

## **Early History and Presidents of the Oregon Band Directors Association**

Compiled by Dave Becker, OMEA Historian

Much informal discussion took place among leading Oregon college and high school band directors during the late 1970's about the need for an Oregon band directors association. The purpose would be to give band directors a more unified voice in supporting, working with, and advising the Oregon Music Educators Association and provide a forum to initiate change in performance standards and expectations where there was a perceived need.

Concern about band director "burnout" was a big issue at this time. Robert Vagner (U of O Director of Bands) and John McManus (U of O Professor of Music Education) were among those voicing the strongest concerns about this trend. It was felt that burnout was developing in part from the rise and popularity of competitive jazz band contests coupled with increased pressure for more athletic services resulting from the 1972 Congressional Title IX portion of the Higher Education Act. This much-needed legislation prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program receiving federal funds and thereby forced all-male schools to open their doors to women and athletic programs to sponsor and finance female sports teams. In Oregon at that time, most high schools expected their pep bands to perform at all men's home basketball games. The addition of women's teams being treated equally essentially doubled the number of band athletic services at many high schools.

John McManus was a guiding force in helping band directors find creative ways to cope and negotiate with their administrators for reasonable expectations for their programs. He was a former OMEA President that had an exemplary career as a high school band director before joining the University of Oregon Music Faculty in 1967. He led workshops and developed guidelines in this area that were ultimately adopted by OSAA and published by NAFME. Early OBDA activities and input played an important role in collaboration with this.

Former Montana band directors, Larry Gookin (South Eugene HS) and James (Jim) Robertson (Eastern Oregon State College) were two of the strongest early proponents for creating an Oregon Band Directors Association. Both were very supportive of OMEA, but they touted the benefits of a new organization that could include all school band directors who might want to discuss and initiate change for their areas of concern or need. In the future, an organization like this could allow Oregon's band directors to speak with a unified voice to the OMEA Board through their OMEA Band Affairs Chair.

An ad hoc advisory committee developed out of informal discussions which took place at the 2nd Western International Band Clinic, held at the Portland Hilton on November 23, 1980. During the 1980-81 school year, the committee held three meetings led by Larry Gookin or Jim Robertson, who were selected by consensus to serve as the chairs of the planning efforts. Jim led the dinner meeting held on Friday, January 23, 1981 at North's Chuckwagon in Eugene. This was held during the U of O biennial Music Education Conference. It was well-attended because back then OMEA did not hold state conferences on the odd-numbered years when the NW Division conferences were held. The U of O event filled in the void for several years with an excellent conference that included a high school honor band, choir, and orchestra. It tended to attract a good number of high school directors.

The following month, much informal discussion also took place at the NW MENC Conference, held at Jantzen Beach in Portland. That event included a meeting on Friday, February 27th, 1981 of the OBDA Constitutional Committee comprised of Larry Gookin, Dave Becker (South Salem HS), Jane Forvilly (Elmira HS), John McManus, James Robertson, and guest, Lynn Sjolund. Sjolund was the choir director at Medford HS and the current president of OMEA. He was included because he was extremely respected by band directors and had voiced concerns about "umbrella organizations" in his President's Column for OMEA's Winter 1981 *Oregon Music Educator*, writing:

*Perhaps we (OMEA) have not done enough to encourage and help special groups such as the choral directors, band directors, or Orff specialists, but we do have elected chairmen whose responsibilities should cover the organization of activities in the various areas. Certainly OMEA wants to encourage any groups that are interested in improving music education. However, if we become too fragmented, will we lose some of our own effectiveness? Presently OMEA is by far the most important voice for school music education in our state. In order to keep our place of prominence, I hope all of you will encourage other music teachers to take an active part in OMEA, and all music educators will recognize the importance of putting OMEA number one on their professional organization list.*

Those involved in the early planning and development of OBDA were all in agreement with Sjolund's sentiments. Here is what Sjolund wrote, addressed to David Becker and Larry Gookin, after attending the February 27th meeting mentioned above:

