

NEWS & INFORMATION ABOUT PRACTICING

# SWEET MUSIC Monthly

Volume 1 Issue 2 MARCH 2007

PERFORMING POPULAR STANDARD SONGS



## Banjo Stories

By Robert Schmeltzer

As you may already know, Christina and I moved several years ago from the San Francisco area to Bend, OR, and then further north to Sequim, WA in 2006. In all of our travels we left behind many banjo bands with whom we played. From time to time, I thought it might be a good idea to take a few snapshots of the various band members so that I could later associate their names with photos of their faces, if my memory of them might fade over time - sort of a Who's Who of the greater banjo band community.

Recently, Christina was looking through my accumulation of snapshots and decided to have some fun with them by superimposing them over each other using PhotoShop, sort of an experiment to see what the "average composite banjo player" might look like. To be completely accurate, our own mugshots were included in the overall mix.

Well, the result was a total surprise to us both! Her composite picture of all of us is shown below. Psst... don't let Christina get a hold of your photo!



Robert Schmeltzer is a plectrum banjo player with Sweet Music, regularly performing at local venues. He lives with Christina Gross in Sequim.



Director Christina Gross, standing far left, enthusiastically leads her Sweet Music group through the third verse of "Jamaica Farewell" in the foyer of The Lodge at Sherwood Village in Sequim, Washington.

## Playout Heaven

By Christina Gross

MOST MUSICIANS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICING songs that are meaningful to them. We know the satisfaction that comes from carefully polishing a song. This precision can be for personal improvement and enjoyment, open group jamming for fun and social contact, or the broader goal of preparing for public entertainment as a band. In each situation, improving technical skills on your instrument is usually matched with performance goals that you have in mind. Many musicians, however, prefer not to perform in public, believing that they are not proficient enough to play on a "professional" level. Surprisingly, this way of thinking fosters a resistance to play with musical colleagues. Most private performers are content to practice only to their own set of standards and feelings, free from what they consider as the outside interference of public opinion, taste, and criticism.

On the other end of this spectrum are highly skilled, performance-savvy musicians who are admired by their contemporaries as top players in their field. All too often, however, their musical focus is centered entirely on skillful execution. With this approach, rationality wins out over emotion, with diligent repetition leading to an increasing lack of sensitivity for the original intent of the music they are playing. It is sad to watch a performer dazzle an audience with skillful techniques, yet leave them feeling cold and detached from a showcase devoid of shared feelings.

Our Sweet Music group practices to combine technical expertise with sensitive musical expression so that our audiences - and other musicians - will take notice.

1

Christina Gross is the Director and President of Sweet Music. She also sings and plays her plectrum banjo with her group of musicians. She lives in Sequim, Washington with Robert Schmeltzer.

# OUR MUSICAL HERITAGE

BY GLENN POWELL



This is a 1952 photo of the Sousaphone section in the 103 piece Driller Band that I played in (second from left) as a senior at Bakersfield High School. At the time, we had the largest Sousaphone section in the country. Our band won first place in the All Western Band Review in Long Beach California.

## Meet the Tuba

### Part 2

Playing the tuba well requires proper breathing, buzzing of the mouthpiece, and the development of a good *embouchure* or lip strength and shape for producing the desired tone, pitch, volume and quality. Soft notes or *pp*, extremely low notes, and notes in the highest range are the most difficult to play well. Breath control and embouchure are paramount with these extremes. Tuba players know that it can take twenty minutes of playing to bring the tuba up to temperature and the pitch can change by a semi tone.

Deep breathing from the diaphragm is a must. I once asked a professional tuba player how frequently a tubist should breathe during a song: His answer seemed obvious enough: "As often as you can. Take deep diaphragmatic breaths through your mouth, but sneak in some quick snorts if you need to." I learned early on that before the start of a song a good tuba player inhales, straightens up, inhales some more, and then takes in a final really deep draw to fill the lungs. The rule is this: Don't let

yourself get below half a tank of air, or the quality of your tone will deteriorate.

This quality of tone also depends upon human physiology and elements particular to the musical instrument. Biological factors include the size and weight of the player, the volume of his or her oral cavity, sinuses, and thickness of the chest.

