



## Raymond G. Torns Jr

October 9, 2021

Raymond G. Torns, Jr. (October 12, 1943) of West Hartford packed up his horns, hoisted his leather gig bag over his shoulder, flashed the inimitable Torns smile, threw his head back and laughed that “bubble up from deep inside laugh” one last time then strolled on up to that Big Band in the sky on September 16, 2021.

Ray began his life of music at an early age taking lessons on the trumpet and violin. By age 14 he was playing gigs dressed in his cowboy hat and Bolo tie, with his precious fiddle in the Scrub Oaks Band back home on Long Island. He joined the family tradition marching alongside his father and two brothers in the brass section of the Lindenhurst Fire Department Band for years. Later on he advanced to the Navy School of Music where he honed his “high notes” and talent.

Ray was well known as a fine horn player in the greater Hartford area. He was an asset to any trumpet section as he brought exceptional sight reading skills, musicality and his wickedly funny sense of humor. He performed with The Hartford Symphony, The Hartford Pops Orchestra, Connecticut Opera Orchestra and loved those crazy days with the Ringling Brothers Circus Band, “Tempo de Tearass” as he affectionately called it! In his retirement he played with the Newport Community Orchestra and Band and enjoyed all his gigs with the Swinglane Band. Back in Connecticut Ray was very proud to be a member of the 100 piece symphonic band Capitol Winds. His real love was playing trumpet and Flugelhorn in the Katz N Jammers Swing Band.

He met his vocalist wife Nancee in 1977 when they both worked for The Al Jarvis Orchestras playing general business gigs. They later married in 1983 (he says he married his fantasy and she says she wished upon a star and Ray was her dream come true) and established and booked their own 5 piece group of fabulous musicians called the B-T Band. Their success was based on quality music, integrity and great service! He loved working on stage with his “favorite” singer.

Music and teaching went hand in hand for Mr.T. The last half of his 40 year career was spent in West Hartford, where he taught at every level, but his real passion was starting budding young musicians in the elementary school. Ray’s goal was always to instill the love of music, but especially to instill a love for the sound of the instrument. He maintained if you loved the sound of your instrument you would love practicing!! Mr.T taught with humor, knowledge of strategies, expertise, a gift for matching the instrument to the child, Jolly Ranchers, Dummy Thumps and lots of hugs and laughter! Ray’s long association with The Inter Elementary Music Festival spanned over twenty two years where he conducted Band and Orchestra and acted as Festival Coordinator for eleven of those years. Part of the fun of teaching for Ray was also the relationships he relished with his talented colleagues at Morley and throughout town.

Ray’s motto, “I Live to Serve” was one he put into practice on a daily basis. On any given snowy morning before school you could find Ray outside snow blowing the walks and driveways of his neighbors. Need help building a deck? Ask Ray Torns. More than one of Nancee’s friends was on the receiving end of a closet organizational system, an oil change, a ride to PT twice a week, a plumbing issue or coverage for an extra recess. There was even a “bat catching “ incident where Ray turned out to be the hero! Ray’s generous heart and nature compelled him to help anyone, with a smile and his ever present tool belt! Ray used his extensive knowledge for home improvements as he and Nancee worked on the remodel of their home in Newport, where they spent many magical summers entertaining friends and family under the stars

by the sea. He was quite loved by all, especially Nancee's girlfriends who benefitted from Ray's humor, chauffeuring around Newport, bartending skills, lobster cooking and cracking and all around "pool boy" know-how.

Upon learning of Ray's passing one of Ray's former Morley colleagues wrote, "Heaven's brass section just welcomed a real gem." Ray was a gem. He shared all his many gifts willingly, he was incredibly supportive to everyone, he was quick to give a compliment and a hug, and he was an eternal optimist handing out positive vibes. He will be missed by the entire Morley community, his adoring niece Kathie (Ed), our songbird Carrie, our darling "adopted" kids Miss Liz and Tommy, Helen and James, his "adopted" grandchildren, precious friend Betsy, Laura, Kiernan and Mary, Emily, Karen and Jim, Butterfly and many others including his musician friends. But most of all he leaves behind the one he loved fiercely, his wife, Nancee, who will miss him forever.

