Mark Ferguson

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

Interviewed by Dean Brand

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Time stamps reference the video interview.

**DB:** Dean Brand

**MF**: Mark Ferguson

[00:00:00]

**DB**: This is Dean Brand, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives Cyclone ‘Varsity’ Marching Band Oral History Project. Today is Thursday, September 28, 2023. I’m interviewing Mark Ferguson. Mark is in Polk City, and I'm in Mitchellville. So, Mark, could you start by telling us a little bit about your early life? Where you grew up, your family, that kind of thing?

[00:00:42]

**MF**: Certainly. I grew up in Coralville, just outside of Iowa City, and my entire family on that side is all Hawkeyes. [Brand laughs] I came to Iowa State because I was studying architecture, and of course, Iowa State is one of the top architectural universities in the country. I came to Iowa State starting in the fall of 1973. I realized that my life was going to drastically change as I went into the college activities, and one of those things as I was walking through one of the engineering colleges was I walked by the band room. I thought, Hmm. I'd love to be a part of the Iowa State Marching Band. I was just reaching for the door to the band office and out walks Jimmie Howard Reynolds. Jimmie Howard Reynolds [Director of Bands, (1973-1980)] was the band instructor and the director of the Music Department at the time, and I asked him, “Hey, I'm thinking about joining the marching band. What do I need to do for that?”

He says, “Well, first of all, what instrument do you play?” Well, in high school, I played bass clarinet. Bass clarinets are not typically marched in marching band. He made that clear. [laughs] But I also said that I also was a part of the jazz band and played baritone saxophone.

His eyes lit up, and said, “Oh my gosh! I've always wanted to march a baritone saxophone. Would you like to be our first?”

I said. “Certainly, [Brand laughs] that's—” [inaudible] [laughs]

[00:02:47]

**DB**: Okay, well, you kind of answered the next question then, how you how you got to Iowa State. You really grew up not far from me because I grew up in West Liberty, so kind of the other side of Iowa City, if you will. Now, were you just involved in the marching band then, Mark?

**MF**: I started in the fall of 1973, playing baritone saxophone. At that time, I was a member of a saxophone rank and was marching towards the center of that rank. As a sophomore then, I became a right guide for a rank. In sophomore year, we ended up with three baritone saxophone players marching in my rank. I was in marching band for five years. I only marched with baritone saxophone for two years, my freshman and sophomore year. Once I got into my upper-level classes, I had more laboratories and large, long classes, and I knew I was not going to make it to marching band on time. So, I went to Jimmie Howard Reynolds and Dr. C, Mr. Christensen [Joseph Christensen, Director of Bands (1980-1998)] at the time. He and Mr. C said, Well, we've always needed extra people around to help us organize the band and be our assistants. Would you like to be one of our assistants? That way you wouldn't be affecting the entire rank by coming in late.

I said, “Sure. That would be great”. So, my junior year, I became one of the student assistants. That year, I believe Greg Long [Greg Alan Long, Industrial Administration] and [inaudible] were student directors, and we leaders of the band. Greg Long, down the road, ended up being working for the same company as I did, and I actually reported to Greg Long. [Brand laughs] So, I've had a lot of experience with a lot of people from the marching band and still kept track of those students that were in the marching band from 1973 through 1978. My last three years of my college career, I continued to be a member of the marching band as a student assistant.

[00:05:35]

**DB**: Okay, great. So, when you were marching, you were part of the saxophone section. Anything particularly interesting about the section or, you know?

**MF**: We had a number of saxophone players. Most of them, of course, were altos and tenors. The three baritone saxophones that we went with. Interesting enough, one of the members has already passed away, and the other two members that were part of the baritone saxophone members never graduated from Iowa State. They ended up only being there for a year or two, and so I'm the single lone baritone saxophone player that has come back to be a part of the Alumni Band. Currently, there are no more baritone saxophone players. They stopped marching baritone saxophones probably in 1980, 1981, somewhere around there. Since then, I am the lone baritone saxophone player on the field when I come back for the Alumni Band.

