

Excerpts from correspondence with Mr. Marty Erickson,

One of my personal favorite stories is this:

Years after I left MSU and was with the US Navy Band, I went to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp as guest soloist/clinician. The reason for this particular trip was for me to perform with the "Blue Lake Monster" Jazz Band (Bruce Early conducting and GAIL ROBERTSON ON BASS TROMBONE!!), and then present a brass master class for 40-60 students.

The concert went very well and included a couple of encores of "screech tuba playing." Then I hopped onto a golf cart and was taken to the other side of the camp for my low brass clinic thinking, no problem I can relax and talk and play a little. To my surprise, and maybe horror, sitting beside my host Don Flickinger was Mr. Falcone. In my mind three bad things were happening: Mr. Falcone did not like students playing jazz back in the day; he abhorred anyone being late; and, my chops were not relaxed and feeling fluent after the 1 1/2-hour jazz blow. In my mind, it was Strike Three!

So I started just breathing and trying to stretch my chops as I heard Don F. say "students; Mr. Falcone has asked that he introduce his former student today and has graced us with his presence." Mr. Falcone got up and essentially told the students gathered ALL of my bad habits as a student; poor, unfocused attacks and more. He finished by saying; "As a professional player now, you will hear no evidence of any issues in his playing and the stamina he has built playing with one of the world's finest bands will be evident."

I am thinking: I AM DEAD!!! As it turned out, the introductions gave me time to gather some chops and we did a short warm-up together. As I talked, Mr. Falcone sat right next to me and from time to time would whisper; "Don't forget to tell them about....." The faculty was cracking up to see me sweating it out STILL trying to please my teacher!

There are many more stories of course and you know as many as I do. You also know this; when I teach I ALWAYS hear Mr. Falcone's words in my ear and in my heart. I was one of those many students whom he fed at his house and gave me work to do to earn a little money, and had INTEGRITY about everything he did Not always easy to find these days.

Excerpts from correspondence with Dr. Earle Louder

I will attempt to share a few instances about Dr. Falcone and his teaching style:

1. I remember once when I was in a lesson with Dr. Falcone that I had a problem and asked him about what I could do to fix it. He asked me "what was the problem". I indicated to him that each time I had to start at the very beginning of a particular etude or solo on which I was working at the time, that I was all locked up and couldn't get the first note out. He rubbed his chin and thought for a minute and then walked over to his desk and picked up his baton and walked back over in front of me. He asked me to put my euphonium up to my lips and get ready to play the first note. With that he raised his baton and with a preparatory motion gave

the down beat and I played the first note without any hesitation. He remarked, "Earle, I don't see any problem. Just be your own conductor." With that I quickly learned the principal of rhythmically-breath-play without any hesitation. I had been breathing in and then holding my breath which would lock me up and make it difficult to release the air. This was his practical way of teaching a concept. It works.

2. In my lessons Dr. Falcone also taught me other things in addition to teaching me the techniques and concepts of how to perform on my euphonium. He taught me to have confidence in myself and in my own ability to perform on my euphonium. Case in point: One Monday morning I walked into the music building and, as I usually did, went to the message board in the front hall to check out the activities for the week. In reading the list of performers for the Thursday afternoon Student Recital, I found to my surprise my name listed there. I immediately went to Dr. Falcone's office/studio and informed him of the situation. He picked up the phone to call the front office and then hesitated and put the phone back down. He said, "Earle, we have been working on the Rimsky-Korsakov Concerto for Trombone, haven't we?" He then proceeded to say, "Well, let's do it." I was shocked to say the least. I immediately got in touch with my accompanist and informed her of Dr. Falcone's decision. To shorten the story a little bit, we both worked like beavers on our individual parts on Monday afternoon and evening and on Tuesday morning. We then started working together on Tuesday afternoon and evening and almost all day Wednesday. I will interject here that I also was memorizing all three movements because it was customary for Dr. Falcone's Junior and Senior students to perform solos from memory. We rehearsed on Thursday morning for Dr. Falcone and then performed the Concerto at the 3:00 o'clock Student recital hour. I still can't believe that we did it, but we did. Believe me my confidence level rose as a result of Dr. Falcone putting me on the spot with no other choice but to do it. This scenario was not so much about the solo as it was to help me to learn to meet a challenge with confidence and "just do it."

