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FEBRUARY 2013

# NOW



## Pulling at the Harp Strings

Dan and Sydney Howell create romance through music and dance

**Plus:**

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In the Kitchen With Tracy Paulsen

## Spanning Generations

At Home With  
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### ON THE COVER



Dan and Sydney Howell are romantics at heart.

Photo by Vanessa Polozola.

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## Editor's Note

Hi there, *WeatherfordNOW* readers!

As February gets underway, many of us are still enjoying the cooler temperatures, while others cannot wait for spring to arrive. Others are getting ready to celebrate Valentine's Day with their loved one with a romantic, candlelight dinner or by decorating heart-shaped cookies with the children. *WeatherfordNOW* is celebrating its two year anniversary in the community. Over the past couple of years, we've had a chance to get to know a little more about many of you in the local community and shared your stories with our readers. I am looking forward to meeting more of you and hearing your great story ideas. If you have someone in mind, who volunteers their time for others, creates artistic pieces to enjoy or has a great meal you have always wanted the recipe for, please let me know.

Happy Valentine's Day, everyone!

# Amber

Amber D. Browne  
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# PULLING AT THE HARP *Strings*

— By Amber D. Browne

*As the perfect gentleman, Dan Howell was determined to talk and dance with the beautiful lady he met at a West Coast Swing or “Push” dance class during the summer of 1992. Ever since their first fox trot, Dan and Sydney Howell’s romance has been as instinctive as dancing, and they joined in marriage 19 years ago.*



For Sydney, the transition came naturally, like pulling at harp strings — she has played the harp for four decades. Sydney entertains the crowd at local weddings and other venues, but spent nearly 30 years of her career at Texas Christian University (TCU) teaching others how to play. She also spent 15 years performing with the Fort Worth Symphony and has even graced the stage at Carnegie Hall. Locally, she plays at the Wild Mushroom Restaurant and also performs occasionally and records with Octavia, an eight-harp ensemble.

Sydney became captivated by the harp when she was a freshman at Paschal High School in Fort Worth. She was no stranger to music. Her late mother, Margaret Payne, was a piano teacher for 76 years and taught Sydney from the time she was 5. As Sydney matured, she wanted to try another instrument and play in an orchestra. “We went to a symphony concert where the harp was featured, and I got real excited,” Sydney explained. She asked her parents for harp lessons, and they found a teacher at TCU. Eventually, they found another teacher in Ranger, where she had long lessons twice a month. Sydney went on to receive a master’s degree in harp from the New England Conservatory in Boston after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Texas. She is active in the Dallas Harp Society, has taught at national Suzuki Institutes and written articles for national harp publications. Over the years, Sydney has accumulated beautiful harps that now line a large window in her spacious living room, which

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also serves as her studio. She spends time there practicing and teaching her students, who range in age from 5 to 85. Sydney believes in introducing children to music when they are very young. She believes talent is overrated. "Some people learn faster than others," she said. "I teach Suzuki harp, which is the mother tongue or by ear approach," she



explained. "Every child, unless they have a physical disability, learns their native language without any effort. It's the same with music. More important than talent or ability is determination — and practice, discipline and consistency," she said. "Anyone can be successful to the extent of their determination."

This applies in romance, too. Sydney had given up on love after her husband passed away. At the dance class where she met Dan, she was looking for a dance partner not a relationship. "I had decided I was going to be single, and I was okay with that," she said. "I was through shopping." She told God that if He wanted her to have someone, He would have to bring him to her. "And, He did," she smiled.

"I asked her to dance, and we got out on the dance floor. Like an audible click, we were two puzzle pieces coming together," Dan recollected. "It didn't hurt that she's knock-out gorgeous with a beautiful figure. We hit it off right away."

The two have plenty in common. "We both have master's degrees. We both love to travel the world. We both love history," he said. "We're very dedicated to our faith. There are so many parallels — it just goes on and on." Although their paths had crossed throughout their

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young lives, the two never really knew each other. They both attended Paschal High School, and her father also taught Dan's Sunday school class for five years in junior and senior high school. "He was one of the most wonderful men I've known," Dan said of Sydney's father.

Dan fell in love with classical music after taking a music appreciation class as a child. He used his paper route money to buy his first record, which was *The Nutcracker Suite*. His second album purchase was *Swan Lake*. "Now I'm married to a classical harpist whom I've seen play on stage at Carnegie Hall," he said proudly.

Sydney and Dan married in 1993, merging their two families together. They each have three children. Sydney's daughter, Rachel Hunt, owns a ballroom dance studio in Cleburne, where Dan teaches classes. Sydney also has two sons: John in Fort Worth and Peter in Seattle.


Dan's three daughters, Dannelle, Desiree and Deanna, all live in North Texas.

Dan is a retired international pilot. For his retirement flight, all Dan's daughters and their spouses travelled with Sydney on the aircraft for a trip to Paris, France. The couple often travels the world together. They visited Sydney, Australia, shortly after Dan retired. They have also traveled to Thailand, Canada, Germany



and many other countries. Sydney and Dan enjoy spending time together. They often read to each other while commuting and are very involved in their Christian Science church in Fort Worth. The two also perform together and have collaborated on a music CD with Sydney behind the harp and Dan adding vocals.

Besides teaching and performing, Sydney has occasionally donated her time




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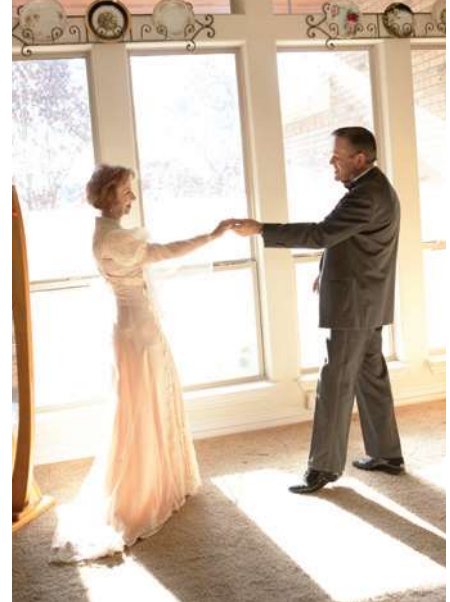
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to play at hospitals and nursing homes. The healing harp music is often used to sooth patients and staff. "The vibrations of the harp have a positive physical affect on the body," Sydney explained. It can include lower heart rates for both staff and patient and provide quicker recovery and more successful surgeries. "Acoustical harp is the best thing," she said.

Playing the harp has also brought Sydney into the pageant world. She was crowned Miss Senior Parker County in 2010. "It was great fun," she said. Sydney played harp for her talent and wore her unique Victorian wedding dress, which included five different lace patterns. "When I won the title I was really shocked!" she exclaimed. "I enjoyed riding in some parades and promoting Meals on Wheels," she shared. Sydney was able to pass on her crown to the couple's 98-year-old friend and fellow church member, Carmen Ashby. Dan escorted Carmen and danced the Rumba with her during the talent competition.

Getting on the dance floor is second nature to both Sydney and Dan. They encourage couples to get involved in ballroom dancing. "In what other sport or activity do you hold each other close in a romantic fashion? It is world-renowned as a major source of relaxation and tension release," Dan explained. "In dance, you put each other first." Whether sharing a dance or simply sitting across the kitchen table from one another, Sydney and Dan often get lost in each other's eyes and share loving glances. Happily married for nearly two decades, they are romantics at heart. **NOW**