*Thank you for including me in your meeting last Friday. I enjoyed the positive enthusiasm of the group and hope it will thrive and be a great help to OMEA and the band directors. I have thought about proposing the changes necessary to make the president of OBDA a representative to the OMEA Board. There*

*are some “bookkeeping” chores to take care of, but I think they can be accomplished with some careful thought. Any ideas you have would be appreciated.*

*On Saturday a.m. I had a breakfast meeting with Wes Hedeem [OMEA Chairman of Band Affairs] and told him what I was interested in doing, and explained a bit about your group. I felt he should have the information first hand so he would be able to support the proposed changes. He felt it would be a positive step, and I’m sure he will add his good ideas wherever possible. So - for now, congratulations on a good idea. Do keep me informed, and I’ll reciprocate.*

On April 4, 1981, Larry Gookin mailed this announcement on South Eugene High School letterhead to prominent school band directors in Oregon:

*As you may know, many of the band directors in the state are attempting to organize an Oregon Band Directors Association. We have had three very successful meetings this year, and are convinced that there is a need and an interest for such an organization. I’ve included a tentative draft of a proposed constitution that will be discussed at the State Solo Festival in Bend, April 25, 1981. We are planning to have a luncheon meeting. You are invited to attend the meeting and are encouraged to invite any other director that you think may be interested. Since many of you may not be attending the State Solo Festival, we hope that you will join the organization and attend our first “official” meeting this fall. Details of that meeting will be sent to you at a later date.*

*For more information concerning this organization, you may contact the the following people who have been active in the planning stages: Tom Barber (Mt. View HS), Dave Becker (South Salem HS), Bob Callison (Gresham HS), Jane Forvilly (Elmira HS), John McManus (U of O), Gerald Poe (U of O), James Robertson (EOSC), Lynn Sjolund (Medford HS - choir and OMEA President 1980-82), and Richard Sorenson (WOSC).*

The OBDA organizational meeting at the State Solo Contest in Bend on April 25, 1981 had a modest attendance, since the directors’ first priority was to support and hear their students compete. However, it attracted a very good sampling of directors from across the state and included many who were important and influential. Larry Gookin, Jim Robertson, and Dave Becker presented a set of bylaws based on those of the Montana Bandmaster’s Association for approval. A voice vote was taken. Those in attendance overwhelmingly approved them and moved to form the Oregon Band Directors Association and adopt the bylaws as presented by Larry Gookin’s committee.

Next, an OBDA Nominating Committee was assembled, comprised of Tom Barber, Dave Becker, Dick Elliott (Newberg HS), Larry Gookin, and future presidents of OMEA, Raoul Maddox (Ashland HS) and Gene Slayter (Springfield HS). They put forth a slate of OBDA officers for election at the upcoming 3rd Annual Western International Band Clinic in Portland November 25-28, 1981. Those who had been involved in any way with planning expected Larry Gookin to be the most-qualified choice for OBDA's first president because of his leadership with the Bylaws Committee and involvement with the Montana Bandmasters Association. However, at some point after the April 25th meeting and before the end of the school year, he accepted the Director of Bands position at Central Washington University. The committee logically chose Jim Robertson for the President-Elect position, but in early June he also left Oregon, accepting a Teaching Fellow position in trombone at the University of Northern Colorado.

Ultimately, the first officers of OBDA were selected by the nomination committee and formally elected at a meeting during the 1981 Western International Band Clinic on November 22 or 23 in Portland. Elected for terms from 1982-84 were President: Dave Becker (now at South Eugene HS), President-Elect: Jane Forvilly, Vice-President: Gene Slayter, and Secretary/Treasurer: Dick Elliott. Regional Representatives elected to the OBDA Board were: Eastern: Randy Powell (LaGrande HS), Central: Tom Barber (Mountain View HS), Northern: Chuck Bolton (Sam Barlow HS), Willamette: Ephraim Hackett (West Albany HS), and Southern: Bill Norfleet (Grants Pass HS).

