Music & Memories

Washoe County, NV
Lifescapes
2012
This book was created as part of *Lifescapes: Senior Writing Program* which is a cooperative program of the Washoe County Library System, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), University of Nevada English Department and Nevada Humanities. The program was started in 2000 and has reached out to many lives mainly through word of mouth – or singing in this case. We all felt that we had many things to be grateful for and thought sharing our stories and thoughts on how music has been a part of our lives would be appropriate for the anthology this year.

Enjoy! Enjoy!

Julie Machado

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It was unplanned, unrehearsed—totally spontaneous.
We had been invited to Gorrell's for cocktails. We've had sing-a-longs and Christmas caroling since then, but never again have we quite achieved the special, uninhibited, warm flow of that evening at Gorrell's, which Joi precipitated.
I first met Joi in the intensive care unit of Washoe Medical Center, where her husband, George, and my husband, Phil, were being treated. We walked the corridors together for 48 hours. My husband recovered; hers did not. I learned, during that 48 hours, that she had met her husband during the period she played piano in the bar at the Boondocks. The Boondocks on the river was a favorite local watering hole. She also allowed as how she'd been married two, or was it three times; and no matter what happened to George she would never marry again. About 6 months later, I met Joi again. She was at a Christmas party with our friend Bob, who'd been widowed about a year. Bob became #4 (or was it #3?) for Joi; and over the next 6-8 years we had them to our house, or visited theirs, several times a year. We both had pianos, but Joi never could be persuaded to play until that special evening.
There were 8 of us at Bob and Joi's that evening. We had dinner reservations at a nearby Italian bistro, but we never got there. Joi was bartending, as she always did, and my husband said, “Joi, please, you always wait on us. Let me serve for a change.”
She said something like, “But then I won’t have anything to do.”
Phil said, “Well, you can play some background music to help me.”
And, you know, she sat down at the baby grand and began with “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes.” Fran started humming; then the words came. Joi continued with “I'll Get By,” “When I Fall in Love,” “LaVie en Rose.” Songs made famous by Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Frankie Laine, Patti Page, Dinah Shore, Rosemary Clooney. All the Oldies. “My Way,” “I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm,” “You Made Me Love You,” “Sentimental Journey.” We sang ‘em all. Then, about 9 o'clock, Bob got out his saxophone. He was really pretty terrible on the sax, but we managed to drown him out with our voices. All of us were in full voice by then.
The time for our dinner reservations was long past when Bob went to the kitchen and returned with a plate of cold cuts, some bread and a package of stale Oreos. Until well after midnight, we sang and ate and sang some more; no one complained about having missed the Italian dinner.

*Shirley P. Altick is a retired educator. She has lived in Incline Village since retirement.*
CHERRY PINK AND APPLE BLOSSOM WHITE

Popi Anastassatos

In the fifties, in Athens, Greece, every young people’s party wasn’t fashionable or even well attended, unless the music was from the United States. The music was authentic, but the lyrics were usually changed to the Greek language. The lyrics of the song “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White,” in the Greek version, were loaded with romance, playfulness and overflowing with energy. It was my favorite song, because the essence of the lyrics was exactly the essence of me at that time. I was sixteen.

I loved being at a party to dance with lots of young people. It was the ultimate pleasure of my life then. Unfortunately, that wasn’t my mom’s idea of a good time for her daughters. My mom was abnormally strict, to my estimation, and since dating was not practiced in Greece at that time, going out to a party by yourself to dance with lots of boys was unacceptable to her. Every time boys happened to be around her daughters, her body language and facial expression indicated to me, she needed to strategically place red flags in the space between us and the males. I could not understand where she was coming from and what her imaginary risk to us was.

Right about that time in my life, a couple of male cousins, from Northern Greece, moved to Athens to study at the University. They were renting an apartment with some friends of theirs, who were studying as well. Being young students in a big city, they quite often got a break from their studies by holding parties at their place. Our two cousins every so often would also be invited to our house for a home cooked meal. However, even then I would detect my mom’s nervousness having the male cousins around. By then I was used to her unexplainable anxiety. I was trying to act normal, although I must admit, I felt confused and somewhat strained to act content around my cousins.

My older cousin asked my dad, at one time, if he would allow me to attend one of their parties. My dad, being a relaxed, fun-loving kind of a guy and sort of cosmopolitan, said “yes” to my cousin. He knew I would be exceedingly happy to attend.

When he got home that day from work, he casually mentioned to my mom the upcoming party and his consent to my cousin for my participation in their fun soirée. My mom gasped for air as though someone had pushed her unexpectedly in freezing deep water. “Are you in your right mind?” she asked. Her voice was more of a shriek. Her eyes had gotten penetratingly small, propelling high speed arrows his way. He swallowed a couple of times, before his voice found the courage to be heard. “What is your problem with my decision?” he asked with innocence in his voice. “The way you look and sound you seem to be
upset and I must be stupid, but I do not get it.” By that time she was beside herself. Her patience was at a point of disgust. She left the room and stepped outside to breathe some fresh air and regroup her thoughts to come back and resume combat. “I thought you had more sense than that. I thought you would realize that a place full of guys is not the right place to allow your young daughter to be and spend a good part of the evening dancing with a bunch of guys who you do not know and have no idea how they are going to be behaving around her. You do not know what she is going to be exposed to for the rest of the evening.” He rolled his eyes and finally he asked: “So, what do you want me to do now that I gave permission for her to go?” “I do not know” she said. “You have to figure it out and change the course of the events.” He shook his head in disbelief at her audacity. He drew quiet. He took a couple of cigarette puffs and he fell in deep thought trying to figure out how he was supposed to negotiate the situation.

I, on the other hand, felt very guilty for creating such an unpleasant position for my dad, although I had nothing to do with the beginning, the middle, or the end of this fiasco. I was also perplexed thinking about what my dad could do at this point to clear himself out of this mess. He delightfully had given his permission to my cousin and now it was very clear to him and me that he had to change his word or else he would not be able to hear the end of this for the rest of his life.

A couple of days went by. I did not dare ask about the party either my dad and of course never my mom. I knew the weekend was approaching and I did not know whether I should start thinking about what I should wear for the party, or what I should dye black, wear it, and mourn the loss of a fun evening and great dancing. Finally the third day after the big argument, I heard my dad telling my mom that he had called my cousin to inform him that I had come down with the “measles” and therefore I would not be able to attend their party.

I could not believe he had to come up with a lame lie like that, rather than telling him the truth and thus exposing my mom’s weird thinking. I was looking forward to an exposé. I wanted everybody to know the truth about her. I was very angry. My mom had won again regardless of how irrational her perception was, about youth and the need to have unspoiled clean fun.

The evening of the party I was sitting home, fuming. I couldn’t stand to be there alone and not enjoying life dancing to the music of “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White.” What a shame . . .

Popi Anastassatos was born in Greece. She came to the USA in 1958. Was married in 1961 and moved to Reno in 1962. She has been a Reno resident since then.
SINGING IN THE RAIN

Karolyn Bader

The drops came one by one. At first there was a long synapse between them, then a fast pitter patter. They sounded like small pellets resounding to a flurry of flutes.

Then silence. I listened, waiting for the next anticipated drop upon my umbrella. I held my breath...everything around me was total silence except for a drop here and there. It seemed the heavens were waiting to release the cloudy burden. Then the burst of a thousand drops came and I ran under a huge tree and watched. The splat splat splat of drops sounded like tubas in symphony competing with one another. Then a loud thunderclap came out of the blue, an unguarded moment that made me jump.

Then silence again. I walked out into the open. I jumped again when an unexpected rain drop fell like a bullet on my slick umbrella. Then drops came in pairs, then threes and then fours...and intermittently like a sing song of notes. I hummed and walked on the cement sidewalk, looking down with umbrella held tight and raincoat sticking to my knees. The wet was warm, soft and thick upon my calves, flowing down my rubber boots. My raincoat was a sky gray blue color, and I was almost invisible, except for the jet black umbrella, which was my canopy of protection.

A smell of tree leaves, thick humidity and lilacs invaded my senses, all coming in for a wave across the tight air. Worms were scattered along the sidewalk. Perhaps they were drowning and came up for air. Robins lurked nearby looking to grab a snack.

Impulsively I glanced up, lifting my umbrella. I was bombarded with falling sparkles enchanted with the feel of thick lazy drops as they fell from heaven, washing away dirt and sweat of the day. Opening my mouth, I tasted. A clean fresh taste of earth invaded my tongue. Then a light breeze came and flew up my umbrella, almost lifting me to new heights. Impulses of short and long drops came again, keeping my attention to the moment at hand.

Suddenly someone came down the sidewalk. I cuddled up even tighter into my rain proof hideaway. My face undetected. I did not say a word. The person passed by and I was alone again. To think and to feel and to ponder. Then I was singing...singing in the rain...and smiling.
And then I skipped and danced down the sidewalk. Singing, skipping and dancing from side to side and swishing in the wetness.

Then it stopped. I felt alone. I longed for the rain drops. A warmth of mist floated into my space. I shed my raincoat, boots, and umbrella. I went to the edge. Do I dare go in?

I watched the water run aimlessly, like it had a mind of its own, but it had no choice but to go in the direction of the gutter. The gutter was filled with leaves and plugged up, making a pond of dirty mud water. I touched my toe into the brown swirling mass. Then I couldn’t help myself. I slid into the gutter and soaked. My clothes dripped dirt, leftover leaves and pebbles and I curled up into it. To become a part of it. The warmth of it. Ah…this is my reward for allowing.

My pastel pedal pushers and pure white blouse turned to cream chocolate, but I didn’t care. When the rain came again, I would emerge. It would purify my clothes and my soul.

I was nine or ten years old. I don’t know. But I do know there was a song called “I'm Singing in the Rain” and Gene Kelly danced in that movie. We got our black and white TV at that time and I probably listened to such a song and dance on that fascinating entertainment box. And one of my favorite things to do was sing and dance in the rain.

Why? I guess I missed the farm when we moved to the big city and felt the need to get into nature and the unknowingness of it all…will it be gentle…will it be scary…how will my heart feel when I experience it all?

Karolyn Bader grew up on a farm near Lennox, South Dakota. Her family moved to Sioux Falls, South Dakota in 1953. She left the Midwest at a young age and settled in Lake Tahoe and then Reno. She loves the outdoors, the mountains, and still loves walking and singing in the rain.
MUSIC MEMORIES

Jose “Manny” Barba

Music has been around seemingly forever in all shapes and forms – literally speaking, with countless variations and compositions using the basic seven musical notes: Do (C), Re (D), Mi (E), Fa (F), Sol (G) La (A), Ti (B) and arranging them in a sequence to make sounds called “music.” The first of seven definitions in the American Heritage Dictionary reads, “The art of organizing tones to produce a coherent sequence of sounds intended to elicit an aesthetic response.” My own tin ear governs the aesthetic response/experience.

At around five years of age, my first exposure to music was to read and vocalize the musical scale (in Spanish called, “SOLFEO” meaning melodious song.) At that time very little problem with the vocalizing, but to date, 79 years later, I still can’t read music. Our teacher, musically savvy as he was, couldn’t penetrate my thick skull. He also taught harmonica playing plus choir singing. Eventually I got pretty good at playing and singing “by ear.” I really liked the harmonica, but I discontinued it when I got bleeding sores on the outer edges of my lips.

At this time a local dairy was sponsoring an amateur radio program. My sister Mary, two years older, played a waltz on the piano using her sheet music, winning the five-dollar first prize. I sang a capella, “I’m an old cowhand from the Rio Grand, and I learned to ride, ‘fore I learned to stand. I’m a cowboy who never saw a cow, never rode a steer ‘cause I don’t know how, and I sho’ ain’t fixing’ to start in now. Yippee I-oh-kai-ay, yippee I-oh-kai-ay.” I was awarded a quart of ice cream, choice of chocolate or vanilla as a consolation prize. During this period my domineering oldest sister tried forcing piano lessons on me. Stubbornly, I kept refusing and eventually she gave up trying.

Some years later, while a junior in high school, I joined the marching band and was assigned to play the piccolo. The director had so many “non-musically inclined” in his class, that his efforts were spent on the musically inclined and allowed the “slow learners” to fake it, so long as we marched in cadence to the music and kept our uniforms cleaned and pressed. This was my last experience having any formal musical instruction. I never learned the difference between “flats and sharps,” nor understood other musical jargon, e.g. “vibrato,” etc. I still can’t see the reasoning behind translating “Do” as a “C” instead of as an “A.” Wouldn’t it be easier to vocalize and memorize the scale as “Do, Re, Me, Fa, Sol, La, Ti” going up then reversing downwards “Ti, La, Sol, Fa, Me, Re, Do.” I found it impossible after learning “C,D,E,F,G,A,B” to reverse it downward, neither mentally nor vocally.

After the years have gone by I’ve informally learned to memorize words and tones of popular songs in both English and Spanish mainly
from the 30’s and 40’s. I had five older sisters and a mother who sang constantly. (I wish they’d have been dancing also – I wouldn’t have had to wait so many years to learn how.) Now that I frequently attend ballroom dances, I find myself singing along. Some partners follow my lead by humming, some harmonizing, yet others tell me, “Keep your day job.” I’ve come up with a retort, “For five dollars I will sing to you, for ten dollars I shut up!”

In conclusion, I will now do the latter at no charge.

Jose Manual (Manny) Barba: For a very long time one of my sons has been requesting me to write my memoirs. “Yes, son, I’m seriously considering doing so,” I answer…But, to myself, “Mañana, if I think of it.” Procrastination plus! Until sometime in October, in the Reno Gazette-Journal an announcement, “Memoir writing class for seniors at the Northwest Library on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays.” Can’t do, a timing conflict.” A phone call told me, “Tuesdays are available at the Sparks Library.” Bingo! What Luck! So here I am in a class accompanied by experienced writers who have so much knowledge to impart. I promise not to indulge in conscious plagiarism.
I CAN SING A RAINBOW

Betty Bates

A rainbow symbolizes color to me, and I view my life as a rainbow with colors more brilliant at times and more muted at others, arising out of the fog and mist and always a visible sign of hope and beauty.

As a lifelong painter, I was always in love with color; how one color might predominate and create excitement in the eyes of the artist as well as in the viewer’s sight. So is life. Early memories of myself at about age six or seven, roller skating down our long driveway, arms flung out and smiling at my unseen audience, the world full of many shades of green, signs of growth and promise. Childhood, a rainbow each day, but sometimes the greys creeping in with the death of a younger brother.

I was always painting, receiving some accolades such as an art scholarship upon graduation from high school. A move from the Midwest to the West coast prevented acceptance, but I enrolled in an excellent art school in Los Angeles, where I was surrounded by color and design. A memory arises of my naïve mother seeking me out and finding her innocent seventeen-year-old daughter sketching a nude male body! Her hurried retreat the color of Red!

The rainbow of marriage and child-raising encompassed our lives from bright living colors of happiness to hues of sadness in losing a first born child only two weeks old. As children left home to experience their own rainbows, the greys move into my own life as a marriage falls apart.

I remember a period of my life when I visited “psychics.” The first psychic based her readings on color auras and how they influence decisions and approaches to life. Each of my four children supposedly had distinct auras: red (emotional), blue (service to others), yellow (intellect), and a rainbow of colors (using different approaches as needed). A different psychic used paper and pastel crayons to draw my portrait which was surrounded by a rainbow!

Who could have predicted the brilliant colors of Van Gogh to enter my life as I traveled to many corners of the world? Now as I wonder about the famed pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, I realize I have enjoyed these riches all along.

Elizabeth (aka Betty) Bates studied at the Art Center School of Design in Pasadena, California and majored in Art at UCLA and the University of Michigan. She attended Arizona State University and graduated with a Masters Degree in Counseling and Guidance at the University of Nevada, Reno. She worked as a Special Education teacher and then as a Counselor at Wooster until retirement in 1987.
DON’T FENCE ME IN

Marge Blockley

This song probably came out in the mid-forties for I remember singing it while horseback riding in open fields after the hay was cut and baled; the rhythm of the horse’s gait matched that of the song, and the lyrics expressed my feeling of freedom after high school graduation, and being outside in the fresh air and sun.

Music was in our home as long as I can remember; my parents loved music, and Daddy played the piano with ease. We sang while he played and sang the words to popular show tunes: Oklahoma, and later The Music Man and South Pacific. He also played classical music, especially with a neighbor who was a violinist. Saturday mornings the radio was reserved for the Metropolitan Opera series from New York, which he followed diligently in the season. Our family was able to attend many concerts and musicals at Stanford, and occasionally in San Francisco.

My sister and I took piano lessons, and practiced, but after several years of my inability to play the popular songs as Daddy did, and needing to practice simple versions of Mozart, Haydn and even Schumann, and all the while watching the clock for the time I could go out and roller skate or play one-a-cat, the piano lessons were abandoned. My father was disappointed, but I tried on occasion to pick out some of my favorites of the sheet music on hand, and found limited success.

From elementary school and into high school art and music were routinely taught, though not daily. We learned to read music, and sing
the standard songs, patriotic and old favorites, plus some rounds, and some with harmonizing parts. We learned simple dances, and could even try to play an instrument such as violin or clarinet. Practicing the violin produced screechy sounds and I gave that up to spare the family from the torture.

At Girl Scout Camp there was a lot of singing and we learned new songs, different from those we sang in school or at church. Thus I ended up just singing songs along with the group, and hoping the good voices would cover up mine. And I still enjoy listening to many, but not all, sorts of music.

While in college, I looked forward to vacations and getting together with friends. In some of their homes various instruments were assembled near the piano, such as an accordion, a guitar, saxophone, some drums, a trombone, and a mandolin and a few times we would "make some music" to entertain ourselves. Usually we could manage to produce a tune recognizable enough to sing the words that belonged with it, and we also invented some new verses at times. No one was very perfect but it didn’t matter; it was fun with good friends.

In high school I spent many hours playing sports, and then on Friday evenings some of us joined a class for folk and square dancing, which lasted three or four years. The activity of swinging my legs and kicking my feet was satisfying and the sociability was wonderful.

After the first year of folk and square dancing, we looked forward to attending some of the Bay Area festivals with other groups, and that was always an experience. At that time, near the end of World War II, the limited availability of fabrics and shoes prohibited the idea of matching costumes, and there were not the crinolines that came later. And it was lots of fun anyway.

And much more recently, "Don’t Fence Me In" was sung with a group of WWII vets and wives riding a bus while attending a reunion. We sang with gusto other songs as well. I wonder what the driver was thinking of all that, but it doesn’t really matter, does it?

\[ ... \]

*Marge Blockley was born and raised in Palo Alto and graduated from U.C. Davis where she obtained a degree in Animal Science. She married soon after graduating, and was able to use information from "Feeds and Feeding" class to provide nutrition to her husband and their three children while living in Northern California, Hawaii, Italy, Iraq, Brazil, Malaysia and Indonesia.*
ALWAYS

Jacqueline Bordoli

My musical experience may be described as a patchwork quilt. Growing up in the country, life was basic and simple. There was no electricity and we were miles from our nearest neighbors. Music was simple, too. The idea of notes, rhythm, or composition never entered my mind as a small child. All I knew was my mother and father sang songs. They had beautiful voices. My mother would yodel. And they both would whistle tunes. It was what we learned to do. Interestingly enough both of my parents could play the harmonica, but none of us kids mastered the instrument. As an adult I took harmonica lessons and learned to play a bit.

Because our radio ran on a battery, time was principally reserved for listening to the weather reports, the Friday night fights, the Jack Benny program and Gunsmoke. However, we did listen to music.

When I was about four or five we received a phonograph. Again, because we had no electricity, it was a wind-up. We cranked the little handle until it stopped; selected one of our five or six records; lowered the needle slowly so it would not scratch the record; and, then we listened to and sang along with the songs. What a time we had. Shortly before we moved from the ranch, we acquired a piano from somewhere. My mother had learned to play some piano by ear so that provided another musical experience. I learned the musical scale. Applying the notes to the music and playing them was another thing with little success.

My best musical experiences were the community dances. I thought they were so much fun. The dance location was usually in a bar or a neighboring ranch 35 plus or minus miles from where we lived. Since I was small it meant taking a blanket because the kids would sleep in a designated area when it got too late to continue the festivities. The music was sometimes provided by a jukebox, but mostly by an accordion, guitar, or banjo. There was one particular gentleman who brought his entire band. He sat on a stool with a drum in front that he could hit by tapping his foot. He had a harmonica attached around his neck so he could play it while playing his banjo/guitar. I was so amazed that anyone could do all those things all at once. There were also a couple of other people who played the accordion or guitar.
I loved dancing. Even though I was small some of the “old” men would ask for a dance. The most special was dancing with my father. He told me I was so light on my feet and I felt even more special.

Of course there was music as part of school. It was mostly part of the Christmas Pageants in the one room school. A phonograph provided he back-up as we sang the standard Christmas songs.

All this seems so “Little House on the Prairie,” but it was part of my childhood. It still provides such fond memories.

Once our family left the rural setting and moved to the city, I became a member of the school choir for approximately six years, which I loved. In college, I took a music appreciation class and logged hours of classical music which I enjoyed. I would never have listened to this music without the exposure provided by the class.

I am grateful for the times our family sang songs together that included music from the ‘30’s, 40’s and 50’s. And yes, it included a little of Elvis and the Beatles. What is so amazing to me is how long music stays with us. My mother is in memory care. Although she has forgotten so many things, does not recognize people, and has difficulty seeing, she still sings and yodels. On music days at her residence, I am still able to sing with her. For whatever reason she still knows the words and the tunes of those same songs we sang so long ago when riding in the car when I was a kid.

Jacqueline Bordoli is a native Nevadan and as a child lived on a ranch in eastern Nevada. In the mid-1950s her parents sold the ranch. Jacqueline has lived in the Reno area for over 50 years. She and her husband are now empty nesters.
SILENT NIGHT, December 16, 1961

Judy Cabito

As a historical note: nothing really happened on that day. People were born, people died, people fell in love. As for that year and the year to come: JFK was the President of the United States, the Beatles had not arrived in the US, Jim Morrison of The Doors was a distant psychedelic rumble to The End, and the Vietnam War, on the back burner of turmoil, had just began to gurgle.

