



ENGAGING THE ELDERLY IN MUSIC



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INTRODUCTION

**MUSIC
ENGAGEMENT
WITH THE
ELDERLY**

*“When through the woods,
and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing
sweetly in the trees”*

(How Great Thou Art)

BACKGROUND:

After discovering that listening to music involves several areas of our brain, it seemed only natural to use it as a way of engaging deeply the elderly population that has been so profoundly impacted by physical and mental changes due to the aging process. Maureen McCarthy Draper's statement in her book "The Nature of Music" spoke volumes with these words about the significance of music upon the lives of God's creation: *"Beautiful music is the promise of happiness, a doorway through which we can enter the fullness of our being."*

Thus, given the fact that when the ear hears beautiful musical strains floating in the air it is like the very breath we inhale for sustaining life in all of us, it seemed only logical to explore a variety of methods and techniques conducted individually and in large groups to determine how to better engage older people.

Since, unlike the eyes that have lids to close, the ear is automatically the receptor of the vibrations produced from the notes being performed, the potential impact for everyone is enormous. Without our knowledge, each note is being enriched by the brain and delivered to the very core of our being in a form that has been designed with our needs in mind. In other words, no two people hear or are touched by a song in the same manner. Maureen McCarthy Draper goes even farther by stating, *"A great symphony can stir qualities of our humanity that we need and long to feel; exultation, grief, dignity, compassion, playfulness.... At times music brings the gift of self-forgetting, inviting us to slip out of our own skin. But paradoxically, because it connects us with our emotions, music often brings more self-awareness. And it is easier to own our emotions when we meet them through music."*

Even without having access to the latest studies on the brain and music, Martin Luther, through simply observing the people he served when listening to music recognized the impact it had upon the human mind; so much that when having been instructed by law that he could no longer use the written word as a method of communication, back in 1524, wrote a missal of 8 hymns as a way of moving people's hearts and minds toward God; one of which was "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" that was accepted by even his enemies during the Reformation. His reasoning for gravitating toward music as a means of stressing ideas without losing his life was clarified when he stated: *"Music drives away the Devil and makes people happy. They forget thereby all wrath, unchastity, arrogance, and the like. After theology, I would give music the highest place, and the highest honor."*

Consequently, based on Luther's observations as far back as the 15th century regarding the power of music upon the brain, is it any wonder that elderly people whose bodies have been dramatically changed by the aging process react in such obvious ways? In fact, there is nothing more fascinating than to watch relatives of a nursing home resident sit spell bound, wearing smiles of amusement, as they study the face of a loved one singing and swaying to a favorite old song. Having grown accustomed to their relative being in an uncommunicative state, they are totally captivated by the response.

OBJECTIVE:

Given the latest scientific information on how the brain responds to music, causing the individuals to react in a more fluid and responsive manner, it seemed only natural to investigate a variety of ways for using music to more deeply engage the elderly. In so doing, not only would it benefit the lives of the

older individuals, but also serve as a resource for those in the community working with or entertaining the old folks when offering performances. Value would be added to both the giver and receiver.

MUSIC ENGAGEMENT CATEGORIES

- 1) **Music and the Brain (My Father's World):** Basic background on some of the latest research and how the brain reacts to music.
- 2) **Music and the Nursing Home Staff:** (A Spring in My Step and a Song in My Heart) Background on the importance of Nursing Home Staff as it relates to engaging the elderly in music. A staff that is well trained, inspired, and empowered by the owner/administrator creates a win/win situation for both employees and residents. [\(Accompanying Video\)](#)
- 3) **Large Group Performances:** (Community members perform music for large groups of elderly people in a health care facility setting.) Given this scenario, what methods can be added to increase the participation of the audience? The Joy Pickers & Senior Saints from Schweitzer United Methodist Church, Springfield, Missouri (a group of 35 individuals using both instruments and the human voice) served as test model for accomplishing this goal.
- 4) **Bedridden Residents:** After the large group performance, certain individuals that had furnished the entertainment volunteered to perform at the bedside of those residents unable to attend the large groups session due to health restrictions by using both instruments and the human voice as a form of engagement.
- 5) **Nursing Home Choir:** An opportunity to belong to a choir was extended to interested residents. Not only were their social skills enhanced by working together as a team, but also represented with pride their fellow residents by participating in a large group performance. Once again, they could give, rather than just receive; a behavior sacrificed when moving into a facility due to needing assistance with their daily living.
- 6) **Wheelchair Dancing:** Even though the residents were no longer physically able to use their entire bodies to dance, they learned ways to keep time to their favorite music from a sitting position that also allowed them to engage deeply when listening to performances.
- 7) **Grand Finale:** Using the old hymn "When We All Get to Heaven," this next to the last inspirational chapter, not only shows the culmination of the process of engaging the elderly in music through a joint community effort, but also demonstrates the joy the nursing home and church choir members experienced when the Glendale Gardens Silver Saints journeyed to Schweitzer United Methodist Church, Springfield, Missouri, and joined their voices for a time of musical worship. [\(Accompanying Video\)](#)
- 8) **At the Altar of Age:** This closing chapter will touch your heart in ways never experienced as you learn how nursing home residents gracefully deal with their winter season of life. It is not only inspiring, but also serves as a model that is filled with courage and hope as their final destination comes into view. [\(Accompanying Video\)](#) *Remarkable video recording of "What A Day That Will Be"; one of the residents' favorite songs that is sung by Assistant Activity Director Melody Childers. (Made possible through the efforts of ClearBox Rights License Manager, Brian Litwin who took the initiative and obtained permission from the owners of the song for it to be recorded and offered exclusively by www.devotionalembbers.com. Thank you, Brian!)*

PROCEDURE

** Each chapter described above contains information along with matching still life shots of step by step directions for ease in integrating the musical techniques into nursing homes worldwide.

CLOSING:

Dramatist Christopher Fry's following quote says it best with the words.

*“Oh, the fabulous wings
unused, folded in the heart.
Music allows us to spread our
wings, even when they may
be protecting tender,
vulnerable places.”*





CHAPTER ONE

MUSIC & THE BRAIN

Two European Robins with bright orange-red chests and grey-blue backs are perched on a thin, leafy branch. They are facing each other with their beaks open as if singing. The background is a soft-focus blue sky.

MUSIC & THE BRAIN

***“This is my father's world
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres”***

(Maltbie Davenport Babcock, 1901)

A close-up photograph of vibrant green grass blades. Several large, clear dew drops are clinging to the tips of the blades, reflecting light. The background is a blurred green field.

Arise carefree before dawn and witness the Great Artist's genius as; *"all nature sings, and round me rings; the music of the spheres"*. Inhale the freshness of each morning while feasting hungry eyes on the Father's world; resembling a painting rich in colors, sounds, and textures offered as his gift to all creation; a one of a kind unique masterpiece that's filled with reflections fair in color and pure in form. Soak in the beauty of the dew kissed leaves and blades of grass that serve as a feast for the eyes decked out in various hues of color with some even appearing to be dipped in rich icy liquid greenness.

But alas, in contrast to the description presented above, can the serenity of this place turn into a mysterious, noisy adventure? Is it possible the anticipation for a peaceful sojourn into nature can take on a new complexion causing the human mind to wonder if the expected outcome could be only an empty desire? Certainly, on this ambrosial morning, anticipating the woods to be a place of solace, soon turns into a natural melodic symphony of sounds worthy to be heard; a calming poultice yet energetic nourishment for the brain. Without fanfare, quietly hidden among the canopy of leaves in the trees overhead, as if on cue, a thousand birds began to twitter and sing heralding the beginning of a new day. Although the vast cacophony of sounds appears to be emerging from hundreds of various sources, methinks it is a gift from the Master that is divine and immortal; notes the mind interprets as glorious and ethereal.

Thus, dear reader, how is it possible to have such an awakening by simply going for a walk in the woods? Can a mere human even recount the emotions of such a journey, that for all intense purposes, should be interpreted by the ear as nothing but chaos and noise? The following words written by Henry David Thoreau on September 28, 1852 seem to supply a perfect description of what creation experiences when listening to the magnificent score of nature written by the Master: "Ah, if I could put into words that music which I hear; that music which can bring tears to the eyes of marble statues! ---to which the muscles of men are obedient!"

Even though Thoreau's words are beautiful, indeed, they only serve as a temptation to explore deeply why the mind of man gathers the array of sounds that should be heard as discordant and translates them into a breath- taking musical composition; thus, the motivation for delving further into the most complicated organ of the body.... the brain and its relationship to music.

MUSIC AND SONG BIRDS



***This is my father's world
The birds their carols raise
The morning light, the lily white
Declare their maker's praise***

However, before moving forward, it is important to determine if, other than humans, there is another creature that uses music as a form of communication. A clue to the answer for this question can be seen immediately at the top of the page on both sides of the title. Yes, birds are the only other species that use song as a method of transmitting messages to one another.

Although the terms “song” and “call” are used interchangeably when referring to our feathered friends, a yearly planner offered by “Birds and Blooms” clearly pointed out the enormous difference. Calls are inborn and are produced instinctively. They are the exclusive sounds used by a given species, whereas, songs, on the other hand, are musical phrases delivered by song-birds to vocalize messages to one another. Surprisingly, these musical phrases even can take on a regional dialect by birds, just like human beings that reside in a variety of locations throughout the world. The male birds, known for singing, mimic their own dads, or pick up the proper phrasing from nearby songsters. Even more astonishing, however, is the fact that scientists believe birds learn to sing as chicks still in the egg.

Additionally, it is important to note male birds use their ability to sing most often during their breeding seasons; as a method of attracting a mate, as well as a warning when defending their territory or for the purpose of alerting the female partner. Then, as the bird ages, the song from within becomes even more refined, rich and beautiful. (Rephrased from “Birds & Blooms” 2011 daily planner, written by John Neville, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia)

While investigating the birds and the songs they sing to communicate, the writer recalls reading about an incident that occurred at a concert being held in Washington D.C. that turned out to be a show stopper. During one rendition, when a flutist was playing a solo part, a shockingly wonderful event occurred that interrupted the performance. Ladies and gentleman, the attention of a lone mocking bird sitting in a nearby tree became centered on the flutist’s notes that floated in the air all around.

Then suddenly, as if right on cue, the mocking bird began singing its heart out, filling the air with notes that identically mimicked the rich sound coming from the flute. Thus, the wise conductor immediately stopped the orchestra and allowed the attendees to listen to the sounds of nature at its finest. What a beautiful gift from the great Creator!

Consequently, after realizing all this fascinating information regarding birds and music existed, it seemed only natural to include them in this collection. Therefore, please note the beautiful photographs of birds that appear at the beginning of each chapter as a way of celebrating our wonderful Creator.

THE INCREDIBLE BRAIN



First, it is important to point out that the human brain is not only the most complex organ of the body, but the speed at which research is developing regarding it is almost dizzying, making the writer realize it is necessary to leave this area in the hands of the experts. However, as a way of launching the study on the elderly and music engagement, it was important to set the foundation with at least a bit of background about this amazing organ.

Many years ago, when the writer was a teacher, as a way of gaining information that would enable her to better help her students learn, she read a book titled “The Brain Book” written by Peter Russell. One thing that immediately stood out was the importance of exposing the children to a variety of subjects and experiences from conception forward. In order to make his point, Russell reported a story about a

mother-to-be that sang in a Bach choir throughout her pregnancy. Even after giving up her time with the group following her daughter's birth, she still found that when Bach music was playing on the radio, her new born child would become so engrossed listening to it that she would pass over everything else...even food.

In addition to this fascinating story, as a first grade teacher, the writer recalls a student named Michael that was one of the largest, most active individuals in her class that pointed out the mystery of the brain at a very personal level. Having carefully prepared the class to attend the "Cleveland Nutcracker Ballet" she was startled after the performance to see a local newspaper reporter interviewing Michael regarding his feelings concerning the event. Surprisingly, this six year old student proceeded to identify his favorite movements of the music using descriptive words only someone proficient in the field would have known. Later, when conversing with the parents about the puzzling incident, it was discovered they had piped classical music on the intercom into his room as he was preparing to sleep from infancy forward. This rough tough child absolutely adored classical music because of being introduced to it at an early age.

FAST TRACK BRAIN RESEARCH

Hence, when you focus on the rapidity at which brain research is unfolding, an example that shows how quickly the advances are occurring would be to take a look at the brain's cells called neurons. In 1979 when "The Brain Book" was copyrighted, it was reported that ten billion neurons were found in the brain. Whereas, today in a book by researcher Daniel J Levitin called "The Brain On Music", the number of neurons reported to be in the brain are one hundred billion. Levitin also indicates the manner in which the neurons are connected to each other make the number of different thought or brain states each of us can have to be over 32,768 possibilities. Additionally, researchers have noted that extra neurons are present at birth that naturally lessen over time. Fascinating!

In order to simplify our understanding of how the brain works, Levitin used a wonderful example that should offer clarity for nonresearchers like myself. He defined the brain as follows:

Brain—like the computer's hardware (an organ of the body that is a collection of cells and water, chemicals and blood vessels, that reside in the skull)

Mind---like the computer's software that runs on the hardware. (a collection of our thoughts, hopes, desires, memories, beliefs, and experiences that define who we are as an individual)

******* Levitin believes the brain and mind are two parts of the same thing.**

Levitin also wrote in his book, "The Brain On Music" that a neurosurgeon once told Daniel Dennett (a prominent and persuasive spokesperson for functionalism) that he had operated on hundreds of people and seen hundreds of live, thinking brains, but he had never seen a THOUGHT." Mysterious, isn't it?



