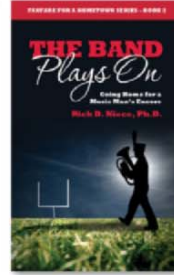


Rick Niece

Experience growing up in small-town America through the eyes of acclaimed author and educator, Rick Niece.



Fanfare for a Hometown Series - Book 2

The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore

A delightful celebration of music and memory, *The Band Plays On* takes readers on a poignant journey home to DeGraff, Ohio (population 900). Humor, heartbreak, and hope characterize this inviting small town, where the future of young Rickie Niece is shaped by the unwavering devotion of caring friends and family.

About the Band Plays On

Celebrating the soul of America's heartland, *The Band Plays On* is Dr. Rick Niece's heartfelt tribute to friendship, community, and, most importantly, his father, Lewis Niece. When DeGraff, Ohio's beloved band teacher is invited to direct an encore performance, "Lewie's Alumni Band" gathers to celebrate with gusto. As the band practices for its final parade, Rick, his baritone in tow, reflects on treasured memories, relationships, and the legacy of a small town with indomitable spirit. The second volume in the delightful *Fanfare for a Hometown* series, *The Band Plays On* provides an entertaining, inspirational glimpse into lives richly lived — and shared.

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A Buck A Book!

One dollar for every copy of *The Band Plays On* sold will go directly to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. More information about Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation is available at www.MHopus.org.

Reviews & Interviews

5 Stars

Step back in time to small-town America with author Rick Niece's *"The Band Plays On,"* the story of a community band once again coming together in tribute of their band leader, who has also been invited back to lead the band. The Lewie's Alumni Band members offer a true story of the impact one man can make on a community, whose inhabitants have spread far and wide in the intervening decades. While reminiscent of Mr. Holland's Opus, "The Band Plays On" is even more special as the people, events and memories are true. The story hooks the reader in on the first page, prodding them back in time to a special town filled with special people, each of whom has a place in the author's memory.

Offering strangers a glimpse into small town life, Rick Niece takes readers along for a ride down memory lane, where the memories don't have to be yours to be thoroughly enjoyable. A witty delivery and sense of humor is infused throughout the book, where the author tells a heartfelt and sincere story. Nevertheless, the author refuses to take himself too seriously as he takes the reader by the hand and leads them into the three-dimensional world of DeGraff, Ohio, from the easy-going days of the 1950s to today. The people, the places, and the faces all come alive under Niece's gifted pen, creating a world for readers that is easy and enjoyable to inhabit - a world of simpler times and friendly, and sometimes quirky people.

— Denise Stern for Readers' Favorite, Readers' Favorite Book Reviews

I highly recommend this book.

In *The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore* by Rick D. Niece, Ph.D., the author describes DeGraff, Ohio to be a warm, inviting small town that almost anyone would want to join. After reading his delightful memoir about the town and its members, I found myself wanting to become an honorary member and go for a visit.

Dr. Niece grew up in a small town in Ohio, and reminisces about his childhood, and the people and events that were significant to him. It is full of charming stories of a variety of people, with funny insights into a young boy's thoughts and feelings. The author has a way of creating a clear picture of what the people were like, and how a small town takes care of its own.

Having moved many times in my childhood and not having the experience of growing up in a small town or in one place, I was drawn to this story of DeGraff, Ohio. Dr. Niece's father was the band director and a teacher at the only school in DeGraff, and the story works up to a reunion with Mr. Lewie Niece coming back home to lead the band one last time. This heartwarming memoir left me feeling hopeful that there are still small communities like DeGraff, Ohio out there. *The Band Plays On* is a feel-good book that will inspire you to go out, smile and say hello to a neighbor. I highly recommend this book.

— Christine Watson, Blog Critics Book Review

Five out of Five

During the presidential election, we are often bombarded with negative messages. We need to make sure to surround ourselves with positive words and thoughts. Author Rick D. Niece has written a heart-warming tale that will delight readers of all ages. *The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore* tells the story of Niece's father, Lewis Niece, and his triumphant final performance in a town filled with admirers. Years after Lewis has retired from teaching, a group of his former students come together to create "Lewie's Alumni Band" and plan a community tribute and parade over one memorable Memorial Day weekend. Most interesting is Niece's commentary on growing up in DeGraff, Ohio, and the original poetry his scatters throughout chapters.

