Tim Jensen

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

Interviewed by Jay Chapman

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Time stamps reference the video interview.

**JC:** Jay Chapman

**TJ:** Tim Jensen

[00:00:00]

**JC:** This is Jay Chapman, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives Iowa State University College Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band Oral History [Project]. Today is Monday, January 29, 2024. I'm interviewing Tim Jensen via Zoom. Thanks for joining.

**TJ:** My pleasure, thank you.

[00:00:27]

**JC:** All right, well, let's just start here. Maybe tell me a little bit about your early life, where you grew up, your family, that kind of thing?

**TJ:** We lived in West Des Moines for years, most of the years before. I’ve lived in St. Louis, and Dallas, and Minneapolis, and of course, came back to the Minneapolis area now. Of course, from West Des Moines to Iowa State made great sense because--I actually went to Iowa State. Was a pre-vet major. So, the world changes as you go along with that, but that was a big part of it. I was always a Cyclone fan. Had friends [who] were Hawkeye fans. I probably still have friends who are Hawkeye fans, not many of them, but we deal with those things. But go from there. So, we traveled a while with my family. But I enjoyed being in Iowa. Then, obviously, as you move on from there, but that's a lot of it.

[00:01:17]

**JC:** Sure. So, you said you start pre-vet, you said--

**TJ:** I'm sorry, I was pre-vet.

**JC:** --so what would you graduate?

**TJ:** I graduated with a BA [bachelor of arts] in political science. Randy Dop [Computer Engineering (1977-1981)], who's a very good friend of mine, said it was the greatest paradox at Iowa State University. I got a BA instead of a BS [bachelor of science]. So, if anyone ever deserved a BS, it would have been me. [Chapman laughs] I also have a master's degree in public administration.

[00:01:42]

**JC:** Okay. Which bands were you involved with at Iowa State?

**TJ:** I did sound work for the wind ensemble and the jazz bands, but as far as me being directly involved, the marching band and the pep band were my two main. I was now needed by Mr. Christensen [Joseph Christensen, Director of Bands (1980-1998)] and some other folks to participate in the All-American College Marching Band. Which we did. There are several of us that went to that where they opened Epcot [1982], which kind of dates the party a little bit. So, we went down there and opened the Epcot Center. But my main emphasis was, of course, the marching band, and then the pep band is an is an ancillary part of that. Johnny Orr [Iowa State Men’s Basketball Coach (1980-1994)] and I were buddies. I actually had someone a couple of weeks ago--I was traveling somewhere, and he walks up, and he looks at me. He says, “Do I know you?”

I said, “Well, it’s sure possible. I do a lot of stuff.”

He says, “Did you go to Iowa State?”

“That's right. I sure did.”

He said, “Were you in the band?”

I’m like, Okay, this is getting a little strange now.

“You see,” he says, “Johnny Orr always came over and shook your hand before the games.”

“Yes, boy, you are good. Yes, that's true.” You know, we play Johnny's team, Johnny came over and shook our hands.

We had a situation years and years ago now where a gentleman I worked for would not believe that I knew Johnny Orr, because Johnny was still alive then obviously and, you know, going on. We're in the airport in Des Moines, and Johnny came off a plane from somewhere--it didn't matter where. My friend said, “We should go over there and talk to him.”

“I think he's busy. He's got people all over him. He doesn't need me coming over there.”

He [Johnny Orr] looks over. He says, “Timmy!” He walks over, shakes my hand, said, “How you doing, buddy?” Of course, now the crowd’s following, Who's this guy? What's going on? And all this.

So, I just turned around after Johnny left and went to my friends said, “Should we go now?” [Chapman laughs] That was the end of it. But Johnny was a great guy. The Athletic Department supported us very well. Pep band was just a riot. We went from the days when I was the tallest person at the basketball game until we won the Iowa game, we won [the] Missouri game a couple days there, some big times. Scariest moment for me was when there was a very large gentleman, played for Oklahoma [the University of Oklahoma], and I said something, and he heard me. He spun around, I thought, This isn't going to be good. [laughs] But we just got to ease it off, and we worked from there. Of course, the songs of the pep and the things we all--they're classics. Oddly they still play them, but remember when Junior, Mr. Phillips [Daniel Phillips], we would write variations. It was great. He wrote some great stuff for us. So that helped a lot too.

[00:04:32]

**JC:** Sure. So what section were you in the marching band?

**TJ:** I tried out for the drum section. I was a drum major in high school for the Iowa's Official Bicentennial band, and once again dating myself to how that goes. I was cut after tryouts, realizing, of course, that I was a true drummer, I was not a percussionist. Never had been a percussionist, you know, I just hit things really hard to make a lot of noise, and had reasonable ability to maintain a rhythm. A real good friend who's also a drum major at Iowa, at the high school, she came to me, she said--Jimmie Howard Reynolds was in front of the band. He said, “We have people from all over the state all over the country. We have some hot shot drum major from West Des Moines Valley here.”

She says, “I think he was talking about you.”

I said, “Well, he must not know I'm in there,” so I walked in, I said, “Hey, you know, if there's something I can do, I'll help. I can write shows. I can do whatever.” We walk into Mr. McKinney's [James McKinney, Marching Band Director (1972-1983)] office, and Mr. McKinney was new at that point, and he [Jimmie Howard Reynolds] said,

“There's your new base drummer.”

Of course, he’s going, “Well, no. He’s not.”

Jimmie said, “I've heard you guys play. He's your new base drummer.” So, that's how I made the drum line. The drum line from their course became a great institution at that point. I was probably the only true drummer. Other real percussionists were in there. But we started marching around the stadium. We had a great time. We introduced a lot of things. Mirrored sunglasses were a big part of it. We never smiled, which is my nature anyway, and the crowd became very entertained in trying to make us smile. I always told the new drummers, “You got mirror sunglasses on, just close your eyes. They don't know what's going on.” We started doing the stick routines and some stuff, and then we had a lot of fun. I don’t know how many drummers we had--we had two bass drums at that point, to give you the size of our group. But other than that, that's the section I was involved with until I became a student director. Then worked on writing halftime shows and working with the with the other parts of the team to get practices done and those things. So that was always good. I always did a state of the band every year. What our status was, and what we saw coming, and what was going to go on. That's the big part of those two.

