

Teacher's memorial likely to draw crowd

Service moved after calls pour in about popular Palmyra-Eagle educator

BY BETSY THATCHER
of the Journal Sentinel staff

George J. Morateck Jr., a retired Palmyra-Eagle teacher and former Eagle village trustee, was so well-liked throughout the community that his memorial service was moved to the high school to accommodate the expected crowd of mourners.

Mealy's Funeral Home in Eagle was so inundated with phone calls Thursday inquiring about Morateck's Tuesday memorial service that officials there decided to move the service from the funeral home to the Palmyra-Eagle Community Center at the high school, teacher Joe Whitmore said.

Morateck, who was 60, died at his Eagle home Wednesday after hanging himself, according to the Waukesha County medical examiner's office.

Morateck taught language arts at Palmyra-Eagle Middle School from 1978 to 1994, when he quit teaching because of his struggles with clinical depression, said Whitmore, a longtime friend and social studies teacher at the middle school.

"He really missed the teaching," Whitmore said. "That was a big hole in his life."

Recently, Morateck underwent extensive testing and learned he unknowingly had suffered a mild stroke about four or five years ago, Whitmore said. Doctors told Morateck the stroke affected only his mental capacities, specifically his moods, and that his depression was a result of the stroke, Whitmore said.

Whitmore said the community's loss is tremendous.

"To say that George was gregarious would be an understatement," Whitmore said. "He was very popular."

Morateck, a musician who taught music at New Berlin, West and Eisenhower high schools for 15 years before joining the Palmyra-Eagle school district "incorporated a lot of music and enthusiasm into his classroom," Whitmore said.

Known for his "singing spelling tests," Morateck also found ways to use his accordion in his lessons, Whitmore said.

"He did some wonderful things with the kids in the classroom," he said. "The kids really enjoyed that."

Morateck, who played the piano and keyboard, often dressed up like a cheerleader, brought his keyboard to school basketball games and provided the musical accompaniment for the games.

He also played with a jazz combo on dinner cruises on Lake Geneva and played in a Waukesha piano bar. Morateck also was a past board member of the Waukesha Musicians Union.

Survivors include his wife, Darla; a son, Michael (Deneen), of Palmyra; a daughter, Michele (Greg) Scolman, of Fort Atkinson; mother, Caroline, of West Allis; a brother, James (Karen), of West Allis; and five grandchildren.

The memorial service will begin at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Community Center, 123 Burr Oak St., Palmyra. A visitation will follow. Cremation will be at Wisconsin Memorial Park, 13235 W. Capitol Drive, Brookfield.

Memorials to the Palmyra-Eagle High School music scholarship fund were suggested.

Morateck, George J. Jr.

Age 60 of Eagle died Aug. 27, 1997. Beloved husband of Darla (nee Albright). Dear father of Michael (Deneen) and Michele (Greg) Scolman, brother James (Karen) and mother Caroline and five grandchildren.

Memorial service 7:00 PM Tuesday, September 2, 1997 at the Palmyra-Eagle Community Center at the Palmyra-Eagle High School. The family will receive visitors following the services. Cremation: Wisconsin Memorial Park. Memorials to the High School Music Scholarship appreciated.

MEALY'S FUNERAL HOME
Eagle, Wisconsin
549-2442