

In Memoriam

Art Skantz, Our Dedicated Colleague

By Dan Shea

We deeply regret to tell you that Art Skantz, a longtime Björling Society member and a past Treasurer and board member, died last January 26. As Treasurer from 2004 to 2011, he was the conscientious keeper of the JBS books and an always helpful supporter of worthy projects. Art had high-level experience in corporate finance. Further, he and his wife Marilyn had great memories of having heard Jussi at Lyric Opera during the 1950s. Clearly he was well qualified to serve JBS-USA as financial officer!

Art was proud of the fact that he had overcome an impoverished childhood during the Depression, in the tiny town of Ely MN, 25 miles from the Canadian border where winter temperatures can be -40 degrees (the point where F = C). He identified with his Finnish heritage and its notion of *sisu*, the ability to stoically finish a useful task successfully. And that surely had to have been part of his decision to devote a good chunk of his time in retirement, with all the enjoyable distractions of a large family and many other cultural interests, to work for this organization that honors Jussi Björling's career.

One of Art's first tasks as Treasurer was to keep track of the finances for our mini-conference at the LA Opera in February 2005. The following year we organized another mini-conference at Minneapolis's American Swedish Institute, and Art and Marilyn invited our JBS board to have its annual meeting at their beautiful home in nearby St. Louis Park. By now Art was playing an important part in helping plan JBS activities.

The next few years brought continued growth in our activities. There was a mini-conference in Charleston that Sue Flaster had been planning, as well as several substantial CD projects maturing as we headed for an important goal: a conference



PHOTO OF ART SKANTZ COURTESY OF ALLAN BUCHALTER

to be held in June 2011 at Gustavus Adolphus College to mark Jussi's centennial. That four-day event would require a huge amount of planning, much of that financial: registration fees for the attendees; speakers and singers to be paid; CDs, books and other items to be sold. Art's experience with *sisu* would be important during those days!

I recall visiting Art and Marilyn early in 2014, shortly before they left their home in St. Louis Park. They described many happy family times there with their family: six children with their spouses, and their children (11 of those!). But they also were looking forward to their move to an independent living condo in Wayzata MN, where there would be facilities for their good family times to continue.

All of us at JBS-USA extend our special condolences to Marilyn and her family. ■

Dan Shea is co-founder and board member of JBS-USA, and a frequent contributor to our publications.

Hanna Hedman, 1934-2020

We report with sadness the death of Hanna Hedman. Hanna was married to Frank Hedman, who in 1979 founded the *Bluebell* recording label, which she managed successfully after Frank's death in 1990. Among her notable issues were many Jussi Björling recordings, especially live performance recordings from Stockholm. *Bluebell's* "Great Swedish Singers" series presented such artists as Schymberg, Söderström, Gedda, Hasslo, Berglund, Wixell and Björker. Hanna was a remarkable person, idiosyncratic, funny and generous. She died just before her 86th birthday. An in-depth article about Frank, Hanna, and *Bluebell* will be published in our next *Journal*.