

SEGUE: ENTERING INTO A LEGACY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

Musicians are different. Not different like athletes are different, or like painters are different – but different from those who are different. Making music literally sounds like it is too much fun, which is sometimes a gross error in perception – sometimes it is profoundly sad, other times it is profoundly inspiring, still other times it is profoundly illuminating. But the true art of making music is always profound in some way.

Fortunately, there is an allied profession that provides a similar result, and that is why most musicians wind up teaching music. When an individual devotes the majority of her life to making music and teaching it, those profound emotions become inextricably intertwined. Old music teachers never die, “they just misplace their notes”, so to speak.

This study, *Segue*, is a multiple case study of four teacher/musicians. Two of the participants are veteran teachers who had already left the profession, one left before the completion of this study, and their cases are examined as well as a fourth, who has been forced to delay retirement. In this study, the effects of retirement on the first three individuals are assessed, while the other teacher has been observed to note changes in attitudes and behaviors now that her retirement has been delayed. In all cases, these “rites of passage” were examined within the context of changes in music education praxis, as well as their impact on the other significant stakeholders in the process, including students, colleagues, and affected communities. The study illustrates that music teachers, as a group, remain committed to making music after retirement, at its base, for their own aesthetic needs, but also for sharing music with others, and their continued contributions to music education in multiple forms promotes a sense of value to the individual, as well as a sense of cherishing from the community.

*To Barney, who hated retirement as much as he loved music.*

## **Acknowledgements**

My career as a musician and as a music educator has been blessed with many colleagues who have since participated in that ritual that our economic system refers to as “retirement”. Their experiences have laid the foundation for this dissertation. I am grateful for all of those who have shared their intimate, fearful, aesthetic, and often heart-wrenching moments in an attempt to provide a clearer view into the future for those who will eventually follow in their footsteps.

As I have prepared to complete this dissertation, I have gone down several paths in order to understand the design for its foundation. The inspiration of Professor Sam Reese, first as a teacher and then as a model of the experience was instrumental in pointing me in the right direction. Professor Matt Thibeault has fortified that inspiration by giving me the hope that “legends can be followed” with his passion and his commitment to teaching “with” students instead of “to” them.

The foundation for this dissertation has been available to me for many years. I owe so many unpayable debts to my advisor, Professor Liora Bresler for causing the scales to fall from my eyes, and to find meaning in close observation and vivid description of the compelling world of music education. With her guidance and patience I have learned that the meaning to the music we strive to hear from ourselves and our students transcends the quality of the sound of the performance, and elevates the meaning to a level that personifies the drive that all of us have to express ourselves in music. With her dedication I have learned that qualitative research cannot exist without the unfailing belief that, unlike media, the meaning is the message. She has been a source of strength, as well as one of faith.

For all her wonderful contributions, Professor Bresler's greatest gift to me has been, and no doubt will remain, an introduction to Professor Bob Stake. Through him I have found greater meaning in all of my research, and his own landmark studies have served as exemplars for finding the deepest meaning in this study. His steady, thought-provoking and inspiring guidance has been responsible for the depth of data that has been harvested from the individuals in this study, and consequently their stories are all the more compelling, thanks to his guidance. Once I only saw experiences, I now see legacies. Where once personal experiences reflected only on the person, they now also radiate to others. His dedication, his loyalty, his passion, his ethics, and his belief that these individuals have left indelible designs on their communities have served as the anchors for this dissertation.

Professor Stake's faith in my project has been a great inspiration, and has also shown me that I was already blessed with a family that believed in this project. As my children continue in music education, they have reminded me that the contributions of the legacies in this study continue to bear fruit. My wife, Elizabeth, has patiently stood by as I have been transformed by Professor Stake's tutelary guidance. To all of them, and more of my colleagues, I dedicate my contributions to this study.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Puzzling Passages

Have you ever been out for a late autumn walk in the closing part of the afternoon, and suddenly looked up to realize that the leaves have practically all gone? And the sun has set and the day gone before you knew it - and with that a cold wind blows across the landscape? That's retirement. (Leacock)

For more than half a century, cultural mores in America have been twisting in the wind in regard to what “retirement” is. Webster’s *New World Dictionary* refers to the “withdrawal from one’s position or occupation or from active working life” (2009, p. 651), and yet the *American Association of Retired Persons* claims that 72 percent of its members are currently engaged in some occupation (Richman, 2004). Surely the state of retirement for some occupations is radically different from the state found in others – for example, a retiring athlete probably harbors no illusions of remaining in “active working life” as far as her athletic discipline is concerned, but other occupations are less likely to see retirement in such “black or white” choices.

The modern view of retirement and the social significance behind that view is relatively new. Atchley (1982) contends that retirement “came of age” with the passing of the *Older Americans Act* and *Medicare*, both in 1965. Legislation was also passed that outlawed most retirement policies that mandated retirement before the age of 70. Prior to that legislation retirement was viewed, especially by blue-collar workers, as a sign of infirmity or laziness. As a result, Atchley stated, “people had learned to want retirement and to be willing to bear economic sacrifices in order to have it” (p. 273).

In education, the desire to retire can imply multiple meanings and consequences. Using Webster’s definition, a retired educator would have to refuse to provide any sort of

instruction to anyone after the end of their teaching career – an impractical, if not impossible state for most humans in which to exist, and certainly one which defies all of the training and habituation that educators experience during their schooling and subsequent application of it.

The musician/educator is in a similar fix. A musician who follows the traditional definition of retirement would never create music in any way – and for most musicians, this is as impractical as expecting any educator to stop using her training for sharing knowledge and experience. While Gustman and Steinmeier's study on early retirement has noted a substantial decrease in the longevity of retirees (Gustman, 2000), the selected participants of this study and additional data from Kaplan (1980) and Dorfman (1997) indicate that music educators tend to continue teaching well beyond the age where they could retire financially. This author's study of music educators in higher education (Solomonson, 2002) revealed that most music educators at that level also teach well beyond their possible retirement age. It also noted that most music educators were surprised at the enjoyment they experienced once they finally retired, finding it difficult to imagine a life without these new freedoms, and once they had taken the step, they discovered that there were still ample opportunities to create and teach music. As performers, musicians are found working as child prodigies well before they have reached puberty (in spite of child-labor laws that would prohibit such activity in most professions), while centenarian performers such as Artur Rubinstein and Eubie Blake continue to perform as long as they are physically capable. So it is that many music educators consider themselves (and are often considered by others) as being as enduring



as the art they endeavor to teach. This endurance supports several theories about the role of meaningful activity to any retiree.

Cumming and Henry's "disengagement theory" (1961) was the result of a study that concluded that retired individuals are prone to withdrawal from social involvement and equate their status with a close proximity to death. Considerable debate ensued between disciples of the disengagement theory and Vygotskyian proponents of the Activity Theory (Cohen, 2003), which contends that Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" can continue to expand well beyond the absence of a traditional vocation. Ronch and Goldfield's "Continuation Theory" (Ronch and Goldman, 2003) supports the Activity Theory, but also concludes that patterns of activity that are created in youth will continue into later life, and consequently retirees must either change these patterns with new activity or face a retirement of disengagement. One of the key elements of this study will be to note that the continued use of musical talent and interest by music educators allows the retiree to enjoy the security offered by remaining active in an activity that is both familiar and aesthetically based, while also retaining a high level of social engagement. That continued use has significant consequences that are not confined to the retiree. As a result, this study examines how school environments can be altered by the retiree's subsequent interactions with students and their replacement music educators, and also examines how the community at large embraces or dismisses the new roles of the retiree and the successor.

To address these and other issues, there are several questions that will be addressed in the course of this study. Public schooling in America has a long tradition of local governance, which, in turn is held to account by the purse strings of state and

federal funding. With the onset of standards for music education at a nationwide level, how have retiring music educators, either those who are making the passage or have “passed over” into retirement, balanced the musical preferences of the local community, the mandates of multiculturalism, the musical/political climates of national advocacy, and media-generated popular culture, against their own musical voices? Were these educators working to maintain earlier musical traditions, abandon them, or enhance those traditions? What legacies have they left behind, both for their immediate community and at higher levels? And, looking into the future, what influence will they be able to exert on music education from outside the classroom?

In the process of searching for the answers to these questions, this study will also serve as an attempt to refute the stereotype of retired individuals bound for a life of hobbies, tourism and forgotten utility. It will also present data to support the value of the retired music educator as a mentor and an inspiration to less experienced educators, as a valuable resource for one-on-one teaching in the form of private lessons and coaching, and in leadership roles in professional organizations. At times, it will point out how a retired music educator can be a detriment to the school programs that she or he once nurtured. And it will provide some sentient data to clarify how certain music educators earn the moniker of “legacy” as the capstone of their career. In all cases, the contributions of these educators will defy the antiquated notions of the “rocking-chair bound” retiree.

Legacies remain legacies only as long as they contribute to the health of their profession, either by being role models or mentors to younger teachers, or by continuing to make music within their communities. In his paper “Leaving Teaching”, Peter

deVries, a music educator who left the profession long before retirement, cited the lack of mentoring as one of the four principal causes for leaving the profession by male music teachers (deVries, 2005). DeVries' case study about one such young teacher actually cites an example of negative mentoring, as the teacher is encouraged by an older teacher to "get out ... while you still can" (p. 5). Optimistically, this study has found that veteran music educators are much more likely to have the ability and the passion to encourage the opposite.

### **Changing Times and Meters**

The teacher education programs that trained the veteran music educators of today have changed a great deal in the past four decades. The standards and expectations that were set for a music educator in 1970 are no longer adequate to serve a growing and more diverse student population – one which has at its fingertips more access to music than any generation in history – and one that also has more tools to create their own music. Music educators, as a result, are under increasing pressure to consider multiple constructs of what constitutes "music", and the value of the study and performance of it. Today's music educator must build a program with the technology of the present, while continuing to offer musical experiences inculcated from past practices. The concentrated "conservatory method" of musical study still exists – in fact, the degree of competition for coveted positions in musical ensembles such as symphony orchestras has become more intense – but today's standards in elementary and secondary schools are aimed at a broader spectrum of the student population. The *National Standards for Music Education* have broadened the scope of music education past the traditional performance base to include, among the other standards, "Understanding relationships between music, the

other arts, and disciplines outside the arts” and “Understanding music in relation to history and culture” (MENC, 2009). As such, music educators are focusing on how music benefits the individual as a consumer as well as a performer – and the music educator has to be aware of and sympathetic to the cultural and sociological conditions of the student. The task of remaining culturally relevant and establishing the relationships mandated by the MENC National Standards requires more of the music educator than technical skill in performance – it requires equal skill in communicating the love of the art through experience. This is the skill that the successful, experienced educator has honed in addition to their academic training – and many music educators are as unwilling to let that skill go unused after their formal retirement as those who are unwilling to cease making music.

### **Need for the Study**

An earlier study, *Coda* (Solomonson, 2002) focused on the experiences of retired and retiring music educators in higher education. As in that study, it was necessary for this study to ascertain that few if any earlier studies focused on music educators in public schools. A cursory examination of over twelve hundred dissertations and theses on retirement revealed that the most frequently-researched vocational group was faculty in higher education, followed by public school teachers. Non-educational vocations had some exposure, some of the most prevalent being federal and state employees, military personnel, law enforcement personnel, and religious leaders. In nearly all cases, however, the key issue of these studies remained the financial or health stability of the participant group, with very few studies exploring the sociological or aesthetic consequences of entering retirement. There were studies about farmers, Brazilian auto

workers, CEOs, textile workers, and coal miners, but no studies about musicians. In a small example of academic irony, the few studies that have incorporated music or music education into retirement are focused on offering music education and music therapy programs to retirees from other walks of life. With such an abundance of studies examining the financial aspects of retirement including studies specific to educators in Illinois (Oest, 2006, Trisler, 1996), this study will simply note that music educators in Illinois are enrolled in the same retirement system as their peers, and as such have already been intensely scrutinized about their financial readiness for retirement.

Music educators, by necessity and through standard curriculum, are expected to undergo extensive training in making music before they are sanctioned to teach it. Normally, the process begins long before college, with private study and involvement in a public or private school arts program. As Ronch and Goldfield's "Continuation Theory" (Ronch and Goldfield, 2003) would posit, these activities are deeply embedded into the individual so that the success of that part of their teacher education training will ultimately play a large role in their involvement in music outside the classroom (and, as some cynics would note, within it.) As a profession and as a discipline, the rate of attrition for students in music education programs is very high and often predicated on the level of involvement during earlier years (Snyder, 2005). However, it should be noted that there is a similar, if not larger rate of attrition of graduates of music education programs who abandon all forms of extracurricular music-making once they have entered the teaching field. In addition to the obvious loss of role modeling for their students, this lack of musical involvement also limits the post-retirement options for musical activity. While the primary motor functions for singing and mastering musical instruments remain

intact after intensive training, without regular practice the physical conditioning and mental discipline is lost over a short period of time, leaving the retiring music educator with fewer options to make music in “the outside world.”

The contrast between those music educators who choose to continue to practice their art in conjunction with their teaching, and those who feel little or no need to remain skilled as a performer provides two unique lenses through which to view music education. On one hand, a “non-performing” educator who focuses on “consuming” music can approach the music with a detachment that the “performing” educator might find difficult, but the performer can act as a role model for creativity, discipline, and the aesthetic benefits of making music.

Understanding the rite of passage known as retirement and its significance to music education and music educators has, for the most part, remained a mystery that has had little allure for music education researchers. Drawing upon Clem Adelman’s charge to foster a closer connection between theoretical aspirations and actual practice in music education research (Adelman, 1994) this study presents, through multiple sources of qualitative data, the directions that some retired music educators have taken to preserve their passion for music. It also follows the final steps some music educators are taking as they close out their careers, and witnesses some of the choices they have been making that will either keep them invested in the process of music education, or send them off into a world that has much less music in it. Regardless of the directions that these retirees take, the wake created by their course will leave behind a legacy within their respective communities, and members of those communities have been interviewed to hear how the legacies of those educators have influenced their lives.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Choosing the Participant Base**

#### **The Actors**

##### **An Impresario**

My background as a music educator lies primarily in higher education. My undergraduate degree is in music education, and as in most undergraduate music education programs, I was trained for a career as a public school music educator. As I developed my performing skills, I became interested in pursuing a career as a performer as well as an educator, and entered graduate school to earn a master's degree in music education while also holding an assistantship in applied music, with the pragmatic understanding that few musicians are capable of earning a living solely by performing. After receiving my master's degree, I was fortunate enough to secure a position at a university that allowed me to earn part of my living as a professional musician while teaching at the collegiate level.

Collegiate music educators, especially those who teach applied music, are greatly dependent upon the teaching of music educators at the public school level. Without them, student recruitment would be much more difficult, and without their skill in training these students, honing those skills would be nearly impossible over the course of a typical four-year degree program. As a result, it is incumbent upon applied music teachers at the collegiate level to cultivate and maintain extensive and frequent contact with as many public school music educators as possible. Over a number of years, I have actively developed a statewide network of associations with a number of public school music educators, by attending Illinois Music Educators Association conventions, judging

solo and ensemble competitions, giving guest performances with school ensembles, and giving presentations and master classes at many schools. In addition, my performances as a professional musician have allowed me to perform alongside other professional musicians who are active or retired public school music educators, and I maintain a small studio of students who are in public school, primarily for the purpose of working with students at that age. In my current position, I am also charged with observing student teachers in the field, and part of that observation involves observing the supervising teacher and the program that teacher has developed. As a result, I am able to list a great number of public school music educators as “colleagues” – perhaps even more than I can list as colleagues in higher education.

My experience with these public school music educators has lasted long enough to allow me to observe the transformation of many educators from the “fresh-faced idealist” or “fear-faced novice” to the “confident-countenanced mentor” or, sadly at times, the “virulent-visiaged cynic”. As many of these educators retire, I have seen (and experienced) wide ranges of expressions from their colleagues and students ranging from great sadness to profound relief. Some of these individuals have become invaluable resources for the musical life of their communities, while others are devoting much of their time and talents to fostering an atmosphere of comfort and confidence for teachers who might otherwise become disillusioned and leave the profession. Those who have earned the reference to being a legacy have not only excelled at training young people to play music, but have also earned the trust and devotion of the community in which they teach. In many smaller communities, they are *the* authority on music. In some cases in this study, their accomplishments with their students have elevated their musical



ensembles to being considered the “professional” musical groups within their small communities. This study places considerable focus on the personal experiences of retiring music educators, but also examines the collateral experiences and viewpoints of the academic and geographic communities that have been sharing those experiences over the years.

### **The Idealist**

“Bill Hedges”<sup>1</sup> has just retired from a rural school district in Central Illinois. He grew up in a town not unlike the one he taught in for nearly thirty years. While some teachers would be thrilled at the thought of someone giving them a farewell party, Bill had to endure three of them, the last being held in the high school gymnasium where people had to sit on the basketball floor after the bleachers were filled. Over the course of his career, he’s seen at least a half-dozen of his former students chose some sort of musical profession. A strong believer in the power of his art, he has been active in the IMEA (Illinois Music Educators Association), and has held statewide offices. Currently, he is the chair for the IMEA’s area for retired music educators. For many years he and his predecessor, Fred Franklin, have organized an “alumni band” for his former students that has become a stable ensemble with well-balanced instrumentation and regular performances. Over his thirty years he has encouraged Fred, the previous band director to come to the school every week to teach private lessons, and they have remained fast friends. Within a month of his retirement, he was offered a position with a music store in a nearby city, and now travels from school to school selling equipment to students and the schools themselves. Shortly after that he was hired by a regional university to

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<sup>1</sup> All names used are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

supervise student teachers in music education. He frequently has breakfast with his predecessor and his successor at the same restaurant he's been frequenting for over three decades.

### **The Warrior**

"Peter Williams" retired last year from a large urban school district. His first position after graduating from college was in his old neighborhood, and he held it for thirty-three years. He met his wife, Wendy, at school, and they have both spent their careers teaching in the district. While in college, Peter also excelled as a performer, and throughout his career he and his wife have continued to perform professionally.

Unlike Bill, Peter has few trophies in his case, and his one farewell party was given at the small house of a devoted parent near the school. The band boosters presented a ceremony at the church across the street, where several young African-American men proudly testified that Mr. Williams had been their role model – that he had "set them straight", and that they would always be thankful for what he did for them. His community has honored him by inducting him into their "African-American Hall of Fame".

Peter's long-term rewards are easily observed, but so are the costs. He watched his high school that had had one of the premier music programs in the state gradually decline into the condition that many inner-city schools have fallen – declining enrollment, falling test scores, and eventually being placed into reorganization after spending years on the federal "No Child Left Behind" watch list. The program he left reflects all of these conditions – empty practice rooms, poor scheduling, and obsolete equipment.

Peter has every right to be bitter, but on the outside he seems at peace with leaving. He keeps in touch with his former students, and is active in the local arts scene. There is clearly relief that he no longer has to battle his old foes of poverty, indifference, and discrimination, but he is haunted at times by his experiences to the point where it retirement almost seems “too good to be true.”

### **The Disappointed**

At the start of this study, “Cindy Swinarski” was planning on leaving teaching at the end of the year. Her career has led her to no less than six different schools, many times meeting with a low level of success. Her career goal had been to lead a high school instrumental music program, which finally seemed in her grasp when she took over Peter’s position. Most of her early teaching had been done in rural areas, and her lack of experience with inner city situations during a turbulent time at the school resulted in her early removal from the position and she was placed into a middle school in the same city. Disillusioned, her deteriorating relationships with her administrators prompted her to file for retirement, but she discovered that the school district’s past policies on maternity leave and the Teacher’s Retirement Systems policies on private school teaching did not apply enough time toward her retirement date. As a result, at age 62 she is faced with at least another year before she can afford to retire.

Cindy also excelled as a performer during her college years, and performed for several years as a professional musician before taking her first teaching position – lured by the need for a position with health and retirement benefits following the unexpected death of her husband. She raised two children by herself, and both are now pursuing careers in music. At the same time she was also caring for her invalid mother, who

recently passed away. She is now suddenly faced with an “empty nest”, but also an empty bank account as a result of the significant health care expenses for both her mother and her daughter, who gave birth to her first child without health benefits.

It seems as though retirement cannot come soon enough for Cindy – but for her it is a bitter end to her career, as though she is leaving the battle in retreat.

### **The Champion**

“Rick” knows how to “win” at music. He has countless trophies to prove it. He has been teaching in a suburban community where affluent professionals live next door to farmers. Like most Midwestern small towns, “Warm Springs”<sup>2</sup> centers much of their community spirit around the high school, and in this community the “winning team” has not been the football or basketball team, but the band. Rick’s rehearsals are demanding, the performances are exciting, the audiences are large. When Rick walks into the local grocery store, everybody knows him. His band’s budget was at least as large as the budget for the football team, and the band’s trophies far outnumber those in the athletic department. A fleet of trailers and trucks is parked behind the school to transport all of their equipment to performances. There are also storage buildings and a tower for the director to survey his students on their practice field. Colleges have a hard time coming to his school to recruit music students because there are so few available dates, and talented musicians are treated like premium athletic prospects.

These facts are easily available because Rick is very proud of them. For three decades he has appraised the success of his program almost solely on the quantifiable awards - the plaques, the trophies, the music scholarships, the miles traveled to festivals

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<sup>2</sup> Locations are also pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

around the country, and the amount of money raised to make it all happen. A consummate planner, Rick selected his successor over ten years ago, when he hired his current assistant. Clearly, by his own definition, Rick is going out a “winner”. But his definition of “winning” began changing as his retirement date drew near. And what does a winner do when there are no more contests to be won?

## **The Supporting Cast**

### **The Students**

An integral part of this study examines the interplay between the educators and the students that they have guided. In the case of Bill, Peter, and Rick, there are countless students who have virtually idolized them at some point, whereas in the case of Cindy, she has been more often excommunicated than exalted. Two former students, “Jason” and “Mark” spent some time outside of the school environment providing their reflections on how their lives have been directed by these legacies. Both have been inspired by their teachers to become music educators. “Chandra” and “Molly” were observed working with Cindy under her distressing conditions. One student, when approached, declined to be interviewed, but a conversation with one of her peers did not indicate that she had any negative impressions about Rick, her former director. Any educator who spends multiple decades working closely with students for multiple years can expect to have had a negative impression on some of her students, but in the cases involved in this study, those students are extremely rare.

## **The Colleagues**

With the exception of Cindy, who has worked in several different schools, all of the other principal participants in the study have spent multiple decades working side by side with the same faculty. Some, such as Bill, have cultivated the talents of their predecessors, and dispelled the old notion that music educators and athletic coaches “don’t mix”, while others, such as Cindy, have worked alongside of other music educators for twenty years or more without establishing many strong social associations. Rick’s principal, “Royce” has been at Warm Springs for just a few years, and has provided a view of his legacy from the lens of an administrator who, in his words, “had never seen a band program like this before.” One of the administrators, “Barbara”, is Bill’s wife, and had previously worked as his assistant. “Brian”, who has worked alongside Rick for many years, also falls into the next category.

## **The Successors**

Every music educator who leaves a school leaves behind a tradition of practice and values. In the case of most retirees who have spent decades teaching at the same institution, those traditions and values are most likely highly prized by both the school culture and the community at large. Their concepts of musical “taste” and aesthetic impact often become the driving force behind the practices of their students, who may one day be assuming a similar role as a music educator.

No music educator can expect to remain productive and creative by merely emulating someone else’s concepts, and eventually that educator will find it necessary to create her own set of practices and values. Some of the actors in this study have already learned this lesson – Cindy experienced a punishing year trying to “follow a legend” in

the form of Peter, and “Jeff” is now struggling to restore some of the quality lost to that program. “Mike” found himself unable to establish himself as the head of his program at Belmont City as long as Bill remained involved, and is moving on. His successor, “Mark”, is unique in that he also fits into the category of “student of a legacy”, and as he attempts to establish himself as the director at Belmont City, Bill is reassessing his role as part of that transition. As was mentioned earlier, Brian has become Rick’s successor by being in concord with his standards, but has made it clear that he has new ideas to inject into the program, hopefully setting another standard by shedding light on the steps necessary to transition from one “legend” to the next.

### **Family Ties**

Cindy’s daughter, Linda, is a professional musician and a music educator at the college level, and her son, Jack, is a professional singer in New York, who teaches at a private school just outside of the city. They are, of course proud of their mother’s achievements, and their success is Cindy’s “hidden” musical achievement. Bill’s son, Craig, manages an arts group in Chicago, and his daughter, Susan, is a special education teacher. Peter’s daughter, Emily, went to school to become a nurse, but has also been working as a professional musician with her father, and his son, David, has become a landscape artist. Rick’s son, Tom, will be graduating from college soon with a degree in law enforcement. Tom spent most of his childhood separated from his father after an unpleasant divorce, living on the east coast with his mother, but he returned to the area to go to college, and has also found a new relationship with Rick.

Rick’s first marriage to a “non-musician” and “non-educator” is significant, given that all of the primary participants, now including Rick, married individuals who are or

have been music educators. Rick's second wife, "Sue", will be following her husband's example soon, and retiring from the Catholic High School where she has been the band director for a number of years. Bill's wife, "Barbara" has been in the unique position of first teaching as a music educator at a "competing" school, then being Bill's assistant, and then his boss after becoming the principal at his school, before becoming the superintendent at another school. Peter's wife, "Wendy" taught elementary school in the same district as Peter, and retired at the same time as her husband. Cindy's husband, "Jon" had had a family prior to marrying Cindy, and had previously raised two children from his earlier marriage. Their children were very young, and he was teaching music at a school in a small town near Midville when he died suddenly of a heart attack slightly more than twelve years ago.

### **Locations of the Study**

The participants in the study have been chosen in part for their relatively diverse work environments. Peter and Cindy have both spent at least part of their careers working in an urban, metropolitan school district with a minority-based population. Last year, Southern High School, where Peter had taught was restructured after failing to meet the prescribed AEP, or Adequate Yearly Progress standards set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act, but Bolivia Middle School, where Cindy teaches, has been cited for improvement in ISAT test scores.

Bill Hedges taught for a few years alongside his friend Rick at Warm Springs before his position was eliminated in the early 1980s. By moving to Belmont City he has spent most of his teaching career in a rural area, populated by farmers, small businesspersons, and a substantial number of migrant workers. The town of Belmont



City is located near the junction of two busy interstate highways, and also has passenger rail connections to the Chicago area.

Rick Ransom has built his program with the considerable funds available at a school district long considered to be rural, but the growth of the suburbs and a nearby factory has created a surge of student population. The town of Warm Springs is relatively remote, approximately 20 miles from the nearest interstate highway, but plans are being made to connect it with the interstate system in the near future.

Belmont City, the home of the “Idealist”, has a large canning plant, where each fall millions of canned vegetables are processed from the nearby fields. When Bill arrived there the school was a hodge-podge of buildings, with a turn-of-the-century stone structure at its center. The “music wing” consisted of a dilapidated outbuilding, and the auditorium, complete with falling plaster and exposed steam pipes, was a considerable distance from it. Bill is very proud of the new school, located on the opposite side of town, which has a large auditorium with seating for approximately 700, and a very fine concert grand piano that Bill coaxed out of a local citizen. The backstage area is directly across the hall from the fine arts area, complete with offices for the teachers, practice rooms, two rehearsal halls, an arts technology area, and an instrument repair room – all constructed to MENC standards. Bill is quick to point out that the athletic facilities are right next to the music wing – his belief that the two disciplines are mutually advantageous will be noted later in the study.

### **The School Environments**

Cindy Swinarski is the music teacher at two middle schools in her district. One of them, Bolivia Middle School, was constructed in 1931, and is located near one of the

worst areas of the city for drugs and gang violence. Security is very tight for the teachers and students.

In spite of the location, Bolivia Middle School is extremely well kept. The principal, “Jeanette” took pride in escorting me through the halls to Cindy’s room. Compared to the Spartan aesthetics of most public buildings, the elegance of the natural woodwork from the period is in warm contrast. Jennette’s pride is somewhat misplaced, however, when she boasts about removing band from the ancient auditorium to the gymnasium, which was added on many years later. She has ignored complaints from Cindy that the acoustics of the old auditorium are better suited to music in favor of a location that is cleaner and brighter (and probably easier to police). Jeanette is also proud that Bolivia has defied the district wide trend, with standardized test scores rising for the past two years.

Rick Ransom has had by far the finest facilities of all. Warm Springs High School was built in 1976, and sits on 80 acres of land on the west side of town. It serves approximately 700 students, and over a third of them are involved in some way in the music programs. All of the classrooms are carpeted and air-conditioned, including the fully-equipped theater, multiple rehearsal facilities, practice rooms, and arts technology labs. Outside of the fine arts wing is a full-sized football field that is used by the “Marching Mohawks”, along with parking facilities for the directors and the equipment trucks.

At one time, Peter’s school had facilities that would have been considered superior to those in Rick’s school. Southern High School was built in the early 1960s to address the postwar “baby boom”. Peter’s band room is easily large enough to

accommodate an ensemble of 100 players, and there is plenty of storage space for their instruments. Peter's office suite, designed for several fine arts teachers, occupies one side of the music wing. The rear double doors of the rehearsal room open out to the backstage area of the auditorium, one of the largest venues in the city, capable of holding an audience of nearly 2,000. In its heyday, the auditorium served as a performance venue for many professional and other community ensembles, but the poor condition of the building and the dangerous level of crime in the area has driven most of them away.

There is plenty of space for the fine arts at Southern High School, but it is mainly empty space. The aging neighborhood population has dropped enrollment to approximately half of the school's planned capacity. The curtains and electrical equipment in the auditorium look and smell antiquated, and there have been frequent electrical problems with lighting during the few performances that are still given. Many of the musical instruments occupying the storage space have been stored there for over half a century, but others are brand new, waiting for students to come to play them. Student participation in the Fine Arts has fallen to an all-time low, and with the federally mandated reorganization of the school, funding and scheduling for the music programs have been given extremely low priority.

Of course not all music teaching by these educators occurs in these buildings. Two of these communities have vigorous programs for summer music that are administered by other agencies of the community, such as the local park district, and they have chosen these educators to lead them. As a result, many of the "best and brightest" participants in the public school programs have spent their summers in a similar, albeit more enjoyable program with these educators. Most music programs in secondary

education today base a part of their curriculum on the experience of traveling to music contests and festivals, and these participants have all expanded their “classrooms” to include far-away concert halls and football fields.

### **“Morales” of the Study**

Music Educators, for all of their special contributions to education and the surrounding community, have similar goals in their personal lives as others. Those goals, however, are secondary to the main the focus of this study. In the course of this study on retirement for music educators, there will be case studies that will illustrate how music educators move from what is often decades of teaching to a life that may, or may not include working in allied fields. While multiple case studies seldom begin with a hypothesis, this study holds that music educators are endowed with an aesthetic heritage that compels most of them to remain *de facto* educators in music, as well as musicians, for the rest of their lives.

Of course not all aspects of legacies are welcome ones - one of the chosen participants is angry with her school’s administration about her retirement, and her teaching has suffered as a result, while others, such as Bill, are finding it impossible to divorce themselves from the continuing activity of the programs they have fostered. Rick is struggling with having fewer battles to win, and is on a crusade to find more. Peter feels the guilt of retiring just as his beloved program is deteriorating by being in a failing school district. So while the participants may be pursuing typical goals for retirement, their morale varies depending on their ability to adjust to, and remain attached to the legacy they have left behind. Overall, this study concurs with Lorraine Dorfman’s study (Dorfman, 1997) and also Ingraham’s (1974) that the vast majority of educators make the

decision to retire at the right time, but for different reasons. In all of the cases of these participants, this study finds that “the system” dictated the “right” time to retire, and in all but one of these cases the participants would probably still be teaching if the economic system made it feasible.

This study has discovered that successful music educators remain invested in their programs beyond what is expected of them by administrators, parents, current and former students, and sometimes most unexpectedly, their families. Many younger music educators may view the retiree askance if they offer suggestions or offer to assist, while others may find it forced upon them by external forces, such as parent groups or administrators who are convinced that the younger educator needs some assistance, which the younger educator may interpret more as “meddling” than mentoring. This study is being finished just as MENC is launching their national mentoring program, in an attempt to remove any stigma that may be attached to newer music educators accepting guidance from those who have preceded them.

In light of the recent adoption of more specific national standards for music education, one aspect of this study focuses on the falling away of some of the traditions and emphases that characterize the stereotypes of music educators who entered the profession several decades ago. Many have remained ignorant of the Illinois State Board of Education or MENC standards for music education, and many others have simply chosen to ignore them. Part of this study observes how those elected to succeed these legacies are coping with both positive and negative forces of tradition while working to address the state and national standards.

Regardless of the positive or negative natures of these outcomes, this study investigates the actions, proposed or actual, that the primary participants in this study are taking or are planning to take to shape their futures. As will be noted in the review of related literature, there are studies that demonstrate increased volunteerism by retirees, and while music educators serve as volunteers in many different public service venues, the majority of them continue to find their greatest level of satisfaction volunteering to make music in the same manner they did when it was their vocation. One of the key elements to “morale health” for all of these primary participants is the knowledge that these activities are still available to them.

The interplay of consequences resulting from retired music educators continuing to participate in music making illustrates that the students and other community members they inspired as educators continue to be inspired by them as colleagues. A significant conclusion of the study posits that retirement satisfaction for music educators is heavily measured by the responses of these former students, as well as co-workers and current family members, all of whom are stakeholders in the happiness of their heroes.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Formal Studies on Joining the Retirement Community**

There is extensive literature available about retirement from public school teaching – however, nearly all of that literature focuses on financial preparation or managing finances for retirees. Organizations such as TIAA-CREF, MENC, the Illinois State Teachers Retirement System, the AARP, and the Michigan Center for Retirement Studies have collected considerable material on this subject. Danny Oest’s dissertation on the financial perception of retirees in the Illinois Teachers System (Oest, 2006) provides ample evidence that retirees are usually relieved to find that “the system works”, and that most found their pre-retirement concerns about finances to be without merit, while noting that most teachers who are about to enter into retirement carry that same fear, in spite of the advice given them by their former colleagues. Subsequent interviews with the participants in this study revealed that while music educators harbor the same fear, their loathing of listening to retirement seminars has kept them largely ignorant of the minute details of how their retirement system works, and they rely largely on learning from the experiences of their colleagues who have gone before them.

As a result of this lack of research on music educators, it is necessary to turn to studies on retirement in the general populace in western cultures – followed by three primary avenues of narrower topics – qualitative and/or quantitative studies on retirement of all educators, music educators, and all educators in higher education. There is close comparison to be found in this study and the study done of college professors in Lorraine Dorfman’s *The Sun Still Shone* (1997).

The overall image of the “retiree” in most of modern western culture evokes an image of individuals eagerly seeking out warmer climates, and living a relaxed, schedule-free lifestyle devoted to interests that were coveted during the individual’s years in the workforce. Many of those qualitative studies that have explored the viability of such an image have relied on reminiscences by participants to determine their present satisfaction with retirement, but few have dealt with the ever-expanding future for retirees. In Judith Malette and Luis Oliver’s *Retirement and existential meaning in the older adult: A qualitative study using life review* (2006), the authors note that when the now-traditional age of 65 was established, the average life span for a male worker in North America was 37, and has nearly doubled since that time (p. 31). While such an observance indicates that individuals now spend a significant amount of their lifetime after retirement, their study employs what the authors refer to as “Life Review” (p. 32) to compile a series of constructs that predict life satisfaction after retirement. Of principal import to this study is the construct that “retirement relates more to a self-definition process than a specific point in time (p. 33)” of principal disappointment to this study is the focus on Jacques Hetu’s process of Life Review, which the authors refer to as “LR”, which is focused on the recounting of experiences by the participants of past events. In keeping with their discipline of counseling and psychotherapy, Malette and Oliver used graduate students to interview participants and audio record their responses, as well as employing self-assessment tests for depression and anxiety (p. 37). The data were integrated into Hetu’s stages of Life Review – *Priming*, which recalls the past, *Immersion*, which reviews those memories, *Reaction*, which observes the emotional response to recollection, *Reframing*, or reinterpreting the data to reflect current conditions, and finally *Integration*, which



reconciles a participant's past with their current status. While Malette and Oliver's study has significant meaning for the retiree's quality of life at present, it seems to ignore what appears to be a significant issue for the participants in this study – the future. The overwhelming majority of those participant remarks recorded in the study use verbiage akin to "I am at peace with my life" (p. 41).

Other studies have examined the value of "peace" in determining a successful retirement - Vinick and Ekerdt (1992) note that married couples have a different set of goals and expectations for this period in comparison to unmarried individuals, and that individuals lacking in other family ties such as children or grandchildren are even more diverse. Vinick and Ekerdt's study also lacks an important aspect that is crucial to this study, in that it did not explore the goals and expectations of couples who also shared the same vocation, as is the case for all four primary participants in this study. These and other varied expectations are also noted in articles such as Onyx and Benton's *Retirement: A problematic concept for older women* (1996) and Szinovacz's *Social activities and retirement adaptation: gender and family variations* (Szinovacz, 1992). Articles such as these found in the *Journal of Gerontology* repeat the familiar theme that a retiree's "family status" is more of a significance in retirement satisfaction than their financial status. The status of their career disciplines, however, vary markedly – and it is from this point that the streams of additional research must be found that explain the unique status of retired music educators.

Qualitative and/or quantitative studies on the aesthetic aspects of retirement in music education are few and far between – while the "business" of the music educator is the improvement of the life aesthetic of the student, precious little time is devoted to the

educator's quality of life – as the lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client, and as physicians always make the worst patients, perhaps music educators are the last individuals in the audience who indulge in completeness through music. As academics, music educators tend to focus on individual legacies, who do serve as exemplars for a study such as this. In most cases, those studies reflect the same type of radiant effect by a significant music educator on a student who emulated his example, such as the study done by Roger Reichmuth (1977) examining the influence of his former teacher, Price Doyle. Fewer examples exist of music educators who did not enter higher education, although tributes to many can be found in the local newspapers of many communities, such as David Pickett's homage to one of the founding members of MENC, Philip Cady Hayden (Pickett, 1961). His work was expanded by F.C. Smith the following year (1962) and included short biographies of other music educators in Keokuk, Iowa during the first half of the twentieth century. A study by David Vroman (1994), done close to one of the locations of this study measured the effects of exceptional teachers in three nearby music education programs, setting the stage for what Vroman suggests will be three additional legacies. The tradition of honoring music educators continues to this day, with articles about the accomplishments of three of the four primary participants published in those three communities. Each article, whether written in 1960 or 2010, clearly aims to reveal to the outsider the legacy that each musician/educator has created within his community, and many, such as the article for Professor Hayden, note the contributions made by these individuals to the entire profession.

## **Preaching to the Teachers of the Choir**

It should come as no surprise that the largest number of studies by academics about retirement deals with their own circumstances. A study prepared by Rees and Smith known as *Faculty retirement in the arts and sciences* (1991) is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of quantitative data on the subject to date. The original intent of the study was to examine the impact of mandatory retirements on the university community as a whole, but the collateral observations and conclusions of the writers provides a rich base of information leading to the attitudes and actions of the participants in the study. Quantitative data accumulated by the study included flow data for a number of perspectives, including age distribution, institutional demographics, work intensity, and other data pertinent to the effect of mandatory retirement. In addition, this study examined the differences in attitudes, academic emphasis, age differences, and institutional retirement policies between Research Universities, Doctoral Institutions, Comprehensive Institutions, and Liberal Arts Colleges. The total population of participants numbered 2,800, taken from eleven private universities, three public universities and seven liberal arts colleges that were “capped” (those which had mandatory retirement policies), along with five public universities and seven liberal arts colleges that were “uncapped” (1991, p. 99). The stated goals of the study were to examine the impact of mandatory retirement on both the institutions and the faculty involved in the study, especially in the areas of eliminating incompetent teachers or removing qualified ones too soon in their careers. Briefly put, the study concluded that while mandatory retirement was effective in removing teachers who had become incompetent, the cost in terms of lost expertise and knowledge from active, vibrant

faculty was far greater than the benefit. In addition, the study predicted that without mandatory retirement the proportion of faculty over the age of forty would continue to fall at least into the year 2004 (p. 91), in contrast to a Carnegie Council report of 1986 which predicted a rise in the average age of tenured professors to age 55 by 2001 (Carnegie Foundation 1990, p. 30) . What this study did not attempt to assess was the emotional and psychological impact the spectre of retirement (mandatory or not) represents to senior faculty. It does, however raise similar questions as those mentioned above, which in turn have been addressed to public school faculty by *Segue*. Among the questions raised as a result of the data presented (but not fully analyzed) from the study is the question of why the percentage of tenured professors in the arts and humanities over the age of 49 is the highest in academia (1991, p. 36). Is there a reason that teachers of the arts stay on longer? Do educators in the arts enjoy their profession more? Are they more committed? Does their lower pay force them to keep teaching? And are public school music educators likely to follow the same trends? Rees and Smith acknowledge that their study only addresses the feasibility of retirement from the fiscal and academic standpoints, while leaving the questions of retirement's impact on the individual to qualitative studies, and the qualitative data uncovered in *Segue* supports the notion that musicians must keep making music. Manny Brand conducted a brief study (1983) in which music educators who chose to delay retirement were asked to explain their reasons. While economics often played a role, many felt that the daily contact with young people outweighed the freedom of retirement – as one thirty-five year veteran put it, "...it kept the youthful, fun side of myself alive while my body got older. It helped me retain my connection to youthful vitality. I have no regrets. I did what I most wanted to do" (p. 51).

Bauer's short paper on "Research on professional development for experienced music teachers" (2007) notes that many retirees dream of continuing their education in order to be qualified to teach music education methodology at the collegiate level (p. 19), which is borne out by the fact that two of the four primary participants in this study have achieved that goal.

In addition to the Rees and Smith study, there are three other studies that also provide similar information. Robert L. Clark has been involved in all three of these studies, including his study with Linda Ghent and Alvin Headen, "Retiree health insurance and pension coverage" in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Ghent, 1994) and his book, co-edited with Brett Hammond *To Retire or Not?* (Hammond, 2002). In "Retiree health insurance" the authors provide typical conclusions to the topic raised in the title – that one can never begin making financial plans for retirement too soon, and that supplemental coverage such as 403-B plans are a vital part of retirement planning – but in addition the study raises more questions that should be asked by those entering retirement, such as "What will happen to my creativity?" "How can I 'bank' my productivity?" and "What sort of 'happiness insurance plan' can I enroll in?" *To Retire or Not?*, addresses a choice that most of us in education will have to make someday in an intelligent, logical and step-by-step fashion, suggesting that each individual ask themselves if they can imagine living on the stipend available, along with elaborate and practical tables for predicting the value of that stipend over time due to inflation. *To Retire or Not?* however, provides precious little qualitative information. There are anecdotal reports that are clearly placed to spur the reader into careful fiscal planning, and several stories that paint retirement in terms of the "golden years", but precious little

information about maintaining a particular lifestyle in the form of practical, one-on-one advice from one “colleague” to another.

Clark, Ghent and Steven Allen returned to gathering quantitative data for their study in 2001 titled, *The impact of a new phased retirement option on faculty retirement decisions* (Allen, 2001). This study, written for *Research on Aging* examined how gradual retirements effected the operating abilities of the institutions that were impacted by these unusual changes, and also provides accurate and provocative data that concluded that most faculty members who retired under the new “phased retirement” plan were satisfied with the results. Phased retirement as a practice in Illinois public schools is very rare, and is made rather difficult in part due to the restrictions imposed by the system (TRS, p. 33). Later in this review, we will note that Lorraine Dorfman’s study *The Sun Still Shone* (1997) adds considerable weight to Clark, Ghent and Allen’s report, although it does not lend any additional credence to a transfer of this practice to secondary education.

In 2004, Penny Weymouth completed a study on “The predictors of four different types of retirement” (Weymouth, 2004). This longitudinal study examined variables such as relationship status, gender, financial stability, and perhaps most cogent to this study, what Weymouth refers to as post-retirement “obsolescence of job skills” (p. 9). Unfortunately, Weymouth’s study is focused on industrial workers, but her qualitative data from interviews, along with her survey responses presents two observations that could be interactive to this study – that individuals in a non-spousal relationship tend to delay retirement more than their counterparts, and that the perception of the obsolescence of job skills can be generated by the individual as well as the organization for which she

works. Given the precept that many “traditional” music educators are having their global concept of music and music education challenged by changing standards and a larger multicultural spectrum of study, it is not beyond reason to expect certain retirees to think that they are “musically obsolete”. Indeed, one of the participants, Barbara Hedges, refers to this concern when discussing her husband’s retirement while he was “at the top of his game.”

Certainly the concept of obsolescence in music itself is not new – popular music groups seldom remain so for more than a few years – and it is not unreasonable to assume that some school administrators could see some of their educators as unable to address more contemporary trends in music education. There is cogent meaning for one of the participants in this study, Cindy, as she has been transferred to a “less visible” position by administrators who saw her as both irrelevant and irreverent. In Robert Weissenberg’s *Academic Tyranny: The Tale and the Lessons* (1998) he presents strong arguments on the dangers of academic administrators wielding reassignment or induced retirement as a way of silencing controversial figures, in this case Robert Nagel of the University of Illinois. While the article focuses on the apparent injustices done to Professor Nagel, it also illustrates how retirement can be a harrowing experience in itself when used as a “weapon” against a faculty member, such as the participant in this study.

Heston, Dedrick, et al found similar levels of “pressure” leveled against high school band directors as an ancillary part of their study (Heston, 1996) dealing with job satisfaction and stress, and John Scheib’s Collective Case Study on *Roles, Expectations and Tension in the Professional Life of the School Music Teacher* (Scheib, 2002) also

notes that diminished assignments for the veteran teacher often signal the individual that they are no longer a vital part of the school environment.

There is a study that is similar to that of the Rees and Smith study (*Faculty retirement in the arts and sciences*) that was prepared by Susan Gee at the School of Psychology of Edith Cowan University in Australia with John Baille at the London Institute of Personnel and Development called *Happily Ever After? An exploration of retirement expectations* (Gee and Baille, 1999). Gee and Baille's study provides similar data to Rees and Smith's work, but it is interesting to note the contrasts between retirees in general in the United States and the United Kingdom – for example, Gee and Baille's study notes a significantly lower number of British and Australian men who delay retirement than does the Rees and Smith study. Interestingly, the Gee and Baille study noted a statistically negligible difference between the sexes in retirement avoidance, whereas the Rees and Smith, Ingraham, and Kaye studies of Americans showed notable differences. The Gee and Baille study did note, however, that female retirees were much less interested in financial planning for retirement than their male counterparts (p. 124).

Gee and Baille's study sees these retirement expectations as a multidimensional construct, and so posits four views of experiencing retirement:

1. Transition to Old Age/Rest. Retirement is a time to relax and slow down into a quieter life and prepare for aging.
2. New Beginning. Retirement is the welcome beginning of a new phase of life. Retirement is a time of freedom, when one can tackle long-awaited goals, and live life to the fullest.
3. Continuity. Retirement is not a major event or critical transition. The basic pattern of life continues, with more time for valued activities.
4. Imposed Disruption. Because their job is irreplaceable, retirement is meaningless and frustrating. (p. 111)



These modes are well-represented in Dorfman's *The Sun still Shone*, but without the quantitative data supplied by Gee and Baille, and the other previously mentioned qualitative studies. Since Dorfman's study also examined professors in the United Kingdom, their research is complimentary. Gee and Baille also provide extensive data about the effect of PRE (Pre-Retirement-Education) courses have had on easing the transition from full employment to retirement (p. 112). It is worth noting that this study provides no evidence or suggestion that the graduated retirement process that has worked so well for many in academia has had success with the participants in their more generic study. There are many interesting data that illustrate other major differences between "typical" Australian or English retirees and those from higher education – using Kanungo's *Work-Involvement Questionnaire* (WIQ), Gee and Baille concluded that the largest segment of the male (63 percent) or female (68 percent) retiree population considered retirement a "new beginning" (p. 118), and were fully expecting to divorce themselves from their previous careers. This is in sharp contrast to Dorfman's findings that the vast majority of retired professors intended to remain active in their particular discipline in some way, with those involved in research being the most devoted to their work (Dorfman, 1997, pp. 18, 117).

In another example that aesthetic value often comes from those least embedded in aesthetic disciplines, there is a report created by the former dean of the school of Business at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, Mark Ingraham. *My purpose holds: reactions and experiences in retirement of TIAA-CREF Annuitants* (1974) was prepared for the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association/College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF) and is based on questionnaires that were mailed to all participants in

TIAA-CREF who retired in the year of the study. The study's ultimate conclusion was that educators who participated in TIAA-CREF were substantially more secure in their retirement than those who did not participate in some sort of 403-B annuity program, but in the case of this study, the lack of additional data raises a most provocative question – are these retirees happy only because they are financially secure, or is there another factor that comes into play? Since the study was funded by TIAA-CREF, it is doubtful that anyone directly connected with it saw any reason to question the results beyond their factual accuracy. Nevertheless, this 1974 study provided partial impetus for Dorfman's book.

Of all of the studies related to retirement in higher education that were compiled for this review, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's report, *Early faculty retirees: Who, why, and with what impact?* (1990), paints the darkest picture for academia as a result of a vanishing workforce. The foundation's survey of college and university faculty indicated that roughly 40 percent of all faculty under the age of 60 intended to retire early, and as many as 17 percent plan to retire while still in their 50s (p. 31). As the age of the faculty member decreases, the age of their anticipated retirement decreases as well. While the loss of a significant number of faculty from the higher education system is in itself disturbing - the foundation predicted 15,668 early retirees in 2000 (p. 37) – the report on the disenchantment of faculty planning on retiring early is even more alarming. There are correlations to be found that reinforce the studies by Dorfman, Rees and Smith, and Robert Clarke, however – when the participant group is broken down into disciplines, those faculty involved in research and graduate studies are only half as likely to take early retirement as those who teach exclusively in the

undergraduate domain (p. 40). Additional data to corroborate these studies can be found in this author's study entitled *Coda* (2002), and the case of Cindy, "the Disappointed", in this study is also disenchanting.

### **Studies Specific to the Retirement of Primary and Secondary Teachers**

Educator advocacy groups such as the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have been involved in commissioning studies to study retirement, primarily for the strategies involved in fiscal planning, but also for the changes in lifestyle for the classroom teacher in primary and secondary education. The articles that were examined for this review had some residual value that could also be applied to the retiring teacher in higher education. As mentioned earlier, the Music Educators National Conference is in the process of launching a mentoring program that promises to involve retired music educators, offering an opportunity to evaluate the ways in which they can continue to contribute to music education.

Of the branches of research available for this study, the least – researched branch by far is that of music educators in general. Few studies have been made that deal primarily with music educators in elementary and secondary education. The value of these studies is significant.

The first meaningful study that deals with the *post-partum* effects of leaving a position in music education is *Retirement is More than Parties and Gold Watches* by Max Kaplan (1980). Kaplan discusses problems of retired persons in general and of the retired public school music educator in particular, and makes suggestions for making use of the retired music educator's expertise. In many ways, Kaplan's suggestions are similar

to what Parini suggests in *Living up to the meaning of “emeritus”* (2000), most notably the concept of the retired music educator as a mentor.

### **Organizations Devoted to Retirement**

Perhaps spurred on by the lure of financial success, it would appear that the commercial world has addressed the market for dealing with the nuances of the social and psychological transitions involved in retirement more quickly than academia. As such, some voice should be given to a resource that has commonly become referred to as the “retirement coach”. Emily Brandon’s article, “A coach for the Retirement Years” (Brandon, 2006) notes that these coaches function in conjunction with financial planners. Her primary examples in the article include Howard Stone, founder of the group “2 Young 2 Retire”, and Cynthia Barnett, who offers a 90-day program for \$397 to assist retirees in reinventing themselves; a home-study course for \$597 that includes a 194-page volume, introspective exercises, and CDs; and one-on-one coaching on line ([www.mydreamretirementguide.com](http://www.mydreamretirementguide.com)).

In 1947, Ethel Percy Andrus founded the National Retired Teachers Association. Andrus had been a pioneer in teacher education for women, and was the first female principal in California. Eventually her interests turned to Gerontology, and she was instrumental in developing the first professional school of the discipline, the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology at The University of Southern California (Turner, 2005).

As Andrus herself approached retirement, she became concerned that the teacher’s pension system in her state was inadequate, and the NRTA began as an advocacy group for better funding. In 1958, Andrus founded the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). In 1982 the larger organization merged with the NRTA,

which still functions primarily as a resource for retirees to plan and manage the financial aspects of their lives, but has also provided material that shares retirement experiences with its members. More applicable to this study and to retired music educators would be the AARP's function as the hub for retired teacher organizations in all fifty states. In many instances, these organizations have no administrative framework of their own, but others, such as the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) are powerful advocates for the maintenance of pension funding. Until recently, the organizations largely ignored the quality of the retirement experience, but the NRTA is now organizing a mentor project linking retired educators with first-year teachers (AARP, 2010).

One of the proposed participants for this study brings more than typical career experience to the research table. In the past two years, the Illinois Music Educators Association has formed a sub-group called the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association (IRMEA). Membership in this organization consists of retired music educators, and also music educators who have indicated their intent to retire within the next two years. The Chair of the association is one of the primary participants in this study. His value to the study is more than that of an observed participant – he has been instrumental in providing suggestions for additional participants, drawing from the membership base of both retired and soon-to-be retired music educators.

The IRMEA itself has established communications as well as a line of inquiry about the experiences that its members are undergoing. There is a separate column dedicated to their dialogue in each quarterly issue of the *Illinois Music Educator's Journal*, and the organization holds an annual meeting during the Illinois Music Educators Association's annual convention in January and February of each year. Unlike

other retiree organizations, the IRMEA has focused primarily on the issues that will be dealt with in this study – the “afterlife” of retirement from an occupational standpoint instead of fiscal concerns. This network of contacts as well as information has proved to be a rich source of qualitative information as well as an efficient opportunity for survey material.

### **Examples of Other Qualitative Data**

Once the stage of initial data gathering for *Segue* began, an attempt was made to find similar projects that had gathered data from retired music educators. Finding little specific data for that group, the field was broadened to retired educators from any discipline. The most extensive work in this field has been done by Professor Lorraine Dorfman, and of her numerous writings her book *The Sun Still Shone: Professors talk about retirement* (1997) carries the greatest similarity to the qualitative research done for *Segue*. Professor Dorfman’s eleven-year study consisted of contacts with 427 professors from a variety of institutions in two different countries – 113 from research institutions, 54 from liberal arts colleges, and 36 from comprehensive universities in the United States, and 124 professors from British universities. In addition, Dorfman incorporated interview data from 104 participants in a longitudinal study of teachers making the transition into retirement (1997, p. 4). Dorfman’s study was especially meaningful to *Segue* thanks to several participants from the public universities and liberal arts colleges who were retired music faculty. The interview data from these individuals was nearly identical to the data being harvested for *Segue*. Several reviews of Dorfman’s book have been published, and a typical one is by Joel Snell of Kirkwood Community College, also in Iowa. In his review *When the Old Profs are Put out to Pasture* (Snell, 1998, p. 137),

he also notes that he was recently reminded of his eligibility for retirement. Snell's conclusion, based on Dorfman's book, was that despite quadruple bypass surgery he'll continue teaching as long as possible, but, as he puts it, "If and when my day comes, I'll know what it's like in the academic after-life" (p. 138). While retirement may present an attractive lifestyle to many, the incentive to remain creative in itself creates a paradox to those reluctant to give up the facilities of academia.

A study with more specific potential is a dissertation completed by Mildred Walton entitled *Utilization of retired teachers as volunteers* (1976). Unfortunately, Walton's study strays from the initial proposal of evaluating retirees as supporters of music programs to a study about the gifted student program at the Atlanta school where she was the principal, and the data concerning the retirees and their continuing impact on music education is very sparse.

The internet has proven to be invaluable in searching for dialogue on retirement. The most specific examples of this are available on numerous groups in Facebook, but for greater academic value, the MENC's educator forums are designed to facilitate discussion specific to the needs of music educators. In a later discussion with Rick, the "Champion", he cited an example of music educator "burnout", an example which may be found in the dialogue at the MENC forum:

There is no backup to be had. My administrators have told me, basically, "Tough cookies. Get over it, that's the way it is here." I also now have parents calling in upset that I made their child feel bad for having something else planned. I had a parent call today and ask me to shred their child's permission slip because they have grounded their child from Festival! There goes 1/2 my Advanced Band horn section...

The whole community here is one gigantic Charlie Foxtrot, and the kids are a reflection of their parents. After one more year I'll be fully vested in the state retirement system, then I'll be out of here. This job can suck the life out of someone else. (MENC Forums, 2010)

## Value for Value

Piper Fogg, a frequent contributor to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, has written several brief articles that investigate the aesthetics of the retirement phase in higher education. Her article *Three Early Retirees* (Piper, 2002, p. A11) provides three examples of retirees who have found great satisfaction in retirement – most notably by being asked to return from retirement because of their value to the institution. On a sadder note, the other common thread tying these educators together was their disillusionment with the academic system, as one retiree put it:

When I first started teaching, the things we did were very simple. We taught, we did research, we were on an odd committee, and that was it. Life is so much more complicated than it used to be. (p. A11)

Fogg's 2002 article for the *Chronicle* followed on the heels of her more ambitious article *Survey of Changes in Faculty Retirement Policies* (2001, p. 41) which was commissioned by the American Association of University Professors. In this survey, Fogg notes that while in general these retirees are financially comfortable, they are in large discontent with the treatment they are receiving by the institution in terms of facility support and a sense of remaining value to the institution. This data corroborates similar qualitative data reaped by Lorraine Dorfman over the eleven years of her study. The most relevant study to *Segue* by Fogg, however is another article for the *Chronicle* called *Taking generous retirement incentives, professors call it quits and departments suffer* (2002, pp. 48, 41) simply due to the majority of the retirees examined in the study. In this study the University of Massachusetts at Amherst School of Music lost eleven of twenty-five tenured professors at the end of one semester to retirement, brought on by the devastating economic downturn in Massachusetts. The state legislature forced the



university to cut thirty-two million dollars from its operating budget offered early retirement incentives that made it nearly impossible for these professors to refuse to leave. While the majority of the article deals with the difficult situation of the department (most of these retired professors have not been replaced), it also deals with the stress and depression suffered by these professors as they attempt to adjust to life outside the university. One professor, a pianist, said she looked up the word “retire” in the dictionary, and was distressed at what she saw:

"One was to quit the battle," she announced at their retirement party. "The second was to go to bed. And the third, to withdraw from one's activities, career, and work." (p. 14)

Mary Beckman is also a contributor to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and her report on “The Not-So-Retired Scientist” (Chronicle 2002, 48, 12) is welcome anecdotal data which blends well with Dorfman’s report as well as for *Segue*. Her portrait of Bruce Stocker, an 85-year-old professor emeritus in Microbiology from Stanford University has elements of humor, describing his disheveled appearance and reputation for absent-mindedness coupled with his on-going achievements in his field. Freed from the administrative burdens of full-time teaching, he has encountered what Beckman describes as the “Pastoral Effect” (p. 36). Beckman notes, that Stocker fell victim to the mandatory retirement policies that were in effect until 1994, but that Stanford, recognizing his abilities as well as his desire to continue research and work with students, has continued to subsidize his activities, providing laboratory facilities and graduate assistants. As long as Stocker continues to excel in his field (and generate additional grant income to the institution) this “value for value” arrangement apparently satisfies everyone.

Dorfman's study, however, took the issue of graduated retirement to another perspective by examining why professors continue working past the age of 70, either as part of a transitional program or simply due to their desire to remain active in their field. Similar data can be found in the case of one of the participants in *Segue* that corroborates both studies in describing a degree of satisfaction with a "graduated" system, one which was originally intended to reach complete retirement after two years but eventually took much longer. In the case of *Segue*, the transitional aspect of turning over an established program of performing ensembles to a new director is illustrated by two differing levels of longitudinality... one which was relatively short and another which has been on-going for over ten years.

Perhaps the most eloquent plea for reassessing the role of the retired educator with her institution is by a professor of English at Middlebury College. Jay Parini's *Living up to the meaning of "emeritus"* (Parini, 2000) notes that in the majority of cases of retired faculty, these professors merit only a furtive glance in the library, seeming to say "we thought you were dead by now" (p. 68). The principal participants in *Segue* are finding it more likely that they remain "the band director" or "the choir director" in their community's eyes well past the time that they actually fulfilled that role. Interestingly, while all of the primary participants in this study indicate a desire to keep teaching, they all see excessive administrative worries as one of the best reasons for retiring.

After a continuing search of this field, it became apparent that the vast majority of quantifiable data found on retirement in education would deal with non-aesthetic factors such as the income levels, geographical location, and mortality rates for the group. A concerted search began for any studies or data that dealt with the aesthetic impact of

retirement on any group or the entire group in the United States known as “retirees”.

While much quantitative data does exist for the overall demographic of individuals in the United States, it appears that no studies have been made assessing the impact of retirement on those individuals who have devoted their lives to teaching music. Much of the literature included in this review, as a result, is supporting literature that assists in framing a socio-demographic picture of retired music educators. Using the quantitative data found in some of this literature, the data gathered as part of this study has been reinforced. Briefly, such statistics as the disposable income, social and geographic mobility, and second careers of retirees have been gathered to note the agreement with similar descriptions provided by the participants in the study.

## **Conclusions**

Music educators have been trained not just to teach music, but to also predicate the experience within the community they work. Many have written about their experiences, but few have written about them as history. Fewer still have undertaken an explanation for the honors and respect that some have received for their efforts. The literature that has been useful for this study has been directly targeted to ancillary situations, such as retirement in general, music education, and community involvement – all ingredients for a successful legacy for a music educator.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Methodology**

The primary research approach for this study has been qualitative, based on observation of the chosen participants in three primary environments – the schools in which they taught or are currently teaching, the homes in which their family is based, and any musical ensembles in which they participate, such as community orchestras, choirs or bands, and either as performers or teachers. Additional environments may occur depending upon the actions of the participants – for example, one participant may have become a volunteer for a museum, or is working in an entirely different type of job.

From the pool of participants, three completed their retirement before data collection ceased. The fourth participant, Cindy, had her plans interrupted by multiple circumstances. Her misunderstanding of her district's policies on maternity leave has cost her two years of service under the state retirement system's policies. This group of participants, represent varying demographic groups and geographic areas.

The combination of the locales, the participants, and their common reality of retirement, culminates in the principal thrust of the dissertation – the overarching effects on individuals, communities, and educational programs during the process of a music educator's retirement. It studies those who have recently retired, and those who are on the cusp of following their colleagues into retirement. Much like those advertisements for weight-loss pills that show participants "before" and "after", these participants may demonstrate dramatic changes in their exterior behaviors, but unlike those weight-loss advertisements, the study focuses on the effects of the elixir of retirement to the body of the discipline. Given the close network of communications between music educators

provided by the IMEA, it is impracticable to expect total isolation from one participant to the other, but anonymity has been protected to avoid the exchange of ideas between the participants prior to data gathering.

The primary participant base dictates the occupants of the secondary participant base, and where those participants are located. The students, both current and former, are often still involved in the same community, and have much to say about the primary participants and the impact they have had on them. The educator's colleagues have provided provide rich data from the vantage point of a peer, and the family members of the primary participants, most of them community members as well, gave significant depth to the strong community attachment for these legacies.

### **Combining Cases for Cogent Conclusions**

While two of the participants were officially retired by the time data gathering began for this study, it should not be assumed that there were no opportunities to observe them in the environments that constituted their careers. Both Bill and Peter are active performers in community groups, many of which have more of their original constituents than can be found in their old schools. They are both active participants in ancillary programs sponsored by their communities that allow them to work with middle school and high school students. Rick has finished his career in a flurry of concerts, festivals and ceremonies, and of course Cindy continues to work with young beginning students as she keeps one eye on the calendar. Observations were made during band rehearsals, concerts, and private lessons, as well as in social situations with friends, families and co-workers.

There are numerous correlations that have emerged from observing these participants, which are drawn near the close of the study. Combined, they constitute the bulk of the requirements for educators to be respected, admired - and loved by their constituents.

In all of these situations, the data will be instrumental in answering the primary research questions mentioned earlier in this proposal – how have these music educators remained true to their own musical voices while fulfilling the needs and mandates of their community? Did they succeed? And, perhaps more important for some educators, what sort of legacy have they left behind?

### **Member checking**

Audio recordings of all of the primary participants were stored as .mp3 files, which in turn have been stored on a laptop computer, and are now stored on a compact disc. Each of the primary participants was offered the opportunity to review the audio recordings for accuracy, and also afforded the opportunity to examine the printed transcripts of the interviews as soon as they were processed, usually within a week of the event.

The participants were also contacted by letter, along with a copy of this dissertation, asking them to examine noted sections of the document that pertained to their involvement in the study. Each participant was invited to comment on the content and make suggestions for any additional or corrective material that would more accurately depict their involvement or opinions. In some cases, their comments were limited to their overall assessment of the document, and in others the comments were quite detailed. Some of their comments may be found in the “Epilogue” of this study.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Case Studies**

#### **The Idealist**

There is a “triumphal arch” of sorts when one enters Belmont City from the south— actually, and appropriately, it is in practice a railroad viaduct, stretching over what used to be the main route into town lined with Victorian houses. The trees lining Center Street have had many decades to grow, slowly reaching out over the pavement and where they are no longer disturbed by the passing of large trucks - that duty has passed to the interstate highway on the east side of town. Like most Midwestern towns, Belmont City has grown its crop of convenience stores, gas stations, and various boutiques, but Belmont City’s downtown area is still active with department stores, cafes, barber shops, and banks. Cars surround the train station, where Amtrak still runs a route to Chicago twice daily, and the old depot still has a good restaurant. The largest employer in the community is still the canning plant on the east side of town, although a new medical complex being built across the highway could possibly compete for that honor someday soon.

The community of Belmont City is ethnically diverse – almost twenty percent of the population is Hispanic (CityData, 2010) – but certain values that Midwesterners claim to be their own seem to be dominant regardless of ethnicity. Several blocks of Third Street are still the domain for the main churches of town, and they are well attended. Most of the borders of the city have remained unchanged for nearly a century, framed by the rail line to the south, the cemeteries to the north (one for the Catholics, one for the Lutherans, and one for everyone else), and the canning plant to the East.

The border on the western edge of town, however, has done some expanding, ever since Belmont City constructed a new high school. The building of the school was accompanied by a housing boom in the area, as new subdivisions were set up around it. The old high school, which had been in use since 1917, had become a danger to students and faculty, cramped, and an eyesore hidden behind a grove of oak trees, and so no attempt was made to restore it once the new school was built. Like most school projects, the community haggled and struggled to reach an agreement on how to build the new school, but eventually consensus was reached, priorities were set, and numerous interviews with school leaders and students have shown that the result has been excellent. As was mentioned earlier, the facilities for music are well planned, and in accordance with MENC standards and the athletic facilities, were constructed to assure parity as well as pride in both disciplines. As is often the case with small towns, Belmont City has constructed not only a site for learning, but also a statement of their core beliefs about education and the quality of life in their community.

### **No Rest for the Retired**

Arranging for a time to meet with Bill Hedges is much more difficult, now that he has retired. When we finally agreed on a date and time, it was between his visits to one school as a representative of one of the local music stores, and another visit to a different school in the role of observing a student teacher, as part of his new position with one of the nearby universities. When I arrived at Bill's home, he had still not arrived, so I passed the time by enjoying the beautiful landscaping surrounding his home, and wondering how someone as busy as he could find the time to take care of his gardens and lawn so well.



A few minutes later, Bill's small pickup truck came around the corner and into the driveway. As the overhead door opened, Bill ducked inside and opened the refrigerator. "How 'bout a cold one?" he said, pointing to a collection of bottled water. I gratefully replied "thanks", and we both headed into the house.

Bill and Barbara are "empty nesters," with son Craig having recently relocated in Chicago, and daughter Susan teaching in a nearby county. As a result, their attention has been centered on their cat, Bilbo, who insisted upon being present during our interview. "If Bilbo's bothering you, I'll kick him out of here." Bill offered, but it seemed clear that Bilbo thought that he had some stories to share. Bill's busy schedule has developed slowly in the past eleven months since his retirement. His mother had been a teacher, and her advice to him had been to say "no" to every offer of employment, volunteerism, and other activities until he had been retired for a year. But the pull to stay involved in music education has been too strong to resist. As we talked, Bill had the demeanor of a man flushed with activity, and cherishing every minute of it. While Bill and Barbara may appreciate the added income from his new positions, they have been clearly comfortable with their finances for some time, which may explain the unorthodox method that Bill employed when he retired:

I think for several years you start looking at when and how you can retire. And that process became looking at obviously how old you are, the number of years you have, I'd come up with a magic date, I don't know, maybe eight or ten years ago! And looking at what class would be coming through, and who would be in it, and I would, you know, "graduate" with that class. It became more realistic the last three or four years. And from that standpoint, that's when we got a little more official, and made contact with TRS, and had like some of those first interviews. Just to see what the process was. As far as the actual retirement, two years ago – however you want to think of this – I could have retired at the end of two years ago, with the idea of I would have had enough sick leave days to come up with two years of service. But I wouldn't have known that, because I was right on the border, I had like, a day, or half a day buffer. So if something were to happen to

me I wouldn't have had it. So I couldn't declare until the end of that year, but that would have put me at the end of year and would have been submitting a letter at the end of the year, which in our profession is pretty hard to do. So, I knew I was going another year. And as I looked at that there were several factors – it just seemed like OK, if I go another year then it was like I would have time to let the school know, would have time to do a job search, would – it would have been my twenty-fifth year at Belmont City, that seemed like a magic number – it was also a tour year for us, so it would have been like following through doing a tour, rather than having a new person come in and have a tour facing them - we travel every other year. So it would have – it allowed for the person coming in the next year to come in on an off-tour year, not have to plan one, and so it just seemed like ok, that's realistic. I did not – I didn't announce early on to get the percentage up – you know, the six percent, I didn't do any of that, because I wanted to - if I'd had my way I would have gone to the end of the year, and said "sayonara, thank you very much, let's move on." And you can't do that, though. But, I didn't want to - part of it is I didn't know for sure, you know, did I really want to do it, and didn't have to commit to it that way, but I really didn't want to advertise that I was retiring.

Bill is the only participant in this study who expressed any concern about the timing of his departure in relation to the well-being of his students, certainly giving good cause for his moniker of "The Idealist." His metaphor of "graduating" with the class of 2009 places his outlook on the transitional aspect of retirement on a different plane from his colleagues. His sacrifice of a considerable amount of money in order to shorten the "waiting period" between the time of his announcement and his actual retirement date demonstrates his concern for the stability of his program, which has only had two directors in fifty years.

Now that Bill has had time to assess his strategy, I asked him if he thinks the three-year staging for retirement is a good idea for teachers.

Bill: Oh, I think so – now as I look at it now for that person who's looking to retire, and they're planning out, it's a healthy bump, and a raise, to the individual going out, and yet it's still less expensive to the school, to give those incentives to a veteran teacher rather than continuing to pay their salary. So I think it is still a "win-win". The other part of it is if I had gone out - would have been 2 years, something like that I could have bought part of it and then your school has to buy out a major portion of it, well that's real expensive for the school. So for them to

give the incentive to encourage retirement, yeah – I know some other directors that they're right at that point now and their schools are talking to them very much now – “what can we do?” “How can we buy you out?”

Terry: For various reasons?

Bill: Yep, mainly financial, mainly just where they're at, I won't name names while we're on tape, but just very much, it's not a question of integrity or a program, it's financial.

Terry: It's the money.

Bill: Yeah.

Terry: Get a new teacher –

Bill: Hah! (laughing) two or three!

Again, unlike the other participants in this study, Bill demonstrated a pragmatic approach about his retirement that demonstrates a concern for the community he has served for three decades. Later, in conversation with one of his colleagues, we are told that Bill was instrumental in negotiating a settlement between the school district and the teacher's union – one that raised more animosity with his fellow teachers than with the school board.

Since Bill had defied all of the conventional precepts of “the right time to retire”, it seemed appropriate to search for the defining reason.

