

# Clay Dawson

June 18, 1934 - December 20, 2018

Clay Howard Dawson was born in Davenport, Iowa on June 18, 1934 to Clifford J. Dawson and Gladys (Brown) Dawson. He attended Garfield Elementary, Sudlow Junior High and graduated from Davenport Central High School. Graduating Magna Cum Laude, he received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. While at Coe he met his wife, Kathy (Morgan) Dawson in the cast of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. They were married shortly after graduation in 1956 in the Coe College Chapel. Following a teaching position at Monticello, Iowa, he was drafted into the United States Army, where he became an instructor of missile electronics at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. He later completed his Master of Music degree from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

In 1965, Clay accepted a position as Director of Choral Activities at Northeast Missouri State University (Truman State University) in Kirksville, Missouri, where for 28 years he taught voice, diction, and directed the choral ensembles, including the NEMO Singers. His choirs appeared in state and national music conventions. While at NMSU he was a teacher and role model to thousands of music students, many of whom have continued in music as professional or church musicians around the country. Clay also served as the choir director at First Christian Church in Kirksville.

Following his retirement from NMSU, Clay and Kathy moved to Long Grove, Iowa, where he accepted a position as choir director at St. John's Methodist Church in Davenport. He also worked part-time at the Scott County Library and helped with the Bookmobile for a number of years.

While in Baton Rouge, Clay developed a passion for horticulture, later building and maintaining greenhouses in both Kirksville and Long Grove where he specialized in orchids, bromeliads and other tropical plants. While in Kirksville, Clay established Dawson's Gardens, which included hundreds of varieties of day lily plants. Many of those plants found their way to Long Grove and can be seen in their beautiful yard each summer. Clay was a member of the Illowa Orchid Society, the Cedar Valley Iris and Day Lily Society and was a Master Gardner. He was happiest when he was working in his Long Grove garden, assisted by one of the many dachshunds that he and Kathy raised over the years.

Other interests included furniture refinishing and chair caning, collecting antique toys, clocks, glassware, early sheet music and early musical instruments.

Clay was a member of National Association of Teachers of Singing, Phi Mu Alpha music fraternity (province governor), Missouri Choral Directors Association, Music Educators National Conference (NAfME) and Quester's.

Clay passed away at the age of 84 on December 20, 2018 at the Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House. Those left to honor Clay's memory are his wife Kathleen; daughters Anne Dawson and Vicki Schaeffer, Norman, OK; brother Theodore (Denise) Dawson, Durham, NC; brother-in-law Alan (Jolyn) Morgan, North Liberty, IA; sister-in-law Karen Moline, Marengo, IA; and many nieces and nephews. Clay was preceded in death by brothers Clifford, Jr. and Jack Dawson.

## *A Memorial Celebration for* CLAY DAWSON



June 29, 2019 at 1:30 pm

Eldridge United Methodist Church

604 S. 2nd St. Eldridge, IA 52748

Courtney Dake, Pastor

