

Cornhuskers march to new director's beat

# The leader of the band aims to entertain

By Lisa Nutting  
Daily Nebraskan Staff Writer

A light fixture made from an old brass trombone hangs behind the desk. A black console piano stands next to one wall, and a torn old drum head hangs on another. Pictures of two

## Profile

marching bands hang above the piano — reminders of years passed. And the nameplate on the office door reads "WILLIAM BALLENGER."

Ballenger, new director of the Cornhusker Marching Band, is "excellent," according to Bruce Jensen, a freshman music major from Aurora.

This is Ballenger's first year as band director. Last year as assistant director, he said he "basically watched what was going down." And it seems he watched well.

"He's really good," said Linda McMorris, a sophomore music major and second-year band member. "To take this big responsibility — he's doing a really great job. He just took this (band) over."

Ballenger previously directed high school bands in Ankeny and Oskaloosa, Iowa. During his six years at Oskaloosa, as assistant director and musical arranger, the band remained within the top 12 competitive high school bands in the country.

At UNL, Ballenger found many differences between high school and university bands.

"A big difference here is that we're much more entertainment oriented."

The first football game halftime show featured music popularized by Frank

Sinatra. The second game's show is planned as a melody from "Fiddler on the Roof." And the third show will feature the current hits of Diana Ross's "The Wiz," and Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

Ballenger said he likes the shift from the competitiveness in the high school bands to an aim for entertainment in the UNL band.

"Another gigantic difference is that everyone who's in this band wants to be here very badly," he said.

And so it seems. "It's just what everyone says it is," Jensen said. "I'm really glad I tried out."

But Jensen is not the only one who is glad.

"That's (directing) what I've been doing for years," Ballenger said. "It's what I like to do. And I get to do it here."

Ballenger said he thinks there is "an obvious unity — one of the greatest social organizations in this band."

Jensen and McMorris agree. "It's a pretty tight group," Jensen said. "The band as a whole is great. It's a good time."

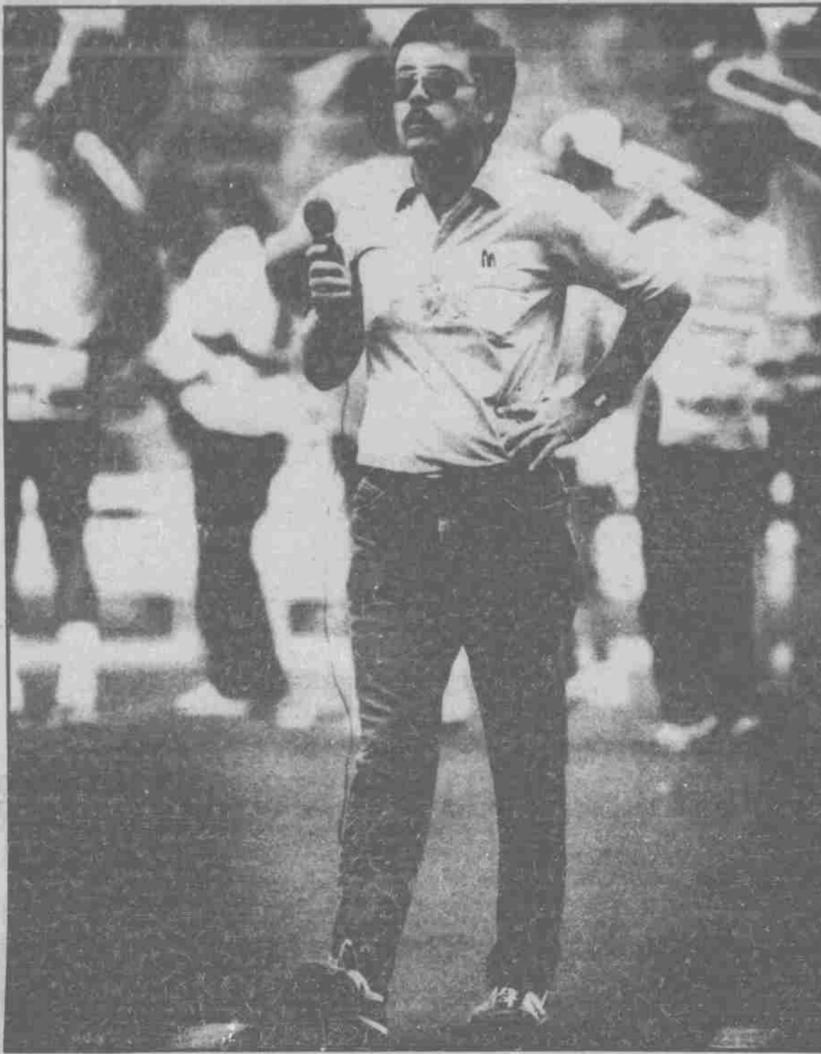
"We're just like one big, happy family around here," McMorris said. "We have to work really hard, but it's a lot of fun, and it's worth it."

"Personally, I don't have goals for radical change," Ballenger said. "What's going on here is very good — very current."

Hard work and early hours — 7:45 a.m. to 9 a.m. daily — keep this group of 267 instrumenteers united. And Ballenger leads the band.

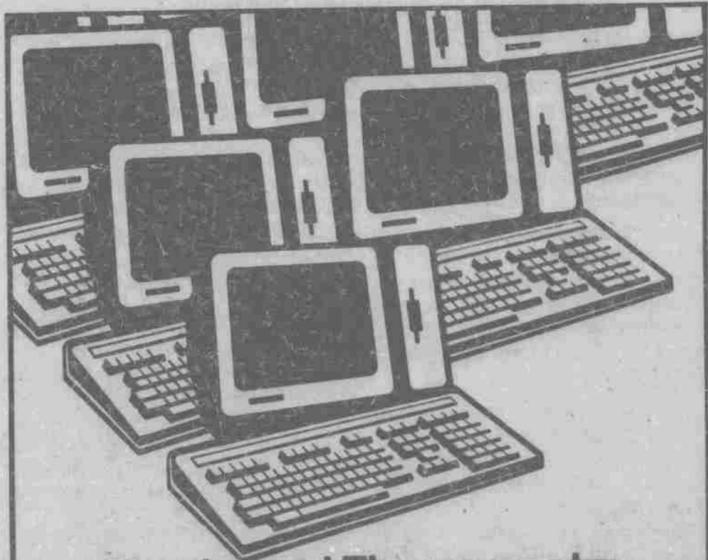
The pictures on the office wall remind Ballenger of where he has been. But outside Westbrook 233, the hallway rings with the tune of where he is, and where he has yet to go.

March, two, three, four ...



David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

Ballenger practices in Memorial Stadium Tuesday morning.



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