And I knew this would kind of be a question that came up and I was trying to think “Well how would I answer that?” And it's not a simple answer, so bear with me a little bit – it's a –part of it, I always said that when I feel like I've stopped learning or I've lost the desire to keep learning, or being active, it's time to get out. Now I never reached that, but there were signs of sensing, you know, when the trade journals would come in – the *Instrumentalist*, or journals or something, and I'd catch myself going through them really quickly, you know “OK, seen that, all right, nah, I don't want to read about that... those type things, and it was like so I sensed “hmmm- you're getting a little calloused when you do this.” I can remember when I'd get those and I'd read everything in them. Then there was enough things that I caught myself recycling literature. Now, good literature I think should be recycled – but I caught myself analyzing where the

band was, and instead of looking for something new I'd be going, "Oh, this piece would work." "All right, yeah, why don't I use this piece," and I caught myself using things that I already knew and I didn't have that real strong desire to seek something new – new literature to learn. Well that's never been me either! And it worked, it was the appropriate piece for that group – I was comfortable because I knew the piece already – but again it was a sign that I'm not pushing myself to stay on the cutting edge and learn the way I used to.

Bill's concerns for his students and his community are laudable, but at some point personal reasons must factor into choosing a retirement strategy, and eventually he agreed that he had some personal concerns about his future.

I'm one of these that I know that I always want to be doing something. And the idea of retiring and becoming the person that fixes things around the house and golfs every day, and the stereotypical retirement kind of things, I knew that wasn't me. So part of it was knowing that I'd have to leave the door open for whatever would come about. I would still want to be active.

One of Bill's continuing involvements in music education is acting as an officer in the Illinois Music Educators Association, or IMEA. Bill has worked with many others who have served as officers, and as a result has maintained close contact with many retired teachers. Because of this, Bill was also the only participant in this study who had actually studied the activities of some of his former colleagues. He cited one of his more compelling learning experiences as coming from the so-called "Five by Five" program, initiated by the State of Illinois Department of Education in 1995.

Bill: Now in little tiny Belmont City I think there was eleven teachers that did the "Five by Five", and that's when Luci Smith came into Mendota – and that whole crew left. So had watched a lot of those colleagues to see what they were doing, and to a "T" I don't think there were any of them that just stopped being active. They went and took another job. For the most part, not in education – you know it was just kind of – some of them substituted, or this type thing, or became volunteers in the community, and I remember our computer tech took a job at the "Press" there in Belmont City, and so I kind of watched that and going "OK, that's how it goes", I also knew that I didn't want to just keep teaching lessons, and run a studio, or something like that. The closer it got to actually retiring, then it became, as you go through your thinking process, and you're thinking of retiring, and you start to think "What am I going to do?" And I went from "OK, I

could teach lessons, that's what Fred Franklin did. Or I could substitute. I could drive a bus" – I could do all these type things. And part of it was "I don't know that I want anything to do with music." "I'm not sure I want anything to do with education." So I did go through like "What are" – you know, I could - you know you start looking at people that you've worked with, you could be a fundraiser, you could work on the farm, I could drive a bus, I could ... all this type thing. Basically, it was just kind of opening the door, see where things take me. And I have to admit that that's kind of been my life even as far as my teaching – very often, doors opened up and that led me to go a certain direction. It wasn't that I actively searched for something.

Terry: You haven't mentioned much about other people influencing your retirement date – when you decided to retire. So did you talk with other people about it? Anybody?

Bill: Yeah, I saw that on the question there, I started going "Who did I talk to? Did I talk to?" Obviously at the TRS sessions, Fred Franklin, being retired and still very active, it was like "he's always been a mentor to me," and so watching what he did and going about it – the "Five by Five" crew, I guess those are the ones that I saw retire, and saw what they were doing. And I don't know that I talked to anybody that said bad things about retirement. From the standpoint of "would they go back?" I think to a "T" they all did something, they all were active or became involved in something. So from that standpoint – but I don't know that I had any close – it would have been a multitude of people who had retired and I was able to watch what they had done. But to actually get serious about talking to anyone or interviewing anyone, or "What did you do?" or "How did you do it?" - No.

Of course there was one person Bill had had a lengthy conversation with before he made his decision to retire, and that was his wife, Barbara, but Bill had ignored the obvious, and laughed when I asked if he had consulted her.

Bill has been teaching since he graduated with his bachelor's degree, and insisted that he has never considered changing his profession – but he did remember having to consider one lucrative offer.

Probably one of the biggest things, my dad was a farmer and sold insurance, and this is back in the day when he started out as a small farmer but you couldn't make it as that – so then he went into the insurance business on the side but for the most part it was all ag related, or crop insurance, or things like that – one of the things that came up was he was looking to not retire but wanted to get help with the agency. And at that point he sat me down and - I'm trying to think I'd

only taught maybe four or five years or something like that – and wanted to know if I wanted to come in with him. And I really didn't have any desire to do that... it wasn't something I wanted to do, but he did say, "Well if I bring somebody in, that person – he and I are going to work together, and when I sell the agency, the agency will go to them." So there won't be any, you know, you're not going to be able to come back, and change your mind and get into this." So from that standpoint it did kind of make me think, or reaffirm, "This is what I want to do."

Bill had grown up on a farm, and his "employment" prior to graduation mainly consisted of doing farm work - but many of his family members, including his mother, sister and brother-in-law, had become teachers before he left for college. Originally, Bill had started out to become a history teacher, but his love of music led him to Music Education.

(I) played in a festival band, and the guest conductor was the director of bands from ISU, and my teacher at the time was an ISU grad, and so we made the connections and went in for signing up for classes and this type thing, so he was helping out, I was going to go in as a general student! And it was his recommendation that – well it was Ed Fuller – his recommendation was "don't be a general student. You can be a general student your whole life. Declare – get in on the ground level. If it's history, let's make sure that we've got this class, this class, and this type thing." Course then he came back and says "on the other hand, you've already signed up for lessons, all right, you've already signed up for band, you're thinking about doing music theory... that's a music major." I said "OK!"

Bill has a reputation for being an organized, well-prepared band director. His organizational skills have been displayed many times in his activities in IMEA and IRMEA. So it was somewhat of a surprise when he testified that his plans for post-retirement work had not come with great expectations:

I don't know that I had any grand scheme of expectations. That's a hard one – that assumes that I had some kind of a goal, or philosophical nature of what I wanted to do, and I didn't. Again, I think I've always been one of these that waited for the door to open and see where things go. I have to admit that if we talk expectations, the people that I talked to first, you know, beyond family, and in retrospect I guess I look back on it that I was planting that seed of being aware that I was planning on retiring, "if there's anything I can do for you let me know." All right, so one was with the Music Store. Mandy Pine was the one who called

on us, so it was early in the year and I'd officially decided, I hadn't turned anything in, but let them know. One was Greg Deal from Quad-State. Because we'd worked with them for over 20 years, on our tours and things, and was just kind of letting him know that "All right, this tour would be my last, and you'd need to be thinking," and I guess planting the seed, and the other was Randy Kummer from IMEA, so those were that type of thing. As far as where or what I was going to do, like I said, doors opened up, ISU contacted me almost immediately... and that would have been Priest, and Fedstrom, that called and asked if I would be willing to supervise some student teachers. And that – I popped at that, I said "Yes, I think I would enjoy doing that." And I also said that, because it would all be part time, the one thing that my mom said, and I still remember that, was that when she retired from teaching was not to lock yourself in right away, don't say "yes" to everybody, because her first year that when she retired, she ended up being busier and on more committees, and on more clubs and things like that than when she was working, and so I can remember her saying that and she would tell other people "say 'no' to everybody for a year." And let yourself kind of be established. So I always had that in the back of my mind, knowing that I can't not do something, that would drive me nuts, but also not to get committed into something that would be long-term that I couldn't get out of, or that I didn't want to get involved in something and say well "I really want to do this." So was trying to be careful of that. So had said something to those three people – Mandy, with the Music Store, and IMEA, and Quad-State, and then ISU – and I hadn't said anything to ISU, they came to me. And I said "yeah, I would like to do that", and I think I could be very valid, but I also felt like that's something that is not a real long – it's part-time, I can kind of come and go when I need to, I think it's a win-win for the university, because they're using several retired directors, and I think - I don't know if other universities are doing that, or if more of them are doing that, but I think it's a win-win from the standpoint – I see my student teachers minimum of every other week, and can write an informal thing, I make a big deal of doing a formal evaluation, or an informal one, or just chatting, or seeing them with the kids so the kids get used to me bopping in, so that it's not this formality of somebody coming in. So have enjoyed that so from the standpoint of the university I think that's good, from the standpoint of the student teacher it's good, what I also shared with the university – with Jim and Charlie, was that I don't think this is a long-term thing.

I think there's a window of time when you would still be valid, as a student teaching supervisor. At some point - and what that point is going to be different with each person, kind of like retirement - at some point you're no longer valid, or your examples, and your suggestions might have – are no longer part of the real world. So I said 'yes' to that right away. The next thing as far as expectations was Randy came to me towards the end of the year – Randy Wood – and we always kind of teased that all retired band directors go and work for the Music Store... or a music store, and we hadn't said anything other than I had announced it in the middle of the year. So at the end of the year, he then said "Well Bill, we finally ought to go out for lunch and talk a little bit." And that was

really the first inkling that he had, well you know he was showing signs of “would you like to help us out, work with us part-time?” So that was kind of an expectation that I didn’t know that would happen - as soon as I announced my retirement is when Randy Kummer announced his as Executive Director of IMEA. That was probably the next biggest decision for me was whether I wanted to apply for that position or not.

Bill has been having a difficult time adhering to his mother’s advice, and could not resist applying for the Director’s position at IMEA. Like so many professionals, he had been somewhat unaware that he was held in such high esteem by so many of his peers, and was finding more exciting opportunities on his doorstep than he was prepared to consider.

Yeah, I did apply. And part of that does come back to retirement, the reasons that I retired, well now you’re looking at taking on that kind of position, I had to sit back and analyze “well, do I want to get into that?” The reason that you retired was that you felt like you no longer had the spark to read and get involved in stuff, so as I was thinking and going through that process then that’s when John Mahlman announced his retirement as the MENC executive director, and I caught myself looking at the websites, and looking, and interested, and I’m going “you know, you are intrigued by this,” all right? “This might be something to go after.”

Bill was not chosen as Executive Director of IMEA, nor did he apply to become the Executive Director of MENC. But his schedule is just as busy as if he had taken either position, as he is in constant demand as a guest conductor and clinician. Ever concerned about the consequences of his actions on others, he noted that this overwhelming list of offers has caused some frustration by his son, Craig:

My son has a music business degree – came and then went ahead to Loyola – out of ISU, went to Loyola and got his MBA, and looking for jobs, and in that market kind of thing, and in a way would have been - we haven’t talked, but he was a candidate for the Executive Director position, if it went that direction. But he’s the one that said “jeez- you’ve just retired and you’ve already accepted student teachers with ISU, and you’re working with the Music Store, and you’re thinking about doing this...” “and he’s just kind of shaking his head and he’s trying to get a job. And then I kind of realized, “wow, I didn’t mean to come off that way, it was – it just kind of worked out, and you know you just kind of hope that things will come about...”



Bill is eager to talk about his role as Chair of the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association – not as a prestigious one, but for his belief in the potential of the organization for allowing retired educators to remain active in music education.

Bill: Yes, I do, or I wouldn't be doing this. Now to what extent that is, I think is different for each person. And we've talked more and more about how can we utilize that part of our association and I'd share this. We just came off of a board meeting last weekend, and I said you have a wide gamut of retired directors - we have a lot of directors out there that would love to come back and help out. All right, we have professional development where we're looking for people to simply preside over a session, and then help do stamping... you know, CPDU's (Continuing Professional Development Units) and this type thing. We've used retired directors to help man the exhibit booth and just be runners for that. We've used some retired directors obviously in our leadership roles, as far as, you know, Bill with the magazine, and Randy as Executive Director, Dick Kerley has been very active, but then there's a large segment out there that don't want anything to do with music. Don't want any part of it, don't want - you know, "I'm done". So those people, we're not going to reach. There's also a group that kind of like just coming back for the collegiality, and seeing people, and so the sessions that we've had at All-State the last couple of years – I think one of the biggest ones to me is a reception for retired music educators. And that's the social side. Regardless of other things you're doing I think that's also one of the big benefits. Obviously we're also trying to keep people to pay their dues and stay a member, but...

Terry: We could probably spend the rest of the day talking about the potential, but suffice it to say you see a great deal more in all these avenues that you've already talked about?

Bill: Oh, I think there's - I would like to see more crossing over of the special areas, I would like to see the retired area – I would like to explore it before everybody gets totally away from it – as part of like the historian's side of it. I know that Greg Bihm and I talked a little bit – but Quinlan and Fabish does quite a bit with doing interviews and recording and archiving of things. Tried with Donna Martin to get interviews with Fred Franklin, or before, as I said we've already lost our opportunity to get interviews with Ray McKeever and John Kinnison. And yet these guys are hesitant to do that, they don't want to be involved, they're afraid of leaving somebody out, or coming across, I mean they're so humble and they're at that point – that's one side – the historian's side, Our state has had highs and lows of mentoring programs. I think many of our associations have mentoring programs - IMEA has a mentoring program! It was real active for a while, now it's pretty much defunct. Now, I don't remember now – well, it's – who's the trumpet player at Western?

Terry: Rich Cangro! He's the head of the peer mentoring special area.

Bill: Yes, that's what he is right now, as part of IMEA. And so we've talked a little bit about, right – here's a mentoring of – it has to be the right retired person, you know, that kind of thing, but that's another resource of mentors. Of being able to go in and help. So I see some connectivity there. The professional development already mentioned. As far as even having people give presentations on things – the hard part is, I think you at some point you don't volunteer for things. But if I came up to you and asked, you know, "Terry, would you do dah-dee-dah-dah", "Well yeah, I'll do that for you – I'll help out." So it does have to be that personal contact. And that is one of the problems of IMEA, is we have all of these special areas, that are pretty much turned loose, and they really don't get a chance to dialogue with each other. We were asked to come to the board meeting and that hadn't been done since I was president of IMEA!

Terry: Wow – you're talking about all the special areas?

Bill: Yes, they all came to the board meeting – but it is a logistical thing, to bring all of those people in – it's a financial thing, and if you're not going to get a good turnout, then it's a kind of wasted time in a board meeting also. But this had been long enough that there was good dialog! Between all of the people that we're talking about, as to well. "Where does the board want us to go?"

Terry: I just assumed that there was always a lot more communication between the areas, so that's news to me! I'm pretty surprised.

Bill: It's not good. I think everybody's kind of on their own. And that's not how it's meant to be, but also I know that as a former officer, sometimes you were so glad that you had somebody in that position, great! They'll handle that, and then you ran off and did other things.

Bill's enthusiasm for the potential of the IRMEA is inspiring, although the reactions to his ideas by two of the other participants of this study would imply that he faces an "uphill battle." He shows no signs of surrender for his enthusiasm, however, and shows no signs of intending to abandon it.

Bill has never lost his enthusiasm for remaining a performer as well as an educator in music. His principal instrument has always been the Euphonium, which limits his commercial marketability somewhat, but he has always maintained his conditioning by playing in community bands.

Bill: I play in a wind ensemble – Belmont City Community College, the junior college that's here - we like to tease that we're the poor man's "Prairie Wind"... (In) reality, it's a pretty good group. I've played in that ever since coming to Belmont City, and that was one of these where when I first came to Belmont City, of course the two groups that you can play in was the wind ensemble at the junior college, or we have a local orchestra, the Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra, and so I played trombone in that for a little bit. And I caught myself trying to play euphonium with the wind ensemble and trombone with the orchestra, not probably doing either one justice. And trying to keep up with the program and the demands of the high school program, something had to go. But I kept playing because I've always been a big advocate that the reason we get into teaching or education is for most of us because we enjoyed singing, or playing or performing or whatever, so to suddenly get into education and quit doing that, I think is wrong. I think it keeps you active, I think it keeps you on that side of the podium, and watching that conductor from the perspective of you being a conductor, and what it's like, I did it all, so I had ulterior motives because as a junior college ensemble it was for junior college students, it was also for more advanced high school students, so I was able to get some of my best students playing in that ensemble, so to see – to have them see me still playing, I thought was important, and vice versa, and the enjoyment of seeing my own students performing, and I enjoy now going and seeing adults that are graduates of the program continuing to play and be in that ensemble, who were students who have just come out of college, and are back home as they're shifting and playing, so that would be how I've kept involved from a performance standpoint.

Terry: I wouldn't want to stereotype you, but I think that's pretty – it is pretty typical of what most of us want to keep doing in terms of keeping our playing...

Bill: It is hard, I go through at some point I either am going to have to practice a heck of a lot more, because it just doesn't happen any more, or get out of it. I'm kind of depending on the day, or how things are going, is how I feel. I was one of these that as a euphonium player, I could pick up the horn, and play pretty much what I wanted to play. I can't do that any more.

While Bill continues to play his instrument, his wife, Barbara, who used to play the flute, does not. Bill attributes it to a combination of eyesight problems and her schedule as an administrator in nearby Plainville, which will change soon upon her forthcoming retirement. In the meantime, Bill has been having more time with Barbara by accompanying her on seminars.

Bill: ...one of the side benefits of being retired is now I've been able to go with Barb to her conferences. Where I was never able to do that before. And part of that is just to be with her.

Terry: You find that interesting?

Bill: Yeah, I do, really, from the standpoint of, well went to the school board convention. So it was interesting to kind of see - of course I enjoy watching people, too. So to see her school board members and how they interact, and seeing some of our board members in a different setting, and you know go up to a few of the sessions, that OK, it's not like I'm out to, you know, it was more just "enjoy doing it," I'm there for the social side of it, for the dinners and to be with Barb, and this type thing... we went out to Phoenix to her superintendent's national conference, and so went to a couple of the sessions, and a couple of things that were real interesting. And it's beyond what we're doing here, but it was- a couple sessions on the different generations in the workplace, well that's interesting to me, that's valid from seeing all of that, then there were a couple on brain activity, and I'm going there and I'm watching and I'm listening to brain activity and they're talking about how important it is to make the connection of the neurons, and we have all this software that we'll sell you to do this and I'm sitting there going - "just be in music."

As usual, Bill's neurons have connected back to music education. They are set in their ways. Bill has witnessed hundreds of students participating in his program, and is keenly aware that his program has been fundamental in fulfilling the holistic goals that the community of Belmont City has demanded of its teachers. We discussed how the furor over the "Mozart Effect" of the previous decade had tried to make music-making the handmaiden of "core" educational programs in math and science, and lamented on how this practice short-changed its total potential, including its aesthetic function. As always, Bill's concern was that studies that see music as a tool for his students neglected to see music as a vital part of his students, just as much as his students are a part of him.

There were many points in our conversation when Bill inadvertently referred to his role as band director at Belmont City in the present tense – using the collective "we" when referring to upcoming events, for example – and there have been numerous

accounts of his visits back to the campus – perhaps too many accounts, by a few reckoners. Quantity aside, they have all been part of the process of pulling away from his immersion in the program, and it has been difficult. It is difficult to imagine what Bill misses least about his former position, and even he had to struggle to define it:

Bill: It's a combination – the routine. The ritual. And yet that was also what I missed when I first retired, was not having a structure. 'Cause I am one that – I want to know where I'm going today. What I'm going to do. It doesn't have to be the same thing, but I want to – I guess a purpose to get me up and get going. But I don't miss – and I even – this is one of those things that you started to sense when you knew you were retiring – and you're sitting at a teacher's meeting, and you're talking about RTI, and goals and objectives, and the philosophical side, I have to admit, "OK – I don't miss that at all." I don't miss, for me the grading papers, the listening to recordings of the kids, doing the grading, documentation, that type thing.

Terry: Paperwork in general?

Bill: Yes. And I catch myself now, with my student teachers, what do I least enjoy is coming back home after I've taken notes and observation, of writing that up. Yes... I can procrastinate on that, I have a couple people on my to-do list who want letters of recommendation, that's about the last thing I want to do is sit down, and write and compose something. I enjoy being physically active, I enjoy working and doing things, and then go home and be done.

For Bill, the question of what he misses most has a simple answer:

Well the quick answer is the kids. And I could also say some people could say (clapping his hands) "I'm glad to be away from the kids!" I enjoy going in, I'm kind of embarrassed as you go in, and they kind of clamor around and this type thing – but do miss that – I – part of what has been enjoyable for me the, Music Store or just in the area here, is that I can go in and when some of the schools it works out, they see me coming, "Hey, would you mind taking the trumpets next door and working with them?" Or, "Would you mind listening to us and critiquing them?" So I can get my fill of still working with kids, still working a rehearsal setting, or critiquing or something, but then walk out the door.

I wanted Bill to mention some sound advice for his successor, those student teachers he has been observing, and any other music educators. As expected, he took his charge very seriously, but he also inadvertently expressed some of his deepest regrets

about some facets of his career. As he listed all sorts of helpful “dos and don’ts” it would become clear that he realized that some of his work had encroached deeply into his personal life.

Bill: I guess what I see of younger teachers coming – and it’s a pro and a con, I don’t think they “live the job”. Now I’m not saying they don’t *do* the job – I look back on it and I did miss a lot of what my daughter and son did as they were growing up. I saw more of them when they hit high school. And was able to do a lot more with them there. To me, the job always came first.

Terry: I understand what you’re saying.

Bill: Yeah, that kind of thing, and that part of retiring is not having to be on the job 24-7. On the job, to be that, especially in a small town, you are always that Director of Bands wherever you are, whenever you are.

Terry: So how do you advise a new music educator, or soon-to-be music educator to do what you’re just saying?

Bill: Probably to be better than what I was, as far as a blend of get away – you can have a personal life... something that if it doesn’t get done today, it’ll be there tomorrow. Now I have to admit that when I walk into a band room and I see a disorganized and it’s – I mean clutter everywhere, and it’s like how do you – don’t you care? How do you handle that? I have to take a step back and go “that may not be important to them”. And they’re balancing their lives in different ways. Where for me that would have driven me nuts and I would have spent the extra hour to put away, clean up and do that. I do believe that it’s important that young teachers, student teachers, whatever, get into the “conference habit” quickly. To go to things. Get out of your own school, go visit other people, continue your connections with your colleagues. It’s really important that you go to an IMEA or to a MidWest. You continue to learn. I have kind of a catch phrase – “to be a sponge”. I use that with student teachers, I use that with anybody I talk to.

Terry: I’ve heard you say that before.

Bill: Yeah, you soak up everything and anything. You soak up the good and the bad. You see something that goes “wow – I never want to do that. I never want to be that.” OK, you soak that up. You see little, simple things that somebody else does. You put that in your bag of tricks. That... continue to learn. And, when you get to the point where you don’t care any more, or you’re not learning, you need to really do some soul-searching. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Terry: From who?

Bill: From – multitude of ways – from that mentor, from your, you know, if you're a brand new director don't be afraid to go back to your college guys and ask them. Don't be afraid to ask other teachers in the building "Are you experiencing the same things? Am I just all wet with this student, or with this procedure?" I would also recommend that they eat lunch with other teachers – be social with other teachers, and of course the old adage that you've got to know your janitors, and your cafeteria people–

Terry: Most important person in the building is the secretary?

Bill (laughing): Well for me it was the cafeteria lady. But I think it's so easy to get isolated – we're a unique field –we walk this fine line of curricular-extra curricular, elective, all of the terms you want to put on it – and especially if you're that teacher that's out – you know, as I'm going around now as the road rep – I can go in and I recognize that I may be the only music person that this person is talking to all week long. And it's like they've got to share, they've got to vent, and it's been like, and there's been many times that we've sat there and chatted and you know, kind of joke with them, "All right, feel better? All right, when you go out in the hallway you put your smile back on, and put your persona back on. Don't go down to the teacher's lounge and vent, and "blankety-blank" with everybody else."... I still think teaching – let's broaden it out – teaching has had good and bad things over history – I think right now it's one of the more stable professions. Even with the cutbacks and things that we have right now, it has been one that has been pretty stable, with a pretty good retirement system, and I'm stating that now as retiring, it's kind of like "I see what other people have gone through," and I'm sitting here going "Well I feel pretty good about where I'm at" – what I'm doing. Am I rich? No, but I'm not having to pinch pennies from one day to the next either. So from that standpoint and music – well we still have just some students that have just recently come out or who are continuing in music ed. Or, I guess I shouldn't say - I guess I broadened it beyond music ed to music business, or music therapy, staying involved in music. 'Cause I don't think music education is for everybody.

Having known that Bill has had many students who wanted to become music educators, I asked him how he dealt with those students that he felt had an inadequate understanding of the task.

Are you sure you want to do this? Yeah, kids who – the combination of promoting "stay involved" – you don't have to be a music major. Stay involved – especially those good kids – keep playing, keep singing, for a lot of our kids, because we had a strong nucleus of kids that were in both band and choir, and it was like, you really have a hard time doing that at the college level any more. So they'd have to make a decision as to which way they wanted to go, and yet if they

were going into education, it was kind of nice to have that background, because they're more marketable, but yeah, the promoting of that not to be... just not to be afraid of it.

Since Bill is as prepared as well as he is organized, I was surprised when he responded to my question searching for advice for music educators who would soon be following his example.

I don't have an answer to that right now. Advice. I guess it would come back, you're making me think a little bit. The things that pop in my mind are the things like what I remember Mom saying, not to, in essence, take some time, and be – not get yourself tied into something too permanent. 'Course part of that was the whole discussion with me, with the Executive Director position, is that something I really wanted to do, because in a way that was contrary to what I'd been saying. In some regards I kind of look at that and go "maybe this was the right thing." For them to go a different direction. That would be one thing, of course I've always been one that – I guess I've used the phrase too many times now, "wait and see what opens up." Part of that is where your family is gonna go, and what you want to do.

As we had been talking, the questions had been becoming more and more difficult for Bill to answer. Not because the answers weren't on the tip of his tongue, but because they were difficult for him to hear. Each time that his response required a retrospective, Bill had to admit to himself that he was not part of the group he was advising any more. Each time he had to talk about his former students, he realized that he had no current students to care for. This time I asked him to pretend that he was being given an opportunity to present a one-sentence "last lecture" to them, and he was, at first unwilling to comply.

A one-sentence statement to your students... (laughs) Well, I'll give you Mike's – follow your dreams. And that's - I think that's – has many different levels to it.

For the first time during our meeting, Bill seemed uncomfortable. He had always given thoughtful answers to questions, but now the answer he was searching for seemed too elusive. He lowered his head and frowned, as though he was unhappy with his effort.



Bill: I don't know that that would be me saying that. I'm not one that is typically that – poetic.

Terry: Yeah, it's not exactly a good example of Midwestern philosophy.

Bill: No. It all comes back to relationships. Of – enjoying being with the students, I've always enjoyed being with them. And I hope to continue to be with them in whatever regards. Kind of the same philosophy of that student that drops out of the program. OK, people go different directions. But don't be a stranger. If I see you in the hallway, say "hi" to me. Don't put up a wall between us. Look forward to being colleagues with everybody. I'm looking forward to going back and doing some of these alumni things, and being able to be with past students, and adults. That's not a one-sentence statement. I hate one-sentence statements, I hate- you're ending on a sour note here, I hate to...

To my surprise, Bill began laughing, as though he was amused by his clumsiness.

But at the same time, he had personified the best of the so-called "Midwestern Philosophers" by speaking plainly, and from the heart. Faithful to his commitments, Bill had centered his remarks around his relationships with his students. While there are remarks about his relationships with his colleagues, they were smaller, less passionate.

As we were leaving Bill's house, Bilbo, the cat, rubbed up against Bill's leg. Bill was on his way to visit another school, and observe another student teacher. "That is one spoiled cat," I said, as we went into the garage. "Yeah, it's crazy," said Bill, "but he's all we've got now." I thought of Bill's family, and the colleagues who have honored him so many times, and most of all, his students that I have known, and realized that he had just made his only incorrect statement of the afternoon.

### **The Warrior**

Spring is seen by most poets of the past as the time for rebirth, or new birth. That which has lain dormant for the winter months is supposed to come alive again, and that which did not survive the lack of warmth is replaced by new life.

I went to a party in the spring not to celebrate new life, or the awakening of an old one, but to celebrate a long and distinguished life of teaching music. The “caretaker” of that life, the person being feted for his work was one of the many music educators that would leave his position that spring – in this case, after thirty-four years of teaching.

While I have known Peter Williams professionally for over 20 years, I was not surprised that I was unfamiliar with most of those attending his retirement party. Peter had taught for 34 years in the Midville School District, most of them at the same school. When he began teaching at Southern High School, he replaced a music educator that had been there for more than three decades, and was highly respected in his field. His school music program had been celebrated throughout the state, and his band had traveled and performed in Europe and Japan. Southern High School had been located in a solid, middle-class area of Midville, and was blessed with strong financial and administrative support. When Peter took over, however, storm clouds had been brewing in the school district. The 1970s were a turbulent time for race relations in the city, and “white flight” was causing the population of the schools to shrink. Those who could afford to move to suburban areas were doing so in record numbers, and Southern High School, once the showplace of four high schools in the district, found the size and the demographic of its student population changing drastically. By the early 1980s, Southern’s population was predominately made up of low-income African-Americans. Those that remained, regardless of ethnicity, did so either out of loyalty to the neighborhood or due to their low incomes. Housing values in the city plummeted as the blue-collar manufacturing jobs that had supported them vanished. Eventually Southern would become known as a “Title

I” school, a classification given to schools with a population of more than 40 percent existing below the poverty level. Southern’s most recent level was listed at 70 percent.

A situation like that of Southern High School would hardly be considered a “comfortable” one for most music educators, let alone one with just a few years of experience. But Peter Williams was convinced he was the right person for the job. Growing up in the neighborhood, he defied the conventional wisdom of avoiding teaching positions where the older faculty and students still might see you as a student. He was idealistic enough to believe that good teaching could overcome the logistics of shrinking support from parents and administrators. He was committed enough to persevere when his dwindling numbers no longer allowed his program to remain “competitive” at a time when the primary form of assessment in music education meant being competitive. He was devoted to the belief that his compassion for students would lead them to a greater sense of self-worth. His commitment to family, community, and friends made him a role model for the students in his program. After 34 years of teaching, Peter had proven that music education teaches more than music.

### **Peter Keeps Moving On**

My private student had been doing well today - so well that I had lost track of time, and was apologizing to her for giving her just a few minutes to get to her next class when I noticed Peter standing in the hall. “Why didn’t you knock? I lost track of the time!” I said, and Peter waved his hand. “Oh, I’ve been out here listening! You’re doing all right with that horn, little lady!” Peter towered over the diminutive student, his deep voice resonating down the hall. “You keep up the good work.” For a moment I was jealous that his unsolicited comment could draw such a wide grin on her face.

Peter had come to my studio today to talk about this study, but for a while it appeared that he was more interested in the progress of the student. After a few minutes of questioning me about the unique challenges of female tuba players, I asked him if he had come to campus with his “big wheels”. “Nope!” He laughed, “Got the truck today, and besides, you don’t have any parking over here for a bus!”

The question had been addressed because Peter had traded in his Band Director’s uniform for the blue blazer of his new employer, a charter bus company. He had been driving today, and he was on his way home from the bus terminal when he stopped by.

Peter loves driving. He and his wife, Wendy, have been spending a lot of time “on the road, with Wendy serving as the navigator, and Peter at the wheel. The freedom to travel is, by both of their accountings, their greatest joy in retirement. For Peter, it also helps to assuage his deep feelings that he was not really “ready” to retire.

I really wasn’t ready to retire when I did. To be honest about it, I would have taught another – at least another couple years. I guess the main thing that was keeping me in the saddle was that my son was still in college, we put the daughter through and the son was still in – and I was thinking well, how are we going to get him through? So, with the Midville District you have to put in for retirement two years in advance... give them two year notice. I think now it’s even four. Two years, and actually I had not put in the two years, my wife Wendy did put in the two, she knew she wanted out, and I was going to continue on. We went down to Springfield, just to assess our situation, with teachers retirement, and to find out, that with the incentives – the monetary incentives that the district was offering for early retirement, I had to retire that year in order to get any of them because each year that would go on, they would diminish. So I guess that was the main thing, plus I talked with other colleagues and they were saying “God, Pete, I retired and I’ve still got kids in college...” that it can be done, it’s not going to financially drive you into a hole. So I guess a combination of one, knowing that I could make it, two, the incentives for early retirement window was closing, plus, the representative told me “Mr. Williams, you already have enough time to retire.” So that was pretty much it. It had nothing to do with being fed up with teaching, as difficult as the situation was turning and I tell people – anyone I come in contact with, as long as I’ve been in education things have been changing, I’ve been able to change and adapt as I needed to. To not get burned out. So I thought

I was doing a pretty decent job of that. So I could have stood it for another couple years, I think (laughing). But that's pretty much it.

In the past, I have visited Peter's school for a variety of reasons - as a teacher, as a performer, and even to attend a concert at Southern High School. Peter's insistence that he did not get "burned out" is a claim that he is constantly having to reiterate to his colleagues, who have greatly respected his ability to persevere at Southern during its decline. When I mentioned that no one in this study was admitting to getting burned out, Peter found the situation humorous.

Yeah, well sooner or later, but I was fighting off burnout! I mean, you have to work at it! If I hadn't worked at it, about eight, ten years back, I probably would have been burned out by then.

While Peter's fiscal reasons for choosing to retire seem logical, as we talked more about the timing of the event he did observe that it was fortunate for both him and the school that he didn't continue on, now that the school is being restructured for not meeting the standards of No Child Left Behind:

I guess after I made the decision I was glad that I did because my school was restructuring - you know, for several straight years of failing test scores, and the threat of the state taking over and the mandatory restructuring, it would not have been good, me being a veteran person, set in my ways, you know, type of thing, hanging on, and then a bunch of new changes coming about.

Unlike Bill, "The Idealist", Peter did not consult any of his colleagues, or retired teachers who had already gone through this transition. Instead, he relied solely on the advice of one person:

Yeah, the wife. Yeah, and like I said she had had enough - when we got out of college she got the first job, and she graduated - in June of '73, I graduated with my bachelors, in December of '73 - started in applying and a semester of graduate school and went on to December of '74 - so she's really taught longer than I have. So she got the very first job, so she by that time she had had it- she could have retired sooner than she did, but- Yeah, we talked it over, and that, and after we looked at how much money we would be losing year after year, she just

flat out said “Now look, I don’t want to hear you complaining about the money that you’re going to lose – you need to go ahead and submit!”

Peter and Wendy are the same age, and started at school the same time. But in the mid - 1970s Peter was finding it difficult to find a teaching job. He noted the irony of his situation when we discussed his “other careers”.

I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. I have been – sometimes I have to kick myself because it appears to be – you look at elementary education, a lot of men who go into elementary education, don’t remain a first or second grade teacher very long – their intention is to be what? An administrator, principal – and it’s like you’ve not succeeded – you haven’t arrived, if you’re not an assistant principal or administrator – and I truthfully say I’ve never wanted to be an administrator – I’ve always wanted to be a teacher.

Terry: Did you ever work in another field before you became a teacher?

Peter: Yeah, worked road construction – I was a laborer. I labored for a very big contractor here in the tri-county area – that was, I joke that was my scholarship through college – ‘cause the money I made in the summers there put me through school. It’s ironic, too, ‘cause as an African-American young male growing up – people say “you know you want to get yourself a good education, by God, so you don’t have to end up having to dig ditches the rest of your life – and hey, then I’d dig ditches and major labor, well I got an education digging ditches cause after I got an education and couldn’t find a teaching job I still wound up back on road construction! Go figure!

Terry: Teaching jobs were not plentiful back then –

Peter: Not at all. When I graduated from high school there was a shortage of teachers, and that was the field to get into, and then by the time – by my junior year, that door had closed!

Once Peter started teaching in the Midville School District, other doors started to open for him, and most of them have yet to close. Like many other music educators who have had to “follow a legend”, Peter was challenged to adapt to the traditions of his predecessor while at the same time realizing that the support system for the program that had been in place was eroding. As his role in the greater Midville community grew, as a civic leader and as a performer in other ensembles, his schedule became more and more

hectic. Once he had retired, Peter discovered that the transition did not award him much in the way of free time.

No, it didn't – in the sense that people talk about all the free time that you're going to have – I don't have any free time! For a while I thought about going back to work just in order to rest up! And it's a myth– well my son said the other day, retirement is like a curse, because everybody thinks you have all of this extra time because you're retired now, and so people constantly ask you and require you to do this and that – and you have no free time – you've got to learn how to say “no.” I've also heard that people would say you need to find something to do to occupy your time, especially in the industrial field. People would retire, and have nothing to do, and within a year or two would be dead! And so I figured “No, I have better plans,” so I've had a plan to keep moving, and find things to do. I'm a part time driver for the Midville Charter Coach Company – its called a “Professional Motor Coach Operator” – they don't like you to say “I drive a bus.” For one, as a kid, being in band all those years, I rode a lot of miles on those buses, and I always thought it was cool – like “I want to do that.”

There is a bit of the kid coming out in Peter when he talks about his new position, but Peter is also adamant about his priorities. Family and music still come first. He has little difficulty choosing between “family” and “music” because he frequently plays in ensembles with Wendy and his daughter, Emily, but the bus company has to take a back seat to both.

It is important to Peter that he keeps busy. There are things about teaching full-time that he misses, and being a professional motor coach operator can only partially substitute for them.

Peter: Yeah, as I told the bus company, I've been a musician – I started playing my horn when I was seven years old, and going to the parochial schools – they did things differently from public schools – public school kids started in fifth or sixth grade, and parochial schools let anybody play who wanted to play. And so, I'm fifty-nine years old, turned this year, I've been playing since I was seven, I do the math, I told them when I hired on I said I'm not going to give up playing. I'm still a giggin' musician – if there's money to be made and I'm out there and somebody gives me a call I'm ready to do that. I had to make a decision in the first year of retirement how active I wanted to be – I admit I kind of wanted – I turned away from music and teaching, I cycled through my last private student –Brian was one of them and it was funny because no one else has called

requesting a lesson, and I figured that ain't all bad. I kind of enjoyed the break, still want to keep my hands in it – I love judging contests, that sort of thing, if people will have me – and now that a couple of years have gone by, I can honestly say I do miss the teaching, miss teaching – I never don't miss the headaches, and the administrative battles, paperwork and all that stuff that goes along with it – but I know that in the last six to eight years that I said that if I could just come in every day and just teach – direct my band and do the stuff that goes along with directing the band... I didn't mind the setting up this, planning concerts, all the same...

Terry: The artistic angle –

Peter: Right! I'm a music educator! Don't ask me to go help out and go tutor math students so we can pass the SATs, bring the scores up, and you know- you don't want to go down that road! That's somebody ugly!

For the moment, Peter Williams is somebody funny, as he laughs at a situation that is no longer his problem. Peter may have issues that bother his conscience, but they don't include guilt for the federally mandated restructuring at Southern.

Like Bill, Peter has concepts about his role within the network of music educators in the state. During his tenure at Southern, he also played an important role in the structure of IMEA, hosting regional music festivals and attending all of the All-State conventions. Now he is trying to re-define his status within that network, as he compares his legacy with his colleagues. I asked him if he thought that the IRMEA was a useful organization within the IMEA.

I want to say yes - since Bill has become retired – I think it kind of keeps retirees connected – you're not just "thrown away." Now the popular guys – let's go on to the university level band directors, and there are some high school people who are approaching the university level – the guys who get called all the time to guest conduct – ok? They're popular, and in high school there are those high school people – I'm not in that circle – I've done one festival, I recall, right? Whereas people, and so as you feel– I've felt like as a retiree, well, you know, you're done. You're done! Maybe get some calls, some requests for private lessons, but you look at any university level – Begian, anybody like that, hey they could retire today and someone'd still be calling them to come direct, at their festival – and that's what they do. And I can't be – I'm not jealous or envious of them because when I put my career together I focused my career on teaching kids, and I think



that if I compare, and I think it's a valid comparison, if I compare myself as to what I've been able to accomplish as a teacher, working with kids – I teach the good, the bad, and the ugly – all of 'em – anybody who walks upright, and respects me, walks through the door I could teach. I think I've done as good a job or better job than some of the individuals who are a noted clinician and conductors. And it kind of hurts a little bit – personally. There's people who don't know who Peter Williams is – or was.

There is a tinge of anger in Peter's voice. But the anger doesn't seem to stem from his being a victim of racial discrimination. Instead it stems from one of demographics. Peter's students have, as a group, seldom been able to afford expensive instruments, or private lessons. Most of his parents have lacked the resources to transport the students to band camps at universities. Peter never had an assistant to work with some students while he was working with others. And as a result he was never able to achieve the sort of "winning" status at contests and festivals that some of his contemporaries did. Peter is proud of the achievements that occurred during his tenure at Southern, but is angry that his colleagues have reaped greater public awards for their efforts. He does have several examples of students who have gone on to be music educators, but they were exceptional students, who came from exceptional families. For Peter, his eventual satisfaction has had to come from those students and parents.

One of things that makes me feel good when I look back on my career – this is personal – is when a student or family or someone would come up and say. "You know what? I'm glad you had my kid. I'm glad that I had a chance – I had a student once, you know special ed – and I had a real strong rapport with special education teachers – I'm going off on a short tangent here – but I remember as eating lunch with these people, when I thought my job was really difficult – these people – they can get into heaven without God even blinking one eye – because the students, the people they work with... (So) I had the same rapport with the special education teachers – and I'd take their kids in band.

Peter's philosophy of "anybody who walks upright, and respects me, walks through the door I could teach" is, realistically speaking, not a formula for "success" for

many music educators, especially those who are either mandated by their district to bring home trophies or feel that “winning” a contest is the best method of teaching music. For Peter, meeting the challenge of providing a musical outlet to any student is paramount. As a result his trophy case has very little brass in it, but he has a golden legacy within his local community. Peter’s personal trophy case holds memories of working with students that won his heart with theirs:

Peter: I had one girl, I tried my best to teach this girl – every instrument, and since that didn’t work I put her on flag corps – and, stupid! (tapping his chest with his finger) If she’s having trouble counting, how’s she going to learn a 64 count routine? Sequential stuff! And it never occurred to me - but I would just never give up. What she ended up doing was I put her in the color guard –and so I’d have the American flag, the Midville flag, and I’d say, “Now, your job is to carry this rifle, and you always have to be to the right of the American flag, that’s all you have to do – cause you can’t display the American flag without the weapon!” And every time we’d have a football game she would beat me there, and I’m early! One day, the doggone American flag kid didn’t come! So she’s marching around the field with just a rifle! And it hit me – here’s this kid with tears in her eyes, bawling, disappointed because she could not perform that day! “I’ll tell you what, here’s what we’ll do. We have a couple of tunes that use ride cymbal – you march next to the percussion battery – you march next to Jim – and he’ll show you where to go, and he’ll take his stick and point where to go, you know – and when it’s time, he’ll tell you, he’ll nudge you – hold your cymbal out like that so he can play on it, and then when he gets done playing on it...” I didn’t give her any of the crash cymbal parts!

Terry: They could put people off pretty bad.

Peter: Right, but the fact that this child got a chance to perform at that game – at the end of the season I always gave my kids a letter... I mean you need to give kids an incentive for attendance – you had to be at ninety-five to ninety-eight percent of all the stuff we did. So I had kids who would be failing other subjects, but these kids never missed! Cause they were going to get that letter. And I stuck to it – there was never no fudging one way or the other... so anyway I was, at the end of that season, this little girl was – I gave this little girl a band letter. Even though she was only part of the band during marching band... (Commitment) means a lot. And so that, and teaching kids like that – I had another kid who was a borderline – was autistic. And this one really hurt! This kid played tenor saxophone – that’s my instrument! I tried my best to teach this kid how to tongue. Could not get him to manipulate his tongue – how to manipulate his tongue in order to manipulate a phrase. The way we solved that was speaking

with and talking with the speech pathologist. “Look Marcie, this is what has to happen. The tongue and the reed have to – it’s a reed instrument.” And they tell them how to form letters, she worked with him, and she’s the one that taught him how to tongue. I swallowed my pride, and all – long story short, he was four years in band, played in jazz band, was able to still-stand up and play a solo on the spring concert – this is the autistic kid that everybody else tried to get to quit! They gave up on him in fifth and sixth grade, you know, “Jack is unteachable – you can’t teach him. We just keep him in band because his mom sent a note – they want him in band.” So they pushed him off in the corner – I never threw him out. You see, I’m telling you this, but that kind of stuff never gets written up. In the accolades, you know, “He did this.” Teaching – those are the kind of things - they mean something to me, and so I guess that’s good enough.

Peter’s disappointment that his work has not received state or national recognition is understandable, but there have been accolades for him from his community. In April of 2008 he was inducted into the Midville African American Hall of Fame Museum, and was also included in the “Role Model Project” of Midville’s nearby community college (Wheeler, 2008). That same year, he was asked to speak at the college’s “Celebration of the Arts and African American Heritage” (West, 2008). When Peter’s band would travel to festivals in places like New Orleans, or Disneyland, the local television stations would provide coverage, often noting how the band would work throughout the year to raise enough money for the trips.

Peter is bitter about being overlooked for recognition from his peers in IMEA, but he has found more than enough comfort from the gratitude he has seen in the eyes of his students, and their parents.

I had a kid who had a speech deficiency. I listened to him – “Why does he speak that way?” And this kid was a sophomore, junior in high school, and I talked with the speech therapist and she said, “You know, he will be... if he can come in and see me” and I said “No, he’s too proud... he’s too proud, he would never come in...” So we put our heads together and she said “I’ll tell you what, at the pep assembly, when you get done playing, I’ll come over and stand there, you know, supervising, handling the crowd, and whatnot, and have him come over, and ask him something, and have a conversation, so I can hear him speak. And she diagnosed it, right there, standing there on the gym floor. And she called him in

and she said, “Well I know exactly what it is.” I can’t remember what she called it, I won’t make something up – labels and terms – but “I know exactly what it is,” and she says “Peter – this can be corrected. I’m surprised that it’s gone this far, this long, that no one’s referred this kid.” And she said “What I’ll do is I’ll call him in – can I take him out of band? It’s about the only time I can work on him.” And I says “Yeah, call him down,” and she said “Bob – do think if we corrected this, you could speak better, would you be up for that?” And he’s “sure.” His folks came up to me, and they had tears in their eyes, and she says “Mr. Williams, our kid has had this problem all of his educational life... and it took the band director to straighten it out.” The band director...

Peter is a large man with large emotions. I pretended to take notes while he stopped talking, and he pretended to look out the window. It took a moment, and then he turned back and stared at me.

She said, “We want to thank you very much. You’ll never know how much you’ve impacted and helped change his life.” English teachers, all those academic teachers – no one ever took the time to be concerned about him... but the band director did...

Once again, Peter looked away, and then slapped himself on the knee. “I need to shut up! Sounds like I’m patting myself on the back.” I told Peter that I felt that there was no need to ask him what he missed most about teaching. “Of course not,” he said, “It’s the kids” was his simple and inarguable response. But in asking about what he missed the least, I was intending also to discover what worried him the most about the deteriorating conditions at his old school.

The hassles, wrestling with the administration – dealing with their bonehead ideas. I used to compare a lot – one of my colleagues said “You know what, as tough as our jobs is, Caterpillar or anybody else in industry know good and well if they had to build a tractor or something and use inferior material they would not use inferior steel! They would use the best resources, the best material they can use. A teacher has to use whatever you bring to them. And we make – they have to do a good job with it.” And, another thing along industry – it seems to me that successful companies, corporations, what ever you want to call them – are those that listen to - they respect and listen to the input from the people that work for them! I mean if Mr. Terry over there works the 517 machine, he knows how the 517 machine operates, and what needs to happen. Ask the man! He’s not trying to take over, but if he’s got some input, that might help all of us – those are things

I don't miss, because in the thirty - some years that I worked in this district, and they ignore that, they don't want to hear what you have to say. I don't know if they're threatened, you don't know – I can't put a rationale, put a "reasoning" behind it. Those things I don't miss.

Peter's comments are similar to those that Cindy, his colleague at Bolivia has made – that the lines of communication between teachers and administrators have been all but cut.

I'll give you an example. Depending on the demographics of the kids that I taught, when I first started teaching there, quite a few kids took private lessons. Now, in this district, kids start in fifth grade, going through the book, and you might get through book one, sixth grade, book two, seventh and eighth grade they start focusing on ensemble playing. OK, now somewhere along the line, the private instruction needs to continue. So at what point do we start talking about alternate fingerings? Different mouthpieces? Upgrading to another horn? When does that – so, after sixth grade – then all of that stuff ends. So if you've got kids whose parents will pay for private lessons, then that continues, because its not going to happen in the school district. See, they've taken that away from you. So in my situation, I used to – kids used to have at least two study halls. One study hall, some had two! Then you could get those kids, rather than just sitting up there twiddling their thumbs bring them come down and give 'em a lesson!

Terry: It happens in a lot of schools.

Peter: It doesn't happen in this one. On a rotational basis! I put together a proposal – I surveyed – IMEA District 2, several people, naming names, you might know who they are – "Oh yeah, this is the way we do it in LaSalle, this is the way we do it in Ottawa, on a rotation..." I put together a proposal, on a rotational basis, where a kid – I would get a chance to see a kid at least once a month, maybe twice, and not pull him out of the same class, where you're not pulling him out of the same class and you could say "Well now he's failing English because Williams is pulling him out of there twice a week", but put together that whole thing – they don't want to hear it. My system wouldn't have cost them a dime.

Peter was eager to outline the plans he had made to improve instruction for his students by giving them private lessons, and to explain why his school district was incapable of listening to him.

My system – here's the way it works. The principal and the assistant principal – see, in this system fights between site-based management and central

administration management. If it's to their advantage, then "we're site based". If it's not to their advantage then it's "no, we don't do it this way – do it the other way." So the plan has to first clear this desk here, where you're at, for them to be willing to fight for you at the central administration. They don't feel like fighting for you – they don't feel like it's one of the things they want to pursue, it's dead in the water right there. So with my school district, with my particular school, compared to the one clear out at the other end of town, Northwoods, where all the money's at – it's only obvious that the type of tunes the band – the level of difficulty the band can choose to do is only going to be as well as the doggone technique that they have underneath their belt! That's common sense – so you end up the only way you could teach these kids is before school, after school – after school you can forget because whatever sport is in session, that who'll be missed – or they have to go home and take care of their kids – or they got jobs, or whatever – but you won't get 'em after school. You can't get 'em before school, see? And so they don't have any study halls, so I do their teaching during the rehearsal – we didn't just rehearse – you start raining on a piece and you take the time, you somehow in your lesson plan you talk about form, about balance, blend, timbre – not just playing the doggone notes. Asking them, challenging them to be able to be a part – to play an active part – you know how we do it in Prairie Winds, you can be playing through Prairie Winds – check a note here, doesn't sound right – I would love to get high school kids to that level – not just playing notes because something came out – so yeah, those are some of the things I don't miss, just because my hands were tied – I could have done a whole lot more things I wanted to do – but administrative-wise, they didn't want to see it that way – and I think the take on administrators, maybe I would have done the same thing, I don't know – you have to decide how many battles you're going to get into – they beat up on them too – I often said if I'd been the Coordinator of Fine Arts I wouldn't have lasted very long, because if I'd have come out of there every day bloody, beaten, mentally, and then you've got to ask how much of it you can stand – that's the part of it I don't miss –

With the exception of a semester's worth of substitute teaching, Peter's entire teaching career has been with the Midville School District. He noted that he had questioned other administrators, including Bill Hedges' wife, Barbara, who had not only been a music educator but also an administrator for two small-town school districts, and that she had sympathized with his plight, noting that a district as large as Midville tended to be overburdened with bureaucracy as well as political issues. One of Peter's points of pride is that he managed to press on with his program, in spite of those issues.

Peter: I think I did a pretty decent job in my career and not letting that stuff taint me – you were asking about burnout – and that some of the stuff would make you – you’d be disgusted. I’ve come close to blows! Having fistfights with people, over stuff because I was so passionate about what I wanted to do for the doggone kids.

Terry: It’s not the students that get to you...

Peter: No! Eventually, to get through the rest of my years, I just made up my mind regardless of the rules, happening - I know I’m going to run room 142.

Over the years, Peter had had to come up with an extensive “coping mechanism” to continue teaching at Midville. His hard work and discipline made his program work, but the ever-increasing administrative problems were stressful. Peter’s deeply held beliefs about the priority of his family required him to constantly remind himself that his wife and children came first.

What you’ve gotta do is leave all that stuff at school. Don’t bring it home, to your home, your address – coming home, kicking your dog, chewing your wife out, there’s a lot of stuff, Terry, I would come home at the end of the day, and Terry, I’d never even mention to Wendy and the kids what was going on. I was able to leave that stuff there. I used to tell people I used to park my truck not facing school – facing AWAY from school. So when I got in it, I didn’t have to turn around. I’d look in the mirror – it was just like blasting off into space. And each inch that you got away, you could see that it was getting behind you. (Over) the years, I can remember early on in my career, it seemed like anybody who had those goals, and had that compassion, had all of those neat things, they didn’t last. The system beat up on ‘em. They quit, they died, they moved on – or they succumbed to the politics of the whole big machine thing. They just tainted or corrupted themselves.

Peter is satisfied that he never gave in to the malaise that infected so many of his colleagues. His insular approach to maintaining his program is one that he felt was necessary, not ideal. It is symptomatic of what was, and is happening within the district. For most successful music educators, the opposite approach has worked much better, as in the case with Rick, the “Champion”, and Bill, the “Idealist”. But Peter’s ideals were

never compromised; they were protected within the aegis of his program – within the corps of the Midville Band.

Would Peter recommend a similar approach to new music educators? Only if they were in the same situation, which he realizes is not where most music educators want to be. And yet someone must take over, and be the next “warrior”. Peter laughed when he finally decided on his most important piece of advice to that person.

I’ve often said I’d talk ‘em out of it! I want to know, one, if you have the option to shop around, not only do they got to be decent districts – if you can find a district – an employer that respects you as an employer – employee – willing to work with – doesn’t just have blinders on, that’s what you want to go for – that’s some advice right there, that and I used to tell ‘em, generically, as each individual person, everyday that you get up in the morning and you can look in the mirror and be satisfied with what you see – then you’re doing pretty good. Don’t compromise - and that’s easier said than done – I’m glad I was able to last as long as I did without compromising and caving because there’s a lot of times you feel, and its true you be out there on a limb by yourself.

Peter is also proud that he was influential in the development of his students, and a few of them have gone on to careers in playing and teaching music. As we talked, Peter began to recount his own struggles he encountered when he began his own path as a music educator.

Peter: When I was a kid coming up through in high school – this really hurt – my high school counselor set me down and says – “You know you got no business being in music education, you go to Caterpillar and sign up, you know, in the industrial field, do something with your hands, some sort of apprenticeship. You’ll never be any good as a teacher – you really don’t even need to worry about college.”

Terry: Did he give you any reason?

Peter: He didn’t think I was qualified – didn’t think I was qualified.



When Peter repeated his words, they were stronger and more deliberate. This time, when he stopped speaking, it was to keep his emotions from getting the best of him. He knows that the best of him demands that he maintain his dignity in the face of insult.

I always tried not to- then and now, not play the race card, but what came out of all of that was that I will never tell someone what they can't do. I'll tell them the truth - I'll tell them the truth - I know when I went into college, heck, most of those kids had forgotten more than I ever learned! To this day I don't know how to play cards, Bid, Wisk, Rummy and all of that because while the kids were sitting up in the Union playing cards, I was using the practice room or something - I didn't have time! Be ready for hard work... and if that's what you want to do, and you've got those goals, set your sights on that goal, then pay attention to what people tell you. Listen, you don't have to necessarily agree with everything that everyone says, but listen because when people are speaking to you you'll be able to pull something away from that that's going to help you - and that common sense is what helps you to sort those things out. To be able to draw, to pull away - pull things that are going to help you, but hard work - you can't be afraid of hard work - and sometime, because there'd be other people - you don't have to tell anybody this - I think you know, as you go through the educational system - you can look around in your classroom, and when the tests are passed out... some two, three knuckleheads just fill the paper out and they up and gone. Everybody learns at a different rate, and what comes easy for one person is difficult for another - you can't let any of that psyche you and turn you away. But music education - to be a music educator, that's funny, I've had a lot of kids who've gone through -especially the vocal people - vocal people, if they've got a voice that sounds halfway good, you know everybody can sing - they sing the same - "Well I'm going to college and I'm going into music education - I got a good voice, I'll be good at that!" Hey, hoss, there's a lot more involved than that!

Looking back to the time in which Peter was working toward his teaching certificate, it is worth noting the racial turmoil and social mores with which he had to cope.

I have the theory book that one of my instructors wrote, signed and autographed. And this is after, oh, probably about twenty years of teaching, right before he retired. I came over to see him over at ISU, and we had that long talk because he - maybe you've heard of him - John Ryan was his name. Six foot - like that song "Big John" - he was all of six foot - five, and 245, just a great man, and hell, people were scared of him. Students were, I've seen where - I've seen him in theory class come in and set his coffee cup down on the desk, and he went to turn around and his blazer, the pocket caught on to the edge of the piano, and he damned near turned the piano over! OK, I mean he was that big! Kids were

scared to speak with him. And I remember one time I asked a question, and he made slight of it, which kind of implied “well, you dumbass, you...” and I got pissed! And I didn’t wait until after class, and I told him right there and then “You know what? I worked really, really hard to pay for the tuition to get here, and you as an instructor, even if my question is dumb, stupid, but I got a right to ask that – cause I’m seeking out an education. And I feel on the same terms, along the same line, you being an instructor, that’s kind of your job to be able to pass that information on to me.” And so he gets saying “all durn” right there in class, I was pissed, you know, and this is the sixties, going on into the seventies – I got the afro out to here...

Peter gestured with his arms, creating a space on either side of his head that had not seen hair for many years. He laughed as he thought of what he had looked like, and what I had thought was becoming the retelling of a major struggle was actually his celebration of his principles.

But we talked after class. And he said, “You know Peter, no one has ever pointed things out to me like that. I really respect that, because it shows that you’re a person that knows what he wants, and, he said “I owe you an apology... (Few) people have ever spoke to me... you’re a hundred percent right, and I will help you any way that you need.” I used to come in, Terry, and for extra work, ‘cause getting better at analyzing chords is to analyze more chords! He used the ‘Hardy and Fish Piano Anthology,’ you know, and he’d give that – “analyze this, and when you get this done bring it back and I’ll check it over.” and “Show me the progression of it. Where’s it going?” And then when he ran short on time, he assigned a graduate student from Louisiana – Grambling, Louisiana, to help tutor me. And he’d say “You’re a hard worker, and you’re going to be successful, but because of your hard work and your discipline.” So advice to pass on to kids – the discipline, and to define discipline is “get the job done”. I don’t care how much work, how much time it takes – what you have to do, if you don’t have that work ethic, you don’t have that discipline, to start and finish something, to stick to it – then I’ll flat out tell you I don’t think you’re going to make it. You’d probably better find something that doesn’t require as much discipline – or be very, very good at what you do.

Peter’s colleagues know that he has been “very, very good” at what he’s done at Midville for over thirty years. When I had had a conversation with his successor at Midville, Jeff Steele, he pointed out that he heard a student exclaim that “Peter Williams doesn’t play,” a respectful term for someone who is strict. It’s been all business for Peter

while he was a music educator, but that hasn't stopped him or his students from having a lot of fun.

Peter has been having a lot of fun during his retirement, and his suggestions for others is to apply the same sort of self-discipline he's lived by most of his life.

Peter: Find something to do. Find something to do! Have a backup plan – have a plan! I get up every day – I get up as early as I do – with a purpose! And this is not only in music education but I've heard this from a number of other people, to have a purpose. I'm working on – one of the other things, you know, outside of music, I'm working on the restoration of my grandmother's car – I don't know if I told you about it – it's a 1960 Buick LeSabre.

Terry: The only thing better would be if it was a convertible.

Peter: Oh, right! And I need my butt kicked because I should have come and got it when she gave it to me in 1989 'cause then it ran – now it doesn't run – and the other part of that is that my mother's eighty-four and my grandmother's still alive – will be 103 in October, and I didn't realize this until the other day, my son was saying "Yeah, grandma says that she'd like to ride in her car one more time,"

Terry: You'd better get to work...

Peter: Yeah! And after that she's ready to go to glory. But the thing is, and I've had people tell me, it's a piece of crap, you're polishing a turd, you know, but the hard work and discipline and the stuff – I enjoy doing stuff like that, I enjoy being able to take something – almost say something someone else has thrown away, something that wasn't going to succeed, going to be profitable, and make it profitable with the understanding, I got common sense enough to know not to tackle something that I can't do – not to get in too deep that you can't get out – before I even started this project I had a friend of mine that builds street rods. This guy's a retired teacher, physics and chemistry, so not only is he a gear-head, but in order to be able to figure out the mathematical formula why to shorten the axle, and the ratios and that, he can figure it out.

Terry: You want this to remain stock, don't you?

Peter: Oh, yeah, mine's going to be stock! But I called him in to evaluate the project before I got started on it. And I've got a bunch of other friends, colleagues, and people like that, so I say "Hey, if I get too crazy, reel me back in." And that's the project – other people fish, hunt, volunteer, but I think the important thing is to find something, and I don't think that a teacher – tutor? Neither one of us are going to tutor. Wendy, you couldn't – Wendy's not going to tutor anybody. But we'll read to kids, anything like that, and my mother was a

teacher, as was that hundred and something year old grandmother, she was a teacher, so we got, there's a long legacy of teachers. Neither one of them has done any tutoring!

As Peter talked about his project, and working on something that may on the outside seem like, as he put it, "something someone else has thrown away, something that wasn't going to succeed, going to be profitable, and make it profitable", I started comparing his project to his career at Midville. The project had been his band, one that most music educators would conclude was never going to "succeed", and Peter had certainly made it "profitable" by producing students who were disciples of his values of hard work and discipline.

Peter has no intentions of continuing to teach in the manner of Cindy, or Rick, or Bill. He feels that that part of his life is behind him, perhaps because of the traditions of his mother and grandmother. When the school year started after he and Wendy retired, they celebrated by taking a trip while the rest of their colleagues that they had left behind were starting up their classes. And they will do it again when school starts up again, and probably continue the ritual for as long as they are able. It is, for them a way of remembering the reasons they have chosen to retire, and it is also a way for them to remember that they have performed a task that deserves to be rewarded with their new-found freedoms. But Peter will never forget his students as a group, and he will never forget those that left an indelible impression on him. We talked about the speeches that some of those former students made at his retirement party, and how they had affected him.

As a person, and myself, I always wanted to – I always look in the mirror and be satisfied with what I saw. And I always tried to do the very best that I could – a lot of times my best wasn't good enough to change whatever the situation was, but I always tried to do the best I could for about everybody in the beginning, and

be fair. I know I was firm, but I'd also be fair. I don't know, I guess I'd like to see it on my grave – on my headstone, "He did a good job." Or tried to do a good job, that's probably more appropriate.

For the third time since we had been talking, Peter needed some more time to reflect more on the most important facet of his work – his relationship with his students. His voice became quieter now, gentler, and his speech was deliberately slower.

I always tried to respect kids for who they were, what they brought to the table, what they brought to the ensemble. And to listen to kids – I don't know, maybe that's what they were trying to hit on. I think, in listening to people at that open house, that there's a lot of respect, because there's more than just teaching music. And I always kept sight of that. There's a lot of times when, I would put my coat on, in my office, ready to leave, and here comes some kid walking in, wanting help with something, well I never turned anybody away, I'd take my coat off and be helping them. 'Cause... that kid was me!

Peter and I were both surprised when we heard a knock on the door. My next student had arrived and we had spent the hour talking. This time Peter quizzed the student about her instrument, a very expensive one. Like the other student, she was diminutive in comparison to him, but she had grown up in the Midville School District, and knew all about Peter. She smiled, and Peter helped her move her large case over to the side. Then he put his new coat on, and headed off to his newest career.

### **The Disappointed**

The stagehands were busily arranging four arcs of chairs on the stage of the Performing Arts Center when I arrived. I had agreed to substitute with the Southern Wind Ensemble for a player who was injured – presumably as a favor to my friend, the conductor of the group, Craig McPherson. But I had also volunteered to have an opportunity to solicit Cindy Swinarski as a participant in this study. As the players found their seats for the rehearsal, I noticed that the start time was very close – and with only a few minutes to spare, she finally made it to her chair. Surrounded by other players, all

trying to tune their instruments, I decided that I would have to wait for a break to talk to her.

When Cindy arrived, she seemed flustered, and I assumed it was due to her late appearance. But Cindy has always had plenty of reasons to appear flustered. A single parent for over a decade following her husband's death, she had seen to it that both of her children had gone to college, and her daughter, Linda, had been married the previous summer. She had married late in life, to an older man who had raised a family in a previous marriage. Her husband, Jon, was only fifty-eight and teaching in a small town outside of Midville when he died from a heart condition associated with diabetes. At sixty-two years of age, she had worked hard – both as a single parent and as an educator, and was looking forward to retirement.

During a break in the rehearsal, I had a chance to congratulate Cindy, since her daughter was expecting her first child. Instead of the countenance normally expected of a potential grandmother, I was met with a frown. “Don’t get me started” she said, shaking her head. “These stupid kids have no health insurance, no steady jobs – and they’re going to have a baby!” Her voice was transmitting anxiety more than anger – anxiety that no doubt came from experience.

Cindy is one of many musicians who studied to be a professional performer, but was unable to make a living at it and turned to teaching to support herself. Her path to teaching was not an unusual one, but as is often the case her resentment over her situation has left her less centered on her teaching career than the other participants in this study. Her years of struggle, including her late marriage to her husband and his untimely death have left her with strong convictions that her children should not have to undergo what

she did, but their career choices have made her sharply aware that there are parallels. While she is pleased that both of her children are talented, practicing musicians, she is vigilant about protecting them from making the same “mistakes” that cost her a career in music, and sees the baby as an obstacle.

Cindy’s role in this study is that of “The Disappointed”, not only because she never realized her goal of being a full-time professional musician, but also because her teaching career has fallen short of her goals as well. For a brief moment, near the end of her career, it appeared that she had reached the level that she had set for herself of being the director of a band program at a major high school. Cindy had been appointed as the band director at Southern High School, to succeed Peter Williams. Quantifying her qualifications for the position was no doubt an easy task for school administrators – she had the most experience of any of the applicants – but her experience had been in very different demographic situations. Cindy, however, was now faced with a dwindling number of students in a school classified as “Title I” – with at least 40 percent of the student population from low-income families – and restructuring under the mandates of the *No Child Left Behind* Act, and a shift to block scheduling that restricted her contact with the students to just a few times per week. In addition, her petite appearance was in stark contrast to that of Peter, who had used his authoritative voice and physique to enforce his regimen of discipline.

By the time I had reached Cindy to discuss this study, she was already convinced that the administration was going to transfer her from the position. Since she was retiring the following year, it seemed that Cindy would finish out her career in the Midville

School District somewhere else. Those plans, like so many of Cindy's, were destined to be changed by forces beyond her control.

At first, Cindy seemed perplexed that I was interested in including her in the study. "It's fine with me," she said, "but I don't know why you'd want to do that – I'm just a middle school teacher now – not much to tell." In spite of her bemusement, we went ahead and scheduled a time for me to drop by her school.

Bolivia Middle School is a relic from the Depression Era, a reminder that in the midst of hard times communities such as Midville gave high priority to the quality of their children's education. While many of the Midville School District's schools are in poor condition, Bolivia's brick and stone structure stands unmoved at its old address, surrounded by large trees that were only saplings when the school opened in 1931. The lawns are well maintained, and while the neighborhood has many homes that suffer from neglect, the property is free from litter and vandalism.

Bolivia's appearance has been made possible by a joint effort from the maintenance personnel and the faculty. When Principal Jeanette Jackson arrived a few years ago, she encouraged this cooperative effort in order to present Bolivia as a symbol of what can be accomplished in the neighborhood. It has also been credited with being instrumental in the revitalization of student achievement – at least as seen from standardized test scores.

The test scores are evidence best printed in the newspaper, but better evidence can be found by visiting Bolivia, which was my good fortune late in the spring. When I parked in the faculty lot one morning, I was surprised when I looked across the street and the front lawn was filled with children, quietly chattering while waiting in line with their



teachers to enter the school. As I opened my trunk I saw many fingers pointing at me, and a few teachers bent over, trying to explain something to their charges. As I was taking my briefcase from the trunk, Cindy parked alongside me, and came over. “I think they’re all worked up about your scooter!” she said. “I don’t think anybody’s ever brought one of those around here before.” As we started to cross the street, she added “They’re probably wondering how long it will be there before somebody steals it.”

As I was pondering the wisdom of not taking the bus to the school, we walked past a group of third-graders waiting to go in. One little girl with pigtails waved shyly, and I responded with an equally small wave of my hand and a smile. A little boy was hopping up and down impatiently on the other side of the door, as if something wonderful was waiting for him inside. As we approached the main door, one of the fifth graders said hello to Ms. Swinarski. “Did you practice last night?” was Cindy’s reply. I heard a squeaky “Yeah, I did!” which prompted a laugh from Cindy.

Inside the main hall of Bolivia there are two offices, one on each side of the entrance. One is for the administrative staff, and the other is used as a security office. I presented my credentials to the secretary, and realized that I would have to wait until later to introduce myself to Jeanette – she was still helping to greet the students and escort them into the building.

As Cindy and I walked down the hall, she seemed excited about having someone to talk to. Most of her mornings are filled with waiting for students to show up for music lessons, and occasionally nobody does. And so our planning for the interview was predicated on the notion that she would have little, if any duties to perform that morning. I was admiring the mirror-like sheen of the hall floors, and the ornate woodwork

surrounding the walls of the hall, while Cindy's familiarity with the building had apparently made her oblivious to its charm. "I'm pretty sure that Chandra and Molly will be here next hour," but until then – I'm yours!"

When Cindy originally consented to be a part of this study, she was jubilant, ready to participate as she finished her last year of teaching. By now she had gone through the depression of realizing that her years at a private school and two extended maternity leaves had cost her too many years toward retirement, so I asked her how much longer it would take.

Probably three years. I would like to get out now, not because I hate the kids, it's just – the job is crazy. I put in for retirement – you want the whole story? I put in for retirement, last year, the 6 percent increment, and so on, and such and it looked pretty good because I took time off for my kids, and I don't resent that – but now that leaves me somewhat shaky on my retirement. And so last year I put in for the 6 percent over four years increment deal, and about a month and a half later I got a call saying "you're already in your 60s, and it'll be ten years back to the district, so you can't do this." And I went "O-K... so when can I retire?" "Whenever you want – I suggest you stay maybe five more years, so you'll have a little more money to work off of ." And I said "But I don't want to stay five more years!" That was the whole point of putting this in – I knew I could manage – I'm in pretty good health, but still – I don't want to work that hard. If I'd put it in like, 57, 58, I'd have been OK. But I didn't know I could do it then. Truthfully, I wasn't even thinking about it, so - so that was that way. Last year, I was at Southern, it was about March – I think it had to be in April first or something to that effect, it was a specific date, and I don't remember what it was, but I put it in that day, and I came back skipping, and "tra-la-la-ing", I was in such a fine mood that everybody knew I'd done it... but it was just – I was running with mother (Cindy's mother died last summer)... I never knew when she'd call and say her thermostat had been stolen, or whatever... and it's funny, but it wasn't funny then. And I just decided "OK, I'll get out and I'll teach part-time somewhere and have some fun with it - St. Elizabeth's, Creve Coeur, someplace, and have a fun program like Jim Goss had, and Ray Conklin does it, and it's just fun!

While I found no surprise in Cindy's previous lack of knowledge of the retirement system, I did wonder what finally, at the age of 61, had made her finally consider retirement:

Banks (the assistant principal at Southern) came in and reamed me out for some stupid thing in the hallway... my schedule, at that point, it's different now – she had, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade came at 2:20 for band, and ninth grade came at 2:45. Now it's hard to be in two places at one time, and kids can hide in Southern, it's real easy. It's huge. And so they'd sneak off and do this and that – I mean, they're ninth graders. Kids, OK? And so she reamed me out for the kids being in the hall, the kids were doing this and that – “OK, I don't see you out here corralling them, sending them down here... so I just took up standing midway between the two. And then, you know, she would criticize anything else in regards to the way I ran my program, and yet there were never any kudos about how the band went out on the third day of school with no practices and did a good job – they were at a football game, and the next day they marched a parade – the whole year they did this for me! And for me, I mean I was not Pete and they constantly reminded me that, and I reminded them I was Pete's friend –

Cindy had to stop for a moment. Although this happened a year ago, she still has vivid recall about the way she and her students were treated. In appearance, she stands in stark comparison to Peter, but in her passion for teaching, she held much the same beliefs. She moved her chair back from the desk, and started again. “Sorry – but I just decided ‘This is crazy – I'm going to take advantage of this.’ But – something...”

I had witnessed similar treatment of a teacher by this principal when she was at another school. I mentioned it to Cindy, pointing out that she left teaching as a result. Cindy was aware of what had happened, and that the principal's treatment of teachers had led the district to transfer her.