**DB**: And we're glad to have you in the sousaphone section. [Brand laughs]

**MF**: That's right. We played tuba music because before, when I was marching with the baritone saxophones, they didn’t actually transpose the music for me. Once they no longer had that baritone saxophone rank, we ended up having to do our own transposing of tuba music from bass clef to treble clef, and adding, I think it's four sharps. I can’t remember that. So, every year, I kind of go, Oh, how many sharps do I have? I have to do that every year I come back. It's a pleasure to be a part of the alumni marching band.

[00:07:33]

**DB**: When you were marching, what was the process of learning and performing the show? Then how did you go about getting the drill to learning the music, to putting it all together into the performance? I know it's different from when I was in the band, to probably you, to certainly the way they do it now today where it's everything is electronic. [laughs]

**MF**: Right. Back then, we had paper charts that we were given on a weekly basis. Those charts showed us not only where we stand, but then also the movements from one chart to the next, and you had to figure out the flow of how you're going to get there between the different numbers and measures that you march. We did a style of typically a high knee lift type of marching style, not more low type of shuffling marching style that they do nowadays. We were typically in blocks, and we would also do moving pictures. In fact, interesting note, as a student assistant in my junior year, we came up with the idea of the Spinning Cyclones, marching out and doing the the Flying ISU that we currently are still doing today as a pregame show. That pregame show probably has not changed, I don't think, since the mid-seventies. We started that when we came onto to Jack Trice Stadium. My first year, we actually marched at Clyde Williams Field, which is over next to Helser [Helser Hall]. It's no longer there. That's when they opened up the Jack Trice Stadium, and what a facility that is. It was exciting to be there and march on a weekly basis.

**DB**: Definitely. I can relate to the Clyde Williams Field thing because that's where we marched at.

[00:09:52]

DB: Where and when did your practice take place, and how often did you rehearse? How long did they go?

**MF**: We rehearsed about two hours every day, from about four o'clock to six o'clock. We would march and practice in a blank field across the street from the old music building, which is across the street from the Marston Water Tower. It was actually right next door to the Design College building. We actually got to watch the Design College building go up as we were doing our rehearsals, and I think that area has now also been swallowed up by another building on campus. It is no longer there. I'm not sure where they're practicing their marching practices these days. But that field, I don't believe is even there.

[00:10:54]

**DB**: Yes, you're right about that. They rehearse up--what used to be, I think, where the clubhouse was for the golf course. You know, clear up by the old armory, and they have a dedicated practice field up there now with lights and the whole thing, so that was a real plus when we got that.

**MF**: As a student assistant, we ended up with a set of scaffolding as a tower that we would use to get ourselves elevated so we could view the marching techniques. Myself and the other student assistants had an eight-foot pole, or ten-foot pole, whatever it is, which would lay out three positions, and we would end up clipping that pole to get everybody spaced correctly and aligned so that the formations looked correct. I don't know if they're still using those poles or not, but I certainly remember going up and down, up and down, trying to get that spacing exactly right. We had our diagonals, we had our straight lines, and our marching techniques. We always marched in what we call block one, I think. That was every rank, eight people per rank, and we would march in parades and that type of thing, with our particular ranks. Then each rank itself would be split up to make the different formations that we would have on the field.

[00:12:35]

**DB**: Yes, pretty similar to when I was--do you recall any of the shows you performed, or did you have a favorite one that you actually did while you were marching or--?

**MF**: Yes, there was one that really stood out. We did “the Rocky Theme.” We had a guest player, Maynard Ferguson [Canadian jazz trumpet player known for his ability to play in a high register]. What a performance. Being a namesake, [laughs] last name of Ferguson, I always liked Maynard Ferguson and his trumpet and his high reaching voice that he could make that trumpet sing. I was privileged enough to be able to be the one that got to usher him around and show him where we needed to be. He came out onto midfield, and we made a beautiful display for him and his particular song, and we played the “Rocky Theme” with him at center field. What a magnificent show that was. Really, still, to this day, is my favorite show. We had two different bus trips that I remember. Both of them went to Oklahoma for an away game. On our way back through from Oklahoma, we would stop off and play the Chiefs’ field on Sunday, and that was also a great experience to be able to be the marching band that came out in the Chiefs’ field and play for them at halftime. Those are the highlights that I remember, being a student in the marching band.

