



*Julia
Dean
Evans*

Material prepared by James R. Nance

Biographical Sketch Julia Dean Evans Amarillo High School • 1939-1950

The fall of 1939, Julia Dean arrived in Amarillo, Texas, to accept the position of A Cappella Choir Director at Amarillo High School. Amarillo was the hub city in the Texas Panhandle, a town of approximately 40,000. Amarillo High was the only high school where sophomores juniors and seniors came from all over the city and several nearby smaller towns. At the time it was considered a large high school and was best known for its football team, the Amarillo Golden Sandies, several times state champions. Amarillo High was soon known for something else. Its outstanding A Cappella Choir program.

Julia Dean was a young, attractive, petite, enthusiastic lady with big ambitions and the determination and dedication to fulfill her ambitions. Her magnetic personality quickly attracted the students of the high school and by the end of her first year she had 44 students in her choir. During her 12 year tenure as the Amarillo High School Choir Director the choir program grew to eight large choirs with over 430 members.

In 1943, during the World War II years, the male band director was drafted into the service and Julia Dean directed the state renowned 80 member Golden Sandy Band, in addition to her choir work. After the war, when a full time band director was hired, Julia returned full-time to developing her choir program.

Julia Dean was born in Oklahoma, attended Clarendon College, West Texas State, The University of Southern California, Juilliard School of Music and North Texas State University. Her quest for improvement in excellence as a choral director demanded continuous advanced education.

Beginning in 1945 a selected choir would tour throughout the state of Texas performing before school, church and civic organizations. Julia Dean found the annual tour stimulated great interest in her group and also found that their appearance encouraged other schools to either organize choirs or improve and upgrade their own choir programs. In addition the choir was selected several times to serve as the demonstration choir for the Texas Music Educators Association.

The highlight for the A Cappella Choir under Julia Dean's direction, was a trip

to New York City in a July 1948. Chosen by the Lions Club of Texas, a 50 voice choir represented the state of Texas at the Lion's International Convention. Performances in New York City included a concert at Madison Square Garden, a Sunday morning and national radio broadcast over N.B.C. and an appearance on the Maxwell House coffee television show.

While in New York City, the choir was invited to a rehearsal of Fred Waring's famous choir "The Pennsylvanians" at his estate at Shawnee, Pennsylvania. After the rehearsal of Mr. Waring's choir, he asked if the Amarillo high school choir would perform for them. Mr. Waring kept them singing for 37 minutes after which he stated, "This is the finest high school choir I have ever heard".

Julia Dean resigned from Amarillo high school in 1950. During her 12 years in Amarillo she had over 1500 boys and girls in her choirs. Several members of her choirs, some whose first introduction to music was as a choir member, became choir directors.

After Amarillo, she taught at Marshall High School in Lubbock, and South Oak Cliff High School in Dallas, before retiring. Julia Dean married Bill Evans in 1945. Following his death she married O'Dell Simmons. Julia Dean Evans Simmons died in Dallas in 1976.

Julia Dean Evans influenced the lives of many young men and women who attended Amarillo high school, sang in her choir, played in the band under her direction and just had the privilege of hearing her musical organizations perform. Below are comments from several of the many who responded when asked to share the influence Julia Dean Evans had on their life and their appreciation of music.

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Lynn Whitten Class of 1948

I was in the AHS A Cappella Choir from 1946 to 1948. During the second year, the city of Amarillo and Texas Lions Club underwrote a train trip for the choir to perform for the Lions Club International Convention in New York City. My fondest memories are from that trip. I had been no further away from home than Canyon.

The trip included New York of course, Toronto, Niagara, and the highlight for me,

Fred Waring's estate/workshop at Shawnee on the Delaware. There we sang with and for the Fred Waring singers and attended a taping of one of their radio shows. Singing with Julia Dean Evans had a tremendous impact on my future as a choir director at Dumas, Texas Junior High and High Schools for six years, and as choirmaster/ organist at First Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, for three years, and most recently, 30 years as director of Choral Studies at the University of Colorado. Julia Dean Evans impeccable ear and love of music making are always goals for me. And her putting Amarillo on the musical map gave endless thousands the pleasures and the feeling that music can bring.

