

Stop & Reed

Special Edition September 2022
*San Joaquin Valley Chapter
 American Guild of Organists*

In Memoriam

Catherine Diane Walker, CAGO

1939-2022



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Organist, Colleague, Friend

Catherine Diane Crist was born on August 22, 1939 in Wenatchee, Washington to her parents Ezra Crist and Ruby Woods Crist. She was the third of four children. She looked up to her older sister Jeanene and older brother Calvin, and loved caring for her younger brother Ron. As a child in Wenatchee, she was surrounded by the company of her many cousins, aunts, and uncles, and helped her family pick and sell fruit from the pear orchards at their home. During the winter season, she loved to ice skate on the frozen playground of her elementary school. Cathy began taking piano lessons as a young child, and her passion for music continued in high school, where she accompanied numerous high school musicals.

Cathy came to California to attend La Verne College, where she received a BA in Education and her teaching credential. During college, she sang in the a capella choir and a women's trio, and studied piano and pipe organ. Cathy became acquainted with Phil during their many musical activities, and after dating for over a year, they announced their engagement in the presence of their parents. They were married on August 12, 1961 by Phil's father Robert Walker at the Church of the Brethren in Wenatchee, where Cathy's family were active members. Cathy and Phil sang a duet, a hymn based on peace, as part of the ceremony.

Phil and Cathy's first home together was in Laverne. Cathy taught first grade in Covina for one year until Phil was drafted in 1962. As lifetime members of the Church of the Brethren, a church that promoted pacifism, Phil and Cathy accepted an assignment to serve in a civilian capacity through International Voluntary Service in South Vietnam. They taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to high school students for two years, and then returned to California and settled in Fresno.

Cathy was a devoted mother to three children. In 1968 Cathy and Phil adopted their daughter Lynne from Seoul, Korea. Their daughter Brenda was born in 1973 and their son Loren was born two years later. In 1978, Phil and Cathy left the city and moved to Yosemite Lakes Park in Coarsegold to enjoy a rural lifestyle with their young family. Cathy taught piano from her home in the evenings and was a church organist with the Fresno Church of the Brethren. When the children got older, Cathy returned to teaching in Fresno Unified School District where she taught ESL and third grade for 20 years.

Throughout her life, Cathy was an accomplished pianist, organist, and choral director. She sang in and accompanied several choral groups, including the Fresno Master Chorale and Fresno Choral Artists. She was an organist at the Fresno Church of the Brethren for 15 years and organist and choral director for 30 years at Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church in Oakhurst, California. She was a Board Member of the American Guild of Organists for many years where she also served as Dean. Cathy also initiated and directed several choral groups in the mountain area: Mountain Arts Chorale, Sierra Choral Festival, and the YLP Serenaders.

In 2019, Cathy and Phil sold the home in which they had lived for almost 40 years, and moved to The Terraces at San Joaquin Gardens in Fresno. Although this move concluded a 52 year career of teaching piano and organ, Cathy continued to lift others through her music. Most recently, she was a guest organist at University Presbyterian Church, the director of a mixed quartet at The Terraces, the accompanist for the choral group Coro Solare, and the inspiration for spontaneous singalongs with her friends and grandchildren.

Memories

I met Cathy 12 years ago when I joined the organ guild. At the time, she was serving as the dean, and I must admit she intimidated me a bit. But all of that went away as soon as I saw how supportive and invested she was in a budding young organist.

Cathy was a real “go getter”.. She was impeccably organized, timely, and kept us all honest. Rarely was there anything that slipped her radar. Cathy served as Dean from 1974 to 75, and again from 2009-2012. We especially relied on her over the past few years as secretary, keeping excellent notes! I leaned on her heavily for her expertise of how things should be managed, executed and promoted. She was an integral part of our program planning, from recommending world class artists, to leading our hymn festivals and workshops.

It goes without saying that all of us were blessed by Cathy’s music.... She was an excellent performer and was always judicious about practicing. Her passion for quality music and worship was obvious in everything that she played and led. I’m grateful for her friendship and mentorship and we will miss her deeply.

Cactus Harris,Dean

Music in a Sacred Space

“Jerusalem, My Happy Home”

arr. Gerald Near
Scott Horton, organ

Dedicated in loving memory to
friend and colleague

Cathy Walker

https://soundcloud.com/big-red-church-first-congregational/jerusalem-my-happy-home?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Memories

MY TRIBUTE TO CATHY WALKER, MY DEAR FRIEND.
Helga F. Lutke Medd, 8.30.22

We had several connections so that made for a very close understanding in our lives. So whenever events happened, I knew

Cathy would be in touch with me - *and she always was!*

When Byron and I moved here from Canada, she and Phil often met us for dinner to discuss the outside world. We heard about their experiences and they were very interested in our Canadian events.

When I taught briefly at Lowell Elementary School (FUSD), she was delighted because this was her school and some of the same staff members were still there.

