

*Celebrating the  
Sound of West Texas  
Buffalo Marching Band*



*Christmas 2022*



## *Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!*

Christmas is a magical time of year with twinkling decorative lights, the joyful sounds of carols and holiday music, and the festive cheer of being with family and friends. And for Mary, our family and me, it's the time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as predicted in the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

One of my favorite Christmas movies is "It's a Wonderful Life." The movie tells the story of George Bailey, who is facing a devastating situation and declares that he wishes he had never been born. Clarence, an angel, is sent to earth to make that wish come true, and George is able to see what the world would be like if he had never been born. The movie shows the profound difference one person can make in the world. Without George and all the gifts and talents he shares during his life, the beautiful, welcoming town of Bedford Falls would have become Pottersville, a place of darkness and despair, filled with people who have no hope. Clarence makes this statement:

**"Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives.**

**When he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"**

As I reflect on that statement I think of how each of you – WT's faculty, staff, students, donors, alumni and friends – have had such a positive impact on the University, the Texas Panhandle, and the world. Without you, there would be many "awful holes."

WT is committed to people first – especially to our future generations. Every student enters WT with different backgrounds, aspirations and mindsets. It is our job as faculty, staff and



leadership to help students be successful outside the classroom – transforming what could be an “awful hole” into something that is larger than one’s self. This acknowledgment includes the positive impact of our alumni and donors who are partnering with us to extend the educational reach and impact of our University through our One West comprehensive campaign that emphasizes people first.

Every student has touched the lives of so many others, from the Panhandle to the world. An example of this is the expansive reach of the School of Music in WT’s Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities, and its marching band—the focus of this year’s Christmas card. This year marks the 100th year of WT Band Camp, and the 105th anniversary of the Sound of West Texas Buffalo Marching Band. Just think of the thousands of students who have been positively affected by this remarkable program, not to mention the regional impact our band directors have had on high school marching band performances and music programs across the Panhandle and beyond. It is through those types of regional relationships that we continue to make a positive impact on the lives and communities that we serve.

“It’s a Wonderful Life” ends with this quote from the angel, Clarence:

**“Remember, George: No man is a failure who has friends.”**

WT has been blessed by friends like you who give so generously to the University, through time, talents and treasure. I am deeply grateful to each of you. Mary and I are honored to be a part of this remarkable WT community.

In closing, let me say that Christmas is the ultimate celebration of the most incredible act of love. John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

As we prepare to celebrate, Mary and I extend our warm and heartfelt good wishes to each of you during the holiday season and throughout the new year.

God bless WT!

On, On Buffaloes!

*Walter and Mary Waudler*

## **WT Fight Song**

*On, On Buffaloes,*

*We are right for the fight tonight;*

*Hold that ball and hit that line,*

*Every buffalo will shine;*

*And then we'll fight for maroon and white,*

*And we'll roar for the old varsity;*

*We'll kick, pass and run*

*Till those \_\_\_\_\_ are done;*

*And we'll bring home the victory!*

*W - T - A - M, WTAM, Fight! Fight! Fight!*

The University's Fight Song was written by Jack Curtice, a member of the 1938-1941 football coaching staff. Other fight songs have been introduced, one as recently as 1963, but none have been able to undermine the popularity of Curtice's "On, On Buffaloes."



*West Texas State Teachers College Band, early 1920s.*

**“A band is not proud because it performs well;  
it performs well because it is proud.”**

**- George N. Parks**

Jazz icon Louis Armstrong described music as life itself. It’s also been said that music is a lifelong experience.

Music has certainly had a rich, resounding and lifelong impact on the history of West Texas A&M University and the thousands of WT students, community and family members, staff, faculty and alumni who have graced our campus over the decades.

2022 marks the 105th anniversary of the Sound of West Texas Buffalo Marching Band. This year also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the launch of Band Camp, although camp went on hiatus several years due to the Great Depression, World War II, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Buffalo Marching Band and Band Camp seem to go hand-in-hand. Many youths who experience Band Camp return year after year as campers before returning as collegiate students with a passion for marching band. It is a way of life – a wonderful life.

It’s also a wonderful way of life for the WT band directors. There have been just eight over the 105-year history, which is a remarkable statement. Four of them, thankfully, are still with us. Three, in fact, still teach classes at WT.

That’s a remarkable legacy, one that was recently celebrated with Dr. Gary Garner, Mr. Don Lefvre, Dr. Russ Teweleit and Dr. B.J. Brooks shortly after Brooks took the baton as WT’s newest marching band director.

Their conversation and reminiscing, edited for length and clarity, follows.



