

It all begins with music,
Like the dawning of the day,
Like the moon and stars above,
It will guide us on our way.
Ev'ry generation hears its call,
The language of the soul.
Through time and space it dances on,
A blessing for all, a blessing for all.

It's All About the Music



Over the course of TMEA's 104-year history, only six individuals have worked in the association's executive leadership position. Among them, Robert Floyd stands as the longest-serving executive, having dedicated 31 years to the role. Throughout those three decades, he has also held the position of *SOUTHWESTERN MUSICIAN* Editor (see page 8 for his 283rd column!). While he will retire from his position as Executive Director on June 30, Bob's positive impact on this association and on music education for all students will resonate for years to come.

Preparing for this magazine issue, I met with Bob to discuss the roots of his passion for music and music education. Since it's impossible to fully capture in one article the rich history and myriad stories that have guided his 56-year career in music education,

I chose instead to offer a few reflections that illuminate why he chose the music education path and why he's never strayed from it.

A Lineage of Influential Educators

Bob's musical journey began at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas, where he sang in the children's choir alongside his older brother Dick. Bob's first structured music education began when he was seven years old, during weekly piano lessons with Edna Kimsey. Without a piano in their small country home, Bob rode his bike down the narrow country road to his grandmother's house to practice on her old upright. "Mrs. Kimsey was a wonderful and kind teacher, and I still value that I can play piano." While a lot has happened in his musical life since those nine years of lessons, Bob continues to play for personal enjoyment, occasionally



Singing with the Mount Calvary Baptist Children's Choir in the 1940s (far right on the first row).



After performing with a high school clarinet quartet at a 1961 UIL solo & ensemble contest (second from right).



Rehearsing the Berkner HS... they were a TMEA Honor Bo...

sharing his music with the TMEA staff at the piano in the boardroom.

Bob began attending Richardson Elementary School in 1949, just before the opening of Central Expressway, which cut right through the Floyd family farm and supported exponential growth in north Dallas. In contrast to Richardson ISD's 55 campuses of today, Bob went to elementary school in the same red brick building where his father had spent his school days.

When Bob joined the beginner band in fourth grade, he had to share a clarinet with his brother Dick, who was then in seventh grade and playing in the high school band. Bob fondly remembers the time about one year later when he was standing in their front yard at the end of the day, anxiously awaiting his father's return—he was bringing Bob his own brand-new clarinet, bought from the downtown Dallas Brook Mays music store. "That was a good day!"

Bob's first band director was George Gates. "He was a dedicated and kind teacher, and he programmed high-quality music. He really is the one who started what became a long tradition of great bands in Richardson," Bob said. "I have a vivid memory of going to the band hall during lunch and sitting with him at the piano. He had a piece of manuscript paper and a pencil and was writing *Sol y Sombra*, still a popular paso doble for band."

Bob then joined high school band, under the direction of Norman White. Bob played clarinet in the concert band and alto saxophone in the marching band, ultimately leading that group as their drum major. He also put to use his piano skills as

a member of The Dixie Cups, a combo that he and five high school friends formed. They played for dances, talent shows, and local Kiwanis Club events. "Band was just my thing, and it was my social outlet. All my friends were in band."

During high school, Bob had the good fortune to take private clarinet lessons at SMU from Oakley Pittman, who directed the Symphonic Band and who became the music school's registrar (this would become important later in Bob's academic career). After graduating high school, Bob immediately enlisted in the Air National Guard, performing with the 531st Air Force Band for seven years.

During those years of service, he also attended SMU, first enrolling in premed but switching majors to earn a bachelor's in mathematics—an *unexpected turn in this music journey story*. Bob chose his major in part because he wanted to finally deviate from his brother's path (at the time, Dick was studying music at SMU). But it was also because Bob truly loved mathematics—an interest nurtured by his favorite high school teacher, Mrs. Mann, who during World War II was recruited to help test the Army's first computers at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. "She was wonderful, loved math, and shared that passion with her students. I also really enjoyed working with her when she was our student council sponsor—student government was another big interest of mine in high school."

While working toward his math degree, Bob also performed in the SMU Mustang Band directed by Irving Dreibradt and in

the Symphonic Band still led by Oakley Pittman. "I didn't ever think about *not* playing in band. I did it because that's who I was, and that's what I did. Math was my major, but *music was my life*."

As he completed his bachelor's studies, it was again a teacher's influence that motivated his next choice. "I let my math professor talk me into going to graduate school in statistics. I really had no interest in that, but he convinced me." With his life anchored in music (and perhaps with his brother no longer at SMU), Bob found the courage to abandon statistics while waiting for his professor to arrive for





Band. Under his direction, and in 1974, 1987, and 1991).



Receiving his TMEA Past-President and Honorary Life Member plaque at the 1982 Clinic/Convention.



