Cindy Cindy (Leuch) Spencer

Cyclone Marching Band Oral History Project

Interviewed by Michael Belding

2023-04-26

Time stamps reference the video recording.

**MB**: Michael Belding

**CS**: Cindy Spencer

[00:00:00]

**MB:** This is Michael Belding, an interviewer for the Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives ‘Varsity’ Marching Band Oral History Project. Today is Wednesday, April 26, 2023. I'm interviewing Cindy Spencer in person in a podcasting studio in the Student Innovation Center on the ISU campus. Cindy, thank you for joining me today.

**CS:** Thank you for having me.

[00:00:35]

**MB:** I was wondering if we could begin with you telling me a little bit about your early life, things like where you grew up, what your family was like, that sort of thing?

**CS:** I was born in Davenport, Iowa. My parents are Ed Leuch and Linda Leuch. They divorced when I was three. I have a younger brother, Robbie. He is three years younger than me. My father got remarried when I was five or six to Sandy. So, I lived with my mom. I saw my dad about every other day. Graduated from Davenport North High School in 1995. My brother passed away in 1994. Let's see, in high school I was in the marching band, did gifted and talented program, so Odyssey of the Mind [program meant to teach students creativity and problem solving skills] and all the stuff that went with that, jazz band, concert band. We did a sister-city exchange with Kaiserslautern, Germany in the summer of 1994, so OJ was doing the White Bronco on the freeway I was over in Germany, so that was fun. I was over there for, I think, three weeks. That was part of the German club thing. So, that's kind of the synopsis of early life there.

**MB:** And the people over there were able to pronounce your last name correctly.

**CS:** Oh, yes. Yes. They were pros at it.

[00:01:55]

**MB:** So, when did you come to Iowa State and how did you come to be there?

**CS:** So, okay, I came to Iowa State after I graduated from high school. When I was in high school, I decided I was going to either go to Iowa State, that was kind of my fallback position--you know, in-state school and in-state tuition, Dad would pay for it--or I was going to shoot for the moon. So, I applied to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and Iowa State, and I kind of decided early on that I didn't really want to go to MIT anyway. But, I mean, I was from eastern Iowa. Everybody over there was all about the Hawkeyes. But my dad was from Wisconsin, so we were not allowed to root for the Hawkeyes, and I didn't like them anyway. So, I came to Iowa State. I wanted to be an architect, so at the time, that was the only school that had it. My dad wanted me to be an engineer. He thought I was too smart to be an architect, so he talked me into that. And it was between Iowa and Iowa State for that. But again, I wasn't going to go to Iowa, so here I am.

[00:02:53]

**MB:** What years were you in attendance at Iowa State? 1995, maybe, to ’99?

**CS:** So, I got here in fall of ‘95. I graduated in May of 2001.

[00:03:06]

**MB:** And what area of engineering did you end up studying here?

**CS:** I studied civil engineering.

[00:03:12]

**MB:** Okay. Did you have any minors or certificates or any other areas?

**CS:** I minored in history.

**MB:** Okay. I love that.

**CS:** Yes.

[00:03:21]

**MB:** Okay. What bands were you involved with at Iowa State?

**CS:** Marching band. Men's and women's basketball pep band. I did one semester of symphonic band, and I also did the hockey pep band, which is more of a club.

[00:03:42]

**MB:** Did you have any other extracurriculars?

**CS:** I did the freshman honors program. That was just my freshman year. Let's see. Band took up a lot of time, so that was kind of the thing I liked the best. That was kind of mostly it. I think I wound up in Chi Epsilon, which is the civil engineering honorary. Cardinal Key [Honor Society]. I tried Women in Science and Engineering, the Wise Club, and I was in Tau Beta Sigma, which is the band sorority.

[00:04:17]

**MB:** How did you balance the band and all the academics? And I don't know if you worked as well or--just, all those other parts of your life?

**CS:** I'm not what you would call like a real heavy study type person. In high school, I kind of coasted by not doing a lot of studying. That was kind of a shock to the system when I got to college. I would say it wasn't too bad because marching band was generally like four to five-thirty, weeknights. You had the whole rest of the evening to do whatever you wanted, so that was fine. The hardest part was when I got to be a senior. You have to do a senior project in the senior design course, and you do it with a group, and, you know, there were times that marching band stuff got in the way of when the group wanted to meet, you know, it's like, Hey, guys, we want to meet on Thursday night.

It's like, “Well, no, I have to go to Cedar Rapids to play for the high school kids out there.”

It's like, Well, can't you just skip that?

