



80-Year-Old Godfrey Musician Publishes First Book

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GODFREY - Cheryl Houck is an 80-year-old musician, teacher, therapist and, now, author.

Houck's first book, "Roses and Broken Sidewalks: My Musical Journey through Life," will be in stores on Oct. 4 through Trilogy Christian Publishing. The book shares Houck's love of music as a pianist, singer, handbell choir director and music therapist in the Riverbend area, as well as God's presence in her life through those experiences.

"I think music is the greatest gift God has given mankind," Houck said. "While we're going through life, it keeps us encouraged. It keeps our hearts open."

Houck will celebrate the book's release with a book signing at Abundant Church in Alton on Saturday, Sept. 23. From 10 a.m. to noon, attendees can chat with Houck and buy a copy of "Roses and Broken Sidewalks" before it's released in stores.

While writing the book, Houck said she relied on God and her friends. She also gives a special thanks to her son, who helped her navigate the publishing process by setting up Skype on her computer so she could talk with her editors.

"I'm not really, really, super good at it yet, but I'm learning, and this is what I love about life," Houck said. "We see new things and you get to learn new things. It's like a new adventure every day."

This mindset has guided Houck through life. Her father was a musician, and her aunt taught her how to play piano starting when she was 6. By the time she was in high school, Houck had her first "students" — friends who asked her to teach them what she knew.



In adulthood, Houck's husband and four children traveled around the Riverbend area and performed Christian music as "The Singing Houcks." She went on to receive her bachelor's degree in music education at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

While studying and teaching piano, she became interested in playing handbells and founded the Riverbend Ringers with members of her church. They spent several years playing in local nursing homes, schools and churches.

Houck was the director of the music preparatory program at Lewis and Clark Community College from 1988 to 1992. When she received another bachelor's degree in music therapy, which was a new practice at the time, she decided to switch gears and work with hospice patients.

"That opened my eyes to another facet of music that most people don't realize, how powerful it is. It's so therapeutic," she remembered.

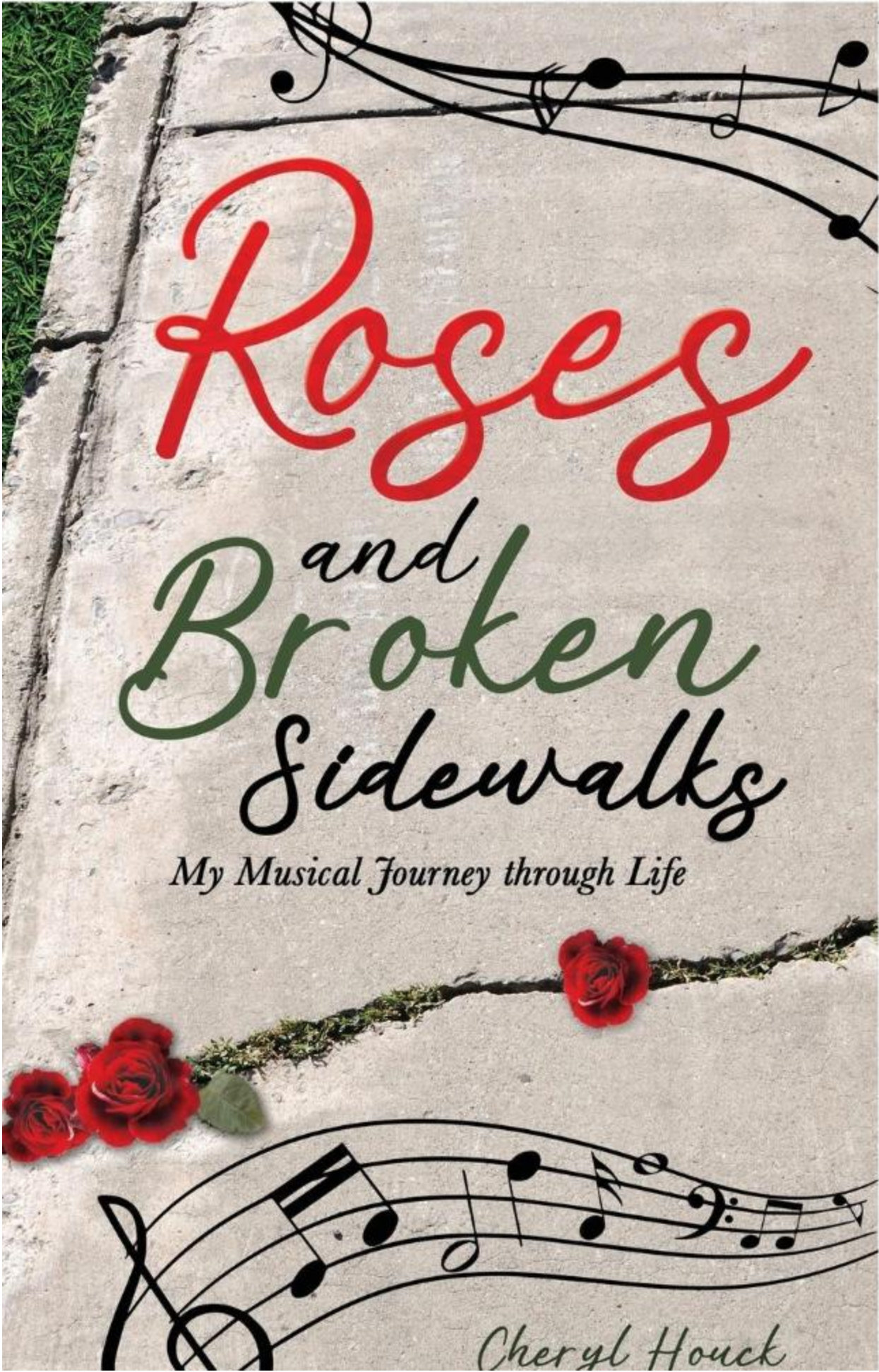
A lot of people don't understand why she chose to practice music therapy in an end-of-life setting. When they ask, Houck explains that she has sat with people in the last hours of their lives. These are usually patients who have been ill for a long time and can no longer move or speak. Houck plays soft music for them, and sometimes, they smile.

"When a person reaches that point in their life, I can't give them anything," Houck said. "But I can give them music."

Her book chronicles this and many other experiences with music and religion. Houck still teaches piano and currently has students ranging from 5 to 91 years old; she says she "love every one of them." She regularly travels around the Riverbend to play as a substitute pianist in local churches, and she researches the history of hymns and performs them on her [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

Houck has devoted her entire life to sharing music with those who need it, and she hopes her book does the same. You can preorder "Roses and Broken Sidewalks: My Musical Journey through Life" on [Amazon](#), or stop by the book signing from 10 a.m. to noon on Sept. 23 at Abundant Church, located at 3986 Humbert Road in Alton.

“I want to thank everybody in our community that has reached out to me and invited me to come play or help them with a wedding or a funeral or whatever. I’m just so thankful,” Houck said, adding, “I’m still enjoying life.”



Roses and Broken Sidewalks

My Musical Journey through Life

Cheryl Houck

