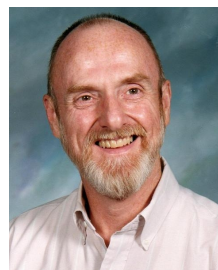


## A Special Tribute to Duane Gohlke

As we go through God's gift of life, we experience simple things in our lives such as world events, music, sports, food or just being around family and friends. When we encounter these events, several thoughts go through our minds as we ponder the things that shape our lives. When I reminisce about the good years, I often think of the people who have had a profound influence on me. One such person is Duane Gohlke.



I remember carpooling with one of my sister Janet's friends who was a freshman at Sherman High School that had just made a cappella choir. For an underclassman, this was quite an accomplishment. His name was David Layman, who was a very gifted and talented singer. I remember sitting in the car while my mom drove as he would tell us how proud he was to be in such a prestigious organization. Most of all, he spoke highly of the director, Mr. Duane Gohlke. I was taking band at Dillingham Middle School and at the time, did not think I had what it took to sing. I was only interested in drums. After a few years I had made it to High School.

The summer before my freshman year, I had the great pleasure of teaching Duane and wife Bobbie's kids swimming lessons. Josh and Jenny were incredibly bright kids who did really well in their lessons. My freshman year I had the honor of taking Spanish from Bobbie Gohlke. I could not believe all of the fun I had in that class. Not only did I learn a lot of Spanish, but I enjoyed hearing Bobbie entertain us with stories of the Gohlke's vacations and other anecdotes. I truly LOVED Bobbie!! She was so full of life and stories. In the course of her stories, I would hear about Duane and the choir. Like I said, at that point I never thought I could sing. Then that year I got to take a ski trip to Breckenridge Colorado with Duane and Bobbie's church. I will never forget that trip. We had devotions every night and Duane would play his guitar and lead us into song. As the trip went on, I found myself becoming interested more and more with joining the choir.

My sophomore year, I was approached by Duane to play drums for the choir concerts. The more I played for them, the more interested I became. That year I had dated a girl for six months and we had broken up. I decided to get her back by singing and playing the piano to her. I anguished over the song, "Faithfully", by the group, Journey and sang it to her one night at a party. She melted!! She told me that I had the most beautiful voice and thought I should be singing in the choir. With that, I enrolled in voice lessons from the late, Mel Derr to try to make it into choir the next year.

After a year of studying with Mel, I decided to take the plunge into choir. Duane welcomed me with open arms as he watched me develop. I couldn't believe I

was getting to finally study with Duane after all of the great things I had heard about him. He was so personable and passionate in his teaching. He would take us through these exercises over and over until we got them right. He was a real task-master. A respected task master as he led us through the drills. I remember he always wanted us to go over the song "Once more! Because Mom would have it that way!", as he so eloquently put it. I truly believe the members of the choir were afraid of not performing well with Duane directing. When we weren't performing up to our full potential, he would stop the choir and address us all with, "How many people worked on this last night???!?" "Well, that's not even HALF!!!" He would continue with, "When I hear y'all not counting quarter notes, two words come to mind: God, and Why!" "If I couldn't count quarter notes, I'D HANG IT UP!!!"

He was never intimidating and he gave you much praise for a job well done. He had a highly developed sense of humor and could make you laugh and forget about the pressure. He had extraordinary ability in his voice and on piano. He would often sing folk songs and do comedy numbers in class to loosen us up. He was a blast at all the parties with all of his goofy costumes.

He was a wonderful friend to me. EVERYONE! When you made an honest mistake and owned up to it, he would shake your hand and reassure you saying, "There's no love lost on this!" He gave me so much direction which I would take to heart and take with me wherever I went. I will always be grateful for his sense of direction, loyalty, honor and friendship. As Choir President of '85-'86, I learned so much from Duane. He taught me to persevere, to keep a great work ethic and to always have faith. So in closing, I would say that if there is anybody out there who thinks that they've got it all together? If so, do it again!!! Because Duane Gohlke would have it that way!

Steven L. Froese