

## Because love is unforgettable

A troubadour stirs memories among the memory-impaired



Paul

Wayne of Newburyport, who frequently performs for senior citizens, plays a tune for residents of Amesbury's Elizabeth Calsey House. (Joanne Rathe/Globe Staff)

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AMESBURY — “Indian Love Call” is an old song that always seems to touch something deep within Terry Neve’s 89-year-old heart.

“It just stayed with me all these years,” Neve said, as both a smile and a blush broke across her face. “It reminds me of my good days. . . . Just growing up.”

Entertainer Paul Wayne, 66, was happy to sing the 1920s tune about a Canadian girl who falls in love with a miner. “*I am calling you, I will answer, too,*” he sang, stretching out the words. “*That means I offer my love to you . . . If you refuse it, I will be blue . . .*”

Neve answered in her own sweet voice, and with her own melody. “*And I hear your love call echoing so near . . . Then I know our love will come true.*” Valentine’s Day seems to come at least once a month at the Elizabeth Calsey House. Many residents have early-stage Alzheimer’s disease or other memory loss conditions. Some need to be reminded when it’s time for lunch or bingo. Others need help taking medicine or a bath. But most always remember when it’s time for the jolly guy from Newburyport to show up with his acoustic guitar.

One sharp lady saw a chance to turn on the charm. “Well,” said Celina LeBlanc, 90, “this one has turned out to be pretty good-looking.”

Wayne, who has been performing all of his life, once warmed up crowds for Johnny Cash and Smokey Robinson. But for about the last 10 years, he’s been leading sentimental sing-a-longs for senior citizens. He charges a fee for his performances, based on what a facility can afford, he said. He started these shows with his father, Paul Sr., who enjoyed playing his harmonica for seniors. Father and son performed together until Paul Sr. died 11 years ago. To this day, whenever Wayne sings “Oh, How I Miss You Tonight,” he hears his dad’s booming vocals.

“Don’t let anybody tell you that you didn’t hear my father sing it,” Wayne said after belting out a few bars at Calsey House. “Because you just did. I never sing it myself. He always sings it.”

Wayne isn’t a neuroscientist. He’s just a guy with a big heart and a guitar.

But he believes that love songs stimulate a unique emotional response from people with memory problems.

“I can see it in their eyes,” said Wayne, who performs as many as three gigs per day. “They’re interested, attentive. They become involved. . . . They’ll let me know when I forget a line.”

He relies on humor to draw people out. When he sang like a Munchkin, a lively discussion of “The Wizard of Oz” followed. “I think I saw that one time,” Ione Gagne, 83, said of the 1939 movie classic. “I think I was about 12 years old. It was a long, long time ago. I’d like to see it again sometime.”

Sometimes the repertoire rekindles memories of romance, long and lasting.

“We got married on Valentine’s Day,” LeBlanc said of her vows 70 years ago to her husband, Paul, who also lives at the home. “We met at church, Sacred Heart in town. Now it’s called St. Joseph’s. . . . He’s a very good husband.”

Wayne chimed in. “A lot of people say when you are truly in love, the person you love never ages. There is no such thing as time.”

He struck a chord with Carol Young, 82. “My husband said that to me, a few years before he slipped into a state of chronic depression,” said Young, her voice clear. “He said, ‘I will always remember you the way that you looked when I first met you.’ ”

As if on cue, Wayne broke into Jimmy Roselli’s 1967 hit, “When Your Old Wedding Ring Was New.”

*“I remember with pride, how we stood side by side  
What a beautiful picture you made as my bride  
Even though silver crowns your hair, I can  
still see those gold ringlets there . . .”*

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