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**UW BAND**  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
**ECHO**

**UW BAND  
ALUMNI  
WEEKEND**

**OCTOBER 4-5, 2019**

Renew your membership  
and join us for a Badger  
football game!



# UW BAND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ECHO

REUNION REGISTRATION  
AND MEMBERSHIP FORMS  
are available at [uwalumni.com/band](http://uwalumni.com/band)

If you have difficulty registering, please call our registration team at 608-308-5426. **The deadline to register is September 22, 2019.**

August 2019 Wisconsin Alumni Association® | 650 N. Lake Street | Madison, WI 53706-1476

## MIKE'S LAST CONCERT

For those of us band alumni who were lucky enough to have attended one of Mike's last three concerts, to say it was a slightly emotional experience is like saying the Rose Bowl is slightly a football game! Mike was gracious enough to include approximately 50 band alums during the show, and they held their own against the UW Varsity Band! At least that's what we old farts are telling ourselves! Fifty years is an amazing legacy, which will probably never be matched. In my position as alumni band president, I have had the privilege to interact not only with alumni from Mike's first band, but also with the current kids because of my participation at the band banquet each year. I've been lucky enough to meet alumni from all 50 years, and we all have one thing in common: our respect for Mike and what he was able to wring out of us to make us perform better than we thought we were capable of. My very first practice was held in Camp Randall Stadium in August of 1980. I had never seen a Badger game, let alone the UW Marching Band. After all, I was brought up to be a Packer fan! I showed up to that first practice wearing blue jeans and my prized Converse All-Stars. WRONG! All of us freshman were on one side of the 50, and across the field was this amazing group of people wearing shorts and soccer cleats, totally in shape, high-fiving each other and having a good ol' time as they hadn't seen each other since the previous spring. What the hell is this? Soccer cleats? And then this old man (yes, he was old, even back then) is now inbetween both groups on the 50 yard line, and he says "Band Attention," blows three whistles, and in unison, all 200 returning band members snap up their legs in perfect precision to that now familiar 45 degree angle, not moving a muscle. Who is this guy? And how did he get this group of unruly college kids to perform like this? Holy crap, I wanna be in this band! An alternate my first year, I marched for four years and played at numerous basketball and hockey games, as well as *Rock Star for a Night*, the Varsity Band concert! At the beginning, the band concert was a little more like the Wild West (buy me a beer, and I'll tell you the story of when we ordered a pizza onstage), and while it has been tamed a little, the spirit today is still recognizable and undeniable. The term "moments of happiness" wasn't part of the lexicon back then, but whether you were in his first band in 1969 or the 2019 version, we all know what it means. Thank you, Mike.

## ALUMNI BAND BANQUET!

Join us in Memorial Union's Great Hall! Because of wonderful previous memories, many alumni have requested the opportunity to enjoy the experience of a band banquet, and here's your chance! Just like the banquet of your youth, Mike Leckrone will be a huge part of the evening. There will also be a slide show and fudge-bottom pie, and we will revisit previous Stribey Award winners and Elroy Hirsch buying refreshments at the KK! (Although we'll do our best to re-create the band banquet experience, we can't guarantee the appearance of Elroy Hirsch, but he'll be there in spirit!) This evening affair will be held on the Friday of alumni band weekend. Proceeds will benefit the Michael Leckrone Director of Marching Bands Fund. Tickets are \$85, which will include dinner, soda, wine, and beer. See you there!

## EAT THIS ROCK ...

We anticipate an 11:10 a.m. kickoff, but please check [uwalumni.com/band](http://uwalumni.com/band) for any updated schedule information. Each alum who registers to attend will receive a game ticket with an assigned seat. Game tickets WILL NOT be mailed out prior to the reunion. YOU MUST HAVE YOUR TICKET TO GET INTO THE STADIUM, INCLUDING RUN-ON PARTICIPANTS. Consequently, we must have your registration by September 22nd, as we will have to arrange for the tickets in advance. Each alum may order up to two additional tickets for family members at the price of \$65. We will seat you by instrument. Please do not ask for specific seating as we will not be able to comply.

