



## Bobbie Siegel

Bobbie's life had been musical almost from her birth, in Lancaster, Pa, where her grandparents taught music from a music store they owned. Mom and Dad moved to Virginia Beach when she was 9 months old, and in a few years she took quickly to violin, guitar, piano and clarinet, becoming adept at them all.

The family headed to Richmond, Va. when she was 14. After that time, something about drums captured her imagination, much to the consternation of her parents. They refused to buy her a drum set, but determination led Bobbie to spend a summer baking and selling pretzels so she could afford to buy a set of drums for herself. She caught on quickly and soon was playing around town in groups, improving her skills. A poster still hangs in her music room advertising an appearance by "Barbara and the Boys" featuring you know who on drums. Bobbie has always been very conservative by nature, but she never let that stand in her way of self-improvement and success. How else could she have pursued the drums? In the 1960's it was unheard of for a woman to play drums. The paradox of the conservative young woman doing "rebellious" things was just beginning. Her greatest music lessons came from playing drums with Otis Blackman, a piano player, and Alonzo Jones, a tenor sax player.... both of whom happened to be African Americans. That might not sound very daring or "rebellious" today, but in 1969 in Richmond Virginia, young white women didn't "mix" with older Black men. Young Bobbie holding blind Otis Blackman under the arm to guide him into a club did not sit very well with the then powerful Virginia Ku Klux Klan. Be it naivety, determination or a combination thereof, her "rebel" streak would not be suppressed.

"I got it in my head that I needed to be in New York," she recalls, knowing it was a mecca for her kind of music. "I was 21. I'd never been on a train, bus or plane, but I got there, got a gig and started making money." She worked clubs throughout New York City as well as the famed resort

Grossinger's. Keeping her head low, avoiding the drug and booze scene, she practiced when she wasn't on stage. And men, she says, "were definitely NOT in the picture." Before long she was backing up some of the most famous recording artists of that time including The Platters, and The Coasters. She started sending large checks home to her parents, and their anger over her departure became a thing of the past. But then one young man heard her play, got to know her, and just wouldn't take "no" for an answer. They had so much in common, particularly music. Bobbie liked him and wanted to be friends. He had much more in mind. After a prolonged on again, off again relationship, Bobbie finally decided to marry former musician/producer/songwriter and, at that time, struggling ad man Barry Sea. Bobbie continued with her music after the birth of their first child, Debbie. She saved every penny in hopes of buying a house. The couple soon realized that they might not ever be able to realize the American dream in New York, so they gave up on music and headed for Houston, TX. Bobbie learned how to be a commercial artist so she could help Barry in the ad business. She worked part-time in the ad business through the birth of her second daughter, Niki. She eventually converted those skills into interior design and she founded her own company, Nicole Décor.

Her days as a drummer seemed long past. But her love for music never died. She took up the bass as a hobby. Then temporarily returned to the drums for one "last" time, when husband Barry convinced her to play on a music video commercial featuring George Foreman for the Houston Police Department. But the "bug" would return thanks to both daughters, Debbie and Niki, insisting that their parents sit in with Grady Gaines' band at their respective weddings. The story doesn't end there. A whole new chapter begins.

Seeing how much Bobbie enjoyed playing again, Barry wanted to find a way to inspire her to continue. During a casual conversation about music, the couple compared stories about the music that inspired them most. Bobbie mentioned, "Respect," "Cold Sweat," and "Memphis Soul Stew." It was a light bulb moment for Barry. He went to the Internet to verify what he thought to be correct. All three songs featured the same drummer, Bernard "Pretty" Purdie. Purdie, the world's most recorded drummer had a website with a schedule of his appearances featured. One such appearance happened to coincide with a business trip Barry had scheduled for New York City. So Barry and Bobbie went to see the great "Pretty" Purdie perform. They arrived two hours before the show at B.B. King's club to make sure they could get a good seat. There was Purdie doing his warm-up and only Bobbie and Barry in the audience. The legendary drummer finished his warm up, left the stage, pulled up a chair and sat with the couple for a very special visit. Before the conversation ended he agreed to give Bobbie private lessons. Inspired by Purdie, her husband, and Houston musicians Luke Wayne Richards (aka Kool Hand Luke), Bobbie's dusted off the cobwebs and is playing drums better than ever.

Why is she doing this? Could it be that the "rebel" in her has returned, or because people believe that Grandmothers don't play drums? Possibly — it's a bit of both.