

**Kennesaw State University
Department of History and Philosophy
Summer Hill Oral History Project**

Interview with: Darlene Smith (2nd INTERVIEW)
Interviewed by: Amanda Williams
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(Tape 1, Side A.)

A.W: You told me that you were younger when you joined the band, how did that happen?

D.S: Well, I had older sisters that were in the band, and my parents worked, so I had to stay at the school with them to practice, because I didn't have nobody to keep me at home, so I was in the fifth grade. I was in the fifth grade so I stayed with them, so they was trying out, and they had tryouts for majorettes, so they said why don't you try out, because I've always liked majorettes, because I already a majorette uniform, because when I was in the fourth grade I wanted a majorette uniform because Mary Hotline was the big thing like Super Man and Batman and all that is popular now, back there then you had cheerleader outfits, a ballerina, the majorette outfits you could buy from Sears and Roebuck, so Mary Hotline was the majorette outfit you could get from Sears and Roebuck, so my mama was in the so and so she didn't get me that she made me a uniform, so she made it the school colors, which was blue and white. Mary Hotline was red and white, and I was

really mad, because I wanted a red and white one from Mary Hotline, so I got my blue and white uniform, so I marched around with my baton and everything, and then they said why don't you go out there and tryout since you are here, so I went out and tried out with the high school band, so they thought I was so cute at the time, because I was so small that I got the part, and I already had the uniform, so I just marched with them, and they always took care of me because I was always there, so when I became majorette, and I was a majorette from the fifth grade to the twelfth grade. When I was in the ninth grade I became head majorette, and then you had to play instruments so I learned how to play the French horn, so in the concert season I played the French horn, and then in the marching season I marched as a majorette. So I was, I had, the head majorette had a gold uniform, and I had a white uniform trimmed in blue, so I marched behind her, because then we had, the majorette uniforms were made, homemade, we didn't have like order it from a company or anything, they were handmade, so when I became in the ninth grade, they, we ordered uniforms regular uniforms so I got a bright one then.

A.W: Who among your friends was in the band?

D.S: Huh?

A.W: Who of your friends was in the band, what friends did you have?

D.S: Well when I was in fifth grade nobody was in the band, my friends wasn't, and as we got older Sharon Green she played clarinet, Angela Cotton, Theresa Banks, I'm giving you their maiden names now, Theresa Banks, Faith Smith, all them played flutes, and then they were my closest friends, so we always, most of my

classmates were in the band, so we had great times going out on trips, band trips and that type of thing, because then you didn't have a lot of activities outside of school activities to do, and the ones you did have, my parents wouldn't let you do it so the only activities I had was through the school, so I loved being in the band, because that's what we did for you know activities, we didn't have malls to go shop at or McDonald's to go hang out, or you know nothing, you didn't have anything really but the movies, and you couldn't go there that often (laughing), so that's the reason I think the band was such a focus point in the community, it was a main thing, because that was our recreation.

A.W: Were your older sisters all in the band or just...?

D.S: I had two older sisters, one played the clarinet, one played the saxophone, and my brother played football.

A.W: Okay.

D.S: So it was, my father was the president of the booster's club, so it was a family thing (laughing).

A.W: That's good. What did the uniforms for the band look like?

D.S: Well the first uniforms we got the band had white pants, and they were just like regular white pants they wasn't uniform white pants with blue stripe down the side that somebody sewed down the side, and they had jackets they had real jackets, and when we first started the band they wanted to get Cartersville High, they wanted to give us Carterville High's old uniforms, and then we pitched a fit, because their colors were purple and gold, and ours were blue and white, but since we were used to getting hand me downs from Cartersville High, they thought that

