

A TRIBUTE TO RONALD THORNTON

MAN AND HIS MUSIC



DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

It is predetermined prior to leaving our mother's womb what plans God has for our lives. It is also predetermined how much time we have here on earth to identify, prepare, and complete our responsibilities. Each one of us is placed here for a purpose to be fulfilled and Ronald Bernard Thornton identified his destiny early in life. If you were blessed to meet him, to know him, to befriend him, to be associated with the man, it was revealed to you what was his purpose, and that was to lead and help his fellow man. He was born into a family wealthy in love. He was supported by a helpmate who's support system lessened his load. He took lessons learned from Mr. Broussard at James D. Ryan Junior high School, Mr. Bennett at Jack Yates Senior high School, Mr. Benjamin J Butler II at Texas Southern University as both a student and as Assistant Band Director, the University of Houston where he earned his Masters degree, and dozens of other musical scholars he crossed paths with. He took all of this into account as he embarked upon a career where he would touch, influence, and mold lives through teaching. He taught more than music to his students. He taught them about life. He encouraged each of them to be the best they could be while demonstrating discipline and the meaning of words such as respect, honor, and responsibility. Always flashing a charismatic smile this gentle bear of a man gave his students a visual picture of how to be responsible for your actions and how to forge ahead on the road of life. His time was too short by man's timetable but our brother and my dearest friend fulfilled his destiny.

Sharone Stewart



Texas All-State Intercollegiate Band

For Outstanding Performance, Leadership, and Scholastic Merit

The Texas Division of College Band Directors National Association


Awards this Certificate to

RONALD BERNARD THORNTON

as a performing member of the Texas All-State Intercollegiate Band

February 4, 1973

Dr. Joseph Bellamah, Chairman
Texas Division of CBDNA


Dr. Donald Hunsberger
Conductor

**From the Brook to the Ocean
to the Ridge**



May The Music Never Stop!!!!



**Maestro
Ronald Thornton**



FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL

Rennie Laws



FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL



FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL



FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Ronald Thornton was more than an instructor, and more than a band director. He had a talent of being able to see the accomplishments students could achieve even though the students didn't realize it lived within them. He knew how to manage people. I was one of many young minds that he challenged, in that I seek all options in taking steps to achieve each goal, whether it was in music or decisions in life. As a student of Mr. Thornton, I was under his direction maybe longer than any student during the time he taught as a high school band director. I spent 5 years with him winning competitions and growing as an assistant to him. It was not because I didn't pass my classes from year to year, but while still attending middle school as an 8th grade student, I began playing in the Forest Brook High school band, under his direction. The point of him making me his assistant gave me the confidence to make smart decisions, whether it's in a rehearsal, performance or social gathering. A role I assume on 98% of the jobs and events I attend, every since he placed me in that position as a student. Mr. Thornton directed and motivated as a coach does, and I, being the drummer, simply drove the band just as a quarterback would run the plays. Also the fellowship we encountered, gave me an understanding of communicating with people, to help them achieve their goals. I've only addressed him as Mr. Thornton, something he didn't ask of me but something he deserved from me. I am now a full time working musician and have been since the time the journey Mr. Thornton and I began.

Land Richards

These are just a few of the jobs, I've applied his teachings to.

TELEVISION APPEARANCES: The Tonight Show Into The Night
The Paul Rodriguez Show The Byron Allen Show The Arsenio Hall Show
Good Morning America Soul Train Dick Clark's Rockin New Year's Eve
Sesame Street VH-1's Story Tellers UNCF's Lou Rawls Parade Of Stars
ALMA Awards/American Latin Music Awards NAACP Image Awards
Motown Live.



Performed And Recorded With:

Gerald Albright Ashford and Simpson Exile Patti Austin George Benson Angela Bofil
Michael Bolton Rick Braun Peabo Bryson Bobby Caldwell Cab Calloway Larry Carlton
Jose' Carreras Nell Carter Randy Crawford Natalie Cole Placido Domingo Will
Downing Earth Wind And Fire Shena Easton Kevon Edmonds The Emotions
Rodney Franklin Johnny Gill Dave Grusin Don Grusin Eddie Harris Lahla Hathaway
Heather Headley Jennifer Holiday Bruce Hornsby Englebert Humperdinck
James Ingram Boney James Al Jarreau Chaka Kahn Gladys Knight & The Pips
Patti LaBelle Ronnie Laws Triny Lopez Jeff Lorber Bobby Lyle Stephanie Mills
Stevie Nicks Tony Orlando Jeffery Osborne David Pack Pointer Sisters Diane Reeves
Lee Ritenour Diana Ross Brenda Russell Joe Sample Jessica Simpson Lonnie Listen
Smith Temptations Stanley Turrentine Ben Varen Dionne Warwick
Jody Watley Kirk Whalum Denise Williams Jimmy Witherspoon Bobby Womack
Stevie Wonder Ali Woodson



sister Sister

LATIN SOUL WITH A TWIST
sisterjam@sbcglobal.net



Proclamation

KASHMERE/FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOLS STAGE BAND MONTH

WHEREAS, it is most important to develop and promote the interests and talents of all young people in our community; and

WHEREAS, the National Endowment for the Art's Jazz Artist in School National Training Workshop located on the campus of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, has recognized both Kashmere and Forest Brook High School Stage Bands for their musical accomplishments and extended an invitation to these outstanding musical groups; and

WHEREAS, during the month of June, both high school stage bands will serve as goodwill ambassadors from the City of Houston as they tour the eastern coast touching the hearts of countless people in Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Cleveland, New Jersey, Atlanta and St. Louis with their unique "Houston Sound";

NOW THEREFORE, I, Jim McConn, Mayor of the City of Houston, do hereby proclaim the month of June, 1980, as

KASHMERE/FOREST BROOK HIGH SCHOOLS STAGE BAND MONTH

in the City of Houston, Texas, and urge all citizens to lend their support to this outstanding musical group.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Official Seal of the City of Houston to be affixed this 4th day of June, 1980, A.D.


Mayor of the City of Houston



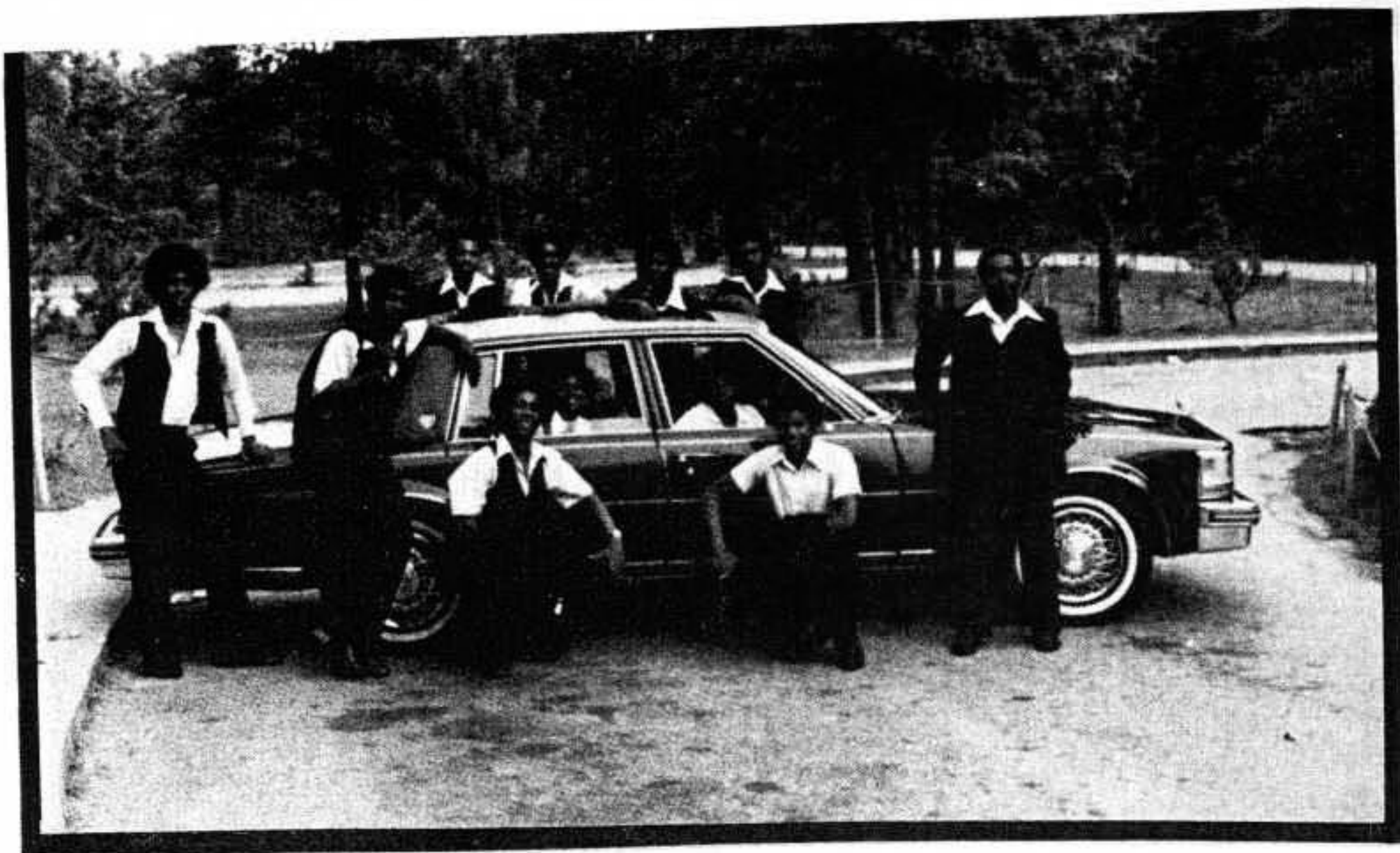


Isaac Hayes
and
Forest Brook / Kashmere
Eastern Tour Directors
and
Friends



FOREST BROOK
& KASHMERE STAGE BANDS
EASTERN TOUR 1980





The Forest Brook High School Stage Band

Plays Jazz

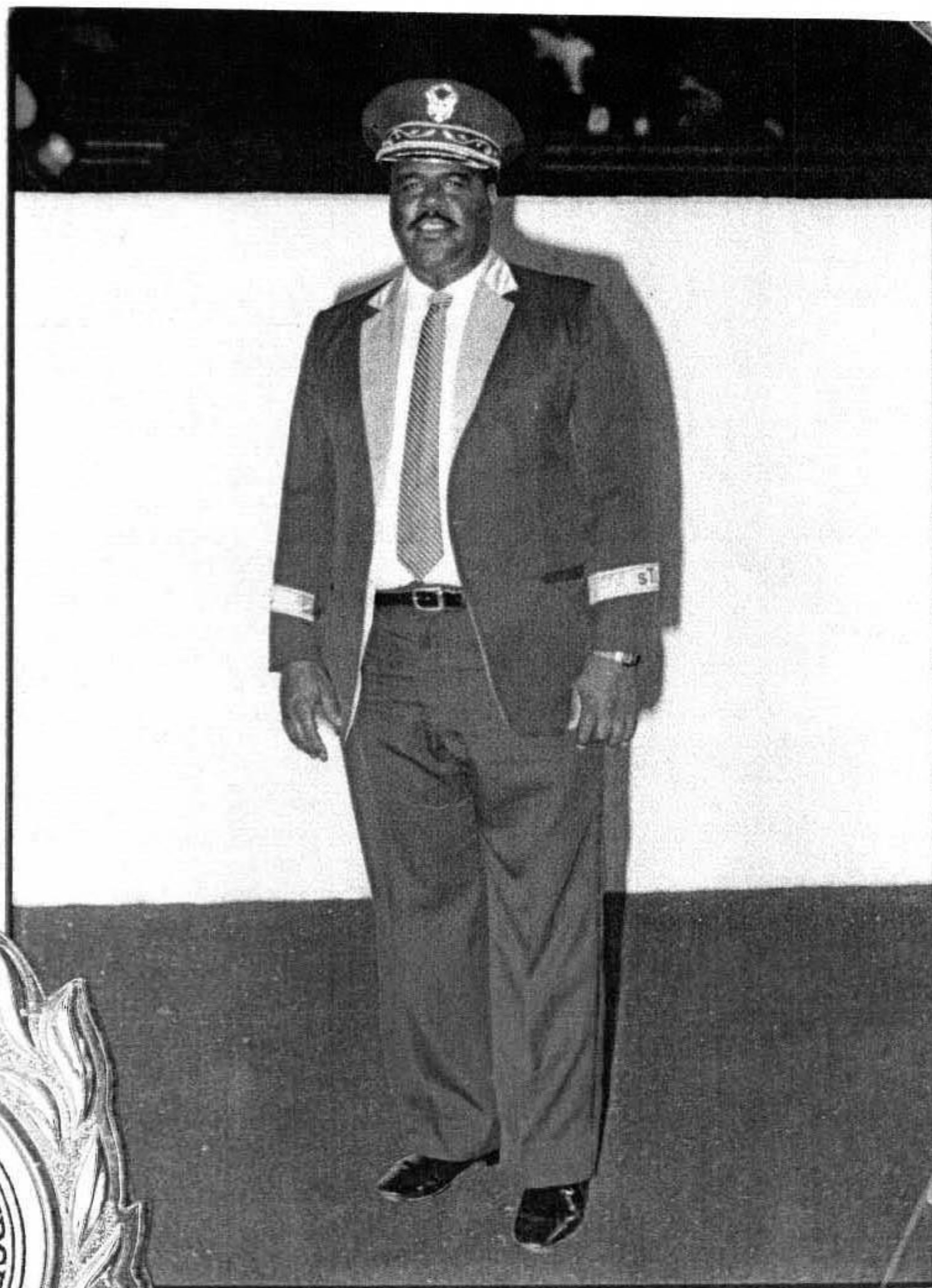
with

Passion and Style

1977-1979

Ronald B. Thornton.
Director

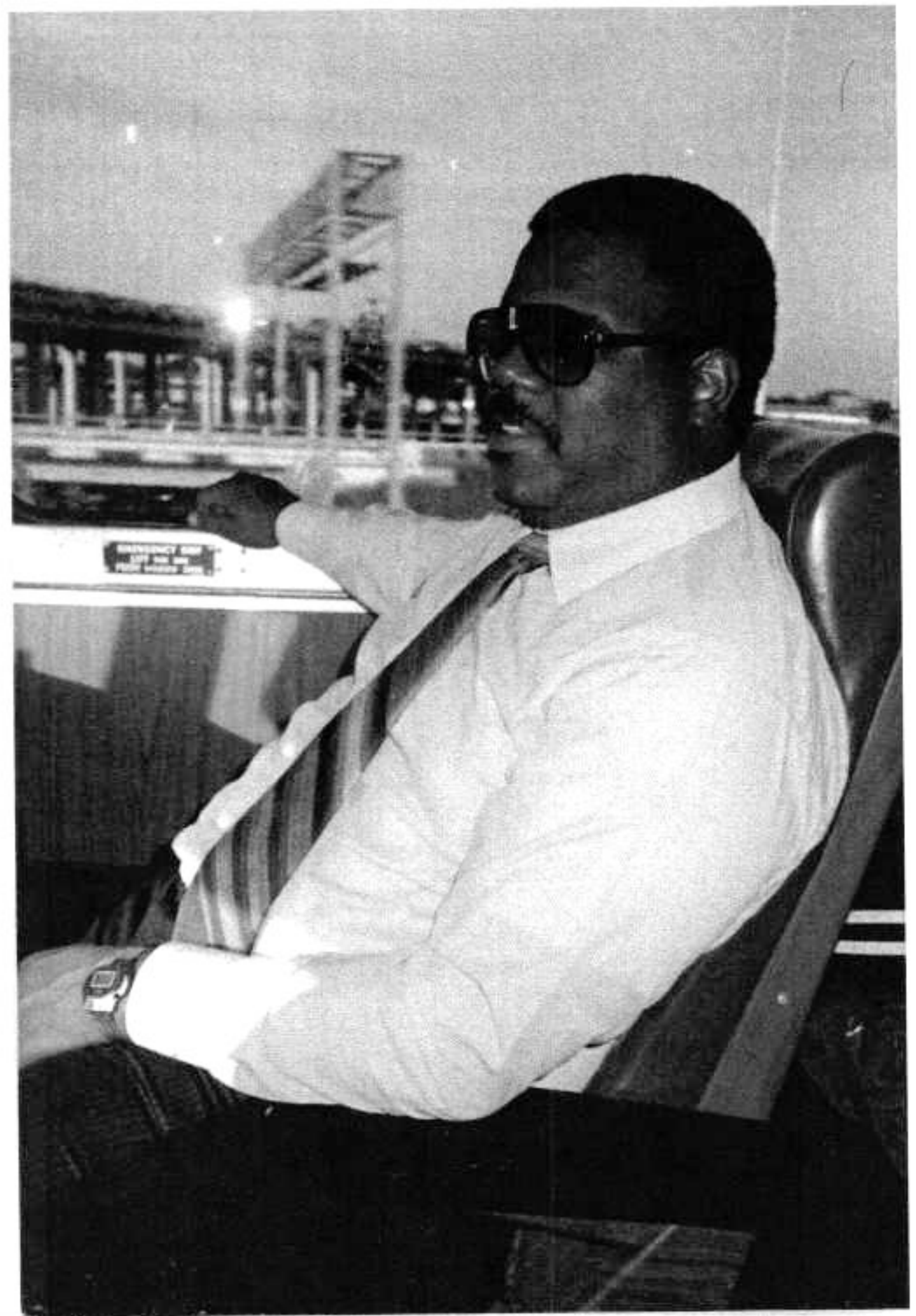




TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

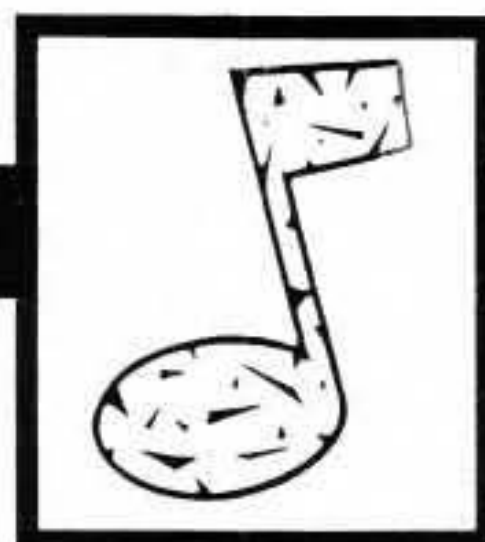
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

1981 – 1988



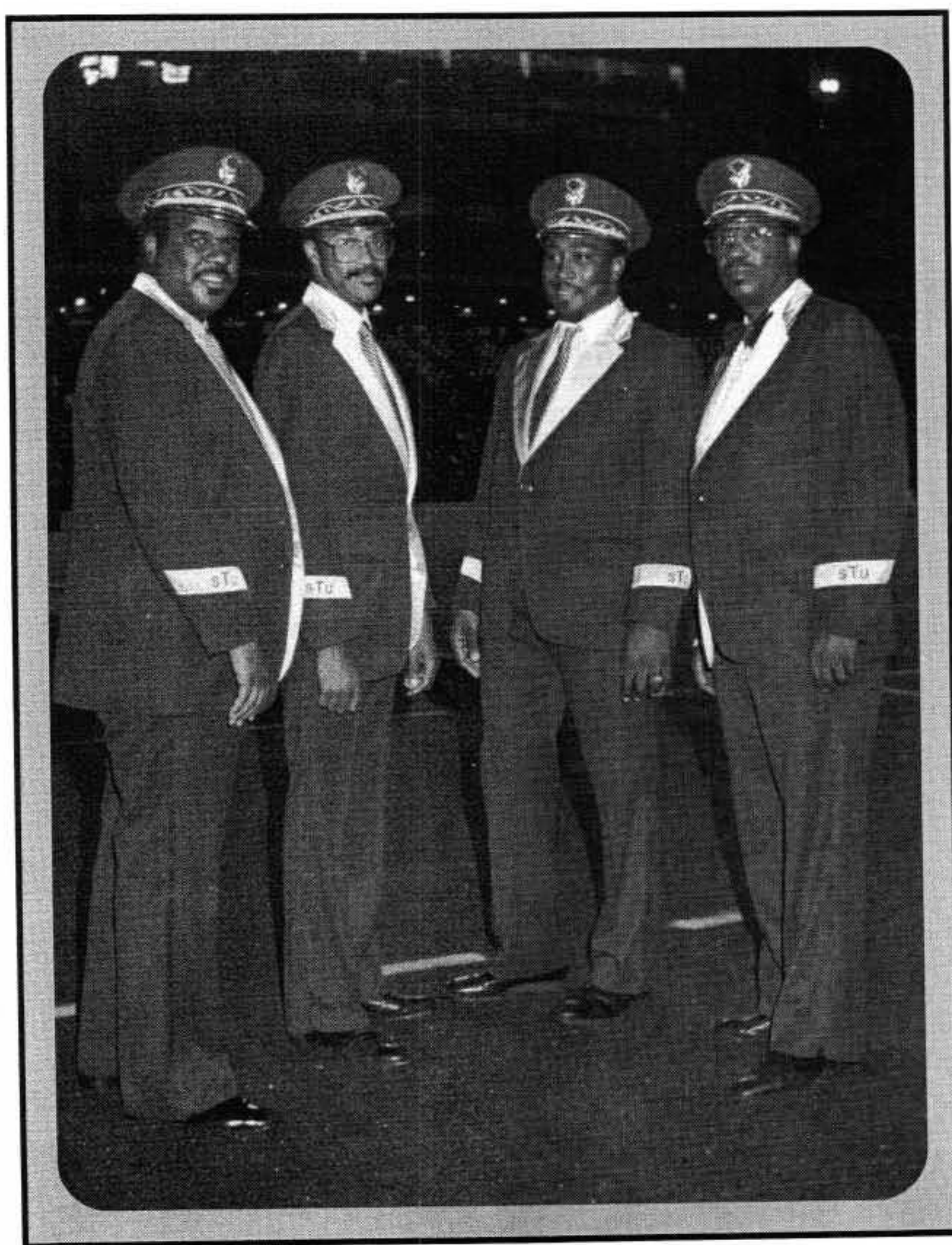


Former Directors of The Ocean of Soul



Best Wishes

From



Former Assistant Directors of the Ocean of Soul- (l to r) Ronald Thornton, Sam Jackson, Earl Thompson and Director Ben Butler

Texas Southern University
Ocean of Soul
(1981-1988)



