IN MEMORIAM

Floyd C. Townsley
(1897-1970)

Floyd C. Townsley died at Westminster Manor Hospital, Austin, Texas, September 7, 1970, after seven weeks' illness from a series of strokes. Only three days before his hospitalization, he had tendered his resignation as Professor of Voice in the Department of Music at the University of Texas at Austin. He is survived by his wife, Martha, and a sister, Mrs. Erle Francis, of Topeka, Kansas.

Born in Oldsburg, Kansas, January 8, 1897, Floyd attended high school in Holt, Kansas, where he graduated in 1915. He attended Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas, 1915-1917, before serving in the Navy during World War I (July, 1918 - June, 1919). He attended the Horner Institute of Music in Kansas City, 1920-1922. In Europe Floyd studied German, French, and Italian in each of the three countries. Among his voice teachers were Oscar Seagle and Jean de Reszke. He coached in many areas related to his field and with several different persons in each area, among them: Lieder with Ernst Victor Wolf, Negro Spirituals with H.T. Burleigh, French songs with Camille De Creus, Opera with Reynaldo Hahn and Ethel Leginska, Oratorio with Dan Beddoe, Acting with Aquistapace, English songs with Sir Richard Terry and Roger Quilter.

Floyd's professional career began as a church soloist in Oakland, California, then in Kansas City, Missouri. From 1922-1924, Townsley studied and concertized in Europe. As a member of a male quartet, "The de Reszke Singers", he sang in England, Scotland, Wales and France. He also did solo recitals and recordings for His Master's Voice in London and did several concerts with the famous pianist Wilhelm Bachaus. Before disbanding in 1927, the quartet did 392 concerts in the United States and Canada, of which 200 were with Will Rogers. They also made recordings for Victor.

Further study in Europe, recitals, oratorio and opera engagements followed, including a season with the Deauville (France) Opera Company. From 1929 until 1944, Floyd was soloist for the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest in New York City. In 1939, he became choir master as well as soloist. During this same period, he had many oratorio engagements in the East, Mid-West, and South; sang in opera radio hours for N.B.C. stations WOR and WQXR. He was a leading tenor of the Montreal Opera Company, appeared in New York, Tennessee, and Michigan, performed duet-concerts with Anna Hamlin and was tenor soloist for the Albion College Summer Music School at Bay View, Michigan, 1933-1945.

A member of the U.T. Austin faculty since 1944, Floyd enriched the musical life of both the university and local communities as solo recitalist, church soloist and choir director (First Methodist Church) and tenor soloist in many performances of the University Chorus and Orchestra. Among the latter was a performance of the Verdi "Requiem", given as a memorial to university students, faculty and staff members who died in World War II. Friends and colleagues who heard that concert will never forget it.

His associations were not confined to the University campus. He was an active worker for the United Fund and Red Cross and numbered among his friends persons from every walk of life. His wit, sense of humor and inclination to tease were among his most engaging charms.

One might say that Floyd's career reached a unique culmination when, at the age of 72, he gave five beautiful recitals in the summer and fall of 1969. Those who attended were deeply moved by what was communicated as a complete absence of ego and self. His students and friends know him as one whose life was given to the sharing of the good things of life: friendship, concern, justice, beauty and love.

A former student who is now a minister in Illinois, at the service for Floyd expressed it this way: "He was a sensitive and gifted teacher who took his students beyond the physical aspects of creating sound into the spiritual realm of the motivations and feelings which prompted their singing."

The Townsleys often entertained the entire music department faculty and staff. Their gracious home was always open and often a haven for their student friends. Again quoting, "Martha and Floyd gave many of us at the university an inspiring example at a crucial period in our lives of what a lasting marriage based on give and take, and upon mutual support can be - "

Those who know him best are enriched by his friendship.

Bryce Jordan

Bryce Jordan
President ad interim of the University of Texas at Austin

Forest G. Hill

Forest G. Hill
Secretary of the General Faculty

This Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors Chase Baromeo, Jr., Edra Gustafson, Jess Walters and Charlotte DuBois, Chairman.