[00:14:30]

**DB**: Cool, very good. What was the culture of the band back then? How did the members, the drum majors, the staff, and the university, how did they shape the band, I guess kind of in your opinion?

**MF**: It's interesting because being a family that the rest of my family is a Hawkeyes, [Brand laughs] my brother actually was in the Hawkeye marching band. They do not have students leading the marching band. They are directed by their actual directors. Iowa State has always had student drum majors who actually direct the students on the field. The only area that the regular directors and the head of the department would direct would be the “Star Spangled Banner,” and so they gave a lot of responsibility and power to the drum majors. We had wonderful twirlers back then. We had a culture of fun. I remember my very first rehearsal at Iowa State. It was in 1973, that summer the drinking age had been dropped to eighteen, which meant everybody that came to school could now go out and partake with alcohol. I got my first experience of a FAC, Friday Afternoon Club, with all of the band members that went out to Cy’s Roost, and we all got to know each other and got to know other one other people within the band, not just those eight people that you have in your rank. We got to know a lot of different people just by having that Friday Afternoon Club every single Friday just before we would have our performances on Saturday. That was the best thing for me to acclimate myself into the university culture and into the band culture. It was a wonderful experience.

[00:16:47]

**DB**: Good. Do you have a favorite tradition from the marching band? Pregame rituals etcetera?

**MF**: It's interesting. As we're marching to the stadium, we do what they call the “Alligator Cadence,” and that's the one where you go *whoop, whoop!* That was developed by some clarinets and piccolo players back in 1973, 1974. LaVonne Anderson [LaVonne (Salton) Anderson, Psychology (1973-1977)] who is a recognizable member of our Alumni Band, and she was one of the few ladies in the band at this time because ladies weren’t allowed in the marching band, I believe until ‘72 or ’73, but when they got in and they gave their portion of the culture, it really fired up the entire atmosphere of the band. She and several others of that rank started this whole thing with the *whoop, whoops* and it has been a tradition ever since. The students are still doing it. They still do the same cadences as what we developed here back in ’73, ‘74.

[00:18:19]

**DB**: What about the band uniforms while you were in band? Do you remember?

**MF**: Yes, my first year, we were mostly all black, and had a yellow front, and then shakos with the plumes. They were older uniforms that--probably the same ones that you were using. We only used those for the very first year of my tenure, my five years that I was in the marching band. Then, when we moved to Clyde Williams Field, I believe that's when we started the brand-new uniforms, which were red, and with a white front, and a back panel. I actually have two handbags that have been made from those old uniforms that my wife just loves to have. Those are nice clutches and remembrances of the time when I was back in the marching band. I believe Dennis Carlson [Agricultural Business (1974-1978)] has one of those band uniforms that's going to be offered as an auction thing for the 2023 Alumni Band meeting that we're going to have at homecoming this year. I still remember that uniform. I remember the tubas wouldn't have shakos. They had the tams with “Cy’s Big Wind” on it. Then when we took the shakos off, the entire band would change over to our red, white, and yellow tams that say, “Cy’s Big Wind.”

[00:20:13]

**DB**: You talked about traveling to Oklahoma a couple of years on the trips and stopping at Kansas City on the way back. Any other stories about the travels?

**MF**: I remember the year that we went to the Peach Bowl. We went to the Peach Bowl in ’74 or ‘75. I can't remember the--I think it was ‘74. We went to the Peach Bowl, and the entire time we were there, this, of course, is in Atlanta, Georgia, we had to march in pouring rain. So, we were all just totally drenched, and there was probably about--it seemed like only about ten people came out to watch the parade. Then that year, I can't remember who it was we were playing, but we had lost that game. But we always said, the band always wins. Whenever we went somewhere, it took us about it took about five different motor coaches, buses, in order to transport the band because we had so much equipment they had to go underneath, and then enough seating for two hundred to two hundred and fifty people in the band. So, we always had five buses, and it became notorious that bus five had the reputation of being the party bus. Of course, when we got to the Peach Bowl, that game was on New Year's Eve. We had to fly back through two time zones right over the midnight hour, so we could have celebrated, twice, Happy New Year, but we were on a dry airplane. [both laugh] We did not get a chance to really celebrate, and then when we landed in the morning, we came back into a blizzard, and the buses nearly didn't make it back to Ames, and I remember, I lived about three blocks away from the band office in a fraternity. I can remember walking down the middle of the street where the buses had just created the two lanes of possible tracks that you could use to walk back to my fraternity house. It was about a twenty-four-inch snowstorm at that time. We came back into a blizzard from the Peach Bowl, where we just were just totally drowned by the rain of that day. So, that was a very memorable weekend. My poor, now wife, who was my fiancée at the time, I remember her having to spend the time and my parents' house in Iowa City or in Coralville, listening to the game with a whole bunch of Hawkeyes. [both laugh] It was a unique experience at that time.

