



BAY NOTES



News from the USAF Band of the Golden West

Vol. 1, No. 3

May-June 2007

In this Issue:

- Commander's Corner.....p. 1
- Conductors Clinic.....p. 3
- Jazz Ensemble Performs.....p. 4
- Band "Fit to Fight".....p. 6
- Bands combine in Parade.....p. 7
- Patriotic Concerts.....p. 7



French hornist Technical Sergeant Steve Schaughency in rehearsal with the concert band at the recent conductor's clinic



Commander's Corner

Captain R. Michael Mench

The Commander's Corner this month features an article Captain Mench wrote for the *Tailwind*, Travis Air Force Base's weekly newspaper.

I'm still amazed when people stare at me and say, "Our Air Force has bands? What do you do? You mean Tops in Blue? Oh, I see... you play the National Anthem for a change of command."

I guess with Air Force bands at only ten United States bases and four overseas bases, chances of an Airman being assigned to a base with a band are slim. With our area of responsibility often covering large portions of the world outside the base, it isn't really often an Airman will actually hear and see 90 percent of what we do. So this is a crash course in what our bands are and how they play a role in the Air Force's fight.

Stationed at Travis, the United States Air Force Band of the Golden West is typical of the eight bands located throughout the US. We are 60 professional Airmen musicians. 90 percent of us have some college, 80 percent have at least a bachelor degree and four of our members hold Doctorate degrees. Presidential Budget Decision 720 hit us hard, and over the course of next year we will be down to 45 members. As with most other units in the Air Force, we are becoming a lighter and more agile unit, but our mission will remain the same.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

Our mission comprises three main goals: community relations, troop morale and recruiting. Community relations represent half of the 500 annual performances we do for the Air Force in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Nevada. We are an integral part of the Air Force's strategic communications



Staff Sergeant Wendy Hermes and Senior Airman Heather Holowecky stand to play the piccolo solo from Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*

plan to inform the public our Airmen are the best in the world and that they are serving heroically alongside their Army, Navy and Marine counterparts.

Metaphorically speaking, we're able to go into a small community and "land a C-5" right on Main Street. We bring the excellence of the Air Force to people who might not ever get a chance to see an Airman. Although we play music, we also tell the Air Force story.

I'd like to share two quick anecdotes about the power of our performances. The Japanese Ambassador to the United States, the president of Sony Corporation and our chief of staff of the Air Force at the time, General John Jumper, were in attendance at a band concert in Washington, D.C. At the end of the concert, those three came back stage to greet the band. The Ambassador turned to General Jumper and said, "If your bands are this good, how good your pilots must be."

But bands represent all Airmen. He would have said the same thing about any career had he been there to see them in action. Another positive influence we had was outside Edwards Air Force Base, CA. The base commander there was getting letters complaining about low flying aircraft. Their public affairs officer called and invited us down to do a series of concerts. We had various commanders come out and talk at the concerts about the operations of Edwards and the importance of the training and missions flying over their homes. The year after the concerts there was a 95 percent decrease in complaint letters to the base commander.

Troop morale and ceremony has always been our bread and butter. Our career field continues to deploy in support of troops for both Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. We're getting smarter each time we deploy. We lengthen our stays and get to more remote locations just to bring a little bit of home-spun music to our troops down range. I was sitting in a United Service Organization lounge at the Philadelphia airport last week and an Army Lieutenant Colonel was there. He just came in on a Freedom Flight and was waiting for his flight home. We were talking and tears came to his eyes when he spoke of the time an AF band came to his remote base west of Baghdad. It was only for a night, but they but they hadn't had any entertainment in the year he was there. "What a difference it made for my troops," he told me. Although we won't be deploying this cycle, we recently recorded a compact disc with our popular music group, Mobility, that we hope to get into Travis Airmen's deployment bags as they get ready to go. With the excellence that is our Air Force, we will always tell the Air Force story through the universal language of music.



Mobility performing for troops in the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

Annual Conductors Clinic A Rousing Success

Senior Airman Nathan Drabek

This past April, the Band of the Golden West was pleased to host its 6th Annual Conductors Clinic. The featured clinicians for this year's event were Dr. Jack Stamp, composer and Director of Bands at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Eric Hammer, Director of Bands at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. For many of us in the band, this event is the highlight of our year because it affords us the opportunity to give back to a special group of people, Music Educators.

