

# SENIOR LIFESTYLES

## St. Ann's resident tickles the ivories every day

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**IRONDEQUOIT** — Elizabeth "Betty" Riordan fell in love with the piano early in life.

"I've always loved to play," she recalled. "I picked things out before I had any lessons."

She began to study classical music seriously at the age of 16, and spent several years under the tutelage of Raymond Havens, the distinguished head of Boston University's music department.

By the time she was in her early 20s, she was a fairly accomplished pianist living outside of Boston with her parents, John and Madeleine Bufford.

Then one of her friends told her a young baritone singer named Charles F. Riordan needed someone to accompany him for a recital. She agreed.

The singer called her up and asked for directions to her house so he could pick her up for the concert. In all sincerity, she told him: "It's the house with the little red lights on the porch."

Riordan said she couldn't understand why the performer began laughing, and when he explained the meaning of "red light district" to her, she confessed her ignorance. Her innocence must have touched the heart of her more worldly acquaintance because he eventually married her, had three children with her, and spent 59 years of his life with her.

"We both loved music, and we played and sang together," Riordan recalled, adding that her husband was a photographer, machinist, salesman and master carpenter. "He was always full of jokes."

A veteran piano teacher, Riordan, 84, related this and other stories of her life to the *Catholic Courier* during an interview at The Heritage, a senior citizen apartment complex that adjoins St. Ann's Home at 1500



Betty Riordan plays piano at The Heritage in Irondequoit. Daughter Connie Deming looks on.

Portland Ave.

She and Charles spent much of their life in Massachusetts, then moved to Dansville in the early 1970s to be near family members, she said. The two often travelled, she said, noting she has visited Ireland, Japan and Hawaii. After Charles suffered a stroke that left him somewhat debilitated in May 1997, the couple moved to St. Ann's Home/The Heritage, she added.

Sadly, she noted, Charles passed away on Jan. 20 this year, and she now lives alone at the Heritage, but she keeps busy spending time outside each day and playing the

piano whenever she can.

A lively, articulate woman, she noted she enjoys the loving support of her family of three children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, many of whom live in the area.

Her daughters include Connie Deming, a Rochester-area singer-songwriter and recording artist who has performed locally for several years. Deming and her mother performed a concert together in St. Ann's auditorium for about 100 residents

on the evening of March 30. The mother-daughter duo performed selections from Chopin, Debussy and Gershwin.

Apparently, the residents enjoyed the performance, as one of them stopped to talk to Riordan during her *Courier* interview two days later to tell her what a "nice show" it was.

Riordan said she often plays a piano located in the lobby of the Heritage, and that many residents come and sit around to hear her.

"Most of them like to hear me play," Riordan said, though she acknowledged she doesn't always enrapture them as well as she did at her March 30 concert.

"They want me to do it, but that doesn't mean they aren't going to stop talking," she added with a laugh.

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