

## **Harold T. ZELLNER**

Meet Harold ZELLNER

Resides in Nazareth for 55 years

Born in Moore Township on May 18, 1913

Married to Thelma Brior for 55 years

Work: C. F. Martin Guita Co., 28 years

Philosophy of Life, Love people, when you learn to love, you learn to know God.

I just retired when my wife, Thelmas and I began visiting nursing homes. We enjoyed the thought of bringing happiness to others, but we knew the pursuit would also bring us happiness. Our visits began when my sister-in-law, who was working as a nurse's aide at Gracedale, asked me to play my guitar and sing at the facility's monthly birthday parties. Since my childhood including nightly sing-alongs with a family that loved music. I knew the magical power of an old-fashioned melody. When I was 14, my older brother took me to the music shop in Bethlehem and bough me my first musical instrument for \$6. It was a German accordion that looked like a harmonica and was built into the bellows. It was a treasured gift that allowed me to join the ranks of our troop of family musicians. When my uncle's family came for their weekly visit, our home was bustling with excitement. With my, Father playing the violin, my cousin strumming the banjo, my sister at the piano and me playing the accordion, the lively music lifted everyone's spirits. When I was 18, I didn't thing about buying a car. I had saved enough money to buy something more important – my first Sears and Roebuck guitar. Later, after working at C. F. Martin Guitar Co., for many years, I was permitted to make my own guitar for \$8 the cost of the materials. Throughout my life, music has been my second language. The joy it gave me was what I hoped to share with residents of the nursing home when Thelma and I began our visits. I selected 120 songs with Thelma's help and I memorized the music and words to each one so the program could move along quickly. The residents responded to the music right away. Thelma wasn't musically inclined, but she clapped her hands and sang along, sharing her zest for life with the audience. Thelma and I could feel the joy in the room where music made heavy hearts lighter, and we knew we were doing something very worthwhile. Soon our visits included additional nursing homes and we were making visits three days a week. We loved our audiences and they seemed to love us. The greatest evidence of the reciprocal nature of love was during a visit to the Slate Belt

Nursing Home, a patient, who was in her mid 40's, had been in a serious car accident and her injuries had left her unable to talk. As I sang, I watched in amazement as the woman started to move her lips and sing-along with me. By the end of the song, everyone was crying, including the nurses. The experience etched a lasting memory of one of the most rewarding moments of my life. Those days of bringing music into the lives of some very special people sustained me through many unhappy days when I had to cope with the death of my dear, Thelma. After she died, I didn't think I'd ever visit another nursing home. I even sold my treasured guitar. But as time went by, I realized that losing Thelma would be more painful if I gave up something she cared about and we enjoyed so much. I decided to buy another guitar and keep our project alive. Now I'm alone when I visit the nursing homes, but I always receive a rousing welcome when I arrive. And When I Leave, I get a warm good-bye. People often ask why I make time to visit my nursing friends. My answer is simple. Someday, I may be sitting in a similar place longing for someone to visit me. If so, I hope someone will be willing to come in and lift my spirits.