Oral History Series:
The University of California Marching Band

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The pace-setter of college bands . . .
The Pride of California . . .
The University of California Marching Band

An Interview with Bill Isbell
Drum Major 1954

Cal Band Alumni Association
INTERVIEW WITH BILL ISBELL

Interviewee:       Bill Isbell, Drum Major, 1954
Interviewer:      Dan Cheatham, Drum Major, 1957
Date of Interview:  February 27, 1994
Place:            600 Via Hierba St.,
                  Santa Barbara, CA, 93110
Transcriber:      Barbara Gabler
Preface to the Interview

The 1950s were decisive, formative years for the Cal Band—and those of us lucky to have been part of that dynamic, rowdy, and raunchy organization were forever affected by the experience. This was a time of relative innocence, compared to the 60s and 70s. When Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson came to campus in 1952 to campaign, they were made to present their positions from podiums set up on Dwight Way. The University grounds were off limits for political discussions.

How things changed! A few short years later, my family and I were escorted to a Band Spring Concert by a National Guard soldier, with his rifle at port arms, who guarded our passage to Harmon Gym though a crowd recently dispersed with pepper gas from their free speech rally in Sproul Plaza—an area which not much earlier had been sacrosanct for such activities.

The 50s provided a most excellent training ground for young bandsmen. Where else could you learn to lead others, to manipulate your peers, to try out the most outrageous ideas on your fellows—and relatively without repercussions if and when you failed? Factions came and went quickly. Alliances were made and broken in days. Friendships seemed ephemeral but—given a view from some forty-five years later—the bonds that were forged then have lasted many of us a lifetime.

The post-WW2 years at Cal produced some of its most memorable and successful graduates—and the Band of the early 50s mirrored the University in general at that time. But I feel that, individually and collectively, the Bandsmen were more devoted to the ideals and spirit of Cal than was the average student. Though many would have denied it, we were in love with Cal and with the ideals that the University held so dear . . . . As I said, a time of innocence.

My interview with Dan Cheatham has produced neither a diplomatic nor tactful view of the Cal Band in those days, and I apologize to those who make take offense at my sometimes incautious remarks. I felt it better to express my true recollections and feelings than to paint a rosier picture.

I must also apologize for possibly crediting Cal Band 54 with some ideas and innovations which others may have initiated before us.

The older we get, the better we were.

I remember the Band as a rowdy, carousing, hard-working bunch of extreme characters whose enthusiasm for life was beyond even the Berkeley norm. We believed in nothing; we believed in everything. No person, no idea was above being open to question.

The truth is, however, that the Band formed us, molded us, in ways that have lasted throughout our existence. A large portion of my success in my life and my career, such as they have been, is directly attributable to my Cal Band experiences. My family, my profession, and the Cal Band, has been the wellspring of my existence.

I could not have asked for better. I hope that current and future generations of Bandspersons are as fortunate.

Dr. William Isbell
Drum Major
University of California Marching Band, 1954

Santa Barbara, California
September 2002
There’s a Rumor Going ‘Round . . .

that the 1954 Cal Band just celebrated their 50th anniversary. Let’s look at the evidence.

- On the evening of September 9th, at the NorCAI Party, the ‘54 Band ExComm was introduced to a crowd of perhaps 150 people, after the band show. The ‘54 group consisted of:
  - Bill Colescott  Manager  San Jose California
  - Bill Isbell  Drum Major  Santa Barbara, California
  - Tom Miller  Student Director  Anchorage, Alaska
  - Roger Hammer  Librarian  Golden Valley, Minnesota

- Earl Jack, Rep at Large from Sacramento, California, was unable to attend, being on a long-awaited cruise through the Panama Canal.

- The following day, the group joined the Band on the field during pre-game and was introduced to the 60,000-person crowd attending Homecoming Day.

- Throughout the two days, Band Director Bob Calonico and many in the current Band expressed sincere friendship and gratitude to the ‘54 group—very touching.

With all of this evidence, I would guess that the rumor is true. We have indeed survived and thrived the 50 years since 1954. Remarkable.

Bill Isbell
Drum Major 1954

Hammer
Colescott
Miller
Isbell

September 2004
Interview

(Dan) Give us a brief self-introduction.

(Bill) I came to Cal in 1952, after graduating from Santa Barbara High School that June. I had been Drum Major for two years in high school -- which led to my to becoming Cal Band Drum Major in 1954. I graduated in physics from the University in January 1958, and spent some time in the Air Force. My career in shock wave physics began at Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park in 1960-1965. During that time I worked with the Cal Band alumni, assisting the Band's pyrotechnicians.

I returned to Santa Barbara in 1966, then left again (for reasons that seemed good at the time) for Detroit to work at General Motors Technical Center. I returned to the Bay Area in 1971 with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Back to Santa Barbara (where I belonged) in 1976, where I still reside today—except for a few years spent traveling between California and Japan, where I received my Ph.D. in physics in 1993. My university in Japan is a fine school, but it was a heck of a commute.

Five kids, about a dozen grandkids to date. With their spouses, this amounts to about 25 Christmas and birthday presents each year. Currently, I am a consultant to Boeing on National Missile Defense, a staff member at GRC International, and head up a small company designing and manufacturing laser interferometer systems for shock wave research. Intend to keep working until it's no longer fun.

That enough?

That's plenty for now. Let's talk.

When did you first become aware that there was such a thing as the Cal Band?

In high school, my life revolved around my bands and my studies, so I had checked out various university bands before I decided on which university I'd attend. I had heard about Cal Band—not all of it good—but it sounded like my kind of group. When I arrived on the Berkeley campus, the first thing I did was look up 5 Eshleman Hall. I entered without any idea what to expect and certainly not knowing what was about to happen.

The reputation of Berkeley in the early fifties was that of a rather wild group of people. The reason primarily was the leftovers, the last group of students that had come in on the GI Bill after WWII—totally undisciplined, over-aged for students, and a very raucous and riotous bunch.
It was the time that, if you had a fire on campus, the Berkeley Fire Department would have to send a blue fire engine in, instead of one painted red. Once, when an engine painted the hated Stanfurd color arrived to put out a fire, the students turned it over on its side.

Cal had gone to the Rose Bowl for four years in a row. [Dan is saying three years in a row. I’m saying, screw you, Dan; you remember it your way and I’ll remember it mine.] Pappy Waldorf was the coach at that time and was very well known, even down in Southern California. Since I was going to be a physics major and Cal was the place to be—I wound up at the University of California.

When I finally found 5 Eshleman, I asked a group sitting on the front stairs how one becomes a member of the Band; they said, “They’re accepting enrollments down at the end of this hallway. Go ahead and turn right.” I went to the end of the hall, turned right, and found myself in a bathroom with a bunch of people laughing at me.

That's the way they introduced the Freshmen to the Cal Band in those years.

Expand a bit more on your reactions on entering Room 5 Eshleman—the reception you received. What the interior of Room 5 was like?

The whole situation was kind of trashy. I walked in and there were piles of things everywhere; people were sprawled out on the sofas; there was a card game—a Heart game actually—going on. It turned out that it had been going on for several years, almost continuously, day and night.

(One of the things that distinguished that era of the Cal Band was the fact that there were people that you could count on to play Hearts at any time. There was a nearly continuous card game.)

I walked in and was somewhat appalled by the people that were there. I had come from a fairly disciplined home and I was hearing language pouring from their mouths that I had never heard before.

I'll jump ahead a bit to our first band practice. I walked into Wheeler Auditorium, where they were having the first get-together with the new Band and they were singing raunchy songs. I knew most of the individual swear words, but I'd certainly never heard those words put together in such a manner. (Dan laughs heartily) It was really quite appalling for a young freshman!

As a matter of fact, I nearly turned around and walked out. I thought, “This couldn't be for me. These guys are just too off the wall.”

[Isbell—added in editing: You must remember that those were rather innocent days.—before the liberated sixties and the Free Speech Movement. There was little to prepare a small town kid for a scene quite like that evening in Wheeler Aud.]
I think the major shock in being at Cal was the difference between being on a University campus where, primarily, you furnished your own discipline, and being in high school, where others imposed discipline and order on you. At Cal, there were really no bounds on what you could say and what you could do—except for the bounds you imposed upon yourself and what the group imposed upon you. The Cal Band and the University were very different than anything at the high school level and represented a dramatic and difficult cultural change.

However, it turned out to be very easy to fit in to the new regime. I certainly liked the idea of the lack of discipline and being able to govern myself—and I probably went overboard for a while, exploring my new boundaries. The Cal Band—and the housing group I was in—provided much the structure of my next few years. The University, I found, couldn't care less whether I succeeded or failed, attended class or not, whether I lived or died. What a shock!

I think that ours was a substantially different situation than the students had in the later 1960s and the 1970s, with the flower children and their Free Speech Movement. Our attitudes and behaviors in the 50s were based a lot around school spirit, school ties. Students were searching for what they wanted to be, I think, but we were not in the mode of casting over all authority. Authority was pretty well respected.

I don't think there was any particular mission in what we were doing. We didn't have a united point of view. We just wanted to have fun. And we wanted to support the school.

Of all the things that I could think of that exemplified the Cal Band in those days was support of the University. We were so very firmly behind Berkeley and what Berkeley stood for. The leaders tried to keep everybody on a course that led towards making the University better known, even more respected, and a better place to be. The most respected people, such as Bill Ellsworth, as an example, led the way—but they motivated others in terms of school spirit.

Well, we're still at the point where this wide-eyed and innocent freshman is in Room 5, Eshleman observing all the goings-on and, I think for the sake of younger readers of this interview, we should also point out that this was the days of an all-male band. So you're kind of teetering on this thought of, “Goodness gracious. Do I really want to join this group or not?” What went through your mind then?

The decision was whether or not I was going to stay with the Band or find something else to do. There were a few people that struck me as the kind of guys I could get along with. I remember Allen Humphrey, for example, as a person of excellent wit and high intelligence. A very friendly, gregarious sort of fellow. Allen and John Copren—both of them fellow clarinet players, by the way, encouraged me to stick around and see what came next.

We waited together for my interview. I brought my clarinet with me on the off chance I'd get to play it, but I was extremely nervous about the audition. I had been first chair clarinet in the high school, but I wasn't sure I was going to be able to even pass the audition for the Cal Band. I was almost to the point of throwing up before I went in, but Allen got me aside and said, "They never turn anybody down in the Cal Band—don't worry about it".
So Allen Humphrey and John Copren put you enough at ease that you decided to go ahead with the audition. Now tell us about that.

The audition was held in the bathroom with Jim Berdahl. Berdahl said, "What would you be most comfortable doing?" I said, "Playing the melody"—so he put me down as a first clarinet.

[Dan: Okay. I can't stand it anymore. An audition in a bathroom? Is this serious? I always laugh when I hear about it! This is first time I heard Berdahl was there too.]

Also, at that time, I told him I wanted to be Drum Major. The first time I met JB—as we came to call him—nearly the first thing out of my mouth was that I wanted to be Drum Major of the Cal Band. Afterwards, I felt like a fool, but it worked out OK. Jim remembered.

Because Jim was only in his second year as band director, I felt that he was somewhat of a freshman, just like me. He was always very aware of being on-trial as director, and he did so want to do a good job. He certainly was quite nervous over this. I didn't really realize that until later.

Jim was very anxious about his performance as the new director. He had come in on the heels of Charles C. Cushing, who was a distinguished professor—and a very distinguished person, as well—and Berdahl was a totally different type of man. JB was, I think, quite concerned about his future at the University.

As the years went along, I had many long conversations with Jim. He's became a very important person in my life and, later, in the life of my family. He was a father figure at that time for all of us because he was a bit older. Do you know how old he was?

I couldn't tell you his exact age, but he returned to Cal as a graduate student, so he would have been graduate student age—but an advanced age for a graduate student because he had spent some time playing in the big bands in the mid-west prior to returning to Cal and he was Student Director of 1939. He also had WW II service.

Well, perhaps Berdahl was not that much older than the rest of us, but he seemed much, much older and was a mature, calm person, except when he went ballistic, which he did periodically. There was a question on my mind of how I would interact with him—especially given my plans to become Drum Major some day—and I wanted to make a good impression. He turned out to be an extraordinarily easy person to relate to, and I wound up telling him a lot of my goals and personal ambitions. He certainly had the knack of drawing people out.

He was also very serious about the musical quality of the Band. You could tell that right from the beginning. Jim was very passionate about the sound that the Band produced. It frustrated him no end to hear sloppy playing or intonation. It was a great game, sometimes, to play poorly. Berdahl would rant and rave at the podium, to the extent of breaking his baton—until he realized that we were just putting him on. A “two-baton breaking” rehearsal was our ultimate goal—one which we never realized.

One problem with the Cal Band music was that you rarely got a chance to practice a song for more than a few minutes—so sight-reading turned out to be very important. All of us who
auditioned at that time were thoroughly tested for our sight-reading ability—at which, fortunately, I was fairly proficient. Perhaps that was one reason he put me in the first clarinet section.

