



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
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**The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of  
38 years in the Band Business**

**CLINICIAS:  
Bill Watson**

**Sponsor: American Classic Tours & Music Festivals**

**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

## **The Good, Bad, and the Ugly of 38 years in the Band Business**

**Clinician: Bill Watson CC214CD**

**Sponsor: American Classic Tours and Music Festivals (a subsidiary of Gerber Tours, New York)**

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### **Public School Background**

My sister and I lived with my Grandparents in Dallas while my mother was starting a career in Houston with Dow Chemical.

**Victor H. Hexter ES, Dallas ISD – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, Alto Saxophone**

### **Lake Jackson Intermediate: Ernest Clark, Director (PBM Hall of Fame)**

**Good:** Since I started in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, I was 1<sup>st</sup> chair every week.

**Bad** I would then be last chair because I did not turn in my practice card. And I practiced well over 300 minutes every week. (ask my pets who went crazy)

**Ugly:** My football career in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade as a 2<sup>nd</sup> string center assured me of my path.

### **Brazoswood High School: Fred McDonald, Director my first 3 years (PBM Hall of Fame)**

**Rod Cannon Asst. Director/Head Director my last year (Jazz Band Director all 4 years)**

**Good:** From my HS experience I learned early that a staff should have different strengths like we had with Mr. McDonald and Mr. Cannon.

**Good:** I also had the privilege of having the following Conductors of the All-Region Bands:

10<sup>th</sup> Grade: Colonel Arnold Gabriel

11<sup>th</sup> Grade: H. Robert Reynolds

12<sup>th</sup> Grade Tom Bennett (2<sup>nd</sup> band.)

**Bad:** Both my Band Directors were from Sam Houston and I chose the University of Houston. They supported me, but I disappointed them by going to Houston. After living in a town of 9,000 people growing up, so I wanted to live in a big city.

**Ugly:** I was a notorious choker at Region and Area tryouts. Usually going too fast.

9<sup>th</sup> Grade: District; 10<sup>th</sup> Grade: District/Region; 11<sup>th</sup> Grade: District/Region/Area alternate to state; 12<sup>th</sup> Grade: District/Region (2<sup>nd</sup> Band)

### **University of Houston 1975-1980**

**Directors: Wind Ensemble: James T. Matthews and interim directors before Eddie Green.**

**Marching Band: Bill Moffit**

**Private Teacher: Jeffrey Lerner**

**Student Teaching: Pearland ISD; Jack Fariss, Pearland HS. Leroy Osmond, Pearland MS.**

**Good:** Mr. Green arrived my last year at Houston, and he became my primary mentor. He enabled me to student teach in Pearland with Jack Fariss, where I was a private teacher.

Bad: As Mr. Green started with Concert F, and taught us to listen for the overtones, many in the brass section did not believe they needed to work on ensemble tuning.

Ugly: He was not appreciated by most of the applied music majors because he was teaching ensemble skills, which many of my colleagues didn't think they needed

Good: People began observing the Wind Ensemble when Mr. Green arrived. Among the visitors was Richard Crain, FA Director for Spring ISD and Spring HS Band Director. Mr. Green indicated that Mr. Crain was considering me for Wells MS. Mr. Green essentially helped me get into Spring ISD as the Director of Bands at Wells Middle School.

**First Job: Wells Middle School, Spring ISD 1980-1985** School enrollment: 350  
Band Enrollment around 150. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, you were in Band or Fine Arts/Practical Arts (FAPA). There was no Choir or Orchestra. I followed Scott McAdow, who transferred to Spring HS, and I found the Wells students were well trained when I arrived.

Good: Mr. Green became my mentor, so I became a student of his in Graduate School. I had to bring my reel to reel recordings. He listened and gave me assignments to fix what was wrong.

#### **Wells Assistant Directors:**

**1980: Becky Lewis-was the assistant in place prior and was/is a master bassoon teacher. It was a good fit to have someone as calm and mature as Becky to be with me.**

**1981-1985: Charlotte Royall replaced Becky Lewis. She was great and the kids loved her.**

**1982-1985: Gregg Rinehart: Percussion for the Westfield HS cluster, which included Wells. Gregg was well ahead of his time as a Percussion Director. His students were very advanced, both in the Westfield Cluster and when he transferred with me to the Spring Cluster.**

Good: We raised the All-Region numbers from 3 the first to over 30 in 4 years later by hiring a good private lesson staff and having sectionals/master classes for the students. The booster club was very supportive. Becky and Charlotte were amazing teachers and we had a great team.