## ... OR EAT THAT ROCK

If you have any questions about the banquet and Alumni Band Day, please contact me. See you on October 4, and **on, Wisconsin!**

**Dean Teofilo '85**  
President, UWBAA  
[uwbandalumni@uwalumni.com](mailto:uwbandalumni@uwalumni.com)

## OUR STUDENTS: OUR LEGACY

After singing a Willy Nelson tune, "Funny How Time Slips Away," he stepped down from the podium and walked slowly down the center aisle, and then the side aisle, moving toward the exit. The song lyrics reverberated in my head, perfect lyrics to mark the end of a teaching career. As he moved through the audience, people reached out to touch him, to shake his hand.

He touched those hands as he moved out of the Kohl Center in Madison, Wisconsin, humbly taking his final bows.

Those who reached out to touch him, his former students, wanted one more moment with Mike Leckrone, the director of bands at UW-Madison. They wanted to say thank you, to show their appreciation, to make sure he knew he had influenced their lives.

And then it ended, seemingly so suddenly, but in reality, this ending was 50 years in the making. What a career! He has spent the past 50 years directing the UW Marching Band and the university varsity band. He has become a statewide legend and treasure. For those of us who studied with him, he has always just been Mike. Many of his former students, probably thousands, came back to Madison for his final concert, to witness the end of an era and thank one of their former teachers.

Most teachers will drop the curtain on their career much sooner. Something, though, kept him going. His return each year started to seem a given, and some of us deluded ourselves into believing his era, our era, would never end. Many, many college students participated in his era. He taught us some music. He taught us more life lessons.

We have all grown from being in his "classroom." We have made lifelong friends. One of my new band alumni friends, someone who just left the marching band a year ago, says she learned so much from him about life. She said her best friends from college came from the marching band. The man she will likely marry she met in the marching band. Another dear friend said her band friends will always be her best friends. Yet another said he taught us the importance of a work ethic, which has led so many band alums to find success in the adult world. He taught us that along with that hard work, we must always, always have fun. And we should fill our lives with moments of happiness. As one friend said, he saw more in us than we ever considered possible. Through his intense and unique motivational methods, he compelled us to dig as deep as possible and always give our very best. He would accept no less from us. He expected our best and demanded we give him that.

One of my band friends, actually many of my band friends, call him a great man. In reality, Mike taught. Like all teachers, he affected his students in known and unknown ways. He taught his marching and varsity band students many significant life lessons. This stands as one of my favorite band days, and one of the most important lessons learned:

The rains kept coming. Seemingly they would never stop. More than one person started talking about building an ark. The marching band practice field had turned into a sodden mess. The mud sucked shoes off, and they disappeared, never to be seen again. For the fourth day that week, we would practice in the rain. The regular practice field had turned into a quagmire, so we moved inside the track to practice, which, honestly, was in no better condition.

Lethargy set in. No one wanted to be there. Already soaked from the rain, we stared at 90 minutes of slogging through the muck. Since the band had a game in two days, we couldn't afford a bad rehearsal. Those

around me, really everyone in the band, moved with all the energy of cooling lava. After a few minutes of watching this sluggishness, Mike started screaming from atop his ladder, his amplified anger echoing off the WARF building, coming back at us and giving another volley.

"What's the matter with you?" he screamed. Then again, "What's the matter with you?" He scrambled off his ladder and dashed to the 50 yard line, which you could barely discern through the puddles and mud. "Bring it in. Bring it in, now," he shouted. Band members slouched toward him. He wore an intense expression.

"It's raining. Does that mean we pack it up and go home? Does that mean we don't work hard and give it everything we've got? We've got a game Saturday, and you'd better believe you are nowhere near being ready. You perform the way you practice."