1952 was the beginning of the transition years between the old Cal Band and the Cal Band that we know today. It probably was the biggest single change of style and attitude in the Band’s history. This, of course, was not obvious to me when I walked in on the first day—but, at that time, rumors were flying about a “new” Cal Band.

With Berdahl’s coming—and with the problems that the Band had in, I guess, the 1950-51 Rose Bowl—the talk around the Band at that time was that things had to change. Robert Gordon Sproul, the distinguished President of the University, had been quoted in the press as saying, “That band stinks” and I heard that quote from the first day I was there.

We repeated, “The Cal Band stinks” and we solemnly [and somewhat pretentiously] added, “and we’re going to do something about it”. Sounds corny today, but in 1952-1954 we took it very seriously.

I remember Robert Gordon Sproul fondly. He took a great interest in the Cal Band, and in the Drum Majors in particular—“Bob” having been Drum Major himself in 1912. He used to drop by once in a while and we got to know Dr. Sproul personally, which was really quite an honor.

But there was a strong motivation from the very beginning when I got there, in 1952, to make substantial changes in the Band. The questions were: What changes would they be? Who would lead these changes? Where would they come from? But there was no question that changes would occur.

As a freshman, I had essentially no power over the change and, in that first year, I was primarily an interested observer into how this was going to happen. It was obvious, though, that there were some people in my class that were going to rise to the top of the Band administration and, as an aspiring candidate for Drum Major, I kept my eyes open, looking for those people with whom I might form alliances.

One of the stronger personalities that showed up very quickly was Bill Colescott. I knew very quickly that I wanted nothing to do with that man. He and I were born enemies from the day that we looked at each other (laughter). Bill was a natural born manager—organized, efficient, well focused. I was a Drum Major—marginally organized, intuitive rather than analytical and, I felt, scattered but creative. As such, we two were constantly at odds.

I’ll add parenthetically that, in time, we got over those freshman animosities. Some years later, Bill became my best and most trusted friend. He was best man at my wedding.

Let’s get back later to more on the story of how the Band reformed itself. Freshman Bill Isbell attends the first rehearsals, both music and marching. What are your memories of those?
I’ve described the first time we had a rehearsal in Wheeler Hall and the songs and the noise that were going on. It was complete chaos. Nobody seemed to be taking charge, although various people were trying to do so. Berdahl seemed to have lost it at the time and it didn’t appear obvious that we would ever be able to converge on any sort of reasonable solution.

Suddenly, there was an unexpected transformation. The tremendous noise and confusion halted immediately when Mr. Berdahl stepped up to the podium and rapped with his baton. The conversation ceased and people picked up their instruments and—all of a sudden—I realized that out of this chaos, you could actually get some sort of discipline. It was just a different situation than we had had in high school.

The music started shortly after that and I think the thing that I remember most about the real beginning of my Cal Band experience was a wonderful feeling of strength and beauty in the music that I had never experienced before. It was a larger band than my previous bands, but not that much larger—but there was this feeling of strength.

Which is not to say it wasn’t chaotic, because up until the first down stroke, it was. These people were doing all sorts of strange things, but they all seemed to come together in that one instant of time. I thought that it was kind of a magical moment when I heard the first chords of Cal Band music. Good stuff.

On another note: From the beginning, the differences between the musical groups came out very loud and clear. The group that impressed me above all others was the sousaphones, the tuba players. They stood head and shoulders above everybody else in terms of their professional conduct in the rehearsal hall and on the field.

My good friend from high school, Bert Willoughby, became a stalwart of that section. Bert, Dick Myers—a lanky tuba player from the San Francisco—and several other excellent musicians began [carried on?] a tradition of excellence in the bass section that is noticeable even today.

Today, forty-five years later, the three of us still get misty-eyed talking about those days. It sticks with you.

*It’s interesting to hear you say that, Bill, because that’s true even today. The sousaphones are capable of putting out a sound [that] I’m sure give them a real sense of joy. Having that horn wrapped around them must vibrate their whole bodies. As you know, the brass horns that we had in the Band in those days—and I’ve heard this said by other people, including Jim Berdahl—that there was something about their manufacture that made them especially fine sounding instruments. While they no longer use those sousaphones today, there is probably some similar fact that the present horns also have a special sound to them. And even today, the sousaphone players have a special inner strength of their own which is astounding.*
We’ve heard something about music rehearsals. What about marching rehearsals?

Music rehearsals developed some sort of discipline. The marching rehearsals in my freshman year never did. I came from a high school where things were planned and mapped out in advance by one person. Now, we had a whole group of people that were constantly designing and re-designing the stunts, trying to put things together. Frankly, it was kind of an appalling sight to come to rehearsals, because there seemed to be no discipline, no sense of direction.

[That was one of the things that I had planned to correct, if I ever became Drum Major. Sometimes you learn more from bad examples than from good.]

On the other hand, we had a hell of a lot of fun! It was really enjoyable, but we didn't get a lot done at practice. I think the lack of order contributed to our poor performance, especially at the first couple of games. [Drum Majors Bill Pippin and Cy Silver, please forgive the implied criticism.]

Of course, we didn't have much time to prepare. There was one week of practice before the first game and then you were at the game, performing on the field. We worked very, very hard but there was this laissez-faire attitude, where other people didn't feel free to tell you what to do. They kind of suggested what you should try and you made up your mind whether you were going to do it or not.

This was left over, I'm sure, from the late forties and early fifties, because that's the way those ex-veterans wanted to live their lives. They didn't want people telling them what to do. They'd had plenty of that when they were in the Service and, as a result, they rebelled against all types
of authority. It made it very difficult for the leaders of the Band to develop any sort of discipline and direction. This was one of the problems that had to be overcome.

The problem kind of went away naturally during the transition period, because the older fellows graduated or dropped out. There were a few of them left in the Band, but not very many, and they were no longer in positions of authority.

Some of the outstanding characters in 1952-1953 were holdovers from the older days—Art Robson, who played bass drum throughout his Band career. Cy Silver (DM 1953) and a few others also were a bit older—Bill ellsworth was reputed to be older than the hills. In those years, they were the leaders of the Band, leftovers from the older, somewhat less disciplined times. They set a certain tone for the Band that the rest of us, I wouldn't say that we were actually against them, but we were not really in tune with the old group, it was obvious that the they were kind of fading away and that a new group was emerging.

[However, the old days were not yet past.]

The Band had its share of hard drinkers. When we went on band tours, we had to carry a lot of them off the buses. On my first band tour, each non-drinker was assigned a drinker roommate. It was the non-drinker's job to get his buddy up to his room. When we got off the bus, we stacked the fellows that had passed out like cord wood in the lobby of the hotel. You'd search through these bodies, find your roommate, put him on your back and carry him up to your room.

On my first trip, I watched as a fellow clarinet player was carried to his room, and figured that that was the last that we would see of him this trip. To my great surprise, the next morning he was marching beside me in rehearsal—blurry-eyed and pasty-faced, but marching nonetheless. Not one person—not one bandsman who, the night before had been passed out or throwing up
on the lobby floor—missed marching rehearsal. Throughout my entire Cal Band career, I saw a lot of drinking; but I never saw a single bandsman miss rehearsal because of a hangover.

To put this in perspective, we've mentioned, in this interview and in others that, at the time, the drinking and carousing behavior was a familiar human response—at least in the American culture—and was a function of being away from parental control for the first time. The pattern had been set by those veterans that had come back previously.

In spite of that, the cooler heads in the Band disliked this behavior. There was an internal control mechanism by both the elected student officers and other bandsmen that allowed this kind of behavior to have certain limits, but worked to eliminate it. The internal controls and peer pressure worked.

As to preparation for rehearsals, we were divided into groups of five players, usually of one type of instrument. The head of each group of five was told what to do and where his people were to stand on the field. We'd get on the field and the leader would try to lead you from one formation to the next. You were expected to memorize your moves—trying to remember your coordinates on the field—then to proceed from one place to the next in a smooth fashion.

However, we didn't really all have to know where we were going. One person or other in the group would remember where to go next and we'd have groups of five or seven that would trail around, one after the other. Once we got into position, we would adjust the formation by looking around—with lots of heads turning back and forth—to see how far we were from our neighbors and whether or not we were forming something reasonable.

The system was not set up a winning performance. I don't want to be too critical of the officers because, first of all, we were all mainly into having a lot of fun. But I don't think that our performance showed the real capabilities of the Band.

[It's interesting to remember just how we reinforced each other on and off the field. It was kind of an in-joke, to laugh among ourselves, when we had not been as good as we knew that we could be. When we failed to perform well, we pretended that it really didn't matter, that the crowd wouldn't know the difference anyway—we were united in the fellowship of the Band against the world.]

Yeah, they hadn't quite discovered poop sheets yet—and other Drum Majors in the interview series indicated that, a lot of times, even they didn't even know what the stunt was going to be until the Thursday of the week of the game and perhaps even, in some cases, until Saturday morning. This was just the best mechanism that they had, given the state of the art within the Cal Band at that point. Bearing in mind that we didn't have the Big Ten style tradition of a strong adult leader and winning performances were not yet a part of our heritage, we were conducting things as best we could. In fact, within its limitations, it was working for us.

I'm sure that I sound more negative at this late date than I was when it was actually going on. I had a great amount of fun and we all got a great experience out of it. The reason I emphasize some of the shortcomings of the Band here is because what we could see around us provided the motivation for the changes that we would make later.
Let me comment on some of the personalities that were involved during my freshman year in 1952. Art Robson was crazy -- certifiably so. Maybe that's why he later became a judge. (laughter) That had to be one of the greatest surprises of my life—to find what Robson achieved. I figured he was on the way to the funny farm. (laughter)

Art was also a man with great skill as a drummer and as a showman. He put on a show such as I've never seen any single bandsman do. He was a centerpiece of our performance, and the crowd loved him.

Bill Pippin (DM '52) was a tall, handsome man [Just like most of us. [Right, Dan?] who had a great air of authority about him. He struck me as a person who was in control of himself and the people around him.

John Elkus was obviously a very talented person, recognized even at that age as a having real gift for music. He was very active, writing original music scores. We expected big things of John. His father was the professor in charge of the music department at the time, so John came from an excellent musical background.

Over the next few years, Jon distinguished himself by writing arrangements for the Band and, also, for putting on an original musical, based on the Greek tragedy, Medea, which was performed in Wheeler Auditorium. Several of us joined the pit band and played the music that John had composed.

I should point out that we have an oral history from John Elkus. If you hadn't heard, Bill, John is currently the Marching Band Director at the Davis campus.

One of the most exciting things in the lives of Cal Bandsman is the first time that they come out of North Tunnel onto the playing field at Memorial Stadium. Tell us about your experience.

Yes, the first time going out certainly was exciting—especially for the freshmen. In the pre-game excitement there were bandsmen vomiting or pissing their pants, or both. You remember that this was in the days of great Cal football, so there were some 60,000 people in the stadium—yelling and shouting and screaming and all doing sorts of things that you never ever saw a crowd do before—and you're standing back in this rather quiet area in the tunnel, all lined up, talking, trying to remember what you were going to do.

About the time that then Band was getting some sort of calm and order, the football team ran through the Band, running out onto the field. I remember very clearly the panic that struck me as all hell broke loose, when the team pushed their way through our ranks.

(Our relationship with the football team was friendly, but wary. There was always a question of who was in charge around there. Had the people come to see football or had they come to see the Band? (laughter) This was never animosity, exactly, but a certain amount of confusion as to who should be doing what.)
In any event, that day we watched as the football team went through the Band and onto the field, where they began a highly successful season. We had very few losses. As a matter of fact, during my first few years, it was unusual ever to see the Cal team lose on the football field.

We came out of the tunnel with a great burst of energy and the first thing that hit me was an absolute wave of sound. A huge roar engulfed us, a sound like you never ever hear unless you're marching out of North Tunnel with the Cal Band. Afterwards, I remember thinking how great it was, to be a bandsman and to see and hear such things that most people never knew existed.

After the entrance, things were pretty much of a blur. I stumbled through the formations, played my pieces, and got off the field into the stands, not knowing quite what to expect. Now, if you thought that the band was wild, you should have seen the Cal rooting section! Screaming and yelling and a torrent of noise that reached a crescendo as the ball was kicked off. The Cal rooters were the Band to the n\textsuperscript{th} power.

Yet, a certain discipline that was maintained, even in the stands. The card stunts were superb examples of organization. And the rooters had a cap that was reversible. The cap had blue and gold sides and you were either a gold or a blue, depending upon whether you were part of the background or part of the Big C that was printed on your card stunt directions. Then, at half-time, they reversed the colors so that the blue became yellow and vice versa. [Do they do that still today?]

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I'm going to shift the subject slightly and I want to talk about part of the "sociological" history of the Band. Would you tell us the role of "pantsing"?

At the time, pantsing just seemed like a fun thing to do. In retrospect, I realize now that it was part of the discipline that we had in the Band. I mentioned earlier that we didn't have a lot of limitations, but the Band took care of itself in terms of disciplining its members and you could get pantsed for at least two reasons.

