



The People Behind the Gretsch Name

President Fred W. Gretsch & CFO Dinah Gretsch

The professional life of Fred W. Gretsch reads like the Great American Novel – at once a story of determination, trial and triumph. Born in Chicago, Ill. to Bill and Sylvia Gretsch, Fred began learning the family business at a very early age. Before he was 10 years old, Fred was working part-time as an office boy at The Gretsch Company's Brooklyn manufacturing plant. At a starting wage of 25 cents an hour, the job was by no means an introduction to the comforts of nepotism. But the experience and knowledge gained through working closely with his grandfather, Fred Gretsch Sr., would aid the future company president throughout his life in the music manufacturing industry.

In 1965, Fred joined The Gretsch Company full time as an industrial engineer. Two years later, Fred's uncle and then company president Fred Gretsch, Jr. announced that he was selling the family business to the Baldwin Piano Company. While Fred was surprised and disappointed by the announcement, he didn't take the news lying down. As a declaration of his passion for the business, which had been in the Gretsch family since 1883, Fred vowed to one day buy back The Gretsch Company.

After years of making offers that were repeatedly turned down by Baldwin, Fred seized an opportunity to make good on his promise in 1985 during a period of financial struggle within the Baldwin Company. Baldwin finally accepted the offer, and Fred returned The Gretsch Company to family ownership. He soon moved operations to Savannah, Ga., where the revitalized company began to offer new, vintage-styled Gretsch drums and classic Gretsch guitars. The success of the new products was immediate, and The Gretsch Company once again became a leading force in the musical instrument industry.

An integral part of The Gretsch Company's success has been the visionary talent and technical skills of the company's current "first lady" and CFO, Dinah Gretsch. Born in South Carolina, Dinah grew up in an Air Force family, living in a number of U.S. states and in England for six years. She attended schools in the U.S. and England and purchased her first business at age 20.

Dinah joined the company in 1979 and brought with her experience in banking, credit bureau operation and computer software design. Dinah's analytical and computer skills positioned Gretsch as an industry leader in electronic business transactions in the 1980s. Today Dinah handles The Gretsch Company's finances and much of the company's artist relations. Through the years, she has helped foster endorsement deals with some of the world's top drum and guitar artists. Dinah was the first person at The Gretsch Company to make contact with George Harrison and ultimately the rest of the Traveling Wilburys.

Fred and Dinah Gretsch have consistently supported a variety of music education initiatives in an attempt to "enrich people's lives through participation in music" – the stated purpose behind The Gretsch Foundation, the charitable arm of the family. They became early contributors to the Save the Music Foundation in conjunction with VH1 and regularly contribute musical instruments to charity auctions benefiting education. Recognizing the potential of the burgeoning Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Dinah signed Gretsch up as a major sponsor of the museum in 1994, two years before it opened.

Fred serves on the advisory board for the Salvation Army, Savannah Corps. Dinah devotes much of her spare time to board work at Loyola High School in NYC, UGA Music Business Program, Sacred Heart Church in Savannah, Ga. Savannah Country Day School & the Georgia Musical Hall of Fame Foundation.

A devoted husband and wife team, Fred and Dinah have ensured that the Gretsch family tradition will continue for another 125 years or more. They are very proud of their six children and fourteen grandchildren. Their oldest daughter, Lena, has worked in the company for eleven years.

Celebrating 125 years as a family business, the Gretsch name is a testament to the spirit, passion and determination of the people who lived and those who continue to carry on its legacy. From humble beginnings at a small Brooklyn, N.Y. shop in 1883, Gretsch was built on a foundation of hard work and a dedication to making a quality professional product without sacrificing ideals. This vision still rings clear today.