

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 2, 2014

NOTE: THERE WILL BE GOOD INTERVIEW AND VIDEO OPPORTUNITIES AT OUR FINAL SHANGHAI REHEARSAL ON SEP. 5, AS WELL AS THE SEP. 3 SEND-OFF PARTY. DETAILS BELOW.

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The Beat Goes On Marching Band

Portland, Oregon

Band's Chinese preparations are headed down the drain[pipe] ... but in a good way



PORTLAND – It's a sunny, sticky Sunday afternoon on the softball field adjacent to the Garden Home Recreation Center in southwest Portland. One-hundred people are walking, talking and balking this way and that. Then, the familiar voice...

“People ... **PEOPLE!** – I **don't** have a microphone!” You'd hardly know it – Steve Tolopka's voice projects perfectly without one. “Let's run through the '48 Steps to Glory' once again.”

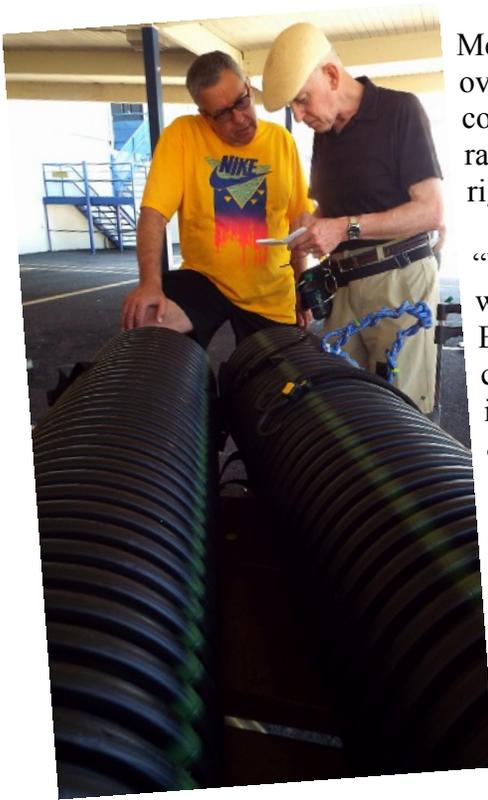
With just days to go before the members of **The Beat Goes On (TBGO)** marching band embark for Shanghai, China, last-minute preparations are becoming a bit frenzied.

Since this is a rehearsal, there are no uniforms. Music director Tolopka (right) looks even more whimsical than normal wearing a red Dr. Seuss “THING 1” t-shirt. There's only one thing on his mind: perfecting his *20 pages* of instructions for moving each of the 122 band members from parade formation to concert formation, in 24 seconds, in Shanghai.

Though they will be parading through the world's largest city for a considerable time, the all-adult band has just two minutes to perform in front of the main reviewing stand and the TV cameras beaming the event to a Chinese audience of 200 million. “We want to be at our best and not waste a second,” says Tolopka. Hence 20 pages detailing those 48 Steps to Glory for each and every performer, from the drum major to the trombones to the “hydration engineers.”



(more)



Meanwhile a few feet away, under a shady canopy, two men are standing over two five-foot sections of black plastic drainpipe. They're not contractors. They're travel planners. The pipes aren't carrying water, but rather the nine flags and two banners the band is taking overseas (below right).

"We had two soft kite bags, but they were already tearing and I knew they wouldn't make it all the way to China," says TBGO support team member Eric Hoffman (near left), who conceived and built the drainpipe flag carriers. "These tubes are indestructible – I *know* they're going to get there in one piece," says Hoffman, who will have the honor of carrying the Stars & Stripes in the Shanghai Tourism Festival Grand Parade on Sep. 13.

Admiring Hoffman's improvised carriers is Tom Higham (far left), TBGO clarinetist and the band's travel guru. A veteran of more than 40 years in the travel business, he knows challenges when he sees them, yet perseveres. "The biggest challenge was getting 130 seats on a single plane – that's a lot to ask," he says. Coordinating all the paperwork was another chore. "It helped to sit everyone in the band

down early, making sure they followed directions, and getting their travel visas done in an orderly way," he says.

The drainpipe flag carriers and even the tubas are small enough to go as checked baggage, which eliminates the hassles and uncertainties associated with air freight. "We'll check them in as usual. Once they're checked in, hopefully they just change planes like the rest of us on the way to Shanghai," says Higham.



This trip to China, the biggest undertaking in the three-year history of TBGO, has been made possible through the ongoing efforts of a music director, a travel agent, a drainpipe adaptor, an accountant, a music librarian, choreographers, grant writers, amateur diplomats and other odd-jobbers, all within the ranks of the band. Sponsors, the public and even the U.S. Department of State have pitched in financially, too.

The band's final rehearsal takes place Friday, Sep. 5 at 6pm at Southwest Bible Church, 14605 SW Weir Road, Beaverton. **The media is invited** to come record the final run-through of those fledgling 48 Steps to Glory on the band's 5,783-mile odyssey. **The media is also invited to the band's send-off party and fundraiser, from 5 - 10pm on Sep. 3** at Buffalo Wild Wings at 1200 NE Broadway in Portland. A contingent of the band and its auxiliary units will perform that evening.

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PHOTO CREDITS:

All photos by Ken Kane. Photo files available upon request.

THE BEAT GOES ON MARCHING BAND: More smiles per mile!

Want to come out and play?

Email: director@tbgo.org

Website: <http://www.tbgo.org/>

Facebook: www.facebook/TheBeatGoesOnMarchingBand