He paused a moment, put his whistle in his mouth, and gave it four sharp tweets. Nobody moved except him. He marked time for eight. Then he stepped off. The band members in front of him parted as he marched toward them, his face fierce with determination. With perfect marching style, he paraded through deep puddles. Muck covered his once white tennis shoes and leapt up his socks. With each step he tweeted the whistle, finally blowing the stop signal. At that point, in the middle of the deepest puddle, sinking into the ooze, he kneeled and bowed. The band howled and screamed. Drummers immediately picked up the cadence. The band started chanting. "Eat. A Rock. Eat. A Rock." It was our anthem to physical and mental toughness.

Suddenly a body arced through the air. The guy executed a belly flop next to Mike, water flying up everywhere in a perfect plume. Others dove in or marched through puddles and muck. Soon everyone looked as if they had just completed a Tough Mudder competition. Though it might have looked like play, it was intense. Leckrone let the play continue for two or three minutes.

The whistle blew loudly. Back on his ladder, Mike picked up his microphone and yelled, "Pregame in the tunnel. Pregame in the tunnel."

We marched like we never had before. Every line that day was ruler straight, every movement precise. People executed form in a rehearsal that no one ever saw. I had never before seen such intensity. People marched with more energy, more drive, more enthusiasm than ever before, even on game days. Often primal screams broke through the wall of sound from the music we played. Mud covered everything and everyone. It was. Perfect.

On one of the most dismal days any of us had ever seen, we shared an experience none of us would ever forget.

I remember that day so many years ago with vivid clarity. A little rain doesn't hurt anything. Mike taught me that. Mike also taught me another important lesson that day. He taught me that you don't always get to do things under the optimal conditions, but no matter what, you always, always give it your all. That lesson has stayed with me throughout life.

Eat. A Rock.

Through the long hours of grading, the difficulty of assessment and planning and managing so many students each day, the time slips away. Funny how that happens. The years start to pile up. We do affect our students. We don't always know how. Mike Leckrone knows. We, his students, are the music of his life. We are his final opus. We are his legacy.

**Mark Nepper '82, '90, MS '99**



# UWBA A 2019 REUNION SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, OCT. 4, 2019

**6 p.m.** **THE UW ALUMNI BAND BANQUET!** Celebrate Mike's incredible legacy and experience a time-honored tradition, the Band Banquet! Music, fudge-bottom pie, a slide show, special guests, and most of all, Mike Leckrone! In addition, we will be celebrating Mike's induction into the UW Marching Band Hall of Fame! This event is expected to sell out so sign up ASAP! Priority goes to band alumni, and possibly spouses, depending on demand.

SATURDAY, OCT. 5, 2019

We anticipate a 11:10 a.m. kickoff. However, please check [uwalumni.com/band](http://uwalumni.com/band) for updated schedule information.

**6:15 a.m.** Instrument checkout and registration in the **Field House**. You must register to receive your game ticket and to participate in the day's activities. Game tickets **will not** be mailed in advance. **Do not park in the lots adjacent to the Field House.**

**6:45 a.m.** The last bus leaves for the band practice field.

**7 a.m.** Rehearsal on the UW Marching Band practice field.

**8:30 a.m.** Announcements for the rest of the day, load buses for the **Field House**.

**8:45 a.m.** Reunion breakfast at **Union South**.

**9:30 a.m.** Pregame concert at **Union South**.

**10:15 a.m.** Those participating in the pregame run-on will assemble along the east wall of the parking garage on the north side of the stadium. **You will need a football ticket to enter the stadium.**

**10:40 a.m.** Alumni Band pregame show.

**11:10 a.m.** Kickoff. **BEAT THE GOLDEN FLASHES!** The Alumni Band will sit in assigned seats in the **south end zone**.

**12:30 p.m.** Halftime. If you leave the stadium to return your rented instrument to the Field House, you will not be allowed back into the stadium.

**2:30 p.m.** Fifth Quarter. Return rented instruments to the **Field House**. Those who wish to join the UW Marching Band on the field for the Fifth Quarter and/or return to the Humanities Building are welcome to do so.

**2:31 p.m.** Sixth Quarter postgame party at **Union South**. Free refreshments and munchies will be provided.