MUSIC AND THE BRAIN



The definition of music differs depending on the source. The scientific definition of music is as follows:

Full Definition of music. 1a: the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity: 1b: vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony. (Webster Dictionary)

Let us now turn the scientific definition of music into a thing of beauty by adding emotions from the hearts of mankind by redefining it.



"Where words leave off, music begins."

— Heinrich Heine



"Where words fail, music speaks."

— Hans Christian Andersen



"Music is the universal language of mankind."

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



"Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens."

— Maria Augusta von Trapp



"Music... will help dissolve your perplexities and purify your character and sensibilities, and in time of care and sorrow, will keep a fountain of joy alive in you."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer



"When I hear music, I fear no danger. I am invulnerable. I see no foe. I am related to the earliest times, and to the latest."

— Henry David Thoreau



"My heart, which is so full to overflowing, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary."

— Martin Luther



"Music is an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul."

— Johann Sebastian Bach

In an article called "How Music Affects the Brain" writer Jacob Berkowitz stated that neuroscientist, Robert Zatorre, pointed to Dr. Wilder Penfield (Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital) the institutes founder, who, over the course of hundreds of brain surgeries to relieve patients' debilitating seizures from 1934 to 1961 learned that his patients clearly had music hard-wired into their brains, with even the correct rhythm and timing. In Dr. Penfield's post-surgery notes, the title of the song each patient had heard during surgery was recorded. Also, Lola Cuddy, a music psychology pioneer stated

that Dr. Penfield's probing discoveries indicated that **"MUSIC IS REPRESENTED ALL THROUGH THE BRAIN, THERE'S NO MUSIC CENTRE"**.

Furthermore, in March 2013, McGill psychologist and leading mind-and-music researcher Daniel Levitin summarized the findings of more than 400 scientific studies and noted there's clinical evidence that playing and listening to music can boost our immune systems and reduce stress—in fact, listening to music was found to be more effective than prescription drugs in reducing a patient's pre-surgery anxiety.

Additionally, in the article written by Jacob Berkowitz, an example of high-profile congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (shot in 2011) was sighted as being helped with music therapy. After awakening from a coma unable to speak, it was discovered she could still sing. Therefore, music therapists used a technique called melodic intonation therapy (often used with stroke survivors) to rewire Ms. Giffords' language skills, using melody to shift her brain's language centre from the left hemisphere to the right one.

Also, Peter Russell stated in The Brain Book that "while in the womb, a child learns the sound of his mother's heartbeat and after birth the sound of a human heart will have a very soothing effect on the baby. It has been suggested that this also accounts for the universal appeal of rhythmic music to adults."

Researcher Levitin continued by stating, according to longtime researcher, Francis Crick that when we love a piece of music, it reminds us of other music we have heard and activates memory traces of emotional times in our lives. Your brain on music is all about connections.

Oliver Sacks, author of the book, "Musicophilia", shows how important it is to include music in programs with the goal of adding focus or depth to a presentation because of the impact it has upon the brain. He stated, "Music can pierce the heart directly; it needs no mediation. *Music, uniquely among the arts, is both completely abstract and profoundly emotional. It has no power to represent anything particular or external, but it has as unique power to express inner states.*"

MOTIVATION FOR ENGAGING THE ELDERLY MORE DEEPLY IN MUSIC

Ladies and gentlemen, after observing the residents' reactions to various musical programs at the nursing home, it soon became obvious that music brought out an array of emotions on a very personal level for each one. Although it was impossible to determine the source that caused tears, joy, shouting, laughter, or dancing feet, there was no doubt regarding the unique power it represented.

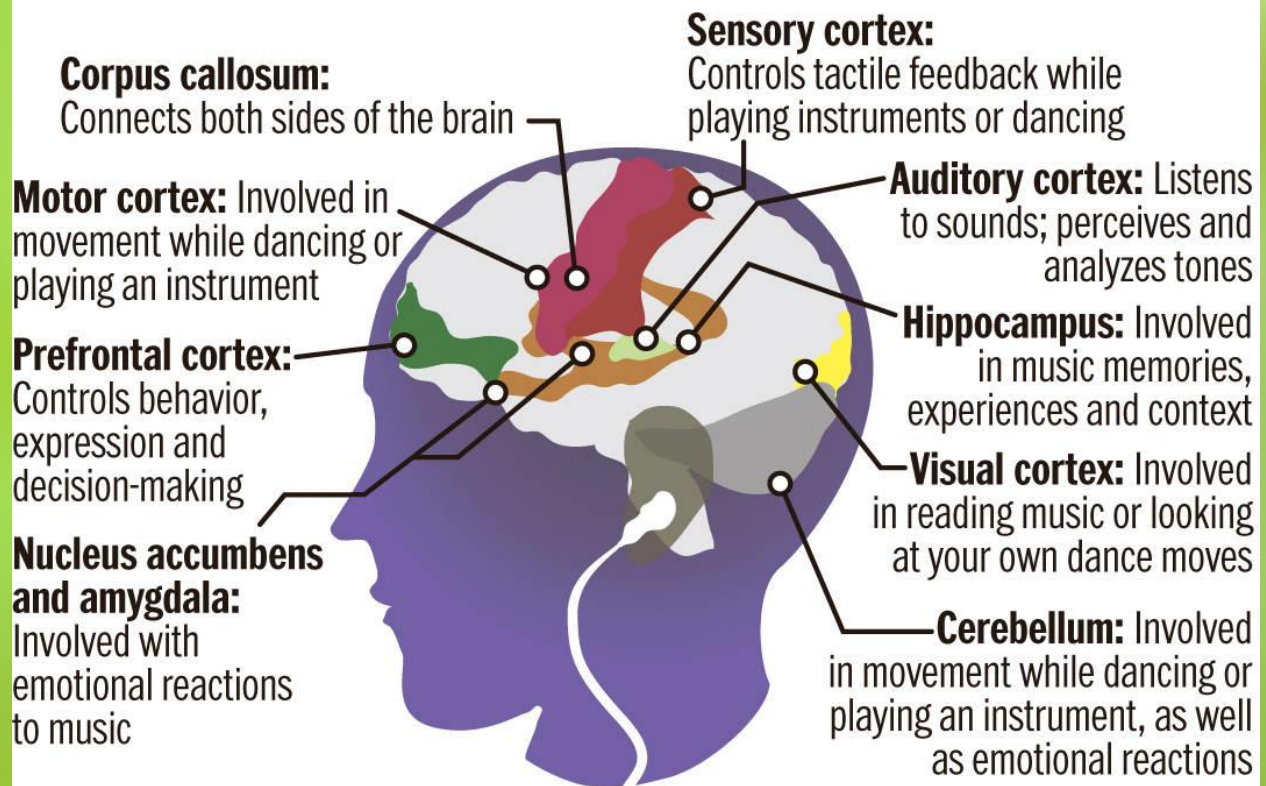
Thus, the writer was motivated to go on a mission of locating ways for the outside community to engage nursing home residents using a variety of techniques. After all, not only would the residents receive greater enjoyment, but those performing, as well.

Certainly, the goal of this collection was not to be a researcher or music therapist, but simply to find ways of touching the lives of sweet old people by encouraging them to sing with joy the songs they so dearly loved when in their youth. As a way of encouraging these techniques to spread worldwide, it was important to leave no stone unturned in the process.

Consequently, in order for you to understand how valuable it is to engage the elderly in music, please feast your eyes on a remarkable photograph that shows how the brain appears on music that will give you the foundation needed to realize why it benefited so immensely the nursing home residents in this collection.

Music and the brain

Playing and listening to music works several areas of the brain



SOURCE: Music for Young Children

DESERET NEWS GRAPHIC

***This is my father's world
He shines in all that's fair
In the rustling grass, I hear him pass
He speaks to me everywhere***





CHAPTER TWO


A SPRING IN YOUR STEP & JOY IN YOUR HEART

(Music and The Nursing Home Staff)

(VIDEO AT END OF CHAPTER)

How to Choose A Nursing Home

A SPRING IN YOUR STEP & A SONG IN YOUR HEART!



"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer;
it sings because it has a song."

~ Maya Angelou

As each day dawns, we often find ourselves probing wildly for answers to the mystery of our being without stopping to realize that we are held tightly in the hands of the Great Giver of Life who has provided a simple but powerful tonic for our fears and frustrations found in the raindrops softly calling our name on the window pane. If only we would pause in sacred idleness and listen to their patter for just one precious moment, the verse: **"This is my Father's world and to my listening ears all nature sings, and round me rings, the music of the spheres"** would suffice as a balm for the troubled soul; a time when the Spirit of God would enlighten us with the wisdom that "in Him we live and move and have our being."

As the drops of rain softly sparkle and shimmer in route to, what is often misunderstood as their final journey, we would soon surmise that the dark rich thirsty soil below has been eagerly anticipating their arrival for the purpose of a resurrection just resting in the darkness beneath; that of a tiny seed longing to come to life as a flower attired in queenly clothes and saturated with a rich aromatic fragrance. Instead of being lost forever, the raindrop has been transformed into a new and perfect body; a rebirth only possible because it arrived on earth in a shower with others rather than alone.

In this, our Father's world, there is nothing ever lost or neglected; for everything He creates has a purpose and reason; always to be resurrected in His time and for His pleasure.

Thus, accepting the fact that without God, we are helpless human beings lacking answers, just like the birds, we would greet each day with a spring in our step and a song in our heart; whether in work or play. Although our part in the whole scheme of things may seem minute, in the end, our actions will become the resurrection of hope for a better tomorrow in the hearts and minds of the vulnerable elderly residents we serve. Paul stresses the importance of the role we all play in life by stating in **1 Corinthians 12:12, "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ."**

When analyzing this Scripture in the light of those caring for the elderly, this means that the owners and administrators of healthcare facilities are only as successful as the staff they hire, lead, and empower to do their jobs. Literally, once again referring back to the journey of the raindrop above, attitudes of staff members are dependent upon those making decisions at the head whose actions stream down as creative moisture into the body resembling the drop of water on the window pane on its journey to the parched ground below. An open-door policy along with walking among the people hired to make the three shifts in a healthcare facility efficiently run, will not only demonstrate support, but send the message of compassion to residents and employees as well. Having chosen staff members that truly love working with elderly people, coupled with a thorough training program, will serve as a winning formula and work for the good of everyone involved.

Thus, if we approach our day realizing answers are not within our ability to understand, but we still have a song to sing, the soil beneath our feet will be more fertile and new flowers of grace will bloom forever touching the hearts of the sweet old folks everywhere.

Dear readers, as I have completed the numerous collections found on devotionalembbers.com, the importance of every member of the staff in reaching the goals set out by those in charge of a healthcare facility have become more vivid as each year passed. This fact is substantiated by simply observing the behavior of the staff members as they go about the business of each day. If they are in an environment where an administrator makes them feel special and important, like the raindrops described above, there will be an obvious spring in their step and a song in their heart that the residents will reap benefits from on a daily basis. Additionally, the atmosphere will become electric when the staff members serve the residents as an organized team and saturate them with showers of grace filled blessings.

In order to graphically demonstrate how a scene unfolds in the presence of wild and infectious joy, it is now time to witness the delight on both the faces of Glendale Gardens staff members and residents alike.

Administrator Keith walking blindly into a water fight at OK Corral among his gun slinging Glendale Gardens residents and.....



**RECEIVING A GRAND AND THOROUGH
SOAKING!**



FOLLOWED CLOSELY BEHIND BY LYNN, HEAD OF NURSING



ANOTHER DAY! ANOTHER SOAKING!



**DIFFERENT DAY IN THE LIFE OF
ADMINISTRATOR KEITH! TAKING PART IN
THE SPRINKLER CLUB ABIDING BY THE
RULE, "TO BE A MEMBER, YOU MUST GO
THROUGH THE WATER SPRINKLER
TWICE!"**



**QUESTION: What value does Keith
place on the activity department?**

**ANSWER:
He allocates funds and
considers activities an integral part of each
resident's care plan!**



MEET BRIAN, SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR, MOVING WHEELCHAIRS ON AN OUTING AT FELLOWS LAKE. YOU WILL SEE HIM EVERYWHERE; OUT OF HIS OFFICE AMONG THOSE HE SERVES BY KEEPING HIS FINGER DIRECTLY ON THE PLUSE.



CINDY, STAFF MEMBER FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE, OUT AMONG THE RESIDENTS DRESSED UP AND PARTICIPATING AT A HALLOWEEN PARTY.

Let the good times roll.....

**A SPRING IN THEIR STEP
AND A SONG IN THEIR HEART
LOOKS LIKE THIS!**



**LYNN HEAD OF NURSING
SHOUTS FOR JOY AS AN
EXAMPLE TO HER STAFF.
AND...LOOK AT THE RESULTS!**



**THOSE NURSES
ROCK! THEY
LOVE THEIR
RESIDENTS!**



**HAPPY MEALS COME
FROM THE KITCHEN!**



***DRUM ROLLS FOR CLEAN
DISHES!***

THE ENTIRE NURSING HOME SPARKLES!



