

Excerpts from:

# **Being a Band Director is Totally Incredible**

West Texas A&M University Band Camp  
Band Directors' Workshop  
July 2002

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"Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself – it's what you do for others." – Danny Thomas

As teachers, we have the opportunity to shape the lives of the young people we teach. The values that they gain from being in the band will always be with them. We have no idea of the impact that we have on the lives of the students we teach. We owe them our very best at all times. To do this we must realize that our commitment to be the best is where we can really make a difference.

### **Part 1: Making the Commitment to Be the Best You Can Be**

It is very difficult for most young teachers in today's band world to realize how much they are going to have to give of themselves in order to really be successful. I promise that it's going to take a great amount of time, energy, love and devotion to your band if it is going to be really successful. Be prepared to spend time not only teaching but doing the behind-the-scenes dirty work that it takes to be the best.

If you can't really be dedicated to the kids you teach, then you need to do something else. The students that you teach don't care how much you know until they know how much you care about them personally. They can smell a fake. Spend a lot of time listening to students personally on their instruments. Don't leave it to the private teacher. It is your job to teach the students.

Be willing to go the extra mile in every area to make things work. Be willing to pick up paper, set up chairs and stands, tighten stands, be an instrument repairman, etc. Be loyal. If you are an assistant, there are some special things that you could do to really help the person you are working with. Help him/her stay organized. Ask questions about everything. Asking, "What can I do today to help make things better?" would be a great way to start each day. Stay on task and complete assignments. Be willing to do the dirty work. Delegate and then follow up. Try to realize the pressure the head person is under. Try to do things that will help things go smoother. There will be tense times, so stay cool. Be willing to come early and stay late. Remember, you are young. If the old guy is working that hard, then you should too.

CONSIDER IT A PRIVILEGE TO BE A TEACHER. YES, YOU HAVE THE DEGREE.  
THAT IS A LICENSE TO LEARN.  
ASK QUESTIONS.  
DON'T OFFER YOUR OPINION UNTIL YOU HAVE PAID YOUR DUES.  
BE HELPFUL.

Never be satisfied with reaching a goal. Once you have reached it, savor it briefly and then move toward your next goal. If you stop there, you will stagnate. The journey toward the goal is much more rewarding than arriving at the destination. – Tim Lautzenheiser.

Students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."  
- Henry Brook Adams

Why are you doing this? What is your primary goal? What is your priority?  
Working for excellence? Keep competition in perspective, do not let it be the driving force.

When students leave the rehearsal, they should be totally exhausted. Do not waste time.

Private teachers are incredibly important.

Make students #1. Make sure we are there to teach and help the students - not to use the students in any way for our own personal gain.

Use a family and team approach. Plug into a tradition of excellence.  
Use student leadership effectively.  
Students are great teachers. Take advantage of student modeling.  
Develop a solid work ethic in students.

### **The commitment level of the band director.**

Having the work ethic and the ability to spend the necessary time, dedication, preparation, love for the students and self-pride to make sure that they have done their very best for their students.

"No one ever won anything worthwhile without fighting for it, whether it is creating a successful car or achieving a world class championship. The commitment to be the best makes the difference."

We need to be very careful that we don't set the kids up for failure. The way we as teachers approach a performance or contest is very important. We should be guiding the students towards musical excellence...not winning a contest. We should inspire the kids to always give their very best. We need to find ways to motivate the students to want to develop their ability. Clyde Wilson tells my band every time he stands in front of them, "THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ABILITY." When they give their best for all the right reasons and when we as teachers do the same, then things are going to work. It is really easy to do things for all of the right reasons. Everyone needs to lose their ego and this I/ME attitude. Yes, band needs to be fun for the students. Band needs to be fun for the band directors also.

KIDS NEED HEROES. I think we should really strive to use our influence as teachers and as band directors to be heroes for our kids. If we do things right and for the right reasons, kids will love band and you can make a real and lasting impact on their lives.

I have many heroes. One of my favorites in our profession is Mr. Wesley May. He is a national treasure. He is constantly guiding me to do things for the right reasons. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word. He inspires me to always believe in kids and always expect the very best from them and of them. Mr. May works the Lee Band as many times each year as I can get him to. He thinks the big challenge for band directors as teachers is to inspire in the students that

the most important thing to have is the right attitude so that you can have the right kind of opportunity to have the best rehearsal possible. If this is accomplished, then over a period of time, positive musical results can happen.

Other heroes that have touched my life in the band profession are...

