



Richard J. Molter, 1929-2017

Richard James Molter, 88, of Lafayette, died peacefully on July 7, 2017 at St. Mary Healthcare Center. A music teacher who taught thousands of Indiana school children the value and beauty of music for over six decades and instilled in each of them the benefits of music education - discipline, practice, self-improvement and success - for use later in life, was an inspiration to generations of students he mentored and coached.

Born on January 1, 1929, in Goodland, Indiana, to Samuel and Margaret Molter, he graduated from Goodland High School in 1946 and went on to attend [Indiana University](#) School of Music on a woodwind scholarship. He played with the Marching 100 band, symphony orchestra and a cappella choir, and practice taught at University High School. He graduated in 1950 with a bachelor's degree in music education.

He taught briefly in the Galveston, Indiana, school system until he was drafted and served two years in the U.S. [Army](#) during the [Korean conflict](#). After heavy weapons training, he was transferred to the 101st Airborne Division band, where he served as a bandleader and director of the band training unit. He was one of three in his company at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, who remained stateside during the conflict. The other 147 were shipped overseas; none of them returned alive.

In 1953, he entered Indiana State University in Terre Haute and received a master's in music education. He then became the supervisor of music at Rochester, Indiana, schools for five years and built a strong music program of three bands and four choirs.

In 1959, he became the director of bands at Sunnyside Jr. High School in Lafayette and served there for 32 years before retiring in 1991. During his tenure there, he conducted three bands that were consistent winners in organized Indiana music contests and also helped teach many students to succeed and thrive in solo and ensemble music contests. His bands produced eight albums of recorded music - rare for any junior high - during that time.

In addition, he added jazz studies and improvisation to the band curriculum and consistently strived to put together musical programs that were progressive, challenging and contemporary.

He was elected or was a member of several music and educational organizations: Kappa Kappa Psi band fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha, Phi Beta Mu honorary for band, Phi Delta Kappa, Music Educators National Conference, National Band Association, National Educators Association, Indiana State Teachers' Association, Indiana Music Education Association and Indiana Bandmasters Association.

Molter was also a band judge, festival conductor and private music teacher for many years. He was a member of the Lafayette Citizen's Band and organized and conducted the "Fithian Five," a musical group that performed for many of the late U.S. Congressman Floyd Fithian's (D-Indiana) campaign functions while he was running for or was serving in Congress. In later years he belonged to the Lafayette Kiwanis Club.

He was married for 64 years to Natalie (Joest) Molter. They were married on June 13, 1953 in Evansville, Indiana, and she survives, along with one sister, Rita Molter, Indianapolis. In addition, he is also survived by four sons: Keith (Bobbe) Molter, Lafayette; Jeff, New York City (Becky, fiancé); James (Betty), Trabuco Canyon, Calif.; and Kent (Jenny), Loganville, Ga.; four grandchildren: Mackenzie and Anderson Molter, Loganville, Ga.; Alexander Slava Molter, Seattle; and Deborah Pinedo, Lake Forest, Calif.; and one great granddaughter: Maya Pinedo, Lake Forest, Calif.

He was preceded in death by his parents, as well as the following siblings: Keith Molter, Samuel Molter, Jr., Lloyd Molter, Marcy Molter (Byno) and Raymond Molter.

Friends may call at the Hahn-Groeber Funeral Home, 1104 Columbia St., Lafayette from 4 until 7 PM Monday July 10. The funeral will be held at the funeral home 10:00 AM Tuesday July 11, Fr. Ambrose Ziegler officiating, with military rites by American Legion Post 11. Friends may best express sympathy with memorials to the Richard J. Molter Memorial Fund for the benefit of the Sunnyside Middle School Band. Memories and condolences may be left at www.hahngroeberfuneralhome.com