



# *Euell Porter*

Material prepared by Maurice Alfred

## Biographical Sketch of Euell Porter 1910-1998

Edwin Euell Porter was born October 10, 1910 near Franklin, Texas and died September 23, 1998, in Waco Texas. He was the last of six children born to George W. and Alma Parker Porter. His parents worked a small farm outside of Franklin in Robertson County. George W. came from Missouri and was a second generation Irish immigrant. Euell's mother was of Cajun descent with hair as "black as coal."

His twin sisters, Addis Mae and Gladys Faye, and his brothers, Richard Bland, Samuel Lewis, and George Felton, took care of their little brother almost from his birth. When Porter was about six, his mother became bedridden with influenza and he remembered his mother saying "bring that baby here and let him stand by the bed and sing for me." Though his mother was ill, the Porter's sang and made music each night, with his sister Addis or his brother Sam playing the piano, and the rest of the family singing. His mother's illness became progressively worse, and she died when he was eight. After her death, the family moved to a farm near Pettaway, Texas.

Their new house and farm were much larger, with one room set aside for music. In the music room there was a pump organ and a five pedal upright piano. The family continued its tradition of singing, with his sister Addis Mae playing the organ and brother Samuel Lewis playing the piano. In the early 1920's, Porter attended a singing school in Boone Prairie and it was there he learned to read shaped notes. Porter's father remarried and moved back to Franklin with his new wife. At this time Euell went to live with his oldest brother Richard and wife Irene Porter.

The following year, Porter moved to Calvert where he attended high school, living with his sister Addis Mae and her husband, Edward Lockett. His main interests were basketball and football, but he also took four years of Latin. The Latin teacher was school superintendent J. I. Moore. Porter said his studying in Moore's Latin class was when he first began to enjoy language and poetry. He said he learned more about English in the four years of Latin than in any English classes in high school or college.

Superintendent Moore took an interest in the young Porter, and tutored him

throughout high school. Porter also played basketball and football at Calvert. Moore was the basketball coach. Porter described Moore as a “hump-shouldered, ugly faced man who later became his best friend.

In 1925, Porter became a Christian at a tent revival and then joined Calvert’s First Baptist Church. There he met Mrs. Peeler, a Sunday school teacher and new friend. While listening to him sing hymns, she was impressed by the quality of his voice. Just as he had sung with his family and in church as a boy, he now was singing in church as a tenor. Peeler and Moore encouraged him to take voice lessons from a local teacher and Euell’s brother-in-law, Edward Lockett, arranged for the lessons with Miss Stella MacIntosh. Porter was quick to point out that his playing sports kept the other kids from thinking singing was “sissy.” Porter continued to be active in church and school activities until his graduation from Calvert High School in 1928.

The Lockett family did not have the means to send Porter to college and he began to work in the local Calvert grocery store. In December of 1928, Superintendent Moore came to Porter and asked, “If I get you a scholarship to Simmons College, will you go?” Moore was a graduate of Simmons College and had family in Abilene. In early January of 1929, Moore returned from a visit to Abilene having arranged for a full scholarship for Porter to attend Simmons College. The next week, Porter went to Simmons College to study English and walk on as a basketball player.

As it was too late to make dormitory arrangements Porter boarded at the house of Mrs. S. O. Reister. He also found a job in a grocery store and began classes at Simmons. Though it was unknown to Porter, Superintendent Moore contacted William James Work, chair of Vocal Music and Choirs at Simmons. During the first few weeks of school, Work came to Porter’s boarding house and said “You, come and go with me.” They went to the music building and Work convinced Porter to major in music. Work and his wife took a special interest in Porter, and treated him as their own child throughout Porter’s years at Hardin-Simmons. Mrs. Work accompanied the choirs and taught basic theory and music history. Porter believed that Work taught him to utilize small groups to build a choir. In the 1931-32 school year, Porter sang first tenor with the Simmons University Male Quartet, along with Bernard Richards, second tenor, Mack Carden, baritone, and Tyler Cagle, bass. This was during the depression and Porter found himself working all night in a filling station, working in the Post Office in the morning and jerking sodas in the afternoon one summer in order to be able to attend school the following fall. Porter was a popular student and was elected president of his junior

class. He had also been vice president of his sophomore class. In his senior year, 1933, the quartet was Porter, Richards, Guy Shaw and Cagle. These quartets sang in Baptist churches throughout West and Central Texas, and at the Texas Baptist Conventions in 1930 and 1932. The 1933 quartet went to the World's Fair in Chicago; Shaw said they left Abilene with \$10 between them and sang in churches for food and overnight lodging. Shaw also said they had more money when they got back than when they left.

Porter thought Work's method of teaching the basics of vocal production, primarily breath management, was worthy of emulation. Work encouraged Porter to conduct choirs. During his junior and senior years, Porter was the primary soloist for the University Choir, President of the Debate Squad and active in the Baptist Student Union. Though he never played basketball for Hardin-Simmons, his intramural basketball team, (the quartet and two other musicians,) won the intramural championship in 1932 and 1933. He graduated in 1933 with a major in voice and a minor in English.

Porter's older brother Sam lived in Hearne, Texas, which was twelve miles south of Calvert. Sam made arrangements for Porter to teach five classes of English at Hearne High School and direct the music at Hearne First Baptist church. Porter convinced the high school principal to approve the formation of a male chorus, girls' chorus, male trio and girls' trio, which would be considered extracurricular activities.

His first recruit was the all-conference center on the football team. After that, Porter always had plenty of boys in the choir. He was allowed to rehearse the choirs before school and during study hall. There were about 200 students at Hearne High School, and 150 of them showed up for auditions. Porter chose thirty girls and thirty boys for the first chorus groups at the school. Using the pattern he had learned from William James Work at Hardin-Simmons, Porter formed a girls' trio and a male trio from the choruses to sing in the community and at school functions and community churches.

The glee clubs were successful, and they and the trios performed throughout Central Texas. Their repertoire included cowboy songs (ballads), hymn arrangements and novelty songs, accompanied by a piano.[21] Porter, in addition to his other duties, coached basketball and baseball in the afternoons. His baseball team won the state championship and the basketball team took regional honors.

Porter also created the Hearne Community Chorus. It was comprised of the town's Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian Church choirs. The chorus was formed for a town revival in the spring of 1935, and after the revival, the choirs met annually for town hymn singing festivals. They would perform at the school auditorium or at First Baptist Church, singing hymn arrangements exclusively.

When Porter was a senior at Hardin-Simmons, he was invited to lead the singing for a revival in Muleshoe, Texas. On the first night of the revival, he met Christine Dennis, a sixteen year-old junior in high school, and a friendship developed. After graduation from high school, Christine enrolled at Hardin-Simmons University in the fall of 1934. Porter would visit her while working in Hearne, and at the beginning of her junior year, Christine and Euell drove to Shreveport, Louisiana, eloping August 26, 1936. Rev. H. M. Ward, the pastor who introduced them in Muleshoe, performed the ceremony.

When Hearne High School did not place the choirs in the normal school day for the 1937 academic year, Porter moved to Bryan, Texas as the new choir director at Stephen F. Austin High School. Miss Wesa Weddington, high school principal, had heard Porter's Hearne glee clubs perform at First Methodist Church of Bryan and she wanted her school to have a choral program. Porter also became the Music Director at First Baptist Church.

Porter taught four classes of English while the choral program was being developed. He began by creating men's and girls' glee clubs that met before school one day a week. On Fridays, a large number of students had study hall, and Porter chose fifty of those students to be in a mixed choir. The remaining one hundred students had to sit in the auditorium while the choir rehearsed on stage. Porter said he would not even call this group a choir; they were just a true mixed chorus. Then, in September, Porter and his wife Christine attended a concert by the North Texas State Teachers College Choir under the direction of Wilfred Bain. Bain had brought the style of the Westminster Choir and its director, John Finley Williamson, to North Texas. Porter said that he had sung in glee clubs and mixed choruses before, but he had never heard a choir like this one. The choir's diction was clean, the tone was full, dark and resonant, and they rarely used the piano. Porter said to Christine, "I'd like to have one of those."

On the following Friday, Porter began rehearsing a sacred song "Blessed Be the Tie." He had the tenor, Edward Carson sing a descant with the choir singing on the vowel [u]. He worked on balance, to keep the female voices from overpowering the male voices. Then, without a piano, they put the piece together with an opening

solo while the choir sang the four parts of the hymn on a [u] vowel. Then the choir sang the second verse using the text of the song and closed by singing with a tenor descant floating above the choir quietly singing. The hundred students in the auditorium began to applaud, and Porter went to the office and asked the school superintendent, Topsy Wilkerson, to come and listen.

Mr. Wilkerson had been the football coach when Porter played football at Calvert High School. Following his years at Calvert, Wilkerson went to Reagan as a school principal, and then came to Bryan as Superintendent of Schools. He only knew Porter as a football and basketball player. As he listened to the choir, tears began to come down his face, and he said, "Do it again." Porter identifies this moment as the beginning of his first a cappella choir.

Wilkerson gave Porter the funds necessary to send the choir to a competition at Southwest Texas State Teachers College, in San Marcos, Texas. The contest was five months away and the choir began to practice. They earned the highest score at that contest, and principal Weddington made plans to make choir a part of the class schedule for the next year.

The new A Cappella Choir began before the 1938-39 school year, rehearsing between football practices twice daily. This choir is credited with being one of the first high school a cappella choirs in Texas, and by 1940 Porter had five choirs and 300 students involved in the choral program.

Richard Euell Porter was born in March of 1940. Prior to the birth, Christine developed diabetes. With complications from the diabetes and not receiving enough oxygen during delivery, the baby was born prematurely and severely injured. A blood clot from the cesarean section caused Christine to have a stroke which resulted in brain damage and partial paralysis. Christine was now totally dependent on outside help to do the simplest of tasks and her mental capacity was that of a child. Richard died one day later. With help from friends, Porter continued to teach and care for Christine, while filling the next two summers with course work at Texas A & M University. He completed a Master of Education Degree in Social Studies in 1942.

In 1941, Porter began a choir program at Bryan Junior High School. Here, he also continued the practice of forming trios and quartets from the chorus. With his choral music programs gaining regional and state recognition, Archie Jones invited Porter to study at the University of Texas in Austin. Porter stated that Archie Jones was the person who most affected his approach in running a choral program. He

attended the University during the summers of 1943, 1944, and 1945, but did not complete the degree. He studied privately with Jones, and did course work that included choral literature, conducting, choral methods and Baroque and Renaissance literature.

The Stephen F. Austin A Cappella Choir toured throughout Texas, and Porter introduced plays and operettas to his high school students and audiences in Bryan. In 1944, the choral department presented Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. The Choir was invited to sing for the opening of the February (1945) session of the Texas State Senate and was recognized as one of the most outstanding choirs in the state (Texas State Senate Resolution No. 14.)

In the spring of 1945, Archie Jones recommended Euell Porter to the President of Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville, Texas. The SFA A Cappella Choir received top honors at the choir contest in March 1945 at Sam Houston. After the contest, the president of the college came to Porter, inviting him to be the voice teacher and choir director at Sam Houston. Porter accepted, and after twelve years of public school teaching, he and Christine moved to Huntsville. In addition to his duties at SHSTC, Porter was also appointed Music Director at First Baptist Church. The pastor was Rev. H. M. Ward, the same man who introduced Euell and Christine in Muleshoe and married them in Shreveport.

Porter taught at Sam Houston for three years (1945-1948). He was hired to teach voice and direct the Sam Houston Mixed Chorus. He changed the name from Mixed Chorus to the A Cappella Choir of Sam Houston State Teacher's College. He continued his practice of forming ensembles from the choir. In the first year (1945-46) there was a "Girls' Quartette" and a "Men's Double Sextet." The A Cappella Choir made trips to the Texas Capitol, Houston, and toured the valley in the spring. In the spring of 1947 (second year at SHSTC) the Choir sang 17 concerts on a ten day tour of West Texas and New Mexico. Leaving Huntsville on March 6, the choir sang an afternoon concert at Fairfield High School and an evening program in Mexia's First Methodist Church. Other performances included Gatesville, Brownwood and Coleman on March 7; Abilene Christian College, March 8; Presbyterian Church and First Baptist Church, Abilene, March 9; Merkel High School and First Baptist Church in Snyder, March 10; Lamesa High school, Brownfield High School and Eunice High School, New Mexico, March 11. The singers took a day off on March 12 to visit Carlsbad Caverns. The return trip included programs at Grand Falls High School and First Baptist Church, Big Spring March 13; Winters High School and Lampasas High School March 14.



Euell Porter had an unusual ability to book choir tours that were exceptionally enjoyable for his students. And he could do it without cost to the singers or the necessity for non ending fund raising drives for the students. The following is a quote from Charles Downey on his experiences at Stephen F. Austin High School in Porter's choirs:

“He was always able to raise money to send his groups on tours without a penny from the student's pockets. The community loved Euell Porter and would cheerfully participate financially and in any other way to see that his choral programs were well supported.”

In the spring of 1947, the a cappella choir was also invited to present a concert for the prestigious Lyceum Concert Series at the University of Texas. This series was usually reserved for professional performers.

Dr. Porter always formed smaller ensembles from within the large choir. In his third year (1947-48) at Sam Houston, he had two male quartets: the Freshmen Quartet (four freshmen, all from Bryan) and a Sophomore Quartet. Also during this year, Porter became the first choral director to be elected President of the Texas Music Educators Association, serving in that position for the school year 1948-49. In previous years this office was always filled by a band director.

During this third year, Porter accepted the position of Chair of the Voice Department and Director of Choirs at Hardin-Simmons University. He had been offered the job of choral director at H-SU in 1945 by President Dr. Rupert N. Richardson. Porter did not accept because of a philosophical conflict with the Hardin-Simmons Chair of voice. When the said chair left in 1948, the president combined the vocal chair and choir positions and again offered the job to Porter. His words to Porter were, “I remember your quartet from 1933 and I've heard your choirs in Houston and Dallas. I want a great quartet like that, and I want a choral program.”

