Alanna Lowe

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

Interviewed by Jay Chapman

2023-12-11

Time stamps reference the video interview.

**JC**: Jay Chapman

**AL**: Alanna Lowe

[00:00:00]

**JC**: This is Jay Chapman, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections in University Archives Iowa State University Cyclone Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band Oral History [project]. Today is Monday, December 11, 2023. I'm interviewing Alanna Maxwell Lowe via Zoom. Welcome.

**AL**: Thank you.

[00:00:29]

**JC**: Well, let's go ahead and get started. Maybe start by telling me just a little bit about you, your early life, maybe where you grew up, your family, that sort of thing?

**AL**: Yes. So, I grew up in West Des Moines, Iowa, a short forty-five minutes from Ames. I am the oldest of three kids. My brother goes to Iowa [University of Iowa]. My sister is also at Iowa State. Yes, I don't know what else you wanted to ask about that.

[00:01:01]

**JC**: Sure, so how did you come to be at Iowa State?

**AL**: Yes. So, when I was in high school, I did a couple of different college trips. [I] did one at the University of Iowa. Did not really like it. It was a little bit too busy for me. It felt a lot like being in a city. Did one at University of Kansas. Beautiful campus, but just, I don't know, didn't quite call to me. My husband, boyfriend at the time, his family, huge Iowa State fans. I was more raised as an Iowa fan since that's where both my parents went, but my grandparents went to Iowa State--or one side of my grandparents did, the other set were Hawkeye fans. So, very much sort of divided household, like extended family. I actually went with my, again, boyfriend at the time, and his family to an Iowa State football game my junior year of high school and it was the coolest thing ever, and it was super exciting. It was a really fun game. I think Iowa State ended up winning. So, even as I went on like other college tours my senior year, I still had Iowa State in the back of my mind. Then his older sister, my now sister-in-law, was a sophomore at Iowa State, and so I went up and like spent the night with her, went to some of her classes, and realized, like, Yes, this is the school for me.

[00:02:42]

**JC**: Cool. So, what years did you go to Iowa State, and what did you study?

**AL**: I went from 2017 to 2021. I studied kinesiology and health with a minor in psychology, on the occupational therapy track.

[00:03:00]

**JC**: Sure. Awesome. So which bands were you in at Iowa State?

**AL**: So, I was in the marching band all four years. I did pep band my junior and senior year. So, I was [in] men’s pep band my junior year. Senior year with COVID things got a little bit weird, and so we played at both men's and women's games. We kind of cycled through. Then my senior year--well, I did campus band, my freshman year with some other marching band friends, and then senior year, I did wind ensemble.

[00:03:39]

**JC**: Yes, great. So, what section were you in marching band? What did you play? Is there anything interesting that you wanted to note about your section?

**AL**: Yes, so I played the mellophone for my first three years, and then I was actually a drum major in my senior year. I loved the mellophone section with all of my heart. There were a lot of really fun things about the mellophone section that I hope that they still do. I think they might still do. For example, whenever we would go on a band trip, we always carried this little unicorn piñata, maybe like this big or so, called Dat Ass. Like D-a-t and then A-s-s. I never knew who held on to it, but basically, whenever people would fall asleep on the band bus, somebody else would hold a picture of Dat Ass in front of them, take a picture of it [Dat Ass was held in front of them, not a picture of Dat Ass - AL]. Then we had my freshman and sophomore year, a Facebook group page for everybody where we would just post pictures and funny memes that we had made. Then we also were on Group Me [phone app used for texting large groups] for a while, you know, and then on whatever. Inevitably, everybody would end up with a picture of Dat Ass when they fell asleep.

[00:05:08]

**JC**: Awesome, that's a fun story. So, maybe talk a little bit about the unique way in which your section kind of worked together to learn a show. Or maybe talk about just the general process of learning a show.

**AL**: Yes, so when it was time to get the show, we'd get the music ahead of time, learn the music separately. We'd usually have sectionals twice a week where like the first half hour to hour was only for music. So, captains would kind of guide those music rehearsals. In my junior year, another person and I were co-captains together, and so we would split it up, like he would take Tuesday, I would take Thursday, or whatever it was. Then as far as learning drill, we still had it--I think I was the last year--because again, senior year, COVID, kind of weird--but my first three years, we still printed out all of our coordinate sheets. So, everybody would go to the library before– print off their coordinate sheet. Sometimes, people would have it on their phones, but it was a PDF, and it was always in the massive file with everybody's coordinate sheets, so if you like turn your phone sideways, it'd get wonky. So, most people would just print them out anyways. Then you can all go through, sort of, as a whole band like step by step, and then eventually put it all together.

