



Lewis Hugh Cooper
(1920-2007)

Tributes to Lewis Hugh Cooper

Compiled by Jeffrey Lyman and Mark Clague
Ann Arbor, Michigan

From JOHN MOHLER

Professor Emeritus of Music (Clarinet),
University of Michigan School of Music

I am fortunate to have known **Hugh Cooper** as a teacher, a faculty colleague, and, above all and most importantly, a friend for fifty years. We first met when he arrived early for his University of Michigan School of Music teaching schedule one day and joined a group of us who were “brown-bagging” lunch in a faculty office. In those days the triangular route from home in Pontiac, Michigan, to Detroit for Detroit Symphony Orchestra services, to Ann Arbor, and back to Pontiac was his routine. It was immediately clear that here was a man who knew a great deal about many things (including how to install cable for an outdoor lighting project then under discussion!). Over the intervening years this breadth of knowledge and his generous personality for sharing it became increasingly more evident and appreciated.

Hugh is a teaching legend. It was thrilling to hear the many testimonials offered at the recent celebration of his life. As with everything else he did, his dedication was absolute. The stories of the “three-hour” lessons are all true. Once asked when he scheduled lunch, he responded that “there’s a lot of time for lunch on the days I’m not here!” When Hugh left the DSO to join the School of Music faculty full-time, this dedication never waned; he became fully invested in school functions which also included faculty woodwind quintet performance. His acoustics course, continued right up to retirement, was one of the most unique offerings available. His professional performance experience plus his personal scholarly efforts which included a close association with Hans Moennig (for many years the master woodwind technician in Philadelphia) provided a wonderful background for his becoming the master teacher we will always appreciate.

During our retirement years, my wife and I were able to get to know both Nan and Hugh much better. There was always a story unheard before, many recollections shared, and a lot of good humor. Hugh was an inspiration in so many ways and a constant

source of encouragement. He loved people and was loved in return.

Hugh, you will live in our lives through our memories of you and the voice of your publications, yet all of us will greatly miss you. Thank you for allowing us to experience your artistry and generous personality.

From JEFFREY LYMAN

Associate Professor of Bassoon, University of
Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance

“You can’t take it with you,” or so we’re told. Knowing this, Hugh Cooper made some careful decisions about what he knew he would leave behind, and thanks to his typically thorough planning, bassoonists everywhere will continue to benefit from the generosity of spirit that characterized his meetings with students and colleagues throughout his life.

No one who ever visited the Coopers at their home was able to leave their basement without seeing “the cabinet,” which housed Hugh’s collection of Heckel and Püchner bassoons. Upon his passing, many bassoonists must surely have first thought about what would become of those instruments, and of course Hugh already had a strategy for getting the bassoons out into the musical world. However, far fewer people knew about his music library, as he was so much better known as a technician, reed maker and author. Just as he was often described as a treasure trove of information about the technical aspects of the bassoon, he had another treasure tucked away in yet another filing cabinet.

About a year or two before he passed away, Professor Cooper donated this extensive library to the University of Michigan School of Music. In the summer of 2006, he called me in Arizona, just before I moved to Ann Arbor, to ask me to be sure that the library was being taken care of, and more importantly to make sure that students would be able to have access to what he had donated. Over the course of the past year, U of M Music Librarian Charles Reynolds and his staff helped sift through the donation and in-



Hugh Cooper and his wife (r.) and the late Leonard Sharrow and his spouse (l.)

corporated much of the collection into the holdings of the U of M Library. Some of the items can now be found on-line by searching the catalog with a keyword search on the name "Hugh Cooper."

However, a great deal of the library was not incorporated, but was instead given directly to the bassoon studio, where it is my privilege to care for it now. While cataloging the contents I felt as if I was back in the same room with Hugh, but instead of having a lesson on reed theory or bassoon repair, we finally had the chance to talk exclusively about the music he loved, and not only his favorites but those of his great friend **Charles Sirard**, his colleague for many years from the Detroit Symphony.

