**OH, WHAT A NIGHT!**

December 2013 – Our son, his wife and their second-grade, twin sons came from Santa Cruz, California to celebrate Christmas with us. Actually, that is not completely accurate. They were thinking of relocating to Petoskey. Leave Santa Cruz where the sun shines year round, the temperatures are mild, and the beach and the boardwalk are within walking distance of home? What were they thinking? But, that is another story for another time.

At any rate, the twins were not even close to being happy about the potential move—that is until they saw the Steel Drum Band perform during the Petoskey Open House. The double decker bus that literally rocked while the high school students moved to the beat of the drums they were playing. The Santa hats and the reindeer ears that were worn by the students. The joyous faces of the musicians as they brought the notes of the familiar holiday songs. And, most of all the sound itself coming from those instruments. It was the Steel Drum Band that brought the twins around to thinking that a move to Petoskey may not be all that bad. If they had to move here, their goal became that one day they would be in the Steel Drum Band.

Fast forward to Thursday, May 10, 2018. The Petoskey Middle School band concert took place. Performing were the bands, the jazz bands and the steel drum bands from all three grades (sixth, seventh and eighth). The twins now go to Petoskey Middle School, and they are in the sixth-grade band and the sixth-grade, steel drum band. They are on the path of fulfilling their dream of being in The Steel Drum Band when they get to high school.

Back to the May 10, middle school band concert. As grandparents, we obviously attended, but to be honest, with some reluctance. Our thoughts went something like this. “We get to sit in the high school gymnasium on bleachers for over an hour listening to squeaky clarinets and saxophones, off-key brass instruments, flutes that can not even be heard, and drums that may or may not be in step with the beat. On top of that, we have to miss *The Big bang Theory.*”

What a misconception we had! Talk about drawing a conclusion without any facts or knowledge on which to base the assumptions. The middle school, band concert was anything but amateur. To begin with, all 350 of the kids were wearing black pants, black shoes, white shirts, and blue cummerbunds and bow ties. They sat up and stood up straight. They personified professionalism, and that was just the beginning. The eighth grade band opened. Wow! They were really good. As the evening went on, it just seemed that the concert got better and better and better. This was not your old-fashioned, John Phillip Sousa band concert.

The discipline displayed by these young musicians was incredible. They knew exactly what they were doing and when they needed to do it. What could have been a choreographic nightmare flowed without a hiccup.

The grand finale summarized the quality of the music program at Petoskey Middle School. All 350 students joined together to play a Sousa march. Just having that number of instrumentalists on key and in beat makes for a powerful sound. Then, take those 350 students playing that Sousa march without a conductor. That’s right. Without missing a beat or a note, with everyone in unison, those kids were so well trained and musically astute that their grand finale was played with precision.

Did I cry? Of course. Did I miss *The Big Bang Theory*? Not at all. Will I go to next year’s middle school concert? You betcha.