

**Alfred Watkins and the Lassiter High School Band: A Qualitative Study**

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the life and lifework of Alfred Watkins, Director of Bands at Lassiter High School for 27 years and to describe the components that contribute to the success of the Lassiter High School Band Program. Lassiter High School, located in Marietta, Georgia, has grown to represent excellence in all facets of the program and has sustained the reputation and the reality of that high level of achievement for nearly 30 years. Excellence in large ensemble performance (concert bands, marching band, jazz band), chamber music, and individual performances have led to Lassiter's recognition nationally as one of the most comprehensive high school band programs in the country. Topics covered include Watkins' philosophy of the program, band curriculum, organization, and other unique qualities that have contributed to the development of the program. Data collection for this qualitative inquiry included direct observation, participant observation, video observation, study of documents and artifacts, and systematic interviewing to describe the history, philosophy, structure and organization used by this exemplary teacher and this exemplary high school band program. Observations from this study can inform practicing high school band directors and their programs and can also be used to shape curriculum for undergraduate music education students.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

With more than 15,000 public high schools in the United States (NCES, 2009), it seems that more than a handful of exemplary high school band programs should exist. Band directors look towards several nationally recognized awards as indicators of significant achievement for high school band programs. Performing at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, receiving the Sudler Flag of Honor or Sudler Shield from the John Philip Sousa Foundation, reaching the finals competition at the Bands of America National Championships, or being selected to perform at a major parade (e.g., Macy's Thanksgiving or Rose Bowl) are some milestone achievements by which the high school band profession measures a program's success. While it is extraordinary for a high school band program to achieve any one of these recognizable successes, only five schools in the United States have attained all five of these significant achievements as of this writing: Duncanville High School (Texas, Tom Shine, Director of Bands), Lassiter High School (Georgia, Alfred Watkins, Director of Bands), North Hardin High School (Kentucky, Charles Campbell, Director of Bands), Owasso High School (Oklahoma, David Gorham, Director of Bands), and Westfield High School (Texas, Philip Geiger, Director of Bands). Of these five nationally recognized high school band programs, the Lassiter High School Band is exceptional because of its

unparalleled level of achievements sustained over an extensive period of time and because of the personal attributes of its Director of Bands, Alfred Watkins.

I first met Alfred Watkins in the spring of 1987 when I interviewed for the Assistant Director of Bands position at Lassiter High School. I had a vague idea about how lucky I was to be offered that job, but there was no way to know how much I would grow and develop as a teacher because of Mr. Watkins' influence. While I believe strongly in the quality of my undergraduate education, I would most certainly not be the same teacher I am today had I not worked side by side and shared an office with Alfred Watkins for 12 years. His skills in developing and maintaining a comprehensive band program, consistently creating outstanding performances, and instilling tenacity and a love for music-making for decades of students merit study beyond the cursory glance.

What is it about Alfred Watkins and what he has done as a teacher for nearly three decades that has brought incomparable success to the Lassiter High School Band program? Is it the overall organization and structure he has created? Is it the daily routine he has established? Is it his musicianship and rehearsal skills? Philosophy? Personality? Motivation? What has he done and does he continue to do on a daily basis in the classroom that has consistently fostered a depth of musical learning for his students? What can we learn through an in-depth study of Mr. Watkins' philosophy, leadership, and pedagogy that can be passed on for others to emulate?

As a music teacher educator, I am interested in discovering what happens in Alfred Watkins' classroom that can be extrapolated and crafted into creating a more effective curriculum for future music teachers. This research project represents an attempt to create greater insight and understanding about the composition of the Lassiter Band

program including the history and development of the program, the philosophical approach of the teacher, the construction and organization of the program, and the educational and musical events that occur regularly in the program. In order to learn more about this unique teacher and program, a qualitative examination utilizing direct observation, participant observation, video observation, study of documents and artifacts, and systematic interviewing was used with the intention of creating a rich descriptive portrait of elements that other band directors may replicate with their own school band curricula (Creswell, 2007).

In the field of music education, there has been a great deal of research about effective teaching, with characteristics and skills being broken into three primary subject areas: musical skills and knowledge, teaching skills, and personality traits. Additionally, while much research has been undertaken to define important skills and dispositions to be included in the undergraduate music education curriculum, there is no clear agreement on which specific pedagogical knowledge and skills make the difference between ordinary teaching and truly extraordinary, iconic teaching. Neither is there clear agreement among music teacher educations regarding how to incorporate the knowledge and skills into an already overcrowded four or five-year curriculum. Furthermore, the creation and organization of an exemplary program requires more than excellent teaching. In order to gain a better understanding of what is involved in the creation of a program with longstanding excellence, music teacher educators must also examine the philosophies behind the choices made in the classroom, the organization and structure of the overall program, and the combination of these elements within the context of their natural setting.

Most instrumentalists gain the preponderance of their experience through large ensemble performance. Instrumentalists learn by doing, experiencing, and actively engaging in music-making. Certainly, much can be learned through reading and discussing facts and theories. However, active participation in hands-on, authentic-context learning experiences taps into the foundation of learning music. The mentor-apprentice relationship and the familiarity of modeling behaviors to create new knowledge and skill levels naturally parallel musical practice.

In order to shed light on the complexities and details related to Alfred Watkins and the teaching, development, and excellence of the Lassiter Band Program, it was necessary to examine the situation as a qualitative study. Although much of this investigation was indeed of an historical nature, the direct observation and video observation used in data collection created a unique approach by combining historical narrative along with a contemporary, present-day examination. I conducted an empirical investigation of this unique band director and program in their natural context, influenced by the idea of case study research (Yin, 2003). By narrowing the focus to one exemplary program, it was possible to examine an ideal situation with much greater detail than if a larger sample had been studied. This type of investigation was similar to using a zoom lens on a camera (Barrett, 2007) rather than a wide-angle lens. This unique teacher and program merited a concentrated focus that illuminated the structure and composition of the Lassiter High School band program.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

For this study, several domains of relevant research seemed appropriate for review. First, because one of the main data sources was observation of Alfred Watkins' teaching strategies and practices, research in music teacher effectiveness was reviewed. Examining the qualities and techniques of successful high school teaching provided a reference base for the emergent themes resulting from this investigation. Although music teacher effectiveness has received a great deal of attention in the research literature, it was found to be lacking in number of qualitative research studies. As themes emerged during this study, collaboration and group cohesion appeared to be significant for Watkins and the Lassiter Band Program. Thus, this research topic — while scant in the area of music education — was also examined. Since one of the primary aims of this study was to illuminate concepts and materials that could be passed on to others, literature related to music teacher education curriculum was examined to determine what was lacking and how to incorporate such knowledge into that curriculum. Finally, research about historically significant band conductors helped to shape this study. Of particular interest were studies related to successful high school band conductors. A review of relevant literature for this study must therefore cover several areas of research. The four primary areas are outlined below, with a brief explanation of how to connect these topics for a holistic view of the current study.



### *Music Teacher Effectiveness*

The preparation of prospective educators is a topic of concern among researchers in music teacher education. While there is global agreement regarding the significance of effective teaching, which specific skills and traits are most important is a constant debate. Madsen (2003) sought to define which teaching skills, delivery skills, and classroom management skills were deemed most effective for classroom music teachers. Participants ( $N = 168$ ) represented four groups: music students in grades 6-8 ( $N = 42$ ), music students in grades 9-12 ( $N = 42$ ), undergraduate music education majors ( $N = 42$ ), and experienced classroom music teachers ( $N = 42$ ). Participants viewed and evaluated a videotape of eight investigator-created teaching segments that isolated variables (accurate/inaccurate teaching, high/low delivery skills, and on/off-task student behaviors). The segments were presented in a random order, and participants used a form to rate the effectiveness of each segment on a 10-point Likert-type scale with written comments that were coded for themes. Results indicated that high delivery presentations (i.e., teachers who presented a fast-paced lesson with a high degree of energy and interaction with students) received more positive responses from participants regardless of the accuracy of lessons. Thus, teacher delivery may have a greater impact on teacher effectiveness ratings. If that is so, a case may be made for music education programs to teach high delivery skills within the curriculum.

Ballantyne and Packer (2004) investigated the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that early-career secondary music teachers ( $N = 136$ ) perceived to be necessary to function effectively in the classroom as well as those teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of their teacher education program in preparing them to teach. The

questionnaire covered four major areas of knowledge and skills: musical, pedagogical, general, and non-pedagogical. Pedagogical content items that were rated as highly important but reported as inadequately covered in the undergraduate curriculum included: knowledge of music teaching techniques, engaging students with music in a meaningful way, implementing music curriculum effectively, assessing students' abilities, and explaining and demonstrating musical concepts. Thus, a strong teacher education program should seek to strengthen these skills within its curricular offerings.

Duke and Simmons (2006) sought to identify the specific skills and traits in the teaching of expert artist-teachers ( $N = 3$ ) in music. The goal of the investigators was to determine if there were common elements that effected positive change in students' performances. Investigators found 19 elements common to each of the three teachers and organized them into three broad categories: Goals and Expectations (e.g., "Teachers have clear auditory image that guides their judgments"), Effecting Change (e.g., "Teachers are tenacious, often having the students repeat a passage until there is a positive change"), and Conveying Information (e.g., "Negative feedback is clear, precise, frequent and specific, while positive feedback is intermittent...unexpected, and of high magnitude"). Duke and Simmons found and outlined complex, higher-order thinking skills that require excellent musicianship, insight, experience, intuition, communication skills, and a passion for teaching. These 19 traits provide an excellent guideline for aspiring music teachers, and music education professors should seek to instill these qualities in pre-service teachers.

A study of eight Midwestern band directors (Jachens, 1987) investigated the pedagogical approaches of these teachers who had outstanding high school concert bands

in the 1920s and 1930s. Through extensive interviews and a narrative approach, Jachens organized and analyzed data in two primary categories: methods of teaching tone, intonation, technique, and interpretation; and pedagogical means and motives (full ensemble pedagogical materials, philosophy of instruction, rehearsal techniques, and goals and objectives for ensemble development). Jachens presented his findings as practical, music-oriented, pedagogical practices. Some of the findings included the ability to describe and provide tonal models, the presence of a regular warm up period in which tone is emphasized, group ear training, rhythm classes and counting, clear teaching of varied articulation, teaching principles of expression, and modeling expression. Additionally, the master teachers were constant students of the band activity and studied post-rehearsal notes and planning, demonstrated enthusiasm for the repertoire, and were sensitive to rehearsal momentum. Performance was seen as the best way for students to understand and experience music first-hand, so the teachers had excellent performance-teaching skills.

Other studies related to teacher effectiveness explored the qualities relevant to excellence in teaching. In his evaluative report, Cruickshank (1990, as referenced in Colwell, 1992) suggested that

teachers are effective when they are enthusiastic, stimulating, encouraging, warm, task-oriented, and businesslike, tolerant, polite, tactful, trusting, flexible, adaptable, and democratic. Also, they hold high expectations for pupils, do not seek personal recognition, care less about being liked, and are able to overcome pupil stereotypes, are less time-conscious, feel responsible for people learning, are able to express feelings and have good listening skills.

The majority of the reviewed studies approached the topic of teacher effectiveness from a quantitative point of view. Studies related to how band directors spend time in rehearsal and their use of verbal instruction with the ensemble were plentiful (Blocher, Greenwood, & Shellahamer, 1997; Duke & Madsen, 1991; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Madsen, 2003; Mory, 1992). Also numerous were studies related to sequencing of information during rehearsals (Price, 1992; Yarbrough & Hendel, 1992; Yarbrough, Price, & Hendel, 1994). These studies suggested that the most experienced and effective teachers spent more time engaging students in performance and that these teachers approached classroom instruction with a logical sequence pattern that was clearly communicated to the students. Other studies focused on the band directors' use of approval and disapproval or other rehearsal techniques and interactions from primarily a quantitative point of view (Iida, 1991; Lien, 2002; Madsen & Duke, 1985; Pontious, 1982). These studies indicated a need to provide frequent approval to students both verbally and non-verbally and to provide intermittent disapprovals along with recommendations of how to improve. While most studies in music education research examined teacher effectiveness by seeking commonalities of many teachers, this study was designed with a different approach. Rather than attempting to determine qualities of teacher effectiveness among music teachers in general, this study was designed to zoom in and focus upon one iconic teacher in an effort to understand how he created and maintained an outstanding band program that may serve as an exemplar for the band profession, especially at the high school teaching level.

### *Group Cohesion and Efficacy*

Setting goals and working towards achievement constitute a large contribution to the creation of group cohesion. In the fields of sociology and social psychology, group cohesion has been defined as an active process wherein group members unify in the pursuit of common goals or shared purposes (Steiner, 1972). Group cohesiveness is viewed as multi-dimensional: goal or task-based and interpersonal or social-based (Zaccaro & Lowe, 2001). In task-oriented cohesion, group members share a commitment to the task of the group. In a study that involved adolescents in an outdoor course challenge experience, group cohesion was fostered through the shared task experience (Glass & Benshoff, 2002). In interpersonal cohesiveness, group members may share an attraction to other members of the group or towards the social perception of being a member of the particular group. It is through the combination of task-cohesiveness and interpersonal-cohesiveness in some type of cooperative activity that group members participate in developing a group's identity. This identity development appears to lead to strong group cohesion and a high positive interdependence among group participants, regardless of the specific task (Serrano & Pons, 2007). High task-cohesiveness and high interpersonal cohesiveness appear to be significant contributors to increased productivity (Zaccaro & Lowe, 2001).

In a musical ensemble, group cohesion, productivity, and collective efficacy affect the perception of conductor support in ensemble rehearsals (Matthews, 2007). In this investigation, skilled high school instrumental students ( $N = 91$ ) responded to survey items related to collective efficacy, group cohesion, and motivational climate during rehearsals. Collective efficacy, related to the more common term self-efficacy, refers to

the group's perception of their combined capabilities to accomplish a given task (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the individual members of a musical ensemble view their individual contributions, the group's collective efficacy, and the conductor's support as significant contributors to the quality of their experience in an ensemble. Certainly, individuals' perceptions of quality of experience directly impact their motivation to continue to make positive contributions to the group—the payoff must outweigh the personal costs of participation (Steiner, 1972). Research suggests that participation in a high school band program, thus, must offer an environment rich in conductor support, group cohesion, and collective efficacy (Matthews, 2007).

### *Music Education Curriculum*

In 2001 Asmus discussed his opinions regarding the ever-increasing requirements that the National Association of Schools of Music, state boards of education, and even university colleges of education have placed upon the undergraduate music education curriculum. Music education majors working toward certification to teach in the public schools take courses in the general core studies, education, music, and in music education. What was once a four-year degree has shifted in many schools into a minimum five-year undergraduate degree program (Conway, 2002). Music teacher educators continue to debate the most valuable content to include in the undergraduate curriculum. What courses should be included? What should be taught in those courses? Is it possible to collaborate with other faculty to incorporate a variety of material into one course or into a smaller amount of time in order to better facilitate the music education curriculum (Thornton, Murphy, & Hamilton, 2004)? Music education professors must determine the needs of the student in the classroom—the elementary and secondary

school classroom—and then determine the needs of those future teachers in order to design a curriculum better suited to the real-life teaching situations that will be faced by the future music educator (Asmus, 2001). Upon seeing the need for curricular change in undergraduate music teacher education, the College Music Society music education committee created the Institute on Music Teacher Education so that music teacher educators might stimulate discussion regarding the recognized need to initiate collaboration for curricular reform. (Hickey & Rees, 2002). Music education professors must continue to look towards reforming the music education curriculum to empower future teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in the classroom while keeping in mind that the undergraduate curriculum cannot continue to augment course requirements.

Conway (2002) recognized the need to evaluate the impact that current teacher education programs on the ability of teacher candidates to teach effectively. Conway found that the most valued aspects of the novice teachers' pre-service training were: student teaching, fieldwork/practica, ensemble experiences, and private instrument lessons. The first-year teachers cited the least helpful courses as teacher education courses, early field observations without context, and instrument methods courses when taught by professors who did not have K-12 school experience. Her findings indicated that the first-year teachers most valued authentic-context learning and skills that contributed to their personal overall musicianship. In their program evaluation guide, Cruickshank and Metcalf (1993) further supported the strength of authentic-context learning in the general classroom and proposed an on-campus laboratory experience for preservice teachers in order to better assess these novice teachers. An approach utilizing

microteaching episodes, simulations, and reflective teaching proved to be beneficial in creating opportunities for teacher assessment and improving teacher preparation

Roulston, Legette, and Womack (2005) conducted a similar study whereby they learned that the young teachers valued “hands on” pre-service training experiences and would have liked to have experienced more hands-on situations in authentic settings during their undergraduate training. The participants ( $N = 9$ ) appreciated assistance from formal and informal mentors in field experiences and student teaching. The novice teachers reported that some of undergraduate courses had been too theoretical and not practical, and the participants felt generally ill-equipped for classroom management issues. Again, these findings point toward reform of current music education curricula.

Campbell and Thompson (2007) compared the concerns of preservice music education teachers across four different points in their professional development. Of three classifications of teacher concerns (self concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns) impact concerns rated the highest, meaning future teachers were most uneasy about large-scale issues such as “helping students to value music” and “being able to motivate students to learn” while they rated lowest the task concerns such as “skills for working with disruptive students” and “creating support for music programs.” Additionally, findings indicated the need for early opportunities for students to be exposed to real-life situations so that as their concern levels increase, they apply new information gleaned in their undergraduate curriculum to adjust to these concerns.

Teachout (1997) compared the responses of preservice teachers to experienced teachers regarding “what skills and behaviors are important to successful music teaching within the first three years of experience.” Of the 10 top-ranked items for each group,



seven were common to both: be mature and have self control, be able to motivate students, have strong leadership skills, involve students in the learning process, display confidence, be organized, and employ a positive approach. Teachout concluded that techniques to develop the above-listed skills and behaviors are not included in the traditional music education curriculum. Review of the research suggests that the addition of more authentic-context learning experiences and increased exposure to examples of excellent teachers and music programs may provide opportunities for development of those skills that are deemed important by both pre-service teachers and experienced teachers.

As teacher educators, college music education faculty must decide what content must be covered in the undergraduate music education curriculum. Rohwer and Henry (2004) addressed this issue when they sought to describe university music education teachers' perceptions of the skills and characteristics needed to be an effective teacher. Responses were categorized into three broad areas: teaching skills, personality characteristics, and music skills. Respondents indicated that teaching skills were ranked highest in terms of overall importance. These skills include classroom management, ability to give clear instructions, pacing, eye contact, organization, and questioning skills. Surprisingly, musical skills received the lowest rankings. However, the musical skill components of being musically expressive, error detection, sight-reading, theory/history knowledge, performance, and conducting had mean scores as high as or higher than most of the teaching skills and personality characteristics items. Rohwer and Henry concluded that the different responses in the areas of choral, instrumental, and general music indicate the possible need for tracking in the curriculum. Additionally, they suggested a

clearer approach for teaching and assessing musical expression, since expression was ranked highest in importance in all three specialty areas. Furthermore, the researchers proposed that authentic teaching environments may help in teaching and assessing student's teaching skills and personalities.

### *Historically Significant School Band Conductors*

Although several historical and biographical studies of professional and military band conductors such as John Philip Sousa (Church, 1943; Stacy, 1972), Patrick Gilmore (Humphreys, 1987; Darlington, 1950; Nicholson, 1971), and Edwin Franko Goldman (Jolly, 1971; Lester, 1984) exist, this study focused only on school band conductors. The function and teaching skills required of professional band conductors as well as the context in which they worked was presumably quite different than those of the school band director. The careers of notable university band conductors have been studied: A. A. Harding of the University of Illinois (Weber, 1963), Leonard Falcone of Michigan State University (Welch, 1973), Mark Hindsley of the University of Illinois (Gregory, 1992), Alfred Reed, composer and band director at the University of Miami (Jordan, 1995), John Paynter of Northwestern University (Piagentini, 1999), Donald McGinnis of Ohio State University (Titus, 2005), Gary Garner of West Texas A & M University (Teweleit, 2006), Francis McBeth, composer and band director of Oachita University (Preston, 2006), David Whitwell of California State University-Northridge (Gonzalez, 2007). While each of these biographical studies provides excellent historical narrative of the respective conductors' careers, philosophies, and achievements, they do not directly relate to the present study. The unique focus of this investigation upon Alfred Watkins' pedagogy in both an historical and contemporary context as well as the different goals

and intentions of high school band teaching compared to those of university band teaching distinguishes this study from those already existent in the literature. Of particular significance to this project are the studies about William Revelli (Cavanaugh, 1971), Herbert Hazelman (Jeffreys, 1988), Harry Begian (Hile, 1991), and Frank Battisti (Norcross, 1994) because of their focus on these educators and their high school teaching.

In his study of the high school teaching career of William D. Revelli, Cavanaugh (1971) captured the history of the development of the Hobart (Indiana) High School Band from 1925-1935. Through in-depth interviews with both Revelli and his wife, Mary, and through the study of personal correspondence, newspaper articles, programs, and other personal records belonging to Revelli, Cavanaugh presented a description of the evolution of the Hobart Band into one of the finest bands of its time. Revelli started the Hobart Band program when none existed previously. Although his background was as a violinist, Revelli studied privately with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and learned to play all of the wind instruments. His understanding of tone production, intonation tendencies, rhythm, technical proficiency, and interpretation served as the foundational elements for his relentless approach to teaching. Revelli frequently referred to the work of his mentor, H. A. Vandercook and his book *Expression in Music* in his lessons. As Alfred Watkins was an informal student of William Revelli—he invited Revelli to the Lassiter band room to rehearse the bands on several occasions—Watkins modeled some of his own teaching strategies after Revelli. Thus, many of Revelli’s instructional approaches foreshadowed what we observed regarding Alfred Watkins’ teaching.

In a biographical dissertation, Jeffries (1988) presented the high school teaching career of Herbert Hazelman. Like Revelli, Hazelman had the reputation of being an extremely demanding taskmaster. Hazelman served as a high school band director for 42 years (1936-1978) at Greensboro/Grimsley (North Carolina) High School. Through in-depth interviews with Hazelman and with seven of his colleagues as well as analysis of documents and artifacts, Jeffries aimed to illuminate the significant accomplishments of Hazelman's long teaching career. Among Hazelman's numerous notable successes were selection to perform at the 1963 Midwest National Band Clinic (the first band from North Carolina to ever be selected) and commissioned works by Gunther Schuller and John Barnes Chance that have become standards in the high school band repertoire. Jeffries' approach to investigation informed the design of this current study in regards to methods of data collection, and, his focus on a successful high school band conductor with a longstanding career in one particular program is similar to the subject of this study.

Two dissertations described the life and lifework of the exemplary band conductor Harry Begian. Through interviews and informal conversations with Dr. Begian, Wallace (1994) recorded primarily an historical narrative. Hile's (1991) dissertation served less as a biographical or historical study of Harry Begian but more as a case study of how Begian's experiences and philosophies were reflected in his teaching. Begian was noted both as a high school band director (at Cass Technical High School, Detroit, Michigan, 1947-1964) and as a university band conductor (first at Wayne State University, then Michigan State University, and finally at the University of Illinois from 1970-1984). Begian's successes while at Cass Tech included production of numerous excellent recordings that are stored at the National Archives of the Library of Congress

and two performances at the Midwest National Band Clinic (1954 and 1961). Hile employed content analysis of comprehensive interviews with Begian as well as tape recordings and videotapes of Begian in rehearsal to investigate the degree to which Begian's rehearsal techniques reflected his expressed philosophies and guiding principles. As was the case with William Revelli, Alfred Watkins invited Harry Begian to work with the Lassiter Bands on several occasions. Begian's emphasis on quality literature, his relentless pursuit of rhythmic integrity, and his endless passion for expressive music-making influenced Watkins' teaching.

Another prominent band conductor, Frank Battisti, was initially renowned for his high school work and later for his work at the New England Conservatory. In the book *One Band that Took a Chance: The Ithaca (New York) High School Band from 1955-1967 Directed by Frank Battisti*, Norcross (1994) related an historical and biographical account of Battisti's tenure at Ithaca High School. In a dissertation, Chi (2005) used Battisti's program as a model to create a proposal to build a high school band program in Taiwan promoting interdisciplinary music study of music and imparting a sense of democracy to students. Chi noted as significant in the Ithaca curriculum a well-rounded approach utilizing multiple intelligences. Of particular interest were the commissioning projects taken on by Battisti and Ithaca whereby 24 works for concert band were brought into the repertoire, his introduction of and collaboration with many prominent professional musicians with his band program, his performance at the Midwest National Band Clinic in 1965, and the program's inclusion on the Honor Roll for High School Concert Bands of the John Philip Sousa Foundation (a recognition which preceded the current Sudler Flag).

### Summary of Relevant Literature:

Although music teacher effectiveness has been researched there has not been complete agreement regarding which qualities or skills are most important. The vast majority of these studies approach the topic of teacher effectiveness from a quantitative point of view. Quantitative studies related to particular teacher behaviors (Blocher, Greenwood, & Shellahamer, 1997; Duke & Madsen, 1991; Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Madsen, 2003; Mory, 1992; Price, 1992; Yarbrough & Hendel, 1992; Yarbrough, Price, & Hendel, 1994) permeate the literature. Few researchers approached effective teaching from a qualitative methodology, either through case study, biography, or other means. The appeal of a more narrowly focused study is that it provides richer description of an exemplary teacher within the natural context of the contemporary band classroom and culture.

While several biographical studies of outstanding school band directors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exist, there do not appear to be any studies in which the conductor and the structure of the high school band program are examined in order to serve as models for other teachers and programs. Hammond (1973) examined the philosophies, contributions to music education, and the development of the Lenoir High School Band under the leadership of J. C. Harper. In his study, Hammond describes the influences of this exemplary teacher and band program in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but no rehearsals were actually observed. No studies of outstanding high school conductors who are still actively teaching could be found. Further, the approach that combines historical biography with present-day observation presents a unique contribution to our literature. Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature.

Group cohesion and group efficacy have been studied in the fields of sociology and psychology. However, in the field of music education, little research exists. A band program in which there is a strong environment of students working together to create high levels of achievement merits analysis of group dynamics.

The present study is an attempt to illustrate the structure of the Lassiter High School Band and to discover the day-to-day and long-term contributions of its director, Alfred Watkins, and his pedagogical knowledge and skills, philosophy, structure and organization, and leadership. I hoped for a fusion of themes that could be crafted into curriculum for the undergraduate music education student or into advice and prototype for school band directors.

#### Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe the components that contribute to the success of the Lassiter High School band program. Specifically, (a) the pedagogical knowledge and skills, (b) the director's philosophy and approach to teaching and (c) the program structure created and exhibited by Alfred Watkins was examined. The research questions that guided this project included:

- 1) What is the structure of the Lassiter High School band program?
- 2) What is Watkins' philosophy of instrumental music education?
- 3) What happens in a typical rehearsal?
- 4) What can we learn from an examination of this exemplary teacher and program that may have implications for curricula and that may be passed on to other band conductors?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

Prior to data collection, the investigator examined related literature in the areas of qualitative research, particularly interviewing techniques (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 2001; Yow, 1994). The principal investigative tool employed in this qualitative study was the interview. Insight provided by the primary character in this research study, Alfred Watkins, served as the predominant data source. Interviews were conducted to gather information from an historical perspective regarding Watkins' personal history and biography, Watkins' development of the Lassiter Band over the past 25 years, and Watkins' philosophies as they relate to teaching and learning in the classroom setting. Watkins shared his personal philosophy on teaching and on music education as they relate both generally to the field and specifically to the structure of the Lassiter Band program. Details regarding program structure, curricular content, and the activities and experiences that have led to the depth and breadth of the Lassiter Band experience were discussed.

The interviews occurred in four two-hour sessions during June and July 2009 in Watkins' home in Marietta, Georgia and in the researcher's home in Fultondale, Alabama. While the interviews were semi-structured (See Appendix A), Watkins often moved in tangential directions and provided copious amounts of relevant data. The interviews were recorded with a Roland Edirol digital audio device. The recordings were



transcribed and analyzed immediately following each interview session. In order to ensure dependability, the investigator shared the summary of each audio transcription with Mr. Watkins so that he might confirm their accuracy. Mr. Watkins and the researcher discussed by telephone any clarifications or additions to the transcriptions. They also identified subjects that emerged during analysis that necessitated further description as well as additional topics and questions for the following interview sessions. This member checking allowed for the main participant in the study to check accuracy and credibility of the collected data (Creswell, 2007) and allowed for interview sessions with tremendous depth of subject matter. Prior to the interviews, permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board of Auburn University to conduct the investigation.

The researcher employed HyperRESEARCH software and Microsoft Excel in order to code and analyze data, separating text into preliminary themes related to Watkins' personal background, Lassiter High School Band program structure and organization, Watkins' teaching philosophy, pedagogical approaches, and group cohesion. Some of these themes included history and development of the program, program balance and structure, development of individual skills, development of group skills, goals and expectations, classroom environment, conveying information, task cohesion, and interpersonal cohesion.

To further ensure dependability, the researcher enlisted help from a colleague in the coding process using peer review (Creswell, 2007). The colleague reviewed the interview transcriptions as well as the analyses the researcher presented using Microsoft Excel software. The colleague confirmed themes or pointed out alternative

interpretations. The themes were then separated into content areas (e.g. program structure, curriculum balance, scheduling, pedagogical approach, communication) that could inform other music teachers. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher kept a research journal and provided detailed analysis memos to the colleague for review.

In addition to the interviews with Alfred Watkins, the investigator also interviewed several colleagues of Mr. Watkins', including all current and past assistant band directors at Lassiter, the supervisor of music in Cobb County, and several other colleagues in the music education field who have observed the Lassiter Band in either a marching band or concert band setting. These 12 colleagues were selected for participation based on their direct knowledge and extended contact with Alfred Watkins and the Lassiter Band Program. Each semi-structured interview took place via telephone conversation during June and July 2009. Phone interviews ranged from 20 -- 60 minutes, depending on the participant's desire to elaborate on the original interview questions. At least four of the participants' interviews progressed tangentially, discussing Watkins' influence upon other music educators. This discussion was included in the final chapter of this study, as it seemed important in relating Watkins' impact on the music education profession. Although the phone conversations were not audio recorded, the participants spoke via speakerphone as the investigator entered all comments into Microsoft Word. The investigator sent the conversation transcripts to each participant for verification of credibility via email so that they might make corrections if needed. Data were then entered into Microsoft Excel for coding of themes. Thus, data from each interview were put through the member-checking process and coded into themes to focus direction for

subsequent interviews. Detailed data analysis memos documented this process, and data was shared with the investigator's advisor for peer review.

One of the most important aspects of this investigation is its relevance to improving the field of music education. Thus, the investigator sought not only to provide an historical document but an active "how-to" guide for music educators and future music educators. To that end, video of two hours of rehearsal conducted by Alfred Watkins was recorded and analyzed. The rehearsals took place in August 2009 and were recorded by Mr. Watkins and transmitted to the investigator electronically. The primary purpose of these analyzed rehearsal sessions was to document how Alfred Watkins implemented his professed philosophies, strategies, and teaching techniques in authentic contexts. Utilizing the emergent data from the interview process, the investigator observed both Watkins' verbal and nonverbal communication, the classroom environment, the level of expectations set for the students, and the pedagogical process in order to provide the reader with an actual portrayal of what happened in a typical rehearsal at Lassiter High School. Data from the video were analyzed by using a timestamp in iMovie software with a MacBook computer. The video analysis centered upon Mr. Watkins' expressed philosophy of "taking a private lesson approach to teaching band" that emerged as a predominant theme from the interviews. Finally, the research literature related to group efficacy points to the advantages of effective goal setting and positive change for the creation of task cohesion and group cohesion. Conclusions drawn comparing the coded rehearsal observation to themes developed from the interviews were described with careful emphasis on the context in which they occurred in order to create

greater understanding and to provide clear direction for others wishing to emulate the expert teaching of Alfred Watkins.

Finally, relevant documents and artifacts were collected and examined for insight into the organization, curriculum, and achievements of the Lassiter Band. Some of these data included CD and DVD recordings of the ensembles, photographs of the bands and the facilities, and documents such as classroom materials, band handbooks, Booster Organization by-laws, newsletters, website data, repertoire lists, and program accomplishments. Data from the documents were categorized into themes related to history and development of the program; program balance and structure; development of skills; goals and planning; communication; and pedagogical approach and were used to confirm findings from the interviews.

The use of interviews, examination of artifacts and documents, and the content analysis of videotaped rehearsals provided triangulation of data for this unique teacher and teaching situation. The qualitative approach provides a distinctive contribution to the knowledge base of a particular phenomenon within its natural context (Creswell, 2007). This knowledge base can in turn serve to improve the field of instrumental music education by incorporation of the resulting conclusions into the music classroom or by sharing the findings with pre-service music teachers. While some may argue that a weakness of the qualitative approach is its lack of generalizability (Yin, 1984) this investigator asserts that the overall concepts regarding the “how” and the “why” of Alfred Watkins’ philosophical approach, rehearsal strategies, and structure and organization of the Lassiter Band program can and should indeed be replicated in other

contexts and situations. This paper aims to serve that function for music educators—to describe a role model situation for current and future high school band directors.

### Organization of the Study

The first three chapters of this study have set forth the background information for the purpose and need for the current study, a review of related literature, and the procedures used in the study. The following four chapters serve as the typical “Findings” section and were separated to provide clarity and readability: Chapter Four consists of a brief account of the significant aspects of Alfred Watkins’ personal, educational, and professional experiences that informed his teaching practices; Chapter Five presents the Lassiter High School Band program structure and organization, with particular focus on program balance and philosophy; Chapter Six describes Alfred Watkins’ pedagogical approach to rehearsals and classroom environment and documents to what extent his philosophies on bands are evident in his rehearsal techniques; and Chapter Seven summarizes the Lassiter experiences with a focus on group cohesion at the student, parent, and community level. Chapter Eight serves as a synopsis of Watkins’ contributions by highlighting the Lassiter Symphonic Band Camp as a microcosm of the findings from this study. Finally, Chapter Nine is a discussion that relates the findings to the literature, including recommendations and implications for further research.

