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## ABM Receives Georgette Twain Banjo



*Cecilia Yale, daughter of Georgette Twain*

In 1951, 26-year-old Georgette Twain, an aspiring opera singer, was set to audition for the San Francisco Opera. Raised by parents who were professionals in the theater, Twain's own career was about to take off. But, as she prepared for her audition, she noticed something was terribly wrong. Her left hand was knotted and she was having difficulty walking, and then, the unthinkable happened, she lost her voice. The young singer had contracted polio.

Robbed of her voice and her left side paralyzed, Twain was angry and in her own words, "hated the world." Rather than embarking on a singing career, she instead began the long road of physical therapy that would eventually help her regain the ability to walk and speak, but her dreams of a singing career were gone forever.

With a love of music still intact, Twain's father agreed to teach her to play his old banjo as part of her physical therapy. It was the banjo which would lead her back to a musical performance career that would span decades.

Though she was unable to speak during her first television appearances, she ultimately did regain her voice. But more so, it was the way in which she made the strings of her banjo sing that would cement her place in musical history.

Twain became a student and friend of the great banjoist, Eddie Peabody, and in 1962 *Variety* magazine named her the "World's Greatest Woman Banjo Player." She went on to perform hundreds of shows in major entertainment venues and would often share the stage with show business legends such as Phyllis Diller, Lawrence Welk, Red Skelton, Carol Channing and Danny Thomas.

As the entertainment industry changed in the 1970s, Twain became a headline performer aboard luxury cruise ships, summing up her philosophy on life and career like this, "I learned that you can't sit around feeling sorry for yourself. You've got to fight your own problems."

Sadly, Georgette Twain passed earlier this year. During a private ceremony on November 18th her daughter, Cecilia Yale, graciously donated her mother's beloved banjo, a 1962 Vega Vox IV, to the American Banjo Museum. Now on permanent display along with one of Twain's stage costumes, this priceless artifact of banjo history will allow Twain to have an audience for generations yet to come.

"We're honored to have become the stewards of such an historically significant instrument," said Johnny Baier, Executive Director, American Banjo Museum. "I had the pleasure of knowing Georgette Twain and am humbled to be able to share her story, her inspiration and her "musical voice" with our museum visitors."



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www.AmericanBanjoMuseum.com

## MISSION

The mission of the American Banjo Museum is to preserve and promote the music and heritage of America's instrument: the banjo.

## STAFF

Johnny Baier, Executive Director  
Margie Smith-Robbins, Assistant Administrator  
Dustin Pyeatt, Development & Outreach Manager  
Janet Raines, Sales & Marketing  
Sherril Mitchell, Reception  
Ellie Mowery, Administrative Assistant

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## LOOKING FORWARD

While not known as a philosopher, Elvis Presley once said something that really hit home with me: "... The secret to a happy life is having something to do now and something to look forward to." I can attest to the fact that the staff here at the American Banjo Museum has plenty to do right now as we look forward to the coming year. As we wind down the *Banjo World of Steve Martin* exhibit which runs through January 2017, we're preparing a new and very special exhibition to take its place, *Roy Clark – America's Super Picker*. Set to open in February, this exhibit – which includes instruments and memorabilia from his amazing career - traces Roy Clark's journey from poverty to superstardom through music. Two of our signature annual events, Mardi Gras and Americana Fest (set for February 25 and June 24 respectively), are also in place, bringing back the music and fun activities which made them both such hits in 2016. Our educational outreach efforts are ramping up with the popular *Pick A Tune With Lucas* classes returning as we make preparations for our new *Learning Lounge* educational area - which is set to open in fall. Live mini-concert performances round out the year and set the stage for our new

and highly anticipated open jam sessions. Since its introduction, the *Banjo Players Directory* project has also filled its promise of being an almost infinite source of providing our staff with "something to do" as hundreds of names are being entered into this important database project every month. Finally, the highlight of any year at the American Banjo Museum is our Hall of Fame weekend (scheduled for September 7-9, 2017). With honorees including John McEuen, Paul Erickson, Roy Clark, Tony Trischka, and Joel Walker Sweeney, the 2017 ABM Hall of Fame events promise to be the best ever. So, by Elvis' definition, we must all be living happy lives as we look forward to 2017!

