

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: HARVEY SHEPPARD

For Harvey Sheppard, making magic with his marimba at Treemont will be like *deja vu*. Since settling in Houston in 2007 he has appeared here frequently as a featured entertainer, and he will again take center stage when he performs for Treemonters this month, on October in the Auditorium. The difference is that this time as a resident he will be performing before his peers.

Harvey Sheppard was born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, one of two boys born to his parents. A gentle and soft-spoken man with a friendly smile and great sense of humor, he confides that he and his brother Harry were the only students in their school whose parents were also born in the U. S. All the other children were first generation Americans whose families who had immigrated from mainly Ireland, Italy or the Slavic countries of Europe. Perhaps that is where he got a jumpstart on the five languages he now speaks, which he enumerates with a smile as French, Spanish, Italian, German and “a little bit of English.

Both Harvey and his younger brother displayed their musical talents early on, and Harvey played his first professional “gig” at age 16. Encouraged by his audiences’ enthusiastic response, by the time he finished high school in Worcester he had set his sights on a career in music. He enrolled in the

prestigious New England Conservatory of Music and completed three years of study of percussion, harmony and keyboard performance.

Meanwhile World War II had broken out in Europe, and with the attack on Pearl Harbor the United States entered the war. Like many men his age Harvey enlisted in the Army and was immediately assigned to the Division Band, which toured the war zones entertaining troops in England, North Africa and Italy.

While at the Conservatory he had married his long-time sweetheart Marsha, whom he describes lovingly as a “wonderful wife, mother to Steve and Scott, and a very understanding woman” who took in stride his frequent travels and odd working hours as an entertainer. They eventually made their home in Palm Beach, Florida, where he organized and headed a quartet and engaged a top-flight agent—General Artists Corporation.

The agency arranged bookings at venues like Lake Tahoe, where Harvey’s group alternated with Louis Prima and Keeley Smith for the late night shows, and Las Vegas at The Sands Lounge. There was also a tour of European military installations where they entertained the troops. In between tours his quartet played the famous Breakers’ Hotel in Palm Beach, and the Cultural

Council of Palm Beach kept them busy with trips to assisted living and nursing homes in Florida.

Marsha kept the home fires burning and cared for their two boys, Bradley and Scott. Scott now lives on Long Island, but tragically Stephen was diagnosed with ALS (aka Lou Gehrig's disease) at age 41 and passed away eleven years later. Besides his surviving son, Harvey has two grandchildren and one great-grandson to carry on the family line.

Marsha suffered a stroke at age 81 and Harvey had the privilege of caring for her (with part-time help from Hospice) for five years until her death in July of 2007. In August 2007 he yielded to Harry's urging and joined his brother in Houston.

Immediately after his arrival Harvey became involved in Houston's music scene through Harry, who had been with Benny Goodman's band and was being awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Jazz Society of Houston. Harvey moved to Treemont (B214) in March of 2015 and continues to be a familiar guest performer at Houston area retirement centers and nursing homes.

Fellow Treemont residents can look forward to hearing him with his high-tech digital marimba in the Auditorium on October 17.

Lois McCall

Make a Note!

Treemont
Presents

Harvey Sheppard
And his
Marimba

In
Concert

Saturday,
October 17,
2015

Treemont
Auditorium

3:30 P.M.

Guests
Welcome