Stephen Smith

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

Interviewed by Dean Brand

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Time stamps reference the video recording.

**SS:** Stephen Smith

**DB:** Dean Brand

[00:00:00]

**DB:** This is Dean Brand, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project. Today is Thursday, October 5, 2023. I am interviewing Stephen Smith. Stephen is in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and I am in Mitchellville, Iowa.

Well, Stephen. Now that we got the Zoom thing figured out this morning and so forth-- and just for people's information, sometimes my video gets weird, and I lose it, so I've just got to get back on. So, don't anybody panic.

[00:00:53]

**DB:** As we start then, Stephen, could you begin by telling me about your early life? Where did you grow up, your family, that kind of thing?

**SS:** I grew up in Marcus, Iowa, which is in far northwest Iowa, near Sioux City. [I] attended the Holy Name Catholic School there for eight years and then went to Marcus High School. From there, went on to Iowa State.

[00:01:23]

**DB:** Okay. Brothers, sisters?

**SS:** I have two younger sisters. One of whom also played in the marching band at Iowa State. Grew up in a family of musicians. Makes our family’s musical history five generations long.

**DB:** Cool.

**SS:** Yes. [laughs] When you really think it through, it is pretty interesting.

**DB:** Yes, no doubt about that.

[00:01:52]

**DB:** How did you come to be at Iowa State and when were you a student? What was your major? What did you study?

**SS:** I actually came to Iowa State in the fall of 1969. I think what I've determined that actually led me to Iowa State was my high school band director, a guy named Martin Crandell. Took our high school band down to what was Band Day at that time when the crowds weren't so good at the stadium, [Brand laughs] and they had to fill the seats. There were, I think, twenty-five or thirty high school bands down there. I remember very clearly, each band lined up, I believe, on the east side of Clyde Williams Field, and you marched down and played your school song. At that time, that south end zone looked pretty big—to a little town kid, that was a big deal. [laughs] But I loved the atmosphere, and I think that I hadn't really made a decision about going to college. I've been in music my whole life and had been to camps at Morningside [Morningside University], University of South Dakota, in various places and had scholarship offers to different places. Kind of decided Iowa State might work for me. I kind of owe it to my high school band director as I do many other things. He was a great teacher. But it was a place to--music and sports was something in our family, and nobody accused us of being athletic, [both laugh] but we love the music and the athletics, and pep band and marching band and all things like that fit very well for us.

**DB:** Yes, and I kind of remember Band Day because I was not in the same era as you, I was already in the band. But now that you say that I remember that. Band Day--yes, the university certainly needed something to put people in seats, we'll put it that way. [Brand laughs]

**SS:** I think that was it. But anyway, it worked for me, and [laughs] kind of got me started on the Iowa State track.

**DB:** Yeah, there you go.

[00:03:57]

**DB:** What bands were you involved with while you were a student, and was it all the same groups your whole career, or did they vary?

**SS:** Pretty much, yes. I didn't march as a freshman. I had thought that I was going to be a business major. As I got into being in the jazz band, being in the symphonic band, I had taken private lessons and taken freshman music theory; I decided after a short period of time I was going to spend a lot of time on music. It probably made more sense to just be a music major. So, I did change my major to music, and eventually--I actually got the first Bachelor of Music degree at Iowa State. Prior to that, you could major in music, but it was a Bachelor of Science degree that you got. So, that's a unique [both laugh] thing. It's just my whole life has been-- if you can play piano and some of those things, you end up very deeply into music. And so, it went at Iowa State, also.

Eventually, I played the keyboards and piano for the Cardinal Keynotes. We kiddingly called it the Keytones, but Cardinal Keytones was the vocal jazz group of Iowa State. Doug Pritchard [Douglas Pritchard, Associate Professor of Music (1965-1973)] was in charge of that at that time. We had a great trip to Sweden planned that never happened because of world events. I think it may have been something to do with the violence at the Olympics or something, but I was learning the Scandinavian languages and just dropped that--

**DB:** [Brand laughs] --and never picked it up since.

**SS:** No. Now I'm trying to learn German because my son is teaching music in Austria right now.

**DB:** Oh, okay.

[00:05:54]

