



Ruth Whitlock

Material prepared by Mary Jane Phillips

Biographical Sketch of Dr. Ruth Whitlock by Mary Jane Phillips

Dr. Ruth Hendricks Whitlock was born in 1935 in McAllen, Texas. She and her sister, Judith, attended McAllen public schools. Dr. Whitlock graduated from McAllen High School in 1953. She attended college at Tulane University, receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Piano. While at Tulane, she directed her first chorus - a group of her Kappa Alpha Theta sorority sisters! She stated that it was "more fun to boss people around than to sit in a practice room all day", and a legendary career in choral and elementary music education was born. She later received her M.A. from Occidental College in Los Angeles, California and her Ph. D. from the University of North Texas. During her education, Dr. Whitlock studied with some of the foremost choral musicians and music educators in the world, including Julius Hereford, Elaine Brown, Edwin Gordon and her beloved mentor, Howard Swan.

Ruth Whitlock's remarkable teaching career began as a student teacher for Bev Henson in McAllen. Her first paid teaching job was general music for third through eighth graders in Georgetown. She began a volunteer high school choir in Georgetown, and this choir earned a first division in its first contest. Charles Nelson was one of her judges at that contest, and she was still gratified years later by his glowing assessment of her musicianship at her very first choir contest. After two years in Georgetown, she taught elementary music in Austin for several years.

Charles Nelson then invited her to come teach with him at Edinburg H.S. and establish a "music conservatory" for students in the Valley. Unfortunately, these two talented people never worked together. Dr. Nelson accepted a teaching position at a college in Tennessee, and Dr. Whitlock (then Ruth Summers) took over his job as director of choirs at Edinburg H.S. She remained there for eight years - achieving great success with her choirs. She stopped teaching public school for a few years upon the adoption of her son, Hal. During his preschool years, she taught private piano lessons from home.

When Hal was older, she began teaching elementary music again - this time at Sam Houston Elementary in McAllen, one of the poorest schools in the barrio. She was recognized by her students and colleagues as one of the most inspiring elementary music teachers they had ever known. Some of her Sam Houston elementary students even went on to become music teachers. Dr. Whitlock then moved to the

Metroplex and taught choir and general music at Vivian Field MS in the Carrollton-Farmer's Branch ISD. After her tenure at Vivian Field MS, she began her doctorate at the University of North Texas. Serving as a teaching fellow at UNT, she taught music for elementary education majors and directed the Women's Chorus. She was soon hired as Director of Music Education Studies at Texas Christian University. During her years at TCU, she cheerfully taught everything from freshman ear training to Choral Methods, as well as directing the Chapel Choir for many years.

It was during her years at TCU that Dr. Whitlock's remarkable gift for "teaching teachers to teach" emerged. Her students learned not only HOW to teach music, but WHY she felt it was the most important job in the world. She took great pride in the fact that her former students taught music at every level from elementary to university. Many continue to be very successful, and still share her resounding joy for teaching.

She was a legendary and beloved professor at TCU. She was honored with a Mu Phi Epsilon Outstanding Faculty Award in 1979, as well as a Mortar Board Preferred Professor in 1987 and 1993. In 1988, her former students honored her influence by funding a Texas Choral Directors Association scholarship in her name. Ruth Whitlock was a lifelong learner and a great scholar of various music education theories. She was a contributing author to the state-adopted textbook *Sing!*. She also wrote a series of books titled *Choral Insights* which help choral directors incorporate music information from different historical periods into their teaching. She created the *Vocal Connections* sight singing tapes, CDs and booklet and edited the *Songs for Sight Singing* series published by Southern Music. She published articles on various music education topics in the *Choral Journal*, *Southwestern Musician* and *Texas Sings*. She was listed in the *World Who's Who of Women*, *World's Who's Who of Musicians*, *Who's Who in the South* and *Southwest*, *Who's Who in American Education*, *Who's Who in American Women* and *Foremost Women of the Twentieth Century*. She was a proud Episcopalian, and a member the Chancel Choir of All Saints Episcopal Church in Ft. Worth. She also held memberships in the American Choral Directors' Association, Texas Choral Directors' Association, Texas Music Educators' Association, Mu Phi Epsilon, Pi Kappa Lambda and Kappa Alpha Theta.

Dr. Ruth Whitlock died in 1995 at age 60 after a lengthy battle with breast cancer. She is survived by her son, Hal; her mother, Lucile; and her sister, Judith. Her joy for teaching and unending devotion to her students is her great legacy. The ripples of her life's work continue, and we are all better for having known her.

Whenever and wherever a group of her former students gather, the conversation invariably turns to remembrances of Ruth Whitlock. Someone always says "I wish she were here so I could tell her about?" The "?" is always an important event in one of our lives - sometimes musical, sometimes not. I can think of no greater tribute to the influence of Dr. Ruth Whitlock than those words. She was the consummate teacher, and a lifelong presence in her students' lives. Instilling in us the pure joy of teaching was her wonderful gift to her students. We were never quite finished being Dr. Whitlock's students – even after graduation. We continue to be her students even now.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Dede Duson

Having heard of and about Ruth Whitlock for so many years, finally our paths did cross during the years when she was teaching at TCU. Through mutual friends, I knew that her professional standards were very high. As she and they all work together on various music education projects, I was able to observe firsthand her most gracious and convincing ways. It was obvious that she loved teaching and love sharing her enthusiasm and passion toward doing it in the right way!