Addressing the TMEA State Board during its meeting at the 2008 Clinic/Convention.

his very first graduate class. He got up and walked to the Owen Fine Arts Center and to Registrar Pittman, who helped put him back on his path—this time to earning a bachelor’s degree in music.

Two years later, after student-teaching at West Junior High in Richardson and graduating from SMU, Bob was hired as an assistant in that same junior high, but that didn’t mean he was done learning. Each morning, he spent first period with the high school band, then under the direction of Joe Frank, Sr. “I watched him rehearse every day for two years, and I learned so much from him—he had such passion and

love for teaching and would get so excited to talk about it. It made no difference what the subject was. He taught me how to play flute. He taught me how to rehearse a band. He taught me how to snow ski. He taught me how to fly his airplane. He could just teach!”

Bob remained in the place of his musical roots for the rest of his 26-year band directing career, during which he was elected to serve as TMEA’s State Band Division Vice-President and TMEA President and, ultimately, hired to be TMEA Executive Director.

Enduring Influence of Music Educators

While technical mastery was a top priority for each of his educators, it wasn’t the defining factor of their influence. Bob consistently describes his teachers—from elementary school through college—as *kind, compassionate, supportive, and willing to share what they knew*. “My most reminiscent memories aren’t how somebody taught me how to get the throat tones right. They are about how they touched me and helped me become the best musician I could be.”

As music educators, I hope you recognize yourself in these stories. *You are the Elizabeth Manns, the Joe Franks, and the Irving Dreibrodt*s. You have the opportunity to guide your students on their musical journey and inspire and equip them to navigate their path with passion and purpose.

All About the Music

When I spoke with Bob about his education and his career, most stories found their way back to *music*, and how it touches our lives. As a band director, Bob spent countless hours researching repertoire and preparing ensembles to perform, so when I asked him about the most powerful music performance experience of his life, I was surprised to learn it was as a singer.

As an SMU music major, Bob was required to sing in the Choral Union, at that time conducted by Lloyd Pfausch. In his freshman year, the Choral Union joined with the Dallas Symphony and Symphony Chorus in a performance of the Mozart *Requiem*, conducted by Bernhard Paumgartner, Austrian conductor, composer, and renowned Mozart authority. “I don’t think I’d ever felt how powerful music could be as I did in that performance that was in memory of President Kennedy—the emotion that music can bring in a moment like that. It was life-changing, from a music perspective.”

A few years later—early in Bob’s band directing days—he pursued his master’s degree at then West Texas State University, studying with Gary Garner. One summer in that program, Bob participated in a two-week summer camp for graduate credit, where H. Robert Reynolds served as the guest conductor and lecturer. On the first day, Bob walked into a directors reading band rehearsal and sat down to observe and take notes, ready to learn from this conductor he’d never heard of. “He got onto the podium, and without offering any real instruction on the piece, he had

In the late '50s Irving Dreibrodt revitalized the Mustang Band, returning to its jazz and swing roots established in the early years, removing all non-brass instruments except for saxophone. While Bob was prepared to play sax, at Irving Dreibrodt’s request, he learned to play euphonium during the summer before his freshman year. He joined the all-male band just as it had grown to 96 players and one featured twirler, leading to their popular nickname, “96 Guys and a Doll.” On this November 22, 1964 cover of *The Dallas Times Herald Sunday Magazine*, you’ll find Bob inside the “M.”

them play straight through *Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon* by Grainger. I can't explain it, but *it changed my conducting life*. The music he pulled out of that piece—just sightreading it—was indescribable. I sat there and thought *that's what I want to be!* It just touched me like no other music performance.”

Hearing about these powerful experiences from his time as a student, I asked him to share a most memorable moment from his teaching days. He immediately replied with a story about taking his band to Corpus Christi to participate in Buccaneer Days Music Festival—a huge event at the time:

We played the Giannini Variations and Fugue. It's an incredibly difficult and emotional piece—a classic example in the repertoire of tension and release. That day, on that stage, everything just came together in an indescribable way. When we finished, the kids walked off stage, crying, so moved by what they had just been a part of. It still blows my mind to think about what sixteen- and seventeen-year-old kids can create through music.

While these are just a few of the many stories Bob shared, I found it significant that in our conversations, he never focused on a contest win or any award. Fittingly, he finished our conversation by recalling this moment that followed the performance of his 1991 Honor Band:

After cutting off the final note, I acknowledged the applauding audience and turned back to recognize the band. I found them all hugging each other, sharing the joy they experienced in making such beautiful music together. It's always about the music and how it touches our lives.



Karen Cross is TMEA Communications Manager and Managing Editor of *SOUTHWESTERN MUSICIAN*.

