



# American Banjo Museum Quarterly

Fall 2020

## A Tribute to Jack Canine



It is with great sadness that we share the news that American Banjo Museum founder and benefactor, Jack Canine, passed away on Sunday, September 27, 2020. A lifelong friend of the banjo – naming his company, The Banjo Corporation after his passion, Jack began collecting vintage banjos in the 1980s. When the time came to find a new home for his collection, he – along with attorney Brady Hunt – founded the *National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame Museum* in Guthrie, Oklahoma in 1998. When the museum's collection outgrew that modest facility with the 2007 acquisition of a collection of over 200 vintage banjos (purchased with Mr. Canine's help), the museum began a search for a new home. While many locales were considered, Jack believed in Oklahoma City and, when what would become our new home was found in OKC's Bricktown district, purchased

the building, funded a complete renovation, and established a financial endowment which allows us to share his vision of preserving and promoting the music and history of the banjo with the world. A devotee of the four-string jazz banjo, Mr. Canine was wise in realizing that the story of the banjo included many different types of instruments and playing styles. In this spirit, he was the driving force and financial support behind expanding the museum's collection to represent all types of banjos and playing techniques. With this direction a more inclusive name seemed in order and the *American Banjo Museum* was christened. As the museum celebrated its 10th anniversary in Oklahoma City in September of 2019, Mr. Canine made his last visit and proclaimed, "I like what you're doing...keep it up." In his memory – and celebration of a life well lived – the staff and board of directors of the American Banjo Museum will continue to honor the legacy of Jack Canine.



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## MISSION

The mission of the American Banjo Museum is to preserve and promote the banjo while expanding appreciation and understanding of its history and music.

## STAFF

Johnny Baier, Executive Director  
Margie Smith-Robbins, Assistant Administrator  
Rachel Reichert, Sales & Marketing  
Sherril Mitchell, Reception  
Ellie Burns, Administrative Assistant  
Lucas Ross, Community Outreach & Promotion Coordinator

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## My Journey With Jack Canine by Johnny Baier

While I had seen him at events, I didn't actually meet Jack Canine until 1997. Out of the blue he called me to discuss my helping him find a new home for his personal collection of banjos, noting that his wife had recently passed away and he "wanted to downsize..." His goal was to keep his collection intact by donating it to a museum which would put it on permanent display. Although I had no museum experience, Jack saw a kindred passion in me that allowed him to entrust me to propose his donation to a list of major museums including the Smithsonian in Washington and the Henry Ford in Detroit. When none of those museums showed any interest in his donation with (pun intended) "strings attached," I made Jack aware of Midwest City, Oklahoma attorney, Brady Hunt, who had a vision of establishing a four-string banjo Hall of Fame as well as a museum in Guthrie, Oklahoma to enhance the festival which he produced there each spring. I put Jack and Brady together and, in short order, a nonprofit corporation was established and the National

Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame Museum opened its doors above the YMCA in Guthrie in 1998.

As a member of the board, I was aware of the struggles and growing pains the museum went through during those early years. However, Jack Canine was committed to the success of the project and truly put his money where his mouth was. Having gone through a succession of museum directors who were not banjo specialists, Jack inquired if I would be interested in the position. While I had no museum background and little interest in uprooting my young family, Jack convinced me that the museum needed someone like me (and, let's face it, everyone likes to be needed). While it was a big change from my performing career (not to mention, a major upheaval for my family), the financial security which Jack assured us allowed my wife, Sara, and I to raise our children without the uncertainty associated with the music business. So, in 2004 I accepted the museum director's position and we moved from Orlando to Edmond, Oklahoma.

My presence at the museum seemed to energize Jack to take ever growing and bolder steps to develop the museum into the world-class facility that he envisioned. In 2006 he again entrusted me, this time to negotiate the overseas purchase of the Dierk Frerich's collection of over 200 American made banjos from the jazz age of the 1920s. This million-dollar acquisition immediately found us outgrowing our small Guthrie museum and looking for a new home. While we seriously explored several locales via a nationwide site search, having become established with an Oklahoma

identity resulted in our decision to stay relatively put. When a 1920s vintage warehouse in the Bricktown district of downtown Oklahoma City became available, Jack was decisive in stating this to be our new home.

The belief and trust which Jack showed in me through the renovation and relocation process was extraordinary and were enough to last a lifetime...but there was more. In 2012 Jack determined that we could not truly fulfill our mission with our exclusive focus on four-string jazz age tenor and plectrum banjos (no matter how much we liked them ourselves). So a new chapter in the museum's evolution began when I was yet again entrusted to conceive, research and script the major expansion project which saw us acquire iconic and historically

significant instruments and artifacts from all major periods of banjo evolution in the United States. With our collection now representing all types of banjos and playing styles, it was Jack Canine's influence which also saw our Hall of Fame expand to embrace the entire spectrum of banjo music and history as well. In 2014, with Earl Scruggs as our inaugural five-string inductee, the *American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame* as we know it today was established.

