

Information on Dr Raymond Tabley Bynum (August 14 1906 --)

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Condensed from "Who's Who in the South and Southwest and
"Who's Who Internationally in Music"

Organized first high school band in Texas Directed Abilene
High School Band 1926 to 1946 Organized first school orchestra
winning many honors and awards B A and BM from Hardin
Simmons University and later Doctor of Music Oklahoma City
University Flutist adjudicator clinician consultant

Born Springdale Arkansas married to Mary Catherine
Adamson (deceased) four children William M D Yale Medical
PhD Cambridge Raymond Jr B A and M A Princeton Theological
Seminary Ann and Sue gifted organists

Director bands McMurry College (now McM University) 1946
to retirement 1972 Made 49 concert tours of Texas and other
states Concert tour to five European capitals) London Paris
Amsterdam Zurich and Rome with the Abilene Rotary club
Five tours to Mexico including two to Mexico City

Subject of Masters Thesis " Raymond T Bynum His Contribution
to Music Education in Texas " Honored by having the two storied
band hall at McMurry named "Bynum Band Hall"

Past president Abilene Rotary Club Past president Texas
Music Educators Association "Bandmaster of the Year" of
the T B A ((1968 Phi Beta Mu Hall of Fame American Bandmasters
Association (1954--)) Elder Presbyterian Church 32nd degree
Mason Shriner (demitted)

Afterdinner speaker, rancher, rose grower

d d d d d d

During McMurry years was major professor to many school band
leaders a number of whom are still active Currently Professor
Emeritus McMurry University Band

d d d d d d During high school years Dr Bynum
was active in the development of the TMEA and was an innovator
in many school practices still current today i e credit for marching
band half time pageantry etc

d d d d d

This comment ' Had I the opportunity to live my professional
live over I would like to be a school band director and deal
with young people For 46 years this is what I did and would
like to do again School band teaching is a great profession! "

MEMBER OF ORIGINAL "Cowboy Band" (HARDIN-SIMMONS) UNDER
DIRECTION OF D.O. WILEY -

The Way it Used to Be

Editor's note: The following article is excerpted from an interview with TMEA's oldest living Past-President, 90-year-old Raymond Bynum. Our thanks is extended to Hardin-Simmons University student Justin Williams for his contributions to this project.

I was asked to tell about the early days of band and the way it used to be. First, let me tell you a little about me - I'm Raymond T. Bynum. I was born in 1906 in Springdale, Arkansas. My elementary schooling was in north Louisiana. In 1919 my father was elected to be superintendent in Anson, Texas, where we lived next door to the Adamsons. I married Mary Catherine Adamson, and we would later have four children.

After graduating from Sterling City High School at the age of 14, I went to school at Simmons College (now Hardin-Simmons University) in Abilene, Texas, for two years. I was a member of the Cowboy Band and majored in Spanish. Then, at the age of 17, I was elected to teach Spanish, Math, English and just about everything in Toyah, Texas. Two years later I went back to Simmons for a year to graduate, and then, at the age of 20, I was elected to Abilene High School as the Spanish teacher. After forming a band at Abilene High, I was band director there until 1946, when I became the band director at McMurry College. I didn't ever have any idea that I would go into the music business because I was not an excellent player, nor did I have any background in music education.

Band in School

When I went to Abilene High, there were no high school bands in Texas. There were community bands and a few band leaders around, but there were no school bands at all. Band, at that time, was not very popular in school because it made noise if you practiced in the building. It disturbed the classes, and it disturbed the schedule (as those of you know, it's hard to schedule band). We practiced at night the first year. I got about a dozen boys that were in school (we didn't think girls could play in the band at the time, but we finally learned that they can), and we practiced once a week, at night.