was appropriate, but this one time we stood up, we didn't want them, so we started off with the white pants and blue stripes, regular coat, and then the booster club got out and did this big fund raiser, well we was always doing some kind of fund raiser, selling something. We sold candy, we sold raffles on tickets, doughnuts, that's when I first was introduced to Krispy Kreme doughnuts, when the company when we sold those, because we had a slew of them I ate half of mine, we had to pay for all of mine, because that was one of my favorite things, doughnuts, we sold Krispy Kreme doughnuts though they was coming out of our ears, for our new uniform, so we got the new uniforms, I think I was in the ninth grade when we got the new uniforms, and then the band grew so we had to get more new uniforms, so there was a time in there where the band wore blue jeans and Summer Hill sweatshirts, because we had enough for everybody while we was trying to raise money for the others, and then the majorettes wore just a regular sweater that we had purchased at the store and skirts, well they were majorette skirts, but they were sweaters, regular sweaters, we didn't wear our uniforms, and I think we've got a picture at the museum with the band, I had a picture with the blue jeans and the Summer Hill sweatshirts.

A.W: I don't know if I've seen that one or not.

D.S: It's one floating around here somewhere, and then we sold some more doughnuts, and got enough to get everybody a uniform with the new hats and the whole nine yards so they were blue all over. We were so excited to have real uniforms at that time.

A.W: Well did each individual have to pay for their own uniform, like was the fundraising money divided or...?

D.S: Yeah, the fundraising money was divided as a whole, you know like I said we had candy, because nowadays when school, time school starts, second day of school I think they give those kids some kind of little pamphlet to see you know like wrapping paper and little candy, and I don't really know what they're selling, they just have to sell all the time, but they sell a lot of stuff that's not useful, you know some little junk to me I call it junk, but we was really selling good stuff like doughnuts, so it was, it was all good.

A.W: What do you remember about football or the football games?

D.S: Oh about the football games, I remember I guess half time, because that was our thing halftimes, and before the football games, we always marched from the gym, which is maybe a couple of hundred yards, two or three hundred yards from the gym on up to the field, we always did a pre-halftime show, so we marched, pre-game show, so we marched up on the field, everybody would be screaming and hollering, and we'd do maybe like one song, then we'd play the National Anthem on the field then we always marched off. And then halftime you know we always prepared to get ready for the game, and then I always liked going to away games, because you got to travel, but for some reason they didn't let us go a long way off, we didn't go too far off. We probably have enough buses, because you know we just had a couple of buses, so if the band went then you know if we went a long ways, had to get another bus, so as far as the band went with the football team, I think was Lagrange, we played a school down there called East Depot and

(unintelligible), so we went that far down, which was ninety minutes away, which was a long way for us.

A.W: Yeah.

D.S: Then like I said, football games were a community thing too, because now most of the time, a lot of people just go to the games if they've got kids playing in the band or football, because I know I once went to a Cartersville High games when my daughter graduated (unintelligible) I think I made one or two games, but then you didn't have to have no kids you just liked the games, because that was something you did on Friday night, and then when you hear the drums beating everybody got all excited and got ready to come to the games, so then a lot of my classmates played football, so it was real neat.

A.W: Did yall play during the games?

D.S: Uh huh.

A.W: Like from the stands.

D.S: Right.

A.W: What do you remember about Homecoming?

D.S: Oh Homecoming was really like I said a great affair to me it was always a great affair, because like we have, everybody had floats you know we had a whole line of floats. We had the queen's float of course then each class had their own float and you know you always competing with each other, which class float was the best or whatever. And then the auxiliaries had floats like the SLAG, the business club, the French club, and each club had a queen you know like you ran for the French queen and then you ran for the queen of the FBLA, ran for the queen for

the SLAG whatever you had queens, so even if they didn't have a float then they had a car, but a lot of them had floats, and like I said we used to work on them all week in your classrooms you made flowers, because we made a lot of the decorations out of paper, tissue paper you know it wasn't no order from a company, we did everything you know hand made because we didn't have a lot of money, so crepe paper was our best friend and tissue paper so you know I don't know if you know how to make a tissue paper flower, so we made tissue paper flowers all week, we loved Homecoming, because we didn't have to do no school work.

A.W: (laughing).

