



*Member Since Sept 1995;
Conductor's Circle*

On a beautiful early autumn afternoon, I caught up with Mary Boyd, Alto 2. Earlier that day Mary had taken a long walk in Crocheron Park, enjoying some gorgeous fall foliage. Mary walks every day and tries to take a different route each time. These walks have become more important than ever for her health and peace of mind during the time of COVID.

In an effort to become better acquainted with this long-time OSQ member, Mary agreed to share her answers to a few questions.

Q. You have been a member of OSQ since 1995. What brought you to Oratorio in the first place? What keeps you coming back?

A. Twenty-five years ago, I was searching for a watercolor class in the Queensborough Community College brochure when I saw an advertisement that featured Maestro David Close. The ad stated, "If you can carry a tune, I can teach you to sing Handel's Messiah." Well, I like a challenge, so I took the chance. The rest is history!

What keeps me coming back? Not sure if it's the music or the people, I love 'em both! I served on the Board of Directors for 9 years. The current board has adapted to the present situation amazingly. I would like to see more people rotate through the Board, that way they would understand the mechanics behind what makes Oratorio work. Every rehearsal, every meeting has always been a great education!

Q. In 2022 OSQ will be 95 years old. How do you want the season 2020 – 2021 to be remembered in the future when OSQ is 100 and beyond?

A. I'm so proud of the Board for what they have done this season – for the educational offerings as well as vocal opportunities for singing and voice instruction. Although I miss hearing other voices and singing together, it's still an outstanding experience. And I am so happy that so many members have stayed!

Q. What is your dream for the future for yourself? What is your dream for the future of OSQ?

A. To outlive the pandemic! I'm looking forward to getting back to traveling and to spending time with my family. Due to COVID I had to cancel a trip to the Holy Land and a trip to Eastern Europe. As for the family, my son is local, and I have a granddaughter and her family who live on the east end of Long Island. There are grandchildren living on the West Coast. My daughter lives in Florida. My brother is in Maine; I went to visit him with my son. And I have to mention my grandson and his wife who live in Manhattan. They always come to our concerts! But in general, I haven't been able to see much of my family for quite a long time.

My dream for the future of OSQ is for us to have more members and to get back to meeting in person. That's all. It's not broken so don't fix it! By the way, when I traveled to Salt Lake City,

Utah, I attended a rehearsal of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Guess what? They get stopped for the same things that David stops us for! So, we're not so different and I guess choruses all over have the same problems.

Q. In addition to OSQ, what are some other interests and activities in which you are involved?

A. Well, I'm a lector at my church and that is a very important part of my life. In addition, I do volunteer work with a multi-faceted charitable organization that assists families who are in need. My job is in material assistance, where we provide necessary items such as clothing, cribs, strollers, formula, diapers, etc. to folks with children and newborn babies. I joined this organization 25 years ago – same time as OSQ! In the past I used to enjoy painting, but I don't do that so much anymore. Instead, I design and knit baby sweaters to be given to these families with newborns. That's my creative outlet now. Besides, I get to see lots of cute babies and kids!

My other great interest is travel. I have spent time in 53 countries, and I have often been able to see things in a non-tourist way. My husband's uncle was a missionary in Zambia, and there we were able to meet people and see places much more intimately than the average tourist. In Uganda we stayed at a school and met students. Altogether I have visited seven countries in Africa, as well as many countries in Europe, South America, Asia, Australia, and Russia. My travels have taught me that although the scenery is different from country to country, the human heart is the same everywhere you go. When I grew up it was "My country, right or wrong." And during the Cold War Russia was the enemy. But you know what? Russia is a beautiful country and the people are just like us.

Q. How did you spend your time pre-Pandemic? What do you do now? What has changed for you?

A. Before the Pandemic, I loved to go traveling. And, of course, spending time with my kids and grandkids was also high on my list. The Pandemic has taught me that adversity can bring out the best in people. It has prompted me to think about what's really important in life. Consequently, I have reordered my priorities. Getting fit, eating right, walking every day, have all become much more vital. Additionally, I've been thinking about gratitude and how there are so many people who are all essential workers and how they're all worthy of our gratitude. And I'm also grateful for the beauty of nature. This has been a summer of especially beautiful cloud formations. Positively exotic!

Mary shared with me that when she told her walking partner that she was going to be interviewed for this feature her friend advised her, "Think of some good lies to tell!" As it turns out, that advice was unnecessary. Mary's true story provides insight, humor, and joy for each of us.