So Porter accepted the position, and brought fourteen of his Sam Houston students with him, including what was to be the University Male Quartet. It was made up of the bass and second tenor from the Sam Houston sophomore quartet and the baritone and first tenor from the freshman quartet.

During the summer of 1947, Porter began an association with Dr. John Finley Williamson, attending the 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1950 summer sessions at

Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. During the summer of 1948, he brought Williamson to Hardin-Simmons for the first of a series of summer choir clinics.

Also during that summer ('48), with the help of H-SU President Richardson, Porter became the new Minister of Music at First Baptist Church, Abilene. Porter considered the strong link between H-SU and FBC an important part of his plan. The H-SU School of Music began a strings program and diverted most of the scholarship money to orchestral students. The association with FBC solved the scholarship problem by giving Porter access to community resources needed to recruit students for the H-SU choral ensembles. Two of his new choir members at FBC, P. A. Hooker and Wendell Foreman, developed a strong friendship with Porter. Both were interested in strong choir programs at both the church and the university. Porter asked Hooker to manage the financial elements of the FBC Sanctuary Choir and the soon-to-be Hardin-Simmons A Cappella Choir. Foreman offered funding, and Porter thereby created several scholarships for H-SU student singers at FBC.

Following is Porter's plan to build a Choral Program at Hardin-Simmons as listed in the excellent doctoral dissertation on Euell Porter by John Simons:

1. Create small ensembles: University Quartet for men and University Trio for women.
2. Use financial support from private sources to offer scholarships to the quartet and trio members.
3. Have the quartet and trio perform throughout campus, at athletic events, and in churches.
4. Recruit students and strengthen the men's and women's glee clubs.
5. Disband current mixed chorus.
6. Select a new mixed group called the Hardin-Simmons A Cappella Choir and organize choir officers.
7. Perform music with all the ensembles and choirs that appealed to the students and the community.
8. Plan recruiting tours to schools and churches.
9. Create events for public school and church musicians.
10. Give lectures and workshops throughout the state for public school and church musicians.
11. Become involved in the community.[45]

The success of the small ensembles (quartet and trio) gave Porter immediate

credibility with the administration. When he held auditions for the A Cappella Choir, there was enough student interest to build a balanced forty-six member choir. After the ensembles sang on campus, the choirs received the funding needed to tour. In the fall of 1949, Porter created a forty voice Chapel Choir and the A Cappella Choir became a sixty-voice ensemble.

Between 1948 and 1950, the Hardin-Simmons A Cappella Choir sang at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Conference of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Texas Music Educators Annual Convention. In two years, Euell Porter had moved the Hardin-Simmons choral music program from obscurity to regional and state prominence.

In addition to being president of TMEA during 1948-49, Porter was also Vice President and Vocal Division Chairman of TMEA from 1948-1951. As Vocal Division Chairman, Porter brought John Finley Williamson to direct the Texas All State Choir at the TMEA 1950 Convention in Mineral Wells. Porter's H-SU A Cappella Choir also sang a one hour concert at that convention. In 1951, Porter again brought in Williamson to direct the All State Choir at the state convention, this time in Galveston. Porter's affiliation with TMEA and his H-SU summer choir schools provided a great connection with public school music. He used Baptist conventions, state and national, singing schools and church service appearances as a platform for church music. The Hardin-Simmons A Cappella Choir became the standard performing group for the Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 1951-1955.

As Porter's reputation grew, both Howard Payne and Baylor attempted to gain his services as their director of choral music. After hearing the H-SU choir at the 1950 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Chicago, Baylor president W. R. White communicated continually with Porter trying to convince him that he could do more to promote his ideas of choral music and to improve church music by working at Baylor. At a meeting following the 1954 Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, White persuaded Porter to move to Baylor. Porter left Hardin-Simmons University in July of 1955, joining the faculty at Baylor on September 1 as a professor in the Department of Sacred Music and also becoming the new minister of music at Seventh and James Baptist Church. Porter asked President White to find a job for P. A. Hooker, his long time friend from Abilene and White responded by giving Hooker a job as Porter's business manager.

There were still two major problems to overcome: Porter was placed in an adversarial role with some of the music faculty members because he was hired without their knowledge or consent, and he could not implement any changes to the choral area because he was neither a department head nor conductor of a School of Music choir. Richard “Pop” Hopkins directed the A Cappella Choir, Martha Barkema directed Bards (men’s choir) and Rhapsody in White (women’s choir), and Dean Daniel Sternberg directed the Oratorio Choir. According to Sternberg, Hopkins and Barkema did not work in any coordinated way and refused to work with Porter.[51]

During the first quarter, Porter taught choral literature and choral methods, and at the end of that quarter he asked the university president’s office to fund a new choir. Permission was granted and he created the Chapel Choir and male and female small ensembles. The Chapel Choir sang at Baylor’s daily chapel service and in local Baptist churches. Then Porter arranged for the Chapel Choir to sing at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. By the third quarter, the Chapel Choir had over 100 members and was the largest choir on campus.

The next year, Porter persuaded Sternberg to make Chapel Choir an official ensemble of the School of Music, and he brought his Summer Choir School to Baylor and Seventh and James Baptist Church. Hopkins died in February of 1957 and Sternberg chose Porter to reorganize the A Cappella Choir in the fall of 1958. The officers for the reorganized choir came from transfer students from Hardin-Simmons, including the new president, Jakie Shirley. With over 150 singers auditioning for the new sixty-voice A Cappella Choir, Porter channeled all freshman and less experienced upper classmen into the Chapel Choir. The new choirs first year included joint Christmas and Spring Concerts with the Chapel Choir and performances at the annual meetings of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Texas Music Educators Association and a tour to Florida with appearances on two television programs and the Annual Meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Miami.

In 1959, Porter was named Director of Choirs. He established a self-supporting system of mixed choirs that stayed intact from 1960 to 1974. In 1960, he created the Freshman A Cappella Choir, changed the membership of the Chapel Choir to include only sophomores, and changed the A Cappella Choir to a junior, senior and graduate student choir. All of the choirs toured twice a year and sang at countless Baptist meetings and conventions. The combined choirs gave annual concerts at

Christmas and at the end of the spring quarter. During either the Christmas or summer vacation, Porter combined his Seventh and James and Baylor choir members for international tours.

Porter's wife Christine, an invalid since her stroke in 1940, was at his side until her death in 1976. He arranged his collegiate teaching schedule so that he could go home to see her numerous times during the day. He brought her to concerts, football games, choir schools, lectures, etc., and she even traveled with the choir on continental and European tours. He was genuinely admired by students, colleagues and friends for the tender, loving care he provided for his wife.

In 1978 Dr. Porter was given the Texas Choral Directors Association's first Distinguished Texas Choirmaster award in appreciation for his service to his profession and his accomplishments in choral music. He was a past president of the Texas Music Educators Association and a member of the Choral Conductors Guild of America, the American Choral Directors Association and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Porter announced his retirement at the beginning of the 1979-80 academic year.

From 1955 to 1980, Porter's Baylor choirs sang in more than forty states and ten foreign countries in such places as Carnegie Hall and Town Hall in New York City, Orchestra Hall in Chicago, Cobo Hall in Detroit, the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City and Jones Hall in Houston. He received applause and recognition during his last concerts at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Texas Music Educators Association and tour to New York. At his final concert in the spring of 1980, Porter received proclamations from the Governor of Texas, the Mayor of Waco and Baylor University. During the summer, he led an alumni tour of Europe with performances in Vienna, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Zurich and Oxford.

After retirement, Porter led Baptist workshops and served as interim minister of music in area churches. In 1983, with a new Dean of Music (Robert Blocker) and a new Director of Choral Activities (Hugh Sanders), Porter developed the Baylor University Senior Adult Choir as a community-based senior adult choir funded by a university. In cooperation with First Baptist Church and the Baylor University School of Music, the choir had free rehearsal space and publicity to announce the choir's formation. Porter began this choir with three goals: never sing slow songs, produce quality choral music and never sound old!

Shortly after retiring from the Baylor University Senior Adult Choir post in

1994, Porter suffered a series of strokes that diminished his mental and physical abilities. He was moved to the Ridgecrest Retirement Center of Waco in November of 1995 and he died September 23, 1998.[59] Euell Porter conducted choirs from 1933 until 1994, touching the lives of thousands of students and inspiring many generations to love the art of choral music.

It seems appropriate to end this discourse with the anonymous poem that Dr. Porter seems to have quoted to every choir that he directed, sometimes in rehearsals, sometimes in concerts and sometimes at professional music meetings.

For the common things of every day,  
God gave man speech in a common way.  
But for higher things men think and feel,  
God gave the poet words to reveal.  
For height and depth no tongue can reach,  
God gave man music, the soul's own speech

## *Sources and Acknowledgments*

- *Simons, John A. "Euell Porter, Profile of a Choral Musician: An Analysis of His Musical Philosophies, Techniques and Leadership Style." DMA dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1999.*
- *A very special gratitude is extended to Monte Ray Porter West (Dr. Porter's niece) and her husband Farris for the hospitality extended to me at their home. She provided access to sound recordings of Dr. Porter's choirs, as well as letters, photographs, marriage licenses, citations and awards.*
- *Theiss L. Jones, retired Minister of Music at First Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas, provided concert programs and lists of choir members from Dr. Porter's last years at Hardin-Simmons and from 1955-1959 at Baylor University.*
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- *Brit Yates Jones Assistant Vice President for Advancement and Director of Alumni Relations at Hardin-Simmons University, and her staff helped with articles, programs and other research material from H-SU. Carol Hamner at the Richardson Library History Center furnished a great number of articles about*

*Porter from the H-SU News and Views, the Baptist Standard, the H-SU Brand the Bronco yearbook and the Abilene Reporter News.*

- *Dr. Randy Lofgren, Vice President for Alumni Affairs at Baylor University was most helpful in locating alumni that they might participate in the letters of tribute for Dr. Porter.*
- *Thanks to the many students, friends, and colleagues who sent letters sharing their memories to Dr. Porter.*

## Euell Porter Remembered by Charles Nelson

As I recall, Dr. Porter told me that he was a Latin teacher in Bryan High School, teaching five sections of Latin, when he formed an extra-curricular choir. Within my range of knowledge, this was one of only two high school choirs which established a reputation outside their own communities. (The other was Amarillo High School choir directed by Julia Dean Evans). His excellent work brought him to the attention to the Music Department at Sam Houston and they hired him to be their choir director.

From Sam Houston he went to Hardin-Simmons and then to Baylor where he finished his teaching tenure. When I began my teaching career at Carthage High School, Euell Porter was the TMEA State Vocal Chairman. I had heard of him and his work, but did not know him personally until the TMEA State Convention in 1952, when several of the ambitious, hot blooded young choral directors, in our 20s, decided that TMEA was treating the choral division like a step child. At the business meeting at that convention, it was moved that the Choral Division withdraw from TMEA and continue under our own auspices. Dr. Porter (and cooler heads) prevailed and our “insurrection” gleaned only three votes. With so many impetuous young men flooding the choral field, it was a good thing for our profession that there was a seasoned man of good judgment, like Euell Porter, at the helm.

As I grew to know him, and his students, I became aware of what a tremendous influence he and they had in the propagation of choral singing in the public schools of Texas. He was able to convey his passion for choral music to those young men and women who availed themselves of his pedagogy. His reputation as a human being was legendary. His gentleness and compassion was unsurpassed. His life was a model for us all. I consider it an honor to call him a friend and colleague. All

young choral directors could use him as an example of how to conduct themselves toward their students and colleagues.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Broadman Ware

It is with great joy that I participate in this remembrance of our friend and mentor Dr. Euell Porter. Dr. Porter enjoyed the thought that he, along with members of the 1955 Chapel Choir, was a freshman at Baylor University. It was at this time that I, a true freshman, began my learning experiences with choral music and vocal production. Dr. Porter was my conducting professor, my voice teacher, and the flame that brought light and warmth to both.

I would like to highlight two of Dr. Porter's teachings that have been life changing for me. First, he taught that you sing with your total self, not just your voice, but with your heart, your eyes, and your total countenance. Much great solo and choral music is ruined by poor interpretation and performance by the singer or singers. Second, he taught that the conductor's hand should remain in a relaxed position and that you should confine your motion to a "small box" area. He felt that too much arms and body movement took away from the over all beauty of the performance.

Most of all, Dr. Euell Porter was a great inspiration to all who knew him. He loved his Lord and felt blessed to present Him to any and all. Thank you for your contribution to a great teacher and friend. Thank you for your continued contributions to music that touches the heart and changes lives.

The following is one of Dr. Porter's favorite poetic thoughts:

For all the common things of everyday,  
God gave man speech in a common way,  
For higher things men think and feel,  
God gave poets words to reveal;  
But for heights and depths no tongue can reach,  
God gave man music the . . . the soul's own speech.



Euell Porter Remembered  
by Francis Bryant Simpson  
Baylor Class of '69

I could write all day about adventures with Dr. Porter but I'll try to be brief and tell you some that are dearest to my heart. We were the great freshman class of '65 and of course one of the largest that had come to BU in a while. My high school days of choir had been in girls chorus because Clyde Wolford could not fit us into his schedules for choir and I had been terrible disappointed about it so when the same thing began to happen at Baylor, I almost just walked away. There were 150 of us in freshman choir but he managed to get us all in and keep us in for several years. I was scared to death of him and never opened my mouth until the first Christmas program in Waco hall. Everyone had the "jumps" and rounding all of the choirs up was a rodeo for sure. The alto next to me, one of his favorites, sang over a note because she wasn't paying attention and I just turned to her and said way to go, Kay or something and he pointed at me and started yelling, get out, you, get out!! Now I was of course on the back row and had to wind down all of those steps, walk across the stage, down the steps, down the aisle and out the swinging doors while he continued to yell at me!!! I wanted to die of course and was so hurt because I really wasn't the trouble maker to begin with but I gutted up and went to see him the next morning. Of course, I had been used as the scapegoat to quiet the masses and there wasn't a peep out of anyone else the entire rehearsal and he proceeded to tell me so and how sorry he was that it came to that so he and I jelled after that and of course Christmas was always the highlight of the year for me.