It became very clear upon opening the boxes and boxes of music that were delivered to my studio that Hugh Cooper was as much a collector of music as he was of bassoons, but for some reason he never made a big deal about the library. Some of the highlights of the *Cooper Library* include a late-19th century reprint of the original André edition of the Mozart *Bassoon Concerto*, first editions of the Milde *Concert Studies* and many of the Paris Conservatory contest pieces, and even the

first printing of the Saint-Saëns *Sonata*, which proves once and for all that the end of the first movement MUST begin on low D and end on high b', without the optional 8va in the penultimate bar of the solo part. Besides first editions, there are also meticulously prepared collections of handwritten and printed orchestral excerpts, among them the first version of the Stadio book, which had far more excerpts than what you will find in the current edition. Many of the bassoon solo works are sprinkled with fingerings from



Hugh Cooper lecturing to the IDRS about bassoon maintenance and repair



Hugh discussing bassoon acoustics following an IDRS lecture/demonstration.

the famous “Cooper Book,” all in that familiar angular handwriting, and of course there are tons of pages torn from yellow legal pads. Besides all the standard “serious” repertoire, he also had well-worn copies of every single arrangement made by the Bubonic Bassoon Quartet, and many works composed for him, some by students at the U of M, others by friends from around the world. There are autographed copies of many classics, including the Kovar *Daily Studies* with a dedication by **Simon Kovar**, to cite only one.

Everyone contributing tributes to this issue of *The Double Reed* has mentioned Hugh Cooper’s dedication as a teacher, and that dedication continues after his death through his library. A listing of the contents of the library is published on-line at the University of Michigan Bassoon Studio web page. I hope that former students and bassoonists who never had the opportunity to work with Hugh Cooper will take advantage of the collection, and get to know this great man through this generous gift.

From CHRISTOPHER WEAIT

Emeritus Professor of Music, Bassoon,
The Ohio State University School of Music

Before I met Hugh I know about him because my college teacher **C. Robert Reinert**, his friend of many years, spoke often about him. I got to know him through many IDRS meetings. At one, I had an unforgettable meeting with him at breakfast.

At the time I had been in the Toronto Symphony about 15 years. I was thinking about the future. I asked him should I obtain a DMA degree in order to get a university teaching job. He asked me how long

I’d been playing in the TS. After I told him he said something like: You don’t want to teach at a school that will require you to have a DMA. You have the equivalent in professional experience. A good school will recognize that. I was deeply grateful for his judgment. His willingness to freely share his knowledge is a characteristic that I have tried to emulate.

From GERALD COREY

IDRS Honorary member and co-founder

Hugh Cooper was my bassoon teacher/mentor at a very young 18 years of age - as I began working with him on bassoon and music and acoustics in 1952 before graduating from Ann Arbor, Michigan High School. Hugh gave me the most valuable lesson one afternoon in that year, when I began playing one of the E. Bozza *Etudes Journaliers* in his studio at Harris Hall. After I played a few lines, Dr. Cooper said, “I am taking my chair and moving out into the hall and down a piece. I want you then to play to me so I can hear you out there”. I have used that method of improving the sense of projecting the bassoon tone over a large area, with umpteen students over the years I have taught bassoon. Every time I would speak to Dr. Cooper on the telephone, he would give me such brilliant and complete explanations of how to solve any problem I had encountered, all with his typical great enthusiasm and good humor. What a treasure of a superb teacher he always was for legions of fine artist professionals. I miss talking with him every day, but remember his effective words in every thing I do in music today.



Hugh (l) and another distinguished IDRS Honorary Member, Don Christlieb, in Tallahassee, Florida, 1983.



Hugh and wife (l.) along with the Püchners and a few other bassoonists at the Püchner Anniversary reception in Frankfurt, Germany.



A very distinguished bassoon quintet: (l to r) Hugh Cooper, Bill Waterhouse, Steve Paulson, Klaus Thuneman, and Sol Schoenbach.

