



# HIGHTY-TIGHTY

## NOTES

*The official newsletter of the Highty-Tighty Alumni, Inc.*  
*Volume 39 Number 2* *Summer 2015*



# HIGHTY-TIGHTY ALUMNI, INC.

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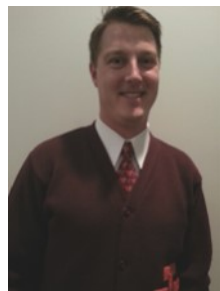
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Director



# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

## Bert Kinzey, HT '68

### The Highty-Tighty Experience

Since becoming president of the HTA almost eight years ago, I have made a point to meet and talk to as many of our alumni as possible. Back in 2008, I actually chatted with two from Highty-Tighty classes of the mid-1930s. But whether I am talking to an alumnus like Dr. J. B. Jones from HT '45 or a Highty-Tighty who graduated just a few years ago, I always hear about how special their four years in the Regimental Band was and how much it means to them to this day. It is also wonderful to see the bond shared by all Highty-Tighty alumni. As a member of the class of 1968, I still feel something in common with other HT alumni, even if they graduated two decades or more before or after I did. We all experienced the challenges of making it through a demanding freshman year, and we share similar experiences of completing our four years as cadets while trying to uphold the proud traditions of excellence and continuing that eternal pursuit of perfection that comes with being a Highty-Tighty.

On many occasions, alumni have told me that the Highty-Tighties remain the most influential organization they have ever belonged to. We all became cadets at the end of our teen years as we were becoming adults, and that is a very formative time in anyone's life. We became members of an organization that demanded and expected our best efforts, and that is something very special. We learned about the long and proud history of the Regimental Band, and we were challenged to write new pages in that history that would continue to exemplify and reflect the very best in the Band and ourselves as individuals. In doing so, we learned self-discipline, dedication, time management, and other skills that would serve us well throughout life. As Highty-Tighties, we had to spend more time marching, practicing, and performing than did the rest of the Corps, but we looked at that as a challenge and a privilege rather than as a burden. Those four years helped mold who we are today whether we are 23 or 93 years old.

I am reminded of when the three alumni from the classes of 1923 and 1924 called younger alumni together in 1975 to form the Highty-Tighty Alumni, Inc. They did so when they learned that the administration at Virginia Tech had decided that the Highty-Tighties would no longer be the band that represented the University at football games and elsewhere. There was a clear indication that the administration would do away with the Corps and the Band within a few years. Remembering what the Highty-Tighties had meant to them in the 1920s, they formed the nucleus of alumni who came together to form the organization that would save the Band and the Corps. They took this bold action because of how much the Highty-Tighties had meant to them so long ago, and it was important to them to

see that generations to come would have the opportunity to have that experience.

Let me assure all of you that the Highty-Tighty experience is just as real and as meaningful today as it was then. Living in Blacksburg, I get to see the Highty-Tighties on a regular basis, and as president of the HTA, I get to interact with the cadet leadership during the year. I wish all of our alumni could see the present cadets as they go through their own Highty-Tighty experience today, just as each of us did in the past. It would make you very proud. Just as the school year was ending, I had lunch with five cadets who will provide the senior leadership for the Band this coming fall. These included the commander, drum major, assistant drum major, executive officer, and performance officer. These are all cadet leaders we can be proud of, and their attitude and desire to strengthen alumni-cadet relations and honor the great traditions of the Highty-Tighties is truly remarkable.

Just as alumni from the classes of the mid-1920s came together with other alumni to form the HTA back in 1975, we must now strengthen our commitment to insure that the Highty-Tighty experience will be available for future generations. Because the Band is so much larger now, more Freshman Stipends are required, as are more Emerging Leader Scholarships. Please honor your Highty-Tighty experience and help in our effort to insure that the Highty-Tighties will remain as strong as they are today by making a contribution or a pledge to the Schaeffer Account to fund the Freshman Stipend or the Dobyins Account to fund Emerging Leader Scholarships for Highty-Tighty cadets. You can also give or pledge to one of the named Emerging Leader Scholarships that go to Highty-Tighty cadets. One of these is the newly formed ELS honoring George McNeill, and I'd ask all alumni who were in the Band under George to make a contribution to this ELS, so that we can get it endowed as soon as possible.



