

Home Built Harps

by
Jerry
Brown

This feature is intended to celebrate and encourage the craft of harp-making by home hobbyists around the world. The goal is to publicize the excellent, and sometimes surprising, results of one of these adventurous woodworkers in each issue of the Journal. The focus is on amateur builders, those building harps as a hobby rather than as a business. We'll share some of their interesting experiences, successful woodworking tips, customizing ideas, etc. for the benefit and encouragement of other amateur builders.



Jerry Haynes with his maple harp

Announcing the World's First Ecologically-Friendly Harp! Jerry Haynes showed it to me at harpcon 2005 this past summer, and I could hardly believe the story. Jerry and Linda Haynes live in the forests of Washington State, just below the Canadian border. Big Leaf Maple is plentiful in these woods, and it often has wonderfully figured grain patterns for which people pay lots of money to use in furniture, not to mention musical instruments.

Five years ago, a big storm came through and blew down an 80-foot maple tree on the Haynes property. The entire root-ball had pulled out of the ground. Jerry called in a portable sawmill operator and asked him to cut the tree into lumber. As they were lopping off sections of the tall trunk, they were startled to see the base of the tree right itself after most of the weight had been removed. Yes, the trunk simply stood up again and re-planted itself into the original 15-foot diameter crater where the roots had previously been.



Harp on living room floor
all made from the same tree

Jerry just left the stump there and thought nothing more of it. He was building a new house, and he planned to use windfall for flooring the living room, as well as making a few other projects (Linda wanted him to build her a harp).

The biggest surprise, however, came the next summer when the Haynes noticed that the old tree trunk was sprouting growth again! Now, five years after the house has been finished, that tree is healthy and thriving in the woods with new branches reaching up 20 feet toward the sky.



Jerry and Linda call this their “Living Tree Harp”. They figure they might get to harvest the wood from the same tree again some time in the future. Is that sustainable forestry, or what?!

Haynes designed this harp himself after reading the book, *Folk Harp Design and Construction*, by Jerry Brown. He went all out by making a stave back body with ten staves – no simple job! The staves are 9/16” thick and about 2” wide at the bottom, tapering to 1” wide at the top. He had to cut each stave carefully at the taper, tilting his blade 9 degrees off vertical. That’s nice workmanship! Contact the Haynes by email at JLHaynes@nas.com. If you’d like to see these photos in color, look on-line at www.musikit.com.



Harp standing on the tree that came back to life

Ten staves form the back of this harp



Jerry Brown is owner and founder of Musicmaker’s Kits, Inc., in Minnesota, and author of *Folk Harp Design and Construction*, a 150-page manual on harp making. An admitted kit-monger, plywood soundboard pusher, and incurable do-it-yourselfer, he corresponds regularly with hobbyists who build their own musical instruments.

If you know of an amateur harp maker who should be featured in this series, please contact Jerry Brown, of Musicmaker’s Kits, Inc. (800) 432-5487, jerryb@musikit.com.