



# BAY NOTES



News from the USAF Band of the Golden West

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The Commanders jazz ensemble performs in Twin Falls, Idaho  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Niko Ellison)



### Commander's Corner

Major R. Michael Mench

For this issue, we would like to introduce Mrs. Emily Low, our band's Honorary Commander. At Travis Air Force Base, select members of the civilian community are offered a chance to see how active military members do their daily jobs. We are pleased to have Mrs. Low with us and have asked her to write about her new position for our newsletter.



Mrs. Emily M. Lowe

To say that I was surprised when asked to be Honorary Commander of any division at Travis Air Force Base would be an understatement, but to learn that I was to be Honorary Commander of the Band of the Golden West really "knocked my socks off!"

Singing has been a constant in my life. I come from one of those families that took road trips when I was growing up, and we'd all sing in the car driving across the country. My mother studied opera as a young girl and sang on the radio and in USO shows during World War II. My earliest memories are of performing for the Sonoma Valley California Grange and singing in both school and church choirs. I still sing with the Solano Choral Society.

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My "real" career is with the City of Fairfield, serving as Main Street Program Coordinator for the Fairfield Downtown Association. We work with the existing merchants to keep their businesses profitable, and we help recruit new businesses that will compliment the existing mix of shops, restaurants and services.

Probably our biggest and most visible projects are our many annual special events. The Fairfield Downtown Association sponsors the annual Independence Day Parade, the Tomato Festival, the Candy Festival and the Holiday "Night of Lights," our annual merchant open house and Christmas tree lighting.

This month's issue of *BayNotes* is full of information about what your band is doing both locally and around the country. I'm anxious to hear more about your upcoming tour to Las Vegas!

Thank you for the honor of serving with you as Honorary Commander. You have a wonderful group, and represent the very best our wonderful country has to offer. I'm excited and happy to be part of this excellent program.



Mrs. Emily Low, our Honorary Commander, with Major R. Michael Mench (photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)

## **Concert Band performs with Boston Brass in Las Vegas**

Master Sergeant Jim Boubonis



Boston Brass onstage with the Concert Band in the world premiere Rick DeJonge's *Flight* (photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)

The USAF Band of the Golden West Concert Band recently departed Travis Air Force Base for a one-week tour to the Las Vegas area. We had been rehearsing the music for two weeks in our band facility at Travis, and we were looking forward to this trip. Not only would we be bringing the Air Force message to the large population centers of southern Nevada – we would also be performing three of the five concerts with the Boston Brass, the world-renowned brass quintet!

The band had performed previously with the Boston Brass in February 2007 at the Music Educators National Conference, Northwest Division in Portland. That performance was such

a success that the band arranged for the Boston Brass to perform with them on three concerts during this Nevada tour: at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas (UNLV) campus, the Events Plaza in Henderson, Nevada, and at the Sammy Davis Jr. Festival Plaza in Las Vegas. The band also presented concerts at Mesquite and Boulder City.

"This set of concerts with the Boston Brass continues a long tradition this band has carried forth, bringing in outstanding, talented artists to complement the band's excellence and

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to challenge the band musicians to an even greater level of professionalism,” commented Major R. Michael Mench, the band commander. “We were really excited about this opportunity to share the stage with the Boston Brass, and the performances with them were a fantastic experience!”

On the three concerts performed with both groups, the Band of the Golden West opened the show with **Nabucco Overture** by Giuseppe Verdi, **March of the Tankmen** by Semyon Tchernesky, and retired Chief Master Sergeant Tom Watts’ arrangement of **Italian Street Song** by Victor Herbert, featuring Airman First Class Rachel Trimble as soprano soloist. These were followed by the world premiere of **Flight**, composed for the Band of the Golden West and the Boston Brass by Rick DeJonge, and then **España** by French composer Emmanuel Chabrier. In the second half of the program, a group of selections from the Boston Brass alone was sandwiched between patriotic and popular pieces from the Band of the Golden West.