Good: There was an El Torito Mexican restaurant near Wells MS, and a few Wells faculty members from would go after school on Fridays to relax. It just so happened that some Klein ISD band directors were there regularly, which included Paul Worosello and the Klein Forest Band staff. The first assistant on that staff was a man named Philip Geiger. We all talked shop over appetizers and beverages. Over the course of time, I realized it is good to talk about band in a relaxed atmosphere. I was learning something every week. **Philip Geiger took the Westfield MS Band job in 1982.**

Good: Even though I was at Wells MS, I learned a lot about Marching Band from Phil Geiger. It was very different from my college marching band. I went to many rehearsals during my

conference period, which I arranged to be last period at Wells. I was sort of a field tech, so that was my first experience with drum corps style, which was way different from my college experience.

**Bad:** I was very strict. The band would have been larger if I didn't run kids off. We still managed to grow, but it could have been more if I was more kid friendly.

**Ugly:** In 1982 we got this rating at UIL: Concert: 2/2/1; Sight Reading: 1/1/3. We kept working and submitted for Honor Band, and we got to the state level and finished 6<sup>th</sup>. Of course, Mr. Green was a large part of that, and two years later, Wells was the Class C Honor Band.

### **Notable Achievements**

**UIL Results: Sweepstakes 1981,1983-1985**

**Region Honor Band: 1982 (placed 6<sup>th</sup> in state),1984 (placed 1<sup>st</sup> in state)**

**TMEA Class C Honor Band: 1985**

### **What I learned at Wells:**

**I learned that you have to help students through sectionals and master classes if you want them to achieve at a high level. This applies for both ensemble and individual events. My last 3 years at Wells, I learned about how to teach the modern marching band from observing Philip Geiger and the Westfield HS Band Staff.**

### **Westfield High School Assistant 1985-1989**

**Head Director: Philip Geiger 1982-2004**

**Assistant Directors: Me, Key Poulan, in his 1<sup>st</sup> year of teaching, before settling down in California. Wes Russell from Marion Catholic for one year, and Mark Edenfield from UH.**

**Percussion: Gregg Rinehart, Lamar Burkhalter**

**Colorguard: Robert Thompson, Pat Kelly**

**Good:** I was able to teach former students from Wells MS at the high school level. I really learned a lot from Philip Geiger and I was fortunate to be able to work with him. Most of what I did the rest of my career was based on what Westfield had done. I learned about accountability and how to run a marching and concert program. Between Jack Fariss, Philip Geiger, Eddie Green, and Richard Crain, I could not have had better mentors.

**Bad:** Although I was better with how I treated students, many of them whom I taught at Wells, I was still young and aggressive and needed to calm down.

**Ugly:** In 1989 Philip was having trouble with his back. Because he was in pain and couldn't move the week of UIL, I had to take the Westfield Symphonic Band to UIL C & SR in 1989, which included the entire Hindemith Symphony in Bb., Irish Tune, and the

Florentine March. Since Philip had every student pass their music off to me during class, I knew that program very well. Accountability was important at Westfield.

**Westfield Accomplishments: Marching Band: Never below 2<sup>nd</sup> place in any regional, state or national marching contest from 1985-1998. 2-time TMEA Honor Band. 5-time UIL State Marching Championship, including 3 in a row.**

**What I learned at Westfield: Accountability for students and teachers. How to run a complete HS Band Program. Preparing students for the TMEA process and the UIL events. Using the staff in an effective manner.**

### **Spring High School Director Bands 1989-1996**

**Directors: Bill Watson, Diane Vasquez, Don Meyers**

**Percussion Directors: Gregg Rinehart, Rick Rodriguez**

**Colorguard Directors: Blake Kottenbrink, Garrett Decker, Glenn Howard**

**Good:** The first year with the marching band, we made straight 1's at the Region 9 UIL contest, which was 1 rating higher than the year before. On that same day, Spring made finals of the BOA Houston Regional and finished 6th

**Bad:** The Spring Band had a reputation of not showing up at all rehearsals, but still getting to participate due to the low numbers. This scenario stopped immediately and, as a result, a lot of the upper classmen "retired" in summer band.

**Ugly:** Although the parents were enthusiastic after our game 1 halftime show, the next week the Band Booster President's daughter quit because of the time involvement and the new standards that were imposed on the students.

