

World famous opera singer returns to Colby roots

By John Van Nostrand
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In the late 1950s with American radio waves filled with Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley, one Colby youth was intrigued by the voices of other musical performances with intense stories of romance and drama.

Colby native Sam Ramey was just beginning to learn what would be a well-documented and world-traveled career in opera.

"It's kind of an amazing story," he said Wednesday while walking the streets of downtown Colby. "It's been quite an amazing ride."

With a few days to spare before his next performance, Ramey spent time in Colby to show his own son, Samuel Guy, 4, where he grew up. Ramey takes the stage, starting in his most famous role of Mephistopheles in Gounod's haunting tale "Faust" at 7 p.m., March 29, at Century II in Wichita.

"I enjoy riding around town

and seeing what's left," said the 65-year-old remembering his younger years. "And I see the town has expanded."

The western Kansas wind blew the bangs of his gray hair while recollecting his adolescence.

"The winds haven't changed," he laughed with his bass-baritone voice.

One thing that has expanded has been Interstate 70. Ramey said he remembers driving home during his college days when Interstate 70 was being completed in chunks leading to Colby.

"Parts of the road would be interstate and then other parts wouldn't," he said.

Part of his Colby tour included stopping at the house in the 200 block of West Seventh Street he grew up in. He stopped to meet whoever was currently living in the house. No one was home.

He estimated his parents, Grace and Guy, moved the family into that house by the time he was 2 from another house in town. Sam

is the youngest of four children.

Both of his parents had north-west Kansas roots. He said his mother was from a farm south of Colby and his father was from Linda, an extinct town between Colby and Atwood.

"It's not even on the map," he said.

Ramey said any relatives remaining in the area would be distant cousins. He said he occasionally keeps in touch from his Chicago-area home with people in and around Colby he grew up with via Christmas cards and e-mail. He attended the Colby all-school reunion in 2005.

The neighborhood the Ramey family settled in turned into being an important one. Almost in view from the front porch of the house is the apartment building on Chicamagua and West Sixth Street where he listened to opera recordings with Ron Lock, a University of Kansas extension agent.

Before that, the only genuine samples of opera performances he heard were from occasional guests on the "Ed Sullivan" televi-

sion show.

"I hadn't seen an opera until I was actually in one," he said while pointing to the apartment building.

Ramey was like other youth, and people, in Colby.

"I was still interested in Elvis and Pat Boone," he said.

He remembers when Colby had a community theater group which had its performances in a bandshell in the park. Years later, Ramey would be singing in much bigger venues to many more people.

After graduating from Colby High in 1960, Ramey went to Kansas State University to pursue education in music. He was considering becoming a music teacher, but meeting certain people fueled the interest in opera. He rehearsed "Figaro" there.

He eventually transferred to Wichita State University which, he said, had a better music program.

After a college education, he needed a place to work in opera. He had heard an opera company

in Central City, Colo., was accepting samples of performers. Ramey said his recording he sent to Central City was done in KXXX radio studios. Central City liked his work. Ramey performed in Central City and in Santa Fe, N.M., as an apprentice before his professional debut in 1973 in New York City.

Since then, Ramey's 30-plus years have expanded more than just three decades. Although places like New York City, Chicago and other major American cities have a following in opera, he said Europe's interest in opera exceeds America's. He is known around the world at opera theaters. Because of that, he has learned to speak some French and Italian, both of which are popular for operas.

"I'm not that fluent," he said, "but we Americans are spoiled. Everybody knows how to speak English. I just know enough of the others to get by."

When he started, vinyl records were still on shelves in stores. He has made several recordings

of either his solo work or opera performances. Now, he has his own web site.

"When my friends see something new of mine on youtube, they send it to me," he said.

Spinning CDs rather than vinyl, Ramey knows things have changed. He said he, too, is not exactly the same performer he used to be.

"I'm not as booked as I used to be," he said.

He said his age is becoming more of a factor. He still performs about 10 months out of the year. But Ramey's fans, nor does he, see the immediate end as he has performances scheduled four years from now.

Ramey said he is not much different than Placido Domingo, 67, who is also still performing opera.

"I plan to be singing when I'm 70," he said. "But when to stop performing, it's always in the back of mind."

For more about Ramey go on line to www.samuelramey.com

JENNINGS NEWS

LOUISE CRESSLER

Karen Stueve, Katie and Amanda from Gardner visited her parents, Helen and Bud Rhodes, over the weekend.

