



*Michael  
Johnstone*

Material prepared by Karl Hickfang

A Biographical Sketch  
of Michael Fuller Johnstone  
by Karl Hickfang

It is my sincere hope that the reader will accept the use of first-person in writing of a man who influenced and inspired so many choral directors in the state of Texas.

During a summer of 1949, I was finishing requirements for a bachelor of Music degree. I looked forward to my first teaching position as the band director at Bonham High School, my alma mater. Near the end of August I learned the position was not mine and I had to scramble to find another position so close to the start of the school year.

The teacher placement bureau at the University of Texas informed me of junior high school band openings at Conroe and Alvin, north and south of Houston. I found the Conroe position filled. From a phone booths in downtown Houston I call the superintendent of schools in Alvin and was told the band director at Alvin High Schools would be at H and H Music in Houston and at 1:00 p.m. and that he had the authority to hire me if he chose to do so.

While I waited at H and H Music Co. three gentlemen came in the store: Marvin “Bunk” Atkinson, band director at Galena Park High School; Johnny Dessain, band director at Galena Park Junior high school and Michael Johnstone, choir director at Galena Park High School. I was introduced to these gentlemen and Mr. Johnstone indicated he knew of me and said there was an opening for a choir director at Woodland Acres Junior High School, in the Galena Park district. To this day I never believed he knew of me and I told him I anticipated going to Alvin Junior High School as a band director. I learned right then that you don’t say no to this man. He eventually he convinced me to take a position at Woodland Acres and became my mentor.

It was a tradition of Mike’s to have Tuesday evening two hour choir rehearsals in addition to regular class hours. He did this at every school he worked to find students who were willing to give their time to be there. I attended these rehearsals at Galena Park and watched a genius at work. He was demanding, but fair;

obviously a fine musician; displayed outstanding vocal techniques and teaching skills that set a standard of excellence that few of us have been able to achieve.

A man of genius always has his critics and Mike was no exceptions. His choirs in the late forties and early '50s were showcases of vocal maturity and repertoire far above the standards of those years. His critics shook their heads and said he was ruining voices with his extreme demands. What he was doing was developing vocal maturity in those years that become the standard for the up and coming high school choir directors in the late '50s.

Mike was always at the center of controversy because he spoke his mind and his mind was always ahead of most of us. In February, 1950, I attended my first TMEA convention in Mineral Wells, Texas. In those days very little standards were required of membership in the various All-State groups. The directors would bring their best students to the convention. Those who passed the audition became members of the All-State band. Similarly the All-State orchestra was selected.

There were no requirements to be a member of the All-State choir. Directors were asked to bring their best students to participate; some would bring their entire choir to "learn from the experience". Many of the students had no music with them. The result: an unprepared group of between 400 and 500 voices, woefully unbalanced in voices of the four sections. Typically you might have 50 tenors, 100 basses, 125 altos and 175 sopranos. The first rehearsal had to be a nightmare for the clinician.

Mike sought to address this problem. At the vocal division business meeting he proposed that the students be auditioned in their regions and that a numerical balance of sections be achieved. He suggested that only mature voices be chosen. Selected students would be required to bring the music with them and be urged them to learn their voice parts in advance. Mike put this in the form of a motion. There was a storm of protest all over the room. The motion was defeated and nothing was done. Mike became a villain.

Dr. Jon Finley Williamson, noted conductor of the famed Westminster Choir, was clinician for this 1950 convention and accepted the invitation to return as clinician at the 1951 convention in Galveston, Texas. During this convention he was invited to speak at the vocal division meeting. He very graciously spoke of the fine talent he was working with and suggested the students be auditioned prior to the convention "as a man suggested a year ago". Only the directors who agreed with Mike in the previous year thought he should have been given credit for the

changes that began to take place in auditioning procedures; procedures that led to continued improvement in the following years in developing the great All-State Choirs of Texas we have today.

Mike graduated from North Texas University in 1938 and began his teaching career in Sugarland, Texas, a small district with a high-school enrollment of around 100. The late Jim Shepherd, a past president of TCDA, was a student of Mike's during his junior high days. Mike later toured with a Lawrence Welk orchestra in Kansas and Nebraska, playing trombone.

