

Eleven Years in the High School Orchestra?

Some students spend three or four years in the high school orchestra, but I managed to play clarinet in my high school orchestra for eleven years...how was that possible?

In the spring of 1943, I was a second grader in the Arcadia (OH) Local Schools. Since graduation, I have always called my school The Academy at Arcadia to keep up with some of my more snobbish friends who had attended private schools. "Oh yes, I think I have heard of that academy...who was your Headmaster?" The Academy (Hancock County) was made up of mostly rural students and was quite small. More students wore bib overalls than blazers, but we had our moments.

Like the time Carl Ram stomped on his shock proof watch to demonstrate its invincibility, only to have it break into a million pieces...but I digress. There were only twenty-one students (we were called pupils in those days) in my class and that was typical of all Academy classes...small teacher-student ratios...we were somewhat ashamed about our small size and most of us never thought to brag about this obvious educational benefit.

It was a great place to go to school in those days, even though one could not take typing if you were enrolled in chemistry and vocational agriculture, we had many, or at least several, of the courses that were in the curricula of other larger schools. We had sports, Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the performing arts (music and plays)! I

participated in all of these programs. While I could only be in FFA and on sports teams while four years while in high school, opps, the Upper Level, I served (participated) eleven years in the Academy Orchestra. Let me explain....

In 1943, the year I started second grade, a few of us musically gifted students (my assessment) were given Recorder lessons. The Recorder resembles a clarinet, if you have a good imagination, and I could play "Air" (Twinkel, Twinkel Little Star for the musically less gifted) before two of the other kids and was moved immediately to the more advanced clarinet. At first it was fun, especially when I practiced and my dog, Doc, (named after our family doctor, Doc Thomas, who gave him to me) would howl so loud my parents would put him outside.

As practice became more difficult, I sometimes wished they would send me outside, but Doc always got the break! As it neared the end of the school year, Ms. Bowdle asked me to play with the Academy Orchestra for the graduation ceremony, as they were down to one clarinet player and Ms. Bowdle wanted her orchestra to look like, well, an orchestra. She said, "Glenn, I want you to practice Pomp and Circumstance (by Edgar Elgar, if I recall...or if I looked it up) and be a member of the orchestra as the seniors march towards the stage." What an honor! I practiced the song and could generally get through it without squeaking.

Squeaking is the main thing that bothered Doc and I could tell I was getting better as Doc got to spend more time indoors. He especially liked that in January and February.

Well, that big June night arrived and I put on my only jacket, err, Academy Blazer, and was ready to perform. My parents were so proud. The only problem I had was keeping up with the rest of the orchestra...I had practiced this piece in a much slower tempo. Winfield Zeissler, an upper classman (and real clarinet player), was very nice to me and kept pointing to the note I was to be playing. He only had to do this about thirty times!

My musical career had been launched and Ms. Bowdle asked me to stay in the orchestra...and I did until I graduated in 1953. Eleven years if you don't want to be fussy about me only playing one gig in the second grade!

My musical career didn't end there. My sister, Alice, paraded me around playing The Clarinet Polka for women's groups until that got old. I played in the Marching Band when it was formed in the junior high years...we were the Marching 21, and probably the only band in America doing the Script A (before you sneer, think how many folks it would take to do Script Arcadia.

The band gig only lasted until I was eligible for football...one might say I wasn't committed to the band. Off to college and the Conn Wood Clarinet was put in the closet. Some years later, while bragging about my playing days at the Academy, the young daughter on one of our friends brought her clarinet out, handed it to me and asked me to play something. I tried, but couldn't even get a note from her stupid horn...she must have had the reed set wrong! I did get it to squeak several

times and I just knew Doc would have been proud of me...or would have at least rolled over in his grave!

That \$212 clarinet is still in the guest bedroom closet. (I know it was \$212 because every time I wouldn't practice my father would say, "I paid \$212 for that thing, yada, yada." Now that I am seventy-three, have been retired for a few years, and have a few more open spots on my schedule, I may have to buy a new reed and get that old licorice stick out of its case. We just got a new dog, Orville, and he needs to get out more.

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Dr. Saltzman no longer plays in the Academy Symphony Orchestra, but has written a verse for the Navy Hymn. His musical talents continue to emerge.