Materials relative to a tuba's sound quality involve the level of workmanship on the horn, the craftsmanship of the valves, the size and shape of the instrument and its bell, and its finish. A tall tuba has a much deeper tone than a short one. A lacquered brass tuba sounds different from a silver-plated one. Some prefer the tarnished surface of the bare brass tuba. There are fiberglass Sousaphones, but most tuba players don't like the fiberglass sound. However, one would be easier to carry the 5.5 miles in the annual Rose Parade. I can tell you from experience that a 60+ pound brass Sousaphone gets heavier with each mile marched.

So how much does a new tuba cost today? Plan to spend \$1,800 to \$50,000, depending on the quality you want and the size of your ego and wallet.

Glenn Powell plays the tuba for Elsie's Little Trio around Sequim and Port Angeles, Washington.

## Spotlight on Performers

By Mark Johnson

Cynthia Sayer is a highly entertaining banjo player who might not be known to many musicians outside the jazz banjo community. Here is a little background information on this popular performer that may spark your interest.

Cynthia Sayer is considered to be one of the leading jazz banjoists of our time. She is an internationally acclaimed musician and singer who is known for her entertaining multi-instrumental skills and vocal talents. Cynthia has worked with such artists as Woody Allen, Bela Fleck, Bill Cosby, and many others. She tours regularly here in the United States and abroad, livening up festivals worldwide.

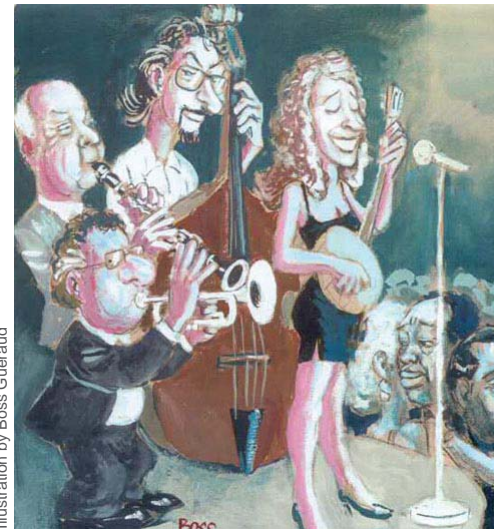


Illustration by Boss Gueraud

Cynthia is a 10-year piano and vocals member of Woody Allen's *New Orleans Jazz Band*. She appeared in "Wild Man Blues," an award-winning feature film documentary about Woody Allen filmed during a recent European concert tour. Cynthia has performed at the White House for presidents and played in New York City's Carnegie Hall, Town Hall and Lincoln Center. In 2006, Cynthia Sayer was inducted into the Four String Banjo Hall of Fame in Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Mark Johnson donates some time to play his plectrum banjo for local retirement and nursing homes.

### CLASSIFIED

Banjo Lessons Free weekly lessons given on the four-string plectrum banjo. Music theory also taught. Call Bob Schmeltzer at 360-683-1085

# On the Psychology of Learning

By Robert Schmeltzer

Learning is the process of acquiring new information or skills through study, instruction, or experience. The key word here is “acquiring.” We acquire what we want or need by making an effort to REACH for what we do not have.

But this effort involves RISK: Will we achieve our goal? How will we feel about ourselves if we don't? Can we deal with the risk of reaching? Or will we feel inadequate, stupid, or think less about ourselves than when we are not reaching? Are we willing to do the work?

These questions can invite uncomfortable feelings. Many of us would rather stay with the status quo and not engage ourselves. Why should we have to deal with such feelings? All of us have to answer these questions for ourselves. There is always the less threatening alternative of AVOIDANCE waiting in the wings. We may decide to do it later: “Let's have dinner instead.” Or, maybe we would prefer to go shopping or just go make another cup of coffee. We all have our pet ways of avoiding what is uncomfortable.

Such negative feelings are likely to come to us as we reach and risk. If we are to engage in learning, practicing, and reaching, then we must continually be AWARE of these uneasy feelings and accept them. We must choose a course of ACTION, rather than inaction. We must keep focused on the rewards of achieving, rather than on the difficulties of trying. We should leave time for intellectual curiosity and exercise PATIENCE with ourselves. Overcoming any resistance requires PERSISTENCE.

It is only when we begin to feel inadequate to a task that we know we are being challenged. To grow and ACHIEVE our next level of accomplishment requires acknowledgement of these ever-present self-effacing feelings and our ability to rise above them. Today, I hope that you will make the effort to try something new and see how you feel about yourself. Remember: NO RISK... NO GAIN.