Right! Oh, yeah! This is not the first time she's pulled this. There were six of us that she was after last year. And I would say to her, “Have you bothered to notice what your band program has actually done?” They've been to all these basketball games, they went to all the football games, they did four parades, they did a veteran's day sit-down concert, and three other concerts after the first of the year – they were busy, and they're from the 'hood. You know, you never knew who was going to show up, or who'd been knifed, or who was shot.

We had a ball game the night – I don't know if you remember the one kid that was killed down there in Hanson Homes – it's on-going, but this kid was the cousin of my lead drummer, Big Jim, who if you've been down there probably you saw him – he's a huge black boy and anyhow, he came to the ball game – it was his cousin – and the kid's sister came, she played clarinet for me – and they

came in and I just stood there with my mouth hanging out, and I said “guys, truly I don’t own the instruments... this is OK, you’re here – yes, they were in uniform- and they were and they did a great job – and one kid tried to pick a fight with Big Jim that night – full of shit – and we had a shrimp who was a ninth grader and a 300-pound football player – and, this kid kept pushing Jim and I saw the look on his face and I knew where his mind was, he’s always fussing – he picked up the kid, and stuffed him into one of the percussion closets. And I got between ‘em, because I knew Jim was madder than just stuffing him in the closet – and I got between ‘em – I don’t do that much anymore – and said “Jim, you are smart – you’re an honor roll student – you’ve got a life ahead of you – don’t ruin it by stuffing this idiot in the closet! He’s nothing but dirt, and you’re a good guy.” He finally let him go, and I didn’t turn it in. It was my deal, his deal, he gave me a big hug, a couple of days later he said “you know I’m not supposed to touch you but I’m going to hug you now.” And it was very touching, and the fool – he didn’t get any smarter, he kept pushing Jim around... but –that’s the kind of kid I was dealing with – and Banks didn’t see - unbelievable – what they were willing to do with the camaraderie amongst them, and they had accepted me as best they could, as a first-year person down there – I mean, I was this white woman standing there instead of a very tall, elegant black man...

Since Cindy was exhibiting the same symptoms of a first-year teacher, I asked her if she felt as if she had been treated like one. She agreed, and regretted that she did nothing about it:

Cindy: Within a couple of weeks, yeah. It was abuse, and I didn’t do anything about it – I should have. You know who the percussion professor is up at Northern? I can’t remember what his name is... he came in to do a clinic at Gloccamora, and they shared him with Southern, it was very cool, but he came twice, then our kids, there were twelve of ‘em, they were invited out to Gloccamora to be on their concert, and do those, well they did two different times – one was with the world drums, and the other kind of a rhythm thing with the band – and here’s why - there was only one white boy in the bunch, and you go out there and you could see the looks on their faces, like “oh my god, this is white man’s turf”. We go in there and there’s this very black man with corn-in hair, he welcomes them with open arms, and they were like, “oh my god...”

Terry: You mean Liam Teague.

Cindy: Yeah, he was awesome with the kids. Banks actually came to that concert, my one boy, you know, they’re always wearing hoods and stuff, they got all done, and they went down and sat down, their behavior was good, he threw his hood up, you know (Cindy made the motion of drawing a hood over her head). And she went up and pulled on it – EXACTLY! And she pulled on it, and he decided he was going to be an ass about it. ‘Cause she was not being nice to him at all – all

she would have had to have done is say, (in a whisper) “please take it off” – and he would have, cause he’s a good kid. I mean he can be a jerk, but he’s a good kid, he was being no trouble, and she did it again, and she got pissed. So anyhow, I’m sitting back further so I can see ‘em, but not interfere, you know, they’re young adults – why not treat ‘em like that out in public? So I scooted up there and got right next to the kid, and I said, “for you and me, take your friggin’ hood off.” And he took it off, but she was already mad, and she grabbed him – GRABBED HIM – right after the concert and hauled him out of the auditorium, and I thought just to ream him out. I gathered my kids, they had a pizza party for our kids afterwards, it was very nice – and of course they love to eat, and they’re filling their bellies and I couldn’t find the boy, and I kept saying “where is he?” And his one best friend said “well I’m going to fix him a plate if that’s OK”, and I said “absolutely”, so he fixed him a plate, I never did find the kid! We get out there and Big Jim stands up on the bus step cause he’s so huge, he looks all over the parking lot and her fancy-ass car wasn’t there. She’d put the boy in her car, taken him, and I didn’t know where. I’m flippin’ out, we get back to Midville, she indeed hauled him back to Midville – what a stupid thing, to take a male child in the car with you in the first place!

Terry: It’s got to be illegal...

Cindy: Oh yeah. The whole thing was illegal. ‘Course my hands were tied. The kid got suspended for three days, and I was furious over it. And he came to me with tears in his eyes with what she said, “you’re out for three days” and he came in with tears in his eyes and he said “I’m very sorry, I didn’t mean to make all this trouble.” And I said “I can’t tell you how sorry I am cause truly you weren’t being a disturbance, I wish you had taken the hood off, but that’s – you know, that is from the ‘hood – you do that down here and you just didn’t get to take it off there – that folks were watching you” I said “I’m truly sorry because I think you were abused. And I wish your mom would do something about it.” Course his mom isn’t any brighter than that blackboard, so... nothin’. But that’s just typical what Banks does, and yet she would – she had her pets, and some of ‘em came from Jefferson, and the pets could do no wrong. Absolutely no wrong. Did I answer your question or did I just get pissed off and let it all... ?

Cindy’s personal horror story explains why she finally was “inspired” to retire, and it also helps to explain why she only lasted one year at Southern High School. It would be easy to dismiss her story as bias against her former principal, but there are too many other instances reported in the district that corroborate it. Later, her daughter provided a different perspective on why her mother has had numerous confrontations with administrators.

Of all of the participants in this study, Cindy has struggled with her finances the most. With Cindy being unable to take full advantage of the school district's incremental retirement policy, she is convinced that her primary concern about retirement is financial.

Cindy: Well, I'll probably not survive very well financially, but I'll get something else, you know, I'm not one to sit around. Pressing concerns as to... not being in the education field? Is that what you mean?

Terry: Anything.

Cindy: You know, financially it'll be a little tough... but I'm not opposed to doing something, actually I'd kind like to go out to Wildwood (a nearby nature center) and something – hi, ladies!

The “ladies” that Cindy referred to are Chandra and Molly, two of her second-period students. Chandra is learning to play the tenor saxophone, and Molly is learning to play the euphonium. They brought their instruments into the room with the kind of care usually accorded to delicate Stradivarius violins, although their cases attest to their past travels in cars and school buses. Cindy introduced me as “an important professor from Central University”, and mentioned that I play the euphonium. Chandra seemed very happy that a guest has arrived, but Molly seemed concerned that she might not be able to play up to “professional” standards. “Nice of Mrs. Strumm to let you come,” said Cindy. “You thank her later.”

When I had asked Cindy about her schedule, it had been to arrange an interview, and now I was becoming aware that most of Cindy's scheduled meetings with students at Bolivia are contingent upon the students being excused from their regular classes to participate – in other words, if their fifth or sixth grade teachers are not willing to excuse them for the period, they must stay in their regular classroom. Cindy made sure that Chandra and Molly were set in some chairs, and we talked as they demonstrated how to

assemble their instruments. For a while, we chatted with the students about playing their “horns”. Chandra had a new saxophone that Cindy found at one of the high schools. There were no students playing tenor saxophone in the high school band, which had only seventeen players, so she asked if the instrument could be used at her school. She asked me to examine Molly’s instrument, which had been giving her some problems. Molly showed us how the valves kept sticking. With a little oil and a suggestion that she use the tips of her fingers on the valves, she was soon able to play her assignment for the day – “Hot Cross Buns.”

After Chandra and Molly went back to their classroom, Cindy and I returned to the topic of how she made the decision of when to retire. Up until this point, I had assumed that Cindy had consulted some of her friends or family before making that decision, but she had made the decision on her own. The lone exception was one of the union officers:

Cindy: No. Well, that’s not true – I asked Bobby Darling, the union president, to make sure my letter was appropriate. And he just changed a few words, and it was all good.

Terry: Was that helpful at all?

Cindy: Oh, oh yeah, he was awesome.

Terry: You went to TRS? (Teacher Retirement System)

Cindy: Did I go there?

Terry: Yes.

Cindy: Yes – I called them, it was decent, at that moment they were not accepting parochial school teaching, now they’re back to accepting it again. Cause they were for awhile, they would take two years of your parochial work, which shocked me – now they are again, evidently, I guess this last year, I gotta get stuff from St. Elizabeth’s (where Cindy taught for three years) and send it down there.

But I think I have to buy it – I don't know if it's worth it – be better off putting my money in a mutual fund or something, I'm thinking, because you know...

After listening to Cindy's thoughts on her options, I felt that I knew less about her retirement goals than any of the other participants in this study. Unlike the other participants, she has actually had a few other jobs in her lifetime that she might want to try again:

The year Jon (Cindy's husband) died, I left. I subbed all year. In special ed. You know, I liked it – it was interesting. Lousy money, and they discovered real quick that I wasn't afraid of the kids, and so I had the BED kids most of the time. Which was interesting... we had the dog kennel... grooming, and show kennel. For a long time. So in a sense, I've left teaching twice.

Even with her other experiences, Cindy seems to be uncertain about making a living to supplement what will be a relatively meager stipend from retirement. She is, in many ways, wandering through her final days as a teacher in the Midville School district, still caring for her students and caring more than before for her own future – but feeling powerless to do something about it.

You know, I like to work outdoors, either garden or in my yard, would like to do some stuff around my house, or in the back of my mind I'd like a new house, but whether that will happen I don't know. I have five acres there, it could, I suppose. In time – but, you know, I like to fish – I would like to be able to play more – I think my playing's gone down the tubes cause I didn't play much – I mean I was in Southern Winds but it was – I just didn't play enough. Too exhausted to practice.

In spite of her teaching career, it is clear that Cindy still holds playing her instrument, the horn, close to her heart. When I asked her about her greatest goal, it was about performing:

Well I know there's not a chance in Halifax, but I wouldn't mind playing in the symphony again. It really irks me I didn't get to play in Middleburg, I did – when I was studying with Randy I did, now I don't – I'm not trying to sound like sour grapes, I just like – I like orchestra music, I got to play with the Bailey Symphony a couple weeks ago, did Dvorak Eighth – he didn't have enough horns, you know.



In a later discussion with Cindy's daughter, Linda, it becomes clear that their mutual love of playing has been nurturing for both of them – for Cindy as she retires, and for Linda as she tries to establish herself as a professional. As Linda has had more training as a player than Cindy, she has mentored her own mother in matters of the horn (they both insist on not calling it the “French” horn), but as Cindy is the more experienced teacher, she has been able to mentor her daughter when she deals with her private students. I asked Cindy if she felt that the IRMEA could be a helpful organization for connecting retired music educators with first-year teachers. She observed that retired teachers could do a much better job at preparing student teachers for the “real world”:

Yep – that's a point too, I didn't think of that, but you're right – cause they don't teach – I don't know about Central, the kids I'm seeing coming out of ISU, Bailey, they really don't teach 'em what it's all about knowing. I mean, they go out – there's one in particular I'm thinking of – they go out and have no clue that there's this side of the world (motions around the room). I mean in that the urban children – it's a whole different lifestyle, and you've got to treat 'em - treat 'em like children, but you really do treat them differently...

As Cindy spoke, it occurred to me that she had never been in a position to mentor a student teacher during her career. The predominant reason would have to be that few students are interested in student teaching in music education in a disadvantaged urban area, but Cindy's confrontational attitude with administrators has also damaged her candidacy with student teacher coordinators. One can only speculate what Cindy has to offer to the novice teacher, but her concern for a friend in a nearby school gives some clues:

Cindy: I was talking to a friend of mine who is student teaching right now, over in Lesterville ... and she'll be a phenomenal teacher. Really, she will – I've had her here working with me a number of times - she loves the urban kids. But she was struggling with – she's doing the high school part of it now, and struggling with the discipline, and this is her weeks on her own, and she called all “boo-hooing” one night and I said, “You know you've got to get tough. You're not

cruel, but you have to be tough. It's tough love. And they're trying to walk all over you because they think you're four years older than them, and it's true! You look like a kid, and that's how they're going to treat you. But you have to walk in there, and...."

Terry: Is she maybe a little small?

Cindy: Yeah, she's short – a little bit – she's not chubby, but kind of round, she's short, she's got this little pixie face, and black curls, and you know... she looks like a kid. She dresses as professionally as she can in her limited finances... she looks nice, but I said, "You've got to be tough with 'em". "Well, I don't want to be mean..." "You don't have to be mean, just go in there and set up some rules, and you know, take that piece and rehearse it six times, and stop it, and go over and over, but they need to know that you are the boss." And then whoever her credit teacher is came in and said the same thing to her, so she was feeling better about it. Yep, I think to me, the discipline, you have to be consistent with your discipline.

Being "consistent with your discipline" comes straight from Cindy's own experience – her traumatic experience at Southern High School is a strong lesson that both teachers and administrators should note, since Cindy was a victim of misplaced discipline from two parties – in her dealings with her students, and being mistreated as a subordinate by her administrators.

In spite of her turbulent past as a music educator, Cindy has some fond memories of teaching, and will miss the most obvious roles:

You know I'll miss the kids! I'll miss the kids – I won't miss the craziness and the... (Cindy mouthed an expletive) – because I chose to come back to Midville. I won't miss that – I would be more apt to miss what I had at Gran – in the Granite schools, because we had, you know, it was good camaraderie, the kids, well, the parents support - parental support, was very good – you don't have much of that here... I truly won't miss Midville. In any way, shape or form. I'll miss some of my colleagues, OK?

It's difficult to believe Cindy when she claims that she "chose to come back to Midville." In an area where music education jobs are at a premium, Cindy's reputation for confronting administrators has no doubt spread, and Midville is the only district in the

immediate area that has been having difficulty attracting teachers, at one point resorting to providing scholarship money for teacher education majors, providing they agree to teach in the district schools for a certain period of time (Associated Press, 2001). Her claim is negated by her own words, when she talks of what she will miss least once she's left the district:

You never know what a day's going to bring around here. Even... the fine arts teachers take such abuse. Truly abuse in Midville. And I know other school districts don't support their arts people... but we're nothing but underfoot, dirtiness, keeping it clean – you know, I mean without saying the actual nasty words – and on an on-going basis, we're treated like that for something we love to do, you know? Though I didn't necessarily start out to be a teacher that's what I was – put into, because, as Adam Meier (her former teacher) said, “women don't really perform, you know.” OK, so my parents bit, and I went into education. But I like the kids, and I - although I've gotten lazy, I think I've been a good teacher, over the years – I mean, I think a state contest win now and again must have done something right, at St. Elizabeth's – but will I miss anything but a few of my colleagues and the kids? No, because the administration is too – they don't care about us. I don't want it anymore, I'm tired of the mediocrity.

Even at Bolivia, where the atmosphere appears to be so pleasant in the midst of an urban battleground, “mediocracy” can indeed be seen, and it is very evident in Cindy's music room. Her limited contact time with students such as Chandra and Molly means that although the district spent thousands of dollars purchasing instruments for these students, they are making poor progress in learning how to play them. Although there have been four high schools in the district, only one has sent any instrumental music students to perform at the “All-State” Music Festival in the past several years. The district has been coping with mediocrity in music education for many years, beginning with their choice of cutting beginning instrumental music programs in the 1980s (Vroman, 1994).

Cindy's comments have been revealing, but in a much more negative way than those of the other three primary participants in this study. When asked if this is a good time to become a music educator, she held out some hope:

Cindy: Oh, man, that's a hard one to answer. It would be a hard decision. If I were in that position? No, it's not a good time.

Terry: What advice would you give to young people who are in high school who are thinking about majoring in music education?

Cindy: First off I think they need to go out and observe. Different spots, you know, if they're in Midville they could go, maybe see all the three high schools, four high school people and watch what they have, or watch the middle schools – and if they're fortunate enough to be able to do this go out to the outlying schools, like Farmingville, or - - -

Terry: Outside their own school.

Cindy: Uh-huh. And see what other things there are, available, cause you've got a whole different world out there. I mean you still have kids who are troubled, and discipline issues and that, but at least you have some materials to work with, and an administration that will at least back you - they may tell you off later, but they'll back you in the circumstance, rather than ream you out in front of – but the kids need to see that! And you, to say "I'm going to be a music teacher" and they need to do some serious thought about it, and you know, if you're able, go perform for a while, or like my daughter, doesn't want to be in the public schools, but she's really enjoying the private school she's in. So maybe look at the private schools – they don't pay as well, but you'll have...you'll have some pride and your own self-esteem will be not beat upon.

In spite of Cindy's cynicism, her depression, and her financial situation, she is still convinced that music is vital to her students, her children, and herself. I asked her to give me one sentence that would serve as her "last lecture" to her young students, and after a long pause, her words were no longer bitter:

Music is a "forever". It's a universal language. You know, you can do something with your music when you're 102, sitting in your wheelchair, so when you wear out your sports that you think you're so good at, use music for your heart and soul, and share it with others. That was a long sentence!

A short paragraph, perhaps, but it explains why Cindy is still teaching, and why retirement will only mean she will be moving “down the road” in search of another group of young students to teach.

As I headed for the parking lot, Cindy stayed behind, waiting for the next group of students that may – or may not – come to her door. I stopped by Jeannette Jackson’s office just long enough to thank her for permission to visit her school, and complimented her on the environment. “Come back again,” she said, looking up quickly from her desk. In the brief time we had talked she mentioned the difficulty of accommodating the music program – her decision had been to vacate the original auditorium area to the “new” addition, probably built around 1960. She seemed oblivious to the fact that the new addition had been built for basketball, and that the acoustics were horrible for music. This supports Cindy’s viewpoint that Jeanette is “clueless” when it comes to the needs and values of the arts. For all of its serenity and order in the midst of urban chaos, Bolivia School is still missing its voice.

### **The Champion**

Warm Springs is one of those small, sleepy communities located on what used to be considered a major US highway. It has nearly the same population as Belmont City, but it is not as ethnically diverse, with less than two percent of its population consisting of African-Americans, Hispanics, or any other non-white ethnic group (CityData, 2010). Like most of those sleepy communities there is a strip of brick business buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that is several blocks long. The town is proud that there are so many businesses still surviving in the downtown area, including the sixty – year old “Metro” theatre, operated by the Warm Springs Optimist Club as a

Youth Center, which still shows first-run movies – as long as they are not rated “R”, or “NC-17”. Just on the other side of the tracks is the 120- year old train station, and the Amtrak station, which was closed over ten years ago still stands on the northern side of town. There is the customary street of stately Victorian homes, on the south side, as well as smaller bungalows on the northern edge of town near the railroad terminal, that have been overshadowed by trees probably planted when these homes were built. The fast-food chain restaurants have all congregated on the south end of town, except for the venerable downtown ice cream shack, which still manages to attract the majority of the teens in on Friday nights. Since Warm Springs is located on the western shores of a river, there are dock pilings for barges, and just outside of town there is a large grain terminal that loads them up.

With the river bordering Warm Springs to the east, most of the expansion of the town has been westward, and there are many modern homes stretching out into the cornfields that fill out the rest of the river valley. Most of them have congregated around the high school. Like most small towns in the early twentieth century, Warm Springs’ high school has functioned as the town’s community center, and in 1976 they constructed a new school with that function in mind. While the school has its own library and media center, the community leaders chose to construct a new public library across the street from the new high school, giving students access to more materials.

Shortly after the high school opened, the district also hired Rick, who had been in his first position teaching at a small community in the eastern part of the state. The school’s previous director, Rich Sparks, was one of the first in the area to involve his students in marching band competitions, and the school board was looking for someone

who could continue to win awards. Rick had never been in marching band in high school– he often jokes that “Marching band hadn’t been invented yet” – but had marched and studied the techniques for writing precision drill charts while in college. As a result, for more than thirty years, Rick’s largest “classroom” has been a field 360 feet long and 160 feet wide.

Warm Springs has yet to finish their tributes to Rick Ransom in spite of making him Grand Marshall for their annual “Warm Springs Days” parade, and hosting a series of parties – next fall they will be holding their first “Rick Ransom Day” – an honor that no mayor of Warm Springs has ever received.

I arrived at Warm Springs High School to visit Rick on a cold day in January, and the band program had shifted gears, rehearsing for a series of spring concerts and a festival in March. I had come during a teacher in-service day, ostensibly to present a seminar on using technology to enhance music teaching. I had been to Warm Springs High several times in the past, and so after reporting to the main office I went to the loading dock of the fine arts wing to unload several boxes of equipment I had brought to demonstrate.

I began unloading my equipment into the band room, but Rick came by and corrected me. “Wrong room, bozo! We’re in the choir room today!” and grabbed the largest box on the floor. Rick is no stranger to carrying lots of equipment – for some time he was the equipment coordinator for the annual IMEA Festival, making sure that percussion equipment was moved from one rehearsal room to another, and obtaining anything a visiting band or orchestra might need. Later, that experience led him to another post-retirement job.

After the equipment was loaded in the room, we had some time before the rest of the teachers were to arrive, so Rick began looking over the inventory. “Hey, I’ve got this!” he said, and pointed over to his office, where the same audio recorder was sitting on a shelf. I was able to connect my computer to the school’s internet server and had displays running in a manner of minutes, thanks to their state-of-the-art facilities.

Like many schools, there were a group of teachers who were resistant to using technology in new ways to supplant old teaching methods, but Rick had instigated this seminar. While I had known Rick for a number of years, and was familiar with his reputation for winning marching band competitions, I was not prepared for his desire to find new ways of teaching music – especially those that would apply a more holistic approach for the individual student. It appears that, as his retirement was approaching, he was re-assessing his values and finding them wanting. I had not come to Warm Springs to recruit a participant for this study, but through this seminar one had been presented to me.

When I returned to Warm Springs in the spring, it was to interview Rick for this study. I have been to Warm Springs many times, in fact, but now I am functioning as a researcher, not a teacher... not as a friend, and not as a performer.

My first stop, as it always should be, was at the school office. Spotting the most efficient and influential office personnel is always the key to functioning well as a guest in a school environment. Secretary Peggy Sales instructed me to sign in, she gave me a badge, and a student escorted me to Rick’s office. We passed through the cafeteria and I commented on how good the food smells. “We do have good food”, the student says, but they’ve been taking it away lately because of people throwing it. We can’t have French



Fries any more.” By the time I had digested this bit of bad news we had reached Rick’s office, embedded in the confines of the Fine Arts wing of the school. Across the hall is the backstage entrance to the auditorium, and in the rehearsal area are the usual trappings of a music educator’s world... stands and chairs, the larger instruments visible in stands along the walls, the percussion (carefully covered) in its proper position, and trophies – dozens and dozens of trophies. The main wall of the room is roughly 40 feet wide by 20 feet tall, and trophies cover most of it up to about 15 feet in height. There is a large area in the middle that is not covered with trophies where “Pride and Performance” has been painted in large red letters. I wonder why they have painted “Pride AND Performance” and not “Pride IN Performance”.

My escort introduced me to Mr. Ransom. Not wanting to spoil her moment, I thanked her and shook Rick’s hand. He played along, saying “it’s nice to meet you.” After our obligatory formal paperwork, we began talking but were interrupted by the change in classes. Rick had been asked to cover for an absent colleague, who asked him to run the movie “Patton” for his class while we have our interview. I stopped the recorder and waited while the students filed into the band room, and Rick set up the movie.

While Rick was out of his office, I surveyed the room. Plaques and trophies covered all of the walls. There was only one sign of Rick’s impending retirement, a framed picture of a group of girls listed as the “Color Guard” on his desk. The frame has a large border that has been used by them to write their “farewells” to Rick – including “we’ll miss you”, and “thanks for all you’ve done”. There were other pictures on the desk, including one of his wife, Sue, and several of Rick and his “heir apparent”, Brian

Thompson, along with his long time friend and another primary participant in this study, Bill Hedges. Bill had been Rick's assistant at Warm Springs during the mid 1980s, and was reluctantly laid off by the district during the recession. In an example of community support for the program, the band boosters raised the funds needed to keep Bill at Warm Springs, but he chose to leave for Belmont City. One of the pictures of Bill and Rick is quite old, letting me see how time has weathered them both. I noticed that while Bill has lost most of his hair Rick has considerably more now. One picture frame has the cover page to a musical score – "The River Valley Legacy", commissioned by Rick from composer Kevin Mixon a number of years back. Perhaps the most noticeable frames to be found are leaning against the wall – paintings by Matisse, Gainsborough, and Kandinsky. Rick's office is rather small, and it's made to look even more so thanks to the number of typical parts necessary to keep a musical group going – replacement parts for music stands, extra mouthpieces, bottles of lubricants, trumpet mutes, and all sorts of gadgets.

When Rick comes back he says "I suppose you've heard the news about Bill", but I haven't heard any news for a few weeks. "Tammy Rothlisberger came up to me the other day and didn't say it outright, she just said 'good luck', and the word is that he didn't get the job." "The job" that Bill was aspiring to was the Executive Directorship of the IMEA, and it had been a foregone conclusion by many that he would be the new director, replacing Randy Kummer, who had been the director for over 15 years. Rick is also an applicant.

Time has become an issue for Rick – as we are talking he has nine more weeks until May 24<sup>th</sup> - when he will be giving up the position he's held for the past thirty years.

Rick spoke of the quantifiable reasons for leaving this year.

Well, with the state of Illinois and our contract, here at Warm Springs High School we have to let our school district know three years – we SHOULD let our school district know three years ahead of our planned retirement. And the reason for that is – they will give us a six percent - they will make our raise up the maximum allowable by the state up to six percent for those final three years. And as our retirement system works here in the State of Illinois your retirement salary is based on an average of your best – your highest three years in your last 10, something like that – and so that generally is your last three years, and so school districts have gone to the, ah, process of increasing salaries in those last three years to give teachers a little extra cushion – a little extra bone. So, with that knowledge, and knowing that I was going to be 55 this year, and I had my time in – I let 'em know.

Fiscally, Rick's explanation is sound, but as we talked he offered what he considered to be a better reason for retiring now:

I felt it was time for me to do something else. I had been a band director – a busy and active band director, for 33 years and - and I have enjoyed immensely my 33 years of doing it but I'm ready to do something else. I don't like the term "burnout", because that's not what it is – I'm not that bad, I don't hate what I'm doing, I don't hate coming to school, I'm not overjoyous that I'm leaving, but on the other hand I look forward to – I'm looking forward to having a normal life again. Whatever normal is...

Rick's booming laugh is symptomatic of his understanding of the unusual aspects of his career. He has been intensely involved in his program, but Rick showed a great deal of concern that it be known that he has never been "burned out". I asked him if he was aware of any music educators who were, and he related a story told to him by a colleague.

Tim Karth went up to interview for a job at his own high school, and the guy was leaving, and he basically - Tim was shocked! The guy went up and he did a five minute warmup – he did a fifteen minute very unpersonable rehearsal time and then said "alright kids, we're done". And the rest of the time the kids screwed around. If I were to, halfway through my band period, look at my kids and say

“OK, that’s good enough for today,” and say “we’re done”, my kids would look at me like, “are you sick?”

Rick is quite happy with the financial situation that retirement is presenting, thanks primarily to the Illinois Teachers Retirement System (TRS). He feels his school has been very supportive through their retirement policy. Even so, when pressed for any concerns that he has about retiring, his first thoughts are financial.

Rick: Item number one is insurance... health insurance... not so much for myself but for my dependents, which at this point would be my wife and my son, who’s still at school at Western. Now my son will be easy – he can go on the Central student plan for a year, which we’ve opted out of for his first three years, with a savings of about 600-700 dollars for me. I can put him back on that plan which is much cheaper than having him on the TRS plan., My wife is going to look independently and see what she can find, she’s actually looking at a plan through MENC. MENC has a health plan, so –

Terry: (interrupting) So Sue has not been on - there’s no health plan at Notre Dame?

Rick: She’s part-time. She’s been part-time the last four or five years.

Terry: Wow.

Rick: So yeah, she’s not – no – and she’s probably going to retire this year too. So, looking for some kind of health coverage for her has been something that has been of a concern, because with TRS, a dependent – a non-member dependent, kicks it up to – a fright – it’s \$800 a month.

In a later conversation with Rick’s wife, Sue, she corroborates Rick’s statement, with even more concern. However, when Rick was asked if he had discussed when to retire with others, she was only mentioned as an afterthought. His planning had started over ten years ago.

Rick: Because I talked with other folks that had retired, I wanted to make sure I had my ducks in a row, I didn’t want to walk into the office and say “hey, I’m retiring in three years,” and then have somebody come to me eight months later and say “well hey, you don’t have enough time in – you’ve got another year , or “you’re not old enough,” or “you don’t have enough sick days built up,” and so I’ve checked with a lot of folks – people that had retired here – and said

“whaddya got to have to retire?” and looked at the TRS, and basically talked to colleagues to find out what they did, and what it took – and then I took my status and compared it to what their status was at the time of their retirement, and found out I was, ah – in line. So absolutely I did consult.

Terry: Did you ever reach a point where you felt you should have done this earlier? I mean, in terms of the logistics, not ..

Rick: No, I actually started – it’s been a little weird because when you’ve been someplace for 30 years like I have people start looking at you as, you, know, when you start getting kids of kids, people start thinking “well, you should be retiring pretty quick,” so this – this opportunity of retirement has made itself apparent to me actually for the last 10 years, when people would say “wow, you’ve been here 20 years, how many more do you have to go?” And so that’s when you start “well gee, if I’ve only got 10 years to go...” And then there’ve been colleagues – Vic Cuzimano, Vic Cuzimano was the band director here for nine years, and Vic was a good friend, and when he retired, I had about 10 years to go, and Vic told me at that time “Don’t blink. These last ten will fly,” and he was right.

During the IMEA Convention in February, I had seen Rick in the lobby as I was heading for a seminar on preparing for retirement, organized by Bill and presented by a representative of TRS. When I asked if he had received helpful advice from his colleagues, he said it was more helpful than from “professionals”:

Rick: I have found that talking to a colleague, or talking to a - yeah, just talking to a regular person is a lot more informational than talking to somebody at TRS because they tend to talk up here (holding his hand up very high). They tend to use a lot of big words, and a lot of, you know, words that have to do with insurance, and ah, what’s that word that if you study the math side of insurance is called?

Terry: Annuitization?

Rick: Yeah, big long words like that.

Terry: That’s why you didn’t go to that seminar at IMEA that Bill organized, and we were all kind of sitting there, staring blankly into space?

Rick: Yeah, amortization, and annuities, and blah, blah, blah.. And you just kind of go “what’s that got to do?”

Terry: “Show me the money?”

Rick: Yeah, you go to friends and you find out, like “Hey, you don’t have to pay state income tax. Wow? You know, you find out from friends how much they’re paying for insurance, and so that’s the kind of information that you find out from colleagues – the simple questions with the simple answers.

Rick’s satisfaction with “simple questions with the simple answers” says much about his biggest true concerns about retirement. There have been enough educators that have gone before him to assure him that his finances are not an issue. His concerns for adequate health insurance for his family are concerns that he would have even if he were continuing to teach. When pressed about his dialogue about retirement with his wife, Rick almost seemed dismissive:

Well, yeah, my wife and I talked about it, and I told – I basically told Sue I was going to do it, and of course her first concern was about her own situation with insurance, and I told her not to worry about that, but, you know that was basically it.

When talking with Sue, she seemed to agree that Rick had made his decision before he discussed it with her. Compared with the other two male participants, Rick’s autocratic approach seems to have discounted his concerns for her situation, and later during her interview it can be seen that their relationship is different from the others.

Rick’s long-term planning for his retirement day is in sharp contrast with his plans for his retirement life. After three decades of planning his life around his program, he is now looking forward to having, as he put it, “the freedom to do what I want to do, when I want to do it.” Knowing how active he has been during his career, I asked him if he’d ever considered a different one. At first he insisted that he’d never thought about leaving teaching, but then remembered an unpleasant time in his life.

All right, wait a minute – not recently! Now, in the early 80s, when we were going through the same financial situation that’s becoming apparent now only I think now is worse, I actually did call Caterpillar to see if they had a job. Because at that time I was in a marriage that proved to be

unsuccessful, and was getting a lot of pressure at home about the time I was spending at school, and so I did consider something else. But at this point in time in my life I'm glad I didn't follow through with that.

While Rick had couched his response as an afterthought on making a career change, it was clear that this episode was life-changing for him. He had met his first wife in college, but she was not a music educator. As often happens with spouses of professionals in time-consuming disciplines, Rick had been forced to choose between his career and his marriage, and as is often the case, the marriage failed. Rick's conclusion that "at this point in time in my life I'm glad I didn't follow through with that" not only confirms his choice to keep teaching, but also reaffirms his second marriage to Sue, who has spent 20 years understanding the meaning behind his passion for teaching. Age and reason seem to be prevailing in their relationship, and while Sue is concerned about having Rick, as she puts it, "underfoot" all the time, Rick is confident that he will be busy- just in very different ways.

... it's hard to anticipate a lifestyle that's going to be completely different from what I'm... how I've lived for the last... since 1960! And I think in my situation, which is not unique in any teacher, I've been living ...my life has been governed by a school calendar since I started in kindergarten in 1960. So for the first time since 1960, my life is not going to be governed by a school calendar. And so I'm going to have to sit back, I'm just going to let ...I'm not ...I'm just going to sit back and go, "OK, how does this feel?" I'm not going to try to anticipate what I'm going to feel, try to anticipate what my day is going to be like – I'm just going to sit back and let it happen, because it's going to be very usual. When I get done with school, I mean – my situation in the past has been "school ends, marching band starts the next day!" And now school's going to end, and I'll get up the next day and I'll go "wow" (laughs). You know, it's like waking up on a new planet, or waking up and finding yourself living in a new country, and you just kinda sit there and go "OK-let's see what this is gonna be like."

In the brief time that had elapsed since we scheduled our talk, Rick has seen quite a bit. Even before he had finished his last day of teaching he was working at the local music shop, repairing violins and other stringed instruments, using his woodworking

skills. His experience in setting up equipment for concerts at IMEA led him to becoming the stage manager for one of the regional orchestras next season. In some ways his choices seem to conflict with the possibilities he was considering:

Rick: I would like to work in either the areas of, landscaping, or ah, construction – repair, woodworking – and music... I think those are my three main loves – possible travel, travel industry. But I think the one that, you know, obviously it's real easy for me to float into another music job, somewhere- make my low brass studio a little bit more involved, maybe get some more kids involved with private lessons - I teach, right now I've got seven private students – I wouldn't mind kicking that up to a nice size, I don't know, there's been a lot of scuttlebutt, I've heard a lot of stories about local universities and colleges calling, having me teach this or that – we'll see... If they do, that'd be great, if not, that's fine... One of the jobs I'm seriously considering is next summer going out to Yellowstone and working maintenance - to being a carpenter out in Yellowstone in 2011.

Terry: Is that an easy thing to do?

Rick: Yeah, just get on their website, and say "I'd like to come out there and work," and they give you a list of what you have to be able to do, and I'll start working on that in the fall, let 'em know that I'd like to come out there and work. And they'll wanna know what I'm capable of – they've got a list of things. "Do you know how to run a saw?" "Can you read blueprints?" "Can you lift 60 pounds?" blah, blah, blah, - all those things I can do easily, basic understanding of the construction of a building – so yeah, I'm looking at that – AND not being a band director – not being tied into being a band director, I can go do that kind of thing.

Rick's future choices may not have the significance of sacrificing his marriage for his career, but his desire to remain musically active may keep him away from Yellowstone.

Rick: In some regard, I hope to become a little more active in that I want to start, you know, one part of my musical being that has been left untouched since college is singing. I've not been able to sing in a group since I graduated, and I talked to Bob Jackson (a community choir director) and said "You need another bass too?" And he's... so I may go start singing in his group. He's pretty excited - He goes "How low can you go?" (using a very deep voice) And I said, "Oh, on a good day, how 'bout an 'A' below the staff?"

Terry: I imagine that got Bob's brain churning –



Rick: He said “No!” and I said “Oh, yeah...I can sing with the tubas”... I sound like that Russian on that one really creepy Nonesuch chant album that they had where they sing the chromatic scale?

Terry: Those Bulgarian guys – the Tuvan Monks.

Rick: Yeah, So yeah, I hope to do that – it’d be fun.

The single aspect that all of the activities Rick is considering have in common is that Rick firmly believes they will be “fun.” Building houses for “Habitat for Humanity” may benefit society, but the “fun” of the activity drives this builder. Supervising a stage crew setting up for an orchestra rehearsal can require an equal amount of “perspiration equity”, but Rick sees the fun in working with musicians in any capacity. There’s one activity, however, that Rick has already decided would not be “fun” for him:

Terry: What about being involved in the IRMEA (the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association)?

Rick: Involved in the IMEA?

Terry: I-R-M-E-A, the -

Rick: (laughing) Nah! – No, I’m not too excited about hanging around with a bunch of retired people.

Terry: You didn’t go to the reception for IRMEA?

Rick: No, no – I’ve spent my life with young people...(you) know I’ve been blessed with relatively young looks for someone my age, and most people look at me and I tell them I’m retired and they can’t believe I’m that old. And I think that that’s – I really – no, I’m not too enthused about hanging around with retired people.

It is difficult at times to believe that Rick is old enough to retire. In spite of being very heavy, his face appears youthful, and the massive mane of hair he’s grown, on both his face and head to celebrate his retirement, has only made him look younger. While he is not reluctant to declare that he’s retiring, he may be reluctant to admit that he’s old

enough to qualify for organizations devoted to the interests of people his age. It is conceivable that Rick is also reluctant to engage in groups of older individuals when his life has been spent surrounded by younger ones, and as he becomes engaged in other musical activities with his chronological peers, they may not completely replace the satisfaction he has received from working with his students. This becomes clear when Rick is asked about what he will miss most about teaching.

Rick: Interaction with kids... and the positive vibe that comes from that. You know, I love rehearsals. I love standing up on a podium in front of a group of eager kids, and we work together to make music happen. That's going to be the thing I miss. Am I going to miss contest? No. Am I going to miss trophies?

Terry: (laughing) Let me ask the question before you go there – What will you miss the least?

Rick: (laughing) All right – but that's what I'm going to miss the most.

Rick's rhetorical question "Am I going to miss trophies?" is an illustration of the change in his attitude about competition in music. His reputation, and the reputation of his program at Warm Springs has been built on "championships" at the state, and even near-championships at the national level. To most of the students at Warm Springs, the "Marching Mohawks" are "good" because they've "beaten" certain rival schools. But after thirty years, Rick has seen enough of his students go on to careers in music, and music education, to know that his greatest contributions have not been made on a football field. In his final years, he's become resentful of "the tail wagging the dog", as his band parents hold fundraiser after fundraiser in order to supply the marching band with instruments and uniforms that may win contests. More importantly for Rick, those funds have left his other resources available for what to him is far more valuable – new music for concerts, extra instructors for lessons, trips to hear orchestra concerts. It is, in some

ways for him, a “deal with the devil” – but Rick is not above making deals with anyone to make better music.

Unlike many retiring teachers, Rick is not ready to claim that he will miss his former administrators very much, and he has cited a very good reason.

You know what? Honestly, I have been blessed with great administrators. I really have. I really have, and maybe it's because they've been nice to me – and I don't know why – but for the most part my administrators have been very respectful, of myself and this program. Now, I think I'm in a wonderful situation, where this is a community where band is considered important, and it has been – you know there is a legacy here, this program. And the administrators understand that legacy, and embrace that legacy, and have helped support that legacy. And so I've always had a great relationship with the superintendent, and the high school principal. So I certainly wouldn't be negative about missing administrators. I would probably have to say I miss stupid parents more than stupid administrators, 'cause you run into one of those every once in awhile. But in all honesty, what I will miss the least are the distractions – it's not even the contests – I will miss – least - the distractions and the conflicts which keep – kept me from doing my job better than what I could have done. Things like parent-teacher conferences which we have today – and I'm going to sit here tomorrow and not have school, and I'm going to sit here tomorrow waiting for somebody to show up and talk to me, and nobody's going to show up! And there won't be – I would be surprised if twenty percent of the parents will come to this building tonight and tomorrow to talk to the teachers about their kids. And could have had rehearsal, and got some teaching done. Those are the things that drive me nuts about education - the distractions.

Rick's comments about his administrators were important enough to lead me to the principal's office – not because I had misbehaved, but because I would have to see if this was a reciprocal relationship. Before I left I wanted to see what sort of advice Rick had been giving to his two graduating seniors who are going to study music education.

Rick: In this current situation, my first advice to anybody going into music education would be “A”, diversify. Be ready to teach anything, whether it's choir, general music, band – banjo class! And I'll be real honest – this is nothing new. What we were told in the late 70s, because it's rolling around again – this smells so much like the late 70s it's scary.

Terry: Get the superdegree?

Rick: Yep. So to be able to market yourself, we were even told to get our driver's ed certification. Pick up something else you can teach. Diversify yourself, maybe you can pick up an English class and do band. Number two, don't feel like you've got to stay in Illinois. Of course after what I read in the paper today you don't want to go to Kansas, because Kansas City closed half their schools. So anyway, after those two things, you still can't find a job, you might even look across the pond somewhere. Australia, China, there are – I had a former student that got a teaching job at the American School in Kabul, Afghanistan! She was teaching music over there! (laughing) Now I don't endorse going to Afghanistan to teach, but look overseas. And again, if you do those kind of things you may not make a lot of money, but you're looking for – you know, if you want to stay in the business that's what you've gotta do. And I think that's going to be the trend. I think, too, looking back at the 80s, what will happen in about five or six years, we're going to have people retire, and this ship will right itself, and all of a sudden out of nowhere these jobs will open up and there won't be anybody there to take 'em.. Because people have gone elsewhere, people will have gotten jobs doing something else, so – stick it out, diversify, feel free to move outside of the state, move outside of the country – that'd be my advice.

Terry: What advice would you pass on to young people in high school who are considering music education as a career?

Rick: Well I have some kids right now who are going into music ed, and they're looking at things and they're concerned and that's what I've told them, that I think by the time they get out in five years, things should – I would hope things would be fine. Now, people getting out in the next couple three years, it's going to be tough! I've got a couple of kids – I've got a young lady who's a sophomore at Dayton, course she's over in Ohio, so she's- I told her, don't be afraid to stay in Ohio. You know, the old adage "bloom where you're planted". You know, the kids that are out there looking, that are currently in college that are looking to do a job I would give them the same advice – diversify, be ready to teach choir, ready to teach general music, and you know, people are amazed that I teach band, I teach jazz band, I teach music theory, I teach music appreciation, and I have a humanities class – that's why this art is in here (motions to several paintings). Name another band director that has "Blue Boy" in his office. Because I teach - there's a Kandinsky on the wall when you walked in the door. That's because I also teach an art history class.

It is difficult to find much in the way of negativity in Rick's words. The plight of music education in these unsteady times, especially for newer teachers, would allow for dire warnings from a veteran teacher, but Rick has been through the storm before. Still,

he has given advice to some who he has felt were not up to the task of being a music educator:

I've said "look – and my lick there is "just because you've had a lot of fun blowing your trumpet in the Warm Springs band doesn't make you material to be a music major. And the first test for those people is you take my theory class – which I basically teach as a collegiate level – I mean we're using the same book ISU uses, or did use... and I say "this is what you're going to have to get through." This is Band Director Survival Class Number One – if you can do this, then you're going to be able to - you know – succeed as a music ed person. And those are also the people you say "are you studying privately?" "Are you taking lessons?" And if it's somebody who isn't, then you know, you aren't going to be ready for college. And so yeah, oh yeah, you gotta be – I went to college with some people like that – I remember a trumpet player who went to some tiny school in Eastern Illinois, are there any large schools in eastern Illinois? – Anyway, tiny little high school in eastern Illinois and she came in and she was a horrible trumpet player- but she was the best trumpet player in her high school! She got the John Philip Sousa Award! So she was going to be a band director. Because that's the thing she was best at in her school. But it's all relative.

Rick can speak from experience, since many of his students have gone on to be music educators. In the process, they have had to leave Warm Springs behind, first to become a student in college, and then to become an educator in some other small town in the Midwest. And there have been those who attempted to become music educators and failed. Some have come back to Warm Springs, and as Rick has noted, some who will try have been his students during his final days in his position. Another sign that the time has come. When I asked Rick what he would say if he were given the opportunity to make a short statement to both generations as a "last lecture", his reply was as quick as any he had made:

I would tell them that if somebody would have told me 33 years ago that I would have had this much fun, shared this much passion, had so many amazing experiences that I've had in my career as a music educator, I would never have believed it. That – This has been far more of a positive experience on me as a person than I ever dreamed it would be...

The relationships I've had with people – kids, fellow musicians like yourself, you know, those kind of things – if somebody had told me that 33 years ago I just would have sat there and said “no way”. And I look back on it now, and I've told kids this, just wait, and it'll be way better than you thought it was going to be. And it has been. It's been WAY better. And I came from a – what's the right word? – I came from a background – not an opportunistic background. When you go to Deer Creek-Mackinaw High School, you don't really have – although when I was there we had 80 kids in the band – but at that time marching band hadn't been invented yet (laughing) - competitive marching band – and if it hadn't been for the lady who gave me private lessons, I probably wouldn't have gone into it. Two things really changed my life – one was Delores Brown giving me trombone lessons, and two, after thinking about it, I realized that my – you're going to love this one – my sophomore football coach killed his wife, so my life took a different direction at that point. 'Cause I adored the guy, and he was my biology teacher, my football coach, and if he hadn't killed his wife and left town, I would probably be a biology teacher coaching football right now...

I think too that, as a young person, as a young teacher, the impact you have on people – I've been getting emails from kids that I taught 30 years ago... or right here! Just when I was bringing these kids back, a young lady stopped and said “Oh, by the way, my dad says ‘hello’ and congratulations on your retirement. I said “Who's your dad?” “Kevin Stratton”. Kevin Stratton graduated my second year here! And I said “Your dad still remembers me?” She goes “He thinks the world of you,” and he said to tell you congratulations and good job, and I said “Well tell him thanks,” and I also said “You also tell him that you're lucky you don't look like your dad.” (laughing) Yeah, I just don't know, I think for the most part until you get to that... we're all so busy - I first got into the music business because – for completely wrong reasons. I wanted to win a lot of trophies as a marching band director. I just thought marching band was amazing. And I wanted to get out and do that kind of thing. And so, OK, if you want to have a good marching band, you've gotta have a great concert band. And I also was strongly influenced by the Dale Hopper philosophy of being a band director that you do it all right. You have a great marching band, you have a great concert band, and you have a great jazz band. You don't have an awesome marching band and just kind of a mediocre other two –or not even the other two. So I kind of aspire to that philosophy, and then over time you just kind of see the big picture that goes “Wow, this is really having a positive impact on kids.” And we're doing well too. And so, those kind of things come around – the ship generally gets on the right track eventually, and you start seeing the real reasons for doing all this stuff. Trophies don't become very important. Kids become important – and what they do with their lives.

The period was just about over. From my position in Rick's office, I could see into the rehearsal room. The group of students that had been watching “Patton” had been

completely quiet during the entire period, and after Rick spun around in his chair he headed into the room to dismiss the group. As he went in, I could see into most of the room, and the wall containing dozens of trophies from years gone by. Perhaps the light from the windows was coming in the wrong way to the darkened room, but somehow they all seemed to have lost their shine. As I headed back toward the main office, I passed by two of Rick's students who will be majoring in music education next year. Their faces were shining.

A few weeks later, I was back at Warm Springs, interviewing Royce Mallory, Rick's Principal. When Royce and I left his office, Rick was waiting outside. "Well it's about time! Keeping me waiting out here!" Rick's voice sounded as if it could be heard in the library across the street. "I didn't know you were out here – didn't you know I had other people to talk to?" I said. I turned to Royce and said, "I've been trying to explain to him that this study isn't all about him!" Royce, the secretaries, and Rick all were laughing as Rick put on a disillusioned face. "Besides, if you've really been waiting out here we would have heard you from inside the office with that fog-horn voice of yours!" I retorted. "I wasn't using my teacher voice", said Rick, grinning. "I've been using my 'ladies voice'." "Your Barry White voice?" I teased. "That's the one – they love it! C'mon, let's go back to my office."

Yes, the secretaries do love Rick's voice –his "Barry White voice", his "teacher's voice," and any other voice that he's used over the years. As we passed through the large commons area of the school, I thought of the times I have passed through there with masses of students eating their lunch, passing on to classes, or just socializing – and the number of times I've seen Rick in the midst of them. There are only two students now,

both silently waiting for something or someone. Unlike most school cafeterias, there is no institutional odor that usually accompanies a large dining area, and the natural din that comes from a poorly designed commons area is absent too. Even more unusual is the lack of sound in the music wing. No one is practicing, no one is rehearsing, and perhaps most profoundly, Rick's stereo is silent. There are boxes of CDs that had lined his walls on the floor – and those boxes will have to go home and be emptied before they can return to be filled again, and again, and again.

When I had previously visited Rick, he had nine weeks to go before retirement. Now that time had dwindled to six days, including graduation day on Sunday. I was unsure if Rick would be comfortable conducting the band if I was observing, but he was more than happy to have me come. We made arrangements for me to meet him in the band room an hour before the ceremony.

In the time that has passed since our last meeting, Rick has had to deal with some uncomfortable issues. Earlier, we had discussed the level of involvement Rick should have with the Warm Springs Band after he retired, and he had been reluctant to commit to any specific level. His successor, Brian is also his very good friend, and was starting to ask Rick for more help than Rick thought was good for the program.

He asked me about going to band camp and I wanted to say “Brian, you don't want me at band camp!” You're going to have – and no pun intended – you're going to have enough ghosts to deal with, you know – you don't want me there. And two, I don't want to be there! You know, when you've done something a certain way, for thirty years, in a situation for thirty years, it's time – I really feel it's time to make a clean break, and it's not that I'm not - it's not that I'm not interested, it's not that I don't care – I told the kids this – I said “Look – you won't see much of me. I'll come to your concerts, and I'll probably be at your marching contests, and... but I probably won't come back to the bus and you know ‘high-five’ it with everybody because this is not – it's not my time anymore. I'll be there to cheer you on, but it's not me – it's - this needs to be his time now.



It seemed that Rick has developed a firmer concept of a level for appropriate involvement, one with which Brian will eventually become comfortable. Rick has been concerned that Brian may not be able to act with authority, and for that reason he wants to remain as far on the “sidelines” as possible.

No, if Brian were to call me and say “It’s the week of U of I,” or “It’s two weeks to U of I,” or ISU, “I’d really like to have another set of eyes and ears and look at this – can you come on out?” Sure. But I’m not just gonna drop in... I won’t do that – I don’t know that I’ll come to a football game! You know, the only reason that I would come to a football game is so I could sit in the bleachers and enjoy watching the football game and not being worried about “OK, who’s not here tonight,” and “What kid do I have to make up for,” and you know, “What’s going to happen at halftime,” and “Who’s chasing who over at the concession stand?” You know, ‘cause I – I hated football games. It wasn’t until Ron Carlson (Rick’s former assistant) finally pulled me aside once - he could see the – the rage - and he said “You know what? You need to change your attitude about these. You need to think of these as dress rehearsals.” And at that point, light bulb... It’s all in front of a bunch of moms and dads and Joe Hotdog who wouldn’t know what this song sounded like if, you know, if it mattered. And I’ve told my kids for the last umpteen years, there’s only two songs that we have to play perfect at a football game – the banner, and the school song. ‘Cause Joe Hotdog knows what those sound like. If we don’t do “Outdoor Overture” clean as a pin, Joe Hotdog’s not gonna know!

On the surface, Rick’s attitude about performing at football games seems to contradict the large sign in the band room that says “Pride and Performance”. But Rick has clearly changed his attitude about a lot of things. More importantly, Rick wants Brian to adopt some of these attitude changes as well, for his own sake.

Again I told the kids, I said “It’s not that I don’t care, it’s not that I don’t - this isn’t important to me. It’ll always be important to me, but it needs – a transition needs to occur. And you know, poor Brian, but he didn’t heed my one bit of advice, and I said “You know what? You need to let something go, because you’re going to be overwhelmed if you don’t let something go. I don’t know if it’s your private students, or maybe do less at Fernville this semester, or find something that you can just say “You know what, I’m not going to do it.” You know, DON’T take a trip with Fernville, DON’T go to ISU’s band festival with Fernville, don’t go to contest! So who cares? It’s one year!” He didn’t listen – and he’s just been tearing his hair out. So, and I feel a little bit guilty because some of his – some of his – activities have involved creating farewell “dealeos”

for me – you know, he did this thing for me at the last concert, where he had the kids schlep together the four fight songs that I have been associated with, kids played it, and that was nice... that was sweet.

For Rick, all of the accolades he has been receiving have been “sweet”, but Brian’s work has left him feeling guilty that his friend has done so much during the transition. In addition to the guilt, he is worried that Brian may suffer through some of the personal experiences he went through over two decades ago.

You know what? I am not concerned about him professionally, in this job. He will be fine here. But between you and me, I’m concerned for whether his family life will hold up. I really am. I don’t know, I’m hoping it will survive, and I hope that his wife will have the patience to let him get through some of this stuff... (lord) knows that those of us who are married to musicians are blessed. “Cause my first wife wasn’t. I thought - well, she was a clarinet player, she was a very fine clarinet player, and I thought “OK, this’d be great, she’s a clarinet player, she understands what band is about, her best friend’s dad was Joe Baker, OK, so her best friend’s a music major, wants to be a band director, so I should be, you know, and oops! Didn’t happen!

Rick seems fairly comfortable with laughing about his situation now, but his vivid recollections are a clue that he is concerned that his friend could suffer the same fate.

Brian shares many of the same passions for band and the students in band with Rick, and this part of Rick’s legacy is one that he wishes was not there.

For Rick, marrying another music educator has been a godsend. His countenance lights up when given an opportunity to talk about their relationship.

Rick: Thank gosh, since I ran into Sue right away, and she’s just been wonderful.

Terry: Well, she knows where you’re coming from.

Rick: Well, and I with her, so - it’s Sunday night, it’s “Well what have you got this week?” “Well, I’ll be home Tuesday, and I’ll be home before we go to Southern Winds, and I don’t have a game this week so I’ll be home Friday night” – “OK, great – well I’ve got a game, and I’ve got a booster meeting Tuesday, so I guess I’ll see you Saturday.” (laughing) And so it’s not a big deal! You know, ‘course we don’t have any kids at home right now, so that makes it easier too.

But like I said, the professional part of it... if Brian can keep the home fires from going out he'll be fine.

Rick freely admits that his immersion in his band program was a major factor in the dissolution of his first marriage, but he also noted that the students and parents were also a major source of emotional support for him during that trying time.

Rick: I know that when my ex-wife moved my kids to Baltimore, it was the darkest period of my life. It was horrible. Not only did my kids move, 800 miles away, but a dear friend of mine died. And she was my second band mom, and she was like a mom to me, she was just - her name was Hope, and she could be a thorn in the side, but by golly she was a wonderful lady. I'll never forget her. And those two things happened about three weeks apart, and man, I'll tell you what - if it hadn't been for this band, if it hadn't been for these kids, playing for me, I don't know how I would have made it. But I'd come into rehearsal, and these kids - they didn't know I was going through that - but coming in every day and working with them, and having the interaction of making music together was really... it really helped me through all that.

Terry: Something to get out of bed for.

Rick: Absolutely. Absolutely - in fact we played a piece of music that - we did "Canterbury Chorale" by Van der Roost, during that time, and that was just kind of like my cathartic experience. If I - and those kids played it really well, and then we did it this year, and then - I think this band this year played it better - So - it was one of those things that you know, that...

It seemed like an odd time for Rick to start laughing, but it also signaled a pattern of emotional defense for him. The pathos of the experience had been a strong one, and laughing allowed him a chance to gather his reflective thoughts.

It's a love-hate relationship that this - this thing that we do called band directing and music can be the source of problems, but yet it can also be the medication - it can also be the source of the relief from that... (the) day my dad died, I came - dad died overnight and I'd stayed overnight with him, and I helped mom that morning get the - helped my mom get things ready at the funeral home, and whatnot, and then I had band rehearsal here at 1 O'clock, and I said "OK, I've got to go to school - I have rehearsal." OK. So I came back here, and the kids said "well we didn't think you were going to be here today," and I said "No, dad passed away this morning, so it was OK for me to come back." And you know, the chorale, you could just feel it. You could just feel them giving back - it was really amazing. So, you know those are all the things that we go through, and it's

a blessing, it's something that I really feel, for whatever reason, you know, we all get kicked down a path, of little things in our lives...

Those little things have been gradually falling into place for Rick. In the past few years, he has been in much closer contact with his son, Tom. Tom had been living with his mother on the east coast for most of his life, but chose to come to nearby Central University to get his college degree. It has meant a significant lifestyle change for both Rick and Sue, but they are very comfortable with the new arrangement. Sue has decided that Rick's transition into retirement has been so comfortable that she, too, will be making the transition. For Rick, the biggest surprise from the process has been the amount of money he'll have to "play with".

Rick: Yes, things are ending the way I expected, there's no big surprises. I would say the biggest surprise so far has been the amount of money I'm making in retirement. I mean I get my last - we have this thing, this severance package that we have, and in order to get my six percent bump up, well you know nobody's getting six percent pay increases anymore. So our contract this year I think was 2.3, 2.5, something like that - it was our raise this year - 2.5. So I get 3.5, bump at the end of the year from the school district, so I get the allotted six percent. Well I get that tomorrow, and that amount - that amount plus my normal paycheck is probably more than my take home my first year of teaching. My first YEAR. In one check. That I get tomorrow.

Terry: You'd better go see the accountant.

Rick: Yeah! I'm sitting here, going "Well, I'm going to pay off..." I've got a credit card I'm getting paid off, and I'll put it in the bank for the Central University tuition for my son, you know those are the big surprises...and, you know, the kind letters, and notes, and whatnot, I mean I've already gotten wind of the surprise party - I don't know when, or where, or what, but I know it's going to happen, which makes me feel good because I was staring to get a little pissed off -

Terry: Are you going to "act dumb?"

Rick: Yeah, I'll act dumb when I show up, but I know, and Brian knows I know, and Sue knows I know, but that's OK, because I don't know - I still don't know what, and that's fine. But you know - to be honest, when I went to the symphony concert, where they did the "Javelin," that was kinda sitting on my mind, going -

well cripes, nobody's going to throw me a party? I've got to throw my own party? AM I going to have to put together my own damn retirement party? Hadn't heard anything about it yet. So I ran into some band parents, and I'd literally had put that thought in my mind. OK- if I don't hear by the twentieth of, or what was it? Gonna be the week before the concert, the twenty-eighth. If I hadn't heard by the twenty-eighth of April I was going to go to Dale Lynn and say "Is there not –is there not a party being planned for this?" You know – do I have to plan my own retirement party. But anyway, like cripes – so anyhow I run into these former band parents at the symphony and they said "Oh, we're so sorry we can't come to your party but we're going to be in California..." And I'm like "THANK YOU GOD!" And then I get a note from another band parent, early this week...

Terry: Did they ever figure out that they'd let the "cat out of the bag?"

Rick: Oh, yeah... because I said "Oh! There's a party?" And she goes "Oh! we weren't supposed to tell you!" I said "No, you know what? I'm glad you told me because at least I don't have to worry about that. I don't have to think about, you know, doing this on my own. So that was nice – so –but nah, everything's been pretty much – it – there haven't been any huge surprises, I mean, I was told by Jerry Rock, who retired at Mount Jefferson three years ago, Jerry said, "just keep track of your last year, because it'll be really nice. A lot of neat things will happen." And a lot of neat things have happened. You know, emails, you know one indication that something was going on was that about - yeah, I kept getting all these emails through the fall, things from former kids... "hear you're retiring, best of luck, thanks so much, blah blah blah..." and then about the end of November, around Thanksgiving time, they stopped! I thought, "Well, it's the holidays." And I thought, "Oh, they'll fire up after the first of the year", and then I never got – and I thought "hmmm. So only 15 kids out of the 1500 I've had over the years really thought enough to send me an email! Oh, well, ok..." Well now I know why because something's in the works. So, and that's cool. That's – I'm looking forward to that, I hope there's a lot of kids there that I can say 'hi' to, and say 'thanks' to, and we can reminisce, and you know, have some good times.

Rick is ready for some good times. He has been extremely careful in his preparations for retirement, and for him all of the pieces are falling in place. His concerns that he will be forgotten by his students, at least for the time being, have abated, and the program he has nurtured for over thirty years seems to be functioning well under the leadership of his friend and long-time colleague, Brian. Graduation Day is coming soon, and Rick will be leading the processional.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Considering Legacies:**

#### **Colleagues and Communities**

##### **The Ice Cream Social**

When Bill Hedges had asked if I was interested in playing in the Belmont City Alumni Band, I was glad to accept. Playing in the back row of a group of musicians during an ice cream social seemed like the ideal spot to play the role of the “mouse in the corner”, and observe another event that would celebrate Bill’s retirement from Belmont City High School.

Bill had sent an email the night before the social with the official notice that the event had been moved from the city park to the high school gymnasium due to the inclement weather that was forecast - hot, humid and a high chance of thunderstorms. We were scheduled to have a short rehearsal – just forty-five minutes ahead of the social at 7 o’clock. When I arrived at the school, I quickly found myself with a stack of music, and a stand partner, Mindy Eastbrook, the band director at nearby Kingville. I knew that Mindy had been an applicant for Bill’s job, but she had been passed over in favor of Mike Gordon, who was also in town. As we looked over the music I asked her if she had met Mike, and she said that he had been around the area quite a bit, as Bill tried to introduce him to as many of his nearby colleagues as possible.

When Bill started the rehearsal, he introduced Mike, and explained that Mike would be conducting part of the program, and that Barbara, his wife would also conduct one piece. Bill and I had been discussing his strategy of gradually passing along responsibilities to Mike over the course of the summer. After the Ice Cream Social, Mike

would be taking on more duties for the annual “Corn Festival”, especially since Bill and his predecessor, Fred Franklin, had been chosen as the Co-Grand Marshals for the big parade. Band camp would follow after that, and by the time it was over the transition, at least officially, would be complete.

Bill’s program was predictable enough for a summer event that would have been outdoors, if the weather had been fair. We started out with a medley of tunes by George M. Cohan, and worked on a few marches. Mike had chosen a pretty difficult piece to perform, especially by some of the players in the band, who probably save their playing for events like this one.

Bill had been quite excited about being part of this study. As chair of the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association he was convinced that a study such as this would be of interest to any music educator preparing for retirement, and would serve as an inducement to join the organization, which has not been as successful in recruiting members as it would like. As we were preparing to practice a march, Bill announced that I was visiting in the tuba section, and told the group about the study. The “mouse in the corner” had been flushed out.

Bill’s wife, Barbara, is now a superintendent of schools in nearby Plainville, but she and Bill had both started out their married lives as music educators. Sue had chosen to conduct a medley of tunes from the Broadway show that she and her daughter, Susan, were directing.

There were a few more pieces to rehearse, but time was at a premium. Bill “spot-checked” some of the old standards, such as “America the Beautiful”, and of course the “Stars and Stripes Forever”. After we had finished all of the tunes, Bill simply said “OK,

that's it – go out and have a good time – you'll get a chance to get some cake and ice cream.”

The gymnasium is only a few dozen feet from the band room, and as I struggled with my music stand and my instrument, Mindy held the door, even though she was wrestling with her own tuba. “These little school horns are really handy,” she said. Mindy has never purchased her own tuba, and has always used instruments owned by her school, even when studying music education at a small college just outside of Chicago. She had been teaching at Kingville for five years, but the town and the program are tiny compared to that of Belmont City, with fewer students in the entire school than Bill has had this year in his instrumental music program (CityData, 2009). We found our seats in the back of the band, where I could watch as the guests were coming in through the doors that opened into the main lobby of the school. Many of the women were carrying cakes, and there were large tables at the opposite end of the room, already covered with cakes of different sizes and colors.

One of the traditions of the Ice Cream Social at Belmont City is that the band director is also the master of ceremonies, and Bill took charge almost immediately, using the microphone to direct the guests to the bleachers, and reminding everyone to purchase their tickets for the “cakewalk”. In the Belmont City tradition, the band will play a tune while the participants promenade around the tables of cakes. When the music stops, the participant is given the cake that is closest to them. There are so many cakes that it almost seems that everyone in the gymnasium could participate and there would be cakes left over. My role as the “mouse in the corner” was further compromised when Bill introduced me as the Professor of Tuba from Central University, who is doing a study on



his impending retirement. But his announcement was of little import to the crowd. They are there to observe an annual tradition, and exceptions are ignored whenever possible.

While the band was playing their patriotic tunes by George M. Cohan, I was letting my eyes drift away from the familiar music to the unfamiliar faces in the gymnasium. Since the band was made up primarily of older students and former students of the Belmont High School Band, the usual group of supportive parents and grandparents could be expected to be there, but there were many more people attending than are usually found at a Belmont City High School Band Concert. In addition, the spectrum of personalities at the social was much broader. One could see children running, teenagers “hanging”, couples holding hands. One older woman was slowly coming in with her walker, while a man who appeared to be her husband was carrying her purse. There were “working men” who wore jeans and overalls, and those who had arrived wearing their best Sunday suits. For many of the women, the fashion of the day was floral dresses, but some of the younger women were dressed in jeans. Moving the event indoors had taken away the pleasant surroundings of the city park, but the hundreds of participants seemed to be having fun nonetheless. I wondered if grass and trees would have made that much difference.

Once we had finished playing the Cohan songs, Bill turned around and grabbed the microphone. He introduced our next march, “Bandology”, which was going to be conducted by Tiffany, our other tuba player who had also been the field commander for the marching band. Tiffany managed to squirm her way past the percussion section and made her way to the conductor’s stand, and led the band while Bill stood off to the side, chatting with one of the women in charge of the social. She was shouting into his ear,

trying to be heard above the playing of the band, which was very loud inside of the gymnasium.

When Tiffany finished conducting, her serious face broke into a smile, and she made her way back to our row, where Mindy and I were waiting to compliment her. While Tiffany had, at one time, considered a career in music education, by now she had decided to go into veterinary medicine once she graduates from Belmont City.

Bill was using this event to introduce Mike, his successor, to the community, again exposing my motives by mentioning that Mike had just received his master's degree from my school. Mike's piece was unlike anything else on the program. It was difficult, and had no familiar "toe-tapping" tunes. When we finished, we were treated to polite, but uninspired applause.

Bill returned to the podium to conduct the music for the cakewalk. The original dance calls for a special rhythm, which he had found in a work by Robert Russell Bennett. As the band played, those who had purchased tickets were strolling around the long tables of cakes. Bill had warned us in rehearsal about where he had planned to stop the music, and when the music stopped, the strollers picked up their cakes and made room for the new participants. One young little girl had picked up a large orange cake with several layers, and worried many of us as she scampered across the floor of the gymnasium with it. Soon cakes were everywhere, but there were still more on the tables, much to the relief of the musicians.

After the cakewalk, it was Barbara's turn to conduct her Broadway medley. As it turned out, there was an ulterior motive in having her conduct a piece, and as we finished one of the women in charge of the social called Bill over to the microphone. The social

committee had a plaque, which they presented to Bill for his thirty-plus years as the band director at Belmont City, and as she presented it the entire crowd in the bleachers gave him a standing ovation. Bill did not seem surprised, but was still overwhelmed by the reception. He made a very short speech, saying how much he appreciated the tributes he had been given in his final months, thanked the committee for the plaque, and asked for another piece of cake, which garnered a loud roar of laughter from the audience.

After the band had finished its final song, “America the Beautiful”, we were invited to have some cake. It seemed as though there were enough left over for each of us to take a cake home, but my instrument was occupying both of my hands. Bill’s hands were full, too, but not with cake – he was cradling his plaque, no doubt making plans to place it near his others. Next year, he will be able to sit with his old friend and predecessor, Fred, and eat ice cream and cake while Mike conducts the band.

### **A Concert Without the Legacy**

The weather forecast for Sunday was foreboding. The winter storm advisory said that it might start snowing before I could return from Belmont City High School, where the new band director, Mike Gordon, was giving his first spring concert at 2 o’clock. I was invited to attend, along with some of my other colleagues, to see the first concert given by one of our graduates since he received his master’s degree last spring, as well as the first major concert in several decades led by someone other than Bill Hedges.

As I started my 100-mile trip, the weather was pleasant, traffic was light, and I had plenty of time. I had volunteered to take some recording equipment along to record the concert, and so I was on the road before noon. Later, that recording would also be helpful to this study, capturing comments made by Bill’s successor.

I arrived at the school at 1:15, just in time to hear the final rehearsal for the big finale, which included alumni of the Belmont City Band performing the Strauss “Konigsmarsch” with the band, playing from the catwalks in the top of the auditorium. I set up my microphones, tested the equipment, and noticed that the hall was a little larger than I had anticipated.

Just as I finished setting up, the rehearsal ended. Mike was clearly excited, and showered his guest performers with compliments. “Can you see OK up there? It sounds great!” He turned his attention back to the students on stage, who were beginning to chatter quietly. “Thanks, folks, it all sounds great. You’ve worked hard, and I really appreciate all of the work you’ve done. These concerts have a great tradition and I’m very proud to be a part of it. Relax, and when you come back on stage have fun!”

The students seemed prepared to follow Mr. Gordon’s instructions willingly. Extensive preparations seemed to have paid off. Every student had taken great pains to dress appropriately, and the tuxedos of the men were just the right size (not too small or too large, and not hand-me-downs). The women were wearing black, and had dressed with the same amount of care as they would if they were serving as bridesmaids for a wedding. In fact all seemed ready, except for Mike, who was still wearing slacks and a polo shirt. After he got off the podium, he saw me, he came over and shook my hand. “So glad you could make it”, he said, “How do think it sounds?”

“It sounds great, but you could use a little cleaning up – got a tux?” I joked. He laughed and ran off, with lots of things to do (including getting dressed). With less than 30 minutes before concert time, his speed attested to his anxiety.

Belmont City's auditorium is only a few years old. The design and extent of the facility are very good for putting on programs. The backstage area opens out to the fine arts wing, and the band and choral rooms are across the hall. Traffic between the stage and the band room was brisk, as the students made their final preparations. One of the students, Tiffany, recognized me from my earlier performance at the school. "It's good to see you again", she said, shaking my hand. I replied "It's good to see you too – I wouldn't have missed this for the world." Tiffany laughs, and I take a few seconds to assure her that I'm only exaggerating, and not joking – this is an important concert for the community.

I stopped by the choral room, where my colleague, Phil Clevenger, was warming up for his solo with the band, with his wife Sherry at his side. He seemed surprised to see me. "I'm glad you came- did Mike hire you to record the concert?" "No, I just had a free Sunday afternoon and wanted to spend it with you," I joked.

The forty-five minutes I had allotted before the concert was far too brief, and I returned to my seat in the hall to await the start of the concert. The auditorium seats about seven hundred patrons, but it is far from full this afternoon. Just before intermission, I took the time to look over the audience and counted 152 parents, grandparents, siblings, and one section of the hall that seemed occupied by a group of students. (Later, I discovered who they were and why they were sitting as a group.) 152 souls seemed like a small number for such a large group of students. There were 69 musicians, and the young people in the audience left less than two parents or grandparents for each student on stage. Eventually, even the very best music program with very good students (both musically and behaviorally) will suffer if ignored by a

significant number of parents. Are they absentee by divorce? Death? Relocation? Apathy? Or are they boycotting the replacement?

I had enough time before the concert to start reading the program notes. These notes were not the kind of notes one would find at a symphony orchestra concert in a large city. Instead they spent little time discussing the history or description of the music scheduled on the program, and instead focused on the traditions of the school's music program. Mike had written a long, full-page letter entitled "A Look Back ... A Vision Forward":

In 1959 BCHS held its first Symphony Concert which was intended to bring symphonic orchestra literature to the band stage and to "re-create" the sound of the symphonic band that had been fostered and grown in institutions like the University of Illinois under Mark Hindsley and Harry Began. Further, the concert would always feature one or more soloists. These were world class performers from all over the world who would come and play with the Belmont City Band. This concert was revolutionary of the time for school ensembles. High School band programs did not strive to play music with world class soloists all over the country; rather, only in select districts was this the norm like the famed Cass Tech High of Harry Began, Ithaca High School of Frank Battisti and Belmont City High School of Frederick Franklin. In Mr. Franklin's own description the music and purpose of the concert was "to educate the audience and performer on music that could not be fully understood upon one hearing." The purpose was not just to play symphonic music like of our orchestral counterparts but to re-create the symphonic sound and experience of attending a formal symphonic orchestral concert. The look of the band moved from marching uniform on stage like the military bands of old to the concert black orchestras in the country, moved the Symphony Concert into what it has become to this day: a top notch, classy presentation of outstanding music to be experienced by both performer and audience alike.

