



Don Lewis was our beloved Club songmaster and all-around Rotarian whom we lost in November 2022. He was a passionate and humble man despite his rich history and accomplishments that went well beyond our knowledge of his involvement in our Club.

Don came of age in the 1950's in Dayton, Ohio, parlaying his passion for music as a church organist into performing at Carnegie Hall and participating in studio sessions with Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones. Don's

early career in electronics fueled his creation of the first integrated multi-synthesizer network designed for live performances in 1977. Praised for his vision, while criticized by others for a perceived attempt to supplant live musicians, his success with Live Electronic Orchestra [LEO] was the inspiration for the development of Musical Instrument Digital Interface [MIDI] in 1985.

Born in 1941, Don grew up through segregation and the civil rights movement. As his wife, Julie (also a fellow Rotarian and past President of our Club) explains, "Don came to believe that his journey and mission in later years was to make sure he could spread the gospel of music. He wanted young people to be given the opportunity to have music make a difference in their lives." Don & Julie were honored with Pleasanton's Distinguished Mayor's Award in 2023 for, among other contributions, "Young Expressions" a youth performing arts mentoring program. Don's story is the subject of a documentary "Don Lewis and the Live Electronic Orchestra" by acclaimed filmmaker, Ned Augustenborg.

Our Club Foundation is partnering with Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council in providing the annual Don Lewis "Say Yes to Music" Awards to aspiring young musicians in our community. Funding has already started and we welcome you to join us in contributing to Don's legacy with a donation through this website.

We miss Don dearly. If you join us at a regular Thursday Club lunch meeting or catch us on Zoom, you can still feel his presence and positive energy with the Rotary songs that he wrote and recorded for us to continue to sing and enjoy.