Major R. Michael Mench (left) with members of the Boston Brass: (l-r) Jeff Conner, Lance LaDuke, Andrew Hitz, J.D. Shaw and Jose Sibaja  
(Photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)

The first performance was on October 17 at the Ham Concert Hall on the University of Nevada – Las Vegas campus, a state-of-the art facility. Professor Tom Leslie, Director of Bands at UNLV, guest-conducted the band that night on Tchaikovsky’s **Dance of the Jesters**. “It’s one of America’s great bands,” Dr. Leslie said of the Band of the Golden West, “and this chance to perform with them was terrific–You should be really proud!”



Dr. Tom Leslie leads the band in *Dance of the Jesters*  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

Lance LaDuke, the trombone and euphonium player of the Boston Brass, had similar words of praise for the band that night. “Since playing in Portland with them, we’ve been looking forward to performing again with the Band of the Golden West. We really enjoy this.” LaDuke is a former member of The USAF Band in Washington, DC.

The next night found the band and the Boston Brass entertaining an enthusiastic audience at nearby Henderson, Nevada, at an outdoor amphitheater. Then on the following night of the 19th, both groups performed at the Sammy Davis Jr. Festival Plaza, at Lorenzi Park in Las Vegas. It was a beautiful, warm evening, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed the music. Being our last concert with the Boston Brass, at least for now, their leader Jeff Connors told us, “It’s been an honor and a privilege working with you, and we hope to do it again!”

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Please visit our website at: <http://www.bandofthegoldenwest.af.mil>

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The last two concerts found us playing at Virgin Valley High School in Mesquite, NV, and an outdoor amphitheater at Boulder City, NV. At these concerts, the parts of the program previously filled by the Boston Brass were filled with a duet from Airman First Class Jamie Lantz (cornet) and Airman First Class Ryan Williams (trombone) on a Herbert Clarke featurette entitled **Cousins**, and also with a Stevie Wonder medley showcasing the fantastic vocal talents of Airman First Class Pamela Kelley.



Airmen First Class Jamie Lantz (left) and Ryan Williams perform *Cousins*  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

## Band Supports 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Air Force Ball at Travis AFB

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The Commanders jazz ensemble perform at the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Air Force Ball  
(photo by Dave Cushman)

The Band of the Golden West provided full spectrum musical support for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Air Force Ball, held at Travis Air Force Base. Featured guest for the evening was Jay Leno, comedian and host of NBC's *Tonight Show*.

The event included performances by several component groups of the band. The Commanders jazz ensemble, led by Technical Sergeant Jon Ruff, presented a musical "journey" through the 60 years of the Air Force. Jay Leno was introduced with the **Tonight Show with Jay Leno Theme**, arranged by band trombonist Staff Sergeant Scott Ruedger. Mobility, our popular music ensemble, performed a two-hour dance set to close the evening.

Audio and sound support for the entire ceremony, including Jay Leno's comedy routine, was in the capable hands of our band's audio engineer, Senior Airman Lou Kohley.

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### Current Openings:

The United States Air Force Band of the Golden West announces immediate openings for the following vacancy:

#### PIANO/KEYBOARDS

Approximate starting salary \$36,000, 30 days annual paid vacation, full medical and dental benefits. For consideration, send resume to [auditions@travis.af.mil](mailto:auditions@travis.af.mil)



## Band provides music for 9/11 Remembrance at Travis Base Flagpole



The Ceremonial Marching Band at the Travis Air Force Base 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony  
(USAF Photo by Staff Sergeant Candy Knight)

The Ceremonial Marching Band recently performed for the Travis Air Force Base September 11th Remembrance Ceremony, which honored the victims of the tragic events of 2001.

Technical Sergeant Jim Masters provided a solemn rendition of **Taps** prior to the Retreat Ceremony. The band also performed the **Air Force Hymn** as the U.S. flag was folded.

Travis Base personnel have flown more than 27,000 missions, transporting troops, cargo, fuel as well as providing medical care since the War on Terror began.

## Commanders Present Jazz Concerts in Idaho, Utah and Nevada

Staff Sergeant Scott Ruedger

In the month of August, the Commanders jazz ensemble performed for over 5,000 people at cities in Nevada, Utah and Idaho. Utah is not part of the USAF Band of the Golden West's regular touring areas; nonetheless, the band's reception by the many appreciative concertgoers was incredible and we hope to return to the area soon.