So in 2010 as we celebrate the beginning of the next 50 years of Symphony Concerts one would be near-sighted to not examine and re-examine what we do with this concert and more importantly why we do this concert. As anyone nearby my weekly discussions with Mr. Franklin and Mr. Hedges can attest, they are often saying "don't let us influence what needs to happen next." These conversations always intrigue me because the humbleness that is inherent in those statements shines

through; however, one cannot help but be influenced by the past and the past is what drives us forward into repeating what has been done or modifying to suit the current and the now and to set up what must be in the future. In the attempts of my predecessors to stay “out of the way” as they say. What has truly come about is a wonderful time of reflection, question, dialogue, passionate research and a quest for what these concerts will be from this time forward. I know for sure that they will not be the same. To do anything the same, for too long, I believe philosophically is to be a car spinning its tires in the snow. However, without solid grounding... without the tread that was laid long before the snow fell, the car will not go forward. Therefore, with a solid grip on the foundation of this concert and with knowledge of where we have been, we now move forward into a broader-based, type of symphony concert that welcomes not only the history of the Symphonic Sound, but embraces fully the modern movement of the wind band including new compositional sounds, new soloists and composers and new types of ensembles. In 1952, in a hospital bed in New York, the Wind Ensemble was born from the head of Frederick Fennell, the long time conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensemble and the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra. His determination and challenging of the status quo forced new outlooks on what a band was and what sounds it could produce. In doing the new, it challenged programs to decide which band to be: “symphonic band in the older style”, or “wind ensemble in the newer style.” Unfortunately, until about 20 years ago, schools and further regions of the world felt that this was an explicit choice... one in which you chose which side of the pendulum to belong. Today, after a period of bitter debate, most successful institutions embrace both entities as viable, worthwhile ways of communicating musical expression. Further, do to the leadership and vision of people like Frank Battisti at the New England Conservatory and Rodney Winther at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, the band has gone back to the original roots of “wind music” and a resurgence of chamber music has begun. Composers all over the world have started writing for winds again as the unique and special musical communicators in which the originated in the courts of the aristocracy of France, Spain and England. This year, our symphony concert repertoire has music from all three of these types of band; symphonic, wind ensemble, and chamber winds. Each piece of this triadic whole is worthy of all persons to explore, learn and express music. In this way, one can see us return to the original roots of this concert even as we venture towards new ideas. We continue to find the “Symphony” in all of us (Davis, 2010).

These were necessary notes for this special concert. The community and the students were not very concerned about the birth and death dates of Vincent Persichetti, but they are very concerned about placing their children’s care in the hands of a stranger.

Mike carefully crafted notes that describe the “hierarchy” that he has inherited, the traditions that he is strapped with (most of which he appreciates), and his plan for moving on – with or without Bill. But of course Bill is there. He has been watching from the lighting booth, at the top of the auditorium. I wonder if he is there to stay away from the “action” – to continue disconnecting from involvement in the program. Does he feel obligated to attend this, or is he drawn to the concert out of concern? Still, his “looming” over the proceedings seems to have some significance.

My reading of the program notes was not quite finished by the time the lights in the hall were dimmed. I checked my recorder to make sure it was running, and in a matter of seconds Mike came on stage, almost running towards the podium, and very quickly started the first piece – the traditional beginning for fifty-one years of Belmont City’s band concerts - Carmen Dragon’s arrangement of “America the Beautiful”. There will be no “Star-Spangled Banner” tonight, but the beautiful feeling in this auditorium was far greater than any “bombs bursting in air”.

From a purely clinical standpoint, the performance of “America the Beautiful” was not very well done. Intonation was poor, and the students seemed unprepared for certain passages. Two possibilities came to mind – the first that the concert was not as well planned as I had hoped, since the upcoming literature listed on the program was far more difficult than this simple piece, and the second that Mike and his students worked so hard on those pieces other that they ignored this simple, but expressive arrangement.

Knowing a little about Mike’s career goals helped to explain his first difficult choice for the concert – Vincent Persichetti’s *Pageant*. This work was commissioned in 1953 and is considered one of the first modern-day compositions to use the concert band



as a venue for “serious” music. If Mike is planning on moving on to a position in higher education, his resume must include performances of literature like this.

The time between “America the Beautiful” and “Pageant” was very short - hardly time for the students to be seated after the applause died. The horn solo that began the piece was played very well, and the clarinets came in after that were also playing beautifully. The second explanation for the poor quality of “America the Beautiful” was now apparent. The students were performing at a very high level of quality. Having heard the band during Bill’s final year, it was clear that the quality had not diminished, and perhaps had even improved. There were problems, of course, but they were minimal (later, in reviewing Bill’s comments, we see that his opinion is predictably different). From years of experience, I have found that a constant indicator of success in conducting works that are this complex is whether or not the students are carefully watching the conductor. Certain sections of players are usually guiltier than others of not doing this – especially the percussionists, and so I watch them most attentively. Of the nine players on stage, only four were performing on this piece, and two of them were giving Mike the attention needed to perform it – the other two appeared to be less than totally engaged in the work.

Still, a fifty percent participation rate for percussionists is relatively good. Of course the students varied in their degrees of confidence, but as an ensemble it is apparent that most of the principal players have developed not only confidence but also leadership, and the more timid players were following along quite well. It was only at the difficult end of “Pageant” that certain players fell short, but for the most part the performance was very good for students in high school.

The choir director at Belmont City, Luci Smith, also serves as Mike's assistant. When I first met her I was concerned that perhaps she was not comfortable serving in that position, since she has been teaching for at least ten years more than he has. Mike took the time to make some comments about the Persichetti, but did not introduce Luci as she came out to conduct the next piece, although she is credited in the program as "Luci Smith: Master Musician, colleague and friend. Words cannot say enough." In addition, there may be some greater meaning to be found in the piece that she conducted - James Barnes' "Yorkshire Ballad". From the standpoint of program planning, it makes sense to perform a much simpler piece after such a difficult one. Barnes has become famous as a composer of music for younger groups, and this piece, based upon songs Barnes heard during a trip to the Yorkshire Dales in northern England, makes few rhythmic or technical demands on the students, with the exception of playing in tune.

Luci's piece went well – it would have been a surprise to everybody if it didn't, due to its simplicity – and when Mike reappeared on stage it was with Phil Clevenger, the featured soloist for the afternoon. This is a position I was in many years ago, before the new school had been built and when Bill was struggling with a dilapidated auditorium. There is a full-page biography of Phil in the program, with all of his awards and achievements, but they all pale in comparison in the face of Mike's glowing praise on stage for his former teacher and mentor.

Phil appeared as the soloist for his own composition - "Festive Processional for Horn and Band", which he wrote for horn and organ, and then arranged the work for band for Mike. The band accompaniment is fairly simple, and like other composers for student ensembles, Phil's success as a composer has largely been a result of his accessibility.

The piece went well, and his solo was, as usual, excellent. It was difficult to observe how well Phil and Mike interacted, while keeping an eye on the students at the same time. They played well, and when it was finished they give Phil the traditional “foot tapping” accorded to a soloist who not only performs well, but also was fun to perform with.

With Phil off of the stage, Mike wanted to start the next piece, “The Pines of the Appian Way” from Respighi’s “Pines of Rome” right away... but as he was about to step up on the podium the wail of a baby could be heard from the audience. It brought him to a complete stop, and I could see that he was thrown off his routine by it. He waited patiently, resisting the urge to turn around and face the offender and the caretaker who should know better than to bring a baby to a concert. As Mike and the ensemble waited – and waited for the baby to stop (or the caretaker to leave with the baby), a grin started to move up the corners of his mouth, and soon many of the flutes and clarinets were stifling grins and giggles themselves. Finally, the wailing ceased, and Mike raised his baton. The pause seemed to have actually relaxed the students somewhat.

Those who know “the Pines of the Appian Way” know that it is one of the longest continuous crescendos ever written in classical music. The beginning is very soft, with just a few of the low woodwind and the low brass players “oom-pahing” as softly as possible, depicting the marching Roman army approaching the city on the famous road known as the “Appian Way”. As the army draws nearer, Respighi continues to add instrumentation and louder dynamics, and soon the score is lit up with blaring trumpets, clashing cymbals and high woodwinds to paint a picture of the gleaming shields and swords of the soldiers. By the time the piece is at its peak, everyone needs to be playing

very loud, and the marching of the soldiers is now portrayed by the bass drum and tympani playing as loud as possible.

Mike was clearly in his element for this piece. His training as a conductor reminded him that the size of his metric pattern needed to be appropriate for the dynamic levels, and in the beginning his baton was barely moving. His oboe soloist played perfectly over the quiet ensemble, and the bass clarinet, seldom given such an opportunity, was equally good with her solo. As the soldiers drew closer, Mike's pattern got broader, and the ensemble responded accordingly. The tubas, relegated to playing those dreaded "oom-pahs" that so often stereotype them, continued to breathe deeper and deeper, responding to the demands from the conductor's baton, and as the baton's pattern grew wider, so did the strokes of the tympanist's mallets. Just before the moment that the army arrives at the gates of Rome, the low brass began to play a simple B-flat major scale, with each note getting louder and louder, and when the octave was reached the music exploded with all of the percussion crashing down on the beat, and the trumpets blaring a fanfare of arrival. Now Mike's baton was at its full extension – his arms reaching out to his players, exhorting them to commit all of their air, all of their drumming, all of their hearts – nothing can be held back if the music is to reach full expression.

"Big and loud" is still the way to get an audience excited, and when the final chord of the "Pines" was released, those 150 listeners immediately become an audible part of the program with cheering and applause. There was nothing sedate about it. Just as the players had lost, if only for a moment, their inhibitions about their skills, the audience had lost all of its inhibitions of decorum. The reaction was a passion now, not

just a learned behavior. I found myself wondering why Mike would perform this piece to end the first half of the program, since there is much more to follow – and how does one follow the Roman Army?

Mike's strategy seemed to have been to end the first half as though a separate concert had come to a close. The intermission was announced, and it was mentioned that it would be only 5 minutes long – just enough time for the stage to be reset for the second half, which mostly features the smaller “Chamber Winds” and “Wind Ensemble”. Five minutes was barely time for me to reset my recording equipment, but I had time to watch and listen to the members of the audience. Many had quickly risen from their seats, and the number of coats left on the seats hinted that they were simply making a trip to the restroom. Others were standing in place, chatting with one another. The photographer was busily arranging his equipment in one of the side wings of the auditorium, so that a group picture could be taken at the end of the concert.

When the second half began, Phil Clevenger served as the conductor for the second of his two pieces on the program – “Freedom Fanfare”, written for Mike's former school in Florida. Unlike the music in the first half, this piece is designed to be played in “wind ensemble” style – or just one player on each part. As Mike wrote in the program, “Each student is individually responsible for covering a part and this ensemble has risen to the responsibility” (p. 2). So instead of 69 musicians on the stage, there are only 35.

From a musician's standpoint, the music reveals that these players are the better players of the larger group – they are the leaders, and their confidence shone through in comparison to some of the reluctance heard in the first half. The audience, however, seemed to be disappointed in the sound – after all, it's not “big and loud” like the “Pines

of Rome”. Perhaps technical difficulty is only appreciated by those who have struggled to master it themselves.

If loudness inspires interest, then the second work on the half would explain the increased lack of enthusiasm by the audience. Mike stopped between the Clevenger “Fanfare” and two movements of Robert Spittal’s “Consort for 10 Winds” to briefly describe the history of the chamber ensemble, especially its “glory days” of the baroque and early classical periods, when wealthy aristocrats sponsored performances of this music in their homes.

A scene like this would be commonplace in the late 1700s and early 1800s in Europe, when chamber music was born every house had a place where people would get together, and friends and colleagues would entertain. It’s kind of had a hibernation period, in band music especially, but wind ensembles like the one in front of your were popular, and kings and queens and all sorts of royalty, especially in France would hire court musicians whose job was simply to come and play great music, so we hope that you’ll enjoy our little snippet of this today.

Unfortunately, the audience apparently didn’t feel “at home”, and these two light, innocuous pieces received only mild applause, with most of the virtuosity of the students going unnoticed. As discreetly as possible, I began watching the members of the audience as they began to fidget, some conversing with their neighbors, others looking down into their laps – where faces were being illuminated by the screens of a number of hand-held electronic devices for texting or reading e-mails.

Mike may have been the most relieved person in the building by the end of the two pieces... and that’s probably because he had programmed a “novelty” of sorts next – a “Fantasy on “Yankee Doodle”. Mike had promoted this piece in the program notes by pointing out that “the piece begins with a fanfare statement and then a subdued humorous take complete with tuba solo... yes, tuba solo” (p. 3). Perhaps worried that not everyone

had read the notes, Mike also pointed this out before the band, now back at full strength, began to play. When the tuba solo began, the audience began to giggle a bit, and the tuba players were clearly having a good time. Once their solo had finished, I saw two of the players discretely “high five” one another, a gesture that probably was seen by more than a few parents, but Mike chose to not notice it.

After the fantasy was over, the tuba soloists were given a solo bow – and now the audience seemed more engaged. The familiar “toe-tapping” music, along with a little fun, made the concert more like what they had come to expect from Mike’s predecessor, Bill, who was quietly watching from the lighting booth, almost appearing as the “ghost of traditions not quite past”.

Mike’s choice of a humorous piece right before the finale was probably “spot on”. It relaxed both the audience and the students, and provided him with the opportunity to make the speech that everybody knew was going to have to be said.

Thank you for all of you attending today – we never want to miss an opportunity to talk about all the great things that they do in this community – we are fortunate to have such great teamwork – I do want to take a moment to recognize – I know that we – have a few school board members who called and said they could not make it this evening but it our school board is here, could they please stand and be recognized?  
(applause)

Our board, and our administration, despite very hard times currently and probably to come, our commitment is to music education and that is very vital to all of our students in the school – not just the ones on stage, but the ones that participate in choir, or the ones that come up to me in the hallway and say “Mr. Gordon, I’m petitioning for a rock band class. (laughter) Good! We’ll find time to teach it. Music comes in many different forms, and I cannot – and Mrs. Smith cannot thank you all enough for remembering that in these dire times. All of our band parents and community members and family and friends who have come here today – we’re so grateful – thank you for all the hours of driving, and bringing kids to rehearsals, dealing with “crazy Gordon”, and all of those wonderful things that you do. We are very, very grateful. Dr. Clevenger would mentioned some things and I can’t tell you in the short time hoe

much me means to me as a musician, and what he's done for music. But – to give you an idea he comes to play a solo and he asks me if the horns could show up at 8AM on Saturday morning. (laughter) I said 'no, they're off doing math team, basketball, and all the other things our kids do. Varsity Basketball team – where are you? These guys, are awesome, they were, shall we say "highly encouraged" to come to our concert today (laughing in the audience) by their coach, and we have such a great relationship between the athletics and the arts and we are so similar it's scary – we live near each other, in the building, and we enjoy that – and it is so awesome to see you guys here – we've enjoyed playing for you this season, and we've enjoyed watching you play every second of every game, to the enth degree, watching you scramble – it's just been a joy – pep band'll always be in there with you guys and we enjoy that camaraderie that we have, so that's another great thing about Belmont City and I hope that you'll recognize that – how many students on stage are involved in a sport or other activity outside of music? (applause) The best thing that can happen to any person is to have a well-rounded education and at Belmont City that philosophy is not only something we put on paper but it is something that we believe in, and it's something that we act out every day. We have teachers and just lots of great things – I want to thank Mr. Hartmann, who's helping with lights and sound this afternoon, one of our social studies teachers, we're always indebted to you (applause)

As we close this afternoon's concert I just want to thank you once again for coming- I also want to remind you that we will be taking pictures as soon as the concert's over, so we kindly ask you to get out quickly, head to the reception, and have a good time and we will join you there very shortly. There is so much history, I'm just blessed to kind of be the next person that gets to stand in front of this great group...And all the great work that Mr. Hedges has done, and Mr. Franklin has done before him- we cannot say enough about those two gentlemen and their contributions to music, and I'm – I'm just going to tear up, so I'm just so indebted to them and so blessed to stand in front of these great students who work their butt off every day. Thank you for coming, and enjoy Richard Strauss's "Konigsmarsch". (applause)

Observing a moment like this is not a rare opportunity. It happens in many places, many concerts. It is brewed by the values of the community, and stirred by the passions of someone like Mike. His speech has accomplished several things. There is great significance in seeing Mike at the podium of the stage while Bill, his predecessor is looking on at the opposite end... and it is at the very least symbolic that Bill is in the



lighting booth, as if an apparition from the other world is looking down from above on his successor.

Mike's comments were not well rehearsed, and perhaps that gave them even more impact. They seemed to come from the heart, but how sincere were they? Clearly Mike wants to succeed as Bill's "replacement" – but from our discussions I knew that he wants to succeed primarily from a personal standpoint. But his personal success is inextricably tied to the success of Belmont City's program... and that success can't continue unless the entire community – not just the students, and not just the parents of the students – embrace him as a suitable leader. Has he reached that point yet, after eight months "on the job"?

At the reception, I was able to talk with Phil Clevenger and his wife Sherry, who had come along, in spite of being ill. I kept looking for Bill, assuming that he would be easy to spot in the cafeteria. To my surprise, he was nowhere to be found. When I had been packing up my car it was snowing heavily, and I knew I would have to leave very soon. Was his absence a planned move, or did he decide to leave before the roads became bad? I emailed him after making the three-hour trip home to find out. His response came a few days later:

Terry,  
Good to see you . . . I didn't stick around for the reception . . . Still walking that fine line of being there, but not being there . . .  
I liked how Mike acknowledged everyone in the program and verbally. It was a good idea to change the format of the printed program - having a student submit a cover to IMEA to be used for the journal and receive honorable mention is a first - nice to have that as the program cover. If you notice he let go of all of the history of the concert (past soloists, tours etc.) good move - begin new traditions. I like the use of the wind ensemble and chamber group - we've used this in the past, but nothing consistent. The students struggled more with these pieces - probably didn't get as much rehearsal time and unfortunately students don't practice as

much on their own as they should. I know that I worried about maintaining the tradition of the symphony concert - to Mr. Franklin that was a "symphonic" sound and specific literature to achieve that . . . We were no longer able to achieve that "symphonic" sound with current instrumentation so to try to hang onto that was silly in my view . . . I simply moved this concert into the realm of serious literature rather than a pops concert that so many groups do in the Spring.

Just got home from directing the Mendota, Ottawa, Streator junior high band festival. These three schools have been doing their own junior high mass band festival for 50 years. Started with Tom Rice, Streator; Eben Campbell, Mendota; and John Kinnison, Ottawa. Tom and Eben were there and John's wife Edre was there (John is in a nursing home). Pretty special . . . I directed this festival in 1984 - the year before going to Belmont City - who would know that the following year I would end up as the high school band director. Seemed apropos to conduct the year following my retirement.

Keep smiling  
BILL

That "fine line of 'being there, but not being there..." had me pondering. Not only for what it means to Bill, but to what it means to the community. Clearly the audience saw Bill, hovering above them, almost as a spirit watching over the proceedings. Bill had no involvement in the preparations for the concert. The students seem to be making the adjustment better than he is - when Mike suggested that some of us, including myself and Bill, participate as performers, the students rejected the idea. Bill's subtle discomfort with Mike's changes in the concert format, such as using smaller chamber groups, is interesting in that he notes that it is a departure from Bill's predecessor, as well as a departure from his own traditions.

It is indeed a phenomenon that I had not expected - students understanding the need to "move on" and embrace the change, with whatever consequences. The smiling faces of the students as they posed for pictures after the concert reinforces this. Certainly the occasional malcontent can be found, but the majority - a solid majority - seem happy

that Bill was given closure, that Mike is a suitable replacement, and that the time-honored traditions that have lasted 50 years will remain intact.

The Belmont City concert was given at the end of February. By the end of March, Mike made a decision that would enforce the old adage of “never follow a legend.”

### **The First Successor**

After his “Symphonic Concert”, roughly five weeks passed before Mike and I could get together and talk about his program. During those five weeks, Mike had had to make an important decision. He had been offered a prestigious graduate assistantship to complete his doctoral studies at a well-known band program in the South, and had to make his decision by April first.

Mike was spending part of his spring break at Central University. He had come in part to see old friends, in part to watch ensemble rehearsals and concerts. He has also come in to discuss his decision to leave Belmont City and pursue his doctorate. Before coming to campus, however, he mailed a letter to those directly involved in his decision, including Bill, his predecessor, his students, and several faculty at his alma mater.

Dear Band Family,

It is with a conflicted heart that I announced to the kids today my resignation from Belmont City High beginning August first. I have an opportunity to pursue my dream of higher education instruction beginning with my doctorate study this fall.

This opportunity comes with a full assistantship covering my costs and the opportunity to be mentored by a true leader in the field of college band directing.

Despite my excitement personally, I am torn up inside about leaving here. This decision did not come lightly and I deeply care for all the students and families here at Belmont City. This year I have learned the need for longevity in Belmont City and I realize that I am not the person to remain and provide that stability. I will be continuing to serve you as your director through the summer program and up to the first day of band camp when the new director will work side by side with Mrs. Smith to lead from that point forward. The administration here accepted my resignation yesterday and we are working as a unified team to search

and find the absolute best music candidate for the director of bands position.

With the recent cuts in other districts, the talent available is large. We still have lots to celebrate with our seniors and lots of music still to make together. I just want to say thank you to all of you for the amazing support you provided me this year and you will continue to remain special in my hearts after I depart this August. Please remember: follow your dreams without concern for wealth or stature and you will be happy in your life. It is with that mantra in my core that I embark on my dreams.

Most sincerely with musical love,  
Mike Gordon (Davis, April 2010)

Mike had made it clear to many of his colleagues when he took the position at Belmont City that he had no intention of remaining very long – that his long-term goal was to obtain a doctorate and a position as director of bands at the university level. For a person in his early 30s, Mike’s time frame is beginning to run short. There are many more music educators with the same goal who are much younger and have completed more of the steps than Mike has.

When Mike dropped by my office on a pleasant Friday afternoon, the room was warm, still waiting for the university to turn on the central air conditioning system. Mike has spent time in my office before – most of it while he was an undergraduate, struggling with issues as personal as his failed relationship with another student, with leaving Illinois for Florida, and now with dealing with his decision to leave a public school music program that has a proven track record of success.

Mike was never a student of Bill Hedges, but he was a part of a thriving high school band program in another part of the state when Bill was a major officer in IMEA. A talented hornist, Mike participated in the “All-State” festival for two years before heading off to college at Central University, primarily to study with the Director of Bands there. Mike remembers, as he sat on stage for the concerts, hearing “that crazy bald guy”

giving a speech, and over the years he had many opportunities to witness his work at the festival while an undergraduate music education student.

When Mike returned from teaching in Florida, he had left behind his former spouse (who was not a music educator) and quickly completed the requirements for his master's degree at Central. When he heard that Bill was retiring, he had mixed emotions.

Well, personally and selfishly, it allowed me to have a job, so I felt that was nice – from that standpoint that was a positive thing for me personally, and yet it also it had... I had some trepidation about it because of following anyone that is a legend truly, truly, figuratively, however you want to put it the fact is that is exactly how he's viewed and justifiably so in Belmont City, so when you follow a legend there's a whole lot of things that can come out of that so I was both excited for him, I was proud for him, I knew the history that was involved in it but at the same time I had the unique position of maybe being one of the few people that had some negative feelings about the whole thing just because of what I was going to encounter.

There had been nothing naïve about Mike's approach to taking the position at Belmont City. He had seen too many programs unwilling to free themselves from traditions that could no longer work. The challenge was great, and the variables were greater.

While Mike feels that Belmont City is not unique in having non-contestable traditions in their band program, he does feel that they are exceptional in that their traditions are mostly traditions based on musical excellence. For a veteran teacher to enter such a program, gives the teacher a greater feeling of foreboding than a teacher who may have never encountered such a situation.

Yeah, I think that's a normal feeling for anybody in that situation, when you have somebody there that's become an institution in what they do, in as unique a field as the arts and band, and the amount of community involvement that happens – following anyone that's been there retiring is, I think, that's a very transferable feeling.

Since Mike was willing to use his eight months of experience at Belmont City as a lens for the sorts of experiences a “legend-follower” might encounter, I asked him if he thought the students were able to enjoy band as much this past year. Mike laughed as he quickly replied.

No! Clear as day, and I think my students would answer that too – and I think that would be the case with anybody. I think when you bring somebody new in, regardless of how much fun I’ve had or they’ve had at certain times it’s not AS much fun because there’s not that relationship that’s built yet, and that takes years to develop. And I think – just differences in personality too – the way we go – the way that Bill goes about things and I go about things were different, so I think it was not AS much fun, no.

The type of problems Mike had with his students is very predictable, and very public. Later, Mike’s successor, Mark Hensen, noted that he and Mike had a difficult time just relocating the band chairs for the annual Ice Cream Social. At this point in Mike’s career, it was worth investigating his concern about being considered a “failure in following a legend.”

Well, sure, ‘cause I have an ego like any musician, and I don’t want to be talked about badly, but the fact is, I’m the first director in fifty-one years that has not stayed long-term. And so there’s going to be negative conclusions drawn about that, from everybody’s standpoint. It did make it tougher for me, it also made it tougher for me because I’m a committed educator, and I in no way intended to come into a program and leave it so soon, especially one that has so much history and growth potential. But at the same time, the best thing about what Bill did, and what Fred Franklin did before him, is they developed a program. And the program’s greater than me, and it’s greater than any one person, it’s gonna be fine. We find the right person – I’m not some demagogue that can’t be replaced under any circumstances at all – but yeah, it concerned me a little bit, because you always want to leave a positive impression. But I feel like, because of my experiences that I had prior to Belmont City that I didn’t do any harm, that’s for sure. And I feel like I was a good buffer between Bill and someone else who comes it who maybe isn’t as experienced or maybe has some newer ideas they want to try – they’re not going to be compared to Bill as quickly because I’ve been in the middle, and I’m fine to serve that role.

By the time the summer ended Mike's replacement, Mark Hensen, had been chosen, and they frequently discussed the relationship that had grown up between them, and Mike did, indeed remain comfortable as the "buffer" between the "legacy" and the next descendant to the program.

If I ever had the opportunity it would be really fun to get with Bill and Fred Franklin and anyone around and give a clinic on "This is how you can do a transition" Because the transition – I said I'd been teaching at Belmont City for nine months, and that's true, but I really did start teaching from the moment I interviewed there and they said "OK, you're going to be the guy." I really began at that point, and Bill and I catered to each other, we talked and we planned out the transition, and I came on purpose to a concert, he introduced me to the kids and the parents. I conducted a piece on the summer band so they could kind of get used to me and see me and then we designed the marching band camp where he started teaching for the first few days and I was his assistant, and then halfway through the week we kind of morphed responsibilities to the point where by the end of the week he was doing absolutely nothing as far as direct teaching but was just kind of there – and then that way when the day came when he wasn't there, it wasn't like a band-aid being ripped off. The kids – it was more of a gradual transition. And I think if people are less selfish and think more about the needs and the feelings of the program and the community they can make those transitions work... (I) feel blessed that I was able to be a buffer between the next person who will come in and see how special Belmont City is and will want to stay for a long time. 'Cause they need that.

Surprisingly, Mike has a far different outlook on the benefits of a veteran teacher like Bill staying involved in the band.

Absolutely! And I would say that even if I was still going to be there... the worst thing possible that anyone can do coming into a program I feel where they've had someone that's been there so long is to 'cut the cord', if you will. And say "you're not involved anymore because I'm the new director" and blah, blah, blah... I think a lot of younger teachers would try and make that mistake, because they want to develop their own sense of the program, and you have to, but at the same time, why on God's green earth would you cut off someone who has a direct link to all the answers you need to know as a new director? And someone who the parents buy into, who can be your best advocate, and that's what Bill was for me, and it made the transition so much smoother.

It is difficult to deny that Bill has a direct link to all, or at least most of the answers. Bill would no doubt say he obtained most of those answers from Fred Franklin,

but many of the questions and challenges that Bill has encountered in over three decades of teaching were never questions during Fred's tenure. Mike is convinced that Bill, or any similar legacy, is a resource that a succeeding and successful band director must exploit.

Bill made a lot of visits to Belmont High during his first year of retirement. Some of those visits were, ostensibly, "business", as he was calling on Mike as a "road rep" for the Music Store. Business or not, whenever Bill was in the building, Mike knew that his students would be flocking around their old band director, prolonging the connection between them and delaying the development of a relationship with Mike. While Mike sees Bill as an important resource, he has caused problems with his involvement at times.

It's so hard try and put into words and to look at all the things – I mean we didn't talk – we talked a lot about the positive things – but I think I'd be in error if I didn't share a few of the things that were difficult of the transition, from the standpoint of, and whether or not they are applicable I don't know, but just - I think they are in the standpoint of as a retired director – again because its not about the person, it's about the program – and having to let go of that. I frankly don't know how I'll do it when it comes time for me – and so having that opinion of it, helped me understand sometimes if I saw Bill in the building and someone else would say to me "Why is he here?" I'd just kind of smile and go "Well, that's where he wants to be." And I guess I'm just too stubborn of an ass or have an ego and don't care, you know if he's standing in the room when I'm rehearsing and I'm sitting there worried about "What's Bill thinking about this right now?" Because he and I had already established a rapport where if he didn't like something I was doing he would be able to tell me about it, and we would be open to that dialogue, and I think that's great. But there was a time where he got a phone call from a parent of a current student of mine wanting to have his help because this student had been a private student of his. So he said "Sure, I'll come in and help you work on this solo and ensemble thing." And I found out about it later and I was kinda like "Hey, man, you need to call me and let me know this so I'm aware of this change of command, 'cause I don't want this parent thinking they can call the former director – no matter how good you are – and get some –you know, and not put me in the process. Bill and I talked about it at length and he was like "Oh my gosh, and I never saw it as that, I just saw, you know, it was a former student of mine," and I truly believe he meant no harm, and he, later on, kind of opened his eyes a little bit – he went "Wow, I see how that could have been, you know, an interesting thing." It could have been a problem, but it wasn't



– we worked it out, and everything was fine, and you’re back to “Is it about Bill?” or “Is it about Mike?” or “Is it about the program?” and it’s about the program. And that kid had – Bill had the knowledge that I didn’t have, and that’s where I was really glad that we talked about it, and if you focus on the kid, and you focus on the program then that doesn’t become an issue anymore. And that’s why I say it’s not really negative thing. It’s just a situation we had to work through that I think anybody would work through in this situation. If you’re going to keep the former director as involved, you have to be ready to have these situations come up – and the kid had the benefit that Bill knew what solo he had played the last five years, he knew the best option to give this student, it would have taken me longer to get to the same answer, and the bottom line of it is it didn’t matter if it was me or him, it was what was best for the student. And if you focus on that, I think a lot of the conflict goes away. And frankly, when I explained that to my administration they were a little bit more happy than when it first happened. So, that’s just one of the – I mean there’s been so few situations where we actually butted heads but that was when it first got reaction, I was frustrated ‘cause I was like “What’s this parent doing calling him when they could call me?” and you know, this typical thing of a new director, I think in a transition.

Mike sees episodes like this as a small price to pay for the wisdom that Bill could provide as an advocate for his plans, and also as a mentor.

Yes, he’s been a mentor to me. As a graduate of an Illinois school I had the weird thing happen to me of I moved away and taught in Florida, so I had never taught in Illinois yet, and so what I knew of being a teacher in Illinois was just from my being a student at Central High, so Bill was great to get me re-introduced to the nuts and bolts of teaching in an Illinois public school again. And just from the standpoint of – he was always very careful of saying “I’m not trying to interfere,” or “I’ll be there if you have a question...” just knowing that I could call him with anything from “Where’s this file?” to “I’m having a hard time with this family what can I do – do you have any insights?” He would do that, and very unselfishly and without concern for self-gratitude. So he was a mentor in that regard, to me, and he was also very supportive of me from the beginning. And I think he saw, as any good retired teacher who invests their entire life, really, to this program, they certainly don’t want to see it go down in flames. And so they’re going to be there to help the new person.

Mike’s outlook on having Bill as a mentor is different than that usually taken by successors, in part because he is not a first, or second – year teacher. As a result, he credits Bill with advising him on board members more than balance, on diplomacy more than diatonic scales, on community more than chromaticism.

While he was generous with his praise for Bill's understanding of the nuances that helped develop the program, Mike was a little more evasive when it came to trying to pin down some key reasons that Bill's work at Belmont City has been so successful.

The gut reaction is "what's the best answer?" And I don't know if there is one – I think one thing that maybe he will definitely say and would say in that maybe someone who's not as close to the program would not have the insight to know about – one of the best reasons that he's had such a good band program is the support staff from the administration side, and also his colleague, Luci Smith. And Luci, I don't think gets enough credit for her input and help in the band program, because her role as the assistant band director, you know, she helped out in whatever way Bill needed her to, and the same with me, but she's been there, that consistency of being there for the last 16 years – I think really helped. Before her was Barb Hedges, you know, Bill's wife, which ran a great program, but I wouldn't wish that on anybody! You know, to have to be married and your "work wife" is truly your "work wife"... that'd be very difficult, I think...

Since Barbara had, at one time, been the superintendent at Belmont City, I asked Mike if he thought that would be more difficult than having her as a boss. Mike laughed at the thought:

Which she was, that's true! That was a very unique and hard situation, but Luci, from a standpoint of being a clarinetist by trade, and learning the vocal side, and being there as a resource, for him, when she was asked, was invaluable as far as supporting that program. For her being there 16 years and seeing, really, she views him as a mentor and as somewhat a legend in the profession, to be able to work with him that long is special, and it helped me in the transition too, I think that's a big reason – the community, and I think that's the thing. Bill is as much of a great politician as he is a band director, and I mean that in a positive way. From the standpoint of somebody who can rally the troops and get people behind music for the right reasons, and the community understands that it's about a program and I think probably the biggest statement of Bill's success is that every Memorial Day or Veteran's Day we bring people together to play with the Alumni Band and it's not a matter of "do we have enough," it's can we find enough chairs?" People come back willingly to play and they're truly life-long musicians – I think that's his greatest legacy.

Mike's assessment of Bill's greatest legacy can also be compared to the keystone for building a greater one. There are smaller legacies that Bill has forged that define his

character in the eyes of the community in Belmont City. We explored some of these, including Bill's contribution to the new school building.

When the new building was built – and they still talk about the new building - what was it? 2003, and it was finished seven years ago now, but when the new building was built I don't know if it was intentional, I don't know how much input he had directly, it would be interesting to ask him that question – when the music wing was built it was built right next door – I feel was great – was built right next to the physical education area, where the gym, the coaches, and all the teachers that are involved on the athletic side are right next door to us, and he talked about the benefit of finally, in the new building, seeing each other and seeing the hours that we all put in. And the commonality and the bond - and Luci will say most definitely solved a lot of problems that had been in the past where there was difficulty with kids being involved in everything - since the new building came about there's a grown mutual respect, and it's something I worked hard to continue to foster when I was there, with success, and Bill did as well... that we're all on the same page and the same team and we do things so much alike – and I think the actual physical location had a lot to do with it. And I don't know if that was planned or not, or if that's just what worked out, but gosh – it makes a huge difference.

I mentioned to Mike that Bill had pointed out the strategic location of the athletic facilities when I first visited the high school, over a year ago, and also noted how Mike had integrated the improved relationship with the athletic staff during his speech at the Symphonic Concert in February. Mike agreed that Bill had done much to foster that relationship over the years, even when they were trying to co-exist in the old school.

From the stories that I've heard from him, but yeah, the institution of Belmont City High School, if you say Belmont City High School in music settings, the next words out of anyone's mouth is Bill Hedges. I think that says something about it. And depending upon the age of the person, they may say Fred Franklin first and then Bill Hedges, because they really have been leaders of the school and the community, so he contributed to the overall atmosphere by providing support, of the students involved in many different attitudes of it... he certainly made his way around the building during the course of a day, making sure to socialize and hang out with all the people that were vital to the band program being successful. Cafeteria staff, administration, whether it was to go down to get the 'scoobie snacks' third hour or various cookies, or whether it was to say "hi" to the cafeteria people I'm not sure, 'cause he was legendary for finding every snack in the building, but he – even in that there's a being – getting out of the room, meeting people, being supportive was very good.

In the months that Mike had worked at Belmont City, he had learned a lot about the program, and had come to understand the reasons that the community was holding on to all of its traditions. Mike firmly believes that he would have been able to continue on at Belmont City longer, had his irresistible graduate assistantship not presented itself, at least in part due to his improving relationship with the students. By the spring, they were talking more freely about their feelings for Bill.

Mike: One of the exercises that I had the kids do about halfway through this year was have them comment on “what is your favorite band moment?” and I made sure I put on the paper “does not have to be this year.” And so kids would write about – one of the euphonium players, Ken Curtis, who’s an outstanding musician, and his family has been in Belmont City for years and his parents were graduates of the school, and Ken is a great player and another – I guess this was last year since there was another euphonium player there named Rob Peterson, and the kids would remember the story of Bill chasing Ken in the band room because Ken had grabbed a cookie that was supposed to be left over for Bill at some point during the day, and he was ticked, so he says “I remember Bill guffawing and running across the band room after Ken with the cookie.” And things like that, although it’s not a truly musical experience, it goes to show the atmosphere, it goes to show the –the thing that has to be there in a high school program of the kids being comfortable enough to see that you are a person, and see that you have real needs, I guess? I think he was just being fun and messing with him, but so the kids, their painting of the experience was they had a great time in band, and all the things that came with it. So I think the kids, they had a good experience with that, the parents that have talked about when they were in Bill’s band, the experiences they had, the tours that they’ve gotten to go, all over the world, to go see things over the course of time that Belmont City’s been doing that – and the fact that the tour was not to go win a trophy, the tour was to go play at places in the world that they would not otherwise be able to visit... to go to DC and see the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, or to go and do the New York trip or the last trip that he did, where they went to Virginia and they got to do a lot of historical things there, and play in different communities and when I took the job at Belmont City we talked about trips, because it was an off year for the band but they’ll be touring next year, it’s like “Well, what do you do?” Well this IS what we do at Belmont City, it’s not a “What do you want to do?” And that was how it was set up – you WILL play in a retirement home or someplace like that, you WILL do this many concerts in public, and that’s a board thing, they expect to see that, and I think that... (if) you’re going to tour, and take a trip, this is truly going to be an educational experience first and foremost, and I wish more schools would do that – And I think Bill, and before him Fred Franklin, really put that in place

and the school board there truly doesn't know anything else. And if someone else came in...

Terry: That would be too intimidating to go against it!

Mike: Yeah, I mean they really are, and if someone came in and said "Hey, we're going to go to Disney World for six days, and we're just going to do a clinic and hang out in the parks, the trip would never get passed, and that's a credit. So the kids, whether or not they realize it now, the adults who have been in his program back when he was an earlier teacher, 'cause he is that old, the adults – the parents of these kids I have now, they still talk about those experiences and they realize now what they have.

Although he did try to make a few changes, on the whole Mike has been an erstwhile "caretaker" of Bill's program. He knew he would not be able to instigate too much change without a backlash, probably from the adult members of the community more than from the students. Now, Mike may be more concerned about the future of the program after he's gone than Bill.

With Mike leaving at the end of the school year for North Carolina, both Bill and I have accepted the notion that it is possible that Mike will never return to teach in his home state. While the *de facto* network of music educators often brings former colleagues back together through state and MENC conventions, or the MidWest Band and Orchestra Clinic, Mike knows that Bill will gradually be less of a part of that network, and so I asked him what he would like Bill to remember about him. "What would I like him to remember about me? I would LIKE him to remember about me that he gave me..."

Mike suddenly stopped in mid-sentence, as though he had second thoughts about what he was going to say, and wanted to consider the impact of it. For a moment, he seemed held back by the stark reality that he was leaving a community he had come to love, and was losing a mentor as well as a friend.

He gave me a full-grown child of the Belmont City band program, something that he had developed, and gave me the blessing and the freedom and the space to nurture it in a new and different way. And I would hope that he would remember about me that I really took that to heart and took a lot of pride in whatever decisions were made or whatever way we went with things, that there was always – it was always based on a true connection to philosophy and a true reverence for what he had set up. And I would like him to remember me as a – an absolute passionate musician that tried to get the best out of the kids.

Mike's hiring had been Bill's final official contribution to the Belmont City band program. He had chosen Mike himself, with the hope that he would be exactly what Mike claims to be. Together, they carefully did their best to assure a smooth transition by gradually shifting responsibilities from Bill to Mike. No one is disputing Mike's claims that the transition was working, certainly not Bill, although he is disappointed that he is leaving so soon. Their parting has been a graceful, diplomatic one, and as a result Mike has strong feelings about how he will remember him.

I was just thinking about one of the last times that he came into the band room as a Music Store representative, and just seeing the kids reaction of saying "Hey, Mr. Hedges" and him walking in and going "HEY-O!" - You know, his traditional greeting – and just – there's a joyfulness about him in everything that he does, and a true sense of being content at being the Belmont City High School band director and being very proud of that. And it's not anything to laugh at or joke at, but some people who may not know anything else would look at that and say "A town of 7,000 people and a high school of 600?" And a band that literally from 1981 until now has been 52 kids to 85 kids and never changed out of that range, it's been very consistent, cause he tracked that stuff on every post-a-note, I think that's a very proud thing. And other people may look at that and scoff at it but I think that Bill would stand with the best of the best in the country and say "I'm very proud of what we've done here."

Neither of us had kept track of the time, and I apologized to Mike for keeping him so long. The rehearsal Mike had come to campus to observe was almost over, but Mike was convinced that he had spent his time wisely. There will be other rehearsals, other conductors to observe. Mike has observed, taught and learned a lot during his short year at Belmont City. He still holds fast to his goal of becoming a Director of Bands at the

college level, but perhaps what he has learned most at Belmont City is that for him, his goal no longer holds a much higher measure of prestige as it once did. He has learned that great educators are not measured by the number of students in their program, or the number of awards they have on their shelves, or the number of times their achievements have taken them to famous events. As he pursues his goal, he will take some measure of Bill's legacy along with him.

### **A Party Full of Tributes**

Peter's retirement party was by invitation only, and being the "outsider" of the group made me somewhat uncomfortable at first. At the same time, it afforded me that precious "mouse in the corner" opportunity to observe the other party-goers and see how they fit into the occasion.

The party had been hosted by the Pat and Jerry Dow, who had been supportive band parents for both of their daughters at Southern. Two daughters, evenly-spaced over the years, meant that Peter had been an important part of their family's life for nearly a decade. The Dows began raising their family the same way that most middle – class families did in Midville near the close of the century – they moved to a small, mostly-white suburb, with a rapidly-growing school system known for academic excellence. What separates the Dows from other families of the times is that they chose to return to the city and face the problems of an urban school district – if for no other reason than that it had been their home. Had the Dows heeded the statistics of *No Child Left Behind* – had they thought only of the standardized testing scores needed for admission to a prestigious college – such a move would have seemed to place their daughters at academic risk. The Dows, however, made their choice of their children's education on criteria that is seldom

used today – the strength of the bonding of friends and family, and the quality of the educators themselves. Their devotion to Peter borders on that of another family member.

The Dows have a small home, one that might best be described as a “bungalow” in a part of town that built rows of those houses in the 1950s to accommodate the post-war baby boom. When I arrived for the party the small driveway that led to their one-car garage was full of cars. The Dows are located on the corner of Wyler and Oak streets in West Midville, and there were cars lining both streets for at least a block in every direction. What little lawn in the back that had been set aside for the house had vanished under the construction of an outdoor deck and a swimming pool, and the entire area was full of guests. As I arrived I was directed to that area, where dozens of well-wishers were gathered around Peter, most were holding cans of beer in their hands. Since I had come in the front door, however, I found myself taking a slight detour through the arched passageways into the living room, where I had spotted Peter’s wife, Wendy, standing with a few women. “Looks like you’ve come over here to get away from the crowd for a while”, I remarked, as Wendy grabbed my hand. “It’s so good you could come!” She bubbled. “Peter was hoping you could make it.” Wendy was retiring too, but only a few of her co-workers seemed to be aware of it. Today was clearly a day to mark the accomplishments of her husband, and she seemed very comfortable with that. “I want you to meet Pat – this is her house, and she’s putting on this terrific party for Peter.”

As we shook hands, I wondered if the Dows saw their own party just as a tribute to Peter, or if they saw this as a party to honor both Peter and Wendy. Perhaps the old saying of “behind every man there is a great woman” has become passé, but Peter’s



legacy would certainly be far different than it would have been without his wife, as we shall see in both of their interviews.

My detour gave me a different entrance to the back yard, and as I came onto the deck it was almost impossible to get close to Peter. The large group of about 18 people on the deck consisted of former students, co-workers, and parents – including Jerry Dow, who noticed that both of my hands were empty. “There’s beer in that ice chest, and soda in the other – help yourself!” As I reached for a soft drink, I thanked him and introduced myself, noting that I had been playing in ensembles with Peter for many years. “It was really nice of you to put on this party for Peter,” I noted. Jerry seemed proud that he was given the opportunity to do it. “We went through ten years of being Southern Band Parents,” he said. “Three daughters, one right after another. They loved Mr. Williams, and we loved him for it. He did more for their education than anyone else at that school...”

There was a slight trailing off of Jerry’s voice at that remark, as though he realized that Peter’s extraordinary contributions were even more extraordinary in the face of the declining conditions at Southern. While their neighborhood had remained relatively untouched by the gang violence and drug culture that had infested the school area, he seemed worried that while his youngest daughter had just graduated, the conditions that his and other families had fought to eliminate were beginning to expand. For a moment, we both seemed to look around the neighborhood, as if trying to capture the image of what Jerry and his family had dreamed of for their home.

That moment was soon interrupted by the sound of a very powerful voice – one designed to project over dozens of chattering students, saxophones, drums and other

instruments. “Terry! You found the place!” My strained voice seemed to pale in comparison, as I reminded him that I had once lived in the area. Peter introduced me to several of his co-workers, and to Bob Pierce, the current president of the Band Parents Group. Bob has seen his son go through the program, and now his daughter is a member of the drum line. Bob was not interested in talking about next year’s band, however. In fact, no one wanted to talk about the future. For the observer, it was clear that today was a day to look back.

Just across the street from the Dow’s house is the West Midville Christian Church, a small church on the corner that has been well maintained since its construction in the mid- 1950s, along with the rest of the neighborhood. After a while, Pat was standing in the middle of the street waving her arm, signaling to her guests that it was time to head for the church’s basement. Just in case any of the guests hadn’t had their fill in the house, there was a large sheet cake, with a saxophone drawn in yellow and red icing, along with bowls of punch, and assorted snacks. I counted ten large tables, with eight chairs at each table, all facing a large table up front with several chairs for Peter and his family. Both of his children had come – Emily, who had just finished nursing school, and David, who had gone off to college to study landscaping. In addition, Peter’s mother was there, and so was his brother, who had come from Chicago. I felt that I could observe from the back, so I found a seat behind one of the pillars, near the kitchen, where Pat and several other women were still working. A couple of men were bringing out more tables, apparently to accommodate more guests than they had originally expected. The original tables had coverings made of paper, but they had run out. It had seemed that

the Dow's house was filled to overflowing, and now the church's basement was becoming equally packed.

As the crowd in the basement became larger, so did the diversity of the participants. Many of the Southern parents were African-American, while the neighborhood in which the party was being given was still predominantly white. While there is virtually no part of the Southern district that could be considered affluent, some of the guests had chosen to dress quite elegantly, while others dressed more casually. Some of the guests heading for the speaker's table were wearing suits and dresses.

Once the basement was filled, the guests of honor came down the stairs to spontaneous applause. Peter, who has always prided himself on remaining composed during "performances", waved to his friends, and along with Wendy took his seat at the center of the front table. He made sure that his mother sat at his right side, and Wendy sat on his left. Their children sat alongside Wendy, and Peter's brother, Paul sat next to his mother.

Pat Dow welcomed us all to the gathering, and described the order of events. "There are several people at this table, who have things they would like to say about Peter, and then we'd like anyone else who'd like to say whatever they'd like to say, but we're going to start with Peter's brother, Paul."

Both Peter and Paul are big men. Paul has moved to Chicago, where he works in real estate. His remarks about Peter were predictable – the stories about growing up together, about Peter's musical abilities (and the lack of his own), and a few humorous anecdotes about Peter getting into trouble a few times.

After Paul finished speaking, a very tall man stood up, dressed in a black suit, looking much like a successful business executive. “Some of you might remember me. My name is William Johnson, and I was in Mr. Williams’ band back in the early ‘90s – I graduated in 1995.” He paused for a moment, looked over at Peter, and had difficulty in saying his next sentence. “I wouldn’t have graduated if it hadn’t been for this man.” There was another pause. He went on to talk about his career as a business executive in Chicago, where he now lives. There were jokes about Peter’s hard discipline, William’s occasional rebellions against that discipline, and he closed with another version of “he made me what I am today.”

Peter had stayed seated while his brother had spoken, but when William finished he was on his feet, hugging his former student. His obsession with composure had given way to emotion, and he was clearly overcome with what was obvious to everyone else in the church – that William was just one of dozens of students who saw him as a major influence on their futures.

There were more speakers, of course – a few parents, who, like the Dows, saw two, three, or even more of their children flourish under Peter’s guidance. There were more former students, most of who had recently graduated, and two were still in school. After a while I looked at my watch and realized that over two hours had gone by since we had all assembled there in the basement. Instead of any formal closure, the time between people getting up to speak, gradually become wider, until most of the guests were chatting among each other. I had hoped for a moving speech of some sort by the guest of honor, but Peter had remained silent.

Eventually, while no one else seemed to have left the party, I decided to quietly leave. As I arrived outside, Peter's brother, Paul was standing next to the church, having a cigarette. While he seemed pensive, I was compelled to approach him and introduce myself. "I've known your brother for many years," I said, "and I'm sure you're proud of him." Paul barely looked up from his cigarette and said "yeah, thanks." His apparent indifference was surprising. Paul is apparently successful in business in Chicago, but in Midville it is his brother who is the success.

### **Learning How to Follow a Legacy**

It has been a long time since I've visited Southern High School, but the exterior of the building still appears like it did when it was new. Built in the 1960s, it's a sprawling campus that covers several city blocks. Unlike most high schools that are this old, there are no signs of additions to the original building. Pictures of the building when it was new confirm that it is exactly the same... on the outside, perhaps.

Inside, Southern High School has drastically changed. When it was built, Midville was a community "on the grow" with a massive heavy equipment industrial base and the international headquarters for one of the largest corporations in the world. The southwest side of Midville was prospering, and Southern was built to hold an anticipated peak enrollment of nearly 2,000 students. As I walked into the main concourse, I was met by a uniformed patrolman, in charge of registering all guests. Before I could proceed to the music wing, I was instructed to check in at the main office with "Daisy", who first had to confirm that I have an appointment. Prior to my coming, I had asked the principal, Shannon Cooper, if I could pay her a complimentary call a few

minutes before meeting the band director, Jeff Steele, but she was temporarily out of the building.

Once Daisy confirmed that I was supposed to be meeting with Jeff, she led me out into the main hall, and instructed me to turn left just before I reached the end of the wing. As I walked down the hall I noticed that it (and all of the other halls I passed by) is extremely wide – where most schools might have halls that are, perhaps 15 feet wide, the halls at Southern are at least 5 feet wider. I can envision a time long past when hundreds of students filled these halls, chatting, slamming lockers, and waiting until the last possible second to jump into their classrooms, which are also quite large and blessed with plenty of natural light as well as the standard fluorescent lighting. Today, however, the halls are abandoned, save for the watchful eyes of the security officers. I can't hear anyone chatting. I can't see anyone strolling to the restroom, enjoying their ill-gotten moments of freedom. I walked past a large classroom where a teacher was giving a lecture on what appeared to be American History. Only a handful of students were listening.

When I arrived at the music wing, the silence was even more deafening. There are practice rooms, a band room, and a chorus room, but no music was being made in any of them. In fact no sounds were being made at all, because there were no students around. Jeff, who had been notified that I was on the way, popped his head out of his office, followed quickly by his hand. "C'mon in! Glad you could make it!" I was still pondering the lack of any students in the entire wing at 10 o'clock in the morning. "Care for a brownie?" Jeff held out a baking pan that was half-full of brownies that smelled

delicious, but I chose to stay on my diet. Later, I discovered that brownies are an important part of Jeff's daily lesson plans.

As we were preparing to have our interview, Max Schroeder, the orchestra director, stuck his head in the door. Max and I are old friends, since we both play in the same orchestra and have both taught part-time at Bailey University for many years. "Just stopped by to say 'hi' and grab one of Jeff's brownies", he said. As Jeff and I continued to prepare, however, the discussion turned to the announcement from the previous day that new teachers (and other state workers) will be required to work until they are 67 to receive full retirement benefits. After this year, Max will be three years away from retirement, and like most teachers his age in the district, he's counting the days. As a result of the district closing a high school, Peter was transferred from a successful program there and sent to Southern. "You just can't believe how bad it's gotten here," he said. Since the school had been undergoing federally mandated restructuring, I was curious to see if the changes had produced any effect, especially since I had been unable to meet Dr. Cooper. When I mentioned that I had hoped to see her, Both Jeff and Max looked at me with disgust. Jeff, only in his second year in the district, probably should not have said "she's useless" in front of an observer like myself – but Max, who feels that his lot in the district has fallen as low as it can, simply said "she's an idiot."

Dr. Cooper has an interesting background, which would seem to make her very qualified to lead the restructuring at Southern. Her husband is a professor of mechanical engineering at Bailey, and she has been an adjunct instructor there as well. According to an article which quotes her in Bailey's Alumni magazine, *Entourage*, her first year at Southern has been very successful:

Thus far, we have experienced improvement in the following areas: students' enrollment, increased attendance, an increased course passing rate, lower suspension and expulsion rates, and an increased number of student graduates. (Meister, 2010)

A quick check of Dr. Cooper's statistics confirms some of her claims, but her numbers are deceptive. Enrollment went up from 588 to 786 students, but that was due in part to the addition of a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade academy. There were 12 more students who graduated, but only one student took the ACT. Even with the added students on campus, all of the music programs have had an extremely low turnout. Certainly the opinions of Jeff and Max would not bear Dr. Cooper's claims of "improvement" out.

Jeff is finishing his first year at Southern, after teaching for one year at Bolivia, where Cindy is now teaching. He replaced Cindy after she had taken over following Peter's retirement, and had encountered the sort of opposition typically found when trying to "follow a legend." In many ways, she has served as the type of "buffer" that Mike Gordon feels he has been for the new Director of Bands at Belmont City, Mark Hensen. But Jeff is encountering forms of resistance that Mark will not encounter. He has the support of Peter, but Peter was unable to leave behind a stable program for him. As a result, Jeff has mixed emotions about following this particular legend.

That's a big question, since I took the job, it's always been in the back of my mind that I'm taking over a program that – that this guy that built this legacy of the Southern Band after Paul Bennett was here for thirty – some years, and then somebody stepped in only for about five years, or something, and then Peter Williams was here for either thirty one or two years of his life – it puts a lot of pressure on you to not do poorly... I think that it's really cool that not a lot of programs have that sort of longevity in their directors, for a host of reasons I imagine, but I think that the pressure that it places on me is, uh, extreme... but at the same time I try not to think about it all that much because I don't want to compare myself to them – we're two completely different people. You gotta retire at some point, and it's just real tough, and I imagine that this happens a lot – but – I don't know... you tell me, do directors stay in place for that long? Their entire career?



This is not the only time during our interview that Jeff asked questions of me. He has been out of undergraduate school for less than two years, and is just beginning to understand the traditions and the workings of this sub-culture known as Midwestern Music Education. There are many communities, many schools that can point to music educators that wound up teaching the daughters and sons of their first students, but fewer of them are exceptionally proud of it. More viably for Jeff, larger, urban school districts such as Midville seldom experience such phenomena. In a system such as the one he is working under, burnout would seem inevitable. Still, there are enough music educators in the area that are finishing out their careers after several decades in the same school – enough to say that it is still happening.

Jeff had many other questions, and they were interfering with the task of getting answers from him, but at the same time he was asking questions that fit well into the motives behind this study. His most provocative question was “These teachers you’re studying – do they consider themselves legacies?” When he asked the question, I realized that all of them do, but they have different concepts of what constitutes a “legacy”. Jeff was forthright about the reasons for his questions. He is searching for ways to build his own legacy, perhaps not at Southern, possibly at some other school. At one point we focused on the necessity of making music education a satisfying experience for the students, and Jeff felt compelled to admit that the situation at Southern has deteriorated to the point that there is not much satisfaction in band for his students.

I would say that at its current stage that is not – now, you could attribute that to it being a new director, or you could attribute it to how they’ve done scheduling, this particular year, and different sorts of changes that the school is going through that are outside of a director change... the reason I would say that its not as much fun - there was a drop in numbers, significant drop in numbers – between what I consider to be the leadership of a program, they were all seniors, they were the

top chair, wind players, and they decided to not participate, partly because Mr. Williams ran his band one way – and the person who was here last year ran it one way, and then I came in and I didn't get to tackle any of these particular kids, they just decided they're not going to deal with this any more. So, I feel that when you take over any program – middle school, high school, whatever - there's always going to be that allegiance to somebody that's leaving – and that can make it difficult for the newcomer... because of how many ways and methods that they've established themselves, and kids just aren't going to like that – they're going to resist it, or they're just going to quit altogether. So consequently the numbers are small, nobody wants to play in an ensemble that's dinky and small – I don't want to say that they're – I mean, I've got some great kids and great players, but it's just not as much motivated – it's not as motivating to come to a rehearsal with only 17 other people in the room. And, the way they've scheduled things, some of them might not show up, cause it's 7:30 in the morning - before school starts – I don't know how much you want me to go into detail.

More detail is necessary. Southern High School is, statistically speaking, a Title I School, which is applied to schools with at least forty percent of the students coming from low - income households. In the case of Southern, roughly seventy-eight percent of the students fall into that category (Public School Review, 2010).

For Jeff, the low-income status of his students is not the main issue. He has plenty of instruments for them to play, plenty of time to devote to giving them the same individual instruction that Peter wanted to give them. His most precious commodity, which is being denied him, is time.

Because of the block scheduling that the school has gone to within the last year, they had no place to place music courses. So, their solution was to place it as “early bird” – at 7:30 in the morning – which is an hour before school begins – I mean, just calling it “early bird”. Kids here that early in the morning, not going – or, “it's not as important,” um – and I actually just wrote a little essay for admission to ISU for grad school, and one of the questions was “how did you deal with a particular issue?” and look at it from two views – the issue of having it at 7:30 in the morning – its not that early – these kids are up anyway – but they're up to get their brothers or sisters to school, or they're up to make sure their mother gets out of bed, and goes to work – different issues that are culture-specific, and band is just not a priority at 7:30 in the morning for them... they've got other things to deal with.

It is difficult to avoid feelings of compassion for this young teacher. His desire to teach is strong enough that he has tolerated a situation that would be considered intolerable by any standards mandated by MENC. In an effort to gauge his level of discontent, I bluntly asked him how he was compensated for having to come to school earlier than any of his colleagues, especially since he was also expected to stay to the end of the day:

That's a terrific question! How DO they compensate me? Well, we were just talking about that this morning. I don't have an answer for that – we don't really, see, theoretically, all of the teachers are supposed to be here at 7:45 in the morning. We're required to be here by 7:15 for our 7:30 class. Now, the three of us are here by 6:30 – 6:45 in the morning just to make sure everything's opened up, ready to go – but – so we're looking at what, another 45 minutes of clocked hours a week over what other teachers are working. Now, somebody made the claim that we could be done at 2 o'clock – school gets out at 3:25 – however, the choir director and I teach a music theory and music history class the last hour of the day. So, I may not have a class fourth period – that's from 12:30 to 2 o'clock – so I guess theoretically I could leave for an hour and a half, go home, come back, and teach my last class – but it just doesn't work out that way. So, to answer your question, I receive no extra praise, no "pats on the back".

Jeff's situation is grave. Block scheduling has removed any opportunity for him to have daily, continuous contact with his students, and as he has noted, meeting at what is referred to as the "early bird" time has implied that music is an "unimportant" activity. His tiny core of remaining students are understandably discouraged and left without peer leadership.

Jeff knows that these scheduling conditions happened after Peter left. He also knows that Peter had several times as many students as he does, and that his band parent organization had been very powerful. But Jeff has also seen the considerable turnout from the alumni whenever Peter is going to conduct the alumni band. He recognizes that Peter can be a great help to him.

Terry: Should Peter continue to help the band if he wants to?

Jeff: I would say absolutely. I really enjoyed having him come out and conduct the alumni band, and I think that that's really important because the alumni are coming for him, they're not coming for me – they don't care about me at all! They don't know who I am and that's fine! He taught all these people – he should be there, it gets people in the door, there's that camaraderie, you know, sort of established with his first alumni band he had 16-17 years ago. And that is really kinda neat, and I invited him to come out and host, or rather to judge the saxophones at solo and ensemble contest – I've got a junior saxophone player and I told him "You'd better be careful, Mr. Williams is going to be the judge" and he says "Oh, man! Mr. Williams!" 'cause he had him as a freshman, and he says "Oh man, he's gonna tear me up on this..." so they still remember how he was, and it's really kind neat in that regard that juniors and seniors that had had Mr. Williams know that he wasn't here just to play games, he was here to, you know, you just didn't play! I've got a senior percussionist, he said "Man, Mr. Williams didn't play!" And the more that I can remind them of how things were I think the better – somebody else in my position might feel the opposite, but I think it's important to know where it's come from – that sort of perspective.

Jeff is the only participant in this study who has suggested that it would be beneficial for his students to realize that conditions were better under a previous director. It would be foolish for him to try to convince them that they were not. While Southern High School continues to struggle with reorganization, music has been placed on the "back burner", and both Jeff and Max are convinced that it will stay there for quite some time. For Jeff, any help he can get from Peter helps him convince the community to hang on.

Sure! I mean, he might have his own opinions about what he sees – I'm sure that he's witnessed things that are just beyond what he would have had to deal with because I just do things differently, but I think it supports – cause we're all just trying to teach music – he's retired, but I mean he still has an allegiance to this school and to the program he ran for 31 years. And I have no doubts that if I ever needed anything from him I could call him up and say "hey – Manual Band, we need blah-blah-blah", he'd be there! Just cause he feels bound to do it. That's my hunch, I could be completely wrong...

Since Jeff had used the word “allegiance”, I found myself asking him if he thought that Peter’s loyalty to the school had made a difference to his students, and if he thought that Peter missed teaching.

It has! And as a matter of fact at the alumni night I kind of leaned over and said “Hey - do you ever miss this?” And he said “Well, of course! You know, I did it for thirty-one years, and of course I’m going to miss it! The first year was real rough!” I can imagine – that kind of – I just love talking to him about how things were, and how he used to do things, and his approaches to that, and the structure, again, I’m not going to – I listen to everything he says, absorb it, and I cherish knowing that he’s around, and didn’t just go to Florida or someplace, and - ‘cause I can bounce ideas off of him – I can ask him “Well, what did you do here? How did this work?” and he tells me and I respect that a lot, ‘cause I’ve learned so much from him in just the few encounters that I’ve had with him.

Jeff has made a study of the history of the music program at Southern. When he arrived in the fall, most of the office records were in disarray, and while cleaning up he discovered old programs, newspaper clippings, memos, and even awards dating back to the 1920s. He is aware of the “glory days” of Paul Bennett, and the relics that can be found throughout the music wing are mute testimony to the support that used to be present. He is convinced that the program succeeded because of the longevity of its directors.

I think part of it was that they had those two directors that decided to stick around. In all honesty, I think it was just blind luck that this school had that – I don’t know why Peter decided to stay here – he had mentioned he could have taken the job at Northwoods – because he had the most tenure in the district. Now, I’m thinking, “Why would you do that?” like I understand- because I feel I’m sorta the same way – if I get something started – I get something going – I mean, I’ve poured myself into this place already – I’ve only been here a couple months! Why would you want to leave? Why do you want to abandon things? So I think that him staying here, as well as Paul Bennett staying here for as long as they did helps. And these kids deserve it just as much as any other kids, and if all the really excellent teachers – they’re just stepping on heads to get higher up the food chain, I think that these kind of programs get lost. Because it’s not like an English teacher who may have a student for one year, we’ve got ‘em for all four.

For Jeff, the question of “to stay or go?” is moot at this point. Budget cutbacks are leaving countless teachers without a job, and vacancies in music education are rare. Jeff was “pink-slipped” at the end of the semester, but he is convinced that the district will hire him back once a new Superintendent of Schools has been hired, for a number of reasons.

Jeff: I don’t know how long I’ll be here, but the amount of time I spend here, I guarantee I’m going to try to do that same kind of thing – I’m not going to ease up, and I really want to move forward and develop things to something that it once was.

Terry: I know we’re all on pins and needles these days, about what’s going to happen to everybody’s program, so I hope you at least have that opportunity to keep going.

Jeff: And it’s unfortunate. I just told the kids, one of them asked me “Did you get pink-slipped?” “Oh, yeah, absolutely.” “You’re not gonna be...” “Nah, I don’t think you’re going to be that lucky!” But it’s interesting – one of my junior percussionists came up to me today and he’s like “Are you really not going to be here next year?” and I’m like “No, I’m pretty sure I’ll be here.” Of course it’s out of my control, but he goes “Man! I’ve had a new teacher every year I’ve been here!” And I thought that’s true – three teachers in three years. I imagine that I will be here in the same capacity that I am this year – they might stash me in a couple other places in addition too, but, the fact that I’m here as a second year teacher, tells me that nobody else in the district wants the position, which is highly unfortunate in that – Williams had said it back in September or something, the first time I talked to him he said, “Well that makes me feel real good – I spent 31 years here, now it’s the job no one wants.”

No one, that is, except Jeff, who realizes that while he may be aspiring to build a program based on the same community values that Peter has, it will be difficult. Peter had the advantages of a more stable school, both politically and financially, and he also had the advantage of being brought up in the community. None of those factors has escaped Jeff, who finds it impressive that Peter and Wendy have chosen to remain in the area.

Jeff: It's really interesting that he hasn't just vanished. He still plays, he's in Southern Winds, he does the Muni Band, and he's like a something, a big-time operator with that, right?

Terry: He's the manager.

Jeff: Yeah, he's the guy! I always see him standing up there to talk .

Terry: He's the guy who writes the checks.

Jeff: Yeah, there you go! That's awesome! He still loves what he has devoted his life to, and that's great. I'm glad that he never got jaded from it all. 'Cause I think that's an issue for some music educators – we get into it because we love to play, but once we get into it – we never play again!

Jeff holds the same philosophy as Peter and many music educators that continuing to make music off of the podium is essential for his personal development. He laments that he has been unable to be more like Peter, and to be able to play his instrument as much as he would like:

I still love to play, I don't play as much as I used to, I mean a couple weeks ago I got offered this gig in Galesburg, and I'm thinking "This'll be great! I haven't had a gig in a while, I'd better take out the horn and play a little bit." But to go from playing eight hours a day of in college to, you know, practice and rehearsals, and just to go - you just get out of school and I want to do nothing for a little bit. I don't ever anticipate myself losing that passion to play - and to still be active in education even after I'm retired – apparently that's a long ways out.

Jeff's admiration for Peter is genuine. He sees Peter's career as the kind of career he would like to have. For that reason, he also sees him as a mentor, and he wishes he could have more contact with him.

I would claim him as a mentor, our interactions aren't real frequent but I would still say that I've learned a lot from him, therefore I would claim him to be a mentor. Because it's just so easy to not know everything. I mean I came into this office and there was stuff everywhere! Well, like I can't work in chaos, so I go through all the files and I like go "Wow, they did this? There are files all the way back to the 1920s!" So I can look at a lot of things that are considered gaps and say "Well, where did he go to do this? How did he do this? He told me that he gave his seniors a plaque every year, so I've got to carry on that tradition, if you've been doing it for as long as he has. We talked about the band-parent

group that he started – a long time ago, and how he used to run that, and he told me to be careful of this, this, and this, and there’s issues with the school, and there’s just so much stuff that he knows that anyone new coming in won’t know. And especially when the whole department was cleaned out – who do you ask, if I don’t know? There’s nobody here!

It would be understandable to assume that Jeff could be lonely at times. He has Max, the orchestra director who has virtually no orchestra to lead, and Tim, the choir director as his cohorts within the music wing, but they are detached from the rest of the school both physically and ideologically, being relegated to the status of “early birds”. With only seventeen students, which he sees sporadically, his chances of replicating the successes of Peter and Paul seem remote, at best. He does think that Max and Tim have been mentors to him, as well.

Jeff: Well, Max Schroeder was assigned to me as my “official” mentor, now last year I always joked with my roommate, who also has Mr. Schroeder as our mentor, he’s a good guy, but I never feel like – I don’t want to sound arrogant, but I never felt that I really needed a whole lot of assistance in my position last year in the district. I was teaching at a middle school and the responsibilities are so much less. However, once I got in this position, I feel I’m bouncing ideas off of him all the time, just because he did it for twenty-five years at Eastside, he knows – he knows more than I do.

T: He knows the system?

J: Yeah – and it’s easy to go “Hey, what do you think about this?” and the choir director here, while he started at this school - Tim Martin started the same time I did – he has teaching experience, he taught in Chicago Public Schools, he taught in Florida, and he’s got leadership experience, he was the Executive Director of Assisted Living, so he’s got a lot of wisdom of his own, so I can say “How should I approach this? How should I do this?” He knows politics a little more than me cause I just say “I don’t like this” but apparently that’s not a good way to approach some things with the higher-ups – you gotta dress it up – make it sound pretty. And they help me with those kind of things.

Jeff is aware of the old adage “never follow a legend”, but he wasn’t Peter’s immediate successor. That status falls to Cindy, who is now teaching in Jeff’s former



school. While Jeff understands that Cindy had a formidable task, he feels that his job would have been easier if he had taken over when Peter retired.

I think this would have been easier had I been here the year right after he retired. And we talked about it being hard – what is it you said, the “Jesus effect”? That would have been present, however, I feel my chances would have been better if I had had them on the schedule that they were used to, and I had all the leadership that was here last year but not any more. I feel that I have taken over a program that is at the bottom of its existence.

Jeff has solid ideas about what it will take to raise his program up from the “bottom”. Key to his plans is the reestablishing of a sense of pride in being in his band, which goes along with the sense of pride that he feels is needed in the entire school.

I think that his programs that he had throughout his tenure here was – helped establish a feeling of pride – and I have one of the band parents in the organization at the moment - her daughter now is a freshman flute player – she had actually recalled Mr. Williams would say every fall before they started marching “I can teach you the music, I can teach you the rhythms, I can teach you how to march, but I can’t teach you pride.” And I think that extends well beyond the program, into – you know, it just becomes part of the atmosphere of the school. Seeing as how band, especially has become a face for the school in the community – they’re in parades, they’re at football games, they play at basketball games, they might not get recognized as much as the sports teams, but I think that people always – they know when they’re NOT THERE. So if the band wasn’t at football games, people notice – and if they’re not at basketball games, people notice. SO I think that the standards that he held so highly for his ensemble – people noticed, and I think that they cared, and built on that atmosphere of pride.

If Jeff’s plans are successful, Southern High School’s “Marching Bulldogs” will be able to regain the pride they once had in their band. For Jeff, it would mean that Peter might one day remember him as an educator who shared his ideals.

I would like him to think that the work that he put in for his career isn’t just going to be forgotten and wasted – I would hope that he understands that my goal isn’t to discredit anything he’s ever done, that’s the last thing I would ever want to do – and I hope you’d feel comfortable knowing that I sincerely hope to carry on the tradition that he helped establish. He and Paul Bennett, and John Broadmoor, and all the other folks that walked through the doors. But who knows?

If Jeff is holding out hope that someday he will have lived up to Peter's legacy at Southern, then he truly is an optimist. But he is an optimist who has done his homework. He is aware of the work that Peter put in to make his program successful, and he feels that he will always remember him for that ethic.

