



Leo Charayn

GL - What got you interested in playing the guitar?

LC - I had some interest in the guitar in high school. I played just a little back then and eventually quit. Then jobs, college, family, sports, and a career came along and there just wasn't time for a guitar. When I retired the guitar was on my list of things to try out after I retired.

GL - How long have you been playing the guitar?

LC - I retired 5 years ago, so 5 years.

GL - What music gets you excited and why?

LC - I love the sound of a good acoustic guitar and I'm really fond of acoustic music. Also, I really like finger style, especially good finger style players. So, I really enjoy artists like Tommy Emmanuel, Billy String, James Taylor, Molly Tuttle, and 40 Fingers. Also, I'm rediscovering artists like Tony Rice and Bill Morrissey. And, yes, I know some of these folks are flat pickers.

GL - Are you playing guitar as much as you would like to and if not why?

LC - Oh, this is hard to answer. I play 1 to 3 hours a day depending on how busy life is making me. I suppose the real question becomes are you getting enough quality practice time? Quality practice time to me is the time by yourself working on something that will truly make you better. So, I'd say that in a week I probably have about 3-5 hours of quality practice time. I'm pretty addicted to playing every day. So, yes, I get to play as much as I'd like.

GL - When was the last time you listened to a new artist, band or guitar player?

LC - I listen to WUMB radio. So, I hear a lot of artists that are new to me on the radio. The Wood Brothers, Mipso, and Steel Wheels are fairly new to me and I first heard them on WUMB.

GL - What are you practicing and why?

LC - I'm probably working on too many things at once. The following are some things I'm working on:

Tom Waits, The Heart of Saturday Night.

James Taylor's, Fire and Rain, and You Can Close Your Eyes.

My guitar teacher has given me his arrangement of Don't Think Twice and I'm learning that, too. I'm working on better technique practicing things, like palm muting, walk ups and walk downs and making them fit with the rhythm of the music. And I spend time with a metronome a couple of times a week. I've taken James Taylor's Sweet Baby James and applied a varying country strum to it and applied some walk ups. This exercise has improved my timing and my pick location.

GL - Who are your top three musical influences and why?

LC - Well . . . Tommy Emmanuel just because he is so good. Every time I listen to him I'm in awe. James Taylor, his finger style guitar is good and so smooth. Every note seems to be just so well thought out. And his songs are just wonderful. I think I have a bunch of people and bands that are tied for third place. These include: The Band, The Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan, Billy Strings, Molly Tuttle, Eric Clapton, and Tony Rice.

GL - What is your greatest guitar playing challenge?

LC - A couple of items come to mind: Improving my rhythm. Strengthening my baby finger on my left hand and using it more.

GL - What musical accomplishment are you most proud of?

LC - My rhythm used to be really bad. It's gotten much better. I keep working at my rhythm by using a metronome and by playing with other people. This proves that repetitive practice can make you better.

GL - How would you describe yourself as a musician in one sentence?

LC - A pretty average intermediate guitar player whose voice isn't very good. But I'm having fun with it.

GL - Do you keep your guitar playing to yourself or do you play for audiences?

LC - I play more for myself. I get together with my son and daughter-in-law who live in the Berkshires about once every 6 weeks. He plays guitar and she can play the fiddle. Once a week I get together with a friend of mine and we have a few beers and play. Also, there is Guitar League and other jams I participate in. If there is an audience, it is usually family or close friends.

GL - What style do you mostly play and why?

LC - I split my time about evenly between finger style and playing with a pick. As for the musical style, I'd say it's Americana. Which to me includes folk, blues, country, and roots music. The songs I'm most interested in learning fit into this category.