Then I begin to see this very kind and caring side of this tenured Dr. Whitlock with a whimsical, creative flair about her as well. She was so respectful of every aspect of music making, including the efforts of us “current” composers. Often she would share, analyze, or perform our pieces with her classes, while she herself was extremely creative in presenting them. As a 50th birthday present to me, she wrote and sang three very disjunct and imaginative haiku type settings of texts about friendship. Ruth possessed a winning smile, a teasable personality, a charming manner. She thoroughly enjoyed all gatherings in the name of good food and good friends! She was proud to be from the Valley, and proudly was a devoted Episcopalian. She was taken from us far too soon, but always she will be remembered with great fondness and respect.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Rosemary Heffley

The mental image is still present from those many years ago . . . Ruth Summers,

slightly flamboyant (!) full of life and music, very funny and, just a bit irreverent. In fact most of the infamous Texas choral directors of the 70's seemed that way to me.

Those perceptions were to change, however. Late in the 70s Ruth was completing her doctorate from UNT. The final dissertation project involved a practical and extremely useful method of integrating the teaching of style and history of performance literature in the choral classroom. To assuage concerns of the advisors as to academic value (!!) she called on several of us high school directors to assist her in field studies. We became her Choral Insights guinea pigs! She was strategies and Kjos later published the project in four style periods. A real triumph for the now Dr. Ruth Whitlock, TCU Professor of Music Education.

Happily we became friends and colleagues enjoying many adventures together, always full of laughter, philosophical chatter and, yes, that wee bit of irreverence crept in from time to time. A few seem pertinent to mention:

. . . innumerable phone calls and several trips to Austin for TMEA Symposium planning. Her contributions to those gatherings [1977, 1980, 1985] were enormous. Many rather short-sighted critics suggested TMEA had better ways to spend its resources than on such "lofty" Topics. Gentle and persistent prodding by leaders, including our dear Ruth, enabled and assured success of those projects.

. . . her penchant for seeking the best from whom to learn led many of us to friendships with Howard Swan, undeniably an enormous influence.

. . . Together surviving (barely) a hike at Aspens Ute trail one summer afternoon.

. . . For gentle suggestion/invitation to redesign her garden in her new home. . . Since I enjoy outdoor work! Whew! Speaking of surviving. . . But, we were so pleased that she seemed to take real pleasure in it as her illness intensified.

. . . and, of course, the annual burst they get into: May 7th - J. Brahms; May 8th - R H; May 9 DD; and May 10 - Dr. Ruth! (naturally she always claimed to be the youngest!) Laughter, wonderful meals and yes, a wee bit of spare expense all added to the great times over a 20 year period.

Columnist Robert Wilson introduced us to a new term some years ago. It seems most adequate to describe Ruth. Duende - - - To do something - anything - with a minimum fuss and a maximum of style. It has to do with no wasted motion and the

ability to convey the exact motion required without sentimentality. Duende is the ability to deliver, embracing grace and class. But, it encompasses more than that, it is a collection of that use whose worth is so inherent that no outside applause is required. Ruth embraced that ideal of duende and shared it with all of us. It is no wonder we miss her, still.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Charles Nelson

It was during the middle 1950s that I first became aware of this remarkable woman. Bev Henson had invited me to McAllen High School to clinic a girls' choir.

Ruth Whitlock was completing her degree from Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans and was doing her practice teaching with Bev in the McAllen High School choral program. From the beginning, even as a student, one could tell this was a special person.

Several years later, after I had judged her choir at a UIL contest, I knew she was the right person to have in a new, comprehensive program of enriched teaching I had dreamed for the Edinburg CISD. She agreed to come work with us. I had no idea that at that very time I would be offered a teaching position at a college in Tennessee that I could not refuse. Instead of being colleagues in this wonderful educational venture, she actually took my place in Edinburg. (I've always wondered what would have happened if I had stayed.)

Ruth's teaching prowess became legendary. I followed her teaching progress with great interest. Once, years later, when I was visiting McAllen, I visited a third grade class she was teaching, and it was one of the most extraordinary demonstrations of teaching music I have ever seen. The depth of her teaching and the student's response was amazing. I had never seen anything like it.

The professional teacher, Ruth, always planned for the future and wanted to know where we were going and what process would best help us reach our goals. She was not satisfied to teach just another song to the children. She had some grasp of the enormity of what we were trying to do and wanted all of us to do a better job. Her influence caused the first TMEA Symposium which examined this problem. As far as I know, we've only had one subsequent symposium. We should have one at least every five years!

Her influence expanded as she taught Music Education courses at Texas Christian University and imbued her students with not only the knowledge of techniques, but an enthusiasm to become the best teachers they could possibly be. Through her students, and their students, and their students, the influence of Ruth Whitlock will be everlasting.

As cancer ravaged her body, she continued to teach. One evening I called to see how she was doing. She had just come home from teaching. I did not recognize her voice. She told me she was on the way to the hospital. She died before morning. Those who knew her shall never forget her.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Armentia Newcomb

Dr. Ruth Whitlock . . . what a name. My first memories of Ruth go way back to the year of 1962. At that point in time her name was Ruth Summers. She was a “Valley” girl. Ruth grew up in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Her parents lived in McAllen and her grandparents lived in Mission, Texas. I actually knew her grandparents before I knew her real well. I was a freshman in high school at Edinburg high school. Ruth was the choir teacher.

I come from a large family and she had “four” of us in Choir all at the same. Behind Houston, Tim Houston, Jim Houston and me. All of the four rich and blessed by having had her as a teacher. The three boys all got degrees. Jim Houston became an orchestra teacher. All four of us to this day still participate in singing in a variety of ways. One thing Ruth liked about the four of us is that we were “Church of Christ” and that meant we could sight read music because we did not use musical instruments and the boys all knew how to conduct.

She was always encouraging, pushing, nudging us to do our very best. She had a way of making you love music of all different varieties. She had extremely high expectations and somehow you never wanted to disappoint her so you worked hard to reach those goals.