Niece's story will strike a chord with different types of readers. Music fans will appreciate learning about Lewis' life journey. Current, and former, marching band members will relate to the camaraderie felt by Mr. Lewis' students during their time in high school. Readers who have grown up in small towns will cherish the opportunity to reminisce about traditions and the ins and outs of living in a place where you know everyone, and you can return decades later to celebrate a role model. Anyone who has ever looked up to someone will enjoy reading a memoir about one man who had an impact on hundreds of young people. Readers are encouraged to think about bigger questions, like whether small-town values can exist in this fast-paced world, the importance of educators, and how memories are made and how they define us. One dollar from every book sold goes directly to the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. If you like the upbeat energy of Niece's writing, check out *Side-Yard Superhero*, the first book in the *Fanfare for a Hometown* series.

— **Posted in Biographies & Memoirs by editor, San Francisco & Sacramento Book Reviews**

Great originality with the writing style of a master.

"*The Band Plays On*" is an enjoyable, heartwarming story told with great originality by an author with the writing style of a master. Dr. Rick Niece translates his memories into words that captivate the reader while honoring his father, other family members, hometown, and friends. His tale of "Lewie's Alumni Band" was music to my ears and brought back remembrances of my own hometown and childhood. However, the story goes deeper than being a delightful engaging read. It is a story written by an author who is showing the world that family values and morality are alive and well in DeGraff, Ohio. And you are invited to be part of it when you read this wonderful book.

— **Mimi Mathis, Amazon Customer Review**

"A must-read for anyone who understands the meaning of tradition."

The title, "*The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore*", pretty much sums up this heartfelt tribute written by Rick D. Niece about his memories of growing up in small town DeGraff, Ohio. I have never personally been there but, after reading this book, I truly feel like I

have. The similarities to my own childhood struck me from the very first written words: "Small towns live by tradition." Just like the author, I played in my school's marching band. In fact, my Dad also conducted the band on occasion. I even had a paper route and delivered papers on my trusty old Schwinn. I didn't know everybody in my town and we certainly never left our doors open at night, but I can still identify with the closeness of neighbors and the lifelong friends I made in my own little town.

"The Band Plays On" starts with a phone call from a friend wanting to start an alumni band honoring the school's band director, Lewis (the author's father). A well-beloved figure in his small town, Lewis Niece, Jr. was quite the character. A man of humble beginnings Lewis worked hard, was full of 'clever' one-liners ("worthless as teats on a boar") and was generous to a fault. It was no wonder that so many people were willing to shake up their busy lives to go back to their hometown, even embarrass themselves, to show their respect to such a warm and loving man.

Most of the book delves into the author's childhood memories - the local shops and their colorful owners; his friends and teachers all of whom left indelible marks on his (and the town's) life; his forays into sports; his pets; and the musical journey that led him to become a baritone horn player. The black and white photos at the back of the book captured some of those special moments in time and were as touching as the very descriptions they immortalized. Readers will likely be inspired to remember their own childhood memories as I was told repeatedly after writing my book, *Life Songs*.

"The Band Plays On" is a feel-good book, a very quick and satisfying read and certainly a must-read for anyone who understands the meaning of tradition.

— **Ellen Greiss Alexander, BookPleasures.com**

"Rick Niece's memories had me giggling out loud..."

There are some books that you read that leave you feeling happy all over. *"The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore"* is one of those books. I was drawn in before the last word of the introduction was over. And I loved every word until the final word.

Rick Niece had me longing for simpler times and wishing that I had grown up in a small town. *The Band Plays On* is his tribute to his father--and to "family, friendship, and the richness and goodness of life." The book is the second volume in the *"Fanfare for a Hometown"* series.

