

WOMEN INVADE BAND:
THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
MARCHING BAND

by
Cate Collard

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Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Rebecca Sharpless, Ph.D.

Department of History

Alex Hidalgo, Ph.D.

Department of History

Jeannine Gailey, Ph.D.

Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Abstract

This paper examines the role of women in the Texas Christian University marching band in its first one hundred years, 1904 to 2004. By analyzing primary sources such as yearbooks, newspapers, and other TCU archives to identify patterns inclusion and exclusion, this study informs a new perspective of the Horned Frog Band's (HFB) history. From its establishment as a male-only military band, the marching band has excluded women from participation as instrumentalists. Instead, the only women involved in marching band in the first forty years were band sweethearts. Band sweethearts, chosen by the bandsmen for their dedication, were highly scrutinized for their physical ability and appearance. It wasn't until World War II that women were able to participate in the HFB because of the lack of available bandsmen. Despite this, women were pushed out of the organization and forced to reside as spirit members rather than instrumentalists after the conclusion of the war. Only when the lack of instrumentalists rose as a problem in 1953 were women finally admitted as full members of the ensemble. While this is earlier than many other schools, who waited until Title IX, women were still not recognized as leaders or outstanding members. The TCU marching band's gender history continued to profoundly impact the structure and organization of the ensemble, as it continues to today.

Introduction

The story of women's roles in collegiate marching bands in the United States has been one of gradual inclusion and overcoming barriers in a traditionally male-dominated space. The lack of acceptance of women in college bands was largely influenced by the early military traditions of marching band programs.¹ While the first collegiate marching band debuted in 1887 at the University of Notre Dame, it wasn't until after World War I that the combination of the movement for school bands, along with the increasing popularity of American football, led to collegiate bands performing outdoors for various events.² These twentieth-century developments led to an increased emphasis on entertainment aspects of performance, focusing on visual performance through pageantry and field formations rather than rigid, militaristic styles.³ At this point, marching bands, like today, began to feature brass, woodwinds, and percussion, with visual teams providing additional flair through the use of rifles, flags, and other props. By the late 1930s, 65 percent of higher education institutions had university bands, but 87 percent of these bands were all-male (those that were not all-male were typically female-only).⁴ Texas Christian University followed the majority, excluding women from membership in the Horned Frog Band until 1953.

Across the country, observers have used a variety of different reasons to explain the absence of women in marching band. Some cited the physicality of the performances while

¹ Cheryl Jackson, "Women as Leaders of Collegiate Bands, 1850-1980," *College Music Symposium* 38 (1998): 118–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40374323>.

² Michquelena Potlunas Ferguson, "Oral Histories of Women Instrumentalists in College Marching Bands Post-Title IX." PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 11.

³ Olivia Broslawsky, "Marching Forth: A Study of the Impact of Gender on the Professionalization of Marching Band Students in New Orleans," PhD diss. 2017, Tulane University, 37.

⁴ Walter Duerksen, "A Survey of College Bands and Orchestras," *Yearbook of the Music Educators National Conference, 1939-1940*, 274-76.

others thought it was not acceptable for women to play wind instruments (flute, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, et cetera).⁵ Lorraine Cugat, a journalist in the late 1950s, stated, “girls who want to be musicians should stick to instruments such as piano, violin, harp, or even accordion - any instrument the playing of which doesn’t detract from their feminine appeal.”⁶ Regardless of the reason, women as a whole were not permitted into this domain until World War II, when the lack of men demanded their participation to fill out numbers. Women’s participation and association with collegiate marching bands have varied widely across institutions. Some collegiate bands became available to women shortly after World War II (even some prior) while many other groups are only recently celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the admission of women. Texas Christian University has a uniquely progressive and repressive history with women in its Horned Frog Band (HFB).

While the HFB was not the only male-dominated musical ensemble at TCU, the marching and jazz bands were the only ensembles that remained exclusively male for a significant portion of their history. The TCU Orchestra first premiered in 1907 and its photograph in the 1908 yearbook includes women (four, all on stringed instruments).⁷ Similarly, the Concert Band, formed in 1935 admitted women in the spring of 1938.⁸ Women, especially in TCU’s early history, remained predominantly congregated in the TCU orchestra as violinists and

⁵ “Women Made ‘Waves’ in World War II Military Bands.” *Military Bands | ASU News*, news.asu.edu/content/women-made-waves-world-war-ii-military-bands#:~:text=Women%20had%20played%20in%20bands,%2C%E2%80%9D%20from%201870%20to%201930.

⁶ Ferguson, "Oral Histories," 15.

⁷ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1908), 94, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11035>.

⁸ *The History of the Texas Christian University Band (1905-1969)*, edited and researched by Beverly Peard, Cheryl Robison, and Barbra Stepan.

pianists. So, while women were excluded from membership in the marching band, they played unique roles on the outskirts as sweethearts, majorettes, and twirlers. These subsections allowed women an alternate way to participate “without sacrificing their physical beauty.”⁹ Even after their eventual admission into the Horned Frog Band, gender and the marching band’s gendered legacy have continued to profoundly affect the culture and structure of the organization.

Early History

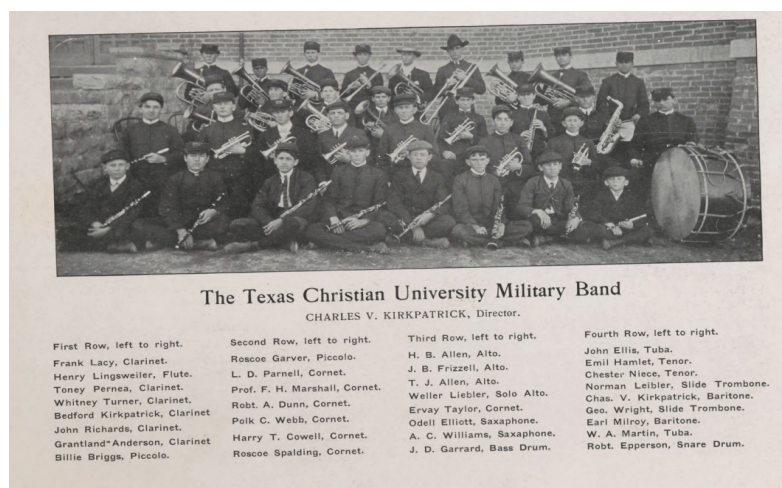
The Texas Christian University (TCU) “Horned Frog Band” began in 1904 with a small group of musicians participating in a military band under the direction of Charles V. Kirkpatrick. The group of thirty-two included members of the local community, professors, and even Charles Kirkpatrick’s sixteen-year-old brother - Belford A. Kirkpatrick.¹⁰ As seen in the photograph of the 1904 band, the group was a rather informal group of young men with no official uniforms and varied instrumentation. In fact, the singular drummer left halfway through the first season to join the baseball team. Future director Jim Jacobsen referred to this early pep band as “not too good” with “directors enlisting any student who knew what a drum or trumpet was.”¹¹ This was the “haphazard beginning” from which the Horned Frog Band eventually emerged.¹²

⁹ Broslawsky, “Marching Forth,” 27.

¹⁰ “TCU Band History.” School of Music, finearts.tcu.edu/music/student-experience/university-bands/tcu-band-history/.

¹¹ Rachel Master, “Presenting 100 Years of the Horned Frog Band.” *TCU Magazine*, June 24 2016. magazine.tcu.edu/winter-2004/presenting-100-years-horned-frog-band/.

¹² Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1905), 97, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11032>.



Texas Christian University Marching Band 1905¹³

In the following four years, the band was informally organized under Music Theory professor Willis C. Hunter before a fire burned down the main buildings on TCU's campus in Waco, Texas on March 22, 1910. To keep classes running, the university was forced to use every inch of the remaining land, including music rooms, for classes; consequently, the band had to wait until TCU found a new home to reassemble and recover.¹⁴ With little hope of recovering in Waco, the TCU Board of Trustees moved the campus to its current location in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1911.¹⁵ When the cornerstone ceremony for the new administration building (now Reed Hall) happened, Belford Kirkpatrick, brother of the first director and student at TCU's medical school, gathered a group of undergraduate and medical students to play. This was, however, the only time the ensemble played, and it took several more years for the band to be fully revived.¹⁶ Although TCU reopened its doors on September 6, 1911, it wasn't until 1913 that

¹³ *Horned Frog* 1905, 97.

¹⁴ Sean Foushee, writer and director, *TCU 1904-2004: 100 Years of the TCU Band* (TCU Band/FSI INC, 2004).

¹⁵ Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

¹⁶ "TCU Band History"; Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

the band was able to become a fixture on campus again. From 1913 to 1920, Fredrick M. Cahoon led the band which consisted of only thirteen members.¹⁷ The band was very close to disbanding due to the lack of players. The band director begged students to join, however, “it was up to the members to buy their own instruments” and thus recruitment was difficult.¹⁸ In 1921, the group was able to become more formally organized, with regular rehearsals and performances under the direction of J. E. King, sometimes referred to as “the father of Texas band.” King earned this title since he was the founder of the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) and helped start the movement to get bands into public schools (and funded).¹⁹ While King was the director of the Horned Frog Band, alumni (most notably Dan Rogers) and friends of the university financed the band.²⁰ There were still no regular uniforms and football season was the only time the band performed.²¹ By 1925, the band had expanded to roughly forty members.²² This was a big year for the Horned Frog Band; with the financial aid of Amon G. Carter, the creator and publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, the band received its first official uniform.²³ These uniforms were “purple with white braid decorating the front, stiff collars and stiff-brimmed caps.”²⁴ For the first time, the band was held to a new standard as they were “placed upon

¹⁷ “TCU Band History.”

¹⁸ “University Bands Began in 1905: Sammis Figures in Late History,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 13, 1933. [The Skiff, Vol. 32, No. 4.](#)

¹⁹ “James E. King (1885-1947) - Find a Grave Memorial.” *Find a Grave*, www.findagrave.com/memorial/69217458/james-e_-king.

