

## THIS MONTH'S FEATURED HALL OF FAME MEMBERS



**JAMES MASON**



**TOMMY DUNCAN**

*(Go to Page 3)*

**SUNDAY, May 4, 2025**

## Letter from The Editor



Once again our dance surpassed all expectations. I'll take a minute to thank our dancers and listeners for their participation. The dance wouldn't be possible without you. This month we have Janice Allen and All the Queens Men. I can't wait!

Mae McCoy and her Neon Stars played a great show. They kept it "Western Swing" and the dancers kept the dance floor full. Mae sings and plays guitar. In her band



is Chuck Webb on bass guitar; Ronnie Elkan and Reid Fisher on fiddle; Brian McCommas on guitar and vocal; Arron Smith on drums and vocals. Also the band featured guest singers: Rex Barnes, Peggy Van den Boeck and Jessica Arce. This month Mae, our Vice President, wrote a great article on page 6.

Our Hall of Famers took the stage after the raffle. In case you are curious about the whereabouts of our raffle volunteers Bob and Virginia, they called me this week from Turkey, Texas where they were taking in "Bob Wills Days". They are traveling for a few months.



The Hall of Famers were Jim Baughman on guitar and vocals; Ralph Chase on keyboard and vocal; Ronnie Elkan on fiddle; Steve Clark on bass guitar; Olen Dillingham on fiddle and Mandolin; Bill Cornett on drums and vocal; Arron Smith on drums and vocal. Singing with the band was Janice Allen, Nancy Long, Rhonda Lynn and Linda Baughman.

## Janice Allen & All The Queens Men

**1:00pm-3:00pm**

**Followed by the House band**

**"The Hall of Famers"**

**3:00pm-5:00pm**



## WHAT'S INSIDE

Officials & Staff .....	2	Bands & Directions	11
Jam Room News .....	2		
HOF Profiles.....	3		
American Legion News .	4		
Photos Online .....	4		
Upcoming Bands .....	4		
Band Photos.....	5		
Raffle Winners.....	5		
Mae's Article .....	6		
Dance Photos .....	7		
Band & Dance Photos .....	8		
HOF Rules	9		
Profile Continued	10		

**FREE DANCE LESSONS**

**With Admission @ 12:00 pm**

*Thank You Volunteers*

The Western Swing Society

PO Box 2474

Carmichael, CA 95609

westernswingsociety.net

Facebook: SacramentoWesternSwingSociety

Founded in 1981 by Loyd and Perry Jones to enable performance, preservation and perpetuation of the unique American art form known as Western Swing Music.

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Western Swing Society Music News

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Views and opinions expressed by contributing authors are not necessarily those of the editorial staff or the Society.

Submitted articles, publicity notices and letters not relating directly to the Society or its members may be published at the discretion of the Editor, as space permits. The staff reserves the right to edit any and all items submitted for publication.

Deadline for Submittals:

All items, photographs, articles, and ad's are due to the Editor no later than the 10th of the month.

JAM ROOM JAMMERS



We'd like to have you write to us about your experience if you play in the jam room or go in to listen.

We'll share

your comments here in this column. Just send your thoughts to [ronnie.elkan@gmail.com](mailto:ronnie.elkan@gmail.com) or send us a letter via snail mail. In the meantime we'll list the players who joined us last month.

Come in and join in, you can listen or sign up to play and/or sing. Are "Hall of Fame" hosts, Brad Barnett and Dave Rietz will be there to welcome you!





**JAMES MASON**

Inducted October 6, 2024



James began playing the fiddle at the age of 10, inspired by his fiddle playing uncle. His dad played mandolin and a few tunes on the fiddle and taught James his first couple of tunes.

The following year he played for local square-dances and took his first trip to the National Fiddle Contest in Weiser, Idaho, and also started entering many other regional contests which he attended for throughout his teen years.