[00:06:47]

**JC**: Sure. So where did you practice both for music and then also for marching?

**AL**: 95 percent of the time, we were out on the band practice field that is immediately west of the Communications Building and right next to, like, the graveyard [Iowa State Cemetery]. Kind of out by the railroad tracks. So, yes.

[00:07:09]

**JC**: Okay. So, how long were your rehearsals? How often did you have them? What was that like? How long did it take to learn a show?

**AL**: So, rehearsals, five to six thirty every day, Monday through Friday. Sometimes, you know, if we got ahead or if it was exceptionally bad weather, we would cancel. We would also sometimes, if we had really bad weather, move to Music Hall to do just music rehearsal. Some shows were always easier to learn than others, like some shows, we could learn in four days. Then some things were a bit longer to learn. But we had a new show every week, and I don't think we ever really had to repeat a show. Ever.

[00:08:03]

**JC**: So, you mentioned having at least most of your time there in the paper sheets. What was it like to try and take that paper sheet and then translate that into, Hey, this is going to be a show that people are going to see. How does that work?

**AL**: It was always really fun, and I'm now remembering, I think it was junior year, we got the Ultimate Drill Book app. So junior year I'm pretty sure people had the choice of printing off their coordinate sheets. Otherwise, we all had an app that for our drill, we all still had to print off music at the library was the deal. But the app was really nice because you could see the whole full picture, you could like hit play and see dot like set to set, how it would move, and it would highlight your set and go which direction you had to go in. But with like the paper stuff, you know, freshman and sophomore year, we just kind of had to trust Carichner [Christian Carichner, Marching Band Director (2017-present)]. He said, “This line to this line better be in a straight line, like line it up.” We would all turn sideways and put our arms up. It sort of it took a lot more--there's a lot less wiggle room to, like, talk between sets and whatnot because we don't really know what we're making. It was always fun, like my freshman year, we had a senior who flew drones for fun, so he would fly his drone over the band for our final run-throughs. My freshman year, we had assignments where you would have to go in and watch the drill from the previous rehearsal and submit one thing the band did well, one thing that the band could improve, one thing I did well, one thing I could improve, or whatever it was. So, then it was really nice to see what it should have looked like. You know, to look at it.

**JC**: Having a drone, does that really make it a different kind of experience, to be able to see it from that perspective more like you wouldn't get the form then.

**AL**: Yes, and we never, you know, in high school, so in high school, it was same thing. It was like, Well, I think I’m where I’m supposed to be. But then like having that footage made it come to life a lot quicker.

[00:10:40]

**JC**: Sure, sure. That makes sense. Can you talk a little bit about the leadership? You mentioned captains. Can you talk about what different leadership roles were and how they helped lead the band?

**AL**: So, in every section, they had, depending on how big the section was, either one captain or two captains. The trumpets always had three captains because they had a captain for each part, like first, second, third. That's generally what the sections did. Like I mentioned, the mellophones, my junior year, we went from one to two captains. Which you could have justified either way. Each section was divided into ranks of about ten people. So, your rank had two guides. So, there were, in the mellophone section, for example, we had thirty people, so we had three ranks of ten, J rank, K rank, and L rank. Then we had, like, four or five guides, and then one captain. So, six total leadership people. So then guides were responsible for doing pass-offs to guarantee that people knew how to play their music. They would have to come early or stay late after rehearsal and play through their music memorized for a guide or captain who would check them off. Then guides also just helped out on the field. So did captains on the field, make sure people knew where they were going. If they had questions about their dot or their set. Then guides also brought rank treats every week. You would pair off. So, the treat [was] like the snack that you'd get after halftime. There were always some crazy rank treats. I know every year the trumpets, one of the guides would grill steak and bring steak for all the trumpets. Yes. So, then the captains would do all of that plus run these extra music rehearsals, sectionals, and then also just kind of be the main point of person between the section and the student leadership. So then, at like the next level, would have been like the student staff. So, generally, about nine people total, maybe like six who are student staff specifically, and they helped with attendance, running warm-ups, setting up the field, helping more with like the logistical side. So, they didn't play or march, they just helped with like the logistic stuff and like running the band and keeping it going. Then the other three then would have been the drum majors, and so they would also help with that, but then also do the conducting, and in non-COVID years, marching on the field for pregame and stuff like that.