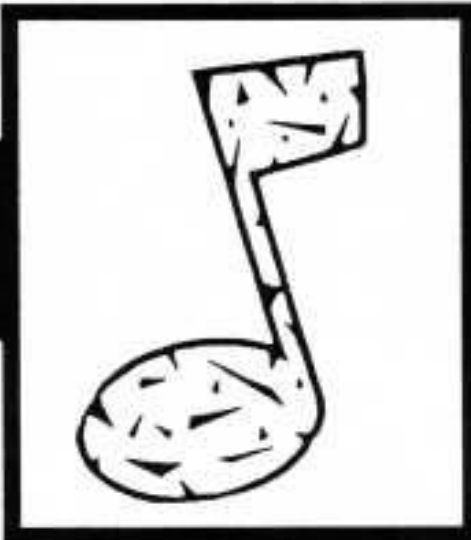
Department of Fine Arts
"Distinguished Alumni Award"

presented to

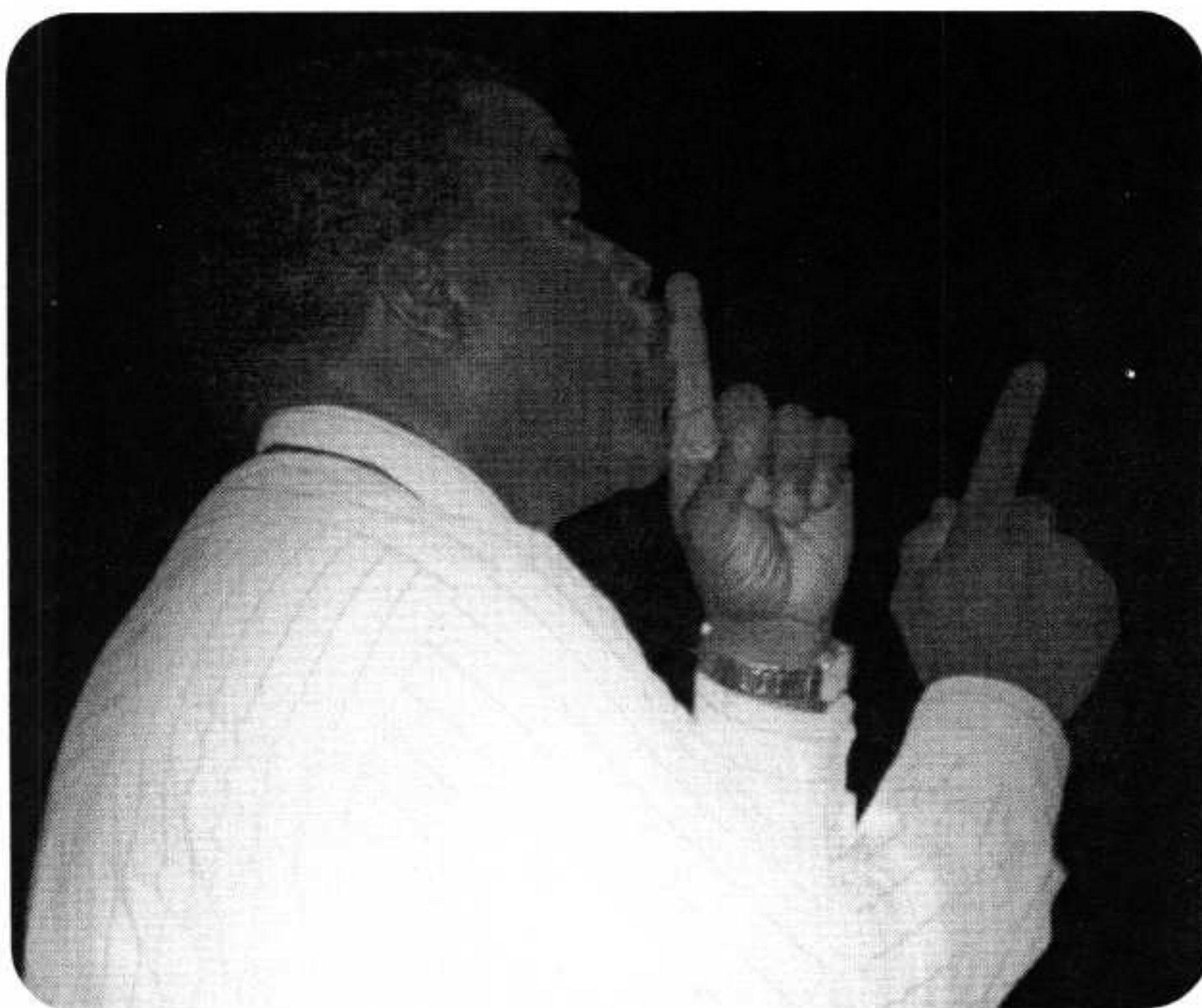
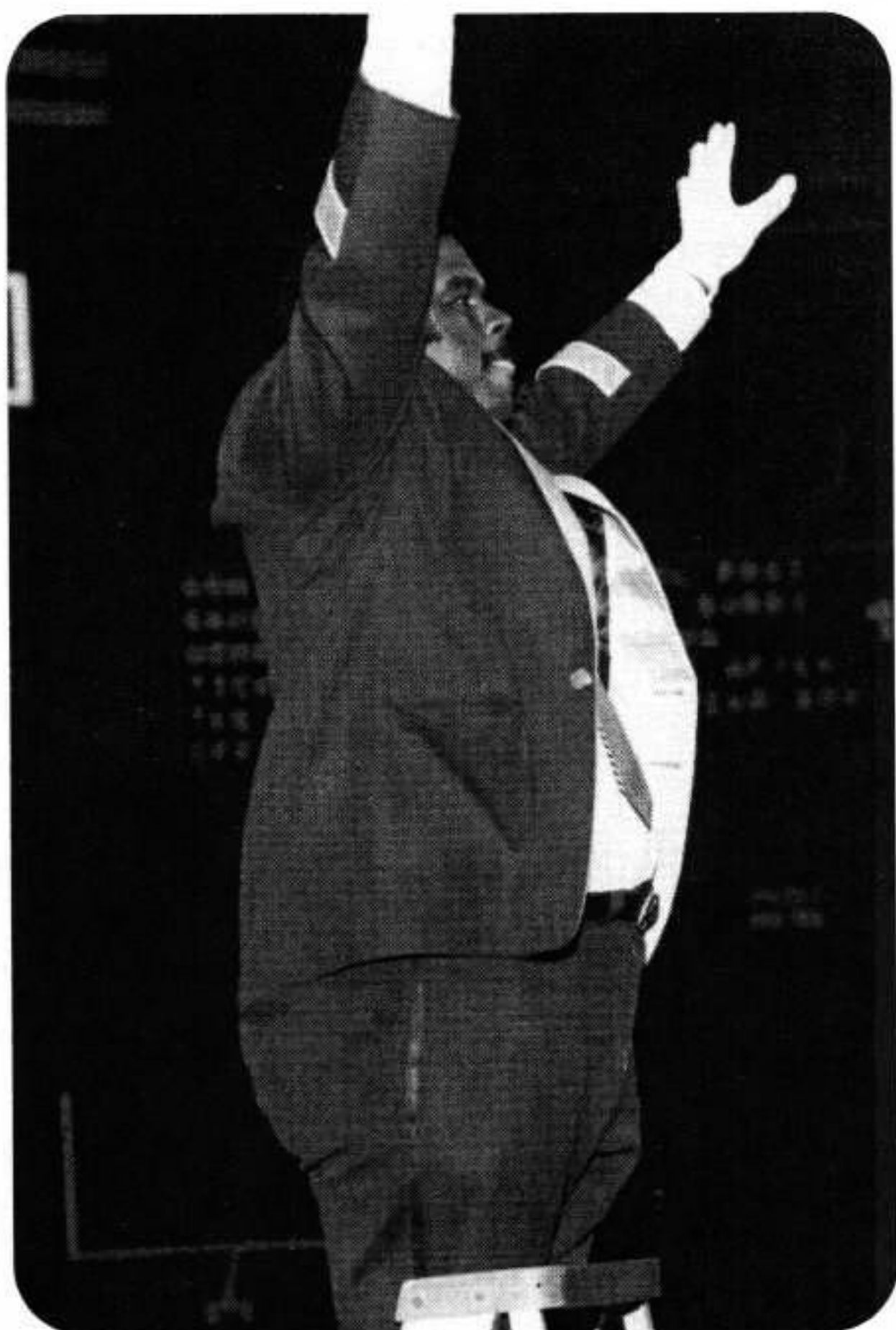
Ronald Thornton

For Outstanding Accomplishments

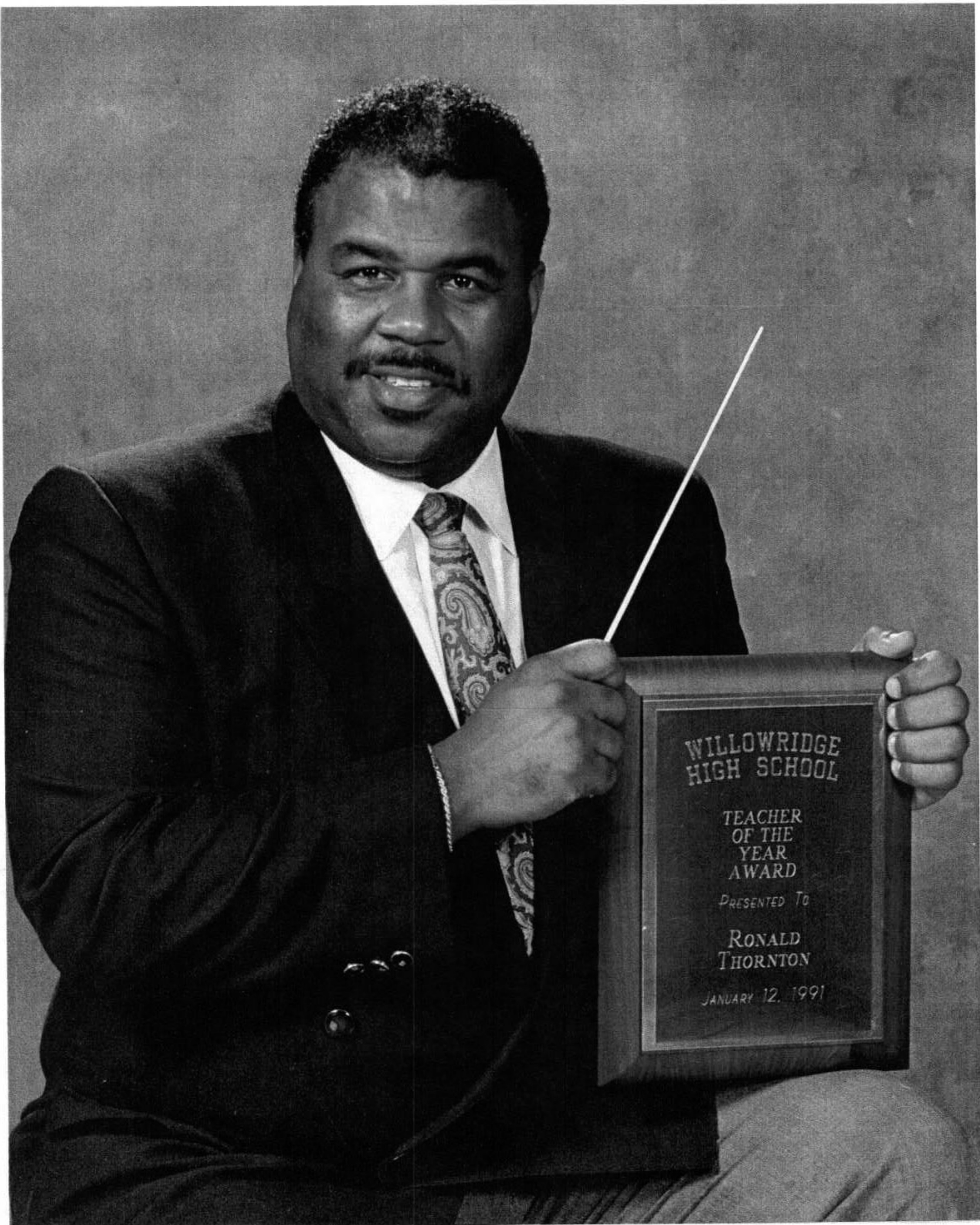
April 13, 2005



A Man and His Music







WILLOWRIDGE
HIGH SCHOOL

TEACHER
OF THE
YEAR
AWARD

PRESENTED TO

RONALD
THORNTON

JANUARY 12, 1991



Award For
**Community
Service**

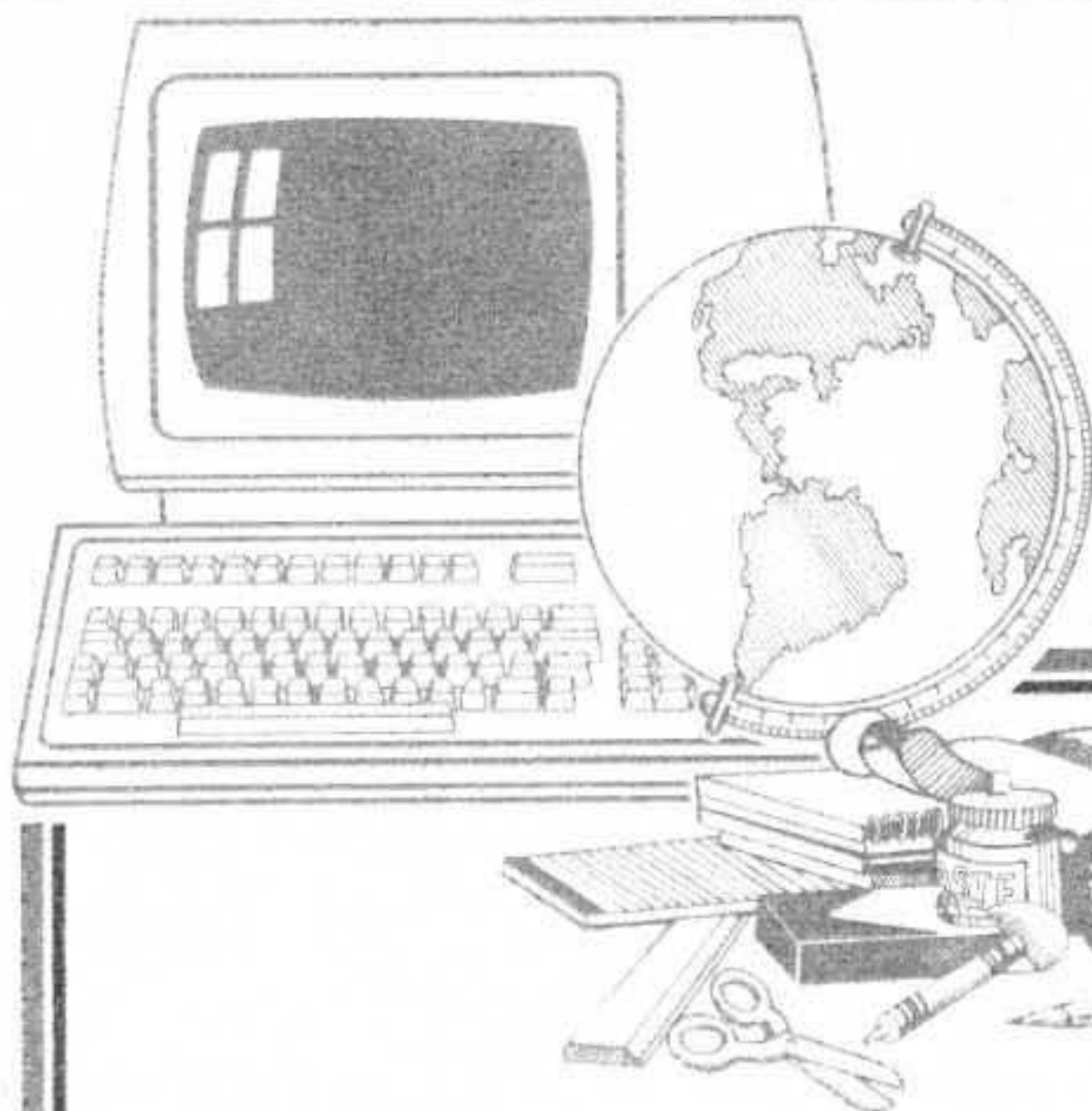
Presented To: Ronald Thornton

Thank you for caring about your community, for giving your time and effort to make things better for others. The spirit of your giving is admirable and we can all learn from your example!

Presented By:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joe McNeil", written over a horizontal line.

/PRINCIPAL



PRINCIPAL'S AWARD

This Certifies That

RONALD THORNTON

is awarded this Certificate for

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

at

WILLOWRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Presented this 20TH *day of* JANUARY 19 89

Gloria Friday

Ed Glover

Certificate of Appreciation

— This certificate is presented to —

RONALD THORNTON

in appreciation for the valuable contribution

given to FONDREN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Our sincere gratitude is extended to you this

26th day of April 19 91.

Signed

Jo Ann Newsome

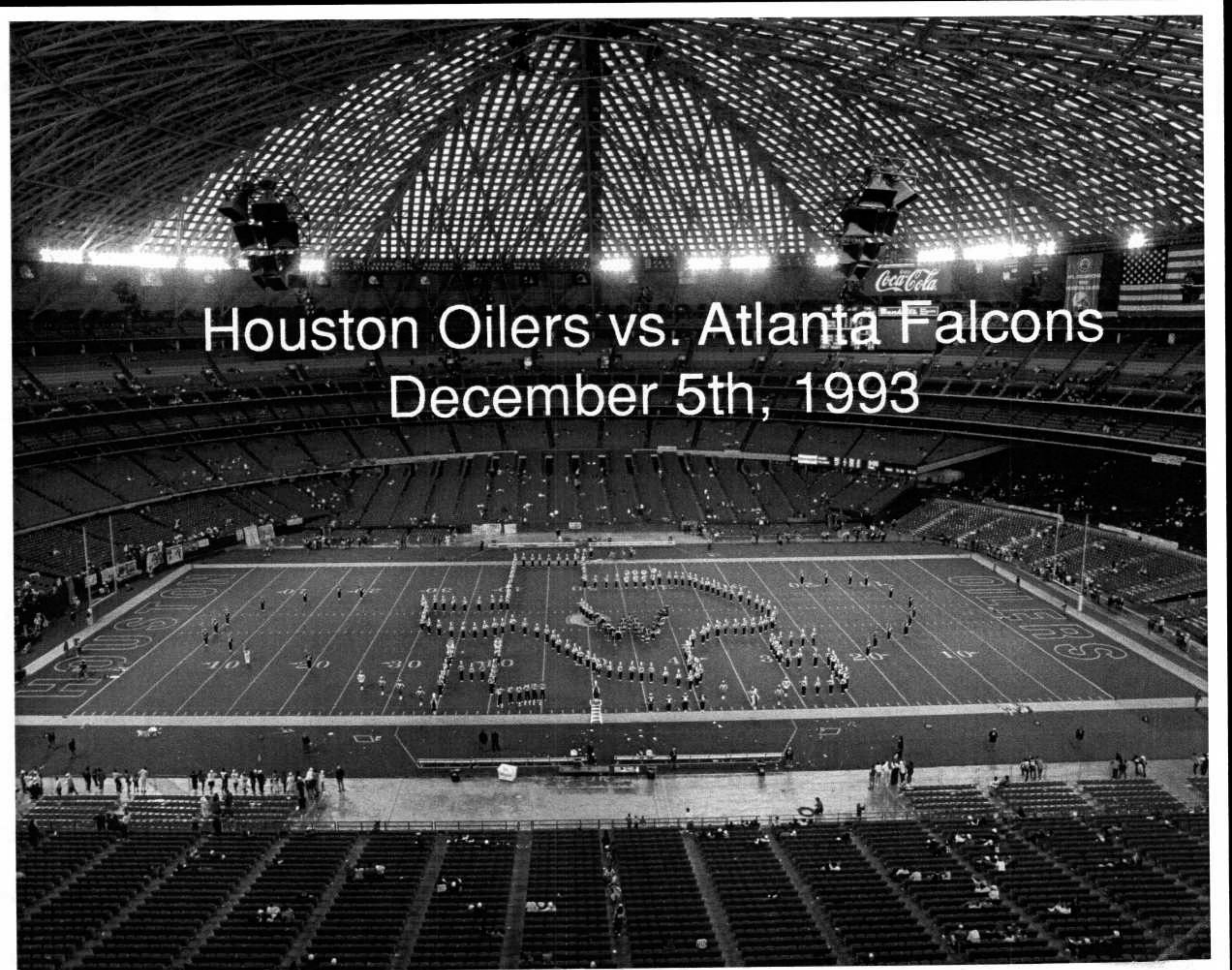
THE CLASS OF 1992

Since the summer of 1988
These seniors went to band practice
Every morning at eight
But through it all, we were still able
To overcome problems big or small...
Krista and the Drum Majors...with the whistles that never worked
Monica Patterson who shows up wearing those tight mini skirts
Reeshemah Burrell, always dozing off in class
While Jeff Raval tries to roll on young ladies...well, you know
Sharon Lopes never marched eight to five
When Ayoka Robinson never talked that jive
Naomi Lopez learned how to play bass
While Kelli Jones, at U.I.L. fell all over the place
Darlene Elizondo was the one who really did care
While Charles Smart was the one who spread that pleasant smell in the air
Latrice King has been know as "Zero"
When at U.I.L., throwing the stick, Derrick James Was our hero
At summer camp, we couldn't ignore, when Jimmy Rouen, our president,
 kept yelling "HEY, CLOSE THE DOOR!!!!!"
Juan Martinez was the one that put the stickers on the light
And who will ever forget Shena Berger with that hair so very bright
Schmecia Davis stayed inside so she won't sweat
When Colleen Bradford and Carmen Aycox burned down the house
 playing Silhouette
Well, as for me, Mr. T, you never learned how to pronounce my name,
But with out my uncontrollable laugh, next years band will never be the same
So, Mr. Thornton, after all that we've been through...
We all know you'll never forget your special SENIOR BABIES from

THE CLASS OF 1992

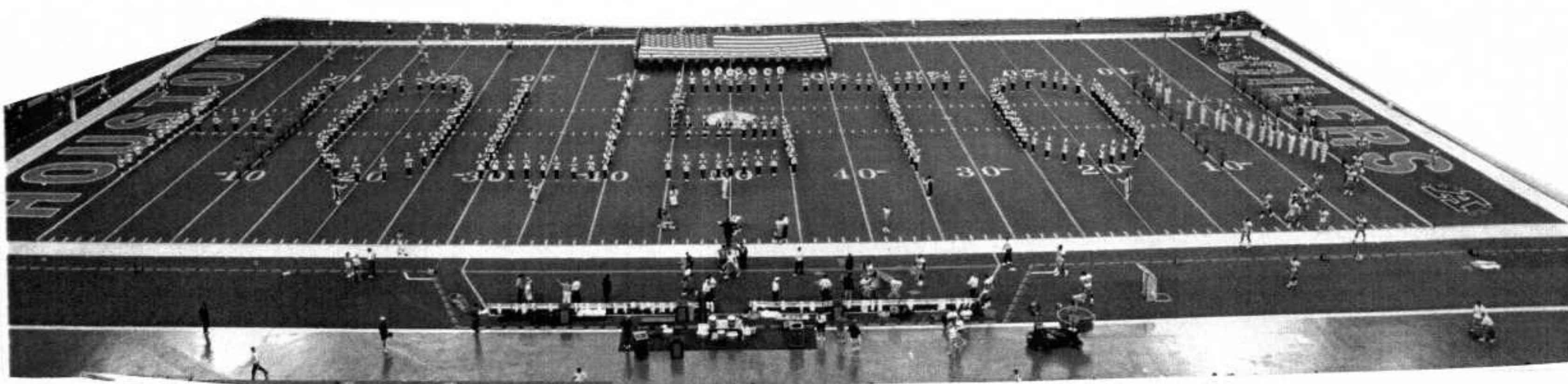
By: Mariel N. Agbayani
Class of 1992!

