



## Music hath charms to soothe the boss

Sometimes I wonder what the people in my office must think of me. I'm really not much of a Boss. I don't yell, I don't control, I don't show any real desire for world domination. But perhaps the most curious thing about my management style is how much music plays a role in it.

One of the first things I do when I walk into the office is to turn on my boom box. Some days, it's tuned to WVMV-FM Smooth Jazz and some days, to an oldies station. I've got a collection of CDs and tapes on the shelf behind my desk.

I listen to whatever seems the most balance the tenor of the day, and the more stressful things get, the more calm my musical selections.

Once I listened to variations on Pachelbel's Canon in D for six hours straight. But that was an exceptionally bad day.

Among the most interesting out-growths of my own interest in music was discovering that both Katie, our receptionist, and Paul, our Farmington Hills reporter, play guitar—as do I. Katie brought her six-string in one day to practice, and it hasn't left the office since.

Every now and again, one of us will pick up our Office Guitar and start playing, never loud or twangy and always respectful of the location. It's relaxing, it allows us to share a unique bond and most importantly, I think, it opens a window into the world outside of work just long enough that we can catch a breath of fresh air.

Researchers have also found that language and music are processed in the same part of the brain. Something called the "Mozart effect" was discovered in 1993, by researchers who observed that college students demonstrated greater spatial reasoning ability after listening to the classical composer.

We're not quite that advanced. Paul does "Stairway to Heaven," Katie knows "Tequila Sunrise" and I'm fairly adept at "Amazing Grace." The thing is, we've found a way to balance the work day, a way that we all enjoy.

The concept is by no means unique. Studies have shown that not only does music in the workplace contribute to greater productivity, but it also results in 70 percent less tardiness.

I have also learned music in the workplace even has historical roots. Last weekend, my Best Friend introduced me to Greenfield Village, where we walked through buildings that seemed to vibrate with echoes of the past. I could feel the energy of language in Noah Webster's house, where volumes of his work are kept under glass, and imagined the effort it must have taken to create his unabridged dictionary. I learned Webster even translated a version of the Bible, ironically taking out words he found offensive.

The most fascinating spot, however, was the top floor of Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, a long, narrow building. The walls were lined with rows of apothecary jars and stoppered glass

PLEASE SEE CHATROOM, C6

## THE GIRLS OF SUMMER

### Michigan Mavericks loads the bases with senior women



Above, Sarah Kahaian, 76, of Garden City seldom misses a practice session with the Michigan Mavericks, a softball team for women over 70. Even though she works two jobs, she always has energy to play. Top right, Kay Oswalt, 77, of Garden City, team manager, takes aim before hitting the ball to her teammates during practice.

BY RENEE SKOGLUND  
STAFF WRITER

They pull their caps low over their foreheads as they trot across the field to take their positions. They swing their arms and shift their feet to loosen muscles, and they punch their gloves until the leather feels just right. Soon, their bats will send balls arching across the dusty diamond of Moeller Field in Garden City on this cloudless, sunny Tuesday morning.

It's practice time for the Michigan Mavericks, a softball team for women over 70. These girls of summer—and that's what they are, tan and trim—play for the camaraderie, the exercise and an everlasting love of the game.

Kay Oswalt, 77, of Garden City is the team manager. Actually, there is no "team." There simply aren't enough women over 70 who can still play baseball to make up teams, she said. Instead, the Michigan Mavericks play in tournaments, and they travel statewide for the Michigan Senior Olympics and all over the country for the National Senior Games.

"To put us in with 30-year-olds would be slaugh-

ter," says Oswalt, who acquired a bum knee seven years ago when she slid into third base while playing in a mixed league.

She talks about that incident with a survivor's sense of pride. "A 24-year-old guy came down on me," she recalled. "When he came off my knee, he came down on my shoulder with the other foot." So far, neither a bum knee nor weekly chemotherapy sessions has benched Oswalt. As Tom Hanks' character told his female players in the movie *A League of Their Own*: "There's no crying in baseball."

#### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

"Hi, I'm the 83-year-old," says Jerry Gawura of Canton just before she heads out to third base.

"I play wherever they need me. I pitch quite a bit. I've played third base, and I've played the outfield. I'm having a bit of a knee problem, but I still have a pretty good arm... but not as good as I'd like."

Oswalt starts hitting balls to her teammates with dead-on accuracy. She alerts Gawura that the ball is coming her way and tells her not to throw to first base.

"Jerry, do not throw to first because of your knee. If you have to pivot, don't throw," she says. Her voice could tame a bunch of Marines.

Gawura catches the ball and pivots any way. The ball sails to first.

"You're not listening, kid," says Oswalt. "She's not going to listen to you," yells pitcher Joan Fitzpatrick, 72, of Farmington. "She's older than you."

Oswalt rotates her players, and Gawura comes to bat. CRACK! It's obvious Gawura is a serious ballplayer. CRACK! No wonder she took a gold medal in javelin throwing at the Michigan Senior Olympics in Midland in early August. CRACK! No wonder Oswalt doesn't want her to pivot. Two bum knees are not better than one. "I need her in May for the National Senior Olympics," says Oswalt.

#### SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Petite, red-haired Sarah Kahaian, 76, of Garden City has played softball with Oswalt since 1986, sometimes on opposing teams. They're buddies. Like Oswalt, Kahaian has more energy than two women half her age. She came home from her second job at Meijer at 5 a.m. and showed up for practice at 9:30 a.m.



Jerry Gawura, 83, of Canton winds up for a pitch to Joan "Fitz" Fitzpatrick.

"Why do I love it?" she says about playing with the Mavericks. "It's the energy you get playing the competition. I'm a winner. I don't like to lose."

Kahaian cracks out her 10th hit before Oswalt calls for another rotation.

Fitzpatrick comes to bat, and Gawura pitches. Oswalt admonishes Gawura for pitching too fast, too low. "Jerry, take your time," she says. "You're

PLEASE SEE MAVERICKS, C6



Joan "Fitz" Fitzpatrick, 72, of Farmington is the team pitcher most of the time.

PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | OBSERVER



Jerry Gawura heads home after morning practice. She traveled with the team to the National Senior Games in St. Louis.