(Lynn Whitten married Evelyn Dean, a niece of Julia Dean Evans.)

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Charles Nelson

I'm not sure what a fifteen year old boy, who has spent his whole life in just two North Texas counties, should know about the world of choral music, but I had played in a school orchestra and sung in school choirs and had listened to world class music played by world class musicians over airwaves broadcast from NBC and CBS.

In March of 1942 I heard the Amarillo High School Choir directed by Julia Dean Evans and could hardly believe my ears. I was acquainted with a college choir, whose men's section had been decimated by losing men to the armed services. The men's section in this high school choir sounded as good (or better) than the college choir.

That choir sang so far above the level of my own high school choir that they could not be considered in the same class. It was a real eye opener (or ear opener) to this young lad who had an interest in singing, but as yet, had no aspirations to direct a choir. I had seen the musical possibilities of a group of 15-17 year old children who had experienced good vocal and choral instruction.

As years passed, a stream of students from Amarillo High School found their way to the Music School in Denton. All these music students were influenced by Julia Dean Evans and her choir. I was glad, that in later years, I got to know this dynamic, talented person. Her work introduced me to possibilities I didn't know existed.

Julia Dean Remembered
by Alice Lee Gist Federer
Class of 1944

Singing at the Easter Sunrise Services, held at Palo Duro State Park, is what I remember most as a choir member. Two songs I remember singing were, Fairest Lord Jesus and an original composition written and arranged by one of Julia Dean's relatives. I think it was her brother. Singing in that wonderful choir as the sun rose over the canyon was one of the most inspirational experiences of my life.

Julia Dean Remembered
by Jim Clifton
Class of 1949

I was a member of Julia Dean's A Cappella Choir in 1948 and 1949. I was woefully short on musical talent, but long on appreciation for those who possess it. Julia Dean assuredly possessed it, and sought and nurtured it in every one of her students.

I recall with fondness singing Peter J. Wilhousky's arrangement of "In Solemn Silence", Fred Waring Dry Bones, and of course, The Battle Hymn of the Republic. I also recall with great sadness the choir singing Fairest Lord Jesus at the funeral of Carolyn Kelley. She, Bob Lacey and a journalism teacher Dorinda Bond were killed in a car wreck as they returned from Canyon, Texas after working on our school paper "Sandstorm".

The choir's Christmas concert was a personal favorite of mine. One of my joys is being associated with the publishing of A H S class of 49 newsletter. I include here an excerpt from the 2003 editor's corner relating to the choir Christmas concert.

"I can't remember what I had for dinner last night, but I can remember when I first heard "Oh Holy Night". It was a holiday season, perhaps 1947. We had gathered for the choir's Christmas program, in a festive mood and noisy, until the music began. Sue Johnson, spotlighted on a darkened stage, that tiny figure standing in front of the choir, with that sweet soaring soprano voice filling every corner of the auditorium held us absolutely spellbound for a magic moment. I've thought of that moment many times since, and have

regretted the passing of so many years without having told her how special it was. Now I get to say thank you Sue.”

In “To Kill a Mockingbird” Miss Maudie says, “Mockingbird’s don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy but sing their hearts out for us.”

(Jim Clifton graciously furnished a CD taken from a 78 rpm recording made of Julia Dean’s 1948 choir. Included on that CD is Jim’s favorite song the choir sang “Madam Jeanette”.)

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Texas De Sautell Pasetti

As many, many more were, I was in Mrs. Evans choir all my high-school years. What a wonderful choir and what a great choir director!! We all loved her. Believe me that was big time for Amarillo in the early ‘40’s.

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Charles Jeffress Class of 1944

I didn’t sing in the choir directed by Julia Dean Evans, but I was in the AHS Band she directed. I remember her as a very talented lady, a good leader, a good musician and a lot of fun. I’m reminded of an anecdote that happened one time during band rehearsal. She stopped the band in mid-tune to review some sections of the music which had lettered reference point A, B, C, etc. She called out “Go to H . . . No! On second thought Go to L”. Of course all this brought loud laughter from the band members who immediately thought their days were numbered. Ah, fond memories!!

