

Band Memories

By Tad DeOrio

I was in the 7th grade when I first saw the St. Joe marching band on a hot September night at Euclid Stadium.

More than a year later, at the suggestion of my Dad, I signed up for Cadet Band. It didn't seem nearly as cool as football but I did it. I got lucky.

The Band was central to my St. Joe's experience. As other band members can attest, it takes a lot of time. At St. Joe's it was virtually 12 months since there was always some summer affair that involved the Marching Band and Band Camp. But it was a blast.

Band Camp. In August during the hottest days of summer with a lot of dust. The cabins were not fancy. Hours of marching on a dusty field in the sun. Practice after dinner. I loved it. I think most of us did. Mr. Novak loved it more.

Friday night football. Texas had nothing on Ohio. And it was better at St. Joe's than anywhere else. I remember the reaction of the fans as our buses would pull into the stadium. The chant would begin when we were blocks away and got progressively louder. "We are the Vikings the mighty, mighty Vikings! Everywhere we go-o people want to know-o who we are? So we tell them - We Are the Vikings! The buses would shake from our noise. And then we'd line up to march in. The chanting would change to "We're from St Joe's and no one can be prouder! And if you cannot hear us, we'll YELL A LITTLE LOUDER!"

The football team was great but I think we intimidated the opponents before the game began.

Spring brought the Musical and Spring Concert. The concerts were okay but if you were in the pit orchestra for the musical it was great. It was a lot of work. A lot of practices to learn the music. And then a lot of practices to turn the music into the show.



And then 6 sold out shows! Mr. Novak in an outlandish tuxedo standing tall in the pit. The shows were all good. South Pacific had amazing sets. Half a Six Pence then Carousel and finally Funny Girl. I knew people who would go more than once. And the fun didn't end with the musical.

The musicals were during basketball tournament time. Our senior year the team was great. A few of us brought a small transistor radio into the pit. One guy would listen and signal the score. It must have been a semi-final game that was going on during a Saturday night performance. The curtain came down for intermission just as the game was ending. Someone cranked up the radio and we heard the end of a Viking victory. We let out a loud cheer and the people in the crowd looked confused. Even Mr. Novak was okay with it.

And then there were road trips. We used to do a tour every spring to play at other high schools. On the Pittsburgh trip a few of us - Joey O, Pete Fries and me and probably a couple of others thought we should climb the Monongahela Incline under the cable car track. We climbed it but it was a LOT steeper than it looked from the bottom. We were crawling and pulling ourselves up by three branches as we reached the top for a greeting by the local police. I thought we were busted but the police were glad we all made it up and then didn't have to get some kid off the side of the hill. They drove us back to our hotel.

We marched in Cleveland Stadium for a Browns game. That was great but marching in the same stadium on a cold day when our team shutout St Ed's was better.

The highlight of my experience was the trip to NYC. We sold candy bars to raise money for the trip. The entire band and chaperons for 4 days and 3 nights? Round trip on American and United. The Rockettes. Other shows and a bunch of Cleveland kids loose in New York City. The parade was a great experience. I had forgotten the cost until John Jaros sent around the 3-page parents' information sheet a few years ago. The trip was under \$100 AND Norm included a PS to parents reminding them that we'd be on our own for lunch, taxis and extras so they should plan on an additional \$20. Twenty-dollars? That won't get you anything in NYC today.

It was a great four years. And we must have been decent for in the fall of '70, Pete Fries, Frank Zalatel and I were in a group of 125 that marched as the Band of the Fighting Irish. Thank you St. Joe's!