

The Music Man

Frank J. Mannino



Music is in the DNA of Frank Mannino's family. Beginning with his uncle, jazz trombonist Santo Pecora, through his sons Marco '69 and Milo HC/EJ '81, to his grandson Jon, the sounds of the big band swing era continue.

His story at Holy Cross began when band director Br Roberto Muller left mid-year in 1964. Richard Crosby filled in as the interim band director and at the end of the school year, he suggested to Headmaster Br. Robert Hampton that he take a look at hiring Ridgewood Prep band director Frank Mannino, a fellow Warren Eastern graduate.

Mannino undertook the task of changing the culture of the Holy Cross band, essentially turning it into a year-round program including practice at 7:00 am daily during the school year and throughout the summer. In the beginning, it was not well received in all quarters.

"The first year of Prof's tenure at Holy Cross was "bumpy" to say the least. While he saw some improvement overall, he was still dealing with resistance to the changes he had implemented," recalls band captain George Plaeger '71. "Fortunately, the 1965-66 school year saw a significant influx of 'new blood' in the form of potential band members entering in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades that could start to build on the foundation laid in the 1964-65 school year. The musicianship started to show much improvement."

Agreeing with that assessment is Charles Pennison '71 saying, "The first thing that comes to mind with the name Frank Mannino is 'Professional.' He demanded that his students behave as professionals during practice and performances. I became a band member in seventh grade - the same year that Frank Mannino started as band director. There was some tension

between a few older band members and Mannino and one of them quit the band. After that drama was settled, we coalesced into a unified group.”

Within a few years that dedication was showing results playing at football games, joint concerts with Dominican High School, Christmas concerts, Mardi Gras parades, Louisiana Music Educators Association competitions and spring festivals. They even took first place in a national competition at the Mobile Jazz Festival.

“Prof was always a gentleman. He was an excellent band director. During my time at Holy Cross, the marching band always placed in competition, as did the concert and jazz bands. He mentored many excellent musicians and even tolerated a hack like me for four years,” commented Pat Wolfe ‘71

The music department – which was composed of 8 complimentary bands - was earning Superior ratings and first place awards in every festival it entered. The 1969 *Tiger* yearbook proclaimed: “The 1969 band, 80 members strong, has been acclaimed as one of the best bands in the school’s history under the direction of Frank J Mannino, alias Silver Fox. The band has received the highest of honors in all events that it has entered throughout the year.”

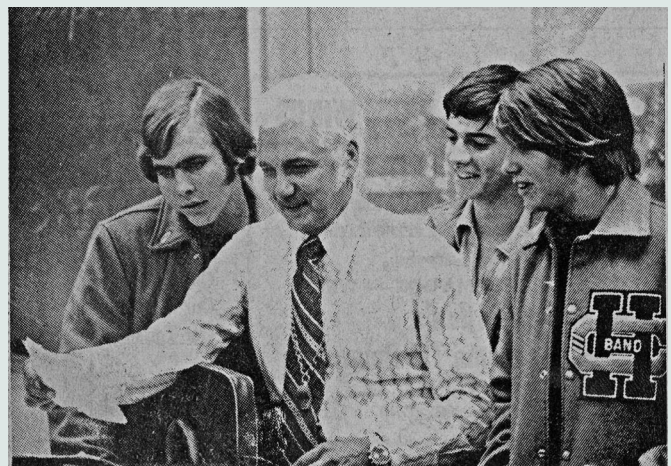
The Awards Continued

And that winning continued as the Tiger Band earned ‘superior’ ratings at all festivals entered during 1972. The highlight of the year was winning first place in every event they entered in the Tri-State Music Festival in Enid Oklahoma, where they competed against college bands.

“We really wanted to test our boys nationally,” said Mannino during a *Holy Cross Bulletin* interview. “And the results of this competition speak for itself. The boys competed against the best bands from seven states and proved themselves to be among the best.”

Although he did not compete against Holy Cross’ band at the time, Br. Martin band director Arthur Hardy states, “We definitely did not have a rivalry. It was always about the music and the students. I thought the world of Frank.”

Indeed, the lessons learned went beyond what was taught in the band room. It involved life lessons. Chuck Sabadie ’73 explains what he took away from the program: “Tiger Band lessons learned included evaluating your activities, pacing yourself, listen to leaders and teachers, prepare each day, thank God for His blessings, be on time, focus on your activities, organize your time, develop your talent and wake up with enthusiasm.”



Gerry Orkus, Frank Mannino, Louis Bernadas, and Chuck Sabadie

“Some of the students were proficient enough to be named to the All-State band. The All State band consists of the most outstanding high school music students throughout the state. While the students prepare their programs, which incidentally is comparable to that of a college level, they get to rub elbows with the best professionals in the state,” Mannino said in another Bulletin interview.

One of those students who was named to the All State band was Stephen Orkus '74 who says “Frank Mannino was a kind, generous, and good man, much like most of the lay faculty. He was a tremendous musician and a great leader. He demanded perfection to make us as good as we could be. Prof was one of those people who made me the man I am today.”

Mannino was a champion of the big band style of music and promoted the idea of including a jazz element in high school music departments across the state. He brought the National Association of Jazz to the LMEA, serving as its first president.



“Stage banding has blossomed out in the last five years into becoming one of the most desirable programs that any school could have. A good stage band requires a director who has a concept of what the music is supposed to sound like and be able to channel the better musicianship within his concert band. This takes in the interested students who are willing to learn a new style – a trend away from the concert band,” wrote Mannino in an LMEA newsletter.

The 1974-75 stage band performing at the St Bernard Civic Center

“Stage Bands are the biggest thing happening today in music education.

Both educators and students like stage bands. Educators realize the value of giving the students the opportunity to express themselves in a way that adds to their musical development. Students find stage band music challenging because they have to use their musical talents in an effort over and above that required for conventional concert music. Students find stage band pleasing because it can be linked to ‘rock’ – their kind of music.”

From Student Musician To Professional Musician

“The background students obtain from playing in stage bands is much more useful later on than is a classical background. While very few students go on to careers in classical music,

many students can use a popular music background to their own economic advantage,” he continued.

One of the first former students who turned professional was child prodigy Santiago Rodriguez '69, who received a master's degree from The Julliard School. *The Baltimore Sun* said that Rodriguez was “among the finest pianists in the world.”

Locally, Tim Laughlin '81 became a professional jazz clarinetist. Of Mannino he says “He instilled a lot of discipline that we needed. He was a master at earning respect, not demanding it.”

Echoing that sentiment is professional tuba player and music educator Charles Villarrubia who wrote. “What a wonderful personality he was. Always affirming in his nature, I never heard a negative utterance from him. I always respected the fact that he combined a performing and teaching career with such aplomb. Frank Mannino's influence has made an impact in my life.”

Based in California, professional bassist Vince Tividad '76 added, “There is not a month that goes by that I have not mentioned my high school band director to someone. As a professional musician for many years, I have often thought about the great job ‘Prof’ did with me and many other musicians. I have never stopped thanking Frank in my heart for his influence in my life.”