At the age of 12, James met Paul Anastasio, and immediately took to the improvised Swing tunes he heard from Paul and a few others at the contests. Paul liked James' playing and began showing him tunes and harmonies and soon became close friends had many tunes worked out in 3 and 4 part harmony.

During this time he also met and studied with the legendary Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson, who had just moved to James' home state of Washington.

Because of James' love of Swing music, he was always listening to Joe Venuti and Stephane Grappelli and other jazz violinists... however he never lost his connection to his "fiddle roots" and always had a deep appreciation for Bob Wills and Western Swing. When the "Texas Playboys For the Last Time" album came out, James was immediately inspired by Johnny Gimble's playing, which becomes obvious when you hear him play. James says "tone and phrasing are what it's all about."

About 1977 he met Tiny Moore. Tiny's admiration for James' musicianship fueled a friendship that lasted until Tiny's untimely death several years later. Around the age of 19 James started playing in various Bluegrass and Country bands, and at 21 he received a call to audition for "Dusty Drapes and the Dusters", a Western Swing Band in Boulder, CO. (by recommendation of singer-songwriter, instrumentalist Tim O'Brien)... Paying his dues and developing "chops" and band performance skills playing 5 nights a week, from 9 to 2, every week at a different club or dancehall for 2 years.

James has since been playing in various bands in the Portland area, from Classic Country to Gypsy Jazz,

*Continued page 4*

**Thomas E. "Tommy" Duncan**

Born January 11, 1911 Died July 25, 1967

Inducted October 5, 1986



Better known as Tommy Duncan, was a pioneering American Western swing vocalist and songwriter who gained fame in the 1930s as a founding member of The Texas Playboys. He recorded and toured with bandleader Bob Wills on and

off into the early 1960s.

**Early life**

Duncan was born near Whitney, Texas on a large farm into a large and impoverished family of truck farmers. He was one of 14 children. His most profound influences as a young singer were Jimmie Rodgers, Bing Crosby, Emmett Miller and other country and blues musicians. He left home at 13 to sharecrop on a cousin's farm, and by 1932 was surviving as a busker in Fort Worth singing at a root beer stand. That year he won an audition against 64 other singers to join the Light Crust Doughboys, a popular local band which featured Bob Wills on fiddle. Another man had auditioned who sounded almost exactly like Duncan but was turned down because of his crossed eyes. Duncan was hired after he sang a version of Emmett Miller's "I Ain't Got Nobody" and impressed Wills with his yodeling ability and bluesy phrasing. As was common at the time, the Doughboys appeared on a radio show under the sponsorship of a local business, in their case Light Crust Flour. Duncan quickly became a sensation, both on the show and at dances and other appearances.

**Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys**

When bandleader Wills decided to form an independent band, he and Duncan became the creative core of The Texas Playboys. Duncan was versatile in his singing style and repertoire, was credited with a fine voice and range, and was ideal for the kind of dance music Wills performed and recorded. He sang everything from ballads and folk to pop, Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, Blues and Cowboy songs.

As a lyricist, he contributed to "New San Antonio Rose" (1940); the recording, with Duncan on vocals, sold three million copies for Columbia Records. Duncan married, but after only a few years his wife

*Continued on page 10*

*Janes Mason continued from page 3*

and various Swing combos. In about 1995 He recorded the "Cactus Setup" CD with renowned vocalist Rebecca Kilgore, which included the great Bobby Koefer on steel. James and Bobby hit it off and stayed in touch throughout the years until Bobby's recent death.

James won 1st place at the Weiser National Fiddle Contest "Swing Division" in 2014

He also entered the Bob Wills division in Greenville TX in 2014, 2017 and 2021 and took 1st place each time.



He Lives in Vancouver WA with his wife Dusty, and recently retired after working 35+ years at The Kerr Violin shop in Portland OR

Left: 2019 Just won The Bob Wills Fiddle Contest in Greenville Texas (again!).



