

A History of the North Carolina Bandmasters Association and Band Contest/Festival (MPA)

Herbert Hazelman, NCBA President (1947-1948)

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Compiled by Patricia Garren.

The first band contest in North Carolina was held on the campus of the North Carolina College for Women in Greensboro in the spring of 1926. The three bands involved were Greensboro High School, **H. Grady Miller**, conductor; Lenoir High School, **Captain James C. Harper**, conductor; and Winston-Salem High School, **Christian D. Kutchinski**, conductor. I was a member of the Asheville High School Band conducted by **M.T. Iverson**, which joined the other three groups for the 1928 contest. I missed the first contest but had perfect attendance for every single state band contest from then until the move was made away from Aycock Auditorium in 1970.

In the beginning all contest affairs were administered by the public school music supervisors, instrumental and vocal teachers, and private piano pedagogues who attended an annual fall conference of music teachers at NCCW. By 1930, the contest had grown so large that running it under this system had become unwieldy, so loose associations of bandmasters, orchestra directors, choral directors, and piano teachers split off and began running their own affairs subject to approval by a newly instituted contest executive committee. A drastic step was taken before the 1931 contest. Most progressive states were abandoning the old 1, 2, 3, one winner concept, and had moved to a contest-festival arrangement where honor ratings were awarded depending on the quality of performance. North Carolina adopted a five point system with I being Excellent; II, Very Good; III, Good; IV, Average; and V, Below-Average. Not all directors were happy with the change and thus was born the first schism among North Carolina Band Directors. Captain Harper was asked to assume the role of peacemaker and for the fall conference of 1931 organized the first band clinic in our state. Directors present at this meeting requested that Dr. Wade R. Brown, head of the music department at NCCW and founder of the state music contest, engage a nationally known band figure to conduct a

clinic each fall. **Norval Church** of Columbia University was the first of many recognized authorities to bring their knowledge and inspiration to the fall conference. Clinicians for succeeding years were **Edwin Franko Goldman** founder of the Goldman Band in 1933; **A. Austin Harding** of the University of Illinois 1934, 1935; **Ernest Williams** of the Ernest Williams School of Music in 1936; **Frank Simon**, director of the Armco Band in 1937; and **Archie A. McCallister** of the Joliet High School Band in 1938. These clinicians were invited to judge the band contest the following spring.

James Christian Pfohl was the first elected president of the newly formed North Carolina Bandmasters Association in 1938, and he decided that we no longer needed to import outside experts so the clinic of 1939 was led by J.C. Pfohl of Davidson College; **Donald Pfohl** of Wake Forest College; and **C.D. Kutchinski** of North Carolina State University.

Leaders in 1940 were J.C. Pfohl, **Earl Slocum** of the University of North Carolina (there was only one UNC then), **George Henry** of Womans College, and **Herbert Hazelman** of Greensboro Senior High School. I would like to feel that I was selected to be the first high school director for the clinic because my peers recognized outstanding ability, but the truth is my band was chosen to perform and I was part of the package.

Pfohl, Slocum, **Robert Fearing** of Duke University, and Hazelman led the last clinic before the hiatus in contest activities resulting from World War II.

In 1930, almost all band directors of Class A (500+ students) schools and many of the Class B (250-500 students) directors were employed by local school boards. However, a great majority of leaders in Class C schools were "Music Men" employed by instrument dealers. Schools would generally provide a room for rehearsal and nothing more. The instructor would sell or rent instruments and collect nominal fees to pay for lessons and rehearsals. Many of these directors were dedicated, proficient musicians who produced excellent results. Some took money and ran, but far worse were the sorry ones who took the money and stayed.

In the spring of 1932, the depression finally caught up with North Carolina, and all of the school-employed band directors except those in

Charlotte and Lenoir were dismissed from their jobs. A few held on by teaching privately, but most sought other employment. At the fall conference in 1935, it was determined that several schools had reinstated their band programs and Harper and **L.R. Sides**, director of the Charlotte band, agreed that they would not enter the 1936 contest to give these struggling bands coming back from three years of no activity a better chance to show up well.