²⁰ “University Bands Began in 1905: Sammis Figures in Late History.”

²¹ “T.C.U. Frog Band Started in 1905 as Military Unit,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), April 20, 1936. [The Skiff, Vol. 34, No. 30.](#)

²² “T.C.U. Frog Band Started in 1905 as Military Unit.”

²³ “TCU Band History.”

²⁴ Peard, Robison, and Stepan, “*The History of the Texas Christian University Band*,” 9.

military discipline, drilled in the ‘military band parade technique’ and put under an extensive period of training.”²⁵ In addition, the organization implemented the positions of drum major, band president, and band sweetheart.²⁶

Band Sweethearts

The tradition of naming a sweetheart for a group or club was not an uncommon practice; however, “the oldest form of queen or sweetheart is the band sweetheart.”²⁷ Sweethearts were most frequently chosen by collegiate marching bands and fraternities (both of which began doing so more commonly in the 1920s). Typically, this honor was bestowed on individuals dedicated to or valued by the organization.²⁸

Jo Brice Wilmeth, the first TCU drum major, was the man who originally introduced the tradition of having a band sweetheart to the Horned Frog Band.²⁹ Sarah Hal Williams, student body treasurer, was the first to be voted into the position in 1925.³⁰ Every year, the men of the Horned Frog marching band would cast their vote for Band Sweetheart.³¹ While the intention was originally to select a young woman considering her ability as a musician or singer, that

²⁵ “T.C.U. Frog Band Started in 1905 as Military Unit.”

²⁶ “TCU Band History”; “T.C.U. Frog Band Started in 1905 as Military Unit”; Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

²⁷ Virginia Churchill, “TCU Has Long Heritage of Sweethearts, All Descendants of ‘43 Bond Queen,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), March 12, 1943. [The Skiff, Vol. 41, No. 21](#).

²⁸ Madison Jenkins, “What Is a Fraternity Sweetheart?” *Campus Classics*, Campus Classics, February 16, 2023. www.campus-classics.com/blogs/greek-life-blog/what-is-a-fraternity-sweetheart#:~:text=Fraternities%20and%20sororities%20have%20a,a%20part%20of%20their%20organization.

²⁹ Joe Sargent, “Miss Moody New Band Sweetheart,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 10, 1933. [The Skiff, Vol. 32, No. 8](#).

³⁰ “TCU Band History.”

³¹ Churchill, “TCU Has Long Heritage of Sweethearts.”

quickly faded. By 1928, “the girl need not be a musician if she is popular, a good sport, and will be an asset to the band.”³² In fact, the *Skiff*, TCU’s school newspaper, reported that between 1926 and 1928, the three sweethearts were chosen from members of the Girls’ Pep Squad, “which has in its requirements for membership good health, good posture, good sportsmanship and that the student be passing in twelve hours” of classes.³³

According to *The Skiff*, many female students on campus considered being chosen as the band's sweetheart a great honor, some even saying it was “the greatest complimentary honor that can be conferred upon a Texas Christian girl.”³⁴ The winner got to accompany the band on all trips and appear with them at all performances. In addition, the band sweethearts also selected a uniform to wear alongside the band; 1928 sweetheart Emma Nell Handley chose a “straight-line flannel dress with a purple cape and purple insert plaits in front of the skirt.”³⁵ While the sweetheart was “the only girl whose name appeared on the role of the band,” they were not physically or theoretically recognized as equal members of the organization. For many years, this was the only position that existed for women in association with the TCU Marching Band.³⁶

While being selected as the band's Sweetheart was considered a privilege, it was regularly discussed alongside gender roles and expectations. In 1930, *The Skiff* published an article titled “To Parade or Not to Parade,” in which the unnamed author discusses the possibility

³² “Miss Emma Nell Handley is Now Band Sweetheart.” *The Skiff*, (Fort Worth, TX). November 16, 1928. [The Skiff, Vol. 27, No. 7.](#)

³³ “Miss Emma Nell Handley is Now Band Sweetheart.”

³⁴ “Let’s Have a Band Sweetheart,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth. TX), October 25, 1931. [The Skiff, Vol. 30, No. 2.](#)

³⁵ “Miss Emma Nell Handley is Now Band Sweetheart.”

³⁶ “Miss Emma Nell Handley is Now Band Sweetheart.”

that it would be too strenuous for the sweetheart to march alongside the “50-odd hale and hearty male members” of the band. Without “superhuman stamina and superior courage,” it must have been trying for previous sweethearts. Instead, the writer suggested that the Band Sweetheart stays in the stands because “long parades and the necessary short steps of most girls are not an agreeable combination. It is too tiresome for the girl.” So the author concluded that they should “give the little girl a big hand” and “leave the marching and parading for the boys.”³⁷ The open forum of the next edition of *The Skiff* contained several passionate responses to this article. Chas Cotten, a band supporter, wrote to the editor, “I have always gotten a thrill from watching the proud, happy face and contagiously rhythmic step of the band sweetheart... I should surely think that no hardship had been involved.” Other respondents, including the current and previous sweethearts, expressed their opinions regarding the article, concluding that fatigue was not a concern to them due to the enjoyment and pride in their experience. Emma Nell Handy, sweetheart of 1928, reported she was so filled with pride, “it never occur[ed] to her to feel the least bit fatigued as she proudly [led the] splendid young musicians.”³⁸ Helen Jenkins, 1929 Band Sweetheart, stated “If I could not parade with the TCU Band I would not care to be its sweetheart.”³⁹ Despite the *Skiff* writer’s opinion, the sweetheart continued parading with the band. It was not the last controversy to emerge over their role and relationship with the TCU Band, however, the same year, band director Claude Sammis selected two drum majors instead of one, causing further unrest over the role of the Sweetheart. According to *The Skiff*, with two

³⁷“To Parade or Not to Parade,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 10, 1930. [The Skiff, Vol. 29, No. 3.](#)

³⁸ “Open Forum,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 11, 1930. [The Skiff, Vol. 29, No. 4.](#)

³⁹ “Open Forum.”

drum majors, “it seem[ed] almost impossible to have a girl on the field.”⁴⁰ Though it is not entirely clear, it seems as though the idea of having multiple people (especially three) lead the band was rather controversial and the bandsmen remained highly territorial over where women could be. The unnamed author suggested that the sweetheart “sit with the band at football games and appear at concerts.” This would allow band members to choose their sweetheart from those who can play piano and sing “rather than from those who seem to have the most endurance for walking.”⁴¹ Another unnamed writer for *The Skiff* added, “it is hoped there will be no thin, petticoated band sweetheart prancing like a show pony with the band on the football field.”⁴² In October, the *Skiff* officially announced the bandsmen’s decision to have the band sweetheart “not appear in drills and parades.” As a result, the 1931 Band Sweetheart, accomplished pianist Rowena Doss, was only permitted to “play at concerts and to sit with the band at football games.”⁴³

Along with the physical ability of the band sweetheart, their sexuality and desirability were also a frequently romanticized topic in the school newspaper. In October 1931, *The Skiff* published an article detailing the Marching Band’s “Kangaroo Court” which held two trials regarding advances on the sweetheart Rowena Doss. The first case was “Murray Livingston vs. the Horned Frog Band,” in which Livingston’s charge was kissing the band's sweetheart. Livingston caused quite a reaction among the bandsmen when “he began monopolizing too much of the sweetheart's time and company.” After finding out his original plea of insanity would

⁴⁰ “Let’s Have a Band Sweetheart.”

⁴¹ “Let’s Have a Band Sweetheart.”

⁴² “Gold Dust Twins: We Get the Dirt,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), May 29, 1931. [The Skiff, Vol. 29, No. 33](#)

⁴³ “Miss Rowena Doss is Elected Honorary Sweetheart,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 9, 1931. [The Skiff, Vol. 30 No. 4.](#)

prevent him from a date with the sweetheart, Livingston pleaded guilty and was charged with buying candy bars for the entire band. A few days later, in “Professor Claude Sammis v. Murray Livingston,” Livingston retaliated by accusing the professor of making advances on the sweetheart. It was “proved that Prof. Sammis made advances toward Miss Doss and that she was forced to throw a piano stool at him in self-defense.”⁴⁴ Claude Sammis, the director of band and orchestra from 1926 until 1934 and chairman of the music department, received the same candy bar fine as Livingston.⁴⁵ Even the outcome of being selected as the sweetheart was “a bouquet of flowers and a kiss from the drum major” or band president.⁴⁶ This long-standing tradition was referred to as the “congratulatory kiss.”⁴⁷ On the front page of a 1953 *Skiff* publication, the announcement of that year’s Band Sweetheart included a large picture of this congratulatory kiss between Shirley Kee and fellow student and band president David Smith. It also includes “the

⁴⁴ “Prof. Sammis is Found Guilty in Mock Band Trial,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 23, 1931. [The Skiff, Vol. 30, No. 6.](#)

⁴⁵ “Prof. Sammis is Found Guilty in Mock Band Trial.”

⁴⁶ “New Band Sweetheart Bussed, Hugged, Happy,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), September 29, 1950. [The Skiff, Vol. 49, No. 2.](#)

⁴⁷ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1954), 48. TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11080>.

18-year old blond[‘s]” height, bust and waist measurements, and weight.⁴⁸ The sexuality of the sweetheart was closely correlated with her physical appearance, which was equally scrutinized.



