



**SYLACAUGA HIGH SCHOOL  
HALF MILLION DOLLAR BAND  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**  
Volume 3 – Summer 2009



**Alumni President Notes – Henry W. Nunnelley**

Welcome to the 2008-09 edition of the SHS Band Alumni Association newsletter. We fully realize we would like to have two newsletters per year; however it has not worked yet. We can hope for better things in the next school year.

For those unable to attend our Fall meeting on October 3, 2008, it was great. We won the football game and the team scored fifty points so we had LOTS of opportunities to play “Hail to the Varsity.” We had approximately 40 members actually participate and the alumni band was able to play “Hail to the Varsity” all by ourselves just before halftime since the band was warming up for their performance. We have included a few pictures from the meeting this newsletter. For a more complete set, we invite you to visit the website, [www.shsband.net](http://www.shsband.net), and view pictures of not only of the alumni weekend; but also the entire band football season.

**The 2009 SHS Alumni Band Meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2009.** This is a home game against Talladega. We now have all the music, including the music that is played in the stands (“The Horse”, “Beginnings”, etc.) on the website ([www.shsband.net](http://www.shsband.net)), so you have no excuse for not knowing the music. Please plan to participate. We can guarantee it will be fun. Do not be concerned if you cannot attend the Thursday practice, we will make room for you on Friday. You also do not have to actually blow the horn, just be counted and have fun. **Also please encourage your friends and family to participate.**

Practice with alumni and students will be at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2009 and a reception or some type of social activity afterward. We will also have a social time on Friday from about 5:00 p.m. until about 6:30 p.m. The attire will be red shirt and black pants, if possible.

Technology has progressed since 2006 when the current organization was formed. There are at least 2 groups on FaceBook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) related to the band. They are: 'I marched for Fess, Buddy or David Simpkins!' and 'I was an SHS Band Member.' We highly recommend these groups as opportunities to find high school friends.

As you read the member list at the end of this newsletter, these are the members who have actually paid their dues for 2008-09, according to our records. While the dues notice was mentioned in the previous newsletter, we have determined that many missed the notice. We are still trying to determine the best way to distribute these dues notices. If you have comments or suggestions, we would like to hear from you. Please fully realize this organization has at least 2 purposes, one is a social organization; however this is also a way to support the band financially.

As you look at the officers in the organization, you will see some blank spots. Actually the president would like to be past president and then fade into the sunset at some time in the future. We need some volunteers, especially to organize and publish the newsletter and publicize the gatherings. There is not a tremendous amount of time involved and most of the work can be done electronically. If you are interested, please email Henry Nunnelley at [hunnelley@shsband.net](mailto:hunnelley@shsband.net).

If you received this letter via snail mail and do have access to email, please email me at [hunnelley@shsband.net](mailto:hunnelley@shsband.net) with your email address. We are trying to save as much paper and postage as possible.

Thank you for your participation in the SHS Band Alumni Association.

## DUES NOTICE

This newsletter will constitute your statement for dues to the SHS Band Alumni Association. Annual dues for the period July 2009 through June 2010 are \$15.00 per member or \$25.00 per family. This association is open to both SHS alumni and friends. If you would like to donate more, as many members have, we will gladly accept with a smile and a thank you.

### *2009-10 Officers*

<i>President.....</i>	<i>Henry W. Nunnelley</i>
<i>Past President.....</i>	<i>Judy Ward</i>
<i>Treasurer.....</i>	
<i>Secretary.....</i>	<i>Sheri Smith</i>
<i>Director .....</i>	<i>David Simpkins</i>

Please mail your payment to:  
Sylacauga High School Band Alumni Association  
P. O. Box 2083  
Sylacauga, AL 35150

**Finances**

Currently our fund has a balance of \$2,033.20 and is earning interest at a small amount, which is better than nothing. Although our current main financial drive is to help with uniform purchases in the near future, David Simpkins did ask the alumni to help with the charter bus expense for the Demopolis playoff game. We also sent memorial flowers for 2001-02 SHS drum major Heather Grice-Sweeney, who passed away unexpectedly in February.

**Letters from members:**

We received the following 2 letters from SHS band alumni members we would like to share.