**2025 UPCOMING BANDS**

May 4	Janice Allen & All the Queen's Men
June 1	Beau Jeffers
July 6	Lincoln Highway
August 3	Geoff Miller
September 7	Rhonda Lynn & Edgewood Station
October 3,4 & 5	Hall of Fame
November 2	Rob Shotwell & Let the Horses Run
December 7	Mae McCoy & Her Neon Stars
January 4	The Baughmans

**COMING THIS DECEMBER**

*A Nashville Christmas*

Presented by Meghan "Mae" McCoy  
A celebration of Western Swing, holiday cheer, and surprise guests.

*Full band announcement coming soon...*

American Legion, Mather and Rancho Cordova, are all volunteer veterans that prepare meals and cook for us at all our Sunday dances. Come early for lunch to support these volunteers and stay to dance.

A hot meal, reasonably priced, provided by our American Legion



**PICTURES NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE TO DOWNLOAD AND PRINT**

Pictures are now available on our website:

<http://westernswingsociety.net/>. OR on Google Photos

**Tips:**

- From PDF newsletter, click on link below these instructions to enter that photo album.
- Use the three dots at top right to download entire album or a selected photo
- To see all albums, click top left on Google Photos
- Once back at the home page, click on Albums in the left column
- To find all photos of a particular person, click then click *See all people* at the bottom of the dropdown list. Scroll and click on a person. You will see all photos of that person. Then you can download and print what you like.



**PHOTO LINKS**

**Monthly Dance Photos April Dance**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/yA9MaF6ZZ234DstG9>

**Western Swing Society  
Café Menu**

**Serving 12-3:15**

**Hamburger with chips or potato salad \$8.00**

**Cheeseburger with chips or potato salad \$8.50**

**Pulled Pork with coleslaw \$9.00**

**Cobb Salad \$10.00**

**Hot Dog with chips or potato salad \$4.00**

**Beyond Burger \$10.00**

**Chips \$ .50**

Thank you for supporting





THANK YOU MUSICIANS!!!!!! (PHOTOS BY ALICIA FOX)



Free Dance Lessons with admission on  
Sunday April 6, 2025  
Best kept secret in town.

RAFFLE WINNERS (Photo's By Alicia Fox)



**WESTERN SWING and the Sound of Belonging****By WSS Vice President Meghan "Mae" McCoy**

It started with my grandfather, Ventura Lumidao — a survivor of the Bataan Death March and World War II POW camps. A man who endured the unthinkable and still walked the streets of Sunnyvale, California, wearing a handmade "Bataan Death March" sweater with quiet pride. He raised nine children under the shelter of American ideals and carried his love for music like sacred scripture.

At family gatherings and community parties, the Filipino men, many of them friends from the same village, would gather with a guitar, singing tight three-part harmony late into the night. Their voices smooth, playful, full of life ushered me into a life-long love for the sounds of The Mills Brothers. They wore pinky rings and strong cologne, and their songs never missed a note.

My grandmother would sing Slim Whitman's "Indian Love Call" back in their village nipa hut, a memory my mother still recalls like it was yesterday.

That's how country music first entered my blood.

Western Swing rose from the meeting points of Black, Mexican, German, and jazz traditions a sound stitched together for dance halls and communities who understood that music was movement, and movement was memory.

Filipinos found a home in it naturally. Perhaps because our traditional music carries the echoes of Spanish and German waltzes. Maybe because memory and melody travel through generations the same way stories do. For us, country music didn't sound foreign.

It sounded like home.

I've been blessed to encounter legends who embodied that spirit. Leon Rausch "The Voice of the Texas Playboys" — warm, generous, and deeply human — welcomed me when I first crossed paths with him and Tommy Allsup in Lubbock, Texas. Later, during my time hosting a radio show, I interviewed him, and he stayed in touch always making me feel like I already belonged.

To the RIGHT: ( Meghan "Mae" McCoy with Leon Rausch in Lubbock, Texas — honoring the legacy of Western Swing)

That kind of welcome stays with you. Especially in a world where, sometimes, the doors weigh heavy. Where belonging isn't just about talent, but about permission. One open door can change everything. One voice saying, "Come in — you already belong."