1953 Band Sweetheart announcement in the Skiff.

It was not uncommon for the *Skiff's* articles talking about the sweetheart to include specific physical descriptions. In 1931, Don Gillis (a future director of the TCU Band) wrote a song entitled “The Sweetheart of the Band.” The chorus of this song went as follows: “[Who’s] that girl with all the beaux? [Who’s] that lady there with complexion fair? She’s the sweetheart of the band. And every once in a while, you get a wonderful smile. Now here’s the warning, don’t fall! She’s the sweetheart of them all.”⁴⁹ This song demonstrates that, beyond physical beauty, the sweetheart was glorified for being alluring to men. This focus on physical attributes can also be seen in article captions such as that of Mary Rowan the 1932 sweetheart whose picture is captioned, “Miss Mary Rowan, a blonde and a sophomore from Wharton” who was

⁴⁸ “Fish to Frolic!” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 16, 1953. [The Skiff, Vol. 52, No. 5.](#)

⁴⁹ Don Gillis, “The Sweetheart of the Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 23, 1931. [The Skiff, Vol. 30, No. 6.](#)

elected by the bandsmen to be their sweetheart.⁵⁰ While being blonde would be a seemingly unimportant detail, another article title read: “Miss Rowan is First Blonde to Become Band Sweetheart.”⁵¹ Since the first eight sweethearts had been brunettes, the article stated, “blondes are now in the ascendant. After seven years of unbroken fidelity at the altar of brunette beauty, a Horned Frog Band finds its ideal of feminine loveliness in the blonde person of Miss Mary Rowan of Wharton.”⁵² It was common for the sweetheart’s eye color, hair color, weight, measurements, phone number, and even address to be posted in *The Skiff* upon their election. Another *Skiff* article described 1935 Sweetheart Patsy Lee Tap as a “diminutive, blue-eyed-blonde.”⁵³ A photo of 1947 Sweetheart, Mary Graves, stated, “By the way Mary is 5 foot 3’ with eyes of blue, and her telephone number is 5-2093.”⁵⁴ The *Skiff* described the 1950 Band Sweetheart as “a slender freshman girl,” “blonde Miss McNeil,” and “green-eyed freshman from West Texas.”⁵⁵ Feminine attributes, especially small size, were frequently mentioned and emphasized by authors in the *Skiff*. The femininity of the band sweethearts was essential to their role and recognition.

When women were eventually accepted into the marching band in 1953, the band sweetheart became a female member of the band. The first female band member to receive this

⁵⁰ “Miss Rowan is New Sweetheart of T.C.U. Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 27, 1932. [The Skiff, Vol. 31 No. 3.](#)

⁵¹ “Miss Rowan is First Blonde to Become Band Sweetheart.” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 14, 1932. [The Skiff, Vol. 31, No. 4.](#)

⁵² “Miss Rowan is First Blonde to Become Band Sweetheart.”

⁵³ “Sulfur Springs Sophomore Selected Band Sweetheart,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 1, 1948. [The Skiff, Vol. 47 No. 2.](#)

⁵⁴ “Big Band Show Set for Game,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), September 26, 1947. [The Skiff, Vol. 46 No. 2.](#)

⁵⁵ “New Band Sweetheart Bussed, Hugged, Happy.”

“exciting and envious gift” was Willma Hoyler, “the pretty music education major [who] plays French horn in the TCU band.”⁵⁶ The *Skiff* described the 1954-1955 band Sweetheart as the “attractive music education major” and the “pretty band sweetheart.”⁵⁷ Throughout this position’s existence, physical and emotional traits of beauty and grace continued to be essentialized by articles in the *Skiff*. Julie Harrison, the 1960 sweetheart and member of the ensemble, stated, “I was worried to death... Don [band president] threatened to kiss me for three minutes when he presented the bouquet. That would have been ridiculous - I look so much like a boy in my band uniform.”⁵⁸ This tradition continued until 1992, when Pam Becker, a TCU drum major, became the last recorded Band Sweetheart.⁵⁹

Margaret Helen Pyron

The first woman to ever appear in a photograph with the TCU Marching Band holding an instrument was Margaret Helen Pyron. Attending TCU from 1940 to 1943, Margaret was listed as a clarinet player in the band in her freshman and sophomore years (1940 and 1941), and was the only woman to participate in the Horned Frog Band in both those years.⁶⁰ She pursued a degree in public school music with a minor in music; she also played violin and oboe in the TCU

⁵⁶ Sarah Slay, “Horn O’ Plenty is French, But it Works for Wilma,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 22, 1954. [The Skiff, Vol. 53, No. 6.](#)

⁵⁷ Slay, “Horn O’ Plenty.”

⁵⁸ “Julie Harrison Presented as 1960 Band Sweetheart,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 14, 1960. [The Skiff, Vol. 59, No. 7.](#)

⁵⁹ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1992), 88, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11113>.

⁶⁰ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1943), 107, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11069>; Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1940), 259, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11066>; Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1941), 213-14, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/19563>.

Symphony Orchestra.⁶¹ Her presence in the band photo of 1941 is intriguing because, up until this point there had never been a woman in the Horned Frog Band. No records indicated her participation or its reason anywhere outside of the two yearbooks. It wasn't until 1942 that women were allowed to fill in for the men who left to serve in World War II. But ironically, in 1942 and 1943, she wasn't one of the women participating in the band. She graduated in 1943 and served as a civil air traffic controller in the war. She married Nolan Sparks, another graduate of TCU, and lived to be eighty-three before passing away on May 27, 2005.⁶²

World War II

The population of the TCU marching band (and other university bands across the United States) changed dramatically when the United States entered the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The Selective Training and Service Act, signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt one year prior, was amended to require all able-bodied men ages eighteen to sixty-four, previously twenty-one to forty-five, to register for military service for the duration of World War II.⁶³ Marching bands at major universities across the country responded in one of three ways. One, they admitted women into their marching bands to replace the missing instrumentation but generally excluded them again when the war was over. Two, they created separate marching bands in which the women marched in conjunction with the men's bands. Or three, rather than admit women, they disbanded or discontinued public performances until the

⁶¹ *Horned Frog* 1941, 213-14.

⁶² "Margaret Helen Pyron Sparks (1922-2005)" *Find a Grave*, www.findagrave.com/memorial/74518068/margaret-helen-sparks#source .

⁶³ David Vergun, "First Peacetime Draft Enacted Just before World War II," U.S. Department of Defense. April 7, 2020. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/article/2140942/first-peacetime-draft-enacted-just-before-world-war-ii/>.

men returned.⁶⁴ In TCU's 1942 band season, "membership was reduced considerably... because of boys entering the service."⁶⁵ To fill out numbers, Naomi Whitehurst (director of bands for one year), "allowed girls to join the band for the first time in its history."⁶⁶ The first group of women in the Horned Frog Band were Harlan Gremillion (freshman), Wilma Miller (junior), Margaret McKennon (freshman), Betty Jean Blackwell (freshman), Gloria Sheinberg (freshman), and Gladys Cain (sophomore). To further fill out the numbers, members of the Paschal High School Band "were invited to play with the TCU band at all football games" because they "had the same color uniforms."⁶⁷ The organization also added three baton twirlers: Frances Hall, Norma Purvines, and Gerlyne Schmidt. During this time the band continued to perform at football games, high school functions, and basketball games, and to present many concerts.⁶⁸ In the 1943 season, the band again switched directors with John William Woldt taking over. Woldt only served as TCU's band director for one year, during which there is no record of the band's participants in the yearbook. However, women continued to have "band" listed among their extracurricular activities.⁶⁹ One ex-band member recalled that, in 1943, "when so many males

⁶⁴ Elizabeth S. Gould, "Cultural Contexts of Exclusion: Women College Band Directors," *Research & Issues in Music Education*, no. 1 (2003).
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=rime>.

⁶⁵ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1942), 223, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11068>.

⁶⁶ *Horned Frog* 1943, 168.

⁶⁷ "Recollections of the TCU 'Show Window.'" *TCU Magazine*, 2004.
www.magarchive.tcu.edu/articles/2004-04-rc.asp?issueid=200404.

⁶⁸ Peard, Robison, and Stepan, "*The History of the Texas Christian University Band.*"

⁶⁹ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1944), 44-46, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11070>.

had left for the service” the director of bands “was desperate for warm bodies to make up a band.” Anybody who “could march and had rhythm” was accepted that year.⁷⁰

The fall of 1944 was an especially exceptional year for the women of the Horned Frog Band. Not only were there thirteen women, one of them was the drum major. A drum major is a key figure and leadership position within the marching band, responsible for directing the band’s performance. Typically, at the front of the ensemble, the drum major uses a mace or baton to signal tempo, stop and start cues, and communicate other directions to the bandsmen.⁷¹ Because of the overlap in drum major and majorette’s baton skills, it made sense for the head majorette to take on the position. In the 1940s, the Horned Frog Band even frequently referred to the head majorette as the assistant drum major.⁷² Consequently, Frances Hall became the TCU marching band’s first female drum major.

Frances Hall, “nicknamed ‘five foot two, eyes of blue,’” pursued a degree in voice with a minor in music theory.⁷³ Hall was first allowed into the marching band in 1942 as one of three baton twirlers, also known as “drum majorettes,” when women began filling the ranks.⁷⁴ Two years later when Edwin Carruth, the previous drum major, was called into active duty for the Air Corps, she took on the role.⁷⁵ Drum majorettes were “selected on the basis of twirling ability,

⁷⁰ Dorothy Houk, “Recollections of the TCU ‘Show Window,’” *The TCU Magazine-Recollections*, 2004. <http://www.magarchive.tcu.edu/articles/2004-04-rc.asp?issueid=200404>.

⁷¹ “Drum Major Job Description,” *PEBBLEBROOK BANDS*, www.pebblebrookbands.com/drum-major-job-description.html.

⁷² Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1946), 166, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11072>.

⁷³ *Horned Frog* 1946; “Baton Twirler, Sweetheart Add ‘Color’ to Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 9, 1942. [The Skiff, Vol. 41, No. 3](#).

⁷⁴ *Horned Frog* 1943, 168.

