

*Summer is underway and yes, even superintendents need a break. Over the course of the summer, I will rest my Lancer Letter pen here and there to give myself a break. On those weeks, I will run a "Lancer Letter Classic" or borrow something from someone else. This week's submission is in the latter category.*

*At the beginning of June, some alumni organized a retirement recognition program for retiring band director, John Marszlek. At the one event, GM grad Jimmy Strand, Jr. presented a tribute to John's wife, Marilyn, who has worked with the band and taught in our elementary school.*

*Jimmy's presentation so so eloquent and masterfully worded, I asked him if I could print it here. It serves as an example of the impact a teacher can have on a student and how that student "pays it forward." The mission and core values of our district live on in our graduates.*

Hello. My name is Jimmy Strand and I was a percussionist in the battery during my four years in high school. Certainly, I want to congratulate Mr. Marszalek on his retirement and thank him for all that he has done, but I was asked to say a few words today about Mrs. Marszalek.

The Battery, The drumline, the heartbeat of the band – from the outside, we are a chins-up, no smiling, focused machine composed of expressionless faces, and sticks and hands and synchronous feet... most of the time.

From the inside...with a look from the inside we're a family, bonded by the love of an activity, a passion for music, percussionese from an instructor with words like, hurta and pataflafla and trip dids, and an immense amount of hilarious moments, moments that can only stem from a group of percussionists together for extended periods of time. As I look around here today, I see the faces that understand that bond.

The ones that understand the pride I feel when I say, "I played in the GM drumline."

The pride of the line, the family, was built by Mrs. Marszalek, our teacher, our mentor and a phenomenal percussionist; we alums refer to her as Mom.

Her teaching, her time, and her expectations of quality, and commitment to the art and the group, we will never ever forget. She held us together. She linked the ages and has given us so many memories... you both are responsible for so many of our memories.

Great memories, some during the hottest days of the year at band camp and warming up in the lot, or the championship night where I am convinced the drums played themselves. As I get further away from when I marched, I worry some of those memories may fade, but I do not fear that I will lose the feelings, the excitement and the emotion - the emotion that cannot be taken away after leaving everything out on that field. It is safe to say that I dream of marching band.

I know that it is also safe to say I can speak for all GM band members past and present when I say thank you thank you, thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Marszalek for what you have done for all of us.

For me personally, this school, this program, the General McLane Marching Band, Mr. Marszalek, and you Mom helped me find my passion but so much more than that.

You have taught me to be proud, be humble and honor the tradition.

The tradition of those before me and to be a model to those that follow.

Following my HS graduation, I returned to the group as a student instructor while in college, where I was able to continue living my dream, being surrounded by what I love and remaining so close to the family.

Upon your retirement I was sad. Certainly I questioned who would be working with the line in the future, but mainly, I was going to miss you. We had had so much fun together and you had given me so much.

Lancer Letter #187

A Tribute

And upon your retirement, I was given the unbelievable opportunity to work as a second generation GM drumline instructor, to continue what you have established. As I stand here a child of this amazing family that you have started, I can only hope to impact future percussionists to the level which you have impacted us and helped us find our dot, not only on the field, but in life as well. I am grateful every day to continue this tradition. I am grateful to tell the stories of GM line, to share the emotions of GM line, to be proud, to be humble and to always love the tradition.