

THE LAUNCH PAD

Volume XVIII Issue 3



Spring 2022

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Traditions Old and New</i>	2
<i>The Mother Ship</i>	3
<i>Rites of Spring</i>	4
<i>ASPA and Econ Wins</i>	5
<i>Sgt. Major's Last Stand</i>	6
<i>JROTC Six-Peat</i>	7
<i>Summer Calendar</i>	8
<i>School Play and Band</i>	9

Dear Parents,

Congratulations on being a part of a winning season at Catholic High School for Boys. You are definitely a part of the major wins we've had over the past school year. This publication covers just a few of them.

The biggest win, of course, is that we were able to come together from the first day of school to the last without the dreaded component of virtual school. (Well, we did have one cyber snow day, but we'll forget that happened.)

In this issue, you'll find a few articles that represent the 2021-22 wins we experienced. These stories don't even cover all the many victories in sports including spring visits to state championships for the baseball and soccer teams, but we congratulate every team and every coach for their efforts and valor in such trying times.

What you will see is cause for great joy in the hallways. As each season progressed, we've come closer and closer to the elusive idea of "normal."

Thank you for sharing in all these wins and for entrusting your sons to us.

—the editor



Happy seniors react to Mr. Steve Straessle's remarks after the closing Mass for 2021-22. The Mass was a way for students to give thanks for hundreds of small victories. Students and teachers worked day by day to bring back all the traditions and joy of a "normal" school year. The year began with all students attending in person and in masks. Slowly but surely, life returned to what the seniors remembered from 2019.

2022 BRINGS WINS IN ACADEMICS, SPORTS, AND LIFE

Spring 2022 was a winning season for everyone here. High on the list was another national championship for the JROTC Physical Fitness team. The school's program, under the leadership of Col. Charles Johnson and Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan, hosted this year's top contest. The honor of hosting was well-deserved after our fitness team won five national championships in a row in far-flung venues across the country. This year's win was a bittersweet victory as the school will say goodbye to Sgt. Major Jernigan when he retires at the end of this school year.

The school's baseball and soccer teams brought excitement to spring as both teams advanced to state championship games. The baseball team ended with a conference championship and a record of 21-7. Both played their final games on Friday, May 13, with temperatures climbing into the high 90s.

Back home on the scorching CHS football field, another fierce yet friendly competition took place as class teams faced off for the second ever field day. Fans made the circuit of basketball, volleyball, and kickball games that determined a championship team. This year's additional contest was a mystery event. Mr. Matt Dempsey explained it only seconds before teams took to the field for a multi-phased relay.

The relay began with running but then veered into math problems, geography questions, weight toting, and back-

wards sprinting. Seniors ended up victorious and celebrated with a giant trophy. Mr. Matt Dempsey then gathered the whole student body and reminded them of final exams that would begin for seniors on Tuesday, May 17. The day ended with all students singing the *Alma Mater*.

Mr. Dempsey said, "Field Day was a great opportunity not only to celebrate the work of a year of hard fought growth in and out of the classroom, but also a chance to recenter as we headed into the final push of exams."

It makes perfect sense that Mr. Dempsey would dismiss the crowd with a reminder about studies. This year has brought plenty of academic wins as examples to all about the importance of excellence in the classroom.

As noted earlier this year in this publication, seniors Jackson Smith and Chad Greenway are National Merit Finalists. These two student scholars joined teachers Mr. David Massery and Mr. Matt Golladay as winners of Stephens Awards this spring. Smith and Greenway piled up stacks of college acceptance letters and had the happy chore of deciding which highly selective college to attend.

Several other academic teams made progress this spring including the journalism, yearbook, and broadcast teams; Mr. David Massery's economics challenge team, and Mr. Paul Lincicome's robotics team. Their stories are in this issue.

Field Day 2022



Seniors dominated the basketball contests during the second ever CHS Field Day on May 13.



Juniors look on as underclassmen battle it out in a hotly contested volleyball game. Temperatures in the 90s did not lower enthusiasm among players or spectators.