This May, during Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, I honored that lineage: performing at the Crocker Art Museum for Filipinx Law Students Association, traditional dancing rooted in both my bloodline and my birthright. Later this summer, I'll take the stage twice at the California State Fair: once leading my Western Swing band, Mae McCoy and her Neon Stars, and once dancing traditional Filipino folk in the cultural showcase. None of it feels out of place. I don't have to choose between stages. It's all the same songbook.

Western Swing didn't teach me how to belong. It reminded me that I always did.

To learn more about Meghan "Mae" McCoy's music, writing, and cultural preservation work, visit [MeghanMcCoy.com](http://MeghanMcCoy.com).





AT THE DANCE!!! (Photo's By Alicia Fox) See all The Photos Page 4





**THANK YOU MUSICIANS!!!!!! (PHOTOS BY ALICIA FOX)**



**DANCING AND VISITING AT WSS (Photos By Don deMars & Fox West Photos)**







# HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS

## THE TIMING

**January 1—May 31st:** Submissions of nominees for consideration accepted from a member in good standing

**June:** Hall of Fame Selection Committee reviews and chooses 12 nominees to be inducted in the Hall of Fame. Nominations must adhere to the rules and be complete in order to be considered. Any submissions not chosen roll forward to the next year for consideration

**July:** Board signs off on the chosen inductees. Inductees are notified and told about our Hall of Fame Event details

**August:** List of inductees first appear in the newsletter

**September:** Photos of inductees appear in newsletter. List of HOF bands in newsletter

**October:** The three day celebration, culminating in the Induction Ceremony on Sunday

## HOW TO AND THE RULES

Let's have another inspiring set of inductees for the Western Swing Society Hall of Fame event, the 1st Friday—Sunday in October. ***The closing date for submission of nominations is May 31st. Start NOW. Time FLIES!***

Any member in good standing may make 2 nominations, by either postal or email.

An 8 x 10 hard copy photo or a digital jpeg (at least res. 300 dpi) is required at the time of nomination.

The nomination should contain sufficient biographical information to enable the committee to evaluate the nominee's qualifications.

Nominations must include the name (as they wish it to appear in our Hall of Fame registry), address, phone numbers and email addresses (if available) for the nominee **and** the person submitting them. If the nominee is deceased, please include the name of a person who may be able to accept the award.

Mail to: Western Swing Nominations Committee, P. O. Box 2474, Carmichael, CA 95609

## It's Easy!

### Nominate a musician or exceptional volunteer for this year's Hall of Fame

Time is running out. May 31st is the last date to submit your nominations for our Hall of Fame celebration!

Being inducted into the Hall of Fame is a BIG HONOR, so submit a nomination and make someone's day!

1. The name, address, phone and email of member submitting the nomination
2. The name, address, phone and email of the nominee
3. The nominee's name as the nominee wants it shown in the bio and on the Hall of Fame registry
4. Biographical information about the nominee, with emphasis on involvement with Western Swing Music.
  - Birthplace and date.
  - Age at which participation in music began? How? Singing? Playing an instrument?
  - Early inspirations and influences?
  - Time and place of first professional performance.
  - Name of well-known bands and/or performers with which nominee has played.
  - Names of well-known locations where nominee has performed.
  - List of any awards or formal recognitions received by the nominee related to his or her music career.
  - Nominee's personal reasons for involvement in and support of Western Swing Music.

See the instructions in the previous column and email or mail your completed nomination information so that it is received by WSS no later than May 31st.

**DON'T FORGET** to include *your* phone, email and the *nominee's* phone, email and mailing address so that we can contact you.

*Tommy Duncan continued from page 3:* developed cancer and died. Ironically, Duncan's first royalty check for "Time Changes Everything" was used to cover her funeral expenses.

