

Interview of Larry Barringer by Jerry Wright

I met Larry Barringer in the Fall of 1994 at a North Harris County Dulcimer Society meeting. We had attended a couple of meetings but didn't really know anyone. Then I spotted a pickin stick and wanted one. Someone told me that I needed to talk to Larry Barringer. I remember walking up and introducing myself. I told him that I didn't play anything but wanted a pickin stick to mess around with. In November 1994, we drove over to the Barringer residence and I picked up my pickin stick.

Here is what Larry has to say...



“I am from upper state New York. Sylvia is from Ashokan, New York which is right down the road from where I lived. Jay Ungar wrote Ashokan Farewell, which was made popular in the PBS series about the Civil War.

About 30 years ago, Sylvia and I spent a weekend on the Blue Ridge Parkway. We stopped in a craft store and saw a dulcimer there. I was very interested in it but they wanted \$75 for it so I decided to go home and build one myself. I got a pattern from an old man in Stanton, Virginia.

I made one. Then shortly thereafter, I made two more. I couldn't play so I just hung them on the wall. Then in 1985, we met Arlean Leech in Mountain View, Arkansas. Arlene said she was a dulcimer teacher and invited us to her house in Houston. At that time we were living in Houston and working for G.E.

I showed up at Arlene's house with a dulcimer that I had made from a McSpadden kit. Not long after that, the North Harris County Dulcimer Society was formed. Then I started building dulcimers from scratch and I was buying my wood from Folkcraft. I soon learned that I could cut my own wood cheaper than ordering it from Folkcraft.

Then we were traveling up to Virginia and I decided to stop off in Blountville, Tennessee and visit with Robert Mize. I stopped in town and called him. I had never met him. He asked me where I was. I told him and he drove over and led us back to his house. I was going to spend about an hour. Well, three hours later, we were backing out of the driveway and I was rolling up my window – he was still talking.

That started a friendship. We went to Boone with them one year and that is where we met Susan Trump. We also went to the Carter Fold with them. Then three years ago, we met John Huron through Bob.

In 1987 we were in upper state New York on a business trip and saw a strum stick, which was made by Bob McAnally in a craft store. I went home and made one from memory. The name strum stick is copyrighted so I call mine a pickin' stick. It took a couple of tries before I made one like I wanted. I sold

one to a lady who took it to Ireland. I sold one to Jan Goodsight who wrote about it in the Dulcimer Players News."



I received my first pickin' stick from Larry in November 1994. We then played in public for the first time at the NCDS Christmas Party. Then in April 1995, Larry gave me the pickin stick that I now play.

When Larry and Sylvia became full timers, Larry turned his entire dulcimer building business over to Terry McCafferty.