Rick Niece's memories had me giggling out loud at times. And there were also times his memories had me in tears. His love for his father, friends and his small-town life shine through on every page of this book. Niece's father was the band director at DeGraff, Ohio's high school. His father apparently made a huge impact in every musician's life in DeGraff. His students loved him so much that they planned a reunion and called themselves "Lewie's Alumni Band."

On Dr. Niece's return to DeGraff to perform in the band led by his father, we get to reminisce with him about his small-town life. The book will take you back to simpler times when kids played outside all day long and when faith and family were important. We get a glimpse into the people who shaped this small-town newspaper boy into the university president that he is today. His

colorful descriptions led me into an escape from the trappings of our crazy, harried, tech-filled current day life. I loved his descriptions so much, I want to visit DeGraff to see Dr. Niece's hometown. I would no doubt bump in to a descendant of one of the people described in the book, as DeGraff is still a small town.

Dr. Niece is a proud supporter of the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. The foundation provides musical instruments to under-funded school music programs nationwide. \$1 from the sale of each copy of *The Band Plays On* will be donated toward the foundation's efforts.

— **Michelle, Heartfelt Balance Handmade Life**

"A perfect sequel!"

"The Band Plays on...Going Home for a Music Man's Encore" is a perfect sequel in *The Fanfare for a Home Series*! A must-read for sure! The young boy we read about in *The Side-Yard Superhero*, is now all grown up, and goes back to his hometown of DeGraff, Ohio for an alumni band performance. Reflecting upon the people and memories from his childhood that we all got to know and love in the first book and seeing where they are now. Entertaining, emotional, and inspirational! Rick Niece is truly such an inspiring author and person! Also...Dr. Rick Niece has launched a campaign of donating \$1 of every book copy of *The Band Plays On* sold to the organization "Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation." This organization donates new and refurbished instruments to school music programs that cannot afford to purchase them. So, not only are you reading a life changing book, but helping a great organization at the same time!

— **Sarah Farris, SarMama5**

"I highly recommend!"

I was absolutely charmed by this slender volume of remembrances. Written in a personal voice that brings to mind storytelling on the front porch, author Rick Niece shares tales from his past growing up in a small town in Ohio.

Some stories will make you laugh, some will bring back memories of childhoods past, and some will bring tears to your eyes. It was particularly poignant to read of Niece's memories of watching the Andy Griffith Show with family friends.

I highly recommend *The Band Plays On* for anyone who enjoys stories about a gentler past.

— **Sharon Galligar Chance, Sharon's Garden of Book Reviews**

A Grand Tribute for a Musical Legend

No one quite knows who initially came up with the idea. To honor their old bandleader, Lewis Niece, alums from the DeGraff High School marching band would come together and lead the Memorial Day parade through town and perform a field show and concert. Called "Lewie's

Alumni Band," the adults would honor the man they met as kids and have continued to admire and respect throughout their lives. Rick D. Niece is the author of *The Band Plays On* and the son of the beloved band teacher. In his book, he contemplates small town life growing up in rural Ohio with a sense of nostalgia. He recalls farm living, adventures with childhood pals, Sunday mornings at church, lessons learned in grade school and other cherished memories. The author includes black and white photographs capturing moments from the band reunion and celebration and pictures of the author and his dad from their early days.

Experience how one man discovers how many lives he touched through teaching music. Readers will likely be inspired to remember (and possibly record) their own fond childhood memories. Take the time to thank someone who had an impact on your life. Short chapters keep the pace of the book moving along quickly. Original poems by the author that are relevant to each chapter's theme are interspersed throughout the story.

— Kathryn Franklin, Portland Book Review

"Inspiring and motivational!"

I recently read *The Band Plays On, Going Home for a Music Man's Encore* and found it inspiring and motivational. The author is Rick D. Niece, Ph.D., and the book is published by Five Star Publications Inc. It is the second book in a series about Niece's hometown. I have also reviewed Niece's first book, *Side-Yard Superhero* here on my blog. This second installment, *The Band Plays On*, is filled with powerful memories from reading Robert Frost poetry to playing in the school band. Since I am always happy to recall such things, it was a first-class journey for me. I felt honored to be on it. The framework of the book is a tribute to his music-teaching father and that aspect is quite touching. I read many inspiring vignettes that made me want to continue teaching with gusto. Since I teach in the day and teach guitar after school, I am sometimes spent. It can get hard to see the larger vision. Rick Niece, Ph.D. is a writer of Americana and teaching and his work helped center me while reading. His books also remind me of what's important in just plain being human.

