

# **Chorus Chatter**

*News and Musings for Young At Heart Chorus Members*

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**Issue #5 ...November 18, 2016**

## **Two in a Row**

We've made it past the first issue of our revived newsletter, and we hope it is informative and sometimes even entertaining.

With more than 30 people on our membership list, it will take a while to share everyone's profile. Last issue, we covered the performance team, some of whom play other roles as well. This issue, we're featuring the rest of the board of directors plus a few who have been active members for quite a while. We'll continue to put the spotlight on four to six members per issue, so if you want to submit a short write-up and a photo, send them to me, and we'll publish them as we have space. Otherwise, Dennis or I will be in touch to get your background and a photo. Ray

## **What to Wear for our Performances?**

Our normal costume or uniform when we perform is black slacks or skirts (not for the guys) with a white top. The men typically wear string (bolo) ties. For many months, we change from the usual clothes to something that reflects the theme or season. Examples would be cowboy/western garb for our October program and Christmas/holiday accents for December. Often we will wear pastel tops in spring and fall colors in fall, usually with tan slacks or skirts. Be sure to check your calendar for notes on what we're wearing, but also watch for e-mails in case we make a last-minute change.

*Editors: Ray Scroggins & Dennis Cherry*

## **Director's Notes for December**

Most of the songs we're singing in December are familiar Christmas and Holiday season melodies. One request: on *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, try not to close the word *Wish* until the end. This will avoid an unpleasant hissing sound. The easiest way to do this is to sing the first part of the word as "Wiiiiih," and put the *sh* on the next word, "you," so it comes out something like "Wiiih Shew." Seems funny, but it works. We'll try it at practice.

Also, note that we will be singing a different version of the words for *Deck the Halls* at Northrise Morningside only. As we did last year, we will sing the special words for Barbra, the activity director, to recognize her Jewish roots. Normally there are three verses, but for this version, there will only be two.

## **Mesilla Valley Chorale Concert**

In case you haven't heard, the Mesilla Valley Chorale's concert, *Holiday Fanfare*, will be on Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM in the Rio Grande Theater. If you've been to their past concerts, you know they always put on a good show. We have quite a few current and former Chorale members singing with us. If you need tickets, they still are only \$10.00. See Ray, Rob or Chris and get yours now.

## **Sign on the back of a wine truck:**

In case of accident, bring cheese and crackers  
...Lots of cheese and crackers!

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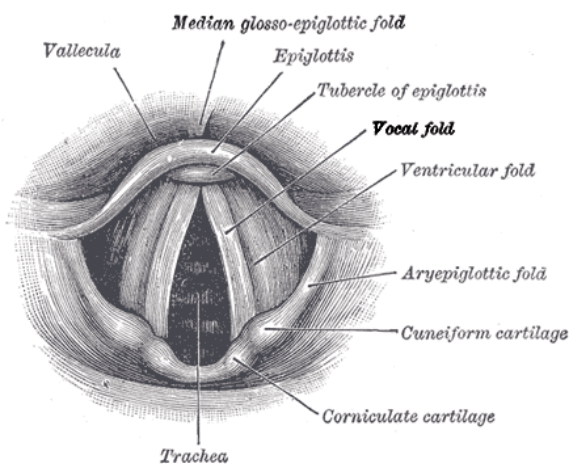
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## The Voice

The larynx, or what we call the “voice box,” includes a set of cartilages that form the vocal folds, often called the “vocal cords.” They normally are closed but are opened by air pressure from the lungs at the beginning of a sound. Their elastic resistance and the air pressure from below causes them to vibrate. This creates a sound that is amplified in the resonating cavities of the head and throat.

This drawing shows how the vocal folds look from above. They are joined together at the front and form a triangular opening that can open or close at the back. Various muscles control this opening and the tension in the folds to change the pitch of the sound they produce.



The pitch of the sound depends on the frequency at which the vocal folds vibrate, while the volume depends on the pressure of the air against the folds. The muscles of the throat, mouth, tongue and lips act as resonators, and the conscious and subconscious changes we make to them are what make speech possible and also control the quality of the musical sounds we make when we sing.

If you are interested in learning more, there is an app called Vocal Folds ID, available through the Google Play store for \$2.99, which includes videos of the vocal mechanism in action.

## Want to watch our performance again?

If you would like to watch some of our performances again, George has put many of them on you tube. In You Tube's search bar, just type in **yathchorus**. Then click on Videos, and you'll see a whole menu of them. He also records each month's program and will make you a DVD or Blue Ray disc. Just tell him which format you want, and make a donation to the chorus treasury. It's \$5.00 for a DVD or \$7.00 for a Blue Ray.