[00:13:52]

**JC**: Sure. What was it like to be a drum major besides just game day? What was it like to be a drum major?

**AL**: So, the one year that I did was the COVID year, so everything is a little bit different than like it would have been, and I had friends who were drum major both before me and after me, and so hearing their experiences, there's a lot of similarities, but also a lot of differences. That COVID year was insane--I mean, I think back on that year, and the amount of like planning and the amount of changes that had to be made for everything to go back to normal the next year is astounding. But I really enjoyed it. It was something to work hard for, and I really enjoyed, like, I was drum major in high school, and so I really enjoyed doing that and sort of getting to know everybody in the band and really getting to have a hand in like, Do we need extra behind the scenes work to help create an experience for like freshman, sophomores, juniors? That I had, and to be able to give back to the band, and give back to the program, and give back to my school in that way. So, all of that was still true at Iowa State, just on another level because it was it was just that much more--and be able to like support the team and really be able to put in that extra time to again, give back to this program that gave me so much and to help others fall in love with this program the same way that I had too was incredible.

[00:15:51]

**JC**: Right. Yes. Maybe talk a little bit about some of the shows that you did, maybe ones that you remember, ones that were your favorite shows? Can you talk a little bit about some of those performances?

**AL**: Yes. We always talk about this at homecoming, but I think one of my favorite shows was always my first show as a freshman. It was the summer show. We did “California Dreaming,” “Aquarius,” which was our closer, and I can’t remember what our other song—it was not “Pretty Woman.” I can hear it in my head, but I can't.

**JC**: You'll probably get it in a second, I'm sure. [Chapman laughs]

**AL**: It will come to me. But it was one of those where like--because so much of band happens in band camp the week before and pregame--always a favorite, that actually might have been my top favorite even if it did happen week after week. You get through pregame, and it's super stressful, and it's so hot out, and you're learning how to be at college and whatever. Then we have this other show, and everything feels crazy and overwhelming. Then you finally get to the game day, and you get to Jack Trice, and the energy is unreal and whatever. I think that that was maybe because it was such an, Oh, this is what all the hard work was for. This is why we do this. This is worth it, that makes that show stand out.

We did a Hilton Magic Show my freshman year where we did a Hilton medley. We did a *Harry Potter* medley because it was magic. That whole medley, it was insane. I think it was maybe three pages long, like six different songs. We made a basketball go into a basketball hoop. That day, it was so rainy, it was so muddy. I had pink eye, so I was like already kind of miserable. We were playing Kansas. It was like a hot mess of a day, but it was such a fun show. It had been raining all week and the people in the basketball had to take these giant steps. People were wiping out in the mud all week from these giant steps, but it was so much fun. It was so fun.

[00:18:27]

**JC**: Are there any performances you did that were outside of game day, outside of the, you know, Here's a regular performance on a football field, what other performances did you have?

**AL**: Yes, I think we always did at least one, maybe two exhibitions. So, for instance, we would go to Valley Fest, one of the marching band competitions in West Des Moines. One year, we went to Mid Iowa, which was the big state competition in Ankeny [Iowa]. When we went to Iowa my sophomore year, we did an exhibition at one of the high schools. We, a lot of times too when we would go for bowl games and stuff, we would do some extra performances here and there. We would also have a sign-up if people--we'd have a lot of times people who were former members of the band want some of the band to come play at their wedding, so I feel like every other week, we would get an email like, “Here's another optional gig! Come play at this wedding or at this random performance for a bunch of new incoming students,” or you know. Felt like it was almost constant.

[00:19:38]

**JC**: You talk a little bit about bowl games and traveling. Can you talk about traveling in general with the band? What was that like? What was unique or fun? You kind of mentioned the unicorn a little bit. What else was fun about traveling?

**AL**: Just kind of, not the common misery of being on a coach bus for upwards of twenty-four hours at a time. We always traveled, at least when the whole band went, we would go by coach, by bus usually. We went to Akron [Ohio] for an away game. That was a good eighteen hours, maybe? Orlando was something like twenty-six hours. San Antonio, something like sixteen. We would go throughout the night. People would sleep in the aisles. There was one, can't remember which bus it was or which trip it was, but the mellophones were sharing with the baritones, and somebody had brought both *Mama Mia One* and *Mama Mia Two,* which my friends and I loved. I think I was maybe the captain at the time, so I was like, “Unless anybody else brought a movie and unless anyone really objects, we're going to watch *Mama Mia*.” Initially, all the baritones in the back were like, Boo! I don't want to do that. It's like, “Just wait, just wait,” and I think twenty minutes in, the entire bus was silent because we were all watching it, and then ten minutes later, I realized people were singing along, like all the way in the back too. So, that was fun. The trumpets once asked if we wanted to trade movies on like the trip back, and we agreed, and then realized that they had taken out all of the DVDs and replaced them with copies of the movie *Cars.* So, we had like four different DVD copies of the movie *Cars* in these four different DVD sleeves that we thought we were actually getting a real movie. So, that was fun. Yes, just silly shenanigans like that.