⁷⁵ *Horned Frog* 1943, 168.

scholastic record, and general fitness for the TCU band program.”⁷⁶ As a result, in the fall of her junior year, 1944, Frances Hall led the band while many men were off serving in the armed forces. Despite this, the band was still majority male with only thirteen of the thirty members being women. Another forty men were listed as “band members not pictured (many now in Armed Services)” in the 1945 yearbook.⁷⁷ Three other majorettes were named alongside Hall; since drum majors and majorettes led the band from the front, a *Skiff* headline read: “Four Girls to Lead Band Formations.”⁷⁸



*Horned Frog Band 1944 and Drum Major Frances Hall.*⁷⁹

During this period, the Horned Frog Band faced a series of issues. First, there were problems securing every member a uniform because “the army is using all serge for uniforms, no more band uniforms or caps are being made.” This meant many people were marching bare-headed or with broken buttons. Even Frances Hall was having trouble; the only thing they could get for her uniform was a white flannel. Her boots and “shako (hat) were nearly impossible to

⁷⁶ “5 Win Drum Majorette Positions With Band for 1948-49,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), June 18, 1948. [The Skiff, Vol. 46, No. 36.](#)

⁷⁷ *Horned Frog* 1945, 156.

⁷⁸ “4 Girls to Lead Band Formations,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), September 14, 1944. [The Skiff, Vol. 43, No. 10.](#)

⁷⁹ *Horned Frog* 1945, 156-57.

acquire due to wartime shortages.”⁸⁰ Additionally, the role of director of bands had to be frequently replaced by the music department as individuals left the university; between 1942 and 1950, there were five different band directors. As a result, membership had varying success. One 1944 article noted that the previous year had thirty-five members (under John Woldt), and now there were sixty (under Leon Breedon). The newspaper claimed students were saying, “That sounds like our old band” during the band’s first appearance under the direction of Leon Breedon.⁸¹ Leon Breedon remained the band director from 1944 to 1949, overseeing the shift back to an all-male and very rowdy band made up mostly of World War II veterans.

With the conclusion of the Second World War, the TCU marching band once again had a significant shift, this time back to a male-only band. Of the approximately ten women in the band in 1944: two graduated, two switched over from instruments to flags, and six were no longer participants in 1945.⁸² A 1947 recruitment pamphlet discussing the TCU band’s history, recalled that “in 1945, it was possible for the first time since the end of the war to have an all-male sixty-piece marching band for the football season.”⁸³ As a result, women remained on the outskirts of the band because they were kept from marching. The same promotional pamphlet stated, “Although only men are accepted into the marching band, it is possible for girls to play in the band in the stands at all games played in Fort Worth.”⁸⁴ While the inclusion of women in the

⁸⁰ “Band to March By Aid of Luck, Needle, Thread,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 15, 1943. [The Skiff, Vol. 42 No. 14](#).

⁸¹ “Say it With Music,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 17, 1944. [The Skiff, Vol. 43, No. 17](#).

⁸² Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1947), 156, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11073>.

⁸³ Texas Christian University, “TCU Horned Frog Band,” Recruitment Pamphlet, 1947. *TCU Digital Repository*. [Horned Frog Band booklet](#), 3.

⁸⁴ Recruitment Pamphlet, 4.

stands was an improvement, it still upheld the fundamental idea that marching was not an activity for women. Language in the pamphlet was gendered in every instance. “After a man has once been accepted into the Horned Frog Band, he is furnished a uniform.” Another section stated that “information regarding [uniforms] will be furnished to each man as soon as he has been accepted into the band.”⁸⁵ The gendered language of recruitment pamphlets helped re-solidify the idea that women were not welcome as instrumental members of the band.

Consequently, women took on marginal roles in the post-World War II Horned Frog Band.

Spirit Women

Instead of being equal participants in the band, after World War II women filled roles as majorettes, flag bearers, and baton twirlers. This meant that women who marched in 1945 were removed from participating on the field to reestablish the all-male band of 1946. Jackie Clardy and Betty Benton who marched with instruments in ‘45 and, in ‘46, were allowed to participate only in the stands.⁸⁶ During this time, majorettes, as twirlers and dynamic halftime performers, were becoming common for collegiate bands. While majorettes were initially an attempt by band directors to increase audience appeal, they quickly gained popularity and are still around today.⁸⁷

Baton twirling originally emerged as a predominantly male sport in the beginning of the twentieth century because of the considerable weight of the batons. Though the exact origin is unknown, armies adopted twirling rifles during marches and often had a “rifle twirler” in the front of a parade block. Eventually, the rifle transitioned to a “mace,” a larger and heavier

⁸⁵ Recruitment Pamphlet, 10.

⁸⁶ *Horned Frog* 1947, 156.

⁸⁷ “History,” *World Baton Twirling Federation*, [History — World Baton Twirling Federation](#).

version of the batons known today.⁸⁸ The skill of “twirling” these mace batons became a common practice of collegiate drum majors. At TCU, this meant the drum major was often additionally referred to as the “baton-twirler” up until 1950.⁸⁹

It wasn’t until the 1930s that batons “were altered for easier twirling,” leading to the development of female majorettes or “drum majorettes” It is important to note that sometimes twirlers and majorettes were mistakenly labeled as drum majors in articles published by TCU’s *Skiff*; this is because they were often found at the front of the formation alongside the drum major and share similar twirling skills.⁹⁰ As women became more interested, “short, lighter batons continued to develop for the rash of feminine twirlers springing up.”⁹¹ Baton twirling was only one of the many skills possessed by majorettes; their choreographed routines included dancing and movement elements in addition to baton twirling.⁹² Collegiate bands and high schools started incorporating majorettes in the late 1930s; at TCU, the first two were introduced in 1938. The tradition of the TCU “all-male” group was broken by Joan Tratcher and Bobbie Davidson who became “the first women drum majors to don the TCU band uniform.” Tratcher and Davidson only appeared at the home games and reportedly “caused some confusion among the female students who were in complete disagreement with having women as drum majors

⁸⁸ “History,” *World Baton Twirling Federation*.

⁸⁹ “600 Golden Bear Supporters to Attend Game at Frog Stadium Tomorrow,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 2, 1934. [The Skiff, Vol. 33 No. 7.](#)

⁹⁰ Martha Mellown, “The Skiff Salutes Gerlyne Schmidt,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 6, 1942. [The Skiff, Vol. 41, No. 7.](#)

⁹¹ “History,” *World Baton Twirling Federation*.

⁹² Julie Blume, “What Is Majorette Dancing? A Brief History and Explanation,” October 28, 2022. [https://livethedance.com/what-is-majorette-dancing/.](https://livethedance.com/what-is-majorette-dancing/)

[majorettes], but the men loved it.”⁹³ After World War II the presence of majorettes only expanded as a female-dominated subspace of the marching band. In 1950, F.R. “Woody” Woodard, a TCU alumnus and previous drum major, led a camp at TCU on twirling in which women made up the majority of participants with only six men in attendance. This camp consisted of “75 lively drum majorettes” who learned “the finer intricacies of baton twirling which finally produce the prancing, strutting, colorful, and lively entrance of the school band on the field and on parade.”⁹⁴ Seemingly similar to the phenomenon of cheerleading, as men left for war, spaces previously considered too masculine for women opened up. Consequently, as the popularity of the sport increased among young women, twirling became a symbol of feminine grace rather than the masculine leadership it had represented among drum majors.⁹⁵

At TCU, majorettes reigned as the spirit women of the Horned Frog Band from the years right before World War II until 1960. While the team of women were referred to as majorettes they were also frequently interchangeably referred to as baton twirlers. This terminology was always fluctuating and often used to describe the same group.⁹⁶ When the band returned to an all-male group after the conclusion of World War II, Swiss flags emerged alongside a larger majorette team. TCU’s Swiss flags were square flags with each of the five banners containing

⁹³ Bob Bullock, “Frog Band Still is ‘Showcase,’” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 31, 1958. [Vol. 57 No. 7.](#)

⁹⁴ “Campus Will Rock When Majorettes Do Their Strutting,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), June 16, 1950. [The Skiff, Vol. 48 No. 35.](#)

⁹⁵ Trenton M. Halton, “Give Us a Twirl: Male Baton Twirlers’ Embodied Resistance in a Feminized Terrain,” in *Body Battlegrounds: Transgressions, Tensions, and Transformations*, edited by Chris Bobel and Samantha Kwan, 200–212 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16759ws.29>.

⁹⁶ “Majorettes,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 9, 1951. [The Skiff, Vol. 50, No. 8.](#)

one letter in order to spell out “FROGS.”⁹⁷ Swiss Flags Twisters, also referred to as “Froggie Flag Twirlers,” existed at TCU for a relatively short period between 1946 and 1951.⁹⁸ The flag twirlers' role entailed performing “fancy flag routines with their flags.”⁹⁹ Meanwhile, majorettes “head[ed] the Horned Frog Band” alongside the drum majors, demonstrating their baton twirling and dancing abilities.¹⁰⁰ Majorettes tended to have a more military style to their twirling and formation style. They added “variety to the band presentations with fancy twirling and high stepping.”¹⁰¹



*Drum Major and Majorettes Pictured in 1947 Yearbook*¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* 1947, 205, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11073>

⁹⁸ “Betty Lou Hitson Coach and Captain of Flag Twirlers,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 22, 1946. [The Skiff, Vol. 45, No. 10.](#)

⁹⁹ “Band Uniforms Have Arrived,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), September 19, 1947. [The Skiff, Vol. 46 No. 1.](#)

¹⁰⁰ “Majorettes,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 9, 1951. [The Skiff, Vol. 50, No. 8.](#)

¹⁰¹ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1961), 207, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11087>.

¹⁰² *Horned Frog* 1947), 273.



*Swiss Flag Twirlers, 1947.*¹⁰³

After World War II, baton twirling started becoming nationally recognized as its own individual talent, creating the role of “feature twirlers.”¹⁰⁴ The creation of national baton competitions and organizations, such as the United States Twirling Association and the National Baton Twirling Association, propelled the specialization of twirlers as unique performers starting in the 1950s.¹⁰⁵ However, it wasn’t until 1960 that the Horned Frog Band decided to have “Twirlers Replace Band Majorettes” following a trend in declining majorette squads in the Southwest Conference.¹⁰⁶ Despite this name change, there was considerable overlap. When four twirlers were chosen “to appear with the band instead of [a] majorette line” for the 1960 season, “the head twirler . . . [was] returning Miss Kathy Birkner . . . who [had] been on the majorette

¹⁰³ *Horned Frog* 1947, 205.