## Have Hidden Talent?

If you have some abilities to play the piano or ambition to direct the chorus, we could use you. Since Joanie is our only pianist, it would be good to have a backup in case she can't make it sometimes. Also, as we only have two directors who alternate months, it would be great if we had some extra help in that department as well. If you think you might be interested, see Ray, Dennis or George.

## News from Harry

Many of you will remember Harry Whalen, who sang with us for many years before moving to be near his son in Las Vegas, Nevada a couple of years ago. Recently he reported he had been feeling very tired, listless and had no appetite. After many tests, they found that his sodium level was dangerously low. After spending five days in the ICU, they got his salt level back to normal. Harry says, "I have high blood pressure

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and was told for 30 years to avoid salt. Now I take two salt tablets every day and am feeling much better.” Good to hear from Harry. We miss his renditions of “Clancy Lowered the Boom” and “Same Old Shillelagh.”



**Joan Kowalski** joined the Young at Heart Chorus in 2008. Originally from Chicago, she came to Las Cruces via Phoenix, AZ, where she and her husband lived for 27 years. She worked for Bell Telephone Co. in Chicago and spent 20 years in retail sales as well.

Joan moved to Las Cruces in 2006. She previously sang in church choirs and the Elk Grove Festival Chorus (Illinois), which sang classical and pop music.

She is a reading volunteer at Mesilla Park Elementary School, reading with the first and second grade students.

Joan has one son, who lives in Las Cruces and works for NASA. One of her twin granddaughters teaches at the middle school in Page, AZ, where the student body is 75% Navajo, and the other works for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, CA.



**Rob Pearson** joined Young at Heart three years ago and has sung with the Mesilla Valley Chorale for the past four years as well. He also has sung in church choirs for seven years. He came to Las Cruces 5-1/2 years ago from Hibbing, Minnesota, which, he points out,

is Bob Dylan's hometown. Rob left behind a career in finance as well as the cold weather when he left Minnesota.

Rob is married to Chris, who he says is the real musician in the family. His hobbies include napping, hiking, napping, biking, napping and geocaching. You can ask him to explain the last one if you don't understand.



**Joy Webb** joined the chorus three years ago, bringing a lot of show biz experience with her. Although born in New York, she was raised in Colorado before moving to Phoenix for high school. She became a model and started singing in night clubs at 16, as well as performing in musical comedy and summer stock melodrama. Joy says she also danced the Cancan then.

She joined the Army and sang for the troops, sometimes with a big band. Afterward, she sang jazz with her first husband's trio while also raising her daughter, Denyce. She worked as an engineering secretary and a booking agent's secretary, where she met many stars, including Wayne Newton.

In 1972, she began singing country music with her own band around Arizona before retiring to work for the highway department. While still singing on weekends, she also became the first female police officer in Peoria, AZ.

After a divorce, Joy moved to Las Vegas and worked as a dispatcher with the North Las Vegas Police Department. Her life took another turn

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when she married MSgt. Webb, who was later transferred to Spain, where they enjoyed the culture for two years. She was asked to join the Special Services and sing around Europe but had to return to the States when her husband became ill and later died in Las Vegas.

Joy moved to Texas for a while but returned to take care of her mother. Joy met her life partner, George, 25 years ago, and he joined her in Las Cruces following her move here 16 years ago to take care of a friend. After joining Young at Heart, she since discovered she still could play drums and has become our "Rhythm Queen."



**Jo Banks** joined "Young at Heart" with Eleanor in March, 2006. Phyllis, Alice, Marilyn and Mary Kammann had sung for the Progress Club's Christmas party, and after talking to Mary they both joined. Their first program at Good Sam's Nursing Center was a comedy of errors, with them going to the Assistant Living by mistake. Rushing next door, they set off the alarm. As they sat in the two remaining front row seats, the only members without the lovely green bow ties, the ground did not swallow them up despite their wishes.

Jo's only musical background was growing up with music in the house-no TV yet- and learning all the songs her dad sang. A special favorite was "Old Shanty Town". You can imagine what she felt the first time she heard Elvis belt it out! She also sang in the church choir throughout grade school and in high school musicals.

Jo and her husband, Bill, moved to Las Cruces in June, 1996. They sent their two daughters and two sons to NMSU and followed them to Las Cruces after retiring from the Roswell School District in 1996, Bill as a guidance counselor at Goddard High and Jo as a classroom teacher (6th and 3rd) at Del Norte Elementary. They both were born and raised in Davenport, Iowa and actually met in second grade. Their children have added two grandsons and four granddaughters to the family, the absolute delight of Jo's life as she sees them grow into outstanding young adults.

After Bill's death in 2005, Jo was looking for some productive community volunteer opportunities. Her first move was to get more involved with the "GFWC Progress Club," which she had joined in 2002. This international Women's Club began here 100 years ago as a NMSU faculty wives' group. She has worked with them on many projects, most specifically as chair of the Education Committee. The group's main focus is a Nursing and an Education Scholarship to NMSU, along with participation in the school district's "Read Across America" and "Battle of the Books" events.