From DANIELLE MAYS

Hollywood, California, Observatory Orchestra, Studio Musician, and Professor Cooper's last student at the University of Michigan

How does one even begin to speak about a man like Lewis Hugh Cooper? He has touched so many of our lives in such beautiful ways. To say that he loved teaching is such an understatement. When I auditioned for him in early 1995 my audition lasted about

twenty minutes. Professor Cooper then declared that I would be his next project and proceeded to sit and work with me for the next eight hours! He never even got up to get a glass of water or anything else for that matter! It was like a fire had been suddenly lit inside him. He had a mission. He saw something in me that I couldn't see in myself. He was determined to help me see it so that I could enjoy music and the art of bassoon playing the same way that he did. This is how I saw him treat everyone. He gave of his time

and knowledge so freely and with so much joy that you found yourself becoming just as ecstatic over the simplest things. I could go on and on about his genius, his kindness, the way he could make you laugh and a hundred other wonderful things and it would never do him justice. If you ever had the pleasure of meeting him or the even greater pleasure of studying with him then you already know so I will keep this short and sweet.

Goodbye old friend. You will be dearly missed. I'm sure you are somewhere playing the bassoon with the greatest of ease no longer bound by the difficulties of this world. Someday I will sit next to you and play again and it will be an honor. May God bless you and everyone who has been touched by you.

From JAMES A. WARING

Violinist and former member of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Hugh Cooper was a friend of mine. We first met in 1953 which was my first year in the Detroit Symphony. Our chairs on the stage were some distance apart since he was in the bassoon section and I was across the stage in the violin section. I really began to know Hugh when we both were elected by the musicians to be the first negotiating team to represent them at the bargaining table in the early 1960s. It was in that capacity that I discovered what a strong and brilliant leader Hugh was. Hugh was a great strategist who understood instinctively the many subtleties of the negotiation process...when to stand firm and when to compromise, while at all times remaining calm with dignity and finesse.

Hugh Cooper donated endless hours, days, night, and indeed years to the task of improving the quality of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He was a fearless and tenacious leader and a towering force for good for all the musicians and to this day his spirit appears throughout the pages of DSO history.

I knew Hugh well as a friend and colleague. We were roommates on tour for many years. My memories of him are among my fondest treasures.

Something is missing in my life now...it must be Hugh Cooper.

From ROBERT D. JORDAN

DMA, Solo bassoon, USAF Band of Mid America, University of Michigan Class of 1988, Former Faculty Member: The University of Dayton, Denison University, Heidelberg College, Sinclair Community College, Tiffin University

In 1986, as I neared the end of my senior year at Louisiana State University, I chose three schools to audition for graduate work. One school was on the East coast, another was a music conservatory, and the third was the University of Michigan. The auditions all took place during my spring break, and Michigan was the last one of the three. I met Mr. Cooper for the first time at 9:00am on a Friday morning. Like many young bassoonists of my generation, I considered Mr. Cooper a legend in the bassoon world, as were the other bassoon teachers that I had met and auditioned for earlier in the week. What happened on that Friday in Ann Arbor changed my life, no doubt for the better. I met a man who had a zest and love for teaching like no other individual that I could imagine, before or since. We began the morning with my prepared pieces and then moved on to the Mozart *Concerto*, excerpts, bassoon technique, articulation exercises, and many other bassoon and music related topics. Before I knew it, it was 5:00pm and I was walking out to the parking lot with Mr. Cooper. We had spent the entire day together, and I had just had the longest and best bassoon lesson of my life. I chose Michigan that day. I began my studies that fall and learned that Mr. Cooper scheduled his graduate students at the end of the day, so that he could have longer lessons with them. My lessons were at 3:30, and we seldom finished before 6:00. Mr. Cooper was without question one of the finest teachers in the bassoon world, but he was much more than that. He was a true mentor offering advice, perspective, and encouragement during my years of matriculation at Michigan. More importantly, that mentorship and loving relationship lasted during the decades that followed. Mr. Cooper once told me that he was not deeply religious, but that he hoped that part of his being would continue on through his students. That has most certainly been the case for me. I hope and believe that my teaching reflects the style and core of Mr. Cooper. He will be sorely missed, but his essence will remain with us for a long, long time.



