

simply stories

Don Morman and family tell tales with music

By AMY GAIL HANSEN | Contributor

Don Morman knows how to tell a good story. But he doesn't use big words or flowery language. Nor does he employ grandiose gestures or rely on fancy props. This folk singer needs only an acoustic guitar and an audience, and he's ready to spin yarns that make people laugh, cry or just plain smile.

Singing folk, gospel, bluegrass, country and '50s rock 'n' roll, Morman plays at many venues throughout the suburbs: Lord of Glory Church in Grayslake, St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church in Park Ridge, Borders Books in Mount Prospect and the Antioch Fine Arts Foundation, where he appears the second Saturday of each month. The Park Ridge resident recently presented "Songs of Hope and Inspiration," a collection of gospel and secular songs to inspire the human spirit, at the Park Ridge Public Library.

The power of song

Morman fell in love with music while listening to the pop and rock 'n' roll hits of the 1950s. He was taken in by the power of song. "Music can be so much more than words," he said. "It has a tone that doesn't always come through in poetry or prose. It's magical, putting together the right words with the right melody."

He took up acoustic guitar as a teenager, and later the autoharp. In the folk revival of the 1960s, he discovered the kind of music he would listen to and play indefinitely. He was charmed by the simplicity of folk music. "It's truthful music," explained Morman, a Bob Dylan fan. "It's kind of basic, but it appeals to the senses that way. It doesn't need a lot of flash and glitter."



Don Morman and his acoustic guitar: "(Folk music) is kind of basic, but it appeals to the senses that way. It doesn't need a lot of flash and glitter."



(From left) Fred Bowen, Marcia Morman, Don Morman and Mary Morman. Bowen, Morman's wife, Marcia, and daughter Mary accompany folk singer Don at his shows.

A family affair

"Music is always much better shared," he continued. That's why he often performs with his wife, Marcia, and daughter, Mary, who play mandolin and recorder, respectively. Experienced soloists, the women also sing harmony. His long-time friend, Fred Bowen, rounds out the group's sound with standup bass.

Solo or accompanied, Morman sings a varied repertoire, the commonality being "songs that tell a story." That phrase is also the title of his first CD released in August of last year, witness to the fact that storytelling through music has become his niche.

He doesn't write his own music; his shows are a compilation of songs by other artists. But they aren't "cover" songs, he argued. "That word refers to pop songs that are very

popular and are not performed by the original artist," he explained. "The songs I do have never been performed much; many times, people have never heard them before."

Variations on a theme

Morman centers his programs on a theme, like "Rock and Rollin' in the '50s," "Growing up in the '50s and '60s" and "The Folk Revival of the '60s." His first priority is to entertain. "But I hope people walk away feeling a little better about themselves, about life in general and about other people," he said of his Songs of Hope and Inspiration program.

With the release of his CD, Morman's performance schedule is growing, but he won't be quitting his day job — a cost estimator for a sheet metal plant — anytime soon. Singing will continue to be his hobby.

"I love to do this," he said. "And if I can spread a little joy while I'm doing it — maybe make another CD — then I'm happy."

For more information, visit www.donmorman.com.

