

# Laurie Postans

## A Musical Journey, 1943—2011

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Laurie was born Laurence Rodney Postans, in England, on January 9, 1943. His father, of whom Laurie was particularly proud, was a London policeman, affectionately known then as a London “Bob-by”. In 1948 the family immigrated to Canada, living first in Winnipeg before moving to Nanaimo. At the age of 15, at the beginning of the folk revival, Laurie picked up the guitar, and this led to the banjo, the 12-string guitar, the octave mandolin, the concertina and, at one stage, the sitar. Upon his graduation from high school, Laurie studied to become an accountant, and eventually a Chartered Accountant, in Victoria and elsewhere, with his studies broken up somewhat by his musical pursuits. It was in Victoria that he played with his first folk group, The Wayfarers. Laurie was the musical force behind The Wayfarers; he played guitar, 12-string guitar, his trademark long-necked banjo, and sitar. Ron Parish also played guitar, John MacConnachie played tenor guitar, and Clif Dawson was on percussion and washtub bass. Later, Jim Whittaker took over on washtub bass when Clif went to art school in Vancouver. In 1965, at a house party in Victoria, Laurie met Sharon Hazelwood. On the music front, they teamed up as the duo, and sometime trio, Folkal Poynt, first with Clif Dawson and later with Colin Jordan. Then, with Bill and Judith Stamps, they formed the group Western Broom and Woodenware.



Figure 1: The Wayfarers, circa 1985



Figure 2: Sharon and Laurie

Sharon and Laurie were married in 1967 and, in the summer of 1972, they went to Britain to check out the folk scene. Of special note during their sojourn in the U.K. was their residency at the Hammer-smith Folk Club and meeting the fine folksinger Celia O’Neill, now based in Vancouver. Sharon and Laurie remained together until 1977. In 1978 Laurie met Sue Averill. They were married in 1980 and their son Michael was born two years later. During this time Laurie and Sue formed Sagebrush Company with Leo Ready. Later, again with the Stamps, and with the addition of the fine Victoria singer-songwriter Pat Thompson, they formed Rainy Cove (1981-1986). In order to explore further avenues of music, in 1984 Laurie and Sue got together with Maureen Campbell and Denis Donnelly to form the very popular group Callanish, named after the stone circle on the Isle of Lewis in the Scottish Hebrides, but in 1986 Laurie and Sue moved to Nanaimo, which effectively put an end to the group. Although Callanish did not record during their short time together, a few years ago they reformed in order to record, and from these sessions has come an eclectic collection of thirteen songs and tunes. The final mix of the recordings was completed in 2007 and we can now look forward to the release of the Callanish CD within the foreseeable future.



**Figure 3: Callenish, 1985**

In Nanaimo, Laurie and Sue reformed with singer, guitarist and bass player George Halkyard as Full Circle, which recorded two excellent albums to cassette, *Roll On Clouds* (1989) and *End of an Era* (1993). *Roll On Clouds* took its title from the song by Jean Richie and, to a degree, indicated the content of the recording, which is largely made up of cover songs. Of the thirteen tracks, five were traditional and the others included James Keelaghan's fine song "Hillcrest Mine", "Tugboats" by Bob Bossin, the Tim Hall/John Lyon song "Home Dearie Home", Bob Coltman's "Last Minstrel Show", and "Second Effort" and "Everything's Gonna Be Okay", by the late Stan Rogers and the late Becky Bernson, respectively. Their later cassette, *End of an Era*, included three notable B.C. songs, "End of an Era" by Terry Botkin, "The Rum Runners Song" by Jack Fleetwood, with music by George Halkyard, and "Dreams of My Father" by Deb Maiké.

