



She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich



2005. Judy performs in a Bay Area production of Gian Carlo Menotti's opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

Written by Jean Bartlett, October, 2020
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TUGENDREICH, JUDITH FRIESE (1939-2017)

Judy Tugendreich shared music. She played it, she arranged it, she conducted it, she taught it, she sang it, she savored it and she gave it to audiences in a way that made them stand up and cheer.

How was she involved in music?

The short breakdown: she taught piano for 41 years in Pacifica, at one point teaching over 45 students a week; she taught cello; she sang with a madrigal chorus, which evolved into the madrigal and modern music choir, the Seaside Singers – the latter for which she also did arranging, conducting, marketing and concert bookings. She also brought in local elementary school students and their teachers to join her Seaside Singers in an annual Festival of Holiday Music at Pacifica Performances Mildred Owen Concert Hall. These packed concerts received too many standing ovations to count. I know. I was there.

Morning Nichols, musician, artist and longtime Artistic Director of Pacifica Performances, shared her thoughts on Judy.

"Judy was a champion of children and adults, leading them all to their own musical journeys with her leadership and instruction," Morning said. "With her choir, the Seaside Singers, she performed many times at our Hall, bringing with her community members of all ages to join her onstage and off. She took particular care to include the littlest children, and always invited Director Marilyn Wells and her Third Grade Chorus from Ocean Shore School to have a slot during our annual Holiday Concert. Judy was an energetic, creative woman with a strong heart and spirit."

* * *

Judith Karen Friese was born in Seattle on March 3, 1939, at the tail end of the Great Depression. She was the only child of Irving and Helen (Throdahl) Friese. Her family named her "Judy" because, as Judy later explained in a family history account she wrote in 2016, "it was not a common name. Later that year, Judy Garland debuted in 'The Wizard of Oz' and that was the end of uncommon!"

Both Irving and Helen were 1934 graduates of the University of Washington. However, the economic upheaval of the times offered no certainties in the job market. Her father "held a series of temporary jobs" and her mother "worked as a seamstress in a department store."

"The month I was born my father earned five dollars," Judy stated in her family history. "My mother and I stayed in the hospital for 10 days, which was the norm at that time, and the total bill was \$99."

A few months after Judy was born, her dad secured a permanent job with the National Bank of Washington in Tacoma and her family moved to the City of Puyallup, WA, pronounced pew-AL-up. Puyallup is about 10 miles southeast of Tacoma. As it turned out, Judy's dad's family had a long history in Puyallup, dating back to the late 1800s. That's when Judy's great grandfather, William Henry Fries, Jr., or "Henry" as he was known, and his son Will, headed west from Pennsylvania to grab a piece of land in the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889. Will, who some years down the line would become Judy's grandfather, was then all of 15.

Established by Congress in 1862, the Homestead Act allowed U.S. citizens to apply for eventual personal ownership of quarter-sections of government-owned land – 160 acres – out in specific areas of the undeveloped Southwest and West. Henry and Will were looking to homestead land for their entire family, which consisted of Henry, Henry's wife (and Will's mom) Flora Forsythe Wilson Fries, Will, and the couple's two other children, Mae and Adam. When Henry and Will arrived in Oklahoma, they decided it was not the place to resettle and they headed further west, eventually homesteading in Puyallup. Henry built a house and the family had a farm where they grew potatoes.

In 1898, Will headed to Alaska for the Klondike Gold Rush, made himself a "nice nest egg," and then he moved to the City of Snohomish, WA, to run a feed store business with his sister Mae's husband, Herman Fries (same last name, different ancestry). That's when Will changed the spelling of his last name to "Friese" and the brothers-in-law opened their shop, Fries & Friese.

Will returned to Puyallup where he met his wife Lillie Sanders. Lillie was born in Colorado in 1887 or 1888. At some point in her childhood her family moved to Puyallup, as she was a graduate of Puyallup High School. Will and Lillie married in the summer of 1910. Will became a cement contractor in Puyallup and "poured the foundations for many of the city's early commercial buildings." The couple owned a large house on East Main with property that extended for several blocks, up to the railroad tracks, including several small rental cottages on the land.

"My grandmother managed the business end of the harvest produced on the acreage behind their house," Judy noted, "and she may have managed the business end of my grandfather's cement contracting business as well."

Their only child, Judy's dad Irving, was born in 1911.

Judy's mom Helen was born in Washington State in 1911 to Clarence and Huldah (Hanson) Throdahl. Helen was the third of her parents' three daughters. Her family lived in Grays Harbor, WA and Centralia, WA before settling in Tacoma. Riding in the caboose, Helen's dad worked as a brakeman for the Great Northern Railway. He made the front page of the *Tacoma Times* when his swift actions prevented a runaway train from crashing into a bridge in the City's downtown.