Continued on page 8



## DIRECTOR'S DOWNBEAT LTC George McNeill, Virginia Militia

**Fond memories of the great times I've had  
are many...**

Highly-Tighties. Fond memories of the great times I've had are many. It is now time to pass the baton to Senior Chief James Bean- someone I feel is the ideal person to carry on the traditions of this great band. Chief James (we call him Jim) Bean comes to us after 22 years with the United States Naval Academy Band. Married to Kathryn, they have two daughters. After his retirement from the Navy, he spent six years teaching in the Queen Annes County public School System in Maryland. He has already begun his transition by working with me during orientation that runs through the month of July. I will be guiding and advising him throughout the semester to insure a smooth transition at all phases. Jim has already expressed his excitement about his new position and he looks forward to establishing a great working relationship with the Band, music department and the Virginia Tech community.

In the past five or more years the Band's enrollment has been steadily increasing. In 1991 (my first year as director) the Band was about 70 strong and the numbers dropped even lower in the mid-nineties. Today, I am proud to announce that the Band's enrollment will reach in excess of 160 members by the start of the fall semester. We strive to recruit the most talented cadets entering the corps by encouraging those with at least three years of musical experience to join, and by offering a two week trial period for those uncertain about joining for the first semester. The two week trial period, and those who have worked with me during orientation agree, is the key to the numbers being so high. Our retention rate is the best its ever been.

In April, the Highly-Tighties were invited to participate in The Virginia International Tattoo at the Scope Arena in Norfolk, Virginia. This tattoo is long regarded as the most patriotic of the world's great Tattoos. The Highly-Tighties performed with bands from Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and military bands from the United States. This was one of the most spectacular events I have ever seen with over 900 performers participating. The Band spent five days there performing in the six Tattoos, the opening of the Norfolk Tides Baseball

game, a local elementary school, the NATO Parade in downtown Norfolk and a performance on the Scope Plaza. The Highly-Tighties also made history as the very first collegiate band ever to perform at this event.

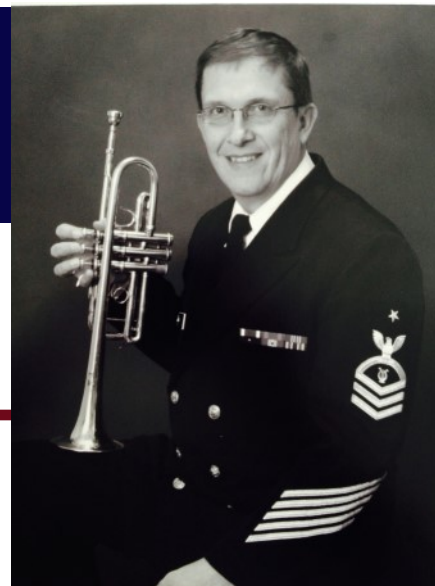
Finally, I want to thank everyone from the Cadets, Highly-Tighty Alumni Association, Music Department, Department of Military Affairs and the whole Virginia Tech community for all the support they have given me to make my job the most exciting ever!





# Greetings from Senior Chief James Bean

## Hello from the New Director



**2015** is proving to be one of my most pivotal and exciting years to date. I walked my oldest daughter, Sara, down the aisle in April, I watched my youngest daughter, Caitlin, graduate from Hood College in May, I graduated from Towson University with my Masters in Music, and with the help of Kathryn, my wife of 27 years, I found a new job with the Highty-Tighties! Having taught music in the public schools for six years, I resigned from my position to pursue my Masters, using the Post 911 G.I. Bill, with the goal of continuing to teach at the college level. While I enjoyed being a full time student, Kathryn took it upon herself to start the job-hunting for me and came across the Regimental Band position at Virginia Tech. Interestingly, each bullet of the job description matched experiences I had, either as a Navy musician or as a teacher.