MARIEL AGBAYANI



Houston Oilers vs. Atlanta Falcons

December 5th, 1993





From The Office of

Judson W. Robinson III

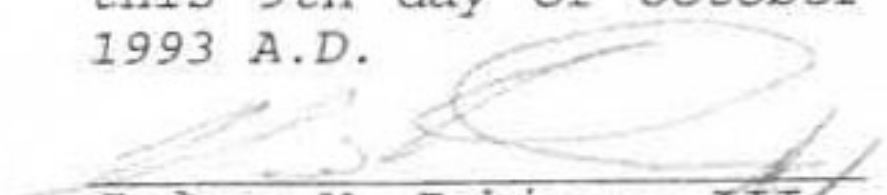
City Council Member At-Large, Position 5

Presented To

Willowridge High School Band
Congratulations And Best Wishes At The
105th Tournament of Roses Parade



In witness whereof, I have
hereunto set my hand and
caused the Seal of the City
of Houston to be affixed
this 9th day of October
1993 A.D.


Judson W. Robinson III
Houston City Council Member
At-Large, Position Five




FORT BEND
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Certificate of

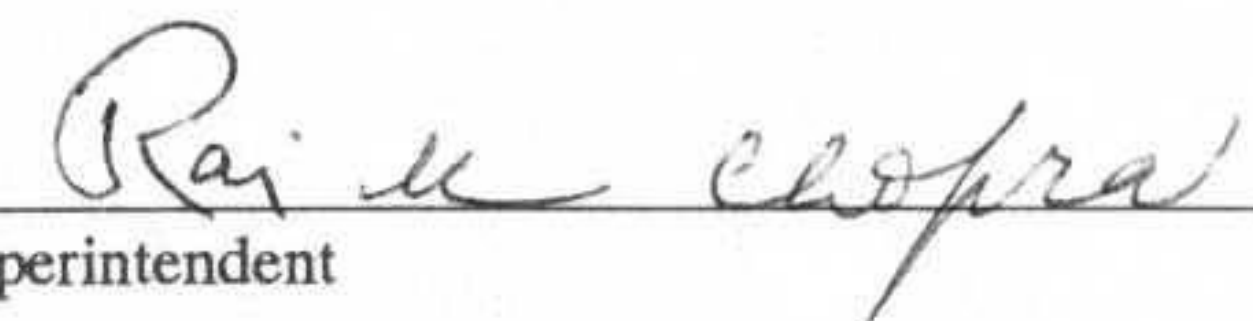
Achievement

Presented to **Ronald Thornton**
and the **Willowridge High School**
Mighty Eagle Band

Willowridge was the lead band in the
105th Tournament of the Roses Parade
held January 1, 1994 in Pasadena, California.



President, Board of Trustees



Superintendent



Fort Bend Independent School District
P.O. Box 1004
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-1004

Support and Service Center

January 4, 1994

Ronald Thornton
Director
Eagles Band
Willowridge High School

Dear Ron:

Congratulations on the wonderful and impressive performance of the Willowridge Eagle band during the 1994 Rose Bowl Parade. How proud I was to see you all on national television. Please express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the members of the Eagle band for a most exhilarating performance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'David Lambert', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Lambert
Director of Fine Arts

cc: Yvonne Friday



Fort Bend Independent School District
P.O. Box 1004
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-1004

Willowridge High School
Yvonne Friday, Principal

TO: Ronald Thornton and Staff
FROM: Yvonne Friday *[Signature]*
Principal
DATE: January 4, 1994
RE: 105th Tournament of Roses Parade

You are a team extraordinaire! As I look back over the year and see a dream of this magnitude realized, I cannot help but stand in awe of your hard work, skillful planning and organization, and masterful orchestration of a performance second to none!

The tremendous amount of time and dedication given on your part is exemplary of your commitment to excellence for our students. These are the types of events that form memories that will long be cherished by all of us.

We are all so very proud of you and proud to be a part of this phenomenon.

You and the mighty Willowridge Eagle Band have made history for Willowridge High School and for that I say, with an abundance of gratitude - Thank You!

YF/mdr

cc: Dr. Raj Chopra
Dr. Mary Ann Reynolds



105th Tournament of Roses Parade
January 1, 1994



Pasadena, CA

©1993







PASADENA TOURNAMENT OF ROSES®

January 12, 1994

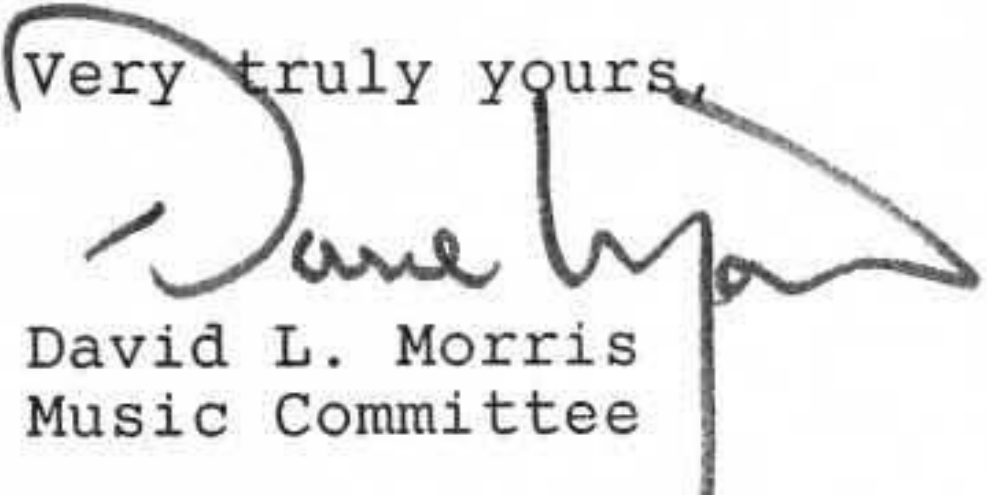
Mr. Ron Thornton
Staff, Students & Parents
Willowridge High School
"Mighty Eagles" Marching Band
1311 Myers Mill
Missouri City, TX 77489

Dear Mr. Thornton,

Just a brief note of thanks for your support and the participation of the entire "Mighty Eagles" Marching Band in this years Parade. As I mentioned, before your departure, this has been THE most rewarding year for me, as a Tournament of Roses member, since joining the organization in 1979. As part of the Committee that was ultimately responsible for positioning over 4000 band members and nearly 150 vehicles the morning of January 1st, and the Committee that hosted one of the most outstanding Directors Brunch and BandFest events in recent memory, it would not have been possible without the "Mighty Eagles" Marching Band!

This indeed was one of our more successful Parades. Only one float needed assistance getting to Victory Park. Television coverage of the entire Parade was complete, to the very last unit. The community as a whole, and the entire viewing audience was treated to the color, pageantry and excitement of this 105th Tournament of Roses Parade. Please accept my heartfelt "thanks" for your participation and cooperation. I was extremely proud to be associated with your entire organization!

Very truly yours,



David L. Morris
Music Committee

cc: L. Pederson
Tournament of Roses



Fort Bend Independent School District
P.O. Box 1004
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-1004

Willowridge High School
Ed Glover, Principal

Mighty Eagle band keeps on struttin'

The Willowridge Eagle Band has been very busy since the beginning of the school year. The Eagles had a winner in the area band tryouts. Lilla Gamez, a junior flutist, placed third chair. The tryouts were held on January 9, at Houston Community College.

The Mighty Eagle Band won first place in the January 18, Martin Luther King Parade in Galveston. This parade was sponsored by Public, Inc.

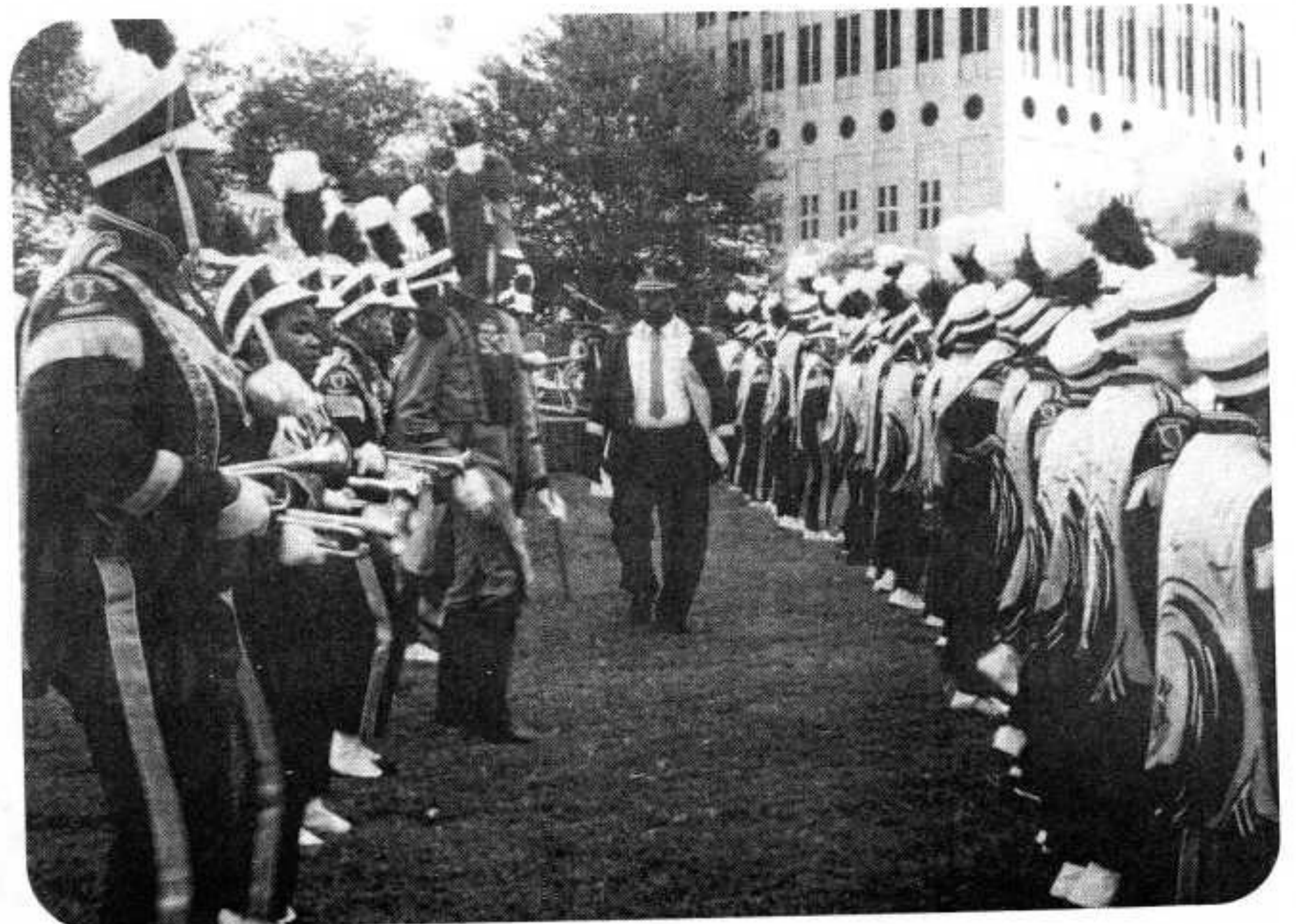
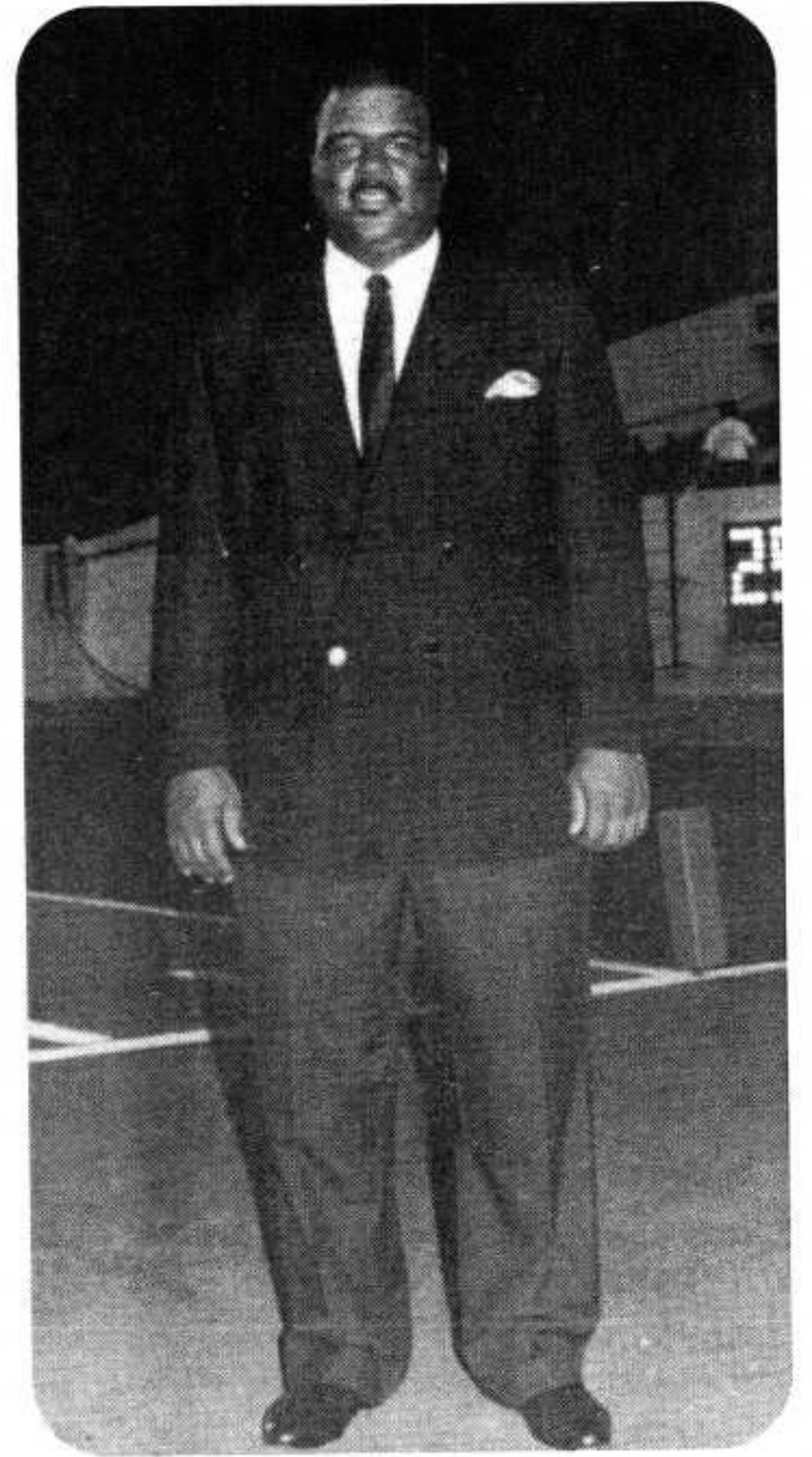
The Willowridge Jazz Band performed Sunday, January 24 at the request of Dr. Raj Chopra, Superintendent of Fort Bend I.S.D. for the Republic of India Independence Day held at the Gandhi Center. They will also provide the entertainment at the Fort Bend County League of Women Voters reception for newly elected Fort Bend County officials. This reception will be held at the historical McFarland House (directly across the street from the county courthouse in Richmond) on Thursday, February 11 at 7 to 8:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend and meet all the new county officials.

As the Eagles prepare for their appearance in the 1994 Tournament of

Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, they have been invited to march in the Mardi Gras Parade in Galveston on Saturday, February 20 at 7 p.m. We invite the entire community to Galveston to support us in this fun event.

The Mighty Eagles under the direction of Ronald Thornton, James Ellis and Herman Lee will lead the Blueridge Lions Community Day Parade Saturday, February 27. This parade sponsored by the Blue Ridge Lions Club celebrates Black History Month and education in the Blue Ridge community. Students from Ridgemont, Ridgeway, Briargate, Hunter's Glen, and E.A. Jones Elementary Schools will provide singing, poetry reading for all who attend. Additional music will be played by the McAuliffe and Missouri City Middle School orchestras and choirs. All activities will be held at the Briargate Elementary School. The entire community is invited.

Booster Club meetings are held the first Wednesday in every month. The next meeting February 3 at 7 p.m. in the band hall.



Awards and Recognitions



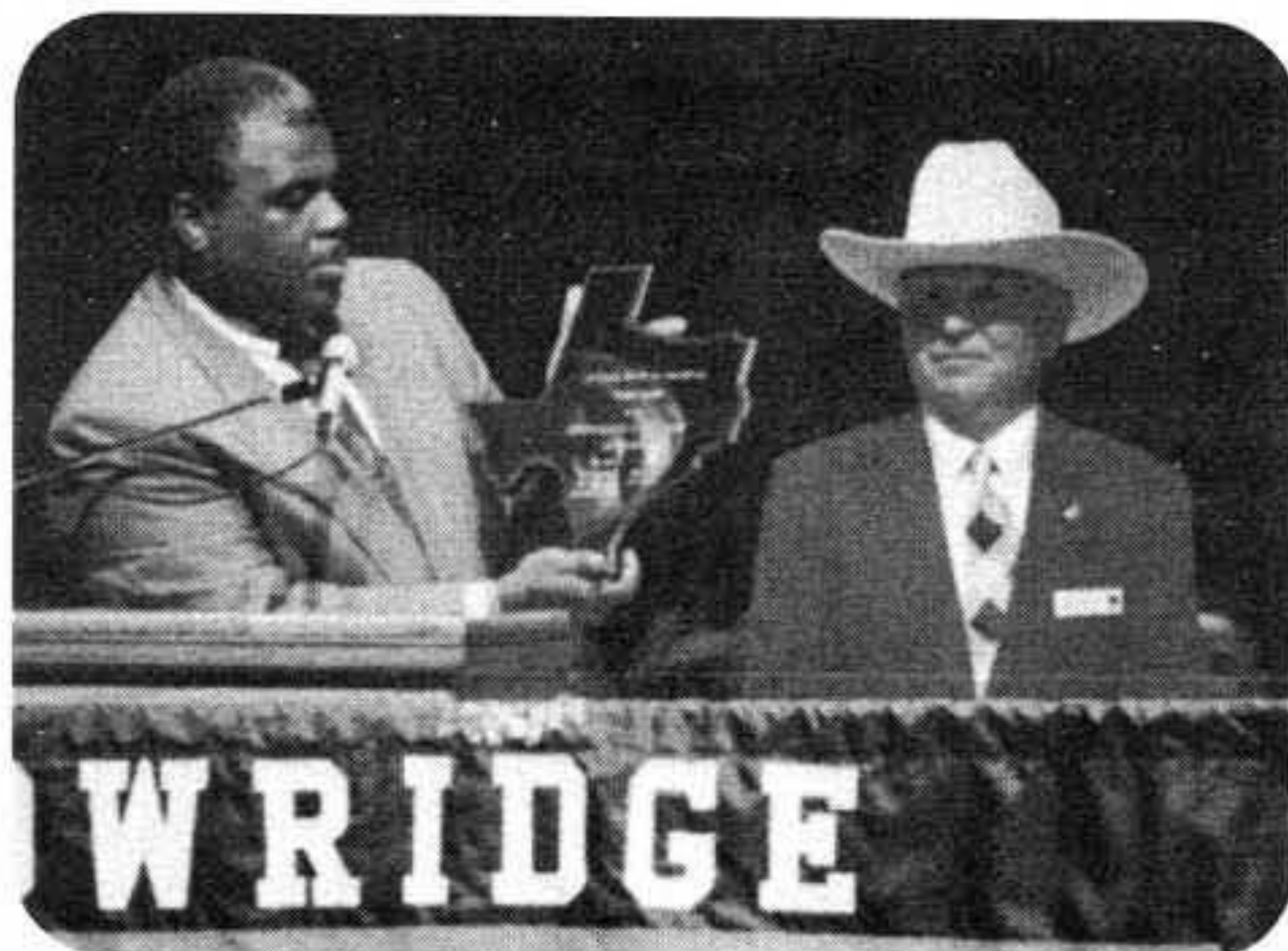
Cast member of the Redd Foxx Show congratulates Ronald on a music performance



Thornton and Ben Butler receive the Ocean of Soul Award



Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Award



Dale Beckhart presents Rose Invitation Award



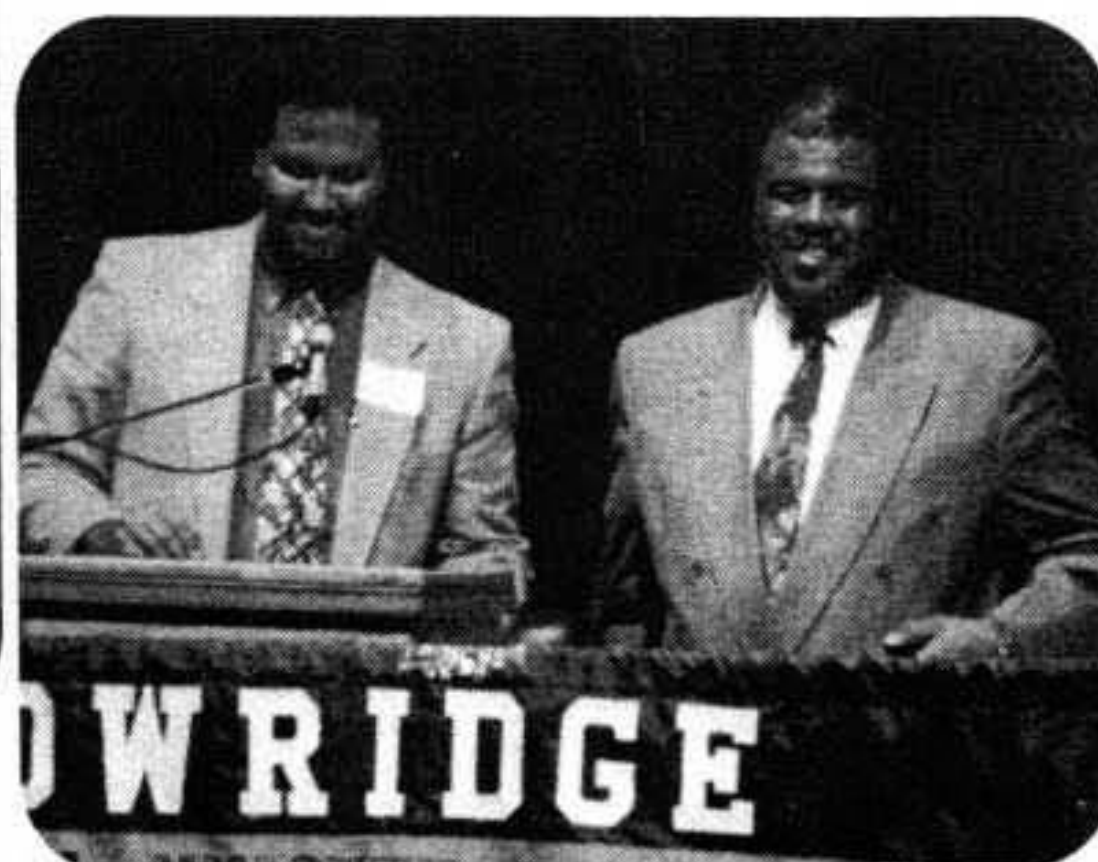
WHS Eagle Award



Richard Price presents the 1991 Teacher of the Year Plaque to Thornton (top)



"Sitting pretty" - A Rose Bowl Victory



County Commissioner Grady Prestage presents a Rose Bowl Proclamation (left)

RONALD THORNTON



**GIVEN IN RECOGNITION
OF YOUR CONTRIBUTION
TO THE
DORIC SHRINE TEMPLE #76
15th ANNUAL TALENT AND
SCHOLARSHIP PAGEANT**

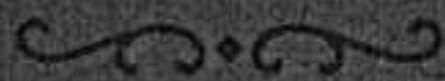
MARCH 17, 1996

**JAMES E. HOOPER
ILLUSTRIOUS POTENTATE**

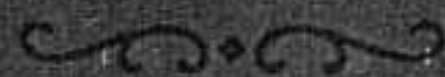


PRESENTED TO

MR. RONALD B. THORNTON



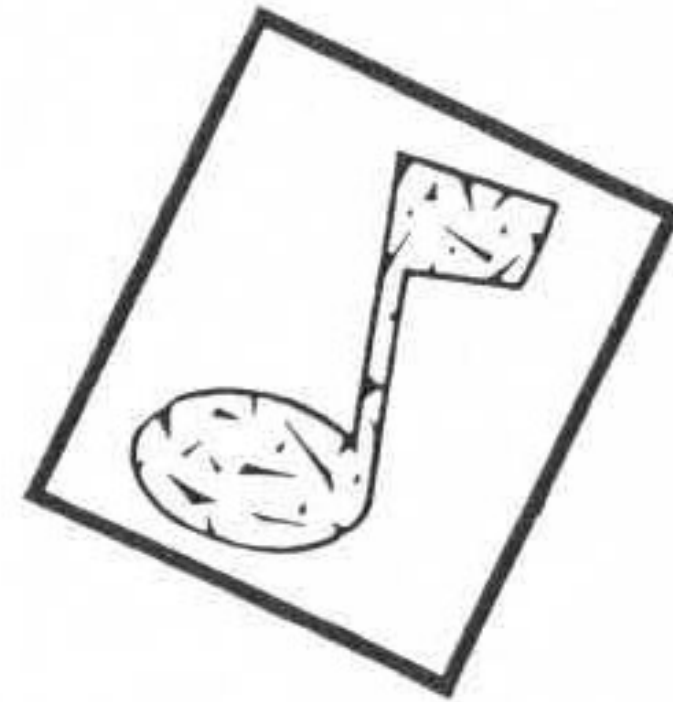
IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR
DEDICATION AND HARD WORK



GIVEN THIS DAY

MAY 20, 1995

CLASS OF 1996



With unrelenting crescendo,
the symphony of a life replete
with melodic progression,
hastens to its finale.

