Dale Underwood: "Heifetz of the Alto Saxophone"

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

DALE UNDERWOOD: “HEIFETZ OF THE ALTO SAXOPHONE”

By

Nathan Benjamin Mensink

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

DALE UNDERWOOD: “HEIFETZ OF THE ALTO SAXOPHONE”

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The purpose of this project is to document the extensive performing career of Dale Underwood during his tenure as Navy Band saxophone soloist. Through meticulous research in the Navy Band archives and Dale Underwood’s personal collection, many performances are brought to light and arranged chronologically – sectioned by Navy Band leaders. Dissertations, journal articles, and newspaper clippings were also consulted. Specific appearances discussed include solos at major conferences such as the American Bandmasters Association Conference, Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference, College Band Directors National Association Conference, World Saxophone Congress, the International Navy Band Saxophone Symposium, and the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. Interviews with Underwood and other musicians provide a glimpse into Underwood’s early music studies and document his influence in the Navy Concert Band. Additionally, several humorous experiences reveal the camaraderie and rapport which Underwood helped create among the band members. Unpublished personal correspondence from composers (such as Paul Creston, Vincent Persichetti, and Karel Husa), conductors (such as Arnald Gabriel), and other saxophonists (such as Donald Sinta, Lynn Klock, and Fred Hemke) further provides
evidence of Underwood’s musicianship and his place in the classical saxophone community.

This essay also serves to document the contributions Underwood made to the saxophone repertoire. Through the unparalleled exposure Underwood received as Navy Band soloist, numerous new works were elicited from notable composers. Many of these pieces, and how they originated, are mentioned in the body of the text but a complete listing of compositions written for Underwood during his Navy career is included as Appendix A.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express profound gratitude for my dear wife, Whitney. Her undying support, encouragement, and love, with a fair amount of patience, helped make this project a success. I am indebted to her for the many hours spent helping me organize, proofread, and edit this essay.

Many thanks are also due to Dale Underwood, with whom I have had the pleasure of studying privately for the last five years. I have grown tremendously as a musician and have enjoyed the stories and experiences shared over many meals at Fox’s and Casacuba (the idea for this essay evolved slowly but surely during these meal-time conversations). I am also grateful for the many hours Dale willingly spent answering questions and reviewing the content of this work.

Further I wish to express my appreciation for the other members of my committee, Thomas Sleeper, Robert Carnochan, and Lansing McLoskey, amongst which are two incredible composers, two wonderful conductors, and three brilliant musicians. I would also like to convey gratitude for other teachers who have had a significant influence on my growth as a musician, and with whom I have shared many wonderful experiences: Gary Green, previous conductor of the Frost Wind Ensemble, Tom Keck, who first offered me an assistantship at the University of Miami, Thomas Rohrer, conductor of the Utah State University Wind Orchestra, and Jon Gudmundson, my previous saxophone teacher who has made a lasting impression on me.

I would like to mention my parents, Rene and Olivia Mensink, for their constant support in my endeavor to pursue music. Over the years they have spent countless hours
taking me to private lessons, school band activities, and performances. I am also thankful for my younger siblings who always supported me despite years of saxophone tooting and honking throughout the house.

To all my family, friends, and loved ones: Thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE .................................................. 1

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................. 7

3. METHODOLOGY ........................................................................ 16
   Suggestions for Further Research ............................................. 17

4. THE EARLY YEARS ..................................................................... 19
   Lessons with Donald Sinta ....................................................... 22
   The First Military Band and Enlistment in the Navy ...................... 24

5. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE NAVY BAND ............. 28
   Charles Benter ........................................................................ 29
   Charles Brendler ..................................................................... 31
   Anthony Mitchell ..................................................................... 33

6. DALE UNDERWOOD IN THE NAVY CONCERT BAND ............ 34
   Allen Beck: 1984 – 1989 .......................................................... 84
   Philip Field: 1989 – 1992 ........................................................ 93

7. CONCLUSION ............................................................................. 118

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................... 119

9. APPENDIX A ............................................................................ 123
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1. 1969 Fall Tour Program Photo ............................................................. 38
Figure 6.2. Midwest Clinic ....................................................................................... 41
Figure 6.3. President Richard Nixon Inauguration Participation Certificate ........ 43
Figure 6.4. Publicity Photo. Circa 1974 .................................................................. 46
Figure 6.5. 1975 Album Cover .............................................................................. 51
Figure 6.6. Boston Pops Orchestra Invitation Letter ............................................. 52
Figure 6.7. World Sax Congress ........................................................................... 56
Figure 6.8. President Jimmy Carter Inauguration Participation Certificate ........ 58
Figure 6.9. 1977 Album Cover .............................................................................. 60
Figure 6.10. Navy Saxophone Quartet. Circa 1976 ................................................ 60
Figure 6.11. Missouri Music Educators Association Conference ....................... 62
Figure 6.12. Summer Concert Series. Circa 1979 ............................................... 66
Figure 6.13. 1979 Album Cover ........................................................................... 68
Figure 6.14. 1981 Album Cover ........................................................................... 74
Figure 6.15. 1984 Publicity Photo ....................................................................... 83
Figure 6.16. Dale Underwood and Pete Christlieb .............................................. 86
Figure 6.17. Dale Underwood and Claude Smith ............................................... 88
Figure 6.18. World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles ............... 94
Figure 6.19. Karel Husa Retirement Poster and Program .................................. 97
Figure 6.20. Carnegie Hall Program .................................................................. 105
Figure 6.21. Dale Underwood, Timothy Roberts, and Connie Frigo .................. 111

vi
Figure 6.22. Meritorious Service Medal and Drum Plaque………………………….. 114
Figure 6.23. Certificate of Appreciation from President Bill Clinton………………… 115
Figure 6.24. Citation for Meritorious Service Medal………………………………… 116
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Dale Wilson Underwood has developed a world renowned reputation as a saxophone soloist, clinician, and teacher of the highest caliber. During his appointment as soloist with the Navy Band for almost three decades, Underwood received unparalleled international exposure and is likely the most-heard saxophonist in the history of the instrument.\(^1\) By virtue of the unmatched publicity he brought for the classical saxophone, Underwood has elicited dozens of new works, expanding the saxophone repertoire.

Earning particular distinction for his impressive command of the altissimo range, musical expression, and vibrant tone, Underwood has helped raise the performance standard and inspired thousands of saxophonists throughout the world.

The purpose of this essay is to provide a detailed overview of the extensive solo career of Dale Underwood’s Navy years. This biographical sketch encompasses many significant solo performances with the Navy Band as well as numerous guest performances with other ensembles. It relates encounters with various composers, many who have written works for him, as well as conductors and other saxophonists who admire him. Underwood’s participation in various saxophone-promoting and educative organizations is also noted. Firsthand accounts additionally provide a glimpse into the life of a Navy musician in those days. In short, this essay documents invaluable contributions of Navy Band soloist Dale Underwood – a man who has dedicated his life to the development of saxophone performance, pedagogy, and literature.

A brief overview of the instrument’s history will clarify Underwood’s place and confirm his significance in the saxophone community. Since its early days, the saxophone has struggled to find acceptance in classical and symphonic literature. Its relatively late invention, in the 1840’s, precluded entrance into the standard orchestral instrumentation. Adolphe Sax, the inventor of this eponymous instrument, connected with great composers who were in Paris at the time including Hector Berlioz, Fromental Halevy, Jean-Georges Kastner, and Gioachino Rossini to demonstrate and promote his instruments; they approvingly praised Sax and his wonderful new invention. Furthermore, after winning a massive outdoor battle of the bands, Sax’s instruments were incorporated into the French Military ensembles.² Military bands from other countries quickly followed suit and helped spread the saxophone internationally. In 1858 Sax started teaching at the Paris Conservatory, creating the first saxophone program. While other European institutions also began to teach saxophone, these programs were often taught by clarinetists using printed materials rather than drawing on actual experience.³ The lack of saxophonists with advanced playing skills resulted in very little original solo repertoire written during the first 80 years of the instrument’s existence.⁴

The saxophone gained popularity through vaudeville acts and various jazz styles. This recognition created a new generation of amateurs and professionals with skill and


facility on the instrument. The jazz craze gave way to the rise of several important classical soloists who emerged around the 1930’s: Sigurd Rascher from Germany, Marcel Mule from France, and Cecil Leeson from the United States. Each became a highly influential pedagogue and performer responsible for the creation of many new works.

Around 140 pieces were composed for Rascher, 46 for Mule, and 55 for Leeson. By the 1960’s the majority of the standard repertoire comprised the best pieces from the solo music written for these three. Through their efforts the perception of the saxophone solely as a jazz instrument faded, and while it has yet to become standard in the orchestra, it is recognized more and more as a flexible cross-genre instrument capable of various expressions and styles, classical music included.

Dale Underwood is a contemporary counterpart who has significantly propelled the development of the saxophone as a legitimate classical instrument. As one of the most-heard saxophonist in the history of the instrument, Underwood toured extensively as soloist with the U.S. Navy band for three decades. To date, Underwood’s career spans 47 years and has taken him to 49 of the 50 states and many countries across the world.

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5 Segell, 67, 75.
6 Raumberger, 8.
8 Audrey Elizabeth Cupples, “Marcel Mule: His Influence on Saxophone Literature” (D.M.A. Essay, University of Maryland, 2008), 1-3.
10 Bristow, 4.
11 Ibid., 2-4.
including Canada, Cuba, Brazil, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, Sweden, Italy, China and more.\(^13\) His audience has included seven United States Presidents,\(^14\) countless other dignitaries, and even a Pope.\(^15\) As one of the foremost saxophone virtuosos, the *Washington Post* dubbed Underwood the “Heifetz of the Alto Saxophone.”\(^16\) Four records and four CDs currently make up his solo discography, with numerous appearances on other CDs and video media. His high level of playing has helped set a new performing standard, particularly in altissimo playing, and influenced the way many composers approach writing for the saxophone. He is admired for delicate musical phrasing, technical facility, and beautiful, vibrantly projecting tone and vibrato – the result of having to balance against a full band for nearly 30 years.

Constant solo exposure, coupled with his meticulous attention to musical detail, inspired many composers to write for Underwood, expanding the classical repertoire. By 1990 he was responsible for nearly 30 new works, with almost another 30 since that time. Composers who have written for Underwood include Walter Hartley, Clare Grundman, Jay Chattaway, Alan Vizzutti, Ralph Martino, Elliot Del Borgo, Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn, Jeff Taylor, Harold Shiffman, David Ward, Claude Smith, and many more. Although there are others who have also greatly contributed to classical saxophone literature, Underwood’s music is uniquely tied to his career as a Navy Band soloist. The majority of the music written for him is for saxophone with concert band, which is


especially meaningful considering this medium is severely under-represented relative to the music available for other ensemble types such as unaccompanied saxophone, saxophone and piano, or saxophone with orchestra.\(^{17}\)

Besides leading a brilliant performing career, Underwood is also a master teacher and pedagogue. He founded and assisted in several organizations which have promoted the saxophone and provided invaluable educational resources to all serious saxophone students across the globe. In 1978 for example, Underwood started the International Navy Band Saxophone Symposium, which has developed into a large conference attracting thousands of saxophone enthusiasts each year.\(^{18}\) Furthermore, Underwood was one of the founders and original investors of the *Saxophone Journal*, which remained in print until 2013.\(^{19}\) Additionally, elected twice as president of the North American Saxophone Alliance,\(^{20}\) Underwood prevented the organization from splitting up due to financial difficulties and expanded its scope and purpose.

While in the Navy Band, Underwood somehow managed to maintain a private studio and teach part time at multiple Universities. Upon his retirement from the Navy in 1997 he taught full time at the University of Maryland, and in 2008 accepted a position at the University of Miami. As a result of the reputation earned during his Navy career,

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\(^{17}\) Rife, 18-21.


Underwood remains a frequent guest at festivals and conventions as a performing soloist and continues to be in high demand as a teacher and clinician.

Recordings featuring Dale Underwood are readily available. Accessible information regarding his performances and solo career, however, remains sparse. The purpose of this essay is to supply such a source and provide detailed insight into Underwood’s Navy career. This biographical sketch encompasses the following: Underwood’s upbringing and his joining the Navy Band, his extensive performance career, and his relationship with various saxophonists, conductors, and composers. It further recounts how the most significant works written for Underwood came about, and comments on his participation in various saxophone-promoting and educative organizations. In other words, this essay documents the unparalleled exposure Underwood received and the lasting impression he made on the classical saxophone community during the course of an illustrious Navy Concert Band soloist career.
This work surveys Dale Underwood’s contributions to the development of saxophone performance, literature, and pedagogy through an unmatched career as soloist in the U.S. Navy Band. Several biographies exist about the life of other notable saxophonists, in the form of dissertations as well as published books. Many are divided into sections chronologically based on periods of time spent in specific geographic locations. They typically use both documented facts as well as firsthand accounts such as interviews, letters, and recordings, which are sometimes included at the end of the volume. Mark Hulsebos in his dissertation about Cecil Leeson, however, inserts an express warning which should be noted with any biographical writ, “that these periods have only been created after-the-fact and for the sole purpose of organization, so as not to distort the reality that life’s history is a series of evolutionary, interconnected events which often unpredictably lead from one to another in ways the participant had not planned.”

The biographies reviewed with classical saxophonists as the subject often include discussion within the body of the text about works premiered. Sometimes information in the text is presented along with an appendix listing. This is the case in John Bristow’s dissertation about Donald Sinta. For example, Bristow discusses the Albright Sonata in depth, but also includes it in a bibliography of Sinta’s premieres. This is particularly

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21 Hulsebos, xiii-xiv.
22 Bristow, 104-105.
favorable allowing the reader to understand the context and development of a work, especially if it has since become standard repertoire or if there are unique circumstances surrounding the composition. Though in some cases it may not be practical or worthwhile to discuss every work written for a great performer, instead, a mere mention of the piece can suffice. Study of the following biographical writings has influenced the creation of this essay.

Eugene Rousseau’s *Marcel Mule: His Life and the Saxophone* consists almost entirely of a transcribed interview between the author and subject. The interview with Mule, one of the founding fathers of classical saxophone, although lengthy, provides some fascinating personal details of his life and career and records many of his associations with composers.

In “Cecil Leeson: The Pioneering of the Concert Saxophone in America From 1921-1941,” Mark Hulsebos writes about the formative years of classical saxophone in America led by Cecil Leeson. He shows Leeson’s development as a player and his crucial role in building the repertoire by eliciting works from composers such as Paul Creston. An appendix includes transcriptions of taped interviews, essays written by Leeson, and historical materials.

Gail Hall’s dissertation “Eugene Rousseau: His Life and The Saxophone,” no doubt a tribute to Rousseau’s own book, opens with a brief biographical chapter followed by a large section organized by topic rather than chronologically. Rousseau, who studied

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23 Ibid., 137-138.


25 Hulsebos, xiv-xvii.
with Marcel Mule, was the first full time saxophone professor appointed at Indiana University in 1964 and remained on faculty there until his retirement.\textsuperscript{26} Most of the work is a transcript of Rousseau’s own words and notes his thoughts on topics such as performance strategies, equipment, and the future of the saxophone. Ironically, Hall devotes his fourth chapter to Rousseau’s pedagogical philosophies and procedures without a thorough review of the method books Rousseau has written.

A dissertation by Scott Sandberg discusses the life and career of James Houlik. While Houlik’s reputation is well established as one of the foremost classical tenor saxophone players in the world, the entire essay is based solely on personal interviews and lacks any specific reference to scholarly sources. Sandberg includes an annotated bibliography of many works composed for Houlik as well as an interview transcript discussing Houlik’s ideas on topics such as performing, equipment, education, and more.\textsuperscript{27}

A dissertation by John Bristow examines the life of Donald Sinta, who studied with Larry Teal and subsequently took over his teaching position at the University of Michigan when Teal retired in 1974.\textsuperscript{28} Many pictures and musical excerpts are included as Bristow discusses Sinta’s teaching and performing career and the music dedicated to him. While the document relies on many sources, Sinta’s own words from personal interviews are used sparingly.


\textsuperscript{27} Scott David Sandberg, “James Houlik: Life of a Tenor Saxophone Specialist” (D.M.A. Essay, the University of Iowa, 2010).

\textsuperscript{28} Bristow, 91.
It is important to note that while these documents were beneficial in many ways, and their subjects are exceptional musicians who have influenced the classical saxophone community across the world, there is a significant difference to Underwood’s Navy career. The saxophonists in the essays reviewed were first and foremost educators, and then performers, whereas Underwood was a primarily a solo performer and secondly a teacher. This is pointed out not to diminish or praise either one, but merely to note that the previously mentioned works arose from the perspective of a full time teaching career.

Although some biographical information is available on saxophonist Dale Underwood, it is often incomplete and outdated. Most of the published information is contained in several small articles for the *Saxophone Journal*, excerpts of which are reiterated in a number of non-scholarly sources such as Underwood’s personal website, concert programs, and newspaper articles. Two articles contain the bulk of published information: “Dale Underwood” written in 1990 by Jerry Rife, and “Dale Underwood Retires from United States Navy Band” by Timothy Roberts in 1997. Both give insight into Underwood’s solo career with the U.S. Navy Band, describe his playing, make reference to some of the works written for him, and discuss pedagogical ideas. Limited to a few pages, however, these articles are lacking in scope and depth and fail to mention many of Underwood’s important solo moments. References in relation to performances or specific musical works written for Underwood are numerous but vague, mostly being found in non-scholarly sources. Jerry Rife includes a partial listing without any contextual information as to the commission and performance of these works.\(^{29}\)

The more considerable sources are overviewed in this chapter. Unpublished sources, or those providing less information, are only cited in the body of the text.

\(^{29}\) Rife, 21.
Review of the following sources containing information about Underwood’s career benefitted the construction of this essay.

The North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) publishes the *Saxophone Symposium*, a magazine started in 1976, which has since developed into a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal devoted solely to the saxophone. Underwood is mentioned many times in this publication. Since entries are varied in depth and importance, only some will be formally referenced in this essay. For example, some of the issues note Underwood’s performing schedule, simply stating locations and repertoire planned for upcoming concert tours. Other times Underwood is referenced in articles revealing plans for Navy Saxophone Symposia, the 1985 World Saxophone Congress, and NASA conferences, as well as reviews of those events published after their occurrence. Additionally, the opening of each issue typically includes the “President’s Message” which Underwood wrote during his four years as president of NASA from 1988-1992.

*Saxophone Soloists and Their Music, 1844-1985* by Harry Gee provides a brief historical account of the saxophone’s invention and its increase in popularity. The largest portion of the book is devoted to annotated bibliographies of saxophonists from around the world. Whenever possible, the annotation includes the date and place of birth, primary teachers, debut of career, music dedicated to the artists by composers, and recordings featuring the subject. Besides highlighting Underwood’s career as Navy band soloist, Gee deemed several of Underwood’s specific solo performances noteworthy. The entry lists Underwood’s participation in several World Saxophone Congress gatherings, as well as a featured performance with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Gee further mentions the annual International Navy Saxophone Symposium even though the event was only in
its eighth year at the time. Gee notes 11 compositions for Underwood and four solo records.  