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Jim Nance Class of 1944

I remembered Julia Dean fondly. My first year at AHS I played cornet in the band. Julia Dean was the director. My second and last year I sang in her A Cappella Choir. She also began a small vocal group called the “Four Hits and a

Miss". I was fortunate enough to sing bass in the group, which, if I'm not mistaken, was the year Julia Dean formed the group. The other members of the group were, Hoyt Mulkey, tenor, Bob Andrews, second tenor, Clarence Kincaid, baritone and our star was Jane Whicker, our 'Miss'. Donna Autrey was our pianist.

In 1944, Julia Dean arranged for the University of North Texas A Cappella Choir to sing a concert at the high school. I later attended the University majoring in voice and choral conducting. While I ended up in business, I thank Julia Dean, as well as others, for inspiring me to attend North Texas to study music and participate in some most inspirational music presentations. My real appreciation of music began under Julia Dean. She challenged the choir members with difficult music but made it fun to feel that sense of accomplishment when we finally neared that point of excellence to which she so strived.

Everyone who had the privilege of participating in and or hearing her choirs, over the dozen or more years she was director of the Amarillo High School, was fortunate. She brought a new medium of entertainment, art and music to the entire area.

Julia Dean Evans Remembered by Cloys Webb Class of 1946

As a student in an Amarillo High School, I was privileged to sing in Julia Dean's A Cappella Choir for three years. I did not realize, until many years later, after I became a choir director myself, what really outstanding choirs Amarillo had in those very early years of music education in Texas.

In addition to being a member of Julia Dean's choir, I can also claim her as a mentor. She was a person who got things done! My parents were loving and supportive, but they had neither the vision of a college education for me, nor the finances to make one possible. Knowing these things and feeling that I had some musical talent to offer, Julia Dean stepped up to the plate. She called me into her office in 1946 and announced that I was the recipient of a music scholarship at the University of North Texas in Denton. She also told me that she had found a dormitory room for me and a job which would provide enough money to pay my room and board. Though I had to drop out and work for a semester to help pay expenses, I eventually earned a B.S. in music and a Master of Music Education from North Texas.

I've often wondered if I would have attended college were it not for Julia Dean Evans. Of course, I'll never know the answer to that, but I do know that because of her I did and because of her I became a choir director and was able to teach all levels of choral music education for 33 wonderful years. I wish she were here for me to give her my personal thanks.

(Cloys was A Cappella choir director at Perryton High-School, McAllen High School and Texas Christian University.)

Julia Dean Evans Remembered
by Nancy Fields McClintock
Class of 1948

I was one of the lucky choir members that got to go on the New York trip sponsored by the Lions Club of Texas, the summer of 1948. One highlight of the trip was our audition for Fred Waring at his beautiful estate on the Shawnee in Pennsylvania.

I made a scrapbook of our trip and have all the articles that appeared in the Amarillo Globe News about our trip. I will be happy to contribute copies of all I have about that trip and the choir, including pictures and a program of our 1948 a cappella choir spring concert, because Julia Dean was an exceptional talent and contributed enormously to the lives of every student she taught.

(Sincere thank you to Nancy fields McClintock for making available so much material about the choir, the New York trip and Julia Dean Evans.)

Julia Dean Evans Remembered
by Ken Kohler
Class of 1948

As a junior at Amarillo High School in 1946, I first came in contact with Julia Dean Evans. I was playing in her band, but was attracted by the wonderful sounds Julie got from her choirs, so I tried out and made the choir. From that time on, Julie became my best teacher-friend and most revered teacher. We went all over the Texas Panhandle singing in schools, in churches, wherever she had a request.

