

# Value Enhancement for Life

## Z. Randall Stroope

Director of Choral Activities  
Oklahoma State University

Colleen Barrett, President of Southwest Airlines (483 jets), was recently quoted as running the business over the phone and with hand-written messages to her colleagues in and out of the office. She didn't use e-mail, amazingly. Now this article is not about promoting the discontinuance of e-mail, but.....

I find a troubling paradox in the media bombardment of the "fast food", "do more in less time" message to us and our students on the one hand, juxtaposed with "craftsmanship is important", and the "quality assurance" message on the other. We buy cell phones, blackberries, electronic planners and the like so we can do more in less time and "simplify our lives." "Eat on the road, e-mail fifty people a day, and never have any private time without a cell phone ringing in your pocket or the person's next to you (even in the restroom)." That sounds more like "complicate your life as quickly as you can in the least amount of time."

*But do you want to buy a house built in the least amount of time? Do you specifically remember ONE e-mail you got last year? (Most business people receive about 10,000 a year). Worse, do you remember even ONE e-mail that you sent? Can you quote it?*

Our gadget society was intended to simplify our lives, but instead it complicated them, increased our busyness, and worst of all - *made our daily communication so insignificant that we can't even remember one percent of it a year later.*

Choral music comes along and says "slow craftsmanship", "long range benefits", "hard work with results not always readily seen", "every piece is a work of art that you will remember for years to come", and "this work ethic will change your entire life". Your students need choir in this world of driving while eating a cheeseburger with one hand and holding a cell phone with the other. Do you want a singer "built in the least amount of time"? Did Notre Dame's Lou Holtz throw a team together, or Bill Gates run his investments in a fritz? Is that the way to "win"? Are you promoting this with your students, or stopping it?

Proper training takes TIME. Teachers are providing *value enhancement* for students.

Meeting individually with every student (even for ten minutes) once a year takes TIME. Teachers are *embracing the very core* of students.

Besides being a wonderful musician, Robert Shaw was a wonderful human being, and he constantly talked about life and philosophy. (In fact, philosophy, English literature, and religion, not music, were his majors in college.) The most effective teachers and conductors are also the most *human* – believable, simply profound, and connected to the essence of life itself.

- Keep yourself and your students connected to significance in life.
- Never apologize about taking time (lots of it) in the quest for excellence
- You may be the only compass in the life of so many. Be sure you are pointing in the right direction.

P.S. Colleen Barrett (SW Airlines President) can boast as running the most financially profitable airline in the U.S. today (w/o gadgets). A personal touch or handwritten note may be worth something, who knows.