**DB:** Okay, what section of the marching band were you in?

**SS:** Well, I wanted to be a drummer because I played drums, pretty much, in my high school marching band. But the numbers were short enough in the band that Mr. Ostling [Acton Ostling, Junior, Director of Bands (1968–1972)] at that time said, “No, I got to have you play saxophone. I need the wind players. I got enough drummers.” So, I was a saxophone player. I did that until the middle of my final year in the band, at which point I kind of got drafted to help do some conducting and things for Jimmie Howard Reynolds [Conductor of Bands and Associate Professor of Music (1972-1982)] when he got to running the program. Was a saxophone player. Played saxophone in the concert band and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, played clarinet in what was called the ‘Varsity’ Band at that time. I've always wondered what part that ‘Varsity’ Band thing had to do with the football band eventually being the ‘Varsity’ Marching Band.

**DB:** Yes, there's that story out there how that all came about. Mark Ferguson [Architecture (1973-1978)], who I interviewed last week, was actually part of that group that was in the locker room [Smith laughs] when Earle Bruce [Iowa State football coach (1973–1978)] came in. So, [Smith laughs] that was kind of fun.

[00:07:12]

**DB:** Was there anything interesting that happened in your section while you were part of the marching band that you want to mention or--

**SS:** Oh, not so much. The band at that time was relatively small [compared] to what it is now. We just showed up and practiced. The guys that were the seniors who were the right guides and so on, they kind of told us younger guys what the heck we should be doing. You know, it had that kind of tradition. I don't think we had quite the enthusiasm that I see out of the band in this era today. But it was fun. Musicians are always fun people, and they're interesting people, and quite a few of them are pretty smart. You got a few that--[laughs] or whatever--[laughs] different.

**DB:** Yes, definitely.

[00:08:12]

**DB:** For you, what was the process for learning and then performing in the show?

**SS:** I'm a little sparse on details for those things. We used to rehearse our shows south of the Design Center on the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] drill field. We went over--and the shows are so different now, and the bands are so different now. It's hard to equate it because you marched around for a little bit, and then you stood in a place, and you played. Now corps style marching pretty much dominates marching band shows.

We didn't work a lot on drills. Obviously, we worked a lot on trying to get our high step march to look sharp, and the lines to be straight, and all those sorts of things. But rehearsals were fine, and Mr. Ostling was a very organized--you know, he was a good musician, a good band guy. Just to the task. It wasn’t a lot of too much fun stuff that I remember, [laughs] but I was coming at it from a musician--“This is another job--” you know.

It's a little different experience for me, all these kind of groups, because I've been placed in a lot of different musical situations and marching band was another one of them, and I loved it. I always loved marching band. My dad played in the 585th Army Air Corps Band during the Second World War. That's a blessing to get that sort of a job in the middle of a war. That's part of the fascination with band in our family. It's gone on for a long, long time. Band is a good place to be. You get a good seat at the game, too. [laughs]

**DB:** Yes, as I recall everything we did back then, we got our charts when we picked up a new program—

**SS:** Sure.

**DB:** --and the music. Then we kind of worked the charts and, like you say, practiced marching from point A to point B on the chart and then started again.

**SS:** Right. Yeah, that's right. That's my recollection also.

[00:10:34]

**DB:** Okay, we talked about where we practiced at. What time of day? How long did practices go on in your recollection?

**SS:** My recollection of that [is] that those [were] at four o'clock in the afternoon and it went on for something over an hour, I think. The symphonic band always rehearsed from four to five thirty on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, typically. The marching band fit into that somewhere, perhaps, symphonic band was at a different time, then, I'm not sure. But it seems like it was an hour fifteen minutes or so. It wasn't far away from the Exhibitionist Hall [Exhibit Hall] as Jimmie Howard Reynolds used to call it. [both laugh] Anyway, it was close to where the tuba players and the drummers had to haul their stuff across the street.