My next set of butterflies in the stomach came when I drew Dr. Porter for my first voice test at the end of the semester but I think he found out I could sing a lot better than he thought!! My choir director at FBC in Tyler, Joe Carrell, was not one of his favorites and now I know why he favored all the kids from Bryan and Abilene!! Anyway, I learned so much from him and the importance that memorizing poetry and piano pieces in childhood would play in my music career. He took the freshman choir on tour with two buses and found homes for us to stay in all the way to St. Louis where we sang on television and Colorado Springs for the national music convention and all over Texas and the opening of Jones Hall.

What a place it was for this East Texas gal to see and sing in. I'll never forget how he would pass out music and about three weeks later he would take it up and call us up by groups of 6 or 8 to sing it by memory. I never got called up but I always knew my music-----even the whole score of The Peaceable Kingdom!!! I can see

it now with all the animals in green. You had to constantly keep your eyes on him because he directed with his hands in front of his stomach but we really were an awesome group to be so large. Even after we left Baylor, we heard he talked about us all the time!!!

I loved the old choir room in Waco Hall and the quaintness of Baylor during 1965-1970. I had to stay an extra year because I flip flopped my major and minor but those memories are etched into my heart and soul forever. I did come back to live in Tyler and joined a wonderful group called Tyler Civic Chorale directed by Richard Herr. I was with him almost 30 years and he has now moved on to Buffalo and Westminster Presbyterian Church and my heart and soul may never be the same again. Times change for the masses but not for those of us who know what good music is all about. Even though the group has changed it's name to Tyler Chamber Chorale, it's young director was mentored at SMU by Lloyd Pfautsch, as was Richard Herr, so we are in pretty good hands. He is also the music director at Marvin United Methodist Church and I sing with him for special events. I've been asked to sing with First Christian Church this spring so I stay busy in spite of what's happening at my own church!!!

I do hope this sheds some light about choir days and Dr. Porter. Just wish he could have heard me sing as an adult but maybe he knew what potential I had and that's all that mattered to him. I cannot hear Lutkin's The Lord Bless You and Seven Fold Amen without tears running down my face and remembering it all as if it was yesterday. Thank you for this project so we never forget all of these wonderful people. I have also sent you E-mail addresses for Richard and Fred in case you want their input about Pfautsch.

Oh, I did want to mention that my very FIRST encounter with Dr. Porter was in Jr. High when Joe Carrell took us to Waco to the state Jr. Choir Festival and we met kids from all over Texas and most of us ended up in this freshman choir together. Dr. Porter would finally get us all still and he could tell if you had gum or candy in your mouth and he'd send you out even then!! I think the big group piece we did was Let All Things Now Living and I can still sing the descant part of that to this day!! Oh, and staying in the old Raleigh Hotel!! Oh my, what memories-----well, one more link in my musical career I'll not share with you today!! My piano teacher was Nina Overleese if you have a recollection of her. Oh, the stories there!! Better run on for the day and it's going to be a gorgeous one.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Ed Nichols  
Hardin-Simmons University '53'

I am sure that all of us who shared the special experience of singing under Euell Porter (as I did at H-SU until graduation in 1953) can still feel what it was like. There was a sense of subtle energy and never-shrill controlled intensity and same wavelength dynamics that characterized that sublime musical blend Mr. Porter (he wasn't Dr. Porter then) was able to elicit from his a cappella singers that almost raised us to our toes (or brought us to our knees). And, as it has stayed with us, we have tried to convey some of that same sense of energy and controlled, unshrill intensity to those with whom we have worked musically, a kind of passing along of the Porter torch.

I always appreciated Mr. Porter's solicitous attitude toward his fragile wife, and I remember this anecdote: Once at some sort of banquet in Abilene where Mr. and Mrs. Porter were present, perhaps as honorees, he was invited to sing a love song, and he began to sing "When I Grow Too Old To Dream." No sooner had he completed the first phrase than Mrs. Porter broke down into deep, uncontrollable wails and sobs. Mr. Porter not only immediately stopped singing; he cradled his wife in his arms and walked away from the hall with her and never looked back.

The poem Phil Briggs referred to – 'For the Common Things ....' Has also stayed with me for these fifty-plus years, and I've used it myself time and again. I also hold fast in my memory the unusually haunting poem turned choral composition 'I Am Music' by Macon Sumerlin which Mr. Porter had our a cappella choir to sing. I hope others remember it as well.

Euell Porter was an uncommon man who had a certain genius for choral music. Like most of us, he was not incapable of bias or favoritism. But he gave us wonderful music and lasting memories. It is good for us to remember him together.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Martha Brittain Pausky, Baylor class of '59

My memories of Dr. Euell Porter take me to my freshman year and his first year at Baylor. Before I came to Baylor I received information about the new choir which would be forming, and how I could audition. I was extremely excited to

have an opportunity to be in a choir at Baylor. I had not heard of Dr. Porter, but learned quickly what he was like as I auditioned for the Chapel Choir. I was extremely nervous and excited. I did not make the cut as far as selection for the first 62 who would be in the choir, but I was named as an alternate. I was told that I could attend rehearsals if I wanted to. Did I ever! I attended every rehearsal and stood in the wings ready to step in every time the choir performed at chapel. I guess my faithfulness and eagerness counted, because it was only a couple of weeks before Dr. Porter put me in the choir as a permanent member.

What an experience! It is one that will be with me for all of my life. You knew you were doing something special, and that Dr. Porter was someone special. It was obvious that many people thought so, because of the students and staff that followed him from Hardin-Simmons. You did not “fool around.” He knew if your eyes were not on him during rehearsal. He was serious, but it was fun. Other than the thrill I always felt when we were performing, there were three things in particular that I remember. The first one is the feeling I got when Dr. Porter would direct the choir without using his hands. After starting us out, his hands would drift to his sides and he would direct you with his eyes and a slight movement of his body. Second, to this day when I sing “Beautiful Saviour,” I remember the way we sang it at the end of every concert and the way he directed it. Third, the choir always had fun.

At performances in schools, especially, the trio of Hugh Sanders, Ralph Gibson, and Bill Hardage would sing “Earth Angel.” I’ll never forget how funny they were. Much to my regret I had to move to Dallas the next year because I was a nursing student. I hated to leave the choir. It was the best memory of my freshman year. Dr. Porter has always had a special place in my heart and memory because of his love for Christ and the way he expressed it through his work with the choir. I was in the Baylor Chapel Choir of 1955-56. Thank you for asking for my memories.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Wyley M. Peebles  
Baylor University, 1964-1969

The first time I heard one of Euell Porter’s Choirs, I was there because I loved choral music, and I knew someone in this choir from Hardin Simmons. The music was wonderful, and I was impressed. I found myself wishing that I had had the privilege of being in one of his choirs. I had already graduated from Baylor and was on my way to a career in church-related vocations.

Fourteen years later I found myself re-entering Baylor as a freshman in church music. This turned out to be the most important step in my life. I was scared, but I found Euell Porter not only to be the teacher and choral director I expected, but he was soon my confidant and friend.

Dr. Porter had an amazing supply of practical experiences that seemed to cover any situation. I also took voice from him, so I found it easy to ask questions about many of his techniques. I remember one particular time when we were on tour. He inspired the choir so much in the warm-up with a certain method that we went into the church and sang our hearts out. I wanted to know more about it after we returned to the campus the next day. "You can do that with junior high and high school choirs about as often as you need to," he said, "but you have to be careful about using it with college and adult choirs." I never knew of his using it again.

There was a time in graduate studies that an undergraduate student asked me to take over his church choir for the summer, while he toured the revival circuit. I went one Wednesday to meet with the choir and to rehearse them a bit. On our way back to the campus he paid me one of the finest compliments I ever received. "You reminded me of Dr. Porter," he said. How many former students are out in the world through whom Dr. Porter still works and inspires?

During twenty-five years as choral director at Cisco Junior College and twenty-one years as minister of music at First Baptist Church, Eastland, Dr. Porter was often by my side. For this I am truly grateful. An unusually fine choral conductor, a teacher, a friend, a Christian gentleman, that was Dr. Euell Porter.

### **Euell Porter Remembered by Paula Constantine Perron**

I was grateful for the opportunity to sing in Dr. Porter's Chorale at Baylor University (in 1959 and 1960). I am very glad he is being honored.

### **Euell Porter Remembered by Sam Prestidge**

Euell Porter made a tremendous contribution to the growth and effectiveness of

Youth Choirs in Texas Baptist Churches as he directed State Youth Choir Festivals on the Texas Baptist College Campuses beginning in the late 1950s and continuing on into the 1970s. These Festivals and Camps were planned and sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Many of these festivals brought together over 2,000 youth for a two-day event and it was something else to see the 2,000 youth sitting or standing in rapt attention and responding to every meaningful motion and suggestion from Euell Porter. These choirs returned to their home churches rejuvenated and inspired to make a greater contribution to Worship.

These festivals were not only exciting experiences for the youth but a great laboratory learning experience for the directors. Many Young People made life changing decisions as a result and many of them determined to attend a Baptist College. I am told that when Dr. Porter moved from Hardin Simmons to Baylor he had over 400 students audition for his first Chapel Choir. Wonder why!

Dr. Porter was very active in Texas Baptist Music Camps started by J.D. Riddle at Lueders' Baptist Encampment (now Big Country) in the late 1940s and continued by V.F. (Pete) Forderhase as these camps grew from one to eight during the fifties and sixties. Paisano Music Camp, in the big bend country, became a tradition for many Baptist Music Groups from all over Texas.

When the Senior Adult Choirs started coming into existence in the early seventies who do you think was at the forefront in influence and leadership? You are right – it was Porter again leading the way to becoming bigger and better. Because of Euell Porter's keen insight and understanding of Choral Music and because of his wisdom and knowledge of Churches and because of his untiring ministry and influence, we have all been blessed. May God continue to bless the memory and influence of Euell Porter

**Euell Porter Remembered**  
**by Fern Wiese Quebe**  
**Sam Houston Choir, 1945-46 & 1946-47.**

Euell Porter was responsible for some of the happiest hours that I had at Sam Houston. He instilled in us a love and appreciation for music and harmony in our lives. We looked forward to daily choir practice, concerts and those wonderful choir trips. So many friendships were made that still survive today. When asked to perform for us on one of our outings he sang "Without a Song."

How true those lyrics are. He certainly put a song in our hearts.  
It was a privilege to be in a choir under the direction of Mr. Porter.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Lora Thomas Robison  
BME '67 Baylor University

I was a student of Dr. Euell Porter's at Baylor University from 1963-67. During that time I can say that his life had a profound influence on me. Dr. Euell Porter was foremost a dedicated Christian whose busy music career never interfered with his loving care of his beloved invalid wife. In this care all of his students learned about a "servant's heart." We saw and experienced this in the life of Euell Porter.

Dr. Porter always upheld the character of "excellence" in whatever musical project we were working. He never ceased to be excited about the next concert whether it was for the students at the Methodist Children's Home, the local or nearby Baptist church, or our once-in-a-lifetime concert at Carnegie Hall! He inspired all of us with his wonderful sense of humor as well as his depth of sensitivity in his artistic approach to understanding the music we were singing.

He was a gifted musician who always had a goal of ministry in his music. How grateful I am to have had him as choral music director and instructor of conducting!

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Carolyn Pittman Sager, PLS CLA CLSS

In January 1950, I was a sophomore in high school at Lutch Stark High School in Orange, Texas. At that time, the high school was privileged to employ Maurice Alfred who had just graduated from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. This was my first introduction to the then Mr. Euell Porter who was head of the Choral Department at Hardin-Simmons.

During the next two years of my high school days, Mr. Alfred saw that all members of the high school choir became acquainted in some manner with the teaching methods and techniques employed by Mr. Porter in his conduct with his students. During that time, I was privileged to attend a summer choir camp in Abilene where I auditioned for a scholarship at Hardin-Simmons. I was accepted

for the scholarship and enrolled in September 1952. These next two years were the best years of my college life.

Mr. Porter was a strong willed person who set high standards for his students and achieved amazing results. During his years at Hardin-Simmons, the choir became nationally known and traveled extensively. The tours were great fun and much hard work.

Fifty years have passed since I was privileged to work with Mr. Porter but my memories of him remain strong. I don't remember all the places we traveled but I do remember the fun that was had by all choir members who were chosen to travel with him.

### Euell Porter Remembered by Rinky Sanders

This time of year we hear "give the gift that lasts," or "give the gift that keeps on giving." What could this "special gift" be? One man in particular comes to mind. He is one who has given of himself to others throughout his lifetime. He is now 82 years young and continues to be of service.

This same man helped my husband receive a college education. Whenever time came for registration, and there wasn't enough money, my husband would go to him and he would simply hand him his billfold. This single unselfish act not only affected my husband, myself and our children, but also affected the lives of hundreds of students my husband has taught and influenced through the years. He was best man in our wedding. During the holiday period, and many other times through the years, there is a place set for him at our table. Our son loves to talk sports with him. I once accused him of knowing more sports trivia than Howard Cosell. He is lovingly accepted as a member of our family. When our daughter came to Baylor as a freshman, he once again said he wanted to help. The gift was to be anonymous, as always. Who knows how many students he has helped through the years.

A few years ago, my husband was going to attend a music conference in Vienna, Austria. This same man came forward and said, "I think you should be able to go to Vienna with Hugh." He wrote a check for the amount of my plane ticket. He goes around daily helping senior adults all over this community. It may be



taking them a meal, driving them to the doctor, or simply taking someone for a drive so they can get outdoors for a while. He gives new meaning to the word, sharing. I don't think I have ever seen a more loving and caring husband. His wife Christine has been gone many years now. But I think everyone who ever knew them, knows he did everything humanly possible for her while she was alive. He not only made her comfortable, he made her happy.

