

Who was the first director? Mike Wuchner was band director for Liberty's first year. Mike left Liberty and last I heard was residing in Lewis County. He would probably be in his late-50's.

Who was the first principal? Wilson Curry He remained principal through 1988-89. Dave Book began in 89-90. I believe both principals deserved to be respected and both did great things for Liberty. I didn't always agree with everything they did concerning the music department but all in all I would say that both principals were supportive of the band.

What was the uniform like the first years? I have seen pictures of the first years' uniform and I believe it consisted of blue slacks, white turtle neck, and red sweater. The first official uniform came while we were in band camp my first year and it was a blue tuxedo-like jacket and slacks covered with a vinyl overlay. The front of the overlay was mostly red with Liberty printed diagonally down the front. The back of the overlay was mainly white with a mountaineers head in the center. The hat was a traditional shako similar to the current hat. The band also wore white spats over black shoes. The spats proved to be a real problem because kids were constantly losing or forgetting them. I believe we wore white gloves. For concert band the overlay was removed and the students wore a white shirt and red bow tie under the tux-like jacket. The uniform was a high percentage wool and fairly uncomfortable in warmer temperatures. It came from the Ostwald Uniform Company. For many years Mrs. Marie Burleigh took special care of the uniforms, coming out before we issued them to make sure all the buttons were on, etc. She did this for several years after both her kids had graduated.

Where did you begin your teaching career? I began teaching at Salem High School and Salem Grade Schools. I was there for 2 years. I then taught band at Pennsboro High for the next 5 years. I began at Liberty in 1974-75

Assistant Directors? Sometime around 82 or 83 a group of band boosters and myself met with board member Jim Reaser at his home to discuss the fact that other bands in the county had assistant directors and we did not. We had tried to go through proper channels for a couple of years with no results and in the meantime our band had become the county's largest. As a result Jim Eschenmann, who was band director at Central Jr. High was hired to assist me at after school practices and performances. I don't remember if he did this for more than one marching season or not. This is the same Jim Eschenmann who is the county's technology person now so maybe Jim can remember the dates. Finally a fulltime assistant's job was posted and Ed Propst applied and got the job. This was in 1985. Ed had been the band director at Salem Jr. High for three or four years but was assisting at WI. I always thought this was uncomfortable when the Salem director was assisting at WI and the Central Jr. High director was assisting at Liberty. But that is how it was.

Ed remained with me for 13 years and was replaced by Jude Gore.

When was the bandroom remodeled? The original bandroom and choir room which was called the ensemble room by Mrs. Richards, the choir teacher, contained risers. The

risers held about 75 people and gave you no possible room for expansion. Also the risers were open at the bottom so it was possible to drop music, pencils, mutes, conductors baton and whatever underneath. I never could understand the practicality of bandroom risers. You never perform on risers. I believe I had the risers removed during the first year but it may have been later. The main reason was that we couldn't fit. All around the room, back and sides were the cabinets and cages. When you walked in the door from the hallway, the first set of cabinets between the door and sink were the uniform cabinets. The sink was actually the rear corner of the room. On the other side of the sink, along the back were the instrument cages mixed with some tall cabinets. The instrument cages were very sturdy with steel doors. Each student received a combination lock and was required to keep their cage locked before and after class. On the left side of the room were larger deeper cabinets which we used as percussion storage. Once we removed the risers the room served us very well for a number of years. But I don't understand the initial design of the room being so small since at the time the schools consolidated both Salem and Victory had nearly 100 kids in each band. Yet those risers barely held 75 and the uniform closets had 80 slots in which to hang uniforms. I guess they were planning on a smaller band. The music office was in the hallway and contained two desks. The neat one belonged to Mrs Richards and the messy one was mine. That trend lasted for 29 years. Hope your desk is neater.

The room had one external exit and that is the single door facing the front circle that is still there. For many years that door went out into the grass or rather mud just as the outside theater doors do now. The original back wall was located approximately where the steel beams run today from floor to ceiling. You can probably see the seam in the wall next to the sink where that outside wall was when the school was built. If you can imagine cabinets extending about 4 feet into the room from three sides, you can see how much room we had to operate. We squeezed nearly 180 students with instruments into this area. With one outside door we were in a real fire hazard, especially if you would block the hallway double doors. We didn't have room to move or breathe.

So the first thing we did and I believe this was around 86 or 87 was to use the classroom that is between the bandroom and the stage. When I retired it was the health room. The county came in and opened the wall so we could walk directly into that room from the bandroom. The opening was more than equal to a double door opening and about 8 feet tall. This opening would be where the chalkboard is now in that class room. We then moved all the cabinets and cages from the bandroom into that classroom and that became our storage room. I do remember Ed Propst and several male band members and myself spent a couple of days moving the cabinets and cages. This proved to be a tougher job than originally planned. We still couldn't get all the cabinets into that room but it did give us more rehearsal room. Also around this time one of our boosters who worked at the gas company, Tom Painter, said the gas company had boxes of carpet tiles that were never going to be used. He got the gas company to donate enough of the carpet tiles and we were able to put carpet on the bandroom floor. This helped dull the volume quite a bit without doing too much damage to the acoustics. (I understand that in today's construction, carpet in bandrooms is forbidden because of sanitary concerns.) Still the band grew and the school really needed that classroom so plans were made to enlarge the room to its present size.

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There is a plaque on the wall by the office with the date that the room was finally complete. I think it was 1991 but I may be wrong. Superintendent Kittle and Mr. Book were the main forces behind getting the room expanded. Bridgeports room was expanded at about the same time.

If I had stayed I would have tried to replace the instruments shelving that is in the back room. Maybe you have plans to do that. It was a lot better when the students could lock their instrument cages. It certainly keeps kids from messing with someones horn.

We also got the air conditioning when the room was enlarged. I don't know how we made it without air and no windows. I guess we were tougher in the good old days.

### Uniforms?

We got the next set of uniforms in 1984..This particular uniform was my favorite and it was more expensive then your current uniform. The expense came from the cape which is the same cape you currently use. I don't know how to really describe the jacket except to say it was a short white jacket trimmed in red and blue. The jacket had liberty printed near the cuff of each sleeve. The pants were high waisted but not nearly as high as your current bibbers. We always wore our blue Liberty tee shirt under the short jacket in case the jacket rose too high when the student picked up his instrument to play. The hat was a blue shako with a flat white top and eagle on the front. We wore a red feathered plume. I had a banner designed with the same script Liberty that matched the script Liberty on the cape. We had several meetings with uniform companies and several sample uniforms made but we settled on the Niscinger Company with which Elaine Kerr and George Kerr from Charleston were affiliated. The band parents had all kinds of different ideas about what looked best so I finally sat down with Elaine and came up with the uniform. We were one of the first bands in our area to go with a white jacket. This was actually one of the more controversial things about the uniform that the parents couldn't agree on . Many felt that it would get too dirty. I was assured by Kerrs that this was going to be a trend and sure enough after we got our white jacket it seemed like everyone had more and more white on their uniforms. Our uniform was used in the Niscinger ads in all the major band magazines for a couple of years.

Our band made its biggest growth spurt while we had these uniforms. We ordered additional uniforms at least one other time and maybe two. We also purchased Morgantowns old uniform pants which were exactly the same as ours to use. We had to put our drum line and eventually tubas in white silk shirts wearing the used band pants from Morgantown. For the last couple of years with these uniforms it was touch and go as to whether everyone was getting a uniform.

These uniforms did not hold up as well as I would have liked but at the time we got them I thought we had the sharpest looking band in the land. I liked the idea of having the dancers and flags wearing the same jacket as the instrument players in the parades because it made us look even larger.

I'm not sure exactly what year we got the current uniform but I do know that one of the problems that forced us to get new uniforms was that we did not have enough smaller uniforms for the freshmen. I suppose it was around 94 or 95. Again we

purchased the uniform through George and Elaine Kerr but by this time they had switched uniform companies and were now with Demoulin. Incidentally I remember when George Kerr was band director at Hundred High School, a long time ago.

What is the largest the band ever grew to? We had 200 or more in the band about 5 years. I saw in some of my old band spectacular programs that we had 165 in 1985 and 160 in 87. I have a picture with 184 in 92. In the mid 90's we reached 200 students getting up to about 215 at any one time. But usually our numbers would increase in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. If we had a parade in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester we would be able to use all the marching band plus use the additional kids that we picked up for concert band. The numbers started going down when we went to the dreaded block schedule. We almost never marched with all 200 people because we always had a lot of athletes in the band who would have some event at the same time. When you have this many people in the band you can miss 15 or 20 people and not feel the effects. I do remember writing a drill for 36 trumpets and 24 trombones with 52 clarinets and flutes, 8 horns ,8 baritones, and 14 saxes. We usually had at least 8 tubas and a few years 10. We always had too many drummers. In the last few years I would use a generic instrumentation to begin writing the drill of about 140 winds plus 8 tubas and 16 percussion. I would then adjust as needed and add the flags and dancers. I always wrote the drill mainly because I didn't trust anyone else and I felt that some people might write things that would be too difficult to learn and not provide the visual results at Hite Field with its low bleachers. I never worried about competitions because I didn't want to go to them but I did want the band to always sound good on the field. Some of the formations that some people write sacrifice too much of the sound for my tastes. From about 1980 to 2003 we probably averaged about 180 marchers per year. That included going through a stretch where our feeder area was drastically reduced and some of our former feeder area sent to Lincoln and WI-Byrd.

Trips?- I can't say that I kept track of a lot of our trips. I've gone through some programs and clippings that I have and have come up with these. I'm sure some of your current parents who were in the band may be able to add or correct my list.