After World War II (in 1946) Mike became the choir director at Grand Prairie High Schools. While on a tour in the Houston area, they sang at Galena Park High School. Don B. Slocumb, principal at Galena Park High School, was a great believer of arts in the curriculum of public schools. In 1948, after hearing Mike's Grand Prairie choir, he convinced Mike to become the Galena Park choir director. After Mike's marriage failed in the summer of 1951, Mike resigned from Galena Park and returned to North Texas State University to finish his master's degree.

In 1952 Mr. Slocumb accepted a position as superintendent in Giddings, Texas. He invited me to go with him as band director and to start a choir program. Like a fool I turned him down. He then called Mike at North Texas and asked him to recommend a young graduate for the job. Mike replied that he would like to take the job which included the position of high school principal. He proceeded to turn a poor band into a First Division group and his first year choir was the talk of the region choir contest at San Antonio. In 1953, Mike remarried, worked a year at Parker music company in Houston and in 1954 choir director at Jackson Jr. High School in Pasadena.

In 1955, he and his young wife, Pattye, became a team as they moved to Abilene where he became choir director at Abilene High School. Pattye was a marvelous singer and she proved to be a fine teacher as she worked individually with Mike's students. She later accepted a position at the University of North Texas on the voice faculty, a position held until her death recently. Later, Mike moved to the "new" high school (Cooper high) where they continued to work together. In 1964, their marriage failed and Mike moved, for one year, to a small community in Missouri.

In 1965, he became supervisor of music in the Pulaski County School District in

Arkansas, a position he held until his death. In Arkansas, he started a summer reading clinic similar to TCDA. He always came to the TCDA clinics, bringing with him, young Arkansas directors, many of whom became members of TCDA. Mike said of his years in TCDA: "I will always remember the great professional drive manifested by most of the TCDA officers during my nine years in TCDA. All of them were good directors and were dedicated in their work for TCDA".

The legacy Mike started in Galena Park continued with James Furrh, who became choir director there in 1954. James became the third president of TCDA in 1959. Mike was vice president that year and became the fourth President of TCDA, 1961-1963. Joe Lenzo, who followed me at Woodland Acres when I moved to Bay City in 1953 became executive secretary of TMEA. I served as third and first vice president, 1959-1962 and as President of TCDA 1965-1967.

Going back to 1948-1951, Mike had a boys quartet in his choir at Galena Park that became a legend in their own right. They performed all over Houston and Harris County. Subsequently they all received scholarships at North Texas University. Their names: Vernon Moody, who taught voice and choral music at Abilene Christian College and was a vice president of TCDA when I became president in 1965; Van Hale, a fine choral director who followed James Furrh at Galena Park; Frank Roberts, who was successful in his work in Beaumont; Bobby Jones, the fourth member of the quartet, became associated with NASA in Florida. Still another president of TCDA, Jack Glover, followed Mike at Cooper High School in Abilene, and the aforementioned Jim Shepherd became president after Glover. Carroll Barnes, another giant in choral music in Texas, was a member of Mike's choirs at Abilene High School for three years. The names seem to continue into later generations, all inspired by the work of this great director who certainly deserves the recognition given in this paper.

I know that all of us in choral music have heard beautiful singing in our minds, marveling at the wonder of it. I suggest that on Tuesday evenings; the rehearsing of the choir of heavenly hosts, directed by, you know who, MICHAEL FULLER JOHNSTONE: a true legend of Texas Choral directors.

Michael F. Johnstone Remembered  
by J. David Malloch, Galena Park ('52)  
Graduate Student Director  
and Principal Accompanist

In 1948, Michael F. Johnstone began a three-year tenure as choral director at Galena Park High School in Galena Park, Texas. Previously he had been choral director at Grand Prairie High School. He distinguished himself as a major influence in the lives of students who received choral music training through exposure to his knowledge and master skills. He also influenced graduating seniors, including myself, by directing them to the School of Music at North Texas State College, Denton, Texas where he had graduated.

My association with Mr. Johnstone at Galena Park was accentuated by my assignment as the choir's principal accompanist for works requiring instrumental accompaniment, and student director for rehearsals and events in his absence. His adherence to strict discipline and high performance standards enabled every choir member to experience personal pride and satisfaction in being a member of the Galena Park High School Choir. We had no special name other than being "one of the best high school choirs in Texas."

