

LaVerne E. Newsome Biograhhy



Laverne Edward Newsome - Class of 1925 - b. October 21, 1907 - d. August 25, 2001 From the EHS Yearbook, The Maroon: “8-Ball” - General Course - “The Fastest Man On Wheels” - Track '22, '23, '24, '25; Captain Sophomore Track Team; Spanish Club; Orchestra; Sophomore Cheer Leader.

LaVerne Newsome was a musician and educator who touched the lives of countless aspiring musicians.

Born in Elgin on Oct. 21, 1907, “Mr. Newsome provided encouragement, guidance, hope, a sense of direction, and a sense of worth to me and countless black youths who were under his tutelage,” wrote a former student, Professor David Baker.

Newsome graduated from Elgin High School and received a BA and MA in Music Education from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He taught at Alabama’s Talladega College until 1937 when he moved to Indianapolis. There he was orchestra director and music department chair at Crispus Attucks High School, the city’s first all-black high school.

For 37 years, he taught and mentored thousands of students, including trombonist J.J. Johnson, Virgil Jones, trumpet, and guitarist Wes Montgomery.

An accomplished violinist, Newsome was the first African American member of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Indianapolis, a position he held until 1992. He frequently returned to Elgin to play violin at his parent’s home for their annual music teas to benefit the St. James AME Church.

Newsome died on Aug. 25, 2001.

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His Obituary reads:

LAVERNE E. NEWSOME, taught music at Attucks High, won many honors.Services for Laverne Edward Newsome, 93, Indianapolis, a retired music instructor, will be at 11am, Aug 29 in Light of the World Christian church, of which he was a member.Calling will be from 6 to 8pm Aug 28 in Stuart Mortuary.Entombment will be in Crown Hill Cemetery.He died Aug 25, 2001.Before retiring, Mr Newsome was a teacher 37 years at Crispus Attucks High School, where he also was the orchestra director, retiring in 1974.He performed with the Indianapolis Philharmonic Orchestra from 1947 to 1992.Mr Newsome founded and directed the string ensemble at Light of the World Christian Church.He organized the Music Stars of Tomorrow, an annual recital for advanced students.He received several awards, including the Prelude Award from The Children's Museum, the Phillips Service to Music Award from the Indianapolis Symphonic Band, the Jazz Hall of Fame Award from the Indianapolis Jazz Foundation, and the Wes Montgomery Award for Educational Leadership from the city of Indianapolis.Mr Newsome received bachelor's and master's degrees from Northwestern University and was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.In 2001, Wabash College awarded him an honorary doctorate of humane letters from outstanding contributions to the cultural life of the Indianapolis community.He was an Army veteran of World War II.Memorial contributions may be made to the Indianapolis Music Promoters, in care of the funeral home.Survivor wife Maenell Hamlin Newsome.