



James 'Jim' Elsberry

March 15, 1940 - August 7, 2017

James "Jim" A. Elsberry, age 77, passed away Monday, August 7, 2017 at Nye Legacy Nursing Home.

Jim was born in Wausa, Nebraska, on March 15, 1940, to Archie and Grace Elsberry. He attended Wayne State College where he earned a degree in Music Education. He continued his education and attained a graduate degree in Music Education from the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley. He then taught at Underwood High School in Iowa before accepting a teaching position at Benson High School in Omaha. It was during this time that he developed what has become known as the 'Elsberry Sound' which was influenced by the likes of Duke Ellington, George Shearing, and Stan Kenton. He was inducted into the Benson High Hall of Fame in April 2014 for the contributions he made during his tenure. In 1976, Jim accepted a position at Midland Lutheran College as a professor of choral music and jazz studies.

During his tenure at Midland, Jim developed a highly respected choral program as evidenced by his excellent Concert Choir and Clef Dwellers vocal jazz ensemble. His ensembles routinely performed on campus, in venues in Omaha and Lincoln, and at major national events such as the University of Northern Colorado Greeley Jazz Festival. He had the unique ability to meet his students where they were and then bring them up to the highest standards of collegiate musical performance. Through his inspired teaching that was energized with a great sense of humour, he was able to imbue in them a deep love for making music.

Jim was a major force in the development of jazz education in Nebraska. He created the Midland Jazz Festival, an annual event that brought the best high school jazz bands across the region to campus. Jim also conducted the Midland-Dana Jazz Ensemble, a collaborative big band for students from Midland and Dana Colleges.

In addition to his work leading the choral area at Midland, Jim was a visionary teacher of music theory and aural skills, having created most of his own curriculum to develop his

students' musicianship to the professional level. His students went on to achieve success as performers, conductors, and educators.

While teaching at Midland, Jim met and married Ardeth Ohm-Moser at Bethany Lutheran Church in Elkhorn on July 9, 1982, and they later divorced. To this union two sons were born. Jim retired from Midland Lutheran College after 31 years in 2007.

Jim was a longtime member of the Nebraska Music Educators Association. In 2004, his peers in the profession elected him to the NMEA Educators Hall of Fame in recognition of his contribution to music education in Nebraska. Induction into the Hall of Fame is the most prestigious award bestowed to NMEA members.

Jim was the artistic director for Die Meistersingers/Master Singers, a select choir in the Omaha Area, for 30 years. He also enjoyed a tenure as chorus master for Opera Omaha; directed music and shows for the Firehouse Dinner Theater; composed for and directed the Peony Park Arthritis Foundation concerts; assisted with and conducted music for the Miss Nebraska Beauty Pageants; conducted music for the Pathfinder Chorus; and was a guest conductor for the Summer Sing Choral Retreat at Lake Tahoe, California.

Jim loved to restore antiques, was a fabulous chef, liked to fish, and enjoyed farming and gardening. He had a great sense of humor and was known to bring people together, often being described as humorous, gregarious, demanding, and warm. He had an intense, charismatic persona and always strived for perfection. In all aspects of life, Jim expected the same intensity and effort from those he taught and those who knew him.

He was also extremely active in contributing to Cheyenne charity organizations for the education of children.

Preceded in death by his parents Archie and Grace Elsberry

Sister Lovyce (Stanley) Petersen

Brother Myles (Beverly) Elsberry

3 brothers who died in their infancy

Brother-in-law Harold Sherman

Survived by:

Sons Austin Elsberry, Jordan Elsberry

Sister Dorene Sherman

Nephews David Sherman, Audie Elsberry, and Daniel Petersen
Nieces Kris (Chuck) Yates, Deborah Petersen, and Patrice Weisser
and many other nieces, nephews, friends, and family

Memorial Services will be held at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, August 16, 2017, at Dugan
Funeral Chapel in Fremont.

Comments



“ I was in the Midland Choir from 2004 to 2008. Jim's ability to direct in a way to blend diverse voices was unbelievable. While he had high expectations & was demanding, he also told jokes & lightened things up with his smiles. The beautiful sounds of his a cappella choirs can largely be attributed to his amazing directing that taught students how to sight-read, listen, & blend. His wonderful jazz compositions were such a joy to sing. His music theory classes made challenging work fun. He will be greatly missed, but his spirit lives on through his music & lives that he touched.

Peace & Love,

Tiffany (Janssen) Gonda

Tiffany Gonda - August 17, 2017 at 01:10 PM



“ Jim and I were colleagues at Midland in 79-80 and again in 89-96. Attended Midland with Ardeth. Jim was a great man. Loved his sense of humor during campus tours. He will be missed and Midland became less when he left. Didn't know he was a Benson grad. I sub there 50-60 times a year now. His spirit will no doubt be felt there. Thank you for your friendship at Midland. I was a rookie and you helped make me successful. Say hi to my brother Pud in heaven. Much love-Gregg Kupfer

Gregg Kupfer - August 13, 2017 at 11:18 AM