The Naval Academy Band, “the Navy’s oldest and finest,” is an enlisted band permanently stationed at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. It has special band status, meaning you audition to win a position before enlisting in the Navy and are permanently assigned, unless you choose to leave. After joining the band in January 1986, I became the principal trumpet in 1988, where I sat until my retirement in 2007, performing countless solos as part of the section and in front of the band. In addition to my performing duties, I held positions in the Operations Office, Public Affairs, and as Head Librarian. However, my most rewarding position was as Ceremonial Band leader, conducting countless ceremonies on and off the Naval Academy for civilian and military dignitaries. After my promotion to Senior Chief Musician, I became the Division Chief for all ceremonial and marching band engagements. Through the years at the academy, I also worked as the leader of the USNA Brass Quintet and as a member of the jazz band, the Next Wave, as well as mentoring midshipmen during some fourteen musical productions.

All great things must come to an end, so in 2007 I retired from the Navy and began a second career as a music instructor in Queen Anne’s County Public Schools. Having taught as an adjunct professor at Anne Arundel Community College and Salisbury University, as well as performing numerous school concerts and clinics with the USNA brass quintet, I thought teaching school would be a logical choice. After one year of elementary school, I was assigned as the middle school director of bands at Matapeake Middle School in Stevensville, MD. There, I enjoyed watching students develop into fine, young people with music as the catalyst to team building and goal oriented success. While at Matapeake, I took pleasure in watching the band program grow from some 30 students to well

over 100, earning superior ratings at state festivals and an invitation to perform at the MENC conference in Baltimore in 2014.

Having just finished my first summer of orientation with the Corps of Cadets and meeting not only the prospective HT’s but some current members, I am even more excited to get started. Through working with these cadets and viewing the band on numerous YouTube videos, the pride and professionalism is evident in these young men and women. For example, working to recruit new members during orientation, Cadet Godoy exemplified these behaviors. As a 5-year engineering student, he is not able to march with the HT’s this year, but that did not stop him from volunteering to aid in recruiting freshman during orientation. He, along with several other HT’s, demonstrated their dedication and devotion to this ensemble.

The most frequent question I get from alumni and cadets is, “What are you going to change?” As new director I obviously have some ideas about what I want to accomplish. However, Lieutenant Colonel McNeill has left some big shoes to fill and my immediate goal is to learn as much as I can as quickly as possible. I see no need to fix something that isn’t broken. My personal goals include raising the level of performance as much as possible without adding to the already busy schedule of the cadet, finding interesting venues of performance, and eventually producing a recording of all the ensembles of the Highty-Tighties.

I want to thank Lieutenant Colonel McNeill for his mentorship and guidance since I’ve arrived, making me feel right at home here with the Corps. I know he finds it difficult to leave something he has cultivated successfully for 24 years, but he has been a true gentleman and shown nothing but patience with my many questions. Sorry Colonel, but I have you on speed dial!! To all the alumni, I look forward to meeting you, and I want to make sure you know I have nothing but the best interests of this great organization at heart.

# International Tattoo

Norfolk Va. April 2015



*In his interview with Bert Kinzey (see History Notes), Col. George McNeill described the Band's participation in the International Tattoo in Norfolk back in April of this year as near the "top of the list" of experiences he has had in his years as Director of the Highty-Tighties. The photos on this and the facing page are just a few of the many shots captured by Mike Diersing and posted to his Flickr page on the web.*





# International Tattoo

Norfolk Va. April 2015



To see more great photos look for the link at  
<http://www.hightytightyalumni.org>



Photos by: Mike Diersing



## Alumni Notes

### Tim Williams HT '84 Promoted to Maj. General



**Brig. Gen. Timothy P. Williams**, the Adjutant General of Virginia, was promoted to major general May 22, 2015, at the Virginia National Guard Army Aviation Support Facility in Sandston, Va., by his wife Cheryl HT '86 and son Troy. Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran presided over the promotion ceremony on behalf of the Governor of Virginia Terry McAuliffe. Williams was sworn in as the 28th Adjutant General of Virginia June 2, 2014, and he leads more than 9,000 members of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard and Virginia Defense Force.