When Judy and her parents first moved to Puyallup, they lived in one of the small cottages her dad's parents owned at the end of East Main Avenue, which was not far from the railroad tracks. Some of Judy's earliest memories are walking with her mom to the railroad tracks, timed to when Grandfather Throdahl would be riding by on the train. Along with lots of waving, her grandfather would toss her candy as the train chugged by. Just before her third birthday, her family moved to her childhood home on West Pioneer Avenue. She loved that home the moment she walked in and even when she wrote about it in 2016, she referred to it as "My Home, with a capital H, though I haven't lived there for almost 60 years."

← Judy's childhood home, 817 West Pioneer Avenue, Puyallup, WA.

When Judy grew up in Puyallup, the population was nearly a quarter of what it is now – 10,500 then and 41,886 now.

"Because Puyallup had enough stores and services, it wasn't necessary to go very often to the big city nearby," Judy wrote, "the City of Tacoma. I enjoyed a lot of freedom today's kids don't have. There were no concerns for safety. I walked by myself to school from the first grade on and I could ride my bike anywhere."

Several months shy of turning three when the United States entered the Second World War, and six years old when it ended, Judy put to paper those childhood memories.

"Based on its size, a family was allowed a prescribed amount of sugar, butter, flour, coffee and meat each month. I particularly recall there was a shortage of candy! Rationing allowed two pairs of shoes a year. I remember my summer sandals were poor quality and fell apart. I also remember going to the grade school to pick up our ration books. My father planted a garden each spring to supplement our menu and there was always the food my mother had canned. People saved cooking grease in an old shortening can and we took it to the corner grocery store for the war effort." (The theory: one pound of fat contains enough glycerin to make about a pound of explosives.)

"Nylon and silk stockings became very scarce as the fiber was also needed for military goods. When a limited supply became available at our local store, near riots occurred as women clamored to get them. My mother used to painstakingly mend the inevitable runs by stretching the stocking across a drinking glass and using a special darning hook. Things were not thrown away until they were totally useless and you didn't buy anything unless it was very necessary.

"Living on the West Coast, there was great fear of an air attack from Japan. Mother made heavy monk's cloth drapes as every house had to be blacked out after dark. Block wardens went around to make sure not a crack of light was visible. There were no street lights or traffic signals after dark. Car headlights were painted black, except for a narrow strip across the middle.

"My feet were very wide, and to get shoes that fit, we had to go to Seattle twice a year to Nordstrom's. At that time, it was only a shoe store and Mr. Nordstrom himself used to wait on us. On the way we would drive by the Boeing Airplane Plant. To camouflage the building from the air, a mock village was erected on the roof with houses, lawns, streets, and laundry hanging from clotheslines.

Author: Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 4)

"Many Japanese Americans in Western Washington were sent to internment camps. One was located on the Fairgrounds in Puyallup, not far from where my Grandmother Lillie lived. The Fair was closed during the War and I could see the barbed wire from her front yard. This was the first camp described in the book "Snow Falling on Cedars" (David Guterson), and also in the book, "Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet" (Jamie Ford). My friend Barbara remembers actually going to the camp with her mother who used to take home-baked bread to a friend who was being held there." (Judy and Barbara, lifelong friends, met at Episcopal Sunday School, which Judy began attending when she was 3.)

Judy also went on to note that during WWII, the local high school presented a variety show to raise money for war bonds, and once a week at school, kids bought stamps to put in a book. "When the book was full, it could be turned into a war bond."

A War Bond Stamp Book allowed an individual to purchase postal stamps in denominations of 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents, 1 dollar and 5 dollars, and place them in their book. Each book held a single type of stamp. Once enough stamps were collected, an individual could then purchase a larger war bond (\$25, \$50 or \$100). War bonds helped the government raise money for such things as medical supplies, artillery, food and manufacturing – whatever was needed to support the war effort.



The Friese family – Irving, Helen and Judy – Christmas, 1943.

Judy learned to read by the time she was four and had her own library card. Her mom was a big reader and the two spent lots of time reading together. She also started piano lessons at the age of four.

"I liked to play on the piano at Grandma Lillie's house," Judy noted, "so it was moved to our house when I started lessons. My teacher's studio was about two miles from our house and my mother and I would walk

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 5)

to my lessons each week. My teacher had a very large living room in her house and that was her studio. She had two pianos which I thought was quite impressive. Our recitals were held there. I still remember walking back to my seat after my first recital and our neighbor Fanchon, reached out and put something in my hand. It was a little gold cross and chain. I still have it."