D.S: Supposively we were doing school work, but you know we would slack around making flowers, getting crepe paper and twisting them and making chains and you know you fold up those chains and made all that kind of stuff, and the floats was beautiful, I mean you know we covered everything on the float, because we had you know chicken wire and tissue paper, chunked in chicken wire for days, and we made devils and whatever the opponent was that was coming we made their mascot you know out of tissue paper of course made all this, so the Friday of the Homecoming we didn't have class that day we was all day making the floats and you've got to float around from here and there and yonder, and I was always privileged to lead the parade you know, because I was head majorette at that time, because everybody wanted me running for the queen, I said no, no I can't run for no queen, I got to be in the band, you know when I was talking about I said no, no I don't want to run for no queen I want to be in the band, so one year I thought

was really exciting, and I don't even remember who the person was, but somebody downtown gave all the majorettes corsages. I had this big old mum corsage, and I thought, and little blue ribbons and little footballs hanging off the ribbon, I thought that was the grandest thing that some merchant, I don't know who it was from the town gave us these big corsages, I mean they were huge, I thought oh I'm so excited, because I've got this big corsage, you think I'm going to be on the float, no, no, I got to be in the band, and then as we had said before the community, you know everybody, old people, cripples, everybody got together and got downtown. When you marched downtown, you couldn't hardly get through town, because people was in the, you know in the street, and you had to, they had to just breakup, like at certain places where we performed, where they would cut the street off, and everybody just be circling around that place where we would perform, and then the band started to move on, and then they would run with the band, if you perform it first natural they were there when you get to another spot they were there, they just moved from place to place to see you march like they hadn't seen you march before, but they'd just march place to place so that was you know the big thing. Now, I don't even know, was it Homecoming? You know when I used to go to parades downtown, it wasn't about ten or fifteen minutes, and they was through, because you had one float maybe two, and the rest of them were just cars, so you didn't have anything you know, and like I said we always had, tried to invite other bands to parade too so that makes it exciting because you see other bands, you just didn't see our band, and I think the drum (unintelligible), which I don't remember how they went, but they

were, they were so, they got down in your bones your rhythm, you know just got down into, because it wasn't just (drum sound), you know it was one of the major part of the bands was the drums. You start with the drums, I don't know if it's because we originated from Africa, and we came with the drum beats, but the drum (unintelligible) were our main thing, you know they'd get excited about just hearing the drums, and you know now when I go to a college game or go to somewhere where I hear that drum (unintelligible) that drum beat, it just, like I said it just gets in my bones, I thought oh that feeling you just want to, you know just run to where you hear those drums playing, that's crazy thinking, but that's what we do, I mean it just feels so good to hear that, so and then that night you had the girls wore gowns, you know gowns on the, the in the parade, the queens and the runner-up, and then that night they had on suits, blue suits, and the runner-ups had on blue suits like the ninth grade, tenth grade, eleventh grade had on blue suits, and the queen had on a white suit that's the way it always was, the queen had a white suit and they had on blue suits so they would come out on the field, and you know, but we always knew by Homecoming, we always knew who the queen was, you know now they have like two or three running for queen and then that night they name the queen, but we always knew who the queen was, because we already went through that. We had a coronation on Thursday night, so the queen was crowned then so we knew who the queen was.

A.W: How did they do the coronation, was that a thing that everybody showed up for?

D.S: Yeah. I don't think we had it every year, but I remember one year we had, because all my friends we wore red dresses, we were ushers, and we wore these

red satin dresses, because I'll get to that in a minute about talent shows. We had a talent show, and we were the Supremes so we all had dresses made just alike, so we wore the dresses and they, all the queens marched down the aisle, I can remember they got on stage and that's when they crowned the queen so that was fun too.

A.W: Did the parents come to that?

D.S: The parents came to everything. I mean everything we had the parents was there, and you just expected them to be there, its not something that oh my mama's there, you wanted them there, they just was, you knew that was a part of it, so you didn't question why is she here you know that was just a part of it for them to be there. I had some pictures of that, us at that coronation somewhere. Like I said we all had on red dresses, satin, with white gloves up to here, (unintelligible) gloves, so and then that was that, and then we had the bonfire, now a lot of parents, because sometimes I didn't get to go to the bonfire, they had them bonfires and then on Friday we always had a big pep rally in the gym, you know doing the Homecoming, well we had a pep rally every Friday. That's something else we had, maybe that's another story, but...

