

Timothy Nguyen

Jim Dunlop

The following interview was conducted on behalf of century high school. The interviewee is Jim Dunlop and the interviewer is Timothy Nguyen. The interview took place at 3 o'clock may 20.

tn: Can you first tell us how you got into Century?

Jd: Well, I was teaching at Jefferson and I knew Keith Allan and he called me up and said "Jim do you know that band job at century opened again" like three weeks before school is starting. And I said "you got to be kidding me, I only live four minutes away and so he said 'yea you ought to go check it out.' So I come up and don Montgomery in the office and I said "hey, I'm the band teacher from Portland and I'm really interested what kind of band space there is" and she gave me a tour and walked around and talked a little bit and said "oh, it'd be great if you talked to Barnekof, see, we're really looking for someone." Two hours later I came back and talked to barnekof, and said "well, if you like the job, we'd be really happy to give it to you." I said "well I don't know, I'm pretty happy at Jefferson, let me think about it." So I came back the next day and took some tax dollars and took the job.

tn: so they didn't have any band directors?

Jd: nope, there wasn't anybody planned to come here and they were still looking. It was sort of fate because if he hadn't called me I never would have came up. I would have just stayed where I was.

tn: how would you compare Jefferson and Century?

Jd: well, I had a lot better budget at Jefferson cause it was an arts magnet. but I had fewer kids and Century I thought it was an opportunity to build a program from scratch which is unique. I thought it was an opportunity to build a program that my kids could be part of cause I live in the neighborhood. And the kids are easier here. There's not that much family or community turmoil that I had at Jefferson, but I had very talented people there so I try not to compare them. I was in a little bit of culture shock at first because racially this wasn't a very mixed group and the kids are all pretty complacent and behaved pretty well. I had to adjust about that.

tn: how was the block schedule affect the teaching?

Jd: it affects my teacher a lot because instead of running a 50 minutes rehearsal I'm running a 90 minutes rehearsal. And players can only play so long before they become tired. So I had to change, it allows me to do more technique, more rehearsing fundamentals and not have to jump through everything and play so fast. The problem is

having half as many rehearsals so I have to be careful not to run out of time before a performance.

tn; So how was the transition between the 50 min to the block?

Jd: okai, I had block at Jefferson too so it wasn't so bad. And then I came here and we were on 50 mins and went back to block. The nice thing is that kids can get into my class easier. For me I'd rather have class everyday but what I know since kids cant get in my class without the sacrifice their other work. Most of my kids are honor kids, AP kids, scholastic kids, by having a block schedule they will be able to get 32 credits easily by just being at school. That opens their schedule.

tn: So what would you say about the achievements at Century so far?

Jd: We started with 22 band students and we have 150 now. That's big. We played very poorly the first year. Now we're competing with all the big schools and best schools of the state. I think that's a big achievement. Also I think, we're putting out good musicians that are going to college and getting auditions for scholarships and to the top band.

tn; so did you start out with competition that have been entered?

Jd: we started from scratch. We took dead last in the first and second year in every competition we did. And now we place over top ten every single time.

Vc: what are your goals for the future?

Jd: well I think there should be 200 band kids. That's my numbers goal. I'd like to have a program that rate in the nation. That's national. I'd have jazz band, marching band, percussion group. So that's my goal, to get the group into a national level.

tn: so when students try out, are they usually starting from middle school?

Jd: most of the kids I start is in the 6th grade and they go to middle school for two years and come back to me so it's kind of fun. Most of the students all work with for seven years. So that's unique thing about band because one semester you get to work with them, I get to work with them for seven years. I get to see them from the sixth grade with their high voices and tiny guys and grow up to be adults.

tn; so how many freshmans start for the first time at century?

Jd: we're lucky we have a beginning band because we start some. But maybe three or four or five make it. Most everybody starts in the 6th grade.

tn: So is there try outs?

Jd: 6th grade is when most people start. If they're start when they're a freshman here, they cant make a group cause their skill is so much lower. It takes a pretty good person to start one year and participate the next with the rest of the kids. But we have had a couple of kids do it.

tn: can you tell me about the programs about C.H.A.M.P and C.H.O.M.P?

jd: CHOMP century high outreach music program. I started this program because I get to see the 6th grader for 2 half and hour a week. When I was in Portland I get to see them for 50 minutes every day. And so I said to my wife, I cant get them good enough so that they love to play with passion with just 2 and a half hour a week. And so on Tuesday nights, all year long, I have them come here for two hours and we hire highschool kids to go work with them and have concerts. It's just a way for them to get more time on their instruments. After a lot of 6th grader kids that wanted to keep doing it, I added 7th and 8th graders to add more kids to it and it's kind of growing. Now we have like 110 kids all year round.

tn: and CHAMP?

Jd: CHAMP stands for Century High Awesome Mom and Pop. And that's just a parent organization that helps fundraiser and helps run pit crew and food at competition. We have like 40 field trips and competition a year so they help us organize all of that. This year we went to Hawaii for a week and they went with us chaperoning and help us fundraise. It cost about 102,000 dollars for that. So the fund raises a lot of that money.