Judy worked with her first piano teacher until she was about eight. The piano lessons stopped for a year because Judy wasn't practicing enough which did not sit well with her mother. At the age of nine she worked with her buddy Barbara's piano teacher. She stopped after a few years then returned to piano lessons in seventh grade with Louis Owens. Mr. Owens was Puyallup High School's choral music teacher, in addition to being the organist at the church the Friese family attended. He also showed Judy how to play the organ. Beginning in seventh grade, Judy was the church's substitute organist until she graduated from high school. She additionally sang in the church adult choir from the time she was in the eighth grade through high school.

During her childhood she also helped with the responsibility of the family pets. First came Suzy, a black male cat adopted by her folks when Judy was three and subsequently named by Judy. Then a few years down the road her family adopted Penny. While Judy always liked cats and of course loved Suzy, Penny made Judy a lifelong fan of dogs. Penny lived to be 15 and featured prominently in Judy's remembrances of growing up in Puyallup.



Penny and Judy, 1949.

In the third grade, Judy added the plastic tonette, a small end-blown flute, to her musical education. In the fourth grade, students were allowed to join the band and so she did. She took up the glockenspiel, which is similar to the xylophone but uses metal plates or tubes instead of wooden bars. For Judy, it was particularly appealing because it was just like a piano keyboard. She loved the band uniforms – white shirts and pants, with blue capes lined in red, topped off by cloth hats "like soldiers wear!" Every year, the school band marched in the Daffodil Parade.

In seventh grade, all the sixth grade graduates from the four elementary schools, attended middle school in the same building as Puyallup High School. Judy wrote, "The school was divided into two sides, separated by a large auditorium on the second floor and the gymnasium directly under it on the first floor."

Judy took band as her elective but was told she needed to learn all the various drums, as glockenspiel was but one percussion instrument. At the end of the first semester, the band teacher, Mr. Bell, took her aside.

"He told me I had too good an ear to be wasted on drums," Judy wrote. "This might have been a nice way to say that I had a good ear, but a questionable sense of rhythm, and let's get her out of there before she ruins the band!"

She was given the choice of double bass or cello. She chose cello only because she thought it would be easier to transport. Despite the small amount of time she spent weighing in on which instrument, that decision would prove to be for her, life-altering.

Mr. Bell gave Judy basic instruction on the cello and then sent her to the practice room every day during the regular band class. By the eighth grade she was in the junior high orchestra. In addition to piano lessons, cello lessons, singing in the church choir and filling in as the church organist substitute, Judy also took Girls Glee Club after school, taught by her piano teacher, Mr. Owens."

"Louis Owens became my mentor, my hero, my champion and my severest critic. He taught me so much as my piano teacher – how to improvise, how to fake and a lot about style."

Judy kept going with all her regular classes and her electives. She proved to be such a strong singer, who was always able to hold her part, that when she was in eighth grade, Mr. Owens had her sing in the high school choir for performances.

"Every spring the department put on a musical production that we wrote ourselves called Viking Varieties," Judy noted, clearly experiences she would use later as the leader of the Seaside Singers. "Often times we borrowed plots and music from Broadway shows, wrote our own script and changed things a bit. If ASCAP had ever come to one of these shows there would probably have been some legal issues! But the productions were well done and it was a much anticipated event in our town with sold out houses."

Judy additionally helped arrange the music and performed as accompanist when needed. "We were the living embodiment of the Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney 'Hey, let's-put-on-a-show-and-save-the-town' axiom," she told this *Pacifica Tribune* writer many years later.

In her freshman year, Judy joined the high school orchestra. The orchestra was under the baton of Ed Krenz, a former trumpet player in the Seattle Symphony and an excellent teacher. Judy's schedule was quite hectic and she was neglecting her piano practice and had, as she called it, "a less than successful piano performance at Solo Contest." She was also often coming in late to Girls Glee Club rehearsal which was held before school. At the end of her freshman year, she had arrived late, again, for morning Glee Club. Mr. Owens, her piano and choir teacher, told her not to bother with her piano lessons anymore. She

was temporarily devastated. But by the end of the day, she arranged to start cello lessons with cellist Ruth Grainger who lived in the town of Sumner, just five miles from Puyallup. The cello became increasingly important to Judy during high school. During her junior and senior years, she played in the semi-professional Tacoma Symphony Orchestra.



Taken at home before her high school graduation, where Judy performed a solo piece. June, 1956.