**Good:** We were able to hold the students accountable and we had master classes with all three bands. We held the students responsible for learning their scales, 3rds, arpeggios, and Clarke studies. Our percussion staff was outstanding and many of our Spring percussionists have been successful in the music business.

**Bad:** When we visited the MS campuses, we were only welcome if we didn't say anything. One of the MS Principals threatened to ban us from campus if we made his Director nervous. We received many talented students from our middle schools. We just were not on the same page. For example, there were 3 schools in the cluster and 3 different counting systems.

**Ugly:** Our Spring HS Football Coaches turned us into UIL for breaking the 8-hour rule. They did not know that we split up rehearsals, for example Colorguard only, Percussion only, Winds only, Full Band. No child went past 8 hours

### **Achievements:**

Concert Bands: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> bands two earned sweepstakes all 7 years. During our tenure. Many "Best in Class" awards at festivals such as Buccaneer Days in Corpus Christi. The 3<sup>rd</sup> band joined the other two after building our numbers and started earned sweepstakes as well.

Marching Band: UIL all first divisions. 1992 and 1994 UIL State Marching Champions; BOA Regional Champions: 1993, 1994, 1995

BOA Grand Nationals 1991; 3<sup>rd</sup> in Class AA, 8<sup>th</sup> in finals; BOA 1993: 1<sup>st</sup> in Prelims and Finals; 1994 UIL State Marching Champions.

TMEA Honor Band finalist: 1991 (5<sup>th</sup>) 1993 (3<sup>rd</sup>).

1994 Midwest Performance; 1995 Sudler Flag of Honor.

What I learned at Spring:

**The importance of vertical alignment. Even though the Spring Cluster MS Directors were excellent teachers, we could not get together on curriculum or counting systems which ultimately made myself and Diane leave Spring.**

### **Richland High School, Director of Bands 1996-2010**

**Assistant Directors: Bryan Christian, John Donner, Jed Weeks, Kevin McNulty, Jason Bird, Brian Lowe**

**Percussion Directors: Lou Boldrighini, Gregg Rinehart, Kevin McNulty, Evan Blackard,**

Good At my last TMEA as the Spring Head Band Director in 1996, Greg Hull, David Bertman, and FA Director Henry Schraub talked to me about taking a job in Birdville ISD as the Richland HS Director of Bands. Greg and David worked at Haltom HS in the Birdville ISD, they were on board to have me teach their rival high school. I interviewed and got the job. As for vertical alignment, all HS Band Directors were assigned to their feeder schools during the week

Good My last interview for the Richland job was during a Spring Band trip to a music festival in Arlington. We had played, the kids and parents were at Six Flags, so I drove to Richland HS in our instrument truck to talk with the Principal and The FA Director one last time. I asked, "Do you really want to do this?" to the two administrators, and they said yes. I don't know if the Principal understood how different the band would change.

Bad When I first I met with the student leaders, many of the leaders told me to treat them like Spring HS. This meant that to march at halftime you would have had to play off whatever part of the show we were performing. Our first game was with L.D. Bell, which was among the best marching bands in Texas. We performed first with around 35 holes playing "Appalachian Spring", and it looked awful. The next game we had less

than 10 holes. We later revised the policy to not punish the people who memorized their music. Everyone marched, but if they did not know their music, they marched with their hands instead of their instrument. For the next 13 years, very few people did not have to march without an instrument for not passing off their assignment.

**Ugly** I did not know that my mother was in the stadium all the way from Lake Jackson and sat behind the band and out of sight from me. Unfortunately, she sat among Richland Band alumni and parents that were not pleased with me. After the halftime she came down to the field crying. She said "Bill, these people are going to destroy you. They were saying terrible things about you." I said it would be ok.

**Good** For our last marching event of my first year, Richland we attended BOA Denton. Since we signed up late we were given the time of 7:30 am with the temperature of 35 degrees. After that performance we had a Saturday football game in Ft. Worth and came back to BOA Denton that evening. It turns out we barely got into finals. There was a 3-way tie for 10<sup>th</sup> place due to penalties, so 12 bands performed in finals. Richland moved from 10<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> that night. Scott McCormick said that was the biggest jump between Prelims and Finals

### **The Best Drum Major Award**

Our first marching contest my first year was the DeSoto Contest. We had no idea or expectations. We finished 1<sup>st</sup> after Prelims and we finished 1<sup>st</sup> in finals, winning all captions except Best Drum Major. The entire Band was happy except 4 students: The Drum Majors, who were crying. I told them that there is not really a Drum Major Judge, but that the 2<sup>nd</sup> place band always gets best Drum Major.