[00:21:50]

**JC**: What was it like to play in other stadiums contrasted maybe with what it's like to play in Jack Trice?

**AL**: Yes, it was always interesting going to different universities, so when we went to both the University of Akron and University of Iowa, they stuck the band up as far in a corner as they could go. I mean, literally, like very top deck in the corner, no wiggle room, hardly any room. I think at the Iowa game all the sousaphones had to stand on the stairs because there literally were not enough seats blocked off, which we always thought was kind of interesting and made us appreciate Jamie Pollard [Director of Athletics, 2005-present] more. Because if you notice, whenever visiting bands come to Iowa State, they're always in the lower bowl. They always have like a good amount of room with them. They're always in a place where, like, they can easily access the field so that they can get out as quick as they can instead of weaving through all the people. So, that was always interesting. Bowl games were always so much fun because Cyclone Nation travels so well and is so supportive. So, we would call wherever we were going Jack Trice South, or in the case of Ohio, Jack Trice East, or whatever because it really felt very comparable to Jack Trice with how many people would travel.

[00:23:25]

**JC**: Sure, sure. Can you talk a little bit about some of your favorite marching band traditions, or did you have any pregame rituals that you or your section went through?

**AL**: Yes, so the band always does their parade into the stadium, like from the Step Show, and goes through all the different cadences. Then we always had the different motions, chants, whatever. But the drum line would always do--we called it Big Ten-ing--and they would always start it right as we got to the stadium. It's the one where the bass drums are really going at it. The mellophones, we would always hold our instrument in our right hand, and, you know, go up on the beat repeatedly, and then at the same time, kick our legs out as far as we could go and as high as we could go. We would do that for the entirety of that drum cadence, and there'd always be like, Come on, you can do it! Like the encouragement, like, Don't give up! Don't give up we are almost there! Which was always great until we then had to run down to the sideline, get like maybe five minutes, ten minutes to catch your breath. Then right before pregame--because to get onto the field quickly, they have to run onto the field quickly from the cyclone and kind of unwind. So, you get in your cinnamon roll and your cyclone, and everybody take a deep breather. Then each circle has their different whatever, like somebody would yell out, “Whoops on three,” and then whoever is on the outside does whoop, and you go all the way in and then come all the way back out. Different stuff like that before we then would run onto the field and play for fifteen minutes. So, yes. As far as before games, though, we would like my freshman year--it was also the job of like the guides to make sure that their whole rank was awake in time for the game. So, at five am, four-thirty am, those texts would start coming in, you know, all caps like, “GAME DAY! WHO’S READY FOR GAMEDAY?” Everybody would have to text back so to know, like, “Yep, you're awake! You're going to be there.”

This one friend and I would always--it got more and more elaborate the longer the season would go on. But Jack [Jack Schwickerath, biological Systems Engineering (2015-2019)] would always ask, “Alanna, what day is it?” We would kind of go, Oh, shoot, I don't know. I didn't check. We would be like, Well, where’s the sun right now? Maybe we can calibrate it with the sun? Where is the sun? Okay, we got that figured out. Okay, where are the stars? Like what—what’s going on? You know, Check the watch. Nope, the watch doesn't tell me. Then whoever would break first would let out the most monstrous, like, “Game Day!” that they could--just to get woken up and get going at six in the morning.

[00:26:51]

**JC**: Fun, fun. Any other traditions? Anything special that other ranks maybe did?

**AL**: I know the piccolos had Henry the Christmas Cow, a little light-up cow that always showed up. I don't know if they had anything special to do with him. I know there are always pictures of him after game day on their social media stuff. Oh, let's see. Rank dismissals, that was always fun. So, at the Step Show at the very end everyone's lined up so nicely and organized. Every step is a different rank, so we're all crammed in there. Carichner would stand at the bottom and sort of dismiss us row by row, and every rank would yell like, *J* is for--and then say something that started with *J*, and usually with something mean against the other team. They would get pretty creative too, and sometimes not the most appropriate either. [Chapman laughs] Sometimes people would really take risks, and there would be a lot of discussion beforehand. For the mellophones, we would always do for homecoming at least like, *J* is for, *K* is for, *L* is for Let's play “Mellie Fights,” and then they play a four-part arrangement of the fight song, those thirty people, usually in the cold, and it usually didn't sound very good. But that's what we did. It’s what we did. Yes.

