

Mr. Blake: 46 Year (+) of Teaching!

Tuesday, 18 November 2008

The Fort Hunt High School band continues to be a wellspring of our community's pride. Under the brilliant direction of Mr. Frank Wickes and Mr. Harry Blake, thousands of young Americans were inspired to accomplish wonderful things. Our classmate, Stasia (Wolicki) Rhoads recently tracked down Mr. Blake. He responded as you would expect, with terrific warmth and strength: "There are no programs in the United States like the Fort Hunt Band Program of the 70s. There are many good ones, but they could not stand up to those programs of Mr. Wickes in the early 70's and our good times in the middle of the 70's. I still have friends who cannot believe it is a high school band when they hear the recordings of Pines of Rome, Candide, Festive Overture, Children's March, etc....P.S. I still have a copy of Blake's Bloopers that was passed out on our trip to the National Bi-Centennial Contest in June of 1976. It brings back many pleasant memories. I still don't believe I made those comments."

An online news article dated 29 Oct 2008 announced that Mr. Blake was moving from high school to college. He is currently the director of Blinn College's program. You can click on his photo at that school's page, and email him. They say that a teacher's influence is like a pebble tossed in a pond; the teacher never gets to see the fruits of his/her teaching, but those ripples go on and on. What a great Christmas gift for Harry Blake if his former students let him know how those ripples he started continue. His email address: harry.blake@blinn.edu

Also, download newspaper articles about the Ft. Hunt band. Pull down Media > Downloads > General.

See his bio and links: click "read more."

<http://www.blinn.edu/finearts/musicfaculty.html#harryblake> Harry D. Blake / Director of Bands, DeSoto Independent School District, DeSoto, Texas

Harry D. Blake, former director of bands at North Salem High School in Salem, Oregon and MacArthur High in San Antonio, Texas, finished his 45th year of band directing in June of 2007 as Director of Bands at DeSoto High School. In five years under the leadership of Mr. Blake and his staff, the DeSoto Band program has re-established itself as one of the outstanding 5A programs in Texas. The Eagle Band is a consistent winner of superior ratings in marching, concert and sight-reading contests. The DeSoto Eagle Marching Band has an impressive 38 straight years of 1st Division's in UIL Marching Contests. The Wind Symphony was the Grand Champion of the 14 week All American Music Festival in Orlando, Florida in the spring of 2004. The 2005 Wind Symphony was a featured band at the Bands of American National Concert Band Festival in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Desoto High School Wind Symphony was a featured band at the 2007 Southeastern United States Band Clinic in Troy, Alabama in February, 2007. The 2008 Wind Symphony will be the featured band at the 40th Annual Western Michigan Wind and Percussion Clinic in April of 2008. The MacArthur High School band of San Antonio, which Mr. Blake directed from 1994-1999 was the winner of 26 consecutive UIL sweepstakes awards, placed 5th at the 1998 Bands of America Southwest Regional, was a featured band at the National Concert Band Festival in Indianapolis in 1997, finished 8th in the 5A honor band competition in 1996 and 11th in the 1997 state marching contest. Mr. Blake also conducted the Killeen High School band program from 1990-1994, one of the outstanding 5A bands in Central Texas. Prior to coming to Texas to teach high school, Harry Blake served as Director of bands at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma; University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV); and Frostburg State College in Frostburg, Maryland.

Before entering the collegiate ranks of teaching, Mr. Blake directed the renowned Fort Hunt High School band from Fairfax County, Virginia. The Fort Hunt band was the winner in both concert and marching in competitions such as the National Bicentennial Band Competition, the Virginia Beach Music Festival, the Shenandoah Cup and Six Flags over Atlanta. The Fort Hunt band toured extensively and performed at the Mid-East Music and the Mid-West Music Conventions. They were the first high school band to perform major concerts on the main concert hall stage in the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Prior to teaching at Fort Hunt, Mr. Blake was the director of the outstanding Sturgis High School Band in Sturgis, Michigan.

Mr. Blake is a native of Sophia, West Virginia. He earned his Bachelors and Masters degree's from New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico, which he attended on a basketball scholarship. He is multi-talented, having also won the 1963 Men's National Baton Twirling Championships. Inspired by such great band directors as William D. Revelli of the University of Michigan and Fred Ebbs of Indiana University, Mr. Blake chose to pursue a musical career, although he had offers to play basketball and tour with the Harlem Globetrotters. Mr. Blake was involved as a tennis coach for his son Joey, who was ranked 4th in the World in singles and doubles as an 18 year old on the International Tennis Federation Circuit. Joey won the NCAA Division I Indoor Tennis title as a freshman at the University of Arkansas. His pro career was cut short with a wrist injury early in his career.

Mr. Blake is a past State Chairman of the National Band Association and College Band Directors National Association. He is currently a member of TMEA, TBA, Phi Kappa Phi Honorary Academic Fraternity and Kappa PSI National Band Fraternity. His wife, Karen, a professional flutist serves as an assistant band director at DeSoto High School. Karen Blake is a former teacher of flute at Cameron University, UNLV and Frostburg State College. She received her Bachelor of

Music Education degree from Hart College of Music in West Hartford, Connecticut and her Masters in Performance from Texas Tech University. The Blake's live in Midlothian, Texas, and have one son, Joseph, who is a professional tennis player and coach.

Blinn College band

The Blinn College Buccaneer Band has chosen Harry D. Blake as its new director after longtime leader Larry Campbell became the chairman of fine arts at the college's Brenham campus.

Blake joins the Blinn staff with more than 40 years' experience directing at the high school and college levels. He has directed band programs across the country, including at DeSoto, San Antonio MacArthur and Killeen high schools in Texas, and the Fort Hunt High School band in Fairfax County, Va. His college experience includes Cameron University in Oklahoma, the University of Las Vegas and Frostburg State College in Maryland.

The Buccaneer Band, with students representing 68 high schools, made its initial performance Oct. 4 as Blinn hosted Tyler Junior College at Spencer Stadium.

<http://www.theeagle.com/lifestyles/Our-Neighbors2008-10-19T00-10-51>