GOOD NEWS TO SHARE! In preparation for this review, I had the distinct pleasure of corresponding with the author himself. I did a Q and A with him which I've pasted below. He provided some great insight to my questions and I thank him for the time he took to do so:

Damien Riley: Hello Dr. Niece, since I am a blogger, I truly appreciate the term you use in your book "automythography." I think most bloggers struggle with the line between history and fiction. Your term is helpful to me in understanding what I do. How does this genre free you up to expand on your own perceptions and/or limit you to what really occurred?

Rick Niece: I thought that I created the term "auto mythography," but then found out it has been around, primarily used in art and dance, since the 1980s. However, I have defined it for literature. An auto mythography is a work of non-fiction that looks reflectively at what we think we remember and how we think we remember it. It is an iridescent memory based upon the author's truth and personal narrative.

Most of the autobiographies and memoirs I have read are presented as factual and accurate. I

do not doubt their veracity, but I am leery when the author quotes dialogue and describes specific scenes from decades past. I do that as well, but with the caveat that they are how I remember what was said or is being described. Time alters our memories. My favorite part of the term auto mythography is the "myth," but not in the sense of something being made up. Myths are also stories that are true and repeated from one generation to the next. Each telling, and retelling is slightly different—and that is no doubt the case for me and my stories—but the telling's are based upon true and real incidents. The stories are not made up.

Finally, in my definition for auto mythography I use the word "iridescent." I like that word and what it connotes. Soap bubbles are iridescent. As they float away from us, they change shapes and colors. But they are the same soap bubbles. That is true for memories as well. Over the years, as our memories float away from us, they change shapes and colors. But they are the same memories—they are our autotherapies.

Damien Riley: My 3 kids attend a school where I teach 4th grade and guitar after school. My kids seem to enjoy having dad at school with them, but I imagine they might prefer anonymity. Were there ever times you felt you couldn't measure up?

Rick Niece: Oh, my goodness, yes, there were times when I felt it was difficult to "measure up" on a variety of levels. In *Side-Yard Superhero*, Book 1 in my series, *Fanfare for a Hometown*, I describe how I was repeatedly warned not to embarrass my father in front of the superintendent and the other teachers. Although I thought I was a "typical" kid, it was difficult to remain typical when my father was the school's only music teacher and the superintendent lived across the street from me and my family. There was no anonymity for me, and consequently, I was a relatively good kid and student.

My father was one of those teachers' students could go to with their problems, big and small. He always had time for students before school, after school, and at home. Because of that, I sometimes felt that I had to wait in line. That is not a complaint, but simply my fact of life. I admired my father even more because of the respect students had for him and that he had for them. I was proud that my parents were a second set of parents for many students.

My father was an exceptional teacher, and because he was so good at what he did and how he did it, I was hesitant to go into education myself. In fact, I did not seek acceptance into Ohio State University's education program until the end of my sophomore year. I was afraid that, as a teacher, it would be difficult for me to emerge from the long shadow of my father and his success.

Through it all, I felt special and was proud to be in the school where my father taught. I am certain that your children feel that same sense of pride—and pressure—with you being a teacher in the school they attend. In time, we all adjust.

Damien Riley: Do you think it is possible for children today to enjoy the same sort of upbringing as you? Why or why not?

Rick Niece: I hope that children growing up today enjoy the same type of upbringing I did. I do not want to sound too optimistic naively when I say that I think they are experiencing the same joys today that I did decades ago.

However, I also must be realistic. When I was a boy, four environments provided a positive influence on children: home, school, church, and community. My fear is that far too many youngsters may experience none of those today. How sad is that?

Damien Riley: Whom do you think will most enjoy *The Band Plays On*? What makes it so appealing?