There were several favorite things that happened as a student of hers besides the wonderful music and teaching. One was getting to have her come to your house for dinner. It was chosen with care and you felt like you were having royalty come to your house. She was always gracious and made you feel very special.

Another thing that I remember was if we got straight A's we got to go to her house for a special party. Most of us came from poor families and her house was something else. One of my first trips away from home was a trip Ruth plan to TCU in Fort Worth, Texas. We got to stay in TCU dorms and perform there.

Any time any of us went home we always went to the choir rehearsal at Edinburg High School. She always had us sit and sing with her choir. Ruth and I reconnected when she moved to Fort Worth. I can still remember how excited I was. Guess where I got to sing . . . You got it, TCU with one of her choirs.

I kept in touch with her until the day before she died. She was calling to ask how my brother Jim was, he had a tumor and has since passed on. I will never forget that especially at a time in her life when the days were numbered. When I went to the funeral I looked around and wondered how many of the other people felt the loss of such a wonderful, gifted person. What about all the students who would not benefit from her wonderful style of teaching? She is missed still to this day.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Sally Schott

Dr. Ruth Whitlock was a shining example of a visionary educator who utilized her many years of successful public school teaching to create a valid music education program at the university level as well as to provide innovative teaching materials for the secondary choral director. Her insistence upon the importance of adopting a philosophical approach to teaching music was aptly demonstrated in her own career. To her, the "why" of teaching was equal in importance to "what" and "how".

As one of the teachers selected to participate in the primary study for her 1981 dissertation, "The Design and Evaluation of Study Materials for integrating musical information into the Choral Rehearsal", I had the opportunity to utilize her distinctive approach to performance class curriculum with students at South Houston High School. These materials formed the basis for her unique series of publications entitled "Choral Insights".

A greater privilege was getting to coordinate the writing team for the secondary textbook "Sing!", a project which allowed Dr. Whitlock to collaborate in creating student chapters and teacher's guides to developing music literacy. It was marvelous to see her creative mind at work. I cherish having been able to prepare

and present teacher's workshops with her. Watching her interact with teachers with such fervor, logic and sense of purpose was simply unforgettable.

Ruth Whitlock espoused lofty ideals but was always mindful of the necessity of following a step-by-step process to develop skills and understanding. She was imaginative, tenacious and unfailingly inspiring to all who worked with her. Her contributions to music education are of inestimable value. Ruth Whitlock was truly one of a kind.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Amby Tanner

Aside from my mom and dad, no single person has had more influence on my life than Dr. Ruth Whitlock. I met Dr. Whitlock when I was a junior at TCU in 1974. At that time I was a choral music education major without much of an idea of why I had chosen that direction for my degree. Thanks to Dr. Whitlock, I not only found out why I wanted to be a choir director, but also because of her influence, discovered a passion for the profession. That passion is with me still today.

You know, it was a lot more than just the nuts and bolts of teaching choir in Texas, which she certainly did teach us. It was the joy of teaching itself that she managed to show us that I am most thankful for. There are many very talented choir directors in Texas, but no matter how great a vocalist, pianist, or conductor they are, I feel sorry for many of them because they find no real fulfillment or pleasure whatsoever in the art of teaching. They are not the students of Dr. Whitlock.

I wish I was an author, or better yet a composer, in order to do some justice to what the lady meant to me. I won't go into any more detail other than to say she came into my life at the right time and that any success, and certainly all of the joys, I have experienced in my years at this job is directly related to the delight of knowing Dr. Whitlock.

Toward the end of my first year of teaching, I told her how much I had learned during that first year and how much better I would be next year. She told me something that I use every year to keep me going. She said, "Amby, if you ever get to the point that you think there is nothing more for you to learn in order for you to improve, then please, quit teaching. Learning how to be better teacher is a life long

task, it never stops.”

I appreciate her more each and every day that I teach.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by Amy Detrick Allibon
TCU, 1985-89

There are teachers that teach their subject, and there are teachers who teach people. Ruth Whitlock managed to do both with grace, wit, spunk, and the patience of Job. When I walked into her cluttered office at TCU during registration my freshman year, I remember stacks of papers, mounds of books, and struggling to find a path to her desk. She was my advisor, and I had to schedule my classes with her. I told her I wasn't sure about the whole music major thing - that maybe I wanted to be a communications major (must've been staying up late with all the girls going through rush in the dorm - they were ALL communications majors).

She made some passive/dismissive comment and filled out my schedule; the only non-music course was English. I left thinking, "Oh great, another adult who isn't going to listen to what I want." Notions of pursuing anything other than music vanished the moment I walked into my first TCU Chorale rehearsal. I was back in the music groove and loving the other people around me. We all seemed "different" from the typical TCU student, probably because we were significantly poorer. Dr. Whitlock was the regal matriarch of the music building -when she wasn't holed up in her cluttered office working on projects or advising students, she was shuffling through the halls with a cup of coffee in her hand, smiling at all of us over the top of her half glasses like a proud mama. I'm not sure we gave her all the much to be proud of in the early days, but she still smiled at us.

I had a class with Dr. Whitlock almost every semester for three years, but the most impacting class was Choral Organization and Management my junior year. I still have the two 3" binders from this class that are full of everything I need to teach successfully short of the patience and drive. I occasionally refer to those binders, looking for some article or reference that we touched in that class. I marvel at that year with Dr. Whitlock and the wealth of information and topics we covered. With only four students in the class, our time together was more intimate. We shared a lot of personal stories. She made us think and analyze music and the sounds of different choirs. She made us write and write well. She made us aware of the big picture of choral music.

