



## Thomas Watson Brawner III

October 12, 1946 - August 15, 2021

Thomas Watson Brawner, III, 74, of Georgetown, KY passed away on Sunday, August 15, 2021, at UK Chandler Medical Center. Services will be held at First United Methodist Church in Frankfort on Saturday, August 21, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. with Dr. Jack Brewer officiating. Interment will follow at Frankfort Cemetery. The family will receive friends at First United Methodist Church from 10:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on Saturday.

He was born in Frankfort, KY on October 12, 1946, to Thomas Watson Brawner, Jr. and Nell Donoho Brawner, and was a graduate of Franklin County High School, The Ohio State University, and the University of Kentucky.

Tom Brawner was retired from 48 years in music education, teaching at Scott County High School, Frankfort High School, the University of Kentucky, Eastern Illinois University, and Franklin County High School. He loved playing golf and coaching summer baseball leagues in Frankfort. Tom conducted the Capitol City Community Band from 1992 to 2017, and worked extensively as a professional trumpet player in both the classical and jazz genres. Bands under his direction performed at the KMEA State Conference, the prestigious Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, and Carnegie Hall, earning numerous Distinguished ratings at both state and national level assessments. Tom Brawner was the first recipient of the KMEA Secondary Instrumental

Music Teacher of the Year, and is a member of the both the Scott County Athletics Hall of Fame and the Franklin County High School Hall of Fame, as well as the Phi Beta Mu International Bandmasters' Fraternity Hall of Fame.

Tom is survived by his wife of 26 years, Elaine Brawner; children Lindsay Brawner King (Brent) and Thomas Watson Brawner, IV (Erin); step-children Lesley Gardner Smith (Shane) and Jeremy Gardner (Jackie); grandchildren Elizabeth King, Audrey King, Evelyn King, Avery Brawner, and Rye Brawner; step-grandchildren Preston Smith, Pierson Smith, Alyx Gardner, and Kylan Gardner.

Tom Brawner was a great musician and an avid sports fan who loved his family, his friends, his band family, and his dogs. He will be missed, but his influence continues throughout the state and the nation through those who knew and loved him.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made in Tom's memory to a charity of one's choice.

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory.

# Cemetery Details

## Frankfort Cemetery

215 East Main Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
(502) 227-2403

# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG 21. 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church  
211 Washington Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601

## Service

AUG 21. 1:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church  
211 Washington Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601

# Tribute Wall



“ *Thomas Watson Brawner III*

October 06, 2023 at 03:15 PM



“ *I did my student teaching with Tom at Franklin County HS. Learned a lot from him. Well rounded guy and firmly grounded in his beliefs of doing the right thing. RIP Tom and thanks.*

**Douglas Wayne Clem** - October 22, 2022 at 03:04 PM



“ *So sorry for your loss. My daughter was a student of his for 4 years, He turned her into a wonderful flute player and drum major. He was a wonderful teacher.*



**Michelle Lee** - August 31, 2021 at 12:00 AM



“ *Tom was my masters teacher at EIU. As with many, he got me from there to here. He was an inspiration, great teacher/player/conductor, and example. I owe a lot to him. It was an honor to study with him. We spoke last month...another honor. RIP. Well done good and faithful servant....Dr. David Champouillon, Bach Artist/Clinician, Retired University Professor.*

**Dr. David Champouillon** - August 21, 2021 at 08:55 PM

ML

“ And so today one of the greatest musicians I will ever know was laid to rest. At one point in my life I wanted to be a band director, just like him. It's always been my biggest regret. Thanks to talking to a special friend, Monty, who also wanted the same thing, we both came to realize that we could never emulate what he was (not sure anyone can), because you see, we truly knew how good he was. Not only having the time in high school, but also through college and even a little beyond for me. We not only performed, but we studied music under him. So we really knew, and we truly didn't stand a chance. So not until now, not until really letting it sink in how extraordinary this man was, does it all make sense. I let that part of me go and didn't pursue it, because deep down I knew I could have never been as good as he was. God had a different plan for me but I thank God for the time I spent engulfed in the musical world of Tom Brawner.

*Michelle (Rogers) Little*

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**Michelle Little** - August 21, 2021 at 07:30 PM

LW

“ Dear Elaine, Lindsay, Thomas, Leslie, and Jeremy,  
Tom and I were great buddies in school. I remember playing football in his back yard and going lots of places together. He has always been a treasured friend to my entire family.

We both played trumpet at Franklin County (although he was so much better than me that I should simply say I owned a trumpet). Tom was the finest trumpet player I have ever known. He was first chair in everything: Franklin County High School, Central Kentucky Youth Orchestra, and nearly every state and regional clinic he attended. I was extremely proud to have played a trumpet duet with Tom at state contest one year. I felt as if the gods had smiled on me to be associated in any way with the trumpet virtuoso of our time.