This man's name is Euell Porter. I know of no one on this earth who has affected more lives in a positive way. He has been my example for years. He has shown me what is really important in life. His Christian charity is an inspiration to us all. I think I can speak for all the many churches, schools, communities, ex-students, and a multitude of friends, in saying we love, respect and admire him. This world is truly a better place because of his example and spirit. I believe it is his intention that no person, regardless of their station in life, be lonely or uncared for. If you count currency with the heart, he is a millionaire. God must be very proud. He gave, and continues to give, the gift that keeps on giving.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Andrea Hall Savage  
Freshman choir, '64; Chapel choir, '65;  
A Cappella Choir, '66

What I remember most about Dr. Porter is his expression: he had a glint in his eyes and wanted us to, also. He often said "No dead eyes!" Another favorite memory is singing a 16-part Heinrich Schutz number, standing in groups of 4 (I believe I stood close to tenor Bruce Teel, among others). After that, I could always carry my part no matter who stood next to me.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Robert (Bob) Segrest,  
Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes

Good choral music has been an important part of my life largely due to the positive influence of Dr. Euell Porter. My initial introduction to his kind and sensitive Christian spirit came as a young person at 7th and James Baptist Church in Waco, Texas when he was called as Minister of Music. Dr. Porter was a bivocational minister who shared responsibilities with the church and the Music Department of Baylor University.

Since I had been involved in choral music at University High School in Waco, Dr. Porter invited me to join the Sanctuary Choir at 7th and James as a tenor. That was an extremely “heady” honor for me to become a part of that excellent choir as a teenager. I felt I was sitting under the leadership of a master, and truly was. Quickly I learned the disciplines necessary to be a useful part of an excellent choir. Rehearsals and the weekly presentations of our choir were spiritual experiences for me. Dr. Porter led the choir with loving dignity. He knew what he wanted from us and knew how to motivate us to always give of our best to the Master.

Upon graduation from High School, I continued my education at Baylor preparing for the Gospel ministry. One day Dr. Porter came to me at church and asked if I would like to be a member of the Chapel Choir at Baylor he directed. I was honored beyond words and readily accepted his invitation. For two years I sang in that large choir and served as choir president for a year. We were not just a choir. We were ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ as we sang to His glory at school and on various tours.

In my junior year at Baylor, Dr. Porter invited me to audition for the A cappella choir. Somehow I passed the audition and began a new and thrilling adventure of singing with the master for the Master. In my mind I can still see Dr. Porter standing before the choir dressed in his black tux. From time to time he would drop his hands and lead us with his facial expressions. I never hear “Beautiful Savior” sung that I do not see him leading us to close a concert.

Not only was Dr. Euell Porter a godly choral director, he was a godly man. I watched with deep admiration as he lovingly cared for his afflicted wife. His commitment to her helped me understand the depths of love a man is to have for his wife. His influence as a silent mentor in marriage has helped me in my 40 years of loving commitment to my wife, Barbara.

Dr. Porter will always be one of the most important Christian men in my life. Today, some 42 years after graduating from Baylor and spending 30 years in pastoral ministry, I am once again singing in an excellent church choir in Chattanooga, Tennessee where I serve as Regional Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Children’s Homes, Inc. My ability to make a contribution to the tenor section of my current choir has much to do with Dr. Euell Porter who taught me to love quality choral music and to glorify God while singing it.

May our Lord richly bless Dr. Euell Porter. His life has made a lasting contribution

for Jesus Christ in so many lives for so many years, mine included!

## Euell Porter Remembered by Jakie Shirley

My first association with Dr. Euell Porter was in the summer of 1954 when I traveled to Abilene with my parents and church pianist to audition for a voice scholarship with Dr. Porter. After the audition, he asked me how much I weighed and said, “Young man, you need to gain some weight.” Well, I will never hear that again.

After that first year, he announced that he would be taking the position at Baylor University. There were four present choir members that transferred with him to the new position. They were: Ralph Gibson, Barbara Ralls, Hugh Sanders and I, Jakie Shirley. Some who had been with him before and had gone to the military came later. How well we all remember his unusual but effective techniques – the “duck walks” around the auditorium, the hot potato in the back of the throat and the strict attention to keeping our eyes on the director.

At his recommendation, I became the minister of music at First Baptist Church of Lampasas, where I served all my Baylor days. Mrs. Porter’s parents lived in Lampasas where we visited on some occasions. He had a fond affection for every member, remembering our names and our hometowns. He seemed to have a fond affection for our age for we would have been about the age of the child he lost. We were humbled and blessed by the careful attention he gave Mrs. Porter on the choir tours when she could go.

Because we knew his heart, we were often brought to tears when he sang “How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours when Jesus no Longer I See.” I began to totally understand the meaning of those words when we lost our own daughter two years ago. I was student conductor of the Chapel Choir in 1957-58. He would often remind me “not to sing with the choir,” a suggestion that I followed all my forty six years as a minister of music. After the reorganization of the A Cappella Choir, I was president in 1959.

We never had discipline problems in rehearsal or on tour. We had such a great respect and love for Dr. Porter that no one ever wanted to be “out of fellowship” with him or each other. He had control. He had our attention. He often directed the

choir with his eyes. We did not realize it then, but those were indeed some of our finest years. The world needs the influence of great men like Dr. Euell Porter.

## Euell Porter Remembered by DeAnna Venable

I am proud to be one of the many young people taught by Dr. Euell Porter. He was a grand man and a marvelous teacher. I graduated from Baylor University in May of 1960 with a degree in music education. I have now retired from 32 years of teaching in the field of public school music education, and I am currently the Children's Choir Coordinator at First Baptist Church in Garland, TX, a position I've held for the past four years.

During the years since I left Baylor, I have drawn heavily from the wealth of experiences I received from having been in Dr. Porter's first A Cappella choir the last two years I was at Baylor. Trying to describe and enumerate all he taught me is very difficult.

There were so many things I observed and admired about him, I feel quite inadequate to recall them all. I am sure his life affected mine in ways I don't even realize. I loved him as a remarkable man.... The love he had for Mrs. Porter was so impressive. He was a kind and thoughtful man, a godly man. I'll always remember the twinkle in his eyes and his little smile. We loved and respected Dr. Porter unreservedly.

I remember the fun and excitement of the choir tours. I have many, many happy memories of my time with Dr. Porter. Dr. Porter was without a doubt the most memorable teacher I had during my four years at Baylor. He was more responsible than anyone else for developing in me the skills I have used as I have worked with my own choirs over the years. I can still see him in my mind's eye.... so controlled and intense as he stood before us. He taught us what excellence was. He showed us how to give our very best to perfect the gift we presented to those who would hear us sing. I owe a lot to Dr. Porter.

I am pleased to be a part of this project to honor Dr. Porter as a truly outstanding teacher and an honorable Christian man.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Sharon Vickrey

When I think of Dr. Porter and I always called him Dr. Porter, I think of - his students – What a legacy! Our family was blessed by Maurice and Glenna Alfred who came to our church as part-time minister of music when I was in the 4th grade. Only there a year I got to sing in Mrs. Alfred's children's choir. Her blessing of my voice is one of the pivotal points of my childhood. Dr. Alfred was choral director at Odessa High and Mrs. Alfred taught elementary music. In high school and junior college I sang in Dr. Alfred's choirs and many times Mrs. Alfred helped me with singing. Our family considers them a rich treasure.

A place for everyone- I never sang in Dr. Porter's Baylor choir even though I am a vocal performance graduate of Baylor. That did not matter. Dr. Porter got me a music scholarship and a job accompanying in the music school. Anyone who wanted to sing, could find a place in one of his choirs. I was amazed at how many "barely able to sing" people filled his choirs and how he made lovely music with them.

Encourage your gift – I sang in Dr. Porter's 7th and James Baptist Church choir. They were so many gifted composers and singers. Dr. Porter used everyone all the time. He seemed to attract talent, encouraged and grew it. When I started teaching voice privately he sent me students. The next year two of these students decided to become music majors. When they auditioned for voice scholarships, Dr. Young, head of the department, looked at me and said "Where did you get these students?"

Pageantry - Christmas concerts and special events. I remember my first Christmas concert at Baylor the stage was covered with greenery and poinsettias. The choirs sang beautifully then processed out and caroled us as we left. The Dr. Porter touch!

Processing- The 7th choir always processed in. The last time I sang in Dr. Porter's choir I was 9 months pregnant with our first son. We ran up the stairs to the balcony to sing the call to worship and then back down during the introduction to the first hymn. How many times did we all do that? What a blessing! We will never forget!

## Euell Porter Remembered by Marilyn J. Walker, Ph.D. 1953 Graduate H-SU

My first awareness of Euell Porter was when as a freshman, I attracted his attention by singing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” at some kind of talent show, and subsequently was invited to join the A Cappella choir. What a thrill for me. I have many happy memories of touring with that group, sometimes as a soloist. I enjoyed his sense of humor. Once during a concert, I surprised him by clucking like a chicken. Thou surprised, he smiled and walked over to pet my head like it was planned. From then on, that was part of the show when singing that particular song. What a fine man. I especially admired his loyalty to his handicapped wife. Thank you, Euell Porter. One of these days we will all sing with you again.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Bobby Watkins

Dr. Porter was my mentor at Baylor University from 1969-1974. I was student conductor of a cappella choir for two years under his leadership. Dr. Porter taught me much about the art of music and conducting, but more importantly he showed me how a Christian man should live. He made Baylor for me.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Andrew White

Dear Euell:

As you already know, one of the first things that came to my mind when I was considering the option of joining the faculty of the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati was “Where can I ever find a friend like Euell to go with to the ball games”. Ever since first meeting you a number of years ago at Glorieta, New Mexico, during Music Emphasis Week, it has been a privilege to know you as friend and colleague.

The numerous oratorios that I have sung with you were always an inspiration to me, and the versatility that you displayed at Paisano made me appreciate you even more. You allowed LaRue and me into the inner sanctum of your friendship and into the wonderful fellowship of your home life.

I know that you recognize the depth of feeling that we and our three daughters have had for you and for Christine. The beauty of yours and Christine's love has been reflected countless times in the lives of those you touched.

God bless you in your new work, and let me close with a thought by Beecher, "Tears are often the telescope through which men see far into heaven".

LaRue joins me in wishing for you the best, and always know that our home is your home.

Cordially,

Andrew B. White, Dieterle Professor Emeritus of Music  
Professor Emeritus of Voice

### Euell Porter Remembered by Kay Norsworthy Szenasi

I graduated from the music department of Baylor University in 1959. I had a conducting class under Dr. Porter my sophomore year. It was a very large class of about 50 or more students. He always wanted us to stand up, first as an entire class, and conduct with him, and then in groups of 3 or 4, and finally as solo. I remember that I was petrified to stand up in front of the whole group and conduct and I felt very inadequate in comparison with others. However, Dr. Porter always tried to help me feel at ease. He was so great I always wished I could take that same class again.

Whenever I saw Dr. Porter anywhere in the music building he always knew my name and chatted with me. He knew my uncle and some of my family from Wichita Falls, where my cousin was a long-time Baptist pastor at Lamar Baptist Church and his father was a music conductor there and in Oklahoma City. So we first had a conversation about them, because Dr. Porter recognized my name.

My memories of Dr. Porter are very pleasant and happy ones, and I will always remember him as a great teacher, conductor, Christian, and friend.

### Euell Porter Remembered by C. Bruce Teel, Class of '67, Baylor University

Dr. Porter taught his classes with strength and serene joy. Once he quoted someone to us, and I've never found the source, "Music is the language of the soul." He

gave us a brief explanation of this, and immediately I had a newer, deeper and truer appreciation of music in all its forms than ever before. Now I could see how important my small part in that choir would be. I would be speaking mysteriously to the innermost depths of those who would hear me sing! What imprint would I leave? How would I touch their souls? How important for me to do my best!

Your best. Dr. Porter could bring that out in you, if only you would let him. He was not sternly demanding or forced. He had that compelling persuasion which only comes from a gentle, kind spirit but one who strives for the best in himself and his pupils. Many have prayed, "God grant me serenity." God had granted him serenity long before I crossed his path. Even so, he taught me that music is manly, as least for men, and that every man should develop his musical sense to be fully a man. He always conducted himself and his choirs with gentlemanly calm, keeping his hands near his face, close to his mouth and at times beside his face so that you looked into his eyes.

There, in his hands and his eyes you read the directives: the soul of the music you were singing. You were swept up into joy, power and beauty of the music with him and your fellow choir members. Yes, you felt, you knew you had done your best, and it was wonderful.

How wonderful, too, the music Dr. Porter led us into Heinrich Schutz, Palestrina, Bach, Handel and modern giants of Choral splendor such as Ralph Vaughn Williams. We even sang a musical version of some of Robert Frost's poems. That gave me a much greater love for and insight into Frost's poetry. Indeed, singing for Dr. Porter was always a learning experience. And in his lessons... we learned about the best life has to offer.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Charles Downey, Stephen F. Austin High School

Euell Porter came to the Bryan Public School System in the late thirties or early forties. His background before coming to Bryan was in Athletics as a coach and as a Latin Teacher and as Choral Director. In Bryan, he taught Latin and Choral music.

His wife Christine had suffered catastrophic complications in childbirth, in



which she lost the child. This event left her totally disabled and dependent. In addition to his duties as a school teacher and also as choral director for the local First Baptist Church, he always faithfully cared for his wife with great affection. Dr. Porter was not only interested in Choral Music. He was a regular at all the athletic events and was always a favorite on the sidelines. He loved sports almost as much as he loved music.

He developed choral organizations in the junior high and the high school as well. He was a pioneer in a cappella singing and most of his choirs were unaccompanied. Since he was interested in sports, he was always able to attract the athletes to his music programs which was a miracle in itself. The "back row" of his choirs always included burly football players, basketball players and athletes from every sport.

