

James R. Murphy is a graduate of Central Methodist College in Fayette, Mo.; the U.S. Army Music School in Washington, D.C.; and, received his Master's degree in Music Education from the VanderCook College of Music in Chicago, ILL.

From 1946 through 1957, Mr. Murphy served as director of Instrumental Music in the public schools in Brownsville, Texas. While at Brownsville, Mr. Murphy conducted both the concert and marching bands and supervised the instrumental music program throughout the entire system for 12 years. Under his direction, the Brownsville high school band was awarded a first division in the highest class of competition in concert, marching, and sight-reading for 11 years under the Texas University Interscholastic League Music Plan.

In 1950 and again in 1952, the band served as the clinic band in Chicago at the Mid-West National Band Clinic. On three other occasions, the band entered the Tri-State Band Festival at Enid, Oklahoma, where they were awarded a first division in concert, marching, and sight-reading, the Grand Sweepstakes Award, first place in the Million Dollar Parade, and were recipients of the Outstanding Concert Band Award in the highest class of competition.

Mr. Murphy served as guest clinician and adjudicator throughout the state of Texas for 12 years and was elected State Band Chairman for the Texas Music Educators Association. He has also directed concert and marching bands in clinics at the University of Indiana; Western State College at Gunnison, Co.; the VanderCook College of Music in Chicago, Ill.; the Oklahoma City University; The University of Wisconsin - Madison; State Teachers College, Chadron, Nebraska; State University of Oklahoma; and, the Music Educators National Conference. In addition, he has conducted numerous high school clinics and adjudication assignments throughout Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Montana.

Mr. Murphy is a Professor Emeritus of Music and former Conductor of Bands at the University of Minnesota - Duluth. Other teaching duties included conducting applied brass and supervision of instrumental music majors in student teaching. He was also a member of the Graduate Faculty.

Mr. Murphy is presently serving as Instrumental Music Consultant in the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas. He and his wife, Barbara, a vocal music teacher in the Northside Independent School District, reside in Hollywood Park.

Mr. Murphy is a member of the American Bandmasters Association, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Beta Mu, the Texas Bandmasters Association, the Music Educators National Conference, and the Texas Music Educators Association.

## TRIBUTE TO DECEASED FACULTY MEMBERS

JAMES ROBERT MURPHY

1918-1983

James R. Murphy, professor emeritus and a former head of the Department of Music, the University of Minnesota at Duluth, died of cancer on June 17, 1983, at the Northeast Baptist Hospital in San Antonio, Texas.

Professor Murphy was born in Logansport, Indiana, on February 16, 1918.

He was a graduate of Central Methodist College, Fayette, Missouri, the United States Army Music School, Washington, D.C., and the VanderCook College of Music, Chicago, Illinois.

From 1946 through 1957 Professor Murphy served as the director of Instrumental Music in the Brownsville, Texas, public schools. In addition to supervising that system's instrumental programs he conducted the concert and marching bands. For eleven years his Brownsville High School Band was awarded first division in concert, marching, and sight-reading under the Texas University Interscholastic League Music Plan in the highest class of competition. Invited to be the clinic band, his musical organization was further honored in 1950 and 1952 at the Mid-West National Band Clinic in Chicago. On three other occasions the group captured first division in concert, marching, and sight-reading at the Tri-State Band Festival at Enid, Oklahoma, winning in addition the Grand Sweepstakes Award, first place in the Million Dollar Parade, and the Outstanding Concert Band Award in the highest class of competition.

For 12 years Professor Murphy served as guest clinician and adjudicator throughout the state of Texas. He was elected and officiated as Band Chairman for the Texas Music Educators' Association.

more

Adjudication and conducting invitations took him to numerous high school clinics throughout the states of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Montana.

College concert and marching bands were under his baton in clinics at the University of Indiana, Western State College at Gunnison, Colorado, VanderCook College of Music, Oklahoma City University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the Nebraska State Teachers College (now Chadron State College), the State University of Oklahoma, and the Music Educators National Conference.

Professor Murphy brought a rich harvest of music repertoire, conducting expertise, and teaching experience to his position at the Duluth Campus in September, 1958. His dedication to music as a profound art exacted every ounce of his energies and he demanded one's all regardless of whether one was having a studio lesson, learning to conduct, preparing to teach, or playing in one of his ensembles.

Proficient in his comprehension of the literature and attuned to its emotions, he became one with it, his imagery stimulating the performers to professional heights beyond their imagined competencies. Nothing stood between the score, his empathizing, and the baton as he welded the notes into a listening experience to be remembered.

