

Life & Times

The balm of friendship

Editor's note: Sharon Randall is on vacation this week. This column first ran June 8, 2004.

It's almost midnight, and I am sitting on top of an air conditioner in a motel room in Kingman, Ariz. Outside, it is slightly hotter than the hinges on the gates of hell.

Earlier today, somewhere in the desert by Barstow or maybe Needles, I got lost — possibly because I was a bit distracted thinking about rites of passage.



Sharon Randall

I had spent the whole week-end dealing with things I usually avoid: Doing laundry, paying bills, packing my car and saying goodbye. I wasn't planning to leave forever,

just a few months, give or take. But a few months is a long time to leave the people you love.

When I told them that I wanted to go back to the mountains where I grew up, rent a cabin on a lake and spend some time writing, much to my surprise, they understood. My grown children, my closest friends, the man I share my life with — they all said that I should do what I want.

Imagine: A woman my age, free to do what she wants — as soon as she figures out what she wants and how to do it.

"Go for it," they all said. Did I mention they are wonderful people? They know why I'm taking this trip. What they don't understand is why, instead of flying, I've decided to drive 3,500 miles, give or take, depending on how many wrong turns I make.

I thought a road trip sounded like fun. That was yesterday, before I left home. Today, after I missed a turn and drove 30 miles out of my way, I decided it might be more fun to sell my car and take a bus back to California.

Some days I'm not good at believing in myself. This is one of those days. I'm lucky to have people who believe in me. Too bad they can't help me drive.

But back to the rites of passage.

Sunday morning, I packed up my car (it's amazing what you can take if it doesn't need to fit into an overhead bin) and hit the road. Before leaving town, I stopped to speak at a graduation ceremony for the young women of Notre Dame High School in Salinas, Calif.

I told them what I have been learning: Life is short, so do what you want, to the glory of God and the betterment of mankind. Then I shook their hands, returned their hugs and watched them totter across the stage on 9-inch heels. Somehow, I felt as proud as if they were my own. The girls, not the heels.

After the ceremony, I drove 100 miles south to attend a retirement bash for a woman who has been my friend even longer than she has been a teacher. The "slumber" party drew a crowd of women, old friends, some I'd not seen for years. We spent the evening reminiscing, then piled into beds to lie awake listening to each other snore.

This morning, saying our good-byes, we got word that an elderly friend had died over the weekend. She would've loved to be with us at that party. She wouldn't have cared who snored. We stood there together in the parking lot, remembering our friend, and blinking back tears. Then they waved me off on my big adventure — "Thelma and Louise" without Louise.

Hours later, I spotted on a dry, barren hillside a patch of brilliant green — a place that had been watered and was growing. That's it, I thought. That's how it works. We celebrate together the passages of our lives — the births and deaths, the weddings and graduations, the retirements and big adventures. We water each other's souls with the balm of friendship to keep us green and alive. It won't stop you from making wrong turns. But it can help you feel a little less lost.

(Sharon Randall can be contacted at P.O. Box 777394, Henderson, NV 89077, or at www.sharonrandall.com.)



Breanna Farmer/Olean Times Herald.

Eight people were inducted into the Allegany-Limestone Music and Performing Arts Wall of Fame. In front (from left) are Charles and Joan Phearsdorf; Norma Roosa, accepting the honor for her late husband, William Roosa; and Carol Hakes. In back (from left) are Gustave "Gus" Napoleon, Judy Pastore, Barbara Sue, accepting the honor for her late husband, John "Mac" Sue, and Rossalie Anne

Eight inducted into Allegany-Limestone Music and Performing Arts Wall of Fame

ALLEGANY — Several people were inducted into the Allegany-Limestone Music and Performing Arts Wall of Fame recently during the Gala Concert in the high school gymnasium.

Marcia Wymer, Music Boosters president, said the inductees are Carol Hakes, Rosalie Kalinowski, Gus Napoleon, Judy Pastore, Bill Roosa, Joan and Charlie Phearsdorf and John "Mac" Sue.

Ms. Wymer said Joe Roosa came up with the idea for the Wall of Fame after seeing the Athletic Wall of Fame in the school. She said Mr. Roosa approached her last fall and asked why there was nothing similar for individuals in music and performing arts.

Ms. Wymer said she checked into it, and requested permission from the Board of Education to consider a wall for the performing arts. After receiving permission from the board and the Music Boosters officers, the group proceeded with the project.

The group will utilize the Allegany-Limestone Music and Performing Arts Wall of Fame to:

"Recognize and record the accomplishments of former students in the district, as well as those of members of the community, in the areas of music and performing arts.

"Acknowledge teachers, directors and instructors who contributed to the accomplishments of students and/or furthering of Music and/or Performing Arts programs within the school and community.

"Recognize the efforts and contributions made by parents, community members, school officials and others who have shared their gifts of time and treasure to promote Music and Performing Arts in the school and community.

CAROL HAKES

Ms. Hakes is a 1964 graduate of Hinsdale Central School and a 1972 graduate of Fredonia State University. She was a music teacher, choral director and accompanist for Allegany-Limestone school district for many years. She also spent many hours providing accompaniment for the school district's girls' gymnastics teams, and served as accompanist for many community theater productions.

