

Marching Tarheels

More than a uniform makes the band

By MONT ROGERS

This year over 270 Carolina students put on those blue and white uniforms to become the Marching Tarheels, but it takes more than a uniform to make the band.

The Marching Tarheels start practice orientation week, twice a day, every day. These practices are devoted to learning new music and teaching new members that classic Carolina strut. When classes begin, the band practices every evening, Monday through Thursday.

Every minute of practice time is important to this organization. Each week the band learns a new show, a practice most bands have discontinued.

It takes a special staff to organize and rehearse a group of over 270 members. Major John Yesulaitis, director of the Marching Tarheels, is the only full-time staff member, so with the help of assistant director, Allen Reep, and the students themselves, the band puts on a highly spirited, entertaining show each week.

Marching is not the only thing band members do. Students volunteer to do various tasks that could not possibly be done by Major Yesulaitis, such as uniform distribution, music allocation, equipment storage and prop construction.

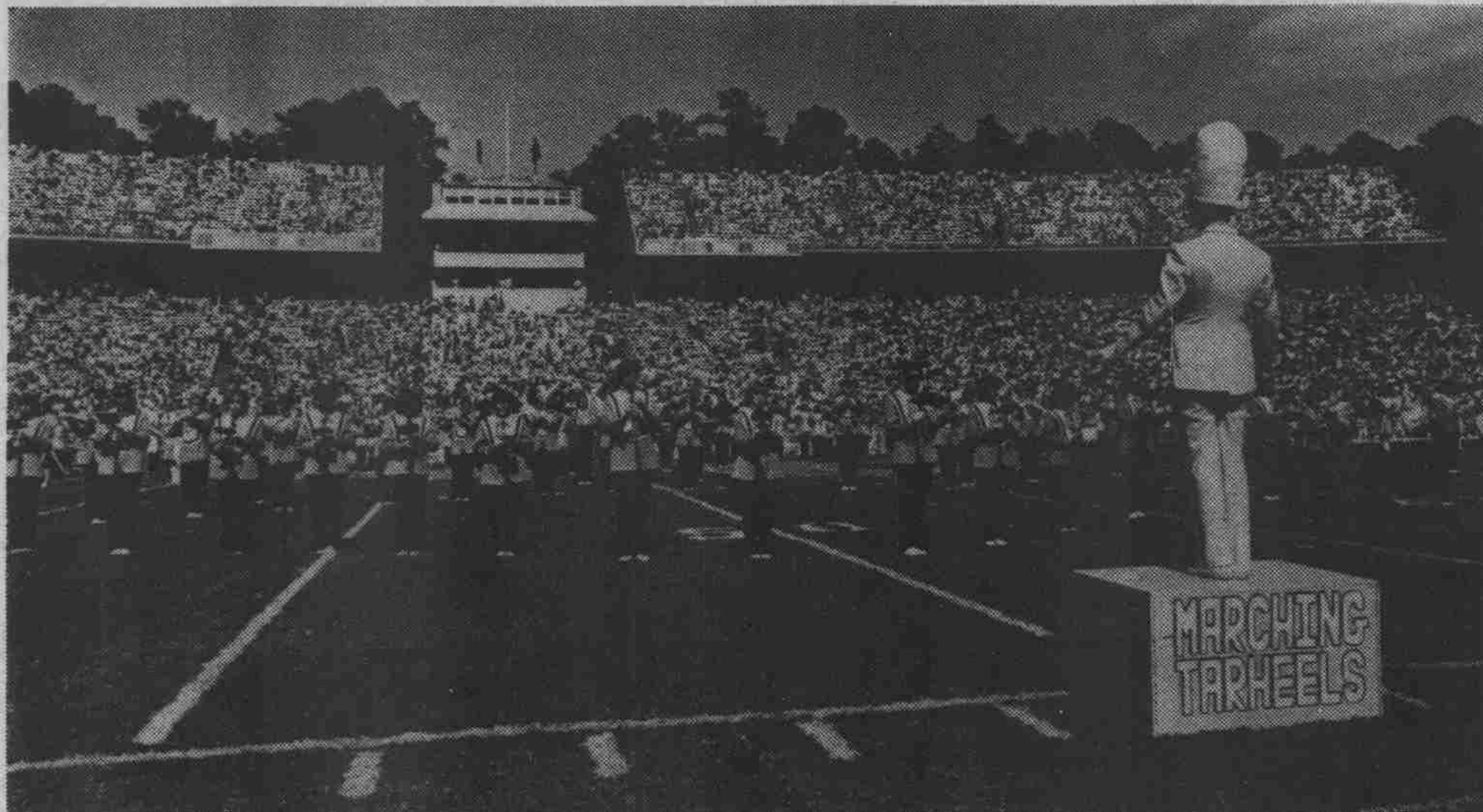
"Students run this organization," Reep said.