[00:28:46]

**JC**: Shifting gears a little bit, can you maybe talk about what the band uniforms were like while you were in band, maybe the general uniforms, and a little bit about the drum major ones since you were a drum major?

**AL**: My freshman and sophomore year we still had the pretty much all cardinal. It had the picture of Cy on the back that was the sideways facing Cy, said “Iowa State Cyclones” on it, ball cap that we hook onto the side when we were wearing our shakos, with the white shoes. Then my junior year, we got new uniforms. Those ones were the ones that they wear now with kind of the--I think it's ombre, pretty sure--but it kind of makes a V across the chest here. There's a little cape on the back. Interestingly, the original plan was to go from wearing white shoes with the uniforms to transition to black shoes with the new uniforms, and right before the surprise guide gig at band camp, we're all like getting ready in these new uniforms. I don't think we had the black shoes yet, and so everyone just brought their white shoes anyways. As we are all putting them on, Carichner was like, “This is the new uniform, but imagine it with black shoes instead.”

We were all like, I don't know if I want black shoes. Like, I kind of think the white shoes look better. So, enough people sort of said it.

Finally, he's like, “Alright, raise your hand if you want to keep the white shoes,” and everybody did. He’s like, “Alright, we're keeping it then.” That's what they did. I actually never got to wear the drum major uniform. Because of COVID, we didn't wear uniforms senior year. So, typically, I'm pretty sure the drum majors just wore a completely white version of whatever the other uniforms were, so my year, again because of COVID, we wore white polo shirts and black pants because the non-drum major student staff would always just wear black pants. They all had a matching polo that said “Iowa State Band Student Staff” on it, so we kind of followed their lead there.

[00:31:25]

**JC**: Sure. Was State Storm a group when you were there? Can you talk a bit about that?

**AL**: Yes. So, State Storm was originally created for people who maybe weren't quite at the level of being able to handle the amount of shows we would learn super quick. So, the marching, sort of the music acquisition because the ‘Varsity’ Band moved so quickly. I knew a few people who did their freshman year in State Storm, and then by the time auditions came around, then they were totally caught up, like totally ready to go. So, my freshman and sophomore year, it was, everybody who auditioned for the Iowa State ‘Varsity’ Marching Band would be in either State Storm or the ‘Varsity’ Band, like there's a place for you no matter what. Then we just kept growing and kept exploding. My junior year was the first year that some people did not make either for the first time. I'm pretty sure that that's how it still is to this day. The State Storm, they have a much more relaxed schedule. I think they practice three days a week instead of five. They're under the direction of Mr. Shields [Javan Shields, Assistant Teaching Professor and Assistant Director of Bands (2018-present)] still. Then they do a lot more. I think they played at every soccer game. They played the soccer games and then maybe some of the other sports like baseball or something. Yes, and they have their own uniform. They have basically jerseys sort of similar to what the pep bands wore, and then I'm pretty sure the red pants also, like the same bibs that we wore.

[00:33:34]

**JC**: Sure. What's the culture of the of the band? Maybe how was it shaped by the members, drum majors, the other leadership, maybe even the directors, or those at the university?

**AL**: Yes, so my freshman year was Christian Carichner’s first year as like Head Band Director. He was still technically Interim Director when I was a freshman, and then sophomore year was when he actually got that role, like officially. So, I only ever had him as a director in band, and he worked really hard to sort of create a culture of, “We support each other. We work really hard for each other. The whole reason we're here is to support our school and our football team and our university and that's why we do the things that we do.” I think that for some of the older members of the band, that was a little bit of a culture shift potentially from what they had been. I remember, too, the leadership, so like all of the student staff, captains, and guides, had maybe three or four meetings in the spring to prepare for the upcoming fall. A lot of it is like, How do we want the band to be? How do we want that culture to be? How do we shape that? Every year, we always kind of talked about how change is really hard, so how do we help mitigate and support people through the different changes that the band has. But overall, it was one of like, We want to be here to support the school, the football team, and to make music with each other. You know, while we're here, we're going to work really hard and really give it our all, and we are going to support each other on and off the band field.