By coincidence, in February, 1982 Dave Becker was elected by the OMEA membership to a similar two-year term from 1982-84 as OMEA Chairman of Band Affairs. Having the OBDA President represent the band directors throughout the state to OMEA as their State Band Chairman was the linkage that planners of OBDA had hoped for! OMEA later changed their Bylaws so that the pairing of those positions became the norm. OMEA's Bylaws were amended to recognize OBDA as an affiliate. In return, OBDA has required membership in OMEA as a requirement for full membership in OBDA.

OMEA Chairman of Band Affairs, Wes Hedeon (Coquille HS) included this announcement in his Band Column of the Winter 1981-82 *Oregon Music Educator*: "*The Oregon Band Directors Association is official. Elected officers are: [the same as the list above, though Dick Elliot's name was left out]. First business of the association is to work on contests and consistent adjudication of groups. Action of the 1st meeting also made the OMEA Band Chairman part of the board. All band directors of OMEA are encouraged to join the Oregon Band Directors Association.*"

The first OBDA Meeting under the approved bylaws and first elected officers was held on February 12, 1982 at McKay High School during the OMEA State Conference. Twenty-eight members were present. The minutes of the November 23 meeting were read and approved. President Becker reported on the Oregon School Activities Association's (OSAA) decision that a separate branch (OASSA) would not be created to deal with governing of all non-athletic activities. The treasurer's report showed a \$140 balance.

New Business dealt with a proposal by the Portland Rose Festival wishing to co-sponsor an Oregon High School Marching Band Championship with OSAA, suggesting the date be the Saturday, the day before Thanksgiving, in conjunction with the OSAA State Football Playoffs in Portland. During discussion, Tom Barber made a motion that the OBDA advise the Portland Rose Festival that OBDA is not in favor of their proposal as it stands and that the Rose Festival should possibly co-sponsor the U of O Band Day or pick their Festival of Bands contestants from U of O Band Day. Bill Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Next, a proposed adjudication workshop and certification of judges was discussed to address the need for uniformity throughout the state. The suggested date was June 5, 1982 at South Eugene High School. A motion was made by Scott Janes to check into the possibility of the U of O Summer School sponsoring the workshop. Dean Jolstead seconded it and it passed unanimously.

President Becker proposed to add an amendment to the by-laws of the OBDA Constitution stating that the OMEA State Chairman of Band Affairs be included on the OBDA Board. This passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

A proposal that this year's members have 1982-83 fees waived, due to OBDA not having large financial expenses this year. The motion by Bill Ellison and seconded by Richard Sorenson passed.

Under "Member Concerns" Chuck Bolton moved to have OBDA form a committee to check into the feasibility and format of a state concert band competition. The motion passed. The committee selection included Chuck Bolton (Chairman), Ric Faunt, Ephraim Hackett, Dave Becker and Tom Barber.

Tom Barber brought up a concern over lack of uniform guidelines on athletic events involving band participation. John McManus suggested that guidelines could be drawn up at the 'Band Director Burn-Out Seminar at the U of O July 29 and 30.

Ephraim Hackett moved that OBDA advise the OSAA that the judges for state solo and ensemble competition come from out of state. Ric Faunt seconded it and it passed.

Richard Sorenson brought up the lack of a list of approved solo and ensemble literature in the state of Oregon. The purpose of such a list would be to advise, not control or exclude. Ric Faunt volunteered to chair a committee to check into the matter.

The second full OBDA membership meeting took place on November 20, 1982 at 6:00 PM in the Portland Hilton Pavilion Room during the Western International Band Clinic. In his President's Report, Dave Becker discussed an important OMEA event that had taken place over the summer: "Defining Directions for the Decade." The "3D Conference" was planned by incoming OMEA President Adrienne Harris and Oregon Department of Education Music Specialist, Del Aebischer. Twenty-five Oregon music education leaders had been selected to meet for overnight retreats at the Shiloh Center near Pleasant Hill in May and July of 1982 for two conferences about improving music education in Oregon for the coming decade.