Senior kickball champions strike a victorious pose.



Seniors celebrate with a giant trophy at the end of the May 13 intramural challenge. The contest also included a mystery game which was a relay race that included math problems, geography questions, weight toting, and backward sprinting.

END OF YEAR TRADITIONS AT CHS RETURN IN FULL FORCE AND FULL VOICE

Mr. Paul Spencer is a magician. He has the ability to coax a full-throated close-to-harmonious sound from 725 boys sitting in a high school gym.

At the last Mass of 2022 on May 3, the seniors realized that their list of “lasts” would grow daily. They took their responsibility as leaders of the school seriously all year and gave underclassmen a final lesson as they participated in the Mass with full attention and full voice.

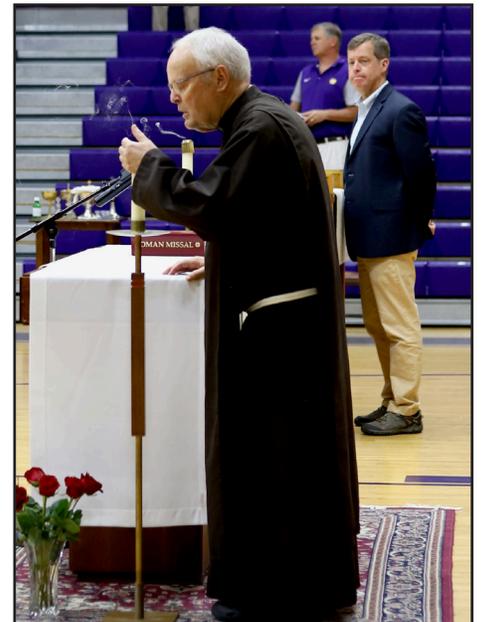
Senior Charlie Timmis wrote in a recent *Rocket Times* article, “During times in the past three years that we couldn’t control the situation in the school, we adapted to make sure that the word ‘normal’ could be as close to us as possible. With our final year at this school coming to an end, I can proudly say that the class of 2022 helped bring back that word and the foundations of the school that Covid took from us.”



Senior Charlie Timmis works in the Rocket Times room. He is proud that he was able to have a senior year that looked close to “normal.”



Fr. Patrick Friend, one of the masterminds of the second ever CHS Field Day, prepares to award the championship trophy to the class of 2022 for the second time.



Brother Richard Sanker performs a time-honored ritual as Mr. Steve Straessle looks on. The school’s gym becomes a sacred space while the candles burn. Brother Richard signals the return to a boisterous gathering place as he extinguishes the candles.



Junior Elias Found reads poetry on an ordinary day in a normal 2022 classroom. It’s a victory for us all.

THE MOTHER SHIP

(A COLUMN FOR MOMS BY MOMS OF CHS GRADUATES)

DEAR MOTHERS [AND DADS] OF CURRENT AND FUTURE CHS STUDENTS,

As we've already written here and tell everyone we meet, we are now part of the honored league of grandmothers. As such, we are revisiting the activities we loved when we had our own babies. Of course, the obviously great thing about being a grandmother is that we revisit ONLY the activities we loved when we had our own babies.

A favorite practice from our young motherhood was the chance to read to our children. As you did, we probably memorized the entire text of 20 or so battered and much-loved books. Most of us didn't stop reading with our boys when they turned five. As they went through grade school, we spent the obligatory time helping them struggle through their first readers. Later, we encouraged them as they triumphantly finished a chapter book in fourth or fifth grade.

When they began junior high school, we continued reading what they did. It was and is a great idea. Not only did we have a window into their literature classes, we also had an opportunity to talk about important topics in a fully objective way. The books on the Catholic High reading list offer plenty of opportunities to delve into serious subjects. English teachers here expect students to read eight books a year in addition to their regular classwork.

