



RESOLUTION NO. 17-81

A RESOLUTION AWARDED BY SOUTH BEND COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE MEMBER KAREN WHITE HONORING WILLIAM TYREL NICKS, FONDLY KNOWN AS BILLY "STIX" NICKS, FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ARTS IN THE SOUTH BEND AND MICHIANA AREA

Whereas, Billy "Stix" Nicks was born on December 8, 1934, the second of seven children born to Wyze and Alma Nicks, in Greenwood, Mississippi, where his parents were sharecroppers on a large cotton plantation; and

Whereas, Billy's parents chose to move to South Bend, Indiana, where his father had relatives, in the autumn of 1944 in an attempt to escape the racial prejudices of the Deep South and in search of fairness and equality and a better life for his young family; and

Whereas, Billy attended South Bend Central High School and his friend, Jackie Ivory, gave him his nickname, "Stix," because Billy had developed the habit of carrying a set of drumsticks with him at all times and drummed on whatever was within his reach at the time. It soon became obvious that he had a God-given talent for the drums and he purchased his first set of drums from a local pawn shop with money he'd earned working for a typewriter company; and

Whereas, Billy, being self-taught and after much practice, started his first band, "The Blue Notes," while still in high school, and they played at weekly "sock hop" dances and local parties from 1953 to 1955, when the band was also known as "The Whopping Bopping Show Stoppers;" and

Whereas, when Billy graduated from high school in 1954, he became involved in another band called "They Rhythm Rockers," which included another famous South Bend musician, Junior Walker, on saxophone and Fred Patton on piano and vocals, with Billy also contributing on vocals, in addition to acting as the band's leader and, of course, drummer; and

Whereas, Billy "Stix" Nicks' reputation as a drummer grew and he played with many other young, up-and-coming artists at various local venues, including the Morris Park Country Club, where he was approached by the mother of a young fan who admired Billy's unique skills and asked if he would consider teaching her son. This led to young Billy's first foray into a lifetime career of teaching drumming; and

Whereas, in 1956, Billy and The Rhythm Rockers were hired to perform at the grand opening of a teen dance party at Club 46 for WNDU-TV, which became a standing gig after they signed a contract to play for the weekly Saturday afternoon dance party television show for WNDU; and

Whereas, Billy was drafted into the U. S. Army in 1957 and, while taking a forced break from his own band, he played in the Army band as a percussionist and his tour of duty led him to Germany. When he was honorably discharged in 1959, he returned to South Bend and began playing with a long-time friend, Oscar Baby Jones, in several engagements as the "Oscar Baby Jones Jazz Quartet;" and

Whereas, in 1962, Billy joined forces with his old friend, Jackie Ivory, and "The Gents of Soul" and they recorded an LP in Chicago that was released on Atco/Atlantic records. Billy credited this event, and the tour of the southern states that followed, as the turning point in his career; and



Whereas, in 1963, Billy married Pattie Tate and they were married for nearly fifty-four years. Pattie survives, along with four children and nine grandchildren; and

Whereas, Billy also played and recorded with the Motown/Soul record label with his former bandmate “Junior Walker and The All-Stars” in 1962 and in 1966 they opened at the famed Apollo Theatre in New York City. They played many other venues, including Harvard University, the Regal Theatre in Chicago, the Uptown Theater in Philadelphia, Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. and with many famous artists, including Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, The Staple Singers, Louis Armstrong, Sammy Davis, Jr., The Fifth Dimension, Marvin Gaye, Pattie LaBelle, Gladys Knight and the Pips, The Four Tops, The Isley Brothers, Dionne Warwick, and a host of others too numerous to mention; and

Whereas, in 1967, Billy organized and performed with his own trio, “The Billy Nicks Jazz Trio,” when he was not traveling with Junior Walker, and they played many reputable venues. Also in 1967, Billy signed a contract with the University of Notre Dame and became a disc jockey on his own show, “The Bill Nicks Radio Hour,” at WNDU studios, which was a colossal success; and

Whereas, Billy continued to play in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s with many famous artists, including Mary Wells, jazz legend Sonny Stitt, and blues legend Pinetop Perkins, all while still playing in his own jazz trio and with Junior Walker and The All-Stars; and

Whereas, Billy also branched off into promotions of other artists and in music publication while still continuing to teach at his own private studio, Nicks Music Studio, where he acted as the percussion and studio director, and for affiliated groups, in addition to his teaching of percussion at the University of Notre Dame; and

Whereas, one has only to look at the guestbook feature on Billy Nicks’ website to see how universally he was loved and valued as a man and a musician to know what an impact he has made on thousands upon thousands of people whose lives he has touched throughout all his years prior to his passing. In a recent South Bend Tribune “Viewpoint” article by Jeff Harrell, with whom Billy played in their “Billy ‘Stix’ Nicks & The Motown Machine” show, he called Billy “just a beautiful spirit.” This is an understatement and doesn’t even begin to describe such a talented and honorable man, but it’s a good start; and

Whereas, the name “Billy ‘Stix’ Nicks” will forever be preceded by the word “Legendary”; and

Whereas, Billy’s life and his extensive experience in the local music culture and his many contributions to the arts through his lifelong work and love of music and as a role model for other young drummers who aspire to greatness led to his 2017 induction into the South Bend Hall of Fame.

Now, Therefore, be it publicly and proudly Proclaimed as follows:

Section I. On behalf of the citizens of South Bend, Indiana and the South Bend Common Council, we proudly and publicly recognize and thank Billy “Stix” Nicks for his numerous contributions to the arts in our community and the entire music world in general.

Section II. We also look forward to Billy’s legacy as being a positive role model and inspiration to all aspiring musicians, young and old, in our community.



Section III. We wish Billy “Stix” Nicks and his family all the blessings of God to one of the most “beautiful spirits” this world has even known. Rest in peace, Billy. You are always in our hearts.

Signed and Approved this 1st day of December 2017, in the City of South Bend, County of St. Joseph, in the State of Indiana.

Karen L. White, At Large, Sponsor

Oliver J. Davis, 6th District, Co-Sponsor

Tim Scott, 1st

Dr. David Varner, 5th District

District Regina Williams Preston, 2nd District

John Voorde, At Large

Randy Kelly, 3rd District

Gavin Ferlic, At Large

Jo M. Broden, 4th District

Council Attorney

Attest:

Approved this 11th day of December, 2017

Kareemah N. Fowler, City Clerk

Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend