



# the Country Almanac

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## Play it again...



## the Menlo Atherton Band aims for Europe

"Heading for the Hague"...

Under this slogan the Menlo-Atherton High School Jazz Band, fresh from its victory at the Clovis Jazz Festival, is aiming its sights on a European concert tour this summer, climaxing with an appearance at the North Sea Jazz Festival at the Hague in the Netherlands.

The band will launch a drive to raise the \$40,000 needed to send its 20 young musicians to Europe with a free outdoor concert at noon on Tuesday, March 11, at One Market Plaza in San Francisco. This is the modern office complex rising from the classic facade of the old Southern Pacific building.

"The MA band is one of only two high school bands chosen to represent the United States at the Hague," said band Director Frank Moura. "In terms of mainstream jazz this is easily the largest international jazz festival in the world." All the big stars and the big name bands will be there, as jazz bands and combos perform 24 hours a day in seven halls all under one roof, according to Mr. Moura.

This is a return invitation for the band which in 1978 was acclaimed the best high school band to play at the Montreux International Jazz Festival in Switzerland. For the first two weeks in July the band hopes to repeat successful performances in Holland, Germany, Luxembourg, France, and Switzerland, where it has received a return invitation to perform at this year's Montreux festival. It expects to have radio and television coverage throughout the tour.

Even with 16 new members, the current band appears to be continuing the tradition of excellence established by the 1978 band. Members are jubilant after sweeping the jazz festival at Clovis Feb. 15.

"Besides winning first place in the heavy bands division and taking the sweepstakes, we earned awards for three outstanding soloists and the best sax section," Mr. Moura said.

Named as outstanding soloists were Erroll Dietz of Redwood City on the tenor saxophone, David Galbraith of Atherton on the flugelhorn, and Jim Kelly of Redwood City on the trombone.

Earlier in February the band earned the coveted "unanimous superior" plaque at the California Music Educators Association festival at Hayward.

Two more festivals are coming up this spring. The band

will be competing at the Reno International Jazz Festival, and on March 14 and 15, and will go to Bear Valley in April.

How does this band compare with the 1978 band which starred such outstanding players as Jim Norton who played solos on ten woodwinds?

"The strength of this band is its ability to play as a unit," Mr. Moura said. "This is a very tight band with good dynamics and solid soloists—the last player in each section is almost as good as the first."

This band is also unusually hard-working and highly intelligent, according to Mr. Moura. He hardly ever has the band room to himself, even at lunch, because band members are practicing in sections. "They spend a lot of their spare time in making the band better," he said.

As for intelligence, the band has two 4.0 students and National Merit finalists and another half dozen with averages above 3.8. "They are well-rounded students, not just musicians," Mr. Moura said.

Members of the Menlo-Atherton Jazz Band are: saxophones, Mike Otwell of Redwood City, Erroll Dietz of Redwood City, Sandra Middel of Menlo Park, Jason Briggs of Menlo Park, Monte Colgan of Redwood City, and Carolyn Wallace of Menlo Park; trumpets, Tom Garland of Menlo Park, Richard Archuleta of Menlo Park, David Galbraith of Atherton, Dennis Cooley of Menlo Park, and Doug Galen of Menlo Park; trombones, Bill Softky of Menlo Park, Jim Kelly of Redwood City, Mike Urbach of Portola Valley, Scott Levenson of Menlo Park, and Robert Smith of Redwood City; and rhythm, drummers Greg Cootsona and Peter Dippery of Menlo Park, bassist Jaque Harper of Portola Valley, and pianist Kristy Thompson of Menlo Park.

The band plans a variety of activities to raise the money it will need by June. It will be playing benefit concerts; it will arrange concerts for companies and community groups in return for a donation; and it will be soliciting direct contributions. A combo of band members will be available to play for smaller groups and at social events.

Tax deductible donations may be sent to Menlo-Atherton High School Band Fund, care of Pacific Union Bank and Trust Co., 800 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park. For further information call John Galen at 325-5715; to arrange a concert call Graham Wallace at 323-3397.

by Marion Softky

**Trombones glint gold at a night concert. Shown are [above, left to right] Mike Urbach, Jim Kelly, and Bill Softky of the Menlo-Atherton Jazz Band. Trumpeter Tom Garland shows behind.**

**Turn to page 2 for a photo of the whole jazz band in action.**

**Erroll Dietz of Redwood City is the Menlo-Atherton Jazz Band's star saxophonist.**