“Not really, no. That's something that you're supposed to do. You're in the band. You do all the performances, and anyway, I don't want to.” So, I mean, that was kind of the only time that there was really any static about that. But I think, for the most part, it was fine. I did do a co-op with the Iowa DOT [Department of Transportation], in which I took a whole semester off from school to work there, and it was a fall, so I was enrolled in one-credit marching band and really worked for the DOT, which was great because I had money and nobody else did. But then it was just working and band, and that was kind of a nice little balance there, so.

[00:05:57]

**MB:** What instrument did you play, or what instruments did you play?

**CS:** I played trombone. I started on second part, and I moved up to first part after that first year.

**MB:** Is that still the instrument you play in the Alumni Band?

**CS:** Yes, it is.

[00:06:14]

**MB:** Okay. So, you mentioned practices as a student. When and where did practices take place, and how long were rehearsals? What were they like?

**CS:** We were at Clyde Williams Field, which is the old stadium. It's next to Helser [Helser Hall]. It's where the suite buildings [Eaton Residence Hal and Martin Residence Hall] are now. Those are four to five-thirty every evening, weeknights. We would also practice Saturday mornings before games. So, when I first got here, the stadium had a turf field, so we would do our Saturday morning practices inside the stadium. But then they tore out the turf and put the grass in, and after that, we had to do the practices outside the stadium somewhere. So that kind of moved around through my years there, but, you know, there was a while where it's kind of where the parking lots are next to the stadium now, and there were times that we'd go across University [University Boulevard] there and practice in those fields, but it was just kind of around.

[00:07:15]

**MB:** So I learned piano as a child, I had eight or so years of piano, but I was never in any band, and so my frame of reference is very, you know, soloist in their own kind of environment with long time spans between getting a musical assignment and actually performing it. How is the marching band different? What's the turnaround between getting a piece of music and having to perform it, and where do practices fall in there, and what do you do on your own time, and so on?

**CS:** So, when I was in high school--and my son is in high school now, it's the same way--you would get a show, and you would basically spend the whole football season getting that show right. So maybe the first game, you'd have a song and the pregame, and as you went along in the season, you get more and more of the show until you're in competition season, and then you have the whole thing done. So, in high school, it's one show that gets you the whole year. You get to college, and it's basically a different show every weekend. That wasn't always the case, in 1997, we did a *West Side Story* show, and that was, I want to say, at least three different games that we played that at. Kind of like high school, where we got better as we went along, and we kicked butt on that show. But that was the one time we had one that went over three weeks. Almost every other time it was a one-week show. So sometimes you had one week to get it right, sometimes you had two, but usually that's about it.

[00:08:53]

**MB:** Okay. And when you talk about having practices for an hour and a half every weekday evening was the expectation essentially that that's when you practice the music, or were you supposed to be practicing off on your own time as well?

**CS:** I mean, yes, they would put us in sectionals. So, I would go with all the other trombones, and we'd work out the parts while we were there. So, you had the music to work out. You had the marching to work out, you know. The fundamentals, that's what band camp is for at the beginning of the year. So, before school starts, everybody gets together, and you figure –

**MB:** Oh, that's why I hear the drumline every like move-in week or something.

**CS:** Right. It's usually like the Wednesday before classes start. Everybody goes there, and you learn, This is how you're supposed to hold your horn. This is how you're supposed to position your body, you know. This is how you move your feet. When you march high-step, this is how high up your knees go. It's just all the fundamentals that you have to get in your body before you learn any of the other stuff. There's so much more that goes into marching band than people realize.

**MB:** Yes, a lot happens off stage, it seems.

**CS:** Yes.

**MB:** Which I guess is true of anything once you actually come to understand it.

**CS:** Right. But as far as the music went, you know. Yes, I guess you had an obligation to work it out on your own. I was a pretty decent sight reader, though, so.

**MB:** Lucky.

**CS:** Yes.

**MB:** I'm not, much to my piano teacher’s chagrin.

[00:10:23]

**MB:** Can you recall any of the shows that were especially memorable?

**CS:** Oh, yes. The *West Side Story* show in ’97 was a really great show. We played that here versus Iowa. We traveled to Minnesota that year to the Metrodome [Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, home stadium of the Minnesota Vikings until 2013], and we played it up there. I remember they had guys on the field in the Metrodome, you know, the cameras and the little directional mics, you know, you're walking around, and we're doing a company front where we're marching forward. And I had to flip real fast, and that guy was standing right there. I took out a microphone with my trombone when I did that flip. Then we played it at Mizzou [University of Missouri] that year, too. That's probably my most memorable one. I kind of remember the first show I ever played, too. We played a song called “Throwdown”--which for whatever reason is now back, and they play it in the stands sometimes--but we played the whole song on the field, and they had banners and stuff, and they brought Johnny Orr [John Orr, Iowa State Men’s Basketball Coach (1980-1994)] out at the middle of the show to raise money for Adopt the Band and stuff like that. I remember that. I remember we went to the bowl game, so we played a Blood, Sweat and Tears show there. That was fun. Yes, I can remember most of the shows that we did. So, yes.

