

EMILY LOWE INTERVIEW

Emily Lowe came to the Keys to retire, but she ended up with a second career. Emily and her husband Don, a fifth generation Conch, moved to their dream home on Cudjoe Key in 1989. In 1990 Emily, retired from her professorial position at Eastern Michigan University, agreed to teach at Key West Community College for one year. Twenty years later, she is still teaching.

Emily is best known to this community for founding the Keys Chorale, which she began with one student. “I believe that you carry with you who you are,” Emily said. “I had started choirs from scratch before and I was excited about doing it again.” The venture was a resounding success, growing to more than 100 members by the time she handed the baton over to Dean Walters last year.

The secret of her success? Making sure everyone was welcome and that they all had fun. Emily held no auditions and encouraged people who had not sung for years to give the Chorale a try. “These are adults who worked hard, some at two or three jobs,” Emily observed. “I wanted us to sing well, but also to have a good time doing it.”

Anyone who attended the free concerts the Chorale presented at Fort Zachary Taylor can attest that the group sang well and everyone present had a good time. Emily twice took a group of 65 to perform in the Bahamas. “There were more people attending the concert than lived on the entire island of Green Turtle Cay,” she recalls. “Many of them came in boats, and I think some of them even swam.” A smaller group performed at an international program held in Canterbury, England.

Emily believes that Key West is a perfect place for the Chorale. “It’s the beautiful, open nature of the community,” she said. “There is such humility and a sense of equality here.” She

is particularly proud of the fact that her choristers got to know one another and took care of each other in times of need. “I love every one of them,” she declared, “this has been a glorious extension of my life.”

Emily has only one regret: that music programs are being curtailed in the schools and may not even survive at the College. “I wish the powers that be understood that there is such a thirst for music in this community,” she said. “We don’t want to spend all our time sitting at computers.”

Emily Lowe has been honored with the Tennessee Williams Award and the Samuel House Woman of Integrity Award. Please join the Key West Pops in paying tribute to her on Monday, February 8 at the Grand Key Resort.