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**The United States Air Force
Musicians'
Alumni Association**

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Your History Is Important!

During a meeting open to all attendees (and most were there) at the 2002 USAFMAA Sacramento reunion, one of the many topics discussed at length was history - the history of all Air Force Bands and the importance of the personal "history" of each and every individual who served in those bands.

The general feeling was that the accomplishments of all Air Force Bands over the years, achievements which continue to this day, need to be preserved. And each and every member of the USAFMAA - past, present and future - represents a unique and important link to that history.

As a first small step toward preserving our history, Harry Gleeson volunteered at the meeting to be the central point of contact for gathering our history. Having written hundreds of articles and press releases over the years, and currently engaged on gathering material to write two books - a biography about Floyd Werle (a USAFMAA member) plus a history of the USAF Band and the Singing Sergeants - Harry knows what is needed to bring our history together to insure that the accomplishments of the past are properly linked with the achievements of the present and the future.

Each and every member of the USAFMAA has an important story to tell. We are all a part of that large jigsaw puzzle known as Air Force Music - a puzzle in which each and every piece is important to the whole.

Not only that, but your history is important to your family - particularly your children and their children - and it

deserves to be written down and preserved.

Here is just one example of how important this kind of a project can be. Through a long series of circumstances, Harry learned early this year of a man in his early 50s whose father had been a member of the D.C. Band (1942-1962). Prior to the father's death, and not long after retiring, the musician and his son became estranged. However, over time the son wanted to know more about his father, heard of Harry's research, and contacted him. Harry was able to supply not only several photographs, but also personal memories of the father from several of his fellow musicians.

While that specific circumstance may never arise again, it still proves that your history is important, not only to the whole, but also to the many individuals who know you - whether they be family members, relatives or fellow musicians.

The USAFMAA and Harry can help, but the first step needs to be taken by you!

Write down an outline of your time in Air Force Music and either e-mail or snail mail it to Harry - E-mail: hgleeson@aol.com / Address: 8783 Gatewood Drive, North Ridgeville, OH 44039-4375. That will start the ball rolling, and Harry will get back to you to help flesh out your story, which is in reality our story.

Additionally, we all have documents of genuine importance to our history - copies of orders, letters, old press releases or newspaper articles, photographs, itineraries, etc. Just gather them together and get them to Harry.

He'll make copies for our files of those you want returned and get them back to you as quickly as possible.

Our plan, which is in the early stages of being formulated, calls for creating and maintaining a folder on each member containing his or her history in written form, along with copies of everything each person submits.

Additionally this will help in creating a file on each Air Force Band which ever existed. And considering the small number (12) which remain today, it is important to be able to list all of the bands in our history while our "corporate memory" is still intact.

So stop reading this and get to work because - YOUR History is Important!



Carl Costenbader doing a balancing act before the USAF Band departs for a formation in dress uniforms of that time. (Circa 1950-1952)

I Remember...

by Dick Daugherty

* Conducting the "1812 Overture" as part of my Warrant Officer exams. I kept thinking the board would stop me part way through but it didn't happen. I conducted the vibrato with my knees but can't remember how we simulated the cannons. (I think it had something to do with our lunch.)

* Scheduling a local brewery tour for the SAC Band in Omaha. We had to schedule it about 6 months in advance and declined several gigs to save the date. I don't think SAC would have approved but it was worth it! Beer that has not been jostled is great!

* **Gene Jebson's** audition. He played French Horn very well and we decided to accept him. He then mentioned that "he sang a little." We asked **N.J. Rich** to accompany him. Sang a little? We used him as a soloist for years!

* **Rex Williams!** The best bass drummer I ever heard! Sweat pouring down his face, a great sense of rhythm, he lived for that thing!

* Being taken aside by **Butler Eitel** and advised to pursue my musical education due to my limited background. He suggested I study things like the Chalumeau register of the clarinet. As it turned out, I would ask my first chair clarinet player to take over and say, "I'll be at the Officer's Club Bar if you need me."

* **Charles Vesely** berating me that when **Al Norman** dropped out on the march he couldn't hear any 1st trumpet. Al was the loudest trumpet player I ever heard and there was no way I could match his volume!

