

Hi, I'm Becky Perry ... and this is my story.

On New Year's Day 2025, my husband, Mark, and I made a hard decision. It was time to part with our piano; and we went into action.

When I was a little girl in January of 1964, a wonderful delivery came through our front door. A brand new, beautiful Starck piano. Pretty exciting for me as well as my brothers. I know now that such a purchase was a stretch for my parents, but having music in our home was a high priority. A piano was a must.

My mother already knew how to play, and usually did so by ear; I started piano lessons immediately. I remember Mrs. Erickson coming to our home for my lessons, and my first piano book was Thompson's "Teaching Little Fingers to Play." First order of business – learn the location of middle C. The first song I ever played was "Birthday Party." ("Here we go, up a row, to a birthday party" – CDE, CDE, DCDECC.)

The years flew by. The piano was well used and lovingly cared for. I had lessons for a number of years with different teachers, and learned enough to be dangerous. I wish I had practiced harder. Perhaps the best thing I learned was that just sitting down and playing for enjoyment could feed my soul.

My parents became empty-nesters, and my mom still enjoyed sitting down on the piano bench and playing whatever was in her heart. I actually prayed at one time for the ability to play by ear as she could. It amazed me. But that was her gift, and not mine. I still need the music in front of me to this day.

As more years passed, the piano was played sporadically when we had family gatherings; impromptu sing-alongs, performances, and grandchildren "composing" their own pieces. And yes, that included a little pounding.

The piano stayed with my parents until the early 1990's when they made a hard decision. It was time to part with it. They brought it from their home to ours in Chicago. I was very happy to have a piano in my home once again. Mark and I both valued music, and wanted to raise our sons to know it and love it as well. They are both in music professions today, so that worked out!

Fast forward through the years, and "Mr. Starck" moved around a bit with us as we've lived in three different states. And now, Mark and I are empty-nesters. The piano was being used less and less frequently as life just changed. We were basically hanging on to the piano out of sentiment. It was taking up space in our living room that could be used for other purposes. What to do? Much pondering and research. Perhaps someone would want it.

Well, no one wanted our piano. It seems very few are looking for used pianos these days. Ads for free pianos abound; all stating that the buyer must remove it from the seller's home. And I didn't like the alternative of calling 1-800-GOT JUNK. It hurt my heart to think of my childhood piano dumped into a landfill.

And so we decided. We would lovingly and respectfully deconstruct our piano.

(Continue on the other side.)

In the days leading up to January 1, I had a couple little goodbye soul-feeding sessions at the piano. It had served us well, and I was ready to let go. We started to dig in; and while I had just a little “moment” at first, I knew it was the right thing to do. It took a few days, but we dismantled with great interest and amazement at the inner workings and craftsmanship. It was a great experience. We saved many, many parts, large and small, with which I have crafted pieces that will serve as reminders of a musical instrument that gave so much to us. And you better believe, I kept middle C.

After nearly four months, I wrapped up my piano repurposing project. It stands as one of the most unique and personally meaningful experiences of my life; and I consider it all a well-timed gift from God. The hours and hours I spent creating were packed with opportunities for learning and trying new things (even power tools!). It was joyful, therapeutic, renewing and, dare I say, sacred.

As I worked, I often listened to music; but mostly enjoyed creating in silence, alone in my thoughts in my own little world. I pondered life, and my journey through it; where I’ve been and where I’m going. There were prayers for friends, loved ones, and our world; and processing of joys and sorrows. There may have been a couple tears along the way, but they too are a gift.

I’m certainly not a professional artist, or even that much of a crafter; but did I ever have fun! I was determined to use up as many piano parts as I could for my creations, using only ideas from my own imagination and not the Internet. For many of the hanging pieces I used the beautiful copper-wrapped piano wires for hangers. The only purchased items were frames and other mounting materials.

I was repeatedly impressed with the fact that a piano contains a huge amount of interesting pieces of all shapes, colors, textures and sizes - each serving a particular and important purpose. As they all work together, there is beauty. There is music. What an amazing, creative mind someone had to create the piano! And what skill on the part of the workers who assembled it!

And now, after over 70 creations, I’ve depleted most of my supply of piano parts. That was the goal; to reuse and repurpose — avoid the landfill, and especially to honor the memory of my family piano, Starck #187557. As you will often read at the end of a score of music, my project is now “Fine.” It was a long and sometimes physically draining process; and boy, did it mess up my house. But Mark and I agreed it would be neat to keep going! We have already dismantled a second “retired” piano at our church and I have hosted a series of piano crafting days with our church folks. It was a joy to share my passion and watch others catch the bug.

Much gratitude to my late parents for purchasing the piano and getting me started with piano lessons; my husband, Mark, for humoring me by going along with my crazy ideas, helping to dismantle the piano, and putting up with my obsessive creating binges; also my sons for their encouragement. Most importantly, I thank God for giving me the most amazing experience. As Bach and Handel penned at the end of their manuscripts, “SDG.” Soli Deo Gloria!