

Norman Woodall - 2011



John Fulton Abel (December 12, 1942 -January 22, 2001) graduated from Rhea Central High School in Dayton, Tennessee in 1960. He earned his Bachelors of Science in 1965 and his Masters of Science in 1976 from the University of Tennessee. He was the band director at Bearden High School in Knoxville, Tennessee from 1965 — 1994. The Bearden High School concert band, marching band, jazz band and orchestra had notable successes under his baton. Under the direction of Mr. Abel, the BHS band was recognized for achievement at the highest levels of competition nationally and internationally and gained an enviable reputation through the years as an outstanding organization of musical excellence. A strong reflection of the exceptionally talented musician that he was himself, his bands received numerous superior ratings at festivals and contests. During the decade of the 1970's Mr. Abel's bands participated in the Invitational Festivals in Italy, Mexico, and Spain, testaments to the high caliber of

musicianship he promoted among his students. Following those appearances, he returned to Fiuggi, Italy and to Madrid, Spain as a guest conductor for the All American Youth Honor Musicians Band. The BHS Band was selected to perform at the National Band Association's B" National Convention in 1980.

For 11 consecutive years, the BHS Band won the Class VI competition at The Dogwood Arts Band Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee. He also served as an adjudicator, clinician and performer throughout the southeastern United States and in Mexico, Italy and Spain. Mr. Abel's professional memberships included ETSBOA, NBA, TBA, MENC, TMEA, Phi Beta Mu, Phi Mu Alpha, and Knoxville Musicians Association Local 546. He served on the Executive Board of ETSBOA as secretary and has the distinction of being one of their Honorary Life Members.

As a student and a professional, Mr. Abel was a featured trombone soloist and was also a member of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, the AI Curtis Orchestra and the Knoxville Community Recreation Band. As a member of the local musicians union he was called upon often to perform in back up bands for various touring celebrities including Cher Bono and Ringling Brothers/Barnum and Baily Circus.

Those that were fortunate enough to be young musicians under his direction were positively influenced by his profound passion for music and his commitment to detail and excellence. Mr. Abel welcomed a wide variety of ability in his students into the BHS program accepting their unique contributions. He created meaningful ways for the special needs students to be a part of the program and to share in the pride of identifying with and belonging to a school activities At the same time he challenged the exceptionally talented and offered additional stimulating

opportunities for growth, participation and recognition. Admiration and respect for Mr. Abel was shared by all who knew him.

In addition to his musical pursuits, Mr. Abel enjoyed and valued his family. He was a loving and devoted husband and father and took great pleasure and pride in the pursuits of his two daughters, Elizabeth Anne and Katherine Jo. His favorite pastimes included reading and fishing. He was an avid fan of UT football, Lady Vols basketball and Atlanta Braves baseball.