JAMES FROM
MAINTENANCE
DANCES WITH
DAM! DAILY
FUN!





**THE THERAPY WON'T MISS OUT ON
THE ACTION! WORK IS A
BALL OF FUN!**



LET'S SHAKE OUR BOOTY!

***AND THE BEAT GOES ON AND
ON! LET'S ROCK THE HOUSE!***



AND...RESIDENT DON SMILES!





*A STAFF WITH A SPRING IN
THEIR STEP AND JOY IN
THEIR HEART...*

BLESSED RESIDENTS

***Team work means
everyone is on the
same page
regarding patient
care; a win/win
for both the staff
and residents.***

**Results: A wholistic
approach regarding
patient care by staff
members will mean
happy well cared for
residents. Each day
will be a time of
restoration.**

- 1) Clean rooms will sparkle like the stars in the sky that will not only deliver a message of pride in the task performed but be evident to the occupants that people care about the space in which they live.
- 2) Activity departments will be recognized by those in charge as important to the health and welfare of the residents and a primary factor in the care provided by the nursing staff. Instead of thinking of this department as "just occupying time playing bingo," it will become the central hub for those residing there; an integral part of the healthcare plan for each individual, thus, making certain the activity director/s are a part of every critical team meeting. The insulting words, "They are just activity directors" will never be uttered again but be provided with an ample budget to accommodate the ability of those in charge for coloring outside the lines. Having taken this approach, the community at large will soon be aware of how alive their loved ones feel because of the electricity permeating the air. The success of this department depends

on hiring energetic people that love old folks and possess the willingness to try new and exciting activities based on the needs of those residing there.

- 3) Compassionate aids will be trained to give showers to residents using such expert hands on the fragile skin of the aging bodies, that they will respond with a resounding, "Yes" when asked if they desire to be scheduled for a shower today.
- 4) Training will be offered to a kitchen staff that has them up to the task of preparing food for residents that have created recipes their own children still cherish today. (Reasonable \$ allotment per resident to assure nourishing meals as a primary goal; resulting in a delicious fare, not institutional food.)
- 5) Therapists that are considered by residents to have the "magic touch" and well-trained ears to listen to their stories of "times gone by," repeated with every session, will be on board.
- 6) Those that care for building maintenance with efficiency and pay special attention to the needs of the residents; along with showing equal concern for their beloved wall decorations, will turn an ordinary room into an extraordinary living space.

RESULTS! RESULTS!

EVERYONE WINS!

Let us now take these comments to application level and watch what happens when one staff member named Jesse not only does her job as a therapist, but also goes way beyond the lines as it applies to a resident's care. First please note that step one was intently listening with compassion to the longing a resident expressed during the course of one therapy session that propelled her into action. Instead of simply performing her job responsibilities as stated on an employee document, her desire to reach out in a meaningful way took wings within her heart. In other words, she became the raindrop that allowed the love in her own heart to trickle down into fertile soil where the resurrection of a man's dream was waiting to be activated.

Thus, not having an answer in her own mind, the song she sang to others was heard and answered in the form of team work; one drop instantly became a gentle shower that would provide moisture for years to come; the birth of a program called "Swan Song" designed to impact residents' lives in an enormous way.

Read now how resident Garry's longing became an extraordinary reality; one that would impact his heart forever.



“OPERATION SWAN SONG”

(A person's final public performance or professional activity before retirement:)

(“he has decided to make this tour his swan song”)

When you arise each day with a spring in your step and joy in your heart, the opportunities that unfold will not only be limitless, but extraordinary in nature; so spectacular that a life may be touched forever. Folks, it was all because a physical therapist modeled this behavior while working with a resident at Glendale Gardens Nursing Home, that **“OPERATION SWAN SONG”** was born; whose mission, if possible, is to honor the last requests of the critically ill residing there.

No matter what capacity an individual is hired to accomplish as an employee of a health care facility, there is always an opportunity to learn from these wise elderly people that have successfully traveled life's highways and byways. Certainly, it requires only a short amount of time around those that reside there to realize they have an uncanny ability to recognize when their earthly journey is nearing its conclusion; this fact, over time, proven through their comments and questions.

Thus, as resident Garry B. carried on a spirited conversation with therapist Jesse, the words he proclaimed, *“If only..... If only..... If only I could see the beautiful landscape of Ha Ha Tonka State Park just one more time”*, took on a life of their own. Having created the windows and catalogues for the St. Louis based store called Famous and Barr during his career as a designer, his love of color and textures had lasted a life time; causing him to absolutely adore Autumn's glorious display that covered the

hillsides in this wonderful park every year. Many times, when reminiscing about his favorite trips to Missouri's finest festivals and landmarks, although he held an appreciation for them all, it was the landscape of Ha Ha Tonka State Park that had forever captured his heart.

Therefore, finding Garry's conversation playing repeatedly in her mind, therapist Jesse felt led to make his last request known to the administrator and activity director; resulting in a barrage of conversations among an array of staff members around the question, "How can we make this last wish come true for Garry?"

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an example of the stuff that makes dreams come true, for not just one person, but the multitudes; all because employees realize the importance of the role they play each and every day in the lives of the sweet old folks they serve. Jesse did not have an answer but had a song to sing; causing a dream to become reality for a deserving resident.

Thus, when Garry learned that his wish to soak in the beauty of his favorite park just one more time was to be granted the very next day, his behavior was beyond description. His face absolutely glowed as he learned that his friend Tom, resident friend Driscoll, Administrator Keith, Activity Director Tim, and Nurse Cindy would be accompanying him on this special occasion; the final request of his life.

Folks, the thoughts that bounced around in Garry's brain during the night, must have resembled the dance of the sugar plum fairies. Certainly, all of us have experienced the inability to get a good night's rest due to the anticipation of what tomorrow might hold. The reel that played in his mind must have been filled with scenes stored up in his treasure chest of Ha Ha Tonka State Park from the many journeys enjoyed over the years. Would the colors be as rich as he remembered? Would the scintillating fragrance of the foliage be equal to those he breathed in previously? And...Oh, those sweet little creatures that scampered everywhere! Would they still be as active, mischievous, and plentiful?

Garry soaking in the beauty.



SURROUNDED BY FRIENDS



ONE MAN'S DREAM CAME TRUE



If a resident doesn't have an after death guide on file, this can be used as a model.

My Wish List - After Death Guide

I am providing the following information to close friends and relatives to assist with the handling of my affairs in the event of my death.

Personal Details

Full name:

ID number:

Where I have placed my will:

Where I keep my ID Card/ID Book:

Organ/tissue donation / entire body for research:

Arrangements for organ/tissue/body donation have already been made with:

Organ Donor Foundation/Tissue Bank/Medical School

Living Will:

Guardianship of Children:

My Pet's Needs:

Please make an announcement of my death on Facebook/twitter/WhatsApp/other, e.g. notify my old high school Facebook page:

Friends, relatives, neighbors and colleagues to be contacted in the event of my death, (add more pages, for a funeral guest list):

Name:

Relationship to me

Contact details, tel/e-mail

Funeral Details

Payment for funeral:

Name of burial scheme/funeral insurance:

Financial Institution where policy is held:

Policy number:

If more than one funeral policy, provide details:

If you prefer a specific type of coffin - provide details:

Requests regarding burial / cremation / placement of ashes

If you own a burial plot or mausoleum / ash niche, where is the deed kept?

Provide cemetery name, address, contact details and plot number:

Name and address of preferred cemetery / memorial park:

What I want done with my ashes: interned / memorial wall / buried with spouse or child / kept at home / planted with a tree / scattered...

Ash details and final resting place:

Preferred funeral home / funeral director:

I would like the following people to act as pallbearers:

1. Name:

Contact details:

2. Name

Contact details:

3. Name

Contact details:

4. Name

Contact details:

5. Name

Contact details:

6. Name

Contact details:

7. Name

Contact details:

8. Name

Contact details:

9. Name

Contact details:

10. Name

Contact details:

I want my funeral / end of life ceremony to be religious / secular, provide details:

I prefer not to have a formal service, but rather...

I would like the ceremony to be at my place of worship / retirement village / family home / graveside / crematorium / funeral venue - provide details:

I want the service to be run by a particular speaker/minister/priest/imam/rabbi/other:

I wish to have an open casket / closed casket / no coffin present:

I wish to be dressed in:

I wish to be buried / cremated with (favorite possession):

I want the following to be written on my ash niche / tombstone / grave marker:

I have the following preferences:

Readings:

Prayers:

Music:

My favorite song is:

Eulogy Notes (to help with a eulogy speech)

Milestones in my life:

My philosophy / causes I strongly believe in:

People I want to thank, my favorite things, what I love most, what I live for:

Funniest moments:

I have a special message that I would like to be read at my end of life ceremony:

I give my sincerest thanks to those special people in my life that I have been able to trust with this information. May your continued journey on this earth plain be filled with inspiration, prosperity and love.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

CHOOSING THE RIGHT NURSING HOME FOR YOUR LOVED ONE

One of the hardest decisions you will ever have to make in your life is choosing the right nursing home for your loved one. When and if this time ever rolls around, you will immediately recognize that your roles have switched. The person, or parent, that raised you and offered wisdom throughout your childhood suddenly is no longer capable of dealing with the task of performing his/her own daily living requirements and now needs your attention; a situation that feels not only strange but very painful.

Then, when you have finally accepted the fact that it is time to choose a facility that your loved one will call home, a new wave of terror rushes through every fiber of your being. Having been thrust into the role of evaluating the facilities, what criteria do you use in reaching the correct decision?

Many people in this situation get caught up in a nursing home's interior decorating and mistakenly use it as the major tool in determining that it must be as efficient and loving as it appears. However, the old saying, "All that glitters in this world is not gold", suddenly should take front and center in your mind.

So, you shout loudly, "HOW DO I GO ABOUT MAKING THE CORRECT CHOICE?"

Folks, that is exactly why the following 30-minute interview between Administrator Keith Steenbergen and Activity Director Tim Trafford has been included in this chapter. Since both have been vastly successful in the field, the writer felt it was imperative that you have answers to as many questions as possible regarding this important issue.

Given the relevance of your task at hand, it is the writer's belief that you will reap great rewards from the fountain of knowledge imparted to you by these two experienced individuals. Since the writer has seen them up close and personal every Thursday for many years and has observed them masterfully deal with all aspects of residents' needs, it was an obvious choice that you be offered the privilege of hearing their viewpoints on the importance of team building and how it relates to your loved one's life.



Keith Steenbergen
Administrator



Listen now.



Tim Trafford
Activity Director

LET ME BE A GIVER

*God, let me be a giver, and not one
Who only takes and takes unceasingly;
God, let me give, so that not just my own,
But others' lives as well, may richer be.*

*Let me give out whatever I may hold
Of what material things life may be heaping,
Let me give raiment, shelter, food, or gold
If these are, through Thy bounty, in my keeping.*

*But greater than such fleeting treasures, may
I give my faith and hope cheerfulness,
Belief and dreams and joy and laughter gay
Some lonely soul to bless.*

(By: Mary Carolyn Davies)

**"A bird doesn't sing because
it has an answer; it sings
because it has a song."**

By: Maya Angelou





CHAPTER THREE

LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES

Engaging the Elderly

LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES



ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2: 13-14)*



Painting by Tissot: Shepherd and the Angels

Ladies and gentlemen, please study the amazing painting by Tissot above and note the description in Scripture from Luke of a great company of heavenly host that appeared with the angel to announce the birth of Jesus. Although scholars debate whether the singing came from the voices of angels or other heavenly beings, we can be assured that a group or choir announced the birth of our Lord.

Also, it gives us an indication of what God thinks about the importance of singing as a group of people together in praise to him. Isn't it thrilling to know that those lowly shepherds, viewed as outcasts in the eyes of society, were offered the gift of hearing the musical sounds of heaven that awaits the ears of every Believer someday?

Certainly, Scripture offers numerous verses that either depict a group of people praising God in song or encourages every individual to do the same on a daily basis. Thus, a choir of worshipers sang at every service in the Jewish Temple as a part of the religious ceremony, and also as a response to receiving blessings. Additionally, research is filled with descriptions of the role music and dance played at Jewish wedding ceremonies held in private residences. Also, as the children of Israel climbed the hill up to the Temple, the Psalms of Ascent flowed as music from their lips in praise to the Father. Isaiah 55:12 substantiates the importance of music in God's mind with the verse: **"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."**

Another, more current example of the significance of music to the survival of the human race occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States when slavery existed, motivating groups of African Americans to sing together the words from the spiritual song "Go Down Moses":

*"Go down, Moses
'Way down in Egypt land,
Tell ole Pharaoh,
To let my people go."*

Then, later on during the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans would lift their voices with great purpose and sing the beautiful old spiritual, "We Shall Over Come".

*"We shall overcome,
we shall overcome,
we shall overcome someday!
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe
we shall overcome someday!"*

Folks, there is simply no way to measure the impact of singing these spirituals during this cruel time when freedom for these children of God did not exist, as it related to their very survival individually, and as a people. They were not only lifting their voices up to God as a cry for assistance and courage but allowing music to bring the world's attention to their plight in the process.

