



The Blawenburg Band Newsletter

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Flute Sectional

Contributed by Leslie Rife

Carol Carlson

My decision to take up the flute at the age of 12 was not the result of much careful consideration. As a girl in the early 1960s, the heavy brasses and drums seemed out of the question. That left clarinet and flute—and I just thought that flute was “prettier.”

I have never regretted that decision. I started playing in junior high, and in high school I played in the concert and marching bands as well as the show band. Ours was an unusual marching band—our band leader didn't think kids should pretend to be military, so our uniforms were Ivy League style—soft caps, blazers, and the girls wore skirts. Our formations for half-time shows were also non-military—for instance, we formed a stick figure of a girl, with prop people holding up the appropriate cardboard costume, to play “Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weenie Yellow Polka-dot Bikini.” Our big excitement was playing for two years in the Miss America parade on the Atlantic City boardwalk.

After high school, though, I put away my flute through college and for the next 20 years while working on my career in journalism and editing, raising my two daughters, and helping on our Christmas tree farm. But I could never bear to give away my flute, so in 1984, when a neighbor told me about the Blawenburg Band, I jumped at the chance to play again. I took lessons for a while to brush up, and I've been playing ever since. I love it, and I'm proud to play with such a talented group of musicians and such a terrific conductor.

My favorite band memories: playing “Victory at Sea,” playing at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton to commemorate World War II for the reunion classes, and playing at the Trenton War Memorial—despite the miniscule audience. I think our most important performances, though, are in the nursing homes, where our upbeat music makes a real difference in the lives of our audiences.

Susan Danser

I started playing the flute the summer after fourth grade in the summer band program at Cranbury Elementary School. I chose the flute for two reasons: my neighbor's daughter, whom I idolized and who babysat for us, played the flute; and it was small enough to fit in my bike basket and therefore easy to transport to school. My first flute was a Bundy student model that my parents rented to own for the princely sum of \$13 a month, if I recall correctly. I was in the concert and marching bands throughout high school and college and played in the pit orchestras for the musicals we did in high school. Around 10th grade I upgraded to an open-hole Gemeinhardt flute that I still use today (although I still used the Bundy for marching band to avoid exposing my good flute to the elements).

In the summer of 1990, I was home from college and my family attended a Father's Day picnic at Cranbury Village Park and saw the Blawenburg Band perform. At some point in the performance, Jerry mentioned that they rehearsed on Monday nights in Blawenburg and welcomed new musicians. At the urging of our dad, my sister, Sarah, and I decided to give it a shot. I think our first rehearsal was actually a performance at the gazebo in Harlingen and Sarah had to borrow a horn because we'd gotten distracted as we left the house and she'd left her horn on the front lawn. We continued to play with the band when we were home from school and after graduating, and our parents became band groupies and unofficial members. Twenty years later the Blawenburg Band is

still a family affair for me. I'm thrilled that my kids and husband enjoy coming to and occasionally taking a more active part in the Blawenburg concerts. They feel as if they are part of the Blawenburg family as well. We even enticed my brother-in-law to dig out his trumpet to play with us.

There are many memorable gigs, but the ones that really stand out are those that clearly touch the audience. One of my favorite gigs was around 1995, when we played at Princeton University to honor the Princeton students who had served in World War II. The acoustics in Richardson Auditorium were spectacular and it was obvious that our program moved the audience members deeply, and, I'm sure, the band members as well. That feeling of shared accomplishment and of being able to positively touch an audience is what keeps me coming back.

Alison Denis Longley

I am the newest member of the flute section and joined the band in March after reading an article about the Blawenburg Band in the Princeton Packet. I studied music performance in college and then placed the flute in the closet after graduating from college where it stayed for 20+ years as I devoted my energies to a career in financial services marketing. About six years ago, I returned to playing the flute. I took private lessons from a Mannes School of Music graduate student living in Princeton and attended several master classes, usually as an auditor, over the past several years. I also attended two National Flute Association Conventions. Last summer, I participated as a performer in a master class in Italy with Rhonda Larson.

I am currently a marketing consultant and reside in Princeton with my husband, Steve.

