

The Band

I played trumpet and was president of the Band in my senior year -1966.

The band was formed in 1920 with key promotion by Arthur Osborne (class of '07) and fueled by the John Phillips Souza bands and the military bands of World War I. The big difference was that the Tiger Band eschewed the intricate military formations preferring to present whimsical and to many, disorganized, groupings on the field.

The marching band had 72 members. The concert band was formed in 1951 with 50 members. I'm not sure of when the traditional uniform of straw boaters, orange and black plaid and white saddle shoes became the norm, but certainly by the 1930s. The blazers were handed down year after year – ratty would be a fair description. Personally, I carried safety pins to fold up the bottom of my jacket, which was a good 4 inches too long. We started a fundraiser to buy new blazers and by 1965 we had them.

Each Saturday at 1 o'clock, the band formed up at Alexander Hall and then wound its way via Prospect Street to the stadium leading a parade of fans. The band initiated each game with the playing of the Star Spangled Banner, and then stepped into the stands to play Princeton fight songs and popular tunes for the duration of the game.

In the mid-1960s, Ivy League football enjoyed great popularity. Palmer Stadium (the old) was filled every game. At half-time, most of the spectators stayed in their seats to watch the half-time shows. The shows consisted of four musical numbers with connecting dialogue and appropriate formations centered around a humorous and sometimes risqué theme.

Some shows that I remember are:

The band formed a discarded shirt on the field and to the tune of the Stripper, honored LBJ's modesty in showing his scar to the American public.

The band depicted the Cornell agricultural student looking into the sad, doleful eyes of his cow who in utter frustration bellowed: "It's the wrong time, it's the wrong place, but it's alright with me."

The band offered its own inside story of a Harvard weekend forming a hand mirror on the field and depicted Johnny Harvard preparing for his date and saying to himself "I feel pretty."

In 1965, Princeton had the best football, basketball and tennis teams in the nation thanks to Iacavazzi, Bradley and Fitzgibbons. The media interest in Iacavazzi was such that the Cornell game was televised but then half-way through our half time show the coverage was paused. We had formed a mattress on the field and played "It's a Hard Day's Night." However, the Princeton Tiger decided to ad lib; he raced into the middle of the field and began humping the ground. TV coverage was paused.

Each Monday, I awaited a possible summons to Dean Lippincott's objecting to a particular routine. The first time it was about the LBJ routine. However for the mattress performance the Dean gave me my only official reprimand and it wasn't even our script.

Although I am not sure if the tradition continues, but for many decades the band on its way to Cambridge would stop off at Wellesley and march through the campus between 5 and 6 a.m. Windows flew open, the girls in their nighties appeared and some threw down their underwear to recognize our musicianship.

Our band was successfully autonomous unlike other Ivy League bands. We ran the whole thing including hiring buses for away games and finding places to stay (or not) with the key assistance of a professional conductor from New York City. One weekend, only one bus came to take us to the Palestra. We pieced together a band and took the field. We had everything covered but no drums.

Philadelphia also stands out in my mind because of the rowdy crowd trying to steal our hats, instruments and tripping our sousaphone players. We quickly learned to reconfigure into a turtle formation with the sousaphones in the middle, hats tied to belts and mouthpieces held between two fingers ready to defend.

After a decade of using a beat up station wagon to transport instruments, we were able to purchase a used black Cadillac hearse. My girl friend was an art student in Boston and she painted a magnificent tiger to cover the back gate. My mother called it a death trap and used her own money to have seat belts installed. I loved driving it.

The Band's only outside participant was our conductor. For many decades, the conductor was Robert Franco Goldman. He was succeeded by Robert Leist in 1955. On March 20, 1965, Leist led the Band in a New York City concert with the main attraction of the evening being the world premiere of the music from the World's Fair Show "Wonder World" arranged especially for the Tigers by Bob Leist.

For myself the Tiger Band remains one of my best memories; it got me out of the library. I saw every football game for four years. The Tigers only lost one game (to Dartmouth on the last day) in my last two years of college. We went on tour and played Beethoven to Bartok to Souza. What a blast!

Rob goldie '66