¹⁰⁴ Cynthia Gomez, “A Dying Art,” *New Bedford Standard-Times*, January 12, 2011. <https://www.southcoasttoday.com/story/lifestyle/2002/11/19/a-dying-art/50453500007/>.

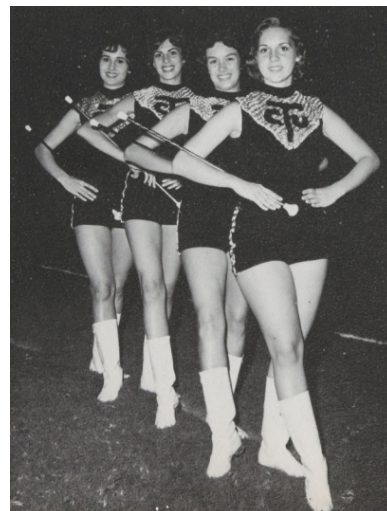
¹⁰⁵ “History.” *World Baton Twirling Federation*.

¹⁰⁶ “Twirlers Replace Band Majorettes,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), May 13, 1960. [The Skiff, Vol. 58, No. 55](#).

line for the past two years.”¹⁰⁷ Potentially the most notable difference was the change in uniform from ornate jackets and pleated skirts to a more tight-fitting leotard style with shorts and sleeveless tops.¹⁰⁸ Despite this technical change, the Horned Frog yearbook continued to refer to the twirlers as majorettes interchangeably throughout the 1960s.¹⁰⁹



Band majorettes are, L to R: Misses Josie Bird, Faye Redwine, Linda Kay Arnette, Kathy Birkner, Martha Hall and Sallie Raines.



Majorettes/Twirlers Pictures in 1960¹¹⁰ and 1961¹¹¹ Yearbook

In 1971, in order to construct a “new look for majorettes,” a “dance-twirl-march unit” named the “Bandebs” was created by Jim Jacobsen to “have a little added glamor.” By this time women had been members of the marching unit of the band alongside the bandsmen for twenty-

¹⁰⁷ “Four Twirlers are Chosen for 1960-61,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), May 5, 1960. [The Skiff, Vol. 58, No. 53.](#)

¹⁰⁸ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1961), 207, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11087>; Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1960), 190, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11086>.

¹⁰⁹ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1966), 218, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11092>; Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1968), 282, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11094>.

¹¹⁰ *Horned Frog* 1960, 190.

¹¹¹ *Horned Frog* 1961, 207.

seven years. This group consisted of women doing everything “from twirling to acrobatics.”¹¹² Trying to “keep pace with changing times” the Bandebes' repertoire included “dance twirling and specialty routines to accompany the band's big numbers.”¹¹³ One of the women, Treva Ladd, was known for twirling large knives in her routines.¹¹⁴ In essence, the Bandebes served as another female spirit group that performed with the band with close ties to the qualities of majorettes and twirlers alike. In 1976, the “Bandettes” changed their name to the Showgirls with “only slight changes in their uniforms and routines.”¹¹⁵ Showgirls were “a unit of the marching band which performs as a dancing group during halftime.”¹¹⁶ Jim Jacobsen, the band director and innovator of the Showgirls, stated that this “integral part of the band...operates similarly to a drill team but with more variety of activity.”¹¹⁷ The Showgirls remained a part of the TCU band until 2000 when they became an independent organization under the TCU athletics program.¹¹⁸

As the TCU Band Debs transitioned into the Showgirls dance team, twirlers were also being added back into the marching band’s visual component. From this point on visual members of the band consisted of varying arrangements of twirlers and flag bearers (also

¹¹² Sue Ann Sandusky, “Bandebes to Add Sparkle,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), May 7, 1971. [The Skiff, Vol. 69, No. 55.](#)

¹¹³ “Contemporary Ideas to be Used by Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), August 31, 1971. [The Daily Skiff, Vol 70, No. 1.](#)

¹¹⁴ Bob Buckman, “Twirling Champ Swings Swords,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 11, 1968. [The Skiff, Vol. 67, No. 7.](#)

¹¹⁵ “Showgirls Shine,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), January 23, 1981. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 79, No. 57.](#)

¹¹⁶ “Showgirl Tryouts Saturday,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), April 13, 1978. [The Daily Skiff, Vol. 76, No. 96.](#)

¹¹⁷ “Showgirl Tryouts Saturday.”

¹¹⁸ “The Evolution of TCU Showgirls Costumes,” *TCU 360*, October 16, 2014. [The evolution of TCU Showgirls costumes | TCU 360.](#)

referred to as color guard or flag corps), all of which remained predominantly female roles.¹¹⁹ As a result, the skills, concepts, and sexualization of these groups of women were heavily correlated.

As the role of majorettes and twirlers became solidified as a female position, it was not uncommon for these talents were often made to be about looks rather than skill.¹²⁰ In 1949, one headline declared, “Cupid turns Thief; Steals Three Females from Band.” The article discusses the loss of the two majorettes and the Band Sweetheart to romantic partnerships as they chose to retire from their roles in the band.¹²¹ The rhetoric framed women as belongings of the band (and bandsmen) rather than fellow members of the organization. Spirit women, from majorettes to twirlers to showgirls, were often discussed in ways that emphasized their role as purely ornamental, reaffirming the notion that the bandsmen were always paramount. As a result, their appearance was frequently commented on by students, bandsmen, and the *Skiff* in sexualizing ways. When the majorettes received new uniforms in 1953, a writer for the *Skiff* wrote, “real cool...those short-skirted uniforms - in more ways than one.”¹²² Titles in the yearbook referred to them as “Beauty Before the Band”¹²³ and “Prancing Prettily were...”¹²⁴ with photos of the women below. In 1971, Jim Jacobsen noted that “physical appearance” was “a prime consideration when selecting members for the Bandebbs.” He went on to explain that ““they have

¹¹⁹ Michelle Espinosa, “Twirling Quartet Entertains Crowd,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 1, 1986. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 87, No. 19.](#)

¹²⁰ “8 Girls Will Try for Majorette,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), May 14, 1948. [The Skiff, Vol. 46 No. 32.](#)

¹²¹ “Cupid Turns Thief; Steals Three Females From Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), January 14, 1949. [The Skiff, Vol. 47 No. 15.](#)

¹²² George Pucket, “Real Cool,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 13, 1953. [The Skiff, Vol. 52, No. 9.](#)

¹²³ *Horned Frog* 1955, 106.

¹²⁴ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1954), 62. TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11080>.

to be real good-looking chicks.’ Some of the girls were accepted only after they agreed to lose a prescribed amount of weight -in the right places- before July 19 when they will be measured for uniforms.”¹²⁵ Similarly, a 1978 ad for Showgirl tryouts stated “evaluation of the [dance] routine will be based on gracefulness, coordination, rhythm, attractiveness, figure, poise, showmanship, general ability and attitude.”¹²⁶ Jacobsen again stated that “they also must maintain a weight limit, always being aware of any weight problems they may have.”¹²⁷ An emphasis on looks and beauty often caused the skill of these women to go unnoticed and underappreciated.

In 1991, one TCU twirler wrote, “It takes years of practice and lots of sweat to make those difficult moves appear effortless.”¹²⁸ Beth Patton was responding to a *Skiff* article implying that twirling and beauty pageants were frivolous pastimes. She argued that people have an inaccurate perception of twirlers and that “perhaps if twirling was televised like other sports, the general public would finally grasp the true difficulty and dedication it requires.”¹²⁹ Beth Patton wrote another letter to the editor when the *Skiff* wrote about an incident in which Super Frog (TCU’s mascot) ignored a twirler’s request and was in the way of her performance. She stated that “so often, baton twirlers are not given the respect that they deserve . . . many twirlers have worked for years and spent thousands of dollars on lessons and practice.”¹³⁰ Even among

¹²⁵ Sandusky, “Bandebs.”

¹²⁶ “Showgirl Tryouts Saturday.”

¹²⁷ “Showgirl Tryouts Saturday.”

¹²⁸ Beth Patton, “Letter to the Editor: Stereotypes,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), February 22, 1991. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 88, No. 80](#).

¹²⁹ Patton, “Letter to the Editor: Stereotypes.”

¹³⁰ Beth Patton, “Letter to the Editor: Twirling,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), February 14, 1992. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 89, No. 72](#)

the band, the hard work of majorettes and twirlers was not always recognized. The 1969 drum major, Tommy Horton “thought it was ‘sissy’ to go out on the field and twirl batons like the majorettes” and consequently stated “he [would] not [be carrying] a baton.”¹³¹

Post-World War II Band

Though women were no longer allowed to participate as musicians on the field after the conclusion of World War II, the return to an all-male band was not without its challenges. Leon Breeden became the director of bands at TCU upon his graduation at just twenty-three years old, making him the youngest band director in the country.¹³² With the majority of the band being ex-GIs he had his work cut out for him; Breeden deemed the band boys “impossible to control” and “devoid of discipline.”¹³³ One year, after the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show Parade, the bandsmen acquired a big white horse. They rode it through the old administration building, parading to the tune of “Onward Christian Soldiers.”¹³⁴ Another year, when the football team and band traveled to Kansas City for a game with Kansas University, a significant rainstorm hit as the game started. The drum major took the band behind the stadium during the second quarter and made a change to the field show. The bandsmen were supposed to spell “HELLO”; however, they first spelled “O HELL” before the “O” ran to the other end of the formation.¹³⁵ Yet another time at the Stock Show Parade, the last flank of the parade block formation broke off mid-parade and marched straight into a bar. When the band circled back around the group, made up of mostly sousaphone

¹³¹ Larry Crowder, “Short in Height, On Experience, Too,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), September 16, 1969. [The Skiff, Vol. 68, No. 4.](#)

¹³² Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

¹³³ Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

¹³⁴ “TCU Band History.”