Duncan soon set the standard for Western swing vocals. In California he became friends with Bing Crosby when they stabled their horses together. A virtual "human jukebox," Duncan memorized the lyrics and melodies to more than 3,000 songs. He was a master stylist with the ability to make each song sound as though he wrote it. Duncan was also a multi-instrumentalist who could play piano, guitar and bass.

After a decade of musical success, Duncan was the first member of Wills's band to volunteer for the armed services after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. His service lasted less than a year when he received a medical discharge and he rejoined Wills in 1944 as the war neared its end.

He appeared with Wills and the other Playboys in several movies, including *Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys* (1944), *Rhythm Roundup* (1945), *Blazing the Western Trail* (1945), *Lawless Empire* (1945) and *Frontier Frolic* (1946). His voice matured in the middle to late 1940s. Duncan joined Wills in writing several more numbers, including "New Spanish Two Step" (1945), "Stay A Little Longer" (1945), "Cotton-Eyed Joe" (1946) and "Sally Goodin" (1947). One night in a bar visiting with songwriter Cindy Walker, Duncan motioned for her to look at a gentleman sitting just a few tables away who was staring at his glass of beer. Duncan commented to her that he's just "watchin' the bubbles in his beer."<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Instantly they both realized they had a song idea and "Bubbles in My Beer" became one of the staples of Western swing songs. Aside from "Faded Love", sung by Rusty McDonald, every Texas Playboys record that was a hit featured Duncan on vocals, cementing his status as the finest vocalist Wills had.

Rumors about Duncan having been a heavy drinker were false; Duncan would only have a drink or two at social events and his brother Glynn stated that otherwise he never saw Duncan drink even while they lived together in Fresno, California. Many band members considered him a troublemaker, but the accusations may have stemmed from professional jealousy. Duncan was admired by contemporaries including Tex Ritter, Tex Williams, Teddy Wilds, Hank Penny and Ole Rasmussen.

By 1948, Wills' drinking was becoming too out of control for Duncan. Wills often missed shows, and when the headliner failed to appear, the band's pay reverted to union scale. After a string of performances in 1948 without Wills, Wills overheard Duncan complaining one night before a performance. Wills told guitarist Eldon Shamblin to "fire" Duncan, who set out to form his own band.

He organized another Western swing band called Tommy Duncan and His Western All Stars featuring his younger brother Glynn (1921-2013), a Western swing pioneer, on bass (who would later become Wills' lead vocalist in the late 1950s). Another brother, Joe Duncan, was the lead vocalist for Johnnie Lee Wills' band for a period of time. At the height of the band's popularity, Duncan and the band made an appearance in the 1949 Western film, *South of Death Valley*, starring Charles Starrett and Smiley Burnette. Musical tastes were changing, however, and attendance at the Western All Stars' dances ranged from fair to poor, certainly not enough to sustain a large band, which lasted less than two years.

From 1959 to 1961, Duncan again toured and recorded with Wills, rekindling much of their former success. By this time Duncan's voice had evolved to a mature mellow croon and he used it to the greatest effect. But when Wills began drinking, he again left and made personal appearances with various bands. Wills' band never achieved the same greatness it had with Duncan, and Duncan's solo efforts mostly paled in comparison to his Wills output. Although known for Western swing, Duncan enjoyed singing country hits of the day.

Duncan, who had previous heart problems, died in his motel room in San Diego, California after a performance at Imperial Beach on July 24, 1967. The coroner's report said he was "lying...on the floor...Evidence victim had a heart condition, numerous pills for heart were found among personal effects." He is buried near Merced, California.

Duncan's reputation was that of a unique and distinctive talent, a hillbilly Bing Crosby who never compromised his style to be more popular or commercial. On his own and with Wills, he was an influence on such artists as Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ray Price, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Roy Orbison, Merle Haggard, Buddy Holly, Red Steagall, George Strait, Clint Black, Randy Travis, and Garth Brooks.

