

The Western Music Association is saddened to report the passing of a true and steadfast friend of Western Music, the legendary Dean Armstrong on March 7. Dean was truly a Tucson music institution. He came to Tucson in 1946 and began immediately to pick and sing in his new home town, Dean and his wife of 68 years, Ardith, had just begun settling into their new home when Armstrong landed a singing gig at the old Chanticleer Night Club on the south side of Tucson in 1946.

He made a good living, he said in a 2005 Arizona Daily Star interview, moving on to the Open Door Night Club at South Park Avenue and Benson Highway when the Chanticleer closed in 1948. It was there that Armstrong formed his Western swing band, the Arizona Dance Hands. Dean and the band performed at L'il Abner's Steakhouse for more than fifty years.

Dean will be laid to his final rest on Thursday, March 10, 2011, after a private family funeral.

The family plans to hold a celebration of Dean's life and legacy at L'il Abner's Steakhouse in Tucson, tentatively scheduled for sometime in mid April. Look to the WMA and the Tucson newspapers for the announcement of the date.

The family asks that you hold off on flowers and the like because they intend to create a non-profit foundation to continue Dean's work in bringing music to folks in nursing homes and rehabilitation facilities and it's there that your fiscal gifts will do the most good.

There's a great article available at the Arizona Daily Star website. Take a moment to remember a wonderful, selfless man who loved Tucson, Arizona and who loved to sing and play. His musical history in Tucson makes for fascinating reading and is truly inspirational. Dean was one of those rare individuals who never had a bad word to say about anybody. The Western Music Association will miss him always.