She even made us memorize the TCDA officers by name and picture. She connected us with TCU graduates in the teaching field so we wouldn't be alone once we left her nest. We also had to read a book of our choice - any book - and discuss it with her in a private conference. I remember that meeting with her; it was perhaps my first insight into her as a person rather than just as a professor.

There were times during my TCU years that I worried that Dr. Whitlock was in an ivory tower. I was there during her fascination and intense study of Edwin Gordon; I could never fathom saying "do da di" with a group of kids. The lesson I was absorbing, albeit subliminally, was to keep learning. Dr. Whitlock stayed on the cutting edge and always wanted to discover ways to help kids learn better. Her constant quest for knowledge inspires me to this day, and my cluttered office is living proof!

My favorite times with Dr. Whitlock were the personal moments. I would look forward to watching her put on her bright coral lipstick before class. I would hope that she would wear her turquoise linen jacket - it was my favorite. I enjoyed hours at her house - I remember sharing experiences and more than one bottle of wine. I enjoyed sharing music with her. I loved her patience with all of us. I loved the time at the TMEA/TCU reunion that she had a little too much wine and stood on a chair and announced that she loved everyone in the room. I love being old enough now to understand some things I didn't then, and I hate that I can't share that with her. I love Ruth Whitlock - she saw things in me that I didn't see until years after her death. She not only taught me all she could in four years, she planted seeds for me to keep growing the rest of my life. I ache to share things with her to this day - to share my frustrations and successes with her. Her influence on my life and teaching is very personal, profound, and simply immeasurable.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Brad White

Ruth Whitlock has been for me, one of those constant voices of conscience. I was always fortunate to have outstanding teachers in my career. Ruth Whitlock is at the top of that list. I joked with my TCU students that my own teaching demeanor was simply a composite of personalities like Jim Casey, Charles Nelson, Ron Shirey, Bobbie Douglas, Cherie Townsend and of course, Ruth Whitlock. With all of these wonderful teachers influencing the way I taught, it's no wonder that my students stayed in a continual state of confusion!

Dr. Whitlock (I NEVER could bring myself to call her Ruth, even though she tried) was a constant inspiration to me in my classroom. I remember many moments in which she would "pop into my brain" as I was teaching. Often times, it would not necessarily be over musical decisions, but more often, when I was dealing with students and their hearts.

One of my favorite memories of Dr. Whitlock was singing with her in the Chapel choir at TCU. Even though Chapel Choir did not offer the refined musical experiences of other ensembles, it offered what was most important in my teaching career; an understanding of human nature. Dr. Whitlock had the uncanny ability to make you stop and think.

At the close of one concert, during the applause of a Handel piece, Dr. Whitlock held up a score for the audience to applaud for the COMPOSER. THAT was what I learned from Ruth Whitlock. I thank God for the wonderful influence Dr. Whitlock had on my life. To simply reduce a description of her to "influential teacher terminology" is not worthy of the depth of understanding which Ruth Whitlock brought to her students. She was a gracious, intelligent, motivating, loving lady who had a deep understanding of human nature. Our lives are all richer because she touched us so deeply.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by Brian Miller
Sam Houston State University

Ruth Summers (Whitlock) taught choral music for a short time in my hometown of Edinburg. Although she moved on before I joined the choral program in the sixth grade, her influence on music education continued to be felt in our community. Our paths would cross years later after I transferred to TCU to study choral music education.

"WONN-DERFUL" was one of Ruth Whitlock's favorite expressions, and the way she conveyed it brought new meaning to the word for me. One of my fondest memories was watching the joy on her face and in her eyes (over her signature half glasses) while she conducted Handel's Dixit Dominus. She loved music and loved sharing music, and I continue to be impressed as I reflect on her willingness to share her podium time with her choral music education students, so that we could have a taste of the joy of making music.

Like most choral directors, Dr. Whitlock had her way of wanting things done, but above and beyond that she was an educator and an advocate for her students. After discussing with me an uninspired effort at organizing my major project her way, she allowed me (after the end of the semester) to reorganize my project, giving us both the opportunity to explore another approach to the project. We agreed if I could convince her of the validity of approach, she would reconsider her assessment. I recall that experience with Dr. Whitlock regularly, for the lessons I learned far exceeded the bounds of that project, and I have shared that story many times. That was my last class with Ruth Whitlock.

While I was an undergraduate, I was aware that Ruth Whitlock was highly respected in music education circles, but it was only after I completed my coursework and had been teaching for several years that I realized how fortunate I was to have been a student of Ruth Whitlock. I recall some of the conversations she and I had after I had a few years of teaching junior-high and high school choral music under my belt. As in my hometown, she is missed, but her WONDERFUL influence continues to be felt in the music education community.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by Carol Smith, Conductor
SHSU Symphony Orchestra
3.20.95

Thirty-one years ago this month, I was first introduced to Ruth Whitlock when Bev Henson brought this young, energetic, articulate, extremely passionate teacher/musician to the TCU campus to speak to all of the young conductors. None of us have ever forgotten that visit for it changed our lives. Everyone who could become a professional musician/educator did--I was one of those lucky ones. When I was a young teacher, Ruth helped me organize the knowledge I had and define the parameters for its use. She promised me that I must know the scope and the sequence of each step I took with the minds and talents of the young musicians I taught. She did the same for all whom she taught. For it was through Ruth that new ways of seeing old information and old ways of seeing new information were honed until new ways of seeing new information began to develop into precise and meaningful skills.