An early picture of Hugh demonstrating the air-tightness test for a bassoon long joint.

From MICHAEL DIPIETRO, MD

John F. Holt Collegiate Professor of Radiology, School of Medicine, University of Michigan, and bassoonist with the University of Michigan Campus Symphony Orchestra and U of M Life Sciences Orchestra

Memories and impressions of my experiences with Lewis Hugh Cooper:

1962: As a high school student in upstate New York I read about the Püchner bassoon and Hugh Cooper in *The Instrumentalist* magazine.

1965: February 4-8 I attended the MENC/NYS-SMA Conference in Buffalo, New York where I tried a Cooper Model Püchner bassoon at the Custom Music booth. I liked how responsive and open the bassoon seemed. I took some literature that I have copied and sent to **Jeff Lyman** for the Hugh Cooper Memorial site. It explained the Püchner bassoon, contained photos from Hugh and Nan's first visit to the factory, and had photos of **Stephen Maxym**, **Sherman Walt** and **Arthur Kubey**, as well as Hugh and the Püchners. I also included Cooper's "Teacher's Guide to the Bassoon" from 1964.

1988: having been in Ann Arbor since 1982, I finally phoned Hugh who invited me to the studio in the music building. He is receptive, warm, open and cordial as though we had been life long friends.

Within five minutes of my arrival at his studio he told me about IDRS, gave me a few extra back issues of *The Double Reed* that he had on hand along with an IDRS application. I joined IDRS that week and still consider IDRS among the most important organizations to which I belong.

A "short" visit: My wife learned quickly that a drive over "to see Coop for a few minutes" would last until quite late. Hugh was a fountain of knowledge about many things, and he was always willing to share and help. It is well known that bassoonists from visiting symphonies would stop by to see Coop and have him look over their bassoon. The wee hours of the morning would come around, the bassoonist would be asleep in a chair, and Coop would be working away, trying to make the bassoon perfect.

Perfectionist and Hans Moennig: Paul Nordby, noted bassoon repair person and long time colleague of Jim Laslie, another legendary bassoon repairman, once asked me at *Glickman-Popkin Bassoon Camp* if I ever have "Coop" look at my bassoon. When I replied "yes," Paul stated that I was very fortunate to have Hugh's expertise so near. Coop always spoke with such reverence about Hans Moennig. Hugh said that one of his proudest days was when Moennig looked at a bassoon that he (Hugh) had repaired or voiced and said that this was great work. I heard this story from

Hugh a few years ago. Even though over 50 years had passed, Hugh had a lump in his throat as he told the story and was so proud of Moennig's blessing.

Torch and splinters: One time "Coop" was sealing the boot joint around the U tube with paraffin. I was amazed to see how he used a spatula and a propane torch to heat up the bottom of the boot so the paraffin would seep in. Coop chuckled when he saw my face as he ignited the torch and applied it to the bassoon. Obviously, he knew when to pull away before burning my bassoon. I discussed reeds with Hugh but never had the opportunity to study his hand profiling techniques with him. Once he worked on one of my reeds by cutting into it and pulling off cane, not scraping it. I couldn't believe what I saw! He explained the importance of finding the proper plane and keeping the fibers intact along the length of the blade by not compressing them. The reed played very well.

The pocketknife: Although Coop owned all sorts of tools in multiples, he delighted in showing how the yellow jack knife in his pocket (also used to "clean fish" as he would say) and his knowledge of reed "physiology" were his most valuable tools.

The phone calls: It was also a pleasure to speak with Hugh on the phone several times over the years. We are so grateful that **Terry Ewell** recorded his phone interview with Hugh a month before Hugh got sick, and that we can all hear it on the IDRS website. It is as though we are on the phone with Hugh. In later years when Hugh was no longer attending IDRS, I'd phone him (as did many others) to give him a briefing on the conference. No matter how Hugh felt, he always seemed to enjoy an opportunity to talk music and bassoon. We will miss those conversations.