[00:07:08]

**JC:** Which years were you in the band at Iowa State?

**TJ:** I started in the fall of ‘78. I went through that fall. I had to leave school for a while with an illness issue, not important now, but I was gone. I graduated with my master's in ‘86. I was not in the band my last two years. I was there for a while. In fact, I think Mr. C [Joseph Christensen] got tired of me. So, you should probably just go do something else.

[00:07:38]

**JC:** So, you talked about some of the things that you brought to the band in the drum section. Were there any particular drum cadences or anything that you brought in?

**TJ:** Well, I didn't bring it in, but I started X. Which was our running cadence, for a lack of a better term. We started a lot of things that way. At least I was supposed to start a lot of things. Didn't always happen. We marched in Kansas City, and I just spaced off and kind of went a different direction. JHR [Jimmie Howard Reynolds] was up on this ladder just jumping up and down, and somebody tap me on the shoulders, “You should probably go ahead.” We started it, and we got going, and there we go. I didn't really bring much in, I learned a lot. I still could not be a percussionist, but I know a lot more than I did. I did march in Alumni Band carrying a drum twice. Will never do that again. I'm really thinking if I go back again, or as I go back again, I go back as a student director because that's a lot less physical work at my age. [Chapman laughs] Trucking across at the stadium or the fields at my ages, just carrying a drum, just doesn’t work. In my day, the drums actually hung in front of you. Now, they stick out in your in front of your chest. I can't see that well, so I just play on from there.

[00:08:55]

**JC:** So, what was it like as a percussionist at that time learning a show? You obviously have--you're supporting the band the entire time when you're marching the stadium pregame, during the game, and at halftime. What's it like to learn a show as a drummer?

**TJ:** Well, as a drummer, a lot of it, as you say, is learning the music, the tempos, being able to and willing to watch the directors to see what tempo they want because it can change. Obviously, no one's hearing the same thing. Even as is, the band is spread out across the field where you are always most commonly within ten yards of the fifty, so we could stay mostly centered. But a lot of the show was just--cause we didn't march much. We had side steps. We had things we did. We did march at times. Obviously, the band is going back and forth up and down the field. We did also. Biggest mistake I made as a drummer was--doesn't matter what game it was--we line up, I'm on getting ready to go out of the field, and I look up, and I'm the only drummer on that side of the field. We only had thirty seconds left. So, there's no way for me to get off and run back around. So, there's a videotape of me, of the drum line running down to the fifty-yard line, which is our normal way of entering, and me coming from the other direction. Just kind of fell in line and started going. You just got to act like I was supposed to do that. It wasn’t that fun to watch.

[00:10:31]

**JC:** So, where did you do music rehearsals while in marching band?

**TJ:** I was thinking about that after we talked the other day. We practiced on grass, just to the backside of the then the new design center [College of Design]. So, Saturday morning practice is a whole different animal. So, we practice out there. It is a reasonable walk back out to the field. We still got complaints about noise from the design center because you put that band out there and you are going to make noise from four o'clock until five-thirty, I believe was our most common time. We started putting towers up, and that helped a lot. Rather than the ladders, we put up a football tower and used those things. But a lot of it was the friendships of the band. Overall, that was the most important part. My best friends are still band members that we march with, and rode around with, and rode bus five, which we probably shouldn't talk about, but we may at some point, you never know, as long as I kind of package that a little bit so it's not quite as graphic as it could be. Several bad songs. We're not going to do any of those, that I can think of. We can do “Paradise by the Dashboard Lights.” That was one of the most popular ones. But the practice were tough. You're on grass, you're on mud. It gets tough. The only time we're on turf--as a marcher, you know this--turf handles a lot differently than grass. It's a lot more accurate, and if you're half a step off, you're going to be a very visible half a step off when you get turf.

[00:12:11]

**JC:** Did you just play in Jack Trice Stadium?

**TJ:** Yes, I never marched in the old stadium. Trice [Jack Trice Stadium] was, of course it was much less developed at that point. Then it was Iowa State Stadium [Cyclone Stadium], Jack Trice Field. Press boxes were in the same general places. I can’t think of his name [Robert Lindemeyer]. I apologize for that, the announcer was a great guy. He hung out with us all the time, the band announcer. He understood what to do and when to do it because the lag in the sound system. We all dealt with those things. But yes, we practice there Saturday mornings or Friday nights. We would load the trucks up and haul them down the next morning to the field, practice for a while. One of my greatest interactions with the football team is we lost our punter in Missouri at the Missouri game. He broke his leg, which tends to hamper a punter. [Chapman laughs] So, the word went out across campus that if anyone kicked in high school, they knew what's going on, come on up. Well, we always play football on the turf before band practice started, which is probably a bad plan. I was in the back. They snapped me the ball. I kick it, just because. I kicked it sixty-four yards. A perfect spiral. I mean, just went up in the air and just went--up by the offices there was a group of guys standing on the on the balcony. They said, Dang, those guys saw you do that.

I said, “Perfect. That's all I need right now. I'm busy at halftime, so I can't go up and do those things.” The next time we played--we punted a lot--there was thirty guys up on that, and they said, Are you going to punt again?

I said, “Absolutely not.” [both laugh] I got the one. We’re good, and we'll just stay with that. But those were good times, except for the turf burns when you try to do stuff.

[00:14:18]

**JC:** I was going to ask you, did you have, in the course of the years playing football, any broken bones that you recall from anyone?

