

# Chorus Chatter

News and Musings for Young At Heart Chorus Members

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**Issue #7 ...February 18, 2017**

## How it All Began

By Marilyn Gioannini

The Young at Heart Chorus has been in continuous operation since 1972, over 44 years! This miracle is a tribute to all the seniors who believed that our chorus is a valuable public service and stuck with it through the years. We are grateful to Harold Mack and his wife, Audrey, who started the chorus in June of 1972. Harold was director and Audrey was the pianist. The group practiced at the old senior center at the corner of Nevada and Chaparral, and their first performance was for Halloween 1972, with four singers. Harold was a basketball coach in Indiana when he was younger and was inducted into the Valparaiso University's athletic hall of fame as a member of the 1944-45 "World's Tallest Basketball Team." He is listed on the chorus roster as late as 1994, making 22 years of dedication. He was a resident at the Aristocrat when he died in 2013 at the age of 86.

The facts we have about the early years come mostly from Dr. John Early, chairman of the chorus for many years. He and his wife, Martha, took care of details like scheduling and preparing the music. Martha typed each month's song list (on a manual typewriter) and started saving them in 1992, which gives us an original source, the large blue binder in our files, known as "Chorus History." It contains over 200 programs plus other information. The first thing you notice looking at the oldest programs: we are still singing the same songs! We've added many more old favorites, but almost all the songs from 1992 are found in the programs we do today. We also have many, but not all of the chorus rosters through the years.

John recorded a few facts about the Macks and also the chorus in 1995. Then, we were known as the Munson Senior Chorus, we had 23 members, and were singing at three nursing homes and the Munson center on a regular basis, with extra performances as requested. This is the same schedule we use to this day, although the names of the chorus and the places we go have changed.

*Continued on page 2*

Editors: Ray Scroggins & Dennis Cherry



*Bob Shade talks with TV and newspaper reporters at the airport before his flight in the B-17 bomber, similar to the ones he flew in WW II.*

## Our Family

The more we share the experience of singing together, the more we become like a family. We hope the profiles of our members in this newsletter are helping us to get to know each other better, a little at a time. Eventually, we'll tell every member's story. Meanwhile, be sure to talk with some of the members you don't know as well. And current members- don't hesitate to adopt a newer member until they get into our routine. Let's continue to support each other and our mission while we also bring joy to our audiences.

## Our Changing Themes

As you know, our themes change each month. Here is a list of our themes for 2017, which tend to repeat yearly with some minor variations:

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

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Places where we've performed in the past include Memorial Hospital, Munson Center, Casa del Sol, Mountain Shadows, Las Cruces Nursing, and others.

John Early reported in 1992 that the chorus was active in the Senior Olympics Talent Show, which is also still true. Joanie, our pianist, won a blue ribbon last year with her famous "Down Yonder" rendition, and Joy, our rhythm queen, won a blue ribbon for "You Belong to Me".

Now we skip forward to December, 1999. John Early lived across the street from me, and knowing I played the piano, asked me if I would try helping out because their pianist, Carolyn Darr, wanted to quit because of her age and eyesight. After a rocky start, not having really practiced since I was 17, things improved, and I was the pianist for the chorus until we were lucky enough to entice Joanie to play for us in 2013. One of our true blessings is her dedication to Young at Heart.

For a few years, starting in 1996, a lady named Elnora Altman was directing the chorus. Not long after I joined in 1999, she got married and moved away. The members chose Elgin Bryce, a retired minister, to lead the group. He loved country music and hymns. While Elgin was director, we changed how the music is handled by putting the music sheets into a three-ring binder. Before that, they were in a loose leaf folder and many members couldn't keep the sequence straight. Big improvement!

Also, during his tenure, the powers that be at Munson Center asked us to move our music (two large file cabinets) out of the center. They went into my spare bedroom. That gave me a close connection to our music source, which continues to this day. George houses the folders for individual songs, (now 4 large file cabinets), but I have all the music books from which we copy, numbering 84. I also have individual master copies of all the songs in our list, numbering somewhere around 1000, if you count the songs saved from featured performers and those we may someday try as a new song. (We have a database that a former member volunteered to make of all the songs in those 80+ books, which has 6641 lines. We're rich!)

Sadly, Elgin had a heart condition that took him from us after a few years. In 2002, the chorus chose Joe L. Otero as our leader, with Alice Schwebke as his assistant. I was also helping behind the scenes as well as playing the piano. He and Alice continued until Joe L. had a stroke and could no longer help us. The records are unclear when that happened, but it was sometime during the 2008 season. Neither Elgin nor Joe L. had the ability to read music. Nonetheless, a strong sense of rhythm and years of experience singing these songs carried them through.