As a member of The Texas Playboys, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an Early Influence in 1999, and was also inducted into the Texas Music Hall of Fame. Texas singer Billy Mata has released the Volumes I and II of a planned trilogy of tunes a tribute to Duncan entitled *This Is Tommy Duncan*. Glynn Duncan and his son Larry are among thousands of people who consider Duncan one of the most versatile vocalists of the 20th



### OTHER WESTERN SWING MUSIC ORGANIZATIONS/MUSIC HAPPENINGS

**Buck Ford & Pure Country Band:** Check Website for schedule, <https://buckford.com/events/>

**Carolyn Sills Combo:** <https://www.carolynsills.com/>

**Cowtown Society of Western Music,** Contact: Joe Baker, Membership Director, 940-452-6300, 4361 F.M. 1195, Mineral Springs, TX 76067

**Grace Clark and Swingitude:** [www.graceAclarkmusic.com](http://www.graceAclarkmusic.com). 925-443-5217

**Greater Arizona Country/Western Swing Association and Hall of Fame, Inc.** PO Box 953, Dewey, AZ 86326. Contact Jim Gamble at 928-458-0714.

**Hot Club of Cowtown:** <https://hotclubofcowtown.com/>

**The Lincoln Highway Trio:** Every Tuesday, 1:15-3:45pm. Mission Oaks Community Center, 4701 Gibbons Dr, Carmichael. \$8 cover at the door. <https://www.facebook.com/lincolnhighwaybandca/>

**Mae McCoy and Her Neon Stars**

Contact: [www.maemccoymusic.com](http://www.maemccoymusic.com)  
<https://youtube.com/@maemccoyandherneonstars>  
**Sactown Playboys** @ <https://www.facebook.com/sactownpbs/>

**Slade Rivers Band:** <https://sladeriversband.com/events/>

**Western Swing Music Society of the Southwest,** PO Box 644, Shattuck, OK 73858. Meets quarterly. Go to website at: [www.wsmss.com](http://www.wsmss.com).

**Cliff Huey 27 Outlaws Band @** <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=cliff%20huey%202027%20outlaws>

**Rhonda Lynn & Edgewood Station** Contact: Rhonda Rogers 916-240-8736 email: [info@rhondalynn.com](mailto:info@rhondalynn.com) website: [www.rhondalynn.com](http://www.rhondalynn.com) [facebook.com/rhondalynn66](https://www.facebook.com/rhondalynn66)

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD OF WESTERN SWING MUSIC, HERE IS WHERE TO GO!

<https://www.westernswing.com/Events.html>

### Board Meeting Invitation

You can attend the Society's monthly Board meetings; Please contact any board member if you would like to attend on Google Meet or if you have a suggestion.

## FREE DANCE LESSONS With Admission @ 12:00 pm



### MEMBERSHIP

**Any Changes?** Keep us up to date on any changes in your membership information, especially email addresses. We can't get your newsletter to you unless we have your current information.

You can mail changes in your information to the Society at P.O. Box 2474, Carmichael, CA 95609; or email it to [membership@westernswingsociety.net](mailto:membership@westernswingsociety.net)  
Thanks! Keep on Western Swingin'

### MONTHLY MUSIC SESSIONS

The Western Swing Society holds a music and dance session on the first Sunday of each month, featuring guest bands and artists and jam sets.

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at The Machinists Hall  
2749 Sunrise Blvd., Rancho Cordova, CA\*

Donation: \$7 for Members; \$10 for Non-Members  
For information, browse to [www.westernswingsociety.net](http://www.westernswingsociety.net)

\*The address is Sunrise, but the driveway is on Citrus.



Driving Instructions to MACHINISTS HALL: From Hwy 50, take the Sunrise Blvd. South exit and cross two lights (Folsom Blvd. and Trade Center Drive). After crossing Trade Center, be in the left lane and take the next left turn which is Citrus Road. You will see an Enterprise Car Rental lot in front of you. Turn right into the driveway just past Enterprise. You'll see our sign, and you are there. Park, come in and join the fun.