I think I'm just going to always have this – my senior percussionist in my ear, saying "Peter Williams didn't play." In talking to him he admits he was very structured, very disciplined with the students, and there just weren't games – he said something and it happened, and if it didn't happen there were consequences! Part of it – I don't know, he's a very tall individual, he's got some gray in his hair – I don't know... I just can't do it the way he does it – but I think I'll always remember that... (I) think even in his last couple of years here, where some people might just hang up that and say "Well, I'm out in a couple of – I don't think he ever gave up. And I think he held those kids to the same standard as when he started, in 1978? 77? I don't think his standards ever changed, and I admire that quality a lot. That even after you've done it that long, and he had to go through tremendous hardships and difficulties with things within this building. Yeah, I read about it in the files, I see what he's done, what he's accomplished, and what he was given, and I just – every time I look at a piece of equipment, I mean we've got a collegiate level tuba in there! And I'm just like "My God! For this district that's just unreal!" There's equipment like that all over the place, and it wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Peter Williams. Without that band parent organization that he initiated, this equipment wouldn't be here, and I understand it's not Chicago, and we don't have money everywhere, and equipment coming out all over the place. The fruit sale that he started every year, they made so much money on that back in its heyday – now it doesn't make nearly as much, but he made enough money to buy new uniforms! It's just really impressive to just sit back and say among the culture and among all the issues that they threw at him he still just said, "Forget it! I'm Peter Williams, I'm not going to play, this is what I need, and this is how I'm going to do it." And he just did it. And I hope that in the time that I'm here I can do some of those same kind of things, just say "Well you know, there's a lot of issues up top, but this is what I'm going to do just because its not about me, its for the betterment of the kids in the program."

The face of one of those kids in the program had just appeared in the doorway to Jeff's office. Her smile was enough of a cue for Jeff, who reached back for the tray of brownies he had offered me. The girl took a brownie and started back down the hall. "You're welcome..." said Jeff, and a second later her face reappeared, followed by a "Thank you." I thought that Jeff's next class was about to start, and made preparations to

leave, but apparently she had just made a detour while she was on her way to another class. The hallway, the practice rooms, and the classrooms were all still empty. Jeff is a patient man.

### **School's Out in Warm Springs**

My first meeting with Rick's principal, Royce Mallory, had been brief. I had mentioned to Rick that I couldn't find him on the way in, and his advice was simple – "Just look for the guy who looks like a student wearing a suit." It turned out to be good advice. I was passing through the school cafeteria when I saw a person who fit Rick's description perfectly, standing at one of the cash registers. I introduced myself as he was trying to attend to a student who was having problems at the automated checkout. "I'm not exactly sure what's wrong here," he quipped, "I've never been a cashier before!" We talked long enough that we agreed that we'd set up a meeting the next time I'm on campus.

Given the hectic time just before the end of a spring semester, it took several weeks to arrange a time that Royce would be available for an interview. Once we had found a date, I also arranged to meet with Rick again, just to see if he had any other observations to make in the final days of his tenure at Warm Springs. This week was finals week for the district, and by Thursday, nearly all of the exams had been given, and most of the seniors had left the building for good, except for graduation on Sunday. Entering the main lobby, the usual crowd ambience was gone, and the short jog to the main office showed that activity had slowed, but not stopped, and certainly some of the activity is different from the rest of the year. Boxes of doughnuts were lying on a couple of filing cabinets – boxes that one would not normally see in the school office, at least not

in public view. One of the receptionists asked if she could help me, and I mentioned that my appointment was with Mr. Mallory. Royce's office is only a few feet away, and before she could answer we could both hear "I'll be out in a second!"

I've met Royce before, and as noted earlier, Rick had described him as looking like a "...guy who looks like a student wearing a suit," so when another man walked out of the office I was not fooled. But in a moment Royce passed through the door. "Good to see you! Glad we could get together today".

I noted that by seeing the nearly empty halls, this looked like a good day for him and Royce agreed – he had mentioned when we talked earlier in the week that he had a meeting until 1, which turned out to be about graduation this weekend. When I mentioned that I'd like to record the interview, he suggested that his office would be a quiet place.

In contrast to the rest of the school, Royce's office is unassuming, even small in comparison to the customary offices one sees for administrators - there is a suite of offices at the front of the building, and there is little that sets his office apart from those for other front-office workers. After closing the door, Royce grabbed a couple of chairs and placed them in the small area in front of his desk. He placed a small table at my disposal for my notes and audio recorder.

Royce is finishing up his fifth year as Principal at Warm Springs, after serving in that capacity at another, smaller school district nearby. After he finished his undergraduate schooling, he taught for a few years in Texas, before spending a couple of years working in Cameroon through his church, and then he returned to the Midwest.

In Rick's eyes, Royce is highly qualified for the position of Principal at Warm Springs, at least in part due his previous experience as a musician in both high school and

in college. Royce played saxophone for the same teachers that Rick had, and his years of teaching in Texas left him with a strong impression of the impact that marching bands could have upon a school:

Well, the marching band was pretty intense. That was intense, I was at a large school – the first year I was down there I was at a junior high, which was a ninth grade campus, of a thousand students. So that was interesting, all freshmen – the following year I went to a 9-12 school in the same district. About 2000 kids, 1800 – and if you were in band that was the only thing you were in. You weren't allowed to do anything else.

Royce's passion for marching band was evident, and I was curious to see if he had been excited about coming to Warm Springs, especially since his previous school had a very poor music program:

Royce: I was excited about it. I was a little bit overwhelmed, though, too, of how I could get involved, coming from a smaller school, into - even though Warm Springs isn't that large – you know, it's 600 more students than what I had before. My opportunity to get involved wasn't very much. I remember attending the first band booster meeting, and I was, like, "Whoa, this is way..."

Terry: Quite a machine...

Royce: Quite a machine! Yeah! And one of the questions I even asked the board when I was interviewing over here – I asked them to identify if there were any 'sacred cows' within Warm Springs High School, that coming in as an administrator I need to be aware of, that I shouldn't really mess with, and a couple of the board members looked at each other and laughed, and in unison said "the band program." It was automatic – the band program was one of those - things.

As an administrator, Kent has to walk a fine line when dealing with a parental support group like the Warm Springs band boosters. His strategy for dealing with this group has been "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," and while Rick insists that the group was already functioning perfectly, Royce insisted that Rick has been much more important to the success of the group.

(There's) so much support for the program, whether it be the boosters, the parents, past parents, past kids who've been in the band, that a lot of things run, and they –

just get momentum, and run and he doesn't have to be – directly involved in everything. You can't be, in something that big. And the family, it's like this big – this big family. Yeah, Rick always gives credit to his predecessor, over thirty years ago... (laughing) he doesn't take a lot of the credit himself – but I really think – I don't know, I think it's something like you said, you don't want to fix it, if it's not broken, but yet you're always looking for ways to do it better. I've noticed that just going through two trips with them – you know, I didn't attend the trips, but in the preparations for their trips, of how they've looked at some things differently – it's a pretty cool organization.

Regardless of the credit, Royce is a bit nervous about Rick's retirement. He freely admits that Rick has made his job easier in many ways. At the same time, he is grateful that Rick has done such a thorough job of making sure that the transition will go as smoothly as possible.

Royce: Well, having only been here for – it's only my fifth year – he's kind of a – bad to say, a “staple?” He's kinda like – he's one of those firm, foundations around here, so I'm a little nervous. A little nervous about him retiring. And mainly because I haven't had to worry about anything. With the band programs, and his being here. I knew that things were just taken care of. I'm very thankful that Brian's coming in, that does help a lot, versus hiring in somebody who wasn't familiar with our organization here. Brian's been a part of it for fifteen years, and a lot more a part of it recently, in the last six or seven years, so he's a known commodity. And he'll do well – but I think you know, Rick's excited about retiring, but I know he'll miss it. But I think he's excited too.

Terry: I feel bad that I've never really tried to sympathize with an administrator going through all this, but I'm sure they frequently do.

Royce: Well and I know, just talking with Brian about the transition, thus far, and I mean he's already got things rollin' – got things goin' – and he has a plan. And he was very upfront, saying “I'm not Rick, you know – I hope to continue on what he has here, what he has developed and built, but I'm also looking forward to maybe some change here and there too.” And that was great to hear that, his confidence with that. I've never worked with Brian at this level, you know, he's been in a different building. I know he's been very successful at that building, he's... the parents love him, he's enjoyed it very much, but I've never had the chance to really work with him, I have full confidence in him, Rick has full confidence in him. So I kind of ask myself “Why wouldn't I?”

Royce's confidence in Brian is similar to the confidence that Rick has in him, but it is clear that he lacks the intimate knowledge that has come from two friends working

side by side for a decade. As a result, Royce has also based his confidence on the strength of the legacy Rick has left of trust.

Royce has known Brian long enough to feel secure in believing that he can provide an equally high level of experiences for the Warm Springs students.

Oh, I think so. He's got a great sense of humor, he enjoys being around kids, he wants what's best for the kids, and he's got a lot of energy – he's excited, so you'd think that he'd - you know, you put those things together, and he's going to do very well. I think the kids are going to enjoy it. And I think he's been in a position too, the last number of years, that the kids come to him a lot of times, and he'll hear things – you know, he'll get a sense of “Oh, well, the kids aren't really with this part of the program, or with this part of this movement,” whatever it might be - I think he takes that all in. And he offers his suggestions to Rick – some of which he might take some of which Rick might not take – I don't know, but I think he's got a pretty clear and a direction of what he wants to do.

In the course of our conversations, both Rick and Brian have talked about “keeping it fresh”, referring to maintaining the quality of the program. I asked Royce if he thought he understood what they were trying to describe.

Making it so that the kids want a little more – I think that's probably what he means. That they want to get a little bit further, they want to know a little bit more, know a little bit more, get a little bit better, and that – I think that brings the excitement into it for the kids. If something is not fresh, it's stale- it's –it's not appealing... I think that's where it's at, to keep the kids attention, their excitement, their focus.

Rick's expertise at “keeping it fresh” is legendary, and that legend extends far beyond the city limits of Warm Springs. Given Royce's confidence in Brian to continue that tradition, I asked him if it would be a good idea for Rick to remain involved in any way. Royce spent a long time pondering his answer.

That's a tough one. A double-edged sword. Initially, I would say no. Because sometimes that can become a little unhealthy. There's a time to take a break, and let the new person take over, and - and run the show, in a sense. Even though I know Brian will come into it as not a dictator, but more of a (laughing) – to working with others. But, there's a time for a break. Why I'd say that in this situation it's both sided is because of the relationship that Rick and Brian already

have, and that they have with the parents, and the boosters, and the kids – I know Brian will call on him, and Brian will continue to talk to him, and may even invite him back! To help out with some things, but I don't know, 'cause – you have to watch out too, 'cause even though the comparison's going to be made, like you mentioned earlier, it's tough to come in behind a – a legacy. With Rick being around much, may cause those comparisons to really come up more vocal. But boy, I tell you – you look at the relationship they have... and they really get along well. I don't know – that's tough.

Royce is also convinced that Rick will have very little time to devote to the Warm Springs Band, since he knows of all of projects that Rick has already started – putting his woodworking expertise to work as a luthier at the local music shop, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, and managing the stage crew for the local symphony. For Royce, there are no surprises in Rick's projects, and he believes that his enthusiasm and his ability to share responsibilities with others has been the key to his success at Warm Springs.

I think there's a lot of – I mean, his love of music, his love of the program, and a lot to do with him, as you mentioned earlier and I agree with it, a lot of what the program is is because of Rick. But he's the first one to say that everything else helps the program be what it truly is. That's things that I was saying earlier – when you have the support of the community, the support of parents, of a booster organization like they have, of the network that he has, other music educators, that all really adds a lot to the program.

Royce and I talked at length about this combination of support systems that have made Rick's music program so successful. We both agreed that in many ways, Warm Springs has kept intact a valuable tenet that seems “old fashioned” compared to many other communities. In addition to serving as its educational center, the community continues to center most of its cultural, political, recreational and sociological activities around the high school. There is a sense of enfranchisement by the community about their school that it is there for the entire community. Royce cites this “centering” of the school as being vital for the success of the music program.



I think it has to be, because we are - I've always said "our," you know, the school - we are an extension of our community - and that support, and how we are still - we are a center for Warm Springs and the surrounding area. I heard parents that have had kids come through our school system years ago - they speak very highly of the school system. Don't get me wrong, I know there are a lot of areas that we need to improve on, and work on a lot. But I think our parents and the kids that have gone through here - I think they're very pleased with it.

As an administrator, Royce is enthusiastic about Brian being able to make changes in the band program. In his five years at Warm Springs, he has noticed gradual changes occurring in the relationship between the music department and the athletic department, and he thinks that Rick has been instrumental in fomenting that change. Now, he is hoping that Brian will be able to continue fostering that relationship.

Something I noticed when I came, five years ago, which was interesting - I made some observations, I talked to the previous principal, I talked to the athletic director who'd been here for - you know, quite a while, and some others, is that there was a, ah, - you'd call it a rift? Kind of a little bit of a jousting on two different sides, in between the band and the athletics here at the school. And I noticed that when I came in, because I'd hear comments. You know, you'd look up in the stands at a football game, second half and there weren't many people up there, because all the band parents were gone. So there - there was some animosity there. And, and I really think that with some new - not new coaches, but new coaches to our school - come in, and Rick's welcoming of them, and acceptance of them, and I think Rick being the one who tried to encourage a relationship there, has really changed things. Because - I think success always helps too, on the football field - and other sports, when you have success, people stick around and go - but Rick's an ex-football guy, you know, he's been involved in athletics a lot, so he - he can carry right on with these guys. And I think it's a much healthier relationship right now, than I sensed when I came. Five years ago. And a lot of people say that that has been a five, six year transition - it started a year before I came. But it has been a little bit of a transition that - it's not felt as much... (his) willingness to work with coaches, through problems, and through conflict, instead of, you know, digging the heels in, and not budging, that's helped a ton.

For Royce, this sort of "peaceful coexistence" has been invaluable. It has made his job easier, the parents happier, the students more motivated. He believes that Rick's motto of "Pride and Performance" is contagious, and that the virus is spreading.

Royce believes that Rick and Sue will stay in the area. They have a lovely home on the river, and the infrequent flooding only seems to strengthen their resolve to stay. He is amused when he talks about Rick being known in every store in town, because he has tried to get donations out of all of them. He is aware of the close network of fellow music educators that Rick works and plays with, and is convinced that both of them prize that network too much to relocate.

Yeah, the network he's a part of is huge. I could not believe, y'know, we were going through applicants for his position, he had – I mean, connections, everywhere. He knew people who knew people who knew people, all over the place! I was amazed, but it is very similar to how it is in the athletic realm – so often, you just have a lot of connections, you know kind of what's going on, all around, but he had a much more intimate knowledge of what's going on. It seems like it's more of a, well, how do I say it? It's a less of a competitive network. I mean, when you're in the athletic realm, yeah, but I tell you, Rick could probably name, I mean he could name off twenty people to you right now without even blinking, that he would call for advice, or assistance, or help, or direction, or whatever.

But for Royce, the most important reason that he believes that Rick and Sue will stay in the area is that Rick still has an emotional attachment to Warm Springs, and in particular the program he spent three decades developing.

Royce: There's a lot of people out there that he's become close with, and that support him, and he supports, so I think that - yeah, I think that it'd be tough for him to head out – and I think he – like I said before, I don't know about the love of involvement that he wants or does not want, with the band program down the road, but I think he wants to know how Brian - he wants to be there for Brian! He wants to be there, to support him, and see how things go – he wants to see the program continue to grow, and be as good as it has been.

Terry: Do you think he'll always have that - that emotional investment in the program?

Royce: Absolutely.

While Royce has an important role to play in Warm Springs as the principal of the high school, he refuses to let that role be of an “all-knowing administrator.” Compared to

Rick he is very young, and his oldest child is just eight years old – still a few years away from entering the instrumental music program. While Rick's presence at the high school has given him a sense of security, he also has found Rick to be a profound mentor at times.

Yep, oh yeah. And he kinda laughs some of it off, and he'll reference something from fifteen years ago, or twenty years ago, but he gives some great guidance. He gives great– and he doesn't force it. He offers good advice, and guidance on a lot of things. He really does. And he's - I mean he's a straight shooter, he's not going to lie, or beat around the bush with it, but he's not going to come in and say "this is what you've got to do. This is what you should be doing right now." He doesn't do that.

Royce also credits Rick with setting a high level of performance for himself, that Royce and the rest of the school have been inspired to match.

I think he's set a sense of high expectations. He definitely has a lot of high expectations in his program – development of leaders, student leaders, and that impacts the entire school. Camaraderie with other staff members, support of other programs, and that's really been a 'biggie', cause you'll see him at other events... a lot of times, a high school band director you're not going to see him much, you know, and you do, you see him around, and he - so yeah, a level of professionalism, I think that he kind of carries with him.

It is very unusual for a high school of 700 students to have almost twenty-five percent of them involved in an instrumental music program, but it is the norm at Warm Springs. For Royce, this involvement is especially good for the incoming freshmen classes, as the summer activities of the band have already given them the feeling of belonging.

Royce: One of the best things that I've seen out of it, as far as the students here at the high school, that band camp at the beginning of the year, to take a group of freshmen, who are scared and are nervous about that transition to high school, and they don't know what's going to happen – what's going to go on – and you put them into a situation that for a week they are with a cohesive group already, and they come in here the first day of school, the band camp's the end of July – they come in here the first day of school and they know 150 people.

Terry: They've been orientated.

Royce: You're right! And they've got a group. They've got a family, and you see that in the whole structure, of that band, of how you have a lot of mentoring roles within the students, and student leaders, and it really – it's amazing to see how – and how it's done. More than anywhere else. And they have seniors they can go and ask - "What do I do?" There's no other programs here that do that. That's very special and unique.

Royce noted that although Rick was an intense "competitor" at music festivals and competitions, there was a much "friendlier" air of competition than he had witnessed in athletics, and that "winning" and "losing" came in second to learning.

Coming back from competitions – whether he's – you know, whether it be a jazz festival, or a marching band competition, or whatever it might be, I don't think I've ever heard him say anything negative about a competitor. I really don't. He will - he will say that he felt that - you know, that he had a better performance than they did – but the judges felt otherwise... or something like that, but he won't ever put 'em down. And he'll say – he'll talk highly about some of them, you know, and he'll bring up programs from up north, and he'll be like "they - they are, they're just phenomenal." He goes "You just wouldn't believe, seeing them out there on the field – what they can do."

Like Bill in Belmont City, Royce believes that Rick has served as a "voice of reason" to many of the faculty at Warm Springs. There are several faculty retiring with him, some who have taught nearly as long, but Royce has learned that it was Rick who has been the glue that has held them together during other tough economic times.

Royce: We had a math teacher who'd been here for thirty-three years. We had a social studies teacher who'd been here for fifteen to twenty years. We had a science teacher who'd been here thirty years. An industrial tech teacher had been here for twenty-five years. You know, so you look at a number of people that - that Rick has been here with 'em. Through a lot. You know, Rick's talked about the early '80s, when this place went through a couple of riff situations, and very difficult financial times, and he talks about a lot of the trust that was lost during those years, you know, with the system, because, you know, friends losing jobs, or what have you...

Terry: And history's repeating itself right now...

Royce: Right. But then he also talks about how this faculty really does come together and bind together when there's - somebody's hurting or there's a problem... you know, they really come together. So, and I've seen that. I've seen that in just five short years.

I was curious to compare Royce's outlook on the future of teaching with that of Rick's for music education. I explained to him that Rick was optimistic about opportunities for new teachers, although it will take a while for those opportunities to resurface. Royce agreed, feeling that after several years there will be a shortage of teachers in many fields as would-be teachers graduating from high school now choose to go into other fields.

It was tempting to read to Royce what Rick had said about his Principal. Rick considered himself fortunate to have had good administrators in his career, and numbers Royce as one of his favorites. Instead, I asked Royce how he hoped Rick would remember him.

Well hopefully he remembers that I was supportive, I admire him, I respect him, and probably if its- if its more just about me, and how I go about my job, I would hope he would think and remember that I want to do what's right for kids, and that gets lost a lot of times with people dealing with a lot of stuff in education when it comes down to doing what's right for the kids. It's what it's gotta come down to. And I hope he's been able to see that, and what I've done here in five short years. So...

While I jotted down some notes, I was really watching Royce carefully as he paused, wondering if there was more to be said – more that was important to him. After a moment, he looked up and smiled, as if he were content that “what's right for the kids” said it all.

By now we had talked about Rick for nearly an hour. I had little doubt that Royce admired him greatly, but I wanted to know some of the reasons that he thinks he will remember him:

Well, he has shared with me a number of stories that I will never forget! (laughing) They were pretty good stories! Probably his excitement- his excitement for band, and his love of teaching kids, a lot more than just how to play the instrument. And he does talk a lot about how through the humanities courses that he teaches, through band itself, that you've got to be focused on teaching a lot more to the kids than just instrumental skills. You've gotta teach them about life skills, and about how to deal with people in conflict, and just a lot of things. I think - I mean he – he epitomizes that, I'll remember that about him. 'Cause a lot of teachers don't. They focus on their subject area, and they want to go like this and anything outside of that...

Royce placed the palms of his hands on the side of his head, creating what looked like “blinders” for a horse. He likes how Rick sees the “big picture”, the “total student”. We talked for a while about Rick's original goal to teach biology, and agreed that it would have mattered very little what he eventually chose to teach – that he would have excelled at any subject.

Royce knew that I was going to stop by Rick's office and check in on him. “I saw him hanging around the office earlier today,” he said. “With those doughnuts out there, I don't doubt it for a minute” was my reply. As Royce opened the door to his office, we realized that Rick had been waiting with the secretaries.

### **Celebrating the End of One More Semester**

It often seems that Warm Springs refuses to stop honoring Rick for his service to their community. Next fall the town council has proclaimed a day in November as “Rick Ransom Day”, and in a week or so there will be a “surprise” party for Rick in the town park (which, of course Rick knows all about). It is by invitation only, and I haven't been invited. But tonight Rick is holding a party at his home for his friends and colleagues who play in the Southern Wind Ensemble, and I am allowed to attend as a spouse.

Chronologically, the Southern Wind Ensemble's concert season always ends within a week or two of the school semester, and since the vast majority of the players are

music educators, the party is held a few weeks after the concert. This year Rick has offered (as he has in the past) to host the party at his house, located in a quiet, wooded neighborhood on the river. Considering stereotypes, the thought of having approximately 40 musicians at a party in one's neighborhood is probably a chilling one, especially when the party is being held outside, but of those 40 musician/music educators and their companions, most have either retired from teaching, or will be retiring in the next few years. Loud music (or any music, for that matter) has been banned from this affair.

As in his teaching, Rick had planned the party well. He has a large garage, and he had moved his woodworking equipment off to the side so that there was plenty of room for the pizzas, and there was a large table in the middle reserved for a large cake. He had a pair of old tympani sitting in his parking lot with the heads removed, and they had been filled with ice, beer, and soda. Rick was unable to control the weather, however, and the rain that began earlier that day refused to stop. When I arrived, I saw Rick standing in the rain, his T-shirt soaked, talking to a couple of players from the trombone section, and I felt compelled to greet him with a joke - "Hey! Can't you see that the beer's getting wet?" Rick's reaction to the greeting was predictable. "Funny, Terry, really funny. Maybe you'd better test some of it and see if it's still OK." The main course of the party was supposed to be pizza, but it appeared as though I'd gotten to the party too late to enjoy much of a selection. Again, Rick had everything under control. "Don't panic! There's another load on the way! I told Monical's to space the order out into two sections so that the low brass players wouldn't eat all of it." Once again, the legacy has left his impression on another example of experience in music education working outside of the school system.

The party offered me an opportunity to talk with many of Rick's friends. There were three other trombonists in the band, and they were all there. The principal trombonist is Jack, who is the youngster of the group, at roughly 45. He works at a music store in the city, and has several other groups that he plays in. Frank was sitting next to him, and he has been teaching middle school band for over thirty years – he, too, is contemplating retirement, but like so many others, he's held back by some typical issues – his wife is somewhat younger, so she has several more years to go before she retires from teaching, and they started their family after they had their careers on track, so their children are still in school. Walt, who sits next to Rick, is involved in education, although perhaps not in the traditionally considered sense – he is one of the custodians in one of the local schools.

Frank and I struck up a conversation. He was curious about some of the graduate seminars that were being offered at Central University. Frank never finished his master's degree, and says that at this point in his career he sees no value in finishing it. "I've got so many years of experience that the degree wouldn't add much to my pay scale, and besides, who wants to put up with that crap?" Resisting the reflex to present the usual arguments for graduate degrees, I simply agreed that his experience was far more valuable, and that at this point in time the only reason he should consider going "back to school" would be if he thought it was going to be fun. Like many educators, Frank is clearly looking for a diversion of some sort – considerably overweight, he had a mild heart attack a year ago, although he is convinced that his weight was not the issue – instead, in his eyes, it was the stress of years of watching his band program at the middle



school deteriorate to where it is today. Like many, he is counting the hours to retirement, or at least he would be if it were a manageable number.

No one really can say when the sun set on the party, thanks to the constant drizzle that had kept nearly everyone, including Frank and myself, just inside Rick's garage. But eventually the rain stopped, and with that came the realization that the darkness was a result of time, and not the clouds. After Frank left, I made my way from the front to the back yard, where Rick's wife, Sue, was lounging on the patio with a group of women from the ensemble, again, all music educators. Sue is the band director at the catholic high school in Midville, Notre Dame, and her friend Beth has taught band and choir for 32 years in Farmville, some thirty miles down the road. Wendy is the wife of Peter, "The Warrior", and she retired at the same time as her husband, and Janie Peterson now teaches English in nearby Crystal City, preferring that subject's stable hours to those in music education. I'd come to the patio to pay homage to Rick's attempt at creating visual art. A number of years ago he had a large truck purposely run over an obsolete sousaphone several times until it was completely flat, and then mounted it on the wall next to the patio and festooned it with colored lights. "I've just come back to admire Rick's sculpture," I said to Sue, "and to tell you that we've got to be going – but I've enjoyed the party and really like the bucolic setting of your back yard."

"Yes, bucolic..." Sue paused, grinned, and surveyed the large lawn, bordered on one side by the woods, and the other by the river. "We love it here."

I'd already resolved to interview Sue, after the reality of all of the primary participants in this study having spouses who are educators (and about to retire) became impossible to ignore. "I know that Rick has kept you informed about the research I've

been doing on retirement,” I said. “Is there any chance you could find some free time next week so that we can get together and I could interview you? It wouldn’t take very long...”

“Call me on Monday afternoon, after band.” Sue replied. I resisted the urge to ask exactly when band was over, instead suggesting four o’clock. “OK, give me a call then, but I don’t know what I’ll be able to tell you.” As I headed for the garage, I suggested that perhaps she could tell me more about Rick retiring than he could. Her reply was prophetic. “Well, I’ve put up with the guy for a long time, you know...”

### **A Concert Filled with Legacies**

Tonight marks the opening concert of the Midville Municipal Band, and another season of summer playing for two of the primary participants in this study. Peter, “The Warrior” has not only been a member of the band for many years, but has also served as the manager of the band since 1999. As a result, even though the band plays at the park twice a week at 7:30, Peter is always there by 7 – and so is his wife, Wendy.

This particular Sunday I was there too. Not to see Peter, but instead to talk to Wendy. We had just missed each other the night before, when we were both invited to the graduation party of a young man who had been her student in grade school, and then went on to be one of my students at the college level. When I caught up with both of them backstage, she was apologetic. “We just missed you last night!” she said, as I approached both of them. “Yeah, we were dragged off to another one of those stupid retirement parties...” this time it was Peter, who was laughing as he was taking his saxophone out of his trunk. “Frank said you had just left.”

I apologized for not staying any longer, but the party was mostly for young people, even though I knew that both Peter and I needed to make an appearance – both to let the student’s parents thank us (as they have so many times in the past) and to celebrate another successful graduation. “I’m glad I caught you both back here,” I said. “That way I can ask your wife for a date while you’re standing right there.”

Wendy laughed, and Peter was quick with his response. “Go ahead, she’s easy!” “Did you really mean to say she’s ‘easy’?” I said. “That’s a nice thing to say about your wife!” Wendy gave Peter a push, and the six-foot-four fullback did his best to appear thrown off his feet. “Well, it is what it is...” he said, with a few spasms of laughter.

Wendy and I set up a date for Thursday. All three of us, as well as Cindy Swinarski, have agreed to play with the Southern Wind Ensemble during the National BandMasters Association Symposium later this month, and there’s a rehearsal scheduled next Thursday, so we’ll be meeting an hour early.

Having no instrument to warm up, I decided to head out toward the park area and enjoy the concert. Before I could leave the backstage area I was met by one of the Euphonium players. “Did you hear about Rick Ransom?” he said, as he blocked my exit. “What now?” I said. “You’re not going to believe this, but he’s the new stage manager for the Symphony!”

I had good reason to believe his story, although it was still a surprise. Earlier that week I had stopped by the symphony office with some paperwork, and the Executive Director had asked me for a recommendation for someone to replace the stage manager, who had just resigned. It occurred to me that Rick had been the stage manager for IMEA for many years, and that the logistics of preparing at least 50 ensembles for performances

in a few short days was much more difficult than preparing for one symphony orchestra concert, so it seemed sensible to recommend him. I told the director that since Rick had just retired he might not be such a good candidate for the job, but she was unwilling to disregard him as a candidate. Now, just a few days after our meeting, it appeared that I had interfered with the future of a participant, hopefully for the better.

As I headed for the park benches in front of the stage, I noticed Cindy sitting near the front with her new granddaughter, Miranda. As I sat down, Miranda immediately reached for my face. “She’s fascinated by beards,” said Cindy. I made the usual compliments about how beautiful her granddaughter was, and Cindy radiated with pleasure. She is still angry with her daughter over her decision to have a child without health benefits, and still shakes her head when someone like me says “they’re young – they’ll be OK,” but it’s also clear that she is ecstatic about having a granddaughter.

Cindy’s fear of being one of the several hundred teachers affected by the Midville district has abated – even though she is tenured, the district could have reassigned her to duties that would have been worse than the ones she already has, and instead they have chosen to keep her at Bolivia School. Her reaction is mixed, and it seems she’s not sure if she’s truly relieved that she’s teaching another year instead of being forced into retirement. But for the time-being, she is doing exactly what she wants to be doing, playing music, and caring for her grandchild. “This time last year, I was dealing with that whole thing with mom – she’d call and tell me somebody had stolen her thermostat...” Cindy’s mother passed away last summer. Her funeral marked the last time that Cindy’s son, Nick, had returned home from New York, where he is trying to “make it” as a singer, and Cindy is looking forward to his visit home later in the month. Ironically, in

order to make ends meet he has taken a teaching job in a private school, where certification is not required, so both he and his sister, who have degrees in music performance, have resorted to teaching to support their professional goals.

Cindy was playing in the concert, too, so she finally handed Miranda over to a friend sitting next to her. She'll be sitting in the horn section, alongside her favorite horn player, her daughter Linda.

### **Following a Friend**

I was supposed to meet Brian Thompson, Rick's assistant, at the Warm Springs band room at 1 o'clock. He had agreed to meet there since he often comes to the high school from his middle school duties are done to work on next fall's programs. When I arrived, Brian was running late, and the student teacher, Kayla, met me at the door. "Have you come to check up on me?" she asked. "Why, do you need to be checked on? Have you been misbehaving?" I joked. Kayla was in her final two weeks of student teaching with Rick and Brian, and was enjoying it. When the telephone rang, she reached to pick it up, saying "I think I've been here long enough to answer the phone." Brian was calling, and told Kayla that he would be there in a few minutes. I told her that I would wait in the office, and started to set up my materials for our interview.

Rick's office still looked more or less the same as it did when I first visited it several months ago. There were recordings, pictures, equipment that belonged to him that would eventually have to be moved out, but apparently he was in no hurry. Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" had switched places with Monet's "Sunrise", and Rick's Kandinsky had left the building, as had his Matisse. Apparently Brian was in no hurry to

move in, since none of his belongings were occupying any of the space. There's no hurry when a legacy is still filling the building.

I had just finished setting up my materials when the doors to the loading dock flew open, and Brian came trudging in. "Sorry I'm late," he puffed, "Always something holding you back when you try to leave Fernville." That is easily understandable. If anyone is truly saddened by this transition, it is the Fernville family, who believe that they have had the finest junior high school band director possible. I have observed Brian while observing student teachers like Kayla many times, and he is a joy to watch while teaching. His students are never bored, never left to their own devices, as Brian always has them making music.

Brian came to Fernville as the junior high band director sixteen years ago, after his first year of teaching music in grades five through twelve in a small town in Eastern Illinois. Two years later, the district created the position of Assistant Band Director for the high school band, and those duties were added to his teaching grades five through eight. When Brian took the position, he was aware that Rick intended for him to take over his position when he retired. Brian has been patient, waiting for this moment, but not frustrated. He has enjoyed his work in the junior high school, and because of his great success, almost all of the students in the high school have very fond memories of him as their first teacher – a factor that will make his transition to Rick's position much smoother.

Brian's road to Warm Springs started out in the Rockville school district, where instrumental music is not offered until the seventh grade. It was there that he met Sue Shockley, his teacher, who would eventually become Rick's second wife, and an

important link to what eventually would become his career. When Brian graduated from college, Sue made sure he applied for the position at Fernville. Brian admits that they have kept him very busy.

I obviously do the fifth and sixth grade bands, I do lessons for those, those are “pull out” lessons, in sections, I go for half an hour a week... I do junior high concert band, I do have two jazz bands that are voluntary, that meet at 7:30 in the morning for 45 minutes. And they rotate every other day. And then I come up to the high school, and I am the assistant director up here and I do the second concert band. Rehearse them.

Brian laughed when I claimed that that hardly seemed enough to justify his position. He could tell it was a joke, and most music educators would agree that Brian’s workload is “considerable”. But Brian has handled it for sixteen years. I thought of Rick’s concern that he might be overwhelmed by his new duties, simply because he might be unable to let go of his other tasks. At this point in time, however, Brian was too excited to consider those consequences.

This afternoon, however, we were meeting to talk about Rick. In their sixteen - year association, their friendship has become far more important to them than their employment statuses. They frequently socialize outside of work, they play in the same adult ensembles, attend the same concerts, “double date” with their spouses. Few blood brothers are as close. Both of them are large men, formidable enough to look appropriate for the front line of a football team, but Brian is slightly shorter than Rick – just enough to enhance Rick’s “big brother” status.

Brian has no expectation that Rick will be leaving the area. They will continue on as friends, working together outside of the district. But things will be different. Brian will spend most of his waking hours at the high school, trying to live up to Rick’s example, but he also intends to make his own mark.

It's going to be completely different here. Personally, he's been a great mentor to me, I've learned a great deal from him, regarding just how to deal with people, deal with situations, coming up with creative ideas, keeping things fresh, just finding different ways to keep kids interested in music. Bringing in guest conductors, commissioning pieces, he will be missed and I hope I can lean on his expertise when I need it. I don't think he is ready to retire – I think he still enjoys being a band director. But it's probably financially not - it's not needed for him, that's the reason why he's leaving. I think that's part of the reason. He sees no value in continuing this position. But I think he is a little tired, and I hope he sticks around, and I have not asked him officially to come back and help out – I'm just waiting for him to kind of find the time to figure that out.

While Brian was talking, two students appeared in the doorway. One of them, Jason, said "I'm Ransom's Independent Study right now." "Just hang out," said Brian, and Jason said "Cool, I'll listen." A few weeks later, I was listening to Jason.

I asked Brian how much longer he thought Rick would have kept teaching if the retirement system had been more tolerant, and he said "Until he felt he wasn't getting the job done." When I pressed him to speculate on how long that would take, he finally decided that Rick could have kept teaching at least into his early sixties – almost another decade.

Yep. I think he could. I think he still has the passion for it. I have heard him say, though, when, and this goes to his playing, he wants to know, when he doesn't feel like he's playing as strong as he is, and brings value or something to the group, organization, he wants to be told that. And he wants to say, you know, "good-bye" to that. So I don't know if this is the same way, how he values that.

Brian knows, perhaps better than Rick, that it will be hard for Rick to really say "good-bye" to his job. The parties and ceremonies that are being held in his honor only make it more difficult, but at the same time they also lend a greater air of finality to the transition. At some point, Brian and Rick are going to have to come to an agreement, formal or otherwise, regarding Rick's involvement with the band once he has formally retired, and both Rick and Brian seem unwilling to "make the first move".



Brian: Yes. I think he will wait to be asked, though. He will sit back and just wait to be asked and - I've - he's let me take over, he's let me do all the setup, all the organization of next year, there hasn't been much of him - he's just been sitting back waiting for me to say "hey, I need help on this."

Terry: And of course you've been fighting this tooth and nail...

Brian: (laughing) Yes, I am!

Terry: Is there a special way that he has to be asked?

Brian: I don't think so - not with Rick. I think it's pretty "plain Jane" with him - I mean you can just - if I say, "Rick, I'll need you next Wednesday, is there any chance you can come out next Wednesday, he would be there. I think he would - I mean you know, if he could make it. It's that simple with him, I don't think you have to, you know, send him a card, or invitation - I don't think that's gonna be the case - I think - but that initial step "Hey I need some guidance here would you mind coming out?" or "The kids would like to see you", or "We're doing a concert, and you know we're going to honor you again, or do something like that - that's, you know, "I heard that's your favorite march, you want to come critique it?" I'm definitely going to use him in the concert bands to come and listen to the bands and hear us before our concerts, 'cause I value his, what he's - he's amazing on literature.

And so the dance goes on - Rick is reluctant to volunteer, and Brian worries that by asking he will be imposing on Rick. Ultimately, they must both decide how much involvement is best for the students, best for the transition, and while Brian treasures his relationship with his "big brother", he knows that too much involvement will hamstring the program. And Rick will accept this.

Brian is confident that he and Rick will reach a consensus about Rick's post-retirement involvement in part due to his own past, and how he transitioned into the position of Director of Bands at Warm Springs. Brian feels that Rick's recipe for success has been a lot of hard work, and being an inspiration to his students.

You know, he established himself here in the early 80s and promoted a program when the community needed it! And we were going through rough times in the 80s, when Caterpillar was restructuring their test thing, and I think he's done an amazing job of instilling a legacy and commitment from not only just the kids, but

from the parents, to the community. And they know that, and they will be honoring him, that, over this year. I mean there's going to be a Rick Ransom Day in November. No one knows about that yet because it's under wraps. And he has no idea. But the success is – you know, and he's done a lot of – you know, “behind the scenes” studying, and trying to find ways to make it enriching for the students, not just trips and things, but also academically. He's always on the cusp of new material coming out – in fact, he's doing that today. He's ordered DVDs of new things, when the Burns things came out, he was on top of that... you know, those kind of things. So not just musically, either, professional, or performance level, it's academic, too. Within his classes. And he's pushed – he's really open for students obviously continuing in music. The two of them back there are going into music ed. So, that's a continuing to make music a part of their life. Which I think has been vital to the success, too. He's kept the parents involved.... our booster program is amazing. We have between twenty-five and thirty parents every month, come to our meeting, which is... we're very active!

The support Rick has received from the community during his tenure at Warm Springs has been impressive. A large part of that support stems from tradition, but Brian also believes that much of that support is a response to Rick's leadership. Brian is grateful that such an efficient and effective system is in place – one which not only takes care of many of the logistical details that go into a competitive marching band program, but also raises a massive amount of funds for the program – funds that have allowed for the students to travel to Canada, Hawaii, and many other places in North America. I asked Brian if all of these accomplishments will resurface for him as challenges, and he laughed when I asked if band can be as much “fun” with him as the director.

It'd better be! That's the good thing about this transition, is that Rick and I have worked really close together and we've come up with great ideas on how to keep it fresh for the kids. I think – It's a special situation here.

Brian's close relationship with Rick has ensured that he has always been accessible. For many years, their schedules have allowed them plenty of time to work together, and as a result Brian has seen much of that time as mentoring for this eventual transition.

He's really gave me some insight on first of all, dealing with parents, how to think about situations before you just jump the gun, his experience, obviously, is key – just knowing throughout the years – I've already asked him things about "Hey, what happened in the 80s is going on here..." he's given me that experience, on how to deal with that in the future. The administrative things - he's helped me out musically, he's always made me aware of the things I miss (laughing) you know, he's come down and he's been able to say "Hey, you haven't focused on what type of mallets you're using," or those kind of things, you know, things I just – you just sometimes forget. But keeping the activity fresh – I think that's really what he's taught me, and what I hope to continue on, obviously. With literature, and with activities.

Brian is grateful for all of the wisdom and advice he has harvested from his relationship with Rick. At the same time, he has earned Rick's respect by working hard, and supporting Rick's decisions. He has helped Rick in the planning and execution of every band trip since he came to Warm Springs, and intends to continue making trips that place their emphasis on learning, not leisure – on performing, not partying.

In spite of his duties, Brian feels as though he is somewhat unfamiliar with the role that Rick has played in the overall atmosphere at Warm Springs High School. He does know, however, that Rick has "done it all."

I know there's a lot of faculty that respect him, and know that he's brought – he got a lot of history with him from this school – I mean, he's been here since this building was built! Or pretty close to it – This was built in '76, so he was here in '80, so, he's done everything like cutting the grass, to, you know, all the maintenance things, the guys in the maintenance, I mean, they love him, the custodians, the connection there. Atmosphere? I don't know, you might ask these kids.

I duly noted Brian's suggestion, and eventually I was able to arrange a time to talk to Jason, Rick's independent study student. Meanwhile, we expanded the scope of Rick's influence to include the entire community.

You come into this town and you see, you know you see the signs on the side of the road - you know, that the band is doing well. And you see that, and the impact on all the businesses that we've dealt with through the years, people know him – I mean people know – I could walk into any business and say "Hey, I need

this. Oh, by the way, I'm Rick Ransom's assistant." "Oh, sure, here you go." I mean that's how it works. They know him and he's made great connections. And he's constantly had over a hundred and – hundred-plus students in the program every year, that says something for a school of 675. The percentage is usually, in most band programs are five percent of the population- ten, I think that's what I've read... and we're up twenty – thirty percent all the time.

Brian's statistics have not gone unnoticed by the community, and especially not by the school board and the administration. With one out of every four students participating in the band, it is the most talked-about organization in the school, and the school is the center of activity for the community. Brian is proud of the signs on the edge of town that boast of the band's accomplishments. His daughter began her involvement with the middle school program this past year, and someday soon he will be welcoming her into the high school program. He's seen plenty of students who were the daughters of band directors, but this is the first time it has happened to him.

Brian: Well, I'll tell you what my experience is and I think it will come out of what she's experienced... it was, for the first few weeks or months I would even say, it was bizarre to see her sitting there in the front row and knowing that everything I said she could relay to her mom or whatever, but also – I've come to realize that she's enjoying the experience, and I know why she's enjoying it because she's pulling kids in from her same section after school and they're playing duets, and trios, and things – you know, easy stuff, but she's trying to look for more ways to play than just the book and the music. She's interested in playing another instrument, that she can do in jazz band, 'cause she plays the flute, so she wants to look at sax or the bass guitar, so – I think she's had a positive – I think she's not too crazy about, you know, being picked on once and awhile – cause I'll use stories, and about my family and things like that. And she'll roll her eyes... they're good – they're not anything that will, you know –

T: Embarrass her?

B: Well, there's once and a while...

Brian leaned back in his reclining chair while he laughed at the thought of his red-faced daughter. There is always a little teasing somewhere when making happy music.

Brian and I were both aware that Rick had talked about going to Yosemite National Park and working as a volunteer carpenter. Futures are always fluid, but inevitably they involve separation from friends and loved ones, so I asked Brian to tell me how he would want Rick to remember him. The wide grin that had covered his face disappeared, and for a very long time he kept silent. When he was ready, his first sentence was the only sentence he truly needed to say.

That I kept the legacy going. The tradition of this program – he’s really made it clear to me about that. We’ve only had seven band directors here. Since the 50s. I think that’s why he picked me, back in ’94, to come over here. I’m still to that family tradition of staying here, sticking to one job, one community. I don’t like to bounce around too much. And that would be – I mean, knowing that I continued his ideas, his values, well, you know, tweaking it with what I believe in, where it should go, it’s still that core legacy of having a great program, having it involved in the community, and keeping it fresh for the kids. I would like for him to know that I did that. And I kept that going – and I’ve already started that process, with my replacement at Fernville, finding someone I think might stick around for, you know, another 15 years and then I’m out the door and then he comes in. So, I think that’s a great thing to have here.

Rick had mentioned many times that he had picked Brian as his successor for exactly the reasons Brian had just mentioned. I asked Brian if there was ever a time that he questioned the wisdom of his choice.

Yeah, yep. We actually crossed that bridge about 5 years ago. I was looking to move out of here, move to the ‘burbs, and I just came to the point where, you know I like this area, I like this town, I still want to do this, and I didn’t want to give that up, so that was about 5 years ago.

Brian seemed proud of his choice, one that he had made with his wife and without pressure from Rick. As we were talking, we heard someone whistling, and we both realized that it was someone who could speak as loudly as he could whistle. “Did I know you were going to be here?” said Rick, who was peering into his own office. As all three of us laughed, I said “No! I don’t want anything to do with you today.” Rick feigned a

look of disappointment, and said “Ouch. I thought we were buddies, too...” I responded with “I can’t ask this next question until you get out of here!” and soon Rick was heading out of the room. We could barely hear him as he neared the outside door, saying “I’m going to go where I’m wanted, then.”

I certainly did not want Rick to be within earshot when I asked Brian what he would remember most about Rick. His first joking response was “His loud trombone playing! It’s still ringing in my ears!” Then he paused for a moment, readying himself for his own understanding of what Rick had meant to him for sixteen years.

His passion to produce a good product. To keep music education a core component in this school district. He’s a hard worker – he’s always seemed to put this program first. Even in his personal life, I think he’s done that. And it’s cost him a marriage, and – but I think he’s in a happy place, now, obviously, personally, but I think he poured his heart and soul into this program. And you can definitely tell. Connection with the kids... I mean he can – he knows students that walk in and go, “hey, do you remember me from 19... 84? And he’ll know who that person is.

It would be difficult to dispute anything Brian has said about his friend. It would be impossible to claim that Brian wasn’t sincere about his admiration and respect for him. And it would be negligent to ignore the possibility that Brian may be putting his own marriage at risk if he repeats some of the actions that cost Rick his first marriage. It will be a delicate balance, at best. But Brian will have Rick’s support, and his approval, and his friendship. The transition continues, and ultimately the community will judge if Brian is a suitable successor.

As Brian and I continued to talk, we heard Rick’s voice whispering through the band room. “Is it safe?” I felt very comfortable saying “Yes, Rick, it’s safe.”

## **Stomp and Circle Dance**

Three days after Rick's wet, but well-attended party, I was going to be able to observe him conduct the Warm Springs band for the final time, at least in his official capacity. Graduation Day had arrived, and the weather was cooperating for the families who were arriving at the school, complete with caps and gowns for the seniors. Most of the graduates were gathering on the front lawn, and cameras were everywhere. Rick had told me that he'd be at the school at 1 o'clock, so I decided to arrive a few minutes later. By now I had visited the school enough times that I no longer need to identify myself, and entered the building without the traditional "check-in" protocol. But soon hundreds of proud parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles will be doing the same thing. I came in through the loading dock of the band room, anxious to see how Rick is coping with his last performance. When we met, however, his excitement was for the concert he had attended at Orchestra Hall in Chicago the night before. His first words were "Who's the tuba sub for the CSO?" I mentioned a few names with descriptions before Rick decided that one of them matched the person he saw. "They did Mahler Five, and it was AMAZING!" He was about to go into a detailed description of the concert when two of his students walked in, wearing shorts. Immediately, Rick's usual voice switched to his 'teacher voice'. "You were specifically told not to wear shorts! Go Home! You get an 'F' for the class!" Rick's voice was thundering throughout the room, but most of the students seemed oblivious, as though they'd heard it all before. Even if it's only for a few more hours, Rick is still very much in charge. One of the students protests – "but we were told by a band mom..."

“Is the band mom the director?” Rick’s voice became even more powerful. “No, I’m the director! Either find some long pants or go home!” As the students headed for the door, Rick pivoted back around to see another student taking an instrument out of its case. “No, no, we’re using concert instruments today.” This time the voice was a little more subdued, but it was followed by Rick shaking his head. “Sometimes, these boneheads...” he muttered – but there was also a small grin on his face.

Most of the students were making their way to the gym, where the ceremony would be held. It was a relief to feel air conditioning as we marched down the hallway, and the sight of hundreds of parents and other family members pouring into the large room made it all the more vital. The upper tier of the gym is at ground level, and the actual basketball court of the room has been sunken into the ground, creating a very large space for the ceremony. Within a few minutes, any doubts I might have had about a “full house” evaporated, as the bleachers filled up quickly, and soon visitors were beginning to gather near where the band was setting up to play. I had found an area next to a supply room that allowed me to “see, but not be seen.” The assistant principal came up to the edge of the band and shouted to Rick, “It’s not too late! You could still change your mind!” Rick, who was in the midst of passing out sheets with schedules for summer music lessons, waved him off, preoccupied with the tasks at hand. A few minutes later the principal, Royce Mallory stopped by. He had been busily placing name cards on the seats for the graduates. Royce and all of the other administrators were not wearing caps and gowns – instead they were all wearing suits, and sporting boutonnieres. One of the students who had come wearing shorts tried to sneak into the back of the band, but was quickly spotted by Rick. His teacher voice said “NO!” and a stern look was all it took,



and the student walked out again. Regardless of whether or not Rick has drawn a fair or realistic line in the sand, it's clear that he never allows anyone to cross it once it is set.

Even though the din of hundreds of parents chatting had created a constant roar in the gymnasium, Rick began to warm up the ensemble just as he would in the confines of a fine concert hall. Using long tones, scales, and chords, he at least proved to his students that he was still trying his best to create music in the midst of mayhem. "Get ready for the Washington Post!" he bellowed. "One, two, ready, - OOPS!" Rick raised his finger. "One more minute... sorry!"

As the crowd continued to search for any vacant seating, the photographers were swarming everywhere. The school had hired a company and they were setting up near the entrance for the procession, and other photographers were setting up next to the band. While cameras were flashing, people were coming up to Rick and shaking his hand, as though many of them had finally realized that soon he would be gone.

Finally, Rick got the signal from Royce. The "Washington Post" began well, but some of the players forgot to take the first ending of the "trio" section, and for a brief moment, the band struggled. They all managed to get back together after sixteen measures, and the march finished well. "Pass it in," yelled Rick, "Lion King is next."

For a moment, I was baffled by the choice of this music for the ceremony, but eventually I discovered the pragmatic reason – the band had performed it earlier in the year, and Rick simply needed a long piece of music to fill time before the top of the hour. It also appeared that Rick was looking for music to play that was not too challenging, and the band was able to play this selection without much trouble. The band that he was directing was poor in comparison to the band he been conducting all year, since his senior

players were downstairs dressed in caps and gowns. As the music continued, Rick could be seen glancing at his wrist watch, even though there was a wall clock right next to the band. “The Lion King” finally concluded at 1:49.

“Get ‘Stomp and Circle Dance’ ready!” Rick yelled. Most of us have heard “Stomp and Circle Dance” at a graduation ceremony – but usually under the title “Pomp and Circumstance”, by Sir Edward Elgar – Rick had his own pet name for the piece. “We’ll have to skip ‘The River of Life’” he said.

As the musicians shuffled their pages, looking for the Elgar, several more well-wishers come up to shake hands with Rick, as he spent a few minutes explaining to the band that once the ceremony is over, they would need to take their instruments outside and walk around the building to get back to the band room. “There’s going to be complete chaos out in the hall,” he said, “and I don’t want any of you to be a part of it.”

Rick kept leaning over the railing, looking down for his signal from Royce. Again and again he looked at his watch. Finally, the signal came and the “stomp” began. It was clear that the procession was going to be a long one – each pair of graduates stopped for a moment under a temporary arch for a photo, before continuing to walk the length of the gymnasium floor. It was also apparent that “Stomp and Circle Dance” had not been rehearsed as well as it needed to be. Many of the students kept forgetting that they were not playing in one of the more traditional keys for bands, and wrong notes caused Rick to wince quite a few times. The timpani player seemed unconcerned that the gymnasium seemed to amplify his instruments, and Rick kept motioning to him to play softer – a plea that went, for the most part, unheeded.

By 2:09, Rick was looking frequently at his watch, wondering how many more times the band would have to repeat “Stomp and Circle Dance”. At 2:11, he reluctantly put up one finger, signaling to the band to take the first ending and start again. Finally, at 2:13, Rick realized that he could finally end the processional, and put up two fingers. Unfortunately, several students missed the signal and began repeating, while the rest of the band began the final part. The finale was depressing to most of the musicians, but the crowd seemed oblivious to the confusion. Rick signaled to the band to put down their instruments, and turned to watch the ceremony.

The superintendent of the district made the opening speech, choosing to quote some of the philosophy of Theodore Geissel, better known to most academics as “Dr. Seuss”. After a few references to “The Cat and the Hat” and “Horton Hears a Who”, he charged the graduates with the usual duties of a student – turned – citizen. The class valedictorian’s address was a list of accomplishments that had occurred in the school during her tenure as a student. “In our sophomore year, the marching band won state,” she noted, and mentioned that a number of musicians had been selected to perform with the All-State bands, while I noted that the valedictorians of few schools would find the achievements of a musical organization more worth noting than the trophies won by their athletes.

The president of the school board came to the podium to announce each candidate for a diploma, and the superintendent was standing by to present them as they passed across the stage. Whenever the child of a school board member graduated, the parent was given the honor of handing the diploma to their son or daughter. When the president called out the name “Morgenstern”, I realized that we were more than halfway through

the alphabet, and getting close to the end of the ceremony. Rick, who had been standing at the railing the entire time, appeared stoic at first, but then for a moment I could see the gaze of a man who had realized that a pivotal moment was upon him. A wave of regret had washed over him, along with a look of helplessness, knowing that this event, as well as all of the events to come, at the school were out of his hands.

By 2:50, the final graduates are receiving their diplomas. I could see Rick nodding his head as he turned to the band and reminded them that they would be playing Clare Grundman's "March Processional." The final pronouncement by the superintendent that the students were now graduates was the signal to the crowd to erupt into applause, cheers, and also to stand up from some very uncomfortable wooden bleachers, and it also served as a signal to Rick to start his last piece as the band's director. As "March Processional" began, I could barely hear the music in spite of being within a few feet of the ensemble. Parents, students, and others were mingling and conversing almost within an arm's length of the performers. The air conditioning had been shut off earlier, and the temperature had soared, but the organizers of the event had apparently made no provision to get the graduates out of the main floor in a timely manner. Dozens stopped to have their pictures taken, and the march wasn't nearly long enough. "Go back to 'D'" Rick yelled, but many of the students couldn't hear him, and the music began to deteriorate. After a while, most of the students had found their place, but again the music was running out. Clearly, the students weren't ready to play the piece several times. Finally the last of the graduates passed under the arch, and Rick let the piece play out to the end, but his exhausted players had lost all of their focus. The

piece ground to a halt, mercifully still being drowned out by an enthusiastic group of family members.

Rick's final piece as the director at Warm Springs was met with a smattering of applause. Certainly a smattering was all that the performance deserved. But Rick deserved so much more. The students seemed unaware of the significance of the moment, as though Rick will be back in the fall, and nothing will change. But it will change. Rick is just beginning to accept that himself.

I saw Royce, down on the main floor, picking up the scattered programs, and name tags, and wondered why a principal would feel obligated to clean up on a hot Sunday afternoon – and then, after finishing my notes, I started stacking chairs with Rick. There seemed to be no regret, no dismay, no sadness to be found on his face, as though this had been “just another graduation,” and that the next one will be better. But chances are the next graduation Rick attends will find him in the bleachers, instead of on the podium. He'll be listening to someone else conducting “Stomp and Circle Dance”, and not watching for the principal to cue him. Rick's “graduation day” had come and gone.

### **Carrying Through on a Promise**

I had scheduled an interview with Barbara Hedges, the superintendent at Plainsville, and Bill's wife, for 2:00. Since I would be in the area, I had contacted Mike Gordon, Bill's successor to see if he could take an early lunch that day, since school was over the day before. I arrived at Belmont City High School at 10:30AM, a little early, in order to stop by the principal's office, since we had never met.

Diane Anderson, the principal, is very young. She has been at Belmont City since the fall of 2004, and recently completed her EDS degree at North Central University.

When I checked in at the main office, the secretary telephoned her and she asked for me to come to her office, located on the other side of the main entrance to the building.

When I arrived she was in a classic “multitasking” position, speaking to someone on the telephone while tapping away at her computer. A minute later she spun around and I re-introduced myself, apologizing for taking over a month to stop by but explaining that I had attended several public functions at the school while doing my research, including the 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Concert. “Oh yes,” she said, “and no doubt you saw Bill there too – he comes to almost all of the band’s events.”

There was a timbre to her voice that seemed to give her remark multiple meanings. While we had no interview scheduled, I pursued it further. “Well, I suspect that he feels a strong attachment to the band, and the school.”

“Yes, he does. He was here for a very long time.”

I wanted to get Diane’s reaction about Mike’s leaving, so I mentioned that it was unfortunate that he was given his opportunity for a graduate assistantship after just coming to Belmont City. Diane seemed to be stoic about it - “Well, it’s been difficult, and after having two band directors in 50 years, I worry that the program is going to suffer. But we’ve hired a new director – a local boy named Mark Hensen, and I’m confident that he’ll do well.”

During her remarks, Diane had been moving at all times, heading toward the door. There was a clear indication that she has more important issues to tackle today, even in a nearly empty building. I thanked her for her time and cooperation, although her agitated tone seemed to indicate a level of frustration. She appears to be resentful of Mike’s career move, seeing it as damaging to one of the most respected programs in her school,

and at the same time she is also tired of Bill's reappearances in the building. Perhaps she's tired of mine, too, when she asks "Can you find your own way to the band room?"

Finding my way around at Belmont City High School is no longer difficult. The school is very well laid out, and each time I pass the athletic wing I think of Bill's comments that having the music and athletic areas next to each other made a major difference in how the two disciplines have come to work together, and I also think of Mike's speech at the "Symphonic" concert.

When I arrived at the band room, one of Mike's students was sorting music. "Where's Mr. Gordon?" I asked, and she noted that he had "gone to look for someone – was it you?" "Yes, it was..." I said, and just then Mike's face could be seen in the next room. "Bout time you got here – what kept you?" As we were shaking hands I blamed my conversation with Diane. "Great lady – really sharp," he said, "She's been really helpful. I want you to see something." Mike took me into his office, which was uncharacteristically neat. "Has there always been a carpet in here?" I joked. Mike had taken away almost all of his materials, and left the rest in immaculate condition. "Mark was here the other day and I wanted him to feel that he could move in whenever he wanted," he said. "I told him that all of the books and stuff belonged here, and if he was looking for anything I'd be glad to help him find it – I didn't want him to have to tangle with the mess Bill left me." Mike grinned as he mentioned "the mess". Bill was notorious for demanding that every instrument, every piece of music, every loose item in his room be accounted for. Mike was much more concerned with maintaining yet another tradition than winning a cleaning contest.

After a short period of haggling, Mike and I decided that an early lunch was in order, and we headed for the “Sidetrack Cafe” in the old railroad depot. I was curious about his plans for the rest of the summer. “Technically, I’m under contract until the first of August,” he noted, “and when I resigned I told them I would be leaving then, even though the Sweet Corn Festival is a week later – they didn’t say anything, so I’m assuming that as of August first I’m gone.”

After speaking with Diane and Bill, it appeared that as far as the community is concerned, Mike is already “gone.” Later, I would discover that Mike’s duties in preparing for the upcoming Memorial Day program would be given back to Bill, and that Mike was relegated to a role far in the background.

As we ate, our conversation turned to the future of the program. Mike is clearly concerned that his choice of leaving will reflect badly on his reputation. His goal of teaching in higher education as a band director depends on his completing his doctorate, but it also depends on having a resumé supported by glowing recommendations, and his former conducting teacher has already expressed his displeasure at Mike’s timing. There is little, if any evidence that the Belmont City school district had any reason to be displeased with Mike’s work. There is some evidence that the administration was displeased that Mike was outspoken about his concerns for the program in light of a declining feeder program in the junior high. The main focus of the concern for both the program and for Mike is that his early departure has disrupted a half-century of stability. “Next year these kids will have their third band director in three years,” he mused, “and some people are very uncomfortable with that.” I asked him if he wished he hadn’t made his choice, and he was adamant. “I made the choice – it might not have been the



best timing, but it's done. I can't go back, so I won't look back." Still remembering the comments Diane had made, I finally approached the issue of the support. "I got lots of support, and this is a great program. I've made friends, and the students are super. Luci has been incredible, and of course Bill was always there to support me."

Bill had always been there. But was he always there to support Mike, or was he always there to protect his legacy? As we talked, it became clear that Mike, like Diane, occasionally became weary of Bill's visits. Part of this could be attributed to the cumulative effect of visits as the former director mixed with the visits Bill frequently made as a sales representative for the Music Store. But the frequency of visits is what counts. Mike was weary of his students being constantly reminded of their former director – the specter of the legend looking over his shoulder.

As we were eating, I began to run out of time. I realized that soon Mike would have to finish the "burning of his bridges". I realized that he is not aware that once he leaves to attend a music camp at Central University at the end of June, he might as well not bother coming back. Sometime soon, Mark Hensen will be in charge, and I will need to be meeting with him for lunch instead.

### **A Memorable Memorial Day**

As another trip to Belmont City began, I reflected on the trip I had made to the city almost one year ago for their annual Ice Cream Social, when the event was forced inside due to inclement weather. Once again the skies were cloudy, and tornado warnings had been issued in some nearby areas. It was only seven o'clock, and in the Midwest it is unreasonable to expect the same weather for four hours. My wife, Libbie,

was coming along to play the flute, and she was looking forward to seeing Bill's wife, Barbara again.

This time our invitation to come and play with the Belmont City Alumni band had come from Mike Gordon, who, as the current band director at Belmont City was entrusted with arranging all of the details for the band playing at the annual Memorial Day observance at the cemetery. I was eager to come and play, and equally eager to observe Mike in one of his final official acts before stepping down as the band director.

Rehearsal was scheduled for eight-thirty, at the high school, which is only about a half-mile from the cemetery. When we arrived the skies were still cloudy, but the rain was still absent. As we entered the room I could see Mike busily arranging chairs, answering questions, and greeting as many players as he could, but I also noticed his horn sitting on a chair nearby. Tradition had prevailed, and Bill would be conducting the ceremony. By the time we had arrived at 8:20 the rehearsal room was packed, thanks mainly to Bill and Barbara bringing several large boxes of doughnuts, lots of bottled water and coffee, and even cheese and crackers. We had been told that casual dress was appropriate for the day – polo shirts and khaki pants – but Bill was dressed as I had seen him almost every time he had ever been in the Belmont City Band Room – a neat, long-sleeved white shirt, modest red tie, and dress slacks. The difference in his appearance was visual confirmation that Bill was back in charge.

Before I had had a chance to greet Bill, I noticed a fellow carrying a tuba. My advance research had enabled me to identify him as Mark Hensen, who had recently been hired to replace Mike. I came up to identify myself, and discovered that Mark had also

done his homework. “Terry Solomonson! Mike told me you were coming over – and I’m interested in the research you’re doing about Bill!”

Musicians are, by both nature and necessity, collaborative. We talked for a moment, and agreed that this transition was going to have to be discussed for the study, and made arrangements for a chat later on. Mark was having some problems with his tuba - another musician had accidentally bumped his instrument and had broken a valve, so we had some urgent “first aid” to attend to before the rehearsal.

By rehearsal time, I had counted 62 musicians, all in place and ready to practice their music. No one was more prepared to practice than Bill, who pounced upon the podium with an uncommon amount of enthusiasm. “Let’s get up ‘Air for Band’, he said, “just to get us a little warmed up.” Within a few seconds the band was playing a piece that was slow, required little in the way of articulation, and allowed all of the wind players to “stretch out their lungs” and warm up their instruments. The balance was poor. The intonation was poorer. The percussion played too loud. Above it all was Bill, who clearly was enjoying his task as conductor as much as any conductor I’ve seen. After a few minutes of the “Air”, he stopped and said “OK, we’ve got a little air through our horns – now let’s see if we can start to sound like a band. We’re going through our music in concert order, so keep your music in order as you play it – and watch for the cuts I’m going to be making. Let’s do “Concord”, but first I’d like to start at measure 132.”

Measure 132 was near the end of the piece, and Bill was using a rehearsal technique that many conductors have found successful – practice the difficult transitions that make the end of the work successful, and work backwards until the beginning of the piece has been reached. “Concord” is a piece with its roots in colonial-era fife and drum

songs, and Bill made sure to point that out, as well as to reminisce about the High School Band's trip to Williamsburg, where a fife and drum group came to their hotel to perform some of these colonial songs with the band. Bill was talking at a fast clip. He was gesturing, smiling and laughing, and the faces of those alumni who had been on that trip reflected their memories of the experience. After he had spent a little too much time talking, someone in the trumpet section called out "No more coffee for you, Bill!" and the entire group burst out laughing.

Bill was laughing too. He was having more fun rehearsing, and bantering with his old students than he had probably had since his retirement began. Ten months worth of pent-up energy for this moment had been unleashed in ten minutes, and the musicians were enjoying his love of collaboration, creation, and commemoration.

The remark did slow Bill down – not in his enthusiasm, but it served as a reminder to him that his players needed a little "down time" too. "I want to go around and have everybody identify themselves, and let us know when you graduated – if you dare – but first I want to welcome Terry Solomonson and his wife, Libbie – who've come over to play with us today. As some of you know, Terry is doing a doctoral study on retired old band directors like me, and I wanted him to see how our alumni band works. I don't know how unique our band is – Terry, do you know?"

The mouse in the corner, once cornered, still tries to remain shy, and I simply shrugged my shoulders. At the same time, however, a fractured paraphrase developed in my mind. Yes, there are plenty of "town bands" in hamlets like Belmont City. Most of them have someone who could be referred to as the "venerable band leader", and most have the prerequisite comics, latent prodigies, former virtuosos, and crackpots. But most

importantly - and Belmont City is a definitive example – they all prove that “the community that plays together, stays together.”

I thought that later I would get a chance to share that idea with the entire ensemble. It seemed, and still seems that these people would resonate with such a statement. They would believe it, mostly because they would want to believe it. The true measure of a legacy in music is the faith that the community puts into that legacy, whether it be a musical community such as Tanglewood, where the legacies of Copland, Bernstein, and Ozawa are honored season after season, or in a community like Belmont City, where the music sounds best knowing that it has been created by one’s friends and neighbors.

As the players went around, the graduation years gradually covered all of the last decade, and most of the previous one. Ladies with grey hair would sometimes retort with “I’m a parent!” One gentleman pointed out that although he was bald he still had more hair than Bill. Still another woman dodged the graduation date by reminding Bill that he had conducted the band at her graduation, and at her daughter’s graduation. Again and again their responses to Bill’s request gave out a lot more information than the number of years that had passed since they had been in high school.

By the time the last person had identified herself, Bill had successfully employed another classroom strategy that has eluded most teachers – he had bonded together 62 people and made them feel part of a community within a community. Observing these individuals over a short period of time had shown that there were a variety of reasons they were in attendance, but the greatest observable phenomenon of the day was that they

all had come because they knew that Bill wanted them to come – and within the first thirty minutes of rehearsal, he had made sure that they all understood his gratitude. There were still several pieces to be rehearsed, so Bill called up “What’s up at the Symphony” – a montage of classical pieces that were excerpted during the 1940’s and 1950’s in Hollywood for Warner Brothers cartoons. Again, he used his “reverse flow” technique, making sure that the tempo changes going from Liszt’s “Hungarian Rhapsody” to Brahms’ “Hungarian Dance”, or Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries” were understood. We spent more time on balance, blend, and chordal sound for the hymn paraphrase on “God of our Fathers”, for the ceremonial part of the program, along with a closing march, Latham’s “Proud Heritage”.

The ceremony was to be held at the local cemetery, about a half-mile down the road, and eventually Bill realized that we would have to stop in order to get there on time. For a moment, his face lost its sunshine. The rehearsal was over, but his understanding of its meaning will endure. We were all given directions to the cemetery – “It’s right over there.” as Bill pointed to the east. Susan, Bill’s daughter and one of the clarinet players, had warned Libbie that we were going to the “North Cemetery”, and that it should not be confused with the “Catholic Cemetery” or the “Lutheran Cemetery” which we had passed by on our way to the school.

In spite of their denominational differences, the three cemeteries all look the same, and they are all next to one another. Our task was to travel to the north end and find the assembly area, a lovely circle framed by Lombardy Poplars and tall Pine trees. As we set up our folding chairs, and unpacked our instruments, men in uniform could be seen gathering about one hundred yards away, carefully unfolding their flags and

shouldering their rifles. Out of a community of 7,000 souls, several hundred of them were waiting for the ceremony to begin. Of course the band was to play several of its pieces as a prelude to the actual ceremony, and Bill was, as usual, adamant about starting on time. Just as the last players were sitting down, however, he looked up, grinned, and sheepishly said “Does anybody have an extra music stand that they can lend to a senile old band director?” As it turned out, the only musician who had brought a spare was the mouse in the corner, and my spare stand wound up holding Susan’s music while he used hers.

These days it is common for individuals to assume that their conduct at events where live music is being performed can be the same as it is at events where recorded music is being played, but it is still aggravating to musicians to compete with jabbering crowds, klaxon-like cell phones, and ill-timed announcements over public address systems. Nevertheless, the “band played on” throughout all of this during the prelude music. Visual cues are more difficult to ignore, especially when they are given by men in uniform, and as the veterans prepared to march, the crowd became reverent.

The music became reverent, too. Bill had chosen a paraphrase of the hymn “God of Our Fathers” to lead up to the actual procession. The combination the music with an assemblage of patriots gathering to honor their comrades, along with the peaceful setting of the cemetery had focused the attentions of the crowd on the purpose of their gathering.

As the music ended, I could see Bill turning around to make sure that the color guard was ready, flags flying, rifles shouldered. The band quickly moved to the “Proud Heritage” march, and soon the soldiers were marching in step, crisply uniformed,

expressionless, toward the front area for the ceremony – a bayoneted rifle, stuck into the ground, with the traditional “GI Helmet” resting on the rifle butt.

Once the guardsmen had reached their destination, Bill allowed the march to finish, and then aimed his baton at the percussion section. As soon as the master of ceremonies requested the men in the audience to uncover their heads, a drummer began a roll while the color guard prepared to present the flags. Apparently one of the soldiers had forgotten the proper protocol, as the American flag dipped lower than the flag of Illinois, and so Bill waited for the “Stars and Stripes” to rise above the others before playing the national anthem.

After an invocation, the band prepared to play a medley of patriotic songs written by Irving Berlin. Just as he was about to start conducting, Bill turned to the audience, which was still standing. “You can all sit down now.” A few laughs could be heard, but for the most part everyone remained standing. Bill waited for a moment, and finally said “C’mon, now, have a seat! This is gonna last for about 5 minutes, so why don’t you relax and enjoy these songs?” More laughter, more people sitting down, but many still chose to stand. The medley of tunes consisted of typical patriotic fare from Irving Berlin, beginning and ending with his most famous song, “God Bless America.”

Following the medley, the master of ceremonies introduced a young man named Kevin, who had submitted the winning speech for the “Veterans of Foreign Wars” contest. His speech was about his heroes. He noted that it seemed that in today’s society we make heroes out of individuals who entertain us instead of inspiring us. He noted that he was fortunate because his two greatest heroes were living in the same house with him. He mentioned that he thought his country’s greatest heroes were those who love their



family, cherish their community, and protect their country. He never mentioned the current overseas conflicts, nor did he mention those of the past. But he mentioned that “a hero makes sacrifices without expecting anything in return.” I was comforted by Kevin’s remark, but also realized that I disagreed with it. A hero does expect something in return—at the core of that sacrifice there needs to be the knowledge that that sacrifice has made a positive impact on the lives of those he or she cherishes. They may have not been aware of it, but the veterans standing alongside of Kevin were there, at least in part, to be reminded why they and those who had fallen before them had served their country as they did. They were on a search for reconfirmation that their country, their community and their families were secure.

The soldier’s search is not dissimilar to Bill’s search. He had formed the alumni band many years ago as an extension of the program he had established as a music educator. Long before most music educators had embraced the notion that continuing education was vital to the success of music education at all community levels, he had sacrificed his time, his talent, and his tithing by planning, cajoling, rehearsing. And getting coffee and doughnuts. Observing Bill in rehearsal, it was clear that he had mastered the technique of first dealing with an individual as a high school student, and then transitioning that relationship to dealing with that same individual in the role of a peer. It was also clear that the students he had nurtured, who then became adult members of the community, have never seen him as a peer. “Mr. Hedges” may have become “Bill”, but he was still their hero. And like the soldiers that stood near the podium, Bill stood at his post, surrounded by his friends, appreciated by his community, secure in his legacy.

