

Ray E. Cramer

It is a long distance from rural western Illinois to the great concert halls of the world, but Ray Cramer has, in a remarkable career of music-making and teaching, experienced that adventure, and in the process touched the lives of countless numbers of musicians. Over the years at Indiana University he has done it all—everything from conducting the IU Big Red Pep Band in Assembly Hall to conducting the University Orchestra for annual productions of the ballet *The Nutcracker*.

Ray grew up on a farm seven miles south of Knoxville, Illinois, near Galesburg. In high school he played trombone and was on the football team. He attended Western Illinois University where he received an undergraduate degree in music education. While still a college senior, he served as band director at Bardolph High School in Illinois, having received provisional certification to start teaching and conducting. When he arrived at the University of Iowa to work on his M.F.A. degree, he found himself playing trombone in the Hawkeye Marching Band, the Symphony Band, the Symphony Orchestra, the Brass Choir, and the Faculty Brass Quintet. Frederick C. Ebbs, the director of bands at the University of Iowa, immediately recognized the potential of his new student. Another person who recognized Ray's potential was a student at Iowa named Molly. Ray and Molly were wed not long after and thus began a wonderful marriage that united kindred spirits. Ray and Molly have been true life-partners, sharing as many activities as possible over the years.

After earning his M.F.A. in 1963, Ray taught for two years in West Liberty, Iowa, where he was the band director of every grade—elementary, middle school, and high school. All of his groups were successful, earning top ratings at various festivals. This success led him to Harlan, Iowa, where he taught middle school and high school for three years, again earning top ratings and a special performance at the Iowa Music Educators Convention in 1967. He was then lured to Parma High School, near Cleveland, Ohio. At this position, he directed one of the outstanding high school band programs in the nation, where he was able to perform literature of the highest musical standards. He and Molly were in Ohio one year when Frederick Ebbs, who had left the University of Iowa and was now the director of bands at Indiana University, offered Ray the position of assistant director of bands. So the Cramers moved to Bloomington and began Ray's collegiate career at Indiana University, where he has been ever since. Their children, Heather and Jere, were both outstanding students and musicians at Bloomington High School South, graduated from Indiana University, and have successful families and careers of their own.

After serving as assistant director of the Marching Hundred for several years, Ray was appointed director of the group in 1972. His professional colleagues quickly recognized his strong leadership abilities and elected him president of the North Central Division of the College Band Directors National Association in 1974.

When Frederick Ebbs retired as department chair in 1982, Ray Cramer was appointed as director of bands after a national search was completed. During his tenure the Indiana University Wind Ensemble performed at prestigious music conventions and conferences, earning a reputation as one of, if not the finest, collegiate wind ensembles in the world. The group has performed for the College Band Directors National Association, the American Bandmasters Association, and the Music Educators National Conference, as well as the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. The group traveled twice to Japan, performing concert tours that were hailed as musical triumphs. Ray has served as president of the American Bandmasters Association, the College Band Directors National Association, the Big Ten Band Directors Association, the Indiana Bandmasters Association, and remains president of the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, which is the largest professional meeting of band and orchestra teachers in the world.

A natural athlete, Ray often played racquetball at the HPER Building during the lunch hour when he could spare the time. On occasion new graduate students would find this out and schedule a match. It was always entertaining to watch them leave for the HPER Building full of confidence and youthful bravura and then return having been soundly beaten by a much better player.

It's impossible to be familiar with Ray and Molly, however, without knowing of their many travels and residences in Tokyo, Japan. Whenever possible, Ray has conducted the wind ensemble at the Musachino Academy of Music in Tokyo, one of the largest collegiate music schools in the world. Among the highlights of his work with the Musachino Academy Wind Ensemble was a concert tour of the United States, including a brilliant performance at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. He will continue his work in Japan with that group, having promised to travel there for at least five more years.

Ray and Molly have always been busy with church activities and family time. For many years they enjoyed climbing mountains out west when they had the opportunity. Now that Ray has retired, he will

continue to guest-conduct all-state bands, intercollegiate bands, and other groups, filling his schedule with much music-making and travel. He has guest-conducted nearly every one of the 50 all-state bands in the last 25 years. Ray and Molly will be spending a lot of time at their home in Colorado, close to their favorite mountains; however, much time will surely also be spent visiting with their two grandchildren in New Mexico.

Stephen Pratt