¹³⁵ “TCU Band History.”

players, rejoined the group as if nothing had happened.¹³⁶ After five years with the rambunctious group, Breedon left TCU to continue his academic career.¹³⁷ The next man to assume the full-time position of Director of Bands at TCU was Lewis Gillis; under whom the band underwent fundamental change.¹³⁸

Women Invade Band

In 1952, Lewis Gillis organized “an all-girl marching band”. This group met at seven pm on Tuesdays and Fridays. It was purely an extracurricular activity, “carries no credit,” and was not featured anywhere in the 1953 yearbook. Professor Gillis stated his goal was to eventually develop the band to be able to “perform during halftime activities at football games.”¹³⁹ This plan ultimately failed due to a lack of diverse instrumentation.¹⁴⁰ An innate issue with allowing women to enter the marching band sphere was instrumentation. Since the late nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, the only “acceptable” instruments for a woman to play were piano and violin, neither of which exist in marching band. Wind instruments such as the flute, require a contortion of the mouth which was seen as unbecoming for a woman.¹⁴¹ One composer, Gustave Kerker in 1904, stated “women cannot possibly play brass instruments and look pretty, and why

¹³⁶ Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004: 100 Years of the TCU Band*.

¹³⁷ Peard, Robison, and Stepan, *"The History of the Texas Christian University Band."*

¹³⁸ “TCU Band History.”

¹³⁹ “Women’s Band Being Organized,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 3, 1952. [The Skiff, Vol. 51, No. 3.](#)

¹⁴⁰ “Editorial Comment: Uniformity Would Help,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 23, 1953. [The Skiff, Vol. 52, No. 6.](#)

¹⁴¹ “Call the Gender Police!” *Rachel Susser*, July 24, 2017, rachelsusser.com/2017/07/22/gender-and-performance-practice-history-classical-music.

should they spoil their good looks?”¹⁴² Additionally, brass instruments produced “an overly strong and powerful sound” that “did not agree with a woman’s modest and mild character.”¹⁴³ While these stereotypes lessened over time their effects remain present in the gender discrepancies in marching band instrumentation today. Today, flute and clarinet are considered predominantly feminine instruments while trumpet, trombone, and drums remain male-dominated sections.¹⁴⁴ In 2016, 94 percent of percussionists and 97 of trumpets were male.¹⁴⁵ So while all instrumentation eventually became available to women, the centuries of instrument stereotypes and expectations still profoundly affect the gender distribution in collegiate marching bands. Thus, it is not surprising that TCU could not form an all-female marching band with proper instrumentation in 1952.

The following year, “Women Invade Band.” This was the title of a 1953 article, in the *Skiff* in which Ted Jackson wrote about “the most marked change in the 47-year history of the Horned Frog Band.”¹⁴⁶ Gillis made the decision halfway through the football season stemming from “a need for a larger band.” The Horned Frog Band was the only band in the Southwest Conference (except Texas A&M which was an all-male school until 1963) that had not allowed

¹⁴² James Bennett II, “Stereotyping Instruments: Why We Still Think Some Are for Boys, Others for Girls: How to Classical,” *WQXR*. April 19, 2018. www.wqxr.org/story/stereotyping-instruments-why-we-still-think-some-are-for-boys-others-for-girls.

¹⁴³ Kilden, “Gender-Based Social Conventions Influenced Development of Musical Instruments,” *PHYS ORG*. April 22, 2016. phys.org/news/2016-04-gender-based-social-conventions-musical-instruments.html.

¹⁴⁴ Laura M. Wiendenfeld, “Sex-Types and Instrument Selection: The Effect of Gender Schemas on Fifth Graders’ Instrument Choices,” *Texas Music Education Research*, 2012. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1102257.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ Bennett, “Stereotyping Instruments.”

¹⁴⁶ Ted Jackson, “Women Invade Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 16, 1953. [The Skiff, Vol. 52, No. 5](#).

women to join its ranks.¹⁴⁷ Gillis stated that the swing style of music (used by the HFB since the mid-1930s) would remain since “‘girls can play swing as well as the boys and sometimes better.’”¹⁴⁸ This style of marching band has its roots in jazz and is typically characterized by a high-keyed, precession, driving, and articulate style.¹⁴⁹ While the marching style would remain, the tempo (speed/pace) needed to be changed to “a slower cadence,” presumably because of women’s shorter strides.¹⁵⁰ Fourteen women were added in this first year. They included Pat Olsen (trombone), Ann Adams (flute), Barbara Alford (clarinet), Pat Baughman (French horn), Wilma Hoyler (French horn), Eugenia Schuler (clarinet), Judy Smith (clarinet), Kay Hartman (clarinet), Shirley Kee (oboe), Mary Tener (clarinet), Margie Schriver (baritone), LaNeal Tankersly (bass drum), and Gail Pate (clarinet).¹⁵¹ But, because this change was halfway through the season, “the girls [could] not wear uniforms. They [would] march in black skirts, white blouses, white socks, and black shoes.”¹⁵² Women were not fitted and given the same uniforms as men until the following year, when the entire band received new uniforms.¹⁵³ An editorial comment in the *Skiff* said that the band “looked ragged” with the women “wearing black skirts and white blouses” marching “beside men in purple and white uniforms.” Ellis Amburn, the *Skiff*

¹⁴⁷Jackson, “Women Invade Band.”

¹⁴⁸ Jackson, “Women Invade Band.”

¹⁴⁹ “Traditions,” *SMU Mustang Band - Student Affairs*, www.smu.edu/studentaffairs/mustang-band/about-us/traditions.

¹⁵⁰ Jackson, “Women Invade Band.”

¹⁵¹ “Horned Frog Band Accepts 14 Girls,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 30, 1953. [The Skiff, Vol. 52, No. 7](#).

¹⁵²Jackson, “Women Invade Band.”

¹⁵³ Jim Brock, “Frog-Hog Battle is a Letdown Test,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 1, 1954. [The Skiff, Vol. 53, No. 3](#).

editor, questioned why the band did not “wait for uniforms, carry on as before and put women back into a bigger and better marching band next year.”¹⁵⁴ Other observers noted this “minor bombshell” required “the famed swift marching cadence [to be] reduced considerably.”¹⁵⁵ The idea that women could not perform on the same level as men due to the physicality of marching bands persisted. This was a frequently cited reason for the exclusion of women in marching band throughout the twentieth century. When one hopefully female musician, Joy Rimpau, sent an interest letter to the University of Minnesota Marching Band in 1967, the first line of the returned letter read, “The University of Minnesota Marching Band is limited to male students, the reason being that the long and strenuous hours of practice would be exhausting to the average girl.”¹⁵⁶ While women eventually proved their capacity for marching band’s physical aspects, it has not been a quick journey and its lingering implications can still be seen in what instruments women are encouraged and discouraged to pick up.

Leadership and Awards in Band

In 1955, James A. “Jim” Jacobsen became the director of bands, a position he would hold until 1981 - making him the longest-serving band director.¹⁵⁷ Jacobsen was famous for inventing a marching technique referred to as “Peel-Offs” or “Moving Diamond Drills;” this technique was picked up by bands across the country and made Jacobsen an influential person in marching band fundamentals.¹⁵⁸ At TCU, he introduced a week of “basic training” in which band members

¹⁵⁴ “Editorial Comment: Uniformity Would Help.”

¹⁵⁵ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1953), 52. TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11079>.

¹⁵⁶ Ferguson, “Oral Histories.”

¹⁵⁷ “TCU Band History.”

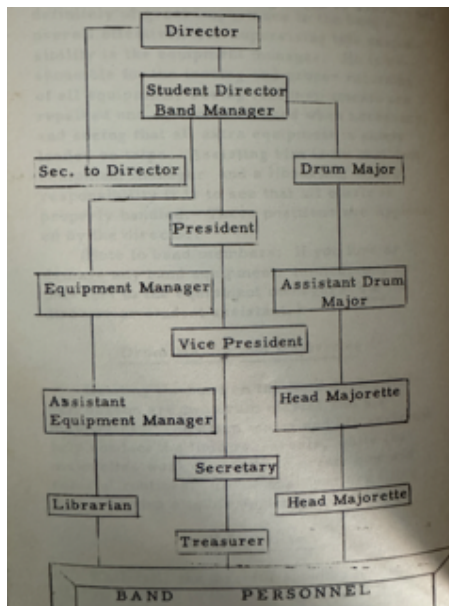
¹⁵⁸ “TCU Band History.”

arrived a week before school started to begin learning marching technique.¹⁵⁹ While this was a new idea at the time, it is now commonly referred to as “band camp” and today it is standard practice among high school and collegiate marching bands.¹⁶⁰ Jacobsen also standardized the hierarchy of authority in the band. He set up student administration positions to help keep the band functioning. The positions included: student director/band manager, equipment managers, president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, drum majors and majorettes, and drill instructors. In a 1957 HFB recruitment pamphlet, the description of the leadership roles implied that several of them would be male-only positions. For example, the president was to carry out “whatever administrative work demands his attention.” The equipment manager's description stated, “he is responsible for the issuing and proper returning of all equipment” and overseeing the assistant equipment manager and librarian. Drill instructors were “a number of men” appointed by the director in what was considered “the toughest job in the band, for they must mold a precision marching unit.”¹⁶¹ Most of the gendered roles fell at the top of the hierarchy illustrated in the same pamphlet.

¹⁵⁹ Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

¹⁶⁰ Foushee, *TCU 1904-2004*.

¹⁶¹ “The TCU Bandsmen: Official Handbook for Members of the Texas Christian University Bands.” Published by Texas Christian University Bands. Fort Worth, TX: 1957.



*Student Leadership Hierarchy, 1957 Pamphlet*¹⁶²

One of the most important student roles in marching band has always been the position of drum major. The recruitment pamphlet stated “The drum major and his assistant help conduct relief rehearsals, while the majorettes work diligently to create new and colorful routines.”¹⁶³ Despite Jacobsen stating that “the part the drum major plays during halftime can be handled by almost anyone,” in his twenty-six years at TCU he never selected a woman to fill that role. One might look at an individual's high school experience to inform this discrepancy, however, Jacobsen had selected a man with no prior experience to serve as a TCU drum major. The 1969 drum major, Tommy Horton, had “never acted as a drum major for a marching band, either in high school or college.” Despite his “complete lack of experience,” Jacobsen felt he was qualified because he could perform the two “primary functions: instruction and critical

¹⁶² “The TCU Bandsmen.”

