

# SENIOR TIMES

OHIO'S FOREMOST  
NEWSMAGAZINE FOR  
BOOMERS & BEYOND

OCTOBER 2022

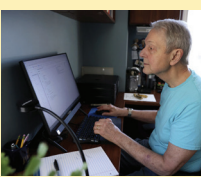
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### RAY PAUKEN AND HIS BANJO

## Entertaining Columbus for over 25 years

By Miriam Segaloff

For more than five generations, the Pauken family has been making music in Central Ohio and around the world.

The music is in their genes, said family patriarch Ray Pauken. His grandparents and great uncle brought their performing talents to the United States from Germany. His father played Vaudeville shows and scores for silent movies. Today, his daughter and 17-year-old grandson are both professional performers.

"I was exposed to music all the time," said Pauken. "It's just one of those things. Every time I do some research, I find more Paukens who played music. I am very blessed to have it in my life and very happy that it will go on."

Pauken said he started playing his father's banjo when he was seven years old. Now at 87, he says, "I



Ray Pauken

ments on East Broad Street. After his retirement in 1996, Pauken said he was surprised to find an almost daily audience at area nursing homes and senior centers.

Friend and neighbor, Mimi Chenfield, describes Pauken as, "good as gold" and points out that his talents extend beyond music to carving, painting and writing. "He's got a great sense of humor," she said. "It's very low key, but he is hilarious. He's a delightful and very caring person."

Pauken is very proud of the next two generations of musicians in the family. His daughter is a professional musician and plays guitar, bass, drums and mandolin. She performs with a number of groups including Sirens, McGuffey Lane, Late Nite Drivers and John Schwab. She also teaches several instruments and has a recording studio business. Her 17-year-old son, Jordan, is a Bexley High School student



Pauken and friends played on the patio of Johnson's Ice Cream on summer Thursday evenings for 21 years

don't know if I could do without it anymore. As long as I have my fingers, I can play my banjo and guitar."

Over the years, Pauken's banjo has become so much a part of his identity that his grandchildren named him "Granjo."

Drafted into the US Coast Guard during the Korean War, he served seven years and was discharged in 1956. He graduated from The Ohio State University in 1962 with a bachelor's degree in education. He was a history/geography teacher for the Columbus public school system for 31 years. He would bring his banjo to his junior

high school students and make it a part of his lesson plans

For him, performing as a musician came about out of necessity. Pauken said he needed to find a way to supplement his teacher's salary of just \$4,700 a year.

"We had three babies at the same time," he said. "So, I scouted around to see if anyone would pay me to play the banjo, and they did."

For nearly 25 years Pauken and a piano player played every Saturday night at Plank's Bier Garden in German Village. Around the same time, the owner of Johnson's Real Ice Cream



Ray Pauken with daughter Molly

on Main Street in Bexley approached him about putting together a band to perform on the patio on Thursday evenings in the summer. In September, the group finished its 21st year of getting paid in ice cream.

Before that, Pauken's daughter Molly Pauken said, her father and a small group of friends would play at Greater's Ice Cream and the Drexel Theatre, also on Main Street in Bexley.

Pauken and some musical friends also play every Friday morning in the lobby of the Bexley House apart-

and plays trumpet in The Jazz Arts Group's Columbus Youth Jazz program.

"Thank God I got Molly started playing at age five," Pauken said. "She is very multi-talented and has a long waiting list for students. And, she looks after me."

"It's a labor of love," Pauken said. "I never made much money, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. I've been lucky all around."

Miriam Segaloff is a local freelance writer and frequent contributor to Senior Times