Prof with middle schoolers

In 1969, the stage band performed with the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra's conductor, Werner Torkanowsky, commented “I've never heard a stage band play in tune like this before.”

Arthur Hardy continues, “Almost every school had a stage band, but Frank started a jazz bad and took that concept to the state level. He was ahead of his time. He was inducted into two Hall of Fames: the Warren Eastern and the Louisiana Music Educations. They were honors he richly deserved but he wasn't trying to get them.”

Mannino was also inducted into the Holy Cross Tiger Band Hall of Fame in 1995 and the Louisiana American Italian Sports Hall of Fame in 2024.

International Reputation

The Tiger Band also had an international reputation. They performed twice in Mexico and were asked to perform in Europe. In March 1973 they received a telegram from National Educational Scholarship Foundation saying the Tiger Band was selected to participate in the International Band Festival in Vienna. The invitation was declined due to the cost of \$60,000 needed to attend.

The following year the *Holy Cross Bulletin* commented on an addition to the music department saying: "Frank Mannino and the Holy Cross Band go together like gravy on rice. But, during the past three years, a new name has become associated with the program, that of assistant band director Michael Orkus."



Rehearsal in the band room

"I had the unbelievable privilege of learning directly from one of the premiere music educators in New Orleans (and Louisiana.) Frank was one of the biggest role models in my life. He was in the best sense of the word a "gentleman" passing on important values by his life's example. The world is a better place because "Prof" was here and, in particular, so am I," says Michael Orkus '67

By 1976, with over 500 students enrolled in some form of melodious pursuit, the music department continued as one of the largest in the school. The middle school bands had 120 members.

One of those middle-schoolers was Douglas Degan '82. He says, "I waited for four years – my entire middle school career - to be under the direction of Frank Mannino. We observed him in middle school hoping to be in the Tiger band as a 9th grader. Prof had an aura of professionalism; he commanded respect. We all aspired to be in the Tiger Band."

Another educator in the Holy Cross music department was Bobby Ohler, who commented, "Not very often does a person like Frank Mannino come along. He was a charismatic teacher who could motivate his students to achieve excellence. He was a musician who could also demonstrate what he taught. As a leader, he inspired others. As an individual, he was loved by his students. Music education in New Orleans and Louisiana knew no better friend."

Prof Retires

When he retired from teaching in schools in 1992, Mannino devoted his newly found time to the Shriners. He'd been a Shriner since 1960 and with raising four children and work, he had not been too active with the group. He directed the Jerusalem Temple's four bands – a German Band, a Dixieland band, a concert band and a dance band. One of the Shriner's projects was to give concerts to raise money for burn clinics and children's orthopedic hospitals.

Frank Mannino's commitment to his students could best be summed up by what he wrote in one of the Tiger Band's newsletters:

"I have always tried to make your development universal – not simply musical and I know that these efforts along with your own growth and relationships with one another have made your days in the Tiger Band a unique and lasting part of your life."

That statement still reverberates through former band members, even after 50 years have passed. Bobby Dawson '71 remembers his music teacher well, saying, "Prof Frank Mannino was like no other band director I had ever studied under. He was strict, yet had patience and a teaching style that could bring the absolute best out of any musician, no matter their skillset. He opened my eyes to a whole new world of music. I will always appreciate his mentorship for that."

As Michael Carter '81 recalls, "Mr. Mannino, The Silver Fox, Prof, Frankie Mann were all names we knew him as.

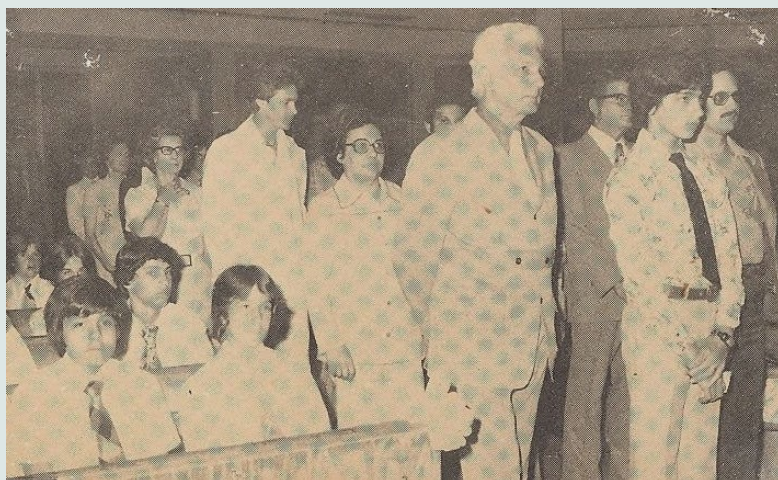
From the times he drove me to school with Milo (Mannino's son), to when I was frustrated at not getting the licks on the Flute because Timmy Laughlin was too good. But when I did, he gave a 'Yeah Baby!!!' which was one of the sweetest sounds I've ever heard. Like many great musicians, conductors and students he's guided and created, he will sorely be missed. I only wish I could have given him the blurry picture I've kept of him riding the motorcycle in Mexico City. The only thing you could see was the silver hair and the white of his coat. I think I miss him as much today as I did when he left Holy Cross."



The Legacy Continues

Mannino left Holy Cross becoming the band director at East Jefferson High School. Going with him was his son Milo HC/EJ '81, who currently leads his own Big Band, the Ramblers, in Cincinnati.

Of his father, Milo says "Dad's devotion to helping others never wavered through his entire career, either educational or performing. He had an authentic passion to make the world a better place, one student at a time or through his music performances."



Milo standing between his dad and brother

program exponentially from its small beginning. I'm sure he was inspired by my dad's dedication and teachings."

"I treasured the moments we had as a family when performing together. I was fortunate to have spent so much time together making music. My brother Marco played trumpet and piano and my wife Cherie is a vocalist. My mother was also a singer, but never in public."

"Jon (Frank's grandson) followed dad's path of teaching and performing, just like his dad, Marco. Jon's been very successful at creating a foundation for his students to want to participate and learn, growing the

Jon Mannino has been the band director at Doyle High School in Livingston, Louisiana for over 15 years. He recalls growing up in a house filled with music.

He remembers that "Growing up, it was music 24/7. My dad (Marco '69), also a band director, was always writing music and arrangements for his school bands, the Frankie Mann Orchestra, or carnival balls, or anybody else who came calling. The top-notch work ethic matched their musicianship. After my dad passed away, I got to help Pawpaw with putting together some of the carnival balls. Those were a massive undertaking!"

"Every opportunity I had, I'd sit in with the big bands. When I was a junior or senior in high school, I played behind the late Harry Connick Sr and Ronnie Kole. It was an awesome experience."



1968

Jon's younger brother Wesley is also musically talented and a drummer in the band.