¹⁶³ “The TCU Bandsmen.”

appraisal.”¹⁶⁴ This raises a question about why a woman was never deemed capable of achieving these responsibilities.

The esteemed award of “Outstanding Bandsman” or “Most Valuable Bandsmen Award” was also introduced during this period. The honor was established by Tau Beta Sigma and Kappa Kappa Psi (national music sorority and fraternity) as one of their first projects.¹⁶⁵ This award was considered “the highest honor bestowed upon a TCU bandsman and was an award elected by secret ballot.”¹⁶⁶ From 1955 to 1987, the first thirty-two years of this award, only six women received the honor: Sylvia Schroeder (1959), Verna Kennelly (1960), Karen Hardee (1969), Suzanne Smith (1983), and Rene Ozuna and Susan Codin (1986).¹⁶⁷ There is no locatable record of the outstanding bandsman award from that point so it is unclear how long this gender disparity persisted.

The other great honor that can be awarded to TCU band members and staff is their induction into the “Ex-Bandsmen Hall of Fame.” This honor is given to TCU music graduates (undergraduate and graduate alumni), staff, and other associates who played a notable role at TCU and/or went on to have an accomplished career. Jacobsen became the first inductee in 1987 for his time serving as the director of the band. Sixty-four people were inducted between 1987 and 2020. Of these sixty-four, fifty-eight were men and six were women. Of the six women, three were named alongside their husbands (Kathy Smith, 2013; Pat Huff, 1999; and Wyn Jacobsen, 1987). The other women to be inducted were Joyce Roach (1991), a twirler in the band

¹⁶⁴ Crowder, “Short in Height.”

¹⁶⁵ “The TCU Bandsmen.”

¹⁶⁶ “The TCU Bandsmen.”

¹⁶⁷ Peard, Robison, and Stepan, “*The History of the Texas Christian University Band.*”

from 1959 to 1958; Toni Parker (2012), the administrative assistant for the TCU Band (aka “Band Mom”); and Donna Mastandrea Haas (2020) the director and choreographer of the TCU “Showgirls” from 1976 to 1998. While many of the inductees have had remarkable accomplishments inside and outside the musical profession, many of the men were inducted for less than their female counterparts. All six women worked for Texas Christian University in some capacity. Short biographies show that the reasons for their induction were as follows: created and worked as Showgirls director, served as the band’s administrative assistant, worked as secretary and webmaster for the Ex-Bandsmen Association, served as band librarian, performed as twirler and (current at time of induction) faculty member of the English Department, and served “always by his side” as wife to the director of bands (Jacobsen). While several inductees were band directors, the male honorees’ descriptions rarely matched the direct and labor-intensive service that the women did. For example, 1988 inductee Kenneth Baughan (Class of 1938) received the honor for directing a band called “The Dictators” during his time at TCU. Similarly, three male inductees (Dr. Gerald F. Cox, Jr., 2004; Dr. Michael D. Korenman, 2004; and Dr. Arthur “Skipper” Dolt, 2014) were all TCU graduates who were recognized for practicing as dentists and surgeons in the Fort Worth area. None of these three are recorded to have served in leadership or service roles during their time at TCU or achieve notable music careers.¹⁶⁸ While the Hall of Fame “serves to honor past band members, but also give our current students a sense of tradition and feeling of pride in the history of [the] band,” there seems to be a notable discrepancy in the reasons men and women are recognized in the band hall of fame.

¹⁶⁸ “Band Hall of Fame Ex Bandsmen v3 October 2020.” Excel Spreadsheet of Hall of Fame Inductees. [Band Hall of Fame Ex Bandsmen v3 October 2020.xlsx](#).

Women were admired for their labor with the band, while men were recognized for their achievements after their time as bandsmen.

The discrepancy in these two honors is even more startling considering that by 1958 the band was “over 70 percent female” (according to an article in the *Skiff*). All these awards began in a time where women held a significant ratio of the band’s membership.¹⁶⁹ Despite this, they are marginally represented in these awards. In this same era, in 1957, the TCU marching band debuted as the “Show Window of TCU.” Jacobson created this slogan to point to “the high reputation and esteem that the band carries and the prominent position it reflects in the ideals of the University.”¹⁷⁰ Whether or not the TCU marching band was adequately representing the “ideals of the university” or simply a victim to social views of women, there seems to have been a failure to promote and recognize women in the organization.

Band Fraternity and Sorority

Jim Jacobsen also introduced two organizations that became fundamental to the functioning of the band. In 1955, the Frog Horn (male only) and Crescendo Clubs (female only) were created as “petitioning organizations,” the precursor to the band fraternity and sorority.¹⁷¹ In 1957, “both the fraternity and the sorority petitioned the national organizations” and were approved for membership.¹⁷² The male organization, known as Kappa Kappa Psi (KKY), was founded in 1919 at Oklahoma State University as the “Honorary Fraternity for College

¹⁶⁹Bullock, “Frog Band Still is ‘Showcase.’”

¹⁷⁰ Peard, Robison, and Stepan, “*The History of the Texas Christian University Band.*”

¹⁷¹ Ron George, “Kappa Psi Renders Aid to Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), March 12 1968. [The Skiff, Vol. 66, No. 38.](#)

¹⁷² George, “Kappa Psi Renders Aid to Band.”

Bandsmen.”¹⁷³ Tau Beta Sigma (TBS) was not established until 1946 as the “National Honorary Band Sorority” at Texas Tech University.¹⁷⁴ These two service organizations were not limited to their work with marching bands, but marching bands commonly made up the largest number of members and had the most needs.¹⁷⁵ Marching bands have significantly more equipment and travel with much more frequency than other musical groups; both these facts require hands-on help and fundraising efforts from students. The groups’ establishment at TCU was to “to help the band perform to the best of its ability” and “provide social outlets for their members” in a variety of ways.¹⁷⁶ For Kappa Kappa Psi, duties “consisted mainly of picking up and tearing down,” “building equipment,” and “moving equipment such as podiums and instruments.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, “Kappa Kappa Psi does every physical thing the band needs done.”¹⁷⁸ Some of Tau Beta Sigma’s responsibilities included: “selling refreshments,” “providing first aid kits,” and “helping new members adapt to the intensity of college band life.”¹⁷⁹

The two organizations eventually became co-ed.¹⁸⁰ The elimination of gender-specific membership was an adjustment made in order to remain compliant with Title IX (signed into law

¹⁷³ “Brief History,” *Kappa Kappa Psi*, www.kkpsi.org/about/brief-history/.

¹⁷⁴ “Tau Beta Sigma Historical Timeline,” Tau Beta Sigma, <https://www.tbsigma.org/tbs-timeline/>.

¹⁷⁵ Matt Pearce, “Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Invaluable Assets to the Band,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), August 5, 1996. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 94, No. 6](#).

¹⁷⁶ Carson Lane, “Band to Host Convention in 1991,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), April 11, 1990. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 87, No. 104](#); Pearce, “Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Invaluable Assets to the Band.”

¹⁷⁷ Lane, “Band to Host Convention in 1991.”

¹⁷⁸ Erin Brinkman, “Marching in Line,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 7, 1997. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 95, No. 43](#).

¹⁷⁹ Lane, “Band to Host Convention in 1991.”

¹⁸⁰ “DEIA: History Resources,” *Tau Beta Sigma*, www.tbsigma.org/deia/.

in 1972). While Panhellenic and social sororities were not affected by Title IX, service, honorary, and professional organizations were.¹⁸¹ As honorary organizations, this meant TBS and KKY had to comply. Though a merger was suggested, neither organization supported the idea at their respective national conventions. Tau Beta Sigma Nationals decided to allow men to join in 1975, but the first man did not join until 1977 when a member of the University of Connecticut Marching Band joined the Gamma Kappa chapter.¹⁸²

Kappa Kappa Psi nationally became co-ed in 1977 after significant resistance. At the 1973 National Convention, there was a proposal to remove the word “male” from membership requirements, but there was not enough support. Instead, the voting body changed the wording to read “all active, alumni, inactive, and life members of the Fraternity be of the male sex.” This loophole allowed women to be accepted into the fraternity as honorary members but prevented them from being active members. At the next convention, in 1975, a committee was created to discuss Title IX compliance. Their recommendation was that both organizations be restructured to have the same fee structure, national offices, and hierarchy; but the intention was to remain as single-sex organizations. At this point many chapters across the country were being pressured to comply with Title IX by their university’s administrations; many were at risk of being forced to leave the university if they did not comply. The Kappa Kappa Psi national executive secretary, W. Frank Evans, began exploring lobbying options but the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare denied his request to be heard. In an issue of *The Podium*, the publication of KKY, Evans stated, “it has become imperative that the National Constitution be altered to delete all

¹⁸¹ William L. Smith, “*Social Fraternities and Sororities and Title IX Exemptions*,” United States Department of Education, May 31, 1999. www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/memo-re-fraternities-and-sororities.pdf.

