



**Judy
Kendall**

*Tales from a
wayward bus*

His melody still lingers

In the program for the Service in Joyful Memory of Richard Vogt at First Congregational Church in Old Greenwich (which happens to be my church), there was a quote from him in 1971:

"Music at First Church is the sound of voices, organ, hand bells, recorders, trumpets, guitars, and drums. Music is worship. It is hundreds of children and adults singing and playing Britten's 'Noye's Fludde,' Handel's 'Messiah,' and a Yule Log Festival. It's a little boy hitting a big bass drum or a little girl discovering the sound of finger cymbals. Music is the sight of bell ringers in the snow on Christmas Eve. It is candles, and carols, and coloring Easter eggs, and all those children singing by the water in Binney Park or rushing to a rehearsal with a costume over one arm. Music is banners and balloons and men moving scenery and women making sandwiches. Music is the sight and sound of life in this very special place."

This quote made me both sad and happy: Sad because we will not hear Richard Vogt directing these musical moments again and happy that my church had such a rich life while he did.

The church had asked for four buses from my company for the day of the memorial service — two for the train station and two at the civic center — to transport people to the service. Many worshippers were expected. As one of the four drivers, I had a chance to be with those attending the service and to share the moment with them. The death of Richard was so sudden and memorable that it was a shock to everyone. When good men and women die, there is so much collective pain.

We drivers did not have to drive during the service and I asked one of the others to drop me off at the church so I could attend part of the service.

I have no skills with either voice or an instrument, but I love music. And, like everyone else in Greenwich, I was aware of the special talent of Richard Vogt. Over the years my kids sang in the choir and participated in the traditions of the church. During the Christmas season, as many as three members of my family sang the "Messiah." Richard was a part of the ebb and flow of our family, our town, our church and our lives, much as he was with many others in Greenwich.

Standing in the back of the church, I heard the music of the choir. Large hanging baskets of flowers were suspended from the ceiling and there was a gentle peace in the church. As the congregation and the choir sang the beautiful hymns, one had the feeling that Richard was listening very carefully and might even have interrupted with a correction or a comment.

We all have our favorite songs, hymns and symphonies, our childhood lullabies. When we die, these are the songs that our loved ones want to sing for us. The wonderful thing is that, in loving us, those around us know what our favorites are — we never have to tell them.

So it was with Richard Vogt. Everyone knew. And as the various songs were sung, we could all remember how and when we learned of his favorites. There was a balancing of Bach with Gershwin, Brahms with the simplicity of a Shaker song. The most beautiful music for me was "Jerusalem" by C. Hubert H. Parry. Hearing the Greenwich Choral Society and the church choir singing this magnificent hymn as I was standing quietly in the far recesses of the church and hearing the voices soar, I knew that Richard heard us tell again of his love for England and for our own church.

We recently lost a special member of our own family. At that time, his church was crowded to overflowing, and old and young mourned and celebrated, even as we wept. The gifts that were given to us when he lived are the memories we will have forever, good memories that will dull the pain and the loss. I thought then, as I did again standing as song filled the church, that we never lose our loved ones — we can laugh or cry, sing or smile anytime we remember them. So it will be with Richard Vogt, who so shocked our town with his sudden, untimely death.

We will remember Richard Vogt whenever the "Messiah" is sung at Christmas, or Easter hymns are raised in praise, or when the lawn at outdoor concerts in Greenwich fills with people, or luminaries line the church sidewalk, or when children sing in the choir. He will always be with us.

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