As for us: Paige, Lisa, Dennis and I, we were at a church retreat on Mt. Rainer. I was 15, too young for real dating, but Lisa, Dennis and Paige were 18 and old enough for many things. Both guys had something inside them like a tightly wound ball of wire waiting to spring, and unbeknownst to anyone at that moment, they would be going to war.

Dennis, a box boy at Safeway, making a $1.00 an hour, had big dreams. He often said he'd owned an XKE one day. My parents worried about me and him; I wasn't clear on the subject either besides I didn't know from XKE to the ABC’s.

Paige, the Reverend’s son, and his soon to be fiancée, Lisa, were in the front seat of Paige’s car. Dennis and I were in the back.

Paige, with his boxing-Irish build, his rusty-freckles and burnt-red-hair, had more charm on the tip of his nose than any guy alive. All the girls in our church had been infatuated with him at one time or another, unfortunately for me, Paige regarded me as a little sister.

I watched him as he snuggled up to Lisa, a full-figured Dolly Parton. She pretended to bat him away.

“Oh stop,” she said but he didn’t. “Stop,” she’d giggle and still he didn’t.

Dennis tried snuggling up to me, but I wasn’t interested or at least not for what was going on in the front seat.


When we first arrived at the cabin-retreat, it had begun to snow. The “glory of it,” sang Mrs. McKey, Paige’s mother and choir director. She led us in song beginning with “Jingle Bells” then worked up to “Angels We Have Heard on High.”

Dennis, in a red-plaid-flannel-shirt and horned-rimmed glass, sat looking at his hands in front of the man-tall fireplace. Paige and Lisa stood huddled like two spooning-spoons. Me? I sang. I had a decent voice and was taking lessons from Mrs. McKey; I was her prize student so she said. Well, the truth: I was her only student. If Paige was home during my lessons, he’d stand leaning against a wall, arms folded, nodding approval. So this evening I didn’t hold back.
“Glo-o00oo-o-00000-o-0000-o ria in excelsis Deo.”

After dinner we went outside to trudge around; our boots chomped and cut through the powdery snow leaving deep impressions. The skies cleared giving away to a full moon that shone through the ceiling of frosted-Christmas trees. Silent stars sparkled amid the specks of airborne snow. We felt light and heady and didn’t want it to end.

Paige whispered, “Let’s sit in my car.”

# # #

Lisa had on a white angora sweater so when she and Paige stopped necking and she scooted across the vinyl seats, her sweater glittered from dozens of static charges; the specks of light danced. She squealed. Paige thought it fun and started pulling at her sweater. The more he did, the brighter her sweater glowed so you could see right through it.

Suddenly Dennis grabbed my leg and pushed his hand up my thigh. Holding on, he kissed me and dug his tongue in. I elbowed him hard, yanked out from under his grasp and yelped. Paige turned and glared. I jumped out of the car. The three of them followed me back inside the cabin.

We were greeted with steamy hot chocolate. Mrs. McKey hit a note on the piano, my cue, then she ran her fingers up the ivory’s to introduce, “Silent Night.” She gave me a sharp nod.

I stumbled, “…night, hooooly night.” I continued to stumble over word-after-word, until Mrs. McKey joined in and at last I was able to finish with, “Sleep in heavenly peace.”

When the song was over Paige got up and took hold of Dennis and pulled him back outside. They were gone a long time, long enough for “Joy to the World” and six refrains of “Oh Come all Ye Faithful.”

When they returned Dennis looked sweaty and agitated; Page looked triumphant. I don’t know what happen out there, but it was clear from then on, no one would ever need to worry about Dennis and me.

# # #

For the sake of history: in June, Lisa walked down the aisle...pregnant. Four years later Page returned from Nam with cancer. He died within the year. What had grown from their union, Michael, lived to go to another war and come home a hero.

Dennis: he retired in 2008 from being the CEO of an Electrical Engineering firm. I’m fairly sure he owns an XKE.

For me: In September of 2011 Alan and I celebrated our 37th anniversary. We have three daughters and four grandchildren, and we own a Jaguar XKE.

Judy Cabito lives in Incline Village, Nevada. She grew up, steps from the Puget Sound, and calls herself a Westcoaster, if there is such a thing. Published online and in print, she has an analytical interest in micro-fiction.
HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING?

Mary Chandler

I’ll be singing at Ursula’s chamber concert,” my dear friend, Mary, says. “I know it’s a long drive for you, but...”

“I wouldn’t miss hearing you,” I interrupt. “I’ll see you at the church.”

On my 275-mile drive, I think about our enduring friendship and the sharing of ideas, problems, joys, and sorrows over the years. I worry that, at the last moment, Mary’s disabilities might prevent her from performing, and then I remember her favorite song, the American folk hymn “How Can I Keep From Singing?”

As my car hums along the busy Interstate, I can hear Mary singing the words to that song: “My life flows on in endless song;/Above earth’s lamentation/I hear the sweet, tho’ far-off hymn/That hails a new creation:/Through all the tumult and the strife/I hear the music ringing;/It finds an echo in my soul—/How can I keep from singing?” Despite disappointments, hardships, and even though joys and comforts may die, “The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,/A fountain ever springing:/All things are mine since I am His—/How can I keep from singing?”

Mary’s adult life has never been easy. She was studying for an operatic career in the Bay Area, but after her divorce, Mary’s living expenses were no longer manageable. She and her young daughter moved back home. As her aging mother’s health began to fail, Mary helped care for her. Throughout these years, Mary sang in chamber concerts, community and school productions, in churches, and in other venues. Everyone wanted to hear her!

After a long illness, Mary’s mother passed away. When Mary was in her late forties, she began struggling with health problems of her own. She lives with insulin-dependent diabetes, and regulating her blood sugar continues to be a real challenge. Neuropathy affects her arms, hands, legs, feet, and her digestive system. In addition, she has problems with her vision and with arthritis. Still, despite all of these physical challenges, she holds down a full-time job teaching instructional classes to families for Health and Human Services. And once a month, she drives to San Francisco and back—a 250-mile journey each way—to take private voice lessons from Mr. Dewey Camp, an elderly teacher from her college days, whom she loves and respects.

“I’m hoping that the lessons will benefit my vocal health, so I can continue my singing,” Mary said. “I feel it is my duty to God to share the gift that He gave me.”

I know how complicated her life has become and how difficult it has been to “keep singing.” When the neuropathy caused numbness in her fingers and her feet, playing her own organ accompaniment at church assignments proved formidable. She played the music as best she could, until she could do so no longer, all the while praying that the feeling and strength would return.

“From time to time, that happens,” Mary said on the phone. “I’m always grateful when it does.”

“Are you still singing at the local dinner restaurant?”
“No. My fingers became too numb to play for myself. I can’t see the music clearly, either.” She paused. “That will change when my doctor removes my cataracts—as soon as my blood sugar stabilizes.”

I heard the hope and the determination in her voice.

“I’ve slowed down a bit,” she said, “but I haven’t stopped singing.”

*****

At the late afternoon concert, Mary stands beside the piano, her arm resting against the edge for support. Ordinary shoes are out of the question now. Because she wears a lovely long dress, no one would guess that braces support her feet and ankles. She looks out at the audience in the old church, smiles, and nods her head for the accompanist to begin.

I needn’t have worried. As Mary sings “The Shepherd on the Rock,” by Schubert, her sweet soprano soars with the flute and piano and echoes throughout the church. Her voice is warm, expressive, clear, bright, and indescribably beautiful. Her music touches my soul, just as it always has, and I marvel at her faith and her courage.

When the concert ends, Mary graciously receives compliments from many in the audience. I wait to congratulate her—so that we can be alone.

“You amaze me,” I tell her. “You always maintain a positive attitude, despite your disabilities, and you remain the sweet, thoughtful friend you have always been.”

Mary smiles. Her expressive eyes look into mine. “I am so blessed. Having to be creative—finding ways to reinvent myself—is exciting,” she says. “I try to encourage others who are having physical problems to look at things that way, too.” She reaches for her cane. “Some people ask: Why me? At the beginning of my illness, I did, too. And then I remembered what someone else said: Why not me?” She pauses. “We all have to take our turn at coming to the end of our time here on earth, and it’s different for everyone. Knowing I will be reunited with those I love makes me feel better. My faith sustains me.”

When I leave my dear friend, my heart is at peace. Whatever paths we travel, I know that Mary’s songs will always be a part of me, along with her love, her friendship, and her caring. And, at our journey’s end, I can hear a smiling Mary say: “With God’s love and the love of family and friends, how can I keep from singing?”

Mary Chandler enjoys writing about those she loves—and how they add joy to her life.
SUMMER OF '69

Penny Cooper

I was eighteen and graduating from John Swett High School, looking forward to starting college in the fall. There were many parties happening especially for those classmates that either had just gotten the idea to sign up for the military and fight in Nam-- or--- those 18 year olds that showed up on the draft. It was a time of change, Simon & Garfunkel’s “The Sound of Silence” could tell you that. There were steady protesters in Berkeley, California, a place that was forbidden per my father....which made it even more appealing. It was “The Age of Aquarius”--remember? Every summer party was either out on our parents’ driveways (of course they weren't home) with Creedence Clearwater blaring on our stereos, or at various city parks in Crockett, California, and even Garretson Field in Rodeo, California. Bands would show up and by word of mouth young people from 16 to 26 would show up -- dancing like we were part of WOODSTOCK out on that field-- so free -- so filled with only the HOPE that youth knows....

The *Smothers Brothers Variety Show* would air every Sunday evening, and they were making their comments on the escalation in Vietnam-- some called them communists. *Laugh In* was really big on TV as well, and pretty risqué for the times. However, quite entertaining for sure.

It was a magical summer for certain, the energy was tangible -- we believed somehow we could make a difference in the world.....ah youth, so fleeting!
MUSIC GOOD FOR THE HEART AND SOUL

Penny Cooper

I have always loved music of all kinds. As a child, I loved my piano lessons and the glorious sound my old upright made as I played from age ten to the current time. There is nothing so calming, so uplifting, reflective, or tear-producing as the sound of music.

As I practiced as a Registered Dental Hygienist for 15 years in a remote Texas community, I also witnessed the healing properties of music. As I worked in the mouths of patients young and old, it never ceased to amaze me how a person's frazzled upon their entrance would be soothed by the CDs I had carefully chosen. Many very meditative, some old 60s folk music -- which calmed one of my most anal patients -- Dr. Konjoyan-- THANKFULLY!

While attending a meditation course here with OLLI, I learned about the Mozart Theory, which is now promoted from keeping your mind sharp to calming children with ADD, a 21st century dilemma for certain and so much more, such as helping brain damaged patients who are unable to find words, but can still sing them. Diane Sawyer shared this finding with us in regard to Congresswoman Gabby Gifford recently.

I am so thankful for music, and know the power of it. Lucky are the artists who create and share their talents for the benefit of all of us.

Penny Cooper is enjoying the ongoing learning OLLI has provided, along with making new friends. When not traveling with husband Art and Springer Spaniel Duchess in their 5th wheel fishing for salmon or crabbing in Bodega Bay, and having fun with three grandchildren in the SF Bay area, she indulges in her other passion: a Registered Dental Hygienist working to open a FREE DENTAL CLINIC for the underserved of the Reno-Tahoe area.
Can we inherit a love of music? My maternal grandfather who was a minister, a world traveler, an artist AND a musician used to play guitar and sing, while combining a story through the medium of “Chalk Talks,” all incorporated into his sermons. He died when I was very young. I’m so sorry I didn’t have the chance to know him.

My mother danced and my father sang. I’m not sure if it came from them but I’m going to say up front that music makes me high. The right music, the right place, with the right man and I fall in love. This can be dangerous. But all the right components don’t happen that often and from the cosmic view of things it’s quite unlikely. That’s not to say that there aren’t countless other levels of enjoying music.

One example I title, “The Seduction of Dancing,” happened when I lived in Prague. Music with pulsing rhythms reaches deep inside me, quickens and stirs, turning on a flow of feeling. My body joyously moves, my spirit soars with the spontaneous, instinctive outpouring of creative expression. Twirling, dipping, reaching, spinning -- setting primitive energies wildly free, I am radiant with flushed face beaming, eyes alive and flashing, body, warmly moist and glowing, riding the wave of emotion. I am intoxicated with the pleasure of “the dance.” My partner and I are flying to/with the pulsing Latin rhythms, our feet moving with the fast pace of salsa, meringue and samba music. Hours and hours pass and it’s 2:30 am. Waves of exhaustion come and go yet we’re still lured to the floor for more by another compelling beat. I finally reach the limits of endurance. Then, as more late night people arrive, a plateau is reached and from somewhere new energy takes us past our level of before and we begin to connect on a heightened level and really flow with our routine as never before. I float, I fly, I merge with and become the dance. Timeless, ageless, vibrantly alive. A woman from the sidelines smiled with approval and nodded a thumbs up. It was wonderful!

Another example of bonding through music such as “My Dear and Affectionate Beast” or “Libertango” is Argentine Tango dancing. We are two bodies in close embrace, connected in a dance of subtle signals through the magic of movement to the stimulus of music. It’s an almost instantaneous reading of signals from the leader to the follower -- a blending, a melding of two bodies into one -- a fluid movement in which an aura of transformation becomes a reality for a few moments, and we experience being in love with all of life. The Universe expands within us and time stands still. It’s a rare and beautiful “Tango Moment.”
Other moods blend music with nature on a warm summer night. I wrote:

**Street Dancing on a Summer Night**

- Earth beat feels our feet
- Warm wind lifts my hair
- Twirling, flying, sweet night skying
- Our movement has a flair

- With a twist of wrist, I'm out in space
- Hair wildly flying in my face
- Then back in your arms, your warm embrace
- Breath to breath I match your pace

- Stars and moon the night sky sending
- A mystical aura for musical blending
- Savoring these moments of elation that excite
- Street dancing on a summer night.

And I must include the gospel singing connection in Florence, Italy in 1998. While my daughter and I were there to teach English we happened to meet Nehemiah from San Francisco who was directing a gospel choir, “The New Voices of Joy,” to introduce this music to the people of northern Italy. It was a unique and wonderful experience to join this international group, our harmonies reaching out and bouncing off the walls of the cathedrals and contagiously drawing the audience in to move and clap hands and join our energy. The melodies filled my head as we walked home late at night after rehearsals and gatherings for pizza with the warmth of the Italians sharing their lifestyle. Sometimes we even burst into song in the restaurants. This music brought with it deep feelings and a unique emotional outpouring of self expression.

Other singing opportunities found me here in Reno and I sang with the Sierra Nevada Masterworks Chorale for several years, learning a wide variety of music. Music in the form of dance aerobics is yet another great energizing and uplifting experience. I have been doing this for 10 years, ever since I moved to Reno. Moving to the fast pace of Ricky Martin’s “She Bang” and other Michael Jackson favorites, we also sometimes formed a chorus line to Frank Sinatra’s, “New York, New York.”

Music is a path to the soul. I’m so grateful my life is filled with music.

*Jan Corbelli spends time writing chapters from her travel journals in Lifescapes, Metaphysics, and book discussions at OLLI when not dancing.*
SHALL WE DANCE?

Barbara Cotter

Where there’s music, there’s dancing: The stately waltz with couples gliding across the floor, young and old; the more lively music inviting those who enjoyed more varied steps--the two-step, foxtrot, polka, etc., twisting and turning, fancy-stepping as the music dictated. And as the music changed, so did the dancing. Jitterbug was fast-paced and became very popular, followed by the twist, which evolved to the hodgepodge of modern-day dancing. But whatever the style, we did it all!

As teenagers and young adults, dancing was one of our favorite forms of recreation. Weekly neighborhood dances were held in school gymnasiums, public halls, or even barn lofts. The so-called “barn dances” were actually held in barns. Before the hay crop in the fall was harvested, the upper loft of the barn (where the hay was stored) was empty. It was swept clean, lights were added, and it became a great dance hall.

We danced from dusk to dawn, with a break at midnight for refreshments. Having a date was not required—the men and boys congregated on one side of the hall and the women and girls on the other. When the music started, the boys would ask the girls to dance; and if you were a good dancer, you rarely missed a dance. We had live music consisting of accordion, fiddle, etc., generally supplied by local talent. I have fond memories of my young dancing days.

Then as school and work became priorities, followed by marriage and family, dancing lost its priority but was not completely abandoned. There were still school dances and company dinner-dances; also, more opportunities to attend fantastic concerts. Music and dancing were always a part of my life. Incidentally, the man I married was not a good dancer!

Barbara J. Cotter was born and grew up on a farm in eastern Montana. At the request of her children, she is describing events of her early childhood in her memoirs.
YOU RAISE ME UP

Margo Daniels

Buried in your bear hug or lying next to you, I feel the music in our closeness. The notes float in and around us and we see the mountains, the valleys and the canyons through the rhythm of the chords. Hand in hand we sing our way through the maze of busy days and sometimes sleepless nights, searching always for the tunes that bring us ever closer.

In the early days, there was always the angst of building a repertoire of song that would lead us onward and upward, the necessary searching for just the right lyrics that would allow our children to understand the importance of finding music that nurtures and sustains. We were in allegro mode then. As the years passed, the joyous chorus of success, achievement and pride in what we have sung together is a marvel to us.

And then we are alone together – just as we were in the beginning. But the songs continue, never a cappella, always in unison. We are striving always for harmony, never dissonance. But as we continue to sing, we find adagio a more comfortable tempo. We sing more softly, perhaps to obscure the cracks in our voices, lyrics we forget, the melody that seems to elude us at the moment.

And the musical memories often overwhelm us. Reflection, sizing up the dynamics, listening fiercely to the glissando of our lives – is it a deceptive cadence or the coda, we wonder.

Did we truly establish ourselves as the duet we set out to be? Did we each do our part to support the high notes as well as the low ones? Did we sing in perfect harmony as we so wished to do? Did we create the sound of a symphony or one of cacophony?

I am sure we grabbed the baton together and conducted our way to the concert hall, but I am also sure the performances may have intimidated me. It was you who shouldered the burden then of lifting me up to sing with all my heart and soul. The many nights of practice to get an additional degree -- the auditions for the television show interviewing authors -- the on-the-road shows to San Francisco, Denver, New Orleans and Chicago singing the praises of public libraries – the Symphonic Choir, Carnegie Hall, the Reno Philharmonic Chorus. Ah yes, as I remember all you have sung to, for and with me, I know in the medley of our lives that it was you who made me more than I could be.
You raise me up so I can stand on mountains,
You raise me up to stand on stormy seas,
I am strong when I am on your shoulders,
You raise me up to more than I can be

And did I raise you up as well? As we enter into the final movement of our symphony, will we continue to sing legato together with the same glow of love and partnership we’ve enjoyed for fifty years? Will we be able to keep the song alive and on key through whatever physical and emotional trials await us?

I answer yes to that with the confidence of your serenade. For when I am on your shoulders, Pera, there isn’t any song I can’t sing, nor any harmony I can’t hear. You will always raise me up to more than I could ever be.

Margo Daniels and her husband met in the Peace Corps in 1961 and are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in April 2012. She loves music, especially singing, her children and grandchildren, OLLI, and Pera.
IT'S A HEARTACHE

Bob Eaton

This is just another one of my bike tales. One day I will write a whole book about me and my bike. It's Thursday morning and I have a rough time getting out of bed to answer the phone at 7:30. Same call as nearly every morning, my friend James in Illinois. I listen to him tell me how cold it might be outside. He can't see out of his trailer windows because he has them covered in multi-layers of plastic. He fears opening the door will bring in a blast of cold air. He ends the wake-up call with, “You get out there, Bob-o, get some coffee. Call you after work.” I just ain’t got it as bad as poor old James.

I choose a couple of CDs, the one I put in my little player this morning is Best Hits of the 70s. I put the extra CDs in one jacket pocket and the player in the other. “It’s a heartache, nothing but a heartache” booms into my head as my bike and I go to the elevator. I’m trying to look inside my wallet to see if I have money when I reach the lobby, but get the chain from my wallet caught in the cord to the earphones when I feel a tapping on my back. It’s the guy who always smells like cigars getting my attention with his cane. We talk a moment as soon as I can get the earphone out of my ear so I can hear him. “How ya’ doin’ Buddy? Better zip that jacket up.” I only see this guy in the lobby or out in front, but there’s something about him. He’s like a really close friend, but I don’t even know his name. We just talk a little now and then. “Nothing but a heartache” again bursts into my brain. I hurry through the lobby because Bonnie Tyler is really doing a number on me now. I want to sing too. Once out the doors and on the bike I sing along with her, but slightly different words because the morning is so golden. “It’s anything but a heartbreak.” It’s sort of strange. Here she is singing a sad song, but the effect of the melody and the sound of her voice and the rhythm cause it to be really kind of happy.

The song concludes about the time I reach the Fairly Grounded bike rack. Here I get the cord caught in my bike chain. What a mess. New song “Do That to Me One More Time.” Great song, but I’m glad it isn’t audible to the clerk. It’s kind of suggestive. I then sit down to write and listen to the songs from the 70s. “Midnight at the Oasis.” Hmm, Reno is my oasis. I think how when I leave here I can ride along the river and listen to more songs. A couple years ago, it was in the fall too, I was riding along the river trail as the leaves fell, the water rushing along going the opposite direction from me. I was listening to a piano sonata. The music, the bike, the river, the leaves all rushing merrily along.
I imagined at the time that I was experiencing the sensation one must get from the very best drugs without the bad side effects.

I write a birthday card message to James, then try to write a memoir about light, but come up with nothing so I just sit back and listen to the music. “That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be.” Now this song is serious, I mean sadly serious. I will be glad to have it end. It's too much about commitment, being responsible. Yuck.

Then the song, “There's Got to Be a Morning After.” Perfection. Makes you a believer in Heaven and in the goodness of all humankind, gives you hope. What a song!! Time to change the CD and get out of here and go see what's going on out there. I think I'll listen to some Elton John songs when I ride along the river because I know most of the words to those songs. People on the trail will look at me strangely thinking I am talking to myself. Who cares. I'm old, I'm at peace with myself, singing gives me joy and Maureen McGovern told me there is a morning after.