[00:35:48]

**JC**: Sure. So, you're not long away from the band, but how do you think the band has changed over time?

**AL**: It's interesting. So, it's been fun going back for homecoming. I think that they, in most ways, they are still the same, right? They are still a bunch of people who support each other, who support the school, who make music together. So, in all of the most important ways, the band is still the band, and it's always fun being at homecoming and seeing them do things the same way and do things similarly. I do think it's really interesting, and I've said this to some friends--I remember freshman year that there's always this after you found out which band you made, there is this three-hour meeting where we talk about, like, how everything works. Everyone signs the handbook, and we go through the handbook line by line to make sure everybody understands. My freshman year, there were still rules in there about how men's hair could not touch the collar, women could have one earring per year, and even then, it had to be like a stud earring, or it had to be a natural color, no facial piercings. Again, men's hair off the collar, generally clean-shaven, spelled out, and we talked about this, right. It was never something that was truly enforced. I got my nose pierced before my sophomore year, and initially, I was worried that there was going to be whatever about it. Never a problem. I think they probably took that out of the handbook, honestly, because it was never enforced, but we did talk about it. So, going back my first year as an alumni, I saw all these friends in the band, and I’ve never really noticed, but man! A good chunk of people with fun color hair, and necklaces, and multiple earrings, and here I was, a little sophomore, worried that like my little tiny nose piercing was going to be the be-all-end-all. Whatever. So, I do think that they've gotten a lot more inclusive and a lot more, you know, open about things like that, which is awesome.

[00:38:34]

**JC**: Did you receive any advice as you were coming into the band, and on the flip side, as you were leaving, did you leave any nuggets of wisdom for those as you were leaving?

**AL**: Okay, so I do remember that freshman year learning pregame. It was so overwhelming. I actually didn't play mellophone in high school. I learned it for the marching band because I played bassoon, and you can't march with a bassoon. There's so much like imposter syndrome, like, I can't even really play this instrument. Not only do I have to do that, but also the marching. I've technically only marched one year in high school because I was drum major for two, like, What am I doing here? I got so overwhelmed on our big pregame learning day that during one of our breaks, I sat under a tree, and I cried. It was so stressful, and I was like, Oh my god, they're going to figure me out. They're going to kick me out. I was freaking out, crying, but not wanting anyone to see also because I don’t want to be that freshman that cries at band camp. One of our upper classmen--she was a junior, she was one of the guides, Millie [Millicent (Cameron) Jackson, Event Management (2015-2019)]-- I still love her. I see her every year at homecoming, and I love it– sat down next to me and was like, “It's overwhelming for everybody. You're going to get it, I promise. Everyone feels like that. Don't even worry about the music yet, like don't worry about it. A lot of people can't put the pregame music and the drill together until like sophomore year. There are three hundred other people in this band. Focus on one thing at a time. You can do it.”

It's like, “Okay, Millie. Okay,” and she was right, and I got it. It came together. Then leaving. Again, leaving was weird with COVID. Normally, the band has Band Banquet [end of the season ceremony held for the students] in person, and the student staff and graduating student staff and graduating drum majors get to make a speech to the band and sort of give back. We did it virtually, so I did get the chance to thank the band. Sort of parting words, whatever. I don't really remember what I said because it was long ago, and it was weird and sentimental. This year I told--not even people who are in the band but some friends who had just graduated, so fresh on the other side of being an alum--because my sister is a freshman this year and she's a cheerleader. I got the opportunity to go to the first game and see her cheering at the spirit walk. I teared up and realized they don't even realize how much fun they're having until they're on the other side. It's so much fun, and yes, I realized, like, Yes, this is fun. This is where all my friends are, like I love Iowa State. I love football. I love Jack Trice. I like game day, and this is all great. But I didn't even realize the full extent of it until you're done until you're out. I know I told my sister that, like, “I know it's hot. I know the game days are hot, and they're long, and they're exhausting, but you only get, like what, maybe twenty, depending on how many home games there are in a season, and they go by really quick, and you don't even realize how fun it is till you're on the other side.”

[00:42:45]

**JC**: Sure. What sets the Iowa State University Cyclone Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band apart from any other marching band program?

**AL**: That’s a really good question. My husband would be a better person to ask. He's a band director, so he knows the specifics. He once, I think, my sophomore year, he kind of went down a rabbit hole of watching other universities' pregames, and then was like, “Alanna, Iowa State’s is the hardest and sounds the best musically.”

I was like, “Okay, I trust you. That's awesome. I'm not going to spend that time doing that. I trust you.” Really and truly, I think just the amount that people love Iowa State--because, especially historically, Iowa State has not had a great football program, that's not why people do it. They don't do it to go to the football team games to watch their amazing team win game after game and go to bowl game after bowl game and championship, all this stuff. The people who do it, do it because they enjoy marching band, and the people who go to Iowa State go to Iowa State because of how much they love it, not because they're *the best* in any one thing--except maybe engineering, [Chapman laughs] possibly. We go because there's something about Iowa State that people love, and it's apparent. It really is.