At the end of her junior year, her cello teacher encouraged her to go to the High School Music Institute held for five weeks in the summer on the campus of the University of Washington. It was there she met George Kirchner, a member of the University faculty, who took the young cellist under his wing. Twice a month during Judy's senior year of high school, she commuted from her home in Puyallup to study cello with Mr. Kirchner.



Also, during her senior year, she was one among only two or three high school students from Washington State chosen to go to St. Louis and play in the National High School Orchestra. It was her first plane ride and she had the time of her life. The Orchestra was under the baton of Joseph Maddy, the founder of Interlochen Center for the Arts, as well as Thor Johnson, the conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Peter J. Wilhousky, composer as well as music administrator in the New York City public school system, served as choral director.

"It was an amazing experience to meet students from all over the country and to play in such a high-caliber ensemble," Judy wrote.

← Judy Friese, Class of 1956, Puyallup High School.



Puysallup High School Senior Orchestra, Judy ↑, 1956.

Following Judy's graduation from high school, she soloed that summer with the University of Washington Symphony Orchestra.

In the fall of 1956, Judy headed off to UW where she majored in music and graduated with her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1960. Her former high school orchestra conductor Ed Krantz had moved to California in 1957. Through his recommendation, Judy was hired to teach choral music at Antioch Junior High School, in Antioch, California. No in-person interview required. (Located in Contra Costa County along the San Joaquin-Sacramento River Delta, Antioch is 45 miles east of San Francisco.)

"In 1960, Antioch was a sleepy little town I later described as being the last stop before you fell off the end of the earth," Judy wrote. "It had a few stores, some smelly factories, an old section with 1920s' era bungalows and some tract houses. It was hot, flat, dry and barren, but it had a nice junior high school with nice kids. I moved into a garden apartment and met the band director and his wife, who then introduced me to another teacher at the school. He also lived in the same apartment complex and, as discovered, directly across the grassy area from me. I did not have a car and he volunteered to drive me to school. By the end of the year, Michael and I were engaged."

"I arrived in California by car from New York in 1958," Michael Tugendreich said. (All the interviews for Judy's biography took place in October of 2020.) "Two friends and I rented an apartment on Central Avenue just above Haight Street in San Francisco. We loved the apartment which was across the street from St. Joseph Park.

"I enrolled at UC Berkeley in a master's program in philosophy using my G.I. Bill. A year later I was lucky to find a position as a junior high school teacher in Antioch. I knew nothing about Antioch. I was familiar with the name of the city because of its biblical name." (The biblical city of Antioch was a Syria town where the followers of Christ were first called Christians.)

"Antioch was a community of 16,000 souls and had a church every two blocks," Michael continued. "The junior high school was a delightful place and my classroom overlooked Mt. Diablo. I enjoyed teaching American History and English to eighth graders. The students were eager and the administration was very supportive. I rented a cottage not too far from school."

Judy arrived in the summer of 1960 and she and Michael met shortly thereafter at the home of the band director.

"The music teachers in Antioch were well organized with their own supervisor who was a musician," Michael recalled. "By chance, Judy rented an apartment next door with only a large swath of grass separating the two free-standing cottages. Judy had no car and I offered to drive her to school each day. She would meet me after school in my room and we would stop at my apartment for coffee and cookies. We became good friends during the fall semester of 1960. I had no idea that this friendship would become something other than two people who commuted together."

It was after Michael returned from New York during the Christmas holidays, that he and Judy began to feel that there was more to their relationship than just friendship. They began dating.

"All of our dates were in cities other than Antioch. School teachers had to be careful regarding their personal life. Small towns can be a hotbed of gossip."

Michael noted that Judy was an enthusiastic teacher and her students loved her. Her choral students covered the three junior high school levels.

"She was able to organize several programs for students and parents during her year of teaching in Antioch," Michael said.

Once they decided to marry, they also decided they would not stay in Antioch.

"The city did not have enough cultural activities. Judy and I loved music and plays, entertainment of all kinds. I applied during Easter for a high school position teaching in Daly City and Judy applied to teach at a junior high school in San Francisco. We left Antioch in the summer of 1961 with regrets. We both had friends in Antioch and still do.

"We were married in Carson City, Nevada on August 7, 1961, during a rare rainstorm. We rented an apartment in the Richmond District of San Francisco near Golden Gate Park. I taught American history and geography at Jefferson High School. Judy taught choral music at Ben Franklin Junior High on Geary Street. Judy's experience was not good. At that time, the school used the choral music classes as a dumping ground for troubled and troubling students."

