

## THE ROBSON RANCH MUSIC CLUB FOUNDERS STORY

Joe and Tawana Arnett moved to Robson in 2003 with the mindset that they had retired. Both Joe and Tawana had some music responsibility from the ages of 13 and 14. The couple retired and moved here from Lakewood, Colorado where Joe was the Choral Director and taught the IB (International Baccalaureate) Music Classes. Both also served in two large churches with over 200 in the choir and full orchestras, Riverside Baptist, and Bowles community over the years. In both churches Joe was the Associate director as well as the orchestra director. The position required he also assist in their large-scale productions. The two also were musicians at both churches with Joe at 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet and Tawana the main accompanist. As the couple met new people and made new friends, they were encouraged by several of them to start a choir. They resisted greatly. Afterall, they were not only retired but they were also tired.

At the time there was a social committee that planned all the events at Robson. In the Spring of 2004, this committee approached Joe and Tawana about putting together a choir the Veterans Day event they were planning. Joe, being a retired Marine and just could not say no to that. So, they planned the first Veterans Day concert that November of 2004. They recruited, pulling a small choir together and presented a decent concert in the gym. Many people were so excited about singing, that they started asking for a Christmas Concert. Reluctantly they agreed and that also was a great success. By that time, they were both enjoying the opportunity so much that a Spring Concert was soon in the works. The choir grew as did the community's support for the choir. It wasn't long before two concerts had to be offered to accommodate all the people.

Gordon Summers, a World War II Veteran who was at the Battle of Iwo Jima as a young Marine, became the choir biggest advocate. Though music was not his profession it was his passion. He loved to entertain and could be found at the piano at many parties in people's homes. He was instrumental and persistent in getting the choir started and a place for them to perform as well. Gordon began to "harass" Ed Robson about building a facility for the choir to perform. He faithfully sent Mr. Robson, a veteran himself, videos of the Veterans Day programs being performed in the gym. At the time the Arts and Crafts Building was slated to be the next building go up for Robson. Gordon somehow talked them into doing the Clubhouse first. When they held a community meeting to introduce the plan for the clubhouse, there was a drawing that depicted a very large building with a performing arts auditorium on the East end of it. The plan, at the time was to build the half of the building with the auditorium, then complete the rest of it later. That actual building never happened. Some wonder what ever happened to that drawing and building. In any case the Clubhouse was built first. The community was all in and response was tremendous for the concerts. Though the Clubhouse was complete, "capacity" signs had to be made because the Clubhouse didn't have enough chairs in the building to accommodate the crowds. Family members of the choir were told to bring lawn chairs for their family members so the good chairs could be used for audience members.

The choir did not charge for performances in the beginning. They used a hometown approach as the passing of the hat at the end of concerts. Attendees were very generous. To get music in the beginning, they borrowed from the Denton Community Chorus and selections from their personal music library. They also borrowed from friends who were directing in other Texas towns. Once they started selling tickets for the performances, selections for the Clubs own music library could be purchased. The Club has grown over the years and the addition of other sponsored events has been added to help fund costs. The Choir has been fortunate to have some fabulous talent over the years. Joe and Tawana feel privileged to have presented great programs to the residents at Robson. After eleven years of leadership and sharing they felt the need to step away. Their need to continue executing the job to their own high standards was wearing on the couple. In 2015 they told the board they were retiring. The board then selected the present director Dr. Arturo Ortega. Their biggest and most heartfelt desire was that the choir keep going and growing. They had seen many a choir die after a successful director left. They believe God blessed the club when Arturo was found and have felt peace with the growth and quality of the programs from his first concert and on.