In the 70s, on a regular basis Ruth reminded us--all of us--that we, as a profession and as a state --must look to our TMEA, as incredibly effective as we were, --and

ask to come together to consider our ways. It seemed two issues were pretty clear to her: For one, we had become focused on the product and had allowed the process to slip into disarray. We were so concerned about the performance of music that we had forgotten to consider the methods, materials, and the means we used to get to our performances and our goals. And more importantly, our students--these precious children-- had been, on occasion, inadvertently left out of our real planning-----Ruth never demanded that we retool ourselves and our work. She was much too genteel to demand. What she did do was to start planting the seeds for change by talking to us individually--and where 2 or 3 were gathered --to whip all of us into a frenzy---She made us believe it was our idea to ask ourselves who we were and what we were doing and, for God's sake, why we were doing it. She inspired us to move mountains and in the midst of that process, we began to define ourselves --with her help and that of many others. Our profession owes so much to so many--to Ruth we owe much for showing us the way to rediscovering our core.

How grateful we are, Ruth, that you taught us by example - to acknowledge and revere a life elevated by involvement with the art of music and with those dedicated to the teaching and performance of that music. There is none better than the honor to be chosen to pursue this profession. It is to Ruth that my mind runs when I read Henry's monologue at the Battle of Agincourt from Shakespeare's Henry V:

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

And now, we have to be what you taught us to be--we have to reach back and become what you always told us we already knew how to be. We ask for strength and courage unbounded by our own frailties, formed and modeled by your gift to us over these years together. You would be embarrassed by an uncontrolled outpouring of our group--so as you taught us, we will be measured. But never fear that we will forget your passion for life, for music, for teaching, for children, for humanity,and for all of us. Our assignment is clear--- the torch we must take in hand now...all of us.

And now to you, Ruth -- dear Friend, sweet Comrade, honored Colleague -- we say a gentle good-bye.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by Clara Dina Hinojosa
Texas Christian University - BME '87

While reading the book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of A Teacher's Life*, I was frequently reminded of Ruth. The author, Parker J. Palmer, raises important questions: "What subject shall I teach?" "How shall I teach?" and "Why should I teach?" However, he strongly asserts that two other questions regularly remain unaddressed: "Who is the self that teaches?" and "How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?"

Long before its 1998 publication, the concepts of this book were issues that deeply concerned Ruth and significantly shaped TCU's music education program. She was convinced that developing the "inner landscape" of young music ed. Students was an essential component in fashioning effective, creative, and successful educators.

She believed in teaching or "forming" the whole person - mind, body, spirit, and voice. Ruth's initiatives at the regional, state, and national level helped to reform and improve the face of choral music. Humble yet confident, she knew her efforts would positively impact future educators and music students around the country. Ruth Whitlock was not only the quintessential educator; she was the epitome of a life-long learner, continually exploring the meaning of life in all areas of human experience. She remains the single most influential person in the development of my skills as an educator. She may well be the greatest mentor that I will ever have.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by James Taylor, Class of 1991

Back in 1985 when I was considering college options, I spoke to my high school choir director and asked her opinion of the three schools that I was considering, namely North Texas, SMU or TCU. It was at that time that I first heard the name Ruth Whitlock. My choir director couldn't say enough about her. She told me that

she was a special lady and a great teacher and that I would be in the best of care studying with her. It was largely because of my choir director's input that I chose to go to TCU and work with this remarkable woman, who was destined to become one of the major influences in my life. Dr. Whitlock instilled in me the desire and need to teach and share with others the joys of music. She was an extremely caring, warm person who always made me feel welcome, supported, cared-for and capable. From no other teacher did I receive so much pertinent, practical and applicable information regarding music education, musical concepts and aesthetics in music. I remember her wonderful smile and laugh and often would stop by her office just to chat or say hello. We would often share thoughts about concerts we had attended, travels in Europe, art exhibits and even the church music that I was discovering in the choir at All –Saints Episcopal Church, where she was also a member. At the time I found it amusing, that while most people give something up for Lent, her "sacrifice" was to sing in the church choir. But, that was somehow typical Dr. Whitlock. She was a very busy lady, and it was her time that she sacrificed.

Since graduating from TCU, I have been living in Germany and working as a concert and opera singer. Even now, over 15 years later, scarcely a week goes by that I don't think about Dr. Whitlock, especially now that I find myself teaching voice as a college professor. Her image comes racing back to mind and I am reminded of words like "wonderful," "marvellous," "aesthetics," "right-brained" and of course "DOOda-dee!"

Through my career, I have had the opportunity to travel a great deal, and to sing in truly inspirational settings. I don't know how many times I have said to myself, "Oh, I WISH Dr. Whitlock could see or hear this!" I would love to see her purse her lips in that characteristic way? see her eyes light up, shake her head from side to side and hear her say, "Oh how wonderful Jimmy, just wonderful!" Before she died, she expressed interest in coming to visit me in Germany, but unfortunately that never came to be. Her strength during her sickness and her ability to "roll with the punches" was also profoundly inspirational to me. She never seemed to lose her ability to marvel at life's wonders. She was the definition of a great lady and I miss her terribly.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Janet Bonicelli Hatcher, BMEd 1990

I know many of us wish that we could have had the chance to tell Ruth Whitlock

what she meant to us and how she influenced our lives. Here is the letter I wish I had written to her.

Dear Dr. Whitlock,

Unfortunately, we all get busy with our daily routines, family, jobs and second jobs. We forget to say the things we need to say to the ones we love and admire. Hopefully you knew how we all felt. Hopefully you know now that you live in us each day in our classrooms.

From the moment I decided to go to TCU you were there to fight for me. Since I decided at the last minute to go to TCU instead of Sam Houston, I thought that it was too late for financial aid of any kind. You knew I needed the money and you believed in me. You pulled scholarships and grants out of your magic bag to help me in the door. I remember you calling me at my summer job and just telling me that everything would work out. I knew then that you were someone I could trust and count on in my times of need. The next four years I leaned on you and you never gave up on me. You always lifted me up. Your lessons went beyond the classroom. You always seemed calm and nurturing. How did you endure all of our talks together? My life dramas had to seem so silly to you. But, you always listened. You always cared. I'm sure that I'm not the only one who came to you with problems. I hope that I can show understanding and support to my students like you showed us.