"Michael said life was too short for this, so I resigned after a month and we decided to start a family," Judy wrote in her family history.

The couple's daughter Roberta was born in the fall of 1962. A year later, the Tugendreich family moved to a flat in San Francisco. Their son Stuart arrived in 1965 and in 1967, the family moved to Pacifica.

When Judy resigned from her teaching position, she auditioned to study cello with internationally known cellist, composer and teacher Colin Hampton, at his home in Berkeley, and was accepted. (During the Second World War, Mr. Hampton performed noon concerts in London's National Gallery with the Griller Quartet. They performed regardless of whether bombs were falling.) Judy continued with her cello lessons until her daughter was born.



Michael, 1967, Jefferson High School.



Judy, Pacifica's prolific piano teacher in 1987.

When Roberta was little, Judy and Michael decided to start her on piano lessons and hired local piano teacher Cynthia Gerdes.

"I think one of the things that impressed me the most about my mom was her music abilities," Roberta Tugendreich said, "which I definitely did not inherit! But perhaps even more impressive was her work ethic. Both of my parents really instilled the value of hard work in me, but with my mom especially, it took on an extra dimension of dogged determination. She would never give up and always try harder no matter how impossible circumstances seemed. She felt that with enough effort, she most definitely would succeed and overcome any obstacles in her path."

"Roberta and I played instruments in school but my mom was semi-professional and we were just kids taking music lessons at her insistence," Stuart Tugendreich said. "I was decent at the trumpet and French horn and took private lessons, but it was not my natural talent. Along with piano lessons, Roberta also took clarinet for a few years. My mom had perfect pitch and maybe that made it easier for her to become proficient. In her memoir she notes she had fewer distractions than today's kids and that is why she excelled."

The Tugendreich children's arts education was not limited to music lessons. Both Judy and Michael enjoyed the symphony, theater performances, ballet and museums, and took their children to many of these cultural offerings.

Roberta shared one of her favorite memories from childhood regarding the arts.

"I went with my mom to a matinee performance of 'Hello Dolly' starring Carol Channing. My mom's good friend from high school was the company dance captain and he gave us tickets to this production at the Curran Theatre in San Francisco. After the performance we got to see him backstage. It was thrilling for me as I'd never seen a Broadway musical and then meeting the chorus dancers was really exciting for me as well."

One of the unexpected results from Roberta's piano lessons was that Judy and Roberta's piano teacher became great friends.

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 11)

"I began to collaborate on music projects with Cynthia," Judy wrote. "I had put my cello aside while the children were small, but Cynthia recruited me to play cello in a local one-act opera she was helping to stage. I started practicing again and decided to take lessons again as well."

Judy auditioned for Laszlo Varga, an eminent cellist. Prior to moving to San Francisco, Mr. Varga served as the principal cellist for the New York Philharmonic under the batons of Leonard Bernstein and Dimitri Mitropoulos. Judy's audition was a success and she became a Varga' student. Later she studied with cellist Milly Rosner, famous for her longtime association with the Crowden School of Music in Berkeley.

In 1972, Cynthia moved to Oregon and she asked Judy to take on her piano students.

"I began with just 10 students," Judy wrote, "and at one point I was teaching over 45 students a week."



Hundreds of students learned to play on Judy's Yamaha upright.

Judy taught piano at the family home in a big room adjacent to the kitchen. How was it growing up in a house where "Mom" was teaching the piano?

"Kids and their parents were often ringing the doorbell or just walking in and going to the room where Mom taught," Stuart said. "There were many instances where I would not be expecting a student and would run into one by the kitchen or on the stairs. Occasionally she would hold recitals at home and I liked those because she would bake different types of cookies. She was a great cook!"

"The hours of piano lessons were slight torture for us," Stuart added, "in that many students would practice the same song so we would hear it repeated, often badly, for days on end. Not sure I ever want to hear 'Nadia's Theme' or 'Für Elise' – thought it was 'Furry Leaves' at the time – again!"

There were other moments with 'Mom' and her music. Around the holidays, the family would have sing-alongs at home. In a sixth-grade performance at his school, Stuart played trumpet and his mom accompanied him on piano. At home she listened to a classical FM station during the day and would sometimes call in to try to win classical music trivia contests that the station ran.

"Music is not a huge part of my life now," Stuart said, "but I appreciate classical music because of her. When I was in college at UC Berkeley, she gave me a stack of classical music cassette tapes that she bought and I listened to them constantly when I studied with headphones. My wife Paula and I tried to get

our twin sons to take piano lessons but they protested so much we gave up. We bought an electric keyboard for them to play and even when Mom was quite sick with cancer near the end, she still came over and worked with them a little and played for them on it.