1976 ( I Think ) The band was invited to an International Jaycees parade to represent WV in Indianapolis. As we were about to leave the hotel in Indy to go to the parade I received an emergency call telling me that the parade was being cancelled due to severe weather. At the time I couldn't believe it because the weather was beautiful but within 15 minutes we were in the middle of a tremendous storm. We were planning on touring the Indy racetrack and museum but had to forget that because there was a complete power failure. The only thing we could do was board our buses and head on to Cincinnati where we had reservations , The next day was spent at Kings Island. I remember the hotel in Ohio was really great and took us in 6 hours earlier then planned. While we were there some of the students spotted a funnel cloud and we heard news reports of a tornado touching down in Cincy. The day at Kings Island turned out to be fun and all in all our first trip was fun. But it could have really been interesting if that tornado had been closer.

??? Daytona Beach Music Festival and Disneyworld There should be a plaque with the date in the bandroom.

May 1984 Hershey Park

Nov. 1987 Pittsburgh Christmas parade we did this parade a few times

July 4 1988 Marched in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. Washinton DC Did the normal tours and stayed for the fireworks on the Capitol Mall. Parade route was supposed to be same as the inaugural at that time. I just know it was hot.

May 1990 Daytona Beach and Disneyworld (marched at Epcot) Universal Studios

April 1993 Virginia Beach (Fiesta-Val) concert, jazz and dancers competed. We placed in everything but these competitions mean nothing because almost everyone wins. We spent a day at Busch Gardens.

May 1998 Daytona Beach and Disneyworld

May 2000 Williamsburg (Fiesta-Val) Marching band won meaningless first place


May 2002 Disneyworld

I know we had several other trips. I remember another trip to Washington DC with the choir. MENC sponsored the opportunity for school groups to perform a concert on a stage in the park beside the White House. We shared the concert with the choir. It was a good trip and included our drum major placing a reef at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We also attended a performance of Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat at Fords Theater. That was neat. I don't remember what year this was but it had to be early 80's. We went to DC at least 2 other times. We did the Pittsburgh parade 2 or 3 times and have gone to all the amusement parks multiple times. I always tried to use these trips as a reward but I also know there were many years that we could not afford to travel because were we paying off uniforms. From time to time I had band booster groups who did not believe that trips were worthwhile and necessary. I had to agree. I didn't want the kids to think that the only reason to be in band was because we were going on a big trip because as soon as the trip was over a bunch of kids would drop out. I never had any major discipline problems on any of our trips. I'm sure that alumni can help fill in the dates for a lot of the trips I missed.

Biggest thrills as a director? Just too many to single out. The band never ever disappointed me. They always performed better then I could ever have hoped. I know I yelled a lot especially when I was younger and never seemed satisfied but I know the kids never let me down. We played music that I never thought we would ever be able to play. We actually received a standing ovation three separate times from the judges at the Area Band Festival. I have never seen a judge stand and applaud a band they were judging, but it happened to us three times in three different eras. First time in the early 80's on the WI Stage, then in our own Gym in the early 90's and finally just a couple of years ago at Bridgeport. We've had kids go on to college on music scholarships and we've sent a ton of kids to the WVU Band. We've had kids march at Tennessee, Marshall, Ohio State and Notre Dame, and other colleges. Being a trumpet player I own every record that the great Maynard Ferguson ever made and to have a former student, Brian Wolfe, play in Maynards band was almost too much for me to handle. I remember Mike Kinney,

Denise Collins and Radonna Plaughter who were the first kids to make the All-State Band in 1979. I remember Traci Clark who was the first kid to make All-State all 3 years. We had several accomplish that. I remember going to a WVU Football game and listening to a trumpet soloist who I thought was fantastic only to find out after the game that it was Ronnie Bennett a kid that I started on the trumpet during his study hall while he was at Gore Jr. High.

When I was about 15 years old the Ohio State University Concert Band came to the Armory in Clarksburg and made an everlasting impression on me. I think that's when I started becoming interested in being a band director. My high school band director would bring me recordings of the Eastman Wind Ensemble and other concert bands and I started becoming familiar with all the important works for band. Even when I was in high school I would spend the entire day at WI or the Armory listening to all the bands play for their rating. I would try to grade them myself and then wait for Sundays paper to read the ratings. I remember Ron Woods great West Fairmont Band and Bob Hills Morgantown and Saul Fishers Buckhannon and on and on. I think that's why I became so impassioned about the festival and making anything less than a 1 was unacceptable. I guess now I can really appreciate what we did at Liberty because I think we became as good as any band ever around this area. I really got to live my dream.

 Some other thoughts.....

I don't want anyone to think that this was a one-man operation because it absolutely was not. I made a lot of decisions about the music part of the band, of course, and we never played music that I didn't want. But all the success we had was all the result of so many different people and events and in many cases in spite of some of my stupid mistakes. To me the single most important factor in the development of the Liberty Band was the success of the feeder schools music programs. Sam Brunetti was the key reason that the Gore and North View areas were successful. Salem had a good Jr. High Band under David Wright but when he left and Ed Propst took over the program more than doubled in size. More importantly, both Sam and Ed encouraged their students to continue in the marching band at Liberty in spite of the lunatic who was the director. Sam is the best fundamental teacher I know for beginning woodwind players and he has the ability to spot a students weakness immediately. Sam would take kids who I would have probably given up on and made them into tremendous band members. Ed was a fantastic band director and great assistant. His program at Salem just took off and very honestly Salem was Gore Jr. highs biggest competitor when it came to earning positions in the all-county band. We would have years when 65% of the all county jr. high or cadet band was made up of kids coming to Liberty. And at the same time more than 50% of the high school all-county band was from Liberty. I loved counting the numbers and comparing. It had to be frustrating for some of the other area directors.

Ed was absolutely the right guy for the job and there is no doubt in my mind that he would have been a fantastic high school band director. He really knew how to calm me down when things would go wrong.. Ed would usually arrive at Liberty while I was in the middle of class and I can't tell you how many times he would sense that I was having a bad class. In which case he would come over to the podium and offer to take over the rehearsal so I could calm down. Whenever I had something to ask Mr. Book that I knew Book wouldn't like I sent Ed. Ed could always handle the tough situation where I would go spastic. He always seemed to know the right thing to say to get control of tough situations. That's why I know without a doubt he's a great principal.

I hated to see Ed get a principals job but I knew it was just a matter of time. We were really fortunate to get Jude Gore. Jude came at a time when all the changes were starting to take a toll on me. Overall enrollments at all our schools were dropping. It seemed that the sports and cheerleading were drawing more and more kids away from band. There were plans to allow seniors the opportunity to attend college classes. And of course there was the talk of moving into the block schedule. It seemed like I was always having to adapt to change. I guess that's normal. But I always thought that one reason we were so successful in building the band was in our ability to keep things the same. In the late 90's it seemed as if each year brought new obstacles. Jude was a breath of fresh air and a real shot in the arm or kick in the butt. Where Ed calmed things down Jude fired things up at exactly the right time. He made me do a better job. It didn't hurt that he is an incredible band director. Jude has energy along with the talent. That's a tough combination to beat. I'm glad he was on my side and not against me cause honestly if he had been at RCB or Bridgeport leading their bands I would have had a tough time staying with them. It was the team. Directors, parents club, students, administration, and many others that made it all work.

Comments about the band's future. The idea of the block schedule and the fact that the principals and much of the faculty supported it even though they knew it was the wrong thing for the band really bothered me. The block took all the wind out of my sails and was really the main thing that caused me to give up. The situation with the Salem feeder and assistant director was the last straw but the block started the thoughts of retirement. You can't have kids in just one semester and maintain the quality of musicianship that we were able to achieve. Even when we used to end a year at the end of May and begin again in late July the time off made it seem like we starting all over. How can a kid drop out in January and then start back in late July and still maintain his skills. He has to have gone backwards. Worse yet would be a kid not in marching band who starts back in late January after being away from his horn since the end of May. The whole concept has to lead to a drop off in musical quality. Also once a kid is out for a semester its got to be much easier just to stay out rather then rejoin at the new semester. I bet you're finding this out. Maybe not but I think the scheduling has got to change. I like 90 minute practices most of the time but I liked 55 minutes better. I wasted more time in the 90 minute rehearsals while in 55 minutes you had to make efficient use of the time. I know there's talk of splitting a 90 minute class but I think 45 minutes might not be enough time. No kid should be put in the situation where he has to choose either marching or concert. Very honestly the administrators and the counselors have no idea about musical skills and how tough it is to maintain those skills. They can see the numbers of students in band but they can't recognize diminishing musical skills until it gets to the point that the band really sounds awful. I hope you are able to get a schedule that solves these problems. I think marching band should be fun and I think concert band can be fun. I think we had that for a lot of years and I hope you are able to achieve that while still maintaining a quality musical organization. Winning trophies is not a necessity. Sounding good is. Always make the Star Spangled Banner sound good. That's not a patriotic statement. Everyone stops what they are doing and listens to the banner. One of my pet peeves about the banner concerns that possible high C in the trumpet part. I've heard many great performances of the banner be ruined by some trumpet player trying to be a hero. It doesn't take much of a mistake in the banner for

John Q Public to think it was awful. I think some of the arrangements of the banner that are out there are too busy and gaudy. Keep it simple and solid and it will work.

One other thing that comes to mind is that I think our band made the best progress when band class was during 2<sup>nd</sup> lunch.. They don't mess with lunch time. The worst time is last period. Last period gets cut a lot. My last couple of years we had 15 or 20 seniors coming back for concert band after going to their college classes. I was really appreciative of these kids because they really didn't need the credit. They were always my strongest players. I remember Dave Book making a big deal about those college classes during a faculty meeting when they were first being offered. I thought this is going to kill the band just so those kids can get 3 hours credit. I think he was happy to get them out of the building.

