

NEWS

PAUL BUNJES, 83, MUSIC TEACHER



By **CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

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It would have been too simple to say Paul Bunjes was religious. Every aspect of his life, from his music lessons to his organ designs, centered around his dedication to keeping alive the Lutheran faith.

"He pointed us to the historic Lutheran heritage of church music, which helped the church remain grounded in its music," Carl Schalk said of his friend, Mr. Bunjes, who died Saturday of heart failure. He was 83.

Mr. Bunjes started teaching music to 5th and 6th graders at Zion Lutheran Church at the age of 22, and he eventually became principal and organ master at the church.

He graduated from Valparaiso University in 1940 and went on to receive his master of music from University of Michigan in 1994 and his doctor of philosophy in music theory from University of Rochester in 1966.

Before that he joined the faculty at Concordia College, now Concordia University, as a music teacher in 1951.

Although demanding to the point where students were terrified of being called upon in his class, they respected him and had fun at the same time.

"When someone was called upon for keyboard dictation, it was so difficult you had to look at it for a while, and he'd say, 'louder please' and the class would laugh, out of empathy," said Leonard Berghaus, a former student. "But no matter how tough he was, there was always a kindness from him that overrode it."

Berghaus added that he intentionally attended summer school at Concordia so that he could fit Mr. Bunjes' classes into his schedule.

"When we would take organ lessons from him, his example was always done so perfectly that you learned how to put yourself into the music and make it come alive," Berghaus said.

Mr. Bunjes also composed numerous musical compositions and designed more than 100 organs for many churches and college chapels.

"His designs were more classical, like those from the 17th and 18th Centuries," Schalk said. "Those were the eras when organ building took great precedence—for concerts and to accompany choirs. Those designs helped congregations sing better."

His survivors include his wife Barbara; a daughter Jennifer; two sons, Geoffrey and Stephen; and two sisters, Martha and Irma

Services will be held at 7 p.m. Friday in Grace Lutheran Church at 7300 Division St., River Forest.

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