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MARGERY ABER AND HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUZUKI METHOD IN

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By

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MARGERY ABER AND HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUZUKI METHOD IN
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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Abstract

Margery V. Aber (1914 - 2001) was a violinist and music educator who was invaluable to the growth of the Suzuki Method movement outside of Japan. Her love and enthusiasm for teaching led her to begin a new job at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point after thirty years of teaching in the Detroit Public Schools and twelve years at Wayne State University.¹ Miss Aber was one of the first Americans to go to Matsumoto, Japan to study with Shinichi Suzuki. His “mother-tongue method” had been gaining much attention in the United States, as he had been extremely successful in teaching very advanced violin pieces to young Japanese children.²

In 1971, Miss Aber founded the first summer Suzuki Institute outside of Japan at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.³ This is very significant because there are now over seventy institutes that were modeled after the one in Stevens Point.⁴ Summer institutes are now considered an important part of a Suzuki child’s education.

Aber was a significant figure in the development of string education during the twentieth century. She authored numerous journal articles and a book entitled, *Hip! Hip! Hooray! 30 Years with the American Suzuki Institute In Stevens Point, Wisconsin*, which was released shortly before her death. Training numerous Suzuki teachers as well as students, Aber had an enormous impact on string playing in the United States. Looking through the literature, it is surprising to find that more has not

¹ Margery V. Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray! 30 Years with the American Suzuki Institute In Stevens Point, Wisconsin* (Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Worzalla Printing, 2001), back cover.

² *Portage County Gazette*: Obituary – Margery V. Aber. In webarchive. (Accessed February 17, 2010.)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

been written about Margery Aber and her contributions. This presents an opportunity for a topic of research that deserves much attention.

The purpose of this study is to recognize the work that Margery Aber did to spread the Suzuki Method in the United States. She also traveled to many other countries to help educate teachers, children, and parents about this method, but the focus of this paper will be on her work in the United States. Special attention will be given to the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, which she founded.

MARGERY ABER AND HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUZUKI METHOD IN THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

Need for Study

Margery V. Aber (1914 - 2001) was a violinist and music educator who was invaluable to the growth of the Suzuki Method movement outside of Japan. Her love and enthusiasm for teaching led her to begin a new job at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point after thirty years of teaching in the Detroit Public Schools and twelve years at Wayne State University.⁵ Miss Aber was one of the first Americans to go to Matsumoto, Japan to study with Shinichi Suzuki. His “mother-tongue method” had been gaining much attention in the United States, as he had been extremely successful in teaching very advanced violin pieces to young Japanese children.⁶

In 1971, Miss Aber founded the first summer Suzuki institute outside of Japan at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.⁷ This is very significant because there are now over seventy institutes that were modeled after the one in Stevens Point.⁸ Summer institutes are now considered an important part of a Suzuki child’s education.

⁵ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, back cover.

⁶ *Portage County Gazette*: Obituary – Margery V. Aber. In webarchive. (Accessed February 17, 2010.)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Aber was a significant figure in the development of string education during the twentieth century. She authored numerous journal articles and a book entitled, *Hip! Hip! Hooray! 30 Years with the American Suzuki Institute In Stevens Point, Wisconsin*, which was released shortly before her death. Training numerous Suzuki teachers as well as students, Aber had an enormous impact on string playing in the United States. Looking through the literature, I was surprised to find that more was not written about Margery Aber and her contributions. This presents an opportunity for a topic of research that deserves much attention.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to recognize the work that Margery Aber did to spread the Suzuki Method in the United States. It is important that her work and influence in the Suzuki world be recorded in more than just an article format. Her close relationship with Dr. Suzuki and his wife was valuable in gaining insight to his method. Dr. Suzuki respected her so much that he agreed to help her in establishing the first “Suzuki Summer School” outside of Japan by giving her a list of some of his approved teachers and their addresses.⁹ The name of this new summer school was the American Suzuki Institute, and it became a model for over seventy Suzuki institutes that have been established since then. She made huge contributions in educating parents, students, and teachers in the United States about the Suzuki Method through the development of the American Suzuki Talent Education Center in Stevens Point, the American Suzuki Institute, the teacher training programs at the University of

⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 19.

Wisconsin – Stevens Point, and her countless hours of outside education throughout the United States. She also traveled to many other countries to help educate teachers, children, and parents about this method, but the focus of this document will be on her work in the United States.

Limitations

This study is not a yearly account of Margery Aber's whole life, but describes the important events that shaped her life. It includes a brief biography with focus on Miss Aber's musical education, teaching, and activities associated with the Suzuki Method. Special attention has been given to her founding of the American Suzuki Institute and the role that this Institute has had in furthering the dissemination of the Suzuki Method in the United States. Specifically, it has become a model for institutes outside of Japan. These institutes are often an integral part of a child's Suzuki musical training. This study does not attempt to give a detailed account of Miss Aber's contribution to the Suzuki Method in countries outside of the United States, although it may simply state this fact.

Procedure

The sources of information have been examined in order to better describe Margery Aber's contributions to the Suzuki Method in the United States. The interviews that were done have given the researcher more information regarding this

matter. The study includes a brief biography of Miss Aber, a description of her job in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, a description of the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point, which Margery Aber founded, the growth of this Institute, and a description of Margery Aber as a teacher.

Various friends, relatives, and colleagues of Margery Aber were given a questionnaire to complete or were interviewed in person, by phone, or online through Skype. These included two of her nephews and three students she taught as children. There were seventeen interviews done in this study, some of which included both husbands and wives. Nine of the individuals interviewed had studied teacher training with Miss Aber. Most of those continued to have a colleague relationship with her after their training. The others began their relationship with Miss Aber as a colleague. These interviews were conducted in accordance with the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board guidelines. The interviews were recorded by a digital audio recording device. Transcripts of the interviews were made by the principal investigator and various transcription services. (The author of this document, Ana Maria Wilson, is the principal investigator of this study.) These were used as some of the sources and were cited in the document.

The following procedures were used to recruit individuals for the interviews: The subjects were recruited based on the principal investigator's research in determining who knew Margery Aber well during her lifetime. Some ideas of subjects to interview were given by colleagues of the principal investigator. Interviewees were given a script of questions to study before the interview. Subjects were told they could respond in writing if they chose; however, this was not required. They were also given

the option of an interview by phone, or online. Patricia D'Ercole was interviewed in person. If the subject wanted to respond in writing as opposed to being interviewed, this was done. Naming the subjects in the document of the study was essential, as their responses were used as cited sources of information in order to add validity to the study.

An in-person interview was conducted over the course of several different sessions at the discretion of Patricia D'Ercole as to not inconvenience her. If interviewees chose to give written responses, the amount of time they used to answer the questions varied according to their wishes. When interviews were done by phone or online, each portion took not more than one hour unless the interviewee wanted to continue past that time. Any communication bills incurred were paid for by the principal investigator. The P.I. made the phone calls. No more than three hours total were required of subjects interviewed by phone or online. Those interviews took place at times convenient to the interviewee and principal investigator. The interviews were recorded by a digital audio recording device. Online interviews took place by Skype. Interview questions used for Patricia D'Ercole were included in Appendix D of this document. Interview questions for other subjects were listed in Appendix C.

The results of the interviews and questionnaires were used to strengthen the content of the document by giving an account of Margery Aber's life told from different perspectives. Because the people being interviewed had different relationships with Miss Aber such as colleague, student, family member, and friend, it is believed that the varying accounts have strengthened the breadth of this study.

The following people were contacted for an interview or questionnaire completion. After each name is a brief biography about the person as well as an explanation of their relationship to Margery Aber.

Patricia D’Ercole was a close friend and colleague of Margery Aber. She received teacher training from Miss Aber while getting a master’s degree with emphasis in Suzuki pedagogy at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. D’Ercole is currently serving as Director of the Aber Suzuki Center in Stevens Point where she also teaches violin to children and Suzuki pedagogy classes to university students. D’Ercole has been the Board Chair for the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA). She has been on the planning committee for the International Research Symposium on Talent Education (IRSTE) since it was founded in 1991, and has been its director since 1995. She is a registered teacher trainer for the SAA, and has given clinics in 22 states of the United States, as well as in Puerto Rico, Finland, Canada, Estonia, Peru, Chile, and Taiwan. In 1988, she studied in Japan with Dr. Shinichi Suzuki.¹⁰ She has been a recipient of the Suzuki Chair Holder award at the American Suzuki Institute. Towards the end of Miss Aber’s life, D’Ercole took care of her along with another caregiver. She lived in the duplex unit next door to Miss Aber. Many colleagues in the Suzuki community have told the author of this document that D’Ercole would be the best person to interview because she knew Miss Aber so well. They first had a student/teacher relationship, then they became colleagues and close friends.

¹⁰ "Pat D'Ercole," *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, 1997-2010, <http://suzukiassociation.org/members/directory/?id=583> (accessed October 7, 2010).

Diane Slone has been involved with the Suzuki Method as both a violin student and teacher. As a child, she had the opportunity to study with Dr. Suzuki because her mother, Dr. Kay Collier McLaughlin, was very involved in the Suzuki movement and had contacts with Dr. Suzuki himself. Diane is a graduate of the Talent Education Institute in Matsumoto, Japan, where she studied with Dr. Suzuki as an adult. She is currently a Suzuki faculty member and Chair of Strings at the Hartt School in Connecticut. She attended countless summer institutes as a child because her mother was a Suzuki teacher at these events, and the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point was one that they frequented quite often. In addition to studying with Dr. Suzuki, she has had significant Suzuki Method training with Margery Aber, William Starr, Cathy McGlasson, and Yuko Mori, as well as short-term training with many other teacher trainers.¹¹

Dr. Kay Collier McLaughlin is the mother of previously mentioned Diane Slone. She has been a Suzuki teacher trainer and teacher, as well as a Suzuki parent. In addition to her musical qualifications, McLaughlin holds a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology from The Union Institute. She is the author of the book, *They're Rarely Too Young and Never Too Old to Twinkle: teaching insights into the world of beginning Suzuki violin*. In 1982, she was honored with the Suzuki Chair Holder award for her outstanding teaching and leadership as a faculty member of the American Suzuki Institute.¹² Margery Aber described her as “One of the most

¹¹ "Diane Slone," *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, 1997-2010, <http://suzukiassociation.org/members/directory/?id=4974> (accessed October 7, 2010).

¹² Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 89-90.

important persons in the development of the American Suzuki Institute. . .¹³ Aber goes on to describe McLaughlin:

It was my good fortune to have her intense interest in the development of the American Suzuki Institute. In 1975 I put her in charge of parent discussion groups. We often spent hour-long conversations, starting at 11:00 p.m. I would tell her what I was planning and she would suggest different ideas. It was always amazing to me that she knew so many people who she thought would be particularly good for a lecture. In fact, she encouraged different ones to come, not only for the benefit of their children but so they could present their knowledge about a particular subject. . .¹⁴

Dee Martz has held the titles of Professor of Viola at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point since 1979 and Director of American Suzuki Institute and the Aber Suzuki Center from 1986-2009. She served on the SAA Board of Directors from 2001 through 2007, and was the SAA Board Secretary from 2003 through 2007.¹⁵ Martz was a long-time colleague of Margery Aber, and is a very well respected Suzuki teacher, clinician, and violist.

Jennifer Burton was both a student and colleague of Margery Aber. Burton studied Suzuki teacher training with Aber while she was getting a master's degree in music education from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. She later taught at UWSP for seventeen years, and in Dallas for thirteen years. Burton has served on the SAA Board of Directors, and has published a book for Suzuki teachers and parents called *Sharpen Your Tools*. She is currently serving again as a faculty member for the Aber Suzuki Center in Stevens Point.¹⁶

¹³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 82.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵ "Dee Martz," *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997-2010, <http://suzukiassociation.org/member/directory/?id2157> (accessed August 27, 2010).

¹⁶ "Jennifer J. Burton," *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997-2010, <http://suzukiassociation.org/people/jennifer-burton/> (accessed October 26, 2011).

Dr. Earle Williams and **Dr. David Williams** are nephews of Margery Aber. They are the sons of Margery's sister, Jean (Aber) Williams, who is now deceased. Margery Aber would often spend vacations with these nephews and their families when she had a chance, as they had close relationships with each other.¹⁷

Dr. Earle Williams is a Principal Research Engineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He holds a PhD from M.I.T. His primary areas of research are, "cloud physics, thunderstorm electrification, radar meteorology, breakdown phenomena, and tropical meteorology."¹⁸

Dr. David Williams is Director of the Center for Visual Science at the University of Rochester in New York. His professional field of interest is in the optics of the eye. He is probably best known for the invention of the camera that can take the sharpest pictures of the inside of the eye. He and his team ". . . took the first pictures ever of the rods and cones inside a living human eye."¹⁹

Stan Smith is a Suzuki violin teacher who had a very successful program for many years in Aurora, Illinois. He taught at the American Suzuki Institute, and kept a chronicle of events that happened at the ASI, which Miss Aber subsequently used in her book.²⁰ He was a recipient of the Suzuki Chair Holder award at the American Suzuki Institute.

San San Lee was a student of Miss Aber who went on to receive degrees on scholarship at both the Oberlin College Conservatory and the Juilliard School. As a winner of the Artists International Auditions, Miss Lee gave a debut recital at

¹⁷ David Williams, transcript of Skype interview by Ana Maria Wilson, May 11, 2011, 7.

¹⁸ "Faculty – Earle Williams," Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, <http://cee.mit.edu/ewilliams> (accessed October 30, 2011).

¹⁹ David Williams, transcript of Skype interview by Ana Maria Wilson, May 11, 2011, 25.

²⁰ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 23.

Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall and was also invited to perform on their Alumni Winner Series. In addition to Margery Aber, her other major teachers have included Dorothy Mauney, Stephen Clapp, and Joseph Fuchs. She played in master classes for Shinichi Suzuki, Max Rostal, Joseph Fuchs, and Joseph Gingold. Miss Lee has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe and Russia, and has taught nationally at Suzuki workshops. She has served on the School for Strings violin faculty in New York City since 1990, and Juilliard's Music Advancement Program since 1991.²¹

Joyce Wotruba-Polson was suggested as an interview subject by Pat D'Ercole. She taught in the Stevens Point Public School System for thirty years. While there, she taught elementary strings and some high school orchestra. Joyce graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and did graduate work at UW – Madison and UW – Stevens Point. She attended the first University of Wisconsin Suzuki String Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, where she met Dr. Suzuki. In 1968, she returned to Madison as a piano accompanist with Margery Aber's demonstration student group. Margery later hired her as the American Suzuki Institute's summer piano coordinator. Joyce was one of three graduate students in Margery's first teacher training class at UWSP.

Ann Marie Novak teaches piano and serves as an accompanist at the Aber Suzuki Center at UWSP and did so while Miss Aber was teaching there. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Oberlin College, as well as a Master of Music from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Novak has received Suzuki training from Martha Stacy, Haruko Kataoka,

²¹ "San San Lee," The School for Strings: Faculty, <http://www.schoolforstrings.org/main.asp?category=Faculty&sub=Violin&sub2=San%20San%20Lee> (accessed October 16, 2010).

Valery Lloyd-Watts, Carole Bigler and Jasuko Joichi.²² She wrote a touching tribute article upon Miss Aber's death depicting the humorous, child-like side of Margery.²³

Gail Engebretson was recommended as a possible interviewee by Jennifer Burton. She first knew Margery Aber when she was in college and asked her for training to become a Suzuki teacher when the Suzuki program was new in Stevens Point. Ms. Engebretson later worked under Miss Aber as a kind of secretary and helper at the American Suzuki Institute.²⁴

Ed and Judy Muelling were recommended to the author of this study by Jennifer Burton. They both received their master's degrees during the 1970's in Suzuki pedagogy at Stevens Point under the tutelage of Margery Aber. They both worked in administration for the American Suzuki Institute. Some of their duties included office work, arranging housing for the students and parents, scheduling classes for students and teachers, and being the orchestra librarian.²⁵ Judy later had a private home studio, and Ed taught in the West Bend Public Schools in Wisconsin.²⁶

Marilyn O'Boyle has been involved in the Suzuki Method since 1972, and started a Suzuki program in Lincoln, Nebraska at that time. She later started programs in Lima, Peru, and Santiago, Chile, while she lived there during the 1980's. Ms. O'Boyle is a registered teacher trainer, and has taught courses throughout the United States and Latin America. She is currently the director of the New Mexico Suzuki Institute, serves as an SAA (Suzuki Association of the Americas) liaison to Latin

²² "Ann Marie Novak," UWSP Aber Suzuki Center – Faculty, <http://uwsp.edu/Suzuki/Pages/asc/faculty/anovak.aspx> (accessed November 12, 2011).

²³ Ann Marie Novak, "The Birthday Gift," *American Suzuki Journal* 30, no. 1 (Sept. 2001), 43-4.

²⁴ Gail Engebretson, transcript of Skype interview, May 9, 2011, 1.

²⁵ Ed and Judy Muelling, transcript of phone interview, March 28, 2011, 1-2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

America, and is serving on the SAA Board of Directors.²⁷ Ms. O’Boyle wrote a tribute to Margery Aber on the SAA’s website section entitled, “Thanking Our Lucky Stars.”

Paul Landefeld attended the first American Suzuki Institute as a parent, and later attended as a violin faculty member. He and his family moved to Japan in the 1970’s in order to study long-term with Dr. Suzuki. He was later asked by Miss Aber to be her assistant for both the American Suzuki Talent Education Center and the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point. When Margery Aber retired in 1984, he was named Director of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point Suzuki Programs. Mr. Landefeld is currently the CEO of the International Suzuki Association.

John Klein was part of Miss Aber’s first class of Suzuki violin students at the University of Wisconsin Campus Laboratory School.²⁸ He later attended the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he studied with Zvi Zeitlin.²⁹ Klein taught at the American Suzuki Institute for twenty-five years.³⁰ He currently teaches at the Odyssey Academy in Rochester, New York, and coordinates all of the musical activities for the Greece Central School District.³¹

Everett Goodwin received teacher training from Margery Aber in 1972 and 1973, and attended the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point from 1973 to 1977. He served as a violin instructor at the ASI and the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point from 1978 to 1981. From 1981 to 2004, he was the director of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Talent Education Program. Mr. Goodwin has taught throughout

²⁷ “Ms. Marilyn O’Boyle,” *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997-2011, <http://suzukiassociation.org/people/marilyn-oboye/> (accessed October 26, 2011).

²⁸ John Klein, transcript of Skype interview, June 12, 2011, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

the United States and Canada as a Suzuki clinician, and continues to teach privately and perform chamber music with his wife, Santha Goodwin. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and a Master of Fine Arts in Violin Performance from Carnegie Mellon University, where he studied with Sidney Harth.³²

Santha Goodwin holds a Bachelor of Music degree with an emphasis in piano from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She has done Suzuki piano training with Carol Bigler, Valery Lloyd-Watts, Yasuko Joichi, and Rita Hauck. She has had further piano studies with Brooks Smith, Robert McDowell, Harry Franklin, Michael Keller, Francis Karp, and Eli Kalman. Mrs. Goodwin has been a Suzuki piano instructor for nearly forty years, and has been a guest Suzuki clinician throughout the United States. She has taught for the Suzuki programs at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, and the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh.³³

³² “Mr. Everett Goodwin,” *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997-2011, <http://suzukiassociation.org/people/everett-goodwin/> (accessed November 11, 2011).

³³ “Santha Rae Goodwin,” *Suzuki Association of the Americas Member Directory*, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997-2011, <http://suzukiassociation.org/people/santha-rae-goodwin/> (accessed November 11, 2011).

Review of Literature

The main existing sources include one book written by Margery Aber, several pamphlets, newspaper articles, obituaries, tribute articles, and videos of a lecture, a dedication ceremony, and an interview for a video documentary. No books or dissertations have been written about Miss Aber or her contributions to the Suzuki Method besides her own book, although some works do mention Miss Aber in a general way. Some other sources give good overviews of the Suzuki Method including the importance of attending a Suzuki institute such as the one that Miss Aber founded in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. In order to obtain more information, interviews of Miss Aber's close friends and colleagues had to be done. The review of existing literature is divided into the following categories: Books, Articles, Dissertation and Theses, and Videos.

Books

Aber's book, *Hip Hip Hooray! 30 years with the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point, Wisconsin*, is one of the most useful sources. She gives a detailed account of how and why the Institute came into being. She also describes what changed from year to year. Many letters from other colleagues were included in the book as well. This is a useful addition because it gives an account of what other people thought of the Institute and Margery Aber's work.

In Search Of The Japanese Spirit in Talent Education: A Research Essay, is a book written by Susan Bauman. She studied Suzuki teacher training with Dr. Suzuki

himself in Matsumoto, Japan, where she graduated from the Talent Education School. She gives the meaning of many Japanese words and concepts, thus better explaining Suzuki's ideas.

Louise Behrend and Sheila Keats wrote *The Suzuki Approach* with the purpose of educating people against misconceptions about the Suzuki Method and to encourage more fine musicians and music teachers to become Suzuki teachers. Ms. Behrend briefly discusses the differences in background between note reading for American students and Japanese students. She offers a guide to teaching American children how to read music since not all Americans are taught this in their school systems.

Suzuki Education in Action: A Story of Talent Training From Japan was written by Clifford A. Cook, one of the first "pioneers" of the Suzuki Method in the United States. In this book, Cook describes how Talent Education first came to the US. It was published in 1970, so it doesn't have anything related to Margery Aber's work in the Suzuki field.

Shinichi Suzuki: The Man and His Philosophy by Evelyn Hermann has a one-page description of the American Suzuki Institute. It also has a description of how the Suzuki Method first came to the US, as well as a section on Dr. Suzuki's philosophy and technical teachings.

The Vehicle of Music by Masaaki Honda is a book describing the author's relationship with Dr. Suzuki and the tour group made up of Japanese Suzuki students. It does not mention Margery Aber. This book is not especially useful for this document topic.

The Suzuki Concept: An Introduction to a Successful Method for Early Music Education edited by Elizabeth Mills and Sr. Therese Cecile Murphy lists Margery Aber as a contributor to this book. This book mostly contains practical suggestions in teaching children for Suzuki teachers and parents. It does not contain specific information about Miss Aber or the American Suzuki Institute.

Ability Development from Age Zero by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki has firsthand information concerning the Suzuki Method by the master himself. *The Law of Ability and The "Mother Tongue Method" of Education* is a book containing two speeches given by Dr. Suzuki to the Japan Institute of Educational Psychology. This also contains many of his ideas on education. By reading Dr. Suzuki's writings and speeches, the principal investigator of this study can have a better understanding of what Miss Aber's motivation was in her teaching and in spreading the knowledge of education that Dr. Suzuki had to people in the United States.

Nurtured by Love by Dr. Suzuki is considered by many to be a sort of Bible of the Suzuki Method. He explains his philosophy that is the basis of his method. Like many excellent Suzuki teachers, Margery Aber must have read it countless times during her life. Much of her own teaching, after she was introduced to the Suzuki Method, was a reflection of the contents of this book along with Dr. Suzuki's other writings and lectures.

The Suzuki violin method in American education: What the American Music Educator Should Know About Shinichi, written by John Kendall in 1966 and republished in 1973, does not give any information about Margery Aber. It does, however, summarize the ideas of Talent Education. It also gives a description of the

beginnings of Talent Education in the United States. The founding of the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point and the Suzuki Association of the Americas are mentioned. At the time of publication, Kendall insightfully described the need for centralizing the Talent Education movement in North America as well as coming up with a system to standardize the training of a qualified Suzuki Method teacher.

Is Suzuki Education Working in America? by Ray Landers is a book in which the author tries to answer the question of the title. He compares cultural and educational values of Japan and the United States. Landers presents the arguments for and against the success of the Suzuki Method in the United States. The principal investigator of this study believes that although this is an excellent book for Suzuki educators to read, she may not be able to use much information from this book because Landers does not give any specific information about the American Suzuki Institute or Margery Aber.