Jerry Rife begins his 1990 *Saxophone Journal* article, “Dale Underwood,” by praising Underwood’s live performance at a recent concert. Rife discusses Underwood’s beginnings as a saxophonist, his current endeavors, and spends a significant portion on Underwood’s philosophy regarding new music and the responsibility he feels to expose the public to the possibilities of the classical saxophone.  

The 1996 *Saxophone Journal* insert entitled “The Altissimo Register” contains an audio CD of Underwood teaching a masterclass on altissimo. The CD includes performances, a demonstration of exercises, and an interview by Timothy Roberts. Several exercises are notated in the insert, as well as an altissimo fingering chart for alto and soprano saxophones. This has been a useful educational tool referenced in a number of scholarly works.

Timothy Roberts’ article “Dale Underwood Retires from United States Navy Band” appears in a 1997 *Saxophone Journal* and documents an interview between the two. Roberts questions Underwood about his early days in the Navy, his first solo with the band, and what the concert tours were like. The nostalgic interview also records some humorous experiences during his lengthy tenure as soloist.


Rife, 16-21.


American Composer Elliot Del Borgo, explores Del Borgo’s saxophone music. Barrick documents the importance of Del Borgo’s collaborations with Underwood and includes an interview transcript as an appendix to the book. Barrick’s discussions with Del Borgo, also transcribed in the book, focus on Del Borgo’s compositional approach but also contain numerous references to Underwood’s playing abilities.  

The Force of Destiny: The Life and Times of Colonel Arnald D. Gabriel was written by Michael Gabriel to share the extraordinary accomplishments of his father, Colonel Arnald Gabriel. The heavily decorated World War II veteran landed on the shores of Normandy Beach on D-Day and spent over two hundred days on the front lines. He later became commander and conductor of the Unites States Air Force Band, Symphony Orchestra, and Singing Sergeants in Washington D.C. The book details Col. Gabriel’s rise to the pinnacle of his profession as a brilliant musician and discusses his innovative and transformative leadership. Upon his retirement in 1985 Col. Gabriel was recruited by George Mason University to develop its band program and chose Dale Underwood as professor of saxophone. The colonel records some of the performances they shared, noting a particular concert in Rome during which they had an audience with Pope John Paul II, who afterward invited them to pose for pictures.  

Record and CD reviews also appear throughout magazines, journals, and newspapers. Walter Simmons, one of the critics of Fanfare discusses Underwood’s third record in the May/June 1981 issue. Distastefully comparing Underwood’s recording of a Vincent Persichetti work against another saxophonist’s rendition, Simmons judges

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35 Gabriel, 313-315.
Underwood’s version superior. Although he critiques Paul Creston’s sonata, Simmons still concludes that the recordings by Underwood and Don Sinta are the best available versions.\(^{36}\) In the fall 1982 issue of \textit{Saxophone Symposium}, Brian Ayscue discusses Underwood’s fourth solo record.\(^{37}\) Another review, complementing Underwood on his altissimo acrobatics, is found in the June 1992 issue of the Clarinet and Saxophone Society of Great Britain’s magazine, \textit{Clarinet & Saxophone}.\(^{38}\) The \textit{Saxophone Journal} also contains a number of reviews, one example being Joseph Viola and Paul Wagner’s writing on the release of Underwood’s CD entitled \textit{Classic Pastiche}.\(^{39}\) Copies and excerpts of a number of reviews were also discovered in the Navy Band archives. Unfortunately, some do not include all the information to cite the original reference and will either be cited with as much description as is available or as part of the Navy Band archives.

A dissertation by Jimmie Wayne Dyess, “A History of the United States Navy Band, Washington D.C. (1918-1988),” was instrumental in understanding Underwood’s place in the Navy Band. Dyess provides a thorough and detailed account of the history and development of the Navy Band and relates many of the Navy Band events Underwood participated in. He mentions a small number of Underwood’s solo performances but is mostly concerned with events pertaining to the various ensembles as a whole and the impact of each Navy Band leader. The structure of Dyess’ dissertation, 


organized chronologically by the succession of Navy Band leaders from Charles Benter to Allen Beck, serves as a model for the structure of this document, which arranges Underwoods’ Navy career chronologically by the various conductors of the band.⁴⁰

Several biographical writings dealing with other notable saxophonists have been studied and influenced this essay. Although lacking in scope and depth, the literature with Dale Underwood as the main subject is instrumental in providing a point of departure and general overview. Literature with another main subject containing references to Underwood, or the music written for him, goes into various amounts of detail but is nevertheless useful. The literature currently published represents but a vague generality of Underwood’s impressive Navy career. The remainder of this essay is dedicated to the discovery, detailing, and documenting of Dale Underwood’s contributions to the development of the classical saxophone performance, literature, and pedagogy specifically through his extraordinary career as Navy Band soloist.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The performance biography utilized parts of dissertations, books, articles, album covers, and websites, to gather information about Underwood’s Navy career. Sources with Underwood as the subject were discovered, as well as sources related to Underwood by means of a composition written for him or an ensemble he performed with. Published information was searched extensively and while small references were numerous, much was vague and repetitive.

However, a plethora of information emerged from extensive research and organization of two largely unpublished sources, perhaps adding to the value of this essay. First, a visit to the Navy Band archives provided many military documents, publicity photos, press releases, newspaper clippings, concert programs, tour schedules, and audio/video recordings. Secondly, Dale Underwood’s personal collection revealed countless concert programs, as well as photos, magazine clippings, and letters. Information extracted from the Navy Band archives and Underwood’s personal collection was ordered chronologically where possible.

In the dissertation about Cecil Leeson, Mark Hulsebos notes that a “true biography is an account of a person’s life written by another, however, elements of oral history – the participant’s own words and accounts, add a certain personal connection and offer a glimpse into the person’s attitude, emotions, and philosophy regarding various
events.” Therefore, information gathered from these sources was supplemented by extensive interviews with Underwood.

Interviews with Underwood were largely steered by the findings from the Navy Band archives and his personal collection. Many long-forgotten concerts and compositions were brought to light and discussed. Furthermore, other notable musicians were interviewed to give additional insight into Underwood’s participation in the Navy Band and to confirm Underwood’s lasting mark on the saxophone community. The following individuals were interviewed: retired Air Force Band leader Colonel Arnald Gabriel, saxophonist Timothy Roberts, saxophonist and Navy Band Historian Michael Bays, tubist Martin Erickson, and educator John Casagrande.

Suggestions for Further Research

The scope of this essay is limited and focused to Underwood’s most significant and influential performances, which took place during his tenure in the Navy, and therefore concludes with Underwood’s retirement from the Navy in May 1997. Additionally, Underwood’s career in the Navy was solely performance based. This shifted after his retirement from the Navy when Underwood became a full time University professor. Furthermore, this document mentions memorable performances that occurred at the International Navy Saxophone Symposium, a conference which Underwood started and hosted for nearly 20 years, but does not entail the development of the event or the contribution it has made to the classical saxophone community. While the body of this essay touches upon the most important works written for Underwood, a comprehensive collection, however, falls without the scope of this paper. Suggestions for

41 Hulsebos, vii-viii.
further research include: Underwood’s educational and performance endeavors since the Navy retirement, the development of the International Navy Saxophone Symposium (including the guest artists hosted there and new works emerged as a result of the symposium), a complete overview of all works written for Underwood, and Underwood’s pedagogical approaches.
CHAPTER 4
THE EARLY YEARS

Robert and Leah Underwood lived a simple life and worked hard on their family horse farm in Cortland, NY. On November 26, 1948 they learned that a baby boy was discovered on a farmer’s doorstep earlier that week just a few houses down from where they had previously lived. The local newspaper, *The Cortland Democrat*, reads as follows,

A new-born baby boy [was] found early Tuesday morning at the front steps of the Harry Potter residence at Blodgett Mills. Potter, who works in Cortland, discovered the baby when he started to go out of the house at 4:30 o’clock. He immediately called Sheriff Barnes, who took the baby to the Cortland Hospital. Dr. John Steltner who examined the baby…stated that the child was only about eight or nine hours old when left on the steps, and that it was doing nicely.  

Robert and Leah were acquainted with the adoption agency in town because they had hosted numerous foster children over the years. The Underwoods decided to adopt the baby and named him Dale. From a young age, Dale worked on the farm caring for the various animals and frequently rode their horses in show circuits along the east coast. Robert and Leah were both interested in music and wanted him to study piano but were dissuaded since they did not own one. His mother’s affinity toward saxophone and trombone led Dale to choose saxophone.  

At age nine Dale started taking private saxophone lessons at the local music store with Alfred Fabrizio, who later enlisted in the army and eventually became a high school band director. Dale’s first public performance soon followed. He recalls,

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42 “9-Hour-Old Baby Left on Steps at Blodgett Mills,” *Cortland Democrat* (NY), November 26, 1948.

It was [during] music class in fifth grade. Everyone except me was going to play the piano, and I remember thinking to myself that it was going to be awful. But everyone clapped when I played; they loved it. Afterward, everyone wanted to touch the saxophone. It was a great feeling for me. I think that moment was the real beginning of my love of playing.\textsuperscript{44}

Dale continued private lessons on alto saxophone but played baritone saxophone in the school band.

By the time Dale turned 12, he seriously considered a future in music education and was also studying with the woodwind specialist at his junior high school, Bob Carabia. Dale’s teachers recognized his potential and since both the junior high school and the high school were housed in the same building, he was given the opportunity to participate in the top high school band in addition to his seventh grade junior high band.\textsuperscript{45}

Although Carabia was a fine teacher, Dale was “more interested in creating mischief with the guys!” During their lesson one day, Carabia made a passing mention that Dale truly had a natural talent but was not living up to his potential. Fortunately Dale took note of that comment, followed his teacher’s subtle advice to take his studies more seriously, and started practicing several hours a day.\textsuperscript{46}

Dale played alto saxophone in the marching band as well:

I played on an old silver Buescher horn. It was a small marching band used for half time shows during the games and parades. I remember having a metal neck strap, a kind they don’t make anymore. One day during the rehearsal, the strap broke and the horn fell. Before I realized what had happened, the horn landed on the bottom part of the bell and literally bounced off the tiled floor straight back into my hands… I had caught it! Turns out it played just fine and hadn’t even left dent!\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Rife, 16-17.

\textsuperscript{45} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, February 24, 2017.


\textsuperscript{47} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, February 24, 2017.
As he progressed through high school, his teachers included Charles Roberts, Kenton Briggs, and Joseph Rioden. Charles Roberts was one of the Homer High School band directors. Roberts left for another job and was replaced by Kenton Briggs. Joseph Rioden was a band director at the neighboring Cortland High School.\(^ {48}\)

One of several highly influential events occurred early on in high school when Homer High School hosted the Ithaca College Band. They performed a concert featuring saxophonist Donald Sinta who had recently started teaching at Ithaca College. His performance of Maurice Whitney’s *Introduction and Samba* left a profound impression on young Dale. He said, “I remember hearing that solo and thinking I had never heard anything like that in my life. I didn’t believe that was possible.”\(^ {49}\)

Realizing the likelihood of Dale attending college, his teachers suggested he switch to clarinet in the concert band because there were very few colleges in that area offering music degrees with saxophone as the main instrument (a few years later, when he was ready to enroll, however, this had changed). In 10\(^{th}\) grade Dale switched to clarinet in the concert band, played alto saxophone in the dance band, and tenor drums and bass drum in the marching band.\(^ {50}\)

Although the high school was very small, they had a fantastic basketball team. When Dale was in 11\(^{th}\) grade several students were eager to have a pep band. The band director supported the idea saying, “It’s fine by me, as long as I don’t have to come in.” Consequently, Dale led the pep band in rehearsals and at the games for the basketball season that school year. This wasn’t the only time Dale “filled in” for a teacher, however.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Rife, 17.

\(^{50}\) Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, February 24, 2017.
One of the teachers wrote music to be performed alongside the Shakespearian plays frequently put on by the school. On one occasion when the teacher was ill, Dale took over and conducted.\textsuperscript{51}

**Lessons with Donald Sinta**

In preparation for attending college, Dale started clarinet lessons with Donna Yacavone, who replaced Bob Carabia as the woodwind specialist at his former junior high school. Incidentally, she had just completed her degree at Ithaca College under tutelage of Don Sinta. In fact, Yacavone had been in the Ithaca College Band when they came to Homer High School. When she heard Dale play saxophone she offered to reach out to Sinta on his behalf and inquire about private lessons. Thanks to her efforts Dale was afforded the opportunity to study with one of his musical heroes, Donald Sinta, during his last two years of high school.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite the distance, each week Yacavone picked him up and drove him to Ithaca College for his lesson with Sinta. These studies were crucial to his musical development and had a greater effect on him than all other musical endeavors he participated in during that time. Dale had desired a life in music education for some time, but his association with Sinta sparked ambition to seek a career as a performer. They spent much of the time working on phrasing and tone. He described his lessons as follows,

> The thing I liked best about his teaching is the way he drew things out of you. He could get you to play in ways you didn’t know you could. I always played my very best for him, and I always wanted to. In every lesson I learned something

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
about literature, phrasing, taper, and control. I couldn’t wait until the next lesson. He just motivated me to the point that I just never wanted to put the horn down. On another occasion he remarked, “When I studied with him…he pushed me to become a professional saxophonist and encouraged me to push myself by not settling for anything less than the highest standards. His confidence in me, as well as his own musical style, influenced me greatly.”

Young Dale made quite an impression on the saxophone students at Ithaca College. John Casagrande, a master’s student studying with Sinta at that time, shares,

I was walking down the hall one day near the faculty studios. I see these two saxophone majors that are standing outside of Sinta’s studio with their ears glued to the door. I said, “What are you guys doing?” One of them, and these were his exact words, said, “There is this little shit from Homer playing the crap out of all the stuff we’re doing.” I stopped to listen as well. It was unbelievable. I was working on the Creston Concerto at that time and I’m listening to this kid… had not seen him and had no idea who he was…but he was playing the spots off the page. Come to find out he was a junior in high school! I hadn’t met him but just heard that.

Then, a couple weeks later a similar thing happened. I’m walking down the hallway and here is another saxophone student with his ear on the studio door. I asked him, “What are you doing?” He said, “Well… I didn’t practice enough last week so Sinta told me I had to come and listen to a kid named Dale Underwood take his lesson.” He was a senior in college but as punishment [Sinta] made him listen to a lesson with Dale! I went off on a teaching career and heard Dale solo with the Navy Band later on and all of a sudden I connected the dots. The guy playing as soloist in the Navy Band right now had been that young high school student from Sinta’s studio! It was mind-blowing. We got to be friends and have known each other a very long time.

Studying with Sinta also meant more listening. Dale recalls, “At first he gave me a record of him doing Introduction and Samba and a tape of some movements from Creston’s Concerto.” His famous American Music record was done during the time Dale Rife, 16-17.


studied with him and also inspired him. Encouraged by all of his teachers, Dale began to listen to records of saxophonists such as Donald Sinta, Sigurd Rascher, and Marcel Mule, as well as non-saxophonists such as Heifetz, Horowitz, and Rostropovich.

The First Military Band and Enlistment in the Navy

It was also during high school that Dale first heard a military band. Colonel Arnald Gabriel, a heavily decorated World War II veteran and brilliant musician, was the leader of the Air Force Band at the time. Dale attended a concert when Col. Gabriel and the band came through Cortland on one of their annual tours. Enthralled by their fine performance, Dale immediately inquired about the procedure to join the band. He was so enthusiastic that Col. Gabriel still recalls this occasion years later. Gabriel relates,

The first time we met was when the Air Force band played in my home town of Cortland, NY, which is Dale’s hometown too. He heard the band in concert and wanted to audition for it. He came to me and said, “I’d like to audition for the band.” At that time we had four saxophones in the band and all of them were career men, meaning the earliest opening we were going to have would be in about 12 years.

Underwood would later reconnect with Col. Gabriel and form a lifelong friendship. The lack of vacancy in the band discouraged him temporarily. However, he continued with his musical studies and besides playing at Homer High School also joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars Band, playing alto saxophone and clarinet. In 1966, Dale graduated from Homer High School with the largest class in its history, one hundred graduates, and continued to play with the VFW Band that summer. The following fall

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57 Rife, 17.
semester he attended Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, NY performing with the concert band, dance band, and woodwind ensemble.\textsuperscript{59}

During the spring of 1967, a friend who had played trumpet in the Homer High School Band informed Dale of his intention to audition at the Armed Forces School of Music in Norfolk, VA. Underwood said, “Thinking that it would be a fun road trip and nothing more, I decided to tag along. Ironically I got in and he didn’t! He was a good player but there simply was no opening for trumpet at the time.” Dale’s plan was now “to go through the Navy Music School and hope that during some point there would be an opening in the Navy Band. Fortunately, that is what happened.”\textsuperscript{60}

Dale Underwood officially enlisted in the Navy May 1, 1967 and shortly thereafter attended a 12-week boot camp in Great Lakes, IL. He entered the Navy School of Music in August of that year.\textsuperscript{61}

Near the end of the course Underwood had the opportunity he was hoping for:

Sometime in March, or maybe the beginning of April, there was an opening in the Navy Band, within their concert band, which I auditioned for. The building was different back then but I remember the audition taking place in a little hallway between the offices and the sail loft, where the band rehearsed. The principal saxophonist was there, as well as one of the officers. I then also remember a second round, auditioning in Tony Mitchell’s office. He is the one who officially hired me.\textsuperscript{62}

Before completing the program at the Navy School of Music, Underwood had already passed the audition and been accepted into the Navy Concert Band but for some reason his orders did not come through for quite some time. He says, “The Navy just didn’t quite


\textsuperscript{60} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, February 24, 2017.


\textsuperscript{62} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, February 24, 2017.
know what to do with me. They thought about putting me on staff but were afraid that as soon as they did my orders would come through. Essentially they ended up leaving me alone for a few months to do nothing but practice.”

Captain Joseph Phillips happened to return from a cruiser off of Vietnam and teach at the music school during the one year that Underwood came through the program. Phillips then went on to lead the Navy Atlantic Fleet Band and later served twice as leader of the Washington D.C. Navy Band. He said,

I knew Dale when he was a kid of just 18 years old. He had barely entered the Navy. It was obvious that he was a talented young guy and already having that nice big sound, he was obviously one of the finer students at the school. [He] was destined for great things musically. Believe it or not he also did a bit of dance band work too, occasionally playing in the saxophone section at the Breezy Point Officer’s Club. I also knew right away that he was a mischievous kid. But when I met him, he wasn’t famous yet, just a young kid from a very small town near Ithaca. We lost touch after we both left the Navy Music School and reconnected when I became the leader of the band in 1979, but I certainly remembered meeting him because he was such an outstanding young player. Underwood’s orders finally came through and he entered the Navy Concert Band on July 1, 1968. The Navy Band was already recognized as one of the finest musical entities in the world and Underwood’s acceptance into the organization became a springboard to a professional performing career spanning thousands of performances and developing an international presence as one of the most renowned classical saxophonists in the world.