Given the fact that Holy Script is replete with verses that include music and dance as ways to praise and communicate to God, the writer went on a search to locate the benefits of singing in a group for all of us. Not only is there a magnificence attached to the sounds of musical strains saturating every square inch of a large sanctuary, but a mystery as to why they address each worshiper's brain in a customized manner. Researchers are fascinated by the human brain's ability to enrich a single note of music for each listener in a way that is amazing and according to need. Perhaps this puzzle is due to the mystery still not uncovered of the location in the brain from where emotions emanate.

In this collection, the focus will be on benefits received from music by individual listeners, as well as those performing in a large group for an audience. Additionally, ways to engage the elderly in music will be the thrust of every category explored. Above all, the point will be stressed to remember that

singing does not require a person to be a professional or even possess the ability to carry a tune. Since God hears our voice in perfect harmony, *"Sing when the Spirit says sing!"*

An article written by Stacy Horn that was published in Time Magazine reveals some astounding evidence of the impact and benefits music has on man in a variety of ways. Horn stated: *"When you sing, musical vibrations move through you, altering your physical and emotional landscape. Group singing, for those who have done it, is the most exhilarating and transformative of all. It takes something incredibly intimate, a sound that begins inside you, shares it with a roomful of people and it comes back as something even more thrilling: harmony."*

Ladies and gentlemen, if you have ever enjoyed a concert or cantata sung by a choir, Horn's remarks should be easily internalized. Repeatedly, this writer has witnessed waves of jubilation sweep throughout the congregation as a body of voices are lifted in praise to the Lord. Even more fascinating is to observe the body language of the listeners; depending on how the brain is receiving the strains. Sometimes, tears of joy or sadness will flow unabashedly down their cheeks, while a gentle shower of blessings appears to have relaxed the physical being of others. Several will even have hands raised in the air as a praise to God and will be swaying back and forth as a demonstration of their feelings. Folks, there is nothing more precious than to soak in the reaction of a sweet old saint quietly listening to the strains of a familiar hymn with so much emotion that one can almost see peace like a river gently flowing as it saturates the soul.

Thus, as a constant reminder of the importance in lifting our voices in praise to our Creator, let us commit to memory the Scripture from Psalm 138:5 that reads, *"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord---"*. All it requires to establish the importance for this memorization process is to bring to mind the moment our fetters fell off while kneeling at the foot of the cross; a time so important to the Father that at the happening, all the heavenly hosts broke forth in song out of gladness that a soul had just been forgiven.

Certainly, this writer recalls the reaction of her own earthly father after he had witnessed his youngest daughter's decision to give her life to Christ. He was so full of joy on the return trip home from church that, after crossing the Elk Creek bridge, he proceeded to honk his car horn for a half a mile up a hill to Grandpa and Grandma's home, waking them out of a sound sleep. Then, after getting them up, our family gathered in their living room for a time of singing and rejoicing. Since Scripture describes the heavenly hosts as breaking forth in song when a child of God asks for forgiveness of sin, let us add to this special evening, the setting being that of an ordinary country home, along with voices emanating from the celestial city. How exciting! And.... all those repenting of sin receive the same response! How thrilling to internalize the fact that our Heavenly Father loves each one of us to that extent!

Large Group Singing for Health Care Facilities

The method most community members throughout the world choose as their way of ministering to the elderly population residing in health care facilities, is performing as a group; mainly at Christmas time. This being the most frequent method of choice, it seemed only natural to use this technique as a starting point for music engagement.

In other words, rather than the community group performing for the elderly people being the entire focus, how might the listener be more involved and literally become a part of the program? What would be some techniques visiting performers could use to engage the listener?

In order to accomplish this task, it was obvious that a pilot needed to be conducted through the cooperation of a single large performing group so that several techniques could be applied or adjusted for the creation of a model.

Therefore, Schweitzer United Methodist Church choir director, Cheryll Moll, was contacted to see if she would join in the effort by using a group already visiting nursing homes called,

“The Senior Saints & Joy Pickers”. This particular choir of approximately 25-30 retired individuals used a combination of voices accompanied by musical instruments that had a reputation for playing lively music that caused toes to tap. Thus, after receiving a nod from everyone involved, the project was off and running.

Ladies and gentlemen, after laying the groundwork, it took only one performance to realize that we had struck gold. In order for you to be able to take advantage of the model, please now enjoy the photographs of this wonderful happening.

GATHER THE RESIDENTS!

- 1) Talk About the Event prior to happening:** As the date for the performance nears, remind the residents that it is almost time to hear the group. Tell them how wonderful the music was in the past. This creates interest and gives them something to look forward to in their lives. They will also invite their family members to attend.
- 2) Needs of the performing group:** Prior to the day of the performance, make contact with the music director or person in charge to inquire about their needs. (Number of participants, chairs, piano) Then have the space set up well in advance of their arrival. You can even ask about the pieces they will be performing and have fun practicing some of the songs with the residents in advance.
- 3) 15 minutes prior to the performance,** go from room to room and gather the residents. Remember, the aging process causes the elderly to forget. Even though they want to come, they will not recall the day or time. Think your calendar of events posted in their rooms or on a board in the hallway is enough???? Think again! Go get the residents!
- 4) Activity Director:** Introduce your performing group in a way that will not only welcome them, but also remind your audience to sing, clap, and move in time with the pieces of music. This not only engages the audience, but also shows respect to those performing. After all, they have given time prior to visiting the facility practicing the chosen selections. Groups want to perform at facilities where engagement takes place. Proof: Watch the reactions on the faces of the performers when they spot the residents taking part!



Activity Director Tim Introducing the
Senior Saints & Joy Pickers



SCHWEITZER SENIOR SAINTS & JOY PICKERS

*SCHWEITZER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Springfield, Missouri*



*MUSIC DIRECTOR CHERYLL MOLL INTRODUCES
EACH SELECTION!*



Anticipation



LET THE SINGING BEGIN !



And...sing they did!



*Songs the residents sang when in
their 20's were selected.*



They picked and sang!



The residents were
given: **INSTRUMENTS**



And...then what happened?



Watch the brain on music!



Trouble & Double Trouble!





Go
Girl!



And...The Beat Goes On &
On & On!



DANCING & NOISE!



CLAPPING & JOY



TENDER MOMENTS



TOUCHED MY HEART!

Makes me want
to sing!



AMAZING GRACE!



*THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE
ME!*





SAVORING THE MOMENT!

Think this is wonderful? It has just begun! Enjoy the program unfold in the remaining chapters. You will see dancing, the birth of a nursing home choir, videos and those old saints lifting the rafters! Who says old people are over the hill? Don't believe it for a moment!

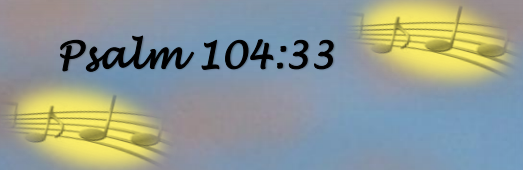


CHAPTER FOUR

IN ROOM SINGING

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live...

Psalm 104:33



IN
ROOM
SINGING



Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord....

Ephesians 5:19 New International Version (NIV)

Occasionally, as the cold winter winds continue to howl through the branches of the tall oak trees, the beautiful season of winter that is an essential stage of rest and restoration for nature, seems to last a bit too long, prompting your mind to go on a journey of remembrance; recalling a time when the landscape was covered by a myriad of soft flower petals as far as the eye could see; accompanied by the sound of the buzzing bees as they enjoyed the sweet nectar of life.

Then, when old man winter serves another blast of frigid air as a reminder that his grip is still firm, your desire for the change of seasons has to be revamped into being satisfied with a mere sample of spring's arrival. Instead of the big picture of spring in full bloom, you may have softly muttered, "Oh, how wonderful it would be to spot among the dead leaves, the fresh green daffodil shoots, or to witness a flash of blue feathers and an orange breast sitting on a branch right outside the window in full song."

Patience my heart! Spring will soon arrive in all its splendor; a time when the air will be filled with the promise of new beginnings; when the birds will call to you tweeting the message, "Enjoy the sweetness of the land, but remember always that you own it not! Savor the cherished glimpses that herald its approach, but wait patiently for the Almighty's timing, trusting in His wisdom; and.... then the Great Creator will bless you one morning with a royal gift softly nestled in a snowy white blanket outside your window."



Ladies and gentlemen, at this point, the writer will use the above analogy in order to relate a personal experience that helped her get through a very painful time in life; that of saying a long goodbye to a loving father stricken with Alzheimer's Disease.

Just like the example above that described the desire for the arrival of a beautiful spring season that had been permanently committed to memory, as a daughter, she found herself recalling a former image of a loving parent that had been fun loving, humorous, compassionate, and rock solid in every situation.

However, peering into the shiny blue eyes that had once looked back at his child with adoration and love, it was obvious that something had gone horribly wrong. Certainly, the statement, "The eyes are the windows to the mind," could be perfectly applied. Their focus was gone, and had been replaced by a dull empty stare; one void of all emotions and feelings.

Thus, as the clock ticked at a snail's pace for 9 years, the realization that the full measure of the person he had once been to the family would not resurface, had been replaced with the search for small glimpses of his former personality. And...so it was. Simply by adjusting expectations, an appreciation for each fleeting moment where obvious coherence appeared was savored just like the first signs of spring.

Folks, it was during one of these moments of time spent beside him that a discovery was made regarding music and the brain. One evening as the family was watching a program on the history of the old hymn, "Amazing Grace", (his favorite), soft giggling could be heard from the recliner where he sat. His brain that had been adversely impacted by Alzheimer's Disease, suddenly came to life. Tears streamed from his moon-shaped eyes, accompanied by an enormous smile, as he followed right along with the performer; remembering the words to every verse. When my mother witnessed this happening, her comment was, "He is just happy"; a common behavior she recognized when he was being moved by the Spirit throughout his years as a minister.

Just like the reaction to the fragile crocus peeping its head through the snow, music allowed his family to enjoy a precious glimpse into the heart of a loving father once again. It had acted like a can opener to the brain for a soul that was being held prisoner by an ugly disease; a grand moment in time that felt serene, immortal, and infinitely encouraging for the entire family.

Dear readers, it is with great joy that this writer can announce to you that at the close of the 9th year, a miraculous spring arrived in all its glory for my family on December 26th with splendor that could only be compared to that of a landscape adorned with the fragrance of thousands of blossoms; a gift from the Creator that will be at home in our hearts for all eternity.

Instead of the time of his passing being one of sadness, our Lord chose to bless the family with a gift of remembrance that would demonstrate an example of His love for all children on earth; one that could be labeled, "The Lord; He is truly my Shepherd."

In contrast to the empty, emotionless eyes that had been a part of his countenance throughout those traumatic years, my earthly father suddenly came to himself with such clarity that he tried to pronounce each family member's first name, followed by the word, "LOVE." The familiar commonplace blank stare that had been ever present, had been replaced with shiny blue eyes that hungrily soaked in every feature of the faces that surrounded his bed. Then, bowing his own head, his spirit was carried to his heavenly home on the wings of glory to the tune of "Amazing Grace" that was sung by his loved ones.

Believe with all your hearts, folks, that no spring will ever equal the one supplied by God on that cold dark day in December when He chose to demonstrate how much he loved this writer and her family. Truly, the zest for life and hope for rejuvenation that lives within the soul had been rewarded with a brief, but astounding glimpse of the eternal spring waiting for all those that choose it.

Thus, having experienced this agonizing, but enlightening situation, the number of moments spent recounting the mystery of the happenings that unfolded have been numerous; especially regarding my own father's reaction when his brain was on music. Then, after reading an article titled, "*Music and*



Dementia: Does Music Therapy Help Reverse the Effects of Dementia in the Elderly found on the website, "Assisted Living Today", many questions were answered. All things considered, the following paragraph from that article described the journey experienced by a loving father and his family when having to deal with the ugliness of Alzheimer's Disease:

"Beyond the physical aspects of aging lies the impact on the mental state of a person suffering from dementia. Due to the decrease in short term memory, struggles to communicate and reason lead many to become depressed and easily agitated. These men and women become like children. They feel trapped in a mind and body that is not capable of expressing itself or being independent. This leads to a frustration that manifests itself in childlike acting out. It is often these symptoms of dementia that are the hardest for caregivers to handle. The combination of music and dementia has been shown to calm this agitation and increase social interaction. The realization that their minds are still holding on to memories of the life they had, also helps ease depression. Music helps them to grasp at something that makes them feel whole again, even if for a short time. A person with a strong mental state is able to respond to other therapies and lessens the weight of their care for their doctors, facilities and family."

Ladies and gentlemen, it is impossible to have gone on a 9-year journey like that of my family without experiencing a need to reach out to others treading the same painful, rocky pathways. Therefore, when it was decided that a collection would be offered on Devotional Embers regarding music engagement and the elderly, a desire to include bedridden residents was so strong that the "In Room Singing Program", was born.

Although not every member of a large performing group feels comfortable in singing to residents in this type of situation, you will find that it just takes a few to start the ball rolling. Thus, after the Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers had concluded their program one day, some courageous members of the group felt up to the task. Therefore, it was decided to start with just a few rooms and allow the program to take wings.

Consequently, at the conclusion of the Schweitzer choir's performance, three residents were assigned to each singer, to be accompanied by a staff member of the health care facility. The odds for a successful outcome will increase two-fold if the bedridden individual identifies a familiar face when the singers enter the room. Additionally, it will demonstrate appreciation and importance to those participating. If an activity director leaves the group performing (large or small) on their own, the potential for a positive outcome is lessened. The formula for success is as follows: (Engagement occurs when all hands are on deck; meaning staff members encourage the participants to clap and sing through example.) Don't be shy! Clap loudly! Sing, even if not in tune! "ROCK THE HOUSE!"