[00:23:39]

**DB**: Okay, you talked about Clyde Williams Field as being part of the Alumni Band and what it's like to play in Jack Trice. What do you view as the difference between Clyde Williams and Jack Trice, other than size, for certain?

**MF**: Well, that was the main thing. One of the things I really enjoy, which is somewhat being taken away this year, is the fact that we had all of the parking capable of all of the tailgates that we have. Iowa State has become notorious and famous for their tailgating activities around Jack Trice Stadium because we've had so much good parking and capabilities for people to come out really celebrate. There's very few universities that have that amount of parking capability to handle all of the tailgating that happens in such a concise area as we do for Iowa State. When we had game day come through here a couple of years ago, they even commented on what an atmosphere that creates. My only hope is Jamie Pollard [Director of Athletics, 2005-present] has got a vision for the new Cy Town, and I hope that site town doesn't interrupt all of the fun activities that we have through the tailgating capabilities for Iowa State University.

[00:25:32]

**DB**: Okay. [You] talked about the Peach Bowl. Did you get to go to any other bowls? That wasn't one of the high points of Iowa State’s football career, at that point.

**MF**: No, it was not. We at the time--here's an anecdote for you--we at the time had, now I can't remember the coach's name, that's part of my illustrious thought process as they are starting to go. We as a marching band, we were practicing getting ready for the Peach Bowl. We were practicing at the stadium for what we were going to have for our performance. After we get done, we all went to get changed to get ready to go and get on to the buses. At the time, we went and a whole bunch of the men went into the men's locker room. We went in to the lock room with the idea that we're going to get ourselves changed out of our uniforms, to make sure we have everything ready, and repack ourselves to put it all on to the bus getting ready for all the instruments. In walks the coach at the time--and I can't remember his name for the life of me right now, which is really frustrating—

**DB:** Earle Bruce

**MF:** Thank you. Earle Bruce walks in to the locker room with nothing more than a tank top shirt, undershirt, and shorts on, with his tennis shoes. He walks up to all of the members changing in the locker room goes, “What the heck is—” I'll use a more appropriate word, “--what the heck is going on here? What are you doing?”

And we explained to him, Hey, we're part of the marching band. We're getting ready to get on the airplane for the Peach Bowl. So, we're just changing here.

He says, “You can't be in here! This is the *varsity* locker room.”

One of the members, and I can't remember who it was, [Tim Jensen] perked up and says, “Well, we are the *varsity* marching band,” and that's how the “V” in varsity got to be, and that was then communicated throughout the rest of the story. So, when we announce ourselves on to the field, we always announce ourselves as the ISU Cyclone Football, quote, ‘Varsity’ Marching Band. That's why the “V” is enforced in honor of Earl Bruce and his statement of needing to be a *varsity* player to be in the *varsity* locker room. [Brand laughs]

[00:28:39]

**DB**: Yes, that's a great story. What do you think sets the Iowa State ‘Varsity’ Marching Band apart from other bands? You talked earlier a lot about the student leadership.