Bill Reisser

I started at the Texas standard end-of-fourth-grade and had selected the trombone after I did well on the musical aptitude test. My mom told me that the flute can play in any group and is thus the most versatile instrument of all, and I (not knowing about Dixieland music) acquiesced. I studied in high school with Houston Symphony principal Byron Hester's top student Linda Merrill Hirsch who was also an exceptional soprano, and she taught me to think of playing the flute as though I were singing- or fiddling. I spent four summers at U Kansas in the Midwestern Music and Art Camp. I was the principal of the Texas All-State Band my senior year, won the singular "Outstanding Performer" award at the state solo contest and my home town's "Arion Award" for excellence in musical citizenship.

Music scholarship offers came from many colleges, but I majored in Mathematics. I joined the Longhorn Band, the marching band that performed at football games as part of the athletic department rather than the music

department. I marched with a stunning antique Haynes silver Db piccolo of the band's, and learned to transpose many marches.

In graduate school I was a music critic for the school paper, the Purdue Exponent. My favorite concerts were the Leningrad Symphony, 14-year-old Joshua Bell, Rostropovich, and a young Parkening. I was paid like \$3 per column inch and got (two) free tickets with prime seating in the huge Music Hall (Purdue's identical copy of Radio City Music Hall).

I played in the school orchestra and a local semipro orchestra, the Lafayette Symphony where I played mostly second flute. I also played in some school musicals, and sometimes with a choral group called the Bach Chorale Singers (often as a "Floboe"ist playing an oboe part on flute). My dad was a (Latvian-born) jazz fan and I played the American premiere of a Soviet jazz piece on his 50th birthday with the Purdue Jazz Band. I joined a semipro summer band and the Musician's Union to get Music Performance Trust Fund money of around \$20 per concert. I attended master classes by the Chicago Symphony's Richard Graef and IU's Pellerite, and I of course went to Chicago Symphony concerts and to Bloomington for the IU opera. The best music pay I've ever gotten was a free US State Department tour of Holland with the Purdue Bands the summer of 1974, which gave me the chance to spend close to a week with my grandmother in Geneva and visit with my rich relatives the Wengers (Swiss Army knife) in Basel. At Purdue I majored in Physics then Computer Science then Industrial Engineering.

I married briefly and spent two years in State College PA on the faculty of Penn State's Industrial and Management Systems Engineering department. There I played second flute in the Centre Philharmonic to the very talented professional Diane Gold. Returning to Purdue, I eventually completed my doctoral thesis with Moshe Barash (the great young engineer who had designed and supervised the manufacture of the secreted guns that the Israeli Defense Forces used to surprisingly win their war of independence). The head of convocations at Purdue told me that Westminster Choir College is the top liturgical music school in the western world, so that aspect of moving to Princeton appealed to me.

The flute I play is my version of the "Chicago Symphony flute", a heavy gauge (.018") Powell body with a lighter gauge (.014") headjoint. My headjoint was made by David Straubinger and I added it to the Powell flute which was ordered when I graduated from high school and arrived when I started graduate school four years later. After I went to Pellerite's master class, Mr. Straubinger machined out the bottoms of my toneholes according to the recommendation of Charles Benade to provide better acoustic response, and I got the second set of Straubinger pads which were ever installed. Those pads were replaced by Mr. Straubinger in the early 1990's with a newer version. Most of the Straubinger pads I now have are close to twenty years old, still seat perfectly and are functional!

I go to a reading orchestra, and sometimes play with musicals and other little groups. But my heart and my indebtedness are with the Blawenburg Band. We briefly had a second very talented male flute player with a robust tone who left after being asked to be the principal second flutist, and I was subsequently asked to assume that role. I feel I can help our group musically since I have seated myself to the left of the other flute players. I was also very pleased that I could initiate the association of our band with my son's elementary school where we now rehearse.

Leslie Rife

I began learning to play flute as a fifth grader in the public school program. By the time I had graduated, I had played in a lot of regional contests--ensembles, solos or accompaniments for others and marched in countless halftime shows during football seasons. I was also fortunate to attend band camp at KSU for three summers playing flute in the camp orchestras and bands as well as singing in the choir--all under prominent guest conductors.