A.W: Well keep telling me about it, telling me about that too.

D.S: (laughing), we used to have assembly every Friday that's when all the classes get together sometimes it was boring. The principal would give out announcements, and say what we done wrong, but then we got to have assembly where auxiliary would, auxiliary's in the church, what is it clubs is in schools, clubs would be responsible for the assembly, you know they do like little talent shows, you know

like this week this is the SLAG's doing the assembly so you'd go on in there, and you'd do singing and somebody might do a little dancing or reading, so you'd say who's having the assembly this week so everybody would run in the gym and sit down, you know sometimes the ninth, freshmen had the assembly go on up to the seniors, and you would be excited, because this was your week to do assembly, and you'd come up with some kind of little cute skit or something so we enjoyed that too, and then sometimes it was a good place to take a nap you know (laughing), but I can't remember when the assembly was, but the bell would ring, and we know we had an assembly. We had that even in elementary school, because I remember marching to the assembly singing God Bless America or My Country Tis of Thee, and they always had, you march in like the first group would march in, then another class march in, and you didn't get in until it was time for your class to march in, I remember that from the first grade marching into assembly sit down, and we had the teacher who always started singing God Bless America, America the Beautiful, that's all the songs we sang, and get up and Pledge to Allegiance, which I don't think they can even do that now a days. We got up and done the Pledge to Allegiance, and then somebody would do a little skit or something like that, so that was always entertaining. See we had a lot of talent shows.

A.W: Tell me about the talent shows.

D.S: Talent shows was always fun, you know each class we were responsible for somebody doing some talent, and it was an organized talent show you know somebody who could sing, and we always had costumes they didn't just get up

and do something, we had costumes, you couldn't get up there is you didn't have a costume a like, because I know I had a group called Darlene and the (unintelligible), I don't know why we had that, anyway we wore black skirts and yellow blouses, and we had shades on so we would come out, and you know do something like James Brown, sing songs, you know Patty (unintelligible), because one of the groups I did we was the Supremes, me and my friends we did the Supremes, so we did some Supremes' songs, Stop in the Name of Love, and all that kind of stuff, like I said we had the red dresses, and the white gloves up to here, the white earrings all just like (unintelligible) got these earrings just alike, these high heel shoes, and I think people still remember us doing that, Supremes thing, so and I know, I don't even know where my little dress is, but we always had, we had another little group that really sung, they didn't (unintelligible) they sung, they had them a little band, that was a group that was older than I was, they sung, and we just had all kinds of little stuff. That was one of the fundraisers for the band too, we had a talent show, and we sold french-fries that's when I was introduced to french-fries and ketchup. We sold french-fries, had a little french-fry machine or something the band director had and ketchup, and we sold that. We made money doing it, we used to charge, we had a talent show at nights, extra ones besides the ones at school, we used to charge a little bit, and people used to pay to go to that, so we'd raise money doing that.

A.W: Are there any specific performance that yall did that stand out in your mind?

D.S: Yeah.

A.W: For the band.

D.S: Yeah, and this I guess I was younger, I remember that we did, like I said we had a western, we always had a theme, and one theme we had new shows every Friday night, we didn't do like, nowadays you just when they do one show they do it all year long or maybe two one off one in time, but we had a different show every Friday night, so that means the band had to learn new song every week, and the majorettes had to get new dance routines every week, so you had to have somebody who was a majorette who could learn fast, you couldn't have no slow, because you've got to make up the dance routine, and we had like lady's over us, like chaperones, but we had to make up the dance routine. So sometimes you got a little bit of what you had last week, but one thing, if we went out of town, sometimes we'd do the same routine you know, like this week we're in town, next week we're out of town use the same routine, but if we was in town two weeks in a row, we used different routines, but so that was always fun. We did this western theme, and the majorettes wore cowboy hats and cowboy guns, and my grandmother was a big supporter of the band, she loved the band so she thought I had to have this real cowboy hat, rather everybody else went and got a little straw hat from Wal-Mart, Woolworth, we didn't have Wal... Woolworth, she went and ordered this felt cowboy hat from Sears, I don't know where she got it, but I called it a real felt, I thought you paid all that, I forgot how much, for this hat, but anyway I had this real felt cowboy hat so I was special. Had these two, the gun with the two holsters on our side, and the band came up the field playing Wagon Train, the theme from Wagon Train, and they made a wagon and part of the band was the wheels, and it was turning, the wheels was, they were going around and