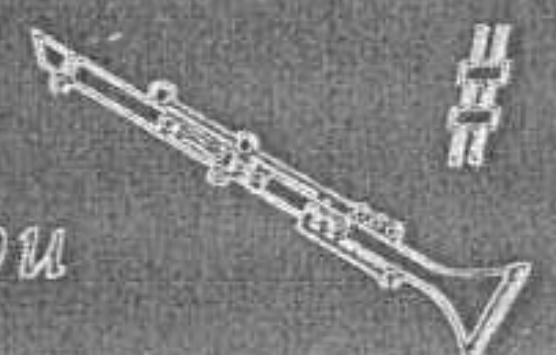


And a friendship that is ours to share
with its "largos" and "allegros"
moves ever-lasting,
onward, in sweet memories.



Thank You

Mr. Thornton



For All of the
Great Memories!



Latrina Bradley
1995 ~ 1999



Certificate of Recognition

Presented to

Ronald Thornton

for

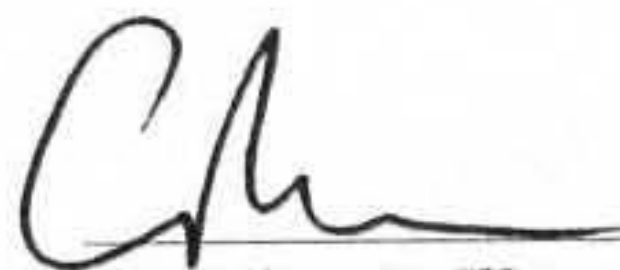
Professional Dedication

as a

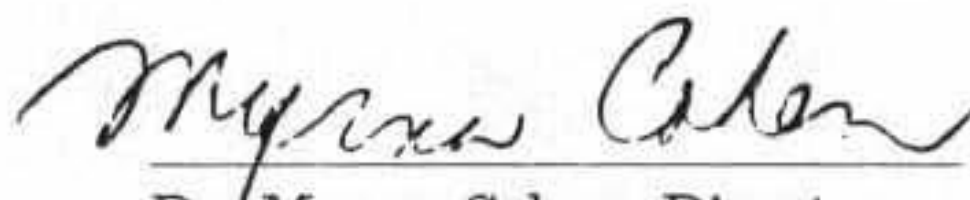
School-Based Teacher Educator
of Student Teachers

Spring 1996

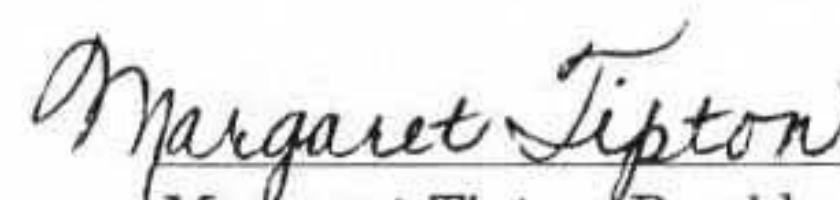
University of Houston
Houston Area Teacher Center



Dr. Allen R. Warner, Dean
College of Education



Dr. Myrna Cohen, Director
Field Experiences



Margaret Tipton, President
Houston Area Teacher Center

this
*Certificate
of Appreciation*

is awarded to

Ronald Thornton

for participation in
The College Fund/UNCF Walkathon



September 28, 1996

Carl Lewis,
Honorary Chairman

Delores Garner,
Chairperson

ORANGE BOWL 1996-1997

Pumpin

-n-
Drivin

WILLOWRIDGE

MIGHTY EAGLE BAND



“Most Outstanding Band” The 1996-97 Orange Bowl



Orange Bowl Parade
December 28, 1996  Miami, Florida

Certificate of Recognition

Presented to

Ronald Thornton

for

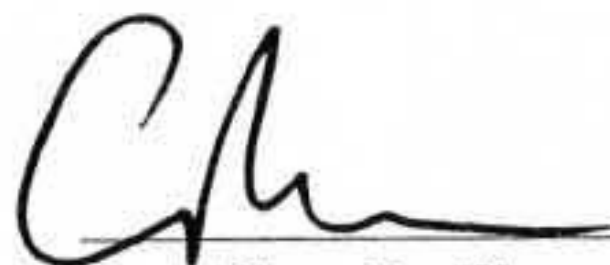
Professional Dedication

as a

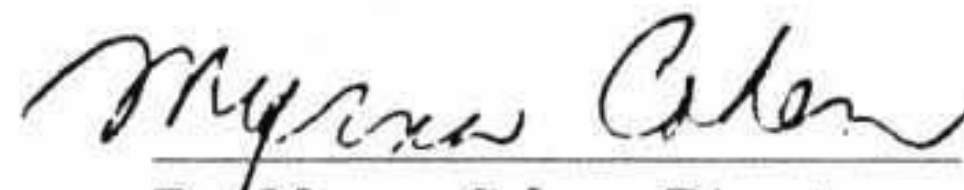
School-Based Teacher Educator
of Student Teachers

Spring 1996

University of Houston
Houston Area Teacher Center



Dr. Allen R. Warner, Dean
College of Education



Dr. Myrna Cohen, Director
Field Experiences



Margaret Tipton, President
Houston Area Teacher Center

THE TRIBUTE TO
A MAN AND HIS MUSIC
ENSEMBLE THEATER HOUSTON, TX
FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 1998



Certificate of Appreciation

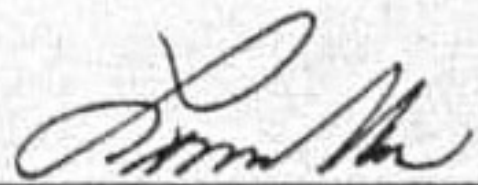
*from the
City of Houston*

presented to

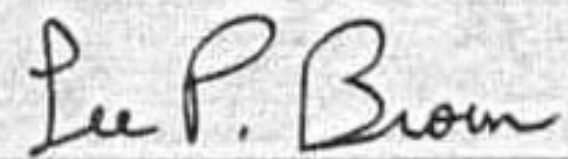
Ronald Thornton

*for your generous contribution to the
Mayor's Service Awards Luncheon*

April 12, 2001



Director of Human Resources



Mayor

Office of the Mayor

Missouri City, Texas

Proclamation



WHEREAS, Ronald B. Thornton, Band Director for Willowridge High School, began his teaching career on August 1, 1998; and

WHEREAS, he was honored as "Teacher of the Year" in 1991; and

WHEREAS, through his dedication the band led the 105th "Tournament of Roses Parade" in Pasadena, California, January 1, 1994; and

WHEREAS, through the efforts of Ronald Thornton, Willowridge Band has won sweepstakes honors and eight consecutive First Division Ratings at UIL Marching Contest; and

WHEREAS, was the most outstanding band in the 1996 "Orange Bowl Parade; and

WHEREAS, Willowridge Administration, Faculty and Staff is recognizing Mr. Ronald B. Thornton for his hard work, dedication and commitment to Willowridge High where "Quality and Excellence is a Way of Life".

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Allen Owen, Mayor of the City of Missouri City, Texas, and on behalf of the Missouri City City Council, do hereby proclaim June 19, 1998 as "Ronald Thornton Day" in the City of Missouri City, Texas in recognition of the dedication and commitment as a band leader to Willowridge High School.



In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused this seal to be affixed.

Allen Owen

ATTEST: *John Rodgers*

DATE: *June 9, 1998*





Proclamation

Ronald B. Thornton Day

Music and other arts have been recognized as unique to human capabilities and creativity as a means to self-discovery and self-expression, and as a fundamental part of civilization. Houston has long been home to composers, musicians, educators, and renowned ensembles that have achieved national and international acclaim. Through these individuals and groups, Houstonians have made lasting contributions to the arts.

As band director at Willowridge High School, Ronald B. Thornton has created a positive educational experience for his students, nurturing their enthusiasm and spirit of adventure, and teaching them positive, life-long values. Through his dedication and responsible leadership, his students have devoted countless hours to practice and training. Their hard work, talent, and dedication to music have led them to many impressive accomplishments, bringing pride to their school, families, and our community.

On June 19, 1998, Ronald B. Thornton will be honored at a special tribute in recognition and appreciation of his outstanding accomplishments and contributions. Focusing on "*A Man & His Music*," this special event will celebrate the accomplishments of a talented musician who has performed with artists including Lionel Hampton, Lena Horne, Arnett Cobb, Stevie Wonder, The Temptations, Gladys Knight, Marvin Gaye, and the Four Tops.

The City of Houston is pleased to congratulate and commend Ronald B. Thornton on this auspicious occasion, and extends best wishes for continued success.

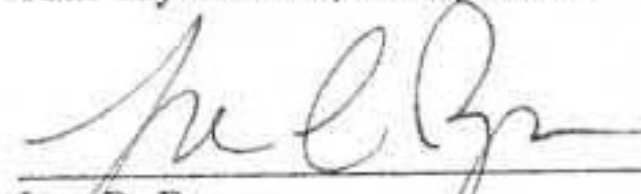
Therefore, I, Lee P. Brown, Mayor of the City of Houston, hereby proclaim Friday, June 19, 1998, as

Ronald B. Thornton Day

in Houston, Texas.



In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Official Seal of the City of Houston to be affixed this 18th day of June, 1998, A.D.



Lee P. Brown
Mayor of the City of Houston



CONRAD JOHNSON

STEPHEN RICHARD

GROVER WASHINGTON JR

RONALD THORNTON

1999 VERIZON THEATER
AT BAYOU PLACE HOUSTON, TX.

6 ~ 1991



6 ~ 2001

RONALD
THORNTON

Thank You

*For the 8 Years of Being There
for Donna, Donnielle & Donald
Smither.*

*You Have Been a Teacher,
a Mentor and Especially a
Surrogate Father.*

Sincerely,

DONALD and JACKIE SMITHER



Mr. Ronald Thornton

***T - Thank you for being our Outstanding and Godly
Band Director and Mentor***

H - Thank you for Having faith in us

***O - Thank you for helping to Order our lives as we
matured***

***R - You were Right in demanding 110% because you
knew we could do it***

***N - Thank you for taking us to NEW HEIGHTS and
awesome adventures***

***T --Thanks for the love, care, respect, and teaching
us about life***

***O -Thanks for being an Outstanding Leader,
bringing pride to us and our community***

***N -Thank you for giving us what we needed!
You're our Role Model***

***Because of you we are better people
You will be fondly remembered!***

***May God richly bless you and keep you and your
wonderful family, especially Mrs. Thornton.***

***From the bottom of our hearts we love you and Mrs. Thornton
MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU -CONGRATULATIONS!***

Love & Prayers
The Lukens
Tony, Shirley, Michael & Nike and
The Smiths
David, Dorothy,
Dane & Laverne

We all call you Mr. Thornton, affectionately "Big T". Ten years ago, when you stepped on the grounds of Willowridge High School, who would have known you would become a Living Legend of a Great Band.

When you shout out "BAND" students and parents stop in their tracks and come to attention, listening attentively. During UIL, we know, just as the students do, not to bother you the entire day, until after competition, when the band brings home a NUMBER ONE.

We know how to disappear within the wink of an eye, when its time for a student conference and pity the child when you call their parents.

There are no words in the English language to state how much we appreciate you. We know you stay here at Willowridge because you love the children. It was destiny that brought you to Willowridge and we are truly blessed to have you remain here.

Many are called, but few are chosen". Big T, you are the chosen one for the Mighty Willowridge Eagle Band. From the Rose Bowl to the Orange Bowl, from the numerous parades every year and the special invitations, You have put Fort Bend County on the map. When people want a band, who do they call? 1-800-WHS BAND.

May you remain in good health and continue with your success. It has been a pleasure to know and work with you this past year and we look forward to next year.

Regards,
The First Wives

A man who knows where everything
should go.

How it should look and how it *better* flow.

A man who will go the extra mile as long
as you walk it with him.

A man who will take that additional step
as long as he sees you and him
step together.

A man who stays up late many nights to
improve something that he feels could be
better.

A man who works in the heat, cold or
nice weather all year round to perfect his
band so that we look together.

A man who means what he says and says
what he means.

A man who knows what discipline is and
has passed it down to us so that he takes
no lip from us teens.

A kind and gentle man who will protect us
as best he can from all harm but still is
fun.

A man who is a great father figure to me
and a great director, teacher and
mentor----

Mr. Ronanld B. Thornton

ThisWeek

Band director makes noteworthy impact

By MARA SOLOWAY
Chronicle correspondent

If music is a gift, then Ronald Thornton, Willowridge High School band director and music education teacher, has been a generous benefactor over his 30-year teaching career.

Faces in the crowd

Through his love of music, and a very long workday, he encourages his students to deepen their musical talents through hard work and believing in themselves. Many of his former students are school band directors in the Houston area or are in university bands across the southeastern United States.

Willowridge Principal Christine Criner Smith nominated Thornton, 54, for a prestigious teaching award. She floored him when she made a surprise announcement during a school assembly that he had won.

The Missouri City resident has been selected as one of 10 recipients of the Outstanding High School Teachers sponsored by the Texas Exes and the College of Education at the University of Texas. Thornton will be honored Feb. 27 in a special ceremony in Austin, where he will receive a \$2,250 cash award and a commemorative sculpture.

Under his direction, the Willowridge band has earned more than 200 awards and has performed at numerous events, most recently the Super Bowl XXXVIII tailgate party. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, they marched in the parade and competed in the high school band contest, winning the large band competition over schools from Texas and Louisiana.

The band has marched in the Tournament of Roses, the Orange Bowl and Gov. Rick Perry's inauguration parades, among others. In 2005, band members will travel to Hawaii to march in the King Kamehameha Day parade.

"He is able to bring together



Suzanne Rehak photo

Willowridge High School band director Ronald Thornton strives to obtain the best from his students, and his bands through the years have won recognition and awards.

a lot of students who come here from different schools as one band with one sound," Smith said. "Music is a personal attribute. He gives that to all the kids. It's a gift."

Maurice Ross, band director at Christa McAuliffe Middle School, considers Thornton a mentor. Ross was a student of Thornton's at Texas Southern University and was an assistant band director at Willowridge for four years.

"He can take the students who feel the least about themselves and turn them into confident people and great performers," he said. "He shows a child that he has no doubt

that they can meet his high expectations."

"As far as teaching is concerned, he is one of the most positive influences in my life."

As Willowridge band director, Thornton oversees the program's components of majorettes, color guard, drill team and the jazz, concert and marching bands. The marching band is active during football season; concert band practice begins in the spring.

He said credit for his success also belongs to his assistant directors, Dell Hill and Robert Jackson; drill team

See DIRECTOR on Page 5

FORT BEND COUNTY

Thursday, Feb. 12, 2004
www.houstonchronicle.com/thisweek

SNAP SHOT



Suzanne Rehak photo

Award of note

Willowridge High School band director Ronald Thornton, 54, has been a music educator for more than 30 years. He will be honored this month as one of 10 recipients of the Outstanding High School Teachers, sponsored by the Texas Exes and the College of Education at the University of Texas. See related story, Page 4.

Director

Continued from Page 4.

leaders Meredith McCall and Letisha Kelly; and an active band booster club of about 120 parents led by Willowridge parent Gwen Carter. He also credits Fort Bend ISD.

Thornton grew up playing music at St. John's Baptist Church in the Third Ward. After graduating from Yates High School, he earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Southern University and a master's from University of Houston, both in music education. He plays all of the brass instruments with main emphasis on the trombone. Thornton taught for seven years at both Texas Southern University and Forest Brook High School before teaching at Willowridge.

While studying at TSU, Thornton found a mentor in band director Benjamin Butler, for whom he later worked. "He taught me how to use my passion for music. He dedicated long hours and he instilled excellence. He had a God-given talent to motivate students. I wanted to be just like him."

At the end of each school year, Thornton evaluates himself as a music teacher.

"I evaluate my teaching to see if I've reached students by testing their musical knowledge and by asking them for their feedback," he said. "I am dedicated to trying to perfect myself and my teaching."

"One incentive for them to work so hard and learn classical music and maintain standards is that then we will play some of

music they like."

Thornton typically arrives at 7 a.m. and stays until 9 p.m. Band students have a long day, too, attending classes during the day and rehearsing after school. To Thornton, the lessons are not just musical. He tries to show students how their hard work and commitment to music helps shape their lives.

"Musical lessons and long hours of practice will enable them to discipline themselves to listen and succeed at different jobs, and learn how to work with others," he said.

Willowridge senior Christopher Rose, 17, was inspired by Thornton to go to college. The trombonist is heading to Prairie View A&M University to study computer science and minor in music. He feels his hard work during the past four years will help him in the long run.

"Since my freshman year, I have changed more than just as a musician. I was shy as a freshman and now I'm a different person," Rose said. "Mr. Thornton has helped all of us harness our talents. He is like a father to us."

Throughout the school year, Thornton brings in musicians to play for and talk to his students about music in their lives. In the summer, he oversees a six-week jazz workshop where Houston-area students ages 14 to 21 can learn how to play jazz and about the jazz music business.

Thornton is the president of the Texas Black Music Educators Association and a member of several other professional societies. He was named the WHS Campus Teacher of the Year in 1991. His wife, Michele, works as an engineering technician at

Center Point Energy. Both of their children are teachers. Ronald is a Sam Houston High School band director and Monique teaches kindergarten at Bastian Elementary School.

After 14 hours of teaching music, Thornton listens to music when he gets home and plays with his 15-month-old grandson, Tyron. His tastes run from jazz — especially trombonist J.J. Johnson, Count Basie and Duke Ellington — and to classical, which he listens to with an ear toward music for his concert band to play.

Thornton also directs the orchestra at Brentwood Baptist Church and freelances as a professional jazz trombonist. He has played with the likes of the Temptations, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder and Lena Horne.

"I love all types of music and try to put as much passion into my music as possible," he said.

His son knows that firsthand. The younger Ronald Thornton, also a trombonist, grew up spending time at his father's rehearsals when he wasn't practicing and performing for his middle school, high school and college bands.

"I was inspired to become a music educator myself when I would see the looks on peoples faces when they heard his band play," said Thornton Jr. "It made me proud to see how my father affected people's lives. He's also a father figure to many of his students. I decided it was something I wanted to do, too."

To suggest a "Faces in the Crowd" profile, e-mail karen.zurawski@chron.com or fax 713-362-7552.

Texas



'It Wouldn't Be Texas Without the Exes!'

'EX' - *Cellence*

Tuesday, March 9, 2004

7:30 P.M.

Willowridge High School Commons

Congratulations Mr. Ronald Thornton for being selected as one of 10 recipients of the Outstanding High School Teachers sponsored by the Texas Exes and the College of Education at the University of Texas.



THE STATE OF TEXAS

GOVERNOR



*To all to whom these presents
shall come, Greetings: Know ye, that
this certificate is presented to:*

Ronald B. Thornton

Willowridge High School

In Recognition Of Your Being Named A Recipient Of A
Texas Exes Award For Outstanding Teachers

*As a winner of a Texas Exes Award for Outstanding Teachers, you are being saluted for being among the
best of the best.*

*Your recognition today reinforces to all across this great state the immeasurable contributions that you
are making toward young Texans and the Texas of tomorrow. You have set exemplary standards and,
moreover, your commitment to excellence has imparted to your students that success awaits them if they
dream, dare and do. Daily, you are empowering young Texans to excel, highlighting the very best of the
Lone Star State.*

Anita and I wish you the very best for the future.