President's Page continued from page 3:

The Highly-Tighty experience continues. The details of day-to-day life as cadets may have changed from when we wore the white cord, but the important values and traditions remain the same, and the cadets of today still graduate with the pride we did years ago. Help this continue by making a contribution or pledge today. No matter how large or small, your support is needed and appreciated. You can make a donation or a pledge by mailing it to the VTCC Development office at:

Virginia Tech  
University Development 0336  
Attn: Gift Accounting  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Please be sure to specify which account or scholarship you want your donation to go to on your check.

Anyone who wants to charge to a credit card or make a pledge payable over a period of time up to 5 years should go to <http://www.givingto.vt.edu/> and enter the same info on the form. Any questions should be directed to Dave Spracher at 540-231-2806 or Scott Lyman at 540-231-2801.

Ut Prosim,

Bert Kinzey  
President, HTA





# Development Update

Rumor has it we will be turning them away...



That's right, alumni, while the numbers are still in work, there is talk of setting a cap on the size of the Band — how does 160 or even 170 sound? Nothing is official at this point, but things are looking very very good with Highty-Tighty enrollment numbers. The downside of that great news is that every new freshman HT represents another thousand dollar stipend that has to be covered. As I mentioned in the last issue, the stipend appears to be one the keys to attracting new freshmen. This gets the attention of high school seniors and their parents. This \$1,000 incentive makes a difference to many of these families. Please consider in your 2015 planning to pledge or send a contribution to support the growth of the Schaeffer endowment account that allows us to give these freshmen an additional financial incentive to be a new Highty-Tighty. You will find details about how to contribute to this and other accounts in the continuation of Bert's message to alumni which appears on the opposite page.

Just in case you didn't notice it, Summer is here. Fall and football season is around the corner. It's time to look at your calendar and make plans to attend Highty-Tighty Homecoming which is a little later than usual this year. October 24 will be the homecoming parade, pregame march on, and game against Duke University. See page 14 for details.

This is one weekend a year when we need and want you to be on campus to see old friends and enjoy the beauty of the Virginia Tech campus. Also, the new Pearson Hall (Rasche's replacement) will be completed soon. You will be amazed at this new Corps dormitory. Brodie is also "history" and its replacement will be rising soon. Come join the fun, enjoy the sights and catch up on old times.

Hope to see you there!

Chuck Rowell HT '71  
VP of Development, HTA



# History Notes

## INTERVIEW WITH COL. GEORGE MCNEILL



**The Highty-Tighties performed at the 2007 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, marching in a missing man formation to honor Matt La Porte, HT 2009, who was one of the victims of the shootings on campus the previous April. George McNeill counts this as one of the two most memorable events during his tenure as the director of the Regimental Band. (Highty-Tighty file photo)**

*By Bert Kinzey, HT '68*

*Author's Note: In the previous seventeen issues of the "Highty-Tighty Notes," history articles have been included that traced the history of the Regimental Band from the when it was formed in 1893 up through 1934. In this issue, we take a break from the chronological history of the Band and pause to reflect on the history from 1992 through 2015 while George McNeill served as director. This article is an interview conducted by HTA President, Bert Kinzey, HT '68, with George McNeill as he stepped down as the longest serving director of the Highty-Tighties and second only in service to Jim Schaeffer as combined assistant director and director.*

**Bert:** George, how did you become director of the Highty-Tighties?

**George:** That's a story a lot of people really don't know. My son, Marvin, was a member of the University Jazz Band, and they needed a string bass player. Marvin told Joe Kennedy, the director of the University Jazz Band, that I was retired, and that

I played bass, so he contacted me about playing with the jazz band that year. While doing so, John Hussen, the head of the Music Department, approached me and asked if I would be interested in becoming the assistant band director for the Highty-Tighties. I took that job in 1991, which was Wally Easter's final year as director. As it turned out, I took over most of the day-to-day responsibilities, and when Wally moved on to another position in the Music Department, I became the director in 1992. So I actually served as assistant director for one year before becoming the director.