*Dr B.J. Brooks, second from left, the new director of the Sound of West Texas Buffalo Marching Band, is welcomed by his three living predecessors: Dr. Gary Garner, left, Dr. Russ Teweleit, second from right, and Don Lefevre.*

**Dr. Garner, what was the marching band like when you arrived. Let's start from your arrival at WT.**

**Garner:** My first year, we marched 96. And the talent range is pretty wide, there were some extraordinary players, but the band primarily was made up of non-music majors. And some of them were considerably less than extraordinary. But they were all very committed to the organization and what they were doing.

**What brought you here? And, where did you come from?**

**Garner:** The opportunity to come back to Texas, and the opportunity to have more than just a marching band, to have the concert band as well. I'd been the marching band director at University of Southern California for four years.

**Why go from USC to WT?**

**Garner:** It wasn't in Texas, but you know that already. The marching band scene in California at that time was not remotely what it was in Texas. And I missed that greatly.

**Tell us about your earliest memories of Dr. Garner?**

**Lefevre:** I started coming to the WT band camp in the, I guess, early '70s. And Dr. Garner was always the conductor of the honors band at that time. And so I knew

Dr. Garner from the honors band, but then I came to WT as a student in 1975 from Fort Stockton. And surprisingly enough, there were a ton of students that were attended WT from Fort Stockton because our high school band director was such a big believer in Dr. Garner and what he was able to do.

**Garner:** And I might interject, if I may, that the band camp then and now and every year in between has been probably the single biggest factor that has brought a lot of extraordinarily talented band members to this campus.

**Teweleit:** My story is almost exactly the same. I came in 1983 because my friend Alan needed a roommate.

**Lefevre:** I often say, when people ask me about the success that we're able to have at WT, what makes it so special, I always comment that if it wasn't for the WT band camp, we would not have remotely the program that we have. I have to say, you know, we talk about with all my friends, a lot of our alumni, we talk about the '70s. And the '70s were an amazing time and WT in the Department of Music. Oh my goodness, the talent level was extraordinary. It was really amazing. And it was so much fun to be a part of that. The marching band made it one big family. We got to do a lot of neat things. And the marching band was unreal. I'll never forget the way it sounded. (It was) the trumpets. I think we probably had at that time 35 to 40 trumpets in the band. And if you happen to be marching in front of them, it hurt your ears. It was so intense.

**Garner:** If I could relive one decade of my life, it would be the '70s.

**Lefevre:** I mean, we're going to recapture that again, I hope, but I think the '70s were probably the highlight of things in the School of Music in terms of just the quality of students.

**Garner:** We had an extraordinary faculty — and this is true now — that regarded itself as a team, with everybody pulling in the same direction. And that is not a common thing in college music faculty, let me tell you.

**Teweleit:** The numbers were huge then. I came to camp just for no reason other than my friend needed a roommate. I didn't know anything about WT until then, but I feel like I came to camp and never left. I came here as a music major in the fall of '86. I graduated, moved two blocks and taught in Canyon for eight years, and then came back to WT and been here since 1989.



0-33 0 10

pepsi

FERG FIELD

30

40

50





10 4:57 10

ALL INFORMATION IS TOP SECRET

NARON PLATOON

WALMART

WALMART

J FERG FIELD

40

30

## **What was the reputation of this band?**

**Lefevre:** I think we all felt like Dr. Garner was the very best in the country at what he did. And he had no equal. Really, when you listen to those performances, and all of us do, the band played at a higher level than any other university band in the country.

**Brooks:** I can tell you a little bit about how reputation works. I think my first year here (in the master's program) in 2002, I took conducting from Lefevre. And first thing that we did in class, I remember that, we watched a video of Dr. Garner conducting 'Lincolnshire Posey,' and Don said, 'Now watch this, watch this,' talking about all of the subtle variation of the baton that could invoke a really musical response from the students and not doing more than is necessary, not doing anything showy, but doing what the music demands. This Dr. Garner must be somebody, you know, to be able to pass these words of wisdom to people that I admire and respect. That meant something. That, to me, is what reputation is. It's not the firsthand thing, it's the second and then thirdhand comments from people.

**Lefevre:** I came back and start teaching in '87. I wanted to teach in the best state. So I came back to Texas, and became a high school band director at Robert E. Lee High School. And then this was a crazy story, really. I'm at home in Midland, and I answered the phone and Dr. Garner was on the other end of it. He says, 'Would you like to teach saxophone and be the assistant band director at WT?' This was in the middle of the summer, by the way. And I said, 'Well, I'd love to, but there's not a job opening right there now.' And so what had happened, Dr. Garner was going to actually leave WT and to go to teach at Sam Houston. And luckily, T. Boone Pickens intervened.

