Sarah (Hughes) Vacura

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

 Interviewed by Jay Chapman

2023-11-30

Time stamps reference the video interview.

**JC:** Jay Chapman

**SH:** Sarah Hughes

[00:00:00]

**JC:** This is Jay Chapman, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives Cyclone Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band Oral History Project. Today is Thursday, November 30, 2023. I'm interviewing Sarah Hughes at her home via Zoom. This is our second session due to audio issues during the first session held on Thursday, November 2, 2023. Thanks for joining us again.

[00:00:33]

**JC:** I'll start off with, maybe tell me a little bit about your early life, where you grew up, your family, that sort of thing.

**SH:** Yes, so I grew up in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. I was in a suburb of St. Paul my whole life. I have two siblings, my two parents at home, and it was great. I'm the oldest. Love my family a lot. They actually supported me a lot throughout my college career, through marching band, and came to a lot of the games. So, just really thankful for that support from them.

[00:01:06]

**JC:** Good. How did you come to be at Iowa State, and what did you study when you were there?

**SH:** Yes, so I surprised myself a little bit in my college decision. I thought I'd be the type of person to go to like a small private liberal art type college just because I like that environment, and there were also a lot of opportunities for band there, but not for marching band. So, when I looked at Iowa State, it was the only larger school that I looked into. I realized that marching band is actually really exciting to me, and I liked the opportunity that would provide. And so, I just threw [it] on the list and end up feeling like home, and I chose it, kind of late in the game, like April of my senior year of high school. I'm glad I made the choice I did. I did a double major in marketing and management. I graduated in 2022.

[00:01:58]

**JC:** You were a marching band. What other bands were you involved with at Iowa State?

**SH:** I was in the symphonic band for four years. I played flute in that and piccolo in marching band and pep band. I was in the women's basketball pep band for three years, I think, and only three because I studied abroad for one, that type of thing. I was in the flute choir for a couple of semesters. I think that's everything. Yes. [laughs]

[00:02:29]

**JC:** Okay. So, you mentioned you were a flute, so you're in the flute section. Is there anything interesting you would maybe like to note about your flute section in the marching band?

**SH:** Yes, something that I love about the flute participation in the marching band is that it's just all piccolos, and it was that way all four years, and I think it has been that way for a pretty long time because we can actually be heard above all the other instrumentation at certain points of the music. We had consistently about eighteen to twenty-two piccolos in the section. It was just a lot of fun. I feel like I remember showing up to band camp freshman year just being like, Oh my gosh! We have being a flute in common! There's just certain characteristics that go along with that stereotype. I just felt right at home right away. It has the kind of atmosphere where you look up to the upperclassmen because they know what they're doing, and it's a lot at first as a freshman. We looked up to them a lot, and bonded with them pretty quickly, and learned from them. But it was that type of environment where we’re all supportive of each other. We all want each other to perform well and do well, but we're also just hanging out outside of band. Just a really fun section to be a part of. We did a lot of goofy things together. We were just a really fun family to be a part of.

[00:03:51]

**JC:** Great. When you think about the shows and the process of learning and then performing a show, how did you get from a drill or something on paper, so to speak, and learning the music to putting into a final performance on game day?

**SH:** Yes, so my freshman year and I think my sophomore year too, we had little sheets of paper with our dot on them, is how you call it. It basically just gives you your 4.25 steps inside the fifty-yard line, or outside the fifty, whatever it is. Then four steps in front of the hash on the front sideline, whatever. It gives you very specific instructions, but it is all numbers-based. You had to go stand on your dot, find it, make sure that you line up with everybody else, and then remember it, you know. What changed about that my junior through senior year was we had UDB [Ultimate Drill Book], which is kind of like an electronic version of that, so it would show you what the full picture would look like, which was super helpful to just to know what kind of picture you were trying to make on the field. It would show your step size. It would show you how long you had to get there. It would match with the music. Just like awesome technology that really helped us to elevate our fundamentals, and how we looked on the field especially. It also helped us to learn drill faster. That was helpful, too, especially on weekends or game weeks when we had just a week to turn around a show.