Once, when we were singing at the old Municipal Auditorium, we were a warm-up group before an appearance of beloved comedian, Bob Hope. I was standing in the wings with Julie and we happen to be next to Bob Hope as he waited to go on. I was wearing a black and gold “Sandy” jacket. He hurriedly asked me to give it to him as he shed his own coat. Hope strode out on the stage in the black and gold AHS jacket to the delight of the audience. He made a few jokes and ask me to come out on the stage. We traded coats and I exited to a very excited Julia Dean Evans. She was so glad for me to get to participate in such a manner.

After AHS, five years of college and two years in the Army, I returned to Amarillo and joined a small Bible church. There was talk that we should have a choir, but we had no choir director. I thought, well, I’ve watched the best in action, why couldn’t I at least do what I saw Julie do? There started a life-long joy for me, leading choirs. Since that time, I’ve lead choirs in many churches in many locations.

In 1947 I went to Costa Rica to learn Spanish. In the eight months I was there, we had a choir made up of students of Spanish who sang in Spanish-speaking churches throughout San Jose. After that, I went to Mexico City. In two years there, I had choirs from the Wycliffe Bible translators staff, from the Mexican workers at the center and at a Spanish-speaking church I attended.

Julia was such an inspiration to all of us who sang in her choirs. She was tough, fair, fun, but always correct. She was a magnet in our school, attracting a good part of the football team, cheerleaders and other “noteworthy”. I look forward to meeting her again sometime and only hope she’ll let me sing in her choir once more.

History of Amarillo’s A Cappella Choir by Betty Burkhalter • 1948

When Amarillo’s first A Cappella Choir was organized in 1939 by Mrs. Julia Dean Evans, it was impossible to predict the rapid growth of such singing groups. With 44 students in the first AHS choir, the organization grew steadily until a second group, the Choristers, was organized with a grand total of 125 singers. After another two years, the increasing number of singing aspirants made it necessary for a third choir to be organized. Thus the harmony singers took their place in AHS in 1944.

Today, nine years later, 420 boys and girls spend one hour daily in singing the

songs they loved. Mrs. Evans conducts three choirs each day, and Miss Tennie Thompson conducts five. Each year for the past three, a state tour has been made by 50 members of the A Cappella. Mrs. Evans and group travel by bus to various cities and towns of Texas, presenting their programs before schools, church and civic organizations. For two years the local delegation has served as the demonstration choir for the annual convention of the Texas Music Educators Association.

Highlights of musical activities for the A Cappellians this year, is their selection to sing in New York City's Madison Square Garden in July before the Lions International Convention. Through the years the best in music has been consistently presented to the student body until today, Amarillo High School students appreciate religious and classical numbers equally as much as the lighter popular tunes. The public always received graciously the wide variety of singing of the choir which includes classical, religious, Negro spirituals, novelty and popular music and has shown its appreciation of the choir by inviting it to appear before many different civic groups many times throughout the year.

During the past nine years more than 1300 boys and girls have worn the robes belonging to the A Cappella; and each, in a spirit of love and loyalty to the choir, its conductor, and Amarillo High School, has done his share to maintain the reputation of the A Cappella in the hearts of Amarillo citizens.

From the Journal of Nancy Fields McClintock Trip to New York City • 1948

Thursday, July 22nd, 1948, 5:30 a.m.

We traveled by train which was chartered by the Texas Lions Club and the choir was assigned two Pullman cars to use for both day and night. The first day took us from Amarillo, through Oklahoma and most of Kansas.

Friday, July 23rd

We traveled through Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and into West Virginia.

Saturday, July 24th

We arrived at Washington D.C. and around 10:00 a.m. Eugene Worley, Texas Congressman, had arranged a tour for the choir.

1. The White House, including the East Ballroom, the Green Room, Blue

Room, State Dining Rooms, even the Oval Office, the China Room and the Theater Room.

2. The Washington Monument, yes up to the top!

3. Tour of the Pentagon.

4. To Arlington National Cemetery.

A. Tomb of the unknown soldier

B. Robert E. Lee's mansion

5. The Jefferson Memorial

6. The Lincoln Memorial

7. The Capitol building

A. sang in the rotunda

B. climbed to the top of the dome

C. visited the House of Representatives

8. Visited Mount Vernon

Back on the train to get to New York City by nightfall. Thirty minutes after our arrival we were walking down the famous Broadway!