In order for you to internalize how the residents received the in-room music program, photographs have been supplied for your enjoyment. My friends, the experience was so powerful for the writer that she frequently had to step outside the room and wipe tears. Having walked down the rugged path with a father suffering the same illness, to witness the joy and clarity the residents demonstrated when singing occurred was truly overwhelming. As you study the following photographs, please note the comments made by each resident.



Lynette & Alice singing to Connie

Look at Connie's face! Does it get any better than this? It brought the Scripture she reads everyday to life. Do you think the saints & angels joined them in praise to the Lord? Oh, joy!

Garry was next!



As they sang, Lynette touched him with a blessing. Since the older we get, the less we are touched, how precious! What was his reaction?



He sat in the doorway & listened as they sang to someone else, calling out, "How beautiful!"

Dennis sang!



These two residents broke into
song through words and
harmonica! She knew every
word to each song!



"How beautiful! Thank you! So lovely!"

In closing, the words of a resident that was suffering from dementia accompanied by anger offered a perfect ending for this chapter. Upon entering her room, the agitated way she rocked her entire body, gave all present fair warning as to what to expect. Under no circumstance was she in the mood to be pleasant! Enter at your own risk was the missive received.

However, as the musician began strumming her instrument, accompanied by the words to a beautiful hymn, the face of the troubled resident went through a transformation like never witnessed before. Her anger appeared to literally melt away as an ethereal brilliance took its place. The hostile eyes became as bright as the morning sun, followed by these words, "Oh, thank you so much. My prayers have been answered today. I longed for angels to descend from above with a song of thanksgiving. And...it has happened. Truly beautiful! The Lord has sent me a blessing today."

Ladies and gentlemen, the soul of an individual that was being held prisoner by a horrible disease had been given relief... if only for a few moments. The iron bars had been broken for the heart of a person that had once operated from a sound mind.

Let us always remember that gifts that seem too small to those on the outside, differ depending on the eyes of the beholder.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

(Ephesians 2: 10)





CHAPTER FIVE

NURSING HOME CHOIR



**"I WILL SING UNTO THE
LORD A NEW SONG."**

PSALM 104: 33

"Generally, bird songs become richer and more varied as a bird ages and gets more experienced." (Birds & Blooms, 2014)

Imagine all the sweet old folks that as mere children, while deeply engaged in their own thoughts, rambled into a copse of trees and were suddenly awakened by the enchanting sound of birds singing as a choir in rich perfect harmony. Unmindful of the strangers below, the notes from these feathered friends were vibrating the air under the direction of their Creator; warbling because they simply had a song to sing; a gift bestowed on them as a part of the Master's plan that included man.

Without realizing it, this strange but enchanting rhapsody was serving as a beautiful backdrop for these children, now elderly people, to sit and listen to their own thoughts; a process that would form the foundation on which they built as they journeyed through life. Yet, when all was said and done, the most beautiful and mysterious development was the song that was playing at this moment inside their young minds that would live within their souls for all

eternity; music that would always be present and ready to give expression and allow them to articulate thoughts and feelings when all else failed during the winter season of life.

Given the above quote from “Birds & Blooms”, what do you think life might be like for the residents in nursing homes if society viewed them in the same light; meaning the belief that human beings lives became richer as each year passed? Can you visualize the value society would place on their importance as a resource in making decisions for the good of all? Certainly, the hallways in healthcare facilities would loudly echo from the sounds of community members’ busy feet moving from room to room as they sought the company of residents living there.

Thus, due to the impact of the aging process upon the body; a time when most elderly individual’s lives don’t seem large enough for their souls, it is music that will bring forth within them feelings that are longing to surface; especially in an environment that has become closed in and deficient due to physical deterioration.

Therefore, music engagement will allow the sweet old folks to trust in the sorrowful times as much as the joyful ones stored in their treasure chest of memories. Creating ways for music to resurface in their lives through opportunities to participate, instead of being one dimensional only, the result will be that of both receiving and giving as they did when living on their own out in the world.

Consequently, as the study on music engagement unfolded, creative ways to encourage audience participation rapidly became the focal point. Not only did each resident keep time with his/her own instrument, but the result of the brainstorming sessions regarding such was the birth of **“A NURSING HOME CHOIR!”**

NURSING HOME CHOIR

As the Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers from Springfield, Missouri were performing during the opening day of the study on how to engage the residents in music, the first thought of forming a Glendale Gardens Nursing Home choir became a potential program. The thinking was that it could be used as another mechanism for deeper engagement, as well as a way to provide an opportunity for a small group of people to be on the “giving” end with the possibility of traveling to other sites within the community. If the latter became a reality, the community could be offered a different view of nursing home residents when observing them in the atmosphere where they used to function before needing assistance with daily care.

Therefore, it took only a brief time of scanning the group of residents gathered to see who was truly singing with gusto and totally into the renditions being performed. Then, by simply moving closer to potential candidates so the voice could be heard, the dream of a nursing home choir became a reality. When Activity Directors Tim Trafford and Melody Childers heard about

the concept of a choir, they became a part of the team and began soliciting interested residents. After obtaining 7 individuals that willingly volunteered to take part in this one of a kind opportunity, plans were ready to be developed.



Driscoll



Don



Bessie



Lela



Ann



Viola



Jeramy

PLAN OF ACTION

- 1) First, a volunteer from the Schweitzer Chancel Choir was contacted to be the music director. (Volunteer: Carla)

- 2) The director then located an individual to play the piano for practices. (Myrna & Brad)
- 3) Once a week, a practice was scheduled by the Activity Director that would complement his calendar. (This was done so the choir members would not miss anything.) It was decided that practice would last one hour each time.
- 4) The nursing home volunteer now in charge of the choir then contacted the Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers director to see if her small group could sing 2 songs and be backed up by them when they performed the next time at the facility.
- 5) The two songs selected were chosen because they were already familiar to the residents and had a simple tune to assure comfort. These were songs the residents would have sung in their early twenties.
- 6) The Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers director provided CDs and printed copies of the renditions chosen so the nursing home choir could practice it exactly right to assure that everyone would be on the same page the big day of the performance. In the event an accompanist had a conflict in scheduling, the CD could be used as a substitute with great ease. Instead of a piano, a keyboard was used to offer flexibility in the selection of a small private area where practice would occur.
- 7) Lyrics for the songs were typed in large print and given to each resident to avoid memory issues. The copies were retained at the conclusion of each practice for use the next time. Since a few residents wanted to practice in their rooms, extra copies were always available. (Lyrics included at end of this chapter for your use.)

CHOIR PRACTICE BEGINS

******GATHERING:** Since most choir members were in wheelchairs, it was important to arrive 15 minutes ahead of the time allotted for the practice session to push the sweet old folks to the determined room where practice would occur.

WE ARE OFF ON OUR GREAT ADVENTURE!

- 1) Allow time for bonding by sharing back and forth fun remarks. Then, be sure to outline the goals and objectives to the new choir members. In this group, we chose to establish the fact that we were always singing as a praise to God and would send first fruits up to him each time. The second principle was to stress that this little group of 7 people would be showing the world that individuals residing in healthcare facilities could still

sing in a choir setting. At this point, an outline as to how the practice sessions would unfold was shared.

- 2) A calendar was then shown so the group could see how many sessions would be held prior to singing with the Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers.
- 3) In the event the choir had more than one song to practice, it was critical to not begin another song until every individual was holding the correct lyrics in his/her hands.
- 4) Since the lyric pages contained both verses and chorus, it was crucial to have the choir members know the difference. (When verse 1 was called out, it was important to request that each resident point to it. Have fun with this exercise by inviting them to touch the verse you call out. This gives their eyes practice in moving from verse to verse.) Above all, cut up and have fun.
- 5) Volume: Since the members tend to sing too soft, it was important to get them accustomed to projecting their voice to those listening. A volunteer would tease them by letting them know she was going all the way down the hallway to see if she could hear them. When coming back, much laughter occurred when they were told, "I heard your beautiful voices when standing in front of room 212." This gave them motivation for singing even louder!

******It is critical to realize the changes that may occur when dealing with individuals living in residential care facilities. Since they are in the winter season of life, turnover of choir members will be a common characteristic brought on by the aging process. During the launch of the first choir, new members had to be obtained due to some of these old saints departing for their heavenly home. In fact, unlike church choirs, the complexion of the choir will change dramatically due to some of them passing on even within one session. However, keep the faith by simply being willing to start from the beginning a multitude of times. It is much like teaching a new group of children in elementary school each year; you just start from the beginning with great gusto repeatedly. Offering this type of opportunity to nursing home residents will give them purpose during their final hours on their earthly journey.**

- 6) Dress: In order for the audience to view the group as a choir, it was decided that white tops and black slacks would be their uniform each time. Since everyone in the group always had these as a part of their wardrobe, there was no expenditure necessary, and availability was always assured. (The ladies chose to wear pretty ribbons in their hair all on their own.)



**PRACTICING LIKE
CRAZY!**

*THEY EVEN CHOSE A
NAME FOR THE GROUP!*

BIG DAY ARRIVES!



Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers kick off the big day with gusto! The air is filled with excitement! The activity director and his assistant go into action and are moving among the residents to assure each one is focused and reacting to the much-anticipated guest performers.



PICKING & SINGING!



**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT
IS A PLEASURE TO
INTRODUCE**

“THE SILVER SENIORS!”



*ALL EYES ON DIRECTOR
CARLA!*



LOOK AT THOSE SILVER
HATS!





SO, WHY SING?

The following article written by Julia Layton focuses on the question, “Does Singing Make You Happy” with amazing results.

Physical Effects of Singing

Singing has some of the same health benefits as exercise.

All types of singing have positive psychological effects. The act of singing releases endorphins, the brain's "feel good" chemicals. Singing in front of a crowd, a la karaoke, naturally builds confidence, which has broad and long-lasting effects on general well-being. But of all types of singing, it's choral singing that seems to have the most dramatic effects on people's lives.

A study published in Australia in 2008 revealed that on average, choral singers rated their satisfaction with life higher than the public -- even when the actual problems faced by those singers were more substantial than those faced by the general public [source: [MacLean](#)]. A 1998 study found that after nursing-home residents took part in a singing program for a month, there were significant decreases in both anxiety and depression levels [source: [ISPS](#)]. Another study surveying more than 600 British choral singers found that singing plays a central role in their psychological health [source: [ISPS](#)].

Given this bit of information, the testimonials from the Silver Seniors make tremendous sense:

TESTIMONIALS FROM THE GROUP



"Choir harmonica player, Driscoll, asked his son to not only bring in his instrument, but had him to purchase another key so he would be prepared to play each selection. He would call out, "What key?" As each performance approached, his joy could be witnessed by the manner in which he played. He not only joined this group but was included in other community groups that came to perform at the nursing home.



Don's behaviour was the aspect that gave away his true feelings regarding the choir. He always had a million-dollar smile, was the first to arrive, and would rare back and sing with great enthusiasm. He was so excited about his involvement that his family members always were extended the opportunity to attend all his performances.



Bessie was the shy one in the group and would hide beneath her hat or hold her head down during a performance. Still, her sweet voice could be heard right in tune with the other members.



At first, Lela would pretend that she did not have a good enough voice to be in the choir. However, after being involved in a "heart to heart" talk with Tim, the Activity Director, she took hold with her foot on the throttle. In fact, she would request a copy of the music and practice in her room.



Ann, the activity director's mother, was a "LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS" type of lady. She had a chance in her earlier life to be a professional musician but loved her children too much to be away from them. She was a solid rock of the group; always in the game.



Although a late arrival, Viola eased into the group and sang like an angel. She had been in choirs during her life before moving into the health care facility and was fully equipped with an abundance of experience. Viola remarked that singing in this choir was the most fun she had ever felt. She was known for singing every note to the glory of God.



Although the youngest choir member, Jeramy assumed the role of not only caretaker for the others but was Johnny on the spot when the choir director was suffering from allergies. He would get everyone started on the right note displaying great confidence. Not only did he have a fine voice but was created with the kindest heart every imagined.



This chapter would not be complete without paying tribute to a choir member, Dottie, that is now singing her heart out in heaven. Although she never had the opportunity of performing in public with the Silver Seniors, the other choir members would sing robustly in her memory every time. We love you sweet lady!

BE SURE TO SEE THE SILVER SENIORS IN THEIR GRAND FINALE----→

I SAW THE LIGHT

1)

I wandered so aimless life filled with sin
I wouldn't let my dear Savior in
Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night
Praise the Lord, I saw the light.

(Chorus)

2)

Just like a blind man I wandered a long
Worries and fears I claimed for my own
Then like the blind man that God gave back his sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light.

(Chorus)

3)

I was a fool to wander and stray.
Straight is the gate and narrow the way
Now I have traded the wrong for the right
Praise the Lord, I saw the light. (Chorus)

CHORUS:

I saw the light. I saw the light

No more darkness, no more night

Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight.

