

Happy holiday chimes from Jani Eisenhut

Native-born Islander has played Christmas songs since 1957

BY JUDY HIBBS

Residents and visitors alike appreciate the melodic tones of the Wrigley Chimes that toll on the quarter hour daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. But have you noticed that there's music coming from the hills this Advent Season?

That's thanks to Jani Eisenhut, who has been playing Christmas songs on the keyboard in the chimes tower regularly since 1967. Jani and her siblings were all born on the island. Her parents Dale and Donna Eisenhut raised their three daughters Alice, Lynn and Jani Sue, the youngest (and "best" she says) here after moving to

Avalon in 1947.

Dale Eisenhut was an electrical engineer for the Santa Catalina Island Company. Donna Eisenhut was the town librarian.

The Catalina Chimes were a gift to the people of Avalon from Mrs. Ada Wrigley in 1925 and they resonate from atop the hill overlooking the harbor and the Casino building.

Dale's work responsibilities provided the opportunity for the Eisenhut family to actually live in the Casino building, which Jani remembers fondly. She shares a love of the town and the interior with her family. She also works for the Island Company (for many years she spent her time as a tour bus driver telling marvelous stories about the history of Catalina and what it's like to grow up here.)

Jani plays her music on a sim-



Jani Eisenhut, pictured here, is the musician who plays the Wrigley Chimes tunes at Christmas and throughout the year.

ple keyboard purchased originally from the J.C. Deagan Company of Chicago. The timely tones ring out with the lyrical Westminster Chimes tune (named for the clock

place it was, and what a privilege it had been to be able to spend most of her life here. I will miss her, the people of Avalon will miss her, the very island itself will miss her. I was so fortunate to have crossed her path and share conversation and insight with such a wonderful and dynamic woman.

There is a special place out there for little Miss Melba.

Chuck Adargo
Avalon

Letter to the Editor

Missing Miss Melba

Melba Pilch passed on Nov. 23. I don't know if you remember her.

Small in stature woman, long blonde hair, would walk all over Avalon every day, knew everyone.

The service and celebration of Melba's life was very well done and moving. I'm glad I was able to be there.

How lucky Rudy and Melba were to be able to find each other at such a young age, Rudy being 16 and Melba 14 years old, and be together for so many years. Storybook life, to be together, have a life that they shared, and find

reasons to stay together. And the most important, being how much they truly loved and cared for each other.

I knew her long before her health started to fail. What a fine lady; active, caring, personable person that she was. I had spoken to her many times, a historian as it were, love to chat about the island and what a special, almost sacred

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tower that is London's Big Ben). She plays one note at a time for the "sheer love of it." She is known for special music at Easter, graduation and other special occasions.

A Catalina Chimes Tower Foundation is seeking to restore the beloved landmark. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to PO Box 677 Avalon, CA 90704.

As a gift to the town and the people that she loves, Jani has committed to play her beautiful melodies every day that she can until Christmas. So listen for the caroling chimes. It is a delight and a legacy for Avalon's generations of visitors and those who are lucky enough to call the island "Home for the Holidays."



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