

rep corner

Music to His Ears

How music played a role in one rep's career.

By Laura Thill

Mark Gold rocks. Literally. Since the Beatles' television appearance on the Jack Paar Show, Gold's passion has been the guitar. "I saw that show and said, 'I want to do that,'" he recalls. Today, the New York City-based MMS East sales rep plays a traditional six-string electric guitar, a seven-string electric guitar (a modified version developed for jazz players to add an allusion of base, melody and rhythm) and acoustic guitar. His repertoire includes classic rock, R&B, jazz, blues and a little country. And, his current band, Avalon, plays weekend gigs, mostly in Westchester County, north of the city.

Sure, more than one distributor rep has joined a rock band on the side. But, what distinguishes Gold are the twists and turns in the path he followed to the career he eventually chose, as well as the career that didn't happen.



The Gold File

Company: MMS East

Territory: Based in New York City

Hometown: New York City

Noteworthy: Plays in the band Avalon in gigs north of the Big Apple



Mark Gold playing at a political fundraiser in 2006.

Brush with fame

A typical kid with a flare for music, Gold grew up playing cello and upright bass for his high school orchestra. He continued with music at City College in New York City, where he was a psychology major, and joined his school's string quartet. Out of school, he played guitar with various "garage bands" he helped form. The first twist Gold encountered occurred following his freshman year in college. "The summer after my freshman year, I joined a band

called Earth," he says. After placing first in a battle-of-the-bands competition, Earth won a 12-week tour in the Caribbean that summer, where the band played a string of clubs in between enjoying some beautiful beaches.

Difficult as it may be to upstage a summer in the Caribbean, the following summer presented Gold with a crossroads that largely determined his future. "My sophomore year of college, I ran into a high school friend, Ed Gagliardi," says Gold. "Ed (a bass player) and I had both played in separate bands in high school, but never together." The two decided to start their own band, together with Gagliardi's drummer friend, Dennis Elliot. "We got some rehearsal space in Manhattan and began looking for other

Difficult as it may be to upstage a summer in the Caribbean, the following summer presented Gold with a crossroads that largely determined his future.

players," he says. "We played together during our sophomore year of college and through the next summer."

As summer drew to a close, however, Gold had some decision making to do. "Eddie and Dennis decided they were going to leave school and their jobs, and make [music] a full-time career," he says. "I had to decide whether to stick with the band full-time or go back to school." Gold chose school. Gagliardi and Elliot went on to meet a couple of guys from England, formed a new band and six months later landed a contract. Their band's name was Foreigner, and its debut album sold over 4 million copies in the United States.

"Was I jealous?" says Gold. "Absolutely! But, I wasn't regretful. I'm the type of person who believes I am in control of my own destiny and that I make choices for a reason."



Gold and the rest of Avalon at Wilkens Farm.

Making choices

Gold completed his college degree, as well as a master's degree in psychology, and began working as a state-licensed psychologist at a major psychiatric hospital in New York City. However, as many young adults discover, many choices are merely a means to an end, and Gold soon realized that psychology was not his final career destination. "I was a clinical director of the drug and rehabilitation program at the hospital," he says. But, funding cutbacks forced many patients at that time to transfer from hospital psychiatric programs to community-based ones. "My role [shifted] from psychologist to fund raiser to help keep the hospital program running," he continues. "This was very frustrating, and I didn't want to continue this career."

While at the hospital, Gold met a lot of pharmaceutical and

"I stopped playing music for over 20 years. Unless you play regularly, you lose your chops. The playing isn't as much fun because you lose your level."

— Mark Gold

manufacturer reps who did business with the hospital. "When I talked with them, they seemed to be happy with their jobs," he recalls. "I thought, 'I can do this,' and soon found a job with Clark-Surgical (New York City). The owner hired me to learn the business and take over some of his responsibilities. After a year or so, I took on some physician accounts, and later became a director of sales and marketing." Through a series of acquisitions (Clark Surgical was purchased by Caligor, which was purchased by Henry Schein, which sold the Caligor division to MMS), Gold transitioned to his present position as corporate account manager for MMS East's hospital group.

Meanwhile, Gold inadvertently placed his musical talents on hold. After leaving his band and focusing

A flare for design

As much as he enjoys a hobby in music, Mark Gold, MMS East sales rep, is impassioned by his work, he says. After transitioning years ago from physician to hospital sales, he won the Caligor/Schein salesperson of the year award several times. In addition, he has consistently won the highest gross profit achievement award for MMS. Today, he specializes in hospital construction and renovation projects, working closely with architects, equipment planners and biomedical engineers in the clinical selection of equipment for facilities in and around New York City. Some of his recent projects include:

- Greenberg Pavilion, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Cornell Campus, New York City.
- New York Presbyterian Children's Hospital of New York, New York City.
- Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, New York.
- Weill Medical College of Cornell, Faculty Practice Building, New York City.
- Jacobi Medical Center, Bronx, New York.

Currently, he is involved in three new construction projects projected for completion in 2009, he adds. "Yesterday, I was at one hospital's O.R. and met with the biomedical engineer and various nurse supervisors of cardiac, orthopedics, neurology and ENT to discuss the selection of new medical equipment."

At this point, Gold's thirst for performing had returned. So he rented some studio space, auditioned players and put together a new band of his own.

on his studies, he had some limited contact with Gagliardi for a couple of years, "but our lives grew apart," he says. He married in 1987 and started a family soon afterwards. A busy father with two active daughters (both are athletic and volunteer in the community), Gold had little time to pursue his hobbies. "I stopped playing music for over 20 years," he says. "Unless you play regularly, you lose your chops. The playing isn't as much fun because you lose your level."

Then, about six years ago, en route to the Long Island sound, where he fishes, Gold passed a house with a sign that read, 'Guitar Specialist.' He had, in fact, passed this very house quite regularly for the past five years, but whether the timing was right, his curiosity got the best of him, or both, he made the choice to stop and meet the owner. "I liked him a lot," he says of the accomplished jazz guitarist turned guitar repairist. "I began studying with him once a week for a couple of years. I got my chops

back and found other people like myself to play with – professionals and family guys looking to [play music with] other musicians once a week.

"I did this for a couple of years, until our musical tastes ran in different directions," he says. At this point, Gold's thirst for performing had returned. So he rented some studio space, auditioned players and put together a new band of his own. Today, Avalon includes six musicians and a repertoire of sounds ranging from classic rock to light jazz, blues and Motown. "We play music by bands that we love to listen to," he adds.

Until now, Avalon has shied away from performing in the Big Apple. "None of us wants to drive the 1 ½ hours to get home after we finish playing at 1:00 a.m.," Gold admits. "But, I have a lot of customers in New York City, and I've promised them I will set up a 'gig' there one of these days." And, rumor has it, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. **RE**