[00:11:40]

**MB:** What was the culture of the band while you were a student? Or bands, I mean, you know, like, the project name is ‘Varsity’ Marching band, of course, and there's sort of a correlation between that and the marching band that people may have been involved with as a student, but, you know, as a person who was involved in multiple bands, of course, by all means, answer however.

**CS:** So, I would say the band culture kind of evolved a bit over time. I was in the band for six years, so I mean, nothing stays static over that length of time. And when I got here, they were just Roger Cichy [Marching Band Director (1986-1995)], who was the band director for a very long time, had just left, and we had a new director in John LaCognata [Marching Band Director (1995-1996)], and he was not the nicest guy. People didn't like him very much. He was only there for that one year. So, that year was kind of different. But then we got Marty Province [Marching Band Director (1996-2002], and those years are kind of more similar, but it was also the cultural time between, I guess, when things were more open in that they let people get away with more stuff, I guess. And I think part of the reason Roger Cichy was outed was because the band got away with maybe too much, so they were tightening the screws a bit. So, you know, college kids like to have parties where you drink beer out of kegs and stuff like that, and that was kind of the culture when I got there, it was a lot of guys that drank hard and had fun and stuff like that, and that kind of evolved away as I was here. They very much wanted to distance the band from any type of drinking culture. So that was a big thing. But I would say, in general, the band is very close. My husband likes to say that we're like our own little culture, you know, everybody was friends with everybody or somebody, and people were all dating each other. [laughs] And you think about how much time we spend together just on a weekly basis, it kind of makes sense, you know, you spend the most time with these people right here, Pep band, you didn't do as much practicing, you usually just practice before the game. You’d do a few songs, run through that, and then you go out there and you play. So, it wasn't the same, but you all hung out together at games and cheered together. So, you know, there's that, so.

[00:14:13]

**MB:** And what about the culture of the ‘Varsity’ Marching Band?

**CS:** Well, the varsity marching band’s the regular marching band.

[00:14:19]

**MB:** Oh, sorry, the Alumni Band?

**CS:** Okay, so I got involved with the Alumni Band after I graduated in 2001. I was kind of heavily involved at first and then less so as I had kids. And that's one of those things you learn fast about the Alumni Band is after you graduate, everybody's gung-ho because the reason they're doing alumni band is because they love marching band, right? So, you have tons of people that just graduated and then after you get married and you have kids, you don't really have time to do that. And you feel guilty saddling your significant other with your kids for however many hours it takes to do that. So, it's like there's this big hole for people that have been out for, let's say, five to something like twenty years. But then, there's the people who are empty nesters, or there's now people that I was in band with that their kids are now in the marching band, and they're coming back now. You haven't seen them in years, but there they are because their kids are in the band. So, it's like the alumni band seems to be a lot of recent grads and a lot of older people and not a lot of the middle.

[00:15:30]

**MB:** Can you talk a little bit about--having explained how the other bands work, can you give us a primer on how the Alumni Band works? Because I imagine with, you know, people having their--not their own lives, but a more adult kind of lives, you know, and being more separated at a distance, obviously you can't get together for nine hours a week and practice like when you're a student. So, how does how do the Alumni Band performances all come together?

**CS:** They send us a newsletter sometime in the early fall. So, let's say August. In there they know when homecoming is, but they won't know the game time because the game time usually isn't set until a couple of weeks ahead of time. They'll say, Okay, please sign up for Alumni Band and they'll give a schedule. Like if we have a game that starts at 11 a.m., this is what the schedule is going to look like. If we have a night game, this is what the schedule is going to look like. So, they gave you a basic idea and then you have to sign up. Typically, Alumni Band, marching band, the way it works is there's a Friday night gathering, a social somewhere. It used to be sometimes at a hotel or sometimes at Memorial Union. Lately, it's been at the stadium, so they'll have a social on Friday night. And then Saturday is game day. You get there early, and you do your rehearsal. So that's where you do music rehearsal, and you do marching rehearsal. Sometimes, some years they've done some complicated drill where they have us do several formations, which is a lot to try to learn along with the music in a few hours before game day. Lately, they've just had us march on with the ‘Varsity’ Band, play a song, and march off. I liked it better when we did some drill, not when we did awful drill, because--Marty did that a couple of times to the alums where he had them do a line drill and this stuff where you're moving all the time and--I mean, that's kind of fun, but it's also difficult. So yes, I mean, it's all really just in those few hours before game day, you put it all together and that's it.