Praise the Lord, I saw the light

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

1) This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

2) Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

3) Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine
Hide it under a bushel? NO! I'm gonna let it shine
Hide it under a bushel? NO! I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

4) All around the world, I'm gonna let it shine
All around the world, I'm gonna let it shine
All around the world, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

5) Repeat #1

WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN

**1) Sing the wondrous love of Jesus
Sing his mercy and his grace
In the mansions bright and blessed
He'll prepare for us a place**

(CHORUS)

**2) While we walk the pilgrim pathway
Clouds will overspread the sky
But when travlin' days are over
Not a shadow, not a sigh**

(CHORUS)

**3) Onward to the prize before us
Soon his beauty we'll behold
Soon the pearly gates will open
We shall tread the streets of gold**

(CHORUS)

CHORUS

**When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus
We'll sing and shout the victory**



CHAPTER SIX

WHEELCHAIR DANCING

WHEELCHAIR DANCING

LET THEM PRAISE HIS NAME IN THE DANCE



Psalm 149: 3

*“The moon is the reflection of your heart and
moonlight is the twinkle of your love.”*

— Debasish Mridha

It requires one only to read the Scripture from Genesis 1:31 that states: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning-the sixth day,” to realize why the poet, Debasish Mridha penned the above reaction to moonlight. Anything created or touched by the hand of the Almighty can be nothing short of spectacular; causing our emotions to erupt.

Thus, when the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array by him, is it any wonder that man struggles to capture the essence of the surrounding landscape with words or color? If the Almighty evaluated his own work as being, “GOOD”, does it not give us pause to rethink the dictionary definition of the word; so much perhaps because man has underestimated its value?

Folks, since God proclaimed night as good, shouldn't we be prompted to look within the darkness of our own hearts to see why we classify it as something totally the opposite. After a time of contemplation, I would imagine the results will be connected to how mankind choses to behave within that 24-hour time period, rather than how our Father originally intended it to be used. So often, it is viewed with fear because of being unable to make out the shapes or sounds that are associated with that interval. We are afraid of what we cannot literally see or understand. Yet, faith in our Lord depends totally on being assured of what we are unable to see; “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”([Hebrews 11:1](#) | [NIV](#) |)

Yet, by chance, if you could be extended the opportunity of magically entering the photograph above, one can only imagine your response. After all, how can a mind even resurrect words that are able to capture an individual's thoughts and reactions brought on by unbridled emotions that suddenly surface as you stroll beneath heavens canopy of countless stars brightly winking at you from the vast night sky above?

Thus, having finally acclimated to your surroundings, there is no doubt but what you, through the actions of some magnetic force, find yourself drawn to the enormous, perfectly shaped harvest moon beaming its golden glow through the bare branches of a stately tree whose elegant form has suddenly taken center stage in your focus. Consequently, after you visually caress each inch of its bark covered form, the realization suddenly dawns in your mind that even its scars, labeled as imperfections during daylight that have been brought on by simply living, make up the character it now proclaims.

Then, as your eyes continue their journey down toward its immense trunk, what appears to the human eye, as merely a single black hunk of protruding bark on one of its limbs, moves ever so slightly, before releasing the sweetest musical notes your ear can recall. Folks, simply because it has a song to sing reserved especially for its mate, you soon recognize it as the silhouette of the northern mocking bird announcing to the world, a well-kept secret. Totally clothed in the understated color of gray feathers by day, in the darkness of night, its image is suddenly transformed into nothing less than mystical and

has chosen eventide to fill the air with the most beautiful love strains ever imagined, all due to the fact it simply has a song to sing reserved especially for its partner; and....in the dark hours of night.

Consequently, is it any wonder that directly beneath in the shadows of the branches, the feet of ballroom dancers, softly bathed in the golden moonbeams, suddenly come to life praising the Great Creator in dance? Here beneath the cover of darkness, possessing souls that have been stirred by the sounds and colors of night, three couples sway uncontrollably to strains of the throaty notes because of emotions that have been propelled into action.

Author, Maureen Mc Carthy Draper says it best with these words: *"Sound flows into and throughout your body like oxygen. You can think of the body, with its nerves and heart strings, as the lyre upon which your life plays. When music comes into this sensitive instrument, it can stimulate the life force on the deepest levels. But, you must be ready to receive it. And you must listen with your whole body."*

Dance

Ladies and Gentlemen, the quote from Maureen Mc Carthy should give us pause to ask if this statement includes only those individuals that label themselves as professionals, or attendees of vocal and dance classes. When one studies the meaning behind the words, does it not include all mankind; signifying the Creator has hardwired all of us to sing and dance?

When contemplating these thoughts, let us allow our minds to revisit nature once again for an explanation. How many times has man included nature when either describing its beauty or naming pieces of music; i.e.;" Waltz of The Flowers" or "Falling Leaves"? When listening to the performance of these arrangements, clearly, movement or dance can be felt and heard. Actually, can one not view the aspects of nature as an enormous dance of life; including the seasons in which all human beings live?

Thus, if the conclusion has been reached that every individual enters the world possessing the ability with emotions that will react to the sounds of musical strains so dramatically that movement/dance occurs, how is it that we have allowed performers to replace our own natural feelings? Why must just a few be viewed as the only ones "good" enough to sway to musical sounds that fill the air all around us? Is it not time for us to take back the God given gift of song and dance; allowing ourselves to have freedom of expression?

Lin Marsh, a singing leader with the British Council's World Voice program clearly explains not only how connected music and dance are to one another, but also when they are developed in the human body with the following statements:

"The meaning of music or dance is not dependent on language. Our first response to music is through the movement of the body. Babies create their own choreography (in the womb, they are practicing stretching, kicking and hitting movements) and small children become totally absorbed in the physical sensation of movement."

"By four months, a baby can recognize facial expressions and interpret emotions. Laughter begins soon after, and then much of the world is encountered through play and sound. By six months, babies recognize and respond to songs with movement, using toys to shake, rattle and bang."

"Song, music and dance can help children become more imaginative, self-aware and collaborative global citizens."

Added to these dramatic words above regarding the importance and chronological age music and dance have been recorded as first occurring in children, is a personal experience from the writer. Recently, after being asked if she had photos of her infant grandchild, a grandmother proudly began sharing videos filmed when the little one was only 2 ½ months old while reclining in a musical swing. Folks, even at this early age, the infant could be seen obviously “bopping” in time with the music. When the music stopped, her movements ceased, as well. After watching several videos of the child ranging in age from 2 ½ months to 4 months, it was very easy to draw the conclusion that this little one was reacting to the strains and responding to music through movement.

Given this story about a child’s response to music, does it make you wonder why individuals often state, “I cannot sing or dance.” Truly, the real question should be, “When and why do people suppress their ability to move to music?”

Perhaps, the real issue that should be addressed is society’s view toward “performance.” When did people allow themselves to become members of an audience, rather than inviting their own bodies to respond to music?

Certainly, when researching the definition of dancing, rather than described as a natural response by human beings to music, a litany of terms related to professionals fill the screen. Is it not time for the child from within each of us to surface once again and allow our toes to start tapping to the music from within our souls?

Ladies and gentlemen, one thing that happens in the winter season of life that is brought on by the aging process is the shedding of layers. These old souls are living in the moment and are no longer encumbered by the worry of what others will think about their actions. They simply enjoy the things that make up every second of their existence by releasing the inner spirit within. When first observing this behavior, it reminds one of a bird being released from a gilded cage.

Therefore, whether sitting in a wheelchair or reclining in bed, when music enters their sphere, be prepared for a pleasant surprise. Even though they are restricted by parts of their body that no longer work well, a reaction will suddenly occur when they hear their preferred musical arrangements. It may be the head bobbing, a toe tapping, shoulders swaying, clapping their one hand that works against a leg, clicking of the tongue, or swaying of the upper body; actions that are labeled in their winter season of life as dancing; thus, the definition of wheelchair dancing.

Wheelchair Dancing

Interestingly enough, when researching wheelchair dancing on line, you will mostly find articles and photographs of someone in a wheelchair being moved around by an agile partner, or an individual able to put his/her own wheelchair in motion.

However, that is not how the residents at Glendale Gardens in Springfield, Missouri do wheelchair dancing. They simply sit in their wheelchairs and are taught to use whatever part of their body that will move in keeping time to music. And...folks, do they move! When the music starts, their emotions take over and that childlike spirit that has been at rest swings into action!

Word To The Wise: Do not treat wheelchair dancing as exercise. Instead, allow it to be a special glamorous time and watch their reactions. Invite the residents to wear whatever adornment they might still possess for the kickoff. (Hair ribbons, necklaces, scarves, or even make-up)

Procedure

Kickoff: In order to offer motivation, ball room dancers were brought in for an evening of glamour and grace. Three couples, dressed in beautiful garments, performed at 6:45 one Thursday evening; a time when most of the residents were already in their bed clothes. What at first appeared as a very sleepy audience, soon came to life in a big way. After all, who could resist being enticed by couples gliding gracefully across the floor in time to tunes the residents had learned during their twenties?

As the evening unfolded, staff members danced with those that were able to stand, while others simply moved the body part that was still functioning. As you view the beautiful still shots below of this spectacular evening, please note the number of heads bent toward the floor. They were absolutely mesmerized by the dancers' graceful feet.

When the last chord ended and the dancing feet rested, the residents did not want to go to their rooms and hit the hay. Instead, they just kept their eyes focused on the dancers in hopes those magic feet would come to life once again. Actually, a few even insisted on remaining for about 30 extra minutes anticipating the dancers return to the floor. One resident named Dorothy even remarked, "I loved this evening. Even though I never learned to dance, my parents always were thrilled to move around to music right in our own living room. We did not have much materially, but those old rugs were rolled up and they danced as a way of celebrating a hard week of work on the farm. I could picture them dancing right along with those wonderful people tonight."

Step 1:

Music: Choose music the residents would have heard during their early twenties for best results. (If dancers within the community have performed as a way of kicking off the program, try to recall the titles of their music and play it as a part of the next step. If not, just choose music they would have been familiar with during their early years.)

Step 2:

Prior to step 1, be certain to talk it up with the residents so they realize it will be a fun time; not exercise. It would be great to have balloons flying or streamers in the activity room. Encourage them to wear adornments to the first session. **ABOVE ALL, GATHER THE RESIDENTS OR THEY WILL FORGET TO COME.**

Step 3:

Arrange the residents in a semi-circle, making sure to allow ample space between wheelchairs for their waving of arms. Place the leader's chair in front of the group, being sure each person can easily see your moves. Also, when giving directions with music in the background, make sure you project your voice so all can hear.

Q: Does the activity director need to be a professional dancer? NO! You are just going to wiggle your body in time with the music. Don't be inhibited, move the parts of the body they can mimic. Be free!

Laugh and have fun. Encourage them to think of new ways to keep time. Your goal is freedom of expression. Encourage the child within to come out and dance.

Step 4:

Allow time between songs to rest. During that time, encourage them to share memories relating back to their earlier years. Did you dance? Where did you go to dance?

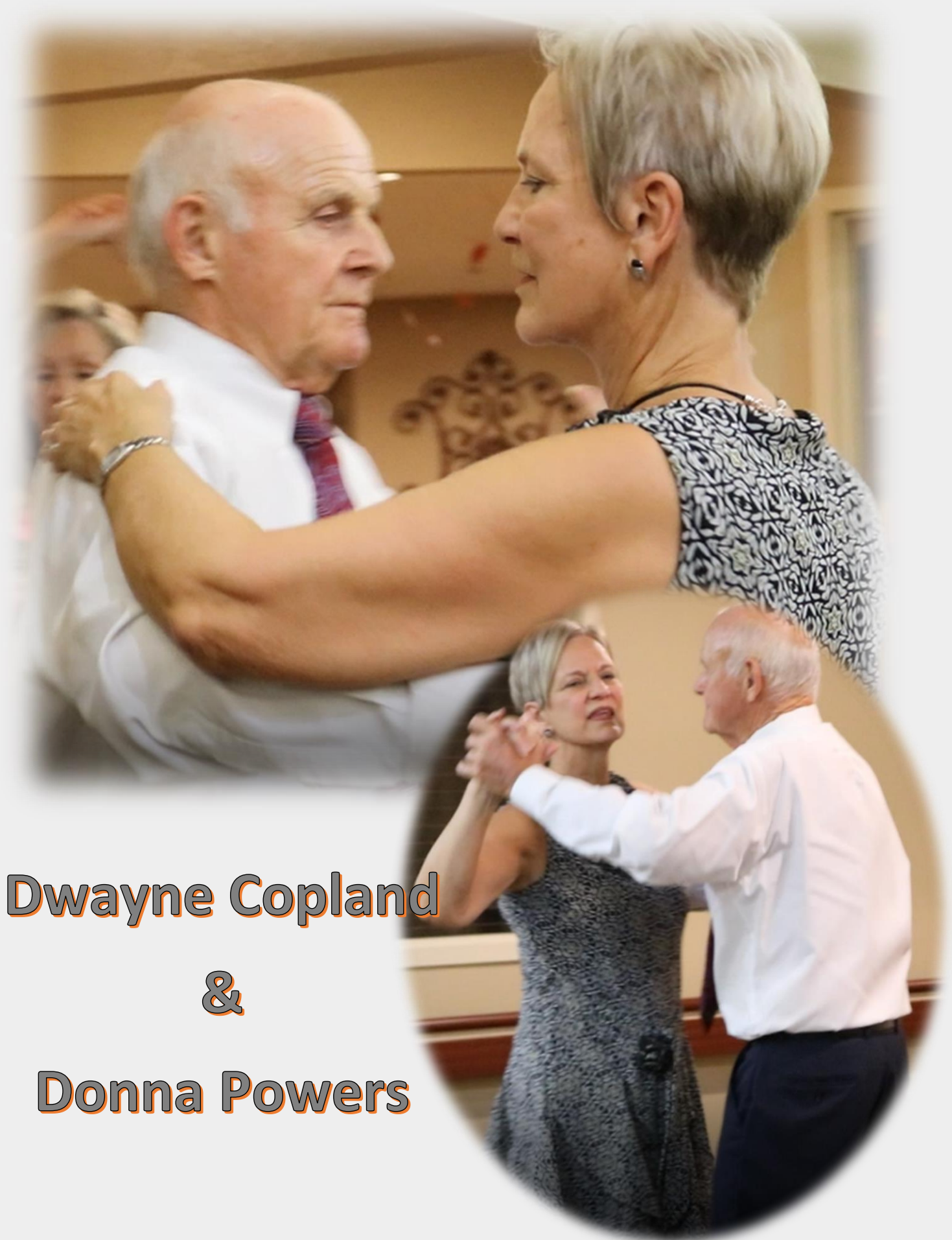
Step 5: After completing the wheelchair dancing, offer refreshments. (Punch, Cookies)

Step 6: As you continue wheelchair dancing, think about themes that will promote a celebratory type atmosphere. (Snowball Dance, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Spring Fling, May Pole Gala, Easter Fun, Patriotic Tunes, Picnic Fiesta (outside on the patio), Autumn Harvest, Christmas Ball)

MEET THE BALLROOM DANCERS

Debbie & Bob
Williams





Dwayne Copland
&
Donna Powers



Cindy & Ron Douglas



Watch the reactions of the residents as those dancing feet moved across the floor.



