

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

HERBERT BOSWELL NANNEY

(1918-1996)

Herbert Boswell Nanney, professor emeritus of Music, died of heart disease on May 20, 1996, at the age of 77, in a Mountain View convalescent hospital. Nanney was widely known as a concert organist, and served Stanford both as University Organist and as an active member of the Music faculty for 38 years, before retiring in 1985. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Jean, and son, Duncan.

Herb Nanney was born in Whittier, CA on August 1, 1918. He studied organ with Alexander Schreiner at UCLA, earned his AB degree in Music from Whittier College in 1940, and briefly assumed duties as organ assistant to Warren D. Allen at Stanford University, before leaving to serve in World War II with the 203rd General Hospital Battalion in England and in France. While in Paris, he was organist-director of the American Cathedral, and studied with Marcel Dupré at the Paris Conservatory of Music.

After the war, Herb assumed duties as organist and choir director for several churches in Southern California and, later, in Philadelphia, where he resumed organ studies at the Curtis Institute of Music with Alexander McCurdy, earning an Artist's Diploma in 1947. He returned to Stanford that year as University Organist and member of its fledgling music faculty. He earned an MA in Music at Stanford in 1951.

Herb Nanney's legacy to Stanford rests on three principal areas of activity. As a performer, he gave recitals and lectured throughout the United States and Europe, and was frequently featured as soloist at professional conventions. As a teacher, he organized a new doctoral program in organ performance practice in the 1960s, which attracted national attention, and trained dozens of skilled performer-scholars for University positions throughout the country. And as Director of Music for Memorial Church, he maintained high standards and a central place for musical performance at services, provided music for the myriad events that took place in the Church (including, by his own count, playing for "more than 5,000 weddings in 40 years"). He also oversaw the construction of a superb new Baroque-style organ -- a dream of Nanney's realized only after some 30 years of planning and fund-raising: the Fisk-Nanney organ, dedicated by a series of celebratory, inaugural concerts in 1984.

Herb was a warm, caring, committed, lively, and witty colleague, as well as an inveterate punster. At social gatherings, he enjoyed demonstrating his ability to improvise at the piano, and especially delighted in playing popular songs in the style of classical composers.

Although he had eclectic tastes in the music he played and taught, Herb clearly favored the works of J.S. Bach. At his retirement, he was honored by the return to campus of 30 of his former students, from throughout the nation, to participate in a series of concerts, performed in Memorial Church over several days and devoted exclusively to the organ music of Bach. It was a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the composer's birth, in recognition of the special place held by Herb Nanney at Stanford and in their lives.

Albert Cohen
Gregory Wait