Articles

Margery Aber wrote the following journal articles: “Two Homely Stories for Suzuki People” is a short excerpt published in the *American Suzuki Journal* containing two stories that are metaphors for the development of a child through the Suzuki Method. “My Teacher, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki” is an article in the *ASJ* paying tribute to Dr. Suzuki after he died. “ASTA Fiftieth Anniversary: Suzuki Method Takes Hold in America: the Growth of Summer Institutes” is an article in the *American String Teacher* describing the first American Suzuki Institute in her own words and explaining how institutes have spread across the US. “ASTA Fiftieth Anniversary:

Thanks for the Memories, ASTA” is an article in the same issue paying a brief tribute to the fiftieth anniversary of the American String Teachers’ Association and her string teacher colleagues. It does not mention anything related to the Suzuki Method.

“Toshio Takahashi—Flute Teacher” is an article in *The Instrumentalist* that describes the person who started the Suzuki Flute School and his work.

“Why I Want My Students and Parents to Attend Summer Suzuki Institutes” by Joanne Bath and “How Do You...?” by Beth Titterington are both articles in the ASJ by experienced Suzuki teachers which explain the reasons for attending summer Suzuki institutes.

“A Visit with Dr. Suzuki” by Theodore Brunson describes a visit by the author to the school in Matsumoto, Japan, where Dr. Suzuki taught. He observed several students lessons. He then described the Summer School in Matsumoto.

Shortly after Margery Aber died, there was a collection of articles written by her friends and colleagues in her honor that was published in the *American Suzuki Journal* Volume 30, Issue 1. This was entitled, “A Tribute to Marge Aber.” One of these articles was “Eulogy” by Shirley Gibb, which gives some biographical facts about Aber and her achievements, some of her students’ accomplishments, and some aspects of Aber’s teaching philosophy. Other contributors to “A Tribute to Marge Aber” were Kay Collier-Slone (McLaughlin), A. Hurst, Janet Bogart, Carol Ourada, M. Chang, Harry B. Dyer, and Bette Dyer. These articles all speak well of Aber’s personality, high level of energy, goodness, and dedication to what she did. “The Birthday Gift” by Ann Marie Novak is another article attached to the end of these tributes. This highlights Aber’s sense of humor. The 2002, Tanya Carey wrote the

tribute article, “Memories of Marge.” This is a short but useful article for this study because Carey specifically described her experiences at the American Suzuki Institute teacher training sessions as well as Aber’s helpfulness and energetic personality.

Clifford Cook, former violin professor at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, wrote several articles. “A Composite Report from the American Suzuki Institute” lists comments that attendees contributed about the ASI. “Japanese String Festival” describes how Cook was first introduced to Dr. Suzuki’s work through a video of a Suzuki string festival in Japan. He also gives an overview of the method and includes a portion of a speech by Dr. Suzuki and another by a Finnish dignitary after hearing the 1955 (Japanese Suzuki) National Concert. “Suzuki in Oberlin” was written as an advertisement for a workshop that was to be given by Dr. Suzuki at Oberlin College Conservatory during the summer of 1965. It contains a brief explanation of the method.

“Suzuki Touched the World” by Cheryl Cornell describes the positive non-musical aspects that make Suzuki institutes so wonderful in the development of a child by sharing several institute anecdotes with readers.

“Teacher and Student Behavior in Suzuki String Lessons: Results from the International Research Symposium on Talent Education” was written by Dr. Robert A. Duke of the University of Texas at Austin for the aforementioned symposium that Margery Aber co-founded. “Third International Research Symposium on Talent Education” by Dr. Michael F. Heaney was written after the 1995 Symposium. These are both examples of the scholarly research that has been produced in music education as a result of the initiative of Aber, Patricia D’Ercole, and others.

“Margery Aber and the American Suzuki Institute” by Patricia D’Ercole is an extremely useful article for this document because it focuses on the author’s topic. D’Ercole interviewed Miss Aber about how she started the violin, how she became interested in the Suzuki Method, and her development of the American Suzuki Institute.

“Learning with Suzuki: Seven Questions Answered” by Alfred Garson gives a detailed description of how the Suzuki Method works. “An Interview with Dr. Shin’ichi Suzuki at the Talent Education Institute, Matsumoto, Japan on 18 April 1991” by Susan Grilli is a transcript of that interview. They discussed Dr. Suzuki’s ideas about education.

“Suzuki’s Mother Tongue Method” by John Kendall explains how the Suzuki Method grew in America, gives a brief introduction to what Suzuki summer institutes are, and explains the possible dangers of misusing certain aspects of the Suzuki Method.

“Bridges—Variations on a Theme: Suzuki Association of the Americas—25 years, 1972-1999” by Joseph McSpadden focuses on why a Suzuki organization in the United States was needed after the method was introduced in this country. Margery Aber helped establish the SAA. “Suzuki Association of the Americas” by Kathleen Starr also discusses the mentioned organization.

The brochure about the Aber Suzuki Center published by the College of Fine Arts & Communication at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point has a lot of information regarding their current year-round Suzuki program and the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point, as well as a timeline about how these programs were

developed. The websites for the Aber Suzuki Center and the American Suzuki Institute give current information about enrolling in those programs.

Dissertations and Theses

JoAnn S. Atwood wrote a final paper for the Suzuki pedagogy course at the American Suzuki Institute. This was entitled, “The Suzuki Experience: An Overview of The American Suzuki Institute.” She gives an overview of her experience at the 1977 American Suzuki Institute. She then describes some aspects of philosophy and technique of the Suzuki Method from what she learned at the institute. Other sections she includes are “Suzuki in the Public Schools,” “Suzuki Taught Privately,” “Teacher Observations,” “The Students’ Experience,” and “Personal Summation.” This source gives a description of what Atwood learned at the American Suzuki Institute, which was founded by Margery Aber. Atwood also gives specific observations about Aber’s teaching.

“The Development and expansion of the ‘mother-tongue’ method of Shinichi Suzuki in the United States” by Julie Ann Ciurleo may be useful for seeing how the Suzuki Method was transplanted into the United States. She includes sections entitled “The Early Years of Talent Education in the United States,” “Talent Education in the United States Today,” and “Future Developments in Talent Education.” This work mentions Aber and the American Suzuki Institute several times.

“Music educator Shinichi Suzuki: His teacher development program and studio teaching” by Sarah Smith Hersh follows Dr. Suzuki’s teaching of students from 1972-1976 in Matsumoto, Japan who are learning to become Suzuki Method teachers. This

doesn't have any information about Margery Aber, but perhaps some of her teaching methods can be traced back to those of Dr. Suzuki by studying this document.

"The genesis of Suzuki: An investigation of the roots of Talent Education" by Eric Madsen gives a background on Dr. Suzuki's teachings from the Japanese cultural perspective. It does not mention Margery Aber.

Jill Eiko Morita's thesis, "Talent Education: An International Application of Educational Methods from Japan's Past," was written as an undergraduate honors thesis in Asian Studies at Whitman College. It gives a background of the introduction of Western classical music to Japan, and the growth of Dr. Suzuki's Talent Education method. She then describes prominent ideas in Japanese educational philosophy, especially as they relate to the Suzuki Method. Most of these ideas have roots in the cultural practices and traditions of Japan. Morita also gives a description on many of the pedagogical points of the Suzuki Violin books. On page 47, there is a description of the annual Summer School in Matsumoto, Japan. This was the model upon which Margery Aber based the American Suzuki Institute. Morita also describes the predecessor of the present-day Summer School in Matsumoto (47).

"American Suzuki Institute Violin Pedagogy Course, 1978," by James Schwenk, was also written as a final document for the same course that Atwood wrote about, but for the following year. He organized his document into different topics relevant to Suzuki teaching such as, "A Step By Step Procedure," "Memorization," and "Motivation." This document contains no accounts of Miss Aber or activities at the American Suzuki Institute.

Steve Swanson's thesis, "The Violin Teaching Method of Shinichi Suzuki in Its Theoretical and Practical Application to Music and Music Education in the United States," is a good document for addressing the pros and cons of using the Suzuki Method in the US, although it was written during the early part of the American Suzuki movement (1965). He compares the application of the Suzuki Method in both the US and Japan, and has both positive and negative commentary by music professionals as they saw the Suzuki Method in 1965.

Videos

"101 Group Ideas" from the *Suzuki Association of the Americas 20th Anniversary Celebration* shows both Margery Aber and Carol Dallinger giving a public lecture about teaching Suzuki group classes for the violin. It is useful to study this in order to get to know Aber's personality and teaching techniques since she is no longer alive. Notes and transcriptions of sections from this video have been taken by the principal investigator of this study.

Aber Suzuki Center Dedication was made several years after Aber's death commemorating her work and dedicating the new Suzuki Center in Stevens Point to her. Former students performed, students and colleagues gave speeches about her, and pictures of her were shown. The speeches by her colleagues and former students may be used in this study to further describe Miss Aber and her work.

Nurtured by Love is an informative video often shown to parents and teachers new to the Suzuki Method. Several prominent Suzuki teachers in the US were interviewed on this video including Margery Aber.

CHAPTER 1

Early Biography of Margery Aber

Margery V. Aber was born on February 15, 1914 in Racine Wisconsin. She was the daughter of Alvina Kratochviol Aber and Earle J. Aber.³⁴ She was the second of five children. There were three girls and two boys: Georgia, Margery, Jean, Ernie, and Earle Jr. The youngest two were fraternal twin boys.³⁵ Ernie died as a very young child. Earle Jr. died in 1945 towards the end of World War II when his plane was hit by friendly fire over English waters as he was returning from a mission in Holland. This was a very difficult event for the family to bear.³⁶

Margery was very close to her family. The girls were very similar to each other in many ways, and they remained good friends for their entire lives. All of the members of the Aber family, except the two boys, lived into their late 80's or 90's.³⁷ Margery was especially close to her younger brother, Earle, probably because they both played the violin. Violin playing produced a three-way bond between their mother, Margery, and Earle.³⁸ Their mother helped the two children practice,³⁹ and eventually, she took violin lessons from the same teacher.⁴⁰ Although it was much

³⁴ Shirley J. Gibb, "A Tribute to Marge Aber: Eulogy," *American Suzuki Journal* 30, no. 1 (Sept. 2001): 39.

³⁵ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 55.

³⁶ David Williams, interview transcript, 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

³⁸ Earle Williams, interview transcript, 14.

³⁹ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 63, 65.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

harder to get Earle to practice,⁴¹ he did go to Interlochen for music camp in 1935 and 1936.⁴²

Margery Gets a Violin

When Margery was almost ten, her mother said that Santa could only bring each of the children in her family one present that year. Margery said that she wanted a violin, although she had not had very much exposure to the instrument. As she recalled later in her life, “ . . . I had never seen one, but suspect that the midwife’s daughter, who played a violin, may have been practicing during one of our visits.”⁴³

In her journal, *Reminiscences*, Margery’s mother wrote the following:

The instrument, bow, and case came to \$10.00. Now, I think how foolish we were and yet we couldn’t even afford that. Had we waited until we could afford a good violin, she might never have had one. Then on December 30, Dad [Margery’s father] took her to see Elmer Slama for her first lesson. Georgia had been taking piano lessons from Esther Lindhardt, and Esther recommended Elmer very highly and I am surely glad she did.

Elmer was so disgusted with the violin we bought and couldn’t understand why we didn’t come to him first and let him select the instrument – Well, we didn’t know any better.

I liked music but knew little about it. Now with Margie taking violin lessons which we couldn’t afford – I had to help with the practicing by playing the piano for her – counting time and what work! I wanted her to succeed as well as get her money’s worth out of the lessons. She pleased Elmer very much and the following May he took her with him to play in a recital at So. Milwaukee. She played “Cantilena.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 66.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴³ Patricia D’Ercole, “Margery Aber and the American Suzuki Institute,” *American Suzuki Journal* 21, no. 2 (Feb. 1993): 22.

⁴⁴ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 63.

In addition to Georgia taking piano lessons and Margery and Earle Jr. studying violin, Jean took cello lessons for a bit. However, according to her mother, there were no good cello teachers in town, and it was so awkward to carry. Jean did not stick with the cello, but she did have other interests such as art.⁴⁵ She was even a member of the cartoon club in high school.⁴⁶ Margery must have shared this interest because she was known to draw stick figured cartoons on the back of programs for various people later in her life.⁴⁷

Margery began taking private violin lessons immediately after receiving a violin. She had lessons twice a week. Her mother helped her practice during her first two years of study. Although she later became a violin professor herself, practicing was sometimes not what Margery wanted to do. During one of these instances, her mother told her to call her teacher to inform him she could not take lessons anymore because she was not practicing. After much crying on Margery's part, her mother agreed that she did not have to call and cancel her lessons if Margery promised to practice.⁴⁸ Miss Aber received further inspiration to play the violin when, at the age of twelve, she saw a performance of Fritz Kreisler. She also studied for a summer at the Interlochen Summer Arts Camp in Michigan, where she furthered her musical skills while studying with great artists.⁴⁹

On June 15, 1932, Margery graduated from high school.⁵⁰ She went to college at Oberlin in Ohio, where she majored in violin performance and minored in music

⁴⁵ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 66.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁷ Wotruba-Polson, interview transcript, 11.

⁴⁸ D'Erocle, "Margery Aber and the ASI," 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 71.

education. She studied violin with Reber Johnson.⁵¹ Margery spent her summers studying music at Chautauqua, New York.⁵² Jean also attended Oberlin with her, and they both graduated in June of 1937.⁵³ After graduation, Margery moved to Detroit to take a job as an “emergency substitute” teacher. As jobs were hard to find at that time, she accepted her meager salary of \$1,400 per year and the daily three hours of traveling by bus, streetcar, and foot that she had to do between each school.⁵⁴ After eight years, she was “promoted” to teach high school, where she taught string classes, orchestra, dance band, and choir. She would come early to school in order to practice, but the children also came early to ask her questions.⁵⁵ She would answer their questions instead of practicing, demonstrating her selfless nature. During the summer, Margery furthered her own studies by receiving a master’s degree from Columbia University in music education.⁵⁶

As her love for children and music grew, so did her reputation as a teacher.⁵⁷ Her reputation grew to the point where the Honorable Lee Sherman Dreyfus, who later became the President of Wisconsin State University, Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, and Governor of Wisconsin, commented in the introduction of Miss Aber’s book that he had heard of her accomplishments in Detroit.⁵⁸

⁵¹ D’Erocle, “Margery Aber and the ASI,” 22.

⁵² Alvina Aber, *Reminiscences*, 79.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ D’Erocle, “Margery Aber and the ASI,” 22-3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁶ “The Hip, Hip Hooray! Lady: Margery Aber; Leaving a Legacy of Joy in Life,” Hill Connections, <http://hillconnections.org/ri/aber4jl.htm> (accessed May 27, 2011).

⁵⁷ D’Erocle, “Margery Aber and the ASI,” 23.

⁵⁸ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 3.

Beginnings of the Suzuki Method in the United States

In 1958, a Japanese student named Kenji Mochizuki happened to be studying at the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology. He also played the violin in Clifford Cook's "College-Community string festival."⁵⁹ Mochizuki brought Cook a film and a tape of a string concert in Japan. Hundreds of Japanese children, starting from the age of three, were playing complicated pieces, some of which were usually studied by high school or college students.⁶⁰ Mr. Cook, a friend of Margery's, explained:

Aside from the sheer weight of numbers and the appeal of cute tots performing seriously, the outstanding features for the string specialist were these: (1) There was not a poor left hand position or bow arm visible in the entire group. (2) Intonation was good and pleasing tone was modulated expressively. In short, this was not just mass playing of 1200 children from 5 to 13 years of age—it was *good violin playing!*⁶¹

Mr. Cook arranged for Mochizuki to speak and to show this film to his college students at Oberlin as well as other string teachers during the Ohio String Teachers Association meeting at Oberlin in May of 1958.⁶² John Kendall, who later became an influential Suzuki teacher and started a Suzuki teacher training program at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, also saw this film.⁶³ He was so intrigued that he went to Japan in 1959 to find out how this method produced such fine, young string players.⁶⁴ Although some people in the United States knew about this new method in Japan that produced astonishing results, it wasn't until the first Suzuki tour group came to the United States in 1964 that many people started to notice.

⁵⁹ Clifford A. Cook, "Japanese String Festival," *Music Educators Journal* 46, no. 2 (November-December 1959): 41.

⁶⁰ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 9.

⁶¹ Clifford A. Cook, "Japanese String Festival," 41.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 9.

⁶⁴ Clifford A. Cook, "Japanese String Festival," 41.

Margery Aber read an ASTA (American String Teachers Association) advertisement concerning a summer trip to Japan in 1967 for American music teachers. They were to visit the Matsumoto Summer School to observe the Suzuki Method in action. She happened to have the nine hundred dollar fee with her when she read the advertisement, so she decided to go. She was skeptical and wondered if this Suzuki concept was some kind of a musical trick.⁶⁵

Twenty string teachers and their families traveled to Japan on the ASTA tour group. They observed lessons, heard concerts by the children, and listened to daily lectures by Dr. Suzuki about his philosophy, violin technique, and tone production.⁶⁶ Every time the teachers arrived in a new place, they were greeted by either a small or large group of Suzuki students performing for them. Miss Aber observed that they all played with phrasing and artistry beyond their years.⁶⁷ She stated,

Yet these tiny tots, seen with their parents or in a street scene, played games, fought, laughed, cried and proved to be normal average children with the same kinds of reactions that American kids have. We were all beginning to ask ourselves, *then how come our children scrape and saw their violins so ruthlessly?*⁶⁸

Dr. Suzuki's philosophies and his fine example of being a good person started to influence everyone on the tour. It was evident in everything he did and said, and in the way he worked with the children. The teachers developed this same desire to be the best possible teacher. If the Japanese children could play like this, why couldn't the American children? After all, these children in Japan seemed like very typical kids. Miss Aber continued in her book:

⁶⁵ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

How terrible that we American teachers could so casually provide our youngsters with so mediocre an education and not even be concerned. As the days went by, the seeds of desire to train beautiful children to make beautiful music and enjoy doing it at the moment became stronger and stronger in all of us.⁶⁹

Hearing the Japanese Suzuki students play with such a beautiful, artistic tone brought tears to Miss Aber's eyes.⁷⁰ The Suzuki Method in particular was drawing in Miss Aber's attention. If parents and teachers work together to develop a fine child and not just a fine musician, there is a wonderful result. Patricia D'Ercole commented that Margery would often say, "Parents are the teacher's assistant in teaching the violin, but teachers are the parents' assistants in raising good children, or developing character."⁷¹

This positive teaching approach was also very appealing during the time of the Cold War. There was the fear that nuclear war would erupt and kill much of the human race, so this idea of teaching children to be good people must have sparked the interest of Miss Aber and others.⁷²

Dr. Suzuki had lived through World War II and its aftermath. He saw that Japan was in such bad condition after this war. He was especially touched when seeing the children of Japan suffer. They had nothing to do with the war or its decision, yet their level of nutrition and education had declined greatly as a result. Dr. Suzuki was determined to use his musical abilities and discoveries in the mother-tongue method to give the children a good education. He wanted to bring them up as fine people who would hopefully not repeat the mistakes of their elders in waging war.

⁶⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 11.

⁷⁰ Patricia D'Ercole, transcript of interview by Ana Maria Wilson, October 26-28, 2010, 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

Although it had been thirty-some years since World War II by the 1970's, memories of the bombing at Pearl Harbor and loved ones being killed in the war still loomed in the minds of people. If Dr. Suzuki, a Japanese man who observed the horrors of World War II first hand, could stand up and speak about the importance of peace to an audience of Americans, once considered an enemy nation, then Margery thought that they should reciprocate with the same attitude. This was despite the fact that her own brother was killed during the war in Europe. It was a very difficult loss for her to deal with, yet this hope for a better future by educating our children to be fine people provided a beacon of light to look towards during the Cold War.⁷³

⁷³ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 12.

CHAPTER 2

New Job at Stevens Point

A Woman of Action

As Dr. Suzuki said in his book, *Nurtured by Love*, “To merely ‘want’ to do something is not enough.”⁷⁴ He described an account during a harsh winter day shortly after World War II in which his sister had seen a wounded soldier begging for money in their hometown of Matsumoto, Japan. She wanted to invite him to sit in their warm room and drink tea. She told Dr. Suzuki this, and he replied, “You merely *wanted* to?”⁷⁵ She quickly left to find the man and invited him to their home. The man, who had been collecting money for other wounded soldiers, was very humble and grateful. They spoke for three hours. After the soldier had left, Dr. Suzuki’s sister thanked him for the lesson he had taught her.⁷⁶

As Dr. Suzuki said later in *Nurtured by Love*:

Plenty of people often think, “I’d like to do this, or that.” We all have the ability to think that. But it usually ends there, and people who put their thoughts into practice are very few indeed. I realized I was one of those people who just think of doing things, and I made a resolution: “There is no merit in just thinking about doing something. The result is exactly the same as not

⁷⁴ Shinichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love: The Classic Approach to Talent Education*, trans. Waltraud Suzuki (Athens, Ohio: Senszay Publications, 1983), 87.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

thinking about it. It is only doing the thing that counts. I shall acquire the habit of doing what I have in mind to do.”⁷⁷

Margery Aber, who was constantly studying Dr. Suzuki’s teaching, undoubtedly read his book and this statement many times during her life. As evidenced by her actions, Patricia D’Ercole said that Miss Aber really tried to live by this idea, and would often mention, “If you say, ‘I should practice,’ get up and practice, even if it’s ten minutes.’ ”⁷⁸ This attitude, along with her energetic personality and determination, must have had an impact on her decision to go ahead with her ideas of creating a Suzuki program and later a summer institute at Stevens Point. It didn’t matter if a summer institute did not yet exist outside of Japan. She would just have to be the first one to establish that. In her eyes, it had to be done.

Margery did not let obstacles get in her way, and she did not make excuses for herself. In fact, it seemed that whenever she encountered a challenge, it only made her more determined to accomplish the task. One example of this is that she gave violin recitals even after the age of seventy when many people might retire from playing. Even more impressive was that she gave another recital at seventy-five, just eleven months after having had a brain tumor and being paralyzed.⁷⁹

One of the questions posed to the interviewees in this study was, “What drove her to be a woman of action and not just of ideas?” The answers the author received shed significant light in helping to understand Margery Aber. Dee Martz, Professor of Viola at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point said the following:

I really don’t know, but she was a woman of action throughout her life, long before the Suzuki years, so the obvious answer is her home environment. As a

⁷⁷ Suzuki, *Natured by Love*, 88.

⁷⁸ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 10.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

single professional woman of her generation she had to work extra hard to accomplish things and then to be recognized for those accomplishments.⁸⁰

Ed and Judy Muelling, former graduate students of Miss Aber in the Suzuki teacher training program, responded to the question with the following: “Well, she was very strong-willed.”⁸¹

San San Lee was a student of Miss Aber for twelve years in Stevens Point. She now teaches at the Music Advancement Program at the Juilliard School in New York City. She said that Miss Aber was already well trained as a musician and teacher before she learned of the Suzuki Method, having attended the Oberlin College-Conservatory and Columbia University. She was driven and ambitious to begin with, but the Suzuki philosophy of “Every child can learn” as well as the concept of “nurturing by love” gave added incentive to her teaching for the rest of her life.⁸²

Joyce Wotruba-Polson, a public school music educator and former piano coordinator for the American Suzuki Institute said in response to the above question, “I think probably her love of children and parents.” She explained how close Miss Aber was to her siblings and her parents. Wotruba-Polson went on to say:

. . . I just think [she was] a family person. She became a mother figure even though she was never married. She always exhibited her love of the violin, especially with young children. All experienced her and Suzuki’s belief that anybody, including the handicapped, can learn. She held many sessions for Suzuki parents as the home teacher. She specifically chose the Mother’s Day date for the large Suzuki yearly concert in the university gymnasium.⁸³

Marilyn O’Boyle thought that it was probably her vibrant personality, physical activeness, desire to get things done, and her connection to the university. As an

⁸⁰ Dee Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail to author, June 7, 2011, 4.