*In testimony whereof, I have signed my name and
caused the Seal of the State of Texas to be affixed at
the City of Austin, this the 9th day of February,
2004.*

Rick Perry

Rick Perry
Governor of Texas



The Senate of The State of Texas

SENATE PROCLAMATION NO. 164

WHEREAS, Texans place great value in the importance of education, for the future of the Lone Star State lies in the hands of our children, who must be fully equipped with the skills needed to successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, Such success would not be possible without the commitment and enthusiasm exhibited by teachers such as those being recognized as the 2004 honorees for the Texas Excellence Awards for Outstanding Teachers; and

WHEREAS, Larry Arnhold of Deer Park High School in Deer Park, Jane Grillot McCurdy of Lake Highlands High School in Dallas, and John E. Mitchell of Lufkin High School in Lufkin are receiving the Lillian B. Rhodes Teaching Award; Mary A. Eisenmann of J. J. Pearce High School in Richardson is receiving the Glaxo Teaching Award; Frances Leanne Fair of The Academy of Creative Education in San Antonio, Joe D. Rogers of Hereford High School in Hereford, and Patricia A. Salinas of Lanier High School in San Antonio are receiving the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Teaching Award; Kelly Yarbrow Griffith of Angleton High School in Angleton is receiving the Mrs. Harold B. Myers Teaching Award; Sandra LaQuey of Lamar High School in Arlington is receiving the Gordon Appleman Teaching Award; Ronald B. Thornton of Willowridge High School in Houston is receiving the Houston Texas Exes Teaching Award; Melayne M. Knezek of Buda Elementary School Lower Campus in Buda is receiving the Julius and Suzan Glickman Teaching Award; and Norma Quintanilla Muñoz of Sunset Valley Elementary School in Austin is receiving the Verna Rogers Teaching Award; and

WHEREAS, All these highly regarded professionals have earned recognition from their peers for their proven ability to motivate students, for their instructional expertise, and for the cooperative manner in which they work with their colleagues and members of the administration; and

WHEREAS, Nominated by their principals, this year's honorees were selected from a large and talented field of entrants, and they are being honored at the 2004 Conference on Texas Excellence on Education held at The University of Texas at Austin; and


WHEREAS, Now in its 18th year, the Texas Excellence Awards program is jointly presented by The University of Texas at Austin College of Education and the Ex-Students' Association; as a recipient of a Texas Excellence Award, each of these educators has achieved a rare distinction that is deserving of legislative recognition; now, therefore, be it

S.P. No. 164

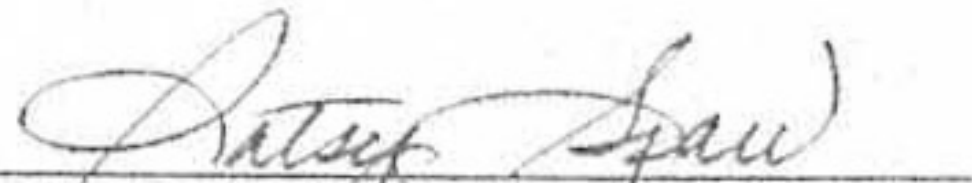
PROCLAIMED, That the Senate of the State of Texas hereby commend the recipients of the 2004 Texas Excellence Awards for Outstanding Teachers and extend to them sincere best wishes for continued success in the years to come; and, be it further

PROCLAIMED, That a copy of this Proclamation be prepared for these dedicated teachers as an expression of high regard from the Texas Senate.

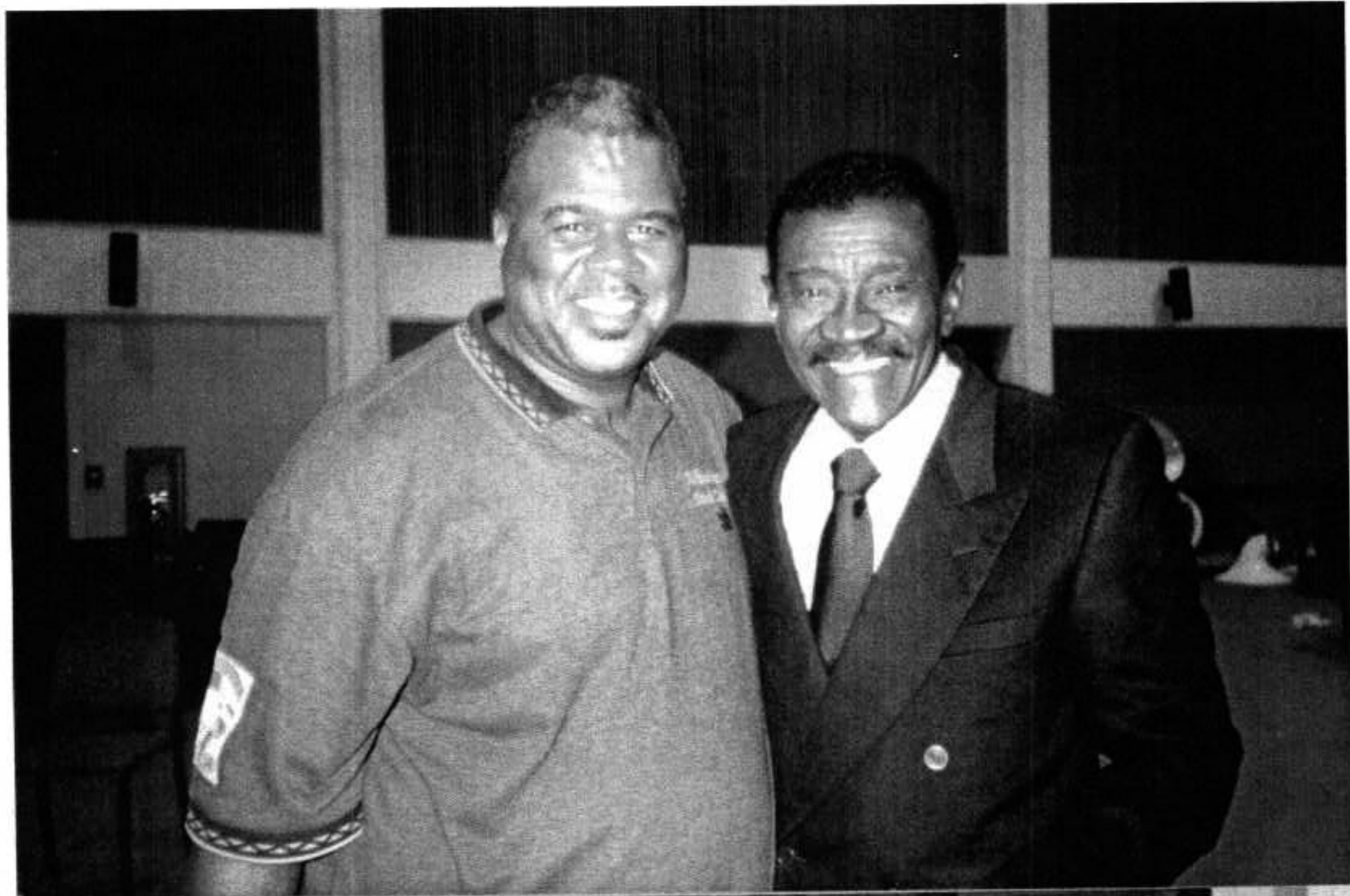
Barrientos

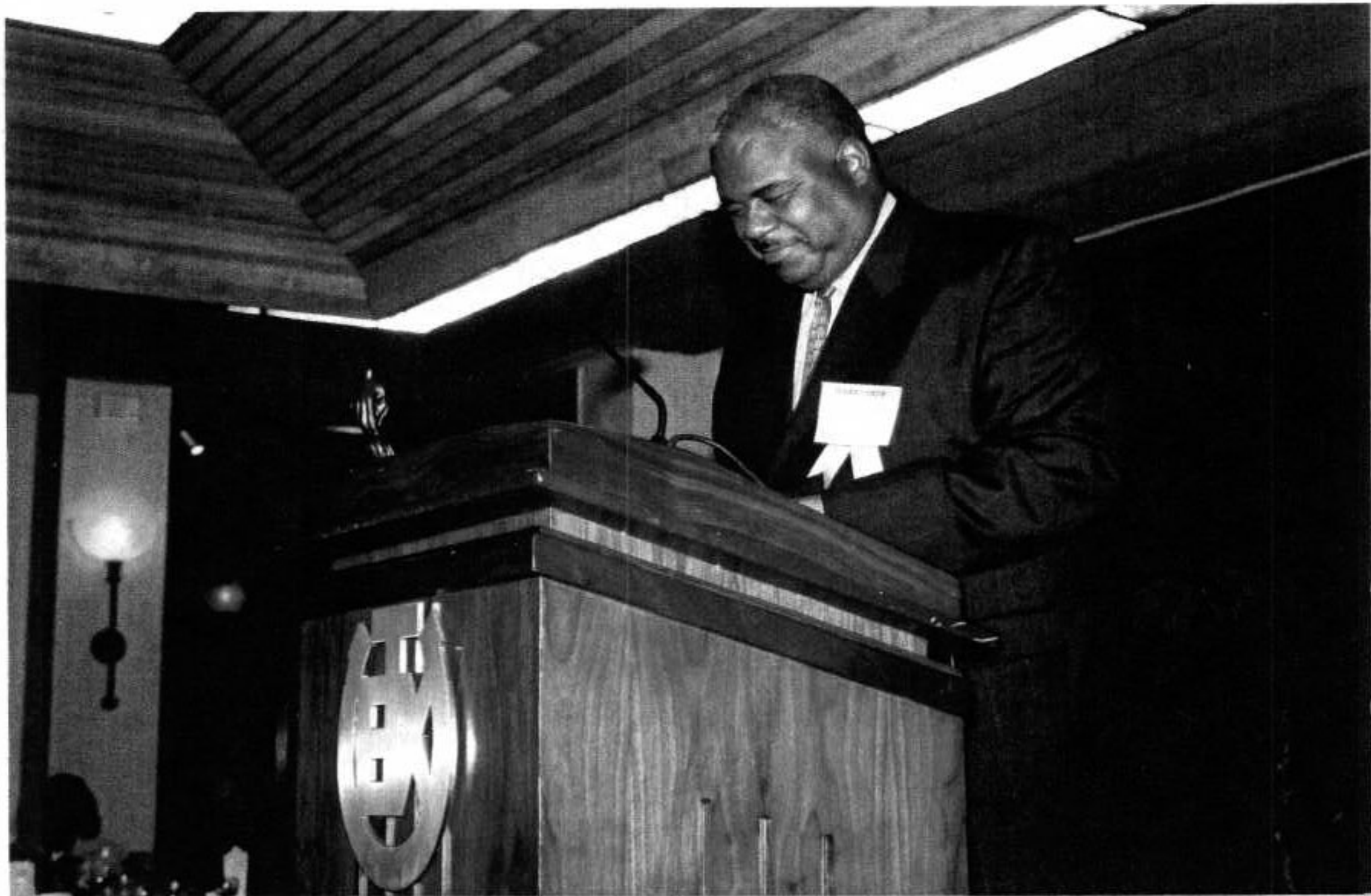

Member, Texas Senate

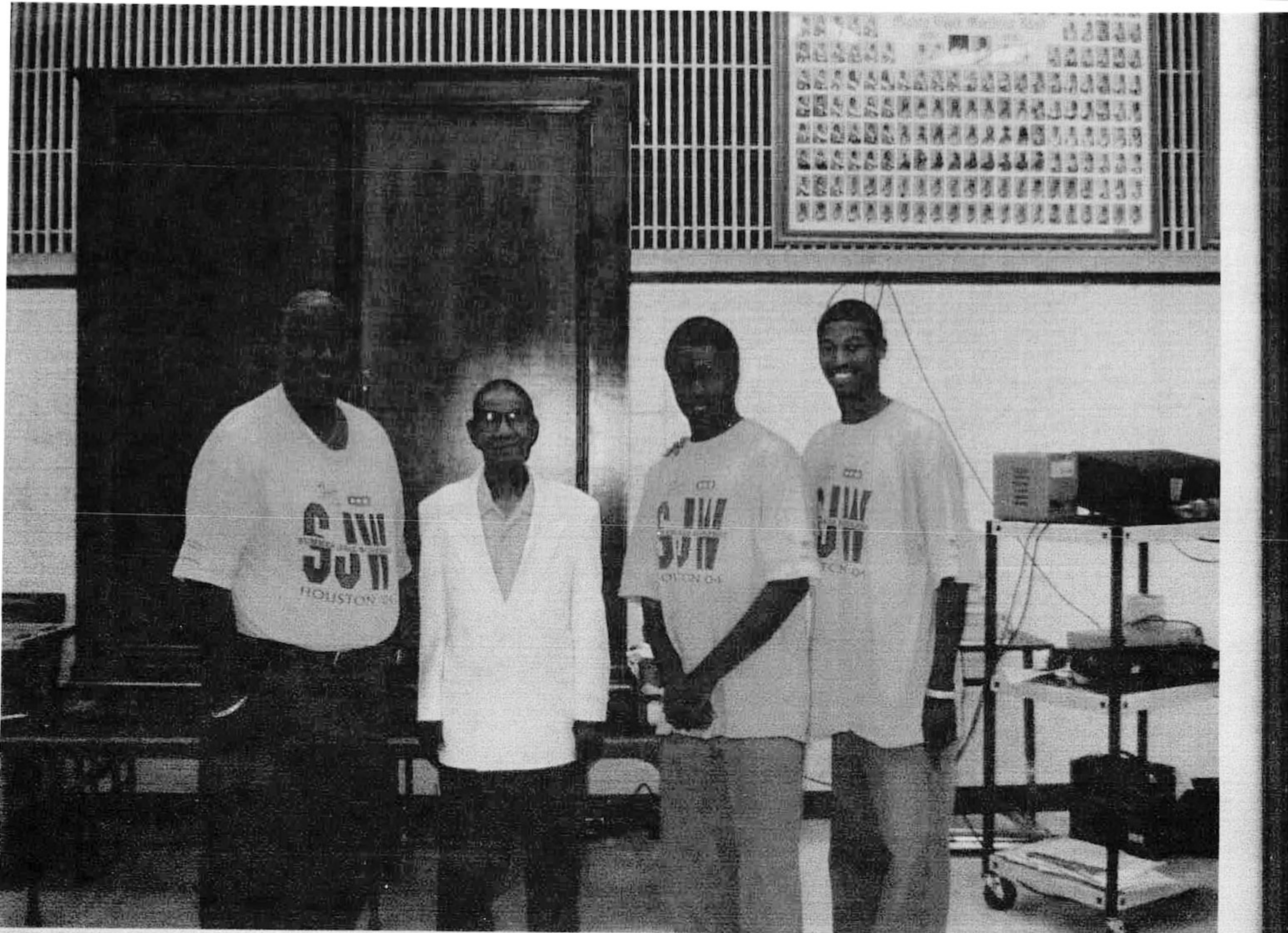
I hereby certify that the
above Proclamation was adopted. —


Secretary of the Senate









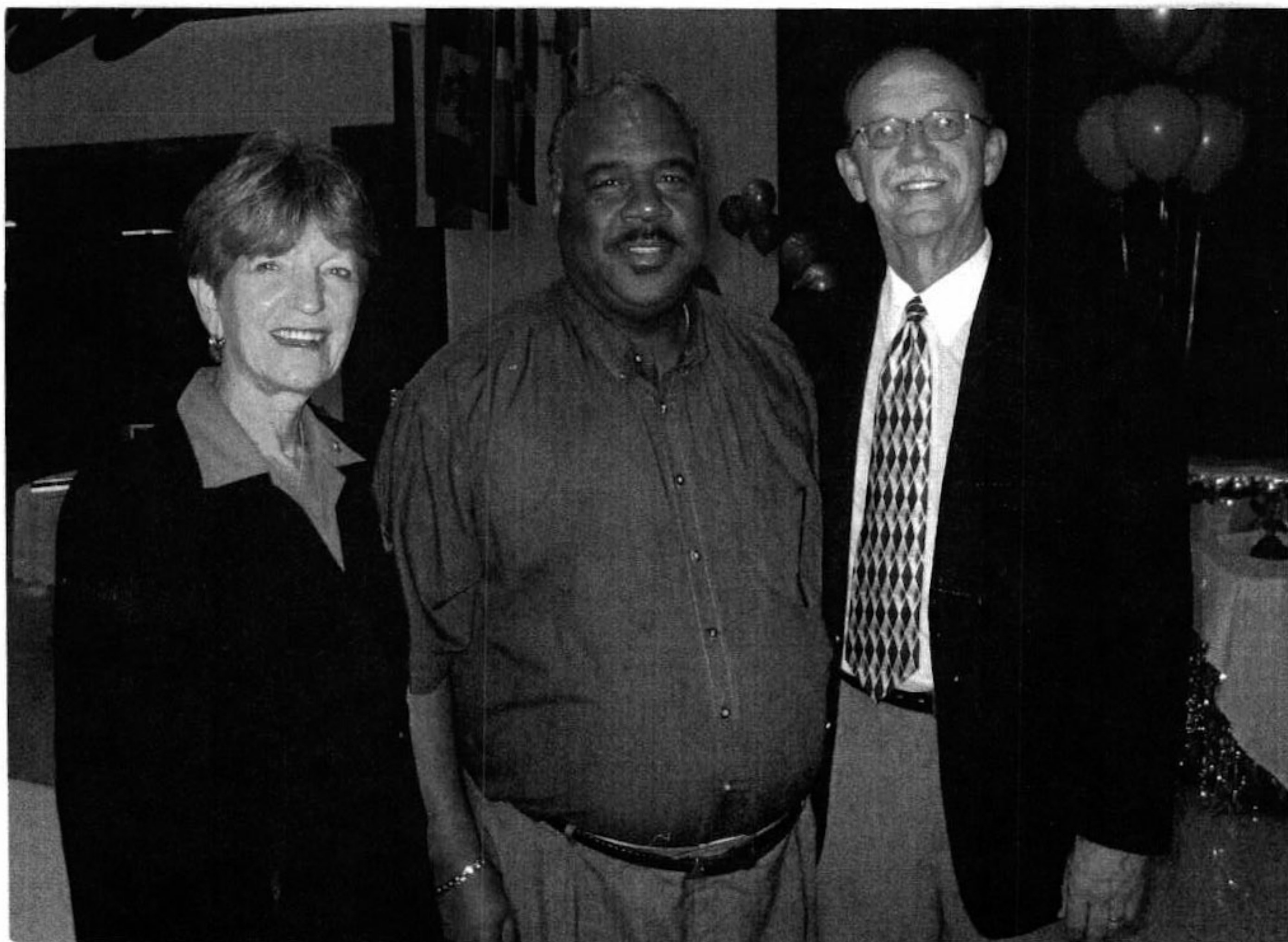
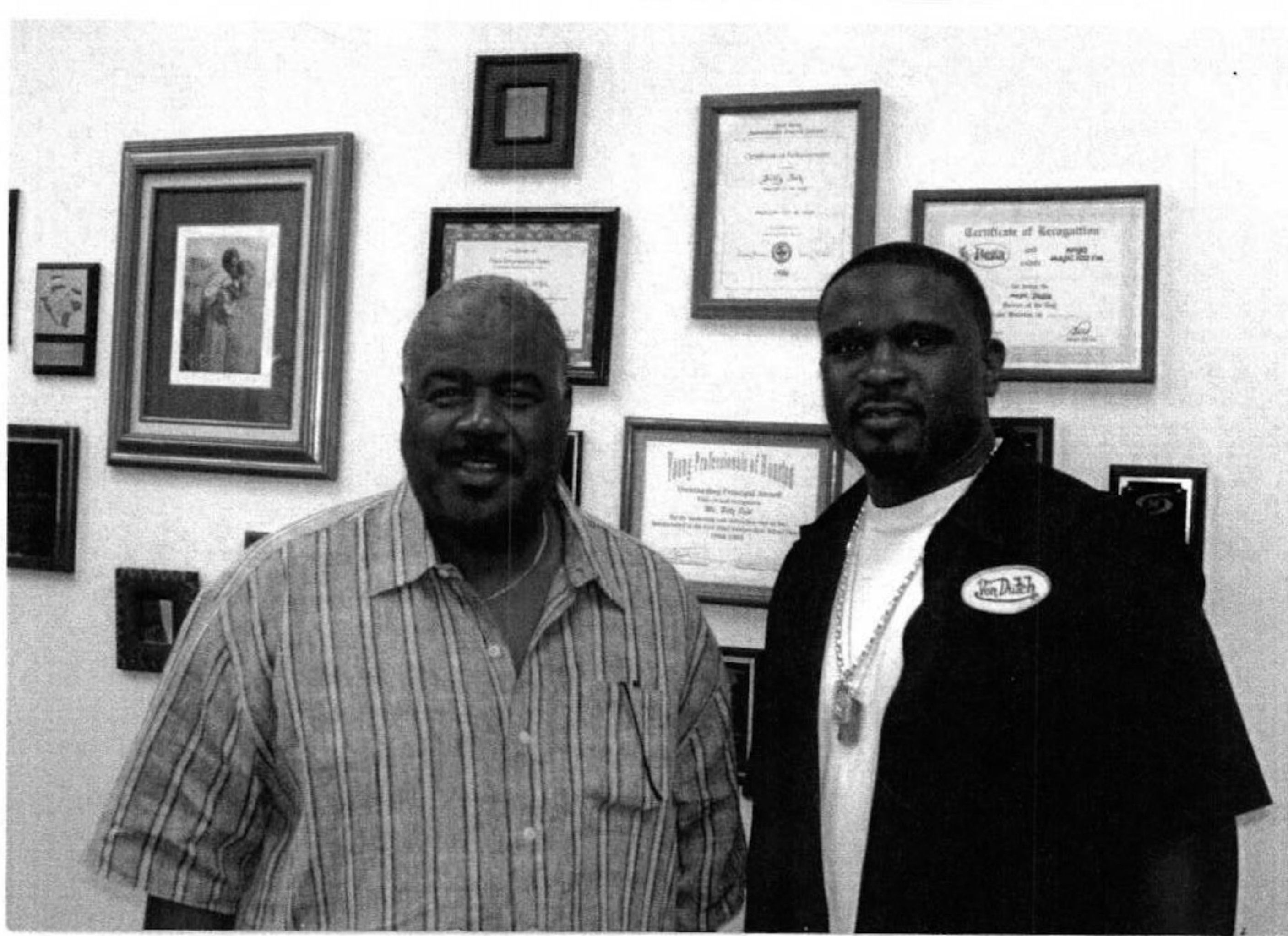
Excellence is a personal commitment;
it is an attitude of what separates
Excellence from Mediocrity

This Certificate Acknowledges
Mr. Ronald Thornton
Professional Musician
and Educator