**DB:** Yes, yes. [Brand laughs] I remember that.

[00:11:39]

**DB:** Do you recall any of the shows that you performed? Or have a favorite one that the band did?

**SS:** I can't say that I really did. I liked the whole process. I still get a little bit of a chill in my spine when the band steps off to “Iowa State Fights” [“ISU Fights,” Iowa State’s fight song] coming down the field. I will say, we did a show--and it wasn't about the show so much, but Iowa State had three Olympic wrestlers standing on the field about ten feet from me. Dan Gable [Danny Gable, Gold Medalist in the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany] and Chris Taylor [Christopher Taylor, Bronze Medalist at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany] and Ben Peterson [Benjamin Peterson, Gold Medalist at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany]. That’s something I'll never forget. I think we would have probably played the “Star-Spangled Banner” before the game, and they might have been standing there. But that's the show I remember--and breaking the bass drumhead on a ten-ten tie against Nebraska one day when we didn't make the extra point. [both laugh] Which hung in the band room there for a long time, that drumhead on the wall. [laughs] Tom Goedjen was a great kicker, but he didn't make that one.

[00:12:44]

**DB:** What was the culture of the band then? How is it shaped by the members of the band or the drum majors, the director, [the] university?

**SS:** Well, I think, all of the above, and I think it was shaped by the times. It was Uncle Frank Piersol's [Frank Piersol, Directors of Bands (1948–1967)] band as taken over by Acton Ostling. The traditions were things that had come up, I guess, back from the fifties and so on. They were fine. They were just the way things are in any fraternalist organization where you got just, We always did this, or We always did that, and you got to do that, and it was fun. Of course, the older--I'll say guys in the band because the enormous change in the band came when Jimmie Howard Reynolds came, and it went from being a band full of boys you could hang around to a band with some girls. It was a very different atmosphere after that, just as it would be because a bunch of guys all together is a little different than when you put a few girls in the room. The old traditions were fine, and I think some of those traditions probably stand today. I think when the poor guy tries to shoot free throws at the basketball game and the band comes up with all these cutesy [laughs] sayings to try to distract them. I don't think that started in 1970. I think that went back farther than that even. The band has always had the things that it has done--to entertain itself and the crowd.

**DB:** Right. Yes. Back then, especially during football--there needed to be a lot of entertaining. We'll put it that way. [laughs]

**SS:** Yes, we still encounter games sometimes where we do need a few laughs. The band, it does serve a function. It can be all anger and hating the other team and mad at our own team or mad at the coach and all that stuff anyway. So, the band provides a great distraction from all that. But it was a time where the culture was going to change quite a bit and that which really took place in a big way in 1972. Times were changing, and so the band was changing.

Some of those older traditions still stick. Frank Piersol and Tom Davis, who I believe was his drum instructor. They had a firm grip on the Iowa State Band. Did a great job over a number of years. Now, if you listen very carefully, to this day the Iowa State marching band drum kids, as they enter the field, is the cadence that Tom Davis wrote when he was there, I think, as an assistant to Frank Piersol. He took that cadence with him to Iowa, and when the University of Iowa band comes out and marches onto the field, they still play that very same drum cadence. Albeit much slower because Iowa State,--when Jimmie came and we did the circular spinning and all that stuff, he just wanted excitement. So, the Iowa State band has always played it much faster to create excitement. But it's an interesting piece of drum history. Those two university bands--who now are at sort of an unfortunate place in the road where we had an incident a couple of years ago. But hopefully, they'll patch that up so both bands can play again at the Iowa-Iowa State game because that was something I always looked forward to. Didn't get that this year.

But anyway. The culture was changing. And change always has some people happy and some people not so happy. I think, for the most part, it--I know I like to have the flag girls myself, but I thought it added plenty to the bands. [laughs]

**DB:** Yes

[00:16:52]

**DB:** What are some of the favorite marching band traditions? Did You have a pregame ritual or maybe the saxophones have a ritual or--?

**SS:** You know, I don't recall that--so much. I don't know, maybe I was a stick-in-the-mud about some of the things--being a musician's been a job for me my whole life when I play. So, I always concentrated more on the playing. I'm [a] good player, was a lousy marcher. [both laugh] I never worried really a lot about the music. I worried about—I’d have to watch the right guide or something to see when we were going to turn. Or, “Was that really eight steps, or was it only—” Those were things on my mind. I was dazzled by the atmosphere at ball games, and I enjoyed the crowd. I liked it the best, I guess, when we had our horns up and we were playing.

