



## HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

### *Giving Back to Education*

### ***HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!***

*Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,*

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

It has been a busy summer, with many HHS class reunions during Swedish Days and a very successful HPS Foundation 7th Annual Golf Tournament.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,

*Teresa Kröll, Chairman  
HPS Foundation Committee*

### **Bob Trenchard - Class of 1964**

#### **Passion for music paves the way for career in law.**

By Kristine Jacobson

A passion for music helped Bob Trenchard, class of 1964, pay for college and law school.

His law career led him to the oilfields of Texas, where he helped hundreds of oilfield workers who suffered injuries in the dangerous jobs they do.

Now, he is semi-retired from his law firm Trenchard and Hoskins, and his passion for music is still alive as he spends much of his time writing, producing, and recording songs at the record label he started 15 years ago, Catfood Records. "We have yet to make a profit. It's been a critical success but a financial failure," Trenchard said of his Catfood Records, which has won several blues awards throughout the years including the Blues Music Association's Album of the Year in 2009.

Now, the roles are reversed, and his success as a lawyer has made it possible for him to continue to work in the music industry.

Trenchard shared his passion for music with Holdrege school students before Christmas last year when he donated \$10,000 to the school band. The money helped purchase four new timpani, an alto saxophone and two clarinets. "I have been fortunate to make money over the years, and I wanted to do something meaningful with it," Trenchard said. "I just felt like I owed Holdrege so much because of the school system and all the advantages I had growing up in a place like Holdrege."

His music education started in Holdrege at age 6 when he began taking violin lessons taught by his grandmother. But, he discovered the violin wasn't for him. "My parents said I could quit violin if I took piano lessons," Trenchard said. And, so he began piano lessons and continued for eight years. But, it was always a struggle to practice since he was trying to enjoy his childhood in Holdrege.

He remembers leaving his house in the mornings and fishing or playing football, basketball, or baseball all day with his friends during the summer. "Looking back on it, it was a great place to grow up," Trenchard said. "You get up and go outside and play until its dark. The whole town is like your neighborhood."

Although he wasn't keen on his piano practices, he did enjoy music and played in the percussion section of the HHS band under legendary instructor Verle Straatman. Straatman encouraged Trenchard and two others when they wanted to form a rock band.

Trenchard and his brother, Tim Peterson, a drummer; and Gary Sprague, a guitarist; formed The Countdowns, one of the first rock bands in Nebraska. Later, his friend, Ken Shaffer, also joined the band. They played 'surf music' at high school sock hops and proms and college fraternity parties. Trenchard played the guitar in The Countdowns but said he never learned to play that or any instrument well until he picked up the bass guitar in college.



**Gary Sprague, Tim Peterson, Ken Shaffer, Bob Trenchard.**

"I never really was a great student at anything," he said of his early musical abilities. "I was forced to practice. I never really became a good musician until I was 18 years old. Then, I started actually practicing and discovered the key to being a good musician was to practice and learn how to play your instrument."

Trenchard also played football, basketball, and Legion baseball in high school and hunted and fished in his free time.

He credits his teachers for helping him become a National Merit Finalist.

He recalls learning a lot of life lessons from football coach Jess Keifer, and he cited Verle Straatman (band), John Teter (math), and Dorothy Larson (English) as a few of his most impactful teachers. "I could probably name every teacher I had," Trenchard said when recalling teachers who inspired him. "They were all good. Not just in high school, all the way through."

After high school, Trenchard set out for college on a full scholarship to Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. However, he dropped out after three semesters and instead enrolled at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln the next school year. His brother, Tim Peterson, joined him at UNL in the fall of 1966, and they both auditioned for a jazz band and were hired. They played six nights a week, first at a jazz club in Lincoln and then in Omaha. "So, you might imagine I didn't make the dean's list," he said.

He graduated from UNL with a degree in philosophy and landed a job at BD in Columbus. However, he was still playing in a band in Lincoln, so he would drive the 150-mile round trip six nights a week. "After doing that for eight months, it sort of convinced me to try law school," he said.