My students, Gary Garner, J.R. McEntyre, Bill Dean, Robert L. Maddox, Charles Nail, Don Baird, Howard Dunn, Tony Anderson, Harry Haines, Harry Begian, Clyde Wilson, G.T. Gilligan, Jerry Finnell, Don Hanna, Dan Gibs, J.W. King, Jim Sudduth, William D. Revelli, Ike Nail, Gene Smith, Jim Keene, Gary Green, John Whitwell, Don Lefevre, Joe Frank Sr., Jo Frank Jr., Brice Taylor, Van Ragsdale, Jack Nall, Frank Wickes, Robert Rynolds, Norvill Howell, Rey Mesa, Paula Crider, John Bourgeois, Tim Lautzenhiser, Arturo Valdez, Robert Floyd, Mike Watts, Gordon Hart, Robert Hastings, Roger Edwards, John Carroll, Dick Clardy, Randy Vaughn, Paul Worosello, Gary Doherty, Cindy Bulloch, Bill Surface, Melvin Scott, David Jackson, Jimmy Rhodes, Tony Gibbs, Paul Sikes, Brian Collins, John Gillian, Geoffrey Elsner, John Barton, Jim Shaw, Jenny Shaw, Rick Villerreal, Ed Handley, Bill Harden and Cody Myers.....etc.....to name a few.

The bottom line is.....

Do things Right.....

Care about the students.....

Chop Wood.....Carry Water!!!!!!

Take care of business the right way and you can have the biggest and best band in the land!

## **Part 2: Motivation: The Secret of a Successful Band Program**

“Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm. It overcomes discouragement and gets things done. It is the magic quality. And the remarkable thing is – it’s contagious.”

The band director is the motivator. How he or she relates to people is directly responsible for a successful band program.

Be committed to excellence. Be dedicated to your profession. Work hard and keep developing an outstanding work ethic. Be sure you work smart and don't be afraid to get dirty. Spend enough time to make things better on a daily basis. Do not let yourself become lazy – your students deserve your very best at all times.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit!” – Aristotle

Band should be for all of the students. It should be a melting pot. There should be a place in the band for the slow students as well as the brilliant ones.

Always work for ways to inspire students. Teach with emotion, intensity, energy, drive, passion and most of all - enthusiasm.

Always have ten different ways to solve a problem. Never let the students become bored. Don't get into a rut – do things differently every day. For example, set the rehearsal room up differently. Change the learning environment. The way the facility looks is important. Make sure the band is clean and organized.

Listen to students individually – a lot!!! It will make them practice and they will appreciate you for it. Make them play in front of their peers. Tryouts are a natural motivator to get students to take their instruments home and practice.

Be organized. Have a plan –kids can always smell a fake. Know what you are doing and don't waste time. Set daily goals. Set long term goals. Pacing the rehearsal is very important. Start and stop rehearsals on time. When you make a mistake, admit it. You need to appear sincere. Thank your students. Find a way to make each student feel special (a pat on the back, a personal note, compliment in front of peers, brag to parents). Your approach, the way you dress, your body language, and the tone of your voice have everything to do with your effectiveness with your students. Be patient, be tolerant, and smile!

Kids don't care what you know or how much you know until they know how much you are. In order to be effective and to gain the respect of the students, the students need to like you and you have to genuinely like them – and let them know it. They know that you are giving them 120% and what you are doing with them and for them, and that they are the most important thing in the world to you. When you are talking with a student look directly at the student, know the name of the student and be sure to address them by their name in order to make the student feel important. Make sure that your body language is positive. Try to speak to each one of your students personally every day. Show your interest in their lives. They will always appreciate your interest.

Make each day be positive and productive. Take care of yourself. You need to feel good. Do not take your problems out on the students. If you are going to be effective, you must be enthusiastic, charismatic, and almost appear as if you are superman or superwoman. When you don't feel good or are having a bad day, somehow hide it. Save some quality time for you and your family. Keep things in balance.

Be sincere and fair at all times. Be human. Make every rehearsal have a purpose. Give short-term and long-term goals that are realistic for the students to be successful. Always play great music. Avoid trash, nobody wants to perform or listen to bad music.

There is a special and unique value in having clinics. A really great clinician can motivate your students and you. Be sure to choose the right clinician. This will give you an opportunity to get to see and hear your band from a different perspective. I try to have a lot of great clinicians for my students.