**DB:** Yes

**SS:** It was the music that moved me.

**DB:** Sure.

[00:18:05]

**DB:** What do you remember about the uniforms while you were part of the band?

**SS:** Oh, they were heavy and black, and they had a gold and red overlay, and they were hot. But they were great on a cold day because they were warm. Those uniforms didn’t make it too much longer after I was in the band. I had one of them in my closet for quite some time. I think it is no longer. I think my daughter may have it as a souvenir. They looked fine. They were appropriate, I thought, for the time. Now it's a lot of red and white, and I like it. I like the new uniforms. But that was the style at the time, and it fit the style of marching we had. You wore white spats always in marching band and that kind of thing, and it looked good and it looked sharp. But in a lot of ways, the band was marching in a Big Ten style, like the bands in the Big Ten [Conference]. To this day, we kind of kid about the service station attendants at Michigan State [University] when we see their band because they got these hats--they all look like they're coming out to put gas in your car, and stuff. Now the spats look old-fashioned, but I know we looked good in them at the time. Now I'm glad to see the band looks more modern.

**DB:** Yes. Okay.

**SS:** You know.

[00:19:35]

**DB:** I know back then the band did travel. Can you describe [your] experience with traveling with the band?

**SS:** Oh, traveling with the band. Yes. I made three trips. I think that was to Lawrence, Kansas, twice. Once when Mr. Ostling had the band, and the other time was when I was a senior, the band went again. Jimmie Howard [Jimmie Howard Reynolds] was there then. Then, the other trip we made was to Kansas State [University]. I believe that must have been when I was a junior. For the longest time, I did, well, what wouldn't have been approved. I snuck away to the bar, and you had to be a key club member to get a drink in Kansas. You had to join the club to buy a drink. I was a member of the Gaslight Club there in, I think, Topeka--the band must have stayed in Topeka the night before the ball game in Manhattan. I had that membership card for a long time thinking I might get back, but I never did. [both laugh]

Other travel, I--perhaps you were too--but I was fortunate enough to be in the band when we went to our first bowl game with the Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas. Mr. Ostling was the director at that time. Remembered the game well. Remembered the trip well. We had a little side tour to Juarez. I've never really wanted to go back--to Juarez, [laughs] but I wouldn't mind seeing El Paso again. But it was a memorable ball game. It rained a little on us, but we had a good time. It was the first time I'd ever flown to a musical engagement, so [Brand laughs] that part of it was fun.

The next year was a little different when Jimmie Howard was there, Kent Crawford and I--Kent taught music for many, many years in eastern Iowa. Jimmie Howard had kind of designated us to kind of, go do some of the stuff the band director doesn’t really want to do.

So we pulled up-- and we stayed at the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City because he wanted to give us an urban experience. They pulled up the buses, and he said, “Will you guys go in and check us into this place?” So, we did, and I got a kick out of doing that. We went on and played then at Kansas the next day. The other story I relate about that, but several of the older of us in the band, when we got to Kansas City, we went to the Golden Ox Steakhouse, which was in the stockyards. We no more than walked in--and I'm thinking Jimmie was there with some other people. I can't remember who else was with him. I want to say Joe Christensen [Joseph Christensen, Director of Bands (1973–1979)], but I don't think he was there already that year. But, at any rate, we sent them over a bottle of wine [both laugh] from those of us eating at the other table. It was fun. But that's some of that culture change, like I say, that had gone on. It was a good memory, always.

[00:22:36]

**DB:** Okay, you talked early in our interview that you performed in Clyde Williams. Were you strictly in Clyde Williams, or did you try to make the transition to the new one [the new Iowa State football stadium, which opened in 1975]?

**SS:** No. Jack Trice Stadium didn't open for another couple years, I think, or at least one year after I had graduated. But I was in the first probably ten Alumni Bands when the Alumni Band thing started. So, I’ve played on the field at Jack Trice Stadium. It's great. It was great when they did it. They've made some really nice renovations to the stadium, I think. I know what it feels like to be down so close to the players and close to the field. Which you got that at Clyde Williams, and it's the same feeling at Jack Trice.