One good thing is now you are getting kids from my kids. When I read your parent lists I am amazed at the number of former band members. You will find out that the people from this end of Harrison County will really support their kids . I remember the late Gordon Cain, who worked for Fred Ross Bandland, telling me that the thing he admired the most about what we did at Liberty was to have built a successful band program in an area that was so sports dominated. You have some tradition behind you and I'm sure you will be successful.. The best thing about being retired--- "NO Pressure"



As I attempted to answer some of your questions about the band history I found that it opened the floodgates. For the past few weeks I've just been writing page after page of how I remember much of what went on. Many of the things with the band really developed as the result of other some other happening in the system. Maybe the schedule changed, schools closed, new activities were started that attracted band kids or some new rule was put into effect. I was always trying to keep the numbers. There is no doubt in my mind that a lot of other people would have done a better job over the years than me. And I know that others would have done things a lot differently. But no one would have been more devoted to the idea of making our band the very best it could be. And I believe that, for what ever reasons, the band prospered many years in spite of my mistakes. So here is some more stuff as I remember and here are also my feelings and opinions about band and school. It may not be perfectly accurate. 29 years was a long time, but it really seems like it flew by. Wilson Curry gave a pep talk once to the school and made a remark that I had made into a banner that we hung in the bandroom for many years. It sort of propelled me through those developing years when the band was young but I think it says a lot. PRIDE IS EVERYTHING I sure am proud of the Liberty Band.

Mike Wuchner was the first band director in 73-74. I knew he was not going to be rehired as early as April of that first year and I made a point of expressing my interest in the position to Mr. Henry Mayer who was the music supervisor. Both Mr. Mayer and Mike denied that the position was going to open but I was assured by a good friend on the Lib. Faculty that Wuchner would not be back. I made a point of going to a band concert at Liberty and of catching them in their adjudication. The concert consisted of 15 minutes of band and 90 minutes of choir. Mary Jo Richards was choir director. The festival adjudication was awful. I remember them playing Folk Song Suite by R.V. Williams and practically falling apart. The piece had a DC al Coda and when they got to DC the director put down his baton. His oboe player continued back to the beginning and then a few of the other players joined in with her. When Mike realized that he should have continued he started conducting again but the band started at the beginning and the others were several measures ahead. It almost sounded like a round. It was a disaster. If ever a band deserved a 5 or maybe 4 rating it was then but Mr. Mayer who owned the judges in those days made sure that they got a not too embarrassing 3 rating. The only 3 rating ever received in any festival of any kind by our band. The band concert that I attended was in the theater. So I guess that suggests the size of the band. It was able to fit on the stage. I never saw the Marching Band that first year but I do have pictures somewhere unless I left them in the office. They would have participated in the band festival parade but I was with the Pennsboro High Band in that parade. The first Drum Major of the Liberty Band was Spence Nichols. Spence is still around town. His daughters were graduates of Liberty and members of the band in the 90's. Spence was also my drum major during my first year. There are a number of members of that first band still in the area and many of their kids were in my band. Jack and Cindy (Hawkinberry) Tanzey had two daughters recently graduate. Cindy and I designed the current banner with the help of some students. Jeff Hamrick, Adam's dad was a trumpet player in the first band. Joey Nardelli played drums and was the first Liberty alumnus to march with WVU. All those kids also played for me and were juniors in the first Liberty Band. Connie Rife was my first head majorette. I don't know if she was head majorette the first year. Connie was tragically killed in an automobile accident years after she graduated.

I was hired during the summer just as you were and much of the things for that first season had already been planned or were done at the last minute. I had taught 7 years at Salem High School for 2 and Pennsboro High for 5 without a college degree. When I started teaching I had less than 80 hours college work. They had a severe shortage of teachers in WV at that time and offered emergency certificates to counties who needed teachers. In retrospect it was probably a dumb thing to take a job like that while I was trying to go to school but I guess it all worked out for the best. I started at Salem High with about 35 students. Band wasn't even a regularly scheduled class. We got a 2 rating in marching and concert at that first band festival. The next year we grew to about 65 students and were the only Harrison County Band to get a superior rating in both marching and concert. Because I had not finished my degree and Harrison County had someone with a degree wanting a job the county let me go. Mr. Mayer who gave me the bad news promised that if a position opened and I was certified he would guarantee me the position. I then was planning to finish my college work. Fred Ross called and asked

if I would consider going to Pennsboro High under the same type of emergency certificate and after meeting with Fred and their principal agreed to take their band on part time basis. Pennsboro had been Fred Rosses home town. They actually had a great little Class A band at one time with a legendary teacher by the name of Chris Connelly. But in recent times the band was down to nothing. I started that first year with 15 kids the first day . No one today could possibly believe how bad that situation was . But the principal wanted to build the band back and he gave me complete freedom to do what I felt was needed. I recruited kids from everywhere and by the end of the year we had about 40 members. There were 119 students in Pennsboro High my last year there and 85 were band members. I had several kids make the all-state band at a time when very few all-staters came from Class A Schools. We received superior ratings at the band festival the last 4 years that I was there. My final band at Pennsboro played pieces that are graded Level 5 today. Those people in Pennsboro were great and treated me wonderfully. They always made a point of thanking me for things that I just thought were part of the job. There was one very special surprise party in the school gym that they gave for me my last year that I have never forgotten. I also remember the feeling after a couple of years at Liberty, when things with the band were at the worst, that maybe I had made a mistake by coming home. I always taught at Liberty with the feeling that people were really quick to criticize. I never felt that at Pennsboro, they were really appreciative.

After 5 years at Pennsboro I had finished my degree at Salem College and was pursuing the Liberty job and thought everything was in order when Mr. Mayer informed me that the State department would not wave my student teaching even though I had taught successfully for 7 years. So in order for me to get Liberty, Salem College worked out a deal with Randall Hall at Bridgeport where I spent the summer giving lessons to the Bridgeport kids under Randalls supervision. Gary McAllister whose kids played for me later at Lib. was the Salem College Prof. who supervised the student teaching experience. I owe a lot to Henry Mayer, Wilson Curry, Randall Hall, Fred Ross and the people at Salem College who stood up for me and had confidence in me. By the way, we had a wonderful music department in those days at Salem College. Our band director was Ernie Osbourne and he was great. Dave Burton, Mike Ford, Harry Bailey, Jack Wolfe, Bob Minear and myself were among the many successful band directors that came out of Salem College. Even though I knew I was going to get the Liberty job I was not officially hired until late summer. I found out it was official when I received a phone call from Connie Rife ,the head majorette, who said I had been hired the night before. She was asking for permission to have a fund raising sale for the majorettes. I explained that I really didn't have authority yet to give permission since I hadn't received official notice. Within 15 minutes I received calls from the county office , Mr. Mayers office and finally Wilson Curry who scheduled a meeting at the high school. So I guess it took a majorette and her mom to get things rolling. I'm sure the board office delayed hiring me until they were certain that I would meet certification. I found out that they actually avoided several other people who were interested in the job and essentially held it open for me through the summer.

1974-75

.The first years at Liberty were tough. There was still a lot of friction between the different groups still loyal to Victory Salem or Bristol. I remember a teachers meeting where Mr. Curry who was an ex Marine Drill Sgt. said he wanted to see Coaches Mazzie (football) Rice (basketball) and Mr. Perri. immediately following the teachers meeting in his office. Mr. Curry was rather intimidating especially when those veins popped out of his forehead. Needless to say he was furious because some Salem parents called to complain that we were using too much equipment and uniforms that belonged to Victory High. The football team practiced in old Victory uniforms and of course all of our instruments had come from Victory. When the schools merged the Salem instruments stayed for Salem Jr. High . Liberty got the Victory instruments. Also Mazzie and Rice coached there and I graduated from there. And I admit I referred to my alma mater quite a bit. I never mentioned Victory again for many years. Mr. Curry could make a point.

When I was hired Mr. Curry said I had two major problems. Number one was discipline. I guess the band had a reputation for partying at games and parades. I think a lot of this came from the previous schools particularly Victory who had actually gotten in trouble during the last few years of its existence with vandalism at Hite Field and some other bad behavior. We were able to get a handle on this problem and create some pride in the group which helped solve much of this. The second and bigger problem was the fact that we were in debt. Mr. Curry and the boosters had no idea the extent of the debt. They knew that the uniforms were ordered and not a dime had been raised to cover this huge bill. But they didn't know that they owed every music store in a 6 state area. The bill at Bandland dated back to the Victory Band and Mr. Ross had been promised it would be taken care of by Liberty. In the meantime since Liberty couldn't charge anything at Bandland they had charged instruments and music at every other music dealer available. I started getting bills from stores that I had never heard of. At that time we received very little aid from the levy funds and for several years after, any funds that I received from the levy went immediately to Bandland. Of course the boosters were more concerned with paying off the uniform debt but I had to try and run the band with absolutely no money to work with. If I had cash I could pick up reeds or drum heads or sticks but I was not allowed to charge anything. I actually purchased an instrument that we needed with my personal money. (good thing I wasn't married) Later in concert season the band booster president Mrs. Voie Perrine purchased a baritone for her son to play which she eventually gave to the band. We had instruments fall apart on the football field and during parades that were actually being held together with tape. I remember when after a couple of years we had gotten a handle on our debts, I went to a booster meeting to ask for permission to purchase some much needed instruments. As it turned out the parents were aware that our debts were paid also and the majorette mothers banded together to come to the meeting asking for new majorette uniforms. Now I know I was supposed to be in charge but I was still young and they voted down my instruments and approved another set of majorette uniforms. I became so upset with the parents that I organized my own fund raising projects with the students and fired them up for some new horns. I made a few enemies along the way but we started the process rolling to build the band.