After graduation from North Texas in 1955, I followed Mr. Johnstone as choral director at Southmore in the Pasadena Independent School District. Because I was trained by him and knew his discipline and performance standards, I closely followed his example. This enabled me to sustain high morale among returning students who might otherwise be disappointed that he was no longer their director. There was nothing of substance they could tell me about him that I did not already know!

Although my association with Mr. Johnstone encompassed only a few years early in my life, I can proudly say that his influence continues to be felt more than five decades later. Without hesitation I know that he was a giant--with few peers among choral directors!

Michael F. Johnstone Remembered  
by Vernon Moody  
Professor Emeritus, Metropolitan  
State College of Denver

I had recently moved to the Houston, Texas area from Oklahoma when I first met Mike Johnstone. My music education was already off and running. My Dad and all of his brothers were what you would call country musicians....that is “country”, not “country western”....a term not yet used in the music industry. From the time I was around 9 years old I had been playing the steel guitar while my Dad played the fiddle. Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, Hank Williams, and Dad were my musical inspiration. I continued playing the guitar for several years and had pretty well determined that it would figure prominently in my future. That is until a most dramatic series of events, over a three year period, totally changed my mind and my life.

Mike Johnstone and I arrived at Galena Park High School at approximately the same time. Mike was hired to build a choral program at Galena Park and since there had never been a choir there, he would be starting from scratch. It was on my first visit to the school that I discovered that there was going to be a school choir. I simply mentioned to the lady helping me to enroll that I was interested in music....specially singing. She suggested that I should talk with the new choir director, Mr. Johnstone, and directed me to his registration table.

After fifty years as a choral director myself, I can certainly understand now, why Mike took a little extra time to convince me that I should sing in the choir. Just imagine a tall, skinny fifteen year old kid who weighed around 125 pounds, who was all feet and adams apple, walking up to your table and, speaking on about a low E-flat, inquiring about how one might get into the choir!

From that day until now, some fifty-five years later, I have been constantly reminded of his influence on my life. His demanding standards, which were stringently enforced; his dedication to excellence; his lack of concern for what was “politically correct” at the time and his absolute faith in himself and his young students that, between them, they could accomplish extra-ordinary results. He strongly influenced all of us who had the privilege of being his students. Mike Johnstone, more than any other teacher I have ever had, was absolutely convinced that great things could happen when superb teaching and extraordinary dedication from ordinary students came together in a common cause. He would argue that the

particular area of study was not really all that important...it could be athletics, wood working or music...whatever the academic discipline, successful educational goals could and should be attained.

He said on many occasions that the one thing that he wished for was to be able to pick all of his singers from the honor roll. With smart students he would guarantee a great choir. With those not so smart he would also guarantee a great choir but it would just take a little longer. How musically talented they were was of no real concern to him. He contended that it was his job to teach them to sing. He also stoutly argued that the size of the school should have little or no impact on the quality of the program. How many times did you hear him say, "Kids are the same in any school. A bad choir is the result of bad teaching, not of bad students."? He proved his point many times. Grand Prairie, Galena Park, Abilene, Giddings, several schools in Arkansas...large, medium or small...it made no difference, his choirs were always above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of them.

His strong opinions were not limited to education. I vividly remember one evening during the semester we shared an apartment together at NTSU. It was in the evening when I came home and found that he had prepared a wonderful steak dinner for the two of us. We seldom had really good steak because it was simply too expensive, but on this occasion he had really ignored the budgetary constraints and went all out for a top notch T-bone for each of us. First, they were cooked medium rare. At the time I liked mine well done...actually well burned and second, no steak was good enough to eat without a huge helping of ketchup.

You cannot imagine the explosion which took place when I covered that wonderful serving of beef with about a half inch of tomato ketchup. For thirty minutes I was lectured on the value of being able to actually taste the beef and that I might just as well have a pile of cardboard on my plate because it would taste the same. He heaped on the guilt by letting me know that he had wasted a substantial amount of cash on the steak that I had just ruined. It has been over fifty years and I have never eaten another steak with ketchup on it. Actually I even prefer my steak medium rare today, thanks to that special meal prepared for me by Mike Johnstone many years ago.