[00:23:37]

**SS:** There was one question that I think you've ask, but I'll bring it up if that's okay. That was, “Were there any favorite songs you had or favorite things you did playing wise?” I must say, to this day, I thought about it, and it didn't come to mind first, but “The Bells of Iowa State” is actually a very great song. It's unlike other alma mater songs you hear. When Jimmie Howard Reynolds--who was a Michigan guy, he'd been to Michigan to study. He got Jerry Bilik, who was a very famous arranger at the University of Michigan, to write the arrangement that is played to this day of “The Bells of Iowa State.” It, in my opinion, is a very, very well-written piece of music. The other thing he wrote was the fanfare that the band played for many years, until just the last couple years, as they came out onto the field. That is also a gem. They're not using it right now, but I certainly hope that it will stay not too far out of the way in the library because things have changed as the game opens now. There's a thunderous roar over the PA system, and actually, the band plays a new fanfare that was written, and it's good. But you can't hear it. The announcer is announcing the cheerleaders, and he's announcing this and that. But, anyway, the Bilik arrangements of the songs of Iowa State, which is the opening for the marching band, and then his arrangement of “The Bells of Iowa State,” I think are really classic things for the Iowa State Band to have in their possession.

**DB:** Yes

[00:25:26]

**DB:** You mentioned, as far as special events, bowl games. Any parades, concerts, what do you remember about the performance—or nothing really special. It was, “We did it, but it was, you know, just a different--” The visitor stadium, if you will.

**SS:** Oh, yes. Well, the Liberty Bowl game was quite interesting, I thought. In fact, the whole trip to the Liberty Bowl game was interesting because when Jimmie Reynolds came to Iowa State, he came from Louisiana Tech [University] in Ruston, Louisiana, and the culture in Ruston, Louisiana and the culture in Ames, Iowa were two very different things. He was very sensitive to diversity and all sorts of things. When we went to play at the Liberty Bowl, we played Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology], and I think Georgia Tech had one black player at that time. Of course, Iowa State had—obviously, we had a black player in the year Jack Trice was tragically taken out of this world--but Iowa State had a more diverse team, but the band wasn’t very diverse, and when the band got ready to go, we had some special assistants that went along because Jimmie wasn't going to go to Memphis [Tennessee] where the bowl game was without a little bit of diversity in his band, which was not hard to do. There were some black players in the band that year, but he also had some other people go along as assistants to him. It was interesting. He had a very clear goal in mind there. I'll mention that one of them was Sammy Davis, and people who hung around Ames enough and maybe had been to Mister B’s might have heard Sammy Davis and the Novels. They were a band of black musicians. Sammy had been a football player at Iowa State. He'd been a star in the Chicago City League, but been injured enough times--he'd been recruited by Johnny Majors. But at any rate, Sammy went along. He was a great guy, was a very good musician, and was very personable. Some of those people got to make that trip to Memphis with us, also. It was interesting from a cultural standpoint. There were a couple incidents, and Mr. Reynolds knew how to deal with that. [Brand laughs] It was great, you know, but I learned a lot from that myself, I guess. That's why I think of it fondly.

[00:28:04]

**DB:** What sets the Iowa State University Cyclone Football ‘Varsity’ Marching Band apart from other marching band programs, do you think, Stephen?

**SS:** Well, I don't think we're absolutely unique in this, but the fact that there are so many non-music majors in the Iowa State band and the quality of the playing is so high. I heard them this fall, and the first thing they played was some John Williams [American composer famous for some of the most recognizable film scores of the twentieth century], I believe, that had been written for marching band, from one of the newer things he's written. The playing is so crisp and so clean and it's a real testimony to music education, frankly, that goes back to the elementary schools and the junior highs and the high schools. Not just big schools, but a lot of small schools that have excellent music traditions. But the playing quality, I believe, is very high for a band that--I mean, at Iowa, you would have many more music majors in the band, or a band at, say, Michigan or Texas where they've got large music departments and lots of music majors. It's different. It's, I think, 60 percent engineering majors, I've been told. Or something like that. They’ve got be smart people because they can take that much time for marching band and still get through those rigorous kinds of majors. That's what separates us, I think.