Milo Mannino, currently resides in Columbus, OH with his wife Cherie, daughter Amelia and son Matthew. He performs regularly with his own groups, The Ramblers – New Orleans Infused Jazz and The North Columbus Big Band.

The Passing of a Legend

Frank Mannino obtained a BA in music education at Loyola and a Masters degree from LSU. He spent almost 40 years directing high school bands, including those at Holy Name of Mary High School, Ridgewood Prep, Holy Cross School, East Jefferson High School and T.H. Harris Junior High School. He brought the National Association of Jazz Educators to New Orleans, serving as its first president. Inducted into four Hall of Fames: Warren Eastern, the Louisiana Music Educators Association, Holy Cross Tiger Band, and the Louisiana American Italian Sports Hall of Fame.



His Frankie Mann Orchestra played and conducted for Perry Como, Bob Hope, Doc Sevrensen and performed with the New Orleans Summer Pops, New Orleans Symphony, and New Orleans Opera Association. His orchestra also provided music for Carnival Balls, weddings, and social functions. Frank became a Shriner in 1960, becoming a 32 degree Knight Commander of Honor and directed the Jerusalem Temple's four bands. He passed away in 2007 of Lou Gehrig's disease.

His loss was felt by many, including Robert Sturken '77, senior drum major. He says, "Frank was my friend and mentor for 35 years. Along with Mike Orkus, no one else has continued to influence my music and career throughout my entire life. I was 12 the day I met both of them, and this year, I turn 65. Does it continue past Holy Cross? Oh YES!

Frankie Mann

"The bottom line is that Frank provided opportunities - whether it was providing gigs or chances to play interesting instruments. Holy Cross, under his direction, seeded the community with more professional musicians and educators per capita than perhaps any other school."

"These men shaped my life. This is not just a musical influence, but lessons about being a gentleman, friend, and professional. We grew from boys to Holy Cross Men under the tutelage of Frank J. Mannino and Michael Orkus, as did so many other graduating classes. We learned to be gentleman, laughed at ourselves often, and loved our Tiger Band."

[YouTube Video: featuring Frank Mannino; soundtrack by the 1978 HC Stage Band](#)

Birthday Bash: Part 2

The Holy Cross Class of 1971's 71st Birthday Bash Part 2 will be held in the Sicilian Room of Rocky and Carlo's Restaurant and Bar (Ladies Invited), 613 W St Bernard Hwy, Chalmette, LA 70043 on Saturday, 16 November 2024 from 4 PM until Tommy throws us out!

This event will be free, as have all our events, thanks to generous donations and sponsors. Naturally, we will have a donation box out like always.



Mentor and Teacher

By Sam Bolen '71

There's no two ways about it: Prof was great. He did a lot for all of us in the band. I don't know anyone who didn't like him. I was in the band 7th through 12th grade playing in the marching band, the concert band and the stage band.



One year we traveled to Mobile to a big stage band festival and during our off time he let us do what we wanted. He trusted us, gave you leeway as teenagers and trusted you to do the right thing.

He was a great mentor and teacher. He had your back if you had a problem. Prof was truly a professional, an outstanding teacher, and always put his students first.

Sam Bolen (on the right) rigs a guillotine on his Malibu for the HC-Jesuit game

Years later, while back in town with my grandkids for Mardi Gras, I saw him in a parade on a trailer with his band. We talked for a bit and wanted to get together, but we weren't able to make it happen

Sam Bolen

A Father Figure

By Tim Laughlin '81

I started band in the fifth grade at Holy Cross. I had already been playing for about a year and I couldn't wait to have Prof as my band director. We all knew he had a great reputation and gravitas. He treated the freshmen the same as seniors. We prayed every morning and discussed being "A Holy Cross Man." Definitely a father-figure to us all and a great mentor.



1978 Jazz Band: Tim Laughlin seated in front of Prof

After graduating from Holy Cross in '81, I became a professional musician (jazz clarinet). An occasion came up to book a private party at a local restaurant in the French Quarter. I called Frank and asked if he would join me. He was as thrilled as I was. Needless to say, we had a ball and it was a proud day for both of us.

When I hear the name Frank Mannino, "Silver Fox" comes to mind. Also, a legacy of a great musical family dating back to the 1920's. I recall him talking about his Uncle Santo Pecora, who was one of the pioneers of early jazz trombone in New Orleans. He played and recorded with The New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Frank recalled playing clarinet in his band on Bourbon St in the 1950's.

A favorite memory of Frank, but outside of band, was taking lessons from him at Campo Music on Broad Street in my junior year in the summer of 1980. Not only did his lessons help me earn lead chair alto sax in the All-State band later that year, but after every lesson we'd walk down to Picou's Bakery, where he would treat me to my favorite pastries.



Tim Laughlin with Frank Mannino

Frank Mannino loved students who worked hard. Even if you fell short, he was there for you, encouraging you. But if you didn't live up to being a Holy Cross Man, he would tell you, and he was pretty stern about that.

Tim Laughlin

An Aura of Professionalism

By Douglas Degan '82

I started Holy Cross in the 5th grade. I met with middle school band director Mike Orkus and told him that I wanted to play clarinet. He said Frank Mannino had one for sale, so I bought it from him. I still have it.

I waited for four years – my entire middle school career - to be under the direction of Mannino. We observed him in middle school hoping to be in the Tiger band as a 9th grader. Prof had an aura of professionalism; he commanded respect. We all aspired to be in the Tiger Band.

When you were a freshman, you did not necessarily make the horn section. He put them in the color guard. He would send out a letter saying you are accepted into the Tiger marching band: I received one of those acceptance letters.

Holy Cross had a Dance Band in the 40s and 50s. Mannino started the modern stage band. He came up with the formula for a stage band and we saw that formula actually work. He was state chairman of the LMEA Stage Band division for years throughout the 70s.

The Mexico trips in 1974 and 1979 were arranged by Frank Mannino. We appeared on Mexican national TV, a political rally, and a mall. My most vivid memory of the trip was Frank Mannino riding a motorcycle in a white suit following the bus.



1979 Mexico Trip

In my freshman year, we won the gold medal in the Mid City parade's Greatest Band in Dixie contest under the direction of Jessie Gros '77 and Marco Manino '69. In my sophomore year, we didn't win anything. In my junior year, we won the bronze medal. In my senior year, as we were approaching Gallier Hall, I was hoping that we'd win the silver medal so I could have a complete set. We won the silver, so I had a complete collection: a bronze, silver, and gold!

When Manino left in my sophomore year, it was a shock to us. Jerry Orkus '73 took over the Jazz Band, the Symphonic band, and the middle school stage band.

Our being invited to participate in the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade in 1981 was based on our having won the Mid City parade battle of the bands in 1979. We still had a lot of Mannino-trained musicians. All the other bands in the parade had a lot more musicians than us. We weren't that big of a band. There were always too many other things to do in the area. Whereas in a lot of these college towns – some in the middle of nowhere - there wasn't much to do other than being in the college band.

