

The Legacy of John L. Whitwell: A Life Shaping Wind Band Conducting and Music Education – A Conversation: Handout

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- Why this study?
 - Personal connection with Whitwell.
 - Whitwell's career warrants study:
 - Connection to predecessors.
 - Unique time that bridges different eras of the wind band.
 - Serves as a model for other conductors and educators.
 - His career path is similar to others who have been studied.
- Methodology
 - In depth, structured interviews with John Whitwell
 - Interviews with former students and colleagues
 - Transcribed through AI software, then edited, sent back to subjects for accuracy
 - Verified information through programs, personal correspondences, newspaper articles, memorabilia, and yearbooks
 - Organized data according to chronology and salient themes that were present
 - Only data corroborated by printed sources was used
- Guiding Questions
 - What experiences from Mr. Whitwell's life provided the catalyst that led to his career as a music educator?
 - How did Mr. Whitwell's tenure in public school music education impact his career as a collegiate music educator?
 - How did Elizabeth Green, William D. Revelli, and H. Robert Reynolds influence Mr. Whitwell?
 - How did Mr. Whitwell impact the conducting and instrumental music programs at Michigan State University?
 - What was it within Mr. Whitwell that enabled him to influence so many people musically, professionally, and personally?
- Early Family History
 - Thomas Whitwell (b. 1750, d. 1774)
 - Robert and Thomas Whitwell – moved to Kentucky.
 - Pleasant Whitwell – founded Pleasantville in Hickman County, Tennessee
 - William Harry Whitwell – (John's grandfather)
 - Owned Sawmill
 - Only way of life in Hickman County
 - John Harvey Whitwell – (John's father)
 - Left school for CCC before World War II
 - Married Annie Lee Barber
 - Both worked at Vultee Aircraft in Nashville during WWII

- Early Family History (cont.)
 - John Lee Whitwell (b. October 14, 1942)
 - Stayed with Horner Family, cousins while his parents worked in Nashville
 - After WWII, family moved back to Hickman County and settled in Cow Hollow, a valley near the town of Coble
 - Hard life, no running water or electricity
 - Church of Christ faith was central to life in Hickman County
 - Larry Doyle Whitwell, John's only sibling
- Move to River Rouge, Michigan
 - John Harvey's older brothers moved to Michigan to find work in post war steel industries
 - Encouraged them to move to River Rouge, eventually did in 1951
 - Found work hauling slag for Eugene C. Levy Company
- Fourth of July Parade, 1951
 - Whitwell's previous experience with music was his father and uncles playing folk music, or of music on the radio.
 - First time Whitwell saw a marching band
 - Quote: "it was maybe the most singular, most exciting thing that I can remember up to that point in my life, hearing and seeing this band. It was a combination of all those things, the shiny brass instruments, the self-discipline, the sonority of the band..."
 - Transformational in his life
 - He knew he wanted to be a member of the band
- River Rouge (cont.)
 - Stuttering
 - Whitwell stuttered his whole life
 - He felt he was unable to communicate effectively
 - Through patient and positive teachers, he was never held back
 - Later in life, apparent to students
 - Always had an emcee for performances
 - 4th grade – sought music teacher to ask about band
 - Piano class once a week after school
 - Cardboard piano keyboard
- River Rouge Bands
 - Mr. Gilbert, Beginning Band teacher
 - Trombone instead of trumpet
 - Mac E. Carr, High School Band Director
 - Major influence in Whitwell's life
 - Private Lessons every Saturday through 9th grade
 - Teaching opportunities
 - Guest artists and soloists
 - Ties to University of Michigan
 - "Old school" teacher

