



## Patricia A. "Pat" Ellison

April 20, 1944 - February 14, 2021

PATRICIA A. "PAT" ELLISON age 76 of Bella Vista died February 14, 2021 in Springdale. Born April 20, 1944 in Fort Smith, Ark. to Herbert Lee Ellison and Dolores Wallen Ellison. Her early years were spent in Yokohama, Japan; Paris, France; and several U.S. cities before her family settled in Fort Smith. After graduation from Fort Smith High School, she completed her collegiate education at Arkansas Tech University (ATU) and the University of Northern Colorado.

Upon graduation from ATU in 1966 with a degree in Music Education, she became the assistant band and choral director at Fayetteville High School. Her 35-year career as an Arkansas music educator also included assignments at Gardner Junior High School in Russellville, Woodland Junior High School in Fayetteville, and Springdale where she became director of bands at Springdale High School and the coordinator of instrumental music for the school district in 1979. Pat was chairman of the Springdale High Fine Arts Department and a member of the Springdale High Curriculum Council for 23 years. In 1992, she became director of the Springdale Performing Arts Center. Her career included many state and national clinician and guest conductor appearances.

Pat received numerous honors and awards including the 1975 American School Band Directors Association-Stanbury Award, 1977 and 1984 Tau Beta Sigma Outstanding Service to Music Award, 1991 Arkansas Bandmaster of the Year, and 1993 Springdale Teacher of the Year. She was inducted into the Arkansas Bandmasters Phi Beta Mu Hall of Fame in 2003 and ATU Hall of Distinction in 2007. Pat was recognized in 2014 as Springdale Public Schools Education Foundation Retiree Cornerstone Recipient. She was the first female president of the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association and served as president of the Arkansas Bandmasters Association.

For "Miss Ellison" it was all about her students and the music. She encouraged each one to excel personally and musically. Awards and trophies were not the goal. Achieving one's best and being a good citizen came first. In 1993, the Springdale High School band accepted an invitation to perform a concert at the prestigious Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. She repeatedly refused invitations for her bands to perform across America, believing expensive trips should have strong educational values. To that end, she began a tradition of tri-annual SHS band trips to march and perform in the

Nation's 4th of July festivity and parade in Washington DC. These trips were packed with public performances at and visits to the Capitol's landmarks, music venues, museums, the White House, and the US Capitol. Her legacy lives on in the thousands of students she influenced.

After retirement in 2001, she tirelessly devoted her time and talent to Springdale public school music, as well as serving as director of the Ozark Mountains British Brass Band. She is preceded in death by her parents and survived by sisters Barbara (Edward) Hancock of Springdale and Joan Ellison of Little Rock; nephew Michael (Kelly) Hancock, Madeleine and Sebastian of Norman, OK; several cousins; her very close friend Sandy Trigg; and many music, golf, and travel friends.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, a celebration of life will be held in Springdale later this year, date and time to be announced.

Arrangements under the direction of Sisco Funeral Chapel in Springdale.

Online condolences can be left at [www.siscofuneral.com](http://www.siscofuneral.com)

# Comments

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“ I find myself in junior high school again, where I spent as much time as possible in the band building. Here's why:

Miss Ellison—as she has always been to me and always will be—is one of my favorite teachers. She could be demanding, helpful, focused, fun, and sometimes a bit scary as the occasion required. She was a leader, a tutor, a mentor, an inspiration. and a sensible friend as the student needed.

Miss Ellison demanded the best from each of us; she inspired it in us and taught it to us. It is one thing to see greatness from afar in the lighting on the mountaintop, but it is quite another to be taken to the mountaintop and collaborate on the lightning. She did took us to a whole range of mountaintops, some lesser, some greater. Every day was an ascent.

Several decades' worth of students could say the same. We are legion.

**David Franks** - March 20 at 03:07 PM

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“ Miss Ellison was definitely one of a kind. She was an amazing teacher and musician and person . If you were lucky enough to have her as a teacher you caught her passion for music and the drive to be your best . She gave me so many lasting life lessons and great memories . She will be missed .

**LaLinda Gay Page** - March 10 at 05:23 PM

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“ I was her first Horn in SHS in the early 80s and had the privilege of having her teach me in her Music History class. I still love and cherish that class to this day. In fact, one of those pieces will be played at my own funeral, the "Goin' Home" or Dvorak's New World Symphony 2nd Movement Largo. She did inspire me and introduce things to me no one else has since! Although my father wanted me to go into business as dying wish, I always loved the fine arts music and always will. I still have dreams of my time in music because of Pat Ellison. May she play with the angels in heaven now and rest in peace.