Another improvement was made at some point around this time. We decided to provide sheets for the chorus with only lyrics if requested. At our age, some members often need the larger print, and the music only makes sense if you can read it. Reading music has never been a requirement for participation in the chorus.

From 2002 to 2006 we were known as "Las Cruces Senior Chorus." In 2006 we wanted to step it up a bit. It only took a few minutes to come up with "Young at Heart". Stay tuned for more Chorus History in next month's newsletter!

## **Hydrate for Healthy Singing**

To stay healthy and sing better, drink lots of water. Our bodies are made up of approximately 60% water, and we need to be replenishing it constantly to prevent dehydration. When you are properly hydrated and have enough water in your throat membranes, you'll be able to sing better without getting a sore throat, and you'll be less likely to get a cold.

Try rubbing your hands together when they are dry, and they will get warm and red from the friction. Add a little soap and water, and they will slide together easily. The same thing happens with your vocal cords. When they are dry, they get irritated easily. The answer is to drink enough water regularly to keep your body tissues hydrated. Strangely enough, the best way to monitor your hydration is by paying close attention to urine color. The closer its color is to tap water, the better your hydration level.

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**Marilyn Gioannini** joined the chorus in 1999. Here is her story: After 17 years with the chorus, health issues forced me to take a break in the spring of 2016, but I still consider myself a member! Most of my musical experience has been with the chorus, but I had thousands of piano lessons as a child (or so it seemed). Since I grew up on an isolated ranch many miles from town with not much to do, I practiced faithfully and got to be good at it! I have variously been a mother, a teacher, a computer programmer, the author of a fairly popular cookbook, a vegetable gardener, and a nanny granny. I didn't have much time to play piano till Young at Heart came along!

One of the proud and few, I am a New Mexico native. I have two sons and the smartest grandson around. (But all of you have one too, I'd guess). My sons and their wives live here, but my grandson will probably fly the nest eventually.

My wish is that all Young at Heart members find it as rewarding as I do. I love that we have two missions. One is to bring joy to our audiences. Equally important is to bring joy to our members. You may notice in our history, members stay with us as long as they are able. The rest of us can help them do that.

If a member has need for a particular piece of (old) music, remember the collection at my house. I would be happy to help. My number is 642-3675. I hope to be able to join you, at least to listen, before long. I'd love to see my old friends and make some new ones!



*It was great to see former chorus member **Jack Thomas** singing along with us at *The Aristocrat*.*



**Fred Waskowiak** joined the chorus in 2001, making him our longest-serving active member. He was born and raised in Sherman County, Nebraska in the middle of the Great Depression and stock market crash, as well as a drought, grasshopper plague and the Dust Bowl. Fred says, "Hence the present image." He graduated from Loup City High School in 1951 and served as a forward observer in Korea with the U. S. Field Artillery from 1953 to 1955.

He was employed by the Federal Bureau of Land Management, finally as Chief Branch of Cadastral Survey for New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, in support of various land management programs. His career led to working in support of the Bureau of Reclamation on a number of water reservoir irrigation projects throughout the Midwest. Fred says these required moving every three to six months, "a good job for the footloose and mostly fancy-free." Along the way, he says he attended convenient courses of higher education, graduating Magna Cum Laude from the "University of Hard Knocks. "

Fred is the father of Dean and Bryan and grandfather of Grayce and Jeff. He retired in 1985 after 31 years of service and spent time in volunteer services before retiring to Las Cruces in 1993.



**Skipper Bottsford** says he stammered as a little kid but not when he sang, so he sang a lot, especially Burl Ives songs. In high school, he did not sing in the choir. "That was for dummies," he says, but he did sing in a trio that also included two guitars and a string bass. As this was during the late 1950s, they sang rock and roll plus a few folk songs.

In college, Skipper sang as a single and did a little backing of groups singing in Santa Clara. He ran out of

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money there and moved to Idaho, where the tuition was a lot less. There, he won the Blue Key Talent Show, singing "The Frozen Logger." Moving to Oregon State University for graduate study in microbiology, Skipper sang folk music with a trio that included a graduate engineering student and an undergraduate, with two guitars and a banjo. He says they sounded almost professional. The group performed for the 1966 George McGovern for President campaign all across western Oregon, a state McGovern won.

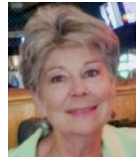
Skipper came to Las Cruces in 1970 to teach Biology at NMSU and also joined Vos Vaqueros, where he sang first tenor and played guitar and banjo. The group had been started by Dr. George Jarden, who, Skipper says, "had gone to a spiffy Eastern School that had a men's choir and decided to start one here."

After singing with Vos Vaqueros for 12 years, Skipper says he "got tired of the histrionics," so he quit and joined the Mesilla Valley Chorale. He sang tenor with the Chorale for 35 years, including the last 12 years with Nancy Ritchey directing. "She made us grow and took the group to sing in France," he recalls. Unfortunately, he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and couldn't go. Then, when his wife died suddenly, it got to be too much, so he quit and moved to Good Samaritan. He still remembers much of that music as the best he'd ever done.