## CHAPTER 4

### PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF ALFRED WATKINS

#### Early Influences

Alfred Lee Watkins was born on June 3, 1954 to parents Oscar Jewell Watkins and Lucy Bell Watson Watkins in Jackson, Georgia. Jackson, a small, rural town of less than 4,000 inhabitants, lies approximately 50 miles southeast of Atlanta and covers 4.7 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). One of four children, Alfred grew up in a modest but comfortable family home in a small village outside of Jackson that served the families of the employees of the Georgia Power Company, where his father worked as an electrician. Mrs. Watkins worked at home to take care of Alfred and his two older brothers, Fred and Theottis, and his younger sister, Janice. As African Americans in the 1950s in rural Georgia, the Watkins family lived in one of the few integrated places in the county. As a child, Alfred played and interacted with the White children in his neighborhood, but he did not attend the same churches and schools as the White children. Georgia was still in many ways a segregated state and would be for at least the next 20 years.

Mr. Watkins attended segregated schools in Jackson until he completed the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, when the schools in Jackson integrated in 1970. Up until that time, he was exposed to Black teachers, Black intellectuals, Black athletes, Black coaches. He “saw successful people and [was] anxious to be as successful as those [Black role models]” (A. L.

Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). When Watkins entered his junior year in high school, he served as a member of a student panel that worked together to bridge the integration of the schools. According to Mr. Watkins, the students did not seem to have any problems with integration. The student panel agreed to throw out both the former names of the segregated schools (Henderson was the all-Black school and Jackson was the all-White school) and the school colors of the segregated schools and emerge as McIntosh High School with a new set of school colors. Unfortunately, many of the White parents were unhappy with the integration of their schools and wanted to maintain some of their traditions, so when the integrated school opened in the fall, the decisions of the student panel were thrown out and replaced by a decision from the school board to keep the name Jackson High School and the Jackson High School colors.

Another decision made by the Jackson School Board was to name the head football coach at the new school. Although Henderson High School had a winning football record and Jackson did not, the school board named the White coach as head coach of the new, integrated school. The young Alfred Watkins saw the injustice in this decision, and he led a walkout with many of his classmates—both Black and White students—during the first semester of the integrated school. This early demonstration of Watkins' passion for what is right resulted in the school board making a positive change in the coaching staff—naming the Black coach as head coach at Jackson—as well as adapting one of the school colors from the Black school into the integrated school.

At the time the two schools merged, the Black students did not know how they would fare academically. They knew that they had been educated in separate facilities with a separate curriculum. They knew that they had been using cast-off textbooks from

the White school. According to Mr. Watkins, “once we took our first round or two of exams, and once I found out that my academics were going to measure up with the White kids, I never looked back” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

### Musical Influences

Mr. Watkins’ involvement with music began when he was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and some of the teachers at school thought it would be cute to have a couple of young trumpeters play at graduation ceremonies. Because he was such a strong student, clean-cut, and bright, he was selected to go to the music room to learn to play the trumpet. Growing up in a church-going family in the rural South, Alfred was exposed to the sounds of gospel music. In addition, his parents regularly listened to public radio, and Watkins remembers hearing the Lawrence Welk show, Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, and the Bernstein Young People’s Concerts. Thus, with a love for the sounds of gospel and classical music, young Alfred developed his ear for symphonic music. Although he had an early interest in becoming a lawyer, by his junior year in high school, Alfred knew that “the call to music was too powerful” for him to resist (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

### Education

When it came time for Alfred to choose a university, he selected his high school band director’s alma mater, Florida A & M University, in Tallahassee. Although he had attended an integrated high school for two years, Alfred had experienced some racism in some of his state-level music experiences (see Appendix B for more details), and it turned him away from the traditionally white colleges. Known for its outstanding marching band, the Marching 100 at Florida A & M attracted many young, talented Black



musicians. At A & M, Alfred experienced some wonderful music instruction from his trumpet professor, Lenard Bowie, and from his two band directors, Dr. William P. Foster and Dr. Julian White. Watkins credits Bowie for helping him to develop his sense of phrasing and musicianship as well as an overall music educator intellect. Dr. Foster was a strong role model who taught students music and character building. “He was a giant amongst men,” Alfred said, “very good at developing character, highly intellectual, very organized, very decent man. He was a very good musician, but his main points were character, leadership, and those traits that were ancillary to playing an instrument” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). Finally, Dr. White provided Alfred with a curriculum prototype that had a significant impact on Mr. Watkins’ own approach to the classroom. “When he [Dr. White] brought all of his methods, materials, and skills to our classroom. . . to our music methods classes, he gave us the template for success if you don’t have students taking private lessons. . . . He called it the private lesson approach to teaching the full band” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009), the approach Watkins still uses today.

During his senior year in college, Mr. Watkins completed his student teaching experience at Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta. He had requested special permission to student teach closer to home since his mother had been diagnosed with cancer earlier that year. A position in a neighboring school opened up a few weeks before graduation, and Mr. Watkins was offered the position as a supply teacher (since he did not yet qualify for a teaching certificate), which he accepted even before completing his student teaching requirements. Upon graduation from Florida A & M in 1976, Mr.

Watkins continued to teach at Murphy High School, in the city of Atlanta, where he remained as Director of Bands for six years.

### Murphy High School Years

Murphy High School was located in the Atlanta Public Schools System. The school was a short drive from downtown Atlanta—the city skyline could be seen from the front of the school. Mr. Watkins remembered that the school was known for its drug and violence problems (“knives and guns were commonplace”), that approximately 95% of the student body was on free or reduced lunch, and that the band program had been left in a deplorable situation (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). He related a story of finding the marching band uniforms in a filthy pile in the middle of a room, and single-handedly taking them to a laundromat and cleaning them by hand. There were no band parents involved to assist with the program, and no other teachers to work with the band program. According to Don Roberts, a former student of Mr. Watkins’ from Murphy High School and current supervisor of music in Dekalb County, Georgia, “The school was in a rough community, in a low socioeconomic level community, with not much positive happening in the community. Based on the program when he arrived there in 1976, there was not much there at all. By the time he left, it was playing level VI literature” (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 28, 2009).

Roberts described the progress Watkins made with the Murphy Band: “At Murphy—the biggest thing he did was instill discipline first and with that came pride from a sense of accomplishment. The band overachieved under his leadership. I didn’t realize how much we had overachieved until looking back on it much later after I left” (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 28, 2009). Mr. Watkins instilled discipline

from the outset of his tenure at Murphy. The first thing he did was to eliminate any band members who would not cooperate with his plan to create a well-disciplined group. Thus, he threw 20-25 students out at the first practice. He was left with about 35 students in the band, but he would have taken any number—he just wanted to have a good, disciplined band. He said “we were going to move forward with whoever was left standing. If it had been a trio, I’d have a trio....but the students that I had were going to be, look like, and behave like and sound like a school band. That was the only thing that drove me” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

The Murphy Marching Band stood still and played for all but the last football game of that first year. Watkins knew the band did not play well, and he insisted that they learn to play before they learned to march and play. The band received a standing ovation at the final football game of the year because they marched a 32-count drill for the first time that year. In the spring of 1977, the Murphy Band went to the district band festival for the first time in its history. No one had ever insisted that the students develop strong music skills until Mr. Watkins took the helm of that program. He remembered the repertoire the first Murphy Band played at festival: *Brittany March*, *Little Love is Kind* by James Ployhar, and *Pageantry Overture* by John Edmondson. The band received an “excellent” rating. It was not until that point that Watkins learned the meaning of the rating system. His supervisor explained to him that a “superior” rating was a higher rating and explained why the Murphy Band did not receive a superior rating based on the evaluation sheet used at the festival. From that point forward, Watkins was determined to achieve a superior rating, and he did not ever receive another “excellent” or “II” rating at Murphy. “If they were going to use that as a measuring stick for excellence, then I was

going to figure out how they measured. So that was it” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). It took Watkins about four years to develop the concert band program at Murphy from a grade II ensemble to a grade VI ensemble.

By the time Mr. Watkins left Murphy in 1982, the band program had grown to almost 150 members, performed well in local marching band competitions (using a combination of the high-knee-lift style of historically Black colleges and universities and corps style marching), and performed solid level VI concert band literature. Watkins nurtured students towards individual successes as well, including students who were selected for the McDonald’s All-American Band and the Georgia All-State Bands. When asked about his greatest accomplishments at Murphy, he said: “when I first began there, probably 5% of the students were college-bound. When I left my last year, I think it was 100% were college bound” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). Watkins’ impact on his students at Murphy went beyond the musical. His former student, Don Roberts, confirmed Watkins’ impact on the students during his tenure at Murphy. Roberts said, “He was the band director, the private teacher, the counselor, the parent. . . . He’s the master of attaining great success with minimal resources” (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 28, 2009).

#### Transition to Lassiter High School

Watkins made the decision to leave Murphy in 1982, when he was offered the director of bands position at Lassiter High School, in suburban Marietta, Georgia, 20 miles northwest of the city of Atlanta. Boyd McKeown—then supervisor of music in Cobb County—had heard Alfred’s Murphy bands and was keen to have Alfred in the Cobb County System (B. McKeown, personal communication, July 30, 2009). While Mr.

Watkins did indeed attain success with limited financial resources at Murphy, he aspired to achieve more advanced musical goals. In terms of the finances required for private instruction, high quality instruments, and travel opportunities, Mr. Watkins recognized that the small inner-city program at Murphy would always be limited. It was difficult for him to make the decision to leave Murphy, but in the end, his drive to develop a program that could make music at the highest possible level and that could travel and grow at more advanced levels determined his move.

When Mr. Watkins arrived at Lassiter in 1982, the school was one year old. Currently the second largest school system in the state of Georgia (CCSD, 2009), Cobb County boasted tremendous growth from the 1980s to present. Lassiter was opened to relieve the overload student populations at nearby Sprayberry and Walton High Schools, as the population in suburban Marietta continued to grow. At the time, the school enrollment at Lassiter neared 1200, with approximately 120 in the band program. According to demographics, continued growth in population was a guarantee. In fact, the school enrollment continued to grow until it reached nearly 3000 students in 1987, and Pope High School opened a few miles away to relieve the Lassiter overload.

One of the principal attractions to Lassiter for Watkins was the middle school feeder program. With over 500 students playing in bands in the middle schools, he knew that if he could attract those students to continue in the high school band, he could make a great impact in music education in that community and in the state of Georgia. At that time, in 1982, Mabry Middle School had a large band program of approximately 500 students with Steve Stanley as the director of bands. What Watkins needed to do was to create a strong high school band program that would keep the high school students

interested, challenged, and involved and that would allow for maximum retention as Stanley's middle school students eventually moved from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Despite the possibility of significant numbers in the band program, the Lassiter situation presented a few stumbling blocks for Alfred Watkins. He found himself the only adult Black male on campus for many years. (author's note: Even when I joined the faculty in 1987, of a faculty and staff of over 150 people, there were only three adult Black males at Lassiter: Mr. Watkins, an assistant football coach, and a custodian.) Even more surprising, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was still active in Marietta in the 1980s. Mr. Watkins related a story of riding the band busses to his first away football game in the fall of 1982. When the busses pulled out of the school parking lot and made a left turn, in the park adjacent to Lassiter, there was a sign announcing a KKK rally. At the time, Watkins joked with the students that their parents were "having a meeting over here." He later found out that, in fact, there were band parents in that meeting planning to scare Mr. Watkins out of "their community" (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). In addition, Watkins felt less overt—but no less significant—signs of racism from the adult community at Lassiter. Parents would frequently watch closely when he worked with sections that had more females in them by having five or six chaperones around, when they would only have a single chaperone as he worked with the male students; or there was a sense of hesitation at booster club board meetings for simple decision-making tasks. Fortunately, Mr. Watkins never experienced racial tensions with the students. From the beginning, he stressed that he "had a terrific group of students that were anxious to have a good band. They were cordial; they were responsive; they were bright. . . . They didn't play as well as my Murphy Band when I first started

there [Lassiter]. . .but the potential was there” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

Despite the racial challenges Watkins faced, he chose to stay through the difficulties presented by some of the band parents. He wanted to live on his own terms and not be forced out of a situation until he himself would make the choice to leave. In the long run, his decision and his fortitude benefitted everyone involved. After two or three years, the adult community came around to accepting Alfred Watkins as director of bands at Lassiter. The students had already united in a healthy environment for positive music making and growth, and with the rest of the community on board, the Lassiter Band Program began the growth and development that have allowed it to become known as one of the finest high school bands in the nation.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

#### Curriculum Balance

The Lassiter Band Program grew and developed guided by the philosophy of its leader, Alfred Watkins. Watkins' beliefs about teaching, learning, music, the educational process, and what it takes to sustain a successful high school band program evolved developmentally from the experiences described in Chapter Four, but it was not merely happenstance; he consciously built upon those earlier experiences. As both Watkins and the Lassiter program matured, Mr. Watkins' philosophies governed the direction of the program, creating an organization and program structure that have proven successful for more than 25 years. With so many facets to a high school band program such as teaching various musical concepts to students with varying ability and interest levels, performance preparation and competitive possibilities, the director's guiding philosophical principles become reflected in the program's organization and structure. One of Lassiter's former assistant band directors said:

The Lassiter program has maintained a balance in all facets of the program. Every faction of it has been set up in such a way that it produces high quality. Alfred always talked about it being important to be well-rounded and to offer different avenues for performance—whether it be jazz, marching, concert, or chamber music. It's a multi-faceted program, and every component has been designed to



allow the kids to progress and succeed. (G. D. Gribble, personal communication, July 8, 2009).

The Lassiter Band was created with a focus on the symphonic band program. Watkins' belief was that children must learn to play their instruments well, first and foremost. He stated that he had always worked to ensure that "100 % of the students that come through under my leadership have an opportunity to learn the real valuable tool of music through performance, through everyday growth and development" (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009). Thus, the structure of the program was set up to reflect a strong belief in musical pedagogy with a focus on individual skill development.

Individual skill development started with the structure of the school band curriculum. In fall semesters, Watkins avoided rehearsing marching band music during the school day. Instead marching band was predominantly an after-school activity. Thus, during the school day, the focus in the classroom was to develop individual musicianship in regard to tone quality, intonation awareness, technical development, and musical understanding. In order to provide the freshmen students with an opportunity to transition into the high school program effectively, Watkins devised a curriculum and a structure in the first semester that was altered in spring semesters. In the fall, the upperclassmen students were assigned to concert band classes based on ability. However, the freshmen students were assigned to freshmen woodwind, brass, or percussion classes in order to focus on particular skills in the more homogeneous class setting. At the end of the first semester, all students were auditioned and placed into large symphonic ensembles based on ability. The Symphonic I Band was comprised of the most advanced players in the program; Symphonic II Band was the second group; Concert I was the third, and Concert

II was the youngest, least-experienced group. Watkins described the concert band set-up:

There are four concert bands at Lassiter. There are three symphonic bands on top and a wind ensemble underneath (*he chuckles as he says this*). We have the smallest band underneath, which many people would call a wind ensemble nowadays, because we try to have a lower pupil per teacher ratio in the band where kids have the most needs. The symphonic bands are 65 members (Symphonic I and Symphonic II), 65-70 members in Concert I, and 45 members in Concert II (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

In addition to the concert bands (see photo, page 41), Lassiter's ensemble program was comprised of a large marching band (see photo, page 41), an active auxiliary program, a jazz band, and a chamber music program. More than 100 students annually participated in some type of small ensemble music making at Lassiter. Chamber music was always a significant component of the program structure at Lassiter, and several of the smaller organizations were standing ensembles for many years. The clarinet choir and trombone choirs, for example, were active for more than 20 years. In addition to those ensembles, student-formed brass and woodwind quintets, flute choir, tuba-euphonium ensemble, saxophone quartets, and percussion ensembles remained an active part of the music making experience at Lassiter. With the exception of percussion ensemble that was required, all other ensemble participation was voluntary, and "as a rule, coached by the students themselves" (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

The jazz program at Lassiter was active primarily in the second semester. The jazz band consisted of students in all grade levels in a standard instrumentation of five

saxophones, five trumpets, four trombones, and a rhythm section. Other jazz combos served to round out the jazz curriculum in terms of additional student involvement. The jazz band performed at regional adjudicated festivals and school and community spring events. A separate jazz teacher was often employed to coach this group in an after-school setting.

In addition to the band ensembles, the more advanced wind and percussion players at Lassiter had the opportunity to perform in a symphony orchestra. This 100+ member group met both during the school day as well as after school. The string orchestra and the Symphonic I Band were intentionally scheduled during the same class period so that wind and percussion students could be pulled out of their band class in order to rehearse with the orchestra. Typically, the band students would play with the symphony orchestra one day a week. Mr. Watkins believed strongly in the value of the orchestra experience for his advanced students.

The non-musician members of the Lassiter Band program included auxiliary members who participated in the marching band as well as the winter guard activity. January through May, members of the auxiliaries had the opportunity to participate in one of two indoor color guards at Lassiter. The advanced level group typically performed at national level competitions through the Winter Guard International (WGI) organization on a biannual basis (the Lassiter winter guard won the WGI national championships in 1996 and 1997). The second group served as a training ground for the less experienced flag, rifle, or weapons performers. The winter guard activity became an important component of the program, involving those auxiliary members in a year-round band program, rather than dismissing these students at the end of marching season. Watkins

stated that keeping those students involved year round was an important part of their continued skill development as well as the members' sense of belonging within the context of the overall Lassiter Band Program.



*Figure 1.* Lassiter Marching Band, Bands of America Grand Nationals, 1998.



*Figure 2.* Lassiter Symphonic I Band, Midwest Clinic, 1989.



*Figure 3.* Backstage after Sudler Flag acceptance concert, 1989. Left to Right: James Curnow, Gladys Stone Wright, Alfred Watkins, Rita Watkins, Sue Samuels.

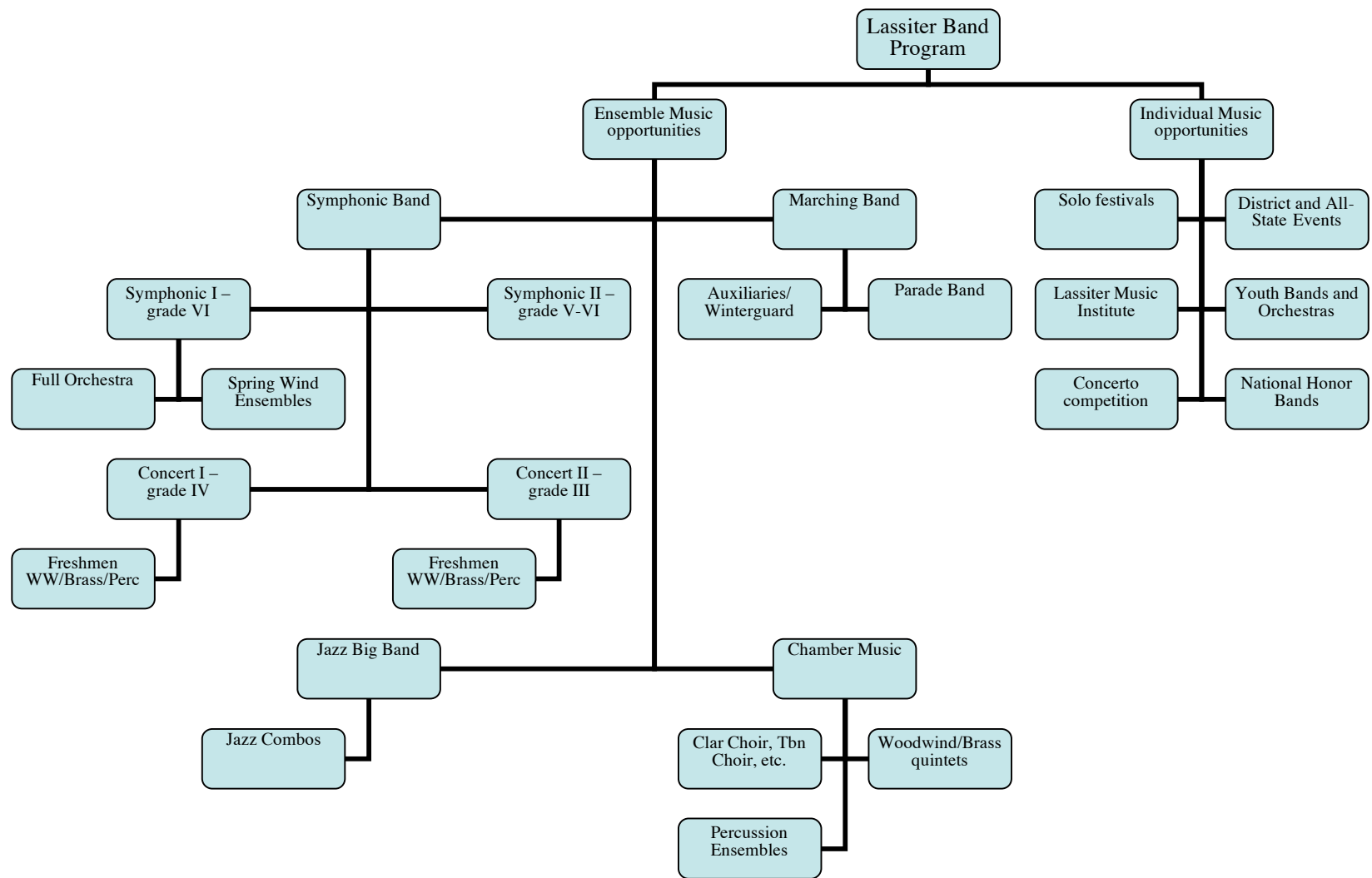


Figure 4. The Lassiter band program musical structure.



In addition to the emphasis on balance within the overall curriculum, Watkins expressed strong opinions about the balance of the marching band program regarding competition and educational focus. While the Lassiter Marching Band has won the Bands of America Grand National Marching Band Championships twice (1998 and 2002), Watkins intentionally avoided that level of competition on an annual basis. He said:

One of the reasons that I don't compete on the national level every year is because I don't think it's healthy for groups . . . to spend that kind of [financial] expenditure for marching band. Another reason I don't compete with the marching band on the regional or national level every year, I think it's important to have a balance in your marching band program . . . . So we try to space out [the national level competitions] every three to five years. During the years that we were going to the Bands of America Grand National Championships, we would use the parades in between as having another national event that was non-competitive. . . . They were an opportunity for us to enjoy being in the organization and being able to perform at a high level nationally and internationally without the spirit of competition involved in it. Being a parade band to balance the other parts of our program was very important to me, and that was established actually before we established the competitive marching band pretty well.

The Lassiter Band participated in its first national parade in 1986, when it was selected to perform at the King Orange Jamboree Parade in Miami, and it has been selected to perform at the 2010 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. This 25-year run of involvement with national parades has enabled a sense of healthy balance for the Lassiter program,

according to Watkins. He carefully planned a concert band focus on alternate years in order to show balance between the marching and the concert bands and to demonstrate to the students and the community that both were equally important. For example, to follow up the Orange Bowl Parade of 1986, the Lassiter Symphonic I Band performed at the Tri-State Convention at Florida State in 1987. In 1988, the Symphonic Band performed at the National Band Association National Convention in the spring and then performed at their first Bands of America Regional Championship in the fall of 1988 and in the Rose Bowl Parade that winter. In 1989, the Lassiter Symphonic Band played at the Mid-West. Then, in 1990, they performed at the Grand Nationals of Bands of America. Thus, there is evidence that Watkins' scheduling allowed for a balance and variety of experiences for his students (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

### Organization of Teaching

One of the unique aspects of the structure of the Lassiter program was the development of a teaching curriculum that improved individual student abilities that then advanced the group successes. Former assistant director, Catharine Bushman shared her opinion of Lassiter's unique approach to teaching the individual student when she said,

What goes on day to day is not generally available for public consumption—the way that [the Lassiter teachers] talk to the individual students and what they're learning. In other places I've observed since leaving Lassiter, the focus on competition and performances is a regular part of their instruction. People assume that's a part of it at Lassiter, but it's not. . . . The Lassiter Band program isn't about creating the best top band in the world or musicians that get into Julliard. It's about teaching every child [in the program.] I know Alfred thinks about a



four-year curriculum—the combined experience of what a student will be exposed to in four years. . . might be a year of travelling, a year of competition, and so forth. A student may come in at a low level of performance, and they'll start at a lower level of literature, like the educational music of Jim Swearingen. As they improve over four years, they'll perform music by Sousa, Karl King, Husa, Persichetti. . . the educational music is just one component of what the students perform over four years (C. S. Bushman, personal communication, July 8, 2009).

Mr. Watkins also addressed the structure of the program as it pertained to the ability level of all students involved. The organization of the concert bands, based on ability, allowed for students to perform music literature appropriate for their individual skill levels. No student was pushed too far beyond his or her capabilities, but care was always taken to ensure that every student was challenged at an appropriate level. Within each of the bands, individual musical skills were the focus of every rehearsal, and each individual in each group was challenged to move beyond his or her current ability level. Watkins stated that in the second semester, each band's repertoire was specifically chosen to be a bit above where they were capable of playing. The stretch of the students' abilities, along with good teaching and student cooperation, allowed for significant achievement. The outcome of this structure produced individual student growth so that students progressed through the bands over the years, moving, perhaps, from third band to second, and to first.

In addition to the tiered level of instruction within the curriculum, Mr. Watkins constantly sought to provide additional resources in order to best serve the students in the Lassiter program. He built a large contingent of adjunct faculty who became a regular

part of the Lassiter teaching staff. For example, at the beginning of each marching band season, as the students came away from a summer break and were in need of specific instruction to get back into shape, an individual teacher was assigned to every section in the after school band. Each section, from flute to tuba to percussion, had a professional on that particular instrument to provide specialized instruction to all members of each respective section. Former colleague, Ginny Markham commented that not only do the students benefit from Watkins' knowledge within the structure of the program, "but he hires staff and hires other musicians and professionals, so there's a constant revolving door of musical knowledge for the students" (G. F. Markham, personal communication, July 8, 2009). The structure Watkins had set up provided that "everyone gets a high level of professional instruction from the time they walk in the door, and they begin to develop their skills" (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

## CHAPTER 6

### PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

With a sound program structure in place, Mr. Watkins' approach to the students, to the classroom environment, and to the teaching process were also examined. One of his former students—currently a colleague and music supervisor in Dekalb (GA) County—summed up Watkins' approach:

I think in his rehearsals he's like an artist or a sculptor. When an artist builds a monument, it isn't done all at once. It's done a little bit at a time. Piece by piece, the artist chips away at it and then comes back and perfects it. You're not going to get it all done in one day. He taught me that. You might get section A done today. . . then B the next. . . then review section A and B. He's very methodical in his approach. . . . He understands the pedagogy of every single instrument, and he studies all the time. I think people don't realize that he studies everything about a piece of music as if it were a homework assignment or a major report for a degree. He studies his scores, outlines them, details them, makes notes on them, lives with the music. . . . His preparation that he puts into a piece of music is so detailed. . . He's just prepared and very well read. That's his edge. (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 29, 2009)

Another colleague commented on Mr. Watkins' approach:

He also is extremely knowledgeable from a pedagogical standpoint and he insists that his assistants understand and get pedagogical information as well. It's not as simple as telling a student to get better, but he and the other staff members tell students *how* [italics added] to get better. (G. E. Markham, personal communication, July 27, 2009).

Still, another colleague—a former assistant director at Lassiter—noted:

He's really good with readiness and knowing what he needs to discuss with the students in order to get them in the proper mental phase to get what needs to be done. He might create an analogy or tell a story that is just right to inspire the students or to help them understand the task at hand. He takes the time to put them in that mindset, and it makes the rehearsals efficient. . . . He keeps a really good eye on whether the students are engaged, where they are mentally, and who they are. He takes time to help them understand where he wants them to be musically . . . . He demands and gets silence and attention. . . He's really good at getting everyone to work towards the one common goal. He keeps things interesting and always relates information in a way that gets their attention. He works for it. (C. Morantz, personal communication, July 12, 2009)

Evidence from colleague interviews indicated that Mr. Watkins' approach to rehearsals was thorough, focused and engaging. Watkins prepared himself and his students in a positive manner so that learning could take place efficiently. Through his individual study and preparation, through his ability to manage the classroom and the students effectively, and through his ability to communicate his knowledge and

musicianship, Watkins' pedagogical approach laid a strong foundation for music learning within the Lassiter Band Program. The following sections detail some of the themes of Watkins' approach to teaching.

### Learning Readiness

Watkins stressed the importance of preparing students to learn. Learning readiness refers to the level of sufficient mental and physical development and personal motivation a child must have in order for learning to take place (ERIC, n.d.). If the students have not entered the classroom and approached the rehearsal in a frame of mind in which they are ready to receive information, then even all the musical knowledge in the world would not be enough to produce excellent music making. The responsibility falls to the teacher to prepare the students to learn. Watkins said, "The teacher has to create the atmosphere where the student is readily engaged in the process of music making or the process of learning" (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

Part of this approach to the classroom was directly related to student behavior and the teacher's expectation of the students' behavior. Watkins insisted that the students enter the classroom quietly and in a manner that did not create a distraction or change the atmosphere of the classroom. The empty classroom had a quiet, tranquil, peacefulness to it, and as the students entered the room, their responsibility was to quickly and quietly get their materials and get set up for music making. When asked how he created learning readiness at Lassiter, Watkins communicated:

The first thing that I had to do at Lassiter was to discipline the program, get the students where they were interested in listening and interested in following

instruction and following directions. Discipline breeds self-discipline. It isn't the other way around. They don't come self-disciplined out of the box. You must give them a sense of structure, a sense of organization, and a sense of decorum first, and then that, within itself, will breed a student who will do it for themselves. . . . You must train them how to treat this particular environment until they learn that this is what they must do in this environment. . . . Once I got them with a sense of discipline, order, structure, behavior modifications, and attitude adjustments, then I could teach them; but you can't teach them if they're in the wrong space, mentally. . . . You can teach all the music you choose to teach, but if they're not listening or anxious to learn, or interested in learning, then it doesn't matter what you know. Beethoven couldn't teach them. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

In order to convey this expectation of approach to the classroom, Watkins communicated constantly with the students and their parents. Whether in the form of written communication—as in a band handbook—or verbal communication—as in greeting students as they entered the classroom and urging them to move quickly and quietly to gather their materials and sit down for rehearsal, Watkins constantly conveyed his expectations of behavior to the students. Perhaps more importantly, Watkins maintained his high level of expectations consistently and relentlessly. He always insisted that excellence was an every day, every minute, every second standard, and he never allowed himself to tire of working towards it in every aspect of his approach—whether it was a musical line or a behavioral expectation.

In terms of behavioral expectations, Watkins always made it clear to the students what their responsibilities were. As soon as a student deviated from those expectations, Watkins immediately corrected them. Sometimes, the student would be corrected after class; sometimes the student or the student's parent would receive a phone call at home; or sometimes, a behavior would be addressed during class. Depending on the severity of the behavioral infraction, one of the aforementioned actions would be taken. Mr. Watkins always felt it was his responsibility to correct the behavior clearly and to insist that the students follow through with their responsibilities (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009).

Watkins communicated that behavior modification and helping the students learn their roles in terms of behavior can be done in a non-threatening environment. This was an essential part of building trust and respect in the Lassiter classroom. Watkins' efforts at correcting behavioral issues were grounded in the idea of correcting behavior without bullying the students.

The students can't be afraid to come into the classroom. They can't be afraid to play a phrase. They can't be afraid to take a risk. That's what I mean by non-threatening. There has to be some pointed discussion if behavior modification is necessary—very pointed discussion, but it needs to be directed toward the individual child [with the behavior issue] and not toward anyone else in the classroom. So I'd just simply say "I'm sorry I was short with Suzy today. She made a mistake that we all witnessed, and she's not going to play with us for two or three days, so she can decide on whether she wants to be in this organization or

not. It has nothing to do with anyone else in this classroom. Let's start at letter D, please. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

Other teachers who have witnessed Mr. Watkins correcting students' behavior in class confirm his approach. One former assistant director reinforced:

I never saw him blow up at the band. When he would get [angry at something that happened in the class,] he would just say "I'm mad," and he would simply state why. It was a statement—just truthful and honest without making it uncomfortable. We've all seen other band directors lose it, and he never did that. . . . With Alfred, you always knew what you were going to get, so you came in relaxed and comfortable. (G. F. Markham, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

With the creation of a level of behavioral expectations along with a cooperative, non-threatening environment, the stage for learning readiness became possible. The learning readiness phase was vital in providing the groundwork from which students could springboard into learning music. Watkins equated the learning readiness concept with the fundamental concept of learning the alphabet:

Learning readiness is like learning the ABCs. If you don't know the ABCs, you really can't construct a sentence; you can't construct a paragraph; you can't write an essay; you can't write a book; you're stuck. . . . If you can't do that, you can't do anything else. So learning readiness is a simple tool much like learning major scales. Without learning major scales, you can't construct music. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

Once learning readiness became a ground base for the organization and the students understood their roles and responsibilities, then the teaching of music became simply



that—the teaching of music and not the training of behavior. This set the stage for a classroom environment open to learning music and growing as individuals and as an ensemble.

#### Private Lesson Approach

At Florida A & M University (FAMU), Alfred Watkins was a student of Dr. Julian White. A graduate of Florida A & M, himself, as well as of the University of Illinois and Florida State University, Dr. White taught high school band in the 1960s in the Jacksonville area. During that time, his programs were recognized as having excellent performing groups (FAMU Department of Music, 2009). In fact, Dr. White's bands at Raines High School consistently received superior ratings at the Florida Bandmasters Association State Music Performance Assessment (an accomplishment difficult to achieve even today). According to Watkins, the Raines students that attended FAMU were “nearly expertly trained” and soon occupied all of the top chairs in the University ensembles. The Raines students were known for their excellent sight-reading skills, beautiful tone qualities, and proficiency playing the standard solo literature and method books. Dr. White accomplished all of this with his players at Raines without the advantage of private instruction (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, August 7, 2009).

Dr. White brought his successful teaching methods, materials, and skills to the students at FAMU, and Mr. Watkins was his student in music education courses. The methodology included a template for success based on the assumption that the students in the band program were not taking private lessons on their individual instruments outside of school. The method was called the “private lesson approach to teaching the full band.”

Watkins took that template and put it into practice from the time he began teaching. He said that although he had modified the approach by allowing it to grow over the years, the basic core approach was what he learned from Dr. White at FAMU. The concept was simple: ensure that every child improve on his or her fundamental musical skills during the course of the school term.

Watkins had employed this concept during his years at Murphy High School, and when he moved to Lassiter in 1982, he approached his class lessons the same way.