**Chris Baker** - March 01 at 11:56 AM

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“ Pat was a very special person. I have known her since 1966 and enjoyed many experiences with her: teaching, adjudication, golf, sailing, and many other aspects of just appreciating life and what it has to offer. Not many were harder on their students or more in tune with their needs, simultaneously. I learned from Pat and echoed some of her techniques but as they say, "Nobody does it better." She excelled with her students and her friends. She will be missed but I pray she enjoys the release and comfort of her accomplishments for all times.

**Gerry Laster** - February 26 at 05:03 PM

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“ Pat and I were All-State Clarinetist coming to Tech, but there was need for oboe players straight from woodwinds class. The Tech band was planning a bus tour to schools in Eastern Arkansas and one of our selections was LA FIESTA MEXICANA. One of the movements had Ed Marlar, French horn, sound out the “priest chant”. Pat leaned over to me and whispered, “My father—plays dominoes— better than your father—plays dominoes——”. I turned every color in the rainbow trying to swish my reaction.

Chief called me in his office to see what was going on. I was afraid to lie so I gave him the story. The next rehearsal, Chief told the band what the rhythm of Marlar’s solo sounded like;

the band and Chief all “cracked up”.

DeWanda PratherGray 1961-64

**DeWanda Prather Gray** - February 25 at 11:33 AM

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“ A life well lived! This loving, inspiring person lives on in our grateful memories. She mentored out son and was his godmother. May God bless her and may her good works live on to serve our world in such need of others to be like her.

Vicky Hatfield Kiehl

**Vicky Kiehl** - February 25 at 10:11 AM

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“ Ms. Ellison was my band director from 90 to 93. But she was so much more to me than a school teacher. Her lessons were life lessons. She worked us so hard, and pushed us to be the best version of our selves at every opportunity. She taught us to have dignity, and respect for others. She made us feel like we were part of something very special, and we were. For Pat’s students, band was much more than mastering an instrument. It was about mastering our lives so that we could become successful, contributing members of society. She loved us, and she payed attention to us when we spoke.

When my mom had a stroke and cancer, and my family was struggling to put food on the table while paying medical bills, my wallet and whole Harp’s paycheck was stolen from the band room after a game by another student. Ms. Ellison, unbeknownst to me, had gotten Dick Trammel and some other parents to put together money to help us out. I cried like a baby in her office when she gave it to me, she cried too. She told me I didn’t have to go back to class, and she got me excused. We sat in her office and she told me stories of her childhood, and challenges she had growing up. I loved her like a parent. She made the world a better place for me for 3 years... and even today.

**Joe Purdy** - February 24 at 07:01 PM

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“ Ms. Ellison’s lessons live with me to this day. I’m always making sure my ducks are in a row and that I am always presenting me the best way possible. Thank you for your love and devotion to each and every one of your students. You will be missed and never forgotten!

**Andy Farriester** - February 24 at 03:33 PM

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“ Early in my band career I knew all about Pat Ellison. My dad made sure of it. Pat was his favorite teacher of all time. He told of how she took a 7th grade farm boy wearing hand-me-downs who started band a year late, and turned him into an all-stater by his 9th grade year. His group at Gardner Junior High I think had 5 all-staters in 9th grade, which I've always suspected led to 9th graders being banned from trying out for all-state in Arkansas. Pat affirmed my dad's confidence in 9th grade by telling him that he had become too good for her to help at that point.

In high school at Russellville, I always looked forward to Friday nights when Springdale came to town, or when we visited them. I was in awe of the power and musicality of the Springdale band, and I did my best to match them in passion for music. It was a big deal when my band director Travis Beard introduced me to her on a Springdale school bus.

In college at the U of A, when it was time to student teach, they asked us to list our preferences for where we wanted to intern. This was easy for me. I wanted to learn from the best at Springdale High School. Thankfully, Pat accepted me, and I interned with her in the spring of 1998. She and Russell Robinson took me under their wings and taught me how to teach and truly care for students. They affirmed me as a band director with "so much to give." I had the honor of conducting the Springdale Symphonic Winds in "America the Beautiful" by Carmen Dragon. To this day, this was the best band I've had the honor to conduct.