In June, 1980, Professor Murphy and his wife Barbara left for San Antonio, Texas, where he became an Instrumental Music Consultant and Barbara, a gifted choral musician, continued her career with the Northeast Independent School District. In April of that year Professor Murphy was the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award bestowed him by Central Methodist College. He retired in July, 1982.

more

**JAMES ROBERT MURPHY --- 3**

**Professor Murphy was a member of the American Bandmasters Association, Phi Nu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Beta Mu, the Texas Bandmasters Association, the Music Educators National Conference, and the Texas Music Educators Association.**

**Surviving are Barbara, his wife, and his four children, Michael, John, Patricia, and Kathleen. To all of them we offer our sympathy.**

**Interment is in the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.**

**- END -**

# A Tribute to James Robert Murphy

1918-1983

James R. Murphy, professor emeritus and a former head of the Department of Music, the University of Minnesota at Duluth, died of cancer on June 17, 1983, at the Northeast Baptist Hospital in San Antonio, Texas.

Professor Murphy was born in Logansport, Indiana, on February 16, 1918.

He was a graduate of Central Methodist College, Fayette, Missouri, the United States Army Music School, Washington, D.C., and the VanderCook College of Music, Chicago, Illinois.

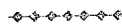
From 1946 through 1957 Professor Murphy served as the director of Instrumental Music in the Brownsville, Texas, public schools. In addition to supervising that system's instrumental programs he conducted the concert and marching bands. For eleven years his Brownsville High School Band was awarded first division in concert, marching, and sight-reading under the Texas University Interscholastic League Music Plan in the highest class of competition. Invited to be the clinic band, his musical organization was further honored in 1950 and 1952 at the Mid-West National Band Clinic in Chicago. On three other occasions the group captured first division in concert, marching, and sight-reading at the Tri-State Band Festival at Enid, Oklahoma, winning in addition the Grand Sweepstakes Award, first place in the Million Dollar Parade, and the Outstanding Concert Band Award in the highest class of competition.

For 12 years Professor Murphy served as guest clinician and adjudicator throughout the state of Texas. He was elected and officiated as Band Chairman for the Texas Music Educators' Association.

Professor Murphy brought a rich harvest of music repertoire, conducting expertise, and teaching experience to his position at the Duluth Campus in September, 1958. His dedication to music as a profound art exacted every ounce of his energies and he demanded one's all regardless of whether one was having a studio lesson, learning to conduct, preparing

to teach, or playing in one of his ensembles.

In June, 1980, Professor Murphy and his wife Barbara left for San Antonio, Texas, where he became an Instrumental Music Consultant and Barbara, a gifted choral musician, continued her career with the Northeast Independent School District. In April of that year Professor Murphy was the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award bestowed him by Central Methodist College. He retired in July, 1982.



James Murphy, a band chairman of TMEA in the 50's passed away in June. He was a leader of the Texas band movement in the valley for a number of years.

Surviving are Barbara, his wife, and his four children, Michael, John, Patricia, and Kathleen. To all of them we offer our sympathy.

We present here two tributes from two friends, Tony Castellanos, a former student, edited from remarks read at James' funeral, and Robert Vezzetti, who inherited the famous Brownsville Golden Eagle Band when Jim moved to Minnesota.

## BY ROBERT VEZZETTI

I had the privilege of working with Murph and the honor of inheriting the system he built. I think of Jim as a giant among the second generation of great Texas band directors. I believe as a result of his high standards of excellence he became a teacher of teachers. He did not intend for this to occur, it was something that grew as a result of his ability to take the children of "common folk" and make great music which placed him in that position of musical and teaching leadership. His influence transcended the city limits of Brownsville, then a sleepy border town, the Rio Grande Valley and even the state of Texas. His philosophy and skill in making students "do what they were capable of" still lives in his former students no matter what their station in life from university professor to mailman.

Many things we young directors take

for granted — band hall, purchase of equipment and music by the school district, assistants and staff, are a direct result of the battles fought by Murph and others like him.

I spoke to Murph a short time before his passing. It was a pleasant but difficult chat. Now that I think back on that conversation I should have said . . . "Thanks Murph for your high standards and faith in young people, thanks for sharing with us the knowledge of how to obtain those standards, thanks for the many material things we now enjoy, but most of all, thanks for the privilege of knowing you, I wish it could have been for a longer time."