Under Tom's tutelage, my younger brother Paul became an excellent tuba, string bass player, and musician. Years later when Paul was the Band Director at Franklin County and needed his master's to continue teaching, Tom beckoned to come to Eastern Illinois University where he took Paul under his wing and found him a job and then set him on a path to earn his Masters.

Elaine, we will not forget that you and Tom introduced Paul to his wife Kathy and our entire family will never forget you and Tom traveling all the way to Harlan just to play for Adele's wedding.

I could heap accolades on your wonderful husband, father, and my very dear friend for hours but suffice it to say that I loved Tom like a brother, my Mom and Dad loved Tom like one of their own, and my brothers and sister did, too.

To say we will miss him is a tremendous understatement,

Logan Weiler

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Logan Weiler - August 21, 2021 at 12:33 AM

BI

“ I’m not sure how to express my overwhelming gratitude to the man who is responsible for nurturing my love of music and guiding my career choice. Thank You Mr. Brawner! Sincerely, Brooks Giles III

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**Brooks Giles, III** - August 20, 2021 at 07:56 PM

RH

“ With the love of music in him Tom contributed immensely to the Frankfort community.  
It would be difficult to count the number of people, especially those in their teens whose lives were enriched by his influence. I did not know Tom well but remember his calling me [40 years ago?] to be a keyboard n accompanist to some of his FCHS band members preparing their contest pieces. I've been a church musician at South Frankfort Presbyterian since 1970. His students loved and respected him. Frankfort is a better place to live because of his commitment to the art of music.  
Sincerely, William R. Herzel.

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**ROLAND HERZEL** - August 20, 2021 at 07:09 AM

SR

“ I was one of the many students who had the pleasure of having Mr. Tom Brawner as my band director at Scott County Middle/High School. This is a man who earned the respect and admiration of his students, even if he had to demand it at times. We would test his patience some days, being a bunch of teenagers there would be times when our minds would be anywhere but the pop song he had taken the time and care to arrange for our marching band. There were even a couple days we had worn his patience so thin he would simply leave the rehearsal room, leaving us to stew in the disrespect we'd shown him. He'd set us straight and we'd get back to the piece at hand. We all learned very quickly that this man demands respect, and it doesn't take him long to earn it either. His passion for music bled from him into the room. He'd share different pieces of music with us some days. After a brief explanation of the artist/composer, he'd put on a CD and we would all just listen. I would watch his face as we listened, I felt like I knew why music was special to me, so I wanted to know why that particular piece was special to him. I'll never know why, but it was plain to see that it was, and that was always enough to put a smile on my face. Through him, I learned so much about music. Not just the act of playing music, but why it's so important to so many people.

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**Sam Ridenour** - August 19, 2021 at 11:54 PM

KB

“ I was a band student at Scott Co when Mr. Brawner graced our doorway. I was very quiet and shy, little self confidence, but I loved being in band. Mr. Brawner pushed me to try out for all state, signed me up for college band seminars, leadership seminars, and just about everything you can imagine. He saw in me what I never saw in myself. I had the honor of him adjudicating two of my groups and I'll keep the note he sent me that read "I'm so proud of you". Thank you, Mr. Brawner, for being so passionate about music and pushing me to believe in myself. You suggested that I take on music teaching, and everyday I teach I think of you. Many prayers, much love, and condolences to the family. We have all truly lost a great mentor and friend.

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**Kristal Bromling Bruce** - August 19, 2021 at 08:37 AM



“ Memories 44" Sonnet was purchased for the family of Thomas Watson Brawner III.



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August 18, 2021 at 08:04 PM

PM

“ We have truly lost an iconic figure in our profession. Tom Brawner will always be remembered for his ability to get young musicians to create amazing music. He was a master teacher and great colleague. I never got to know him as well as I would have liked, but on those occasions when our paths would cross, I knew I as in the presences of a true professional.

*My most sincere condolences to his family on this most sad passing.*

*You will all be in my prayers.*

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**Paul Metzger** - August 18, 2021 at 05:11 PM

BS

“ Tom was a force in the band world. He demanded excellence from his students and his profession. He raised the bar in the band world by being a part of it. As a high school student in Tennessee, we couldn't wait to get a recording of the Franklin Co. High School Band because we knew it was a standard of excellence and as aspiring band directors even then, we knew his name. When I came to Ky and first met Tom, I was scared and put-off by his straight to the point, sardonic manner of talking to you. But as I got to know him, I grew to see the side of him his students loved and feel blessed to have been able to call him colleague and friend. My deepest sympathies go out to his family, friends and students of all ages. He cast a huge shadow and will be greatly missed.