Students know this book list as "Outside Reading." The "outside" part is only in the fact that boys must read these books outside of class time. Some books with obvious plots and simple characters might not warrant a classroom discussion. However, most of the books on the list show up monthly — if not weekly — in classroom talks about morality and social justice.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn examines the triumph of standing up for what is right in the face of an adult world bent on prejudice. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is a study of a person finding his own voice and using it to help those who cannot speak for themselves. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* puts a man in an impossible situation and has him choose a sacrifice.

All Quiet on the Western Front delves into the mind of a young soldier on the front lines as he learns that war is not a grand adventure.

We read all these books when our sons did and we discussed them. It brought us closer. Sharing books is something we still do today. Again, it takes us out of the everyday world and lets us visit other people's ideas in an objective way. As Atticus Finch tells Scout in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view — until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Books — particularly books of fiction — allow all of us to take Atticus's advice about walking around in another person's skin. Such a walk can lead the reader to revelations about people different from ourselves.

Mr. Steve Straessle is a life-long learner and an avid reader of both fiction and non-fiction. Lately he's been recommending a book by Johann Hari, a British journalist. Hari titled the book *Stolen Focus* and subtitled it "Why You Can't Pay Attention — and How to Think Deeply Again." The book looks into a major problem we see with our sons today: attention deficit.

However, it does not dwell only on the problems of young people. Today, all of us from our small grandchildren to us of the grandparent generation are susceptible to severe lapses in our ability to focus on important issues in our lives. So, what does this have to do with reading?

Hari has compiled a specific list of seven items that cause modern people's loss of focus including task switching, poor sleep habits, and (of course) social media. He brings up one problem that seems surprising: the collapse of sustained reading. Here's a short excerpt from some of Hari's research: "Each of us can only ever experience a small sliver of what it's like to be a human being alive today, but as you read fiction, you see inside other people's experiences. That doesn't vanish when you put down the novel. When you later meet a person in the real world, you'll be better able to imagine what it's like to be them."

So sustained reading of fiction can help all of us recover our ability to focus and make us more empathic. We challenge you parents to encourage your sons to read by giving them an example of a person who values reading. We grandparents will do our part. Our favorite for this month is *Dino Dance*. We'll tackle Steinbeck with the grandboys in due time.



For some strange reason, Mr. Steve Straessle continues to ask the moms of the CHS classes of 2002 and 2003 to write this column.

NOT ONE, NOT TWO, BUT FOUR STEPHENS AWARD WINNERS FOR 2022

Pictured at right are senior Chad Greenway, band director and music teacher Mr. Matt Golladay, economics and history teacher Mr. David Massery, and senior Jackson Smith. All four received the Stephens Award this year.

It is not common for a school to have more than one student or one teacher win this award. It makes sense that the committee felt the need to include all four. Both Greenway and Smith are National Merit Finalists and highly motivated students who will pursue their goals at prestigious universities. Greenway will head to Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to study "the evolving intersection of economics, mathematics, decision making, and data science." Smith will travel in the opposite direction to the University of Southern California. He will study neuroscience in his quest to become a neurosurgeon.

Students here appreciate the talent and experience that Mr. Golladay and Mr. Massery bring to their classes. Mr. Massery left a long and successful career in the business world to teach here, and Mr. Golladay is a gifted musician in his own right who recognizes his students' abilities.



rites of spring--TIE BURNING AND 5K



Mr. Paul Lincicome prepares the ties for the annual rite of blowing them up. Senior Jed Straessle addresses the student body just before the explosion that would set the student body free of ties for the rest of the school year.

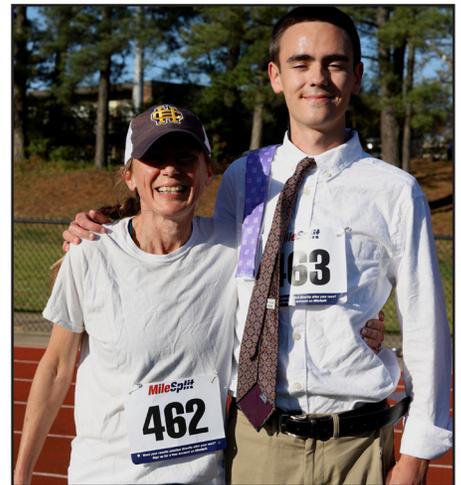
The burning and the Rocket 5K are cherished end-of-the-year rituals unique to this school. The tradition of burning tattered ties at the end of a long school year goes back to at least the 1980s. The Rocket 5K has a shorter history but has become legendary for its course full of midtown hills and its motto "Yeah, it's tough. Get over it."