**Bert:** You have served as director for almost one-fifth of the time the Regimental Band has been in existence, and that is saying a lot, given that it was formed 123 years ago in 1893. In all those years, what stands out as a highlight or the most memorable experience or event?

**George:** There are so many, but I think two really stand out. First was the nationally televised appearance in the 2007 Macy's Parade in New York. We expected an invitation in 2008,



# History Notes



but after the shootings on campus in April of 2007, the Macy's committee contacted us and asked us to come that year. They were aware that one of our members, Matt La Porte, was one of the victims of the shootings, and they wanted us to come a year early. They were absolutely wonderful to us. I worked with them on the script that would be read while we were on television, and we spent a lot of time on it to get it just right. The Band performed with great precision, and we marched in the missing man formation in honor of Matt. Other band directors came up to me and were really kind and very generous with their comments about the Band and the tragedy we had experienced. I am so proud of the way the Band represented themselves, the Corps of Cadets, and the entire University that day. It truly was a very special time.

But I would also have to say the International Tattoo this past semester also ranks at the top of the list. To be a part of that and be among those military bands from the United States and eight other nations was truly special. When we were announced and marched into the arena to take our place among the other bands, the crowd just exploded with applause and cheers, and it was an experience none of us will ever forget. I will never forget the experience of directing all of those bands

in the arena. You have to remember that this International Tattoo has been going on for years, and we are the first collegiate band ever to be invited to participate. While there, we also got to play at a game for the Norfolk minor league baseball team, and we visited an elementary school as well. The entire event was really special, and I hope the Band will be part of it in the future.

**Bert:** You have told me many times that this is the best job you've ever had. What aspect of it did you like best and enjoy the most?

**George:** Unquestionably, it was working with the cadets. Year in and year out, the cadet leadership was wonderful to work with. There were a few bumps in the road along the way, but with very few exceptions, the cadet leadership has been truly outstanding. When you asked them to do something, they did it. It's a privilege to work with such fine young people. They have so much to offer, and they do so much of the work. I'm really fortunate to have been able to have known and worked with so many. My age is catching up with me, and it's



*George McNeill conducts the combined bands from nine nations at the International Tattoo in Norfolk in April 2015. This unforgettable experience is a special highlight of his years as Highly-Tighty director. The Highly-Tighty drum major is visible at the extreme left side of the photograph. (Photo courtesy of George McNeill)*



# History Notes

time to retire, but honestly, Bert, I'd love to do this for another thirty years! Yes, it is the best job I've ever had!

**Bert:** Of what are you most proud when it comes to the accomplishments during your years as director?

**George:** When I became director, the Band was small. There were some very fine musicians in the Band at that time, but the percentage of good musicians was not as high as it should have been. There were some cadets that really



*Working with the cadets is what George says was the best part of being the director of the Highty-Tighties. "Just tell them what needs to be done, and they do it," said George. He considers himself to be very fortunate to have worked with so many fine cadets over the years. (Photo by Bert Kinzey, HT '68)*

did not play as well as I would have liked, and a few simply carried instruments. They were fine cadets, and otherwise they represented the Band very well, but we needed to improve the musical quality to include a much greater percentage of the Band cadets. I think we have done that quite well, and as a result, we now have much greater respect within the Music Department. It is great to see the Band so much larger in numbers now, but I know that most of the cadets are also very good musicians. So we have not only increased the size of the Band, we have improved it musically.

**Bert:** It's nice to know you'll be participating with the Highty-Tighty Alumni Band from now on. What else do you plan to do in your retirement?

