

"THE CAT'S TALE"

"Let the Band Play On"

September 21, 2011

Being a "wannabe" musician, I have a great respect and admiration for anyone who can carry a tune, play a guitar, beat a drum in rhythm, or especially play a tuba while carrying the thing. I live in a house with approximately 15 musical instruments scattered throughout and everyone in the house attempts to play at least one instrument. I played with several rogue bands in my younger days. I have played in parades, tin barns, fair barns, under pavilions, at lakes, in streets, in small auditoriums, large auditoriums, and my personal favorite--on a long flatbed trailer parked above a rodeo arena in early September. The point here being I have some experience along these lines.

I have the greatest admiration for anyone who can master an instrument to a level that someone else would want to hear them perform. I have even more admiration for a teenager who has done the same and is willing to step out in front of the world with their ego and reputation on the line and belt out a fight song to support and inspire their fans and team. I did not have the opportunity to participate in a marching band, but I do remember setting up equipment for the above mentioned rodeo at about 1:00 in the afternoon. The dust was constant and the smells atrocious. The temperature was hovering around 100 degrees and blowing dust was coagulating with the continuous stream of sweat pouring from our brows. At 4:00 we began to play and did so until 8:00 until the rodeo began. At that time I was playing the drums. Playing the drums can be a workout in the best of weather conditions. Just after 8:00, we started taking down the equipment and loading it into our vehicles. Our clothes were thoroughly saturated and we were exhausted. I say all of this to make this point. I can only imagine playing 4 hours in those conditions, that heat, and having to **carry** those drums. I cannot imagine doing this at age 15 while walking in time and formation. I certainly would not have been able to do this if I were wearing a **band uniform**.

I often walk around school looking and listening trying hard to be inconspicuous. I have watched and listened to our band students as they perform. I see them working very hard. I think they have a great sound. When I watch and listen I am proud of them. Starting your day off by strapping on an instrument as big as you are and walking in formation would be asking a lot of most of us. Trying to carry a tune while doing this would be even more difficult, yet they manage it!

On September 2, 2011 I attended a football game in Tishomingo. Even though as superintendent I try to dress professionally, it was so hot that day that I did not wear a suit and tie. I wore short sleeves. I thought that was appropriate dress due to the sweltering heat. I sat less than 10 feet from the band. More specifically I sat near the percussions section. I watched them play for about 4 hours with sweat dripping from their brows. It has been dry and there was a lot of dust. I watched a young man play a bass

drum while constantly having to control and adjust it. It was about as big as he was. I became tired just watching him. When the band director gave the members their cue, they immediately scurried into position working as hard as possible. Their faces showed their intensity and concentration. Their egos and reputations were on the line with every note. At the end of the night I saw they were all exhausted including the band director.

I have performed in public and I know what they feel. I know how stressful it is to put yourself out there and to take the chance that the crowd won't like your performance. I know what it is to fear that someone who could **never** do what you are doing might publicly criticize you.

The members of our school band are teenagers, and what I want them to know from me is this: "Week after week, you perform very well and I am very proud of you and how you represent Madill Public School. Keep up the good work. LET THE BAND PLAY ON!"

Mr. Tuck