

# Warren Returns From Hollywood

**Local Musician Comes Home  
To See His Twins After  
Completing Motion Pic-  
ture At Republic Studios.**

Elmer Warren (or Garnet Warren to people of this city) has returned to Mount Airy after completing a motion picture at Republic studios in Hollywood, Calif., to visit his wife and a set of twins born August 14.

The father was taking part in the filming of a scene entitled, "Goin' Down The Road Feelin' Bad," when he was handed a telegram telling him of the birth of the two 6¼-pound babies. The twins, a boy and a girl, are named Donald Roy and Wanda Joy.

The local musician had been playing with the Tennessee Ramblers at radio station WBT, Charlotte, for several months prior to his trip to California a few weeks ago. Elmer, as one of the stars of the string band, appeared with Gene Aubrey in the western feature, "Ride, Ranger, Ride."

## 'Fiddlin' Hank' Warren — A Mount Airy Native

# Briarhoppers Getting Together

BY R.J. BERRIER

"I have had three heart attacks and multiple bypass surgery," the former star of the Briarhopper radio program said Thursday in a telephone interview from Charlotte. "But I still like to get out on the stage and jump around the microphone as much as I can..."

That entertainer, a young 76, is Garnett "Fiddlin' Hank" Warren, a Mount Airy native who will be one of the featured performers this weekend in The Charlotte Country Music Story. The tribute to Carolina musicians who played an important role in early country music is sponsored by the N.C. Arts Council in partnership with Spirit Square of Charlotte.

There will be two concerts, tonight and Saturday evening. Both will feature recreations of the famed WBT radio "Briarhopper Show" with the original cast, including Warren.

In addition to the Briarhoppers, the Charlotte event will bring together, among others, Bill Monroe, legendary Father of Bluegrass, Arthur Smith, Snuffy Jenkins, Homer "Pappy" Sherrill and the Tennessee Ramblers.

"All the seats have been reserved for the Saturday show," Warren said, the pride evident in his voice. "Between eighty and ninety percent of the seats have been sold for Friday."

The former Granite Citian and his fellow Briarhoppers will perform for one hour, from 8 to 9 o'clock, at Spirit Square tonight, "with other acts coming on after us," Warren said.

"Saturday night, we will perform for one hour. Bill Monroe will be the second act."

Warren has been described by people in the business as "one of the most versatile of the Briarhoppers."

He joined the favorite radio program of thousands of Carolinians in the late 1930s or early 1940s and became not only the group's fiddler but their baggy-pants comedian. Photos of the band from that decade feature Hank — made up with freckles, fake glasses and blacked-out teeth — cutting capers with



Fiddlin' Hank Warren, as he appeared with the Briarhoppers in the 1940s.

his fiddle or even standing on his head.

Few listeners realized that Warren had enough formal training to play with the Charlotte Symphony, or that his skill at sight-reading allowed him to act as the Briarhoppers' musical director during the busy days following World War II when composers deluged the band with song sheets.

### Made Movie With Autry

It was a long road from Mount Airy to Charlotte for the versatile entertainer, whose 50-year career in entertainment has included a movie with Gene Autry.

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Hank Warren's son, Roy, was a guest on the Betty Feezor Show recently where he displayed this "afghan" which he designed and made.

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## Jeffcaster Salutes...



**Hank Warren**, who celebrates 42 years with the company Thursday, is photographer and darkroom operator for the Jeffcaster, also turning out prints for WBTV Promotion. Hank (whose real name is Garnett) was a member of the WBT Briarhoppers at the height of their radio program in the 1940's and still plays dates with the group throughout the Carolinas and other states. Hank's wife, **Inez**, is an accomplished artist who sometimes does paintings from photographs taken by Hank.

## Garnett And Inez Warren

Sunday afternoon friends and relatives of Garnett Benton and Melissa Inez Turney Warren helped the couple celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

The couple's children are Donald Roy Warren of Charlotte, Wanda Joy Thomas of Mint Hill, Barbara Jean Carlsen of Bountiful, Utah, Larry Dean Warren of Pineville and the late Bobby Alton Warren. The Warrens have six grandchildren.

Mr. Warren, 72, retired from full-time work at WBTB in 1974, where he had been chief photographer. He also was "Hank" on the Briarhopper program on WBT radio. The five Briarhoppers are together and play for schools and churches. Warren works part-time as a photographer for WBTB. He began work with WBT in 1938 and is still on the payroll there.

Mrs. Hopper, 70, went back to school in 1966. In the last 14 years she has worked in sales at Ivey's. Mrs. Warren also has been working on an old dream of hers — painting.

The Warrens, who married Aug. 10, 1931 in Hillville, Va., attribute their "long and happy marriage to love, respect, honor and the ability to understand the other and work our problems out." They live on Dunaire Drive.



The Warrens In 1931



The Warrens In 1981



BOB LEVERONE/Staff

### So that's how you do it

Bain Elementary fourth-grader Kyle Jolly, 9, helps Hank Warren, 72, of the Briarhoppers band, as the two joined in playing

bluegrass music during a Grandparents Week celebration on Wednesday at the Mint Hill school.

