

Chorus Chatter

News and Musings for Young at Heart Chorus Members

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Editors: Ray Scroggins & Dennis Cherry

Sing! It Really is Good for You!

A U.S. study of 166 older adults revealed that those who joined a choir were in better health, used less medication, were less lonely and had fewer falls after a year than a similar group of non-singers. This could be due to the effect that singing has on breathing as well as the emotional benefits of creating harmony with a group. Another study out of Sweden found that when choir members sang in unison, their heart rates slowed down and eventually synchronized, which may have long-term benefits for both cardiovascular and mental health.

Reader's Digest (May, 2017)

Teddy Bears' Picnic

In September, we will be singing *Teddy Bears' Picnic* as one of the songs for our theme "Places." George says the "place" is a picnic ground!

The song itself was written by John Walter Bratton in 1907, and it was published later that year. Irish songwriter Jimmy Kennedy wrote the now-familiar lyrics that we sing in 1932. Several vocal recordings were made after that, by artists including Bing Crosby, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Rosemary Clooney, Jerry Garcia and many others.

Probably its most well-known exposure, at least to people of our generation, was as the theme song for the radio show "No School Today," hosted by Big Jon Arthur and Sparkie, an alter ego that Big Jon voiced by replaying that part at a fast speed. The show began in 1950 at WSAJ in Cincinnati and was carried daily on 181 ABC stations and by 275 stations that reached 12 million listeners on Saturdays. The show's theme song was sung by Ann Stephens.

...Where the Buffalo Roam



Judy, Marcie & Phyllis do "Ballin' the Jack" in May

It's ironic that the colors red, white and blue stand for freedom, unless they are flashing behind you.

I was always taught to respect my elders, but it keeps getting harder to find one.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving probably is not for you...

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Carol Briggs joined Young at

Heart in early 2015 after seeing our flyer on the bulletin board at Golden Mesa. Plus, she thought the tear-off strips with a number to call were an innovative idea and figured our singers were probably interesting people.

When she moved to Las Cruces from Hobbs a little more than 3-1/2 years ago, Carol had to leave the Jubilee choir, a joint effort among all the churches in Hobbs that welcomed anyone 55 or older who enjoyed singing for the grace of God. With that group, she performed in many New Mexico locations, as well as at Senior choir competitions in Texas.

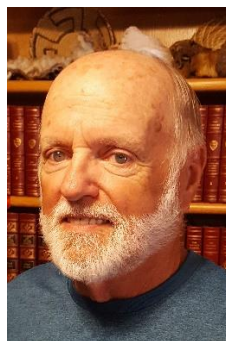
Having sung in church choirs in many places where she lived, plus a light opera group in her school days, Carol was saddened to think her choir days were finished when she left Hobbs. She says, "It was with great joy that "Young at Heart" was brought to my attention."

Her career as a teacher took Carol to many places around the U.S and the world. Her first 15 years were spend teaching Physical Education, including stints in the Bahamas, San Bernardino, California, New Delhi, India, Miami, Florida, the Canary Islands and back to New Delhi. She says she has "live" souvenirs from each country where she taught school: daughter Heidi, born in the Bahamas, son Mark, born in Miami, daughter Ursula, born in the Canary Islands, and daughter Katrina, born on her second stint in New Delhi.

She spent four years at the Laboratory School of Northern Colorado University, in Greeley, an

exciting time because she had the chance to write her own curriculum for middle school students and work with intern teachers as well. She says coming to New Mexico was the best, with 28 years of teaching in the best climate, the best people and even the best horses. After teaching five days a week, the horses gave her a chance to ride and gather cattle on Saturdays.

Carol moved to Golden Mesa in Las Cruces in December, 2013 to spend time with one daughter's family and to finish her second book. Her small private cottage, with food provided, was ideal for writing. She feels her life has been blessed, and even more now, with 16 grandchildren six great-grandchildren and singing with Young at Heart. Carol says, "Who could ask for anything more?"