I feel so much appreciation for the opportunity I had to learn from the best. Pat's legacy carries on in Russellville with the Gaston family with my dad as a 4 year all-stater, me as a band director, and my daughter as an 8th grade talented flautist. Rest in peace Pat. Your legacy is strong and will carry on.

**David Gaston** - February 24 at 12:51 PM

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“ Pat Ellison was a one of a kind. I always remember her leaning out of the press box on Tuesday nights during practice. Her passion for her music and students was always amazing. She had an open door policy to her office and welcomed kids. It's amazing how people react when you say she was your director...they know how lucky I was. Rest In Peace Ms. Ellison, you will leave your legacy with so many of us.

**Jill Stanfill Law** - February 24 at 12:45 PM

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“ I first met and remember Ms. Ellison as a student in Russellville in the 70's. I was in athletics but my sister was in her band. My parents worked in the school system with her. This gave me the opportunity to know and respect her. She was an awesome instructor as witnessed by all the love she received from her students. Well done, Ms. Ellison. You will be greatly missed by so many.

**Kelly Davis** - February 24 at 10:14 AM

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“ I cannot express adequately what a huge influence Pat Ellison had on my life. I had the privilege of having her as a band instructor during my Middle School and Jr. High School years in Russellville. She was tough in a fabulous way! Kind and fun loving, I have many fond memories. She played a huge role in my ability to think that anything is possible and I have carried that with me throughout life. A great woman who impacted so many lives! I was blessed to have had the pleasure of knowing her. My condolences to her family and loved ones, may God bless you all!

**Kristi Mitchell Kennedy** - February 24 at 09:28 AM

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“ Pat was a big part of our daughters lives from 1996-2001 in the SHS band. She inspired them to do their best. They learned not only music but discipline, became members of another larger family and gained life long friendships. She was compassionate about the kids and music. We traveled on 2 Washington DC trips with the band and she made it the best trip of their lives. She became our friend too. She always had a smile, big hug and asked about the girls. She will be missed but not ever forgotten. Won't Heaven have heavenly music going on now. Prayers for the family.

**Chuck & Carol Fincher** - February 24 at 09:21 AM

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“ Pat Ellison was TRULY a legend in Arkansas Band Directing. It was my pleasure to be on her staff the last 6 years of her career. Some of the things I learned from Pat I still spread around today when I do a clinic or teach a music lesson. Her influence will not end with her passing. No doubt we will never see another like her.

**Bob Sivils**

**Bob Sivils** - February 24 at 08:22 AM

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“ I remember Miss Ellison well! I was an all-state French horn player at Fayetteville HS 1979-1981. She had quite a reputation! She served as guest conductor at many events I attended: band camps, All State, Solo & Ensembles - you name it. She was amazing! She was tough but her bands always sounded the best!! My heartfelt condolences for your loss. Please know that she did so much for the budding musicians in our state and region!!

**Nancy U. Fletcher** - February 23 at 08:23 PM

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“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**James Butler** - February 23 at 08:05 PM

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“ No matter what I did, I could never catch the attention of my parents, but I was symphonic band percussion section leader for 2 years, and Ms Ellison made sure that I knew that I caught her attention. She's the only reason that my sanity hung around as long as it did, and I will never forget that.

**James Butler** - February 23 at 07:57 PM

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“ I wasn't in band, but I did play football and after graduation her and I had a couple of conversations and she did ask why I never joined and I told her that my heart was for football and that her policy of not allowing football players to join the marching band was the reason and she explained that trying to do both was too hard for the student which I understood and she said that she was glad that I had a passion for something. Later I was working for Walmart and my boss was going to lunch as she caught me and she pulled out a \$100 and said that she always noticed me busting my rear and wanted to show her appreciation for that

**Joey Landers** - February 23 at 07:42 PM

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“ My heartfelt condolences to you. Aside from my mother, Pat was the single most influential person in my life. I hope that I can pass on wisdom to my students as she did for so many  
-Vince P

**Vince Pinalto** - February 23 at 07:15 PM

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“ Pat was a dear friend to me every year about the first of March I would call and ask her if she knew where her taxes were We would have a good laugh She said i was waiting on you to call In later years after she retired my husband and I would meet her for lunch and visit and we would have such a good visit We will surely miss Pat so much

**SHARON L MOTLEY** - February 23 at 07:02 PM

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“ Ms Ellison was truly a legend. One of my most favorite teachers. SHS 92-95. She will live on through all of her family, friends and students. Sending love and prayers to all who knew and loved her.

**Shannon(Gordley) Robbins** - February 23 at 06:24 PM