

Band tunes up for kickoff of September season

By Sonya Falls

On September 13, the air above Hoke High Stadium will resound with the music of the Hoke High Marching Band as members move onto the field for the first half-time performance of the year.

Long before that date, however, Director Jimmy James and his dedicated marching group will have perfected each show-stopping move, every trumpet blast and flag twirl.

The show, which James describes as being "in the style of a Broadway production," was planned early in the summer by James and Upchurch Band Director, Gil Clark. Percussion members and color guard began practice early in the summer and all band members

attend band camp for two full weeks during the summer. Night practices are also held throughout the summer.

"People don't understand what these kids give up in order to participate in the band," says James. "They give up their summer trips, jobs - just to come here and sweat and have me holler at them. They love it. They wouldn't come out here all summer if they didn't."

James recalls the days when things were very different. "I remember begging people to be in the band. It was hard to get kids in but now I have to turn some away. It's something they want to do."

This year, the Hoke High Band is 199 strong. In addition to performing at home football games,

they will take their show on the road to at least four invitational band competitions.

Last year, the band received superior ratings in all four competitions they attended and the band room sparkles with trophies they received. James and Clark both feel that the competitions are a vital learning experience for the band members.

"It gives the students a chance to compete, which they are going to have to do all their lives, for jobs, for school, and they enjoy this chance," states Clark.

"Bands have moved into more of a competitive stage now. It's almost like the athletic program, with the competitions," adds James. "Bands don't march up

and down streets anymore playing John Phillip Sousa marches. You have to change with the times and this is something that the students enjoy and will participate in."

The style of performances is also another aspect of change in high school bands. Very few bands, of Hoke's size, performs a simple little show, such as marching onto the field and forming the school letter while the trumpets play the school song.

Instead, the larger bands opt for the Broadway style of show. This is a combination of choreography, marching, and a variety of music interspersed with those lovely solos by trumpets, xylophones or drums. These give extra-talented students a chance in the spotlight.

Putting together this kind of show requires outside help in the form of dance instructors, former students or others in the community with marching experience.

Nowhere is this community support more prevalent than with the Hoke High Band Boosters.

This group of band parents, and music lovers works continuously to raise necessary funds and support for the Hoke High marchers.

The Boosters and James are particularly excited about hosting their first invitational band competition on October 5.

Seventy-five invitations have been sent to bands throughout the state.

Not only will this serve as a fund raiser for the band, it will afford the Raeford and Hoke County

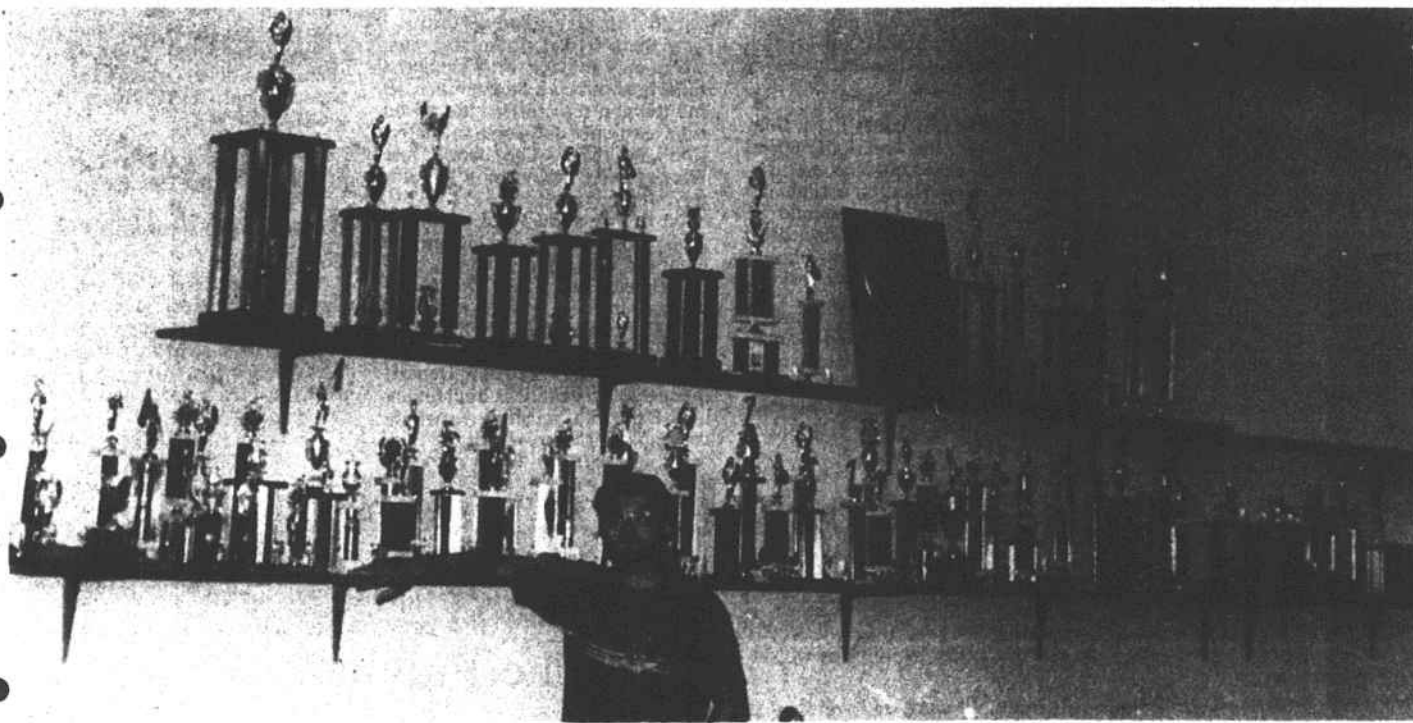
Community an excellent opportunity to view band competition first hand.

Serving as host band, the Hoke High Band will perform, although not competitively.

Their chance at showing their stuff will happen at other sites across the state. There, all the sweat, dedication and practice will pay off for these enthusiastic students and their directors.

No doubt, this year, they will bring home plenty more golden trophies to add to all that glitter lining the shelves in the band room at Hoke High.

But, a more important thing will have occurred with the pride created within the heart of each member of the Hoke High Band.



Wall of honors

Gil Clark takes a break from practice to rest below a wall of trophies commemorating the competition victories of past bands.



Observing the progress

Clark and senior band members oversee a summer practice session as the group prepares for the coming season.



Getting in line

Band members have a good time practicing a routine during one session of summer camp.