As well as the work the band does in preparing for half-time shows, the Marching Tarheels do many things for the University. "The Band does a lot of things people don't know about," Karen Boyd, band president, said. "We help at University Day, orientation, ground breaking ceremonies, Tarheel Days, homecoming, plus things for the community such as parades."

Of all the work the band does, Boyd said, "our first and foremost job is to support the team, followed by giving a damn good show." Boyd added that the band helps the team by letting them know somebody cares.

Kenny Vance, band vice-president said "The band doesn't get the recognition it deserves." "We work a helluva lot and we're good at what we do."

For band, a person sacrifices his evenings, weekends, and occasionally his GPA, but



Marching Tarheel Band entertains football fans in Kenan Stadium

DTH/Tom Carr

Yesulaitis remains young directing Marching Tarheels

By MONT ROGERS

Would you believe that the same mastermind who has orchestrated shows at Buckingham Palace and the White House directs the shows for the Marching Tarheels?

Major John Yesulaitis is in his 16th year as band director at UNC, but his musical career began long before he raised his baton in leadership of the Marching Tarheels.

John Yesulaitis was born a coalminer's son in Coalsdale, PA. His first musical lessons were on the piano and he went on to play the French horn and alto horn in high school.

After graduating second in his high school class, Yesulaitis went to New York to study music at the Ernest Williams School of Music, where he graduated first in his class.

In 1936, at the age of 20, Yesulaitis joined the U.S. Army band and later attended the U.S. Army Music School.

During World War II, Yesulaitis was in Korea leading the infantry band of the 77th Army Division, which not only entertained the front line troops, but took part in combat patrols.

Major Yesulaitis lived in Japan several years after the war and was one of the few people to see Hiroshima after the city's destruction by the atomic bomb.

After returning to the United States, Major Yesulaitis became the associate director of the Army-Air Force Band. In this position he has entertained every U.S. President from Roosevelt to Nixon. He has entertained such dignitaries as Lord Mountbatten, King Saudi of Arabia, Premier Nikita Krushchev, and has worked with such personalities as Jane Powell, Lorne Greene and Helen Hayes.

Yesulaitis was also in charge of White House entertainment and was honored to play at the Queen's garden party, where he met the royal family.

Yesulaitis also produced and wrote the radio shows "The Air Force Hour" and "Serenade in Blue." In addition, he conducted the orchestra for the shows.

Since Yesulaitis came to UNC in 1964, the band has changed from an organization with little notoriety into what many call "the pride of the ACC."

Major Y insists band members study every day after practice. The hours can be long, especially on a crowded bus at hour seven of a grueling trip from Pittsburgh and the driver is just pulling in for the first pit-stop. But the experience is worthwhile.

Reep pointed out just how worthwhile when he compared the Marching Tarheels style with the subdued style of the University of Pittsburgh Band and the chaotic style of the University of Virginia band. Reep said the Marching Tarheels had the best of both. "Nowhere in the country will you find a group of people like us," he said. "We are at a happy medium, very professional, and good hell-raisers."

Mont Rogers is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.



Major John Yesulaitis
Band Director for the Marching Tarheels

DTH/Jeff Neville

"I brought enthusiasm and a desire to put on a good program," Yesulaitis said. "I said we're going to look for quality, and when you tell people you look for quality, they strive for that level."

The band has reached that level of quality. Last year the band was chosen to be in "Halftime USA" as one of the top 12 bands in the nation.

"When I first came to Chapel Hill there were only 65 to 70 people in the band and not a lot of interest," Yesulaitis said. "I used to send out over 2,000 letters to the freshman class until we started making our mark in spirit and sound. Now students want to be in band."

"Major Y" has molded the Marching Tarheels into a respectable band, but a good band is not all the Major wants to see. "I came to Chapel Hill because I like to teach and watch the development of individuals," he said. "Here I have it in three dimensions: marching band, concert band, and pep band."

Yesulaitis said band members get more out of the band than musical experience. "Band teaches them to work hard and budget their time," he said. "Band students can organize their time better than the average student. Band also makes demands on them, demands that prepare them for challenges later in life."

Yesulaitis puts a great deal of importance on the music the band plays and tries to make it appealing to a wide variety of people. "We play current things, but we have requests for marches and other things by the old timers, so we play new arrangements of old things," Yesulaitis said.

Major Yesulaitis and his wife, Pat, have two daughters: Joan, 16, and Mary 18. His wife teaches in the evening college here at UNC, and his daughters attend Chapel Hill High School.

What does Major Y get out of directing the Marching Tarheels? "It's kept me youthful," he said.

Mont Rogers is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.