The tour began with a late afternoon performance in Winnemucca, Nevada, which is perched along interstate 80 between Reno and Salt Lake City. The sun setting over the beautiful distant mountain range, coupled with the wonderful venue of Vesco City Park was an ideal setting for the pleasant concert. Janet Vaughn, a fine vocalist, and the wife of our sponsor, joined the band for **I'm Beginning to See the Light**, arranged by Tom Matta.



The Commanders jazz ensemble in performance at the Stephens Center in Pocatello, Idaho  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

The next day, the band traveled through Nevada and into a very warm Salt Lake City for concerts in Sandy and Provo. A special "thank you" should be given to David and Denise Williams and their family for inviting the entire band into their home for a wonderful home-cooked meal prior to the evening's performance at Timpview High School in Provo. The Williams are parents of band trombonist Airman First Class Ryan Williams. Ryan is a native of Provo, and also coordinated operation details for this tour.

The band then set its navigation system for Pocatello, Idaho. A capacity crowd in the new Stephens Performing Arts Center, part of Idaho State University, enjoyed vocalist Airman First Class Rachel Trimble's stylings on USAF arranger Tim McMillen's arrangement of **On the Street Where You Live**, from **My Fair Lady**, and Linda Eder's **Big Time**.

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Commanders Jazz ensemble performance at Rexburg (Idaho) County Fair  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Scott Ruedger)

the electric equipment with plastic tarps when the summer afternoon storm approached. The County Fair staff worked with our Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, Technical Sergeant Jon Ruff, and was able to find an alternate performance venue inside the farm animal presentation building. With help from fair volunteers, the band's equipment was quickly moved into a straw covered corral that moments before was home to several prize winning presentation cattle. The audience's enthusiastic applause combined with



Brent Jensen, saxophonist, solos with the Commanders jazz ensemble  
in Twin Falls, Idaho  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Niko Ellison)

Staff Sergeant Niko Ellison had the audience snapping along to Nat King Cole's **Straighten Up and Fly Right** and Neil Diamond's ever popular crowd pleaser, **Sweet Caroline**. The thunderous applause and standing ovations led into the perfect encore, a Ray Charles-style version of **America the Beautiful**. Concerts were also presented in Blackfoot's Performing Arts Center, the Civic Auditorium in Idaho Falls, at Carl Miller Park in Mountain Home, home to nearby Mountain Home Air Force Base and Albertson College in Caldwell, Idaho.

The band was scheduled to perform in Rexburg, Idaho at the Madison County Fair on a large trailer set up on the fairgrounds; however a threatening thunderstorm quickly changed our plans. The band had already set up on the trailer stage and covered

"moos," and "baa's," from the various farm animals in the building to create a memorable event for all.

The final evening concert was presented in Twin Falls, Idaho, on the campus of the College of Southern Idaho (CSI). Special guest saxophonist, Brent Jensen, faculty member at CSI, performed blistering solos on Jeff Jarvis' **You Can See It From Here** and **Mas Production**, a Matt Harris composition. Brent's inspired improvisations were memorable for the audience and band members alike.

Special appreciation should be made for Technical Sergeant Neil Griffin, member of the Air National Guard Band of the West Coast, Moffett Field, CA. Neil, a Modesto native,

was called at the last minute to join us as our lead alto saxophonist. Neil had only one rehearsal with the band before the tour departed and performed brilliantly.

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## Band of the Golden West Announces Holiday Concert Series

November 30	7:30 pm, Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre, Vacaville, CA
December 1	7:30 pm, Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre
December 2	2:00 pm, Chabot College, Hayward, CA
December 6	7:30 pm, Fairfield Center for the Creative Arts, Fairfield, CA

As always, please check our website [www.bandofthegoldenwest.af.mil](http://www.bandofthegoldenwest.af.mil) for the most current location and times, which are subject to change.



We continue our series of articles that highlight different performing groups within the Band of the Golden West with the Travis Brass quintet, our resident brass quintet.

## Meet the Travis Brass

Comprised of two trumpets, a French horn, a trombone and a tuba, the Travis Brass is an ensemble that has developed quite a popular following among concertgoers. The lively interaction of the five musicians playing their independent parts can be quite a thrill for listeners! The synergistic blend of the instruments creates a majestic and sonorous sound that will please all who hear the brass quintet in performance.

