



TOMMIE ARENDALE



George Tommie Arendale was born in Owensboro KY and moved at age 10 to Drew Mississippi. He became an accomplished clarinet player, learning much from his music teachers in the Drew High School Band in Drew Mississippi. He then attended college studies at Delta State University, where he graduated with a degree in music education. He took the position as Director of Bands at Hernando High School and continued serving the students and Hernando community for four years. In 1969 Tommie heard another calling and became a music education representative for Collie Stoltz Music in Memphis TN. Upon the closure of Collie Stoltz Music, Tommie joined AMRO Music team in 1992 as the West TN Representative, and serves so TODAY.

Deeply devoted to his local community and to music as a whole, Tommie has also directed the choirs of the churches he has attending for over 34 years, beginning with Hernando United Methodist Church, then Madison Heights UMC, Andrews UMC, and most recently Whitehaven UMC until its closure.

Tommie has been in many, many schools throughout his career. He has served aiding in the development of recruitment programs, providing recruiting supplies, meeting students and their parents, and assisting in placing beginners on their proper instruments. Imagine the miles and visits necessary to supply all the required books and accessories for the many band programs to begin teaching every year. After the fall "rush" was over, Tommie continued to come to our band rooms on a regular basis to ensure our success in the teaching of young musician. In all these years, many a suggestion has been offered, music-folders provided and the all-so-important instrument repair done right before your eyes, all provided because Tommie want us ALL to be successful each and every day as we teach.

Tommie is married to his beautiful wife Sharlee and has two sons; Alan, married to Melynn, and Eric, married to Kristie. He has one daughter Sarah. He has two step-children, Mark Gillespie and his wife Elizabeth, and Bill Gillespie and his wife Courtney. Tommie is also very proud of his six grandchildren.

LEEURN HARRIS

Leeburn Harris always considered himself to be a luck man; he loved his job and never thought of it as "work." He loved music, loved sharing it with his students and he knew that he was instilling qualities in his students that would last a lifetime. He credited the US Air Force with not only providing him with the means for a college education but with giving him direction throughout his career. He received his B.S.; his Master's and 45 hours above from Memphis State. He was a man of character and loyalty; he worked in only 2 school systems in his career. He began his teaching career at Parsons High School in Decatur County, TN in 1959. It was later consolidated with another county school and renamed Riverside High School. He was the band director there for 15 years until he accepted a position at Lexington High School in the city where he was born. He remained at LHS until his retirement in 1992.

During his tenure as a band director there were many trophies won, many marching contests and parades, and many nights of band practice. Fall brought Friday night football games that were all about the half-time show and perfecting the performance while still playing 3 quarters of rousing background music for the fans. Winter brought Christmas parades and spring brought even more parades. Summer brought planning time for the half-time show and the exhausting 2 weeks of band camp. Mr. Harris loved each of these seasons of music.

He knew that students were not only learning to play an instrument but they were learning life skills such as perseverance, respect, teamwork and pride. He has a Facebook group dedicated to his memory titled "Mr. Harris was my Band Director." Many write about the qualities he helped them find in themselves and the lessons that they learned that have carried them through hard times.

Mr. Harris was a lifelong member of First Baptist Church in Parsons, TN and enjoyed re-working classic hymns that could be played by the brass section, with him playing his beloved silver trumpet. The complete brass section was comprised of former students who had carried their love for music into adulthood. Leeburn Harris died on November 13, 2006. He left behind his wife, Peggy, his children, Mike, Jim and Lynda, and 5 grandchildren. He also left behind countless students who remember his as a father figure, a guide, a mentor and a friend.



JOHN JONES



John Jones graduated from The University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Music Degree in 1965. While in the Ole Miss Band under the direction of Lyle Babcock, John was band librarian and a member of the Ole Miss Band Council. Other activities include: member of the Concert Singers; Rehearsal Conductor for the opera, Carmen; and Chapter President of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia.

During his fifth year taking graduate courses, John was the band director at Oxford Elementary School for the 1965-66 school year.

After leaving Ole Miss, John became the band director for Camden City Schools in Camden, TN. He was there for two years.

John became the Grove Junior High band director in Paris, TN in 1968 and was moved to the new Henry County High School in October of 1968. During his tenure at HCHS, John also had the responsibility of organizing the band portion of the World's Biggest Fish Fry Parade for five (5) years. There were twenty six (26) bands to participate in the parade. John also was the president of the Paris Arts Council during his last year in Paris and was a member of the Paris Choral Society.