He spent the next 29 years as a member of this group and contributed to its prestige and musical prowess. A brief review of the history and evolution of the Navy Band will

63 Ibid.

provide a better perspective and illuminate the context of Underwood’s joining the band.\textsuperscript{65}

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE NAVY BAND

Musicians have been on board Navy ships since the Navy’s establishment in 1798. The orders to Captain Robert Dale, commander of the first Navy ship to sail, states that he was to include a drummer and fifer among his crew.66 A Washington D.C. band, however, wasn’t established until the early 1900s. Details are vague, but in 1904 a band of sailors arrived for duty at the Washington Navy Yard and in the summer of the same year Charles Stanley organized the Naval Gun Factory Band which rehearsed after working hours in the sail loft.67

When the United States Battleship Kansas was decommissioned in 1916, bandmaster S. Tortino and his band were re-assigned to the Receiving Station (part of the Washington D.C. Navy Yard). Bandmaster Henry Peterman and his group from the Presidential yacht Mayflower were also assigned there and both groups together formed the Navy Yard Band.68 In 1917 John Philip Sousa joined the Navy teaching new recruits. As rank of lieutenant, Sousa was the first Navy musician to become a commissioned officer, and at age 62 he was the oldest man ever to enlist in the Navy until that time. Sousa’s fame and recognition as a successful band leader brought many new recruits to the Navy. He organized the musicians into smaller ensembles to serve aboard various


67 Dyess, 15-17.

Navy ships and occasionally brought them together forming an ensemble up to 350 strong for special events such as parades, major city tours, and fundraising events.\textsuperscript{69}

After World War I most servicemen, musicians included, returned to their homes. Although the number of musicians significantly diminished, the Navy Department recognized the importance and potential of a high quality ensemble. In 1919 bandmaster Tortino was ordered to sea duty. Charles Benter then became the first leader of the Navy Yard Band and was tasked with organizing an ensemble matching the status and pride of the rest of the Navy, as the finest in the world.

\textbf{Charles Benter}

Benter engaged in a host of activities and performances to boost the ensemble’s exposure and solidify its reputation. Besides military functions, the Navy Yard Band provided many public concerts. In the summer of 1922 Benter initiated a series of outdoor concerts at the U.S. Capitol Plaza which still continue annually to this day. Through his efforts the Navy Yard Band was the first of the Washington service units to present a radio broadcast, something Benter continued, affording them a national audience.\textsuperscript{70} As the band further distinguished itself, the Navy Department showed their support by increasing the musicians’ pay and allowing other benefits such as quicker rank promotions, wearing special uniforms, and accompanying President Warren Harding on a visit to Alaska.\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{70} Dyess, 34-36.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 39-50.
Benter’s hard work continued to be rewarded as President Calvin Coolidge signed an act of congress on the very day of his inauguration, recognizing the Navy Yard Band as the representative band of the United States Navy. On March 4, 1925, the Navy Yard Band officially became the Navy Band stationed at Washington, D.C. Their participation in the inaugural ceremonies that same day marked their debut performance. Later that year the Navy Band would go on its first tour, visiting 51 cities in seven states over a period of eight weeks. That tour included four designated soloists, one of which was a saxophonist named Ervine Waulters. The number of requests to join the President or other high-ranking government officials on cruises also increased, giving Benter the opportunity to associate with many influential officials and ensuring plenty of coverage by the press.

Benter’s tenure the following years brought more exposure as they were featured on radio broadcasts, sound motion pictures, served as a presidential support unit on several cruises, performed for foreign dignitaries, and participated in numerous public and military events. In 1932 Sousa conducted a concert celebrating George Washington’s Bicentennial birthday – he passed away less than a month later. In the same year, the Navy Band performed in the American Bandmasters Association’s third annual conference featuring the cornet virtuoso Herbert Clarke on Carnival of Venice.

As the musician training centers previously established around the country failed due to ineffectiveness and lack of organization, Benter sought to centralize a training

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73 Dyess, 53-55.
74 Ibid., 50-52, 56.
75 Ibid., 70-71.
facility for new recruits with the ability to manage and organize a unified plan to be followed by all navy bands. In June 1935 Benter was given authorization to establish the Navy School of Music.\textsuperscript{76}

In 1940 the American Bandmasters Association also recognized the Navy Band’s incredible musical talent and dubbed them “the world’s finest,” a fitting slogan which the band still uses today. By his retirement from the Navy in 1941, Lieutenant Benter had more than succeeded in carrying out his order to establish a “musical unit that would superbly represent the United States Navy.” He was responsible for official establishment of the Navy Band, providing international visibility and prominence, attracting the finest musicians in the county, and setting up a tradition of excellence which is still continued today.\textsuperscript{77}

Charles Brendler

Charles Brendler, Benter’s successor as leader of the Navy Band, was equally as ambitious and fervent in developing the ensemble and following in the tradition Benter had initiated. Besides the many public concerts and military ceremonies, activities under his leadership included establishing the longest running radio show entitled “The Navy Hour,” multiple appearances at the largest exhibition in Canada (the Canadian National Exhibition), television features, and even a football half-time show at the 1955 Sugar Bowl.\textsuperscript{78} Although touring had halted some during the Great Depression and World War II, in 1948 Brendler proposed a new format for their travels settling upon two annual six-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 78-79.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 106.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 107-108.
\end{itemize}
week tours. The spring tour that year included 59 cities in 15 states and again featured a saxophonist, this time Carl Grove, as one of its soloist.\footnote{Ibid., 158-160.} During his tenure more string instruments were added to include a symphony orchestra and a string quartet within the umbrella of the Navy Band.\footnote{Ibid., 123-126.} Further expansion, driven by popularity, allowed the creation of a 30-piece chorus in addition to the already established concert band, swing band, and symphony orchestra.\footnote{Ibid., 148-149.}

In 1960, near the end of Brendler’s tenure, the band accompanied President Dwight Eisenhower on a good-will tour to South America. The trip resulted in the tragic loss of 19 Navy Bandsmen who perished in a plane crash over Rio Di Janeiro. At his retirement in 1962, Commander Brendler rejoiced at the progress the band had seen since its inception in 1925. He said, “It’s one thousand times greater now. No one had a [college] degree in 1925; now there are 50 members with master’s degrees and one Ph.D. There were 75 pieces, now there are 137 and a chorus.”\footnote{Ibid., 120.}

Charles Benter and Charles Brendler directed the Navy Band for a combined 46 years. Their successors, however, served shorter terms due to a change in the Navy Band leader selection process and a new law forcing the retirement of officers after their 30\textsuperscript{th} year of active duty. They nevertheless served with the same ambition and drive as the band’s founding commanders.\footnote{“Navy Band History 1942 - 1968,” Navy Band Website, accessed December 2016, http://www.navyband.navy.mil/history_1942-1968.html.}
Anthony Mitchell

Anthony Mitchell was selected to follow Commander Brendler, a natural choice as he was a gifted member of the band who had been promoted to assistant leader after the tragic plane crash in 1960. Additionally, he had served as the Conductor of the Navy Dance Band while continuing to perform as a clarinet soloist.84 Mitchell was particularly keen on inspiring the youth and showed his commitment to music education by initiating the first children’s concert, the first ballet performance for children, a music education series with Washington D.C. schools, and the Washington Area Soloist Festival.85

In 1968 the size of the band increased to 175 musicians, allowing further distinction of specialized groups. Previously, engagements with the ceremonial band, concert band, and dance band, for example, might have interrupted rehearsal schedules as some members performed in all three. The increased man power also allowed smaller specialized groups such as a marimba ensemble, a folk group, and a German band.86 During spring of the same year a vacancy opened up in the saxophone section. The third leader of the Navy Band, Anthony Mitchell, auditioned and hired a talented 19-year-old saxophonist named Dale Underwood for the second alto saxophone position in the Navy Concert Band.87

84 Dyess, 206-207.
85 Ibid., 208, 221.
86 Ibid., 234-235.
CHAPTER 6

DALE UNDERWOOD IN THE NAVY CONCERT BAND

The various Navy band engagements, along with guest appearances outside of the Navy, have included literally thousands of solo performances. It would be impractical, and nearly impossible, to document each performance. Therefore this biographical overview only relates the most significant and memorable of those experiences and while representing but a fraction of Underwood’s entire performance output provides a glimpse into Underwood’s career, life, and influence on many other musicians. Some concerts are referenced through published sources and others through interviews, but every performance noted in the remainder of the text is also confirmed by concert programs found in either the Navy Band archives or Underwood’s personal collection.

Anthony Mitchell: 1968

Underwood’s musical talent was immediately recognized and put to use. In October 1968 the principal alto saxophonist, Jim Lee, decided not to re-enlist. Having been in the band just a few months, and despite being only 19 years old, Mitchell assigned Underwood to take over the principal position. Moreover, as an even stronger testament to his playing, he was invited to perform solos with the band shortly after that. The members of the concert band provided numerous concerts for the public, went on tour, and performed at military and government functions. Although this was Underwood’s primary job, he often performed with the ceremonial band, used for smaller

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military ceremonies such as funerals, and the Dance Band, which became the

It was during this time Underwood met another one of his saxophone heroes, Sigurd Rascher. He recounts,

The first time I met Rascher was in 1968 or early 1969. I was early on in the band and he soloed with [Colonel] Gabriel and the Air Force band so I went down to the Capitol to hear him – it was fantastic. He played the Frank Erickson Concerto and then a number of encores. The one encore I remember is “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair.” When I first met him and went to talk to him he hadn’t actually performed yet. He was standing backstage on the grass at the Capitol when I walked up to him and introduced myself. Gabriel and the Air Force Band were doing “Old Comrades,” a German march, and Rasher was back there playing along! He was very friendly. Ever since then, whenever we were at any events together, and I thought this was so amazing of him, he would go out of his way just to come say hello to me. I believe the next time I saw him was at Ithaca for a regional saxophone conference and I remember him coming to say hi to me. I also remember him being at a conference in Lebanon Valley, PA.  

Donald Stauffer: 1969 – 1973

During Stauffer’s tenure the band became busier than ever before. The addition of the Ceremonial Band, Commodores, and Port Authority (the Navy Band’s rock music group), allowed more performances to take place. The band’s activities saw a 60% increase from prior years. In Stauffer’s second year for example, the Navy Band and all its ensembles participated in 1800 engagements.  

Donald Stauffer asked Underwood to solo with the band on some of the evening concerts in the summer series of 1969. Of his first solo, Underwood says,

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91 Dyess, 259.
I remember it vividly! I played *Introduction and Samba* at the old Watergate in Washington. We played there every Thursday night in the summers and thousands of tourists would come and listen. I wasn’t nervous, but I was sure scared to death…my eyes probably looked like a deer’s in the headlights. I remember standing offstage thinking, “Why did I agree to do this?” But the performance went well and the crowd that night loved it.\(^2\)

That same summer one of the alto players in the Commodores took a 30-day leave and needed a substitute. Underwood agreed to fill the spot and spent a full month playing second alto with the Commodores. They continued to use him as a sub throughout his entire career.\(^3\)

Many members of the Navy Band play solos occasionally, typically in the summer concerts. Similar to any professional organization, the music director chooses the most successful soloists in the ensemble to be “tour soloists.” While there is no official procedure, tour soloists are usually senior members who are established principal players and will alternate soloing every night when the band travels.\(^4\)

At the time Underwood entered the band, the annual tours usually lasted about two months. Later on, there was a period of time where the band went on two such tours each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Occasionally, the band went on “mini-tours” as well, traveling for just a few weeks. Eventually the tours became somewhat shorter with less performances overall. For most of Underwood’s tours the band performed two concerts each day, which occasionally required sleepless overnight travel

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\(^4\) Timothy Roberts, phone interview by author, January 12, 2017.
to get to the next destination in time. The band usually had two woodwind soloists and two brass soloists who alternated each night playing a large solo and a lighter encore.95

Confirmed by the solo on the summer concert series, Stauffer recognized Underwood’s talent and ability to perform at a high level consistently and invited him to be a tour soloist at the end of the summer. This was only a year and a half after joining the band. Underwood soloed on every Navy Band tour, except one, and every summer concert series from 1969 until his retirement in 1997. Additionally, many of the matinee shows also included a special saxophone quartet feature with Underwood on soprano.96 At age 20 on his first tour, Underwood was not only the youngest bandmember at the time, but also one of the youngest tour soloists in the history of military ensembles. After serving as a tour soloist for 28 years, Underwood likely also became the longest-serving soloist in the history of the military bands.97 There was no resentment from the more seasoned band members towards the young soloist, however. In fact, Martin Erickson, a tubist who joined the band only 6 months before Underwood, remembers, “The veteran players in the band needed nothing more than to hear Dale play for the first time to realize he belongs in front and center.”98

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96 Ibid.
97 Michael Bays, phone interview by author, March 8, 2017.
98 Martin Erickson, phone interview by author, April 4, 2017.
After the 1969 summer series had concluded, Underwood went on his first tour as soloist. They performed in 49 cities throughout 13 states, over a period of about 60 days. Regarding his first tour Underwood states,

My solo on the first tour was Maurice Whitney’s *Introduction and Samba* with *Saxophobia* as an encore. I probably played them 30 or more times in those two months. On that tour, the encore was not accompanied by the band but by a saxophone ensemble. Some of the clarinetists would switch to saxophone and play the easier parts…we added an old terrible bass saxophone and ended up with a group of about nine saxophones, which accompanied me on *Saxophobia*.100

On one concert during his first tour Underwood remembers having to fill in for the tuba soloist because the stage was too small to fit a chair or even a stand in front of the band. Fortunately Underwood played from memory. He said, “I had to play with my feet

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together, not moving an inch! The tips of my toes hung over the edge of the stage, there was so little room.”

Underwood quickly developed a friendship with Martin Erickson, who later became the tuba soloist in the band. They would overlap 26 years together in the Navy and for the first dozen or so they were tour roommates, until they became senior enlisted men who are allowed individual rooms. Erickson said,

Dale got standing ovations on nearly every concert for his solos and the consistency of quality playing was remarkable. The band performed in every possible venue from high school gymnasiums to world-class concert venues and in every possible climate and acoustical situation. Dale never disappointed. Besides his obvious technical and solo abilities, he knew how to play to a crowd, and quickly earned the reputation as the premiere saxophone soloist in the service bands and among the greats in the country.

The next tour, in the spring of 1970, included 48 cities throughout 18 states in the south and west of the country. Underwood was again featured on *Introduction and Samba*. On May 1 they made a stop which was quite memorable, performing at the Salt Lake City Tabernacle. Regarding the tabernacle, Underwood said, “It’s just an incredible hall. Not a large venue but the building was beautiful and the acoustics in there were unbelievable. They said that from the back of the hall you could hear a pin drop on stage…Well it was true!” The tabernacle was filled to capacity that night. Many of the other concerts on that tour had an audience six to seven thousand strong.

Later that year Urban Carvalho, also in the band, wrote a piece for Underwood entitled *Song and Dance*. This was the first of many works written for Underwood and

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102 Martin Erickson, phone interview by author, April 4, 2017.
was premiered on one of the winter concerts held in the Departmental Auditorium early in 1971. Carvalho also created a piano reduction, an orchestral rendition, and an arrangement with woodwind quintet as accompaniment. It was later used on several tours and many guest performances with other ensembles. Underwood suggested the work to the Theodore Presser music publishing company. He received a letter from the head editor confirming they would publish it. After hearing a recording the editor declared, “Wow – what a tremendous saxophonist you are!” Underwood didn’t think much of it, until he glanced down to the bottom of the letter and realized it was written and signed by Vincent Persichetti.  

The spring 1971 tour took Underwood to 49 cities throughout 15 states in the northeast and mid-west of the country. Among them was a visit to his hometown of Cortland where he was again featured on Introduction and Samba. Traveling together on tour, and frequently sharing beautiful musical moments together, fostered incredible friendships and a close bond among the band members. These were in turn fortified through their off-stage interactions, including more than a few playful pranks. Erickson tells one such experience,

After one evening concert on a tour, Dale and I grabbed a bite to eat at a local restaurant. Because we were jokesters, we became prime targets for other band members to have some fun as well. So…on this night, we returned to our hotel to find the entire contents of our room out in the parking lot, arranged exactly as our room looked. The perpetrators were resting comfortably in our sofa, chairs, and on the bed… except all were in the parking lot!

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107 Martin Erickson, phone interview by author, April 4, 2017.
In December of that year the Navy Band featured Underwood on *Song and Dance* at the annual Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference (from here on referred to as Midwest Clinic) held in Chicago, IL. This was the first of nine solo appearances and two clinics given at the event over the years. Composer Clare Grundman was in the audience and after his performance asked if he might write a work for Underwood. The result came the following year in his *Concertante*.108

Figure 6.2. Dale Underwood performs Urban Carvalho’s *Song and Dance* at the 25th anniversary Midwest Clinic in Chicago, IL on December 15, 1971.

In 1972, Robert Hoe, a wealthy business man who enjoyed collecting and classifying all kinds of marches, approached Stauffer with the idea of a recording project. The purpose of the project was to record and preserve as many marches as was possible. Stauffer approved the idea and, funded entirely by Hoe, the Navy Band recorded 18

albums for the “Heritage of the March” series. Underwood remembers taking part in the project:

I was involved in every single one of them. The Navy did a bunch of albums of these obscure marches. You’d play them and then realize why they were obscure! Not all of them of course, but many. Bob [Hoe] somehow convinced the Navy to let him record them. He was a wealthy guy from New York that owned bowling allies. He and Stauffer were friends. Stauffer always wanted everyone to play on each tune but some of them, especially the German marches, didn’t have sax parts. They’d give me an E-flat clarinet part instead and sometimes for fun I liked to take it up an octave where it was possible. I’m not sure if Stauffer ever knew I did that!110

In December of that year, Underwood returned home and performed Introduction and Samba and Song and Dance with the Homer High School Band, from which he had graduated five years earlier. He continued to frequent Cortland, performing with the high school band and the Old-Timers Community Band. Eventually, Underwood set up a scholarship at his high school. He returned each year to give a recital, the proceeds providing young aspiring musicians the opportunity to attend various summer music camps.111

Clare Grundman’s Concertante was premiered on January 20, 1973 at the inauguration concert for Richard Nixon’s second term as President of the United States. The concert took place in Constitution Hall and was filled to capacity. About a month later, Underwood gave Concertante its second performance at a concert in the Departmental Auditorium during the American Bandmasters Association convention.

109 Dyess, 255-256.


He was the only soloist at the conference. Several important connections resulted from the ABA convention. Underwood recounts,

At the end of the concert, someone came up to me, said, “I really enjoyed your solo,” and handed me his card. I didn’t read it at the time, but later when I was backstage packing up I was wondering, “Well, who was this guy?” I read the card and his name was Jack Feddersen and he was the president of Selmer. That opened the door for me to become a Selmer clinician a short time later.

Furthermore, The ABA concert was recorded by Clark Galehouse who owned a company that made records. Most of their business came from pressing rock records but Galehouse also owned several record labels. The Silver Crest label was used for conventions and conferences such as the Midwest Clinic and ABA, while the Golden Crest label was reserved for special series. Galehouse approached him after the concert as well and said, “I really enjoyed your playing. I would love to do something together.” This collaboration eventually led to four solo records on the Golden Crest label.112

Figure 6.3. Certificate awarded to Dale Underwood for participation in inaugural ceremonies for President Richard Nixon January 20, 1973.

