

George Bryne: He sings for charity

Riding the South Trail



AUDREY BLACKWELL

Perhaps you have seen and heard George “Buddy” Bryne playing a guitar and singing somewhere along the avenues of downtown Venice. I met him recently after receiving an email from one of his neighbors

who suggested him as a man of interest for my column.

“George plays guitar and sings at numerous events and venues in the Venice area. Sometimes he performs for free and many times he donates all the tips thrown in his guitar case to a charity,” Flo Leidel said in her email. “Some of the charities George has helped are Garden Elementary, South County Food Pantry, PEO, and at least one family with a sick child and insurmountable medical bills. He is just a good guy with a generous heart.”

Generosity seems to come easily to this 64-year-old gentleman who has performed solo and in various bands since the 1960s. Besides giving away people's donations, when he is paid to perform, he said he gives that away to a charity, too.

When he performs, he puts out a sign that tells passersby what charity he is playing for. He showed me a sign that read: “Charity — Disabled American Veterans,” for when his proceeds go to that fraternal organization.

His list of charities includes about 25 more,

including Children First, Hurricane Sandy Relief, Neuro Challenge Foundation, Special Olympics, and Montel Williams' MS Foundation.

Accompanying his singing on both acoustic and electric guitars, he favors rock 'n' roll music. His voice type is baritone and some alto. He said he performs sometimes with a doo wop group (The Doo Pointes) in Florida and a full rock 'n' roll band in Pennsylvania.

George was born in Brooklyn in 1952. He is married to Jo-Ann and



PHOTO BY AUDREY BLACKWELL

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they have one grown son, Peter, who lives in Long Island, N.Y., with his wife, Sandy, and their two children.

"Nico is 9, and Tommy is 6, and they are my pride and joy," George said with a big grin.

His family members mostly live in Long Island. His mother, Theresa, lives in Port St. Lucie; his father, George, died in 1982 at age 61. His sister, Diane, lives in Port St. Lucie with her family.

With his talents and love of music, I wondered if music had been his lifelong career.

"No," he said, but it has been a love of his since 1964 when the Beatles came to America.

He worked in the corporate world for 40 years and retired in 2012 as a management consultant for Deloitte, which he described as the largest professional services firm in the country.

"Music is a hobby and a passion, which interested me when the Beatles arrived. My real inspiration was my dad, who used to sing around the house, and both parents encouraged me to play guitar at an early age. It went from there."

He has several guitars and his den is both office and practice room fully equipped with a microphone, amplifier and all that's needed for him to perform.

Another inspiration was his cousin, Chuck Laskowski, who was a musician and singer.

"He was a big help. He wasn't professional, but he did cut some records, a couple of which are now being played by young college bands."

Cousin Chuck's recording titled "Introspection: A Faine Jade Recital" is available on iTunes.

George doesn't have the same interest in pursuing work in the recording industry, though he's happy for his cousin. And George did work with many famous bands early on, serving as stage

hand for some rock 'n' roll legends such as Aerosmith, The Grateful Dead, Kenny Loggins, REO Speedwagon, Linda Ronstadt and more.

"I did stage security, set up equipment and drove equipment trucks," he said.

Was there any money in it?

"It was more fun than money. My friends said I had a good time," he chuckled.

He met Jo-Ann through friends in Queens, N.Y.

"We clicked right away," he said.

After she retired from Long Island Railroad as a transportation department manager in 2000, they looked to move south. They came to Venice on the advice of a friend in New York who had lived here in the 1980s and suggested they look into moving here.

"We came to visit and fell in love with Venice, and we bought our home in Pelican Pointe in 2001. I was still working, but my job took me around the world and I could live anywhere as long as there was a network nearby."

He said he retired in 2012 because he felt it was "time for me to move on and let the younger kids take over the reins."

He has an MBA from Dowling College at Long Island, and he earned a certificate at Harvard Business School in advanced operational strategy, which helped him to progress in the field. He had joined the Army in 1972, served in South Korea and in exactly three years, three months and 28 days was honorably discharged.

"I like to think that music is my passion, hobby. When I retired, I knew I wanted to do more than play golf, and I jumped back into music — guitars and singing."

Why music?

"There are so many things that divide us, but things stronger than those unite us, and that is the power of music. I've been very fortunate to live the life I live

— Pelican Pointe, nice cars, vacations. With music, I saw a linkage where I am able to give back by doing something I like to do."

That pretty much sums up his desire to give, but he had more to say.

"My life and all I have and my life experiences exposed me to a lot of people who are less fortunate than I am, and I was raised with family values and, in particular, at my high school, to give back.

He attended an all boys Catholic high school in New York: Archbishop Molloy. He recalled a motto from that school in Latin: "Non scholae sed vitae discimus."

George translated it as, "We do not learn for school, but for life," which he said means we were not just there for the academic education but to learn to be good people.

"What I do will go down to my grandchildren, who also will be fortunate for what they have in life. When I play, I get a lot of gratitude when someone comes up and says 'You rock,' or 'You're great.' But the most satisfying to me is when they put a \$5 or \$10 bill in the tip bucket and I can go home and write a check to someone who needs it more than I do."

So look for the man and his guitar around town. One place you're likely to see him is at Ciao Gelato the third Thursday of the month for what he calls Tasty Thursdays at Ciao Gelato. To contact him, call 941-724-9654; or e-mail him at: RockBud@comcast.net.

Editor's Note: Audrey Blackwell writes about the people, places and businesses along the South Trail in Venice. Your suggestions are welcome. Call 941-207-1102 or send an email.

Service and product information in this column should not be taken as an endorsement of the business.

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