In Recognition of Music Education
For
1999-2000 IAJE
New Orleans, Louisiana

You Have Shown Us All That
Excellence Is Not A Single Act

Billye Davis
Fine Arts Department



CONGRATULATIONS

MR. RONALD THORNTON

On Being Chosen As

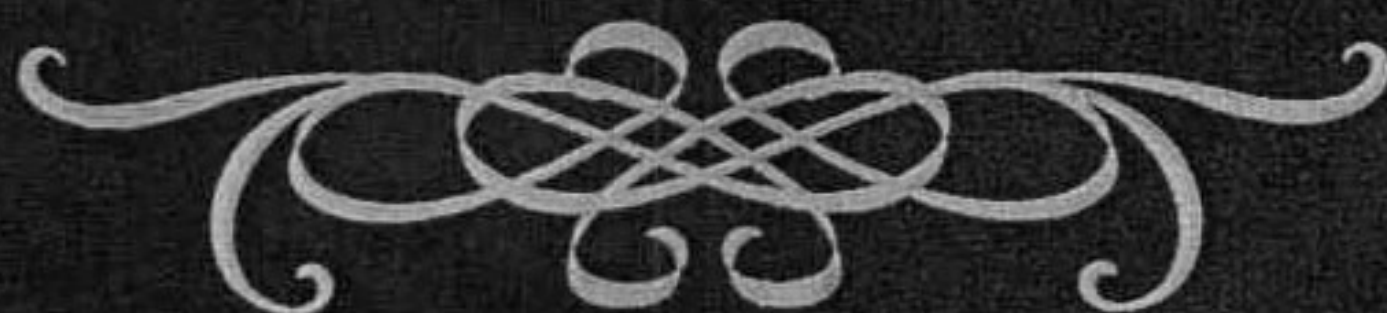
TEXAS EXES

2004

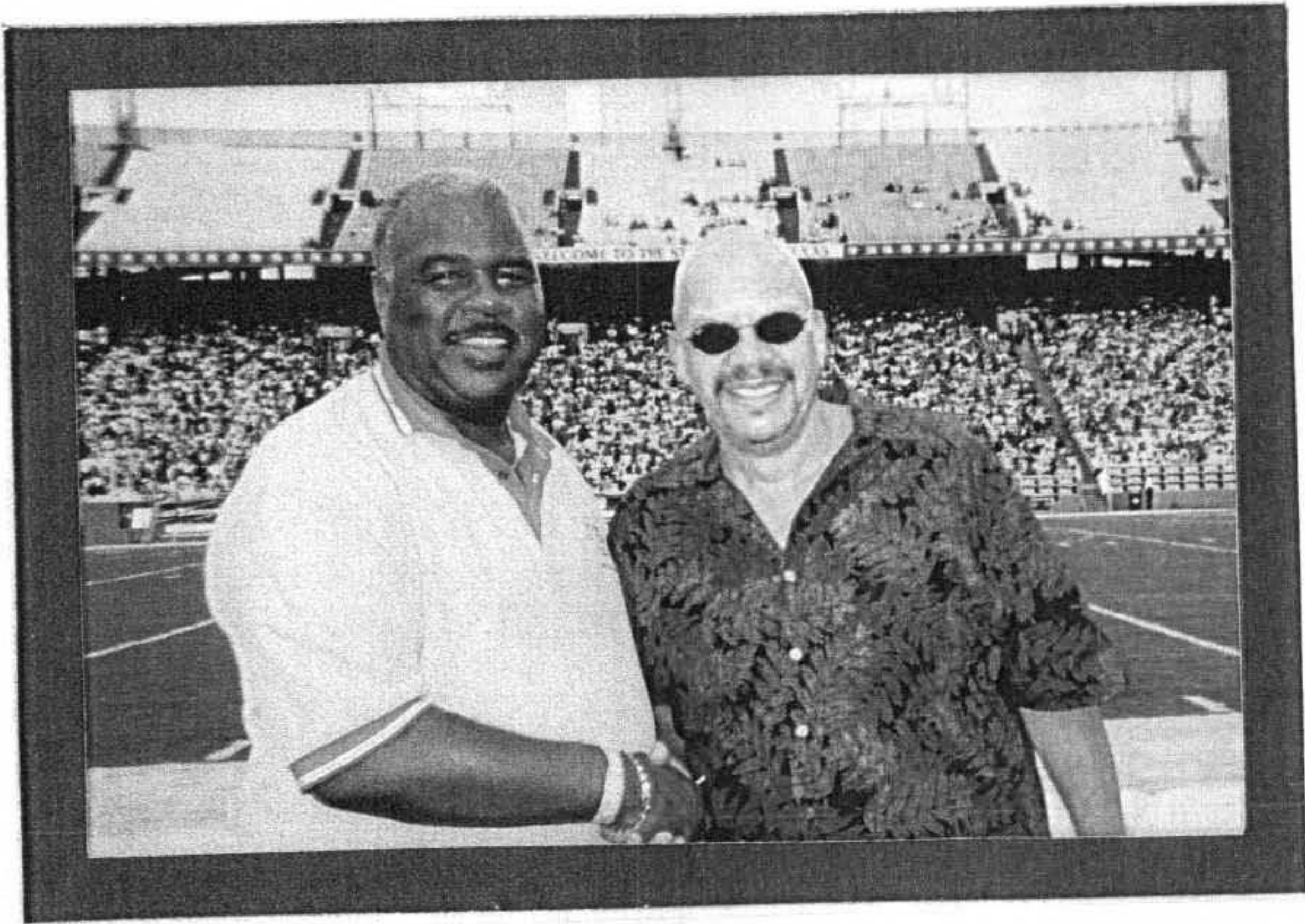
OUTSTANDING TEACHER

*"Your Dynamic Spirit and Commitment
Has Touched Many Lives!"*

*Willowridge High School Band
&
Band Booster Club*



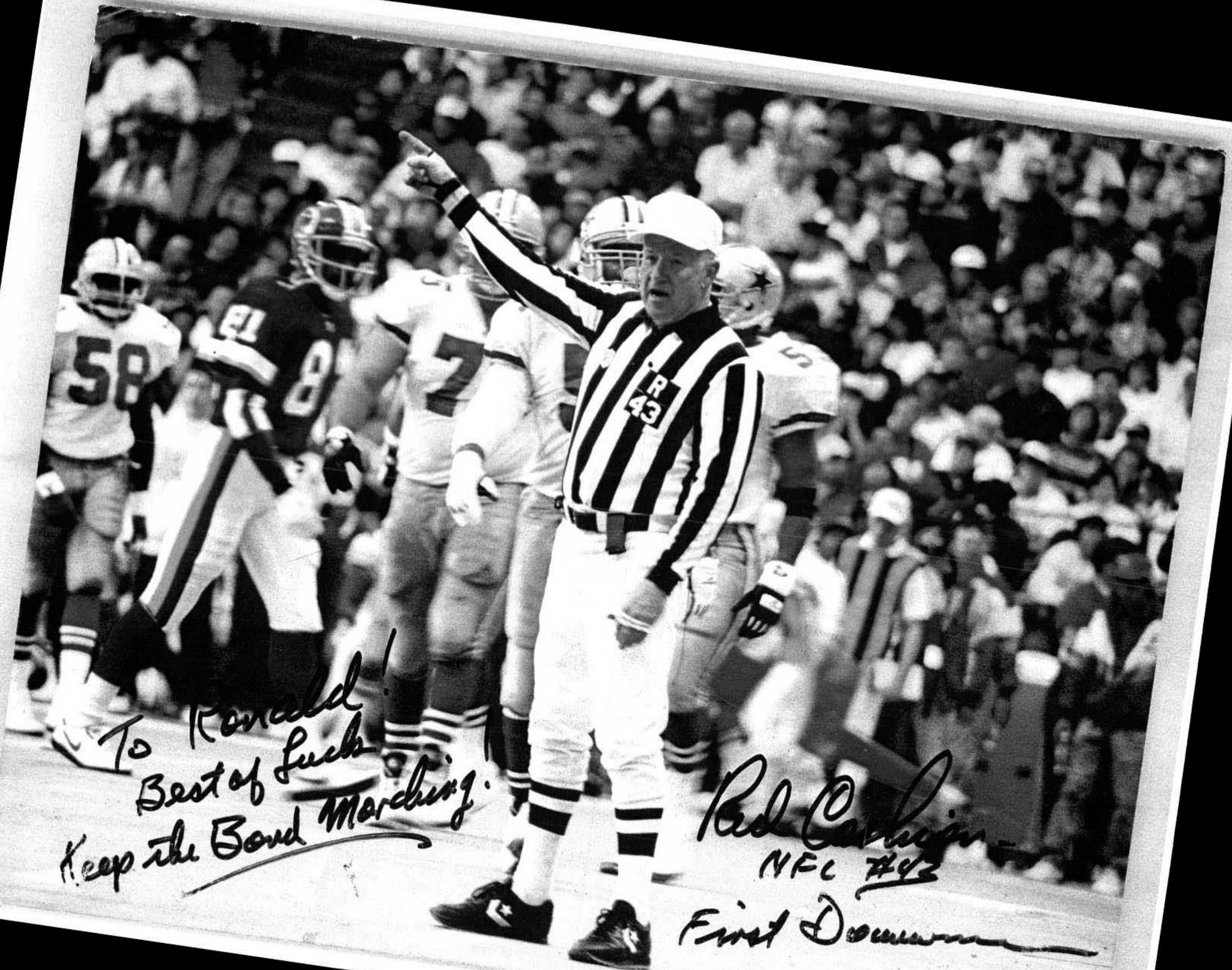
March 9, 2004



Ronald Thornton with Tom Joyner
Dallas, Texas



Super Bowl XXXVIII
Sunday, February 01, 2004
Houston, Texas



To Ronald!
Best of Luck
Keep the Band Marching.

Red Carlson
NFC #43
First Down



THE STATE OF TEXAS

GOVERNOR



*To all to whom these presents
shall come, Greetings: Know ye, that
this certificate is presented to:*

Ronald B. Thornton

Willowridge High School

In Recognition Of Your Being Named A Recipient Of A
Texas Exes Award For Outstanding Teachers

As a winner of a Texas Exes Award for Outstanding Teachers, you are being saluted for being among the best of the best.

Your recognition today reinforces to all across this great state the immeasurable contributions that you are making toward young Texans and the Texas of tomorrow. You have set exemplary standards and, moreover, your commitment to excellence has imparted to your students that success awaits them if they dream, dare and do. Daily, you are empowering young Texans to excel, highlighting the very best of the Lone Star State.

Anita and I wish you the very best for the future.



In testimony whereof, I have signed my name and caused the Seal of the State of Texas to be affixed at the City of Austin, this the 9th day of February, 2004.

Rick Perry

Rick Perry
Governor of Texas



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition

Presented to

Ronald Thornton Sr.

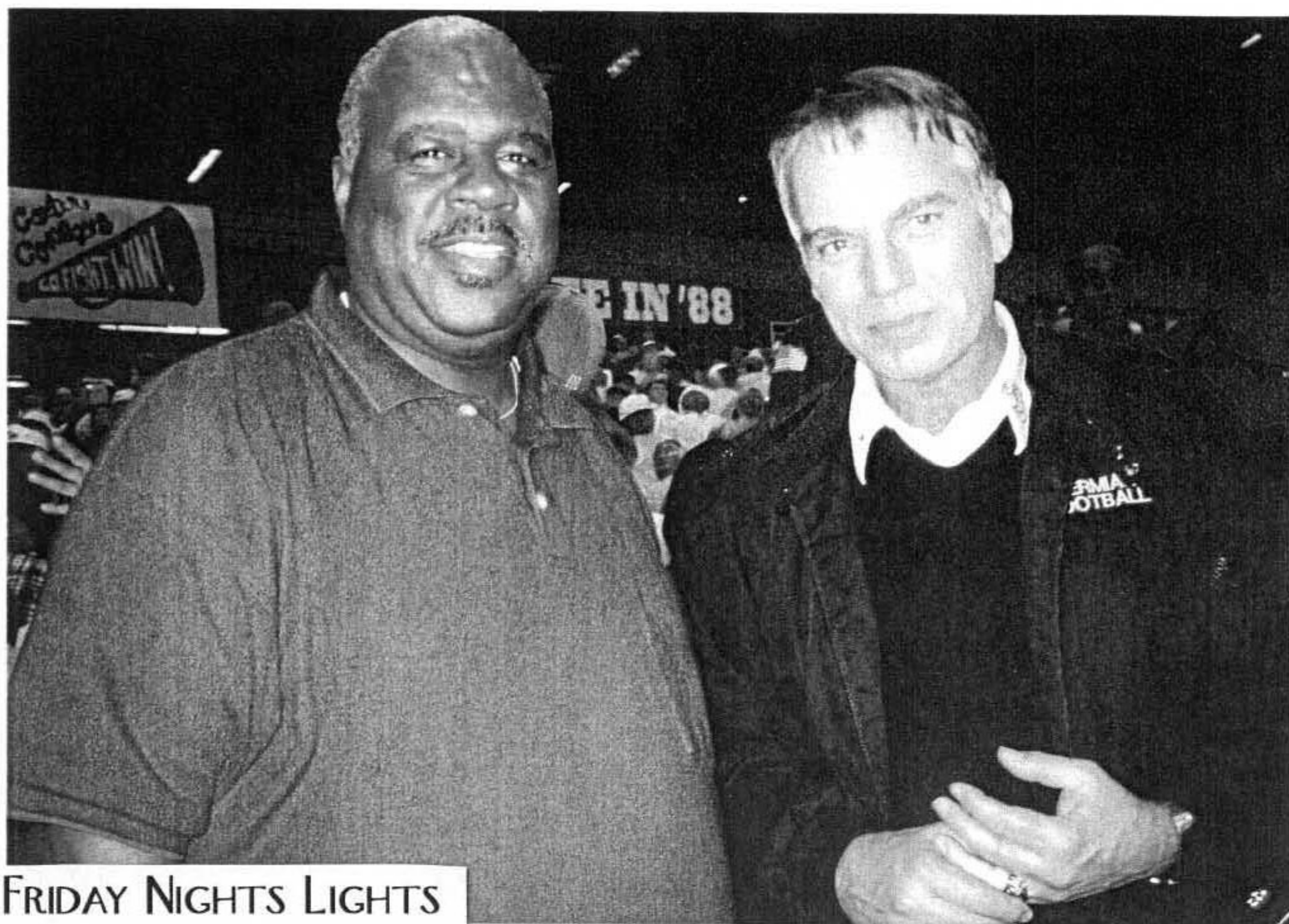
Band Director, Willowridge High School

*On Behalf of the Constituents of the Ninth Congressional District of Texas,
I Salute Your 35 Years of Commitment to Teaching, Mentoring, and Community Service.*

June 26, 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Green", enclosed within a circular flourish.

Al Green, Member of Congress



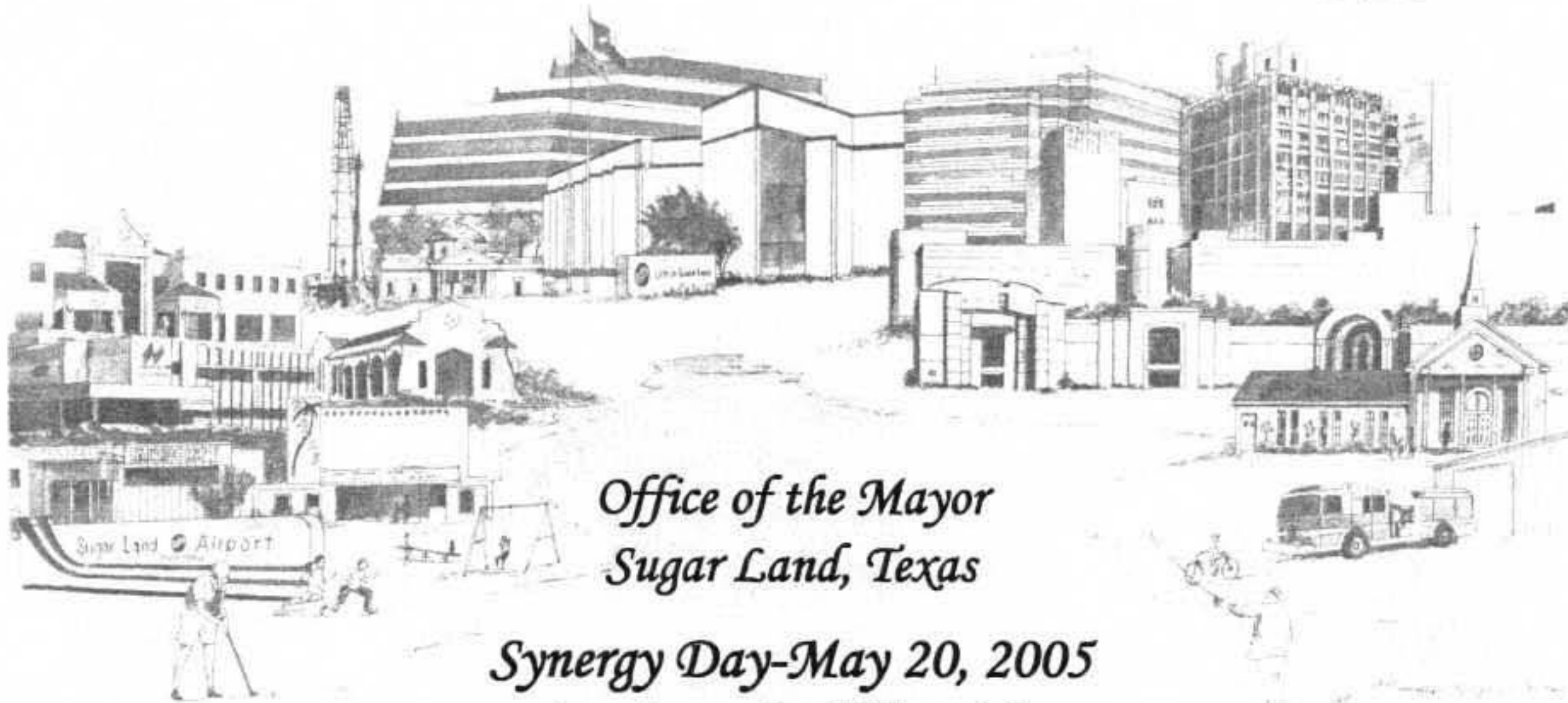
FRIDAY NIGHTS LIGHTS

STARRING : BILLY BOB THORNTIN

UNIVERSAL PICTURES 2004



Proclamation



*Office of the Mayor
Sugar Land, Texas*

Synergy Day-May 20, 2005 Austin and Willowridge High School Marching Bands

WHEREAS, Willowridge Mighty Eagle Marching Band and Stephen F. Austin Bulldog Marching Band proudly come together to form Synergy, a high energy combination of two nationally recognized marching bands in a unique musical and visual performance; and

WHEREAS, the Synergy performance is a premiere concert entertainment event, is highly recognized by other high school bands, and is growing in popularity and impacting students in positive ways of character building, sharing and team work; and

WHEREAS, with dynamic talent and brilliant performers, Austin and Willowridge High School Marching Bands combine to excel and aspire in becoming the best marching band performers of all time;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, David G. Wallace, on behalf of the members of City Council, and by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Sugar Land, Texas do hereby proudly recognize and congratulate the Willowridge Mighty Eagle and Stephen F. Austin Bulldog Marching Bands on their Synergy premier concert performance and commend them on their accomplishments and success and declare May 20, 2005 as Synergy Day in Sugar Land, Texas.



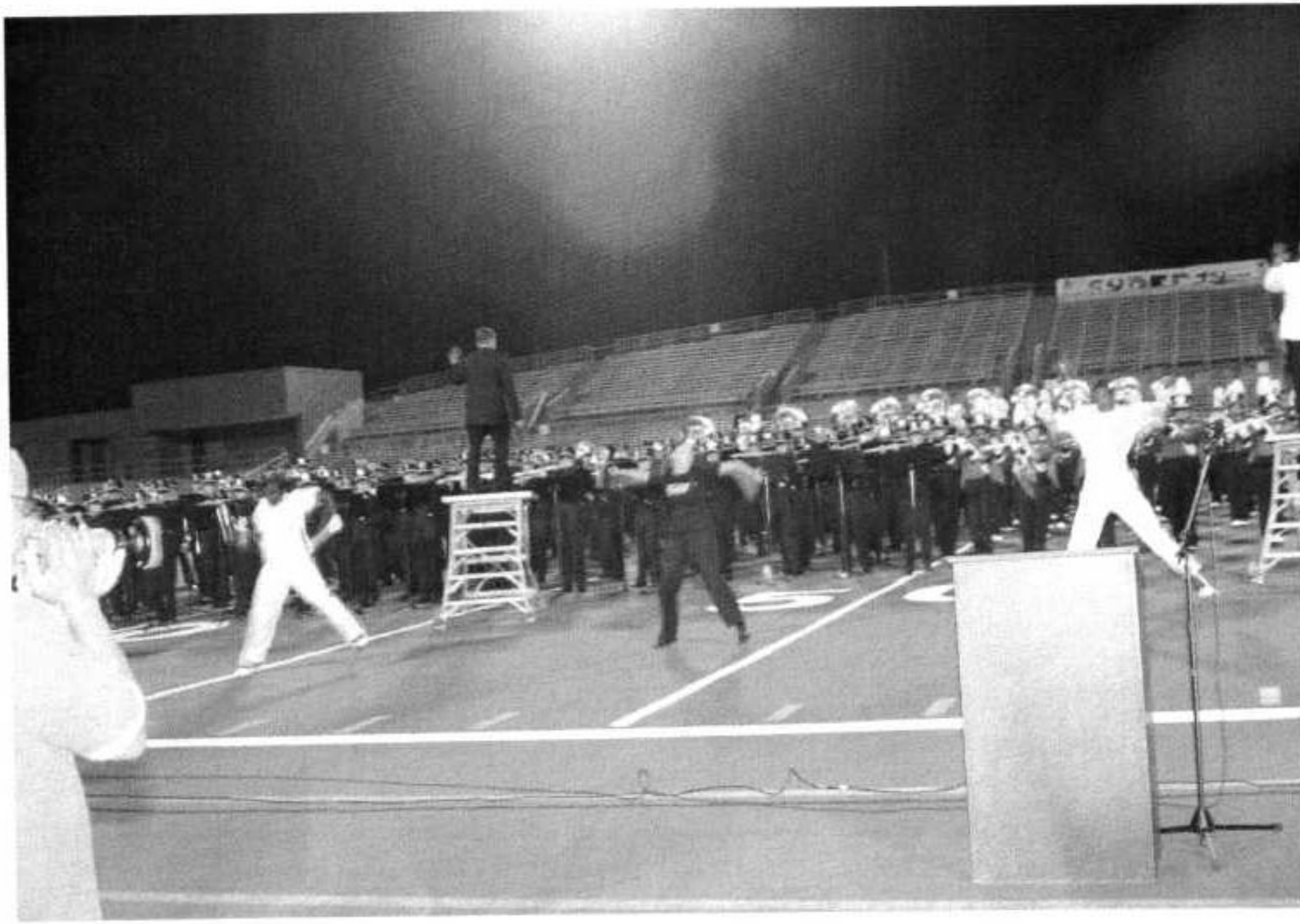
In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused this seal to be affixed.