We started [at Lassiter] with the same teaching techniques that I'd used all my career—the private lesson approach to teaching full band, with emphasis on building tonal quality, pitch, blend, balance, and facility. . . through a daily drills program. Then, a sense of interpretation of musical line and interpretation of the music [follows]. You can get to the music once the kids have skills. You can't get to the music easily unless they have skills. . . many teachers teach the other way around—they try to teach interpretive ideas first without the kids having skills, so you have beautiful interpretations that sound poor. So what I have developed at Lassiter is an approach to teaching the band, assuming that none of the students were taking private lessons, and I used private lessons as an enhancement above the natural course of study. . . . The first thing a private teacher does is to get the kid to play this big, gorgeous rich, round, robust sound in the middle of the horn [and then move on from there in terms of range and volume]. . . . It's incumbent upon the teachers and conductors in the classroom to develop those skills also. So I developed the Lassiter Band with the assumption that none of the students were

going to take lessons; that whatever they got, they had to get from me. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

### The Daily Routine

In the private lesson approach to teaching the full band, Watkins went through as many of the basic fundamentals as possible in efficient exercises on an everyday basis. He assumed that if he did not cover a particular fundamental in the warm-up, then the student would not cover it at all that day. Thus, attention was given to tone quality, blend, control, center of pitch concepts, precision of notes moving together, attacks and releases, interpretation, and so on every day. Mr. Watkins said that these fundamentals never left his ear as he worked with the band, regardless of which band he was rehearsing.

Following is a list of fundamentals or fundamental exercises that Mr. Watkins said he addressed on an everyday basis:

- Breathing – Inhale four counts, exhale four counts; in two, out six, in one, out seven, etc.
- Tone quality – Long tone exercises to develop projection, tonal focus, resonance
- Intonation – Unison matching and chordal adjustments using “just” intonation concepts
- Range – Exercises in three registers: low, middle, and upper
- Technique – With a mechanical time keeper such as Dr. Beat, various patterns and exercises; generally woodwind dexterity and brass slur passages; attacks and releases
- Articulation – Within the context of music, varied articulations such as slur two, tongue two, etc; emphasis on the beginning, middle, and end of each note
- Dynamics – Changing dynamics within other exercises while maintaining excellent tone quality; volume contour concepts
- New/beautiful – Something should be new to the students daily, whether it is a new piece of music or a new way of approaching something old or a new way to shape a phrase
- Ensemble books – Building listening skills and ensemble awareness and development of individual player roles within the ensemble
- Unisonal studies – Can be long tones, scale exercises, or melodic lines – the key to developing the ear and center of pitch concepts
- Musicality – Playing melodic lines with natural rises and falls based on contour, tension, harmony, and timbre

Watkins' focus was on efficiency of exercises. He said

In general, I am always seeking exercises during which we can cover a broader palette of training, quantifying how many areas of skill we can use in each warm-up exercise. For example, in the range extension exercise, we can focus on developing tone quality and timbral blend while also working on moving together, precision in attacks and releases, and center of pitch...all while building control of range as well. There are so many musical skills that we must be responsible to develop in our ensembles, we must be as efficient as possible in our approach. It really doesn't take much time to do an exercise, provided that you don't waste any time coming into the classroom, the students are engaged in learning, and the teacher has in mind what he wants the band to sound like (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 9, 2009)

#### Video Observation of Daily Routine

*The following description resulting from the analysis of one of Watkins' videotaped rehearsals from July 29, 2009 shows how Watkins incorporated numerous music concepts into the daily warm-up procedure.*

Watkins began with breathing exercises to wake up the lungs. These were not too aggressive, easy in for four counts and out for four counts type exercises. Next, he had the students play an F concert pitch, maybe four to six times of four to eight counts each time. He would not give the students any feedback then; he just let them blow. In recent years, Watkins expressed, he found it to be a nuisance if he tried to "micromanage every sound that comes out of the students'

horns, so I just let them blow first” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 7, 2009).

Next, he took the band through long tone exercises, beginning with Remington studies. (*Remington studies are a series of long tones, usually beginning on F concert in the middle range and moving by increasing half step intervals, always returning to F; named after Eastman trombone professor from 1922-1971, Emory Remington*). The band went on to play several long tone exercises through scales, arpeggios, and interval studies. The point, according to Mr. Watkins, was to play a lot of unisons, so the students only had to focus on one concept at a time, in this case, tone production, quality, and control (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 29, 2009).

After several minutes of long tone exercises, Watkins followed with a flexibility exercise: the brass played lip slur exercises based on the overtone series while the woodwinds simultaneously played coordinating ascending and descending scale passages. During all of these exercises, Watkins gave the students verbal feedback only between the exercises, not while they played. The students would play for 10-15 seconds, get some feedback, and play again. These were brief exercises, giving the students some short instruction in between each (such as “Keep your corners firm and move your air faster”), and the students immediately applied the instruction to the next attempt. Next, the class moved to some lyrical playing to work on phrasing, sense of line, and pitch—in particular, understanding tendency tones on the various instruments. In the observed

rehearsal, the band played three different exercises from James Curnow's *Tone Studies for Band*.

The band played two chorales from William Eller's *Three Bach Chorales*. Watkins said the purpose of playing chorales was for developing balance and blend. These were played legato, and using just tuning, they worked on adjusting pitches within the chords. Watkins said that the band would sometimes do range extension exercises (adding tones above and below a scale in long tones, and sustaining the added pitch to establish tone center) at this point, to establish center of pitch concept at the extremes. Throughout all of these processes, Watkins often had the students sing and then play. After they established a tuning pitch and ensemble pitch center at the end of the warm-up procedures, the rehearsal moved to focus on the literature to be rehearsed that day. The warm-up procedure lasted about 30 minutes in this particular session, but Watkins has been known to spend entire rehearsals working on his private lesson approach in the full band setting. The Lassiter students have developed an understanding and a trust in the system, and Watkins' constant encouragement to keep the students mentally involved enabled a patient approach throughout the process of fundamentals training. A former assistant band director remarked:

One of the things that make his rehearsals so unique is how much time he spends on fundamentals. A lot of people talk about [spending a lot of time teaching fundamentals], but they think that's 10 or 15 minutes. What Alfred taught—and what I continue to do now with my own band—is that we could spend an entire period on fundamentals. . . we might not pull out

a piece of music all period. . .or for several class periods. We could easily spend entire periods working method books, rhythm sheets, long tone studies, and it was OK. The kids knew it too. It's not wasting time, it's building a program. (G. F. Markham, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

### Pedagogical Planning

When Alfred Watkins goes into a rehearsal, he knows what he wants to do—how far he wants to progress, what specific aspects he wants to address. The planning of the rehearsal is a key. The thing he does better than anybody I've encountered: he knows how to read [any] group better than anyone I know. . . . Within a few minutes of hearing a group, he can tell you, "here's where they are, what they need, and here's how far we can go." He knows how to plan the rehearsal, and if the plan works, great; if it's not working, he can be flexible and adjust the plan. (G. D. Gribble, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

Watkins regularly demonstrated excellence in rehearsal planning at Lassiter. Whether a marching band rehearsal, a symphonic band rehearsal, or setting long-term goals for the education of the students in the program, his approach showed careful thought and consideration to all elements involved. Often for marching band rehearsals, Watkins would write an outline for every hour that would be spent in rehearsal, and he would copy and share that outline with other staff members (i.e., percussion instructor, color guard instructor, assistant band directors) so that all teachers would approach their instruction with



an understanding of the timeframe for the rehearsal. Mr. Watkins always set clear instructional goals for rehearsals, and “there’s a continuum of goals throughout the season,” said former assistant band director Catharine Sinon Bushman. She went on to say that the timeframes set by Watkins to achieve particular aims “are very realistic, in terms of getting drill done and music taught. His understanding of students and how he plans his instruction for them is what’s unique” (C. S. Bushman, personal communication, July 8, 2009). See *Figure 5* for a sample of a marching band rehearsal timeframe from a recent band camp.

| TUESDAY, SECOND DAY OF BAND CAMP (FULL STEAM AHEAD)   |  |
|---|--|
| Goals: Drill Charts 1-25 by end of night  |  |
| Full Ensemble of Troy, TUSK, Ave Maria, Neverland, Abram's  |  |
| 8:00-12:00  | Winds/Battery/Guard On STEP FIELD -DRILL   |
| 8:00-8:15   | Gathering up and Stretching on STEP FIELD  |
| 8:15-8:45   | Marching/Movement Warm-up Routine<br>Down the Field, Adjusted Step Size, Dave's Junk   |
| 8:45-9:15   | Musical Warm-ups in Arc; Battery Percussion on Knoll<br>Guard Spinning   |
| 9:15-9:30   | Marching and Playing Drill w/Winds   |
| 9:30-10:30  | Review Last Night's Drill session  |
| 10:30-11:30   | New Drill (5 sets minimum)   |
| 11:30-12:00   | Recording Session in band building<br>Tribute to Troy, TUSK, Fight Song, Finding Neverland   |
| 12:00-12:45   | LUNCH  |
| 1:00 – 1:30   | Winds in Band Building for Ensemble Routine  |
| 1:30 – 3:45   | Small Group Sectionals<br>Details work on tone quality, pitch, clarity of articulation and<br><u>memorization</u> ; (uniform study tempi: TBA)<br>Finding Neverland, Abram's, Ave Maria, Psycho (2 <sup>nd</sup> read) |
| 4:00-4:30   | Large Choirs<br>ww's in Choral Room; Brass in Band Building  |
| 4:30  | FULL BAND ON THEATER STAGE<br><b>W/FULL PERCUSSION</b><br>Troy, TUSK, Abram's, Neverland   |
| 5:00-5:45   | Dinner   |
| 6:00-7:00   | Brass w/Freddy in band building; Woodwinds in marching ovals in Gym<br>Battery Percussion on STEP (review drill); Guard inside in sectionals   |
| <b><u>7:00-10:00</u></b>  | <b><u>Full Band on STEP Field (New Drill Charts 15-25)</u></b>   |
| Special Note: Marching and Playing 1 <sup>st</sup> 25 sets on Wednesday AM !!!!!<br>Keep up the good work. Great Camp and Thanks!!!!!! Alfred |  |

Figure 5. Sample marching band rehearsal timeframe.

Ten of the 12 colleagues interviewed for this study also noted another significant element to Watkins' approach to pedagogical planning: He differentiated instruction and instructional goals for students of different ability levels. While Watkins' behavioral expectations were identical for all students in the program, his musical expectations were realistically based on the students' individual ability levels. Watkins understood that the player in the third concert band would not be able to do what the player in the first band can do. While he expected all students to progress, he established goals that were realistic to the students' abilities. Below, see a sample for a long-term musical study period for scale development for the Lassiter Concert/Symphonic Bands that demonstrated Watkins' different musical expectations based on ability level.



*Figure 6.* Watkins in rehearsal, 2009.

| Lassiter Bands<br>Spring, 2009 Scales Curriculum |  |
|--|--|
| 12 week curriculum:                              |  |
| Concert II: q = 60 (4 cycles 3-6-9-12)           |  |
| Concert I: q = 72 (4 cycles 3-6-9-12)            |  |
| Sym II: q = 96 (3 cycles 4-8-12)                 |  |
| Sym I: q = 120 (2 cycles 6-12)                   |  |
| Flute:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYM I &amp; II- 12 major scales (all 2 octaves B &amp; C 3 octaves)</li> <li>• CON I- 12 major scales (Eb-Bb 2octaves)</li> <li>• CON II-12 major scales (Eb-G 2 octaves)</li> </ul>  |
| Clarinet:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYM I (E-A 3 octaves)</li> <li>• SYM II (E-G 3 octaves)</li> <li>• CON I (E-F 3 octaves)</li> <li>• CON II all 12 major scales 2 octaves (F 3 octaves)</li> </ul>   |
| Sax:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYM I Bb to F# 2 octaves (G, G#, A octave + 5<sup>th</sup> )</li> <li>• SYM II Bb to F 2 octaves (G, G#, A octave + 5<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• CON I Bb to D 2 octaves (Eb to A octave + 5<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• CON II Bb to D 2 octaves</li> </ul> |
| Horn:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYM I- 12 major 2 octaves (choose two 3 octave scales)</li> <li>• SYM II- 12 major 2 octaves</li> <li>• CON I - F to C major 2 octaves</li> </ul>   |
| Brass:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SYM I 12 major scales 7 Chromatically Adjacent 5 an octave + 5</li> <li>• SYM II-12 major scales 7 Chromatically Adjacent (E to Bb)</li> <li>• CON I&amp;II-12 major scales 5 Chromatically Adjacent (E to Ab)</li> </ul>                               |

*Figure 7.* Goal planning based on differentiated ability levels.

In the example above, Watkins has accounted for the different ability levels of the students in the four concert bands. The expectation for number of scales, octaves to be performed in terms of range, and tempo requirements were varied according to the students' ability level. Thus, the differentiated approach to teaching was evident in documents as well as the interviews of this investigation.

## Repertoire, Performance-Based Education, and Comprehensive Musicianship

Mr. Watkins took great care in making literature selections for the students in the Lassiter program. Since 1986, there have been at least four concert groups playing grade III, IV, V/VI and VI music respectively (in some years, the program was large enough to have five concert bands, and the fifth band played grade II/II literature). He considered himself “old fashioned” when it came to selecting repertoire, not searching for the latest, newest compositions that were popular for the day. Rather, he selected music based on a philosophy that balanced high quality music with students’ strengths and need to develop their weaknesses in mind.

I believe in trying to find good music and exposing my students to good music that has a variety of textures, timbres, interesting transitions—not transitions for the sake of transitions and not an assortment of *ostinati* that have no place to go and are pointless. . . . I just try to find good substantive music that has good melodic material, good counter-melodic material, good treatment, good development of material, good transitions, good high points, good low points, and there’s never a dull moment. I think that’s really important that there’s never a dull moment in music. It shows the thoroughness of the composer. . . . If musical pieces don’t capture your attention and maintain your attention through the various tools that [the composers use], then it’s a weakness in construction. (A. L.

Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

Watkins looked for a variety of repertoire for his students. Balance in regard to programming was critical. All of the Lassiter Bands played a march in every concert preparation period because of the universal nature of concepts which can be learned

through the march such as tone quality, rhythm, balance of musical line, dynamic contour, form, articulation, phrase shape, and so on. In addition to that, Watkins selected varied literature with diversity of composers, orchestrations, tempi, textures, and representative of different musical periods.

Watkins stressed the importance of quality repertoire because of the performance-based nature of the instruction of the Lassiter Band Program. While he acknowledged the import of comprehensive musicianship in the music classroom, he maintained that the comprehensive musicianship approach must not detract from the quality of instrument performance instruction.

Unfortunately, we are not allowed to be poor performers in the schools past elementary school. Society doesn't accept it. Our standards as Americans are too high. The elementary school kid can play poorly . . . or go on stage in the school play and forget their lines, and it's cute. . . . It's like t-ball. The t-ball kid hits the ball, everyone yells "run," and the kids leave the dugout running out to the ball; they break the rules of baseball, but everyone thinks it's cute because there are no goals for success involved in it. Once you get just about past that age then American society doesn't function that way. It doesn't allow for it. It's in every facet of our society, so our organizations must perform well if they are going to have credibility. I guess that's it—musical credibility. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009)

Within the realm of performance-based education, however, Watkins brought a great deal of comprehensive musicianship to his rehearsals. He frequently required students to complete supplementary projects related to repertoire performed in ensemble.

For example, he would have the students evaluate their own or other groups' performances, write poetry, create artwork, or complete some research related to a musical time period, a geographical location, or some other aspect ancillary to the music in order to enhance the students' musical understanding of the composition. On many occasions, Watkins invited the composer of a work into rehearsal so that the students could ask questions about the composer's intent or musical decisions made while creating the music. Lassiter students were visited by Alfred Reed, James Curnow, Frank Ticheli, Mark Camphouse, and other notable band composers, and had the opportunity to interact with and learn from them, and even try their own hand in short composition projects after being coached by these notable band composers.

#### Personal Musicianship

While methodology and careful planning have certainly played a role in the success of the Lassiter Band program, without Watkins' significant level of knowledge, skills, and artistic sensitivity regarding music performance, the program would not have achieved as much. Many of Watkins' colleagues attested to the high level of musicianship Watkins brought to the podium at Lassiter. He was able to hear and analyze a group with tremendous depth, his preparation and approach to the musical score demonstrated intellectual and musical intensity, and his understanding of instrumental pedagogy enabled Lassiter students to reach great accomplishments. Watkins' orchestra conductor colleague at Lassiter remarked:

He knows the score inside and out and discusses the score with the composer (if alive) and with others who have worked on the piece. If it is a transcription, he studies the original score and delves into the history of the work with original

instrumentation. I remember Alfred preparing the Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphoses*, bringing the original score to me and asking me to be very specific about the violin harmonics and how they were played in terms of register, fingering, and timbre. Alfred always discusses the history of a piece of music and the composer's background and how this relates to the performance practice. (C. Doemel, personal communication, July 20, 2009)

One of Watkins' former students commented on his musicianship as well:

His knowledge of composers, scores, and compositions is remarkable. His preparation that he puts into the music is so detailed. He tries to learn everything about it. If the composer is alive, Alfred has talked to him. He doesn't just play a piece of music; it becomes a part of him. . . He can pull the emotion from the kids that most people can't do. The Lassiter Band can play a composition and not miss a note. I can hear another band play the same composition and not miss a note, but it doesn't sound the same. The Lassiter Band can feel the music. (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 28, 2009)

Watkins himself discussed the importance of having an excellent musician on the podium:

You can't get around the fact that you must have an artist in the room; you must have a person that has acquired knowledge, who leads the organization—knowledge that is all-encompassing. It's not one simple base of knowledge. . . . You must know your subject matter, and you must know music, and you must be interested in sharing that knowledge of music with others. Knowledge in music



doesn't help you if you're not interested to share it. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

### Communication

Watkins has made an impact because of his interest in sharing knowledge and his ability to impart his thoughts, opinions, and information clearly. Each of his colleagues interviewed for this study mentioned Watkins' clarity regarding what and how he communicated with his students and staff at Lassiter. All colleagues reported Watkins' specificity about his expectations and goals as well as the quality and the frequency with which he communicated to the Lassiter community, both in rehearsal and out of rehearsal. One colleague mentioned Mr. Watkins' detailed communication in relating his concept of sound to the ensemble. Another mentioned Watkins' constant communication bookending rehearsals, when he would meet with the students to express the plan for the day at the beginning of the rehearsal and again at the end of rehearsal to summarize what had been accomplished. Still, other colleagues pointed out:

First of all, Alfred is charismatic. He makes sure that the information he is presenting is directed towards all students . . . Alfred is very specific about goals and the correct procedures to accomplish those goals. (C. Doemel, personal communication, July 20, 2009)

It's just unbelievable how he constantly talks to the students, the parents, the community, and the administration. . . especially to the kids about why they're there, why they play, why they're important. (G. F. Markham, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

One of his strengths is that he is able to convey the music to the kids so that they can play it musically. . . . He is able to make the music alive so that it speaks to them, and they can musically interpret that so the music speaks to others. (B. McKeown, personal communication, July 30, 2009)

He's very relaxed on the podium and very knowledgeable. He's the best rehearsal technician I've ever [seen]. He knows what he wants from the music and communicates that in an economic fashion. Alfred is cordial but demanding, and he makes you want to play it right. (R. C. Cowles, personal communication, July 21, 2009)

Thus, communication skills, combined with musicianship, organization and planning, and a sound pedagogical approach enabled Alfred Watkins to create a high school band program of significant musical accomplishment. However, the musical accomplishment was only a portion of what Watkins created at Lassiter, as documented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### GROUP COHESION

#### Leadership Curriculum

While having nothing to do with music directly, the development of the leadership curriculum at Lassiter contributed in large part to the success of the Lassiter Band Program. The role of student leadership was vital in the growth and maturity of the organization. Student leaders were expected to provide guidance within their various instrument sections and were ultimately accountable to the band directors. With nearly 300 students in the program annually and only three band directors, it was necessary to rely heavily upon the student leadership, including section leaders, drum majors, and band officers.

The selection of student leaders took place annually following a two-week leadership clinic each spring. During this clinic, Watkins exposed students to character development, decision-making skills, and self-evaluations for the purpose of individual personal growth as well as team building and peer-management skills. The leadership and character model taught at Lassiter was based on the Turknett Leadership Group (2009) model of integrity, respect, and responsibility (The Turknett Leadership Group, founded in 1980 and based in Atlanta, is an organization that serves the business community in developing leadership and organizational effectiveness. Mr. Watkins was nominated to receive the Turknett Community Leadership Award in 2009). The concepts covered in

the Lassiter leadership training sessions included fostering respect for oneself and the organization and cultivating a sense of responsibility to the organization. The clinic was open to upperclassmen students, and between 70 and 100 students participated each year in the training session. Of that number, approximately 50 were assigned positions as section leaders or assistant section leaders within the marching band program. According to Watkins, the leadership program was

designed for self-analysis so that the students can look inside of themselves and see what their strengths and weaknesses are, whether they're assertive or non-assertive, whether they procrastinate, and [they discuss various other personality traits.] We put them in situations and see how they handle themselves in those situations. We coach them throughout the process. What we've done through training—we've sculpted them into the student we would like to be around, the student we would like to lead other students, and the student that the parents could trust their child with. That's kind of how it's organized socially, emotionally, and musically. Those three elements are critical for students to be leaders in the program. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009)

With the creation of such a strong group of student leaders, Watkins gave the members of the organization a voice and a sense of ownership in the overall purpose and process of the band program. Lassiter Orchestra Director and Music Department Chair, Carol Doemel, observed "By building outstanding leaders, much of the work of the band program can be carried out within the organization in terms of sectional rehearsals and the outstanding work ethic of the students involved" C. Doemel, personal communication, July 20, 2009). Student leaders functioned as peer counselors, musical

leaders within the section, conductors, and in many ways, as assistant band directors. Student leaders assisted their peers both in marching fundamentals, in sectional rehearsals learning music, and in developing a social network in the band program. The sense of responsibility and ownership within the program seemed to connect to the overall musical experience of the Lassiter students.

### Fostering Collaboration

Watkins' music supervisor in Cobb County commented on the synchronous nature of character and music development:

Developing responsibilities, friendship, all the things you want students to have, [Mr. Watkins] models. What a lot of people don't see is [how he teaches] the character stuff. I think he prides himself in turning out students that have the traits everyone wants to be around. The non-musical legacy will live on in so many aspects, not just the musical world. I think the musical and the character go hand in hand. As you build personality, character, feeling, and empathy, you become a better musician. They're inseparable. (G. E. Markham, personal communication, July 27, 2009)

Within the entire program, Mr. Watkins worked constantly to model and to impart excellent character traits for the students in the Lassiter Band. He identified the distinction between a student being interested in learning individually and a student being interested in participation within a group. A student could be an excellent musician, but if he was not interested in working within the group to match pitch, blend, and balance with other students, then he would not be an excellent musical contributor. Watkins inquired rhetorically "Is it more important to be a good citizen or a good tax payer?" An individual

must be a good citizen before she can contribute whole-heartedly to society. Watkins answered “the group dynamics are important for the growth of the group, and that’s not to say that the musical skills are minimal, but that part of the process is not that difficult” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009). Thus, Watkins established his belief that developing students with excellent character helped to develop students with excellent musical skills.

Watkins viewed the relationship between teachers and students as a collaborative one. He reflected that earlier in his career, he viewed himself more as a lone gunslinger whose purpose was to troubleshoot and wipe out intonation problems, wrong notes, and bad precision. As he matured as a teacher, he changed his viewpoint:

[I used to view myself] as a traffic cop on the box, and I thought that was what I was to do was to troubleshoot. I found myself to be the same as a doctor, trying to assess what’s wrong with you . . . and I didn’t have very good bedside manners. [Now, I have developed] a stronger sense of cooperation and a stronger sense of community in my classroom. . . . I borrowed that technique from some very good colleagues of mine, Ray Cramer and Eugene Corporon, who I had seen rehearse my band as invited guests. They taught me to use two words that I had not used very often before in rehearsal. They were “please” and “thank you.” Now I use them liberally. At the end of the day, our students are our collaborators. . . . I found that *we* must be cooperative, not that they (students) must cooperate with me, but I must cooperate with them. We have to collaborate at the end of the day to make music. I’m a part of the project too. A concert to me is much like a class project, and we all must participate fully in the class project in order for us to get

to our acquired goals, which is perfection and execution of the music and some semblance of uniform interpretation. So I'm a collaborator; so cooperation is the key. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

The sense of community and collaboration of the Lassiter organization extended beyond the students and staff and into the parent community. Mr. Watkins developed a relationship of trust and collaboration with the band parents through his sound decision-making, constant communication, and inclusion. Former assistant director, Ginny Markham reasoned:

He was able to establish a huge level of trust. He was always generous and sensitive of the students' time in the way he scheduled after-school rehearsals . . . taking into consideration the kids' academic needs, such as when the SAT dates were . . . or to schedule weekends off for college visits. . . . He established trust with parents. He's very good with money, and that is probably number one with parents. He just put an enormous amount of thoughtfulness into [the development of the budget] and everything he did. Parents knew he wasn't inflating costs, but that he streamlined and considered everything. He would provide a great experience for the kids without breaking the bank. That established a lot of trust.

(G. F. Markham, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

That level of trust existed in the general parent community at Lassiter, and it was even more evident in the Lassiter Band Booster Association (Booster Club).

While it was not initially easy for Watkins to establish parent collaboration, he did eventually do so. Through many conversations with parents at Booster Club meetings, in concert settings, in post-performance meetings with the organization, and in individual

conversations, he was able to build an understanding. Watkins discussed the concept of the “I” parent versus the “We” parent. The “I” parent was concerned only for his own child. The “We” parent was concerned for all of the children in the organization. Watkins’ constant conversations with the parent community focused upon the concept that when the group became successful, all of the children—including the parent’s individual child—automatically benefitted.

Early in his career at Lassiter, Watkins sat down with every committee chair in the booster organization and provided guidelines for exactly how he expected committees to operate within the band booster organization. He left nothing to question. The band boosters served the program throughout the entire school term as well as during the summer. In addition to serving on committees such as uniforms, ways and means, equipment, hospitality, chaperone, publicity, and travel, the Lassiter Band Booster Association has served the program with more than 300 active parent volunteers annually. One of the program’s fund raising activities included working the concession stand at all of the Atlanta Braves and Falcons home games; the Braves had 81 games in 2008, most of them during the summer months! Fourteen parent volunteers served at each home game. Watkins said “In 2006, 400 volunteer parents worked as Lassiter hosted its first marching band competition” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, August 8, 2009). In addition to those activities, the Symphonic Band Camp discussed later in Chapter Eight gave the parents an inside look at the working of the concert band program and gave the parents’ year-round involvement in the processes of the organization. Watkins’ philosophy regarding the Band Booster Association included the parents in the collaborative process.



Many band directors have issues with their band booster clubs. They're frightened of them, and they don't see them as part of the collaboration. They see them sometimes as their enemies. You have to help [the parents] realize that you all seek the same common goal for the full development of their child. Once they realize that you are there for their child, and they're there for their child, then we have one common goal. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 2, 2009)

The collaboration with the band parents led to a clear establishment of their roles within the Lassiter organization.

Band boosters serve three roles. One role is a natural liaison between the band directors and the students; two is they serve as a service role to the band organization through the [Booster Association.] We rely on them for chaperoning duties for the students very often and particularly on trips for football games and bus rides. We rely on them for ways and means in terms of providing finance. Those funds support the program in terms of our quality adjunct faculty and a lot of latitude for purchasing equipment and uniforms and instruments. They're very well organized into a number of committees: a uniform committee, a separate committee that makes the flags and color guard costumes, a separate committee that rents the vehicle that carries the percussion equipment and instruments in football season. That same equipment committee sets up for all of our concerts. . . moves stands and percussion equipment. We have any number of committees that serve the band. [The parents] function as operational assistant band directors. The band boosters fill those rolls in terms of operation—anything outside of music, which they cannot do. The third resource they provide for us is a lobby to the

school principal and the board of education to communicate our needs as a program. (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009)

Thus, from student, teacher, and parent standpoints, collaboration served as a unifying concept at Lassiter.

### Social and Emotional Connections

The unity of the entire Lassiter organization centered upon music, but it became a more personal and individualized experience as well. Watkins expressed his belief that his program served the purpose of fostering personal growth in addition to musical growth for his students:

I provide a vehicle [through which the students can grow.] The vehicle happens to be a top-flight, well-respected school organization that they can take pride in because of their participation and or their friends' participation. It's important for me to create a social atmosphere so the more extroverted students can reel themselves in, and the more introverted students can find a little more of an outward expression in a calm, rational, non-threatening environment. It also allows for students that don't feel good about themselves—because of their adolescence—whether they've got pimples, or they're too fat, or they're too skinny, or they're Black or Asian . . . or they just don't fit in . . . to have a place where they belong and can contribute. We try to provide social events and musical moments where we can capture the pride, where they feel good about being in the group, and they have developed an appreciation for music and an appreciation for the group they are in that may last them forever (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, July 10, 2009).

In fact, according to his colleagues and former students, Watkins has wide-reaching effects and has built a sense of community that has stood the test of time. Former assistant director, Gary Gribble said:

While Alfred has been producing that quality [program,] he has been able to produce a real sense of belonging and family that, 20 years down the road, people still remember. You can run into to people [today] who were in the first or second Lassiter Band [back in 1982 or '83], and they still have that same sense of belonging they had when they were students there. (G. D. Gribble, personal communication, July 8, 2009)

In 2002, Watkins received recognition from Georgia Congressmen Johnny Isakson at the July 11 meeting of the House of Representatives. The tribute acknowledged Watkins' 20<sup>th</sup> year as Director of Bands at Lassiter. The Congressional Record reads:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today and pay tribute to a man of great vision in my district, Alfred Watkins.

Twenty years ago, he took over the leadership of a brand-new high school in my community. He built a program from 78 participants to the largest music program in public education east of the Mississippi River. His children have won the John Philip Sousa Award, the Louis Sudler Flag Award, a Grammy for the best music program in a public school, twice marched in the Grand Parade at the Tournament of Roses, the World's Fair, and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

But is his legacy the great music or the great music his children perform?  
No. It is countless numbers of young people who, through the discipline of

participation and through the appreciation of music, are changing the lives of other people all over this country. (J. Isakson, H. Res. 4502, 107<sup>th</sup> Cong., 148 Cong. Rec. 21, 2002)

More than 150 former students who graduated from Lassiter between 1982-1987 took part in the tribute celebration, demonstrating the power and long-lasting effects of the Lassiter Band experience.

A natural outgrowth of this sense of belonging through musical experience inspired Watkins to create the Cobb Wind Symphony, a community band that he formed in 1999. After years of trying to develop a lifelong appreciation of music for his students and telling students that music making was a lifelong activity, a handful of former students gave Watkins the motivation to create the group. Several former Lassiter students had returned to live in the Lassiter area after finishing college, and they wanted a place to play their instruments. The Cobb Wind Symphony grew to over 100 members, more than 20 of them former Lassiter Band students. Thus, the sense of musical identity and belonging that Watkins created extended from Lassiter and into the greater community.

Through the leadership curriculum, through his communication and collaboration with members of the Lassiter community, through development of trust and careful guidance of the program over many years, and through fostering a lifelong love of music, Alfred Watkins has developed unique group cohesion. The students, parents, alumni, staff, and greater community of Lassiter shared a bond in music, character, and experience. The expectation and achievement of excellence touched all aspects of the Lassiter program, and the respect and self-respect of all participants built a lasting bond.

## CHAPTER 8

### SYMPHONIC BAND CAMP

The Lassiter Symphonic Band Camp experience can be seen as a microcosm of many of the ideas presented throughout previous chapters. The concepts of curriculum balance, program structure and organization, the “private lesson approach to teaching the full band,” differentiated instruction, communication, and group cohesion are evidenced in this intensive 2-day camp experience held annually at Lassiter. This investigator examined the Lassiter Symphonic Band Camp as a participant observer in February of 2009. A discussion of the Symphonic Band Camp assists in weaving together many of the themes that emerged throughout data collection.

In January of 1988, Lassiter High School held its First Annual Symphonic Band Camp. As far as this investigator knows, that camp was the first ever of its kind. At that time, I was a first-year teacher, serving as the Assistant Director of Bands at Lassiter. I shared an office every day with Alfred Watkins for the following twelve years. “Talking shop” was a regular part of the job for the Lassiter Band Directors. As a result of many conversations, we wondered why it was so commonplace for high school bands to spend five or six days during the summer focusing upon marching band camp and no equivalent period of concentrated time focusing upon the symphonic band program. Thus, the concept of program balance was something that we discussed and felt was important by balancing the inclusion of both a marching and a symphonic camp. As teachers who

believed that the symphonic band was the foundational element for most of the musical teaching that takes place in the high school band curriculum, we decided to create a Symphonic Band Camp that would demonstrate our sense of purpose to our students and the greater band community.

When the Symphonic Band Camp concept was created in 1988, the intent was to provide an intensive music study period to “jump start” the District Assessment preparation period, just as marching band camp provided a jump start to the competitive marching season. To the present day, the camp continues to serve that purpose, and it has grown in scope and depth as well. Thus, the philosophy behind the Symphonic Band Camp was that it aimed to provide the students in the band program with a mid-school year boost in terms of musicianship, task cohesion (working towards the district assessment), and interpersonal cohesion (spending many hours together, sharing meals, and evening social activities).

Mr. Watkins made his philosophy clear to the students in the program, to the parents that supported the program, and to the school administration. He did this through repeated verbal explanations during classes, in band booster organization meetings, and in meetings with his school administrators. His constant communication with the community, sharing his philosophies and goals, helped to build a level of trust in the new concept. After more than 20 years now, the camp has become a part of the traditional educational process at Lassiter and was viewed as a unique learning tool within the overall structure of the program.

The camp weekend began after school on Friday at 3:30 pm and ended Saturday evening at 10:00 pm. During that time, students played in full band rehearsals, sectional

rehearsals, and chamber music classes; they attended a recital given by professionals representing every instrument in the band, and they performed a concert for one another and for parents. All four of the Lassiter Concert Bands participated in the camp weekend. The four bands at Lassiter were based on ability, determined by audition prior to the camp weekend.

Because the attention span of some of the younger and less musically experienced students may not be as developed as the older students, the members of the Concert II Band—the least experienced group—were provided a shorter camp experience. Any student in the Concert II group who wished to attend the full weekend was allowed to play “up” a band with the Concert I group on Friday, and then on Saturday, the full Concert II Band joined the camp. Thus, in his planning of the camp weekend, Watkins considered differentiated instruction based on the different stages of learning readiness and abilities of the students involved.