At the last possible moment, Sides reneged and entered the Charlotte band. Dr. Brown called Harper and apprised him of the situation and gave him an invitation to enter the Lenoir band also. Harper, being a man of his word, chose to honor his commitment.

Meanwhile, I was in graduate school at UNC when I was offered the job of directing the Durham High School Band. I found 34 players, some of whom were quite expert, and a fairly balanced instrumentation. By judicious shuffling of a few players to other instruments and a lot of editing the contest piece, I entered Class A competition and earned a Superior rating.

In those days, a final gala concert was performed on the last evening of the contest-festival by soloists, ensembles, and large groups. I am not sure we played better than Charlotte but the judge, **Raymond Dvorak** of the University of Wisconsin, selected us for the honor spot. Harper was also invited to bring the Lenoir band to play on the gala.

The repercussions of this affair were still ringing at the next fall conference, so **H. Hugh Atwater**, who had succeeded the retiring Dr. Brown as head of music at WCUNC and inherited the mess, took immediate action. He decided that the band representative of the contest executive committee should forthwith organize a bandmasters association, which would henceforth handle all band contest affairs. The bandmaster representative was L.R. Sides!

The 1937 contest was relatively uneventful. Lenoir and Charlotte earned their superiors and all other Class A bands found that they still could not compete. At the fall conference in 1937, the projected bandmasters association was still non-existent so a fight erupted on the floor. There were many more directors present who had first year bands than those with more experienced groups so the have-nots rammed through a resolution to change our method of classification to the so called

Wisconsin system where class was determined by a complicated, easily manipulated mathematical formula which took into account the average experience of the players, the minutes rehearsed per week, etc. So we all determined our own class, got our superiors and returned to the old method in 1938.

Meanwhile, Sides and a few bandmasters in the Charlotte area declared that they were now the official voice in all contest matters. Quite naturally, many bandmasters not included in the clique found the situation to be intolerable so after a concert by the Davidson College band on September 11, 1938, this pack of malcontents led by Capt. Harper met and organized a group to go to Charlotte for the annual meeting of the NCBA with enough votes to elect its own slate of officers. Below is the first paragraph of a letter, which Harper sent to me on September 19, 1938:

"May I express my personal appreciation to you for your cooperation before and during the events of last Saturday night. The fellows certainly stood by us in a fine way and it was a satisfaction that we could elect 7 out of 8 names on our slate. I think we are now assured of honest and capable management and that this will be one of the best years of the association."

The elected officers were **James C. Pfohl** of Davidson College, President; **Harold A. McDougale** of Greenville, Vice President; **Larry Rogers** of Salisbury, Secretary; **Herbert Hazelman** of Greensboro, Treasurer; **James C. Harper** of Lenoir, Representative on Region 8 Board; and **Bernard Hirsch** of Marion, **L.R. Sides** of Charlotte, and **Joe D. Hamrick** of Fayetteville, Board Members.

After the tally was announced, I moved that we organize our first ever All-State Band to present a concert during the March 1939 meeting of the North Carolina Education Association in Raleigh. I was made chairman of the committee when it was revealed that **Ben L. Smith**, superintendent of Greensboro City Schools was president of the NCEA and I had more influence with him than any other member of the NCBA. Thanks to yeoman work on the part of **Millard Burt**, director of the Raleigh High School band, in making arrangements for housing, feeding, entertaining, and finding rehearsal space and inspired

rehearsing and conducting by **Earl Slocum** of UNC, the whole affair was a resounding success and certainly fulfilled our stated purpose of exposing those superintendents and principals who did not have bands in their schools to an inspirational demonstration of what youngsters of this age could produce.

The annual fall meeting of the NCBA for 1939 was moved from Charlotte to Salisbury and the following slate was elected: **James C. Pfohl**, President; **Millard Burt**, Vice President; **Leonard V. Meretta** of Lenoir. Secretary; **Julian Helms** of Hendersonville, Treasurer; **Bernard Hirsch**, Representative on Region 8 Board; and **Robert Smith** of Charlotte, **Harold McDougle**, and **Dean C. Tabor** of Greenville, Board. To reduce friction Harper and I decided that we should not hold office at this time and Sides was never nominated again for office in the association.

