**Steve Gaston - In Memoriam**

In the fall of 1948, my sophomore year, two new students in the School of Music - Steve and Mildred, "Billie," Gaston arrived from Norfolk, VA. Steve had served two years in the USArmy and entered as a sophomore because he had already taken classes at Old Dominion University. He quickly joined Indee Men and was their representative to the Student Union. His membership in the International Relations Club, Campus Youth Fellowship and Episcopoi showed his desire to extend his deep Christian Faith to making a difference in the larger world. He even planned to devote his life to some sort of missionary work, which no doubt would have integrated his music major. His sister had attended James Madison University for one year and transferred to Wesleyan when her brother enrolled. Steve was majoring in piano studying with Dwight Drexler, and minoring in French horn while Mildred, who joined Delta Omicron music sorority, majored in voice and minored in cello. They both quickly became my good friends.

When the Christmas holiday was nearing, I posted a note requesting a ride to Indianapolis where my family would meet me and take me the rest of the way home, about 45 miles north. I soon heard from the Gastons that both their parents were coming to drive them home for the holidays. They had already planned to take Clara Siapno back with them to her home in Norfolk, but would gladly fit me in. That made six of us in their sedan! I was so glad to meet the Gaston parents. I don't remember much about their father, but I remember their mother was a very warm, kind person. I so appreciated their including me in the first lap of their long drive to Virginia. I meant to write them a Thank You note for their squeezing me in, but just didn't get around to it during the holidays.

I returned to campus intending to express my guilt to Steve and Billie. Imagine my shock when I learned that on the way back to Norfolk they had been in a terrible accident and both Steve and his mother were killed. Driving through the winding, hilly terrain of West Virginia, they had gone around a curve where an oncoming truck was loaded with huge logs which became untethered and fell directly onto the Gaston's car, instantly killing the mother and wounding Steve seriously. He was taken to a local hospital, where, in deep pain, he cried out, "Mama, Mama!" No one had the heart to tell him his mother died, he was so devoted to her. Sadly, soon after, Steve died.

After classes resumed, a huge memorial service was planned, probably by the beloved professor of religion Dr. and Mrs. Hazzard at whose home he had often hung out with his large circle of friends. The service was held in Presser Hall which was packed. In the short time he had been on campus, Steve had made his mark in so many areas. Everybody knew and liked him. He fit in everywhere. I think the most telling tribute was that the whole chapter of Phi Mu Alpha attended *en masse* even though he was not a member. The 1949 Wesleyana Yearbook featured a full page picture of Steve Gaston, class of '51, titled *"In Memoriam."*

Steve was a special friend of mine and I got a hint of his feeling for me when, during a conversation he and I were having, another friend came by to speak to him, and Steve said to him, "Can't this wait? I'm courting this girl!" I was rather surprised because Steve and I never had a date and I was already being courted by the wonderful young man I married. Still Steve was a good friend and along with so many others on campus, I grieved him deeply. Rest in peace, dear Steve Gaston.