Another major problem with the total band program was the feeder bands. I had 1 class at

Gore Jr. High consisting of about 25 total in grades 7 to 9. The band director at Salem Jr. High was David Wright who had a good but small Jr. High Band. He had about 50 kids total. We were also fed by North View Jr. and Summit Park Jr, whose director I believe was a Richard Grindstaff. I only met him a couple of times and he never came to any band director meetings. The kids from NV called him the phantom director because he missed more than he was there. Actually Larry Virtue replaced Grindstaff during the second semester and finished out the year. The second year that I was at Liberty , I believe, is when Sam Brunetti was hired. This was major!!! Sam taught the elementary schools that fed Gore and taught NV Jr. and Summit Park. We were also fed by Sardis , Hepzibah and Spelter elementary schools who had no band program. I agreed to use my free time to go to Hepzibah and Spelter and Don Hamilton ,who became our supervisor when Mr. Mayer retired, went to Sardis. With the great job that Sam did and the addition of the other schools we were able to build a strong feeder program for Gore. It didn't happen over night . The Gore band went from 1 class that met in the hallway to eventually 3 classes that used the entire cafeteria. I had 160 students eventually at Gore in grades 7 to 9. Sam had somewhere around 75 in his North View Band and a smaller group at Summit Park. My last ninth grade band at Gore which by that time included North View was a tremendous Jr. High Band. Eventually things were realigned and the kids from Hepzibah and Spelter were sent Lincoln. I remember losing some really strong players who actually didn't take band at Lincoln. I think some of those kids would have been good players for us but they had a tough time adjusting to new band directors. Summit Park was assigned to WI and eventually RCB. I remember Sam asking me if I wanted quality or quantity. I said quantity. "Send me the kids and we will develop the quality." But Sam also sent quality. After a few years we were getting 7<sup>th</sup> grade band students who were as accomplished as any in the county. Sam is a master teacher when it comes to beginning band students. By the way I liked the 7 to 9 Jr. High concept better than the current Middle School .

My first band at Liberty attended band camp at Ev UN Breth Acres in Upshur County or Camp Pioneer in Randolph. I don't remember which was first. I don't remember too much about that camp except the kids were pretty wild. Initiations and shaving cream were a big part of it. I guess this activity had dated back to the Victoy band camps. How we got anything done is beyond me but evidently the marching band was somewhat better then the year before. I believed in peppy music for the field and games and I guess the year before things were a little slower. We made up for a lack of musical ability with enthusiasm. Because I changed a lot many kids became upset and dropped out during that first year. But I was able to hold on to most of the good players. Our new band uniforms arrived at the school while we were at band camp and that created a lot of excitement when we returned. The first official uniform consisted of a vinyl overlay that was red on the front and said Liberty and white on the back with a mountaineers head in the center. The overlay covered a blue tuxedo-like jacket. It had blue slacks and a similar traditional shako to the current hat. The uniform also used white spats which we wore over black shoes. The spats proved to be a real problem because kids would constantly forget or lose them. I believe we wore white gloves also. The uniform was extremely hot with the vinyl overlay. The uniform was made by the Ostwald Uniform Company.

For concert band the overlay was removed and the kids wore a white shirt and red bow tie under the tux jacket.

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My first Liberty band consisted of about 70 people. Spence Nichols was drum major and Connie Rife was head majorette. I think we had 8 or 10 majorettes. The featured twirlers were Lynn Huffman, Kim Knight, and Jim Mazzie. The county majorette festival was a big deal then and we created some excitement with an outstanding show and several trophies. I know we won best twirler- Lynn and I believe we placed in the the majorettes and maybe won best Drum Major. Spence was a showman. I know the results were unexpected and I remember Mr. Curry coming into class to congratulate us. They made a big deal of presenting the trophies to the school at the next football thuse and this upset the football team who felt that the thuse should only be for them. This actually started a rivalry with the football team and band that lasted for a few years. I do remember that in those days we had a thuse for nearly every game. We also did a complete pre-game including drill and banner. We also changed the half time completely for each home game. And we attended all home and away games. Bus transportation costs then were practically nothing. It increased by a lot a few years later and that led to Mr. Curry suggesting that we limit the away games. Fuel costs and bus driver costs really rose in the late 70's and early 80's. In fact I remember that we only went to out of county parades that paid most of our expenses. I think transportation costs are what led to the decline in the number of bands that participated in the various festivals like the Forest and Strawberry Festivals. At one time these parades were automatically attended by every band. The Marching Band practiced every night during the week. Again this was before girls sports and our cheerleading squads were much smaller. Also the fast food restaurants were just beginning to be built and fewer kids worked. Therefore I did not have to share the students with any other activities.

My schedule then was 1 class at Gore Jr. High, a music appreciation class at Liberty, band and jazz band. Liberty operated on a 6 period day. One problem was that anyone who participated in any sport had to sign up for Phys. Ed. Class 6<sup>th</sup> period. This was jazz band. So any one who played any sport, at any time of the year, could not be in the jazz band. Also since the athletes had to take 6<sup>th</sup> period phys.ed., if many of them also chose to take a couple other electives they had no room on their schedule for band. I never felt that it was right that an athlete had to be put in the position of choosing between sports and the band. This rule was in place so that the sports teams could begin their practice before school was out. In those days all the coaches taught at the school where they coached. What happened a lot was that at the end of first semester someone might decide to run track or try out for the baseball team and the solution was to drop their band class and replace it with what ever they had 6<sup>th</sup> period. I remember losing kids who had to quit band only to not make whichever sport team they tried out for. In this case everyone lost. It took a few years of complaining before that rule was finally changed and I believe the decision actually came from the WVSSAC who ruled that sports teams could not practice on regular school time. I know this change really made a difference in kids being able to stay in band.

One of the strongest sections we had during my first year was our marching band drum section. They could play and play and never repeat a drum beat or cadence. I believe this was a carry over from the old Victory Marching Band led by Sam DeMaria who also always had good drum sections. During this time drum sections consisted of snare drums, tenor or tom toms, scotch bass drums and cymbals. Drum music was really very simple and rather boring if played the way it was written so we usually just made it up for every tune. All the bands did this in those days. It's sort of like a drum set part looks like in jazz band. It's really just a skeleton that allows the players freedom to play what they like. Our drum sections during these early years were always good. It wasn't me. These kids did it on their own. Tonal bass drums and multiple pitched drums were in their infancy. I remember when we got our first set of trios (three pitched drums) that first season. Joey Nardelli played them. There was no music written for these. Joe just made it up and did a good job. The drum corps influence was just beginning in our area but really didn't gain full force for more than ten years or so. It was quite a while before publishing companies included multiple pitched drum parts. While today's drummers have to be percussionists and really be able to read music, those days all you really needed was to have good rhythm and a strong back. I know in the later years there were days that I looked back on those early drum sections as being much easier and a lot more fun even though today's kids have to be better musicians. In the old days if a bass drummer was absent anyone could take their place or you could leave it out cause the other bass drum was playing the exact same thing. While today it takes a drum section a week or more to learn a few tunes the old days drummers would learn 6 to 10 different long cadences, and about 15 or twenty tunes in a matter of a few days. The old drum section could really fire up the student body and the rest of the band. They were fun. The bad thing was that since it was so easy for them to learn their parts it allowed them a whole lot of time to get into trouble. My gray hair first began during my first year at Liberty. But times change and styles change and today that style of drum section would not fit in. Too bad.

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Liberty was a AAA high school then and our football schedule consisted of some schools with pretty impressive bands at that time. Morgantown and Buckhannon were large and great. East Fairmont with Earl McConnell Senior as director was very similar to how they are now with Junior. West Fairmont was big and of course our main rivalry was WI. The WI Band had been tremendous for quite a few years and had built a great tradition. Henry Mayer had built the program followed by directors John Puffenburger, Glen Goodwin and then John Christian. Two years earlier while I was teaching at Pennsboro I had been contacted by Mr. Mayer to see if I would want to replace Glenn Goodwin at WI. At the time I was close to finishing my degree but it was actually too late in the summer to follow through with it. WI's Band had just finished several great years and I was afraid that I might really bomb there following Glenn who was extremely popular and successful. Mr. Mayer then hired John who actually made the already good program even better. Right from the start my goal at Liberty was to get our band to a point where we were as good or better than WI. Part of this was my own pride and determination and part of this went back to my old high school days when all the other bands in the area took a "back seat" to Mr. Mayer's WI Band. WI had a huge advantage in that it was a city school with a few elementary schools and one Junior High feeding it.

In contrast the old Victory High consisted of many elementary schools and at one time Adamston, NorthView, Summit Park, Sardis, and Ziesing Jr. Highs. I may have even forgotten about some other junior highs. The Victory band job was an impossible job when compared to WI just based on the number of schools one person had to serve. Gore Jr. High was built in the mid 60's and this led to the closing of several of these buildings. And with the opening of Gore a separate band director was hired to do Gore and some of the grade schools. Glenn Goodwin was the first band director at Gore, a job he had before he became the director at WI. Phil Rossano followed Glen into Gore and built a fine Jr. High Band. My sister was started in band by Glenn and had Phil as her Jr. High Director. Phil and I became close friends at that time and much of what I learned about running a band program came from my association with Phil. Some time while I was teaching at Pennsboro Phil left Gore and the situation changed to where the position was not filled. This was actually a step backwards because now the Gore feeder program had to be done by the high school director again. This led to the eventual collapse of the Gore Band. When Phil was director, the band practiced in the cafeteria. In those days few schools were built with large separate band rooms. Bands were forced to use auditoriums or what ever space was available. Phil actually had an elaborate situation in the cafeteria that included microphones in the ceiling and a stereo sound system in one of the cafeteria storage rooms. He had the ability to record and play back each rehearsal to his kids. This was actually done on a reel to reel tape recorder. By the time I got there which would have been 5 or 6 years later this entire program was down to just a handful of kids and almost no equipment. The music library consisted of two file cabinet drawers and what equipment they had was shoved into a janitors closet in the hallway next to the gym. The principal at that time was Leo Pilewski, father of Leon and Lexanna, who was a good man who stressed discipline. I don't think Mr. Pilewski was at fault at all for the band declining. I believe the previous directors who were primarily focused on Victory High and then Liberty High allowed the Jr. High program to deteriorate. When I began at Gore I had to have band practice on the stage in the gymnasium with the curtain closed while Coach Martinos Gym Class was on the gym floor. It is the same stage today and when I look at it I have a hard time imagining teaching on it. I remember dodge balls bouncing against and through the curtain and kids leaping onto the stage and under the curtain to fetch the ball. All happening when I was trying to explain some important fingering or tricky rhythm. Its no wonder that kids wanted to quit band and take gym because they were having more fun. Eventually I got permission to move off the stage and out to the hallway between the gym and cafeteria. We still had dodge balls and student chasers running out into the hallway but it was somewhat better. Still the Industrial Arts class was next door and occasionally we would have to compete with a loud table saw or pounding hammers. We used the janitors storage area in the hallway for stands and what few pieces of equipment we had. Eventually as the band grew in size and the sound carried down the hall and through the school, we were promoted back into the cafeteria. This was in my third or fourth year and again it didn't happen over night. I had band in the cafeteria at Gore for probably 22 or 23 years. Each day I would put the tables and benches up into the wall before class and the first period class would set up the chairs when they came in. Then the second and eventually third period class would put the chairs away and take down the tables. At first the cooks complained about the noise but eventually they became a good barometer for how good we were getting. At the