Students count down to ignition on Tie Burning day, April 9. The day was uncharacteristically chilly.



In a stunt to persuade Mr. Steve Straessle to give the seniors an early dismissal, DC Comic characters kidnapped senior Jed Straessle. Mr. Straessle consulted with Fr. Lawrence Frederick who set all the seniors free.



Cross Country coach Mrs. Jennifer Found and her son Elias Found share a moment after finishing the 5K.



The race begins as hundreds of students, parents and race lovers burst into the perfect April morning. Teams included bomerooms, friend groups, and even some father-son duos. JROTC cadets were on hand as usual to help with traffic, logistics, and of course, with the snacks. Entry fees and sponsorships for the 5K ensure funds for CHS development.

ARKANSAS SCHOLASTIC PRESS CONVENES AGAIN



Students representing print and on-line newspaper, yearbook, and broadcast journalism turned heads at the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association convention banquet not just because of their impeccable style. They also collected close to 60 individual and staff awards. It was a good night to be a Rocket.

One of the many events that saw a come-back this spring was the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association (ASPA) convention. Held this year at the Embassy Suites in Jonesboro, this meeting drew hundreds of students from all over Arkansas to celebrate their accomplishments, learn from professionals, and pick up awards for their year's work.

Not a single one of the CHS attendees had been to an ASPA convention before and so they had

no expectations. The Booster Club provided funding for bus transportation, hotel rooms, and a nice pizza lunch on the return trip.

Rocket Times advisor Mrs. Gretchen Gowen said, "I was very pleased to be back in person at this convention. We've been attending for about ten years, and the competition aspect has elevated all of our programs. We always benefit from the many break-out sessions covering all aspects of journalism. It's also just plain fun to see our boys

in a new environment interacting with fellow student journalists from around the state."

Highlights of the 56 awards included All-Arkansas for the *Rocket Times* and for the 2021 *Rocket* yearbook. Individual awards included Chad Greenway as a runner up for writer of the year and David Haynes as a runner up for yearbook business manager of the year.

First place on-site contest winners included Chad Greenway for editorial writing, Nicholas Tarini for people copy, Arden Semans for ad design, and Cade Johnson for media-based theme design.

Students winning "Best of ASPA" for individual work over the 2021-22 school year included Charlie Henry, Cade Johnson, Nicholas Tarini, Phillip Zawislak, Arden Semans, and Chad Greenway.

Mrs. Deanna McGill, the new advisor for the *Rocket* yearbook, attended for the first time. She said, "I think the ASPA convention is great exposure for students to see journalism in a bigger context as well as exposure to all the other programs in the state. It was a confidence boost winning competitions with schools who are quadruple our size. It shows our quality programs are mighty and efficient despite our size. It really is a David and Goliath type match-up and an incredible motivator for everyone involved."

MR. MASSERY'S STUDENTS WIN FINANCE CHALLENGE FROM ECONOMICS ARKANSAS

Mr. David Massery is becoming accustomed to wearing first-place medallions. For the second consecutive year, his senior economics students have won the state championship for the Economics Arkansas Personal Finance Challenge.

Mr. Massery explained the contest: "The team considered a fictional case study of a family suffering from overspending and a series of previously bad financial decisions. The boys identified issues as a team and then split up the responsibilities to respond to each of the issues.

"For the second year in a row, the business executives who judged the case study complimented our team on going the extra mile by suggestions to help the struggling family not only to be successful, but also to find ways to enjoy free family activities that would make their struggles a little easier."

