



50th Anniversary Reunion Celebration
CLASSMATE SCRAPBOOK
J.J. STAMM, IRV STEIN &
THE SPIRIT OF LIFE VOICES

Together Again

TAFT HIGH SCHOOL
Class of June 1959
50th Anniversary Celebration



Returning 50th reunion questionnaires included a surprising number of unsolicited comments about teachers. James J. Stamm was the teacher they mentioned most often. Many indicated that he was tough, a perfectionist, but got more out of his students than they thought they had to give. James J. Stamm was affectionately known to many of his students as "JJ". So we contacted J.J., (now retired in Sarasota, FL), to see if he would be interested in attending our 50th Anniversary Reunion Celebration. The answer was an enthusiastic YES!



The Taft Girls & Mixed Choruses' under the direction of J. J. Stamm won more Chicago City Choral Competitions than any high school during his tenure as the Taft Music Director. For over 25 years there simply was no competitor that even came close. The winning formula was simple as 1-2-3 . . . (but that's where "simple" ended) 1. JJ selected songs that had a high 'degree of difficulty, and he did so with confidence that his students would meet the challenge. 2. The complexity of his musical arrangements was always of professional quality. 3. The practice regimen he required resulted in a precision execution by his students and were unequaled by any competitor. ***As stated by Chicago Sun-Times music critic attending one of the competitions, "It was hard to believe the Taft Girls & Mixed Choruses' programs was performed by high school students".***

The following pictures represent JJ's attendance, his heart warming speech praising the June Class of 1959, his decision to become a music teacher and the luck of ending up at Taft High School for most of his almost 40 years as a music teacher. He had a chance to thank us for providing him with the most memorable career he could have ever imagined, and we had the opportunity to honor an extraordinary teacher who didn't make it easy . . . but he made it worth it!



Editor's Note: Second place went to **Miss Edith Strandberg** as the next most mentioned teacher. Many remembered the rigor and discipline she demanded of her English students. All came to appreciate her teaching style in college and in later career pursuits. Taft High School and the June Class of 1959 were blessed with many gifted and dedicated teachers.

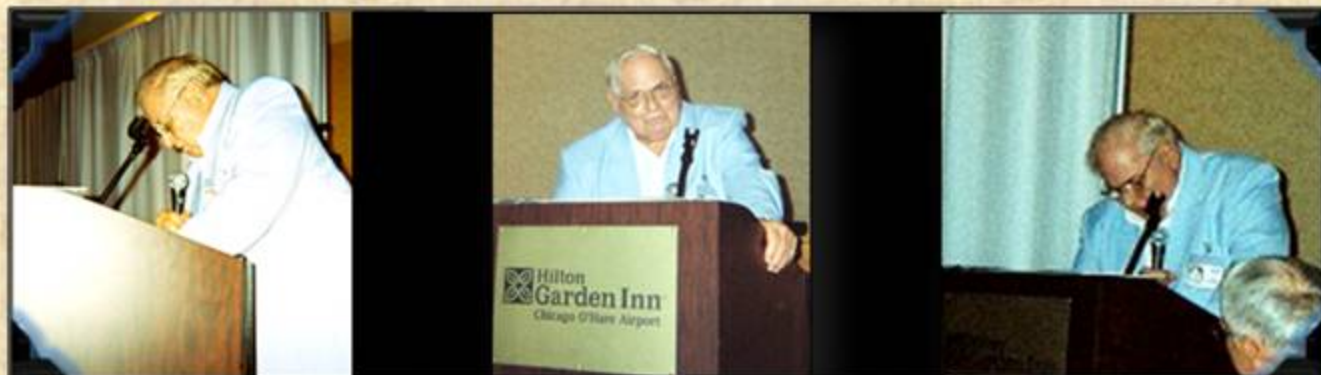
James J. Stamm Teacher Extraordinaire



Our Class President & Reunion Chairman Larry Marsh introduced Jim Stamm to the reunion audience which consisted of almost 180 people, (*Classmates & Guests*).



Arnie Werling picked Jim up at Midway Airport and spent time with J.J. all evening long. Little known fact: Arnie Werling best known for playing football at Taft, was a proud & enthusiastic member of the Mixed Chorus.

