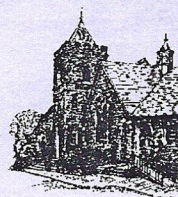


The First Congregational Church of Greenwich

Meetinghouse News



June 1, 1995

Andrea Bates, Editor

We mourn the loss
of our esteemed
colleague and friend
Richard Douglas Vogt.

A Memorial Service
will be held on
Saturday, June 3, 1995
at 4:00 PM
in the First Church
Meetinghouse.

A Reception will follow.

On Sunday, May 28, 1995, First Church lost Richard Vogt, our beloved Director of Music. Richard was in the process of retiring from his ministry after 28 powerful years.

He had organized and conducted a special event for himself entitled "Joyful Noise III: Richard Vogt's Retirement Party" on February 11, with many of his special friends participating in that gala event.

On May 1st, the Church Committee voted to name Richard Director of Music, Emeritus at a special event to be held on June 25th.

On the Sunday before his death, he led the choir and congregation in its annual Music Sunday program, followed by fish and chips and a clam and oyster bar on the front lawn of the church. With our hearts full to overflowing with beautiful music, one week later we were shocked and numbed by his sudden death. I was attending my daughter Heather's graduation from law school at Suffolk University in Boston. A special prayer service was held in the Meetinghouse that Sunday afternoon. I immediately returned by train from Boston to Old Greenwich to be a part of that prayer service.

Then on June 3rd, a sad congregation and Greenwich Choral Society held a memorial service in the Meetinghouse followed by a reception under a large tent in the front yard of the church.

The talks given at that memorial service are reprinted here.

Tom Steers

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

Prayer for Richard

Delivered at the 5:00 PM Gathering
on May 28, 1995
by the Rev. Sally Colegrove

Gracious and most merciful God,
Tonight we gather as family at the
end of a long day. We gather
remembering so many times of joy
and celebration here in the
Meetinghouse and we give you
thanks for the life of our friend and
teacher, Richard. Today has been a
day of shock and grief, of the
numbness of hearing that Richard
was gone. You have been with us
today loving Spirit, drawing us
together and sustaining us as we
have thought back to so many great
events and small routine moments
with Richard.

Lord, as we care for one another in
the days ahead, help us to find
comfort in word and song. We have a
rich legacy and one which will go
with us into the future. Now we need
to remind each other to care for
children and animals. Now we need
to take leadership in celebrations
large and small. Now we need to see
the wonder in all of creation and
strive to protect the Earth. Now we
need to work for justice and peace,
even as Richard did. We have a
wonderful inheritance and one which
will never die as long as we
remember to let our hearts sing.

Lord, tonight, God bless your child,
Richard. Amen.

Excerpted Remarks by David Taylor

Delivered at Richard Vogt's
Memorial Service • 4:00 PM
June 3, 1995

Dear Richard,

Fast exits from concerts and
performances were always your style—I
imagine you darted out for a variety of
reasons—to shower after the perspiring
workout, to avoid the embarrassment of
continuing accolades from adoring
crowds, and to be the first to get to the
usual post-concert party. Well, we have
it all here this afternoon—plenty of
perspiration, an adoring crowd, and a
great post-event party.

Fast exits—you did it again last week. A
quick departure from the performance of
a lifetime. But it has left more than a
few unanswered questions, a few things
left unsaid, and a few unfinished
conversations. Thus I felt the need to
write this letter. Let's begin with some
unanswered questions:

Remember the Choral Society's
performance of *Elijah* at SUNY Purchase
in April of 1981, when you generously
gave us four prime tickets, seats in the
3rd or 4th row, right in the center, and
our friend Jim underestimated the time
from their home in Ossining, and we
arrived 20 minutes late? Now, when you
turned around from the conductor's
podium, was that a grin, grimace, or
glare that you gave us as you had to wait
for these rude latecomers to be
seated?....

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

(Taylor, continued)

And we've just got to know, when you called people on the telephone and greeted them with, "Hello, this is Richard," did you really think you needed to identify yourself? Didn't the "hello" sort of give it away?....

...I want you to know that our daughters Emily and Meg will continue to get to know you because we will tell them about your loves and your passions. We will teach them your love of animals and children. We will share with them your concern for the hungry and the homeless, the oppressed and the victims of war....

I will close this rambling letter with some poetry—poetry you and Stephen Paulus gave voice to six days after I arrived in Greenwich in December of 1980....

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

....The nights are wholesome, no planets strike, and no evil has power to charm, for the time you have spent with us has been hallow'd, the time has been ever so gracious.

