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Family Donates \$25,000 Gift in Memory of the Late Walter B. Roberts

Winthrop University

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Family Donates \$25,000 Gift in Memory of the Late Walter B. Roberts

Quick Facts

- Roberts was chairman of a Winthrop committee that succeeded in raising money for the organ's purchase and installation in 1955.
- The organ gift adds to the Roberts family's longtime support and loyalty to Winthrop and its mission to educate South Carolina residents

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The family of the **late Walter B. Roberts**, a former music department chair who helped bring the **D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ** to Winthrop University's **Byrnes Auditorium**, will honor his contributions with a **\$25,000 gift** to the organ's restoration campaign.

Roberts was chairman of a Winthrop committee that succeeded in raising money for the organ's purchase and installation in 1955. The gift reflects a longstanding commitment by Roberts and his family to ensure that the organ remains a viable part of Winthrop and its music program.

During Roberts' tenure as department chair from 1925-1958, he shared with thousands of fellow citizens his passion and love of music. He is remembered as a demanding teacher and kind mentor who was dedicated to musical excellence and to the education of young musicians. Roberts also is well known in the community for launching numerous concert series that attracted a high quality of musical talent to Winthrop.

"Some of the happiest moments of my father's life were spent in Byrnes Auditorium. He had such pride in the fact that South Carolina had an organ of that caliber," said **Mary Gene Roberts Hardin '45**, daughter of Walter B. Roberts. "The family is very proud to honor his legacy by supporting the restoration of the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ."

The organ gift adds to the Roberts family's longtime support and loyalty to Winthrop and its mission to educate South Carolina residents.

During the organ's golden anniversary this year, university alumni and friends are asked to contribute to renovate the organ to its former glory. **Rock Hill organist Shirley Fishburne '72 and '73** and **former Board of Trustees chair and local attorney David White** are leading the effort to raise \$400,000 for the restoration.

The **D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ**, which is named after Winthrop's founding president, is widely regarded as one of the most valuable and historic organs in this part of the country. The Boston company that built it, the **Æolian-Skinner Organ Company**, constructed some of the finest mid-twentieth century instruments in the U.S. Winthrop's organ is one of the few in the country to have been adjusted by **G. Donald Harrison**, **Æolian-Skinner's** legendary president.

Winthrop President Anthony DiGiorgio praised the Roberts family for their years of partnership with the university. "This generous donation exemplifies how Winthrop over the years has become a touchstone for multiple generations of many South Carolina families," **DiGiorgio** said. "Whether one's first experience with Winthrop is as a faculty member or as a student, the bond that results often is a sustaining one, as this very special contribution from a very special family demonstrates."

Money from the campaign will be used to renovate the organ's pipe work, install a digital memory system, replace the leather components and rebuild the organ's console. To date, the university has commitments of about \$140,000.

A series of **mini-concerts** in South Carolina and Georgia have helped promote awareness of the organ campaign. The next concert is set for Sept. 18 at 3 p.m. at **First Presbyterian Church** in Spartanburg, S.C.

For more information, contact the **Office of Development** at 803/323-2150.

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