

Carl Frangkiser and the Unity Band

Recollections submitted by Ken Matson, WJU #3298, and reprinted from *Circus Fanfare* 2010-03; also, see photo on page 15.

I've always been a fan of the circus and its music. During the mid to late 1940s, my dad took me to the circus twice a year in Kansas City, always on a Friday evening — the Shrine Circus in November, and the Police Circus in March. All I remember about the director of the circus band was that he was referred to as Mr. 5x5 [Joe Basile]. During 1948 on Monday evenings, I began to listen to the Cities Service Band of America conducted by Paul Lavalle. It was during this time that I fell in love with the low brass sound, and my parents allowed me to take up the trombone. I started playing in the Unity Band around 1954 under Carl Frangkiser. I continued to play in the band until my marriage in 1962 and my new job took me to Florida as a mathematician for the Dept. of the Navy.



Dr. Carl Frangkiser in rehearsal, Dec. 1956 (Ken Matson Photos)

Carl Frangkiser's band rehearsed and performed at the Unity School of Christianity in Lee's Summit, Missouri. During intermission of the summer concerts, the Unity School of Christianity viewpoint was presented by one of their ministers.

We would rehearse on Thursday evenings in the tower in a room barely big enough for an 80-piece band. Some

nights we were a mighty warm crowd of musicians. During June, July, and August we would play outdoor concerts in an amphitheatre on the Unity grounds. Usually, there was a mixed quartet that sang with the band on the show tune numbers. About twice each summer, Keith House, then band director at Lee's Summit High School, would play a cornet solo.

Another fellow trombone in the band that I got to know was Charles Himmler. He was in Lawrence Welk's first dance orchestra in North Dakota. During the summer, if there were more than two trombones per part, Carl would move me to another section of the band to play the missing part on my trombone — alto sax, euphonium, or bassoon. One summer evening concert, I was seated directly under his baton playing the bassoon parts. He later told me he had a tape recorder and in the playback he heard my low notes sounding good.

During the non-summer months, we rehearsed for one and a half hours. All we did was sight-read band music. I don't remember playing the same music twice in a given year. Frangkiser must have had a very large library of circus type music. It was a great experience.

As a member of the Unity Band, there were some perks. You could play on their golf course and swim in their pool without charge. In the summer, I remember swimming in the pool on Sunday afternoon, and then playing the outdoor concert that evening.

Until years later, I did not realize what I had at the time. To have played under a band director who played cornet with **Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show** and the **Barnum & Bailey Circus Band**, both directed by Karl King, is quite extraordinary.

Additional facts from Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music

Carl Moerz Frangkiser (1894–1967), whose music was composed under his own name and over 36 pseudonyms, was born in Loudonville, Ohio, on September 18, 1894, the son of Edward and Anna Moerz Frangkiser. He attended Loudonville public schools, and his early music training was received from his father, a French horn player. He received his higher education at the Capitol College of Oratory and Music, a small private school in Columbus, Ohio [not to be confused with Capital University, of the same city]. From Capitol, he received a Bachelor of Music degree in 1915, a Master of Music degree in 1936, and an honorary doctorate (Mus.D.) in 1948. In his late teens, prior to his enrollment in Columbus, he apparently took summer courses offered by Capitol at Lakeside, Ohio [a Methodist Chautauqua institute], also playing band concerts there.

He played cornet with the **Sells Floto and Buffalo Bill Combined Shows (1914–1915)**, with the **Sells Floto Circus (1916)**, and with the **Barnum & Bailey Circus (1917)**.

With Sells Floto and Barnum & Bailey, he was under the direction of Karl L. King. With Barnum & Bailey, he was solo cornetist and assistant director.
[See 1916 Sells Floto Circus Band photo on Page 15.]

During World War I, he served in the U.S. Army. He received a commission from the American Band School in Chaumont, France, and then led the 3rd Corps Band of the 308th Engineers in Germany.

He returned to the United States in 1919. In 1926, after working with various theater orchestras for seven years, he moved to Kansas City, Missouri. There he led the Kansas City Pinto Pony Band. For 40 years, beginning in 1927, he was director of music and music editor of the Unity School of Christianity at Unity Village in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

The Unity Band began as a small school band of 15 members but gradually grew to 100 members by admitting community musicians, some of whom were professionals.

Frangkiser died in Kansas City on January 19, 1967, was cremated, and interred at Summit Gardens in Lee's Summit. He was a very prolific composer, and most of his music was of the school music grade.



Carl Frangkiser, before a summer Unity Band concert in 1958.

Carl's Known Pseudonyms:

Philip Akron	Stuart Allen
G.S. Arberine	W.C. Collins
Arthur S. Darman	Paul Deniston
Walter Desmond	C. Elsen
J. Evans	James Farrell
Larry Fenshaw	Austin Gilbert
Ernesto Goldrin	Arthur Graham
Walter Graham	Teddy Holland
George S. King	Raymond Klay
Chester Leoni	Luther Lorenz
Bernard Loss	Howard Manton
David Marlowe	Eric Noble
Frederick North	Walter Payne
A.J. Perry	Edward Rayner
Edward Raynor	Leonard Safroni
M. Sanford	M. Seldon
Arthur Severn	John Muir Sills
T.R. Stevens	W. Tuffilli
Henry Walton	L.W. Weldon
Diane Williams	M. Williams
Lolita Young	

In addition to the pseudonyms listed above, Carl Frangkiser used the name A. Chandler, but this was not used for band works. There is evidence to suggest that the use of many of the pseudonyms was suggested by one of his publishers. As might be expected, using so many pseudonyms resulted in much confusion. One complication arose on the use of the name Arthur Graham as a Frangkiser pseudonym on *Sorority Sue*. There actually was a composer by that name, writing for the same publisher, and the publisher subsequently acknowledged the duplication.

WINDJAMMERS CONTACT INFORMATION

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