

Terry Garrison: letting the music take control

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — His preferred instrument is the guitar and he proudly owns a Gibson Electric 335, two Godin guitars and a Tanara. When Terry Garrison plays either instrument, musical magic spins.

"I'm always trying out guitars," Garrison said. "You can't have too many guitars."

Many Sheridan County residents have been treated to Garrison's musical melodies but many may not know that Garrison once performed on the road.

'I opened for the Singing Rambos in Mapleton, Illinois, and they hired me to play guitar for them for their California tour in 1974.'

Terry Garrison
Musician

"My mom was always musical. She played accordion and some keyboard. She was the inspiration for me," Garrison said. "I always had a musical ear but didn't know it. I got my first guitar when I was 15. When I got the guitar, I learned I could sing."

At age 16, Garrison joined a gospel band with what he describes as "a bunch of us guys."

"We went to Assembly of God churches back then and they had competitions. We won in the category for instrumental ensemble for our state," said Garrison who had grown up in Peoria, Illinois.

"My music took over," Garrison said. Garrison got another gig after the church competition and continued playing until high school graduation "all over Illinois."

He played with one group called "Good News Sound" and ventured into solos. His stardust led him to being the opening solo for the Nashville-based Singing Rambos when he was 20 years old. He was invited to go on the road with the group.

"I opened for the Singing Rambos in Mapleton, Illinois,



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Local musician Terry Garrison did not know he was musical until he was in high school. His talents led to an offer to perform with and travel with a professional music group shortly after high school.

and they hired me to play guitar for them for their California tour in 1974," Garrison said. What was tour life like?

"You ride in a bus forever," Garrison said. "We left Nashville and went across Texas. Our first concert was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Phoenix, Arizona. We then continued west to California and played at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. I had never traveled so I was constantly looking out the window. I didn't get much sleep."

But life on the road for a musician has its special incidents.

"I remember one episode," Garrison said. "I was responsible for gathering up the guitars. We were playing in Missoula, Montana, and heading to Boise, Idaho, then Sydney, Nebraska. I thought someone had picked up the guitars and someone else thought I had. We left one of the guitars. It was Dottie Rambo's guitar that she had written over 600 gospel songs on. Boy, did I get boinked for that."

The bus driver, who ironically was also called Terry Garrison, pulled over and called the next gig to request to have the guitar shipped to the next concert spot. The guitar arrived safely and "Big T" — the nickname Garrison the guitarist was tagged — was out of the dog house.

The singing gig with the Rambos lasted three months before Garrison returned to Illinois.

"It was great for being young and seeing everything," Garrison said.

Garrison played for 10 years with the Little Joe Wyoming band during summers at Eatons' Ranch and Horton's Ranch. He has settled in Sheridan where he continues to play professionally and give guitar lessons. Garrison plays some banjo and mandolin but not publicly. He claims he is "fluent" in guitar and bass guitar.

The music scene for Garrison these days is playing in the Sheridan-based Boot Hill and Canary Joe bands. Frequently he plays with a number of other local entertainers. He has two CDs to his credit — one a collection of Christmas music and another called "Solo Flight," a compilation of country tunes, Chet Atkins-style songs, classic jazz and some James Taylor songs.

"It's mostly instrumental with some vocal," said Garrison. "The singing is not on purpose as I'm more interested in doing guitar CDs."

Garrison plans to do more vocal CDs.

What are Garrison's plans for the future?

"Keep on playing and cut another CD," Garrison said. "I'd like to get in the studio again."

CENTER STAGE |

Activities for the heart, mind and soul

I recently attended the National Adult Day Services conference in Phoenix, Arizona, and came away with a new and fresh outlook. I learned how when dealing with the loss of independence, which many of our participants face, that building personal wellness can be found by a healthy balance of activities for the body, mind and soul.

I took all I learned and quickly began implementing it into the Day Break program.

Activities for the heart or body focus on maintaining and improving physical well being.

Exercise can be fun. We maintain that exercise can be accomplished in a chair. Chair exercise can help to improve or sustain mobility and overall strength. If you don't like the word "exercise," then involvement in our daily games might be more your style. It's not just exercise, it's competitive entertainment. Day Break is an activity-based program and we are ready to play every day. Horseshoes, bowling and volleyball work on that range of motion. Shuffleboard and pool work on eye/hand coordination. There is more than one way to stay healthy. Walking over to Java Moon from the Senior Center for coffee is a great way to

get the blood flowing and enjoy coffee with a tasty pastry.

Activities for the mind promote education and learning.

Stimulate thinking, maintain reasoning skills and provide an opportunity to use previously learned skills.

Each day we are challenged to learn something new in a fun and imaginative way.

Discussions invoke memories of travel, family and personal interests. Most recently, we studied and discussed our American presidents. We talked about those bearded presidents, the ones born British subjects and the left handers. Our ultimate goal is to be able to name the presidents in the order that they served our country. I'll let you know how that works out.

Through the years I have heard people say, "I don't play games." Well, that's OK, we have volunteer positions that offer a task within the individual's ability and provide a sense of accomplishment. The Senior Center newsletter comes to Day Break to be organized, folded and labeled for the mail. This is a job that requires dedication and the ability to work as a group. I can see the retired office workers or secretaries shift into their professional gear and shine as they organize the work. Our team works hard and puts out a quality product. On a daily basis, we label the food containers used in Home Delivered Meals. If you get a home delivered meal or know someone that does, our Day Break volunteers were involved in getting the container labeled for all 365 days in a year.

Activities for the soul encourage creativity, prompt self expression and provide enjoyment.

Music therapy with Andy Edmonson is a highlight for our group. We get to hear Andy play the guitar and sing while offering our own accompaniment and back up singing. Andy has a special talent in getting our musical juices flowing. He always says, "It is more fun if everyone participates!"

Jewelry with Shannen is a fun way to be creative and accessorize at the same time. The group gets together to visit and bead, whether it is just a way to keep your hands busy or make a piece worth bragging about. Those in jewelry class make one of kind gifts for their family and friends.

The social interaction provided by the Day Break staff is invaluable, creating sense of belonging and lasting friendships. We always honor each individual's interests and choices. We want to be the place that helps individuals to maintain their independence, create an atmosphere that is a home away during the day and to help people love fully through life's journey.

If you or someone you know could benefit from Day Break services, call Barb Blue at 672-2240 or stop in anytime. The coffee is always on.

BARB BLUE is the director of Day Break onsite adult care services at the Sheridan Senior Center. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

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