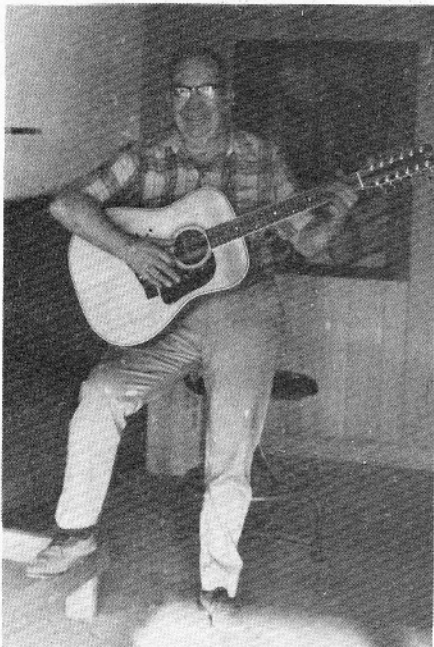


# J. W. Gallagher Can Easily Claim The Title Of "Guitar King of Tennessee"

by  
Jim Lynch



Mr. J. W. Gallagher, master guitar builder, happily plunks away on one of his hand-made twelve-string models.

Mr. J. W. Gallagher doesn't seem like a man whose business has made his name almost a household word among the thousands of professional and amateur guitar pickers in the world.

It isn't really noticeable that this gentleman, whose 59 years in his beloved Wartrace, Tennessee, have left him in peace and harmony with the world, is really the man considered by many to be the finest guitar maker in the country.

Watching him ramble about in his little shop on Main Street, he appears as any other small manufacturer would — giving instructions, planning, answering questions, and simply making a living — except for the advantage that he'll never really have to concern himself with sales and advertising problems because the 80-90 guitars he makes a year become instant collector's items.

The distinctive "G", in old english script, has found its way onto the headplates of some 600 guitars since the Gallagher Cabinet-Furniture Co.

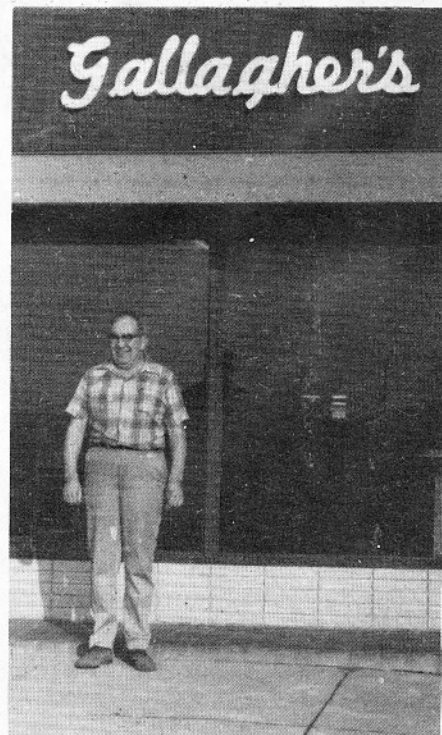
became the Gallagher Guitar Co. in 1965. Prior to that, he'd spent about a year making guitars at a, now defunct, factory in Shelbyville. When it became apparent that his employers were more interested in quantity than quality, he left. Some 600 proud guitar owners are glad he did.

Among that elite are popular singer Neil Diamond; Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary fame; and songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker. Rock stars John Kay and Stephen Stills also play Gallagher's as does Bluegrass wizard Doc Watson.

Gallagher, who admits that he can't hit a lick as a picker himself, claims Watson as his favorite with Grand Ole Opry star Grandpa Jones as a very close second.



Gallagher employees Gary Gross and Martha Norvell patiently tool out and construct more quality instruments. Gary has been with the company for four years, while Martha has been with Gallagher for three.



Proudly standing in front of his shop, Mr. J. W. Gallagher presents a picture of pleasant prosperity.

"I guess my favorite music is Bluegrass and Doc is about as good as there is," he says. "His son Merle is gonna be just as good, too." Merle Watson also plays a Gallagher.

It must be something of a mutual admiration society because Doc and Merle were quoted in the July/August issue of *Guitar Player* magazine as saying, "Well, both of us use J. W. Gallagher guitars, made down in Wartrace, Tennessee, . . . because Mr. Gallagher builds one of the finest instruments I've ever put my hands on." And Doc has been around for quite awhile.

About Jones, Gallagher says, "Not many people realize how good a guitar picker Grandpa is because they always see him playing the banjo, but he can really go to town."

