

## INTERVIEW WITH CINDY PACK -- MARCH, 1995

*Born in Big Spring, Texas in September, 1948 Cindy graduated from Baylor College with a bachelor of music education degree. In 1973 she began teaching at Parker Elementary School in Houston. One of her standout students that first year was a talented sixth grader named David Catney. Cindy still works at Parker today, as magnet coordinator.*

My grandmother had six sisters, and they were all piano teachers. So that was the source of it all, those six piano teachers, all sisters. They all lived together in the same town in Mississippi. My mother's generation wasn't particularly musical, and mine hasn't been either; actually I think I'm the only one besides one or two first cousins. My music degree is an "all level" certificate, so you can teach any grade or level. I started teaching in Houston at Peterson Elementary in 1970. I taught there for three years and then went to Parker Elementary School, where Paul Oldfield was the principal. He'd been a music supervisor in the district and when he became a principal he asked me if I'd come to his school and be the music teacher, so I did.

We started doing musicals at Parker in 1973. We'd do *the Wizard of Oz*, *Pinocchio*, *Peter Pan*, *Tom Sawyer*; all that kind of stuff. And then at Christmastime we'd do the *Nutcracker* and *Scrooge* and different things like that. I think the one that David was in was *Christmas Around the World*. I believe he played a shepherd. I've taught for twenty years now and I've probably done *Christmas Around the World* about twelve times. That's the best program you can do, *Christmas Around the World*. That way you cover everything; you cover Chanukah and all the major religions and all the major holidays, and that way you don't offend anybody!

I believe that my first year at Parker was David's sixth grade year there. I was somewhat associated with the Singing Boys of Houston too. I wasn't working with them at that time but I was friends with Gary Patterson and Ann Hendricks. And David was at our school, and I knew he was in the boys choir so I knew he had to be sort of special to be in that boys choir. He was also in my choir. He had a really nice voice and was just really interested in music. I don't know how we knew he was so talented. We just knew. He would make up these little tunes and he'd play them for me on the piano. So at the end of the year we had this little recital and I invited his teachers and they came, and we all sat around in our little chairs and he played the piano. I have a tape of it somewhere. I even remember the label on it, the color of it... I'll know it when I see it. It says "David's tape."

I bet there weren't five people there. In elementary school at that time I think he had two or three teachers; they would have a math teacher and a reading teacher. And David was always very smart. I'm pretty sure he was in the accelerated group, however they had it back then. But he was real smart, academics as well as music. It was Geri Newton and Joyce Jordan; those were two of his teachers. I can't remember the others who were there. Probably it was his fifth and sixth grade teachers that I invited, and Mr. Oldfield was there.

David had just played these different songs, and since people have all their piano recitals in the springtime I think I said, "well David, why don't you do a recital for your teachers?" And of course David never took any formal music training, at that age anyway. So we just had a little recital. It didn't last over fifteen minutes. He played these little

songs that he had made up. There were no words; it was just music. Of course he'd never written them down or anything, but I did have the presence of mind to make a tape of it!

All the teachers really enjoyed it. We just said, "oh wow, look at David. He's going to be great!" Everybody commented on how clever he was, for someone that age to be able to put something together that had form and style and had texture to it all. It was real impressive. I mean these weren't just little ditties. It had a beginning and it had an ending and it had a middle section. I think he had a basic idea of what he wanted to do and then he'd just go with the music. And it wasn't anything complicated at all. It was just two hand stuff, pretty little tunes. He'd stand up and bow after his songs, and we all applauded. We were very proud of him. As far as formally urging him on, we didn't do that. We just appreciated the moment, which I guess was all he needed.

David was a real sweet boy. He was enjoyable to teach. He'd do what you told him to do and he'd do it right. He wanted to please. He was a cute little boy. I just remember David having such a sweet spirit about him. He was never temperamental. He was always real accommodating and interested in learning and understood that he was the student, and you were the teacher and you had something to teach, and he wanted to learn! He had a real good attitude about learning.

I really never saw David after he left Parker. I'd hear about him and read about him and I'd listen to his music, and we sort of communicated a little bit through Ann Hendricks. She and Howard would go hear him play and visit with him through the years. During that period of time I had babies and so I wasn't getting out much.

David was one of the top students I ever met as far as loving music. He just really liked music and liked performing it and listening to it... I just remember him being really willing, and he had these bright eyes. He just had an energy for life and an energy for learning. Teachers are really attracted to that, when you don't have to twist their arm to do something. When they're just ready, and you give them a little bit and then they take off; that's an exciting child to teach. That's a fun thing for everybody. And he was that way. He was fun to be around. He just had a zest for life and for music. David was just always real easygoing and easy to get along with. He just was a real delight to be around. But that little piano recital stands out in my mind. That was a significant event I think for him, and for me too.