**TJ:** Not that, not from that. There's people with noses who were kind of put out a joint because you get a little physical. The fields were slick. You know, you're practicing, especially towards fall and early winter, that field’s pretty slick if you're in tennis shoes or whatever you're doing. Of course, we always practiced, no matter what the weather was, we practiced in shorts because you had to. That was just the deal. I also wore my checkerboard pep band pants at times, which were a whole different thing. We will talk about uniforms of pep bands. That's just kind of strange too. But yes, it was a good time. It’s just more camaraderie with the band from the FAC’s [Friday Afternoon Club]. I don’t know if we're talking about those or not, but those were a big issue, at least you know, when we were in school. Sadly, I'm dating you too because we were in school about the same time. Very similar to that. But FAC is Friday Afternoon Club. I was thinking about those the other night. Cy’s Roost was *the* place for that. Then after that, we went to Granddaddy’s on Friday nights, on the old Saturday Night Fever dance floor, [Chapman laughs] which is a whole different animal. The band got to drink for free, which is never a great plan. But we had some good times. The official position of the directors of the band were that you can do whatever you want to do the night before as long as you can march the next day. Now was it perfect? No, but we always did that. We always lived up to our obligation to get out there and do what we had to do. Of course, Granddaddy’s burned down, later. We actually had a memorial service at Alumni Band after Granddaddy’s burned down. Went over there, and the police showed up, Why are you all you people standing on the concrete, at that point? So, we stood out there and explained to them. Well, that's fine. Your good, you stay here. We sang some band songs and talked awhile and went back from there. Other places, we had FAC’s, the Bins where I lived. Al Henkel [Alan Henkel, Journalism and Mass Communication (1978-1982)] and I lived in the Bins, another trumpet player. Of course, Scott Benesh’s [Computer Engineering (1976-1980)] house, just down on Welch there. Coby Neil, as we went along. There were a lot of them. The Bins and Coby’s house had a lot of FAC’s at them. [Chapman laughs] Then, of course, Cy’s was always our go-to establishment, for lack of a better term.

[00:16:52]

**JC:** Sure. Maybe talk a little bit about some of the memorable shows that you did. Doesn't necessarily have to be a show that was in Jack Trice Stadium, maybe ones that you did while you traveled on the road.

**TJ:** Well, we traveled a lot of places. I was thinking about that too. Obviously, the pro games. We marched at a Vikings game. That was at the old stadium [Metropolitan Stadium] before they built the dome [Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome]. The downfall of that was we sat behind the stands. I don't know if you were on that trip or not, but we were actually behind so all we could see was the back of another stand, and we weren't overly pleased with how that all turned out. The show was fine. We got along with that just fine. The Iowa shows are always fun. We had the situation--we played an Appian Way theme, was a Roman theme, and the two bass drummers knelt down on the sidelines like you would a Roman ship or whatever. I had a tendency to break sticks. I broke a lot of drum pads too. Oddly, there was someone in front of me, and they had a stick in their hand. I always had one on my belt. I hit down, the stick broke, I came back up to throw the end the end of the stick away from me. When I came back down, they threw a stick, and by the grace of heaven, I caught it. Because I sit there with one stick and try to do that whole bit, it would not have worked out. When the band turned--they were what marching away, they turned full front back to the Iowa side. Again, with the grace of heaven, the wind came up, and when they turned and hit it hard, the wind started to blow, and people's hair went back. I said, “That was awesome.” Those are the things you remember, other than, of course, walking on the wrong side of the field. I remember that show pretty well. I've had a lot of fun watching the shows that I have a lot of videotapes that I got over the years. They all kind of, not sadly--they kind of blend together. We always enjoyed marching in Oklahoma because Oklahoma was a whole different animal, and because of that traveling is where the ‘Varsity’ Band came from.

[00:19:12]

One year, we traveled; we went to Kansas twice, the University of Kansas and Kansas State. We marched a Chiefs game also, and we were cleaning the stadium to pay for all the travel. Now here I am fairly young, very shy, as you remember. I was always shy. Still am. It's just it's very out of character for me to be able to speak like this. We cleaned the stadium and it was nuts. You have not cleaned until you try to clean that stadium. Obviously, it's bigger now, but it took us a long time. You had marched the full show, you had done practice, you tore it all down, and then you came back, and you had to clean aisle by aisle. A group of us went to clean the varsity locker rooms, and the group, we're in there to clean the bathrooms. We walked in, had not been in that varsity locker room. There was said, Attack, attack, attack. Pursuit, pursuit, pursuit. Yes, I get that stuff. That’s fine. One thing that surprised us is when we can see the players--Dexter Green [Iowa State running back (1975-1978)] was playing then--so the players numbers on the lockers, which made sense, their name, which made sense, and also their picture. Now, we're thinking, *One* of those should trigger these guys to where they're supposed to be. No disrespect to the football team, I don't mean that. But I think without the picture if a number and your name don't tell you where you're supposed to be, you kind of go from there. Anyway, so we keep going and we're cleaning or doing what we got to do, and here comes Earle Bruce [Iowa State Football Coach (1973-1978)]. He's got blue boxer shorts. He's got garters on his socks, which is fine, I mean, he's, he's a dapper guy, I guess. T-shirt on. He comes in, there's probably thirty, forty of us in that locker room doing stuff. He comes and says, “What are you doing in here?”

Again, because I was shy, I turned and said, “Well, coach, we're cleaning the stadium. We're supposed to shower in here because we are getting on buses from the stadium and heading for Kansas.”

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

And I thought for a second, I said, “But Earle, we're the ‘Varsity’ Band.” From then on, we told that story, the announcer started throwing ‘Varsity’ Band into the introductions, and from that weekend, we became the ‘Varsity’ Band. [My] claim to fame, possibly. It's remembered. Chuck Offenberger wrote a story about it back at the *Iowa Boy* when he used to do the band show reviews, which band won. Didn't always agree with him because once in a while he said Iowa won, but what do you do about that? So that's really one of the claims to fame, if there is such a thing, is that's where “varsity” came from, and that's kind of neat how that all played together. Never would think it's in the men's locker room at a football game with a coach in boxer shorts. But, you know, if you were there--and there are still people around that were there, so they can verify it. Offenberger verified it. He didn’t call Earle because I said, “Don’t call Earle. Don’t. No. Let’s not even do that.” So, we go from there.

**JC:** And the rest is history.

**TJ:** The rest, as they say, is history. Absolutely.

[00:22:46]

**JC:** And which year was that, again?

**TJ:** I'm thinking probably ’78 because I think that was the year we traveled the most. That's the year we went to the Hall of Fame Bowl also, so that's a whole other set of stories. At times, members of the band, not the whole band, would drink just a little bit. Just at times. Bus five, which you said we couldn't talk about, well, you had to be invited to ride bus five. You couldn't just get on it, which they changed later because they thought that was not fair. We get along really well with the University of Oklahoma Marching Band. Every time they were up here we partied with them. We go down there, and we go to the duck pond. I don't know if you ever went down there with us. You go to the duck pond. Oklahoma had hats that said “80/20”. So, we ask them, What's the story with that?