The drive to Madison: A great memory was when I drove Hugh from Ann Arbor to Madison, Wisconsin for IDRS a few years back. Alvin Swiney, another noted double reed repair person and great admirer of Hugh Cooper, told me to bring a tape recorder, turn it on and just let Coop talk for the entire trip. I didn't have a recorder to bring, but it was the "fastest" long road trip I had ever taken even though I never exceeded the speed limit and we experienced a traffic jam outside Chicago. Coop was a fountain of knowledge, and I just soaked up everything he said on that road trip. When it got quiet (Coop did have to take a breath once in a while), I asked another question and he was off again. Later, I wrote down as much as I could recall.

I had dubbed a cassette with the first movement of Mozart K.191 played by eight different artists. We

listened to it while we were driving, and he enjoyed listening and critiquing the renditions while being unaware of who was performing. He could sometimes figure out a nationality or an era based on the sound of the bassoon and the style. Hugh talked about how much he enjoyed this "little game" for several years. I loved hearing his analysis of the various recordings, both before and after I revealed the names of the performing artists.

Bores and Bridges: There are many technical aspects of bassoons and reeds that Hugh has written about, some of it in his "Bassoon Seminar Series" in *The Double Reed*. These are being updated by some of Hugh's illustrious former students in conjunction with him, and we hope they will be published soon.

Acoustics course: I had the good fortune of being on sabbatical when Hugh last offered his music acoustics course at U of M. I attended the course and even took and handed in the final take home exam for the "full experience." The material was weighed a bit toward the bassoon and woodwinds, which was much to my liking.

Always a student: Hugh was always curious and questioning, never taking anything for granted. He wanted to learn more about so much. Much of his "leisure" reading was about science, which he liked to discuss with me and with other scientist/physician musicians. As you will hear in the interview with Terry Ewell, he expected his bassoon students to question and to understand the music, the bassoon, and the reed and to know why things are done. His full time students can address this more completely, but he wanted students to learn how to identify and isolate problems and to find solutions in a thoughtful way.

Weissenborn and lessons: Hugh would sometimes direct a new student, even one with some accomplishment, to the beginning of the Weissenborn book so that he could isolate any deficiencies and work on them. He would ask you to play something "simple" which when you realized what he was doing, really wasn't so simple. He would just increase the tempo or vary the articulation until a deficiency was revealed before it became hidden by other aspects of performance in a more "advanced" lesson. Hugh would sit to my right (I assume this was his standard position) with his yellow legal pad and listen and watch. He would help me to identify a problem and talk me through it since he was no longer actively playing. He might have played more during lessons years ago, but this method seemed to work fine at this stage of his career.



An early picture of Hugh Cooper and his bassoon from his Detroit Symphony days.

his guidance there would've been many more years of struggle and frustration. He always gave me the gift of his time with lessons lasting well past the 1 or 2 hour marks. And somehow he managed to foster that relationship with each and every one of his students.

As I sat at his funeral in May I expected to feel devastated. Instead I found myself listening to one student or friend after another each give their heartfelt eulogy, and I thought, "Wow, we should all be so lucky to have such incredible celebration at the end of our life." He has touched so many bassoonists' lives. His legacy will be passed down from student to student for many generations. I am honored to say he was my teacher, mentor, and dear friend. He will be greatly missed. So hats off to you, Hugh!! I will keep your "little" red book close by and know that all the reeds in heaven will soon be crowing an Eb! Love ya!

He could play: Hugh once played a recording for me of the U of M Woodwind Quintet. It was from many years ago and he had a technical lick which he nailed perfectly. Coop just gave me a little wink as if to say, "see, I could play."

A legend: Hugh will be missed, but we hope not forgotten for a long time.