I remember one occasion when it had rained, and the walkway (there were no sidewalks) to get to the room where we prac-

ticed was muddy, and we tracked mud in the building. The janitor took a dim view of the mud and he told the superintendent, who called me in and said, "if we can't do better than to track mud in the building, we just won't have band." He wasn't particularly in favor of having a band. In fact, there wasn't anybody in favor of having a band except me and the few that were in it, but we survived. Finally we had a principal that agreed that it ought to be on school time. He scheduled band practice when the others were having their lunch because we practiced in the auditorium, and it would be disturbing to the other classes. I never had a band hall at Abilene High; we practiced on the stage all the time. It did disturb, and it was not too popular with the other teachers, but it caught on pretty well, and the second year more people joined.

Early Fundraising

One thing that is significant to people who read about bands now, and are conscious that every school has a band that is financed partially out of the taxpayers' money, is that this was not true then. There was nothing in the budget for band. As a matter of fact, for the first couple of years, each band member had to pay a quarter to get into the football games at which we played. So we had to devise ways to buy a little music. Now at that time a march (the "quick-step" size marches that younger directors are not familiar with) cost 50 cents for a band. We bought music and a drum or two by making a little money off concessions. I guess that here in Abilene, (I'm not sure that this is true, but I think it is) that we were the first town in the state where the band sold concessions at ball games. It is hard for most of you to conceive of a football game without the concession stand, but we did that. For the first year or two, I'd have the band peddle it in the crowd. As the band got a little bigger, and we could spare the players, I'd let a quarter of them out to sell drinks in the crowd. All our finances were done on our own. We finally got a band-parents association that helped out some at ball games. We sold programs at the games and also tried to sell tickets to the band concerts. I'd send the boys to town and they'd go to all the merchants. I remember some merchant said, "Well, I heard that band play on the street yesterday in a parade. Why should I pay a quarter to sit through it again?" He had a good point. What finance there was, we made it ourselves. I didn't think there was any other way to do it.

The first uniforms were not so ornate as they are now. I remember the honor band I had picked from all the elementary schools, and the uniforms they wore. They had white pants, a white shirt, a little bow-tie that cost a dime, a cap (made by a company here in Abilene) that cost a quarter, and little vests their mother made with some brass buttons which cost a dime. So the uniform cost less than a dollar, and it looked pretty good.

Our principal let us practice on school time, and I finally got him to let us have two periods, and we marched after school. Some thought that it was too much time in band. It may have been, but I think it wasn't, because the band got pretty good. In fact, there was a time that Abilene had maybe the best band in the state.

The first contest we entered was a national contest held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and there were three Texas bands that attended. They rated bands one, two, three, four, etc., like they do in the Olympics. In class A, which was the top schools (which we were in at the time) there were 15 bands at the contest. I believe we were 13th, Cisco was 14th and Amarillo was 15th. We had the three bottom bands in the nation. Most of the bands came from the Midwest, around the Chicago area. There were some very good ones from there, but we didn't do so well. My publicity was that "Abilene band rates the highest of any Texas band."

Contests

At the national contest in Tulsa, John Phillip Sousa, Edwin Franko Goldman, and Karl King were judges: names that the younger players may not know, but the older players may remember. As a matter of fact, Sousa brought his band to Abilene once, and he let the local school band fill in at intermission and play a piece under his direction. Our band filled in, and the piece we played (using the word "played" very loosely), was "High School Cadets." Sousa came out, took his bow, got on the podium, and gave the downbeat before half the players had gotten their horns up. That's the way that particular event happened, but I cherish the fact that I had met him and had my band play under his direction.

Later we had national regional contests, and we had a lot of them here because Abilene was a center of band activities. There were other towns where it became important too, like Waco and Galveston. There was a period when most of the state conventions went to Galveston because it was the only place in Texas that had enough hotels close enough together to have a convention. So we had a convention. That was the Texas Music Educators Convention. Now I was active in those matters and served two terms as president of TMEA, and I was active in the Texas Bandmasters Association. In 1954, I was elected to membership in the American Bandmasters Association, which is a significant honor, and I went to most of the conventions. In 1968 I was named the Texas Bandmaster of the year, and I was also one of the first few people inducted into the Phi Beta Mu Hall of Fame.