Well, that means, 80 percent of the alcohol is consumed by 20 percent of the band.

Cool, great. So, we come back. We get “ninety, ten” hats. We just did because we couldn't let them have something we couldn't have. So, that went on for a couple of weeks and then we saw some people we talked to at Oklahoma came back and said that they have gone up to a “ninety-five, five.” So, we went to “ninety-eight, two.” There was six of us. We added “ninety-eight, two” hats. 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by 2 percent of the band, which mathematically kind of worked out. Not the 98 percent, of course, but the 2 percent was, and Oklahoma saw those and said, Okay, yes. What do you do from there? So, that became a tradition. We wore the hats. We still wore them at Alumni Band. We have founders hats now that go on. So that's part of the trips.

Then there’s, at Iowa, there's challenges with being at the Hawkeye Stadium. I was asked to take a band over to play at a pep rally where both bands were going to be present. Hayden Fry was then the Iowa football coach. We were supposed to play the Iowa fight song. “Okay, we'll do it.”

He comes over to me, pats me on the back, says, “You guys play the Iowa fight song better than we do.”

I turned to him, and said, “I know.”

He looked at me, and shook his head, and smiled, pat me on the back, and said, “I'm going to like you.”

“Yeah, okay,” so I go on from there. But just a lot of stuff like that. If you remember the moments, and after we started talking about possibly doing this, you start putting the stories together. I won’t say which member of the band because he may see this, but we were marching high school games, too, and near his hometown. We're playing Cedar Rapids. Some people drank a fair amount after the high school game, not with the high school kids, we would never do that. Really. We never would do that. But there were some parties, you know, local parties for his friends and other friends around. I was in charge of loading the buses for years. We could load, we could load all five or six buses with all the stuff we had all set up in under a minute. It was just *boom*, it was all in. So, we're getting set up. I'm getting set up to load the buses. All the bellies are open, and this guy walks up, he looks at me, crawls in the bottom of the bus, and goes to sleep. I said, “Hey, you can't be in there because when this starts it is going to go fast.” We got him up, and I said, “Why don’t you go sit down. You promised you could always march but didn’t promise you could be ready to march until we got there.” Stuff like that. Randy Dop once had to sew his pants. He tore pants. He had to try to sew them up while we were moving on a bus. [Chapman laughs] Well, I happened to be sitting next to him, which I thought that was just one of the stranger things I've seen. The potential for injury, which we won't pursue, did not happen mercifully. That’s just not one of the things you think you're going to do.

[00:27:12]

**JC:** Any other unique sorts of things while traveling with a couple hundred college students?

**TJ:** Someone I know did this, because I burned a lot of energy during games and all this. We get places, of course, they would serve itty-bitty meals, *itty-bittys*. I used to order those meals later as we would travel. So, I always took my coat, and I threw over the seat next to me. The waiter would come by and say, “Is anyone here?”

“Yes, he's in the bathroom, but he's coming back.” So, there's two. We ate that, switch plates, kept going. Is that kosher? Probably not, but we were hungry, and I know the budget. It all worked out. There's some challenges with fans. Especially coming out of Iowa. We put all the banners in between the drums, and we start on the outside. People actually drank at the games too. I know you couldn't, but people did. We're marching out, and these guys are trying to get to get to the girls. Of course, we're not going to allow that to happen. A gentleman actually--I say gentlemen--I was on the on the left side of the line. He came up, he jumped onto my drum. Where is he going to go? I don't know, but as I said, I hit things a lot, and I reared back and just went over his head. The stick snapped off and spun out. He just kind of went limp. I took him off my drum and set him on the side of the road. We never intentionally did that, but I had to defend the honor of the ladies. There’s the stories of rocking the buses and, again, the band songs, which someday we should record without names. “The Twelve Days of VEISHEA” always jumps to mind, and now there's Christmas songs I can't even come close to without thinking of the band versions of those.

[00:29:26]

**JC:** Yes, yes. What was maybe one of the other unique stadiums that you played in? I think you maybe played in Arrowhead Stadium [home stadium of the Kansas City Chiefs football team]?

**TJ:** We played in Arrowhead. Yes, we played in in the old Viking stadium. Yes, I think Arrowhead was fun. It’s a totally different animal. Then the size of the professional football players. Even the college teams, when you're in the band--you're down there, and these guys can walk up by, and they're massive. Well, until you get to see the pros. The linemen come by, and they're huge. These are the guys that are running four four-forties, and they are six-twelve, five hundred pounds, and they have arms as big as legs. They just go walking by you. I'm like, Wow. But the pro fans, or fans at professional games, were always very supportive. They encourage the band. Actually, we marched at the Chief’s stadium a couple times down in Kansas City, so we must have done okay as we got through with that. But we go from there. We did get a lot of [inaudible]. I marched at Kansas, Kansas State, Oklahoma. We tried to march to Nebraska, but they sold our tickets. I don’t know if you were in the band then. We never got to Nebraska, but we were supposed to march. We were all set up to go, and about ten days before, Mr. C announced that the University of Nebraska had sold the tickets they had allotted for the band, so we weren't going. So, I've never marched in Lincoln [Lincoln, Nebraska]. A lot of the Big Twelve schools, pep bands too, the same thing. We went to a lot of places, played pep bands, and do that stuff, a little easier. Again, I'm not a musician, never was, and anybody who worked with me--I used to think I had to count to four, then I learned if I said, ‘One, two, ready, go,” it covered a lot more stuff. I really didn't have to know. My advantage was I knew the sports. I knew, Something's coming. We need to be ready. And that was always fun.

[00:31:47]

**JC:** You mentioned at pro stadiums. Were there any things outside of a football stadium, of course, talked about some of the local establishments, but maybe something more formal? Were there any parades, or any other events where the university had you playing?

