



Charles Welsh

June 23, 2022

Charles William Welsh was born to his parents, Thomas William and Julia Rogers Welsh on April 18, 1929 in St Mary's Hospital, St. Mary's, PA. He grew up on a farm out of Emporium, PA, where his father was a high school teacher and his mother was the home economics teacher and manager of the high school cafeteria.

Charles attended rural schools until he entered Emporium High School and studied chemistry under the teaching of his father, along with his other studies. He excelled in chemistry and mathematics and won a scholarship to the college of his choice, which was Penn State University, his father's alma mater, but because of the influx of veterans returning from WWII, PSU gave priority to those entering on the GI Bill, so Charles chose his mother's alma mater, Manchester State College, for his freshman year. After that year, he was able to register at Penn State for his sophomore year. At the end of that year, he dropped out of school and later finished his education at St. Bonaventure University in St. Bonaventure, New York, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics.

As a Pennsylvania farm boy, Charles did his share, milking the cows and milk goats, tilling the garden for his mother and as a teenager, helped his father pitch hay. He had a mind for mechanics and when given a bicycle for Christmas, he took it all apart and put it back together so that he understood

the principle of how it worked. He enjoyed tinkering with the motor of his first car at age 16, and learned to do the basic service required for good maintenance which he carried out throughout his life. He attended church with his mother and began singing in the church choir with her when he was 15 year old. His interest in singing grew, and he practiced singing with the hymn book on his knee while doing the milking each day. He later took voice lessons from his high school choral director and enjoyed singing bass in the Emporium High School Choir. The Sousaphone captured his interest, so he became a band member, learning to read music and playing that instrument in the Emporium High Band all through his high school years. He spoke of working hard to prepare and perform a solo on his instrument at the District Band Festival in the Emporium vicinity and was proud of that achievement.

After his sophomore year at Penn State, he went to work to build up some funds and when he was 20, he met and married Mary Lou Ingram from Hinsdale, New York. They settled in Hinsdale near Charles' workplace, managing a gas station. He kept that job for several years while his two children, David and Beverly, were born and began growing up. But he wanted to finish his education and follow his interest, so he entered St Bonaventure University in Bonaventure, New York, as a night school student. He continued managing the gas station while attending classes at night until he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics. He started his job search soon afterwards, sending out his resumes to many states, but at that time, hiring was at a low point and it took a while before he got a response.

Charles interest in music grew, and he gained from his association with his brother-in law, Don Ingram, a prominent organist and choirmaster in a New York Episcopal Church. He took the opportunity to learn and perform sacred solos for worship services at Don's church and benefitted from Don's instruction and accompaniments. Charles attended church and sang in a church choir everywhere he lived. He was a high baritone with a wide range

which gave him the ability to sing solos with a high or low register and to sing either tenor or bass in a choir. This made him a valuable choir member, especially in his younger years.

When the job offer did come, it was from a distant place - Satellite Beach, Florida - where RCA had a contract with Patrick Air Force Base to support NASA. Charles interviewed, accepted the position and the family moved south from their New York home. Charles had been very worried about his young son, David's severe skin irritation making the little boy quite uncomfortable and unhappy because of the scaling, bleeding lesions which the doctor had not been able to heal. Moving to Florida to the warm, humid climate seemed to be a miracle cure for David's skin troubles, and the condition soon disappeared after a few sessions at the beach. So Florida proved to be a good move for the family in more ways than one.

Charles worked in data processing and he began using the huge, room sized computer, necessary for his computations in tracking the missiles from NASA. This made his job even more interesting and it led to his buying a kit with which he built his own personal computer before computers hit the market! Charles was successful in his work and later on, he was given the opportunity to get his Master's Degree through a program provided by his firm, without any cost to him. He attended Brevard Engineering College (now Florida Institute of Technology) which had been started expressly to support NASA, and earned his Master's in Mathematics while working for RCA. He then was promoted to Manager of a team on a ship which tracked the missiles from locations at sea. He stayed with that position until he was 58 when he decided to retire and invest his retirement funds. A month later, he was persuaded to come back to work as a trouble shooter because his firm needed him. He enjoyed that work for five years before he finally retired in 1995.

