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Former UT music teacher leaves legacy

By Robin J. Youngblood, ryoungblood@qconline.com.

Mallie Williams will live on forever through United Township High School students.

Not only did he teach them in band and music for 34 years, he is helping to further their education through a scholarship in his name.

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Mr. Williams, 79, died June 10 at Manor Care in Libertyville, Ill. His funeral was Tuesday, and his burial was at the National Cemetery. Instead of flowers, his family requests that memorials be made to the Mallie Williams Scholarship Fund in care of Jamieson Long and Associates in Moline.

"He was just the greatest guy," recalled former UT student Brian Nelson about his band teacher. Mr. Nelson played saxophone and said Mr. Williams encouraged him to study music education, which he did at Augustana College. "There are very few teachers that you can look back on and appreciate what they did for you."

Mr. Williams served older students, too. As an alumnus of Augustana College, Rock Island, he served on its alumni board from 1993 to 1995, said the college's assistant vice president for development, Sue Rector.

"He was a very thoughtful, dedicated person to the college," she said. He had very good attendance at the meetings and brought a different perspective to the board as a 1950s graduate.

According to some, Mr. Williams even knew the students he didn't have in band.

"Everybody knew Mallie," said UT School Board member Carol Miller. Her husband, Jeral, was Mr. Williams' student. "Mallie was that kind of teacher. Even if you weren't in the band, he knew most of the students, and he always spoke to you."

When Mr. Williams left UT in 1986, he continued to teach music at Hampton and Carbon Cliff elementary schools. He also directed music at First Christian Church, Moline, and was the choir director at Moline's First Baptist Church and Union Congregational Church and Gaines Chapel AME Church in East Moline.

Giving private lessons, Mr. Williams was known to be demanding and expected a lot from his students, including UT school board member and

former trumpet student Dale Zude.

"I thought he was a great guy, but he was demanding as a teacher from the first day," he said. "He wanted you to learn and expected you to go home and practice. If you didn't have your practicing done, he knew it, and he let you know."

Jerry Greer, a former UT teacher, agreed with Mr. Zude.

"He was demanding of the kids, but the kids worked for him," he said. "He was somebody that everybody respected."

Even though Mr. Williams had a great band and talented musicians, according to community members, Mr. Williams didn't boast.

"He was a low-key guy," Mr. Greer continued, "steady and professional. He didn't want any of the attention himself. He let his work speak for itself."

Mr. Williams also worked for the Quad City Music Guild as a music director on several productions including "Oliver," "Li'l Abner," "Fiddler on the Roof," "West Side Story," "The Sound of Music," "Man of LaMancha" and "The King and I."

Of the many awards and commendations he received during his life, he received the Outstanding Secondary Educator Award and a Distinguished Alumni Award from Augustana College.

He also was a U.S. Army soldier in Indian Gap Town, Pa. After serving, Mr. Williams attended Augustana where he received his music education degree and his master's degree from the University of Iowa in 1959.

Survivors include his wife, Lorraine Williams; daughter, Karla Williams; grandson, Nate Elsey-Williams; son-in-law, Ronald Elsey; many cousins and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Jessie Williams and step-mother Ruth Williams.

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