Bob Eaton is a Wyoming native, former elementary school teacher, father of one daughter and grandfather of three grandchildren.
A PIANO FROM CRIPPLE CREEK

Sharon Upson Edwards

Almost sixty years ago, after a hard day of work my Grandmother who had arthritic hands would sit down and play a concert for me, her only grandchild.

Grandma Hawkins had brought this piano from Colorado when they settled here in 1929 in a house Grandpa built at the corner of Mayberry Drive and N. McCarran. This house is now occupied by Walden’s Coffeehouse.

Listening to her playing pieces from Tchaikovsky, the “Red River Valley” and the “White Cliffs of Dover,” I sat mesmerized. I was about 8 years old.

It didn’t matter to her that she had already worked a hard eight hours, and she still had lawn to water, eggs to gather, dinner to cook and all the other things necessary to run a house. She was the most unselfish person I have ever known.

Still, to this day, I cannot read music and I’m trying to teach myself to play a Hammond Organ my father gave me a few years before his passing.

But there was nothing like the music that came from that old upright antique piano from Cripple Creek. I imagine in its heyday it had seen many barroom fights, many painted ladies and some rip roaring good times.

Looking at the same coffee-stained and well worn music she played brought tears to my eyes. If all could be as unselfish as she was, what a great world this would be.

My maternal grandmother was Mae Hawkins. They settled on thirteen acres on Mayberry Dr. My grandfather and grandmother tilled the land. McCarran was only a figment of someone’s imagination back then.
Music has magical powers. It can be happy or sad. More importantly it can bring back memories and transport you into another time and place.

My first memory of a song is one my father sang to me when I was around two. It was about three fish that swam over a dam. This takes me back to Eagles Nest, New Mexico and the cabin we lived in at Buko’s Motel. My mother worked at the motel as a maid and my father worked at a mine in the nearby mountains. I can feel the closeness of my father as he lay next to me singing to get me to sleep. I still don’t know why the fish swam over the dam nor do I remember all the words, but I do remember feeling very loved and special.

Another memory was a song my mother would hum as she went about her household chores and sometimes she would sing parts of it. The song was a Stephen Foster tune, “Carry me back to Old Virginie.” It was sort of a sad song, but still when I think of it or find myself humming it I get a warm glowing feeling and my mother is there with me.

The next memory I recall is a song from the 1940’s, “Sioux City Sue.” I was living in Big Springs, Nebraska. My mother worked at Dixon’s Café. The café had a backroom that had a dance floor and a jukebox. After school some of my friends and I would go by the café and get an ice cream cone and then go in the back room where the jukebox would be playing. There we would spin and whirl around in our six-year old version of dancing. I’m sure there were lots of songs being played, but “Sioux City Sue” is the one that triggers the memory.

Still in the 1940’s there is another memory of two songs. My favorite was “Ghost Riders in the Sky” and my father’s was “Up a Lazy River.” Because my father’s work required him to travel all over the midwest, my mother and I joined him in the summer. This meant that we ate in restaurants frequently. Most of the restaurants had mini replicas of a jukebox at each booth which were connected to the main jukebox. For a quarter you got five songs. At supper my father would give me a quarter for the jukebox and then the race was on to see which of us could punch our song in the most times. I think that summer there were more herds of the Devil’s cattle chased across the sky than lazy rivers.
In the 1950’s we moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming. My best friend, Mary Alice, lived across the street and we got hooked on the radio program, *Saturday Afternoon at the Met*. Her favorite opera was *Carmen* and mine was *Aida*. Whenever I hear the “Habanera” from “Carmen” I’m a teenager again sitting with my best friend.

When I graduated from high school and got a job, I used some of my money and bought a record player. One of the first records I owned was *Scheherazade*. This was a gift from Mary Alice. I no longer have a record player to play it on, but I still have *Scheherazade*.

All these different pieces of music are truly magic. They still provide wonderful memories that span over seventy years and many miles.

_Yvonne is a 57 year resident of Sparks who loves to travel and learn new things._
DID YOU EVER SEE A DREAM WALKING?

Diane France

“Did you ever see a dream walking? Well, I did. Did you ever see heaven in your arms saying I love you, I do? The dream that is walking and the dream that was talking and the heaven in my arms was you.”

I had these emotions with my children. All of my pregnancies were fine until the births. With the first I fainted and the baby then took ten hours to be born. She was healthy but I had iron-poor blood and low blood pressure.

In my second pregnancy I was using salt and developed toxemia poisoning which causes you to retain too much water. I was going to a clinic the day an intern told me to go home and come back in one week. I walked past a doctor who asked me, “Where are you going?” I said, “Home.” “No you aren’t!” was his response. My second child had bounced around until the umbilical cord had wrapped around his neck. So after taking out the fluid, the doctor induced labor. My child, a boy, our first boy, lived 1½ minutes with the cord around his neck. When the ultrasound was invented allowing doctors to see into the womb, I was happy for future mothers. My first son might have lived if we had the ultrasound then.

Our second living child was born after the deaths of our favorite people who learned to love one another: our grandmothers who loved each of us very much. My grandmother died in December and his grandmother, whom I took care of, died in April. This child was born depressed, and I think it was because I was depressed over the loss of those two beloved grandmothers.

Eighteen months later I was pregnant again. We were both ready for this child, or so we thought. It was a 30-45 mile drive to the hospital so I timed myself to the minute. When we arrived at the hospital, I informed anyone who would listen that the baby was breech. I could feel his elbow. I started to sing this song even when they told me I really didn’t know what I was talking about. A little blond nurse walked into the room to prep me for the operating room. She screamed, “This baby is coming! He’s working his way out!” Straight to the operating room where a Johnny Bench Asian-style doctor looked at the elbow and pushed it back in, then asked me if I wanted a shot to localize the pain. I said anything he could do to help would be appreciated. Then the nurses said I should use the Lamaze method of breathing and panting instead of pushing and screaming. “Pant like a puppy dog,” she said. I
hit her and blackened her eye so they tied my wrists down. In the meantime, the doctor was turning the baby around. The baby began screaming when he felt the air and didn’t stop until he was born and they held him upside down. His lungs were certainly clear but we were both angry by this time!

This child told us about everything he wanted from the time he was two years old. He didn’t like child care centers and this 2½ year old going on 21 told me I would have to make other arrangements if I wanted to go to work. He also said when we found a babysitter, that she would have to be a coffee drinker since his parents (us) did not drink coffee or know how to make it. Coffee turned out to be his “Ritalin.” He bossed the babysitter around, told her when to make beds, when and what to fix for dinner. Since the babysitter had been raped at a bus stop, she had been afraid to leave her house. But now her husband was very happy that she was with our son and doing all kinds of things.

That Christmas the babysitter’s husband gave our boy more gifts than the other two children because his wife was now able to come out of the house. She was a different person. This child we called the old man. His babysitter loved him; didn’t understand him, but she loved him.

I see you in my dreams and hold you in my arms. Then came our last child, the Nevada Day son, born when I was 32 years old. It was the most peaceful time in my life.

Just like the song that came out of my heart, nothing in life can keep us apart. Music and dream songs have helped me stay focused and even more so since the children are grown.

_Diane France is 74 years old, a retired teacher, member of the Vintage Players, volunteer, Head of Community Service at her church and OLLI member._
IF I REST I RUST

Ute D. Gacs

I grew up in Germany where everyone in my family enjoyed listening to classical music and opera. My father introduced us to Wagner and Beethoven and we traveled with him to town to hear famous opera stars and musicians perform. Tannhaeuser by Richard Wagner was one of the first operas I saw but neither the tenor nor the soprano impressed me. Singers in the early 50’s were all quite heavy and even though they exhibited great voices they did not know how to act. I still remember the chubby tenor waltzing down a platform in Lederhosen moving towards his “Brunhilde” like date. His portrayal of a young lad singing “Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen…” (Here comes a young boy…) made me giggle as I could not imagine how these stars would ever be able to embrace in a rousing duet. Since the advent of television and High Definition in the cinema, opera singers have slimmed down, have wonderful voices and are excellent actors.

After I immigrated to the States I continued to see opera and started to follow the career of one tenor, Placido Domingo. He is one of the most celebrated artists in our time and the motto on his website is, “If I Rest I Rust.” He has been performing for 50 years. Born in 1941 he recently celebrated his 70th birthday as conductor, tenor, baritone, and administrator. As one of his ardent admirers I have followed him for many years, witnessing many of his performances on stage, on television and in the cinema. During the summer of 1980 I visited my sisters in Germany and in August of the same year my younger sister and I drove to Salzburg, Austria to see the premiere of the “Tales of Hoffmann” at the Festival House. We had never heard of Domingo before but were mesmerized when the curtain opened and Hoffman alias Domingo appeared singing one of the famous arias “Oh nuit d’amour” (Oh night of love). Seated three rows away from the stage we were suddenly upset by a loud noise and noticed that an elderly gentleman sitting next to us had collapsed and slid onto the floor. He appeared unconscious. We were quite concerned that Domingo and his ensemble had heard the commotion and would stop the performance. However, no one on stage seemed to have noticed it and the performance continued undisturbed. Quickly, we summoned one of the ushers who rushed out to call the paramedics. They only appeared during the first intermission to pick up the patient. After the final curtain call and thundering applause, we ran out of the opera house determined to follow the tenor to his hotel. There we sat in the bar for many hours having more than a few drinks anxiously eyeing the elevator to glimpse a sign of the tenor who never showed up. Disappointed I returned to the States where I soon learned that Domingo would be appearing as Don Jose in Carmen at the San Francisco Opera House. I bought two tickets for my husband and I
convinced him that I had purchased excellent seats in the orchestra section not too far from the stage. For two months I agonized over what I should wear and how I should style my hair. Finally, September 12th arrived and we drove into the city. It was raining and we had to park several blocks away from the Opera House. Soon my hairdo was ruined, the new suit wrinkled and water trickled into my suede shoes. The bouquet of flowers I was planning to toss onto the stage looked wilted. After showing our tickets at the entrance, I became quite agitated when realizing that we were not sitting in the orchestra but much higher up in the second balcony from where it would be impossible to gain access to the stage. The performance was sold out. When the curtain finally opened I immediately recognized Domingo as the love struck Don Jose singing “Love Has Colorful Wings”. After much applause and the final curtain call I rushed down to the orchestra and tried to toss the flowers onto the stage but instead they fell into the pit. Before leaving I consoled myself with buying a T-Shirt featuring a portrait of Domingo on the front and a CD. My husband still claims that I used to wear this shirt at night but inside out. Two weeks later a friend and I traveled to San Francisco again to hear Domingo and the orchestra perform in the Golden Gate Park. We left our homes in Menlo Park at 5:30 a.m. to make sure we would get a seat as close as possible to the stage. The performance was supposed to start at nine and after our arrival around seven a.m. We spread our blankets in front of the stage eagerly awaiting the performers. Soon it started to drizzle and we felt the cold and dampness seep into our clothes. Soon we heard an announcement that the performance was canceled because the musicians did not want to ruin their instruments. We were just leaving when a limousine drove up. As the door opened we saw Placido Domingo emerging out of the car and quickly walking up to the stage. A couple of stage hands followed carrying a piano. Accompanying himself at the piano he entertained us with tunes from La Traviata, Othello, and Tosca. I have continued to follow his career and life all over the world enjoying his voice at home on the radio, and on television. In 1998 I saw him again in Las Vegas at the Mandalay Bay Theatre where we enjoyed his repertoire featuring Zarzuelas, his favorite folk songs. Again I missed meeting him in person as there were too many admirers surrounding him when he mingled with the audience after the performance. Recently I saw him in a High Definition live performance from the Metropolitan Opera as Simon Boccanegra by Verdi. I was so thrilled when he came out for an interview during the intermission because it felt like a face to face encounter. But until I really meet him in person, I am still wearing the T-Shirt.

Ute D. Gacs is a native of Germany and has been living in the U.S. since 1960. She holds a Masters Degree in Anthropology and has been teaching courses in Anthropology and German at Sierra, Western Nevada and Lake Tahoe Community Colleges.
From the moment my baby feet got planted on this earth in Chicago, I have heard the “sound of music.” My mother used to rock me to sleep singing an Irish lullaby. When I was elementary school age, I remember rousing summer camp songs on the bus and around campfires. I sang in holiday presentations in the school auditorium. As an 8th grader, I went to school dances on Friday night in the gymnasium. (I once sprained my ankle when I came down after a dance jump and was on crutches for 7 weeks.) My Girl Scout troop would go roller skating to music at a local indoor rink. Occasionally, I’d go for lunch with a girlfriend to a neighborhood hamburger hangout with jukeboxes, where you could play your musical selections for a few coins from your table as you ate. At the age of 13, my mom decided I should take ballroom dance lessons to make me a “lady” and give me a social boost in dating boys and going to proms and later weddings. It was no longer enough to do the Mexican Hat Dance and the jitterbug which I had taught myself by watching American Bandstand on TV after school. Though my grandparents weren’t into music, my adoring grandfather gave me as gifts a small, leather-covered transistor radio, a twirling ballerina musicbox, a musical locket, and a clock radio.

In high school, I belonged to several social clubs where we would put on skits by rewriting popular song lyrics (which I had a knack for) and performing in front of our peers. In winter, I’d go ice skating at night to music at an outdoor rink that in summer was an Olympic swimming pool. Also I recall the lengthy process of getting ready for dates, singing in the shower and then listening to my bedroom record player and singing some more with my favorite vocal artists -- Sinatra, Streisand, and Ella Fitzgerald. I didn’t play in the school band (which I regret) because it was not a cool thing to do. Moreover, I had wanted to play piano (which my cousin Ellen did), but my mother insisted that there was not room in the apartment to put a piano. Mom wasn’t very musically inclined, but she sometimes enjoyed playing Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” on the phonograph hidden in the front hall bench. Throughout my younger years in Temple, I’d sing Hebrew songs at Sunday school and at High Holiday services (Rosh HaShona and Yom Kippur).

In high school and college on dates in Chicago, I’d go to Rush Street for live jazz and to Old Town for folk music. When I was 22, I got married and we picked as our wedding song “Strangers in the Night.” My New York native husband had a musical background -- he played bass
and had an extensive collection of record albums, mostly Broadway musicals and jazz (which I still have, along with drawers of cassettes and CDs). George and I took disco dance lessons in the 1980’s before his untimely death.

As a mom, I wanted to make sure my children (Lauren, Leslie, and Jason) had musical instrument experience that I never had. So starting in 2nd grade, all three took Suzuki violin lessons which the girls played through junior high school. In addition, the girls played piano for 4 years on the old player piano we had gotten in Madison, Wisconsin until they balked at practicing. My son, in between his various sports, played bass and flute as well. For almost 20 years, we had season tickets to the Reno Philharmonic and the Chamber Orchestra but because they played late on school nights, the kids never wanted to go. I hope my 8 grandchildren at least get the musical training my kids got.

In my adult years, I go to concerts, take my IPod on trips, play music at dinner, in the bath, in the car and during exercise and watch musical shows on TV like Dancing With The Stars. I have taken piano lessons and belonged to a recorder group, each for a year and a half. I bought a harmonica but never learned how to play it. In the future, perhaps I’d like to take singing lessons as an alto and be part of a choral group. One day I might even get up the nerve to sing karaoke. For sure I want to get back to playing the recorder and maybe even buy a keyboard. I love a cappella vocal groups, duets, World Music, New Age and recently opera (attending taped New York Metropolitan Opera broadcasts at the downtown movie theater). I’m taking ballroom dance lessons again -- this time with boyfriend Larry Hardy. Before I take my last breath and leave this earth, I’d like to pick out music for my funeral celebration, possibly ending with the song “So Long, Farewell” from The Sound of Music!

Helaine Greenberg, mother, grandmother, community volunteer, traveler, former teacher and journalist hears the sound of music and has a song in her heart.
THE FIRST TIME I EVER SOLD MY BODY

Kathryn (Kay) Greene

My introduction to music was when my mother made me learn “You Are My Sunshine” and sing it for any visitor so subjected. My cousin Jerry was similarly coerced, but his mom, my Aunt Emma, was also encouraging him to pick up his clothes, so when he sang the line, “and when I awoke dear, I was mistaken, and I hung my head (on a nail) and cried” was included.

My mom was also a fan of Kate Smith, so I had to learn “God Bless America” and stand on a small stool and perform on demand.

Sometime later when we moved to Salem, Oregon in 1943, my brother Larry and my sister Lois, both teenagers, would invite every service person they could find to come to our house on Saturday night. My mom had a big phonograph player and a huge stack of 78 records. The soldiers, marines, etc. would bring any goodies their families had sent to them to share. Music was played, sung to, and sometimes the rugs were rolled up and they danced the night away.

My role, at age 6, was to sit on any soldier’s lap who had money. My fee was generally $.50 per half hour and then I would shift to another lap for another 50 cent fee. This went on for as long as I could stay awake. I was the wealthiest member of my family. I also learned all the lyrics to the songs of the current favorites of the day: Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Doris Day, etc.

I enjoyed singing, so joined the chorus of my Jr. High School, where I shocked the instructor with the lowest voice in the class: all sopranos and one alto. I continued to join choirs in whatever school/church I happened to be in, learning to read music, the values of various terms, etc. beginning with my 8th grade instructor Miss Kirkpatrick.

I have found over the years the quickest way to get new friends is to join the church choir; you instantly have a group of friends who are glad to see you and quick to include you in OTHER activities!

Born and raised in Western Oregon, Kay promptly left Oregon after college days and spent her varied career in a juvenile hall, libraries, schools and cities in California and Nevada.
MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

Ruth Hailer

“Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder.” I had just married a Staff Sgt. in the U.S. Air Force and we were heading to Tucson, Arizona to do his next tour of duty. We rented a trailer and had just started to get settled in when he was told that he was going TDY (temporary duty) to England for the next three months. Living in a strange town away from family and friends I realized just how lonely it could be, “Oh Lonesome Me.” When he returned from his mission, “Happy Days are Here Again,” we decided to go camping. Getting back from camping trip we were told that once again he was going TDY, but this time it would be for a year. “Till We Meet Again.”

By this time we had a son and he took up quite a lot of my time. Loneliness was not a problem anymore. I also found out that I was pregnant once again. The day he arrived back in town, “Roll Me Over” a relative took the children and we had 24 hours to ourselves. “It Had To Be You,” and “Cuddle Up A Little Closer.”

A couple of weeks later we were told that we were being transferred to Alaska, “North To Alaska.” What an experience that was driving up the Alcan Highway. We had three kids and we were hauling a trailer on those black ice roads. We lived there for 20 years. It was a total eye opener for me and then it was over, “”D.I.V.O.R.C.E.” Although the marriage was over I felt that “I Get Along Without You Very Well,” and I had three healthy and happy children. I will always be grateful, “Till the End of Time.”

I was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and at 19 married an Air Force enlisted man and moved all over the country with him and we finally ended in Alaska. I had 3 children, 2 boys and a girl. We lived in Alaska for 21 years and then I moved to Reno, NV for 18 months and then it was off to Sacramento, CA for the next 15 years to work for an Arab family in the jewelry business. I did most of the advertising for them also bought and sold jewelry and did appraisals when needed. I have 6 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren and one great great grandchild. It’s those long winter nights. They’ll do it every time. I’m back in Reno supposedly enjoying “The Golden Years.” Just an adult fairy tale.
SING SOMETHING SIMPLE

Beverly Harvey

I was born with music in my heart, in my soul. Perhaps it was because both of my parents were talented musicians, playing piano and organ. Who can say why one person has a talent for math, another a talent for writing, another can’t survive without music? I can’t imagine being in the world and not caring about music.

When I was small enough to walk under our kitchen table, my mother would turn the radio to the Firestone Hour as she ironed, and the magnificent voices of Lauritz Melchior, Helen Trauble, Lily Pons, and Jan Peerce, among others would soar into the room. I would lie on the floor, entranced, smelling the warm scent of her ironing and hearing the gentle bump of the iron on the board as we listened.

Music makes my heart soar, makes me laugh and cry, and can induce a satisfying blanket of bathos when I feel a need to indulge in abysmal self pity and sadness, producing a nice sense of catharsis. My daughter and I came down from Seattle, and just before Susanville we encountered a dense snowstorm. We saw no one but a lone state trooper, and it was tense driving. She put a Leonard Cohen album in, and I had my first encounter with his dolorous dirges. Leonard can make even his positive messages sound dismal. I had to laugh at the absurdity of his droning.

Like art, music is a window on each era. Growing up just on the fringes of the big band era, I was immersed in the music of jazz and ballads. There were songs for every occasion. Doris Day’s “Once I Had A Secret Love” spoke to the excitement and terror of our first crushes, as we wondered—did they feel the same way about us? Today we have the Streisand/Dion duet “Tell Him.” Women have learned to be bolder, realizing that a man also has some trepidation about having always to be the one to make the first move. My first husband proposed as Perry Como sang about a ring of gold—very romantic.

The scores of the wonderful musicals of Rodgers, Hart, Hammerstein, and others provided the background for romance as we danced (together—remember?) or fell in love over quiet dinners. It was music to hold hands by. There was a message for every occasion. I sometimes have trouble even understanding the words these days. The music seems all too frenetic.
Singers don’t just stand and sing any more. Now music is a full fledged production where they have to dance, have ultra-loud music, and fireworks. We’ve gone from Busby Berkeley to Thriller. This speaks to the pace of life in general these days. Everything is moving faster. Computers speed up the world, and more is demanded of people because of it. The music reflects that. But I’ve had enough of people leaping across the stage and music that assaults my eardrums. We’re producing a generation of deaf people, and I’d rather not be part of it. Do people fall in love to the music of Alice Cooper or Smashing Pumpkins?

Because of that, I’ve even learned to listen to country music. I want to hear a nice symphony or some music from before Rock and Roll took over. Or even the Beatles. It matches the pace of my life better. I guess I’m getting old. I don't begrudge the kids their music. We all have our own eras and preferences. I want to put on my records or disks and relax to sweeter sounds. I want my song to be simple, so anyone else can sing along.

