



## Quick Study

Well, last week we had a story about high school, and TV, and music ... and I think we can shuffle those same three elements for still another story!

When I was 15, our family moved from the Canadian prairies over to the west coast, to a small town near Vancouver. This happened part-way through a school year (grade 10 for me), and I thus became one of those 'drop in' students, who suddenly join an established class. On the first day at my new school, I had an interview with one of the staff members for the purpose of deciding what courses I should be taking.

As it happened, the courses on offer at the new school didn't match up with what I had been taking before, so this involved quite a bit of discussion about what courses would be best. At one point during the discussion, the teacher asked about my family, and when he heard that my father was a musician, he said "Well, we have a good band program here; I'll put you down for that right away."

Now actually I didn't play an instrument, and hadn't shown any interest in music at all. But he pushed me into the courses that he felt were the most suitable for me, and as I was a pretty shy little kid, I just ended up doing what he suggested. So a few hours later, there I was, heading into band class for the first time. "My name is David Bull, and I'll be joining this class ..."

The teacher was a friendly and gregarious guy. "Hi, come on in; glad to have you. What instrument do you play?"

"Um ... I don't play anything."

"Nothing?"

"I'm sorry ..."

Although I no longer remember clearly what happened, I guess the two of us must have then sat down together and discussed what to do with me. This was a high school band, and the members had all been playing since they were in middle school, at least three years previously, and in some cases for much longer. There were no beginners here. But I was game to give it a try, and for some reason we decided that I would be joining the flute section.

The first few days of the class were of course difficult; I didn't read music, struggled to make my fingers move over the keys, and of course struggled even more just to get the thing to produce a sound. (I have no idea what my father thought about all this; I have no memory at all of sitting down together with him for any kind of lessons at all ...)

But then something interesting happened. I caught fire. I had entered this new school in the second week of November, but by the time of the Christmas concert, I was ready to take my place on stage with the other band members. And shortly after that, I was no longer at the bottom end of the row of flutes, I was at the top end.

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Together with my new friend Jan, one of the clarinet players, I became one of the ringleaders of the band, 'living' in the bandroom every minute that I didn't have to be in some other class. We helped the teacher organize the music library, practiced our instruments until we were tossed out by the janitors, and devoured the record collection end to end, learning a huge amount about the standard classical music repertoire.

No more than a few months after the counsellor randomly plugged the band class into my schedule, I was on my way - what did I want to be when I 'grew up'? Of course ... I was going to be a musician!

All this was the foundation behind the episode I related last week - being chosen as a member of the quiz panel at least partly because of my knowledge of music. Now that's not the TV experience I had in mind when I started to write today's story, but I see that we are almost out of space. You'll have to wait until next week to read about the commission I got to create the theme music for a TV show!

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