Nancee's greatest honor was taking care of Ray with loving compassion, patience and being in the moment day after day for their last 2 1/2 years together.

Ray and Nancee wish to thank Kathleen and Jocelyn and Lennox at Hartford Healthcare at Home Hospice for their dedication, attention and care.

In lieu of flowers, and if you are so inclined, Ray and Nancee request that you make a memorial donation in Ray's name to the Gifts of Music, 10 Columbus Blvd Fl 8 Hartford, CT 06106.

Ray's Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

# Tribute Wall

LR

“*Mr. Torns introduced me to the saxophone when I was in 4th grade, in the 90s. He gave me a solo in our school concert, and the honor felt enormous. He was so kind, gentle, funny, and committed. I'll never forget finding out I'd clinched a chair in the Concert Jazz Band as a high school freshman — the first thing I did was run back to Morley School to tell Mr. Torns, and he was so proud of me. Playing that instrument became an essential part of my life, and recently, after a hiatus, I just picked it back up. He gave me such a source of joy and creativity by teaching me to play. I'm lucky he was my teacher, and that our lives intersected. My love goes out to his family.*

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**Leah Rubin-Cadrain** - October 12, 2021 at 03:27 PM

NB

*Leah, I thought I had responded to you, but technology and I have never been quite comfortable. I remember you and this story. Of course he gave you a solo! You deserved it in many ways and his confidence in giving it to you was a boost to yours. And yes, he was so very proud of you when you nailed a chair in the CJB. Who wouldn't be proud! Oh, yes, he loved you for sure,. He is smiling in Heaven knowing you have picked up your horn again and have many happy years ahead of playing. If you are still in this area try some of the many community bands. The one at Univ Hartford, Capitol Winds is truly excellent....if that is not comfortable start smaller and work your way up....he would be so happy to have you on stage with him!! Good Luck! Nancee*

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**Nancee Beidler-Torns** - October 18, 2021 at 03:57 PM

CC

“*Very sorry to hear about the passing of Mr. Torns, he was truly one of the good ones. He was our band leader @ Naylor school in the late 70's early 80's in Hartford. Everyone loved him I know most of us kids took band just to be able to hang with him in the band room. Hope you're making beautiful music w/your horn Mr. T...*

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**Cheryl Christopher** - October 12, 2021 at 11:18 AM

NB

*Cheryl, So happy to know how you all loved to hang with him. That was a favorite thing of mine, too. He was truly a great guy and enjoyed all of you at Naylor. Nancee*

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**Nancee Beidler-Torns** - October 17, 2021 at 11:35 PM

MS

“*It was with great sadness I read about Ray’s passing. He was a consummate musician and teacher. I worked with him for many years in WH in the Music Program and in the Inter-EI Music Festival. I almost never saw him without a smile and a “lending hand.” He loved his students and they not just knew it - they could “feel” his caring. The world is a better place because Ray was here. My condolences to Nancee and his family.*

*Mary Lou Hoffman Solomon*  
*Friend and Former Supervisor of Fine and Performing Arts K-12, WH.*

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**Mary Lou H. Solomon** - October 12, 2021 at 10:49 AM

NB

*Mary Lou, Thank you for your condolences. This is a really tough one for me. I know the world is a better place because he cared and took the time to let those kids know. It is such a wonder in today's crazy world that there was a Ray Torns out there who always was a willing "lending hand" with smile on top!!*

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**Nancee Beidler-Torns** - October 17, 2021 at 11:36 PM

KB

“ I'll always remember Ray's live to serve attitude being put to the test when just before a West Hartford Women's Chorale concert, Nancee asked him if he'd go home for her lipstick that she had forgotten. She couldn't sing without her lipstick on! Ray cheerfully obliged and arrived back just before we went on. What a husband! Just a small example of how devoted he was to his Nancee. Love you Ray, and we'll always toast a glass to you on our double date night, New Year's Eve.

*Karen and Jim Bachman*

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**Karen Bachman** - October 10, 2021 at 12:48 PM

NB

*Karen, thank you for posting this funny but awesome story about Ray. The lip gloss was just my thing and thank the Lord he was willing to do whatever it takes!!:-) Love that man so much!!*

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**Nancee Beidler-Torns** - October 17, 2021 at 11:37 PM