As instrumentalists and vocalists, the members of our organization have attended countless master-classes specific to each individual's instrument and vocal range. Unfortunately, band directors are not often afforded the opportunity to hone their skills on the podium in a master-class setting, especially not with an ensemble at such a professional level as the USAF Band of the Golden West's Concert Band. To help fill this void, the band started the Conductors Clinic. Based on resumes, seven participants and one alternate were invited to "wield the baton" in front of our ensemble and receive feedback from our clinicians regarding their conducting techniques. Each participant was given two twenty minute sessions to conduct the band, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.



Dr. Eric Hammer leads the concert band at the final concert in Vacaville



Dr. Jack Stamp coaches a participant in the morning session

Dr. Stamp and Dr. Hammer alternated sessions, so participants were able to receive feedback from both clinicians. Sessions were videotaped as well, so the participants could view their performance following the clinics.

The participants did not have to pay any fees to attend, and all master classes and concerts were free and open to the public.

This year's participants ranged from college students to veteran music educators, and came from throughout California to attend the two day clinic and seminar.

(continued on page 4)



Visit the USAF Band of the Golden West's website at: <http://131.9.254.113/pages/band/>

(continued from page 3)

The insightful remarks from both Dr. Stamp and Dr. Hammer made a lasting impression on not only our participants but the many observers in attendance as well. Dr. Stamp and Dr. Hammer's innovative application of various conducting concepts was easy to grasp and the participant's growth was immediately noticeable as each applied the suggested techniques. To witness two accomplished conductors of such stature so committed to the art of music education was truly inspirational.



Dr. Hammer and Dr. Stamp were presented with flowers following the concert at the Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre

Following the clinic, I had an opportunity to speak briefly with conductor and music educator Harvey Benstein, director at Campolindo High School in Moraga, CA. Benstein reminded me the importance of our Conductors Clinic is that every educator who attends will be able to apply the lessons learned to generations of current and future music students. The USAF Band of the Golden West cherishes the opportunity to have such a direct impact on the development of our great nation's youth and we will continue to offer this wonderful event for years to come. We hope to see you at the 2008 Conductors Clinic!

The weekend culminated in a standing-room only concert hosted by the Vacaville Concert Society and presented at the Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre. The program included a vast array of challenging band literature featuring the Concert Band under the direction of our esteemed clinicians, as well as our Commander, Captain R. Michael Mench. As usual, the band was up to the difficult task. Highlights from the concert included a performance of Jack Stamp's salute to baseball, **Pastime**, as well as **Escapade**, written for the USAF Academy Band by Joseph Spaniola. As a special treat, the band presented the world premiere of Joseph Trapanese's **On The Edge Of All Light**, recently commissioned by the USAF Band of the Golden West.



Our conductors for the 2007 Conductors Clinic Concert: Dr. Jack Stamp (left), Captain Mench and Dr. Eric Hammer (right)

Jazz Ensemble Presents Concerts in March Tour

Staff Sergeant Scott Ruedger



Staff Sergeant Kevin Bolen plays in Elko, NV (photo by Ross Andreson Elko Daily Free Press)

Ready for some exciting big band sounds? The residents of Elko, Battle Mountain and Carson City, Nevada and Truckee, California sure were. The Commanders jazz ensemble, the Band of the Golden West's full eighteen-piece big band recently returned from a short tour where they performed for energetic audiences in these towns. For these concerts, the band was supplemented by exciting trombonist Senior Master Sergeant Dave Stultz, from the Air National Guard Band of the Northwest in Spokane, WA, who was featured in **Body and Soul**.

(continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

As the band's bus crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains and headed east along Interstate 80, the sagebrush and distant mountain scenery of central Nevada spanned far and wide. The only company along this road, other than auto traffic, was the occasional Union Pacific train that would beckon to the rails ahead of its approach with a lonely tone.

The jazz ensemble's first stop was Elko, Nevada, the largest city between Reno and Salt Lake City. The performance at the Elko Convention Center drew hundreds of listeners, including Elko High School band director Walt Lovell. "They're beyond outstanding," said Lovell, who commented that he had recently seen the Navy Commodores at the Midwest Band Conference, and the Air Force Band of the Golden West is much better.



Members of the Commanders jazz ensemble in Battle Mountain, Nevada

The next day, the band performed in Battle Mountain, where setup was delayed slightly because new flooring was still being placed in the Civic Center. A backup plan was considered, but just as the last of the new tiles were in place, the band began unloading and setting up equipment. The music for this tour included a wide range of big band favorites, from Artie Shaw's **Man from Mars** and Stan Kenton's **Stompin' at the Savoy** to the modern sounds of the Police's **Wrapped Around Your Finger** and Don Sebesky's **Bluer than Blue**. The band also featured vocalists, Staff Sergeant Niko Ellison and Airman First Class Pamela Kelley.