Master Sergeant Brian Wood is the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, and performs on trumpet. As group leader, Brian leads rehearsals and chooses the music for the programs. The staples of brass quintet literature form the foundation for the group's musical selections, however the quintet is always looking for opportunities to add new pieces to its repertoire by commissioning original works and arranging popular songs.



The Travis Brass Quintet (l-r) Senior Airman Ed Oschner, Airman First Class Jamie Lantz, Senior Airman Jill Corbett, Airman First Class Ryan Williams, and Master Sergeant Brian Wood  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)

In addition to Brian, members of the quintet include: Senior Airman Jill Corbett, tuba, Senior Airman Ed Ochsner, French horn, Airman First Class Ryan Williams, trombone and the newest member, Airman First Class Jamie Lantz on trumpet. Members of the Travis Brass are highly educated, with most holding

Master's degrees; trombonist Ryan Williams recently received his Doctorate of Musical Arts from Arizona State University.



The Travis Brass performing at a recent ceremony at Travis Air Force Base  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)

The Travis Brass typically presents two concert tours each year, traveling within the band's five-state region. Programs for concerts are chosen based on the performance venue. For schools, the program is designed so that younger audiences will find something familiar and exciting to attract their attention both to the music and the Air Force. The schools are also a perfect venue for master classes, in which the quintet might coach student musicians in perfecting their ensemble musicianship or introduce the instruments to younger students.

For evening recitals, the group has the ability to program a variety of music that might include original brass quintet compositions, big band favorites, Sousa marches and patriotic music.

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Members of quintet are so comfortable with the various styles of music; audiences are sometime surprised with the variety of music performed. The Travis Brass is also very involved in providing musical support for military ceremonies at bases in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Nevada.

To request the Travis Brass for your event, please contact our director of operations, Master Sergeant Aaron Johnson, at [aaron.johnson-02@travis.af.mil](mailto:aaron.johnson-02@travis.af.mil)



The Travis Brass Quintet performs Holiday Music at a Caroling Performance (USAF Photo by Staff Sergeant Candy Knight)

## New Arrivals

We would like to welcome Tom, Coreen, Michael and Jim to our band family.



Master Sergeant Tom Eckert  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

**Master Sergeant Thomas D. Eckert**, trombone, is a native of Kent, Ohio. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Performance from Kent State University and has studied with Paul Wallace, Chas Baker and his father, Donald Eckert. Tom has performed with Joe Williams, Frank Mantooth, Frederic Fennell, the Omaha Symphony, and the Guy Lombardo Orchestra. Sergeant Eckert joined the Air Force in 1985 as a member of the Heartland of America Band at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska and joins us from Tokyo, Japan after three years with the Air Force Band of the Pacific. Tom performed superbly with us on our recent Las Vegas tour (see page 2) doubling on euphonium.

**Technical Sergeant Coreen A. Levin**, oboist, is a native of Seattle, Washington. She has been assigned to Air Force bands in Georgia and Nebraska. Coreen received her Bachelor of Music performance degree from the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland. Coreen also received a Master of Music from Temple University in Philadelphia. She has performed with the Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) Symphony Orchestra and taught oboe at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Coreen also holds a commercial pilot certificate.



Technical Sergeant Coreen Levin  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

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**Technical Sergeant James Butler** is the band's newest saxophonist. Originally from Alpine, California, Jim attended San Diego State University and later continued his musical studies at the University of Texas at Austin where he received his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees. Among his teachers are Harvey Pittel, Jim Rötter and Dave Liebman. After graduation, he taught Jazz Performance at the University of North Florida. Sergeant Butler has recently returned to his native California following assignments in Texas and Japan. In his spare time, Jim enjoys spending time with his family, tennis and karate.



Technical Sergeant Jim Butler  
(photo by Staff Sergeant Leo Smith)



Technical Sergeant Michael Williams  
(photo by Airman First Class Rachel Trimble)

**Technical Sergeant Michael Williams**, a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Thomas Edison State College and a Certificate in Music Arranging from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Mike enlisted in the US Army Band Program in September of 1992 and transferred to the US Air Force in 2001. He has been stationed with Air Force bands in Nebraska and Alaska. Mike has performed for Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Vice-Presidents Al Gore and Dick Cheney. In his spare time he enjoys running, cycling, and spending time with his wife and two children.

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## Coda

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