



## The Legend Has Retired!

### We Miss You Already, Jeff

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Jeff Jaros, store manager of the Denver Folklore Center for over twenty years (twenty-four years working at the store) has retired. We asked his wife, co-workers, students, friends, bandmates and others to share their thoughts on his retirement. But first, read what Jeff has to say about his time at the store and his plans for the future.

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The Denver Folklore Center has been a great place to work and to really invest a big chunk of my life. The climate of the store was perfect for me. I'm a people person and I love music. I got to educate myself and become the old master of sorts. And I'm super grateful to both sets of owners.

Harry (Tuft) was my mentor and is still my very good friend and he was

I'm the institutional memory, if you will, of this place, which I found weird when the owners changed. I thought, hell, I'm the guy that all the old people come to when Harry's not here. I'm happy to turn that over. It's been a real blessing because it has fit with my life, my learning curve and my maturing process which really, if you're doing it right, goes on throughout your life.

my original boss for close to twenty years. And then he sold to Saul (Rosenthal) and Claude (Brachfeld) and that was a crucial change in the store, in the respect that the store was getting to a point where we needed a different direction.

We needed to buckle down and get more business-like. It's just the climate these days dictated that sort of thing. There just wasn't that more casual business attitude you could get away with and still survive as a business. Both me and my wife thought it was a blessing that Harry approached the right people at the right time for him to get out and for them to get in. I've learned a lot from Saul and Claude also. It's been a great ride.

My future plans are nothing major, other than I love to fly fish so we will be doing plenty of that, my wife (Judy) and I. She doesn't fish, but she loves Colorado and cabins and other places where trout live, so we'll get along fine. Obviously, I'll do things like trying to stay healthy, and I love reading, so I can do that any time I want. That's a great thing for me to think about. I've got a new Kindle and I've been acquiring books.

I've got nothing that's really on my horizon, but I've talked to a number of people who say that's a great way to approach it. It's not your next job, being retired. It's being open and actually finding things you never thought you'd enjoy. - **Jeff Jaros**



I first met Jeff, after enrolling in his Banjo 1 class, at Swallow Hill. There he was ... sitting relaxed, pleasantly providing instruction and engaging in dialogue, all the while encircled by six neophyte banjo students, who created a cacophony

of sound, as we tried to find our “bum-dittys”.

It is a special person who can take someone from the very beginning of their musical journey all the way through to their potential; and Jeff is that instructor. Whether class, private lessons or over Zoom during the pandemic, Jeff provided excellent instruction!

Jeff has a vast knowledge of folk, bluegrass and old-time music and he was always willing to share his knowledge. Jeff makes everyone he meets feel at home and that he's interested in you. Many times, Jeff often went above and beyond, to make himself available and to assist his customers and students.

If you are around Jeff for any length of time, you will know, Jeff loves Judy and is passionate about The Beatles! He is a gifted musician, instructor after five years, I am pleased to call “friend”. For me, Jeff has always been a major part of the The Folklore Center. He set me on my clawhammer journey by selling me my first banjo. One of my favorite memories of Jeff is seeing him on his lunch break reading a book, in the shade of a tree by the side of the Folklore Center; I will miss his presence.

Going forward if you need to find Jeff, he will most likely be reading a Steinbeck novel at his cabin or “wetting a line” while living off his banjo music royalties.

**- Finn Agenbroad**

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When Claude and I (and our group) purchased the Denver Folklore Center (DFC) in 2016 we were thrilled that Jeff (and Mark and Brian) agreed to stay on. Little did we know at that time how important Jeff had been to the success of the store. His customer service skills are superb; his knowledge of acoustic instruments is unmatched; his ability to teach others what he knows and how to be successful at what we do is enviable. And on top of that he is a really fine human being. After 24+ years at the Denver Folklore Center he has certainly earned his retirement. I know he will be spending it doing the things he loves most – fishing, making music, traveling and being with his beloved Judy. He will surely be missed by all of us at DFC. – **Saul Rosenthal, co-owner, Denver Folklore Center**