She next joined the "Friends of the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library" and has been their Membership Chair since 2006. She also works with the St. Albert the Great's food bank "La Bodega" and says, if times get tough, she can get a bagger job at any grocery store. Jo's hobbies are reading, genealogy, puzzles and travel. These activities, along with following her grandkids' many sports

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and other interests, have helped keep her out of trouble.

She hasn't set off an alarm since 2006.



**Eleanor Kruschke** joined the chorus at the same time as Jo Banks, in 2006. Previously, she sang in a church choir and in a trio as a young adult. She took piano lessons as a child, although she says she had no talent for that.

Eleanor was born and raised in Chicago, where she married and had three sons who still live there. While there, she worked for Hartford Insurance Company and after a break to raise her sons, she worked as a bookkeeper for various school districts. In 1969, marital problems led her to move in with her brother in Las Vegas, NV, where she soon met her second husband, Chuck. In 1972, they moved to Santa Clara, CA, where they both worked for Pacific Bell (now back to AT&T), Eleanor as cable manager (analyst) and Chuck as a lineman.

After retiring in 1992, they moved to Las Cruces. Although Chuck died in 1997, many good friends and volunteer opportunities have kept her here. Since 1994, she has volunteered for the Las Cruces Police Department, where she works on authorization for disposing of items of evidence. Last year, the city awarded her its Impact Award for her 10,000 hours of service. Eleanor's busy volunteering schedule also has included Habitat for Humanity, Red Cross and St. Luke's Clinic.

In addition to her three sons, Eleanor's family includes seven grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren, with #14 due in March! One son,

Bob, is a professional "senior" Bowler and another, Ken, is in the Chicago Softball Hall of Fame. Family traditions continue, as one granddaughter has set several records while playing soccer at the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana. A step-granddaughter is teaching at Ohio University and one step-grandson-in-law is teaching at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh.

Eleanor apparently inherited her performing bent from her paternal grandparents, who were Vaudevillians. Although she has had to give up some interests and activities because of macular degeneration, Eleanor says she believes she has been blessed in many other ways.

## Are we a Chorus, a Choir or a Chorale Group?

Dennis asked that question when he first joined Young At Heart last October. He says, "Here is what I know today:

A CHOIR is a group of singers that sings in churches.

A CHORALE is a large group of singers who usually sing in a church.

A CHORUS is a group of singers who sing songs at various places.

I have sang in choirs, THE SCHOLA CANTORUM, when I was in the Seminary, I played the Pipe Organ and Directed Choirs when I was the organist at Catholic Churches, and now I sing in a CHORUS.

Glad I got that figured out. Thanks to all our members, and thank you for sharing your voices with our CHORUS.

*Somebody ought to cross ballpoint pens with coat hangers so the pens will multiply instead of disappearing. Same thing applies to reading glasses.*



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## Fight Colds the Way Performers Do

Even though it's called a "cold," it's really caused by a virus. If you do catch a cold, be sure to drink a lot of fluids, and you probably have your own favorite remedies. Professional singers have a few other tools they use to relieve their cold symptoms and protect their voices. A humidifier or vaporizer will keep your throat from drying out. To prevent bleeding injuries to your vocal chords, avoid aspirin and use Tylenol or Advil instead. Some people use Vitamin C, but in excessive quantities it is mild diuretic that may dry out your body's tissues. Zinc lozenges can shorten a cold's duration, but don't take more than four a day. Finally Slippery Elm eases coughs and sore throat pain. Made from the inner bark of the slippery elm tree, it is a highly effective remedy. Mountain View Co-Op has slippery elm capsules or lozenges or a tea called Throat Coat that works well.

## Coming Attractions

### Chorus Music for December, 2016

Director: Ray  
Piano: Joanie

(Medley) Joy to the World O Little Town of Bethlehem O Come All Ye Faithful	One verse each
It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year	All
It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas	Both verses (no intro)
Winter Wonderland	Both verses
The Christmas Song (women)	Once
Go Tell It on the Mountain (men)	All 3 verses (everyone on chorus)
Holly Jolly Christmas	2 times with interlude
Break: Joy & Joan (My Favorite Things); Marcie, Judy & Sue (I'm Gettin' Nuttin' for Christmas)	
Feliz Navidad	All, as written
Frosty the Snowman	2 verses
Jingle Bell Rock	Once
Jolly Old St. Nicholas	2 verses
Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer	Once (men on intro)
Deck the Halls (special lyrics for Northrise)	all 3 verses (2 verses at Northrise)
We Wish You a Merry Christmas	3 verses, then chorus
Auld Lang Syne	Once

## JANUARY 2017 Young At Heart Chorus Schedule

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Practice is at First Baptist Church unless otherwise noted.