[00:44:23]

**JC**: What does the marching band mean to you?

**AL**: A really good question. They mean a lot. They mean a lot. I think about how many people I know and how many experiences I've had and friends I have that the only reason I have is because of the marching band. In my wedding, one of my bridesmaids, I met her in marching band, and we were roommates. The main people that I still talk to and I look forward to, I have because of marching band. The structure and just how much I love the Cyclones and I love Ames, Iowa, all because of the marching band. I mean, really and truly, I feel like a lot of the things in my life I have--my ability to multitask, and my ability to manage my time well because I had ninety minutes a day of marching band, and more like two hours when you factor getting there early and like two and a half hours every day. I was showing up to like help people pass off their music. Just yes, the marching band means a lot. It's given me a lot. It's given me the ability to sort of lead and work with other people and give to something greater than myself. I hope that that’s what I was able to give back because I got so much from that band.

[00:46:22]

JC: Maybe this might kind of fall under the COVID umbrella, but can you maybe talk about where the band had some difficult times or difficult experiences?

**AL**: I will definitely touch on COVID. Also, so the first bowl game that we went to my freshman year was actually the Liberty Bowl. So, the same place we're going this year. That was the band trip from hell. We had a couple of saxophones deviate, so they didn't travel down with us. They met the band there. They got mugged outside of the hotel before the band showed up, so that was a nightmare. We ran out of water one day. We carry around these big gallons of water, and for some reason, we could not find any place to fill them up. Then, on the bus right back, I think literally half the band got either Norovirus or Rotavirus. It was to the point where we had a band-wide Facebook Messenger group, and people were like, “Go to your doctor and ask them for this specific test,” and literally, I think half the band had it. So, people were puking on the bus. One of the buses broke down like one had a flat tire. That was that was the trip from hell. They get to repeat it this year, [Chapman laughs] so I hope that it goes better for them.

Then COVID was a fever dream, to be honest. COVID was a fever dream. We had started some of the leadership meetings January, February of 2020. 2022 [2020] happened, or March of 2022 [2020], and that was interesting, if you don't mind me sharing. So, I was in men's pep band. It was for the Big Twelve tournament. I was also [in] travel band. So, travel band would go down to Kansas City with the team for the Big Twelve tournament. I believe it was like a Wednesday or whatever, but it was whatever Wednesday it was that universities around the United States started announcing that they would be closed for an additional two weeks after spring break, right, because of this coronavirus thing. The whole ride down, we're like, We're not going to do that. What's the likelihood Wendy's actually going to close the university? Wendy Wintersteen [Iowa State University President (2017-present)].

When we got to Kansas City, we were free to get lunch in this area, and I remember a lot of us were in the same restaurant when we all got the email at the same time saying, “Iowa State will be extending its spring break for two weeks after,” or not extending like, we'll do online classes for two weeks after to mitigate the spread. We’re like, Oh, that's kind of weird. Then we go to play the game. On the way to the game Carichner tells us the Big Twelve has just decided not to let any band or fan come to the remainder of the tournament. This is the only day of games where fans and the band will be allowed. So, we got lucky that we played on the first day. The women's team was on their way to Oklahoma City. They literally turned the bus around, headed back to Ames. They didn't get to go. So, we are like, Oh, that's weird. It's kind of getting a little serious. When we were at the game during one of the media timeouts, they announced over the loudspeaker, “After today, the remainder of the Big Twelve Tournament will be cancelled.” Just canceled. We'll get to the end of today and that's it. The amount of booing, ridiculous. [JC raises his hand] But again, we are like, This is getting really serious. Yes, yes! [AL responding to JC’s raised hand] We're like, This is getting fairly serious like this is getting legit.

We got back to the hotel, and I think everybody ended up [in] a random lobby living room on a second floor with the TV on. So, we're all sitting, like literally like thirty band kids sitting on four couches with CNN on. Tom Hanks had just been diagnosed with COVID, and he was in Australia, and we were like, Oh my god, Tom Hanks has COVID. Everything is like another layer of, Okay, like this is really getting real, and we all kind of sat around, and we're like, What is the next month going to look like? Carichner ended up coming down, sitting with us. It was just so surreal, and we were talking about--we wanted to put together a band March Madness, basically, of like different sections playing basketball, and we're going to organize a pep band to go with it. Carichner was all for it. The winning team was going to play Carichner and Shields [Javan Shields] and some of the other faculty. Obviously, never happened because COVID then continued. It was weird.