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Jeff's ready smile made everyone  
feel comfortable and welcome at the



Denver Folklore Center. Second only to Harry (Tuft), Jeff was always a font of wisdom about music, instruments and folklore. A true gift to Denver's music community. Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

**- Robert Elrod**

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Plenty of folks in the DFC orbit have known Jeff a lot longer than I have. That said, working together in a one-room shop, through all the craziness of the last few years, can give you some insight into a guy. He likes his guitars old and his beers cold. Knowledgeable and always willing to share what he knows; whether it's a tune, or a technique, or some ancient piece of banjo trivia. He goes out of his way for his friends and colleagues. I reckon the Denver Folklore Center wouldn't be quite what it is without Jeff Jaros walking it into a new century, new owners and new times. Big shoes for the rest of us to try and fill. – **Ian Dehmel, co-worker, Denver Folklore Center**

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As Jeff's wife, it has been fun to watch him grow into the different roles he's had in his musical career. He was an entertainer/band member, teacher and store manager. As a band member he was a natural leader, full of energy, talent and lots of laughs.

I always knew Jeff would be an excellent music teacher because I was the beneficiary of his natural, sensible style. It was very rewarding to see how quickly he took to it and how much his students appreciated him. Some of his best friends are former students.

When Jeff started working at the Denver Folklore Center, it was a joy to see a job he was so good at also fit him perfectly. He is naturally outgoing, sensible, knowledgeable and fun to be around. Although his teaching and managing roles are wrapping up, thankfully he will continue to bless me with his music for the rest of our lives together. - **Judy Jaros**

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In the mid-'90s I was taking a break from my chosen profession to play

When I decided to get back to my original work, Harry asked if there

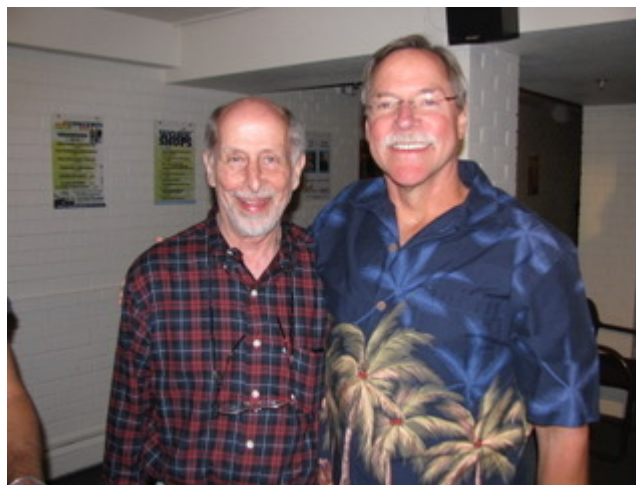
more music and I was working for Harry down at the Denver Folklore Center. I met Jeff at a jam session thru our mutual friends Bing and Suzi Soloman. Jeff had just picked up old-time fiddle but he was already really good.

We found we lived close to each other and decided to get together and do some picking. It was not long before we began to get together with our wives in an informal group with Jeff on fiddle and guitar, his wife Judy on bass and guitar, my wife Susan would play mandolin and I was playing clawhammer banjo. Jeff just soaked up music like a sponge and it did not take very long before he was a monster old-time fiddle player.

was anybody from our circle of pickers who would be a good fit to replace me - I thought of Jeff right away.

Over the years when I would visit the store, Harry often would thank me for recommending Jeff, as he really was perfect for the job. Jeff and Harry clicked, they were not just coworkers but good friends. When I heard Jeff was retiring after all these years, I couldn't help but think it is truly the end of an era. In my mind Jeff is a link between Harry and the old Folklore Center and Saul and Claude and the new Folklore Center. Jeff has been a fixture at the DFC and he will be missed. I congratulate him on his achievements and his retirement!