Sunday, July 25th, 1948

11:00 a.m. Our choir was invited to sing live at the NBC studio in New York City. It was a 15 minute concert in the time slot used for Fred Waring. This was radio of course. (TV hadn't reached Texas yet.) We attended the Bobby Houston show in Rockefeller Center. After lunch we got to attend the Robert Merrill show called "Music America Loves Best" (the RCA Victor show). Sunday evening the choir appeared on a Maxwell House Coffee TV show which featured musical organizations brought to New York for the Lions Convention.

Monday, July 26th

Our choir officially opened the annual International Lions Club convention at 10:00 a.m. on stage in Madison Square Garden. We sang again to fill in for Gov. Thomas E. Dewey, who was unable to attend and speak. A first: that a musical organization was used twice in one convention. Monday afternoon we went to see the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall. Monday evening some of us attended the Firestone Hour, then all went shopping.

Tuesday, July 27th

After breakfast the choir was treated to a tour of New York City which included going through the Cathedral of Saint John, the Divine, which is the largest gothic structure in the world, and the third largest church in the world. We went to Ellis Island and went up to the Statue of Liberty. A few of us even climbed up her arm

and went out on the base of the torch. We went by boat around New York Harbor to see the skyline of New York City. Our choir sang today and at the dinner for the International Lions Club Governors at the Commodore Hotel. Then we went to a huge ice show called "Howdy Mr. Ice". (At that time the only ice theater in the world was located in Rockefeller Center.)

Wednesday, July 28th

This afternoon a bunch of us went to Ebbets Field to see Brooklyn Dodgers play the St. Louis Cardinals while others went to see a Broadway show. Tonight I (along with three other girls from our choir) were chosen to escort the delegates representing all the countries at the convention. I was to represent Ecuador and wore the costume of that country, which was a formal dress with a large hoop skirts of all colors and a straw hat covered with flowers. Our four, along with 18 other girls from across the country, appeared on stage before 20,000 delegates amid a setting of international flags.

Thursday, July 29th

We were up early today to sing at the Texas delegation state breakfast in the Hotel New Yorker. Then we were invited to sing for an unprecedented third time before the Lions Club convention. The invitation was issued from Melvin Jones, "Father of Lyonism". We ate dinner and boarded charter buses headed for Shawnee, Pa. where Fred Waring had requested our choir to audition for him. We auditioned in his studio singing Cherubim, Madam Jeanette, In Solemn Silence. Then Fred Waring himself directed us in singing Dry Bones. On our last song Battle Hymn of the Republic, the Pennsylvanian joined in, with Mrs. Evans directing. The whole choir was invited to a five course state dinner on the Green Terrace of the Waring estate. After dinner we boarded buses for the ride back to our hotel, where we packed and prepared for our departure.

Friday, July 30th

The day we began our trip home, first by way of the Hudson River Day Liner, a river boat with Albany as her destination. Albany was our only venture out of the U.S.. From there we went to Toronto, Niagara Falls, back to Buffalo, New York then to Chicago. Most of the day was spent on the river boat and it was warm and sunny on the deck and we took advantage of the wicker furniture and slept like babies. After a short shopping spree in Albany we made connection with our train and boarded for the long trip home.

Saturday, July 31st

We arrived in Toronto early this morning and after breakfast were treated to a two-hour bus tour of the city. Then, after a short shopping spree, we left for Niagara Falls. Once there, we swarmed a curio shop, then went to see the falls. We were too late to take the boat ride, but enjoyed our view of the falls both before and after dark. Of course we sang while at the Falls and were heard by the director of the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra who wanted our choir to appear as guests artists at his concert the following Wednesday night. What a compliment! Too bad we couldn't stay.

Sunday, August 1st

Chicago was the stop for the day and the choir missed singing a concert at the railroad fair because the train arrived three hours late. There was time for a tour of the windy city, however, and a quick song at Dearborn station which was The Eyes of Texas.

Monday, August 2nd

We arrived at home.