

Joann M. Bongiorno

Former Treasurer of the Nevada Silver Haired Legislative forum.

Joann was born on February 9, 1936, the only child of a Sicilian immigrant family. At age 11 in 1947, Joann accompanied by her mother, was sent to live with her Grandparents in a small village in the Sicilian hills. There she experienced the devastation, poverty and aftermath of World War II. She witnessed a childhood companion's leg torn apart by a mine undetected in the field in which they played. Food was not plentiful even if the means to purchase was. The village held no theaters, skating rinks nor TV's. The only entertainment and laughter was provided was by the villagers during the evenings as they gathered to sing and dance while strumming on their instruments. It was then that Joann decided music was to be part of her life. During that year, she traveled throughout Italy and wrote back to her teachers and classmates of her experiences.

Upon her return to America, she studied music at the Cleveland Institute of Music forming her first instrumental and vocal group. In 1953 a contest was held by Coca-Cola bottling company and the Department of Defense in Major cities looking to sponsor talent that would be capable of performing in military Armed Forces installation throughout Europe, North Africa and Asia. Winning the event for the city of Cleveland, Ohio, Joann's group was then named by Coca-Cola "The Cokettes". From 1954 through 1958 "The Cokettes" traveled as Good Will ambassadors to major cities and Government Installations throughout the world receiving certificates and medals of Esteem from the Department of Defense.

In 1958, led by Joann, turning professional, the group's name was changed to "The Coquettes" debuting on the "Ed Sullivan Show" with their hit record "The Music Goes Round & Round" followed by "American Band Stand", "The Joey Bishop Show", along with appearances on the "Grand Ole Opry". To their credits, then called "Joann Bon & The Coquettes", they appeared in the movie "Harry & Tonto" with Art Carney who received an Academy Award.

The Coquettes being an all-female self-sustaining vocal and instrumental entertainment lounge act, spear-headed by Joann, pioneered the way for other female groups in Nevada. In 1958, Las Vegas became her permanent residence performing in major hotels, The Stardust, The Sands, The Golden Nugget, The Riviera, The Aladdin, Caesar's Palace and many more. Joann also became an Events Director for casinos and other acts. She performed with Bob Hope, Liberace, Sammy Davis Jr., Brenda Lee, Roy Clark and others while writing radio commercials and doing voice overs.

While attending UNLV and CCCC, She co-founded "Computer Academy", a rental business supplying the Las Vegas Convention Center with electronic computer products. Graduating from the Nevada School of Real Estate, she founded J. Stevens Realty and Ideal Investments Inc. as owner broker. In the 1990 Joann became C.E.O. owner of Deeds Inc., and Diamond L.L.C., a real estate investment, financial, and consulting firms.

Joann was nominated by Senator Woodhouse, followed by Senators Breeden, Parks, and Lange approved by Governors: Gibbons Sandoval, Sisolak, and Lombardo to represent Nevada Seniors and Veterans, to serve the "Nevada Silver Haired Legislative Forum". The purpose of the N.S.H.L.F. is to identify, make recommendation and draft bills on issues of importance pertaining to the aged. The forum holds public meetings, submits recommendations for legislative action to the Legislative Commission and the Governor.

Joann was instrumental in the creation and passing of Nevada's Silver Alert bill, which acts similarly to the Amber Alert but for older endangered persons in the State of Nevada and the Pharmacy Reader bill for the blind. Elected treasurer, Joann, after 14 years, continues to serve passionately for seniors working on exposing the abusive guardianship treatment of seniors.