



Cloys

Webb

Material prepared by Angus McLeod

Cloys Webb Remembered

By Angus McLeod

Who was Cloys Webb? What did he do with his life? What is his legacy? What do we all remember about him? I write from several different perspectives because Cloys was my high school choir director, my church choir director, my inspiration for entering choral music as a profession, one of my college professors, my former father-in-law, the grandfather of my daughter and my friend. I remember many things about Cloys, his beautiful smile and his fun, even impish, sense of humor. The teacher in me remembers vividly, during one of our high school rehearsals, he stormed out of the choir room because we were not prepared or focused enough. He said he wouldn't come back until we were ready to make music. We all scrambled that very night and met in homes to "wood shed" our notes and be ready for the rehearsal the next day. I recall rehearsals, concerts, and recording sessions that were so beautiful my soul was transformed to understand what beauty could be in the choral arts. I can remember Cloys walking on his hands down the sidewalk at Reagan High School in Austin Texas in order to help relax us after a long rehearsal. Cloys was both a mentor to many of us as we began our teaching careers and a tormentor at times as well. I feel that as a master teacher he didn't always understand why we "mortal" teachers couldn't all do exactly what he was able to do so naturally and apparently easily. I always loved to hang around the kitchen table and listen as the likes of Herb Teat, Bob Irby or Charles Nelson would gather at Cloys and Bettye's to "swap lies and stories" and every once and a while say some rather remarkable things about music and life.

Clearly, Cloys was a giant among choral directors in the state of Texas. He served in TCDA and TMEA in various high level leadership positions. His choirs were recognized by MENC on at least two occasions with invitations to national conventions. Even though I know we competed in UIL events, I don't remember one UIL contest or rating. What I do remember is Cloys' remarkable musicianship, his attention to detail, his ability to lead his students to the very core of a piece of music and to explain just enough for us to discover the inner most beauty of a particular choral piece. Whether talking about the Faure Requiem or the Britten Rejoice in the Lamb or a Brahms Motet like Create In Me a Clean Heart, he always taught us to be true to the composer and the music. The score had all we needed to make great music. Of course, we all knew that without his expert guidance, our music experience would have never happened. Finally, I believe Cloys really

enjoyed his profession. He originally left work in the oil patch of west Texas to begin his work as a teacher. He was a people person. He loved music clearly, but he loved people even more. He loved building kids up and helping them learn to believe in themselves. He didn't just see us for who we were but for who we could become. I am so glad Cloys Webb crossed my path in life. He brought beauty to my life in his gift of music.

Cloys Webb Remembered By Charles Nelson

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in paying tribute to Cloys Webb.

I met Cloys in 1947 and was pleased to call him a friend until his death in 2007. We were friends for most of our lives. From the first time I heard one of his choirs sing (I believe it was a Junior High School group from Perryton in the 1950s) it was obvious he had the ability to convey to a group of children a musical sensitivity which allowed them to make beautiful music beyond established norms for their age. He never lost this ability, as long as he was able to meet his choral classes, no matter at what level he was teaching.

Let's hear it for Cloys and those other devoted choral directors, in Texas colleges, universities and public schools, who had the ambition, passion and dedication to perpetuate a choral art which has been a unique aesthetic response to every generation as far back as history can trace western civilization. The choral art, to which Cloys was dedicated, combines the art of music with artful words and can only be expressed through that most personal of musical instruments, the human voice. In its highest form, group singing allows, or compels, its participants to become one in expressing the profoundest thoughts from Holy Writ, Shiller, Goethe et. al. which inspired Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and all the significant musical geniuses in our history.

Cloys Webb certainly belongs among the outstanding choral teachers of his time.

Most sincerely,
Charles Nelson

Remembering Cloys Webb By Carol Smith

In 1965, my teacher Bev Henson rounded up a group of about 20 of us who were undergraduate TCU music students and organized a caravan of cars to travel to the Rio Grande Valley. Our assignment was to observe some of the best public school teaching that he knew about. We knew that he was aware that our classroom experience as TCU students needed to be supplemented with the actual classroom experiences that we could gain only by being in the rehearsals we were about to view.

We saw the teaching of such prominent choral music educators as Bob Irby in Harlingen; Bob Buchanan in Brownsville; Ruth Summers (Whitlock) and C.M. Shearer in Edinburg; and Cloys Webb in McAllen. All of these folks opened their classrooms and their “playbooks” to all of us and showed us a wonderful kind of hospitality that, honestly, welcomed us to the profession.