¹⁸² “Male Allyship in Tau Beta Sigma History,” *The Podium Online*, June 20, 2024. podium.kkytbs.org/male-allyship-in-tau-beta-sigma-history/.

mention of specific sex.” When the men of KKY once again adamantly opposed a merger, the fraternity officially removed all gender references from the constitution, making it compliant with the Education Amendments of 1972. The first woman to go through the formal membership process of Kappa Kappa Psi and become an active member was Darrah Hill Young. In 1976, at Wichita State University, the brothers of KKY sent out bids to three women as a joke; freshman percussionist Young accepted. As a member of the male-dominated drumline, Young had to work hard to earn the respect of her peers. She recalls that “there were two guys who did not want me in the chapter, period.” In addition, members of Tau Beta Sigma were not very supportive of her decision. Some started rumors or “got real nasty”. Young states, however, that once she was initiated most of the brothers of KKY became supportive, saying she had proven herself.¹⁸³ Young’s story is eerily similar to that of Katie Starkey, the first woman to ever join TCU’s chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi. Starkey, a tenor sax player, rushed KKY in 2013. Some of Starkey’s best friends, all male, decided they were going to rush Kappa Kappa Psi and began joking that she should join as well since she “was already one of the guys.” She “didn’t take it seriously at first, because there were some lines [she] did want to respect, especially TCU tradition.” It wasn’t until one of Starkey’s friends informed her that Kappa Kappa Psi was a co-ed fraternity and that other chapters across the country had both men and women, that she became interested. When Starkey began KKY’s formal rush process a lot of people were unhappy including members of both the sorority and fraternity. Starkey recalls that some people thought she believed she was better than the TBS girls and just wanted male attention. Others spread rumors that she was gender fluid or a lesbian. Half of her KKY brothers “loved, supported

¹⁸³ Dave Justin, “Women in the Fraternity,” *The Podium Online*, April 18, 2012. podium.kkypsi.org/women-in-the-fraternity-part-1/ .

and defended [her], while others hated [her] for making it in.” Despite Starkey’s “rough start” in Kappa Kappa Psi, after her first year in the fraternity “many of them came to accept [her] in” and that her “experience in its entirety was absolutely fantastic.”¹⁸⁴ Katie Starkey was the first to break rank at TCU, inspiring a man to join TCU’s chapter of Tau Beta Sigma the following year in 2014.

Title IX and Zooming Out

At TCU, the effect of Title IX on the marching band was felt most prominently on its fraternity and sorority. Many collegiate bands around the country remained male-only, however, and thus Title IX dramatically altered how these bands could and would function. Some of the most well-renowned marching bands in the country, Ohio State, Michigan, Notre Dame, University of Southern California, and others hadn’t admitted women until this point. As a result, many marching bands around the country are only recently celebrating fifty years of women as members.

Unsurprisingly, many of these same schools lagged in placing women in positions of leadership, most specifically as drum majors. The Michigan Marching Band first appointed a female drum major, clarinet player Karen England in 2001.¹⁸⁵ At Ohio State, Shelley Graf served as the first female drum major at the school and in the Big Ten in 1981; despite this relatively quick change in the Ohio State band, they did not see a second female drum major until 2003.¹⁸⁶ The University of Southern California did not see its first woman leading the band as a drum

¹⁸⁴ Katie Starkey, (@kt.flexy), Instagram Direct Message to author. September 5, 2024.

¹⁸⁵ “She’s the Leader of the Band,” *University of Michigan News*, July 24, 2001, news.umich.edu/she-s-the-leader-of-the-band/.

¹⁸⁶ “Shelley Graf: 1981,” *The Ohio State University Marching and Athletic Bands*, tbdbitl.osu.edu/marching-band/drum-major/biographies/graf-1981.

major until 2019 when India Anderson earned the role.¹⁸⁷ So while the admission of women into collegiate marching bands was an exciting step forward, change in leadership has been slow to follow.

This discrepancy in female student leadership is further reflected in the profession of collegiate directors and staff. At the high school level, the gender ratio of male to female band directors is estimated to be three to one, though some sources say it is closer to five to one.¹⁸⁸ This difference contributes to women's even smaller representation at the college level, in part because successful experience as a high school band director is often considered to be a necessary qualification for a band position in postsecondary education. Though it is difficult to get an exact percentage, little more than five percent of all college band directors are women.¹⁸⁹ In addition, there is no record of any women ever serving as the head director of a marching band at any school in the Big Twelve Conference. (It is unclear whether this extends to all Division I schools.)

Female Leadership in the HFB

At Texas Christian University, despite women being in the marching band since 1953, there was not another female TCU drum major after Frances Hall (during World War II) until 1986. During the 1986 season, third-year student Molly McLean became the first woman to serve as drum major during peacetime. She served alongside Steve Linton in his fourth year as a

¹⁸⁷ David Medzerian, "USC Trailblazer Pushed Past Criticism as Trojan Marching Band's First Female Drum Major," *USC Today*, December 8, 2023. today.usc.edu/usc-trailblazer-pushed-past-criticism-as-trojan-marching-bands-first-female-drum-major/.

¹⁸⁸ Mike Lawson, "Report: Where Are All the Women Directors?" *SBO*, September 1, 2002, sbomagazine.com/49report-where-are-all-the-women-directors.

¹⁸⁹ Gould, "Cultural Contexts of Exclusion."

TCU drum major.¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately, there is no record of her in any other yearbooks and the only other known information is that she was nominated for homecoming queen in 1987 as the representative of Sherley Hall.¹⁹¹ The year after Molly McLean served, in the 1987 football season, Julie Buell (music education major) began her four-year run as the Horned Frog Band's drum major.¹⁹² The music education major even served alongside another female drum major, Pam Becker, for her last two seasons. The late 1980s and early 1990s marked a significant change in the position of the drum major. Between 1986 and 2004, eight out of twenty drum majors were women.¹⁹³ This means that in the first 100 years of the Horned Frog Band, only eight women are known to have been chosen by the band director to serve as a drum major.

This discrepancy travels up to the staff of the Horned Frog Band. TCU has never had a female director of bands, associate director of bands, or director of athletic bands (the three positions that directly oversee the functioning of the marching band). The only female staff member who works with the marching band is the secretary (today titled "administrative assistant-TCU Bands"); while the role is essential to the operation of the band, the secretary works with the entirety of the School of Music (not exclusively the marching band) and doesn't attend or lead any rehearsals or events (thus should be considered support staff). Besides the director, paid staff includes adjunct faculty who work with percussion (all of whom have been male). The only non-student leadership women have possessed in the Horned Frog Band is that

¹⁹⁰ Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1987), 140, TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11108>.

¹⁹¹ "Homecoming '87: Homecoming Queen Nominations," *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), October 27, 1987. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 85, No. 34](https://www.tcu.edu/skiff/vol85no34).

¹⁹² Texas Christian University, *The Horned Frog* (Fort Worth, TX: 1991), 66. TCU Digital Archives, <https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/11112>.

¹⁹³ There were anywhere from one to three drum majors per season. From 1970-2006 only twenty are identifiable.

of graduate assistants. In the last decade, the Horned Frog Band has had several female graduate assistants. Graduate assistants receive a stipend to assist at all marching band rehearsals and events. They help lead warm-ups and give critiques on technique in marching and music; many of them are pursuing their degree to become future band directors. Additionally, they work with adjunct and full-time faculty to ensure everything gets done on and off the field. Hopefully, this represents a positive change in the future of female leadership in the Horned Frog Band and collegiate bands across the country.

Retelling 100 Years

In 2004, TCU's Marching Band celebrated its one-hundred-year anniversary. A number of articles were posted outlining the history of the Horned Frog Band, and the absence of women is poignant. One TCU Magazine article, titled "Presenting 100 Years of the Horned Frog Band" gives "Jim Jacobsen's thumbnail sketch of the history of the TCU Band." The only notes from 1942 to 1944 were the two directors of bands (Naomi Whitehurst and John Woldt), not the historic involvement of women stepping up to fill in while many of the men were serving in World War II. Despite women being admitted to the band in 1953, Jacobsen's thumbnail reports that between 1950 and 1955 Lewis Gillis was the director of bands. Jacobsen notes that under Gillis "the band dwindled to 35 [members] in the fall of 1954 including 7 majorettes and drum major;" and fails to acknowledge women's admission to the Horned Frog Band.¹⁹⁴ The Fort Worth Star-Telegram also published a piece written by Matt Frazier, titled "Band: Group gained fame through jazz in the 30s." Once again, this article outlines the history of the Horned Frog Band without mentioning the role of women in any capacity other than when they were

¹⁹⁴ Master, "Presenting 100 Years of the Horned Frog Band."

“[allowed] in the band to fill spots left empty by students going to war.”¹⁹⁵ Similarly, a Skiff article titled “Band Commemorates Full Century of Music,” gives another outline of what the band’s history looks like. This article, along with a similar article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reports that in 1942 “because so many of the men were fighting in the war, the band was opened to women.” There is no mention of the fact that the band immediately returned to an all-male band after the war. In fact, women’s inclusion in 1953 is not even worth noting despite the extensive description of the mischievous behavior of the post-World War II band.¹⁹⁶

The role of women in TCU’s marching band has been largely overlooked especially in the retelling of its history. Women’s complex relationship and involvement in the Horned Frog Band is a story that should be told in order to observe how it has impacted the culture of the band today. A Google search of women in collegiate marching bands will result in a plethora of articles celebrating big schools’ fiftieth anniversary of women being admitted to their marching bands. TCU has thus far not publicly told the story of women’s history in its band, and while it is sometimes a hard reality, it is one that should be embraced. It is time to retell a hundred years, this time acknowledging the complicated and important role women have played in the Horned Frog Band.

Conclusion

The intention of this paper is to shed light on the history of women in the Horned Frog Band in its first one hundred years. The TCU band’s treatment and perception of women is not unique; in fact, they fall in the middle of the road regarding progressiveness. I think this research, as an in-depth case study, shows the complexity of gender inequality in marching

¹⁹⁵ “Band: Group gained fame through jazz in the ‘30s,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 23, 2004.

¹⁹⁶ Darcy Deupree, “Celebrating 100 Years: Band Commemorates Full Century of Music,” *The Skiff* (Fort Worth, TX), November 12, 2004. [TCU Daily Skiff, Vol. 102, No. 46.](#)

bands. As a current female participant in the Horned Frog Band, I know it is not a well-known history by its students or leaders. As I have done this research, however, it has informed my ability to see where gender continues to affect how the organization is structured and who it recognizes as exemplary. It is my hope that this research highlights a new perspective on the history of the Texas Christian University Horned Frog Band and allows for introspection among the band community of where we still fall short and why.