



John A. "Jack" Kelly, 1945 - 1999

John Kelly mentored young musicians

Times, The (Munster, IN) - Sunday, August 29, 1999

VALPARAISO -- John A. "Jack" Kelly's dedication to nurturing young musicians extended well beyond the realm of the Valparaiso middle school band rooms, where he taught for 33 years. Mr. Kelly and his colleague, Daniel Bolin, who now serves as head of the school of music at Butler University, founded the Great Lakes Music Camp in 1981, a summer program at the Valparaiso University campus.

Bolin recalled high standards were the foundation of the program. "We wanted a music camp (exclusively for middle school-age children) that was better than anything going on in the state at that time," Bolin said. "Our goal was for 175 (students) and we ended up with over 450 at the very first camp." To date, more than 20,000 students have attended the camp.

Mr. Kelly, 55, a longtime Valparaiso resident who recently made his home in Largo, Fla., died Aug. 23. "If most band directors in Indiana were to say who overall had the most outstanding junior high band, they would agree it was Valparaiso ... and it was Jack," Bolin said.

During his tenure with the school, Mr. Kelly received numerous local and national awards. Among those were the prestigious "Legion of Honor" awarded by the John Philip Sousa Foundation and recognition as "Outstanding Middle School Teacher" by the Indiana Music Educators Association. Bill Higbie said he always respected Mr. Kelly as a mentor and associate. "Jack was a fine teacher, a superb musician," Higbie said. "He was demanding, but he produced excellent results in his students and in his groups as a whole. Jack had an outstanding reputation throughout the music education field nationally. He was a quality teacher."

David Kelly agreed music was his father's passion, but noted family was always a great source of pleasure and pride. He especially loved spending time with each of the three grandchildren. "First and

foremost, he was a loving and devoted husband, father and grandfather," daughter Kathy Hensch said. "He was very special."

Mr. Kelly received his master's degree in education from Ball State University in 1967 and was the middle school band director for the Valparaiso Community Schools for 33 years.

He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Karen; parents, Albert and Hazelle Kelly of Largo, Fla.; son, David (Lisa) Kelly of Lafayette; two daughters, Christy (Thomas) Ray of Charlotte, N.C., and Kathy (Eric) Hensch of Indianapolis; three grandchildren; and one sister. A memorial service was Aug. 27 at the First Church of the Nazarene in Valparaiso with the Rev. Jerry Castleman officiating. Arrangements were handled by the Moeller Funeral Home in Valparaiso.