Bev Harvey has lived in Reno for 33 years and considers it home. She grew up in Buffalo, NY, has three children, and loves her Lifescapes class. She is currently working on her book of memoirs.
SOON IT’S ALL YOU CAN HEAR

Jackie Hogan

It is Spring of my 9th grade year at Holy Redeemer School in Milwaukee, the school I have attended since second grade. This is the first year 9th grade has been offered, and I am disappointed not to be in a real high school, as are many of my classmates. Our pastor and principal, Father Nellen, is a strict, forbidding, no-nonsense man, with no apparent sense of humor, or so he seems to me. We all (or at least most of us) dread upsetting him.

On this beautiful, clear, sunny day my best friend Marilyn and I are volunteering at a rummage sale table at the parish bazaar. The school playground is festive with its colorful booths and paper streamer decorations. Besides rummage sale tables there are food booths with delicious offerings contributed by parishioners (cakes, pies, cookies, lemonade, hot dogs, sausages, and more), game booths with prizes from local merchants, special events for children, and light classical and pop music playing over the school public address system. Left in the school office in charge of changing the records are two of my male classmates.

Everything appears to be running smoothly, and parents and other parishioners seem to be enjoying themselves. Suddenly the record changes and we hear:

“There’s a burlesque theatre where the gang loves to go
To see Queenie the cutie of the burlesque show
And the thrill of the evening is when out Queenie skips
And the band plays the polka while she strips.”

The crowd stands still and people look up, some in shock, some in amusement, and some in horror. Marilyn and I look at each other -- what will Father Nellen do? As the record swings into the chorus:

“Take it off. Take it off, cries a voice from the rear
“Take it off. Take it off. Soon it’s all you can hear”

We see the normally a bit-more-dignified Father Fischer, assistant pastor, hike his cassock up over his black-trousered knees and sprint across the playground toward the door of the school. The chorus continues:

“But she’s always a lady even in pantomime
So she stops! And always just in time.”
As the next verse starts we hear the needle squeal across the record and the PA system goes silent.

I remember no more of what happened that day, but most assuredly the boys were very severely dealt with by Father Nellen; and all present that day had an interesting or shocking story to tell their friends and neighbors later.

Lyrics: \textit{Strip Polka} by Johnny Mercer

\begin{quote}
Jackie Hogan moved from Wisconsin to California with parents at 16. She married and divorced; she is the mother of six, grandmother of eight, great-grandmother of seven. RV full-timer for several years, Reno resident for four, enthusiastic participant in Lifescapes.
\end{quote}
THE BELLS OF BELL HIGH

Andrew Ivanov

The bells of Bell High, the bells of Bell High – ring, ring, and ring.
And how they ring and ring for all – ring, ring, and ring.
The Bell High bells, the Bell High bells, we heard them toll – ring, ring, and ring,
Each day for years our life we were there on their call – ring, ring, and ring.
From early morn you’ve heard them ring till mid-afternoon – ring, ring, and ring.
We all conformed to the Bell’s bell schedule and its ringing tune – ring, ring, and ring.
The tardy slips and passes in between – ring, ring, and ring.
It was a constant hassle to handle in – ring, ring, and ring.
And then at last we bid goodbye – ring, ring, and ring
To the bells of Bell High with a parting sigh – ring, ring, and ring
To hear no more the Bell High bells ring – ring, ring, and ring
How quickly we forgot their daily sting – ring, ring, and ring
Their changes in schedule and of our routine – ring, ring, and ring
Their reflexive conditioning is no longer in – ring, ring, and ring
And for us, the Bell Skippers, the bells are gone and their ring – ring, ring, and ring
We can’t even remember their ding a ling – ring, ring, and ring
As once they rule our daily lives with their demanding cling – ring, ring, and ring
These bells are quite nostalgic, whenever we visit Bell and hear – ring, ring, ring
Their ring, how could we forget the sound once so impressively dear? ring, ring, ring
It is amazing that their rings are no longer in our brain – ring, ring
And today we are so impassive what once was in our grain – ring, ring, and ring.
THE EVENING BELLS
Bomme, Bomme

Andrew Ivanov

Once upon my father’s lap I heard him sing and sigh, - Bomme, bomme
   A sad and gloomy teary lullaby, - Bomme, bomme
About the ringing church bells in the night, - Bomme, bomme
And how their gongs brought deep and maudlin thoughts. – Bomme, bomme

These late evening bells with a mystic tone – Bomme, bomme
Brought the memories of his childhood on and on, - Bomme, bomme
Those vivid times in his native land where he had roam, - Bomme, bomme
And how at last and forever more he bid goodbye – Bomme, bomme
To all he knew and loved of his father’s home. – Bomme, bomme

The evening bells, the evening bells, in his mind still clang on – Bomme, bomme
And bring more sullen thoughts with their eerie gong – Bomme, bomme
Now that my father has long gone – Bomme, bomme
His moody madrigal still haunts me off and on – Bomme, bomme
I’ve chanted it to each of my girls rocking them in my arms – Bomme, bomme
Trying to put them asleep with this moody lullaby charms – Bomme, bomme
But the bomme bomme tend to wake ‘em up and cry, - Bomme, bomme
So I had to improvise to a more soothing chanty try. – Bomme, bomme
I am sure the evening bell somewhere still chime, - Bomme, bomme
And still bring on some weepy thoughts with their booming sound.
   – Bomme, bomme

Was born in Manchuria and raised in French Colonial China; sailed for 5 years in the Norwegian Merchant Fleet; drafted into the U.S. Army and stationed in Germany during the Cold War. Graduated from the University of Southern California with B.A. in IR-Economics and M.S. in Education; also, received an M.A. in Political Science from the Claremont Graduate School. He taught at Bell High School and Junior College in Los Angeles and now lives in Reno with his wife, Gloria.
WITH A SONG IN MY HEART

Deanna Jackson

That’s the way I’ve tried to live my life, with a song in my heart. Often the song bursts forth from my lips. I’ve sung aloud when alone for as long as I can remember. I have no illusions about my singing ability. It’s mediocre. I sing with enthusiasm and good cheer, good enough when one’s self is the only intended audience.

The many songs I’ve sung throughout the years reflect the progress of my life from the overwrought emotions of my teens to my present time of contentment. “Mister Sandman, bring me a dream. Make him the cutest that I’ve ever seen.” I met my mate at a far younger age than most do. At the end of our summer romance, he went back to college hundreds of miles away leaving me behind to finish high school. “But I miss you most of all my darling when autumn leaves start to fall.” With the impatience of youth we married before I finished high school. He left college ready to take on the task of supporting a wife. Soon it was “Lullaby and goodnight,” and “An itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout.” The years rolled by. “Row row row your boat,” “She’ll be comin’ round the mountain ‘til she comes” and of course, for travel, “Ninety nine bottles of beer on the wall.” I had an audience then who flattered me by thinking Mommy’s singing was wonderful.

When our boys were teens they were seldom home. My husband wasn’t home much either. I learned to sing along with Janice Joplin, Carole King, Tina Turner, the music of a woman beginning to feel liberated, a woman who was beginning to think she might be more than just a wife and mother. Our nest was empty only a few years before a troubled nephew came to fill the empty space. He guided me into the music of the eighties. I enjoyed it at the time though I’ve remembered little of it. Now my middle aged children give me CDs of things they consider to be “oldies.” This refreshes my memory so I can once again sing the lyrics of Fleetwood Mac, “Tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies” and Phoebe Snow, “And he’ll kiss your lips and caress your waiting finger tips.” I tell myself there was no music of the nineties worth remembering since I don’t remember any of it. I’m sure that’s not really true. I was in a different phase of my life. Rather than listening to the popular vocalists and groups of that decade, I found jazz in all its infinite varieties on National Public Radio. Its improvisation seemed to mirror my own life at the time, the perfect accompaniment while I tried first this and then that, not exactly a mid life crisis but certainly a period of personal unrest. When I sang then I took my inspiration from the legacies of Etta James, Sarah Vaughn and, of course, Ella Fitzgerald.
In the late nineties my voice was stilled. After my husband’s health problems, both physical and mental, forced me into the endless exhaustion of full time care giving it was all I could do to make it through each day. Singing never crossed my mind. We struggled through the next six years together. His death left our home filled with the oppressive silence of grief. Even the blues weren’t blue enough to express my emotions. I slept very little, seldom ate, and I certainly did not sing. After weeks of eating nothing except peanut butter sandwiches and cold cereal, I got out of bed after yet another restless night surprised to find myself hungering for vegetable soup, the kind I used to make. I rushed to the market, not wanting to lose that feeling. When I looked at the vivid palette of vegetables scattered across my kitchen counter I knew I could make a soup that would feed me for many days.

The Bose CD-radio combo I’d ordered sometime during the first irrational days of my grief sat upon a shelf above my knife block still unused, a constant reminder of my foolish extravagance. When well meaning friends saw the Bose, they’d given me a basket filled with jazz CDs as though they thought I’d someday be lighthearted again. That day, when I looked at the Bose I thought, “If I’m not going to use it I should send it back.” Sending it back would take more effort than I could muster up so I slipped a randomly chosen CD into the player. My knife began dancing across the cutting board to the syncopated rhythms of the Dave Brubeck Quartet. The Bose seldom fell silent again. When I played the radio I discovered voices new to me, Nora Jones, Jane Monheit, Eva Carpenter and best of all, Diana Krall. I sang with them. I healed with them. I began once more to venture out into the world trying first one new activity then another, breaking the isolation I’d endured for more than six years. With the help of a wonderful circle of women friends I met along the way, I built a busy and satisfying new life for myself.

Four years later I made a New Year’s resolution to start some new form of exercise. By the end of January I was going to a Tai Chi class. When one of the few men in the class asked me to go to lunch with him I surprised myself by saying yes. We discovered a mutual love of jazz. More lunches and a few evening concerts led to dinners at my house. I began to look for CDs with tunes reflecting my new unexpected state of mind. Nancy Wilson’s lyrics “An older man is like an elegant wine,” perfect. Other sentimental ballads floated from the Bose and filled my newly opened heart. I sang “Someone to watch over me” and “He’s just my Bill.”

Two years after we met in Tai Chi class Bill and I married, something I’d said I’d never do again. My dog, my cat and I moved to Bill’s house. I sing all the time now. I hope the music never ends.

Deanna Yardic Jackson—Tea For Two—“We’ll build a home, just you and me.” Deanna and her husband Bill are busy creating a home filled with their blended belongings. Hers moved to his house this past March when they undertook the new adventure of marriage. Carving out a creative nook for her desk and computer had a high priority for Lifescapes class is her second love.
MARIAN THE LIBRARIAN

Mary Kelso

The first thought that came to mind when I began to write this piece was the librarian song from the musical *Music Man*. In the last 15 years, I have spent more time in the library and while one used to go to the card index, I can now share conversation with the librarian. I used to think we were not supposed to talk to the librarian. I am amazed at a librarian’s memory. It is like being on a quiz show where the librarian has the answers and their prize would be that I found a job or learned how to do things most effectively. The fun of it for me is being turned loose on my own to keep searching out more information. For example, I found a book on the bloodlines of horses, so I upped my ante at the race track. I discovered magazines in the periodicals section on the rodeo and pre-production films which led to 10 years of volunteering at the rodeo to support the needs of special kids and to be part of the crew on a major Disney/Touchstone film. I can find people to contact for a film job. Locate places to go in the community for senior events. Learn how to plan a trip. Try to answer a question: Are there angels and aliens or not?

I recently found a parallel between the library and coming to presentations and classes at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Attending classes is like opening books written by locals whose careers included being an executive chef, a chaplain, gold miner, hand-writing investigator, Taiko drumming, life planning, and laughter yoga. What OLLI means to me is laughter and the pursuit of things I thought were lost in me. I am thankful that I get out more instead of staying home and listening to gossip and the dishwasher.

I have discovered that I am not old, but living my life over again in the things I used to enjoy—listening to music and song and writing about memories. Music that can incite or invite memories is everywhere—elevators, restaurants, coffee shops, book stores, and even from the car that just passed you. Songs are played in shopping malls which I believe subliminally encourage one to purchase that one item you would not normally buy because it was just a bit more than you budgeted for, or to encourage one to feel richer. It’s that nudge that gives you the go-ahead to buy an extra cake or bottle of wine, just in case an unexpected guest arrives.

I should open up a music store and sell all the music I’ve ever listened to including Frank Zappa, Kiss, Elvin Bishop, Boz Scaggs, Ernest Tub, Smokey Robinson, Prince, Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli, Sammy Davis Jr., and Stevie Ray Vaughn, and even Tibetan singing
bowls. I would be the music librarian and talk to my customers about how they came to like a tune and where they were when they first heard it.

I think that memories and song are the same and although song and memories can be separated, sooner or later, they will come together. In just my daily activities there is not a song or church bell or bird singing that does not click onto a memory of the past to affect a smile or tear of gratefulness that I have the sun in the morning and moon at night. This allows me numerous mental vacations playing them back in my head. I look back over the activities of my day, rewinding the tape in my head and remembering the songs I heard and it triggers memories of the specific conversations I had with people. I remember their behaviors, including spoken and non-spoken gestures, to better understand their unique reactions. In other words, I learn how to get along with people better, what makes them smile, how to prepare for the next day to be better.

I believe if you surround yourself with music, one memory will lead to another favorite memory. Keep learning, singing and dancing and make a journal of your thoughts to hand down to the next generation for them to read. Don’t forget that you can write and remember about the “Once Upon A Time” or “Somewhere over the Rainbow.” Life is shorter than we think, so be fearless and write your own song, do your own dance, and ask someone to join you.

Mary Kelso – to find me in the past, look for Cowboys and Indians. Now you can find me with OLLI classmates listening to the talking books inside their hearts. Do twinkles in the eyes have a sound?
PETER AND THE WOLF

Sue Kennedy

There was one defining moment in my childhood where I fell passionately in love with music. It happened the day my mother, trying to keep her seven-year-old from being too bored, put a record on the phonograph and invited me to listen to it, all by myself. It was a production of Walt Disney, with a captivating picture on the album cover made to entice children inside, where there were a series of pictures that illustrated what the music was meant to convey. Sterling Halloway’s narration of the story was captivating. It was one of adventure, friendship, danger, and bravery. From the first listening, I was hooked!

This was classical music, masterfully crafted by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev in 1936 as a symphony for children. He was so intrigued by the invitation to compose one that it took him only four days to complete. It failed to attract much attention in 1936, but it had my whole attention in 1951.

I lay for hours on my stomach on the living room carpet, with my head propped up on my arms. That day I heard music in a way I had never heard it before. I paid close attention and learned to recognize each instrument, as each was part of the story.

The young boy, Peter, is represented by stringed instruments. He lives with his grandfather in a forest clearing. One day he goes for a walk with his trusty popgun, but leaves the gate open. The duck (an oboe), always looking for an opportunity to go swimming in the pond, follows him out.

A little bird (a flute) flits into the story. She thinks the duck is a pretty silly bird if she can’t fly. The duck thinks the bird is pretty silly if she can’t swim. Meanwhile, the party is being stalked by Peter’s cat (a clarinet). The listener gets the idea that the cat would find the bird a tasty morsel for lunch, but she flies to safety into the tree before that happens.

Peter’s grandfather (a bassoon) thunders into the story, warning Peter that a wolf might come out of the forest and attack him. Peter is not afraid, but he is dragged back inside the garden gate, which the grandfather locks.
Soon, the French horns, played ominously, announce the arrival of the hungry wolf onto the scene. The cat quickly escapes into the tree, but the duck is not so lucky. The wolf swallows her whole. Peter, seeing what is happening, climbs over the garden wall with a rope. He asks the bird to fly around the wolf’s head to distract it, while he lassoes the wolf’s tail and ties the end to the tree.

Woodwinds announce the arrival of the hunters who had been following the wolf. Timpani and the bass drum are the sound of their guns. They want to shoot the wolf, but Peter persuades them to help him take the wolf to the zoo.

At the end, they all march off triumphantly, with the wolf tied by his feet to a pole balanced on the shoulders of the hunters. In the parade are Peter, the bird, and the cat. But what about the duck?

There is a musical movement of sadness to commemorate their fellow-adventurer. But Prokofiev did not intend for the duck to die. She has been swallowed whole, and somehow her lovely oboe tones play quietly, leaving hope for her emergence from the wolf’s stomach. At that age, I could not bear to think that she was gone forever.

I loved the story. I loved the way the story was told in musical sounds. I loved the way adventure, mischief, camaraderie, danger, and triumph were all evident from the score. I was too young to know what a musical score was, but I was not too young to resonate with it.

The record was only 25 minutes long, but I made it last all afternoon, replaying it many times. The first time I listened and followed along with the pictures. The last time I played it I was able to close my eyes and see in my imagination the characters and the action. To this day, I cannot hear a piece of classical music without hearing the individual instruments which make up the movements, and trying to imagine what the composer was trying to convey by each. I can hear the mood. I can hear the passion. I can no longer lie on the floor for hours and listen to something five times in a row. That took childish awe and patient discovery of something beautiful unfolding before my senses. As I remember that day, I can still hear strains of the music in my mind. It is a memory I will always treasure.

Sue Kennedy has enjoyed her involvement with OLLI and Lifescapes since 2005. Her mother, after that hopeful beginning in music appreciation Sue writes about, made sure her daughter had music lessons. Sue was no prodigy, but she learned to appreciate even more the skill of those who provide music for the masses.
ONCE IN LOVE WITH AMY

Richard S. Knapp

Music has always been a part of my life. I was born into a family that loved classical music. My mother was a graduate of the Chicago Conservatory of Music, an accomplished pianist, a former public school music teacher, and taught piano in our home in Lancaster, California, for many years. I loved to attend band and orchestra concerts, operas, Broadway musicals, etc. as often as possible, which sometimes meant a trip to Los Angeles for "live" performances, but normally it meant I listened to the radio or to our family’s small collection of 78 rpm records. Although I never had any desire to learn to play or perform any instrument, I loved music, especially classical music.

At the age of 15 in the summer of 1949, I was not yet very much aware of what plays and other theatrical productions were popular in the United States. But I definitely was very much taken with the story of the Wizard of Oz. My mother had read the story to me two times and I had seen the movie a few times. I especially loved the Scarecrow character as it was portrayed in the movie by the famous movie star and outstanding dancer Ray Bolger.

In July 1949 our family was in New York City for three weeks while my father attended a special seminar at Columbia University. We did all the usual tourist things, including going to the top of the Empire State Building, riding past the Statue of Liberty on our boat tour around Manhattan Island, riding the Staten Island ferry, going to Yankee Stadium to see Joe DiMaggio, Yogi Berra and the other Yankees play baseball, visiting the then new United Nations Building, going to Coney Island, and seeing a show at the Radio City Music Hall featuring the famous Rockettes. And of course we had to attend a Broadway show.

The show we selected to see was Where’s Charlie? a musical adaptation of the hilarious comedy Charlie’s Aunt. I loved this selection as Ray Bolger was the featured star who performed both singing and dancing numbers as well as playing the lead character. The show was terrific, and Ray Bolger was outstanding for the entire production. The highlight of the show was a long and strenuous number in which Ray Bolger both danced and sang the hit song of the musical, "Once in Love with Amy." Towards the end of this exhausting routine, Ray Bolger invited the audience to sing along with him. Even though I can’t carry a tune in a bucket, an invitation from Ray Bolger to sing with him couldn’t be turned down. I now remember that occasion as "the night I sang on Broadway!"

Richard Knapp is a retired architect, originally from Southern California. He worked in Los Angeles before moving his family to Reno in 1972. He and his wife, Barbara, have been married 52 years and have two children and four grandchildren, all living in Reno.
WELCOME TO GERMANY. . . WELCOME

Ina Krapp

Bob and I walked into the Hotel Deutsche and were greeted with a warm “Guten Tag.” As we struggled to remember our two years of study with Frau Berg at De Anza College, the young woman switched to English and, within minutes, we had a room with a duvet-covered bed. A window box of red tulips complemented the garden of yellow and violet pansies. I closed my eyes – we were in Heidelberg.

Except we weren’t. We were in Filadelfia, Paraguay. Six days ago we flew into Buenos Aires: were robbed on the first day; toured the magnificent Iguaçu Falls for two days; bussed overnight to Resistencia and spent the fifth day resting. The sixth day we traveled to Asunción, Paraguay. By the time our bus labored into the station in Asunción, Bob and I were dusty, dehydrated and thoroughly disgruntled. We pulled our equally dusty back packs out of the overhead bin and headed across the street to a row of motels, our Lonely Planet Guidebook firmly in hand. We found a room for the night in the best of the lot and went next door to a small outdoor restaurant inexplicably named “Café Charley Chaplin.” A glass of red wine helped with the chewy meat. We didn’t talk much. Even our lips were tired.

Our son Greg urged us for years to explore South America. He bummed around the continent right after college and, though he came home sick and broke, his memories were of adventure and beauty. “Especially,” he said, “go to the Chaco.” Then he added a list of superlatives. “And you’ve got to see Filadelfia. A German town in the midst of the Paraguay desert.” So we were on our way.

Somehow we managed to oversleep. We knew our bus would leave at 8:00am, so we just had time to grab a Media Luna and a cup of coffee at the station. We panicked when we couldn’t find the bay for our bus amid about twenty spaces. We knew from Greg that Mennonites had founded Filadelfia, so when we spotted a white bearded man dressed in black – including his wide brimmed hat – we sprinted toward him. In Spanish, I asked about the bus.

“Are you folks from the States?” he asked in a decidedly Midwest accent and pointed to the sign we stood under. “Oh, you’re going to like Filadelfia.” So we climbed on the bus; minutes later it departed. We leaned back in the worn uncomfortable seats and tried to relax. The padlock on the toilet door made us regret even our one cup of coffee. The landscape viewed from the bus window was arid, but not barren. Bushes,
small trees and vines enjoyed by a myriad of small birds flitting in the
golden sunlight delighted us mile after mile, hour after hour. A rest stop
at a small café and the assurance from the driver that we would be in
Filadelfia in two hours emboldened us to have another cup of coffee.
When we arrived, I talked with the driver – he spoke no English – about
the return trip tomorrow morning at 6:00 a.m.

