

Obituaries

EVERETT HAFNER (1920-1998)

Word has been received from IDRS member David Nielsen that fellow IDRS member, oboist Everett Hafner of Village Road, Mass., died tragically in the crash of his Cessna 150 airplane on August 2, 1998 near Chesterfield, Mass. Everett was a faculty member of the physics department of the University of Rochester, New York, and became Dean of Natural Sciences at Hampshire College in 1968 until his retirement. After his retirement he received a second doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in music theory, and remained active as a composer and oboist. He was particularly interested in electronic music, and maintained a studio in his home. The IDRS mourns the tragic loss of this valued member.

RICHARD HIGGINS LEA (1946-1998)

It was with great sadness that I learned of Rick Lea's sudden and unexpected passing last June. I first met Rick in the late 1970's, and we used to periodically get together to listen to a sampling of his magnificent collection of oboe recordings, but I only really got to know him when I had the privilege of teaching him the oboe at the University of Calgary during the 97-98 school year. He enrolled at the U. of C. after taking early retirement from Shell Oil, fulfilling a lifelong dream to study for a music degree. He was enjoying himself and doing very well, both in his academic classes, and particularly with the oboe. He was certainly one of the hardest working students I have ever had, and, in his enthusiasm for the oboe, really something of an inspiration for me.

Rick was a computer whiz, and right after his oboe lessons often gave me some help with my computer, computer "lessons," in effect. With that experience I came to realize how what seems simple to one person is complex for another, and that I needed to keep that in mind when I was teaching the oboe. At any rate he persevered with me and eventually I learned more or less how to use the computer, and I am grateful for that, and for the chance to have known him.

He lives on, of course, through his family, and the people he has known and influenced. But Rick will live on in another, special way, through the truly astonishing collection of oboe recordings he assembled over decades. The size, quality and comprehensiveness of the collection is almost unbelievable, and I feel certain is unmatched anywhere. The collection has been left to Mount Allison University, and my hope is that it will become a worldwide resource for all those interested in the art of the oboe.

Over the course of time, I came to respect and admire Rick. We became I think more than student and teacher. We became friends. I will miss him.

Jean Landa
Oboist, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

The oboe world recently lost one of its least known, yet most remarkable figures in the person of discographer Richard Higgins Lea. "Rick," as he was known to his friends, was the most distinguished archivist of the sonic documentation of our instrument. Though a petroleum engineer by profession, he was a passionate oboephile by inclination, and what an extraordinary avocation this turned out to be.

His professional position for years required him to travel extensively, and it was during this period that Rick established fruitful contact with record dealers all over the world. Alerting them to his interests, and ever minutely scanning the many catalogues which came his way, Rick was able, over the last 25 years, to accumulate what can only be termed the most comprehensive collection of oboe recordings ever assembled.

The knowledge Rick gained over years of quiet and dedicated collecting was remarkable, not purely in the oboistic sense, but in the broader area of music literature in general. He did not neglect the instrument's use in popular and jazz idioms, either, nor the employment of the many oboe-instruments of world folk musics, all well represented in his carefully-assembled archives, which reflected the broad-ranging interests and insatiable curiosity of the true scholar.

Still, Rick was troubled that he possessed no academic degree in music, and was largely self-taught in playing the oboe as indeed he was in his other musical pursuits. Taking early retirement in 1997, he set about realizing a long-standing dream of obtaining professional training in music, enrolling in the B.A. program at the University of Calgary. (Having long resided in this city, he was well known to the university music faculty and to the local orchestra, in which he occasionally performed as a substitute.)

Having done very well indeed in his freshman year, he was looking forward with pleasure to returning in September of 1998 to begin his sophomore year. A few weeks into the summer break period, however, and only shortly after his return from the Arizona IDRS meeting, a mild heart attack carried him away at the age of only 52. He had, as ever, been working steadily on cataloging his new acquisitions and maintaining a heavy correspondence. (One of his last letters was to the present writer, as full of enthusiasm as ever over the eleven years of our exchanges.)

The departure of Rick Lea from our midst has left a void in the oboe world which is unlikely ever to be filled, and certainly not by anyone with Rick's patience, skill and dedication. He had plans, once his degree program was completed, for a great many fine articles derived from his unique archive. These would have been of great value in documenting the artistic legacy of our instrument in this century. The members of IDRS have lost an irreplaceable man: he will be missed by those of us who knew him and valued his devotion.

Michael Finkelman