Never stop learning. Things don't stay the same, they either get better or they get worse. People are that way also. When you are sure that you have arrived, watch out - you may be on the way down. Go out of your way to observe outstanding directors rehearse. Attend seminars, clinics, leadership conferences, and conventions to constantly keep yourself fresh and renewed. I remember attending a clinic here at TBA and hearing Dr. Revelli tell us to listen to a really great piece of music each day. Ask a lot of questions and keep your ears open. Listen to the old guys in this business. They have a lot to offer. Make sure that you are teaching for the right reasons. Remember, it's not for you—we need to be doing this for the kids. Make them love band and you'll never experience a greater reward.

In dealing with students, you are going to encounter some problems. When they occur, be absolutely certain that you do everything possible to get the problem taken care of before the student leaves for his next class. Never let the day end with the student not knowing that you sincerely care about him or her. Make them understand that you are only trying to correct the

problem. Never undermine their individual value, worth, or their dignity. Do not let the problem become personal. To the extent that is possible, try to deal with problems one-on-one in your office and away from the students.

Public relations with parents – if you are going to motivate kids, you must motivate the parents. Get them involved. If they are directly part of your program it will mean much more to them.

Public relations with faculty/administrators/student body – make it a point to speak to people daily. Try to make the entire school feel that the band belongs to the whole school.

Concentrate on ways to make each student have a rich, rewarding and memorable experience that will be with them forever. We want excellence to happen in a positive way for the students and the band program. We should constantly re-evaluate our motives. When all is said and done, winning is not the most important thing. Ten years from now they will remember most their friends, their directors and the rich memories of being a member of the band. We should make sure that we are not using our students for our own personal glorification and reputation.

Never forget the great mentors, directors, students and friends who have helped to shape your life. They are a part of your life.

Remember that as teachers, we have the opportunity to shape the lives of young people. The values they gain from being in band will always be with them. We have no idea of the impact that we have on students. We owe them our very best at all times. To do this we must realize the commitment to be the best can make the difference.

**Publications to read:**

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Covey

Works by Leo Buscaglia

Works by Zig Zigler

Works by Og Mandingo

Works by Tim Lotzenhizer

“The majority of us lead quiet, unheralded lives as we pass through this world. There will most likely be no ticker-tape parades for us, no monuments created in our honor. But that does not lessen our possible impact, for there are scores of people waiting for someone just like us to come along; people who will appreciate our compassion, our unique talents. Someone who will live a happier life merely because we took the time to share what we had to give. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have a potential to turn a life around. It's overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt.” – Leo Buscaglia

## Part 3: Special Thoughts that Make a Difference “Good Stuff”

“So much has been given me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied.” – Helen Keller

What does not destroy me makes me strong. – Freidrich Nietzche

God will only give you as much as you can handle. – Anonymous

Most people never listen. – Ernest Hemingway

I’m not a teacher, but an awakener. – Robert Frost

It's kind of fun to do the impossible. – Walt Disney

Every really new idea looks crazy at first. – Alfred North Whitehead

I will not condemn you for what you did yesterday, if you do it right today. – Sheldon S. Maye

How far we travel in life matters less than those we meet along the way. – Unknown

“When you raise the bar, it is true that some people may quit and leave, but it is better than having them quit and stay. - Unknown

“Think enthusiastically about everything. If you do you will put a touch of glory in your life. If you love your work with enthusiasm, you'll shake it to pieces. You'll love it into greatness, you'll upgrade it, you will fill it with prestige and power.” - Norman Vincent Peale

This is the beginning of a new day. I have been given this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever. Leaving in its place whatever I have traded for it. I pledge to myself that it shall be: gain, not loss: good, not evil: success, not failure; in order that I shall not regret the price I paid for the day.

If you don't invest very much, then losing doesn't hurt very much and winning isn't very much fun. – Dan Gibbs

Always do your very best wherever you are with whatever you have.” – William D. Revelli

Do what you love, love what you do, and always give more of yourself than is expected. – Dan Gibbs

Other classes teach you to do something. Band teaches you how to be someone. – Wes May

“The will to win means nothing without the will to prepare.”

“If we don't climb mountains, we'll miss life's greatest views.”

## Commitment

Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions. And the actions which speak louder than the words. It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

## The Arena

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat." - Theodore Roosevelt.

## Decisive Element

I have come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized." – Haim Ginott

## Short Course in Human Relations:

6 most important words:

"I'll admit I made a mistake."

5 most important words:

"You did a good job."

4 most important words:

"What is your opinion?"

3 most important words:

"Will you please?"

2 most important words:

"Thank you."

Most important word:

"We"

Least important word:

"I"

# Problem Solving

Problem solving is like eating frogs. If you have to eat a frog, don't spend all day looking at him; and if there are several frogs to be eaten, start with the big one.

