

Imagine the stereotypical freshman...slowly walking through the halls of Ponderosa, mouth agape, staring wide-eyed at what seem to be monstrous pieces of metal, but are actually lockers. The atmosphere is completely different. The comfort and monotony of Sagewood is long gone. As a freshman, walking these halls for the first time is just a bit intimidating. A sudden overwhelming feeling of panic takes over, causing the never-ending stream of thought to begin. Such questions as, "What will the next four years be like?" "Will I fit in?" "Where will I belong within these massive hallways?" and similar quandaries never stop running through the brain, causing a sense of insecure excitement...This was me. I was petrified of coming to high school. I constantly wondered what kind of person I would be and who I would become over the next four years. But it was through this fear that I found my niche, just as most people do, whether it be athlete, cheerleader, nerd, artist, singer, academic, dancer, or in my case, band geek. Sure, I mixed a couple of these titles. I tried out choir and the position of nerd has always followed me as well. But one title fit me the best. The band label truly enveloped me and guided me through my entire high school experience.

My personal band label began with Marching Band. Before high school even started, I remember Mr. Wick coming to Sagewood to talk to us about signing up for band, and I was utterly terrified of him. It wasn't until the first day of Marching Band practice during the summer, when Mr. Wick complimented my star-shaped earrings and asked if he could borrow them sometime, that I discovered his humorous side and that he actually was human and not just an extremely tall and intimidating being. I came back two days later, a little more confident in what to expect out of practice, and Mr. Wick once again asked me about borrowing my earrings. From then on through the rest of the summer, I slowly eased my way through the transition into high school. Even when I felt insecure walking through the hallways as a wee little freshman during the day, I was confident that I would walk out of those doors at 2:37 and onto the Marching Band field, knowing exactly what was expected out of me and the belonging I would feel amongst the others on the field. Marching Band slowly became a routine that I came to look forward to. It was hard work and long hours, just like any other sport or activity, but the reward that came from it was incomparable. Spending that much time with fellow band members created a whole new type of family for me, and that family stuck by me through all the ups and downs of those four crucial years.

With each passing year of high school, Marching Band got continually better. When I became the Drum Major my junior year, I developed an entirely new outlook on the whole program and what it meant to me. I was no longer the innocent underclassman who needed to hold someone's hand. I now viewed myself as the person who needed to welcome in new members, make them feel comfortable, and help create a sense of family for them as the upperclassmen had done for me. The responsibilities and pressure that I felt drastically increased by becoming Drum Major, but I loved it. I loved getting to know each individual that marched with us. I loved leading warm-ups, especially the very silly and dance-like, "Joe," and getting everyone involved (even the ones who tried to hide and thought it was lame...I know they secretly liked it). I rarely headed into practice with a feeling of dread. That feeling of excitement and energy going into something so routine after three years is rare, but it is simply the result of being in the Ponderosa Band.

Even with the hundreds of memories that came from not just Marching Band, but also Pep Band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble, I have finally developed that one “favorite memory” that people ask for on a regular basis. For the last four years, when I’ve been asked what my fondest band memory has been, it has usually taken me awhile to think of something truly distinct. That difficulty, however, completely disappeared after the night of April 11, 2009. It wasn’t until my senior year that I finally scrounged up the courage to take a stab at Winter Percussion. I had always thought that, after playing saxophone for four years, I had no business trying to turn around and be a percussionist. However, joining the Winter Percussion ensemble ended up being the best decision I ever made regarding band, and became the best way to finish my career in the band program. Even with all the fear that I had going into the season, I had a blast the entire time. I learned so much not just from the entirely new method of music, but also the cooperation, teamwork, encouragement, and bond that all 17 members shared. In the end, it all became that much more gratifying when we were announced as State Champions at the RMPA State Competition on April 11th. After completing our finals performance, I was absolutely overwhelmed, with happiness at what we had just accomplished, but also sadness at what was now over. My fondest memory of band is not being announced State Champs, but standing out at the band truck just after our finals performance, simply staring at all the equipment, the people, and the energy that went into the season. Just standing there by myself looking at it all, I realized just how much band had truly meant to me. It really had become my life for four years and given me so much that I will never know how to repay. Mr. Wick, Jason Herron, and every single band member made a huge difference in who I became those four years, and the kind of person I hope will stick with me in the years to come.