

"Fame" Can Be Found In Charlotte School System, Too

By Terri Byrum
Special To The Post

When the movie "Fame" came out in 1980, I saw it four or five times. With my theatrical background, I identified with the talented students, all the while wondering how it was that some people go to the High School for the Performing Arts, and I only got to go to Myers Park High School.

I struggled for months with that sense of injustice and eventually got over it.

Then in spring of 1982, "Fame" was brought to TV as a weekly series. I have become glued to the TV set on Thursday evenings with "Fame" is on. I stay home from any clubs or business meetings which might meet on Thursday night and I take my phone off the hook so that those who didn't know better than to call between eight and nine won't disturb me.

The TV show features some of the same characters as the film. I miss the girl who played Doris Finsucker in the film, but the new character of Doris Schwartz is pretty close. It's too bad Irene Cara chose not to follow the role to the series, but her replacement, Erica Gimpel almost matches her quality.

As for the teachers, I'm glad they kept Mr. Shervovsky. He's a good father figure for the kids. I like the added English teacher Miss Sherwood. But Debbie Allen, who plays Miss Lydia Grant, carries the show, without a doubt.

All this wishful thinking on my part about the School of the Performing Arts led me to investigate what the public schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County have to offer students who show creative talent. I was hoping to find



LIGHT MOMENTS are shared between serious Harding High School music students and band Director Joseph P. Chambers (right) during a pause in practice last Monday. Assistant Harding High School Principal Marshal Smith, (left) enjoys the levity of the moment with students, left to right, front row:

Samantha Thorne, flutest; Michele Bowling flutist; Michele Bowling flutist; Debbie Smith, flutest; Russ Link, alto sax. Second row seated, left to right: Renee Griffith, clarinet; Darryl White, clarinet; Annette Alvey, Clarinet; Gary McIntyre, trumpet; and Mark S. Horton, trumpet. (Photo: Peeler's Portrait Studio)

that things had improved significantly since I was a student in the 60s and early 70s.

It seems that there are (and always have been) opportunities for creatively talented students, but one must use a little creativity in seeking them.

When I was in elementary school, the highlights of the week were those days when we had orchestra. All of the budding musicians carried their rented instruments (some larger than they were) into the lobby of Lansdowne Elementary School and the teacher with much patience "conducted" as though it were the New York Philharmonic.

Even more exciting than orchestra were those occasions, about three or four times per year, when the roving art teacher came to our class.

Art was everybody's favorite, and sometimes our regular teacher would circle the "art" date on our class calendar weeks in advance. Notes were sent home to our mothers asking for a smock or old shirt to protect our clothing to be sent to school. The art teacher was with us for a half day and we converted our classroom into a studio with the desks pushed back against the walls and the floor was used as an easel.

Although as a child I always enjoyed music, the "chorus" segment of elementary school was not particularly anticipated. The roving choral teacher always seemed to be an

older lady who was constantly out of breath from pushing her piano-on-wheels from class to class. I remember the "lessons" as being very hurried and lackluster - just as the teacher was. We would have gladly traded chorus for art any day.

I don't remember any drama in the classroom - except for the 'who put gum on the teacher's seat?' variety.

Today, elementary school students are given opportunities to play an instrument from the fourth grade. Those whose families cannot afford rental fees for an instrument are not left out - the admin-

istration of each school will accommodate any student in such a situation.

Art teachers and music teachers visit all classrooms at least once a week and regular teachers try to supplement the art and music lessons throughout the week.

When asked if particularly talented children are encouraged by the special teachers, Mr. Eugene Todd

principal for Marie G. Davis Elementary School, says with tongue-in-cheek, "Yes. The teacher may be able to spend about 30 extra seconds with the talented student." The art and music teachers are itinerant and often see more than 700 students per week.

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