Mr. Massery is rightfully proud of his team. "They were self-starters," he said, "They followed through without my having to keep them on schedule. They took each section of the study to present and it was clearly a team effort."



Mr. David Massery and his senior economics squad accept state championship awards at a meeting of Economics Arkansas held at the UALR Cammack Campus on May 11. Pictured are Economics Arkansas representative Marsha Masters, Mr. Massery, Charlie Henry, Armando Guerrero Lopez, Sid Beers, John Lindsey, and First Security Bank representative Ms. Andrea Hogan Lewis. Mr. Massery said, "I am so proud of our team. We are the Arkansas state champs for the second year in a row. We beat Mountain Home High School and the Arkansas School for Math and Science in Hot Springs." Each student received several awards including a first place medal, a certificate, and a cash prize.

SGT. MAJOR JERNIGAN'S RETIREMENT GIFT: A HUGE WIN



Senior Christian Dawson puts in maximum effort on one of the first fitness events. This was Dawson's first year to participate. Participating during Sgt. Major Jernigan's retirement year meant a great deal to the whole team.

Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan was characteristically serious. He seemed to be everywhere at once at the May 7 National Marine Corps JROTC Physical Fitness Championship competition, held this year on Catholic High's campus. He was finally able to relax and smile after the CHS team stood on the platform to accept their first place award.

Quietly present on this day was Master Sgt. Fernando Faria who will take over Sgt. Major's role as MCJROTC instructor in the fall. The always highly motivated team members including seniors CJ Matthews, Cole Mock, Luke Jacuzzi, Gavin Kyer, Sam Robinson, and Christian Dawson had the added incentive to win for their mentor in his retirement year.

Sgt. Major Jernigan will definitely retire from his instructor duties next year, but there is a good chance he will be present as a coach for the fitness team. This year's win was Sgt. Major's ninth in his 14-year CHS career.

Head of JROTC Colonel Charles Johnson said, "This has been a 24/7 job for the Sgt. Major. It is a lifestyle, not a job. He lives and breathes it every day."



Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan watches three CHS team members make up the top six winners. His boys held the numbers one, two, three, five, and ten positions. When coaches from around the country ask Sgt. Major about his program, he tells them about his revolutionary recipe for success. He said, "It's called W-O-R-K." His athletes put in time before school several days a week and even stayed in condition during quarantine by working out individually.



Senior Cole Mock uses his best form to rack up points for the standing broad jump portion of the meet.

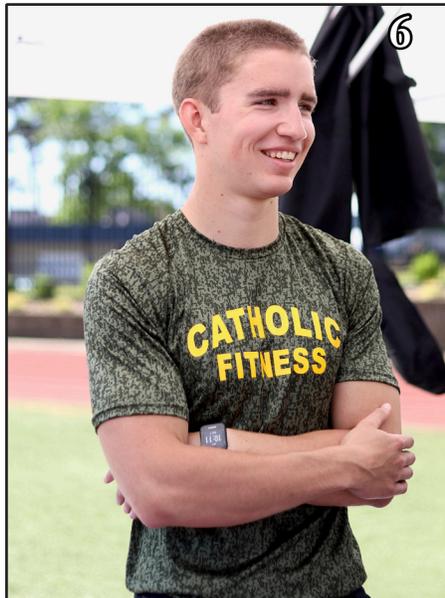


School	Girls	Boys	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	Total
CHS	438	378	382	370	346	338	321	2291	1914
...	431	465	458	477	465	321	...	...	2291
...	420	779	383	307	356	359	...	...	1902
...	411	399	382	352	346	...	...	...	1992
...	408	403	324	293	256	...	...	...	1777
...	445	404	406	364	334	...	...	...	2002
...	411	460	297	395	393	...	...	...	2095



Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan stands proudly with top three competitors CJ Matthews, Cole Mock, and Luke Jacuzzi after he checked the scores in the brilliant May sunshine. The team scored 2308 points out of 2500. At right Master Sgt. Fernando Faria, who will join the JROTC program in the fall, shares a light moment with Sgt. Major Jernigan.