[00:17:43]

**MB:** During your involvement with any of the bands, do you remember any really memorable or otherwise useful advice you received from other members?

**CS:** Well –

[00:18:00]

**MB:** Or mentoring, maybe?

**CS:** Well, the mentoring thing--the way the band is set up is, okay, you have your section and you kind of end up dividing things out into ranks. A rank is a unit of eight people, and so your rank has a right guide and a left guide. So, in the band leadership, there's the band director and assistant director. At the top you've got your drum majors kind of below that, which just wave their hands. They're kind of in charge. Call it the student leader--

**MB:** “Just wave their hands,” I'm sure they would love to hear that. [Belding laughs]

**CS:** Yes. Then you go down to the right guide. The right guides are your leadership within the sections of the band. So, when you start off as a freshman, you know who your right and left guides are and they kind of provide you with guidance and they teach you the ropes and stuff like that, and you learn from the others around you. And you kind of work your way up, and then you become a right guide, and then you teach that to your freshmen. I did experience the whole gamut of that because I had a great right guide my first year. His name was Jon Bovenkamp [Mechanical Engineering (1991-1996)]. He recently passed away and he was a great guy. And by the time I was I was leaving I was a right guide to other kids, you know, and I taught them how to do it. And we're all buddies. And it was fun.

**MB:** So, were you ever a left guide?

**CS:** Yes. Yes.

**MB:** Which is harder?

**CS:** Right guide is the leader. The left guide just kind of sets the other end of the line. [laughs] They don't ask you to do much if you're a left guide. Your kind of like, I'm important, but not that important.

[00:19:41]

**MB:** How about passing on advice?

**CS:** It can be difficult depending on how willing your freshmen are. I know my first year as a right guide, I had a couple freshmen in my rank. One was a kid named C.J., and C.J. had split loyalties, let's say. He said he wanted to, like, rush a fraternity, and he was asking, “Oh, can I have time off to do that?” He was always asking me, “Well, I kind of got to leave early. Do I have to do that?”

It's like, “No, marching band is a commitment. You have to be here from this time to this time. And if you're not going to be here, then you can't be here.” I guess you can only teach people as much as they're willing to learn. But I don't know, I still remember the freshmen that I taught stuff to, and we ended up friends, you know, so we still talk on Facebook sometimes.

[00:20:32]

**MB:** And again, this question in particular is certainly applicable to any of the bands you've been involved with over the years, but what does what does band mean to you?

**CS:** Band was what made college fun for me, just because you get involved with the school, right, You're now part of something, I guess. You can say you can sit on the sidelines and go to class at Iowa State and say, “Yes, I was at Iowa State.”

“What did you do while you were there?”

“I don't know, I was a student.” But if you're in the band, you're an active part of it, right, you're going to the games, you're providing the atmosphere, you're cheering for the team, and it's a lot of fun, even when--I was in band in some pretty lean football years, we were pretty terrible, but Marty Province used to say, “If you guys have this much fun when we're losing, I'd hate to see what you guys look like when we win.” Then eventually we did get there. We were winning, but still it was fun. It was a way to be involved and be part of the school. Really, I was more in the band than I was anything. Even my major, you know, it's like, Okay, I'm going to school and I'm learning stuff, yes, okay, whatever. I don't know, I saw a band as being kind of on an even level with that in importance. It was just fun. It was a lot of fun. Yes.

[00:21:59]

**MB:** Why the trombone?

**CS:** My dad played in the US Army band, 76th Army Band during the Vietnam War era. He was stationed in Germany for a couple of years. He played with the band. So, he liked to relieve stress by playing trombone, so he had a trombone just sitting in the basement or whatever. I would go and find it and put it together and play it. So long before we ever did instruments in school, I was playing trombone in our basement. Of course, I'm left-handed, and I put it together backwards. I was doing the slide with my left hand, and my band teacher fixed that real fast. But that's why the trombone. It was Dad has a trombone and we don't have to get one for you, and you already know how to play it, so there you go, you're playing trombone.

**MB:** My parents are both left-handed, so I hear the backwards assembly of things. Like the way I learned how to tie a necktie is backwards.

