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Former Music Dean's Estate Gift to Support Two Scholarships, Award

Winthrop University

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Former Music Dean's Estate Gift to Support Two Scholarships, Award

Quick Facts

- Jess Casey, former dean of the Department of Music, was active at the university from 1958-88.
- The two scholarships will support students majoring in music and physical education.
- The award will be given to a graduate student majoring in music.



Jess Casey

ROCK HILL, S.C. -- **Jess Casey**, former dean of Winthrop University's **Department of Music**, dedicated his life to music education. Scholarships funded through Casey's estate gift will ensure that future musicians enjoy this legacy in Winthrop's top-notch music program.

Casey's \$274,000 estate gift will establish the **Jess T. Casey Endowed Scholarship in Music** for undergraduate students majoring in music and the **Jonathan Moore Casey Endowed Scholarship in Physical Education**, named in honor of Casey's son. In addition, the gift will fund the **Melle Beach Casey Endowed Award in Music** for graduate students majoring in music. The award is named for Casey's late wife. Funds from the estate gift will be divided equally among the three scholarships.

Casey was a strong presence in Winthrop's music program from 1958-88. He is credited with hiring many of the department's current faculty, including organist and Professor Emeritus of Music David Lowry; Professor Emeritus of Music and tenor Jerry Helton; and **Don Rogers**, '75, chair of the Department of Music, among others. Casey also brought many world-renowned musicians to Rock Hill and to Winthrop's campus. Under his direction, Winthrop hosted such well-known musicians as opera singers **Joan Southerland** and **Jerome Hines** and pianists **Arthur Rubenstine** and **Emanuel Ax**.

Rogers began working at Winthrop in 1975 after earning his master's degree in music education. He credits Casey, his mentor, with taking Winthrop's music program "beyond the state."

"Dr. Casey took the program to the next level. Now Winthrop is known throughout the region and a lot of the country," said Rogers, noting that Casey also bolstered the university's music program by adding master's degrees.

A talented musician, Casey also helped create the **York County Choral Society**. Casey, who served in the U.S. Army, worked as a pianist, playing with Swing bands after World War II. For years his jazzy arrangements of carols for Winthrop's Christmas show drew large crowds.

Shirley Fishburne '72, an organ major who later taught in the Department of Music during Casey's tenure as dean, knew Casey as both a supervisor and a friend. She described Casey as "a good mentor of young faculty members, always offering helpful ways to improve teaching styles."

"He had a standard of excellence that was expected of everyone in the department – students and faculty," said Fishburne, noting that Casey was as gifted a teacher as he was a musician. "He loved Winthrop, and Winthrop owes so much to him."

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