

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

### The Sound of Music: Visiting With Gwen Leonard

**TGN:** Gwen, tell us about your musical background.

**Gwen:** My parents were professional musicians. I studied piano with my father as I grew up. In high school I did shows. I graduated from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, obtained my masters of music from the University of Illinois, and my doctorate of musical arts from the University of Oregon. My career has been a combination of teaching (faculty member at several colleges, but primarily for 28 years at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon) and professional singing (I was lyric soprano in operas by Mozart and Puccini, did recitals and chamber music including the Bach Cantata Seminar at Tanglewood, and also some contemporary and musical theater performances). I have recently had experience in directing musicals (Pippin, Carousel, Cabaret, The Merry Widow, The Student Prince, and Quilters) and I directed an Opera Workshop at Linfield College. I still have a private studio in Portland, Oregon, for students who are teachers of voice, and young professionals (eight former and continuing students are currently singing nationally in opera, oratorio and musical theater).

**TGN:** How are you pursuing your musical interests at Menlo Commons?

**Gwen:** Since moving here in September 2013, I have started speaking on "Perceptive Listening in Classical Music" on a regular basis to a group of 8-9 residents. We play an interesting classical musical work and then explore what is motivating the composer, and how he/she uses certain techniques in orchestral music. I also am teaching piano to a young girl (in exchange for her family storing my grand piano), and am planning to open a small studio soon for teaching voice locally.

**TGN:** Tell us about your family.

**Gwen:** I have two daughters and they each have two children. One of my daughters lives in Maryland and the other lives in the Atherton-Menlo Park area. My 15 year old grandson Keeton is good at high technology. My 13 year old grandson Jake wants to be a graphic artist (he is into designing cars at this time). They are the ones who live here



in California. Back East, my 12 year old granddaughter Emma is a dancer and she is excited about ballet (recently a Nutcracker performance with a ballet company from Russia - she was a mouse in the production!) My 10 year old grandson Ryan is an ice hockey player. I try to visit my East Coast family whenever I can.

**TGN:** Do you travel anywhere else?

**Gwen:** Yes. I have been to many places, but I still need to go to Hawaii, and I would like to spend more time in Scotland and Ireland.

**TGN:** I notice you have an upright piano here.

**Gwen:** Yes. I also have a Steinway baby grand and an electronic keyboard. I played the electronic keyboard at last year's Christmas Party here at Menlo Commons.

**TGN:** And you have a white cat?

**Gwen:** Yes, he is "Benji". He likes to visit my neighbors via the roof - he is quite a character!

**TGN:** And you are "liason" for Building B?

**Gwen:** Yes. I keep my ear to the ground, listen to what others are saying, and report suggestions to the Board. For instance, I want to make sure that in each building we know about the people who are disabled, hard of hearing, or have other needs - who is "at risk". Reporting this quickly to first-responders is important. Another issue concerns earthquakes here - are our buildings retrofitted properly? I am going to attempt to find out! Flooring in front of elevators and poor light in hallways and stairwells need attention (it is darker than it should be).

**TNT:** So why did you move to Menlo Commons?

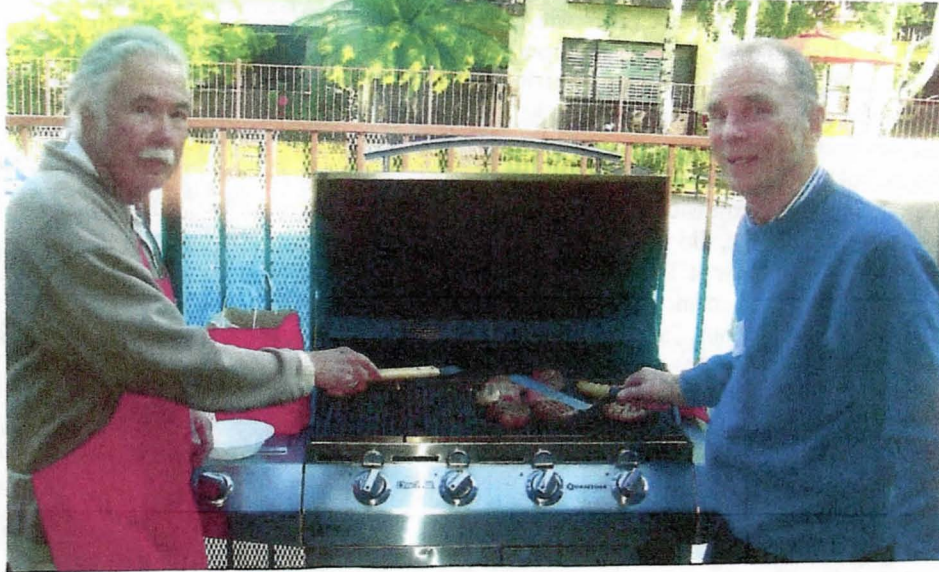
**Gwen:** I think it is a happy, friendly place, that represent "gracious living".

**TNT:** Thank you, Gwen, for all you have shared with us.



# THE SPRING FLING!

Menlo Commons residents celebrated Spring time 2014 with the "Spring Fling" on Sunday, April 27. Each of us brought our meat and other grillable food and had them Bar-B-Qued by expert chefs Roger Murray and Dick Wrenn.



Shirley Stewart was in charge of the event. She supplied yummy potato salad and cream puffs. Her helpers included Pat Galvez and her grandson Justin Greco (age 21).



Among those enjoying the event were Joan and Kent Bouma, Ina Frymire, Gene Brown, and Privash Gharvi.

