



Gordon H. Clem

September 29, 1931 - September 29, 2013

Gordon H. Clem, 82, of 40 Sunset Ave., died September 29, 2013 at Kimball Farms Nursing Care Center.

Born in Millbury, MA April 19, 1931, the son of George E. and Irene M. Johnson Clem, he was a 1949 graduate and Valedictorian of Auburn High School and graduated summa cum laude from Trinity College in Hartford with a Bachelor's degree in Economics. A member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, he played the carillon at Trinity and at St. Thomas Church in New York where he also studied psychology at Columbia University.

Mr. Clem served as a counselor and directed programs at Camp Putnam, a Fresh Air Fund Camp in Massachusetts during high school and college vacations. He started a long and successful career with St. Thomas Choir School in New York City in 1954; first, as an athletic coach, a math and science instructor, and became Headmaster in 1967, retiring in 1995.

While at St. Thomas he organized an annual Training Workshop for math and science teachers from the U.S. and abroad which has been held at the Dana Hall School in Wellesley, MA for the last 50 years as well as helping to organize similar workshops throughout the U.S. and abroad.

A resident of New York City for much of his life, Mr. Clem summered in the

Berkshires for many years and made his home here permanently following his retirement. He served on the Board of Directors of the Children's Store Front School in Harlem, St. Luke's School, NYC, The Bement School in Deerfield, MA, and Berkshire Country Day School in Stockbridge. He also organized a food distribution program for the homeless in New York. He enjoyed directing Gilbert and Sullivan operas and volunteering at Tanglewood.

Mr. Clem was among the charter members of Elementary School Heads Association (ESHA) and since then has served on the standing committees of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts for many years. He also served on the boards of the Church of the Heavenly Rest Day School, The National Association of Independent Schools, and New York State Association of Independent Schools.

Mr. Clem leaves three sisters; Mrs. Anne Hoyle of Wrentham, MA, Mrs. Priscilla Fisher of Union City, CA, and the late Mrs. Grayce Landry of Somers, CT and two brothers; George of Leominster, MA and Jon of Oxford, MA.

The funeral of Mr. Gordon H. Clem of Lenox will be celebrated Saturday, October 19th at 11 am at Trinity Church, 88 Walker St., Lenox, MA. Mr. Clem will also be remembered Sunday, October 13th, at 4 pm during Evensong at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 1 West 53rd Street, New York City.

Tribute Wall

CN

“*Mr. Clem was an important influence in my life while a student at Saint Thomas Choir School in the late 70-early 80's. His hands were full with my less than stellar academic performance. His strong impact on my life is something that I will always remember and cherish.*

Chad Newsome - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

AM

“*Gordon was a friend, mentor and inspiration to so many of us in NAIS, NYSAIS, and Episcopal schools as we found our way in teaching and school leadership. Calm, centered, and clear he was also enormously generous with his support and wisdom. Gordon lives on in the lives and work of so many, including my own.*

Ann Mellow - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

CD

“*Gordon Clem was an outstanding individual and a Christian whose life was characterized by good works. He was revered by many and will be sorely missed.*

Christopher Doyle - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

MB

“*I met Gordon Clem as a (brief in my case) member of the choir of Trinity Church in Lenox. He was such an inspiration. When I lost my voice through Lyme disease, he was so encouraging, so I still warble as much as I can in the congregation. When I sing I think of him. He will be sorely missed.*

Martha Burke-Hennessy - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

BW

“ Of Mr. Clem, David's sister said 'what an institution Mr. Clem was.' Mr. Clem was such a caring person -- he was gentle, decisive, mainly caring. In 1983 he sent me (in Ethiopia) in addition to the date for David's Choir School audition, a list of other schools in the U.S. -- just in case. He showed concern for what happened to others -- showed it and fostered it in his student charges. Mr. Clem's humanitarian sensibility, broad outreach, accessibility were evident - - the soup kitchen, the school as host to students from South Africa, the Seders. He preferred the encouragement of non-military interest and once let me know his view that of two books I had given David for his birthday, the non-military one was the better choice. I was so touched to learn that when we were living in Israel/Jerusalem during the 1991 Gulf war, some years after David's graduation, Mr. Clem included us in the school's prayers.

Barbara Walker
Mother of David Brownstein
Choir School - 1986

Barbara Walker - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

RB

“ It was a pleasure and privilege to know and work with Gordon on the vestry and search committee at Trinity Church. i valued his friendship and sense of humor as well as his dedication and sincere faith in God. I will miss him very much.

Ruth Billetter - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

GO

“ Gordon has been sending me Christmas and birthday cards for many years now, decades after I was obliged to leave St. Thomas prematurely to assist my family through a difficult time. I became alarmed when my mother had had her Christmas card returned to her. Alas, my fears were justified. I mourn deeply his passing. He was a fatherly figure, one whose steady, quiet voice and taciturn wisdom buoyed and comforted me many a day. That year with him was one of the very happiest of my youth. I loved the man, and have striven to emulate his kindness and generosity. If only I could have remained under his tutelage a few years longer! I console myself that I was fortunate enough to have ever gotten to know him. He, I hope, would be pleased with what I've tried to make of my life. His influence luminesces.

Garret Simpson Olberding - December 03, 2015 at 02:47 PM

RB

“ I was both a friend and colleague with Gordon on the Vestry at Trinity Church for many years. We also served together on the Trustees for the Diocese of Western Massachusetts since 1999. He was on the "Community Investment" committee that looked for organizations & small businesses that could not qualify for bank loans. That work was very successful for the committee and for the Trustees.

While at Trinity, Gordon would lead Hymn Sings in the Parish House. He played the piano and to the delight of everyone played their favorite hymn.

He was very talented and very much a Gentleman. It was my pleasure to know him and respect him as a dear friend.

Richard Billetter - October 13, 2013 at 12:00 AM

GG

“ *When French Teacher at St Thomas Choir School in the Seventies, I found in Gordon Clem the most decent and caring headmaster in all professional settings I had been in. Quite some years later I am able to confirm this rare feeling. I enjoyed his respect to my teaching as well as to a faithful friendship lasting the time I've been living away from the States.*

Missing him, I shall keep his memory as one of a wonderful human being.

To all who respected, enjoyed and loved him my deepest condolences.

From Ghislaine Graf

Ghislaine Graf - October 11, 2013 at 12:00 AM

FG

“ It was not always easy being so distant from home. Gordon’s door was always open to us both when times were good but also during the difficult moments, such that he was a real adoptive father, and his mentoring love helped form us in a special bond of brotherhood that remains to this day. Among my fondest memories is how we would get together with him as 8th graders before bedtime to talk, to share in a Christian story that was upbuilding in faith, and to pray. He taught us how to care for each other, but also how to love the world around us in a tangible way. We would make numerous meals for the homeless with him in the Saturday soup kitchen, then breaking into small groups – sometimes being in his group – to take warm meals to the homeless in the often significant cold. It taught us valuable lessons in treating those less fortunate as our neighbors in the human family and to love without counting any cost to ourselves. Birthday card after birthday card later from Gordon over decades, he’s still been a strong mentor — always loving beyond himself and asking the latest news — building us as an ever-growing Saint Thomas family even into retirement. He was faithful to us even to the very end, leaving us a precious legacy in how to love one another. Gordon’s personal impact on my priestly ministry has been profound.

Fr Gregory Gresko - October 07, 2013 at 12:00 AM