## All you have to do is...

Play the right note  
At the right time  
For the right length  
With the right articulation  
At the right dynamic level  
In the right style  
In a musical manner  
With a beautiful tone  
And perfectly in tune.  
- Dr. Gary Garner

## Leadership

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

Do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, whether you want to do it or not.

Every day you miss practicing is one more day you have to wait to be good.

The more you practice the more fun it is.

After all is said and done, much is said and little is done.

Don't complain to someone who can't fix it.

People are more important than titles.

Failing to plan is planning to fail.

Sometimes it is better to just shut your mouth.

It is never too late to make things right.

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.

It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up.

"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will."

"The future belongs to those who show up and work hard."

You must do the thing you think you cannot do. – Eleanor Roosevelt.

## The Mountain Story

A son and his father were walking on the mountains.

Suddenly his son falls, hurts himself and screams: "AAAhhhhhhhh!!!"

To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountain: "AAAhhhhhh!!!"

Curious, he yells: "Who are you?"

He receives the answer: "Who are you?"

And then he screams to the mountain: "I admire you!"

The voice answers: "I admire you!"

Angered at the response he screams to the mountain: "Coward!"

He receives the answer: "Coward!"

He looks to his father and asks: "What's going on?"

The father smiles and says: "My son, pay attention."

Again, the man screams: "You are a champion!"

The voice answers: "You are a champion!"

The boy is surprised but does not understand.

Then the father explains: "People call this the ECHO, but really this is LIFE.

It gives you back everything you say or do.

Our life is simply a reflection of our actions.

If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart.

If you want more competence in your team, improve your competence.

This relationship applies to everything you have given to it."

**YOUR LIFE IS NOT A COINCIDENCE. IT'S A REFLECTION OF YOU!"**

-Author Unknown

## Attitude

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think, say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

And so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes" – Charles Swindoll

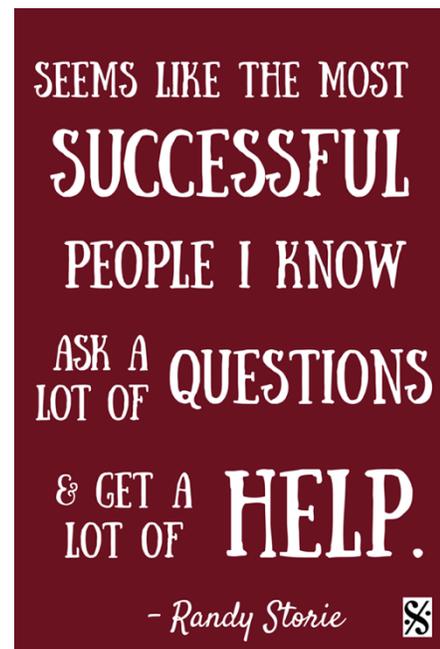
I firmly believe that any man's finest hour – his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear – is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle – victorious.

# Teamwork

It's all very well to have courage and skill  
And it's fine to be counted a star,  
But the single deed with its touch of thrill  
Doesn't tell the man you are;  
For there's no lone hand in the game we play,  
We must work to a bigger scheme,  
And the thing that counts in the world to-day is,  
How do you pull with the team?

They may sound your praise and call you great,  
They may single you out for fame,  
But you must work with your running mate  
Or you'll never win the game;  
Oh, never the work of life is done  
By the man with a selfish dream,  
For the battle is lost or the battle is won  
By the spirit of the team.

You may think it fine to be praised for skill,  
But a greater thing to do  
Is to set your mind and set your will  
On the goal that's just in view;  
It's helping your fellow man to score  
When his chances hopeless seem;  
It's forgetting self 'till the game is o're  
And fighting for the team -Edgar A. Guest (1881-1959)



# It's All in the State of Mind

If you think you are beaten, you are  
If you think you dare not, you don't,  
If you like to win, but you think you can't  
It is almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost  
For out in the world we find,  
Success begins with a fellow's will  
It's all in the state of mind.

Full many a race is lost  
Ere ever a step is run;  
And many a coward fails  
Ere ever his work's begun.

Think big and deeds will grow,  
Think small and you'll fall behind,  
Think that you can and you will;  
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, you are  
You've got to think high to rise,  
You've got to be sure of yourself before  
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go  
To the stronger or faster man,  
But soon or later the man who wins  
Is the man WHO THINKS HE CAN!

Nothing I have done in the past will ever be good enough again.  
The sun always shines on the Rebel Band.