## BY TONY CASTELLANOS

When Barbara Murphy asked me to say a few words about her husband I started by jotting down the many honors, awards and recognition that the man we knew as Murph had received during his lifetime. But somehow all of that did not really describe the man I knew; nor could a list of achievements detail the influence James Murphy had on band music in this state, and certainly lists and honors could not describe the tremendous impact the man had on the people that knew him, especially his students.

Knowing Murphy was an experience. He was stubborn; he was blunt; he had many strengths and he had some weaknesses; he was demanding; but above all he was brutally honest — I say brutally honest because to friend and non-friend alike, Murphy always expressed exactly what he believed. But Murphy was also very sentimental, although I don't think he allowed very many people to see that side of him.

To say that Murphy was demanding is putting it mildly. Why then did we as students respond to him and his methods? We responded and gave our best because we knew and felt that Murphy had that burning desire for each one of us to succeed — to become somebody. And once we put on the band uniform, and we learned our music we were somebody and we were unique.

## JAMES R. MURPHY

When Barbara Murphy asked me to say a few words about her husband, I started by jotting down the many honors, awards and recognition that the man we knew as Murph had received during his lifetime. But somehow all of that did not really describe the man I knew; nor could a list of achievements detail the influence James Murphy had on band music in this state, and certainly lists and honors could not describe the tremendous impact the man had on the people that knew him, especially his students.

Knowing Murphy was an experience. He was stubborn; he was blunt; he had many strengths and he had some weaknesses; he was demanding; but above all he was brutally honest--I say brutally honest because to friend and non-friend alike, Murphy always expressed exactly what he believed. But Murphy was also very sentimental, although I don't think he allowed very many people to see that side of him. Murphy hated with a passion intolerance and injustice, and he would never, but never, forgive anyone who played quarter notes as eighth notes. He was driven to create music at the expense of everything else, and quite often at the expense of those near and dear to him. In short Murphy was a complex and many dimensioned individual.

To better illustrate the man I have just attempted to describe, I would like to share with you some events that I either witnessed personally or had first hand information:

The year was 1946 and Murphy came to Brownsville, Texas, a sleepy little town of 18,000 on the Mexican border. They told Murphy not to go to Brownsville --something about too many Mexicans and, therefore, not a good place to build a band. I was in grammar school, and I joined Murphy's first music class; I was in his high school band, taught with him in Brownsville after I graduated from college, and then when Murphy was ready to return to Texas from Minnesota, I was in a position to hire him as the Music Consultant in the Edgewood School District, where he served until he retired a year ago almost to this date. I guess you can say that I was there at the beginning and at the end of his quest for great music.

So Murphy started his band program there in Brownsville, and immediately he made an impact--an impact that was felt by everyone in the community.

You see there was only one thing that mattered to Murphy and that was how well you played your horn. Remember that this was over thirty years ago and minority students were looked down upon. Consider the impact on a poor Hispanic kid, whose father worked in the fields and whose mother worked as a maid; a kid who was poor yet here he was sitting "first chair" and being recognized, judged and respected on his ability alone, while the banker's or lawyer's kid would be sitting playing "second" or "third." And consider the reverse--a banker's or lawyer's kid sitting "first chair" not because his father was important, but because he had earned it. In Murphy's band we challenged and were challenged for "chairs" and "leadership"--in front of God and everyone. Can you see the genuine respect and admiration we students had for one another--rich kid, poor kid, Hispanic, Anglo.

When you look back at the printed programs of those years you see names like Garcia and Smith and Gonzales and Jones all interwoven and ranked according to ability and playing together to create great music. This was Murphy's law. And to this day, people that played and learned this under Murphy are following those teachings. That determination of Murphy's to judge a person on his ability alone is what made the Brownsville Golden Eagle Band the success it was. Murphy would not have it any other way. Not only was great music created, but Murphy's band provided a tremendous experience in race relations, in tolerance and in respect for your fellow man.

Band rehearsals under Murphy were an experience. And after each rehearsal you either left the band hall feeling good because something had been accomplished and music created, or you left feeling bad because not much had been accomplished. Each rehearsal was a happening and an experience.

To say that Murphy was demanding is putting it mildly. Why then did we as students respond to him and his methods? We responded and gave our best because we knew and felt that Murphy had that burning desire for each one of us to succeed--to become somebody. And once we put on the band uniform, and we learned our music we were somebody and we were unique.

