

Military Appreciation Day Tiger Band Alumni Spotlight

Blair Berkland has spent more time than most in uniform. Berkland attended Clemson from 1971-1975 and sported the Tiger Band uniform on most Saturdays throughout the football season. After graduating in December of 1975 he traded in the orange and purple for a US Air Force uniform.

Blair Berkland graduated with a bachelor's degree in Industrial Management as a member of Clemson's ROTC program. It was mid-way through his college career that he realized that if he planned his coursework schedule appropriately he could stay at Clemson an extra semester. Why would someone want an additional semester of classes? Well for Blair Berkland it was for Tiger Band. Berkland and his friend stretched their classes so they could continue their studies for a 9th semester solely for playing with "The Band That Shakes the Southland" one last season. That football season he travelled to every single football game with trombone in hand playing his favorite Tiger Rag gliss. When asked what his favorite memory of Tiger Band is Berkland couldn't decide on one but reflected that it was the "overall enjoyment and fun" with the friends he met. He admitted it was hard work practicing and performing but that's what fostered the unique "camaraderie" he shared with his lifelong friends.

Joining the Air Force required Berkland to put the trombone down for a while. Throughout his four and a half years in active duty Mr. Berkland travelled many places from California to Honduras to Saudi Arabia serving as a medical service corps officer. Afterwards he pursued an MBA at the University of Auburn and the University of Georgia and, after graduating in 1984, landed a great position with an oil company in Texas. Berkland is an eagle scout and it was through his volunteer position as scout master in Texas that he got involved with the Air National Guard and later went into the Air Force Reserve. Berkland was called to work after 9/11 and was relocated to San Antonio to the largest hospital in the air force. Since his move to Texas, Berkland has continued to follow Clemson football and still attends games every once in a while.

On this day as we recognize the millions of heroes who have served our country it is people like Blair Berkland whose dedication and selflessness inspire fellow tigers and band members alike to pursue lives of service. We thank you Blair Berkland, for your service both in Tiger Band and in the US Air Force. Go Tigers and God Bless the U.S.A.!

By Tivvi Pare