

DOUBLE TREBLE

Twins, Guam band to perform

Aydletts work as meteorologists

By **PETER WILLIAMS**
Staff Writer

Brandon and Landon Aydlett recall taking some long bus rides to performances back when they were members of the Northeastern High School band. But the 200-mile trip to Douglas Byrd High School in Fayetteville was nothing compared to the 8,000-mile journey the twin brothers will make when they return to Elizabeth City to perform next month.

The Aydletts, trumpeters who graduated from NHS in 2000 but now live in Guam, will be performing with their current band, the Guam Territorial Band, at Elizabeth City State University's Fine Arts Center on March 17. Joining the Guam band onstage will be the Aydletts' former band: the high school band at Northeastern.

The Guam band's performance at ECSU actually will be a tune-up for an even bigger gig a few days later: The band has been invited to



PHOTO COURTESY LANDON AND BRANDON AYDLETT

Landon (left) and Brandon Aydlett, twin brothers from Elizabeth City who now work in Guam as meteorologists, will be performing in Elizabeth City as part of the Guam Territorial Band, March 17.

perform March 20 at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Landon Aydlett, who works as a meteorologist for the National Weather Service on Guam, said in an e-mail that he's "incredibly excited" about coming home and performing in Elizabeth City next month.

"I'm especially excited to bring a whole band from the other side of the world to see my hometown, where I'm from," he said. "Some (of the Guam) band members have never been off the island, so this visit, and the trip up the East Coast will be a great experience for them. While I'm excited to play at Carnegie Hall, I'm thrilled to be playing in Elizabeth City and with the NHS band."

The Guam band's concert in Elizabeth City came about because of the Aydletts' close ties to the area — their parents still live in Weeksville — and the outreach efforts of their former mentor: NHS band director Wayne James.

James, who has taught at NHS since 1991, remembers the Aydletts as "probably two of my best music students."

Landon was the band's first-chair trumpeter, and Brandon was second-chair trumpeter. However, the two continuously swapped the top trumpeter slot back and forth. Sometimes the twins would play tricks on James and others by sitting in the other brother's seat.

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"I was talking to one of them one day and called him Brandon," James said. "He said 'no, I'm Landon.' But they really were model students, they studied hard and never missed a day."

The two brothers have stuck together since graduating from high school in 2000 — much to the surprise of their parents.

"We figured after they graduated high school, they'd separate and go their separate ways," their father, Bill Aydlett, says. "Then they went to (College of The Albemarle) for a year, and we figured after that, they'd separate. They didn't. Then they both went to N.C. State, and we figured after that, they'd separate."

They didn't separate then either — not even after taking their degrees from N.C. State University in 2005.

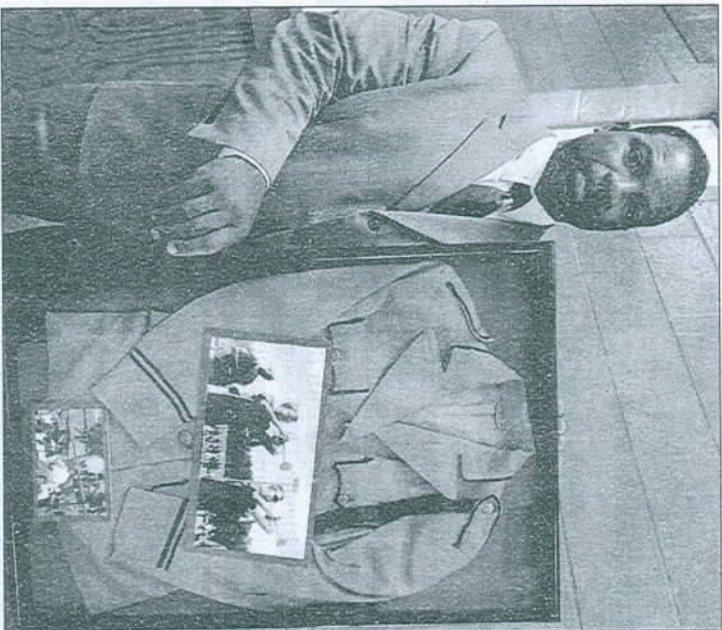
In July 2007, Brandon landed a job working as a meteorologist on a U.S. Army base on Kwajalein, the largest of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Landon followed him there in January 2008.

Brandon said he jumped at the chance to work on Kwajalein because it meant working in a field he had studied for.

"During, but especially the two years after college, Raleigh became a second home," Brandon said. "While it was hard finding my first weather job, I enjoyed juggling four part-time jobs and staying busy with that. But after two years, I was getting antsy for that weather job. I think that helped prepare me to say yes to the Marshall Islands job in 2007. I knew that's where I wanted to be and I wanted to take that adventure. Now I see that traveling isn't as big a task or worry as I used to think. (You) just get that passport and go."

Brandon got to use his passport again when he was offered a job with the National Weather Service on Guam in February 2010. Like clockwork, brother Landon followed him to the Pacific island territory four months later.

Guam is of strategic importance for the U.S. military. Bases make up about almost a third of the island, which is about three times



STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT A. CLARK

Northeastern High School band director Wayne James holds a photo that includes a picture of former NHS trumpet players Brandon and Landon Aydlett, Tuesday.

the size of Washington, D.C. Brandon calls it "one of the most welcoming places I've ever visited in my life."

Landon also enjoys living on Guam, calling it "truly a melting pot of many different cultures and people." But it's probably the last

place on earth he thought he'd end up. "I never intended to live outside of North Carolina until I was back at NCSU pursuing an education degree in 2007 and I had a job offer from Kwajalein, where Brandon was sta-

tioned," Landon said in an e-mail. "I considered (moving to Kwajalein) for about two weeks, knowing that I was pretty much guaranteed the job there. It was my anthropology teacher who convinced me to go abroad. He had lived and studied for several years in New Guinea, and hearing of his travels and experiences, I decided to give it a try."

Both brothers say their fascination with the atmosphere and weather patterns extends to their childhoods growing up on Meadstown Road in Weeksville. Landon said eastern North Carolina's often-volatile weather was what got him interested in becoming a meteorologist.

"I have so many fond memories of growing up in Elizabeth City," Landon said. "Some of my favorites of course, deal with weather. My favorite storm, the 'superstorm' of March 1993, was the first storm that I truly enjoyed. Before then, I was terrified of lightning and thunder. Since then, I've been fascinated by all types of storms."

Bill Aydlett, the twins' father, is excited about next month's performance. Even though his sons haven't performed in the NHS band in 12 years, he remains an active booster of the band. He continues to drive a band bus to and from performances, a job he's held since 1998.

James credits Bill Aydlett and other band boosters for putting together the Guam Territorial Band's visit to Elizabeth City. "This wouldn't be possible without the band club," James said. "People like Mr. Aydlett and band club president Ken Bateman are what makes all this happen."

Tickets to the Guam Territorial Band's performance at ECSU are \$5. Funds raised from the performance will be split between the Guam band and the NHS band. James is hoping to raise enough money to take the NHS band on some long-distance trips — but maybe not the 8,000 miles to Guam. He's currently working on trips to Williamsburg, Va., and New Jersey.

"The hands' performance at the ECSU Fine Arts Center is scheduled for 7 p.m. Advance tickets can be purchased by e-mailing nhsbandsclub@hotmail.com.