I ended up going to college at KSU majoring in Music Education....more marching in a really big band for a couple years on top of the usual lessons and band/orchestra playing opportunities plus the required junior and senior solo recitals. Good things happen and I once played with/for Peter Schickele on a P.D.Q. Bach program plus Aaron Copland was on campus for a week and conducted our groups in concerts.

While I was teaching music in Kansas, I didn't really have much opportunity to play. In 1978, we moved to Michigan so Jer could work on his Ph.D. and I just worked for 6 years. I did play flute quite a bit during 2 or 3 summers which we spent in Door County, Wisconsin. I and Jer worked out this little gig: we played background duets for a restaurant on the nights they served their New England buffet--no pay, but a really nice meal twice a week. A few months after we moved to New Jersey in 1984, Karen Pitts invited us to play in the Blawenburg Band. Playing in the band for 25 years has really helped me learn a lot of literature and improve as a flutist and musician. An unexpected job loss a few years ago rewarded me with more time to devote to playing both with the band and in smaller groups.

Among all the pieces we have played in the band, my favorites are: Joyce's 71st N. Y. Regiment march, Midway March, Esprit de Corps, several of the overtures, Suite of Old American Dances and the Ragtime collection given to the band by a Shirley.

My most memorable jobs for beautiful setting and good music include our Longwood Gardens appearances, the 118th Concert and the War Memorial

program. I'm glad to support the outreach function of the band when we play for nursing homes.

Dina Robinson

I started playing flute in sixth or seventh grade because I wanted to be in the band. I loved it so much that I just kept on playing in band after band, South Jersey Regional, Allstate, Shore Regional, and a couple of orchestras. In college, I played in the orchestra and band too. The Rutgers Wind Ensemble played Town Hall my senior year and that was a thrill. There were some breaks for child-rearing and then I came back to play with the New Brunswick Chamber Orchestra and the Hillsborough Community Band; then another long break until my cousin yelled at me to get back into playing shape, so I joined the Blawenburg Band for a short while. Took another break and joined for good six years ago.

I enjoyed playing "The Witches" and would like to keep working on it. I also like Cubaland

My favorite jobs are those that include FOOD. Besides that Longwood Gardens is my favorite place to play.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS: A BLAWENBURG BAND COUPLE: PEGGY AND JACK SCHENCK



LAMBERTVILLE: City couple stunned by anniversary party

This was the headline of an article written Thursday, September 9, 2010 by Linda Seida. The “City Couple” were none other than Blawenburg Band member Jack Schenck and his wife Peggy, who have been married 60 years. Here is the article.

LAMBERTVILLE — A city couple who celebrated their 60th anniversary on Sept. 1 got the surprise of their lives when about 50 relatives crashed their weekly date night to give them a surprise party.

The party on Aug. 29 took up a large part of the McDonald’s in New Hope, where the couple goes each Sunday evening for dinner.

Peggy Schenck, sometimes called “Doc” for the longtime job she held at the Phillips-Barber Family Health Center as a receptionist, later said she was too bashful to discuss the party that was thrown for her and her husband, Jack Schenck.

With a laugh, she said she felt like “a redneck” for celebrating the milestone in a McDonald’s. “That’s where they knew we would be,” she said. “I was so surprised. That’s the first time in my life I was ever surprised, and my husband was stunned.”

Granddaughter Stephanie Sansone Brigandi spoke of the couple with love and pride. “My whole life, whenever people learn that they are my grandparents, they immediately know they are the cute couple who walks around town every night holding hands,” she said. “Anyone who passes by their house is likely to see them sitting on the front porch, or Pop sweeping the sidewalk.”

Both Mr. Schenck, 79, and Mrs. Schenck, 78, were born and raised in Lambertville. They lived not far from each other but never met until they both attended English class at

Lambertville High School, Mr. Schenck said. They had gone to different elementary schools.

Upon seeing her for the first time, he turned to a friend and said, "Man, she's pretty," and asked who she was, he recalled.