## ABM Receives Grant

The American Banjo Museum was recently awarded a grant for \$10,000 from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund to establish a Banjo Learning Lounge at the museum.

"We're honored to receive this generous grant from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund," said Johnny Baier, Executive Director, American Banjo Museum. "The Kirkpatrick Family Fund's legacy of supporting the arts and education is inspiring and we're proud to be part of it."

The Museum plans to refurbish the current front west side area of the building to become a fully developed "hands on" interactive educational exhibit called the Banjo Learning Lounge. Interactive videos will include banjo history as well as short video lessons designed for visitors to ultimately play a song on various banjo types including tenor, five-string, guitar banjo and ukulele banjo. The Banjo Learning Lounge will give museum goers a chance to hold, play and experience the instruments that are on display.

## ABM Welcomes New Exhibits

Friends, museum members and community leaders gathered for a private reception on November 18th to welcome two new additions to the American Banjo Museum.

Museum Executive Board Member Paul Poirier, along with his wife, Theresa, and other family members officially dedicated the *Banjo Players Directory*. The *Banjo Players Directory* is an interactive exhibit aimed at cataloging as many banjo players as possible,

both past and present, of all skill levels and playing styles. The Directory is funded by a generous gift from Paul and Theresa Poirier in memory of Theresa's father, Emile "Pete" DeBlois.

The museum also welcomed a beautiful 1962 Vega Vox IV that belonged to "The Queen of the Banjos" Georgette Twain. Twain's daughter, violinist Cecilia Yale, was on hand to officially donate her mother's beloved banjo to be on permanent display, along with one of Twain's stage costumes.



*Paul Poirier dedicates the Banjo Players Directory in honor of Emile "Pete" DeBlois.*



*Paul and Theresa Poirier*



*Cecilia Yale donates Georgette Twain's banjo to the ABM*



*Paul Poirier, Steve Caddick, and Bob Alexius perform during reception.*



*Cecilia Yale with portrait of her mother Georgette Twain*

## Steelwind performs at ABM



Photo Credit: Budd Walker, Photo Journalist, Walkers Folk Mania Media LLC

After weeks of anticipation, Steelwind took the stage at the American Banjo Museum on November 5th, and it was worth the wait!

Despite hours of college football games on dozens of channels, the band still managed to generate a great crowd.

Founding members Blake Parks on fiddle and Michael Henneberry on guitar were joined by Adam Davis on dobro, Kenny Parks on

bass and the amazing Jim Paul Blair on banjo. Blair is a member of the American Banjo Museum and also the executive director of the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame in Muskogee, OK. Blair was playing his custom “Hot-Rod Banjo” that has actual dice inlaid into the fretboard. And, in a move worthy of its own country music song, acquired it by trading a 1966 Mustang.

“Having the opportunity to bring our style of music to the American Banjo Museum, a place rich in

banjo history, was quite an honor,” said Henneberry. “We are huge Earl Scruggs fans and will always appreciate how he brought the three-finger style of banjo playing to the forefront of bluegrass music.”

The band played songs from their new CD, F5, as well as some country and bluegrass standards. Parks’ and Henneberry’s harmony was pitch perfect and Parks skill as a fiddle player are formidable. If you close your eyes and listen, Steelwind will make you think you’re in a backroads honky-tonk, but without the fear of tripping over a spittoon.

“Playing at the American Banjo Museum was a true delight,” said Blake. “From first being very impressed with the beautiful banjo museum, to having an attentive audience in a great room to perform our songs, we had a great time and can’t wait to be back!”

To learn more about the band and find out where they’ll be performing next, visit [www.steelwindmusic.com](http://www.steelwindmusic.com).