He had a well-rounded program. He had groups for the talented and groups for the less talented. No one was left out. In addition to choral concerts, his program also always included choir trips and the presentation of operettas as well. He had an uncanny ability to communicate the subtle nuances of choral singing to his students. They knew about intonation, blend, phrasing, breathing and all the rest. The result was that he produced some of the finest a cappella choirs which were always top rate winners in regional and state adjudications.

The quality of his main choir at the high school brought an invitation for them to sing at the Lion's Club International Convention to be held in San Francisco in 1947. He trained them and prepared them for that great trip, but because of his move to Hardin Simmons University, he was unable to accompany them on the trip, which was made (through his planning) by charter train!

He always was able to raise money to send his groups on tours without a penny from the student's pockets. The community loved Euell Porter and would cheerfully participate financially and in any other way to see that his choral programs were well-supported.

These were truly his formative years. He moved from being a sometime coach, sometime Latin teacher and part time choral director to being one of the leading choral directors in the state as well as in the nation producing high school choirs that were models for other choral directors and the envy of all. That he was a man of great stature in his field was obvious to even the casual observer.

## Euell Porter Remembered by C. William (Bill) Thomas

Participating in Dr. Porter's choir program at Baylor University from 1965 (my freshman year) through 1967 (my junior year) represented the closest thing to formal vocal training I ever received, although I have been singing constantly since age 10. I grew up in Granger, Texas (a small town about 70 miles south of Waco on the Central Texas Prairie). I attended the First Baptist Church, and our organist, a Baylor graduate, worked with me as a youth to help develop my talent and skill. My older sister, Lora Anne Thomas, now Lora Robison was a music major at Baylor, and had been a of Dr. Porter's choirs since she went there as a freshman. My mom and I used to drive to Waco for Dr. Porter's traditional candle-lit Christmas concerts, a spectacle that we had never seen before. We were awestruck at their beauty. Partly for that reason, I decided to attend Baylor, rather than North Texas State University. My sister arranged an audition for me for Dr. Porter. After hearing me sing, he asked me to join Freshman A Cappella Choir. I was thrilled.

Although I was an accounting major, singing was then, and still is, my passion. Some have said I have a "gift". Dr Porter was not as profuse in his praise as others. He didn't single me out for solos, always being careful to ask the music majors to do that work. Nevertheless, choir was one of my favorite times of the week. I loved watching Dr. Porter direct. He could do more with his eyes than most men could do with their arms. Although he didn't much like horseplay when we had work to do, he had a great sense of humor. I can still see that wry grin whenever someone cracked a joke that he just couldn't ignore. One time during the spring semester of 1966, I had the flu and went to choir sick. I passed out about halfway through the rehearsal. I can still remember waking up, flat on the floor, with Dr. Porter hovered over me. He could be gruff at times, but it was at times like this when I saw beneath that exterior to one of the most warm hearted and generous men I ever knew. I still remember his kindness with his wife, who was an invalid. He adored her, and his countenance totally changed whenever he was around her. I worked hard for his approval because I had so much respect for him.

I could tell that Dr. Porter liked my voice when, during the fall of my sophomore year, an opening occurred in the Junior/Senior A Cappella Choir (a select group) and Dr. Porter asked me to join them. They were planning a trip (Baylor's first) to Carnegie Hall in New York City, in the spring of 1967. My sister, a member of the A Cappella Choir, was ecstatic that I had been asked to join the group. She had been selected as one of the pianists to accompany the choir, as well as a member of

the second soprano section. I was a second tenor. We worked hard that whole fall and winter season, honing our intonation and pitches, practicing difficult pieces, and taking short tours to what seemed an endless stream of Baptist churches, raising “love offerings” to help defray airfare and hotel costs. Our mother attended several of our concerts, anxious to see her kids do well. Our family didn’t have much money. Our father had retired from the Navy about 8 years before I entered Baylor. Both of my parents sacrificed greatly, borrowing on dad’s life insurance, skimping on personal things for themselves, so that we could attend Baylor without incurring debt ourselves.

Our father had to take a job out of state to help make ends meet. In the summer of 1966, at age 63, he had a heart attack, which prevented him returning to his job. Things were tight at home, but our parents were determined to scrape the money together so we could have our big chance on the big stage at Carnegie Hall. We had a generous aunt and uncle who lived in Washington, D.C. who were better off than we were financially. Secretly, without my sister and I knowing, they sent our mom the money for airfare to Washington. Then they drove her to New York. Just after we arrived at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, we turned around and saw mom as she emerged from behind a marble column to surprise us. Dr. Porter was standing beside us, and I’ll never forget his face as he saw her come up to us. I still remember the love and affection in his eyes as he saw us tearfully embracing our mom.

This trip, getting to sing in Carnegie Hall, knowing that our mom and family members were in the audience watching us, was one of the most memorable occasions of my life. Our final song of the concert was “Choose Something Like a Star;” a hauntingly beautiful piece. I felt that was just what I had done. I will never forget that song.

Through my adult years, I have been a member of many churches in many cities, and I have never failed to join the choir in any one of them. I am still singing, and I believe, singing pretty well for a 57 year old man, still using the vocal techniques that Dr. Porter taught me. Although I have had many directors, Dr. Porter has stood out in my mind as the best of them all. His life and dedication have helped shape my own in ways I never imagined. I thank God that my path crossed with his almost 40 years ago. I have now been a member of the faculty of Baylor University for 28 years, not in music but accounting. Euell Porter and professors like him were role models for me. They inspired me to become a professor myself, and to continue the tradition of influencing young people from humble backgrounds to “choose something like a star.” I believe that Dr. Porter embodies the spirit of

Baylor University that we still strive to keep alive today? “To light the ways of time.”

## Euell Porter Remembered by Frances B. Thornton

When I entered Sam Houston, I had had nine years of piano lessons, but very little experience singing in a choir. Dr. Porter expressed his confidence in me which made me feel comfortable and welcome.

I was impressed with his hard work and dedication. His attitude has stayed with me in all things I have done. It was an honor to have been a part of his choir and to have known him.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Elena Ann Donald

“FOR THE COMMON THINGS OF EVERYDAY,  
GOD GAVE MAN SPEECH IN THE COMMON WAY,  
“FOR HIGHER THINGS MEN THINK AND FEEL,  
GOD GAVE THE POET WORDS TO REVEAL,  
“FOR HEIGHT AND DEPTH NO TONGUE CAN REACH  
GOD GAVE MAN MUSIC, THE SOUL’S OWN SPEECH.”

Those six lines came to mean so much to me because in many ways, they explain the depth Mr. Porter gave his students, not only in music, but in life. Of course, many of you remember that when he finished quoting this poem, the touching strains of Beautiful Savior followed and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

Why did I come to be so moved by all of this? In the course of less than four years, Mr. Porter came to be one of the most influential people in my professional life. When I entered Hardin-Simmons University in the fall of 1951, I had never even heard of Euell Porter. It takes quite a while for news to get from Abilene to Goodnight. If you ever saw the bus that went from Abilene to Childress – where my mother would pick me up – you would understand the slow communication and news’ delivery. I was a music major but I didn’t really know exactly what my concentration of study was going to be – I had to be in an ensemble, so he let me be in Chapel Choir. At that point, I would not have dared to even think about auditioning for the A Cappella Choir.

I muddled along for a couple of years and my knowledge of Mr. Porter was pretty well limited to Chapel Choir rehearsals and that short tour each spring. I did make points with him on those tours when he found out I was a pretty good “42” player – what else was there to do in Goodnight, Texas.

By my junior year, I had made THE choir and what a joy that was. I had gotten to the point I was taking some courses from Mr. Porter and was studying voice with him. I was beginning to see just how special he was and what a positive and inspiring experience it was to be around him. The more I was around him, the more I appreciated him and all that he was.

My senior year was the one that really brought me to the realization of just how much I was benefiting from the opportunity to learn from him in so many ways. I didn't have to carry a very heavy course load and as a result, I was asked to accompany quite a bit for his voice lessons. I was able to observe him while sitting on the piano bench. I felt like I was in a Seminar all the time. He had accepted me as more than a student and I was deeply honored and grateful. I vividly remember him giving me his car keys one day and asking me to go to the beauty shop and pick up his wife Christine and take her home. I was so glad he trusted me enough to ask me to do that errand, but I was also quite nervous about it. Everything went well, thankfully, and I was so pleased that he felt comfortable enough to ask me to do such a personal errand. His love and devotion for that dear lady was beautiful to behold and it showed what a tender and caring man he was.

During the summer of 1955 – after I had graduated – he called me at my parents' home and invited me to join him at Perryton and participate in a workshop he was directing at the First Baptist Church there. What fun that was. Of course, my ego got fed quite well with his invitation to participate.

I've sprinkled several special memories into this piece and there is no way I can really explain just what he meant to me professionally. He showed me in so many ways how music can reach people and how important it is to believe in your craft. He also taught me that you couldn't succeed in teaching music to young people and how important it is to believe in your craft. He also taught me that you couldn't succeed in teaching music to young people if you can't get yourself out of the way and let music be the important thing. I've proudly told people for years that Euell Porter is one of the most influential people in my life and I would never have gone into teaching choral music had it not been for him and the influence he

had on me while I was a student at Hardin-Simmons. I truly thank God I had the privilege and pleasure of being one of his students.

### Euell Porter Remembered by Dorothy and John Bates

During each of the years from Baylor Summer Music Camp, 1963, through Baylor University Graduation, 1977' you had one or more of our four daughters with you in both Baylor Summer Music Camp and Baylor University. John and I appreciate so very much all you did to provide the best of musical training and experiences for each of our daughters. We appreciate too, your personal dedication, your standards of excellence and. all your personal interest in the life of each student. Your Christian witness (and. that of Mrs. Porter during her lifetime) in both words both in words and by example, continue to serve as an inspiration to all.

Thank you for many wonderful memories, and be assured, that our prayers and best wishes are with you always.

### Euell Porter Remembered by Charles Fuller

After my roles as husband and father, the highest and most undeserved privilege of my life has been to be mentored and befriended by both Euell Porter and Hugh Sanders. My wife, Cindy, and I first met singing in one of Dr. Porter's choirs. He became friend and family to us and a shining example of both faith and excellence. I sang for Dr. Porter from 1976 through 1980. I served as his last graduate assistant during his retirement year of 1979-80. He showed me how to deal with loss. He lost his dear wife, Christine, during my first year of singing for him. He showed me how to prepare for change as he finished his career and transitioned to an active retirement. He showed me how to challenge people without alienating them. He challenged us toward excellence in our music and in our lives, sometimes with great intensity, but always with the intention that it was our best interest he had in heart, not his own glory or reputation.

Dr. Porter's life was a model of excellence, both in challenging us to do our best and to use the very best musical materials. He challenged church choirs to do the

same. He understood the importance of meeting church people at their musical taste, but always took them toward better music. He loved people with a genuine love and challenged us to be better as people as well as musicians. He never hesitated to tell you what he was thinking. If he thought you were headed in a direction that wasn't in your best interests, he would certainly tell you, but even when we were talking about "see the blazing Euell before you," we knew that that special grin with the twinkle in his eye was just under the surface and would return soon.

Dr. Porter was a man of genuine faith whose faith empowered him to face the challenges of life: the challenges of tragedy and the challenges of "raising" countless young people who sang in his choirs. It's almost silly for me to talk about how I try to emulate him because his influence on me was like a father, it's so much a part of who I am that, after almost thirty years, I can no longer separate what I was before from what I've become since knowing him.

He was quite simply, the finest man I've ever known.

**Euell Porter Remembered**  
**by Jack Yates '51**  
**Hardin-Simmons Range Rider, Winter, 1998-1999**

The Abilene Reporter-News for September 25, 1998, carried the news of the passing of Euell Porter, former Director of Choirs at Hardin-Simmons University and First Baptist Church of Abilene, choir director extraordinaire. The obituary referred to him as Dr. Porter, an honor accorded to him by two universities, but the title with him somehow seemed superfluous. Euell Porter needed no "Doctor" in front of his name to command respect. You merely had to listen to one of his choirs to know his stature.

Mr. Porter and I came to Hardin-Simmons at about the same time, in the late 1940s, he as Director of Choirs, and I as a student. He was a graduate of Hardin-Simmons and had met his beloved wife there, and he had greatly desired to return to HSU as choir director.

When he came from his position at Sam Houston State College, he was held in such high esteem by the members of the choir there that a large number of them transferred with him. He never had to build or rebuild a choir program at Hardin-

Simmons. The choir arrived virtually full-blown with him. As a young man (and also as today) I loved good choir music. The late 1940s were something of a golden age for collegiate choirs. There were many of excellence. A national radio network had a weekly series of programs featuring college choirs from around the country. First and last I heard in person, by radio, and by record many great and noted choirs. With that background, the first time I heard a Euell Porter-directed a cappella choir, I was simply enthralled, and although I later heard scores, perhaps hundreds, of performances by his choirs, that feeling never left me. They sang as with one voice, and the tones and cadences that his choirs produced were magnificent.

Mr. Porter was at that time in his thirties. He was handsome and had the build of an athlete. When he directed a choir, it was like poetry just to watch his rhythmical and fluid directing. He never liked the style of conducting used by some very good directors who used large, dramatic flourishes. With him, that was unnecessary.

It was not so much discipline (although his choirs were disciplined), as it was that his choirs were devoted to him, and gave him their undivided attention and best efforts. Part of this devotion arose from Mr. Porter's care for his wife. Not long after their marriage she had suffered an illness that left her unable to have children and disabled for the rest of her life. He was always extremely sensitive to her needs and feelings. Part of this devotion arose from his being a dedicated Christian. His choir programs revealed that. There was such an aura of devotion to Jesus Christ in his concerts that, even though the sounds of the choir were wonderful, you always were aware it was first of all a Christian choir that you were hearing. He loved the classic anthems of the Christian faith by the great choral composers. Such songs never grew old with his choirs singing them. Every concert ended with the song "Beautiful Savior," also known as "Fairest Lord Jesus."

