



WESS' SENIOR STAGE BAND PLAYED FOR WESES students recently, to give them an appreciation that through practice students can become good musicians and together play good music. Conductor Dave Cunningham is at left. Front row: Carolyn Quinton, Brett Christensen, Gary Fenn, Ruth Ferguson and Jon Loren playing

saxaphones. Middle row: Jill Hind and Cindy Walker, playing trombones, the latter playing a solo. Back row: Pattie Hopper, Leann Bijker, Alicia Stacey and Catherine Jobson on trumpets. Not pictured are Sharon Liepmann, Marie McPhail, Brenda Small and Don Barnet.

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THE BEAT GOES ON — The West Elgin Jazz Band played a fantastic performance on Friday, September 25th for the whole school. That led to students dancing in the stands and the band received tremendous applause and shouts for more.

Photos by Jeff Thompson



The West Elgin Secondary School Band cheer International Music Festival for victory as they head for Chicago for the

Mercury-Sun Photo

WESS bands get top marks

By Kari Christensen

There are a lot of smiling faces at West Elgin this week, and with good reason. Our concert and jazz band members are ecstatic after returning from what can be classified as a successful and memorable excursion to Chicago, Illinois. The undisputed highlight of our band careers has come from participating and placing in the International Music Festival over the past weekend, but this festival only marks the peak of a wonderful year. The work really began several months ago.

Since mid-September band members have been meeting for early morning rehearsals two, and some four, days every week. With noon hour sectionals scheduled some days as well, we've worked many, many hours. In March our concert band placed second in the St. Thomas Music Festival and we repeated the performance placing second at the London Festival in April. In the back of all our minds though, the Chicago Festival loomed like a thrilling and frightening ghost. It provided us with a goal, a purpose to perform to the best of our abilities.

Last Wednesday, 43 of us departed for Chicago, together with our conductor and chaperones Mrs. Brenda Price, Mr. Larry Schneider and Mrs. Judy Peters. Funding for the trip came through profits from selling pizzas, fruit, poinsettias and helping out at community bingos. A generous donation was also made by the Rodney Kiwanis Club. We wholeheartedly appreciate the outstanding community support.

With Chicago being the third largest city in the United States, the trip offered us the opportunity to see some of the best tourist attractions in the country. We visited the Museum of Science and Industry, attended a Chicago White Sox

baseball game at Comiskey Park and relaxed on a luncheon buffet cruise on Lake Michigan. We watched a performance of the musical "Damn Yankees" at the elegant Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and toured the sites of Chicago on a double-decker bus. To keep in tune, we held a concert performance for shoppers at the Brickyard Mall and were surprised to discover that they announced our arrival on a huge, flashing advertisement sign outside the mall.

Together, we laughed, sang, played and had a great time. The festival performance and awards dinner was scheduled for Saturday.

The International Music Festival varies from other competitions in that there is no competition between bands. Rather, the band's performance is ranked according to how well they play in comparison to bands of similar size and structure worldwide. An esteemed panel of adjudicators listen to groups all over the world, from Mexico and Alaska to Honolulu and Bermuda. Not all of the bands present receive the prestigious awards and only a choice five per cent of all the awards are golds. To be given any sort of a medal is quite an accomplishment.

Thirty different ensembles, including choirs, orchestras and jazz bands, competed at the Congress Hotel in Chicago over the weekend. We had the chance to listen to other fine ensembles. At the awards dinner following our performance the adjudicators called up all of the conductors from the various schools to give them their awards. Our conductor was called on twice. First, to accept a bronze award for our jazz band and secondly, to accept the award for our concert band - a gold medal. It was a moment none of us will forget, ever. Only two golds were awarded

that evening and one came to WESS, the first such achievement for this school. It is only the third of its kind in the history of Elgin.

Standing behind us all of the way giving up as many, if not more, hours of dedication and hard work was our conductor Mr. Mark Enns. It was through his guidance that we grew as musicians and were able to perform at an international level. We sincerely thank him for showing us how great we all can be.