Mike was also a very witty, humorous guy. Even when angry he could be funny. I recall one occasion when the school quartet had an engagement in some little town several hours drive from Galena Park. Mike insisted that, since he had committed us to the program, he would drive us there in his new Kaiser. On the return trip,

around 2 a.m., Mike started looking for an all night service station because he desperately needed a rest stop. Things had reached a critical point when, finally, he whipped into an open service station. As he jumped from the car, he yelled at the attendant to fill it up. He ran around the corner of the station to the men's room. A few seconds later he came flying from the direction of the rest room yelling at the attendant for the key to the toilet. Frank Roberts, Bobby Jones, Ted Wilson and I were standing in the well lighted office when Mike barged into the room. He was livid. He started in on the poor attendant. "Mr.," he growled. "I want you to know that my grand daddy lived on a farm and he always had an outdoor toilet which he never locked. My Daddy also lived on a farm with an outdoor toilet...he also never locked it. I also grew up using an outdoor toilet which was never locked." Mike paused long enough to breath and let the blood drain from his face. "And I want you to know sir, that there was never, ever one pound of crap stolen from any of them." With that he paid the bill, huffed and puffed his way out to the car and we continued our journey home. It was one of the most miserable couple of hours the quartet ever spent together. We were biting our tongues to keep from laughing but we knew that at that moment, it was no laughing matter for Mr. J.

Mike was also an unintended matchmaker. I met my wife in his choir. Cherita Kirksey, the love of my life, was fifteen and I was sixteen at the time. We sat together on a short choir tour to south Texas and have been together ever since. Our three children and six grand children give us great joy and pleasure. Thanks Mike!! His telephone call to me from North Texas State, urging me to consider transferring there instead of continuing at Abilene Christian College, was another milestone in my life.

I could go on and on about M. F. Johnstone. We all know he could be difficult and frustrating at times. However we also know that he was the best there was at what he did and his influence is still strongly present in the choral (TCDA) community of Texas. I miss him. I am confident that the quality of the heavenly choir has improved since he took over the direction of it.

## Michael F. Johnstone Remembered by Charles Nelson

I was in Wilfred Bain's fourth choir at NTSTC. Michael Johnstone had been in an earlier choir. I had seen his picture and heard his name, but I didn't meet him face to face until 1948 or 1949 when the North Texas Choir sang a concert at Galena Park High School where Mike was the choir director. As was the custom of

the times, when a high school choir sponsored a college choir on tour, the hosts found some time to sing for the visiting choir. After our concert in Galena Park, we heard their high school choir sing with a power and precision far beyond the norm for high school singers. It was obvious that this Michael Johnstone, whom I had only seen in choir pictures, was a very special teacher. A friendship that began with this meeting lasted the rest of his life and will linger in my memory for as long as I live.

The Galena Park choir sang with a big full vocal sound that was the ideal for late nineteenth and early twentieth century choral compositions. After hearing a Caro Carapetian choir, Mike wanted to explore a sound which was more compatible with the European renaissance tradition. When he finished study with Carapetian, his choir sounded altogether different. In all my experience I've never heard a conductor's product change as rapidly and as completely as Mike's. The maturity was still there but he had added a refinement. Mike was an "older" teacher who set standards for the large group of young choral directors who flooded the choral scene following W.W. II.

On the many occasions we were together, an entire evening would be spent talking music and choral techniques. Mike could teach a group of high schools singers to sing better, faster than any teacher I have ever known. I'm not sure I know how he did it. Fear may have played a part. He made tremendous demands on his students, but did it in such a way as to not drive them away. As a matter of fact, his demands seemed to attract singers. The daughter of the Superintendent of School where Mike was teaching said, "I don't feel like I've been to choir unless I've cried two or three times a week".

Mike's students learned to read. He was adamant about teaching them to sing by numbers. He knew that numbers are inadequate in reading chromatics, but he knew that most of the singers he taught would not continue to be professional musicians and figured the immediate facility numbers allowed, balanced any negatives. The debate continues, but that was Mike's point of view, and it served him well.