If you'd done something that the Band really hated—you had gotten too far out of line; you wouldn't march with the rest of the group; you showed up late to rehearsal; you were disruptive or (worst of all) you played badly—when you got far enough out of line, they took your pants off and they ran you around the field and that was all great fun.

Also, you earned the honors if you did something that the Band really loved—you did something that was really neat. Robson, we took his pants off at about a third of the rehearsals, because he would do something outrageous. The Band showed their appreciation and love for the guy by taking his pants off and running him around the field. It's strange that the discipline and the love would come out in exactly the same form, but that's what we did.

I suspect that the tradition of pantsing has changed now that they have women in the Band.

I'm sure there must be some truth to what you say, but I understand that pantsing still does go on. I'm just not close enough to the individual bandsmen to know what the protocols are, like I suspect that only women get to pants women. There may be other unwritten rules that go along
with it but I would observe that the role of pantsing as a disciplinarian measure does seem to have been forgotten.

It now seems to be mostly an expression of affection for the other. As you mentioned with Art Robson -- someone might get pantsed who’s especially popular and does something that is considered sort of a highlight of that moment. Also, I think there are certain traditional times, such as when the Drum Major has a birthday—or he or she might get it at the first rehearsal, when the show starts to come together and they realize what a fine show that person designed. I think it’s shifted more toward the expressions of affection than the expressions of dissatisfaction and a form of discipline.

I think the time has come now to start moving forward chronologically. Let’s talk about your second year in the Band and your subsequent years. A good way to start this is to ask you to begin to lay the groundwork for your own participation and those of your close friends in the transition to the “new” Band.

There were certainly some very strong characters in the Band during 1953. Wayne Henderson became Manager, Cy Silver became Drum Major; Bob Mott was the Student Director and Louie Kahn—an extraordinarily gifted person, I thought—became Rep-at-Large.

I’ll tell you some of the stories that we thought were true at the time. But, since I can’t verify any of these, please take them for what they’re worth.

Wayne was an interesting person and I observed him very closely in his managerial capacity, but I never knew quite what he was thinking. He was very skilled at manipulating people and he and Cy disliked each other enormously. This was not a team.

As a matter of fact, the story goes that Wayne and Cy tied into each other so often that, after the 1953 marching season was over, Wayne demanded that Cy resign as Drum Major. Wayne apparently had gone into the University archives and found that Cy had not been a student while he was Drum Major the Cal Band. Wayne reportedly used this to force Cy out, causing him to resign.
Cy left after the marching season and that left Wayne in sole control. Wayne was Manager and, since there was no Drum Major to oppose him, he was in full control of the Band.

That wasn’t the end of the story though. Towards the end of the year, somebody thought to check Henderson’s records and found out that Henderson wasn’t enrolled either!

Henderson’s subsequent resignation left [Rep at Large] Louie Kahn in charge. Louie was obviously uncomfortable about being the lead man. He was a man behind the scenes who moved people around, quietly and very effectively. Eventually, Louie became a member of the U.S. State Department.

So, with Henderson and Silver leaving, and Louie now in charge, the old guard was now effectively gone. There were still older people who were around and marching in the Band—but they no longer had the power.

Louie developed a group of people to run for offices for 1954 and his primary protege, I believe, was Bill Colescott, who Louie helped and tutored. An “in-group” was formed, of which I wasn’t a part.

During the Spring of 1954, Colescott and I had had fairly sharp differences of opinion, and I was surprised when the in-group asked me whether I would stand for election as Drum Major in the Fall. That had not been in my plans, since I had planned to be Drum Major when I was a senior. I thought, though, that it might be best to grab the opportunity while it was available. So I consented and, the following semester, was elected.

Colescott and I both knew that we were going to strike sparks with the majority of the Band. There were going to be hard feelings because of the changes we were going to attempt. The ombudsman for the Band was the Rep at Large, so that position was going to be a key to our success.

We chose, with great care, Earl Jack, upon whose shoulder people could cry. Earl was the ideal person for this position. He was a large fellow, a trombone player, with a very ready smile and a good wit. Earl was very easy to talk to and he spread the oil on the waters that Colescott and I continually stirred.

To round out the Band Executive Committee, we chose Tom Miller [a.k.a. “Fire Plug”] for Student Director. Tom was not very well known to us when he was selected, but it quickly became obvious that he had a mind of his own. Handling Tom became a full-time job for several of us for awhile. By the time that marching season began, however, it was evident that Tom was to be the cool hand—the outsider—who was able to keep a reasonably objective viewpoint and to represent factions of the band which needed someone on the inside.

And so, for better or for worse, we were now organized to begin planning the Fall 1954 marching season.
One of the most significant things that happened to Cal Band during the Spring semester of 1954 was when Louie, Bill, Tony Martinez (DM '51), and a few others changed the uniform of the Band. For many years we had worn the old mustard yellow pants and blue coats. They were terrible. There was no way in the world that the Band could have ever progressed and kept those same uniforms.

So a committee was formed to design and to purchase new uniforms. Where we got the funding for this, I don't know. [Colescott adds that the ASUC Executive Director was very supportive.] Money became available, probably because the evidence was so strong that, if the Cal Band was to achieve its goals, it was going to have to have new uniforms.

We started looking at uniforms of other bands—the Michigan Band and the Ohio State Band, primarily. I remember poring over photographs of those bands and thinking that there were several things that we could do better.

There were a few things that we developed—such as having no stripe along the leg—that were improvements on the uniforms that we examined. Most of these bands had a stripe that ran down the leg of the pants and, looking at photographs and marching films of these people, you could always tell when a person's legs were being lifted to a different height, because it was exaggerated by this line.

So there were certain design characteristics that we built into the new uniform (by not including, for instance, the broad contrasting stripe) that got away from some of the problems that we observed on uniforms from other marching bands. The goal was to make things very uniform—so that when you looked at the Band, they were essentially all the same person.

We put breastplates and cross belts on the uniforms so that everybody would look the same from the front. With the white breastplate on the front and a yellow and gold cape on the back, when you flipped them front to back you had a completely contrasting look, performed almost instantaneously. We incorporated spats and white gloves to accentuate the movements, especially in the dance movements, and that turned out to work very well.

Of course, the clarinet players had to cut the fingers off the tips of their gloves.

We put feathers—plumes—on the caps, and that turned out to be a mixed blessing because, especially in '52 through '55, the great sport amongst the rooters was to steal a Cal Band hat—and the plumes made a natural handle. Stealing hats may have been great fun for other people, but was not thought of very highly by the Band. We were not amused.

So, before the game, going to and from the stadium, we'd take the plumes off and stick them inside our coats. Also, the people on the outer sides would take their hats off and pass them to the center. That way we didn't lose as many hats.
One of my favorite hat-snatching stories was during the 1954 Big Game Eve ceremonies, when we were over in San Francisco. We had divided the Band down and were marching past the St. Francis Hotel, when a rooter grabbed somebody's hat and went streaking down the street.

Now, Berdahl had always counseled, “No violence; let the hat go; don't take a chance on ruining yourself or your instrument”. But, as I and four or five other bandsmen started off after the hat-snatcher, over the wall vaulted Jim Berdahl.

The wall was probably five or six feet high, but Jim jumped down, landing in back of us. He outdistanced all of us younger people, tackled the snatcher, and sat on the guy's chest until the rest of us caught up.

This was a different Jim Berdahl. We hadn't seen that man before.

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We lost a lot of hats during the season but, I also remember one time we collected a lot of hats. In 1954 we had the first truly All-Cal weekend band display. It was a performance that featured the UCSB Band, the Irvine Band, the Cal Band, and the UCLA Band—for the first time, all in the same field together

We had set up on Hearst field, which was ringed on three sides by a high, tall hedge. We placed the Drum Major's tower on the fourth side, the open side, and I was on the podium directing a very large number of people in the field.

The UCLA Band had just gotten new shakoes and they were very proud of them. But, of course, they were eminently stealable. UCLA was very nervous about losing their hats so they put them along the three sides of the hedge. To steal the hats, somebody would have to run across the field, grab the hat and run back through their Band.

What they didn't realize was that the Cal Band waterboys were sneaking around through the hedge and taking their hats. By the end of the rehearsal, nobody had noticed that the hats were gone because we didn't take every hat, we took every other one.

Finally, we must have had 50 hats, (laughs) all in 5 Eshleman Hall, carefully hid out. At the end of the rehearsal, UCLA realized what was going on and all hell broke loose.

Nobody knew where the hats were. I was on the podium and I could see the hats disappearing, but I didn't know who was taking them and I certainly wasn't going to tell UCLA. Eventually we wound up giving UCLA all their hats back, but the laugh was on them.
The officers for fall season of 1954 were selected early in 1954 and it was a very carefully chosen slate. -- I learned a lot about politics.

It was not proper to be elected without opposition but you wanted to be sure that you didn't lose, either. So you had to select somebody to oppose you that you knew you could beat. The people that ran against the slate in 1954 were up against the machine.

It seemed as if it was a democratic process, but it really was not. And, in general, that characterized the politics for rest of my band career. It seemed like a democratic process but things were so carefully worked out in advance that things were pre-ordained.

The charter that we had been given was to change things. There was a great mood at that time and the post election speeches were all about how things were going to change. Everybody realized that change was necessary and the ASUC was behind us now with our new uniforms.

Robert Gordon Sproul had created a lot of momentum with his “That band stinks” comment. I think that everybody understood that the slate of officers that they elected in 1954 had a charter to make change. And that new attitude was no small thing, because this formerly undisciplined, laissez faire group now began imposing change and discipline upon themselves.

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We're at the point where we have a slate of officers, firmly committed to change and with sufficient skills to do so. The time is here. The next football season is going to be a dramatic change. How did you guys go about it?
The major person to make the difference was Colescott. Bill imposed an organization of everything that we did that none of us had ever seen before. Colescott has a list for everything and then he had a master list of all the lists that he put out. We had checklists on this and check lists on that.

It drove us crazy, but Bill was unrelenting—his goal always was perfection.

Colescott gave us the lists that prepared us for the beginning of the next year. One of his lists dictated how the Drum Major was to organize his shows. I saw to it that the list went into the trashcan—the Drum Major was in no mood to accept direction from a mere Manager—but it mysteriously reappeared periodically over the next few months.

I don't know whether it still pertains today or not but, certainly in those days, there was a very sharp division in authority. The Manager ruled everything that was off the field. The Drum Major ruled, or at least thought that he did, everything that was on the field.

As a result of Colescott's and my different management styles, the stunt committee and the organization of the stunts was not as finely honed as that in the administrative area, but we got a lot of creative work done—[and, I still firmly believe, we achieved a better product than a more organized style could have conceived. Managers' ways are not Drum Majors' ways.]

We decided that we were going to complete a lot of our work during the Springtime and then—in contrast to the norm—we returned to Berkeley back early during the Summer. During the Springtime, we got the uniforms purchased and in place.

A bunch of us came back about a month before the season began and started putting together the stunts. Now, although we had had stunt committees in the past, this time we were finally organized into a committee that had scheduled times that they met and duties that were assigned. We started bringing some organization into the stunt-making process.

One of the single biggest things that made a difference in how we decided to march and how we decided to look, came from Pappy Waldorf. During the 1953 Ohio State game, when Cal went back to Ohio State, Pappy had his movie photographers film the performance by the Ohio State Band. We spent dozens and dozens of hours going over that same film. We probably saw that 20-minute performance 100 times.

We looked at what each individual person did. We looked at what the Band did as whole. We looked at how high they raised their feet, how they swung their arms, whether they swung their shoulders. We looked at the uniforms that they wore.

I paid a lot of attention to how their Drum Major acted. I never saw anything quite so grand as the way that fellow looked. He was actually that terrific. As a matter of fact, he was on the cover of Life Magazine that same year, he looked so darn good.

However, we decided that, even if we could accomplish it, we didn't want to look the same as the Ohio State group. We were to have our own marching style. In actuality, since our new style was largely based upon the discipline and the vitality that we saw coming from the Ohio State Band, much of the Band shows that we produced during those next few years came out of that film that Pappy had made during the Ohio State half-time.
One thing that was obvious was that we needed to have a substantial amount of advance planning—and we needed to be able to communicate that planning to the Band. Information transfer had been done in various fits and starts before, so none of the things that we did were really original, perhaps they were just better carried out.

We came up with a method of making stunt sheets so that, before the marching rehearsal, the entire Band had a chance to study them. The stunt sheets were quite specific. In contrast to what had been the norm, the movements of each individual were choreographed and very tightly controlled. Every person had his number and he knew where he was in a given formation, where he was going to go to the next formation, how many steps it was going to take to get there, and how many musical bars it would take.

We also controlled the marching rehearsals very tightly. We would rehearse each section independently and, after each section knew its parts, we would put the Band together and everything would click into a formation at the same time.