I'd had no formal music training. There was no place that I know of, other than maybe the conservatories up north, where one could study to be a band leader. You could study piano, violin, or voice at the Texas colleges of fine arts programs but nobody had an instrumental study and there was nobody to ask. I know one piece we had (it was a contest number), was in six/four time, and I hadn't ever played anything in six/four and didn't know what it meant. I taught it to them in three and they were playing it pretty good. Then some fine musician that I knew was passing through and heard it from the back and said "Raymond, that should be beat in two, like 6/8 time." I didn't know any better and there

wasn't anybody to ask until he came by, but we relearned it. The piece was "In Bohemia" by Henry Hadley and I remember it well, but I haven't heard it since then.

A lot of the girls said they'd like to play in the band, but I didn't think it was proper for the ladies to play in the band. I had a good deal of people like piano teachers that didn't want them to get involved in horn-blowing. They claimed it would ruin a girl's lips if she played a brass instrument, and that it was not lady-like. In about 1937, I conceived the idea of organizing an all-girls band, which I did, and it sold really well. We had up to around 75 players in at one time: some really excellent players. They were never as good as the boys band because I had trouble getting girls to play the bass horns, though I had some that did play them. As long as I was at Abilene High School, I didn't have the bands together. At half-time the girls would do part and the boys would do part. Dr. Robert Fielder, who followed me at Abilene High, finally put them together. He told me that he thought he was going to be tarred and feathered and run out of town by the boys because they didn't think the girls ought to be in it. That's virtually the way it was back in the early years.

Directing Now

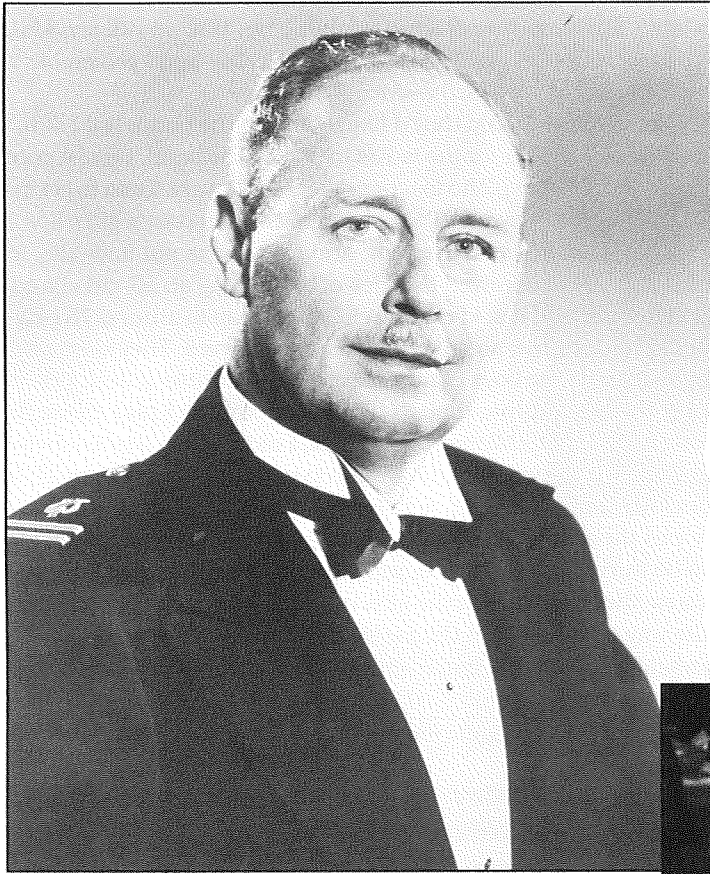
The pay, when I was a band director, was not too good. It's adequate now. Band directors make pretty good salaries, but also have associations with the students and the opportunities to mold their lives. Some people say that the discipline of the kids is worse than it used to be, and I guess it is, but if I were a band director now I think I would be able to have pretty good discipline. Students

"Many band directors have the idea that they step on the podium, come down with the baton, and the band makes glorious music. Not so. You have to teach them to play the pieces, but there is so much more to being a band director than just directing."