So usually, we got the music early in the season, and then we wouldn't really start working on it as a band until like the week of, or potentially the week before if we had time. We would do a first reading of all of the music as a big band and then it would be like, okay, sectionals needed on these particular parts, and we break off in the sections the next day and really work on memorization. That was a big component of everything we did was memorizing all of our music. We had pass-offs to show that we could memorize our music. Even the week of the game, we were learning music sometimes for the first time. Then learning it as we were learning the drill, so that was really interesting to just pair it together that way. But, in terms of memorizing music, back to that idea, my freshman through junior year, we just came to rehearsal with, Hey, we're memorizing this music today, and we're doing our pass-off today. We signed up for passing-off with the captains and that kind of thing. We would have to have our music memorized and come to the captain and say, “Hey, I have it memorized. We will pass it off,” and then if you passed it, you would be able to march your dot in that game, and if you didn't pass, then you would be on the back half of the field in Star Rank. It wasn't as fun, you know. You put work into memorizing the drills, you want to be able to play the drill. But it's just keeping that engagement, wanting to perform with excellence.

Then, my senior year, we moved to a recorded through a computer pass-off, so then we would be graded on a rubric, and the recording would be submitted to the captain online, so they'd be able to listen to it whenever they wanted to. That, I think, really elevated our sound even more because you have to have this memorized and recorded and it might take multiple tries at recording, but that kind of inherently helps you memorize it better. It was a pain for a bit. It was some growing pains, if that makes sense, but I think it did elevate our sound a lot. Yes.

[00:07:40]

**JC:** So where and when did you practice both the music and then the marching as well?

**SH:** So, our practice field out by the old cemetery [Iowa State Cemetery] [laughs] and the Communications Building is kind of where we had our marching band rehearsals just on the on the regular grass. We painted on yard lines the best we could. Sometimes they were quite crooked, but we made do. That's where we would practice marching, learn drill, everything like that. There was the occasional Friday before a game that we would go to the Bergstrom facility where the football team practiced [Bergstrom Football Complex] and have the opportunity to practice on that field, which was great. Then music, we practiced in that same area unless it was very cold or rainy, and we would go in the Music Hall, in the recital hall. We would kind of cram together and try to learn music that way. But personal, just learning the music myself, it would be if I could even just finger through things in my dorm room on my piccolo and just learn the fingerings of all the things, or grab a practice room at Music Hall.

[00:08:42]

**JC:** How long was a rehearsal, and did you meet every day of the week?

**SH:** Yes, we met every day of the week about an hour and a half. I think it was just short of an hour and a half. It depended on the day, what time it was, but it was around five o'clock or five-thirty every day. So yes, it was a time commitment for sure and that was a little bit daunting at first, but just a lot of fun when you work really hard at something.

[00:09:07]

**JC:** You mentioned that sometimes you had a week to learn a show, sometimes you had a little bit longer. What was it like typically? Was it mostly just the one week to be able to learn something?

**SH:** I think on average, I would say about a week and a half because some weeks are back-to-back weekends, other weeks you have like two, maybe three weeks even. Also, throw in there, you have exhibitions that you're traveling to, you might be going to an away game. So, the fall is a very busy time. We can count on something going on almost every weekend in the fall. We had enough time, but we definitely are moving fast. During rehearsal we had to be efficient. I never remember going into a show feeling like I didn't know what I was doing. I felt very well rehearsed. I felt like we were confident. Some weeks were a little bit harder than others, especially if it was a tough show to learn or tough drill or tough music, but I never felt like we weren't prepared.