You have brought us closer to the holy, and God has graced us with your love. Richard, because of you, we love each other, and we love God, a whole lot more. Richard, we love you.

Take care, and write when you can.

Excerpted Remarks by Catherine Garlid

Delivered at Richard Vogt's
Memorial Service • 4:00 PM
June 3, 1995

Two weeks ago tomorrow on Music Sunday I led the responsive reading of a Langston Hughes poem Richard had chosen for us as a congregation. It began this way: "The Lord has a child; that child I know is me, even when I'm not all I ought to be, His loving care guides me on my way, Every place, everywhere, every day." In the choice of this poem Richard *ministered* to us as a congregation as he so often did. I believe he was called to this ministry by God, as was Isaiah, and through his living and his loving among us, through his words and his music, he fulfilled the response that Howard read for us, "Here am I. Send me."

I'm not sure how our friendship began though I know from the start I appreciated the rebel and prophet in him, his courage and audacity in pursuit of his ideals, and the tireless passion in him and his music. And he found ways to show an interest in my ministry at the hospital. Then several years ago he quietly asked my assistance in finding a way to help people living with HIV and AIDS in our area. I connected him with Tom Mahoney and also asked him to visit and offer his help to some very sick patients in the hospital. What I quickly learned is that Richard was unshakable and without judgment in his compassion, moving in and out of

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

(Garlid, continued)

sometimes very painful situations with quiet, unassuming grace and good humor, offering tremendous practical assistance to people who needed him.

About the same time Richard drew closer to our family and befriended our children as he has befriended children in this congregation for years. He loved the *idea* of children and without a doubt he idealized children. Certainly he offered children magnificent opportunities to be not only playful and fanciful, but also serious in the making of music.... As our daughter, Annie, said to me, "Richard was shy and often seemed lonely, and I felt like I needed to make him happy." Or as our son Tim said, "He was fiery and mysterious when he was conducting, but there was always a twinkle in his eye when I talked to him." Richard blossomed one-on-one and he delighted in special attention given to him....

Thank you, sweet Richard, for asking God's blessing on all of us and particularly our children. "The Lord has a child. That child I know is me." May we live that truth for each of us in Richard's memory. I would like to close with another short Langston Hughes poem entitled "Heaven," dedicating it to Richard who now knows what it's all about.

Heaven is/The place where/Happiness is/Everywhere./Animals/And birds sing—/As does Everything./To each stone/"How do you do?"/Stone answers back,/"Well! And you?"

**Excerpted Remarks by
Thomas Mahoney**

Delivered at Richard Vogt's
Memorial Service • 4:00 PM
June 3, 1995

The disadvantage of going last is that sometimes one's stories and lines have been utilized. As I thought this week about talking about Richard and they said you have three to five minutes, I forgot the minutes part and thought I'm going to tell them a lot of things. And as I wrote this I thought, there isn't enough time.

So I thought I would tell you about one dimension of Richard, and Kitty has alluded to it. Richard and I were very different people. We had very different tastes in music. I never tried out or auditioned for the Choral Society, or the choir here. I can't carry a tune. I was not a member of First Church, although I've been here on numerous occasions. But we got along. What brought us together was a disease—AIDS. And as Kitty said, she introduced us. It was on a fall day, at the hospital to introduce Richard to a patient. I said, "Hi, my name's Tom Mahoney." "Hello, I'm Richard," he said in a deep voice. This disease neither one of us had, but it affected both of our lives. He on a more personal level—he had known individuals with this infection. It had become my profession in 1989. In 1990 at the request of Mrs. Lucy McKinney of the McKinney Foundation, we started a buddy program. The purpose of a buddy program is to help people living with AIDS have a friend. The terror of this infection, the abandonment that people

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

(Mahoney, continued)

felt, often left people alone. Richard decided, through Kitty, that he would be a buddy. But, it had to be quiet. Nobody was to know that Richard was a buddy. Okay, we'll honor that. Buddies are people who made meals, who visited folks, took them to their doctor's appointments, made no judgments and didn't fear that they would get the infection by shaking hands, by holding someone in their arms, by giving them a hug....

Richard was a great support of the work that I did for the health department. He provided financial support which allowed us to help people living with this disease who couldn't meet their medical bills. When we brought the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt to Greenwich several years ago, Richard collaborated with Brenda Stiers to write the dedication service and hold it in this church, where more than 600 people attended whose lives have been affected by this disease.

On a personal level, Richard did something to both honor and embarrass me. When President Clinton created the position for a national advisor on AIDS, Richard nominated me for the office. He wrote to the President and every Connecticut congressional representative, stating the reasons why he believed I should hold the post. You can see that his influence in Washington is not as vast as his influence here in Greenwich.