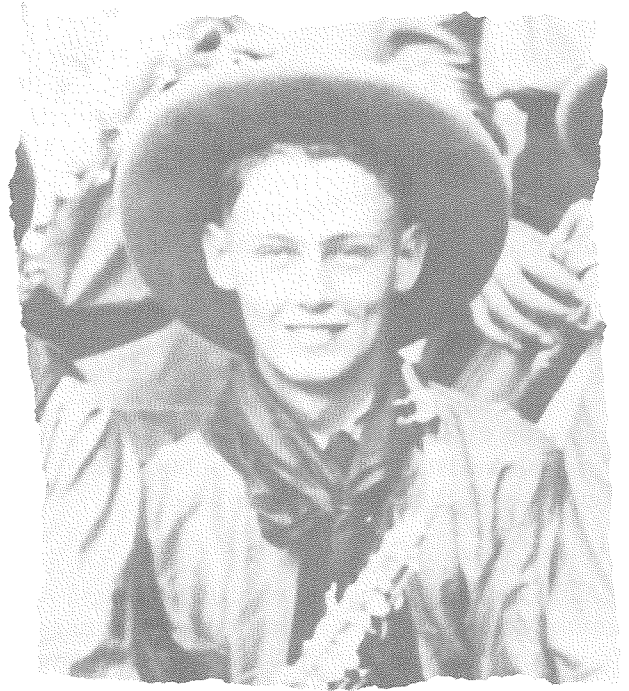
that take up band are a grade or two above the average student. I don't mean that to inject any animosity, but the band people are super people, usually.

Many band directors have the idea that they step on the podium, come down with the baton, and the band makes glorious music. Not so. You have to teach them to play the pieces, but there is so much more to being a band director than just directing. The rehearsal routine is part of it. Discipline is certainly a part of it. I always wore a coat during the rehearsal. Actually, for many years, I always wore a uniform while directing. People don't do that anymore. You've got to set an example for the kids. When I first went to Abilene and met the superintendent of schools, I didn't like him; he was hard on young teachers. Later I loved him like a father; I was even a pall-bearer at his funeral. I remember his main speech was, "I teach John arithmetic. Now what are you teaching? Are you teaching arithmetic or are you teaching John?" Well, he said that you could do both, but that you should be more interested in teaching John than you are in teaching arithmetic. As band director, you have a close relationship with your students: closer than in the regular subjects. If you, as a director, don't want to be a counselor as well as a music teacher, maybe you're in the wrong field. If I had my career to go over again, I wouldn't change a thing.