I remember one day that our principal, Mr. Hanna, came to the band hall and he seemed to be spending more time than usual in the band hall. (This was unusual because Mr. Hanna almost never came to the rehearsals, and when he did

he would never stay more than a minute. Someone said this was because Mr. Hanna was a deacon in the Baptist Church and he did not like to hear some of Murphy's "salty" language that he sometimes used in rehearsals.) Murphy finished the number we were rehearsing, told us to get the next one ready, and stepped off the podium and greeted Mr. Hanna. This is what followed:

Mr. Hanna: "Murphy, what is Buster Sanderson doing in the band?"

Murph: "Buster is one of my better French horn players."

Mr. Hanna: "Has he been here all this time?"

Murph: "What do you mean? Buster is always here. He's never absent."

Mr. Hanna: "That's funny. I withdrew Buster from school two months ago because he never came to school."

You see, Buster had dropped school, but not the band. So Murphy had one of his famous one-to-one talks with Buster...and Buster decided to add the other classes to his schedule. Buster graduated with his class.

I mentioned earlier that Murphy was a sentimentalist. Her name was Eloisa Martinez and she weighed almost three-hundred pounds. We tried to tell her not to get her hopes high because she would never make the band. I mean, how can a three-hundred pounder march in formations and parades? At the end of this particular summer were we surprised when the band list was posted. There in the clarinet section was the name Eloisa Martinez--all three-hundred pounds of her! We could hardly wait to see what would happen out on the football field. We knew for sure Murphy had blown it this time. And sure enough it happened that very afternoon as the band rehearsed the football show. In those days football shows were pagentry and we went from one formation to another. We got into a formation and Murphy said, "Sixteen measure drum cadence to next formation. Go." And we all stepped sharply to the next formation and kicked as the sixteen drum cadence ended. That is all of us except Eloisa--she was still yards away from her spot and ambling along like a great elephant. We felt Murphy had met his match and we eagerly waited for the man to figure this one out--actually we were snickering a little bit. But Murphy never changed expression, waited until Eloisa got to her designated spot and bellowed out for everyone to get the message: "Thirty-two measures drum cadence to next formation. Go." We became the only band in that area that used thirty-two measures instead of sixteen to get from one formation to another. A small price indeed to pay so that a girl who was over-weight because of medical reasons could belong and be a proud member of the band. This was also Murphy.



4

I said that Murphy was a complex individual and he allowed nothing to stand in his way to reach that band sound for which he became famous in band circles.

The new Superintendent of Schools decided that the school district needed a curriculum director. And a middle aged, prim and proper and plump lady was hired--the type that wears a cameo brooch to add a little more modesty to her dresses that button up front. And the day came when Mrs. Garrett paid a visit to the band rehearsal. Murphy was at his best--telling the tubas they sounded as if they were "passing gas" in a tin can, and the third cornets "couldn't play worth a damn", and what the "hell" do you mean missing your entrance, trombones! Mrs. Garrett could not take anymore and in an authoritative voice demanded, "Mr. Murphy, Mr. Murphy! You cannot talk to children in that manner. I will not tolerate such language. You cannot teach that way." A hush came over the band hall. Murph turned slowly toward Mrs. Garrett and calmly said, "Lady, if you think you can teach better, here is my baton. You take the band. If you cannot then I suggest you get the hell out of my band hall."

Mrs. Garrett made a hasty exit and went directly to the office and called the Superintendent. And what did the Superintendent do? He wisely advised Mrs. Garrett not to visit the band hall anymore.

The head football coach had a winning team. The coach also taught some P.E. classes. One day, Murph's lead trombone player came in with a busted lip--the result of a right hand cross thrown in P.E. class during boxing matches. Murph went to see the principal. The word came down. Band students were not to box. The head coach made some cute remarks about band kids during his P.E. classes. Something about "sissies in the band." Next day the coach went into great length to apologize for his remarks and at the same time making sound like it was not an apology. But we get the message. Word had it that Murphy had challenged the coach to a little sparring session. The challenge had been accepted. What the coach learned afterwards, painfully it seems, was that Murph had been a boxer in his youth and a pretty good one.

Murphy was very competitive. Competitive even with people he knew and loved. Like Joe Frank. Joe had great bands in Harlingen, which is a town some twenty-five miles from Brownsville. Concert contest came and both Murphy's and Joe's bands got a first division. But one judge wrote that Joe's band was the

best band he had heard all day. This happened during Murphy's last year in Brownsville. Murphy didn't take too kindly at Joe's being the "best" band that day and he told me, "If Joe Frank thinks he has out-played me or that he will ever out-play me, he better think again."