marching up the field at the same time, so it looked like the wagon train was moving, so I thought that was real neat, how we did that, it was rolling and moving at the same time, and then we played Bonanza, you know the theme song from Bonanza, I remember that real good, and I can't remember the other theme songs, but I remember Wagon Train and Bonanza, those two theme songs we played, but everybody thought that was real neat that we did that. Then when I was young they did a routine, and the band made up like arena, like a fighting arena, and two majorettes got in there with gloves, you really had gloves and kind of boxed off the Gillette song, off of Gillette song so that was neat. Like I said we always had a theme, we just didn't get out there and just march, but one thing about our last band director, which was David Williams, he always made sure we did march songs, plus popular songs, we didn't just do like the songs that were popular during the day, which the people liked those songs better, because they could relate to them you know the songs that were popular, he always made sure we was a marching band, precision marching, like eight to five, you had to march eight to five, and we'd practice marching eight to five make sure you did that, and see how you get into positions and get out, steady moving in positions and moving out, and then we played popular songs, hip songs I guess that's what you'd want to call it, so we always did both of them, but we never did want to do that precision marching, because that seemed kind of straight laced and boring, but you know that was part of band and let folks know we could do that, and do the, because some bands just came and just did the, because (unintelligible) like

that just did the popular songs, and you know we always had to do the eight to five marching, and all that kind of stuff.

A.W: What is eight to five marching mean? I don't know that much about music.

D.S: That's the yards; you know how you got the yards marked off on the field?

A.W: Oh, uh huh.

D.S: So you do eight steps within five yards.

A.W: Okay.

D.S: Yeah, I think the yards is five yards a piece, well you do so many steps, everybody had to make sure you did the same amount of steps in between yards, that made sure everybody was even, the lines were even.

A.W: Okay.

D.S: If you do the correct steps within a yard, so many yards.

A.W: My little sister would be embarrassed that I had to ask that; she'd say you should know that.

D.S: (laughing).

A.W: What trips did yall go on that you remember?

D.S: Oh we, I loved those trips like I said that was our traveling, because you didn't, my parents just didn't go on vacations and do like you do nowadays you know, you know so those little trips were important to us. When we were in concert season, we always went to Ft. Valley for a festival, they had all the high school bands down there festivals, and we would do a parade through town, and then we would come back and play classical music and that's when I got the French horn I played classical music, and you know you either, it was an all day thing, and you

would, you had to wait your turn for your band to play, so when your band played then you was free to just goof off till they give you your rating or whatever, you know you got excellent to superior whatever, and then we also went to Albany, Georgia for, it was always at a college, went to Albany to do the concert playing then, and then the furthest trip we went was to Savannah so that was a couple of days so we was really excited about that to be in, I think we stayed at the YMCA, I don't think we stayed at the campus, I think we stayed at the YMCA somewhere, and we stayed all night there, so there was, like I said we always we're always with the Fort Valley area for the festival they called it Band Festival. Now during football season, like I was saying earlier Rockmart at that time didn't have a marching band so they adopted us as their marching band, so at Homecoming we'd just go down there and be there band, we'd just march with the parade and then if we didn't have a game that Friday night, we stayed down there and marched at their Homecoming, especially Homecoming that's what we did at Homecoming, we marched and played there, and they always fed us real good, because I was talking to my sister, which is three years older than I am about that the other day, she said oh yeah I remember that meatloaf and candied yams that was so good, because we thought they cooked so good, because they always fed us there, which was always good, so they was always excited about seeing us when we went down there. And I remember this one distinct time we were in Rockmart walking, marching, and it seemed to me they had as march all over the creation, their parade was longer than ours. We used to march, march, and march, and we were so tired, and we was just kind of like dragging, and my