Mike's choirs always attracted the more mature students in school. This means that he attracted school athletes. The inevitable conflict of concerts vs games reared its ugly head. Mike considered his program as important as football, basketball and track. He drew up a plan and proposed it to the athletic coaches. Added to the athletic schedule of football season, basketball season and track season, would be choir season. During each of the seasons, the appropriate coach would have first call on the boys. During choir season, Mike had first call. He

planned his concerts and tours accordingly. What a sensible approach. I doubt they would have accepted such an idea if the choir work had not been of high standard.

Once, when Bev Henson was teaching at Trinity University, he invited Mike's Abilene High School Choir to sing for the Trinity students. Their recital hall was a circa 300 seat facility with excellent acoustics. Bev had been rehearsing his choir there and while singing a Bach double motet had tried dividing the choir with one half in the front and the other in the back. The choir didn't stay together too well and Bev blamed the acoustical lag and they brought the two halves closer together.

A few days later, Mike's choir arrived just in time to sing the concert. Without hearing a sound in the hall, the choir divided in three equal choirs, went to the farthest corners of the room and opened the concert (in perfect sync) singing a Gabrieli piece for three choirs. Bev was more than a little embarrassed when his students said, "Mr. Henson, what was that about distance and time lag"?

Then there was the time Mike's madrigal group was invited to Stephen F. Austin University to participate in a madrigal festival. Robert Ottman, a professor from North Texas, director of the North Texas Madrigal Singers, was the guest lecturer and clinician. During his lecture he mention a number of famous madrigals, adding, "But of course, they are too difficult for high school students". It so happened that Mike had programmed some of the "too difficult for high school singers" professor Ottman had mentioned, and sang them like young professionals.

In 1956, when I was TMEA Vocal Chairman (while the business meeting was still held at a luncheon meeting) I had learned that the main duty of the chairman was to keep the organization from self-destructing. Though an agenda was prepared and followed, we had many motions (bombshells) from the floor. In many ways, Mike was a no-nonsense guy and always had strong opinions. That day, Mike had offered several motions from the floor which were duly voted down, or sent to committee for further study. After all that had happened, I was reluctant to recognize Mr. Johnstone again, but alas, painful as it might be, I had a duty. It went something like this: "The chair recognizes Mr. Johnstone". Getting to his feet, and in his most resonant bass voice we heard, "Mr. Chairman, I would like for one of my motions to pass today. I move we adjourn". After a quick second, and amid a room full of guffaws, we adjourned, and I had dodged another bullet.

Mike also had a keen sense of humor and was not timid about hurling an analytical barb here and there. While judging a UIL Choir Contest in the Panhandle, a

men's choir arrived on stage with several girls in the first tenor section. One of the judges (Ed Hatchett) took the director (Al Skoog) to task about girls in a boys choir. A heated argument ensued. Finally, from the stage, Mr. Skoog, beating right forefinger against left palm said: "Mr. Hatchett, you can't show me where it says in the rule book that girls can't sing in a boys choir"! Whereupon Mr. Johnstone said "Someone should show Mr. Skoog a biology book". Mike Johnstone stories are legend.

In his later years Mike moved to the Jacksonville County schools in Arkansas and became music supervisor. He left his mark on those teachers and students in the Jacksonville Schools. He was responsible for me singing several oratorios with a civic choir in Little Rock. Mike was singing in that civic choir. Riding home with Mike, after the first rehearsal, I suggested that he should be directing the choir for his knowledge and skill were far more than the man who was directing. He said he wouldn't mind directing the music, but he just didn't want to have to ". . .put up with all those people".

For years Mike and I met at the first reading session at each TCDA Convention, sat together and added all we could to the bass section. The standards Mike set were always a goal to reach for. Who knows how far his influence will reach.

### Michael F. Johnstone Remembered by David W. Jones

I first met Mike Johnstone and around 1950 in the Opera Workshop class at UNT. He was rehearsing the baritone part in Menotti's "The Telephone". I had seen him earlier while on choir tour at Galena Park High School. After our choir had sung we listen to his choir sing All Breathing Life from Bach's Motet #1. I can tell you that I had not heard anything like it in my short experience with choral music, especially from a high school choir. The tone was a very full and extremely loud. It was, however, perfectly performed. (I knew the piece by memory.) It was obvious that this was a highly disciplined group. But I must say that it was not very pretty.

