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**Yankee Trace**

**BACKSTAGE WITH  
BOB D'EPIRO:**

MUSICIAN,  
EDUCATOR AND  
ENTERTAINER

**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**

COVER PHOTO BY RESIDENT PAULA DYTOKO,  
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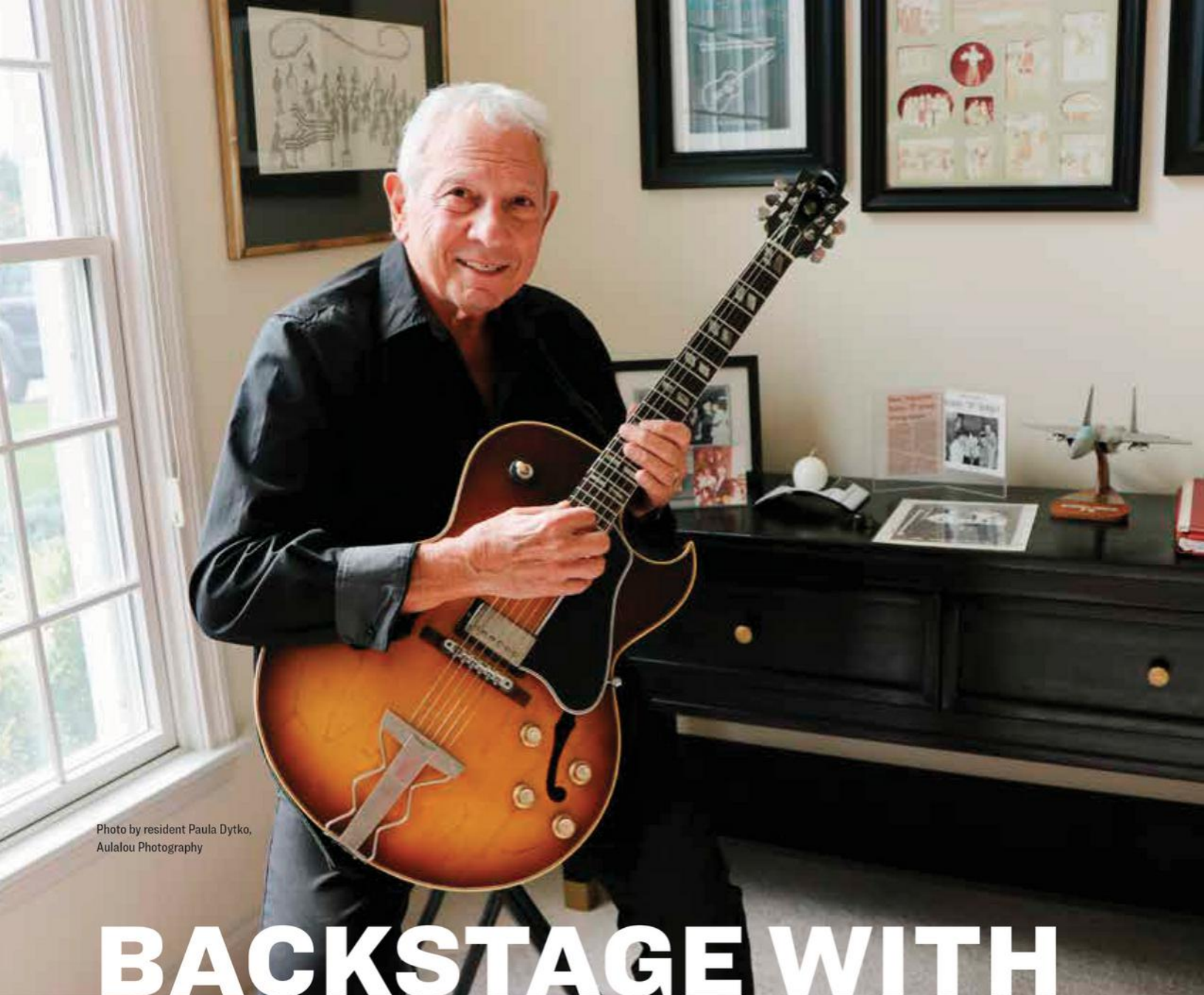


Photo by resident Paula Dytko,  
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# BACKSTAGE WITH BOB D'EPIRO: Musician, Educator and Entertainer

BY JACKI DONALDSON

**B**ob D'Epiro's life has been a beautiful symphony. His journey, from Pennsylvania to Ohio and through the halls of education and beyond, paints a vivid picture of passion and purpose.

Bob's story begins in Pittsburgh, where he was born and raised. In 1959,

he embarked on a life-changing journey when he came to the University of Dayton to play football. Although he played for only one year, he left with a degree in music education, which would pave the way for his life's work.

His educational pursuits led him to Wright State University, where he earned a Master of Education degree. After years of dedicated service as a music supervisor



## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



and band director for the Fairborn City Schools and as an adjunct music professor at the University of Dayton and Sinclair College, Bob began blazing his own trail. He founded the Progressive Performance Program, a business dedicated to bringing music programs to Catholic and Christian schools that didn't have band programs. For 54 years, he nurtured young talents.

Then came the curveball — a global pandemic, which forced Bob to reevaluate his path. "Because of contained classrooms, I could not come and go with band equipment," Bob shares. "The good Lord told me it was time to go. I had graduated." At the same time, Bob's wife, Dottie, previously a ballerina and a Rockette, was struggling with an illness, and he wanted to focus on doing what she wanted to do. Sadly, she passed away in 2020 from pulmonary fibrosis.

That same year, Bob's granddaughter, Ellie, asked him to perform at her high school graduation party. Bob shares, "I had not played professionally for 25 years, but I told her that if we were to survive the COVID situation, I'd come out of retirement and play for her." Bob did play at the party, and so did his grandson, Jacob, a percussionist for the UC Bearcat Band who was so enthralled by the performance that he persuaded Bob to keep playing. "We formed a duo," Bob states. "Then, my granddaughter, Kelsey, got into the fray, and before I knew it, I had two grandkids playing with me."

About a year ago, Bob, 82, found himself playing in a quartet called The Bobby D Quartet. The quartet, including saxophonist Gary Finton, bassist Connor Smith and percussionist Jim Brooks, plays a repertoire that spans decades, from the







Photo by resident Paula Dytko,  
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50s to the present day. Granddaughter Kelsey sometimes sings with the group, and grandson Jacob joins occasionally.

The Bobby D Quartet has been delivering engaging performances in the community at venues like Rumbleseat Wine, Zink's, Dorothy Lane Market and Wright Station in Springboro. You may have seen them at Jazz on the Green at

Yankee Trace Golf Club, and they have been honored guests at the Yankee Trace Christmas Dinner.

For Bob, who was married for 54 years and has four daughters, 14 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, music is both a pastime and a lifeline. It gives him purpose,





Wright Station






Bob with grandson Jacob



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something to practice and look forward to, and we hope you and your family are lucky enough to experience his magic. Please visit [www.bobbydmusic.com](http://www.bobbydmusic.com) for details about upcoming Bobby D events.



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