After completing my first degree at TCU, I taught elementary music in Fort Worth for two years, while beginning studies on the masters degree. I think Bev knew I needed more practical experience before completing the graduate conducting degree when he guided me to a position as an assistant with Cloys Webb in McAllen. What a remarkable year of work and study with Cloys (and Ruth Summers Whitlock who took time away from her teaching hiatus to adopt a special young son that year) I experienced. He shared his family (Bettye and the four children), his home and regular meetings at his dinner table, his teaching experience and pedagogy and the students, who were so carefully prepared, taught and nurtured.

I certainly owe most of the incredible life in teaching I have had to the teaching, care, nurturing and guidance of Bev Henson. That has never been in question. Cloys gave me information, methodology and first-hand experience that I could have gathered no other way and from no more able public school educator. The pedagogy that he and Ruth professed was solid, always reminding us that attention to the scope and the sequence of our work would help secure the future for our students’ work in music. A good number of Cloys’ students followed his path and became the same kind of caring, complete teachers. You will know two of the most able in Angus McLeod and Kelly Webb (the eldest of the Webb children).

I appreciate the opportunity to give these remembrances of both Cloys and

Bev. And, I would like to salute TCDA for, again, leading the way in this very important project to focus attention on the teachers and mentors who gave us and the profession the skills and information and guided us carefully into the profession which has given us the incredible careers and lives that we now enjoy. Lest We Forget will be a model for other organizations in our state and across the nation. Bravo TCDA!

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Remembering Cloys Webb By Guerra Hodges

How can I describe in a few words how a person can have such a profound effect on my life such as my beloved teacher, Cloys Webb? Cloys was in the truest sense, “a man of character and integrity, a man of honor, a Godly man.” He lived his faith. He was a brilliant musical teacher and not only taught music, but what was important in life! I remember he used to say, “the most beautiful things in life..are the simple things.” “Less is more!” So many more he instilled in me that I have continued to carry throughout my life.

I first met Cloys when I was a child, at the young age of 11, a sixth grader attending Lincoln School in the small town of McAllen, Texas. Little did I know that he would become probably one of the most influential people of my life. He came once a week for a half an hour and introduced us to the world of sight reading. And to think that at my age, 57, I would still be using that simple technique reading notes with numbers! This continued throughout Jr. High and it wasn't until I got to high school that he became my choral director for the next four years...the most unforgettable four years of my life! Cloys was loved, respected, and well known throughout the state of Texas. My junior year he produced 12 All-Staters which was quite an accomplishment for being such a small town. I was honored to have been one of them. I have to honestly say, there were many days when our choir would be rehearsing a song, and we would become so emotional that we'd find ourselves in tears from just merely the sound we were

creating, the sound he was creating in us! He would always say, “Remember, when you hear a song and the hairs on your head go up, it goes beyond that . . . even deeper . . . Yes, the song is beautiful but who wrote it? Who was the composer?” He was truly a genius!

Cloys was a role model for me, a father image. He was my mentor! I have had the privilege and honor to correspond with the Webbs now for forty years. I would just like to share something that happened to me two years ago on March 17, 2007. It was a Saturday morning and I awoke from a very distressing dream that was quite vivid. I dreamed I was standing face to face with Cloys. There was a man standing behind him who happened to be his father. It was a beautiful day, the sky was blue, and the three of us were standing right next to this huge, green field of what looked like corn. His father didn't speak a word but kept nudging his shoulder as if saying, “Come..come we must go!” “It's time for you to go!” I didn't want him to leave because I knew in the dream where he was going. I woke up and my heart felt heavy. I was scared and had this feeling something was wrong so I decided not to call Mrs. Webb for I did not want to worry her. Three days later, Kelly, Cloys' daughter called me to tell me her father was dying. That following Saturday, Cloys peacefully died. I will miss him more than words can express. I have a picture of him and me that was taken when I was a senior and it's been sitting on my dresser for years. I cherish all the memories dearly and he will forever be in my heart. He truly was a great man! I love you Cloys!

Della Guerra Hodges

Remembering Cloys Webb By Gloria Gonzalez Bauretnfeind

What is confidence to a teen? When we are teenagers, our lives are full of decisions, and peer pressure that sometimes defines our whole lives. I was lucky to have a family that believed in the arts, and music, and encouraged me in that direction. I never thought I had a great voice, that I was average. However, with Mr. Webb, everybody had a great voice. He believed in and sought out the best in you. There were no words like “I CAN'T”. He taught us perfection.