The staff involved during the Symphonic Band Camp weekend was perhaps the key ingredient to the camp structure. First, guest conductors were hired for each band. Mr. Watkins and the other Lassiter band directors communicated carefully with each of the guest conductors who worked with their bands prior to and throughout the camp weekend. The band directors talked each guest conductor through the strengths and weaknesses of the bands, what parts of the music were already in good shape and did not need a great deal of attention, which parts of the music were weaker and in need of work. For example, before my rehearsal with the Symphonic II Band, Mr. Watkins told me “The band has good sonority, but not much leadership.” For me, that means that I had to build the confidence particularly of the principal chair players and talk with them about

their responsibilities to lead their respective sections musically. He also told me “*Do Not Go Gentle (Into that Good Night)* is in pretty good shape...we spent a lot of time on that yesterday. They need help understanding how to put together *Wild Nights*” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, February 11, 2009). That information helped me to plan my rehearsal time more effectively, thus, hopefully providing a more valuable experience for the students.

In addition to guest conductors, the camp also employed professional musicians for each instrument in the band. At this particular camp weekend, the faculty brass quintet from the University of Georgia and the faculty woodwind quintet from Columbus State University were hired. Additionally, a professional euphonium player, saxophone player, and percussionist from the Atlanta area completed the instrumental staff for the weekend. These musicians performed for the students, instructed them in master classes and sectionals, and sat in on full band rehearsals. One of the most unique aspects of the Symphonic Camp experience for these students was putting a professional musician right in their midst. For example, the horn professor from the University of Georgia sat in between the 11<sup>th</sup> grade principal horn player and the 10<sup>th</sup> grade second chair player in the Symphonic I Band during rehearsal of the Persichetti *Symphony for Band*. The students were shown performance tips regarding alternate fingerings, intonation tendencies, clarity of articulation, phrase shape, etc. in an extremely “hands-on” setting. The modeling provided and the interaction between these professional musicians and the student musicians imparted a wonderfully unique learning opportunity to all of the students involved and certainly extended Watkins’ pedagogical method of the private lesson approach to teaching the band.



In addition to the quality of the staff, a high quality curriculum for the Symphonic Band Camp experience was imperative. The camp weekend was rich in varied musical learning opportunities. In addition to the full band rehearsals, students attended master classes for their instrument as well as sectional rehearsals during which time band music and chamber music were rehearsed. The inclusion of a chamber music experience (e.g., flute choir, clarinet choir, tuba/euphonium ensemble) created exposure to new repertoire and sounds for the young musicians, allowing them to develop greater musical independence because of the fewer number of players on each part. In addition to their participation in chamber music, the students all attended a recital given by the professional musicians on Saturday morning of the camp. The inclusion of the recital gave students the opportunity to develop their ears through exposure to expert tone qualities, phrasing, balance, intonation. Finally, social activities provided opportunities to build group esprit de corps and to develop relationships with other students throughout the program. This interpersonal cohesion and task cohesion appear to lead to wonderful productivity both during the camp weekend and throughout the school year.

While not technically “staff,” the Lassiter Band Parents served an important function at the camp throughout the weekend. A handful of parents (between 6 and 10) were present during all meals served, and they remained in the hallways during and between rehearsals. Mr. Watkins said the parents’ job was to “support the program through handling financial and chaperoning responsibilities” (A. L. Watkins, personal communication, February 11, 2009). The band parents provided water and snacks between rehearsals, they helped students move stands between large ensemble rehearsal rooms and the master classrooms, and they attended the final concert performances. By

including the band parents in this intensive, 22-hour period, Watkins continued to build group cohesion, creating unity through shared tasks and interpersonal experiences.

The Lassiter Symphonic Band Camp provided an intensive, unusual, and extraordinary experience for the students in the program. As a significant part of the overall structure of the Lassiter Program, the camp concept represented a unique phenomenon that exemplified the special effort put into the organization from which the students can experience and grow. From a musical point of view, the curricular balance of the comprehensive weekend provided large ensemble performance experience with a guest conductor, chamber music performance experience with a professional musician coach, listening and evaluative experience of professional musicians in a recital, and individual instrument instruction. As an outgrowth of the private lesson approach to teaching the full band, students spent two days hearing wonderful role models on their respective instruments, asking questions about fingerings, pitch tendencies, and practice techniques, and participating actively in music making. They began the weekend with only a cursory knowledge of the music to be studied, and by the end of the weekend, they gave a public performance of the music, with many details having been addressed. Thus, the task cohesion and the shared experiences of students and parents led to interpersonal cohesion as well. The Lassiter Symphonic Band Camp experience, therefore, summarized many elements evidenced in the entire program in one comprehensive, two-day experience.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCUSSION

Alfred Watkins has made an enormous impact specifically in the area of high school band and more generally in the field of music education. The achievements of the program have brought national recognition to both Lassiter and to Alfred Watkins, and he has gained the respect of his colleagues nationally. His personal background and experiences prepared him to work for what he believed in and what he believed was right. His work ethic and motivation enabled him to continue a lifelong pursuit of learning, self-improvement, and improvement of the world around him. He constantly read about band pedagogy, studied and listened to music regularly, sought advice from colleagues and mentors, and according to his colleagues, he generously shared advice and opinions with others. He worked hard to develop a program, kept a vigorous work schedule, and always looked forward to what could be done next.

Watkins learned from his upbringing that life was not always fair or easy. Growing up in the segregated South and experiencing school integration personally, he always carried himself with intelligence, dignity, and a drive to succeed. He benefitted from the strong guidance of his family and from his teachers. As a student at Florida A & M University, Watkins absorbed all he could from his successful teachers, gaining a strong base in music theory, music history, and applied studies in addition to the strong influences of his band directors, William Foster and Julian White. From Dr. Foster,

Watkins emulated the character development and sense of group efficacy and pride that could be developed in a successful organization. From Dr. White, Watkins acquired the sound pedagogical foundation and teaching methodology, the “private lesson approach to teaching full band.”

Watkins’ colleagues agreed that his impact on the profession was significant. Don Roberts, a former student from Murphy High School who followed Watkins’ footsteps to FAMU, now Supervisor of Music in Dekalb County, Georgia reflected:

A lot of people may never know his story in terms of what he has accomplished as a person and as a music educator. It’s hard for people to know his background and what he has accomplished. . . . I think his trials and tribulations at Murphy made him a great teacher. He had to wear so many different hats and teach every aspect of the band himself. Compile his knowledge of how to achieve a successful band program and add the resources at Lassiter, it just puts him heads above everyone else.

When asked about Watkins’ level of respect in the African American community and the general music education community, Roberts replied:

From watching him in both communities, I think he’s extremely well-respected, and it transcends race. On the other hand, I know when he comes into my district, (which is predominantly African American) they think he’s a god! He cannot take a break for lunch because he’s getting question after question. I take that as respect [for him]. I know when you go down to FAMU, Dekalb Schools, or other mostly African American communities, and you hear the name Alfred Watkins, it’s said with utmost respect. I don’t know if that happens in the White

community in quite the same way. Tiger Woods is a golfer, and kids of any race admire his accomplishments as a golfer; but the influence he has on the Black community is even greater. (D. P. Roberts, personal communication, July 28, 2009)

Cobb County Music Supervisor, Gary Markham, echoed similar comments regarding Watkins' impact on the band profession:

I think in the African American world, he is probably even more of a model. I hesitate to say that, because in my view, his legacy transcends [race]. I think he would acknowledge that early in his career, he would say that was one of his goals—as an African American band director he wanted to lead and be a model for success. But he's done it for all of us—it has transcended. (G. E. Markham, personal communication, July 15, 2009)

Many colleagues agreed that Watkins' impact on the profession was an important one. The Lassiter program has been the benchmark for a program of excellence. One colleague remarked:

I think [Watkins] has changed the perception of what a high school band can be and the level of excellence that you can achieve with a high school. Indirectly, he also helped build all of the Cobb County Bands. He set standards that others were able to learn from him, and maybe he created something of a competitive and nurturing vibe within the county. He collaborates and sits down and teaches other directors what he has done and what works for him. He is willing to mentor and talk to them and talk shop and exchange ideas about our profession. Because of that, the other schools in the county have come to be extraordinarily successful as

well. He wants to take everyone under his wing as opposed to “beating” them at something. He established that climate in the County. Everyone has benefitted from it. (Morantz, C., personal communication, July 12, 2009).

The program structure and organization at Lassiter can serve as a model for other band directors to emulate. The program included opportunities for students to experience music in many different types of groups, performing many different styles of music. The opportunities for individual improvement and excellence also added to the strength of the structure and organization.

The strength of the Lassiter legacy was most certainly the pedagogical approach of its teachers. Watkins provided sound guidance to his organization through the private lesson approach to teaching the full band. With the focus on individual improvement of fundamental skills for the students from the fifth band through those in the first band, there was a place for every child interested in making music to grow and learn. Watkins’ clear communication of his goals and expectations, the insistent concept of learning readiness, and a cooperative classroom environment enabled learning to take place at a high level.

There is much to be learned from examining the daily routine of the Lassiter music rehearsal. The daily inclusion of breathing exercises, long tone exercises, rhythm studies, scale/technique exercises, range extension exercises, attention to balance and blend, focus on intonation, articulation exercises, singing, and chorale playing can serve as a guide for current or future band directors. Watkins’ emphasis on developing an efficient approach to addressing these musical issues as part of his daily routine with his ensembles provides others in the profession with a template for success. Alfred Watkins

has managed to find the time to address musical fundamentals in an incredibly thorough manner daily and still prepare bands to: (a) win the Sudler Flag of Honor for outstanding high school concert bands, (b) win the Sudler Shield for outstanding high school marching bands, (c) play at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic twice, (d) reach the finals competition of the Bands of America Grand National Championships four times and win the championship twice, and (e) be selected to perform in several major national parades. In fact, the daily routine may be the critical factor that allows for such success with the high school band program.

### Recommendations

Band directors and future band directors should incorporate a daily routine that aims to teach music fundamentals to their students at the highest possible level. However, they must understand that simply incorporating the exercises of the routine will not be a cure-all. The music does not teach the band; the teacher teaches the band. It starts, therefore, with a good musician—one who has knowledge, skills, and artistic sensitivity on the podium. There are many varied concepts the competent band director must not only understand, but he or she must be able to communicate these often-complex concepts to learners with varying ability levels. The band director must have in mind the concepts he or she wishes to teach—band sonority, individual characteristic instrument tone qualities, ensemble balance, alignment of the beginning, middle, and end of pitches, and other important details in music performance. These concepts must be developed through regular study. Mr. Watkins said that he still reads the Farkas *Art of French Horn Playing*, the Westphal *Guide to Teaching Woodwinds*, the Vandercook *Expression in Music*, and James Thurmond's *Note Groupings*, as well as other pedagogical, technical,

and biographical books regularly. Further, he listens to recordings of great bands and orchestras as well as outstanding soloists in order to constantly refine and develop his musical ear. Thus, the conscientious band director must also be a conscientious student of music and of the band activity.

Next, a band director must be thoughtful, thorough, and persistent in his or her approach to rehearsal and must be engaging in presentation. The concept of the “private lesson approach to teaching the full band” has allowed for tremendous musical success at Lassiter, and it can work for other band directors as well. In a community such as Lassiter, many students would indeed have the resources for private study. However, when Watkins taught at Murphy High School, there were no such resources. Thus, whether or not a school and its students have significant financial resources or modest ones, it is beneficial to assume the private lesson approach and to teach as many fundamental concepts as possible in full band rehearsals.

Jachens (1987) found that successful band directors emphasized tone, group ear training, rhythm, varied articulation, and principles of expression in a regular warm up period. Watkins’ pedagogical approach and purposeful warm up period, teaching musical concepts with insistency and consistency as part of a daily routine is supported by best practices found in the literature. By all accounts from the interviews with colleagues as well as from the video analyzed in this investigation, Watkins approached rehearsals with what Madsen (2003) would label “high delivery skills.” He was able to keep the attention of his students during the daily routine by presenting a fast-paced lesson with tremendous energy and interaction with the students. The daily routine should include all of the concepts discussed in Chapter Six.



Watkins' emulated many of the qualities of teacher effectiveness found in the research literature. His knowledge of music teaching techniques, ability to engage students meaningfully, effective implementation of curriculum, ability to assess students' abilities, and communication of musical concepts serve as models for those wishing to improve their own teaching. Those pedagogical content items he most often demonstrated have been identified as important for the undergraduate music education student (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). Further, Watkins demonstrated many of the qualities of excellence in teaching described by Duke and Simmons (2006) in their identification of the specific skills and traits of expert artist-teachers in music. Watkins showed a clear communication of goals and expectations for his students and the entire program, he demonstrated tremendous tenacity in building and maintaining a level of excellence in all aspects of the program as well as in the rehearsal setting, and his ability to convey information with clarity and appropriate pacing contribute to his success in the classroom.

The findings from this study suggest that Alfred Watkins' philosophical, leadership, and pedagogical approaches combined to present a case of an intensive and extraordinary high school band program. The elements of collaboration, group efficacy, teacher effectiveness, and group cohesion united in the Lassiter Band phenomenon. Alfred Watkins has taken careful thought and created a unique learning opportunity for his students musically, socially, and emotionally. From a program structure point of view, the comprehensive program provided large ensemble performance experience, chamber music opportunities, and individual instrument instruction. Students worked towards both short-term and long-term goals, developed leadership skills, and learned respect and self-

respect. Thus, the students worked together on task-cohesion (Glass & Benshoff, 2002)—preparing music beyond the individual level—in small sections, in large ensembles, and finally, as a total band program comprised of four bands. Further, the students were provided a social atmosphere in which they laughed, shared, and learned from each other through the leadership program, travel opportunities, and the establishment of a safe, non-threatening environment. Finally, from an emotional or psychological point of view, the students have been taught group productivity. The high task cohesiveness as well as the opportunities for interpersonal cohesiveness allowed for strong group productivity (Zaccaro & Lowe, 2001).

When groups set clear and realistic goals and work together to achieve them, their sense of group productivity, and thus, group cohesion increases accordingly (Seaman, 1981). Certainly, the Lassiter program—students, parents, and teachers—have strong group cohesion. The concept of collaboration and the active pursuit of that cooperative effort is one to be emulated by any leader wishing to guide a group towards common goals. The quality and intensity of teaching that takes place in rehearsals, the presence of hundreds of parents throughout the year to assist with the organization, the amount of musical improvement that takes place, and the years of returning band members and legacy of high musical achievement demonstrated a source of group unity. Alfred Watkins has provided leadership that fosters an environment beyond musical learning. The Lassiter Band Community appears to be a prime example of strong group cohesion, efficacy, and productivity. Band directors should learn from this model and must consider the elements of group cohesion in order to promote higher levels of involvement and achievement within their own programs.

## Implications for Further Research

While there has been a great deal of research on effective teaching strategies in music education, further research about large ensemble instruction in an authentic environment could assist music educators. Further, the lists of significant qualities that have been generated and measured in traditional research are often focused on particular themes rather than emergent ones, and are thus rarely studied in actual contexts. Studying these characteristics qualitatively, in authentic contexts will offer more meaning. Thus, more qualitative research, case studies, and direct observation of exemplary teachers in actual teaching environments would be valuable for educators and for those in the music teacher education profession. Observing teachers in the context of the classroom lends more meaning to the characteristics that exemplify extraordinary teaching. Case studies of exemplary teachers and exemplary band programs can serve as musical paradigms to which we can all aspire.

Finally, more research in music related to group cohesion (both task and interpersonal), group efficacy, and group productivity could serve the music education profession. Alfred Watkins built a tremendous level of trust and group cohesion within the entire Lassiter Community—students, colleagues, and parents. Research related to group cohesion at the community level could assist band directors in strengthening the support of their programs and indeed the programs themselves. Determining which qualities help best build that level of trust and inclusion would certainly benefit the aspiring band director. Further, perhaps the most effective teachers are those who can guide their students through learning tasks while creating environments of rich collaboration and group cohesion. Certainly, one of the most unique aspects of large

ensemble musical groups is the shared experience among participants. This shared experience can be powerful and can be used to empower young people to achieve at high levels. Current and future music teachers could benefit from the study of group cohesion, efficacy, and productivity to strengthen their classroom learning environments, their teaching effectiveness, and the learning experiences of their students.

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## APPENDIX A

### Outline for Initial Interview

1. What were the main influences in Watkins' life that led him to teach music?
2. How did his educational background prepare him for his career?
3. Who were the main influences in Watkins' education? Career?
4. How has Watkins' teaching philosophy evolved over the decades?
5. How has Watkins' teaching practices evolved over the decades?
6. How has the structure and organization of the Lassiter Band Program evolved over the decades?
7. What curricular materials and practices have had the greatest impact on the success of the Lassiter Program?
8. How would Watkins describe the ideal band program and how does his Lassiter program differ from that ideal?
9. Does Watkins feel that he makes a long-term impact on his students? On the greater band community?
10. Does Watkins see himself or his program as a role model for the profession?
11. What impact would Watkins like to make in the band profession?
12. What would Watkins like to see as a benefit of this study for the band profession?



## APPENDIX B

### General Interview #1 with Alfred Watkins

July 2, 2009

**SS:** Please state your full name.

**AW:** My name is Alfred Lee Watkins.

**SS:** And your age.

**AW:** 55.

**SS:** What's your date of birth?

**AW:** June 3, 1954

**SS:** And where were you born.

**AW:** I was born in a small town called Jackson, Georgia.

**SS:** How about what's your father's full name?

**AW:** My father's full name is was Oscar Jewell Watkins

**SS:** Is Jewell a family name?

**AW:** No, it's just a name they picked out.

**SS:** A nice one, I never knew that

**AW:** Uh, huh

**SS:** What was your mother's name:

**AW:** My mother's names is Lucy Bell Watson Watkins

**SS:** Bell with an "e" or not?

**AW:** Bell without an “e”. Not a family name either.

**SS:** And what were their occupations while you for growing up?

**AW:** My father was an electrician at the local power company, the Georgia Power Company. My mother was for the most part a housewife. She worked as a merchant in one of the stores about town once a couple of kids got into college but as a rule she was a housewife.

**SS:** How did they meet?

**AW:** Well, in small town Georgia, in small towns everyone knows everyone else and so I’m not sure there is a specific event that caused them to meet, they never talked about it, they just got married.

**SS:** They both grew up there?

**AW:** yeah

**SS:** Still have the family house in Jackson?

**AW:** Still have the family house; my sister lives in it now.

**SS:** You just mentioned your sister, tell me about your other siblings.

**AW:** I have two older brothers. My brother Fred lives here in Atlanta now; he’s 8 years older than me. And my other brother Theottis lives in Charlotte, NC.

**SS:** And where does he fall, the others.

**AW:** Fred’s the oldest, he’s 8 years my senior. Theottis is 4 years older than me. I’m the third child, third son, third child. And my younger sister is four years younger than me. There are 4 years between all of us. Pretty good birth control for the 1940’s and 1950’s

**SS:** Yes, it is. A good plan

**SS:** What was your home like when you were growing up?

**AW:** Well, everything was centered around the family, and the extended family, neighbors, church and school. And, uh, it was a happy household. Not much controversy happened. It was typical southern town, the 1950's. I didn't know much about what was happening socially until I got a little older and got a new school and began to study the history of the country and how it affected me. But I grew up in a small village. My father worked for the power company and the small village was the only integrated place in the town probably in the county. There were two African American families in the small village that served the power company of about maybe a dozen families. So my neighbors were white kids and we were probably 10 miles from the municipality from the town so were way out in the country until I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. So we were forced by just sheer proximity to meet white people and meet white kids and that was our community in terms of our daily interaction. We didn't go to church or school with them but in terms of daily interaction we played with the white kids and visa-versa and we ate at their homes and vise-versa. Our parents didn't interact with them, with their parents at all but the kids were just kids and we played together and that was important for me to, and it came back to help shape me for later in life when I was placed in a mostly white environment; I had been around white kids since birth in a small town in Georgia.

**SS:** So was your house in a, I mean like the suburban neighborhoods we know today or was it so rural that maybe there wasn't another house very close to it.

**AW:** It was kind of interesting. It was a suburban setting in the rural area. All the houses in the community served the Power Company, the power plant. We had a power plant that was a focal point in that little small community. There were maybe a dozen or 14 houses and we lived in a peninsula. There's a little small lake there that served the whole community and so we lived a good stone's throw from the next house but it wasn't, it wasn't a half mile, a quarter mile. The blacks lived on one side of the lake, the two black families lived on one side of the lake and the other 10, 12 white families lived on the other side of the lake. They had a paved highway, paved street that went to their homes and it was a dirt road that went to ours.

**SS:** There really were, there were two, two houses on one side?

**AW:** Uh huh

**SS:** ...and 10 houses on the other side?

**AW:** Uh huh, it was very obvious.

**SS:** Did that mean anything at the time or do you know looking back at it?

**AW:** You noticed. You knew exactly what it was; it was just part of the segregation of the south. Although all the fathers worked at the power plant and, ah, but you knew what was going on. It was a little obvious when you went to school because the white kids, the new bus came to get, to pick up the white kids and the old bus picked up the black kids. And our bus was it was discarded from the white school. Same board of education, same tax-payer base, same, same and once you got a little older you learned what the people in the community were doing. Didn't affect us as children very much. We weren't allowed to be angry. Our parents

didn't raise us to hate. They were, they were good church people and they believed that we should not live our lives in the world of hate and anger and so we couldn't and we didn't.

**SS:** You say, "when you got a little older you recognized that" what's a little older to you?

**AW:** We moved from the rural house out in the country when I was 12, 12 or 13 and the schools helped us when we began to learn the history of America. We learned the history, we began to learn the history of our country through our schools when we became somewhat aware of what was happening in the south. And as they dictated the history of slavery and the reconstruction period and I grew up in the Jim Crow period of reconstruction we knew exactly what it was because they were talking about us. And then you simply learned through the history classes and the government classes and the social studies classes what the situation was in the country and when they got to us we understood what that was. Plus I had two older brothers that had gone through those classes prior to me coming through and they help to explain the social conditions of the south.

**SS:** So I think that leads us to a natural connection to talk about your school then. Can you talk about maybe, just talk a little about your public school days?

**AW:** Well it's interesting. I was born in 1954 which was the year of Brown vs. Board of Education, the famous Supreme Court ruling and yet the south didn't fully integrate until 16 years later in 1970. I mentioned the real small rural town that I grew up, little small rural, rural town and I was away from the town on top of that and so it was a kind of double jeopardy kind of situation and that rural, very rural

setting impacted me a lot and then once we moved into the township I was 12 or 13 years old. I was 12 in 1966. That also helped to shape me.

The rural setting was good in that we could focus on our community. We had schools that were black schools and had black teachers, had black intellectuals, had black coaches, athletes in our black schools and so we saw successful people and we were anxious to be successful as those teachers and things because that was our immediate environment so during those days if you wanted to be successful, if you were black you were either going to be a teacher or a preacher because those were the successful people in the community. And so you just kind of grew up recognizing that. But I forgot what your question was.

**SS:** Tell me a little about your schools, your public schooling.

**AW:** It was kind of two different settings. Interestingly, I went to segregated schools in my town from 1960 when I began 1<sup>st</sup> grade. We didn't have kindergarten; there was no Headstart at that time. Until about 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I think, and they fully desegregated the schools. No, it was 10<sup>th</sup> grade, excuse me, 1970. I graduated from high school in 1972. So up until 1970 I went to an all black school in the black neighborhood of town. We had two schools in my little town – a black one and a white on two separate properties. We had the older of the two facilities for many years. In 1958, I believe, they chose to build a school for the colored kids and so as it stood we had the better of the two facilities, our own gymnasium, our own auditorium, a brick building where the white school was a wood structure, newer black boards, newer desks at that time. Up until the 10<sup>th</sup> grade I attended the segregated schools and my last two years I attended the integrated schools.

We didn't know how our school fared. I do remember vividly kids in the black schools not being able to attend school until after they would do the harvest season. I remember very well the teachers would call roll and the kids that were doing harvesting, mostly of cotton, were absent and it was excused absence and they would join us after the harvest seasons was over. Little did I know they were picking cotton for the white man but they were always, we didn't pay much attention to it, they would come in once the season was over. I was never involved in that. My family was never involved in that part of the industry of my town. My father had a regular job at the power company and he was pretty fortunate to have that job in that period of time.

But all that affected us. I remember that we, when I was at the black school for many years we would get our books that didn't have front covers or back covers on them because they were discarded from the white school first, and you would see Jackson High School, which was the white school stamped on the school, on the books. Most often the books didn't have the first few pages or the last few pages because they had, the covers had been torn off. So the teacher would always ask where the book started for each student. Some page books would start on page 7, some would start on page 20, some would start on page 50. Fortunately, for teachers had, teachers editions so they would mimeograph anything that we didn't have so that we could get the information so because we didn't have the front and the backs of books didn't stop us from getting the information the teachers knew that we, the information that they would

mimeograph during those dates so we would have that information and our education was nurtured very well.

The teachers were terrific. Many of them would come from Atlanta since it was only, my town was about 60 miles south of Atlanta, so many times they would get education in Atlanta and drive 60 miles down which was not too far away to get a job.

1970 I was a rising junior. The school is fully desegregated and we were fine as students. Didn't have any problems at all to speak of as students. My school was around 750 students in the high school once they combined the two schools. We didn't have any problems race relations-wise, no major fights, just regular stuff. The black parents had no problem with the desegregating the schools; they had no problem with us going to the white high school which ended up being the school. The white parents had major uprisings and major situations. When I see all the things that happened in Birmingham and happened in Montgomery and happened in Selma, all those angry faces I remember seeing as a child when they desegregated the schools, but none of it came from our, came from the students. It all came from the parents. But I was a junior in high school. I was 16 and I was old enough to know what was going on at the time. And once they desegregated the schools they put us in classes and we took our first round or two of exams and once I found out that my academics were going to measure up with the white kids I never looked back. We didn't quite know what was going to happen. We didn't know if they were going to have high scores or lower scores



because the curriculum was so different. After the first round or two of all the tests we realized that it was all kind of the same. That was that.

**SS:** So after your two years (sorry) in the integrated high school, what was the name of your school before integration?

**AW:** The school before was Henderson High School. The white school was Jackson High School, named after the town. And it was real interesting, when we desegregated the schools I was on the student panel representing the black school. They had a black student panel and a white student panel. And we named our school McIntosh High School because of the McIntosh Trail came straight through our little town. So rather than having Henderson as the name of the new school, the joint school, or Jackson High, we chose McIntosh. Henderson colors were blue and white. The Jackson High School colors were the University of Georgia colors, red and black, and so we threw those colors out and our colors were green and gold. So we left our separate schools at the end of my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year going into new consolidated school as McIntosh High School – school colors green and gold. And so we bought all of our paraphernalia, all of our shirts, all of our jerseys, everything, and we showed up the first day of school and the board of education had changed the name of the school to Jackson High School and they kept the white school's mascot and they kept the white school's school colors.

**SS:** But the combined panel of black and white students had agreed together to change it and the board of education just ignored that.

**AW:** The board of education was all white and they so no, because they went to Jackson High School. And we had a very successful football coach at the black

school that had won a couple of state championships and a lot of regional championships and the black Class A network and the white school had the worst football team in the history of America. Like 0-80. And we showed up the first day and our coach was scheduled to be the head football coach. We show up the first day of classes and he was the assistant coach and the white coach that had coached the unsuccessful team was the head football coach so I led a student walk-out of school along with a couple of classmates and the black kids and the white kids walked out of the school. We didn't like the name of the school. We didn't like the school colors. We didn't like the way they had treated the black head football (coach) and we didn't know the white kids, but they saw that the parents were wrong.

**SS:** So the first day, the first of school

**AW:** No, it wasn't the first day of school, it was the first, during the first semester

**SS:** You led a walkout

**AW:** Yea, well I was a part of it. I was pretty mouthy, so, I was a big part of it.

**SS:** Really

**AW:** Yes, for some strange reason.

**SS:** Did anything come of that?

**AW:** No, Yes, they changed the coach. They made the black coach the head of the football team.

**SS:** Alright, well, that was something

**AW:** And they kept the school name but they added our blue color to the school colors so our school colors were red, white and blue. Somewhat of a compromise. As good of a compromise as you can get in Jackson, Georgia in 1970.

**SS:** Yeah, probably. That's interesting. I never heard that story before. About the football coach and the walkout . . .

**AW:** I don't like to go back into that past too much. If I ignore it and just let it sit in the bowels of my brain is doesn't come back

**SS:** It doesn't go away

**AW:** Well it, it just stays on my hard drive so I don't have to pull it up until I'm asked questions, because it creates anger and it creates hate, because you realize how, how much people are prejudice and how much injustice they have had and it affects you and if you live in that world it will just make your life miserable so you have to always look forward and be encouraging.

**SS:** Certainly experiences like that shaped who you have become.

**AW:** I don't know. You know, everything, I think everything in your past shapes your present and your future, the good things and the bad things, and so we're all a kind of a conglomerate of things that have happened in our past, so I'm sure some things have affected me negatively and I'm sure some things have affected my positively, it's too many, to many to even identify. Nothing, no single event shaped Alfred Watkins, it's just I was shaped by a lot of things. I was shaped probably more by my family, my immediate family, my extended family and my church and my teachers, first grade through tenth grade. That probably gave me a stronger footing than, than anything I did after that. I came from a family who

didn't, that was real strong. The men were deacons in the church, well respected in our community, very decent individuals but that were very strong, very outspoken for right and for justice and never hesitated through I think about a century. It took part of my family lineage on both sides, my mother's side, my father's side and I was able to witness my grandfathers be strong individuals for that church and that community and be uncompromising, and so that shaped me, knowing that that was, that you could do that and that was expected and probably in the gene pool too.

**SS:** Ok. Let's talk about how you got involved in music, when you began your musical study, maybe what, what inspired you to begin musical study.

**AW:** Well, music is, there are two parts to music to me, there's recreational music where music is part of the environment and that came through my church and recognizing, and music was just always a part of the church, and I'm Southern Baptist, I was born Southern Baptist. I attend a Methodist church now, but when you're born Southern Baptist you can't escape Gospel music as an important part of your background. It's every Sunday, every Wednesday night and it goes on and on forever. And it also was the music of my parents. In the community, someone, when they would listen to recordings around the house they were for the most part gospel in nature, and church music, and that, that had impact on the way you hear music from, from a recreational standpoint.

I was always attracted to, no, my teenage years I was attracted to symphonic music. I was attracted to, uh, it was kind of weird, I was attracted to

Leonard Bernstein, the Young People's Concert, Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, whatever I could get my hands on.

**SS:** Even at a young age?

**AW:** Uh, yeah, probably at the age of about 10.

**SS:** Wow

**AW:** And it was just something I found interesting and I always knew I was a little different when it came to doing that, and I was, I was just different.

**SS:** Where did you find those things?

**AW:** Well, much like today, in my household I get up every morning and watch The Today Show, and so, it's just what I do, so, so when my kids would get up in my house, even today they're going to hear The Today Show. They're going to hear those voices, hear that influence coming from The Today Show. So my parents would get up in the morning, our father would go to work; my mother was a housewife and she would make breakfast for him and they would sit at the dinner, dinner, breakfast table and have that time together without the children and they would always listen to WSB radio. And that was just their routine and it was the radio station of many households in that era, but they played good music, good quality music anywhere from Lawrence Welk all the way up and so I would hear it just by being in the house because the house was quiet and so you'd hear talk and the weather and things of the sort, but they also played fairly light music as they play on the same station now. So there was a part of, there was how I was attracted to a little bit more of a classical sound by listening to that music. I can't

give you titles right now but if I could write them down I could probably do it in time, uh, and that stuck with me.

I was not particularly attracted to the trumpet or to the school band or any of that until in the late, in the mid-sixties, I was 10 or 11. They asked me to play the trumpet for the coronation of the homecoming queen in my brother's class, my older brother's class and they wanted a trumpet fanfare and they wanted little kids to do it so they asked me to do it since I was the best student in the class, and I was probably clean cut, a 'do-good' kid.

**SS:** Was it a music class or a regular class?

**AW:** No, they just found me, like "send us two kids" kind of thing

**SS:** Like you're sitting in math class and they say "hey, come play the trumpet."

**AW:** Yes. So I go out to the band room and Mr. Larkin, the band director gave me a trumpet and taught me to play two or three notes on the trumpet, some from fanfare. There were a couple of us and so we went and practiced it over and over and over and over for what appeared to be a month – it was probably three days. And I played that trumpet on the, in the black schools they have a coronation to the queen back in those days. The white schools now have the coronation to the queen at half-time of high school football games at homecoming. The black schools have a Tuesday event, Wednesday event, Thursday event, then the Friday night football game and the queen's already been announced, so it's a big hoopla that goes along with the coronation of the queen. And the crowning of the queen, I was involved in that in 1965, so I was eleven, and, uh, maybe 1964 and I was 10. So when it was time for me to join the school band in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I believe,

they asked me what I wanted to play and the only instrument I had any familiarity with was the trumpet, so I said trumpet.

**SS:** You didn't own one or anything?

**AW:** No. The school owned it. I played a school owned instrument until I was about 10<sup>th</sup> grade. It's just what you did in that part of the country.

**SS:** Yeah

**AW:** The school provided for all of those. What's next?

**SS:** So, you started playing trumpet in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and all the way through high school?

**AW:** I think it was 7<sup>th</sup>, yeah

**SS:** And then you made a decision at some point in time to major in music or did you choose . . .

**AW:** Oh, no, that was way down the road. I was going to be an athlete. I was one of those little black kids stuck on being a football player and a basketball player and a baseball player which was not our way out of the ghetto, it was just some way of being, well, that's what you did, played sports after school as they do now, I mean, it's not much different. So, I didn't join the school band in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year initially. I was on the school football team and I didn't like the way the high school boys played football because they're so much larger than my youth leagues, and so I quit playing football and went back to playing the band primarily because they had girls in the band and I wanted to be around the girls. So, if I had, I had to choose on whether to be in the locker room with the boys or be around the girls in the band. Easy choice. So I was kind of back through the

back door got into, got back into the band. Played in the band for two or three years.

Around junior year, and I always wanted to be an attorney from the time that I, long as I can remember. I was Perry Mason. And I wanted to be like Perry Mason, and, uh, or Leonard Bernstein after I saw the Young People's concert or Arthur Fiedler I saw with the Boston Pops so our television brought classical music to me and I just found it interesting, and I gave up being an attorney my junior year in high school; I decided I might want to be a musician. I didn't know anything past that point. I didn't know whether I wanted to be a professional trumpet player because I'd never seen one, ah, or a professional band director, I had one there, or a professional conductor. I'd never seen one live. Or, musicologist, ethno-musicologist, any thing. All I knew that I, is that I wanted to be in the realm of music and the realm of classical music and so that's kind of how I was, I made that decision.