**CS:** Right.

[00:22:50]

**MB:** All that stuff. Is there a favorite memory you have from marching band? Again, any of the bands, really.

**CS:** I have so many memories.

[00:23:00]

**MB:** Is there anything in particular you'd like to share?

**CS:** So, my last my last time performing with the ‘Varsity’ Marching Band was at the Insight.com Bowl in Phoenix, and that was the first bowl game that Iowa State had gone to since the late 1970s. There were alums that used to come back to Alumni Band, and you’d go talk to them, it was like, Wow, you got to go to a bowl game! Because it had been, you know, twenty-some years since they'd been to a bowl. The fact that we got to go, that was just--that was so awesome. And it took place, I want to say, December 28th of 2000, in Phoenix, and because we hadn't gone in so long, there was some controversy. I remember I ended up talking to an *Ames Tribune* reporter about it. You know, at first they were like, I don't know, there's three hundred marching band people. That's a lot of expense to go to a bowl game, and the press put the story out there and all that stuff, it got attitudes turned around. So not only did we go, we got to take charter flights down there. So, you know, three hundred people, we don't all fit on a plane, so they took two plane loads there and two plane loads back. And people with seniority got to choose the plane they went on. So, I went on the first plane out and the last plane back.

But, you know, that winter here in Iowa was a very hard winter. When we loaded up all the equipment, it was during a blizzard, so they had a semi-truck parked at Music Hall, and we had to load up our uniforms and our instruments and it was snowing sideways. I went with a friend of mine who lived in the same building as me, and he had to park his car like off campus, so we're walking sideways through the snow to get to Music Hall, and somebody picked us up in the back of their pickup and drove us the rest of the way. Man, it was an awful winter. I think we had snow on the ground for one hundred consecutive days that winter. So, we go down to Phoenix, and Phoenix is beautiful, right, it's sunny. I want to say it's like fifty. It's probably pretty similar to what it is outside now. We were all in the hot tub and in the pool, and it was like, Oh my God, these guys are crazy, how can you swim? It's so cold! It's like, dude! It's like zero in Iowa. This is awesome. So yes, that was fun.

I don't remember a lot about spirit rallies or anything like that. I remember practicing on the field down there. I remember going to Banquet Ballpark is what it was called, it's the baseball stadium where the Diamondbacks play. I remember going to the top of the stadium. I remember standing on home plate while we were lining up to go on at halftime. I remember the fact that the logo on the field was this big giant red football thing that was like thirty yards wide. I'm marching pregame somewhere in the middle and I had to cross this logo and I have no idea where I am. So, when you're doing marching band, you know, you mark yard lines so every eight steps is a yard line. I don't know where I am because it's this big stupid football there. But it was fun, and we sounded good, and we won the game. That was probably my favorite marching band memory.

[00:26:03]

**MB:** Okay. Were there any unique challenges of being in the band, and if so, how did you cope with them?

**CS:** Unique challenges. I mean, it was a lot of time, I guess. But again, if you prioritize and you get your stuff done, it's not such a big deal. I don't think there were challenges *per se*.

**MB:** Okay.

[00:26:37]

**MB:** Were there any traditions or rituals that you guys would do that were especially significant to your experience?

**CS:** There's always traditions on those things. You know, when we march parade into the stadium, you have certain cadences they do, and things you say, and horn movements and stuff like that. I mean, most of the traditions are that type of thing and those changed over time. There was a tradition that went away my last year in the marching band. They used to do their show, and at the end of the show, they put your horns down and you do this bow right, you go four counts down and four counts up, and that would be it. And when Marty Province got here, it was gone. It was just gone. So, you know, things come and go. Pregame, it's something that kind of basically was the same most of the time I was here. It was a tradition, and it's different now. You know, each band director makes it their own. So yes.

[00:27:43]

**MB:** How do you all--you know, as students participating in it--how do you feel when a new director comes in and suddenly dispenses with something you've been doing for a long time?

**CS:** Well, I mentioned that my freshman year was John LaCognata’s first and only year, and there was a lot of resistance to that guy. I didn't understand it because I'd never had Roger Cichy, but he did--the changes that LaCognata made. So, for example, for trombones, the trombones always carried the instrument with the horns down with your left hand, one hand off to the side. When LaCognata got here, he made it a two-hand carry, which is holding it right in front of you. But at Iowa State, you marched high-step for pregame and halftime, at that time, so if you can imagine holding a trombone in front of you with high knees, I got really bruised thighs that year, and after LaCognata left, it was back to carrying it in the left hand. Also, after LaCognata left, when Marty got here, we had marched high-step pregame and halftime. Marty got rid of high-step at halftime, and then we went low-step, usually for halftime. And now I think the band only does high-step during, like, “Fights” [“Iowa State Fights”] at pregame. They don't even do the whole pregame, they just do one song.