"She enjoyed teaching. She wanted to share her knowledge generally and was a resource for people. At her 'celebration of life' after her death, Sheila Shives – her friend and the person who cut her hair for years – said she would most miss being able to ask my mom for advice on medical treatments, cooking and really any other topic. Paula got on the phone with my mom at least once a week with questions about gardening, or cooking, or other topics – and of course just to chat.

"My mom was smart and funny and knowledgeable. She was especially interested in medicine and said if she had not gotten into music, she would have wanted to be a doctor. She was a person that when things happened to you, big or small, you wanted to tell her about it and hear her reaction. Even nearly four years after her death, I catch myself thinking when something happens that I can't wait to call and tell her."

← Michael, Roberta and Stuart, Christmas, 1988.

* * *

In 1986, Judy enrolled at San Francisco State University. She had always enjoyed reading for children and she decided to enter the University's reading special degree program.

"Eighteen months and a master's degree later, I was ready to look for employment," she wrote.

She papered the Bay Area with applications and took on three part-time positions: a speed reading teacher at Skyline Community College in San Bruno, a study skills teacher at City College of San Francisco and she also signed on to teach a class about reading in the education credential program at SFSU. By then Judy and Michael's kids were off on their own journeys.

"Just as my new career was getting underway, Michael retired," Judy wrote. "For several years we traveled during my vacations, but eventually we decided life was short and I gave up my school jobs." (She still taught piano until May of 2013.) "We made two big trips to Europe every year for about 10 years and then slowed down to one or less when health problems interfered."

"My mom was a great listener and conversationalist and could have a good discussion with anyone," Stuart said. "She met people in Europe that she and my dad stayed in touch with for years afterwards that arose from spontaneous conversations in trains or at B&Bs. She was also one to keep friends for a lifetime." (Just as one example, Stuart names his mom's earliest childhood friends: Barbara, Edna, Gail, Joy and Katy.)

In 2000, a madrigal group formed in Pacifica and Judy joined.

"Ellis French was the conductor," Pacifican Ramona Lancaster said of the group that became the Seaside Singers. "Judy was singing in the alto section and I loved sitting next to her because she was gifted with perfect pitch and always sang the right note. To sing the wrong note was painful for her so I really had to pay attention and listen! Judy and I were the only remnants of that original group."

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 13)

In 2001-2002, Pacifica Performances decided to sponsor the a cappella vocal ensemble.



"A few years later our director moved away and I became the conductor," Judy wrote. "With the Seaside Singers, I discovered a new aspect of music I would never have predicted – arranging music for the group. It is a puzzle solving process and I enjoy it a lot. We have an annual holiday concert which involves performing a number of songs and then a musical skit, where all the experience of the Viking Varieties has been a great help."

←In high school, Judy played the Drummer in the Missionary Band in this scene from a Viking Varieties performance that was loosely based on "Guys and Dolls."

Interviewed by this writer many times for the *Pacifica Tribune*, Judy was asked to define the Seaside Singers.

"We are a dedicated, small choir of voices that performs everything from madrigals to modern," Judy said. "Over the years we have performed at a number of venues which include Pacifica Performances, San Francisco's Hyde Street Pier, the Parish of St. Peter in Pacifica, the Pacifica Pier, Pacifica's Annual Tree Lighting Festival in Rockaway Beach, various Bay Area libraries and bookstores, and a number of senior living facilities including the Sequoias in Portola Valley, Pacific Oaks, Sterling Court, Westborough Royale and Peninsula del Rey."

"We work on difficult music," she went on to say, "and musical experience is a must. But it is a very welcoming and friendly group. There are no 'prima donnas.' The members care about each other and are supportive. It functions like a cooperative with input welcomed from all members."



The Seaside Singers strike a pose for an upcoming Valentine's concert at Pacifica Performances Mildred Owen Concert Hall. Judy Tugendreich, sixth from left, bottom row, is seated between the three Seaside Singers members interviewed for this story: Ramona Lancaster, Judy Heldberg, and just right of Judy T., Lesly Hargens. Circa 2014.

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 14)

"I first met Judy when I auditioned for the Seaside Singers in the fall of 2008," said Pacifican Judy Heldberg. "I was so impressed with the professionalism of the group and their polished sound and blend. However, while I was impressed with them, Judy had her doubts about me. I have always had a vibrato issue and it only gets more pronounced when one does not use the voice on a regular basis. I had been teaching at Skyline Community College days and nights and was super busy, so singing did not happen much. So Judy sent me to Mildred Owen to take a few lessons and get Mildred's opinion." (Mildred Owen, 1927-2009, was a music educator, opera singer and founding Artistic Director of Pacifica Performances, for whom the performance hall is now named.)

