

Clay Howard Dawson 6-18-34 to 12-20-18

Clay Howard Dawson, 84, passed away December 20, 2018 at the Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House.

Clay was born in Davenport, Iowa on June 18, 1934, to Clifford J. Dawson and Gladys (Brown) Dawson. Clay attended Garfield Elementary, Sudlow Junior High and graduated from Davenport Central High School. He received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, graduating Magna Cum Laude. 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 he taught voice, diction courses, and directed the choral ensembles, including the NEMO Singers, for 28 years. 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 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. Johns 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. That interest followed him to Kirksville, and he built and maintained 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 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 Gardener. 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 (state president), American Choral Directors Association, Missouri Music Educators Association, Music Educators National Conference (NAfME) and Quester's.

Those left to honor Clay's memory are his wife Kathleen; daughters Anne Dawson and Vicki Schaeffer, Norman, OK; brother Theodore (Denise) Dawson, Durham, North Carolina; 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 John and Jack Dawson.

Memorials may be made to Eldridge United Methodist Church, Eldridge, Iowa, where he was a longtime member. A musical celebration of his life will be forthcoming in the summer.

Arrangements have been made through Iowa Cremation.