Then by the next week, we got the email that we would be going virtual for the rest of the semester. So, that was kind of that. My roommate lived in Chicago, so she was kind of S.O.L. [shit out of luck], like all of her clothes were at our apartment, pretty much all of her stuff. Luckily, she had brought her computer home to do the two weeks virtually, so then that got weird. Then there were talks of like, Can we even do band? A lot depended on the football team. Are they even going to allow football? Once that was decided, then it was a lot of like, Okay, if we do band there was a lot—not optics, but we have to make sure that we're representing the university well, so if you look at pictures from that time, every brass instrument has a bell cover to catch the droplets. Everybody had masks that had little slits. We literally got to the point where we're like, Okay, brass players have the slits that go vertically because then they can put the mouthpiece over it vertically. Woodwind players get the ones horizontally because that's the way the reed comes in. Saxophone, clarinet players, and, I think, piccolo players. Literally a couple of band moms sewed, like handmade--because there's no designs for it--bags to put the saxophones in to catch all of the aerosols. But again, we're all outside and still six feet away from each other. So, the chance of catching COVID was literally lower during the COVID year than the year that they all came back and had no restrictions on anything, literally. We're all apart, always had to be outside to the point where it was like, If you're walking to the stadium together [and] you look like you're in the band, don't walk too close because we don't want to make the university look bad. Or, like, if all these band kids are hanging out outside. So that was really weird.

We only did half the band at a time, so we had Cardinal Band and Red Band, so one practiced Monday, Wednesday, the other practiced Tuesday, Thursday so that we could spread people out. I think they each learned one show and that was it for the whole season. That was the show. We did a version of pregame. Obviously couldn't do pregame off the field because people couldn't be that close to each other to get on to the field, so it was pregame on the field with a little bit different sets to maintain that separation. Everything had to be outside. So, if it was bad weather, we just canceled because we couldn't move inside. No tailgating that year, which sucked. So, no step show. Rehearsals started a lot later. No fans in the stands. That was weird. They pumped in cheering through speakers. That was weird. It was just a fever dream. It was weird. [laughs] It was good! I'm glad we still got to do it, but it was weird.

[00:55:22]

**JC:** Sure. How did you maybe balance being in band and also your academics? Those are both very intensive sorts of things. How did you manage to do that?

**AL:** A lot of time management. I can't completely remember what I would do. I feel like all my semesters were pretty even. A lot of fall semester, I feel like I could usually manage it where I wouldn't have class on a day, so like no class on Monday, and then I would just get as much done as I could. Honestly, having marching band during undergrad made grad school so much easier. So as soon as I graduated, I came out to Colorado to get my master’s in Occupational Therapy. That first semester, I had so many friends who were like, Oh my gosh, I knew grad school would be hard, but this is so much.

I’m like, I feel like this is my easiest fall semester I have ever had because I'm not trying to fit in fifteen hours of band, or ten hours of band on top of this, and work. I worked at a preschool and I did tutoring one semester. Like, this is the easiest. [Both laugh] Because of that massive time commitment.

[00:56:49]

**JC**: Sure. Can you maybe talk a little bit about your participation with the Alumni Marching Band so far?

**AL**: Yes, so I've been back for Alumni Band for all three years. It's super fun. I've played mellophone all three times. I've helped conduct, often throughout the game, which is super fun. I have taken a roving band [band that moves and plays around the bleachers in the stadium] in the third quarter, which is also very fun. Bathroom fights are a hit, no matter what. Getting into Sukup [Sukup End Zone Club] to warm up for a little bit is always a hit. So, I've done that. Since I've lived out in Colorado now, I haven't gotten a chance to come back for Alumni Pep Band, even though I think it would be super fun. I really appreciate though, the Alumni Band, sort of everything that we can do, because especially with COVID year being weird, there were a lot of those lasts that I was kind of counting on that never happened. Like being able to like march on the field or high step off the field, whatever it is, playing in Jack Trice. It gives me a chance to do those again. Which I really appreciate.

[00:58:34]

**JC**: Right. Well, is there any other question that I didn't ask that maybe you thought, “Hey, maybe I should, this is something I want to share and make sure that people hear about?”

**AL**: Oh, that's a good question. I feel like the most interesting thing about my experience was just that COVID stuff, which was kind of weird--unless you had any further questions that came up about all of that.

**JC**: No, I think you covered that quite well. [laughs]

**AL**: Yes. So, I don't think so. I don’t think so.