After Charles retired, he and his wife bought an RV and began to enjoy excursions and campouts, joining a camping club that selected sites for the club to visit all over Florida, and even out of state. Their daughter, Beverly, had married and was living in northern climes, so Charles and Mary Lou often made trips to visit her and her family in their RV, as well. They decided to relocate, selling their Satellite Beach home and moving to Ocala in north central Florida, where they bought a large home with a large pole barn on the property to accommodate their RV. Their son, David (Dave) lived in Ocala and they enjoyed being in close proximity to him.

Soon after arriving in Ocala, Charles and Mary Lou attended the First United Methodist Church there and Charles began singing in the church choir. A choir member in his bass section who noticed the quality of his voice, told Charles about the Marion Civic Chorale and invited him to come to rehearsal and audition. The next week he attended a rehearsal of the Chorale to listen and consider joining. Afterwards, he made the acquaintance of several soon to be friends, as well as the director, Grat Rozzaza, a professional director. As he inquired about joining, the director asked the assistant director, Billie Hengl, to assist in auditioning Charles. Both directors were impressed with Charles voice and friendly manner. He was accepted into the Chorale. It wasn't long before he was given a solo in one of the selections on a Chorale program.

Charles occasionally sang a solo in church, at the invitation of the FUMChurch Director of Music. That church televised its 11 a.m. service each Sunday, so the pastor, choir, organist and soloist were in the spotlight, broadcast to the local Ocala area. Charles felt that he needed more voice study to better present his solos, and inquired at Marion Civic Chorale rehearsal about a recommendation for a voice teacher. The director, Mr. Rozzaza, recommended Billie Hengl, who was the Director of Music at the Ocala West United Methodist Church, and had been a long time voice teacher before moving from Loveland, Colorado to Ocala. The next time she sang a solo in

the Chorale and Charles heard her, he called her afterwards to ask about starting voice lessons. Remembering his voice from hearing his Marion Civic Chorale audition, she accepted him for voice study and he started lessons on a weekly basis. He proved to be a good student, always coming to his lessons prepared and willing to execute the vocalises to improve his vocal technique.

After studying with Billie for two years, Charles asked to sing solos more often at church. The Director of Music told him that a number of people in the choir and church also wanted to sing, so the best he could do was to allow them to take turns! Then he said to Charles, "What you should do is sing a recital! If you would like to do that, the choir will sponsor you and even sing one anthem on your program." Charles had never sung more than one solo at a time, so he told his director that he would think about it. At his next voice lesson, he asked his voice teacher what she thought of the idea, and when she affirmed that he definitely could do it and offered to help prepare him, he resolved to take up the task. He informed his Director of Music at church that he was accepting the challenge and the offer of the choir's sponsorship and involvement. He was quite pleased about it and set about practicing and preparing in earnest. He learned Italian art songs, English art songs, Old American Songs, arranged by Aaron Copeland, and dramatic songs from musical shows, such as Man of La Mancha. For nine months he diligently studied and practiced and an accompanist was found at the local Community College. She rehearsed with Charles the last six weeks to be thoroughly prepared and "in sync".

The recital took place at the Ocala FUMChurch on a Sunday afternoon in late Spring. There was a large gathering of friends present and Charles' extended family, including his daughter, Beverly, from Connecticut were in full force to applaude him. Billie came early to offer to help Charles warm up and give him a "pep talk" to bolster his confidence, but she found him meeting and greeting his guests, instead! Although she was somewhat concerned that he would tire

his voice and lose his focus on the task ahead, she decided that he was relaxed and very natural about it all so she took her seat along with the other attendees. She was very pleased that he seemed very confident in his preparation and put the audience at ease with his manner. He began with the Italian art song that he had learned, singing the Italian words with good diction and clarity. His voice soared, and the audience applauded. From song to song he progressed, expressing the words and the music as he had learned to do while controlling the crescendos and diminuendos with grace. The Old American Songs, which varied in nature from serious to comic relief, were obviously a favorite of the audience, but he captured the audience with the nostalgic Goin' Home, taken from Dvorak's New World Symphony, and The Impossible Dream, ending with, "to reach the unreachable stars".