**MF**: I tell you, there is an excitement about the band. I know people in the stands stay to watch the marching band. It used to be, back in the day, that everybody would go to the bathroom, go get something to eat because the team wasn't doing very well. Once we started to establish the marching band as a performance you want to stay for. This really happened in the early seventies, mid-seventies, late-seventies when we established such a high performance, and culture, and the exciting music that we would play, everyone ends up staying for the marching band and then going to the restroom and going to get their snacks. That's the type of culture that the marching band has created over time, and it really started back when Jimmie Howard Reynolds and Mr. C had such a great vision for the marching band, and we created so many traditions during that time that has outlived Mr. C and outlived Jimmie Howard Reynolds. It's a culture that is still—we have had such a great reputation as a marching band, even winning the Sudler Award here about five years ago, which is the premier marching band for the year, and we ended up winning the Sudler award back then because of the traditions, and part of the traditions means that--to wind the Sudler Award, you must have long-standing tradition of excellence as much as a marching band. That's what Iowa State has created in the culture of the marching band. We have so many people. I've got a student that graduated high school last year. She's currently in the marching band. She lives three doors down from me, she plays trumpet, she's a music major. She said there were five hundred students that tried out for the marching band, and they select only about three-fifty every year. That is an exciting thing, to have that many students wanting to become part of that culture and that fun activity in the marching band experience. It is a testament to so much of the excellence that we developed over the years, and the culture that we have at Iowa State.

[00:31:53]

**DB**: I would totally agree with that. They've come a long ways because when I started in the fall of ‘67, the band was going to move from the whopping size of eighty-four to a hundred and twenty. That was quite the jump then. Now to go to that many, why, that’s great.

**MF**: Yes. We have grown that band. I think when I started out, was a hundred and fifty students. By the time that we ended up my tenure in 1978, we were around two hundred students. I think they have three hundred fifty people now currently in the marching band. When the alumni come back, we have over seven hundred people--on the field all at once, and it's such an exciting time, and Dr. Carichner [Christian Carichner, Marching Band Director (2017-present)] has done a wonderful job in identifying a wonderful type of halftime show that we do every year, for the alumni, and it's such an exciting experience to come back and be a part of the Alumni Band. This year we have had so many people come back that they actually closed down the sign-up sheet before we got to a level where we had taken up all of the different seats. They actually opened it up just here this week for some of us that did not have the chance to sign up to increase the number of people that will be out on the marching field that will be participating in the 2003 [2023] homecoming events. We will be sitting not with the rest of the marching band, but in an upper back level and unable to play during the game, but we are still a part of the marching band and part of that long tradition. We will end up probably with around eight hundred people on the field at that time, which is a lovely thing to see, and the powerful blast of music that comes off the field at that time is electrifying.

**DB:** And a real headache for the directors to put together the marching chart and how to put everybody on the field at the same time.

**MF:** When I was a student assistant, I actually helped do charting of some of the shows that we had done. Every now and then, Jimmie Howard Reynolds and Dr. C would get together with the student assistants, and we would chart what we want to do for formations. I know how difficult that task is from my experiences, and to make sure that everything looks correct and is easy to maneuver around so you can get from point A to point B in the allotted times that you have to during the music. We are one of the very few marching bands that still move during the middle of our performances. A lot of university bands, because of the timing that it takes to relearn a new chart and new music every week, don't do that. They move from one to another formation and don't actually do a lot of movement during the actual show and playing of the music, and that is very difficult to do to make sure that you're doing it in a fluid way and still paying attention to where you end up with at the end of the show. Charting a performance is a unique experience that I enjoyed doing while I was at Iowa State.

[00:35:48]

**DB**: Good. Did you get any advice from band members when you first joined the band, or do you have anything you would like to pass on to young folks that might be coming in?

**MF**: I was fortunate because only being able to play two years in the marching band with the baritone saxophone--interesting anecdote, I was hesitant coming back to an alumni event and trying to actually play a baritone saxophone part. I had not played in about eight years from the time I stopped playing in 1974 or ‘75. I had stopped playing before they started the Alumni Band. I had not picked up an instrument. I was talking to a local band office, and my kids at the time were in band, and I said, “I'd really like the march, but I don't have a baritone saxophone, and it's the only music I know.”

He said, “Well, I'll lend you a baritone saxophone.” So, I was able to get a baritone saxophone to play. Interesting that I got back, and the very first thing they did was went through “Iowa State Fight Song.” I ran through it twice and had it rememorized. Unbelievable that motor memory came back that quickly, and I was able to then participate and play in the marching band successfully and be able to toot out a horn after having an eight-year hiatus, which is interesting. That was a wonderful experience, and I was so glad that Kirk Hartung [Industrial Engineering (1974-1979)] and Mr. C got together and developed the alumni marching band. I was a Director-at-Large in the Alumni Marching Band for a number of years. Those were the early years of the marching band. It's interesting that the students that I associate with, who are now alumni in the Alumni Band, those people were the core people that were in the marching band in my years. So, the friendships that I've had are lifelong friendships that I've experienced with, and it's those core people that were in the marching band in the 1970s that developed the Alumni Band, and thank you to them for doing that because otherwise, we would not have an Alumni Band.