From BETH GIACOBASSI

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Every aspiring young bassoonist should be so lucky as to have a teacher like Hugh Cooper. The four years I spent studying with Hugh at Michigan led me from being a mediocre bassoonist to winning a job in a major orchestra. How do you begin to thank someone who has given you that gift? I truly feel if I hadn't had

From MARK AVERY

Bassoonist and author

When I applied to the University of Michigan School of Music in 1982 I was aware of Mr. Cooper's reputation, but until I arrived I had no idea the depth of his understanding of the bassoon discipline. Every bassoonist is familiar with Mr. Cooper, primarily through his *Essentials of Bassoon Technique* book, his 1974 *How is Your Bassoon?* article in the *IDRS Journal*, and his relationship with Püchner bassoons. Studying with Mr. Cooper changed my notion of what it meant to be a student of the bassoon, significantly broadening that definition. As a teacher, he offered his students expertise in performance, pedagogy, instrument repair and design, literature, and research. He excelled because of his intellectual curiosity and personal drive. If he didn't know something, he was

determined to find out. He read, sought out authorities in the field, and always went beyond what most anyone else would to find the answer.

Mr. Cooper kept a small collection of books on the top of the upright piano in his studio. He recommended many to read, but the most influential for me was Theobald Boehm's *Flute and Flute Playing*. I felt as if I were reading Mr. Cooper's approach to overcoming barriers - identifying the problem and outlining a path to gaining the information needed to solve the problem. Mr. Cooper wanted his students to understand both how and why things worked. Performance practice was a very important issue for him as well. He wanted his students to think for themselves, rather than rely on someone else to give them the answer. He wanted his students to be intellectual musicians, not merely rote performers. I'm sure many a Cooper student remembers the commentary: "I want you to be able to survive if dropped in the middle of the Sahara Desert." Mr. Cooper taught acoustics in the School of Music and recommended (in actuality required!) his students take this class. Again, he wanted his students to understand how the bassoon worked as a resonating body and that fingerings were derived acoustically, not simply read from a fingering chart.

Mr. Cooper taught at Michigan from 1945-1997, probably averaging 20 students per year! When you meet one of his students, they will always talk about his encyclopedic knowledge of the bassoon, the extended lessons he gave them, and how they felt he was genuinely interested in their development as an individual. Hugh loved teaching and observing the learning process. His students now occupy major symphony orchestra positions, teach in universities and public schools, and work in occupations not related to music. The skills he taught about life were transferable.

I spent two years in residence at Michigan, returning in summers to complete my degree. I'm thankful my association with Mr. Cooper has extended beyond our teacher/student relationship. I am fortunate to have collaborated with him off and on over the last 20 years; this has resulted in a number of publications in the *The Double Reed*. This collaboration has been a privilege that has allowed me to develop a personal relationship with a very caring and loving man. It also included the bonus of getting to know his extraordinary wife, Nan. I believe I was given an opportunity to experience true greatness, with one of the masters of the bassoon discipline in all its forms. He will always be with me and I miss him dearly.

From MARYBETH MINNIS

Assistant Director and Assistant Professor of Bassoon, Central Michigan University, Principal Bassoon of the Saginaw Bay Orchestra

The world has been blessed with a handful of "bassoon gods," men and women that have made a profound impact in the bassoon world. Mr. Cooper was a "bassoon god."

I was fortunate enough to know Mr. Cooper since 1979 when I went to study with him. Each lesson was filled with an abundance of information, reed making, fingerings, ornamentation, acoustics of the bassoon, orchestral excerpts, history of the bassoon. One usually left the lesson hours later than scheduled with a handful of pages torn of a legal pad lovingly called "yellow pages". How could one person know so much?

After graduation visits to his office or house yielded the same. Time generously given, a handful of "yellow pages," marveling how could one person know so much. Each conversation with Mr. Cooper inspired me to learn more about the bassoon, about reeds and about the world around me.

Mr. Cooper was generous with his time and his knowledge. He was also a warm, kind human being. I loved his laugh.

While we have lost this wonderful person and this amazing wealth of information, his legacy lives on in his students and his student's students.

From BERNARD NAYLOR, M.D.