[00:10:12]

**JC:** Can you recall some of the shows that you performed or name some of your favorite performances or shows?

**SH:** Yes, one of my favorites was my freshman year, 2018, we did the circus show, and that was fun just because there was a lot of challenging music but also well-known music like “Barnum and Bailey’s Circus,” and “The Greatest Show” from *The Greatest Showman,* and just some of those fun classic circus tunes. We had a lot of fun drill for that. We made a horse jump across the field and things like that. We had a little circus tent that we created and had little streamers that we held. I held one of the streamers, and I felt pretty cool. Things like that, that we just, we put on a show like a marching band show but also entertained the crowd really well. I also remember the Under the Sea Show. That was super fun. We had the classic “Under the Sea” from *Little Mermaid*. We had the *Jaws*’ theme, we had *Pirates of the Caribbean*. It was just a very well put together, musically, show, and interesting drill, and a couple of fun surprises with inflatable sharks. I also loved the– we did a John Williams [American composer famous for some of the most recognizable film scores of the twentieth century] show with the inflatable dinosaurs that went viral. We did a jungle show that had a lot of fun variety. I really love the shows that looked like a fun picture on the field and we were doing something kind of unique that the audience could enjoy, and we could feel their energy coming from what we were doing.

[00:11:43]

**JC:** What was the culture of the band? Maybe how was it shaped by the members, the drum majors, the directors, or the university?

**SH:** That's a good question. It's hard to come up with one word to summarize the culture. It was just really fun. It felt like we were all very bought in, and very excited, and we loved being there. We worked really hard together. We goofed off together. We had little jokes between all of us of just--our director, Carichner [Christian Carichner] would say, “Super duper, let’s go on to the next thing,” and the response across the whole band would be, Super duper, dad! It's just that's how it was all the time. That was our call and response to him almost. Just things like that that were just inside jokes of the band that are only funny to band kids because we are a unique breed, and we are funny. So, things like that, just kind of very collective and very fun. I would say each section kind of had their own culture in a way. You could think of any instrument stereotypes. They're true across every band ever. They were true in this band, but in a really fun way. It's just like you found your people, and it is just a fun group to be a part of in that way, too. Was there a second part to that question? I'm sorry.

**JC:** Yes. How was it shaped by members of the band, or by the directors, or the drum majors, or maybe even the university?

**SH:** Yes. So, I think the student leadership has a big impact on the culture. I was a section leader for three years, I was a guide for one, and then a captain for two. Just being able to be in the room in terms of having those early conversations with our directors, Mr. Carichner and Mr. Shields [Javan Shields, Assistant Teaching Professor and Assistant Director of Bands (2018-present)], just talking about like what we wanted their culture in the band to be, and that we had a huge role to play in setting that culture. You know, a standard of excellence, a place for fun. I don't know if you've heard of some other people, but the word varsity, we came up with an acronym for what that means--and I'm blanking on all of the words right now because I'm two years post-grad--that's unfortunate I should dig that out. But even just living by that and wanting to exhibit a lot of those excellent traits, and yes, just being true to who we were as a group identity. A lot of pride associated with that, a lot of excellence, a lot of fun, just kind of wrapped up in that. We always-- great drum majors. Our directors really pushed us in really positive ways and I was really proud to be a part of the group just as a whole. I think we represented the university very well, just in that excellence identity in the cyclone spirit, everything involved in that, and they put a lot of thought into who is drum major and who is on leadership in general. So, it's like these people were carefully--went through an audition process, carefully selected to represent the university well and to represent our student group as well. So, yes.

[00:14:52]

**JC:** Sure, you talked a little bit about fun. What sort of favorite marching band traditions might you have had, any pregame rituals, anything along those lines?

**SH:** Yes, I think a couple of my favorite traditions, one of them is homecoming no-case. We kind of keep it a secret for freshmen just because it's fun to surprise them with what this is. It's not hazing. It’s not hazing. But it's just doing pregame as normal with X-ing as we're running on, and the tempo is just like four times what it should be, so it's just chaos, and it's super fun. That's the tradition I always enjoyed. We also, from there, no-case, all the way to the stadium and the Alumni Center, and that is super fun. So, fun homecoming traditions. Trick-or-Banding is always a fun tradition, too, all of us kind of just causing chaos but in the most organized way. Showing up to random--well, pre-planned coaches' houses and directors' houses and playing a lot of the fun rah-rah Iowa State songs that we all love. It includes a lot of carpooling with upper-classmen and driving around Ames, just getting to the next house and then playing, and then getting some treats and moving on to the next one. It's just a lot of fun and pretty unique to our band, I’d say. I don't hear of many other bands having traditions like that, and it's always very energizing and fun. I think we just had fun as a section, too, like a lot of section bonding nights of watching away games if we weren't going to one. Us piccolos always had cute painting nights of like, Let's just grab a brush and some canvas and just hang out together and paint. It's kind of cute. Even just as leadership, having conversations before the season about what we wanted it to be like, and that was kind of a tradition that we started. Homecoming t-shirts, merch, things like that. They're all very integrated all four years.