It was kind of a like a magical sort of thing. You'd see these little groups going all over the field, doing their own thing. You put them together and, all of a sudden, they created a picture of something or made a word or a letter.

We inaugurated a “group of four” strategy where the leader would always be directly on a yard line and the other three people would be between the yard line. The next leader would also be on the yardline—so the entire band group was divided down into groups of four, each with its leader.

We rehearsed these leaders separately, so that they would know the right position in the field. Then it was their job to tell the other three people exactly what to do. There was no question about who was in charge. It was the leader of four in each case.

This sped up rehearsals dramatically because, by getting the leaders together, knowing where they were going in advance and knowing what dance step was to be used, etc., and then letting them teach the others, we increased the number of instructors by a factor of 30 or so. Before, one person generally taught everything to the entire band; now it was 20 to 30 people teaching. This made a substantial difference in how rapidly the teaching was given and became a very effective technique.

While this technique may seem obvious today, the discipline this imposed was then quite radical and not altogether welcome. Some people needed more convincing then others—and it wasn't always the old guard that were the most vociferous in their complaints.

One of the innovations at that time was a tower from which to direct the rehearsals. Whereas before, the Drum Major had to stand on the field or climb far away up in the stands to be able to see the stunts, now we had a metal scaffolding from which to watch the show.

It made a substantial difference in how well I could control the marching of the Band. [Of course, the tower became an object to be periodically “captured”, when the Band perceived that the marching practice was being too tightly run. More than once, the tower was toppled and the hapless members of the Stunt Committee and I were pitched over the side. It was all in the game.]
It sounds as if the discipline would have taken a lot of the fun out of being a bandsman and I think many times the administration, that is to say, the Drum Major and Manager, lost sight of what the people were truly in the Band for -- which mainly was to enjoy themselves.

In general, we tended to work them too hard, impose too much discipline, perhaps a little bit too quickly. When that happened, the Band would turn upon us and I would lose my pants or Colescott would lose his or, once in a while, the Band would simply leave the field.

I remember clearly one time, as I was trying to get them to go from one formation to the other for the fourth time, the Band became so tired of it that finally, Robson said, “The hell with this, form a line” and Robson, playing the bass drum, led the entire band out of the stadium, through the North Tunnel, up into the stadium, back through the seats, in and out of the little side tunnels, and then finally back on to the field, where they then went ahead and did the formation for the fourth time.

So there was another group of people in here that were kind of looking out for the spirit of the Band and making sure they weren't being driven too hard.

At this point, what went through your mind? How did you feel?

I was extraordinarily mad at Art. I wanted to get him out of the Band. Upon reflection though, I realized what he had done was to provide the safety valve—which was exactly what was needed. I didn't appreciate that at the time, however, because we were always under such a tight schedule, trying to get things done, and it struck me that it was a great waste of time. Turned out it wasn't -- it was really the right thing to do.

Well, the point that we've made many times in this interview and many times in other interviews, was that this time was a dramatic moment in the life of the Cal Band. We were suddenly a new organization. The fans suddenly saw something new and different. How successful do you feel that you were, in conjunction with your other student officer colleagues, in pulling this off?

I think we started off with a real head of steam. But I don't think, during the first few games, especially, that our performances were terribly distinguished. We were still kind of stumbling around the field, looking for a way to bring it all together. Then, partway through the season, perhaps the second or third game—we realized what we really needed was to have a degree of uniformity to the Band -- not only in how we looked, but also in the things that the audience could count upon seeing. So we developed, for the first time ever, as far as I know, a concept where, for a certain portion of the stunts, the Band came out and did exactly the same thing each time.

We began with a developing a standard entrance, both for the Band and for the Drum Major’s entry. After a while, we began each pre-game with the same general entrance onto the field. Not only did it allow us to hone the formation until it looked good, it also made our practices shorter, since we did the same thing each week.
I remembered that Cy had looked good doing his strutting entrances and it gave me an idea. I inaugurated a standard Drum Major entrance, where I came through the Band with my head down, running forward until I almost reached the front row. As I burst through the front of the Band, I leaned back as far as I could get and went ahead on whatever momentum I had, as far out on the field as I could go, which was maybe 50 yards or so.

This then became the standard Drum Major’s entrance, used for many years by the Band.
Another 1954 “innovation” was the use of the script Cal as a signature stunt. We had done a script California in the past, but the stunt we inaugurated as the end of each pre-game show has persisted to this day.
Another innovation that remains to this day was marching 8 steps for 5 yards. This was, I believe, taken from the Ohio State marching film that we had watched.

Yet another new concept was the use of a standard “long line” entrance, followed by a standard fanfare. It’s hard to over-emphasize the difference it made to us, not have to learn a different entrance and fanfare each week. And, far from being bored, the crowd began to look forward to hearing and seeing the by now “traditional” entrance by the Band. Then, as now, anything done more than twice became a tradition.

The term “flying turn” was invented as I stood in front of the Band in the rehearsal hall, trying to think of how we were going to change rapidly from one direction to the other. The movement and the name came out naturally, and stuck.

The kick/halt was invented at the same time and, although the halt may have had predecessors done sporadically, it and the flying turn became standardized fare for the Band.

But not all these things I’ve talked about were brand new ideas. Many had been thought of by previous bandsmen and were used once in a while. In many ways, we brought together a whole bunch of ideas that had been percolating in the Band over some period of time and we took what we hoped to be the best of those things. What was really the innovation was standardizing the types and methods of marching. That, we were proud of.

*I'm not sure the current bandsmen uses the term "flying turn" although the movement Bill is referring to is what is now called a left face or a right face, consisting of cocking one foot with the toe pointed down and placed in front of the shin of the other foot—then pulling out that foot at the same time that you pivoted in the direction that you wanted to turn. It's the same turn the Band uses today but I don't think they use that phrase for it.*
Something else that we started was called "twinkle." This was brought about because of the opportunity we had with the new breastplates all being white. By throwing our shoulders back and forth as we marched, we were able to get a twinkling aspect. Dan says it was the cape that twinkled. I remember the front, maybe because I was in the front of the Band looking back, (laughs) but in any event, twinkling was a very attractive sort of thing that exaggerated the swing of the shoulders.

Yes, my memory was that the phrase "twinkle" came from the image of how a star might twinkle and if you're standing behind a bandsman, looking at his satin cape, his shoulders were in a motion of going from left to right, the cape sort of twinkled, if you will. That's a leap of imagination but that's where the phrase came from.

Incidentally, I should also say that our twinkle was not exceptionally exaggerated. I've seen other bands, most recently at the 1993 Alamo Bowl where we marched against the Iowa Band. They exaggerated it and they forced that shoulder movement.

In our case, we made it very definite that the trunk of the body remain rigid in these dimensions which I'm describing and that the shoulder swing came from the fact that when you lifted your knee to appropriate height, which is still standard today, there was a natural motion of the shoulder. Even though your trunk was rigid, when you lifted the other knee, the body would go back. I don't want readers to think that we were over-exaggerating; it wasn't a gross movement. It was a subtle movement.
Another thing we picked up from looking at other bands was that everybody said, "Pick up your feet", and we realized that that was the wrong thing to do. The thing you had to do was pick up your heels. The Cal Band, from the early days had said, "Pick up your feet, turn your corners square and drive, drive, drive." We changed that to "Pick up your heels." Once we did that, the toe then naturally pointed down and was much more of an attractive looking maneuver.

You’re absolutely right and I think this comes out in some of the oral histories. The battle cry, if you will, in the North Tunnel served the same function as it does today, only it went "Pick up your feet, turn your corners square" and when you did that...my recollection is one of the difficult things in teaching this new marching style in those very early years was that they would pick up their feet - in a flat manner - and you could still do all the motions but your feet would be flat in the sense that the soles of your shoes would have been parallel to the surface of the field.

I remember that this was a very difficult thing to get across to guys that, "No, if you point your toe down; it emphasizes the white spat, etc., etc." And Bill's absolutely right; I remember that when we changed the yell and introduced . . . for all you new bandsmen reading this transcription, . . . as soon as they changed the yell to "Pick Up Your Heels! Turn Your Corners Square! And, DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE!" . . . it turned out correctly.

This simple change made an instant difference in the way the Band appeared!
Back to the Drum Major’s entrance for just a moment, because this is the same entrance I used a few years later, when I was Drum Major. In my case, and I have no way of contrasting how I looked next to Bill, but I do remember that people would tease me because I was able to lean back so far that I gave the illusion that I was going to slip and fall backwards. I’m sure that’s the same illusion that Bill was trying to create.

I just may have reaped the benefit of the fact that the joke got pinned on me or I should say, the humor got pinned on me but, in fact, I picked up the nickname “Oops” from Bill Ellsworth, who, in my year, was the announcer for the Band. Bill was so worried that I, in fact, was going to slip that he used to joke about the horror of it all.

Here I am, being introduced on the microphone, as "Now down the field comes Drum Major "Oops Cheatham". So there are certain bandsmen that still attribute to me the name "Oops and more particularly a band supporter by the name of Ed Kerwin, who, at that time, was the ASUC photographer that took a lot of photographs of the Band. Even to this day, when I see Ed, he greets me with "Oops!"

In point of fact, it never did happen but . . .

No, it didn’t happen to Dan—but I remember a Drum Major in later years coming in on a muddy field. . . From the press box booth, we watched and waited for a disaster. He got very far down the field, beyond the 50-yard line, when he slipped in the mud and appeared to fall on his back, onto his sparkling white pants.
His reactions were so fast, though, and his adrenaline was so high, that when he fell, the hand not holding the baton hit the ground behind him and pushed him right back up into the air again—so quickly that he never actually hit the ground at all. There was not a mark on his pants. We watched, amazed.

One of the prerogatives of the Drum Major was to design his own uniform and I wanted to design a uniform that was spectacular.

The big movie hit of the year was a movie called The Student Prince and it was showing at a local theater in Berkeley. I took my notepad and sat through four consecutive showings and designed the uniform that I wore and upon which several succeeding uniforms were patterned.

Jon Elkus had a role in [the music for new Band.] The 1954 Band designed this standard pre-game in which they introduced a brand new marching style and a brand new uniform. So it was decided that they should have a new fanfare, as a method of adding to the drama of this introduction.

My memory is that, prior to this time, they frequently used Charles Cushing’s arrangement of the Hail to Cal fanfare. As part of this dramatic new change, they commissioned Jon Elkus to write a new fanfare, which he called the Golden Bear Fanfare.
One of the specifications that they directed him to follow was to allow for a dramatic announcement over a PA system. This was accomplished with a drum roll at the end of the Fanfare.

The drums go into a long roll and it's during that roll that the Drum Major starts running from the North Tunnel through the Band i to gain momentum. While this is going the roll is happening and at this point, at least in my case, the announcer, Ellsworth would say, "And here, to lead the Band down the field, is Drum Major Dan Cheatham". It was timed so that the Drum Major would emerge out of the front of the Band at that moment and the drums would go into the standard drum rolloff and then into Big C.

This Drum Major entrance is no longer used but, if you listen to the current recordings of the Band, you still hear that drum roll—but it only lasts one or two bars. In standard practice today, you go to the Big C itself. It only lasted a couple of musical bars but the idea was that that drum roll could be stretched out for announcement and so forth. And then, of course, in subsequent years, they've gone onto something new and different.
Bill, you have the historical distinction of being the Drum Major that introduced all of this new marching style. How successful do you feel you were in doing so?

At the beginning of the year, we all had great hopes and great aspirations that we would be able to accomplish everything that we wanted to do during that year. As the year went on, it was obvious that we couldn’t do that. There were too many changes to be done in one year and about the best we could hope for was to lay the groundwork for future generations.

I think we were successful at doing that, as evidenced by the fact that much of those marching styles survived for more than 20 years and some of them have been in use for over 40 years now. As far as the 1954 season goes, this was not the best Cal Band that’s ever been on the field. There were too many transitions; too many changes that were going on simultaneously, to really pull it all together.

On the other hand, I think at the end of the year we had a great feeling of accomplishment; we had a feeling that the Cal Band now was on a direction that would last it into the next generation. I don’t think we had any feelings of regret on any of the things that we did. Still, we would have liked to accomplish a lot more.

Well, marching style and uniform innovation is not the only mark that Bill Isbell left on the Cal Band. Tell us about your first encounter with what we call the "bomb."

It began as an accident. The bomb was first used in the Big Game of 1954 and was one of the Manager-Drum Major conflicts. The Manager figured that this was a piece of props. The Manager is in charge of props. The Drum Major figured that, since the bomb was part of the field show, he was in charge.

The Manager won out, as he frequently did.
We had as the last formation a concert formation facing the press box and the Band was playing Mussorgsky’s “Great Gate of Kiev”. While the music was going on, a very large box containing a “bomb” that Colescott had built was drug out to the middle of the Band. At the end of the piece of music, we were to set this thing off -- but we had to move the Band aside so nobody would be injured.

