

Guitar Making Requires Art

There's an art in building guitars, along with a science, a skill and a determination . . . especially to a youngster of maybe 10 years of age who dreamed of making a violin.

W. J. Gallagher of Wartrace, owner-operator of a small plant building musical instruments of nation-wide recognition (and possibly even beyond), told Rotarians yesterday how he came to produce his first instrument . . . the violin he is holding in this picture.

Mrs. Gallagher, who does book and office work for the firm, holds their son's guitar, a specimen of his handiwork. Rotarian Allen Shoffner was program chairman.

Gallagher, a cabinetmaker most of his life until beginning the Gallagher Guitar Co. in 1965, can not play his instruments, but he related his answer to a surprised guest at the plant: "Did you ever see a guitar Chet Atkins built?"

Relating how he developed an interest and built his first musical instrument, Gallagher said he as a very young boy identified owners of cars passing his home, by sound, later studying art and design by viewing advertisements for

automobiles and other skills in slick magazines.

Fascination overcame him when he heard the value of the Stradivarius violin . . . just knowing someone had built such a successful item drove him to the realization such could be accomplished . . . and forced him to determine to do likewise.

Circling the picture of the violin in a mail order catalog and leaving beside his dad's chair so many times to get the message of his desire across, a violin was finally ordered when he was about 10 years of age.

With this "pattern" on hand things fell in place, Gallagher continued, saying he removed a walnut board from his father's barn and began the design and construction of his first violin . . . he used his mother's cane-bottom chair for a saw-horse (and damaged it, despite warnings), an old handsaw, a pocket knife and finally broken window glass to shape and smooth his board . . . after soaking the board in boiling water to soften and make it pliable.

Relating the story of dad's old red mule used to pull their first Model A Ford that hand-cranking would not start, and finding the mule's bones back in the woods some years after his death, he used a bone for this first violin's tailpiece . . . still intact on the instrument shown here.



T-G Photo by David Segroves

MR. AND MRS. W. J. GALLAGHER

Gallagher guitars are widely known, Airport manager-Rotarian Bob Bomar remarked yesterday after J. W. Gallagher of Wartrace spoke to the club about guitar building.

Revealing an incident unknown to Gallagher, Bomar said several years ago, while Southern Airways was providing regular service to Shelbyville, a young man from "up north," maybe New York, saved his money, flew into Shelbyville, walked to Wartrace, bought a Gallagher guitar, walked back to the airport, and departed on the next Southern plane for home.

Airport spokesmen, learning what he had done just prior to re-boarding the plane, were amazed . . . the brief conversation revealed the young fellow had saved just enough money for the flight and purchase, but none for a taxi or other transportation to Wartrace and back to the airport.

He must have really believed the Gallagher guitar was the best his money could buy, Bomar commented.

AUCTION
SAT., JAN. 15TH
- 10:00 A.M.