

Elmer Schenk

ATSSB Hall of Fame Inductee, 2023

Elmer Schenk was born on April 23, 1949. During this time his father (Dale) sold the family farm and went to college to become a Hydraulic Engineer. Mom (Frances) stayed home and took care of Elmer and his older brother, Philip. After Dale's graduation from college, he was quickly recruited by Chance Vought Aeronautics in Grand Prairie, Texas where the family relocated and where Elmer spent his school years. Elmer was a 1967 graduate from Grand Prairie High School and a 1972 graduate of North Texas State University (currently the University of North Texas.) At Grand Prairie he was a student of Charles Vick, a former PBM Hall of Fame member and Colonel Andrew Davis, a former Baritone player in the John Phillip Sousa Band. In high school, Elmer was band captain, always first chair trombone, and the recipient of the John Philip Sousa Award. At North Texas, he was a student of Maurice McAdow and Doug Wiehe, both PBM Hall of Fame recipients. He completed his student teaching under Rex White in Lewisville.



Elmer taught one year at Pilot Point and four years in Ferris before spending the next 26 years building the Howe School Band Program. Through the years, assistant directors for Elmer were Elaine Rulla, Charlie Brown, Jim Hall, former students Chris Burk and Angie Liss, and long time friend, Mike Marsh . Under Elmer's direction, the Howe High School Bands were named TEXAS STATE UIL MARCHING CONTEST WINNERS three times - in 1980, 1995, and 1997 and finished in the top seven 15 times. His bands at Howe were named TMEA HONOR BAND in 1985 and 1999 and regularly placed in the top five as finalists. Other commendations with Howe include three UIL State Outstanding Wind Ensemble awards, three first place awards for ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series, many Best in Class awards with concert bands at Walt Disney World, Six Flags, and Astroworld as well as Plano, De Soto, and the Colony pre-district marching competitions. He amassed 22 sweepstakes trophies at Howe HS and after his retirement, he continued teaching part time for Brandon Brewer and claimed nine sweepstakes trophies with the Clark Middle School Band in Princeton.

Elmer is a Founding Charter Member of the Association of Texas Small School Bands as well as a past officer and permanent board member. He was the ATSSB Region 3/25 Coordinator for the first ten years of its existence. He originated many of the names and procedures at the state and local level for ATSSB and selected most of the Brass Etudes that are still being used today.

His other memberships include the Texas Music Adjudicators Association, Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association and Phi Beta Mu. He served on the UIL State Marching Band Advisory Committee. He was a recipient of the National Band Association – Citation of Excellence Award for outstanding contributions to band and band music and The Certificate of Merit for Marching Excellence, also from the NBA. While at Howe, he was chosen by Texas Educators Association to make a video to be used as a teacher training tool. In 2019 he was honored with being inducted into PBM Hall of Fame.

In the past, Elmer performed with the Sherman Symphony, the Association for the Preservation of Barbershop Singing in America, and the Border Band. For a time, he led the catholic church choirs in Lancaster and Sherman, Texas and conducted the Howe Community Band. His Howe HS Bands have performed at the invitation of Phil Graham, Ralph Hall, George W. Bush and Ron Clark. Elmer was named by the Howe Chamber of Commerce as “among their top 12 most influential persons of the 20th Century”.

Elmer and his wife Anita were high school sweethearts. When he was a senior and she was a Sophomore at GPHS, Elmer proposed to her on the band bus to the Wichita Falls Ryder /GPHS football game. She said “Maybe.” Anita was first chair clarinet and a twirler. In Howe she worked with twirlers and clarinet students. At first, the drill team became her Guard, but once she started her own Color Guard in 1989 her students won every outstanding flag trophy for every pre-district marching contest they entered. She received her training as a travel professional at The International Aviation and Travel Academy in 1997. Elmer and Anita have one son, Anthony, a former Howe Band Member and an ATSSB All-State Trumpet player. Anthony attended A & M Commerce, the Art Institute of Dallas, and received his BA at the University of North Texas. He is currently working with a former high school friend’s business called Index Services, repairing and servicing medical equipment and labs.

As a retiree, in addition to judging, Elmer continues to stay busy by mentoring and subbing for former students and associates who are currently teaching band. His current performance organizations include Plano Community Band, the McKinney Community Band where he is also the Associate Conductor, the Frisco Jazz Band, the McKinney Dance Band, and “Nate and the Rules”, a 1970’s Rock & Roll Band.

It was a difficult and intimidating start in the years before the first ATSSB All-State concert, and some years after, but I am so glad we persisted. One memory that comes to mind is driving all my concert percussion instruments and stands to San Antonio in my struggling Howe Band truck for our first All-State concert. I hauled them up the hydraulic elevator, held my breath though the whole concert, and cried at the standing ovation at the end. My belief was that ATSSB would be a huge benefit to participating students for a long time to come. In the band world, I consider it my life’s greatest accomplishment.

“I am infinitely grateful for the honor to become a member of the “ATSSB Hall of Fame”.