

Ocean Grove Friend of Pete Seeger's to Perform at Clearwater

By DON STINE

Ocean Grove's Ingrid Heldt may have recently lost her friend Pete Seeger but she carries on the famous folk singer's traditions by keep his music alive, particularly through his famous Circle of Song and through the annual Clearwater Festival.

"I am always motivated by Clearwater and I plan to stay involved- I love it. We do a lot of teaching and environmental events. We have a very good musical angle that helps get new people involved- and we can always use more volunteers," she said.

Heldt will appear at the 39th annual New Jersey Clearwater music festival on Sat., Sept. 13 in Long Branch.

Heldt, who is primarily a folk singer and songwriter, has written and translated several hundred songs for herself and others. She has also written commercial songs for various companies, including Volkswagen.

Her voice has been described somewhere between Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Enya.

Originally born in northern Germany in 1948, Heldt said she began performing long before she could read. Her father owned

a radio store and set up sound systems, so she always ended up singing wherever he was.

In 1969 she came to the United States to go to school and she has lived in New York City, Newark and Chicago before placing her roots in Ocean Grove about 20 years ago.

"A friend brought me here and it was so beautiful- and real estate prices were low then. I could never afford to buy here today," she said.

Over the years, Heldt has been an accomplished photographer, songwriter, and has sung with the legendary Pete Seeger well over 100 times.

Her early and extensive photographs of the World Trade Center in Manhattan garnered much attention after the 9/11 attacks and she has even written a song about it.

Heldt said she joined the Friends of Clearwater about 10 years ago and is now vice president of New Jersey Friends of Clearwater.

She first met Seeger while he was manning a Clearwater booth in Beacon, NY- his longtime home town.

"He asked me if I could sing



Photo by Elliot Stephen Cohen

Ocean Grove resident Ingrid Heldt is pictured singing with Pete Seeger.

and I said yes. He invited me to participate in his Circle of Song and I didn't miss any. It was always the first Monday of every month," she said.

Heldt said she took the 300-mile trip to Beacon more than 150 times over the last decade to participate in the legendary Circle of Song, logging in more than 60,000 miles.

She co-wrote two songs with Seeger: "If This World Survives" and "Raise Your Voice" - a lullaby.

When Seeger died on Jan. 27 this year, Heldt was invited by the family to attend his funeral.

"At the wake I said I felt like a family member had died and everybody had the same sentiment. Pete meant so much to so many people and his passing is such a huge loss," she said.

Heldt said her favorite memories of Seeger are how he would often be at a Clearwater festival all day.

"He was the first one there and the last one to leave," she said.