In 1974 John became the marching band director at Oxford High School, Oxford, MS. In 1976, John was approached by the Oxford Schools Superintendent to move to the Oxford Junior High School to help motivate and retain the band students there. John agreed to the move provided he could move back to the high school position when the time came. When the time came, he didn't want to move back to high school and continued to teach junior high/intermediate students for the next 30 years.

While at Oxford, John was President of the I-55 Band Directors Association and President-Elect of the Northeast Mississippi Band Directors Association. John received his Master of Music degree from Ole Miss in 1976.

John became the band director at Tigrett Middle School, Jackson, TN in 1985 and remained there until his retirement from teaching in December of 2005. While at Tigrett, the band hosted the WTSBOA Band Clinic tryouts two (2) or three (3) times. Jan Warren and John organized and hosted at Union University the WTSBOA Solo and Ensemble Festival for several years.

John and his wife, Shirley moved back to Oxford, MS after retirement where they are very active in their church. Since his retirement, John has continued his band ties by participating in the Oxford/University Community Band as a trombone player.

NANCY MATHESSEN

Nancy Ann Adams, was born in Beaumont, Texas, on September 23, 1937.

Nancy was raised by a gentle father, John D. Adams, and forward thinking mother, Freda Adams, both of whom played the piano and encouraged Nancy and her sister Minnie to pursue whatever they were passionate about, including music. Although her first instrument was the violin, Nancy learned early on that she also had a love for percussion; this was a calling that her parents and grandmother (Minnie Lee Aldridge) fostered, one that would ultimately become her destiny.

In 1959 Nancy pursued a Bachelor of Music degree from Lamar University, where she studied with Edna Brooks (violin) and with Paul Holmes (her first true mentor in percussion) and met her future husband, John Mathesen. After finishing at Lamar, Nancy earned a Master's in 1965 from North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas).

Nancy Mathesen began teaching at the University of Tennessee at Martin in 1968. Although she started in a part-time capacity due to her husband's appointment as Director of Choral Activities, Nancy quickly became an integral part of the UTM Music Faculty. Furthermore, Nancy demonstrated that a thriving percussion program clearly belonged in any vibrant collegiate music program. When Nancy became a full time instructor at UT Martin in 1973 there was no looking back. From that time on she made history, and literally hundreds of students have been touched by her dedication to teaching and commitment to excellence.

Nancy's students - majors, non-majors, private students, and general lovers of music - include music professional, music business owners, international performers, principals, managers of major touring acts, a mayor, and most important of all, teachers. In Nancy's thirty-seven years at UT Martin, percussion became a cornerstone of the Music Department. Her resounding influence and commitment to excellence continue today as her words and actions are felt in the daily lives of her students, grand students, and great grand students.

Today, Nancy resides in South Haven, Mississippi. Her son Kris and daughter Johnna are constant companions, and her grand daughter, Tati, is her greatest joy!

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



JACKIE THOMAS



Jackie O. Thomas grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, and attended Hollywood Jr. High. He joined the band there in 1946 and was elected to the All-City Band in 1947. There he met Brother Raphael, the band director at Christian Brothers High School, known at that time as CBC. He got Jackie a four year scholarship. Brother Raphael hired Ralph Hale as the band director in 1948. Mr. Hale was a great teacher and had a big impact on Jackie's life. During his time at CBC, Jackie considered a career in music.

After graduation, Jackie joined the army and auditioned and was accepted into the Third Army Band in Atlanta, Georgia. There were many wonderful musicians in the band and they mentored him while he was there. He got enough experience there to play professionally after he got out of the army.

After his release from the army, Jackie attended Memphis State University and got a B.A. in Music Education. Mr. Harris, the Chairman of the Music Department, recommended him for a Band Director position at Snowden Junior High. Jackie taught there for fifteen years and had superior ratings at Contest every year. He then had short tenures at Whitehaven and Wooddale High Schools. His last teaching position was at Overton High School, where he taught Jazz Band and Music Theory. The Jazz Band at Overton was exceptional and was rated Superior and Grand Champion at festivals and Contest every year until Jackie retired in 2001. Jackie also received the Memphis Grammy Committee "Premier Teacher Award" in 2001.

In his personal life, Jackie is married and has four children and seven grandchildren, which make his retirement a joy. Jackie also had a professional career apart from teaching. He played in the Memphis Symphony for five years. He left the Symphony in order to play in the recording studios in Memphis. Jackie played on many radio and television commercials as well as hit records by Elvis, Isaac Hayes, Neil Diamond and many more. His kids both at home and at the various schools where he taught all think he's a star. Jackie Thomas has a life that is full of joy and happiness for all the success he had in music.