Rick Niece: I think the same readers who enjoyed *Side-Yard Superhero* will also like *The Band Plays On*. The writing is vivid and flows easily, and the characters are endearing, interesting, and quite unique. Within the humor and the life lessons, there is also a sad, poignant reality that comes through because of the deaths of close friends.

The books are universally appealing, I believe, because readers like a story with descriptive writing, strong narrative, and appealing characters. I think that readers also enjoy stepping back in time to an age they either lived themselves or wish they had experienced.

The Band Plays On, however, will definitely be enjoyed by anyone who has been a member of a marching band or who has played a musical instrument. We have a shared camaraderie that comes through loud and clear—and in tune—throughout the book.

My (Damien Riley) final word: Again, I thank Rick for his insightful and empathetic words. Educators and musical educators will be first in line to enjoy this masterpiece but all who enjoy great narrative Americana will be moved as well. I want to thank Rick for answering my questions for this review. I'm a bigger fan of his than ever. As of time of posting, I have been informed of something that makes this book yet even more cool please check it out below:

Long term Dr. Rick Niece is supporting music education by donating \$1 of every book copy of *The Band Plays On* sold to an organization called Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, which donates new and refurbished instruments to school music programs lacking the resources to purchase them. It was inspired by the acclaimed motion picture Mr. Holland's Opus (the story of the profound effect a dedicated music teacher had on generations of students).

— Damien Rile, Dynamite Lesson Plan

Forrest Gump of DeGraff

I really like the movie Forrest Gump. So many of us can quote lines from the film but to me what makes it interesting is how Forrest becomes (often comically) ingrained in so many historical moments. Rolling Stone called the movie and Tom Hanks portrayal of Forrest, everything we admire in the American character — honest, brave, loyal...

I recently read a book that made me think of Forrest Gump, not that the main character is dim, in fact he goes on to be a university president, but that he comes of age during the post-war period and lives more common, but still important, bits of history.

Dr. Rick Niece's second auto mythography, *The Band Plays On*, takes place in rural DeGraff, Ohio. Where, thanks to my review of his first book, he is now so famous he has been invited back to be the grand marshal of the parade opening the DeGraff Country Fair this fall.

Back in 1950-something Rick Niece moved to DeGraff, Ohio with his family. His first book tells the tale of a young paper boy who took the time to care about the people of his town while they took care of him. In this book, it's now 1960-something and Rick Niece plays taps with his father the band director and eventually leaves DeGraff for college.

While reading this book I kept thinking, I know a dozen men Dr. Niece's age who grew up in rural Ohio who could have written this book. But they didn't. And then I realized that Rick wrote this for them. He wrote this for all of us to better understand a moment in time. A moment in history.

History is not always kind to Rick Niece and the people he loves but the book ends with a heart-warming reunion--providing closure in real life and for readers of the book.

The theme for the 2012 DeGraff Country Fair is We welcome the new and embrace the old. I can't think of a better theme for a hometown parade featuring fire trucks, marching bands and Rick Niece.

— Holly Michael, Bringing Home the Bacon

My Take on the Book

I love band and I loved my experience in band and I have to say that I have completely appreciated the passion and commitment of my past band instructor and this book captures this completely. The book is a well written book that was so inspirational to read. On top of this, I loved the characters and the vivid imagery that the author presents, but most of all I loved the story itself. Why did I love it? It drew me in and let me relive experiences that I had as a kid myself. If you have ever had a treasured band experience, this book will transport you as well!

— Dad of Divas, Dad of Divas' Reviews

"If you liked the movie Mr. Holland's Opus, you'll enjoy this book."

I had a chance to review *The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore* by Rick D. Niece. The book, which will be available in July, is part of the *Fanfare for a Hometown* series (you can find more information at Rick Niece Books). If you liked the movie Mr. Holland's Opus, you'll likely enjoy the book, as it highlights a journey home to play in his father's final performance when he's invited to direct an encore concert.

My husband really is interested in this book. He was trained as a music teacher, and loves small-town America, so this book is a perfect fit for him. If you buy the book, you'll also be supporting music in schools, as one dollar for every copy of *The Band Plays On* sold will go directly to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation.