**- Joe Grant**



When in 1993 I decided to reopen the Denver Folklore Center, dormant for ten years, my wife (at the time) said, "Why? You didn't make any money last time?" And she was essentially correct. I realized that I

Bob helped us hire Mark and Brian, which made things even better. (The plus was Sam Burns, who really helped, but in his own way).

What I came to depend on Jeff for

opened on 17<sup>th</sup> in 1962, answering what I correctly gauged was a need for a shop of this kind. Reopening in 1993, I realized it was MY need, not necessarily a need in the community. So, Martha's skepticism might have been borne out were it not for three (plus) people, and I must say, the support of the folk and acoustic community.

Those three (plus) people:

- Mag, my first employee and a tremendous help with customers as well as ordering and accounting.
- Bob Marro nursed an ailing business back to health and profit.
- Jeff who was the catalyst for building a team.

Now Jeff and I are not a natural match and there was a period of adjustment while we were learning to trust one another. And that trust came fully - and between the two of us and Bob Marro's help, we actually became a good working business.

was unvarnished assessments and an honest opinion. He never hesitated to call me out if he thought there was need and I responded accordingly, as honestly as I could. It formed the basis for the strong and affectionate relationship we have to this day. All these relationships have been the real reward of having a business, and I continue to be thankful for that.

Thank you, Jeff, for all that you have given to the business and to me. I'm sure you will be missed, and that you have left a strong legacy with owners, fellow employees and customers alike. Fishing awaits, enjoy! - **Harry Tuft, founder, Denver Folklore Center**

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One of the many joys of owning The Denver Folklore Center has been getting to know and appreciate Jeff. Aside from his being our institutional memory and a seemingly endless font of knowledge, I've found that Jeff has a deep love for the music and the players that have defined my own musical life. I'm proud to call him a mentor, a colleague and a friend. - **Claude A Brachfeld, co-owner, Denver Folklore Center**

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It's the end of an era. For so long and in so many ways Jeff and Harry have been the face of the Denver Folklore Center. Jeff always set a welcoming tone to the store. His broad knowledge and love of music was infectious. He was very skilled at listening to a customer's needs (and their dreams) and helping them find the right instrument or strings or picks or ... It's going to be strange walking into the store and not seeing him behind the counter. He was also an excellent teacher, band leader and a joy to perform with. - **Roy Laird, bandmate, Uptown Relics**

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Jeff and I have had the honor to work with each other for a number of years now. I think we learned a lot from each other in both the music business and in friendship. And although we have a really strong crew of up-and-comings, he will be sorely missed with his years of experience and the stories and laughs. Here's to over 20 years. Cheers Jeff! - **John Rumley, luthier, Denver Folklore Center**

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Simply put, the Colorado music scene wouldn't be the thriving landscape it is without Jeff. Whether working at the Denver Folklore Center or teaching at Swallow Hill, Jeff encouraged and inspired hundreds, if not thousands, of people to pick up an instrument and find the joy in playing music. In addition to his passion for teaching, Jeff is one of the finest musicians on the Front



Range. You might not know this but Jeff also loves Hawaii and in Hawaii they say “aloha” for both hello and good-bye, so let’s all pass on an “aloha” to Jeff and wish him the best in all his future endeavors. – **Brian Bower, former co-worker, Denver Folklore Center**



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I worked for Harry at the Denver Folklore Center, and when Jeff came on it was a tremendous positive addition. His knowledge about business - and the music business in particular - certainly was a real boost for the Folklore Center. Best wishes to Jeff and Judy for a wonderful, fun, retirement. The beaches are calling! - **Mag Hayden**

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The reason Jeff has been the manager of the Denver Folklore Center for so long is because he exemplifies everything that we want the store to be. Jeff is honest, industrious, fair, kind, generous and incredibly knowledgeable. Beyond that, as a person, Jeff is extremely witty, fun to be around and cares immensely about the people he works with and the well-being of his friends and family. He's a hell of a banjo player, guitar picker and mandolin player, and teaches me something every day I have the benefit of working with him. All of us will miss him dearly when he leaves - it's not that his are big shoes to fill, but rather that the impact he's had on the Denver Folklore Center is truly irreplaceable. - **Angus Ogg, co-worker, Denver Folklore Center**