Antelope Canyon



Suzie and Bobby Wahl with family exploring Antelope Canyon

Last Minute Acceptance

By George Plaeger '71

I first met Frank Mannino, aka Prof, In August 1965. Just three weeks before I was to start 7th grade, the Archdiocese of New Orleans closed my grammar school, immediately and permanently. Instead of enrolling me in another grammar school for only 1-2 more years, my parents decided to see if Holy Cross would consider enrolling me as a 7th grader for the 1965-66 school year.

My father, HC Class of 1940, contacted Mr. Richard Corrado, the Admissions Director of Holy Cross at the time, explained my situation and requested some consideration for enrollment acceptance. Mr. Corrado informed my father that although such a request this close to the start of the school year was extremely unusual, he was willing to review my past academic performance and conduct an interview with me based on my father's status as an alumnus.

My interview took place the next day and was going fairly well until I mentioned to Mr. Corrado that I wanted to someday play trumpet in the Holy Cross Band. He immediately made a call to the band director, explained my situation and was then asked by the band director if I could return with my trumpet that afternoon to play for him. I quickly asked, "what time", "where at" and "what is the band director's name". He told me, "Frank Mannino, but he likes to be called Prof by the students."



When I opened the band room door that afternoon, I was greeted by a silver-haired, well-groomed, impeccably dressed gentleman; Frank Mannino. He saw that I was both excited and nervous, so he took his time to ask me about myself, how long I had been playing trumpet, who I had studied under and most importantly, why I wanted to play in the Holy Cross Band. He then asked if I could play for him something I had been practicing and also some music he would like me to read. I responded that I would be happy to do so and asked if I could warm up. He said yes and then stopped me a few times to see where I had learned the various warm-up techniques I was using.

George Plaeger, left, marching in a Mardi Gras parade

I then played a solo I had recently performed at a LMEA Solo and Ensemble Recital and began playing the music pieces he picked out for me to play. Then Mr. Mannino excused

himself and made a phone call—to Mr. Corrado, I later learned. When he returned, he informed me that Mr. Corrado had just informed my parents that I had been accepted into Holy Cross. In addition, he told me to report to marching band practice at 8 a.m. the next morning. I was so taken aback, I just said, “Yes sir!” and “Thank you.” Prof replied, “No. Thank you.”

In the 1965-66 school year there were only three 7th graders that were chosen for the Tiger Band: David Vicknair, Wayne Crumhorn and me. This was a great illustration of Prof Mannino’s philosophy that regardless of age or grade level, if you had the talent, ability and desire to be a Holy Cross Tiger Band member, you were a valuable resource that he would gladly utilize to enhance the Tiger Band and benefit the entire Holy Cross community.

Band Director Extraordinaire

The first thing that comes to mind when I hear the name “Frank Mannino” is extraordinary band director. Frank Mannino was aware of and proficient in executing every facet that must exist for a high school band to be considered elite. While he could prepare a marching band to perform during the halftime at a football game or to march in a Mardi Gras parade, his true loves were preparing for and conducting during the performances of one of his concert or jazz bands. He reveled in seeing audiences and judges enjoy and admire the excitement and emotions his “guys” could convey through their musical performances during his tenure at Holy Cross.

Mr. Frank Mannino was appointed the Holy Cross School Director of Bands for the 1964-65 school year. He quickly came to the realization that the returning band members viewed their band participation duties to only encompass supplying musical entertainment during Holy Cross football games and performing in the Spring Concert at the end of the school year. Their new band director immediately notified all band members that their duties and obligations would increase and to now also include, but not limited to, daily weekday band rehearsals, All-State Band Tryouts, performing in an Annual Christmas Concert, marching in Mardi Gras parades, participation in LMEA District and State Ensemble Assessments, performing at the Senior Baccalaureate Mass and finally, performing at the Senior Graduation Ceremony.



Prof Mannino went into a detailed explanation on how these were merely the first steps in a process to transform the Tiger Band from having an inconsequential reputation to being considered as an elite, admired musical entity. Regardless of the outward grumblings, the behind-the-scenes whispers and some members deciding to quit the band, Prof did not

waiver. He had a well-thought-out vision for the future of the Tiger Band and a plan to get it there.

The first year of Prof's tenure at Holy Cross was "bumpy" to say the least. While he saw some improvement overall, he was still dealing with resistance to the changes he had implemented. Fortunately, the 1965-66 school year saw a significant influx of "new blood" in the form of potential band members entering in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades that could start to build on the foundation laid in the 1964-65 school year. The musicianship started to show much improvement. The band also raised the funds needed to order new band uniforms that would arrive in time to be used for the entire 1966-67 school year. Mr. Mannino was beginning to feel that the band was now starting to embrace his vision and understand why they should carry out his plan.

Hard Work: The Great Equalizer

In May 1970, I was elected by the Tiger Band members to be their Band Captain for my Senior year (1970-71 school year). Per my request, Prof Mannino met with me the next afternoon. I started our meeting by stating that the number of outstanding musicians we had lost in the last two graduation classes had me concerned about the upcoming year. The bar had been set pretty high over the previous three years for a group that will be very inexperienced and, in many cases, not quite as talented.



After Prof heard my concern, he leaned back in his desk chair, smiled at me and calmly said, "We won't spend one, single minute bemoaning what we have lost in the past, but instead, we will concentrate solely on who and what we have now to work with." He then noted that while talent and experience are important qualities for a band to have, hard work, dedication, determination and a desire to succeed can often be great equalizers. He finished by saying that we will almost surely uncover some students with emerging talents, and we will also definitely incorporate some additional training programs designed to

make better musicians out of some of our returning band members.

I left this meeting with a renewed resolve. Expectations and goals were established for all band members. Periodic reviews of our progress towards our goals helped ensure that the necessary corrections were made to keep us on our desired path. With the help of my band officers, we provided leadership and guidance to any and all band members. I truly believed at that juncture that if we could get all of our members, including myself and my officers, to strive to be the best musicians we could be, we would have a very successful year. In fact, history has shown that my belief about success proved to be correct.

In November 1989, Frank J. Mannino was honored by the Louisiana Music Educators Association by inducting him into their Hall of Fame. More so, during his induction ceremony, a special commendation by the LMEA was presented to Mr. Mannino for his major contributions as an introducer of jazz band throughout Louisiana and parts of the South.

It should also be noted that Frank Mannino was also an exceptional musician. He played clarinet, flute and saxophone, all with a high level of proficiency. As a young man, he performed professionally in the band led by the famous jazz trombonist, Santo Pecora. Later in his musical career, he organized and fronted the Frankie Mann Orchestra. His orchestra performed around the metro New Orleans area and throughout the Gulf Coast until about 2005.