The ABA conference also included an inter-service symphonic band, an ensemble made up by some members of the principal Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force bands. All four bandleaders conducted a portion of the concert. It took place in the Kennedy Center as a special concert to dedicate the hall’s new stage, donated by ABA. Colonel Gabriel, commander of the Air Force Band at the time, remembers this concert well:

The band was made up of each of the four service bands – an inter-service band of about one hundred players. Of course every conductor tries to out-do each other, so Don Stauffer had arranged a piece – a very dramatic piece. The band was rehearsing and got louder and louder…then he had antiphonal brass players up in the balcony and they got even louder. Pretty soon even the doors of the organ open up, so now the organ is going to start playing! I’m in the audience with the other conductors waiting for our turn to conduct. When I saw the doors of the organ open up I took out my handkerchief and waived it… I surrender! Dale was up on the stage playing and he was the one that saw me and started laughing in the middle of the rehearsal. Everybody else then started looking at me and broke down. Don Stauffer hadn’t any idea what happened!\(^\text{113}\)

President Nixon made an appearance during Colonel Gabriel’s part of the concert that evening. After Gabriel had finished his piece, the leader of the Marine Band quickly stepped up to the podium to conduct “Four Ruffles and Flourishes” (a short fanfare call which precedes ceremonial music) followed by “Hail to the Chief” (the ceremonial anthem announcing the President of the United States). Underwood remembers a frightening moment when the conductor gave the upbeat in preparation for the band to play. He said, “In the split-second that followed, while his baton was descending, I remembered the service bands didn’t all do that piece in the same key! I’m thinking, ‘This is going to be a total disaster.’ Thankfully a trumpet player yelled ‘B-flat!’ just in time.”\(^\text{114}\)

\(^{113}\) Arnald Gabriel, interview by author, Alexandria, January 10, 2017.

After only a few years in the band, Underwood had discerned himself as a remarkably talented musician. A Navy Public Affairs press release around that time reads,

Underwood has been a member of The United States Navy Band since July 1968, and is one of the younger members of this great musical organization. He has been a featured soloist with the band on a number of occasions… and has received much praise for his artistry. Audiences throughout the country are much impressed with the talents of this young American artist…The Navy is proud and honored to have such a fine young soloist in its ranks.\textsuperscript{115}

The 1973 spring tour followed soon after. It lasted almost two months and visited 49 cities in 15 states. Underwood was featured on \textit{Song and Dance} and the tour once again brought them through his hometown of Cortland performing a matinee and evening show attended by thousands. The local newspaper recorded, “The celebrity of the day, of course, was Navy bandsmen Dale Underwood, one of Cortland’s own native sons. Dale committed himself admirably… and left his Cortland audience bursting with justifiable pride. We look forward with great anticipation to future events such as this.”\textsuperscript{116}

This was Stauffer’s last tour as leader of the band. He addressed the band in July 1973 just before he retired and concluded his comments by saying, “I am most indebted to my many outstanding first-chair men and soloists, not only in the concert band but throughout the entire band, for their positive musical and personal leadership. I am intensely proud to have been their leader.”\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{117} Dyess, 273, 279.

Ned Muffley’s tenure was marked by what he called a “total entertainment” concept. He wanted to thrill audiences and keep them on the edge of their seats, often assembling elaborate, crowd-pleasing shows. This idea led to the creation of several new popular music groups within the Navy Band and the band’s participation in a host of activities in addition to the regular concert schedule and military functions. Some of these activities included televised professional football game half time shows, special performances of Broadway hits, and movie soundtracks. Arthur Fiedler, conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, invited Muffley to guest conduct on a concert in 1973. This led to an annual guest conducting exchange performance with the Boston Pops for many years.\textsuperscript{118} Underwood’s tour solos under Muffley included Carvalho’s \textit{Song and Dance}, Grundman’s \textit{Concertante}, Creston’s \textit{Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Band}, and a band arrangement of Jacques Ibert’s \textit{Concertino da Camara}.\textsuperscript{119}

Figure 6.4. Dale Underwood publicity photo. Circa 1974.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 282-286.

Near the end of the 1973, Underwood was a guest clinician and soloist with a high school band from Kansas City preparing the Grundman *Concertante* for a concert at the Midwest Clinic – Underwood’s second appearance at Midwest. Their program included a piece by composer Elliot Del Borgo who was also visiting as a clinician. Del Borgo stated, “I had heard people play altissimo before, but I was never much impressed with it. When I heard him play altissimo I said, ‘This is a whole different animal.’ ” They became good friends and Del Borgo later wrote several works for Underwood.120

The following year, in 1974, Underwood performed the *Concertante* at the 24th annual clinic by the North Central Missouri Bandmasters Association. The guest conductor was Don Marcouiller and the band was made up of around 150 students from 19 different schools. As an encore Underwood performed an arrangement of the Carpenters’ tune “We’ve Only Just Begun.”121

On August 25, 1974 several band members participated in the first recital of the National Capitol Chapter of the Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association held at the Smithsonian Hall of Musical Instruments. The only selection featuring instruments not of the tuba family was Walter Hartley’s *Double Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Tuba*.122 The soloists were Underwood on saxophone and Martin Erickson on Tuba.123

Most of the military functions requiring the concert band were important events taking place at either the White House or the Pentagon, usually providing music for the

120 Barrick, 71-72.
122 Dyess, 293-294.
President of the United States, high government officials, or foreign dignitaries. One such occasion in the fall of 1974 was quite memorable to the Navy Band. Underwood recalls,

They would have these state dinners, and we’d play on the balcony outside when the guests arrived. We’d be there maybe an hour, and played out of our “White House Book,” which was full of lighter tunes and marches. Where I was, in the back of the band, we couldn’t even see the cars…we knew the guests were arriving, just didn’t know who was coming. There was one time we were playing on the balcony [at the White House] and we received a note from Betty Ford. She had been sick, breast cancer, and was lying in bed recovering from her surgery. She heard the band playing and knew right away it was the Navy Band. She sent down a box of salt water taffy with a note that said something along the lines of, “You all being Navy men, and my husband being an ex-Navy man, I offer you a challenge! To eat this taffy and play your horns at the same time.” We all laughed at that. She was quite a character. They still have the note around the Navy Yard sometime.  

The 1975 spring tour featured Underwood on Song and Dance and lasted well over two months. At times, band directors and other educators who found out the Navy Band planned to tour through their area contacted the tour manager to request a recital or masterclass from Underwood. The Navy Band archives contain numerous letters expressing gratitude for the clinics and recitals Underwood provided. One such letter came from John Stavash, who was vice president of Music Educator’s Corporation. During the spring 1975 tour Underwood gave 10 clinics and two performances in the space of three days in the Cleveland, OH area. The letter reads in part,

I am writing to thank you for the superb job you performed for Educator’s Music…I cannot tell you how much I appreciated the taxing work load of clinics and rehearsals that were accomplished in a relatively short time. I personally was amazed and enthused by your high level and consistency of musicianship and can assure you all sessions were received enthusiastically by students and educators alike.

124 Ibid.

125 Dyess, 300-301.

Underwood met composer Claude Smith some time earlier during one of their tours. They became friends and had performed several clinics together as well. Underwood facilitated the Navy Band’s invitation to Claude Smith to compose a work for the Navy Band’s 50th anniversary concert held March 4, 1975 at the Kennedy Center. The result was a special version of the Navy hymn, *Eternal Father Strong to Save*, and became a significant turning point in Smith’s career as a composer.\(^{127}\)

In April of 1975 the public affairs office sent out a questionnaire to some of the bandsmen to create a biographical outline for publicity and press uses. Underwood’s answers include humble acknowledgement and gratitude to his former teachers and for the opportunity of being a soloist in an ensemble with such “high standards of musicianship and output.” The questionnaire also reveals some of the amiable lightheartedness of his personality. To the prompt “If you could choose to work in some capacity other than the one you are currently employed in, what would you choose and why?” he wrote, “Guest soloist at the October-fest in Germany, I like beer.” It was crossed out with one single line followed by the more genuine “I was raised on a farm and would like to do that professionally, like I did in high school.”\(^{128}\)

The fall of 1975 finally provided Underwood the opportunity to connect with Clark Galehouse to produce their first record. It features Underwood with the Metropolitan Wind Ensemble, a group formed by Underwood for this occasion comprising members from the Navy Band. The four works contained on the record are:


Clare Grundman’s *Concertante*, Maurice Whitney’s *Introduction and Samba*, Walter Hartley’s *Double Concerto* (again with Erickson on tuba), and Paul Creston’s *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Band*. The music selection pays tribute to Underwood’s home state of New York. The 1975 album cover reads, “Mr. Whitney was an educator there, Mr. Hartley and Mr. Grundman currently reside there, and Mr. Creston was born there.”

Paul Creston received the record and wrote a letter in response. He was very pleased with the recording but in addition to his compliments also expressly states his preference of not taking the ending of the third movement into the altissimo register.

Dated October 14, 1975 it reads in part,

> Dear Mr. Underwood  
> I received your Golden Crest record several days ago and wish to thank you very much. I listened to your performance of my Saxophone Concerto and was utterly delighted. It is magnificent! There is perfection not only of technique but phrasing and interpretation as well.  
> If I may be allowed a little quiddity I do not approve of the ending of the last movement – Concert D…instead of concert A. …I know that both Sinta and Londeix end the movement on the high D; I also know that it is to the general public more sensational in relation to the performer. Nevertheless, I think I should tell you of my feeling in the matter…  
> With every kind wish.

Sincerely,

Paul Creston

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130 Paul Creston, letter to Dale Underwood, Dale Underwood Personal Collection, October 14, 1975.
The following year included several significant performances and Underwood was instrumental in the success of the first annual West Virginia Saxophone Symposium held in Shenandoah Junction, WV on May 21-23. Underwood had a zealous private student from there who wanted to organize a small symposium. Underwood, Sinta, and George Etheridge were soloists and clinicians there. Underwood performed the Whitney \textit{Introduction and Samba} as well as a short recital.\footnote{Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.}

Commander Muffley continued the annual guest conducting exchange with Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops. Each summer they put on a special “Navy Night” concert and in June of 1976 Underwood was invited to accompany Muffley and solo with...
the Boston Pops. He performed the third movement of the Creston Concerto. The hall was filled to capacity and the performance was broadcast over live radio.\footnote{Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 4, 2017.}

Just a month later, Underwood traveled to London England. He had been invited to be a featured soloist on the opening concert of the fifth World Saxophone Congress, 

Figure 6.6. Letter inviting Dale Underwood to solo with the Boston Pops Orchestra on their June 16, 1976 concert.
the world’s largest international saxophone festival. The WSC takes place every three years and attracts professionals as well as amateurs from around the globe. The five-day event is filled with performances by top saxophonists, premieres of new compositions, and lectures by renowned instructors. The event was held at the Royal College of Music in London that year and was accompanied by the Irish Guard Band.

During his stay in England, preceding the WSC, Underwood performed a series of outdoor concerts around London with the Scotts Guard Band. Underwood tells,

I played a couple of concerts with the Scotts Guard on the Victoria Embankment Gardens and Regent’s Park. I played the [Grundman] Concertante with them and they also wanted to play something that they had. I didn’t have it, so we never rehearsed and just read it down for the concerts. The Victoria Gardens was kind of an outdoor venue in the big gardens area.

I remember they had the funniest drinking laws in London at that time. A bunch of us would head down to get beer at the pub in the hotel but it would close around 11 o’clock. I said, “What? Closed?” and they told us, “Yes, but you can go sit in the lobby and drink beer all night.” So the pub was closed but we could still sit in the lobby until four or five in the morning and drink beer, which of course they got from the pub.

Now for one the concerts there was a bandshell, as I recall it was somewhat similar to the setting of what the Navy Band did during the summers at the Watergate or the Capitol. And about six years later, the Irish were engaged in some sort of terrorist war because they wanted independence…A band was playing at that exact same garden and a bomb went off and blew the bandshell up! It killed a whole bunch of bandsmen, it was terrible… I just thought, “Wow, I played there.”

Then on July 26, 1976 Underwood gave his performance at the opening concert of the fifth World Saxophone Congress with the Irish Guard Band. Three days later, a Navy Public Affairs Office news release reported on the congress:

London is famous for the number and quality of its performing artists. A new musician in town is not new. But if the musician meets the standards of London’s sophisticated musical world then it is an event…

Underwood [premiered] a modern classical piece called Nocturne and Ritual Dance written and arranged especially for him by Jay Chattaway. It was

well received by the congress. A Member of the London Saxophone Quartet, David Lawrence, said, “Mr. Underwood’s performance was excellent… he is very proficient.” The world’s most accomplished students of this particular instrument were in attendance including Marcel Mule from France and Paul Harvey from Great Britain.\textsuperscript{134}

The composer of the work premiered at the WSC, Jay Chattaway, was in the Navy Band serving as a composer/arranger. He was later responsible for the charts on Maynard Ferguson’s Grammy nominated gold record, \textit{Conquistadors}, and several other albums with that group. After working with Ferguson, he went on to lead a successful career composing film music. His time in the Navy was instrumental in learning how to write for various ensemble combinations and styles. In an interview with James Rotter, Chattaway recalls, “At the time we had a full symphonic concert band, as well as a double string quartet, jazz ensemble, mixed chorus, rock ‘n roll group, [and] even a marimba band. We had to write for all of them.” Looking back over his career he stated, “One of my favorite pieces I did was the one for Dale Underwood.” Speaking of saxophonists who have influenced how he writes for the instrument, Chattaway says, “On the classical side… Dale Underwood’s extreme range… and his technique have just always really knocked me out. He’s a fine instrumentalist and has a wonderful sound as well.”\textsuperscript{135}

About the \textit{Nocturne and Ritual Dance}, Underwood recalls,

I remember Jay [Chattaway] gave me three pages of the solo; it was a slow introduction. I looked at it and said, “Oh yeah, this is no problem.” We kept getting closer and closer to the opening concert of the WSC and I didn’t have anything else yet. One day we returned from a ceremony someplace, got back


around 4PM, and I walked by my mail slot to find a thick stack of papers in there… he had finished my solo. There was a note saying, “Here is the rest.” This was only ten days before we had to premier it… turns out the remaining eight pages were some of the hardest shit I had ever seen in my life up to that point!\textsuperscript{136}

Fortunately, it was a success and according to the \textit{Saxophone Symposium},

Underwood’s performance created quite a buzz:

Great Britain is certainly not a land of saxophiles! Saxophone congresses in Canada, the U.S.A., France, Belgium, yes! But in London, where in the minds of so many the instrument is still equated with the jazz-influenced excesses of the “twenties” it must have taken rare courage…when such a project was agreed to.

A magnificent opening! Against the cool blue-and-white décor of the hall was splashed the scarlet-and-gold of the full concert band of the Irish Guards… Then a tumultuous welcome to that much-loved father figure of the classical saxophone, Marcel Mule, who declared the congress open.

The first saxophone to sound was an alto in the hands of Paul Harvey. [Composer] Gordon Jacob was present to acknowledge warm appreciation given to his typically graceful \textit{Miscellanies} written especially for the occasion. Second alto soloist was Dale Underwood (USA) who displayed a breath-taking technique, particularly in the altissimo register, and whose distinctive tone was the cause of much whispered conversation. A complete change came [next] from the tenor of Guy Lacour (France).\textsuperscript{137}

Other notable saxophonists who performed recitals at the congress were Ryo Noda from Japan, Paul Brodie from Canada, and Ray Ricker from the United States.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{136} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 15, 2017.


\textsuperscript{138} Horwood, 14.
Figure 6.7. Dale Underwood performing Jay Chattaway’s *Nocturne and Ritual Dance* with the Irish Guard Band conducted by Major E. G. Horabin at the fifth World Saxophone Congress in London, England.

The year concluded with another performance at the Midwest clinic in Chicago, three years since Underwood’s second solo there. In preparation for the performance the band went on a week-long tour prior to the conference. Underwood was asked to perform
the same piece that he premiered at the WSC, Chattaway’s *Nocturne and Ritual Dance*.139

As a result of the many solo performances and the release of his first record – there weren’t many classical saxophone records at the time – Underwood’s playing had now established an international reputation and was especially revered in the United States. Many saxophonists and composers were particularly impressed by his incredible control of the altissimo range. His former teacher and saxophone idol, Don Sinta, had certainly taken note of his progress and influence in the classical saxophone community. Sinta wrote to Underwood the very day he received a tape recording of the *Nocturne and Ritual Dance* performance. This letter’s personal meaning and significance is attested to by Underwood’s careful keeping of it over the years:

Dear Dale,

Your tape and score of the Chattaway piece arrived today and have already been listened to. As you can tell from the unusual and prompt response…I was thoroughly gassed. You are simply too much. You continue to grow as a saxophonist and a musician. You are certainly among the very best in the world…and musically you’re with few others. The repertory is being enriched through your efforts and demonstrated to so many with your rare type of playing. I am so damn proud to have been a little influence in what is now a large American influence in super/varied/broad styled artistry.

Mr. [Larry] Teal was knocked out with your playing in Chicago. I always have been, but it’s nicer now than ever. The solo is terrific and the section and your solos in the band pieces on the tape are so tastefully and specially done. It’s obvious they all think you’re a great soloist and asset to the band…

Dale…keep it up. There’s room for your continued artistry and repertory contributions. I am confident that you will continue to be in greater and greater demand as a soloist. The playing is so full of fire and drive, taste and abandonment, soul and beauty, that it’s impossible to be untouched and moved. Damn…I’m proud.

Warmest regards from your friend,

Don140

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139 Dyess, 307-308.

The collaboration between Underwood and Galehouse led to the release of a second classical saxophone record early in 1977, this time containing music for saxophone and piano. The selections are: "Duo for Saxophone and Piano" by Walter Hartley, "Sonata No. 3" by G. F. Handel/Sigurd Rascher, "Music for Alto Saxophone and Piano" by Leslie Bassett, "Sonata for E-flat Alto Saxophone and Piano" by Bernard Heiden, and "Suite for Saxophone" by Richard Lane. The pianist on the record is Marjorie Lee, a talented recitalist who completed her D.M.A. from the University of Maryland. The liner
notes praise Underwood’s playing and give additional insight into his busy involvement in all things saxophone. An excerpt states:

Mr. Underwood joined the Navy Band...and [became] soloist within three months. During his [most recent] enlistment...Mr. Underwood soloed with the Concert Band approximately 60 times a year and in as many as 50 different cities yearly. In early 1976, Mr. Underwood was a featured soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra in Symphony Hall, conducted by Commander Ned Muffley, leader of the Navy Band. He journeyed to London in July 1976 to perform as a soloist before the World Saxophone Congress at the Royal College of Music...