# Homespun talent focus of festival

By JAMES FARRER  
For The News and Observer

It wasn't really an unusual sight in a summer Saturday afternoon: a diverse crowd of young couples in tie-dyed T-shirts, businessmen in ties, senior citizens and foreign exchange students listening to bluegrass music and sipping cool drinks.

But this scene took place in downtown Raleigh, a site that more often resembles a ghost town on weekends.

"I think it's neat," said Tom Badger of Raleigh. "There's a really interesting mix of people. They ought to have more like it."

Badger was one of about 1,000 people who gathered in the shade of the oaks on Moore Square and wandered through the restored City Market to experience the traditional music and crafts of the Piedmont at the ArtsPlosure Heritage Festival.

The shade, a cool breeze, cold drinks and ice cream helped the festival visitors endure the 95-degree temperatures while they sampled a smorgasbord of blues, bluegrass and folk singers as well as Mike Cross's personal brand of music and humor.

The festival, which continues today, was the first major event in the \$8.4 million City Market restoration, the cornerstone of the city's downtown revitalization efforts. The City of Raleigh asked ArtsPlosure officials to hold the festival downtown to attract new tenants and the public to City Market, festival organizers said.

"The focus of this festival is on the traditional music and crafts of the Piedmont with an emphasis on North Carolina pottery," said Diane S. Bothwell, acting director of ArtsPlosure.

She said that the art of making pottery was passed down through families in the region and that many of the potters at the festival were relatives.

Glenn and Lulu Bolick of LeNoir, members of an old pot-making family, demonstrated traditional pottery spinning techniques



Fiddlin' Hank Warren of the band called Briarhoppers uses his bow in a different way to entertain the audience at the ArtsPlosure Heritage Festival

Staff photo by Jennifer Steib

# Original Briarhopper Hank Warren dies at 88

By **TONYA JAMESON**  
Staff Writer

Garnett "Hank" Warren, one of the last surviving original Briarhoppers, died Wednesday morning at Lakeview Living Center.

Warren, 88, was the fiddler for the Briarhoppers, a legendary string band that performed live on WBT radio for 30 years. The band, which played throughout the Carolinas, regrouped 20 years ago and tours the country.

Warren fell ill about four years ago and hadn't played with the band since. But that doesn't mean members won't miss "Fiddlin' Hank," who could play a fiddle and

do a bird imitation at the same time.

"Hank is the best comic fiddle player that any of us have ever seen," said Roy "Whitey" Grant, 81.

Warren was a native of Mount Airy and used to have jam sessions with Andy Griffith, who plays guitar, Grant said. About four years ago, Warren started missing notes and decided it was time to stop playing, Grant said. Warren suggested the group re-



Warren

place him with 54-year-old Dwight Moody — a young 'un by their standards.

Warren is survived by his wife, Inez Warren; two sons, Roy Warren of Monroe and Larry Warren of Pineville; two daughters, Joy Thomas of Mint Hill and Jean Carlson of Farmington, Utah; a brother, Jack Warren of Mount Airy; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be at 11 a.m. Friday at McEwen Funeral Home in Mint Hill with the Rev. Grady Faulk officiating. Interment will follow in Evergreen City Cemetery.



**Garnett "Hank" Warren, 88,** of Charlotte, died Wednesday, December 17, 1997 at Lakeview Living Center.



Funeral services will be 11 a.m. Friday, December 19, at McEwen Mint Hill Chapel with Reverend Grady J. Faulk officiating. Interment will follow in Evergreen City Cemetery. The family will receive

friends from 7-9 p.m. this evening at the funeral home.

Mr. Warren, better known as "Fiddling Hank", was a native of Mt. Airy, NC. He was a musician and photographer, retiring after 40 years service with WBT Radio and WBT Television. He was a member of the Briarhoppers Band which was formed in the 1940's. The band traveled throughout North and South Carolina, playing in schools, churches and orphanages. He was a member of the Photographers Association and the Musicians Union.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Inez T. Warren; two sons, Roy Warren of Monroe and Larry Warren and his wife, Toi of Pineville; two daughters, Joy Thomas and husband, Edwin D. Thomas, Jr., of Mint Hill and Jean Carlson and husband Jay of Farmington, Utah; one brother, Jack C. Warren of Mt. Airy, NC; six grand-

## ***Veteran Briarhopper "Hank" Warren Dies***

One of WBT Radio's most popular and widely-known retirees, **Garnett B. "Hank" Warren**, died December 17. He was 88 years old.

Known to countless thousands across the Carolinas and elsewhere as "Fiddlin' Hank," he was one of the original members of the legendary WBT Briarhoppers. The Briarhoppers performed on WBT for 30 years, later regrouped and continue to play around the country today. "Hank" was noted for his humorous contributions to



Briarhopper performances and for his ability to coax a haunting melody out of a carpenter's saw.

In addition to his musical talents, "Hank" served as the company photographer, chronicling station events and visiting celebrities from U.S. presidents to Hollywood and TV stars. For many years, he provided almost all of the photographs appearing in *The Jeffcaster*.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Inez T. Warren; two sons, two daughters, one brother, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.