The Hardin-Simmons choir sometimes rehearsed in Behrens Chapel. Occasionally, as an audience of one, I would sit in during rehearsals just to hear them sing. He also directed the choirs at Abilene's First Baptist Church. I was not a member there, but I always enjoyed going there, for I knew I would hear an outstanding choral selection. Since he also directed the congregational singing, I also would have the privilege of singing under his direction.

In 1955, Mr. Porter moved to Baylor University. I do not think he ever wanted to leave Hardin-Simmons. Circumstances had come about, however, that made the



move a good one for him. Hardin-Simmons' loss was truly Baylor's gain and that of Texas Baptists, since the Baylor position gave him a much wider influence. Thus it was in churches all across Texas and the Southwest that the Porter "sound" became known. I think he left a big piece of his heart at Hardin-Simmons, however. When he was interviewed by the Baptist Standard, shortly after his retirement from Baylor, and asked which one of all of his choirs was his best and favorite, he remembered his 1950- 51 choir at Hardin-Simmons as his finest choir.

It has now been 50 years since I first heard a Euell Porter choir. Many of the singers from those choirs, such as the ebullient Charles Downey '51, the tall basses, Jimmy Loden '50 and Maurice Alfred '50, Cooper High School's Jack Glover '51/'66 and Bobbie Noles Summerlin '51/'71 themselves went on to be outstanding choir directors, and they are now reaching or have reached retirement age. But in my memory I can still hear the inspiring sounds of those first choirs at Hardin-Simmons. Of all the good and great choirs I have heard throughout my life, and there have been many, in my judgment few if any have surpassed those at Hardin-Simmons, beginning in 1948 and I will agree with Mr. Porter that they were my favorites.

Euell Porter has now passed from the earth at the age of 87. He is now reunited with the beloved bride of his youth, who has been released from that disabling illness from which she (and he) suffered during most of their marriage. Most significantly, he is now in the presence of the one who was always the focus of his choirs' concerts, his "Fairest Lord Jesus," and somehow I feel that the music of heaven has just become a little sweeter.

### Euell Porter Remembered by O.D. Hall Jr. BM Baylor 1957

Dr. Porter came to Baylor when I was a sophomore music major. He changed everything. Euell Porter was the greatest single influence in shaping my standards of choral performance, my conducting style, and my convictions related to the Ministry of music. In the spring of my senior year I enjoyed the great honor of serving as a co-student conductor with Hugh Sanders. What a thrill to stand before the choir and conducting and singing "Rejoice" in the final concert! Twenty years later it was an even greater thrill to send my daughter Debbie (BM '77) to sing in the Baylor A Cappella Choir under Dr. Euell Porter.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Rence Fast Heathclott, Baylor 1968

I had one year of Choir under the direction of Dr. Euell Porter. That has been 40 years ago. Every time I sing, even today, I refer in my mind to the principles and techniques of singing I learned under Dr. Porter. It was a wonderful year. I respected him greatly for his unending devotion to his wife never, but never complaining. There could not be a better caregiver. He loved her to the end.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Alton and Patricia Berryhill Hassell, Baylor 1969

I was in a Porter choir for five years ('64 to 69) at Baylor University while I got my chemistry and physics BS degree. My wife, Patricia Berryhill Hassell, sang with him for two years. We were also in the choir at Central Baptist Church at Bryan when he was interim director in the '70s.

How do you describe a man who was such an inspiration? He demanded that you did each thing to the best of your ability. If you sang with him long, you learned how to push yourself, how to work with others, how to be responsible for yourself and your actions and you learned to sing and appreciate music, good music. You also learned how to treat others with respect, how to behave in public and how to have pride in doing things well. He had a major part in taking the rough edges off of a lot of us country kids. He took us on tours so we could see new places and grow.

He came to Roscoe and sang for our wedding. Patricia lost her voice. He doctored her so she could sing with me at the wedding. I know he never understood how special that was to two young kids. Not a week goes by that I don't think of him, or something that I learned from him. I have my Ph.D. in nuclear chemistry and teach chemistry and archeology at Baylor. My wife teaches in the Family Consumer Science Department also at Baylor.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Dorothy Bernson H-SU 1953-1956

I had the privilege of singing under Dr. Porter for two years. I was in the chapel choir at H S U during '53 - '54. I was in the A Cappella Choir '54 - '55. Mr. Beachy

directed the choir the next year. I also sang in the choir at the First Baptist Church, Abilene and Dr. Porter directed that. It was an inspiration to sing under him even if it was a lot of work. I remember one amusing thing. I have a twin sister named Norma and we never have looked alike. When I was trying out for the A Cappella Choir, Dr. Porter looked at me and said: "Now I know what is alike about you and Norma the expression between your eyebrows". I remember how Dr. Porter was so considerate of his wife in poor health.

## Euell Porter Remembered by John Magee

Euell Porter was my teacher, mentor, role model, friend and was like family. I first met him when I enrolled in Sam Houston State teachers College September 1945. It was his first year to teach there and he had been promised that band music majors would be allowed to audition for the choir if their schedules allowed the time.

I did audition, made his choir and my life took an entirely different path. Next to family, choral music became most important as my life's vocation. I think that these were "golden years" of choral music in Texas public schools and Euell Porter, Archie Jones, Frank McKinley, and a few other great men, should be given credit for the advanced training that they gave their students at that time, as school and church choir directors.

Mr. Porter placed scores of his students from Sam Houston, Hardin--Simmons and Baylor in schools and churches of Texas and other states as well. He didn't just graduate us, give us a degree and send us on our way but stayed in touch, wrote letters, telephoned, gave clinics for us and our neighboring schools. He brought his university choirs on tours of our school and churches helping us instill the love of beautiful choral music in people and choirs.

World War II ended August 14th 1945. My wife, Agnes and I, entered Sam Houston that fall and our lives changed after meeting Euell Porter. He helped in finding us housing and gave me a job the next summer painting his house. He came walking up to our front door one day with a stack of dress shirts of his (it was just after the war and you could not buy a dress shirts anywhere) which he gave Agnes to give to me.

At the beginning of Christmas recess the following year, he asked us to call him

collect when our first child was born. Well, our daughter was born December 22nd and first person I called was Mr. Porter (collect). She grew up and entered Baylor in the fall of 1965 where she sang in his A Cappella Choir and served as one of his accompanists. I recall that just after the great storm "Carla" had raked the Brazos port area, where we were teaching at the time, Dr. Porter (as well as I knew him, I never called in anything other than Mr. Porter or Dr. Porter and never shall) came home to find his wife Christine packing a box of his and her clothes to send to John and Agnes. She was thinking that the storm had wiped us out.

He invited my Brazos port high-school choir to take a singing tour of Greece with his university group. We were to join them in performance of Handel's Messiah. He instilled the importance of selecting good literature that would be worth our efforts in teaching and that would make us and our students better persons.

Dr. Porter was professional and worked in all of our professional organizations. He thought most highly of TMEA, TCDA, national music organizations and the University Interscholastic League. He served as an officer in many of these organizations. He also served as an adjudicator for many years for the U I L. He encouraged scores of directors and thousands of students with his most positive written and spoken comments and criticisms.

Yes, he is gone but will not be forgotten. Thank you for the chance to write something about this great teacher.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Marion E. Luper Jr.  
Sam Houston State Class of 1946

While attending Lamar Jr. High School and Stephen F. Austin High School in Bryan, Texas I sang in choirs directed by Euell Porter along with my sister Duretta Luper Gilchrist.

After this, we were both elated when Dr. Porter came to San Houston State in Huntsville, Texas to organize and direct the A Cappella Choir as well as other vocal groups. One of these groups was the men's double sextet of which I enjoyed being a part.

Many lasting friends were made through the associations made in these organizations. Among them are Virginia Irvin, John Warren Smith, Robert A.

(Bobby) Moore, Doug and Bess McDermott Osborne, Louis Gentry, Espy Watts, Fern Wiese, Velma Hand, and Sundell Harris as well as many others. Euell Porter was an inspiration to all of those who had privilege of knowing him and being a part of one of his choirs.

I later had the privilege of singing in various church choirs, one of which was the First Baptist Church Choir in Austin, Texas where I had the privilege of singing with Maurice and Glenna Alfred who had been in Dr. Porter's - choirs at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene. In addition to the church choir in Austin, I have also have sung with the Austin Symphony Chorale, First Baptist Church Choir and River Oaks Baptist Church Choirs of Houston, the Houston Symphony Chorus of and the First Baptist Church Choir in Odessa. Euell Porter left a lasting impression on all who had the privilege of knowing him.

### Euell Porter Remembered by Maurice Alfred SHSTC 1946-1948 H-SU 1948-1950

Euell Porter came to Sam Houston State Teachers College in the fall of 1945 and I first met him when, as a freshman, I auditioned for the Sam Houston A Cappella Choir in the fall of 1946. Dr. Porter had an amazing ability to inspire his students and to give them a love of choral music that would last a lifetime. He could discipline in a manner that instead of making you mad or unhappy, made you want to try again and do better." There was no wasted time in rehearsals. The instant he finished one portion of the music he was telling you the page and the measure where we would start anew. His rehearsals were very fast paced, but also very enjoyable. Whether he was directing a church choir or a college or high school, there was no talking and if you did interrupt you probably got a stern look from those eyes, or you might be invited to leave the rehearsal. But he also had a wonderful sense of humor and a great smile!

In his choral methods class, Dr. Porter did a great job of giving to his students the "nuts and bolts" of putting together a choral music program. You were well equipped with a single copy of many pieces of the great choral music, the knowledge of how to recruit students, prepare a budget, order music, book tours, prepare programs, etc. He made great use of the officers elected by his choirs. They worked, but it was great training for them as he gave them many responsibilities.

I remember the first time I heard him sing "When I Grow Too Old to Dream".

It was at a choir party at S H S T C when he sang, his wife Christine began to hum along with him. He always took great care of his invalid wife. He was a fine Christian gentleman whose life was a wonderful example for all his students. In the summer of 1948 Dr. Porter left S H S T C and went to Hardin--Simmons University in Abilene. Fourteen of his S H S T C students went with him. It was certainly because of Euell Porter that I directed choirs in high school, college and churches for 51 years before my retirement in 2001. He was my inspiration, mentor and teacher.

**Euell Porter Remembered**  
**by Jess Hensarling**  
**Stephen F. Austin High School Bryan, 1944**

Euell Porter, handsome, lyric tenor, native Texan from Muleshoe, graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, was teaching school in Bryan, Texas, when he heard an a cappella choir. It may have been the one from North Texas State Teachers College in Denton. He said to himself that he wanted one of those. He went to W. D. Wilkerson, Superintendent of Schools, and made arrangements to organize an A Cappella Choir at Stephen F. Austin High School. His students understood that it was the first such choir in Texas. He also directed at Lamar Jr. High and recruited and began training singers who fed into the high school choir. This was in the late 1930.

He worked diligently to upgrade the taste and exposure of both his students and the community. Favorites of the choir included Adoramus Te by Palestrina sung in Latin, Beautiful Savior and Lost in the Night arranged by F. Melius Christiansen, hymn arrangements and spirituals. The closing of every concert was Blest Be the Tie That Binds. Everything was sung without accompaniment. Choir became so popular that some students stayed for postgraduate high school study, just to sing in the choir.

The choir was robed similarly to the choir at North Texas in velveteen floor length robes; the girls wore satin vestments which covered their hands, and everyone sang in black socks with no shoes. Because the choir was a rarity among high schools, it got to travel throughout the state singing in high school assemblies where the football player singers were pointed out. Lodging was usually in homes, but hotels were an occasional treat. World War II gasoline rationing restricted travel, but enterprising parents provided transportation by car to nearby towns.

After the war, the choir traveled, by invitation, to the Northwest Pacific coast to sing for the International Lions Club Convention. Mr. Porter, as he was known then, took the choir to Houston to hear the St. Olaf choir, arranged for them to hear the North Texas State Teachers College A Cappella choir, under Dr. Wilfred Bain, and encourage them to hear Bidu Sayao in recital at Texas A&M College. Choral clinic shared with Marlin high school singers were held frequently. He offered free voice lessons to several.

Euell Porter endeared himself to the entire Bryan community when in spring of 1940 (or 1941) he had to hurry back to Bryan, from a musical contest in Huntsville, for the birth of his only child. Mrs. Porter's pregnancy and delivery were difficult because of her diabetes: the infant was born with water on its brain and did not live; she suffered the loss of the ability to form words. He lovingly cared for her all her life.

Some years later, he was pleasantly surprised to return from a trip to find that friends had taught her to say "oui" to greet him. From Bryan, Euell Porter went to Sam Houston State Teachers College, Hardin- Simmons College and later to Baylor University where he achieved wide spread admiration.

## Euell Porter Remembered by Ken Armstrong

Dr. Porter arrived at Baylor in the fall of 1955. After auditions, he formed the Baylor Chapel choir. He brought with him several outstanding singers from Hardin-Simmons Hugh Sanders and Ralph Gibson came to mind. At the same time, he had competition on the campus. An old Welchman, Pop Hopkins, was a longtime conductor of the A Cappella Choir and Martha Barkeman directed a fine group which performed light choral music.

The Chapel Choir met in the 7th and James Baptist Church choir room each afternoon for rehearsal. This represented quite an investment of time for me since I was a religion and English major and we received no semester hours for choir. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed singing with Dr. Porter during my sophomore and junior years: indeed, it was one of the highlights of my days in Waco.

After being elected president of the Baylor Ministerial Alliance, I felt that I had to give up choir during my senior year and this I did with great reluctance.

My memory of Euell Porter is very clear. On one hand he was a kind, even sweet person. As a friend recently said, he was something of a father figure for many of us. Yet, he could be firm and something of a taskmaster. I thought of him as a perfectionist. He was quite demanding of us in terms of learning the music and producing the tone he wanted. He called names and identified miscreants'. Yet, he was never unreasonable: as a professional in the choral music field, he wanted the Baylor Chapel Choir to be good, and we were. In concert and on tour, I was immensely proud to be a member of the choir.

