

Irion County honors band director

By ARMANDO RIOS JR.
Staff Writer

"Mr. H," as Osiel Hernandez was fondly called by everyone, was honored Tuesday night by the Mertzon community in the best way they could.

The high school band hall was renamed Osiel Hernandez Band Hall following the annual supper and spring concert.

For Hernandez, who died of an aneurysm in November after collapsing on the sidelines while the Irion County High School Band performed in a state marching contest, being with his students was much more than just a teaching job.

"We went fishing with him and a lot of times he would take some of us on vacation," said Michelle Dolan, president of the band and a junior. "He was just like family. He was a friend. We could go to him anytime and he would give advice, laugh, tell dirty jokes and be crazy, yet at the same time, we always respected him."

There was nothing but praise for Mr. H, from students, parents and teachers.

Dolan said the greatest lesson she learned from Mr. H was respect.

"I can see his smile," said Kim Holloway, a senior and this year's drum major. "He always seemed happy, always had a joke or something funny to say. He was always real concerned about his band, his students."

Mr. H taught her to always express herself, whether with an instrument or not, she added. "He always told me to 'play it out'; if it was wrong, it was nothing to be embarrassed about."

Yvonne Rodriquez, an eighth grader, carries a mental picture of a big music note.

"Because he loved music so much and he taught me," she explained.

He taught her not to give up, Rodriquez added.

"He was a beautiful man," said Rubi Pardo, a junior and band secretary. "Everybody could get along with him. Everybody loved him."

She always pictures him smiling, she said.

The lesson he taught her was to have faith and con-



S-T photo by Armando Rios Jr.

Michelle Dolan holds a plaque which will be placed at the Irion County High School band hall designating it the Osiel Hernandez Band Hall. The dedication was made following the annual supper and spring concert by Irion County bands at the Mertzon Community Center Tuesday night.

Zip - 76941
fidence, believe in herself and be the best she could be, Pardo said.

"He was part of the backbone of the community" said band mom Susan Lindsey. "He had a strong personality, shy and bashful at the same time."

"He was everybody's friend," said Lisa Cook.

"Nobody disliked him," said Carrie Weaver.

"He was one of the most wonderful people we have ever had here," said Joanna McCutchen, another band parent. "The whole community felt like the band did, it was a great loss for the whole community."

"He was a unique type of individual. There was only one Osiel Hernandez," said junior bandmember Jason Harris.

Whenever he thinks about Mr. H, Harris said, he sees somebody straight forward and serious, yet with a sense of humor.

"Mr. H had everything to do with (their success)," said current band director Bill McDaris. "It was his dedication and efforts that got them to the point they are now. The kids have been amazing with their dedication and quality, to continue after the tragedy."

OSIEL HERNANDEZ

Osiel Hernandez, 32, of Mertzon, died at 8:59 p.m. Monday, Nov. 13, 1989, in Brackenridge Hospital in Austin.

There will be a prayer service (in Spanish) at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 15, in Johnson's Funeral Home chapel with the Rev. Manuel Vallejo Jr., district superintendent of the Gulf Latin District of the Assemblies of God, and the Rev. Santos Becerra Jr. of Templo Betel Assembly of God officiating.

Funeral service will be at 2 p.m. Thursday (in English) in Johnson's chapel with the Rev. Becerra and the Rev. David Molina of Templo Sinai of Austin officiating. Burial will be in Fairmount Cemetery.

Osiel was born Dec. 22, 1956, in Del Rio, Texas, to Raymundo and Maria (Rodriguez) Hernandez. He was a graduate of Robstown High School in Robstown, Texas, and received his associate of art degree from Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, his bachelor of music degree from Corpus Christi State University and his master of music education degree from Angelo State University in San Angelo.

He was band director at Irion County High School for six years and also taught band camp at ASU.

He was an active member of

the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Band Masters Association, Texas Music Adjudicators Association and a member of Phi Mu Alpha.

The Irion County High School band was the Class A State Honor Band for 1989-91. On the date of his death, his band placed third in the State Marching Contest in Austin. For the past five years, the Irion County High School band won Sweepstakes under his direction.

While he was teaching at Santa Anna High School, his band placed third in the state marching contest in 1983.

He married Sandy Faz on Sept. 12, 1981, and had lived in Mertzon 5½ years.

Survivors include his wife, Sandy Hernandez of Mertzon; one daughter, Araceli Belen of Mertzon; his mother and father, the Rev. and Mrs. Raymundo Hernandez of San Angelo; two sisters, Velma Hernandez and Ida Soto and husband, Lionel, of San Angelo; three brothers, the Rev. Jehu Hernandez and wife, Lillian, Raymond Hernandez and Benjamin Hernandez, all of San Angelo; two nephews, four nieces, several aunts and uncles and many friends.