SIX-PEAT IS NO SURPRISE FOR FITNESS TEAM



1) Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan and his team seniors Gavin Kyer, Sam Robinson, Cole Mock, Christian Dawson, CJ Matthews, and Luke Jacuzzi wait for their turn to compete. 2) Senior fans turned out early on May 7 to support their friends on the physical fitness team. Having the contest on their home field allowed many to witness the grueling competition and the hard-won victory. 3) Members of the 2018 championship team serve as one of the pilot teams in the 300-yard shuttle run. 4) Seniors Chad Greenway and Charles Timmis consult their instructions as escorts for teams during the day. 5) The 2018 pilot team allowed judges to have a run-through of competition rules before the actual meet began. 6) CJ Matthews emerged as the individual national champion in the JROTC Physical Fitness competition. 7) Gavin Kyer, who earned fifth place in the competition, changed from his determined game face into his purple-shaded-win attire.

CHS CALENDAR: SUMMER 2022

- ◇ Wednesday, May 25: Graduation practice for seniors (10:00 a.m.)
- ◇ **Wednesday, May 25: Class of 2022 Graduation Ceremony 7:30 p.m.**
- ◇ Wednesday, May 25-Friday, Jun 3: Rocket Basketball Camp for boys entering grades 4-9 (toddezzi@lrchs.org)
- ◇ Monday, May 30: Departure for Europe Trip (returning June 9)
- ◇ Tuesday, May 31-Friday, June 3: Ninth grade basketball tryouts 3:30 p.m.
- ◇ Thursday, June 9-Friday, June 10: Rocket Football Camp for boys entering grades 4-9 (jfoleman@lrchs.org)
- ◇ Tuesday, June 14-Thursday, June 16: Rocket Baseball Camp for current kindergarten through 8th grade students (RocketsBaseball@lrchs.org)
- ◇ Monday, August 1: Freshman Registration
- ◇ Tuesday, August 2: Sophomore Registration
- ◇ Wednesday, August 3: Junior Registration
- ◇ Thursday, August 4: Senior Registration
- ◇ **Monday, August 15: First day of School for 2022-23 School Year**

ATTENTION, PARENTS OF JUNIORS: IT'S TIME FOR A PLAN FOR YOUR 2023 YEARBOOK AD

Parents of rising seniors are probably thinking about how fast these three years have gone by. Ready or not, it's time to think about your son's senior year.

He has already had the opportunity to order a senior ring and he's tried on senior sweaters so that he will look the part on Ring Mass day. He'll pick up his sweater and tie at registration on August 4.

One more thing you might be thinking about this summer is his senior yearbook ad. The parents of the 2022 seniors responded overwhelmingly to the chance to honor their sons with full-color ads that appear in a special section of their yearbook. Your son received a copy of the yearbook on Monday, May 23. Look over the ads to gather ideas.

Yearbook ads are certainly not required. However, they are the way we ensure that every student will receive a yearbook. Each student pays a nominal yearbook fee at registration that covers only a fraction of the cost for the books. We depend on the ads to keep producing quality yearbooks.

The 2021 *Rocket* recently won the equivalent of a yearbook state championship, the All Arkansas award, at the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association convention. Mrs. Deanna McGill, who spent years working in graphic design, has completed her first year as yearbook advisor here. The 2022 book she sponsored will be a major contender for All Arkansas at next year's ASPA convention.

There is nothing to order or buy now, but you might be thinking about which photos you'd like to include. Some parents spend hours (or days) going through baby photos and special family portraits — or just sweet little boy pictures. That works just great. The yearbook staff can use digital photos (as long as they are 1MB or larger) or they can scan the paper photos you submit.

If you're planning on using a professional photographer or a friend who's good at it, you might think about setting that up soon. Photographers often have many orders to fill when fall deadlines loom large.