parents like I said my dad was the president of the booster's club so he had a habit of following me, you know a lot of parents follow the band, so we was about at the end of the parade and the we seen my daddy's car pass in front of the parade (unintelligible), and we all got excited like we just seen somebody we knew, we just started jumping, oh that's my daddy I was just so excited to see his car, I don't know why, but then that like gave us our second wind we just marched on up until the end, because it thought, gah we're all over Rockmart, all up and down through neighborhoods seemed like to me, they really got, we really marched when we was down there, but that was so exciting, so that's why I think that made me a better parent when my parents did what they did, because when my kids performed, I was always there. They always wanted me there, it didn't matter what, I was always there for them, and you know we would go on trips I was there, even when, this aint got nothing to do with Summer Hill, but I'm saying this say what people should do from then to bring us to where we are now. My daughter was a majorette, was in the dancing in her college in Hampton, Virginia, I guess like mama like daughter whatever, so she said mama you coming to the game, this is in Hampton, Virginia, which is ten hours away, but I used to leave on Friday drive up there because I had to work, drive up there, go to the game on Saturday, then come back on Sunday drive back. I didn't really follow the games, but you know like Homecoming and special games like that I used to drive up there, because she was so excited to see me there, and I was excited to be there. I think that came from when my parents used to drive, because then you didn't have a lot of parents that had cars to drive like that, but mine always did so I was

always excited about that, so that's what I do now, you know if there in something, that's the reason I'm going to the race Thanksgiving (laughing), but traveling was a big thing like I said we had the Bluebird, which was the name of the bus, Bluebird, I mean the bus was Bluebird, but our bus was blue it wasn't yellow, our bus was blue, so when we went places we always said that's our bus the blue bus so we went to, one trip was stand out in my mind, we went to Lagrange, like I said we didn't go down there often, because its too far, but we went down there one time, and I think they always fought, we lost the game, and they still jumped on us, and it was like everybody get on the bus, everybody get on the bus, and then they'd rock the bus, so we had to get down on the floor so everybody could bus from down there so that nipped that end we didn't go down there anymore. The football went but the band never went, because you know we had a lot of girls in the band so they was scared for us to go down there so we hopped on that little blue bus, and we came back to Cartersville (laughing), so we never got down there anymore, and I hated it, because I had friends in that band, because you know if you went every year to these different places you got friends in the band so I had some...(phone ringing).

A.W: You were talking about...

D.S: Yeah friends especially if you played the same instruments so I had some guy friends in the band that played the French horn in their band, so especially when we went to the concert season they wanted to hear how you play your part, because we had different little solos they wanted see if you could, sometimes we played the same songs. Sometimes we had to play the same songs they wanted to

see how you played your part, and you didn't see them until just during that season, because we didn't travel like you do now from one city to another, so you only seen them during band season (laughing), so that's that.

A.W: Did yall have initiation rituals for the freshman or for people just coming into the band?

D.S: No not really, we didn't do, we wasn't in to that like they do that now I guess, but no we just hopped in the band, so no we didn't have no rituals, no initiations.

A.W: Did they have special programs or traditions for the seniors before they graduated that had been in the band?

D.S: Not really, one time they was going to give letters, you know like school letters, but something happened they got the letters, and we never did get the letters, I don't think... they gave the football letters, but I don't think the band ever really got their letters, so really no I don't remember getting anything special done for me (laughing), like I said we had letters one year, but that's not anything we had like on a regular basis. No, we had, this didn't have anything to do with seniors, but we also had Christmas concerts, we had spring concerts and Christmas concerts, so that was a big thing too. When we had Christmas concerts one year, several years the band wore black you know everybody wore black dresses, because we didn't wear the uniform, everybody wore black dresses to the, because you know back then in those days everything was costume, not costume, color coordinated you know you just come and wear what you want to wear. Springtime we wore white and in the wintertime we wore black, and it was always kind of like after five, it was formalish you know just didn't come up with

a sweater and a black skirt, you wear something, it was always exciting to me,
because my mother sewed so I always got some kind of new velvet dress...

(Abrupt end of Interview.)