



Celebrating 75 years of Sweet Adelines

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Sweet Adelines Stories:

Barbershop – The World’s Largest Family

I joined a barbershop chorus in December 1985. We sang songs like *Aquarius* and *Fame* and we thought the “competition-thing” was over-rated and we did not care that we didn’t receive a medal. We sang because we loved it. I got placed on the back row of the chorus because my voice could be heard for miles. This was Gothia Barber Girls in Sweden, and it was my best friend Annika Dellås who introduced me. We sang together in Gothia for many years until she moved to Stockholm and joined Rönninge Show chorus.

Some years later we went to Glasgow for the IES music school with the quartet Rumors and, believe it or not, they taught me to sing with resonance and less volume and suddenly I found that barbershop is not just about me singing stronger than the other three parts. And to my great surprise I found that resonance made it sound better and bigger. It wasn’t just me who listened and improved during this music school, the entire chorus did and during the next competition we won the small chorus division and we got a medal. A medal!!!! Our thoughts about the “competition-thing” changed overnight and we loved our medals. They don’t need to be from Internationals, no, regional was enough for us.

In 2005 my family and I decided to move to New Zealand for one year. I was looking for jobs on the internet, and I found hospitals in need of anesthetists but where should we go? Well, next website was the New Zealand Sweet Adelines, and I found that I could not accept a job in Timaru and Greymouth because they did not have any choruses. I could go to Invercargill and to New Plymouth and I chose Invercargill. Why???? Well, it wasn’t the weather; it was because while looking at the chorus photos, I liked their costumes better. Sorry, New Plymouth, but things could have been different today because your latest costumes were stunning! I don’t know if the recruitment offices understand how important the local barbershop chorus is! You guys should be paid.

Well, I sent an email: Do you want to borrow a bass for one year? And when we arrived to the airport there were two people there to meet us, one from the hospital with the key to the apartment and one from the chorus with tickets to their concert the following night. I started rehearsing with Foveaux Harmony the following Thursday, and I sang with them for almost six years.

My friend Åse Hagerman came out to coach and through her I met the Christchurch City Chorus and I was over the moon when I got the possibility to go with them to Internationals in Calgary, where, as you may know, we got an International medal! I worked in Christchurch for a while and with them I competed in Wellington 2010 and guess what? I got my first gold medal — after 25 years and as many competitions I got my gold medal!

One year in New Zealand turned out to be six years before we returned to Sweden, to family, friends and Gothia Barber Girls, now called Gothia Show Chorus because we may not claim that we are girls any longer. It was sad to leave New Zealand, which is a fantastic country and I had made great friends there. But, I continued to go back and I continued to sing with Christchurch for many years, and I continued to compete with them on the international stage: Houston, Hawaii and Las Vegas. My dear friend Annika is still singing with Rönninge, so we have been singing on the same international stage at several occasions but in different choruses, one from Sweden and one from New Zealand!

In 2018 three Swedish choruses (Gothia, Key Town and Västerås – therefore called GoKeyVäst) joined as one and travelled to Japan to sing there. The GoKeyVäst chorus has shown us that singing together is a fabulous way to make new friends and to create amazing possibilities.

Barbershop truly is the world's largest family!

Nina Widfeldt

Gothia Show Chorus, Sweden