I am a better choir director because of you. I found out that most college graduates aren't really ready for the classroom when they graduate. You prepared us for real life. You made us practice teaching in front of each other. Even though we were embarrassed and sometimes didn't quite get our lesson taught with expertise, you were there to help us. You told us what was wrong, had us figure it out ourselves, or even worse, we had our friends sitting there evaluating us. I guess you thought that if we could survive teaching in front of our peers, then we could survive teaching in public school. You were right!

Finally, you changed our profession. I know that many of us would be in completely different careers if it weren't for you. You spent hours and hours fighting for Fine Arts in Schools. You made sure that we would have jobs to go into when we left TCU. You are an icon in Choral Music Education.

Thank you for all you did for us, for loving us, for giving us skills, and for sharing yourself with us. I feel honored to have been your student.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Mary Jane Phillips, Class of 1989

I entered my freshman year at Texas Christian University in August 1985 as a vocal music education major. I had come to TCU upon the recommendation of Terrie Preskitt, a TCU alumnae and private voice teacher at my high school. I had met Ron Shirey, the TCU choral director. At that time, I didn't even know Ruth Whitlock existed, and I certainly had no idea of the influence she would have upon my teaching and my life.

There is a line in the book "Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom that says "Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine?" Ruth Whitlock was exactly that kind of teacher. She had an uncanny ability to see what her students could be - far beyond the unfocused teenagers that sat in front of her each day. I was never a great singer, never an All-State Choir member, never a star in conducting class, never a great music theory student - the list of "nevers" goes on and on. I know that many of the TCU music faculty saw me as silly sorority girl who was not talented enough to be a music major. Somehow, Ruth Whitlock saw me as something else entirely - a musician and a teacher. I will never be able to repay the debt I owe her for seeing what I could be, and then insisting that I live up to my potential. I know that any success I have ever had or ever will have in this profession that I love so dearly traces directly back to her vision for me. It is a profound lesson that I try to remember with my own students each day.

It is not, however, the most profound lesson she taught me. That lesson came just a few weeks before her death from breast cancer. When she became ill, I (along with several of her former students) chipped in to help teach her classes at TCU. I was visiting her in the hospital to discuss what her "babies" needed to be taught in the next class. Although she was weak and had lost her hair, she was sitting up in bed wearing a hat. After "school talk", we had a wonderful discussion about life and all its assorted challenges. She was cheerful and upbeat even though she was very ill. As I was about to go, fellow alum Brad White walked in to visit with his wife, Hollie and son, Taylor. Taylor, who was between 1 and 2 years old at the time, immediately crawled up onto the side of Dr. Whitlock's bed. This delighted her, since she had an unbridled love for children. As we all sat and talked, Taylor stared at Dr. Whitlock - obviously interested in the hat she had on. She looked at him, smiled and said "You want this hat, don't you?" - then handed it over to him without flinching. She sat there and grinned as Taylor played with the hat. With no hair on

her head, she acted as if no one should worry at all, so we didn't. I left a few moments later in tears at the grace I had just witnessed.

It was the classiest thing I've ever seen anyone do. It was also the last time I ever saw her. I was not at all surprised to find out that her last act on earth a few weeks later was to go teach her Choral Methods class on the day she died. But when I remember my last moment with her in the hospital, I am always reminded about the things that matter most in the world. Not only did she teach me how to live and teach, she showed me how to have humor and dignity in death. I will never forget her and I will never be quite finished learning from her.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Philip Glenn

Dr. Ruth Whitlock: Why I Do What I Do

Quite simply, Dr. Whitlock was responsible for me becoming a choral director. As of January of my senior year in high school, my plans were to attend North Texas and major in mathematics education. By the end of February I was applying for scholarships at TCU and auditioning for Ron Shirey and Ruth Whitlock in the basement choir room at University Christian Church.

The process of coming to love and respect this incredible woman enough to listen to her advice began a year and a half earlier. My wonderful choir and band directors all instilled in me a love for music. However, I always resisted choosing it as a career. My junior year at L.D. Bell High School, Bobbie Douglass introduced us to a dynamic lady who radiated joy and passion for music and for people. She taught at TCU and was doing research for her PhD, and we were going to be one of her test groups. Over the next year we worked through the material that would later become Choral Insights, answering questions and doing analysis for the literature we performed.

Ruth Whitlock stopped by regularly to assess our progress and get our feedback on the program. The next year, to our delight, the energetic (and now PhD) Whitlock was back. We worked weekly with her to prepare a presentation of her research for TMEA. In the process, we grew to know her warmth, her passion for teaching, her intellect, and her joy in all aspects of life. The choir wanted to thank her somehow for what she had taught us and the opportunity she had given us. The choir had to return home, so they took up a collection, and those of us who were

All-State members took her to dinner at Little Rhine. Dr. Whitlock made us all feel at ease, though none of us were experienced "fine diners". She grilled us all about our future plans and encouraged, without pushing, us to remain musicians - whether professionally or not. Personally, she advised me to look into the scholarships available at TCU for academics as well as music in order to make the school affordable for my family and contacted the Financial Aid department herself. With her support and her interest in me as an individual, my life path shifted, and I was off to Frogland.