⁸¹ Ed and Judy Muelling, transcript of phone interview by Ana Maria Wilson, March 28, 2011, 12. (Ed spoke on behalf of both himself and Judy during the whole interview.)

⁸² San San Lee, interview questionnaire, 2-3.

⁸³ Joyce Wotruba-Polson, transcript of Skype interview by Ana Maria Wilson, May 11, 2011, 18.

example of her physical activity, she did actually use the canoe that was always on top of her car.⁸⁴ Its purpose was not merely to help her find her car.

Dr. Kay Collier McLaughlin stated that her parents were probably a huge influence to Margery in forming this attribute. They were “salt of the earth” people, and had raised a daughter who had seen the value of setting goals and working hard to achieve those goals.⁸⁵

Another interview question was, “Why was Margery Aber the right person for the job of starting the American Suzuki Institute?” Dee Martz replied:

The easy answer is that she was a woman of action. She was able to move ahead almost as if she had “horse blinders” on. By this I mean that her determination was so strong that her desire to achieve the end result allowed her to press ahead even when faced with dissenting opinions, experiences, or ideas. Also, she seemed unaware of any negative impact or difficulties her actions might create for others. Interestingly, both the Dean of the College of Fine Arts and the Chancellor of the University at the time Marge started the Institute had some connections with her from her years in the Detroit area. They believed in her more deeply than others who did not really know her history might have, especially since she was relatively new to the university and came to her position by teaching in the pre-college program.⁸⁶

Gail Engebretson, who edited Miss Aber’s book, said that Margery was the right person for starting the ASI because she was so determined, enthusiastic, and would not take no for an answer. She did everything in her power to keep the costs down so that families could attend. She was always begging donors for money. Gail said that she didn’t know if anybody else would have worked as hard as Miss Aber did to keep the ASI affordable for families.⁸⁷

Ed and Judy Muelling said the following:

⁸⁴ Marilyn O’Boyle, transcript of Skype interview, May 2, 2011, 4.

⁸⁵ Kay Collier McLaughlin, transcript of phone interview by Ana Maria Wilson, June 2, 2011, 19.

⁸⁶ Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail, 5.

⁸⁷ Engebretson, interview transcript, 9.

Well, she was professional, and she was very caring. And she knew that there was some type of need here in the US for this, and she was just, as I said before, a very forceful person. She pushed until she got it going to where she wanted it. So between that and the university and community support, once it got going, especially the university. . . You know, because it brought in people to see the university, and plus it was a good money maker for the university, plus all of the businesses at Point.⁸⁸

Kay Collier McLaughlin gave the following response:

I think that she brought a unique combination of qualities. She was there on the ground floor. She had been to Japan. She was a respected violinist and teacher, and she had a school that was willing to support her – so she had the facilities. And she had the vision, the courage, the energy, and all those other competencies to make it happen. So it was just a unique set of qualifications, and timing is everything.⁸⁹

San San Lee answered this question by saying that she was tenacious, had a big heart, and had access to the facilities of the university campus.⁹⁰ From Diane Slone:

I think it's because she had both a combination of personality, and energy, and spirit that were very similar to Dr. Suzuki, but she was also a very practical, pragmatic, good Scandinavian woman. So she had also organizational abilities, which I think Dr. Suzuki did not to that degree. So she had both sides of the brain and the heart doing the right things. And personally, I also think it made sense for it to be in Wisconsin because that's the state where he first started kids himself, even though it's not the first state he visited in this country. He started kids at two summer seminars in Wisconsin, in Madison.⁹¹

New Job

Miss Aber decided to retire from teaching in the Detroit Public Schools to pursue a job where she could focus on teaching violin. She sent out letters to colleges all over the Midwest expressing her interest and availability as a teacher.⁹²

⁸⁸ Muelling, interview transcript, 15.

⁸⁹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 22-23.

⁹⁰ Lee, interview questionnaire, 3.

⁹¹ Slone, transcript of Skype interview by Ana Maria Wilson, June 1, 2011.

⁹² Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 10.

Before Miss Aber left on the ASTA trip to Japan, she received a phone call from the music chair at the University of Wisconsin in Stevens Point. He asked Margery to audition for a position at the school. She replied, “ ‘I don’t need to audition, I am a very fine violinist.’ ”⁹³ However, he explained that this was the policy of their department, and it had to be done.

Margery agreed to go to Stevens Point for an audition at 7 p.m. on the night before she had to leave for Japan. It was a three-hour drive each way, and she still had to pack for the trip after she returned home past midnight.⁹⁴ It must have been worth it because she was offered the teaching position there, and made Stevens Point her home for the rest of her life. That university would be changed forever when she arrived. How appropriate that she received word of this job offer while she was first learning about the method she would so passionately teach at Stevens Point.

When she returned from Japan, Miss Aber started her new job by teaching string classes at the University Laboratory School at what was then called Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point.⁹⁵ This was an appropriate time and place for her to try out the ideas of the Suzuki Method that she had just learned because she had young students to work with, and no one there had experienced her teaching yet. She started a Suzuki program on campus through the university’s Laboratory School.

The Suzuki program at the Laboratory School had large beginning classes, according to John Klein, because everyone wanted to participate in the program. Generally, the Laboratory School consisted mostly of children of university professors, so the level of achievement and expectation was probably higher than

⁹³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 10.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

average. At the time that Miss Aber started the program, the Suzuki Method was still very new in the United States, and people were very curious to learn about it. As some of the older students such as John Klein and Lorre Lynn Trytten became more advanced, this inspired even more young children to start.⁹⁶

The teachers who went on the ASTA tour were all eager to keep learning about Dr. Suzuki's teaching. Two weeks was not nearly enough time to fully learn how to become an expert Suzuki Method teacher. Some of these teachers moved to Japan for a year or more, and some of them followed Dr. Suzuki around the US when he came here with a tour group. Margery did the latter of the two.⁹⁷ After Dr. Suzuki turned seventy, many of the people in Japan working with the Talent Education Program wanted him to stay in the country. A lot of the best Japanese Suzuki teachers were being asked to teach in the United States, and there was a critical shortage of these good teachers in Japan. They wanted Dr. Suzuki to spend more time in his own country to help train new Suzuki teachers.⁹⁸ This was understandable, but very hard to accept for the American teachers who could not afford the expenses of traveling to Japan.

Lamenting the fact that Americans would have to go to the Summer School in Matsumoto, Japan in order to properly study the Suzuki Method, Margery decided that there needed to be a similar institute in the United States. American children deserved the best as well.⁹⁹ Margery saw what an amazing thing it was for hundreds of children to get together and play the same pieces. Dr. Suzuki felt it was important for the

⁹⁶ Klein, interview transcript, 6-7.

⁹⁷ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 11-12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

children to have a common repertoire, and for them to learn how to play together as an ensemble.¹⁰⁰ This would be one of the many benefits that American children could enjoy if there was a summer institute on this continent. Parents could also benefit from meeting other like-minded parents who were taking on the challenge of participating in the Suzuki Method. Kay Collier McLaughlin commented on the need for creating a Suzuki institute in the United States:

Well, I don't think anyone knew there was a need until it happened. I mean, looking back on it, I think the need was, as I mentioned, all of us who are interested on the ground floor were fighting people who thought we were crazy. And so, perhaps one of the first needs was for it to be a gathering place for people to have further training and support. And secondly was to emulate the opportunity that the Japanese children had to come together in large groups and perform from a very early age.¹⁰¹

Diane Slone said the following of the American Suzuki Institute:

Well, I can say I think if it hadn't been created, we wouldn't be where we are today. I think that people would have stayed in their little pockets and the sense of community that is inherent in what we do wouldn't have been developed in this country to the extent that it has.¹⁰²

There were so many string teachers who were interested in learning how to teach this method. This new institute would be a place where they could be trained properly by people who had studied directly with Dr. Suzuki. Marilyn O'Boyle recalled:

At that time, there really was a need for teacher training. Not everybody could go off to Japan. I mean, several teachers had, but in order for the movement to really spread and really be able to get a good foothold in the United States, I think it took a Suzuki institute like that to be able to bring the training, particularly, and bring together all of the teachers that did have some experience and some contact with Suzuki in Japan, and be able to bring them together and start really putting together their ideas about how to actually have a training program. And even the formation of the Suzuki Association of the

¹⁰⁰ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 22.

¹⁰² Slone, interview transcript, 8.

Americas. All of those things happened because those top teachers came together. They came together in several different places of course, but I think one of the main places where they got together and had dinner together and that kind of thing was at Stevens Point, and pretty soon things started happening.¹⁰³

At Miss Aber's new job in Stevens Point, she was expected to teach college students as well as children. Having a summer Suzuki institute at Stevens Point would naturally be a great way to train future teachers in this method that was drawing widespread attention across the country. It had the potential to put Stevens Point on the map of the musical world, a task that was quickly realized.

Marvin Rabin, a noted music educator and conductor as well as a good friend of Miss Aber, helped arrange a meeting in 1970 between her and three other educators in Wisconsin. These were Emmett R. Sarig, Richard W. Wolff, and G. Lloyd Schultz. The latter of the three was the Wisconsin Superintendent of Music.¹⁰⁴ It was decided by all in attendance at the meeting that Stevens Point was the best place for the proposed summer institute to be held. Miss Aber must have been incredibly overjoyed at this because she mentioned in her book that she prayed the whole drive from Stevens Point to the meeting in Madison that the summer institute would get approval and that it would take place in Stevens Point.¹⁰⁵ Margery later received much help from Mr. Schultz, who set up a meeting for her with the chairman of the Wisconsin Arts Board in order to obtain a grant for the institute. In addition, Schultz spent a lot of time advising and assisting with plans for short-term and long-term goals.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Marilyn O'Boyle, interview transcript, 5-6.

¹⁰⁴ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Miss Aber could now go about the planning process for an institute. With the help of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point committee, they decided on naming it the American Suzuki Institute. “American” was chosen because they wanted it to include all nations of North and South America. The word “Institute” was chosen because the event was to be more than just a clinic or workshop.¹⁰⁷

Marvin Rabin also helped Miss Aber by suggesting possible faculty members for the Institute. The names he gave were considered some of the best Suzuki teachers in the United States at the time. Included in this list were Clifford Cook, John Kendall, William Starr, Anastasia Jempelis, Milton Goldberg, Diana Tillson, Louise Behrend, Marilyn Kesler, and Eiko Suzuki Kataoka.¹⁰⁸

Miss Aber wrote to these teachers and asked them to save the last week of July, 1971, on their calendars for this Suzuki Institute.¹⁰⁹ She was not able to assure them of any specific payment amount in that letter, but the recipients still sent back excited replies to the invitation.¹¹⁰ Margery was eventually able to secure funding to pay the staff of the Institute. The first seven members of the staff were paid for room, board, and travel expenses, as well as a salary of \$100 per day.¹¹¹

In addition to this letter, Miss Aber wrote to Dr. Suzuki explaining the plans for the new Institute and asked for any advice that he might have. She requested that the Summer School in Matsumoto not be scheduled at the same time so that the teachers at the American Suzuki Institute could attend both if they wished.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

The first American Suzuki Institute received financial support from the Wisconsin Arts Board, the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and its Chancellor Lee Sherman Dreyfus, the American String Teachers Association, and the Wisconsin String Teachers Association.¹¹³

Here is a letter included in Miss Aber's book that was written to the Johnson Foundation in August of 1970, in the hopes of securing funding:

I am writing you in hopes of gaining financial support from the Johnson Foundation, Inc., for the American Suzuki Institute, which is being founded by a group of educators for July 25-30, 1971. It will take place at Wisconsin State University – Stevens Point.

In the past fifty years, string teaching in the United States has reached a peak, with more students, more orchestras, more chamber societies than ever before. Yet colleges are fighting each other for good students. Symphony orchestras are unable to find the kind of talent needed to perform the great literature...unless they import from Japan! Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, noted Japanese educator, believes that Talent is no accident of birth, that Man is the son of his environment (Nurtured by Love), that a child can learn to play the violin from age two just as he learns to speak his native tongue. From these premises he has developed thousands of violinists, not to necessarily be professional musicians, but to assist them in becoming good citizens. Many have become both.

We know that Dr. Suzuki plans to discontinue his visits to this country, which means no more workshops at our great universities and conservatories of music by him...but we still can go to Matsumoto, Japan where he trains teachers, and where the children from all over Japan spend a week each summer with their parents for special training from the master and his fine faculty. Few of our teachers can afford this luxury, and certainly students and their parents are unlikely to travel so far at so great an expense. Besides, it is time to adapt the excellent ideas and methods to the American way of life. Our educational setup is so different, as is our culture. Some of our teachers who went to Japan have learned how to teach the Suzuki method, and more important, how to teach teachers to teach. Others without any training what-so-ever, have climbed the bandwagon and gotten poor results. Some would like to know more, but have held back lest the hurdles be too great.

¹¹³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 15.

The American Suzuki Institute is being formed to supply the needs of American children and American teachers with these specific purposes in mind:

1. To adapt Japanese Talent Education to American education, thereby providing teachers with workable solutions to string pedagogy at all levels from pre-school through college.
2. To fire college students, teacher-trainees, with a zest for teaching as well as a realization of their potential both as persons and as teachers.
3. To stimulate parents to assume responsibility for the growth of their children into noble beings through attendance at lessons and as home teachers...in environments suitable for study and learning.
4. To give children learning experiences which are fun, through contacts with each other and artist faculty, as well as recognition as performers.

To accomplish this, the program of study will focus on the child since, from his training, demonstrations of excellent teaching techniques and learning may be observed. However, equal emphasis will be placed on the needs of all groups; children, parents, college students and teachers. The faculty will be chosen from among the best in the country, including two Japanese-Suzuki trained violinists, who are renowned for their success in this kind of teaching. They will be university professors, conservatory faculty, public school teachers, and private teachers who have had much experience teaching pre-school, elementary and secondary students, and who have spent considerable time with Dr. Suzuki, learning his philosophy, his techniques of teaching.

It would give me considerable pleasure to talk with you about this further. I'd like to tell you just how we plan to implement the program. Reactions among the founding committee and among parents at two workshops in which I participated are enthusiastic. We think it is great that Wisconsin will host educators from all over the country. It will be a boost for our teachers and a great opportunity for our youngsters. This is, however, an expensive venture, with an anticipated cost of eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars. Enclosed is a copy of the budget. We would be grateful to the Johnson Foundation, Inc. for its support.

May I have an appointment with you to discuss the possibilities at your earliest convenience?¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 15-17.

By writing to various friends, fellow string teachers, and ASTA members in the US and Canada, Miss Aber was able to compile an initial mailing list of 9000 people when brochures were ready for mailing early in 1971.¹¹⁵

Here is an excerpt from Miss Aber's book describing some of work involved in starting the Institute:

Memories from Kay Kalke, Suzuki mom and founding President of the American Suzuki Foundation, Stevens Point:

There was no secretary in Margery Aber's office during those founding years. Her files were full of the carbon copies she typed and sent asking for names of teachers, requesting teachers for the institute, thanking for help or for commitments to teach. She taught college classes as well as 70 students in her laboratory school program and a number of students in a satellite program in Madison, Wisconsin. People on campus in those years remember that the light in her office seldom went out before ten at night, and she would be right back in her studio at seven in the morning, teaching. Mothers and Dads folded and addressed brochures before, during and after their children's lessons. Kids spent spring vacation sitting on the floor of Miss Aber's studio; stapling, sticking, and sorting by zip code. The nine thousand brochures in 1971 became 20,000 or more in a few years.

As compensation for all this work, Miss Aber received a summer school salary based on the number of college students who took a for-credit course during the Institute.¹¹⁶

Miss Aber was hired in Stevens Point to devote half of her time to university students and the other half at the University Laboratory School. The children at the lab school did not have to pay anything except the costs of their instruments and books.¹¹⁷ Their tuition was paid for by the university. Miss Aber turned this into a Suzuki program with much success. In 1974, the State of Wisconsin decided to close all laboratory schools.¹¹⁸ Miss Aber and the Suzuki families participating in this program

¹¹⁵ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 19.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72-3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

now faced a huge dilemma. The only way Margery could now be paid for her teaching time was if a student was enrolled for credit hours with the university. Obviously, children could not be enrolled like this.¹¹⁹

Fortunately, Miss Aber, the parents of the lab school students, and the community organized the American Suzuki Foundation of Stevens Point. This was established to raise funds for the continuation of a Suzuki program as well as for the American Suzuki Institute.¹²⁰ With funding in place, a Suzuki program was able to continue under the new name of the American Suzuki Talent Education Center (ASTECC).¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 73.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

The American Suzuki Institute is Founded

Margery Aber described the opening meeting of the first American Suzuki

Institute:

Everyone shared freely and eagerly. No one was better than any one else, no one was less. The student and faculty concerts, the discussions, everything was at a high (A440) pitch. Probably most exciting was the fact that just about everyone in the country who had the least bit of interest or knowledge of Suzuki and his philosophy, from California to the Connecticut area, from Texas to and including Canada, was present. Those who could not come wanted to be on a mailing list.¹²²

Design of the Institute

Miss Aber wanted to create something like the Summer Institute in Matsumoto, Japan. She wanted it to be accessible to students, teachers, and parents in North America. A family trip to Japan for most Americans was financially out of the question, but many families could probably make a road trip to Wisconsin from different areas in the United States and even from Canada.

Marilyn O'Boyle gave her input on how Miss Aber may have modeled the American Suzuki Institute after the Summer Institute in Matsumoto, Japan:

I think that it was a music camp that was different from most in the United States at that point, because it required the attendance of the parents, which most music camps did not, and still don't, unless it is a Suzuki one. Having some component of teacher training, which of course Suzuki did in Japan for

¹²² Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 24.

so long, but, [also] having teacher training almost immediately be a part of that [was important]. That is where I started getting my own training. Having group lessons as well as individual classes, master classes, but [with] the group lesson component being very important. In a standard music camp, you might have orchestras, but you do not have group lessons, so that is another thing that I think came directly from the Japanese influence.¹²³

In her book, Miss Aber wrote,

Playing together was one of our goals at the Institute, in small groups of four and bigger groups of twelve and twenty-four, with different teachers leading each group. Therefore, all children were assigned to three different class sizes, with class A for solo work in front of others who were learning the same pieces. The second class of twelve was mainly a review of repertoire. Each piece was chosen partly because it would be on the Festival concert and partly because, with everyone knowing the repertoire, it became fun to play it with the others, or a challenge to have a leader with a slightly different interpretation.¹²⁴

Here is an excerpt about the American Suzuki Institute as described in the brochure of the Aber Suzuki Center:

Patterned after Dr. Suzuki's summer school, the American Suzuki Institute is the oldest and largest of the more than 60 Suzuki Institutes held in the US each year and established the prototype for Institutes nationwide. Since its beginning in 1971, ASI has attracted over 100,000 students and their families to UWSP for summer study.¹²⁵

The following is a description of the current student programs at the American Suzuki Institute as given by the Aber Suzuki Center brochure:

Enrollment is open to students currently studying Suzuki violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, flute, harp, voice, or guitar literature with a teacher who has done Suzuki teacher training. Violin, cello, and piano students may enroll for either or both weeks of the Institute student program. Flute and harp classes are offered only during the first week with viola, bass, guitar, and voice classes available during the second week. Pre-Twinkle classes are offered on all instruments with classes for absolute beginners, ages 3-6, available for violin students.

¹²³ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 3.

¹²⁴ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 26.

¹²⁵ "Aber Suzuki Center" brochure (University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, College of Fine Arts & Communication, 2009), 20.

The daily schedule includes private lessons (small master classes), technique/musicianship classes, and group repertoire classes for all levels from Book 1 through advanced repertoire. Classes are arranged according to the level and age of each student. Orchestra and instrument-specific ensembles are offered at appropriate levels as well. The Suzuki repertoire is expected to be memorized and well reviewed. To assist with preparation, the Institute provides a review list for each instrument. The program is designed with the understanding that parents will be involved, just as they are at home, with lessons, practice, and the general supervision of their children.¹²⁶

The American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point has been the model for all of the institutes in the Suzuki Association of the Americas. This includes those in the United States, Canada, and Latin America.¹²⁷ Marilyn O'Boyle commented:

This was the first one. It sort of served as a model for others to follow, and it was based, of course, on Suzuki's Summer Institutes that he had in Japan but, with certain American aspects too. I think her organizational skills and her example there were very important to the development of the Method here in the United States. And, I should add Canada and also South America, of course, because it is all part of the SAA, and all are impacted by the establishment of the summer Suzuki institutes.¹²⁸

The timing for the Suzuki movement in the United States could not have come at a better moment. There was a dire need for high quality string players in the US. Patricia D'Ercole's high school violin teacher was the president of the American String Teachers Association at that time. He wrote an article in the *American Music Teacher* expressing that if the United States continued in the same direction with its string music education, there might not be any professional symphony orchestras in the United States.¹²⁹ D'Ercole later stated in an e-mail to the author of this study:

Just to make sure that this recollection was founded on fact, I did a little research along these lines and discovered an article that appeared in a 1959 issue of the *American Music Teacher* entitled, "The Declining Interest in the Study of String Instruments." In it the author stated, "We discovered that fewer

¹²⁶ "Aber Suzuki Center," 21.

¹²⁷ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 6.

¹²⁸ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 2.

¹²⁹ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 6.

string applicants are available to professional symphony orchestras than has been the case in the past in our country.” He goes on to quote Mr. George A. Kuyper, manager of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who said, “I feel that too little is done to urge young people in our public schools to take up strings. . . . Consequently, the symphony orchestras in general are having a hard time securing string replacements.” (*American Music Teacher* September – October 1959, p. 15)¹³⁰

If professional orchestras were to continue their existence in the United States, they could potentially be entirely outsourced by musicians from other countries if the US could not increase its number and quality of string players. During the summers of 1963 and 1964, meetings were held at Tanglewood in order to address these concerns in the United States.¹³¹

As Patricia D’Ercole recalled, there weren’t too many other children taking violin at the time she was growing up. The Beatles were very popular at the time, so many kids wanted to learn to play guitar and be in a rock band.¹³² Band instruments were often much more accessible and easier to learn in a public school setting.¹³³ D’Ercole mentioned that at that time, there were something like four hundred openings in orchestras and only one good violinist to fill them. Now the situation is the opposite – four hundred excellent applicants for one opening.¹³⁴ The dissemination of the Suzuki Method throughout the United States has largely contributed to this reversal, and Margery Aber played a large role in spreading the popularity of the Suzuki Method. Ed and Judy Muelling said that the American Suzuki Institute provided a

¹³⁰ e-mail from Patricia D’Ercole to the author, November 12, 2001.

¹³¹ Margery Aber, "ASTA Fiftieth Anniversary: Suzuki Method Takes Hold in America: The Growth of Summer Institutes," *American String Teacher* 46, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 29.

¹³² D’Ercole, interview transcript, 6.

¹³³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 10.

¹³⁴ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 6.

place for students and teachers from around the world to meet and be totally immersed in music for a week.¹³⁵

Miss Aber founded the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point. According to Margery, there were four main purposes in establishing this Institute, which was the first of its kind outside of Japan:

. . . to train string teachers in Dr. Suzuki's innovative method, to give children learning experiences from artist teachers and an opportunity to perform with other children at the same levels, to help parents understand how to assist their children through creating positive environments, and to give inspiration and knowledge to college and university students through observations and lectures.¹³⁶

A total of 386 people from two countries and 32 states enrolled for the first American Suzuki Institute. Included in this number were 115 teachers.¹³⁷ This was a sign of the buzz that the Suzuki Method was generating in the string communities of the United States and Canada. Many of these teachers were founders of Suzuki programs in different regions of North America. There were 228 violin students and 15 cellists in attendance. In addition, every child enrolled at the ASI had to have at least one parent attending the classes.¹³⁸ Parent education has always been an integral part of the Suzuki Method.

After the original American Suzuki Institute took place, other similar institutes began to start in other parts of the country. By 1973, there were five such programs in the US.¹³⁹ By 1996, there were 59 Suzuki Institutes in the US. Many non-Suzuki-book enrichment classes and overview courses are now also offered for both teachers and

¹³⁵ Muelling, interview transcript, 14.