[00:16:55]

**JC:** Cool. Can you describe the experience of traveling with the band, and any fun stories or maybe traditions related to traveling?

**SH:** Yes, so the two kinds of travel we would do were to go to exhibitions or go to away games. I went to the away game at Iowa my freshman year. That was an experience, you know, just the rivalry, kind of feeling the heat of that rivalry for the first time. Especially because I didn't grow up in Iowa. I wasn’t familiar with the Iowa State-Iowa rivalry, and I was like, Oh! This is big. This is a big deal, and because the band represents the university so well, a lot of the fans were a little bit aggressive in terms of how they dealt with us. But we never felt unsafe. It was just like, this is a lot for a rivalry in our response to everything would always just be, Go Cyclones! Very positively. That was what we were told to do, and we had a lot of fun doing that, just like cooperating in that environment but in a very positive way instead of a negative way. That was always fun. It usually involves early morning, staying overnight somewhere. In special circumstances, like if it's just a long drive and you have stuff to do the next day, we would stay overnight with families or in hotels. Especially for bowl games, that would usually be like a twenty/twenty-two-hour bus ride to Florida because I went to the game three years out of my four. Yes, that was just very special trip at the end of season that required a bit more planning and more time away and all of that, but super fun. Then exhibitions, just around Iowa mostly, and that was usually just a day trip where we would perform as like the closing act of a high school competition. I always felt a lot of pride. I didn't grow up having competing marching band in high school, and so that was also a new culture for me that I had never experienced. Just being able to say like, “Hey! This is who Iowa State is. This is what our marching band does, come be a part of it.” Just encouraging high school students to maybe check us out for their college choice and then engaging with the community with fellow Cyclones around Iowa was super fun.

[00:19:09]

**JC:** So, you talked about going to Iowa and going to bowl games. What other stadiums besides Jack Trice did you perform in and what was it like performing there as opposed to Jack Tice Stadium?

**SH:** I mean, nothing is like Jack Trice Stadium. First of all, the grass is fantastic at Jack Trice. It's real grass. We love it. But we went to K State [Kansas State University]. We went to Kinnick [University of Iowa’s Kinnick Stadium], in Iowa, and just those environments. I never felt like we couldn't perform our best, basically. I think, if anything, it felt more energizing because we're like, We're here to support our team, and there aren't as many fans for our team here as at home. So, it was always a positive experience. We performed well. In terms of bowl games, it's a much bigger stadium. I remember, particularly at the Alamo Bowl I went to in 2018, that was an awesome performance, that was an awesome stadium. Just because it was a dome, it was closed, and so our sound was louder, it was bigger, but we had to pay closer attention to the drum majors. I just remember the crowd was absolutely electric for us. It was the loudest I have heard anyone cheer us on, even at home. That was just a really electric experience, and we performed really well, and I was really proud of that show. That was just a lot of fun and a good memory, but then we performed at that bowl game, the Alamo Bowl. We performed at the Cheez-It bowl. Man, I'm blanking on the other title of it, but it was also in Orlando in 2020. Yes, in 2020. Yes, that was a crazy time.

**JC:** May have been the Camping World Bowl, perhaps?

**SH:** Yes, that's it, Camping World. That's exactly right. So, yes, so I participated in 2018, 2019, and 2021. Those are my three games. We're good.

**JC:** That sounds about right.

**SH:** Yes.

[00:21:23]

**JC:** So, you mentioned the pandemic--and maybe that's not the only one--but are there any experiences where the band had some difficult times that it had to work through while you were a member?