**DB:** Yes.

[00:29:37]

**DB:** Did any of your kids--were they in the band?

**SS:** Yes. I said my dad had been in the Army Air Corps Band. But my children did not play in marching bands in college. One went to Luther College, and one went to the University of Northern Illinois. My son was a jazz major there, and Luther had no marching band. It's such a music school, the football team sang the school song there, [laughs] which is quite unusual, but it's very much a vocal thing. But at any rate, both of my children did have music degrees. In fact, a master's degree in my daughter's case, and my son has a doctoral degree. He's a professional jazz drummer now in Austria. We'd always kind of hoped to do drum corps at some point in his life, but it never came to be. The resurgence of drum corps, that's done a lot for bands like the Iowa State band, too. Because kids come out of these high school experiences and stuff, and they're so well trained. But yes, my children are very, very involved in music, and now my grandchildren are. I was going to mention my dad and his sister and my grandmother performed at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933 and 1934 with a couple of the orchestras there that were playing at the Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer Pavilion, as you will. They had an aunt that lived in Chicago, so they stayed with her, I think, while they were there. They were vaudeville entertainers, but always entertaining. [laughs]

[00:31:22]

**DB:** When you started in the band, did you get any advice from the more senior band members, or did you have any to pass along to the new members as they came in and you became a more senior member of the band?

**SS:** Yes, I did try to be very dictatorial. I'm dictatorial by nature, so I probably didn't realize that I was doing it. I don't know. Most everybody was pretty friendly and, you know, if you were the right guide, you had to tell people to, “Get in line there, by golly,” or, “Straighten up,” or, “Watch what you’re doing.” You got some of that, and that's fine. There was the system, and I imagine it's still this to some degree because you’ve got to have discipline to have a marching band, or any band, for that matter. Discipline's a big part of it, but I don't remember any nasty incidents. If anything, there was a lot of times there was something funny wrapped into criticism so [laughs] that you were being criticized, but you didn't really take it that way. That's why you hang out with people in band. If you want to be around nasty people, you don't hang around the band.

[both laugh]

[00:32:41]

**DB:** How did you balance the band time along with your true studying? [laughs]

**SS:** Well, that's why I changed my major to music so that, you know--I've been interested in other things in my life besides music and toyed with the notion of doing something else. In the end, the music [was most important], but then I did do something else that really ended up with a career in the insurance industry. That might have been more of the capitalist in me than anything else, but my dad had an insurance business, so I ended up doing that. But playing has always been fun. So, if I had a class until four o’clock, but then you went to band--well, it wasn't a chore. I mean, I liked playing in the band. I always did. The only thing, in the middle of the winter, walking from where I lived to where the band room was was kind of cold at five thirty at night in the dark. That was the negative about that. If you enjoy music a lot, any opportunity to play is usually something you look forward to rather than not look forward to.

**DB:** Yes.

[00:33:53]

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

**SS:** Well, I mentioned some of this stuff, but the style of marching has changed from a high step march where you lifted your leg up to a 90-degree angle and marched on down the field, looking kind of militaristic, and all that sort of thing. With the drum corps thing becoming so popular, that corps style of marching pretty much dominates in the schools, and consequently, it has found its way into marching band. Iowa State does do some high step marching, yet. I'm currently living in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and they have one of the top marching bands in the United States here at Lincoln High School. [I] just saw their new show for this year, and this is a very big deal in these schools if you're familiar with how this comes down. But they incorporated a certain amount of high step marching into their show this year. So, things kind of go from all the way one way and from all the way the other way, and then there’s a meeting in the middle. Because step marching does look sharp, and it does look very precise and things at times. Things change, but they stay the same. You know how [laughs] that can happen. But I think the music that the bands are playing is much more complicated now than it was at the time I was in the band. I mean, these charts are difficult and demanding. They're demanding of the players. They got to be good players, or they can't play them. Hence, I guess, tryouts. [There] probably was a time where if you just showed up, they needed the numbers enough, you kind of--but now you have to--I've talked to a number of people that said their kids had to wait until they were sophomores to get in the band at Iowa State. That sort of thing. That's not a bad sign.

**DB:** No, no. If you've got more that are interested than can get in, why it makes the quality go up in order to get there.