**SS:** And you made that decision when?

**AW:** My junior year in high school. I guess my parents wished this because I always wanted to be an attorney, and they didn't have a lawyer in the family for me to be a lawyer because they knew it was going to be a, it could have been a wonderful life as an attorney and, uh, but, uh the call to music was too powerful. So I ended up going to my band director's alma mater because I knew very little about colleges, opportunities and things of the sort. I knew that, I'd gone to a couple of workshops around, but by that time I was 17, 18 years old and I had run into an awful lot of racism in 1970, 71 and eventually in 1972 when I graduated from



high school. So a little racism was what geared me away from the white colleges. I had gone to the University of Georgia Music Festival and played in the orchestra and the trumpet instructor insulted me in my audition. I played, uh, a few scales and he asked me to play the C scale two octaves and I could play the C scale two octaves, I was a very diligent young student, very diligent person at practicing the trumpet. And he said to me, “that high C came out a little easily for you, do you play in a lot of bandstands?” And I said “no.” I didn’t know what he was talking about. And he said “do you play in big bands, a lot of jazz,” and I said “no, I don’t play jazz” and he looked puzzled. Albert Leghati was his name; the late Albert Leghati. And he looked puzzled that I could play in the upper register without having played in jazz bands and dance bands.

So I was principal trumpet in the University of Georgia JanFest Orchestra, not knowing that that was a real primo position at the time. And, uh, but they didn’t recruit me to play at the University of Georgia and I knew, we all knew why. I tried out for the Georgia All State Band and went to the final audition for the, the district audition I passed just fine and my band director took me to final audition and they wouldn’t let me audition for the band because I was black. They had just desegregated the schools in Georgia at that time, 1970, but the All State Band was not desegregated and they wouldn’t let blacks try out for the All State.

**SS:** How did they tell you this? You showed up at the audition site?

**AW:** I showed up at the audition to play Corelli 8, uh, Sonata 8 by Corelli and I had to play a solo etude. My band director was my accompanist, and, uh, I warmed up, signed up, signed, registered in, warmed up and he came to the warm-up room

and got me and said we need to go. And I questioned him, of course, and he put me in the car and we got in the car and he started driving back to my home town. Auditions were in Macon, he was driving back to Jackson, which is about an hour's drive and he said "they're not, they won't let blacks try out for the All State Band."

**SS:** What year was this?

**AW:** 1972. And, uh, I tried out for the government's honors program in my junior year, and, uh, the same exact thing happened there too. They didn't allow for blacks to be in the government's honors program so I qualified for the state level audition in an interview and he took me there for that audition too, so the same thing happened two years in a row.

**SS:** What was your band director's name?

**AW:** Andrew Buggs. He was a very accomplished clarinetist, a fine classical pianist and played all the instruments pretty well.

**SS:** And a graduate of Florida A & M?

**AW:** Um huh

**SS:** Was he originally from Jackson?

**AW:** He was from Jacksonville, Florida. I don't know how he got to Jackson. I guess it was just a job.

**SS:** That's pretty cool, isn't it...

**SS:** All right, so, you decided junior year that you want to be a musician. You practiced, you were a pretty good trumpet player, you're inspired by . . .

**AW:** I was a good trumpet player.

**SS:** What did I say?

**AW:** Pretty good.

**SS:** You were a good trumpet player

**AW:** I was a very good trumpet player, actually.

**SS:** Oh, a very good trumpet player.

**AW:** Well, the reason that I know that . . .

**SS:** Let's make sure to get it right.

**AW:** Well, I was in, we were in the best district in the state which was District 6, the Clay County district and I had some All State trumpet players that sat in front of me and some All State trumpet players that sat behind me and I sat about 5<sup>th</sup> chair. Ann Hardin sat next to me, Dr. Ann Hardin, and, and, uh, no, I was a very good trumpet player. I didn't know it at that time, but I was, I was equivalent to an All State caliber player.

**SS:** So you decided to go to Florida A & M.

**AW:** Um, hum.

**SS:** Because?

**AW:** Well, it had the reputation of having the best band amongst the black HBCU's. HBCU's - Historical Black Colleges and Universities in the country had the reputation and I went down to Tallahassee one weekend and saw the marching band and they were right. It was a very competent, very solid marching band, played great sounds, and, uh, a real high level of musicianship. So I went down. I didn't know anything about the concert program. I didn't know anything about

the applied program. I just knew they had a good marching band and that was good enough for me. So, that's why I went.

**SS:** Good. Can you talk about your education at FAMU?

**AW:** Sure, Ah, it was recognized as a marching band music department. Marching 100 was world famous when I entered there. It had already played at one of the Superbowls and NFL Allstar games and All-Pro games and was quite accomplished. I was, I found another agenda that I didn't expect. It was, the band director's name was William Foster, William P. Foster and he was a giant amongst men, very good at developing character, highly intellectual, very well organized, very decent man, very good musician, but his main points were character, leadership and those traits that were ancillary to just playing an instrument. The band, when I joined it was all male, right at 200 members of all males, and, uh, but they were very decent people and because of his leadership, he, and they just required it. Very decent, very honorable, very helpful and the musicianship level was high. We had a very good of applied faculty; it's a good band director school. Small music department but, uh, uh, good theory, history set-ups, good piano division, ample practice room space and the environment for music making on the classical level was very, very high, and the was because of his leadership and so, I received a very good education coming out of FAMU, at least as good as any other college in the state was producing during that period of time, so, as a result of that it still is the core and the backbone of my musicianship. My trumpet professor was Leonard Bowie. Leonard was a Florida A & M graduate who when to Manhattan School for his Master's degree and Yale

for his doctorate. He was very accomplished as a player and he was a very good music educator intellect, and he was very impactful on the way I saw phrasing, musicianship, pitch; it was a kind of the thing, he was a very good teacher.

**SS:** Well, who were some other influences on you?

**AW:** Well, Dr. Julian White had just joined faculty, the faculty, joined the faculty around my sophomore year and Dr. White had taught a very successful all-black program in the city of Jacksonville, Florida for about 10 years and was recognized as having a wonderful concert band program. When he brought all of his methods, materials, and skills to our class room, our music education classroom, our methods classes, and he gave us the template for success if you don't have students taking private lessons and he literally wrote the book on it and so I took this template and I put it into practice in my first year teaching and I still use the same template. I didn't change it, I modify it by allowing it to grow but the basic core template is what I learned in my course with Dr. White and it was that impactful. He called it the private lesson approach to teaching full band which is exactly what I do now, that I have done. It simply makes sure that every child improves on their fundamentals during the course of the school term – no children get left behind.

And being a minority in America, having come up in the Jim Crow style and seeing how white people reacted to us insist, made me, ensured that I wouldn't treat any people, any student with any disrespect or lack of, or low expectations which happens a lot now days.

**SS:** So you graduated from Florida A&M in 1976?

**AW:** Um, hum

**SS:** And

**AW:** Four years and no summers.

**SS:** That's very rare, this day and age.

**AW:** That's very rare. It was very rare then too. I didn't enjoy Tallahassee and so I took an overload of classes my last two years to get out. Yeah.

**SS:** Did you hold any leadership positions while you were in college?

**AW:** Yeah, I was assistant trumpet section leader my sophomore and junior years. I was section leader my senior. I was principal player in the symphonic band my last year. I was associate principal my last two years. I was vice president of the band my senior year and I was president of the music fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi my senior year, so, yea, I was considered a student leader from my sophomore year on.

**SS:** After you graduated you took your first teaching job,

**AW:** Um, hum

**SS:** Murphy High School.

**AW:** Um, hum

**SS:** Can you tell a little about that?

**AW:** It's interesting. Um, I did my student teaching, my junior year in college I wanted, I decided to become a professional classical trumpeter so I was accepted into the University of Michigan Music School. Clifford Lelia was going to be my trumpet teacher. Between my junior and senior year my mother contracted cancer and, since Tallahassee was about a 5 hour drive from my home town of Jackson and

Ann Arbor was forever, 10, 12 hours away, I chose to teach in the Atlanta area to be closer to her in case she needed some help to, to, with her bout with cancer, and that's really how I became a teacher; I had no intention of going on being a teacher. I was one of those students that whatever it is to learn, you give it to me and I'll learn it and I didn't make a decision on what I needed, on what I needed at that point in my life, it happened later on. And so, as a result of that, I did my student teaching in Atlanta which was highly unusual; I had to get special permission from the Department of Education in Tallahassee at my school to do student teaching in Atlanta but I was really insistent on Student Teaching in Atlanta so I could be closer to her.

I did my teaching at Booker T. Washington High School which was Dr King's high school; it's the oldest black public school in the state of Georgia. That didn't have any bearing on my students teaching experience, but it was just kind of some information. But I did my Student Teaching there, and it was a part of the Atlanta Public School System and at the end of my Student Teaching Career, near the end, the last 6 weeks or so, one of the band directors in the Atlanta Public School System walked out, just left his program. And, it would have caused for the supervisor of music, a white fellow, Bob Wagoner, to go in, he was the only person that could go in and teach the school band. Well he wasn't about to go and teach the school band. So I was the only extra person in the school district now, there were no assistant band directors. The only available professional musician they knew of was the guy that was student teaching over at Booker T. Washington. So, they hired me as an assigned supply, they offered me

a job as an assigned supply when I had a college student's salary. Nothing. They offered me a salary to come in and do 6 weeks to teach this band. So I did. I never finished my student teaching career. I never went back to the school. And, I went to Murphy High School and did the last – it wasn't 6 weeks, it was 9 days before graduations. There were two weeks or so after graduation. But, I was there about 3 weeks. And, uh, the band program was in deplorable situation, deplorable standing – just as bad as you can imagine.

**SS:** In terms of personnel, or facilities, or equipment . . .

**AW:** All of the above. It was the classic inner city program with 22 high schools in the inner city system and that school was about as bad as anything else, about as bad as it comes. The conditions, the facility was, was ah, had paint of the walls, tiles missing from the ceilings everywhere, tiles missing from the floor. It was very undersized. It was very undersized as a facility, probably large enough to hold about a 25 piece band, there were about 45, 50 kids in the room.

The equipment was deplorable – no concert tubas, no concert French horns, sousaphones, long neck mellophones that had dents all over them, valves missing, percussion equipment was all marching band, just a few rag-tag instruments, no concert instruments, what, to speak of at all. Instrument storage inventory was almost non-existent. Instruments were missing every place.

**SS:** And music library?

**AW:** No, no library. There was a filing cabinet in the band director's office that had one-half of one drawer of music. The school had been around about 30 years.

**SS:** Wow



**AW:** Yeah. And, and the musician, level of the musicianship was about the same par as the conditions. There was not a child involved in the band that knew a major scale. Not a one. Uh, reading was non-existent, to speak of, and, uh, as, as close to ground zero of a school band as you can very well imagine.

The kids were receptive. Once we got in they were bright and could achieve at a moderate to above moderate level with, and to a high level with training. Uh, discipline was a major issue. Uh, when I went in for those, those two or three weeks my job was to take 9 days and prepare them for graduation. In the public school system of Atlanta the band, band plays with graduation, ah, it's a big deal. Graduation is a big deal and the band playing for graduation is a big deal. Graduation was in the Atlanta Civic Center. The auditorium holds 5,000 people. It was three-fourths filled, so it was a big, big deal, and the band had to play. We played *Deep, Deep River* by James Ployhar. Was our selection we played on the program. We played *Pomp and Circumstance* as they came in and *War March of the Priest* as they exited. And in nine days I put together a band that sounded like a band. Uh, the principal offered me a position teaching there at the end of graduation for the following year and I accepted, and that's where it all started.

**SS:** So essentially, you started teaching at Murphy probably in May of 1976?

**AW:** May of 1976, April or May, I was already teaching there so I knew what I was getting my, what I was getting into.

**SS:** Yeah.

**AW:** The situation, however, didn't concern me. Um, the drug problem, the school had a massive drug problem, a massive problem with violence. It was an inner city of Atlanta ghetto school. Uh, probably 85 to 90 percent of the kids were on free and reduced lunch, uh, most, however, did live in single family dwellings, uh, but it was a, was a, was a dangerous community, where it was just crime ridden, probably 7 minute drive from the down, downtown city of Atlanta. You could see the skyline from the front door of the school very clearly and very easily, so, it was a city school. So I was in the middle of an inner city program. And it had been ignored, the school had been ignored, the band had been ignored. Uh, the test scores were well, well below city average which was below state standards, below national standards. But none of that concerned me at all. What concerned me was that I had a job. They had offered me a position and I had accepted it, and I was looking forward to building a program there.

**SS:** So how long did it take you to build a program?

**AW:** Four years. It took 3 or 4 years. Uh, my first year there, uh, first band meeting I cleaned house, and I threw all of the kids that didn't want to be in the school band and follow instructions out.

**SS:** So how many were you left with?

**AW:** About 30, 38. I threw 20, 25 kids out the first practice. I remember that. Some of them I threw out before I heard them play a note. I threw out because they looked like they didn't want to be in the band. And, I didn't know I was cleaning house. That was not my intention. My only intention was to have a band, it was going to be well disciplined, well mannered, orderly and we were going to move forward

with whomever was left standing. If it had been a trio, I'd have had a trio. If it had been a hundred, I would have had a hundred; it didn't matter to me. But the students that I had were going to be, look like and behave like and sound like a school band and that was the only thing that drove me. Uh, I look back now, it's rather frightening because the school climate was dangerous, knives and guns and other things like that were commonplace. Drugs were commonplace in the school building, around the school building. The school principal, the assistant principal saw it, ignored it. No school security and by, just by the grace of God I was protected. I was just driven to have a school band and nothing was going to get in the way. So that was, I started off with about 35, 38 for the first high school football game. I had no band parents at that time to speak of. It was just me and the kids. Took the uniforms to the local laundry mat and washed them by hand, washed them by hand because they were filthy, and, they had not been inventoried, they were just in a pile in a room. I washed them and took them home and pressed them with an iron and put them back in, issued them out. We were ready for the first football game. And, uh, they didn't play very well or march very well but we stood up straight and looked like an organization and we eventually learned to play, eventually learned to march and play. I'll never forget, we stood and played for every football game until the last game of the year. I did a 32 count drill to a standing ovation because our band could march and play now. They weren't going to march and play until they could play first.

But the uniforms were deplorable; we got those cleaned up and, uh, I had youngsters in the color guard with no flags and no resources and so I went to

Hancock Fabrics and I bought the flag material out of my pocket, took it home, found a sewing machine from somewhere, maybe my mother, and did not know how to sew at all. Could barely thread the needle on the sewing machine, and so I figured out how the sewing machine worked and made my own flags. They were rectangular and blue. But they had flags.

**SS:** The school colors.

**AW:** Blue and white – school colors. And I taught them the flag routine, and, uh, we had a band; we were up and running. It got bigger and stronger, uh, each day, week and month after that. I took the band to the district band festival, the first time they had given a formalized concert in 5 years prior to my arrival. They just pretty much played cards and shot crap in the corner, doing whatever. I have them one last concert, and, uh, we took off.

We went to our first district festival in 1977. We played *Brittany March*, *Little Love is Kind*, James Ployhar and *Pageantry Orchestra* by John Edmondson. Made the Division 2 rating with a 2 in sight-reading, and I barely knew what that meant. Uh, my supervisor since explained it to me that weekend, that it meant that I was excellent and there was a rating that was higher, that was superior, and I was annoyed that I didn't get a superior rating and he explained to me why I didn't get a superior rating and once I understood why I didn't get a superior rating I didn't make another "2", ever. So, uh, if they were going to use that as a measuring stick for excellence then I was going to figure out how they measured, so that was it. Uh, but it took us, took me about four years, I was there for six, took about four years for the band to, to, to crest itself out, to work where it could

play college level repertoire, uh, with, uh full instrumentation. There were no students who studied privately, maybe one, one and a half right near the end, so my private lesson approach to teaching full band helped me a lot then.

**SS:** What was your greatest accomplishment at Murphy, and this could be a broad general answer or a specific something.

**AW:** Well, there were two. Uh, when I first began there probably 5 percent of the students I taught in the band were college bound. When I left my last year I think it was 100 percent were college bound. That was a great achievement.

**SS:** That's huge.

**AW:** And, uh, how, I don't know what else, I mean I had kids in the, in the McDonalds All-American Band, I had kids that were first chair in the All-State Band and I don't know if those were accomplishments, or achievements or just normal, normal process of growth. Our part of the academic part of it is that I was able to instill leadership and character development, some honor responsibility, work ethic in the students that I worked on. And they still talk about it. I saw a young lady that I taught there in the post office last week and she still mentioned her years. So yeah, it gave them a sense, it was not much good in the school at that time and, uh, so to have a good school band that was getting larger and stronger every year became a social pride to the community. When I left the band was about 140 to 150 members and, uh, it was a good solid college level concert band, and a real good clear marching band that was doing marching competitions. When I first began teaching them we taught, I taught in the historically black marching band style, how to lift instrument swing, top-40 tunes. By my fifth year, I was, we

were doing drum and bugle core, partially. I had started to dabble into that world, and going to competitions and things of the sort to try to stretch the group out, through adjudication.

**SS:** Did the students accept the new style?

**AW:** Students will accept anything that we give them over a period of time, good or bad.

**SS:** Ok. So, why did you leave Murphy?

**AW:** I'm not sure yet.

Pause

**SS:** So we were just talking about how you were leaving Murphy, I asked you why you left Murphy, you said you don't know 'til this day, but

**AW:** Well, I do know

**SS:** Ok

**AW:** The Murphy program was a fairly small program in the inner city of a major city, um, but it didn't have a wide range of finances available to it in terms of travel, in terms of allowing the student to have private instruction, allowing the student to have high quality instruments so I was interested in making music on a higher level than what I would going to be able to do at Murphy, and I was interested in traveling and taking a band around the country and probably, possibly the world and seeing the world through the eyes of a high school band student and the community wasn't going to be able to support that. Um, I'm not so sure why Lassiter was the place, other than, uh, when I discussed the program I found out that there were over 500 kids in the middle school feeder program that fed into the

high school band, 500 band kids and that was interesting to me. What could I do if I had just half of those students involved in the school band, what, what difference could I make in music education in that community, then music education in Georgia, so, uh, the 500 students in the middle school program was the most attractive part of the Lassiter experience, in terms of getting me to come to that community.

It was one place where I shouldn't have gone, uh, it was almost an all white program, almost all white school system, uh, and considered by most people in Georgia, one of the most racist areas of our state. Uh, so I don't quite know how I was able to ignore that at the age of 28 when I knew where I was going. But, again, I guess it was much similar to my Murphy experience when I really shouldn't have taken that program over either.

**SS:** You just wanted to have a band.

**AW:** I just wanted to have a good band.

**SS:** So what year was that? 1982?

**AW:** My first year at Lassiter was 1982. They offered me the job in 1981, uh, the first year of the new Lassiter High School and I turned it down. I wasn't ready to leave the community where I was for another community quite yet.

I was offered the job at Lassiter the very first year at the school in 1981. I turned the job down. I wasn't interested in changing communities and leaving the students that I was serving. I had a strong suspicion that if I had left those students they wouldn't get a, as valuable of education, and it just wasn't in my heart to leave them at that time. And, uh, I thought about it and just, and it, as it, as things

worked out, the job opened up the next year at Lassiter and I hesitatingly, took the job the second year, though I didn't want it then. Took it.

**SS:** Uh, how was the transition for you, from Murphy to Lassiter?

**AW:** Uh, it was difficult to tell the Murphy students that I was leaving, going to teach an all white school in Cobb County. They didn't accept it very well. Many of the students quit the band while I was talking, walked out the back door, said "I'm out of here," and the program never flourished after that. Uh, it struggled musically and otherwise immediately and I had a suspicion that it would, it did. Um, the Lassiter transition was, took about 3 years. Uh, it took about, it took a few days for the students to accept a new band director, uh, they were terrific for the most part and have been since the very first year. Uh, the parents took 5 or 6 years later, longer. The school administration took maybe a dozen years, uh, to accept a person of color working in the school.

**SS:** A person of color in general or a person of color in your position

**AW:** I was the only African American, I was the only African American adult male on the school campus for 13 or 14 years. That wasn't by accident.

**SS:** Including all faculty and staff?

**AW:** Adult males.

**SS:** Really.

**AW:** Custodians, cooks, janitors, bus drivers, everybody and that wasn't, that's just not by accident. Were everywhere, particularly in a state that's 37 percent African American. We just, we show up everywhere when it's 37 percent. And, uh, so the



transition was a lot longer for the adults. And, um, the parents particularly didn't want me in that school and, uh, well I just ignored that, I wouldn't . . .

**SS:** How did they show that?

**AW:** They eventually told me. They had, there was a meeting the night of my first football game, a Ku Klux Klan meeting on the open field adjacent to the school and adjacent to the school practice field. We're out, going out for the first football game, boarding the busses, pulled out on the left turn, KKK sign to the left, and I stood up and laughed, I remember, I told the kids some of your parents are having a meeting over here, and the kids laughed and I laughed. Little did I know it was meeting about me. I found out about two or three years later. While some of the members of my band booster club, board of directors, told me that they were at the meeting. And the intention, the intentions were to come to my house and burn a cross on my yard until they found out I lived in a black neighborhood.

**SS:** In 1982.

**AW:** 1982. And uh, you could just kind of see, when I first started you could see the whispering, and, uh, the inquisitive looks that I would get. They would particularly watch me, the mothers watched me very closely when I was working with woodwinds and rather than having one chaperone when I was worked with the trumpets and the tubas I'd have 5 or 6 chaperones look, watching very closely when I worked with the, with the girls in the woodwind section and you just kind of sensed what they had up their sleeve as a result of it and I ignored all that. I was their band director and I was the leader of that program and I didn't care what they thought and what they had in mind. I was going to teach those children

because that's what my job was. And so, you kind of sensed it over the years. Uh, some hesitation on decision-making from the board of directors, and some hesitation on the simple things that were decision making. Uh, my band booster club president taught me in the first meeting at Lassiter High School, we don't care how well our children play their instruments, all we want you to do, sir, is to teach them from acting like monkeys. They used that word. He said for all the football games that had gone on, the away games, they were climbing over the seats of the busses and said, all we want you to do is stop them from doing that. We don't care about anything else that happens. I said "thank you, I can do that." Low expectations, I guess.

**SS:** I guess so. Wow, why would you stay at a place that obviously didn't want you like that?

**AW:** Well, I didn't have any problem with the students. I had a terrific group of students that were anxious to have a good band. Uh, they were cordial, they were responsive, they were bright. They had potential to be talented. You couldn't quite find out because they didn't play particularly well. They didn't play as well as my Murphy Band when I first started there and so it, I knew they just simply needed to development, but the potential was there. And so I didn't have any problems at all, hardly ever, with the students, I could think of, so it was a very wholesome, healthy environment for music making and for development of a program from a student standpoint. And I chose to stay through all the difficulties through some of the parents. Parents were, came around in 2 or 3 years. School administrations were not very good and my colleagues were not very good. They

were, many of them were very racist and you could sense it, and they would almost tell you that and so I chose to stay until I, until I wanted to leave myself, rather than having someone to force me out because of bigotry, so I outlived them all. What else?

**SS:** Let's talk about the development of the program itself, from a musical point of view. So when you started there it was not as strong as your Murphy Band. What was the first thing you did?

**AW:** Well, the first thing that I had to do at Lassiter was to discipline the program, get the students where they were interested in listening and interested in following instruction and following directions which is, discipline breeds self-discipline. It doesn't work the other way around. They don't come self-disciplined out of the box. You must give them a sense of structure, sense of organization, and a sense of decorum first and then that, within itself, will breed a student to do it for themselves much like a lower class animal. They don't come housebroken. You must train them how to treat this particular environment until they learn that this is what I must do in this environment. They can do it on their own. That's, that's, the animal has self-discipline, and it has self-disciplined itself. Maybe that's my expression. And so students are the same way and so once I got them with a sense of discipline, and order, and structure, and behavior modifications, and, uh, attitude adjustments, uh, then the music making could, uh, we could teach them, or I could teach them, but you can't teach them if they're in the wrong space, mentally. That's, uh, that was the first thing, so you can teach all the music you choose to teach but if they're not listening, or anxious to learn, or interested in

learning, then it doesn't matter what you know. Beethoven could teach them. So that was the first thing that we did and the first band class that I taught was 120 members, and the marching band, concert band, there were two concert bands, one pretty good grade 5 band and one poor grade 3 band. And, uh, we started there with the same teaching techniques that I'd used, that I had used all my career, the private lesson approach to teaching full band, with emphasis on tonal quality, building tonal quality, pitch, blend balance, uh, facility, uh, through a daily drill, a daily drills program, and then a sense of interpretation of musical line and of interpretation of the music. You can get to the music once the kids have skills. You can't get to the music easily unless they have skills. Um, many teachers teach the other way around; they try to teach interpretive ideas first without the kids having skills, so you have beautiful interpretations that sound poor. And so, so, I teach in reverse, so that was the first thing I did at Lassiter was to get the program structured and under control, get a leadership pattern in place, put a sense of organization, develop a sense of character and pride in the program and then through that self discipline base, then the teaching part is easiest part.

**SS:** So how did you develop that, you talk about discipline but how about the character and the pride in the program. What does that come from?

**AW:** Uh, pride comes as a result of success. Pride doesn't come because people, you tell them, and they should have pride in their program, that doesn't help. Once they have an amount of, students have an amount of success, then they'll want more success, and price comes as a result of success. They take pride in their work, take pride in their achievements. Uh, musically, uh, just a steady diet of

making sure that the individual players grew – through exercises, through various types of training methods, we have exercise that go on for days. We pretty much teach skills first, tonal quality, intonation, technique, the same basic components to make sure that every child has some skill developments, but you can't teach pride, and you can't teach to lead a corp. The leadership program was developed in 1982, 1983. Uh, I developed a leadership manual, uh, structured on character, character, making good choices, how to lead others, and most importantly, it's a self examination period for the student. We still have it in, as a part of our program. About 70 or 100 kids come in, come for a two week leadership camp that we have in the spring for just our students, only 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders are eligible to come now. For the most part we have a program designed for self-analysis so that the students can look inside of themselves and see what their strengths and weaknesses are, whether they're assertive or whether they're, uh, non-assertive, or whether they procrastinate, whether they, a little bit of everything, ah, every personality trait you can think of, we discuss that. We put them in situations and see how they handle themselves in situations. We coach them through the situations and we've done it for many, many years. So what we've done, we've sculpted them into the student we would like to be around, the student we would like to lead other students and the student that the parents could trust their child with. And that's kind of how it's organized, socially, emotionally, musically. Those three elements are critical for students to be leaders in the program.

**SS:** Would you say, based on that, then that, this may be too had a question to answer today, that your goals for your group, are they mostly task goals or are they social goals.

**AW:** Task goals, do you mean musically or otherwise.

**SS:** Either way. I want, it could be, we could be talking about marching band, learning this drill, accomplishing this task, learning this piece of music, learning this exercise, learning this skill, those are tasks, or, is it about the group dynamic of students leading students and building character, and self-discipline.

**AW:** They are inseparable. They are . . .

**SS:** Fifty-fifty?

**AW:** Yeah, uh, probably more toward character development than, than being task oriented. Uh, it isn't difficult to learn to play an instrument, provided that you're interested in learning and that you follow the instructions that the teacher gives you. You can play it at least to an average level, based on your years. It doesn't allow, that doesn't allow for you to function well in the group, however. You can be in the group and choose to play louder than the rest of the group, most of the time. You can be in the group and ridicule the other members of the group so the group doesn't function as well as a whole. And, so, uh, you can have poor attendance to the group, ah, you can have a general bad attitude toward everything the group has, and, uh, it's kind of the same is it more important to be, being a good citizen or being a good tax-payer – you kind of got to be both of them, and, uh, they're inseparable, but more importantly, you've got to be a good citizen before you can contribute to society whole-heartedly. And so, the group dynamics

are important for the growth of the group and that's not to say that the musical skills are minimal but that part of it, that part of the process is not that difficult. Teaching children to play an instrument is not that difficult. Uh, teaching children to want to learn and want to play and want to practice and be interested in growth is the motivational part that is very difficult. It's not to say that our program is based, based on that, because it, once you get that template in place for that character development, and that leadership and for their, their attitudes, once that template's in place, then the template, that template stays in place and the musical growth comes quite easily at the end of it. I very seldom discipline children any more. I very seldom give them my expectations in terms of character, in terms of what I expect because the template's already so well in place and now there's an expectation as to how to function. There has to be a reason that we walk into a library in our schools and we're quiet. There has to be a reason that we walk into our churches and synagogues and we're quiet. There has to be a reason that we don't tell jokes, for the most part, in funerals, that it's a somber, serious space and place that most of American society accepts it. And, so, there are times and places for things that will allow for growth to occur and so there's a learning readiness part of our program that's very important, but that's in place now. It doesn't take long to get that in place. The same thing happened at Murphy and that's what caused it to grow so fast, is that there was a learning readiness after the first two or three years and then you just simply teach the children after that point.

**SS:** How can you, how come you can do that in such a short amount of time and other people can't.

**AW:** I, I don't know what they do in the classrooms.

**SS:** Well, then what is it that you do that makes it happen.

**AW:** I don't know what, I, I can't draw a comparison because I don't know what they do. What I do is normal to me; what they do is normal to them, um, and that's, that's an honest assessment. I have gathered that most of them teach from the outside in. They teach a larger picture first and can't teach much more, much of the details. Uh, today's young teachers are not very strong pedagogically. They simply don't have the chops to teach all the instruments very well. They, uh, are more interested to conduct the ensemble than they are to teach the ensemble. Well, if you go and you watch any, any rehearsal tape of any great conductor going back as long as we've got tapes, they're great teachers--every one of them. They teach the orchestra what they hear. They teach the orchestra the sounds. No different from having an elementary choir. If the leader of the choir teaches the children how this song should sound, that's a teacher. It's the exact same thing that the conductor of a major symphony does. Teaches the performers how he hears this particular piece. He gives them the speed of the piece, which is his interpretation. He give them the louds and the softs, gives him the longs and the shorts and he puts the balances of the ensemble in place as he hears it, so we all teach our, our ensembles, but the newer teachers don't; they don't know how to, they're pedagogically pretty weak as a rule.

**SS:** Well, how did you learn how to do it?

**AW:** I used the base that my trumpet professor in college gave me as a, a template for development of all the skills necessary from musicality, through playing in tune



with yourself, and I applied those skills once my college, my college band directors taught me in my methods classes how to apply those skills to teaching the full band. And so for me, all I've done is massage what I have learned during my college years as a trumpeter. And, so, if you think of what skills are necessary for Tiger Woods to be able to hit a 9 iron stroke 175 yards, if not 180 yards, the fact of the matter is that he's hit it ten thousand times at 175 yards. He's developed that, that specific skill. Then when he needs that skill he can go back and pick it up. He has talents to go along with that. More importantly, he's based his skill on "I will hit the nine iron that many times," and I have been taught to hit the nine iron that well, which if I were taught, I could probably do it fairly successfully too. Uh, so, yeah, the most important this is, is, is, is that, it's just whatever I learned in the trumpet lesson I apply to the band, and so the band is one instrument to me. Uh, the instruments all have different tones, they have different embouchure set-ups, they have different teeth formations and different uses of the tongue and different places for the hands to go, but the timber of sound that comes from wind instruments is the same, at least from a classical standpoint, it's essentially the same. So you teach one timber of sound as you, as your ground base for tone color. Then you can brighten the sound up or darken the sound up, or you can lighten it up or darken it up, or you can, depending on what the music calls for, what the basic chord for the sound is, is the same on all the wind instruments. We learned that in college. If we were good players on one instrument we were probably could play another two or three with a good tone quality, then we would just have to how to set the, and that was just study. Uh, so

what did I do, uh, I've always been very involved in academic study to allow me to learn more about every aspect of what I was going to do in the classroom, whether it was use the computer or teach a kid to play the full register in the tuba. If it was a skill that I needed in the classroom, then I always found the information, either through libraries, or through graduate classes, or through clinics, or through colleagues, or through reading a lot of literature from people that knew a lot more than me. And, I spent my whole career doing that. So, so, you just kind of got to teach yourself how to do all the skills that you think you may need, and if you think of what you don't, if you just list down two hundred things that you need for your classroom, and give yourself a grade on all two hundred of them, you'll find out what your weaknesses are immediately.

**SS:** You said two hundred...

**AW:** Two thousand could be just the same – for some people it's twenty.

**SS:** Well, that what I was going to say. Don't you think, perhaps, part of the problem with some of those people who aren't as successful is that they only see 20 things.

**AW:** I don't know what they see.

**SS:** And you see two thousand.

**AW:** I don't know what they see. If I wanted to get information from them they would already have a good band.

**SS:** Who are some of those people that you would get good information from?

**AW:** On what subject?

**SS:** Band pedagogy, music in general, phrasing

**AW:** Well, once I was out of undergraduate school my first line of defense were the top 10 or 12 band directors in, in the, that we had available to us. The William Revelli's, the Harry Begians, the John Paynter's, the Fred Fennell's, Arnold Gabriel's, were all alive and practicing during my early careers. And so in terms of musicality, in terms of score study, in terms of pedagogy I would talk to them, watch them work. I'd try to find local band directors as best I could to learn from and there were a collection of, in addition, in my earliest years there were a collection of middle school band directors in the Atlanta School system. A guy named James Camp, a guy named John Johnson, guy named Robert Robins, the late Vivian Huggins, Mary Frances Early; they were band directors in the middle school for the most part, in the Atlanta School System. They were excellent pedagogues. They had very high levels of expectation for their children that looked a lot like mine and they produced a very high quality of ensembles. And so, I developed a sense of high expectations from them because they worked with children that often times the society would tell you they shouldn't be able to do this very well. And their group and individual players were terrific and their groups were terrific. So, it taught me, it reinforced my opinion that every child could learn. Uh, from an instrumental pedagogical standpoint I would find the best people on those instruments. If it were breathing, then I would read everything I could read on, came from the library of Arnold Jacobs, the principal tubist in the Chicago Symphony, probably studied Jacobs for 20 years. Uh, so it was just depending on whatever instrument it was and what information I needed, but there was so much, there's a wealth of information to be found in libraries,

and a wealth of information that, it was just easy to get your hands on and there's a wealth of information now in, in pedagogy books, in method books, in college text books for, *The Art of Brass Playing* by Philip Farkas, been around forever, Larry Teal's *Art of Saxophone Playing*...you get them and you read them, read them every summer so you can understand those instruments and the characteristics of those instruments and as the years went on you could build upon that with friends and colleagues that play those instruments and strengthen what you may have missed or what you need is some interpretations on what, how does it, what happened to the tongue here, various things, aspects of pedagogy. But that information was easy to get your hands on; you just got to find out what you don't know. And so, I didn't know what I didn't know. I just assumed I didn't know a lot. Uh, so I just, I've always assumed that. So as a result of that, Otis Murphy, the saxophone professor from Indiana University was in our band room this year. Otis may be the best classical saxophone player in the world on his instrument. Brian Bowman, the world-class euphonium player came through, uh, Joe Alessi trombone from the New York Philharmonic came through last year. Fred Mills, formerly trumpet player from the Canadian Brass came through this year. Chris Martin from Chicago Symphony trumpet came through this year. Uh, Ticheli, the composer came through this year. I mean, college band directors and anybody that can offer some assistance to the students and to me we'll invite in to help. You came in, and, uh, and spent some time, yes, even you. So, I, and I've always been that kind of a sponge.