Mr. Underwood performs constantly as a clinician and guest soloist around the country, in addition to his more than 30 private students. Some of his appearances include: Guest soloist clinician – University of Potsdam w/The Crane Wind Ensemble under the direction of Elliot Del Borgo, featured soloist at the Mid-West Band and Orchestra Clinic, ABA convention, and [performed in] states too numerous to mention.

Mr. Underwood is also very interested in chamber music and was a member of the United States Navy Band Saxophone Quartet. This quartet was the first of its kind in the history of the Navy Band and they were in great demand playing colleges and symposium, as well as giving clinics around the country.

He was instrumental in putting together the West Virginia Saxophone Symposium in 1976, which hosted only key legitimate performers and was extremely successful. In this recording, Mr. Underwood clearly illustrates the depth of his musicianship and virtuosity. His extraordinary technique and interpretive sensitivity makes him extremely effective.  

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Figure 6.9. The cover of Dale Underwood’s second album, released in 1977.

In 1977 the band went on two tours. Underwood used Chattaway’s *Nocturne and Ritual Dance* on the spring tour. The following summer presented yet another international solo opportunity. Belgian saxophonist Elie Apper, who he had met at the WSC in London, invited Underwood and Muffley to appear at the first World Saxophone Symposium held at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, Belgium. Underwood performed Grundman’s *Concertante* with the Army Band of Brussels, Muffley serving as guest conductor. The fall tour commenced shortly after the summer and consisted of 68 concerts between September 20 and November 5.142

Amidst a series of high profile national and international appearances, Underwood still made time to perform with high school students and do clinics. January 20, 1978 was such an occasion when Underwood performed with the Lindbergh High School Symphonic Band for the Missouri Music Educators Association Conference in Jefferson City, MO, earning him honorary life membership.143 William Maupin, then vice president of MMEA, expressed his appreciation in a letter to Underwood dated January 23, 1978:

> Dear Dale
> Please accept my personal thanks and heartiest congratulations on your outstanding clinic last Friday at our MMEA conference-clinic. It is a most heartwarming experience to be associated with an organization made up of people with talent, skill, and dedication as yours. Again, many thanks for your excellent contribution to the success of our conference-clinic and best wishes for continued success in the future.
> Sincerely Yours,
> C. William Maupin144


Inspired by the conference in Belgium, Underwood started the International Navy Band Saxophone Symposium (hereafter referred to as Navy Symposium) in 1978. Held March 17-18, the first Navy Symposium was a tremendous success. The evening concert on March 17 featured Underwood on the Chattaway in addition to soloists Don Sinta, James Houlik, and Elie Apper, and guest conductor Commandant Yvon Ducene of the Belgian Guides band (Apper and Ducene had hosted him a year prior in Belgium).\footnote{Ibid.}

It has since developed into an annual event as one of the largest saxophone gatherings in the country taking place each January. The structure is two days filled with recitals, lectures, and masterclasses, concluded by a large concert with soloists in the evening – the first night with the Navy Concert Band and the second night with the
Commodores. Underwood was a soloist at the symposium every year, except one, from its inception until his retirement, and continues to appear there frequently. The remainder of this chapter will occasionally mention experiences from subsequent Navy Symposiums but the development of the event lies beyond the scope of this essay.

Underwood’s friendship with Elliot Del Borgo led to the creation of several new compositions for saxophone. The first of these, titled *Soliloquy and Dance*, was premiered in 1978. Interestingly, this premiere was not in a public concert but during a recording session which was aired live though a radio broadcast on National Public Radio. The work was performed many times after and also used on tours.\(^\text{146}\)

In June 1978, marking a decade in the Navy Concert Band, Underwood had established himself as one of the foremost classical saxophone players in the world, received international recognition for his musicianship and technical ability, produced two records, and started the Navy Symposium. A newspaper article stated,

> Underwood should know his business. An 11-year veteran of Navy Music, he has been constantly featured as a soloist with the Navy Band not only during concerts in the Washington D.C. area, but also during the band’s national tours throughout the country…“I always try to say something to the audience through my playing,” said Chief Musician Underwood, “by playing a composition as musically as possible…” When the time allows he travels around the country performing with high schools and colleges. “I have presented masterclasses and clinics at most of these schools,” said Underwood.\(^\text{147}\)

An *All Hands* article from June 1978 declares, “Chief Underwood has reached the top of the military music world and intends to stay there until he retires from the Navy.”\(^\text{148}\)

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\(^{146}\) Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 15, 2017.


Commander Muffley retired and ended his stewardship of the band on December 30, 1978, when William Phillips, the sixth leader of the Navy Band, took command. Phillips continued many of the same activities that had commenced under previous leadership including the national tours, summer and winter concert series, the Boston Pops annual Navy Night, and more. The band included 179 members creating seven autonomous units and performing about 1700 engagements each year. James Watkins, (then Chief of Naval Operations) summarized some of the Navy Band’s endeavors during Phillips’ tenure which involved Underwood:

Commander Phillips personally directed the band at countless events of national importance including the 1981 Presidential Inauguration, welcoming ceremonies for the returned Iranian hostages, and internment services for the Unknown Servicemen of the Vietnam conflict. He participated in eight national concert tours [in six years]…and presented numerous highly successful concerts in the nation’s capitol. Showing great foresight, he instituted Navy Birthday Concerts, which have become the keystone of Washington’s Navy Day festivities, and through his initiative, the Navy Summer Pageant was transformed into the dramatic multimedia presentation which thrills thousands each summer at the Washington Navy Yard.149

Commander Phillips was a familiar face for Underwood. They had met years earlier when they were both at the Navy School of Music in Virginia. Underwood was a student then and Phillips was on the faculty. Phillips states that since the time they first met “Dale had already built up quite a reputation as a legit saxophonist and the principal tour soloist.” Sometime during Muffley’s tenure, the band started touring twice a year. This continued for several years under Phillips as well.

149 Dyess, 336-337.
“Two tours a year,” Phillips exclaims, “with two concerts a day, seven days a week…And we’d be out sometimes six weeks at a time! It was grueling.”

Phillips recalls that “Dale really knew how to entertain a crowd. He performed at a high level…[but] of course Dale loved to laugh and pull off jokes.” For some of the tours during this time, Underwood’s solo would be followed by a lighter encore featuring the saxophone section and a faulty horn. Phillips tells,

We’d have an alto saxophone that fell apart; I mean the guy was basically holding the thing together when he first came out on stage. He’s playing and you know, all of a sudden the bell falls off of the damn thing right onto the floor and everybody starts laughing. Of course the guy playing is real good but he says, “What happened?” And looks at the horn…Well, a little later some of the keys start falling off and by the end of the song the only thing he has in his mouth was the very basic tube of the horn! The audience loved it. Dale had a lot to do with putting those kinds of things together, even though he wasn’t the one playing the sax. It was actually a guy from the oboe section and he wasn’t even really playing, just pretending. Though some people believed it… In fact, one time a kid was so concerned that he ran over, picked up the bell, and handed it back to the guy. It was a riot, night after night.

During the second Navy Symposium on January 12, 1979 Underwood performed another work written for him entitled *Concert Piece for Alto Saxophone and Band*. The composer, David Ward, was on the arranging staff in the Navy Band. Underwood performed it on the summer series that year with *Oodles of Noodles* as encore and also used the work on subsequent symposiums, tours, and guest performances at events such as the Midwest Clinic.

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151 Ibid.

152 Dyess, 318-319.

The sixth World Saxophone Congress took place shortly thereafter in July of 1979, this time hosted by Fred Hemke at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. Underwood performed Ward’s composition on the event’s closing concert with the Northshore Concert Band, Marcel Mule sitting right below him in the front row.\footnote{154} A few months after the event Hemke wrote:

Dear Dale,

As I look back to the sixth World Saxophone Congress I have the most pleasant memories of meeting you and hearing your fine performance… I sincerely thank you for your attendance and excellent performance at the congress…. I sincerely hope you enjoyed your stay at Northwestern University, and that the congress provided you with the same type of inspiration that it has provided for me. I look forward now with a great deal of enthusiasm to the next congress in Nuremburg, and hope to see you there also…. It was a pleasure being your host at the sixth World Saxophone Congress,

My very best wishes,

Fred Hemke\footnote{155}

\footnote{154}Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 4, 2017.


The musical common denominator on these two discs is the presence of Persichetti’s *Parable XI* for unaccompanied alto saxophone. Written in 1972 for Brian Minor, it is yet another in the composer’s series of abstract soliloquies. Though I have written in the past that many of these unilinear essays serve more for repertoire expanders for neglected instruments and as interpretive studies for the virtuoso than as rewarding listening experiences, several attentive hearings of this piece brought increased appreciation to its rarified expressive qualities. Of the two editions, Underwood clearly shows a deeper understanding of the work’s structure, and is better able to sort out the importance of its various threads… Underwood’s disc is also graced by an attractive performance of Paul Creston’s perennially delightful Sonata, certainly the most popular work in the repertoire of chamber music for saxophone. Underwood has previously recorded Creston’s lively 1941 Concerto…and his performance here [too] of the Sonata has many lovely moments… Of currently available versions, Underwood’s, along with his teacher Sinta’s, are probably the best.

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The picture on the cover of Underwood’s third album was taken by Martin Erickson. Underwood, Erickson, and a few others were assisting the tour director by traveling ahead of the band to prepare hotel room keys, arrange for money pickup, etc. At a rest stop traveling on a mountain overpass in Colorado, Erickson said, “Get out in that snow and I’ll take your picture.” Underwood replied, “If I’m going through all the trouble to do that I’m at least going to have my horn in it!” Erickson recalls another incident when they were traveling ahead of the band:

We had a short trip [to the next destination] so most of the band decided to sleep in. Dale and I, along with Ron Chiles and saxophonist Conrad Reynolds, went ahead early to the next town. Once there, we formed two teams, collected the

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room keys, and proceeded to short-sheet every single persons’ bed in the band, including our own so that we might be above suspicion. When the band members came in, some wanted to take a nap and discovered the nefarious activity. Most folks blamed their own roommate and when asked if we got short-sheeted as well, we showed them our beds and…..sure enough, ours were “victimized” as well. We knew that the proverbial cat was out of the bag however, when a couple of days later at our evening concert, we turned the first page of our concert music only to find that every piece of music had been taped together. Dale looked back at me from the front of the band and mouthed “I think they know!”

In November 1979 the Navy Band performed at the North Carolina Music Educators Association Conference. An article in the *Winston-Salem Sentinel* noted,

> There have been times in the past when the opening general session of the N.C. Music Educators Association Conference was sparsely attended. But not yesterday afternoon. More than a thousand people crowded into the main hall of Benton Convention Center, taking every available seat, and 97 percent stayed to the end. And for a very good reason. The opening session was given over to a concert by the United States Navy Band – widely recognized as one of the best musical organizations in the world… The band started out by playing the national anthem with the music educators singing… A few moments later Chief Musician Dale Underwood, the alto saxophone player for the band, drew a standing ovation from the music educators for his *Song and Dance*.

Underwood performed Ward’s *Concert Piece* at the fourth Navy Symposium on February 6, 1981. The top music critic for the *Washington Post*, Joseph D. McLellan, was present at the symposium and endowed Underwood with a title that would remain with him throughout the remainder of his career. McLellan wrote, “Senior Chief Dale Underwood is the Heifetz of the alto sax.” He continued, saying Underwood “provided some of the finest musical moments,” and commended the Navy Band saying that its “standards of musicianship are something like those of the Berlin Philharmonic.”

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159 Martin Erickson, phone interview by author, April 4, 2017.

McLellan further noted the presence of other great performers and guests in attendance such as James Houlik, Reginald Jackson, Harvey Phillips, and Eddie Sauter.  

March of 1980 saw Underwood returning to Ithaca College to perform Introduction and Samba with their concert band. Incidentally, the band’s spring tour that year, which included 58 concerts in 33 cities, brought Underwood through the area again a month later and then made its way to the greater Cleveland, OH area. Underwood gave another series of clinics at local high schools and colleges concluding with a recital at the University of Akron. John Stavash wrote Underwood again saying,  

I must write to thank you for the fine job you did for us this spring. I can’t say enough about your playing. It’s better than ever. All the comments from the directors and students of the schools you played at were most favorable. I’m sure the clinics were very worth-while…It was nice traveling with you, catching up on old times, and sharing thoughts and ideas for the future.  

In May of 1980 Underwood traveled to Portland, OR to perform at the biennial conference of the Northwest division of College Band Directors National Association. There he was featured with the University of Oregon Wind Ensemble. Underwood recalls, “Jay [Chattaway] actually set that up. This guy asked if they could do Jay’s piece [Nocturne and Ritual Dance] and Jay suggested they ask me to come out and play it. The conductor, Wayne Bennett, and I got to be good friends through that and he had me out again several times for solos and recitals.”  

Many guest solos and recitals also occurred during Underwood’s involvement with the Texas Tech University summer band camp. Kathy Daniels, a flute player in the  

163 Ibid.  
Navy Band, had a connection with TTU and encouraged Underwood to participate in the camp as an artist/teacher. His first year there was sometime during Commander Phillips’ tenure. Underwood remained involved each summer for about 20 years. Underwood said, “It was a great camp…1100 kids or so. When I first started doing it they had like 13 bands of high school and junior high students and the top band was always very good!”

He met composer/pianist Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn at the camp and developed a lasting friendship.165 They performed her work entitled Matrices, recipient of the Texas Composers Guild Award, at the camp in 1980 and again in Memphis the following year. The work also made it onto Underwood’s fourth record, accompanied by Van Appledorn herself, in 1981.166

Underwood had many wonderful memories of the TTU camps:

The conductor out there was James Sudduth. He and I became good friends. I soloed at a national CBDNA conference in Colorado with his band from Texas Tech once… I also did a solo with [composer] Claude Smith there – it was before he had written the Fantasia for me – we did Song and Dance.

I remember another time Brian Bowman [euphonium soloist with the Navy Band] and I were soloing on the same concert. I said to him, “Brian, we ought to get cowboy hats when we go back out for the final bow at the end of the concert. You get a white one I’ll get a black one.” And we did that! The kids just went crazy…

They also had these courses that the teachers could take and one year I enrolled in their conducting courses. Only time in my life I had a 4.0 GPA! …it was just one class.167

Underwood was getting many calls and invitations for guest solos, recitals, and clinics throughout the country and accepted whenever the Navy’s schedule would allow it. A series of recitals in 1981 took him to the south and southwest parts of the country.

On February 1 he reunited with Van Appledorn and performed her Matrices at a new

165 Ibid.


music festival hosted by Memphis State University. On February 6 he performed Ward’s *Concert Piece* at the Navy Symposium and on February 22 gave a guest recital at East Texas State University. He was accompanied by Carol Houston on piano. Her husband was the percussion teacher there and had been in the Navy Band when Underwood first joined.\(^{168}\)

On September 4 that year, Underwood gave a guest recital at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He was accompanied by William Koehler who was on the piano faculty. Koehler wrote, “It was not only an honor but also a thrilling experience to work with you, and folks around here will be talking about your recital for a long, long time. It made a powerful impression on everyone who was there… Congratulations on a truly spectacular performance, and best wishes for much continued success in your career.”\(^{169}\)

Underwood remembers that Bill was “an incredible pianist. We put a difficult recital together very quickly and he was just great. He wasn’t full time at Columbia and surprisingly they didn’t hire him. He ended up somewhere around Chicago but I used him again as an accompanist later.”\(^{170}\)

Another guest performance on that same trip occurred at Sam Houston State University. He remembers:

Someone had asked me to visit Sam Houston State while I was out in that area – it might have been Harley Rex. Harley was the saxophone teacher at the time and lived there in Huntsville. That’s where the prison is, the one where they execute people. He actually did the prison band! He was the head of the prison band, and he said in Huntsville - they used the electric chair back then - the lights all over town would dim whenever they executed a prisoner. All of a sudden the lights


would just fade and you’d know they were busy at the prison. I was accompanied by a local pianist but not sure what was on the program other than Sarabande and Gigue. That I remember because Fisher Tull [the composer of the work] was there and we became good friends.⁷¹

Fisher Tull, who was then chairman of the music department, wrote Underwood, saying, “Thanks for your beautiful recital on our campus last month. I have heard many rave comments on your performance from both faculty and students. I was especially pleased with your rendition of my Sarabande and Gigue. I have heard the work performed many times, but never with such delicate control and careful nuance.”⁷²

About a month later, on October 7, 1981, Underwood entered the recording studio for his fourth record on Golden Crest – released in 1982. The selections for this record are: Fantasy and Dance by Andreas Makris, An Abstract by David Ward, Sarabande and Gigue by Fisher Tull, Matrices by Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn, Sonata for Alto Saxophone by Elliot Del Borgo, and Aria by Eugene Bozza. The album cover describes Underwood as “possessing a rare blend of poise and electrifying musical skill…one of today’s most excited concert performers.”⁷³ It incorrectly lists that Ron Chiles, also a soloist with the Navy Band, was the pianist for the first three compositions and Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn for the latter three, when in actuality Van Appledorn only accompanied her own work and Chiles the others.⁷⁴

As with previous records, the album garnered much praise from the classical saxophone community. One such example is Brian Ayscue’s review,

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⁷¹ Ibid.


This new digital release from Golden Crest features Dale Underwood in a recital of contemporary music for the alto saxophone. Underwood, known by many as saxophonist with the U.S. Navy Band, is joined on this program by pianists Ron Chiles and Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn (who is also one of the composers represented here)… Underwood and Chiles give a fine performance [of the Markis]… Ward’s Abstract is a model of neo-classical clarity in its construction. Underwood and Chiles play in admirable ensemble in this music, which calls for close cooperation…The altissimo passages [in the Tull] are all dispatched with facility, and Underwood plays at ease in passages of considerable rhythmic and technical complexity. Underwood, with pianist Chiles, gives an adroit read… Del Borgo’s fine craftsmanship yields a work that explores both instruments’ capacities in an exciting and appealing way. The formidable technical demands made upon the saxophonist are handled with ease by Underwood, who shows admirable facility overall, and an impressive agility in the extreme altissimo range…Throughout the disc, Dale Underwood plays with a warm, yet mellow and homogenous sound, topped with a supple vibrato. The often formidable technical demands of the program are met with secure and agile playing that never sounds taxed. His ease in the altissimo range is especially impressive.175

Figure 6.14. The cover of Dale Underwood’s fourth album, with Underwood and Ron Chiles, released 1981.

175 Brian Ayscue, 28-29.
A week after recording his fourth record, Underwood and Chiles presented a guest recital at the University of Maryland. Among the program were two works written for Underwood: Elliot Del Borgo’s *Sonata No. 2* and Carvalho’s *Song and Dance*.

Underwood recalls, “Reggie Jackson, who was the teacher there, called me up and simply said, ‘Hey Dale, I can get you some money if you want to come play.’ We had been friends for quite a while. I knew him well from the symposiums and we’d both been in the area for a long time. He was also at that Brussels trip with me in 1977.”

During one of the tours in the early 1980’s Underwood relates, “I remember one evening…when bowing at the front of the stage before the concerto, hearing the snap of my right suspender! I had to play the entire Ibert *Concertino* with my legs crossed, using the horn to help hold up my pants. Another time bowing I caught the edge of my shoe on the footlight at the front of the stage. Needless to say, I nearly fell straight into the pit.”