They had their first date in 1948, a movie at the Strand in Lambertville followed by a drugstore soda. That date led to marriage, three daughters, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

As the Korean War approached in 1950, Mr. Schenck was A-1 on the draft list. He decided to propose, thinking of the "10 guys or so," the older men he knew during his youth in World War II, who never returned home. He said his mother was all for the marriage, and she even suggested he ask Peggy to marry him.

They paid a Pennsylvania justice of the peace \$10 to marry them. The two-day, \$65 honeymoon was spent in the Poconos, where rooms were \$7 a night. They married on a Friday, and returned to Lambertville by Monday because Mrs. Schenck was starting a new job.

Mr. Schenck worked for 22 years at the Crane Company in Trenton. When the company moved to another location, he went to work for American Standard, also in Trenton, for 30 years until he retired.

The Schenck family goes back a long way in Lambertville. Mr. Schenck said his grandfather opened a livery in the city in 1885, and his uncle was John Barber, whose fortune helped establish the Phillips-Barber Family Health Center.

Some History before I joined the Blawenburg Band: Lanny Hoffman

Princeton Community Band

When I moved to Princeton in the fall of 1958, after coming from the Ohio State University, I heard a band playing on the steps of Nassau Hall. That was in the summer of 1959.

They sounded pretty good, and I found out that they were really a summer band organized to give students that were home from college in the summer a chance to practice and to keep their lips in shape. The band was organized and directed by Richard Gerstenberger, and the band did not practice during the winter. Mr. Gerstenberger was a professor at Rutgers. We practiced at the high school between concerts. Princeton High School was involved in the history of the summer band (see the memo from Elizabeth Soete, George's daughter at the end of this story). Elizabeth has helped me refresh my memory on some of the Princeton details. We did play several concerts both in front of the Princeton High School and at least one concert in the high school auditorium. However, for the first few summers, we played concerts in front of Nassau Hall between the lions. Those lions were great fun for my kids to play on. I guess I didn't worry too much about them falling off, although looking back, they were pretty high above the ground. For some reason, which I do not remember, we left the lions and started playing in front of the high school at Princeton. I remember playing inside the high school for at least one concert. It may have been a rainy night, but I do remember setting up in the high school auditorium.

The summer band was more than just college students. As I remember, there were musicians of all ages in the membership. I do not remember George Soete (the conductor of the Blawenburg Band) at that any job, particularly, but I do remember his daughter Elizabeth (Betsy) playing French horn. In 1964, the summer band played at the New York World's Fair. Although I don't recall any Blawenburg Band members in the New York job, I am sure that members did participate. I remember that we went up to the world's fair in a school bus. George Soete directed that particular job (I don't know why Mr. Gerstenberger did not direct that job). I remember that we played at the American pavilion, which was a series of canvas tents in the air, and there was a water moat that people sat around. It was a bit tricky getting onto the stage (surrounded by water) and when we were seated, we did not want to move too much. I have photographs of the band at that concert, along with photographs of the pavilion. The photo shown here shows the size of the band and the pavilion. It is a bit hard to recognize individuals in the photograph, but you can get an idea of the size of the band.



A letter from Betsy Soete: Mon, 05 May 2003

Hi, Lanny: I read through the pieces you sent me. I am so impressed that you remembered so much of this, over the years! I'm sure my father would be pleased to know that this all is being remembered and recorded. You had sent me a larger file, and I have a couple of comments about that which I've listed below (some are answers to questions of yours).

Yes, Mr. Gerstenberger was a professor at Rutgers. The formal name of the band was the Princeton Community Band, and we practiced at Princeton High School.

When we went to the World's Fair in New York, that was the Princeton Community Band. For the Hopewell Parade, yes, the hay wagon was driven by my brother, John.

After my father died, my older brother Jim conducted the band for awhile, at least at the concerts and some rehearsals. He couldn't keep doing it because he lived so far away. That's when they drafted Wayne Hunter, when it became apparent that Jim couldn't continue. I know some other band members filled in as well (i.e., Phil Thompson). Lanny, I think it's great that you are putting all this together, and I appreciate your sharing it with me. I'll look forward to seeing the pictures, too, someday!