

Member Memories

The Bay Area Showcase Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, commemorates its 50th anniversary. For that occasion, we celebrate some of our members who have been with the organization the longest and who have contributed immeasurable amounts of time, energy and talent.

Pat LeVezu...She Came for the music and stayed for the possibilities



For 29 of its 50 years, the Bay Area Showcase was directed by Pat LeVezu. Pat's motto is to "keep on learning," and after 40 years she's still doing just that. In addition, Pat has shared the fruits of that learning with us all.

In 1963, Pat was persuaded by her piano teacher to come to a rehearsal, and Pat thought she'd try it once just to appease the teacher. By the end of the rehearsal, she decided to become a member. When Pat joined the chorus, it was approximately 30 members, and as a young mother with three children, she looked forward to doing something outside the home. Ten years later, she became the director. Pat also joined the ranks of women working outside the home and took an engineering job at Amdahl. Like her

chorus counterparts who worked outside the home, Pat didn't have as much spare time but at the same time she sought to maintain interesting extracurricular activities. As a result, Pat and the chorus rose to the challenges of meeting the lifestyle changes in the membership.

Pat took on duties outside the chorus, getting involved at the Regional and International levels. One of the International committees she was on was Education Direction Committee, and that committee identified the need for a consolidation of the education programs available to faculty and directors. Rather than intersperse them throughout the year, they wanted to move all the programs to one week, and include the general membership giving birth to the International Education Symposium with Pat at the founding chairwoman.

In the coming year, Pat will assume the highest position in Sweet Adelines, that of International President. Some of the challenges she faces here are increasing membership, director education, and, Pat's personal interest, reaching the women in their 20s and 30s and exposing them to barbershop with the idea that even if they can't do it at that particular time, they will want to come back to it later.

Over the years Pat acknowledges Sweet Adelines for teaching her many facets of music including arranging, becoming a sound judge, and developing management skills. Eventually, her job at Amdahl led to a management position and she credits her experience with the chorus for enabling those leadership, public speaking, and teamwork skills for use in her job as well.

For a woman who loves a challenge, there is no doubt that she'll face the presidency with her usual energy and amazing talents, and she will inspire us all to keep on learning.

Fran LePlante...She Crashed on a Couch and Found a Lifetime of Harmony

In 1966, a young teacher, fresh out of the Peace Corps had returned from Colombia and accepted a job as a Physical Education teacher in the San Jose Unified School District. The night before she started work, she realized she didn't have a place to stay, so she called a friend of a friend and asked if she could sleep on her couch for the night till her new apartment was

ready. The friend agreed and even introduced her to her neighbor who liked to sing. The next night, Fran Laplante found herself at a chorus rehearsal and she's been coming ever since. She had a new job, a new apartment and a new chorus to welcome her to San Jose. Not bad!

Having spent two years in South America where she also taught physical education to teachers and coaches, she was fluent in Spanish and took the job in San Jose in the hopes that she would get to use the language. Her physical education led ultimately to counseling where the use of Spanish was very helpful. She is now retired and enjoying it immensely.

When asked about the changes she had experienced in the chorus, Fran remembered that it was quite different in 1966. The chorus was much smaller than today and the way Fran remembers her audition, she sang with another person from her part then that person stopped midway in the song to see if she could hold her own. There was not much stress on vocal production and there were breaks midway through rehearsal when they served food! The members seemed very enthusiastic and friendly and that was what drew her to the group--that, and of course, the music. In retrospect, Fran feels that Pat LeVezu's special talent for nurturing and developing an individual's abilities made the chorus as strong as it is today.

Over the years, the changes have been numerous. 1966 was before Sweet Adelines International put an emphasis on competitions, and the chorus focused on community performances called "Sing Outs." There still are community performances, but there is an added importance placed on competition and musical growth. Great strides have been made in the quality of the vocal production and in the education provided. While the chorus has changed over the years, the friendliness of the group has remained.

There has also been no change in the opportunities the chorus provides. Fran participated in a number of roles in at the local Regional levels. Fran has served as Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary and eventually, thanks to Pat, was asked to join the Music Staff. She's been a Section Leader and Show Chairman. She's been on the Regional Faculty and is currently the Dean of the LAW school.

Whatever Fran tackles, she does well and is a delight, and while she considers herself shy, she is definitely a part of the friendliness quotient of the chorus. Thank goodness she found that couch, which led to the neighbor, which led to us!

Maggie McLoughlin...She Came for the Music and Stayed for the Friendship

Maggie McLoughlin always had a passion for music. From 6th grade through high school, she played accordion, and for her two years of college, she, with her dad on bass, and her brother on drums, played in local clubs on Friday nights. Music wasn't just a hobby--it was who she was, and she knew she would always have to find something to do with music.

After two years of college, Maggie got married and babies soon followed. While her new life was wonderful, she was going a bit stir-crazy being at home all the time, and the music wasn't there anymore. She saw a little four-line ad in the local paper about a group that was singing harmony, but as delightful as it sounded, she didn't have the nerve to contact them. She cut out the article and carried it around with her for a year and finally got up the courage to call. Pat LeVezu answered the phone. Maggie asked some questions, and then asked, "Do I have to have my own quartet already?" Pat assured her she did not, that it was a whole chorus singing four-part harmony.

Maggie went to her first rehearsal in 1967 and was hooked the minute she walked in the door. The people were friendly and warm, and she loved the music. After four or five weeks, some members took her into another room and asked her to sing with them. At the end of the song, they announced to her she had passed her audition and was a full-fledged member. Maggie was

stunned, not knowing she was even auditioning. The director at the time had a person from the chorus direct one song each week. Feeling that Maggie had some directing ability, she spent time working with her and that was the beginning of Maggie's assistant directing career.

The year she joined, the chorus placed in the top five at its Regional Competition, one of their best showings. From that point on, the chorus never placed below 5th, but never won. San Jose began a search for a new director. They found the perfect match right in their own ranks, and Pat LeVezu, the first woman whom Maggie met, took the reigns. In 1987, after many years of coming close, they won their first Regional competition.

Maggie says she has stayed for the music, but the friendships are with her for life. The members treat everyone like a sister, and here you get to do it all: sing, dance and act. She feels she's a totally different person than before Adelina's, and she likes who she is now. She grew up here.

The Chorus would like to thank Betsy Kerr for her profiles of these outstanding women.