Professor Emeritus of Pathology, The University of Michigan

THE THREE-HOUR MUSIC LESSON

I took up the bassoon when I was a teenager and played it through medical school but gave it up for 40 years because of demands of my profession and a large family. I never had a lesson. Hugh Cooper was my first teacher and I was his last pupil.

Shortly after I retired, I began to have lessons with Hugh. The typical lesson started with about 20 minutes of conversation about general matters, then 20 minutes of my playing which was followed by more than 2 hours of Hugh's wonderful anecdotes. He always had something interesting to say about bassoons (especially their acoustics), bassoon makers, orchestral musicians, and orchestras and their conductors. He was a wonderful storyteller. I never tired of listening to him. He also 'doctored' any new

reeds of mine and he taught me how to make reeds.

At the end of my very first lesson, I asked him what his fee was. He replied, "Nothing. We are colleagues."

From GWENDOLYN ROSE

It was with sadness and disbelief that I received word of Mr. Cooper's passing. From the moment I met Mr. Cooper as a student auditioning for graduate study at the University of Michigan, I was struck with his boundless energy, his enthusiasm for teaching and his wealth of knowledge about the bassoon. Mr. Cooper was such a generous teacher and tirelessly and patiently imparted information to me (and all his other students) while recording it on the "yellow pages". In addition to his great knowledge and experience, however, there was a kindness and humor and warmth about Mr. Cooper that endeared him to me. I am so grateful to have been able to study with him, and he will be missed.

From HOWARD TOPLANSKY

Lewis Hugh Cooper was a peerless mentor, an iconic figure in the music and bassoon world and a legend at the University of Michigan. Mr. Cooper was one of the greatest teachers of his century and certainly one of the smartest men his students would ever meet.

All of those who knew or studied with Hugh Cooper must have a great sense of personal loss, as well as the realization of how fortunate we are to have had the gift of his wisdom and talent.

Recently, during the last phone conversation he and I had, Mr. Cooper said that *Essentials of Bassoon Technique* was the closest he would ever get to have done something that was perfect. I can say very humbly, that it was an honor and privilege to have been a part of this special undertaking. Lewis Hugh Cooper will always be uniquely irreplaceable and unimprovable. He will be missed by all.

From ROBERT BARRIS

Professor Emeritus of Bassoon (Northwestern University) and former member of the Dallas and Detroit symphonies:

In addition to being teacher, mentor, friend and colleague, Hugh was very much a father to me. He

and Nan pretty much adopted me when my family suffered a terrible crisis during my undergraduate years. He took me on as a repair apprentice when I needed a summer job, patiently tolerating my clumsy fumbblings with the Püchner bassoons that he would have to spend hours correcting, while Nan made us lunch and chided him for pushing me too hard. Hugh introduced me to martinis (when I was playing extra on tour with the Detroit Symphony while still an undergrad at Michigan), gave away my wife at our wedding (the relationship with martinis lasted longer than that particular marriage), and hired me as a subcontractor when the work on the Püchner's grew beyond what he could handle on his own. Our relationship spanned nearly five decades and never ceased to grow. And throughout all those years, the quality that made him a great teacher and a great musician was always evident: a consuming curiosity that he enthusiastically shared with everyone who would listen. Whether the topic was music, bassoons, acoustics, ornamentation, reeds, physiology, labor law, unions, university administration, pedagogy, conductors, history - whatever grabbed his attention, he wanted to know as much as he could in as much depth as possible. No matter what he did, he was never a dilettante - if he did it, it was done "professionally," no matter how many hours it took to master. The two adages that come to mind to best describe his work are: If it ain't broke, don't fix it; and if it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing right. Nothing was ever simply "good enough."