Still singing, Skipper joined Young at Heart about six years ago. He also sings in the choir at Peace Lutheran Church and with Diane Schutz's Good Time Singers, in both of which he says he has to read music. In addition, he sings with the Vintage Singers at Good Samaritan and also gets together every Thursday to sing old show tunes from the 30s to the 50s with Phil Hosford, who founded the Mesilla Valley Chorale and also lives at Good Samaritan.

*Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit.  
Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.*

*Why do people say they "slept like a baby" when a baby wakes up and cries every two or three hours?*



**Gayle Trantham** joined Young at Heart in 2010 at the invitation of the late Roger McCandless. In high school and college, she was involved in choral groups, church choirs and community choruses in Louisville, KY and Memphis, TN. She also played trombone in her local high school band and served as a pianist at her church. In Las Cruces, she sang with the Mesilla Valley Chorale before joining YAH and now also assists with our data processing needs.

Gayle grew up in Cullman, Alabama, where her church hired a young college student named John Trantham as Minister of Music. The rest is history. They married after college and moved to Louisville, KY for graduate work. Their daughters, Jennifer and Clarissa, were born during their 10-year stay in Kentucky. Following another 10 years in Memphis, they moved to Las Cruces in 1982.

In 1992, Gayle was widowed at the young age of 47 when her husband, John, died suddenly of a massive heart attack at age 50. Having lived here for 10 years and established her life, Las Cruces was now "home," so she decided to stay here, to the chagrin of her family back in Alabama. It proved to be an excellent decision, as a few years after John's death, she met a wonderful retired NMSU professor, Jack Welch. They married in 1997 and will celebrate 20 very happy years together this fall. Jack also enjoys "vicariously" being part of YAH.

Gayle's working life included handling finance and endowments for Cumberland Presbyterian Church headquarters and serving as regional public relations representative for Connecticut Life Group Insurance, both in Memphis. In Las Cruces, she spent 10 years as office manager with Realty Consultants of Las Cruces, now Steinborn Realty. She says being a mother to her two lovely daughters and grandmother to four grandchildren has been her most rewarding accomplishment.

Since retiring, Gayle and Jack have traveled extensively and spend their summers at their condo in the cool

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pires of Ruidoso. They act as event managers for Dona Ana Senior Olympics and also compete, Gayle in volleyball and race walking, and Jack in swimming. She also enjoys reading, cooking, hiking, gardening and, most of all, spending time with family. She says singing with Young at Heart is a gratifying experience, giving enjoyment to the residents where we perform and being inspired by them as well.



**Chris Pearson** has been a desert rat for 10 years. Prior to moving out here, she lived in Miami, Florida. Her vocation is nursing, but her avocation has always been music. She was a music minister, a youth minister, and a parish council member in her Miami parish for 15 years. After 15 years of meetings, rehearsals and leading the choir EVERY Sunday without fail, moving to Las Cruces gave her a good excuse to NEVER join anything EVER again. For a few years Chris was content to sit on the sidelines, and then.....the music bug bit her again!

After watching a wonderful performance by the Mesilla Valley Chorale, she knew she had to join. Meanwhile, as she and her husband Rob were happily singing away with MVC, she says good ol' Ray Scroggins recruited them to join Young at Heart. Somehow she and her husband also ended up singing in their church choir at St. Albert the Great Newman Center.

Chris also continues to work as a nurse at Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility. When they're not making beautiful music together, Chris and Rob enjoy the great outdoors, hiking biking, birding, geocaching, gardening, and just soaking up the sun.

## Rx for Earworms

Ever had a song stuck and playing an endless loop in your head? It's called an "earworm. It happens to us music lovers a lot, and it's hard to get rid of. They're not always unpleasant, but they can be annoying. Studies have shown that most of them have a pattern of repeating ups and downs in pitch and an irregular

musical interval. One study author says, "It's like your brain picks up on that unusual element and wants to hear it again."

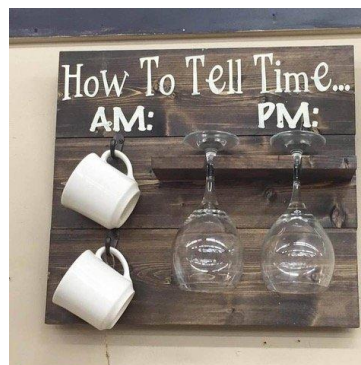
So what's the cure? Experts recommend listening to the actual song, beginning to end, or even just singing the end of the song in your head. That may make the song "complete" in your brain. You can also try distracting yourself with a task that requires concentration or imagining a different song to drown out the first one. That could create still another earworm though. In one study, people who chewed gum reported fewer earworms, possibly because the action ties up the same mental pathways used in imagining music.