[00:29:17]

**MB:** What is it like performing in the stadium versus another venue?

**CS:** Well, it's pretty awesome, when there's a lot of people there, especially. Again, I was there during some kind of lean years for Cyclone Football. So, I got Dennis Goering [Speech Communication (1982-1986)], who was a band alum, used to in the press box take videos and video every show, and you could buy a videotape at the end of the year with the videos on it, right? So, I have all my video tapes from when I was in band, and we've since transferred them onto DVD. But I can watch these in retrospect, and I look, and you can see, like back in ’97, ’98, the crowds on the other side of the stadium were like clustered in the middle. There's like nobody there. But you'd always get a huge crowd for Nebraska and for Iowa, and you'd always have at least one of them there. You're guaranteed one game that you have about forty thousand people you can play in front of. And when they're loud like that, and they're cheering you on, it's pretty awesome. Yes.

[00:30:13]

**MB:** And, of course, forty thousand was much closer to capacity at that time than it is now.

**CS:** Yes, you go to Iowa, and they'd be full, and they'd get seventy thousand. But they're not cheering for you, right? [laughs]

**MB:** Yes. Very different atmosphere.

**CS:** Although when we went to, to Mizzou with that *West Side Story* show in ’97, they did cheer for us at the end, and their stadium is a lot bigger than ours, and it was pretty full. And hearing the other crowd cheer for you at the end of a show, that was that was cool. So yes, it's just so many people. It's so big, but you have to not think about it because, you know, you just got to do what you're doing and kind of ignore it and--

[00:30:51]

**MB:** So, in addition to the games, what other shows would you play?

**CS:** We do recruiting visits to high school events. Every year Ankeny holds the Mid-Iowa Band Championships, which is a high school marching band competition. We’d go to that one. Sometimes we went to Valley Fest, which is in West Des Moines. We kind of, you know, rotate which one we went to. It's a recruiting thing. So, we would be the exhibition at the end of the evening before they give out the awards. I remember talking to a guy who's a few years younger than me about this. And the high school's fields are different than the college field in that the hashes are in a different spot, and you guide off the hashes when you're marching, so when we did these high school shows, we always had to do a special rehearsal where, you know, Okay, let's move a line here, guys, don't pay attention to this. Let's try to do it right. And you only get a few days and that and it never looked real great. So, I was talking to him. I was like, “Yes, yes. We played at Ankeny last year and I don't know, it wasn't great.”

He's like, “Not great? I was at that show. Oh my gosh, I was blown away, it was the biggest, best thing I've ever seen.” It's like, all right. So, the high school kids were impressed by it. Because it's three hundred people that are all playing very loud. That was Marty's thing, was that he would do these breathing exercises with us where you have to take a breath in and a breath out, and you do longer time periods, you know, longer breaths in, longer breaths out, and it would build up your lung capacity, right, all with the goal of being as loud as you can possibly be. After doing that and then getting into these high school stadiums with these kids and that sound like that, that was, I guess, pretty impressive. I'm impressed. They still do that. They still go down to Mid-Iowa Band Championship. And now that I have a son that's in high school band, and we go watch it, it is very impressive after watching the high school kids play. They do a high school thing, like an exhibition thing in Cedar Rapids, that we would go to quite often. It was in the Five Seasons Center, so it was inside, which you can't really fit a whole football field there, but somehow, we managed to cram all our people in there and play there. Those were most of what we did besides the home games, were the exhibitions for the high school kids.

[00:33:13]

**MB:** Okay. At what point did you become involved in the Alumni Band?

**CS:** That was when I graduated. I mean, when you're in school, there's always a game where the Alumni Band come and play. So, I knew a lot of those guys, because you’d watch it every year. But then, yeah, I'm pretty sure I did it my first year. Actually, I'm pretty sure I had a tailgate for some of my friends that year, too, that were still in school. So yes. I did it for many years in a row. I want to say maybe ten and then, you know, had three kids. It gets really hard to come back for those. Plus, you get old at some point. [laughs] It's just not as easy to do anymore. So yes, I'll probably start doing them again regularly when my son gets up here. He wants to be in the Iowa State band, so I'm sure I'll be coming back and doing them then. I do Alumni Pep Band a lot these days.

[00:34:07]

**MB:** Yes. What is that like?

**CS:** That's fun. So, Alumni Pep Band is during the break. So, during Thanksgiving break and during winter break, when the students are gone, they call on the Alumni Pep Band to go play games at Hilton Coliseum. These days, they've adjusted the conference schedule, so we usually get some pretty nice beefy conference games to go play at, so you go play pep band for those, and we don't usually have a lot of rehearsals. We just maybe before the game, and they started doing, like, a Friday rehearsal maybe sometime in November just to practice stuff, but for the most part, you just go play. I'm there most of the time. There's like a core group of us that are at most games, and I've been starting to bring my kids because they let you bring kids. So, my son's in ninth grade, and he's been playing with us a couple of years now. He gets to learn all the songs. It's fun.