We close with a quote from U.S. President Calvin Coolidge:

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not - nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent.

Genius will not - unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not - the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

The slogan “press on” has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

*Robert Schmeltzer continues to have a lifelong interest in philosophy and self-improvement. His favorite author and mentor was David Viscott who wrote the popular self-help book, Emotional Resilience.*



## Beautiful Singing - Part 2

Hi! Judy Larson reporting in again with more technical insights about Vocal Production. This information was learned at a 2006 workshop featuring Debbie Connelly, a classically-trained singer who has become a Sweet Adelines barbershop singer and trainer. As cited in my first *Vocal Arts* column, Debbie said that beautiful singing will always be well-supported, freely produced, and resonant.

In this March edition, I'll share her ideas for making our singing FREELY PRODUCED. Note once again how her technical analysis involves appreciating and applying knowledge of basic physiology to how we vocalize. The body parts and proper use of these integral tools include our throat, tongue, neck, lips and teeth, and jaw.

She provided the following observations and suggested exercises for making beautiful, relaxed vocal sounds:

Our throats should be open (as in a yawn) and have an "inside smile" feel. As we inhale, the air should feel cool.

The tongue is a huge muscle that greatly affects the quality of vocal sounds. Picture it as a rug that you normally want lying flat on the floor. Practice saying/singing "flah, flah, nee" so that your teeth show, and your lower lip and tongue move together. Another suggested exercise for proper tongue movement is to be able to sing "ah" while sliding your tongue in and out, but keeping the sound the same!

To learn the role of our neck muscles and ligaments, first look in the mirror as you use your hand to gently move your larynx back and forth. Try to keep your chin and crown level while vocalizing. Picture yourself singing through your eyes.

While still in front of the mirror, practice talking/singing, making your lips pliable so that your teeth show. This natural fluting of the shape of your mouth will bring sound forward by allowing space between your teeth and lips. You will have created an additional cavity for producing resonance.

For proper use of the jaw, allow it to be completely slack (but don't actually use this mode while singing!) Minimize up and down jaw movement while talking/singing.

NEXT TIME: RESONANCE

*Judy Larson has a wide vocal range and sings with Sweet Adelines in Sequim.*



## Cherished Musical Memories **By Stan Patton**

**I**t was during the month of March 1952 that my modest musical ambitions shifted far beyond my control. I was sixteen years old at the time. I had just walked through the front door of Gould's Music Store in Pasadena, California. I was hoping to start a novelty jug band for our high school dances and I thought we needed new kazoo pipes to pep up the band. Gould's was the place to buy them.

As I was waiting at the front counter to pay for the colorful metal kazoos, the most delightful music flowed out from the rear of the store. I wandered back between the practice rooms and came upon a small, white-haired man sitting on a work stool playing a banjo. I had never seen a tenor banjo before or heard one played in this manner. The man was using four fingers on his right hand to pluck the smooth gut strings. Having studied the piano during the previous five years, I quickly recognized the song he was playing as the "William Tell Overture," with both melody and counter-melodies being played simultaneously. I was speechless and nearly stopped breathing. The gentle-appearing man then effortlessly went into "Maple Leaf Rag," and finished with "Nola," a piece that I had struggled with for two years on the piano - just trying to play the triplets in the sheet music correctly.

He directed me to sit facing him on a wooden chair next to his music stand. He came over to me and carefully placed his Bacon & Day banjo on my lap, saying with a stern voice, "If you're going to learn to play the banjo correctly, you must first learn to read violin music. I am a very strict teacher." He then pulled out Charles McNeil's two-volume instructional book set for the tenor banjo and set them on his music stand in front of me. I could not believe that I had come into his store thirty minutes earlier for a box of kazoos and was now sitting with a banjo in my lap, facing the intriguing possibilities of learning how to play it.

Holding his banjo between my two hands, I seemed to feel a spiritual presence that I had not known before. I heard him telling me to stroke the strings while pushing with my right knee on a protruding pedal on the side of the banjo. I remember being wondrously surprised how the sound of his instrument changed. He sensed my excitement and briefly explained the many uses of the mute pedal during a performance. To demonstrate, he retrieved his banjo from my lap and started playing a song I had never heard before, "Devil's Dream." As his knee easily moved the pedal back and forth, the music sounded to me like the undulating wail of an unhappy ghost.

