

Popular “Entertainer to Seniors” Is Singing a Different Tune

For the first time in many years, the storage closet where Mindy Clark keeps her entertainment paraphernalia is perfectly neat. Lyric sheets that used to spill out across the floor have been picked up and organized alphabetically into a notebook. Wires and microphones have been straightened out and tucked away in felt-lined bags. Props like sequin hats, Mardi Gras beads, and little American flags have been collected and sealed in cardboard boxes.

It may be a while before Mindy needs any of this again.

After nearly fifteen years of entertaining senior citizens in the Delaware Valley, Mindy is taking what she calls a “temporary retirement” to pursue her lifelong dream of being a novelist. This July will mark the debut of her first published novel, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*.

“Between raising two kids and working as an entertainer, it took a while to write the book and then find an agent and a publisher,” Mindy says. “But in the long run, it was all worth it..”

In fact, last fall Mindy signed a three-book deal with Harvest House Publishers, for the inspirational “Million Dollar Mysteries” series. The series features a female protagonist, a private investigator who repeatedly encounters murder, deception—and a little romance. The second book, *Don’t Take Any Wooden Nickels*, will come out in January of 2003 and the third, *A Dime a Dozen*, in July 2003. All of the books in the series are in the Christian Mystery Fiction genre and should be available wherever books are sold.

Mindy is best known among local nursing homes, senior clubs, and retirement communities for her energetic and interactive mix of music and comedy. She has performed her most popular program, “A Musical Tour of America” at nearly fifty different locations in the Delaware Valley. Over the years, she has created shows for many holidays and special events, and she

has even brought her family in on the act from time to time.

“Being an entertainer to seniors has been a wonderful adventure,” Mindy says, “especially when I could harmonize with my dad or showcase my kids.” In fact, she has seen the fruits of her labors with both of her daughters, who at the ages of 10 and 12 are already completely poised both singing and speaking in front of large audiences. “The performance experience for them has been invaluable,” Mindy says.

Other than bringing in the troops, Mindy has resorted to all sorts of tricks and techniques to liven up her act, including passing out hand-held instruments, telling knock-knock jokes, and even giving out small souvenirs. “After doing this for a while,” Mindy says, “you begin to develop an instinct for when you need to slow things down or when you need to speed them up. There is always a high point about three-fourths of the way through every show, when I look out at my audience and they’re smiling, looking expectantly back at me, and I know that they are really *with* me. Giving them this time of absolute fun is what it’s all about.”

Mindy says that she loves entertaining seniors because they respond to her performance with an honesty that’s refreshing—singing along on the songs they love and complaining loudly when the jokes are too corny or the volume is too loud. “Most seniors tell you exactly what’s on their mind,” Mindy says. “And when it’s over, they always make a point of coming up and saying what a good time they had.”

Mindy has great respect for the people who work with seniors on a day-to-day basis. “Truly,” she says, “I have never met an Activity Director that I didn’t like. They

really are very special people with a unique calling. I admire their dedication.” She notes that the people who fill that role must have many talents and wear a lot of different hats during the course of the day.



Clark has become a familiar face in the local senior entertainment field.

“I’ll miss performing,” Mindy says, “but there just aren’t enough hours in the day to do that and write these books too.” Mindy stopped taking new bookings last fall and in May she gave her final performance—to an audience of all ages at a Mother-Daughter Banquet in a local church hall.

For now, she turns to the full time world of the mystery novelist. Her latest challenge? How to integrate a character who just happens to be an entertainer to seniors into one of her books. “For years, people have looked at me blankly whenever I tried to explain what I do,” Mindy says. “They don’t understand that you can actually make a living in the senior entertainment field.” She wrote and self-published the handbook *Can You Sing? How to Make \$100+ Per Hour As a Singer Now!*, which she sells through an entertainment web site. Now, she hopes that if she portrays a character doing exactly that, maybe folks will begin to understand.

“I’m sure there will come a point where I will start doing shows again,” Mindy says. “I love my seniors too much to stay away forever. But right now I’ve got the opportunity of a lifetime with these books, and I need to focus on that. I’ve wanted to be a novelist since I was a little girl.”

To all of the seniors in the Delaware Valley who have enjoyed hearing Mindy sing over the years, her absence will surely be felt. Mindy says she will miss them, of course, but for now she’s working hard to make music out of words.