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Mrs. Edward R. Chapman

Her song lives as Kingswood ex-teacher dies

By JACK CRELLIN
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LOIS CHAPMAN

It seems incredible that a Michigan woman who contributed so much to so many aspiring young women musicians and singers — along with providing entertainment — died unheralded this month and was quietly buried in a tiny cemetery at Alamos in the Mexican state of Sonora.

But that's what happened to Mrs. Lois Johnston Chapman, onetime music teacher at Kingswood School Cranbrook.

And a lot of people who knew the gentle 82-year-old woman are upset, not about the circumstances of her death, but rather the fact her passing — up until now at least — was completely ignored by the media.

Certainly Mrs. Chapman, who made her home in Glen Arbor in Michigan's northwestern Lower Peninsula after her retirement from Kingswood, would have no quarrel with her last resting place, not far from the pristine waters of the Gulf of California which rival her cherished, emeraldlike Glen Lake for sheer beauty.

According to her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Rose Chapman of Grand Haven, Mich., who was traveling with her in Mexico at the time she was stricken with a fatal bladder attack on Jan. 2, the former teacher wanted to be cremated and buried wherever she died.

That commitment was kept and the pounding of the surf on the beaches of Sonora, and the wind whispering through the trees of Alamos, will forever provide an eternal eulogy to a woman whose life was a song.

Mrs. Sally Hopkins of Birmingham, a distant relative, remembers Mrs. Chapman well.

As a young woman she sang with several opera companies, according to Mrs. Hopkins.

Then, for a time, she toured the country — coast to coast — singing with a group promoting the sale of Steinway pianos.

There was a brief sojourn in Detroit where she was the soprano soloist at St. Paul's Cathedral in the late '30's.

Eventually, she found her way to Kingswood in the late '40's and early '50's as a music teacher and soprano soloist at Christ Church Cranbrook.

For those who may yet have difficulty recalling Mrs. Chapman, she was the stocky woman with iron gray hair hovering in the wings who directed so many lively performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operas put on by the student body.

Mrs. Hopkins was naturally upset when none of these facts came to light at the time of Mrs. Chapman's death.

As she told the editor of The Detroit News:

"It seems too bad that in this wacky society of ours, everything and everybody must be viewed with a jaundiced eye.

"A great many people from coast to coast knew and loved Lois Chapman.

"She had a great joie de vivre, and tremendous energy. Her friends will never know what happened to her unless they are permitted to read this."

Mrs. Chapman is survived by a nephew, Army Lt. Col. Robert S. Russell; a grandniece; a grandnephew, and distant but admiring relatives like Mrs. Hopkins.

Worked with Vernon Kellot

of Cranbrook School on the 11th