

Exploring the Cemetery: The Heavenly Band

Having grown up in Warwick Township, I thought that most children learned to play one instrument or another. Music is math, language, and art, all integrated into one giant lesson plan that includes self-discipline and learning to follow directions meticulously. But in California I learned that the traditions here were a lot stronger than in other places. My kids never played team sports; they played team orchestra.

In Lititz, the Moravian Church fostered an early appreciation of what music can contribute to life and worship, but Rothsville also had its own cornet band in the late 1800s and a large marching band.

While going through some of mom's treasures, we found this photograph of the 1947 Warwick Township Marching Band. Look at all those musicians! Under the direction of Irene Miller, the band had close to 70 members playing 18 different instruments and with a majorette squad and color guard. WOW!



I also have a small booklet released by the band about 1948 and have been able to correlate the bandmembers with some of the people buried in the cemetery. So, you might say that I have assembled a small heavenly band which would be rather limited in repertoire due to its heavy reliance on saxophones and drums.

Samuel Adams (1927-2006) was a member of the band from 1943-1944. He played the Cornet and Trumpet. My dad, **Harold Witwer** (1928-2011), was a band member from 1939-1943 and served as first chair on the Alto Sax. My aunt, **Marie Leeking Ferrell** (1923-2011), was a band member from 1939-1942 on the snare drum. **Weidler Grube** (1926-2015) was a band member from 1939-1944 on the Cornet and Trumpet. **Nancy Adams Gouse** (1932-2013) was a member from 1946-1948 also on the snare drum. **Kathryn Long Garman** (1933-2017) was a member from 1944-1947 as first chair B-flat Sax and also Tenor Sax. **Evelyn B. Hess Hummel** (1930-2009) was a member from 1946-1948 on the snare drum.

And don't worry, I haven't overlooked the living who are in that photo, like my mom, Doris Leeking Witwer (1941-1947, Drum Majorette), Norma Grube Rhoads (1940-1946, Clarinet), Audrey Stief Adams (1946-1948, Clarinet), Lucille Grube Martin (1947-1948, Clarinet), Lois Grube Mearig (1946-1948, Alto Sax), Lillian Beck Logeman (1941-1946, Baritone), James Martin (1946-1948, Alto Sax), and Reba Garner Weit (1942-1946, Drum Majorette).