**SH:** Yes, I think the first thing that comes to mind is the COVID-19 pandemic. So, it was just a crazy time. I remember it was the spring of 2020, in March when everything hit, and I remember we had like a band phone call or band Zoom call with our directors just to kind of connect. Everybody had been sent home at that point and there was a lot of chaos happening. I remember them talking to us about what they were working through in terms of the possibility of band in the fall. At that point, we had no idea what it would turn into, in terms of the pandemic lasting two-plus years. I just remember being like, Oh my gosh. I can't imagine if this whole thing that we're going through with lockdown and isolation lasts more than into the fall. That sounds dramatic, but I was like, I don't want to not do band as band is supposed to be, and just feeling that part of my college experience could be taken from me. It was just really sad, and at that point, we didn't know what that would look like, but that's exactly what happened. Just the fact that we were able to perform at all was a miracle. I felt really grateful that Mr. Carichner and the athletics department fought for us and really wanted us to be a part of the game day experience, even if it looked drastically different. As the changes for what the season would look like kind of started to roll in, it was really overwhelming because it just didn't look like what we were normally able to do, and that was my first season as a captain. To be kind of informed about how things are going to be, to be a leader and try to lead people through a difficult time was really challenging for me personally, but I think the whole band too.

So, we didn't wear uniforms that season. We were not able to participate in every game. They divided us up into two different bands and we kind of alternated, and it was a lottery system, or everybody got to go to two games max and perform at those games. We had masks that were hard to play our instrument in. We still memorized music, but it was like, Why are we memorizing music if we're not going to be playing at this game? So, morale was really low, and motivation for that excellence that I talked about earlier was a lot lower than what I was used to. Like I said, being a leader in that time, you know, I would try to lead sectionals with only half of our section. I feel like we didn't have as much section unity that year because we just couldn't be together, but just looking across that section and just seeing eyes, and just seeing a lot of like low-energy, hopeless faces. Honestly, it was a really hard time for all of us individually, as well as just trying to do something that brought us joy in that time was the best you could do. We did kind of perform a showcase at Jack Trice Stadium just for ourselves, just for one half the band to perform for the other. So, we did learn drill. We did memorize music and perform, and for me, that was cool because I had never seen the marching band perform before. I was really impressed with the sound even that half of our group was able to produce. Even with it being COVID, even with no fans in attendance. It was like, Wow! We're doing this. We are performing still. We are making an impact. We are proud of ourselves for persevering through this, and I can't tell you how amazing it was to go back the next fall and have band be at full force again. It was just amazing. It was electric. It was so exciting, so encouraging, and for that to be my senior year I just felt really grateful that I could go back to that for one final season. To have Band Extravaganza again, to have a Step Show as it should be. Just to perform. I never took it for granted. So that was awesome.

[00:25:27]

**JC:** Sure. So, when you were coming into band, did you receive any advice from other band members, maybe the leaders of your section, or maybe the band as a whole? Then as you transitioned out, you know, were a senior, was there any advice that you imparted upon others in the band?

**SH:** That's a great question. I think initially, just showing up to band camp freshman year, it was stressful because there's just so many people there, and you're like, Oh my gosh, my parents just left me. I don't know what is happening. This is intimidating. I don't know if I'm going to make this band. So, the encouragement there from leaders is just, Just do your best. We will help you. We will equip you. It is very personalized in terms of, Here's how you can get better. Here's what it takes to be here, and the commitment it requires, and that kind of thing. I appreciated the authenticity, but also the warmness that I received from leaders, and the genuine interest in helping us succeed. It wasn't like a, Oh, you'll make it if you try hard enough. It was like, We want you to succeed, and we want you to be here, and we're going to do whatever it takes to give you the encouragement and the confidence you need to perform well at audition day. So, that was a big part of advice just from the beginning of the culture that I perceived as a freshman. I think moving on, it continued to be that level of excellence of just like, Let’s work hard you guys. We're here to do what we love, and let's do it to the best of our ability.