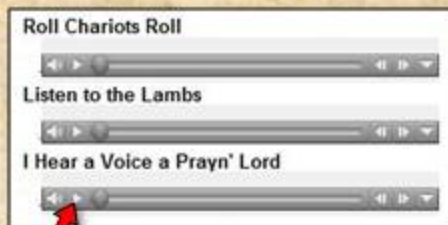


As stated in the opening page; but worth repeating: J.J. Stamm gave a heart warming speech, he was holding back the emotion as he praised the June Class of 1959, his decision to become a music teacher and the luck of ending up at Taft High School for most of his almost 40 years as a music teacher. *He had a chance to thank us for providing him with the most memorable career he could have ever imagined, and **we had the opportunity to honor an extraordinary teacher who didn't make it easy . . . but he made it worth it!***

James J. Stamm Teacher Extraordinaire



We presented Jim with a commemorative **50th Anniversary Reunion - June Class of 1959 Memory Book**. When he wasn't talking, laughing or reminiscing with his former students, he had his nose in the Memory Book, stating on a number of occasions that he couldn't believe what we had done with our lives. He sat there with a smile on his face and an expression that showed pride in maybe having had a little something to do with it. At times he seemed like the happiest guy in the room.



Want to hear *ACTUAL* Taft Mixed & Girls Chorus recordings from the 1950's & 1960's? **CLICK the LINK BELOW then SELECT 1 of the 3 songs by CLICKING on the ARROW in the GREY BAR.** These original recordings were provided by J.J.Stamm from his personal tape collection and digitally re-mastered by David Barth.

<http://www.taftreunion1959.com/CH1.html>

To **DOWNLOAD - VIEW - PRINT** a 10 PAGE Copy of the Taft Mixed & Girls Chorus Yearbook Pictures of the 1950's **CLICK the following LINK:**

<http://www.taftreunion1959.com/CHORUS-PDF.pdf>

*According to these pictures he is still the
same attractive guy he was 50 years ago!*



J. J. in his prime, Circa 1959



Mr. James Stamm, Circa 1956 -1958



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CLASSMATE SCRAPBOOK
TAFT TEACHER IRV STEIN

Remembering Taft Civics Teacher IRV STEIN



Irv & Lois Stein with
Reunion Chairman Larry Marsh



Mr. Stein in 1959
Died October 6, 2009



Irv & his wife Lois Stein at our
50th Anniversary Reunion

From: lah603@aim.com

Sent: Saturday, November 21, 2009 3:26 PM

To: fairseas2u@cox.net

Subject: Former Taft teacher Irving Stein

Larry,

As I was reviewing older emails, I came upon yours.

I wanted you to know Daddy had a wonderful time at the reunion.

Thank you for one of his great last memories. . . Dad died Oct. 6, just eleven days after attending the reunion.

Needless to say, it has been one of the most painful and paralyzing times I have ever experienced.

I will tell you we gave him a beautiful send-off, celebrating his wonderful life. Everyone loved my dad :).

I hope you had a great time at your reunion.

Keep making memories... with your family and friends..

Fondly,

Leslie Stein-Handler



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CLASSMATE SCRAPBOOK
THE SPIRIT OF LIFE VOICES

The Voices of Spirit



Larry Marsh, David Barth, (Taft Graduate-Class of 1962) & J.J. Stamm

David Barth, a student & inspired by J.J. Stamm in the late 50's & early 60's, founded the 100 Voice Ecumenical Christian Spirit of Life Chorus.

For our 50th Reunion David created an a-cappella ensemble group of about 20 singers of the Spirit of Life Chorus were chosen to become an ensemble named "The Voices of Spirit" to perform at the Gala Banquet.

Later all present Mixed & Girls Chorus reunion attendee's joined the "The Voices of Spirit" group to sing some of J.J.'s song arrangements from the 1950's. The Class of 1959 & The Voices of Spirit Chorus was directed by David Barth with the Master J.J. Stamm.

***SPECIAL NOTE:** David was recently inducted into the Taft Alumni Hall of Fame for his volunteer work with Spirit of Life Chorus.*

*100 Voice Ecumenical Christian
Spirit of Life Chorus*



The Voices of Spirit Ensemble



David Barth & his Spirit of Voices Ensemble
welcomed and introduced by Reunion
Chairman Larry Marsh

The Program

The following selections are part of our presentation:

- ♪ Red, White and Blue
- ♪ Simple Gifts
- ♪ Over the Rainbow
- ♪ America the Beautiful
- ♪ Battle Hymn of the Republic
- ♪ Moments to Remember
- ♪ Christmas Was Meant for Children
- ♪ I Hear A Voice A Prayin'
- ♪ * Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire
- ♪ * You'll Never Walk Alone
- ♪ * Taft Fight Song
- ♪ * Taft Alma Mater

* Reunion Singers Participate



The Voices of Spirit Ensemble



A Fun Remembrance

Chorus alumni attending the banquet received copies of the music prior to the event and were encouraged to come forward and join the "The Voices of Spirit" group to sing a few of the Girls and Mixed Chorus standards from the 1950's.

The Class of 1959 & The Voices of Spirit Ensemble joint forces were directed by David Barth with the Master J.J. Stamm coaching from the sideline.