After receiving all the accolades from family and friends, and feeling a sense of accomplishment, Charles still wanted to continue his voice study and sang on more and more Marion Civic Chorale programs as well as in church. He visited his brother-in-law, Don Ingram, who was wintering in Vero Beach, Florida, where he was the organist during that season, and sang a beautiful oratorio solo with Don accompanying him at the organ. Billie always enjoyed teaching him and helping him to prepare for all those opportunities. They became better and better friends and Charles sometimes wrote to her when on trips. Their relationship was that of a real friendship with music at the center of it. As time passed, Charles began to talk in more serious terms, but for another year she would always reply with, "We have a wonderful friendship. Let's just stay friends!"

When Charles announced that he had asked for a divorce, it came at a time when Billie was wanting to leave Florida because the climate caused her a lot of respiratory problems and she was dealing with more and more periods of struggling with bronchitis and sinus infections. Her singing was compromised

and it was very difficult to continue her job as Music Director of Ocala West Methodist Church. She had developed the two choirs and was reluctant to leave, but when she turned 62, she made the decision to retire and move back to Colorado. First, she wanted to visit her sister in Texas and then she needed to find a job. When Charles learned that she was getting ready to move, he told her that he wanted her sister's address and phone number. He was the one who drove her to the airport - with no commitment at that time.

Within a few weeks and a lot of phone calls later, Charles had persuaded Billie to give him a chance and he drove to Cameron, Texas to join her and her sister with hopes to plan a wedding. He eventually got his wish, and won her sister over, which helped the equation, as well! Charles offered to make a home with Billie in her beloved Colorado and in the fall of 1999, they moved to Fort Collins and joined the First United Methodist Church and the Sanctuary Choir. They began hiking the mountain trails in the summers and made Rocky Mountain National Park a frequent get-away - for a number of years. The choir experience and the hiking at RMNP were the best of both worlds...but all good things have to come to an end.

On June 23, 2022, in the early morning hours, Charles passed with the comfort of the Hospice team around him at Columbine West Health and Rehab Facility when he had resided for nine months on his doctor's recommendation. In spite of his numerous health issues, he always remained pleasant - his trademark! He enjoyed occasional visitors, especially one friend who sometimes on a beautiful, windless day would take him out for a stroll around the property in his wheelchair. Billie was able to see him several times a week, and sometimes would join him for a musical program, one of the many interesting activities provided for the residents. His daughter gave him a new laptop so that he continued his fascination with the computer right up to the end, and he enjoyed music of his choice from a nice mounted TV, via a very nice headset, given to him by good friends.

There are so many memories in the almost 23 years together - and Charles' basic good nature and pleasant demeanor were the core of those good memories. He loved recalling his 90th birthday party, held in the choir room, right before rehearsal on a Maundy Thursday when the choir would be part of the service! He was able to walk in and enjoy the gathering of choir friends who converged at 5 p.m. to wish him well and share a cupcake and some jelly beans with a choice of soda - with the birthday balloons floating above! The choir's rousing rendition of HAPPY BIRTHDAY with an equally rousing accompaniment played by one of the Scholars has remained in our musical memories. Not one for long conversations, he enjoyed "chit-chat" and could be counted on for a familiar, "Beautiful day!" greeting. His clever quips surfaced occasionally - and often when asked whether he preferred to be called "Charles" or "Chuck," he would reply, "I'll answer to most anything - just don't call me late for dinner!" ;-)

Surviving are Charles' beloved wife, Billie, daughter, Beverly, (George) Gardner in Cambridge, MD, his son, David Welsh, in Ocala, FL, and his granddaughter, Pam (Brad) Gardner, in Walpole, MA. His grandson, Adam Gardner, is deceased.

There will be a memorial service on July 16, at 2 o'clock p.m. at the First United Methodist Church,
1005 Stover Street,
Fort Collins, CO 80524

And now, he is in His Everlasting Arms.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 16. 2:00 PM (MT)

First United Methodist Church
1005 Stover Street
Fort Collins, CO 80524
<http://www.fcfumc.net/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Charles Welsh*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ *What a wonderful account of Charles' life that I just read. Nicely prepared. Yes, his gentle and quiet demeanor and Billie's sweetness always seemed to be a testimony for their Christian faith. I am honored to have known Charles.*

Bill West - July 12, 2022 at 06:07 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Goes Funeral Care & Crematory - July 06, 2022 at 11:57 AM



Charles was a wonderful neighbor. He'll be greatly missed. Our deepest sympathies to Charles family.

Heidi Hart - July 10, 2022 at 05:06 PM