I also received a lot of encouragement to--because as a freshman going to your sophomore year, you have the opportunity to go for a guide position, and I was really cautious about that because I just was like, There are so many people that are more qualified than me, that have been here longer and deserve this. I felt like I just didn't deserve that position, but I was encouraged as a freshman to go for it. I received a position as a guide, and that was just really mind-blowing for me and really encouraging, just that people had suggested that I go for it multiple times, and I was like, “All right. I guess I will.” Then, somehow, it happened. That was kind of the advice too. I think what really struck me as senior was having the opportunity to make an impact on the section culture and set the pace for being friends with each other, for working hard, for really enjoying your experience, and it not being a militant like, “Memorize the music otherwise this happens,” but really encouraging people with love and excitement and joy for what we get to do. So, I love being able to make an impact in that way and hopefully a lasting impact. I don't know, but hopefully. Then, being able to reflect back on the four years and see the freshmen that I helped audition now that are leaders in the band two years later, and reflecting on the fact that the culture is the same, if not better, than when I started my freshman year. That growth, and that section atmosphere, and the band's excellence has only increased and only maintained a similar identity to when I was in it. It's like, this is way bigger than me, like any impact that I could have. But seeing that consistency for years, and even now, is really encouraging, and I encourage others to continue that as well.

[00:28:57]

**JC:** You kind of touched on some of this, but what do you think separates the ISUCF‘V’MB [Iowa State University College Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band] from other marching bands and other football programs?

**SH:** That's a great question. I think we hold ourselves to a very similar level of excellence, if not even more, because I remember during the rehearsal, we would sound pretty good, and then Carichner would be like, “Okay, but you can do that better,” and he would beg more of us, but in a really good way in which it's like, “Come on, let's do it more! Let's keep going!” [He] just really pushed us beyond our limits in a really good way to which, I think, our sound just got better and better. I have never been a part of other college marching bands, but I really love how we were pushed for that sound, and fundamentals were key in terms of marching. We can't just sound good, we need to look good. Let's go back to basics because as you get two-ish months into the season, you get kind of tired. You get a little sloppier, and so let's go back to the basics. Let's refine this. We never coasted. We never considered us experts at anything fundamental. It was like, We're going to go back to basics and be good at what we do. I think that might set us apart a little bit. I think we had a lot of fun as a band, and I've mentioned that a lot of times as you have heard. I think what that looks like is we have this level of excellence, and we have a level of professionalism, I would say--especially when we're on the field performing--but I think that we also look like we're having fun, in the stands, in no-casing, in step show. We give off this atmosphere of laid back even though we are very on our toes, paying a lot of attention to what's going on, and I think that helped everyone around us to just relax and have fun with us. So, it is not so militant or harsh environment they're feeling, anything like that. Yet, inwardly we're holding ourselves to those high standards. You won't make it on the field if you don't memorize your music. But then we appear like we're having a lot of fun, and we are because we can reap the benefits of working so hard during the week on a game day.

[00:31:15]

**JC:** Sure. So, you put all that time in. It's a lot of effort. How do you balance that time and effort that it takes to be part of marching band versus the academics part of being at Iowa State, or just the rest of what's going on in your life?

**SH:** We had to make really good use of our time. [laughs] We had to be really good at time management. What that looked like was between classes going to the library and cranking out a couple of papers instead of going home, and staying on campus all day instead of going home, and then going right to band. It just meant for a little bit longer days sometimes, but required a lot of organization, a lot of focus on what our priorities were. I never felt like I was behind in school because of band. I never felt like I couldn't keep up with the workload, but it is a lot to memorize music on the weekly, and keep track of all your assignments, and also do exams. There were times when students had to miss rehearsal to take a night exam, and then that requires you to take extra time out of your day the next day and learn the drill that you missed because we're not waiting for you to come back and learn it. So, there were definitely times when I got overwhelmed by just the week that happened to be a crazy band week, happened to be a crazy school week, but we made it work. I look back at it. I'm like, I was really busy. I had a lot going on, but I wouldn't change it for anything. I had so much fun. If anything, band was a release from the stresses of the day. It was like, Oh, I get to be with my friends. I get to do something I love, relax a little bit, and use a different part of my brain to be physically active. All of that makes for a good balance.