**George:** I look forward to being able to spend more time with my wife, Melva, who has also just retired from Montgomery County Schools, and our son, Marvin. Beyond that, I'd really like to perform more, and I'd like to give private music lessons. I'll also continue my volunteer work with the YMCA store repairing computers as I've done for years, and maybe I'll start a business repairing computers.





# History Notes



*Bands from nine different nations, including the United States, performed at the International Tattoo in Norfolk in April of 2015. The Highty-Tighties were the first collegiate band ever invited to participate. Some of the Highty-Tighties can be seen at the center of the block in the back-ground at floor level, while others were in the upper level behind them. (Photo courtesy of George McNeill)*



*George McNeill conducts his final piece of music with the Highty-Tighty Concert Band on May 3, 2015, at the Moss Center for the Performing Arts. George selected his favorite march, Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever," as his final piece to direct. (Photo by Bert Kinzey, HT '68)*



## Alumni Notes

### A Nice Tribute to Chris Bise HT '72



Photo by Mike Diersing

*Highly-Tighty alumni and friends,*

*We made the announcement about the passing of our Alumni Band drum major, Chris Bise, in the last issue. I recently came across a really nice tribute done for him by some folks at WVU where he was head of the Mining Engineering Department. It's clear that we are not the only people that appreciated Chris. This is worth a look.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfk32JgkPOc>



*Does that great shot of Chris leading the Band above remind you of something.....hmmmmmm ..... How about maybe .....*

# Homecoming!!!

That's right, alumni, Homecoming 2015 is right around the corner on the weekend of October 23/24 against Duke. There is no time to waste at this point. Go to <http://www.alumni.vt.edu/reunion/highlytighty/> and get registered! There is a link on the homecoming page at [highlytightyalumni.org](http://highlytightyalumni.org) as well. We will keep you updated with details as they become available at that site, so stay tuned. We are probably looking a marching with the largest Highly-Tighty band in history this year — **DON'T MISS IT!!!**



Thanks Again, LTC McNeill!!



Our Newest Alumnus

**Highty-Tighty Alumni, Inc**  
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## REQUESTS TO ALUMNI

### *Very Important!*

There are three things all Highty-Tighty alumni need to do to help ensure you get the newsletter and stay connected with Virginia Tech and the Highty-Tighty Alumni, Inc.

1. Be sure that your address and other contact information are up to date with Virginia Tech Alumni Relations. The person to contact is Sharon Croy at [scroy@vt.edu](mailto:scroy@vt.edu). Sharon can also be reached at (540) 231-8905. Make sure she has your present address, and if you move Sharon is the one you should notify about your change of address. It is her list that is used to mail out this newsletter. **Please do not provide your contact information or changes of address to the newsletter editor**
2. Everyone needs to go to the Highty-Tighty Alumni website and check their contact information in the database. Go to [www.hightytightyalumni.org](http://www.hightytightyalumni.org) and click on Database. The site provides a way for you to provide and request and update of your address, phone number, and e-mail address.
3. If you know of any Highty-Tighty alumni who are not receiving the *Highty-Tighty Notes* newsletter or the *Highty-Tighty Half-Notes* e-mail updates, please pass this information on to them.

## HIGHTY-TIGHTY HALF-NOTES

### *Subscribe Today*

The *Highty-Tighty Half-Notes* are periodic e-mails sent to Highty-Tighty alumni and friends of the Regimental Band. They are intended to supplement the news included in the *Highty-Tighty Notes* newsletter, which only comes out twice a year. These e-mail updates include both photographs and information about the present Band and alumni. Early information about homecoming and other items of interest to alumni are often subjects of *Half-Notes*. If you would like to receive these occasional e-mails with photographs and updates about the Band's activities, as well as information about alumni, please send your e-mail address and your request to receive the *Half-Notes* to: [bertkinzey@verizon.net](mailto:bertkinzey@verizon.net)

You may have your name removed at any time.

Please forward any alumni notes, articles, or other materials for the *Highty-Tighty Notes* to:

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For more information on the Highty-Tighty Alumni, Inc  
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[www.hightytightyalumni.org](http://www.hightytightyalumni.org)

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