¹³⁶ Aber, "Suzuki Method Takes Hold," 29.

¹³⁷ Aber, "Suzuki Method Takes Hold," 29-30.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

students. These teacher courses include workshops on Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Kodály, Orff, Alexander Technique, and Kindermusik. Some student offerings include drama, fiddling, chamber music, orchestra, and choir for instrumental students.¹⁴⁰

The first American Suzuki Institute was successful for many reasons. In an interview with the author of this study, D'Ercole commented:

And I think the reason it [the American Suzuki Institute] was such a success is that Suzuki musicians, children, and parents felt kind of persecuted by the musical profession. They were looked down upon. They were outcasts because they were doing things so differently. It couldn't possibly work. So they were looking for a way to be together and to support one another.¹⁴¹

Many of Aber's friends and colleagues wrote letters about their experiences at the American Suzuki Institute that were included in her book:

Carol Hughes, Suzuki violin teacher from Kentucky:

In 1971, a wonderful event happened: Margery Aber, after much thought and hard work, started the American Suzuki Institute. This made it possible for many Suzuki students, parents and teachers from all over the world to attend, encouraging them to come and study with fine Suzuki method teachers from all over the world.

We in Louisville had been having a summer workshop ever since 1965. We knew Miss Aber, she had taught at our workshop several times and was good friends with Virginia Schneider who had started our Suzuki teaching. She and Mrs. Schneider had been part of the group of American teachers who had visited Matsumoto in 1967. We knew Marge's dynamic way would create an inspiring situation for learning. I didn't get to go to the first Institute, but one of my good students did and the glowing accounts from him and his mother made me realize that I must go to the second one.

They told me of the warm, friendly reception, the cool, clear summer weather, the clean dormitories, the good student cafeteria food, and most important of all the fine teachers. Some of them were: William Starr, Clifford Cook, Louise Behrend, Milton Goldberg, and Anastasia Jempelis. Some of these teachers we've had at our Louisville workshops, but marveled at having so many in one place.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Aber, "Suzuki Method Takes Hold," 31.

¹⁴¹ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 6.

¹⁴² Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 29-30.

Gail (Engebretson) Shoemaker: an early UW Stevens Point Suzuki teacher trainee under Miss Aber:

The second summer the Institute was going, Miss Aber asked if I'd like to help out, since the work was becoming more than she had anticipated for just herself and two other helpers. She was trying to do almost everything by herself, from negotiating with the teachers, processing the applications as they came in, assigning dorm rooms, checking out the possible rooms for the different size classes and negotiating with the University for the use of those rooms, etc. etc. All of the groundwork had to be established those first couple of years.

I remember these big poster boards Miss Aber had made, with diagrams of the dorms we were using for housing. She had all the rooms diagrammed for each of the floors and all the bathrooms designated male or female. She would write in the names of the occupants for each room as they were assigned. By the end of the summer those diagrams were so smudged with erasures and write-overs, they were barely legible. Sometimes it took all four of us to decipher whose name was written in a particular room. We'd just get to a point where we thought it was set and we'd get another application from a family who wanted to be next to their best friends so-and-so who had already registered way back at the start of the summer. [In later years, the application stated that if you wanted to room together you had to send in your applications together.] Miss Aber tried her best to always be accommodating and to fulfill those requests and we'd play this game of "if we move this family over here and this person over there, then we only have to move 6 more people to make it work!"

Once the changes were made on the board, we had to also make them on the application forms and on the front of the packets. On a couple of occasions we ended up losing someone, or double assigning someone, which of course wasn't discovered until registration day when all hell broke loose.

On the day of registration we were sent out to the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building with all our boxes of packets containing classes and housing information for the families. Miss Aber instructed us to answer any questions we could, but if there were any major problems or changes requested we should send the person back to her. It was fun to have a family come up to me and give me their name, and without looking at their file, I'd say something like, "Oh yes, you are from Winnetka, Illinois and have been assigned to Hansen Hall, rooms 214 and 216, right next to your good friends so and so from Lexington, Kentucky." They would be very impressed to be so personally remembered, but we could all do that with almost everyone after going through those files dozens of times that summer.

It seemed that every other person had some complaint that summer about the class their child was assigned to or what dorm they were in. We kept sending people back to Miss Aber's office right and left. Finally I had a lull and thought I'd better check on how things were going back there. As I neared Miss Aber's office, the hallway became nearly impassable with people waiting. I nudged my way to the front to see if I could help. I found that the office was closed and Miss Aber was nowhere in sight. We later found out that the requests had become overwhelming and she had fled to the ladies room and was hiding out.

Late Saturday afternoon when we were all in the throes of our last minute preparations before the hoards descended on Sunday, Miss Aber came into our office all in a tizzy. We were supposed to pick Anastasia Jempelis up at the airport in twenty-five minutes (the airport was 20 minutes away) and we had to take our violins so we could give her a true Suzuki welcome like they did in Japan. We all grabbed our violins and piled into Miss Aber's car, which of course had the ever-ready canoe on top.

Now, Miss Aber swears she has never speeded in her life. She is probably correct, she often reminds me that she is always right, but my mind remembers that as a pretty wild ride to the airport as we counted down the minutes. We pulled up in front of the airport just as we saw the plane land. Thank goodness the Central Wisconsin Airport was even smaller than it is today, because we were inside, had our violins out and were at the door, playing Twinkle as Miss Jempelis descended the stair to the tarmac.

She greatly appreciated our Suzuki welcome and we all had a relaxing leisurely drive back to the campus. Then the time for relaxing was over once again as we got back to work.¹⁴³

Gail Engebretson told the author of this study that Miss Aber was a perfectionist, and she felt that she had to do everything herself when starting the ASI in order for it to be done correctly to her satisfaction. It took Miss Aber a while for her to trust Gail enough to take over the responsibilities for setting up housing arrangements. She didn't give up those tasks easily to other people.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 51-3.

¹⁴⁴ Engebretson, interview transcript, 7.

The Importance of Attending Suzuki Institutes in the Suzuki Method

Importance for Children and Parents

Dr. Suzuki was known for often saying, “Man is the son of his environment.” It is evident that children, parents, and teachers are all highly motivated when they are attending a Suzuki Institute. This is often the case even though they may have been discouraged and frustrated at home just a few weeks earlier.¹⁴⁵

There are several reasons why institutes create such a wonderful environment of learning for everyone. Daphne Hughes, the author of the *American Suzuki Journal* article, “Returning Home—Life After Institutes,” cites the following reasons: Intensity, review playing, listening, attendance at concerts, playing with piano accompaniment, focus, routine, observation of other students’ lessons, communication with other parents, teachers, and students, and small steps toward large achievements.¹⁴⁶

Although many of these things should be happening at home, they will often be intensified during the institute experience. The first category that Hughes identifies, intensity, has to do with the sheer amount of playing on one’s instrument at the institute as compared to the amount at home during a typical week. Students attend multiple classes during one day, and they are expected to practice between those classes in order to improve before the next set of classes. There are also many types of classes. Some focus on review, some on musicality, and some on playing musical

¹⁴⁵ Hughes, “Returning Home,” 78.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

games.¹⁴⁷ This helps the child from becoming bored of playing his or her instrument all day with the same goals and instructions that he or she may receive while at home. Often, the children are so inspired by the variety of classes and change of scenery that they don't notice how much time they are playing their instrument each day. It is just fun.

The next category is review playing. There is a lot of review that goes into the preparation phase for an institute. At the institute, an average ratio of 10 to 1 is spent on review material as compared to new music and techniques. Improving one's technique and sound, especially for children, comes more easily in doing so with notes that are already learned.¹⁴⁸ In essence, this is one of the reasons why musicians practice scales with different techniques, rhythms, tempi, and bowings. The notes are already learned, but there are other details that can always be refined.

The students are constantly listening to music during an institute. An important part of the Suzuki Method is daily listening to the recordings of the Suzuki repertoire. If a student is living in a dorm room at an institute, he or she will also hear the repertoire through the walls and windows. Children often practice outside, so a child may additionally hear music on his or her way to class.¹⁴⁹

At the American Suzuki Institute, as is the case with many institutes, there are opportunities to attend performances every day. Hearing concerts by both fellow students and professional artists are very inspiring learning experiences.¹⁵⁰ At an institute, students usually have more opportunities than they usually might to play

¹⁴⁷ Hughes, "Returning Home," 78.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 79.

with piano (and sometimes orchestral) accompaniment. This helps the students to learn the whole piece of music rather than only their own part. It increases their level of musicianship and listening.¹⁵¹ The focus provided at an institute is also a positive aspect.¹⁵² There are not the distractions of other sports practices and activities to drive to, no career distractions for the adults, and limited use of video games. The daily routine of an institute is often good for children in that they know they have classes coming up soon that they have to prepare for. Within a few days, they are used to the schedule and often enjoy it.

Although observations of other lessons are encouraged in the Suzuki Method, this frequently doesn't happen when a child is past the beginner stage due to the busy schedule of the parents and students.¹⁵³ Often, scheduling difficulties and other activities prevent them from observing part of the lesson of the students before and/or after them, as is favorable in the Suzuki Method. At the American Suzuki Institute, students are put into groups of three or four students for each master class. This is when the student has his or her "private" lesson. In addition, the students and parents are able to observe the lessons of the other two or three children in their master class group. Daphne Hughes noted in her article that the most frequent comment she receives from parents when she teaches at Suzuki institutes is about how much they learned by observing the other children's lessons during their own child's master class session.¹⁵⁴ Students are also very inspired when hearing other kids play the pieces that they will soon learn. Parents observing the children who are not their own can see the

¹⁵¹ Hughes, "Returning Home," 79.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

same struggles that they themselves go through, thus giving them some encouragement.¹⁵⁵ When they ask, “Are we the only ones that have this problem?” they soon find that the answer is usually “No.” The institute setting shows parents some “realistic expectations for their children and themselves.”¹⁵⁶

An institute is a great place for communication between teachers, parents, and students. This happens even more when families live on campus for the institute rather than at a hotel. Ideas and frustrations about practicing can be shared among parents while watching the kids at the swimming pool, while at an ice cream social, while walking to the next lesson, and during parent/teacher lectures.¹⁵⁷ For the kids, it is wonderful to meet other peers who are learning an instrument through the Suzuki Method. They already have a common bond when they first meet.

Finally, because of the small amount of time in which an institute takes place, the importance of success with small steps is emphasized during this time. This is a very important concept that Dr. Suzuki constantly taught, but it becomes a necessity at the institute in order for the student to feel like he or she achieved something.¹⁵⁸

Joanne Bath, another Suzuki teacher trainer, said in her article, “Why I Want My Students and Parents to Attend Summer Suzuki Institutes:”

. . . It is always rewarding to spend a week with people whose goals and philosophies are similar, especially because those shared ideals are such important ones: to give children beauty in their lives through music. . . I can’t imagine a nicer way for a parent and child to have true quality time together. The results from a week at an institute are long-lasting and valuable. . .¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Joanne Bath, "Why I Want My Students and Parents to Attend Summer Suzuki Institutes," *American Suzuki Journal* 24, no. 1 (1995): 14.

¹⁵⁶ Bath, "Why I Want," 14.

¹⁵⁷ Hughes, "Returning Home," 79.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Bath, "Why I Want," 14.

Importance of Suzuki Institutes for Teacher Training

Margery Aber believed in the importance of teacher training in the Suzuki Method. In an audiocassette letter to her friend and colleague, Marvin Rabin, she said, “. . . it seems that if we can train more people to teach well and to teach this way, why it will do a great deal of good for all the children around.”¹⁶⁰

Teachers can learn a great deal by going to Suzuki institutes for training. These are places where the best of the best in the Suzuki world come to teach. Even if one has taken all of the possible units of Suzuki training for his or her instrument, it is still beneficial to go to institutes, workshops, and Suzuki conferences. The Suzuki Association of the Americas advocates the pursuance of constant self-improvement for its teachers. Dr. Suzuki himself was always refining his own teaching abilities by studying, practicing, and observing.

Marilyn O’Boyle noted the following benefits teachers gain by attending Suzuki institutes:

Well, being able to watch many teachers teach. Right now with the unit system that we have in place, teachers can take one book unit with one teacher and take another book unit with another teacher, or they can follow the same teacher through several units.¹⁶¹ But, at the same time, they can observe other teachers. So, you get a really well rounded picture and can get many different tools in that way. A lot of different approaches, but all within the same basic philosophy - same pedagogical kind of ideas.¹⁶²

Kay Collier McLaughlin described why it is important for Suzuki teachers to attend Suzuki institutes:

¹⁶⁰ Recorded letter by Margery Aber to Marvin Rabin on audio cassette tape, private collection of Patricia D’Ercole, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, date unknown, 12:60.

¹⁶¹ Now, people studying to be Suzuki teachers within the Suzuki Association of the Americas take training by units. In most cases, a single book in the Suzuki Method is one unit.

¹⁶² O’Boyle, interview transcript, 5.

I think that for most teachers, it is first of all seen as a standard, an across-the-board standard of excellence and expectation that gives them the courage to demand that at home. And obviously, there are the teaching tricks and games, and various ways of enhancing the steps in the pedagogy, but I think that perhaps most important is – that standard of excellence that gives them something to bat against all year.¹⁶³

Dee Martz gave the following response to the question, “What new skills do Suzuki teachers obtain from the American Suzuki Institute or from other Suzuki institutes?”

It all depends on what skills the teacher has already developed. At ASI there are teachers in the training classes who have never taught and others who have taught very successfully for many, many years. ASI is a great place for people who have a strong commitment to life-long learning because of the breadth of its offerings and the strength of its faculty.¹⁶⁴

Ann Marie Novak responded to the above question:

Specifically, the one point lesson; also teachers who teach at Institutes get to be quite good at assessing the one most pertinent point in a student’s playing...the one thing that will really help that student.¹⁶⁵

The author of this study notes that Dr. Suzuki stressed the importance of choosing one important item to focus on during a child’s lesson (or lesson segment) so as to not overwhelm the child. This also leads to a stronger likelihood for mastering a specific task. The Suzuki Association of the Americas also endorses this approach for its teachers, as noted in the Suzuki Association of the Americas course book for the teacher training course, *Suzuki Principles in Action*:

¹⁶³ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 22.

¹⁶⁴ Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Novak, interview questionnaire e-mail to author, June 29, 2011, 3.

“Teaching segments are similar to Dr. Suzuki’s ‘one point lesson.’ An entire lesson may well consist of a number of teaching segments.”¹⁶⁶

The Birth of the SAA

Prior to the Suzuki Association of the Americas, there existed a small organization called Talent Education, USA, Inc. This was composed of five board members and the “incorporators.” If Suzuki teachers wanted, they could send in money to receive a newspaper, but they had no vote or say in the organization. Only the board members and incorporators were members. This organization was therefore very ineffective.¹⁶⁷

The American Suzuki Institute had become the main hub for Suzuki study in the United States during 1971. Three of the five board members of Talent Education, USA, Inc. were present at the Institute, and most of the best Suzuki teachers in North America at the time and some Suzuki’s great teachers from Japan were also there.¹⁶⁸ There were also many parents and teachers who were thirsty for knowledge about the Suzuki Method. Many people agreed that changes were needed in Talent Education, USA, but it was recognized by the board that it would take a year to accomplish these revisions. In 1972, the board voted to disband the organization and replace it with the Suzuki Association of the Americas. This would include more people and territory than Talent Education, USA. It included members from two continents and three

¹⁶⁶ Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., *Suzuki Principles in Action*, (Boulder, Colorado: Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 2010), 35.

¹⁶⁷ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 50.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

countries, and included a board of eighteen people. Certain Japanese representatives were given honorary membership.¹⁶⁹ Dee Martz explained:

As Suzuki grew in the US it became necessary to have a teacher organization that was not associated with just one place or on one person's "territory" in part because there were quite a number of strong, independent teachers who had each established their own way of doing things and their own following. It was easier for them to work together to improve teacher training and communication in an organization that was not attached to a particular person, school or institute.¹⁷⁰

Kay Collier McLaughlin spoke about the beginnings of the American Suzuki Institute, Talent Education USA, and the Suzuki Association of the Americas in her interview:

She [Aber] was the first person to bring this faculty together. And if you go back and research that first faculty at Stevens Point, it was all the names who really spread the movement. There they were all gathered together, and it was there that the Talent Education USA was formed.

But it was her vision and sort of the magnetic quality of her personality that caused that gathering. So in many ways, I see that she along with John Kendall and Bill Star were – while there were many other important teachers, Anastasia Jempelis, Louise Behrend, and all these wonderful foundational teachers, but those three were the ones who, in their unique ways, Marge with the Institute, John starting his long-term teacher training, and Bill – he represented Japan because he had lived there longer, and he was almost the direct link with Dr. Suzuki. So the three of them, together, and there they were that summer bringing us all together.¹⁷¹

Dr. Collier McLaughlin went on to describe how she and her two daughters were located in dorm rooms across from Paul and Lorraine Landefeld (also Suzuki teachers) and their two sons. They would all sit in the hallway and talk. The kids would talk in one group, and the adults in another. Pretty soon, other Suzuki teachers

¹⁶⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 50.

¹⁷⁰ Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail, 5.

¹⁷¹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 3.

joined the adult conversations. She said, “. . . that was the genius of that first institute – that we were no longer isolated as teachers with a dream.”¹⁷²

After the SAA was established, it became much easier for Suzuki teachers to contact other Suzuki teachers who had received training in teaching this method.¹⁷³ Ed Muelling explained one of the positive experiences he has had with the SAA directory:

I had a student who would be 73 last fall, that left, and she winters out in Mesa, Arizona. Well, she had just started with me, and had been taking lessons for about nine months, and wanted to know if there was a Suzuki teacher down in that area. Well, taking the teacher list, I was able to find her a teacher that actually lived, I think, three blocks from her house! One that’s qualified and trained.¹⁷⁴

Patricia D’Ercole believes that one of the great accomplishments of the Suzuki Association of the Americas has been to implement excellent teacher training.¹⁷⁵ If Miss Aber had not created the American Suzuki Institute, there probably would have been a long delay in the creation of the SAA.

International Research Symposium on Talent Education

In a 1996 *Music Educators Journal* article by John Kendall, a pioneer of Talent Education in the United States, he stated that so far the Suzuki movement had not been primarily concerned with collecting numerical data on the effectiveness of Talent Education.¹⁷⁶ Miss Aber was starting to change that.

¹⁷² Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 3.

¹⁷³ Muelling, interview transcript, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 28.

¹⁷⁶ John Kendall, "Suzuki's Mother Tongue Method," *Music Educators Journal* 83, no. 1 (July 1996): 46. In JSTOR (accessed September 19, 2010).

As the Suzuki movement grew in popularity throughout the US and abroad, it became evident that Dr. Suzuki's theories seemed to have scientific validity as well. With this idea in mind, Margery Aber, Patricia D'Ercole, and Dee Martz founded the International Research Symposium on Talent Education (IRSTE) in 1990. With the field of research in music education growing, it was thought that empirical data could be gathered on the effect of Suzuki training on children. This symposium would not be limited to the Suzuki Method, but would incorporate areas of early childhood education and development, as well as fields of music education pertinent to Talent Education.¹⁷⁷ This symposium has continued under the leadership of Patricia D'Ercole, and has brought scholars, teachers, and researchers together to present and discuss their findings. One prominent music education researcher, Dr. Robert A. Duke of the University of Texas at Austin, has been very involved in presenting studies at this symposium. The author of this document on Miss Aber has even participated in the IRSTE, and has seen the contributions that it is making towards presenting quantifiable research in music education, thus helping future generations of music students. These results are yet another contribution of Margery Aber's ideas and leadership.

¹⁷⁷ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 111.

CHAPTER 4

Growth of the American Suzuki Institute

There are many things that made the American Suzuki Institute successful enough to continue and keep growing. Since its beginning, Margery Aber invited the finest Suzuki teachers from around the world to be on the faculty of the American Suzuki Institute. Ed and Judy Muelling, who did administrative duties for the Institute while graduate students said, “She had teachers from England, Australia, Germany, all fifty states, and Canada. I mean, there were teachers from all over the world that came in to teach for her.”¹⁷⁸ This tradition has continued today. The Muellings continued:

Well first of all, it was one of a kind, okay? Number one. And I believe it became popular because of the quality of people that she brought in to teach. And, I mean, when you start bringing in Bill Starr, and Doris Preucil, Bill Preucil [Sr.] . . . You’ve got some of the top names in the world. . .¹⁷⁹

. . . You know, when you bring in the best teachers in the world, you’re going to start attracting students from all over the world.¹⁸⁰

Marilyn O’Boyle added the following about the rapid growth in popularity of the American Suzuki Institute:

Well, I think for one thing, it was one of the main places people could go to get training and it was good training. We did not have the unit system at that point, but she had a lot of contact with, and really hired many pioneers. Some of the best teachers of the Suzuki Method. People who had been to Japan. Bill Starr, who brought back all kinds of video tapes of conversations and teachings of Suzuki, and watching Suzuki teach Bill Starr’s kids, and step by step going through things with those video tapes were an important part. Of course, with John Kendall, Anastasia Jempelis, the Preucils, and all of the real pioneers and

¹⁷⁸ Ed and Judy Muelling, phone interview by Ana Maria Wilson, March 28, 2011, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Muelling, interview transcript, 10.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

very important teachers of the Suzuki Method. As I say, most of them have been to Japan, so I think having those kinds of resources available. Plus, just having it at a nice university campus and very well run [helped]. It became a really important place for people to go and get training, and for students to go and be able to play. So, yeah, I think it was a great example, and for that reason, became popular.¹⁸¹

The central location of the American Suzuki Institute in the middle region of the United States may have also made its popularity increase.¹⁸² Although it is in the northern state of Wisconsin, it is still central enough for many families to reach by car. This was especially true when gasoline prices were not so high.

Margery Aber had the resources of a state university at her disposal for this institute, although it was often difficult to convince various deans and faculty to give up classrooms for a few weeks in the summer. The dorms and cafeteria could be used for housing and meals during the institute. Various classrooms, the Quant Gym, and other locations were used for instruction and performance. As a university professor, Miss Aber had contacts with colleagues at other universities. These people, in turn, also had other connections with experts in Suzuki teaching.¹⁸³ She was thus able to bring together the best Suzuki faculty from all over the world.

Miss Aber had a vision in mind when designing this institute. The Suzuki Triangle, a diagram representing the relationship between the parent, teacher, and child, was of utmost importance to her in creating the Institute. The child would be the main focal point in the triangle, but the other two parts of the triangle were very important. For this reason, there are two periods of lectures Monday through Thursday devoted to parents and teachers. The lectures are scheduled at 11:00 AM and 5:00 PM

¹⁸¹ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 3-4.

¹⁸² Ibid., 6.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

so they don't interfere with other activities during the institute. Often there are three or four different lectures to choose from at a time. Pat D'Ercole said that she doesn't know of any other institute that has such an extensive schedule of lectures for parents.¹⁸⁴ This is very attractive to people taking teacher training as well. It is like an added bonus to the instruction already given for teacher trainees.

Another thing that D'Ercole thinks is unique to the American Suzuki Institute is the sense of community. Stevens Point has a small-town ambience with a relaxed atmosphere. Everyone feels like family at this Institute.¹⁸⁵ This feeling becomes less obvious as families choose to stay in hotels rather than the dorms because there is less interaction between the participants.¹⁸⁶ While walking to and from class, however, the children get a sense of belonging when they see other young kids carrying instruments like theirs. The parents see this as well. They are surrounded by other Suzuki families with similar interests, concerns, and questions. For the children, having a common repertoire that they can play with total strangers gives them a sense of connection and helps to "break the ice" when meeting other fellow Suzuki kids.