3. On another side of Dr. Falcone's teaching techniques was how he got concepts across to the MSU Concert Band. I remember on one occasion when we were rehearsing a certain piece of music for the first time that Dr. Falcone did something rather unique. The music was Divertimento for Band by Vincent Persichetti. He was conducting along and eventually very quietly cut off the band and gently laid his baton down on the conductor's stand. He then crossed his arms and with one hand rubbed his chin with a quizzical look on his face. He proceeded to say, "This music is like alphabet soup. All the letters are there, but they don't spell anything." Now you have to know that Dr. Falcone's background in Italy was based on the music of opera. He loved a beautiful full-blown melody and the Divertimento was based on breaking up the melody into fragments never ever putting them together completely for an entire melody presentation.

4. Whether he was teaching in private lessons or conducting the concert band, Dr. Falcone was always leading his students to strive for musical excellence both melodically and technically. He had an interesting music relationship with me. The more he gave me, the more I did, and the more I did, the more he gave me. I spent a lot of time in the practice room.

Excerpts from Michael Schott, former student 1975-1979,

Regarding the Falcone tribute, how wonderful! Here are a few thoughts:

- 1) Around our junior year, the MSU music department decided only music majors could study privately as a for credit class. Dr. Falcone let me keep studying with him for a nominal fee of \$10.00/lesson. That was typical of his generosity and support for his students.
- 2) I remember the studio recitals every term. An important means to challenge ourselves and have exposure to soloing in front of others.
- 3) He conducted us as a section solo when we played the Barat Andante and Allegro.
- 4) I also remember, that even when he was ill, when called on to conduct the Symphony Band, the years would melt away.
- 5) Of course his effortless playing, his horn on the waste basket, the way he strictly taught vibrato, exercises to test how long we could hold a note (I always did poorly, losing out to Pat Billings), the way he made sure high notes were perfectly articulated, with each note attacked flawlessly or else we had to repeat them.

Despite his age and strictness, Dr. Falcone was always kind and thoughtful. Unfailingly fair with the highest moral standards. And always humble despite his immense talent and stature.

Each note I play to this day is influenced by his mentorship and is a vital part of who I am as a euphonium player.

Best wishes, Mike.

Excerpts from Matt James, former student 1976-1980, presently the Director of Performing Arts at Lawrence Central High School, Indianapolis, IN.,

My favorite Falcone story of them all (pardon my retelling as it was nearly 40 years ago when I heard this) was the time he told us about when he was hired at MSU (MAC possibly?) at the time. He described in great detail how the president of the school (I believe back in 1928) hired him to direct the band. He went to the first rehearsals and was amazed as to how awful the band was. "They couldn't read, they couldn't play and they sounded horrible, for goodness sake!" (all said with a Falcone accent)! He went back to the president to express his disappointment with the students. The president listened politely as Leonard listed his concerns, one by one. The president was empathetic and nodded his head in agreement with

all of Falcone's complaints. After Leonard exhausted his list, the president looked at him with sympathetic eyes and said, "I understand the band is horrible. That is why we hired you!" Leonard was surprised by what he took to be a compliment and felt proud that such a grand challenge to fix this band and make it better was offered to him with such confidence. He shook the President's hand, left his office and began to walk home. It was then that the possible other meaning of the president's comment began to surface in his mind... "I understand the band is horrible. That is why we hired you!" "Now, wait a minute!" Falcone shouted.

One of my experiences with the Arban's Book:

The Bb major scale exercises were the most excruciating. It was the first true Falcone experience I had as a freshman at MSU. Professor Falcone, as hard as I tried, would not let me move past the first half dozen lines until I could stretch the first 8th note, gradually accelerate up the scale, stretch the time between the quarter notes, and round and weight the notes exactly the way he wanted. It was so frustrating.

As a matter of fact, after some time had passed during my first semester, in the basement of the music building you asked me if I had gotten passed the first lines in the Arban's book. When I said no (and I know you knew the answer before you asked me) you burst out in maniacal laughter. You were such a nice guy back then.