I told Murph that the challenge would come up soon, since both bands were going to Enid, Oklahoma for the Tri-State Music Festival, and there they would be judged against each other rather than against standards as they did in UIL. Now Murphy's band had gone to Enid before and had won everything except the most coveted--The Outstanding Concert Band Award.

So here go Murph and Joe to do battle. Both bands played brilliantly. The outcome? Murphy's band was chosen "The Outstanding Concert Band."

Murphy's quest in Brownsville had ended. He decided to move on. But the legacy remains. The Brownsville Bands and James Murphy have become synonymous even to this day.

Murphy was always in demand to rehearse bands and he always treated those bands the way he treated his own. Marion Busby had a great band in Weslaco. And for those of us in music, Marion Busby was another of those great band masters. He and Murph were great friends.

Murph and I were sitting taking in a few refreshments when Murph suddenly asked the time and the day of the week. So I told him it was Thursday and that it was 7:15 p.m. He informed he had to be in Weslaco--50 miles away--at 7:30 to rehearse Busby's band. He demanded that I drive him immediately.

We arrived at the band hall in Weslaco and Busby was rehearsing, of course, waiting for Murphy. Now Busby had hugh bands that produced a big, sonorous and wonderful sound. Murph asked Busby to play a number so that he could hear the band. Busby played it. To me they sounded fantastic and I couldn't help but wonder how anyone--even Murph--could improve on the performance. The band finished with a great flourish and Busby introduced Murphy to the band.

"Boys and Girls, as you know, you are here tonight to be rehearsed by my good friend, Jim Murphy. Mr. Murphy is the director of the nationally known Brownsville Golden Eagle Band; this band has won all honors in competition, etc.

Murphy gets up from his chair and take the podium: "Thank you, Mr. Busby. Now boys and girls, the first thing I want to establish is honesty. Do you all agree?" And everyone of the 150 band members answered, "Yes, sir."

"I could tell you know much I enjoyed your playing and what a good friend Mr. Busby is; but we want to be honest, Right?" Again, came the unison response, "Yes, sir." "And I could tell you that in the concert contest coming up that you are going to impress the judges with your playing, and you know that, but we want to be honest, Right?" Again, the unison response, "Yes, sir." And you could sense the kids feeling rather smug. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I want to be honest with you. YOU CAN'T PLAY WORTH A DAMN! Now, let's get to work."

And for the next hour Murphy took that band apart in a musical sense, put it back together and then took the number through. I was amazed at the tremendous sounds that came forth and what Murphy had done with those kids. This was Murph.

But most of all Murphy was a teacher. Many of his students chose music as their profession because of him and went on to success as band directors. But there was one student who played in Murphy's band who went to college and majored in English; this student taught English and then vocal music. And one day, ten years later, found himself as a temporary "keeper" of a large high school band--the regular band director having resigned two days after the beginning of the school year. The Band was quite small for such a large high school and had to compete against thirty other high school bands in and around the city of San Antonio. And as that "new" band director took to the podium and the marching field everything he had learned in being a member of Murphy's high school band came back to him--how to phrase, how to breathe, how to balance a sound, the placement of notes, correct rhythm patterns, lift of the leg, eight to five, and most of all the demand for self discipline and pride. It wasn't very long before that band--which was made up of minority students--began to gain the respect of the other bands and band directors and began receiving superior and excellent ratings in marching, concert and sight reading competition, and being featured in marching festivals. The temporary band director stayed for seven years until he was selected as principal of that high school and two years later selected as the Assistant Superintendent in charge of the secondary education of that District. And all made possible to a large extent because back in 1946 he joined a music class being taught by a strange character named James R. Murphy. Needless to say, I was that student.

I could go on and on with stories about Murphy, but they will keep until that time when band people will gather at a meeting or a convention or at their favorite bar.

I thought of finishing my remarks by quoting an old Spanish saying--  
"Paso por aqui" which is given as a tribute and means in English, "He passed  
this way" (and that has made a difference.) Well, James Murphy passed our way  
and he made quite an impact on us.

But then I thought that Murphy would think this ending as too sentimental,  
perhaps a little too much, so I had to find something a little more fitting:  
Murph is not in heaven at this time. He is doing a little penance. Oh, he  
arrived at the Pearly Gates all right. But as Saint Peter was welcoming Murph,  
Gabriel started playing his trumpet. And I can just hear Murph, "Gabriel, with  
all the practice you have had you still can't play worth a damn."

Anthony Castellanos  
BROWNSVILLE GOLDEN EAGLE BAND  
Class of 1952