The magic we made when we sang the Faure Requiem, still gives me chills to this day. My fondest memory of Mr. Webb was on our bus trip to St. Louis to show the world our magic. He would sit in the front of the bus smoking his pipe, with his beautiful smile. To this day the smell of tobacco from a pipe, makes me smile and

think of that day, I keep a picture that I took of him during our trip on my desk. It reminds me of the confidence he so graciously gave, because he believed in me. It was a magical time. I thank him so much for all he taught me about music, art, and believing in myself.

Gloria (Gonzalez) Bauernfeind

Remembering Cloys Webb By Jerry Foderhase

Cloys Webb was a man of impeccable standards. His accomplishments in music education in the state of Texas are well documented. TMEA would never have been what it was during those “golden years” without the untiring leadership of Cloys. He was a guiding light to us younger aspiring choral directors . . . the perfect model for how it was to be done.

Cloys was extremely humble as he worked tirelessly year after year to raise the bar higher and higher. As a pioneer, dealing with all the politics of organization, his moral standards were a constant beacon of hope. He always had a smile, was always positive, and was a man who lived his love of people far beyond the field of music. Music was his tool to speak to the world but the gentleman doing the speaking was not just an impeccable musician . . . he was a dignified colleague who always saw the positive side of any situation. I will always be grateful to him for his total dedication to the thought that the joy of music can change lives . . . he was the perfect example.

Remembering Cloys Webb By John Ford

The time was 1966-1967. The 1960's were a turbulent time by anyone's standards and I was a youth growing up in South Texas who felt inspired to play classical guitar and pursue a career in music. The future did not look very promising for me. At the time, out of 535 seniors at McAllen High School, only 115 had a lower GPA's than I did. In the entire country there were only 16 colleges and universities that even offered a performance concentration in classical guitar in the United States.

Cloys Webb gave me all I could hope for; a chance to prove myself. He personally

granted me a partial scholarship to study music at what is now the University of Texas at Pan American in Edinburg, Texas. I went on to become the first person in the state of Texas from any University to receive a bachelor of music in performance with a classical guitar concentration at Trinity University in May of 1971. On May 15 1999, I received my Ph.D. from Texas Tech majoring in music with a performance concentration in classical guitar.

The character Father Mulcahy (in Episode 9 of the Mash Series, Blood Brothers), stated, “God didn’t put us here for a pat on our back. He put us here so he could dwell here in our midst and exist through the lives of those he created in his image. I believe this to be true and correct.

John Scott Ford, Ph.D
San Antonio Texas
July 2009

Remembering Cloys Webb By Mitch Watkins

Cloys Webb was one of the people who “pointed the way” during my formative years. His influence and guidance is the main reason I chose music as a career. Cloys not only exposed me (and many others) to some of the world’s great music, he taught me how to listen to it. Whenever I hear a piece of music that gives me “goosebumps”, I owe Cloys a debt of gratitude for teaching me about the incredible emotional quality music can evoke. He imparted this knowledge to many.

I was fortunate enough to be a guest in the Webb household my senior year in high school, because my parents relocated and I really wanted to finish school in McAllen. Much of the music I still love the most I first heard on the Webb’s stereo system during those two semesters.

Mitch Watkins
(Mitch is still playing with Lyle Lovett and teaching jazz guitar and digital audio workstations at UT.)

My Memory of Cloys Webb By Jim Morrow

Cloys Webb was my high school choir director. He had just come to McAllen High School as I entered my junior year. Mr. Webb was a sensitive musician and was able to bring the music out of us; more than we had ever thought was possible. Together with George Mather he presented an excellent choral program which stood out in the state of Texas. Those years with Cloys Webb were a significant stepping stone to where the McAllen Choral program is today.

Mr. Webb was active in TMEA and TCDA, taking several students to All-State Choir each year. I had the opportunity to participate in that choir thanks to his leadership and encouragement. Each year we would travel around the state and sing in schools or churches. One of our tours took us to the MENC meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. We did well.

As I recall, we were not the angelic choir, except when we were singing. We had our moments of disaggregation. Mr. Webb was so concerned with our lack of focus for a season, the story went around, that he would walk the late evening streets searching for a way to bring us back to choral unity.

All in all, we were a good choir. This experience under the leadership of Cloys Webb encouraged many to pursue a career in choral music, whether in school or church music.

Jim Morrow
Class of '67
McAllen High School