

Buckeye fans hear about TBDBITL

April 10, 2007

Nearly 130 years ago, Jonathan Waters said, a "ragtag" group of musicians started something that would become one of the most important traditions at The Ohio State University: the Ohio State University Marching Band. Although more of a ROTC military-style band in those days, the group would morph into an institution now known by the acronym TBDBITL (which, as any Buckeye fan knows, stands for The Best Damn Band in the Land).

Unlike most college marching bands, TBDBITL has a close relationship with the football team, said Waters, the band's assistant director, who talked about the musical group he calls "an American phenomenon" during last night's Buckeye Bash sponsored by the Ohio State University Alumni Association of Paulding and Van Wert Counties.

The Bash, which was held at JEHMMS Banquet and Convention Center, also featured the naming of 2007's "Buckaholic" as well as a raffle, dinner and association reports. Waters, who has a bachelor's degree and two master's degrees from OSU (in music education and conducting), was also a band member from 1995-1999 and is now involved in creating some of the band's well-received drill shows. He also teaches conducting for Ohio State and directs some of the university's instrumental groups.

Waters talked about the OSU Marching Band's unique sound, much of which emanates from the fact that it's the oldest and largest (192 on-field members) all-brass, all-percussion bands in existence (since 1934), as well as the efforts of the band's five professional music arrangers. One thing Waters and current band staff didn't create was the band's famous "Script Ohio," a drill formation that has been in existence for more than 70 years. And in all but one of those years, a sousaphone player has dotted the "I" in the formation. The first year, Waters noted, a cornet player dotted the "I" but that honor was given in 1937 to the sousaphone section to make the dotting more noticeable. Today's band builds on a tradition started in the 1960s of drill shows that encompass fancy drill maneuvers and geometric and other patterns.

Today's OSU Marching Band members - about a fourth of who are music majors - must learn 65 pieces of music and 250 pages of drills each year. And that doesn't even guarantee that they'll be on the field on any given week, since the band holds challenges every Monday during marching band season.

Waters smiled as he told the approximately 100 Buckeye faithful who attended the Bash that most of the band's many traditions have come about "mostly by accident." That includes the first playing of "Hang On, Sloopy," the rock standard by Ohio rock band The McCoys that was first played by the marching band in 1965 after the then director, who hated rock music, finally acquiesced to a band member's request to play the song - one time. The response was so tremendous the song has been played every year for the past 42 years. The Skull Session, the pre-game concert that has been a band tradition since 1934, was first started as sort of a last-minute check to ensure band members knew what they were supposed to do once they got onto the field. The traditional ramp entrance into Ohio Stadium has been around pretty much as long as the stadium itself, which was constructed in 1922.

Waters said the greatest of all band traditions is its "tradition of excellence," adding that alumni help continue that tradition by producing new band members each year. "Woody Hayes said it: 'You win with people,'" Water said, noting that band members like OSU Class of 2006 graduate Eric Hurless -- son of Mel and Arlene Hurless of Van Wert -- and potential members such as Lincolnview senior Zach Profit are what make the band so good. Waters also showed one of the well-received band shows from the 2006 season, which earned applause from alumni group members.

Also during the banquet, Burl Barnes was named the 2007 "Buckaholic" and a number of door prizes were announced.

It was also announced that the group would be raffling off a wooden foot locker made by local resident Phil Baxter. Tickets will be \$5 each or six for \$25 and can be purchased from OSU Alumni Association members, as well as at Mengerink's Source for Sports and The Spelling Bee.

Dave Mosier/[Van Wert independent](#)
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Jonathan Waters, assistant director of the Ohio State University Marching Band, shows local OSU Alumni Association members a sheet of drills and noted that band members have to learn 250 such pages in a typical marching band season.

2007 Buckaholic Burl Barnes



The OSU Marching Band does "Script Ohio."



An Ohio State wooden foot locker/steamer trunk created by Phil Baxter, Abanaka Artisan, which will be raffled off by the local OSU Alumni Association.

Tickets will be \$5 each or six for \$25 and can be purchased from OSU Alumni Association members, as well as at Mengerink's Source for Sports and The Spelling Bee in Van Wert and at the Animal Clinic of Paulding, 308 E Jackson St, Paulding, OH

More photos and information can be seen at www.abanaka.com.