

# Chorus Chatter

News and Musings for Young at Heart Chorus Members

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**God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen** is a traditional English Christmas carol that we are singing on our December program. It is one of the oldest carols still known, dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. The earliest printed edition was dated about 1760. The meaning of the title can be confusing and obscure, "Rest" in the sense it was used in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, meant "to keep, cause to continue to remain." Dickens replaced *rest* with *bless* in 1843. Because *rest* has lost its early meaning, the title often has been mis-punctuated as "God rest you, merry gentlemen." The adjective *merry* in earlier times had a sense of "pleasant, bountiful, prosperous." We could say the title more closely means "God keep you prosperous" in today's language.



Marcie, Sue, Eleanor, Jo and Joan sing "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" at *The Aristocrat* in October.

## Sing Your Way Through the Season

Research suggests that singing, especially in groups, releases hormones and other substances that can decrease anxiety, depression loneliness and stress.

*Bottom Line Publications*



**Karen Smith** joined the chorus a few months ago after seeing our article in *The Bulletin*. Although she hadn't sung a lot in the last few years, she sang in choruses earlier and also entertained at senior homes with her husband on guitar while they lived in Illinois. Early in her career, while working in Milwaukee for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance (NML), she even had a chance to participate in a production for the company's centennial celebration.

Karen grew up in Scandinavia, Wisconsin, a small town in the center of the state that she says was about 99% Norwegian. After school, she moved to Milwaukee, where she worked for NML and AC Spark Plug before moving to California for a job at TRW, an aerospace company in Redondo Beach. There she met her husband, E.L. She says they met at a TGIF party in a piano bar, so music continued to play a role in her life. They were married for 50 years this past October 21<sup>st</sup>.

After leaving TRW, they moved to Illinois, where E.L. formed a company that managed ATM networks for local banks. The company kept them both busy for a while, but eventually they decided to move to Las Cruces, where E.L. had attended college. They snowbirded for a few years before making the move permanent five or six years ago.

Karen has two daughters plus a stepson and stepdaughter. Together, she and E.L. have 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

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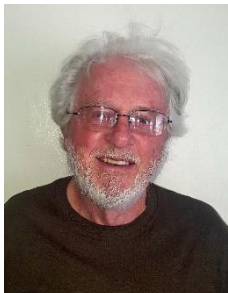
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Indonesia with International Nickel Company.



*George (in his original Army uniform) sings "The Last Farewell" at The Aristocrat in November*



**Peter Barnes-Smith** began his life in Wales, where he started playing guitar with a North Wales rock band in 1958. After that he progressed to playing the club scene in Manchester and Northern England in 1961. There he met some interesting new bands that were later to become famous but says that apparently, he wasn't meant to be a full-time musician (or famous or wealthy).

Returning home to North Wales in 1963, Peter completed his apprenticeship as a Mine Engineer with the National Coal Board and spent a lot of time on the coal face. In 1972, he headed to Canada, where he worked in mining and engineering for the next 10 years. That time also included a stint at a nickel mine in Sulawesi,

Peter came to the United States in 1982, where he worked in fertilizer engineering before returning to Canada in 1996 to finish his career in the oil and gas business, mainly in the Alberta oil sands. Retiring in 2009, Peter moved to Las Cruces with his wife, Nancy, and daughter, Elizabeth.

Peter's family also includes daughter Claire, her husband Colin and three grandchildren living in Dublin, Ireland, and daughter Lori, husband Andrew and two grandchildren in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

His hobbies have included restoring British cars and cutting stones for Nancy's jewelry-making business. He now spends most of his time building guitars and electronics and says, "I wish I had a bigger workshop, as I don't seem to be able to part with any of them."

## How I Ended Up in Las Cruces

I came to Las Cruces from Santa Fe to become Director of Medical Imaging at Memorial Medical Center. We liked the city, bought a home in Sonoma Ranch and now are retired here. We like the people and everything we take part in here in Las Cruces.

*Dennis Cherry*

(If you'd like to share your story of what brought you to Las Cruces, just send a couple of sentences to [ray@scroggins.biz](mailto:ray@scroggins.biz) or bring your comments to me at a practice or performance.)

*Did you ever notice that, when a woman asks a man to hold her purse, he carries it like a football?*

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**Marcie is Good Sam's**

## **Volunteer of the Year**

Congratulations to Marcie Palmer for being voted Volunteer of the Year at Good Samaritan Village. There she serves on several committees and assists in many volunteer positions at Good Samaritan and in the outside community.

Marcie has been instrumental in seeing that someone who needs a walker gets one to keep him safe, bringing soup or baked goods to sick friends, reminding residents of events they might enjoy, and volunteering tirelessly wherever she sees a need. In nominating her for the award, Penelope McClarin, Donor Engagement Director at Good Samaritan, added "She is quick to offer a helping hand and is a woman of her word."

**Auld Lang Syne** is another traditional song with an obscure meaning today. The words were written by Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1788 and set to the tune of a traditional folk song. The song begins by posing a rhetorical question: Is it right that old times be forgotten? The answer is generally interpreted as a call to remember long-standing friendships. It is used traditionally to bid farewell to the old year at the stroke of midnight, but also is sung at funerals, graduations and as a farewell or ending to other occasions. This is how we will be using it to close our programs in December.

The song's title may be translated loosely as "long, long ago" or "days gone by." "For auld

lang syne," as it appears in the first line of the chorus, can be loosely translated as "for the sake of old times."



## **You Can Be a Star**

Next year is right around the corner, and we're working on our programs from February through May. We always need a few solo, duet or small group numbers in the middle of our programs, so if you'd like to give it a try, don't be bashful. Our audiences are non-judgmental, and it's a lot of fun. Whatever number you pick, it should go with our theme of the month. Here are the upcoming themes, so let Ray know if you have an idea, and he'll put you on the list.

February: Love Songs  
March: Irish & Other Cultures  
April: Old Favorites  
May: Spring/Summer Potpourri  
September: Places & Travel  
October: Americana (Country, Folk, etc.)  
November: Armed Forces & Patriotic  
December: Christmas & Holidays

Be sure to check with Joanie for accompaniment, unless you can accompany yourself on the guitar or something else. Also, check with one of the music committee members to see if we have music in file for your song.

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## The Benefits of Familiar Songs

Seniors benefit from familiar music, according to an article in Southwest Airlines *Spirit* magazine. Several senior homes around the country are providing residents with iPods loaded with their favorite music and noticing the benefits. Even though we can't personalize our music to each member of our audience, the music we choose has a strong connection to their memories, as well as our own.

One expert says, "Even as cognitive function and short-term memory diminish with age and disease, the emotional system really doesn't deteriorate." This is why people who may be unable to speak or recognize their own family will come alive if they hear a familiar song from their youth. The notion that music awakens long-term memories isn't new. Anyone who has ever been taken back to the past by a song from their high school years can relate to that. In the past five years, researchers have established a link between music and the storing of autobiographical memory.

All this gives added meaning to the benefits of the songs we sing, for our audiences and ourselves as well.



## Check out the Other Side

Ever wonder how we look or sound from the audience side? George records at least one of our performances each month, usually from either Aristocrat or the Good Samaritan auditorium.

Blu-ray DVDs are available for \$10.00 or CDs for \$5.00, donated to the chorus treasury. Check with George if you want one from our current performance or a previous month.



*Peter was a natural as Santa for our December programs.*

*If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.*



*Rob & Chris sing "Must Be Santa" at The Aristocrat in December.*