**Garner:** He was president of the board of regents at that time and an old high school friend. The school was at the low ebb at that time.

**Lefevre:** Luckily, Pickens intervened. But Dr. Garner met with Dr. Rhodes who said, 'What do you need to stay at WT?' I think he could have asked for the moon and probably gotten it. It really was a turning point for the School of Music had that not happened. And had he left, we wouldn't be sitting here today, I assure you. I can promise you one thing, that marching band would not look like it does now. I can promise you that. We can look back at our life and see those intersections that we come to — turn left or you go right or you go straight. That was one of those pivotal moments for him, and, as it happened to be, for the whole School of Music, because had he not stayed, we have to be totally different. So even though

that's kind of a difficult story to talk about, and it is, it's an important one to remember and to embrace.

**Lefevre:** So what ended up happening, he calls me and I'm not gonna pass up on that opportunity. So we packed up and, and actually, there was no place to live in Canyon, so I came that summer and I stayed in his upstairs bedrooms for a couple of weeks. I couldn't find a place to live.

**Garner:** I'm still waiting on my rent money.

**Lefevre:** At that time I was way too young in almost every way, way too inexperienced. But I had the best teacher.

**Garner:** You were the perfect guy at the perfect time.

**Lefevre:** I had the perfect mentor to help me become a successful teacher.

**Teweleit:** Actually, it was just one rehearsal with the honor band (that drew me here). I didn't know who Dr. Garner was. I didn't know what WT was. I just had a friend who needed a roommate. Yeah. I was shocked. Just like one rehearsal. Yeah, I loved it. Came back the next year and chose to come here for school.

**Teweleit:** (I chose to come to WT for) the combination of working with Dr. Garner at camp and Mr. Ritter, the trumpet teacher, I met at camp.

**Lefevre:** And you fell in love with the campus. And it's just that entire combination. The faculty, and it is really a great place to spend time in the summer. You're just, you're sold on the University.

**Lefevre:** So Garner was the fifth band director at WT. BJ is the eighth since 1917. Garner was the marching band director for 30 years. 1963 to 1993. Yeah, that's a long haul.

**Dr. Brooks, do you have 30 years in you?**

**Brooks:** I was doing the math on that. We'll do one year at a time. (All laugh.)

**In 30 years as the marching band director, how many lives do you think Dr. Garner touched? How many band directors do you think he inspired? What's his legacy?**

**Lefevre:** After many decades, about 8,000 students during that time probably went through the School of Music. And here's the thing about Gary. He retired in 2002, but he's still involved. He's still working at the band camp.

**Dr. Brooks, what's it like to step into the footprints left by these men?**

**Brooks:** It was a big decision. You look at the longevity of these directors and the commitment of these directors, it's certainly no small task. There's a difference from just doing the job but also doing it with the big picture in mind. Not now, but two years from now, five years from now, 10 years from now. I talked to my wife about it and said you know, I don't want to do it for a year or five years, you know. It's a bigger than that. Yeah. I saw the marching band for the first time when I was in Hereford, so that was '98. I come from Eastern New Mexico, and this band was really good. I knew WT was a fine school and all of that. But it was still surprising.

**Garner:** This guy is one of a kind in the world. I mean, he's a theory teacher and a composer of the first rank. But marching band? Those things don't go together at all.

**Brooks:** That was my little secret. Nobody was supposed to know. But my first musical passion was certainly marching band. Of all of the ensembles that I would ever want to be in front of, it would be the marching band.

**What makes marching band so special? What makes it such a valuable experience for students who don't even go on in music?**

**Brooks:** It's so uniquely American to have a marching band, certainly the way that we do it. And I'm not sure what it is in particular, but the idea of putting a visual on top of the music. The visual, but also athletic performance, on top of the music. Something about the physicality of the thing, and you know, of course, being out in the heat, and the cold, and through long days, you're hungry, and this and that. It's a bonding experience. You can have similar experiences in ensembles, but, I don't know, when you sweat together, you start to become very close.

**Lefevre:** It creates an esprit d'corps that you don't get in any other musical activity to that degree.

**Brooks:** Kids want to be part of something bigger than themselves. And if ever there was a team activity, it would be band. Everybody marches. And everybody has to do it together. And if you see somebody who's slightly slower, it's not like we're gonna bench them. They're going to learn it. And they're going to be better for it. Not just better musicians, but going through the whole activity, learning how to do something that you couldn't do before.

**Garner:** There's sense of anonymity in a concert ensemble. There's no anonymity on the marching field. If you're out of step, everybody in the whole stadium can see that.