Harold McDougle was elected president in 1940 and his fellow officers were: **Bernard Hirsch**, Vice President; **A. Moreland Cunningham** of Morganton. Secretary; **Julian Helms**, Treasurer; **Paul Hendricks** of Kings Mountain, Representative on Region 8 Board; and **Robert Smith**, **C.L. McCuUers** of Edenton. and **Arthur Steere** of Winston Salem, Board.

Since McDougle was from Greenville it was deemed wise to elect a president from the west in 1941 — **Julian Helms** of Hendersonville and in 1942 we went back east and elected W. Thomas Hearne from Henderson. All activities were cancelled during the war, so Tom held office for four years.

The 1940-41 roster showed NCBA with 69 active members. When activities were resumed in 1946, membership was down to 51 but grew to 69 before the end of 1947. Many bands lost their directors to military service for the duration and rebuilding in these two years was slow. Bernie Hirsch was elected president for 1946-47. He was still somewhat weakened by malaria, which he picked up in the South Pacific.

I was elected president in 1947 and had a most interesting administration. Colonel **Howard Bronson**, President of American Bandmasters Association, called me and wondered if there was some community in North Carolina that would be interested in hosting the 1949 convention of the ABA.

There were three members of the ABA in North Carolina — Jim Harper, Jim Pfohl, and Earl Slocum. The four of us got together and talked **Cecil Brodt** of Brodt Music Company into assuming responsibility for hosting the meeting in Charlotte. He and his wife Gladys did a fantastic job and the convention was a huge success. Concerts were provided by Charlotte, Greensboro, and Lenoir High School bands and college groups from Davidson, Duke, and UNC. Alan Bone of Duke University was president of NCBA in 1949, so he served as both performer and host.

Another highlight of my administration was a carefully orchestrated campaign to change to our current system of allowing bands to seek their own level of competition by selecting contest repertoire from graded music lists. Ten compositions were selected by the music committee for each of grades II through VI, and each band was required to prepare four numbers from its selected list.

At the contest, the director had to play his selected composition and the judges picked a second number after the band had played the director's choice. This makes for a demanding contest and brought dire warnings from the doomsayers that we were going to kill the contest. In 1948, under the old system only 10 bands competed at the state level.

The new system took effect in 1949, and two Group III, two Group IV, three Group V, and two Group VI bands entered. There was pressure on us to give up and retreat to the previous method of classification. George Kirsten from Lenoir was president for the 1950 contest, and to his everlasting credit he stood firm, and lo and behold, the 1950 contest had 23 bands playing. The new system was working and directors were happy. From that time forward, no motion was made to return to the previous system.

Two all-state clinic bands were authorized in 1948. I can't find the record of the eastern group but the western division band played a concert in High Point on February 21, under the direction of Alan Bone of Duke University.

Herbert Carter of East Carolina College in Greenville was president of NCBA 1950-51. Millard Burt of Raleigh assumed the presidency for the 1951-52 period and it was in his administration that the North Carolina Music Educators Association became a reality.

NCMEA was actually approved in 1947, but it required five years to work out the bugs and sell the new association to the component groups. At the fall conference in 1951, the Contest-Festival Association, the NCBA, the Orchestra Directors Association, the Piano Teachers Association, and the Vocal Teachers Association all approved the NCMEA constitution and agreed to accept affiliation with the larger group.

An official publication was approved with the proviso that the activities of all affiliated groups would be reported in each issue. Volume I, Number 1 of the *North Carolina Music Educator* contained History of The North Carolina Music Educators Association by J. Kimball Harriman; a report of the fall clinic; greetings from Arnold Hoffman, State Supervisor of Music; a message from H. Hugh Atwater, Director 61 Contest-Festival; Previews of the three all-state clinics (Eastern Division at Greenville; Western Division at Boone; and Central Division at Gastonia); Reports from the band, orchestra, choral and piano associations, etc.

From this time forward, we will not be forced to rely on dedicated people like **Pat Garren** who have a sense of history and drive to ferret out missing links, or the pack rats with their memorabilia and memories. The proceedings of every meeting are now spread upon the record and that record is as near as the closest library or archives with a complete collection of the *North Carolina Music Educator*.