An older veteran came forward to call the roll of those veterans who had died in the past year. I expected the list to be short, but instead it was very long – dozens of names. Most had served, sacrificed, and lived long lives afterwards. But they were leaving. Who would be the heroes for the next generations of Kevins? I was sitting next to Bill’s replacement, Mark, and saw that his job was much bigger than he understood it to be. I’m sure that no one has demanded that he must be a hero to an entire community, but unless Mark is willing to make the same sacrifices, he will not be seen as part of the same traditions of Belmont City.

As was customary, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars laid wreaths of flowers at the foot of the monument at the cemetery. Bill chose a setting by Gustav Holst of a hymn that was written at the end of the First World War - “I Vow to Thee, My Country”:

I vow to thee, my country—all earthly things above,  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love.  
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,  
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.  
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,  
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there’s another country, I’ve heard of long ago,  
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know.  
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;  
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering.  
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace (Rice, 1923).

The wreath-laying ceremony took less time than Bill had expected, and he signaled to the band that we would be taking the “special second ending” that he had rehearsed earlier that morning. Not all of the musicians recognized his signal, and the end of the hymn was not as cadential as it should have been. Bill was dismayed but not

distraught. Shaking his head, he pointed at his heart and mouthed the words “sorry, folks”.

Most of us had to read Bill’s lips by this time, because we had plugged our ears in anticipation of the explosions to come. Seven rifles pointed into the air, and three times they fired, followed by a bugler playing taps in the distance. Much further in the distance, we could hear another bugler, playing an echo version of the call.

The minister closed the ceremony with a benediction, and Bill started the recessional march. The tempo seemed sluggish, and Bill watched carefully as the color guard marched away from the memorial monument. As soon as they had cleared the area, the tempo began to accelerate, until the band sounded as though we were at the circus.

Our last duties involved returning our chairs and music to the high school, where more refreshments were waiting. The sky had been getting more and more ominous, and shortly after the soldiers fired their volleys, nature had fired back with some thunder in the distance. Now, as we were loading percussion equipment back into the building, sporadic raindrops were splattering against the drums. “You timed that one perfect, Bill” said one of the players, as he slammed the door of the van. Bill was nonplussed – “Yep – had it all planned out.”

Once back in the band room, instruments were stored, cheese and crackers were eaten. Barb was catching up on old times with Libbie. Mark was hearing how to run the band from every “old-timer” in the place, except for Bill, who was busy chatting with the newest alumni – those who had only months earlier been his students. I caught Mike in the hallway, stacking chairs into a cart. His role in the program had been mostly in the

background, and taking care of the details that people seldom realize heroes have to do. Grabbing some chairs, I started placing them in one end of the cart while Mike adjusted the other end. “People just don’t get it,” he said. “These chairs have to be placed in here in just the right way.” For the moment, Mike was a leader looking for something to lead. In the few days between the last day of school and the ceremony, he had lost his leadership of the Belmont City band program, and for the time being, it had returned to Bill. For Bill this was a temporal rebirth - for Mike, a temporal hold on his life’s work. While the festivities continued, Bill remained the center of attention, while few of the band members had much to say to Mike.

It wasn’t long before I realized that it was time to go. The conversations were becoming routine. Players were looking ahead for the Ice Cream Social in a few weeks as if Bill had never left – and as if he never would. No one, including Bill or his wife, Barbara, seemed to be willing to acknowledge that he ever will.

## Chapter 7

### As Seen by Students

#### Memories of a Mentor

Belmont City is fortunate to be located on an exit for an interstate highway, making it easy to get there from most metropolitan areas – in addition, its close proximity to another East-West Interstate makes it a good area for business development. I chose to take the old roads to get to Belmont City, if for no other reason than to enjoy a lazy trip in the countryside and a scenic ride on an old bridge across the Illinois River.

As I was nearing the river valley, I received a voice mail message from Mark Hensen. “I’m run into some construction and I’m running a little late, so if we could meet at, say 1:30, or 1:45. that’d be great.” I called him back and assured him that it was no problem – that I would drive a little slower, take a little more time.

Instead of taking more time, I increased my speed a bit, because now I would have a little time to stop by the public library and check on the kinds of newspaper articles that had chronicled the Belmont City Band’s history over the past half-century. When I arrived at the library, I found that while eight different newspapers had once served this community, the most venerable of them had been, and continues to be the *Repeater*. Given this extra time, I started browsing the microfilm versions of the paper dating back to 1959, when Fred Franklin first started teaching there. Every time the Belmont City band gave a concert, or students went to All-State, there was coverage. A picture of the six students going to All-State in 1960, along with the report, occupied a quarter page of the “community” section (Students, 1960, 3). Not only were the band’s concerts publicized, the complete listing of what was to be performed was also

mentioned, along with a short description of the concert by Fred – certainly much more than the Chicago Symphony Orchestra can expect from the Tribune.

After printing off a few pages for later study, I headed for Belmont City High School, expecting to apologize to Mark for being a few minutes late. As it turned out, Mark was the one who felt the need to apologize, arriving a few minutes later. He had been driving his moving van into town from Bloomington, Indiana, and today he would be moving back to his hometown as the new band director. After he arrived, we dropped by the office so that I could check in. “There’s no need,” said the secretary, “as long as there’s no students around it doesn’t matter.” Mark was concerned that there was no mail in his mailbox. We dropped by to see Ellen, the secretary, who told him that she had held his mail so that the box wouldn’t get filled. She offered to give it to him, but I suggested that he let her put it in the box first – “it’ll make you feel more important.” I joked.

Back in the band room, Mark and I settled down at a large table that has always stood next to the podium. Bill had always left extra scores and parts of the music he was working on there, in case a student lost a part. Today, it was empty – and once Mark has moved into his new house, it may be moved, along with some other changes he has in mind. Change is on Mark’s mind, but he is mindful that his students, his students’ parents, and many civic leaders may see some of that change as threatening. He knows this because he was a vital part of creating many of the traditions that are deeply entrenched into the community’s concept of what the Belmont City Band should do, and he also knows this because he has seen some strong reactions to minor changes proposed by his immediate successor, Mike Gordon.

Mark's path to becoming a music educator is unusual in that he was never given an opportunity to become an instrumentalist until his sophomore year of high school.

I wanted to be in band when I was in elementary school, or fifth grade, but, my parents, I don't know whether they could afford it, or just didn't think that it was something I would enjoy but I wasn't allowed to join. So when I started high school I was involved with the drama, productions, and then my sophomore year was the musical year. So for the spring semester came time to audition for the spring musical, I had been involved with the drama productions up until that point, and was being encouraged to do the musical but I didn't know anything about music, but I always liked music, always wanted to be a part of the band, and ended up auditioning for the musical, and then Miss Smith was asking me to join choir, and at one point Bill caught me in the hall, and he said "would you ever be interested in joining band?" And I immediately said "yes." I'd always wanted to be in band, and I thought I was going to play the French Horn, because that's what I'd always wanted to play, when I was in fifth grade, but he said "OK, well I figure we'll plant a seed with you, why don't you come in after school someday, or something." So I came in after school one day, this is like early or mid-spring semester, this is my soph year, and we tried out tuba, bassoon, French horn, was basically every instrument they needed – I don't remember what else was in that list, maybe euphonium, and I did the best on euphonium and tuba and I thought "If I'm going to do this, I'll just go all the way." And I liked the sound of the tuba so I went with that. So we kind of went that route, played the tuba. I took lessons with him the rest of the semester, and then over the summer, and then started with summer band, and then that was pretty much it from there on out.

In a world where musical precocity seems to be a prerequisite for musical ability, Mark's five-year delay in becoming a musician would seem to be a major handicap. Mark, however, doesn't see it that way.

I had a handful of friends that were in band, at first I knew a few of the people, but I was just excited to be a part of it, and everything about it interests me, and was, you know, all that excitement that I'm sure like a fifth grade kid goes through but it was happening at a later age. And I was, you know, the learning curve's a little quicker there, so that's pretty much what captured me and that's why I wanted to be in the – I was just interested in playing in the group and the music. I think my learning curve was quicker, and I believe that, because having, you know, in my years of teaching I've started students first-time instrument in high school and they learn so much quicker than you know, a fifth – they just have the intellectual capacity to handle more. And also maybe being in a group that could play better music, like I never had to sit through fifth grade band, or you know, I didn't have to play fifth grade concert so you immediately – everyone was already so good around me. And it was neat, I was sitting down, I

was hearing music I recognized, and music that sounded good right off the bat, maybe that did it. I don't know, it was also novel to me too, I remember once, I had always been interested, and I remember buying soundtracks, and listening to them, and even like I got a Mozart tape at one – you know, back in the day when we had tapes, a tape at one point, was listening to that, as a kid, and then like I was in band and to see the instruments, and like it started putting it together – “Oh, that's the instrument that makes that sound,” or I remember one time, there was a cymbal roll, like with yarn mallets, you know, and I'm like “Oh, that's how they make that sound” and I'd never even thought of it before so I think, yeah, it was just very stimulating and I think exciting, so maybe that was enough to kind of catapult me into that.

Mark and I talked about his fellow students in high school, and that some of them are the parents of his future students. Mark noted that most of his friends were in both band and choir.

When I was in school, I don't know how it is now, but when I was in school the choir wasn't at the level it was now, and the choir – I don't want to say they “farmed” from the band but I would say definitely the strongest people did both. There were very few very strong choir people that weren't in band. If that makes sense... The strongest people in choir were also in band.

Musical kinships such as this are common, and it is very healthy for a student who someday may wish to be a music educator. It has worked in Mark's case. While he cherishes the education he received when he was in school at Belmont City, when I asked him for one word that best describes what it was like being in Bill's band, his choice was not music-specific.

Mark: One word that describes the experience? I would say “Family”. Is that different from what most people have said?

Terry: No, it's come up in pretty much a lot of people's dialogue, but I don't think the first and only thing, if they had to choose just one word, that was it.

Mark: I think the reason I went to that was you know you could say “musical”, or you know, he was great on the box, and you learn so much from him, but I don't know, maybe that was what I was lacking at the time, personally, I just always felt that with the group that he created an atmosphere of trust, and you know, a very much family atmosphere, and he very much took on the role of that kind of father figure – he was always trying to teach us lessons about things in everything. I just



remember like even one time we were at a marching band rehearsal and like a couple of ambulances went by, and he had to stop because he couldn't hear over it, and some kids were talking and joking around about it, and he said something along the lines like "You know, they're going to help someone who's in trouble. And we hope it's nobody - it's not your family, but think if it was." Like, "Would you be acting that way?" And everyone's like – "Oh, well... aw." So it was stuff like that just to remember, you know I mean this wise wisdom he tried to pass on to us.

Mark has taken many lessons in life, as well as music, from Bill. Since he has left Belmont City he has gone on to earn his bachelor's degree in music education from Bill's alma mater, and taught in the tiny town of Salamanca for a couple of years. He has just finished his master's degree - just in time to come back home and perhaps start another legacy in Belmont City.

When Mark first learned that Bill was retiring, he was working on his master's degree, which also employed him as an associate instructor at the university. All during his schooling, he and Bill had kept in touch, mainly by e-mail, but Mark would always come and visit during holidays. Bill would be sure and call Mark if he was short on tuba players, and Mark had been a regular staff member at band camp during his years of teaching at Salamanca. When Bill finally announced that he was going to retire, Mark has not surprised, and he also was not surprised at the telephone call that came soon after.

I wasn't surprised, because he had been alluding to it for a couple of years. He kind of talked about how maybe it was time for him to start thinking about it, but at the same time I was surprised because - because during, and I understand why he did it but during that time he had already submitted his three-year, or whatever it was, so he had talked about it, "you know I might be doing it soon, I might be doing it soon," and then it was, "Oh, this is my last year." Came very - very suddenly, I can see the merit... (and) then there was also a bit of - I don't want to say 'nervousness', but I guess the first thing was "Well, how long before I get a phone call?" Well like I thought that, because I had been teaching three years, and then, well I had been here a lot, and then I was at school for a year, and I thought "Well, I can't do it" because I knew if I – I'd already done one year of my masters, I couldn't split it- you know what I mean, I needed to finish it – and I did get a call, and Bill said "You know, have you thought about applying?" and I

couldn't. I said, "You know, I'm really..." It was a hard conversation to have with him. I said "I can't, I'm in the middle of this masters program." He understood, so I guess the next thing I thought, or felt was "I hope they can get someone good in there who would be strong enough to handle the students who are going to be, you know, upset with him leaving." And I also knew that the upcoming senior class was, personality-wise - I don't want to say "difficult", but they were very strong-willed. So I guess that was the next thing, I was "OK, well I hope they find someone who's strong enough to handle all that wall."

Mark's thoughts belong to a man who has found himself in an unusual position.

Not only is he one of Bill's former students, but he is also about to take over the position that has established Bill's legacy within the Belmont City community. That senior class that he described as "strong-willed" proved to be challenging to Mike, his predecessor, and now he has to wonder if the new senior class, which also remembers Bill, will be equally strong-willed. He knows he will encounter resistance to some of his actions, and he knows that some students can never accept any other person as their band director. I asked him what he thought he could say to some of those students, and those younger students who are considering becoming involved in the Belmont Band.

I guess in my experience I always, you know, try to appeal to their sense of well, "You're going to have a great experience in everything you do in this," and I always try to say "We need you as much as you would enjoy being here." I always just try to also outline to them all the experiences you have in the band program here, it's really, the neat thing about this program - I mean with the programs I've worked, you know whether it be in the suburbs or other places where they may be 'superstate-winning bands' or something like that, it doesn't have the... like the philosophy of this department is to create a well-rounded student, or a patron of the arts in itself. And I think that's really interesting, and I just - I mean the first time I ever saw an orchestra was 'cause I was in this band, the first time I ever went to New York and saw stuff was 'cause I was in this group, and you know, having gone to New Orleans, or even traveling - first time I was on a university campus was in this band, and stuff like that. So, I just think that the experiences, and the lessons you learn, in all those realms, something that, you know, every kid needs, and whether or not that appeals to them now, I don't know.

Perhaps it is more important that Mark knows that someday these experiences will appeal to his potential students. He has not forgotten how much they appealed to him, even when he was denied the opportunity until his sophomore year. Nor has he forgotten some of the aspects of the Belmont City Band that he finds set it apart from other schools.

What I just mentioned I think is a big part of it. I think there's a... in my experience at other places, the band here is kind of - I don't know what it's like amongst the other students, but I know amongst the teachers, and when I was here the band was kind of seen as a professional entity that was - how do I say? I don't know, you think about the school and it's like "Oh, I go to Belmont City High School," and even somebody who knows nothing about music, they always - the band has the reputation, it's something that people from other areas know, so that was something really nice to have - and I know from being here, and teaching here, that the students who are in the music program here have experiences and see things, and get to participate in things that students here at this school or even other bands don't get to. I think that's the biggest thing.

I was not expecting Mark to use the word "professional" in the context of a high school band, but after a moment I was able to see the validity of it. Bill has tacitly been urging the purest aspects of professionalism in music since he has been at Belmont City, and the community, devoid of any formally recognized "professional" groups, logically sees the band in that light. It is like that in many small towns, and not just in the United States. The quality of the performers is defined by the recognition they receive from their community, and in Belmont City and other small towns they appreciate their high school band as much as most major cities revere their symphony orchestras, if not more. Mark worries that it is a "double-edged sword", in that without hearing other performances and performers the students may become jaded about their own performances, but he is fond of remembering the pride that came from some of them.

I remember, from the musical side of it, I definitely remember a few musical performances where at the end of it there's just that sense of pride, and kind of everyone, like there's an electricity where everyone knew it went really well. And it was something to be really proud of. And something you knew you'd

remember. I guess the other side of it, the second part would be I've a lot of memories, whether it be with – in the process of music-making, or all this other stuff we do, of course just with the people I spent it with, so with you know, the friends I had there, specific memories of certain stories. I have one, I remember one concert when we were playing a Rimsky-Korsakov symphony or something, and we had these - we were in this old, you know, the old school falling down around us, as we were playing, and whatnot – and then we had these vents above the stage that were open and it - trombone player's music blew - and you know, he's spending eight minutes during the rests trying to get under there to get it – so it's like I remember, I have memories like that. And then I guess the third part would be the things we got to go see with the band, whether it be traveling, or you know, when we would go to Chicago, and whatnot – I don't know if - to be able to narrow it down to one best memory, I don't know if I could be able to do that.

I thought that Mark might have a similar problem trying to remember some of the greatest lessons he learned from Bill. His answer was much quicker, much more detailed, and very much in tune with what others have said about him.

I think, the first thing was, like working hard towards something work ethic, I think band and music in general, music specifically is demanding of that, and you know, there's no short-cuts in it. I think that was the biggest thing, and also all of those other lessons, just about anything from general experiences in life to, you know, first time at a university, you know I never had thought about that before, and we had got to go see that, and so I would say - I'd say my experiences in the music program here made me more worldly, more global, younger - I would say that's the biggest thing.

Mark's answer came with no surprises, and it certainly was an answer that Bill would appreciate hearing. As a music educator, and one with strong credentials, I was curious to see if he thought that Bill was able to learn anything from him. Mark's answer touched on one of Bill's characteristics that have kept him a valid music educator for so many years.

I think probably the biggest thing would be kind of was his window into what's happening now. You know, how are they teaching people to be teachers now, 'cause he hadn't been in school for thirty - forty years, and what kind of music were they doing now, what do researchers think are important in music ed programs, stuff like that.

As Mark noted, he will have challenges by students who are set in their ways. He's been able to see how this affected Mike, and it worries him. While the traditions at Belmont City are laudable, they are also deeply entrenched, and he sees that lack of flexibility as being a major obstacle to his success.

Mark: The biggest challenge I've had, so far, as the people go, who are coming in here is there's – the students have such – in their head, an idea of what tradition is, and how untouchable that is, that sometimes that makes it hard to do things. I'll give you an example. We were – Mike and I were working in tandem during the summer program, and we were doing the ice cream social, downtown, at veteran's park. Now, the history of the ice cream social – this thing has bounced around, even since I've been in school, so ten years ago when I was in school since then it's been in three or four different venues, it's never been in the same place two or three years in a row – we've tried everything, everywhere.

Terry: I was here last year – it was here.

Mark: Right. Well exactly, because of weather. So I mean, it changes. And we get up – we get down there and Mike and I decide “Well instead of setting it up in the road, which is how it was set up two years ago and the year before, we're going to try to set it up in the grass” – it brings it a little closer to the audience, the kids are in the shade, they're not – they don't have the sun in their eyes, and as we were setting it up we had two, I mean very concerned, they weren't being sarcastic or anything, two of the girls in the leadership committee come up and they said “Mr. Hensen – it's ALWAYS in the street! It's Belmont City Tradition!” That's what they said to me. Now, what that meant was, you know, it was – that's how it was their freshman year, so the fact that it's different now, it just – I don't know, so I think the hardest thing is, is that Bill had such a structure, and it was built upon what Fred Franklin did, that anything that's changed – let me put it this way, like there's such a fear, maybe, that the good things might go away, is that anything that's changed at all, they're scared of. And they say “Well, it's tradition to do it this way,” and “Why weren't we informed,” and whatnot. So I think that's the biggest challenge right now, and you gotta – I guess I gotta remember that with everything that's a little bit, even the slightest bit different, you gotta inform the kids on why you're doing it... (But) where it gets tricky is, if I were to come in and change something big, I mean you could have something, and this isn't the case, but you could have something that was just terrible but if it's big, and you change it, boy I'm afraid of how that would go. I know that was a big struggle of Mike's, was some things last year. And I'm thankful he did it, because there was some things that I think needed to be modernized, or I'm glad with the changes he made, especially with the marching band and whatnot, stuff like that, and I'm glad he took the brunt of that fight, you know what I mean?

Mark is acutely aware that Mike has served as what Mike calls a “buffer” between him and Bill. When band camp begins, there will be no gradual transition, as there was between Bill and Mike, and many of the students who resented Mike’s presence will either be gone or will welcome Mark as being “one of them.”

At the end, and I mean he was completely comfortable taking on that role at the end, “Blame it on me!” he kept saying, stuff like that - and I’m like “well we don’t need to go that route,” but I mean it worked that way – I don’t think that played a big part in his decision to leave – I hope it didn’t.

Mark is not the type of person who would want to advance his own career at the expense of someone else, and in this case both he and Mike have come out “winners”, if Mike succeeds in transitioning to his desired career as a college band director. Mark has no immediate dreams of making that transition. He’s home now, and excited about leading the program that launched his career.

I’m excited – the program I did right out of college was at Salamanca, right down the road, route 94, and it was a, traditionally a strong program for many years but they’d had a cycle of teachers in there, and when I took over it was a 5 through 12 job, and it was in bad shape, and it - I mean we did a lot of great work in those three years there, but I’m looking forward to being in a place where there is a tradition of excellence in place, and there’s so much stuff here that’s autonomous with the students, that in my previous position the students were completely helpless, they – whether it be they get there and they don’t have a piece of music, so they “oh, well I need this” so their neighbor gets up and makes a copy and puts it back. It was like “Oh, Ok, thank you for doing that, now we can make music.” rather than taking ten minutes to baby-sit you through everything. So I guess the most fun part for me is gonna be more focus on music-making, and the rehearsal, as opposed to, you know, trying to teach the kids how to rehearse, and whatnot. I know of course that goes into it, and all that stuff, but I’m most looking forward to being part of just an organization that’s a little more professional, or tries to know how to do things, if that makes sense...

At the beginning of our conversation, the thought of a high school band being more “professional” might have confused me, but now Mark’s intentions are sharply in focus. But equally sharp is the “double-edged sword” Mark talked about. In many cases,

the traditions that he is so concerned about challenging are intertwined with the very traditions that have made the Belmont City Band famous.

Mark has some very specific plans for dealing with the traditions that both hold the Belmont City Band together and at times hold them back. And after observing how Mike went through the “first transition” after Bill, he also has some significant thoughts about the role that Bill should play in the second one.

I think it’s tricky, because I look at Mr. Franklin, and Mr. Franklin is here a lot, you know, giving lessons, and he’s always here to offer his advice, and whatnot, but Mr. Franklin is good about – he understands the rule, and he’s real good about, you know, trying to stay out of your hair, and he’s always, “Oh, if you’ve got something else to do...” he’d just kind of push me away. I would love to have Bill around, and I think he should continue to help, it’s just – there has to be that period that I establish myself with the students before that happens, I feel. And I think that would be with whoever would be in here, you know what I mean? Otherwise it’s kind of sending mixed messages.

Bill has had difficulty staying away from the program that he has nurtured for so long. His principal, Diane, has worried about it, his wife, Barbara, has worried about it, and Mike has noted certain times when his presence has been frustrating. But he has always meant well, and all of these actors in the scene are sympathetic.

I asked Mark if he had any ideas of what other activities Bill might be getting involved with that might divert him from Belmont City.

Before he retired I think everyone knew he was- wasn’t going to be able to sit still very long, I know he’s doing, you know, all that stuff with the Music Store, and with ISU, I wouldn’t be surprised if he would take on a more active role with IMEA, I know he really enjoyed that. And I think he’s still doing the retirement officer position with that organization, but if he would do more with that, or if he wouldn’t, continue to do something with the – like working with student teachers or something at Illinois State, whether giving lectures, or doing something along the teaching line down there. Yeah, he’s a guy who can’t stay still.

Mark worries about disappointing Bill, both as a teacher and as a friend. He realizes that he has been given a position that is held in high esteem in his hometown.

But he will try his best, and have some fun doing it. In addition to his new position, he is taking on another significant change in his life by getting married soon. Through it all, he hopes for Bill's approval, and he hopes that Bill will remember him as someone who deserves it.

I guess I'd like him to remember me as one of his favorite students, as simple as that is. We had a Dixieland band when I was in school, and there was like eight of us, and we formed it – it was totally student-formed, and we did our own rehearsal, you know, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, tuba, I played tuba, we had a drumset and everything, and at one point I remember... You know Bill isn't – he's very – you know Bill is the nicest guy but he has a hard time opening up – as personable and as warm as he can sometimes be, like for him to really say when someone or something means a lot to him I think that's hard – you know what I mean? Maybe he's just of that generation, too, but - and I have that same thing, but I remember at one point he said something to that little group, he's like "You know, I'm really proud of you guys," and like "We never really had anything like this," and, I don't know, he said something that was just very touching, I remember thinking "Well that was really nice." So it was nice to have him – I would like him to remember me like that – just as something – I was part of something special, or our class that was special, or something special that he could call back, you know...

Bill remembers a lot of his old students, and Mark has left an impression on him – enough that he recommended him for his old position. Mark is grateful, not only because of his recommendation, but also for all of the mentoring that prepared him for this moment.

You know, this whole thing of me being, becoming a band director I guess really, I did it because I was so inspired and impressed by what he did. He was the first director I had, and I always thought - it looked like he was always having fun, and I thought that that would be a great job to have. So I guess that's really important, if you can - if you could – if somebody watching you do your job wants to do that job as well, just because you look like you're enjoying it so much or you're so good at it that it looks like fun, I think that's important, so that's what I'll remember. (But) when I came to teach at Salamanca, you know, 30 minutes down the road, I was living here in town, I mean it was like a daily thing, talking to him – and I begged, borrowed, and stole off of him, 'cause we didn't have what we needed, you know, back, in Salamanca, and I'd call him "Hey, you know, when you traveled to do this, what was your experience?" or "Why isn't this going to work?" or "Why didn't you ever do this?" and he was – I'm not



kidding you, I think I called him – there were some stretches where weeks, every day, I'd call him after school and have a list of questions for him. So that was a great thing to have, at that point, I don't think I would have survived without him down here.

Mark had given up a substantial part of his afternoon to chat. He had driven a moving van for several hours, and still had a lot of moving to do. As we went out of the back door of the band room we both promised to keep in touch. His success at Belmont City means more to the community than most members of that community realize.

It has been over a decade since Mark finally managed to convince his parents to let him play in band. Mark laughed when I asked him if they had finally accepted that he was going to be a music educator.

It always was, "Well, whatever," and I remember my dad didn't get it until, I don't even know if my dad – I know he came to some performances when I was in high school, but my dad himself didn't get it until when he finally came and saw me march at college – I think it was, you know it was a Big Ten stadium, and he sees a 300 person – 350 person marching band, I think that's when it finally hit him why I did it – so he's been supportive ever since, and I think my mom was always supportive as well. I mean, they like – they enjoy the concerts, and they understand why I do it, so I would say they support me now, yeah. And you know, when I look back at it, I think the entire reason they didn't want me to join in fifth grade was, it was probably "it costs money," and they would have had to listen to me practice. And that was enough for them - that was enough for them to say "no."

Mark found it humorous to think that his parents had found reasons to keep him out of music, and that they have come to realize that he's now doing what he loves best. Today, he may still seek their approval as part of another challenge from the community in Belmont City. But Mark is not about to get ahead of himself. He has a van full of furniture and other belongings to unload, and then he will go about the other challenges in defying Thomas Wolfe.

## **Traditions and Transitions**

During my interview with Brian Thompson I encountered two students who eavesdropped during our conversation. One of them was Jason Turner, who was a member of this spring's graduating class. I asked Rick Ransom to contact him to see if he would be willing to consent to an interview, and Rick gave him my email address. As a result, Jason and I were able to arrange a meeting at a local Barnes and Noble bookstore for an interview.

Tyler is going to be a music education major at one of the nearby regional universities in the fall. He is a horn player, although he began his music studies as a saxophonist and as a guitarist.

I had gotten to the Barnes and Noble store a few minutes ahead of our 7:30 meeting time. Tyler works during the day and teaches private horn lessons, and it turned out that his last student of the evening cancelled. I had taken a table at the café and was checking my batteries when he arrived. Have you been waiting long? He asked. "Just got my drink and a bagel, and I'll be set up in just a second," was my reply.

In the few months since I had seen Jason, his appearance had changed. At school, his hair was cut quite short. Now, he had let his hair grow out, and it was "tousled" to say the least. It occurred to me that he was now wearing his hair in exactly the same "style" as Rick. To make the transition complete, he had grown a beard, and although he appears quite a bit thinner than Rick, his clothing and the rest of his appearance is very similar. Asking him if he was trying to emulate his mentor seemed to risk alienating him for the rest of our time.

In our e-mails, Jason seemed enthusiastic about participating in this study. From the very beginning, it appeared that he had given careful thought about what he was going to say about Rick, about music, and about music education. He has a strong philosophy that says he believes that music is his chosen form of communication.

I have a personal philosophy about music – well, about all forms of expression, that each person has their own language, and it's not necessarily spoken. It could be, like you know, writing, dance, music, art – some form of expression like that. And I feel that mine is music, and I'd love to, really figure it out, you know? And try to express myself through that language rather than through spoken word.

While Jason is an adult, his tenure at that position has been relatively short. I asked him how long it had been since he had developed his philosophy.

Jason: I could probably say about, oh, maybe six, seven years ago, or so? Just about –I was going through a real tough time in my life, and music was the one thing that, like, it wasn't biased, it didn't want to talk back, it didn't want to do anything, it just, yknow, it let me immerse myself completely in it and just – “be”. I think that's when I formulated this philosophy.

Terry: Any other reasons? Good parties? Cheap food?

Jason: (laughing) Well, the free food, or cheap food is very nice. It's really a good bonding experience, I think... for a lot of people. I like the social aspect of it very much.

As we talked about the social aspect of being a musician, Jason and I both agreed that between seventy-five and eighty percent of our friends are probably musicians, or at least we know them from playing in a band. I asked Jason if his philosophy about music was the same about playing in ensembles.

Jason: No, that came in high school. I changed instruments freshman year, and that really opened my eyes to, you know, all the possibilities out there for music rather than just playing one, or two basic instruments. Playing, you know, expanding your horizons, that kind of thing.

Terry: What did you play before the horn?

Jason: I actually played the alto sax – played it for 4 years. I know! I’m one of those...

Terry: You’ve left “the dark side.”

Jason: Yes...

Terry: Congratulations.

Jason: And Ransom asked me, actually in eighth grade, when he was coming around and giving out part assignments, to all the “junior highers” going into high school, he asked me “So you’re a sax player, huh?” I said, “Yeah”, he said “Are you sure?” (laughing) I said, “Um, I guess I could change,” and he said “how ‘bout Mellophone?” Well, the first thought that went through my mind was “What the heck is a Mellophone?” I was – I’ve never heard of this... And then, the second thought was “Well, why not? I can try it.”

There was a unique opportunity here to uncover an example of the “charisma”, or “salesmanship” that Rick has in persuading a student to explore a different instrument.

Jason talked about how Rick had reasoned with him, using, as he put it, “music makes you smarter, that old adage,” but Jason credited Rick’s most pragmatic approach as being the one that had the most effect.

Jason: Well, one thing he said was “We’re going to have, like 16 altos, and if you don’t want to just be a number, you should switch.” Like, he kinda appealed to ...

Terry: Individualism?

Jason: Yeah, individualism, and also, oh, what did he say? Well, part of it was also that my brother was a senior, and I didn’t want to be going into his section as a freshman!

Jason was laughing at the thought of he and his brother both playing the saxophone in the band, but at the time I was unaware of another ritualistic aspect of his comment that harkens back to an earlier study, *Coda* (Solomonson, 2002).

Jason explained that his saxophone had been a “hand-me-down” from his brother, who by the time Jason had started playing had gotten a new instrument. I asked Jason if

Rick had mentioned that when trying to convince him to try the horn, and he said that Rick used very few of the “textbook” techniques, such as complimenting him on his ability to hear pitches, or his excellent guitar playing. Since Jason plans on going into music education, I asked him what he thought he would do if he were trying to convince a student to become involved in his music program.

Well, from a student’s perspective, when I first joined band back in – or high school band, back in freshman year, the biggest thing that every senior, every upperclassman said was as a freshman coming in, you’ve already had a whole summer with these people, you already know them all- you WON’T be having a new experience. You’ll be having – yes, new experiences, but not like, not frightening experiences, because you know people, you can ask upper classmen questions, you don’t have to have that fear.

Jason was smiling when I pointed out that, during an earlier interview, someone else at Warm Springs highlighted the same benefit, in much the same manner. He never knew the comment came from his principal, Royce Mallory, but he thought it was “cool” that one of his teachers thought the same way. But we both agreed that the advantage of, as Royce had put it, “they come in here the first day of school and they know 150 people,” was not a primary motivator in most of Jason’s friends joining band, nor was it a major factor in why the music program at Warm Springs has been so successful. When I asked Jason to explain why it has been, he started with one word.

Passion. See? I can do THAT in one word – I think our director’s passion, not only Ransom’s, but Thompson’s, and the drumline director, you know, whoever they are, staff people, band camp, everyone - all their passion kind of shows through in us, and the kids. I don’t know if it’s – Warm Spring’s really rich, something in the water, with that - you know, I don’t know, but I think – I think most kids aren’t there because their parents make them. It’s not one of those types of things. Because it’s so time consuming, so energy-consuming, everything like that – and not only marching band, but all bands there are so involved that if your parents are making you, you’re just going to stop trying and finally drop out at some point. And you’ll convince your parents to get you out. But, if you want to be there you do, and you make it and you get to all the

rehearsals, and you get to all the performances, and you do it. And I think that shows through, through Warm Spring's band more than others.

Other music programs, and other bands have passion when they work, too. And perhaps Jason is a little chauvinistic when he believes that at Warm Springs the students are always there because they want to be, and that their parents never coerce them. But his beliefs, and the beliefs of his peers are a major force in the program, and Rick has been the conjurer of those beliefs. Since Jason had been able to explain the "secret" of success for the Warm Springs program in one word – "passion" –I asked him to describe, in one word, the quality of the experiences he has had playing under Rick. Jason struggled for quite some time, suggested that perhaps a word needed to be made up, and finally threw his hands up in the air and said "I don't think I can take it down to one word." I thanked him for trying, and noted that "That, in itself, is an answer."

Although Jason may have struggled to describe the quality of his own experiences playing under Rick, he was more insightful in describing what he feels have been the major motivator for his teacher. He said "I'd say the adrenaline rush when you – right after the last note of a great performance. And that's a real band director's answer, right there."

Since Jason intends to be a music educator some day, I was curious to hear what he thought were the difficult parts of Rick's job – the sort of job that he himself would possibly have some day.

Jason: I'd say it's probably - probably the versatility required to perform the job. Because you're not just directing the band – you're mentoring these kids, you're teaching other subjects, well, still music, but you're teaching not just band technique, but...

Terry: Humanities?

Jason: Yeah, humanities. Thank you. And you have to, you know, you have to be able to cover for the choir director if she's gone, or you have to be able to - you know, suddenly your football team has won state, you're down 30 kids on performance day, what do you do? You know, you have - you've got to be - think quick on your feet, but still be able to roll with the punches. And not just be shot down with every single crisis that happens. I think definitely versatility is a big thing.

When I had spoken with Mark, Bill's former student and the new band director at Belmont City, he had mentioned that his parents provided little in the way of support for his interest in music for many years. When I asked Jason if his parents had been supportive of his efforts, his accounting was very different. Since he has had an older brother in the program, his mother has been an active "band mom" for seven years. She has never missed a single performance that her sons have given - every concert, every contest, every parade. His father has been a strong supporter, too, but his role has changed recently. He said "My dad was, until about last year - he was diagnosed with cancer, and that severely hampered his ability to go to performances and help out. And he..."

When Jason paused, it seemed that he was suddenly aware that he was unprepared to deal with the reality of his father's situation. I said "So he needs a lot of time to deal with that?" and Jason took a lot of time to deal with it himself. "Yeah..." he said, and I said "But he's supporting you in spirit." By this time, Jason had been able to collect his thoughts.

Yes. He's - Every time I have a performance, or something, he has me print out his picture, like one of his favorite pictures of him, and set on a chair next to mom, at the performance, that says "here in spirit". So yeah, it's there.

While Jason had talked about the social aspect of being in Rick's band earlier, he had neglected to mention how important his activity had been during his family's crisis.

His family and his musical family are inseparable. Many of the values and lessons that Jason has learned as he has become an adult are a hybrid of his environment at home, and the values and lessons he has learned from being in music. Jason is aware that he has been given a head start on his future by learning from Rick, and some of those lessons were about more than music.

Jason: Well, I've learned "time-organization skills." Those are a must! (laughing)... (Life) skills, definitely, dealing with a supervisor – the band director, and say, your section leader like I was the last few years, and then dealing with your subordinates, as they are.

Terry: Leadership? –

Jason: Yeah, leadership qualities, abilities. Learning to keep your mouth shut, when you need to, and that is a big one for me!

Terry: How is this going to help you in your career?

Jason: Whoa! Well, the "learning to keep my mouth shut" will help me with administration in whatever school I go to – and parents, parents of course... the leadership abilities will help me, not only in my career, but in everything, 'cause I've learned how to, you know, be a leader of a hundred people, or more – and not just do it by fear, by yelling at them – do it by respect, by liking them.

Leading people by liking them – a simple strategy, and yet one that has worked for all of the primary participants in this study. Most of the lessons and strategies that Jason has learned and developed from Rick are simple at their base, then fortified with passion and hard work.

Jason believes that hard work and passion powers the program, and he also believes that the strong traditions of the program are powerful motivators to the students. When I asked him about one of those traditions, he was quick to point out that while it was a tradition, it had recently been changed for the better.

One experience. I'd have to say, the new "Midnight March" at Warm Springs. At the band camp. It used to be a completely negative, like "hazing" experience,



you know, so-called ‘initiation’, but it’s really, you know, duct-taping kids to trees, and kicking in doors, and you know, “Gold-Bonding” their pillows, and stuff, and – that doesn’t make you want to work for the person next to you. But, the new “Midnight March” that we did - we woke everyone up, and we made the director and the staff the butts of the joke. Instead of the freshmen. So, instead of bringing everybody down with this negativity, we make it funny, and we make it fun to watch, you know, we make fifty and forty-year old guys jump around, and try to do seventeen-and-a-third mark time, (laughing) and then afterwards, we bring the entire band together, in one, two, three lines, however many we can fit, wide, and we have them do a simple move, but all together, perfect. One time. And it’s such a great “team-building” experience, and such...

At first Jason’s recounting disturbed me, in that there had apparently been activity occurring in the program that could be construed as “hazing”, and it appears that this activity was occurring with Rick and Brian’s approval, tacit or otherwise. Regardless of what had been happening, Jason was sharing his memory of the event for a different reason.

Terry: So the event itself is a tradition, and tradition usually works out pretty good that way, but you’re saying that the improvement on the tradition is what made it the great experience.

Jason: Right - I think changing it from such a negative, hazing experience to a positive, team-building “Hey, I’m your friend, not your enemy” experience, that transformation was really what made it stick out in my mind.

Jason and I both agreed that the new “Midnight March” was an improvement over the other one. As we talked about traditions, both good and bad, I asked him if he thought the “tradition” of holding Rick in such high esteem could make it difficult for his successor, Brian, to take over. He agreed that it might. So I asked him what advice he would give to Brian to help the transition.

I think the best advice I could give him would be “don’t get lost in the shadow of the former band director.” Don’t get lost in Mr. R’s shadow. Because you aren’t him – you can still uphold the traditions he set up that are good, but if you feel you need to change something, change it. But don’t change it right away – You know, take a little time to – take a little time.

Jason will be going away to school in the fall, but his car can take him back to Warm Springs in less than an hour. He will be back, maybe too many times, before his hectic schedule as a student of music education compels him to stay away. Once he is viewing his former colleagues from the grandstand they will look different, sound different. And he will be in the grandstand along with Rick, who will see things differently, hear things differently. Jason will become involved in more musical activities in college – he knows he wants to be in the Wind Ensemble, the horn choir, and he wants to keep playing classical guitar, and he is emphatic about being in the marching band. He also thinks that Rick will be as active a musician as ever.

I know he definitely won't set down music, I know that for sure, there's no way – it's too big a part of his life. He probably won't teach as much, I'm going to guess, but he'll – he might perform more... I could see him getting more involved with like quintet, and other related music activities, I could see him being more into the repairing, and working on the instruments, as well as playing them, but not teaching. I think he's had his thirty... Thirty-some years is good enough.

Jason laughed as he pointed out that Rick was ready to be headed "out to pasture". Logistically, Jason is correct, since thirty years is more than good enough for the state teacher retirement system in Illinois. Spiritually, he feels that Rick's enthusiasm for teaching is still strong. As we talked, we discussed how that enthusiasm has endured over time. I suggested that students like Jason who have worked with Rick have been vital to his endurance, and that they have taught him a great deal. I asked Jason if he could describe some of the lessons that he hopes Rick has learned from him.

What would he have learned from me? I think he learned that no matter how old or young you are, that – the passion for music can still – can be as strong as, you know, in an eighteen-year old as in a fifty-some year old. Or, you know, the passion for finding new music or for discovering something about your favorite piece that you never noticed before, you know, just that. That real driving, deep feeling that a musician has doesn't come with time – it's just there. And it may take time for others, but sometimes it just pops out, sometimes it's been going for

a while, and you just finally notice it – but I think he would have learned that no matter how old or young you are it can still be there.

Jason has a true passion about music that is a reflection of Rick's new philosophy, which has abandoned the competitive nature of programs like his in favor of seeking out the beauty and the expression of feelings we sometimes cavalierly refer to as "aesthetics". Given Rick's recent reflections, it is probably true that students like Jason have been his most influential philosophy teachers.

I hope that someday Jason would say to Rick exactly what he had spoken to me, and I was assuming that he would say something similar when I asked him for one last sentence that he would like Rick to hear.

I think... something to say. Trying to draw this out as long as I can, to word it perfectly. "You've really inspired me to be the person that I truly am, and not what everyone else sees."

When Jason finished his sentence, his head was bowed down. I reached over and turned off the recorder, as though hearing anything else after that would somehow diminish the power of his words. I said "Let's leave it at that, because it was so well said." Jason was still silent, but then he looked up, and smiled. He had expected to enjoy our meeting, and he had not been disappointed. And I was not disappointed, because at that point I realized that I had been fortunate enough to see part of that person most of his friends know as Jason Turner. Rick has been more fortunate, because he has had the privilege of nurturing him as he has become that person, and he has had a much more important influence than just Jason's beard, or his tousled hair.

## **Chapter 8**

### **As Seen by Family Members**

#### **Partners**

Bill Hedges' wife, Barbara Hedges, had agreed to devote some time for an interview, and I had made arrangements to meet her at her office after meeting with Mike Gordon, Bill's successor, that morning. I had expected that her office would be in the Plainsville Elementary School building, but the district had renovated the old elementary school across the street into a building just for administration.

Entering Barbara Hedges' suite of offices offers a miniature version of what I've observed in the past as "bureaucratic bloat". When I entered the lobby I could see at least five separate offices, in addition to the receptionist's desk. In the back of my mind I noted that the school district has two elementary schools, and that there are more administrators in just the elementary department than in some school districts in towns the size of Plainsville, which proudly boasts a population of 14,900 on the signs at the edges of town. After announcing myself to the receptionist, she did one unusual thing – instead of telephoning Barbara's office, she walked back to announce my arrival. She returned in a moment, and in another instant Barbara arrived in the lobby.

Barbara is the second administrator I've met today. Like Diane Anderson, the principal at Belmont High School, Barbara is shorter in height than some of the students she oversees, and certainly shorter than most, if not all, of her faculty. I have known Barbara for many years, and we have seldom gone more than twelve months without renewing our acquaintance, so neither of us was taken too far aback at the sight of our graying hair.

Looking at the clock, I noticed that it was one minute past our appointment time. “I’ve learned today that I may be dyslexic,” I noted, “I drove right past your building, telling myself that I was looking for 1250 North Main Street!”

“If you’re dyslexic, how can you play the tuba so darned well?” She replied. “After all, if you’re stringing all those notes together, you’d think dyslexia would be a real problem! C’mon in and let’s get started.”

When I entered Barbara’s office, I first complimented her on the large, beautiful windows that take up the majority of the southern wall. “I’d go crazy without those windows,” she noted, and in no time we were discussing research on school buildings that leave students without access to sunshine. The sunshine had been very good for her plants, which were both hanging from the ceiling and rising from large pots on the floor. Like all good administrators, she abandoned her large desk and we settled into a couple of chairs.

After a prolonged period in this study, what should have been obvious at the beginning was now becoming significant– that all of the primary participants have spouses who are also music educators (Cindy Swinarski, the “disappointed” is a widow, but her husband had been a music educator in a small town near Midville, where she teaches.)

Barbara and Bill both started out as music educators. Barbara started studying music in the sixth grade when she was living in Indianapolis, but then her family moved to the suburbs of Chicago. During her high school years, she had had four different band directors – some that she remembers as inspiring, others less so. Good or bad, they combined to give her a more global outlook on music-making with friends.

(It) was my love of music that kept me there, and not necessarily the director, whereas in the first case, I would have walked on water for that gentleman, because he was just - engaging. And enthusiastic.

That enthusiasm was a key element in Barbara deciding to study music education in college.

(I) Loved music, very intensely, so I went into college with the idea of teaching music... and participating in college in various ensembles, so not only did you have the band, which was my first love, but you also had orchestra, and you had your other small ensembles. And again, I found them all engaging and interesting. So the thing about music is it's incredibly varied and different – it's never boring, and it was always exciting, and I knew to teach that - to go in a classroom every day, even though there's some basic core concepts that you need to teach students on a regular basis, that it could be taught in so many different formats. That's what made it very interesting, exciting, and the reason I gravitated, over the years, toward high school, which is where I ended up in my final years before I left the teaching profession, is just the level of literature. To do it over again, I would take junior high as far as kids, 'cause they'll walk on water, high school they're already pooping out on you (laughing). They're getting older, and, but the level of literature is always really great. Well I thoroughly enjoyed, again, participation in the college level and all aspects of it, and I knew I didn't want to be a performer, but that just wasn't - it just wasn't a passion. But I knew I wanted to teach. And the hardest thing was just to decide what to teach, and I guess the reason for music is that it is history, it is literature, which I love, those are two of my – I could have been an archeologist out there, digging too – I just love all those aspects of it – and it was a science, and it was math – it was just, again, it just engrossed all those different topics, and I felt that's something that could be communicated there again with students.

In Barbara's comments, she noted that she "left the teaching profession," but she has been in schools for seventeen years since that departure, as an administrator. I found myself wondering if all administrators feel, that by becoming a principal, or a superintendent, or a college president that they have stopped teaching, too.

Barbara and Bill met while studying at the same university, and began their teaching careers in Warm Springs, working with Rick. When Bill left for Belmont City, Barbara also started teaching there, first as his assistant, while working first on her master's degree, and eventually her doctorate. She became the Superintendent of Schools

at Belmont City, and then she moved on to her current position at Plainsville, roughly forty-five miles to the south. Eventually she and Bill found a new house in a community about fifteen miles north of Plainsville, leaving Bill with a half-hour commute.

Barbara will be retiring next year. She has had ten months of seeing Bill in his retirement environment, and some of what she has seen has been shocking to her.

Barbara: For the first time in 34 years, I came home for the first two weeks and he was at home. And that was JARRING. That was completely jarring. And- (laughing) not that I don't love my husband, you understand...

Terry: Oh, no, not this 'underfoot' thing...

Barbara: No, it's not that – it's simply that I thought back to a year before, where every day in December, until we got out for break he was at the school. Every day. That's a Saturday, that's a Sunday, and that's the evenings. And he's just not home until eight or nine o'clock. And again, it's unusual for him to be home any earlier than that. So that was a change in structure for me – to get used to. Now he's on the road a little bit more, he's supervising student teachers, and so obviously I knew that wasn't going to be a long-term thing but that was the most - a little thing like that – the most jarring for me to get used to. And still is, to some extent, because he doesn't, again, have the weekends, or the long evening commitments that he used to have. So, sometimes I feel like "hmmm – maybe I should be home more often, where I wouldn't think about it in the past. Our children are out of the household, I have to stay late and work, I'd stay late and work. Rather than take it home or things like that.

Barbara feels no guilt about staying late and working, but she is starting to feel the temptation to join Bill in retirement. She cites one of her reasons for waiting as wanting Bill to feel comfortable with the timing of his decision.

So you really have to think about it. But other than that, I wanted to make sure that that was his decision, and I knew he talked about it quite a bit, in terms of he wanted to retire while he was still very much at the top of his game. And it's a very tiring job, and he didn't want to go too long and have people say "Oh, you know, maybe he should have retired a year or two earlier." And I knew that was specifically what he was concerned about, and that - he's getting older, and he was concerned about that as well – "Do I catch things as well?" And again, he just wanted to make sure he was at the top of his game when he went out.

Barbara feels strongly that Bill was at the “top of his game” when he retired. She is immensely proud of her husband, and is a stalwart protector of his legacy. As we talked, she added that there are intimate thoughts that only Bill would discuss with her about his concerns for his students, and whether or not he might be, as she put it, “slipping”. She is also very proud of the working relationship they had when they were both at Belmont City.

Barbara: We’ve always been very – I mean, Mr. Fuller (their band director in college) always said he couldn’t ever work with his wife, so he doesn’t understand, we worked together for a number of years, actually, in the same district, right across from each other in the hallway, in terms of a connection, and I was always open to him coming in and saying “You know, when you’re conducting your third beat - it’s just not good.” And I always appreciated it because while administration would come in and do their obligatory type of evaluations, I knew that maybe they were looking at maybe classroom management, they were looking maybe at a concept being taught, and did it seem like it was getting through. But really, beyond that, can they really tell that you’re getting to the substance of the topic? Can they really tell if that’s an important part of the curriculum?

Terry: It can border on the absurd, sometimes.

Barbara: It does. So I really counted on him. So we’ve always been very – been pretty objective toward one another. And I could do the same thing – you know, “Did you know that that the percussion were back there beating on one another?” (laughing) which is not an atypical thing sometimes to be happening – and we could communicate back and forth so when this became a topic that he wanted to talk about, I fully supported what he wanted to do.

Retiring may have not been what Bill wanted to do, but it was certainly what he thought he should do. In his own interview he listed many logical reasons for his timing – a “non-touring” year coming up, “graduating” with his senior class at the end of his twenty-fifth year at Belmont City – and other non-financial considerations that all helped to earn him his moniker of “The Idealist”.



Barbara laughed when we talked about how Bill had prolonged making his decision to the point that he was unable to take advantage of the district's generous policy to those who announce their retirement well in advance. For Bill, the concerns about his students languishing during a prolonged "lame duck" period trumped his pay raises. Now, after ten months of not being at Belmont City High every day, Barbara thinks he still wonders about the timing, but has made peace with his choices.

Barbara: And I think he still kind of questions it, to be sure. But I think he comes away after he sits down and still mulls that over, and considers "was this a good decision?" I think currently what I hear from him is "Yes, it was a good decision." And you just have to make adjustments – just as you have to make an adjustment when the first kid comes into your life, then the last one leaves – that was a lot easier! The empty nest, and just getting accustomed to an "it's you and I" situation again, at least on a daily basis, those never change. I think he always looks back and kind of questions, and I think the further he gets away from actually doing the job I think the further he knows he made the good decision – he's doing other things - I mean he goes around now, for the Music Store in Faber, and does free little mini-clinics whenever someone asks "can you help me out?" And he's just right there. But he's away from the daily - daily that he had to do, which gets wearing, he's getting tired of the marching band aspect of it, which in the size of his district, he still has to do, it's just part and parcel, and so now it's a choosing to do what he thoroughly loves doing. And he's out and doing guest conducting gigs, which are OK, but I think he just really loves that occasional classroom setting where he's in there working with a group.

Terry: I had another music educator liken it to being like a grandparent.

Barbara: Ah! That's perfect!

We both agreed that like any good grandparent, Bill loves this arrangement.

Barbara was laughing as she said, "He'll work forever. I'm not going any further." I reminded Barbara that their nest was not completely empty – that there was Bilbo, the cat that they are continually spoiling. "Yeah, he's definitely there, and yeah, you're right, he's spoiled."

With so much to occupy his time, it would almost seem as though Bill would find it difficult finding time to continue to work with the Belmont City band. Barbara knows, as well as Bill's successor, Mike Gordon and his principal, Diane Anderson, that Bill has been making frequent visits to the high school. He has come to almost every performance, has stopped by as a representative of the Music Store several times, and as a result has had fairly regular contact with the students. Barbara has a unique perspective on this situation. She can see it through the lenses she has as a loving spouse, but she is also capable of seeing the situation through the independent eyes of an administrator who is not directly involved with the school,

Barbara: You know, it's interesting, when he came in, Mr. Franklin, for a solid year, who'd been there – twenty-seven years I think it was, didn't walk in that door for a year. He – just wanted to allow the new director- and the same thing, I think Bill wanted to emulate, but, to do some of those things that Fred did do, such as the Memorial Day. Why- you know, Mike and he knows the director's first year – he's had – you know, a difficult year, so take a couple of things that are periphery (sic) things that Fred also did, and do those. And but he's gradually going to break away, from some of those things too – I think he did the jazz alumni band, the group – "Generics", they call them, and he did it but gradually the new director should pick that up – it's just, take one – couple items off, but he's back there more often because of that, or because as the Music Store he's in the door and out the door. And I think there was, maybe a time or two when he was there, and felt like he probably shouldn't be there. He needs to get out, so he's been careful about doing that. And now you have another changeover that's going to be occurring – and that's a whole different set of dynamics, because that's a former student. And so I'm not sure what he's thought in that regard. But I think he tried to emulate what Fred had done – but when Fred left, Gene Embry was still there – had not retired – he retired the following year, so Bill had that to fall back on as far as "where's this? where's that?" you know, and that was fine and then Fred came in, taught lessons, and did other things... always respectful of the new director's ideas, and new things that they want to do, and take the back seat. And it's just interesting to see how it all evolved this year, but those things happen. As far as "ok, that person's now set a different goal for themselves – and you have to say "go for it" – you know, as far as the current director needs to, and Mike needs to - I think it's so neat, the college level, and what fell into his lap. So now you have a different dynamic going on, and the only concern is, you know, the band programs, and music programs, that it's good, and there's continuity – the program holds. But any time a program has a shakiness, is when

there's a lot of different turnover that occurs. I think this is – it's kind of a fluke – it's life.

Terry: I'm inclined to downplay it to that level too.

Barbara: Me too, and some people are already kind of in an uproar about it – I go back and do a summer production every year and I've just said – “this too shall pass, it'll work out fine.” And I agree with you, continuity's going to be there – it's just the program that's been entrenched in that community for so long – it's not going to fall apart that quickly AND the kids coming in next year, and the year after, are part of the group of high school teachers who now have children involved – and talk about stability and talent! It's coming right across the doorstep. And it's just right there – the fuse is just ready to be lit, so those strengths coming from those teachers there, with their kids coming through the program, that program's going to continue. It just is.

In terms of the timing of Bill's departure, the shakiness of the “feeder program” at Belmont City is regrettable. Barbara acknowledged that it has kept the high school band in a “holding pattern” for some time, and one can refer to Mark Hensen's story as examples of the extraordinary efforts Bill (and his successor) have had to make in order to keep the program going. Barbara is very happy that Belmont City is about to continue another tradition that started with her in that they have appointed a new Superintendent of Schools, and she, like Barbara had been a music educator. Her optimism is only diminished by the current economic times.

I know the new superintendent that's going in there – she's a music major, and I'm just hoping that finances being what they are she can garner the support of the board. Now, you look at the board down there and I go “hmm – three former students.” So... why shouldn't it have some strength? So I do see it – I do see at least getting some formal support. Right now there's no choir. There's absolutely no junior high choir. At all. And they still have, really, a fine program at the high school. Mrs. Smith has just done a phenomenal job.

Barbara wore a number of hats when she taught at Belmont City, including working with the choir program. She cites her own attitude about working in that

situation as an example of what it has taken to make Belmont City's entire music program such a successful one.

When I walked in and there was 11 in the choir, and "Well, what can you do, you don't have a lot of choir background, why should I hire you?" That was the superintendent, and I said "I recruit." (laughing) and that IS a forté – that's something I do. I'm not going to tell him I have great knowledge of choral techniques, cause I don't. And the perfect time was when Luci came in, and then took that group, and then at least there were some numbers to work with, and she took them, and they're just very fine. Solfegge, I mean those kids understand the concept of music, it's not just performance, I mean and that's been the whole thing with the band, but the ability for Bill, because he really took a step back in the band program to allow the choir program to build. And that's hard – because instrumental is very fragile, actually compared to a choir.

Bill's relationship with the choir program has always been strong. His student, Mark, affirmed this by noting that virtually all of the strong singers in the choir were also band members. What might be seen as a "sacrifice" for the instrumental side of the music program might also be seen as an "investment" in making better musicians. Barbara noted that unlike some teachers in other disciplines, Rick and most of their other musical colleagues have never ceased in their commitment to maintaining programs like this as they neared retirement.

I've just never seen music people do that as often because of the commitment and the blood and sweat and tears to build the program or hold on to a program, there's just a commitment there –it's a little different than a classroom setting, where your group is different every year that comes in, you have those kids for four years. And you're a counselor – you're a music teacher – you're a...

Barbara started laughing, as she thought of all of the different roles that she and her husband have performed as music educators. They are roles that they felt privileged to play. She is very pleased that the timing is so appropriate for Mark, one of Bill's former students, to take over the program, but at the same time she is hopeful that he will receive more support than Bill's successor Mike did.

I know Mike's expressed some displeasure that he tried to move things along about this, what he was given the grace to do, and then he got shut down. So I really don't know if that's just Mike understanding the dynamics of how you have to go through certain protocols, you know, the whole or whether he helped him with that, I don't know. And that's when having Bill there, he could have helped, say "Hey go this way – this way". And I can see the administration being – being young – shutting him down without maybe intentionally doing it.

Barbara and I discussed how administrators often deal differently with new teachers as opposed to older ones, and in that aspect, Mike and Bill were at opposite ends of the spectrum. When I asked Barbara about Bill's overall influence at Belmont City, she raised one eyebrow, and laughed.

You know in the last few years nobody would cross him. Nobody did! And they learned, even the athletic director, and so forth, learned from the other coaches "don't go after that – don't even – just don't even do that." And I think it's because of his integrity, his work ethic.

Veteran administrators like Barbara probably do feel "caught in the middle" at times when having to deal with legends like Bill, balancing respect with responsibility. It's a balance that is noticed by the students. Barbara's steadfast faith in Bill's devotion to them explains her brief comment on how the students saw Bill – "Even if you weren't in music you – you knew Mr. Hedges." she said, "You knew who he was. Conversations, kids share – gets around." As for their own children, Susan and Craig, she was more reflective about their experiences.

Well I know they had a very solid background, and a wide background, it wasn't just performance – oriented, it was also understanding music, and literature. Where it came from. So I loved the broad-based background that they got- and I know that they were fine performers, all of 'em – Susan, you know, didn't have as much passion, but enjoyed it... she was beyond just holding the instrument, obviously, but she, you know, didn't have the passion – my son did have the passion, and did more with it, and our rule was that they had to do something athletically, and they had to do something fine arts, and to keep their grades, you know, respectable. So, the daughter did the tennis thing, and again didn't really enjoy it but did it, but she loved drama, and she loved her music. And Craig, unique as he is, just loved it, and did it, and was really fairly successful. So I

thought they got an excellent broad-base, and still perform today, and they're still very comfortable with music today. And my daughter's a teacher, and so she is a thespian every day.

In college, both Craig and Susan avoided standing in the shadows of their parent's legacies by majoring in subjects other than music education. Susan became a Special Education teacher, while Craig majored in Music Business, and is working for a theatre consortium in Chicago. Like any mother, Barbara is proud of her children, and as she reflected on their years in the Belmont City band, she was reminded of one point that she had also heard from Fred Franklin.

Barbara: I would say that one downfall of having your parent as the director is that you never deserve to get an award. So, they were always passed over, and Fred Franklin, remarked the same thing. With all five of his children. I think maybe one got some kind of music award, or something like that.

Terry: We don't want to look biased... so you wind up biasing the other way.

Barbara: Yep. And that happens, and while your parents are the director, so you have an "in". All those things. And so we just shared with them that. "In the long run, that's not going to be anywhere in the cards, so don't worry about it."

As the search for the "second successor" to Bill began, there was no worry about family bias in the selection. But a "hometown boy" did wind up getting the job. Barbara is quite pleased that Mark Hensen is coming back to Belmont City, where he grew up, and just a few minutes away from where he started his teaching career. I asked her if she thought that Mark's arrival will bring any welcome changes to the program.

I think he has some ideas already on how to do that, and every style is different – and I know that when Bill visited sometimes over at Salamanca, where Mark was teaching, and now he still goes over to Salamanca and there's another director there – you just look at the program - and it's a little bit different, and how he runs it, and Bill goes "it's really neat –it's different" and we expect the same thing to be happening because that is Mark's style. Very successful program at Salamanca and the other young kid that came in after Mark went down to work on his master's degree at Indiana, has just continued to add his two cents in – Bill walks in, he says "Small school, but you know what?" And I know the

superintendent there. So Brian is going to put his own life, and his own touch into it. He has the greatest sense of little quirky humor, too. He had that quirk – he had that in high school – he had that – number one, a little more mature beyond his years, of a teenage boy coming through the high school, but his sense of humor and his insightfulness was beyond his years and I was always impressed with that. So I think that will continue.

The way Barbara described Mark, especially his humor and insightfulness, seemed to be a description of Bill, both twenty-five years ago and today. They are not the same, and Barbara is aware that Mark will not run his program exactly the same as Bill or Fred Franklin did. But she is secure in knowing that he will not dismiss what her husband has accomplished, that his legacy is safe.

We had left the door of Barbara's office open while we talked. There had been no one out in the lobby all afternoon, and by the time we finished even the secretaries had left for the day. I needed to leave, but Barbara had more work to do, more work that she used to take home – but today, like most days now, she can finish her work and come home to Bill. Someday, she may actually get used to it.

### **The Navigator**

Four days after seeing Wendy Williams perform with her husband, Peter, I arrived for a rehearsal with them and the rest of the Southern Wind Ensemble. We had agreed to meet an hour ahead of time, before we started to work on some new compositions that would be performed at the National BandMaster's Association's "Composer Mentor Project". When I arrived Peter and Wendy were waiting outside – no one had come to unlock the building yet. "Looks like you two will have to talk outside," said Peter, and I started looking for a shady spot – it was very quiet everywhere.

With the brief exception of one semester, Wendy and Peter spent their entire teaching careers in the same school district. Since Wendy was an elementary school

teacher, she finished her degree earlier than Peter, and originally she had intended to retire a year before him. Wendy is a graduate of Southern High School, where Peter taught, and she and Peter went to the same university. Although she was not majoring in music, she was allowed to study flute in the same studio with the majors, eventually taking lessons with three different flute professors.

Since Wendy had attended Southern High School, I expected that she was a valuable help to Peter as a volunteer, especially in his first few years. She said that she had only volunteered to be a chaperone on a few bus trips, and that Peter had never really asked her to do much.

I don't know. Other than, let's see, for marching there, a couple of songs, I made up dancing routines. But outside of that, if he didn't need me for something, he didn't ask, and I was really too busy with my own job, and then when the kids came along it was - I kept them out of his hair, on concert days, or band days, or whatever.

Wendy was laughing as she thought of keeping Emily and David out of Peter's hair at times. Peter still takes performances seriously, and Wendy seems to be a little more relaxed, even as her next performance is approaching.

Wendy had originally planned to retire before Peter. Her reaction to his choice to retire when she did at first came as a surprise, but now she laughs at how it turned out.

Wendy: My plan was to retire first. So I wouldn't have to be bugged by him for a year! But it's worked out, like he was pointing out to me today that we've been able to do things and go places that, you know, we wouldn't have been able to go if he hadn't been retired or we both hadn't been retired, so it has worked out. He stays busy enough that he lets me alone for the most part.

Terry: Did you worry about that? That he'd be pestering you all the time?

Wendy: In a way, 'cause he always - he used to do that. "What's on your agenda today?" I'd say "Don't worry about what's on my agenda - just take care of yourself, don't worry about what I'm going to do." But he's backed off on that. I've had to help him with his, you know, bus driving career and stuff, so -



mapping his way, on the trip – when he takes a trip. When we would travel, I always would have to be the navigator, so – I have to map, but he’s doing better at how to map his way himself, so I’m training him, I guess in that respect.

Terry: Do you use the computer?

Wendy: Um-hum.

Terry: You’ve been replaced by a computer.

Wendy: (laughing) I taught him how to use the computer to do it!

Peter’s schedule leaves him very little time to “pester” Wendy. He enjoys his job as a “Motor Coach Operator” for the local charter bus company, is restoring his grandmother’s Buick, and is managing the Midville Municipal Band. Tonight, he is doing what enjoys most – playing the tenor saxophone. Wendy thinks that his schedule is just one good reason that he should not spend too much time helping Jeff Steele, his successor, at Southern.

He’s trying to back off, unless he’s needed for something that they – that somebody asks him a question, he’s willing to answer it. You know, he’s willing to help Jeff, but he doesn’t want to take over because it’s not his program any more, he still has nightmares over Southern, I don’t have nightmares over my job any more but he still has nightmares over things that have happened. Cause he – I really don’t think he would have retired yet, if it hadn’t been for the system, administration and all that stuff, he wasn’t quite ready to do it when it pertains to the students themselves.

Wendy has a clear conscience about Jeff, primarily because she thinks he’s doing a good job. She is also aware that Peter’s presence prolongs the impression that he still has some authority, some wisdom that a successor does not. She noted that Jeff is fortunate that Cindy “took the brunt” of taking over from a legend.

Wendy: Well, the year following him - he’s a hard act to follow! And it was the same thing for him when he first started at Southern, he had a hard act – he WOULD have had a hard act to follow except that - oh, what’s his name? Ralph Johnson was there, for a year, or whatever, a few years, to “bumper” it a little bit – so...

Terry: Oh, the ‘sacrificial goat.’”

Wendy: Um-hum. Um-hum. So we don’t know if the second person since his retirement is going to be back next year or not, since he was pink-slipped, if he is there, well – they’ll have more continuity there. The kids seem to enjoy him a little more, what few there were, some of the kids were not able to continue with band because of the scheduling at the school, some of the kids that HE had. But I don’t think they’re having as much fun because Peter had so much planned, and so many things they’d done for years that the kids looked forward to. So I don’t think they’re quite enjoying it as much as they had been.

Peter’s list of accomplishments at Southern are impressive, especially when viewed in light of the conditions that kept deteriorating at the school over the years.

Wendy agrees that a key element of his success had been his discipline, for himself as well as his students.

Wendy: Well, he always stressed for the best out of everybody, including himself, you know, he worked really hard putting his all into that program – he grew up in the neighborhood not too far from there. I don’t know, the kids, you know everybody around there seemed to respect him so much, ‘cause we’ve been told by former students that they liked his discipline, for one thing, because they didn’t really much have it at home, and some kids looked upon him as being a father figure for them – we have one student in particular that still calls him “pops”. And he calls periodically, and we have another student that calls, every time he gets ready to make another job move, he has to seem to get....

Terry: Peter’s blessing?

Wendy: The blessing of Peter... you know, to see if it’s OK, and what he thinks about it, and when they come back from contest, he has to hear about how they did, and things like that. We often hear that from kids that, you know, if it hadn’t been for him they wouldn’t have finished school, or - I don’t know, he just got to be the band director, and the counselor, and the parent, and everything that you could think of - he became a lot to those kids.

I mentioned to Wendy that Jeff was very impressed at a comment made by one of the students that he a Peter have shared, a percussionist who told him that “Peter Williams doesn’t play.”

No, he doesn't play! (laughs) What he means is what he – y'know, he says what he means and he's not going to mess around with you he doesn't play with you at all. (laughs) If you need to be disciplined he would discipline you and you'd better be there, and better do what, you know, you're supposed to do – he expects that out of you.

Southern is a large school, and many of the students never participated in Peter's band, but Wendy feels that his reputation as a taskmaster was well known throughout the school and the community it served.

I don't know, it just seems like a lot of kids that weren't even his kids respected him, because he can still go places now and they'll say "Oh, look, you're Mr. Williams." He was somewhere today and he said – he went to MacDonald's and some man kept looking at him and he said "Oh, you were the band director at Manual", you know, and "That band sure was good, and you did a good job while you were there" and dah-dah-dah-dah... and we'll see students, and he'll say, and they'll say "Hi Mr. Williams, how are you?" He doesn't even know them. But the kids around the school got to know that "Mr. Williams doesn't play" also. He was – he had that - that, uh, can't think of the word I want – that reputation at the school of not messing around with anybody, and he had the students from the office – office pages didn't like to go to his room to give him a message for anything because they would be afraid to go down in that area, and you didn't dare interrupt his class, even if you were an administrator, he'd make you stay there and wait until he was finished with class unless it was an emergency. So he was known for that, but – as far, you know, he really didn't have a whole lot of contact with kids outside of the music department, other than when he had to do study hall or lunch duty, and he hated that!

Peter and Wendy live in the Midville School District, but their children went to a different high school. Wendy noted that they were involved in music, but that she and Peter never pressured them to participate. By her accounting, the music educators in Emily and David's school were often held to task by Peter.

Well when they started playing, and they could play well enough, they got a chance to play in "Dad's band". That's how they put it. They played in "Dad's band." And David says that if Dad didn't go to work so early, he would have gone with him TO Southern. Rather than to Northwoods High School, because he enjoyed – they both enjoyed playing in the band more so than at Northwoods, because of the directors - our daughter had more than one director – at Northwoods, and Northwoods did not have a jazz band program – so they learned jazz through Peter at Southern.

Wendy and Peter were not pleased with the attitude of the music educators at Northwoods about jazz, and Peter helped to compensate for the lack of jazz at Northwoods by incorporating jazz into the park district's summer music program.

Although Peter actively advocated for better music programs for his children, Wendy said that he always made sure that they were never given preferential treatment.

No, he didn't do that to any kids. Even siblings. If one sibling was a fantastic player and the other one could barely play, he never threw that in your face – "Well your brother could play better than you, your sister." They were all individuals, and he treated them as individuals, you know, he treated all the kids the same – he'd push 'em all, he'd push 'em as to what he thought they were capable of, or even more. But no, he never – he never compared the kids at school and he doesn't compare our two. 'Cause Emily's off into music, and David - he's comfortable with music as a hobby, and he practices when we aren't home. So, I don't really know what he sounds like!

Wendy was laughing as she thought of her son's shyness in playing, realizing that it must be difficult for David to play in front of her, or even more so, Peter.

Wendy has a great deal of admiration for her husband, both for what he has accomplished and also for the dignity he has maintained while doing it. She has never thought of him as a mentor to her, but she has often relied on him as a counselor.

If I had a bad day at work or bad day with one of my principals, you know, he'd talk to me about brushing it off, or you know, that part he would do, talk to me about problems I was having with administration, and if I – sometimes I would have a parent problem and I would talk to him about it, you know, but I'd tell him, about what had happened and then he would offer his advice. You know, I didn't go home asking him what should I do. But he would just comment on things, and tell me what he would do. (We) discussed school so much that that's why our kids didn't want to be involved with the education program! Didn't want to be teachers.

Wendy was laughing as she noted that her children had decided to stay out of teaching. But they realize that they would have to follow their parent's legacies, and as Wendy has noted, share their frustrations as well as their memories. Wendy feels that

those memories, by Emily, David, and many of Peter's former students, are of a tough director who got good musical results.

Some of the kids, you know, enjoy the music they had. Even the people in the public. We had one man that said, "I could always go to a Southern Band – a Southern game and know I'm going to hear "On Broadway." You know, they look for certain music – the kids, you know there was this camaraderie with a lot of the kids. You could see that when you took 'em on trips, especially. And they seemed to get along really well, and those that –cause trouble, kids were glad when they quit band, or whatever, you know, but... I don't know, they just – they'd come out and they'd talk about the times, they'd tell him he was softening up, 'cause the earlier years, I guess he could get – I don't know, they claim he threw erasers, or whatever, (laughing) they said "You guys don't have it that bad – we had it bad when we first started" kind of thing – he's softening up. But, I don't know – they just remember, and then a few of them have come back and told him that, you know, "When I went away to college, I played some of the same things we played at Southern." You know, 'cause he didn't lower the level of music at all – all the time, and then when he had senior summer band he did the same thing, he played a variety of music, to keep everybody interested, 'cause he had kids at different levels. And he's had several students now that are music teachers or band directors.

Most of Peter's memories are also Wendy's memories. Some of those memories still give Peter nightmares, which in turn explains why Wendy is reluctant to encourage him to stay involved at Southern. She would much rather keep the memories of Peter's legacy in the past, in order to enjoy the future.