"Mildred was a wonderful teacher, one of the best I have ever had," Judy Heldberg continued. "After two sessions, Mildred told Judy that I was a keeper and I joined the Seaside Singers.

"Judy had something she called her 'kitchen cabinet,' which included the treasurer and the librarian, and since I had experience directing in the past, I soon was included as the assistant director. I did warm-ups at rehearsals and auditioned new members, helped plan programs, was involved in script writing, designed handouts and made costumes – whatever I could do. It was so much fun. Judy and I found we had similar backgrounds growing up and similar musical experiences over the years. We thought alike and could almost finish each other's sentences. Before Judy got sick, I directed a number or two at various concerts." In 2017, Judy Heldberg and Dan Dean became co-directors of the Seaside Singers.

"Judy was involved with Pacifica Performances from when it first formed," Judy H. continued. "She pushed music, all kinds of music, and the arts every way she could think of – and she was outgoing, friendly, extremely talented and a workaholic. She just never seemed to quit!"



Judy conducts the Seaside Singers at the 2015 Festival of Holiday Music at Pacifica Performances.

Author: Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 15)

There were so many programs and songs the Seaside Singers gave to their audiences over the years. Here is just a sample of songs from their 2011 Annual Festival of Holiday Music at Pacifica Performances: "Christmas Comes But Once A Year," "Masters In This Hall," "Good King Wenceslas," "The Holly And The Ivy," "Bring Us In Good Ale," "O Magnum Mysterium," "Hark How The Bells," "The Angel Gabriel," "Lich'vod Hachanukkah," "Wexford Carol" and "Bright, Bright The Holly Berries." All of the proceeds from the Seaside Singer events held at the Mildred Owen Concert Hall were donated to Pacifica Performances.

The Sixth Annual
Festival of Holiday Music

VICTORIAN ENGLAND
1848
in story and song
featuring
The Seaside Singers
Mark Sessler Guitar Ensemble
The Third Grade Choruses
from Ocean Shore and Vallemar Schools
Friday, December 9th at 7:30pm
You will have a Dickens of a Good Time!!

Admission \$8.00 - Two Children FREE with each adult admission
Mildred Owen Concert Hall 1220 Linda Mar Blvd, Pacifica
All proceeds to benefit Pacifica Performances

(For those not familiar with Pacifica Performances, a 175-seat nonprofit concert venue providing first-rate, diverse musical and cultural programs to Pacifica and the rest of the Bay Area, it is a must-attend concert venue – www.pacificaperformances.org.)

Pacifican Lesly Hargens has been a member of the Seaside Singers for 15 years and that is where she first met Judy. Judy's nickname for Lesly was "Lovely Lesly" and she often referred to Lesly as "my right-hand gal."

"I was the librarian of our music," Lesly said, "and Judy was not only my music director but she became a wonderful friend." (Lesly was also assigned the job of keeper of keys to the Concert Hall in Judy's absence. The singers practiced both at the Concert Hall and at Judy's home.)

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 16)

"Judy gave each one of the members an opportunity to not only become a better singer, but to learn music theory," Lesly continued. "She dedicated countless hours on our behalf and she was master of all. She had perfect pitch, she was an accomplished piano player – and she was a friend to anyone who walked through the doors of the Mildred Owen Concert Hall."

"Judy changed my life," Lesly went on to say. "We spent countless hours together because of our love of quality music and the sheer joy of working together. She had enough love to share with each of our Seaside Singers and she made everyone feel special."



In 2012, the Seaside Singers made ready to perform sea shanties for an upcoming concert at the Pacifica Pier.

"Judy had such a fun-loving side and the group always maintained a camaraderie that kept us going," Ramona said. "We would meet at Judy's home for extra practices – all of us sitting around her music room with her at the piano. It was cozy and fun. I always left with a happy feeling."

"The thing about Judy was she was always willing to try something new and under her direction, the Seaside Singers were able to put on many innovative productions. She was a versatile, excellent musician and as a director, she had the big picture of what the music should sound like. The group wasn't always able to maintain her high standard but we were motivated to try. We wanted to please her."

"Group singing is very rewarding in that each group has to master their own part. Then you put it together and at first the harmony is questionable and problematic. You keep practicing and thinking it will never work and then it comes together amazingly. When that happens it is spine-tingling and 'sparkles' as Judy

put it. She took us into most performances not sure if we could pull it off and then after would say, 'You did it again. Great job!'"