Reunions

By Harry Vulgamore

Although I had attended a Retired Air Force Musicians reunion here in Colorado Springs in 1990, I didn't get a chance to take part in another one until it was scheduled here again in 1998. My wife Caroline and I had such a great time at this second one that we

decided to make as many as we could from then on. Now that we're both retired, getting away from home was less complicated. Not only did I get to see old friends and meet new people but also it seemed that we became better musicians as the years went by.

We flew to Myrtle Beach in 2000 and enjoyed the sights and sounds of the old South. Touring the city of Charleston was a delight as well as discovering the wonderful sculpture park, Brookgreen Gardens. The band from Langley was a pleasure. Fort Sumpter was a nice educational/historic experience. We even had a resident alligator in the pond outside our room in Litchfield Park.

This year the USAFMAA was to be in Sacramento so we looked forward to spending some time there. I was born and raised in nearby Martinez, California so I knew that region and would enjoy returning. I received correspondence from Dick Bordy and Larry Lawrence and started researching air flights and car rentals on the internet. By December we were all set. American Airlines informed us that we had more than enough frequent flyer mileage for this and on to Hawaii if we desired. Since neither of us had ever been to Hawaii this seemed the perfect time to go. Besides, our friends Dave and Marj Napier, friends from the NORAD Band days were thinking of going at the same time. As it turned out, Dave got a gig working with Frank Sinatra, Jr. in Las Vegas so they had to back out of the Hawaii part. We did see Dave in Sacramento as we almost ran him down in the hotel parking lot.

The 2002 USAFMAA reunion was held at the elegant Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Sacramento. We would check out the hospitality suite on the second floor each time we came down from our room to meet and tell "war stories" with former band members. The first night we were entertained by a big band from Travis Air Force Base playing in the beautiful Capitol Park across the street from the Hyatt. This was a talented and polished group in which I had played in a past life. Not at Travis but here in Colorado Springs. This group was the "Commanders' Jazz Ensemble.

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From Our Members...

From Jim McMillen

In the summer of 1946, I was assigned from basic training to the Bandsman School at Bolling Field. The Army Air Force Band was scheduled to perform concerts at Soldier's Field in Chicago, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It sounded like fun so I volunteered for the loading detail. We flew in four Curtis Commando C-46's. When we were leaving Midway Airport at Chicago for Milwaukee our plane took off and immediately lost power in the left engine. We sat in jump seats along the sides of the plane and had stacked the instruments down the center with the parachutes sitting on top of the instruments.

When the engine started backfiring and making a lot of scary noises all of those "cool" band guys suddenly lost their cool. There was a scramble for everyone trying to put on the parachutes thinking that we would have to bail out. If we bailed out we would have a bunch of grease spots on the runway since we hadn't cleared the airfield and were only about a hundred feet up. Fortunately, the crew chief waded through the panicky band guys and blocked the exit door while he calmed us down.

The pilot gained some altitude, circled the field and brought us down safely much to our relief. At the time it was scary but looking back and remembering those guys scrambling to put on the chutes is quite humorous. I didn't know anyone on board so if any of you were on that trip, please let me know.

As a brand new PFC in the Army Air Corps it made a lasting impression on me. Many years later we rode again on one of those C-46's in Taiwan but that's another story.

From Joseph Losh

Editor's note: Joe Losh is retired Air Force and Commander of the only all musician American Legion Post #1112 in New York City.

In early 1944 in Northern Ireland, the 5th Infantry Division received word that Gen. George Patton was to inspect the Division at the airport the

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Reunions (Continued from Page 2)

I was a member of the original NORAD Commanders from 1959 through 1962. The band subsequently was merged with the Air Force Band of the Golden West in 1979. They ended their concert with an arrangement of "This Could be the Start of Something Big," by Art Wiggins also of the old NORAD band fame, who was attending this reunion. The next couple of days we spent doing tourist stuff, visiting the wonderful California State Capital and grounds, perusing museums in "Old Sacramento" and enduring the 100-degree heat each day. We enjoyed visiting with John Norse and his wife Phyllis from the Myrtle Beach area, Lee Kirschenmann of Billings, Montana, Jerry Dedmon from Washington, Ephriam Wolfolk who I think lives in the Washington, D.C. area and Tom Severino who lives near Denver, Art and Kathy Wiggins and of course Dave Napier, who retired in Pensacola, Florida. It seems Dave and I visit on a regular basis via our trips to the south and his and Marj's vacations here. The affair-ending banquet on Saturday night filled the ballroom with about 78 well-dressed gentlemen and beautiful wives/guests. The dinner was delicious and the "Commanders" treated us to another well-rehearsed concert.