The OMEA Fall, 1982 Oregon Music Educator reported: *Two organizational goals (The Outreach and Education of Decision-Makers and Positive Visibility) and five satellite projects were selected (Music Education Above and Beyond, An OMEA Associate Membership Program, Student Teacher Competencies, Burnout - And What To Do About It, and The Standardization of Adjudication).*

The latter goal came as a direct result of OBDA interest. President Dave Becker was appointed Chairperson of the project along with a high school choir director (David Aakre) and orchestra director (Donna Newcomb). The intent was to "improve secondary school performance through upgrading contests and festivals by standardizing the adjudication process. Activities could include certification of adjudicators, pressing for higher standards, and making use of graded repertoire lists."

Also included in the OMEA Fall, 1982 Oregon Music Educator, was a mention in Becker's *Chairman of Band Affairs Column* of OBDA's Contest/Festival Standardization Project, which "will include graded literature lists and an adjudication form that may be used for either ratings or rankings. Specific definitions of what constitutes a I, II, III, or IV rating will be included." The same issue featured a lengthy article on "A Need for Better Adjudication" by Larry Graves (Band Director, Rex Putnam HS). Larry was the primary author of the "OBDA/OSAA Instrumental Evaluation Scale," in use since the early 1980s.

OBDA's Adjudicator Certification Project was already underway at this time, with the first workshop having taken place at South Eugene High School on June 5, 1982. Clinicians were the two most-respected band adjudicators in the Northwest: Bob Musser (University of Puget Sound) and Wayne Gorder (Western Washington State University). Participating for critique were Gene Slayter's Springfield High School Band and Ron Bertucci's North Eugene High School Band.

The creation of the Oregon Band Directors Association, working closely with OMEA, ushered in substantial, positive changes to high school band activities and performance standards. These have stayed in

place and have been refined over the years. They also have influenced similar change for choirs and orchestras. It is gratifying to see OBDA continuing to serve our band directors and their programs well, especially as it expands its focus to include more middle school directors' needs and contemporary challenges of our beloved profession.

Dave Becker, OMEA Historian, July 24, 2021 [dbecker@lclark.edu](mailto:dbecker@lclark.edu)

Historical Documents Attached:

Gookin OBDA Mtg. Invite 4.25.81.pdf  
J. Robertson Resigns OBDA 6.3.81.pdf  
MT Constitution w/ OBDA Notes.pdf  
OBDA 1st Mtg. Agenda 2.12.82.pdf  
OBDA 1st Mtg. Minutes 2.12.82.pdf  
OBDA 2nd Mtg. Agenda 11.20.82.pdf  
OBDA Formation Sjolund Letter 3.4.81.pdf  
OBDA Org Mtg Becker's Notes 1.23.81.pdf  
OBDA Newsletter Vol. 1 #1 Fall 1984.pdf  
OME F 1982 Becker Band Column.pdf  
OME F 1982 Graves Adjud. Article.pdf  
OME W 1982 Hedeem Band Column.pdf

Presidents of OBDA

1982-84	Dave Becker
1984-86	Jane Forvilly
1986-88	Dick Elliott
1988-90	Pat Vandehey
1990-92	John Dulaney
1992-94	Tom Barber
1994-96	Mary Lou Boderman
1996-98	Chuck Bolton
1998-00	Bob Ponto
2000-02	Ike Nail
2002-04	Dave Matthys
2004-06	Dave Sime
2006-08	Mary Lou Boderman
2008-10	Tom Muller
2010-12	David Hodges
2012-14	Jennifer Brooks Muller
2014-16	Jeff Hornick
2016-18	Michael Burch-Pesses
2018-20	Stuart Welsh
2020-22	Ben Lawson
2022-24	Jennifer Bell