David G. Wallace, Mayor

ATTEST:

Glenda Gundermann, City Secretary

DATE May 20, 2005

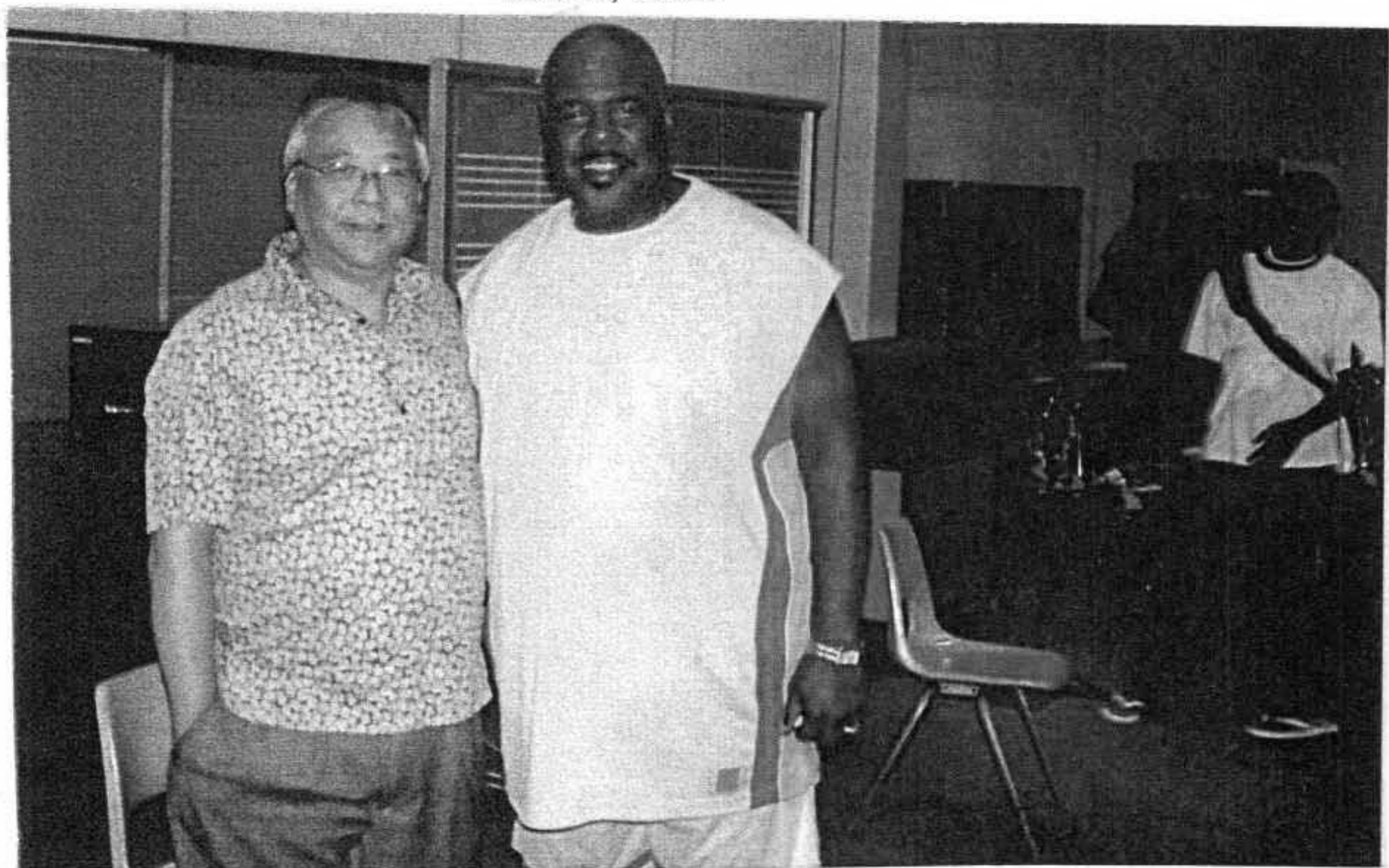






Ronald Thornton greets Mrs Rick Perry

Governor Integration Parade
Austin, Texas



Ronald Thornton with the *"Mighty Eagle Marching Band"*

Honolulu, Hawaii the summer of 2005



Proclamation



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
SUGAR LAND, TEXAS

Synergy Austin and Willowridge High School Marching Bands

Whereas, Willowridge Mighty Eagle Marching Band and Stephen F. Austin Bulldog Marching Band proudly come together to form Synergy, a high energy combination of two nationally recognized marching bands in a unique musical and visual performance; and

Whereas, the Synergy performance, a premiere concert entertainment event, is highly recognized by other high school bands and is growing in popularity and impacting students in positive ways of character building, sharing and team work; and

Whereas, with dynamic talent and brilliant performers, Austin and Willowridge High School Marching Bands combine to excel and aspire in becoming the best marching band performers of all time

Now, Therefore, I, David Wallace, on behalf of the members of City Council, and by the virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Sugar Land, Texas, do hereby recognize and applaud the Willowridge Mighty Eagle and Stephen F. Austin Bulldog Marching Bands on their Synergy premier concert performance and commend those committed to keeping performing arts vibrant and strong and extend best wishes for continued success.

*In witness whereof I have hereunto set
my hand and caused this seal to be affixed.*

David G. Wallace, Mayor

Attest:

Glenda Gundermann, City Secretary

Date:

May 20, 2006





To my Dearest Teacher Mr. Thornton,
you are truly an amazing person.
God has honestly blessed you. I know some
times life is hard, but heavenly father is
always there for us. He listens to our prayers,
because we are his children. I know I am a
Child of God; I am his daughter, and he gives me talents
to share with others to make his world more beautiful.
I have learned many things ~~for~~ from you. It has made
me a better person. I remember that you told the band
"you're only as strong as your weakest player" and you
are right. No one should be left behind the section
should become as one in order to progress. I took
your advice and it has helped me in many ways
because it apply to almost everything in life
when you work with others. Everytime you are in
front of the class conducting I stand amazed. I
see a man with so much love, knowledge, talent, and
most of all I see a tender heart to keep going
for the best and nothing less. You love what you
do. I have waited to be in your band since I
was in first grade, now that I am in it I am
so ~~great~~ greatful and I try my best. I love
music it is special to me. It is everything to me.
It's basically who I am. What I love most
about music is that it touches people's
heart with at a word 😊. Mr. Thornton
Thank you for being my teacher, teaching me more about
music each day. You have been like a second
father to me. Thank you for everything
much love

Andrea Parada

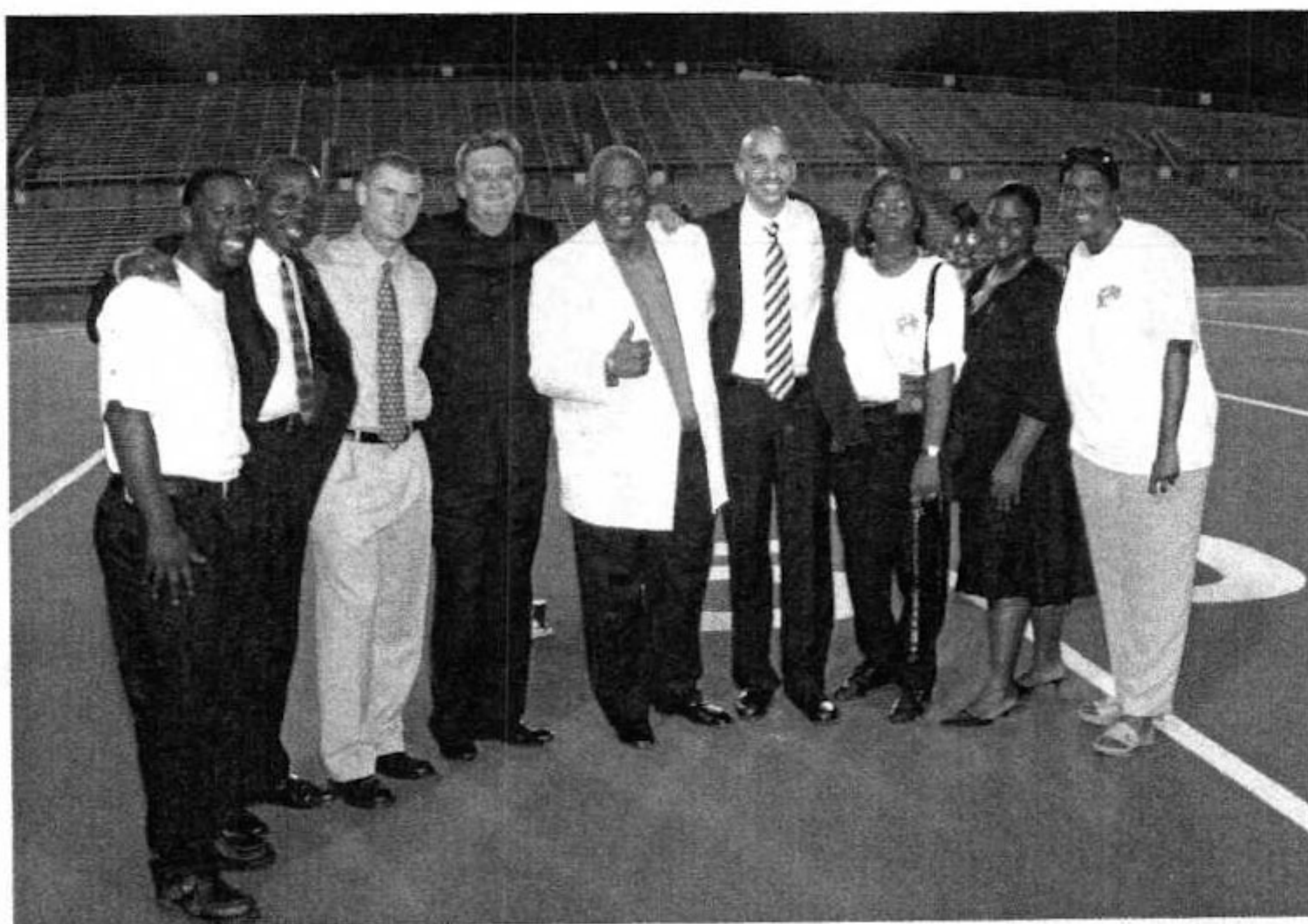
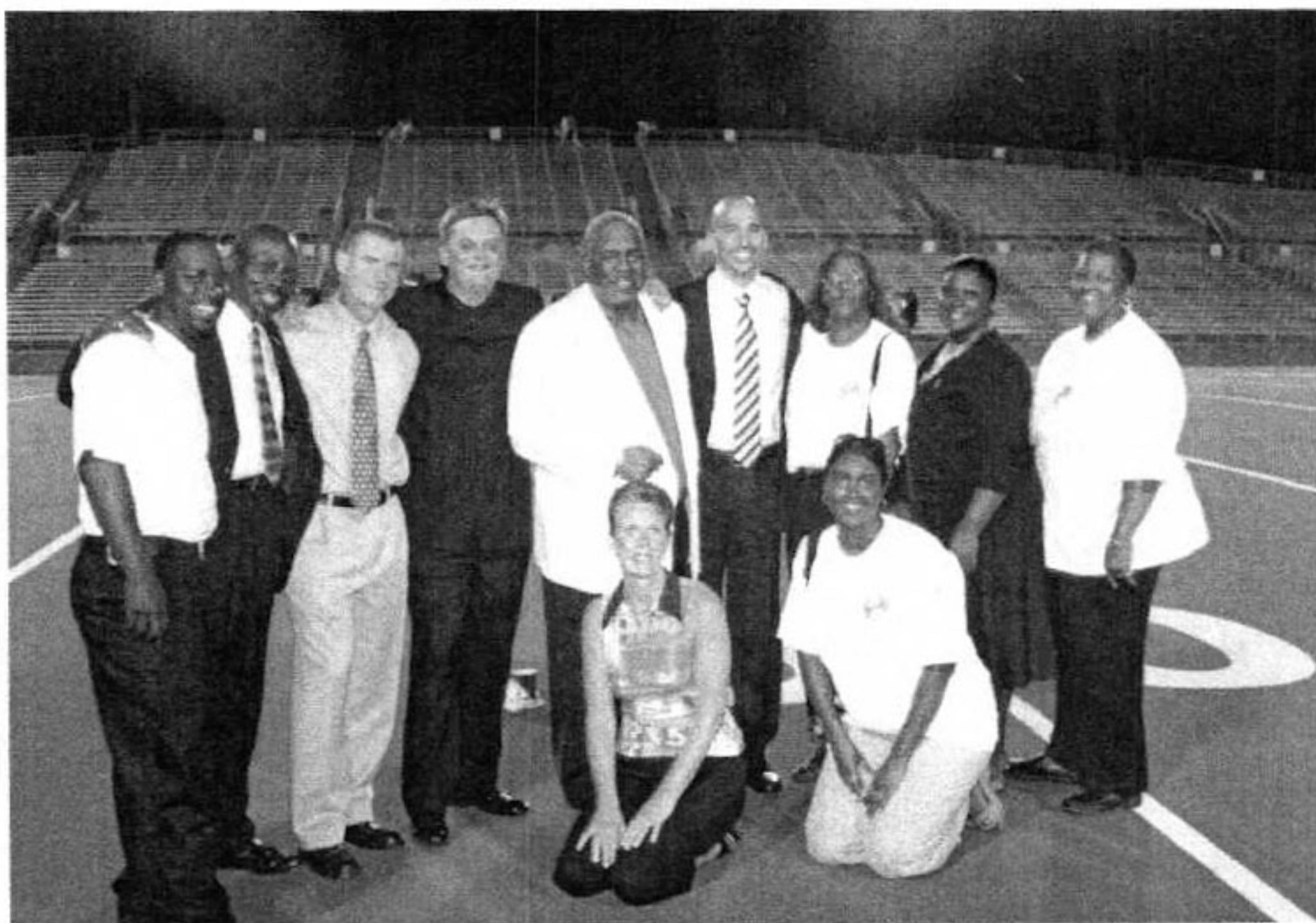
To all my Friends
at Willow Ridge
Best Wishes.
Good Luck With
Your Music!

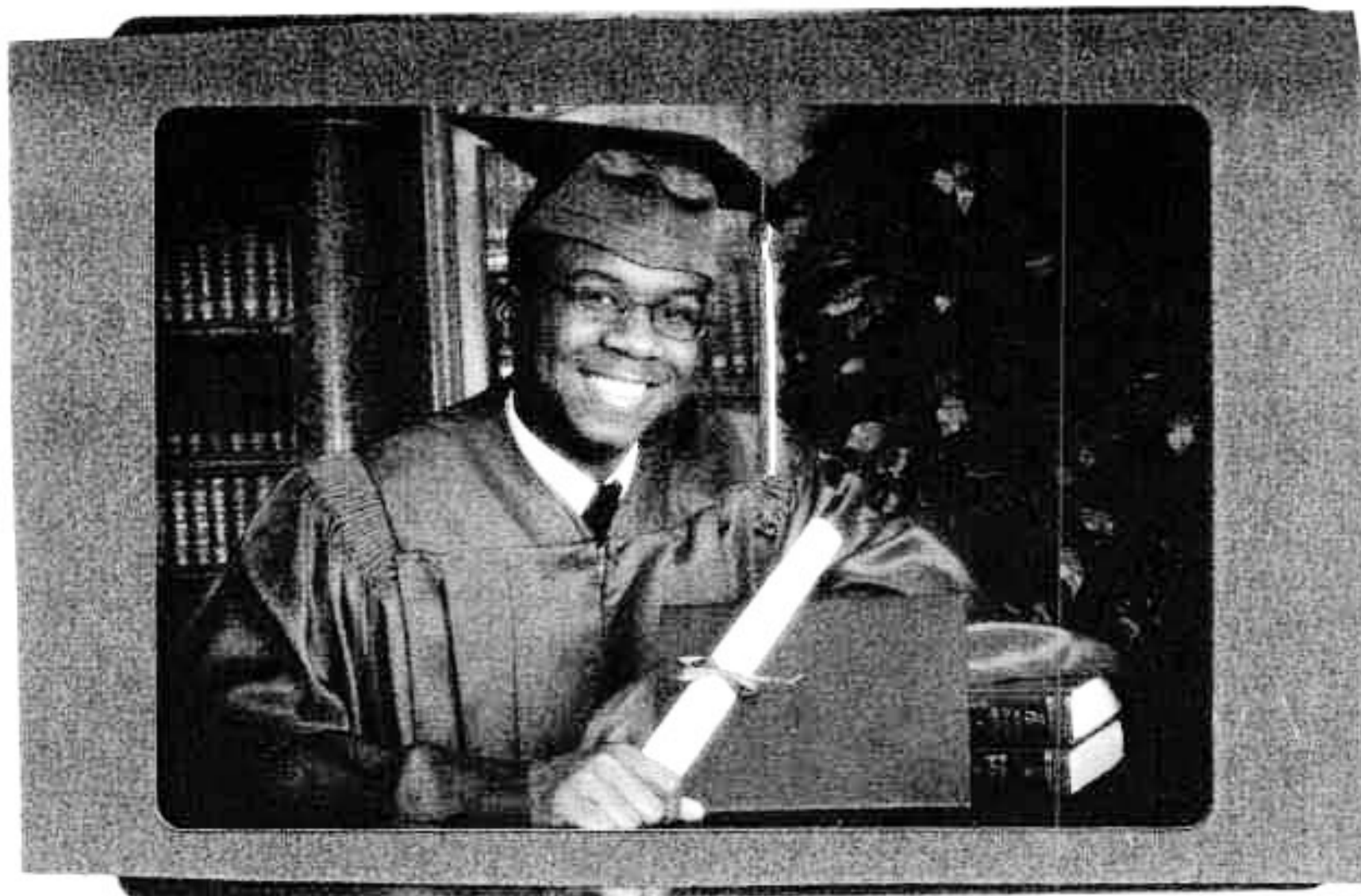
E. Watts

N.T.
1

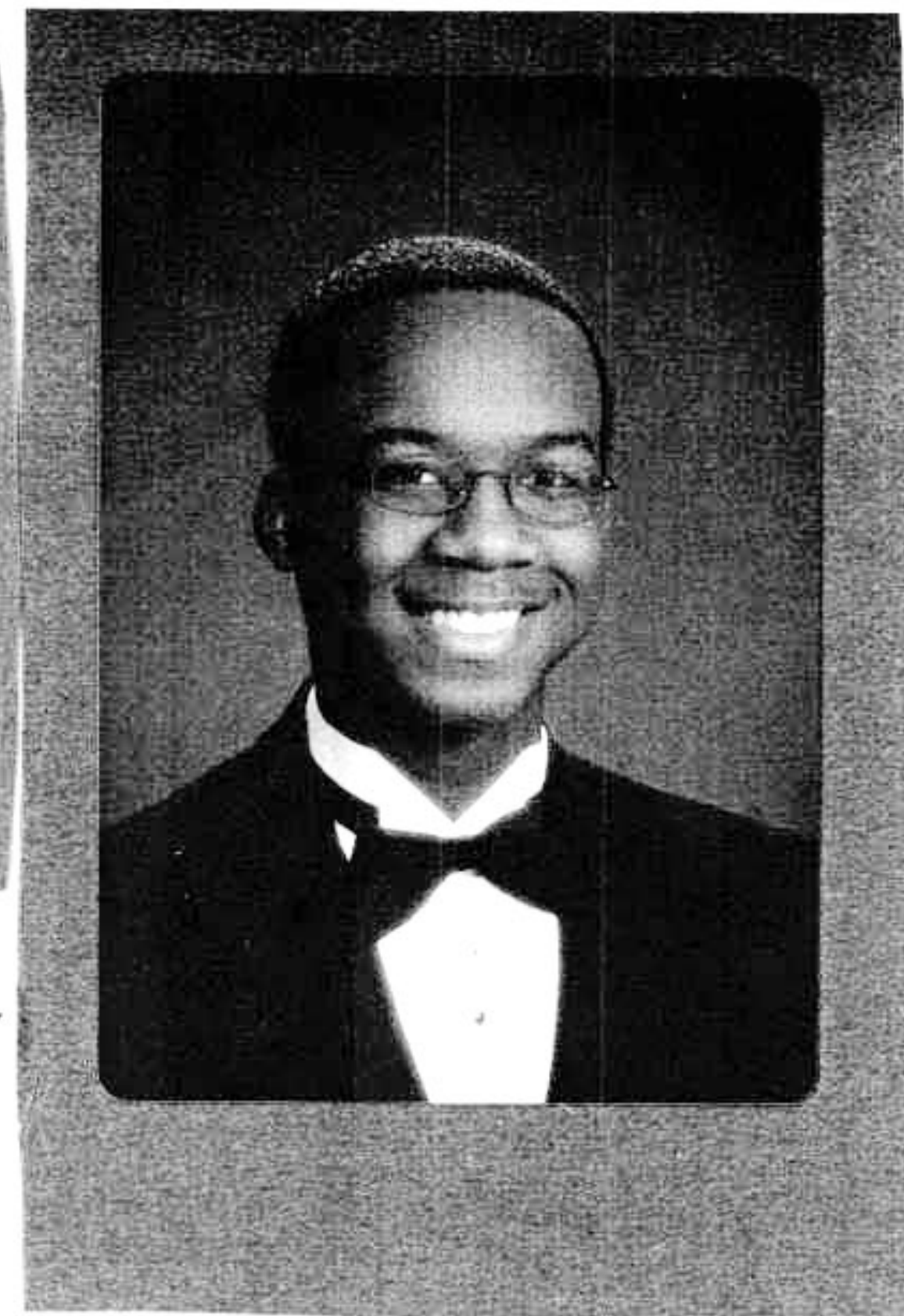


ernie watts





2007



Mr. Thornton,

Words can't express my gratitude for all that you have done for me. You believed in me even when I wasn't sure of myself. Your encouragement gave me the confidence to believe in my musical abilities. You gave me opportunities to experience and learn many things about music. My introduction to jazz music and learning how to play the drum set was all because of you. Thanks for allowing me to be apart of the best marching band and jazz band in the country. Thanks for the talks about life and what is expected of me as a man. I really was listening. I'm going to miss you, Mrs. Hill, and Mr. Jackson. It is going to take some adjustment to get use to not seeing everyone everyday. I will keep in touch. I'll try not to make it a late night call (smile). Thanks again for a wonderful four years.

Love and Respect,

Tremaine Williams
I.C.E. /Class of 2007



You
are
fabulous...

Prof

10/31/08

I'm not sure what I walked into today but I wanted to remind you how loved and respected you are. Soxg says sometimes you have to encourage yourself but I wanted to encourage you also. I always remind my kids that I've known you longer than I've known them and don't embarrass me or act up with you. I also think kids really don't understand greatness when it is standing in front of them but they will understand later.

If you ever forget that,
please read this again.



Remember that I love to you often
I've known you since I was young
and I've loved and respected you
always. You are doing a wonderful
job. I can't wait to motivate even
when it seems from that way.
I feel so inspired to express to
you how respected I think you are.
Thank you for everything.



Special Thanks
To

Ronald Thornton, Fr.

—★—
For Unselfish Service To
Youth and Community
—★—

St. Mary of the Purification Catholic Church
Annual Fashion Show Luncheon
March 29, 2008



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition

Presented to

Ronald Thornton Sr.

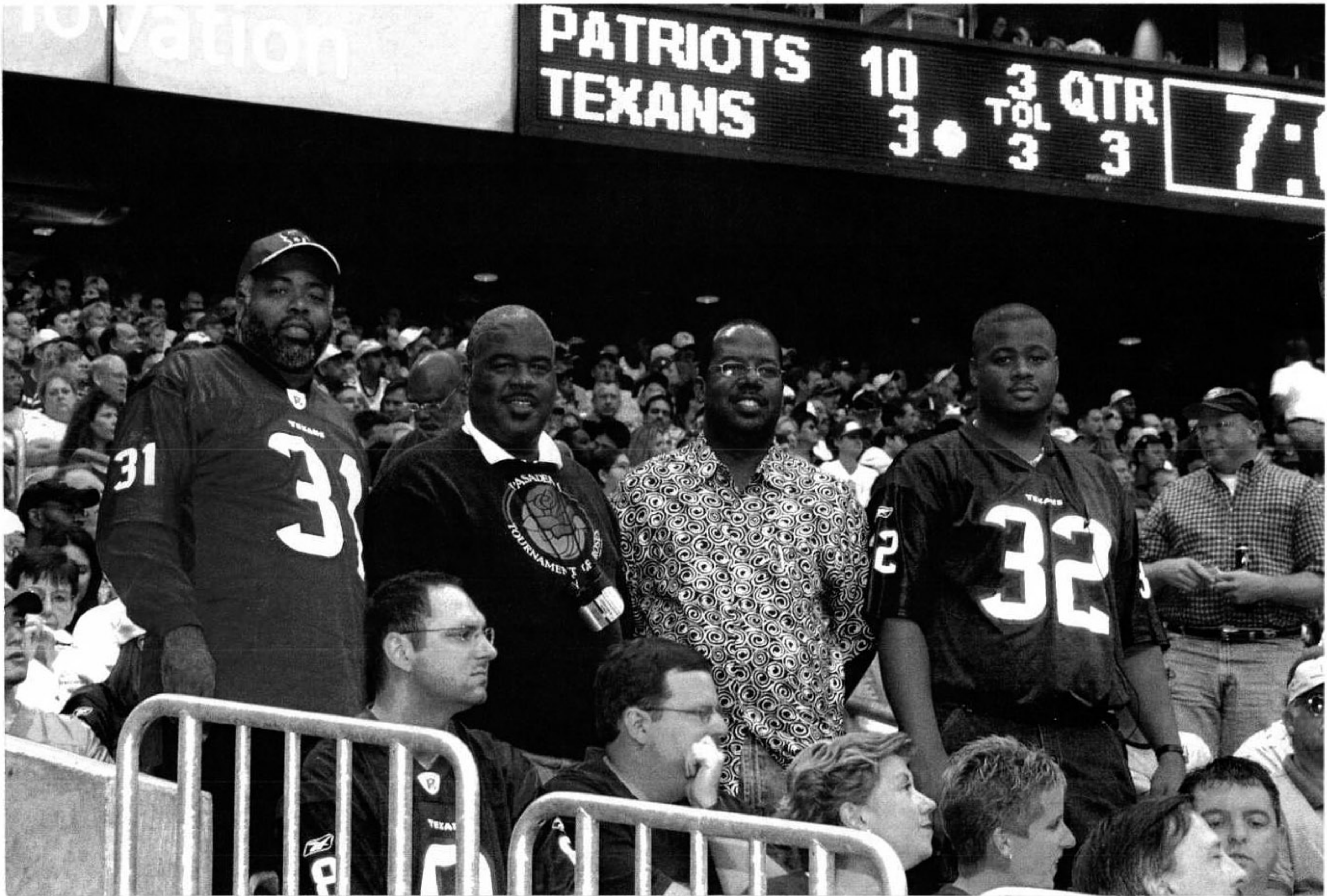
Band Director, Willowridge High School

*On Behalf of the Constituents of the Ninth Congressional District of Texas,
I Salute Your 35 Years of Commitment to Teaching, Mentoring, and Community Service.*

June 26, 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Green", enclosed within a large, stylized oval loop.