Sometimes families even meet here for reunions from different parts of the world. In 2009, three siblings who had come with their mother as children decided to meet with their own children and their mother at the Institute. There were family members of three generations there. One lived in Tokyo, one in California, and one in New York.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

From Stan Smith, a faculty member at the American Suzuki Institute for forty years:

The American Suzuki Institute was the first summer institute, and when you would return each summer, it really had the feel of a family reunion. Since there were very few institutes, you would see the same teachers and parents each year. Even though there are now many other nice institutes, people enjoy coming back to Stevens Point and its family reunion type atmosphere. People return to see the teachers, the families, and to see the families grow up. If you return enough years, you might even see kids of former students take part in the Institute. Today when teachers that also teach at other institutes come back, they always say, “There’s nothing like Stevens Point.”¹⁸⁸

Later in the interview, Stan Smith said, “We had a lot of great times at Stevens Point, and Margery Aber was a big part of that.”¹⁸⁹

The American Suzuki Institute also has a diverse faculty and classes that accommodate a wide range of abilities, especially for violinists. There are classes from Pre-Twinkle to beyond the Suzuki repertoire.¹⁹⁰ This attracts not only students of different abilities, but also families that have several children studying the Suzuki Method at different levels and on different instruments. Since at least one parent is required to attend with the child, this works out very well for families.

According to D’Ercole, two piano students have been coming to the American Suzuki Institute for the past eight or twelve years. Every year, they prepare a duet to play on the four o’clock recital. This Institute is the only time they get to see each other all year. They are now seventeen or eighteen years old, and seeing each other at the Institute is one of the highlights of their summer.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Smith, interview transcript, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹⁰ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 8.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Since the first American Suzuki Institute, new instruments have been added to the program. It started with mostly violinists and a few cellists. Now it includes instruction for violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, harp, guitar, and voice.¹⁹² This is largely due to the success and growth of the Suzuki Method, but also demonstrates the success of the ASI.

The American Suzuki Institute has remained a vibrant center of learning despite new advances in technology such as video conferencing. This is probably due to the same concept in which a live music performance is still more engrossing than watching a DVD performance. According to Patricia D'Ercole, "There's something about being with people, in community, listening to the same piece."¹⁹³ ". . . There's no way to duplicate that energy of a group of people making music together."¹⁹⁴

Teacher training at the American Suzuki Institute has long been an important draw for participants who are current or potential Suzuki teachers. This was one of the goals for the Institute that Miss Aber included on the front page of the ASI directory every year.¹⁹⁵ The Institute has always tried to include as many teacher training courses as possible. According to D'Ercole, they have always offered Books 1 through 8 on violin, and offer Books 9 and 10 every other year. Most institutes do not offer these last two books. They also try to offer as many teacher training courses as they can for viola, cello, harp, flute, and bass. They were the first institute to offer teacher training in Suzuki piano and also the first to offer it for Suzuki voice.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² "Aber Suzuki Center" brochure (University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, College of Fine Arts & Communication, 2009), 21.

¹⁹³ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 16.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Another unique feature of the ASI for people taking the teacher training courses is the free weekend in between the two sessions. This gives the trainees a chance to relax, assimilate what they have learned, get to know their colleagues better, and recharge before the next session. This is compared to a nine-day institute where trainees are inundated with information and still have to stay alert for hours of observations. Although the nine-day institute model may be a more cost-effective model for some people because there is less time taken off of work, the ASI, in Patricia D'Ercole's opinion, probably gives the trainees more for their money because of the downtime to digest information and relax, and the option of attending additional lectures and lesson observations.¹⁹⁷

Each year, the ASI is new in a way, because there are different teachers, different visiting artists, different lectures, and different participants. If you are a Suzuki student, you will probably be at a different level than the last year you came.¹⁹⁸ Many families come multiple years because they enjoyed it so much the first time. They also know that some of their friends will come back.

One teacher with the Aurora Suzuki Program, Stan Smith, had a retirement celebration where a lot of the alumni from that program were invited back. They were asked to write answers to questions for a commemorative booklet they were making. One question asked for their favorite memory in Aurora Suzuki Violins. A student replied that it had to do with the American Suzuki Institute. Their family would come back multiple years because it was fun for their friends in the Aurora program to be

¹⁹⁷ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 18.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 27.

together in several floors of the dorms at the Institute.¹⁹⁹ In a way, they took over the building. The social aspect of being with their friends at the Institute was a great memory for them.

The administration for the ASI has never taken statistics specifically on whether families tend to come back or try new institutes, but Patricia D'Ercole read some of the evaluations from the 2009 ASI, and some of the responses she saw with regards to comparing institutes were: “ ‘We’ve been to other institutes, but we think you get the most for your money here,’ or ‘We think you have the best faculty,’ or ‘We really like your schedule.’ ”²⁰⁰

Dr. Suzuki’s visits also had a big impact on the attendance and growth of the American Suzuki Institute. He first attended the ASI in 1976. In October of 1975, Waltraud Suzuki, his wife, visited Miss Aber and everyone at the Suzuki program in Stevens Point. At the end of her visit, Mrs. Suzuki informed Margery that it would be okay for Dr. Suzuki to attend the American Suzuki Institute the following year provided that Margery would be responsible for his well-being since she herself would be visiting family in Germany.²⁰¹

Kay Collier McLaughlin told Miss Aber one summer that they would need to start a teen dorm at the American Suzuki Institute if they wanted kids of that age to keep coming back. This came about when her oldest daughter was a pre-teen, and they spent a lot of time chasing her and her friends around campus late at night. Collier McLaughlin also noted the need for those kids to have a chamber music program. She and Aber had both observed a teen dorm at an institute in San Diego where they had

¹⁹⁹ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 27.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 85.

both been on staff. At first, Margery said, “No!” Later, she said, “I’ll do the chamber music, but you’ll have to do the Teen Dorm.”²⁰²

They decided to go ahead and start the Teen Dorm in 1977.²⁰³ It was very successful, and still exists today. At that age especially, kids desire social interaction with one another. Those who stayed in the Teen Dorm often formed deep, lasting friendships. Collier McLaughlin stated that during Christmas vacation one year, they had fifteen Teen Dorm kids at their house in Kentucky. The boys slept upstairs and the girls slept in the basement, and Kay monitored the hallway in between. They played chamber music together and went to rock concerts. The kids came from different parts of the country, but they could get together with other advanced musicians their age because of the American Suzuki Institute and the Teen Dorm. Lifelong friendships had formed.²⁰⁴

The following is taken from the American Suzuki Journal and shows another example of how lifelong relationships have formed by attending Suzuki institutes:

Wedding Bells

An Unusual Benefit of Institute Attendance

Margery Aber recently received an unusual thank-you note from a mother who attended the American Suzuki institute with her three children for 14 summers. Sonja Noteboom of Minnesota expressed her appreciation for the myriad benefits of the Institute experience, including the wonderful relationships her children Todd, Dana, and Andrea developed with musicians from other locations. One such special person was Nancy Brasel, a piano student from Cedar Falls, Iowa, whom Todd met in ASI piano classes 16 years ago. Nancy and Todd enjoyed a long distance relationship until college and grad

²⁰² Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 13.

²⁰³ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 91.

²⁰⁴ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 17-18.

schools stretched those distances too far. About two years ago, they re-discovered each other and last July Todd surprised Nancy with a charter flight to Stevens Point, took her to the Fine Arts Building where they had first met, and asked her to marry him!

Todd and Nancy were married in Cedar Falls in April, with his sister Andrea, now a violin performance major at St. Olaf College, playing at the ceremony. Todd's parents also gave the couple a piano for their wedding. Todd and Nancy are both practicing attorneys in Minneapolis, but music will always be a very important part of their lives.²⁰⁵

Growth from Year to Year (Documented by Stan Smith)

1971

- This was the first year of the American Suzuki Institute.
- New ideas for many people.
- Some students had not studied any of the Suzuki repertoire until the Institute.²⁰⁶

1972

- Violin, piano, viola, and cello instruction are offered. Every student receives a private lesson and a large group class each day.
- There are 30 faculty members this year.
- Each evening had an event scheduled at 7:00 PM and 8:30 PM.
- The student recitals at 4:00 PM take place in Jenkins Hall, but one is held in Michelsen Hall so that it could be recorded.
- The final Festival Concert includes 18 violin pieces and 6 cello pieces.
- The Suzuki Association of the Americas is created.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ "Wedding Bells," *American Suzuki Journal* 26, no. 6 (1998): 80.

²⁰⁶ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 55.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

- Students are more prepared than the previous year because they have better knowledge of the Suzuki Method and have received repertoire lists of the pieces to be performed at the Institute.²⁰⁸

1973

- There are now 38 faculty members.²⁰⁹
- Mrs. Haruko Kataoka teaches at the ASI. She was one of three along with Dr. Suzuki who helped to found the Suzuki Piano School.²¹⁰
- The student schedule is set the way it will be for the next 23 years.²¹¹
- Each student has three classes every day.
- The 4:00 PM recitals are now in the Quandt Gym.
- In 1973, there were three other Suzuki Institutes in the US: the American Suzuki Institute in San Diego, ASI-North Pacific in Pendelton, Oregon, and the ASI-Southeast in Knoxville, Tennessee. The proposed fourth, the ASI-East, had to be cancelled that year due to a lack of enrollment.²¹²
- A parent organization was formed to help continue the program at Stevens Point.²¹³
- Parents start a store at the ASI in Stevens Point to help raise funds.²¹⁴

1974

- Sunday afternoon play-ins at Memorial Circle begin this year.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 55.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 57-8.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

- Schedule changes have to be made on August 8th so people can watch President Nixon's resignation speech.²¹⁶

1975

- Chamber music is first offered at the ASI.²¹⁷
- Dorm recitals start this year.²¹⁸
- First Talent Show happens; originally called Skit Night.²¹⁹

1976

- Dr. Suzuki comes to the ASI.²²⁰
- The ASI is divided into three sessions over the course of two weeks.²²¹
- Dr. Suzuki receives the first Suzuki Chair Holder award.²²²

1977

- There are two one-week sessions this year.
- The Teen Program is first offered.
- William Preucil Sr. comes to teach viola.
- The first Viola Final Concert takes place on Friday, August 19th.²²³

1978

- Flute is first offered at the ASI.
- The first ASI Alumni Recital is performed by Lorre Trytten.²²⁴

²¹⁶ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 65.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 75.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., 85.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 90.

²²³ Ibid., 91.

²²⁴ Ibid., 95.

1984

- Dr. Suzuki attends the ASI again.²²⁵

1985

- Paul Landefeld becomes director of the ASI.
- Suzuki Harp is offered at the ASI.²²⁶

²²⁵ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 99.

²²⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

Margery Aber as a Teacher

Miss Aber was well-known as an excellent teacher. She was even highly respected by Dr. Suzuki himself. Ed and Judy Muelling shared the following story with regard to this:

Dr. Suzuki held her in very high esteem. And one of the stories that we both remember. . . We were sitting in graduate school one night in some classes with her [Aber]. The phone rings, and she goes, “Oh well, let me answer the phone.” She looked at us, “It’s a long distance call. I need to take this.” Okay, so we take a ten-minute break. We came back, and she looked at us and said,

“Classes for the rest of the week will be cancelled.” Dr. Suzuki was doing a workshop over in Germany. Bill Starr got sick, so Dr. Suzuki called Marge and had her fly over to teach. She was very, very well known. Dr. Suzuki thought of her as a very good teacher.²²⁷

Dee Martz said that Margery Aber really excelled at teaching group classes. Professor Martz observed her teach hundreds of these classes, and now uses many of Aber’s activities in her own classes.²²⁸

Diane Slone commented that Miss Aber had much higher expectations for her young students than many American teachers did when the Suzuki Method was still new in the US. She had the unique ability to teach with fun games that enhanced the learning process rather than disrupting it. Aber was also able to convey much

²²⁷ Muelling, interview transcript, 5.

²²⁸ Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail, 3.

enthusiasm towards her students through her voice and sometimes by jumping up and down.²²⁹

Slone also said that one thing she learned from Miss Aber that influenced her as a student, a performer, and as a teacher was that one cannot disguise inadequacies in intonation by playing very musically. Miss Aber was the first person that had said that to her. Slone said

I wasn't that old, but I was really advanced, and she sat me down next to her on a bleacher in Quant Gym [at the UWSP campus] and said, "You played with beautiful vibrato, and beautiful tone, and beautiful phrasing, but that really all got lost for me because your intonation was so awful."

And really, she was that direct about it. I would say that's probably the most influential thing that she ever said to me about violin playing that impacted both my teaching and my own playing.²³⁰

John Klein described Aber as having ". . . really high expectations for students, especially those who were really interested in being violinists." He went on to say,

Unlike some music teachers who, by the time they retire, they stop playing, they really stop participating in music a lot, she always continued to take lessons. She was really interested, I think, in developing her playing and her ability to teach students at a high level beyond that. So I think that was something that was inspiring.²³¹

Klein later recounted a story of going to a grocery store and running into a former fellow student of the American Suzuki Institute. That summer, he was teaching at the ASI, and still had his nametag on. The lady asked who his teacher was at the time, and he told her that it was Miss Aber. She replied, "Oh, Miss Aber. She's tough!"²³²

²²⁹ Slone, interview transcript, 4.

²³⁰ Ibid., 5.

²³¹ Klein, interview transcript, 7.

²³² Ibid., 12.

Klein explained, “I think that was the perception of a lot of the kids who were Stevens Point kids. . . that she was a lot of fun, but she also was tough.”²³³

Ann Marie Novak commented on the impact Aber had on her students:

Most of the students she taught felt most fortunate to have her as a teacher. . . I think they were a little in awe of her. To me, when I served as accompanist, it always seemed that she had so much encouragement for her students. . . she mixed this with high expectations and got some very wonderful results.²³⁴

Novak later described what made Aber’s teaching unique:

The one thing I can speak of is her amazing ability to always be able to relate her point (be it tone, phrasing, bow stroke or whatever) to something familiar to the student.²³⁵

Diane Slone said,

. . . you could tell that she really loved what she was doing, and really loved all the students and their parents, but absolutely had a very strict set of standards. You knew if you walked on the wrong side of the line. I think she probably embodied the idea of – not how tough love as the philosophical concept or psychological concept has developed, but – if you knew her, those would be words that would go together very well in thinking about her. I think her enthusiasm and her desire to have everything be at the highest possible level and still be nurturing and loving; I think the fact that she showed that in such a public way really impacted all the teachers at ASTEC [American Suzuki Talent Education Center], but also the teachers from around the country.²³⁶

Jennifer Burton said, “I think she was the best group teacher I’ve ever seen.”²³⁷

She described a time when Miss Aber had everyone switch back and forth between the first and second violin parts of the Bach Concerto for Two Violins. (All of the music was memorized. The author of this study can attest that this is a typical exercise in the Suzuki Method for this piece once the students know both parts very well.)

²³³ Klein, interview transcript, 12.

²³⁴ Novak, interview questionnaire e-mail, 1.

²³⁵ Ibid., 2.

²³⁶ Slone, interview transcript, 3.

²³⁷ Burton, interview transcript, part 1, 1.

Eventually, she had the others in the group play the second violin part, while Burton was left by herself on the first violin part. Miss Aber would walk around her and do everything she could to distract her. She was trying to improve her concentration and focus.²³⁸

Jennifer Burton said that Miss Aber was one who liked to teach by demonstrating.²³⁹

If she was working on hooked bows in Book 2 with “Witches’ Dance,” she’d make the correlation between that and “Happy Farmer.” And what I thought was interesting about her was she wouldn’t say it. She would just play it.²⁴⁰

She also pushed everyone to their limits. Burton said:

She wouldn’t allow you to get by with anything. If you played something and she wanted one little thing to be better, she’d make you figure out how to do it in front of her.²⁴¹

When studying teacher training with Miss Aber, Jennifer Burton had the following experience:

I’d play for her, and sometimes she’d really give into nitty gritty points, and other times she’d say, “Next piece.” So that was her way of saying, “Way to go. Let’s go to the next piece.” But she wouldn’t put it that way. She’d say, “Next piece.” And then so I’d think, “Ah, she liked it.”

So she would often bring in pieces that were outside of the literature. I remember seeing her with the older kids in her studio, and those kids would just eat that stuff right up. She knew what we all liked, and she would bring in pieces that were stimulating and challenging. She knew her repertoire well.

So her enthusiasm, I think, was done by challenging people in the ways that could bring out their creativity, and also by being so spontaneous. She was very spontaneous. So even within the lesson you wondered exactly where things were going. But I think that was her way of being enthusiastic, not getting stuck in any little spot.²⁴²

²³⁸ Burton, interview transcript part 1, 1.

²³⁹ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁰ Burton, interview transcript part 2, 4.

²⁴¹ Burton, interview transcript part 1, 5.

²⁴² Burton, interview transcript part 2, 1.

I think the greatest, and the most unique teaching points, were her group class techniques. She could command the energy in a big room full of people, even outside in the sundial in Steven's Point. She would command the attention of thousands of people in one place, just by sometimes not saying a thing. She would just non-verbally get her points across, sometimes verbally, but often just by being playful. She would do something silly, like get down on her knees, and walk on her knees.

I remember doing that with “Song of the Wind” in Mickelson Hall, and I thought, “Oh, Miss Aber, what are you doing?” Then I thought, “Oh, you can feel the pulse in your knees.” So she would use the body, and get the whole body involved. The parents loved it. They'd be laughing. You'd hear a lot of laughing whenever she was teaching.²⁴³

Paul Landefeld, CEO of the International Suzuki Association, commented:

I think in addition to her wealth of knowledge of violin, she really did know quite a lot about the violin, teaching violin, setting up a student with beautiful form, and also encouraging them to play with expression. She had a lot of Dr. Suzuki's type of spirit in her, but there were two things that I think happened. The first thing is that she could instill in the student a belief that they actually could do this. I learned from Suzuki and from her, that that is probably the most important thing that you can instill in a student is a belief that this is possible. Another thing that I observed in her is she had a great interaction with the families, and she took a very personal approach to working with parents in the program . . .²⁴⁴

Landefeld went on to say that Miss Aber's students appreciated her “whole person approach” to teaching. She would go on canoe trips and picnics with the students and their families, and she played games with the children. She taught them not only about how to play the violin, but how to be a good person.²⁴⁵ Landefeld gave further accounts of how Aber would always be involved in setting up things, whether it was for a picnic or for a concert. Her students would see her and join in helping. She encouraged them, even in lessons, to always look for little things they could do to help their parents at home. She told them to do kind things for them and other people

²⁴³ Burton, interview transcript part 2, 1.

²⁴⁴ Paul Landefeld, transcript of phone interview by Ana Maria Wilson, June 7, 2011, 3.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

without being asked.²⁴⁶ This was something that Dr. Suzuki often told his students as well.

Diane Slone, a Suzuki teacher who studied with Dr. Suzuki himself, knew Miss Aber as a young child, as a young adult, and as an established Suzuki teacher and violinist. She had the following comments:

I got to see her relationships with her students from a really long period of time and from a lot of different perspectives, and I would say that from a sort of personal growth perspective, I think that the way that she lived caused her students, whether they were her college students or people who were her students when they were kids, to strive to be the best that they could be, both in terms of their profession and in terms of their sort of ethic responsibility.²⁴⁷

When asked if Aber's personality was any different when she was teaching, Ed and Judy Muelling responded:

Well, when she was teaching the little ones, yes. She was very nurturing to the little ones, and she had a whole different demeanor when she worked with little kids. By little ones, I'm saying those that are like eight and younger. She was like a grandmother to them, I guess.

For graduate students, she was very demanding. I remember, when I started graduate school, I had already been teaching for three years. She took me aside and she told me, "I hope you understand that just because you've been teaching does not mean that I'm going to treat you differently than any other student."

And I remember looking at her and saying, "Well good, because I didn't come here to have somebody pat me on the head and say, 'That's good enough.' "

So I mean, she was straightforward.²⁴⁸

Dr. Collier McLaughlin remarked:

Sister Helen Ann Berty said many years ago that every half hour, she thought to herself, another living soul enters my studio. And Marge Aber lived that. She connected – she deeply respected her students, no matter what their age,

²⁴⁶ Landefeld, interview transcript, 3-4.

²⁴⁷ Slone, interview transcript, 1.

²⁴⁸ Muelling, interview transcript, 6.

and she connected with them as individuals in the private lessons. She had the capacity to also connect with groups, and everybody doesn't have both.

But I think it was that recognition of the individuality of people no matter their age, and respect for it that allowed the connection to happen because kids – my kids at their young ages, they fell in love with her that first summer. And they never lost it.

And you know, I have a picture of her with them, and they went to her with the same energy that they went to Dr. Suzuki. They felt that. They felt respected, and they never stopped feeling respected by her.

And I mean, we'd stay after institutes and go canoeing with her and that kind of thing, and it didn't make any difference what she was doing with them. We could be having a group of people having ice cream in the backyard, but you know how some adults brush off kids? You know, if there are other adults around, their focus goes to the adults and just kind of, "Don't bother me?"

That was never Marge. She was as interested in what the kids had to say, what their opinions were, and people of all ages respond to that kind of respect.²⁴⁹

Dr. Collier McLaughlin went on to say that Margery Aber was an American Suzuki teacher, at the time the Suzuki movement was still new in this country, who exemplified Dr. Suzuki's philosophy and teaching. She made it come alive in the community of Stevens Point. She said that Aber's teaching was a model for her own teaching in so many ways.²⁵⁰

Her excellence in carrying through both the teaching objectives of the group classes and the desire to make them fun was something that Dr. Collier McLaughlin really admired about Margery Aber. Even though the kids were having fun, she still had high expectations for their playing abilities. Aber was a master at achieving both goals. It was common to observe this ability with the Japanese Suzuki teachers, but

²⁴⁹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 10.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

seeing an American Suzuki teacher accomplishing both tasks when the Method was still so new in the US was a wonderful model for Dr. Collier McLaughlin.²⁵¹

Jennifer Burton talked about the sense of community that she created in her teaching:

I think she wanted the children who were going to be playing those pieces to just relax and create. And sometimes she'd have them play solos in front of us, and believe me, she had kids beyond the books at those marathons. Nowadays, you know, the upper-level kids sometimes don't bother going to the great big jam sessions and things, but every single one of her students would come. It was common to hear Mozart or Mendelssohn by someone at the marathons. She'd have the older kids getting involved with the little pre-Twinklers. There was a sense of community with all of the kids, the parents, the teachers, and teacher trainees all at once. So you had a sense that everybody was working together and having a good time. I've never had such a great time at a play-in before!²⁵²

Aber's nephew, Dr. David Williams, has two children who were both Suzuki students at one time. Although they lived in Rochester, New York, his children had lessons with Margery when she visited or when they attended the American Suzuki Institute. He commented about her interaction with children:

. . . she was extremely sensitive and attentive to the children and their needs, and turned that learning experience into a game . . . There were always these challenges, these little hurdles you had to overcome . . . She stimulated children with this kind of teasing, joking around, and gamesmanship, and that's how she got kids to perform.²⁵³

She was just an expert at getting kids to do stuff. I wonder how many times I washed the dishes after these big family dinners just because Aunt Marge turned it into some kind of competition! Despite my best intentions, she'd get me to do chores around the house. We did all kinds of things on her parents' property all the time that she would somehow cajole us into doing that kids normally would never agree to do. So I think that was the style that made her successful as a Suzuki instructor.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 12.

²⁵² Burton, interview transcript, 2.

²⁵³ David Williams, interview transcript, 10.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Jennifer Burton said the following about Miss Aber as a mentor teacher:

In a way, it was frustrating working for her as a teacher because I always felt I was never good enough. It was her way of saying, “You are great, keep it up,” but it felt like “You're not good enough,” just because she was always striving to be better. So if you were on her team, you were always working your butt off. She saw work as something you did for the love of the job. When I was a young teacher I wanted some affirmation that I was okay or on the right track. She wouldn't give that out. She would just assume you were okay. It took me a long time to figure that out.²⁵⁵

According to Margery's good friend and colleague, Patricia D'Ercole, there were three things that made Miss Aber's teaching unique. The first was that she was an excellent group teacher. D'Ercole credits this in part to being a public school teacher for thirty years.²⁵⁶ At the year-round Suzuki program in Stevens Point, there are marathon Saturday group lessons held once a month that run from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. with a cookie break in the middle. D'Ercole still claims that Miss Aber was able to hold the children's attention better than any other teacher in the program.²⁵⁷

The second thing that made her teaching unique was her creativity. In his teaching, Dr. Suzuki stressed creativity by telling teachers to be able to teach the same point one hundred different ways. Miss Aber was an expert at doing this.²⁵⁸

Pat recalled a time when she asked Miss Aber to give her teacher trainees a lecture on vibrato. Miss Aber had helped Patricia with her own vibrato when she was studying with her, and the exercises Aber had used with her were especially useful to Pat. Expecting that Miss Aber would tell her students these tips that she had already

²⁵⁵ Burton, interview transcript, 8.

