success were stacked against them, and yet they overcame each obstacle.

The book recounts the hard-knock lessons that helped make Taylor Guitars an industry leader. From Bob Taylor's earliest lessons in dismantling household appliances and bikes to the extraordinary sweat equity that grew the business, Taylor imparts his experience as a tradesman with consideration for building a business on the values of quality products and passion for perfection -- values that often seem counterintuitive in today's mass production culture.

By sharing the business and life experiences that nurtured the company's growth, Bob Taylor offers everyone from business leaders to young dreamers in today's world a fresh perspective on how hard work and perseverance can overcome challenges in one's profession and life.

The book resonates with the heart and soul of a craftsman. Unlike seemingly every other business book being made today, Taylor is not out to preach a four-hour workweek or ask you to mull about what Google might do in a certain situation--there is no get rich quick scheme here. Taylor simply shares stories--both positive and negative--that took place behind-the-scenes at Taylor Guitars since its founding in the early 1970s. It's fascinating and enlightening and, more than anything, it's real. The book is a good read teaching lessons of perseverance and success to anyone.

To learn more about the real-life wisdom of *Guitar Lessons* and to read a chapter excerpt, please visit www.taylorguitars.com/products/bob-taylor-guitar-lessons-book/

About Taylor Guitars: Founded in 1974, Taylor Guitars has evolved into one of the world's leading manufacturers of premium acoustic and electric guitars. Renowned for blending an innovative use of modern technology with a master craftsman's attention to detail, Taylor guitars are widely considered the best sounding and easiest to play in the world. Many of today's leading musicians make Taylor their guitar of choice, including Dave Matthews, Prince, Jason Mraz, Steven Curtis Chapman, Serj Tankian, Zac Brown and Taylor Swift.

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Rebels for the Soil: The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement

**By Matthew Reed, 2010, Earthscan, London,
U.K. \$84.95, 168 pages, ISBN 978-1-84407-
597-3**

In an unusual and intriguing social history of organic food and farming, author Matthew Reed has chronicled the origins, the rise, and the potential peak and eventual fall of this popular contemporary movement in the food system. Based on in-depth scholarship and thoughtful analysis, he traces the growth of organics from the early work of Rudolph Steiner on the continent, Albert and Gabrielle Howard in India, and Evelyn Balfour and the Soil Association in U.K. up to the current time. His exhaustive historical treatment of organic farming brings in many names and connections perhaps unfamiliar to many of us, weaving these into a compelling narrative that is an excellent complement to the recent and often more technical history by William Lockeretz and colleagues (Lockeretz, 2007). *Rebels for the Soil* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the motivations of scientists, farmers, and social activists who forged the foundation of today's organic food system. The author also challenges its future.

A general chapter on social movements outlines the well-documented emergence of organic farming in the early 20th Century and how the process relates to other movements such as civil rights in the U.S. and opposition to church taxes in U.K. The author distinguishes the U.S. scholarship on how social movements were organized and who was involved, called "resource mobilization theory", with that in Europe focused on why movements occur and their impact on broader society, historically called "academic Marxism." He describes development of shared

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beliefs, collective action often in the form of protests, and when successful how these evolve through phases of growing discourse and diffusion. The author concludes with speculation on the unique role of information technologies in promoting rapid social change, a process clearly demonstrated in the futurist novel *Prairie Fire* (Armstrong, 2008) that describes a national populist strike by wheat growers in the U.S.

Broad interest in the value and improvement of the soil after World War II took various directions in Europe. Biodynamic farming in Germany and the Soil Association in U.K. were important movements in organic farming. Interesting to many readers will be the controversial association of biodynamic farming philosophy with that of some leaders in the emerging Nazi regime in Germany. Another surprise may be the apparent identity of organics and local food movements in U.K. with the aristocracy, an elite association similar to the concerns today about higher costs of organic food and lack of access to this alternative by low-income consumers. The perceived elitism in the Slow Food movement is another contemporary example. A unique source of support for organics was a small but vocal group of physicians and scientists who believed in the dietary benefits of organic and specific foods for providing health. Their early experiences and writings provide groundwork for today's growing interest and research in diet and health, especially the value of organic foods. Agricultural scientists and farmers through this period expanded their experiments in organic techniques, and in the process continued to ignore the rich practical experiences of farmers in East Asia, with the exception of F.H. King (1924) who explored systems in China, Korea, and Japan.

Parallel to the growth of the Soil Association was a rapid expansion of chemical farming after the war, followed by the high external input Green Revolution. Rachel Carson's (1962) acclaimed book *Silent Spring* raised many questions about chemical-intensive agriculture, and her concerns generated wider awareness of the negative effects of chemicals and provided a foundation for the formation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Debate in the U.S. between supporters of chemical-based and organic farming continues today.

What provided impetus to the organic farming and food movement through the 1960s and 1970s was the rise in environmentalism and general counter-culture movement in the West. The contributions of Fritz Schumacher in U.K. and Hans and Marie Müller in Switzerland provided support to Eve Balfour and other organic advocates in the formation of IFOAM in 1972. Edmund Goldsmith, founder of *The Ecologist* journal, and Barry Commoner, a prolific author, were important to the growing popular interest in a more environmentally sound approach to agriculture. Critiques of chemical farming grew, and this led to a new focus on marketing organic food.