Although I had some association with him at professional meetings, i.e., TCDA and TMEA, I really didn't get to know him until he brought his five member madrigal group to perform for a luncheon at TCDA in San Antonio, Texas. The entire audience was completely "blown out" by what we heard. The group performed Morley, Monteverdi, and even Gesualdo with a precision, style, and

beautiful tone that I'm sure no one at the luncheon believed possible from high school group. He was teaching at Cooper High School in Abilene, Texas. I later heard his A Cappella Choir and it sang with a completely different sound and sensitivity from what I heard at Galena Park High School.

In 1963, shortly after I started teaching at Stephen F. Austin State University, I decided to have a madrigal festival. As I recall about 12 groups attended. The format was to have distinguished people to lecture and demonstrate for the madrigal groups and their directors. The professionals were also there to judge the groups and to award first, second, and third places. I selected Robert Ottman, the distinguished theorist and director of the UNT madrigal group to lecture on literature, composers, and where to find published music. I selected Samuel Adler, composer in residence at UNT, and a composer who had written some madrigals, to lecture on "what constitutes a madrigal", composition of such, and the poetry. I selected Mike Johnstone, the best madrigal director I had ever known, to cover style and performance.

I was very satisfied with my selections because they achieved my aims of both a scholarly and performance oriented festival. In the contest, first, second and third place awards were won by Herbert Teat's three groups that he brought to the festival. Samuel Adler presented the first lecture of the afternoon, which was informative and helpful. The second lecture was given by Robert Ottman, who gave us a very detailed presentation of a massive amount of music available for all levels of performance. He also, as he presented the pieces of music to us, rated them according to difficulty of performance. Dr. Ottmann had been the director of the UNT Madrigal Singers for years and had performed an immense amount of literature of all styles. In his lecture he gave Ravel's "Nicolette" as an example that was so difficult that no high school madrigal group would be able to perform it. He said his university group had tried it and was never able to give it satisfactory performance. It ended at that.

Now Mike had brought his five member madrigal group with him as a demonstration group, the same group of peace TCDA fame. First, Mike's would talk about a piece of music and discuss its style of performance. Then his group would sing a live performance of the piece, demonstrating the style he described. After a couple of pieces he announced that his group was going to perform Ravel's "Nicolette", the piece previously described by Dr. Ottman as too difficult for any high school group.

Mike was a very nice about it, apologize to Dr. Ottman, and said that he in no way

was trying to show him up, but that he had already had this piece on the program. He said that he hoped the audience would not be disappointed. Well, of course his madrigal group just sang it to perfection. Everyone was amazed, even Dr. Ottman, who said that he was glad to hear what the piece was supposed to sound like.

## Michael Johnstone Remembered by Frank Roberts

In my hometown of Galena Park, Texas in 1949, not many of my peers were discussing serious music, or of going off to college after graduation. We had a band and a football team but were blissfully ignorant of just about anything else. Thanks to a visionary high school principal named Don B. Slocumb who, after hearing an outstanding assembly concert by the Grand Prairie High School A Cappella Choir, recruited it's director almost on the spot. That man was Michael F. Johnstone who, in a few years had developed possibly the first high school touring choir in the state at Grand Prairie.

In only three short years at Galena Park, many would say, he surpassed what he created at Grand Prairie and consequently impacted the lives, careers, and the very culture of my generation of choral singers at Galena Park. Indeed, my abiding love of music is the result of the powerful influence and leadership of this great man. I believe it's safe to say that many, many others around Texas share my admiration for Mike and the wonderful contributions he made to their education.

Mike was an incurable builder. He built Choral Programs and then would move on to the next challenge, always leaving a much better situation than he found. He was a marvel to observe in teaching, conducting and organizing. Mostly though, it was inspirational to see him create so much from so little, and in so little time.

When I reflect on my own educational history, Mike stands alone as the model of inspiration and motivation for my own life. This, in my mind, multiplied by the many others he influenced over his career, is his legacy. He truly is a giant in the history of choral music in Texas. So, here's to you Mike. And thanks for revealing a world of music and culture to one who might have missed out had it not been for you.

## Michael F. Johnstone Remembered by DeLois Wimmer

I want to relate the influence he has had on our lives in the little town of Galena Park. The first year he was there my brother Ted Wilson sang in the choir. When I heard that first concert I knew I was willing to give up my right arm in order to sing in such an organization with Mr. Johnstone.