²⁵⁶ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 3.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

heard, Pat was surprised when she heard a new set of instructions that were just as beneficial.²⁵⁹

The third way her teaching was unique had to do with the way she conducted group classes. She would use something in the room to add to her teaching. For example, if there was a balcony, some of the kids would play from the balcony. If they were outside, perhaps one child would each stand on a hill.²⁶⁰

As Patricia D'Ercole described, “. . . Our stage upstairs has doors on each side. Well, she'd have kids run around the outside of the hall and come in the other set of doors. . . . She was very much aware that kids needed to let off energy, and so . . . a lot of the games were physical. A lot of the ways she kept their attention were physical. Not just standing and playing, although she could do that too.”²⁶¹

Stan Smith said that she really knew the violin. “But I think it was her personality and her sense of humor that made her teaching really unique.”²⁶² Ed and Judy Muelling said that the Saturday morning play-ins were fabulous:

You would have an accompanist, and you would usually have maybe fifty, seventy-five people coming, and it was both students and teachers. I [Ed] drove over from Appleton here on that Saturday just to go over and play so I could get better skills in what I was doing. I'd just rather do that. And then just watching her as she worked with these large groups. . . I remember the duck walks. She would get down, you know, like a duck. All the way down. And then she would lead the group walking around playing Twinkle. Twinkle Variations with the little ones. They loved that!

Yeah, all of them! [Judy speaking]

[Ed] Yeah, all of them! And I was twenty-five at the time, and I remember trying to do this, and it was hard!! [laughter]

²⁵⁹ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 3.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Smith, interview transcript, 1-2.

So she had some very, very unique qualities. She was very good at . . . doing things on the spur of the moment. You know, all of the sudden, something would pop into her head, and she would just go.²⁶³

Commenting on Miss Aber's creative ideas when teaching, Ed and Judy Muelling said, "All of this stuff with working on bow grips, the off and on wind shield wipers, monkey on the stick. It was fun to watch her."²⁶⁴ She also had the children do a lot of "partner playing."²⁶⁵ This must have helped them develop chamber music skills.

If a student were to make a bit of a jerk while changing bows, then she would have the student say, "I am a jerk."²⁶⁶ If she thought a student was intelligent, she would call him or her an "egghead." This was a big compliment. Margery thought of herself as a pumpkin head. Her mother had told her as a child that people with egg-shaped heads were intelligent and those with pumpkin-shaped heads were not.²⁶⁷

Ed and Judy Muelling commented:

In the community, she was known as a really excellent, excellent teacher, and she also gave back to the community. She played in the Central Wisconsin Symphony. . . And she felt that it was important to be part of that community and play in the symphony.²⁶⁸

Speaking about her classes at the American Suzuki Institute, Miss Aber commented in her book, "Playing exactly together while walking around the room, and other games, made the classes a delight, with friendships abounding."²⁶⁹

There was a project done at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point to put the videos of Dr. Suzuki's lectures and teaching at the 1976 American Suzuki Institute

²⁶³ Muelling, interview transcript, 8-9.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶⁶ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 2.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Muelling, interview transcript, 3.

²⁶⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 26.

on the internet in digital form. Patricia D’Ercole watched these videos again while working on this project. She noticed that a lot of the teaching points and techniques that she learned from Miss Aber had actually come from Dr. Suzuki. In some cases, Miss Aber had quoted him directly when she was teaching her own classes of future Suzuki teachers.²⁷⁰

It is a testament to Miss Aber’s teaching that she was able to transfer this knowledge so accurately for future generations of teachers, as Dr. Suzuki is now deceased, and many will not have the valuable experience of studying with him directly. The fact that she was able to get Dr. Suzuki to come to the American Suzuki Institute (which she founded) and had someone videotape so much of his teaching and lectures there was also remarkable. We now have so much of his teaching preserved for future generations to study thanks to the work and insight of Margery Aber, Pat D’Ercole, and others.

Influence of Dr. Suzuki

When asked who Margery’s role models were, Pat D’Ercole first mentioned Dr. Suzuki’s name. Before meeting him, her role models included her parents and her violin teacher at Oberlin, Reber Johnson. Miss Aber was especially vocal about her mother’s influence on her.²⁷¹ After studying her writings and all of her work with the Suzuki Method, it is easy to see that Dr. Suzuki had a tremendous influence on the way she lived her life.

²⁷⁰ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 5.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

D'Ercole said that Miss Aber really believed in the concept that the soul meets the soul when two people bow to each other.²⁷² In an article Margery wrote following Dr. Suzuki's death, she wrote that he wanted to honor the soul of each person he met by giving them a bow and a smile. She recognized his sensitivity as a musician as well as his sensitivity towards other human beings.²⁷³

Miss Aber also commented about him in the same article:

The first time he taught in Madison, Wisconsin, he worked with seven three-year-olds and one five-year old in a class. As he talked to the teachers after the lessons, the children climbed on him, hugging his legs and arms. We wondered at the magic, and he explained that "the soul meets the soul, and the children's souls wanted to be closer to his soul."²⁷⁴

Later she wrote:

As I re-read *Nurtured by Love*, translated by his wife Waltraud, sentences popped up indicating his closeness to the Soul of Jesus—"never harm another," a positive statement of "love one another." He loved everyone, helping each to become the best possible. In a Nagano teacher-training conference, he worked with a child who played perfectly to my ears, saying, "Can you do this? Or that?" Within fifteen minutes, the child's ability rose from above average to artistic. We were astounded.²⁷⁵

She continued:

Listening, although an important factor in making music, in Suzuki's own life went much deeper. His listening, I'm sure, was the hearing of the Soul as it was united with God. The more deaf he became, the more he turned to the Spiritual. When totally deaf, he had finished listening to the mundane of the world, hearing only the Voice most important to him.

It is the time for all of us to take heed of his many gifts, his "new ideas" with which he inspired us to teach techniques and musicality. That's the easiest task. Much more difficult is the listening, trying to hear what he heard through our own souls. We too can follow his lead by realizing that children's potential is great when they are given the right environment, love, and music. We can share his ideas of "beautiful tone—with living soul," the importance of

²⁷² D'Ercole, interview transcript, 9.

²⁷³ Margery Aber, "My Teacher, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki," *American Suzuki Journal* 26 (Summer 1998): 25.

²⁷⁴ Aber, "My Teacher," 25.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

listening deeply and loving—“Where love is deep, much can be accomplished.”

My deepest, heartfelt thanks to God for giving us so wonderful a teacher. May I continue to grow in my teacher’s footsteps, doing my best to inspire children to fulfill their potential.²⁷⁶

It is clear from this article that Miss Aber saw Dr. Suzuki as role model for living life. She admired his spirituality and his ability to teach.

Much of Margery Aber’s teaching philosophy during the latter part of her life was influenced by Dr. Suzuki, since she studied his teaching method so closely. Although many of her students eventually pursued music as a career, this was not Miss Aber’s goal. Rather, her desire was, “. . . to give each child an excellent musical education—to give to each child, as her student, an opportunity to develop ‘a noble character.’ ”²⁷⁷

This idea of developing a noble character in children is a theme that is repeated over and over by Dr. Suzuki in his speeches and writings. The following excerpt is taken from his book, *Nurtured by Love*:

My dream for the happiness of all people:

I feel respect and friendly feelings for everyone. In particular I cannot help but feel respect and warm friendship for small children. And my heart brims over with a desire to help make all the children born upon this earth fine human beings, happy people, people of superior ability. My whole life and energies are devoted to this end. This is because of my discovery that every single child, without exception, is born with this ability.

People say that I am trying to do the impossible, and expending my energies for nothing. But I know that what I conceive *is* possible, and I believe that one day the human race will create the kind of world in which everyone will realize that children have the potential. That is why at the United Nations, after Casals had spoken on world peace, I appealed to the representatives of the nations of the world to do something. What I am trying to do now is to apply my Talent

²⁷⁶ Aber, "My Teacher," 26.

²⁷⁷ Shirley J. Gibb, "A Tribute to Margery Aber: Eulogy," *American Suzuki Journal*, Fall 2001: 39.

Education to all areas of life. I am trying to get sympathetic primary-school principals to try out methods of education that will ensure that not even one student fails in school. I am also trying to get something done about mentally retarded children, and to persuade sympathetic politicians to clarify national policy with regard to children.²⁷⁸

Nurtured by Love contains an excerpt from an article in *Newsweek* entitled, “Fiddling legions.” In it, Dr. Suzuki is quoted as saying the following:

“I just want to make good citizens. If a child hears good music from the day of his birth, and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart.”²⁷⁹

Margery Aber was clearly influenced by Dr. Suzuki. The similarity in their passion for developing noble human beings through music education can be observed in Aber’s conversations with others. Miss Aber not only tried to see the good in each situation, but also in all people. She saw that example in Dr. Suzuki.²⁸⁰

In an audiocassette letter recorded by Margery Aber to her friend and violin pedagogue, Marvin Rabin, she says the following:

Teaching is a lot of fun though, anyways. It isn’t just teaching music. It’s teaching people how to live and having a better understanding of themselves and the things which are good in this world. If we can help anyone to understand that, well we’ve helped them a whole lot. But when we can help them and do it through beautiful music, well then that’s even better!²⁸¹

Later in the audio letter, she describes her work in teaching violin to a child with cerebral palsy:

. . . I have several little children in my class: three and four year-olds, and five year-olds. But one of them has cerebral palsy. And the person who is in charge of little children at the university level, she’s an expert on preschool children, has adopted this one little boy with the cerebral palsy because he would have been put into a home, something like a . . . it would have been something like a jail as far as what kind of life he might ever lead.

²⁷⁸ Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 106.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁸⁰ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 10.

²⁸¹ Recorded letter by Aber to Marvin Rabin on cassette tape, 9:21-9:52.

The poor boy was born a twin, and his parents didn't want them. The other child was an imbecile, and as a result, these people had tied the children in bed, wouldn't have anything do with them, gave them nothing to eat except milk, and this poor boy has had a hard time learning to walk correctly, and even to speak and to do things. But because he's taking violin lessons, he finds that he is able to walk better. He can play the violin a little bit, not very much yet, but he's learning how to hold it and how to play "ti ti ti ta – ta." And yes, it is really quite an exciting thing to see how much this child is growing and how well he is doing.

The teacher, the one who adopted him, thinks that the Suzuki way should be used for anyone who has any kind of a disorder, a learning disability, they call it here. And she is trying hard to, well as a matter of fact, she has done a couple of tape recordings with my teaching and these little children as students to show the rest of the countryside about how this teaching can be done. It is very interesting.²⁸²

Everett Goodwin also spoke about Dr. Suzuki's influence on Margery Aber and their similarities:

I think she had spent enough time sitting next to Dr. Suzuki, and really brought into her life Dr. Suzuki's deep respect for the potential of every person, and that Marge was there all the time seeing the student – the potential, and bringing that out, especially with the little ones. She really, really absorbed that.

There's a wonderful picture of Dr. Suzuki looking up at a student and Marge is sitting next to him, and Marge – because, I think, of her Christian Science [background] and all that, she was open to a lot of things, and Craig Timmerman was in that area too, and others, but Marge really absorbed that deep sensitivity that Suzuki had, besides respect. That's a mental thing. Suzuki just had that thing where he saw the potential of each child, and Marge was the embodiment of that. She really did see that, and she was great with little ones. She also expected lots of repetitions.

I remember one day she told me this story. She was in Matsumoto, and a little girl had a notebook, and there were little marks, hundreds, thousands of marks! So she said to the little girl, to her mother, "What are all those for?" [With a Japanese accent] "Ah, Sensei tell me I must practice 100,000 times," and she was on like 50,000 or something, this little girl. Marge was always talking about 20,000, and 2000, and pushing that whole thing. We've got to repeat, carefully repeat.

²⁸² Recorded letter by Aber to Marvin Rabin on cassette tape, 13:56-16:23.

Of course, now there are new books out, *Outliers* and *Talent Code* and all, that show that that's right on, but we all know that. So Marge was very good at repetitive practice, good note taking, good review.²⁸³

Jennifer Burton talked about Miss Aber's generosity:

Marge was a very generous woman. She was generous with her time, her money, and her service. There was a point in time that I could have applied for teacher trainer status. This was before it was hard to do, and I thought, "I don't want to go on Marge's coat tails" just because she trained me. I wanted to earn it myself. And maybe that's something she taught me too. Personally, as time has gone on I just like teaching kids and parents, but I just wanted to do it myself rather than to say "Oh, she studied with me." She taught me that: to work hard for what you want and love.²⁸⁴

Diane Slone stated:

. . . I think that in her personality and her level of expectation, in some ways she was very similar to Dr. Suzuki. I think that, although she wasn't as naïve as Dr. Suzuki. I think that it was very good for teachers and parents around the world to see that it wasn't just one man who really had a love for the children, and the desire to see everybody achieve to the best of their ability, and the belief that the standard could be very high, and the expectation that everybody could be successful and still do it with love. I think that if it weren't for her, that probably people in Western countries would have not been able to take Dr. Suzuki maybe and believed he was as serious as he was. They might have thought it was a cultural misunderstanding.²⁸⁵

The interviewees in this study were asked what they thought Margery Aber most admired about Dr. Suzuki. In most cases, this was probably a guess, although in many instances, similarities between Aber and Suzuki could be seen. Marilyn O'Boyle replied:

I couldn't say for sure, but I think a lot of it did have to do with the fact that she did have this fun-loving streak, and I think that she resonated with that in him, and the way that he dealt with children, always with fun and games. I think she really saw that as a wonderful way to reach children and to teach them in a wonderfully positive way. That may have been one aspect of it, plus the fact that he was a really fine violinist and a fine professional musician. So

²⁸³ Goodwin, interview transcript, 12-13.

²⁸⁴ Burton, interview transcript, 3-4.

²⁸⁵ Slone, interview transcript, 3.

there was the aspect of quality and a certain high standard of playing which was very important.²⁸⁶

From Dr. David Williams (one of her nephews):

She had an elevated status for him in her mind that was unparalleled I think. I mean, I don't think there's anybody else she really respected more than him in her professional life. Now, maybe – maybe someone closer to her professional life would contradict that statement, but I just remember her always – anytime we discussed him, he was it. She made that trip to Japan, and she saw what he was able to do with children. She knew immediately that this was something she wanted to spend the rest of her life doing.

I think what was critical for her, in my opinion, was that combination of music and education and applying it to the very youngest people. I mean she recognized and believed strongly that the earlier she could engage children in this activity, the more success they would have in adulthood.²⁸⁷

Gail Engebretson said that she thought Miss Aber admired Dr. Suzuki's philosophy of the potential of every child and that music could be used as a means of reaching out to children. Miss Aber often talked to Gail about the Buddhist background that she learned about through Dr. Suzuki. She also seemed to admire how Dr. Suzuki was able to start his great program in Japan from nothing. Miss Aber thought that if he could do it there, she could do it in the United States.²⁸⁸ Ann Marie Novak thought that what Miss Aber most admired about Dr. Suzuki was "his way with children, and his ability to break down the complexity of playing the violin into bite sized chunks."²⁸⁹

Jennifer Burton thought that Miss Aber admired the following about Dr. Suzuki:

Dr. Suzuki's vision for the world being a better place. Dr. Suzuki's love of children, and to help every child grow to the best of their ability, and in a safe

²⁸⁶ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 4.

²⁸⁷ David Williams, interview transcript, 10.

²⁸⁸ Engebretson, interview transcript, 6.

²⁸⁹ Novak, interview questionnaire e-mail, 3.

place, to use parents and the world at large to help children become noble human beings. I remember seeing the two of them together, and they would smile and laugh together. They were both very light-spirited people, and I think she liked that about him, too, to keep life light.

They both had certain things happen in their lives; Dr. Suzuki with World War II, and Marge being on the cutting edge of women in higher education. They both had some stumbling blocks, but both of them endured, and persevered, and worked around and through the stumbling blocks.²⁹⁰

Personality

Dr. Collier McLaughlin reflected on Margery Aber's personality:

Well, it was joyous. It was energetic. It was demanding. It was opinionated. It was forceful, and it was incredibly loving and wise. And spiritual, deeply spiritual. Not formally religious, but deeply spiritual.²⁹¹ She was a determined person. There are some people that don't give up.²⁹²

In Myers-Briggs terminology, there is a personality type, I mean, in terms of giving and receiving information. You're either a very factual person or you are an intuitive – and that's the visionary. Marge was a visionary. A visionary who feels strongly about something will then implement as many specifics, as many details as necessary to get the job done, and Marge was one of those people. She had the vision. She had the passion for it. And so, she would absolutely do the work that had to be done to make it happen.²⁹³

From Diane Slone:

She was very playful and very energetic, but also could be very brisk and very strict, and still very affectionate and very loving, sort of like all of that wrapped into one package.²⁹⁴

From Ed and Judy Muelling:

Her personality was so unique. She was just always going. She had you work as hard as she worked. And when she taught, ohh! Her personality just sort of radiated. . . Oh with the little ones - She'd give them a great big hug.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ Burton, interview transcript part 2, 3-4.

²⁹¹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 7.

²⁹² Ibid., 19.

²⁹³ Ibid., 20.

²⁹⁴ Slone, interview transcript, 4.

She loved to hug the little ones. Older ones like her graduate students. . . . When we just finished something that was really. . . . where it got maybe a little more tense at times, the things that we were doing, she was wanting to take you out there for ice cream. She was an “ice-cream-aholic” I guess.²⁹⁶

She was a very loving person. Very caring. But she was also very forceful. She got what she wanted. That’s about the best way to put it.²⁹⁷

From Marilyn O’Boyle:

Well, she did have a really strong personality I think. She was friendly, but at the same time, in some ways she reminded you of a stern schoolteacher, but very, as I say, very positive and enthusiastic about the Suzuki Method. But also, you got the feeling that she was not going to put up with anything but your best. And of course, she had a real fun-loving streak. The “talent shows” at the Institute were always a hoot because she always had some sort of a really fun skit in mind that she was usually the star of. So, very much of a fun-loving bent to her too, and she really loved kids and really loved working with kids, you could tell.²⁹⁸

From Ann Marie Novak:

Marge was kind, generous, impish, caring, spiritual, gentle but firm, and she was funny. Marge is the only person in my life that I have only good memories of. To me, those memories are precious indeed. As for the humor, the two of us were involved in more high jinks around the Center than were the rest of the faculty combined!²⁹⁹

Gail Engebretson said that at times Aber could be a bit of a loner and shy, especially at the beginning of her time at Stevens Point. Some people misinterpreted this as her being standoffish.³⁰⁰ In the beginning of her Suzuki teaching career, she did not even enjoy getting up in front of large crowds of adults, although she was used to

²⁹⁵ Muelling, interview transcript, 7.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁹⁸ O’Boyle, interview transcript, 2.

²⁹⁹ Novak, written responses, 2.

³⁰⁰ Engebretson, interview transcript, 3.

doing this as a performer.³⁰¹ After a bit of practice with public speaking, she grew very comfortable and could even be “a bit of a ham” with it.³⁰²

Gail said in the interview that the teacher trainees working under Miss Aber had tremendous admiration for her, but at the same time, also feared her a bit. She was very, very demanding, and expected her teacher trainees to give all that they had for their job the same way that she did. If they couldn't do that, it probably wasn't going to work out for them. There were some people who really tried hard to do this, but just couldn't deal with the demands and pressure.³⁰³

From her nephew, Dr. Earle Williams:

She was a remarkably positive person. Very interested in many people – a genuine interest. And as a teacher, wanting to bring the best out of everyone. Even if a student was difficult, she would have the patience to work with the student and coax a lot out of them. It was remarkable.

And boundless energy – lots of energy! She was very athletic. She was an adventurer. She liked to go on exotic trips and explore things, and she was a canoeist. She paddled all the rivers all over the place. She carried a canoe on her car full time no matter where she went. It was a standard landmark to see her canoe on her car.³⁰⁴

From Everett Goodwin:

Marge was a unique character. She really was, and that's why I think she was such an important figure in the Suzuki movement. Those are my memories of Marge: challenging, energetic, out to win, pushing her students, pushing her workers and herself.

Marge worked 24/7 if she had 24 hours. In fact, I said I'm not going to work like her. Then again, you go off and direct your own program. You have to do those things.

³⁰¹ Engebretson, interview transcript, 6.

³⁰² Engebretson, e-mail to author on June 27, 2011.

³⁰³ Engebretson, interview transcript, 12.

³⁰⁴ Earle Williams interview transcript, 2-3.

Marge did it and like I said, she always shared her experiences of that first trip over to Japan with everybody. She was very proud of that, and I think she was very proud to be a part of bringing Suzuki to America.³⁰⁵

Joyce Wotruba-Polson commented on Aber's personality:

One of the things I remember about Marge was her peppy personality and infectious enthusiasm. She seemed to always be moving. During marathon [group classes], she would often lead the kids like a piper with them imitating her body motions. While they were all playing their fiddles, she would lead them around and even down off the stage – skipping and hopping.

She always ended with the Suzuki bow [action of bending forward]. The bow was not demanding, but, of course, was showing respect for the student, and [the student] showing the respect for her. Marge was just a completely sincere, wonderful teacher. She was very strict in her belief, though, that the student practiced and repeated a skill until it was exact. She insisted that the parents saw this as part of their parental role.

She was a real inspiration, and publicly performed in recitals even into her 80's. I remember her soloing with the Stevens Point Symphony, but that was not her mainstay by any means. She was a Suzuki teacher. She was in front of the audience as a children's teacher. . . She was a marvelous lady, and the whole community knew it.³⁰⁶

Later in the interview with the author of this study, Wotruba-Polson said:

She was often recognized by her white hair. In fact, sometimes the students would ask, "How old are you?" She would answer, "One hundred," and then they'd say, "One hundred!" and she would repeat, "Yes!" Then she would plop down on the floor!³⁰⁷

When asked what Aber was like when she taught students who were in their early teens, Judy and Ed Muelling said that she could be a bit forceful, but for a reason.

She was forceful because she wanted them to get to a certain point, but still very loving and caring. But when they got to be that age, her students, they were probably some of the best in the country. But she expected them to be prepared for lessons.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Goodwin, interview transcript, 7.

³⁰⁶ Wotruba-Polson, transcript of Skype interview by Ana Maria Wilson, May 11, 2011, 8.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁰⁸ Muelling, interview transcript, 7-8.

John Klein, one of her former students who is now a professional violinist and teacher, also commented on Aber's expectations of her students: "If you didn't want to work hard, she probably was not the teacher for you. She had really high expectations. She was very demanding . . ." ³⁰⁹

From her nephew, Dr. David Williams:

You know, she was so sensitive and thoughtful, and one way I might state this is, I never realized what a – I mean I always realized it, but I never fully realized how fantastic an aunt I had until I became an adult, I mean well into adulthood. I looked around at other people playing the aunt role and failing miserably, in my opinion, because nobody could measure up to my Aunt Marge. I mean she really was just like the ideal aunt that anyone could have. And the reason I'm telling you that is because she approached aunt-hood, if that's a word, in the same way that she approached her Suzuki kids.