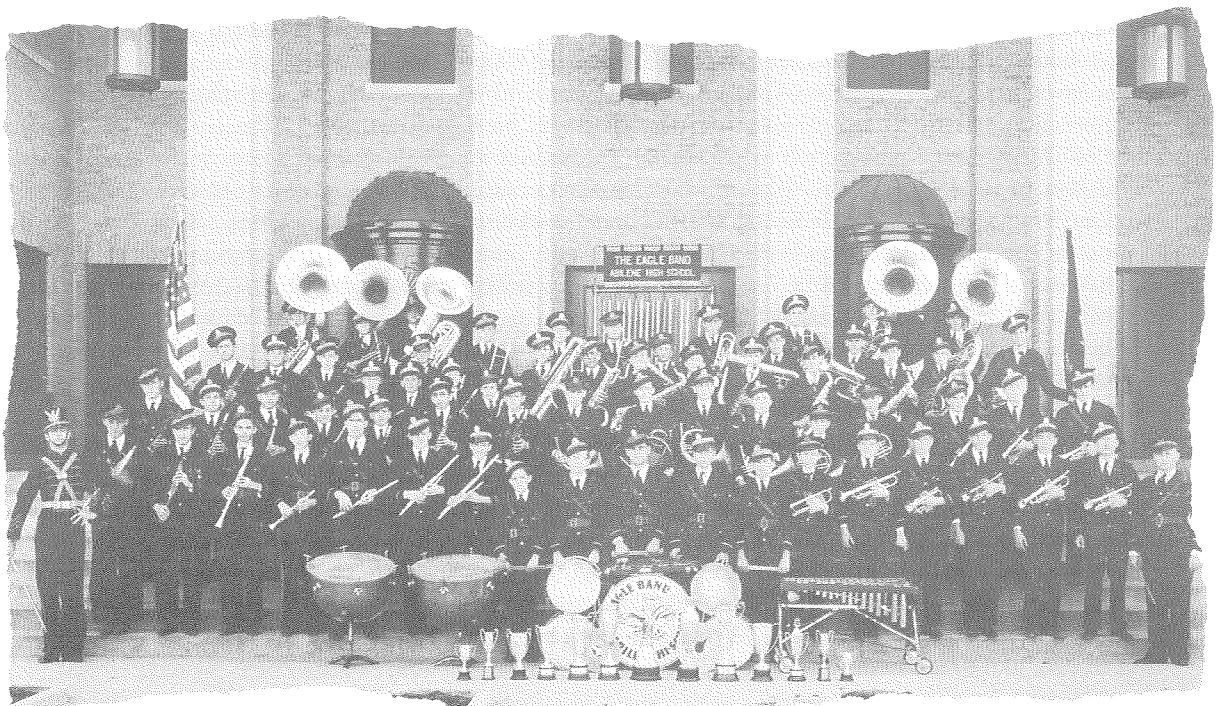
Bynum, a retired band director living in Abilene, was TMEA President from 1944-46



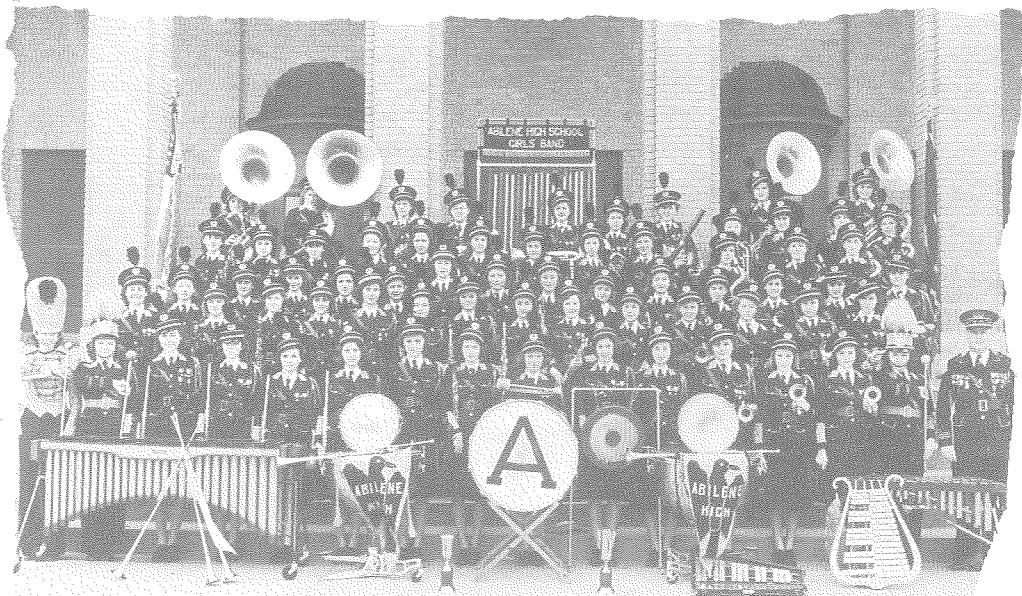
Above - Bynum during his years at McMurry University



Top - Bynum in the original Hardin-Simmons University Cowboy Band, 1923
Left - Bynum at his 90th birthday party, 1996



Right - The Abilene High Band 1934-35 (all boys)



Left - The Abilene High School All-Girls Band



Middle - The original Abilene High School Band, 1926

Right - The original Hardin-Simmons University Cowboy Band, 1923 (Bynum is bottom row, sixth from right)