beginning of the year they kept the kitchen door and curtain closed but as we got better throughout the year they would open the curtain and you could see them in the back of the kitchen dancing. Also by being in the cafeteria I got some free food sometimes. Mrs Vestpoint always kept me supplied with cookies and such. This is also where I got my coffee addiction that I still have. All of this is important to Liberty in that if this situation with the feeder schools hadn't improved we had no chance to improve at the high school. The real key was Sam Brunetti sending the kids to me from the elementary schools and the gradual improvement and excitement over the High School Band. Eventually kids wanted to be part of the Liberty Marching Band and I'm proud to say its lasted for more then 30 years. And by the way, we caught WI and smiled as we passed them. Harrison County never had a high school band as good as we would become, in my opinion. That's what I'm most proud of. And I hope it gets even better.

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The 1974-75 Band actually received a Superior rating at the Area Band Festival although I really feel that Mr. Mayer had gotten to the judge to get him to be easy on us. Maybe not. Those days you played to only one judge and if they didn't like you, "too bad". Because we were a new consolidation we were allowed the first three years to play any level of music that we wanted. Back in those days AAA Schools were required to play at least level 5. I don't know why Mike Wuchner played such hard music his first year but I chose easier music. It was still challenging for the band, but they really came through with a strong performance. I really built this up again to try to instill some pride. I think it helped. We still were required to march in the Band Festival Parade on Saturday afternoon even though it was no longer judged. I always enjoyed the Band Festival Parade from way back when I was a high school student right up through my teaching career. I don't remember exactly when the parade was done away with but I remember bands like Morgantown, Weirton, Oak Glenn and John Marshall pushing to do away with the parade based on the increased transportation costs. Of course, eventually the Area Festivals were reorganized into smaller regional festivals. But in 1975 about 55 High School Bands participated in the Northern Area Festival and were required to march in the parade. The first band in the line-up would begin down at the head of Milford and begin marching up Main past what is now McDonalds. The rest of the parade would fall into place as the band in front of them went by. It gave you a chance to see all the other bands. It was a "band nuts" dream parade. A AAA Band always led the parade followed by Class A then Class AA and back to a AAA, etc. We had the honor of being the first band in the parade. Again Mr. Mayer who had retired from the supervisor position was in charge of the festival and I have to believe that it was not the luck of the draw that we were first. The only bad thing was that the great Paden City Band under the direction of Ed Hood was right behind us. We were marching with about 60 players and Paden City had about 140. And most of them were brass players. I actually don't remember what we played in the parade but I remember that they played Barnum and Baileys Favorite. And they played it and marched at about 160 beats per minute. Needless to say they pushed us around that entire parade. They really had some band. In those days you had to wait until the parade was over and attend a directors meeting at the old Sheraton Inn on Main Street. You then sat through a short lunch and listened to a few speeches usually from Mr. Mayer and some of the judges who stayed for the parade. On some occasions the judges would be pretty nasty, sometimes really getting on the directors. In fact I remember Dr. Richard Strange who at that time was teaching at Carnegie Mellon

University jumped all over Ed Hood because he had a full beard. Dr. Strange said it was very unprofessional. Ed replied that John Phillip Sousa had a beard and everyone snickered, except Strange. After eating and listening to the speeches the directors would receive the packet of score sheets. When I got our rating I was thrilled and relieved and when I got downstairs to the lobby I was met by a handful of our kids and I gave them the good news. We actually received a 2 rating the next year followed by a 1 then a 2 again then a 1 and then a 2. After that we made a whole bunch of 1's. I do remember two of our very best bands got 2 ratings many years later that I thought we did not deserve. So I believe in my 29 years our top band got 24 superiors and 5 excellents. Now that's not counting many years when I took two high school bands to the festival. There were a couple of years when both bands got 1's but usually when I took 2 the second group got a 2 rating. But unlike some other bands when I took two groups I did not add some of our better players to the second group. I notice some bands even today will add upper classmen to their freshmen bands. We never did that.

Marching Band has gone through several different looks and styles throughout the years and our band changed from time to time. I would like to think that the gradual improvement in our sound over the years was our greatest accomplishment. I believe we developed a sound built around a solid instrumentation that was as good as any high school band that I have heard in WV, at least in a period of time during the mid 80's to mid 90's. Our largest Marching Band had 215 members. We had over 200 kids on the overall roster for about 5 years. It was quite a thrill to march in a parade and hear the comments from the spectators about our size and sound. Being too large did create a whole different set of problems. We out grew the room several times. Transportation was expensive. Instrument repair was constant. We constantly needed additional uniforms. Having enough copies of the music was a constant problem. I remember making a block band line-up one particular year that was very unique where every section was in rows of eight. We had 24 trombones, 8 baritones, 8 Horns, 16 Altos, 8 tenors, 32 trumpets, 40 clarinets, 16 flutes and 8 piccolos. I remember upsetting some kids because I chose the banner carriers and color guard based on instruments played so that I could keep the numbers even. This looked great on paper but in reality I don't think we ever marched with everyone present so usually the rows were messed up anyhow. Again during our strongest years I loved the powerful sound. I remember the feeling at our band spectaculars when we would follow all the other bands, especially the anticipation of knowing your kids were going to "knock their socks off". One of our early strong bands played a tune that WVU had played called White Dawn. This tune had been arranged for WVU by Dan Traugh who attended WVU with my sister. Dan became band director at Morgantown High. Dan gave me a copy of this tune and we used it as an opener. It's funny what you remember about things, but I remember our band coming onto the field using this tune. I don't remember whether it was at a game or the band Spectacular, but I remember the reaction of one of my fellow band directors. I was fortunate to have written a very effective drill for this tune. I remember Lou Oliverio who I respect very much as a great band man, was standing on the side line near the 50 as we began our drill. There was a particular spot in the drill where the tune goes to a sudden fff and I had written a nice move where all of our sound was suddenly directed at the stands. Impact!

Lou looked up and simply said "wow". My feelings exactly. I've never forgotten that moment. It was like "the Liberty Band has arrived". I guess in the scope of things this was really a small thing and in comparison to the many performances it was just another half time but it has stayed with me for all these years.

In my 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years we really had a problem keeping the numbers. The effects of not having a feeder program really took over and I had to use every trick I could think of to keep it from looking like we were falling apart. I really tried to encourage kids to join band even if they had not been in Jr. High Band and actually started some of our most loyal students at this time. During those first couple of summers I had beginning band classes in June and July for kids who had never been in band. I believe in 1977 or 78 in order to get our marching band numbers to around 100 I started the flag line. My sister was teaching at Salem College and she told me about 2 of her students who were in drum corps. I met them and found the one to be a drummer in the famous Bridgemen and the second to be a member of the color guard of the Madison Scouts. I hired both of them for summer band and used the color guard member to start the flags. The only rule that I had for the flag line was that you could not already be a band member. The point was to add to the numbers not take away from the instrumentation. This worked for a couple of years but eventually I had to give in and allow band members to try out, although brass players knew they probably wouldn't make it. By this time the band was getting so large that it really didn't matter if we lost a good player to the flags. Now I had been a casual drum corps fan dating back to around 1970. I regularly attended a couple of shows in the Pittsburgh area. I always enjoyed the corps especially Madison and the old 27th Lancers. But I always felt and still do that much of what a corps does can not be done by school bands. I think the corps movement has had a lot of positive influences on bands but I think they have caused some negative things as well. I have never been a fan of marching band contests. Over the years we went to some and usually did well but I still never felt comfortable competing. It used to amaze me when certain out of county directors would talk about their following years competition show in like January. I was planning concerts. The furthest thing from my mind would be marching season. So most years I would wait until August to see what my instrumentation turned out to be, then I would pull a few all-nighters and write a half-time show. I never trusted anyone else to write my drill. I was going to have to teach it and I wanted to make sure I could. When I was teaching in Pennsboro I attended a marching band show each year in Marietta, Ohio. My band never went. I went on my own to watch and actually steal ideas. Year in and year out the best band was always a high school band from Grove City Ohio. Its leader was a guy by the name of Jim Swearingen. Some how I got the opportunity to meet Mr. Swearingen and in the course of our discussions I mentioned that I had never heard arrangements like his band was playing. He seemed flattered and he said that those were his own charts and that he had a number of arrangements that he would be willing to sell. He took my address and sent me a complete list of tunes and complete shows that he had written for his band and for the great Ohio State University Band. I ended up buying a Barry Manilow Show, an Elton John Show and several singles including a great version of The Way WE WERE that I used at several homecoming halftime shows. For the next few years I would always check with him to see if he had anything new. Don Hamilton was so impressed with his

arrangements that he brought Jim in to do a clinic for the band directors on band arranging and how to arrange for you own band. It must have inspired me because for about three years in a row I rearranged the fight song to suit our instrumentation. For the first two or three years it was pretty bland, especially the low brass parts because we were always hurting for low brass. A few years later I brought Jim in to conduct the All-County Band. By this time he had several tunes published and was quickly becoming one of the most popular composers in the school music business. He really is a nice guy and just a good band man.