She really loved those kids, and she had a kind of adulation for youth that was pervasive in her life. And so, she really was so dedicated to teaching those kids how to play the violin at the very earliest possible age that they could hold a cigar box under their chins, as you remember I'm sure. That translated in the way she behaved as an aunt. She didn't have any children of her own. I think that probably played a role. I think this was a way for her to sort of express her motherly tendencies, and she just expressed it to this whole generation, many generations, of Suzuki students, and also her nephews and nieces.

So you know, Aunt Marge's arrival at our house was like this special thing. She didn't show up all that often, but when she arrived that was a big deal because we knew we were in for some -- really a lot of fun. I mean she just -- had a lot of energy. Our parents were great, were wonderful parents -- but it just wasn't the same as when Aunt Marge came to town because she was ready to play. She would drive in with her Dodge Dart, and she always had a canoe mounted on top of this Dodge Dart.

She never really took the canoe off of that car, except when, as far as I could tell, she was using it, because she claimed it was a great way to locate her car in parking lots when she forgot where she parked. She was just a very avid canoeist, and a lot of -- some of my favorite memories of her have to do with canoeing down rivers. She taught me how to canoe, and to this day my family -- we do 10-day trips in the remotest parts of Canada, probably all thanks to Aunt Marge's love of canoeing.

³⁰⁹ Klein, interview transcript, 6.

I can remember one day all three of the kids – all three of us climbed up into a tree in front of our house for an entire day, waiting for her arrival. And you know, Aunt Marge was – you could never be quite sure when she would arrive because she was always doing so many different things. It turned out she didn't arrive until about 5:30, and I can't remember if we were still up in the tree waiting to surprise her then. But we were up there many, many hours because we were just so excited always about her arrival.

. . . I mean, she was like a kid in her 80's. I think I indicated in my e-mail, she was whipping me at ping-pong. I can hold my own, but you know, she'd be in her 80's and – she'd be slamming this and spinning the ball!³¹⁰

David Williams told another story of how they were canoeing once on the Plover River in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Margery had just had gall bladder surgery, but that didn't stop her from canoeing. He looked back at her, and all of the sudden her feet were sticking straight up in the air! She had fallen backwards inside the canoe, and couldn't get back up. She didn't complain at all, however.³¹¹

David said that his Aunt Marge was very stoic and extremely energetic. She had more “get up and go” than anyone else he could think of. If someone suggested doing a hike, even when she was in her eighties, she was the first one to say, “Okay, let's do it!”³¹²

David Williams shared another recollection:

And by way of another example, when we would say goodbye to each other at the airport, whatever random airport, wherever it might be around the world – we always had this game of last tag. Who could tap the person the last. And there is Aunt Marge now, 85 – whatever – running through the airport trying to escape me or trying to tap me in line, maybe even violating the security measures at the airport to try to do that – to win at that little game of last tag. And so, that's just another kind of example. I mean she was really remarkable. You just would've loved – everybody loved to be around her because she had so much – she was so vivacious and always teasing and kidding and joking around like a teenager. It didn't matter at what age.

³¹⁰ David Williams, interview transcript, 6-7.

³¹¹ Ibid., 7.

³¹² Ibid.

So that's what I mean. She just failed to ever really get old. The fact that she died, in my opinion, was some sort of fluke. Like her, the rest of her body could've gone on forever. Her father lived to 98. And as I said, my mother lived to 90 . . . They all had some of that spunk, quite a lot of that spunk, especially Aunt Marge, well into their final years.³¹³

As David Williams said, Margery was very energetic, even until the end of her life at age 87, when she died of a blood clot.³¹⁴ The American Suzuki Institute was taking place at the time of her death in August of 2001. With the help of a caregiver, she attended the International Research Symposium on Talent Education, did a signing of her recently completed book, led the Twinkles at the Opening Ceremonies, and even led her usual "Hip! Hip! Hooray!"s at the Talent Show the night before she died.³¹⁵

David gave another account of one of Aber's more infamous acts at a previous American Suzuki Institute Talent Show:

So you know, one further example that comes to mind that I think Pat told you about – that always kind of worried me a little bit because it seemed like a pretty sort of risky thing to do – at the Suzuki Institute. But she had the strip tease act. And I always thought, "Oh! Is this really a Kosher thing to be doing?" Is this – here are all these parents and these little kids, and here's this – this 80-year-old lady peeling off clothes! [laughter] Now, wait a second, this is pretty weird isn't it? But in fact, she always managed to pull it off because everybody knew she was completely, you know nuts and great – you know, in a very positive way. [laughter] And so, it all worked somehow in spite our worst fears. She pulled these kinds of things off.³¹⁶

There are many examples of her high energy level. Ed and Judy Muelling said: "She would go full throttle until she had no more energy left, and that was it. Then she would collapse. She would just – that was it. Then she would go home."³¹⁷

³¹³ David Williams, interview transcript, 8.

³¹⁴ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 40.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 38.

³¹⁶ David Williams, interview transcript, 8.

³¹⁷ Muelling, interview transcript, 13.

Marilyn O'Boyle remarked:

She was very energetic, really. At the Institute, all of the afternoon honors concerts - where all the congratulations and sing[ing] "Happy Birthday" to people and "Hip! Hip! Hooray!" and all that kind of thing - her three "Hip! Hip! Hoorays!" for people. And, as I say, the skit nights, the talent nights, she would be running down the center aisle dressed as Goldilocks or somebody, you know. [laughter] Yeah, but high energy! The few times I did actually see her teach, she was a high-energy teacher too.³¹⁸

Kay Collier McLaughlin, who spent many summers teaching and giving parent talks at the American Suzuki Institute, commented about the first time she observed Miss Aber:

She was this bundle of energy, dancing around the room, leading these kids through amazing exercises. And my immediate response was the joy on those young children's faces, and even as they were showing and reflecting this joy, they had such high standards of performance for their level. I mean, they were still Book One students, early Book One students, and yet their intonation was good, their file and posture, everything about them was set up well.

And they clearly respected and adored her. The fun was there, but it enhanced the discipline. And she was demanding and a great disciplinarian, but she did it in such a creative way. She was the first American Suzuki teacher I met, and she set the standard for that joy and discipline going hand in hand.³¹⁹

She was well connected in the violin and music education world. She also had this tremendous capacity for leadership and the vision and the energy to create the first Institute. She had experienced Summer School in Japan, and she had the understanding of her own culture and the need of America to take the concept and build on it. That was always her goal. She wanted to give American students the opportunity to come together in a summer experience that she saw in Japan.³²⁰

Diane Slone talked about Miss Aber's energy level:

She had more energy than anybody I've ever known other than Dr. Suzuki; just amazing. She would be running the Institute; there would be a 4:00 recital; she would have to do the announcements and congratulatory "Hip! Hip! Hoorays!" at the end of that and sometimes, there was even a concert at night, but often,

³¹⁸ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 4-5.

³¹⁹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 2.

³²⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

in between the afternoon concert and the night concert, she would go canoeing.³²¹

Margery Aber was never one to say, “I can’t.” According to Patricia D’Ercole, “There were no limits with Marge.”³²² She was not one to give up when faced with an obstacle. She believed one should just find a way around it.

Even when she was sick, Miss Aber would not want to admit to being sick, because in a way, she felt that she would be giving in to the illness.³²³ As D’Ercole said in describing Miss Aber’s thought process, “If you denied it, then you didn’t give in to it and you had more defense against it, and I think that is how she approached a lot of the issues that she dealt with.”³²⁴ Sometimes she would admit to being sick when it was very obvious, but she always tried to be positive about it. D’Ercole recalled that she would say things like, “ ‘I’m getting better,’ or ‘It’s a good thing I’m sneezing because I’m getting all of that out of my system,’ or ‘It’s working itself out of my system, so I’m getting well.’ ”³²⁵

Margery was a very fun-loving person as a teacher. She related so well with children.³²⁶ Some people, most often adults, were a bit afraid of her because she would be very truthful in what she observed.³²⁷ Patricia D’Ercole feels that this may have been a result of trying to be a strong woman and get things done at a time when female visionaries were not taken seriously.³²⁸ She did not give out compliments haphazardly. They had to really be earned. A student would learn not to expect a “sugary coated

³²¹ Slone, interview transcript, 7.

³²² D’Ercole, interview transcript, 10.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid., 2.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

lesson” from her.³²⁹ Her personality mellowed out a lot in the latter part of her life. She was great with kids, and could relate really well with teenagers and boys. Margery often said that her favorite age level to teach was fourth grade.³³⁰ Ed and Judy Muelling recalled the following: “The kids loved her. They just loved her. Period. She just had something special about her. . . She just loved the kids, and it showed when she taught.”³³¹

D’Ercole remembered walking into a specific lesson that Miss Aber was teaching and seeing her wrestle a boy of about 13 or 14 years of age. Margery had pinned him to the ground! This was when she was around seventy years old! They were, of course, doing this all in sport and amusement.³³² Miss Aber often showed the child in herself. Even at the age of seventy, she would do things like dare another teacher to roll down a grassy hill outside with her.³³³ She would go sledding with her students and would continue even when the other adults, often much younger than her, were too tired.

Even after retirement from teaching Suzuki, which was actually the second time she retired, she continued to be extremely active. She volunteered at the local food pantry, gave violin recitals, wrote her book, started the International Research Symposium on Talent Education, and taught private violin lessons.³³⁴ The average person could probably not tell that she had retired. D’Ercole commented:

There was no greater value for her, I don’t think, than this value of service. We talked about that a lot. Even when she was retired. That was her greatest fear,

³²⁹ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 2.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Muelling, interview transcript, 2.

³³² D’Ercole, interview transcript, 2.

³³³ Ibid., 4.

³³⁴ Ibid., 11.

that she couldn't be of service, or she would be put up on a shelf somewhere. Those were her words actually. "I don't want to be put up on a shelf. I want to still be useful to people."³³⁵

Margery Aber also had artistic interests other than the violin. Pat D'Ercole and Joyce Wotruba-Polson told the author of this study that Margery would often draw stick figures on programs or cards, work in her garden, and carve things out of wood. Wotruba-Polson gave the following example:

. . . In Christmas letters to friends and family, she'd draw these little stick figures playing a violin, gardening or whatever. One year she made me a pin that she had carved and shaved out of the black tailpiece of a violin! She had smoothed it to look like the shape of a fish.

I didn't see Marge gardening, but I know she was interested in growing things. She used Dr. Suzuki's examples of the tree growing in her explanations of the child growing. I'm sure you read about the roots, and in time, the blossoms.³³⁶

Because Joyce Wotruba-Polson had young children at the time she was the piano coordinator for the American Suzuki Institute, she worked on scheduling from her home, which was located next to the Wisconsin River five miles south of Stevens Point. This was before computers, when everything had to be done by hand or typewriter. She told the following story about Miss Aber:

. . . I was working at the dining room table with Suzuki schedules all over the place. I heard my outdoor water faucet being turned on and thought, who's out there? I looked and there was Margery Aber. When I asked where she came from, she answered, "Oh I just canoed over to your house, but since I didn't know which one was your dock, I just kind of guessed."

Although we have 66 steps to get up to our house from the Wisconsin River, Marge was thirsty! So she came up here to quench her thirst. Knowing Marge, she maybe didn't even have a cup. She basically just put her head under the faucet, came in and said, "Hi," and, "Oh, I'm glad you're working on schedules." Then off she went again. I mean, she was just a character. And her

³³⁵ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 11.

³³⁶ Wotruba-Polson, interview transcript, 11.

canoe! Almost everybody recognized her blue car with the canoe on top when she was driving around town!³³⁷

When asked what was Miss Aber's motivation to stay up late for repeated nights as she worked on getting things done, such as the preparations for the American Suzuki Institute each year, Pat D'Ercole responded that it was the kids that kept her going.³³⁸ She must have been incredibly inspired to be the best teacher possible.

Margery wanted everything to be just right for the children at the Institute. She spent many, many hours coordinating schedules, sending out mailings, replying to questions, addressing envelopes, etc. This was all much more difficult in the days prior to having copy machines and computers. Everything in the early days had to be mimeographed or typed over and over with carbon paper.³³⁹

Development of Noble Character

As mentioned, the development of a noble character in children was a primary goal for both Dr. Suzuki and Margery Aber. If a child has this instilled in him at a young age, this trait will likely stay with him the rest of his life. As Dr. Suzuki stated in *Nurtured by Love*, there is an old Japanese proverb that says the following: "What he is at three he will be at a hundred."³⁴⁰

One of the ways Margery Aber taught others to be a noble person was by example. Service towards others was a trait that she exemplified. She served on the

³³⁷ Wotruba-Polson, interview transcript, 13-14.

³³⁸ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 11.

³³⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 20.

³⁴⁰ Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love*, 107.

SAA Board of Directors.³⁴¹ She traveled to numerous locations around Wisconsin to establish satellite teaching locations where the Suzuki Method may not have been available otherwise. She also had her graduate students go teach at these locations under her supervision.³⁴² In this way, she believed that more children could be reached.

Jennifer Burton said the following about Miss Aber's generosity and giving nature:

Again, she would give all she had for the good of all. I think she was one of the first people to give a big chunk of money to the SAA. I don't know what the facts were about that, but she impressed me. I put the SAA in my will, because I figured – well, a few years ago I lost a good friend from our cello faculty to cancer at 37, and I thought, "I'm not going to wait to tell them what the SAA means to me." Marge went to bat in those ways, to just show people you care.³⁴³

Miss Aber's nephew, Earle Williams, said:

The thing that always struck me about her was that no matter who it was, she was very caring about the person, you know? I mean giving them attention, coaching them along, asking them about this, that, and the other thing. Asking how they were, what their interests were, what they wanted to be when they grew up, you know, whatever. It was – I think everyone had the sense that she had a genuine interest in you, and that was so helpful in encouraging kids. Someone really cared about them and wanted them to be better – wanted to do good things for them.³⁴⁴

Students' Achievements

Although producing professional musicians was never a goal of Miss Aber, this often happened due to the excellent instruction and inspiration she provided to her

³⁴¹ Marilyn O'Boyle, transcript of interview by Ana Maria Wilson, May 2, 2011, 1.

³⁴² Ed and Judy Muelling, interview transcript, 4.

³⁴³ Jennifer Burton, interview transcript, 7.

³⁴⁴ Earle Williams, interview transcript, 13.

students. According to Patricia D'Ercole, one of Aber's students is in the Boston Symphony, another is Associate Concertmaster of the National Opera Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, one is a composer and violinist living in Belgium, and another is a member of a professional string quartet and an orchestra in Germany.³⁴⁵ Aber, like Dr. Suzuki, was more concerned about producing a fine human being through quality musical instruction, no matter what the resulting career of the child would be.

San San Lee said that Miss Aber would have her students perform at various professional and charitable functions in Stevens Point, as well as throughout the state of Wisconsin. She claimed that Miss Aber taught her students how to live through learning how to play the violin.³⁴⁶

Jennifer Burton commented:

Once you'd get in her studio, you'd stay with her, and the ones who didn't go into music were high achievers. She had a way of bringing out the best in people. When we had a gathering a few years back for the dedication of the Aber Suzuki Center, we had a group of us. We had a group photo. I've got it in my studio here. There are about 35, maybe 40 young teachers from way back that came back to honor that, which is a credit to Dee [Martz] and Pat D'Ercole who kept her legacy. Especially Pat has done a lot keeping Marge's legacy alive.³⁴⁷

Miss Aber enjoyed connecting with her students by taking them canoeing, taking them out for a banana split ice cream at the university's cafeteria, telling them stories, or having running races with them around the Old Main Building on campus. Even though she was fifty years older than these students, she would beat them at these races!³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 3.

³⁴⁶ San San Lee, interview questionnaire, 1.

³⁴⁷ Jennifer Burton, interview transcript, 6.

³⁴⁸ San San Lee, interview questionnaire, 1-2.

The Influence of the Suzuki Method, Margery Aber, and the ASI

Influence of the Suzuki Method

Margery Aber had a huge influence in spreading the Suzuki Method in the United States and abroad. When asked what impact Aber had on the United States as a whole, Ed and Judy Muelling replied, “She was basically one of the main leaders of the entire Suzuki movement at the time.”³⁴⁹ By extension, she had even more impact on the United States than simply teaching her own students. The positive aspects of the Suzuki Method have affected thousands of people in the US and abroad. The Method would not have reached as many people as it did without her work.

The level of string playing in the US has risen dramatically since the introduction of the Suzuki Method. Now, there are many students at prestigious schools such as Juilliard, Curtis, and the Cleveland Institute of Music that have studied the Suzuki Method.³⁵⁰ As D’Ercole said, “There are good Suzuki teachers and there are bad Suzuki teachers just like there are good traditional and bad traditional teachers, but by and large, we’ve done a good job. . .”³⁵¹

Ed and Judy Muelling commented with the following:

Well, we had noticed, these kids that are coming play at a much higher level, but they’re not necessarily going on to be professional players. It’s raising the level of your local orchestras.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Muelling, interview transcript, 4.

³⁵⁰ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 28.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 29.

³⁵² Muelling, interview transcript, 15.

Marilyn O'Boyle also mentioned that the level and number of professional musicians in the United States has increased dramatically with the growth in popularity of the Suzuki Method.³⁵³ She continued:

But I think it is more than that. Suzuki wasn't really out to train professionals, he really was out to help the formation of noble human beings, and I think that I have seen evidence of that, of course, in my life and in my teaching. Even if they don't go on in music, it really does help them become better people - more sharing, more caring, more cooperative. I think that those kinds of impacts are even much more important, and that is very hard to measure. A lot of it is just stories people tell and so on. I think it is definitely there, and it is having a big impact all over the world.³⁵⁴

Another positive impact Miss Aber had in teaching the Suzuki Method are the lives of the students she touched who didn't even pursue music as a career. Because of their experience in the Suzuki program at Stevens Point, the students have developed into “. . . loving, caring, sensitive human beings. . . ”³⁵⁵ Now these children are becoming leaders in society. It is Patricia D'Ercole's hope, and probably it was Margery Aber's hope, that they are now more sensitive and caring people because of their experience with the Suzuki Method. Perhaps they can make a difference in the world through their examples and actions. In addition to this, their experiences have probably taught them to become better parents, thereby raising children who are more caring and sensitive individuals.³⁵⁶

The following stories told by Patricia D'Ercole of the Aber Suzuki Center illustrate the kind of impact that studying music through the Suzuki Method has had on individuals:

³⁵³ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 6.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

³⁵⁵ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 29.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

. . . I had a student who was in Book Six when she graduated high school. Really quiet gal. She came back so excited to tell me she played in three community orchestras a week, and met her husband who was a cellist. And now they're in the orchestras together, and music was such a part of her life. Or the kid that's getting his law degree that comes back, and when he comes home to visit, he always goes to the nursing home with his violin. Or the kid that is in Americore. Or the kid that became the emergency room physician; I go to his wedding, and after dinner, he takes off his tux jacket, goes by the wall, opens his violin case, and says, "I have a present for my wife," and plays Meditation from Thais. . . You know, that's what gets you! (patting her heart)³⁵⁷

When the Suzuki Method was first starting to gain momentum in the United States, some people criticized it for producing "robot-like" musicians because they said the kids just mimicked the recordings and did not play with individual expression and creativity. Patricia D'Ercole said that those involved with the Suzuki Method have disproved this theory over and over again.³⁵⁸ What were once intuitive ideas proposed by Dr. Suzuki are now being proved in academic data in the fields of music education and medicine.

The Suzuki Method has become so popular and accepted largely due to the work of educators like Margery Aber. Many of the first and finest Suzuki teachers in the US were also public school string teachers. Besides Margery Aber, this list included Milton Goldberg, Diana Tilson, and Anastasia Jempelis.³⁵⁹ As an example of how Dr. Suzuki's ideas caught on, many new string method books sold in the US now include a CD with the pieces to listen to as the Suzuki Method always has. Many other method books also help the teacher to instruct students by rote and then teach music reading later. This was an idea that Dr. Suzuki proposed. Teachers are also not as

³⁵⁷ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 30.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

afraid of involving parents in the learning process like they used to be before the Suzuki Method was popular.³⁶⁰ They understand the benefits of having the parent act as an instructor at home in between the lessons.

Gail Engebretson said that the Suzuki Method has raised the level of music education in the United States and worldwide. Many public schools in the US have had to cut funding in fine arts programs, so Suzuki programs have helped to fill that gap by providing music education to children. Children in other countries have also had a chance to learn to play an instrument because of the work of Suzuki teachers.³⁶¹ Dr. Suzuki and Margery Aber both believed in creating these musical opportunities for children worldwide.

Dee Martz wrote that the impact of the Suzuki Method on string playing has been “enormous.” More students are taking private lessons starting earlier in their lives. Hundreds and hundreds of well qualified string players audition for each position in symphony orchestras, and many of them had Suzuki training. She went on:

There has also been a huge impact on the style of teaching, technically and emotionally (specific positive reinforcement, belief in every child’s ability to learn etc.) Finally, the ongoing teacher training programs have improved the quality of teachers available even in low population areas.³⁶²

Jennifer Burton described the impact:

Well, I've been around long enough, although maybe not quite long enough, to see the musical community come around. I remember in the early years of Suzuki, the musical community was very, what's the word, didn't trust it. They thought it was musicians being robots. They thought it was very narrow minded, where you had all kids playing just a small amount of stuff. It was not at all looked at with understanding. It was kind of looked at with a thumbs down analysis of it.

³⁶⁰ D’Ercole, interview transcript, 28.

³⁶¹ Engebretson, interview transcript, 9.

³⁶² Martz, interview questionnaire e-mail, 5.

I think that now that enough children have gone through, students, and teachers, and with these Suzuki students, trained students getting into the symphonies, I think the proof is in the product. I think in that way, Talent Education has a different reputation. You can say all you want about the philosophy, but until you see the product, these children, and young adults who go into the communities to make the world a better place.³⁶³

Ann Marie Novak wrote about the impact of the Suzuki Method in the United States:

It certainly has changed string teaching in this country, but its influence is also felt in other instruments as well, just not to such a great degree. I know that the impact in the piano world has been much more than what most pianists would admit (for instance, so many other methods coming out with CD's of the printed music so that the students can benefit from listening).³⁶⁴

According to Jennifer Burton, Joanne Bath [a Suzuki teacher and teacher trainer at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina] talked about this:

I think the city council in Greenville has a lot of Suzuki parents on it. So you find Suzuki parents and Suzuki students are starting to get into the world. . . They could be engineers or firefighters or whatever, and they're just good people. In that way, we'll never know exactly how Talent Education has affected the world at large. But, certainly, in the musical community, we've come a long way.³⁶⁵

Influence of Margery Aber

Marilyn O'Boyle said the following about Aber's impact on her colleagues:

I think she had a big impact on her colleagues, really, because she was so positively enthusiastic about the Suzuki Method and I think was very instrumental in helping to establish the summer Suzuki institutes and all those kinds of things that have really been some of the main components of the Suzuki system here in the United States for sure.³⁶⁶

Paul Landefeld also commented on Aber's impact on her colleagues:

³⁶³ Burton, interview transcript, part 2, 7-8.

³⁶⁴ Novak, written responses, 4.

³⁶⁵ Burton, interview transcript part 2, 8.

³⁶⁶ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 2.

. . . [F]irst I'll talk about the colleagues that were at the university who were not part of the Suzuki program. I think she had quite an impact on them, because at first they were quite hesitant and skeptical that any of this is actually going to work and then as it turned out, it became the biggest thing on campus. So that was really – it sort of changed their view of Suzuki method and also changed her view of her place in the university community. So that was a real positive.

In terms of her other interactions with the staff that she had, she was open to receiving comments and exchanging ideas with the various faculty. . . It didn't mean necessarily that she was going to do what they suggest, but she would consider it, and if it was a good idea in merit, then she wasn't afraid to use it, and she would always credit somebody if she found a good idea from someone or another. She would be sure to credit them. That's where that idea came from.

She also had a great impact in the Suzuki movement. . . [S]he had a broad knowledge and such a great concern for children, but she just looked the part of being motherly and grandmotherly, so they took her words to heart, and then they also looked to her for – how to do something, because nobody had done a Suzuki institute before her.