**SS:** You've always just picked up the phone and called somebody and said, hey, can you come talk to me?

**AW:** No, no, I was afraid of the superior minds in the profession in the first 10 years. I didn't want them to know what I didn't know and I thought they were unapproachable and not interested in me. It was difficult when you were black and you would go to these music conferences and the exhibitors would say disrespectful things to you, cause, if you didn't understand the language. And, uh, and they would, you would walk up to a booth and someone would say "well, the elementary music is right down here."

**SS:** I get that too. I get that today.

**AW:** Yeah, or "the jazz section is down here."

**SS:** I get "the middle school choir section's over there"

**AW:** Yeah, and so it's that, it's difficult to push through that when you, when people approach you from that vantage point or when you're talking to a bunch of college band directors and they tell you that they taught public schools, the schools didn't, don't have a name and there's no history behind what they've done but I have some public school experience and most often, not so good, probably, uh, and so it's difficult to get information from those kind of people. I just discard them; I just put them off in a category and be done with them and don't look at them again and look for, look toward the people who can help me and help my program, my students. What else? She goes to the big page!

**SS:** Well, you're on a roll.

**AW:** yeah...

**SS:** Uh, when we worked together, and I'm sure before then and since then, you talk about teaching the students musically, socially and emotionally.

**AW:** Um, hum.

**SS:** Would you call that your philosophy of music education?

**AW:** A part of my philosophy. Uh, philosophy shifts about as you grow. The wiser I become the more broad based my philosophy becomes. That's kind of a narrow base philosophy. It can be all encompassing if you choose for it to be. Emotional stability can, can, be a, can be a result of a student digging down deep and try, inside of a, the meaning of the looking for Rosa, for Rosa Parks and if you can find a way to get them to go inside themselves to understand more of Rosa Parks and the struggle that she went through in the Civil Rights movement then you can, that person can understand more, work more. It's also a stretch for them to go into there, so that's the emotional component. It's not the emotional component as when someone has an illness in their family and help the child through that illness which is a part of my job. If a person is struggling through life, then, my job is to help them by understanding that their struggling, being empathetic to their struggles. That's kind of the emotional part of it. I socially want to make sure that they the students are well balanced; that the extraverted students are somewhat reeled in, and have, and, and are their outward expression is, doesn't come to their detriment, and the introverted students are able to express themselves fuller than they would have normally, uh, so you do have through social interaction, you do have a through group work, through working together in their section, the working together in your brass choir, working together with this person, you got

working through class on a day to day basis, uh, you teach the ones that don't laugh how to laugh, and the kids that laugh all the time how to take life a little more seriously so part of that is the social balance that we work toward helping them. What we're doing really is helping them to prepare the people for the citizenry more so than anything else. We're preparing them to be good strong productive citizens, to understand right from wrong, to understand how they place, and how to place themselves into society, to strengthen society. That is part of the role of the teacher. The musical components are the easiest to describe and easiest to understand. It's important that every child that comes through has a unique experience in my program. Every child that comes through has a good experience through music making, not the social, not the emotional. What we call it at Lassiter, now we call it operations. When it's time for us to, to think nothing but music if its, and social activity such as marching band, we say, ok, shut down the social, go into operations, they know then that music making takes a, takes a high priority.

Marching band, I say marching band because it's difficult to convince students that marching band is the coolest thing in the world musically speaking when you're playing *Hang on Sloopy* and the fight song 65 times in a football game. It is not musical. It's a redundant technical activity we're required to do for athletics. And, so, and then the travels, and the trips and the time they spend, marching band students spend more time not playing music than they do playing music, um, and, typically in the music that they play we play in most schools, ours notwithstanding, is of a moderate level, grade 3 and grade 4 that most student

should play by the end of their 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade year in high school. Uh, our marching band music is extremely difficult and we make it extremely difficult to give them a season long technical challenge and musical challenge. So, the musical growth, it's real, it's important that they all can grow musically and they all understand when it's, when it's, when it's time to be a musician they can be a musician and the classroom, that's 98 percent of the time in the classroom when the time's up, 98 percent of the time. Two percent of the time you'll get daydreaming, but about 98 percent of the time they're expected to be on task and making every effort to do all the music stuff.

I think, I do think that every child that comes to us should have an opportunity to learn philosophically, speaking of philosophy a minute ago. I do not think they're all, that all students should be in our organizations. I don't think all students are cut out for the structure. I don't think all students are cut out for, uh, making music. What we try to do with the students that are very slow learners, that can't keep the pace, keep with the pace of the music or can't do the maneuvering of the marching band, we find a place for them. I've had students with extremely special needs affiliated with the marching band all of my career, going back to my first, my very first year. They may not necessarily be members on the field in formation all the time but I'll find a place for everyone that wants to participate. It's kind of like Martin Luther King said, you only need a heart to serve, and so, that's kind of what we do. You kind of have a, if you have a slight will to learn to do this we'll teach you to do it and you'll enjoy through the process of music making.



**SS:** Well, you just said two things that are a little bit, uh, paradoxical. You said at first that you don't think that our organization is for everyone because of the structure

**AW:** The musical component. Oh, you mean the structure?

**SS:** Yeah. But they...

**AW:** Oh, yeah, but kids that, that can't follow the organization and the structure, they can't find their way to, to, to give up their personal preferences for the group needs – they don't have a place in school bands. If you're cooperative and if you have a willingness to learn, yes you do.

**SS:** All right, so that sort of brings me to something I've been thinking about a lot lately, because it's such, at least in my graduate school classes they talk a lot about creativity, teaching students improvisational skills, compositional skills and individual creativity. How do you balance individual creativity in a large ensemble setting? Do you think it's important? Do you think it's a valuable...

**AW:** Most of us in the schools that do what I do don't teach that class. We teach performance based education. Uh, we can, we can find ancillary techniques to use, tools that will allow for them to be more creative than they would not normally be. For example, your playing a piece of music about, uh, the island of Hawaii and you can ask the students to write poetry based on that, you can have the students to do papers based on that region of the count. You can ask the students to compose their own music based on Hawaiian themes, I mean all the comprehensive musicianship that you have is, it's quite easy to do and that will allow them to use their creativity, uh, allow for them to expand, more than of an aesthetical experience. You have to be careful that you don't do that in lieu of

learning to play the instrument, playing the music and so there are a lot of classrooms that are, that are very comprehensive in scope and their organizations are not very good performers. Unfortunately, we're not allowed to be poor performers in the schools past elementary school. Society doesn't accept it. Our, our standards as Americans are too high. Uh, and so the elementary school kid can play poorly. The elementary school kid can go on stage and forget their lines in the play...

**SS:** ...and it's still cute .

**AW:** And still be cute and, and, because the expectations for that child, it's like T-ball. The T-ball kid hits the ball and everyone says run and the kids leave the dugout and run out to the ball and they break the rules of baseball but they think it's cute because there are no goals for success involved in it. Once you get just about past that age then American society doesn't function that way. It doesn't allow for it. It allows for, the person that runs for president must wear a lapel pin, if he doesn't wear a lapel pin then American society says he's not patriotic. And, so, it's in every facet of our society so we must, our organizations must perform well, if, if they're going to have credibility. I guess that's what it is, it's musical credibility.

**SS:** Do you think that's right, or do you just think that's the way it is?

**AW:** Well, for sure, that's the way it is. Whether it's right or wrong is not for me to judge. Um, it's for the people that, that choose, that want to be successful in doing both arenas. We probably do as well as anyone else does at Lassiter with teaching comprehensive musicianship even to the point of having the composer coming in and the students asking the questions about this part that you created for us or this

section of the music which allows them to, to be somewhat creative, and we've got young composers that have come through, we've had young composer's concerts, but as a rule, it's part of American society accepts so we're a performance based education. In many colleges and universities they ask us to be more comprehensive in scope. They don't teach public schools anymore. They probably don't teach an organization anymore. So it's easy to sit on top of the, the hill and scream, and scream what you think life should be like but unless you're working, unless you're doing that for a living then you really don't have any reason to draw those conclusions. Oh, I just say to them, when I see my friends that speak that language, well, bring your tape, let's see how well you taught, see how creative your children really were and how well you taught and they typically don't allow those tapes to come forward and that's just how it is.

**SS:** Has technology changed the way you taught?

**AW:** Yeah. Uh, it's a broad subject – technology. Uh, anywhere from creation of cassette tapes to cd's to recorders to instant recorders all the way through to smart music and so yeah, you modernize your program as opportunity to modernize around you and you'd be foolish not to.

**SS:** Have you been, have you embraced it, I mean, there's people in, I'll say, our generation that aren't as quick to adapt to new technology. Is that something that you would, that you have welcomed?

**AW:** I don't embrace it as a teacher, but I hire staff that can do all that. So it's not important to me, uh, that I know how to use smart music; it's important that someone on my staff can implement it the way that I see is necessary. So uh, at

my age it's not important that I know it; it's important that it gets done, using technology, so yeah, absolutely. And it just, if it makes life a little easier, it makes for us to be able to do more, a better job of teaching, yes, if it makes our life easier, then that's just laziness.

**SS:** So, I mean, for example, are you using smart music for assessment?

**AW:** Um, hum. We use smart music for mostly scalar passages uh, and some etudes. We don't use it for, uh, rapid scales; we don't use it for, uh, very difficult etudes. It, it uh, doesn't assess, it assesses to accurately for human error once you get to very complex music and I'd rather not be bothered with the, the failure rate in kids trying to satisfy what the computer says as opposed to the human ear. If you will listen to any great organization, a musical organization, they play out of time a lot. They play out of tune sometimes. They play, they play out, you know, they play out, they play a lot of notes from time to time, they play out a lot and that's just a part of being human. So, we use smart music for, for scales up to a certain tempo and etudes that are within a certain note value. Past that point, we don't we don't use it. Well, we don't do our music to improve itself, which it will do.

**SS:** Just curious, I was just curious about your take on technology in general. Uh, good

**AW:** If it improves the teaching process it's good. If we use it in lieu of teaching it's bad.

**SS:** Agreed. You ok to keep going or you want to pause.

**AW:** Um, huh. Keep going.

**SS:** Really? All right. Uh, we already talked in another interview about your daily procedures and your warm-up techniques so I don't think we need to cover those here. Uh, but for those people who, uh, we don't need to do that either because I can do that. Uh, if you could describe an ideal band program, what is it? What does it look like?

**AW:** I never thought about that. I'll need some time to think about that.

**SS:** My follow up question to that would be, are you still trying to get to there, or is it too pie in the sky?

**AW:** I hadn't thought about it.

**SS:** Ok.

**AW:** I don't, I don't, I don't know.

**SS:** Ok. That was, we'll come back to that one.

**AW:** It's like finding, it's like identify an ideal mate, or an ideal size, or an ideal hairstyle or an ideal sunset.

**SS:** Ok, Um, do you see yourself as a role model for your students?

**AW:** No.

**SS:** And for other teachers?

**AW:** No.

**SS:** Do you think you're the topic of this dissertation perhaps because I, I see you as a role model?

**AW:** Hadn't thought about it.

**SS:** Ok.

**AW:** I am a role model for young, African American band directors.

**SS:** You think the color makes a distinction?

**AW:** Yes.

**SS:** You don't think you're a role model for me, a white Jewish girl?

**AW:** Well, because we worked together for a long time. If we hadn't worked together I don't know if you would hold me in that high of esteem. Um, I mean, that, I don't know. White folks can find role models in other places. They don't have to look for, to us for role models unless we become the president of the United States. Then it works.

**SS:** Ok.

**AW:** But he doesn't see himself as a role model either.

**SS:** Well, let's go somewhere else. Well, what impact do you hope to make on a daily basis and, sort of, long term also – either on the students or on the profession? Or, do you hope to make an impact, or are you just doing your thing?

**AW:** I don't think about it much. I don't know. I think the symphonic band camp is, is a, is probably my single major contribution to the band directing profession, and

**SS:** And people don't even know it.

**AW:** Well, that's, that's, ok. Uh, the person that starting marching band camp I didn't know, I don't know who that person is either. It's just something that we start to do, and so getting the credit for it is less important than it being an important part of music making in school bands. That's what I said in the late 1980's and not much has changed. Yeah. So, if other folk won't take credit for it, then I can't, you know, that's just their ego and it's filled with their problems and then, it's,

it's the space that they stay in and I can't help them with their problems. I got enough of my own.

**SS:** I don't think we need to talk about the symphonic band camp here because I think I probably have enough of that from that weekend, probably, probably. Uh,

**AW:** I'm done now.

**SS:** Are you done?

**AW:** Um, huh.

**SS:** All right, we can be done.

## APPENDIX C

### General Interview #2 with Alfred Watkins

July 10, 2009

**SS:** It's July the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Will you please tell me what you see as your primary responsibility as a music teacher?

**AW:** My personal responsibility according to the school district and the state is to teach every child music that comes through my door. My personal responsibility is to give them as valuable a musical experience as I can. The state and the school district, however, do not require that. They simply require that I provide them education as one of the school's music teachers. Personally, I make, and have always made an effort to make sure that every child, 100% of the students that come through under my leadership, have an opportunity to learn the real valuable tool of music through performance, through everyday growth and development and essentially learn to play a single line instrument. There are some ancillary things that go along with that such as music appreciation, the history of certain parts of music that we are studying at the time, working together as a group, working together in small groups, developing leadership characteristics, developing leadership traits, giving them the ability to develop their self confidence, and some other things that are very obvious to our part of the serious study of music.



However, my primary responsibility is to make sure that everyone gets musical development.

**SS:** So how do you that? What are the steps that you go through to achieve creating opportunities for the very best musical development possible?

**AW:** Well, first of all it has to be a philosophical decision that one has to make. Once you make that philosophical decision, then everything that you do leads towards the same common goal. So it actually becomes pretty easy. The most difficult thing is to establish a philosophy that is what's important to me. Many people don't quite make that connect, but for me, it's through excellent training and teaching from everyone that's involved on my staff. At Lassiter, we have for an example--during the marching band season which we are about to approach--we have an individual teacher assigned to every section in the after school band. A flute teacher or a flute professional just assigned to the flute students so they can get maximum growth during that season...all the way down through tuba and percussion. From an auxiliary standpoint, there are trainers for dance, and spinning of flags, spinning of weapons. So everyone gets a high level of professional instruction from the time they walk in the door, and they begin to develop their skills. Once their skills are developed, then musical enjoyment becomes easier for them because they can enjoy music at a higher level. Without skills, their growth can be stunted, and musical enjoyment won't develop as well because it becomes more emotional and social than it does just pure musical. So one of the things that I ensure is that students have skills, that they're able to play their instruments, improve on their instruments.

The other thing is a point or goal of mine--it has nothing to do with music--is to make sure that they are in a learning readiness mode when they are in my classroom.

They are in a non-disruptive but cooperative environment, the environment is non-threatening to the student because we are collaborators on music making. We are not always successful with that, but it's always the goal. And that allows for rapid musical growth to occur, because by this time, the students have developed an interest in learning and an interest in growing. Growth calls for fun and development. I once tried to learn to play the guitar. Which is an instrument that I did not study in undergraduate school, and I wasn't very successful after three or four weeks, when I should have been able to play the guitar. So I gave it up; I didn't play it anymore. And I haven't played it since then. I was 20, 22, 23 years old, and I quit playing the guitar because of the lack of growth, and I never went back to it. So after understanding that, it's important that all of the students I teach show evidence of growth that they can measure and that they can value, and we as teachers can measure, and we can evaluate and assess.

**SS:** Is there a difference in the way you teach a child in the first band and a child in the fourth band in terms of that personal growth that you were talking about?

**AW:** Well, yes and no. The student in the first band, oftentimes is highly motivated and self-motivated, highly disciplined and self-disciplined and able to accept corrective measures...has a keen attention span and is probably a pretty fast learner when they walk in the door. The student in the fourth band may or may not have those traits. So it's my responsibility to fill the gaps of those skills, of those personality traits that the student in the fourth band does not have, so they can be prepared to learn. Learning readiness is a very important part of learning, and since it is something that I've stumbled upon the last two or three years of my career, if a person isn't ready to learn, they aren't going to. It simply doesn't matter who you are. Beethoven couldn't teach them. So the fourth band

students oftentimes are younger, which means my teaching approach is a bit more animated than it is in the first band. My suggestions are shorter, and I give quicker dosages of information. I will use more areas of the classroom as the teaching area, outside of just the podium. I'll use the blackboard more because a lot of them are visual learners. Not that there aren't visual learners in the first band, but the first band kids have learned to become audio learners or lecture style learners. The kids in the fourth band haven't learned that just yet. So I'll use the blackboard a lot more, and the most important thing in the fourth band is that I can teach them to learn to love music and learn to love listening to instructions, and in turn they will learn to love music, to love playing, which is not necessarily the same. Many people love music, many people also do not love the serious study of music because of the lack of self discipline and a lack of sticktoitiveness and a lack of patience.

**SS:** So this learning readiness is pretty much the key to providing the high quality music education you're talking about?

**AW:** No, it's not the key. It's one of the keys. It's essential. You just about can't do without it. The key is having a great teacher. You can't get around having a great teacher. You've got to have someone that has knowledge. You've got to have someone that is inspired. You must have someone that is inspiring. Without those, it doesn't work. Martin Luther King was a great American statesman for two reasons. He had a wonderful message that he had intellectually acquired. He had acquired it through intellectual study-whether it was study at Morehouse College, or study at Columbia University, or his independent study of Ghandi. He had thorough knowledge of what he was trying to achieve...and he had the skills to communicate. He was a great communicator. You put

those two together, and you get a great, great American statesman. Ronald Reagan was kind of half of that. He could present a message that was great. I'm not sure he had an enormous amount of intellectual study behind his message because a lot of times he quoted a movie script. Nevertheless, they called him the great communicator, not the great thinker. So, the classroom teacher has to do the same thing. The learning readiness phase is important in order to give the kids a template that they can move from or a base or foundation so they can become ready to learn, which is missing in many cases in the American classrooms. Many teachers find themselves having to discipline the classroom more than teach the classroom, or send kids out to the principal's office more than they can spend time teaching the child. You can't get around the fact that you must have an artist in the room; you must have a person that has acquired knowledge, who leads the organization--and knowledge that's all encompassing. It's not one simple base of knowledge. It's a broad base of knowledges. I guess that is the right expression, but you must have knowledge. You must know your subject matter, and you must know music, and you must be interested in sharing that knowledge of music with others. Knowledge in music doesn't help you if you're not interested to share it. So, learning readiness isn't the key. Learning readiness is like learning the ABCs. If you don't know the ABCs, you really can't construct a sentence; you can't construct a paragraph; you can't construct a phrase; you can't write an essay; you can't write a book; you're stuck. It's like the times tables, mathematical multiplication chart. If you can't do that, you certainly can't do anything else. You can't subtract, you can't divide, you can't go into algebra or the higher math. So learning readiness is a simple tool much like learning major scales. Without learning major scales you can't construct music.

**SS:** So let's say that we are going to teach a young teacher the concept of learning readiness and creating learning readiness in their classroom. I assume discipline is part of that, but it's more than that. What else is it?

**AW:** Well, discipline is a key in that the child has to know what their responsibilities are as a member of the class.

**SS:** How do they find that out?

**AW:** The teacher has to tell them. The teacher has to make it very clear as to what their responsibilities are as classroom members, or members of the band if I happen to teach the band, which I happen to teach. But they have to learn their responsibilities in the classroom...and they are pretty simple responsibilities. They're no different from our responsibilities of doing anything else. You must come, you must enter the classroom quietly as to not draw (attention), create a distraction, or change the atmosphere of the classroom. Classrooms in America, as they change classes are quiet. There's class activity, then the classroom becomes quiet because no one is there, then classroom activity starts again. So the quietness of the classroom, the serenity of the classroom, is the American classroom throughout the grades--with the exception of some of the younger grades when there are some other activities. There are some places where we have activity classes, where the quietness of the classroom, or the peacefulness, the tranquility of the classroom is not important, in some classes of physical education. Perhaps some classes within the art program...perhaps. But yeah, they must understand that it's quiet to come in. They must also understand that time is essential for them to get their materials, and get set up quickly. We have a unique classroom, then, that it takes us four or five minutes just to get everyone into the place where we can begin the learning

process, and if you can minimize that time, then you can maximize the learning phase. And there are other responsibilities that the student has in terms of that learning readiness that are pretty obvious in any kind of a classroom: get your materials, and sit down and get ready for class. Maintain some semblance of decorum and participation, either verbal participation or playing participation in the classroom. So, I approach it for the most part that way.

Once we get that as a ground base for our organization that the students understand their roles and responsibilities--and they can do that--then a lot of other things, even the teaching of music becomes simply the teaching of music and not the training of behavior...or not the correcting atmosphere problems, or dealing with individual issues. Then you can go about the business of teaching music...and that doesn't take long. It's not that we spend a lot of time doing that--we don't. We spend a lot of time at the beginning of each year, a couple of weeks getting them in place, and then we have another 36 weeks we can make music, as opposed to stumbling around and dealing with the same issues for 38 weeks.

**SS:** Not to harp on it but then learning readiness is still more than being quiet and sitting in a chair, right?

**AW:** Yeah. Being quiet and sitting in a chair is the first step.

**SS:** Yeah

**AW:** Then the student--you and the student--must create an atmosphere where everyone is engaged. A student that is quiet and sitting in a chair and is daydreaming, then they may as well be talking, may as well not be there. So then the teacher has to create the atmosphere where the student is readily engaged in the process of music making or the

process of learning...and, well you know we do a lot of different types of things to maintain that student interest. I was at a camp this weekend, and I told a band director that we didn't compete with the marching band until October, and he asked me how do you keep the kids' attention span until October, and I didn't understand the question. I mean, I didn't understand the question, and I still have got to figure it out. I'll have to call him and tell him what the answer is, because I didn't have an answer for him.

**SS:** I think I have the answer to that. Because your motivation is not to go win a contest, your motivation is to teach the children music.

**AW:** Everyone's motivation is not to win the contest, isn't it?

**SS:** That is what I thought too, but apparently that's not the way the rest of the world is.

**AW:** Well, I don't spend time talking to them (the students) about that stuff. I've got other mountains to climb other than worrying about winning the trophy.

**SS:** Yeah

**AW:** I guess I would explain to him that the pursuit of excellence is an every minute, by every hour, by every day, or by every week, every month basis what we think is important. So if you see it that way once you get your group in the right place, every other day past that point, you're developing your organization and you're developing your ensemble, and that's the easy part, that's the fun part. The difficult stuff is getting them ready. More importantly, you've got to do it in a non-threatening, cooperative environment. It's easier said than done.

**SS:** Okay, so let's start with non-threatening. How do you make your classroom environment non-threatening?

**AW:** You do a lot of yelling. (laughs) You make sure that the students fully understand through levels of expectations, either printed or in discussion, what their responsibilities are. As soon as a child deviates from their responsibility, they must be corrected. Sometimes they can be corrected at the end of class, sometimes a phone call home, sometimes during the classroom, depending on the severity of the issue, but once you give them their list of responsibilities, and it's the teacher's job to make sure that they follow through, because they are not going to on their own. They simply aren't going to do that.

**SS:** And how is that non-threatening?

**AW:** How is it non-threatening?

**SS:** Yeah

**AW:** Well, by non-threatening I mean you can't do that everyday. You can't let that be your modus operandi--you can't let the kids see you being that person all the time. They can't be afraid to come into the classroom. They can't be afraid to play a phrase. They can't be afraid to take a risk. So that's what I mean by non-threatening. There has to be some pointed discussion if behavior modification is necessary; very pointed discussion, but it needs to be directed toward the individual child and not toward anyone else in the classroom. So I'd just simply say "I'm sorry I was short with Suzy today. She made this mistake that we all witnessed, and she's not going to play with us for two or three days so she can decide on whether she wants to be in this organization or not. It has nothing to do with anyone else in this classroom. Let's start at letter D please." They may not understand the emotion behind what happened, but they can also understand as time goes on the empathy and the spirit of the conversation. Kids are really logical, and they



understand a lot of things. Once you get them past the emotion, they can kind of figure some of this stuff out. They can leave the classroom and say, “Sue just messed up today.” So that’s non-threatening. That hasn’t always been the case with the old boy, yeah. It’s not to say that I wasn’t short or difficult or down-right mean sometimes (in my earlier career) when a child would do something that was obviously in bad taste in the classroom. Sometimes in education they ask us not to single children out, and so we try to avoid doing that unless they draw attention to themselves singularly. So one good turn deserves another as far as I am concerned.

**SS:** Yeah, so they have singled themselves out. Okay so the other part of that formula you mentioned was cooperation and non-threatening environment....a spirit of cooperation, how do you foster that?

**AW:** I foster that with a tool that a couple of friends of mine gave me in the mid-90s, unfortunately (because it was so late in my career). They were Ray Cramer from Indiana University and Eugene Corporon from the University of North Texas. They came and did a camp for me, and they both used the same expressions over and over and over to the band, and I realized at that time that those words were not really a part of my vocabulary.

**SS:** And they were?

**AW:** They were “please” and “thank you.” And I didn’t say that--I hadn’t, that wasn’t me. I saw myself as a troubleshooter on the podium, designed to wipe out bad intonation, to wipe out bad tone; wipe out bad interpretation and bad precision. I was a traffic cop on the box, and I thought that was what I was to do was to troubleshoot. I found myself to be the same as a doctor, a medical doctor trying to assess what it is that’s wrong with you. You know, so I didn’t have very good bedside manners, so to speak. I watched them

(Cramer and Corporon) develop a stronger sense of cooperation and a stronger sense of community in my classroom, and I borrowed that technique, and now I use it liberally. At the end of the day, our students are our collaborators, whether we like it or not. At the age of 55 years old, there is not much that I am going to collaborate with a 15-year-old child with. That child is 40 years my junior. You can't talk about landing on the moon; we can't talk about the Beatles coming to America; we can't talk about most anything other than the things he or she has shared for 15 years, which I'm probably not most interested in. I found that we must be cooperative, and WE must be cooperative, not that they (students) must cooperate with me, but I must cooperate with them. We have to collaborate at the end of the day to make music. I'm a part of the project too. A concert to me is much like a class project, and we all must participate fully in the class project in order for us to get to our acquired goals, which is perfection and execution of the music and some semblance of uniform interpretation. So I'm a collaborator, so the cooperation is key. It's my job to establish the interpretation of the piece because I'm the learned musician, and I'm the conductor; or whatever it happens to be that we're doing at the time. So it's my job to establish the interpretation of the work, and it's their job to follow my interpretation and to try and get to the common goal that I have established for the group. It's no different than the symphony orchestra conductor, no different from the middle school teacher.

**SS:** Okay, good. How would you describe your leadership style....**(AW:** I think I just did) yeah, it does kind of relate to what we just talked about. You see yourself as a collaborator now, and you haven't always been that way?

**AW:** Yes

**SS:** How would you (AW begins to speak before sentence is complete)

**AW:** I've always been a collaborator. I've never seen myself as a collaborator before.

**SS:** How's that different?

**AW:** It's just age. It's just maturity.

**SS:** Do you think a 25-year-old teacher can collaborate in the same way that a 55-year-old teacher can collaborate?

**AW:** (laughing) They collaborate differently than we do. They may collaborate too much. (laughing) I think a 25-year-old may see themselves more as a part of the social component of the children than what a veteran teacher would see. They may want the children to like them. They may want the children to give them birthday cards. They may want the children to sit down and talk to them about what's happening in Brittany Spears' life, and I'm not really interested in any of those. I can't say what is difficult for 25-year-old teachers because I don't know them all; I don't know many of them. I do know that the assistants that I have worked with have had those issues at that age, and I do know a lot of teachers that I have come in contact with as 25-year-olds don't understand. But it would be kind of arrogant to say "no they don't understand" from my vantage point even though I may think that. I don't know what they think. I do know that life changes for us as we go through various life experiences, and as we go through life experiences we become wiser and broader. I don't tell the children that they are my collaborators, however. That's not a part of my conversation with them. I don't really care that they know that part. At the end of the day, that's what we all do. So after 33 years of teaching, it's easy to look back on your mistakes and things that you did well and things that you did not do well. And a lot of those things don't matter provided you have a good course

and there was a reason for doing what you did. I don't know what your question was--I forgot.

**SS:** That's alright. So what is your role, then, in your students' social development, or do you have a role in their social development?

**AW:** Yeah, I provide a vehicle for them to grow through or with or in. And so, the vehicle is a top-flight, well-respected school organization that they can take pride in because of their participation and or their friends' participation. It's important for me to create a social atmosphere so the more extroverted students can reel themselves in, the more introverted students can find a little more of an outward expression in a calm, rational non-threatening environment. It also allows for students that don't feel good about themselves-- because of their adolescence-- whether they've got pimples, or they're too fat, or they're too skinny or they're black or they're Asian or anything other than white, or that they just don't fit in. We try to provide social events and moments where we can capture the pride...where they feel good about being in the group, and they have developed an appreciation for music and an appreciation particularly for the group they are in that may last them forever. Hopefully, it will last them forever, but we don't know that it does. At least it may have changed their lives, hopefully positively.

**SS:** Okay, let's talk about some nuts and bolts--the organization and the structure of the Lassiter program.

**AW:** Okay

**SS:** We already know that the symphonic band program is the foundation and the focus of the program itself. We talked about that a little bit last time. Can you talk about, maybe how you've put that together, the actual structure of it?

**AW:** Ask that question in a different way. You sound like a college student trying to ask a question. What do you want to know?

**SS:** How is the Lassiter band put together?

**AW:** Okay. Which part of the Lassiter Band?

**SS:** Symphonic band is where we started.

**AW:** ...kind of hard to answer.

**SS:** I don't mean for it to be hard to answer. I'm talking about: there are four or five bands based on audition....

**AW:** Okay, got it. That's different.

**SS:** Nuts and bolts.

**AW:** There are four concert bands at Lassiter. There are three symphonic bands on top and a wind ensemble underneath (he chuckles as he says this). We have the smallest band underneath, which many people would call a wind ensemble nowadays, because we try to have a lower pupil per teacher ratio in the band where the kids have the most needs. The symphonic bands are 65 members (Symphonic I), 65 members (Symphonic II), 65-70 members (Concert I), and 45 members (Concert II) or how many ever students that is. We have another set of students in our program that are auxiliary members that are flags and rifles and weapons. About 10% of those students (maybe a little less) play instruments; but for the most part, they are not part of the everyday classroom band. We also have some standing chamber organizations that we've had for many, many years. We have three percussion ensembles that we've had for nearly 15 years. They meet after school during the second semester. We have a standing clarinet choir that has been around for nearly 20 years. Our oldest standing ensemble is the trombone choir that's

been there for 26 of my 27 years. Percussion ensemble is not volunteer; it's required of everyone in the percussion program. The clarinet choir, the trombone choir and any other choirs that we have are volunteer organizations that are, as a rule, coached by the students themselves. Um, what else? I'm thinking....what else do you want to know?

**SS:** Jazz band? Colorguard? Chamber music?

**AW:** Jazz band is a second semester tool. We have one, sometimes one-and-a-half (meaning a combo)...one or two jazz bands, but typically one jazz band. All grade levels are included. It's standard instrumentation for jazz--five saxes, four trombones, five trumpets, and a rhythm section. We may double some of the instruments. It plays at regional festivals and regional adjudicated festivals, and regional spring events.

We have two winter guards, members of the auxiliary unit that perform in competitive events in the winter season, January through May. One is an advanced level group that typically performs at the national level competition--WGI finals or championships every other year, or two years on/two years off. We have a training group that is below that, that performs in local competitions, and a middle school level group that we call our junior color guard that performs in local competitions and competes in, typically, the novice class, the youngest class of color guard competition. They do very limited travelling.

Percussion ensembles do not travel unless they play at a conference. They've played at the Mid-West Clinic in Chicago once; they played the PASIC--the very prestigious PASIC--Percussive Arts Society International Convention, big percussion convention. They played there once about two or three years ago. They played last year at the State Convention of (Georgia) Music Educators. So the percussion ensemble is a

conference-performing group. The top ensemble is at least. We do not have an indoor winter drum line. It's an activity that I do not support, and I do not think for my students that it is educational. So we don't do that at all. And the students don't appear to have any interest in doing it, although they (indoor drum lines) are pretty common around the country nowadays.

We have an active chamber program with well over 100 students participating in the district solo and ensemble festival. On some years, we host our own event--our own festival, with our own judges, our tapes, our own DVDs, and all of that. As a rule, we have about 110 or 120 kids performing in the solo and ensemble festival each year. Approximately 100 students will try out for the district honor band each year. Of that 100, probably 70 students will make the bands. We have four 80-piece bands in our district. There are 25 schools in the district? 24 schools? so the percentage is very good, very high. We'll have between 20 and 40 students in the all-state band every year, and we have had that many annually for well over 20 years. With the exception of one year about two or three years ago, we've led the state in the number of members in the all-state band and/or orchestra.

