

Homecoming Beer Band Observations

This is a bye week for us Hawkeye football fans, so we'll have to content ourselves with watching other college football games on TV and reminiscing about last week's most excellent game and UI Homecoming festivities.

Besides witnessing the annual pound-down of Penn State – which was rewarding enough - I also participated in the UI Homecoming Parade the previous evening as a member of the UI Alumni Band.

It has been quite a while since I was a UI student active in the downtown bar scene – we're talking the 1970's. I wish smoke-free had been the law of the land back then – it's a pleasure to walk into a bar and not be knocked down by a carcinogenic fog. Another difference - the 21-only ordinance currently in effect - is a change that I support although there is no doubt in my mind that I would have bitterly opposed it if I were still in college.

One thing that hasn't changed in the intervening years between then and now is that I have maintained my aesthetic appreciation for the female form. LuAnn refers to my furtive intellectual observations less charitably, referring to me as a “leering geezer.”

Is it just me, or is there a competition amongst college girls to see who can wear the highest heels, the shortest skirts and the skimpiest outfits on the coldest evenings of the year? Not that I'm complaining, mind you. And it's rather amusing to watch them swarm around downtown like confused bees, shivering as they run awkwardly in three-inch heels from one destination to the next.

As a Beer Band member - a rowdy subset of the Alumni Band - I have numerous opportunities on Homecoming evenings to mingle with these co-eds (are they still called that?) at close quarters in extremely crowded bars. The Beer Band plays its three greatest hits to mobs of patrons, most of them at least moderately inebriated.

By the way, the Beer Band has been described as a marching band with a drinking problem, when it's actually a drinking band with a marching problem.

I normally play trombone, tenor horn or cornet in my dull and conservative real life, but for the Homecoming gig I prefer the slide trumpet (soprano trombone) because it's an obscure instrument that everyone seems to find fascinating. It looks like a tiny trombone, and nobody seems to care if it doesn't sound very good, which it doesn't.

Anyway, I think it was at the jam-packed Sports Column that I was pressed up against an extremely attractive young woman, and it was all I could do to resist telling her "Thank you." The brief stimulation was all mine, because I'm sure she accurately perceived me to be old and harmless. I'd add "pathetically clueless," except we haven't conversed yet and I do my best to delay that perception as long as possible.

She eventually noticed my horn and shouted over the din, "Ooh! Do you mind if I hold your instrument?"

I exchanged amused glances with another beer band member standing next to me; a guy about my age who I'm pretty sure is a fellow leering geezer who had immediately picked up on her unintended double entendre. As I handed my horn to her, I said to him, "Unfortunately, their next comment is always, 'I've never seen one this small before!'"

Outside the bar a little later, I asked the same guy if we should be concerned that this is what passes for entertainment among socially responsible yet moderately depraved men our age. He nodded in agreement and said, "Let's do it again next year."

Dave Parsons spends a large portion of his dull and conservative real life working at a business he co-owns on the Coralville Strip.