Finally, this kind and talented man introduced himself as Joe Tally - his real name being Joseph Inunciolo. When I eagerly voiced my fascination with his banjo, he simply informed me that my first music lesson with him would start the following Friday after school - promptly at four-thirty.

For the next forty-eight years, my life became filled with banjo music and a growing dedication to learning all types of music. The man who inspired my love of music became my lifelong friend, father figure and music mentor, Joseph Inunciolo Tally, who had immigrated from southern Italy in 1906.

*Stan Patton is a musical genius who lives in Bend, Oregon. When he has time away from writing research grants for his clients, Stan plays virtually every musical instrument he can get his hands on.*

# The Olympic Scene

by Bill Wilson

Heads up! The Jazz in the Olympics Society (JITOS) annual jazz festival will be held this year from April 26 through 29th in Port Angeles.

The JITOS jazz festival has earned international acclaim as the premier traditional jazz festival on the west coast. Over the past few years, this popular event has attracted over 4000 visitors and is considered one of the three major festivals on the Olympic Peninsula.

The festival this year will feature eleven great bands who will be rotating through four venues with spacious dance floors.

Some of the better known bands performing this year include Buck Creek Jazz Band from Springfield, Virginia, whose members have been together for over twenty years. They present the most closely integrated traditional arrangements of any band on the festival circuit.

The Yerba Buena Stompers from New York City are an exceptional group

of musicians who play a Lu Watters-style of traditional jazz with two coronets in their front line. Their arrangements are recognized as exceptional throughout the international jazz community.

The West End Jazz Band from Chicago is a high-energy twelve piece ensemble that presents classic traditional jazz, while having fun educating audiences on their intricate arrangements.

The 51st Eight Jazz Band from Vancouver, British Columbia is a youthful group led by a 22-year-old who plays her marvelous trumpet in the traditional style. They take their unusual name from the humorous consideration that they are the "51st State" because of their proximity to their southern neighbor.

Paramount Jazz Band from Boston is a supremely polished group who have been playing with the same lineup for almost thirty years. Their presentations are classics, and they are well-renowned throughout the traditional jazz circuits.

Finally, I would like to remind my readers that JITOS is an all-volunteer non-profit organization. It requires about 130 volunteers to make its annual festivals possible. Requests for volunteers are being distributed now. Sign up and enjoy the festival as part of our volunteer staff.

*Bill Wilson plays his vintage tenor banjo with the local performing group Elsie's Little Trio. He is president of the Jazz in the Olympics Society.*



The exceptional arrangements by the Yerba Buena Stompers will be part of the 2007 Jazz in the Olympics jazz festival. Photo from the Jazz in the Olympics Society website [www.jazzolympics.com](http://www.jazzolympics.com).

# Horning In

BY RAY NASON



In 1941 my older brother took me from Sequim, Washington to Seattle to earn money for clothes for the coming school

year. Due to the man-power shortage at the start of WWII, Cunningham Steel Company hired me to shovel scrap iron into their huge furnaces, knowing that I was lying about my young age of fourteen. Actually, I was very lucky at the time to have an opportunity like this, since most of the men around were occupied with the war effort. I became wealthy after just two weeks work and was looking forward to returning home to Sequim.

Eight blocks from my brother's apartment in Seattle was a pawn shop with a beautiful Elk Hart-Blessing trombone on display for only \$99.50. I told my brother that I needed the money until I got my paycheck. He only gave me \$70 and told me to buy the horn for that amount.

This started a lot of eight-block hikes with disappointments at each end. Every time I went to buy the horn, the pawn shop owner insisted that he needed an additional 23 cents from me to cover the new .0033 state sales tax.

But my brother wouldn't budge about the extra cost for the trombone. One day the store owner gave me back my \$70 and told me to leave his place of business and never return! As I left his store feeling very disappointed, I paused one last time to look at the beautiful instrument on display in his front window. Suddenly, the store owner yelled out, "Come back in here, kid!" He handed me a receipt for my \$69.77 and for the troublesome 23 cents sales tax. And with that paperwork he handed me the trombone.

On the way back to my brother's apartment it occurred to me that 23 cents was more than what was due on \$69.77, but I decided not to go back to get the balance because the man at the pawn shop just wasn't pleasant to do business with.

*Ray Nason is a seasoned trombone player, experienced with most of the local bands on the Olympic Peninsula.*

## Don't Quit

by Quinton Howell

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh.

