

Theodore Folkert [“Ted”] Gast, a resident of San Mateo County for over 50 years, died Thursday, January 14, 2010 at nearly 92 years of age.

Born April 9, 1918 in Dunkirk, New York, Ted was the youngest son and last-surviving child of Martin M. and Hilda [Van der Meulen] Gast. His interest in music began early as he became fascinated by the organist who accompanied silent films in the town’s old Capital Theater. By the time of his high school graduation, he played trumpet in the Dunkirk High School band and was the accompanist for their Glee Club, as well as an active member of the school’s German, English, History, and Dramatic Clubs. He was also a member and soloist with both the First United Presbyterian Church Choir and later the Oratorio and College Choirs of Houghton College, Houghton, New York.

Ted’s further education at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, where he served as Corporal Technician and Technician 5<sup>th</sup> Grade in the 113<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 275<sup>th</sup> A.G.F. Band of the U.S. Army from July 1941 through Dec 1945. Following his honorable discharge from the service, he finished his studies at Westminster where he played French horn in the College Orchestra, and sung with the Symphonic Choir, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree in May 1949. Another highlight of his post-war years was playing with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Charles Munch, Bruno Walter, and Leopold Stokowski.

While teaching music in several different high schools in New Mexico between 1950 and 1954, Ted concurrently received his Master of Arts in Music from Highlands University, Las Vegas, NM. He was a director of band, orchestra, and chorus and could personally play French horn, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, violin, piano and organ.

After recovering from a severe auto accident, Ted moved to San Mateo County in 1955 to be closer to his elder brother John Gast and his family of Belmont. There he accepted a position with the US Postal Service where he served, primarily in the main San Mateo Annex, until his

retirement. Keeping his musical interests alive, he played French horn with the Peninsula Symphony and served as Church Organist for Unity Church of San Mateo for many years.

Although he never married, Ted remained active in the lives of his nieces and nephews and enjoyed many visits to his relatives and friends on the East Coast. He maintained a life-long fascination with trains and railroading, and composed marches, organ pieces, and sacred anthems, while setting to music many of his favorite poems. Up to the time of his death, he was active in the Senior Center Bands of San Mateo and Richmond, CA and enjoyed playing his home organ for visitors and friends. He is survived by nieces – Mrs. Carolyn Depp, Mrs. Patricia Polen-Dial, Mrs. Carol Goodrich -- and nephews James Gast, Robert Mott, Richard Mott, and their descendants. A memorial celebration of his life and achievements is being planned for a future date by his family.