

Golden Notes For Baby Boomers

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If you are one of the 60 million + Americans born between 1945 - 1960, you are a Baby Boomer. You are also either retired or nearing the age of retirement. Wikipedia researchers have stated that January 1, 2011 was the official beginning of the Golden Baby Boomer Era meaning that this is the first generation to retire with the ability, time, and money to devote their energy to new or renewed interests.

The Golden Baby Boomers have been studied by marketing firms worldwide, focusing on the potential for business opportunities resulting from this wave of retirees entering The Golden Era. What plans have you made to insure your continued sense of well-being in your retirement years?

In 1991 Roy Ernst, PhD., was way ahead of this learning curve. He was 52 years old, an accomplished flutist, and a music professor at The Eastman School of Music. Dr. Ernst, who prefers to be called Roy, made an observation in surveying his adult years and looking toward the future; he knew that for him to be content in retirement there would have to be music in his life.

Music has always played an important part of all modern civilization. You probably cannot name a significant event, movie, or tradition that you do not associate with music. There are few, if any, weddings, funerals, political or entertainment events that are not associated in our minds with music.

Even during the worst of times, art and therefore music, survives. Karl Paulnack, Director of Music at Boston Conservatory, has written about a musical piece that was composed by a French musician while an inmate at a concentration camp. There were 3 other musicians also incarcerated, so he wrote a quartet that allowed them all to play a part. The result is the aptly named Quartet For The End of Time by Olivier Messiaen. It was performed in front of 4,000 inmates and guards in 1940.

On 9/11/02, the United States public reacted to the terrorist attacks by singing the National Anthem or We Shall Overcome in front of firehouses around the country. The first public event in New York City was the playing of Brahms Requiem by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in Lincoln Center. Yes, even in the worst of times, music survives and in fact, is a necessary part of the healing process.

We have always been told that music is good for the soul. Well, we now know that music can lower your blood pressure, reduce stress, slow your heart rate, and even defy dementia by allowing otherwise mentally isolated adults to participate in musical events that they were familiar with prior to being robbed of their mental capabilities. Newer studies have found that participation in a music program can decrease depression levels and improve your immunity to disease.

So now, we have set the stage for the rest of New Horizons story.

By January 1991, Roy Ernst had a list of what New Horizons would be . There were to be no auditions,

no sense of intimidation; the instructional environment was to be supportive and fun; there would be entry and re-entry levels for beginners, intermediates, and advanced players. The program was geared to those ages of 50+, but this age limit is often deleted from current local groups' criteria. The motto has always been "Your Best Is Good Enough".

Roy realized that he had to set some perimeters for his dream. Using his experience as a music educator (he was the Chair for the Department of Music Education at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester), Roy decided that his group was to focus on persons who wanted to play a concert band and orchestra instrument, or sing in a choral group.

In January 1991 the first band practice was held. Many of the 40 participants had never played an instrument. A short time later this group, and all other groups to follow, became part of The New Horizons international Music Association.

In the next 20 years, New Horizons International Music Association (NHIMA) has grown to over 180 concert bands, orchestras and choral groups. In addition to that number there are 1,075 individual or couples memberships, totaling approximately 8,000 participants in the New Horizons organizations. NHIMA has a presence in 5 countries with further international growth in the planning stages.

During this 20 year period Roy has not only been the founder, he has been the inspiration and the constant guiding light; he has been the driving force and the one with the vision.

Most existing New Horizons groups perform locally, at charitable events, concerts, nursing homes, parades, etc. These members are giving back to their communities every time they attend an event or practice. Many advanced players volunteer as instructors at local schools. It is virtually an "all volunteer musical army".

It is estimated that between 15-20% of school -aged students in the 1950s - 1970s participated in some form of musical training. The 80% (+) that were not exposed to music in high school along with those that participated while in school, are New Horizons' future. These former students, now baby boomers, are approaching, or are in "The Golden Years".

In a casual member survey it was found that an overwhelming number of the New Horizons membership considers playing music the most important, or one of the most the most important aspects of their daily lives. Many of these members began their New Horizons experience as beginners.

One of the most popular activities of the New Horizons International Music Association are the many summer music camps scheduled in locations throughout the US and Canada. These camps are open to members and non-members.

So, if you are an adult seeking to enrich your life, have an interest in music, and want to participate in an International organization that will provide you with

many rewards while giving back to your community, we invite you to visit our website:
www.newhorizonsmusic.org.

Sources of Information

Para 1 and 2, Internet site, Wikipedia (Baby Boomers)

Para 5 and 6, Welcome Address to Freshmen, Boston Conservatory, K. Paulnack,
PhD entitled "Inspiration"

Para 7. "Music On The Brain", Michael Shaughnessy, also titled Unveiling the Mystery of Music's
profound Impact, printed in The Voice, Winter 2009

Para 7. Live Science, Music Makes You Smart, Nina Kraus, neuroscientist,
Northwestern Univ.

Para 7, Feeling The Beat of Music In Your Heart, from a study at the Univ of Pavia, Italy, Luciano
Bernardi, PhD and Oxford Cardiologist Peter Sleight, MD

Para 9, 10, and 11 Website of New Horizons

Para 12. Membership Chair, NHIMA Board, Eve McGrory

Para 13. Website for New Horizons