

Gary Allan Stenehjem, whose entire life revolved around music as an educator and professional performer, died Saturday, May 2, 2009, in a Minot hospital. Most of his 44-year career was spent in Minot where he taught thousands of young musicians who went on to musical careers of their own.

Mr. Stenehjem was born Oct. 31, 1942, in Williston, a son of Gilman A. and Marian L. (Sorben) Stenehjem. Raised at Williston, he started piano lessons at age four. By fifth grade at Williston Central Elementary School, he was playing the cornet. Following his 1960 graduation from Williston High School, he enrolled at Minot State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in music education in 1964. From 1972 through 1975, he spent the summer months at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, working towards his master's degree in music education.

He began teaching music at the public school in Ryder in 1965. Three years later, he went to Westhope where he taught for a year. In 1969, he was hired by the Minot Public Schools. He taught at Jim Hill Middle School from 1969 to 1973 and again from 1982 until his retirement in 1996. During the years between 1973 and 1982, he was on the music staff at Minot High School's Central Campus. Every year, he took his students who played in marching bands to perform in the Williston and sometimes in the Bismarck band days. In 2009, Williston named Gary the grand marshal for the Williston Band Day. This was the second time he had been honored.

He also taught private music lessons, was a piano tuner and church organist. He served in the latter capacity at Bethany Lutheran Church in Minot from 1964 to 1972 and at First Lutheran in Minot from 1974 until his death.

Over the years, he played in a number of dance bands and other musical groups. The trumpet and baritone horn were his instruments. He performed with the Collegiates, Pete Goetz, Scotch & Soda, Mark IV, Skeeters, and Hal's Quartet. He also played with the Minot Veterans of Foreign Wars, Joe Alme and Ed Manteufel big bands, and the Minot Elks Band. He was a member of the Minot Drum and Bugle Corps and of the Minot Community Concert Band from 2000-2009. He played with the Minot Brass Band from 1996 until his death, serving as director from 2003 to 2009.

He also was active with the Williston City Band, the Williston Elks Band, and the Williston Drum and Bugle Corps.

He had been a member of the Minot and North Dakota Music Educators National Conference, Phi Mu Alpha Music Fraternity, the American Guild of Organists, Phi Sigma Pi Professional Fraternity, and Tau Kappa Epsilon Social Fraternity. He held memberships in the Minot, North Dakota, and National Education Associations.

He was a member of First Lutheran Church of Minot, the Minot Elks and Eagles lodges, the American Legion and the American Association of Retired Persons.

The MSU Alumni Association named him a recipient of its Golden Award in 2008.

Survivors: his sister and her husband, Margaret Jean and Arne Totdahl, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; a niece and her husband, Kimberly and Randall Blohowiak, Appleton, Wisconsin, a great-niece and great-nephew, Reagan and Pierce Blohowiak. His beloved dog Marty, never far from his side, also survives.



*In Loving Memory
Of
Gary A. Stenehjem
1942-2009*