

## Sweet Serenade

She had a classic face framed with hair that was closer to white than gray. She sat in her chair in the Alzheimer's unit at Life Care Center of Coeur d'Alene last Friday, and her smile was broad and contagious. As I walked up to her, she grabbed my left hand and my right arm and drew my face down close to hers.

"Are you a singer?" she asked. Startled a bit by her inquiry, I replied, "No, ma'am. Not me!"

"Yes you are," she insisted. "I know you are a singer. Music helps make life special, and we ought to enjoy it."

I agreed that it did, and so I added, "I bet you are a singer. Would you sing for me?"

"Why, yes," she responded. "How about *God Bless America*?"

"That's a good one," I told her. And she began her solo performance. Her voice was loud and clear. She confused some of the lyrics, but there was no doubt in her mind that she was nailing every word and every note correctly. She finished the song to the applause of all those around her. She beamed with her accomplishment. I hugged her and told her what a grand job she had done.

And I meant it.

I later learned that she had been a teacher, that she was the mother of five sons and that, yes, she had sung in her church choir in Nebraska.

We don't know a lot about the workings of a confused mind. But on this day – in this moment of time – two of this woman's passions were obvious: (1) her love of God, and (2) her devotion to her country. Both were combined in a musical tribute to her Creator and to the nation that had afforded her the freedoms of a lifetime.

I felt that I had just shared a very personal, very significant moment in this 92-year-old lady's journey through a difficult phase of her existence on this earth.

As I turned to leave the room, she called out to me, "Keep on singing. You can do it!"

My ability to verbalize the music is lacking, but she had just put a song in my heart.

--Beecher Hunter