The intervening years have seen the museum grow in stature and acceptance in the worldwide banjo community thanks to the vision, wisdom and means of Jack Canine. While I know what the world sees when they walk into our beautiful museum, very few know how we came to be. Simply put, we would not exist without Mr. Canine. From

a personal perspective, he changed my life through his trust and belief and, while we didn't always agree on everything, our occasional differences were always rooted in what was best for the museum. Although he was a man of great wealth and generosity, I am proud to say that I never asked him to conceptualize and fund any of the amazing things we've been able to accomplish, yet he allowed me to be a major part of fulfilling his vision for the American Banjo Museum none the less.

For what he shared with me...and what his legacy continues to share with the world, I will be forever in the debt of Jack Canine.

Johnny Baier  
Executive Director

## SHOW YOUR BANJO SPIRIT THIS CHRISTMAS WITH UNIQUE ABM CHRISTMAS CARDS!

What better way to share the joy of both the banjo and the holiday season than by sending your friends unique banjo themed Christmas cards designed by the American Banjo Museum. These one-of-a-kind holiday greeting cards are only available from the ABM and will bring a smile to anyone who loves the spirit of the Christmas season. Supplies are limited...order yours now at [americanbanjomuseum.com/christmas](http://americanbanjomuseum.com/christmas)





## A Virtual Banjo Fest

Each year since the museum opened in 1998, we have had the opportunity to honor the best of the best in the banjo world with induction into the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame and, despite all the challenges 2020 has brought, the show must go on! As most of the world was turned upside down due to COVID-19, the American Banjo Museum experienced the effects as well. While previous years saw Hall of Fame take place during gala ceremonies held in Oklahoma City as part of the ABM BANJO FEST weekend, with the ongoing uptick in COVID-19 cases – and safety as a top priority, this year’s induction ceremonies were held as a virtual event streamed via the internet on October 16. Each of this year’s honorees: Geoff Stelling for Design & Manufacture, Roger Sprung for *Education & Instruction*, Don Reno for *Historical*, "Fast Eddie" Erickson for *Four-String Performance*, and Gary "Biscuit" Davis for *Five-String Performance* were class acts in understanding the unusual circumstances and working with us to bring a virtual Hall of Fame induction broadcast that we are all very proud of. *Continued on Page 6*



Roger Sprung  
2020 Inductee for Banjo Instruction



Dale Reno  
accepting his Father, Don Reno's,  
Historic Induction



Geoff Stelling (right), 2020 Inductee for Banjo Manufacturing, with  
American Banjo Museum Board President Doug Parsons (left)

## Outreach

Community outreach has looked different over the past few months with the inability to do many of the usual fall activities safely in person. In times such as this we are grateful to be a part of such a wonderfully creative community that has been coming up with safe ways we can all participate in a few community events and appreciate fall!



### Forward into the Light

On August 26 we participated in the *Forward Into the Light* celebration of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, turning 100 years old. As many of you know, we had chosen our *Women of the Banjo* exhibit to showcase this year for the very same reason. We were honored to be able to participate in Women’s Vote 100, the Federal Commission commemorating 100 Years of the 19th Amendment, effort to highlight the milestone by illuminating the *American Banjo Museum* and our *Women of the Banjo* display in the suffragette colors of purple and gold! While it was still another 46 years until all women were guaranteed the right to vote, honoring this milestone of the bending the arc of American history towards justice is near and dear to our hearts.



### Pumpkin Patch at Myriad Botanical Gardens

We also currently participated in *The Great Pumpkin Patch at Myriad Botanical Gardens*. They asked non-profits and classrooms from around the area to create scarecrows to place around the outdoor pumpkin patch to add some charm to the event so we entered our creation - J.D. Scare Crowe - into the fun. While the majority of the passersby might not get the pun referring to our 2016 Hall of Fame inductee, J.D. Crowe, we know our banjo friends reading this will appreciate him!



DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT  
OUR VIRTUAL PROGRAMING AT:

[YOUTUBE.COM/  
AMERICANBANJOMUSEUM](https://www.youtube.com/AmericanBanjoMuseum)

## A Virtual Banjo Fest Continued

As we were unable to host our banjo friends from around the country who would typically be “road-tripping” to OKC, we endeavored to bring the Hall of Fame experience directly to home viewers. During the months and weeks prior to the big show, ABM board members Doug Parsons and Paul Poirier made trips to the locales of honorees making small or private presentations. ABM executive director did a similar completely virtual presentation to Eddie Erickson. Tributes to honorees came in from names such as John McEuen, Tony Trischka, Alan Munde and Dolly Parton. As the big day drew near, ABM outreach and promotions coordinator, Lucas Ross, worked feverishly to edit all the video to provide a seamless broadcast for the home viewers. During the week of October 12th thru the 16th each day saw an in-depth interview with each incoming Hall of Fame honoree or their families hosted by Johnny Baier.