We have a symphony orchestra at school, and a dear colleague of mine conducts the symphony orchestra. It's fabulous. It's about a 105- piece orchestra that performs several concerts a year. The symphony orchestra will play at the holiday concert in December. It will play at the district festival evaluation in February. It will give a "Night at the Movies" concert which is one of our more popular concerts when they just play movie film scores in April, and they may or may not play a spring concert, depending... They also play at conferences. They played at the Mid-West Band and Orchestra Clinic

this past year. The symphony orchestra meets during the school day and as an after school activity. At Lassiter, the classes are distributed into seven, 55-minute class periods. So it's a traditional classroom block. The string orchestra and the Symphonic I Band, top symphonic band, meet at the same hour. So typically one day a week, starting in the middle of the fall, we'll put the symphony orchestra together without having to work it after school. She'll (orchestra director) either come to my room and rehearse it in my room, or I'll send the students to her room, and I will take the other students that are not in the symphony orchestra and rehearse them. I believe that that musical outlet is very important for them. We have any number of other students that participate in other regional wind bands and other regional symphony orchestras. There are several of them around town, probably five or six now. And we have students that participate in all of those, and we don't have any major conflicts with band rehearsals unless the conductor's a dodo, which does happen.

There's an important part in the structure of the program that you should know, and that is the way I select repertoire--or help the assistants select repertoire. We try to find music that will allow for each member of each band to stretch for each concert, second semester. First semester, we use as a building block semester. We play music that is a little more appropriate for where their skills are at that time (in the fall) so that we can spend a good portion of time, particularly because it's football season, developing their individual skills and their ensemble skills in regards to tone--the blend of tone, beauty of tone, control of sound. We do a lot of work on intonation, either melodic or chordal. We do a lot of work on developing facility, developing precision, developing center of pitch, and musical line and direction of music line with regards to balance and



blend and timbral things that first semester. So, we typically play music a little closer to where their skills are so they can play the notes of the music without having to stretch too far and miss the concept of the musical fundamentals that go along with it. So we don't stretch them much first semester. The first band will do two or three lighter grade VI pieces, which for them is not too difficult. (*Suite Francais*, Darius Milhaud, was on the first semester concert last year, and that's not too hard for them.) The second band will play a grade V concert; the third band will play a grade IV program. We have the students in a freshmen woodwind and freshmen brass class first semester to allow for us to coordinate the learning from the middle schools, and to give them some semblance of all the rudiments that they'll need for the next three and a half years. The percussion students are all placed in a drum line class. They do, for the most part, marching band drum line music and developmental skills until Halloween, and then they split off into three percussion ensembles, and begin to develop those November, December.

**SS:** Can I interrupt? Do you do marching band music during the day?

**AW:** We try to avoid doing it during the day at all cost, unless an arrangement comes in late season or unless we had some, the schedule outside has caused for us to do it but as a rule those are concert band days. We're working on regular symphonic band literature and symphonic ensemble books and developmental skills as a rule.

Second semester, the students are re-auditioned and placed based on audition in four concert bands, regardless as to what grade level they're in. I establish the instrumentation of the bands. I establish the instrumentation that starts with the upper band. I try to find the natural break off of the largest section, whether it's clarinets, or sometimes horns will dictate the size of the band. Sometimes, trumpets dictate the size of

the band; sometimes, flutes dictate the size of the band. Whatever is a natural break-off of those sections (in terms of ability) will give me the size of the band. It'll shift from 60 members to about 65 members. If it's a large clarinet section-- because I have a lot of skill players that are juniors and seniors--then the band will be a little bit larger. If it's a small clarinet section, then the band will be a little bit smaller. If I have a large horn section--which we do now; we have 18 horns in the program--then I'll have to broaden the low brass sound out, or the horn sound won't balance to them. So the band will be a little bit larger than it would have been ordinarily because of horns. It's kind of how I go about making decisions, and then the second and third bands are about the same size, and the fourth band is smaller.

Each band, second semester, plays a bit above where it is capable of playing. The first band plays difficult grade VI music, the second band plays moderate level grade VI music, the third band stretches to about a grade V, and the fourth band--which is typically a II to II ½ band in terms of ability level--we'll stretch them to a III. With good teaching and good cooperation, they'll be able to stretch fine. We're proud of the concert band program. We haven't made an excellent rating, nothing less than a superior rating, since '92...1992 or '93. I can't remember, but other than that, they've been real consistent through the years.

**SS:** You started to say a minute ago something that was important about the structure was how you select repertoire and how you help the assistant band directors select repertoire. Is that what you mean in terms of the difficulty level?

**AW:** The grade level, the difficulty of the music, and, because most of the time they (assistant directors) come from fine university bands, they've been playing music on the

very advanced level. They've discussed easier pieces, more educational pieces, but they don't know them very well. They (young teachers) typically come out of colleges now and don't know much about marches. So I have to start all over again and give them a kind of march training session or some sessions. So I coach them through their repertoire choices throughout the year. The ultimate decision actually becomes theirs, but I give them 10 or 15 pieces that I think will fit their band very well and will cause each person to stretch, until they (young teachers) learn how to go through the process and do it on their own. It takes two or three years to learn that.

**SS:** How do you pick the music that you want to play with your group?

**AW:** Well, I try to get a range of music so that I can get a variety of composers, a variety of tempi, a variety of textures, a variety within the orchestration, variety with regards to time period, whether it's a transcription or an early wind band piece or middle wind band piece or very contemporary piece. I think that balance in programming is real critical. I try to keep a march on all of the concerts. They're not always American marches, but I try to keep a march in their (the students') steady diet. That's pretty much it. I try to find things that fit them. If we've got great horns, great trumpets, great trombones, I'll make sure that they have challenging parts. I don't think that it's possible to hide sections, and to hide players (as some band directors do). Those sections are always creating frequencies, and you can't really hide frequencies, they're just kind of there. You can allow them not to be as exposed; you can minimize exposure to error. I guess that's what we call it. I also pick music that I like. If I'm not convinced that it's a good piece of music, I simply won't play it because it seems to be popular or it seems to be the piece that people are playing. Many of my college colleagues now are attaching themselves to a

lot of wind band writers that I don't think are very substantive or very talented or very good, but that's all that they've got. So they'll play them, and they'll give them the "once over," I call it. They'll play it for a couple years rotation, then they'll rest that music and pick up another piece by another composer in order to inspire them to write more. I think that's laboratory music. I think it should be in the laboratory much like anything else that's in a laboratory. You don't do those things in public. You don't subject the public to that.

**SS:** Experiments...

**AW:** Experiments. Yeah.

**SS:** So would you say that you are more of a traditionalist?

**AW:** I guess. I don't really think of myself that way. I guess I'm just kind of old fashioned...if that's a traditionalist. I'm not sure. Traditionalist could mean play a lot of Paul Yoder or Alfred Reed or transcriptions and Sousa. Traditionalist could mean that middle--that next generation, James Curnow and Francis MacBeth, or it could...I don't know. I just believe in trying to find good music and exposing my students to good music, that has a variety of textures, timbres, interesting transitions, and not transitions for the sake of transitions... and not an assortment of *ostinati* that have no place to go but are pointless, and using them as a ground rhythm because they have nothing else to do. We used to call them a "vamp" back in the old days before I learned it was *ostinato*, so I just try to find good substantive music that has good melodic material, good countermelodic material, good treatment, good development of that material, good transitions...good high points, good low points, and there's never a dull moment. I think

that's really important that there's never a dull moment in music. Shows the thoroughness of the composer.

There was a time we would go to any piece of art, whether it's a painting or musical, or book....(trails off)....there was a time when we would go to the movies, and you'd go about half-way through the movie, and you'd need to go out to the concessions and get popcorn and some candy, and you'd need to go to the restroom, and you couldn't go because the movie was so enticing. In the olden days--10 years ago and before--you'd know that there was going to be a lull in the movie to allow for you to go outside. We all knew it across the culture. This big moment would happen, and then this lull would come in, and you would say "Okay, it's time," and you would see 10 people get up and leave the movie theatre. I would always come back and ask my partner or my mate or the person I went to the movie with, what did I miss? And the answer was always the same: nothing. What I have since come to learn is that it wasn't a very strong movie or a book that gets to the middle, and you don't know where it's going and it just kind of floats around the middle into Never-Never Land, and you skip two or three pages and realize that what you skipped, you didn't necessarily need to read it anyway. If that's the case, it's just not a strong work of art. So, musical pieces are that way too. If they can't capture your attention or maintain your attention through the various tools that they have, then it's a weakness in its construction.

**SS:** Can you talk a little bit about how you set short-term and long-term goals for the program?

**AW:** Hmmm, yes! Well, that's difficult. They change. Long-term goals could be three to five years...five to 10 years...two to three years...six months to a year...second semester

to the end of the year. Short-term goals could be tomorrow or today, and so it depends on the relationship with time. Goal setting is important, and I think the things that are most important about establishing short-term and long-term goals are actually setting the goals to start off with, and giving time for your goals to evolve and develop, and sticking to your goals. So finding a plan, and working the plan and sticking to it, is more important to me. We had a goal this year to make sure that all the students in the entire band program could play all of their major scales, save no one, by the end of the school term. This is a goal we established second semester. So we assessed the students at the end of second semester, and for the first time ever, ALL the students knew ALL the major scales. That means the slowest learners; that means the kid that came to us as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader that could play not one major scale had a long, long road to hoe. But it was a goal of mine. I don't know if that's long-term or short-term, but it was a goal. Sometimes we'll establish long-term goals that will take two to three to four years to evolve. I don't have a lot of them anymore at the end of my career. For example, there was a weakness in our percussion program when I realized that the concert curriculum was wind-generated and not generated for the percussion instruments. Our percussionists didn't develop as well as our wind players did. So I hired a new percussion instructor in the mid-90s and gave it a three or four-year plan to get it up to the same level of the wind program, and it took four, five, or six years, but we got the program to where it was quite respectable on a national level. We did the same thing for the winter guard program. We wanted to get it where it was on the same par with the concert band, and in five or six years, we did that. We went through a period in the 1980s when we wanted to get the marching band on the same par in terms of its quality and depth as the concert band program. It took us about five, six, or

maybe seven years, but it got there in the mid-90s, and it was as good as the concert band program. In many cases, unfortunately, it's more respected than the concert band program because of the DVDs and Youtube that's presented out there. So more people know about our marching program than anything else...which is fine. As long as they can find us, they know that we are there doing something well in music, and it's okay.

Keeping a balance between marching, concert, chamber, jazz and big events is important. I chose parades as an interim event for us. Parades were non-competitive events, once you got past the competition to get in. There was not one band pitted against another band. They were an opportunity for us to enjoy being in the organization and being able to perform at a high level, being able to perform at a high level nationally and internationally, without the spirit of competition involved in it. Being a parade band to balance the other parts of our program was very important to me, and that was established actually before we established the competitive marching band pretty well. That goes back to 1986. That was our first national parade (Orange Bowl Parade), and we are doing the Macy's parade in 2010. It's almost a 30-year run, a 25-year run, I guess, of being involved in nationally recognized parades.

**SS:** And you do those every three, four, five years?

**AW:** Every four, five, six years. You can't do them every year. So we try to space them out every three, four, five years. During the years we were going to the Bands of America Grand National Championship, we would use the parades in between as having another national event that was non-competitive. But once we stopped doing that in 2002, then the rotation, the agendas shifted. There were many years starting in '85, when I would do

a concert band focus and a marching band focus alternatively to make sure our program had balance.

The first regional event we did with the high school band was 1985. We played at the University of Southern Mississippi at the Southern Instrumental Conductor's Conference. It was '85. In '86, we did the GMEA convention and the Orange Bowl Parade. So I wanted to make sure that I had some balance between the marching and the concert with the bands. I thought they were both equally important. In '87, we did Tri-State Convention at Florida State; '88, we did the NBA National Convention. We also did a Bands of America Regional Championship for the first time in '88. In 1989, we played the Mid-West...1990, we performed at the Grand Nationals of Bands of America. So we balanced them out left and right, one to the other. The rotation got a little weird in the late 90s after we won the first national championship (Bands of America), and we couldn't balance that with anything. It just didn't balance...nothing balanced. The parades balanced it, but nothing else balanced.

**SS:** So we've talked about the structure of the program but we forgot to talk about the band boosters, and I know that's an important part of the community and atmosphere of the Lassiter program. Can you talk a little bit about what the boosters mean to you as the band director and to the students in the program?

**AW:** They're an invaluable resource. They are model for band booster clubs across the country.

**SS:** How'd they get that way?

**AW:** It's just the spirit of the community. Once it developed its own personality, they maintained it. We helped to sculpt it. Band boosters serve two roles, three roles actually.



One role is a natural liaison between the band directors and the students; and two: they serve a service role to the band organization through its organization. We rely on them for chaperoning duties for the students very, very often and particularly on trips for football games and bus rides. We rely on them for ways and means in terms of finance, providing finance. They probably have contributed two or three million dollars into the development of the Lassiter Band and probably even more than that through the years. Those funds support the program in terms of our quality adjunct faculty and a lot of latitude for purchasing of equipment and purchasing of uniforms and things of the sort.

They're well organized into any number of committees. A uniform committee sizes the students up, issues the uniforms to the students, and provides for the cleaning of the marching and the concert uniforms. A separate committee makes the flags, makes the color guard costumes. A separate committee rents the truck, the vehicle that carries the percussion equipment and instruments in football season. They (LBBA) purchased the 40-footer that goes along with the band that is a very large source of pride for the overall band community. It has Lassiter Band painted on there in very bold print. They purchased that, maintain the upkeep, load it for every performance concert or marching that's off campus. That same equipment committee sets up for all of our concerts...moves all the stands moves all the percussion equipment. We carry them to district festival. Wherever the band goes, they go with us. We have any number of committees that they do to serve the band. They function as an operational assistant band director corps because of the absence of assistant band directors in our community. Our school district only provides one or two assistants in most of our schools. We're fortunate right now to have one and a half assistant band directors at Lassiter. Because of the absence of that, the band boosters

have had to fill those rolls in terms of operation, anything outside of music, which they can't do. That's a valuable resource. The third resource they provide for us is a lobby to the school principal and to the board of education and other members of the community as to what we do and what our needs are. They do this either through fundraising efforts, through encouragement, or through conversation as to what we do. They are our number one cheering squad when we have performances.

**SS:** When you arrived at Lassiter, what was the band parent organization like, and how long did it take for you to create that spirit of cooperation that is there now?

**AW:** Well it wasn't always quite so cooperative. When I arrived there, the second year of the school, the band boosters were already up and running and already well-organized and well entrenched into operating the band program as they saw fit. (we both laugh) We took a few years to work through that. They were not necessarily anxious for me to be their new band director, and they told me as such-- indirectly for the most part. We worked through those issues. It took about five or six years. It took a couple of strong band booster presidents to right the ship, to accept the fact that Alfred Watkins was going to be our band director and that whatever he needed for our band program to operate itself on was we were going to do. We rewrote the by-laws...excuse me, with my encouragement, they rewrote the by-laws that took the any decision making responsibilities away from the band booster club and placed surely at the hands of the director of bands. Once the by-laws were re-written and amended, whenever the organization would find itself in a position where they thought they wanted to legislate what was happening in the band, then they simple had to read the first article in the by-

laws, and that pretty much muted the conversation. That was just a real smart way of working through those issues.

Early on, I sat down with every committee that we had in the organization: uniform committee, hospitality committee, equipment committee, chaperoning committee, water committee, photography committee...every committee, I sat down with the for each of about the first three years, and I told them exactly how I wanted their committee to function, how I saw their committee functioning within the band organization; so it left nothing to question...that's what the band director needed or wanted or required. Each committee made a book, made a manual that I would look at at the end of the year and make some adjustments in their manual regarding basic operations of the committees and the booster organization, and they still pass that manual down through the committee chairs every year. The treasurers, the secretaries, and things of the sort do this, and it's worked almost without fail. That was really key that I took the time to give a list of expectations to every committee for about three years so that they knew what I wanted.

Many band directors have issues with their band booster clubs. They're frightened of them, and they don't see them as being part of the collaboration. They see them sometimes as their enemies, and you have to try and get a handle on them and what they are doing and help them realize that you all seek the same common goal for the full development of their child. Once they recognize that you are there for their child, and they're there for their child, then we have one common goal. I've never thought that the band parents were there to serve me...that their job was to make me happy, or to make me look good. That doesn't make sense to me. I was there for their children; I wasn't

there for them either. So now we have a really terrific relationship and have had a terrific relationship for many, many years. And on rare occasion when ugly raises its head, the parent organization (as it does in any other facet of America) stomps it out pretty good--by the entire parent association if necessary. I think the entire community, principal, assistant principals, and other organizations understand that.

**SS:** Understand what?

**AW:** Understand that the band boosters are there to serve the school and serve the students in the band program and are not afraid to speak up if necessary if something has been wronged.

**SS:** You mind giving an example of that?

**AW:** No

**SS:** Okay

**AW:** On occasion, we'll have a problem with football boosters. Their program has, by and large, been unsuccessful. It's been equally as unsuccessful as we have been successful for 25 years. The football boosters don't have very much appreciation for the band. I don't enjoy being in that position, but those are not my students; that's not my organization, and I can't teach everybody. So when they (football booster parents) are not kind to me--as they may not be kind on occasion to me--the band boosters will make sure that the school principal and the board of education and the football booster club president recognizes that their organization is out of line. The band boosters do this either

through writing letters or visiting with them or through talking to them. Likewise, with the administrators that we've had through the years, some of the assistant principals have leaned on the band a little hard or leaned on me a little hard, and the band boosters will recognize that. They also recognize that I'm teaching--we're teaching-- 13 to 15% of the school population everyday. They also recognize the value of our program.

Once, in the early 2000s, we had a band booster officer that infiltrated our board of directors, and he communicated some untruths to the band booster club about me as a person. It became a horrible situation that was almost newsworthy in the media community. This individual was so disruptive to the point that when we went to the Tournament of Roses Parade in 2002, according to the Rose Parade Officials, this individual placed a threat on the health of the band program. They were afraid of a bomb. The LAPD was involved in it, the Rose Bowl security was involved in it, and the LA county police were involved in making sure that nothing happened to students with the bomb threat. The boosters removed him from office, but it was a very difficult, very taxing, very awkward situation. They removed him from office, and I received over 150 letters of support from the band organization saying that this is wrong, and we won't allow this to happen. Just stuff like that.

**SS:** What are some of the highlight accomplishments of your career?

**AW:** People always ask me about my favorite accomplishment, and it embarrasses me because I don't have any. There some accomplishments that stand out over others from time to time. Two of them happened during the last two school terms at our district band festival in 2008. The top band played Paul Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*.

Paula Crider from the University of Texas was one of our judges, and she came back and

told the kids in clinic, and she told the rest of the adjudicators, that this was the finest live performance of *Symphonic Metamorphosis* that she had ever heard with a band.

Considering that she worked at University of Texas in Austin and heard all the great Texas bands and had been to the Mid-West many times and been a member of ABA many times, I'm sure she's heard *Symphonic Metamorphosis* a lot. For her to tell us that that was the finest performance of that piece by a band that she's ever heard live was a major accomplishment....that was a high point. Once year later, we went to district festival this past year, and Ray Cramer from Indiana University was the adjudicator. We played the Persichetti *Symphony for Band*, and he came into our clinic, and he told us that that was the finest live performance he'd ever heard of the Persichetti *Symphony*, including the ones that he had conducted. Being from Indiana University, being a member of the Mid-West Board, having heard all those bands--all those tapes, having been a member of the American Bandmasters Association, of which he'd been president before, he had heard the Persichetti *Symphony* a few times. He was probably a practicing band director when the Persichetti *Symphony* came out. So when Ray Cramer's comparing our performance with his own Indiana performances and praising it so highly, and (with Paula Crider's compliment from the previous year), now that was two years running. They're hearing something that maybe I need to listen to. So those were high points.

Having a building named in my honor (the Lassiter High School Band building is named the Alfred L. Watkins Band Building) was a high point that I still don't quite believe. That's one of those things I'm still not sure that I'm supposed to be around to see it or not. I'm not sure I'm supposed to be...so whatever that means. But it's an ongoing

honor because it's my son's last name there, and it's my family name that's there, and my grandson's last name, my great grandson's last name, and to have that in a community that didn't readily accept me 27 years ago is a really great source of pride.

**SS:** How did that happen? You kind of stole my thunder, that was going to be one of my concluding questions but...

**AW:** How'd it happen?

**SS:** Yeah, how did it come about that the new band building at Lassiter High School would be named after Alfred Watkins?

**AW:** Well the school district decided that we needed a new music facility when block scheduling became a part of our natural school district change around 2000, 2001. So they knew they didn't have enough music buildings for all the bands, choirs and orchestras. So the school district chose to build a new music room, and I didn't need the room...I was fine where I was. They chose to put the band in that room and split the choir and the orchestra up and give them separate rooms. And the band booster club board petitioned the principal and the board that the building be named in my honor unbeknownst to me. It would pass the board unanimously, I found out, and the principal at the time, Charles Lee, apparently supported it. I did not know that the building was going to have my name on it in large letters until they began to put it up. I walked in one day, and they had the letters out in the room, getting ready to put them on the building, on the floor. And it was...quite frightening. I've only noticed it about four or five times. Obviously, when I drove in like on a Friday or so my name was up there, and then we had a dedication and all that kind of stuff. I brought most of my family, the Watkins family, to the school. They didn't come to the ceremonies--most of my family came to

the ceremonies--but the ones that didn't come, I brought them over the next day, and we took pictures. Only on a couple of other occasions have I really noticed it. I keep a picture close by; but that was a high point.

Winning the national championship twice ('94 and '98) was a high point because we did it without any repeat students, which is probably really hard to do. Just winning it once is an amazing feat; to have won it twice...was enough. We said what we needed to say, and we're done with that. Playing at the Mid-West Clinic ('89 and '96) was a high point, those two times that we played. The second time was such a high point that I opted never to try it again because it was probably the crowning jewel of my professional career in 1996. And having had six bands (Symphonic I and II Bands in '93, '95' and 2002) to play the National Concert Band Festival as invited bands was a high point. That was a high point to have two bands to play on the national stage of the best 14 bands in the country at that time. Those were really high points. We played great literature beautifully. I guess another one was when we performed at National Band Association Convention in 1988 in Nashville, Tennessee. It was just after graduation, which gave the band ample amount of time to mature. It was a very mature ensemble, and we ended up playing for a small yet very, very important group of people that were my mentors, kind of privately. I got to know all of them. Revelli was there; and Begian was there, Fennell, Gabriel and Paynter. The big five, I call them. Including Bourgeois, it would be six. They were there; the seniors were there. They were all in attendance for that concert; they all appreciated our work and congratulated me on our work throughout our association. That was always exciting for me.



I guess the other highlight, is the formation of my adult community band, the Cobb Wind Symphony. The fact that it's formed and it's a vibrant community group, where everyone comes in, and we play. I'm not compensated for my efforts in 10 years now. That organization is a high point because it allows me to visit with about 15 to 20 of my former students, personally as adults and as band members again. I have so many very good friends in the community band that I cherish the relationship with them. It's really a special group, a real special family, and they're just fabulous musicians. So that makes music-making a lot of fun. That I can make music with just a bunch of people in the community who simply love bands, who simply love music, and simply love playing in bands, and I happen to be the person at the helm of that, and that's always a high point. It's very good band; we play at conferences also (Mid West, GMEA State Convention).

The big parades have been high points. I didn't mention that in this context. The three Tournament of Roses Parades and the two Macy's parades, and two Orange Bowl Parades... Those are high points because parades allow me to take the students in the band program to another region in the country that would not ordinarily know that Lassiter High School exists. And it also allows for those students to be in an environment that they may not ordinarily be in, Southern California, New York City, and Miami. And to be able to take groups there and perform beautifully, and to have the students in the Lassiter Band on local, national and international television on numerous occasions has always been a part of the esprit de corps of the organization, and everyone knows it now in metro Atlanta. Wherever we go we're a recognized entity primarily because of those parades and the coverage from the national championships. Those are high points.

**SS:** Do you see yourself as a role model?

**AW:** I guess. I don't see myself that way much. I see myself as a role model to young African American male and female band directors. That's about it.

**SS:** But not to.....

**AW:** No

**SS:** .....Western European Americans?

**AW:** No. They don't see themselves when they see me, as young black girls and black guys do. There's always--and even the older ones--there's always a special twinkle in their eye when they are around my bands performing, and they don't hesitate in asking gazillions of questions. I may be a role model to other people, but I don't see myself that way. The assistants that have worked with me, I hope don't see me as a role model as much as a friend or a confidant...

**SS:** I think they see you as a mentor and a friend...

**AW:** a mentor

**SS:** I think they'd use the word mentor instead.

**AW:** Yeah, that's probably, I can see that, but a role model I think is a little different.

**SS:** Okay.

**AW:** I don't see myself as a mentor to many, except the young, African-American band directors. I call them my mentees. Rodney Dorsey falls in that category by the way. Yeah. He doesn't call me his mentor; I call him my mentee.

**SS:** Well let me ask you this, in this way then. Do you see the Lassiter program as being a role model program for other band programs?

**AW:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah--because it's exceptional, and because it has exceptional skills, and exceptional talents, and has been consistent through a better part of 20 years.

So that role model that the program has is humbling, and I am very careful to try not to do a lot of wrong things because I know the next generation's going to model their programs after this one. So I try to give them a good model. One of the reasons that I don't compete on the national level every year is because I don't think it's healthy for groups in my region to spend that kind of expenditure for marching band. Another reason I don't compete with the marching band on the regional level every year, I think it's important to have a balance in your marching band program. Some other reasons I don't apply to conferences every year are that it allows for my colleagues to apply for conferences. I know that some of the conferences I apply for, I'll take a slot up. So if I don't apply, it opens up a slot for another one of my colleagues in the area. I know that doesn't sound right, but it's partially true. We're playing at the state convention this coming year (2010). I haven't applied to play at the state convention in 10 years, and I'm taking up a slot that someone else could use that performance as a huge steppingstone in their band program. It is not a huge steppingstone for the Lassiter Band. It's another event that we do, that we'll play well, and we'll organize it well, we'll do it well. For some program, it will be their first time doing a state level event, and that's kind of how I see it. I have to look out for the needs of my program, however. I don't see the program as being a role model for Georgia bands. I do see it being a role model for Cobb County bands, which is my immediate environment, and I see it as a role model for bands around the country but not Georgia bands. I don't think they pay much attention. I get the impression from many band directors they can do the same thing, given the same set of circumstances that I have. I don't know that it's true...but that's the impression that I get from my Georgia colleagues. Which doesn't bother me much; I don't think about it.

**SS:** Well, one of the reasons that I chose you and the Lassiter program as a topic for serious study in a dissertation and something I wanted to write about is because obviously my years at Lassiter shaped who I am as a teacher today. I think there are a lot of things about the structure and the way you teach and approach, and what you have built that can serve as role models for future teachers, and I'm interested in helping future teachers because I don't think ours schools are necessarily doing a great job preparing band directors right now.

**AW:** The schools don't do a very good job of that is a correct assessment.

**SS:** So from your viewpoint and your experience in the classroom for 33 years, going on 34...

being a high school band director for all those years and seeing a lot of young band directors come out, and working with and having assistant band directors who were young and novice teachers, what is it that the colleges are not teaching; how can we fix it; and how can this study which focuses on you and what has happened at Lassiter help fill that gap?

**AW:** You've got three questions.

**SS:** Yeah, I've got a lot of questions.

**AW:** And I'm not the President, so I can't remember all three answers, so hang onto your questions. Those guys can answer three.

**SS:** Okay

**AW:** The colleges could do a better job to assist their students by eliminating band director or music department or school of music in-fighting...

**SS:** in-fighting??

**AW:** In-fighting. The music education classes (in many large universities) are being taught by teachers who simply have public school experience. As a rule, the ones who have valuable public school experience and are very good at it are still teaching in public school. So it leaves us with the ones who are average, at best, in terms of public school experience, that have gotten advanced degrees and have become music education professors. So they're responsible for teaching the future band and orchestra and choir directors. The colleges have taken the marching band, and the athletic bands--the new name that they have coined--the athletic bands, and they went through a period of time where they relegated those positions to graduate assistants who were working on conducting degrees in many cases...not music education degrees. They (graduate students working on conducting degrees) want to conduct advanced literature, and they did the marching bands and the athletic bands. Now the athletic bands are shifting ownership, being owned by the athletic departments. The athletic departments are funding them; they're being run by the athletic department, and in many cases, they are shifting away from the School of Music. That leaves us with the college wind band conductor who now has coined his own phrase; and they're finding, searching for their own next level of music repertoire, and in my impression have left much of our traditions of marches, of performances in gazebos, performances in band stands, performances in public, of a variety of music, they've left that for the sake of trying to find new intellectual music.

So you've got those three groups fighting amongst themselves, and who gets left is the aspiring band director who plays maybe a lower part in the wind ensemble (if they're lucky) or maybe in the second band--which may be a training ground for a

conducting student. They're playing in the marching band, and they'll do a minimal amount of formations a show, when the high school bands are doing substantially more. So they get bored with that. They're playing in the basketball pep bands; the athletics bands are not as intellectual as the concert bands are or the orchestras are. So the athletic bands are playing the fight song maybe a hundred times a week, yet they won't play a Sousa march in their classrooms because they are "uneducational." And then you've got the music education people that may not be the very best to teach them the skills they need. So it leaves a gap in their learning.

**SS:** Sounds like it's a pretty huge gap (laughing).

**AW:** Well I didn't say what size gap it was; I just said it was a gap (laughing). You can decide on how large or how small it is but there's a gap in their learning, and that's a concern to me that there's a gap there. So what I find myself doing, often in the summers and often in the school term is filling gaps from young teachers--first year through about 10 years of information they simply didn't get when they were in undergraduate school. It crosses a wide range from the very large music schools to the very small music schools that are understaffed. So there's a wide gap in there. That answers one question.

**SS:** Well I want to follow up on something then. Who should be teaching the college music education classes? Somebody has to teach them.

**AW:** I don't know. Not being a college professor, that's not a question that I can or should answer.

**SS:** You have an opinion.

**AW:** Well, I don't know how the colleges are organized. Each college may have a different structure, either college music department, small college Department of Music,

large college School of Music, and I don't know who should be teaching. I do know that whoever's teaching them is not doing a very good job. So it's not for me to determine who should be teaching; that would be presumptuous, and I don't want to be presumptuous. I know that they are not doing a very good job. That I can identify.

**SS:** Okay

**AW:** I think it's important that we have another project, another summit where school music teachers get together and discuss our past, present and future of band education and teachers of all levels in an open and honest debate. And once the finger pointing stops, as will be the first thing to occur I suspect...once the finger pointing stops, then we can get down to the brass tacks of trying to provide for our activity for future years. When we're all on board to provide that growth for what's best for band education, in music education, I think we could probably come up with some good conclusions.

One of the things that happens in a school such as Lassiter, where people misunderstand, they just assume that if I can work in a good community, then I can make it. I've heard that for almost 30 years, and they're buzzwords. For an affluent community that perhaps is in suburbia where the students--they believe--are well behaved and where they believe the conductor can rely mostly on private instruction for those 45 kids in the top ensemble...if I could just get there, then I can make music on my level. Well those jobs have to be made. By that same mode of thought, every college and university in the country that has an applied studies department, should have an equal in quality wind band, orchestra, and choir. They should be about the same--not much variation. If you have applied faculty, where students are taking private lessons every week, like they assume we do at Lassiter and other places like Lassiter, then all ensembles should be of

the highest quality of achievement. But for some strange reason, universities are not remotely close. Although the music majors have applied studies every semester that they're there, what causes the difference? Well, there are a lot of circumstances that cause the difference. One of the circumstances that causes for the growth not to occur is the person that is running the program. So there are a lot of suburban communities that are much like Lassiter that don't have great bands, it's because the same thing. The person that's making the decisions is not making the best decisions and there's not much longevity involved in it I wouldn't suspect.

So what I've developed at Lassiter is an approach to teaching the band, assuming that none of the students were taking private lessons, and I used the private lessons as an enhancement above the natural course of study. It is not a part of the course of study. The first things that a private teacher does is to get the kid to play this big, gorgeous, rich, round, robust sound in the middle of the horn. Well that's a *mezzo forte* to a *forte* is what that is. So the first place the private teachers put students musically is there, and they sit them there in that range, and that sound, that range for an awful lot of time. They turn right back and give them to us (band directors), and that same trumpet player has to play in a section of 11. So that robust sound that that child was making, they can only do that at a *mezzo forte*, *mezzo forte* plus and the repertoire calls for the kid to play at *mezzo piano*, and they don't make the same sound. So it's incumbent upon the teachers and conductors in the classroom to develop those skills also.

So I developed the Lassiter Band with the knowledge that none of the students were going to take lessons, with the assumption that none of the students were going to take lessons, that whatever they got, they had to get from me.



So for me it has been a life-long study through reading. I still read the *Art of Clarinet Playing* by Keith Stein, *The Art of Saxophone Playing* by Larry Teal, *The Art of Tuba Playing* by Harvey Phillips. I still read those. I still read *The Art of French Horn Playing* by Philip Farkas to keep up that. I still read the *Guide of Teaching Woodwinds* by Frederick Westphal. It's upstairs right now. I still listen to individual recordings of individual players, a lot in the summertime. The piccolo sound--Walfrid Kujala, Chicago Symphony or the flute sounds of James Galway, the clarinet sound of Larry Combs as solo players. If I can find them playing by themselves, it's even better, then I can hear the natural timbre that they are producing to keep that sound in my ear. That's 33 years into the profession, and so there's no excuse for us not finding that information now. And I'm an old kind of a dog, so it's difficult for me to use Skype and....I barely know what Twitter is. I can use the tools that I have available to me that I know how to use in order to enhance my musicianship. It's easy to put on Brahms and listen to the *Second Symphony*, it's only a finger clip away from us now, whereas before it was more difficult. So you know the Brahms *Second Symphony* will have Larry Combs playing in it. All of that is a part of the enrichment that we must go through in order to provide for our students. That's partially what I don't get credit for--and many others of us that have been successful on a school band level don't get credit for.

And just to stay on my soap box, there's a belief in band education--and it's probably across the board--and I know band directors as well, that we all have different degrees, undergraduate-wise, that our studies are different. We look down on our middle school band directors as not being as astute as high school band directors...and they look down on the elementary teachers, as not being our very best musicians because they are

elementary specialists. They are not anxious to put them in national organizations, they are not anxious to put middle school band directors in national organizations, national honor organizations. I don't know why. I can't answer that. I don't vote on those. It seems like it's that same kind of hierarchy that we've established in the band profession, and it hasn't always been that way, but it's pretty common now. There's a belief, I think, that we all studied different things and the more I think about it, the more I realize that we all studied the Gregorian Chants; we all studied 12-tone rows; we all went to drop-the-needle exams on Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, and Stravinsky. We all studied Stravinsky. That's not news to us. So if you came through a learned study of music, you've studied Kent Kennan, or you've studied out the Paul Hindemith book; you studied counterpoint from Hindemith, and you studied the fugue from Bach. It's not like that information hasn't been around forever. So the basic textbook that we study as undergraduate students in music is basically the same textbook. It's different applications of how it's taught, trained, and how the teacher taught form and analysis or whether the teacher was inspirational or not, and we all kind of learned how to play our instruments. That's why adult and professional bands sound great. I have one; you have one. When they play well, they sound fabulous. There's an awful lot of good training that has been consistent throughout the country.