It was also around this time Underwood applied to be part of the Concert Artist Guild. Despite overwhelmingly supportive letters from composers Andreas Makris, Vincent Persichetti, and Paul Creston, they decided not to accept Underwood. Although a specific reason was never presented, it is likely due to the prejudices against the saxophone as a classical solo instrument which still prevailed at the time.

Makris wrote on Underwood’s behalf:

Most recently I had the opportunity to hear my composition *Fantasy and Dance* for saxophone and piano performed by Mr. Dale Underwood. Mr. Underwood, besides having all the technique one needs for the saxophone, clearly

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demonstrates a strong musicianship, a natural feeling for the music and phrasing, and personality that leaves the listener with indelible impression. In my opinion it would be to the advantage of any musical organization to utilize the talents and virtuosity of Mr. Underwood.\textsuperscript{180}

Persichetti’s letter was concise but equally supportive, “I understand that Dale Underwood has applied to the Concert Artists Guild. This musician is a first-rate performer and plays music of many styles and idioms with meaning and effectiveness. He is a top performer in the field and a musician worthy of your keen interest and help.”\textsuperscript{181}

Paul Creston similarly showed his encouragement. He wrote,

This is to acknowledge my judgment of Mr. Dale Underwood as a phenomenal master of the saxophone and a supreme artist. This judgment is based on my familiarity with his recording of my concerto for saxophone which revealed his flawless technique and sensitive musicianship. I am certain that as a concert artist Dale Underwood would have great audience-appeal.\textsuperscript{182}

On January 29, 1982 Underwood was featured at the fifth Navy Symposium, performing Chattaway’s \textit{Nocturne and Ritual Dance}. Other soloists on the opening concert included James Houlik and James Scott.\textsuperscript{183} The remainder of the year was again filled with many guest recitals outside of Underwood’s solo duties with the Navy Band. In February, Underwood appeared with pianist Marjorie Lee at Prince George’s Community College. He describes her as “a most incredible pianist – she could play anything.” On the 26\textsuperscript{th} of that month Underwood and Chiles gave a recital at the North Carolina Saxophone Society, a two-day conference organized by James Houlik. On

\textsuperscript{180} Andreas Makris, letter to Concert Artist Guild, Dale Underwood Personal Collection, May 4, 1982.

\textsuperscript{181} Vincent Persichetti, letter to Concert Artist Guild, Dale Underwood Personal Collection, January 14, 1980.

\textsuperscript{182} Paul Creston, letter to Concert Artist Guild, Dale Underwood Personal Collection, undated.

March 4 Underwood performed at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam with Robin MacMillan on piano. He says, “That recital probably came through Elliot [Del Borgo] because he taught there. We had met in 1973 working with a Kansas Band at Midwest Clinic, and he had me out after that to solo with his wind ensemble as well.”

In May of 1982, Underwood traveled to Harrisburg, PA to perform the Grundman *Concertante* and the Carvalho *Song and Dance* with an all-county honor band. The band was not prepared to perform music of that difficulty, resulting in an interesting concert. Underwood recollects,

> There was this huge honor band. It was a county band made up of multiple schools and unfortunately it was awful. Good kids but just terrible players. During all the rehearsals we never once made it through a piece without stopping. At the concert I’m thinking, “We haven’t once gotten through these pieces yet! How are they going to do it now?” The concert actually went “okay” and the crowd liked it but that was one of the only concerts where I was seriously concerned and wondering whether or not we would get through it.

It was around this time in the early 1980’s that Underwood and trombonist Art Swanson started a Navy Band Recital Series held in the sail loft. They recognized there were many exceptional performers in the band who didn’t get to solo on tour and felt the need to create an event where they too could be featured. Additionally it allowed all bandsmen more opportunities to perform standard repertoire and chamber music together. Underwood says:

> The officers liked the idea and said as long as we set it up and take care of everything they were fine with it…so we did. We actually got pretty good crowds. We would do around 4 or 5 concerts in the spring and again in the fall. Whoever wanted to sign up could play and we always had plenty of people who wanted to play. I performed several times at that series. In fact, that’s where I premiered Elliot Del Borgo’s *Sonata No 2*. I also did the Fisher Tull *Coliloquy* there once,

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185 Ibid.
the Muczynski sonata, and the Yuyuma *Divertimento for Alto Saxophone and Marimba* with Bill Thomas. It started under Phillips and I organized it a number of years until one of the band’s leaders took it over. They eventually started taking it other places, doing them in all these spots around town. Then museums and other smaller venues would ask for us to come in and do that. They continued that until I retired and I think they still do things like that now.\(^{186}\)

In July of 1982, the seventh World Saxophone Congress was hosted in Nuremberg, Germany. Underwood again paired with pianist Ron Chiles to deliver a recital at the congress on July 10. Two of the works included were also found on his recent record: Andrea Makris’ *Fantasy and Dance* and Elliot Del Borgo’s *Sonata No. 2*. Additionally the recital featured the saxophone and piano arrangement of Carvalho’s *Song and Dance*, and the premiere of Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn’s new composition entitled *Liquid Gold*.\(^{187}\) Of Van Appledorn’s composition Underwood relates,

> That was a really contemporary piece. We had done *Matrices* together a number of times and [she] decided to write something for me. She would send me drafts using next day delivery service. I would get the music, and she would call me the very same night and ask, “Well how is it? Can you play it?” I’d say, “I have no idea, this shit is really hard can I have just one day to look at it?” She was an Eastman graduate and an absolutely incredible musician. She wrote that piece for me, and I ended up playing it many times.\(^{188}\)

In an interview with Bruce Duffie, Van Appledorn later said,

> I have done a couple of pieces with Dale Underwood…He is an alto saxophone player with altissimo range, a very, very high-note technique. He is really a virtuosic, spectacular performer. *Liquid Gold* is the one piece I did with his kind of improvisation, his kind of tone, his ability with the high notes and so forth. I really did that entire piece with him in mind.\(^{189}\)

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\(^{186}\) Ibid.


Commander Phillips recalls another typical incident of a playful, and quite elaborate, prank organized by Underwood on one of the tours around this time. Underwood discovered Phillips’ first cousin was a state trooper in South Carolina, through which they were touring. Some of the band members would get together each week to have libations and socialize. Underwood, Phillips, and John Hadley, the tour director, devised a meticulous plot using Phillips’ cousin. He shares,

One of the guys had just bought this collection of adult entertainment on a bunch of 8mm reels. When they were hanging out that week, having some drinks, they had a projector and were playing those reels on the wall. Dale comes out of the room letting us know the party is alive and well…And my cousin is down in my hotel room taking his guns off and unloading them. And in those days, in South Carolina, they also had sawed off shotguns with them. Well, Dale comes out of the room and says, “Okay, they’re ready to go.” He went back in and left the door slightly cracked. My cousin, with his unloaded pistol and shotgun, runs up and kicks in the door to the room! I’m watching this from across the street in awe. Dale flips the lights on and I could see the people in the room. One of them was Marty Erickson, and boy I thought he was going to hit the floor! They’re sitting there having drinks and smoking cigarettes and watching stag flicks you know, several women watching too. Anyway, my cousin rolls in and yells, “What in the hell is going on in here? You people think you can come down from up north and just do anything you want to!” He was really playing the role. John Hadley defiantly resists, saying, “Wait a minute, what are you doing? You can’t do this!” Everyone is shushing him, saying, “Just be quiet and sit down!” John goes, “No, I want my rights!” My cousin proceeds to stick the shotgun directly under his chin and says, “Oh, I’ll show you your damn rights.” At this point everyone is seriously freaking out, Dale is just dying, and John still has the shotgun under his chin. Finally my cousin asks, “Who is in charge of this whole group?” They replied, “Commander Phillips is.” “Well go get him,” he says. When Dale steps out of the door to get me, he’s laughing so damn hard he falls down. I mean he literally couldn’t stay on his feet. Dale got me and brought me up to speed on what happened and I walked in saying, “What the hell is going on?” I’m looking around pretending I have no idea what’s happening. My cousin looks at me and asks, “Are you in charge of these damn perverts?” I said, “Well yes I am officer, what’s the problem?” He says, “You see what’s going here? What in the world is this?” All of a sudden at that point he can’t hold it in anymore and he starts laughing. Then I start laughing, Dale starts laughing and then finally John burst into laughter. We are all laughing hysterically and about 15 to 20 people suddenly realized they had been had big time. I was looking at their faces… first it was absolute fear, then, a relief when they realized it wasn’t for real. They looked happy, and the next thing you know, they’re all completely pissed. That became a
legendary tale in the Navy Band and I think they never really got us back for that. Things like that went on in the band, and besides the fantastic music, they sure made things interesting.

Phillips laughingly admits, “Dale was behind almost every damn one of those things!”

The opening concert of the 1983 Navy Symposium was held on January 29 that year and featured Underwood, Fred Hemke, James Houlik, and Elie Apper with the Navy Concert Band. Underwood’s much-anticipated performance was the premiere of Claude Smith’s *Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Band*. Underwood paired with pianist Ron Chiles the following day in a recital. Additionally, Underwood also performed Paul Arma’s work *Divertimento No. 12* with Elie Apper as well as Apper’s saxophone sextet arrangement of Gershwin tunes. The Smith *Fantasia* was written for Underwood and dedicated to the Navy Band’s conductor, Commander Phillips. It became wildly successful and was used on the Navy Band tour that year, and on many other tours. By the time Underwood retired, it had become the most popular of the works written for him.

In February of 1983 Underwood performed recitals with Ron Chiles at Prince George’s Community College and the University of Maryland, both times including the piece Van Appledorn had written for him, *Liquid Gold*. Underwood traveled to Texas Tech University to play the work again on February 21, with Van Appledorn.

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192 Dyess, 324-325.

193 Mary Jones, 71.

accompanying him, at the 32nd annual Symposium of Contemporary Music. The month concluded with a trip to Canada to perform with the Scarborough Schools Symphony Orchestra.\textsuperscript{195} Underwood remembers, “That was right outside of Toronto. It was a great high school orchestra. That came about through Elliot [Del Borgo] because he had a friend that taught up there and they had a really good program. They had me out to play \textit{Song and Dance}.”\textsuperscript{196}

Underwood’s friendship with Wayne Bennett led to an invitation to return to the University of Oregon in March of 1983. The first day he performed a guest recital with Joanne Kong on piano. The second day Underwood performed Ward’s \textit{Concert Piece} with the Symphonic Band and Smith’s \textit{Fantasia} with the Wind Ensemble. Underwood performed \textit{Fantasia} later that month at the Naval Base in Virginia for the 34th observance of Armed Forces Day.\textsuperscript{197}

In addition to its premiere at the symposium, the national tour, and a handful of guest appearances, Underwood finished the year with a performance of the new \textit{Fantasia} at the 1983 Midwest Clinic. This time it was done with the VanderCook College Symphonic Band, Claude Smith himself serving as guest conductor. Victor Zajec, then Dean of the Graduate School and conductor of the band, wrote Underwood shortly thereafter:

\begin{quote}
Dear Dale,
I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for performing with us at the Midwest National Band and Orchestra Clinic. Your performance was certainly sensational and the number of phone calls and letters received about you is
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{196} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.
\textsuperscript{197} Dale Underwood Personal Collection, accessed March 2017.
\end{flushright}
unbelievable. You certainly have many school directors interested in trying to get their student saxophonists to play with control and musical taste. Such beautiful tone quality, flowing technic control, and musical sensitivity as displayed in your performance was a joy to hear and is given to a chosen few. We certainly are honored that you chose to perform with us…. Thank you again for playing with us and may the new year bring you many more successful performances and help to keep your name in the minds of saxophone players worldwide…

Sincerely,

Victor W. Zajec

These performances propelled Fantasia’s exposure to thousands of directors, conductors, and performers within its first year. The challenging, contemporary, yet very accessible solo part appealed to a wide range of audiences. As a result, Underwood and his performance of the Smith became one of the most sought-after guest performances in the country. Since that time Underwood has performed the Fantasia literally hundreds of times in recitals, with High Schools bands, University ensembles, Community Bands, and professional groups.

On January 27, 1984 Underwood performed Del Borgo’s Soliloquy and Dance at the sixth Navy Symposium. A fun challenge resulted in a new performance standard for the work. Underwood relates,

I was doing the Del Borgo for the symposium. Sinta was one of the other soloists and we were backstage before it began. Sinta was doing the Dahl [Concerto] and said, “Oh well you’ve got it easy. You’ve only got to go to a high B.” Jokingly, I said, “Screw you. I’m taking that cadenza at the end up an octave!” I did that on the spot and that’s how it is played now.

Among the performers at the Navy Symposium that was year was Lynn Klock, then professor of saxophone at the University of Massachusetts. Klock wrote to Commander

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200 Ibid.
Phillips, “My compliments to you and Dale…I’m sure you already know that you have an outstanding artist in Dale Underwood, not to mention a fine person. Your use of him as a soloist with the Navy Band is a credit to all saxophonists, and without question speaks well of the Navy Band.”

Through the continued success of the Navy Symposium, then in its sixth year, Underwood earned the Navy Achievement Medal for establishing and coordinating the event.

Figure 6.15. Dale Underwood 1984 Navy Band publicity photo.

The First State Symphonic Band invited Underwood to perform *Fantasia* and *Oodles of Noodles* on their concert March 4, 1984. Underwood notes,

That was an interesting community band up in Delaware. You see, the band was actually up in the area where DuPont chemical company was. A huge chemical company…and they used to have their own band! They eventually decided not to do it anymore and donated all of their music and things. The First State Symphonic Band came out of that and a lot of people in the band were chemists.

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and other really smart people who played an instrument. Many of them played well and liked music but they decided to make a good bit of money instead.  

The next month, on April 15, Underwood performed the Fantasia with the Penn State Symphonic Blue Band. “It wasn’t the top band,” Underwood said, “but the guy that did the Blue Band was a real good guy. He was the marching director and had me out twice. I went back after we had both retired and played in a community band he ran in that town as well. Happy Valley is the name I think.”

Allen E. Beck: November 1984 – April 1989

Commander Beck, who succeeded Commander Phillips, had been in the Navy Band for three years under its second leader Charles Brendler. He left in 1960 and returned in 1984. Beck continued many of the same activities as previously established. The duties of the concert band included some military functions, annual tours, the fall and winter concert series, and the summer outdoor concert series. Beck was an Eastman graduate and had studied with Frederick Fennell. Their friendship resulted in several performances guest conducted by Fennell. One of the highlights was Fennell’s rehearsing and conducting the ensemble on the premiere of his edition of Percy Grainger’s *Lincolnshire Posy*, performed at the Midwest Clinic in 1987. Other important moments under Beck’s tenure included opening the “Greatest Bands in the Land” series on NPR, performing at the Statue of Liberty rededication ceremony, and participating in the George Washington Bicentennial Celebrations as well as the nationally-televised

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203 Ibid.

204 Dyess, 348-349.
Constitutional Bicentennial Parade. When Commander Beck retired, and was asked to describe traveling with the band for the last three years, he simply said, “None would believe the story.”

The Navy Symposium in January of 1985 resulted in two premieres by Underwood and jazz tenor player Pete Christlieb. The first was Contrasts, written by Joe Roccisano and premiered on the opening concert with the Navy Concert Band. “Pete and I were looking for a piece to play together,” Underwood says, “and Pete knew Roccisano and asked him to write for us.” Christlieb stated, “[Underwood] had all the notes, and I had all the jazz… Dale is a great guy. He’s a gorgeous player. Great guy.” Upon Underwood’s request, the second piece premiered at the symposium was written for them by Jay Chattaway. Chattaway’s new piece was entitled Double Star, and called for alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, and tape. It was premiered the following day on a recital.

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206 Dyess, 362.


In February of 1985, James Sudduth asked Underwood to come out and play *Fantasia* with the Texas Tech University Symphonic Band. They went on a short tour of about six concerts leading up to a performance in Boulder, CO for the 23rd national CBDNA conference. The conference was hosted at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Although they had not yet met, Professor Gary Green was in the audience. Years later they would meet and become colleagues as well as close friends.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Ibid.
Conductor, Wayne Bennett, who had invited Underwood to perform in Oregon on multiple occasions, was filling in as the band director at the University of California-Los Angeles while their usual conductor was on sabbatical. He invited Underwood and Christlieb to perform the newly composed *Contrasts* with the UCLA Wind Ensemble on March 6. The program notes dubbed it the “west coast premiere.”  

On April 2, 1985 Underwood again performed with the Northshore Concert Band – he had performed with them previously at the WSC hosted by Fred Hemke at Northwestern University. Underwood says,

> For some time the Northshore Band was *the* community band of the nation. Community bands weren’t as big back then as they are now and that was the group a lot of others were patterned after. They used to play at Midwest every year until the event got to be so popular they couldn’t always perform. I played with them multiple times. I did the Ward with them for the WSC. This time they just had me out on one of their concerts to do the Smith *Fantasia* and another time Martino’s *Gershwin Fantasy*.  

Other performances of *Fantasia* followed shortly thereafter, first with the Washoe County Honor Band conducted by Wayne Bennett, then with the University of Nevada-Reno Wind Ensemble conducted by A.G. McGrannaham III. Underwood also performed it with the Central Kentucky Concert Band and finally with the Naval Academy Band conducted by Claude Smith himself.  


In 1986, Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn entered the composition she had written for Underwood, *Liquid Gold*, in the IX Premio Ancona Composition Contest held in Ancona, Italy. She sent Underwood to perform the work and out of 156 entries he earned a spot among the eight finalists.\footnote{214} Underwood states,

> She had entered the piece in some competition and so I went over and played it there – no accompanist. You see, there were three versions. You could do it with live piano, with tape, or unaccompanied. Once you got there they would pay for your expenses but she paid for the plane ticket. I flew into Rome and stayed there for a few days right by the Vatican. Then I drove across the country in a rental car... no idea where I was going but finally ended up in this town, found the hotel, and had a great time there. It was on the Aegean. I did the piece with tape and received honorable mention. It was wonderful; she was just such a great lady.\footnote{215}
In January 1987 Walter Hartley asked Underwood to put together a chamber ensemble to perform at his daughter’s wedding. They had known each other for many years, frequently meeting at saxophone conferences. When the Navy Band toured through Fredonia Underwood called him and invited him for lunch. Their friendship continued to grow. They had actually performed Hartley’s *Duo* together once.

Underwood recalls,

> It was at a regional conference and he played piano for me. That was before London so that was early 70’s. The *Duo* was written for Sinta when I was in high school and though I had heard Sinta do it on some recitals I didn’t work on it until later. He was a really aggressive piano player but there sure were a lot of wrong notes. In 1987 he asked me to put a group together for his daughter’s wedding. He said he was going to arrange some of his daughter’s favorite tunes – I hadn’t heard of any of them. I asked him, “How many musicians?” “Oh I don’t care,” he said… “Well, what instrumentation?” I asked. He replied, “Doesn’t matter, I’ll do the arrangements.” I don’t remember exactly what the ensemble was. It was some odd number, just people out of the Navy Band who were available and willing. I know Marty [Erickson] played with me there. There was at least tuba, alto and tenor saxophones, clarinet, trumpet, and maybe trombone.” We played at the reception at Strathmore – not the concert hall but the house.\(^{216}\)

During February 8-13, 1987 Underwood was invited for a second trip with the Texas Tech University Symphonic Band under James Sudduth. This time they toured throughout Texas, giving six performances of the Smith *Fantasia* before their final concert. They ended their tour with a concert at the Texas Music Educators Conference held in the San Antonio Convention Center Theater. The following year Sudduth was a guest conductor for an all-district band in Virginia where he also invited Underwood to play the Smith.\(^{217}\)

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\(^{216}\) Ibid.

