



Larry Bender shod some of the best for some of the best throughout his career. He was the official farrier at Devon (pictured) for 30 years.

# *The Man Behind The Hammer* LARRY BENDER

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER



Larry Bender and Beverly Jean Clouser walked down the aisle August 29, 1964 and then walked through life together for the next 55 years.



Bender served the famed Penn National Horse Show as its farrier for 35 years. This scene was vintage 1972.

“I’ve known two truly great men in my lifetime:” said Pennsylvania trainer Gary Guz. “Garland Bradshaw and Larry Bender!”

Industry professionals over and over had similar reactions when responding to the November 5th passing of noted farrier Larry Bender (77) at his Lower Paxton Township, Pennsylvania residence. Bender had been battling with PSC, a rare liver bile duct disease.

The grandson of a horse doctor, Bender was the son of the late Mildred (Kelso) and Kenneth Bender. The Central Dauphin High School graduate went on to graduate from farrier school at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California and did his “graduate studies” with Charles (Zimmie) Zimmerman of Linglestown.

The only thing he loved more than shoeing horses and the people in the show horse industry was his high school sweetheart and wife of 56 years, Beverly. They built a beautiful life and a beautiful home, both loving nature, animals and people.

A sought after farrier of American Saddlebreds, Hackney Ponies, and Morgans, Bender spent 55 years helping trainers and

owners make their horses comfortable and travel correctly. Among his clients over the years were George Nash, Gary Guz, Tom Caisse, Frank McConnell, Rob Byers, Mike Barlow, Charles and Wendall Jones, Sullivan Davis, Jim Koller, Rich Robertson, David Kerger, Todd Mathieson, Linda Coffin-Roman, Mark Mason, Jimmy Arnold, Bill Reed, Sr., Brad and Nancy Lukens, Beth Wentz, Bill Fields, Sally Eichlin, Harry Binkley, Marty Waldman, Jimmy Orphanos, Leonard Fishback, Vickie and Charlie Greer, Phyliss Zuber, and many others.

Some of the great show stars he enjoyed shoeing were Stonewall’s Final Addition, I’m A New Yorker, The Puppeteer, Symbolism, Sultan’s Supreme Secret, Hayfield’s Great Guy, Spencer County, Vindicator, R-Bar-B Lord Spence, HVK Vibrance, Trija’s Vigil Pepper, Lady’s Enticement, Braveheart, Diablo, JD Matthews, Oprah Winfrey, and Mr.’s Bones.

He also took great pride in watching his wife Beverly show such stars CH Rip City, Santana Sage, Anacacho Mayday, UNH Cameo, UNH Faraday, Tea and Honey, and Hickory Lane Pride.

“He was one of the top farriers in the Northeast,” said fellow blacksmith Tim Keller. “He was always willing to help anyone, he had a lot of fun, and loved to cook. We had a lot of great times in that shoeing shop. There were a lot of jokes and pranks played on one another. Besides being a well-respected farrier, he was great guy.”

“Larry did my work for 34 years,” said Gary Guz. “He was great, taught me so much about how a horse travels and shoeing. I think what he was the absolute best at was controlling the break over on a horse, keeping it travelling so correct.

“He was very dedicated. If he had been here working on a few changes, in a day or two he would call to see if the changes were working. He knew American Saddlebreds and the physics of motion. He always wanted to watch a horse work so he could understand what it needed.

“Also, if I had one that tore a foot off and he was away working at another farm, as soon as he was finished there he would be at my place to fix my one horse. That doesn’t happen a lot today.

“I think the thing that made Larry so unique was he shod a little different for each trainer because he said each trainer had a different

method, a different way of mouth-  
ing a horse and that effected the  
way their horses traveled.

“As a person, there were none  
better. He was very intelligent.  
Larry’s amount of knowledge was  
unbelievable and he could fix any-  
thing. One thing that I hope has  
rubbed off on me is he never quit  
learning. He was always willing to  
learn from others, always watching  
and paying attention. He would say  
to me, ‘why didn’t I think of that?’

“I really miss him.”

The outpouring of love  
and respect for Larry has been  
remarkable, but that’s the kind  
of person he was. If you met him  
once and shared a passion, be it  
horses, shoeing, dogs, gardening,  
antiques, or tinkering, he was your  
friend.

As many have said, he was  
always willing to help. He took  
great time and pride with his  
apprentices, including Joe Alfano,  
Chester Sebastian, Brian Koch,  
Craig Colflesh, and Tom Johns.

“I’ve never had a farrier like  
him,” said J & L Stables’ Linda  
Coffin-Roman. “He knew every-  
thing and was especially good  
with a gaited horse. Larry was so  
great to work with and his knowl-  
edge was unbelievable. I loved

that he always wanted to watch a  
horse work before shoeing them.  
He would listen to what you had  
to say, but he wanted to see it work  
himself.

“I was so blessed he came  
to shoe for me when Dave Dorn  
retired. It was an absolute bless-  
ing! Julia Wester’s Domino Dots  
was the last horse he wanted to  
shoe before retiring in 2019. He  
loved her.

“When he put that last foot  
down, he quickly said, ‘Put her  
away.’ I asked, ‘Don’t you want to  
give her a mint?’ He said, ‘Yes,’  
with tears rolling down his face.

“He had worked on that  
mare for five years and loved  
her so much. I can’t say enough  
great things about our friend and  
farrier.”

To have had a life-long partner  
and have a career that you were  
passionate about, along with  
friends all across the country, is  
the best anyone can ask for. The  
man behind the hammer for so  
many show ring greats was the  
same man who enjoyed many of  
God’s wonders on this earth and  
loved his days here sharing them  
with Beverly.

Larry Bender, you will be  
sorely missed by many.



With an assist from Dave Dorn, while Lonnie  
Lavery holds the horse, Larry replaced this shoe  
during one of his early years at Devon in this H.  
Leon Sargent picture.



Julia Wester’s Domino Dots was the last horse  
that Bender shod. Trained by Linda Coffin-Roman,  
the mare won many titles with Bender behind the  
hammer for five years they were together.



The shoeing shop was the scene of many great times  
and many great tales. Joining Larry (far left) in this  
group were (l-r) Joe Alfano, Brian Koch, George  
Nash, Dave Dorn, and Carl Kheun.