I just had a conversation yesterday with a fine high school band director, 24 years into the profession from the Twin Cities in Minnesota, and we talked about our day-to-day operations, and it was the same damn thing. We talked about our undergraduate education, and it was the same thing. So we're not as far removed from one another as we think we are. The process of education is the same. When people talk about studying

motion without words and movements without words and movements that mean something, they choose to use Marcel Marceau. It ain't like he just popped up some place, and they found him and no one else has seen him. Marcel Marceau has been around as long as television has been created. So the notion of motion to create certain things is no different than watching an eagle fly. I mean it's pretty natural, and God gave it to us many, many years before we were here. So I think we're running around chasing our tails now and not providing the best education for all of our students, assuming that we're at different levels. And so, I'm simply a high school band director, down in Georgia, as Revelli would say. "You're that good band director from down in Georgia" is what he would call me. I think that's something that has always bugged me and concerned me. We and we must put a stop to it. I guess it's ego, at the end of the day.

**SS:** Yeah, but it has something to do with visibility also. There are more opportunities for visibility for high school band directors, than for middle school band directors, and more opportunity for visibility for middle school band directors than for elementary music teachers.

**AW:** There's not a lot more visibility for the wind band conductor than there is for the marching band conductors at the universities.

**SS:** ...and they have the biggest ego of all?

**AW:** I didn't say that. You said that. (chuckling) I was just talking to a college marching band director yesterday. He's the director of an athletic band. He has his doctorate, and he's a very fine, well-respected citizen in his community.

**SS:** But in our profession, he's low man on the totem pole.

**AW:** When he goes to the professional conferences, they assume that he's not very good.

**SS:** Alright, so can we go back to my original questions? I think we got lost somewhere in the middle of my second question, but the third question was what can we offer as an outcome of this conversation that we're having right now that can help future music teachers? All the stuff we're talking about, how can I implement it into a curriculum and share that information with future band directors?

**AW:** They just simply have to know that at least at Lassiter what my philosophy was about and that my teaching was based on a private lesson approach to teaching a full band. I taught all these years assuming that the children were not taking private lessons. When it comes down to the all- powerful marching band program, they must understand that I am the programmer. I decide on all the arrangements. I decide on how the arrangements are going to sound. I decide on how the drill is going to look. I select the colors. I didn't farm all that out to other people. I didn't hire designers and programmers and things like that. I had to learn my craft in order for my program to represent what I wanted for it to represent. I think that at the end of the day that's what it boils down to is you have got to learn your craft, and it's a never-ending battle to learn your craft. If you do so, then you'll be responsible for your organization.

I think it's important for people to realize that you must stay in a community long enough to have impact on the whole community, for people to see you as the music teacher in that community as opposed to going some place and staying three or four years and going to try to find a good school. There are a lot of different answers to that. There's a day-to-day practical answer. There's a longer space, longer distance answer that's more philosophical in regards to the summit that I mentioned earlier. I personally think it's the only way we can get it together. I don't see an organization that's strong enough to lead

the dialogue, however. No. The CBDNA organization is interested in the stretching the musical art form, and that's what they want to do; that's fine. The NBA organization is struggling for a new identity; membership is lagging, and they don't have their old convention like they used to. MENC convention has changed personalities several times over the last 20 years, to the point now it may be a research scientist convention—research scientist/music educator's convention. The American Bandmasters Association may be one of the standing bodies that can do it because it is consistent of our hall of fame, and it has natural authority based on its membership.

**SS:** And it includes members from CBDNA and MENC....

**AW:** Yeah and it includes members and it goes down through the middle schools.

**SS:** So, back to what young band directors can learn from this project....

**AW:** There's a middle interior part that I didn't express. I just kind of got off on a tangent. I think band directors are interested in "how did you do it." I think they want to be able to read this, and find out that this guy did this, did this; he did this.

**SS:** Yes. I hope to sort of create a how-to manual.

**AW:** Someone asked me this weekend, "give me five things that you have to do everyday in your band room." I've never been asked that question before, and I told him that the students do breathing exercises everyday...that I'm going to mention play with a good tone quality everyday...that I am either going to point to my ears or talk to them about pitch or intonation a lot everyday. I'm going to talk to them about beauty of something everyday...whether it's the beauty of the sunset or musical line, the beauty of a rising storm or the beauty of dusk, which is my favorite time of the day. I'm also going to play long tones with them everyday, and everyday means everyday. It doesn't mean everyday

during concert season starting in January; it means every damn day. I think people get that all mixed up. They think that once we finish football season then it's band season, the concert season starts, the music starts now. No-- it's everyday, every day, all school year long. We're going play long tones everyday. We're going to play for two or three minutes. Our long tones will not be obligatory notes to get us through long tones because I've satisfied it. So my long tones will consist of a full body tone, *mezzo forte* at least from all the players. I'll work consistently all day on finding the core to every tone from every individual player. If I can't hear them in the ensemble, I will ask them to play it in a section. If I can't hear them play it in a section, I will ask them to play it individually. I believe the students must learn how to play in three registers. The middle register is the foundation; the lower register as a second most important register, which develops a depth of sound and also develops a broadness to the sound; and the upper register, which is most difficult to play in. We'll do some technique builders everyday, and that does not necessarily mean facility. We'll do some articulation studies everyday. We'll do some articulation studies within the context of music, not articulation studies just to be tonguing...some slur two/tongue two patterns, some slur two/tongue one through the literature pattern...something like that, a variety of articulations. We will change volumes a lot everyday. I think it is important that they understand that music has to have a volume contour to it in addition to a melodic contour. There's a volume contour in music. Bands suffer a lot from lack of that. Many of our bands play in a small envelope of volume contrast, which causes them to be boring because it's mono volume. We're going to play something new everyday. I hate to say that we're going to read something new. We're going to play something that they've never played before everyday. I firmly

believe in classroom exercise books, classroom ensemble books. At Lassiter, every band is going to play out of at least two ensemble books everyday. I believe that unison studies are the core of learning to play melodically. Unison studies are the core to playing the instruments, period. Center of pitch, good intervallic relationships, and the development of the ear are best achieved through unison playing. I believe the harmony distorts our ability to be able to hear single lines well. It's kind of fun for the kids to play harmony because they can hide in the harmony, and it's fun sometimes for the teacher to hear harmony because it breaks up the boringness that they may find in the unison line; but they are not developing great skills that way. The woodwinds will do dexterity passages as the brasses will do slurs, either on their mouthpieces or their instruments everyday. I do not allow for the drums to play drums in the band room at all outside of playing with the ensemble. That means during my planning period, or during their lunch period, they're in the back playing the tenor drum, that's out of line. The drum has a tendency to destroy the musical atmosphere of the classroom because of the sound it creates is so loud. Percussion players are required to play keyboard instruments as a rule, first and foremost during school. It develops a sense of line, musicality, pitch, there's harmony there and balance and things of the sort. So those are the things that I do.

**SS:** That's more than five.

**AW:** Okay, he asked me five. I didn't say I was going to include five here. But those I'm going to include everyday. I could probably expand that list to 15. It doesn't take much time to do an exercise, provided that you don't waste any time coming into the classroom, all the students are engaged in learning, and you don't have to repeat yourself. I think that was what I was saying earlier about the learning readiness, but it was so early

in the interview, I wasn't thinking that way. The learning readiness allows for you not to repeat yourself over mundane issues that a moron could follow. We get our students confused, we must train them from a behavioral standpoint and must train their minds. We oftentimes don't train their minds because their behavior is so immature; we assume that they are immature. Because they sometimes have immature behavior doesn't mean that they don't have the processes to do a lot of great things with their minds. You've just got to discipline their minds to learn to listen and then to follow, and that's different. So I think a lot of times in school bands, we play down to their behavior. We can't get past that. But if you look at a two-year-old, three-year-old, four-year-old... they can't speak well at all, but they certainly can listen, and they certainly can learn a lot of great things, as studies have shown. So if you're looking at kids at that age--and certainly kids in their teenage years—they can learn an awful lot of great things. But we can't get past their behaviors. It's difficult to talk to a 12-year-old child intellectually, because it's easy to assume that they don't understand. Well, they may not have the maturity to communicate with you. They certainly can understand the concept. As Americans, we do the same thing with people that speak foreign languages or people that speak with a dialect from another part of the country that's not the Mid-west. We assume that they are not as smart because they speak Southern slang or a New England brogue; or they speak Swahili or they speak Spanish; or they speak French or Portuguese, and we just assume that they're dumb and can't understand English. That's part of the arrogance of America. We do the same thing with our children when it comes to behavior, and kids that can't stop talking or kids that do goofy kinds of things, we just assume that they can't think on a high level. Yet they turn right back around, at the age of 12, and study trigonometry the very next

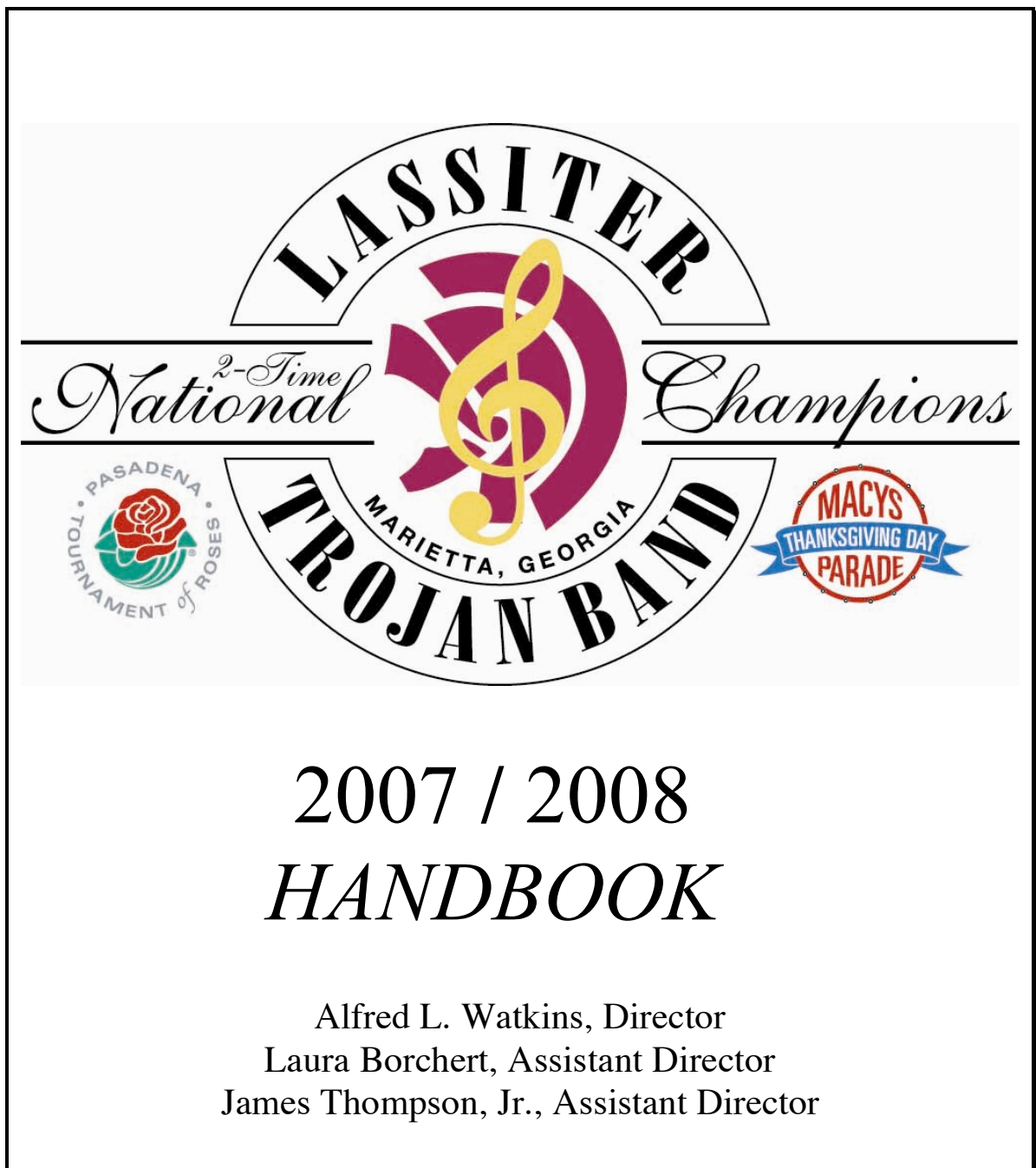


class period and have a full, total, complete command of trigonometry. They have a total grasp of trigonometry yet can't play the  $E^b$  scale in my classroom--makes absolutely no sense to me. And so we do a lot of underestimating the power of their abilities by having low expectations.

Everyone tries to run to the good school where they have high test scores. Well, unfortunately the brains don't play the music; the mind and the soul play the music, and the cooperation plays the music, and their skills play music. So if that were not the case, our very finest colleges and universities would have our best musicians. I haven't heard the MIT band lately, but I don't imagine that it's very good. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth? You go down to Columbia, they have our best and brightest, but they probably don't have our best bands. So go figure.

**SS:** I think we've covered a lot of ground today. Let's stop here. Thanks.

APPENDIX D  
Lassiter Band Handbook, excerpts



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**OFFICIAL NAME:** Lassiter High School Trojan Band

**PRINCIPAL:** Chris Shaw

**DIRECTORS:** Alfred L. Watkins, Laura Borchert, and James Thompson, Jr.  
*Please see Director Biographies.*

**SIZE:** 280 members

**CONFIGURATION:** With a minimum size of 250 members since 1985, Lassiter boasts one of the largest high school band programs east of the Mississippi River. By 1997, band numbers grew beyond a teachable size. Lassiter made history by creating a second marching band, thus having 2 completely separate high school marching bands on one school campus. This unique approach was featured on a Georgia Public Television broadcast entitled, "One School, Two Bands." In 2002, the 2 bands were once again combined into 1 band consisting of nearly 400 students.

**CURRICULUM:** Marching Band, Symphonic I Band, Symphonic II Band, Concert I Band, Concert II Band, Jazz Band, Flute Choir, Clarinet Choir, Trumpet Choir, Trombone Choir, Percussion Ensembles (3), Brass Ensembles, Woodwind Ensembles, Winter Guard (Open, A, and Novice).

**ORGANIZATION:** The Lassiter Band not only teaches the student music, but also leadership. The role of leadership is an especially significant component of the band program. The band leadership is responsible for their various sections and ultimately accountable to the directors.

With close to 300 students in the band program, it is necessary to rely heavily upon the student leadership. These student leaders include band officers, section leaders, and drum majors. Band officers consist of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, communications officer, chaplain, librarians, parliamentarian, and drum majors. Each instrument section has a section leader and one or more assistant section leaders who are in charge of groups ranging in size from ten to forty-five students. Four drum majors direct the band on and off the marching field. Their role is also to provide direction in music, marching, and discipline.

Officers are nominated by the outgoing senior class and chosen by a vote from the entire band. Drum majors and section leaders are selected by audition at the end of a week-long leadership clinic. Student leadership responsibilities include instruction in drill and maneuvering, music, discipline, and the usual tasks associated with being a member of the Lassiter Band program.

## **ALFRED L. WATKINS**

Mr. Alfred L. Watkins has been Director of Bands at Lassiter High School since 1982. He has established a fine reputation as an adjudicator, clinician, and guest conductor throughout the United States. Mr. Watkins is constantly in demand throughout the United States as a guest conductor, clinician and lecturer. Under his leadership, the Lassiter Band has grown from its original seventy-eight members to its present size of over three hundred music students. The band program now includes five symphonic bands, marching band, jazz band and numerous chamber ensembles. The Lassiter Flute Choir, Clarinet choir, trombone Choir, Trumpet choir and Percussion Ensembles have all performed at national level events.

Mr. Watkins, a native of Jackson, Georgia, received his Bachelor of Music Education from Florida A & M University, with honors, in 1976 where he was a conducting student of Dr. William P. Foster and Dr. Julian E. White. Prior to his arrival at Lassiter, he served for six years as Director of Bands at Murphy High School in the Atlanta Public School System where his bands earned consistent superior ratings in both marching and concert events.

Under Mr. Watkins' baton, the Lassiter Symphonic Band has acquired a fine reputation of musical excellence. In 1997, the Sousa Foundation listed the Lassiter Symphonic Band in the HISTORIC ROLL OF HONOR OF DISTINGUISHED HIGH SCHOOL CONCERT BANDS IN AMERICA, 1920-1997. In 1989, the band earned the prestigious Sudler Flag of Honor, presented by the John Philip Sousa Foundation, presented to outstanding concert bands in America. In 1987, Mr. Watkins pioneered the concept of the Symphonic Band Camp, a three-day post-marching season intensive study of symphonic literature. The camp concept has been expanded to include a middle school component and is currently implemented by hundreds of school band programs throughout the country. The Symphonic Band has performed in some of the finest concert halls in America. It has performed at the 1986 Georgia Music Educators Association Convention, 1988 National Band Association Biennial Conference, 1989 Black Music Caucus Convention and the 1995 Atlanta International Band and Orchestra Clinic. It has also performed in symposiums on the campuses of the University of Georgia, University of Southern Mississippi, Florida State University, Troy State University and the University of South Carolina. In 1993, 1995 and 2002, Lassiter's top two symphonic bands performed at the Bands of America National Concert Band Festival. In 1989, and again in 1996, the Lassiter Symphonic Band performed at the prestigious Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic. For twenty of twenty-three years, all Lassiter Symphonic and Concert Bands earned Superior Ratings in Performance and in Sight Reading at the Georgia Music Educator's Association District Band Festival.

The Trojan Marching Band won the prestigious National Championship at the 2002 and 1998 Bands of America (BOA) Grand National Championships,

representing the only high school band in the state's history to have won this coveted title. They have also won BOA Regional Championships in 1995, 1997, 1998 (twice), 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2007. The combined marching bands of 380 members have participated in the 1986 and 1996 Orange Bowl Parade, 1997 Citrus Bowl Parade, 1999 and 2004 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the 1988, 2001 and 2005 Tournament of Roses Parade. In 1999, the Marching Trojan Band received the John Philip Sousa Foundation's, Sudler Shield, recognizing outstanding high school marching bands in America. Coupled with earning the Sudler Flag, the Lassiter Band is only one of four high school bands in America to have earned both high school Sousa awards.

Mr. Watkins is a member of Kappa Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, National Band Association, Phi Beta Mu National School Bandmaster Fraternity, Black Music Caucus, Music Educators National Conference and the Georgia Music Educators Association and the NAACP. In 1996, Mr. Watkins was Associate Director for the Atlanta Olympic Marching Band that performed in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. Mr. Watkins is founder, conductor and musical director of the Cobb Wind Symphony, an all-adult community band based in the Atlanta area. The Cobb Wind Symphony performed the Finale Concert at the 2003 Midwest Band Clinic. 1987, Mr. Watkins was selected as a charter member of the Florida A & M University Gallery of Distinguished Alumni, the university's Hall of Fame. In 2005, Mr. Watkins was inducted into the prestigious American Bandmasters Association representing only the second Georgian selected in the organizations since its founding in 1929. In 2008, Mr. Watkins was selected into the Bands of America Hall of Fame. In Mr. Watkins has served on the Educational Advisory Board of Bands of America, Midwest Clinic and currently serves as an adjudicator for Bands of America (BOA). The Lassiter Band is housed in the ALFRED L. WATKINS BAND BUILDING, a beautiful \$1.5 million facility on the Lassiter campus. He and his wife Rita live in Marietta. Their oldest son, Christopher, is Graduate Classical Trumpet Major at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City and their youngest son, Jonathan, is a junior at Auburn University.

## **AN HISTORICAL VIEW OF OUR SUCCESS:**

Under Mr. Watkins' leadership, the Lassiter High School Trojan Band has accomplished the following:

### **AWARDS AND HONORS**

1. Winners of 65 of 70 marching band championships in the past twenty-six years
2. Two performances for President Ronald Reagan, Omni Arena, Atlanta, Georgia
3. Performances on the steps of the Nation's Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., 1984
4. Recipient of the Citation of Excellence from the United States House of Representatives, sponsored by Congressman George "Buddy" Darden (D), Georgia, 1984
5. Performance at the 1984 World's Fair in New Orleans, Louisiana
6. Performances for the Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta Hawks, and Atlanta Braves professional sports franchises
7. Selected as feature band for the Coca-Cola Centennial Celebration, Atlanta, Georgia (nationally televised)
8. Proclaimed "Ambassadors of Good Will" from the State of Georgia, Governor Joe Frank Harris, 1984 and 1987
9. Selected for a feature role in the motion picture "The Leader of the Band" starring Steve Landesburg.
10. Performance in the 1986 King Orange Jamboree Parade, Miami, Florida, December 31, 1986, NBC-TV
11. Fifty-three consecutive Superior Awards with the Concert Band Program, 1983-1998
12. Performance in the 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Tournament of Roses Parade, Pasadena, California, January 1, 1988
13. Symphonic Band selected to perform at the 1988 National Band Association's National Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee

14. Recipient of the prestigious Louis Sudler Flag of Honor (for outstanding symphonic bands) sponsored by the John Philip Sousa Foundation, 1989
15. Performance at the National Black Music Caucus National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, 1989
16. Performance at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois, December 15, 1989
17. Bands of America Grand National Marching Competition, 5<sup>th</sup> place, Hoosier Dome, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 11, 1990
18. Performance at the 1991 Blockbuster Bowl II in Miami, Florida
19. Bands of America Southern Regional Championship, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, October 31, 1992
20. Symphonic Bands I and II selected to perform in the 1993 Bands of America National Concert Band Festival, Northwestern University, Illinois, March 26-27, 1993
21. Southeastern U.S. Marching Band Championship, Daytona, Florida, November 1993
22. Bands of America Grand National Marching Competition, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, RCA Dome, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 5, 1994
23. Symphonic Bands I and II selected to perform in the 1995 Bands of America National Concert Band Festival, Medinah Temple, Chicago, Illinois, March 30-April 1, 1995
24. Bands of America Southeast Regional Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, Johnson City, Tennessee, October 14, 1995
25. King Orange Bowl Parade, Miami, Florida, December 31, 1995
26. Symphonic Bands I and II selected to perform at the Atlanta International Band and Orchestra Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, April 4, 1996
27. Winter Guard International, Scholastic A Class World Champions, Dayton, Ohio, April 11-13, 1996
28. Performance at the 50th Annual Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois, December, 1996



29. Bands of America Southeast Regional Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Music*, Atlanta, Georgia, October 1997
30. Florida Citrus Bowl Parade, Orlando Florida, December 1997
31. Bands of America Johnson City Regional Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Music, Best Visual, Best General Effect*, Johnson City, Tennessee, October 1998
32. Bands of America Southeast Regional Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Music, Best Visual, Best General Effect*, Atlanta, Georgia, November 1998
33. Bands of America Grand National Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Visual, Best General Effect*, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 12-14, 1998
34. Recipient of the prestigious Louis Sudler Shield of Honor (for outstanding marching bands) sponsored by the John Philip Sousa Foundation, 1998
35. Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, New York City, NY, November 1999
36. GRAMMY Signature School (for outstanding school music programs), 2000
37. 112<sup>th</sup> Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, Pasadena, California, January 1, 2001
38. Percussion Ensemble selected by audition to perform at 2000 Bands of America National Concert Band Festival
39. Bands of America Morgantown Regional Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Music, Best Visual, Best General Effect*, Morgantown, West Virginia, October 2001
40. Symphonic Bands I and II selected to perform in the 2002 Bands of America National Concert Band Festival, Murat Theater, Indianapolis, March 2002
41. Winter Guard International, Scholastic Open Finalist, Dayton, Ohio, April 2002
42. Bands of America Atlanta Regional, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Visual, Best General Effect*, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2002
43. Bands of America Grand National Championship, 1<sup>st</sup> place, *Best Music, Best General Effect*, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 14-16, 2002

44. Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, New York City, NY, November 2004
45. 116<sup>th</sup> Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, Pasadena, California, January 1, 2005
46. Bands of America St. Petersburg Regional, 1<sup>st</sup> place, Best Music, Best General Effect, St. Petersburg, Florida, October 2005
47. Percussion Ensemble I performance at the 59th Annual Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois, December, 2005.
48. Bands of America St. Louis Super Regional, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, St. Louis Missouri, October 2006.

The Lassiter Band's complete chronological listing of awards and recognitions can be viewed at [www.lbba.org](http://www.lbba.org).

### ***Louis Sudler Flag of Honor***

#### **Sponsored by the John Philip Sousa Foundation**

The Lassiter Symphonic Band Program was honored to receive this most prestigious award for high school concert bands in 1989. The Sudler Flag of Honor, given by the John Philip Sousa Foundation, recognizes high school concert bands with particularly high standards of musical excellence. Bands are nominated based on their superior concert performances over the years as well as consistently high participation in the All-State Bands, various honor bands, and superior solo and ensemble performances. This coveted award brings national recognition to only two to four high school bands annually. Each honored band receives a flag that is to be displayed on stage at each performance by the band.

The John Philip Sousa Foundation selected the Lassiter High School Symphonic Band, of Marietta, Georgia, to join the "Historic Roll of Honor of Distinguished High School Concert Bands in America, 1920-1997." The Lassiter Symphonic Band is only 1 of 3 high school concert bands in the state of Georgia to receive this distinguished honor during this 77-year period. The other Georgia bands were Hardaway High School, Columbus, Georgia, in 1984, and Jordan High School, Columbus, Georgia, 1956.

Selection standards for this prestigious honor are quite stringent. A selection committee comprised of some 24 nationally-recognized college and university band directors meets each December at The Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference, in Chicago, to select these outstanding bands. The purpose of this project is to research and evaluate high school concert bands from across the country that have attained unusual levels of achievement nationally and which are considered to be of historical importance and influence to the nation's high school concert band programs.

The Lassiter Symphonic Band is a highly-skilled group of instrumentalists selected from over 350 students in the school's band program. The group is 1 of 4 performing concert bands at Lassiter. The Symphonic Band has earned a reputation for musical excellence. The band has performed on the campuses of the University of Southern Mississippi, University of Georgia, Florida State University, University of South Carolina, and Troy State University. Additionally, the band has performed at the Georgia Music Educators Association In-Service Conference and numerous national and international music conventions. In 1996, the Symphonic Band performed at the prestigious Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Conference, in Chicago, Illinois, for a standing-room-only audience of over 2,000 band directors representing the United States and 5 continents.

### ***Louis Sudler Shield of Honor***

### **Sponsored by the John Philip Sousa Foundation**

In December of 1998, the Lassiter High School Trojan Band was honored to receive the Sudler Shield for outstanding high school marching band programs. Initiated in 1988, this international honor is awarded to programs demonstrating the highest levels of excellence for their marching band programs. High school marching bands that have repeatedly achieved excellence on a regional or national level may receive nominations for this prestigious award. Once a program has been nominated, it must submit videotaped footage of a recent competitive field show as well as any parade footage in which the band may have participated in the past three years.

Additionally, the application process includes awards and honors achieved by the program and letters of recommendation. Lassiter was one of only three high school bands from across the country to receive the Sudler Shield in 1998. The other recipients were Broken Arrow High School, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and Lafayette High School, Lexington, Kentucky.

## **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade**

The Lassiter Trojan Band was honored to have been selected twice to march in both the 1999 and the 2004 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parades. Approximately 380 Trojan Band members participated in 1999, having 1.5 minutes of TV airtime. In 2004, 305 band members amassed approximately 10 minutes of airtime on NBC-TV as the "Santa Band," ushering in Santa at the end of the parade. The annual parade kicks off at 9:00 a.m. from Central Park West and 86th Street, and is viewed by 65 million people worldwide.

## **2000 GRAMMY Signature School**

*Sponsored by The MARAS Foundation, Inc.*

Only 100 schools in the United States are selected for this program. Lassiter was chosen from more than 18,000 public high schools around the country.

This national program recognizes outstanding commitment to music education. The GRAMMY Foundation, a non-profit arm of The Recording Academy, is dedicated to advancing music- and arts-based education across the country and ensuring access to America's rich cultural legacy. An arc of education and preservation programs and services strive to cultivate understanding, appreciation and advancement of the arts for all ages. Through cultural, professional and educational initiatives, the Foundation aims to strengthen our educational system and our culture at large.

"We are thrilled to give national recognition to these schools for an outstanding job of fostering their arts programs in a difficult cultural funding environment," said Michael Greene, President/CEO of The Recording Academy. "We applaud them for their success in ensuring that music education does not become a cultural casualty in their districts, and for implementing music education programs that make a positive difference in the lives of young adults."

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## ***3-Time Participant in the Tournament of Roses Parade***

On January 1, 2001, The Lassiter Trojan Band was 1 of 23 bands chosen to participate in the 112th Annual Tournament of Roses Parade themed "Fabric of America." Selected from hundreds of high school bands throughout the United States, Lassiter showcased its award-winning sound and precision on New Year's Day as it marched 5.5 miles down Pasadena's famed Colorado Boulevard.

"We are proud to represent the State of Georgia as we lead our band to Pasadena to participate in "America's New Year Celebration," said Alfred Watkins, Director of Bands. "We have a talented group of individuals who are looking forward to sharing their talent with the world."

Then on January 1, 2005, the Marching Trojan band once again marched in the "Granddaddy of all Parades," marking its third participation in this event (the first having been in 1988). The theme for the 2005 parade was "Celebrate Family" and saw Mickey Mouse as its Grand Marshal. The 2004-2005 band members had the privilege of participating in both the Macy's Parade and the Tournament of Roses Parade in one school year (37 days apart) – quite an undertaking, as well as an honor, for every member.

## **Lassiter High School Winter Guard Captures 1996 World Title**

The Lassiter High School Winter Guard captured 1<sup>st</sup> Place honors in Scholastic A Class at the 1996 Winter Guard International (WGI) World Championships, April 12, 1996, at the Dayton (Ohio) Arena. The Lassiter Winter Guard, a winter version of the Lassiter Trojan Band Color Guard, placed 1<sup>st</sup> out of 102 winter guards in their class. They received a winning score of 96.00 out of a possible 100.00 points.

Lassiter performed a most complex show combining difficult drill moves while tossing and spinning flags, rifles, and sabers to the astonishment and continuous approval of the audience and an expert panel of ten evaluators. The WGI scoring system is designed to evaluate the movement (marching) skills, equipment handling and overall effectiveness of the visual program.

The Winter Guard is an indoor extension of the Lassiter Trojan Band Color Guard. Winter Guard performances are held on gymnasium floors using colorful floor coverings and towering backgrounds that transform a typical basketball arena into an elegant stage. Internationally, more than 30,000 competitors participate in some 1,900 winter guards. Over 60% of the WGI are located in public and private high schools.

This performance marked Lassiter's first ever performance in the World Championships. The world title signifies the first world title in Georgia Winter Guard history and the first world title in the history of Lassiter High School. The championship awarded in Scholastic, qualified the Lassiter Guard for performance the following year in Scholastic Open Class.

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## **Lassiter HS Winter Guard Captures International Title in Phoenix, AZ**

*“The 22-member Winter Guard from Lassiter High School traveled to Phoenix, AZ, this past week where they competed in Winter Guard International Championships and captured the 1997 World Title. Guards from across the globe, including such countries as Canada, England, Australia, and Japan (as well as hundreds from across the United States) participated in intensive competition to take home this coveted award. Over 5,000 young people met at the America West Arena and Veteran's Coliseum for the event.*

*Lassiter is the first Georgia school to earn the right to compete in Scholastic Open Competition, one of the most advanced levels of competition for international high school championships.*

*They were judged on such categories as individual analysis and general effect.*

*Sophisticated dance routines are complimented by the use of various enhancements to add to the pageantry of the event. Lassiter performed in competition at the preliminary, semi-final and final levels before capturing the World Title with an overall score of 96.95.”*

## APPENDIX E

### Human Subjects Consent Form



#### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

##### INFORMED CONSENT FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ENTITLED "CASE STUDY OF AN EXEMPLARY MUSIC PROGRAM: ALFRED WATKINS AND THE LASSITER HIGH SCHOOL BAND"

**You are invited to participate in a research study** of Alfred Watkins and the philosophy, structure and organization of the Lassiter Band Program. The objectives of this study are to develop an understanding of the components that contribute to the success of the Lassiter program from an organizational, musical, educational, and social point of view. The study is being conducted by Sue Samuels, Doctoral Student, under the direction of Dr. Kimberly Walls, Professor, in the Auburn University Department of Curriculum & Teaching.

**What will be involved if you participate?** If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to take part in 4, 2-hour semi-structured interviews about your life history, teaching, organization, and career at Lassiter High School. The interview will be digitally video-recorded. The video will be kept indefinitely for possible use in future studies and publications.

In addition to the interview, you will be asked to share pre-recorded video recordings of your teaching up to 3 hours of footage as well as other documents related to your work and the Lassiter Band Program.

**The only likely risk associated with this study is a breach of confidentiality.** However, your name and direct quotes will only be used with your consent. You may discontinue participation in the study and withdraw any information given at any time.

Initial here \_\_\_\_\_ if you agree to the use of your name and quotes.

**Are there any benefits to yourself or others?** If you participate in this study, you will be a part of music education history by telling your story. You will be able to reflect on your life and contributions to music education. Findings from this study could serve the greater music education community by providing an exemplary role model for a successful, comprehensive high school band program. Further, the findings could be used in music teacher education to assist future band directors.

**If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Sue Samuels, Principal Investigator, at (205) 567-6140 or [samuels@aub.edu](mailto:samuels@aub.edu) or Kim Walls at [wallski@auburn.edu](mailto:wallski@auburn.edu).** A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.** Your signature below also indicates that you consent to video-recorded interviews, use of pre-recorded video rehearsal footage, and sharing of documents and artifacts related to your work with the Lassiter Band Program.

| Participant Signature | Date | Investigator Signature | Date |
|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|
|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX F

### Outline for Colleague Interviews

1. How long and in what capacity have you known Alfred?
2. What is it about the structure and organization of the Lassiter Program that has brought it such success?
3. What happens in Alfred's typical rehearsal that enables such musical success?
4. Has he been a significant influence for you?
5. If so, in what way (s)?
6. What do you think is Alfred's legacy to the world of music education?