The next part of our adventure featured another reunion of sorts. When we decided to couple the Sacramento trip with Hawaii, I looked up another old friend whom I hadn't seen in over 30 years. Elmer Takeo Kudo was stationed with me in the Air Force Academy Band before he left to be on the arranging staff of the U.S. Air Force Band in Washington D.C. Not only had Elmer and I played in the Concert and Marching Bands but we also played in a small unofficial dance band for extra income on weekends. Elmer had earned his M.A. degree from Indiana University and taught music history part-time for the University of Southern Colorado. I was taking afternoon and evening classes pursuing a music degree and Elmer was one of my instructors.

On my way into rehearsal one morning, I saw a very large herd of deer crossing the road providing what



Professor Elmer Kudo and Bass Trombonist Harry Vulgamore in Hawaii

I thought was a wonderful photo opportunity. I had an old Leica 35mm camera that I had bought used in 1958 from a band member at Pepperel Air Force Base in St. Johns, Newfoundland. This was a great old camera with a super lens, but it was completely manually controlled. I think I paid around \$25.00 for it. By the time I had made all the adjustments, light meter, shutter speed, lens opening, etc. the herd was long gone. Elmer had a newer 35mm point and shoot camera with him and although his was less expensive and sophisticated than mine, in my frustrated mood, I insisted we trade. I don't know what happened to the camera from Elmer but the Leica stayed with him for over 30 years.

When Elmer and I started communicating via e-mail he insisted that since he was off for the summer, he and his wife Barbara would be our guides. Elmer is now Dr. E. Takeo Kudo, senior professor of Music Theory/Composition at the University of Hawaii. He has a long list of compositions to his credit, especially in the area combining Western and non-Western music. Not bad for a trumpet player in a Tijuana Brass combo.

Barbara and Elmer met us at the Airport with the traditional flower lei. They took us for a tour of the Waikiki area and Diamondhead before whisking us to our Hale Koa hotel. Except for one day when Caroline and I visited the Polynesian Cultural Center on the northern part of the island, Elmer was there each morning to take us to the sights. Many not on the usual tourist lists. A particular moving time was when Elmer (who is of Japanese descent) escorted us to the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor.

Although he was born and raised in Honolulu, Elmer had never visited this site. That he chose to tour it for the first time with me was very special. The night before we left Honolulu to visit the Big Island of Hawaii, Barbara and Elmer treated us to a marvelous Japanese dinner at their favorite restaurant. It was there that Elmer gave back the great old Leica camera. I resisted as best I could but he insisted saying he got the better end of the deal having taken some wonderful pictures with the camera and feeling some pangs of guilt all these years. The camera sits on the left side of my desk as I write this. Thanks Elmer!

So there you have it. Two reunions rolled into one both involving wonderful friendships!

Membership is Everyone's Business

By Harry Gleeson

During the open meeting of the attendees at the Sacramento Reunion, tremendous concern was directed toward increasing the membership of the USAFMAA, and rightly so. While the old saying "the more the merrier" certainly applies, so does the old saying, "there's force in numbers!"

Bluntly stated, the greater our membership, the better the potential of our association. While clearly comradeship is one of the greatest benefits we have to offer a prospective member, there are many other advantages to joining the USAFMAA.

Networking is clearly an advantage to membership, especially when it comes to the recently retired or discharged potential members. Already in our membership book we list individuals located in 45 states and three foreign countries, so the potential for networking among musicians is already there.

While there were many ideas discussed to improve our exposure and therefore our potential membership - advertising in music and military publications, direct contact with active duty

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Membership

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bands, etc. - Dick Bordy hit the nail on the head when he said that individual contact is the absolute best way to recruit new members into the USAF-MAA.

Word of mouth has always been, and remains, the best way to "advertise." And we can use word of mouth to increase our membership. Just think - if each of the 447 folks listed in our current directory brings in just one additional member, we'd be hovering at 900 members - and growing! Why we even already have a commercial member - the LaBlanc Corporation.

