

February 2013

When popular cartoonist Henry Anderson of Bella Vista died in 1981, among his legacy he left hundreds of editorial cartoons he drew for the Weekly Vista and the Daily Democrat (now the Daily Record). His cartoons focused on many issues of interest to the local community.

A self taught artist, Henry's dream was always to become a cartoonist, but he made his living in the field of music. After graduating

in 1938 from Graceland College (now Graceland University) in Lamoni, Iowa, he became a high school music teacher, then in 1945 he joined the music faculty at his alma mater. He was best known there for his 25 years as conductor of the Concert Choir, which performed at churches all over the US. He also performed in person as a tenor soloist, and on the radio for a year, station WGN in Chicago, as part of an octet.

Henry's wife of close to 40 years, Bertha Mae, was also a musician. She was going to Graceland and staying in the dorm, but had stayed on an extra month after the end of the semester at a voice teacher's house, to be piano accompanist for her. That teacher happened to be Henry's favorite teacher, and when he came back to visit her, he met Bertha Mae.

While focusing on music at Graceland, Henry still managed to indulge his love of art by helping to create the art curriculum and teaching classes in drawing and painting. He also published, in the late 1940's, six cartoon books of church stories for children, and a few cartoons in nationally published magazines, such as Saturday Evening Post, Better Homes & Gardens, and Successful Farming.

At the end of 1976, Henry retired from Graceland, moving with Bertha Mae to Bella Vista in early 1977. He didn't want to get back into teaching, but wanted to stay busy, so he approached Community Publishers about drawing editorial cartoons for their newspapers and launched his new career shortly thereafter.

Henry didn't abandon his love of music, however. In 1978, he started the Bella Vista Men's Chorus. The Chorus held their practices at Riordan Hall, where the Community Church was meeting at the time, and he became the church's choir director, a position he held until his death of congestive heart failure at age 63 in 1981. The Men's Chorus sang at his memorial service.

Bertha Mae and Henry had one son, Larry, who also died at the young age of 64, of a heart attack.

Bertha Mae eventually left Bella Vista and moved back to Iowa, where she still lives and is still a musician, giving piano lessons and playing for four church services every Sunday.

Before moving, Bertha Mae donated all of Henry's cartoons to the Bella Vista Historical Society, several of which are on display at the Bella Vista Historical Museum. In 1999, the Historical Society published a book of his cartoons, "Henry Anderson's Bella Vista Brush Strokes," which is available for sale at the Museum.

=====

*Picture 1: Henry Anderson and his wife, Bertha Mae.*

*Picture 2: Anderson was a music professor at Graceland College.*

*Picture 3: Anderson loved the beauty of Bella Vista.*

*Picture 4: Anderson's editorial cartoon topics remain timely.*

