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# Dana Point man, 77, finds you're never too old to sing

By [ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER](#)

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0 COMMENTS

As an 18-year-old fresh out of high school in Detroit, Steve D'Arca was trying to get noticed among the singers in Motown. It was 1952, and he had sung on television station WXYZ eight times already. He sure wouldn't mind having his musical talents discovered.

But he shipped off with the military in 1953, putting off any chance of being the next Frank Sinatra.

He never achieved stardom. But the now-77-year-old Dana Point resident has become a local celebrity, at least on the retirement-community circuit.

"My age is against me," D'Arca said with a smile. "But I still got it."

D'Arca performs monthly at San Clemente Villas by the Sea and Aegis of Dana Point, usually singing pop standards to a packed house.

At the Villas, D'Arca has reached something approaching Sinatra status, said Anna Vincent, the community's activities director. Residents fill the lobby for his performances at 3 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of each month.

"Even the most frail of women and men get up and dance," Vincent said.

D'Arca often spends time chatting with residents and keeping them company even when he's not there to perform.

Aegis said his next performance there is scheduled for Sept. 16.

## BECOMING AN ENTERTAINER

D'Arca said he has been performing all his life. Even in the Air Force, he found a place to sing: officers' clubs. Officers noticed D'Arca's talents and would invite him to their clubs for a cocktail and a chance to perform. Eventually, he was making \$25 a night singing for his superiors.

D'Arca ended his four-year military tour in Japan and eventually met Betsy Churchill, whom he dated for six years and then married. She had three children from a previous marriage whom D'Arca treated as his own. D'Arca sang at the wedding of each of his three stepchildren.

Though D'Arca says he's never quite been in the right place at the right time to make it big, he has ramped up his singing efforts the past eight years. In 2003, D'Arca, who by then had retired from his job as a foreman at Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, took some jackpot winnings and bought a karaoke machine.

"Now when I sing Sinatra's 'New York, New York,' I've got the band with me," D'Arca said.

His wife is his unofficial manager, keeping his schedule and looking for more gigs.

## WHERE HE SINGS TODAY

D'Arca is a fixture at the Villas and Aegis. He views his performances there the past seven years as a service, singing to senior citizens the songs they love.

"Everybody wants to know how long he's been singing and why he's not professional," Betsy D'Arca said.

In April, Steve D'Arca sang at a Change of Command ceremony for his granddaughter, an Army captain, as she took control of a company of about 300 troops.

Once, on a cruise, he took over for the ship's captain as the singer for guests during dinner.

In October, D'Arca tried unsuccessfully for a spot on "The X Factor," a talent show on the Fox television network.

He said he wishes there had been shows like that when he was young. "These kids on 'American Idol' are so fortunate," he said.

To book D'Arca to perform, call 949-487-7494.

*Staff writer Rob Vardon contributed to this report.*