

# Fred Pankratz

ATSSB Hall of Fame Inductee, 2024

Fred Pankratz was born November 22, 1947, to Walter and Wanza Pankratz in El Paso. He attended Burnett Elementary School where he played cornet in the fifth and sixth grades. He then entered Bassett Junior High under the direction of William C. Robinson. Mr. Robinson suggested Fred change to French Horn in the seventh grade. He began taking private lessons at that time and soon began performing with the El Paso Horn Choir once with Phil Farkas.

Fred had many musical opportunities at Austin High School with Bobby Booth as band director and George Weber as orchestra director. In 1963 Fred performed with the Austin High School Honor Orchestra at TMEA in Houston. Featured soloist for the occasion was John Coulehan, later the clarinet soloist with the U S Navy band in Washington. In 1964 Fred made All State first chair in the Youth Orchestra. As a sophomore, he also started playing in the El Paso Symphony where he performed for five years and played in the summer park concert series for band and orchestra. Fred made the All-State Symphony Orchestra in 1966 and performed in Dallas. During his high school years, he made All City Band four years, first chair in 1965, All City Orchestra four years, played for church events and played one summer with the Salvation Army Band (all horn parts in Eb).

After high school, Fred and best friend Pat Coulehan were recruited by Harold Hillyer to come to the University of Texas at El Paso. There he performed with many great musicians including a two-year New Mexico All State trumpet player from Jal, New Mexico, Sheila Roberts. Fred continued to perform with the El Paso Symphony, summer park band and orchestra, operas, ballets, and other concerts and also became horn section leader performing under many guest conductors. Both Fred and Sheila worked on Hillyer's staff and were elected presidents of Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma, respectively. The rides to basketball pep band, charting sessions, fraternity/sorority activities and concerts became more frequent, and the romance between the two soon blossomed. Both Fred and Sheila graduated in 1971 with Bachelor of Music Education degrees.

The couple's wedding plans were made in cooperation with the Selective Service. With a draft notice looming, Fred was accepted to serve in the Army Band in San Antonio. The couple was married by the Justice of the Peace, May 26, 1971, so Sheila could set up the household and find a job while Fred was at basic training. Fred failed his physical due to chronic high blood pressure. Without a job or any applications sent out, Fred and Sheila moved back to Sheila's hometown, Jal, a more central location for interviews. While living in Jal, the planned church wedding was held on Fred's parent's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Fred worked as a bartender at the local country club and construction with El Paso Natural Gas while Sheila cleaned houses and babysat. Then a call came from the Superintendent at Miami Schools, who wanted to start a band program from scratch. The town of Miami in the northern part of the Texas panhandle was a drastic change from the landscapes of El Paso and Jal. Upon arrival in Miami,



the couple moved into the newlywed apartment, the only housing available.

At Miami, Fred taught English, reading, photography, three band classes and sponsored the annual staff. Miami bands started going to UIL contest after four years. They earned a two in marching and ones in both concert and sightreading. a UIL Sweepstakes award followed in 1976, the first Class B Sweepstakes in the panhandle in thirteen years. Sheila was working at a garment foundations factory in Pampa, twenty-three miles away and began teaching piano lessons in Canadian, twenty-three miles the other direction from Miami. After her lessons swelled to forty-five students, she quit the factory.

When the Canadian band director position opened, Fred was hired by Superintendent Jim Pollard in 1976, no doubt with influence from some of Sheila's piano students. Sheila volunteered for two days before she was hired as "band aid." After assisting for two years, Sheila moved to the elementary school to provide more musically literate students for the band program. In coordination with the P.E. teachers, Sheila created physical routines that instilled a basic beat.

Early in Fred's career in Canadian, a very important friendship and mentoring relationship started with Dr. Charles Trayler. Fred and Charlie began traveling together to adjudicate contests in both Oklahoma and Texas. They had many conversations and stories including a discussion (very one sided) of the tuning tendency of the second tetrachord.

Fred and Sheila elected to remain in Class 2A Canadian the remainder of their teaching careers. Over the years, Fred was asked many times, "So what are you still doing in Canadian?" to which he would reply, "Very well, thank you."

In 1986 their daughter was born. She had a nine-year foundation in piano, was an All-State horn player and a member of the NBA Honor Band in San Antonio. She played solos, ensembles and was a top student. She holds both a bachelor's and master's degree from SWOSU in Weatherford, OK and teaches Senior English at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City.

Fred's bands, with help from clinicians Dr. Charles Trayler, Dr. Gary Garner, Tim Kelley, Cody Myers, Barry Hurt, Roger Edwards, Dr. James South and others developed into a consistent Sweepstakes winner with twenty-two in a row from 1984 until his retirement in 2005, twenty-five in total. Shared credit for this success goes to students, parents and assistant directors David Hawkins, David Sims, Kyle Maxwell, Jennifer Willison, and Will Brewer.

In 2016 Fred was elected to membership in the Phi Beta Mu Hall of Fame. In 1991 he was one of the founding member of the Association of Texas Small School Bands and was the first Vice-President and Second President of that organization. Mr. P and staff encouraged students to participate in UIL solo-ensembles and all-region auditions. The Canadian band has been represented by many All-State musicians as well as many more TSSEC performers.

Fred received the Southwestern Bell Outstanding UIL Sponsor award in 1997, the Outstanding Service Award from Southwestern Oklahoma State University in 2003 and has served on ATSSB, TMEA, UIL, and Phi Beta Mu committees. He has also been a member of local service clubs where he has served as president of Kiwanis and Rotary. Fred remains active as a clinician, adjudicator and mentor. Fred and Sheila are members of the Methodist church. In their spare time, they enjoy traveling and playing golf as best friends of more than fifty years.