Two of the other saxophonists in the Navy Band retired that year leaving vacancies. Around May 1987 they held an audition to fill the positions and awarded the jobs to Cynthia Marr and Timothy Roberts, both from Northwestern University. Roberts had been influenced by Underwood since high school when he had bought Underwood’s first record with the recording of Whitney’s *Introduction and Samba*. “It became one of my favorite albums,” Roberts recalls, “I listened to him play that piece many times.” When Roberts was attending Northwestern University, the Navy Band passed through the area and Fred Hemke arranged for Underwood to come do a masterclass. Although Roberts had never envisioned himself joining a military band, he reconsidered when he discovered what Underwood did for a living. Roberts played second alto and tenor saxophone for 10 years, and after Underwood retired, took over his position as soloist.218

Roberts remembers the profound respect and admiration other members of the section, and band, had for Underwood:

When I got the job, the second alto who I replaced was Howard Denker. He used to always joke, and make fun of Dale, saying that every day sitting next to Dale was like taking a private lesson from him. The entire time that Dale and I overlapped in the band together people would joke that when they sat next to Dale for a concert they were going “to their private lesson.” The thing is…that was completely true! Dale always taught by example and his playing was so contagious. He was always in tune and had this incredible ability to always feel a phrase.219

In December 1987 the band once again prepared to perform at the Midwest Clinic. The experience there became a musical highlight for many Navy Bandsmen. Their performance was preceded by a mini-tour traveling to Chicago. Underwood performed the *Fantasia* on tour but the program changed for Midwest Clinic concert. While en route

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219 Ibid.
to Chicago the band learned of Claude Smith’s passing away. Erickson shares, “He was a very close friend of both Dale and I. The band decided to play his *Eternal Father Strong to Save* at the feature concert in Chicago, but without a conductor, simulating the “missing man formation” tribute like with the Navy Thunderbirds and other service pilots. The performance was stunning – musically and of course emotionally.”

In 1988 Underwood became the first person elected as president of the North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) who was not a college instructor. His selection was based on his experience as innovator and coordinator of the Navy Symposium, multiple solo performances at the World Saxophone Congress, and the compositions written for him. Underwood felt his membership in the Navy Band was advantageous to NASA because the tours would afford him the opportunity to interact with non-local members of the organization. After the two-year term, Underwood was re-elected.

In January of 1989 Underwood joined the faculty at George Mason University. Colonel Gabriel, who had since retired from the Air Force, was serving as the Chairman of Performing Arts. During his few years there he had strengthened relations between the various departments, revived George Mason’s symphony orchestra, and created a concert band program. Seeking “the best minds in music education,” Col. Gabriel requested Underwood as the teacher of saxophone. They had known each other for many years and crossed paths frequently at conferences and combined service bands. The first concert with Col. Gabriel as conductor and Underwood as soloist, however, took place a year

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220 Martin Erickson, phone interview by author, April 4, 2017.

after his hiring at George Mason University. Since that time the two have performed
together numerous times.\textsuperscript{222}

Underwood says,

I actually taught at Prince George’s Community College first. I taught there for a
while adjunct. The first record I did was recorded there – at the time I wasn’t
teaching yet but it was recorded there. I then also taught at Catholic University.
Both of these positions were really just whenever they had a student. It was
mostly just if they had for example a masters or doctoral student there. Keith
Young from the Air Force Band did his masters with me there and Tim Roberts
did his doctorate with me there after I was retired from the Navy but he was still
in the band. A previous student of mine is teaching there now, he was in the army
band and did his doctorate with me. Then when I taught at George Mason it was a
little more involved. I taught there almost 20 years, but I was never full time. If I
remember correctly my first student there was a girl with the last name Stanley
and she happened to be the granddaughter of Col. Gabriel’s high school band
director!\textsuperscript{223}

On February 27, 1989 Underwood performed a special concert commemorating
saxophonist Brian Minor. Minor had tragically succumbed to a sudden illness and passed
away at the age of 42. Ball State University held an annual concert in memoriam and set
up a scholarship fund in Minor’s name. This was the sixth such concert.\textsuperscript{224} Two of the
works performed were written for Underwood: The Del Borgo \textit{Sonata No.2}, and the
Smith \textit{Fantasia}.\textsuperscript{225}

In March 1989 Underwood and Chiles headed to New York to perform \textit{Liquid
Gold} at the New York chapter of the National Association of Composers U.S.A.
conference. Later that month, after an eight year absence from professional recording,

\textsuperscript{222} Gabriel, 307-314.

\textsuperscript{223} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.

\textsuperscript{224} “Navy Band Musician Featured in Memorial Concert,” \textit{Ball State University Campus Update}
(IN), February 27, 1989.

Underwood entered the Opus One Records studio to record the work for Van Appledorn’s CD.\textsuperscript{226}


Commander Field, who originally joined the Navy as a clarinetist, served in several different Navy Bands before assuming command of the Navy Band in Washington D.C. Improved public relations with the United Soviet States of Russia led to the Navy Band’s participation in two ceremonies welcoming Russian presidents to the United States. Many other performances were dictated by the Persian Gulf War. Although a short conflict, the war was well covered with live news from the front lines and required a “major military band presence in the media.”\textsuperscript{227}

On May 7, 1989 Underwood premiered a new work with the Spring Garden Band in York, PA. The composition, entitled \textit{Dance and Intermezzo}, was written by Jeffrey Taylor who was a member of the Navy Band. He conducted the premiere himself. The piece was actually slated to be premiered at the Navy Symposium on January 27 but it was delayed because Underwood had chipped a bone in his finger rendering him unable to play. “I simply caught it going through a door hurriedly,” he said. “My hand was too sore at the time, I couldn’t play it.”\textsuperscript{228}

Another major international solo occurred in July 1989. Conductor Marvin Eckroth and the University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra, from Saskatoon, Canada,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{226} “Duo to Perform Work by Tech Composer,” \textit{Lubbock-Avalanche Journal} (TX), March 12, 1989.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.
\end{itemize}
presented a program at the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE) and invited Underwood to perform *Fantasia* with them.\(^{229}\) Underwood relates, “The conductor was a saxophonist and I had gotten to know him through the WSC, Midwest Clinic, and other conferences. I actually did a small tour with their band just around Canada before we went over, probably between six and 10 concerts.”\(^{230}\) It was the fifth WASBE and was held in Kerkrade, Netherlands, in conjunction with the World Music Contest. The WASBE website reads, “The conference featured 15 bands from many parts of the world including the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, the American Waterways Wind Orchestra, the Stockholm Symphonic Wind Orchestra, and the Netherlands Senior Wind Orchestra.”\(^{231}\)

![Figure 6.18. Dale Underwood performing *Fantasia* by Claude Smith at the 1989 World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles in Kerkrade, Netherlands with the Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra under direction of Marvin Eckroth.](image)

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On April 29, 1990 Underwood and Col. Gabriel, now both on the George Mason University faculty, gave their first performance together. Among the many duties Col. Gabriel carried out was that of orchestra conductor. Underwood soloed with the George Mason University Orchestra performing *Song and Dance* and the premiere of Walter Hartley’s *Concerto No. 2*. The new Hartley work had been a commission from Dorn Publications, Inc. for Underwood.\(^{232}\) Another guest soloist and friend Col. Gabriel had invited was trumpet player Allen Vizzutti. Underwood had met him before but they became friends at this concert – Vizzutti wrote *Whirlwind for Alto Saxophone and Band* for Underwood the following year.

The following year Col. Gabriel guest conducted the George Mason University Symphonic Band with Underwood on the Smith *Fantasia* at the Virginia Music Educators Conference held at the Richmond Marriott Hotel. A few months later, Underwood was invited to perform *Fantasia* at the Augustana College 34th Annual Concert Band Festival in Sioux Falls, SD.\(^{233}\) Col. Gabriel invited Underwood yet again for a guest performance the next year, this time playing the Glazunov *Concerto* with the McLean Orchestra, which he also directed.\(^{234}\)

Underwood’s friendship with Col. Gabriel continued to deepen. Col. Gabriel tells,

Dale and I are from the same small hometown of Cortland [NY]. And when Dale was in high school I came through with the Air Force Band, which made him want to join the Air Force. The funny thing is… During World War II, when I


was still a senior in high school, I went to the Navy Yard to audition for the Navy School of Music. I was accepted and given a letter which I was to present to the recruiter at the induction center to bypass the draft and instead enter the Navy. In those days you could select your service Army, Navy, or Marines… (The Air Force was part of the Army at that time). But on that day in June of 1943 that letter didn’t do me any good and everyone went into the army. So Dale and I often joke that he wanted to go into the Air Force and I into the Navy but I ended up in the Air Force and he ended up in the Navy!

A comedic exchange between the two is recorded in Michael Gabriel’s book. He shares a moment when they were backstage before their introductions at a concert. He writes, “Dale turned to Arnald [Gabriel] and said, ‘You have never thanked the Navy.’ Caught off guard, Arnald asked, ‘For what?’ ‘Well, who took you over and dropped you off on D-Day?’ Laughing now, Arnald said ‘Yeah, and then they left!’ Dale responded, ‘Well, we’re no fools. They were shooting at you!’ ”

In return for the many invitations Col. Gabriel extended to him, Underwood arranged for Col. Gabriel to conduct the Navy Band on the opening concert of the 1991 Navy Symposium. The Navy Symposium had grown over the years, both in scale and in number of participants. Col. Gabriel suggested Underwood to relocate the Navy Symposium to better facilities at George Mason University instead. The Navy Band graciously accepted and the event was held there until Underwood’s retirement (and continues there at this present time).

Another reason the 1991 Navy Symposium was particularly meaningful was composer Karel Husa’s participation, conducting both his Music for Prague and Concerto for Saxophone, featuring Underwood. Being moved by Underwood’s

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235 Gabriel, 315.

performance of the concerto, Husa requested that Underwood perform it with him again the following year at his retirement concert. Underwood considered it a great honor. They became good friends and stayed in touch until Husa’s passing.\textsuperscript{237} A postcard received later that year, and ironically from Prague, says, “Many thanks to all and for wonderful memories of our collaboration last January! Your playing is outstanding! Bravo! I look forward to our collaboration again.”\textsuperscript{238}

Figure 6.19. Poster and program for Karel Husa’s retirement concert May 3, 1992 both signed by Husa.

In July 1991, Underwood made his second appearance at the WASBE festival, taking place in Manchester, England that year. He was invited to perform with the

\textsuperscript{237} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.

\textsuperscript{238} Karel Husa, letter to Dale Underwood, Dale Underwood Personal Collection, October 30, 1991.
Australian Wind Orchestra, playing Smith *Fantasia* and a new arrangement of George Gershwin tunes by Ralph Martino entitled *Gershwin Medley*.\(^{239}\) Commander Phillips asked Martino, who was on the Navy Band arrangement staff, to do the medley. It was used for the spring tour before WASBE and became tremendously popular. Since then it is often paired with the Smith. Underwood says,

> Besides the Gershwin [medley], Ralph Martino later also did the Cole Porter [medley] and a Jerome Kern medley for me, as well as the *Americana Suite* – that was [originally for saxophone] quartet but he put it with band. *Gershwin Medley* came first, in 1991, and came about as just being an arrangement for the tours. The *Salute to Cole Porter* came after that and then Phillips had him do another one, which was the *Jerome Kern Songbook*. He didn’t care much for the Porter [medley]. For some reason those tunes just seem to work much better on vocals. *Americana Suite* came after that, but eventually we just kept going back to the Gershwin. It’s the most popular of them.\(^{240}\)

Also in 1991, Underwood released a solo CD entitled *Classic Pastiche* on the Open Loop Records label. The repertoire is quite varied and consists of: *Sonata* by Robert Muczynski, an arrangement of *Sonata No. 3* by G.F. Handel, *Chanson et Passepied* by Jeanine Rueff, *Sonata* by Wolfgang Jacobi, *Sicilienne* by Pierre Lantier, an arrangement of *Sonata* by Henri Eccles, *Sarabande and Gigue* by Fisher Tull, and Underwood’s first solo with band, *Introduction and Samba* by Maurice Whitney (the latter two were previously recorded on Underwood’s vinyl records).\(^{241}\) A review the following year in King Durkee’s column *Strictly Classical* read as follows,

> Dale Underwood is an internationally renowned virtuoso and has played in all parts of the world… If your classical leanings prompt you to think, “Yes, but really, the saxophone?” Keep that thought to yourself until after you have heard this remarkable recording by this accomplished instrumentalist. He’ll prove to

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you that his instrument has a place in the performance of serious (classical) music just as much as it does in the worlds of jazz and military bands. This is excellent stuff and it’s classical to its core.\textsuperscript{242}

The Clarinet and Saxophone Society of England published the following review,

Dale Underwood is one of the most highly rated saxophonists in the U.S.A. and his skills are superbly demonstrated on this album. The program opens with the Sonata by Muczynski, a two-movement tour de force often used as a test piece for the instrument. Underwood has a rich, vibrant tone which is used to the full in this performance...The Handel works very well and is an excellent advertisement for the inclusion of Baroque transcriptions in recitals...The Fisher Tull matched the Muczynski in acrobatics and is given a very convincing reading in this performance. Maurice Whitney’s \textit{Introduction and Samba} is an outstanding demonstration of Underwood’s skills. Written for Rascher, the work employs stratospheric techniques now common on the concert platform. Underwood’s control of this register is of a very high quality; you feel confident that he isn’t going to slip from the high wire. This is an album of excellent musicianship, representing some important saxophone repertoire items.\textsuperscript{243}

The following year Open Loop Records released a double CD version. The first CD was Underwood’s \textit{Classic Pastiche} while the second contained only the piano accompaniment of the same selections. The review in the \textit{Saxophone Journal} noted,

“This is not a new concept in jazz, but for classical saxophonists, it is not only new but a very exciting way to practice the repertoire.” The review continued,

From the saxophonists’ point of view, Dale Underwood is perhaps the ultimate role model for the classical saxophone repertoire...Underwood is a strong aggressive player with a full rich sound [and] can easily switch from light, to delicate, to robust. The music flows through his instrument effortlessly and captures the imagination of any listener...Dale has great fluent technique and shares that superb ability with smooth shifts from one dynamic extreme to the other. His articulation is clean and sparkling through the rapid passages as he easily travels the light delicate style of Handel’s \textit{Sonata No. 3} to the heavier styles of composers Muczynski or Jacobi. His propensity for extreme lyricism excels on Rueff’s \textit{Chanson et Passepied} and is outstanding on \textit{Sicilienne} by Lantier. Dale’s use of altissimo register is commendable. The fluency of his sound, and the dynamic range he executes, are excellent. This combination of sound is especially


\textsuperscript{243} Ingham, 53.
noticeable on Fisher Tull’s *Sarabande and Gigue*. Underwood uses a pianissimo delivery in the altissimo that is controlled, fluent, and makes the saxophone become part of the instruments “natural voice.” With all of these magnificent attributes, it is not surprising that Dale Underwood’s most impressive quality is his ability to sound so natural and let the music happen emotionally and artistically.  


After Commander Fields retired, a familiar person again took control of the Navy Band. Phillips was assigned to command the Navy Band a second time, the only leader to serve in the position twice. A change in regulation allowed him to do so as Captain, he being the first music officer in the history of the Navy to attain this rank. Significant events under Captain Phillips included playing for the Bicentennial of the U.S. Capitol, the opening ceremonies to a 1994 World Cup Soccer match, NBCs “The Today Show,” and the International Swedish Army Tattoo in Stockholm, Sweden.  

The Navy Band is one of the finest musical ensembles in the world but with hundreds of performances each year, not all of them proceed flawlessly. On one occasion, during Captain Phillips’ tenure, Underwood’s quick thinking allowed the band to recover from a serious mishap:

We did a Latin influenced piece, *Ritmo Jondo*, one time with Phillips…One of the trumpet players didn’t come in. His part was really important and it screwed the whole band up. People were just dropping out… they just quit! Eventually it was dead silent for a beat or two so out of nowhere I just started playing the melody all by myself, solo…. I went through the whole melody giving Phillips time to communicate to the band where to regroup. I played the whole tune and held the

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last note. He then brought the band back in and we finished the piece. The crowd never even knew!\textsuperscript{246}

Timothy Roberts also recalls the reliability of Underwood and the unequaled respect he had long since earned from the entire ensemble:

We played under a lot of different conductors in the Navy Band. Some were quite bad and whenever the conductor got off… typically in a band you listen to the principal trumpet, but in the Navy Band you would listen to Dale. If things got off you would listen and do what Dale did. I got a whole lot out of my four years at Northwestern studying with Fred Hemke, but the greatest part of who I am as a musician is those ten years I sat next to Dale.

The thing that was so enjoyable about working with Dale, and sitting alongside him, is that he is just such a great and humble guy. There are a lot of people in those military bands that attempt to use their military authority to show leadership. Dale never did that – he knew he didn’t need to do that type of thing. He was a friend to everyone and was a great leader because he knew how to take care of people. He knew how to musically lead a section without relying on his status or rank.

People had such great respect for his playing that he never really had to say a whole lot. The band simply listened to Dale and would know how to do things. It was a respect in the band that no one else had. No other senior band member had the musical respect Dale had. It was a remarkable set of leadership skills – didn’t have to say anything and people knew what to do.\textsuperscript{247}

During November 19-21, 1992 Underwood was an Artist-In-Residence at Unifest. This was a musical celebration for bands, choirs, orchestras, and soloists. Marvin Eckroth, under whose direction Underwood performed at the 1989 WASBE, invited him to be a guest there. Underwood gave some saxophone workshops at the conference and performed \textit{Fantasia} with the University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra. The following month the Navy Band performed at the Midwest Clinic. Due to the extreme popularity

\textsuperscript{246} Dale Underwood, interview by author, Miami, March 20, 2017.

\textsuperscript{247} Timothy Roberts, phone interview by author, January 12, 2017.
and audience appeal they featured Underwood on Martino’s *Gershwin Medley*. It was very well received and led to many more guest invitations to perform the piece.²⁴⁸

On January 10, 1993 Underwood performed the Hartley *Double Concerto* at the 10th annual U.S. Army Band Tuba-Euphonium Conference. This was the second performance with Martin Erickson on tuba. They had first performed the piece together nearly two decades earlier and recorded it on Underwood’s first record.