## Santa Stops By the American Banjo Museum

The American Banjo Museum (ABM) welcomed a special visitor from the North Pole when Santa Claus visited the museum during our premiere holiday event, “A Candy Cane Christmas.”

Families and friends came together from 2-4 p.m., Dec. 11th at the museum to enjoy cookies, punch, candy canes and a visit from old Saint Nick. Johnny Baier, Executive Director, ABM, took to the stage and led a sing along of holiday favorites and even showed off a little Elvis impression!

After that, the Okie Dokie Banjo Band performed more yuletide

songs in the museum lobby.

“Our building was originally a candy cane company,” said Dustin Pyeatt, Outreach & Development Manager, ABM. “In a way, there’s a little bit of holiday spirit here year round.”

Admission to the event was free for everyone who brought a new, unwrapped toy to support the Red Andrews Christmas Dinner.

“We had a lot of fun and we helped some kids who wouldn’t otherwise have a present to unwrap this year,” said Pyeatt. “Helping others and sharing joy, that’s what the season’s all about.”



## Better Know a Board Member



In this ongoing series, we will introduce you to members of the American Banjo Museum's Board of Directors. In this column, we get to know Juston Givens!

*Q: Usually, our first question is whether or not you play four-string or five-string, but you don't play the banjo, right?*

A: Correct. I do not play a banjo, but my father did on occasion when I was growing up. I have had limited experience playing rhythm guitar in a band that I was in named Folsom during college and through law school until approximately 2003.

*Q: Though you don't play the banjo, you're the only attorney on the board of directors, and you also represent some musical clients, tell us about that.*

A: Through the connections I made in playing in a band, I was able to meet some great people and make some great connections. I developed a little bit of industry knowledge and understanding that most attorneys don't possess regarding the music industry. Even though there is not any big

"entertainment law practices" in Oklahoma, I've been able to represent some venue owners and bands with respect to various issues over the years. It's been one of the most enjoyable practices I've started to develop and hope to continue to develop that area of my practice.

*Q: Why did you decide to serve on the American Banjo Museum's Board of Directors?*

A: Being a person who has a strong interest for music, specifically different styles of music that range from roots, rock, country, to west coast rock (i.e. the Eagles) and traditional country and bluegrass, the American Banjo Museum's all-encompassing style of banjo music was particularly appealing to me. In addition, I saw an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the American Banjo Museum. That is very important to me as I believe the American Banjo Museum to be a significant international element in the music industry and tremendous asset for Oklahoma and Oklahoma City metro community.

*Q: Where do you see the museum going in the future?*

A: While I am "brand new" to the Board of Directors, I see the American Banjo Museum growing into a very well-known significant international museum that not only provides extensive education in the Oklahoma City and Oklahoma communities, but also on a national basis as well as being an entity that posts and provides significant live music events throughout the year as it recognizes, honors and identifies those who have distinguished themselves as particularly relevant and/or significant persons who

have played and/or have promoted the banjo.

*Q: What's a song you put on that always makes you feel good?*

A: There are a lot of songs that would fit into this category, but the first one that comes to mind is "Take it Easy" by the Eagles. Any song that starts with the lyric "well I'm a running down the road trying to loosen my load; I've got seven women on my mind" is bound to tell a great story and convey a range of feelings and emotions. Plus, I love the way the Eagles made use of the banjo in this song . . . it's definitely one of my favorite Eagles songs and one of my favorite feel good songs of all time.

*Q: If you could wake up tomorrow and have mastery of any instrument other than the banjo, what would it be?*

A: Well this one's easy. I love the guitar from acoustic to electric. I love the different sounds you can get out of a guitar. I love the different styles of music a guitar can make. So for me, being able to master the guitar would definitely be a wish of mine.