[00:35:02]

**MB:** Yeah. I'm curious--and maybe there's nothing to this question, but just talking about it, I'm curious now--what is it like playing in Jack Trice versus in Hilton?

**CS:** It's a whole different thing. Because if you think about it, when you're in Jack Trice, you are one of three hundred. Or if you're in the Alumni Band, it's more like five hundred. So, one of five hundred people. You're in a crowd, and you're in a uniform, and the whole point of a uniform is to make you somewhat indistinguishable from everybody else, right, so you're one of this big machine, and the stadium's big, and it's all around you and all that, and you get in the Hilton Coliseum. Okay, now you're one of fifty, let's say, and so you stand out a lot more. The atmosphere is completely different. It's kind of an apples and oranges type of thing because what you're doing is fundamentally different, because when you're in the stadium and you're doing marching band, you're moving around, too. You're not just playing. When you're in Hilton, then you're just--you're playing.

[00:36:15]

**MB:** No, I thought it might be like apples and oranges in a completely different thing, but I, again, piano training, so I have no idea.

**CS:** Right.

[00:36:27]

**MB:** Speaking of the uniforms, is there anything in particular you remember about the marching band uniforms from your time?

**CS:** From my freshman year, we had these uniforms where the back part of the coat kind of stretched down below your butt as it went down a bit such that if you did a flip, it would kind of flip up, right? And I've seen pictures of them doing that. Really great picture where they're all just kind of standing up. The front of the jacket had an overlay. So that's something you could take off, it has two sides to it, right. So, there would be a pregame side, and it said “ISU,” and I want to say the top of the “I”, it was like a star, it was very eighties. The other side said “Cyclones,” like a ribbon down the side, and it was yellow with red letters. That was the last year of those uniforms. My freshman year, we got fitted for new ones. So, I got to go down to the basement, and they took my shoulders, and bust, and inseam, and all that stuff, and I come to band next year, and there's a uniform just---it's got my name on it. This is your uniform. So we got a new uniform that year, and those, the jackets were a lot shorter in the back, they didn't have that bit that went down to flip, it was just like at your waist. And the overlay, the halftime sides, still was like a ribbon that said “Cyclones,” but this was the era where we had the tertiary blue, so the red, white, and blue.

**MB:** That's still my favorite color scheme.

**CS:** Pregame side was bird-in-a-blender. So yes. After we got rid of those uniforms, there was somebody, I think it was a company, they made bags out of the old uniforms. So, I have a couple of different bags. One of them is like the, the overlay, and the other one's got like pants on the side. It's pretty cool. So, I still have part of my--maybe not my uniform, but a uniform from that time.

[00:38:19]

**MB:** That’s really cool. That’s kind of imaginative. I think that's essentially all the specifically prepared questions I had for you, but before we conclude, I wanted to ask, is there anything that you would like to add, anything that I should have asked about but didn't, anything not covered?

**CS:** When we played at Iowa, we always went out and stayed with a high school somewhere out there, right. I want to say my first year, it was Cedar Rapids Jefferson. You would go to a high school game, and you'd be like a pep band in the crowd during the high school game. I think we might have played halftime, too. I don't remember. You would spend the night out there, and you'd go in the morning down to Kinnick [football stadium of the University of Iowa] and do all that stuff. I had a friend that was in the Iowa band, so one year, I stayed with her and did some stuff with their band, which my right guide caught me there at the bars and called me a traitor. I was like, “Well, what are you doing at the bars? You're here too, I'm just getting free beer, you have to pay for yours.” But yes. And then my last year, I dated a tuba player for a while, and I don't know if you know this, the tuba lines have their own football game the Friday night before the Iowa game. So, the Iowa tubas and the Iowa State tubas play a football game against each other. The Iowa tubas always took it very seriously, very seriously. Iowa State tubas are like, Ah, whatever. So I went with my boyfriend that the last year I was here, it was down in Iowa City, and we went to the tuba football game and went to the party afterwards. It's a whole different thing going with them. But as far as trips went, my freshman year, we went to KU [Kansas University], we went down to game day, stayed the night, went to Worlds of Fun [amusement park in Kansas City, Missouri] the next day. In ’97, I know we went to Minnesota and Mizzou. Gosh, one year we went to Oklahoma, so I played in--I don't remember what year that was. We almost won the game. I remember it rained a lot that weekend.

