

The Cheryl Six *Stars and Stripes* Scholarship

My intention for establishing the *Stars and Stripes* Scholarship is to extend my gratitude to The University of Northern Colorado for the many benefits I received while acquiring my bachelor's degree. I also want to encourage current and future UNC flute students to broaden their instrumental literacy, and therefore potential for future employment, by adding the piccolo to their skill sets.

My parents, both night club musicians, discouraged me from going into the "music business." They had experienced a difficult career, always hustling for gigs, and wondering if they'd make enough to pay the mortgage. But, when it came down to choosing a major for college, I felt that playing the flute was what I did and liked best, so I went for it.

Having said that, one does not just choose to be a music major; one must play well at an audition. I had never had a private flute lesson, only informal instruction from my dad, a saxophone player, who also doubled on clarinet and flute. That instruction served me well enough in high school and, along with my commitment to learning my band music, kept me practicing regularly. However, these things were not enough to get a coveted spot in the UNC School of Music. After auditioning, I was not selected as a music major.

Disappointed, but still determined, I went to fall orientation and wrestled to piece together a schedule to be a music minor. I was the last one to finish, and followed up with a personal and pivotal talk with the supervising professor. After learning that I had taken years of piano lessons, had excellent high school grades, which included music theory, he allowed me to register as a music major in a probationary status! And thus, the first trusting and helping hand from my alma mater, The University of Northern Colorado!

I improved rapidly on flute during my first year as a music education major at UNC. Hence, I was granted permission to be a performance major, later performing a junior year recital. Coming as no surprise, my parents urged me to stay with a teaching degree that I could "fall back on." However, my flute instructor, Walter Smith, was so enthused by my junior recital performance that he promptly began choosing music for my senior recital! This faith in my abilities on the flute allowed me opportunities to perform in a woodwind quintet, musicals, and more, gaining additional experience.

Despite my journey of continued growth on the flute, I sensed that something was missing. I felt invisible among the dozens of UNC flute players and wanted more for myself, and *from* myself - I wanted to play the piccolo. I didn't yet understand the peculiarities and power of the instrument, but I was eager to find out. Mr. Smith emphasized that the piccolo was not just for marching band, but an instrument to be taken seriously. So, while I continued with all of my flute responsibilities, I also began playing the piccolo, which allowed me seating in several large ensembles, including the orchestra and elite wind ensemble. There is only one piccolo player in these groups, therefore, this unique and exposed position required me to become more skilled and confident in my playing. The more refined I became on the piccolo, the more I distinguished myself, leading to a

somewhat “specialized” place in the music department. This landed me spots in recitals, operas, and special performances with the University Chorus and the Greeley Philharmonic.

During my final few months of senior year, I heard through a fellow musician about an opening for piccolo in the US Coast Guard Band, one of the five premiere military bands in our country. Being born and raised in Colorado, I wasn’t exactly sure what the Coast Guard was! Despite that, I sent a recording of my playing to the CG Band and they in turn asked me to do a live audition for the piccolo position. Coincidentally, the Coast Guard Band would be coming to Denver to perform only one week after my summer graduation! The band was going to allow me to audition while they were in Denver instead of flying to Connecticut, where the band was stationed.

I didn’t own a piccolo, so I had been using a university instrument while earning my degree. Now I was in a jam - I really needed a good quality piccolo to take the audition, but was required to return the borrowed one before commencement. I pleaded with the music department to allow me to keep the piccolo for one more week. Once again, UNC took a chance on me!

I won that nation-wide audition and shortly after, I enlisted in the US Coast Guard. After traveling to the US Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, I was immediately issued a band uniform and took my place on stage, playing my first concert only a few days later. Needless to say, my parents were absolutely thrilled...and relieved!

I was the one and only piccolo player in the US Coast Guard Band for 30 years. I stood proudly when playing for Presidents of the United States. I stood with patriotism when we performed a medley of service songs honoring each branch of the military. And I stood especially tall thousands of times when I performed the piccolo solo in our country’s national march, *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. In fact, a portion of that solo is tattooed on my shoulder.

I am creating the *Stars and Stripes* Scholarship to thank the University of Northern Colorado for the many opportunities given to me before, during and, yes, even after my time there. I challenge young flutists to broaden future opportunities by daring to embrace the difficult, the delightful, and the dynamic - piccolo!