It was my good fortune to take Dr. Porter's conducting class. In it, he largely worked with students who planned to be music directors in Baptist churches throughout Texas and beyond. Dr. Porter also serves as the music director at 7th and James (across the street from BU and the largest Protestant Church in America). Sunday after Sunday he teamed with our pastor, Dr. Charles Wellborn to produce memorable worship services and he was much loved in this capacity. Sometimes, I think . . . this is the real Euell Porter . . . providing musical leadership to Baptist churches. It is true that he traveled all over the state conducting choral clinics for churches. So don't omit this important ministry, for it reflected his Christian faith.

One day in the conducting class, an older fellow asked what he should do in his present assignment. The church where he served loved Stamps music and sang from shape notes. Dr. Porter spent time with that question, and conferred with the man throughout the quarter. His idea was to take the church and choir where it was, and over a period of time, seek to elevate their musical taste and expression to God.

Several years later, I used Dr. Porter's go-easy approach in a church where the pastor considered the doxology as high, fancy music. I often thought of Dr. Porter the year I serve that church. As I think of Euell Porter, I recall a man who worked with college students and churches to produce beautiful music. By all measures, he succeeded handsomely.

Euell Porter Remembered  
by Lena Sue (Pinky) Chilton Murry  
Sam Houston State Teachers College 1947-1948  
Hardin-Simmons University 1948

I met Euell Porter in the fall of 1947 when his choir from Sam Houston State



Teachers College was touring and played a concert stop at Lamesa High School. Since I attended school half a day, I missed the presentation but was called at my part-time job by the principal of the high school, to come to be interviewed by Mr. Porter. I was a poor girl with hardly any hope of attending college, although it was my dream to do so. Mr. Porter asked me to sing for him and from there the story of his influence is indelible in my life's book of treasured memories.

I was invited by him to come to Sam Houston on a scholarship. When he accepted a position in the music department at Hardin-Simmons University, he invited me to go with him, also with a much-needed scholarship. That was the beginning of his influence in my life.

His personal interest in me and his gracious consideration of my needs was the door through which his life caused me to see more than a professor/teacher but a man who loved the Lord Jesus. That was demonstrated in his daily walk and relationship with his students. I saw, for the first time in my young life, a spiritual giant. His humility and gentleness, with meekness that pronounced itself in a demeanor as he conducted the choir in rehearsals and concerts with a strong hand of quiet authority, showed me what God meant when he said Moses was the meekest a man on earth. That strong hand of authority was framed by love for the music and for the singer and he lead us to be aware of the matchless ONE we were singing about. Dr. Porter's God-given ability with music brought into the lives that were under him, and seen with eyes of a learning student, lessons that have had their far-reaching influence on many others.

His faith was evident as he lovingly took care of Christine who, he said, gave her life to bear him a son so he would give his life in meeting all her needs that he possibly could. He did that magnificently!

There are no words adequate to express what my association with him has meant during the intervening years and no way that I could have ever repaid him. He taught me more than music, and for that I am eternally grateful. His one favorite song, "How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours When Jesus No Longer I See", is only a memory of him as he now stands at the throne and sees Him face-to-face. I look forward to that grand reunion when we get together and lift our voices of true praise to HIM face-to-face who graciously planned and directed it all. To God be the glory!

## Euell Porter Remembered by Pat Agnew Kincaid

It is a privilege to have a part in this tribute. Ted Nichols wrote so eloquently of Euell Porter and the feelings the choir members shared. Dr. Porter came to lead the music in a revival at the First Baptist in Cisco when I was in high school. I was impressed with him not only as a musician but as a dedicated Christian. After graduation from Cisco Junior College, I transferred to H S U and became a member of the A Cappella and First Baptist choirs in 1952-1953. I married in June of 1953 and we commuted three days a week to complete our senior year. Even though I was in choir only one year there are many memories. It was at a party in the Porter's home that I first heard him sing "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" to Mrs. Porter. I was going to sing it to Don at our 50th anniversary celebration but there were just too many emotions remembering the Porters. What a special love he showed for God, Mrs. Porter's and his music!

## Euell Porter Remembered by Edward Barnes Hardin-Simmons University 1955

My family moved Abilene in the summer of 1948 when I was going into my junior year in high school. I had been used to singing in an adult choir in church and so ask Dr. Porter if I could sing in his choir. Since it was summer and most of the Hardin-Simmons students were gone, he let me do so, but in the fall when the college kids all came back and filled up the choir, he shuffled me back to the youth choir.

That was an interesting experience. He lined up all the boys on the back row and came behind us feeling our throats for and "Adam's apple" I suppose. When he got to me he got real excited and rushed me up to the piano and ran me through some scales to see what my range was. That was the first time I really knew that I was a bass.

I stayed in the youth choir through the first nine weeks of school and then my folks moved to Orange where I finished high school. As soon as possible I went back Abilene to attend Hardin-Simmons. Since I was, by that time, an adult, Dr. Porter allowed me to sing in the "big choir". I wanted to sing in the A Cappella

Choir at HSU, but I was a chemistry major and my labs fell at the same time the choir rehearsed, so I was unable to sing with it. I did tryout to sing in the male quartet however and therein lies a tale.

I sang in a male quartet in high school in Orange, under Maurice Alfred and really wanted to continue that at HSU. My best friend Eddie Hebert had also sung in the quartet, and he went with me to Abilene. We wanted to sing together so badly that we made a pact: if both of us were selected, we would sing together in the quartet. If either of us didn't make it, the other would not sing in it either. When Dr. Porter called us all together for the first audition, and Eddie and I both tried out and felt like we had a good chance. When the second audition came around however, I was called back but Eddie wasn't. So I lived up to the pact and didn't go back the second time.

Now at the time, I lived off campus in the home of one of the professors, and Dr. Porter lived a few blocks down the same street. As I was walking home from the campus the next day, a car came up behind me and stopped. Dr. Porter told me to get in. He was not pleased. It was the only time I can remember ever seeing him upset – and it was with me - not good. He had planned, he said, to give me the bass spot in the quartet, but since I didn't show up, he gave it to someone else. Well at least we know he was capable of being upset, but I never saw that again.

I continued to sing in his church choir until I had to start working at night and was unable to go to rehearsal. Even so, he often gave me rides home from the campus and he became a good friend. After graduation from Hardin- Simmons, I went into the Army and he moved to Baylor. I was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso for most of two years and then stayed there working for another 10 years after I got out. During that time I sang in the church choir at First Baptist, El Paso. Twice during that time, we had Dr. Porter come out for a week-long choir clinic; once by himself and once when he brought his wife. I treasure the time he spent with my wife and me in our home as well as the association I had with him in the choir. Since then, until his death we would exchange Christmas cards and write occasionally, and at least once, I talked with him at length on the phone when he was in the retirement center. My wife and I attended every Baylor A Cappella Choir concert that happened in the Houston area while he was directing. We enjoyed the choral mastery that he and his choirs exhibited.

I counted Dr. Porter not only a good friend, but the finest choral director I've ever sung under, and I've sung under several who were and are really great. His death was a personal loss to me as it was a professional loss to all choral

musicians who knew him and have sung under him.

## Remembering Euell Porter Randy Adams H-SU '55 BM

In the fall of 1953 I was destined for a University other than Hardin--Simmons. For some reason I stopped by to talk with Dr. Euell Porter before leaving my home in Abilene. The outcome of that meeting was a scholarship and an opportunity to work with one of the three Professors at H-SU who were instrumental in the development of my future.

Dr. Porter was a caring and loving person exemplified by his complete devotion and concern for his life partner. He was an exemplary choral conductor who was able to unify an extremely diverse group of people into a rich choral sound that expressed life qualities no other musical art can claim.

This writer has always felt our lives are truly orchestrated by God, and we are His instruments. Compassion, devotion, and commitment to his faith through choral music and teaching: the instrument on which Euell Porter so masterfully performed. Truly an instrument orchestrated by God.

## Remembering Dr. Euell Porter by Dewayne Beaty

Upon entering HSU in the fall of '54, I had hopes of becoming a member of the A Cappella Choir but I had no formal vocal training. I asked and received an opportunity to "tryout" for Dr. Porter. At the end of the "tryout" I remember him saying to me, Beaty, I want to put you in our Chapel Choir and help get that fine voice God has given you trained and then we will be ready for you in the A Cappella Choir. I was greatly disappointed, but he was right (as usual). So I had one year to sing under his direction and what a year it was! Lyndal Bingham, J.E. Boggs, Vernon (my roommate), Ralph Gibson, Pat Kirita, Barbara Ralls, Carol Scott, Sarah Willis, Becky Kelmer, Sue McCown, Peggy McKibben, Lynn Meeks, Patsy Tidwell, Richard Fancher, Veril Price, Jackie Shirley, Bill Moore, Lawrence Webb, Jackson Williams, Don Scargall, Nanallene Miller, and Betty Baty are some that I remember in the Chapel Choir that year. The Four Flushers Quartet: Lyndal Bingham, Ralph Gibson, David McPherson and Hugh Sanders were a part of our touring program. We sang all over West Texas.

It was during that tour I, along with all the other members of the choir, learned some very valuable lessons from Dr. Porter. Before our last concert in a church worship service on that tour, the choir was eating a meal and enjoying a relaxing time before the service when someone went to a piano and began to play some "jazzed up" versions of several hymns. Soon most of the choir joined in. Then Dr. Porter came rushing into the room and addressed the entire choir for about 15 minutes or more. During that lecture I learned three very important theological truths: 1) The fear of God! 2) Reverence for God and God's House and 3) A deep respect for the privilege, honor and responsibility of singing praises to the Lord and leading congregations in worship. During our presentation that evening, we sang many of our songs without Dr. Porter having to use his hands, only his eyes. It was a very moving experience. I can assure you that many times, in many types of worship experiences, in many countries I have remembered that lesson learned from Dr. Porter in a fellowship hall in a small West Texas Town on a spring Sunday evening. Thank you Dr. Porter, I will be forever grateful!

## EUELL PORTER

### Thoughts of Lyndal Bingham

First thought: One of God's choice men in choral church music.

A friend - From the first time I saw him direct his Chapel Choir from Hardin-Simmons at 1st Baptist in Spur, TX, I knew he was so much more than just a very polished choral director. He was so warm to invite two really country boys, Ralph Gibson and myself to come to Hardin-Simmons and musically fulfill our God calling to church music ministry.

Second thought: The more involved I became at Hardin-Simmons, the more I realized, by observation, what a great choral interpreter he was. He always knew exactly the sound he wanted from each piece of music. All of this came from his facial expression, his eyes, and even the exact way he held his fingers on his right hand. Intonation and wording. "Always make sure the people on the back row can understand the words and appreciate the exact intonation of each note."

Last thought: I always wanted to stand, to interpret, to understand the musical message and try my best to emulate the exact presence of Dr. Euell Porter. My church music calling was always on a little higher plane because of him.

## Remembering Dr. Euell Porter by Jack Bottoms

My first knowledge of Mr. Euell Porter (as he was known back then) came when I enrolled at Sam Houston State Teachers College in the fall of 1948. Soon after I arrived on campus I learned that Mr. Porter had accepted the position of Choral Music Director at Hardin-Simmons University. So, he had departed Sam Houston at the end of the spring semester of 1948 and I had just missed him. However, as I began attending church at the First Baptist Church of Huntsville I became acquainted with a host of people who spoke very highly of Mr. Porter and of their sorrow at losing their Choir Director, at First Baptist and at the college.

The Pastor of First Baptist tried his best to get me to leave Sam Houston and follow Mr. Porter to Hardin-Simmons. However, I could not afford the expense of attending a private college and gave up the idea of moving to Abilene. I completed two years of work toward a degree in chemistry before withdrawing from college to enlist in the United States Air Force. I returned to Sam Houston on a TDY assignment from the Air Force and received my degree in the summer of 1953. I returned to the Air Force and in the summer of 1954 married a wonderful young lady I had met during my final semester at Sam Houston. We moved off base in San Antonio and lived there until I was discharged from the Air Force in December of 1954.

Throughout the six years following my initial enrollment at Sam Houston I was constantly coming in contact with someone encouraging me to "go study with Mr. Porter" and, as a result of a life-changing decision in the fall of 1954, I contacted Mr. Porter (now Dr. Porter) about attending Hardin-Simmons in the fall of 1955. I will never forget his response. He wrote, "I am sure Hardin--Simmons would love to have you attend there and I will help you in anyway I can to contact the right people. However, I need to tell you that I will be teaching at Baylor University, beginning with the fall semester of 1955." I was overjoyed at hearing this news because Waco is only 60 miles from my hometown of Jewett.

So, June and I moved to Waco and I enrolled at Baylor in the summer of 1955. Beginning in September of that year Dr. Porter became my Choir Director at Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco and at Baylor University. What a joy it was to finally work under the direction of the man I had heard so many wonderful things about.

We had some great times during the two short years I was at Baylor and I will never forget the help Dr. Porter gave me as a wonderful friend and teacher. I loved him dearly and admired him so much for the Christian example he lived. This was very evident in his relationships with his students and in his devotion to his wife, Christine. I realized very early in our relationship at Baylor that all the wonderful things I had heard about this man over a span of almost ten years were true. No wonder so many students down through the years have continued to speak of Dr. Porter with love and admiration.

He was loved by many, many people as was evidenced by the number of former students who attended and participated in his memorial service. I have mentioned what a great teacher Dr. Porter was but have yet to give credit to his wonderful talent as a Choral Director. I know that every director has his own way of directing and there are those whose techniques were very different from those used by Dr. Porter. I have sung under the direction of several men since my years at Baylor and have yet to find one who comes even close to the stature of this man where choral conducting is concerned. I guess this was due, in large measure, to the wonderful talent he had in leading young people in the realm of choral music, especially sacred choral music. He was a dedicated Christian and this was always evident in the way he conducted. It was a day-by-day learning experience to sing in one of his choirs. I owe what talent I possess as a choral director to the leadership of Euell Porter.