Vc: how was the experience at Hawaii?

Jd: it was awesome. It was incredible. We hear people talk about Hawaii how great it is and when I was flying over there I tried to calm down my expectation because I don't know if any place can live up to that hype. As soon as I got off that plane it was 82 degrees and it was nice and nice moist and it was just relaxing and the kids were great. We had a wonderful performance and everybody was really nice to us there. And everyone had a great time.

tn: is that your first year to Hawaii?

Jd: that's the first time we've been to Hawaii. But we made a major trip every year including the first year. This was by far the biggest trip we've gone. We've gone to San Francisco, Disneyland, both twice. And now Hawaii. We've gone to Reno three times and we've been at Seattle.

tn: was there any difficulties that you have in the first five years?

Jd: yea, a lot. The first big difficulty was not enough kids in the program and not very good players. They were great kids but they're playing skill was low. They weren't use to being part of a program and the expectation was high and that was a problem. Having

a jazz band of three kids, no matter how good they are, it's just not going to work. So I just had to go out and find kids that have never played or a lot of kids that have quit band and I had to talk them into playing again. So the big struggle was getting some kids and get them excited and get lessons and practice and get their skills up. It was huge work, I would never do it again, ever. If they offer a brand new school with everything I want, I'd say no. it takes an amazing amount of time and burden away from my family and I would be here teaching lessons and all kinds of things. What we do now one day would have taken us two weeks.

Vc: so are most of the competition in state?

Jd: sometimes we compete in state. We like to go to Reno for a jazz festival and we usually go up to Seattle for a drum competition or a color guard competition. We often go to Eugene or Corvallis. But most of the time we stay around here.

Vc: What place do you usually get at?

Jd: this year we got 2nd. And we got to finals in every competition we went to. We're top 10 in all of the divisions. Jazz band didn't place this year. So I don't know. We're in the top. Phonic band placed in the state?

tn: do you go to jr. high to recruit?

Jd: I know almost all the jr high kids because I started them in the 6th grade. I don't go and recruit. The first day of school I'll know every kid in my class and it takes time. A lot of kids I already know very well, I know their brothers or sisters, their parents. I know a lot about their parents. So I say to many of the kids if they misbehave I'll just come over to their house. It's not like I'm nervous about it, I already know them very well. So it's like when I have conferences its seldom I really need to talk to them.

Vc: So it's like a big band family that you guys have?

Jd: I hope so. That's what I'm shooting for. We do dances and social activities and spend a lot of time together. We try to make a family. As we get bigger that's going to be problem. When we had 22 kids, they all had to be nice to each other. Now that we have 140 kids, we have little groups here and there but I try to have them all together.

tn; if you are overcrowded one day, would you minimize the number of people?

Jd: no, then I would have two marching band. Some school in Texas has two marching band because theirs is so big. The good thing about band is that everybody has to work together. If one person is missing, there is a hole in the show and people know it. So everybody is critical. You can do it with 300, 400 people.

tn; is there anything you would have changed?

Jd: first of all, I think we're still struggling with identity and school spirit. I think I would have tried to do something early on and I think, if I knew what I was doing I would have done lots of things different. We don't have enough instruments and I would have start up a fundraiser. I would have fought the board for more instruments and we had a budget.

tn; did you know what the budget was?

Jd: I had no idea at the time that it was going to be such an issue. I thought boy, theres going to be new instruments there was only 22 kids. I didn't know that until I got hired.

tn; so you had no idea what you were up to

jd; nope. I heard Hillsboro had a good reputation and coming from Jefferson I was probably going to be in great shape. When I got the list I just went home and cried. I had this award winning band and I gave it up for starting with nothing. I started from scratch.

tn; have you had regrets about it?

Jd: no, not now especially. Now that I'm getting to where I want to be. The first couple of years I would have done differently if I knew what I was up against. But I think the nice thing about it was great kids. Who keep working and learn new instruments. And come back and say "wow"

tn; what else would you change?

Jd: I would change the technology a lot. We've been trying to get a midi lab put in and a recording lab. If there was one day I could change where I write something down and they follow it. I would change the instruments, uniform design because it was very expensive. But I guess that's how you learn. I wouldn't change any of the kids I had. I have fabulous seniors.

tn: is there anything else you'd want to tell us?

Jd: I don't know, what else do you want to know? I'll tell you a funny story. This is the first day of school and everybody it's the first day. And mostly freshman if you think about it. It was jr high that would be 9th grade and then all the 10th graders were new to highschool and the 11th grade wasn't very big. and they were having this big huge welcome to century hype assembly and they were doing this men in black thing with a huge production and they got smoke machines and everything. And they're in the gym and smoke machines come out and men in black characters in the back and all the fire alarm, all the smoke machines trip up the first alarms. So all the door slams shut and the first alarm went off. Nobody's been in the school and you know, no one knows. And these new fire alarm *fire alarm signals* and everyone thought it was part of the show and everyone was like "WOW! Totally amazing!" and all the teachers were like.. "okai.. do we kick them out or do we.." so I thought that was funny for the first day thing.