The next two years I sang in that magnificent choir and like all the other students in the high school I will always be indebted to Mr. Johnstone for coming to our community. I was a soloist and an accompanist at contest. (We all know how he simply abided contests.) His first year choir did not enter contest at all, instead they went around Texas performing for other communities to encourage choral music. He set an example of what could be accomplished from scratch in one year. Wow! Did he ever show us a thing or two!

I was indebted to him in that he led me to the Episcopal church as a worshiper, a singer and an accompanist. He also let me be a baby sitter for his children who were so dear. He gave us great insights into other things rather than just music. He helped build us up through developing character, creative thinking, as well as solving problems.

I followed him as the high school choir director in Giddings, Texas and I understand it was because of his reference that I was asked by Superintendent Don B. Slocumb to come and teach there. Don Slocumb has had a great influence on music education in Texas. He was our high school principal and the man who brought Michael Johnstone to Galena Park. These two men will always be my heroes.

I have noticed so many of the GPHS graduates went on to be teachers as well as choir directors. They wanted to be teachers like those at GPHS or they wanted to be like Michael Johnstone and be the best of choir directors. I wanted to be a high school choir director but he suggested I go into elementary school music. I have taught Pre-K through high school. I certainly loved the high school music but I felt as a mother raising three little children I could handle elementary school better. He was right and that is where I have been teaching for thirty-five years. Those under the influence of Mr. Johnstone who did not make a career of music have grown in their love and appreciation of wonderful music. He planted a seed that has grown

and flourished into something very wonderful. It is sad he didn't live long enough to see all the good he had accomplished.

I talk about myself because of such a wonderful influence he had on me. This little kid went on to great a doctorate in music education. I never dreamed I would even get the opportunity to go to college. Mr. Johnstone helped and inspired me to make my dreams come true. My love of great music and all kinds of music stem from his introducing all us to the wonderful world of music. He brought us a great feast of music on the finest of silver platters. Thank you Michael Johnstone for the legacy and heritage you left us.

### Michael F. Johnstone Remembered by Carroll Barnes, Past President TCDA

Little did I know that this man who recruited me out of study hall to sing in his choir would have such a profound influence on my life and future career. Also, little did I know that this man was tough!!! No more free rides or coasting. Not only was Mike a tough old bird, but a taskmaster as well. Before I graduated he had me singing in the Texas All-State Choir, taking Voice Lessons from his wife, Pattie, taking care of the Choral Library at Abilene High School, leading Sectional Rehearsals, singing in his Madrigal Group, taking Music Theory (all this on top of Band and Orchestra), Sight Reading new music in the newly formed TCDA, and helped me get a Scholarship to the University of North Texas. I do remember one special moment of great joy under his direction. When my voice changed, he let me sing bass for two weeks before moving me to First Tenor. Ah, the good old days!

Actually, there were many days of enjoyment as well as hard work. He was very demanding and expected your best. He was also so very far ahead of his time as a Musician and Choir Director. Have you ever taken your choir to UIL Contest and sung a Triple Choir selection with one choir in the balcony, one on stage and one on the side. Or better still, a twelve-part arrangement (with three additional soloists) of the Saint Louis Blues. All of this took place in the late 1950's when choirs were not so good. Little did we students know what kind of education we were getting from Mike Johnstone.

Mike not only had a great impact on his students, but on Texas Choral Music and the forming of The Texas Choral Directors Association. While this may sound trite

or a little self-serving, I remember Mike taking some of his students to read new music at the newly formed TCDA, held at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio. It was the year Clois Webb was President and had brought his Superintendent, Gilbert Mize to be the guest speaker. One night after everyone had left the ballroom where we had gathered, I wandered back into the hall to see if anything was going on. The hall was dimly lit, but the Lectern had remained bright. As a high school student standing at the back of the ballroom, I had been very impressed with TCDA and Choral Directing. For some reason the thought came to me that, "One day I want to become President of this Association and I want to become a Choral Director." Both came true, thanks to Mike Johnstone.

Mike was truly a Pioneer in Texas Choral Music, but more importantly, he was a Leader, Teacher and a "God Send" to his students. We will not forget!