Getting started recruiting for the USAFMAA is easy - especially with what we have to offer. The benefits of receiving the annual membership directory and the quarterly "Coda" newsletter alone make the \$10.00 annual membership fee an amazing bargain. Then there's the potential to network with the members - checking out musical opportunities in their area, vacation spots, good places to live, military and medical support, even where the best restaurants are located in an area, virtually any number of networking topics. And of course there's the potential to contact folks from the past - to rekindle old memories, renew old acquaintances.

How to go about recruiting? First, just look through the current USAF-MAA directory and see how many names of friends and acquaintances you note that are not there. For example, just while going through my copy to work on this article my mind came up with the names of seven potential members! And I will have contacted each even before you read this article.

Next, you can go to your e-mail address list or your Christmas card list - your phone directory, even photographs of your days in Air Force Music.

Then make that call or write that letter or e-mail. And then follow-up with as many contacts as it takes.

All your prospective member(s) has to do is make out a check for \$10.00 to the USAFMAA and send it, along with the name, address, phone number and (if applicable) e-mail address and spouse's name, to our Treasurer, John Lemelin: 4230 Brushridge Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918-6105. It's that easy.

One final reminder - our membership is not limited to retirees only. We are open to anyone who has ever been associated with Air Force Music. So four years (or less) or 30 - the door is wide open.

Now get out there and start recruiting!

From Our Members...

(Continued from page 2)

the next day. He wanted all 15,000 personnel to be in Division formation at 0800 hours except the sick and security personnel. I was in the Division Band at the time and we entertained the troops for hours and quit from exhaustion. Come noon-time and no Patton and no word about his whereabouts. Some bright GI decided to blow up a condom and fly it. Before long there was thousands of condoms flying above the Division. There was no water or food and the soldiers were running into the woods to relieve themselves. Come 1600 hours, Patton raced in on a Jeep and rushed up on the platform and shouted through the microphone, "Are you SOB's still here?" I knew then he was testing us. Sure enough, we spearheaded the 3rd Army across France and Germany having almost 300% personnel turnover in dead and wounded. I was fortunate to be assigned as MP in the POW compound in the rear of the Division.

From Tom and Donna Abraira

Now that we are living out of the country, we ask that you include an update on us in the next Alumni Directory and CODA newsletter. We have relocated to the fabulous British Virgin Islands where we own and manage six wonderful vacation rentals overlooking one of the most beautiful beaches in the Caribbean. A definite change of pace from life in the Air Force. Check out our website at agapecottages.com Our new mailing address and phone are: Box 545 Agape Cottages, Cane Garden Bay, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. email:agapecottages@aol.com. (284) 495-4825. God's blessings to all!

From Dick Oldenburg

I was in the 695th AF Band at Mountain Home, Idaho in 1957-58 and in the USAF Drum and Bugle Corps in 1958-61. I am currently the National Administrator for the Marine Corps Musicians Association which means I put out the newsletter. I also am a member of Bugles Across America and we are dedicated to live Taps at military funerals. I am looking forward to a long association with the USAF-MAA and renewing acquaintances with some of my buddies. Looking forward to your newsletter.

From Bob Barker

I served as a trombonist in Air Force Bands in Newfoundland, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and California. I graduated from the USAF School of Music, Washington, D.C. in December of 1959. I served with the Headquarters Command Band in Washington and moved to the band at Hamilton AFB, California as the Assistant Bandleader under CWO Bob Bunton.

I am currently working with a number of bands in the Reno/Tahoe area, and do the summer concert series with the Reno Municipal Band and Brass Quintet.

From Robert W. Deahl

I have certainly enjoyed being back in touch with so many friends from the fifties! Thanks for extending the alumni association to other than career Air Force musicians.

Election Results for 2002 Officers

The election of Association Officers took place at the Sacramento, California reunion and were announced at the Banquet on Saturday evening, August 10, 2002. The Teller Committee consisted of Chairman Harold Copenhaver, Jim Ebert, John Goodwin, and Frank Howanic. The results are as follows and will be for a two year term: Lou Kriebel, President; Harry Gleeson, Vice-President; and John Lemelin, Secretary/ Treasurer. Congratulations to all!

Spotlight On Lou Coppola

by Harry Gleeson

Along with harpists, they form the most exclusive group of instrumentalists in the history of the USAF Band. And the instrument of those six - the accordion! Johnny Oseicki was the first (in 1947), followed by Daniel Desiderio, Joe Soprani, Lou Coppola, Nick Butcavage and the current incumbent, William Popp.

