

Fire destroys history, but not spirit of musicians

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"Eat-em-up, eat-em-up-KSU."

This familiar fight song, heard at every K-State football and basketball game, became a tradition because of the Nichols Gym fire.

According to Phil Hewett, band director when the fire occurred, the eat-em-up song was a way to get the band going after all its music and most of its instruments were destroyed by the fire.

"It was kind of a stupid idea, but we needed something to lift our spirits. Christmas was supposed to be a jolly time, but no one had anything to be jolly about," Hewett said.

Because of the fire, the entire band library was lost. There was no music for anything.

"There was no music for the fight song, 'Wildcat Victory,' for the marching band, pep band, concert band — for anyone," he said.

Many of the instruments were also destroyed, but because there was a Friday night basketball game, some of the instruments were saved.

"IT WAS A REAL BLESSING that some of the students took their instruments home with them after the game that night," he said.

The eat-em-up song was first played at the University of Kansas during a basketball game the Saturday after Nichols burned. The song was not on paper when first played, it was just an idea in Hewett's head, one he said he got from an old army bugle call.

"We didn't have and music to play from, but we had to play something. I guess it really caught on."

Hewett said the song was eventually written down on paper, along with "Wildcat Victory," and published.

"Before the fire, even the fight song had not been published. It was just written on a piece of paper and passed from one band member to another.

"When word got out about the fire we (the music department) got a lot of calls through various parts of the University, from high school bands and publishing companies who would loan us instruments and music until we could get funds to replace those destroyed," Hewett said.

The music department had to get its calls through other departments because its facilities were gone.

TOTAL LOSS FOR the band was about \$350,000, according to Hewett and Collegian clippings. But he said the loss of the music library and films of the band were the real tragedy.