## CHORUS MUSIC FOR MARCH 2017

Director: Ray Scroggins

I'm Lookin' Over a Four-Leaf Clover	Twice with interlude
If There'd Never Been an Ireland	Once with solo on introduction
I Love Paris	Once
I'm Sittin' On Top of the World	Once with repeat from "I just phoned the parson..."
My Melody of Love (Women)	Intro, then duet in Polish by Joan & Dennis, then English
Sweet Rosie O'Grady & Mary's a Grand Old Name (Men)	Medley: each song once
A Little Bit of Heaven	Once with repeat from "So they sprinkled it..."
Featured Performers: George (Clancy Lowered the Boom); Jo & Eleanor (Cuanto le Gusta); Skipper (The Old Orange Flute)	
A Long Way to Tipperary	Twice
Peg O'My Heart	Twice with interlude
You Belong to My Heart (Solemente Una Vez)	Once
By the Light of the Silvery Moon	Twice with echoes by men
How Are Things in Glocca Morra	Once with solo by Joy on intro
Far Away Places	Once
Kum By Ya	All 3 verses
There's a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere	Both verses

## Retiree's Calendar



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## March Music Tidbits by George

### *It's a Long Way to Tipperary...*

During the First World War, Daily Mail correspondent George Curnock saw the Irish regiment, the Connaught Rangers, singing this song as they marched through Boulogne on 13 April, 1914 and reported it on 18 August, 1914. The song was quickly picked up by other units of the British army. In November, 1914, it was recorded by the well-known tenor John McCormack, which helped its worldwide popularity.

It became one of the most popular hits of its time. The song is atypical in that it is not a warlike song that incites the soldiers to glorious deeds. Popular songs in previous wars frequently did this. In the First World War, however, the most popular songs, like this one and "Keep the Home Fires Burning", concentrated on the longing for home.

### *By the Light of the Silvery Moon...*

By the Light of the Silvery Moon was published in 1909 and was one of a series of moon-related Tin Pan Alley songs of the era. The song has been used in a great many television shows and motion pictures. Here is a sampling of those shows:

The song was featured in a 1931 "Follow the Bouncing Ball" cartoon that featured Betty Boop and the voice of Eddie Cantor. In the 1933 film *Turn Back the Clock*, the Three Stooges made an early cameo appearance and sang the song. In the 1939 film *Idiot's Delight*, Clark Gable sang this song while performing in a singing act as an under-employed showman. In the 1946 film *The Jolson Story*, the young Al Jolson is shown singing the song in a theatre. In a 1952 episode of *I Love Lucy*, the song was sung by Lucy and Ethel while their characters were auditioning for Ricky's "Gay Nineties Revue".

The song's patter is parodied in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Audience participation lines like "by the light (not the dark but the light)" became "from the day he was born (not the night but the day)" and "she tried in vain (not the artery but the vein)"

The song was featured in the film *The Producers* (1968). Zero Mostel puts a coin in the jukebox of the

bar where he is having a drink with Gene Wilder. The title he selects is *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*. They both start singing the song, accompanied by a drunk.

In an *All in the Family* episode, Archie and a friend sang the song as part of a minstrel show. The song is briefly heard in *Cannonball Run 2* (1984) when Tim Conway and Don Knotts, playing as a traffic cop duo, sing in front of an abusive orangutan. In the 1988 film *The Good, the Bad and Huckleberry Hound*, Huckleberry sings this song to the character Desert Flower

### *There's a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere...*

This patriotic anthem was written in 1942 and enjoyed its greatest popularity during the war years. The *somewhere* in the title of the song refers to an idealistic version of Heaven reserved for the brave U. S. soldiers fighting the Axis Powers, somewhat akin to the concept of Valhalla. The verses are a narrative of a young man who is crippled but still yearns to fight and earn his place in this patriotic afterlife.

### Dennis says...

I am reading and studying the Aztec and Mayan history. Singing and music were very important to the culture. The Aztecs always had a composer in their hierarchy. The job of the composer was to write songs for the community to sing to praise their gods. Music, especially singing, was a way for the common people to offer praise to their gods.

It is believed that singing at midnight was done by sacred birds, and the worshippers would then sing the same songs in the morning in celebration of a new day.

MARCH 2017  
Young At Heart Chorus Schedule

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 2:30 Aristocrat	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 2:30 Good Sam Assisted Living	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 2:30 Good Sam Health Care	17 	18
19	20	21	22	23 2:30 Northrise Morningside	24	25
26	27 1:15 Practice	28	DRESS: Standard black with white or green for St. Patrick's Day.			

Practice is at First Baptist Church unless otherwise noted.