Now, remember that this was in the days of the cold war - 1954. [Politically and militarily] things were fairly hot, so atomic bombs were on everybody’s minds at the time. And, as the announcer said, "Now don your dark glasses and prepare for an explosion" the Band was supposed to start screaming and running away from the center of their formation.

This they did—and when Colescott pressed the button from the sideline, the damned bomb didn’t go off. I’ll swear that Bill was going to press his finger right through that button trying to get the thing to detonate, but it never went off.

The bomb had performed flawlessly in rehearsal, but this time, it didn’t just didn’t work. [A perfect example of the old Cal Band saying, “Good rehearsal—bad performance”.]

As a result, it was a helluva way to end a season—because the whole thing failed and, for a long time, we figured the entire season had gone down the tubes for us.

It put a squash on the season at that time. However, arising from the ashes, we decided that the first game of the next year would be a successful bomb. This time, it was successful (laughter).

In those days—and perhaps also in these days—there was a tradition that once you were Drum Major, you didn't march in somebody else's Band. So I never marched in the Cal Band again until Alumni Band days—so I had to find something else to do. I decided to become the Band pyrotechnician, so I got a pyrotechnic operator's license from the State and started making bombs for pre-game. This became another Band “tradition”.

Over a period of time I devised techniques where the bombs (almost) always worked. I could go on at some length about bombs I have known.

Good idea, Bill. Would you take some time to tell us about the evolution of the bomb, the physical construction, the physical preparation, and the technology of the bomb as you knew it.

OK, the statute of limitations has probably run out by now, anyway. But be prepared for some awful examples of how we learned the pyrotechnicians trade

The design that Colescott had made for the Big Game was a large sled, perhaps one meter by one meter by twenty centimeters high. It had a Ford spark plug and a battery inside of it. It had a huge arming lever. When you pulled the arming lever up, it raised a red flag and you knew the thing was about to go off. Another switch set the thing off... supposedly.
There was a packet of powder that was placed between two electrodes and on top of that packet of powder was placed a compressed bunch of smoke powder. The smoke powder was of the type used on stage to make magicians disappear. We got it from a local store that sold to theaters. We found that, if you pack it tightly enough, it would detonate instead of deflagrate.

So that was the technology when we went into the following year, except that I decided that now we would plug this thing into the wall and use 110 volts, which gave sufficient energy to set the thing off, just about every time. We also got some help from Red Devil Fireworks, which used to be down in San Carlos, until the factory blew apart and the authorities made Red Devil leave town and go someplace less populated.

So, for a while, we were using bombs that were made professionally. After Red Devil went out of business, we couldn't buy them anymore and, until 1957, I made my own. I left in 1958 for the Air Force for a couple of years. When I came back, I joined Stanford Research Institute and worked at their explosive test site.

The manufacture of the Cal Band bombs had led directly to my career as a shock wave physicist.

I got enough insight from the people I was working with at Stanford Research to make a better bomb system. We were still experiencing failures periodically and I designed a new type of bomb—again, made with flash powder.

I constructed the bombs at my home in Menlo Park and my little daughters—ages about 2 and 5 at that time—helped to make most of the bombs that were used during the next three or four years. They would carefully pack the flash powder in the shells—their little hands were much better than mine at the fine work.

Now—at least most of the time—these things would work, although they were in a constant state of evolution. One of the bombs that I built was designed upon an inverted “shaped charge” effect that I had been developing at SRI. This particular bomb was supposed to direct all of its force straight down and make kind of a pancake sort of effect, as the onrushing gases spread out from the explosion.

I took it up to Memorial Stadium to try it out. With maybe 30 or 40 bandsmen gathered around me, I carefully explained how all the forces were going to be directed straight down. But, when we set the thing off, there was a puff and the damned thing disappeared out of sight. Went straight up!

It turned out I got it exactly backwards. It must have traveled hundreds of feet straight up in the air (laughter). Everyone said, “Oh, look at that, how pretty”. Then, when they suddenly realized that there was one very heavy thing about to come down, they scattered (laughter). Nobody knew which way to run. They knocked each other down, running around the field. Keystone Cops time. The thing landed on one of the seats of the stadium—burst apart, scared the living daylights out of everybody.
Another bomb . . . I decided to double the powder charge. Since I didn't want to make a bigger bomb, I put two of them side by side and had wires going to each. When I pressed the fire button, the first bomb went off and tore the leads off the second bomb before it detonated.

The second bomb blew to the side and went toward the crowd. It had started to burn and you could see the thing kind of smoldering as it flew.

So here we have a bomb that's about to go off and I'm standing there, horrified. But it hits the rail right in front of the seats and bounces back onto the playing field—instead of up into the crowd.

Did it detonate?

It lay there smoldering. A kid was running along and saw the bomb, thought it was a good thing to take, put it under his jacket, and ran off with it.

It didn't go off.

(Laughter). God.

The most terrifying one of all was the first bomb that we made for pre-game. The bomb hung fire and sat there and smoldered and smoldered. The cheerleaders and the pom pom girls were jumping up and down, waiting to take the field. Finally, they couldn't wait anymore, so they all ran out. A pom pom girl ran directly over the top of the smoldering bomb. Shortly after, it went off—but not when she was on top of it.

I need to explain a technical term here. To hang fire is when a charge does not detonate and it's a term that I know is common in the field of artillery back in the days when they were still using cannon balls and things where you would pack the powder. I guess the same thing happened to a musket, where you would pack the powder in and pack the ball in and then ignite it and nothing would happen. So there you are, you're not sure, is that cannon is going to go or not and then if becomes difficult because in the days of cannon balls, you didn't have a breach that opened to remove it and even if you did, you didn't want to be opening it at the same moment that it detonated. So the phrase "hang fire" merely means "My God! What's gonna happen next".

Dan reminds me that his band performed the same atomic bomb sequence three years later. The scene was the same in that there was a concert formation. At the end of the concert, the announcement was made that an atomic bomb was going to be set off. Don your dark glasses.

Something that Dan remembered that I had forgotten was that, in both editions of the stunt, the Band members were marching around like electrons in small orbits, leading up to the moment of explosion, playing music that continued to go up on a chromatic scale—higher and higher and higher—until finally the bomb went off.
But again, the bomb didn't go off. For reasons nobody knows, from beginning to end, this was an absolutely doomed show. The technology improved after 1960 when I got to SRI, primarily because we started using bridge wires “borrowed” from their explosive test site. With these, the reliability of the bomb became substantially greater.

Now, a bridge wire consists of a small element through which electricity is passed. A small wire vaporizes and makes a spark, so when you plant the unit inside of your explosive [or in this case, the flash powder], the bridge wire goes off, the energy is communicated to the flash powder, and it detonates.

There were a variety of changes that were made to the bomb at that time. For instance, heavier walled cardboard tubes were used to contain the blast for a longer period of time, which allowed us to get the same sort of bang out of the smaller charge.

We started mixing powders of inert materials of different colors, so that we could color the blast blue or yellow. Once we made two of them at one time. One was supposed to be a yellow bomb and the other was supposed to be a blue bomb. They both went off at the same time and the cloud came out green. (laughter)

By this time, we had a control box that allowed you to arm the bomb properly, to know whether or not there was power in advance instead of embarrassing yourself on the field. The control box became a standard piece of equipment, quite highly reliable and so, over a period of time, we were able to get the misfires and hang fires down so they were essentially zero, using more modern technology.

However, not everything always worked. Perhaps the most famous story that I was involved with had to do with the playing of the 1812 Overture at the UCLA game in 1965. The Band was grouped on the sideline facing the press box in a concert formation and was about to play the 1812 Overture.

The 1812 Overture ends, as everyone knows, with a series of timed cannon blasts—set off at specific spots in the music. For this extravaganza, we had an electrician make a control box that had 12 buttons on it that would be pushed at the proper moment. We tested the control box in the field shortly before the game and, when everything worked fine, we took it to the stadium.

We had 12 fairly realistic looking cardboard cannons lined up in the South end zone. When the Band moved to its concert formation, waterboys carried out the cannons and put them on the 10-yard line. The waterboys then came back in a very orderly manner and each took a metal plate with a bomb on it, attached to a piece of wire, and placed it in front of a cannon.

The idea, of course, was that I would push a button and it would look as if the cannon had gone off. In order to make sure that I pushed the button at the right time, the Assistant Director crouched in front of me, ready to give me a cue.

If you can picture this now, I'm facing the Band from the end zone; James Berdahl is directing. The cannons are lined along the 10-yard line, going from sideline to sideline. The bombs are in front of each one of the cannons, with their firing lines are stretched out to my box.
Crouched over, facing me, is the Assistant Director, waiting to give me the cue by pointing to me each time a bomb is to be set off. It was a huge production setting this thing up and they announced over the PA system that they were going to have this first-ever cannon event in the stadium.

Did this the first time we did the 1812?

The first time with cannons, so it really was a big production.

The music began, and it is a fairly lengthy piece before the cannons go off. So the tension starts to build here a bit. Everyone's eyes are on the cannons, waiting for things to go off.

Now, we wanted to make a very special show, so we had what amounted to a double sized bomb in front of each cannon (Dan laughs) and each cannon was going to produce one heck of a bomb blast. Finally, came the time to set off the first blast . .

The Director gave me the high sign, pointing his finger down, I pressed button number one and TWELVE CANNONS WENT OFF SIMULTANEOUSLY. 12 double charges! It was a blast to end all blasts!!! Because these bombs were made of flash powder, it looked like an atomic bomb had gone off. You could not believe how loud and bright it was!

I looked around and saw people running away from the bomb blast, in all directions. A huge wave of people started screaming and running for the exits. There was complete pandemonium.

The blast was so large that it blew the Student Director's cape over his head and he fell flat on his face (laughter) . . . landing on the switch box. I was absolutely flabbergasted. I had no idea what to do. The noise was so loud that the Band stopped playing—and all I could hear was James Berdahl, mightily singing the 1812, trying to get the Band playing again.

After maybe 20 bars or so of his singing, some of the Band recovered their senses and started playing again—and by 10 or 15 bars after that, perhaps two-thirds of the Band were back to playing pretty much the same tune. At about that time, the smoke from the blast drifted over the Band and they couldn't see Berdahl any more—so everybody stopped playing again!

A most embarrassing moment for all—and made much more personally embarrassing for me when the Band went off the field to the sideline and came down en mass to the end zone, where I crouched, looking for a hole to hide in. They took my pants off, marched me to the 50-yard line of the Cal side and chased me across the field—pantless—over to the UCLA side. The UCLA Rally Committee, perhaps justifiably upset with me, then chased me back. (Typist laughing too hard to type!)

I refer the reader of this interview to the oral history interview with Paul Bostwick who, it turns out, through a set of circumstances, was walking to the stadium, hoping he would get there in time to see the half-time performance, when he heard this huge explosion from somewhere on campus and, having been a former bandsman, had immediately deduced what had happened. Anyway, I'm sure that readers of this interview would be interested to read Paul's interview.

I also see the interview with John Larissou, the current Band pyrotechnician for details of another performance of the 1812 overture, using 12 bombs.]
This wasn't the first time Jim Berdahl got involved with fireworks. There was a case in the Los Angeles Coliseum in Berdahl's first year as Director of the Band. I'm wondering if you recollect anything of that.

I had wondered why, when I proposed the subject of bombs as a regular pre-game item to Mr. Berdahl, he had such a jaundiced view. Dan has prompted me to remember what happened to Jim down in the Coliseum, during my freshman year.

We had planned the fireworks as a fairly small display, as part of either the pre-game or the half-time show. I don't believe we ever got permission to do so, that probably e didn't even realize that permission was necessary. At the same time, a powerful LA figure, Earl C. Anthony, wanted to do a much larger fireworks display at the Coliseum and, I gathered, had been denied permission to do so. But the rumor among the Coliseum staff was that he was going to do it anyway. So people had heightened sensitivities about fireworks in the Coliseum on that Saturday.

Turns out that Earl C. Anthony did not put on his fireworks display but the Cal Band, walking kind of blindly into the situation, put on its own. The authorities down there were upset. I remember the Fire Chief coming out of the stands and questioning people about who was responsible for the fireworks display. They thought that it was Earl C. Anthony disobeying them—being disobedient and going ahead in his arrogant way and putting on this display.

Turned out that it was just the Cal Band, bumbling along. The result was that James Berdahl was arrested. He got out of custody a short time later, but it must have taken some tall explaining that he and the Band were not part of Earl Anthony's fireworks display.

*Bill, I appreciate your insight on that because so far in these interviews, I've not been able to get any detailed insight into this event. [See interview with Bill Colescott.]*

My recollection is that the senior officers of the Band went behind the scenes in the Coliseum and were eventually successful in straightening out the misunderstandings and that Berdahl was back amongst the Band by the end of the football game.

*Incidentally, Earl C. Anthony was the first editor of the campus humor magazine call Pelican. He later became a wealthy dealer in Packard automobiles and also owned a Los Angeles radio station. I think it was station KNX.*

In 1956, I think it was, Anthony donated funds to build the Pelican building with the intent that it would be the permanent home for the magazine. Then-University Gift Officer Stanley Mc Cafery was actually cultivating him for a larger gift. But he would have nothing of it beyond the Pelican Building. He even commissioned Doris Rich to produce a sculpture of a pelican that stands there today.

