

*The Music Goes On: Leisure World through Laguna Woods Village*  
*by Sunshine Lutey* *Page 1*

When I moved to Leisure World, November 15, 1995, I still worked full time as a Project Manager and programmer/designer of business systems.

A little history -- as I grew up my family and I performed in front of varying sizes of audiences, including family productions and duets with my sister, Waverly. These were special and fun times. When I left home, I met Lloyd who was thrilled to discover I played the piano and sang -- Why? because these were two things he wanted in a wife. We performed together during the next three years for large audiences; sometimes we sang a song I wrote.

In the intervening years, there wasn't time for music because we worked full time, attended college part-time and raised a family simultaneously. In 1968 Lloyd and I took our first trip to Las Vegas and went to the lounge shows. That was when I discovered that I had a dream -- I wanted to sing those wonderful songs on stage. I remember one song that impressed me -- "That's Life."

In 1985, Lloyd surprised me with a huge gift -- a piano; I was so thrilled! I found time to write more songs. In the 1990's, I joined Sweet Adelines for a while and that was fun. While with them, I wrote a song "I Choose To Sing" and formed a quartet called "In Treble Again;" we sang my song in the Sweet Adeline annual show. Soon after, Lloyd bought me a Karaoke machine with which I could practice and I began to build a library of songs.

Just a short time after we moved into the community, Lloyd, my husband of 43 years (1962-2005), read an article in the paper about the Kool Kats and he said, Honey, you might like this." Well, I tried it and yes, I liked it. They told me they needed musicians and if I wanted to sing, I would have the opportunity. I joined, mostly as a singer, as I only knew a few guitar chords.

A month later my caring Lloyd again told me, "There's a talent show; auditions are on Sunday. I think you might like to try." And I did -- it was Penny Hume's show.

At the audition, Penny chose me as one of the performers. In this show, I sang two songs; it was also a fashion show and I modeled some lovely evening gowns. That was a first, too. The audience seemed to enjoy the performance and I loved performing.

I was high on the success of Penny's show, but I wanted to grow, I asked Doug Custance, Kool Kats Director, to coach me. And so I learned. I also formed a small musical group called "Benny and the Rose Petals" and we performed various shows. The more we did, the harder I worked and the harder I worked, the more confident I became. Through Penny, the Kool Kats and the small musical group and other groups, I continued to perform and grow. I enjoyed performing with the Kool Kats in all of their shows. While performing with them I bought a Guitar Guide and learned enough chords to play any song. I also participated in several more of Penny's events in the Clubhouse 3 theater, where I entertained the audience singing two 20 minute sets and emceed her last production.

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The small musical group went through many changes in participants and in group names but through the years always performed. We performed under the following names: "Benny and the Rose Petals," "Terri and Friends," "Sunshine and Friends," and "Sunshine Company." Lloyd performed with us in all except the 1st group, but he became ill and as the illness progressed he lost his resonant voice. In 2003, I retired to be with him full-time but lost him in 2005. I subsequently met and married a wonderful man, David Hartman, and although I didn't know he could sing when I met him, I soon discovered a wonderful singer. Together, in 2007, we formed the "Sunshine Performance Club" and that's the banner that still flies high. Though these exciting years, my dreams of performing on stage are way-past filled. Due to arthritis, my guitar days are over, but I love to create and organize the events, create opportunities for village residents to use and expand their performance talents and I love to play the piano, my horn and sing. It's a win for community residents who enjoy the productions, a win for the resident performers and a win for the charities to whom we give the proceeds.

We began the benefit shows in 2008 and produced two each year through 2014. Saddleback Memorial Medical Center, the Foundation of Laguna Woods Village and Alzheimer's Association received the benefits from the shows. Additionally, we've performed many shows for Saddleback Kiwanis organization/club. We chose these charities because each of them provide service to our village.

So Sunshine Performance Club helps to develop talent in older adults, provides exciting events for the community and raises money for the charities that help our community and life is good. The group also performs for clubs, retirement homes, etc., but requests that the payment for services be paid to one of the four charities.

I am deeply grateful for the stepping stones that Doug Custance and Kool Kats, and Penny Hume, who we lost in 2001, provided. I am also grateful to the designers and organizers of Laguna Woods Village, as it is now called, in which musical development of the community's seniors and performances for the community are possible and where it is possible to help charitable organizations that also help our community.