When we attended the MTAC, Fresno Branch, we performed some music presentations as piano duets, 8 piano-hands, etc. She was extremely musically talented and easy with whom to play.

When we both were on the SJVAGO Board for many years, I was able to observe how much she served here with her compassion, knowledge, experience and love for music. She worked hard at any level that needed doing and always had the expertise to fulfill the need.

When she assembled presentations as Choir Director in her church north of Fresno, each sound was an enormous treat because it was creative, musical and spiritual.

Having recently lost my beloved Byron, I reach out to Phil with much love and prayer. I will personally miss my wonderful dear and long time friend, Cathy.

Cathy Walker was an encourager. I knew her for many years through both the Music Teachers Association and AGO. She was always so kind and complimentary of the musical accomplishments of others. She wrote beautiful thank you notes and letters to the editor of the Fresno Bee about the programs that the MTA and AGO put on for the public. When I joined the Board of the AGO a few years ago, it was Cathy who gently reminded us of all that needed to be done for the various programs. Even in retirement, with all that she had accomplished as a musician, she continued to perform, to learn and to grow. She was a blessing to me and so many others and I was honored to be her friend.

Michal Hembd

Memories

Dear Phil, Precious Family and AGO colleagues,

I will miss our dear friend, Cathy, whom I admired, so much for her engaging spirit, her command and virtuosity in the art of piano and organ expertise, and a joyful spirit captured in her loving smile that made you feel special. She was a vital member of our AGO branch, promoting enthusiasm for the Art of the Organ, wonderful knowledge of the Organ and providing leadership wherever needed. These are only a few of the blessings she shared with us; there were so many more. We served on committees together to plan some of the annual AGO Hymn Sing Festivals. I was always so thankful for her guidance and knowledge in developing these stellar events for our organization.

She was a gift of love, a gift I will treasure always. We have enjoyed the perfection of her technical expertise at keyboard instruments, which made her such a wonderful accompanist and performer. I have also had the pleasure, as have many of you, to be the recipient of encouraging words at programs where I was the keyboardist. Cathy let you know that what you played and how you played it were appreciated. She made you feel better, and the endless hours you practiced seemed worth it. The latest occasion of hearing those wonderful affirming words was for my part playing AGO's Continuo Organ for Soli Deo Gloria's concert "Mozart and More," March 2022. Her kindness made my day!

Cathy was also a faithful member of Music Teachers Association of California. In her piano and organ studios she opened the eyes of students as they received keyboard/organ/pedal instruction from her. At our MTAC meetings and events it was my responsibility as Hospitality Chair to organize the refreshments. Cathy along with other members of MTAC would bake lots of cookies and sometimes serve as a hostess as well. She was an excellent baker. I and others would enjoy her delicious, chewy bars. It is another sweet memory of Cathy that I will always remember.

Friends like Cathy grace our lives, leaving their loveliness to enrich us. Cathy was a special friend whom I will miss, but I'm richer for having known her. To God be the glory for Cathy.

With Our Love and Sympathy,
Susan and Ken Berg

How touching it is to see the tributes and memories to our dear friend and colleague, Cathy Walker. I always enjoyed working with Cathy, as she always brought a sense of joy to any task, and a feeling of worth in what we were doing. I know that I will miss seeing her on the bench accompanying the massed choir at our Hymn Festival, and at our chapter board meetings and events. Cathy's dedication to sharing the beauty of music with her church and community will always remain in my heart. Thank you Cathy, you gave so much to us, and we will miss you dearly.

Michael Varlas

Memories

The two most tangible remembrances of Cathy that I trust will always stay with me were her voice and her laugh, both very comforting to me right now.

She was a special friend for most of my adult life— going back many decades!

I was in her company nearly every month through our local mutual activities of the American Guild of Organists and the Music Teachers Association of California.

Also, each season, hearing her skills as choral accompanist at many important Fresno performances was a joy for me.

There are not enough positive words to describe Cathy, but I will offer: attentive, encouraging, enthusiastic, friendly, fun, and helpful. She made my job as AGO Dean much easier with her words of wisdom along the way.

Cathy was very serious about using and sharing her talents, always very well prepared. I remember her looking forward in her retirement to have more time for both AGO and MTAC. She contributed to both organizations in a very big way.

An admirable musician and human being to say the least!

Laurell Huber

Hello Friends and Family of Catherine Walker,

Many of you are aware that our precious mother passed away from cardiac arrest on August 24, 2022. Cathy had a successful heart valve surgery in May, and we all felt optimistic about her recovery, so her passing last week felt much too sudden. Apparently her immune system had been compromised by a variety of contributing health factors.

Of course we all miss her terribly and we know how much she will be missed by all of you. We have created the memorial website linked below, and we ask you to visit the site for details about the Celebration of Life events which will be held in her honor.

[Catherine Walker's Memorial Website](#)

With Much Love,
Brenda, Lynne, and Loren (her children)