**TJ:** We played when there was alumni or just promo, like hotels. It used to be listed as “members of the marching band,” not the marching band, because you couldn’t get the whole band in a place like that, but if they had parties or watch parties or whatever, we would take them around and play at some of those. It was good, you know, good chance to see the fans. It's nice to see fans when you're in a kind of weird environment. But yes, even just against city fans or whomever else, actually both teams, we did not, even though can't see if it was paying for us to be there. We did play both stadiums, or both sets of crowds. They love the drum line too. Everybody loved to see that stuff because it was fairly new at that point. So, they enjoyed watching that too. Some of the stick work by the snares and some of the other players--not the base drums as much. There's not much stick work to do with a drum other than hit things. But the snares and those guys could really move things around, and it was always fun to watch.

[00:33:09]

**JC:** What was the interaction or the relationship between the drum line and the other sections of the band?

**TJ:** It was pretty good. Once in a while, they [would] get mad if—you could argue, Well, you're not keeping the time right. You're not following him.

I said, “Let’s see, guys, if Mr. C or Jimmy Howard come over and tell us we're not following, we're all over it. But I'm guessing with all of us and you guys being that distance away, you got to learn that's going to sound different. So, you should watch the director too.” That works out. There was never really, that I know of, there was never any real angst between anybody. Most of the time, every got along. There was always some characters that didn’t get along with anybody. But people still get along with me pretty well. Well, I that wasn't that guy, but, you know, there's so there's always some of that. There's always somebody that wants to make a point and cause problems. But overall, I mean, it was just a great group of people. Then it was. I assume it still is. I don't know why it wouldn't be. We never had a chance to travel to France. We went to the University of Iowa. That was pretty much--and Duck Pond. I got a feeling that the Duck Pond at Oklahoma may have been more fun than France. Don't know, never been to France as a marching band. I don't think we marched in a parade in the Hall of Fame Bowl, that I remember. The police give us right to liquor store, I remember that. Well, they said we couldn't all go. The hotel was not in a great neighborhood as far as crime and those things. They say, We'll take several of you. You can get what you want, we'll haul you back. We got in police cars. Now, I'm not sure what the directors thought when they saw their band members being put in police cars. I understood it was explained to them why a lot of the drummers, several trumpets were taken away. But we came back. The team did not do well in the game. Just didn't happen that way. But before even the game had even gotten involved, the announcers for the game announced-- they was talking, you know, the side-by-side stuff--and they said, Well, I don't know anything about the Iowa State Football Team. I’ve seen the reports and stuff, but I can tell you we're in the same hotel as the band, and boy do they know how to party. Which was then true because we were all young, and recovery was much easier, at that point.

Well, I’m just trying to think of the things that I remember, these things that happened. The suicide drill for the trumpets. That was huge with crowds. They got up and did that. The “Coke Can Cabana.” We had coke cans with rocks in them. A couple of those became standards as we got along. But the suicide drill, that was just insane to watch those guys knowing where they had been the night before. [Chapman laughs] Get up and flip. I don't think anyone ever crashed--a couple horns got crashed around a little bit, but we always got through that. Putting Everclear in the horn so they didn't freeze. At least that’s what I was told why they put Everclear in the horns. Don't know for sure. Have no reason not to believe that.

[00:36:39]

**JC:** Any other formations that were unique or special? Maybe something during pregame or--

**TJ:** Well, we had a pregame. Steve Mosack [Steven Mosack, Electrical Engineering (1977-1982)] played a solo when the flags were coming out. He was good at it. It was cold one day there was cold one day, and he made the choice that he couldn't hold the pitch at the octave he was at, and right in the middle of the song, he dropped in an octave. Now, I doubt people in the stands even knew. But that happened. We asked him afterwards, What was that? What happened there?

He said, “I couldn't do it. The horn was cold. I couldn't get enough into it, and so I backed it down.” Which was the right choice because, I said, 98 percent of the people don't listen that much to what's going on. We always told everybody in the band when we wrote the shows that you can be upset about what happened, but no one else knows what's supposed to happen. There’s three hundred fifty of us, or four hundred, whatever the number happened to be, that know what the show was designed to do. They don't know that. So just keep going. Don't do anything silly, just keep going. There was tuba specials we did and a lot of that stuff. It was fun to write. We got in trouble a few times. Things had to be taken out of shows, but such is life.

[00:38:06]

**JC:** Did you have any formations that were like banned, like, No, you were not going to be able to do what you wanted to do there?

**TJ:** You try to do it. We try to do some floating diamonds. They come in and cross over and do where it looks like it's changing and inverting. We finally got it done, but the first time we tried it, it was like cats. We're sitting up there just looking like--Mr. C looks at me and says, “You got an option?”

I said, “I'm thinking we better get one.”

He says, “I'm thinking the same thing.” So, we drop the floating diamonds at that point, the pass through diamonds. We put more stationary things. But trying to move that group, its a big group. Then your directors wanted certain sounds at certain points, so you can't take all the trombones and send them to the opposite ends of the field. Certainly, you can't move the drummers too far apart. Just being aware of those things, you learn a lot doing that. There's also bands that kids that came in--I say kids, you know, freshmen--that had marched in a band of thirty. We got to march in a block of three hundred. It's a totally different animal. Their marching was march on to the field, play a song, and march off. So, we did a lot of practice on eight to five, trying to hit the hit the marks and do those things. Always turn to one side. You can always spot a band member because they step forward with the same foot every time. No matter where they are. So, we used to do that.

“Oh yeah, I was in marching band.”

“Really? Stand straight. Put your feet together. Take one step forward.” They step forward with the wrong foot. Well, there you go. You weren’t in band. Once again, doesn't matter, but it's a little thing. I had some great friends. You were in a pep band with us, with me and Dave Artley [David Artley, Music (Curriculum) (1980-1984)]. The other director, Johnny, John Neil was pep band director for a long time too. John actually could read music. I didn't very well. Everyone knew that. I just started things and stopped them. Mr. C always said it is always fun to watch me if I get to the part of the song I knew--then I always memorized the ends so I could shut it down if we had to. “Basin Street Blues,” like I said, I loved that song with the pep band.