The next year we attended the DeSoto contest again. We made finals, then sat in the stands for the announcement of the scores. When they gave the best Drum Majors to Richland, I heard in unison from the students, "we're 2<sup>nd</sup>", which we were. The next week at BOA Houston we were 1<sup>st</sup> in Prelims and Westfield HS was 2<sup>nd</sup>. Even though we dropped to 3<sup>rd</sup> in Finals, these students were totally sold and we never had any more issues the rest of my tenure.

### **Richland Accomplishments**

UIL Sweepstakes all 14 years. TMEA Honor Band Finalist 3 times. State Marching Contest 5 times; State Finalist 4 times; 2003 UIL 4A State Marching Champion. BOA Grand National finalist twice. Made all BOA Regional Finals.

### **Curriculum Suggestions**

**Any one of these curriculum suggestions should be designed to be at the level of the student. In other words, determine what is reasonable for each grade level and have several options in terms of tempo/range/articulations. Encourage precocious students to do more if appropriate.**

**Fundamentals can include: Scales/Thirds/Arpeggios/Clark Studies/Articulation Exercise. Introduce slowly so the students can achieve these technical exercises. Determine in your cluster the sequence by grade level.**

**Music assignments: Of course, we have method books, region music, solos and ensembles, plus band music to keep all students busy. We now have ways to record assignments, but I recommend that we use the staff, if more than one teacher, and play most of your assignments live. On any music assignment, the students should feel that you are willing to help them. Give them multiple chances to replay, but, as in any other class, there is a deadline.**

**Ensemble Recital and Contest: All HS students participated in an ensemble. The Birdville HS Ensemble Contest was in February, right before TMEA. All ensembles were coached by a staff member, usually during class, and we had an Ensemble Recital for the parents to be able to attend prior to the District Ensemble Contest. The goal was to make a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, either at the Recital, judged by the Band Directors, or the Ensemble Contest with judges from outside the district. If an ensemble made lower than a 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, they were put in the “No Ensemble Left Behind Program”, and each Tuesday they performed until they earned at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.**

**Solo Contest: All HS students participated in the Birdville Solo Contest that was held in May. The Directors were available to help students, and their solo was used for their audition for the next year. We did have a Solo Recital in my early Richland years, but that was very cumbersome, and was discontinued. The rating at the Solo Contest served as their final exam.**

### **Possible Band Events for your Cluster**

#### **MS Night at a Football Game (late September/early October)**

MS students sit with their HS instrument groups. Try to include them in a part of the marching show, perhaps filling in between HS students for the initials of the school (ex., RHS), while playing the fight song. We practiced Friday afternoon, had dinner with the HS and MS together, then we were ready for the game.

#### **MS Music Clinic/Concert with HS Band (early February)**

This was my favorite special event at Richland HS. The HS 1<sup>st</sup> band learns the march and one piece of the MS 1<sup>st</sup> Band UIL music. The 2<sup>nd</sup> band does the same with the MS 2<sup>nd</sup> Band. We did this a couple of weeks before TMEA. Our middle schools in the Richland Cluster, North Richland and North Ridge 1st bands typically played off the Grade 3 and 4 list, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> bands played off Grade 2 with an occasional Grade 3 or Grade 1. We rehearsed together for 90 minutes, took a dinner break, and the parents were there for



the concert and took their students home. Of course, we made a pitch for them to sign up for HS Band.

### **MS Marching Clinic (late March)**

Once our MS Bands were finished with UIL Concert and Sight Reading, we invited all 8<sup>th</sup> graders to the high school for a Marching Clinic. Also present were HS students who were interested in leadership positions for the next year. This is also an opportunity to spot possible future student leaders.

### **Lewisville ISD Director of Fine Arts**

- Good My first year my goal was to have every HS and MS have the 5 Fine arts Disciplines: Band, Choir, Orchestra, Theatre, and Art, which happened quickly.
- Bad All LISD secondary schools have the 5 FA disciplines, which makes recruiting more of a challenge, especially paired with some shady electives, like "Outdoor Trails", in which you can earn a fishing license.
- Ugly Two committees: The Recruiting Committee, and the Auditorium use Committee.
- Good We created a District-Supported Trips Document that has added many music events paid either totally or partial by LISD.
- Good My retirement and my successor, Amanda Drinkwater.

THANK YOU AND HAVE A GREAT YEAR!!!!