We wandered through the town; a town almost like a movie set of
“Cabaret.” A surprise greeted us around every corner: das Postamt; eine
Fleischerei; eine Backerei; ein Restaurant. My stomach grumbled
pleasantly. “Let’s eat here tonight.” The two of us arrived for dinner when
the front door was unlocked. A white jacketed waiter seated us. We
drooled with anticipation. A table laden with salads, potato dishes and
hot cabbages was close enough to touch. White coated servers lured us
with legs of lamb, beef roast and pork cutlets. Bob and I ate until we had
to undo the top buttons of our pants, and still we downed an apple and
whipped cream dessert. “Schmeckt gut. Vielen Dank,” we said together
as we left.

Tomorrow’s itinerary: a bus to Asunción; another bus to
 Resistencia followed by a flight to Rio Gallegos. We had to leave. Morning
came too soon, and I needed coffee. I knew the hotel kitchen stayed open
all night, so at 5:00am I practiced how to ask for an early breakfast. Just
bread, orange juice and coffee for Room #10. I knocked at the kitchen
door. A young woman appeared.

“Por favor, Yo quiero pan, jugo de naranja y café para dos personas.
Quarto numero diez.”

“Lo siento,” she answered. “Pero yo no hablo alemán. Un
momento.” She walked away as I stuttered “That wasn’t German. That
was Spanish.” She returned with a young man.

“Bitte,” he said. “Kann ich sie helfen?”

German, German. Slowly I answered, “Ich muschte Brot und Kaffee
fur zwei personnes. Simmer zehn.” I didn’t remember the word for juice.”

Ah, joy. It came. We drank our coffee and carried our bread to the
bus stop. Fifteen minutes later and we were on our way back to
Asunción, our okay motel and Café Charley Chaplin. “Auf wiedersedeen,
Filadelfia. Auf wiedersedeen.”

“Hola, Asunción.”

*Ina Krapp and her husband, Bob, often use public transportation as they travel. Inevitably, this leads to adventure, surprises and, occasionally, discomfort. They wouldn’t change a thing.*
THERE’S SO MUCH MUSIC

Sherl Landers-Thorman

Sunday School for the preschool class had just been called to order. A three year old girl sat in a chair on stage left while Miss Pat announced that one of the class members was going to sing “Jesus Wants Me For A Sunbeam.” She nodded at the little girl whereupon she stood up, walked to the front of the stage, smoothed her dress, flung out her arms, and joyously erupted into “It Ain’t No Sin To Take Off Your Skin And Dance Around In Your Bones.” After a moment of stunned silence the parents and adults in the audience burst into laughter and encouraging applause as the song ended and I took a proper bow. There was always music in our house as my young adult parents, aunts, uncles and cousins sang with and danced to the ever playing music from the dark brown wood box called a radio.

I really liked the tap shoes I wore to dancing school once a week and every day when I practiced to music from the wind up Victrola. After moving to the other side of town when I was five, my Mama sewed for a neighborhood playmate of mine, Karen. Her mother gave me piano lessons in return. That continued through the second grade. The six or seven other neighborhood kids that took lessons from Mrs. Horowitz as well played a recital or two for our parents before we moved away. Mrs. Horowitz took Karen and me to the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles to see the opera, Hansel and Gretel. Steep stairs led to our high seats. I remember being scared of the witch and afraid that if I leaned forward in my seat I would tumble over all the seats and balconies to the stage and land right at her door.

Third through sixth grades brought different public schools but the same dancing school. A memorable recital for the Veterans Home where I sang and danced to “The Sunny Side of the Street” and finished with cartwheels got me a standing ovation. Dancing lessons were replaced by sock hops at school and the Rendezvous, Pacific Ballroom, Palladium and big bands on dates until marriage, children, and a career brought back the radio and added television. Present time brings radio and television plus a 400 CD jukebox no larger than a bread box at home, CDs and/or tapes in the car and background music in every store and shopping mall.

Play a tango for me for my last dance and I’ll end on a happy note.

Sherl Landers-Thorman is a native of Los Angeles who moved to Reno and joined Lifescapes 11 years ago. She’s written lots of stories about herself and friends and family, some complete and still others in progress that will eventually be organized. Lifescapes is her passion.
WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR
YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Kathleen Legere

Standing alone in the semi-darkness backstage I could see the sleek black nine-foot concert grand center stage. The lid was fully raised and the keys were exposed and waiting. The stage lights were dim as the audience gathered.

It was my senior recital. I had prepared thoroughly for this moment in time. Six hours a day for several months I sat on a hard bench in a practice room in the subterranean labyrinth of the music building at UNM. Actually the journey began when I was six years old.

My life had changed forever the day I watched a piano come through the front door. It was a tall player piano, and was aided by my father and some other men. It came to rest in the living room. Mom played a funny tune on it by rolling her knuckles up and down on the 3 black keys, and using her other hand to play the 2 black keys on either side. Within minutes I knew how to play that song. I never knew its name, and I never forgot it or the excitement of that first lesson.

My enthusiasm was held in check for two years while my older sister had piano lessons. That did not stop me from learning her entire book on my own. It didn’t matter to me that I played a few of the songs in the wrong key. The tune was the same.

Finally in 3rd grade Mary quit practicing, and it was my turn! There was no stopping me from then on. I could escape into my world of music almost at will.

In my Junior year of high school a new dimension opened up. I found out I could teach piano. My piano teacher was a gentle, Polish lady named Mrs. Kaczmarek. She sometimes fed me a great Polish meal after my lesson. She must have thought I was undernourished because I was bone-skinny. I never bothered to explain to her what a fabulous cook my mom was. I just had a high metabolism rate, an absolute zest for life.

Anyway, Mrs. Kaczmarek handed over to me six of her students to teach. She didn’t just throw me into the deep end of the pool saying, “go henceforth and teach.” She coached me. She already knew the students, how they operated, and what they needed and when. It was perfect! And I made money! To a teenager whose only other jobs had been babysitting,
and two weeks in a Lottaburger, this was heaven. I was doing something I loved and was getting paid for it. It was Mrs. Kaczmarek who had guided me toward a major in music. She was now in the audience.

The stage lights came to life, and those over the audience were snuffed out. Waiting was fulfilled. Like the birth of a baby, progress to completion was inevitable. My concert was about to begin.

I had just the right amount of nerves. Too much or too little could bode disaster. It was nerves mixed with energy flowing to me from the audience that fused into a moving performance every time I played.

From the darkness and my daydreams I emerged onto the stage. I was no longer the bone-skinny kid who was all elbows and knees. I had morphed into a tall slender blond. With the grace learned from many recitals I moved forward wearing a floor length deep emerald green velvet formal. It silhouetted my figure and covered one shoulder. A drape flowed down my back the length of the gown. Black patent leather heels peeked out at the floor. I wore no jewelry except a pair of black onyx earrings made for me by an Indian student.

I approached the piano as though in a cloud, then turned to the darkness of the audience. Though unable to see them I could feel their energy and I was ready. I smiled, made my bow and I sat down at the piano. My moment had arrived. My fingers began to glide effortlessly across the keys, and my dream came true.

Kathleen Legere’s “Wish Upon a Star” since early childhood was to be able to play magnificent music on the piano. Her early inspiration came from the player piano sounds to “Alice Blue Gown.”
MUSIC IS IN THE AIR

Bernadette Leichter

In Junior High School one of my favorite classes was Music Appreciation. I learned that stories could be told through music. Who knew that Peter and the Wolf’s characters were instruments. The bird a flute, the duck an oboe, and the wolf French horns.

In the 40’s and 50’s the movies were filled with musicals that made one want to dance. You can recognize and connect the music to the movie. Who does not remember Singing in the Rain or West Side Story.

Now we have television programs that we can connect by their theme music. The famous bong, bong, that introduces us to Law and Order, and you know Hawaii Five-O will be starting as soon as you hear the music.

Classical music is rare and somehow has been replaced by Hip Hop and Rap.

In the last few years artists have begun to sing the old standards. Perhaps the new generation will appreciate the fact that you can understand the words, and be moved by the story the song will tell us.

Music can energize us, calm us, and speak to our hearts when we need comfort.

Music is truly a gift that will last forever.

Bernadette moved to Reno eight years ago and lives with her daughter, 2 dogs and a cat. She enjoys retired life and also volunteering at St. Mary’s hospital.
THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Joy Macfarlane

“Those were the days my friend……….”

Much like photographs, a “scrapbook” of musical memories is a reminder of the past through which I recall times of carefree childhood, teens, loves found and lost, adventure, careers, marriage, motherhood, laughter, tears, highs and lows.

Early recollections are of nursery rhymes in school, Christmas carols and my mother playing the piano and singing along with my brother who was tone deaf. “We’d sing and laugh forever and a day ..........”

WWII songs on blaring, crackling radios during the London Blitz with unforgettable melodies and lyrics of heartache, courage and hope for the future preceded VE Day when my parents took me from Trafalgar Square, up The Mall to Buckingham Palace where King George VI, the Queen, the young Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill appeared on the balcony of the Palace where crowds in the thousands cheered themselves hoarse and sang “Land of Hope and Glory.” “We’d fight and never lose, for we were young and sure to have our way.”

My father was with the Occupation Forces in Germany after the War which further enriched my musical “scrapbook” when exposed to classical music, the opera and the ballet and included German Christmas songs I incorporate to this day and sing along with our own traditional Christmas music. I particularly remember my first symphony performed in a wonderful, ornate theater with red velvet upholstered seats, pillars and elaborate balconies painted gold. It was magical and I was enthralled with the music, unlike my brother who at the end of the performance announced the exact number of seats in the theatre, how many exits and the number of ushers. He became an architect! “La la la la la la la la la la la la la ..................oh yes those were the days.”

When my mother, brother and I disembarked from the “Boschfontein” which sailed from Hamburg, Germany and docked in Mombasa, my father was waiting to transport us 400 miles inland on dirt roads to Nairobi, Kenya’s capital city. We departed “on Safari” the following morning stopping overnight at a roadhouse called “The Max Inn.” Our quarters for the night were round mud huts with highly polished red tile floors and thatched straw roofs. As dusk fell I became
acutely aware of the music of the African night which was alive with sounds of roaring lions, rumbles of elephants, laughing hyenas, screeching monkeys and baboons escaping predators and nearby, rhythmic beating of drums and harmonious voices singing around glowing campfires from a nearby village. I was hearing the heartbeat of Africa. “Those were the days ............ We thought they’d never end......”

Introduction to American music in the 1960s was exciting with Mexican Mariachi Bands, New Orleans Jazz, the Blues, Country Western and Native American music which I likened to the traditional ritualistic tribal music of Africa. The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Elvis, Johnny Cash, and on to the 1970s when popular music was combined with the classics, opera, light classical and dance by new composers merging with Hollywood resulting in such wonderful musical productions as Phantom of the Opera, Cats, Evita, My Fair Lady, Gigi the Bee Gees and Disco with a collection of songs which remain unforgotten reminders of when “We’d sing and dance..... For we were young and sure to have our way.”

The 1980s marked the decline of my interest in popular music which is still true today. Having attended a Neil Diamond Concert at The Cow Palace in San Francisco in 1985, it seemed wise to preserve my hearing which had been impaired for three days following the event and I have avoided similar musical productions since.

I found Rap intriguing when it first became popular along with break dancing, perhaps because it reminded me of its roots in Africa where stories are narrated with rhythm and drum accompaniment. However, some American Rap produced distasteful and offensive lyrics which spoiled my enjoyment. While working at San Quentin State Prison my interest was revived due to inmates who performed Rap music relating their own life stories and circumstances without crass and crude language and I once again became a fan in this somewhat restricted environment. Native American powwows, traditional sweat lodge ceremonies and drums, church choirs and spontaneous singing groups gathering on exercise yards contributed to the music and memories I enjoy today. “La la la la la la la.........”

My “Scrapbook” is full of treasured collections of music acquired through the years which bring back faded, gone but not forgotten times once more to remember, enjoy and return to the present with a smile. “La la la la la la ............ Oh yes, those were the days.”

Joy Macfarlane -- Since leaving Scotland as a child she has taken advantage of opportunities to live and work in many countries around the world which has broadened her appreciation and love of a wide variety of music.
THE BEAR WENT OVER THE MOUNTAIN

Julie Smyres Machado

I am a musician AND I spent my young life growing up in a gold mining camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Together these experiences provided plenty of opportunity to sing in the car as well as enjoy music at its fullest. This however is a story about my tent.

For several years one of my bands was hired to perform for the Jeepers Jamboree high above Lake Tahoe in an area called the Desolation Wilderness. Hundreds of Jeepers would drive a long and perilous road up the side of the mountain into the Sierra Nevada range to an isolated destination high on a granite cliff which was filled with the natural beauty of mountain streams, tall pines and wildlife capped by a clear blue sky. After their long and harrowing trek up the mountain they were greeted at camp by a well honed team preparing a gourmet steak dinner and a trio dressed in sequined gowns and heels playing dinner music on a grand piano, acoustic bass and guitar. After dinner they were treated to a dance by a top named band and everyone ate, drank and danced too hard until the next morning when there was hiking over the cliff above Emerald Bay, sliding down natural granite slides into clear alpine lakes, swimming, splashing, games, drinking, lying in the sun enjoying camp and the day. Paradise.

In order for this smoothly run Jeepers Jamboree to happen many things had to be flown in by helicopter. In order for our band to play they would fly in the grand piano, my acoustic bass and the three of us with our equipment. We would set up our band equipment and then set up our tents. Well, I was the one with a tent and I had a pretty nice sleeping bag. You needed good equipment because nights in a mountain range usually fall below freezing most nights of the year. We would stay and play each night for a long 3-day weekend then fly everything out. It was very fun.

One year we played, left everything up there, then came back a few days later because Lee Iacocca, CEO of Chrysler/Jeep at the time, had his own private Jeepers Jamboree. It was a smaller affair but tremendously fun. During the free days between the events we flew back into Reno. When we arrived back in camp we went to the tent to don our sequined gowns and heels only to find that a bear had investigated my tent. It was covered in paw prints and had a nice tear along the bottom edge where the bear had managed to slice through and pop my air mattress AND my sleeping bag was missing. After we played I borrowed a sleeping bag and asked the camp manager what had happened. He said a bear family went through camp one night - not much damage. The next day a biker group went through – heavy damage. Whew! I'd rather face a bear any day – but that's another story.
I got to meet and play music for Lee Iacocca. The chefs outdid themselves and the mountain was an outstanding backdrop to the last Jeeper’s Jamboree I played. Watching the grand piano fly through the air was a fantastic sight! Everything else flew out nicely too including my bass and the tent. I kept that tent for many years. I sewed up the claw tear and we would set up the tent in our backyard for our boys to camp in during summer months. Eventually the paw prints washed away and the tent did too, but the memories won’t.

The Three of Hearts
Bob Kittle (guitar), Shari Meewes (piano), Julie Smyres (bass)

Julie is co-founder of the Lifescapes Senior Writing Program, has two sons, and enjoys managing the Spanish Springs Library in Sparks, NV, and playing her bass in the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra and in her husband’s band Brassakwards.
SECOND HAND ROSE

Lynn Mahannah

Pablo Casals, the famous South American cellist, once said: “Music is the divine way to tell beautiful, poetic things to the heart.” When one hears the words, sung by Barbra Streisand in the movie Funny Girl to the song, “Second Hand Rose,” they are funny, beautiful and also sad! They bring back memories from my life where I also felt like a second hand rose. Or as we often say today, playing second base or second fiddle! Growing up with a Dad we kiddingly referred to as “Father Fagin” (from Dickens’ Oliver Twist), we were taught to pinch pennies and always save before we spent any of our allowance or monies earned from our paper routes. I had my own route from the age of 9 until I turned 11! Both of my parents, as well as my husband’s, were always most frugal. Clare was born in 1932 when his folks only had 7 pennies between them! I thought Clare and I were poor when we got married in college (1962) and were living on $250/month (his grad school assistantship) at UC Davis.

Father has a business strictly second hand/Everything from toothpicks to a baby grand/Stuff in our apartment came from father’s store/Even things I’m wearing, someone wore before!

Clare’s parents always gave us clothing gifts that were second hand from the dump, Salvation Army, or Goodwill! My mother sewed most of my clothes until I learned to sew in the 6th grade and then I made them. Later in college, I designed patterns and sewed all my own clothes when I became a design major. Clare loved the flannel shirts his mom would send after reversing the collars and mending the cuffs. He’d wear them until there were holes in the elbows and then we’d cut off the sleeves and he’d have short sleeve ones to wear even longer! While I was married, I mended Levis until I rebelled and taught my teenage son Chris to sew so he could mend his own jeans. He’s used these sewing skills over the years in his job as an engineer, designing and making business map-place-holders with his logo on them and giving them away at conferences for publicity! Most clever!

It’s no wonder that I feel abused/I never get a thing that ain’t been used/I’m wearing second hand hats/Second hand clothes/That’s why they call me Second Hand Rose/Even our piano in the parlor/Father bought for 10 cents on the dollar/Second hand curls/I’m wearing second hand pearls/I never get a single thing that’s new.
After Clare and I dated for a short time, we decided to run away and get married on my 21st birthday. He had bought a ring, a beautiful star sapphire, to give me! BUT when I found out it had belonged to another fiancée of his and returned to him after that relationship ended, I rejected it and he couldn’t understand why. I didn’t want to feel I was wearing some other woman’s ring, thus making me feel like “Second Hand Rose [Lynn]!” Sometimes, men are just CLUELESS! I kept the ring and had it resized and appraised after Clare’s death in 2007 and he was right! It was a good and very valuable star sapphire! I’m wearing that ring in the photo pictured here for my 70th B-Day bash this past summer! Back then, however, I was not willing to play second base or second fiddle! After all, a gal has her pride! Today, however, I think nothing of going to the thrift store here in Reno and buying second hand jeans for $2.50 a pair! Makes me feel proud I’m saving money! Also lets me rationalize spending it elsewhere – like on my HOWL (Halloween) parties or for gifts for my friends and family! Growing older does have its advantages!

I’m wearing second hand shoes/Second hand hose/all the girls hand me their second hand beaus/Even my pajamas when I don ‘em/Got somebody else’s ‘nitials on ‘em/Second hand rings/I’m sick of second hand things.

Blessings come in all shapes and sizes and as we age, we become less particular and choosy about who and when we are comfortable being on second base! After all, isn’t second place better than no place at all and after all, we’re half way home! Being on the “right side of the grass” these days is where I want to be for a long while because “pushing up daisies” is not preferred to the alternative! And if that means

I’m buying second hand clothes/painting my own toes/that’s fine by me/for I now truly feel free, to be!

After all, one of my favorite refrigerator magnets reads, “When I grow up, I want to be me!”

Lynn Mahannah enjoys writing stories about her life after retiring from her career as a family therapist! Joining OLLI, volunteering and continuing her hobbies of photography, making homemade bread and warm-water-exercising bring her much joy and relaxation! Life is great and she plans to live forever! So far, so good! Now, if only she can find a way to magically remove those excess, unwanted pounds, she’d be a most “Happy Camper!”
LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

M. L. Mann

There are two kinds of people in this world: those born with Musical Talent and those with No Musical Ability. The people with Musical Talent have the knack to sing on key without embarrassing themselves in front of others and play at least one musical instrument well. They do so effortlessly, adding to the daily pleasure of those around them who say to themselves, “She has such a beautiful voice!” Then there are people with No Musical Ability who ponder, “Maybe I’ll take lessons and learn to play the guitar, the piano, or the banjo.” The thought of performing in front of large or small groups happily strumming, leading a sing a long, or some such merry activity is more of a nightmare than a dream and is approached with grim determination.

I belong to the latter group, being born with extremely limited musical talent, much to the disappointment of my mother who spent her childhood practicing classical compositions on an old upright inherited from her grandparents. It had real ivory keys, sounded like a tin can, and now sat in our dining room, tormenting me by its mere presence.

After suffering through two years of piano lessons, I lost all hope that I would ever grasp such basic concepts as melody, harmony, and rhythm. My brief, unsuccessful music education included piano recitals performed in front of an enthusiastic audience of beaming parents. At the end of each school year, ten pianos were placed on the auditorium stage, and our piano teacher conducted her young students in a well-rehearsed classical music piece. The act of rehearsing for me rarely included practicing on a real piano with a keyboard that made sounds when the keys were pressed. My lack of talent was noticed early in the school year, and I was only provided with a pseudo-keyboard, which made no noise at all and which I shared with another student. Having no ear for music, I usually pressed the wrong keys. Sharing this fake keyboard also meant that I only practiced with one hand. While this was probably a huge improvement over attempting to play with two hands simultaneously, it did not provide sufficient preparation for recitals when both hands were expected to be happily dancing over the piano keys.

The piano recitals at Hexter Elementary were exceptionally terrifying events for the musically unskilled. I am an introvert by nature and have never enjoyed being in the limelight. I was always placed at the front of the stage, because I was petite, a polite term referring to one’s lack of height and weight. I was simply the shortest person in my class, other than Janet Hescock, and she didn’t take piano lessons at school.
Her parents were probably proud enough to spare her the humiliation of performing in front of an audience. A piano recital on a stage, no matter how many other pianists surrounded me to drown out my mistakes, was a nightmare. Ready to begin playing, I sat with a grim, determined expression on my face.

I could never remember the entire performance piece. I could begin playing, but somewhere along the way, I got lost or forgot and simply removed my hands from the keyboard and gazed forlornly at some point in the distance, until I recognized a musical phrase and resumed playing. Despite this occurrence during every one of my recitals, I was tearfully disappointed that I did not win the “Music Student the Year” award, a white plastic bust of Beethoven.