**SS:** Yes, that's right.

[00:36:11]

**DB:** While you were a part of the band, did the band have any really difficult times that you can remember?

**SS:** No, I don't believe so. I think everybody was pretty much on task all of the years that I was in the band. For me, it seemed easier the last year I was in the band, but then again, I'd been there a couple of years. I was kind of pleased with the way the band had picked up numbers, and the changes with the addition of the flag corps, and the fact that it was not just an all-male band anymore, which I don't think could have probably survived too much longer without some sort of problem just because it doesn't appear to have been--well, you can't just say, “This is all going to be all boys.” [laughs] We know now that can bring up problems in a number of areas, so it was inevitable that things were going to change. But we never really had problems. Mr. Ostling was a good musician and a good conductor, and he always played good music, both in the marching band and in the other bands, and his concerts were good. But when Jimmie Howard came, it was different. [I] must mention that he brought such good people along with him, Joe Christensen and Jim McKinney [James McKinney, Director of Bands, (1980–1983)]. I'm missing other people now, but he brought some really good people to the Iowa State Music Department. Many of them were there longer than he was, in the end. I mentioned Jim McKinney, but he was a percussion guy. He had the Iowa State band as the director for a period, I think six years [eleven years, 1972-1983], and then he had gone to South Dakota State and then came back, and then--now he ended up at South Dakota State. I occasionally play somewhere in a restaurant or something with Jim. We play a little music because he plays vibes [vibraphone] and I play piano. At any rate, Jimmie brought in some really good people to the music department. It was a good breath of fresh air there.

[00:38:41]

**DB:** What's the marching band mean to you?

**SS:** Well, it's the reason that I spend so much money on the Cyclone Club, and I've had season football tickets for however long it is from 1974 until now. The band is undefeated, right?

**DB:** That’s right.

**SS:** The band has never lost a game. The football team goes fifty-fifty some years, and some years, not even that. In all honesty, I love sports, but I go to hear the band. And I have--I took my kids and their kids and so consequently, we just love music.

[00:39:27]

I have to mention one other person before I get too far along, and that's Dr. Joseph Messenger who was the assistant to Mr. Ostling with the marching band, and the assistant with the bands period at Iowa State. He was my saxophone teacher and clarinet teacher, tremendous musician, and a very, very nice man. You wouldn't have had any fights or arguments or nastiness around him because he was a great guy. He was with the department for a very long time, and the principal clarinetist at the Des Moines Symphony. I'd be remiss to not mention he and Dr. Art Swift [Arthur Swift] was a trumpet teacher before Joe Christensen came. I’m missing some people, but those guys that you mentioned too, they were great educators, and they were great people. They created a nice atmosphere for everyone.

**DB:** Yes. That’s a couple of names I hadn’t heard for a long time.

**SS:** Well, it's been a while. It's been quite a few years, but those guys were good guys, and they were good musicians and good teachers. There were a number of very good people in the music department. I think Dr. Burkhalter [Lawrence Burkhalter, head of the Music Department (1966-1972)] was the head of the music department for most--well he was, because they had a search committee for the new head of the department toward the end that I was on. Anyway, Lawrence Burkhalter was the orchestra guy. He was the head of the music department at that time.

[00:41:04]

The one thing I should mention about--when you talk about culture--when I was first in the band, there was a war kind of between pep council, and the music department, and the athletic department. They were all kind of at odds about who ought to be doing what, who ought to be playing when, and the pep council had their own pep band or something. It was a goofed-up, mixed-up mess and it just kind of stayed that way. That was another thing Jimmie Reynolds straightened out very quickly. He made very good friends with everyone--the Athletic Department, the pep council. He had a peace negotiation before the whole thing ever started, and things went much better after that. He was the one that sent these small groups playing. Now they go around the parking lot at the stadium, and they do that stuff. When we went to the Liberty Bowl game, pep band to like six different rooms to play for different groups of alums, and to play for this, and to play for that. He got the band to be an integral part of Iowa State athletics because of that. They respect the band, except for when they play the music so loud you can hear the band over them. I've got a few complaints, but some of that's a cultural thing too. You know, hip-hop, which is played over the speakers of the stadium pretty loud for twenty, twenty-five minutes while the players warm up, it's the players culture and they love it. I think the theory is they like that. It relaxes them. The stuff kind of drives me crazy because I don't see the musical content so much, but hip-hop is a cultural thing and it's an important part of the lives of especially--well it isn't just Black kids. Everybody, young people, they like it. It's, I'll say, quote, Music of their era. I just don't like it when it drowns out the band. [laughs] They do a pretty good job of negotiating when the band's going to play and when they're going to play something else. Then they do use the “Juicy Wiggle” at the end to get everybody really excited. I must mention “Sweet Caroline” is not the school song.