*Q: Though you're new to the board, what event at the American Banjo Museum are you most looking forward to?*

A: I don't know if there is a single event I'm most looking forward to, although I'd have to say I'm really looking forward to the museum's involvement with Roy Clark in 2017 in honoring him. However, I am very much looking forward to continuing to build relationships with all of the current board members and learn from the wealth of experience and knowledge that each of them have to offer.

## Maximize Your Donation With Recurring Giving

Your support of the American Banjo Museum is important. Gifts from donors like you allow us to host local bands, offer education programs and new exhibits. But, what if your donations could have an even bigger impact? Through recurring donations, they can.

A recurring donation can be set up for any amount, no matter how small. And, because they're deducted over time donations can be done without putting a strain on your pocketbook.

For example, a recurring donation as low as \$10 a month adds up to \$120 annually. That's a big donation for a small monthly deduction. And that's a win-win for everyone.

A recurring donation is easy to set up. You can set up a recurring donation on our website: [AmericanBanjoMuseum.com](http://AmericanBanjoMuseum.com). There, you can make a recurring donation for any amount that will be deducted on a schedule either weekly, monthly or even annually. You can also change your recurring donation amount at any time. Recurring donations can also be made by calling the museum at 405-604-2793.

Recurring donations are a great way to support the American Banjo Museum over time and can fit any budget. Set up your recurring donation today!

## ABM Membership

The American Banjo Museum wishes to recognize and thank new members and those that have renewed their membership the fourth quarter of 2016.

### Family Membership

Bob Duncan

### Couple Membership

Jim & Tracy Blair  
Dr. Glen & Carol Cartwright  
Mike & Deb Hignite  
Bill & Nancy Majors  
Russ & Diane Morton  
Bill & Marilyn North  
Michael & Jane Sigmon  
Jack & Suzanne Snyder  
Tony & Gina Towell

### Individual Membership

Robert Alexius  
Scott Anderson  
C. Graham Burton  
Raymond James Cisneros  
Peter Corfield  
Diana Daugherty  
Pete Donaldson  
Rachel Fairweather  
Mark Greathouse  
John Huntsberger  
Christian Vincent Lawlor  
Clancy Leverenz  
Lance MacLean  
Sandra Mayfield  
John Mumford  
Dick Neuman  
Edward J. Owen  
Stephen Penney  
Garry Peterson, MD  
Becky A. Rickard  
Randy Shumard  
Kasey Torres  
John Vonk  
Budd Walker  
Marlene White

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



### Krewe de Banjo Mardi Gras Party

February 25 - 6-9 pm

Enjoy an evening of food, drinks and New Orleans Jass by Steve Ham's Jambalaya Jazz Band.

Call 405-604-2793 for ticket information.



## 2017 Hall of Fame Celebration

September 7-9, 2017

### 2017 Hall of Fame Inductees

*Roy Clark, John McEuen, Tony Trischka,  
Paul Erickson, and Joel Walker Sweeney*

## Banjos around town...

A busy banjo is a happy banjo, and we've definitely been busy here at the American Banjo Museum!

Museum volunteer Lucas Ross played at Devon Energy Tower during the Oklahoma City Arts Council's "Art Moves."

Ross also pitched in as entertainment when the American Banjo Museum (ABM) hosted an event for Oklahoma City Yelp Elites. Yelp is an app that allows users to write reviews of everything from restaurants to museums. Yelp Elites are users who write consistently trusted reviews. The Yelp Elites received a tour by ABM Outreach & Development Manager Dustin Pyeatt. Ross gave an amazing performance of comedy and music as everyone enjoyed snacks and drinks from local OKC establishments like The Wedge Pizzeria, COOP Ale Works and Prairie Wolf Spirits.

The museum pitched in to help our friends at the Oklahoma Arts Council. The Oklahoma Arts Council maintains a resource list of Oklahoma performing artists that includes everything from music to theater to dance. Oklahoma Arts Council staff used the museum's "Your Father's Mustache" performance area to audition a local band under consideration to be added to the statewide list. ABM Executive Director Johnny Baier helped by offering his wisdom from years of performing on stage. The Oklahoma Arts Council is the official state agency for the support and development of the arts in Oklahoma.