[00:33:04]

**JC:** Sure. Maybe talk a little bit now about the uniforms that you wore while you were in band. What were they like? Just a little bit about those.

**SH:** Yes, definitely. So, my freshman year, we had the cardinal and gold. What we considered the old uniforms, I know there's been a lot of iterations of these before then. They were a totally cardinal uniform, and then gold accents on the shoulders and on the front with the I-State and everything. We had a shako. We had a plume. That was a great uniform. Then, I think it was my freshman year, 2018, that fall, they debuted the new uniform. I remember it was so dramatic. We were sitting in Bergstrom, and they had us all in a circle or big arc, kind of, sit and be like, Okay, this is a big deal. We're getting new uniforms for you guys. It was a huge drum roll situation, and then they pushed a button, and the garage door came up slowly, and it was so dramatic and exciting. This gorgeous uniform is just--I mean, somebody's wearing it, but we were more interested in the uniform--it was *stunning,* and we were so excited about it. It was new. We loved the colors. We loved the ombre of the yellow and the white. It was just a really clean and fresh look for us. It matched the evolving brand of Iowa State and the new football uniforms that had debuted. The shako was gorgeous. It had the same gold and ombre look, and then the plume was really tall, and it was fluffy. New plumes are like the best. So, we were all just really excited about it. The saddest part about it was that they arrived that spring of 2019, and then, I think we wore them for one season, and then we didn't get to wear them in 2020, and they were just sitting in the closet one year old. It felt so good to go back again, like I said, my senior year, and get a uniform on and be like, Oh my gosh, I love this uniform. I feel like Superwoman in this. I just really loved being able to be a part of that transition into the new uniform era, and yes, just loved them.

[00:35:28]

**JC:** Nice. What would you say, just overall, marching band means to you?

**SH:** It's hard to sum up. In a lot of ways, I don't think I would be the person I am today without it, which again sounds dramatic, but it's a huge part of your life in college. Doing it in high school as well, being part of marching band in high school, having it be eight years of your life. That is such a unique period of your life and a unique activity that you've really can't do--except for Alumni Band--again. It's a very precious time. If I hadn't done marching band in high school, I definitely wouldn't have pursued it in college. I might not even have considered Iowa State as heavily if not for high school marching band. Yes, choosing to do it in college was by far the best decision I could have made. I met a lot of my close friends through that, just the fun of traveling with the band, having the consistency of everyday rehearsal, being proud of the output that you're creating. Just having that very unique college experience of being in a college marching band, which is so fun. Such a great memory that I'll carry with me forever. To me, it carries a lot of the memories of just college, and I'm instantly brought back to college whenever I see the band perform, and I'm really proud of that, so there's a lot of pride associated with that. Also, I can just put myself back there immediately and all the memories I made in my four years. Yes, it means a lot. I learned a lot about leadership as well through the opportunities I was given to be a leader and the chance they took on me as a sophomore. I considered my role very precious, and I held it in high regard, like I had the opportunity to make an impact, and I learned so much about leadership through the good times and the hard times of leading people and learned more about my leadership characteristics, my strengths, my weaknesses. Had good interview experience through trying out for those roles. It made a really big impact on me in so many ways.

[00:37:43]

**JC:** Sure. Can you maybe talk a little bit now about your involvement in the Alumni Band, now that you're out?

**SH:** Yes, Alumni Band has been super fun. I live in Minnesota, so I'm not able to participate outside of that. I'm not able to do the break basketball pep band games. But it's so much fun. I love being able to—especially, I've been to two alumni reunions since graduating, and it's fun to like still know people in the band and have such a warm welcome when I do see people that I know. It's not the same, obviously, we're not memorizing drill. We’re not doing all of the high stepping, thank goodness, because I couldn't do it anymore. But it's really fun to have such a huge alumni network and know that we just are connected through this very shared experience, that we don't even know how similar our experiences are. It's just a great group of people to be around, so a lot of fun be back on game day, like I said, brings me back to my time immediately. It's just fun to be with your friends too.