**DB:** Yes, [Brand laughs] that's true.

**SS:** You know, it's okay. Neil Diamond is a great guy, great musician. People love it, but there's all kinds of schools that think it’s their school song now, so I don't know. [laughs]

[00:43:36]

**DB:** Right. What’s one of your most memorable experiences while you were in the marching band?

**SS:** Oh. Oh gosh, I don't know. You know one thing I'll say about Mr. Ostling--when we went to Kansas to play, we would always play the other team's fight song. You don't see that sort of thing now. You don't have that kind of friendly rivalry. You wouldn't ever do that now. We would go, and he would always have an arrangement written like of the Kansas school song. He used the little phrase of, “I'm just as corny as Kansas in August,” and he had that arranger write that into the middle of that. It's something I’ve never forgot playing. It was very, very clever. I don't know how many people caught it, but he was good at that sort of thing. I really think the highlights for me were the bowl games. Then I mentioned the Nebraska ten-ten game. The enthusiasm at that is unrivaled [laughs] even now with many more people in the stadium, because we just didn't like Nebraska very much and we didn't get to beat them very much, you know. [laughs] Oh my gosh, the students were going crazy. [laughs] Like I say, the base drumhead hung on the east wall like an exhibit all for a long time said, “This drumhead died in the battle with Nebraska.”

[both laugh]

[00:45:04]

**DB:** Alright. Tell us about your involvement with the Alumni Marching Band.

**SS:** Well, as I said, I think I probably marched at least ten years, maybe longer. I think there were a couple other big ones when I did but [sighs] well, you get lazy when you get old,

[Brand laughs] older. The one thing that's changed a lot about football is it used to be one o'clock in the afternoon. Now gosh only knows, and in order to rehearse you were having to rehearse at six o'clock in the morning and things like that. I found myself in a more relaxed mood when I went to ball games. I went down a lot of times and watched the marching band rehearse late in the afternoon because I knew where they rehearsed, and I always enjoy doing that. But getting up four o'clock--the other part was that the Athletic Department determined that you had to buy another ticket if you were going to play in the Alumni Band, and I had season tickets, and it didn't seem to me like I should be buying another ticket to go to the game. It kind of sent me the wrong way. I know the last time Jimmie Reynolds came back maybe ten, fifteen years ago. I don't know. I played that year because there were a lot of other--well he wasn't the only former director that was there. I was sure to go to that one. I wouldn't say I wouldn't ever do it again, but, frankly, now they don't really do--we did kind of a marching show for a while and you kind of had to learn some stuff, but now, they just go out and play one song.

As it goes, fifty years ago, there aren't that many people my age hanging around. You see a lot of younger alums. We always go stand in front of the Step Show. That's a new tradition, the Step Show at the alumni building. That's a fantastic tradition to have the band have a thousand people, at least, standing up there watching them do that show before the game. That's certainly something that didn't happen years ago, and it's great. The Alumni Center, it's great for the university. It's got to just, I don't know. We park close to that in one of these parking spots you got to pay to get. [Brand laughs] But nonetheless, that's a great new tradition, the Step Show. It’s great. They’ve said it's ninety minutes before the game. Now everybody knows that-- or a lot of people know that.

[00:47:37]

**DB:** Yes. Well, before we totally wrap up here, are there any questions that I didn't ask that maybe I should have about your careers in the marching band?

**SS:** No, I think I've talked enough about myself in the marching band. But, as an institution, it's wonderful and I would always encourage anybody--when their when their son says, “I want to play the trumpet,” or their daughter says, “Can I play the clarinet?” that they give them the chance because the one thing, as a musician, you'll always have people say, You know, I used to play piano. I wish I had stuck with it, or, I played the trumpet, but I quit. If the kids, grandkids, neighbor kids want to do it, encourage them to do it because music saves lives. Sometimes some of the people in band, they got some other stuff going on, particularly in high school and junior high and those things. [Being] given the opportunity to do music, that can go a long way for them, and they'll meet some other nice people in music. You might even meet a nice girl in music or something.

[00:48:47]

**DB:** Okay. I think we're ready to wrap up here then. Stephen, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with the oral history project. We'll look forward to seeing you.

**SS:** I appreciate the opportunity to give you some of my thoughts and thank you for doing it.

**DB:** You're welcome. Have a great day.

**SS:** All right, thanks.