On April 14, Underwood visited the Armed Forces School of Music in Norfolk, VA for their 37th Annual All-Eastern Band and Instrumental Clinic. There he performed *Fantasia* with the faculty wind ensemble. Raymond Ascione, the commanding officer over the school and conductor, wrote,

> Dale, thank you immensely for your superb performance with our faculty wind ensemble…It was such a treat working with you again, and needless to say, you amazed the audience, and especially our students, with your incredible virtuosity. My friend, you have contributed so much to military music during your illustrious career. On behalf of all military musicians, I thank you for your hard work, and consider it an honor to be numbered among your colleagues and friends.”"²⁴⁹

In May 1993 Underwood was invited as a guest soloist with the Greenbay Symphony Orchestra. Michael Bankhead, who succeeded Col. Gabriel as director of the Air Force band, happened to be the director of the orchestra and asked Col. Gabriel to guest conduct a performance. Col. Gabriel in turn was requested to bring along a soloist and suggested Underwood. He remembers the orchestra’s reluctance in having a saxophone soloist:

> I told them I’ve got an outstanding saxophonist and they sort of frowned and said, “A saxophone? A saxophonist with the symphony orchestra?” I assured them


they’d like him. Sure enough they loved it! The Weidner Center [for the Performing Arts] was one of those great acoustic halls where if you whisper on the stage you can hear it in the back of the hall. When Dale played in that altissimo range at pianissimo… Well, they were just astounded at how beautiful he played.  

The concert also featured William Warfield, one of the climactic moments being his role as narrator on Aaron Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait*. The reviews from the concert were positive and praising the guest soloists. Part of Terence O’Grady’s review in the *Greenbay Press Gazette* reads,

> A very different sort of high-light [after Warfield] was provided by the performances of alto saxophonist Dale W. Underwood, a master artist and featured soloist with the elite U.S. Navy Band. Underwood was the soloist for Smith’s *Fantasia for Alto Saxophone* and *Gershwin Fantasy*, arranged by Martino. The first of these was a fairly glitzy bit of Hollywood-tinged modernism that exhibited Underwood’s enormous skills very effectively. The second was a fairly conventional example of its type but showed the soloist’s ability to mix and match styles with the best of them.

Three days later, on May 20, 1993, Underwood made his Carnegie Hall debut as a soloist with the Texas Tech University Band under the direction of his long-time friend James Sudduth. Underwood performed Claude Smith’s *Fantasia* and Ralph Martino’s *Gershwin Fantasy*, the latter as an unlisted encore. Underwood was featured in the main hall, a stage which had supported only six other saxophonists in a concerto-style performance before. He followed in the footsteps of his greatest saxophone heroes. Underwood’s idol and teacher, Don Sinta, performed there in 1960.

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The other five saxophonists who had the honor of performing there were equally admired and among them were the three considered by many to be the founding fathers of the classical saxophone. They were: Cecil Leeson in 1939, Sigurd Rascher in 1941, Vincent Abato in 1944, Marcel Mule in 1958, and Kenneth Radnofsky in 1985.253

Thursday, May 20, 1993 at 8:00 PM  
Main Hall

**Texas Tech Univ. Symphonic Band**

*Presenter: Other Presenter*  
**Texas Tech University Symphonic Band**  
*James Sudduth, Conductor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHN WILLIAMS (1932–)</td>
<td>The Cowboys: Overture (1972)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AARON COPLAND (1900–1990)</td>
<td>El salón México (1933–1936)</td>
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<td>Cake Walk</td>
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<td>Rag</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Dale Underwood</em>, alto saxophone</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAVID KNEUPPER (1959–)</td>
<td>Passacaglia and Fugue Rondo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCY GRAINGER (1882–1961)</td>
<td>Mock Morris (1910)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOHN WILLIAMS (1932–)</td>
<td>Midway: March</td>
</tr>
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**Notes**  
Licensee: Texas Tech University School of Music

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Figure 6.20. Program from Texas Tech University Symphonic Band concert at Carnegie Hall featuring Dale Underwood on Claude Smith’s *Fantasia.*
Col. Gabriel and Underwood appeared together two more times later that year, both times performing *Gershwin Fantasy*. The first of these was with the McLean Orchestra, which Col. Gabriel directed, and the latter was with the Old-Timers Band, a community band in their hometown of Cortland, NY. Col. Gabriel wrote, “Thanks for taking the time to perform with the Old-Timers Band. I hope you had as much fun as I did. I meant what I said to the audience. You are the greatest and Homer should be very proud of you.” Underwood remembers a meaningful exchange after one of their performances together in their hometown. Col. Gabriel hugged him after his solo and simply said, “Not too bad for two kids from Cortland.”

Fortunately, with Col. Gabriel conducting, the groups performed well on those concerts but that wasn’t always the case. Underwood remembers one experience with a Virginia high school band in the early 1990’s that was almost disastrous. He humorously shares,

I had a band totally quit on me once! The conductor missed one of the mixed meters in the second half of *Fantasia* and it threw the kids off. They just couldn’t recuperate. I just remember playing, and it slowly falling apart until they all dropped out. I’m still playing the solo part and thought, “Wow, they all stopped! What the hell do I do now?” We were sort of near the Cadenza, about 20 or 30 bars out, so when they quit I just kept going and treated that portion like it was part of the cadenza. I took the rests out and started playing around with it a little on the spot and then went into the actual cadenza. The crowd had no idea and they just loved it!

Underwood traveled to Grosse Point, MI for a performance with the Shoreline Concert Band taking place on November 14, 1993. Underwood knew someone in the

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band who owned a music store called Detroit Wayne Music. He was quite influential and suggested that the band invite Underwood. The concert theme was “An American Potpourri” and included Underwood on Martino’s Salute to Cole Porter and Gershwin Fantasy.

Underwood’s most popular recording, a CD entitled Soliloquy, was released by Dorn Publishing on the Open Loop label in 1994. The entire selection of works on the CD comprises music for saxophone solo with band accompaniment, including six of the compositions Underwood had used on tours, with four among them written for him. It was recorded with James Sudduth and the Texas Tech University Wind Ensemble. The works included are: Fantasia for Alto Saxophone by Claude Smith, Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Band by Paul Creston, Persuasion by Sammy Nestico, Song and Dance by Urban Carvalho, Introduction and Samba by Maurice Whitney, Concertante by Clare Grundman, and Soliloquy and Dance by Elliot Del Borgo.\(^{257}\)

Viola and Wagner, who previously presented a review of his Classic Pastiche CD, also wrote about this new release. Excerpts from their review published in the Saxophone Journal state,

One thing that will be cherished and preserved for posterity is the saxophone and concert band combination as exemplified on this new CD titled Soliloquy. That is, when the saxophone is the soloist. Be it a symphonic wind ensemble, or one of the superb Military concert bands in the United States, what it really means is good music in a tradition that is as American as apple pie. On this CD Dale Underwood gives us both the saxophone and the concert band at its finest. Soliloquy…offers all of us the one given opportunity to hear exciting and vital music for this combination of instruments.

Dale Underwood is one of the finest classical saxophonists in the world today. He is at his prime! On this CD the band performs at a professional level and Dale Underwood, as the featured soloist, exceeds his own well earned reputation.

Dale Underwood is a dedicated sensitive player with a technical prowess

\(^{257}\) Dale Underwood, Soliloquy, Open Loop CD 013, 1996.
that could terrify any monster. His combination of tonal tenderness and vigorous strength is a rare and greatly appreciated commodity. Put another way, he has a superbly vigorous, supple tone that is easily bent to suit the mood or fancy of any music he chooses to play. His command of the altissimo range is sumptuous. Technically speaking, there is no better concert or classical saxophonist, whether one judges the fingers, control, sound, or overall mastery of the instrument. He is a fine musician whose intuitive musical tastes and skills bring him easily into the world class artist category. Dale Underwood goes beyond the notes and the saxophone to bring the real music to the listener...

Even for consumption to the general public, this CD would be a great buy. However, for saxophone aficionados, this CD cannot be passed by. The wind ensemble is outstanding. Dale Underwood deserves a large round of applause for an outstanding effort and recording. He is certainly holding the candle for others to follow, in terms of musicality, taste, sensitivity, and maturity. This CD is historically most laudable.258

Underwood and Captain Phillips had known each other for many years now.

Underwood felt Phillips “was the best leader [he] ever served under.”259 Phillips likewise had long since developed similar respect for Underwood. He says, “Dale has taken [his career] to the pinnacle of what he has the ability to do, and what he wanted to do, and accomplished his goals in life as far as musicianship. He has sold himself beautifully through the years. Some of the places he’s been and things he’s done as saxophone soloist just blow me away. He’s quite the guy.” Their rapport with each other, and among the band in general, had been growing for years through the fine musical performances and the time they spent together on the road. Phillips recalls an experience before he retired,

There was a story about Toscanini, or at least I think it was him. Every time he did one of his most dynamic performances he would reach into the sleeve of his tux and pull out a little note about three by three inches. He would open it up, look at it for about ten seconds, then fold it again and return it to his sleeve and conduct a great concert. After he died, some of the orchestra members that had seen him do this asked his wife if they could see what that note said. She said,

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“Sure” and handed them the note. They opened it up to find a little sign with an arrow pointing left that read, “Violins,” and an arrow pointing right that read, “Violas.” Anyway, that was a joke that went around the band… Well I’m conducting one day… I turn the page of my score and there’s a little white piece of paper in it with an arrow pointing left that said, “Clarinets,” an arrow pointing right that said, “Flutes,” and an arrow pointing straight ahead that said, “Saxophones.” Then I noticed another arrow that was pointing towards my crotch… that one read, “Penis.”… I will give you one guess as to who was behind it!260


Commander Pastin joined the Navy in 1968 as a woodwind specialist but served in several different capacities before taking the lead of the Navy Band in 1995. Perhaps the most notable event occurring during his tenure was when Commander Pastin presided over a 1996 trip to Russia where the band participated in the 300th anniversary celebration of the Russian Navy in St. Petersburg and the Baltic International Festival of the Fleets in Kaliningrad. Those performances reached over 300,000 live audience members and many more by means of Russian television broadcasts. It became a major highlight to many of the bandsmen who took part in that engagement.261

On July 24, 1995 Underwood participated in a special U.S. Air Force Band of the West concert celebrating the music of composer Robert Jager as part of the “Heritage III” American Composer Series. The concert, held at the Lila Cockrell Theater in San Antonio, TX, also coincided with the 48th annual Texas Bandmasters Association

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Jager had met Underwood some years before when Underwood taught clinics at Tennessee Tech University, where Jager taught. Knowing that it was going to be recorded live for a CD, Jager requested that the band invite Underwood for his *Concerto No. 2 for Alto Saxophone*. The Commander and conductor of the band, Steven Grimo, wrote to Underwood, “I would like to express our sincerest thanks to you for participating with us during TBA. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed rehearsing and performing with a musician of your caliber and such astounding capability. You have earned our everlasting respect. Again, thanks for your marvelous gift of solo saxophone!”

The following year, in 1996 the Navy Band traveled to Russia. Timothy Roberts relates,

It was the 300th anniversary of the Russian Navy and they paid for us to go over there a play a concert in the great concert hall in St. Petersburg. We also participated in a parade and gave several other performances. One was a massive outdoor concert playing in the big public square and without any exaggeration there were probably fifty thousand people attending, maybe even seventy thousand! Before the concert started, Connie, who was also in our section, Dale, and I took a picture with all of those people in the background.

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In October 1996, Roberts wrote in the *Saxophone Journal* that Underwood “is the most heard classical saxophonist in the history of the instrument.” Roberts further explained,

> It was a combination of him being one of the few soloists in the band for so many years and the fact that they would take much longer tours [than now] each year, sometimes twice a year, playing about every night. If you think about all of the tours for those years and the performances outside of the Navy and how many people actually saw Dale standing of front of an ensemble, then that number is quite staggering. I can’t imagine that there’s anybody out there that is as listened-to as he is. And since the tours are much shorter now he will likely retain that status.

Underwood’s 30 year mark, and therefore his retirement, was fast approaching.

With only a few months left as part of the Navy Band, Commander Pastin decided to

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feature Underwood on what had become a trademark of his, the *Fantasia*, at the Midwest Clinic on December 18, 1996. This was the 50th anniversary of the event and the program made special mention of Underwood’s first appearance at the clinic 25 years prior (in 1971). They also did a special “composer spotlight” on Karel Husa, who conducted part of the concert.

Underwood’s last Navy Band tour soon followed during which he also performed *Fantasia*. Their last performance on tour was in the Tabernacle in Provo, UT (different from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, where Underwood had played in 1970). One of the percussionists in the band, Guy Leslie, joked with Underwood about the irony of his last ever tour concert. “I find it very fitting,” he said “that your last concert on tour is at a church!…in a dry town!”

After the tour, the band took a few days off in Las Vegas before traveling to San Diego for the 1997 ABA conference. This was Underwood’s last concert as a part of the Navy Band. It wasn’t listed on the program but Commander Pastin asked Underwood if he would perform *Fantasia*. Smith’s passing away years earlier added special meaning to his daughter’s presence at that concert. Richard Thurston wrote Commander Pastin on behalf of ABA. He said, “I must compliment especially the virtuosity of MUCM Dale Underwood, making his farewell appearance in Navy uniform before an ABA audience. It was good to be able to wish ‘Bon Voyage’ to one whom so many of us have known so long and admired so much.”

Underwood’s very last solo would occur just a few days

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269 Ibid.

later. “For some reason that year we couldn’t do the [Navy] Symposium in January,” he
recalls, “so we did it when we got back from San Diego and that March 13 performance
was my very last solo while in the Navy.”

Underwood’s retirement ceremony was held on April 4, 1997. Although it was
just short of 30 years, having enlisted in May of 1967, he had accrued time of leave
which he needed to take before his enlistment ended on May 31, 1997. Celebrating one of
the most distinct and influential military band careers, U.S. President Bill Clinton
awarded him the Meritorious Service Medal.

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Figure 6.22. Above: John Pastin (left) and Jeffrey Taylor (center) presenting Dale Underwood with the Meritorious Service Medal awarded him by President Bill Clinton May 22, 1997. Below: Jeffrey Taylor presenting Underwood with the traditional Drum Plaque.
CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

FOR SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

MASTER CHIEF MUSICIAN
DALE WILSON UNDERWOOD
UNITED STATES NAVY

I extend to you my personal thanks and the sincere appreciation of our nation for your honorable service. You helped to maintain the security of the United States of America with a devotion to duty that is in keeping with the proud tradition of our Armed Forces.

I honor your service and respect the commitment and loyalty you displayed over the years.

My best wishes to you for happiness and success in the future.

Bill Clinton
Commander in Chief

Figure 6.23. Certificate of Appreciation from President Bill Clinton, May 22, 1997.
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL to

MASTER CHIEF MUSICIAN
DALE W. UNDERWOOD
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following:

CITATION:

For outstanding meritorious service at Navy Band, Washington, D.C. from June 1984 to May 1997. An extraordinary saxophonist with the Concert/Ceremonial Division, Master Chief Petty Officer Underwood distinguished himself as a soloist on National Concert Tours and many prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. His exciting performances repeatedly drew standing ovations. An energetic and dedicated Saxophone and Woodwind Section Leader, and Chief-in-Charge of the Saxophone Quartet and Woodwind Audition Board, Master Chief Petty Officer Underwood’s mature judgment and unbiased perspective earned him tremendous respect throughout the enlisted and officer communities. His seasoned leadership and purposeful direction helped mold the finest Saxophone Section in Navy Band history. Master Chief Petty Officer Underwood founded and expertly managed Navy Band’s International Saxophone Symposium, a prestigious event which greatly enhanced Navy Band’s image and reputation as a superior musical organization. To support Navy recruiting and heighten Navy awareness, he implemented a plan to attend key national music conventions, and he supervised the creation of an impressive Navy Band exhibit. An international Navy ambassador, he was the only military member to serve as President of the North American Saxophone Alliance. He also initiated a scholarship program for his high school alma mater, and was a working member of the Navy Band Alumni Association. Master Chief Petty Officer Underwood’s outstanding musicianship, strong leadership, and loyal dedication to duty reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

For the President,

[Signature]

Secretary of the Navy

Figure 6.24. Citation for awarding Dale Underwood the Meritorious Service Medal.
Col. Gabriel, now a close friend of Underwood through their many appearances together, attended his retirement ceremony from the Navy Band. At the ceremony the Colonel invited him to perform a concert on the day his enlistment expired. “I’ve got a concert on May 31st,” he said, “It’s my 50th year of conducting. Will you come solo?”

Col. Gabriel shares,

I remember the day well not only because it was my 50th year conducting and Dale’s end to the Navy…It’s also my birthday! I was then conducting the McLean Orchestra and they asked me to bring in some of my soloists for a concert celebrating that occasion. So I brought in Doc Severinsen, William Warfield, Les Brown, and, of course, Dale Underwood.

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272 Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Underwood had joined the Navy Concert Band at just 19 years old. His remarkable talents and musical sensitivity quickly propelled him to the status of an internationally renowned saxophone virtuoso. Underwood had been dubbed “The Heifetz of the alto saxophone” by the Washington Post and “The American Leader” by Don Sinta. He had performed numerous times at ABA, the Midwest Clinic, CBNDA, the WSC, WASBE and started a major conference of his own, the Navy Symposium. Underwood had seen both Sigurd Rascher and Marcel Mule, two of the founding fathers of classical saxophone. Professional and student musicians as well as audiences everywhere were astonished by his tone, technique, phrasing, and skill in the altissimo range. Among the famous composers to praise him were such names as Paul Creston, Vincent Persichetti, and many more. Many composers had also written for him resulting in new works added to the saxophone repertoire. The exposure received during his thousands of solo performances is unmatched in the history of the saxophone, and will likely never be surpassed. All this and much more occurred during his lengthy career as soloist in the U.S. Navy Concert Band. He had been a part of this organization for well over half of his life and made more than a lifetime’s worth of memories with the group before ending a most impressive and illustrious career in the Navy Band. Dale Underwood was, and remains, a hero in the classical saxophone world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Interviews**


Recordings


Online Sources


Other


APPENDIX A

Works written for and premiered by Dale Underwood during his Navy career

Listed chronologically as follows:

Composer: Title (Year) Premiere information, if available


Elliot Del Borgo: Sonata No. 2 (early 1980s) Early 1980’s Navy Band Recital Series – Navy Yard Sail Loft


Jeffrey Taylor: *Dance and Intermezzo* (1989)
   May 7, 1989 – York, PA

Walter Hartley: *Concerto No. 2 for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra* (1990)
   April 29, 1990 – George Mason University

Ralph Martino: *Gershwin Medley* (1990)
   1991 Navy Band Tour

Ralph Martino: *Songs on Love’s Philosophy* (1990)
   Jan. 25, 1991 at the Navy Symposium – George Mason University

   Jan. 24, 1992 at the Navy Symposium – George Mason University

Ralph Martino: *A Salute to Cole Porter* (1992)

   Jan. 21, 1994 at the Navy Symposium – George Mason University

Ralph Martino: *Americana Suite* (1994)
   Jan. 20, 1995 at the Navy Symposium – George Mason University

Andreas Makris: *Fantasy and Dance* (mid-1990’s)
   mid-1990’s – George Mason University