We've been suggesting the use of a single iconic photo that symbolizes your son's personality. Those ads are dramatic and eye-catching. Whatever you want, the yearbook staff will try their best to accommodate you.

For questions or advice, contact Deanna McGill dmcgill@lrchs.org.

Look for snail mail and email notifications from Mrs. McGill in late August.

SCENE AROUND THE STATE



Members of Mr. Paul Lincicome's Robotics class qualified for the Vex Robotics Competition state championship. Team members were Nathan Ghidotti, Christopher Suffern, George Bishop, and Daniel Nkunga,



Juniors from the National Honor Society helped out at Arkansas Food Bank in Conway on Saturday, May 14. NHS sponsor Mr. Fred Baker was pleased with the boys' enthusiasm and large turnout.



New yearbook advisor Mrs. Deanna McGill celebrates with senior David Haynes at the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association convention in Jonesboro on April 21. Haynes was runner up for Yearbook Business Manager of the Year.

SPRING PLAY RETURNS AFTER TWO YEARS OF A DARK STAGE



Ms. Carrey Reynolds shares words of advice and encouragement to her cast of the spring play See How They Run.

After two years of a dark stage, Mrs. Carrey Reynolds faced multiple challenges, but she used her many years of experience to create a memorable experience for the many who attended the shows on April 28, 29, and 30. Most students had never been able to see a play here and were in awe of the professionalism of the production. Most also found the show absolutely hilarious.

The play takes place around the time of WWII in the British residence of a local vicar. It's a comedy of errors as gossip, espionage, and mistaken identity lead a reserved group of clerics and two Americans into a race to find a traitor. The cast flawlessly delivered their non-stop dialogue in various versions of Russian and British accents. The crowds for all four shows, including a gathering of young alumni for the dress rehearsal, laughed close to non-stop through the entire play.

CHS BAND WINS AWARDS AND ENTERTAINS AT SPRING CONCERT

One of the last memories students have of the strange spring of 2020 was of the band staging a flash mob performance of "Sweet Caroline" during lunch one day. Months of on-line classes and restrictions took their toll on everyone, but particularly on Mr. Matt Golladay and his program. How does a band practice and perform virtually?

Mr. Golladay led the CHS band through two years of restrictions and setbacks. They practiced outside and in the gym. They wore strange masks and covers on their instruments. Still, they showed up at every football game and continued to serve as the soundtrack of life at Catholic High.

The spring of 2022 saw the band back in concert form as they performed for a large crowd on Tuesday, May 3. The concert ran exactly an hour and included performances of both the concert and jazz bands. Seniors had their chance to shine in solo performances. The entire band sounded great. The boys were back.

Several band members had earned individual accolades from the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association (ASBOA) including Jackson Smith for All-Region Senior High Jazz Band 1; Evan Johnson (bassoon) for All-Region Concert Band 1; Justin Lee (alto sax), Tyler Goodman (trumpet), and Cole Carper (horn) for All-Region Concert Band 2. Smith also qualified for All-State trombone in both jazz and concert bands.



The Bishop of Lax (senior Andrew Files) puzzles over the condition of his niece Penelope Toop (MSM student Anna Polk) while American soldier-in-disguise Corporal Clive Winton (senior Elijah Rockers) takes comfort in a glass of liquid courage. Many commented that the set and costumes for Mrs. Reynolds' productions rivals that of professional companies.



Reverend Arthur Humphrey (junior Jett Holbert) and Corporal Clive Winton disguised as a cleric (Rockers) meet under strange circumstances at the residence of Reverend Lionel Toop. It was Holbert's first appearance on stage, but he impressed audiences with his sense of comedic timing.

Mrs. Reynolds dedicated this show to Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan, who has quietly helped her by providing uniforms for shows such as No Time for Sergeants and A Few Good Men. For this production, Sgt. Major found an authentic World War II uniform for Corporal Clive Winton.



The boys are back. Mr. Matt Golladay introduces the band dressed in their concert black at the spring concert on Tuesday, May 3.