The Straw Hat Band played for the dedication and unveiling of the pelican. They even had some guy dressed as Jungle Jim leading around a tame pelican on a leash.

When they unveiled the statue, there in a strategic position was a football painted gold as if the pelican had laid a golden egg.
In time the magazine folded and it was renamed Anthony Hall. It now serves as the headquarters for the Graduate Assemble, a sort of parallel ASUC-like organization that serves the interest of graduate students.

What other final anecdotes do you have to tell on the subject of pyrotechnics?

The Rally Committee decided they were going to have a victory cannon, which they put on the field. It was a cannon without a bore and so they placed the charge on a post, welded to the front of the cannon. When they fired, it looked like the cannon was being discharged.

For some time, I made the charges that they wired onto the post. At one time, an improperly welded post flew off the muzzle and flew towards the crowd. Some time after that, they moved the cannon up onto the hill, in a safer position. It struck me as a good idea.

There's another cannon of some consequence to the Cal Band—known as the Stanford Cannon. Stanford had obtained an Old Spanish war cannon that they planned to fire off after every touchdown against Cal in the Big Game.

The cannon was too heavy to carry and had no trunion to it, so there was no way to move it around. They just simply laid it on the ground, threw the powder into it, and got ready to shoot the thing off.

Since this was the first time that they were to fire the thing, I went over and inspected the cannon and told their Stunt Comm that I thought that was a very dangerous thing they were about to do. Of course, they paid no attention to a Cal Bandsman and so I went to the Fire Chief and said, “I think these guys are doing a stunt that's fairly dangerous”. The Fire Chief ignored me, too.
Well, those guys were even crazier than we were and knew even less about what they were doing. They loaded the cannon full of powder and put newspaper in as wadding. Of course, when the cannon fired, the newspaper immediately burst into flames.

Eventually, there was a Stanford touchdown and they fired the cannon off. The blast went from the sidelines all the way to the field . . . and set one of our waterboys on fire. He was walking on the edge of the field and pieces of the newspaper engulfed him and he had to be patted out. He was never really in much danger but it sure scared the daylights out of him.

There's more than one story having to do with a cannon and a rod. I refer you to the oral history with John Larrisou for more specific detail, but there was another case of a safety violation of a Stanford cannon. They were reloading the cannon and were using the ramrod in this reloading process. There were some embers still in the chamber of the cannon and reloading ignited the powder—forcing the ramrod out and throwing it across the field -- I'm not sure how far -- but it was projected out of the cannon.

This led to a sequence of events which you hear about in John Larrisou's, as well as Professor Bob Stiedel's interviews. This sequence of events led to the Pacific Coast Conference making a ruling that outlawed our cannon in our stadium and the Band had to march one full season without a cannon. The subsequent events make a very interesting reading of the other interviews.

Bill, I think it's time that we just back up now and make some observations from over the years that you've been associated with. Early in the conversation, you mentioned walking into the Band Room and seeing card games going on. It seems to me that I remember you as being one of the active participants in these card games. Give us some insight into that.

The card games in the Band Room would have been described in legal terms as an "attractive nuisance." It was very difficult to keep away from them. They were very dynamic. Allen Humphrey was there constantly. Humphrey maintained an outstanding grade point average in physics, as I remember. How he did it, I have no idea, because I rarely saw him away from the Band Room. Allen was the mainstay of our card game group and was our best player.

He was also extremely volatile. Once, after he lost a particular hand that he wanted to make, I saw him jump from the window Eshleman Hall, two floors down towards the creek. . I've seen him run screaming from the room, throwing the cards in the air, and going out on Eshleman Court and throwing the cards around (laughs), because he was dealt a bad hand. This was an excitable group that played cards.

Very frequently, we used to play from 7:30 in the morning until midnight or 2 a.m. You'd give your hand or a seat at the table over to somebody else and he'd trade off when you came back from class. The card games and the ping-pong table were the two big social events.

Now, the ping-pong table also had another use. When we started the Stunt Committee and began handing the stunt sheets out before marching rehearsal, we used a mimeograph machine, long before the days of Xerox.
The first marching rehearsal of the week was Wednesday afternoon, so everybody had to have their poop sheets in their hands by that time. We would start drawing the final version of the poop sheets on Tuesday morning. We’d draw them all day long and, around 5 o’clock at night, when most classes were done, we’d have them done and mimeographed.

We would then place them on the ping-pong table and would begin a game of what we called “ring-around”. We’d place 30 piles of individual sheets on the table. You would start at the first sheet and walk around the table, picking up and collating the single sheets into one completed poop sheet.

When we finished with the thirty, we’d staple them together and start another thirty. So our collation machine was the ping-pong table in this ring-around procedure. It was labor-intensive, but it worked very well.

In general, after the poop sheers were completed, we would start working and planning on how we would handle the marching rehearsal the following day and, for the entire Fall Semester of 1954, I never went to bed on Tuesday night. Every Tuesday night was preparation for the rehearsal on Wednesday.

I would go to my eight o’clock mathematics class the following morning, after having not been asleep all night and I would hold my pencil over the edge of the desk. When I fell asleep, the pencil would hit the floor and wake me up. The following semester, I repeated that class. (laughs)

It’s a good time to ask the question: what was your final grade point average when you graduated?

I don’t think that I’ll mention what my grade point was that semester. It fell into a classification called “undistinguished”. However, my overall grade point was high enough so that in much later years, I was able to get back into graduate school and to get my doctorate.

While the Band may have been good for many other things in a person’s career, it was not necessarily good for grade point averages. It became a tradition that, if you had a bad semester, when your grades came in, you would take the post cards they came on and tack them to the bulletin board in the Band Room. Everybody would commiserate with you.

We used to call those “cinch notices”. I remember them as being on IBM cards. By putting them up on the bulletin board . . . I guess it was—in a sort of left handed kind of way—a symbol of what a good Bandsman you were, because you spent more time with the Band than with your studies.

I’m sure there were bandsmen who flunked out and never did complete, or get back to college educations. Nevertheless, I think the Band, on a whole, has been able to hold its own academically with other students on campus.
Would you tell us about the routine after a football game was over?

The routine was really quite standard over the period of time I was there. We left the field and formed up outside the team balcony and shouted for the coach. Sometimes we would shout for an exceptional player and Pappy would wind up bringing the diminutive Smitty or Johnny Oschevski or one of the players that had made a star of himself that day.

Pappy would address the crowd and we would cheer ourselves hoarse while these heroes were being introduced. Pappy had a very fine sense of how to play the crowd. He also had a fine appreciation of the fact that, in good times and bad, the Cal Band was always there.

That was a big thing for Pappy . . . he couldn't depend upon the administration sometimes, not even on his own players, but he could always depend upon the support of the Cal Band.

So we always came out and sometimes it was late because they were having a prayer meeting or whatever they did after the game. We would always wait until Pappy showed up and later, the assistant coaches showed up on the balcony and they would deliver stirring addresses—telling us why they won or why they lost and we would cheer on and on and eventually we would turn around, form up, and march down to Bowles Hall.

There were certain songs, the names of which don't come to mind, that we sang on the way down to Bowles. When we got there, we sang a certain set of songs to the members congregated on the lawn and they would then sing back to us.

Was there a favorite song for the crowd?

We would play “By the Old Pacific’s Rolling Waters” to them and we would sing to them and then they would sing back to us. It was very wholesome and nice atmosphere there -- win, lose or draw, you could always count upon having this feeling of camaraderie with the Hall.

As we continued on down to Eshleman, it was the tradition that the Drum Major would wave his baton back and forth. The Band would sing Stanford Waltz and break off into little groups dancing around each other and twirling arms and generally carousing. At the end of the waltz, the Band would form back up into a tight unit and proceed on down to Eshleman Hall where they broke up.

We most of us would then go out for dinner—sometimes at Larry Blake’s Rothskeller on Telegraph. In those days, the drinking age of 21 was upheld pretty rigorously, so there was no way we could go off campus to drink to our victory or to our sorrow—even with beer.

In your years in the Band, did you do much in the way of street marching, or parades?

Street marches were an important part of the Band function at that time. It's how the rest of the town that didn't see us in the stadium knew that we existed. So, whenever given the opportunity to march in a Berkeley parade or to make one of our own, we would form up and march down the street; we’d march very well—with a lot of spirit.
We devised certain dances: “Rock Around the Clock”, in particular, was charted then—perhaps after ’54—and has been used for many years. It was devised for a street dance, coming down Shattuck Avenue.

As I alluded to before, there was always the problem of the snatched hats. I remember Larry Strom—the Drum Major that followed me in 1955—heading up a street march. Several of us who had been in the Band before were riding shotgun on the edge of the crowd, to see whether or not we could keep the hat snatchers down to a minimum.

I can remember Larry chasing after a fellow that had snatched a hat. When he cornered him, the guy turned around and butted Larry in the chest as hard as he could. Larry brought his wooden baton down broke it on the fellow’s back. We all thought that Larry was a hero.

Rock Around the Clock became a very important part of the Band repertoire, after we used it in that Parade of Lights. I believe it was the first real crowd-pleasing dance step that we performed on a football field. Other oral histories mention that we brought down the house when we did that dance; so Rock Around the Clock as a performance dance step is very significant to the history of the Band.

I was marching in the Band at that point and I remember it wasn’t a wooden baton that Larry used. It was a short, made of metal. We called it a twirling baton. My memory of it is that after running down the street after this guy, Larry returned with a smile of triumph on his face and the hat in his hand and his metal baton was bent, as if you had whacked it over a fence railing.

There’s been more than one baton broken over people’s heads. The event I was talking about with Larry Strom and his wooden baton. The previous year, at the USC game, a fellow took off with a hat and I took off after him with my metal baton and turned it into a curve over his back.

Which gives me a good lead on the subject of what are your memories of trips south?

In many ways, the trips to LA were really the highlight of the year, we got away from home; we got away from campus; we got to have a hell of a good time. We stayed at the Hotel Commodore—which everyone referred to as the “Hotel Commode”.

In my second year, I was housed with another clarinet player, a very stolid, mature fellow who rarely smiled—Jerry had no known sense of humor. But when he and I went up to our 8th floor hotel room and got ready to go to bed, he opened this suitcase and took out a long string of firecrackers. He lit the firecrackers and threw them out the window. Without a hint of expression, Jerry closed the window and went to straight to bed! I have no clue to what he was thinking.
The other thing that comes to mind on the trips down South was eating at Clifton's Cafeteria. Clifford Clinton was the owner of that cafeteria and was a renowned person in the Los Angeles area. He was renowned for several reasons, including the fact that he would never turn a person away without a meal. If you had no money, you could still eat with out paying.

The Cal Band would go in and would play a concert for Mr. Clinton—amongst the colored waterfalls that were a main feature of the restaurant decor. The place had a unique and interesting architecture place that fascinated all of us. After we finished our concert, we would absolutely chow down. It was one of the first places where you could eat as much as you wished and we must have eaten him out of house and home. We really enjoyed going to Clifton's.
How were the bus trips with the Band?

It was the goal on most Band trips to be able to sing from the moment we left Berkeley until pulled into the Hotel "Commode". It was a long, 7 or 8 hour trip down Highway 99 before Interstate 5 was built.

We'd start out singing a bunch of Band songs, saving our favorite song, "Down by the River Pardee", for a little while—savoring the moment. Then we would start in.

As we sung, each person would chime in with a verse that he remembered and when, finally, we ran out of verses, two or three people with astounding memories for dirty limericks would go on for perhaps another hour.

We tried to continue to sing without stopping, from San Francisco area to Los Angeles area and, generally, we were able to get at least as far as Stan's Drive-in—or was it Mel’s?—in Bakersfield. We frequently had problems there. Gangs—or what passed for gangs in those days—would be there to greet us and they liked to push us around. Things happened—some of them not all that pleasant—but we always helped each other out and climbed on the buses and went on.

There was always a great concern in the Band management that, when we reached Los Angeles, we would do something that would not bring honor to the University and, frequently, they were right. In 1954, we kind of decided we were going to try to put a damper on some of the activities that had gone on in the past.

I remember going to each bus and using a phrase originated by Bill Ellsworth, "Remember who you are, who you represent—but try to act human anyway." This turned out to be the exact right approach, because although “Cal Bandsmen don't take orders from anybody”—especially in these areas of personal freedom—the idea of linking this freedom to our responsibility to the University seemed to strike a responsive chord. We weren't really ordering them around; we were putting them on their own recognizance.

Bill, I was on one of the buses when you did that and, since I had had some previous history as a water boy, I had some perspective. I would say it was a very small event in terms of the amount of time it took to happen, but it was a very major event in terms of the effect it had on the Band.

Bear in mind that we were just ending the era that followed from the veterans. While many of these older bandsmen had now graduated, the younger, incoming bandsmen still took a lot of their cues from the older folk. Sometimes, the rowdyism did get out of hand.