He was accepted into law school at the University of Texas in Austin, where the music scene was hopping.

He was hired as a bass player for a potential Columbia record as soon as he arrived. Nothing happened with that record, so he joined a band and continued to play in it throughout law school. "It paid 100 percent of my way through college and law school," Trenchard said of his music.

After graduating from law school in 1972, Trenchard began his law career in Odessa, Texas. And, a few years later, he and two other young lawyers decided to start their own firm. "It didn't work out too well," Trenchard said. "We were drawing \$400 a month, so I was moonlighting in the band in order to pay the bills."

For a while, he lived rent-free in a trailer that also served as the office on a used car lot.

In 1978, he was offered a partnership by an established trial lawyer in Kermit, Texas, a small oilfield town. "It gave me the opportunity to try some good civil cases and to establish a reputation," he said.

He defended three first-degree murder cases while still in his twenties and served as a county attorney and a prosecutor for a time. After establishing a reputation, he gave up criminal cases and focused on personal injury and wrongful death cases for oilfield workers and their survivors.

"Once I started practicing law, I loved the law," Trenchard said. "I liked representing the clients."

Early in his career in Kermit, he won a case that established the Rescue Doctrine in New Mexico. He represented a client whose back was injured when he rescued a man from being crushed by a backhoe. The doctrine requires that if someone's negligence puts them in a position where they need to be rescued, they are liable for the rescuer's damages.

With his law career gaining momentum, he stopped playing in a band and focused on his work.

In his career, he went on to be selected as one of the Texas Super Lawyers by Texas Monthly Magazine and has been selected as one of the Top 1 percent of attorneys in the United States by the Association of Distinguished Counsel.

In 1997, a fellow attorney friend recruited him to join a band with a female vocalist. They became Kay Kay and the Rays and toured the country several times

and performed nearly every weekend. They played at the East Coast Blues and Roots Festival in Australia and eventually recorded three records.

Trenchard started Catfood Records in 2000 to record his band's third album and to record albums for other artists.

In 2004, Trenchard's wife, Barbara died of cancer. The grief of losing his wife took him away from the band and touring, but he found that writing songs and music also helped him through that difficult time.

Trenchard and The Rays band now serve as the studio band for most of the songs recorded at Catfood. The label has had 21 releases and 12 Blues Music Award nominations. An album from his label was selected as the Blues Music Awards Album of the Year in 2009. Trenchard has written more than 60 songs and is one of the label's main songwriters and the studio bass guitar player.

Live streaming services have made it more difficult to make a profit in the music industry, Trenchard said, but he still enjoys music and the creative outlet it provides him. "It'd be nice to have a profitable business, but mainly I just love to make music," he said. "And, fortunately, I can afford to do so."

In addition to his music passions and his continued part-time work as an attorney, Trenchard enjoys his work with the Barbara Trenchard Foundation, which he established in memory of his wife.

The foundation gives two or three scholarships a year to high school students in the Permian Basin, which is the oilfield area where he spent most of his career. Since 2005, the foundation has awarded 25 scholarships that average about \$3,000 per year per student. Most of the recipients are the first in their family to attend college.

"It's been really rewarding," he said of the scholarships. He enjoys keeping in touch with the recipients as they complete their education and start careers. Only one student didn't finish his education, opting instead to pursue a music career.

Trenchard now lives in El Paso, Texas, with his wife, Norma, whom he married eight years ago. Trenchard's oldest son, Todd, died in 2011, also of cancer. His daughter, Jill, lives in Dallas, and his son, Trey, lives in Brooklyn.

Trenchard also enjoys fly fishing and duck hunting and travels back to Holdrege a five or six times a year to visit his dad, go to a Husker football games, or join friends in hunting trips.

He said he's had a lot of success in his career, which he attributes partly to luck, but also to hard work and not always taking the straight path.

"The safe, easy path is not always the best way," he said. "Work hard every day. Don't be afraid to fail and get back up when you fall."



*Bob Trenchard*

## About Us

*The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.*

**Holdrege Public Schools Foundation**

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