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I think another interesting thing was the transformation of our practice field. Mike Wuchners band practiced in the front lawn. There were no trees and not much grass in the front in 1973. I remember seeing pictures of the band practicing in front and remember how unusually barren the front of the school was. My first few bands at Liberty used what is now the baseball field. This field was no way as nice as it is now. I would come out in early August and cut the grass and measure and line the field. By the way, we started band about 2 weeks before school started and usually went to band camp 1 week before school began. Band directors were not paid for 11 months work until much later. With the field the baseball coach had asked me to try to avoid tearing up the infield if possible. We also used real lime in those days and it would eat away the grass and during baseball season you could usually see the outline of our practice field. That never went over too well with the die-hard baseball fans and coaches. One day in the winter I drove into the parking lot coming from Gore and I noticed men on the baseball field. After mentioning it to someone in the teachers lunchroom, they said that they were putting up a new fence in the outfield. I went in the office and checked with Mr. Curry and he said it had been donated to the school because of some hard work by Coach Annie. I asked if it was a temporary fence and he said no, it was permanent. I said where is the band supposed to practice and he said "Oh We Forgot About The Band". Now the area to the left and back of the baseball field, the softball field today, was all swamp. The field on top was the football practice field. By this time there were trees growing in the front lawn and the grass was really looking good. So that left us with no practice field. I guess I got a little upset. I don't remember anyone having a solution and I really don't think they thought it was a big deal. I guess they would have in September, especially if we went to the football games and never went on the field. I know I was threatening all kinds of such rebellion. I explained the problem in the next band booster meeting and one of my friends who was also a band parent came up with a solution. His name was Parke Legget and Parke had 2 boys in the band and was also an athletic booster. He felt bad about the mess and thought that he could build us a field next to the baseball field. Somehow he got the use of some heavy equipment that belonged to Harrison County. I remember asking how he managed that and he said "you don't want to know". So I dropped the questions. Parke and another fellow spent the next 2 months removing tons of dirt from the hill and filling in the swamp to build us a level field adjacent to the baseball field. I think this was the ultimate in parent volunteering. I remember asking what I could do to help and he said nothing. Our field actually turned out to be nicer than either the baseball field or the football practice field on top of the hill. We had more than 100 yards and more importantly we had the full width of a standard football field. The

only thing I remember him telling Mr. Curry was that he had better never see the football team using that field because it was the band practice field. I was really upset many years later when Mr. Book gave our field away so that the softball field could be built. I was promised an equally proportioned field up the hollow but we know that that practice field is too small and full of low places that hold water. I made due with that field but I never put my heart and soul into the marching band after that. I think the quality of our marching and of the football shows, in general, dropped after the softball field was built. Again another thing that upset me about the situation was that the people in the athletic boosters that pushed for the softball field to be built where it is also had kids in the band. I think this was the beginning of the feeling that I got many times in the next few years that band was going to take a back seat to sports and other things at Liberty. I think the administration, faculty and parents were really taking the band for granted. Block Scheduling certainly was not going to be a good thing for the band and everyone knew it.

It seems like I spent my entire career at Liberty trying to create an atmosphere where everyone could be in the band. When I was in school at Victory you could not play in the band if you played sports just as it was in my first year at Liberty. Now this was before girls sports but I remember friends of mine having to drop band when going from Jr. High to High School. The practice schedules did not allow students to do both. And frankly the coaches did not want their athletes playing in the band. I always thought this was wrong. Girls basketball was just beginning to become popular when I started at Liberty and its season was during boys football season. So we immediately had a conflict with girls in the band who wanted to play basketball. In the early years the basketball practices would not begin until school started so I got the kids first for band camp. I remember that especially at Gore some of my best band students were basketball players who were going to be faced with the dilemma of dropping band for basketball. This was all occurring at a time when our numbers were really down due to the poor feeder bands and I sure didn't want to lose kids. Mrs Amsler was the basketball coach during several of these early years and she could not have been more cooperative. I remember sharing most of the girls basketball team. They really didn't play as much of a schedule as they do now but we still had some schedule conflicts. I also remember a few years later when a new coach said he didn't want any of his basketball players to be in the marching band. When he showed up for his first team meeting he only had 4 girls come out. It seems that there were 11 other girls who decided to stay in the band. That was one of my favorite moments when the coach called to see if we could work something out. Of course, we did.

I had years where kids would only come to half a class because their bus would leave for the career center. And later we had kids coming part of the time for college classes. I had situations where kids weren't able to schedule band at all but came to all the after school practices to be in the marching band. I was always working around one school activity or another but I always tried to work it out. I had friends who were band directors who refused to work with their athletes and always had smaller bands. I admit sometimes it

was pretty upsetting when things conflicted but I really tried to create this idea that anyone could take band. It would have really upset me if some of our star players in Jr. High would quit because of a conflicting sport. I know football players couldn't march at games and I didn't try to use them for the spectacular but some did march in parades. One of our best kids, Danny Swiger, was one of Gores best football players who also played trumpet in our band. I believe it was during his 8th or 9<sup>th</sup> grade years he developed a serious medical condition that prohibited him from continuing in football. But Danny was able to stay in the band and became one of our finest students. Danny became a WV State Trooper and I remember him yelling hello at me when he was directing traffic during the Buckwheat Festival in Kingwood. Had we not had this atmosphere where the boys knew they could be in the band and still play football Danny would probably have quit band in Jr. High. Cheerleading really grew from 1974 to the present and we always had a lot of cheerleaders in the band. During the early years when the cheerleading squads were smaller the band girls who were cheerleaders were only in concert band. Later when the squads became larger we were able to work it out where the girls could march and cheer. Those kids really had to put in extra time during the month of August learning both but some of our very best band kids were also cheerleaders. I always wanted athletes and cheerleaders in the band. I believe directors who don't try to work out an arrangement with the coaches are really making a mistake. For the most part I got along real well with the coaches at Liberty. I still remember getting the phone call during one summer from Mr. McClain (chemistry teacher) telling me that Coach John Mazzie had suddenly passed away. He had been our coach at Victory and was our football coach at Liberty. He was a gentle man who everyone respected I never could bring myself to call him John. He was always Mr. Mazzie or coach.

We always had a pep band for boys basketball up until my last year or so. Some years the band would have as many as 50 or 60 players. It was always an all volunteer band. Sometimes, not often, I would have to ask someone to play to fill in where we were short but it was basically a volunteer group. I think it was 1979 that we had our best team. That team should have won the AAA State Championship. We had several other teams go to the state tournament but that was the best team. I always concentrated on the Star Spangled Banner for the basketball games. That is one of the reasons that I kept the pep band fairly large, so the Banner would sound full. I remember people going to away games and commenting about how bad the other bands Star Spangled Banner sounded. I played the Banner at every home basketball game for probably 23 or 24 years and then one night before the first game of the season I heard a student vocalizing in the corner of the bandroom. I said "Are you singing something tonight?" and she said "yes the National Anthem". We had just been in the bandroom with the pep band practicing the Banner and had actually been using some class time practicing the Banner for about 2 weeks prior. The girl did a fine job but I was really upset. To me this was another example someone really taking the band for granted. If someone would have come in sometime before we started practicing the Banner and said we have an outstanding vocalist I would have said that was fine. But from that point on I never played the Star Spangled Banner at a Liberty Basketball game. From time to time there would be other groups invited to perform at halftime but I never found out until during the game. Then the athletic boosters started having a shoot-around at half time that again I didn't find out about until

it happened. To me again it was being taken for granted. There again in the last few years I didn't worry about whether I had a pep band or not. If the kids wanted to have one we did but I was not going to beg kids to come out during bad weather just to play a few tunes. I know that upset a few people but by that time I had enough.

We had majorettes and featured twirlers in front of the marching band through the 1988-89 season (I think). The last couple of years there seemed to be a real drop in the number of people going out for majorette and I considered dropping the girls from the front of the band entirely. Dave Burton from Parkersburg High was one of my best friends and he had eliminated all of his auxiliary down to 1 drum major. PHS was winning all kinds of awards and Dave said it eliminated a lot of his headaches. But I decided to just eliminate the batons and have a dance line. The first year we had over 50 girls try out. Because I wasn't sure of the interest I said any girl could try out even if they were not in band. We were shocked and amazed at the turn-out. Believe me I have thought a lot over the years about whether this was a mistake or not especially since my own step daughter had been a majorette. I made a point that first year of telling the girls that if they caused any problems or if I didn't think they were a positive thing for the band that I would drop them for the following year. Those first few years the dancers were fantastic and I made a point of playing music that they could dance to. I always used a pop type tune and I always used a tune that they could kick to. Occasionally I had them carry props or flags in the opening or closing drill. For several years they operated without an advisor and were completely student run. Only in the last few years did we run into problems that required us to get an advisor which, in hindsight, we probably should have had all along. But those first few years I thought the danceline was really exceptional. I liked centering the halftime shows around the girls simply because those bleachers at Hite Field are so low. You spend hours upon hours writing and perfecting drill and complicated formations that no one can appreciate unless they are on top of the press box. We did simple formations that were easily recognized from the bleachers and concentrated on our sound and let the dancers and flags perform. It worked for a lot of years but again in my last few years I let it get into a rut mainly because I was getting so disenchanted with the school system. I have noticed that in the last few years it seems that more and more bands have way too many kids who can't get in step or even in time. I was really struck by that when I went to the band spectacular at Fairmont last year. Even the WVU Band seemed to have a lot of people having marching problems. I wonder what's causing that. I remember years ago in the top bands, no one would be out of step. I caught myself at Fairmont being caught up in looking for this and I really couldn't enjoy the show.

