

Thank a Trailblazer!

Bruce Beach, 2013-14 TBA President Elect

As I write this article, marching band season has come to a close, middle school All Region band auditions are around the corner and the holidays are fast approaching. I hope that my colleagues at the high school level have all had a successful fall and wish them continued success with upcoming All Region tryouts, winter concerts and the occasional playoff football game! To you at the middle schools: first off, thanks for your hard work and dedication. Your diligence to band, band students and music education is what makes our jobs great!! Second, good luck with your All Region Band auditions and winter concerts.

As a Texas band director, I have always been fascinated with the deep history and heritage that we current band directors are following and—for that matter—should be thankful for. We walk and teach in the footsteps of the band directors who blazed a trail for us many years ago.

My father, who grew up on a small farm in Michigan during the Depression, used to talk about the first one to the barn in the morning in the wintertime. Whoever was

the first one out the door in the morning had to “break the trail” through the snow to the barn so that it would be easier for the rest of the family.



There are so many men and women who “broke the trail” for us as band directors. There are names which are synonymous with Texas bands and Texas band history, names that are too numerous to mention here for fear that I would leave someone off. Many of these trailblazers have either served as presidents of TBA or have been honored as Texas Bandmasters of the Year. A list may be found on the TBA website.

At the 2013 TBA Business Meeting Luncheon this past summer, it was my pleasure and honor to recognize the members of TBA and their years of membership. It was a great thrill as we reached those who have been members for 40, 45, and even 50 years! Those gentlemen were the pioneers, the standard bearers for our profession! To listen to them, they were just following in the footsteps of other great teachers and directors.

My point with all this is that we enjoy the fruits of their labors. They blazed trails for us by setting

standards for music performance, marching performance, and the value of music education. The standards that we push our students today were set by these “legends” many years ago. And I think it behooves those of us in the business today to obviously continue pushing those standards as we pass the baton to the next generation. The young band directors today have access to so many more tools; all they need to do is apply them and fit them into these standards. Many, many of them are doing that with great success!

So, if you live near one of these Texas Band Legends, take the time to thank them for their service, their dedication and their incredible contributions to bands and music education. Take them to lunch; pick them up and have them listen to your group. This is nothing new; again, many of you take advantage of these people and are learning from their wealth of knowledge. If you have one of these “greats” nearby, lucky you!

I wish you continued success through the year as you prepare for Solo and Ensemble, All Region Concerts, All State, Jazz Bands and Concert and Sight Reading. Good Luck and God Bless!