[00:38:54]

**JC:** Right. Are there any questions I didn't ask or any points that you wanted to touch on that we haven't already?

**SH:** I'd love to talk a little bit about band camp and just what that was like, especially as a freshman, touch on a little bit, but then leading it. Band camp was fun, but as a freshman it's super scary. It's intimidating, like I said earlier. You show up on Sunday just after you've moved in, and you know no one, and then suddenly, you're surrounded by people who know a lot more than you about marching. You have no idea what the competition will be like in terms of will you make it, will you not? You get going right away on Monday with learning basically how to march. They teach you everything because either you're coming from a school that did marching band differently or you're coming from a school that didn't have marching band at all, so they just want to start you from the very beginning of taking a first step, and I remember that being an incredibly thorough and helpful day, but a lot of information. But you walked away from that day knowing how to audition for the band, and that was crazy. After that first day, I was kind of like, Okay, man. I'm really excited about this. I really want to make it, and I'm really nervous. But the leadership was so encouraging, and they were there for the next day for our audition day and just encouraging you. So, we had a marching audition and a playing audition, and you had the music beforehand--whenever you want to start practicing that the summer before--and it was an intense day, and the atmosphere around you after all the auditions were over and we are just waiting for results—it was probably the most stressed I’ve ever been. I’m not going to lie. Because you don't know how many spots there are. You don’t know how many people performed better than you or what your chances are. So, seeing your name on the ‘Varsity’ Band list was so exciting, and they posted them like a piece of paper on a wall, people crowding, stress. It's a lot.

They implemented State Storm around the time when I got to university, so it's like 2018, maybe 2017 is the first year. Having that additional group was just a great opportunity for students who needed a little bit more refinement on the marching aspect especially, but still allowed them to be a part of marching band. And I really love that avenue. But it's just heartbreaking. The more attention the band gets, the more excitement, and the more people that audition, the more people we have to turn away, and it's just so sad. So, a big sigh of relief when I made the band, but then the breadth of band camp began, and even as a leader that week, years later into my career in the band, it was so exciting. I loved when the freshman showed up, and I was like, Oh my gosh, these could be my best friends now. We are going to be together every day, and they just don't know it yet. I don't know who's going to make it. I don't know what's going to happen, but I want to make it a positive experience for them. I want to encourage them. I want to equip them. I want them to ask questions. I want them to feel good going into audition day. So then you have the full band after that Tuesday, and you get together for the first time as a full band. We do a surprise gig where all of the band members, the leadership, come into music call and do this whole rah-rah performance of what we do as a band, of cheers, and it's just chaos and super fun. That's always fun. You only know what that's like when you've experienced it. That's super fun, and then you go into the next four days of learning pregame just from the ground up, learning all that music. It's a full day rehearsal that's the week before classes. And it's crazy. It's exhausting. You're in the sun. You're doing all these different station rotations to know all the things you need to know. But you really start to realize how fun this is going to be and how worth it it is. You also get to know your section mates a lot better. Yes, you just feel really proud because a week ago, you didn't even know you would be here, and then a week later, you know, pregame on the field. It's crazy. Just a lot of efficiency there. A lot of fun moments of just knowing the section for the first time. You have a section night, and you do fun things together during the day. It's crazy, but it's really impactful, both on the auditioning side and the leadership side.

[00:43:33]

**JC:** Great, that's awesome. Any other items that you wanted to touch on?

**SH:** I think I would just reiterate I'm really thankful for my time in the band and really thankful for the directors and leaders who make more of an impact than they realize and equip us far beyond our four years at Iowa State. Yes, the lasting impact of what it is like to be a leader, what it feels like to be a part of a good team. You take that into your professional life, you take that into your personal life and your family. It just makes a huge impact on you, more than I realized at the time, and reaping the benefits of now, for sure. So, huge thank you to the directors, Mr. Carichner, Mr. Shields, all of the game day staff, everybody that helps us operate at such a high level and helps us be so proud of what we do. Yes, super great to have the opportunity to reflect on that.

**JC:** Great. Well, thank you.

**SH:** Thank you. Thanks.