

## LYLE SKINNER

For 33 years Lyle Skinner taught at Waco High, and it has been said that he had done more to launch more young men and women into the field of music than any other man in the state. He not only taught them band and marching, he instilled a true love of music.

His bands always had that extra oomph, that prance and sway, the beat that compelled foot-tapping, which won hundreds of awards. The first and last bands that he took to contest received Division III in concert. For a period of 29 consecutive years his bands won 29 straight sweepstakes awards.

Lyle was valedictorian of his class at West High School in 1912. While there he studied piano at Baylor University and the band director at Baylor taught him cornet. After graduation, he went to Baylor to study piano and harmony. He worked his way through college by playing piano at the Raleigh Hotel from 6 to 8, and at the old Hippodrome where he played from 8 to 10. While at Baylor, he made only one "C", and this kept him from graduating with honors.

He then attended the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. While there he "had to take almost every music course offered".

"Heavens", he said, "I had to sing a vocal solo, imagine that."

Skinner said he entered two sight-reading courses with "frigid distain", but "now those two courses are the most valuable courses I have had".

He joined the army in 1917, and because he had a music degree, they made him a bugler; that is, until someone heard him play. Then they made him an assistant conductor of a band in France.

After the war he returned to Baylor, majored in English, minored in history and education, and won his BA degree. While at Baylor this time, he was appointed the band director and served 3 years.

After he received his degree, he went on the road, playing various theaters. At the same time he was attending the Conservatory in Chicago during the summers. He finally graduated in 1931 with a Public School Music Degree. From 1928 to 1931 he was the principal and the band director at Tulia, Texas. In 1932 he began teaching band, orchestra, and English at Waco High School. He retired in 1965.

Besides winning contests, Skinner adjudicated and organized many contests, both in Waco and state-wide. In fact during his lifetime he was contest chairman 35 times. He had judged in almost every region in Texas until 1965, being one of the most popular judges in Texas.

He has written solos, marches and overtures, but he always said, "Most of my stuff comes from my classroom assignments."

Showing one of the many club membership cards he had, Skinner said proudly, "That's the highest thing I belong to. Membership is by invitation only."

The card identified him as a member of the American Bandmasters Association. He was elected in 1956. In 1956 he was also elected Bandmaster of the Year by the Texas Bandmasters Association. The 1949 Waco High School annual was dedicated to him.

Lyle married a Baylor classmate, Sadie McLendon Scott of Graham, who died in 1952.

When Lyle retired from Waco High in 1965, he kept active by teaching privately, playing the piano for the Lions Club and by directing the Karem Shrine Band.

Lyle Skinner steadfastly refused to take credit for his many accomplishments, saying they were all done in a day's work.

The late E. T. Genheimer, principal of Waco High for many years, once said, "When Skinner passes on and gets to Heaven, he'll make all the Angels throw away their harps and get pianos and trumpets."

Elected to Hall of Fame in February, 1975.