[00:38:32]

**DB**: Yes, definitely. Anything else as far as how you balanced your studies in architecture and whatever else you studied and other parts of the life besides band? You talked a little bit about that.

**MF:** I had one semester that I had forty contact hours. That's just in class, forty hours a week, because of the schedules that we would have with the marching band. That's a real tough thing, and architectural classes when you're doing projects--I had another architect in my fraternity house, and we had yearly contests of who was going to have the most all-nighters. It was always the architects that would end up with the largest number of all-nighters you would do because of the projects that we would end up having to do. But the year that I had forty contact hours, I was not only in the marching band, but I also was a member of, that year, in the pep band for basketball. The next year, I really wanted to punish myself, so during the time when I was a student assistant in the marching band, I was also trying out for the Iowa State Cheerleading Squad for basketball. So, we had another two hours of practice after I got done with the marching band on top of that with learning all the cheer routines that we had to do. I became a cheerleader for two years, both for basketball, but we were always trying out in the middle of the football season, so there were times when I was doing double duty of both marching band, and on the field in uniform as a cheerleader also. I was a glutton for punishment, what can I say. [Brand laughs] It was an exciting time, and I wouldn't do it any other way. I really enjoyed that.

[00:40:50]

**DB**: How do you think the band has changed over time?

**MF**: I really like the direction that the current directors are going. This has been a developmental thing from the time that you and I were in the marching band. Continues to develop and improve every single year. I love the charts that they're putting together, the music that they're putting together. It's always so clever. To see things such as marching dinosaurs. [Brand laughs] [inaudible] You know. Or some of the other memorable shows that they've put together here lately. They've got now so many people in the marching band they can't chart everybody on the field, so they have this other auxiliary group of instrument players who they're called The Storm. They're the ones that go around during the halftime show, and they'll be helping out doing some of these other activities, helping the band out, but then they're the ones that travel around the stadium and pop up and playoff in the upper decks. That is a great to get new young instrument players involved in learning the music, getting them still as part of the marching band, and the marching band experience even though they do not get to be charted onto the field. They still feel like they're a part of the university music department. I really enjoyed that aspect that they've done, and it allows more students to have that activity capabilities.

**DB**: Yes, and I think, from what I've heard, they've taken some of the load off of the marching band for some of these other odds-and-ends activities that the athletic department or whoever asks the band to perform.

**MF**: You need a pep band? We'll send The Storm. That's the way they've handled it, and it's been great. I know that The Storm is still student run, and it's great to see them get into that exciting aspect of the marching band and the part of it.

[00:43:12]

**DB**: Yes, definitely. Did the band have any particular difficulties or any problems while you were a member, that you can recall?

**MF**: You know, I can't recall any real major difficulties other than the logistics of everything. I mean, Jimmie Howard Reynolds and Mr. C were always great administrators of the marching band. A lot of the things that the student assistants did, and I was a part of that team, were organizational things in the background, and making sure that the members that are out in the field and doing the playing are where they needed to be, and they had the resources capable of doing the things they needed to do to put on the performance. We, back then, were always changing the music. We did not memorize music back then. We always had the flip charts and had to change our music up all of the time, so we didn't memorize music like they have to do today. I think that's a great addition to have people so comfortable that they know the music and can play it without having to be distracted by a flip chart. Us older people in the Alumni Band who only play once a year, we have to come back and use the flip charts, and it's always cumbersome, but it's a necessity for some of us to make sure that we know the music. They have always been gracious enough as they organize the homecoming activities to try to bring a song that we're familiar with. A lot of the music that came out of the seventies and early eighties are favorites for marching bands to perform, and a lot of us know those songs inside and out. “Basin Street Blues,” those types of songs that we did back in the day, “The Rocky Theme,” all those things that we did back when we were members, they try to reinstate those throughout the time and bring it back for some of us old folks as we come back. And of course, in my opinion, the seventies was the best music. [Brand laughs] [inaudible] today. It’s fun.