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I first met Jeff when I began working at the Denver Folklore Center. Jeff had been working there for about six months when I started so we were both kind of "newbies" to the store. I was immediately taken by Jeff's attention to detail and his growing knowledge of acoustic instruments. Jeff already had quite a bit of knowledge about different acoustic styles and was expanding his musical abilities from guitar to banjo, mandolin and fiddle.

Soon he and Judy were taking trips to Hawaii and he was developing his ukulele chops. I went to see his and Judy's old-time group (Virginia Dale) on several occasions and found them to be thoroughly entertaining. I'm glad that Jeff and Judy are going to have a chance to travel, fish, and play music anytime they want. Best of luck to you, my friend!! - **Mark Caldwell**

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I've known Jeff for many years, and in so many roles: an accomplished musician and performer, a master of many instruments, a fixture and valuable asset in my favorite music store, an excellent teacher and leader, an advisor, an old-time music guru, a friend.

As a teacher, he challenged you to be your best, building confidence by encouraging you with his easy manner and sense of humor. As our band coach, we lovingly referred to him as our 'Professor'. He was instrumental in helping us find our strengths and leading us down the path to becoming performers. - **Lynn DeJohn, Goosefoot Revival**

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Jeff's reverence for the things of the past helps to shine a light on just how relevant these traditions are in this moment. His consistent and even-keeled presence as the manager of the Denver Folklore Center is a testament to this and will forever ingrain him in what makes this shop special to so many. I consider myself blessed to call him a friend and a mentor, and I wish him the best in this new chapter! - **Mark Cawthray, former co-worker, Denver Folklore Center**

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I met Jeff through the Swallow Hill String Band 101 class taught by Julie Davis around 1988. He was actually in the previous class that broke up after it finished and joined us in our group after we decided to continue on together. We had plenty of guitarists and banjoists but we needed a mandolinist/frontman and Jeff fit the bill. Other members of the group were Judy, his future wife, David, John and another guy. David and the other guy, both guitarists, left early and were replaced by Robert. I still have cassettes of some of our shows.

I can't believe how good we were and how fast we played, the Hot Jam Family was our name. I lost contact with Jeff after the group broke up and reconnected with him when he went to work for the Denver Folklore Center on South Pearl Street just a block or so from my home and worked with and for him for about six years. The rest, as they say, is history. - **Tom Corona (CoronaTone Music) and former co-worker, Denver Folklore Center**



“Perfesser” Jeff, congratulations on your retirement! What a remarkable career of sharing your love of music through teaching, inspiring people to purchase beautiful instruments at the Denver Folklore Center and I’m sure, sharing a few fish stories along the way.

I want to first speak for Goosefoot Revival, the Old-Time String band you groomed from students to a band in your Old-Time Ensemble class at Swallow Hill Music School. With your encouragement, your love of Old-Time music, you gave us the confidence to create a band and go out to perform for the public. You gave us the confidence to discover our voices, to trust our abilities on our instruments and your passion for music became our passion. You helped us realize our dreams. Thank you!

On a personal note, for two years due to COVID, I’ve had Tuesday’s with Perfesser Jeff via your “Good Time Music Meetings” on Zoom. My lessons were the highlight of my week. You got me back playing the guitar (even sold me one!) and continued teaching me mandolin songs and techniques. I’m grateful for the time and the laughter we had, you truly are a knucklehead! Thank goodness for the Darlings on Mayberry R.F.D. because without them we wouldn’t have our own Hillbilly!

All the best to you in your retirement and “tight lines” my friend. - **Holly Schutz**

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Want to send Jeff a message? Email [HERE](#).

## Contact Us

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