George Plaeger

Frank Provided Opportunities

By Rob Sturcken '77

When I first auditioned for Frank Mannino and Mike Orkus, I played the Fight Song by ear because I didn't have the music. I was self-taught on clarinet from age 8 through 12. I didn't know how to finger the top note and had come up with a combination of side keys that came close to that pitch. When Frank heard it, he asked me to play it again. Then he said, "I'd like to teach you privately." Prof taught in an upstairs room at Campo's music on Broad St. In addition to helping you develop proficiency, he used pop songs that were popular at the time to keep you interested and to teach you style and finesse. I still use that in my private teaching today

In instrumental music class at Holy Cross, he taught college level theory, including chord construction and arranging of harmonies. He along, with Jay Haydel from East Jefferson High School and Lee Fortier from Broadmoor in Baton Rouge, pioneered jazz education in Louisiana. He founded the first All State Jazz Band in 1976, which I was proud to be a part of.

He encouraged students to be multi-instrumentalists. In my case, he would lend me his personal horns to take home and get to know them. On a humorous note, if he knew the oboist was graduating the following year, he'd say, "Rob, have you ever thought about playing oboe?". While the thought hadn't ever crossed my mind, I did take a school horn home and took lessons for a while with the oboist from the symphony that he contacted for me. When one would chase down these suggestions from Prof, you were known as a "Mannino Made Man".

When I was 14, Prof invited me to play with the Frankie Mann Orchestra. Almost the entire group was made up of music educators, including Joe Hebert, the head of the Jazz program at Loyola. What an incredible learning experience it was. There were a few Holy Cross graduates in the group, including Jerry Orkus '73, who sat over my left shoulder.

On breaks, the 1st Tenor player was teaching me altissimo fingerings backstage. At one gig, Frank said "Rob, sing Colour My World, and play the flute solo. I told him that I didn't have my flute. He turned to the flutist and said "Arthur, lend Rob your flute."

Prof and I stayed in touch all throughout the years. The last time I spoke to him was about a week before he passed. Sometimes, we would be in neighboring ballrooms at a local hotel and would catch each other on breaks.

He, along with Mike Orkus, were the strongest proponents of me teaching. I remember him saying in some of our last conversations, "Play as much as you want, but never stop teaching. Anyone can teach the information, but no one can be you!"

That was my friend and mentor for 35 years. Along with Mike Orkus, no one else has continued to influence my music and career. I was 12 the day I met both of them, and this year, I turn 65. Does the bond continue past Holy Cross? Oh YES!



Rob Sturcken, Milo Mannino, Frank Mannino: Carnival ball at Municipal Auditorium

The bottom line is that Frank provided opportunities. Whether it was providing gigs or chances to play interesting instruments. Holy Cross, under his direction, seeded the community with more professional musicians and educators per capita than perhaps any other school.

We grew from boys to Holy Cross Men under the tutelage of Frank J. Mannino and Michael Orkus, as did so many other graduating classes. We learned to be gentleman, laughed at ourselves often, and loved our Tiger Band. The lessons learned from these men shaped my life. This is not just a musical influence, but lessons about being a gentleman, friend, and professional. Everyone has their own memories, but rarely will you find someone who is not completely humbled by and appreciative for the gift of Holy Cross.

Rob Sturcken

Just a Small Town Boy

By Bobby Dawson '71

Coming from a small town like Buras, I realized that I wasn't prepared musically nor musician-wise to be in such a quality band as the one at Holy Cross. I had nowhere near the music training so many others had. I also realized, like many other things at Holy Cross, in my first year of High School there were already established cliques - especially if you were the new kid on the block. So I had to work harder, practice more, and try to prove myself to all the other musicians who had come from better prepared music programs.

Prof Frank Mannino was like no other band director I had ever studied under. He was strict, yet had patience and a teaching style that could bring the absolute best out of any musician, no matter what their skillset. He opened my eyes to a whole new world of music. I will always appreciate his mentorship for that.



The most memorable time for me came in my junior year, when the Jazz Band was preparing to go to Mobile, Alabama for a Jazz competition of High Schools and Colleges. At the time, the Guitarist for the jazz band was a guy by the name of Steve Laiche. He and I were in the same dorm. We would often play together in the dorm, probably aggravating some of the other guys but trying to hone our skills. He was playing music with a rock and roll band at the time and so was I.

I had been playing in clubs since the age of thirteen. The guys I was playing with would often turn down the lights on the stage or use our darker light settings, put a wig on me and sneak me in the back of the stage so as not to get caught by the police or juvenile officers for being underage.

Anyway, Steve was unable to make the trip to Mobile due to other obligations, leaving the jazz band without a guitarist. Prof Mannino didn't know that the guitar was my primary instrument and not the trumpet. However, when Steve told Prof he couldn't go to Mobile he also mentioned that there was another guitar player in the band. Yep, Steve suggested me.

Prof pulled me aside one day after class and asked me about it. I told him "Yes sir. I play guitar, but I had never played with a jazz band ensemble." He said, "Well let's try." I went into my first jazz band practice with some stares and questions from some of the other musicians and I admit that first practice was rough for me. An electric bass guitarist named Barry Basile reassured me that I could do it. I will always remember that reassurance and kindness.

Prof brought in musicians like Ronnie Kole and other jazz greats from the New Orleans area to work with us. As time went by, I became more comfortable and was generally accepted by the other musicians. I remember that one of the guys in the jazz band had written an arrangement of "Hey Jude" by the Beatles that we played during competition and Prof had asked if I could do a little improvised riff during one section of it. That was right up my alley, and I played my heart out.

Skipping forward, we went to Mobile and won the National Title of best High School Jazz Band in the country during that three day festival and competition. I still remember Prof's face when we won.

Because of the encouragement I received from Frank Mannino, guys like Barry and Steve, and other members of the Marching Band, Concert Band and Jazz Band, I have been able to continue a wonderful music career over my lifetime. I am still actively playing music, doing studio sessions for various bands and musicians when needed - playing guitar, bass or piano/keyboards.

I have always loved playing music; however, Frank Mannino showed me a side of music that absolutely burned deep into my soul. He welcomed a small-town kid taking a chance on me that changed my life forever. I will always respect and appreciate him for that.

Bobby Dawson

Legend of the Game

Sports Hall of Famer Dennis Delaney was honored at the HC-Jesuit Rivalry Game as a Legend of the Game. [YouTube Video featuring Dennis' greatest tackles.](#)



photo by Mike Garvey '73

The Frankie Mann Band

By Milo Mannino HC/EJ '81

I always felt like I was part of something larger. This entity was the fact that we had a musical family incorporating all the musicians that played with us. Most musical groups perform with a set personnel. Dad had a core group of members that would be first call and a larger subset of musicians that made up the different sized groups that would get hired to perform. I absolutely loved that the Frankie Mann Big Band was so inclusive of musicians made up from musical educators and professional career musicians. This diversity allowed us to perform a wide variety of events like wedding receptions, carnival balls, or backing up entertainers for a local concert. It felt extraordinary to be a part of something so special.



Milo, Frank, Marco, and Cherie

I treasured the moments we had as a family when performing together. I was fortunate to have spent so much time together making music. My brother Marco played trumpet and piano and my wife Cherie is a vocalist. My mother was also a singer, but never in public. She knew the words to every song imaginable and sang all the time in the house. Her job was to organize the books and hire the musicians. I also have two sisters that were artists. Sylvia Jaynes was a painter and still to this day, Gina Laguna creates large and small welded sculptures.