Marketing organic food grew at the annual rate of 20% over the next two decades, as this prized commodity moved beyond health food stores to the aisles of Walmart, Safeway, and Royal Ahold. Some termed this the emergence of "Big O," in contrast to the more dispersed distribution from small shops and direct marketing schemes. Debates about certification of organic and use of other terms dominated this period, as well as what should be labeled as "local food." Governments began to play a more important role, as the E.U. and the U.S. adopted specific regulations about production and processing as well as the labeling of organic foods. Among these regulations are restrictions on use of GMOs in the European Union, reflecting a concern not shared by most consumers in the U.S. There is constant pressure from industry to allow use of these new transgenic cultivars in organic farming.

In one of the most intriguing chapters, the author ends the book with a prediction of the peak and decline of organic food. Beyond the current dip in organic purchases due to recession, he identifies a number of larger factors that will push us toward more efficient production of local foods, and thus a drastic reduction in transportation costs. Although recognizing the importance of comparative climatic advantage for production, he projects that fossil fuel costs and awareness of larger difficulties with imported foods will create new environmental and social boundaries in the food system. Reed cites the examples of Cuba and the Transition Towns in the U.K. as examples of future-oriented food systems that are sensitive to distance and need for seasonal consumption of local foods.

Author Matthew Reed has provided us with an alternative view of both the past and the future. He has delved into the history of organic farming to reveal the personalities and motivations of some of the prime movers in this alternative food sector, as well as evaluated current trends and predicted a future quite unlike that described by most writers. This is a perceptive book that will challenge the reader's assumptions about organic farming and foods, and help us all to study the system in perhaps a more objective way. It is a valuable resource for students in courses on organic farming, and others concerned about the future of the food system.

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The Online Teaching Survival Guide
By Judith V. Boettcher and Rita-Marie Conrad, 2010, Jossey-Bass, 380 pages, \$38.00, ISBN: 978-0470423530 (also available on the Kindle)

The Online Teaching Survival Guide offers faculty a wide array of theory-based techniques designed for online teaching and technology-enhanced courses. Written by two pioneers in distance education, this guidebook presents practical instructional strategies spread out over a four-phase timeline that covers the lifespan of a course. The book includes information on a range of topics such as course management, social presence, community building, and assessment. Based on traditional pedagogical theory, The Online Teaching Survival Guide integrates the latest research in cognitive processing and learning outcomes. Faculty with little knowledge of educational theory and those well versed in pedagogy will find this resource essential for developing their online teaching skills.

At a time when resources for training faculty to teach online are scarce, the authors have presented a must-read for all instructors new to online teaching. By tying best practices to the natural rhythms of a course as it unfolds, instructors will know what to do when and what to expect. The book is a life raft in what can be perceived as turbulent and uncharted waters.

Developed from years of experience supporting online faculty, the book provides practical tips and checklists that should especially help those new to online teaching hit the ground running.

This book blends a fine synthesis of research findings with plenty of practical advice. It should be especially valuable for faculty teaching their first or second course online. But any instructor, no matter how experienced, is likely to find valuable insights and techniques.

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The Seeds We Sow, Kindness That Fed A Hungry World

By Gary Beene, 2010, Sunstone Press, 404 pages, \$20.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-0865347885

"Practice random acts of kindness" is a catchy little phrase. It is also nonsense. There should be nothing random about the decision to be kind. There is no single action more powerful and "The Seeds We Sow" offers proof of the cross-generational power of kindness.

The book tells the story of the intertwined lives of George Washington Carver, Vice President Henry Agard Wallace, and Nobel Laureate Norman E. Borlaug. It tells how their kindness and passion to feed the world was passed on and enhanced across generations. In his quest to help feed the world, George Washington Carver was probably the most influential not because he was the "peanut man," but rather because he was a "gentle man." His protégé Henry Agard Wallace grew up to be the Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President of the United States. He was likely one of the most under-appreciated and misunderstood leaders of the twentieth century. In turn, Wallace passed the baton to Norman Borlaug, who worked in quiet obscurity for most of his life.

M.S. Swaminathan of India summed up his friend's life, "Norman Borlaug is the living embodiment of the human quest for a hunger free world. His life is his message." Because Carver, Wallace and Borlaug lived, so do we. After a 30 year career in Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education, the author retired as the state director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in September 2008. He and his wife, Carla, enjoy life at their home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Gary states that for him kindness did not always come naturally. He says, "I was one of those poor saps who had to do a lot of personal work before understanding that only the merest quarter-turn of the heart separates us from life's abundance."

Franz Kafka once said: "Books should be like ice axes, breaking the frozen sea within us." Gary Beene's elegantly written book is just such a book.

It becomes incumbent upon all of us to educate ourselves about what kindness-compassion-humanitarianism is - what it looks like in the world, what it feels like inside. The act of reading is only one way to do that. For those of you who enjoy biography and history, Gary Beene's book might be like one of Kafka's ice axes. The book is a fascinating piece of unknown history with a very important message about kindness. This book offers an historical proof that every act of kindness ripples through time and impacts the lives of untold millions of people in future generations.

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