Lou Coppola, who spent over 28 years with the band following his October 23rd, 1956 enlistment, not only performed before Presidents and Kings and traveled the world over, but has the distinction of being the only non string player to have become NCOIC of the Strolling Strings.

Born in Bridgeport, CT, he was far more interested in sports than in music when his mother said, "Try the accordion for one month, and if you don't like it, you never have to take music again..." Young Lou saw it as a way to escape to sports. Instead, the accordion turned into his lifelong vocation and avocation!

At the age of 18 he became the first American to participate in the Coupe Mondiale, an international solo classical accordion competition held that year in Brighton, England. Lou returned to America and had settled into a life of performing and teaching when his teacher, Rudy Molinaro, advised him to audition for an opening in the USAF Band because "You'll travel the world," and travel he did.

With the Strolling Strings from the very beginning of his career, Europe and Asia - and virtually every AF Base in the inventory - became his stomping grounds. However, some of his brightest memories are of performances in Washington, DC.

During the Kennedy administration, Lou and the Strings made it on the cover of Life Magazine with Jackie and John Kennedy. However, it was another appearance at the White House which provided one of the major highlights of his career. Celebrated violinist Issac Stern was the evening's featured entertainment and Leonard Bernstein was the guest.

Following the official function, Mrs. Kennedy asked a small ensemble,



including Lou, to go upstairs to the family quarters and entertain Stern, Bernstein and their wives in the building's private family quarters. After awhile, Stern borrowed one of the instrumentalist's violins. Bernstein found his way to the piano, and soon Issac Stern, Leonard Bernstein and Lou Coppola were presenting a "trio" performance of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto.

Jacqueline Kennedy snapped their picture, and the photo remains today one of Lou's cherished treasures from his Air Force days.

Not only did the music not stop when he retired as a CMSgt in 1985, his gigs have somehow managed to increase. On Friday nights Lou and three string players appear at the Officer's Club in Ft. Myer, VA, an engagement which has lasted over 43 years, 16 of which have been during his "retirement."

Years ago Lou established his own company, Stereo Strings, and with them he has become a fixture at weddings, embassy parties and corporate affairs throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area. Among these have been appearances at the Renwick Gallery, the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, the Concoran Gallery, and with 28 strolling violinists for the opening of the new Ronald Regan National Airport.

However, his performances in the civilian domain have not been restricted to the D.C. area. Among other locations, Lou and his Stereo Strings have performed for United Technologies in Epcot Center at Florida's Disney World complex, and for Lucent Technologies in Palm Springs, CA. He also became the adopted "good luck charm" for

Atlanta's bid for the Summer Olympics, and for them appeared numerous times in Atlanta, as well as in Seoul, Tokyo, Barcelona and of course D.C.

In his "free" time, Lou has contributed extensive research on former Air Force Strings personnel, and thanks to his efforts, there now exists a comprehensive directory of all former and present USAF string instrumentalists and Strolling Strings members.

The exciting and productive life of Lou Coppola to this very day is once again graphic proof that there really is a wonderful "Life after Bolling."

TAPS...

Maurice Valentine

David W. Ladwig

Paul W. Galloway

Jim Roland

From Alan Bonner...Jennifer and I attended funeral services for Jim Roland, and I know a number of guys would like to have been there. The service was held at Wesley United Methodist Church in El Reno at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, August 14th. Interment was in El Reno Cemetery with military honors.

Dr. Burrell McNaught officiated the service and spoke of Jim's life. He related Jim's 28 years in service to our country, coming up through the ranks to Lt. Colonel and talked about his love of music and bands.



82nd Army Air Force "Jazz Band" fronted by Vic Molzer. Note: Al Hirt on lead trumpet and Buck Stapleton on drums.

The second in a series of drawings depicting the early successes, dissapointments, and frustrations of growing with the new Air Force Academy Band as created by Trombonist A/1c Vern Beebe.



Notice

Your help is needed in locating musicians who have served in the Air Force Band Career Field for any length of time. Please make them aware of your Alumni Association, the CODA newsletter and the reunions that take place every two years. Annual dues are only \$10.00. Send to: **John Lemelin**, Secretary/Treasurer, 4230 Brushridge Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918.

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