Milo Mannino

Dad included me on the band stand at a young age. I remember playing in the big band when I was still in middle school. While in high school, I had the great fortune to play with dad's smaller groups. This would include myself with dad in the horn section and possibly a trombone player. It was absolutely amazing to be able to play music jobs with dad, my brother, and then later my wife, Cherie.

Dad was an amazing man, loved by so many. His devotion to helping others

never wavered through his entire career, either educational or performing. He had an authentic passion to make the world a better place, one student at a time or through his music performances. He was an encourager that took the time to connect with anyone that demonstrated an interest. It's this quality that gave him respect from fellow musicians and music educators in the community as someone to aspire to. And to this day, he is revered as an incredible musician and iconic music professor that we come to know as Prof, or Frankie Mann, or . . . Frank J Mannino.

Milo Mannino

Growing Up: Music 24/7

By Jon Mannino

Frank Mannino was the nicest grandpa. He'd always have a big bucket of gummy bears or licorice behind his easy chair that we'd snitch from. Every so often dad (Marco '69) would bring us to his house and I'd get a lesson. I've had private lessons with other music teachers, but it was a cool experience to study with Pawpaw. I thought the world of that. I appreciated the opportunity, although I didn't realize how big of a deal he was until later in life. I now get stories from tons of current musicians about the late great Frankie Mann, either how they student-taught with him, performed with him, were adjudicated by him, or just knew him as the "Silver Fox."

Growing up, it was music 24/7. My dad, also a band director, was always writing music and arrangements for his school bands, the Frankie Mann Orchestra, or carnival balls, or anybody else who came calling. The top-notch work ethic matched their musicianship. After my dad passed away, I got to help Pawpaw with putting together some of the carnival balls. Those were a massive undertaking!

Every opportunity I had, I'd sit in with the big bands. When I was a junior or senior in high school, I played behind the late Harry Connick Sr and Ronnie Kole. It was an awesome experience.

One of my favorite big band memories was playing for a Mother's Day program at the Audubon Zoo where I got to perform in the big band with my dad, Uncle Milo, Aunt Cherie, and my grandpa right before Irma Thomas' set.



Richard "Bing" Crosby and Frank Mannino

I also remember many years at the Shrine Circus at the Pontchartrain Center with the Frankie Mann Orchestra I believe they just called it the Shrine Band... but we know who it really was. Richard "Bing" Crosby played in the trumpet section. Among the many stories that pop up were the legendary bickering between Pawpaw and "Uncle" Bing from the band stand. They were great friends and both top notch musicians. The pair also appeared in an NFL films Super Bowl IX promotional video that was held in New Orleans.

I'm in my 16th year as the band director at Doyle High School in Livingston, Louisiana. I hope my students learn to love music and have fun with it. The arts in general are the only school subject that you must be on the same page at the same time or the performance falls apart. If you're playing something different, people are going to notice. I'm sure there's a life lesson in that.

My grandpa's uncle was Santo Pecora. He's the guy who Frank Mannino credits with teaching him how to play. Later, my grandpa started the Frankie Mann Orchestra. This was followed by his son Milo with the Crescent River City Big Band. When Frankie Mann passed away, BJ Perez got the Mardi Gras ball gig and started his own big band, Carnaval. Then years later, I took the Frankie Mann song book and created Fat City Swing Band. What a big band musical legacy. Those are big shoes to fill, but I think Pawpaw would be happy that it's still going.



Jon Mannino

Jon Mannino

[YouTube Video: Frank Mannino and Richard Crosby in NFL Superbowl promotional film](#)



Drum Major Marco Mannino '69

Back in the BUFF

Bill Pedeaux has lived in the world of the B-52, also known as BUFFs, for almost 50 years, first in the Air Force and now as a civilian contractor. He recently had the opportunity take a special flight in the bird he used to call home.

Of it he says, "What a special day. We had been working for over 6 months to get our instructors incentive flights if they would like to do it. I made sure I was first out of the hat. It was amazing to see how far the missions have come. We did a formation takeoff, multiple weapon releases, refueling, a BDA and traffic pattern. In some ways it was like it was

yesterday and not almost 29 years since I flew in a B-52. But make no mistake: it's a young officer's game - at least 50 years old or younger. I love my job."

Innovative Training Effort Brings B-52 Veteran Back Into the Cockpit

By Senior Master Sgt. Ted Daigle
307th Bomb Wing
Barksdale Air Force Base

William "Bill" Pedeaux gazed around the cockpit of the B-52 H Stratofortress last week at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, a steely glint flashing in his eyes.

It was a look that hadn't come across his face in over 28 years — the last time Pedeaux had flown in the jet while on active-duty at now defunct Castle Air Force Base, California.

As a contracted B-52 Stratofortress academic instructor, Pedeaux spends much of his time in a flight simulator teaching students assigned to the jet's Formal Training Unit. But an innovative effort by FTU leadership is bringing the contract instructors on B-52 sorties to improve student pilot training.

One of these FTU leaders is Lt. Col. Michael DeVita, 11th Bomb Squadron commander assigned to Air Force Global Strike Command's 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale AFB. To run the FTU, DeVita oversees the active-duty squadron that works with the 93rd Bomb Squadron that belongs to Air Force Reserve Command's 307th Bomb Wing also at Barksdale AFB.

He said the move to bring academic instructors on training sorties stems from past and upcoming improvements to the B-52. Those improvements have created a gap between what instructors can teach in the simulator and what student pilots encounter when they initially fly the jet.

"Modifications have been made to the B-52, but not the simulator," he said. "So we constantly focus on how to make up for the differences between what students can learn in the simulator versus what they experience in reality," he said.

For Pedeaux, bridging that gap in the simulator requires a mix of practical experience and theory.

"The fundamentals of flying the B-52 are the same, but the mission has changed so much," said Pedeaux.

During the New Orleans native's flying days, the B-52 routinely conducted in-your-face bombing runs at 800 feet while flying in formation. Today, the B-52 still has the capacity for stand-in weapons attacks, but technological advances have enabled it to be a solitary standoff predator too.

A B-52 crew can now receive digital target taskings via satellite from Air Operations Centers around the globe. The crew can seamlessly plug the target coordinates into the aircraft and fire a precision missile hundreds of miles away or drop a bomb below without ever talking to someone on the radio. That fundamental change is behind the stark contrast between the simulator and the jet.



Bill Pedeaux, center, back in the B-52 cockpit

DeVita and Pedeaux said the most glaring difference between the simulator and the jet is the Combat Network Communications Technology (CONNECT). This communications modification came online in 2016 and serves as the digital backbone of the jet. CONNECT allows aircrew to receive digital tasking messages and real-time intelligence and threat data from multiple sources.

"I can't teach CONNECT in the simulator simply because it isn't available," said Pedeaux.

