

HARVEY PHILLIPS, 80



Harvey Phillips, distinguished professor emeritus of brass, the greatest ambassador the tuba has ever known, died on Oct. 20, 2010, at his home outside of Bloomington, Ind.

Phillips was born on Dec. 2, 1929, in Aurora, Mo., the son of farmers Jesse and Lottie Phillips and the youngest of 10 children. He was taught to play sousaphone in high school by his band teacher, a former circus band leader. He attended the University of Missouri but left school before graduating to join the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, where he played in the circus band for more than two years. During his circus travels, he met William Bell, who then was a member of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Recognizing the young tubist's talent and enthusiasm, Bell helped Phillips gain a scholarship to the Juilliard School. Phillips would graduate from Juilliard and also the Manhattan School of Music. While in New York during the 1950s, Phillips played with the New York City Opera, the New York City Ballet, and helped found the New York Brass Quintet. He served as personnel manager for Symphony of the Air, Leopold Stokowski, Igor Stravinsky, and Gunther Schuller. He was New England Conservatory Vice President for Financial Affairs (1967-71).

At the recommendation of Bell, who had become an IU faculty member, Phillips came to Bloomington and joined the IU faculty in 1971. Two years later, he organized the first TubaChristmas concert at Rockefeller Center in New York City and established the TubaSantas tradition in many cities across the country and the world. He launched Octubafest around the same time at his Tuba Ranch outside of Bloomington, also spreading that tradition to other cities.

Phillips's performance talent and his desire to promote the virtues of the tuba were unparalleled. The press labeled him the "Paganini of the Tuba" and Bell, his mentor, dubbed him "Mr. Tuba." His honors include principal tuba, Circus Hall of Fame Band (selected by Merle Evans); Kappa Kappa Psi Distinguished Service to Music Medal (1979); Association of Concert Bands "first" Mentor Ideal Award (1994); Sousa Foundation Sudler Medal of the Order of

Merit award (1995); National Band Association Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts Award (1995); United Musical Instruments Lifetime Achievement Award (1996); American Bandmasters Association Edwin Franco Goldman Award (1996); Rafael Mendez Brass Institute Lifetime Achievement Award (1997); Colonial Euphonium-Tuba Institute Development of Musical Artistry & Opportunities Award (1997); Phi Mu Alpha Orpheus Award (1997); and others. Harvey Phillips Day has been celebrated by the New England Conservatory (1971) and by his hometown Bi-Centennial Celebration in Marionville, Mo., in 1976. In 1985, the governor of Missouri declared a Harvey Phillips Weekend. He received an Honorary Doctor of Music (1971) from the New England Conservatory and an Honorary Doctor of Humanities (1987) from the University of Missouri.

Phillips was the founder and president of the Harvey Phillips Foundation, Inc. which administers Octubafest, TubaChristmas, TubaSantas, TubaCompany, and TubaJazz. In May 1994, he retired from Indiana University. In 2007, he was inducted into the Classical Music Hall of Fame, becoming the only brass instrument player to receive that honor. In 2008, IU President Michael A. McRobbie awarded him the President's Medal for Excellence, one of the highest honors an IU president can bestow.

Phillips is survived by his wife, Carol, and sons Jesse, Harvey Jr., and Thomas.