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**Beth Stribling** - August 18, 2021 at 02:00 PM

MT

“ Mr. Brawner was my band instructor.. it seems like forever ago and yet just yesterday. I was SO nervous when I was in 5th grade that he wouldn't give me the instrument I wanted...a saxophone. He patiently listened to my young plea, but instead did you have the perfect mouth for a flute and handed me the instrument. He was right...as usual...I could make a beautiful sound come out of my flute. When I tried my friend sax...all squeaks! He was tough on his students but definitely made us better musicians. I'm so grateful for the opportunity of having him as a teacher and mentor and for the kindness he always showed me.

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**Michele Moeck Thompson** - August 18, 2021 at 01:17 PM

TR

“ Mr. Brawner was my instructor from 2005-2009 at SCHS. Around that time, YouTube had just launched and was becoming more popular. I remember for a few weeks during that time, he would write daily suggestions on the board of video performances he recommended us students look up and watch. The performances were of various musicians and genres, and included a lot of jazz. He had a true passion for music and wanted to share this with us in any way he could.

*He was a great teacher and musician, and I know we'll all remember him fondly for years to come.*

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**Taylor Rogers** - August 18, 2021 at 12:07 PM

MB

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. Mr. Brawner was my band teacher in the 1990's. He pushed me beyond my comfort zone, encouraging me to try out for the All State Band and Drum Major. While serving as drum major he gave me my first skills in leadership, which I continue to practice professionally to this day. He taught us KY band kids all about "the best damn band in the land". I am now married to a Buckeye (Mr. Brawner played the trumpet at my wedding) and every time we watch the Buckeye half time show, we think of Mr. Brawner. He constantly taught his students the value of hard work and teamwork and he will be missed.

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**Maria Cornett Bertram** - August 18, 2021 at 10:44 AM

KE

“ It was my pleasure to have Tom Brawner as my band instructor for 5 years (3 at Elkhorn Middle and 2 at Franklin County HS). Although I have not performed since college, his influence on me had an ever lasting impact. He was dedicated, passionate, and extremely talented. I could go on about all the things I learned from him in regards to music, but it was the life skills that I valued more than anything. From music, we learned things that transposed any endeavor; team work, listening skills, time management, focus, attention to details, posture, practice, goal setting, being prepared for the moment, having courage to take on challenging tasks, memory strength, etc. He was a great ambassador to music not only from my hometown of Frankfort, but to the state of Kentucky as well. He will be truly missed and my condolences to his family.

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**Kevin Ellis** - August 18, 2021 at 10:12 AM

LS

“ So many Beautiful words have been shared about what Mr. Brawner meant to band students.

*This morning Coleman and have listened to some of his band recordings. That's perhaps the best tribute we can do, .. be an attentive audience.*

*There are no words. But, there's our FLYER Alma Mater.*

*For all my fellow band family out there, we'll always be his band kids with every march forward.*

*I am grateful for the tremendous gifts of music, respect and diligence under the baton of Mr. Brawner.*

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**Lisa Marie Scott** - August 18, 2021 at 10:03 AM

FS

“ Tom was one of the most impressive, talented and funny people that I have known. I liked him immensely and will miss him. My condolences to his family and friends.

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**Fred Simpson** - August 18, 2021 at 09:32 AM

LG

“ Like so many others have commented here and on FaceBook, Mr. Brawner was a huge part of my life from 6th grade through high school, and even years later as part of the Capital City Community Band. When trying to explain to my then-adolescent daughter how important he was, I said, "It's like this: God, Jesus, then Mr. Brawner." I so admired and feared and loved him, all at the same time. He gave those he touched an amazing gift - my love of music has been a source of joy throughout my entire life. He made band kids cool and made hard work fun. I feel honored to have known him. He is sorely missed.

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**Lisa K. Gabbard** - August 17, 2021 at 08:37 PM

GA

“ I was fortunate enough to have Mr. Brawner for band in 6th grade band and also all through high school at FCHS. I absolutely loved being in band with he and Mr. Greenwood as conductors! I learned so much from him, including a good work ethic and dedication, and he was a role model for me. He will be missed by so many, prayers for his family.

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**Grace Burgess Anderson** - August 17, 2021 at 07:02 PM



“ White Mum and Red Lily Mix (Silk Cemetery Flowers) was purchased for the family of Thomas Watson Brawner III.