Last fall when we conducted a new training program for AIDS buddies, the *Greenwich Time* wanted to help us

market the program, and was willing to publish an article about several buddies.

I asked Richard if he would agree to be interviewed and relinquish his anonymity in this program. And he agreed. The most interesting piece was that he allowed a picture of himself to accompany it. I learned at that time that Richard was 64. I had no idea that he was that young. And when I teased him about it I got, "Never mind about that (followed by) a classic Richard grunt." The reporter wrote and quoted Richard that, "It's probably like all volunteer work. It's something that you wouldn't normally do. It takes you out of yourself and gets you involved with other people. The return is much more to you than to them." The reporter wrote that Vogt devoted a few hours a week to his buddies, driving them to doctor's appointments, to the dentist, doing simple stuff. He also said, "We passed the time, we talked a bit. To him his efforts were minimal and he said he was always left wishing he could have done more."

The more that I wish Richard would do is not going to be able this year. We teased one another about age, and as they say, life begins at 40, and that's what I turned this year. For the past several summers, at the Lawrence home, Richard has celebrated my birthday along with the Garlids there. He thought it was a great time to bring together family and friends. He gave of himself to people living with the infection, he rejoiced in the lives of those who touched others, and this year we'll have to have the party at your house without Richard.

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

**Excerpted Remarks by
Sallie Williams**

Delivered at Richard Vogt's
Memorial Service • 4:00 PM
June 3, 1995

Last Saturday morning Richard phoned to congratulate Webb and me on the birth of our second grandchild, little Kate, born just the evening before. We are very grateful for little Kate...

Richard was as delighted with Kate's arrival as we were. And no wonder. When Kate's father spliced together some old family movies to celebrate our 40th anniversary a few years ago, of course he sent a copy to Richard. Not a moment's doubt that Richard was a member of our family, and we loved him dearly....

No matter where Richard's friends were or when they heard the news of his death, we are all now confronted with the wreckage of that day...Even with the great hymns and wonderful anthems of this service ringing in our ears, a singular new silence has settled in the heart.

Music flowed through Richard's veins. I depend on members of his great choir, the chapel full of Choral Society choristers, and some of his favorite soloists and instrumentalists here today. They can regale you with hundreds of stories of what it was like to sing and play under Richard's direction. Let them try to describe his musical prowess. They are not the only ones who are aware. No other congregation I've ever heard sings like this one, and we all know why.

Richard was a man of great excess. His generosity was outrageous, his stamina legendary, his concentration complete, his imagination unbounded, and his care unrelenting. He never stinted....

There was one area in which he practiced a strict and unaccustomed economy. And that was in his writing. Richard loved the English language, and with it he took great care. But writing did not come easily to him. He labored and anguished to find the best phrasing, a rise and fall, a flow, a cadence and a rhythm, just the right word to say exactly what he wanted. In this era of bloated, raucous, unnecessary and forgettable verbiage, available by the yard all around us, what a blessed relief Richard's writing was....

His writing was lean, clean and clear. Thus it stood out as an example of great power and uncommon grace. And behind those words stood that strong conviction. There were times in this sanctuary when he could hardly get through the prayers he offered from the pulpit. Heartfelt is too pallid a word to apply.

Toward the end of his will, Richard described the kind of service he wanted. Then he wrote, "The service should be followed by a party for everyone, with good champagne and lots of hot and cold hors d'oeuvres." Unfortunately, church policy precludes the champagne. However, there is nothing to prevent those who wish in their own time and place to lift a glass of their best champagne to Richard Vogt, a Grand Tarantelle of a man, a prodigious and productive child of God who constantly enriched our lives.

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

Pastoral Prayer

Delivered at Richard Vogt's
Memorial Service • 4:00 PM

June 3, 1995

The Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Stiers

Eternal and gracious God, we gather here grieving our lost brother, Richard, friend, mentor, esteemed colleague, and creator of choral music which has inspired us time and time again. O God, you blessed him with all ten talents. O how you used the gifts that you gave Richard to bless each of us—his excellence in music and his never accepting anything but the best at all times. As he himself wrote, "The sound of voices, the blare of trumpets, the crash of cymbals, the ringing of bells, the beat of drums, all these make a joyful noise unto the Lord." Thank you, O thank you, O God, for the memories of making music with Richard.

He has so generously shared this blessing with the choir and the congregation of this church, and to a wider circle through the Greenwich Choral Society and recently the Perrot Library. Last year at Music Sunday he wrote he wanted to bring good news to many and to remind us that there's no bad news today. As we're learning, for Richard there is no bad news today, but for us as we mourn his death, we know that there's a void, a silence, for he enriched our lives by being that unassuming choral genius.