Thank You, Bob

The members of the TMEA Staff and Executive Board offer our sincere gratitude to Bob for his leadership, support of music education for all, and especially for his friendship. *We wish you well in your retirement!*

From Music Educator to Music Education Advocate

Before being named TMEA Executive Director, Bob had already been helping protect music education in Texas schools. While serving as Berkner HS Director of Bands, and especially during his TMEA Presidency, Bob often traveled to Austin to work with then Executive Director Bill Cormack to influence state leaders on state law and policy, always trying to protect and elevate fine arts education opportunities for all students.

It was in the early '80s that TMEA evolved as a policy influencer, with Cormack decidedly focused on proactively seeking a place for fine arts. When Bob took over in 1993, he immediately engaged in Texas politics. He met regularly with legislators and their staff and State Board of Education members, developing vital relationships and working to ensure that the fine arts education community couldn't be ignored. In his early days, TMEA successfully appealed for the addition of a fine arts credit graduation requirement, followed by a successful campaign to keep elementary music instruction resources funded, and then, most significantly, for the inclusion of fine arts in the required curriculum as a TEKS-based subject. During his tenure, TMEA's work to influence law and policy has only intensified, with continued consultation with lobbyists and, most recently, with the development of the Texas Arts Education Campaign, which Bob co-chairs.

Anyone who's had a conversation with Bob about music education quickly learns about his deep passion for protecting music education through the law. If you're interested in learning more about TMEA's political influence over the years, you'll find highlights in a series of articles we published in our centennial year, available here: www.tmea.org/100years. To know more about music education in the law today, go to www.tmea.org/music-education-in-the-law.



TMEA President Sally Schott and Bob Floyd at the capitol in 1984.



Bob speaks about the importance of high-quality fine arts education at a capitol press conference during the 2007 Arts Education Day at the Capitol.

QA with Robert Floyd

Thanks go to members of the TMEA social media community who submitted questions for Robert Floyd to answer. While we couldn't include them all, we hope you enjoy the variety of inquiries that range from professional to personal:

In the last 50 years, what's changed the most and what's stayed the same in music education?

In those years, the quality of teaching has elevated to a much higher level, which can be attributed to the colleges and universities focused on teacher preparation. Also, having standards defined at the elementary level is a positive change over the years. As for what's the same, it's just the unique way that music can change a student's life.

What lesson should TMEA carry from its past?

Continue to fly the flag that music is academic and a critical part of a well-rounded education to be protected in law and rule.

What in TMEA's history should every member know about?

In the 1970s, by a vote of its membership, TMEA declared its independence from MENC (NAfME). This meant that membership in TMEA wouldn't require the additional payment of national dues, making TMEA membership more accessible to Texas music educators. *For the details, go to page 39 of the November 2019 magazine issue, accessible from www.tmea.org/emagazine.*

What is one thing you wish you learned about before you began teaching?

The challenges of classroom management in those early years. While real-life experience is what helps us develop confidence in this area, I'm glad music educator preparation focuses more on it now than it did in my day.

What do you wish novice teacher Robert Floyd could do differently?

Be more positive in my teaching and not be so singularly focused on the technical perfection of my UIL program or Honor Band submission. I got there quickly but wish I had started there.

What unexpected lesson did you learn while teaching?

Kids are smart. *If you make a mistake, admit it!*

What advice do you have for early-career educators?

Don't let challenges and struggles in a day of teaching overshadow the successes that occur in that same day.

What legislative changes would you advocate for to better support music education in Texas schools?

Tear down the wall between the foundation and enrichment subjects of the required curriculum in the Texas Education Code.

What is a big next opportunity for Texas music education?

To join in the fight with the public education community to force our state leadership to meet their constitutional responsibility to fund a public education system for all children in Texas.

What advice do you have for educators as advocates?

Being a part of your music program must be an experience valued by students, parents, administration, boards of education, and most importantly, your community. Tell your story and utilize your students to do so, performing in your community, and saying *yes* as often as possible. Sometimes your most effective advocacy tool is across-the-fence neighborhood chatter by parents who value music as a worthwhile experience for children.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Career-wise, *legislation is decided by those who show up!*

Who are some most famous musicians you've met?

British composer Gordon Jacob, conductor Frederick Fennell, and artist/musician Wynton Marsalis.

What is your favorite concert band piece you taught?

Ingolf Dahl's *Sinfonietta*.

What piece never fails to move you emotionally?

There Will Be Rest by Frank Ticheli.

What instrument do you wish you could instantly master?

French horn.

What's the last song you listened to on repeat?

Both Sides Now by Joni Mitchell.

What's your favorite podcast?

Simon Sinek on all phases of leadership.

What's a hobby or interest you have that most people might not know about?

Pretending to be an award-winning chef.

What is the latest book you've read?

Beyond the Notes, Thoughts on Meaningful Music Making by Paula A. Crider.

What are you looking forward to doing in retirement?

Jogging and playing piano more.

