

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DICK & CONNIE THOMAS, WJU #'s 1127 & 1128



Dick and Connie Thomas joined Windjammers in 1988, attending their first Windjammers Meet when it was in Cincinnati that year, not all that far from their Dayton, OH home. Their involvement in our organization

has been significant since then, with Connie serving as a Trustee (1995-1999), two terms as Vice President (2007-2010) and then President for two terms (2011-2014).

Connie, with Dick's able assistance, has also hosted six Windjammers Summer Meets plus a special Windjammers Unlimited event in Danville, KY. The Summer Meets were in Kettering, OH (1994, 2001), Baraboo, WI (2010), Reno, NV (2013), Lincoln, NE (2014), and Springfield, MA (2015.) In 1996, the Thomas's organized a Circus Band for the Great American Brass Band Festival. Two circus wagons were brought in from Circus World Museum in Baraboo for the occasion. The circus band, involving more than two dozen Windjammers members, played an unprecedented five public performances at the Festival.

Neither Dick nor Connie have musical degrees, although Connie's minor was in Music, but they certainly have played a lot of notes in their lives. Dick has an Electrical Engineering degree and worked for 30 years in a government career as a supervisor in the Defense Electronics Supply Center in Dayton. Connie's career has spanned thirty years as well, hers as a 2nd or 4th grade teacher in Kettering, OH, Carmel, IN, and Brookville, OH. Further, post-retirement, she subbed for 20 years.

Dick was a charter member 59 years ago in the Kettering Civic Band in Kettering, OH, a Dayton suburb. He is the only member who has been in that community band the entire 59 years. Connie has been in the Kettering Band forty years. With the Kettering Band, they have participated in the five International trips the band has taken: Steyr, Austria (Kettering's sister city), plus two to England and two to Canadian locations. They organized the Band's 50th Anniversary trip to Branson, where they did three concerts. Dick and Connie also started with the Centerville,

OH band when it was formed, but then dropped out in favor of square dancing, which met the same night. They had previously been involved with ballroom dancing.

In addition to the Kettering Band, they played in the Ohio Valley British Brass Band for 15 years, until that band changed its rehearsals to conflict with Kettering's. They continue to play in the Southwest Ohio Symphony Band in West Chester, OH (9 years), and since 1988, the Dayton Letter Carrier Band, of which Connie is the manager. The Letter Carriers hold national conventions every other year, with state conventions in between. The Dayton band was started in 1926 and is sponsored by the local postal union. Until this year, the DLCB has participated musically in the conventions, which nationally can have 8,000 to 10,000 attendees. At one time, up to 24 bands participated, but the last convention had just three, and perhaps none will be at the next one because of financial restrictions. Ohio has two Letter Carrier bands and they alternate playing at the State conventions.

It's hard to say when the Thomas's get any rest or relax. They are "on the road" all the time for music related events. Included, of course, are the two Windjammers events each year, but also the Great American Brass Band Festival in Danville, KY, the Traditional Jazz Festival in Decatur, IL, the Elkhart Jazz Festival in Elkhart, IN, Grugelfest in Toledo, OH, Williamsburg Consort (last 7 years), Liberty Classic in Williamsport, PA (6 years), and the Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic in Chicago (20 years). From 1992 to 2012, Dick faithfully recorded Windjammers sessions and produced CD's for members.



Thanks to Windjammers Unlimited, Connie really caught the Circus Bug, becoming highly involved with Circus Fans Association of America as a result. She is now President-Elect of that organization, and is

hosting her first CFA Convention in St. Louis, June 13-17, 2017. We have been blessed to have Connie and Dick's involvement in Windjammers.