Dr. Porter was always anxious to help his students even after they had graduated and moved on to their life's work. Upon completion of my degree at Baylor I taught chemistry in high school for two years while I waited for a job to open up in choral music. In the summer of 1959 Dr. Porter recommended me for the choral position at Thomas Jefferson High School in Port Arthur, Texas. After teaching eight years at Thomas Jefferson our family moved to Boulder, Colorado where I began work on a doctorate degree. I didn't get a chance to visit Dr. Porter very much during these years but I never forgot him and his influence on my life and the lives of my Wife and five children. When I wrote my dissertation he was one of the three people listed at the beginning of the paper as having been a special inspiration to me. We moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1972 to accept a teaching position at Missouri Baptist University.

At the completion of eight years at Missouri Baptist I was asked to become Dean of the School of Music at Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, having been recommended for that position by Dr. Euell Porter. I retired from Howard Payne in 1993 and moved back to my boyhood home in Jewett, Texas. I was able

to visit with Dr. Porter from time to time and each time we spent precious minutes remembering those great days at Baylor. I was saddened when I received the call that he had passed away and was glad, as I have mentioned previously, that I was able to sing in the choir at his memorial service. My sadness that day was made more bearable by the knowledge that Dr. Porter had joined his beloved Christine in that celestial home in Heaven. I will always cherish the memory of this wonderful man.

## Remembering Dr. Euell Porter by Phil and Jennette [Crouch] Briggs H-SU

Maurice, thank you for including me in the Euell Porter tribute. Dr Porter was probably the most influential person in my life after high school. I entered H-SU in the fall of 1951 and sang in the a cappella choir all four years, serving as president in 54-55, Porter's last choir in Abilene. He was my voice teacher and several courses in music, conducting etc. (also sang under his direction at FBC, Abilene for one year.

He recommended me to my first church, FBC, Munday, TX following Bill Hardage! (later taught voice, hymnology and founded the Men of Midwestern choir from 65- 71. Porter's guidance even after his move to Baylor remained a main resource for me. The guidance he gave those of us who were soloists or in vocal groups was without peer.

My strongest memory includes many of the names listed in this email, Bill Denton, Bill and Delana O'Brien, P. J. Newsome [Baylor & Midwestern Seminary], John Bullock, Britton Wood, Ed Wiggins, Ed Nichols, Dick Waters, Peggy Muston, The Hardy Twins, Norman Ward, Tommy Adams, Ron Bates, Loretta Guillette, etc. I will be retiring from SWBTS, 8/04 after teaching for 40 years. Hardly a day goes by that Euell Porter does not cross my heart/mind. Beautiful Savior will linger forever in my mind and on my tongue since I still sing and enjoy music. Jennette can still smell the fumes of the bus rounding the corner from a concert or tour. Dr. Porter visited us in the 60's Little Rock and while turning through our scrapbook, he remarked that his 51-52 was probably his best one. Now all the rest of you can argue about that, especially you Baylor folk. Do you remember the poem, "For the common things of every day, God gave man speech in the common way, And for higher things men think and feel, God gave the poet words to reveal, But for heights and depth no tongue can reach, God gave man music, the soul's own speech.



Blessings and Prayers thanking God for the gift of memories.

REMEMBERING EUELL PORTER  
by Bill Davis,  
Retired Director of the sanctuary choir at  
Lake Rayburn United Methodist Church

I was privileged to be in Euell Porter's choir at Baylor University for the one year I attended. I found a great number of talented musicians in that choir due to Euell's recruiting ability.

Dr. Porter was quite gifted in his selections of music. The choir always sounded chorally proficient and the music pleasing. It was my privilege to hear his final performance for T. M.E.A. I was amazed at the excellent quality of the vocal production, and his choice of music was the best I had ever heard from his choirs. Yes, Euell was a great Christian influence on many young people who worked under him, myself included.

Remembering Euell Porter  
by Mary F. Fitzgerald (Day) H-SU 1950-54

The highlight of my college days was having the privilege of singing in Chapel Choir the first year and the A Cappella Choir the other three years. The music truly came alive for me, thanks to Mr. Porter. The verse he quoted sometime during every concert truly became the way I felt about music:

"For the common things of everyday,  
God gave man speech in the common way.  
For higher things men think and feel,  
God gave the poet words to reveal.  
For height and depth no tongue can reach,  
God gave man music, the soul's own speech."

Remembering Euell Porter  
by Priscilla Lawhorne Hyson  
Hardin-Simmons University 1953-1957

Dr. Euell Porter was a gigantic Christian mentor to many young men and women who sang in the choirs he conducted over the years of his teaching and beyond his formal teaching career. Those who sang in the choirs he conducted shall always remember "Fairest Lord Jesus," and the ethereal feeling that came over their spirit as they sang with his direction.

You would hear and feel the Holy Spirit within and see Him shining in the eyes of those who expressed the depth of their salvation while singing together this beautiful hymn of Faith. We knew we were all united forever in our love for Christ. Yes, we learned "music is the soul's own speech."

Our respect and love for Dr. Euell Porter lives on today through his many student friends. His influence shall survive for years to come. His gentle kind personality exemplified Christ's in the eyes and minds of those who knew him. He probably was not a perfect man, but to us at that time in our lives, he seemed the perfect man. He was a father figure to many students. We learned people should be gentle and kind to all they meet when at all possible.

Remembering Euell Porter  
by Melvin D. Jasek, BA 1956  
Hardin-Simmons University

Thank you for letting me be a part of Dr. Porter's recognition celebration. As for so many others, he was such an inspiration to me, a mentor and a person for which I am truly so thankful to have known. The time that I spent with him at Hardin-Simmons and at First Baptist Church in Abilene set my standard for choral music and appreciation of the wonderful world of choral music he exposed me to. Even now after fifty years, I hear the sounds of his choirs and I search continuously for those sounds in music today.

I was a student in high school in 1950 or 1951 and Dr. Porter was the clinician at choir contest. In a few spare minutes he listened to a male quartet and as a result offered the four of us scholarships to Hardin-Simmons. Two of us accepted the scholarship and sang in the A Cappella Choir under Dr. Porter's direction from

September 1952 through May 1955 when he left for Baylor University. We also sang in a men's quartet and in the choir at First Baptist Church.

While Dr. Porter was a strong disciplinarian in his rehearsals, he also enjoyed a good laugh. During a dress rehearsal of the anthem "The Creation" by Wiley Richter, a choir member, Bill Hardage who was the soloist pulled a stunt during his solo, which totally wrecked the rehearsal. Dr. Porter dismissed the choir with tears of laughter. In the three years with Dr. Porter, I don't remember any other rehearsal being interrupted by a choir member.

I remember the choir tours and the annual concerts in Behrens Chapel at Hardin-Simmons, but most of all I remember the thrill and joy of the music and the spiritual experience of just being a part of a choir directed by Dr. Porter. I can still see his face and eyes, the small movement of hands in conducting and the love of God he shared with his students.

I have enclosed some articles, pictures, and programs, which I hope you can use. The article from the Range Rider, "A Personal Tribute to Euell Porter" by Jack Yates, really sums it all up. How fortunate we are to have known Dr. Porter.

### Remembering Dr. Euell Porter by Virginia Lee Allen Lewis

Thank you for making this tribute to Dr. Euell Porter.

I was only in his Chapel Choir for one year in 1957-58, but found that it was one of the best years in my singing career. He was an excellent director and one of the finest gentlemen that I have ever known. He was responsible for making some of the best memories of my Baylor days. My years at Baylor were from 1957 to graduation in 1959.

### Euell Porter: My Great Mentor in Choral Music by James T. Loden

Euell Porter's Christian character, his dedication to choral music, and his personal concern for others were the defining attributes of his life.

My first encounter with Euell Porter was at an Interscholastic League Contest

where I won a First Division in Solo, and he was quick to persuade me to come to Sam Houston State. His genuine interest and invitation met with my Methodist preacher father's approval and thus began four years, not only under his baton, but under the influence of one of the most dedicated Christians I have ever known. He expected and demanded much of his students in choirs as well as elsewhere. Respect and concern were two lessons taught and learned well.

Porter's music in those early years was driven by a desire to create a choral tone that could be described as lush, dark, and organ like. He selected voices that he could train to produce that quality and thus he chose mostly sacred music that lent itself to this quality. His interpretations were very personal and always suited to the texts.

Students were expected to memorize the music by the second rehearsal of a piece which required a great deal of discipline. Rapt attention was given to his directing and interpretation. Music was never held in performance. His choirs had a great appeal to audiences and getting 50 or so singers to sound like one was an interesting mystery to many listeners. Porter's dedication to his ideal was unwavering.

Dr. Porter was very involved in choral activities at the state level, and throughout the years probably recruited more students to attend Sam Houston State University, Hardin-Simmons University, and Baylor University than any other single person. He sought help for many students who could not afford the cost of a higher education.

Shaping lives and building character seemed to be as important to him as producing a perfect choral tone. He had many followers and admirers, and through his motivating leadership he influenced many to follow choral music careers in colleges, churches, or public schools.

I owe great thanks to Euell Porter for my career in church music and the influence he had in my life. He was my great mentor!

### **Dr. Euell Porter, Gone But Not Forgotten Donna Magee Lunsford, Baylor University 1965-1968**

My earliest memories include Dr. Euell Porter. I had a unique family relationship with him, as my father had studied music under Dr. Porter in the 1940s at Sam

Houston. In fact I was born while my dad, John Magee, was a student there and was president of the choir. He and Mrs. Porter were friends with my parents through the years. My dad settled in the Brazosport area, where he taught choral music for 36 years. I remember once during one of our infamous Gulf Coast hurricanes, Dr. Porter called to check to see if we were okay-the phone call was by orders of Mrs. Porter!

When Dr. Porter taught at Baylor, his choir camps in the summer became quite popular. I went to these camps every summer beginning in junior high, and looked forward to them all year long. I loved music, and I loved singing under Dr. Porter's direction. We who were students from the Brazosport area (Lake Jackson, Freeport, and Clute) enjoyed getting to know other students from different areas in Texas who also came year after year. My love of Baylor grew through the years and I just never considered going anywhere else but there.

It was as a freshman at Baylor in 1965 that I first got to sing in the choir under the direction of Dr. Porter just as my dad had done when he was a college student! My sophomore year, I started out in the Chapel Choir and got promoted to the A Cappella Choir, the choir that got to go to New York and sing at Carnegie Hall in 1967. I remember how hard I had to work to learn all the music because I was put into A Cappella Choir later than everybody else. At one point I got so stressed out and tired that I sat in his office and cried. He was so kind and just listened to me, which is all I really wanted him to do. Then I went back to a practice room to learn more music!

I got over my stress and had the time of my life in New York City on that tour! We sang a wonderful concert and got to experience an opera and a Broadway show and eat in nice restaurants. Some of us even went to coffee house in Greenwich Village, where we sang some of our music from "Man of La Mancha." It was the first time in my life that I felt like an adult- no curfews- Dr. Porter just expected his students to behave as he knew we would and be where we were supposed to be at all times! He trusted us. That was part of his special personality.

Years later, in 1975, after I was married and living in Denver, Colorado, Dr. Porter brought his choir there on tour. My husband and I kept a couple of boys from our hometown who were in the Baylor choir. We also had Dr. Porter over for dinner. I have a picture of him holding my daughter who was just a few months old at the time. He was just like family to me. That daughter of mine, Julie, also went to Baylor in 1992, but Dr. Porter had retired by then.

He was such a great man, who left a legacy to many of us. Dr. Porter was tough but kind. He was strict-but he trusted us to live up to what he expected. All of us who sang under him knew he got a very special choral sound that was exceptional. I'm sure many of his students (like my father) went on to honor him by becoming excellent choral directors as well. And many others of us have continued to honor him by letting choral music be a part of our lives in one way or another through the years. I will never forget him or the fabulous music that I learned while I was in his choir. God bless his memory.

### Euell Porter Remembered by Anita Mobley Gilchrest

I was in Dr. Porter's freshman choir 1965-1966 and the A Cappella choir 1966-1967 at Baylor University. He was a tremendous teacher and got the best from all of us. He was tough and expected us to give him our best. We were expected to work on music on our own and to memorize what we performed. His musical programs always attracted full houses. The A Cappella Choir received a standing ovation at the Music Educators National Conference in April of 1967. I would have continued to try out for places in his choir's after my sophomore year, but I was in the School of Nursing and spent my junior year and senior year at the Medical Center in Dallas. I truly missed singing in the university choirs after going to Dallas. Dr. Porter encouraged us to participate in other special musical groups opportunities such as the B R H choir, the opera chorus, etc. He was genuinely loved and respected by his students.

In the year since graduation from Baylor, I have sung in many church choirs. The things that I learned from Dr. Porter are still part of what I bring to the choir. Choral music is still one of my loves.

### Euell Porter Remembered By Eloin Bradley Bates

Dear Dr. Porter,

Echoing the thoughts of countless others, I want you to know that you are the reason I chose Baylor for my source of higher education. Even during those short years when you would suggest your retirement, we would plead with you to wait

until we graduated and then it would be okay! I've wondered how last year's underclassmen felt knowing you wouldn't be there next year. I'm thankful you did stay until I left.

You've made such an impact on every area of my life and in turn, I hope I am passing these values to my children. It is impossible for me to participate in my musical activity, whether performing or listening, without doing it with "Porter scrutiny." (Remember the time our choral conducting class was adjudicating high school choirs for practice, and you and I suggested that a soprano in one of the choirs be sent to PE class instead of singing? Ha!) I thank you for your influence. It has become a means of facilitating enjoyment and accomplishment.

My only regret from having been under your leadership is that every choir director and church musician have not nor will have the opportunity to learn from you. It is difficult not to judge others by the standards you've set for yourself, as well as those instilled in us who have worked with you. Your ways are our ways in as many ways as possible to imitate you. Thus, my life is much fuller and satisfying because of you. Thank you.

With much love and respect,  
Eloin Bradley Bates