I abandoned all musical pursuits except for the occasional Saturday in the park with a guitar-playing boyfriend in college, until I began attending church with my three-year-old daughter in my early forties. She needed a religious education, and I had the desire to return to my Presbyterian roots. Our church had a Hand Bell Choir, which played for the congregation during the holiday season and any other occasion deemed fitting for the festive sound of bells. I was transported to a magical place listening to the ringing tones of those silver bells. An announcement was made: the director encouraged others to join the group saying anyone could play the hand bell. The choir wore special outfits of matching vests and gloves. Even I, the person with No Musical Ability, could do this!

For the next two years, I drove to the church weekly to practice with the hand bell choir in an unheated sanctuary. I was given one bell, and my music was marked with pink highlighter to show when I was to ring it. I was taught the correct way to ring, using the entire arm and flicking the wrist forward just so. My technique became flawless, and I could not fail to ring my one bell at the proper time, because the director pointed to me when it was my turn to play.

Once again performing in front of an appreciative audience, the dream of becoming a musician was no longer a nightmare; however, I continued to perform with the grim determination of a person with No Musical Ability.

*Mary L. Mann has been writing with the Incline Village Lifescapes group for three years.*
THAT’S AMORE

Edward McDonagh

As I approach the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination to the Catholic priesthood, occasionally I would like to use this writing time to muse about experiences during those fifty years. Today is one of those times.

Standing on the stage, looking longingly into the eyes of a young blonde girl, I sang in a tone so sweet and low, “When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that’s amore.” It was the annual church musical revue and sitting in the audience were parents, grandparents and all the neighbors, looking up in admiration at the gall of the young man thinking that he was another Dean Martin.

What makes this scene ironic, of my singing a love song to a beautiful young lady, is that I had just returned from a full day of undergoing the tedious, exasperating and frightening experience of taking the entrance examinations to a Catholic seminary. In fact, I was to return the next day for another day of scrutiny through written examinations and personal interviews.

Yes, by day a young man aspiring to enter into the celibate life of a Catholic priest and by night, a romancing troubadour making musical love to the girl of his dreams.

Possibly the connection of two seemingly opposite experiences and that what united them was the desire to tell another person that they were loved, one through the telling of the story of Jesus’ love for us and the other through the song that, “When you walk down the street with a cloud at your feet you’re in love. For when you walk in a dream and you know you’re not dreaming, Senora, “scusa me, but you see, back in ole Napoli, that’s amore.”

Edward McDonagh was born 7/10/37 in Boston, MA; ordained Catholic priest 2/2/62; active ministry as pastor 50 years. He retired 5/4/2011 and is semi-active in the Catholic Diocese of Reno.
UN BEL DI

Kathryn McKee

Music is frosting on the cake of life. It’s not a necessity, but it does make experiences sweeter. Isn’t it amazing that a few sounds put together in the proper sequence can evoke a memory that has been forgotten!

My first memory of music is of my mother singing in the kitchen as she deftly produced our meals. I still recall many of her songs running through my head with their quaint, innocent lyrics, songs she had learned growing up. Mother didn’t like “modern music” so she sang the old songs, or hymns or perhaps hummed a tune she’d heard on the radio.

My grandmother played the piano so it was mandatory that we all took piano lessons. Miss Ennis came weekly and suffered through my ragged attempts….I didn’t like to practice. The thing I really liked was the bi-weekly class she gave for all her students. We’d gather in her living room while she introduced us to classical musicians and their works. That began my love for classical music and I have never tired of the 78 records she played on her wind-up Victrola.

When I was twelve, I gave up the piano and began playing the flute. I practiced my flute diligently. I didn’t even mind walking two miles for my flute lesson every Saturday. I have fond memories of the recitals we gave, attired in formals with a corsage from my father. I also enjoyed playing in the Festus High School Band. Our Band Director decided we should become a marching band so we were outfitted in gaudy blue and gold uniforms. Lots of fun even with our scraggly lines and our mediocre musical prowess but I still love anything penned by John Philip Sousa!

Another facet of music came from the old juke box. Put in a nickel, make a selection and a record would drop and begin to play the favorite songs of the 1940s. We spent many happy hours listening and dancing to Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey and all the rest of the Big Band era. These may seem corny to the present generation, but I prefer it to today’s cacophony.

Sunday and church offered more variety and I find myself humming an old favorite hymn at times. Of course we can’t overlook the marvelous selection of Christmas music that permeates the air every December and even in November as well. Great to remember the many, many Christmases I’ve enjoyed but it’s almost a relief when December 26 arrives and the Christmas songs cease for a year.
It was fun to sit around a blazing campfire and sing at summer camp. My singing in church and high school choirs all bring back memories. I think about the patriotic songs we all sang during World War II. I still get goose bumps hearing the national anthem sung without the embellishment pop stars feel they must add to their rendition.

In college we danced to real orchestras sometimes but there was still the ubiquitous juke box so there was never a lack of music. When the dances were at the country club, there was no way we could be back at the dorm by its eleven o’clock curfew. That’s when we learned to climb a rickety ladder to a third floor open window and in formals and high heels it’s quite a challenge! Soon it was wedding music and a year later, lullabies softly crooned to calm a fussy infant. Nursery rhymes were fun to sing, especially when we were traveling for hours in the car. We all enjoyed the school songs and then went through the agonies of the children learning to play clarinets. Fortunately, they improved rapidly.

Records and cassettes made it possible to have music with us constantly. I haven’t caught up with the latest methods for producing music but the younger generations certainly have! Music has been an important part of my whole life and just a few bars of a familiar tune will stir up my memories. I must admit I’ve had to edit my memories so I try to remember only the happy, joyous times and lock the sad ones in the darker recesses of my mind. That is, all except one.

Niece Penny was an opera singer. She sang in many opera houses in Europe for 15 years. (Penny’s professional name was Eva Pearl Yeadon but she was still Penny to us.) She sang at my husband’s memorial service. We’d lost my adored husband in a tragic accident while snorkeling in Hawaii. My grief was sudden, bottomless and painful. Penny sang “Un Bel Di” from Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. This is the aria that Cio-Cio-San sings after her Naval Officer husband sails from Japan. It’s a hauntingly poignant melody in which she pours out her sorrow while hoping he’ll return one fine day. Penny’s lovely soprano voice, without microphone or accompaniment, enveloped the church. She told me she sang it for me because I needed to feel Bob and I would be together again — “Un Bel Di – One Fine Day.”

*Kathryn McKee originally began writing her memoir for her children. It’s been such a great experience that she is now writing for herself and having a marvelous time reliving 84 years.*
In 1947 we moved to Tonopah from Goldfield leaving behind the majority of our acquaintances; thus our family spent numerous weekends returning to visit. Our closest friends were the Symmonds, Bill, Mae and daughters Judy and Betty. Betty was a few years younger than myself so she ran around with my brother Phil and me while our parents visited. The visits usually culminated with the grownups adjourning to the Santa Fe a few blocks from Symmonds’ house to “see what was doing.”

The Santa Fe, a typical central Nevada mining town saloon, is on Fifth Avenue, the main road to the mines, about six blocks east of Crook Street (US 95), the town’s main drag. The saloon was built in 1905 and hadn’t changed much over the years. It had never been remodeled and still had the original ornate bar and beautiful mirrored back bar. In fact it is still in operation and appears much the same today.

The saloon was owned by Fred Bremer and his wife, Clyde, and was actually two adjoining buildings that had been interconnected. The section on the left housed a restaurant that was run by Clyde. The bar was in the structure on the right and was managed by Fred, who was the bartender.

Clyde was short and a bit on the heavy side. She was a great cook and a hard worker and took care of most of the day to day business chores while Fred, who was rather portly himself, was usually behind the bar dispensing local news, selling drinks and waiting for someone to entertain him with a joke. He always wore long sleeved shirts with garters and a white apron. We thought the Bremers were old, but in reality, they were probably in their late fifties or early sixties.

A well-worn board sidewalk ran down the west side of Fifth Avenue from Crook Street, past the Santa Fe and on to the mines. It had been installed during the camp’s boom years as a convenience to the miners. The neighborhood around the saloon was made up of a few occupied homes, a couple of houses the Bremers rented and numerous abandoned, deteriorating cabins and sheds that had resisted Goldfield’s harsh climate for the previous forty plus years. These became objects of our curiosity while our parents socialized in the Santa Fe and we explored them all, many more than once.

The bar had the false front typical of early mining camp businesses. The paint, applied decades before, was faded but the words Santa Fe Club stood out above the porch that ran the length of the building and the edifice was decorated with the usual beer and tobacco signs. There were a couple of chairs and a bench on the porch where local old-timers would pass the time of day waiting for the occasional car to drive by and where we sat when we tired of running up and down the old sidewalk or exploring the
area. We would drink sodas and listen to the music of the jukebox filtering through the screen door of the saloon on the heels of a cloud of cigarette smoke and the smell of stale beer.

Inside, the back bar was decorated with the usual multi colored liquor bottles and signs bearing saloon jokes and sayings. There were stools and a brass rail for the customers, a couple of tables in the back, a large wood stove, the jukebox and, to me, most important of all, an upside down number two washtub bolted to a board and equipped with a mop handle and a rope that ran down to the center that could be strummed like a guitar.

There are numerous tunes from the era that kindle memories, but the one that instantly takes me back to 1948 Goldfield and the Santa Fe is “Buttons and Bows” by Dinah Shore.

The minute we heard the first bars of the song’s music from the jukebox and Dinah singing “East is east and west is west...” we were on our feet and headed inside with the pretext that we needed to use the restroom. We knew the performance was about to begin. Mae, an attractive brunette about five feet five with an outgoing personality would be playing the washtub as accompaniment and fully immersed herself in the music. I can still see her standing there, mop handle in hand, strumming away and her performance always called for an encore or two. Without hesitation, someone would drop another nickel into the jukebox and I would watch, transfixed, as the 78 rpm record rose from its slot and the arm with the phonograph needle touched down signaling a repeat of ..... 

“East is east and west is west and the wrong one I have chose.
Let’s go where I’ll keep on wearin’ those frills and flowers and buttons and bows. Rings and things and buttons and bows...”

...so one can understand why whenever I hear the song it resurrects visions of those carefree, happy hours running wild with Goldfield friends, walking the old wood sidewalk, exploring the abandoned buildings, all long gone now, and sitting in front of the Santa Fe on a hot summer’s evening. I imagine Fred behind the bar in his apron with towel in hand cleaning a glass and wearing his unyielding smile while his cigar smolders in a nearby ashtray. I can smell the mix of beer and barroom smoke and I instantly recall one of the many signs on the back bar, a cardboard plaque with a picture of a pistol on it reading, “Join our pistol club, drink ‘til twelve and pistol two.” Oh yeah, the memories a song can bring back. ..

“... And I’m all yours in buttons and bows.”

William Metscher is a Tonopah native and central Nevada historian who has authored numerous articles on central Nevada history. He is married, has two grown children and now lives in Reno, Nevada. His most recent story, The Tonopah Mine Disaster of 1911, appeared in the Fall 2011 issue of Nevada in the West.
My first memory of music was standing on a box singing into a microphone in the back of a rehearsal hall, belting out “Anything Goes.” I think the microphone was dead and I was just pretending I was the lead singer. That was when I thought I could sing. My sister later disabused me of that notion.

My Uncle Joe was a violinist in a symphony orchestra and he got me a child-sized violin and tried to teach me to play when I was about six. I pity him and my poor family who had to listen to me “play.” I suspect it wasn’t pretty.

In grade school we had Music Appreciation Classes. I remember one of the composers was Saint-Saëns. I remember hearing Handel’s Water Music and Debussy’s Clair de Lune. Apparently the music classes made an impression.

Later on when I was in my teens and our family had a car we would take Sunday afternoon drives in the country or in Bear Mountain. That was entertainment way back then. We’d all sing as we drove along. My sister kept telling me to stop singing, saying, “You can’t sing, Janet.”

When we moved from Brooklyn, New York to New Jersey, I had just graduated from eighth grade, the end of grade school. New Jersey had a Junior High system so I started ninth grade where everyone changed classes, something new to me. I latched on to a very tall girl I knew had the same classes I did and followed her from class to class because she was easy to spot in the halls. We became friends.

She suggested I sign up for Glee Club saying “We have a lot of fun there.” I had never heard of a Glee Club. That sounded good-- the name after all had Glee in it which meant happy to me. I had no idea it was a singing group. I happily sang along, but the teacher singled out a few of us and told us one at a time to stop singing. She never said anything to me about my voice, or lack of voice, and I never knew which one of us was the problem. Maybe we all were. The same thing happened to me the next summer when we were singing camp songs. The counselor asked me and two others, to stop singing, and I never knew why. Maybe one of us was exceptionally good! I kind of doubt that. After hearing “You can’t sing” over and over again from my sister and after these two incidents, I began to believe it and was extremely self-conscious of singing in front of other people.

I guess my sister was right. I probably have a “tin ear.” From then on I only mouthed songs, and never really sang when others could hear me. My daughter Kathy, hearing that from me one day said, “Mom, I’ve heard you singing to your grandchildren and you sound fine.” Why don’t I believe her?
When I was working in New York City I was riding the subway home after I’d just seen the movie *Lili* with Leslie Caron and Mel Ferrer. I had loved the movie and couldn’t get the theme song, “Hi Lili-Hi Lo,” out of my head. I was actually singing it softly to myself in the subway. That was completely out of character for me. Much later in life I had a chance to see that movie again but didn’t take it. I preferred the memory of how it made me feel and was afraid seeing it again would destroy that memory. Music can be transcendent and bring back so many feelings.

Maybe in heaven I’ll get to sing like an angel and play the violin like a virtuoso.

*Janet (on left) and sister Carole
In front of corner grocery store*
MUSIC HAS CHARMS

David Nadel

In the summertime, most people in our neighborhood were stoop sitters. On Sunday afternoons, Texaco sponsored a live performance from the Metropolitan Opera House, and most radios in the area were tuned in, especially the Italians, who knew all the stories, songs, and performers. A well known operatic tenor, Mario Lanza, also lived nearby, and he would sometimes come around and accompany the radio voices. My mother fancied herself as a mezzo-soprano, albeit untrained. She would often do the scales, attempt a trill, or even a hemisemidemiquaver and was fond of imitating fire sirens.

Our local schools from seventh grade up sponsored several trips a year to the Metropolitan or NY City Opera where they had special young peoples’ concerts, and the busses were always filled. This resulted in an appreciation of the power of the human voice, combined with the soap opera elements of most Italian Opera, choreography, and the splendors of the staging. Unfortunately I am without any innate talent of any kind except for an appreciation of the efforts of others.

Luck has it that my life partner also likes classical music and drama. Sylvia has the credentials of attending the entire Wagnerian Ring Cycle while a freshman, but even doing it in the 60 cent standing room section of the old Met – quite a feat of endurance. After marriage and with deeper pockets, we had for a dozen years or so subscription orchestra seats at the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center, and many visits to Symphony Hall, the Met and Vivian Beaumon Productions.

We have since given up attending live performances because of the physical effort involved. Modern technology gives us the convenience of home theatre without a loss of quality. Some would say the definition of opera is that someone gets stabbed and instead of bleeding starts singing. There is much more to it!

David Nadel was born with a silver foot in his mouth and continues to amaze and astonish those who believe firmly that his entire life has been a mistake of nature.
SOUNDS OF SILENCE

Katherine L. Odynski

Growing up in a ghost town from the gold rush era was a rather quiet experience. Probably the most profound reason for the silence was the fact I lived on the side of Mt. Davidson which blocked most radio wave signals. This situation coupled with the fact that I was always too busy playing basketball in the side lot, hiking the hills, or playing with my chickens that I rarely listened to music. My music happened in the sounds of nature and town noise as I enjoyed the silence around me. Of course, my world was not totally void of music. Each morning it was a guarantee that I would go down stairs to the kitchen with the sounds of KOH, the one station that always came in loud and clear. In the early 1950s the radio was the primary connection to the rest of the world, especially in Virginia City where newspapers arrived a day or two late in the mail. Listening to the news was important, but even more necessary was hearing the weather report. Especially in the winter months, knowing what the weather was going to be was very important to my dad who usually worked each day outside somewhere between VC and Marlette Lake. Anyway, the small burgundy colored radio blared with music from the breakfast room out into the kitchen. The radio shared the top shelf of the bookcase with my gold fish and my brother’s turtles. I often wondered if those little animals liked the Cactus Tom Show. In between the important information, Cactus Tom would play music like “Tumbling Tumbleweeds” sung by the Sons of the Pioneers or, our family favorite, “Cool Clear Water.”

Things I remember growing up that were music to my ears were everyday sounds. There was nothing more enjoyable than awakening to a robin singing outside my bedroom window as he sat in the apple tree or hearing the quail talking to one another. I especially liked it when the young quail were just learning to sing. I noticed the parents were quite patient yet persistent with the young ones as they learned all the “quail sounds.” One sound that would awaken me with a start was the chirping of our resident ground squirrel, his loud sound meant danger was nearby. I could usually spot the squirrel on the end of a 4x4 which stuck out of a broken down bulkhead in the backyard. He stood high above the hillside covered with sage, rabbit brush and foxtails. Sometimes I would awaken to the sounds of gun fire up in the hills behind the house; it would usually be teenage boys out hunting for chucker or quail.

While playing outside, every once in a while, the silence would be broken with the sounds of dogs barking or cars going by. I could identify the bark of all the resident dogs and many of the town dogs that would
roam freely. Fang was a big Alaskan Husky and everyone said that he killed smaller dogs; I never saw it happen nor did I ever hear him in a dog fight. Then there was T-Bone Touser, Lucius Beebe’s dog, a huge St. Bernard that slobbered all over. Being at about the level of the dog’s mouth, it was so very gross; bubbly, slimy, three inch long drools that would swing as he moved his head. I learned early on to stay clear of T-Bone. As you can imagine his bark was so very deep, it sounded as though it came up from the ground beneath his feet.

Cars rarely went by our house but when they did I knew who was going by even without looking. Probably the quietest car that passed by was a Rolls Royce driven by Mr. Beebe. I never did understand why he would never look and wave as he went by. For the most part the town was so silent that I could hear cars down on “C” Street (2 blocks below our street). Many of the teenage boys had cars with loud pipes so I knew who was driving up and down “C” Street. Sometimes that “music to my ears” was a problem later in life when I would hear my boyfriend cruising main instead of studying or calling me.

Complete music to my ears was the night time silence being broken by the sound of a snow plow. This sound meant it was snowing and there would be fun the next day sledding, building snowmen and having snowball fights with my brother. The snow acted like a soft, fluffy blanket muffling the plow’s engine noise. So when the plow was on our street and it sounded far away I knew it was snowing heavily. Then I would take a look out the window and sure enough it was hard to see the plow, even the lights from the plow glowed dimly as snowflakes flew furiously around. The sweetest sound of all was going outside the next morning in the 5 foot high snow drifts and hearing the sounds of silence in my old Virginia City ghost town on the hill.

Katherine Odynski is a third generation Nevadan and grew up in Virginia City. She joined OLLI in September 2011 and started attending Lifescapes.
THE DAY OF THE PARROTHEADS

Joe Parks

I crooked my index finger and ran the back of it along her cheek. Her skin was surprisingly soft. A couple of hours earlier, this young bleached blonde had served delicious bacon-wrapped mushrooms as provocatively as one could while remaining fully clothed. Now, she was sitting on the asphalt of the Philbertson Winery combination parking lot and dance floor after having placed her plastic chair so precariously near the edge of the winery’s deck that one back chair leg hung over space so that, when she sat down, she and the chair had fallen onto the parking lot. The left side of her face had hit the asphalt. I feared it had left a bruise for she had a dark mark on her cheek but I found it was only dirt and the worst mark was one of embarrassment.

“I’m all right,” she said in a little voice, as we uprighted the plastic chair and replaced her in it.

The eight-hour party was running down as dinner – ribs cooked over charcoal for a long time – was served buffet-style. Twenty-two stalwarts such as my wife, Lisa, who worked or had worked for Pyrosonics, had gathered at the winery for the afternoon and evening to reminisce, drink wine, and eat Johnnie’s cooking. The latter included not only those slow-cooked-over-low-heat, absolutely perfect bacon-wrapped mushrooms (which I usually don’t like) and thinly sliced tri-tip on leaves of Romaine but also cheese and crackers as well as garlic potatoes, cole slaw and charcoal-broiled chicken that accompanied the ribs.

Garrick, the Parrotheads’ lead singer, and his number-one sideman played their guitars as Garrick made up silly lyrics. The pair had “volunteered” to entertain us at dinner if they could have dinner, too. That was supplemented by a gift of a bottle of Parrothead Red. I had enjoyed a few drops of this wine myself that day.

During the afternoon, the parking lot had become not only a dance floor but also a small outdoor auditorium as others arrived and set up dozens of different kinds of folding chairs and plastic chairs in a semi-circle. I socialized with Pyrosonics folks, none of whom I’d met before, for an hour until the Parrothead Band set up just off the west edge of the parking lot, leaving the dancing area with the chairs bordering that to the east. The band took a large chunk of the two o’clock hour figuring out how to make the sound system work. Good sound, really, with three guitars, one base guitar, a trap-drum set, and a keyboard. The keyboardist also played a mean electric harmonica.

In the three o’clock hour, Garrick jumped on stage with his guitar, thick white mustache and gravelly voice. He had the build of a football center with thick calves and mighty forearms. He wore a tee shirt and
cargo shorts. A cap from a Caribbean resort topped the mop of curly white hair that grew thickly down the back of his neck.

The band really tore it up on Garrick’s arrival. Toward the end of the last set, each player soloed and the crowd went wild, cheering and dancing all at once. The music that would never end was about to do so.

Twilight rose from the surrounding woods, the Parrothead Band wrapped up its music and the Pyrosonics Reunion folks picked up their dinner plates of ribs, chicken, potatoes and cole slaw and found places to sit on the winery’s deck where they ate and talked some more.

Garrick and his sideman.

Joe Parks has been a part of Lifescapes for four years and looks forward to many more with this fine writing group. His “life story” has perhaps 80,000 words so far and he has more to write.
THE MUSICAL MAP OF MY LIFE

Raye Roes

All through my life, music has played a big part. Early memories of my Dad were of him playing the wonderful old Cremona violin that belonged to his grandfather. He could only play simple melodies but “The bluebells of Scotland” I can hear to this day. Sadly the violin was sold off when he died, a big loss to me.