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August 17, 2021 at 05:43 PM

TE

“ *Lifting his family and loved ones up in prayer! What an amazing human being! What a selfless life to spend it in the betterment of others. No greater love has any man than to give themselves to the service of others! He will be remembered by the many individuals he touched! Rest in peace in the Hands of the Lord.*

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**Terry Elder** - August 17, 2021 at 05:20 PM

MS

“ *I loved being a part of the FCHS Band. I remember when i was a sophomore and received the first annual R2D2 marching award by Thomas Rawlings. That was so funny. Then I remember the mock wedding I had to Brooks Giles at band camp. My thoughts are with us all as we remember Tom Brawner.*

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**Marjorie Steinberg** - August 17, 2021 at 04:18 PM



“ *I was a senior at FCHS during Mr. Brawner's first year as a band director. He was fresh out of Ohio State and wasn't much older than his students. In his first year, he turned a mundane music program into a powerhouse marching and concert band. He also created the high school's first jazz band. He taught us to love music and life. Godspeed, Tom Brawner, and thank you.*

*Roger Frazee*

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**Roger Frazee** - August 17, 2021 at 03:40 PM

BS

“ Phil Kring That brought tears to my eyes, you described a phenomenon that was close to magic. I remember as a parent sitting in the audience for six years with chills going up and down my spine when I heard literally children play more like a great symphony orchestra. My oldest daughter said “he made me, challenged me and cared about me as a person and as a student. He made me reach for the stars, and I did”.

*I posted this reaction to Phil Kring’s post on Facebook.*

*This is my reaction as a parent who sometimes saw and heard music from heaven, who thought that the perfect sound coming from Tom Brawer’s Franklin County Band and Orchestra was simply unbelievable. The maestro never let these students fail, he wanted perfection from his students and got it, he wanted discipline from them and he got it, he wanted magic from them and he got it.*

*I think back when one of our daughters had a solo to play at the University and she was little and only a Freshman, she looked so little on that huge stage all alone and I was simply terrified for her, afraid she would choke. She had practiced and practiced even at Tom Brawners home where he laid on the kitchen floor, as he had hurt his back, but he kept teaching even from the floor of his kitchen. She began her solo on that huge stage and I wasn’t breathing. Tom Brawner walked behind my seat as she began to play, he leaned down and whispered “She’s got this Mom”, and she did because she trusted and believed in him, she never wanted to disappoint Tom Brawner.*

*Silence, he always began directing when he had complete silence in the room, from his students and his audience.*

*It was magic Mr. Maestro, all of us are so grateful for your life, your talent and your dedication.*

*Now, all I hear is silence.*

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**Betsy Scott** - August 17, 2021 at 03:21 PM

MO

“ I first met Mr Brawner when I decided to play an instrument. He was working with Mr Fugate and I was in the 6th grade. He remained as my teacher until I graduated. Some of my best memories of high school were in band. He always spoke when I would run into him after graduation . He will be sorely missed but always remembered. Prayers to the family.

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**Marsha Otten** - August 17, 2021 at 03:14 PM

BI

“ 1 file added to the album Great Performances



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**Bill** - August 17, 2021 at 03:06 PM

LG

*Hearing his voice brings tears to my eyes, and the music gives me chills. How wonderful. Thank you so much to whoever shared.*

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**Lisa K. Gabbard** - August 17, 2021 at 08:40 PM

JG

*Thank you so much for sharing this video. Not only was Tom a classmate but a neighbor which we rode to school together in high school.*

*Judy Lowrance Goodman, FCHS Class of 1964*

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**Judy Goodman** - August 18, 2021 at 12:12 PM

KF

*I remembered when I watched Mr. Holland's Opus for the first time and thought, that is Tom Brawner, or as close as you could get. You had to share his space to fear him, respect him and adore him and sometimes worship him. Who did not want to get that red beret that one week or beat someone in a challenge; play that arrangement from memory when he called your name or get a "superior" at a musical festival? It was just as much about doing well as making him proud of you. I don't know how many times we would all pile in cars and ride to UK if the jazz band was playing. I loved when he would tell a dirty joke to ease the tension before a competition and make Mary Wells cover her ears so she would not have to hear. I remember the night when his daughter was born with some health issues and the band held a prayer vigil at the school for his family. At band camp when you feared initiation and then later were proud to know you made it through without too many scars and lot of butch wax in your hair. When he turned out a Star Wars arrangement overnight that put the other band at camp to shame. Some parents never realize what effect he may have had on their child but don't doubt that every person that played for him was affected. He had that passion about what he was doing and he swept you up in that. In the winter of, I think '77, we were out of school for several weeks; however, I remember walking with Ellen Burt through deep piles of snow to school so we could practice in time for competition as we could not afford to wait. There are never enough words to talk about a man who gave so much of his own personal time and was such a beloved and revered teacher of not just music but humility and perseverance and personal growth. I hope he gets to play with Maynard in heaven. Thank you God for Tom Brawner.*

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**Kelly Tillett Feifer** - August 18, 2021 at 01:01 PM

PT

*Tommy and I were band members together until we graduated in 1964. It was then that we played this overture. We were always proud of Tom's achievements and he excelled beyond our dreams. Rest easily now, your work is done.*

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**Patty Tuttle** - August 18, 2021 at 09:31 PM