2.P

All this dancing makes a body thirsty!



**Then the action began. Staff members
danced, too!**



Activity Director Tim asked resident Wilma for a dance.



Edna's turn!



Followed by Deborah.



What a great evening!

WHEELCHAIR DANCING TO HYMNS

DANCING AS PRAISE TO GOD

What? Would dancing not be out of line and disrespectful to God? Not really! Let's review Biblical history regarding dancing as a way to praise the Lord. Before introducing this, use devotional time to establish the background on answering the question: Did Jesus dance?

2 Samuel 6: 13-14

¹⁴Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets."

Psalm 149: 3

"Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp." (Timbrel like a tambourine.)

In the Bible, the Israelites use dance as a form of religious expression. From images of Miriam leading the women across the Sea of Reeds to numerous references throughout the Psalms, it is clear that dance was an expression of joy, awe and worship. It's important to remember that the peoples of the ancient eastern Mediterranean had many different kinds of folk music: songs for births, weddings, funerals and various celebrations throughout the life cycle. We do not have any of the melodies from this time for Judea as there was no written notation and mechanical recording was not invented until the late 1880s. But the music of those ancient times may have resembled, in both form and content, much of the folk music of the Jews, Samaritans, Armenians, Arabs and other inhabitants of the Holy Land during the Ottoman Empire and before – music of which we have recordings that are over 100 years old.

In Roman-occupied Judea, in addition to folk music, there was sacred music, including the chanting of the Psalms by the choirs and musicians of the Temple. But given Jesus's antipathy to the Temple, it is more likely that he knew how to recite, rather than perform, the scriptures – a practice that developed in the more than 300 synagogues that existed in Jerusalem before the Romans destroyed the Temple. This oral tradition of synagogue cantillation has survived unbroken among the Jewish people for more than 2,000 years and still flourishes today. Over the centuries communities in Spain, Eastern Europe and as far away as Iraq, Persia, Yemen and Uzbekistan have developed their own unique styles of cantillation. (Wikipedia)

Did Jesus dance? Since his first miracle was performed at the Wedding at Cana, it can be surmised that he danced. Plus, dancing was simply accepted by Jews as an expression of joy, awe and worship. At a given time in their service, they would simply join hands, dance and sing. They sang different songs depending on how they were feeling. (Joy, suffering, peace, grief) We can use our hymns in the same way.

Once again folks, somehow, dance became associated with bars or places of disrepute, prompting religious leaders to preach against dancing all together; all because man chose to behave badly when making merry.

Actually, keeping time to wonderful old hymns can be used as a way of praising God, and at the same time receiving tremendous benefits personally for the soul. Either use a CD Player to play hymns or a volunteer that plays the piano for this time together.

Suggested Hymn List

Peace:

Amazing Grace, In the Garden, It Is Well with My Soul, Abide with Me (Examples) Discuss types of body movement that signify peace before playing each song.

TROUBLED SOUL: (Anxiety, Grief, Worry)

“Be Still My Soul” Play song to show different moods; meaning sometimes troubled and then relaxed all in one song. See if residents can hear the different moods according to sound. Then decide what types of movements could signal each, followed by the song being played again.

COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD, DETERMINATION:

“Onward Christian Soldiers (Will march with our feet)

Joy:

“When We All Get to Heaven, I’ll Fly Away (Will get noisy and loud on this one using every possible movement.)

COMBINATION OF ALL IN A MEDLEY: (Above songs mixed together without stopping allowing residents to use all wheelchair dancing techniques) Please end with “I’ll Fly Away’ so they can get loud.

The early church was Jewish and so their musical influence came from the Old Testament. At the time of King David music as part of worship was rich and sometimes extravagant as the people sought to worship God with their best skills. In the temple we read that there were 4,000 Levites appointed to praise God with instruments (*1 Chronicles 23:5*) and 288 trained singers to praise God with their voices (*1 Chronicles 25:7*). It must have been some spectacle.

The Jewish people worshipped God with harps (*Revelation 5:8*), stringed instruments (*Habakkuk 3:19*), horns, trumpets, loud-sounding cymbals, lyres (*1 Chronicles 15: 28-29*), timbrels and tambourines (*Exodus 15:20*), gittith (a stringed instrument) (*Psalms 8*), instruments of ten strings (*Psalms 92:3*), pipes (*Psalms 150:4*), and resounding cymbals (*Psalms 150:5*).

Certainly, music was a vital part of biblical life, as David expresses so well in Psalm 150:

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbral and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.



James J. Tissot, 'David Dances before the Ark' (1896-1902), gouache on board, The Jewish Museum, New York.

Conclusion:

You are invited to raise your arms in the air with me as a form of praise to Immanuel, God with us from the beginning, until the end! Glory to the creator of life and all that was, is, and ever will be; a Father that dances with us in our song of life; ever present through sorrow, joy, our life's work, at our final breath, during our resurrection, ascension, welcoming us with open arms as he claims us as his own for all eternity. Sing, dance, and make merry as you triumph in the golden glow of His love now and forever more! Amen and amen!



CHAPTER SEVEN

GRAND FINALE

(FIELD TRIP TO CHURCH)

(VIDEO AT END OF CHAPTER)

WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN



Revelation 21:23

"The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing it will be. When we all see Jesus, we will sing and shout the victory! Let us all raise our voices in song as we praise the Lamb of Light; who is an emblem of pure joy! Just as the Scripture states above, there will be no sun or moon to shine on the celestial city, because the brilliance of the Lamb will be the everlasting Light for all eternity.

Thus, all one has to do to imagine how the presence of Christ will impact each Believer's heavenly home, requires only to contemplate the attributes of light. It kindles, blazes, shines, sets afire, illumines, glows, warms, is lustrous, resplendent, scintillating; a bright constellation allowing nothing to obscure your vision of the pinnacles of the eternal city where God sits on His throne with Jesus at His right.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a volunteer in a nursing home, I have often been asked to describe how our future heavenly home will appear. The answer to this question is impossible for this writer's mere human brain to contemplate. Scripture makes this clear by stating, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor mind can conceive what God has in store for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2: 9)

Certainly, we can read John's description where he uses vivid colors to give an account of the throne room with God having the appearance of jasper and carnelian; characteristics similar to a diamond. Around the throne is a rainbow that has the shine or glimmer of deep green; resembling an emerald. He even depicts 24 thrones where 24 elders sit attired in white robes wearing gold crowns on their heads. Whether one interrupts this as literal or symbolic, it demonstrates beauty beyond imagination.

Folks, after sitting beside many residents during their last seconds on earth, the Scripture quoted above from 1 Corinthians 2: 9 is accurate beyond description. Certainly, the reactions through expressions and limited words lets one, whose time has not yet come, fully realize how much God loves His children. The departing one's eyes will absolutely twinkle with delight as they call out names of saints recognized. However, one of the most dramatic moments was when a dying resident exclaimed, "Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus! It was obvious she recognized our Lord and was being warmly welcomed.

Another sweet lady was given the pleasure of observing the angels playfully flying outside her window for three days and then moving to the end of her bed just prior to her departure. This wonderful person named Mary giggled as she enjoyed them dancing and fluttering all around this writer's head and shoulders. What love from her Creator that she was transported to her heavenly home on the wings of glory! After this encounter, the writer had to compose herself outside the room because of realizing she had been given the honor of standing on holy ground; all occurring at the foot

of a bed in a simple nursing home room; an ordinary location transformed into a wonderful, extraordinary place.

Dear readers, when the celestial shores of heaven appear in the view of the sweet old people I am so pleased to serve, there is no doubt that the trials and tribulations of the earthly journey have been worth it all; so much that some onlookers have shouted out, "Oh, I wish I could go with her!"

Not only is the Lamb's Light the source of beauty, but also a sign of knowledge. It has been stated by many scholars that man spends the duration of his journey on earth trying to understand and accept the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus as it relates to His followers' future but will continue to be a mystery that they all live with, rather than understand, on this side of heaven. However, rest assured, dear one, that Christ is the fountain of knowledge that will provide all answers to those puzzling questions that have stumped our human minds when we reach our final destination. Until then, let us live by faith, with assurance that God is the Great Promise Keeper; a Father that always can be counted on to fulfill His covenant out of love for His creation.

Still another definition of light is manifestation; meaning shown or revealed. Folks, as we trod down the paths of life, it is impossible to conjure in our minds the transformation that will take place to our sin stained souls. However, with just the touch of the Master's finger, we will be cleansed and made as beautiful as crystal; residing in a place where Jesus will be the center of it all.

Then, in God's perfect timing, each Believer will be presented the crown that was entailed for him; one that will fit only his head. So, if you personally think, or hear an individual say, "I fear I shall never enter heaven", loudly proclaim, "Fear not! All the people of God shall enter there!"

Folks, the bottom line is this: If you believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart, repent of your sin, and invite Him into your life, your name will be written in the Lamb's book of life. Just as Jesus promised, your mansion will be waiting on you. Believe me, as Christians, we are a shined-on people! What a day of rejoicing when we get to be present with Jesus and wear His precious reflection on our forgiven, restored faces! Halleluiah to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings!

If you have not accepted the Lord as your Savior, I ask you to sincerely pray right now with all your heart the following words:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you so much for dying on the cross as a sacrifice for my sin. I repent of my sin and ask you right now for forgiveness. Please come into my heart and be the Light of my life. I believe in you with all my heart. I realize there is nothing I can ever do to earn your love or forgiveness, but simply freely accept the gift of eternal life you are offering me. I love you and thank you for loving me in a way that I can never understand or repay. Amen!



Grand Finale

Dear readers, as this collection on music engagement with the elderly concludes, I would like to share a wonderful happening that will bless you in an enormous way. As the Silver Seniors Choir of seven Glendale Garden Nursing Home residents practiced and performed with the Schweitzer Senior Saints & Joy Pickers, they had the goal of a special field trip in their mind at all times.

As a volunteer with the elderly, it is very clear how desirous the residents are of participating in the events they once enjoyed as members of the outside community. So much, that they actually go through a grieving process regarding this issue when having to accept the reality they can no longer take care of their daily needs without assistance.

Therefore, several wonderful people worked together toward the goal of extending to them a special invitation to sing at the Schweitzer United Methodist Church along with several members of the choirs. Not only would this provide a very special treat for them, but also show the community at large what treasures they still are to society. The sanctuary setting would allow them to sing praises for the glory of God, while at the same time be accompanied by a superb organist who offered to play their favorite hymn, "Amazing Grace", as a treat at the conclusion of the event.

Thus, after the last service had ended on that particular Sunday, two vans could be seen pulling into the parking lot transporting the seven Silver Senior Choir members on this their special day. Finally, the privilege they had been promised had become a reality.

Therefore, as volunteers stood at the ready, the atmosphere was electric beyond description. Each person was waiting to push an assigned resident in his wheelchair to the lift that would assure them entrance onto the choir loft. Just watching them ride on the lift was a treat within itself.

Upon entering the sanctuary, the Schweitzer choir members were patiently sitting in the pews anticipating the arrival of their seven guests wearing enormous smiles of welcome. Due to all the love filling the beautiful sanctuary, the writer would like to express that it felt like we were all being given the opportunity to taste a sample of how heaven will be.

Although it took great effort to transport these seven-deserving people in wheelchair accessible vans, Activity Directors, Tim Trafford and Melody Childers, two individuals that always color outside the lines with their thinking, pulled it off with ease. They sacrificed a precious day off in order that the residents they love so much might enjoy a special day. There is no doubt in anyone's mind but that these two people always have a spring in their step and a song in their heart!