<p>Henry,          What a super job you are doing. Great news letter and pictures. I particularly got caught up in the New Orleans jazz theme the band featured. I'm the banjo player for Cypress Landing Jazz. We can flat rip it, and, for my part, it's all due to the tremendous influence "Fess" Simpkins had on me ('50-52). Even though my current gig is with five full career professionals, I can still hold my own, and occasionally have to tell them, "That's not really the way that goes." Thanks, "Fess!"</p> <p>Keep up the good work,</p> <p>Buck Rish          Class of 1952</p>	<p>Dear Mr. Porch,          As an Alumna from Sylacauga High School (1986), I was so pleased that my hometown football team was coming to Demopolis to play in the first round of the High School Playoffs. It was nice to see old friends and teachers that I had lost contact. I was very impressed with the ballgame itself. A hard fought game is always good. However, since I was a majorette for Mr. Buddy Simpkins, the band was of particular interest to me. The band sounded just like I remembered. They really impressed me as well as those sitting around me on the Demopolis side. David has done a fabulous job with the band! Congratulations on having students with such class. I was proud to say that those students were from my hometown.</p> <p>Best of luck in the future!</p> <p>Tracy Grimes Stewart          Class of 1986</p>
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## From the Band Director

On behalf of the students and staff of the Sylacauga High School Band Program, thank you for your support.

We are celebrating the close of another successful school year. In the fall, the Marching Aggie Band produced a show that featured the music of Ludwig van Beethoven and proved to be a challenging and exciting experience for our students and fans. It was one of the more difficult shows we have ever attempted considering the demands on musicianship and marching technique. Although the program was somewhat slow in coming together, our band students were able to really turn it on during the final stretch of the season. Those who were able to see the band perform throughout the season were able to witness a tremendous and wonderful process of development, largely due to the increase in experience, maturity and perseverance. Considering that over 85% of our group was 10th grade or younger, we should be very proud of how our young students responded.

I am very proud of our senior leadership. Relatively few in number, our senior class proved to be a tremendous help in showing our young band how to perform. We could not have been as successful without their leadership. Drum Majors Maya McKenzie and Travis Higginbotham did a fantastic job. Also, Jessica Harris, majorette captain, Jen Nunnelley, colorguard captain and Seretha Williams, colorguard co-captain, did a great job of coordinating all the activities of their squads. We are going to miss these leaders tremendously next year.

This spring featured the Symphonic Band, and a very, very strong band it was. It was a pleasure to stand in front and direct such a fine playing and hard working group. In addition to several terrific concerts, the band provided entertainment and ceremonial music for the Sylacauga Art Show and the Marble Festival. The band traveled to Nashville, TN in April to see first-hand how the music industry works in the professional world. The students were treated to record several songs at the historic RCA Studio B, where Elvis Presley recorded most of his hits.

This coming fall, the Marching Aggie Band will feature an exciting show with the music of Stevie Wonder. We look to march around 90 students, which is up around 15 from this past year. I'm very excited about the group we have coming back and I think you'll all be very proud of the '09 Aggie Band. I hope you'll have a chance to come back this fall and see the show. Also, I sincerely hope that you'll make it a priority to come back for our Alumni Band performance. The date for the Alumni Band is set for September 11, 2009 and there is more information on this elsewhere in the newsletter.

There are three areas in which our band program will be working in the coming years. First is in the area of Enrollment. It's no secret that the scheduling practices of our system have hurt our numbers. Many students have not been able to schedule band due to limitations in elective slots at the middle school and other issues stemming from the block schedule at the high school. Our administrators have expressed a commitment to helping us find ways to boost band numbers in the coming years, and I am confident that

we will see the band begin to grow larger in the coming years. Secondly, a drive for new uniforms will be a priority. We'd like to be ready to purchase a new set by the fall of 2010 or at least by 2011. Our current uniforms are beginning to show their age. Lastly, the ever present drive for updating our equipment will continue. Drumline equipment, tubas, baritones, etc, are in constant need for buying new and repairing the old.

If you'd like to help support our program, you can help us by continuing to express your desire to see the band grow and prosper with members of our administration and Board of Education. Share supportive and encouraging words with them about what our band means to students and to the community. Of course, your donations will be used to help us with our uniform and equipment projects.

We appreciate your continued support and pray that you will enjoy being connected with our Aggie Band for many years to come through the Alumni Association.

Sincerely,

David Simpkins

## Scenes from the 2008 – 2009 School year

This is a small selection of pictures. Please check the website ([www.shsband.net](http://www.shsband.net)) for more pictures.



## Drum Major Notes

Dear Alumni,

The 2008 Marching Band season was my most memorable year in band. Being drum major gave me a whole new outlook on what makes our band work. During summer camp, Travis and I learned about being drum majors and how to work with each other. Standing on top of the podium and seeing the halftime show come together was a rewarding experience. Sometimes the band needed some extra coaxing, and I wasn't afraid to give it to them. :) The field was not the only place that was full of exciting moments. Playing in the stands gave us an opportunity to be the "12th man." After a big sack or interception, Travis and I were quick to call out "Tomahawk" or another daunting cheer to get into the other team's head. We enjoyed the drum cheers "Sylacauga" and "Go Crazy" that gave us a chance to loosen up and dance with the band. The halftime show of the Comer game is one of my favorite memories. Travis and I mixed things up by marching in from the end zones in tuxedos and performing a courtly salute. We really put the "CLASS" in the Marble City Classic.

