

Band Senior Essay

Band. Such a small word, yet it means so much to those of us who have been through it. Been through the summer practices, the after school practices, the six hour weekend practices, the twelve hour competitions, the six hour fall break practices everyday, the grueling heat, the frigid cold, the practices that never end, the season that never gets better.

Band is a unit. You're never praised for doing exceptional, unless you're exceptional at fitting into the line. At playing what's expected. At not going above and beyond. Yet for some odd reason, when everyone clicks together, and does what they're expected to do, something happens, and everyone's exceptional. Everyone's a star. Everyone stands out. Everyone feels important. Everyone is important. And band creates that feeling throughout *everyone*, and *everyone* shares the feeling. Band creates that sense of unity, of being not just a part of the whole, but a part that projected the whole to new levels.

I remember one day, the weather wasn't so good, so we inside practicing. Mr. Wick ran us through one of his long-winded talks about tone and air and so on and so forth, but something clicked, and the we all did what we were expected. We played. And when the band played, I heard it, the sound of the band, what I was a part of and contributing to, really for the first time. Sure, I had heard recordings, seen DVD's, listened during rehearsal, but I had never heard that combined sound of forty-some-odd people all working for that common goal of simply being exceptional. It happened again, that sense of unity, that concept of clicking, one long day not too long ago before our competition as a Wind Ensemble at festival. The band knew what it had to do, and

everyone who was there could not have left without a sense of awe at the sound that some of us have been a part of for four years. Mr. Wick allowed me, among others, to sit in front of the band for a while, and I heard what I had been a part of for nearly four years. Just how we sounded. And it wasn't anything like I expected. I felt...something. And I realized I had been feeling that...something...when I had been playing earlier, and I had felt that...something...every time the band had a moment like that. It was a connection. Between me and Mr. Wick, between me and the clarinets, the saxophones, the flutes, the trumpets, the horn, the low brass. Between everyone. It was a hallowing experience, and more than anything confirmed what I get from music, why I want to continue studying and learning.

Of course, band isn't all about holy experiences and whatnot. It's about having a good time. It's a place of comfort, of acceptance, of friends. Ever since year one I've felt like I was a part of something bigger than me. I was with the band. And nothing brings more comfort than on your first day, struggling to open your locker, and having a senior band member come along and help you. Or walking down senior hall, which was, at least for me, quite a scary first experience, and, among the crowd, recognizing friendly faces. It's nice to enter such a big place as a freshman and know you've got a core group to be with should all else fail, a group to laugh with over silly, nonsense things, to go to the band party with, to look forward to the band potluck or band banquet, for no other reason than just to see your band friends. Almost nothing and no one have come as close to me as band has. You can't be ... forever (Read: ... was my freshman nickname because I never talked) (Read: All meant in good humor, I thought it was funny).

And what would band be without a professional educator to give you a lesson about life every now and then. No names, but I swear, there's always been at least one band teacher who everyday had something to comment on, and I can't even begin to describe how much I've learned from this unnamed teacher. This teacher has been there for four years, and sometimes those years can seem longer, and maybe in only in slight part because of this teacher. But in the end, this teacher always comes through, makes some joke, an insightful comment, or just a story you've heard since coming to the band as a freshman which never seems to get old. There's not much I can say about this teacher, except it's been a joy to work with this teacher for four years. If there's one thing I remember, it's how much this teacher had bonded with the band. No matter how many times I'll hear "One more time" and know it means at least twenty, or every time the band gets new music knowing we won't get past the first four measures, I also know that no matter what, this teacher is just trying to help us, help me. This teacher helps to make us better as a whole, and helps to make me better as an individual. This teacher will drill something in until it's second nature, like using air or not pinching in the high registers, not because this teacher's mean or doesn't care, it's because this teacher does care, immensely, and I truly believe that Mr. Wick means to make everyone who enters that red metal door a better musician from day one.

Band. Such a small word, yet it means so much to those of us who have been through it. Been through the after school sectionals, the goofing around at competitions, the yearly low brass tradition of coming up with a shirt design and cleaning and polishing the horns, the dancing of Cotton Eye Joe after the State competitions, the teachers, the friends, the memories. And in the end, memories are what matter most. Memories of

those mentors who only occasionally had to “baby” your part, and those friends who got you through not just band, but life, and who I will remember forever. Memories of that combined, glorious, clicking. I hold those memories dear, and, in the end, that is what band means to me.