- Wyandotte, Michigan
 - At end of 9th grade year, Whitwells moved to Wyandotte.
 - Larger band program
 - More opportunities
 - Kenneth Hauer, Band Director at Theodore Roosevelt High School
 - Not as demanding, but influential with his connections
 - Introduced Whitwell to Interlochen for Post Camp
 - Edward Downing (pictured).
- North Central Christian College (Michigan Junior College/Rochester College)
 - Whitwell wanted to attend University of Michigan
 - Quote: "I wanted to go to [the University of] Michigan after high school, and my parents, being wonderful Christian people, thought state schools were evil. If it wasn't a Church of Christ school, it wasn't to be considered."
 - Fred and Claudette Alexander
 - No band, only choir and piano
 - Individualized instruction
 - Recommendation to attend Abilene Christian College
 - Met Carole Blackburn, his future wife
 - Received Associate of Arts Degree
- Abilene Christian College (Abilene Christian University)
 - Douglas Fry, Band Director at ACC
 - Tradition of Texas Bands
 - James Lynn Whitwell (b. August 20, 1963)
 - Full time job and completing bachelor's degree
 - Earned Bachelor of Music Education Degree
- Northwest Jackson School District, Michigan
 - The return to Michigan to visit parents
 - Inquired about attending University of Michigan as graduate student
 - Emil A. Holz told him to stay and find a job to avoid out of state tuition
 - Northwest Jackson School District
 - Beginning Band Director (1965-1967)
 - Junior High Band Director (1967-1969)
 - High School Band Director (1969-1975)
- Northwest Jackson School District (cont.)
 - Whitwell looks to find other jobs/felt administration was taking advantage of him.
 - Search for another director/Edward Downing's letter
 - Myles Mazur
 - Major Performances with Northwest High School
 - European Tour (1971)
 - Midwestern Conference (1974)
 - Mexico Tour (1974)

- Patricia Brumbaugh
 - Student of Whitwell at Northwest Jackson School District
 - Whitwell's impact on her life
 - Quote from Brumbaugh
- University of Michigan
 - William D. Revelli
 - Quote: "He just [was] a great teacher... and I came to just adore him. I mean, he conducted my band everywhere I ever taught, either in a clinic or in concerts. He was... an amazing person."
- University of Michigan (cont.)
 - Elizabeth Green
 - Quote: "We have to be able to hear the pitch, and in order to be able to hear the pitch, we have to think it and sing it."
- Ann Arbor Huron High School (1975-1981)
 - Reasons for leaving NWJS
 - Replacing Edward Downing
 - The Influence of H. Robert Reynolds
 - Conducting
 - Literature Selection
 - Education Process
 - Collaboration with Myles Mazur and Pioneer High School
 - Midwest Clinic Performance of 1980 with Pioneer High School.
- Abilene Christian University (1981-1987)
 - Reasons for leaving Ann Arbor Huron
 - Teaching assignments
 - Two concert bands
 - Marching band
 - Instrumental Conducting
 - Percussion and Brass Methods
 - Low Brass Studio
 - Supervising Student Teachers
- ACU (cont.)
 - Marching Band
 - Learning a new style
 - Arrangements
 - Performances at professional football games
 - Concert Bands
 - Both majors and non-majors
 - Being away from mentors
 - Conducting Symposia
 - Dale Clevenger Connection
 - Building the studio faculty
 - TMEA Performance in 1985
 - Guest soloists

- Stephen F. Austin State University (1987-1993)
 - Reasons for leaving ACU
 - Steve Peterson
 - Goals for SFA were similar to ACU
 - Hiring new studio faculty
- SFA (cont.)
 - The SFA Summer Band Camps
 - Mel Montgomery
 - William D. Revelli and Colonel Arnald Gabriel
 - SFA Conducting Symposia
 - Importance of Symposia to students
 - Importance of Symposia to Mr. Whitwell
- SFA – Major Performances
 - TMEA Performance of 1990
 - William D. Revelli and *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral*
 - National CBDNA Performance of 1991 in Kansas City
 - Michael Daugherty, Frank Ticheli, Karel Husa, John Whitwell (David Whitwell – not pictured)
 - Meyerson Center Performance of 1992
- Michigan State University (1993-2006)
 - Reasons for leaving SFA
 - The search for a replacement for Kenneth Bloomquist
 - Vying for rehearsal time with orchestra
 - Befriending studio faculty members, Elsa Verdehr, Curtis Olson, etc.
- MSU (cont.)
 - Working with James Forger on a bigger band budget
 - Commissioning Projects and Frank Ticheli's *Amazing Grace*
 - John Harvey Whitwell's passing
 - Connecting with Frank Ticheli
 - *Amazing Grace*
 - Recording projects with Frank Ticheli
- MSU (cont.)
 - Chamber Ensembles and the CBDNA National Conference of 1997
 - Rewriting of the Graduate Conducting degree programs
 - Hearing Loss, Depression, and Retirement
- Post Retirement Activities and Interim positions
 - Awards and Honors
 - Interim Director at several schools:
 - Northwestern University
 - Baylor University
 - University of Georgia
 - Louisiana State University
 - Professional Memberships
 - Guest Clinician/Conductor/Adjudicator

- Conclusions

- What makes Whitwell stand out as a Band Director?
- What was it within Whitwell that allowed him to impact so many people?