Wendy: At retirement time it was amazing to see the amount of appreciation that was shown to him, at our retirement party, but at the last alumni band, and since he's been retired, when they've had the alumni bands, they've - he wasn't even formally asked to direct the bands, he was just told that...

Terry: "You will be there."

Wendy: It was already publicated – "OK, Peter Williams will be the director." And so "Are you going to be there?" "Yes, we'll be there." And we had one former, TWO former students that came by, and they didn't see the blue truck out there – and it was an alumni band thing, and they weren't going to come in if he wasn't going to be there. And they came in to see if he was there before they decided to stay.

Terry: So you came in the car.

Wendy: No, we had got a new truck! And they didn't know about the new truck, and since they didn't see the blue truck they didn't think he was involved in this alumni band, so therefore they were not going to play in it. So, that, and the trips that he took, it was a lot of fun – you know, he went through a lot of hell for it, but going to Mardi Gras, those trips were a lot of fun, and like the Disney trips, but the Mardi Gras trips were really fun because it was so amazing to see - you know, so many of those kids have never traveled before. And some of the staff had to even provide them with a bag, to take their clothes in, and experiencing the South in the winter, and experiencing the different foods, in New Orleans and everything, that was really a worthwhile trip. For those kids, and it was a lot of fun. But I think those were about the main highlights for me.

For Wendy, the highlights of Peter's stay with the Southern band are centered around the students, and the effect that Peter had on their futures. Now it is time for her to help Peter navigate their way through retirement.

Wendy: I can't think of the word my principal used for him – it might have been legacy, I can't remember, 'cause - oh gosh, I can't think of the word right now. But he's well known, and there's a lot of people, even my principal really didn't know him as a person, but just...

Terry: As a figure. As an icon.

Wendy: Yeah, I can't remember the word he used, but yeah, he's adjusting to being retired. He says he doesn't miss it, but he still thinks about it occasionally, but I think he's transitioned a lot better than he would have if it hadn't have been for the change in the program, that change in the program made him think – "I'm glad I'm out of there." (I) think he misses some of the kids, because he was going – he had been there so long he was starting to see generations of kids, you know, his students, their kids were coming through... (I) remember the word now, my principal called him a legend, 'cause they had given Peter a rough evaluation that he didn't deserve, and my principal said, "You don't mess with a legend!" What can you tell a legend? And he's done such an excellent job all these years, why do you mess with a legend?

As soon as the door to the music wing was opened, we could tell that it was almost time for rehearsal, but it wouldn't have mattered – Peter had been waiting patiently, and picked up his saxophone and Wendy's flute. "'Bout time you two were done," the legend muttered, and we all headed down the hall.

## **Playing in the Mirror**

I've come to the rehearsal of the Midville Municipal Band to interview one of the musicians – Linda Swinarski Edwards, professional hornist, teacher, wife of professional trombonist Gary Edwards, mother of Miranda Edwards, and daughter of Cindy Swinarski, one of the primary participants in this study.

Linda was twelve years old when her father passed away, and her brother, Jack, was about 10. Technically, she grew up in a “single-parent household”, but she has had many musical “aunts and uncles” who have worked and cared for her, alongside her mother for many years. Even though both of her parents went into music education, Linda was more interested at first in being a performer and a music therapist. She abandoned her plans for music therapy, and now holds degrees in music performance from Central Illinois University and Western Michigan University, and teaches part-time at two different colleges in the area. She has no permanent performing position, but does a lot of “itinerant” engagements, including the one she was about to rehearse for when I arrived.

Linda married Gary just as they were finishing their graduate studies. Like Linda, Gary has his degrees in music performance, and has been trying to get a full-time position, with no luck. Soon after they were married, Linda became pregnant. Her mother, Cindy, has been distressed by the situation, since the couple is barely getting by on their part-time incomes and they have no health insurance.

Linda has been around music all of her life. Some of her fondest memories of her mother revolve around musical activity.

I remember, two places I guess the most – like, around Christmastime we would always have as many musicians as we could round up at church, and her and I

would always play – you know, it would always be like the two horns that read the trombone music or something, ‘cause there were never any trombones – so I remember that a lot, and then the other times that I remember, once I was old enough that I had made the sub list, for municipal band, I remember playing with her whenever I could. And that was a lot of fun, seeing her in like a more professional setting. I guess those were the two most vivid memories, I bet. Linda insists that her mother never pressured her into becoming a musician,

although now she believes that she is very happy that she is. In spite of the fact that both her mother and father played the horn, she also insists that there was no pressure on her to become a hornist as well.

Linda: Both of my parents were musicians, and I was given a choice – I was never pushed into it, believe it or not (laughs) - I chose violin at first, and then it was like once I chose something I had to stick with it, so I saw that through till I had no group to play in any more, but then I wanted to be in band, too, ‘cause that’s all I ever saw at home – and I started on oboe, because I didn’t want to be like them – I did not want to play horn – but that didn’t work out and I switched to horn. I was very much led to it, I was around music a lot – saw it at home all the time.

Terry: (When) did you decide you wanted to do this for a living?

Linda: About my sophomore year of high school, I thought about how - I had like a research paper or something, and I wrote about Music Therapy, and it was probably the last thing my dad remembers that I wanted to be was a music - to go into music therapy. And then I decided that I would like to perform, after that. So I changed my mind, I still wanted to be a musician.

Linda was quite young when her father died, and her memories of her mother’s teaching career are much stronger than of his. And many of them are not good memories, which may have been why she was adamant about not wanting to teach in public school. She had no difficulty in mentioning some of the reasons her mother’s position is so difficult.

I think, as she’s moved back into Midville and working more with inner-city school, I think the hardest part has been two things – the parents, of the children that she has, the students that she has, and the administration – often not even at a high level, often just right there at the school. And it’s been at most of the several schools that she’s been at. And I think, you know she felt like she’s butting heads



with them. A lot. And even like, I can remember when I was in grade school and she was in a private school that should have been more affluent, butting heads with the administration there, even. I might have been privy to too much of it, as a child myself, you know, as a student, with other students.

Linda has strong memories of her mother “bringing home” her problems. And they are identical to the problems Cindy has talked about. Since Linda’s views on Cindy’s perpetual “butting heads” with administration had already been discussed, I asked her about the problems her mother has with the parents of her students.

Linda: Well I know, with the parents – you may have, I know that she has, like several really good trumpet players, for instance, and if – you know she’s really – she’s practically walked them hand by hand, you know, step by step, how to do every part of playing the trumpet, and then you know, get ‘em really prepared for a solo, at solo and ensemble contest, and then they’re so psyched – the kid is just “pumped” to go, they’re ready. They’ve told her what they’re going to wear, and they had their music practically memorized, and then the parent doesn’t bring them to the place for the solo. And then – and then the child’s really upset, you know, they weren’t there, and they’re really apologetic, kind of making excuses for not being there, well, “My mom had no car”, or “My mom’s car broke down,” or - and probably those are all just excuses, and it happens too, for the spring concert, and they’re excited to be there, and they know they’re first chair, maybe they’re even going to play a solo or something, and then – and they know that’s for a grade! And then they don’t come – their parent doesn’t bring them, or see to them getting to the school for the concert. And then they get a bad grade, and then they’re sad, and they try to make excuses, “Well my mom didn’t have a car” well, “Could you not find a ride with someone else?” “Well she wouldn’t let me go.”

Terry: Is this behavior by the parents a result of their apathy or their disadvantage?

Linda: Apathy. I think. I mean of course there’s some of both, but I think it’s apathy because there are people who are completely underprivileged who have the desire to see their children out of that, and see that they get exactly what they need, and get to where they need to be, no matter what extreme that takes them, you know? “Aunt so-and-so, can you please take Joey to the concert up at the school tonight?”

Linda knows something about disadvantage, and that may explain why she is so quick to choose “apathy” to describe the majority of the parental behavior that Cindy has to endure. It also helps to explain why she thinks that her mother approves of her choice

to pursue a professional performing career – the same kind of career that Cindy herself once wanted.

I think she's always thought I was pretty talented, I think she – I think she thinks that I'm good at teaching, as well, even though I don't do it at the same level that she does – but I very much – I KNOW that she likes me being a musician because she – she's very concerned that my having a family would ruin my career. So, that's a pretty good sign of her – liking the fact that I'm a musician.

It is difficult to say if Cindy is worried that history may be repeating itself. In admiring her daughter for her playing and condemning her for having a child, she is replicating the situation that she was in almost thirty years ago. As a result of that situation, Cindy has spent a long time teaching, and Linda feels that she has reached the level of a master teacher. And there have been rewards, mostly from the happy faces of her students, "Getting the children excited about it. I think she loves to do that – to see their faces light up." Linda freely admits that her mother frequently urges her to go back to get her teaching certificate, which she steadfastly refuses to do.

Terry: Would it make her happy if you had a teaching certificate, and a real, full-time job?

Linda: Yeah, it would. She talks to me about that all the time – "well you know you just need, like, six classes, wouldn't you – what if I help you? What if I..."

Linda paused, as if to dig in her heels once again and resist what must, at this point in her career, be a temptation of a secure opportunity for employment. As we talked about the times that her mother has had her work with her students, I asked if perhaps Cindy was hoping that Linda would enjoy it.

Linda: Yeah, when I would come home, like for spring breaks, and Christmas breaks, she would often go like "Oh, you know my Christmas Concert's next week – why don't you come this week to school with me? And, help me?" You know, I'd take one student, and if she like somehow had got lucky, or unlucky enough to have a strange group lesson going on, I'd take some, and she would take some, and we would work 'em – I would always, we'd be drafted to play in a

percussion section, for like almost every single concert, the entire time I was in college and grad school – “Oh, you’re going to be home - oh, that’s perfect, my concert’s two days after you get home, so I’m going to have you play bass drum, OK?”

Terry: How valuable would you say all that was?

Linda: Well, for me, it showed me, I think really, that I wasn’t always good at working with students at that level. And that I also didn’t enjoy it all that much. So it showed me that, why would I finish a degree in it when I wasn’t like, “Why would I be miserable? Why would I make myself feel like that?”

Linda has been teaching privately since she graduated from high school, ten years ago. She feels that she is not willing to follow in her mother’s (and her father’s) footsteps in education, and instead is pressing on with their original goals – to be professional hornists. But she will be a teacher of private students, and that is where she feels that her mother has taught her the best lessons.

Linda: I think I’ve learned a lot about having private students who are very young, so teaching the youngest level, like third, fourth, fifth graders – beginning them, on any instrument, but specifically the horn, because I’ve watched a lot of lessons, and I’ve observed a lot of other people’s lessons too, but I’ve – I mean I often feel like my mom, what I’ve seen there, has, like she has a lot of ability to connect better – with especially those really young students. And I think that’s really great because I feel like I can’t make the same connection with the youngest students that she can.

Terry: Is it because of her experience teaching young students?

Linda: I don’t know – maybe? I know she’s had a lot of different jobs, at that younger level. I’ve heard other people mention to me too, like well “Your mom has such a talent for that middle-school age, band student.” And I had never thought about it until - that was a couple of years ago, someone mentioned that to me, and I was like “Huh! I guess you’re right!” Then I started thinking about it – and during my master’s degree, actually, we were talking about young, private students, on a one-to-one basis, with my professor there, and she was like “Well, you’d want to do this with your little fifth-grade, private student,” and I was like “Yeah, but what if you did this instead?” She was like “Oh, I don’t think that would work.” I’m like, “I’ve watched my mom do that for like a hundred years! I’m pretty sure it works! I’ve seen it work – be successful, you know, at least twice, you know, at least two or three times,” and, “Well, I’ve never thought about it that way.” Well, I’ve seen it work.

Linda has seen a lot of her mother's techniques work, and she has also been able to hear other students tell her about how much they enjoyed being taught by her.

Well actually I just recently ran into someone who I introduced myself to, not knowing that she'd had my mom. And I said like "Hello, I'm Linda and I'm - nice to meet you," and she was like "Oh! You know, I think I had your mom for a band director - what's your last name?" And I - and she said "Yeah! Your mom was my beginning band director! and I just loved her! She was so much fun, and just made it a lot of fun, and she's so loud, she was just so excited so much of the time," and I was thinking "yeah, you definitely had my mom as a beginning band director."

Linda's sonic assessment of her mother's "teacher voice" made her laugh. It is part of her mother's persona. In her many years of teaching, she has become known for not taking any "guff" from anyone, be it student or administrator.

I've heard it said that "she has no filter." Either, you know, that's both ways, but you know, that's in meetings, and that's in the principal's office, and that's, you know, to the janitor down the hall, or she - and it could be good or bad! I mean, it's not always negative thoughts - it's a supportive comment here, and a supportive comment there, too for those who - whoever she's speaking to, and think that she's kept a lot of people going, for a long time, and I know that there's a young orchestra teacher that she's worked with a little bit in the last couple of years, that is always, whenever she sees me, is like "Oh, I just love your mom, like I don't know what I'd do without her in meetings, I just, she's great like, I don't know how I survived this past year, she's just hilarious, and she doesn't let anything stop her." So I know that she's definitely been really supportive, in some ways - even if it's been in a really loud, obnoxious way.

Linda is disappointed that her mother has had to delay her retirement. She has seen too many crises, too many frustrated moments to think that Cindy is not ready for the transition. I asked her what it would take to make her last two years better.

Linda: For some magic reason, there was like a really good schedule, and it was set, in the school where she was, then she was allowed to no matter what, have her kids pull out for band, and actually get them together on a weekly basis even, possibly even two times a week - that would just be amazing because the kids will love it, and she would actually be doing her job, like she would get the chance to actually be doing it frequently.

Terry: And that's certainly not unreasonable....

Linda: No, it's not unreasonable! Like every other school in like the world does it, so I don't know why... we can't have that, but, I think if that just somehow just miraculously happened for two more years, or whatever she's gonna put in, she would be just tickled pink.

Linda knows that things will not change in the Midville School District – at least not until long after her mother has retired. I asked her if she was worried that Cindy's situation might actually worsen.

Maybe not – maybe it's just going to plateau. 'Cause I think it's been better for her this last year, when she wasn't at Southern any more. That one year at Southern was really the hardest for her. It's too bad, because I think she could have really been good at that. I mean, should have really liked it, but she didn't.

Knowing what conditions had been for Cindy at Southern, it made sense to hope that she would be able to finish her teaching career at Bolivia, where she has a better relationship with both the administration and the students. There, she is not a replacement for a legend, just another in a long line of music teachers. She may not be creating a legacy within the school, but she is finishing without too much rancor and condemnation. Linda thinks that her current situation is the best she can hope for, and knows that when the time comes, she will have earned her retirement.

Linda: I think she deserves it, I think she's worked really long, and really hard, and hasn't always really been able to plan ahead the best for it, and I think she really deserves to be able to retire and have fun, and not teach if she doesn't want to, but to teach a little bit here and there if she'd like to still. I think she very much deserves it.

Terry: The sooner the better?

Linda: Yeah, I think the sooner the better. 'Cause I don't want her to always remember like the last ten years which have been really hard for her. I want her to be able to think back to when she first started teaching, and loved the driving here and there and everywhere to teach. I think the last – I don't know, maybe not even ten years, maybe the last six years has been really a hard six years for her.

Unlike the other primary participants in this study, Cindy will probably not be in demand as a guest clinician, or called upon to lecture or consult with any of the universities in the area. Linda is aware that her mother's retirement stipend will be considerably smaller than most, so she is concerned about how she will make ends meet. And she laughed when she said what her mother probably wants to do most of all.

Well, she'll probably play with her dogs, as much as possible. She'll probably try to play her horn as much as possible as well. Anywhere she can, as often as she can, and she'll probably be one of those people who like to try a different, like a small little grade school and still do like a ten person band, or something like that. I can totally see her doing that.

Linda believes that if Cindy can continue to teach and play, without the restraints that have been so frustrating in the Midville School District, she will be happy. She is still young enough to be active, and still young enough to keep learning about her art. I asked Linda if she has been able to use her expertise to "give back" to her mother.

I think she's learned some about actual playing – like, performing on the horn. I think she's learned some from me about that. 'Cause she would go, "Oh, what have you learned in your lessons?" And I'd tell her and she'd go "Oh, that's really great! How do you play – what? Is there an alternate?" I mean there's some horn alternate fingerings that maybe she knew in the back of her mind would work, but I had never thought about, or something, and I use them regularly, and she'd go "Well, can you do this? Is there a combination for this?" Yeah, so I tried, or maybe some more obscure like extended techniques that she never knew about that worked – that maybe weren't a thing at all, when she was in college.

There could have been more discussion, but it was almost rehearsal time – as we headed downstairs we could see that most of the band had assembled, and we could hear everyone tuning. I ran into Linda's husband, Gary, who is working as a telemarketer while trying to make use of his degrees in trombone performance, and having less luck than his wife. He was eager to let me know that he would be auditioning for the bass trombone position in the orchestra I play in – and it was clear that he was hoping for my

influence, even though he probably understands that I have none. There is a look of desperation in his face – after two years of part-time jobs, one with a baby in tow, he and Linda are showing the inevitable signs of accepting the fact that they may never succeed in accomplishing their goals of making a living making music. Sadly, they would be in the vast majority of musicians – a majority that includes Linda’s mother, who had once set out to achieve the same goal. I was packed and ready to leave, but first I stopped by long enough to see the manager, Peter, and to see Linda’s mother, Cindy, already sitting in the horn section.

### **A Beloved Legacy**

Susan Schockley teaches at Midville Notre Dame High School. We had tried to arrange a time to meet there, but by the time our schedules meshed the year was over, and Susan was in no mood to go back. Instead she suggested that we spend the afternoon at Fitzpatrick’s Landing, a restaurant on the river in a nearby town. I arrived first, and after being seated at a table on the deck overhanging the docks below, I realized why she had chosen this spot. On Monday afternoons, the restaurant is nearly empty, and the location is far away from the rest of the city. There were a few towboats chugging down the river, but they were peaceful, and the scenery was pleasant.

A few minutes later, Sue came down the stairs to the deck. “I sat down inside and didn’t realize you’d already gotten here! It’s a beautiful day to be out on the deck, huh?” I agreed, and invited her to have a seat. As I was preparing my recorders, Sue began examining the consent form for the interview, as well as the list of questions I told her that we would be discussing. “I want to make sure I’m ready for this,” she said, looking at me over her reading glasses, “I don’t want to say anything stupid.” I reminded her that

her comments would be anonymous, and she laughed. “If Rick ever read any of this, he’d know exactly what comments are mine,” she said, “We’ve been married WAY too long!” Sue and Rick have been married for a long time, over twenty years. They met shortly after Rick’s first marriage ended, and their courtship was quite short. Rick had noted that his first wife was not a music educator, and Sue’s background in music education was a factor in their meeting, and eventually marrying. When we were discussing the types of questions that would come up during our talk, I joked that I would ask if she had been one of Rick’s students. Sue’s response caught me off guard. “Well you know what? In a sense, in that he has taught me a lot, we could say that I was a student of Rick’s.”

Having known both of these individuals for most of their years together, I realized that Sue’s observation was profound. Like Cindy, Sue plays the horn. She had the good fortune to attend school in a town where instrumental music instruction started in the fourth grade, and so by the time she was in high school she was an exceptional player, performing in orchestra as well as band. She and Rick attended the same university and had most of the same teachers, Sue had actually started teaching before Rick, in one of the larger cities to the north, but at one point quit teaching and was a bartender for a year. When they met, she was getting back into the profession, but by then Rick had established his program at Warm Springs and was well-respected in the area. Rick had been instrumental in helping Sue establish her program at Midville Notre Dame, lending her equipment and music when she needed it, and advising her on how to run a marching band.

Well in my situation, which was - oh, somewhat hard, because being a band director, I had usually around 26 to 30 students in band, and he had a 126 to 130 in band, you know we’d talk a lot about - even though our groups were different sizes we did a lot of the same things, and I think I used him for - ‘cause I hadn’t



done marching for awhile. ‘Cause before that I had done – I had one year of high school, and then after that my job was all in grade school, and then I guess in orchestra, so he helped me with some marching things, I used him for music ideas, in fact I borrowed a lot of my music from him, cause he, you know, he had purchased a lot of music over the years, so he gave me good ideas with that – and we actually bought some equipment from them, too. They would buy new stuff, we would get the nice, used stuff, so, um – you know, a mentor, I guess I didn’t really give you a good explanation for that. But he helped me with getting back on the – in the marching seat – course we never did halftime shows at Notre Dame. I only had a twenty-minute band period, and then an hour and a half after school one day a week, well then, that’s when football practice was –when’re you going to march on the field? So, but we did do parades. And then I would put together – used to put together one marching band show. A season. And just do that on one of the nights. For fun, and he helped me with that.

Rick and Sue’s professional relationship has been reciprocal. While Rick was always willing to lend Sue equipment, advice and moral support, Sue was willing to help out Rick during his band camps. Since Warm Springs has a paid camp staff, I asked Sue if she and Rick worried about nepotism. “Oh no,” she joked. “We were already married! And besides, we stayed in separate cabins.” But even when they are not away at camp, Sue has helped by giving horn lessons, but she reminded me that she had her own band to worry about during the school year.

In addition to her role as Rick’s spouse, as a music educator Sue is quite capable of objectively analyzing the music program at Warm Springs. She is aware that the band had an excellent reputation before Rick started teaching, but she is also aware that Rick has been an equally excellent caretaker of that reputation.

Sue: Well I think it’s a combination of things. I think it’s because – Rick is very – he’s good at what he does. And he knows what to do to get things done, and he knows how to treat students so that they will work for him. And the nice thing is he knows where that line is – he’s not necessarily a friend to the kids, but yet he likes the kids, he has fun with the kids, but he knows where to draw the line so they know that he means business. And they know that if they work hard, then they’re going to see the fun side of him too. And I think he really loves what he does. In fact we’ve both talked about this – he and I would both continue being

band directors if we could kind of get away from the “football game, basketball game, marching band” thing.

Terry: The Administrative trap?

Sue: You know, if I could just go in and have - and direct the band, have band concerts, teach kids how to play instruments, I would still do high school. But - I think that's what it is, it's a combination of that. Yes, they've had good directors before there, too, now that helped. You know, it was already a strong program when he got there. But I think he probably has made it stronger. And, you know it was a nice thing for the kids, because they weren't - they weren't that big into sports there, sports wasn't that great, this gave them something else, and it kind of made the school well known! Which, you know, caused some conflict with some of the coaches they used to have. And, but, I think he's done a great job! He loves it! He loves doing it, he loves working with the kids.

I mentioned to Sue that someone (Royce, Rick's principal) had mentioned that since the school had hired some new athletic coaches, Rick had been instrumental in opening up the lines of communication between athletics and music. Sue noted that Rick has often been a leader in keeping dialog going between faculty, administration and the community.

Sue: Well, he talked about teachers that he got to be pretty good friends with... and he would sit and talk to them about things, I don't know, some - I guess he talked about - I guess there was a small group that when he first started teaching there they would meet every day at a certain time for coffee. And he says that he really misses that, they don't have that so much any more. But they have that “Block Eight” program now, you know, so that's a little bit different, not everybody's got a free time to do that - I know the people in the office like him a lot. And I think that's because he would always go down and talk to them, and he's nice to them cause he knows they do a lot for him - so I know the office really liked him... the people there, because every time I called, “Oh, yeah, hi, you're Rick's wife!” You know, stuff like that, then I know he worked with some of the other teachers because since he did the music history, and art thing that he would do - go in and talk to their class... about things, and plus - is it the health teacher? The health teacher, every year, he goes in, and he spends one of the periods talking about his brother Ronnie... his brother Ronnie died of cancer. Mouth cancer, and it was basically from chewing tobacco, and that, and so he goes in and tells what Ronnie had to go through, and everything like that, so...

Terry: One of those “scared straight” kind of talks.

Sue: That's right... yeah, so you know, it's kind of nice that he does that – goes into the classes, and he goes into the art class and talks art history – I don't know if it's the art class or if it's some other humanities or something, that he did that, but so, I think that teachers there like him, for the most part. And I'm sure there are some that don't, because he IS kind of an important person there, and he has brought a lot of, I guess the word is "fame" to the school, and I'm sure that bothers some people. I'm sure they're tired of hearing about him, and – but then there are enough others that appreciate what he does, and I think they probably overshadow the ones that don't. And he also – I'm sorry, and he also goes down to – I know he used to go to the grade schools, or to show instruments to the little kids, I don't know if he does that any more but he used to do that.

By the time we were having this interview, Rick was no longer doing any of the things that Sue was talking about, at least not at Warm Springs. All of what Rick has established is now in the hands of Brian, his successor. Sue is in the unique position of having known Brian longer than Rick, since Brian had been one of her first students. She was responsible for Brian attending the same university that she and Rick attended, introduced him to his applied teacher, and recommending him for the position he has had at the junior high. Sue is convinced that Rick made the right choice when he hired Brian over fourteen years ago.

Well I know Brian will have his problems, and I have some concerns, but he's got good people working with him, the student – but not the student teacher! The teacher coming in to take his place, Brian knows really well, Rick knows really well, he's already – he already student taught here, and he's already been out teaching so he's got experience too, and he's a great guy. So that will help, cause right away Brian has somebody good to work with.

Sue and Rick have had many conversations about Brian's future with the Warm Springs Band. Sue has the advantage of seeing their relationship from both sides, as she has known them both for many years. When she spoke about some of the problems that Brian would have to face, her analysis of his abilities also shows some concern from Rick that had not been revealed before.

Sue: I think it will be good for Brian to be in charge, because one of the things Rick would say when he came home would be “Man, he just stands at rehearsal, he doesn’t do anything – he doesn’t go in there...” I said “Rick, you gotta remember he’s the assistant.” He goes “I am – but I want him to go out there and do stuff!” I said “Well, do you tell him?” So Brian has a little bit of trouble taking charge when he doesn’t feel like he’s the one in charge.  
Terry: Well sure, with Rick standing there, right?

Sue: Right! But see, Rick comes off that way. Kind of a – but Rick didn’t want him to be that way – he wanted him to get in and do stuff. So I think now this will be Brian’s chance to do that, you know, do things the way he wants to, and the thing is he’s gonna make some mistakes and I hope people just kind of overlook that, ‘cause that happens for everybody. You find out what works, you find out what doesn’t work. And I’m excited for him, looking forward to see how he does, and - and I think it’s going to be fun because Brian has - Brian has a great sense of humor. And he has fun with the kids.

There was no ominous tone in Sue’s voice when she spoke of Brian making some mistakes, but the statement had an ominous ring to my ears. Past experience has shown that many people are unwilling to overlook mistakes made by successors, and instead see them as flaws, a danger to their traditions, their successes, and sometimes even to the well-being of their children. It will almost certainly occur at Warm Springs, but the level of that occurrence will be the test of Brian’s endurance. His endurance will be strengthened by being the hand-picked successor, by being a “known commodity” from teaching the students at the junior high level, and by already being a member of the Warm Springs community.

It would be difficult to find two music educators who have as close a friendship as Brian and Rick. Any observer would note that Brian’s admiration for Rick rings stereotypically of that of a younger brother, and Brian may have helped to fill the void that was left in Rick’s life when his actual brother, Ronnie, died of cancer. That close friendship will be tested during this transitional time for a number of reasons. There will be times when Brian will need help from Rick, and Rick will be willing to give his friend

any help he needs. But there will also be times when Rick might be interfering, and then Brian would be placed in the uncomfortable position of enduring that interference that may undermine his credibility and authority with the students. Rick has already told Sue that he's not going to get involved with the program, mostly for Brian's sake.

I think he's smart in that he's not going to. He's pretty much going to stay out of it. Now if Brian calls him up, and asks him something, which he's already been doing, all along, you know, that's fine. But for Brian to act – to go back in, and work with kids, I think he's - at least for, you know, three or four years he's going to stay out of it. And that'll become Brian's program.

Sue agrees that Rick will have a hard time staying away from the program.

Brian's loyalty to Rick may cause him to invite him back too often, and that Rick will ultimately have to be the one to have a "heart to heart" talk with his protégé.

I think Brian, I don't know, hopefully not out of obligation – we don't want Brian to feel obligated to ask Rick to do anything. 'Cause Rick wants to stay out of the picture. Because it's - I mean, you know, because if Brian comes to him with something I'm sure Rick will help him out.

Hearing Sue use the collective "we" to describe their reluctance seems significant.

As a couple, Sue and Rick have based most of their relationship around their professional lives. As a retired couple, that basis will undergo some change.

Brian had his first taste of autonomy shortly before Sue and I met, when Rick was chosen to be the Grand Marshall of the annual "Warm Springs Days" parade.

Logistically, it was a trying day, since a thunderstorm and a nearby tornado wreaked havoc on the event, but with Rick riding in the Grand Marshall's car, Brian was left to run the band by himself. According to Sue, Brian passed his first test, at least with one supportive parent, and they all had a chance to laugh about it afterwards.

We met up with Brian, and another band parent - She says, "Gee Brian, your first parade's done." You know, it was pretty much a disaster but they made it through it, and the band sounded good! Drumline sounded good, his Mellophones

sounded awesome! And he had – he only had one tuba player – but the other, one of the other kids I know is on a - he’s doing some thing or another at West Point for a couple weeks. So – but they sounded good!

It is a reassuring sound to Sue. Taking care of a band as they march down a street for a parade is very simple, compared to the tasks that are ahead of Brian, but Sue is convinced that with small successes like this to start, bigger successes will follow.

Since Rick is not one to rest on his successes, I asked Sue what she thought he will be doing to make his retirement life a success. Like Cindy, she is a little worried about the financial aspect, and she’s also concerned that Rick’s passions, when unleashed at home instead of at school, will create some chaos, but she’s looking forward to the two of them having more free time.

Sue: I have mixed emotions. First of all, of course, I worry about the financial part. That’s my big worry. And it’s a selfish reason, of course, I’ve – I’m on his insurance. And now I’m going to lose that, because he’ll have TRS, but for a spouse to be on TRS it’s very expensive. So I’m going to get my own insurance through - MENC offers a special deal through an insurance company that if you stay a member of MENC, so anyhow, financially I’m concerned, but I always worry about that stuff. And, but other than that, you know, first I was kind of concerned like “Oh my gosh! He’s going home so much more! Am I going to be able to handle that?” You know?

Terry: Underfoot.

Sue: Yeah! And he’s a workaholic, always having to have some project going, you know, “Come and take a look at it, what do you think of this?” It’s hard for me to get anything done when he’s home doing his projects, but I’m looking forward to it too, because then we can go do – yeah like the weekend we went to see Mahler Five - and now we can do that during the school year! So I think I’m looking forward to it.

Sue knows that I know about Rick’s new jobs, especially since I had recommended him for one of them. She sees them as necessary to keep Rick from being “underfoot”, but not as a way for him to continue his legacy. But the jobs are ancillary to their futures, and Sue had many different ideas about how Rick wants to spend his time.

Sue: Did he ever tell you that he wants to volunteer at grade schools and go in and read to the kindergarteners?

Terry: I can't tell you that.

Sue: Oh, OK. I just didn't know if it'd be a new one. But he's talked about that, he goes "I'd really like to maybe volunteer," because sometimes they'll do that, you know, they'll bring in people from the community to read. They do that in some of my Catholic schools, my grade schools. And he's talked about that. He goes, "I thought of you – I think it'd be really fun to go in and read a story" because you know he can do all the voices, and make the scary gruff sounds, and make the funny sounds, you know he would love to do that. So that's a volunteer thing, and he would be good at that. He's talked about doing the thing where you go into the community and help rebuild the houses?

Terry: Habitat for Humanity?

Sue: Yes. He's talked about that, because he's good at all that, he knows how to do... we've talked about that together because he's taught me how to do drywall, and everything. So I can do that, you know, and paint, and everything else... so, I'm trying to think of things he probably hasn't already told you - I know he's probably told you about the Yellowstone thing, and he's probably told you that we're going to do some traveling, and... what else? Oh! The other day – this is still when school was going on, and he'd gotten up to go to school, he didn't have to do much but he still had to go to school, he- his habit in the morning after he gets ready he'll go sit in the living room and do sudoku, while he's got the news on TV. So, what he was doing instead was, you know, checking channels out, and there was some movie on, and he goes "Man," he goes "when I'm retired I want to be able to just get up and maybe watch a movie in the morning." So there, you'll put that down.

Sue was laughing as I put that down, knowing that Rick would probably find it funny too. As she spoke, her voice had become more and more excited, and her hands were gesturing, as if she was gathering her fantasies about retired life from the peaceful river setting in front of us.

Rick is going to be busy in retirement. He, like Bill, may soon be able to say that he is busier now than when he was a teacher. But he won't be leaving as strong an impression on the lives of as many students as he has over the past thirty years. His legacy will continue to make an impression, though stories and through the work of his

colleagues. Sue had a quick response when I asked her what about Rick had left the greatest impression.

Sue: Probably his sense of humor. Sense of humor, and his (knocking on table) loud voice and loud laugh! And I want to add to that, I guess that goes along with it because he was always, you know, always willing to talk to people. Or talk to his co-teachers. Gosh, I should have said all the – all the great things he's done for the school – I should have said that, huh?

Terry: You just did.

Sue: OK.

Sue had already mentioned how Rick had served as a liason between the music and athletic departments, his lectures in health class about the dangers of tobacco, his lectures in art history, and his trips to the grade schools. They are great things that have sometimes been taken for granted, but they have had great consequences and created great memories. Sue is Rick's "living scrapbook" when it comes to recalling them.

Sue: He went to Canada one time, with the band, and they had – they were up there, they were going to do their halftime show, they weren't even up there for that but they went up there and they contacted some team and said "Hey, we're going to be here, do you want us – could we march at your halftime show?" And apparently they had a torrential downpour – I don't know if he ever told you this story, but he's got pictures of it. And just in a short amount of time, it was almost a flood, and he always talks about how these band parents of his just went crazy helping then, Everybody was there, they threw this, you know all the equipment and everything was taken care of and he said it was just one of the neatest things to see that, with all these people helping. Now of course that's not a big concert or anything like that but – it was just kind of a cool thing to see. And oh, gosh, they've done so much for him... I don't know, there's been a lot. When he went to Grand Nationals that time, they did pretty well. That was cool, they didn't get real high scores, but Grand Nationals, it's always the 'Marion Catholics' and stuff like that... get it. Some of the marching band shows have just been amazing. And ISU – making finals at ISU - Oh, gosh – performing at – who are the presidents? Mount Rushmore! Oh my gosh, the concert there, that was the neatest thing – and the cool thing, I got to play French horn. And so they had this huge stage there – outdoor stage, have you seen that? It's like a bandshell.

Terry: No, I've never been out there. Is it a great sound?



Sue: Oh, yeah. It was amazing, and there was even a nice audience, just people that happened to be there. And they sat, and listened, and - I mean it was just – it was beautiful, it was a perfect evening, kind of dusk, the band sounded great, that was pretty neat experience. For me, too, my gosh, and he was directing. That was pretty – Oh, that was a great experience.

Terry: So there's lots of them?

Sue: Yeah. And then Hawaii, and not necessarily just the band thing, but when they played- they put on a concert on the deck – not the deck but the- was it the Missouri? It was pulled up to?

Terry: The USS Missouri?

Sue: Yeah, the – you know, where it was pulled up to. Put on a concert there, and then all the other things that happened, were just so emotionally, you know, fulfilling, to just to see all that, and hear the stories, and one of the things we found out was that the night of the attack, they had a jazz band festival, of service jazz bands. And, so all these guys lost their lives. And they have all these names on the wall, of all these musicians.

Terry: Do you think the students were...

Sue: Oh, yeah, there were kids crying when they heard stories and stuff. And then we went on the Arizona, and the drum majors threw the - the lei into the water, you know, and stuff. It was really neat. So I suppose that was one of the – highlights, was the Hawaii trip.

Sue has vivid memories of these experiences. She believes that the students were profoundly affected by them, and that Rick's legacy is constructed primarily by them.

Sue and I had discussed at length the details of trying to keep Rick's "secret" party a secret, that Rick had known about it, and that he had played along to let his friends and students think he was surprised. Rick had mentioned in one of his interviews that he had been concerned at first that he'd already been forgotten, that no one was going to wish him well in his retirement, but that as e-mails continued to pour in, he was feeling better about it. Sue thinks that they have been very important to him.

He's gotten a lot – he's got - he's got plaques, out the - wazoo, y'know, he's got plaques, he's got cards, he's got meaningful pictures, he's got letters, and cards,

and – you know, the thing is I just hope that after all this is over, that students still stay in touch, because I know a lot of them too, and I think they will, I mean we’ve already had a phone call from a student that used to live with us for a while, ‘cause her parents moved and she wanted to finish her year out, so she lived with us – she wants to come and visit, and a lot of the kids at the retirement party he didn’t get to talk to, he’s hoping they’re going to stay in touch, so now that the surprise is over he can get on Facebook and try to find his students but I don’t know – he couldn’t get on it before because there were things about the party going around, and it was a surprise.

For Rick and Sue, retirement has allowed them to look back on both their careers as music educators, and the path that took them to where they are. Rick came from a rural family, and Sue sees Rick’s relationship with his parents being passed on to his son.

His dad was a little different – I don’t think they were THAT close, but, they’ve had a lot of episodes in their life where they’ve done things together, and Rick remembers them, and especially in the last – well, he’s dead now, but before he was dead there was a lot of things he and Rick talked about, and, you know, then Rick felt it was so great that Tom liked to hang out with Grandpa, and so they got to be pretty close. And of course Rick’s mom is as proud as she can about – of Rick, comes to the concerts, brings her friends, and everything, and so yeah, I think they’re real happy with what he did, and in fact he’s the only one in his family that went to college.

Rick has seen to it that his children have gone to college, and now that his son Tom has returned from the East Coast, Rick and Sue have a nest that is occasionally not so empty. Rick the woodworker will continue to feather that nest, but both of them will be flying from it very often, as both he and Sue follow through on their retirement plans.

The view of the river from Fitzpatrick’s Landing is relaxing. The other bank of the river is entirely covered with trees, and the restaurant is one of the few buildings around. Today, only towboats and their barges were chugging up and down the waterway. I watched one “tow” go by, and the wake was spreading wide enough to splash up against both sides of the river. I thought of the wake that our legacies have left behind, how they have spread over the river that has nurtured their communities. Every

wake that has passed down this river has changed the course of it. Some wakes make more changes than others. Rick Ransom has left a big wake.

By the time Sue and I had to go, we were the only customers in the restaurant. We left the deck, and stopped by the bar to pay the waitress, who was watching television. “Thank you for letting us stay out on the deck,” I said, as I paid the check. “No trouble, we’re not doing a whole lot of business today anyway - thank you for coming.” The other side of the restaurant opens out to a dusty road, and both of our cars had been lightly coated. Sue and I agreed that we would have to find more restaurants like this, hidden on a remote part of the river. “Why do you suppose more people don’t know about places like this?” she said. In my mind, I thought, “For the same reason that more people don’t know about teachers like you.”

## Chapter 9

### The Last Notes of Summer

'Tis the last rose of summer left blooming alone,  
All her lovely companions are faded and gone.  
No flower of her kindred, no rosebud is nigh,  
To reflect back her blushes and give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one, to pine on the stem,  
Since the lovely are sleeping, go sleep thou with them.  
Thus kindly I scatter thy leaves o'er the bed,  
Where thy mates of the garden lie scentless and dead.

So soon may I follow when friendships decay,  
And from love's shining circle the gems drop away.  
When true hearts lie withered and fond ones are flown,  
Oh who would inhabit this bleak world alone?  
(Moore)

### School's Out

Sunday evening at Midville Park was sultry, even for the end of August. The musicians, gathering at the bandshell, were beginning to warm up their instruments, and the heavy air seemed to dampen the timbre of their sound, leaving less resonance to the ambience. There was prerecorded music coming through the speakers on the sides of the bandshell, competing with flutes, clarinets and horns that were trying to tune.

Two of the primary participants in this study were busily preparing for the last concert of the season. For Peter, the Manager of the Midville Municipal Band, the end of summer means the beginning of a vacation. He and his wife, Wendy will be leaving town on the first day of school – a self-imposed reminder to both of them that their new roles as retirees have certain advantages. For Cindy Swinarski, however, the last notes of summer are a prelude to the first notes of school, which begins in another week. She will

be returning to Bolivia Middle School for one last year, but many of her younger colleagues will not be there – the district has “pink-slipped” over two-hundred teachers, and some of them are playing in the band.

As the musicians took their seats, Peter asked them to be quiet for a moment, reminding them that their paychecks will be coming in the mail very soon, and then he thanked them for their work over the summer. For Peter, this marks the end of his 38<sup>th</sup> season playing in the band, and his 10<sup>th</sup> season as the band’s manager. Next spring he will begin preparing for another season, doing many of the same activities he did when he was teaching at Southern High School.

The other two participants in this study, Rick and Bill, have also recently played their last notes of summer – Rick was the Grand Marshall of the parade for the annual “Warm Springs Days”, and Bill “assisted” his successor, Mark Hensen, at the Belmont City Corn Days Parade. But now the parades have passed them by, and the last notes of summer have died away. Next summer, Bill and Rick will probably be on the sidelines.

With modern technology, music is no longer considered to be the transient art form that it once was. But the contributions that educators such as Rick, Peter, Bill and Cindy have made are still not quantifiable by listening to recordings of music, or by viewing photographs of performances, and not by examining displays of trophies in cases. Their contributions are showcased by the trophies that are living and contributing in their own and other communities – individuals who were strongly influenced by these educators. Their works and their testimonies best define the legacies of music educators in our culture.

As this study began, there were several issues that were presented that merited major attention. How have Peter, Rick, Bill and Cindy, and other retiring music educators balanced the musical mandates of their communities with the demands of the state and national standards of music education, while remaining true to their own philosophies of music education? Were they working to preserve time-honored musical traditions, abandon them, or to enhance those traditions with new practices that reflected changes in the culture? And what sort of legacies have they left behind, both at the immediate community and at the state level? The stories that the primary participants in this study have told are their interpretations of how these issues are unfolding in communities throughout our society, and the accompanying stories that their friends, colleagues, former students and other community members have shared provide considerable fortification to their interpretations.

### **Defying the Traditional Definition of “Retirement”**

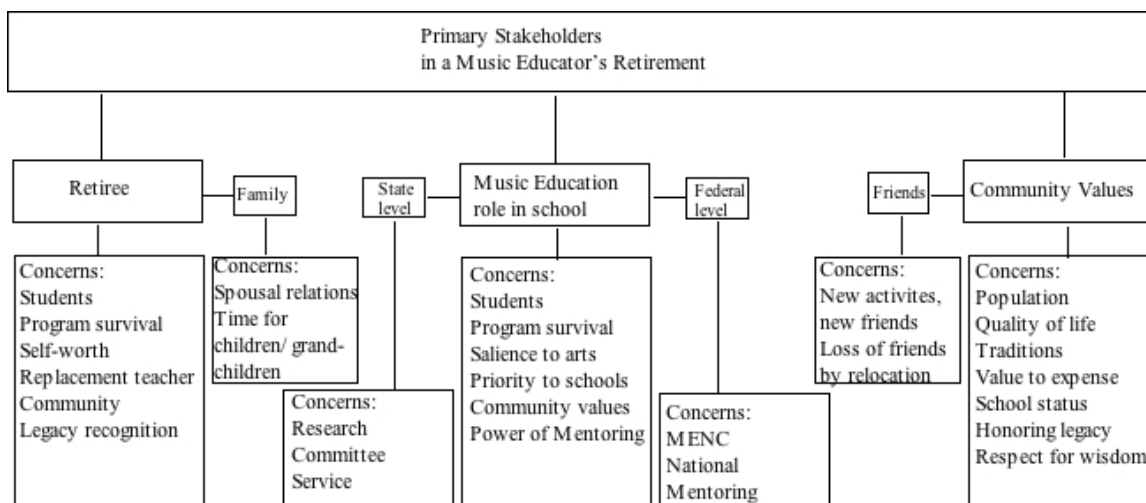
At the beginning of this study, there are definitions of retirement, constructed by norms and traditions that are mostly steeped in occupational practices from the early to mid twentieth century. In those norms, a person retiring from a profession was considered to be at the end of her or his value to the profession, and retirement was a compensation for the loss of the ability to earn a living. Retirees were actuarially expected to survive for a relatively short percentage of their total lifespan, often with health conditions that would limit their productivity.

For the music educators in this study, the prospect of acting out the traditional roles of retirees is highly unlikely. The actions taken by all of the participants indicate that they are still dedicated to practicing their discipline, both as educators and as creators

of music. With longer lifespan expectations, they are retiring with the likelihood of at least two decades of healthy life. If there is a rocking chair waiting for them, it will gather dust before it is put to use. Rick, Bill, and Peter have all established jobs that are keeping them involved in the performance and teaching of music in their respective communities, and once Cindy has retired, she plans on keeping her position with a professional orchestra, and hopes to start teaching at one of the private religious schools in her community that only employs music teachers part-time. The greatest change in the lifestyle of these retirees is that of regimentation – they no longer feel like captives of clocks, slaves to schedules, prisoners of procedure. Most are still in bondage, however, to the joy of making music. Some will find a paying position, and some will volunteer their time, but the gross compensation will be usually be measured in aesthetic terms. For some, receiving a paycheck adds value to their lives much more than it adds to their checkbooks.

### **Those With the Most to Win or Lose**

Undertaking the process of retirement is a major transition of any individual's life. Regardless of their profession, there are many emotional and sociological issues that the new retiree must face. Over the years music educators tend to establish an inordinate number of associations with individuals who will eventually find themselves affected by the music educator's retirement, by sharing in their joy, coping with the adjustment to replacements, or facing the inevitable changes in community activities that were established by the music educator.



*Figure 1.* Primary stakeholders in a music educator's retirement.

It may seem inequitable to place the central figure of a retiree on an equal footing with educational institutions and communities, but the data supports the strong concerns that community and educational individuals have about “losing” the talents of a close friend, colleague, or mentor. As a collective, those who have worked with or have benefited by the teachings and leadership of the retiree find themselves passing through transitions of their own.

Those transitions will have great consequences for other individuals. The students who remain at school will be charged, albeit tacitly, with the task of opening their hearts to someone who is entrusted with both teaching and leading them in making music. All of the primary participants in this study have influenced their students to the level that some have chosen to pursue music education as a career. Most have great affection for their former teacher, which, as Mark Hensen noted, is frequently a relationship that nears “family” status. In that “family” metaphor successor teachers are often seen in the role of stepparents, seldom able to live up to the standards of the original. For the students, the practices and traditions developed during their years at



school are sacred, and admired, venerable teachers are part of that tradition. Successor teachers must grapple with student relationships much as any step-parent would endeavor to win the acceptance of a child, but the tolerance of those real parents, and the administrators who evaluate their performance leaves successor educators with an uphill battle, and precious little time to fight it.

Those parents, administrators, school board members, and other civic leaders who will decide the fate of successor teachers are also charged with accepting the transition from the legacy of a retired music educator to the beginnings of a new one for a successor educator. When faced with reactionary students, a successor is frequently faced with declining enrollment in the music program, and some of the students who remain are less motivated. Parental support, which often provides musical ensembles with fundraising and logistical advantages, may follow. As a result, quantitative evidence that may be construed as poorer performance, such as fewer trophies or awards, often surfaces – and many of those leaders who are entrusted with deciding to retain the successor music educator use that evidence in making their decisions. Bill Hedges’ wife, Barbara, noted with some pride about the music program at Belmont City, saying “... that program’s going to continue. It just is.” But she is not speaking just as a spouse who is proud of her husband – she is also speaking as a knowledgeable music educator and administrator who has seen multiple instances where transitions such as these have been both successful and unsuccessful. Her understanding of the necessity for tolerance, guidance and change with the onset of a new music educator gives her a useful ability. Seasoned and understanding administrators should be able to predict the success or failure of a music educator in the light of both the ability of the educator to adapt to the unique traditions and practices of a

school, as well as the ability of the school environment to tolerate certain inevitable changes. Those music educators who pledge to change the least will probably affect change the most by being unable to replicate an identical social environment. No one can replace a legend, or erase a legacy. One can only begin to build new legends, new legacies on the same site, if the old is willing to make way for the new.

Many individuals who have had long-term relationships as co-workers with these retirees have greater concerns about the perpetuation of their programs in the retiree's absence than the retiree does. Rick is confident that he is leaving his program in good hands with Brian, and so it is that Brian is spending sleepless nights, clinging to any words of advice that he can extract from Rick, and hoping that the students will accept his direction. Others at the core of school concerns are those who worry about the sustenance of the arts programs, the maintenance of student engagement, and the potential loss of prestige from not having a "winning" performance program. Colleagues at other schools may refer to the retiree's program as an exemplar of music education, leaving a high bar for the successor to reach. Every traditional challenge, every political roadblock, and every prejudice that a follower to a successful music educator faces decreases the ability of the educator to provide direction and leadership. Those who lay down those obstacles may be well-intentioned, but often provide more interference than support.

Regardless of the size of the immediate community, the retiring music educator has had the potential to influence the musical events that have occurred in that community. In communities such as Belmont City and Warm Springs, where viable financial support cannot exist for professional musical ensembles, the music educator has

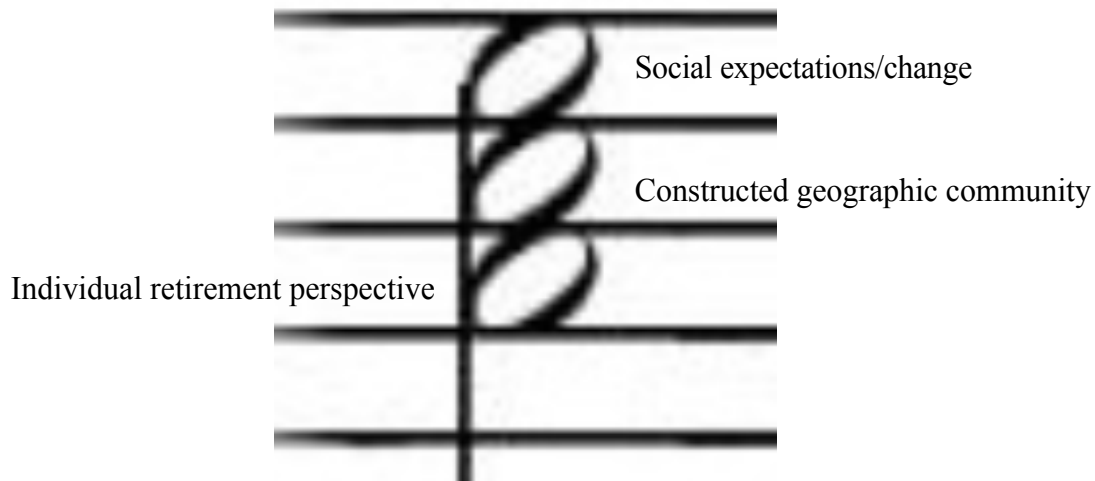
become the arbiter of musical events for that community, and as Mark Hensen has noted, the best of the school groups become recognized as the community's "professional" musical organizations. Chambers of Commerce would refer to this as part of the quality of life issues that make the community "special." It is an asset that can be helpful in convincing individuals and families to locate or remain in the area. And in many cases, the traditions established by music educators have a lure similar to the charming gazebo in the city park, tree-lined streets, or the museum that showcases the history of the area. So it is that the community will continue to look to that educator for advice in most things musical. Both Mike and Mark have experienced this in Belmont City, where Bill is still the "go-to guy" in matters of what to play on the Fourth of July.

The retiree's immediate circle of individuals who are primary stakeholders in their retirement typically begins with family members. As Peter, Rick and Bill have all noted, they are leaving schedules that have required them to devote long hours of work in the evenings, on weekends, and on holidays. It is no coincidence that all three of them are married to spouses that are former music educators. Rick's ill-fated first marriage acts as an example of the difficulty of having a marriage where one partner is incapable of understanding the demands of the position. When examining the closest friends of the retirees it is also no coincidence that they are primarily other music educators in the area. While they and the retiree may harbor the same financial concerns that anyone may have about retirement, they are also best equipped to be supportive of the retiree's concerns about the survival of the program that they built over time, the adjustments to be made by their students, establishing a successful replacement, and leaving behind a legacy that is acceptable to them.

## **A Triadic Construct of Perspectives**

The individual is still the source for the genesis of the retirement experience, but by examining these other primary stakeholders, the impact of that individual's retirement upon the community becomes more evident. Within those different factions are different influences that will change the eventual development of the retiree's legacy.

There is a powerful message in the data that notes the interplay of music educators within their local community. Their acceptance by the community has taken many years, and is structured much as the basic triad of a musical chord:



*Figure 2. A Triad for a musical legacy.*

## **The Individual Retirement Perspective**

Like the root of a musical triad, the perspective of the retiree defines the tone of the rest of the harmonic structure. The actions, attitudes, and aspirations of music educators have driven the evolution of the constructs held by the local towns, such as Belmont City, Warm Springs, and Midville.

All of the participants in this study have developed their own perspectives on how their legacies have evolved. In the case of Rick, he believes that he is part of a much

larger legacy which consists of two influential predecessors, but his actions in developing a program with a tradition of “winning”, and “teamwork” have resulted in a high level of civic pride in a small town searching for ways to make itself stand out from all of the other small towns in the Midwest. He is zealous in his belief that he has been a strong influence in the development of individual students, and there is no shortage of former students to confirm his influence. Warm Springs is a small, rural town, and as a result, many of Rick’s former students do not remain in the area after they leave school, but the intimate feeling of “family” they enjoyed as members of Rick’s band often creates a bond between high school friends that survived many years through reunions, and now is flourishing through social networking websites.

Bill’s perspective on his legacy has a little more focus on the development of the community environment. He too has no shortage of former students who are exemplars of his influence, but the community as a whole holds his contributions as a valuable part of the quality of life in Belmont City. There is no sign on the edge of town touting the triumphs of the music program, but the community has an abundance of musical events to enjoy each year as a result of Bill establishing a tradition of concerts designed for the entire community, not just for the students and their immediate families. Since Belmont City is quite far from a city large enough to support professional musical organizations such as a symphony orchestra, concerts by the school’s bands and choirs are viewed more as community events, and less as events that dutiful parents must attend.

There were few institutional kudos in store for Cindy Swinarski. As a teacher, she has never stayed at one school long enough to establish a significant legacy that is evident to the public. She has, however, stayed in teaching long enough to see the fruits

of her efforts in the successes of her students, and the two most notable students are her own children, Jack and Linda. But her relationship to them has blinded her to their significance as examples of her ability to both teach and inspire others. For all of her misfortunes, she has stood out as an example of perseverance in the face of adversity within her district, but she has not been ignorant of the injustices done to her from antiquated administrative policies, one of which has directly affected her retirement so that she could care for her children when they were newborns.

If it is necessary for one of these individuals to stand out as more unique in their constructed perspectives, Peter Williams should be considered. Peter has very little in the way of artifacts that give evidence to his contributions to music education at the state or federal level. He has little in the way of trophies to place in a display case. But his legacy as a music educator who taught and influenced students in the face of adverse conditions is his great source of satisfaction and is also a great source of inspiration to others. While he has vehemently resisted any references to any racial discrimination he has personally endured, he enthusiastically refers to the awards he has received from local, state and national organizations citing him as an outstanding role model for young African-Americans. While he has been extremely critical of the school system in which he worked for over thirty years, he remains loyal to Southern High School and his former students and colleagues. And while he resents the unfair conditions that he and his students have had to endure over the years, he remains both dedicated to and convinced of the effectiveness of music education in the development of all individuals.

## **The Constructed Geographic Community**

While the retiree brings a set of values, talents, and goals to a community, that community is an established construct long before the retiree begins to exert influences upon it. As a result, communities, in contrast to the actions of their music educators, create a definition of their value to the legacy by their reactions to the educator's efforts. More succinctly, music educators have the power to create community change, and their legacies are dependent upon the effect of those changes.

There can be little doubt that serendipity has only played a small role in determining the "fit" between a retired music educator and the community they have served. There are many commonalities shared by Warm Springs, Belmont City, and Midville, in spite of the differences in their locations, and the size and demographics of their populations. Each community has held out the promise of eager students, regardless of their economic conditions. Every community has civic leaders, and these music educators have all been very adept at cultivating a healthy working relationship with them. More often than not, at least one of those civic leaders has also been part of an even more important facet of the community – the parents who realize that an active and involved arts program will benefit both their children and the community as a whole.

Understanding how these veteran music educators have dealt with adversity from their communities is as important as understanding how they have utilized their resources. Just as these communities share common advantages, they also must deal with common disadvantages. Those eager students that can thrive in a vibrant music program are threatened by peer pressure, apathetic parents, and competing activities. Civic leaders are often prone to seduction by more quantifiable activities for their schools that

guarantee higher scores on standardized tests, and subsequently more financial support. And lack of parental support can range from apathy to suppression for such “frivolous” activities. All three of the communities in this study have had to deal with some sort of economic hardships that have trickled down to the schools. The acid test of these veteran music educators – the tempering aspect of their legacies – has been their ability to persevere and even flourish in spite of the negative constructs of their respective communities.

### **Social Expectations / Change**

Like a well-sounded triadic chord, the fragile balancing act between the musical preferences of the local community, the changes in those preferences brought to that community from new and different cultures, and the educator’s knowledge of music literature requires constant tuning. It is incumbent upon both the retiree and the community to remain flexible to the dominant part of the triad, and remain relevant to the changing social mores that are inevitable in the larger, global community. While our participants in the Midwestern United States may be regarded as “away from the vanguard” of social change, their legacy is in large part constructed by their degree of action (or inaction) to remain relevant to changes in all aspects of cultural relevance. Musically, these retiring music educators have been “working to preserve many time-honored musical traditions,” but none of them have refused to consider new techniques and musics. No doubt some of their former students would wryly observe that many of their attempts to “enhance those traditions with new practices that reflected changes in the culture” resulted in limited success, since the musical culture of the young is as restrictive and inaccessible to older adults as the musical culture of the Afghani tribesmen



is to any German ethnomusicologist. Still, the results of these attempts count. Rick's most current disciple, Jason, pointed out "...that no matter how old or young you are, that the passion for music can still - can be as strong in an 18-year old as in a 50-some year old."

### **Issues and Influences in Transitions**

There is a town near where I live that has an Italian restaurant, and the bread that is baked there has become almost legendary. Eating it is a special experience for me, too. It is very sweet, and the crust is elastic, not brittle, like some Italian bread. The bakers leave the loaves well-dusted with flour, and slicing the bread is almost seen as a crime – it must be pulled apart, with gusto. Whenever I have friends who visit from far away, I almost always recommend we dine at the restaurant, simply for the experience of eating the bread. But I am always disappointed with their reactions. They like the bread, but for those who love it, this is not enough. They don't relish the quality of the bread as I do.

One day, the owner of the restaurant, after years of urgings, agreed to have the recipe for his bread published in the local newspaper. His "secret recipe" was nothing special, no exotic flour, no special pans or ovens. And yet no one came forward with loaves of bread just like it. The owner had given exact instructions on how to bake his famous bread, and yet for some reason, it tasted different, felt different, looked different. Where does the difference come from? The same difference that changes the food we taste can be found in the art that we see, and the music that we hear. Those communities fortunate enough to have a flourishing music program in their schools have their own special recipe for engagement, motivation, and aesthetics. Many communities share common ingredients for their programs, but the outcome is never exactly identical. The

students may be given the best instruments, the finest practice and performance rooms, and the music educator may employ the best techniques known for training musicians, but the personal relationship between the music educator and the musical stakeholders gives every community its own unique psychoacoustical fingerprint. The Tomatis Effect, cited by Leeds (2001) offers a somewhat more specific explanation of the psychoacoustic aspects of music, noting that “hearing is passive; listening is active” and comparing the comprehension of sound by humans as similar to the difference between “looking and seeing (p.260).” The active involvement in listening means that a parent will hear music played by a daughter or son differently than someone who has no communal attachment to the musicians. Our ears welcome music from friends and family, and the loss of a long-time educator to retirement means that community members listening to the results of a new music educator may “hear” a choir concert, but are highly unlikely to “listen” to it with the same active ears that listened to a concert when that educator’s well-known predecessor was conducting. The predecessor was not only the conductor, he was also the treasurer for the Kiwanis club; she was the choir director at the Episcopal Church, his son played on the championship team in Little League. These are the inaudible flavors in the musical mix that change the way we listen to music.

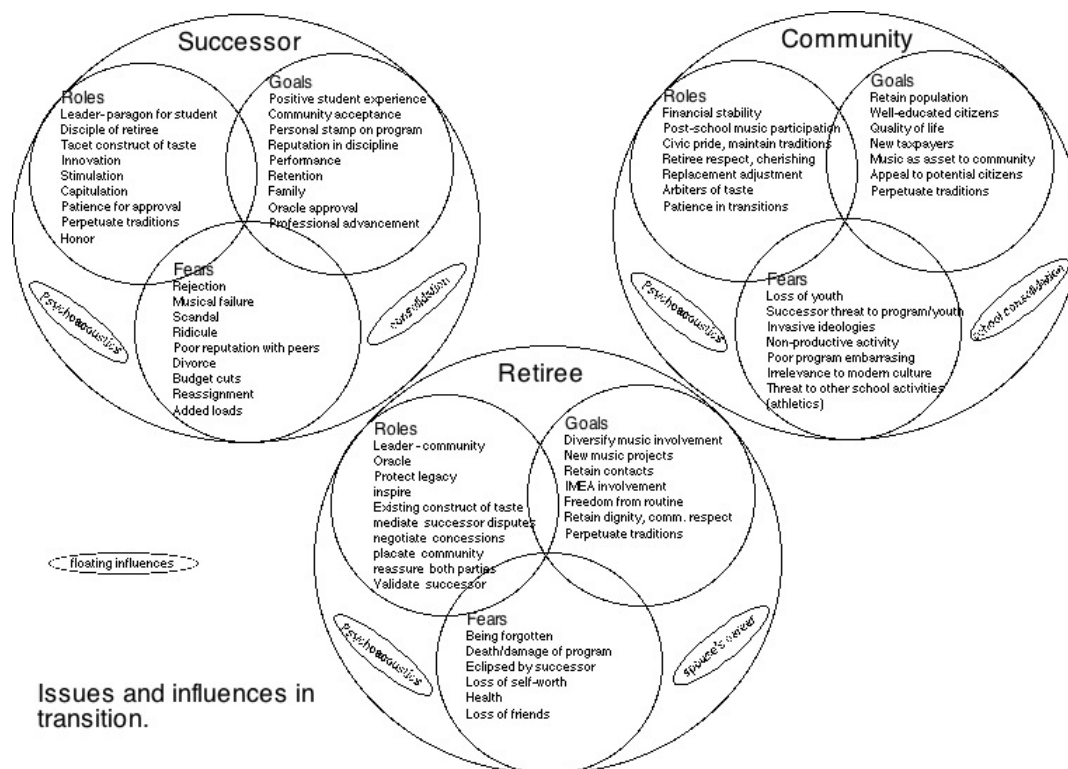


Figure 3. Issues and influences in transition.

For a music education program in transition, there is an understandable desire by many of the individuals who have been involved in that program to keep the “recipe” for that program the same. But just as our restaurant has a unique way of baking bread, the recipe for any musical program will change once the ingredient of the director has been substituted. The successor brings along a different definition of the roles of the position, the goals to be accomplished, and the concerns that surround the pursuit of those goals. Most established music educators are aware of the necessity to assume a leadership role for the students. They realize that the retiree’s legacy has made it necessary for them to avoid challenging most of the traditions that are in place at the institution. But most music educators believe that they can and must remain innovative in order to, as Rick’s successor, Brian noted, “keep it fresh”. Those roles are the necessary ingredients to

accomplish their goals of creating a positive student experience, acceptance by the community, performance of meaningful music, and their own eventual legacy.

While the roles of the community may at times seem to be in juxtaposition to those of the successor, many of them are common roles. Acting in leadership roles of responsibility to students, cherishing of traditions, and honoring the retiree are common to both. In addition, the community supports the transitional process by encouraging musical participation after public school, through civic groups, offers financial stability whenever possible, and hopefully can embrace the successor's new ideas. Most communities pursue these roles with similar goals in mind, including the physical growth of the town, striving for a well-educated population, and maintaining a musical climate as an asset to the community's appeal to potential citizens.

One of the most unique aspects of the roles of the retiree in these issues is the influential power that the retiree can wield over the transitional process. A cooperative retiree has the ability to act as a cultural intermediary between many of the hidebound traditions of the community and the eventual changes that a successor will bring. Acting in the role of a community leader as well as an educational one, the retiree's endorsement of a successor is critical for achieving the goal of a more diverse and innovative music program. Many in the community may view the retiree as an oracle, capable of foretelling great accomplishments to come within the program. From the aspect of self-development, the retiree may find the role of inspiring successors through a difficult transition a part of building their own legacy.

## **Stress for Successors**

In this study, three of the four primary participants have had variable degrees of involvement in the transitional process, and the results of those processes are directly connected. Bill Hedges spent several months gradually introducing Mike, his successor to his students by gradually relinquishing authority over various events, such as concerts, parades and summer band camp to him. His intent was to demonstrate to the students that he had confidence in Mike, but he gradually eroded Mike's authority and credibility by making frequent re-appearances during rehearsals at the high school. Many students continued to regard Bill as the "ultimate authority", and Mike's credibility was frequently called into question when Bill, attempting to help, offered advice and suggestions to students that contradicted him. When Mike was offered an opportunity to gracefully resign, he reluctantly left. Mike's replacement, Mark Hensen, has freely admitted that he believes that he is the beneficiary of this process, and that Bill will be less of a presence at Belmont City High School in the future.

When Peter Williams left his position, he was lauded by his community, but ignored by his administrators in the search for a replacement. For that reason, he has felt less invested in the future of his program, which has been in decline for several years along with the rest of the school. His replacement, Cindy, did not seek help from him, and Peter was reluctant to interfere, resulting in Cindy's quick removal from the position. Her replacement, Jeff Steele, has found Peter to be accessible without being invasive, wise without being meddling. While Southern High School is struggling to reorganize, Jeff and the other music educators at the school remain determined to reorganize their program as well.

There is one person directly involved in this study who must worry that he will suffer the same fate as Mike or Cindy. Like them, Brian is trying to “follow a legend”, but unlike them, Brian is a known commodity to the community he is serving. Rick Ransom selected him as his successor ten years before his retirement, and during that time Brian has been working with all of the students who are now under his direction. Most of them were his students at Fernville Junior High, and so the parents who are active in the support group are familiar with his ways. But there are expectations at Warm Springs High School that are not as prevalent as in Southern High School, or Belmont City – the band is expected to bring home trophies, to “beat” the other schools much as the football team is expected to march to victory on the gridiron. While Rick, in his waning days became less enthusiastic about such competition, the community still demands success, and Brian will no doubt be held to account if trophies fail to be won.

### **Community Concerns**

Communities have certain fears to contend with as they grapple with transitions such as this. Many of them are contending with socioeconomic issues that threaten to destroy the very institution in which these music programs exist through school closures. Legislated demands to accommodate other socially relevant programs for the community are placing a greater strain on school budgets, making it more difficult for a smaller population to maintain those programs. And as their populations continue to drop, they are threatened with the loss of their most valuable asset – those young people that have lived with the experience of their legendary music educators. Many of these communities must battle frequently with community members who dispute the value of an education in the arts. Others fear that the loss of prestige from losing a well-known

educator will cause their prestige as a community to suffer, and others fear the erosion of prestige in other activities, such as athletics.

Mark Hensen's observation about Belmont City is cogent when assessing the concerns about music education to a community. He noted that the high school wind ensemble is given "professional" status by many. It is a claim that could be applied to many small towns in many parts of the United States where professional musical groups are unable to support themselves. Community members attend concerts by the school ensembles not just in the roles of parents, but also as supporters and appreciators of the music the ensembles create. It is very much in line with the other concept that many small towns embrace of the local school serving as the center of most community activities. For that reason, the departure of a cherished music director and educator is viewed as a loss for many of the activities in the town, for many of its residents. Benign acceptance of a successor is highly unlikely – high levels of skepticism are predictable, and equally high levels of frustration when "things aren't the way they used to be" is almost inevitable.

### **From Anticipation to Recapitulation to Retirement**

It is significant to note that three of the four primary participants in this study have demonstrated a marked change in their views on retirement as they have gone through the process, and that there are some notable commonalities that they all share. Each participant has approached retirement with some trepidation about being financially capable of living comfortably on a pension, and each has become extremely satisfied with their income. All of them share the same basic opinion of the Teacher's Retirement System (TRS) – that as active teachers they ignored it, and grudgingly paid into it – and

now they are delighted that they were required to do so. They have discovered other benefits that are seldom touted in public about their retirement conditions, such as that they will pay no state income tax on their pensions, and that their health benefits are still available.

With financial worries at a minimum, these retired music educators are enjoying their new freedoms by engaging in other ways to make music. In addition to playing his trombone professionally, Rick is repairing musical instruments at the local music shop, and makes sure the musicians in the local orchestra are properly set up for their rehearsals and performances. Once forced to endure the anxiety of being critiqued by contest judges, he is now judging contests himself. Bill has been given a position as a student teacher supervisor with one of the local universities, and works at a music shop that competes with Rick's. Bill's "alumni band" consists of his former students who are still playing the saxophone, or the trumpet, or the flute well into middle age and beyond. It is unlikely that an "alumni football team" would have such long-term success, and would probably result in many more injured knees than Rick's band causes injured lips. And Peter continues to play his saxophone professionally, teaches privately, and is acting out his boyhood fantasy of driving a "motor coach" – quite often, with a full load of young musicians.

There was a fear among some of the participants that leaving their position would cut off access to colleagues, especially those in music education. Bill's efforts to develop the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association have been successful at the outset by providing a venue for retirees to gather and preserve old acquaintances, but retirees have been having *de facto* reunions for many years by attending the many contests and



festivals held throughout the state. The last stanza of the Celtic song “The Last Rose of Summer” suggests that without our old friendships, we should soon follow our comrades into the afterlife, for, as the last line notes, “who would inhabit this bleak world alone?” As these participants have passed through the process, they have all realized that retirement, for them, will certainly not be bleak.

### **Learning from Legacies: Creating a Conclusive Coda**

The experiences of the primary participants in this study have shown that it is difficult to “follow a legend.” Eventually legends are always followed, but the first person to make the attempt follows in the largest shadow. Rick, Bill and Peter have all witnessed the process, both as successors many years ago and now as the departing legends. What they have witnessed and given testimony to in this study provides some insight to the transitional process.

### **Music is a Communal Activity**

It is more visible in smaller towns, but any musical endeavors in any social environment are contingent upon community support. For some, it is a matter of participating as a performer, for others it is one of supporting those performers as listeners and benefactors. If creating music is to remain a part of the community it must be deeply immersed in the other activities that are germane to that community. Rick, Peter and Bill have all been involved in service organizations such as the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis. They have spent a great deal of time networking with local officials, and as a result have a high degree of understanding about the unique nature of their town. There are plenty of citizens in those communities that are equally well informed, and they were made aware of the academic, musical and organizational qualities needed to nourish

the music programs in the schools by those educators. It has been through efforts such as these that communities such as Belmont City and Warm Springs are proud to tout the achievements of their musical youth as much as their youthful athletes.

The legacies that have been left by these music educators extends to another, more discipline-oriented community. The community of musicians that has been nurtured by organizations such as the Illinois Music Educators Association allows students and educators to gather together for music-making at special festivals throughout the state. Ideas are shared, new friends are found, and powerful musical experiences create lasting impressions on parents, their children and the educators who have nurtured those experiences.

The communal aspect of music-making presents a community-wide level of interest in all things seen as central to the well-being of a musical organization. Those who have a passion for protecting the function of the organization feel justified in exercising some degree of input in most major decisions regarding the functioning of the group. Issues that may seem petty to some, such as the planning of extended trips for the ensemble become hotly debated. The design for new band uniforms may become the fashion debate of the day. And should the primary leader of the ensemble choose to leave, those most passionate about the ensemble will eventually get involved, in either the selection process or the ensuing critiques, of the successor. In the case of Warm Springs, the process was so gradual that those who consider themselves stakeholders in the process had a decade to form an opinion about Rick's successor, Brian. In the case of Bill Hedges, the school administration made a concerted effort to involve parents, other

teachers, and Bill in the process of searching for Mike. But in Peter's case, no input was permitted from outside of the school district's administration.