I am sure that many will also relate how Dr. Whitlock prepared us for teaching - literature cards, "the notebook", listening evaluations, UIL form preparation, UIL contest observations, careful student teaching placement, and a plethora of information about "the real world". Or how she taught us to appreciate the aesthetic experience, to remember that the reason for music is to communicate on an emotional level, and to realize that the impact on the soul of the student is what music education is about. All these things are undeniably true, but the biggest impact of Dr. Ruth Whitlock on me was in helping me find my way to the calling of choral music education. Without her, my life would be much less interesting and satisfying.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Wayne Robinson

My tribute to Ruth Whitlock has to begin with a long, sad sigh. As I recall her image in my mind's eye, with those half-glasses perched on her nose, I can recall the focused energy she was able to generate and share on a daily basis. I was fortunate enough to have that energy focused in my direction as an undergrad, grad student, and finally a colleague over the course of 20-odd years. To summarize Ruth Whitlock's lasting impact on me isn't easy, but perhaps can be suggested as the sum of a series of contrasting information and ideas that we examined together for many years:

Philosophy vs. Psychology

Art vs. Science

Learning vs. Teaching

Idealism vs. Pragmatism

Spirituality vs. Religion

Left Brain vs. Right Brain

Right vs. Wrong

Visionary vs. Traditionalist
Sacred vs. Secular
Teacher vs. Friend
Liberal vs. Conservative

Over the years that Ruth and I collaborated, I can look back now and realize that it was very much like a long conversation that sometimes paused, changed direction, took a tangent, but never ended. Perhaps that's the way meaningful relationships grow and mature, by keeping a long chat going for months, years, and decades. So, that's why this tribute to Ruth had to begin with a sigh - a sigh of regret for not being able to finish a very important conversation with a very important person.

Remember Ruth Whitlock
by Terrie McKenzie Preskitt
A Tribute to My Mentor

Dr. Ruth Summers Whitlock was a “freshman” at TCU the same year that I was. We share the same birthday, both loved Dr. Howard Swan (even though I only knew him through singing under his baton at All State Choir in 1974 and she knew him as a colleague!), but our most important link was that we were passionate about the effects that we knew music could have on the lives of all people. She taught the music education kids so much more than “methods”. Her Chapel Choir rehearsals were a true lab for her courses, and back in the early days of her time in Fort Worth that choir was full of future teachers and conductors, learning directly from her rehearsals about how to incorporate style into the choral rehearsal. We learned from Schutz, Monteverdi, and Pergolesi through her splendid teaching. We were exposed to the value of careful planning and the choreographing of a choral rehearsal. She was hardly ever seen without legal pad in hand, always reworking her “plan”.

Learning was not limited to the masters of long ago. We were all privileged to observe the greatest area teachers thanks to Dr. Whitlock’s tireless efforts to convince the ‘powers-that-were’ that young teachers needed to see wonderful teachers teach. I’ll never forget the lessons learned from watching Bobbie Douglass, Teddy Brown, Linda Harley, Fredericka Braidfoot... What a privilege it was to help with the typing of then Ms. Whitlock’s doctoral manuscripts which eventually were published by Kjos, giving all teachers a guide for fabulous ways to teach the stylistic characteristics to students during the choral rehearsal. The

treasures jealously guarded in our “Whitlock Notebooks” actually became the blueprints for our first years of teaching.

Ruth Whitlock was a deeply spiritual person, and shared that gift with us as well. At her memorial service at her beloved Episcopal church, her priest shared with us that at the moment of her death, the Psalms were being read to her. This devotion to her Creator was evident in the literature she chose to teach, in the methods that she used to ensure the success of all students, and in the kindness that she showed to all.

Dr. Whitlock’s legacy is evident in so many of the fine choral music educators in and out of Texas. Many times in planning rehearsals, my thoughts turn to her – Would Dr. Ruth approve? – Does this teach enough or is there something deeper the kids can learn here? – Am I using integrity in this lesson? She guides me still.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered
by James Jordan
Westminster Choir College

To Everyone who knew Ruth Whitlock:

When I was a young person in this profession, and had just completed my doctorate, an unknown woman at that time, became one of my biggest advocates. She supported my work when no one else did, and for that alone, I will never forget her.

As I write books on The Musician's Soul and The Musician's Spirit, I realize that ethical and personal models appear in our lives. Ruth was one such figure in my life. I have never known a greater teacher and a more dedicated person to the cause of teachers teaching well.

Ruth had a secret that we should all learn from. She was a great teacher because she was a great human being. Always honest, always loving and always caring, she touched thousands and changed thousands of lives. Quietly, she loved all her friends, colleagues and students. Without doubt, she remains an inspiration to me and my work.

I miss her deeply, but her spirit is constantly with me.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Allison Reynolds

I come from a family of teachers. Although I loved playing “school” and “teacher” as a young girl, I knew when I was 18 that I did not want to teach for a living. So, instead of music education, I selected music performance as my major at Texas Christian University. I made that decision in the spring of my senior year in high school—without any knowledge of who Dr. Ruth Whitlock was. The first week of my freshman year, I met Dr. Whitlock. She was the director of the T.C.U. Chapel Choir, and I was among its members. Little could I imagine then the far-reaching implications of this new relationship.

For starters, she knew before I that I would want to be a music education major. When I did “see the light,” it was she who encouraged me to include a general music methods course in my Texas certification. For the rest of my time at T.C.U., Dr. Whitlock shaped my philosophy of music and music teaching, and my skills as a musician and music educator. I, like my classmates, interpreted her approval and disapproval (about anything we heard, saw, felt, thought, performed, or taught) as an essential part of my continuing development. If she were satisfied, I learned much from her reasons why; if she weren’t, I learned equally as much! She effectively modeled (oozed) musicianship, elegance, intelligence, and diplomacy in every situation.

