

# Writer, Poet, Accomplished Musician

By Corinne Steinbrenner

CGS Assistant Dean **Robert Emery** was devoted to the art of writing, and to his students.

Whether helping students craft persuasive essays as director of the College of General Studies Writing Center or penning his own songs and poetry, Robert Webster Emery was devoted to the art of writing. “Rather than specializing in a given period or form of writing, I was interested in them all,” he once said, “and indulged this interest shamelessly.”

Emery, a CGS assistant dean and adjunct assistant professor of rhetoric, died on June 14, 2010. He was 66.

Born in Newton, Mass., in 1943, Emery (GRS’70, SED’81) earned a bachelor’s degree in English at the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 and a master’s degree in English and a doctorate in education at BU.

He joined CGS in 1978 as director of the Study Center, a precursor to the Writing Center, and eventually took on administrative duties as an assistant dean and teaching responsibilities in the CGS division of rhetoric.

Emery was a dedicated teacher, always generous with his time. “He was committed to his students’ growth, not only as writers but as thinkers and as people as well,” says Matthew Parfitt, an associate professor and chair of the rhetoric division. “He was somebody who was enormously experienced and qualified, and yet students felt they had a very personal relationship with him. He was unstinting in the way he gave his time and his gifts to them each individually.”

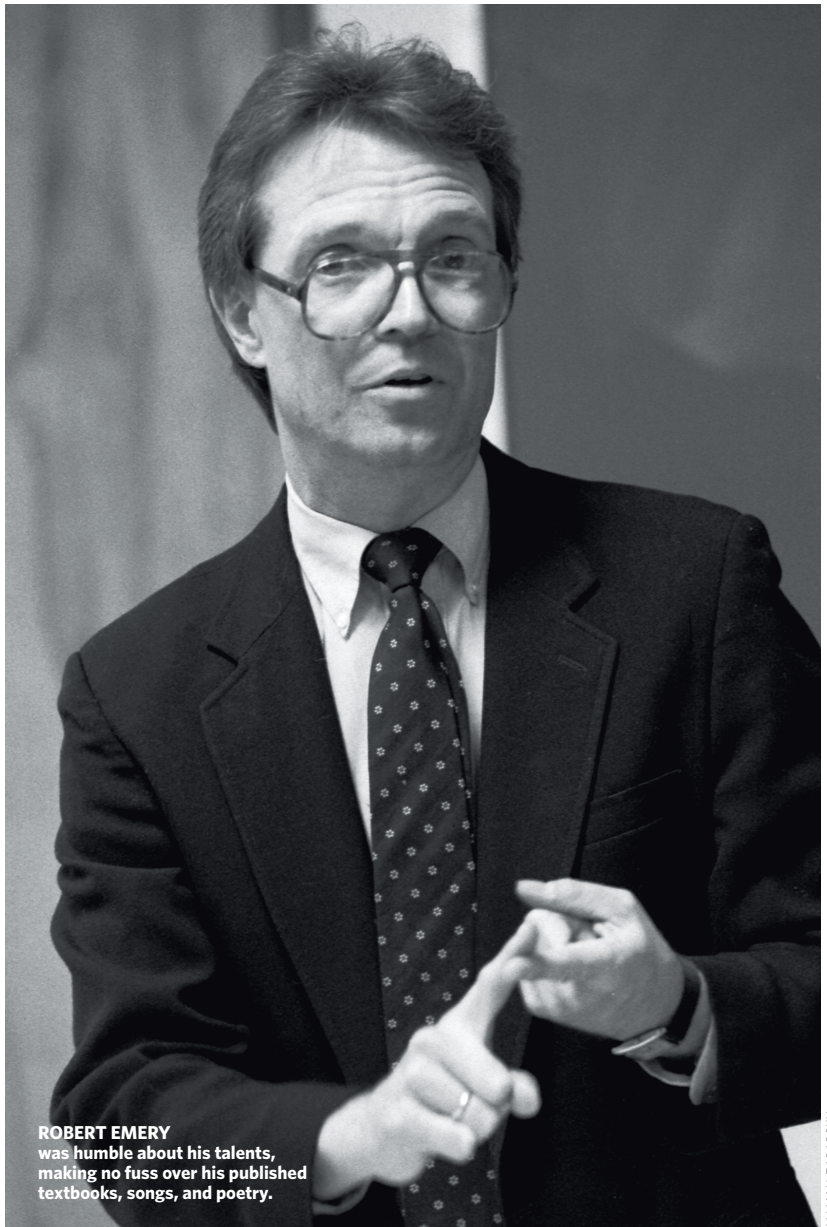
His colleagues say that Emery was humble about his own talents. He made no fuss over his published textbooks, songs, and poetry, and only when he pulled out his guitar to play for college social functions did faculty and students realize Emery

was an accomplished musician.

Emery grew up in a musical family. “The old farmhouse where I was raised was filled with any number of fiddles, potato-back mandolins, ukuleles, saxophones, a beautiful mahogany piano, and an old pump organ,” he once wrote. He began playing professionally at age 14. He played guitar and sang with the bluegrass band Northern

Lights in the 1970s and 1980s and also wrote, played, and recorded with Grammy winners Peter Rowan, Del McCoury, and Alison Brown.

College of General Studies Dean Linda Wells has announced plans to name the CGS Writing Center in Emery’s memory. A dedication ceremony for the center will take place on October 29.



**ROBERT EMERY** was humble about his talents, making no fuss over his published textbooks, songs, and poetry.

KALMAN ZABARSKY