



CLAUDE B. SMITH, 1906 -1974

Evansville Courier, CLAUDE B. SMITH, MUSICIAN, AUTHOR

Claude B. Smith, the “Mr. Music” of Evansville for 35 years and author of instrumental music books used in schools and colleges across the country, died yesterday in an Indianapolis hospital after open heart surgery.

The retired director of music and radio in the Evansville-Vanderburgh Public School System, Mr. Smith was the founder and long-time producer of the annual All-City Band and Orchestra Concert that became the biggest school music show in the nation

He retired from the school corporation in 1970, three years after suffering his first heart attack. Wednesday he underwent open heart surgery at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Indianapolis where he died at 7:45pm yesterday. He was 68.

Mr. Smith came to Evansville in 1931 “because Bosse High School needed a band instructor,” his wife recalled. He stayed for 39 years, not only developing the massive instrumental music program that exists in the local schools today but also becoming an internationally known instructor and writer of music education books. His life was dedicated to music and teaching. During summers when the local schools were closed for vacation Mr. Smith served as guest instructor, clinician, and consultant for 14 different colleges and universities over the years.

Among the schools he taught at were the University of Oklahoma, Western State College of Colorado, Michigan State University and the Universities of Idaho, Ohio, and Kansas.

His accomplishments in the local school system included developing the testing programs to encourage musical talent beginning at the fourth grade level. It was under his direction that an orchestra and band was established in every school in the system, and a uniform program of instrumental music class instruction was instituted.

He originated the All-City Band and Orchestra Concert and it’s annual extravaganza, “This Is Our Story” at Roberts Municipal Stadium.

Mr. Smith resided at 1100 Eris St.

Since his retirement in 1970, Mr. Smith had been serving as a musical consultant, most notably to Tennessee Technical College in Cookeville, TN.

Mr. Smith and his wife, Marie, had also traveled extensively to Mexico, Europe and all across the U.S. and Canada. They had, in fact, given up their residence in Evansville for a while returning only in June of this year.

Surviving are his wife, Marie, his daughter Jacqueline S. Coleman of Evansville; his son, Dr. Alan H. Smith of Portland, OR, and two grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Alexander Funeral Home East Chapel.

Additional details of note:

- 1927 graduated from Oakland City College with a degree in Liberal Arts
- 1930 while band director at Tell City, served as president of the Southern Division of IHSBOA.
- 1930 article ties him to Harold Bachman's Million Dollar Band in Chicago.
- 1931 led Tell City to the first place in Class C State Finals.
- In September of 1932 led a special Bosse HS 48-member marching band in its first football game appearance.
- 1933 (and many other occasions) attended the National Band Clinic at U of Illinois - a precursor of the Midwest Clinic!
- 1934 led the All-City Music Festival: This is Our Story, and did so every year until retiring in 1970.
- 1934 elected President of IHSBOA at a meeting in Indianapolis.
- 1938 Warrant Officer Smith formed a 26-man National Guard Band in Evansville which he led for years. They played their first concert in April of 1940.
- 1938 led Bosse to a First Division rating at the National Regional Contest in Elkhart.
- 1942 Directed the Evansville Municipal Band
- 1944 appointed Associate Director of the Evansville Philharmonic
- 1948 as President of IMEA organized the first IMEA Convention at the Antlers Hotel in Indy.
- In 1953 he was among the charter members of Gamma Chapter of Phi Beta Mu.
- 1957 awarded an Honorary Doctorate from his alma mater, Oakland City College
- Developed an extensive band curriculum that was followed in all Evansville schools.
- From the 1930's on was in high demand as an adjudicator.
- For over 30 years taught in the summer at various colleges.
- Collaborated with Paul Yoder and Harold Bachman on four band methods.