— Bekah, Motherhood Moment

An interview with author Rick Niece

All right everybody, this is Chase March and I have an author on the phone, Rick Niece. You can listen to the podcast of this interview with the player below, or you can download it for free to listen to at your leisure.

So, how's it going Rick?"

Rick: "It's going well, Chase. What an honor to be able to talk to you."

Chase: "I first heard about your book when I was approached by your management and it seemed like it would be right up my alley. It's called *The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore*. You wrote it about your father who is the director of a marching band and how people were coming back to this small town to pay tribute to him upon his retirement."

Rick: "Exactly. My dad was the band director, in fact, he was the whole music show in this small school in a very small town in Ohio, a town of 900. We had about 150 in the high school and my dad taught everything, first grade through 12th grade if it had to do with music. He taught chorus, concert band, marching band, and music appreciation courses. At one point in this small school of 150 people, there were 80 people in band and 100 people in chorus. So, he's a much beloved individual."

The book starts out in the present. I got a call from one of my classmates. I had not been back to my home town in quite some time. They were trying to put together some band alumni of 16 years of classes that my dad had taught, have a parade through town, and play at half time of the football game with the current band. It was an exciting project to get us all back together and honor my father."

Chase: "Too often, I don't think we pay tribute to inspiring people until they are dead. That kind of thing would come afterwards. 'Oh, he was such a great conductor. We loved him.' That's why it's great to see that much love and support and an event being thrown while he is still alive and able to appreciate it."

Rick: "It was amazing to see how many people came back and the love that they still had for my dad and the idea that there still is appreciation for music. My dad wasn't ever an elitist about music, be it chorus or instrumental. 'Come participate.' was his whole plan. And while we had very good choruses and very good bands, it wasn't an elitist group. A lot of people were not only influenced by him as an individual, as a teacher, as a teacher of music, but also by his ethics and values."

A lot of the book, as well, is not particularly about the music, but it's about my dad primarily and also, for me, the influence that a small town has on a young boy growing up there."

Chase: "Well, that leads me in to the one criticism I do have of the book. I really wanted to

experience more of your dad, the music, and the coming together of the alumni band. But it's written more like a memoir of your days of growing up in this small town. That's where the bulk of the book takes place."

Rick: "I think that's a fair criticism. You always hate to disappoint a reader who thinks they'll be getting something else. It's not a biography and, in fact, it's a term I thought I created by I didn't, it's an auto mythography, which is like a memoir or an autobiography. I think about half to sixty percent of the book deals directly with my dad, and probably thirty-five to forty percent deals with music itself, and of course the book culminates with the actual event itself. But I understand that you think it should have been more about him and about the music. That's fair."

Chase: "I hate to be so critical of it but once everyone got into town, I thought that was where the book should have started, but that was late in the book. I thought it would have been neat to make it, not so much auto mythography, but maybe do a little more research and interviews with some of the other band members there past and present and tell more of a cohesive story of what your dad meant to the town and all these kids playing music and marching together."

Rick: "I hear you. That's a different book, and this is the second book in a series. There will be a third book. They all start in the present, going into the past, and end up back in the present. That certainly would be another book, and I think it would be a worthwhile book as well. But the story arc really is music and my dad."

Chase: "I guess, it's the musician in me. We're both educators and I love music and I love being able to share that passion with my students, but I teach primary school, so I do it through choir and rap music. It's amazing how well kids respond to music and how important it is. I think we really need to pay focus to that, how important the arts are in education these days."

Rick: "I can't argue with you. Here in the states, we continue to face some real financial issues within our public-school systems. The first thing to go has anything to do with the fine arts, with music, dance, and theatre, and I think that's tragic. Part of what I was trying to capture was how important music was to us as we were growing up. That was the catch in the book, to get me back to that hometown and talk about other things within that hometown as well. I hear what you're saying, but that would have been a different book. I can definitely hear your passion and your love for music and getting that love across to students."

Chase: "And like you said, the budget isn't there all the times for the schools. That's why it's really nice to see that sales from this book are going to support Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation."

