

Musical Gifts In The Family

■ Taggart/Grout children have hit the high notes.

By Ron Karten

At 18, Tribal member Zane Grout is already sophomore at Western Oregon University (WOU). A youngster who once came within a whisker of singing for the President of the United States, Zane today is thinking about a future in geology and the earth sciences.

At 17, his sister, Tribal member Brittany Grout is a senior at Tillamook High School. Currently a member of the Portland Youth Philharmonic, she has at various times in her youth considered careers as a sign language interpreter,



She's In Tune — Tribal member Brittany Taggart practices trombone with the Portland Youth Philharmonic. Taggart is the daughter of Tribal member Richard Grout and Debbie Taggart. She is the granddaughter of Tribal Council member Val Grout.

a marine mammal trainer (as with the former whale, Keiko) and a nutritionist. One recent day at the end of March, Brittany had moved on to consider the fields of court reporting and travel agenting.

We're not holding either of them to today's ambitions, they're still so young, but in the event that this travel business holds Brittany's interest, she knows that there's a pretty good school for it in Hawaii. And not that Hawaii is part of either of their dreams ("We're from Tillamook," said Zane. "We're not used to the sun,") but Zane also noted that for anything in the field of geology, Hawaii is right up there with Oregon as the place to be.

Meanwhile, these two talented kids continue to pile up credits next to a bunch of everyday pursuits like rugby (Zane), Key Club and the Kids Making Miracles program at Doernbecher Children's Hospital (Brittany) and of course their music, which formally and informally has worked its way into their hearts.

Brittany has played in her

district's Honor Band every year. She's performed in the Solo Contest every year. And she has received top marks every time she's done it. This year, at the urging of a teacher, John Hammond, she auditioned for and was accepted into the Oregon State Honor Band.

As a result of Brittany's acceptance into the state Honor Band, she and her friend, Bethany Bake, will be touring Europe early in July for two weeks. Sponsored by Oregon Ambassadors of Music, the tour will include concerts along the way.

At Tillamook Junior and Senior High schools, Zane performed in the district Honor Band and Jazz Band. He was in a vocal ensemble ("He has a great bass voice," said his mom), which took him on a four-day Alaska cruise during his junior/senior year. (He graduated a year early).

Earlier than that, in eighth grade, Zane was singing with the Jazz Band at the Tillamook County Courthouse for a legislator home from Washington, D.C. The band was invited to play for legislators at the nation's capital, and it took a year to put the gig together. Members of the band had moved on, and all but one regrouped to pull the trip off.

While there, the group was singled out again, this time to give a concert to the President but it was not to be. "He got sick or something," said Zane, "and it was cancelled."

Zane still plays and writes and sings, but on his own.

Today, as trombonist in the Philharmonic's Portland Youth Conservatory Orchestra (PYCO), Brittany attends rehearsals once a week in Portland to prepare for about half a dozen performances throughout the year. The next will be on May 2nd, 5:00 p.m. at the Newmark Theatre, part of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

(PYCO is the second of two full symphony youth orchestras and a string youth orchestra supported by the Portland Youth Philharmonic Association.)

Until just recently, Brittany was taking lessons from the Oregon Symphony's principle trombonist, Aaron LeVere. He told her that she was a little behind but had the potential to succeed, even at a

metropolitan symphony level, and for months she was practicing for 90 minutes or more every day.

"She is enjoying the symphony but enjoys her regular band music much more," said her mom, Debbie Taggart. "In band, the trombone is a significant instrument. Symphonies don't use trombones much."

In a full orchestra, "it's all about the strings," said Zane, who at his peak, played eight instruments in addition to singing.

Meanwhile, LeVere told Brittany that he did not allow himself to miss a single day's practice because one day's rest translated into an unacceptable loss of skills.

Finally, it struck her: "This (unrelenting practice) is not something I can see myself doing for the rest of my life."

Zane has always been the one with the natural talent, said Taggart, Brittany the one that practiced hard.

Long ago, Brittany "saw Zane playing and I said, 'Heck, I want to do that, too.'"

"He could play anywhere," said Taggart of her son. "He can play most anything. He started on trombone, moved to tuba, played bass trombone and all the guitars."

"I improved without practicing," said Zane. "Brittany didn't have the natural talent. She had to work really hard at it. If I practiced as hard as she did, I'd probably still be doing it (in a formal setting). Talent only takes you so far."

So, the question comes up: where did these children get all this talent and these skills? Perhaps from the parents?

"Absolutely not," said Taggart. "We were just laughing about that. He can't hear music at all. I can at least get rhythm."

The fact is, said Taggart, there is nobody on either side of the family that can play or sing like the kids.

The credit for their musical success goes in part to a tireless, inspiring music teacher, the aforementioned John Hammond.

"Both of them



Mei Ann Chen — Conductor and Music Director for the Portland Youth Philharmonic, directs Taggart at a recent rehearsal.

Photos by Peta Tinda



Tribal member
Zane Taggart

would not be where they are without John Hammond," said Taggart. "He would do Jazz Band before school. Forty-five minutes early."

"Brittany started on the flute in 6th grade," said her mom. "She is an excellent flute player. In 7th grade, she wanted to go into Jazz Band but the flute doesn't go there." The junior high school's music teacher, John Hammond, "turned around and handed her a trombone."

"By the beginning of 8th grade," said Taggart, "she was one of the top trombone players."

Like many schools, Tillamook Middle School cut a music teacher position to half time last year. That position was manned by John Hammond, and it could have been the end of the story, but in Tillamook, the parents and kids knew what they had in Hammond, and raised the other half of his salary and benefits (\$35,000) to keep him.

This year, the district cut his position altogether, so many parents packed up their musical kids and traveled to him in Seaside for lessons. "In high school," said Taggart, "we would go to his house in Beaver once a week. (Hammond) follows them even through high school."

As far as Tribal activities, Brittany joined Royalty when she was young. "Zane would dance but nothing formal," said his mom. Both kids helped in the kitchen with food for powwow. Zane has continued to include his heritage in his education, demonstrating traditional dance and regalia for classes, using it as a subject in his speeches.

Zane also has started playing the Native flute. "It's had an influence," he said.

The two are the grandchildren of Tribal Council member Val Grout and the children of Tribal member Richard Grout.