

KARL L. KING AND HIS CIRCUS BANDMASTER FRIENDS

For four years, beginning in 1910, Karl King played baritone in four different circus bands. After that, he spent another five years on the road with circus bands, but this time as bandmaster: first for Sells-Floto (1914-1916) and finally, Barnum and Bailey (1917-1918). He would be the last Barnum and Bailey bandmaster, as the show would combine with Ringling Bros. for the 1919 season, with Merle Evans as bandmaster.

In each of those first four years as a baritone player, King dedicated marches to each bandmaster under whose baton he performed.

1910: Robinson's Famous Circus; Appolos Woodring Van Anda, bandmaster (better known as "Woody Van"): "Woody Van's March".

1911: Yankee Robinson Circus; Theodore Stout, bandmaster: "Salute To The Sultan" March" (published under King's not-very-clever nom de plume, Carl Lawrence).

1912: Sells-Floto Circus; Walter P. "Woody" English, bandmaster: "Garland Entree" March.

1913: Barnum and Bailey Circus; Edwin H. "Ned Brill, bandmaster: "Barnum and Bailey's Favorite" March.



WOODY VAN'S MARCH.
Sole B^b Cornet. To my friend WOODY VAN, Bandmaster Robinson Famous Shows. K. L. KING.
(Conductor.) 500

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To my friend W. P. ENGLISH, Bandmaster Sells Floto Shows.
"GARLAND ENTREE" MARCH. K. L. KING.
Sole B^b Cornet. 541

Copyright MCMXII by C. L. Barnhouse, Oklahoma, Iowa.

To my friend Theo Stout, Bandmaster
"Salute to the Sultan"
MARCH ORIENTALE CARL LAWRENCE
Sole B^b Cornet Conductor 52

Copyright MCMXII by J. E. Agnew, Dee Meins. Price, Full Band, 36 parts, 50¢

To Mr. Ned Brill, Bandmaster Barnum and Bailey
"Barnum and Bailey's Favorite"
MARCH K. L. KING
Sole B^b Cornet 555

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KARL LAWRENCE KING

By Jerrold P. Jimmerson, WJU #3118

Much has been written about Karl L. King – the musician, conductor, and composer. Karl Lawrence King was born in the tiny village of Paintersville, Ohio, on February 21, 1891, the only child of Sandusky and Anna (Lindsey) King. His father, who had also been born in the same village, was a salesman for the International Harvester Company. The family was of Scotch-English and Pennsylvania Dutch descent. They had settled in Ohio about a century earlier after moving west from Pennsylvania.

When Karl was very young, the family moved to Xenia, Ohio, where his father played tuba in the town band. Before young Karl even started school, the family moved again to Cleveland, Ohio, where Karl received most of his formal education. In 1903, the family moved to Canton, Ohio, where Karl would develop an interest in bands and music. After receiving some instruction on cornet, King switched to Baritone. His first band experience was with the Thayer Military Band of Canton while still in his teens. In 1909 King spent some time with the Neddermeyer Concert Band of Columbus, Ohio and also with a band in Danville, Illinois. While a member of these bands, King started to compose marches and other works.

As a circus musician, he played Euphonium with Robinson's Famous Shows (1910), the Yankee Robinson Circus (1911), the Sells-Floto Buffalo Bill Combined Shows (1912), and the Barnum and Bailey Circus bands (1913). He continued to write music during these years while a member of various circus bands, and in 1913, at the age of 22, he wrote what would become his masterpiece, "Barnum and Bailey's Favorite" March.

In 1914, he was appointed bandmaster of the Sells-Floto Buffalo Bill Combined Shows, a position he would hold for three years (1914-1916). From there, he became bandmaster of the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus Band for two seasons (1917-1918), and then ended his "trouping days" to return to Canton and become bandmaster of the Grand Army of the Republic Band of Canton, Ohio in 1919.

As a composer, King published at least 291 works, with many others unpublished, including 185 marches. In addition to this impressive feat, which earned him the title of "America's March King", he also composed 22 overtures, 29 waltzes, 12 galops, and a wide variety of intermezzos, serenades, dirges, and rags, which totaled almost 100 more selections. He left us a wealth of superb band literature, including some of the most famous and recognizable compositions ever written for band. His music continues to be performed worldwide by bands of all experience levels.

Karl King came to Fort Dodge in the fall of 1920 with his young bride, Ruth (Lovett) King, the result of a classified advertisement in a national musician's publication. King was already a nationally known and respected composer. His trouping experience had

ranged from small struggling shows to conductor of two of the largest and most successful circuses of that time. King had published more than 130 works during his circus career before he even came to Fort Dodge.



He was offered, and accepted, the position as conductor of the Fort Dodge Municipal Band, a post he held for more than 50 years (1920-1971). Here, he raised his family (one son, Karl Jr.), established a successful music publishing business, composed his music, and directed the municipal band. During his tenure, the Fort Dodge band gained national recognition, and King became a beloved member of the community as well as a band musician of national and international repute. In addition to local concerts, the band appeared at state and regional fairs, rodeos, and expositions, becoming a popular fixture at those events for 40 years (1920-1959). Most notable among these were his band's annual appearances at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines IA and the Clay County Fair in Spencer IA. The Fort Dodge Band quickly established itself under King's leadership as the top professional show band in the Midwest.

King expanded his style of writing through these years to include works for college and university bands, professional groups, and the school band movement. His compositions ranged from easier works for young school bands to difficult compositions that challenged the most skilled professional groups. He traveled extensively as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator, including several nationally televised football half-time shows featuring massed bands that numbered into the thousands, which usually performed many of his own compositions.

