

Band's performance requires practice, precision

By DOUG McRAE
Of the Emerald

At a time when the University's football team seldom seems able to coordinate the action of 11 men at once, another group from the University puts 150 people on the field at Autzen Stadium and executes with precision.

Certainly the lack of opposition makes the marching band's job easier, but the band's performance, like that of a football team, can be spoiled by one member who is out of step.

Third year director Gerald Poe said the band practices a minimum of five hours a week and spends more on Saturday performance days when pre-game practice starts as early as seven hours before the post-game show ends.

Dedication and organization are two of the keys to the band's success. Organization includes outfitting the band members in uniforms and making sure each has a copy of the band's playbook, which changes for every performance and may, like the one used for the TCU game, contain as many as 27 pieces of music.

Organization also means rehearsals must be crisp and efficient. While band members spend more time practicing than they get credit for, it isn't much time for getting the complex routines together when compared to other University bands which practice as many as 10 hours a week.

Dedication is a prerequisite for those who join the band. All members must attend the practices and performances. If one member is missing, there is a hole in the human patterns the band forms, says Poe.

Getting everyone together for a road trip can be difficult Poe said. Before the Stanford trip last year, three were discovered missing after the band boarded the bus at six in the morning. Poe was able to get two members out of bed with telephone calls, but could not reach Barry Breneau.

Breneau was a newlywed at the time, and he and his wife were "housesitting" for

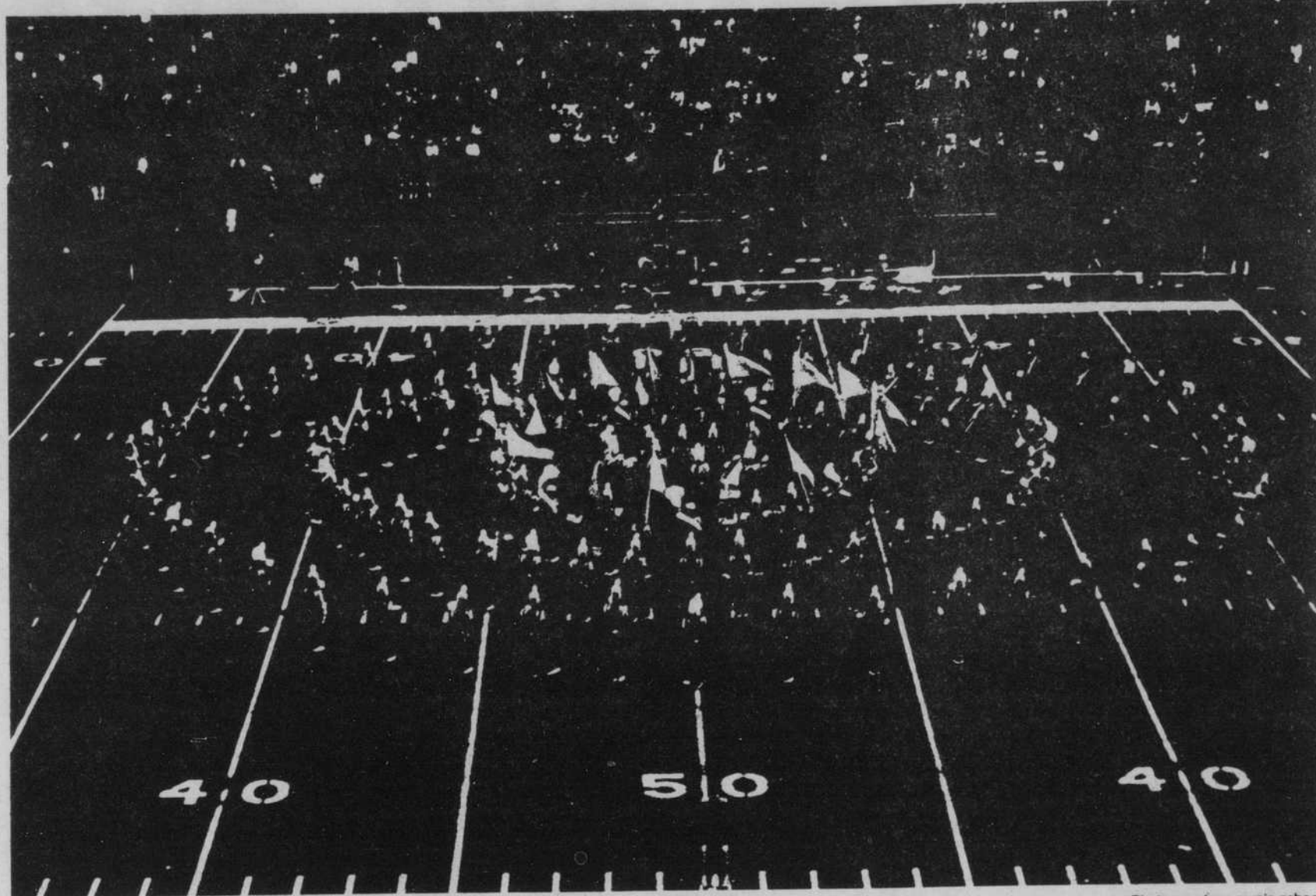


Photo courtesy music school

Oregon's marching band depends on precision during its half-time performances. Director Gerald Poe said the band practices

at least five hours a week and on game days often begins practice seven hours before the post-game show ends.

friends, so was not at home. Breneau remembers the alarm was on his wife's side and she turned it off and went back to sleep. Fifteen minutes later Breneau woke, and realizing he was late, hopped into his car and gave chase. Breneau caught the bus in Medford, and made the rest of the trip on the bus.

That's the kind of dedication that one

would expect from a group that Poe describes as the "spirit arm of the University."

That dedication seems to be bringing results, as evidenced by many of the letters Poe has received in which people have said the band provides the best entertainment of the day at Autzen Stadium. Poe says proudly that one letter he received was written by former coach Len Casanova, who

said last year's band was one of the best Oregon has ever had.

Poe also sees good results at the University as well. "We're developing good spirit and following on campus." And maybe in time the success at halftime will not so much be the bright spot of the day, but the icing on the cake of another game won by the Ducks.

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