Since her retirement from teaching, Ms. Hakes has continued to attend the school district's music department concerts, and provides music for the high school graduation ceremonies. Through her years of teaching, she has instilled a love of music in her students and continues to be living proof that music can accompany you through life.

Ms. Hakes and her husband have traveled to all 50 states and enjoy camping. When not traveling, she spends time working in her extensive gardens at the home they built in Hinsdale. When the weather turns colder, after putting away their holiday lights displays, they travel to Austin, Texas, to spend the winter.

GUSTAVE "GUS" NAPOLEON

Mr. Napoleon was a teacher in the school district from 1963 to 1988. He inspired numerous students in the area of performing arts as the director of the junior/senior plays for 22 years.

Beginning in high school and college as a member of the band and choir, as well as playing clarinet in the American Legion Concert Orchestra, Mr. Napoleon is well versed in the area of performing arts. His booming and theatrical voice was a familiar sound during many of the school district's band concerts, as the narrator who led the audience through the understanding of the history behind particular pieces of music.

His love of theater has continued through the years as a cast member in 30 productions with the Washington Street and Olean Community theaters, including Shakespeare In The Park.

Mr. Napoleon's love of the school district and its students has been exemplified, not only in his dedication as a teacher and director, but also in his 10 years of service on the Board of Education. He and his wife have two grown children and live in Allegany.

JUDY PASTORE

Mrs. Pastore started playing the piano at the age of 3, learning from her mother, June Kamler. Playing the piano and organ has been as much a natural part of her life as eating, and she likes to say it is God's gift to her.

During high school, Ms. Pastore played the clarinet and saxophone and received her training as an accompanist from Yolanda Questa. At that time she began accompanying the high school choirs, and students attending music competitions.

After high school, she worked at the Olean Trust Co. until she was married and moved to Augusta, Ga., where her husband, Frank, was stationed in the Army. After returning to Olean, she wanted to do something that would let her be at home with their son, so she started giving piano lessons. After their children started school, they purchased

their first home, and insisted on being in the Allegany school district.

Shortly after moving to Allegany, she was approached to be the organist at St. Bonaventure Church, where she has been ever since. She has also played at other area churches and is currently the accompanist for the Unity Choir, comprised of singers from area Catholic churches.

When Mrs. Lyter approached her to play for the school choir, she accepted and continued as the accompanist for 10 years. During more than 60 years of playing the piano, she has received congratulations and other accolades, but has never received an honor such as being inducted into the Wall of Fame.

ROSALIE KALINOWSKI

Ms. Kalinowski said teaching vocal music in the Limestone school district was the beginning of her connection with the school district. During her tenure as music teacher at Allegany Elementary, her gifts to the community became quite visible. Each year during the senior citizens holiday dinner, she provided the guests with entertainment from the elementary students. Not only did the adults enjoy the performances, the students were taught the importance of sharing their gifts and giving back to the community.

That example continued through the years in the Flag Day ceremonies that were an integral part of Ms. Kalinowski's career. By her inclusion of area veterans, students were taught to respect the flag, and those who fought for our freedoms, as well as the importance of taking pride in patriotism. Her contributions to the community have continued past her retirement in her visibility as an organist at area churches.

WILLIAM ROOSA

Mr. Roosa's act of instilling the love of music was just one of the many gifts he has showered on his students.

In his years as the director of the high school marching band, concert band and jazz band, he not only taught students about notes and rhythms, but about the importance of never settling for anything but the best.

He gave his band students the experiences of playing under the batons of world famous conductors, recording the Heritage of the March albums, and competing in various competitions throughout the eastern United States and Canada. His lessons were not only

about music, but about living life to its full potential. His legacy continues as the inspiration for the Allegany Alumni and Friends Band, and as the driving force behind the values and standards of many of his former students. In many ways, his influence is beyond compare.

CHARLES AND JOAN PHEARSDORF

"Service beyond compare" is what comes to mind when thinking of Charles and Joan Phearsdorf. As original members of the Allegany Band Parents, they spent countless hours helping to support the district bands and students. Chaperoning band trips contributed to the bond that continues today with many of them.

They began the Rob Phearsdorf Memorial Scholarship, in memory of their son. Their service continues today as the providers of transportation for the Allegany Alumni and Friends Band during parades. Their gifts of service spill over into many other areas including Allegany American Legion and Auxiliary, Boy Scout troop 677, Allegany 60 Plus, Meals on Wheels deliveries, Alley Hats and Red Hat Society.

Their service to our school and community is unmatched.

JOHN "MAC" SUE

A 1961 graduate of Allegany Central School, Mr. Sue became well-known as an area musician and entertainer. During his high school career, he was a choir member and played tuba in band, as well as serving as the chorus accompanist. His gifts to the greater community are many and include co-founder of the Olean Community Chorus, board of directors of Friends of Good Music, American Cancer Society, Interfaith Caregivers, and advisor and planner for the organ installations at many area churches.

He was a member of the American Guild of Organists, and was an entertainer on the Princess Cruise Lines "Love Boat" in addition to playing aboard the Queen Mary. Mr. Sue was well-known as an entertainer with the Mac Sue Trio and performed at area restaurants. He also composed anthems for area choirs.

His many achievements include being a U.S. Representative to World Congress of Church Musicians at the Vatican in Rome, Italy, and Organist Emeritus at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Olean.

A quiet and humble man with a warm smile, he touched many lives with his gifts of music.