There were a number of people around the country who were thinking of doing it, but she got to it first, and then Virginia Snyder, for example, in Kentucky wanted to do one, but she said, "I'll hold off on doing this in Louisville until after you've done the first one in Stevens Point."³⁶⁷

From Ann Marie Novak:

In general, I think that Marge was a great source of knowledge and experience. She also had a mischievous sense of humor. We, as colleagues, benefitted from all of these things.

Personally, her greatest gift to me (besides humor) was showing me how to look inside for the answers. . . (I was a young teacher when I met her, and I was prone to looking outward to find answers about my teaching) she gave me the courage to look inside.³⁶⁸

Miss Aber also had a huge impact on the community of Stevens Point,

Wisconsin. At the time the American Suzuki Institute started, Stevens Point was a

³⁶⁷ Landefeld, interview transcript, 4.

³⁶⁸ Novak, interview questionnaire e-mail, 1.

small town that had a state teacher's college. It contained only one circle of dormitories.³⁶⁹ Dr. Collier McLaughlin said:

It [Stevens Point] was small, and the Institute had a lot to do with its growth over the years because it brought people from all over the world there. But she was really a hero in the town and in the state. I can remember the mayor and the governor and people showing up, and the regard that the president of the university had for her. And this parent group that she established for our program, they would have done anything for her. The kids played all over that community – and again, that energy and enthusiasm, she was just a contagious person.

And what she did with the American Suzuki Institute became a big business that impacted the economics. When we first went there, there was one drug store, a locally owned drug store, a Red Owl Grocery Store, and maybe one fast food place across the street from the university.³⁷⁰

(The author of this study, having been to Stevens Point several times, notes that there are now many restaurants, stores, several hotels, shopping centers, and a fitness club there now.)

Collier McLaughlin continued:

Certainly, there were other factors that contributed to the growth of that school, that area, and the town, but . . . you cannot regularly bring in hundreds of people from across the country and make Stevens Point, Wisconsin a destination without it impacting the community. So I think there was the personal aspect, and then, there was the real business and economic impact and cultural impact.

When Kenichi [Ueda], the flute player, first came to America, he said he knew three names – He knew Los Angeles, New York, and Stevens Point.³⁷¹

Dr. Collier McLaughlin also said that many generations of children had their first exposure to a college campus and dorms when they attended the American Suzuki Institute. Even her own daughter and granddaughter, when visiting other college

³⁶⁹ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 4.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 4-5.

campuses, would mention how a certain dorm or furniture would look like those at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.³⁷²

Dr. Collier McLaughlin commented on the impact Margery Aber had on the United States:

Well, being the first of the institutes, she set a model. She was the bridge between the Summer School in Japan and what they do there, and the American model. She was so thorough in setting that model, in setting the teacher training, the opportunities, although, it wasn't formalized at that time, and the parent events, the recitals, the play-ins, and every aspect of it was – that exists today – was completely thought out and in place. And so, by the time we had formalized teacher training, there was a place for it to be, and then, the other models really bounced off of her. So that's a huge impact.

I truly believe that we have all those institutes today because she had the vision and the courage to – and the energy, to make the first one happen. Now, I'm sure somebody else would have, but she did.³⁷³

Everett Goodwin, a Suzuki teacher and clinician, said that Miss Aber influenced his teaching career: “I can say with gratitude that it was Marge Aber who got me started as a Suzuki clinician.” She recommended him as a teacher in 1978 at several locations in the US.³⁷⁴

Goodwin went on to say:

. . . It was challenging for me, but again as I look back on it, what can I say but be very grateful? We became very good friends later on, but those three years in Stevens Point were tough, and Marge was really great. We had Marge and Jenny [Burton] over every Tuesday for two years for supper. My wife cooked a meal because we worked hard, and then we all played at the Central Wisconsin Orchestra. Marge was concertmaster, I was assistant concertmaster, and Jenny sat behind us in the second stand. We would eat dinner every Tuesday night and go off to orchestra together, so we had that kind of close relationship.³⁷⁵

Goodwin further commented on working with Miss Aber:

³⁷² Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 5.

³⁷³ Ibid., 6.

³⁷⁴ Goodwin, interview transcript, 3.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

Marge, she was very big into camaraderie, and she started that ice cream social at Stevens Point, having all the teachers over. . . Marge had a many-faceted personality, but very strong, and when it was time to do things right, you better do it right. And when you worked for the Stevens Point Institute – I remember I was in charge of buttons one year, making buttons. You had to expect – if you worked for Marge, you were going to – and I don't think it's a bad idea – you started at the bottom and you worked your way up. So I was doing buttons, and it was not the best job, but we did it, you know.

So we worked hard for Marge. She was a mentor, she was an inspiration, she was a frustrater. I was really ticked with her at times. I had other times where I could say nothing but thank you, and now I'm grateful. So those were those intense years of '78 through '81 when I worked there. Then I came over to Stevens Point and she kept on hiring me to teach at the Institute. She was very supportive. We grew in our relationship.

I think for me it was better to be at a distance. Jenny was able to be there all the time. I remember one day I left Marge's office for something, and I was just upset, and I met Jenny in the hall. She said, "Oh Everett, just let it roll off your back like water off of a duck." That's how Jenny was with Marge. She was such a close colleague and friend and worker for Marge. So that was good, and Marge had people like that.

I think Pat D'Ercole became a very close associate and dear friend of Marge too, kind of taking Jenny's spot when Jenny left. That's what I think. I don't really know. So she had those very close friends too, working with her.

So then, from '78 until she died, I was always going over to the Institute and working over there and staying in touch. My dad died early on, and Marge came to the funeral – was very supportive – that's how Marge was.³⁷⁶

Miss Aber also had a strong global impact through her work. She put the small town of Stevens Point on the map. Many teachers from all over the world came to teach at the American Suzuki Institute. She believed in and lived Dr. Suzuki's idea of making the world a better place through teaching children music. She understood the positive global impact that Dr. Suzuki's philosophy could have, and she tried to create an environment in which that could happen.³⁷⁷ She traveled to many places around the

³⁷⁶ Goodwin, interview transcript, 5.

³⁷⁷ Collier McLaughlin, interview transcript, 7.

world to give workshops, and she helped establish Suzuki programs and institutes outside of the United States.

From Paul Landefeld:

Well, she certainly had a great impact on the entire world, or at least the Suzuki world. She was really known all over the world for her work both with Suzuki and her ability to actually implement all of this in a very user friendly and realistic way. . . Most, people thought, well this is fine in a Japanese society, but I don't know how it's going to work in Western culture, and she was – she was very, very much responsible for showing that it could work in many different cultural settings.³⁷⁸

Influence of the American Suzuki Institute

The influence of the American Suzuki Institute was great. It led to the formulation of the Suzuki Association of the Americas. It was also the Institute that others were modeled after. Pat D'Ercole spoke about the American Suzuki Institute:

You know, that was the place where people came to get training in the early days, if you wanted to see a lot of different teachers. This place and Eastman were probably the best. . . the most well-attended.³⁷⁹

The idea of Suzuki institutes spread not only throughout the United States, but also in Canada, Europe, and Latin American. Marilyn O'Boyle has done Suzuki teacher training in Latin America for a number of years. She lived and taught in South America for five years, and established Suzuki programs there. She has been going to the Peruvian Festival for twenty-six years.³⁸⁰

They are called Suzuki Festivals there [in Latin America], but they are modeled after the Suzuki institutes of the United States, have the teacher training components and the units, are really a way to connect the Latin American programs to the North American institutes and programs, and are a very important part of the Latin American participation in the SAA.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Landefeld, interview transcript, 5.

³⁷⁹ D'Ercole, interview transcript, 30.

³⁸⁰ O'Boyle, interview transcript, 8.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

Ms. O’Boyle explained that Margery Aber established a fund to help the South American Suzuki programs:

I think she really did see the importance of the Suzuki Method as a worldwide kind of effort, and the importance of really being able to have teacher training go on in South America was very important to her.

I am very grateful that she established that fund because it has helped many teachers to be able to travel to South America to do teacher-training courses. That is just the one additional thing I would like to add, that she did have really a global vision of the Suzuki Method and saw that it really was something that needed to benefit all of the children of the world and especially an interest in the children of South America.³⁸²

Jennifer Burton summarized her thoughts of Miss Aber:

Marge showed Americans – she helped carve a path. I think she took the role of trailblazer in stride. It never overwhelmed her. She just went about her business because it was what she loved to do. She was a trailblazer, and I think as time went on, Americans in particular – Americans like quality products, and Marge provided that. We like excellence.

She was a trailblazer at a time when it was not a popular concept, but she pressed on, and was able to see the fruits of her work in her lifetime. I’m sure that was very satisfying for her, to see to what extent the Suzuki Method has spread through the world because she was an ambassador for Suzuki in Europe, and Australia, and North and South America. I think she has been to all different places, so I think that was very satisfying to her.³⁸³

Diane Slone concluded her interview with the following comments:

I think of all of the people that I experienced as a child and a young adult in this country in Suzuki, I feel like she stands out to me even now as somebody who was really very present with every student and parent – where that pair of people were when they got in front of her for a lesson. And I never felt like in any encounter with her whether it was in a lesson or any other type of situation, I never felt like her own agenda got in front of what was in the best interest of the children with whom she was working. I can’t say that for everybody that I encountered as a student or as an adult.³⁸⁴

³⁸² O’Boyle, interview transcript, 8.

³⁸³ Jennifer Burton, interview transcript part 2, 8-9.

³⁸⁴ Slone, interview transcript, 10.

Gail Engebretson said that Miss Aber was totally devoted to her students. The Suzuki program meant the world to her. She didn't have a family of her own, so her students were her children. Gail and Margery would talk about that once in a while. It's not that she didn't want her own family. Her life just didn't turn out that way. She felt that because she didn't have a family of her own to raise and support, she had more time, energy, and resources to devote to her students.³⁸⁵

Importance of Self-Improvement as a Teacher

Teacher training was very important to Margery Aber. It was and still is a main goal of the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point. Other institutes, modeled after the ASI at Stevens Point, have become locations for teacher training as well. Miss Aber believed in the idea of constant self-improvement as both a teacher and a musician. This was seen in her preparation of solo recitals even after the age of seventy-five, her eagerness to learn more about teaching from Dr. Suzuki even though she had already retired from the public school system, her founding of the International Research Symposium on Talent Education, and her constant eagerness to learn by attending lectures and workshops. Diane Slone commented on Aber's endless love of learning:

I have little snippets of pictures in my mind from all different times in my life where we would be sitting around after a concert or waiting for a meeting or something, and she would be experimenting with something about her finger position, or something about her bow hold, or asking questions; trying to find if other people had a better way to do something than what she was doing. I think she was very curious. I think that fed her love of learning a lot.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Engebretson, interview transcript, 11.

³⁸⁶ Slone, interview transcript, 7.

Not only did Margery exhibit this trait herself, but she encouraged the idea of lifelong learning with other teachers. She wanted the teachers and future teachers she had contact with to have the best experiences possible in order to benefit the children. Beth Titterington, a Suzuki teacher trainer, commented in her article, “How do you . . . ?” in the *American Suzuki Journal*:

In the early eighties, Dr. Suzuki often visited the summer institute at Stevens Point, WI. While on the staff at the American Suzuki Institute, I became indebted to Margery Aber for many wonderful professional experiences. One in particular stands out. Miss Aber would often schedule Dr. Suzuki with each faculty member in a group lesson setting. This was a teaching-learning combination I will never forget! Opportunities like this—to work “side by side” with people as supportive and gracious as Miss Aber and Dr. Suzuki—are among the hallmarks of our Suzuki community.³⁸⁷

Later in this article, Ms. Titterington described how she and her colleagues continued this idea of “teaching-learning” in their program in Kansas City by creating a free workshop for teachers on a Sunday if they agreed to teach for free in the Saturday student workshop.³⁸⁸ This is just one example of Miss Aber’s ability to inspire others.

³⁸⁷ Beth Titterington, “How Do You . . . ?,” *American Suzuki Journal* 24, no. 1 (1995): 14.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Margery Aber worked very hard throughout her life to share her talents in performance and teaching with others. She spent countless hours doing this in service to others and to make this world a better place. Her strong will, energy, and work-ethic helped her to set up a year-round Suzuki program in Stevens Point, Wisconsin as well as the first Suzuki institute outside of Japan. This institute has been a model for the over seventy Suzuki institutes that have since started in the United States, not to mention many others around the world. She helped found the International Research Symposium on Talent Education, which has made great strides in academic research of music education and early childhood development.

Miss Aber's strong will and determination to achieve her goals allowed her to accomplish so much. This came at a time when women were perhaps not taken so seriously yet as leaders. She saw a need, and wanted to fill it, no matter how hard it was to accomplish. Not only did she have a specific dream in mind in setting up both the American Suzuki Talent Education Center and the American Suzuki Institute, but she also had the practical and organizational skills with which to accomplish those goals. The combination of these traits is rarely seen in most people.

Margery's dedication to the Suzuki Method, her students, and the parents of her students was exceptional. She donated much of her own money to the Suzuki Association of the Americas so that more children might be positively affected by the high ideals of the Suzuki Method. This was more important to her than acquiring material possessions or wealth, as was demonstrated by her simple way of life.

Producing professional musicians was not her main goal, but producing caring young people with noble hearts was of utmost importance to her. She often spent extra hours sledding, canoeing, and picnicking with her students and families in an effort to connect with them as individuals. She really cared about her students and their families both inside and outside of her studio walls.

Another impressive thing about Miss Aber was her boundless energy. She was very physically active, even after her second retirement. Margery would often outlast the parents of her students in sledding and canoeing even though they were at least half her age. She always had a child-like spark of energy and adventure.

There have been thousands of children, parents, and teachers who have been positively influenced by Miss Aber's teaching and the establishment of the American Suzuki Institute. At the end of her book, she explained her motivation:

The children are our joy and our reason for being here. Their laughter, shy smiles, concentrated efforts and the beautiful music they make are our reward. Dr. Suzuki's dream was to help children reach their potential through music. The American Suzuki Institute, through Ability Development, excellent teachers, and caring, nurturing parents, makes me ask everyone to stand up, pat your heads, and with me give a rousing Hip Hip Hooray!³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ Aber, *Hip! Hip! Hooray!*, 112.

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- Klein, John. Interview by author. Skype online interview, June 12, 2011. Digital audio recording and transcript located at author’s residence.
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- Muelling, Ed and Judy. Interview by author. Phone interview, March 28, 2011. Digital
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Digital audio recording and transcript located at author's residence.

Appendix A

University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Margery Aber and her Contributions to the Suzuki Method in the United States
Principal Investigator: Ana Maria Wilson
Department: School of Music

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma. You were selected as a possible participant because you knew Margery Aber in person.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Article I. Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is:

To investigate the life and contributions of Margery Aber.

Article II. Number of Participants

About fifteen to twenty-five people will take part in this study.

Article III. Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Be interviewed on video camera and/or digital voice recorder; possibly answer questions by phone or by e-mail.

Article IV. Length of Participation

About one to three total hours if interviewed by phone or online. Up to six hours total if interviewed in person.

This study has the following risks:

Being acknowledged as a source of information for the dissertation, being quoted in the document.

Article V. Benefits of being in the study are

Publishing the contributions of Margery Aber and the development of the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point.

Article VI. Confidentiality

Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Institutional Review Board.

***You may be cited and/or quoted in the document and listed as an interview source. ***

Article VII. Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study.

Article VIII. Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Article IX. Waivers of Elements of Confidentiality

Your name will not be linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. Please select one of the following options

_____ I consent to being quoted directly.

_____ I do not consent to being quoted directly.

_____ I consent to having my name reported with quoted material.

_____ I do not consent to having my name reported with quoted material

Article X. Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. _____ Yes _____ No.

Article XI. Video Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on a video recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to video recording. _____ Yes _____ No.

Article XII. Photographing of Study Participants/Activities

In order to preserve an image related to the research, photographs may be taken of participants. You have the right to refuse to allow photographs to be taken without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to photographs. _____ Yes _____ No.

Article XIII.

Article XIV. Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at:

Ana Maria Wilson [contact information eliminated for publication]

Advisor: Dr. Eugene Enrico [contact information eliminated for publication]

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Article XV. Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature

Date

Appendix B

University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board Description of Study Protocol

Submission of a copy of a grant application does not replace completion of this form. Please respond to each item. Incomplete submission forms will be returned to you.

- 1) Click below to describe the research design of the study.

The document of this study will contain a brief biography of the late Margery Aber. It will then describe her contributions to the dissemination of the Suzuki Method with particular focus on her work in the United States. Various friends and relatives of Margery Aber will be given a questionnaire to complete and/or be interviewed in person, by phone, or online. The interviews will be recorded by video and/or digital audio recording devices. Transcripts of the interviews will be made by the principal investigator. These will be used as sources that will be cited in the document.

- 2) In the input area below, describe the recruitment procedures. Attach a copy of any material used to recruit subjects (e.g., informed consent forms, advertisement, flyers, telephone scripts, verbal recruitment scripts, cover letters, etc.) Explain who will approach potential participants to request participation in the research study and what will be done to protect the individual's privacy in this process.

Interviewees will be given a script of questions. The subjects will be recruited based on the principal investigator's research in determining who knew Margery Aber well during her lifetime. Some ideas of subjects to interview have been given by colleagues of the principal investigator. Interviewees will be given a script of questions to study before the interview. Subjects may wish to respond in writing if they chose; however, this is not required. They will also be given an interview in person, by phone, or online. If the subject would rather respond in writing as opposed to being interviewed, this is acceptable to the principal investigator. Naming the subjects in the document of the study will be essential, as their responses will be used as cited sources

of information in order to add validity to the study.

- 3) Below, list and describe the tasks that participants will be asked to perform, including a step-by-step description for each procedure you plan to use with your subjects. Provide the approximate duration of subject participation for each procedure.

Subjects will be given a script of questions. They may also be interviewed. (See number 2.) In-person interviews may take up to six hours of time. This will be done in periods at the discretion of the interviewee as to not inconvenience him or her. If interviewees chose to give written responses, the amount of time they use to answer the responses will vary according to their wishes. If interviews are done by phone or online, each portion will not take more than one hour. Any communication bills incurred will be paid for by the principal investigator. The PI will make the phone calls. The phone or online interviews will take no more than an hour per portion unless the interviewee wants to continue past that time. No more than three hours total will be required of subjects interviewed by phone or online. Those interviews will take place at times convenient to the interviewee and interviewer.

- 4) Describe your data collection procedures. If data collection instruments will be used, indicate the time necessary to complete them, the frequency of administration, and the setting in which they will be administered, such as telephone, mail, or face-to-face interview. (You must submit a copy of each study instrument, including all questionnaires, surveys, protocols for interviews, etc.)

As stated previously, a script of questions will be given to the subjects. If they do not wish to be interviewed, they may simply give written responses to the questions. If they agree to being interviewed, this will occur face to face at a location convenient to the interviewee, by phone, or online. The interviews will be recorded by video and/or digital audio recording. No more than a total of six hours of face-to-face interviews will take place with the same subject. These times will be divided according to sessions determined by the interviewee's convenience. No more than a total of three hours of phone or online interviews will take place for the same subject. These sessions will be divided according to the convenience of the interviewee. No more than one hour of time per session will be used for phone or online interviews. Online interviews may take place by a method convenient to both the interviewee and principal investigator. Examples may include Skype, MSN Messenger

Chat, or another online chat medium.

- 5) Click below and provide background information for the study including the objective of the proposed research, purpose, research question, hypothesis and other information deemed relevant. Include up to 5 references from the literature.

The objective of this study is to give a brief biography of Margery Aber and to describe her contributions to the dissemination of the Suzuki Method, especially in the United States. Focus will be given to the founding of the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Sample of Literature:

Aber, Margery V. *Hip! Hip! Hooray! 30 years with the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point, Wisconsin*. Edited by Gail Shoemaker. Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Worzalla Printing, 2001.

_____. "My Teacher, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki." *American Suzuki Journal* 26 (Summer 1998): 25-6.

_____. "ASTA Fiftieth Anniversary: Suzuki Method Takes Hold in America: the Growth of Summer Institutes." *American String Teacher* 46 no. 3 (Summer 1996): 29-31.

Atwood, JoAnn S. *The Suzuki Experience: An Overview of the American Suzuki Institute*. University of Wisconsin--Stevens Point, 1977.

D'Ercole, Patricia. "Margery Aber and the American Suzuki Institute." *American Suzuki Journal* 21, no. 2 (1993): 22-7.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

How long did you know Ms. Aber?

When and where did you first meet her?

In what professional capacity did you get to know Ms. Aber?

Can you describe the impact she had on her students?

her colleagues?

the parents of her students?

the community?

the United States?

the world?

What was her personality like?

Was her personality any different when she was teaching?

What made her teaching unique?

How did she convey her enthusiasm towards her students?

Did she use any teaching techniques that were helpful to you?

In what ways did she model the American Suzuki Institute after the summer institute in Matsumoto, Japan?

Why do you think that this institute grew so much in popularity when it started?

What attracted Ms. Aber's students towards her?

What do you think she most admired about Dr. Suzuki?

What drove her to be a woman of action and not just of ideas?

What motivated her to get things done, even when she had to stay up for repeated late nights?

What was her energy level usually like?

Do you know why she was drawn specifically to the Suzuki Method?

What new skills do the Suzuki teachers obtain from The American Suzuki Institute or other Suzuki institutes?

Why was there a need for the American Suzuki Institute to be created?

Why was there a need for the Suzuki Association of the Americas to be created?

Why was Margery Aber the right person for the job of starting the American Suzuki Institute?

What has been the impact of the Suzuki Method in the United States as a whole?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Patricia D'Ercole

How long did you know Ms. Aber?

When and where did you first meet her?

What was her personality like?

Was her personality any different when she was teaching?

What made her teaching unique?

How did she convey her enthusiasm towards her students?

Did she use any teaching techniques that were helpful to you?

In what ways did she model the American Suzuki Institute after the summer institute in Matsumoto, Japan?

Why do you think that this institute grew so much in popularity when it started?

What continues to attract students and teachers to the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point?

Does this institute have anything unique about it that one cannot find at other Suzuki institutes?

What attracted Ms. Aber's students towards her?

Who do you think were Ms. Aber's role models?

What do you think she most admired about Dr. Suzuki?

What drove her to be a woman of action and not just of ideas?

What motivated her to get things done, even when she had to stay up for repeated late nights?

What was her energy level usually like?

Do you know why she was drawn specifically to the Suzuki Method?

As a Suzuki teacher at the ASI at Stevens Point, where do you see the future of that institute going in the next year?

Five years?

Ten years?

Twenty years?

In your opinion, will there still be a need for institutes in 30 years even though there is already technology like video conferencing?

What new skills do the Suzuki students come away from the institute with?

What new skills do the Suzuki teachers come away from the institute with?

How does the ASI help to train new Suzuki teachers?

What opportunities are offered to the teacher trainees while they are there in August for the ASI?

What was the enrollment of the latest American Suzuki Institute?

Number of teachers:

Number of students:

Number of teacher trainees:

Parents:

Is the American Suzuki Institute a family event?

If so, why?

What results are seen by teachers, students, and parents from the Institute?

What is it that they take away from the Institute?

What are the demographics for the American Suzuki Institute at Stevens Point?

Are these primarily local people?

Do the people fly in from all over the country?

Which regions do they mostly come from?

Do they come from different parts of the world for the American Suzuki Institute?

Is there an age group for the students that is more prevalent?

What do the parents do while they are there?

What do the children do while they are there?

What do the teacher trainees do while they are there?

What is a typical teacher's schedule like at the Institute?

What is a typical child's schedule like at the Institute?

Why was there a need for the institute to be created?

Why was there a need for the Suzuki Association of the Americas to be created?

What does the Institute do for parents, children, and teachers?

What percentage of students return to the Institute?

Is the Institute meant to be a one time event for a child?

Is it expected that the students come back each year?

If so, how is the Institute geared towards that goal?

Why was Margery Aber the right person for the job of starting the Institute?

What has been the impact of the Suzuki Method in the United States as a whole?