



# Jackie Nicholson

## Heartfelt Bluegrass Musician with a Little Folk Mixed In

By Julia Jaegersberg

**JACKIE NICHOLSON'S LOVE OF MUSIC** began as a little girl when her young parents included their children to accompany them to dances in their native Iowa town.

"My parents loved music and shared their joy of music with my siblings and me at an early age," reflects Jackie, a Delafield bluegrass singer/songwriter, teacher and artist. "I've been immersed in music my whole life. In third grade, I started to learn piano. Then in sixth grade, I received a guitar for Christmas when my passions switched to acoustic guitar."

Jackie says she played guitar throughout her high school years, heavily influenced by John Denver. The next step in her musical journey began with another Christmas gift – a banjo in her sophomore year of high school with lessons to follow, which

led her to a love of bluegrass music.

### In the pursuit of art education

A graduate of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Jackie earned a degree in art education and enrolled in a student-teaching program through the university where she taught overseas in New Zealand, which was a wonderful experience!

"I then moved to Wisconsin from Iowa to teach art to middle and high school students in Hartland at University Lake School in the early 1980s," explains Jackie. "I taught art until we had our first child. During that time, I also worked at Old World Wisconsin where I demonstrated weaving while wearing period costumes to entertain and educate visitors at the site."

While her three sons attended school, Jackie returned to the school setting as a relieving

elementary art teacher in the Kettle Moraine School District.

### A musician's life

With her children all grown up, Jackie was able to focus more intensely on her love of music, performing, writing and recording. "I was reintroduced to a high school classmate from Iowa City, Paul Roberts, who plays the banjo," says Jackie. "Then I met his cousin, bluegrass musician Keith Yoder, who's originally from Dubuque, Iowa, but now lives in Knoxville, Tennessee. Keith helped me record my first CD in 2012 called "Wrapped Up in a Song." The album features all covers by Dolly Parton, Stevie Nicks, Emmylou Harris, Bob Dylan and Mike Martin Murphy, plus more.

Jackie travels frequently to Tennessee where she and Keith are now laying in the final touches for a children's CD that should be finished by early 2020. Jackie has an autoharp made by Whippoorwill Acoustics and is anxious to add its beautiful sound to her next CD.

She draws her musical inspiration from nature, history, and being with family and friends. She has written songs honoring her parents' wedding day, a song about her family's boating experiences, the marker trees at Lapham Peak, artist friends and more. Jackie's music provides a healing experience for her audiences.

### Jackie, live on stage

During the last 10 years, Jackie has performed at bluegrass festivals, nursing homes, churches, coffee shops, art galleries and jams in Wisconsin, Iowa, Colorado and Tennessee. "My sound is a mix between old country, bluegrass, gospel and folk, with a June Carter flair," she shares. "The

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Carter Family, Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton, Joni Mitchell, John Denver and Michael Martin Murphey have all influenced my music.”

The first song she ever wrote was about her mother’s wedding day, which helps to keep memories alive of her parents. It’s called: “A Song for Alice,” written in 2014. “You can write a song anywhere,” says Jackie. “Come up with a melody, a line. I love the creative process.”

Today, Jackie plays in a band called The Bluegrass Drifters. You can catch the group playing at Tabi’s Lake Country Wine Bar in Hartland. In addition, the group plays at Vino Etcetera in Oconomowoc and for SummerStage’s Winter Series at Hawks Inn in Delafield.

“I also love to play in bluegrass jams in the area, like the ones hosted by the Mukwonago Library and at Wells Street Tavern in Delafield,” notes Jackie. “I also love to attend the Roots Music Camp in Colorado Springs every summer held at the Rocky Mountain Mennonite camp near Pike’s Peak. We stay in cabins or camp, have a stage, get instructions from fantastic musicians from all over the country and perform concerts. I’ve attended the camp for seven years – so we’re all like a family!”

Two years ago, Jackie also attended a music camp at Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, New Mexico, a setting where Georgia O’Keeffe painted. The camp format combines art, music and nature – with hiking and a bluegrass camp. Both camps are experiences where participants can be completely immersed in music.

Jackie also enjoys Iowa’s bluegrass scene. She’s attended festivals in Kalona and Backbone State

Park. “It’s always fun to go back to Iowa and play and see family and friends,” she notes. “Thanks to Paul Roberts, I’ve connected with Keith Yoder, Bob and Christi Black, and Al and Aleta Murphey, all amazingly talented musicians. The songwriting workshop at Backbone Bluegrass Festival with Donna Ulisse was a wonderful experience.”

Closer to home, Jackie takes guitar lessons from Jon Peik at Hartland Music, where he also hosts jam sessions. Jon, a fantastic banjo player from the Chicken Wire Empire Band, also teaches lessons in banjo, mandolin and bass.

### Family and art

Jackie’s family has lived in its Delafield home for 30 years. She’s married to Lawrence Nicholson who owns The Nicholson Group, a firm that focuses on commercial real estate and appraisals based in Hartland.

“All three of our sons, Caleb, Ben and Jake, work at The Nicholson Group as well,” explains Jackie. “Caleb and Jake have business degrees and Ben has a degree in graphic design. Ben helps me with photography, making flyers to advertise gigs and designing my CD covers, in addition to my website. I am so grateful for my husband and sons who encourage me to pursue my art and music, and to God for all my blessings. I’m also a grandmother, and I’m very excited to share my love of art and music with my grandchildren.”

Beginning at a very young age, Jackie found pleasure in making things with her hands. As an art teacher, she has also enjoyed working with children and guiding them with explorations in color and in a variety of mediums and textures.

Favoring fibers and weaving as her main focus,

she also enjoys many kinds of art mediums, with Georgia O’Keeffe serving as her main influence. “Having a mother who also loved art and music, I’m grateful that she encouraged me to pursue the creative arts. I have loom and spinning wheel, plus I love to knit – creating baby sweaters, car seat blankets and scarves.” You may purchase Jackie’s art and craft creations at the Brown Street Emporium in Oconomowoc – plus you can buy her bluegrass CDs there.

“I feel it’s cathartic to write songs and play,” Jackie concludes. “I feel that art and music are therapies for the soul!”



### Jackie Nicholson – Live & In Concert

Come hear Jackie Nicholson perform at one of these local venues:

- Mama D’s Coffee, Wales
- Tabi’s Lake Country, Hartland
- Genetti Gardens & Gallery, Delafield
- SummerStage, Delafield
- Bluegrass Jam, Mukwonago Library
- Hartland Music Bluegrass Jam
- Revere’s Wells Street Tavern Bluegrass Jam, Delafield
- Pewaukee Area Arts Council events

Learn more about Jackie’s music by visiting [WrappedUpInASong.com](http://WrappedUpInASong.com).



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