



UKE-ING HIS HEAD Dave Rowan Brings Great Music to Seniors

By Lorraine Payette

Dave Rowan is a familiar face to many living in the seniors' residences in our area. He and his partner Frankie (his dog) are making a career playing covers of songs from jazz, pop, country/western, the 20s to the 60s and 70s for grateful residents.

"I do a little bit of pop, a little bit of rock – anything that the old folks would like to hear," said Rowan. "Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, the list goes on and on."

He started his musical career playing guitar around campfires while working as a CIT (Counselor in Training) at kids' camps when he was about 15-years-old. After about five years of doing this he was invited to join a group called the Vegas Boys in Toronto.

"The Vegas Boys played together right up until last year," said Rowan. "One guy got

diagnosed with throat cancer and was no longer able to sing. It was 15 years of unbelievable – and I do mean unbelievable – memories and stories."

He did jam sessions in the city but had to stop when he developed sleep apnea and could no longer stay up late at night.

"I went to visit my sister's father-in-law in a retirement residence," he said. "I brought my guitar along and soon I had 'lots of people' in this dining area. The lady who runs the activity programme said, 'You know, we have money to pay people like you.'"

"I got a list of all the seniors' residences in and around Toronto and started making phone calls. A couple of months later I approached a bunch of the guys that we had been doing jam sessions with, and I got four guys that stepped up and said, 'Let's go make some noise for the old folks.'"

"We started playing and that was the start of 'Friends of Jake'. That's when I started playing seniors' residences with that band and I'm doing solos all along as well."

Jake was a dog who belonged to one of the band members. Being the one most likely to

show up for all rehearsals, they decided to name themselves after him.

About five years ago the Rowans had a grandson and decided to move to Gananoque.

"I've been doing all sorts of stuff since I moved here," he said. "I've been trying to get some musicians together to put a band together. I've been working for eight years trying to develop a reputation as a good entertainer. Then Frankie came along in the last two years and has completely stolen my show. She likes to dance."

A cross between Labrador and Husky, Frankie charms the audiences and puts them at ease everywhere Rowan goes. Whether playing at a seniors' residence or teaching people to play the ukulele, she's always there helping out.

"There was a group from the high-school interested in starting ukulele," said Rowan. "About 8 or 10 kids came into the library and I gave them ukulele lessons. It was a panic. Now I'm giving ukulele lessons at the seniors' residences. I have a course at Rosedale Retirement Residence in Brockville and the residents love it." **LH**

To hire Rowan to come and play for you or to teach ukulele, please contact him at 613-449-7169 or daver_4@hotmail.com . He and Frankie will be delighted to come and make beautiful music with you.