Gary Spencer joined Young at

Heart about two years ago and also has been a member of the Mesilla Valley Chorale for almost as long. Singing has been a part of his life since seventh grade, when he already was singing solos and parts. He studied voice at Seattle Pacific University and sang in a gospel quartet called "The Four Marks," which sang in churches all over Washington and British Columbia. The group also made an LP recording (Gary still has a copy). He has sung in Assembly of God churches in Seattle and Salt Lake City as well as soloing with the Mormon Church choir for a Christmas program in 1959-1961. He also has sung operatic solos. Gary says he played alto sax in a church orchestra but wasn't very good at that and give the instrument to his nephew.

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Gary was born in Corvallis, Oregon and then lived in Portland until he was 12, when he moved to Seattle. In 1959, he left to attend the University of Utah and earned a degree in Economics before returning to Seattle. There, he joined Boeing as a manufacturing engineer.

In his 32 years with Boeing, he was assigned to many programs, including the 707, 727, 737, 747, 757 and 767 airliners. Working with Boeing Aerospace Corp, he was involved with the Minuteman and Peacekeeper programs and also with Boeing Electronics Company. Finally, he ended up in a program to revise all of the company's computer programs, from which he retired with a huge sigh of relief. After selling his home in 2001, he says he "escaped" to Las Cruces.

Here, he follows his passion for photography and is a member of the Dña Ana Photography Club. He has won many blue ribbons while showing his work in exhibits around Las Cruces, with the club and at the Southern New Mexico State Fair. Gary says photography gets him out of the house to climb mountain trails and keep active, which is also important to maintaining his health.

In addition, he is an avid reader of the classics and other works, with an extensive library and also enjoys listening to classical music. With a collection of about 4,000 CDs, he has a lot to choose from.



Judy Waite joined Young at Heart after Marcie Palmer brought her to a rehearsal in 2015. Since growing up during the war years, she always has been nostalgic about the music her

parents listened to and she sang with them on car trips. Although she never learned to play an instrument, she enjoys listening to a wide range of instrumental and vocal music.

Although she never thought of herself as a singer, Judy participated in school choruses and liked singing in church, initially in the 2nd soprano range. Now more of an alto, she sometimes has to sing the melody an octave lower. Although she doesn't read music, her good sense of pitch helps.

Born in Oklahoma City, Judy has lived in many other places since. After high school, her family moved to Albuquerque, and she completed her freshman year at UNM before getting married at 19. Working to put her husband through school, she learned to write ad copy and handle the secretarial reception work at a large real estate firm. With a move to the Seattle area, she had secretarial positions at Washington State University while also taking night classes toward an eventual degree.

After a divorce, she studied speech pathology and audiology and, in 1967, she married a veterinarian. She continued with part-time classes until he volunteered for the draft, as Vietnam was looming. While he served there, Judy moved to Mesa, Arizona, near her sister, to attend school full time. After he returned, they moved to Denver, where she received her undergraduate degree in 1972. She was a therapist at a preschool for developmentally disabled children until her husband's assignment took them to San Francisco. Judy says those two years in the Bay area were a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for great seafood, theater and being a tourist.

In 1976, they moved back to Puget Sound where he set up a pathology practice, while Judy enjoyed exploring the island and new interests, including shape note singing and gardening. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with cancer in 1977 and died seven months later.

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After some time in Montana, she eventually returned to Puget Sound and became involved in supporting the art world after receiving training in picture framing. After her sister died, she returned to New Mexico in 1984 to be near her aging parents and her sister's two children. Living in Santa Fe, she worked for a great framing company.

Judy says that "the universe" then gave her two opportunities to love again. A former geriatric worker, Nancy, who was involved in her parents' care, became a "soul sister" and part of the family. An 11-year May/December marriage with an extraordinary old-world gentleman broadened her world and provided mutual support during sometimes difficult times. When her husband and parents died just months apart, Nancy was there through it all.