A brass band composed of several area band directors will perform at both services.

IRION

EMTs from Sundown until an ambulance and paramedics arrived.

"They were really super," Gray said, praising the Sundown EMT members who helped her.

Former Mertzon band director John Schuch, in Austin with another band group, joined the Irion County group after the contest to assist members and sponsors.

Band members agreed Tuesday afternoon in a tearful meeting with school officials and parents to participate in the Irion County-Rankin football game Friday night. The band will dedicate its halftime performance to Hernandez's memory. The game is the last of the regular season for the two schools.

Irion County School Superintendent Paul Gothard said Hernandez was well-liked in the community and was dedicated to his students.

Gothard said arrangements have been made for a substitute teacher, but no plans have been made for a replacement.

School board member J. Ann Lange said Tuesday that Hernandez "was one of the finest men I know. We were so fortunate to have him in our community to touch the lives of our students. His record showed what a wonderful teacher we have lost," she said.

Band Booster president Johnnie Gray described Hernandez as "a Christian who loved God, his family, students and his work."

Hernandez said in an interview last week that freshmen made up the nucleus of the Hornet band, so he was surprised that the group had qualified for the state meet. The band won the district contest in Brady and was the top qualifier in Region VII contest at Waco.

The band also was named the Texas State Honor Band for 1989-91, and will perform at the Texas Music Educators Association in February in San Antonio.

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MERTZON — Irion County High School band director Osiel Hernandez collapsed Monday as the band performed during the state marching contest. He died later in an Austin hospital.

Hernandez, a 32-year-old former resident of San Angelo, was watching his 39-member band perform in the state contest for the fourth time in five years when he collapsed, school officials said.

A prayer service in Spanish will be conducted at 7 p.m. today in Johnson's Funeral Home Chapel in San Angelo. Funeral will be at 2 p.m. Thursday in Johnson's chapel, with burial in Fairmount Cemetery.

Hernandez had been director of the small Class A school west of San Angelo for the past six years. He came to Mertzon from Santa Anna in Coleman County.

The Mertzon community was trying to cope Tuesday with Hernandez's untimely death.

Band members, parents, teachers, booster club members, a counselor and school officials met in the afternoon to offer support to the students, and to reconstruct for the students the sequence of events.

The band began its return home at 5 p.m. Monday and received conflicting reports on the director's condition during the return trip. They learned later he had died at 8:59 p.m. Monday in Austin's Brackenridge Hospital.

Counselor Cheryl Hord commended the students for completing their performance.

"This was the most beautiful last gift you could have given Mr. Hernandez by continuing your performance with courage and pride ever while some of you sensed what was going on on the sidelines," she said. Drum Major Kim Holloway said Tuesday she was directing the band on the field when she looked back and saw the director lying on the sidelines. Holloway said she tried to concentrate on the band's performance after seeing the director on the ground. The band was playing the second of five songs planned for the state contest, she said.

"We continued the performance as he had taught us to always keep performing no matter what was going on in the audience," she said.

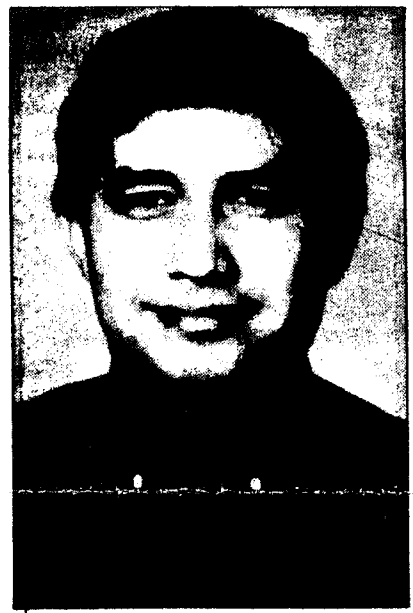
A Mertzon Emergency Medical Technician, Joyce Gray, was taking photos of the band's performance and was the first person to reach Hernandez.

Gray said Tuesday that she started mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on Hernandez when she determined he had not suffered an electrical shock.

The director had turned on a field microphone to be used by band soloists just before his collapse, and some on the field thought he had been electrocuted. A heavy rain storm had delayed the contest earlier and the field was very wet, she said.

Gray said she was assisted in caring for the stricken man by two

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Osiel Hernandez

Irion band director dead at 32

By WANDA COOK
S-T Correspondent

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