For the third consecutive year, the museum participated in Bricktown's



annual Halloween event, "Brick or Treat." The museum was one of more than 50 businesses in Bricktown to hand out candy to hundreds of little ghosts and goblins. ABM Board Member and volunteer Jack Murphy played banjo for the families while Pyeatt

and local radio personality Keri Evans spent three hours handing out 2,275 pieces of candy in front of the museum.

The museum hosted junior high choir students from Latta, Oklahoma. The students were attending a choir competition in Guthrie and stopped by the museum to receive a private tour from Pyeatt and ABM Marketing and Sales Manager Janet Raines.

And, finally, Lucas Ross represented the American Banjo Museum during Downtown OKC Inc.'s annual "Downtown in December" event. Ross performed for the crowds in Bricktown during the free Bricktown Canal rides that are offered every Thursday through Sunday from Thanksgiving until Christmas.

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## ABM Attends Oklahoma Museum Association Annual Conference

The American Banjo Museum (ABM) joined museum's from across Oklahoma to learn and network during the Oklahoma Museum Association's Annual Conference in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Sessions ranged from tips on hosting community events to museum security. Those in attendance were also treated to an evening of tours at the museums in the Bartlesville area, including the Price Tower Arts Center, the only skyscraper built by Frank Lloyd Wright; the Bartlesville Area History Museum and the Frank Phillips Mansion, the home of the founder of Phillips Petroleum.

"This was a great conference," said Dustin Pyeatt, Outreach & Development Manager, American Banjo Museum. "Sharing new ideas and getting to know staff from museums across the state gave me a new perspective on the goals and challenges we face at

the Banjo Museum."

Pyeatt represented ABM during the conference and accepted the Oklahoma Museum Association award for outstanding exhibit for "The Banjo World of Steve Martin" during the conference's awards dinner.

Added Pyeatt, "it was an honor to accept the award on behalf of all my coworkers at the Banjo Museum and I was proud to see our museum being recognized along with some of the largest museums in the state."

The Oklahoma Museum Association is the primary source of information and professional development for Oklahoma's 500 museums, historical societies, historic sites, zoos and botanical gardens, historic houses, living history museums, tribal cultural centers and other museum-related institutions.



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## Upcoming Events

### January

**SATURDAY, JAN 7, 2 PM**

#### **Ukulele Open Jam**

Join other Ukulele players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

**SATURDAY, JAN 14, 2 PM**

#### **Education**

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick A Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, **by reservation only!**

**SATURDAY, JAN 21, 3 PM**

#### **Live Banjo Performance**

Hear American Banjo Museum's Executive Director, Johnny Baier perform. Performance included with paid museum admission. Free admission for museum members.

### February

**SATURDAY, FEB 4, 2 PM**

#### **Bluegrass Open Jam**

Join other Bluegrass players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

**SATURDAY, FEB 11, 2 PM**

#### **Education**

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick A Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, **by reservation only!**

**SATURDAY, FEB 25, 6 PM**

#### **Krewe de Banjo Mardi Gras**

An evening of food, drinks and New Orleans Jazz featuring Steve Ham's Jambalaya Jass Band. Tickets available by calling the museum.

### March

**SATURDAY, MAR 4, 2 PM**

#### **Four-String Open Jam**

Join other Four-String players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

**SATURDAY, MAR 11, 3 PM**

#### **Historical Presentation & Performance**

Learn the history behind a selected banjo maker in the museum's collection. Then hear American Banjo Museum's Executive Director, Johnny Baier play a historically significant instrument from that maker. Performance included with paid museum admission.

**SATURDAY, MAR 25, 2 PM**

#### **Education**

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick A Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, **by reservation only!**

**For more information on events call 405-604-2793  
or email [events@AmericanBanjoMuseum.com](mailto:events@AmericanBanjoMuseum.com)**