**JC:** Still do it now.

**TJ:** Do you really? I believe you do. You know, I go to a lot of high school basketball, college basketball, and it's the same songs. I listen to that going like, “Hot Stuff,” and some of the other ones are like, wow, no one's written anything new since then. I know, Junior is still around somewhere. I shouldn’t call him that because I don't think he'd like being called Junior. Mr. Phillips [Daniel Phillips] is still around somewhere. I know Mr. McKinney is still playing out in South Dakota. I would like to go to the pep band. I couldn't play in the pep band. I played bass drum. Even if we traveled, I took a base drum because you got to have somebody keeping some kind of rhythm. But again, my musical skills were counting to four. That was that was pretty much it.

[00:41:23]

**JC:** I'm going to shift gears here a little bit. What were the uniforms like when you were in band?

**TJ:** They were black. The drummers wore berets. I've got one sitting over here in the corner. We wore berets. We had kind of a, I don't know what it was, a pullover. Cyclone colors, of course. Very hot. The uniforms were wool. We wore shakos, and we had signals, you know, when you put your hat on, we would stand up in front and start doing this--means put your hat on, because we couldn't have the hats on in the stands because people couldn't see. But I remember those uniforms, and the biggest issue--in fact, my brother, who was in the band after I had left, was one of the people we warned a lot--if your uniform gets wet, you can't seal it in a bag. If it’s sweaty, if it's rained on, whatever it is, you can't seal it in a bag. We probably had three or four uniforms a year that came back just mold-crusted. “Well, what do I do?”

I said, “Well, you hope you can get it cleaned,” but we knew it was coming. We told everybody, You got to get them cleaned up. But I know I never wore the full wool uniform, but I know--and you did--they were hot. Man, I know they were hot, and they were so dramatically different than what you see now in the bands. Yes, it was always a black with a white front, and the shakos.

**JC:** What, what did the drum--

**TJ:** And spats. We had spats too. Drum majors were—just trying to remember what they were. We weren’t like some of the southern bands where the drum majors are dancing and flipping and doing all that stuff. They look kind of like drum majors. They wore—did they have tails? You could tell me. I don't remember if they had tails or not.

**JC:** I'm not certain, at that point.

**TJ:** I'm not either. As soon as I say, “This is what they wore,” I'm going to get messages from ten ex-drum majors, them saying, No, that's not right. So, I won't go there. They were pretty standard. They wore hats, the taller hats, as they went along also. We had the ladders on the side, so they were up, directing. Student directors were directing then, also. I had a chance to direct the band with Chuck—I messed this up last time too. Wasn’t Chuck Mangione, it was—

**JC:** Maynard Ferguson [Canadian jazz trumpet player known for his ability to play in a high register].

**TJ:** Maynard Ferguson was there, yes. Strangest guy I ever saw play. His neck went out like it was going to explode, but there you go. We met some fun people. Like I said, the people in the band cared about each other. That was important. There was people who got sick. There was people that had trouble. We had injuries. We had ankles that blew up. We had knees that went out. They still came to rehearsals, which is kind of cool. Not that they could ever go back again. [Chapman laughs] But they were there. You had the alternates who were always hoping to get in, but you never saw them going, I hope someone gets hurt today. We hope they don't.

[00:44:32]

**JC:** What would you say that kind of culture or feeling of the band was as a group?

**TJ:** I think, as a group, that if someone needed something, I wouldn’t say everybody would try to help, but there’s always a group that would try. Certainly, the sections, you know, the trumpet section, the sax section. The tubas were very close. Mary Hardy [Chemistry (1981-1986)] was being part of the tubas, and that's a whole different--she was a sweetheart, and she put two tennis balls on her mouthpiece and hung it on another mouthpiece. Anyway, you can guess the analogy that came from that. But everyone was there, and if you were in trouble--I mean, not trouble, trouble--there is always someone who will try to help you. That was cool, from rides to whatever to doing--you know, we loaded the buses, we hauled all the equipment down to the stadium in the morning. We had the Perkins breakfast every day. Most of that was so the people would wake up. We had a call list, “Are you going to be at breakfast?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Okay, if you're not there by this time, we're calling.” That's a sidebar story there. We were going to Iowa. Of course, we load buses. If you miss the bus, you're not going. That was the rule. We get a notice, and we didn’t have a lot of cell phones then, we're still chipping out rocks and stones and trying to do those things. We got to the stadium, and we're starting to check people out. There was someone missing, and it's one of the twirlers. No one had seen her, no one knew what was going on. I was standing in front of the band doing the routine for the day or whatever the pattern was, and she came up behind me, and she pulled my arm.

I turned around and go, “Glennie. Are you okay? I’m glad to see you.”

She said, “You promised you would wake me up!” Which, of course, she meant as, “I thought you would call me.” Well, of course, the band didn't interpret it that way and made several comments that were less than constructive. I won't repeat much of them, but many were just like,

“You could have. Just say, ‘Hey, get up!’”

“Just stop, guys. That's not where this is going at all,” but now, admittedly, if I was standing out there and I heard that--again, even though shy by nature--I may have interpreted that differently. Then go on from there.

[00:47:08]

**JC:** So, what was the leadership of the band--both the directors and maybe, you were a student director, and the drum majors--how did they help guide or form what the band was like, the culture of it? How it did what it did, as opposed to the individual--

**TJ:** I think a lot of it was the directors, from student directors because the student directors were officially in charge off the field. Rehearsals and all the that. The drummers on the field, of course. I think section leaders had a much more involved part of the communication. Section leaders met together. They partied together sometimes too. But I think really section leaders were the major part of the social aspect. Specifically, with the new members because they're not quite sure, Can I go to this? Can I—because at that point, the drinking age in Iowa was eighteen. I don't know what it is now, it doesn't matter because I'm well past eighteen at this stage. I had someone ID me a couple of weeks ago. I’m like, “Really? Thank you. I don't understand that, but I appreciate it. This is great.” Back in the day, I don't remember this very much. But I think that was a big part, the section leaders, and then you go with the saxophone section leaders. They've got their groups. Then you got the right guides. That structure, the under-structure. I don't mean that derogatorily. Just the basics of it, of how it's set together. You got the right guides, so you got eight people, or six people, or whatever the lines happen to be at that point. They go up to the section leaders, they go up to the student directors, go up to the drum majors, and, of course, the staff. The staff was always very patient with us. Well, not always. If practice didn't go well, especially the Saturday morning practice, there were some pretty intense moments with those, but they had to be. It's part of having a group like that. When you're performing in front of thirty-five, forty-five thousand people, you got to have things kind of together. It's their job, so it's very important to them.

