

## Larry Finch

Prior to the 1964 season, an Ohio trapper sent off for some new name tags from one of the manufacturers who advertised that service. Eight weeks later, they finally arrived! He was beginning to wonder if they would make it in time for the opening of the season. He thought at the time that there should be a better way. But although jobs and family and trapping kept him busy, his work experience was paving the way for a new trap tag business.

In 1979, Larry Finch Sr. decided that it was time. His wife, Mae, was hesitant, but Larry was convinced that he had a better way to produce tags and that the business would succeed. Larry had been working as a purchasing agent for a company that made mufflers for the Big 3 automakers and had a background in the stamping process. He designed a completely new machine to produce trap tags. A local machinist was contracted to make the dies and Larry put it all together in the family garage. Now all he needed was customers.

“The first ad Dad placed was a classified in Fur-Fish-Game magazine,” said Larry Finch Jr. Orders finally came several anxious days later. ” Six orders arrived the first time. Dad was tickled to death about it. I was only 14 years old at the time,” said Larry Jr., “But I still remember seeing him smile about it. We’ve had an ad in every issue of F-F-G since!”

Larry Sr. immediately went to the garage and stamped out the first brass tags for the fledgling business. Brass was used exclusively at first because it was cheaper. The orders were sent out quickly by Mae. Customer service was and still is a priority with Larry A. Finch trap tags. A year later, the company Larry Sr. worked for closed their doors and he found a job across the border in Michigan as a sales rep. That meant while he was often on the road, wife Mae and son Larry Jr. made tags. That year they also headed to their first National Trappers Association convention in Rutland, Vermont. Larry Jr. remembers stopping at Stanley Hawbakers on the way to try to sell trap tags. “Stanley listened to Dad and said ‘So here’s another guy that thinks he’s going to make a mark in the trap supply business, huh.’ We didn’t get an order, but I did get a signed, hardback copy of Hawbaker’s ‘Trapping North American Furbearers’”, said Larry Jr.

The next year at the NTA convention in Iowa, Larry noticed that a lot of people walked by their booth without stopping. The booth needed eye appeal. A short line of trap supplies was added to be sold just at conventions. The majority of their business was still by mail, from ads in trapping magazines. Due to demand, copper was added as an option for the tags as well.

One early casualty of the trapping supply business was, unfortunately, trapping! “Dad taught all us boys to trap,” said Larry Jr. “It was mostly muskrats in the small creeks and ditches in Williams County. One day when Dad and my brother Jerry were out running the line they caught 34 rats and the Game Warden came up and asked to see their licenses. That was back when you had to carry it on the middle of your back. Jerry turned around to show the man his, and discovered that he had on his twin brother Garry’s hunting coat! It took some talking to convince the Warden of the honest mistake! Whenever they went out after that, the twins always checked to make sure each had on the right coat.” After the business took off, Larry Sr. had no time to trap and the boys only trapped when they were youngsters. Larry Jr. still remembers getting his first license at the ripe old age of 8, in 1972. By 1982, Larry Sr. had enough of life on the road as a sales rep and quit that job to devote more time to the trap tag making business. He worked part time driving truck, and Larry Jr. was called upon to keep up the tag making. For many years, Larry Finch Sr. was a familiar sight at the Ohio State Trappers

Association annual convention as well as at every National Trappers Association convention plus many other state gatherings.

“By 2000, Dad was slowing down a little, with some health problems,” Said Larry Jr. “About the same time, my life changed some as well. A woman I knew, who managed a clothing store asked if I could clean the store windows. I did and that lead to me starting my own window cleaning business. That flexible schedule allowed me to help Dad with the tag business when he needed it. I also ended up marrying Lisa, the store manager!”

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Finch family lost a husband and father, and trappers lost a friend when Larry Sr. passed away. Wife Mae and son Larry Jr. decided to keep the family business going. Now Larry Jr. attends about ten conventions a year, including OSTA and NTA and tag making is his full time job. The tags are still produced with the same machine, in the same garage, and Mae still seals each outgoing order. Customer satisfaction and accuracy are still important. Although e-commerce generates a growing portion of orders, the same classified ad in F-F-G still sells tags.

Larry Finch Trap Tags has been at every OSTA convention since 1979. Stop by the booth and say “Hi” to Larry Jr. He can help keep you legal.