When I started school at four years of age, singing was a big part of our day. We sang hymns in the morning and had singing lessons during the day. I remember my first song, it was the famous “Greensleeves” an old English aire. Sundays meant Sunday School which I tolerated only for the singing. The open air and its adventures beckoned stridently in my head as I was forced to listen to dry stories from a foreign land that meant little to me.

Living in Wales, the Land of Song, people tended to burst into song at the least excuse. Helping with haymaking was great fun as songs, sometimes bawdy, rang through the fields. Christmas was fabulous, as at festive times the singing was superb with ancient hymns and well known carols ringing out.

The radio played a big part in our lives as there was no family television. Early memories include Vera Lynn singing “The White Cliffs of Dover” and the sultry Marlene Dietrich rendering “Underneath the Arches,” “Au Wiedersehen” and other famous German hit songs. She was the epitome of sophistication to me.

As a teenager, the early days of Rock and Roll made music very exciting and I remember whirling and twirling to exciting songs from Bill Hayley and his Comets. My mother, who was an expert seamstress, made me a royal blue circular skirt of fine needlecord which I wore with a crinkly paper nylon petticoat and a shocking pink top tucked in. This was a good example of teenage fashion in those days. Exciting times!

Later on, when I was 15 our family moved to the Thames Valley and I was sent to a strict girl's school in Reading in Berkshire. Hormones were ruining my concentration so I did not do very well at this school. On the way home we passed a little coffee bar called “The Cafe Olé.” Here we played the Roccola juke box and hoped that our heart throbs from the local boy’s school would stop by. Lena Horne and Edith Piaf were our favorites and I can recall their smoky voices to this day.
My friend Estelle was worried about my penchant for Pop music and tried to introduce me to Classical music. A famous pianist, Poushnov, I think his name was, was playing Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto at Reading Town Hall and I was persuaded to buy a ticket. My awakening was like waking up and finding myself in a different place. From then on I worked my way through the classics, Beethoven, Bach, through to Vivaldi and beyond. I still remember the trills of Poushnov's fingers playing that wonderful concerto.

My brother Ian gave me a record player soon after I left home and I was able to buy the large 33rpm records of the day. Soon my home resounded not only with beautiful classical music but also with Herb Alpert and his Tijuana band and my all time favorite, Glen Miller and his Big Band sound.

The Beatles were bursting onto the music scene and life became very energized. The Sixties bubbled with excitement as the Beatles brought out song after song. I don't think that any other decade has been so exciting. More than any other influence, the Beatles brought Great Britain to life.

My first marriage failed early on but I was blessed with a wonderful son. Bringing him up and working meant there was little time for music and my pastime of choice was my handsome pony Polly, half Arabian, half Dartmoor pony. Even finding time for sleep was a problem! Almost every Saturday night throughout the Seventies some one would throw a party, often in the big barn at Castle Hill Farm where we kept our ponies. We danced to the exciting music of the Sixties and the Seventies, The Rolling Stones, “I can't get no Satisfaction” and “Lady in Red” for the slower moods. I don't know if that counts as music appreciation but we did appreciate the parties!

Since those days of my youth pop music has always remained my favorite with a dash of Pavarotti and the Italian tenors thrown in. Catholic taste I think it is called. Oh, and I think Lady Gaga is great.

Raye Roes was born in Wales but has lived for nearly twenty years in Incline Village, Nevada with her family. She has been enjoying “Lifescapes” at the Incline Library for more than three years.
BE STILL, MY SOUL

Phyllis Rogers

I begged for piano lessons; and my parents acquiesced, but they made me wait until I could read and write adequately. At age 8, I began my weekly visits to the home of Mrs. Charlotte Moon. She was the prototypical piano teacher: ancient, birdlike, shriveled, always dressed in a suit with pearls at her neck. But there was enough strength left in her to teach me to read music.

My second and last piano teacher was Howard Barr, a concert pianist. He was disinterested, autocratic; and every week he made judgments about my character that demeaned me personally. Still, I somehow returned to his studio each week, and he shaped me into an athletic pianist. I excelled at scales and crashing chord progressions. I was woefully inadequate at sight reading.

Month after month, year after year, my mother paid for my piano lessons. On a regular basis, she asked me, “Don’t you have anything you can play when people come over? All this money for piano lessons, and you seem never to have anything ready to play.”

Were she still living, my mother would be gratified to know that I am the substitute organist at my church. When the real organist is out of town, she asks me to accompany the congregational singing. Each time I do this, it is an exercise in terror for me. If the real organist were not traveling out of town, if she actually heard my playing, she would never ask me again.

The organ is fundamentally different from the piano, despite their both being keyboard instruments. The real organist gave me 10 minutes of instruction 5 years ago to prepare me to play hymns in church. This is what I learned from her:

◆ An organist uses the upper keyboard to play right hand chords in the treble clef.
◆ The left hand plays the bass chords on the lower keyboard.
◆ I am never, never, never to touch the stops, twenty or so, that change the tone of the organ, but I may turn the organ on and off and press one of the five numbered buttons that control volume. These instructions have to do with my arms and hands. The organ makes available bass keys to be played with one’s feet. I have never had the courage to play bass notes using my feet, but also available for manipulation with the right foot is a volume pedal.

As an adolescent musician studying under the harsh tutelage of Howard Barr, I had just enough experience in performance, recitals and student competitions, to know that my mind will never be entirely disciplined. Although my fingers can play the music and my face can remain composed, my soul is screaming inside my brain. Sometimes the
voice I hear in my head as a descant to the music is my own. Sometimes it is Howard Barr’s. In a typical Sunday Sacrament Meeting, I appear calm, but the experience is privately schizophrenic and terrifying.

I play the introduction without incident. The conductor lifts her arms. I look at her and begin as she begins. When the singing commences, I can no longer hear the organ! I am playing, but the congregation is singing so loudly I cannot hear the organ music. Panicked, I wonder whether the congregation can hear the organ. Are they following the organ, as congregations are wont to do, or are they singing a capella with the conductor leading? No way to tell. The foot pedal! My right leg flails in its direction, but my foot can not locate the opening into which the pedal is recessed. I have to bend at the waist and search under my elbow to get my lower body bearings. Is anyone looking at me? Do they think I am multitasking: organ and yoga? Ah, success. My foot elevates the organ volume and the final verses conclude with both singing accompaniment.

When the next hymn begins, the volume is good, but I am still a little rattled. “Uh-oh, am I playing sharps or flats for this hymn?” I sneak a peek at the key signature: four flats. “Oh no! Four flats! I only remember B, A, and E. What is the fourth? Oops. That was bad. The fourth flat must be D. I wonder if anyone noticed that blooper.”

By this time the congregation has come to the second verse. I begin again, glancing at my fingers. “Oh no! Both hands are playing on the upper keyboard. When did that happen?” I drop my left hand to the lower keyboard, causing me to lose my place on the page.

Desperately, I count on my fingers’ muscle memory to play on while I scan the words to find my place. I am sweating now, but I am playing what the congregation is singing.

Another verse begins. “Oh no. The congregation is singing at a tempo faster than I am playing. I have forgotten to watch the conductor. I skip an 8th note and catch up by the end of the measure, only to discover that I have lost track of where we are in the text. Have they sung all four verses, or is there another to get through? The conductor finishes the last note. Is there more? My fingers are poised...Yes! She is beginning again.” I begin with her as I try not to faint. I must do it all again for the next hymn in five minutes.

My mother would be so proud.

Phyllis Rogers is a retired teacher. She lives in Incline Village, where she enjoys hiking and snowshoeing in the Sierra, and singing alto anonymously in her church congregation.
When I was in Dilworth Middle School in 1963 I joined the band and played the alto saxophone. Mr. Vaughn was my teacher. During the first year we screeched through the basics. At the beginning of the year, one of the students played the bassoon. It is an unusual instrument and Mr. Vaughn spent a lot of time with that student. We were put on a very strict requirement of practice. My Mother supported the teacher by making me practice in the bathroom each day. We had practice sheets sent home which had to be signed by our parents and each night after school, Mr. Vaughn checked each instrument which was left behind in the band room to see if we really did take our instruments home. He would then compare his notes with our records and have a discussion with our parents about the difference in notes if there was one. My Mother was very strict about the records. I was only called on the carpet during the first 6 week session. After a bad grade from Mr. Vaughn and a strict lecture on honesty from my Mother, I tried to practice each day, even if it did mean carrying a heavy saxophone home each day from school walking 2 miles.

The 2nd year came and we were introduced to marching band during the fall and concert band in the winter. Every Saturday we practiced marching during the fall. We participated in choreographed sequences which were more difficult as the season progressed. We were expected to participate in competitions with other schools and we found ourselves traveling long distances requiring us getting up in the wee hours of the morning. During the winter we participated in concert band. We had two recitals to prepare for, one around Christmas and a second in the spring. We were also expected to participate in a Grand Competition in which all the schools in the area including Bishop, California were judged according to difficulty of music, smoothness of music, sound quality of music and appearance of the complete band. In order to achieve this, Mr. Vaughn not only used his strict regimen of practice, but also had 6:30 A.M. practices Monday through Friday.

We were also expected to participate in chair evaluations. We had to perform for Mr. Vaughn individually to see which student was good enough for first chair versus second chair. The first chair had to play the SOLOS. I had to play the SOLOS because I was first chair. With Mr. Vaughn driving me and my Mother telling me I couldn’t quit, I learned discipline and hard work.
Not only did we work on quality of music, but also we worked on appearance. He was always saying, “Sit up straight. Look up. Put your knees and ankles together.” He was very hard pressed to work with the flute section about sitting like ladies and gentlemen because they were in the first row.

While he was working on quality, discipline and appearance, he organized the band parents into the “Bandaids.” They had cake sales, car washes, garage sales and raffle ticket sales. We were expected to participate in the activities as part of our grade. We were individually evaluated on our fund raising and if we did well we could raise our grade. My Mother expected me to have an “A.” Many times she patiently taught us to make a beautiful cake which we sold at top dollar only for her to be the one who bought it back. From the money earned we bought new uniforms and a set of concert bleachers to sit on during concerts. We really looked snazzy.

During my final year at Dilworth Junior High Mr. Vaughn made arrangements for our performances to be recorded on records. I still have those records. On the last day of my final year in Jr. High School Mr. Vaughn asked me if I was going to continue playing in the band when I attended high school. When I said I was, he said, “I figured you would.” Mr. Vaughn taught me discipline, persistence and honesty. He was a hard teacher to study under, but he helped prepare me for life.

Daphne Ellen Schofield is a graduate of the University of Nevada. She and her husband have five children and nine grandchildren. She enjoys sewing for her children, quilting and writing.
WHISTLE A HAPPY TUNE

Carole Slater

I broke my hip when I fell on July 30th, 2011. I carefully reached up for the phone, found it and called for help...first my daughter, next the paramedics, and finally, my physician. I was in surgery within 4 hours of the fall, and was in a skilled nursing facility 4 days after that.

Within two of my almost 7 week stay there, I met a somewhat young-looking woman I presumed was in her 70’s who was anxious to return home so she could get married. She had so much hope in her eyes. I was really impressed by her will to move forward, though she did appear rather frail. I believed the first day I met her that she would prevail.

After another 3 weeks passed, this woman’s eyes appeared dead. Her spirit was gone. She made arrangements for a move to an “Assisted Living Care Home” sans her betrothed. She told me that the marriage was off. I do not truly know how ill she was; I only know that she lost the light in her eyes, and the promise for fulfillment with her betrothed was apparently gone forever. Her enthusiasm gave way to desperation...her eyes betrayed her age. The last time I saw her, the day I was leaving, she was looking considerably beaten and hopeless. The sparkle I once saw had disappeared.

The Nursing Home had a number of nurses, but only a handful demonstrated compassion and caring. After I was off of the pain-killing drugs, which are depressing, I chose to be cheerful, and to make the best of the situation I was in by making friends with everyone I came in contact with. I even decided to turn the other cheek with those I had not been particularly fond of early on. I decided to dig deeply for things I could like about them. In this way, by keeping a smile on my face, I was able to help the other patients to remain strong, and feel hopeful. Not only did I fool others into believing I was just fine, but I fooled myself as well!

What I learned from my experience is that I wanted life. I realized suddenly that I must be able to find inspiration and courage from within myself to be able to overcome the challenges presented me in this place that felt like a prison. I feel so grateful and blessed that I had my son-in-law and daughter, and countless friends, who reached out to help me, offer me encouragement and EDIBLE FOOD, which was definitely a premium in this place! I knew I could become depressed to the point of desperation where, compared to this woman, I could become like an
orphaned infant that dies when it is not held and given human love and touch...infants do die from either abandonment of parents, or their untimely deaths. Going to Assisted Living may be all this woman could provide for herself, but had she fought harder, and put a smile and enthusiasm on her face, her outcome, I do believe, could have been many times more powerful.

I believe Thoreau was onto something when he said “None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.” Today the adage is: “You’re nothing without a good attitude!”

If I want to live, I told myself, I must remember that life is worth fighting for, and give it all I’ve got! Anna, in the film The King and I, sang “Whistle a happy tune so no one will suspect you’re afraid!” Anna was absolutely right.

Carole Slater is a widow living in Reno, NV. She knows how hard one must fight to stay driven after an injury. She believes nothing is more frightening than being out of control of one’s own health and care. By strengthening her spirit, she took back her enthusiasm for life!
ROAD TRIP SING-A-LONGS

Lois Smyres

You have to admit there is something about singing that makes one happy. Sometimes you sing because you’re happy and sometimes singing makes you happy. Whichever is true, singing on road trips makes the time go by more quickly and creates an upbeat atmosphere for the passengers in the car.

For ten years of our lives our family made a road trip every other weekend from Sparks, Nevada on Friday to a mine in Trinity County, California and back to Sparks on Sunday. Five people in a car – two adults, three children and at least one dog – can get pretty stressful, but singing can keep tempers in check for many miles. We sang old familiar standards, rounds, Girl Scout songs, popular songs, improvised lyrics for familiar tunes and new compositions (mostly silly).

Of course we couldn’t sing for all the hours it took for the trip, but my most pleasant memories are of the sing-a-longs.

Lois Smyres has been a member of Lifescapes since it began in 2000 and now leads a group of Lifescapers at Sparks Library. Her granddaughter Sierra created the cover art.
GOOD NIGHT LADIES

Hazel Snow

I was born and raised on a farm. Our lives were happy. We did not have electricity in rural Minnesota. We used kerosene lamps and lanterns for lights. Water was pumped by hand from the outside well. Of course the outhouse did not need water.

We did not have a radio. Some people had battery operated radios. My dad’s sister had a hand operated phonograph with records. The music in church was someone playing the pump organ.

When I started dating, my boyfriend Edward played a guitar. On Sunday afternoons a group of us would get-together to play and sing.

After I was married we did have a radio. On Saturday evenings when Grand Ole Opry came on my husband would play along with them. My husband did not read notes so he played by ear. With radio, TV and musical instruments we had all kinds of music.

Later in life, Ed’s health left him unable to work. Music was his life. He could play guitar, piano, accordion and the keyboard. He fashioned a holder for his harmonica so he could play it when he played his guitar.

He started a Gospel program at the nursing home. The residents loved him when he came every Wednesday afternoon to sing and play.

The Activity Department started the Friday night dances. They had Ed form a band to play for these dances. His brother Larry played mandolin, Howard Haataja played accordion, Ira Eckman played the guitar, Pauline played the piano. Ethel, a resident at the home, played the organ. Some of the employees came to dance with the residents. Many of these residents had enjoyed dancing, whether at house parties or at the town dance halls.

When the band played “Good Night Ladies” everyone was ready for refreshments and visiting. Another Friday night of music was added to our store of memories.

MUSIC TO MY EARS

Doris L. Spain

As long as I can remember, music has been in the background of my life. Not too many years ago, I had a job in a therapy group, and music played a major role in the business, but that is another story for another time.

As a child, my dad had music playing in our basement as he puttered around in his workshop, intermittently cranking up the old Victrola and changing records. I can remember old German music, lovely waltzes and songs I can sing or recognize to this day. My brothers, 6 and 8 years older than me, both played musical instruments: Karl played piano and trombone, Binky played clarinet and saxophone. They both participated in the high school marching band and orchestra and brother Karl had his own band made up of his high school musical friends. They often rehearsed in our living room and fussed over me as they would their own little sister. My dad played the cymbals in the local VFW Band and my mom played the piano. It was inevitable that I, too, would join my family in musical performance.

At age 8, I began taking piano lessons from Mr. Schlaff, a totally smiled German gentleman who taught other young girls in our neighborhood. My brother Karl had already taught me to play all the fun things like Chopsticks, Heart and Soul, and an original “theme song” that he had composed. He was an amazing, gifted “play-by-ear” pianist, who could play any tune or song that he heard. At Christmas time, my brothers and I always managed to put together a little musical performance of Christmas carols or songs, to the delight of our parents. When we gathered with family and friends on Thanksgiving Day, my cousin Faith and I always were prepared to play a memorized piece on the piano as afternoon entertainment for all the guests. I was not a naturally gifted musician, as were my brothers, but I enjoyed anything and everything musical. One other fond memory is that our family piano was a “player piano” and our family enjoyed many times of playing “piano rolls” and singing and laughing together.

After 8 years of piano lessons, my lessons ended and hope of my ability to become an accomplished musician ended as well. However, my appreciation of music only grew over the years and musical performances have been a part of my entire life. In college I sang in our University Choir, sang in the chorus of musical performances and enjoyed a course in Music Appreciation. I’ve been to many musicals both locally and on Broadway in New York City, seeing my first musical, “Oklahoma,” on my 16th birthday, a gift from my parents.
After marriage our newly bought “stereo” was our most prized possession. After my dad died, and my mom sold our family home, the player piano and rolls of music as well, I was so very pleasantly surprised when a delivery truck backed into the driveway of our first home, and a brand new piano was delivered as a Christmas gift from my mom. I treasure that piano to this day and play it daily, in spite of my arthritic fingers.

I have collected music boxes for many years and also have given many as gifts. Background music plays in my home most of the time, keeping me company and offering therapy. And so, the music plays on.

_Doris L. Spain is a 22-year resident of Incline Village, native of New Jersey, Graduate of University of New Hampshire and retired Registered Dietitian._
I HEAR MUSIC...

Annette Sprecher

“I hear music, mighty fine music...” – mostly popular songs of my younger days or before, but not always. It might be operetta, a hymn or even some classical music, usually under my breath or very slightly audible. But in my apartment I can sing loud or quietly and in some odd places and for no apparent reason most of the time. But a word or situation or whatever can bring on something seemingly appropriate. Very rarely do I manage more than a few words, or lines, but now and again almost the whole thing comes back. I do most of the sotto voce bit walking the building for exercise, and those I meet don’t seem to notice, thankfully.

My mother and I were fond of classical music – symphonic, recital, etc., but not Grand Opera. Daddy’s opinion was voiced in two words – “Chamber Music” and “disgust.” But he liked to dance and did so well. We had a wind-up gramophone, and later, radiogram and a good selection of 78s. But I was the only one to play an instrument – piano lessons at school. I somehow got through two public exams, had no patience or a piano at home so gave up before too many years and now I can’t even read music.

However, the school I went to had a musical reputation and we did a lot of singing – no orchestra in our evacuated home. Apart from singing in school, we provided the bulk of the church choir and, to say thank you to the kind people of the village, undertook an operetta each year. Trial by Jury just fit on the stage in the village hall – and I mean just. I was the juror in imminent danger of descending into the audience! Pirates of Penzance and Merrie England – probably unknown here – were done outdoors. Then, too, many of us went to see The Mikado performed as a fundraiser by Exeter Cathedral Choristers to help towards paying for the organ loft as it had received a direct hit when Hitler started bombing random cities. I can still see the “Three Little Maids” in their kimonos over black boots! When we were back in Kent in southeast England where the school belonged we performed Chu Chin Chow, an operetta which ran in London for most, if not all, of World War I and entertained who knows how many troops on leave from the front and the horrifying conditions.

The (in)famous “Windmill” was the only theatre open in London for most of World War II. There were artists like Myra Hess who gave lunchtime recitals in churches, but generally the “theater” came out to the counties: in Exeter I don’t remember any concerts, but a top class Merchant of
Venice and, so that I was fully hooked, my first professional ballet – Covent Garden (now Royal) dancing Swan Lake starring a young Margot Fonteyn! Mummy and I also somehow got to our nearby County town at least twice to hear Moiselvich and Solomon play piano – top pianists then.

Later we also went to two or three seasons of concerts in the lovely little Opera House in Lisbon, all dressed up! Quite differently, my best friend and I spent hours listening to records of, for instance, Perry Como, Vic Damone, etc., the heart throbs of our day. And there were a lot of young people partying, in homes, in restaurants, to all sorts of dance music with Samba having just joined the Latin style. I have always loved those rhythms.

And one even earlier favorite (still is) was “Begin the Beguine!” and it was years before I found out why Daddy apparently hated it. After women and children were evacuated from Gibraltar, two naval friends shared the house and they would have wardroom evenings on board destroyers starting or turning over convoy escort to and from Malta. One evening “Begin the Beguine” was played a lot and the men adopted it as “their song.” Next day the ship joined the convoy and was torpedoed and lost with all hands! So now I understand and almost feel guilty enjoying it myself.

Remembering all this, I wonder why I never play any of the cassettes I have. Maybe I’m too lazy and fumble-fingered! So I’ll just keep on with songs, and other music, in my head, sotto voce or aloud when appropriate!

Now, in Reno, I’m so glad I can still enjoy our Reno Philharmonic Orchestra – have done for some 20 years. Sadly, I no longer get to Artown, Bartley Ranch or free concerts at UNR. But I go on hearing music, singing sotto voce, or not so sotto, even the few other language songs I remember bits of. Could that sort of thing qualify as a Brain Game?