Along the way, Judy has traveled to many places, including the British Isles, Russia, Italy, Nova Scotia, Greece and recently a float trip down the Mississippi. Her most memorable trip was a three week visit to New Zealand via Lonely Planet Guide, which incl. meeting part of her extended family tree. At age 60, She bought a small recreational vehicle and enjoyed traveling with Nancy and other retired friends for 11 years before moving to Silver City and eventually to Las Cruces in 2015, with Nancy's sustaining love and support.

Here, she continues old friendships and made new ones, especially her heart connection, Jim.

Scarborough Fair, a ballad we will sing in September, relates the tale of a young man who instructs the listener to tell his former love to perform for him a series of impossible tasks, such as making him a shirt without a seam and then washing it in a dry well. He says that, if she completes these tasks, he will take her back. Often, the song is sung as a duet, with the woman then giving her lover a series of equally

impossible tasks, promising to give him his seamless shirt once he has finished.

The song has been traced as far back as 1670 to an obscure Scottish ballad, but it may have even earlier roots. The melody is typical of the middle English period. It has been known by other names, and many other versions have existed, but the one we will sing is the most common now.



Sue Lashley joined the chorus last Fall but has liked to sing for a long time. She says she thought she sounded pretty good singing along with CDs but didn't know if anyone else agreed. She did hear someone says he had a good voice about 15 years ago though. Her other musical experience was two years of piano lessons and playing the ukulele when she was growing up.

Sue grew up in Pittsburgh and went to college in Ohio, followed by a year of graduate work in Albuquerque. Then she was married and lived in Minnesota for three years and Salt Lake City for two before moving to Las Cruces in 1965. She lived here for 44 years before moving to Durango, Colorado in 2009 and returning here in 2015.

She was a stay-at-home mom for many years but returned to school to get a teaching certificate in secondary math and taught at the junior high level. Back to school once more, she earned a master's degree in mathematics education and taught in the Math Learning Center at NMSU for 15 years before retiring. Since then, she has done some private and volunteer tutoring.

Sue has three married daughters, one in Boise, one on Austin and one in Las Cruces, as well as five

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grandchildren. She has been square dancing since 1984 and also volunteers once a week at the Institute of Historical Survey in Las Cruces.

Snapshots at jasonlove.com



How singers become self-centered.

Don't Fence Me In, which we will sing in October, is a popular American song written in 1934, with music by Cole Porter and lyrics by Robert Fletcher and Cole Porter. "Don't Fence Me In" was based on a text by Fletcher, a poet and engineer with the Department of Highways in Helena, Montana. Cole Porter, who had been asked to write a cowboy song for a 20th Century Fox musical, bought the poem from Fletcher for \$250. Porter reworked Fletcher's poem, and when the song was first published, Porter was credited with sole authorship. Porter had wanted to give Fletcher co-authorship credit, but his publishers did not allow that. After the song became popular, however, Fletcher hired attorneys who negotiated his being given co-authorship credit in subsequent publications. Although it was one of the most popular songs of its time, Porter claimed it was his least favorite of his own compositions.

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"The healthiest part of a donut is the hole. Unfortunately, you have to eat through the rest of the donut to get there!"

Sixteen Tons, which the men will sing in October, is based on life in the coal mines of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky. It was written and first recorded by Merle Travis in Hollywood on August 8, 1946. It was first released by Capitol on the album *Folk Songs of the Hills* (July 1947) and became a gold record.

The line, "You load sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt," came from a letter written by Travis' brother John. Another line came from their father, a coal miner, who would say, "I can't afford to die. I owe my soul to the company store."

A 1955 version recorded by Tennessee Ernie Ford reached number one in the *Billboard* charts, while another version by Frankie Laine was released only in Western Europe, where it gave Ford's version competition.



George & Joy sing "Thanks for the Memories" in May