The official title of the band was the Fort Dodge Municipal Band until after King's death in 1971, at which time it was formally renamed the Karl L. King Municipal Band of Fort Dodge IA. However, within a short time after he assumed the leadership of the group, it became known simply as "King's Band", and was referred to as such by two generations of band members and the general public alike. The same is true still today. It is still referred to locally as "the King Band".

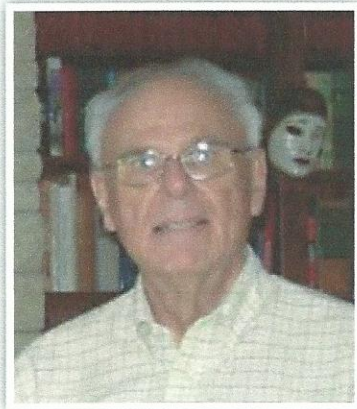
King's influence on the band was immediate and considerable.

The older members of the band liked him personally and respected him as a conductor and a musician, and took pride in his national reputation. He quickly established his goals, style, and program repertoire, which was pleasing to the band members and the audiences alike. He was a demanding but patient leader, expecting the very best from each musician within that person's capabilities.

The younger members of the band, usually high school musicians, viewed him with a combination of admiration, total respect bordering on awe, and just a tinge of fear that they could not measure up to his standards. His influence on these younger players had a profound effect on their lives. Many went on to become distinguished musicians, educators, and bandmasters themselves, including two previous conductors, W.B. Green (1971-1977) and Reginald R. Schive (1978-2002), as well as the present conductor of the band, Jerrold P. Jimmerson (2003-present). No one who ever played under the baton of Karl King would ever forget that experience and the pride of having worn the uniform of "King's Band."

King became a beloved and respected citizen and a dominant personality in his new hometown. Everyone who knew him treasured his friendship, and his advice and opinions were sought and respected. He became a quiet but forceful influence with community leaders, local politicians, and the local newspapers and radio stations. He always worked for the betterment of the community with pride, diligence, and care, just as he rehearsed his band.

He became a familiar figure on Fort Dodge's main street, Central Avenue. Most mornings, he could be seen in the barbershop next door to his music store, stretched out in the chair getting his morning shave, which was one of his greatest pleasures. He'd usually have a coffee break at the corner restaurant, visiting with the main street businessmen. His daily walk to the Post Office, a distance of a block and a half, took up a measurable portion of his day. Everyone he met stopped to say "Hello", to visit, to seek advice, or to comment on his latest concert. Karl had time for each of them, including occasionally someone down on their luck seeking a handout. His twice-weekly trips to The Messenger newspaper office with his program for the Sunday or Thursday night concerts always included a few minutes to visit with the editor, a word with the reporter to whom he delivered the program, or a joke with his good friend, the city editor. And often as



Jerrold P. "Jerry" Jimmerson has been conductor of the Karl L. King Band since 2003. He joined the band in 1960 and played under Karl King, Bill Green, and Reg Schive. A veteran Iowa music educator, Jerry taught at the Crestland Community Schools, Nevada, and in Manson for 29 years.

not, he'd stroll into the galley room next to the newsroom, where one of his young band members would be changing or cleaning type. He'd reflect on his own youth as an apprentice printer, and usually stay long enough to get some printer's ink on his fingers or shirt.

He became a great favorite with the press and radio media. He was always intelligent in his opinion and always quotable, giving pertinent, frequently witty comments. His trips, guest appearances, and honors were always major news items shared with pride by the entire community. In 1956, when he had the moustache that he had worn since 1919 shaved off, it was dutifully featured in the local paper under the caption, "Fort Dodge Loses Another Famous Landmark".

King belonged to the First Congregational Church, the Masonic Lodge, Commandery, Shrine, High Twelve Service Club, Rotary Club, and Elks Club, and was named an honorary member of the Chamber of Commerce.

During his lifetime, King received the highest honors and awards of his profession. These included: President of the American Bandmasters Association, President of the Iowa Bandmasters Association, Honorary Doctor of Music degree from Phillips University in Enid Oklahoma, National Band Association's AWAPA Award, and the American School Band Directors Association's Edwin Franko Goldman Award. Even after his passing, the awards still kept coming.

But his greatest tributes came from his adopted hometown and state. Signs at the major highways leading into Fort Dodge proudly proclaimed, "Welcome to Fort Dodge – Home of Karl L. King". In 1951, some 250 friends from Fort Dodge, the state of Iowa, and the nation honored him at a testimonial dinner in Des Moines, attended by then Governor of Iowa, William Beardsley. The largest of several gifts presented was a new Buick Roadmaster sedan. He was named Elk of the Year by the local Elk's Lodge, and received the Lions Club Community Service Award. In 1962, King and his band dutifully appeared at the dedication of a new, two million dollar viaduct spanning the Des Moines River. When the plaque was unveiled, it bore the name of Karl L. King, which until that moment had been a well-kept secret. In 1975, Karl L. King posthumously received the Iowa Award, the highest honor the state can bestow on an individual. This award was presented by then Governor Robert D. Ray to King's widow, Ruth, during ceremonies at the All-State Music Festival in Ames.

Karl L. King was a giant in the world of band music, and was also a loved, respected, and admired citizen of a grateful and appreciative community and state. He once said: "I've sung my song. It was a rather simple one; it wasn't too involved; I'm happy about it".

For more information about Karl L. King, his music, the histories of the Fort Dodge bands, and an extensive array of photos, please go to the band's website at www.karllking.us.