My high school experience would not be complete without marching band. The life-lessons I have learned during my four years are being put to use in the present. The work ethic I use for putting together a halftime show translates to how I can be a better student council president. Yes, all of the lessons I have learned in band were also taught to me in softball and student council. To learn from softball you have to make the team; to learn from student council you have to be elected. To be in band, all you need is determination to be the best marching musician you can be. Mr. Simpkins is the "coach" that accepts all players regardless of ability and turns the group into a Beethoven masterpiece. This is why band is so important.

After high school, I will attend Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. I was able to receive the Presidential scholarship because of my academic performance and extracurricular involvement in activities like marching band. I plan to major in Political Science. Although I will not continue to march in college, I will always remember my years as a part of THE Half-Million Dollar Marching Aggie Band.

Maya A. McKenzie

Dear Alumni,

Being drum major for the 2008 marching season was a great experience. All of the leadership skills I have learned throughout high school really came into play because of my leadership in the band. Band camp this summer was so much fun. Coming back together with all of your band friends after the summer is one of the best feelings. Although at times the weather seemed so hot, and the practices seemed so long, we all enjoyed the experience. It was so nice to see, as a drum major, all the hard work and effort that we put into our show. On Friday nights when Maya and I would stand on our podiums and direct the band, it was truly a blessing to see how God used music to bring together such an awesome performance. We always showed our class on and off the field by being disciplined and well behaved. Playing in the stands is something I will never forget! When I and a couple of my friends would get together and dance to the songs and drum cadences, I knew that I was making the best of my last year in high school! I will always remember all the nights that I would learn new dances to our songs, and have more and more fun each game.

I hope to have set a good example for the drum majors that are to come in the future. I always try to set a good example to the students, and let everyone know that you can have an awesome time if you let yourself have it. It was interesting to see how people that were once shy come out of their shell. Being in band creates is comfortable for anyone, and this creates friendships that will last forever. I love to see how we have been given the gift of music and how it draws people together.

Next year I plan to attend Jefferson State Community College in Birmingham. I will be touring with a rock band in which I play guitar, and leading worship in a church in Pelham. I will try to receive scholarships for whatever I can involving music, because that is what I plan to major in. I know that I will always be playing music for Jesus Christ, and I hope to reach many people through that ministry. I will definitely never forget my time in the Marching Aggie Band, and the things I have learned through those experiences.

Travis Higginbotham

## *Do You Believe In Magic?*

By Chip McEwen, SHS, 1974

If you don't, then if you had participated in the Alumni Band playing with the Aggie Band at the SHS v. Chelsea football game on Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, you would!!

The Alumni Band members were invited to come out again and join the current student Band and have a little fun helping them blow away the visitors and help cheer our football team to victory! I was blessed to be able to do this last year and when the reminder invitation came along for 2008, I jumped at the chance to go back to my youth and have a little fun on a comfortable Friday evening in Sylacauga at the stadium. If you are an alumnus/alumna and haven't taken the time to participate I hope this story will challenge, convict, and motivate you to become an active dues paying member and commit to participate in 2009!

The alumni members were told to arrive on Thursday, evening around 6 p.m. to practice with the student band. It was good to see a bunch of the alumni who participated last year as well as some new ones and some of the recent year graduates! We had a few more playing members and a bunch of flag and majorette alumni, totaling 37 members this year. David did throw all us instrument players a curve. We were to perform at the pre-game show and had to add the Star Spangled Banner to our routine. He also had another surprise when he told us we were going to do Hail to the Varsity FROM THE TOP! We alums looked at each other and hoped our sight reading skills hadn't left us because we had never played it "from the top!" As it turned out, we did OK and picked it up quickly. And lastly, David Simpkins was going to direct the combined band. And, here was the first bit of Magic -- Buddy Simpkins was playing his trumpet with the alumni band!! It took a moment, but I realized this was a first in mine as well as everyone else's life. We had always been directed by either Fess or Buddy, but never played with them. And, this was a magic moment for David because he hadn't ever directed his Dad!! Do you believe yet?