To compensate, students use computer-based testing to learn about CONNECT while in the simulator. They only get to use it when flying the B-52, taking valuable training time from other important training items like aerial refueling.

"It's frustrating for us and the military, but that's the nature of the beast," said Pedeaux.

The immersion flights are designed to alleviate that frustration by letting academic instructors see CONNECT in use during an actual sortie.

DeVita hopes the firsthand knowledge will translate to the students and increase the academic instructors' credibility when they teach CONNECT.

"You have these great instructors with all this knowledge about the jet, but when it comes to CONNECT, until now, they've received the same training their students have," said DeVita

These outside-the-box training ideas have become almost routine for the 93rd and 11th BS, whose laundry list of recent innovative ideas includes virtual reality trainers to teach in-air refueling and cockpit checklists.

"We've gotten really good at keeping the train rolling down the tracks no matter what happens with upgrades," said DeVita. "As the jet becomes more software-centric, we have to meet those challenges to keep up."

DeVita said all contract academic instructors on Pedeaux's team will have the opportunity to fly on the B-52.

Pedeaux insisted on going first, a leadership trait left over from his active-duty days as a pilot and instructor.

Even at age 70, Pedeaux relishes the opportunity to keep learning and stay as relevant as the jet that has dominated his professional career. He admitted having a bit of trepidation about flying in the B-52 after 28 years. But the worries weren't enough to keep him from the opportunity to learn.

"I may be a dinosaur, but I'm a meat-eating dinosaur," he said with an ear-to-ear grin.

Last week's flight was just another unique chapter in a history that saw Pedeaux move the FTU from Castle AFB to Barksdale AFB in 1997.

He hopes the push for academic instructors to fly sorties is as effective as the myriad of other syllabi changes made to improve the B-52 flying curriculum. Those changes have Pedeaux's fingerprints all over them, and he shows no signs of stopping now.

"I always said I'd stop doing this when it became work," said Pedeaux, shrugging his shoulders.

Until that day arrives, Pedeaux plans to remain part of the innovative training process that has become the hallmark of the B-52 FTU.

Prof Demanded Perfection

Stephen Orkus '74

There was no greater joy in my Holy Cross career than leading the marching band down St Charles Ave during the two years I was drum major.

I made the Tiger Band in 8th grade, the only guy in my class who was in it at that time. My main instrument was the trumpet, but I also played baritone and French horn. In the 8th and 9th grade I played baritone, in 10th and 11th, French Horn, and in 12th grade I transitioned back to trumpet. Sometimes you needed to transition to a different instrument to get the sound Mannino was looking for. He was a master at that.

I grew up in Tad Gormely stadium and was here when almost 30,000 fans were in the stands the first time we played St Aug. Our senior year we took a trip to Mexico and performed at the World Soccer championship in the Olympic stadium with a 70-piece band in front of 200,000 people. We also performed at a Mexican high school. When we were finished, all the kids came up and asked for our autographs.



The Tiger Marching Band leading the Okeanos parade

at Brocato's Italian deli, and then drop us off at the cemetery at the end of Canal St so we could catch the bus back to Metairie.

In 1974, two weeks before the All State Band tryouts, I picked up the baritone again and made the All-State Band. There were only 5 baritones from across the state selected. That was the biggest highlight of my career. The French horn was my favorite; it had the most beautiful sound.

The music department worked as hard as any other. In the summer-time, we went to a camp to prepare us. We would practice every morning at 7:00 am until the bell rang. We worked hard because that's what you had to do to be good.

In those days Jazz Bands were hot. It wasn't uncommon for the jazz band to come back to school at night for 3 hours of practice from 7 pm to 10 pm. We dominated that scene for several years.

Sometimes after an afternoon practice, Prof would drive my brother Jerry '73 and me from the school, head down Rampart, stop

Frank Mannino was a kind, generous, and good man, much like most of the lay faculty. He was a tremendous musician and a great leader. He demanded perfection to make us as good as we could be. Prof was one of those people who made me the man I am today.

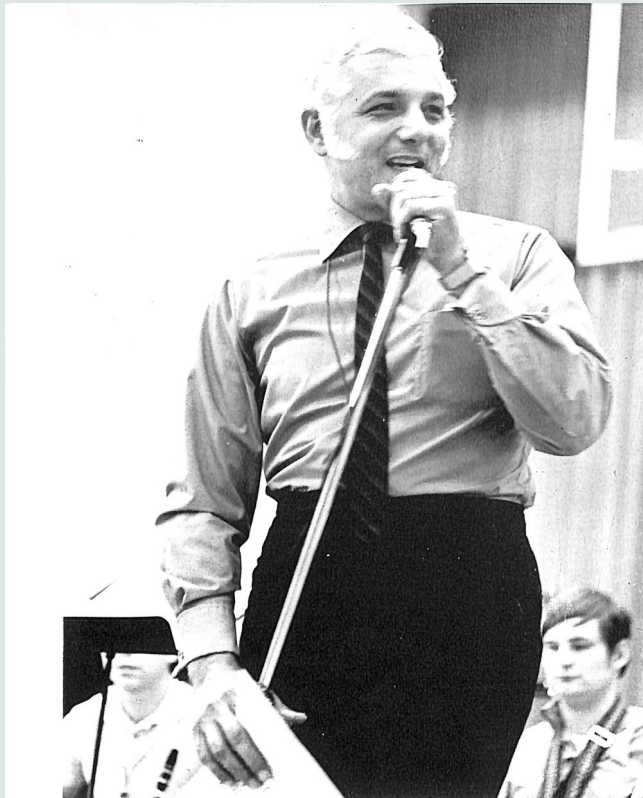
Stephen Orkus

Bass Players Are Always Needed

By Vincent Tividad '76

Frank Mannino was amazing! He was the top band director in New Orleans. He promoted jazz music education.

I started in the band in 7th grade. I had already been playing woodwinds for a couple of years and Frank offered me free saxophone lessons for 2 ½ years. He was very kind.



Before I had a car, he drove me to the gas station his father owned on N Rampart and Governor Nicholls St, It was close to where my mother worked, so she picked me up there.

The band needed a bass player, and Frank asked me to switch to bass. I wanted to continue to play sax. He said that he had more woodwinds than he needed and if I learned how to play bass, I'd never be without a job. Turned out he was correct as I've been a professional bass player for 50 years.

He was an excellent teacher. When I went to Loyola I was in a good spot because Frank had been teaching us college level material. The High School music program at Holy Cross was so good that many of the students in the program became professional musicians and teachers.

There is not a month that goes by that I have not mentioned my High School band director to someone. As a professional musician for many years, I have often thought about the great job Prof did with me and many other musicians. I have never stopped thanking Frank in my heart for his influence in my life. Frank was one of a kind. A true gentleman who is missed by all. I was honored to know him.

Vincent Tividad

Musical Excellence

By Michael Orkus '67

My first three years as a student had me in the Tiger Band under the direction of Brother Roberto Muller, C.S.C. As now, band practice was at 7 in the morning. Brother Roberto,

besides being band director was the Assistant Principal and taught a full load of Latin and English classes! It's amazing what the Brothers did in those days.