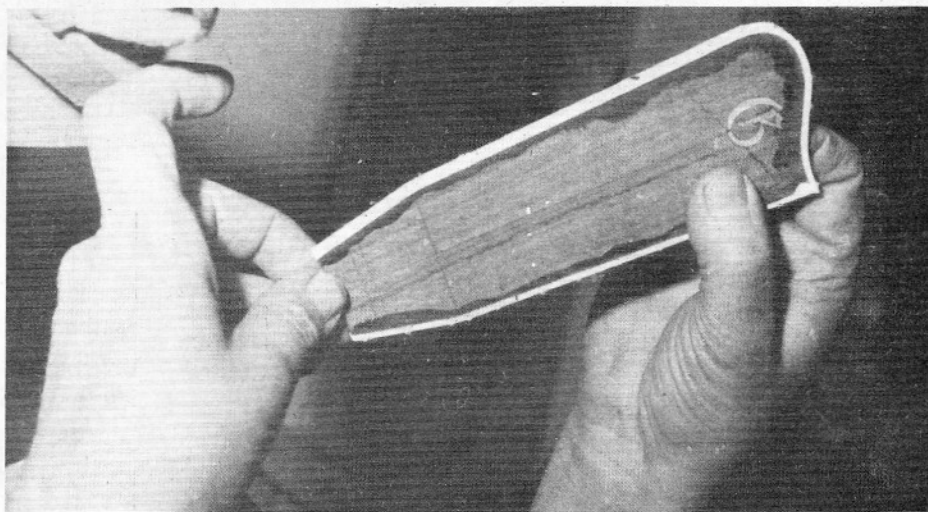
One of Gallagher's fondest memories is having spent an afternoon not too long ago with Grandpa Jones and his wife at a concert date in Dekalb County and watching the Opry standout perform.

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Back in the shop, Gallagher checks a few details with employees Martha Norvell and Gary Gross, and explains that quality is the key in guitar-making, or anything else for that matter.

"The secret, if you want to call it that, is in using the best materials available and taking patience and care in what you're doing," he says, explaining the "Gallagher Way" of doing business.

The acknowledged quality materials for making good guitars are imported rosewood, ebony, mahogany, and spruce



Displaying the english script "G" which has become his trademark, this headplate will soon become part of another world-famous Gallagher guitar.

and they're all found in the Gallagher line. His 45 years of experience in woodworking brings it all together.

Leaving nothing to chance, he has had his manufacturing specifications computerized into a formula that guarantees quality, time after time. If a finished guitar doesn't meet his rigid standards, it's redone until it does.

Gallagher uses the old aerodynamic principle of "maximum strength/minimum weight" in his design, explaining that the thinner the guitar box, the better the resonance and tone. He adds, however, that a certain thickness has to be maintained to insure the strength of the instrument and this balance is what makes for an excellent guitar.

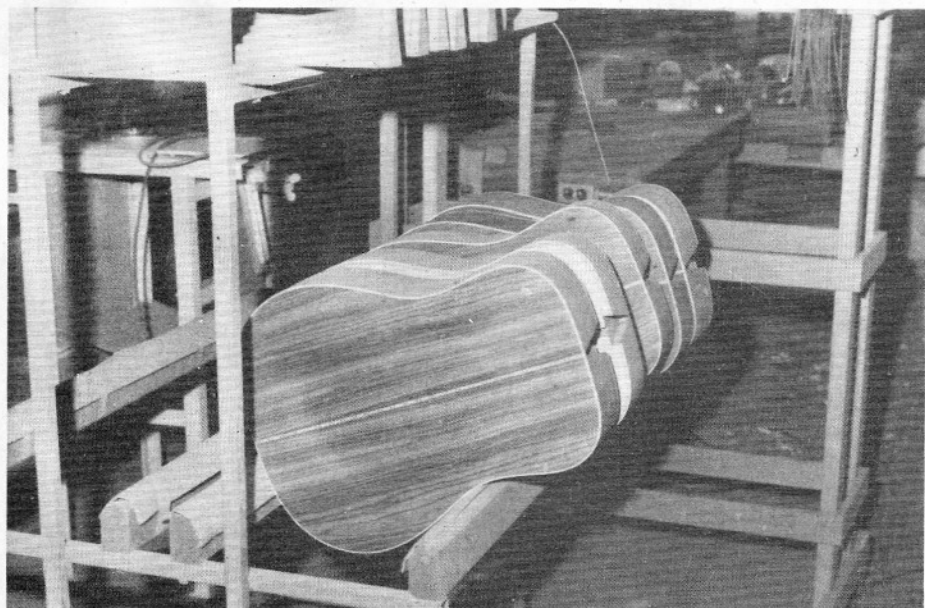
Thumbing through about six months worth of orders yet to fill could cause

some manufacturers to think of expanding or enlarging the business, but not Gallagher. He doesn't seem to want his pace to change.

"My son Bill is thinking of coming into the business soon and he might want to expand later, but I don't think much about it now," is his decree on the matter.

But whatever the future holds in store, guitar pickers everywhere will always know that whenever they pick up an instrument with an english script "G" on the headplate, they'll be holding one of the best there is.

It'll be a Gallagher.



Averaging about 80-90 guitars a year, these models will have to wait their turn until everything is ready for final construction by the master builder.



Checking the strength of the spruce tops, Mr. Gallagher notes that this is one of the most important steps in construction.