Before the block schedule we would begin concert band immediately after the last football game. Usually by this time I was sick of marching band and I think a lot of the kids were also. We still had the Veterans parade and a couple of Christmas parades but I never practiced much for those. During our peak years I was able to have every section of the band audition for chairs by the use of a cassette recorder. We would give them playing requirements and then have them record the audition. Usually one of the people who did not play an instrument like a flag or dancer would do the recording back in the practice room. This got some of the kids to practice and it enabled us to get a huge start on transforming our huge marching band into an equally huge concert band.

Sometimes a student would get upset with their placement and drop out but I don't remember that happening too much. I really didn't have much of a challenge system and I didn't want to be bothered with having to do challenges once we really got into the second semester. If a student was seriously upset with their position we were usually able to work out a compromise. Most years our concert band was larger than our marching band. Anyone who came into the band at the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester was given an opportunity to play for a chair but I always gave the kid who had marched the benefit of the doubt and usually a higher chair when players were equal. We usually had the seating done, for the most part, by Christmas. We were able in some years to have a concert prepared by late January and would give two or three completely different concerts a year. This became a lot tougher later in my career when the freshmen came and when girls basketball was moved to be at the same time as boys because we couldn't get the gym. Mr. Book did not want us to do anything on Sunday, even though this was the perfect time to give a concert. I remember one year very late in my tenure at Liberty when we were allowed to give a Sunday concert and I think the only reason he agreed to it was because I sent Jude Gore down to ask him. After block scheduling went into effect the change in personnel was so dramatic that we just couldn't get the band going until several weeks into the second semester. For several years we gave a marching band concert in the gym at the end of football season and these were very effective but again getting into the gym at the beginning of basketball season became nearly impossible. But we always played a lot of music in concert band even if we never performed it. I think you can start the band festival music too early and it's important not to spend the entire semester only on festival tunes. I usually gave the kids 5 or 6 festival type tunes and then decided which ones I liked the best. Sometimes I never really felt comfortable with my early choices and would switch with just a few weeks to go. If someone would ask me in February what we going to play at the festival I never knew. I had some ideas but I waited until the last possible minute to choose. In my last few years Mike Ford started printing a program for the festival and he always had to call me to get my tunes. I'd have everything else in but I never picked the tunes until the last minute.

I was a little concerned, last year, when the kids were putting pressure on you to play level 6 music because I knew your numbers were down in the clarinet section. I was really happy with your results though and got to hear your performance on channel 18.. I played Festive Overture many years ago with a clarinet section that included 3 all-staters and 2 others who made it the next year. We also played a Swearingen marching band version of Festive Overture as an opener with good results. The first time I played Incidental Suite it was a level 5. I guess you heard the story about me being in the hospital and the band had to be conducted by Don Hamilton. I still remember that the flute soloist in the second movement was Sue Casey and the alto sax solo was by Scott Rebrook. Those two had gorgeous tones on those instruments. The band also marched in the band festival parade and carried a banner that said this 1's for Perri. That picture made the Sunday front page. There are several tunes now graded a 6 that were originally 5's. I know some band directors would choose a 5 and then submit it to be raised to a 6. My friend at Parkersburg did that several times. My favorite concert band piece is Variations on a Korean Folk Song by J B Chance. We played that twice as a level 5 and twice as a level 6. I think it is really a difficult level 5. It is certainly not as hard as Incantation and Dance which he wrote. We played that piece 2 times. Another



favorite composer of mine is Alfred Reed. We played his Festival Prelude in one of my first years and later played his PUNCHINELLO and Russian Christmas Music. Another piece that he wrote that actually was one of the best things we did at the festival was his 2<sup>nd</sup> Suite. Dave Milburn was one of our judges and he raved about that piece. Reeds music for the most part is more difficult than it's graded. A level 6 Reed tune usually has difficult woodwind parts. In the later years I got bored with the traditional guys like Reed, Clifton Williams, Claude Smith, etc and began trying a few different composers. I really like Frank Tichelli, Jack Stamp and Mark Camphouse. For the most part their music is also tough. I always wanted to play something by Don Gillingham but ran out of time. I enjoyed playing a lot of the Holsinger pieces. Over all I believe the band festival is more "watered down" now than it was when it was an area festival. I think it's easier to make a good rating and I think the level of judging is not nearly as high as it was 15 years ago. I would never have dared to play some of the tunes that I played late in my career back in the 80's because the judges would have killed us. I don't think the best bands are as good today as they were then and I think that is just a sign of the times. I don't think the All-State Band is as good today as it was in the 80's. Just look at the size of the bands throughout the state as compared to years ago. And this is surprising because there are larger schools and more consolidations. I was fortunate to have taught when bands were really coming into their own as a part of the education system and I am sorry to say that I think in the last 7 or 8 years we've gone backwards. There are too many other things that are easier for the kids to do. And the growth of sports, especially girls sports, really has cut into the band programs. I don't know how small schools can ever have large bands again. It will really be rare.

I always liked to "let my band do the talking". What I mean is that at the band spectaculars you would always hear these bands list all their accomplishments like 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the cucumber festival or 1<sup>st</sup> place in hot dog festival. Then you would see and hear their show and you wondered how bad were the losers. I never boasted about any accomplishments. I figured that anyone who cared already knew what we had done and I thought we could impress with our performance and not our words. I never like people who brag about themselves and I guess I was always cautious about that when it came to the band. Occasionally some of the parents would get upset with me for not bragging more but I was never comfortable with it and I never felt like we had to. I really wasn't in the band business to win awards. I just wanted to have the best band that was possible. And I just wanted to play music. I always felt that I was a music teacher and a conductor, not a drill instructor or showman. I admit that some of my fellow band directors seemed to always be on an ego trip but I tried to avoid that as much as possible. I think my mom, who was the finest musician I ever knew, was really good at putting me in my place when I got a big ego. I think in today's world it seems as if kids and parents really want recognition for things that years ago were just average things. I think sports, and I enjoy all sports, has really gotten out of hand in that regard. Even grades. Everybody makes an honor roll and yet all you hear about are the poor test scores. That was one of my complaints about the block schedule hype. The principals said that more kids would make the honor roll but they never said that the kids would learn more. By the way I was told by Jerry McKeen, back when we were discussing the block, that I should go along with it because Mr. Book was going to it regardless. McKeen, the assistant principal, said that by

the time that it would really start to damage the band I would be old enough to retire. He said that if I caused a big stink about it Mr. Books revenge would probably be severe. That's when I realized that they really didn't give a "hoot" about the band. Some of the other band directors got upset with me because I didn't fight it enough but it would not have done any good. I really got upset when I found out after we had been in it for a couple of years that Book had gone to the Marion County Board and told them that I loved block scheduling. He knew that was not true. Now what was true was that at the time it had not destroyed the band.

I think band directors today have a tougher time. I don't think kids are willing to put in the practice time and I think all the best kids are involved in so many other diversions. And I believe fewer and fewer listen to good music. I don't think people have an appreciation for an accomplished musician. I think most kids and parents want that "quick fix" and if it becomes a little stressful they take the easy way out. I gave up giving private lessons because kids don't practice. There are a few but not many. It seems as if today a kid takes private lessons just so they will make All-State or some other type of honor rather than just making them a better musician. There was a time when you were considered a more rounded individual if you were a musician but I don't think that enough people look at it in that way today. Back when I was a kid in the 50's , my mother gave 60 piano lessons a week. Everyone in Adamston sent their kids to take lessons from my mom. It wasn't to make them a star but to make them a better person. I don't think that people look at music in that way any more and that's sad.

I saw a picture today in the paper of the late Yale Woody which his mom had submitted. That brought back some memories both pleasant and sad. Yale marched as a freshman in the WI Band and transferred to Liberty because of several problems he had at WI. I remember being warned that he was a real discipline problem and had a very quick temper. He did have a quick temper but for some reason we connected and I never had any problems with him. In fact, he became a solid band member and someone who was very popular in the band. He had a very unique personality and for some reason I seemed to get along best with some of the kids that caused trouble for others. Yale used to carry a boom box on the bus trips and played the song Happy Trails to You, over and over. He really annoyed a lot of the other kids especially after I said I liked that song. But when I told him to put on the head phones after about 10 playings of that tune, he always obeyed and with a big grin. Yales mom became very active in the booster club. One of the saddest times at Liberty was at the time of Yales accident and funeral. Seeing his picture in the paper also has brought on some other thoughts of some of the other students who have suffered tragic events while students in the band. It is at times like these that you realize that the band is an extension of the family.