Stan and Ramona Shaw are visiting several days at the home of their daughter, Cindy and Danny Black, Logan and Bowen of Carlsbad, N. M. While there they celebrated Logan's 12th birthday and the wedding anniversary of Danny and Cindy.

Stan and Ramona Shaw are happy to announce the birth of their great-granddaughter. Emma Shaw Gillespie was born March 10, at Menora Hospital, Overland Park. She weighed 8 pounds 8 ounces and was 19 1/2 inches long. The parents are Tamara Bratt and Elliott Gillespie, Belton, Mo.

The Jennings Tuesday Study Club met at the Southwind Steakhouse in Selden for lunch on Feb. 26. Jackie Boultinghouse and Jackie Neff gave them a tour of the new Community Center and allowed us to have our meeting there. Vice President Joan Metz opened the meeting with the reading of the January minutes. These were amended to include the stop for ice cream and pie to celebrate the birthdays of the following: Wilma Mader, Vendla Tacha and Neoma Tacha. Josephine Kinser's Study Club memory book will be donated to the museum. For roll call, Rachel Carter, Joan Metz, Ruth Chance, Violet Foster, Jean Skubal, Lynn Tacha, Vendla

Tacha, Wilma Mader, Joan McKenna, Neoma Tacha and guest Sue Long told briefly of their favorite books. The meeting adjourned and the club members took a tour of Koeperich Bookbinders. Chris, Dallla and Don Koeperich explained the process from start to finish. Neoma Tacha gave the brothers copies of a news article published when their father first opened the company. The March meeting will be in Oakley with visits to the Buffalo Bill sculpture and the ethanol plant.

The Sunflower Seniors met Tuesday evening March 11 for potluck supper. Following the meal John Juenemann played the guitar and sang several songs. Those enjoying the evening were: Wilma and Jim Mader; Rachel and William Carter; Agnes Wahlmeier; Stan and Ramona Shaw; Kenny Krizek; Larry and Alice Mizer; Mary Votapka; Bob Jones; Carla Latimer and Louise Cressler.

Easter Sunday Breakfast was held at the United Methodist Church.

City water meters were read March 22.

Controlled burning within the city limits of Jennings will be permitted through Wednesday, March 26.

Norton Correctional men will be working on the Community Hall floor sanding. This will take several weeks and then a finish will be put on.

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LYLE NEWS

By VEDA WOOD

Gary and Cathy Anthony took Keith Anthony to Kearney, Neb., where he underwent surgery on March 3.

Dwight Wood underwent foot surgery on Feb. 29 and is recuperating well.

Toots Magers attended the funeral of Virgil Cathcart.

Jeremy and Jill Houghttelling of Hastings, Neb., are the parents of a baby boy, Kreasen, born Feb. 29. He weighed 7 pounds, 13 ounces. Grandparents are Ken and Beth Houghttelling, rural Cambridge, Neb. Lloyd Frandsen, rural Cambridge, is his great-grandfather.

Kathy Van Meter attended funeral services for Verlin Miller at the Hoxie United Methodist Church last Tuesday. His wife is Mrs. Van Meter's cousin. She also

visited her brother Mr. and Mrs. Jim Hillburn.

The Lyle church's monthly potluck was held March 2. Those attending were Gary and Keith Anthony, Ceanne and Martin Rinehart, Judy and Charlie Easton, Joyce and Virgil Price, Kathy Van Meter, Toots Magers and Veda Wood. We missed our dear friend and self-appointed dishwasher Lee Arnold, who was in the Decatur County Hospital. The Prices brought a tape which their son, Bob, had recorded and played it for the group.

Lynn Scrivner rode his motorcycle to visit Toots Magers on Saturday.

Veda Wood's granddaughter Tiela High was a coffee guest on March 2 to help her celebrate her birthday.

3 on 3 tourney slated

The 2008 "Sappa Valley Shootout" Youth 3 on 3 basketball tournament will be held on Saturday, April 12 in Oberlin.

Boys and girls in grades 1-12 are eligible to participate. The tournament will be held in the Decatur Community Junior and Senior High School gyms and is sponsored by the 2015 basketball boys to provide funding for summer activities.

Boys and girls will compete in separate divisions. T-shirts and medals will be awarded to winning

teams in each age division and second place teams will receive medals.

Entry fees are \$30 per team and are due to Angie Erickson by Friday, April 4. Entry forms are available for download at sappavalleyshootout.com and will also be available at area schools.

Public admission will be \$2 for adults and \$1 for students. Players and children under age 5 will be free. For more information, visit the website or contact Angie Erickson at (785) 322-5338.

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