Annette Sprecher was born in England, and making a few stops along the way, ended up in Reno in 1981. She enjoys a wide range of music from all over. She also hopes to go on enjoying OLLI and Lifescapes into the future.
DEAR LITTLE BOY OF MINE

Joyce Starling

A Google search turns up the lyrics for “Dear Little Boy of Mine,” written by Ernest R. Ball and J. Keirn Brennan. An old song, probably not remembered by many, but it has meaning for me through my stint with the Sweet Adelines organization.

In the summer of 1966 my husband had been transferred by the Kaiser Refractories company to sell fire brick and related products to the Pennsylvania steel mills. We were living in Camp Hill, just across the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, the state capital. John almost immediately began traveling for his job and I was often left alone in a new state and an unfamiliar neighborhood. This was the first time I had lived so far away from my family and friends. I loved the state for its beauty, our new house was large with a wonderful yard, the neighbors were friendly, and I was kept busy with three small children, but I did get lonely at times.

One day as I was cleaning house and singing along with one of my sound track albums—My Fair Lady, Carousel, Stop the World I Want to Get Off—my neighbor Lois called to me through the open kitchen window. (This was August in a house without air conditioning so, of course, all the windows were open all the time.) She said it sounded as if I loved to sing and invited me to come along with her to her next Sweet Adelines meeting. Lois connected me with a local teenage girl who was a dependable babysitter -- dear Ruthanne who became a real friend to the children and to me.

So, off I went to a Sweet Adelines rehearsal with Lois. What a treat! Other women who liked to sing as much as I did and an instant circle of friends (much like OLLI). Lois was a bass, but I could not, and still cannot, sing that low. I was welcomed into the bari (baritone) section. They were really happy to have me, especially since the bari section was the smallest in the chorus which never numbered more than fifty members. We practiced every week until the two months before regional competition when things became hectic with sectional rehearsals in addition to the weekly group rehearsals, costume fittings, and committee work if you were so inclined. I no longer had time to be lonely!

We would sing two songs at competition which was to be held in Baltimore. One song was traditionally lively and one was usually more serious or emotional. We would be judged on the quality of our singing and our presentation. Afterwards we would have a session with the judges to receive their comments about our performance. I can’t remember what song we chose for our lively number, but I do remember that we chose “Dear Little Boy of Mine,” for our emotional number.
We were well into our preparation for competition when one of our members, Janet, learned that her toddler son Ryan had a small growth behind one of his eyes and would require surgery and the removal of his eye. The growth was cancerous, but the doctors were able to remove the entire tumor and were optimistic about the outcome for this dear little boy. Our director was worried that we would not be able to get through a sentimental song about a little boy without breaking down. We were all worried about how Janet would feel about participating, but Janet assured us all that she could do it and therefore we all could do it.

Off we went to Baltimore—a city that I have visited once and only seen from the inside of a hotel. (I can say the same thing about Pittsburgh where our next competition was held.) We checked in at the hotel and changed into our costumes just in time for our numbers.

We sailed through our upbeat numbers and went on to our emotional number. I doubt there was a dry eye in the chorus, but we did get through our rendition of “Dear Little Boy of Mine,” and took 3rd place for the region. During the critique session the judges complimented us particularly for our heart-felt rendition of this song. I think we owe that to Janet and her small son—our dear little boy, Ryan.

The Bari part for this song is one I have never forgotten and sometimes it still plays in my head—a poignant memory.

Joyce Starling keeps busy with chairing the board of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). In her spare time she enjoys adventures with her grandchildren Jacob and Amy.
Waiting in the wings for my entrance, I wasn't worried about missing my cues or muffing my lines. Rather, armpit stains on my blue satin, lace-collared costume were from my fear of croaking like a choked chicken during a solo. In 1964 it was too much to ask the Hastings Senior High School orchestra to transpose the entire score of “The Music Man” down two notes so I could avoid the D above high C with which Meredith Wilson so annoyingly peppered his songs. It was up to me to slide in and out of that D as fast as possible without the note sticking in my craw.

The dreaded D was just one of many obstacles I overcame as I competed for the role of Marian Paroo—the prim, proper, straitlaced River City, Iowa librarian who fell for the fast-talking Harold Hill, who posed as a Boys’ Band Leader, then skipped town with the funds raised for instruments and uniforms.

The minute tryouts were announced, I began practicing with my best friend, Barbara, who was the school pianist for all musical productions. By the last week of tryouts, my only competitor was a beautiful blonde named Mary, whose pretty soprano voice sailed smoothly through three octaves, and who was perfectly typecast as the prim and proper Marian.

At this point my mother told me I could not “under any circumstances” compete for the lead. At age 18 I’d already been on Mom’s bad side for about 4 years. Indeed, I’m sure I inspired her maxim that, “There’s no child more difficult than a 14-year-old girl.” I realized decades later that our continuous clashes were inevitable given our views about natural talent. Mine was, “If you’ve got it, flaunt it!” But her forbidding me to compete for the lead role had nothing to do with me strutting my stuff on stage. She told me that I had to bow out simply because “Mary should get the lead.”

Of Hastings, Nebraska’s 22,000 residents, Mary’s family was the wealthiest. The Hunsickers were ten poor sods living in dire poverty, scraping by on the salary of a railroad brakeman. Mom forbade me to compete against Mary to keep me from making an irreparable mistake. Not only was she preventing me from incurring a life-long enemy—but she was saving the Hunsickers from being branded in perpetuity as social upstarts. Of course, I knew Mary’s family was rich and ours was poor, but I failed to see how that related to singing in the high school musical. I thought the competitive tryouts were simply to bring out the best in each student, and that the best student should get the role. And so, against her demands and warnings, I landed the lead.

In 2006, for Mom’s 90th birthday, we filmed an interview in which she talked about each of her eight children. She answered the question, “When did Ronda make you most proud,” saying, “I was most proud after watching her perform as Marian the Librarian. I had no idea she’d sing so beautifully in front...
of such a crowd.” Although her acknowledgment came some 40 years late, I was reminded of the old saying, “The child who causes you most pain will make you most proud.” I know I wasn’t Mom’s favorite, but I know I was a child whom she was happy to call her own.

Unlike Mom, I don’t rate my role as Marian the Librarian among my most noteworthy achievements, but I have thought about how deeply the role may have influenced me, perhaps in ways I’m only now able to see. Is it just coincidence that after divorcing an East Indian and being widowed by an Italian-American, I’m now married to a fast-talking, blonde, blue-eyed Iowan who quotes Shakespeare?

MY WHITE KNIGHT
(c) 1957 M. Willson
My white knight, not a Lancelot, nor an angel with wings
Just someone to love me, who is not ashamed of a few nice things.
My white knight who knew what my heart would say if it only knew how.
Please, dear Venus, show me now.

All I want is a plain man
All I want is a modest man
A quiet man, a gentle man
A straightforward and honest man
To sit with me in a cottage somewhere in the state of Iowa.

And I would like him to be more interested in me than he is in himself.
And more interested in us than in me.

And if occasionally he’d ponder
what makes Shakespeare and Beethoven great,
Him I could love till I die. Him I could love till I die.

My white knight, not a Lancelot, nor an angel with wings.
Just someone to love me, who is not ashamed of a few nice things.
My white knight, let me walk with him where the others ride by
Walk and love him till I die, till I die.

Ronda Davé Tycer is a writer and academic publisher. She holds a Doctorate in Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, and is President of the Association for Support of Graduate Students.
MUSIC AND MEMORIES
Music's Legacy

Vickie M. Vera

There was a time when I would have picked the 60’s as my favorite decade of music, but my life changed in 2004 with the untimely death of my husband, and my favorite music changed as well. My husband was from Mexico, and even though while he was alive we did listen to Mexican music it became more profound to me after his death.

At his funeral my daughter hired a trio of mariachi players to play his favorite song. A few years later the same daughter and I drove with my three grandsons to Tijuana so they could meet their other grandmother. My daughter paid for her flight to come in from Guanajuato. We had a marvelous 3 days together, and I fell in love with Mexico at that time, all the myriad of colors and designs on buildings, the aroma of the native food, and all the sights which seemed as old as time, the churches, and the cemeteries. When we passed the border from San Diego into Tijuana we went from the haughty opulence of the U.S., into unbelievable poverty.

We witnessed a people who did not moan and cry over no welfare, no healthcare, no high paying jobs because of being too lazy for low wage jobs, instead we witnessed people who have lived in poverty since birth and make a living any way they can from selling chewing gum, candy, fruit on the streets to pushing a cart to sell popsicles, and they are still happy.

So now I listen to groupos Los Angeles Azulies, and Los Angeles de Charly, and cry my eyes out because their music is so sad to me. They are Cumbias which are supposed to be happy, lively music, but to me they are incredibly sad. One of my daughters said, “I remember Dad listening to that song.”

I cry for my husband who didn’t deserve to die being run down in the street like a dog, and I cry for myself, and my children who lost their Dad. I cry for all the poor people who can barely make a living and if they get sick they can’t run to a doctor, but have to stay home and just die or suffer. Yet, despite all their hardships they maintain a pride in their culture and traditions, their music and families, and exhibit a joy for living.
Vickie’s greatest joy in life is her children and grandchildren, and being with them. Her second greatest joy is to soak up all the vast array of colors this world has to offer, all the designs, and patterns and incorporate them into her artwork. She also loves writing, and is trying to do journals for each of her children and grandchildren. With all the projects she has going she’s also hoping to live to be 500 years old so she can complete all of them.
JOINING THE CHOIR

Billie Walker

In the early 1950’s I was living in Mendocino, California with some friends. I decided to go to the picturesque Mendocino Presbyterian Church.

During the service the minister told the congregation to “Please join the choir if you enjoy singing.” You did not have to read notes or carry a tune.

Then the choir director turned around and said, “If anyone was interested, come as you are on Thursday night at 6 p.m.” That choir director was very good looking so, the following Thursday night I was the first one through the door! I qualified because I couldn’t read music or carry a tune, but I did enjoy music.

On November 20, 1954 we were married. We celebrated 54 years together. He passed away in 2009.

He introduced me to a world of wonderful music. We went to the San Francisco Opera house and saw Pavarotti in Aida. We went to theaters from New York to Sacramento and saw My Fair Lady, Music Man, Porgy and Bess, Gilbert and Sullivan’s HMS Pinafore and South Pacific. In San Francisco we saw Phantom of the Opera. In Reno we saw Fiddler on the Roof. He introduced me to a whole new world!

My parents and sister never had such an opportunity. When our kids were growing up we took them to see musicals and introduced them to the wonderful world of good music.

I don’t care for, so called, “modern music,” but, I guess each generation has their own thing.

Billie Walker. I was born July 11, 1930 as my parents drove from Montana to California, looking for work. They stopped at an Auto Camp, which we now call a motel. The address on my birth certificate is “Stumble Inn Auto Court, Tucson, Arizona.”

I had an uneventful childhood. As I grew up I had a desire to be a nurse. I entered Santa Rosa Jr. College, School of Nursing in September 1948; graduated September 1951 and went to work full time as a Registered Nurse until I retired in July 1987 in Reno, Nevada.

I joined Lifescapes a couple of years ago and am writing the stories of my life. My family and friends have thoroughly enjoyed the stories, so I continue to write. I enjoy the Lifescapes group and look forward to continuing.
SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Barbara Rae Weiss

I think I was in my early teens before I saw The Wizard of Oz. Probably I had read the book, and certainly I had heard “Over the Rainbow.” I loved its beauty, its simplicity, the wistfulness and promise of hope.

Dorothy looked like an ordinary girl. Her dog was adorable. She lived on a grungy, dirty little farm. The people around her were plain and hard working, and though they cared for her, it wasn’t really a family. She had a rather grim life, really: much worse than mine.

Yet she could dream, and brother, she could sing! Artless, innocent, poised; that lovely crystalline voice played celestially among the clouds.

To a shy little girl mired in a humdrum life, this was magic, a dream, a wish: this song was irresistible.

When I did see the movie it blew my mind. Yes, I was in my early teens, but I experienced it as a child, wide open and uncritical.

Black and white movies were still common, so I didn’t notice the lack of color at the beginning.

The tornado was terrifying, the threat to Toto painfully real. And of course when she opened the door in Munchkin land, it all lit up into magic!

Later I read commentary that said the change was deliberate, for effect, which popped into my mind as “Aha! Of course!” With time and repetition, Dorothy’s childish naiveté seemed somewhat irritating, and the wicked witch a bit much. But the Lion and the Scarecrow never lost their charm, the Munchkins will always be a delight and the wicked witch’s flying monkeys still scare me.

The last time I watched the movie, I realized for the first time that the poignancy and courage of “Over the Rainbow” that grabbed my heartstrings was in the contrast between the song and the scene of a pig pen where a wistful little girl dreams of something wonderful. The best part, of course, is that she experienced wonder, and then woke to know she was happy where she is.
“If happy little bluebirds fly beyond the rainbow, why then, oh why can’t I?”

You did, Dorothy. And now I have as well.

Barbara Weiss was born in Connecticut and grew up old. When her daughters were in college she ran away to Nevada to try to do it right. It took 25 years, but she has. She has two daughters and two grandchildren – and with her 70th birthday has started work on her memoir, “Ride a Purple Pony.”
RIDING A RAINBOW OVER THE STREAM

Marcy Welch

It was my job to comfort the sick and the dying. When I first visited Aida she was suffering from diabetes, which was the reason for the amputation of the toes on her left foot. She was a friendly and cheerful person with whom it was easy to forge a friendship. I met with her weekly in her tiny independent living apartment over a period of five years during which time she lost the toes from her right foot, then her entire right foot and her leg up to her right knee, and then her left foot.

Eventually she was hospitalized, seriously ill. On the day I visited, her insides were impacted and she was in a great deal of pain. She was crying out and there was no response to her pleas into the call box on her bed. I held her and she held me so tightly that it was hard to break away to go and find help for her. The nurse I found could offer her little comfort as she lay in pain for several hours while I held her hand. When her doctor arrived, I left.

At the end of that week I received a message at work that both of Aida’s legs had been amputated and that I could visit her at the rehab hospital. What would I say to her? She had been through so much.

On arrival at the rehab facility I signed in, picked up a visitor’s badge and then proceeded down one long hall after another till I reached her room. The bed next to the door was empty and so was the one next to it. I looked toward the window and there was Aida, looking out over the hills and softly singing, “Somewhere, over the rainbow, way up high.” I called her name and she turned with the brightest smile I had seen on her face in years. Sitting in a wheelchair with only stubs where her legs had been, she looked so very happy. The infection that had been coursing through her body was gone and the happy woman I first met had returned. We sat talking about how hard she was working toward being discharged, how wonderful the staff was, she even loved the food.

Time flew and when I realized that visiting hours were over, Aida looked at me and said, “I’ll walk you to the door!” She extended one hand to me, drove the wheel chair with her other hand, and as we made our way down the hall, I joined Aida in singing, “Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is just a dream.” Amen.

Marcy Welch is three years into retirement and still loving it. All is not roses, but enough. OLLI keeps it new and interesting. So many stories to write and classes to enjoy.
THE BEAT GOES ON

Floyd Whiting

Before becoming a runner, I chose to stick with walking, fearing I was too slow to beat others in a contest. While living in Oregon, I got into the habit of walking to my job at the crime lab in downtown Portland even if I felt pretty beat after arriving at work. If it was cloudy when I left the house, I would try to beat the pending rainstorm by hurrying my pace. Sometimes the rain would beat down on me during my trip. But I tried to maintain an up-beat attitude when it was stormy even if the raindrops beat me like whip lashes. If I listened to music on my earphones, I’d step in time to the beat and perhaps harken to Sonny Bono’s version of “The Beat Goes On” …and on…and on….

If questioned about why I continued to walk to work in inclement weather, I would reply, “Beats me.” After all, when someone wants an answer to an important question, I don’t beat around the bush. But inclement weather conditions did make walking to work more difficult. For instance, one dark, dreary dawn I awoke in the early-morning gloom and silently slipped into my work outfit. It had been raining when I went to bed but during the night the temperature had dipped below the freezing level and now everything was covered with a glistening coat of ice. This was a condition Oregonians called a “silver thaw” which was attractive to look at but could be a hazard for anyone attempting to move about out-of-doors. There was a layer of ice on every object that had gotten wet during the earlier rainstorm. But I wasn’t about to let the icy conditions beat me out of my normal four mile walk to the downtown police station. So I laced up my beat-up walking shoes, slipped on a raincoat and beat it out the door.

Despite the ice on the front steps, by gingerly walking over the rough cement surface I made it to the street without mishap. Oops! Then the trouble began. The icy surface of the smooth asphalt on the street was much slicker than the cement steps had been and immediately my feet slipped out from beneath me and I skidded along the pavement. The spill knocked my hat off and it beat me in crashing to the roadside before I landed there. The temperature had risen just enough so that a fine layer of moisture sat on top of the underlying ice and made conditions extremely slick. By crouching on my hands and knees, I tried to get my feet under me to rise to a standing position, but again tumbled onto the pavement. Carefully balancing myself, I finally made it upright and slowly moved along the street. Unfortunately, the center of the roadway was slightly rounded above its edges and when I arrived at the nearest intersection and tried to walk over the small incline,
I again landed on my tush. Using my sharp intelligence to assess the situation, I concluded that at this rate it was going to take a few hours to reach the crime lab, assuming I didn’t get beaten to death before I got there. If that happened I’d surely be a deadbeat which, for a police employee, would be even worse than being a beatnik.

But beating my brain for a solution, I suddenly had an epiphany. Back at the house was an old beat-up pair of ice skates that I had held onto since my youth. My feet hadn’t grown any since the last time I wore them so they should still fit me. Fearing too much of a beating from additional falls, I carefully crawled on my hands and knees back to the house where I was able to locate the old skates. With them firmly attached to my feet, I again beat it out to the street and this time was able to skate along the ice-covered surface into the city without mishap. I was pretty upbeat that I had not fallen while on the skates and, despite the delay, had beat the 8:00 o’clock starting time to get to work. Realizing that I would look a bit weird if I wore the skates inside the building during the remainder of the day, I was smart enough to carry an extra pair of shoes on my journey. By the time I was ready to return home in the evening, the ice had melted and Oregon’s ubiquitous rain beat down on me as I walked home wearing my shoes and carrying my ice skates. But that day I had discovered a unique way of commuting to work. No matter how one chooses to address a situation, the beat goes on. Under icy conditions, using ice skates sure beats walking.

_Floyd Whiting has traveled to work by different methods over the years. In addition to riding the bus and driving a car, he has also walked, jogged, bicycled, ice skated, and cross-country skied to get there._
QWEE QWA

Judi Whiting

“Qwee Qwa Mahny Mahny Mahny Dashnik, Umpqua Qwee; Umpqua Quo!” reverberated inside our little blue Volkswagen bug as we drove through the tall pines of central Oregon. “Oh, Nicodemo. Oh golly olly ah mo. Oh Nicodemo. Oh golly olly—Umpqua, Umpqua, Umpqua!”

This was our first day together as a married couple, and we were feeling a bit giddy. Starting out from Eugene this morning, we’d had to act like responsible adults and shop for a new car tire. The $40 expenditure put a big hole in our very sparse budget, but for now we were just looking forward to three carefree days at Union Creek Lodge.

Earlier in the trip I’d sung the standards my family always sang on road trips: “I’ve been Working on the Railroad” and “On Moonlight Bay.” Now Floyd was teaching me a Boy Scout camp song. He who claimed not to be able to sing or remember music seemed to have this one down. Of course, I wouldn’t know if the tune was right or not.

In late afternoon we arrived at the lodge near Crater Lake that my uncle, who lived nearby, had selected as the perfect spot for our honeymoon. The log cabin was quaint and secluded—what more could we need? We were thrilled to be anywhere as long as we were together and alone.

At various times during the next three days, one of us would suddenly blurt out, “Qwee qwa mahny mahny mahny dashnik” or “oh, Nicodemo” and we’d convulse with laughter.

Forty-eight years later, a few lines from that tune can recreate the overwhelming joy of young love. The memories wash away the problems or stresses of the current day and we are once again focused on the happiness we feel to have found each other and to have spent our lives together.

Judi Whiting loves OLLI, Lifescapes, grandchildren, crosswords puzzles, singing and Floyd.
SNOWY FLAKES ARE FALLING SOFTLY

Patricia J. Zimmerman

My Mom was the Queen of Christmas. To this day, I have fond memories of the beautiful decorations, wonderful foods, joyous music and, of course, the gifts. Although money was never plentiful in our home, she found ways to make memories that linger in her daughters’ minds forever. All four of us have tried to pick up from where she left off.

We made red and green chains out of construction paper and homemade paste. She hung these in the doorways to decorate the house. She hung the wonderful Christmas cards received from loved ones around the doorways. We all joined in the decorating of the tree. Favorite ornaments would be hung in a prominent place. Mom liked each piece of tinsel hung separately not flung at the tree.

This is the season of love and family. Mom would bake cookies while we were at school. When we came home, the whole family would frost and decorate them. We felt so proud when she served our “works of art” to friends and relatives or when we took a tray of our “homemade wonders” to neighbors.

We took part in the Christmas program at church all practicing our speeches until we could repeat them from memory. We received an
orange and a bag of hard candy for our hard work. We sang in the choir or chorus at church and school performing in the annual holiday concerts. I still remember words of songs I sang when I was nine years old:

“Snowy flakes are falling softly
Clothing all the world in white.
High above the stars are shining
Twinkling through the wintry night.
Was it just like this we wonder
Starry bright and crispy cold
On that Christmas night of old.”

Music has always been a very important part of the celebration of this season. Today I take the little ones to one of the many musical events in our town. Perhaps it is the lighting of the city’s Christmas tree or to the Reno Philharmonic concert. Ice skating is always fun for the children too...or skiing if you have access to the snow-capped mountains. I am a “watcher” not a participant.

There were always lots and lots of packages under the tree. In lean years, they may have been socks and underwear, but they were beautifully wrapped and received with joy.

Whatever you do this time of year, include children. Make memories that they will think of in their old age...and smile.

Pat Zimmerman is a transplanted Midwesterner who retired to Nevada in 1990. She loves the Silver State and its sapphire blue skies. She thinks life should be put to music, just like in the movies.