**Lefevre:** I was talking to one of our alumni and we were visiting about the whole WT experience and what makes our alumni so close and so tight knit. We think it's the marching band, this experience that we've all shared. No one was too good to do it. You know, no one got to opt out. Everybody does it for all four years. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

**Brooks:** Once Russ announced he was stepping down, (I read) the flood of posts, saying, you did this for me, this changed my life, I'll always remember this. Just student after student after student after student. It's a big deal because these are lifelong learning situations, and that's a responsibility that can easily be taken for granted. Our time is very limited, and you have to capitalize on every single moment that you have.

**Garner:** But a very rewarding one.

**Lefevre:** Oh my goodness. It's so much fun. I loved the rehearsals. I loved the involvement with the students. He would say the same thing, he would say the same thing, he would say the same thing (indicated Garner, Teweleit and Brooks).

**Teweleit:** The connection and impact you have on them is so incredible.

.....

At WT, we celebrate our history of music and the continued rich, resounding and lifelong impact it has had on the WT community, the Texas Panhandle and beyond.

It has been and continues to be a Wonderful Life!

## **1910s**

---

Music has reverberated across campus since 1917, when the University's music department was officially recognized. That year the Buffalo Band was established under the direction of Dr. Wallace R. Clark, the first head of the music department.

## **1920s**

---

Five years later, the University hosted a small group of young musicians during its first Band Camp under the direction of the University's first band director, R.N. Brothers. He would be proud to know, fast-forwarding 100 years to today, that WT welcomed 1,003 Band Camp youth, ranging in age from 12 to 18, at the centennial camp event.

A few years later, as Mr. Brothers handed the band director's baton to C.E. "Pop" Strain, the Texas Legislature changed the University's name from West Texas State Normal College to West Texas State Teachers College. It was also when the first band uniforms were purchased. The WTSTC Band conducted its first tour, travelling by train to Brownwood and giving concerts along the train route through Happy, Tulia, Kress, Plainview, Hale Center, Abernathy, and Lubbock.

## **1930s**

---

In the mid 1930s, Canyon residents and the Panhandle community worked together to complete the football stadium that was located on the site of today's School of Music in the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities. The Buffalo Band made headlines as it participated with 2,500 students in high school bands from across the Texas Panhandle, in a parade that featured President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

## **1940s**

---

In 1942, M.J. Newman replaced C.E. Strain as the third band director. Glenn A. Truax served as interim director during World War II when the University band was largely comprised of female musicians. In 1946, the University held the West Texas Annual Band Clinic and a year later established the Alpha Psi chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi and the Xi chapter of Tau Beta Sigma on campus. By the end of the decade, the University also had its name changed to West Texas State College.

## **1950s**

---

In 1958, Dr. Ted Cragger became the fourth band director for the University. A year later the Fine Arts Building – aka The FAB – opened.

## **1960s**

---

In 1963, the University once again had a name change to West Texas State University. During this "golden era" for the band program, Dr. Gary T. Garner was named the fifth band director. He held the reins for nearly 40 years. During his tenure, the West Texas State University Symphonic Band established a national reputation as one of the finest in the country. During this decade, the School of Fine Arts was formed under its first dean.

## 1970s

---

Many new faculty joined the music department throughout the decade that culminated in the opening of Mary Moody Northen Hall.

## 1980s

---

In 1983 the University's Symphonic Band performed its first concert at New York City's Carnegie Hall, performing there again in 1987.

## 1990s

---

The University joined The Texas A&M University System in September 1990. Three years later WT officially became West Texas A&M University. In fall 1994, Don Lefevre assumed responsibility for the Buffalo Marching Band.

## 2000s

---

Dr. Garner announced his retirement in 2002, and Mr. Lefevre became the University's sixth band director. Four years later the Sybil B. Harrington Fine Arts Complex opened and the college became the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities. Toward the end of the decade, Dr. Russ Teweleit took the reins as the WT Buffalo Marching Band director.

## 2010s

---

Dr. Jessica Mallard was appointed as dean of the college; Dr. Walter V. Wendler became the 11th president of the University.

## 2020s

---

B.J. Brooks was named director of the Sound of West Texas Buffalo Marching Band. This year (2022), the band took the field in the newly named Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium, marking its 105th anniversary.



*West Texas State Teachers College Band, 1928.*

The faculty, staff and students of West Texas A&M University  
wish you a blessed Christmas, happy holidays and a prosperous New Year.

On, On Buffaloes!



**WT** Foundation  
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

Funding for this publication provided by the WTAMU Foundation.