



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.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments.

Sincerely,
*Teresa Kroll, Chairman
HPS Foundation Committee*

Clark Person - Class of 1997

Former Boy Choir Singer Enjoys Career as a Spacecraft Engineer

By Kristine Jacobson

As a middle schooler, Clark Person excelled in music. His talented vocals earned him a position in the prestigious American BoyChoir, giving him the opportunity to travel the country singing and learning.

But in high school, Person discovered another interest - math and science. Those passions led the 1997-Holdrege High School graduate to help design part of a NASA spacecraft that orbited Mercury and to his current career as an electronics engineer for the Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC.

His current work involves designing, overseeing, and then testing electrical power systems for unmanned spacecraft, such as GPS and communication satellites. The devices he designs are important to the work of the Navy and other military branches. "One of the things I really like about working at the Navy is that I feel like there is an element of service to it," Person said. "The things I am working on at some point should help the war fighters and should help the country meet its national security needs."

As a child growing up in Holdrege, his unique and specialized career choice wasn't even on the radar. In fact, Person



Clark Person - Class of 1997

Boychoir, a choir for boys in grades 5-8. Local auditions were encouraged after each concert, so Person decided to give it a shot. After his audition, he was invited to visit the American Boychoir school in Princeton, NJ, and then was invited to join the choir and attend school there. That meant that he would live in Princeton, away from his family, during the school year and tour with the group around the country.

"I think it was probably harder on my mother than anyone else," Person said of his decision to make the move to New Jersey. "I was very excited to go. I knew it was a privilege to be able to go. And, they kept us busy enough that we didn't have time to get homesick."

He toured with the American Boychoir for three years, from grades 6-8. He said living away from his parents made him emotionally independent at an early age. The experience also broadened his perspective of the world as he performed in 40 states.

"When we toured, we almost always stayed in people's homes," Person said. "That probably had the biggest effect on me as a person, to be welcomed into these people's homes of all walks of life. To stay with people in each one of those places and eat with them and get a broader perspective on what's really out there. That was a very eye-opening experience."

Person returned to school in Holdrege for high school, where he played the tuba in band and participated in tennis, speech and drama competitions, and school plays. In high school, he appreciated math teacher Mr. Larry Lum and chemistry and physics teacher Mr. Tom Brestel for sparking an interest in those areas and putting him on the path to being an engineer. He said Linda Crandall, English teacher and speech and drama coach, also impacted him as a person.

said he didn't realize his passion for math and science until high school. Prior to that, it was his musical talents that opened many doors for him.

His parents, Kent and Sylvia Person, noticed and encouraged his early musical talents. Although the piano lessons he started at an early age weren't a great fit for him, he enjoyed and appreciated his voice lessons from Paula Knepper. "Being a musician in general is such a great way to express yourself," Person said. "To have a constructive way to express yourself -- I think that is something that music really did for me."

His parents often attended the Holdrege community concert series performances with their three children (Clark's sisters are Ingrid and Erica). They also traveled to Lincoln or Omaha for larger productions, such as ballets and musicals like *Les Miserables*.

When Person was in middle school, he attended a local concert by the American

In high school, Person and his friends found a constructive way to stay out of trouble by designing and building projects, including making a couch out of the back end of a 1962 Cadillac. He also enjoyed building sets and props for school plays.

After high school, Person attended Washington University in St. Louis, a school he chose because it allowed him to work in a research lab as an undergraduate. During college, his interest in spacecraft was sparked by a professor who worked on the Gemini space project in the 1960s. "That kind of fascinated me that someone designed the capsule for the Gemini astronauts," Person said.

Person earned his degree in electrical engineering from Washington University and then began work at Johns Hopkins University in the Applied Physics Lab, where he had his first opportunity to work on spacecraft. At Johns Hopkins, he worked on projects contracted for NASA, the Navy, and other government agencies. His most exciting project there was designing batteries for The Messenger spacecraft, which was the first Mercury satellite orbiter. He worked on that project through development, launch preparations, and the first year of mission operations in 2004. Although Person had switched jobs by the time the spacecraft reached Mercury in 2011, he continued to follow the story of its orbit and study of Mercury. "It was very exciting to be part of that successful program," Person said.

His next move was obtaining a master's degree in electrical engineering in 2009 at Virginia Tech University, where he also worked as a research assistant.

Person now enjoys the challenges and opportunities in his work as an electronics engineer at the Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC. His favorite aspect of the job is the design phase. "It's kind of like solving a puzzle," he said. "You have a bunch of requirements you are given for what your design has to do and what kind of parts you can use. If you can figure out how to put all that together into a system that really works the way it's supposed to, that can be a big challenge."

Person lives in Alexandria, VA, with his wife, Roberta, and their 2-year-old daughter, Anne. When he's not working, Person enjoys spending time with his



family, watching movies, and serving his church, including - of course - singing in the church choir.

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

505 14th Ave, PO Box 2002

Holdrege, Nebraska 68949

Holdrege Public Schools Foundation

(308) 995-8663

holdregedusters.org

Holdrege Public Schools Foundation, 505 14th Ave, PO Box 2002, Holdrege, NE 68949

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by hpsfoundation@hpsfoundation.org in collaboration with

Constant Contact 

Try it free today