In short, she taught me much that I cannot be sure she realized she was teaching. After I graduated, I taught elementary general music. On the last day of my second year of teaching (a Friday), the school’s secretary buzzed my room to summon me to the phone in the main office. I was surprised and pleased to hear Dr. Whitlock’s voice on the phone, but even more surprised when she told me to come to a workshop she had organized at T.C.U! She told me that a man named Edwin Gordon was giving a workshop, and that I needed to come hear it. I sensed she was not issuing invitation, but an ultimatum: I would go to this workshop. Is it fair to say ultimatum now?

Would she agree that is what it was if I could ask? But here, I share my clues with you as a way of further describing Dr. Whitlock. I suppose I reveal a bit about myself, too!

Alison: When does the workshop begin?

Dr. Whitlock: Sunday evening.

Alison: This Sunday evening?

Dr. Whitlock: Yes.

silence

Alison: But my summer vacation starts this afternoon.

Dr. Whitlock: Postpone it.

(Okay, I'm paraphrasing this conversation, but this was her general message!)

silence

Alison: How much does it cost?

Dr. Whitlock: Cost does not matter. You cannot afford to miss this.

Instinctively I knew I could not argue, and Sunday found me headed North to Fort Worth. After all, when had Dr. Whitlock ever led me astray? In the year after that workshop, which had an incredible life-altering influence (I'm sure she predicted it would, in some ways), Dr. Whitlock continued to mentor me through my decisions about attending graduate school in music education. As though that weren't enough, several years later she made recommendations to others about my abilities that I am sure helped secure my first offer to teach at the college level.

In the summer of 1993, Dr. Whitlock came to New Haven, CT. She had been teaching at Hartt, where T.C.U. alum Al Holcomb coordinated Hartt's summer music workshops. Coincidentally, Al and I both had spent the previous year teaching music in New Haven public schools. Al arranged for us to meet and tour New Haven and the Yale campus. Dr. Whitlock had recently traveled abroad with her son, and related many tales about how deeply moved and positively affected she had been by her traveling experiences. I can still see her on that day: she literally was moving like a ballet dancer along the streets of New Haven to describe what she had seen, heard, tasted, and felt, and thought. Her buoyancy then, as before, captured what I always experienced in her presence: hers was an outward, gracious, and contagious thirst for life and art—even after beginning her battle with cancer. Al, my husband Patrick, and I enjoyed our visit with her. Patrick immediately placed my admiration for her in context, and I was pleased he had the opportunity to finally meet her.

In 1994, Dr. Whitlock accepted my invitation to speak to inservice and preservice music teachers at Ashland University in Ohio. Her Vocal Connections and Choral Insights captured their interests. They, along with my colleagues, enjoyed my mentor's workshop. And, this time, Dr. Whitlock inspired my philosophy as a music teacher educator. After her presentation, we traveled together to Cincinnati for the

MENC conference.

I had no idea about Dr. Whitlock—the jewel in TCU music department’s crown, in the world of music education, and choral music education—when I arrived there as a freshman. But it was not long after entering the profession that I learned of the respect she had earned and deserved. I feel lucky to be at TCU with her and to have been ready to learn so much from her. When I am reunited with TCU friends, we share fun memories and remember our “fear” of the workload and the joy of our successes with her, and especially the music we made with her. At work now as a music teacher educator, I cannot be conscious of every way in which she still asserts her influence. I am happy to know that she simply and unquestionably does.

Ruth Whitlock Remembered by Al Dee Holcomb

When I came to TCU in the fall of 1980 with a declared double major of music performance and religion studies, my career goal was to become a minister of music. Around the middle of the semester, I was walking down the second floor hallway of Ed Landreth, when suddenly a smiling woman wearing half glasses and a long denim skirt descended upon me. After escorting me to her office for a brief conversation she insisted on knowing two things: why I was not majoring in music education and why I was not singing the Chapel Choir. Before I could think of a good answer, she began to explain the importance of music education and why I should be a teacher. By the time I left her office, I was excited about my new career path and the thought of singing in two choirs. This was to be only my first encounter with the power of Ruth Whitlock.

Over the next few years, I developed great respect for this woman who would Become verklempt (smiling, eyes closed and right hand fluttering over her heart) at the mention of Brahms, Howard Swan, Bennett Reimer, or Brad White. She could not comprehend why we as junior music ed majors were not as excited about the history and philosophy of music education as she was. Although it was never in her syllabi, it was just assumed that we would find the time and money to attend TMEA, ACDA and TCDA; subscribe to the MEJ and The Choral Journal, buy lots of books and recordings, and skip classes to go observe great choral directors. It became obvious that mediocrity and partial participation were not options for music education students.

I also grew to love Dr. Whitlock. I had a special relationship with her. I know

that each of her students feels they had a special relationship with her but my relationship with her was truly special - I was her house cleaner for two years. My classmates were awed by the notion of my privileged access. When I came to her house, we talked about music, family, life, faith, politics, struggles, and love. We listened to Paul Harvey, cooked meals, and rearranged furniture. It was during these times together that I grew to appreciate what a kind, spiritual, generous, sincere, and devoted person she was. She helped me find my first job. Two years into teaching, Dr. Whitlock contacted me about a summer seminar that she thought I should attend. A few years later, she helped me choose a graduate program. It is not surprising that I still consider her to be my mentor.

Her picture sits on top of a bookcase in my office at the University of Central Florida. The shelves are filled with books on methodology, philosophy, world musics, teaching techniques, lesson planning, assessment, choral conducting, choral music education, elementary music education, and vocal technique. Students flow regularly in and out of my office for advisement, help with an assignment, auditions, or just to chat. In my classes, I regularly find myself becoming energized and excited by the discussion. In rehearsals, I regularly have students move to the music, chant syllables, and describe phrases. It is amazing that after two more degree and years of teaching, I still find myself contemplating what Dr. Whitlock would do.