My final years on Dauphine Street saw the arrival of Prof Frank Mannino. Frank brought the inclusion of music courses - Instrumental Music - into the curriculum and that made all the difference in the quality of the band program from the time of his arrival. Unlike Brother Roberto, Frank had the time and the opportunity to teach each of us on our personal instruments using his lifelong experience as a musician. He brought a long tradition of musical excellence to the campus as a concert and marching band, but most especially as a Jazz Band.



Mike Orkus with Frank Mannino

While I enjoyed the experience of Frank as a student, in 1971 he invited me to become his assistant director. While completing my Music Education Degree at the University of New Orleans and Loyola University, I had the unbelievable privilege of learning directly from one of the premiere music educators in New Orleans - and Louisiana. With all due respect to UNO and Loyola, working under the tutelage of Frank Mannino was my real education. Whatever accomplishments I have had as a music educator over my lifetime are very largely due to my association with Prof. His personal values and kindness were equal to his musical expertise.

Like hundreds of Holy Cross Men, my life was dramatically changed for the better.

Michael Orkus

Alumni Band



Keeping current on the activities of the Alumni Band is the role of *Quarter Notes*, the quarterly alumni band newsletter started in 2022 by former HC band director Michael Orkus '67, Douglas Degan '82 and Lou Carollo '86. Each issue highlights past events of the band, as well as individual classes.

Orkus also published a newsletter during the 1970s. The first issue announced the addition of the Flag Corps "sporting new blue and gold flags designed by Mrs. Frank J. Mannino and Mrs. William Orkus." It also mentioned the First Alumni band "on the occasion of the Holy Cross-Jesuit scuffle."

The alumni band plays one event – the homecoming game. In modern times it was switched to the HC-Jesuit football game. They also hold reunions. Further information may be obtained from [Mike Orkus](#) or [Doug Degan](#)

[LINK: to the Quarter Notes newsletter archives](#)

The Tiger Marching Band

By Rob Sturcken '77



The entire music program garnered its share of Superior ratings, but perhaps we reached the most people with the Tiger Marching Band. Each week of the football season, we shared those "Friday Night Lights" with the athletics department and the cheerleaders.

Each of our field shows had a theme, and the visual formations were created, and hand plotted on graph paper by Mike Orkus. During Mardi Gras, there was nothing like the pride that came as a new group of folks recognized us.

Back then, parades were about precision and discipline. There's nothing like that now. With Krewe of Mid City and ultimately the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, the Tiger Band was always a crowd pleaser! So we took the show on the road. Enid OK, Mexico City, Disney World, and Macys, we're memorable trips for all that were involved.



Santo Pecora



Marco Mannino



The Frankie Mann Band at the Okeanos Ball



Hall of Fame

Chalkboard

Michelle and Charlie Vanek took a two-week cruise to Europe. The trip began in Barcelona and ended in Athens. Places visited included Italy, Santorini, Sicily, Mt Etna, Taormina, Naples, Sorrento, Pompeii, and Rome.

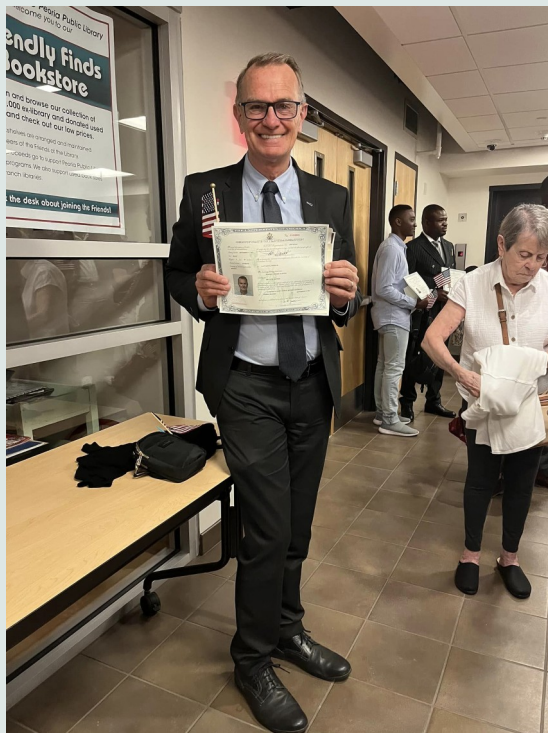


Wayne Crumhorn took an ATV tour of Canopy River Puerto Vallarta. He said there was so much dust that goggles and a mask were required.



After 54 years, Stephen Stanton Conerly recouped his US Citizenship and with it his "American"-Mexican Binationality. He resides in Illinois.

Rhonda and John Glorioso are organizing a trip to Sicily leaving June 18, 2025. Contact either John at johng@stpauls.com or Rhonda at (225)329-9990. They also welcomed a new granddaughter.



Anniversaries

Peggy Jones and Larry Folse 8
Christine and Bill Pedeaux 42
Billie Kay and Robyn Miller 19
Kim and Donald Duplantier 30
Rhonda and John Glorioso 12
Rhonda Todoroff and Phil Kessling 16
Annelle and Dan McGovern 38
Paula and David Hardin 56
Debbie and Byron Byrne 49
Melissa and Kenny Duke 32
Francis and Charlie Kothmann 47
Kathy and Jerry Lodriguss 48
Mary Ann and Rene Bull 24
Debbie and Roni Sumich 51
Peggy and Al Perry 47
Claudia and Steve Schulz 48
The Magees 48
Julie and Sam Bolen 52
Paula and David Hardin 56
Rachel and Mark Kalbacher 44
Shelli and Gary Vinturella 26
Suzie and Bobby Wahl 51
Terry and Louis Reuther 46
Yvonne and Louis Saltzmann 40
Debbie and George Plaeger 50

Local *Fox 8 News* did a retrospective on one of their news anchors who was promoted to the corporate level. One scene had the anchor in a cab driven by Louie DiVincente.



Shelli and Gary Vinturella welcomed their 11th grandchild



Tailgating with Tessitore . . . John and his crew in front of the Class of '71 tent at the HC-Jesuit game



Special Thanks to George Plaeger, Douglas Degan, and Milo & Jon Mannino for their collaboration on this issue.

Debi and Dan Colomb stand in front of their Corvette which took 1st place in the Corvette C6 class contest.



Their granddaughter CeCe (who attended our last crawfish boil) completed training with the South Carolina National Guard last week at Ft Sam Houston in San Antonio. She will start nursing school at the University of Alabama in January.



Debbie and Roni Sumich with family at Disneyworld



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Social Media:

Yearbooks: [All four years of our high school days can be found here](#)

[Holy Cross Bulletins on google drive:](#)

[Class of '71 Facebook page](#)

[Web Page - - access all 24 previous HC71 newsletters](#)

[Class of '71 YouTube Channel](#)