



Dale L. Harpham, 1917 - 1993

Dale L. Harpham, 76, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel who had served in the Marine Corps Band for nearly 40 years before retiring in 1974 as its director, died of cancer Dec. 4 at his home in Martinsville, Ind.

Col. Harpham, who spent his entire corps career in the Marine Band, came to the Washington area when he joined the Marines in 1935. He moved to Indiana from Arlington in 1986.

He had joined the band as a trombone player and also played the cello in the band's orchestra. He had been featured as a soloist in radio and television performances by the band, and he had been a vocalist, moderator and narrator for such features as the band's performances of "Peter and the Wolf" and "Tubby the Tuba."

Col. Harpham served as leader of the Marine Dance Band before being named assistant director of the Marine Corps Band in 1955. He held that post until becoming director of the band, known as "the president's own," in 1972. Under his direction, the band performed at presidential inaugural events and on state occasions at the White House as well as playing across the United States and in Europe.

After retiring from active duty, he acted as a guest conductor and coached young musicians. He had served on the board of the American Bandmasters Association and was a member of the Military Order of the Carabao. He also had directed the choir of St. Paul's Methodist Church in Kensington for 30 years before retiring to Indiana.

Col. Harpham was born in Michigan and raised in Indiana. While in the sixth grade, he purchased a used trombone for a dollar and began studying music. Later that year, he attended a performance of the Marine Corps Band, which was on a concert tour in the Midwest. He said that he "promptly fell in love" with the band and resolved then and there to become a member.

His marriage to Virginia Harpham ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife of seven years, the former Sara J. Harding of Martinsville; two children from his first marriage, George A., of

Paris, and Evelyn E. Harpham of Arlington; a brother, D.S. Harpham of Englewood, Fla.; and a grandchild.