

Lifetime: Kay Poen

As a little girl growing up in the depression Kay Poen decided that she wanted to spend her life with music. Her career began at the age of three with her first operatic performance. Today in Flagstaff, the youthful 82 year old continues to provide leadership to the Flagstaff Light Opera Company, direct musicals, teach piano, sing in the Master Chorale, and occasionally sing in her church choir.

Kay says of her teaching career, "I taught band and orchestra, marching band and twirling. Whatever was necessary, I taught it. I just like to be with kids." She adds, "I like to work with big groups on stage and I like a single student on the piano."

Kay arrived in Flagstaff in 1976 and has enjoyed music here for 33 years. Her piano students currently number 30, the youngest age 6 and the oldest 76. She joined Flagstaff Master Chorale when it began in 1978 and has sung with them for 31 years. For four years, she played trombone in the NAU trombone choir.

She has been artistic director of FLOC since she co-founded the organization in 1995 and has been choral director for most of the nearly 40 shows FLOC has produced since then. In some years she added the role of Director to that of Music Director.

She founded a Flagstaff chapter of Sweet Adelines and directed the group for 10 years, during which time the Adelines provided musical entertainment for many civic affairs. She composed some of their music, served as a board member of the Flagstaff Festival of the Arts, and has been the choir director of the United Church of Christ.

From 1976 until her retirement in 1989 Kay taught music at all levels for the public school system, even including class guitar at Flagstaff Junior High. She helped open Sinagua High School and composed their school spirit song.

Kay Poen's dedication to music performance and teaching didn't begin in 1976. Following her graduation from the University of Northern Iowa in 1949, in a rural Iowa school with \$2,000 to purchase instruments she coached her uninitiated students to successfully compete in a regional band competition.

She taught music in several Iowa schools, until with three young children at home, she briefly limited her community musical activity to teaching piano and directing her church choir and community chorus.

However, her 14 years in Nogales, Arizona may have been the most interesting

and challenging. While she earned a Master of Music and began a PhD, She organized a Mariachi band, directed community chorus and church choir and taught her piano students. Kay says that there was so little for the youth of Nogales to do, not even a movie theater, that she had 150 kids in her high school chorus singing the Messiah and Broadway and Gilbert and Sullivan Musicals.