There are two sides to a bandsman. There are times when he is very responsible and something we can all be proud of—and there are other moments when the opposite is true. The bus trips were a natural moment for this other behavior to come through.
Mr. Berdahl, of course, being the only adult present, was worried both about his own reputation and the reputation of the University. When we arrived at the hotel, Mr. Berdahl went from bus to bus and said, "Now come on guys, behave yourselves. Don't flush cherry bombs down the toilets. Don't throw mattresses out the windows. I want you all to behave."

Of course, this had the wrong psychological effect. In fact, people would say, "Oh, I forgot about the cherry bombs. Let's try that one again."—and rowdyism would go on.

In the Colescott/Isbell era, a decision was made to look for ways to modify this behavior and, as Bill pointed out, they came up with the right psychological approach.

So here I am, sitting on this bus, waiting to get off. Since I was not one of the rowdy types, I wasn't worried about my own behavior—but I knew what was coming. But, when Bill Isbell got on the bus and said the now-famous expression, "Remember who you are and who you represent—and try and act human anyway." The effect was perfect.

That's all he had to say. He got off the bus and the sobering effect that it had was quite amazing. Even today, although it's not as necessary and it's not as dramatic as it was at that moment, but even today, one of the Band watchwords is "Remember who you are and who you represent."

I want to tell you this, Bill, because this is something you should tuck away in your memory as one of the lasting and important effects you had on the Cal Band.

At lunch Bill, you asked me to remind you to tell the story of the time you quit the Band.

There was a period of several days, during the football season of '54, when the Cal Band was without a Drum Major. It happened just before the annual All-University event in the Greek Theater.

That year was the 25th anniversary of UCLA and, in order to mock UCLA, we decided to have a UCLA birthday party. Colescott insisted—and got the rest of the Executive Committee to agree with him—that the Drum Major was to come out in a diaper, with a banner that said "25 years" on it. The Drum Major declined, citing massive embarrassment, and having a bad cold, and anything else that came to mind.

The vote of Executive Committee was 4 to 1 against the Drum Major. The Drum Major lost and the Drum Major resigned. The hell with that—I was not going to come out in a diaper.

Fortunately for all of us, late on Thursday afternoon, before the All-U ceremony and the Cal-UCLA game, the Executive Committee caved in and I became the DM once again.

The "All-University" weekend was one of the efforts put forth by then-President of the University, Robert Gordon Sproul. At this time it was very clear that multi-campus university—Berkeley, Davis, UCLA and Riverside and the School of Medicine in San Francisco—needed to foster a feeling of unity . . . one University rather than four separate universities.
So the All-University weekend happened once a year on the occasion of the football game between UCLA and Cal. It was held at whichever school was the host that year. The rally was meant to create unity between the campuses. Rooters from all of the campuses were invited to be in the audience.

The two major bands were there and to the extent that Riverside and Davis might have had a Band, I think they were also allocated space on the stage, but they were probably a fairly minor bands...dance bands or pep-bands. (Off-microphone: Bill reminds me that the Santa Barbara was also on board at that time.)

In any case, the incident that Bill's talking about was to not just a Cal pep rally with our own rooters, but it this All-University function, that included the Provosts of all the various campuses—we didn't have Chancellors in those days—and all the out of town rooters.

Bill, I don't blame you for taking the stand that you chose. I might have done the same thing, if it had been my year.

Pre-game rally at Greek Theater; one of the last times we wore the mustard-yellow pants
Back for a moment to street marching. Was there anything special about the Cal Band style of street marching that would set it aside from other bands in parades?

Many times, bands going down the street seemed to be performing as a matter of course. We decided early on that if we were going to expend the energy to march, we were going to make it an exceptional experience for the crowd.

What Cal Band had, in abundance, was energy and we tried to get that energy and the spirit across to the crowd as we were going by.

We did this with very loud drums, a very distinctive drum beat—something that you could hear coming from a long ways away—and a very fast pace. We used two different steps, a strolling pace when we were tired, and a very fast step otherwise. We kept driving ahead, inexorably.

It always struck me that, when the Cal Band was in full stride, we seemed to be an elemental force—like thunder or a hurricane—rolling down the street like a great bundle of energy, with a fast beat. Moving ahead, always ahead, at a very fast pace. It was a very dynamic example of what a Band could be, in comparison to the other bands that we met.

I would agree that the idea of a moving ball of energy is a good description. My memory is that the drumbeat stayed the same for the two steps. At that point, we hadn't done much with regards to introducing new and different cadences. There was a single cadence, called the "Cal Band Drum Beat."

The change from full-step to half-step was kind of dramatic. On a signal from the Drum Major, the Band would change their step and would march at cut-time. We were still marching the high step, Ohio State style but doing it in cut-time made it look kind of jerky. For every two beats, we would make one movement, which allowed us to conserve our energy.

Today's bandsmen call that move a "jerky" step. The difference is that the present Band uses the jerky step only as part of certain movements on the field, where we used it primarily in the parade route to allow us to catch our breath.

We're running out of time, Bill, so let's reminisce about certain characters, certain personalities in the Band. For starters, let's talk about Chris Tellefsen.

Chris was one of the more unusual persons around the Band. He wasn't actually affiliated the Band, at least not during my years. He became an honorary Band member some years later.

Chris worked in the room directly below 5 Eshleman Hall—the basement of the Eshleman building. I'm not sure what his official title was, but he did two things: he had a woodworking shop down there and he had what amounted to a psychologist's couch.

Chris had the trust of the people in the Band. You could tell Chris anything you wanted to and it would never get back to anybody else. All of us needed a father about that time. For the freshmen and sophomores, especially, being away from home for the first time, we needed
somebody to talk to. Chris was never long on giving advice, but he was very good at listening to your problems and nodding wisely at the proper time.

As a result, I suppose that most every member of the Band, at one time or other, sat down and unloaded on with Chris, down in Paul Wooker’s shop in the basement below 5 Eshleman Hall. We would lay out problems that we had with the Administration, problems at home, problems with girlfriends, problems with other members of the Band—and the one person that you could count on for a sympathetic ear was Chris.

He was always devoted to the Band, very devoted to the Band members. His was a very strong hand in keeping the Band together and keeping the people on the right track. All in all, Chris had a very positive influence on the overall course of the Band during those years.

In later years, after he had to withdraw from the Band because of health reasons, Chris assumed near legendary proportions. Tellefsen Hall was named for him for very good reasons. It gives some idea of the devotion that people had for him.

Chris was not a dynamic, active participant in the Band. What he was a kind of a rock—and that was the sort of thing the Band sadly lacked most of the time.

Also, he told good jokes.

Bob Desky?

There were two things that were absolute traditions—that you could not get by a Cal Band Banquet without. One was Bill Ellsworth doing a soft shoe dance to Tea for Two and the other was Bob Desky’s ironing board joke
Desky was a fruitcake. The thing that saved him was he was also a very, very smart fellow. People respected his wit and the needle that he carried with him, which punctured any balloon. His puns were exceptionally original and off-beat.

We really enjoyed Desky. I suspect that many Bandsmen have heard of the ironing board joke. Year after year after year, Bob would tell this same, tired story. It was probably the favorite of all time for the Cal Band and that's surprising, because it's a terrible joke.

And the way Desky would tell it was not all that good. It's just that the combination of the terrible joke and his inept delivery made for an absolutely hilarious time. Bob insisted that, since he had badly messed up telling the joke when he was a Freshman—some time long ago, shrouded now in medieval mists—he was destined to tell it again and again, until he got it right. Sort of an Ancient Mariner of the comedy scene.

As far as I know, he never did do justice to that joke and so, every year, the crowd at the Band Banquet would insist that Bob tell his story.

*The joke is really a lousy joke and the punch line is really very subtle.* Probably, many people never do get and, even if they do, it's really not high class humor.

*And that's exactly it. The fact that it was a corny joke—told by a marginally poor comedian—made for a sense of anticipation.* “Oh boy, in a few minutes, Desky's gonna tell the ironing board joke.” This set the scene for an absolutely hilarious few moments over an absolutely nothing event.

*Bob told the joke in his own oral history interview and even there, he told it rather poorly, a little bit hurriedly, and without some of the side humor that would go along with him actually performing the joke in front of an audience.* The Bandsman’s Albatross.

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You've just given me a good lead-in, with your memory of Bill Ellsworth doing the soft shoe to *Tea for Two*. What are your memories of Ellsworth?

Ellsworth probably the most memorable man in Cal Band at that time. I remember Bill more fondly than any other person. I'm not quite sure just why, except that he seemed to represent the spirit of all the good things about Berkeley—the true blue atmosphere, the true blue attitude, the idea that one should put the University ahead of one’s person, one’s anything.

For Bill, the most important thing in life was the University. He's the only person I've ever known who was like that and I honor him for it. All of us have a certain degree of devotion to the University. For many of us, the devotion is substantial. But for Bill, Cal was his entire life; it consumed him.

Some of my fondest recollections of the Band trips to Los Angeles are of Ellsworth, standing on a park bench in Pershing Square, giving his famous soliloquy, "Hear I stand, far from the light of my shining Campanile." He was the kind of guy about which the phrase "true blue" was invented.
I was very disappointed in Ellsworth because he died so very prematurely, from constantly smoking. I've been angry about that for over 30 years.

*Bill, I never thought about it until you just said it. But that's perhaps one of the best epitaphs for Bill that I can think of.* "I've been mad for 30 years, ever since he died," which is, I think, a nice subtle way of expressing the love that we all had for Bill, and our sorrow that he's not with us any longer.

*I'd like to describe this scene a little bit that Bill has alluded to.* Pershing Square is right across the street from the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. It’s almost the exact same setting as of Union Square in San Francisco, across the street from the St. Francis Hotel. Pershing Square also served as a gathering for people that were down and out—what today are called homeless people. In those days, we called them bums.

Pershing Square served as what Londoners know as Hyde Park—the place where people came and set up their soapboxes and expounded on whatever subject it was that fit their fancy. In the parlance we use today, we would call it free speech.

This scene of soap box activity—the down and out Union Square and the image that Bill was describing a moment ago was the equivalent of standing on a soapbox or a park, above the crowd, and carrying on about the University of California and the light from the shining Campanile. Ellsworth had a routine that those of us in the era will remember, but I'm having a little trouble describing. But that's Bill Ellsworth… another memory of Bill Ellsworth.

Now, the reason the Band would have been at the area of Pershing Square was because in that was where the Band started a short, one or two block, march down to Clifton's Cafeteria. On page 28 of the Cal Band History Book, Pride of California, there’s a picture of that 1954 band marching down in the street in the direction of Clifton's Cafeteria and Drum Major Bill Isbell and Student Director Tom Miller are in the photograph. Anyway, that sets the scene for how Pershing Square plays a role in the life of the Cal Band.

Ellsworth worked at the ASUC store, and it was a very unhappy situation for him there. He had a boss that was absolutely overbearing. Bill wanted to be with the Band. He didn't want to work but he had to, in order to support himself. So he spent his time as close to the Band as he could get—and the store was just a few paces away from 5 Eshleman.

The store manager was known to be a bit of a tyrant and, although he was reputed not to love anyone or anything, actually he did have one love. He had a tall plant, a *ficus elastica*, sitting in the entrance to the store. Every day he would dust the plant and, periodically, he would oil its leaves. It was his pride and joy.

But, very mysteriously, over a period of time, the plant got sick. After a while, the leaves started to fall off and the plant eventually died. The store manager was distraught. It wasn't until quite some time, perhaps a year later, that Bill told us that he had been pouring salt water in the pot, a little bit at a time every day. [For another perspective on Ellsworth's relationship with the ASUC store, see the interview with Forrest Tregae.]
In the sixties, it became obvious that the Band would benefit if it had a residence in which to live, one which would act as a focal point for life away from the Band Room. A group, led by Colescott and Desky and a few others, put together a prospectus for such a hall. It was decided to name it “Tellefsen Hall”. I served on the original Board of Directors for the hall.

Bill Ellsworth was a major contributor toward making this idea a reality. It was his dream that we would have a residence hall for band members and he worked very hard towards putting this together.

The house that was purchased at that time was actually only the first of two Tellefsen Halls. It had been Bill's dream that his old fraternity house, the Lambda Chi Alpha House, would finally become Tellefsen Hall. [Colescott adds: That is how I remember it, although no one but Ellsworth took the idea seriously. We were pleased with what we got!!]

After the Band had outgrown the first Tellefsen Hall house, a deal was made to buy the Lambda Chi Alpha House. Bill took us to the new house and showed us two stones, placed in a garden path, that had been taken from the Campanile and the old Newman Hall. He was extremely proud of the fact that he had personally salvaged the stones and had placed them in the path in the garden.

Bill fell ill in the days before the hall was finally ready. It was obvious after a while that Bill hadn’t long to live and so the people that were in charge—I believe principally Bob Desky—worked very hard to get the Articles of Incorporation finished. They visited Bill at the hospital just before he died and tell him that his dream had been realized—that Tellefsen Hall was a reality.