We're grateful for his love of his family. We're especially grateful for his growing closeness with his brother, Howard. He was a caring person, concerned about people and their needs, as we've heard here this afternoon and we've been reminded again that we're not to abuse children, that we're to put hats and gloves on them because that's our sacred duty. He prayed for us to care for animals. He celebrated the beauty of all things of life, sometimes simple things like strawberries or apples. Indeed, he prompted us about violence in our society and he jogged us with his dislike of guns and the violence they bring to so many innocent people.

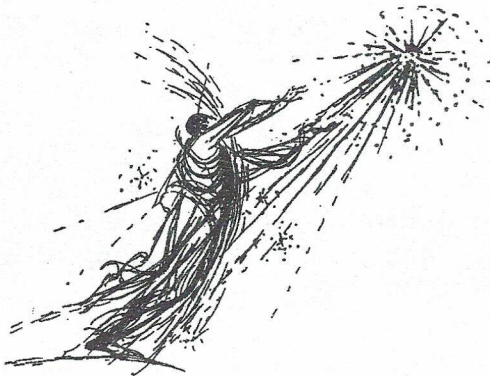
O God, we know that sometimes Richard was a difficult personality, but we enjoyed that mellowness in recent months. We expect that you and he will have some interesting talks about this subject as you groom him to lead the heavenly chorus. One suspects that his deep compassion grew out of his own vulnerability and his quest for excellence. Richard had known pain in his life, thus he cared for those who were hurt. The words of Saint Paul come to mind: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness, so I will boast all the more of my weakness so the power of Christ will dwell in me." O how the power of Christ dwelt in Richard. We're grateful for all that made Richard gold. And from that gift many of us continue to draw.

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

(Stiers, continued)

Accept all of our thoughts and memories this afternoon, O God. We are gathered here as a grateful people, grateful for his time on earth, grateful for our special relationships with him, and we ask now but one thing more—that you, O God, forgive us if we have committed sins of commission or sins of omission in our relationships with Richard. If there be any unfinished business with him, by your healing power restore us together.

O God, just as Isaiah answered the call to ministry, Richard did, too. And now you call each of us to pick up that mantle of ministry that Richard left behind. With your grace and your power and these deep memories of Richard, we reach out for that mantle. And so with the hope of Easter's resurrection and with the joy of tomorrow's Pentecost, we say goodbye to our beloved Richard. For we know that he is now a part of that great reunion in heaven, indeed a member of the communion of saints. Amen.



To the Members and Friends at First Church:

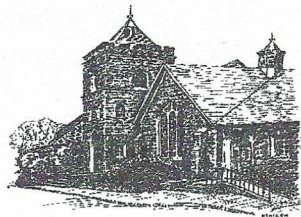
Your expressions of love and respect for my brother have helped me to cope, however falteringly, with the reality of my brother's sudden death. I shall always be grateful for your devotion to Richard's caring mission.

With love to you all,

Howard Vogt
June 6, 1995

You may write to Howard at:

11 Park Place
Bloomfield, NJ 07003



The First Congregational Church of
Greenwich
108 Sound Beach Avenue
Old Greenwich, CT 06870
(203) 637-1791

Thomas L. Stiers, *Senior Pastor*
Sally Colegrove, *Associate Pastor*
William T. Federici, *Assistant Pastor*
Susan M. Craig, *Assistant Pastor*

Published September 1995

RICHARD DOUGLAS VOGT • IN MEMORIAM • 1930-1995

In Memoriam

Richard Vogt

April 10, 1930–May 28, 1995

"He celebrated beauty in all things of life."

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

108 Sound Beach Avenue
Old Greenwich, CT 06870
(203) 637-1791



U.S. Postage
Bulk Rate
PAID
Permit No. 17
Old Greenwich, CT

Address Correction Requested
Return Postage Guaranteed

The Members of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich, *Ministers*

Thomas L. Stiers, <i>Senior Pastor</i>	Susan M. Craig, <i>Assistant Pastor</i>	Richard Vogt, <i>Director of Music</i>
Sally Colegrove, <i>Associate Pastor</i>	William T. Federici, <i>Assistant Pastor</i>	John Stansell, <i>Organist</i>
The Reformed Church of Hungary Partnership		Dr. Joyce Baker, <i>Missionary in Honduras</i>

Sunday Services of Worship—8:00 AM and 10:00 AM

Church School—10:00 AM • Nursery Care is provided during the 10:00 AM Service.

The 10:00 AM Service is broadcast live on WGCH 1490 AM Radio.