



## Janet Reiter a life about music

**Bill Myers**  
staff reporter

Clark College music teacher Janet Reiter, who directs the school's Vocal Jazz Ensemble and co-directs the Community Chorale Group, can't remember a time when music wasn't a big part of her life.

A Washington native, Reiter was born in Bremerton on Nov. 16, 1946. "I was always singing even while a little girl," said Reiter. She came from a musical family. Years earlier, her parents had been members of the Marshall Family Orchestra, and two aunts were pianists.

"My parents enrolled me in piano lessons when I was eight-years-old," said Reiter. She said her mother would accompany both her and her sister to the piano teacher's studio and do menial tasks to help pay for the girls' lessons. "This made it clear that our parents were very serious about our music lessons," said Reiter.

Raised in Bremerton, Reiter graduated from West High School in 1965. An honor student, she had taken some college courses at Olympic Junior College (now Olympic Community College) while in high school.

After marrying her high school sweetheart, Reiter had two children. In addition to starting a family, she worked as a clerk for the state of Washington Automobile Licensing Division. When her marriage ended in divorce, Reiter concentrated on completing her education. Determined to be a teacher, she enrolled at Central Washington College (now a University). "When I started college, I was a single mom with two children, ages two and five," she said.

Reiter worked as a waitress and did other odd jobs to help pay expenses at home. Her good grades in high school helped her earn academic scholarships, and she also earned music scholarships. She graduated in January 1973 with a bachelor of arts degree in music education.

Seeking a mid-term teaching opportunity in January 1974, Reiter applied for a music teacher post at the Evergreen School District. She was hired at the District to teach music at five elementary schools. In September, she

accepted a sixth grade teaching job at Sifton Elementary School where she taught regular classes and language arts. By then she was taking graduate education courses at Lewis & Clark College. In 1978, she added a master's degree in teaching to a growing list of credits. In the same year, she returned to music instruction by accepting a music teacher position at Wy'East Junior High School.

In 1981, Reiter was hired as "the first music teacher" at a brand new Mountain View High School. She taught piano and was soon directing the school's choirs. Reiter continued to study at Lewis & Clark College and in 1986 added a master's degree in piano performance to her credentials. Under Reiter's direction, Mountain View High School choirs and jazz ensembles were often featured at Music Educator state and regional conferences. Her vocal jazz ensemble, "Mountain Express," performed at International Association of Jazz Educators conventions in Louisiana, Texas and Illinois. She retired from Mountain View High School in 2001. In the year following her retirement, she was a recipient of the Washington Music Educators "Hall of Fame" award.

When Skyview High School needed a choir director in 2002, Reiter left retirement and took the post for a couple of years. She was hired in 2004 at Clark College to direct the Vocal Jazz Ensemble. With April Duvic, she also co-directs the Clark College Community Chorale group.

Still at Clark College, Reiter is a frequent clinician and adjudicator at choral and vocal jazz festivals throughout the northwest. She also serves as a music mentor in the Vancouver and Evergreen school districts.

Reiter talks lovingly about her parents who made sure she stuck to her music as a young girl. Music may even have something to do with longevity. Both of her parents are alive and well, in their 90s, and living Arizona.

Reiter lives in Yacolt with her husband, Gordon, another talented pianist. They have four grown children, five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.