Steve Meignet came in after McKinney left. I got to know him very well, so he and I became friends, and now he was at Drake when he left Iowa. I don’t know if he still is, but he was for a while. You meet people and even the directors, the faculty. Mr. C, God bless him with his passing, was a great guy. Very nice guy. He cared about people. He invited me to an Alumni Band. I said, “I can't come.”

He’s like, “Don't worry about it. Well, just– come.” That was cool. We do those things. But the structure itself was very self-supporting, and that was good. Again, you had to have the section leaders, or right guides certainly that can move around. You were a right guide, I believe, you know, if you can’t move to somebody else’s group and know where to go. I remember right guides with the charts trying to figure out, What happens here? That was most of my first two days of practice,

“Okay, see this line? That's you. [Chapman laughs] Go here. I'll go stand where you're supposed to end up. Right now, just get there.” We would dry-run them. We didn't play for a while. The drums would just do the clicks, and we'd move sixteen steps or twenty steps, whatever it happened to be. They let it build. It was fun to watch shows and see the light bulbs come on, Okay, now we're doing this. We didn't tape rehearsals then. I think, in retrospect—it’s harder then, too, because now everyone's got a phone. You can stand up there and record--but I think if the band had seen some of the things they were going on during practice, you go, Well, no. That can't be what they wanted to have. Like any other sport, even with that. But you go on, we always put on a good show. We tried to put on a good show. There were some horrible mistakes. People playing the wrong song. [Chapman laughs] But again, with that much volume, very few people actually knew, probably. So we go from there.

[00:51:40]

**JC:** So, did you learn the music first and then march and then integrate the music? Or how did you end up learning it all together?

**TJ:** Well, when I played, there was always the play rehearsal. You're going through the music, you sit there, and the drums would be there, of course, and they had music. Some of the drummers could actually read music. So, they did that. The base drum, specifically, is only two of us. We primarily just kept the beat. Now there's spots you got to stop, and you learn those things. But mostly just keep the pace that the band had to have, and you get used to the way the directors wanted it played. Actually, for the drum section, we developed more as the week went on. You start with a very basic rhythm so it can be tracked, and then people can play it and handle as they go along. There's the side practices. The saxophone section would play their parts. That all went on. On the way to games or even at the breakfast in the morning, sections would sit together, and they go, We’re going to do this. We’re going to do this. If we're on a bus, the back of the bus, Okay, we're going to play this, then we're going to do this. We're going to move fourteen steps this way and sixteen steps that way. It’s a lot to remember, and you count on each other because you're going to forget something. Now, like me forgetting which side of the field I was supposed to be on. That was a little more obvious to most schools. But again, if you make it look like, That was supposed to happen. We're good. That turns out okay.

[00:53:19]

**JC:** You mentioned that practices were like an hour and a half a day or something along those lines--

**TJ:** Yes.

**JC:** How did you manage having an hour and a half a day for practice plus a full Saturday at least to take up your time, and try and balance being a college student doing, those things, having a good time, and also trying to do some academic endeavors? How did you manage your time with all of that?

**TJ:** Tere was academics involved? I'd missed that. Yes, I'd heard that. You try to space your classes. As a freshman, you just assign classes. As you get more towards the upper classes, then you can start saying, Okay, I'll have a class at ten in the morning. I'll have one at whatever and then I won't book anything past two. If you can. Some classes, you had no option. So, you have to be aware of it. There's counselors available. There's people in the music department who would work with you to try to schedule. A lot of the deans really liked the marching band, so you can sit down with them and say, “Here's what we're working on.”

“Okay. Well, you can do this. We'll try to do this.” A lot of the instructors did too. When we were traveling a lot, you could leave on Thursday night and not be back until Sunday night, Monday morning. We get back at three o'clock in the morning on Monday's. You had to be willing to do it. It's not easy, and if you can't do it, you need to focus on school. That's just the deal. If you're paying for yourself, you understand that. If somebody else is paying for it, you really understand it. That's why most universities have a bar called the library. Back in the days, remember we actually had phones in the in the room, and if your roommates’ parents called, you say, “I know he's at the library. Well, I figured he was anyway.” There's several of those options from there. A lot of it was just scheduling. The marching band staff or the pep band staff. Room 211 in Music Hall was our office, and so we'd use that as study hall also. We would sit in there. The most strenuous time was trying to decide the people who tried out for band cut down to a block. You feel horrible if someone doesn't make it, but someone's not going to make it. Now, sadly, you see some things during tryouts. You go, “Yeah, no. We just can’t.” Tell some people, “You can come to practice. You can watch, kind of like a red shirt. Just come and do that.” We always had some practices beforehand to get through the basics of eight to five. How this all works. But at some point you just got to say, “We just can't right now.” That's hard because somebody counts on it. They could have been a drum major in their high school. Now they can’t even make the band. I got cut, you know. So, there you go. I'm not saying I was anything special, but it surprised me a little bit. The worst part of that was I changed my class schedules, so I had class at four o'clock three days a week, [Chapman laughs] which was a little awkward, but I went to some of them. You can’t miss practice. You miss class. Don't quote me on that. In fact, if anyone edits this, go ahead and edit that part out [Chapman laughs].

[00:56:59]

**JC:** In your observation, how do you think the marching band has changed over time from what you've seen?

**TJ:** I think it's a lot more technical. The music--more different parts, sounds wrong, but it's more dynamic. We played some great stuff, but much of those songs were known. The drums have changed dramatically. Back in my day, high school on up, you couldn't march with something you couldn't carry. Now they got pianos out there, they got organs, they got all this stuff going on, which is fine. That is what it is now. I think the shows are very similar. The motion, the glides, the floating back and forth. Those things are all fun. Of course, the Iowa, the I, the ISU, all the things were classic. The classic for us was always X. Once the X started, you went hard. Then the crowd got into it, and we did, and we ran into our formation and went with that, primarily in the pregame. The shows I see now, they're great shows. I still see stuff out of phase--something that always drove me nuts. You can be in step, but just that little bit, especially with spats on. You see a foot just half a step behind. Well, you see three hundred people doing that, and you're just, you want to stop, say, “Stop. Just no. Don't do that.” But you know, I judged for a couple of years after high school marching, maneuvering, things like that. Accuracy is still important, but a lot of it's the heart, and I don't think that has changed at all. The heart it takes to play a show, and get into it, and have it really be important to you hasn't changed. It's a different show. Different techniques, different horns, different whatever combination it is. But the heart of the band is what it's all about. I don't think that has or probably ever will change.