Tony Trischka  
Congratulating Roger Sprung

Then, on Friday, October 16 at 7PM we broadcast a coast-to-coast road trip with a visit to each of our honorees in their hometowns to present their induction into the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame. While we sincerely miss the in-person Hall of Fame experience (and plan to invite all of this year’s honorees to OKC for a future Hall of Fame event), our virtual ceremony and coast-to-coast road trip was a fun and effective alternative.

If you missed this special week of programming, all of the interviews as well as the full American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame induction ceremony are available at [youtube.com/americanbanjomuseum](https://www.youtube.com/americanbanjomuseum) or [facebook.com/americanbanjomuseum/videos](https://www.facebook.com/americanbanjomuseum/videos).

We’d like to thank our sponsors for the event: The family of Sandy and Lila Singleton, Devin & Gayle Tower, Doug and Phyllis Parsons/PBS Services, and Paul and Theresa Poirier as well as all of the honorees and special

guests who participated in the ceremony and celebrations. And, most of all, we’d like to congratulate the well-deserved 2020 Banjo Hall of Fame Honorees: Geoff Stelling, Roger Sprung, Don Reno, Eddie Erickson, and Gary "Biscuit" Davis. Congratulations to these deserving inductees, we look forward to seeing all your smiling faces next year in Oklahoma City for a long overdue Banjo Fest concert!



Eddie Erickson  
2020 Inductee for 4-String Performance



Gary "Biscuit" Davis  
2020 Inductee for 5-String Performance



Dolly Parton  
Congratulating Gary Davis

## Letter from the Board

### Leaving A Legacy

It was a sad day when I heard of Jack Canine’s passing away. Jack, enjoyed the banjo and loved the people and players that make up the banjo community. Jack decided a number of years earlier that his love of the banjo was important enough to found the American Banjo Museum. As I have said many times, this is a gift to the world from a great man. With his passing, the American Banjo Museum is a very visible part of Jack’s legacy. He will be remembered as the generous gentleman and true friend of the banjo community that he truly was.

So, as we celebrate Jack’s life, let’s take a moment to think about our personal legacy. How will we want to be remembered? Legacy building is not just something for someone else to do, it is something we all should think about. Legacy building is about being mindful of the opportunities and the responsibilities we all have to serve by serving others. “It’s planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.” Building a legacy comes about by working and supporting causes and organizations to ensure the long-term viability of the organization and leaving it in a better place, more resilient and stronger in their ability to fulfill its mission.

In this unique world of 2020, with COVID-19, shutdowns, worry and strife, the organizations we love need our help more than ever. I hope you will join with me and others, who were inspired by Jack Canine, in building a legacy of support for the American Banjo Museum. Included with each newsletter is an envelope asking you to support the ABM with a

donation. I hope you choose to use it to further Jack’s legacy and support our efforts and our mission.

Theresa and I have made the American Banjo Museum a priority in our lives..... Giving back and supporting the ABM is important to us. I hope all of you will join us as fellow banjo lovers in supporting the American Banjo Museum. The Legacy of Jack Canine lives with all of us and your support will ensure that Jack’s legacy, the American Banjo Museum, remains strong into the future.

Paul Poirier, Board Member



## ABM Membership



The American Banjo Museum wishes to recognize and thank new members and those that have renewed their membership the third quarter of 2020.

### Individual Membership

Nancy Cain  
Wayne Cantwell  
Diane Murphy  
Brian P. Spini

### Couple Membership

Jennifer L. Lehner

To become a member, gift a membership, or upgrade your current membership call 405-604-2793 or visit [americanbanjomuseum.com](https://www.americanbanjomuseum.com).

## CARES Act and End of Year Tax Implications

Please check with your financial advisor regarding end-of-year CARES Act opportunities in order to get the most out of your donations this holiday season! The CARES Act provides for several above-the-line contributions to nonprofit organizations such as the American Banjo Museum set to end this year...among these are:

- A deduction for up to \$300 per person/\$600 per married couple even if individuals do not itemize their deductions for 2020 charitable contributions.
- Individuals who itemize can deduct cash contributions up to 100% of their 2020 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI).
- Taxpayers may donate more than 100% of AGI in 2020. Cash contributions above 100% may be carried forward five years.
- Corporations may deduct up to 25% of their taxable income for cash contributions to 501(c)3 public nonprofits.



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## VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



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Virtual Tours and Videos can be viewed on the Museum's  
Facebook Page or Website: [americanbanjomuseum.com](http://americanbanjomuseum.com)