March 9, 2005

Passings: Cal Poly Music Professor, Band Leader Graydon Williams


Williams and student band members, circa 1970s

His family held a celebration of his life March 19 at the Williams Family home in Los Osos, where his ashes will be interred.

Graydon was born Aug. 5, 1928, in Hunlock Creek, Pa., the oldest child of David and Merle Williams, formerly of Clifton Springs, N.Y. He graduated Clifton Springs Central School in 1946 and attended Fredonia State Teachers College for a year before joining the U.S. Air Force Jazz Band, travelling across Europe several years playing trumpet and trombone behind Bob Hope and many other stars, entertaining our troops in the era of the Berlin Airlift.

Graydon returned to the United States in 1952 and married Joanne Knies of Greeley, Colo. The newlyweds moved to Boston, where he studied six years at the New England Conservatory of Music, earning jazz
musical arranging and composing.

Graydon then served several years on the faculty of the College of the Ozarks, Ark., before moving to California as director of bands at Cal Poly in 1970.

His moonlighting jazz combos did hundreds of performances at weddings, state fairs, nightclubs and dances. He also wrote musical arrangements for many Miss America contestants.

He is survived by numerous children, nieces, nephews and family members. He was receded in death by his wife, Joanne, and their infant son, Daniel.

In lieu of flowers, the Williams family asks that contributions be made to a favorite local band or musical organization.

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