Many students and colleagues spoke at his funeral service. The telescope effect brings into sharp clarity the wonderful teaching, the research, the acoustics lectures, the labor negotiations for the Detroit Symphony, the theoretical writings on reeds, fingerings, embouchure, etc. But the telescope effect also pushes back what only a few of us can still clearly remember - he was a terrific bassoonist! He had a great, huge, rich sound and wonderful command of the bassoon. And, like his dear friend Charles Sirard, his playing was always "fluid" with a clear and strong sense of direction. Growing up in Detroit I heard him playing with Charlie on countless Detroit Symphony concerts. He can be heard playing in all of those wonderful DSO recordings conducted by Paray, including that wonderful two-bassoon cadenza in Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnol*. I also had the good fortune of hearing him regularly with the University Quintet as well as in many faculty chamber concerts at Rackham Auditorium. He was a self-taught bassoonist, but he always credited his high school band director,

Dale Harris, and the Michigan band director, Bill Revelli, as being the two strongest influences on his musical development. Also the year he spent playing second to **Leonard Sharrow** in Detroit as well as all those years sitting next to Sirard greatly influenced his attitudes about sound, projection, reeds, etc. And, of course, Sirard and Sharrow were both students of **Simon Kovar**.

I know that others will fill in the things I'm forgetting. Hugh, I love you. Thank you for everything.

From **MARK CLAGUE, PH.D.**

Musicologist, University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Admitted as a pre-medical student at the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and Art, I took a lesson with Hugh Cooper just prior to my freshman year - just hoping to study with him periodically. I left his office about five hours later, a double major in bassoon performance. Now a couple of decades later, I work in the same building he did at the University of Michigan but as a professor of musicology rather than bassoon. Following his lead, I too have fallen in love with teaching. Yet to say that Mr. Cooper changed my life would just scratch the surface.

Sure I learned a lot about playing the bassoon from Mr. Cooper and enjoyed taking my instrument apart down to the posts each year to seal, align, and oil it into the best working condition possible. I made countless reeds trying to imitate the tiniest stokes of Mr. Cooper's magic yellow-handled jackknife. I too read the treatises by Quantz and Leopold Mozart to learn about baroque ornamentation from the primary sources. One of my proudest musical moments was seeing Cooper's smile of affirmation after performing the bassoon part to Mozart's piano quintet - I knew both Cooper and Leopold were proud.

At its deepest level, Mr. Cooper's teaching was about releasing the humanity of his students, allowing them to express emotions they didn't know they had, inspiring them to accomplish what they didn't know they could do. He loved every student and believed in every student as a person. Somehow, he made every student bassoonist better. He was proud of each success and was genuinely happy to see his students realize their potential, whether that be in a major symphony, as a high school band director, or as a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. (The only job off limits was probably "conductor" - he would have had

trouble respecting a musician who had turned to the dark side.)

Now as a teacher and scholar myself, I think the most important things I learned from Mr. Cooper were things typically left unsaid. These were the things you picked up unconsciously by watching Cooper work and by listening for the ideas behind his teachings. These things are two: an unflinching belief in the possibility of people - an undying confidence in my students' ability to surprise me with their insights, growth, and performance - and a healthy skepticism of all received wisdom (especially from the University administration) as well as the attendant belief in my own ability to figure things out for myself. I can think of no better training for a musician, musicologist, or father. Thank you Mr. Cooper for everything.

From **WILLIAM WATERHOUSE**

Some forty years ago there were two Americans to whom many of us in the UK who were players of the 'Heckel', rather than the 'Buffet', had reason to be indebted. The first of these was **Don Christlieb** who, on his own initiative, had circulated duplicated copies of his *Measuring the Conical Bore of the Bassoon* of October 1965. The other was Hugh Cooper.

Hugh had taken sabbatical leave from his teaching post at Ann Arbor in order to inspect Heckel bassoons in use over here; he was later to extrapolate the specifications of the best of these in order to arrive at an 'ideal' bore. I was one of the players he contacted - I think it was in May 1968. What I remember most from this first meeting was his shock at finding such a large 'leak factor' on all of our instruments. He astonished me with the incredible standards he could obtain on his own bassoon, checking the degree of hermetic sealing on each joint against his watch. Although Arthur Benade reassuringly showed how a modest leak factor can offer superior pitch flexibility without loss of intensity, this didn't stop me from commissioning Hugh to 'Cooperize' the odd bassoon for me later on. ♦