If not, this wasn't the only Magical Moment! The combined bands performed the pre-game program and all the participating alumni members were recognized. The songs were played and the exits were completed. The band climbed into the stands and began the usual ritual of playing to support the cheerleaders and football team in their efforts on the field. This was a competitive football game with Chelsea and the Aggies were leading the way. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter was winding down, the student band moved from the stands to get ready for the half-time show. All of a sudden the Aggies marched down the field and scored a touchdown! Well, we alumni couldn't let the band down so with a couple of trombones, several trumpets, an imposter saxophone with a reed, a bell player, a tuba, and a drummer beating the stadium seats, we played Hail to the Varsity to support the football team! It was another Magical Moment! You could see the surprise from the student band members and the crowd was stunned by a few "old and new timers" taking up the slack! The crowd clapped and cheered when we finished. In fact it was so shocking at how well it sounded, the local TV crew filming the game forgot to shoot us and came down and asked us to do it again at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Do you believe yet?

Well, the last magical moment, followed the game. Our Aggies beat Chelsea and the entire football team and cheerleaders stood on the field in front of the band and sang the Alma Mater as the combined bands played! It was truly a Magical Night!!

If you are an alumnus/alumna reading this story, why not make the commitment to come and be a part of the magic and memories we will make next year. Our student band is young and you could see the wonder in their eyes as we, the SHS Half-Million Dollar Band Family, all played together. Your active participation will help the student band! Whether you are a recent graduate or an "old warhorse" you will feel the magic and realize how significant you are to the legacy we all leave with this Band!! Can we count on you??

### Scenes from Alumni Band Night 2008



## Alumni Band Members July 2009

This is the membership list as best we can determine at this time. It includes all members who have paid or made significant contributions from July 2008 to the present plus the past 2 graduating classes of band students. If some names are misspelled or inadvertently omitted or the class years are incorrect, please let us know and we will be glad to correct in the next newsletter.

CLASS	NAME	CLASS	NAME
1944	Dr. Morris W. Hollis	1985	Laura (Roberson) Strickland
1945	Charles S. Crowther	1986	Sandra Williams Custer
1947	Mildred L. Campbell	1986	Tracy (Grimes) Stewart
1948	Edwin McCoy Ray	1992	Craig Aarhus
1952	Berkley L. Rish	1993	Amanda Rumsey Ebert
1952	Catherine G. (Grice) McEwen*	2000	Joshua L. Barnett
1952	Mrs. Marie H. (Harris) Morgan	2007	Aasia - Anne Stone
1952	Ms. Margie P. (Patterson) Sanford	2007	Tara Williams
1953	Mrs. Jill P. (Parker) Gillum	2007	Aasia Anne Stone
1954	Elaine Mitchem	2007	Laura "Ashley" Miller
1954	Mrs. D. Deon (Oswalt) Neighbors	2007	Steven Levi Ellison
1954	Jamie E. Price	2007	Julie Annah Conley
1955	George (Buddy) Simpkins	2007	Lauren "Ashley" Blocker
1955	Jane Bradley Handley	2007	Joseph Lane Barnett
1955	Robert E. Grice	2007	Raymond DeVaughn Bailey
1955	William E. (Bill) Handley	2007	Morgan Anders
1956	M. J. (Jef) Thurman, Sr.	2007	Whitney Kristen Wesson
1959	William M. Ferguson	2007	Haley Michelle Ward
1960	Travis Wesson	2007	Meghan Marie Shingleton
1960	Mrs. Nan E. (Wooten) Morrow	2007	Darius Kentrell Owens
1961	Margaret Stewart	2007	James T. Olden
1961	CDR George C. Stewart	2007	Nichole Melanie Mitchell
1963	Averiette Holly Wesson	2008	Nola Bowling
1963	Sherry B. Spires	2008	Baxter Bozeman
1970	James M. (Matt) Hare	2008	John Bradford
1970	Mrs. Alice Smith (Smith) Tylander	2008	Wynn Campbell
1971	Carol Horton Sprayberry	2008	Matthew Hall
1971	Doris E. Chandler	2008	Matt Jennings
1974	Steve Terrell	2008	Jessica Kelley
1974	Henry W. Nunnelley	2008	Lora Parker
1974	Sheri (Dodd) Smith	2008	Ajike Player
1974	Chip McEwen	2008	Jerry Saylor
1975	Lee Perryman	2008	Wesley Sims
1975	Jeff N. Patterson	2008	Landon Wakefield
1979	Kelley (Sawyer) Wassermann	2008	Alesia Williams
1979	Rev. James K. (Jimmy) Schell	2008	Tara Williams
1982	Lisa (Barnett) Strong	2008	Clisby Wilson
1983	David Simpkins	2008	Clint Wright
1984	Jeffrey C. (Jeff) Cleveland		

\* In memory of Tony McEwen - Class of 1974

### 2009 Senior Band Members

Gabriel Dennis	Cameron Kelley	Jennifer Nunnelley
Emily Giddens	Ben Lamberth	Phillip Partridge
Jessica Harris	Maya McKenzie	Brandy Scott
Travis Higginbotham	Shawn Nelson	Seretha Williams