

Jekyll Island Singers
Who, When, How, Where...the History of The Singers....

As you are aware, this is the 50th Anniversary of the Jekyll Island Arts Association, which we are celebrating with special events throughout the next 10 months. This evening is one of the events, and as part of it, thought you might like to know some of the history of the Jekyll Singers.

In 1988, 28 years ago, the Jekyll Island Singers was started, under the auspices of the Jekyll Island Arts Association. Originally, it was composed of two members from each Church congregation on the island. The original director was Annie Barr, the same sprightly lady you see before you this evening. At that time, Annie was the Secretary, Manager, or all around person in charge of the Methodist Church, so rehearsals were held there, and we are still practicing at the Methodist Church every Monday afternoon. Annie, Pat Overholt and Kathleen Lundahl are the only charter members who still are part of today's Jekyll Island Singers.

There were others whose names you may know, too...like Jody Smith and Lou Ella Banes, who were the Co-Director and accompanist for the first decade or so, and of course, Anne Jennings, who has been a singer, accompanist, and for the past 12 years or so, Co-Director. Original concerts were held at Crane Cottage, or the Old Convention Center. Concerts included the Christmas Concert, a St. Patrick's Day Concert, and performing at a nursing home every May.

Over time, the group of Singers grew and all loved music, but many of us are amateurs. Annie's quiet determination took over, she selected music we could handle, and the individual singers improved markedly as Annie got our various

voices to blend and everyone benefitted from the practices. Her insistence that we pay attention to our words and feeling the words we were expressing continues to this day, and she has instilled that into each of us.

Annie's background is in music...she started as a teacher working with the stringed instruments in the music program in elementary schools. In 1946, she and her husband, Bob, moved to in Columbus, GA and worked with the students at Jordan Vocational School. Bob was the marching band director, and Annie helped by making majorette uniforms, and whatever else needed to be done. Her kids remember there were always high school kids in and out of their home in those days. In the summers, they went to the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute so they were involved in music year round. When they moved to Columbus, the Jordan Vocational School band had 17 band members...who self-described themselves as the worst band in the land. However, through their determination, Bob and Annie transformed that little group into a cohesive group that went to state band competitions and after just five years, were honored as the Best Band in the Land. If you want to read about that time in their lives, google Annie and Bob Barr and Readers Digest. There was a tribute to them written by a former student, and there was talk of a movie being made about it with the primary focus on reminding school systems how important music is in their curriculum.

Here on Jekyll Island, Annie founded a group that with her devotion and determination became a wonderful addition to the cultural life on Jekyll Island. In all the 28 years, she has never missed leading the Jekyll Island Singers in a concert, as our audiences have grown and residents and visitors alike look forward to the performances.

Annie's vision that music is important to everyone's life, nurtured by her years as a teacher of young people lead her to continue leading singers of a more mature age to participate in the joy of music. How lucky we have been here on Jekyll to have shared her vision, talent, leadership, friendship and her love of music. She has made an enormous contribution to our life on Jekyll Island. Annie is stepping aside from the conducting duties after tonight and is passing the baton to her co-director, Anne Jennings. She will still be part of the Singers group, but will work with Anne on selecting music, and all the administrative duties.

Please join me in applauding Annie for all her vision, encouragement, belief in us, and love of music which she has shared with so many.

Thank you, Annie!