When care is pressing you down a bit  
Rest, you must - but don't you quit.  
Life is queer with its twists and turns  
As every one of us sometimes learns.

And many a failure turns about  
When you might have won had you stuck it out.  
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow,  
You might succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out -  
the silver tint on the clouds of doubt.  
And you can never tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so far.

So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit -  
It's when things seem worst that you **MUST NOT QUIT!**



## Playing the Washboard

There are so many instruments that one could play - why the washboard? The answer is simple: There is no other instrument that has more creative uses than the washboard. I like the variety of playing Dixieland-style jazz, as well as bluegrass and 1920s-1960s popular music.

On a washboard you can play with thimbles attached to the fingertips of gloves you wear to make a clanking sound. Or you can use small cymbals that can also be attached to gloves to create a rich bell tone. Another way of producing interesting sounds is by attaching a block to a washboard to mimic a drum, being careful not to create too much loudness for the other players in your group. This drum block can be used by tapping a stick or a cymbal against it.

Another way of making a different sound with a washboard is to use wire type whisks to make a softer sound for ballad songs by brushing lightly on the board. For train songs, I use a cowbell attached to the bottom of the washboard, tapping the bell with a stick to make a sound similar to that of a train coming in to a station.

As you can see, the washboard is an instrument with a lot of potential, providing a wide variety of musical sounds!



Dorothy Seward is shown playing her washboard, using whisk brushes for a softer sound.

# OUR FAVORITE SONGS

BY CHRISTINA GROSS

## Sentimental Journey

As we all know, audiences worldwide love to hear a good musical melody, one that catches their spirit - a memorable tune that they can take home with them, repeatedly humming a favorite passage or lyrical phrase.

Songwriters over the years have taken great pride in creating hundreds of catchy melodies for Broadway shows, movie blockbusters, insatiable popular music, and television ads. It seems that there will always be a place for song in the hearts of people everywhere.

The popular WWII era song "Sentimental Journey" still continues to be one of these unforgettable melodies. It is a nostalgic tune that evokes memories of the 1940s in a way few other songs can. Written by Ben Homer, Bud

Green, and Les Brown of his energetic dance orchestra fame, Les Brown and His Band of Renown in 1944, it was sensitively recorded the same year by sixteen-year-old Doris Day, despite unfounded fears over her skills to perform the extreme vocal ranges required.

At first, some band members thought that "Sentimental Journey" was not going to connect with the younger crowd, but at it's debut in the Hotel Pennsylvania's Cafe Rouge, the kids went crazy! Even now, nearly 60 years later, the song still pleases...



Publicity photo circa 1944 of Doris Day and some text courtesy of the Sentimental Journey Orchestra website www.thejgo.com

# Letters to the Editor

Best Newsletter In Town!

I just read, re-read and then re-read AGAIN your Newsletter Issue #1 that just arrived yesterday. I'm totally excited over your skills, handiwork and polished product. WOW! Is this word "WOW" strong enough?

Stan Patton  
Bend, Oregon

Successful First Issue

Congratulations on your successful first edition of *Sweet Music Monthly*! The newsletter looks great, love the cover photo, and also Bob Schmeltzer's column (*Banjo Stories*, February 2007). I breezed through the rest, but will look closer with more time to spend. Great job!!!

Mary Raffo  
Boise, Idaho

# FUNNY QUOTABLES

Compiled by Bob Schmeltzer

A San Diego patrolman pulled over a driver and told him that, because he was wearing his seat belt, he had just won \$5000 in a safety competition.

"What are you going to do with the money?" the officer asked.

"I guess I'll go to driving school and get my license," the man answered.

"Don't listen to him," said the woman in the passenger seat. "He's a smart aleck when he's drunk."

This woke up the guy in the back seat, who saw the cop and said, "I knew we wouldn't get far in a stolen car."

Then there was a knock from the trunk and a voice asked in Spanish, "Are we over the border yet?"

-Quoted to Funny Times

Playing in a Group - Rule #8:

When everyone else has finished playing, you should not play any notes that you have left.

-Quoted to Funny Times

An old man and old woman lived in a nursing home. He asked her to marry him.

The next day he calls her and says he is so sorry. He knows he asked her to marry him, but he cannot remember her answer. She says, "Oh my, I am so glad you called. I had said 'yes,' but I couldn't remember who asked me!"