[00:59:17]

**JC:** What would you say the marching band means to you, the Iowa State Marching Band?

**TJ:** I love to hear “varsity” of course, when they announce who’s the ‘Varsity’ Band. I saw the V on the new uniforms. That was kind of fun to see. But for me, it was my anchor in college. There's good days, bad days in band, as well as in classes, but you always knew there was a place that you belonged. I think in college specifically, belonging somewhere can make a huge difference to a lot of students. That's important. I had great friends in marching band, some I spent more time with than others. Some I knew by name. I don't think there was anybody a marching band that I just didn't like most of the time. Maybe small instances where I maybe got a little cross with them, again because of my shyness, Jay, that would have been a time where I had to back off a little bit. But I think that's it. It's the heart and belonging, is what makes a good marching band a good marching band.

[01:00:30]

**JC:** Can you tell me a little bit about your involvement with the Alumni Band?

**TJ:** Has not been as much as I'd hoped. I run a couple companies, and timing is just crazy. I went back down for the anniversary of the “varsity” and gave the speech in front of the crowd. Some of that heard me tell the story. I've heard some other people's stories of how they did it. [Chapman laughs] I was there. It was actually said, “Well, you weren't there.”

“Well, I was. In fact, I am the one that said, ‘But Earle, we’re the varsity band.’ So, you may got to change your story just a bit if I'm here.” But I watch what's going on with it. I'd love to come back for it, but being six hours away makes it tough to just run down to a game. Ultimately, as business things settle down a little bit and I pass things along other people, I'd like to come down. I'd love to go to a couple basketball games. There was an athletic director who I got along with very, very, well.

He says, “As long as I'm here, you've got tickets.” Well, he's gone. So, it's a whole different thing now. But realize, I started the pep when Lynn Nance [ Iowa State Basketball Coach (1976-1980)] was coaching. Lynn Nance, for heaven's sake. There was the band and like forty people in the stands. I was the tallest guy there. That was a whole different thing. That has changed so much. You see Hilton [James H. Hilton Coliseum] and all these things going on. If we had a televised game, it was huge. Now everything's televised. That's a whole different thing, and learning how to do the television stuff with the pep band and all that. We wore headsets. We had a game--it was fairly big, one of those Missouri or Kansas had come in. They said they had someone singing the national anthem, so keep the band quiet. I'm listening to the director, right. He's on the headset with me. My butt is muted, and it’s taped down so I can't say anything. They say, Queue the guy for the national anthem, and I could hear, because I was listening too, and I hear, Cue the--band. Which we'll just paraphrase that part. I spun around, and the singer had choked. Just froze. Jerry Dean [Architecture (1078-1985)] was a drummer. I turned to him. I said, “We got to go.” Got everybody up. We cheered up. Started the national anthem. Then, of course, I think C [Joseph Christensen] jumped in to direct it. He was good at that, and the national anthem is a tough song to direct, and you direct pep band now, too, you know. There's some odd parts in there you got to watch for. But that was hilarious. I was sitting there listening to that stuff, Queue the--band! [Chapman laughs] Okay, that sounds reasonably serious. So we went did that. But now it's so common. I'm more surprised when a game isn’t on TV.

[01:03:44]

**JC:** Yes, definitely. Are there any questions that maybe I didn't ask that you would have wanted me to ask? Was there some story that you want to make sure you get out there?

**TJ:** The big one for me is obviously the varsity story. I'm looking at the things--talked about bus five, talked about cleaning the stadium, which is a whole different thing, the Duck Pond at Oklahoma, the “Coke Can Cabana.” Those were all cool things. Practice of the stadium. My infamous punt of sixty-five yards that we went down with. Writing the halftime show. We've covered a lot of the things.

I never said why the mirrored sunglasses actually came to be the first time. I had a pair on because, for some reason, the bright sun that morning was bothering me. Don't know why, but it was. I forgot I had them on, and we were always told, You could not wear sunglasses. But I'm also cheap enough, and they were new. What you should have done is throw them down on the field. Just let them be. We watched the video afterwards, and it looked kind of cool. You know, on the drummers. Jimmie Howard said, “What's this? You're not supposed to wear—”

“I know, but look, it's kind of cool.”

He looks at it and says, “Actually, it is. Let's get all the drummers in mirror sunglasses.”

Said, “I knew you'd like it,” taking advantage of the moment, right, as best as you can. Now it's so passe to even do that stuff, but even the drum line jackets then came out. Was a white jacket, had a pair of sunglasses with the picture of the crowd in the sunglasses, and said they come with the job. That became, not a benchmark, but a symbol of the drum line was the mirror sunglasses. So, that was kind of fun too. We talked about brand songs, most of which we can't talk about, and mostly the friendships. I think you've covered it. You've done a great job. But I think, what it comes down to is friends, acquaintances, and the heart of the band. If the band has a heart, the crowd knows it. If it's going through the motions, it's like, Okay, fine. We can get anybody out here to do that. But if you are excited, if you're having fun, you get out there and you mess it up, you mess it up. You go on from there, and you play on. But, the friendships, like I said, I've been in marching band members weddings. I've been not invited to some weddings, which is a whole different thing, but I understand how that works out. But I said, my best friends are still old, now old, very old marching band members. When I went back with Dop [Randy Dop] to Iowa State once, we were walking around on campus, and we realized that the students walking there could be the grandkids of the people we went to school with. That's a sobering thought. [Chapman laughs] I just think, Okay. Yes. You go from there. But we are still around to watch it, so that's kind of fun too.

[01:07:00]

**JC:** That's great. Hey, I really appreciate you spending time giving us your recollections, your memories of your time at the Iowa State University Cyclone Football *‘Varsity’* Marching Band.