[00:40:29]

**MB:** Almost winning describes a lot of the games. [Spencer laughs]

**CS:** Gosh, where else did we go? My, my last year here, 2000, we flew down to Baylor for an away game. It was a deal where, I guess, an alumni group had a charter plane. They chartered a plane, and they didn't fill the plane up, and somebody said, “Well, gosh, we should fill the empty seats with band members”. So, they hand-picked fifteen or twenty band members, and we took a little pep band down to Baylor, and because I was a six-year member that year, I got to go. That was really interesting because it wasn't the, you know, the whole plane wasn't empty. It's not like they had a little corner of the plane where they put the band people and you kind of mixed and mingled you. So, I sat next to this couple, and we got to talking. Oh, what's your major? It's like, “Oh, I'm civil engineering, I'm graduating.”

“Oh, really? My husband's in civil engineering. His company is hiring.” So, I gave him my name. I got a job interview. Out of the Baylor trip. So later that spring, I flew down to Wichita, Kansas, and got a job interview. Obviously, I don't work for them, but still, it was cool. I got that out of there. We took a trip to Nebraska one year. Again, I don't think it was the whole band, it was just part of the band. We took a trip to OK State [Oklahoma State University] one year with the marching band.

I haven't mentioned much about the pep band trips we went on. Pep band was always chosen out of members of the marching band. So, you had to be in the marching band, and then they made you try out, and at the time, you could say, I want to do men's basketball, or I want to do women's basketball, or I want to do both. My first year, I chose both. And my first year here was Bill Fennelly's [Iowa State Women’s Basketball Coach (1995-present)] first year here, which was exciting. I stayed with women's basketball the whole time. My second year in school, I decided I was only going to do one band, so it ended up being women. I got back to two the year after that, but we got through my time in the pep band, I got to watch the women's program here build up, and it was so neat because our first game there was a few people along the sides, right? And Bill Fennelly talks about it all the time, the box score and the attendance and stuff like that. I was there. I saw this. Then watched it organically build up over the years. I still remember what a big deal it was when they opened up the balcony for people to sit in. Oh, wow! You know, we got people in the balcony for a women's game. Then we got good, and we were hosting NCAA games. I was in the pep band when we were playing in these NCAA games. And that was about as full as I've ever seen Hilton Coliseum for a women's game. It was full. And we walk in, and we weren't sitting in our normal spots. They made us go to the other side. So, we're walking along the baseline, and everybody's cheering and clapping, and that was so cool.

I got to go with on their first-ever NCAA trip to Virginia in, I want to say ’97. I was there for when they beat UConn [University of Connecticut] to go to the Elite 8 in ’99 in Cincinnati. That was a heck of a trip. You know, we were there long enough they actually let us use the athletic department's tutors because we were going to miss school. You know, we flew down in the charter plane with the team, and they were like, Oh, well, we won. So, you know, hey, you guys should probably think about doing classwork and stuff. You know, we have tutors if you need it. How many, how many basketball players are engineering majors? You know, Paul Shirley [Iowa State basketball player (1996-2001)] is on the men's side, but nobody on the women's side. I was there for that. That was cool. I was there in Boise, Idaho, when we lost to Hampton. That was awful. But then it made it up by going with the women to Denver for that Sweet 16 trip. I would say some of my happiest trips were with the Pep Band, and pep band was kind of unique in that you got to meet other pep bands, too, sometimes. When we went to Kansas City one year, we hooked up with the Colorado pep band because I had--one of my friends in the Iowa State band--was Jim Stevenson [James Stevenson, Ceramic Engineering (1995-1999)]--was from Colorado, so he knew people in that band, so they gave us a conference room in the Doubletree down in Kansas City and we just got to hang out and talk about how much we hated other schools and stuff. One year we hooked up with the Texas band. That was the year we won the Big 12 tournament, the women did. So, we got we got champagne in our room--shouldn't say that--but, you know, they let us have champagne in our room. So, we're sitting in our hotel room with a guy from the Texas pep band, you know, they were on the losing side, he was with us hanging out, so we got to talk about our mutual dislike for Texas A&M. That was a good time.

**MB:** Quality bonding.

**CS:** Yes. Those pep band trips were a lot of fun.

[00:45:10]

**MB:** Anything else you wanted to add?

**CS:** No, that's--I think that's most of it, that's--we were a family and had a good time. And I'm actually excited because, again, my son's old enough to--he got to play with the ‘Varsity’ Band last weekend at the spring game, and so he's going towards it, so now I got the next generation coming in, and it's super exciting.

**MB:** Great. Cindy Spencer, thank you for joining us today.

**CS:** Thank you for having me.