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives the writer great pleasure to share with you this special worship service by inviting you to study the following photographs provided by Catholic High School Student, Haylee Ball. After choir member Gail Randolph sent first fruits up to God in prayer, notes of praise filled the sanctuary, bouncing from rafter to rafter in route to the ears of the Father.

As you view these sweet faces, please feel free to sing "When We All Get to Heaven" right along with them. The lyrics have been included at the end of this chapter for your convenience.

****The Silver Seniors chose to not wear their silver hats on this day because they wanted to blend in and be just one of the choir members. Oh, what joy to experience life as it was for them in the outside world where they used to reside. Even though they need assistance with care, they are just like you!**




**SCHWEITZER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MUSIC DIRECTOR: CHERYLL MOLL**



**GLENDALE GARDENS NURSING HOME CHOIR
DIRECTOR: CARLA SMYER**



Gail Sends First Fruits Up To God!



**Beautiful strains from the organ
fill the sanctuary as an introduction
by Brad!**



WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN!



**Praises went up to God with great joy and jubilation!
Look at Silver Senior Driscoll play his harmonica!**



**Joy unspeakable and full of glory! God truly is the
wind beneath their wings!**

*"But ye are a chosen
generation, a royal
priesthood, a holy
nation, a
peculiar people;
that ye should
shew forth the
praises of him who
hath called you out of
darkness into his marvelous
light,"
1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)*





But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; And may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You. (Psalm 5:11)



*My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises
to you; my soul also, which you have
redeemed. (Psalm 71:23)*





*"For you will go out with joy and be led forth
with peace; The mountains and the hills will
break forth into shouts of joy before you, and
all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*

Isaiah 55:12



And...now the promised treat of “Amazing Grace.”



Jeremy eagerly wheeled himself right over by the organ and let the song wash over him like a fresh spring rain shower.

WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN

- 1) Sing the wondrous love of Jesus
Sing his mercy and his grace
In the mansions bright and blessed
He'll prepare for us a place**

(CHORUS)

- 2) While we walk the pilgrim pathway
Clouds will overspread the sky
But when travlin' days are over
Not a shadow, not a sigh**

(CHORUS)

- 3) Onward to the prize before us
Soon his beauty we'll behold
Soon the pearly gates will open
We shall tread the streets of gold**

(CHORUS)

CHORUS

**When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus
We'll sing and shout the victory**

Enjoy the follow-up thank you letter to

Hello Cheryll, *the choir*

Today was such a joyful experience for so many people; especially for the residents from Glendale Gardens. As I watched from the back of the sanctuary, their facial expressions resembled a kaleidoscope of emotions that fascinated Tim, Melody, and I beyond measure. These sweet people had been looking forward to joining you in song for weeks; thus, asking at every choir practice about the details. Some would write it on their calendars; while others asked about it every time they saw Carla's face. You see, they were singing their hearts out for a follow choir member that entered her eternal home before meeting all of you today. No worries! She will welcome each one of us into the heavenly choir where she now belongs.

As I took it all in from afar, it was hard to keep my composure because of knowing each one of the residents intimately. Viola, who used to sing in her church choir, was enjoying the experience to the maximum as notes from her beautiful soprano voice floated happily

through the air. Don, a charming man with a beautiful voice and spirit to match, was so thrilled that his family members arrived to support him by shedding tears of joy throughout the taping. They even walked him to the van and offered kisses just before he boarded. Did you hear Discroll on his harmonica? He was playing with gusto and stated on the way out, "I could get used to this!" Ann, Tim's mother, that had a chance to be a professional musician in her early life, requested the black folders that held the lyrics just so they could project the correct image. Lela had practiced in her room repeatedly so she could make all of you proud of her involvement. Jeremy, Melody's son, was Carla's assistant and would start the practice session for each song when she was dealing with allergies. He also served as caretaker; making sure his friends were all happy and comfortable. Then, when Bradley began "Amazing Grace", he rolled himself right over to the organ and took it all in. In spite of the physical challenges in his life, it would be almost impossible to locate a heart that is as

full of love as the one God has bestowed on him.

On behalf of the elderly worldwide, words cannot express the appreciation they feel regarding the generosity you displayed on their behalf today. After serving as choir members for Schweitzer, you kindly stayed longer; a charitable behavior that is unforgettable. As my eyes beheld the cross behind you, there was no doubt but what God was smiling.

Do you want to know why the sweet old folks voted to leave their silver hats in the van? Their words were: "JUST WANTED TO BE ONE OF THEM!" Thanks for allowing folks that used to travel the roads you now enjoy to join your ranks; even though it was for a short bit of time.

Blessings,
Colene Hank

Enjoy the video now.





CHAPTER EIGHT

FACING THE WINTER SEASON OF LIFE

(VIDEO AT END OF CHAPTER)

SWEET MUSIC AT THE ALTAR OF AGE

Psalm 57:7-11 NIV

*⁷ My heart, O God, is steadfast,
my heart is steadfast,
I will sing and make music.
⁸ Awake, my soul!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken the dawn.*

Oftentimes, creation looks forward to the “*time of old age*” possessing complex emotions filled with both foreboding and anticipation of it being the choicest season of life. These sentiments cause the heart to flutter and skip a beat; a response to being uncertain as to what awaits the soul that has been conditioned to the world’s timeclock and expectations. “How will I handle all that idle time when the pressures of career and family are no longer at center stage in my daily existence? Now that my calendar is waiting for the scribble from my own pen, will I be satisfied to fill it with past musings or look ahead with “*Whispering Hope*” for the journey God now has in store for those who love him?”

Some view it as a musical requiem; thus, filling every hour humming with such chords of grief that they endlessly labor to write a score for the saying, “Youth Was Wasted on The Young.” Although it is wise to open the scrap book and let the “*Precious Memories*” of the past be appreciated as “*Showers Of Blessings*” bestowed by God during our earthly journey, it is crucial to recall that these gifts were sprinkled on our countenance as our feet were climbing the ragged mountains and finding ourselves adrift on an ocean whose waves were dangerous due to the struggles of life’s dark and stormy weather. Yes, dear one, let us always allow the mind to drift into those perfect moments, but not remain there long. Although the aging body reminds us that we now have more yesterdays behind us than tomorrows in front, as we view our future from the vantage point of the altar of age, let us be cognizant that the flashes of the fire of youth are gone and have left us holding a steady brilliant flame entitled “*Blessed Assurance*” that proclaims, despite the aching of joints or physical maladies faced daily, we are truly resting on “*Higher Ground*” with our Lord ever at the helm.

At the altar of age where elderly people last reside as their final stop on their earthly sojourn, a message sent by an enormous number of these old saints is the feeling that they are experiencing “*Peace In The Valley*”; a place where, as pilgrims, they now are tasting the rich days of heaven upon earth. As a volunteer, one can almost see the celestial gales kissing their radiant faces as angels playfully flutter outside their windows or at the foot of their beds. Above all, appearing to be deep in a time of personal

contemplation, their actions send a very readable message that the air all around them is filled with the sound of seraphic music. All that is needed to allow this statement to take on a life of its own, is to observe their actions as an old-time hymn like "Amazing Grace" is played in their presence. No matter how out of tune, both physically or mentally they are to their surrounding environment, as the beautiful musical strains dance playfully around their ears, an awakening occurs like never imagined. Some old folks in a deep sleep will be moved to wake long enough to sing the lyrics from beginning to end before reentering their world of rest once again. Others that are in a confused state of mind will become crystal clear in thought and not only sing right along, but rejoice in the moment, or be motivated to share a happening that occurred at an earlier stage of life using profound statements and reasoning.

Thus, in the eyes of onlookers it is obvious that the impact of music on mankind is so remarkable that tears of joy flowed unabashedly down the faces of those gathered around due to the euphoric joy and drama brought on by ethereal notes only God can compose. Although scientists are unable to provide a definite reason as to why music acts as a can opener to the brain and enters at just the right place and time in the human mind, no matter the age, its impact is indisputable.

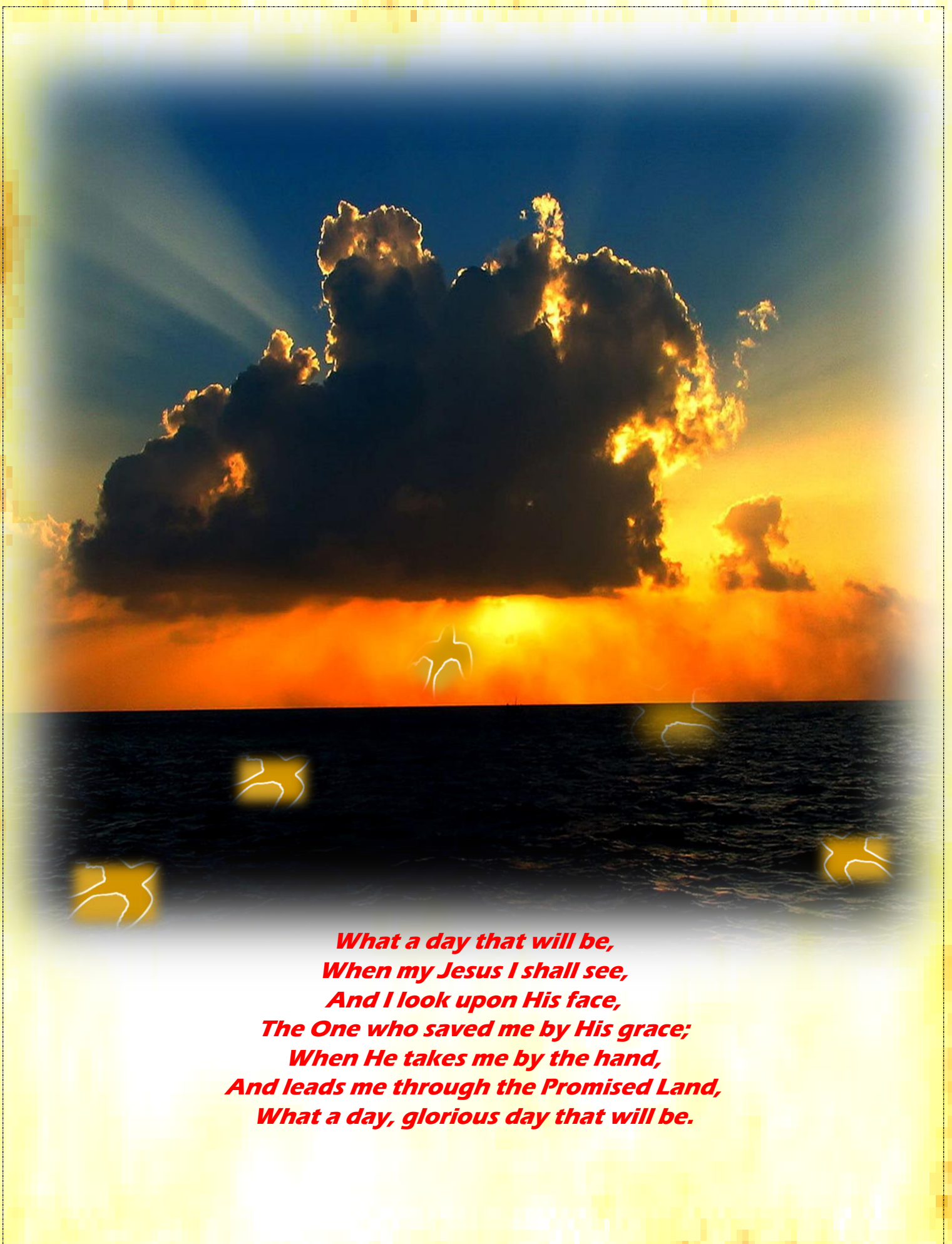
Therefore, as one of the amazed spectators drinking in the reactions provided by the sweet music of God to the elderly, it was indeed obvious the participants appeared to be reclining in the shady groves of heaven on earth demonstrating through their expressions and actions that the time of great fruition could clearly be seen on the horizon; some feeling that night was far spent and the true day was at hand. In this their winter season of life, the sun they saw setting in their presence was larger by far than when it was aloft directly above their heads; with the tinges of its glory serving as fringes of heavenly light around each cloud.

Thus, at the close of day, when the old folks that were kneeling one last time at the altar of age lay their heads upon their pillows, they felt not that night was coming and their existence was ending, but instead, trusted the Great Promise Keeper would soon command his angels to waft them away into the light of immortality; meaning their heavenly place of rest. For them, they were calm in the sweet twilight of age as they looked toward their celestial home knowing the pearly gates were open and the golden streets shone with a brilliance under the reflection of their Savior's precious light. As sleep overtook their physical bodies, they would drift off into a restful state hearing the musical tones from God's magnanimous voice as he spoke to Jesus saying: "Son, Go Bring Your Children Home."



Hear now the beautiful voice of Melody Childers, Assistant Activity Director, as she sings "What a Day That Will Be", a favorite old hymn of the residents she so dearly loves at Glendale Gardens Nursing Home, Springfield, Missouri. Not only does she sing for them at devotional time, but during their last moments and at memorial services. (Permission granted by ClearBox Rights for use on devotionalembbers.com only. Do not copy.)

Piano: Brad Jent



***What a day that will be,
When my Jesus I shall see,
And I look upon His face,
The One who saved me by His grace;
When He takes me by the hand,
And leads me through the Promised Land,
What a day, glorious day that will be.***