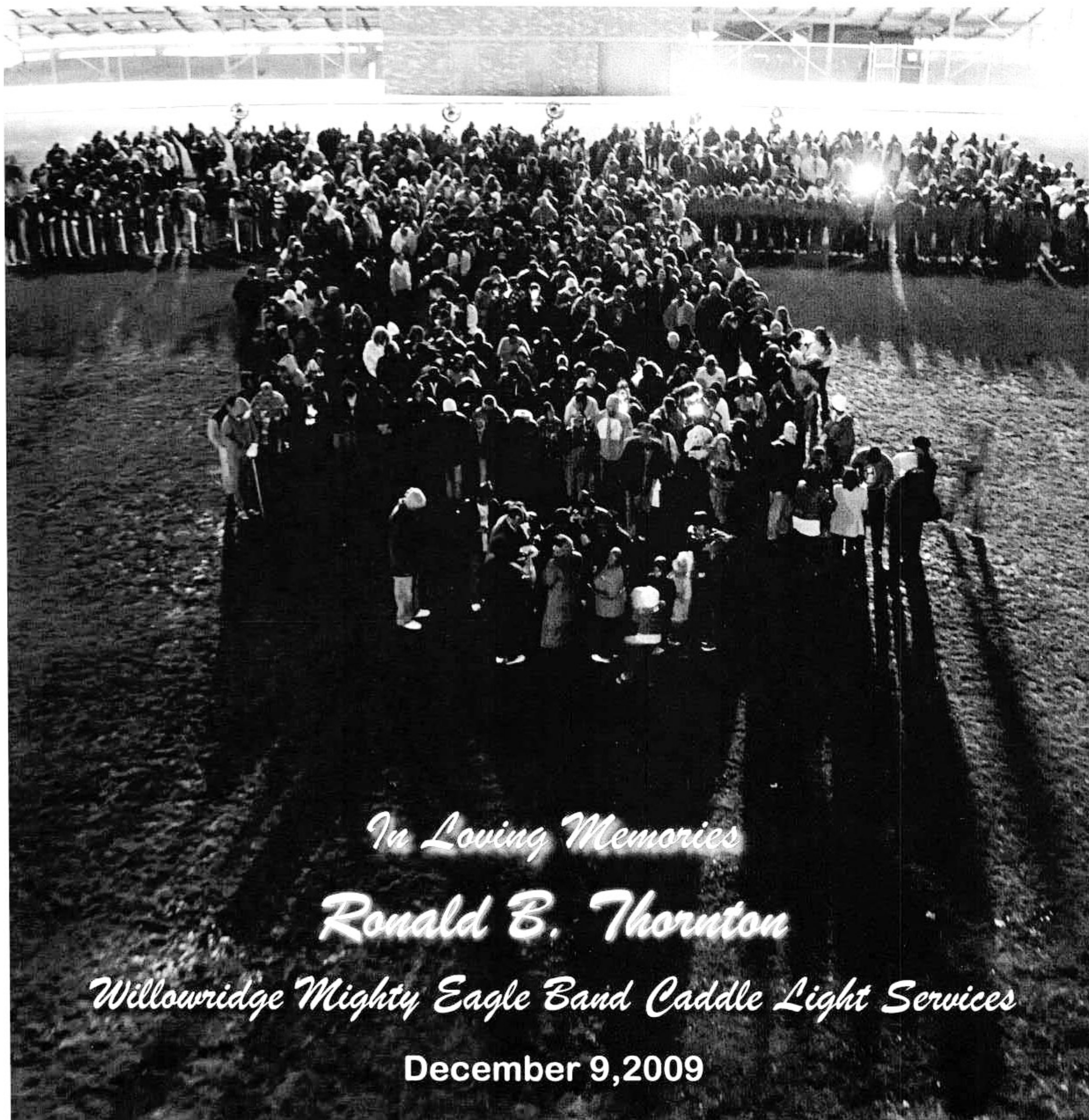
Al Green, Member of Congress











In Loving Memories

Ronald B. Thornton

Willowridge Mighty Eagle Band Caddle Light Services

December 9, 2009

!!
 ...you
 would talk
 to me like
 I was your
 best friend

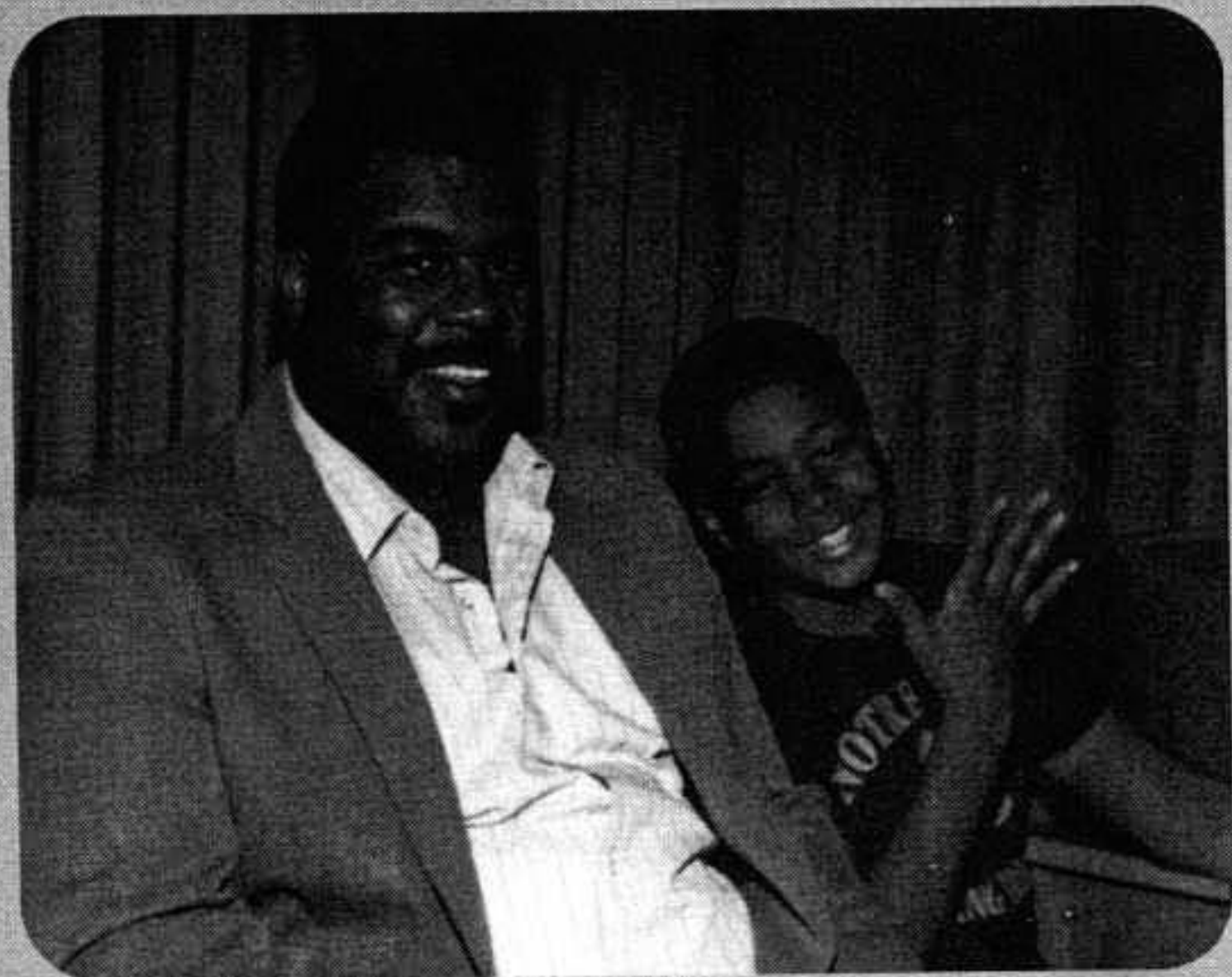
From the one who bears your name,

The greatest honor of a son, is to be named after his father, and when his father has transcended the methods of how an organization or human being should conduct himself, the honor reaches gigantic proportions. When I say our name, the room suddenly falls silent, and the person in which I am speaking to, remembers a man who could bring you to your feet and make you shout with pride and joy. The individual would remind me of performances he or she participated in or watched from the grandstands as the band played, and simply smile and my body begins to tingle. It tingles with the warm feelings that melts all the snow from a mountain top and I am pleased to know, how my father touched this person. Of course this person is telling a band story that I have heard several times, and when I hear it from you, the story never gets old and I never get bored. I relish the times that you and I have sat down and talked about the band. Most fathers do not talk to their children about any event in their life, but you would talk to me like I was your best friend. Of course, mom is your best friend. We would talk about your adventures as a boy scout, your choir trips, especially the trip to Europe, your football career, when you and your boyhood friends dominated the boys from River Oaks on the land now occupied by Highway 288, your "John Henry", story, when you were chopping wood and the ax slipped and cut your leg, your pledgee stories, especially the one when you pledged two at a time. There are so many stories that I could conjure from my memory and I love them all, almost as much as I love you, but one story stops them all.

The year was 1972, and the family tree started with my birth. Mom was working for H&L&P and you were at TSU and marching in the "Ocean". Everyone knows that marching and going to school at TSU is no easy task by any means. As memory serves, your daily schedule consisted of school in the morning, stock person at Oshman's Warehouse in the afternoon and early evening, "Ocean" practice from nine to early morning, and the graveyard shift at Stop-N-Go until school the next day. There was a roof over our head, the cupboards were not bare and a family began a life that would prosper in a way that we know it today. That story makes me proud each and every day,

and when I leave your home to begin my family, I will pass those memories to your grandchildren and continue the tradition of educating our offspring of how it was and what your present situation could lead to without a strong family or faith. Dad, over the years I heard all of your cliches and I would like to end with one I would like to express to you and Mom," words are superficial communicative messages that we use for conversation and clarification, but actions, your actions are the infutable displays of love that time will never erase." Thank you for the memories that you and I have shared and ones yet to come.

*Always upholding our name with pride,
 Ronald B. Thornton, II*

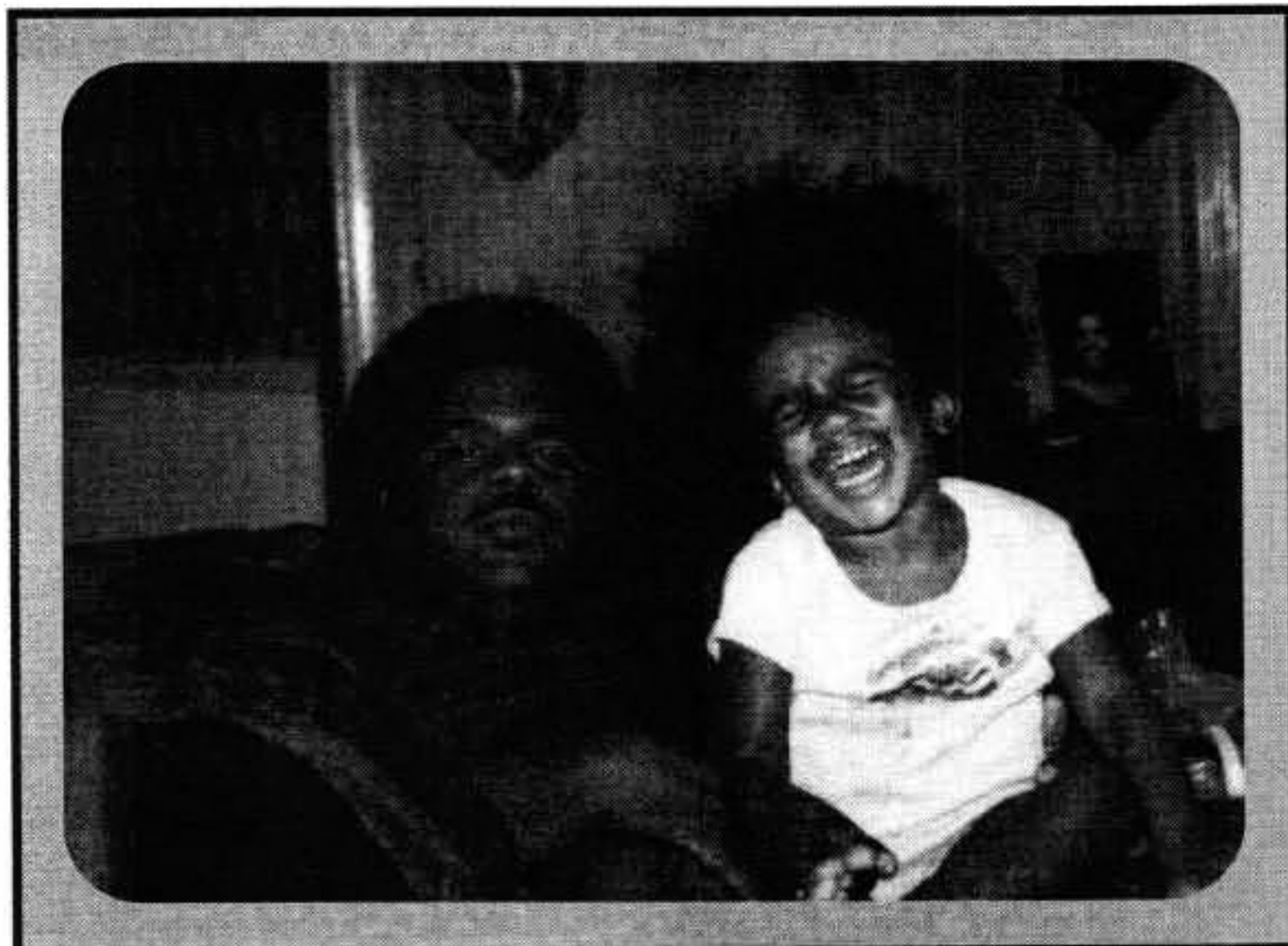


Dear Daddy,

The hard times are upon you since I've graduated from high school. Even though you stressed concerns about grades, typing, BOYS, and non-school organizations, the everyday lectures paid off. Of course, you know that you are special to my heart-- always there when I need you, understanding, nice, a hard teacher, intelligent, gifted, and never understanding my point of view. I know this day is special to you, just like the day I was brought into this world. At the beginning of my aging years, we didn't see much of each other, but everyday the love and respect grew stronger and stronger. The accomplishments you have achieved in this world, country, state, and city have made me proud to say "THAT'S MY DAD!" I really didn't know how much work was put into a worldly known band until my freshman year, when I was under the direction of you. I thought my high school years were going to be easy, but you gave me something to look for. You made me feel excited about every upcoming year to perform with this band. I was always doing the opposite until you put the board on my butt!!! It was funny, but I got my act together for a long while.

God blessed me with a wonderful father! Now he has enabled me to acknowledge the duties that he has accomplished with great dignity. Whose got the greatest father in the country? I do!!! LET'S EAT. HA HA HA

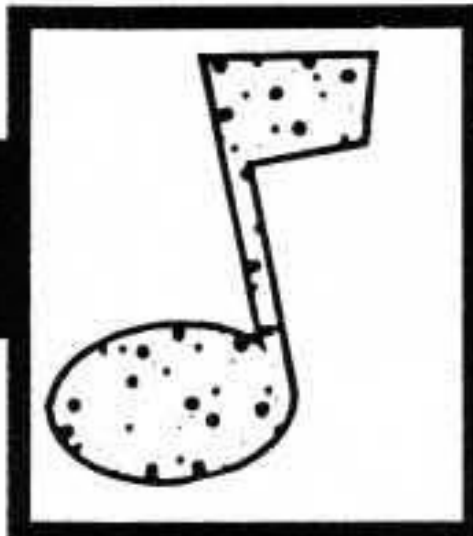
Love You Always,
Monique



!!
...you're
special to
my heart;
always
there when
I need you

!!
...





To My Darling Ronald,

Dearest Ronald,

Back in 1968, it just amazed me that I did have a heck of a lot to do, and as usual, my brothers would bring all of their athletic, stinky, jock friends to the house.

For the most part I ignored all, but even the worst of all, I noticed this certain statue who played baseball, a member of the swim team, played in the band and tried to be a basketball player.

So as I matured and got into the thing called dating and love, I decided to start accepting applications. Low and behold I was looking for someone tall, dark, muscular build, handsome and rich. For some reason this certain person kept coming around and we finally started talking.

He was tall, God knows he was dark and that time handsome as in the eyes of the beholder. I accepted that, oh yeah-the muscular build was a definite-rich- never found that.

However, I do not say this on a minimal side. Ronald Thornton has brought to me a wonderful life, help me create two fine children and his personality and music have certainly been assets to all of us.

For all of who know us and those of you who have just come to know my family, RONALD, with God always first, the husband, father, the friend has always been here for us.

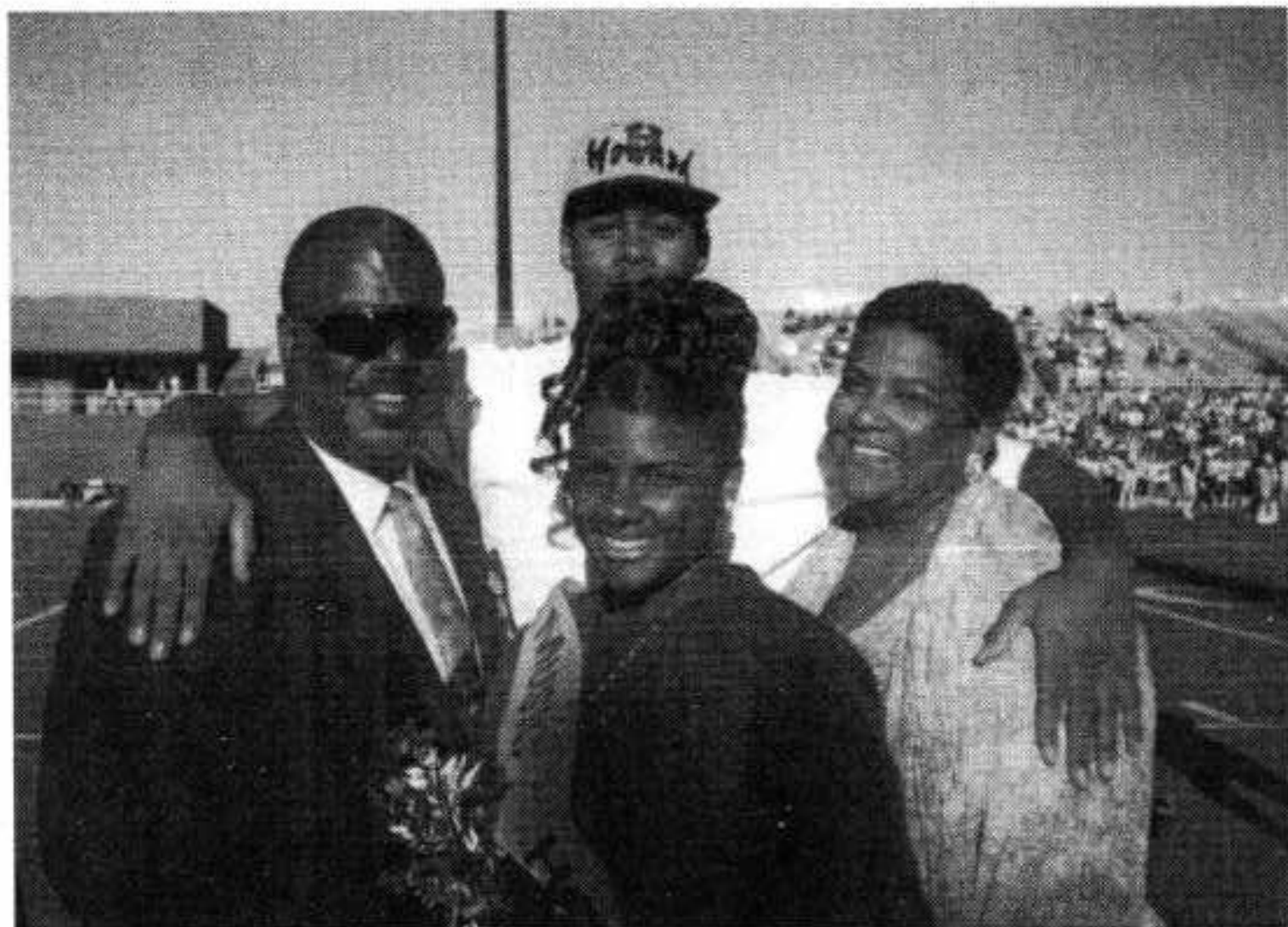
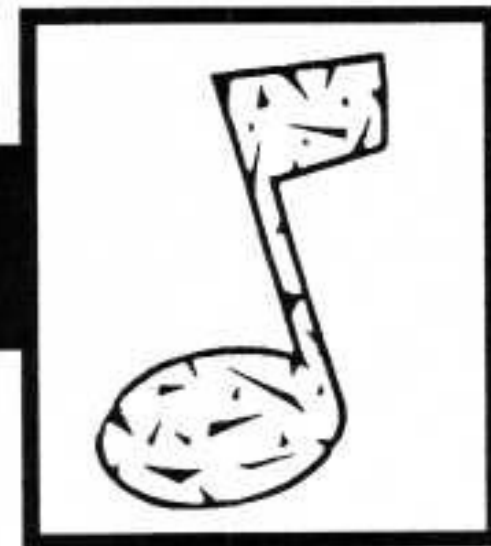
As we all realize, life with anybody is not perfect everyday, but I'm proud of the fact that Ronald made our lives as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. He is a phenomenal person, and considering all of his love and attributes--I think I'll keep him.

On a more serious note, I look forward to my future with my family-Ronald as head and our children exemplifying all that we are.

To my man and his all-n-all, I love you with all my heart and soul and as always I am that person behind you every step you take. You are my HERO.

- Michelle







HONOR

PRIDE

DISCIPLINE

