

WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME

ROBERT P. HILLS, JR. (1932-2016), WJU #71 - 2013 INDUCTEE

By Rod Everhart, WJU #1351

Robert P. Hills, Jr. was our Windjammers Unlimited organization's first president, serving from 1972 to 1977. In 2013, he was inducted into the WJU Hall of Fame in recognition of his contributions to WJU over the years.

In the nomination presentation at the 2013 Convention, Doug MacLeod (WJU #407) made the following comments regarding honoring Hills as a WJU Hall of Fame inductee:

"In the early years of Windjammers, emphasis was placed on a mission to locate and record previously unrecorded circus music or music typical of that played in earlier times by circus bands. Bob Hills was one who provided such music from his personal sources; he also provided equipment required to make these recordings for several of these early meets where he was the sole conductor. He has maintained and made available these recordings over many years.

Bob was the first president of Windjammers Unlimited. As such, he contributed greatly in building this organization in its formative years. He personally arranged for the registration of Windjammers Unlimited as a non-profit organization in the state of Ohio, paying the fees for this from his own pocket. He was instrumental in drafting our first by-laws. He also composed and dedicated a march to Windjammers Unlimited."

Originally titled *The Grand Entry of the Windjammers Unlimited*, Hills composed and honored WJU with it in 1972. At the time, Fanfare editor Charles H. Bennett, Jr. wrote "The editor has heard this march played by a band already, and can say it is a fine march in the sawdust tradition. It is a march in 6/8, that is well suitable as a slower, entry march. At future Windjammer conventions, this will be the kick-off march, as played by our Windjammer Concert Band. It is hoped that a printed edition of this march will be out shortly."

Hills' Windjammers tune, composed under his Paul Harper pseudonym, was not the start of his composing career by any means, but rather his 30th out of 47 others that include marches, ballads, waltzes, and overtures. He also did arrangements of at least 23 other popular tunes, such as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Sentimental Journey*.

Hills once commented "I became a self-made composer the hard way. I look at the works of other composers, study other bands, band scores, piano and orchestra music. Karl King is my idol. He composed over 300 very harmonic compositions for concert band."

Of interest is that Hills doesn't use a piano when composing. "They're written up here," he once said, pointing to his head.

"And most of them take about 40 hours to complete." As a rule, Hills dedicates most of his compositions to the people, organizations or places that have been important in his life.

Bob Hills was born, raised, and lived most of his life in Delaware, OH. During his public school and military band days, he played flute. In 1954, when he enrolled at Kent State University, he began to take music more seriously. Instead of the highly portable flute, however, he switched to playing the tuba. For his time at Kent State, he played tuba in the concert, marching and recording bands. He also played tuba in several other Ohio bands, including the Alliance-Municipal Band, the Salem American Legion Band, and the Nazir-Grotto (Shrine) Band. Later, in 1966 he joined the Columbus Aladdin Temple Shrine Band. He was also member of the Germania Band, the Marion Community Band, the Columbus Board of Realtors Band, and the Scarlet Mask Band. As if not enough, he has a few bands of his own: The Columbus-Buckeye Citizens Band, the Nuts in a Bandshell, and the Carnegie Hall Dropouts.

As a career, Bob was with the Delaware Gas Company and the Columbia Gas Company, first serving as corporate secretary/treasurer of former, then manager of the Columbia Gas Co. in Delaware, and then special representative for the company's central district in Columbus, Ohio. He was not only a musician, businessman, and civic leader, he was a photographer, conductor, composer, arranger, woodworker and model railroad buff. He and his wife, the former Annette Marie Neff, had a daughter and a son.

Bob Hill's interest in circus music was triggered in 1967 when he was asked to join the 14-piece Shrine Circus Band in Columbus. He then played in that band for 14 years, playing on average 23 performances per year.

Upon joining Windjammers Unlimited he soon became its first president and not long after chief bandmaster. Meanwhile, he was also back to playing flute and piccolo when he wasn't conducting. Those early years for WJU weren't all "peaches and cream", however. Following the 1974 ("2nd Annual") Convention, Bob resigned as president. But the board persuaded him to reconsider. Which he did. But at the time, Hills wrote in his 1974 President's Report: "... we have experienced many setbacks. There has been dissention, criticism, humiliation, petty and facetious personalities, and I feel the future accomplishments of the Society seem quite bleak. We have a lot of resolutions to be made." And indeed, resolutions WERE made and progress WAS accomplished thereafter.

Bob Hills was born January 8, 1932 and died September 30, 2016.