Bill died soon thereafter, and had a very well attended funeral. Bill bears the distinction of being the only Cal Band member ever to be buried in his band uniform.

On the subject of significant characters in the Band, are there any concluding remarks that you’d like to make?

I think for 25 or 30 years, Bill Colescott was the single most important factor in the Band. He and Jim Berdahl probably did more to set the tenor of the Band than any others. Bill is a person of extraordinary energy and drive and intelligence and great organizational capabilities.

His forte was bringing young people along so that they could realize their potential and even after he left the Band, he was able to bring along younger people to their great advantage. After Bill's tenure as an officer of the Band, he maintained a very strong influence on the Band activities.

As I mentioned earlier, in the beginning, it was not at all obvious that Bill and I would be friends. I think the way things were set up were that the Manager and the Drum Major were natural protagonists and Bill and I fit the bill very, very well. We fought each other at every turn.
Bill, I'm going to turn the microphone over to you to ad lib about any other characters that come to your mind.

Concert band tours were very important to the Band because it was where our musical talent was showcased. It was also very important to Jim Berdahl, who was essentially a musician and not a drillmaster, because his real rewards came from a band that played well.

This we were able to do this during the concert tours, although not frequently during the marching part of the season. We traveled extensively on these tours, to Susanville and other small towns in Northern California. But the trip that stands out most in my mind was when we played Folsom Prison.

We arrived at the prison in the afternoon and were led into the prison yard, which was divided into two distinct parts. On one side were the prisoners and the other side was the Cal Band. We had played a concert and were lined up getting ready to go into the eating hall. On the other side of the fence the prisoners were getting lined up for their meal.

They were a rough looking crowd and, as we stared at each other, we thought that most of them looked friendly. We'd given them a concert and they liked us, I thought quite a bit. But there was one fellow who must have stood 6 feet 8 or 6 feet 9, probably 350 lbs. He had a shaven big bullet head, no neck whatsoever, very heavy shoulders and he was not smiling at us at all.

He walked over to the fence, looked up and down our line, and said, "college shits." He then turned around and went back into the line. I have rarely encountered any animosity quite this strong. It remains in my mind 40 years later.

We had a delightful lunch, served by the trustees of the prison—good china, good silverware, good food, and good camaraderie. We climbed back on the bus and proceeded toward our next destination. About 20 minutes later, we were pulled over to the side of the road by police cars with sirens screaming and lights flashing. We had no idea what was happening.

The police boarded the buses and announced that someone had stolen the silverware from the dining room and that the trustees—who had been very nice fellows—were being held accountable. The authorities were afraid that the knife that had been stolen might turn up in somebody's back later on in the prison. So until that knife was found, the trustees would be held.

I turned out that a couple of members of the Band had walked off with some of souvenirs. The souvenirs were produced and we went on our way.

I refer the reader to the interview with Allen Humphrey, who tells a version of one of his concert band visits to Folsom Prison. Very quickly, so that I don't hold you in suspense, when the concert was over and the Band was leaving the prison and getting back into the bus, one of the guards grabbed Humphrey and isolated him from the rest of the group.

The guard made Humphrey feel responsible for having stolen some silverware. Humphrey is panicked over this, because he feels he's never going to be able to leave the prison and, also, he was innocent. Then he noticed in the background that Chris Tellefsen, who was along on the
trip, had a big smile on his face. What had happened was that Chris Tellefsen had convinced the guard to play a little trick on this bandsman named Allen Humphrey.

Bill, we’re winding down on this interview—close to the end here—and I’d like to ask you for a brief synopsis of your career subsequent to your graduation.

While I still was a student at Cal, I worked half time at the Radiation Lab on the hill above the Berkeley campus. On the staff were seven Nobel Prize winners or researchers who eventually won Nobels.

With these people, the difficult was something that you did immediately and the impossible may take you a few days longer. This was a period of time when, if the group had not discovered a new particle for a month, they worried that they were falling behind.

It was a period of incredible achievement for the Berkeley campus; Berkelium, Californium, and Americium were synthesized. Knowledge of transuranic elements expanded very rapidly because we had the highest energy accelerator in the world and we were able to synthesize elements that no one had ever seen before. So it was a grand time and grand experience.
One of my recollections of that period was of the graduate students. Every Thursday afternoon one of the grads would have to give talk in front of the scientific staff, with up to seven Nobel Prize winners, sitting in the front row. I've seen graduate students throwing up in the corridor outside the conference room, in anticipation of going in and facing these people.

On the other hand, once they had passed the ordeal and survived, many of the grads went out and became prizewinners themselves, or held other responsible jobs. It was a tremendous training ground and the thing that I liked about it most that we were doing things we didn’t know we couldn’t do.

I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in physics in January 1958. I'd been through Air Force ROTC and had accepted a commission, so I wound up going to Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi for a year. From Keesler, on to active duty for a year on a remote radar site—on a very small island in the East China Sea—as officer in charge of a radar and electronics group.

I returned to the U.S. in 1960 and interviewed for jobs at several places. But the perfect match between physics and blowing up bombs for the Cal Band was offered to me by Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park. I went to work on their explosive test site, performing research, which was almost a direct continuation of the bomb work that I'd been doing for the Band.

I stayed at SRI for five years, learning the trade of experimental shock wave physics, using explosives and hypervelocity impact. I then went to General Motors Corporation in Santa Barbara, where I took over an extremely fast gun that allowed me to generate pressures higher than anyone had ever achieved, by impacting specimens placed at the muzzle of the gun.

So for a period of seven or eight years, I enjoyed setting records of high-pressure measurements in the shock wave physics field.

General Motors had built the Defense Research Laboratory in Santa Barbara and they had specialized in areas of interest to the government—studies of the physics of re-entry bodies and how one shoots them down. The goal was then, as it is now, to construct a defensive shield against ICBMs.

The research that we conducted in the early sixties became the basis for the Strategic Defensive Initiative in 1983, when President Reagan announced that the U.S. was to field an “impenetrable umbrella”, impervious to nuclear attack.

In the summer of 1983, I helped to begin the Strategic Defense Initiative, perhaps better known as Stars Wars, by briefing earlier work showing that such a concept was at least theoretically feasible. I have continued working in the area of missile defense for the past twenty years.

I left GM in 1971 and went to Livermore, California, taking the light gas gun with me, and continued working for five years as a University of California employee. In 1976, I came back to Santa Barbara and organized a company, named ATA Associates, which builds instrumentation for shock wave physics, including laser interferometer systems and a number of other products.

In the late 1980s, I helped to organize the Electromagnetic Launcher Association and served as its founding president. The objective of the organization is to achieve even higher velocities than we were able to achieve with the light gas guns that I described earlier. During this period,
I helped to organize the Hypervelocity Impact Society and served on its founding board of directors. My studies during this period included finding methods to shield satellites from space debris.

In the early 1990s, I became a member of the staff of the University at Austin, Texas commuting from Santa Barbara to Texas, every few weeks. It became obvious that if I was going to continue on at the University, I really needed an advanced degree.

About that time, I was approached by a National University in Japan, asking me if I would be willing to finish my thesis work at their school and become the first American to be awarded a degree on a new Japanese-American program. I agreed and, in January 1994, was awarded the degree of Doctor of Engineering from the Tohoku University—one of the eleven State Universities of Japan, similar in its formation to Berkeley or UCLA.

On a less career-oriented note, my group-forming activities began while still at Berkeley. In 1956, I helped to form the UC Flying Club. I doubt that the UC Flying Club knows the history of their organization. The Club originated because few others and I wanted to learn how to fly. We had no money, but I had the Cal Band mimeograph machine at my disposal.

Two of us would-be flyers distributed leaflets to all of the Berkeley sororities and frats and then put together a series of slides of views from the air and views of aircraft. We made presentations on how easy it was to fly—how easy it was to learn—although neither of us had flown much before. We were convinced that Cal needed such a group and that this was the opportunity to make it happen.

We talked sixty people into giving us $50 each. We bought two airplanes for about $1300 each, set up a ground school, and started turning out pilots. It’s amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t know that it can’t be done.

And that’s how the UC Flying Club began.

At the very beginning of this interview, you spoke of this wide-eyed freshman from Santa Barbara who appeared in the Band Room and, at his first Cal Band rehearsal, witnessed things that someone naive as that had never witnessed before. Now years go by and looking back from this perspective, how would you feel about one of your children or your grandchildren or some youngster that you know, entering the Cal Band?

I have five children, all of whom have graduated from various universities. One thing that they missed in their college careers was belonging to an organization such as the Band. Although their schooling in many ways was certainly equal to mine, I feel that there was something missing from their education.

They were not offered the special relationship to a university—the devotion to something that is bigger than yourself—that the Cal Band has brought to so many of us—our cause and our home. Without such an anchor, it is so very easy to become lost in a sea of a very large number of people. The Cal Band became my place to be and I wish that my kids had had a similar home on campus.
A life-long fascination with flying began with the founding of the UC Flying Club.

While it was a shocker to me to walk into the Band Hall in those early days, but I found that I adapted very quickly and I suspect that they would have too. I would rather they had joined in and sang dirty songs with the Band and participated in achieving their common goals and high ideals.

I think that, with the Cal Band, you get both the good with the bad . . . and the good by far outweighs the bad. So, in direct answer to your question, I wouldn't hesitate to have my grandkids go to Berkeley and to join the Cal Band.
That gives me a lead to ask you a final question, Bill. How did the Cal Band prepare you for your subsequent life?

The Cal Band was a training ground in many areas. It was a training ground in music and helped me maintain my love for music throughout my life. It was also a training ground in leadership. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Band is the chance that it gives young people to try out different leadership ideas without any great lasting deficit for failure. In contrast, if you go into a business and try out poor new leadership ideas, it may end your career prematurely.

If you go into Cal Band, you try out an idea and, it doesn't work, you're going to be gone in a few years anyway. People forgive you because they've been trying things themselves. So it's a leadership laboratory that allows freedom that you'll never have any other place.

That's a very positive aspect of the Band and I learned many of the leadership techniques that I employ today in leading people, forming groups, organizing ideas. The concepts that I learned in the Cal Band have been some of the most important aspects of my life.

The leadership principles that I've learned—the ways to get people to work together towards common goals; the modus operandi of putting together a successful operation—were primarily learned in the Cal Band. The military helped in some ways by adding a little bit more organization to it, but the creativity and the spark that, hopefully, I've brought to my profession over in the past forty years have been largely derived from my Band experience.

Any final comments? Concerns for the Band, perhaps?

I've been away from the Band substantially since the late 1960s, but I've noticed a few things that have caused me some concern and—impolitic or not—I'd like to voice them here.

My major concern has to do with the Band's technical performance.

I believe that, over the years, the Band has gradually has lost vigor in their shows. The Band used to be a ball of energy on the field that just absolutely blew things out of the stadium. Now the performances are more subtle, more subdued. They don't have that great strength and brashness that I remember as being the hallmark of the Cal Band.

A kinder, more gentle Band may be more comfortable, but it is not a better performing marching group.

At the substantial risk of being branded both a reactionary and a male chauvinist, I confess to mixed emotions about the admission of women into the Band. The reason is not at all that women do not make good leaders or good bandspersons. In terms of being Cal Band redhots,
the ones that I’ve observed have frequently been more red hot than most of the young men. And as leaders, they obviously have done just as credible a job as the men.

But, the lack of uniformity in height is obvious and detracts from the visual aspects of the performance. And, I believe that some of the lack of vigor in the performance comes from the female presence—both due to their (arguably) quieter demeanor on the field and on the “gentler” attitude inspired in the men by their presence.

The raucous, all-male Band—not very acceptable by society’s standards—put on a dynamic show that rocked and shocked the stadium.

Are these conditions correctable? Of course they are—given recognition that they exist—and the will to do something about them.

But, while these problems are troubling, the alternative is even more so. If my daughters had gone to Cal, I would have insisted upon them being allowed in the Band. The Band experience must be available to all.

And my daughters top out at about 5’ 2”.

The point that I’d like to close on has to do with the role of the Drum Major in the Band. The Drum Major was the Field General in the fifties and sixties. He was a showpiece at pre-game and at half-time. I think it was a great mistake to remove the Drum Major from the field and to put him in the press box. I can only attribute this to being a Manager’s plot.

This has been a wonderful interview. I really appreciate your insight and your understanding. You played a very special role in the development of the Band and had a major responsibility for the creation of the "New Band."

Dan, I want to thank you for what I think to be a remarkable effort on your part and on the part of other Band alumni to document the first 100 years of Cal Band. The series will be a valuable addition to the archives of the University of California.

I believe that these interviews will be used in future years by bandsmen wishing to find out what the Cal Band thought to be important in the early days. Hopefully, the interviews will still be read a hundred years from now—and bandsmen will be able to understand what we have accomplished and to know what it meant to be a member of the Pride of California . . . the California Marching Band.