-Quoted to Funny Times

A tour manager comes across the guitarist and bass player arguing at the side of the stage and pulls them apart asking what the problem is.

"This guy detuned one of the strings on my bass," says the bass player. "And we're due on stage in five minutes."

"So what's the problem?" asks the tour manager.

"He won't tell me which string it was that he detuned!" mourned the bassist.

-Quoted to Funny Times

Please send your humorous stories for possible publication in future editions of this Funny Quotables column of our Sweet Music Monthly newsletter. All submissions must be free of copyright limitations and of cost and will not be returned to sender.



Premiere February 2007 Issue

Send your letters to: Christina Gross, Editor  
Sweet Music Monthly, Suite 104-103, 1400 West  
Washington Street, Sequim, WA 98382

# SWEET MUSIC

NEWS & INFORMATION ABOUT PRACTICING AND PERFORMING POPULAR STANDARD SONGS

SWEET MUSIC IS A GROUP OF LOCAL MUSICIANS WHO ENJOY MEETING VOLUNTARILY ONCE A WEEK TO PRACTICE PLAYING POPULAR STANDARD SONGS FROM THE 1920S-1960S. Their primary purpose is to have fun practicing and performing the well-known singable and danceable melodies of the past.

Several times a month the Sweet Music group is asked to perform their well rehearsed musical variety shows for local audiences. Many of the songs are presented on stage as entertaining costumed skits with attention given to audience participation. Sweet Music continues to spread the joy of music.

The Sweet Music players are not considered a band, since the singers and musicians are free to participate with other groups. There is no membership involved with Sweet Music.

All donations are used only to cover operating expenses. Any remaining funds are donated to selected charities.

## ELSIE'S LITTLE CORNER

By Elsie Judd

The only thing I can think of in my life as "little" is probably this column. I have always done things in a big way, like joining the *Sweet Music* group as my sixth band over the years. I played piano (or keyboards) while raising a family of four boys and two girls, and working at Olympic Memorial Hospital in Port Angeles for 24 years. I won't tell you how many times I've been married (that's my secret).

My music career started at age twelve when I began taking a year's worth of piano lessons. My parents played in a band called *The Skiie Syncopators*, with Mom on piano and Dad on sax. They would take us to the dance hall and we'd end up going to sleep with music in our ears. I especially liked "Margie" and "The Waltz You Saved For Me." I suppose that is why I love the good old tunes and con-

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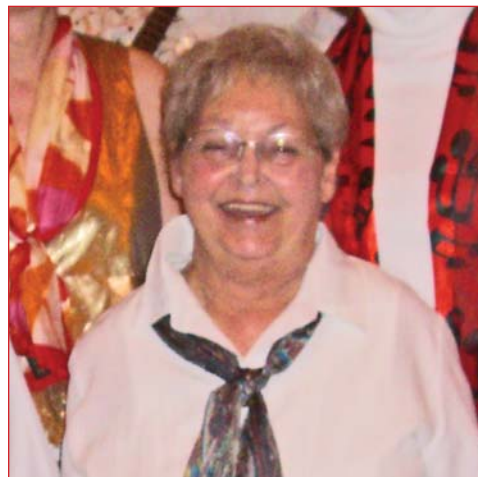
NEXT ISSUE COPY DEADLINE:  
Midnight on the 25th of the month

STAMP

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tinue to play them to this day for local elderly folks who appreciate fine music.

I wish I had been more involved with music when I was working full-time and being a single mom. But after returning to playing in 1991, I really made up for any lost time by joining the *Friends of the Fifties* band for twelve years, then *The Old Time Fiddlers*, *Banjos 101*, *Dungeness Jazz Band*, *Elsie's Little Trio*, and now *Sweet Music*. As one popular comedian always said, "How sweeet it is!"



Elsie Judd plays piano and keyboard for her group, Elsie's Little Trio, on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington.

SWEET MUSIC		March 2007 Schedule		1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>SWEET MUSIC EVENTS</b>						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

### Practice and Rehearsals

Every Sunday afternoon from 12:30-3:30 PM at the Sunland Golf & Country Club in Sequim, Washington. Open to all musicians who enjoy practicing as a group. Contact Christina Gross for more info.

### Next Playouts

March 15, 2007  
Sherwood Manor  
550 West Hendrickson Road  
Sequim, Washington

April 18, 2007  
The Lodge at Sherwood Village  
660 Evergreen Farm Way  
Sequim, Washington