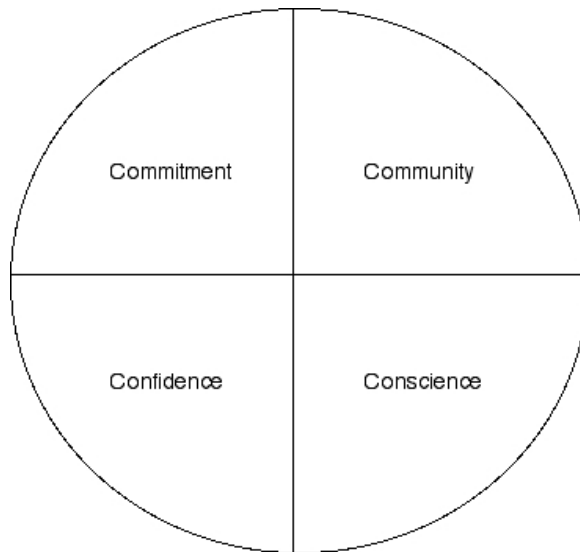
The data culled from Peter, Rick and Bill, coupled with community reactions to their respective successors, gives strong testimony to the need for a retiring music educator to take a proactive role in the transition from Nabob to novice. While a decade may be excessive in planning such a transition, a four-year span that allows all of the students involved in the transition to become acquainted with the successor would likely be as effective. Given the considerable amount of contact time that music educators have with their students, both students and parents require a considerable amount of time to develop a bond of trust with the educator.

The tendency of retiring music educators to take a proactive role in searching for their replacements is directly correlated to their desire to perpetuate both the programs and the legacies they have established. Peter Williams left his position with fond farewells and memories from his students and their parents (some of whom had been his students as well), but laments that he was unable to protect the programs that he had worked so hard to preserve. Rick is supremely confident that Brian will be accepted in his old position. And Bill has learned that there is a point at which the transition must end, that the probationary must go on without any more involvement from the patriarch. Ultimately, each of these veterans has concluded that their legacies will survive as long as their names are used in reference to the past – not as plans for the future.

### **Constructing a Legacy**

Exploring the actions of any aspect of change for individuals requires multiple opportunities for the researcher to witness the effects of those changes. The individuals

involved in this study, both the primary and the supporting participants, have willingly, and in many cases, proactively offered their most intimate thoughts on a transitional part of their lives, often enduring the pain of revealing regrets, but more often sharing the joy of caring for their students. The music educators involved in this study have demonstrated several learned qualities that have come from their lengthy experiences – qualities that developed regardless of their educational background. They are products of the communities in which they worked – creations shaped by the needs and strengths of their students.



*Figure 4. Commonalities to legacial qualities*

All of the participants in this study have retired, or are retiring from an official position dedicated to the teaching of music, but none of them are abandoning their sense of *commitment* to music education as an integral part of schooling. Bill demonstrated it when he spoke of his observations on brain activity during a superintendent’s conference in Phoenix. Cindy summarized it succinctly by saying “Music is a ‘forever’.” Rick has learned that “Trophies don’t become very important. Kids become important.” And Peter

remembers when one of his parents pointed out that “Mr. Williams, our kid has had this problem all of his educational life... and it took the band director to straighten it out... the band director.”

In all of our conversations, the participants varied in their opinions of the future of music education in trying economic times, but they all hold a strong feeling of *confidence* that their communities will remain committed to providing music education to their children. They are confident that their communities will continue to invest in the redefined role of music in the schools to include adult activities. They confidently believe that their former students will take a stand at school board meetings, hold public office, and take up the role of educator so that music education will endure.

The *confidence* that music education has been a vital part of their *community* has been a major factor in the retiree’s desire to stay a member of that community. Their sense of community keeps them committed to the well-being of the school and its music program, both from the pedagogical standpoint as well as the artistic value their work has had for the community.

It is that confidence of the results of their work in the community that requires more commitment from the retiree’s *conscience*. It is the same conscience that wills them to continue using their talents both as a teacher and as a leader for children and adults, and it is the same conscience that has resulted in their ability to enter retirement without guilt.

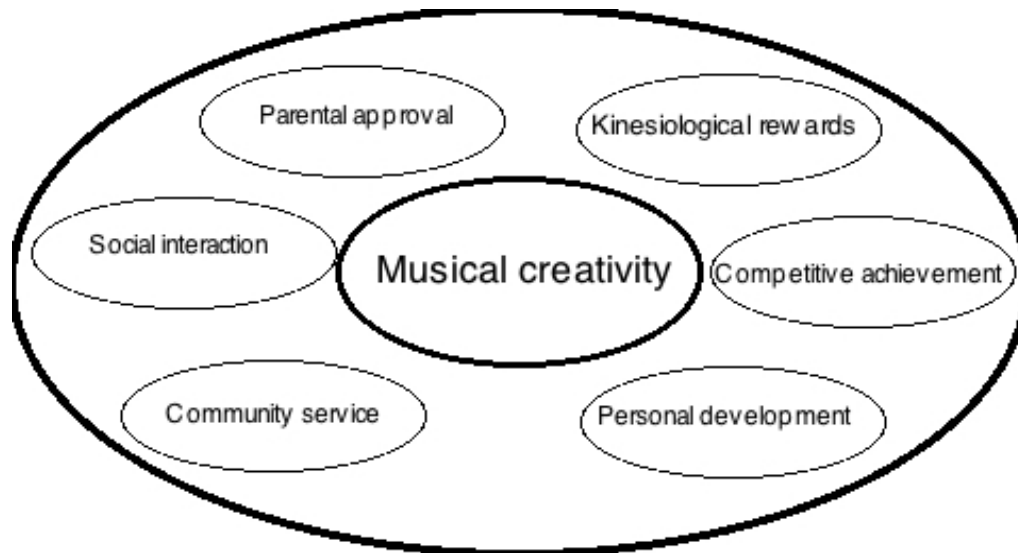
### **Trials of Triangulation**

During an interview with Jeff Steele, Peter Williams’ successor at Southern High School, he asked, “These teachers you’re studying – do they consider themselves

legacies?” Such a question is a reminder that there are multiple perspectives to be considered when weighing the impact of a music educator on the eve of retirement. Data gathered in this study, using the words of the music educators themselves to describe their experiences, along with the corroborative data that has been gleaned from those who have been closely associated with them, including family members, colleagues and students, suggests that most retiring music educators do believe that they are leaving behind some sort of legacy. But priorities vary, and the basis for those beliefs are often anchored in different harbors. Students often see their former teachers as mentors, friends, and masters of their art, with eyes that cannot see the frailties that plague their heroes. Parents, jaded by tales of teacher indifference and incompetence, often see these teachers as anomalies, a property exclusive to their community, someone who has no equal at any other school. Communities, especially those in small towns, see the legacy in terms of the “town band director” of years past, someone to be both revered and appreciated, a sort of living artifact in music. And other music educators, especially those in their first or second year of teaching often marvel at the sheer magnitude of their accomplishments.

It is more difficult to paint an accurate picture of the true self-vision of a music educator’s legacy, in part due to the expectations placed upon the educator by society. Peter, Rick, Bill and Cindy all have the belief that they have placed “kids first”, but each has found a different way to describe the essential elements for that placement. The diagram below illustrates common experiential elements that all of the participants in this study, both primary and supportive, have included when they have spoken of the

memorable events that they have witnessed in their relationship with the music educators in this study. They are not prioritized elements, with the exception of musical creativity.

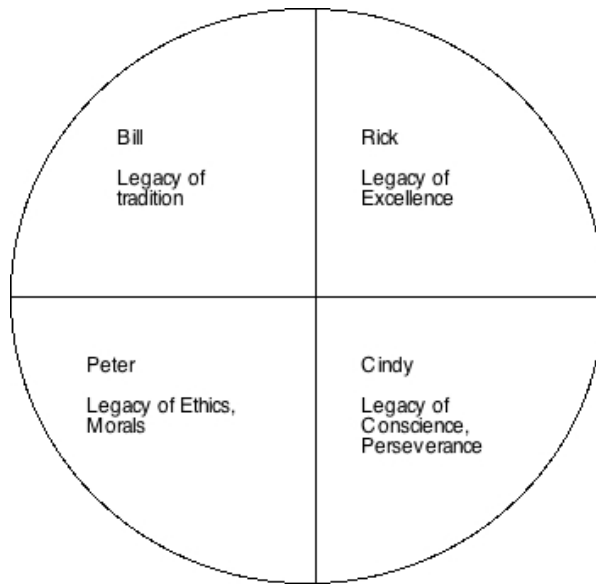


*Figure 5.* Experiential elements common to music educators

While finding commonalities between the four primary participants in this study is extremely valuable, those commonalities only reveal part of the nexus that builds each legacy. Every music educator balances these experiential elements in order to satisfy the demands placed on them from their employers. They must bureaucratically answer to administrators, who in turn are responsible for enacting policies that have technically been mandated by school boards, who ostensibly reflect the priorities of the community. Ultimately, the legacy of a retiring music educator is contingent upon satisfying the entire community through a balance of the experiential elements mentioned in Figure 3.

There is no recommendation for an ideal balance of experiential elements to be found as a result of this study. Each primary participant has left a legacy that is built on these elements, but in all cases, some elements have surfaced more frequently or more

forcefully than others. In the diagram below, there is a “beta-legacy” ascribed to each of the primary participants, based on the particular elements that have dominated their work.



*Figure 6.* Examples of beta-legacies

It should not be construed that each participant is inferior in any of these attributes to the other. Instead, the participant linked with each legacy has made that legacy primarily on that quality. For example, Bill’s legacy is steeped in tradition, having been only the second band director for the town in fifty years, but he also has a reputation for excellent performances by his students. Peter, who is worshiped in part by his community as a role model for African-American youth, was also part of a tradition of long-serving directors. But the primary qualification each participant has to lay claim to their title is the one quality that most made their legacy possible.

### **Idealism as a Tradition**

Jeff Steele observed that music educators are more intimately involved in the development of students because, as he put it, “we get ‘em for four.” Pat Dow, the



hostess of Peter's retirement party, noted that she worked with Peter as a band parent for seven years while her children were in his band, and Jason Turner noted that his mother had done the same in Warm Springs. Jason's director, Rick, mentioned during one of his interviews that there were adults participating in his parent's organization that had seen their last son or daughter graduate years before, but they continue to volunteer their services. During Bill's rehearsal for Memorial Day, one of his former students pointed out that he had conducted the band at her graduation, and that he had also conducted the band at her daughter's ceremony.

Reputations can be made or lost in fleeting moments. Legacies require extensive periods of time to build. As music educators approach retirement, they may be able to alter or create new reputations, but their legacy is more durable. Bill Hedges has multiple reputations – for being a perfectionist, as a father-figure, a good conductor, and a lover of cafeteria cookies. But his legacy stands on his ability to have maintained his reputations over time, and fulfilling the experiential elements that were already ingrained into the community at Belmont City, going back to at least 1959. Bill has held those traditions inviolable. During one of our meetings, Bill reported that one of our colleagues, a music educator in a town nearby, had been fired after three years. “He didn't realize that his private life isn't private” said Bill, meaning that the students and the community have an expectation for a music educator, especially one who leads the students in public performances, to maintain a reputation for conduct befitting the social mores of the community. For Bill, his beta-legacy of carrying on the traditions of his predecessor, Fred Franklin, included conduct that fit well in Belmont City – formal concerts with some informal chat, ice cream socials, alumni bands. As noted in “a memorable memorial

day”, Belmont City is a heartwarming example of “the community that plays together, stays together.” Bill took one small step that tested his legacy by moving to another town, in order to make Barbara’s commute to work easier. But Bill cannot pull himself away from Belmont City – he still shows up for breakfast with Fred at the local café, still shops at the local grocery, still waves at all of his old friends from his pickup truck.

### **Leaving the Field of Battle**

Both Peter, “The Warrior”, and Cindy, “The Disappointed” have worked in an urban school district with considerably more challenges to music educators. Cindy’s assessment of their treatment as “we’re nothing but underfoot, dirtiness,” is never argued by any of the participants in this study, either primary or supportive.

Has “fighting the good fight” meant more to Peter than to Cindy? His success in the poorest, most crime-ridden high school in Midville came at a high price. Vacations were rare, family time even more so. The accolades that Rick and Bill have garnered over the years, the trophies and plaques that have lined their walls, are missing from Southern. To maintain his legacy of ethics and of moral commitment, Peter turned down offers to move to other schools - “safer”, more “competitive” schools, schools that would have given him those rewards. In the days leading up to his retirement, the school district did nothing to honor his service. Instead, Peter celebrated his victories, as he put it, “one student at a time.” In the final days leading up to his retirement he was honored by local African-American groups, band parents, the local media, and his friends. His former students are honoring him the most in the work that they do, some in music, most as productive members of the community they are trying to nourish.

The state Teachers Retirement System has had the final say in shaping Peter's legacy. He was not ready to retire, but was called to it by the system. There were more battles left in him, and a good soldier stays on the field until the battle is over. As a result, he must live with some guilt at times. His legacy of strong ethics is also his burden.

Since their retirement, Bill and Rick have found themselves called back to the field multiple times. Bill has found a new mission in helping to train practice teachers in the field, while maintaining his network of contacts with other music educators in the state through the Music Educator's Association. He has found a new interest in education by attending seminars with his wife, Barbara on school administration, which he admits has shown him a different perspective on how music education programs can best be run. And he has worked hard to offer his former students the opportunity to make music as adults.

Rick has found great satisfaction in the number of offers he has had to remain active in music. He has been able to combine his woodworking hobby with his passion for music by repairing stringed instruments at the local music shop, and his expertise at concert management is being exploited by the local symphony orchestra. But Rick has been so successful at his new position that he has finally been pushed to the point where he has chosen to turn down a promotion to the position of Artistic Manager.

When they told me what my duties would be I was flattered – they said they had been very happy with what I had done. And while I was flattered, I finally realized that this would have been too much. So I told 'em, "I've slain my dragons, rescued my princesses, and taken home my trophies. It's time for me to do other things – things that I want to do, not necessarily in music, even! I'm plenty busy as it is with this job, and I love working with these folks, but I don't need to make that kind of commitment again.

## **Conscience Fosters Persistence**

The lens that brings the legacy of the Cindy, “The Disappointed” into plain sight is more panoramic than that of the other primary participants of this study. Until she was named the Director of Bands at Southern she had been employed as an itinerant teacher, moving from school to school as needs dictated. She seldom had the same students for more than one or two years, usually for one or two periods per week, which is a fraction of the time that the rest of the participants had with their charges. Ironically, of all the participants only Cindy has children that have gone on to careers in music. While Cindy needs to continue teaching to reach a full retirement pension, she is still convinced that she is making a difference in schools where most of the students live below the poverty level. In some ways, she and Jeff, her successor at Southern, are alike, since they both think at times that no other music educators would want their jobs. It is persistence, not desperation, which convinces her that she is making a difference. Occasionally, she is kept going by a supportive word from a student, a colleague, even an administrator like Jeanette, but she knows that her opportunity to build a successful music program has passed her by.

Cindy will go on teaching, and although she may say she is “counting the days” she will really not notice how quickly the time will go by before she will finally retire. When that time comes, she will persistently move from one classroom to the next. That classroom may be located in a parochial school in Midville, or in one of the small studios at the local music store. No matter where she teaches, she will be teaching without the entanglements that have frustrated her for the past few decades.

It is worth reinforcing that Cindy is the only participant in this study who has had a child go into music as a career. The fact that both of her children have chosen that path adds to the significance. It is an example of the social trade-off that has occurred between her and the other participants, who are all male. Society has expected women like Cindy to be the primary caregivers to their children. While Rick and Bill and Peter were given freer social approval to spend inordinate amounts of time building their programs, Cindy was expected to attend PTA meetings, do housework, manage accounts, and other domestic chores, often depriving her of the time necessary to be “competitive” in this field. Alternately, her male counterparts were expected to sacrifice family issues in favor of their positions, and Bill, Rick and Peter were at some time all held to account by their spouses for this. The long-term effect of Cindy’s musical “home schooling” of her children in music has resulted in Cindy’s true legacy as a music educator.

### **The Most Important Contest**

By the end of his career, Rick Ransom was almost contemptuous of the marching band contests that had established his legacy. Without the trophies, banners, cheering crowds and other honors that accompanied those contests, he would be unknown as a music educator in the state, seldom recognized at stores and restaurants in Warm Springs. Instead, he is admired statewide for his program, he has a large number of students-turned-music educators to his credit, and he has to leave town in order to enjoy a quiet meal at a restaurant. In our meetings, he consistently noted that he would not miss the stress and competitive nature of marching band. In his final years at Warm Springs, he instituted a series of cross-discipline studies in the arts.

The hubbub associated with Rick's fame in Warm Springs often blinds most of that community to the most important contest that Rick has won, and it has only been in the past few years that he has come to understand it himself. When he accepted his position, Rick was a firm believer in the pedagogical rewards of competitive marching bands. While he had never been involved in them himself as a high school student, he had been a passionate football player, and his coach had been his idol. Only the horrendous tragedy of his coach murdering his wife destroyed his image of what he wanted to be – a high school football coach – but the tragedy did not destroy his indoctrination that competition on the field “builds character.”

It has taken many years for Rick to free himself of his obsession for competition with his marching band. In its place has been a growing understanding of the transformative nature of making music, alone and with others, and his love for presenting music within the larger aesthetic quilt of literature and the visual arts. By turning to music as an inspirer instead of a “winner,” Rick entered the contest for shaping the characters of his students, and accepted the responsibility of being their role model. To paraphrase his student, Jason Turner, he inspired them to be the persons that they truly are. He became an educator who believed in excellence in performance, but not for the sake of “winning” trophies. For the reinvented Rick, “winning” is in the performing, the understanding, the sharing and cherishing of the music.

### **Challenges to Future Legacies: Inheriting the Wind Ensemble**

It has been shown in this study that the music educators who are replacing the primary participants often face significant resistance from most parties with a stake in the success of the programs in their schools. At the ground level of this resistance, the

students can be cruel and unsympathetic to the replacements, choosing to dismiss their approaches as inferior to their predecessors, and usually finding fault with anything that challenges their concepts of “tradition”. As a result, the initial task of the new music educator is to win over the vast majority of the students they are charged to care for. Even the music educator who makes no effort to instigate change will achieve it simply by being a different face at the podium.

Parents, who frequently consider themselves equal stakeholders with their children during these transitions, are capable of causing great damage to the transitional phase for a new music educator. If traditional expectations of “winning”, or performing at the usual venues are not continued, they are quick to interpret that as a sign that the new person is not the equal to the legend. But no one is. Like habits, which can only be changed by creating new habits, legends can only be replaced by creating new legends.

Parents, students, community members who expect the “inheritors of the wind ensemble” to completely emulate their predecessors are doomed to disappointment. Eventually, the wind will blow in a different direction, the bows will flow faster or slower, the drums will beat at a different tempo. Those charged with being the executors of that inheritance will be disappointed in the inheritor, and that disappointment will frequently cost the successor their position, as happened with Mike Gordon and Cindy Swinarski. But history has shown in this study that the inheritance can be spent wisely. Bill Hedges succeeded Fred Franklin by holding his predecessor close to his side as well as his heart, making sure that he publicly approved of all of Bill’s work. Rick Ransom took over a successful program by promising to maintain the tradition of a winning marching band, but over time invested his inheritance in a more global program in music

for his students. It remains to be seen if Brian Thompson, who has taken over from Rick, will face such daunting odds, but data from the participants in this study indicate that he may have been given the proper preparation to deal with his inheritance. He is not a new face to the students or the parents -they have seen his face on the podium and standing next to Rick's for over a decade. Thanks to his close relationship with Rick, he represents the closest option to the community to keeping Rick himself. Even Brian, however, will pay a price for his inheritance. In addition to being wary of violating too many traditions, he will have to continue the "winning ways" of the Warm Springs High School Band. Few programs like the one in Warm Springs are capable of planning so far in advance, and even fewer are fortunate enough to recruit a successor willing to wait for ten years to inherit the wind ensemble. Rick, who is a very close friend of Brian, is confident that Brian will succeed, but is worried about the cost it may have on Brian's personal life. He does not want his friend to sacrifice his marriage, a cost that Rick sees as his price for his success.

It is ill-advised to state with too much certainty that Mike Gordon would not have survived his first year at Belmont City. His acceptance of his graduate assistantship came one month before he would have been under consideration for contract renewal. Again, data from the participants indicates that there were "grumblings" within the student body, faculty, administrators and community about some of the changes he had made, and those changes were happening while his predecessor, Bill Hedges was watching – too closely at times, for Mike's comfort. Instead, the future of Belmont City's music program will lie in the hands of Mark Hensen, who has the dual advantages of learning from Mike's



attempts at change, while representing a voice from the past by being one of Bill's former students.

Cindy's fate as an inheritor is far more graphic, more inarguable. When she became Peter's successor at Southern High School, the imposing authority figure of a powerful African-American male with a strong reputation for hard work and discipline at a predominantly black school was replaced by a white female who had seldom worked with students in high school. In addition, Cindy was not well-liked by the new administrators at Southern, who had had no input in her hiring. Faced with a growing level of violence and lack of discipline, Cindy was forced to abandon her hopes of leading a high school program. The administration quickly replaced her with a second-year teacher in the hope that a male teacher will be able to restore discipline to the program, but Jeff Steele has practically no students left. If he is allowed to stay, there must be changes, but at least those changes will be made easier by there being no more students (and parents) from Peter's era by the fall.

In our last meeting, Mike Gordon was only half-joking when he suggested "it would be really fun to get with Bill and Fred Franklin and anyone around and give a clinic on 'This is how you can do a transition'." It is a missing part of the music education curriculum in academia. Most veteran teachers, when faced with giving novice music educators advice, will simply offer "never follow a legend." But someone must follow, someone must take the risks, lead the changes. Many of the warning signs, the successful strategies, the hopeful situations are to be found within the body of this study.

## **Challenges to the Community**

The primary participants in this study all learned, at an early stage in their careers, that community involvement in their programs was an integral part of their position. A converse corollary has evolved from this study that indicates that small communities tend to hold a larger stake in the success of the music programs. Larger communities, such as Midville, have professional arts groups such as symphonies, ballets, and opera companies, and as such place them on the top of their lists as treasured arts institutions. Mark Hensen's observance that, in his time as a student at Belmont City, "the band was kind of seen as a professional entity" is accurate, given that it is rare for a community of 7,000 to have organizations like those in Midville. The people that live in these communities, often a considerable distance from cities with professional organizations, cherish the music that is made by members of their community, regardless of their ages. Both Rick and Bill have recognized this in their communities, and have become involved in groups that allow older individuals to contribute to that cherishing as well. In doing so, they have found another opportunity to continue making music after they have retired. Those communities that take advantage of resources such as Rick and Bill will be all the richer for their retirement, regardless of whether or not they have professional performing groups in their town.

Peter's community experience existed primarily on a neighborhood level within Midville. He was fortunate to receive a great deal of community support for his programs within the neighborhood, and African-American organizations frequently cited his efforts as a role model for his students, who were almost all black. In spite of deteriorating conditions, Southern High School has been and remains a major school in

the state in athletics, and the visibility of the band at football and basketball games has allowed it to remain “useful” to the school.

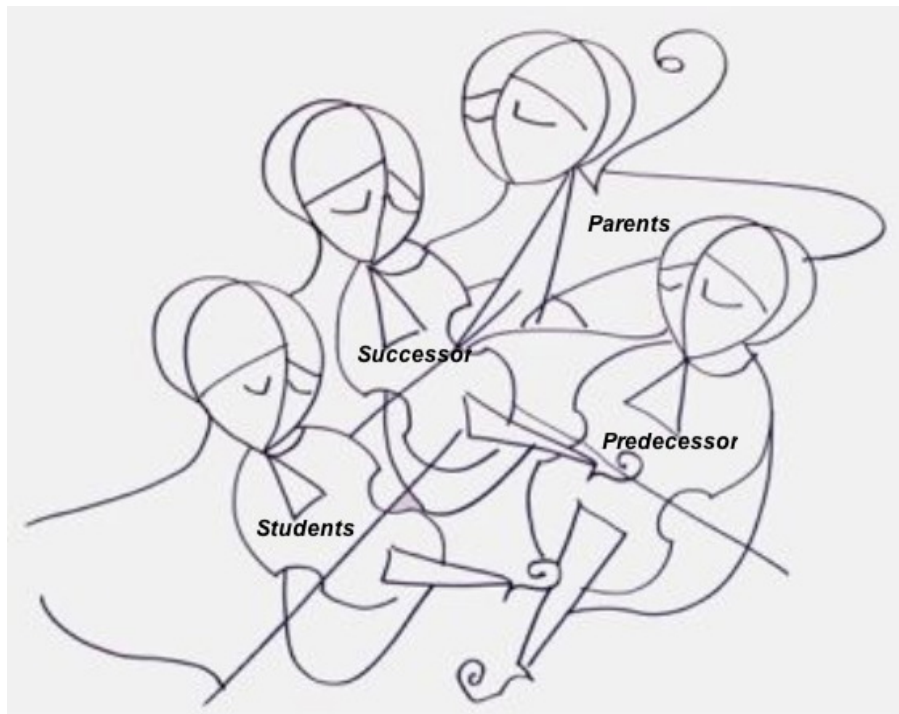
### **Building New Legends**

Secondary school music educators seldom have a typical “summer break”. Like their athletic counterparts, they are preparing for a fall of competitions, concerts and festivals almost as soon as the spring commencement exercises have concluded. They must prepare precision drill routines, give lessons, march in parades, and most importantly, practice. Most band directors hold “band camps”, with at least a week of intense practice to get a head start on the season.

All of the participants in this study are aware of the importance of these events in getting a head start on transitioning from a retiring music educator to a successor. It is to their credit that all of retirees in this study have spent considerable time after their official retirement to shepherd their ensembles into that transition. The established protocol, in most cases is to gradually relinquish authority to the successor. In order for that authority to be valid, however, it must be accepted by the students and their parents – and they will only accept it with the explicit endorsement of the predecessor.

Bill Hedges and Rick Ransom owe a significant part of their successes as music educators to their predecessors. Their own transitions are examples of a delicate balance between the successes of the past and the promises of the future. They, along with Peter, have worked hard to make these transitions. But the balance is not formulaic. Too much involvement undermines the authority of the successor, too little undermines their credibility. Constant visibility by the predecessor can imply insecurity, total invisibility can imply disapproval. These are actions that everyone in the community sees, everyone

knows. It cannot be scripted, because the actors do not know their lines. Like good music making, there must be some improvisation. Just as the dialogue between voices in an ensemble relies on good timing and balance, the balance between the predecessor, the successor, the students, the parents must be proper to benefit the community.



*Figure 7. A Successful ensemble for transition. (Vardi, 2008)*

It is too soon to tell if Rick has played his part properly. The interplay is not yet finished, only the third movement is starting. He and his successor, Brian, must improvise on the amount of contact that Rick has, as Bill had noted after one concert that he attended, practicing the art of “walking that fine line of being there, but not being there.” They cannot follow a script, because the audience of students, parents and community has changed much in three decades. But they know, and they love the

performers in this ensemble. Brian may not yet have a legacy, but he does have a reputation, and it is a sound foundation for his legacy to come.

Bill will be getting another chance to play his part, now that Mark Hensen is back in Belmont City. Mark's part is similar to Mike Gordon's, but they will be improvising on a slightly different theme. Bill is now more experienced at walking his "fine line", and more preoccupied with his new duties with student teachers. And Mark is bringing his reputation as a good leader to the ensemble.

Peter may be taking his final bow in playing his part in the transition at Southern High School. He has walked that same fine line that Bill and Rick have trod, never hesitating to respond to requests for guest appearances, but staying away from the daily schedule of the school. Despite his efforts, the differences between Peter and Cindy were far too contrasting. The school district is hoping that Jeff is a closer match to the legend, but his two years of teaching leaves him desperately short of experience. Peter's part has not yet ended, but he is hoping that his part will soon have more rests.

There is little hope that Cindy will be able to give a bravura performance in her transitional setting. The Midville School district has "used up" their pool of veteran music educators. There is an alarming gap between music educators who began teaching twenty years ago and those who began teaching ten years ago, or even five years ago. This gap is the result, at least in part, of the district's decision in the 1980s to discontinue instrumental music programs in the middle schools (Vroman, 1994). There were many music educators "pink-slipped", and since then the district has frequently and routinely laid off first and second – year music educators at the end of an academic year. There has been a constant rotation of beginning teachers in many positions. Each year the

district loses more experienced music educators, leaving precious few that can serve as mentors.

Cindy is one of the last mentors available for music educators in the Midville School District, along with Jeff's colleague at Southern, the orchestra director, Max Schroeder. Their lasting contribution to the schools can only be to encourage new music educators to be persistent, to keep teaching in the district, to believe that they can make a difference there, instead of moving on to more comfortable positions. When Cindy leaves, she will celebrate her freedom, but mourn for the students in Midville.

### **The Most Influential Person in my Life**

Every participant in this study has affected the lives of their students. The depth of that effect varies from one individual to another, but all of the participants have impacted some students enough so that those students might use clichés such as “he made me what I am today,” or “she taught me everything I know about music.” It is a heartwarming benefit of being a music educator as well as being a heavy responsibility. In our discussions, Bill, Rick and Peter all were placed in positions where they felt subjectively obligated to tell a student that they should not pursue a career in music education. More often, they felt obligated to tell their best and brightest that a career in music is very difficult, deprives the person of a great deal of family time, and is highly competitive. Still, they have all launched students into those careers. They have all sent students to my university, where I have watched some of them fail, but most of them do well. None of these students who have failed has ever placed blame on their failures at their feet, but all of those who have succeeded credit their high school music educators for making their successes possible.

Those who go on to be music educators, like Mark Hensen, strive to maintain standards that would make their mentors, like Rick, proud. He is already setting the stage for his tenure at Belmont City, participating in Memorial Day, the Sweet Corn Festival, the Ice Cream Social. In addition to moving to town, he's getting married this summer. He will buy a nice house, where his neighbors will probably sit near the front row whenever the band gives a concert in the park. There will be mornings when he has breakfast with Bill and Fred down at the Side Track Café. And thirty years later, he may find himself standing alongside Bill, receiving a plaque at the Eightieth Annual Symphonic Band concert.

Jason Turner, one of Rick's last protégées, will be studying at Rick's alma mater in the fall. He has been told by Rick of the hard work ahead of him, told to look ahead, and to limit his contact with his old high school friends. Both Rick and Jason will have a hard time limiting their contact with the Marching Mohawks, but both realize that it is time to move on.

Peter's last four years at Southern produced no students who are continuing on in music. His most recent success was with a private saxophone student who is pursuing a career in performance. Whenever he gives a recital, or performs a concerto at his university, Peter makes the 150-mile trip to hear him play. He also made a 300-mile trip to Missouri last year, to watch one of his last Southern students graduate with a music degree.

Cindy has taught two highly successful musicians who are also music educators. They are her two children, Jack and Linda. Jack studied voice at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and then studied at the Manhattan School, and Linda studied

horn at both Central University and then in Michigan. Now they are both music educators as well, Jack teaching in New York and Linda teaching at a nearby college. They are highly qualified by way of their academic achievements, but they both claim that their greatest qualification comes from their mother.

### **Money Talks, but Passion Makes Music**

The results of this study demonstrate that there was little need to study the fiscal concerns that music educators might have upon entering retirement. The simple conclusion that “the system works” is only challenged by Cindy, who abandoned the system in mid-career, and is paying her penalty by teaching for a few more years. The other primary participants are, at the very least, satisfied with their retirement income, and Rick is overwhelmed with it. All of the participants are pleased with the benign sort of function that the Teachers Retirement serves – until the time has come to use it. This compares favorably with *Coda* (Solomonson, 2002), in which music educators in higher education frequently remarked “I should have done it sooner” (p. 47).

Unlike *Coda*, however, none of the participants in this study indicated that they thought they should have retired sooner. In the case of Cindy, the explanation is financial, but in the cases of Rick, Peter, and Bill, they would have continued teaching much longer if the Teacher Retirement System would have made it worthwhile. Music educators, by and large, are socially drawn to other music educators and musicians. Every participant in this study is part of a close network, made closer by spending many hours practicing and performing together in ensembles outside of their academic work. Like all teachers, they said their good-byes at farewell parties, received their plaques and their citations, and listened to testimony from fellow teachers and



former students. For the most part, however, their network of colleagues will remain the same as long as they are still active musicians – the camaraderie of playing together can last for decades to come. Three out of the four primary participants have started playing in the Southern Wind Ensemble, and Bill is playing in a similar ensemble in his located at the junior college in his area. In both ensembles, there are former students playing alongside their former teachers. While their lifestyle has or will change from less time being spent in public school buildings, it will not change in terms of their steadfast friends and their passion for making music.

### **Family Bonds and Bands**

A consistent pattern of improved family relations has emerged from the data gathered for this study. While all of the spouses of the retiring participants were willing to joke about their spouses “being underfoot”, they are sincere when they say that they are looking forward to spending more time with them. The new freedoms from the confines of the school calendar, for all of them, are very liberating. Two of the participants, Bill and Rick, have suffered some depression over the realization that their positions have deprived them of years of interaction with their children, but are looking forward to making up for lost time. Rick has his son nearby, at college. Bill’s daughter teaches nearby, and plays clarinet for him in his alumni band, and Bill is hoping that his connections can help his son get a job in the music business. Peter and Wendy are celebrating a new life of no tuition payments for Emily and David. When they perform together in the Midville Municipal Band, Wendy is in the front row, Peter in row three, and Emily is right behind him. And Cindy has her daughter playing by her side, a son-in-

law in the back row, and a granddaughter in the audience who will probably be sitting there someday as well.

The four primary participants of this study have presented four different ways of creating a legacy, and they will spend their retirement years in four different ways, as well. But the commonalities are significant. They all will continue to work at their “trade”, which is making and teaching music. And they are surprisingly non-discriminatory about where they might practice their art. Cindy expects to return to the parochial schools, has started teaching as an adjunct instructor at a nearby college, and is playing in an orchestra. Rick has been playing in dance bands and concert bands, while Bill is already caring for music education student teachers, and he’s playing his euphonium wherever he can. Peter is still playing in the Midville Municipal Band, the Southern Wind Ensemble, and a jazz band, and teaches privately. All of them are playing in these ensembles with their spouses, except for Cindy, who is in a relationship with another hornist who often plays by her side.

At the onset of this study, there was no intent to find only healthy participants, but all of these individuals are enjoying good health. Cindy is the oldest, at 62, while Peter will soon turn 60, and Rick and Bill are in their mid 50s. It is unlikely that they will suffer any major health problems for some time. But they frequently attend funerals for their former colleagues, reminding them that eventually they will see retirement through a different lens. The longitudinal observations for the fortunes of the participants are quite good, but also quite predictable. But predicting a good life is a privilege that should not be reserved for clairvoyants or palm readers.

The age of musical legacies in music education is not over. There are more legacies being created in small towns where parades and county fairs are still a major event. They are forming in large cities where families see their children's education as more than a ticket to the executive suite. They are making music close to home, with their friends, their families, and their colleagues. The cycle will continue much as it has for over a century. It has survived the invasion of home entertainment technology, from the phonograph to the iPod, because it is a shared experience, experiencing music as it is being made, where it is being made, with friends and colleagues. Like the aroma of baking bread, the music is sweetest in its own house, and it is sweetest to those who live there.

There will be new legacies formed, in large cities and small towns, where affluence abounds and where "hard times" are a fact of life. Many students will continue to find a special quality in making music in their school environment that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Some will make it their life's work, and wind up being another legend, creating another legacy. When they retire, other students will praise them, emulate them, grieve over their leaving, and condemn their replacements. The cycle will continue as long as the tradition of community music-making survives. If we only examine the changes in technology in our lives, it becomes puzzling why it does. If we examine the close relationships that are created by making music together, the puzzle becomes a revelation.

## **Epilogue**

### **Giving Old Dogs New Faith**

The primary participants in this study have not segued into silence. Nowhere is their continued presence in music education more evident, now nearly ten months after this study began, than at the Illinois Music Educators Association State Conference in Peoria. For the last three days I have had multiple encounters with all four of the primary participants, and a similar amount of contact with most of the secondary participants. For some retired music educators, attendance at the conference could be seen as “a matter of habit.” For the primary participants in this study, the conference is more a “matter of justification.” Each came with tasks to perform, new ideas to share, newer ideas to learn. If they, and their retired colleagues were not in attendance, the conference would have lacked the wealth of their experiences, the strength of their leadership, and the foundation of their legacies.

On the last day of the conference, those participants were joined by approximately 1200 other music educators, of which at least 128 were also retired, roughly 1000 of the finest high school musicians in the state, and now, at the grand finale concert, they were joined by more than 6500 parents, grandparents, siblings and other well-wishers. Most of the organizational officers of the IMEA, from the President through most of the Board of Directors, have spent their careers working with these participants, and like Bill Hedges, a former president and this year’s recipient of the IMEA’s “Distinguished Service Award”, many of them have retired in the past year or will be retiring next year.

Most, if not all of these retired, or soon-to-be retired music educators will be back in Peoria next year for the conference. Just as this year, they will be serving on

committees, giving presentations, conducting concerts, holding auditions, getting music to students, passing out programs. They will watch as younger teachers, still needing continuing education credits, scurry from clinic to clinic. But these educators keep coming back to IMEA for other reasons, as well. Many still have an emotional investment in the students who will be performing, many who were recently under their charge. Others also have commercial interests, such as Bill Hedges and Rick Ransom, who were stationed at the exhibitor's booths of two of the largest music stores in the state. The most compelling explanation for their presence, however, and the presence of most retired music educators at the conference is that it offers them an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, reassure them in their beliefs that they can still contribute, and restore their faith in school music programs.

### **Playing for Perspective**

As the first clinics and sessions of the conference were getting underway, 38 music educators, myself included, were meeting to prepare to audition the student musicians who would be performing in the bands and orchestras. After the auditions had begun, Craig McPherson, the director of the Southern Wind Ensemble, popped into the room in which I was hearing tuba students. "I'm so glad I found you!" he said. I'm short a tuba player for my clinic tomorrow – would you be willing to fill in?" The opportunity for interacting with some of the primary participants in this study was enough incentive to volunteer for his session, called "The Inside Story: A Composer's Perspective on his Music".

It was not too surprising that when I arrived at the rehearsal, two of the study's primary participants had also been recruited to play. The vacancy I was filling was

located next to Rick Ransom, and as I sat down he was warming up his trombone.

“Suckered in again, eh?” he grinned. “Nothing else to do on a Friday morning,” I replied, “except listen to your boss’s bad jokes in the exhibit hall.” Two rows in front of us was Peter Williams, and his spouse, Wendy was up in the front row. Peter’s successor, Jeff Steele, was playing in the trumpet section, and Rick’s wife, Sue Shockly, was busy getting extra parts passed out. Rick’s successor, Brian Thompson, was in the row in front of us. I had not seen him for a few months, and his appearance was disturbing. Brian is in his late thirties, but his dark brown hair has now been overwhelmed by streaks of gray. Both Rick and Brian have been large men, but now as they stood next to each other Brian seemed gaunt, and his clothes hung limply from his frame. His stooped posture made him seem much shorter than the person I had talked with eight months ago. Shortly after he took over Rick’s position, Brian and his wife separated, and now they are in the final stages of a divorce. The strain of both transitions has clearly taken its toll. Rick, who suffered the same fate when he became the director at Warm Springs High School, had been very concerned about this in his interview, and now his only comment was “I’m just surprised that it took this long.”

I had an opportunity to talk with Brian after the rehearsal, and he mentioned, as he put it that “my wife is trying to get a divorce.” After this seminar, he is taking a leave of absence from the ensemble, hoping to devote more time to his family. We talked for a while about the demands of his new position, and he admitted that the increased demand on his time at school had been a crucial issue with his wife. At this point Brian is hoping that by giving up his passions for making music, he can still devote enough time to his teaching and also to his family, but his hangdog appearance and depressed state seemed

to offer little hope. When I asked him how he felt he was doing at school, he was almost wistful, saying that the transition had gone smoothly. While there have been setbacks, such as lower placements in contests, and fewer trophies for the display case, it appears that the community, and most importantly the students, have faith in him. There are more students than ever in the music program, and Brian having been the junior high school teacher has perhaps allowed that bond to transfer to the high school level, softening the trauma of losing Rick. Still, the toll that the transition has taken on Brian's family has been a high one. It was difficult to observe someone who had been so vibrant and is now so burdened.

Brian freely admits that he misses Rick at the school. But Rick has held steadfast in his resolution to not "meddle" in the music program. In our earlier interview Rick had mentioned that his predecessor had stayed away for over a year, even though he, like Rick, continued to live within a few miles of the campus. Rick did set foot on the property last fall, however, when he decided to come to a football game and watch the band, just as a spectator in the stands.

I finally relented and went to a football game, and I couldn't believe the attention I was getting. When I went to the ticket booth, the lady said "Your money's no good here! You'll never have to pay to get in!" You know, it really made me feel good, but also a little guilty – I mean, these people have been so great to me, and I feel like I should be thanking them for having such a great time teaching there.

I resisted the urge to ask Rick if this was a sign that he had some regrets about retiring when he did. Our interviews had discussed his reasons, and given his new multiple "careers", Rick is showing no signs of regret, only signs of regeneration. He continues to council Brian, but only at a distance. While we were getting ready to play, he gave Brian advice on how to run his "pep band" for the basketball games at school.

“Let ‘em wear anything they want.” he said, “they know the routine, and they won’t mess up.” I thought back to the student who arrived for graduation dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, and how Rick had sent him home, saying “You were specifically told not to wear shorts! Go Home! You get an “F” for the class!” Apparently, Rick’s concept of wardrobe discipline in the students has mellowed with retirement.

Peter had come to the conference early on Thursday morning, even before I had arrived to serve as an adjudicator. The music parents group of his old school run a coat-check service as a fund-raiser, and Peter still stops by to make sure things are running smoothly. Peter and Wendy have spent most of the conference visiting exhibits, and as Peter sat down he eased slowly into his chair, carefully positioning his aching back after hours of standing.

It has been a long day for everyone at the conference. By the time our rehearsal was over, most of the opening ceremonies and concerts had ended, the student musicians had had their first rehearsal with their new colleagues, and curfew should have had all of them in for the night.

The following day was the fullest of the three days of the conference. As a representative of my university, I was stationed at our exhibit at the beginning of the morning. One of our first visitors was Cindy Swinarski. I asked about her retirement status. “One more year – that is, if I can stand it,” she said. I had heard that her school might be closing, and asked if she knew what would be happening. “They’ll probably send me to some other school,” she said. “I’ve got tenure, so they’ll probably bump some younger teacher – I don’t know where I’ll be going.” While her dispassionate reply about being relocated was saddening, her next remark was even more disheartening – “What’s it



matter? The kids don't care who shows up, anyway." While it is disheartening, the tone of her voice implied resolution. Cindy may feel under-appreciated, but she is not under-dedicated. No matter where she will be teaching, she will be truly teaching.

Cindy was going to attend the presentation on "The Inside Story", so we walked together to the hall. Almost all of the musicians were there, many scrambling to find music stands, most of which had somehow disappeared during the night. After a few minutes more stands appeared, courtesy of another teacher next door who had just presented his school's jazz band in a performance. Rick, as usual, was placing stands in front of players, hoping to have everyone ready to play by the appointed time. There were many college students in the audience, and as the presentation began I noticed that one of my students won the drawing for a free score and set of parts to one of the Craig McPherson's compositions.

As the presentation began, the musicians in the group were asked to play several compositions by Craig, who is a well-known composer of music for high-school age students. Each piece was preceded by a discussion on the level of difficulty, and the various challenges for individual instruments. For the Craig, this was his final concert before retiring to serve as an editor for a major music publisher, which has allowed him access to new music and the ability to be one of the first to evaluate that music during presentations such as these. He had clearly been touched by the farewells that he had endured as the presentation began, and I noticed that most of the musicians who were wishing him well in his retirement were retired music educators themselves, including Rick and Peter.

After the finale, there was considerable confusion as Rick went through the stage, picking out the stands that had been borrowed. I looked for Brian, but he had already left, and later we discovered that he had left the conference permanently to go home. Rick and his wife, Sue, joined Peter and Wendy, and we all headed out the door of the hall. They take time for lunch these days.

### **Prideful and Prejudiced Educators**

When I returned to my universities' exhibit booth, I saw Bill Hedges' successor at Belmont City, Mark Hensen, standing there. "Remember me?" he asked, while we were shaking hands, "I'm the new Bill Hedges at Belmont City!" Bill, who had been stationed at an exhibit across the aisle, came over, laughing. With Mark's visit, I had been given the opportunity to hear from all but one of the successors to the primary participants in this study. Seeing his arm around Mark's shoulder, it is clear that Bill is proud of his former student. We discussed how his students have embraced Mark's teaching, and that having Mike Gordon as a teacher for a brief time had probably been a great advantage to his transition. As his wedding day approaches, Mark's excitement about his position and his personal life is in strong contrast to both Peter Williams' successor, Jeff Steele, and Rick Ransom's successor, Brian Thompson. Bill's excitement about Mark's success is also in contrast to his contemporaries, Rick and Peter, who have had to witness the misfortunes of their successors.

Before he left, I asked Bill if Barbara, his wife, had come along. Barbara has always attended the conference, but this time had to leave a day early, coming down only to see Bill receive the IMEA's coveted "Distinguished Service Award". Bill reminded

me that he enjoys going with Barbara to her conferences as well, but admitted that her impending retirement will make his retirement more “complete”.

Bill and I talked at length about the future of his organization, the Illinois Retired Music Educators Association. This year the conference presented several sessions for those preparing for retirement, but it was the usual discussions of how to prepare financially. “I’m still not seeing a lot of teachers who appear to be emotionally ready for this.” he said, “and while I think the financial part is important, I really think that we could get a lot more retired teachers to stay involved. There’s just so much talent there – so many that could help out.”

We could have talked longer, but the exhibit hall was closing, and both of us were responsible for packing up our materials and heading for the arena, where the students were preparing for the first concert of the day. We had roughly an hour to finish loading our respective vans, and then for the first time in many years Bill found himself blended into the audience as a spectator. There are over 12,000 seats available in the arena where the concerts are held, but the area behind the performers is seldom used, and so I found a seat very far away from the crowd in order to document the proceedings of the day.

There is always a great deal of ceremony at these performances, as the outgoing president makes a speech, and introduces the new president. Before each ensemble performs, there are introductions for the organizing chair for each ensemble. This year I note that most of them are also giving their final speeches, because they will be retiring soon, and the outgoing president has announced that he will be retiring next May as well. While most of the guest conductors are either professional conductors with symphony orchestras or university professors, when the chair of the All-State Band gives her

speech, she notes that the guest conductor is a retired music educator who had an outstanding music program within the state. There is gray hair to be found on most of the podiums.

The first three performances of the day featured the All-State Band, Chorus and Orchestra. The second concert featured the Honors Band, Chorus and Orchestra, and those students were chosen by the auditioners as the “best of the best”. There is an hour between the two concerts, allowing most of the participants (and the audience) of the first concert to leave and a new group of performers and audience members to enter. It was during that time that Bill and I were able to sneak in the back way, Bill going to an area near the Executive Box (where he had sat for many years), while I headed for the most remote area of the arena.

From my vantage point, I had a close and unobstructed view of the students that I had auditioned, who are almost always stationed in the back row. There are eight tubists in the band, two in the orchestra. As the audience continued to flow into the arena, the band players seemed to be focusing on arranging their music, checking their mutes, and searching the seats for friends and relatives. Occasionally one player would say a word or two to their neighbor, but for the most part there were few signs of new friendships being forged. In the orchestra, the two players were chatting like old friends. I noted that six of the eight tubists in the band were from the Chicago area, and the other two were from university towns in Central Illinois. In contrast, the two orchestra players live far from Chicago. The principal player is from a small town in Central Illinois, and the second player is from a small city near St. Louis. I had also auditioned the euphoniums for the band, and only one of those players lived outside of the Chicago area.

I was not the only spectator who had chosen to observe the concert from the “wrong” side of the arena. There were several music educators scattered throughout the section of seats, including the teacher of the principal tuba of the orchestra, who are just a few years away from retirement. He was sitting with his assistant, who, as Brian Thompson was for Rick Ransom, has already been designated as his successor. As I waved to him he smiled, pointed at his tuba student, and gave an understanding “thumbs up”. Just behind him was another retired music educator from the northern part of the state, and one who had been a teacher in Central Illinois, near Peoria. It reminded me of Bill Hedges remark of how retired music educators deal with “being there, but not being there.”

The current president of the Illinois Music Educators Association began the program with a welcoming speech, which included a moment for a university professor to sing the National Anthem – presumably to avoid any “political” issues as to which student ensemble would perform it. As the president made his final remarks, he said “I would like to ask that all of the music educators in the audience to please stand so that we can all thank them for their work on your children’s behalf.” As the audience began to applaud, I watched as most of the teachers sprang to their feet, but saw one of the retired music educators near me hesitate before finally rising. I started to scan as much of the rest of the audience as I could, searching for other retired educators, to see if they too still saw themselves as their students will always see them. The applause could never have lasted long enough to count them all.

Once the concert got under way, the performances themselves seemed routine. Two days of rehearsal with hundreds of students trying to adjust to one another is taxing

for everyone involved, but the energy level of the students appeared high, fueled perhaps by the adrenaline of making music with so many other good musicians.

The final group to perform was the honors orchestra, and the conductor had chosen to perform one work – Respighi’s “The Pines of Rome”, an excellent choice to display a lot of virtuosity from players in many different parts of the ensemble. The first part, the “Pines of the Villa Borghese” depicts children playing, but these “children” in the orchestra have grown up. The horns, twice as many as in a standard orchestra, sounded brilliant, the strings were full. The second part, the “Pines Near a Catacomb”, calls for a trumpet to play off-stage, and the player had been positioned far into the rear seats of the arena. His playing was extremely beautiful, but the most beautiful solo of the piece is perhaps reserved for the clarinet in the “Pines of the Janiculum”, which was played by a student who one can only hope will become a professional player, given the beauty of his work. The solo is supposed to begin as softly as possible, and the quiet that filled the hall proved that the thousands of audience members had become listeners. As the piece segued into the “Pines of the Appian Way”, many of the “back row” players began to stir for the finale. The tubists had placed their instruments back in their laps, the trombonists were flexing their slide muscles, the horns were clearing their crooks – and all of the brass players were silently blowing air into their instruments. While they were preparing, there were quiet solos by the Bass Clarinet and the English Horn, and the audience remained quiet, truly listening to the performance. “The Pines of Rome” has frequently been humorously called “the world’s longest crescendo”, and with each entry of more musicians, especially the brass, the volume became greater. Just as Respighi had tried to provide the impression of a great Roman army entering the city, the finale

provided an appropriate, and perhaps nobler, comparison to the great army of musicians gathered for this performance.

Standing ovations at concerts such as these is expected, but this standing ovation was also earned, and as such the applause was overwhelming. Crowds cheer at sporting events, roar at political rallies, scream at rock concerts – but embedded within the applause for this performance were tears, embraces, waves, kisses, and of course smiling faces. Many of the musicians seemed to stand at their chairs, stunned that their performance could have such an effect on so many people. Others shook hands with their stand-partners, some hugged them, with tears in their eyes. Many of the musicians seemed to be searching for signs of their parents, and some were waving, probably not knowing exactly where their parents were, but knowing that they were there. There were tears from the teachers in my section, too.

The unpleasant duty of quieting the crowd fell to the president, who reminded the audience that there was a hockey game scheduled in the arena later that evening, and that the finale must go on. As the outgoing president, his final duty would be to conduct the choir, band and orchestra in a combined performance of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”. Because of the large area, each ensemble watched their own conductor as they, in turn watched the president. It is unlikely that many in the audience were not stirred by this performance, but probably for different reasons. Many were no doubt stirred by patriotism, others by the concept that hundreds of high school students could come together from the entire state to make music. Regardless of their feelings, few in the audience could deny that music education had been responsible for a remarkable experience.

The arena has lots of exits, but only one large atrium lobby where the parents had been told to meet their musicians. Some families had been reunited, but many were still waiting, as their sons and daughters said their “good-byes” to new friends, or stayed behind long enough to be congratulated by their teachers. Few seemed to be in a hurry to leave the arena, as if going outside meant closing the door on the experience. As I was leaving, I noticed the principal tubist in the orchestra walking down the hall, searching for his parents. I complimented him on his performance, and he seemed surprised that I had come to the concert, just as many of his colleagues had seemed surprised at the applause that had followed their performance. After a few moments his parents came along, and after a few minutes of congratulations, they headed for home.

Of the primary participants of this study, only Bill had remained for the final concert – When Peter was leaving the exhibit hall, he had said “My feet hurt too much! Besides, I don’t have any students left here anyway.” Rick, who for many years had coordinated the equipment for the concerts, had passed that duty on to someone else, and Cindy had gone home early, with no one left to cheer for. But next year she will be back at the convention, as will the rest of the participants.

Few of the parents and students that left the arena that afternoon without a different perspective on the value of music education in experiential learning. And perhaps a few of them took away a greater perspective on the value of their teachers in music education. Many of these students will pursue a career in music education, not only due to this experience, but also due to the person or persons that made the experience possible. It is also one of the reasons that retired music educators keep coming back to these conferences. Bill Hedges has a firm belief that the underutilized talents of his



retired colleagues should be exploited for the betterment of music education as a discipline. He is substantiating his belief by serving as a mentor to student teachers, doing guest clinics, and continuing to play music with other community members. All of the primary participants in this study are making similar contributions, and they do it without reservation – indeed they do it without hesitation. They have, as Bill Hedges has said, all walked that fine line of “being there, but not being there”, as the new blood of music educators take up the tasks. None of them believes that they have not earned the accolades and advantages they are enjoying in their new lives, but they are all grateful that they were given the privilege of having a career teaching and making music.

### **Having the experience without missing the meaning**

During the course of this study, the primary participants have consistently expressed an interest in learning about the results. Few were interested in re-reading the transcripts of their interviews, but they were curious to discover how their experiences impacted emerging issues, such as the value exchange between music educators and the community-at-large in which they served. In the process of reviewing these materials, the participants also revealed particular issues that were closer to their hearts than others.

The most meticulous inspector of his own material was Peter Williams, and we spent a considerable amount of time discussing how his last year at Southern was different from that of his other colleagues in the study. When I visited him, he was well on his way to fulfilling his promise made during our first interview - the restoration of his grandmother’s 1960 Buick. When I arrived at Peter’s home, the newly-rebuilt engine was lying on the floor in the center of the garage, and the dashboard was on his work bench. Peter was wearing overalls, and was pouring over service manuals.

Peter's grandmother passed away a few months ago, at age 104, without getting "one last ride" in her beloved Buick. In our earlier interview, Peter had noted that some of his friends advised against restoring the car, saying, as Peter noted, that it was "like polishing a turd." But there are restored parts all over the garage, looking good as new, the body is at the shop getting a new paint job, and Peter has put his naysayers behind him. It is much like his own career. Peter was advised to take his expertise and move to "higher ground", where he could leave the challenges of a school in decline and chaos behind him. But he held steadfast, continuing to nurture and encourage his students, his program, and his community in the face of those who thought it a lost cause. Having had some time since he had participated in his interviews, Peter noted that reading the material now brought back memories of his journey into retirement, bad as well as good. "I've told you this before, and I still have nightmares sometime about some of the things that happened while I was teaching," he said. "They just won't go away, I guess. But at least they're just nightmares and not the real thing!" But for the most part, Peter's memories are part of what make his retirement worthwhile. For him, the ties that emerged with the greater community have made his accomplishments that much more significant. Now Peter is curious about the possible impact that this study may make on other music educators. He hopes that the study will convince more of his colleagues to fear retirement less, and embrace the opportunities it affords. He said "One of my old students – a French horn player – he's a millionaire now, and he's been taking care of our financial stuff. That's the easy part!"

### **Sharing the experience, making the meaning**

When I called Rick Ransom to check on his progress in looking over his contributions to the study, our connection seemed faulty at first, but soon it cleared up when I heard Rick say “hold up a minute!” There was a short pause, and then Rick said “sorry, I’m giving an seventh-grader a trumpet lesson.” I apologized for interrupting, and we set up a time to talk later at his house.

By the time I arrived, the seventh-grader was gone, but Rick’s den still had a music stand in the middle of the floor, and a few trumpet tunes lying on the coffee table, right next to his copy of the study. “So, was I supposed to find mistakes, too? I didn’t find any misspellings,” he joked. But Rick wasn’t joking when he made his comments. “I didn’t know that I could enjoy reading a dissertation.” He said. “This was really a joy to read.” For Rick, the issue of community values was no surprise, and he had found great worth in the complexities of relationships between music educators and those closest to them. Most of our time was spent talking about Brian, his successor, who is still going through a divorce. “I just hope that the divorce is final before the study is made public” he said. “Brian needs to put this behind him.” He noted that he and some other colleagues had just taken Brian out for a “night on the town”, trying to cheer him up, and that he is slowly beginning to adjust.

Rick’s wife, Sue Shockly, was sitting in the kitchen as we talked. As a participant in the study, she is also aware of the significance of Brian’s divorce to the study, especially in the brighter light of being Rick’s second spouse. For her, the meaning is clear – it’s easier when both partners are also partners in making and teaching music.

Rick is adjusting to his new role quite quickly. Unlike Bill, who lamented about “being there, but not being there,” Rick is happy to have contact with his old students, fellow teachers, and even Royce, his former principal – but never back at the school. He continues to teach, but only at home, or at the music shop where he works part time. He and Sue are both retired now, but their teaching and their music-making goes on. For Rick, the big question about the study is “what now?” He is convinced that many current music educators who read the study will modify their approach to entering retirement, and that many will be better prepared to continue doing what they do best – making music, be it in solitude or with the best of friends.

### **Understanding the experience, choosing the meaning**

Peter may have been the most meticulous inspector of this study, but Bill Hedges was perhaps the most conscientious. I made a date to visit with him just before he was to attend a meeting of the chairs of the special interest areas of the IMEA. We met at the hotel in a room next to the location of the meeting, and we started with worries that Bill had emailed me about that seemed to be limited to technical issues – for example, I had accidentally claimed that his daughter, Susan, plays the clarinet, not the flute, and now she is a special education teacher. Bill had concerns about some of the remarks his wife had made. They were accurate, but perhaps too candid about her opinions of other colleagues. They had both reviewed the material and jointly came up with some suggestions. None of their concerns were unjustified. Perhaps his, and Barbara’s most valuable input came from their opinions about how some of the issues, especially that of his post-retirement involvement at the high school, had been interpreted. “I don’t

necessarily agree with all of your conclusions,” he said, “but I respect that they are your interpretations, and that’s fine with me.”

Bill, too is asking the question “what now?” As the chair of the Retired Music Educators, he is anxious for the study to be useful to them. He is eager for a follow-up study to compliment *Segue*, about successor teachers. And he is satisfied that his accomplishments have been instrumental in aiding the development of the issues in the study.

### **Living the experience through the meaning**

After Cindy had had some time to review her contributions to the study, I dropped by her home to listen to her comments. As she opened the door, she was both beaming and tears were on her cheeks. “You should be very proud of what you’ve written here,” she said, not using her “teacher’s voice.” “This is really good.” For Cindy, the most resonant part of the study was the encouragement from her co-participants that there is nothing to fear about “leaving the battle” – and as a result she is making plans to announce her retirement before the next school year begins. Aiding in her decision is the fact that the school she has been teaching in is now scheduled to be closed, and Cindy has decided that the uncertainty of moving to another school is no longer worth the trouble. She will leave full-time teaching, but she, like the other participants, will continue to teach.

Cindy is not as bitter about teaching as she was before the study began. As we talked, her granddaughter toddled back and forth between us, and her toys were scattered across the floor. I made a gentle joke about her angst when she heard that her daughter was going to have a baby without health insurance. “Well, it all worked out, didn’t it?”

she said, smiling. “She’s my angel.” There have been many disappointments for Cindy during her career, but her participation in the study has been mutually productive – through her reflections, she has found a more profound way to value her contributions to music education. She has no trophies, no plaques, and few old friends who were either parents of students or students themselves, but she has made a lot of music, and will make much more. And, of course she has made musicians by raising son Jack and daughter Linda, and their work is enhancing her own legacy.

I had spent one last comfortable afternoon with Cindy in her living room, listening to her muse on the potential uses for the study, and how it had been a factor in her choice to retire. As I glanced at the pictures on the wall of Linda and Jack, the black-and-white photo of her husband, and watched her holding her granddaughter, I no longer saw any signs of “the disappointed.” Instead, I saw satisfaction, solace, and serenity.

As was stated at the outset of the study, musicians are different from those who are different. For many who see them at work, making music often does sound like it is too much fun, too rewarding. The rewards have been earned through commitment, caring, and compassion for their students. Cindy, Bill, Peter and Rick have experienced all of the emotions that making music with students can provide – the good and the bad – and each has emerged with their own unique legacy to show for it.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questions For Students

Questions for Interviews for *Segue* – for students

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

- *What are some of the reasons you've been participating in band?*
- *Are most of your friends in band?*
- *When did you decide that you wanted to be in band?*
- *What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ will be doing after he retires?*
- *If you had to describe the experience you've had playing in band with \_\_\_\_\_ in one word, what would it be?*
- *Do you want to be able to play music once you've left high school? If so, how do you plan on playing?*
- *If you were trying to persuade a friend or a new person at the school to join band, what would you say?*
- *What is it about \_\_\_\_\_ band that makes it different from bands at other schools?*
- *What's your best memory of being in band with \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *If you were asked to give your advice to the new band director, what would it be?*
- *What do you think is the hardest part about being the band director at \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *What's the most fun part?*
- *Do you think your parents like your being in band? Do they like to support the band?*
- *When you're in band, of course you learn a lot about music. What else have you learned from \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ has learned from you?*

----- to be given to student -----

Please take this sheet to write down any remarks that you think we may have left out of this interview. If you have any questions, or would like to make more comments, you may reach me at (309)298-2199 or [mfgts@wiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@wiu.edu).

If you have any other comments or observations that you would care to make, please note them here or e-mail them to me. Thank you for spending your time and sharing your ideas about this study.

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## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions For Retiring Educators

Questions for Interviews for *Segue* – for retiring educators

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

- *How much longer will you be teaching before your retirement?*
- *When did you make the decision to submit your retirement date?*
- *Was there a “defining reason” when you made your decision?*
- *What have been some of your most pressing concerns about retiring?*
- *Did you consult with others about deciding when to retire? Were their ideas helpful?*
- *Have you ever considered leaving teaching as a career before retirement? Why?*
- *Did you ever work in another field before becoming a teacher?*
- *What sort of expectations to you have about being retired?*
- *Do you intend to seek employment after you’ve retired from this position? If so, what kind?*
- *Do you intend to remain active in music? If so, in what sort of ways?*
- *Do you plan on being involved in the IRMEA? Do you think it is a valuable resource?*
- *What will you miss most about teaching?*
- *What will you miss least?*
- *What advice would you pass on to music educators just entering the field?*
- *What advice would you pass on to young people in high school who are considering music education as a career?*
- *If you could make a one-sentence statement to your students as your “last lecture” to them, what would it be?*

----- to be given to participant -----

Please take this sheet to write down any remarks that you think we may have left out of this interview. If you have any questions, or would like to make more comments, you may reach me at (309)298-2199 or [mfgts@wiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@wiu.edu).

If you have any other comments or observations that you would care to make, please note them here or e-mail them to me. Thank you for spending your time and sharing your ideas about this study.

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## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions For Retired Educators

Questions for Interviews for *Segue* – for retired educators

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

- *How long have you been retired?*
- *When did you make the decision to submit your retirement date?*
- *Was there a “defining reason” when you made your decision?*
- *What were some of your most pressing concerns about retiring?*
- *Did you consult with others about deciding when to retire? Were their ideas helpful?*
- *Did you ever consider leaving teaching as a career before retirement? Why?*
- *Did you ever work in another field before becoming a teacher?*
- *What sort of expectations did you have about being retired? Were they realistic?*
- *Did you seek employment after you’ve retired from this position? If so, what kind?*
- *Have you remained active in music? If so, in what sort of ways?*
- *Are you involved in the IRMEA? Do you think it is a valuable resource?*
- *What do you miss most about teaching?*
- *What do you miss least?*
- *What advice would you pass on to music educators just entering the field?*
- *What advice would you pass on to young people in high school who are considering music education as a career?*
- *What advice would you pass on to music educators who are about to retire?*
- *If you could go back and make a one-sentence statement to your students as your “last lecture” to them, what would it be?*

----- to be given to participant -----

Please take this sheet to write down any remarks that you think we may have left out of this interview. If you have any questions, or would like to make more comments, you may reach me at (309)298-2199 or [mfgts@wiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@wiu.edu).

If you have any other comments or observations that you would care to make, please note them here or e-mail them to me. Thank you for spending your time and sharing your ideas about this study.

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## APPENDIX D

### Interview Questions For Co-workers

Questions for Interviews for *Segue* – for co-workers

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

- *How long have you been teaching at \_\_\_\_\_?*
  - *Were you a former student of \_\_\_\_\_?*
  - *Did you participate in band in your high school? In college?*
  - *Have you ever worked directly with the band program? In what capacity?*
  - *How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_ retiring?*
  - *Do you think that band will be as much fun with a new director?*
  - *Should \_\_\_\_\_ continue to help the band if he wants to?*
  - *Why do you think that \_\_\_\_\_ has such a good band program?*
  - *What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ will do once he's retired?*
  - *Has \_\_\_\_\_ been a mentor to you? How so?*
  - *How did \_\_\_\_\_ contribute to the overall atmosphere of \_\_\_\_\_?*
  - *Do you have (or have ever had) a child in the band program? Can you describe your opinion of their experiences?*
  - *It's always hard to say "good-bye". What would you like \_\_\_\_\_ to remember about you?*
  - *What do you think you'll remember most about \_\_\_\_\_?*
- \_\_\_\_\_ to be given to the interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Please take this sheet to write down any remarks that you think we may have left out of this interview. If you have any questions, or would like to make more comments, you may reach me at (309)298-2199 or [mfgts@wiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@wiu.edu).

If you have any other comments or observations that you would care to make, please note them here. Thank you for spending your time and sharing your ideas about participating in this study.

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## APPENDIX E

### Interview Questions For Replacement Teachers

Questions for Interviews for *Segue* – for replacement teachers

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

- *When did you take over for \_\_\_\_\_ ?*
- *Were you a former student of \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *What schools did you attend for teacher education?*
- *Have you had previous teaching experience? Could you describe it?*
- *How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_ retiring?*
- *Do you think that the students are willing to accept your new ideas?*
- *Should \_\_\_\_\_ continue to help the band if he/she wants to?*
- *Why do you think that \_\_\_\_\_ has had such a good band program?*
- *What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ will do once he's retired?*
- *Has \_\_\_\_\_ been a mentor to you? How so?*
- *Do the other teachers in the school seem to support you? Do you feel compared to \_\_\_\_ ?*
- *How do you feel that the parents of your students are accepting you as the new teacher?*
- *What are some of \_\_\_\_\_'s strong points that you have found helpful?*
- *What are some of \_\_\_\_\_'s past practices that you feel you need to change?*
- *What do you think you'll remember most about \_\_\_\_\_?*

\_\_\_\_\_ to be given to the interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Please take this sheet to write down any remarks that you think we may have left out of this interview. If you have any questions, or would like to make more comments, you may reach me at (309)298-2199 or [mfgts@wiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@wiu.edu).

If you have any other comments or observations that you would care to make, please note them here. Thank you for spending your time and sharing your ideas about participating in this study.

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## APPENDIX F

### Sample Consent Letter For Co-workers

Sample Co-worker  
Sample City, Sample State  
Date, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Terry Solomonson, and I am conducting research for a dissertation at the University of Illinois. Part of my research involves interviewing the students of \_\_\_\_\_ by observing h\_\_ and the students during band performances and rehearsals.

This project will be conducted by myself, a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, under the guidance of Dr. Robert Stake, Director of the Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE) at the University of Illinois.

Your direct involvement in this project will primarily consist of being observed whenever you may be interacting with \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, I will be interviewing some of the faculty who are more frequently involved with \_\_\_\_\_'s teaching activities. If you are asked to be interviewed, you will also be asked to give your written consent for those interviews as well.

The audio recordings and all other information obtained during this research project will be kept anonymous and confidential. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Copies of the research results will be available after this project is completed. Results will be disseminated in the form of a dissertation submitted to the College of Education at the University of Illinois. Future submission as a journal article is possible. In all forms of publication, pseudonyms for the participants and the locations will be used to protect the privacy of the participants.

If you do not want to participate in the project please sign the form on the space indicated and bring this completed form to \_\_\_\_\_'s office by July 25<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me either by mail, e-mail, or telephone. You may keep this form, and a second copy can be provided should you not wish to participate.

Sincerely,

Terry SolomonsonDr. Robert Stake  
Telephone: (309)298-2199Telephone (217)333-3770  
e—mail: mfgts@wiu.edue-mail: r-stake@uiuc.edu

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

**I do not wish to participate in the research project described above.**

**Date  signature**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or [ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu](mailto:ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu)

## APPENDIX G

### Sample Consent Letter For Primary Participants

Sample Participant  
Sample City, Sample State  
Date, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a retiring music educator, I would like to invite you to participate in a research project which aims to explore life after retirement for educators in public schools. This qualitative research study will gather data from interviews with music educators in an attempt to discover how retired music educators have continued to use their talents in the field, with the hope that future retirees will have a greater grasp of the opportunities available for a continued life in music. The research is being conducted by Terry Solomonson, a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the research is being done under the guidance of Dr. Robert Stake, Director of the Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE) at the University of Illinois.

Your involvement in this project will primarily consist of participating in at least two 30 to 45-minute interviews, which will be conducted during the months of \_\_\_\_\_. In these interviews, which will be audiorecorded with your permission, you will be asked to discuss your experiences in teaching both before and after retirement, along with other questions which are relevant to the art of teaching. Equally important, but less time-consuming for you will be several periods of observations to view your interactions with your colleagues and your students, both past and present. Your thoughts, along with those provided by the other participants, will make up the most important part of the study, which will be submitted for publication. The audio recordings and all other information obtained during this research project will be kept anonymous and confidential. No information will be stored with the study that will link your identity to it. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You will receive a copy of the research results prior to submission, in order that you may examine the material for objectionable content. after this project is completed.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Terry Solomonson, researcher  
Dr. Robert Stake, Professor  
(309)263-2597(217)333-3770  
[mfgts@uiu.edu](mailto:mfgts@uiu.edu) [stake@illinois.edu](mailto:stake@illinois.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or [ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu](mailto:ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu)

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have been offered a copy of this consent form.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

In addition, I agree to allow audiotaping of my interviews.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H

### Sample Consent Letter For Observed Individuals

Sample Observant  
Sample City, Sample State  
Date, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Terry Solomonson, and I am conducting research for a dissertation at the University of Illinois. Part of my research involves interviewing the students of \_\_\_\_\_ by observing \_\_\_\_\_ and the students during band performances and rehearsals.

This project will be conducted by myself, a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, under the guidance of Dr. Robert Stake, Director of the Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE) at the University of Illinois.

Your direct involvement in this project will primarily consist of being observed whenever you may be working with \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, I will be interviewing some of the faculty who are more frequently involved with \_\_\_\_\_'s teaching activities. If you are asked to be interviewed, you will also be asked to give your written consent for those interviews as well.

The audio recordings and all other information obtained during this research project will be kept anonymous and confidential. At no time will there be any audio taping during these observations. No information is kept with the study that would identify you or anyone else in the future. Participating in this study does not have any influence on your grades in this class. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Copies of the research results will be available after this project is completed. Results will be disseminated in the form of a dissertation submitted to the College of Education at the University of Illinois. Future submission as a journal article is possible. In all forms of publication, pseudonyms for the participants and the locations will be used to protect the privacy of the participants.

If you do not want to participate in the project please sign the form on the space indicated and bring this completed form to \_\_\_\_\_'s office by \_\_\_\_\_. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me either by mail, e-mail, or



telephone. You may keep this form, and a second copy can be provided should you not wish to participate.

Sincerely,

Terry SolomonsonDr. Robert Stake

Telephone: (309)298-2199Telephone (217)333-3770

e— mail: mfgts@wiu.edue-mail: r-stake@uiuc.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or [ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu](mailto:ber-irb@ed.uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu)

\*\*\*\*\*

**I do not wish to participate in the research project described above.**

**Signature**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX I

### Websites Which Offer Additional Sources

Association for Gerontology in Higher Education: <http://www.aghe.org/aghe/>

University of Georgia Center for Gerontology: <http://www.geron.uga.edu>

University of Michigan Retirement Research Center: <http://www.mrrc.isr.umich.edu/>

Teacher's Retirement System for the State of Illinois: <http://trs.illinois.gov>