[00:46:01]

**DB**: Okay. What does marching band mean to you? Although, I think we've kind of picked up on this as we've gone along with our visit.

**MF**: I tell you, I think my college experience would not be as fulfilled as it was if I would not have had that marching band experience. I remember walking across campus, and there never was a time, I don't think, any time, from the time I started at ISU to the time I graduated, where I was walking across campus, that I didn't see somebody I knew from the marching band. It was that much of a culture, and we just became a very close-knit group of individuals. That helped me acclimate to college life. Your experience as an ISU Marching Band member, you're going to end up with lifelong friends. I've got now currently lifelong friends from the Alumni Band, such as Dean, that were not in the years that I was there, but have become friends, and number of people that I have grown to know from the experience of being in the Alumni Band. It will create a lifelong friendships that you see every single year you come back for homecoming. There are still students today that I knew as students at Iowa State back in the seventies that religiously come back every year to come back for homecoming. I can name probably at least a dozen, maybe twenty, people that I knew and grew to love as part of the marching band experience. They come back every single year. Sally Burmester [Journalism and Mass Communications (1976-1980)], LaVonne Salton, Sandy Huber [Sandra (Gorowsky) Huber, Home Economics Education (1975-1979)], Dave Sande [David Sande, Industrial Administration (1975-1979)]. It's funny because you keep on running into these people, not only in the marching band for homecoming every year, but you'll meet them out on the street. Dean here, he's a member of the Gardens Club, and my wife is a master gardener also. You know, we met at a Master Gardeners activity, and we remembered each other from marching band. You're going to end up with those types of experiences for the rest of your life. Dave Sande and I lived in Adel [Adel, Iowa] for a number of years and still correspond every year. LaVonne Salton has been a normal fixture for the marching band. When she had her stroke here a number of years ago, everybody rallied around her and encouraged her to keep on coming to back to the marching band, and she still does religiously. Those types of experiences, I think, embody the culture that you have as a member of the Iowa State Cyclone Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band. [Brand laughs]

[00:49:21]

**DB**: Most memorable experience while you were in band?

**MF**: Yes, I would say my most memorable experience was meeting Maynard Ferguson in person and watching him perform “The Rocky Theme.” That was a song that I always loved anyway, and when he was able to come and I got to meet him in person--he's such a personable person. Now he's passed away. But he had such a marvelous range that it just gives you chills running down your spine every time you hear that. It's still one of my favorite songs and favorite performances in my tenure at Iowa State.

[00:50:08]

**DB**: Okay. Anything else you want to add to the involvement with the Alumni Band? You've talked about being a Director-at-Large and--

**MF**: I have really enjoyed the Alumni Marching Band, like I said, there are people that come back religiously every year. Dennis Carlson. I never went to school with Dennis Carlson. He plays trumpet. I play baritone saxophone. How could you ever meet together? Well, we ended up being in the same scout troop with our boys, and like I said, you're going to run into people that are a member of the Alumni Marching Band that weren’t there at the same time as you were, but you're going to continue to have these lifelong friendships because you have that commonality of being in the marching band, and that is what's exciting about the culture that we have at Iowa State, and the long tenure that we have for excellence.

[00:51:12]

**DB**: Definitely. As we get ready to wrap up, Mark, any questions I didn't ask that you think I should have?

**MF**: No. I think this is a great activity. I really enjoyed giving you some of the background and history of the marching band and some of the insights of why we are doing things today, because it's something that we did and has created the traditions that we have had for a number of years, there back forty years ago when we really had a concise group of individuals that were dedicated to the performances and the culture that we created within the marching band itself. So, I've really enjoyed this interview. I hope that there are other members that will come and also interview and give their perspective because I don't know everything that happened [Brand laughs] as a member of the marching band, but I do know a lot of the history behind it and that's what I tried to convey here today.

**DB**: Great. Mark Ferguson, we thank you very much for being part of this oral history project, and I'm excited to be able to help with it, also. We wish you a good day, and you and I will see each other in November.

**MF**: Very good. Thank you very much, Dean.

**DB**: You're welcome.

**MF:** Pleasure doing this.