Rick: "I really appreciate you mentioning that. Yes, one dollar from each book sold goes to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. That was by Henry Mancini's daughter, and anybody who knows much about music certainly knows the name Henry Mancini. Felice Mancini has a foundation for schools to apply for grants who might not have enough money to buy instruments or other things that have to do with music. It's a wonderfully terrific foundation. If nothing more, if people purchase the book knowing a dollar is going towards that foundation. I also have a Facebook page and for everyone who likes that Facebook page, I'll donate another dollar to Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. Terrifically worthy, as you well know."

Chase: "That's awesome. I played in band starting in middle school, Grade 7 all the way through

high school, and then I was also in a marching band in the army, The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, but never once did I own my own instrument. It was always the school's or the army's. But, at least, if we can get kids access to instruments, even if they don't own them, that is a great thing. I still had a great time and I wouldn't have traded that for the world playing in any of those bands."

Rick: "What did you play, Chase?"

Chase: "I played the French Horn."

Rick: "Oh, I'm envious. I love the French Horn. You had to have a really good embouchure. A lot of the tones really come from the pressure you put on the mouthpiece, and it's a small mouthpiece. I love the sound of a French Horn."

Chase: "I love it too. You started out playing a trumpet and a trumpet is very similar to a French Horn, at least in fingering positions."

Rick: "Yes, and because I started on the trumpet, I read Treble Clef and not Bass Clef. Did you read Treble clef for the French Horn as well?"

Chase: "It's Treble Clef, but I read both at the same time because I also play accordion and when you play that, you are playing treble and bass at the same time."

Rick: "How cool is that? How did you get on the accordion?"

Chase: "My parents got me into it when I was a kid, so I played it before I actually had music instruction in school. It was amazing because my music teacher also taught us theory. By the time I got to high school and we were learning the theory there, I already knew it all. I didn't learn a single new thing theory-wise in school because I already knew it from accordion lessons."

Rick: "That's very cool. I went from Trumpet to Baritone. I went from playing a lot of melodies on the trumpet to baritone where it's lower brass and played a lot of counter-melodies. And in a lot of way, the French Horn and Baritone are similar. You had a lot of melodies that you played as well, but you also had some good counter-melodies."

Chase: "I want to share a passage from the book right now because you have a Baritone and in preparation for the alumni band, you had it repaired and the quote reads. . .

"I choked up when I opened the case and saw my reconditioned baritone looking up at me. She was new when dad entrusted her to me as a kid, and now she looked new again."

Rick: "Well read. I get emotional even when I hear that or read about it because she had been so abused. Just to hold that baritone again, I now own it. It had been so damaged that the school didn't feel they had the funds to repair it so they literally gave it to me. It cost a ton of money to have it fixed but I still find myself playing it. My embouchure has weakened over the years and I'm amazed at how quickly my lips get tired. But just having that baritone with me, helps me relive a whole lot of those days of being in the marching band and the concert band and how important that was to me."

Chase: "Your dad switched you to baritone because he didn't have enough baritones at the time."

Rick: "That's right. I was in fifth grade at the time and ended up being in the marching band when I was in the sixth grade. The big kids accepted me pretty well. He didn't have any baritones and he needed a baritone. And fortunately, over the years, my hat was too big, and the baritone was almost as big as I was, but eventually I grew into my hat and into my baritone as well."

Chase: "Very cool. Your dad's name is-"

Rick: "Is Lewis Niece. He'll be 89 this coming September. He has now memorized seven different piano programs of thirty-four numbers each of music from the 20s, 30s, and 40s. And since my mother has passed away, my dad's new mission is to play at nursing homes and retirement centers to play the music he was raised on and to play the music the people of his generation love to hear."

Chase: "He sounds like an amazing man. I know that he was in the military, he was an educator, he painted houses in the summer, he conducted the church choir, and he even started a bowling alley because you didn't have one in your small town."

The Band Plays On: Going Home for a Music Man's Encore is a heartfelt tribute to small town DeGraff, Ohio, and its beloved band director, Lewis Niece. The book is written by his son and we've been talking with the author today in this interview and podcast.

— Chase March, Chase March