In 1997, Laurie and Sue moved on with their lives, and it was in this year that Laurie met the singer-songwriter and biologist Nell Stallard, whom he married in 1999. They showcased their multi-instrumental talents as the duo Sassenach Rebellion and in this format they recorded two CDs, *The Trooper & the Maid* (2000) [reviewed in the *Bulletin*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 33] and *Come Back Here* (2008). *The Trooper & the Maid* included "Aberfan", a song about the Welsh mining village disaster, written by Nell, and of the 16 songs on *Come Back Here*, Nell, with the help of Laurie in some cases (Nell says Laurie was particularly good at writing choruses for songs), wrote seven: "Burqa", "Food Chain", "When the Well Runs Dry", "Come Back Here", "Psalm 121", "Bears Don't Eat Oranges", and "Keith Fair". Of the remaining nine mostly traditional songs, three others also have close connections to British Columbia: "Are You From Bevan", much loved by singers and audiences, especially for its chorus, was collected and adapted by Phil Thomas; "Home Dearie Home", another popular piece, reprised Laurie's *Full Circle* recording of 1989; and "This Old World" ("Seems

like this old world needs a shaking up"), was written by the singer-songwriter, guitar workshop instructor, and member of the Vancouver folk group Fraser Union, Barry Truter. This period of Laurie and Nell's life also included playing with their close friends Rod and Molly Newman in the group Pennyfarthing and, for six years, playing the music for Victoria's Holly Tree Morris. Laurie's love of music was also illustrated by his involvement with the British Columbia Folklore Society. Laurie had been a valuable member since its inception and, amongst other positions, had been both its President and its Treasurer. He was also a most generous contributor and, in memoriam and as a lasting tribute, Nell very kindly asked that donations be made to the Society ([www.folklore.bc.ca](http://www.folklore.bc.ca)).



**Figure 4: Nell and Laurie**

On Saturday, July 9, 2011, Laurie and Nell, together with a considerable number of Victoria folk musicians, gathered at the instrument-maker Neil Russell's house for a barbeque. Although Laurie had been suffering from a neurological condition (MSA) for some time, he played his 12-string guitar and socialised freely at the gathering of friends. Laurie passed away peacefully in his sleep on the following morning, Sunday, July 10, 2011.

Laurie leaves behind him his beloved wife Nell, his step-son James and James's fiancée Kelly, his son Michael, daughter-in-law Michelle, and their son, the baby Seth.

A wake for Laurie was held on Monday, July 18 at his and Nell's home. It was very well attended by a multitude of family and both familiar faces from the B.C. music scene and long-lost friends who came to pay their last respects and play music in honour of him until late in the evening. Amongst the songs that were sung, and appropriately the first song was "Mister Fingers", newly written for Laurie by Denis Donnelly.

# Mister Fingers

To the Memory of Laurie Postans, 1943-2011

Capo where comfortable (3<sup>rd</sup>?)  
And use these C chord positions

Words and music  
By Denis Donnelly

*Chorus*

Hey, Mis-ter fin-gers, let's play a song, One that we both know, that won't take too long, We'll trade off the ver-ses, and

*Verse 1*

both play a - long \_\_\_\_\_ And you'll take a break on the cho-rus. \_\_\_\_\_ There's a hole in the

har-mo - ny bass line down low, there's a hole where the fin - ger-pick in - tro should go, There's a hole on the

stage at the start of the show, \_\_\_\_\_ And a hole in the hearts of the friends here \_\_\_\_\_

*V.2:* Back in the day, it was Dave, Ian, and Pete  
And the Kingstons who gave you those harmonies sweet  
And Stan, Trad, and Judy and your axe breathing heat  
When you got into Living in the Country

*V.3:* You gave us your music, you gave us your heart  
You gave us the best you had right from the start  
Now there's no more to give, now we're so far apart  
And you've gone where no one can find you

*V.4:* I know you'll be wanting to let us all know  
That you're fine where you are, and maybe that's so  
But I can't help but think if you didn't have to go  
There's so many songs we could play now

*V.5:* The party's all over, I sit here alone  
The songs in my head are all scattered and blown  
So I guess I'll just have to sing on my own  
And give your sweet life to my memory