"One of my mom's biggest pieces of advice when teaching music was to 'practice in small sections,'" Stuart said. "She had a handmade poster with those words next to the piano. Kids want to play the piece from start to finish and ignore the rough patches along the way. She wanted them to perfect a few measures at a time."

What else was Judy famous for in her family?



"She was a good cook and baker and seamstress," Stuart said. "Her mother was legendary at those things and my mom carried on some of that tradition. She sewed an entire set of panniers and a handlebar bag so I could take a big bike camping trip in high school. She baked five to ten different recipes of cookies at Christmas and gave trays of them to friends."

"She was not afraid of technological changes," Stuart went on to say. "She happily dumped her typewriter and switched to a Mac when those became available. I did receive quite a few tech support calls from her over the years but eventually got her to call the Apple phone number for some of the more vexing issues. She was a big letter writer when companies let her down in some way. One famous story in our house was when many years ago she got some not-so-fresh chicken at the grocery store. She wrote a letter complaining about it to Foster Farms, and one day, weeks later, a truck stopped by our house and the driver gave her some extremely fresh chickens for free which she said were the best she'd ever

had. She did have a knack for getting companies to do things to rectify problems that she experienced."

If Judy had an issue with the City of Pacifica, she would contact City Council, or whoever was needed, to get the job done.

"She was instrumental in getting a stop sign put up on Everglades at the intersection of our street, Picardo Court, as people would blast up and down Everglades and practically flatten anyone crossing it."

"There was so much to my mom," Stuart said. "She would have been fascinated by all the research going on for COVID-19. She would have been appalled at the current state of our country. She grew up with conservative parents but she was a lifelong Democrat."

"And she was such a good grandma for my twin boys, Cash and Stone. Paula and I are older parents and so she had to wait a long time to become a grandma. But she absolutely loved those boys. They meant so much to her and she was really interactive with them. Paula and I were living in Seattle when they were born and moved back to the Bay Area when they were two. Being closer to my parents was a big part of our re-location. She and my dad came over almost every weekend to see them. She made cookies with the twins, cardboard trains, trains made of Play-Doh – and took them outside and taught Stone to roller skate. She was the perfect grandma and read books to them endlessly. She would bring a canvas bag stuffed with books and they sat on each side of her as she read to them. She wanted to live long enough to see them off to high school and was devastated when she knew she would not. She had almost 10 years with them and I am so sad she is not around for them anymore. They were a gift to each other."

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She hit all the right notes ~ Pacifica's joy maestro Judy Tugendreich (page 18)



Judy reads to her grandsons Cash and Stone, 2014.

"Judy and I were married 55 years until she succumbed to lung cancer in January of 2017," Michael said, who has since left Pacifica to live closer to his children. "Our life was very full and I miss Judy daily. She was my soulmate."



Judy and Michael celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. That's their grandson Stone next to Judy.



Judy says "Hellooo" to her neighbors, her son and daughter-in-law, on a 2006 Alaskan cruise.

"Mom was someone who always set goals for herself and then worked very hard to achieve them," Roberta said. "She also made sure that her passions – music and teaching – shared a prominent role in her life. And when possible, she turned both those passions into paid work so that she never had to sacrifice them."

"It was very hard to see this super talented person succumb to the disease of cancer," Ramona said. "Judy was such a strong individual that we believed, as did she, that she would beat it. Judy left a big empty space when she left us. Her legacy is the dedication to her music students and the Seaside Singers. She was always willing to help and she will be remembered fondly by all those who knew her."

With Judy able to offer so much of her voice in this biography, as the writer and her friend, it seemed fitting to me to end this story on a "Judy" note with an email she sent to editor, writer and blogger John Maybury, whose Wandering & Wondering column engaged *Pacifica Tribune* readers for 20 years. For my money, the note captures Judy's sense of fun and clear-eyed observation. You couldn't get anything past her!



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

WINDY PACIFICA
Judy Tugendreich emails: "Today when the wind was blowing like crazy at my house, I looked at the National Weather Service for Pacifica to find out the wind speed, and it said it was calm. Really? I wrote to Paul Deanno, chief meteorologist at KPIX, and asked why that website says it is calm, and I included a 10-second video of the trees dancing in my backyard. He told me that the wind measurement for Pacifica is taken somewhere between Highway 1 and Interstate 280, which does not really give an accurate picture of the coast, and one should check conditions at Half Moon Bay for a better idea of what's happening on the coast. That said 11-15 mph. I would guess the gusts were closer to 25 mph."



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.