



Member Spotlight: Larry Loftis

Larry Loftis was born in the old Greenville General Hospital in December of 1941. He attended Reid School Elementary and is a 1960 graduate of Taylors High School – its last graduating class.

Born into a musical family, he attended Mountain Creek Baptist Church and began studying the piano in elementary school. “I didn’t take lessons for more than a couple of years since boys didn’t play the piano!” While attending Taylors Middle School, he became active in the chorus and his love for the organ started to grow. He began his organ study in high school. Mr. Floyd Parker, music director at the church, impacted his musical life through opportunities to become involved in their church services. When he resumed piano lessons, his teacher became another musical mentor in terms of training in technique and exposure to classical music. She encouraged her students in other ways such as taking them to community concerts including a performance of “H.M.S. Pinafore” presented by the Woman’s College of Furman University where he likely saw his future wife for the first time!

Larry studied organ at Wingate College where he earned an Associate of Arts degree in music. After college, he worked for a year at the Library of Congress in Washington where his love for that city and for good music flourished. Returning home in 1963, he began working at the Bank of Greer (later BB&T). He successfully served as branch manager for several offices in our community and says, “I’ve always played the organ through job changes.”

Joining the AGO in the early 1960s, he immediately became treasurer of our chapter, faithfully serving in that capacity for over 20 years. Larry became organist at White Oak Baptist Church (WOBC) in 1963 and officially met Mary Wall, a member of the choir. They married in 1969. Mary served in a supervisory position at the J. E. Serrine Construction Company for many years. With a church music degree from Furman University (voice principal), she and Larry partnered together for decades working with the children's choir at WOBC.

Larry is a life-long learner. As his love for the organ grew, he studied privately with Edwin Clarke at Furman University. Following his retirement, he earned a funeral director's license, continued working part-time at the Mackey Mortuary (where he had served during the evenings during his career in banking), and became their staff organist. He continues to serve at WOBC; in addition, he has served as organist-choirmaster at St. Francis Episcopal Church and as assistant organist at Christ Church, Episcopal. When asked about funny stories at church or at the funeral home, he recalls a family who requested "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" as the casket was being ushered out of the Chapel!

Larry and Mary loved to travel (Great Britain, Italy, Austria, NYC, DC) and especially enjoyed a long tradition of spending part of the Christmas season in DC – attending concerts, church services, and other seasonal events. He remembers with fondness a special trip there in 1981 where he, Bob Powell and their respective choirs sang for Evensong at the National Cathedral. The prelude for the service was Bob's "Apperception: An Extended Festival Anthem" for two choirs. Larry was organist for the hymns that evening.

As an officer in the Greenville Chapter, Larry remembers joining forces with the Spartanburg Chapter to co-host a Southeastern Regional Convention in 1973. These chapters were never large, but it was a testimony to what smaller chapters can do when working with a common vision.

Concerning the benefits available to those in the American Guild of Organists, he says, "I appreciate the spirit of being together with like-minded people who enjoy good music, good concerts, and hearing about organs of other churches and venues."

We are grateful for the kind and gracious spirit of this native Greenvillian who has been a faithful member of our Chapter for over half a century!