The final performance of the tour was in Truckee, California (elevation 5840 ft.), a small town tucked neatly in the Sierra Nevada mountains just east of the infamous Donner Summit near Lake Tahoe. Unnerved by weather forecasts that called for a thick blanket of snow that evening, the Commanders arrived at Truckee High School where band members, led by trumpeter Technical Sergeant Jon Ruff, Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the jazz ensemble, presented a clinic for the Truckee High School jazz band.

That evening, while the band performed hot jazz inside, cold temperatures outside plummeted and was soon followed by falling snow. Unique quotes of holiday and winter melodies occasionally filtered into the improvised solos of saxophonist Master Sergeant Tony Seres and clarinetist Staff Sergeant Kevin Bolen. By the time the concert was over, there was 6" of snow on the ground, and it was still snowing! Loading the band's tractor trailer was difficult, but with careful teamwork the truck was soon full, despite the icy slush. The band's bus



The band's truck waits for the snow to clear

then made a slow half mile journey to our hotel, where we spent the night. News that Donner Summit, our only route back to Travis, was closed made for some nervousness from the band's drivers. The next morning, there was 12" of snow on the ground; and a Currier & Ives postcard view from our hotel windows. The brilliant warming sunshine, together with ever present California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) snowplow trucks, cleared the highway summit and we departed the winter paradise to make our journey back to Travis Air Force Base.



Master Sergeant Tony Seres solos on "It's All Right With Me"

Air Force Band "Fit to Fight"



Band members participate in the running phase of the physical fitness tests

This past April, members of the Air Force Band of the Golden West completed physical fitness testing which is required for all active duty Air Force Airmen. To maintain a warfighting force that is "fit to fight," the Air Force requires that all Airmen are evaluated in an annual physical fitness exam. This exam assigns points based on results of a 1.5 mile run, push-ups, sit-ups and body mass measurements. These totals are then compared to age and gender specific chart measurements to determine the member's physical fitness level.

The program was initiated in 2004 by Air Force Chief of Staff General John Jumper (now retired), who wanted to make fitness a daily standard throughout the Air Force.

Rodney McKinley, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, is excited about the program, and often sees Airmen participating in unit-led and individual physical training programs. Chief McKinley wants us to "...make regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle a part of our daily regimen."

In preparation for the annual fitness testing, band members participate in group physical training each week to maintain peak physical shape. These unit exercises are led by Staff Sergeant Christy Bailes, Senior Airman Robbie Mayes and Airman First Class Dustin Trimble.

This marks the second year in which the entire band has passed the fitness tests, with three members scoring a perfect 100%. Christy Bailes, the band's Physical Training Manager, said she was extremely proud with the results; "Fitness cures all. It helps with breathing in playing our instruments, and makes us feel great!"



Clarinetist Staff Sergeant Igor Poklad running for the fitness tests

Captain Mench to be promoted to Major



Captain R. Michael Mench, commander and conductor of the USAF Band of the Golden West, will be promoted to Major in a ceremony to be held at the Band Building at Travis AFB, CA on May 31st.

Captain Mench was recently honored by being selected as the Air Force Public Affairs Outstanding Band Officer for 2006.

Bravo, Sir!



Marching Band at the Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, CA
(U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Raheem Moore)

Active and Guard Bands combine in Torrance

The USAF Band of the Golden West was joined by members of the Air National Guard Band of the Southwest at the recent Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, CA. The resulting band was 55 members strong and seen by over 50,000 spectators.

Also at the parade, which honored the US Air Force, was General Kevin Chilton, commander of Air Force Space Command and Lieutenant General Michael Hamel, commander of Space and Missile Systems Center at Los Angeles AFB. General Chilton also served as grand marshal for the parade.

Coda

Celebrate Independence Day with the Concert Band!!



The Concert Band will be performing outdoor patriotic concerts in the following cities:
*Please check the calendar on our website for specific times and locations.

- June 28th Lincoln Park, Tracy, CA
- June 29th Redlands Bowl, Redlands, CA
- June 30th Temple City, CA
- July 1st Spreckels Park, Coronado, CA (San Diego area)
- July 2nd in Disneyland, Anaheim, CA
- July 3rd Thousand Oaks, CA
- July 4th On the beachfront in Santa Barbara, CA

*Concerts are tentative and subject to change; please check our website for up-to-date information

Contact the USAF Band of the Golden West:

USAF Band of the Golden West	707-424-2263
Editor, BayNotes	707-424-2263
Operations/Band Requests	707-424-3327
Auditions	707-424-3735

travisbandnewsletter@travis.af.mil
james.boubonis@travis.af.mil
auditions@travis.af.mil