We went away to band camp for several years with camps being held in various 4-H camps and church camps. I basically did the whole camp by myself which

really wasn't unusual at that time. I always had plenty of chaperones and sometimes took former students who would assist. The only time I remember getting someone to do the drums was when we asked a percussion major from WVU to help out. He came to one day of camp and decided he didn't think the drummers were good enough and left. I remember telling Don Wilcox about him and he subsequently told Phil Faini who had recommended the student. Phil called and apologized and I never heard from the kid again. I did use a student from Salem College one summer but he was not able to go away to camp with us because his college classes had started. Mr. Curry did not like having the college kids hanging around the students and once school started I phased him and the boy who was working the flags out of the picture. For the most part the away band camps were fun and hard work. But as the band grew and the students other activities increased it became less of an advantage to go away to camp. I asked Mr. Curry if we could have camp at school and after explaining why I thought it would be better, he agreed. I believe we were the first band in the area to stop going away for band camp and I never regretted that decision. We tried all variations of length during the rest of my career, from 2 weeks -all-day to 2 weeks - ½ day. We tried 1 week all day followed by 1 week ½ day to just 1 week all day. All of these provided varied results. Sad to say but you are really at the mercy of the weather. So probably 2 weeks is better in case you lose a lot of field time due to bad weather. But when you go away to camp you have no choice but to march in the rain and mud, which we did many years. All the years that Curry was principal I never once got a complaint from the office about having camp at school but during Mr. Books reign the complaining was constant. We were always in the way or we were always getting the school dirty. It really got to be to a point that I hated to have camp at all because I knew it was a matter of time before I would be "called on the carpet". When Ed became my assistant he concentrated on instrument repair and did some section work and helped on the field. Jack and Brian Wolfe did my drums for many years and then were lured to Bridgeport for a few years. That was another time when my feelings were hurt because I thought the Wolfes were coming to my camp only to find out at the last minute about the switch. Brian was very apologetic but you know Jack. We had tried to share them for a couple of years but it got to the point where we were getting very little time with them because they were spending it at Bridgeport. It sure wasn't because of the money because we paid them very well, sometimes too much for the actual work we got from them. We had enough good percussionists in our section that we got along fine without them. I did use various other college students for a couple of years but not with great results. In fact, the cadence that you still use came from Glenville St. College when their percussion teacher worked our camp. That cadence could be heard for a number of years on a tv commercial about Glenville State. I always did the camps with very little help just simply because I wrote the show as we proceeded through the camp. I never was sure exactly what we were going to do until the last minute. I would have written some possible entrances but many times found that the band couldn't play the tunes or decided that another tune would work better. I hated to have a lot of professionals around because they would want to see the show or know what tunes were in the show and I simply wasn't sure. I always wanted to find the perfect sounding song. I know this isn't how its done today and frankly it wasn't how it was done anywhere else but its how I did it. And for many years I thought it worked. I would watch bands that had their shows specially written for them that I thought didn't make

best use of their personnel. One year we had a kid who was in the Canton Bluecoats write a drill for the tunes I selected. We spent 1 week and 2 days with him on the first tune with little results. I finally said forget it. We had 3 more days and school was going to begin and we needed a show. So I ditched his drill entirely and wrote another one that we learned that week. I think it turned out to be one of the best shows we did in my last several years. I know that I let it get into a stagnant rut the last couple of years but by that time the school system was taking a toll on me. One thing to understand about marching band at Liberty, throughout most of my 29 years we never had very large crowds at our football games. I don't think we had 5 seasons with more than 3 victories. After the band spectacular we would be performing to very small crowds. It was difficult to get the kids excited about the games. It varied from year to year but usually by the end of September no one was coming to the games. That was another reason we stopped going to away games because we never had much of a crowd going with us. I had a lot of trouble during some years with attendance at the football games. I caught a lot of parents making excuses for the kids absences that were questionable. There were a few years where we would perform our entire spectacular show after the football game for anyone who wanted to stay and watch. This went over really well with many of the parents who didn't attend the game but would show up after to watch this show. It got to the point where at some games the crowd was bigger on our side after the game then during. I really began this so we had a chance to do our entire spectacular show that had to be abbreviated for half time. Sometimes I added a different stand and play tune to either the half time or post game. I was asked by the principal to stop doing the post game because the maintenance people and traffic directors were complaining that they were staying at the field too long. I stopped doing a pre-game when the coaches stopped going back into the dressing rooms. That was another time when the coaches decided on their own to stay on the field until kick-off and we either had to share the field with them or not go on. We tried to share the field with the team only to have kids get hit with footballs that were intentionally thrown at them. After complaining to the office with no results and to avoid further conflicts between football players and band kids I stopped the pre-game. We did the banner both on the field and the stands for the rest of my tenure. For the most part I got along pretty well with the athletic department but there was a time when the band started getting some attention that some particular coaches seemed offended. They seemed to deliberately create situations between the athletes and band. Be careful because some of those people are still around. In my last few years the football coach in particular was very helpful. But in all my years at Liberty I can only think of three times that a coach at a pep rally said thanks to the band and two of those times were in my last two years.

I don't remember when we first were invited to the Fairmont Band Spectacular. It wasn't in my first year and we worked our way up the ladder in the order of performance as the band grew. When we got pretty big we were always put in with the big boys like East Fairmont and Morgantown, even after we had dropped to a AA school. Now I suppose I should have been flattered but following East Fairmont in Fairmont is not a good spot. A lot of people would be leaving or talking and just not paying attention to our show. And I understood that Keith at Morgantown had

specifically asked not to have to follow East Side. We were put between East and West 2 years in a row and I asked Barry to please place us earlier so that we could have a more attentive audience. The following year we were again placed after East Fairmont. I felt like we were sacrificial lambs. Barry didn't want to follow East so he put us in that spot. Now maybe I should have said no big deal but I always tried to accommodate the band directors at our Spectacular and I said no more. I really don't think he cared whether we showed up or not and I told him we were not coming the next year. Evidently he didn't work with his boosters very well because the next year they had saved seats for us and had us listed in the program. I never told anyone that we were coming and have no idea why they assumed we were unless Barry told them we were. Besides Fairmont would not come to our show.

Our Spectacular came as a result of the doing away with the majorette festival that was so popular in Harrison County. I waited a few years after it was abolished to bring it up to the band boosters. I really thought that one of the other schools would jump on it but no one did. Our booster club decided to give it a try. A few years ago in a booster meeting I over heard our booster president tell someone that we had it on Tuesday nights because I didn't want to have it on a Saturday. That's not true. At one time Hite Field was used by Liberty, WI, RW, Notre Dame and several Jr. Highs. Getting the field was nearly impossible. We decided to try the Salem College field and scheduled the first Spectacular on Saturday, September 26, 1981. I chose this later date to purposely avoid both the Fairmont and Morgantown Spectaculars that had been in operation before ours. The bands who attended were RW, South Harrison, Bridgeport, Lincoln, St. Marys, Grafton, and Uniontown Area whose band director, Todd Hamel, had student taught under me while he was in Salem. WI was the only county band that refused to attend. After the Spectacular I spoke with the different directors to get their reactions and all spoke in a positive way about it except for the field in Salem. So I explained the difficulty in getting Hite on a Saturday and several of the directors said why not have it during the week. The old majorette festival had been held on a Tuesday and they felt like that was a good night. So the next year we moved to Hite Field and started the Tuesday performances. During many of the early spectaculars we would have a finale that consisted of our band playing the Carmen Dragon arrangement of America the Beautiful while a group of students representing each of the bands slowly carried a huge American flag on to the field. I don't remember where we got the flag and I don't exactly remember when we stopped doing this. I think it came as a result of the show getting too long and some of the bands wanted to leave. Another thing that we did in those early shows was to give each band a check and also to give each director a check made out to him. I don't think this is ethical today but in those days the directors were not paid for extra days. I had attended several other events both at Pennsboro and Liberty where the director received a small check as well as the band.. This sort of helped tell the director that we appreciated his bands attendance. Several years later the boosters decided to stop paying. Lincoln paid the directors for many years to attend their Jazz Festival. None of us got rich but it helped make us feel appreciated. Over the years we attended spectaculars and band-o-ramas all over the state. Its too bad we didn't have a better field where we could have had WVU. Over the years we asked but usually their price was too high. For years they said a meal and transportation. We didn't have room to park their transportation let alone pay for it.

By the way I believe the best thing that ever happened to WVU was Don Wilcox. I remember the WVU Band before Wilcox and it in no way resembled today's band. He transformed that program over night. My sister was a member of the Wind Ensemble when they were auditioning candidates to take over. I remember her talking about this fantastic conductor who was a Michigan graduate who had conducted Lincolnshire Posey without a score. She said she hoped he got the job because he was much better than the other candidates. I brought Wilcox to Liberty my first year to spend a day with our band. We used the theater stage. He rehearsed the band all day and told all his stories and all he wanted in return was a meal. I remember him telling me that we would probably get a 4 rating and I went into shock. I guess he was comparing this to his experiences in California and across the country in festivals. Thank goodness he wasn't familiar with our festivals. We went out to dinner afterwards and he offered me a graduate assistantship for the following year. I told him I would let him know and proceeded to make one of my many mistakes by turning it down. You probably know where a lot of his grad assistants have gone. I think the guy that took it when I refused ended up at Syracuse University. It will be interesting to see who ends up replacing him. These colleges are notorious for skipping over their own grads and bringing in someone from across the country. I remember getting upset with a couple of student teachers from WVU who continued putting Mr. Wilcox down and I felt bad for him because these kids didn't realize how much he had improved things. By the way his secretary Anita was the daughter of Dick Lawson who in my mind was the best public school band director ever. Dick's accomplishments at Buckhannon Jr. High are legendary. Phil Rosanno and I used to go to his rehearsals on occasion and he was fantastic. Mr. Lawson was simply the best rehearsal man I ever saw and was also the best trumpet player I ever heard. I had the opportunity to sit next to him on several jobs and have to admit I couldn't play because I was so nervous. That was another job that I turned down. When Phil Rosanno left Buckhannon, Mr. Bennet (superintendent) called to see if I would be interested in coming to Upshur County. I had been at Liberty about 3 years and was just getting things moving and decided not to leave. Plus Mr. Lawson was ill and we didn't know what was going to happen with that program. Over the years I was contacted by people at Parkersburg South, Wheeling Park and a few other schools but never really considered leaving Liberty.

I know that I made a lot of mistakes along the way and I would love to go back and relive it all and do some things differently. I really did a poor job of thanking many of the boosters who did so much for the band over the years. They really raised a lot of money and I'm sure that in some years they weren't happy with how I spent it. But it seemed that each year some new parents would get involved and they would do whatever was necessary to make the year a success for the kids in spite of the director in some years.

I remember my first day on the job at Liberty like it was yesterday. I met Mr. Curry and he took me around the building ending at the bandroom. I thought this was the greatest day of my life. I thought "how lucky can I be" to have this job. And now when I look at all the photos from all those years and the memories come roaring back I know that I really was a very lucky band director.