



The Jodies' 1957 & 1958 Halftime Performances in the Junior Rose Bowl by Gary C. Hitt

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In the fall of 1956, Joel Ward, Owen Baumgardner, several other high school ROTC friends and I enrolled at Arlington State College. ASC was a logical choice for most of us. First, ASC was a state-supported college, which back then meant that it offered essentially a free college education. Tuition was \$25 per semester for as many courses as you wanted to take. Second, it was close enough that we could live at home and carpool to and from classes. By living and eating at home I could pay for the entire school year with money saved from summer jobs. Third, ASC had a long military tradition and a very good drill team, the Sam Houston Rifles (Jodies). This was a big plus. We were all members of our city-champion high school ROTC drill team, loved ROTC in general and drill teams in particular.

We tried out for the Jodies, were accepted, and so began two of the most memorable years of my life.

The 1957 Junior Rose Bowl and President Eisenhower's Inaugural Parade

In football season, the Jodies gave a halftime performance at all home games. The 1956 football team had a very successful season and were invited to play a post-season bowl game, the Junior Rose Bowl, which was held in the Rose Bowl stadium. The Jodies would perform at halftime as always. So, the Jodies boarded a bus and began a week-long trek across the southwestern US to Pasadena and back.

We started in high spirits, Jody cadences, jokes, songs – many x-rated verses of Frankie and Johnny. The old-man/young-man tradition was strong back then. Any young-man (first year Jody) could be braced by any old-man (second year Jody) and harassed to remind him of his place in the food chain, which was pretty much at the bottom, somewhere below plankton. There was a lot of this at the beginning of the trip. As the trip wore on the young men began to resist and retaliate.

The timing of the trip was not good. We would miss the last week of classes before final exams and have little preparation time for them when we returned. So everyone was told to bring books, class notes, etc., and mandatory study time was scheduled and enforced every day that we were on the bus.

I don't recall where we stayed when we arrived, but I was assigned to a large room with Baumgardner, Frank Bailey, Bill Davis and two other young-men. It was like a converted conference room with beds in it. Down the hall was a similar room where Charles Dansby, the Jody Commander, and 4 or 5 of the more senior old-men were staying, including the oldest of the old-men, a third year Jody whose name I don't recall. I'll call him the alpha old-man.

One night while we were there, one of us went to Dansby's room, found the door unlocked and no one there. When presented with this news, we had a decision to make. I guess we could have been good young-men and locked the door for them.

Or...

We chose the "Or..." option. We went in and "stacked" the room. We stacked everything we could move – mattresses, drawers, luggage, chairs, ..., in one big heap in the center of the room. But we did not damage anything.

Later, there's a loud banging on our door. Dansby storms in and demands, "I want 6 Jody cords!" He said that the alpha old-man's bed and some of his personal belongings had been vandalized, some of it slashed and damaged. All 6 of us were off the team.

("Slashed"?? What is he talking about? We didn't damage anything, certainly didn't slash anything.)

But this was not the time to nitpick. So, we got our Jody cords and handed them to Dansby. Except Davis. He threw his across the room, it landed at Dansby's feet.

"Young-man! You come over here, pick this up, and hand it to me!"

Davis did.

The next day on the bus Dansby told us the only way that we could get our sorry butts reinstated was a sincere apology to the alpha old-man, given in the presence of the entire team, for the disrespect we had shown. No mention of damage or slashing.

The slashers, as we called ourselves, conferred in the back of the bus. We agreed that we should apologize, but none of us wanted to be the one to do it. Finally, someone suggested that I do it, the others quickly agreed and I was elected.

I don't remember what I said, but apparently it passed muster. We were back on the team. The slasher incident was over. Looking back, I think the slasher incident may have moved young-man Jodies a few links up the food chain in the eyes of the old-men.

A full schedule of performances had been arranged for us. First, we marched and performed on Main Street in Disneyland, which had been opened the year before in July 1955. After some free-time to explore, we re-boarded the bus and continued on to Knott's Berry Farm, another large amusement park, for another performance and free-time to explore. It was an incredible day for those of us, myself included, who had never or seldom been outside the state of Texas. On the day of the game we marched in the Junior Rose Parade, with floats, flowers, bands, etc. Our halftime performance in the Rose Bowl went well.

The game was against Compton College, a perennial football power from California. In previous years Compton had been invited to play in the Junior Rose Bowl three times and had won all three times. But this year, it was not to be. The ASC Rebels won by a score of 20 to 13. When the game ended, ASC fans poured onto the field, and, led by the Jodies, tore down the goalposts. We loaded the goalposts onto the Jody bus and settled in for the long trip back. We delivered the goalposts to ASC, and they were erected in front of the Student Union Building. The perfect ending for an unforgettable Jody trip. Surely it couldn't get any better than this.

But a month later, the team was on a plane bound for Washington DC, my first flight on an airplane. We were greeted by Congressman Jim Wright of Texas for a photo-op when we arrived at our temporary quarters at Ft. Belvoir. The next day the Jodies represented the state of Texas in the inaugural parade for President Dwight Eisenhower.

A month after that, we hitched a ride on an Air Force training flight to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras Parade.

Jody Halftime Performance in the Rose Bowl, 1958

For the Jodies, the 1956-57 school year would be hard to top. But in the fall of 1957 an incredible thing happened. The football team had an undefeated season, and ASC was invited for a second appearance in the Rose Bowl. The Jodies were again scheduled to perform at halftime.

Our other scheduled performances were a replay of what we did the year before – Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm and the Junior Rose Parade. This year I was Jody Commander, and the trip was coordinated by CPT Willard Latham, later to become MG Latham, a young captain recently assigned to the ROTC cadre at ASC, who would be on bus with us going and coming.

We had been playing with the idea of silent drill, a complete performance with no voice commands. Instead of each movement having a precise start with a voice command, it would start some number of counts after the preceding one. Every man would memorize the sequence of the complete performance, the number of counts between elements of it and would execute each when he reached that count. There was a risk. If anyone had a mental lapse, lost count, started a little early or late, things could go downhill fast, and it would be difficult to make a graceful recovery. I would have to halt the performance by voice command and complete it with voice commands from the point where it was aborted. We worked on it in practice sessions leading up to the trip, hoping to perfect it and unveil it at halftime in the Rose Bowl.

On the day of the game, I felt we were ready. I asked the team if they wanted to go for it. They did. The halftime performance was flawless.

Afterward, I was happy it had gone well, but a little disappointed. In a silent drill routine the commander is more an onlooker than a participant. I missed the interaction, the connection with the team. As both a Jody in ranks and as commander I loved the command/response interaction between commander and team. But we were all proud we had done it.

This was the last halftime performance of the year, and as I recall we never used the silent drill routine in any of the parade performances that followed.

ASC's opponent that year was Cerritos College from California. The final score was ASC 21 Cerritos 12. The Rebels had won the Junior Rose Bowl for two consecutive years, something that had not been achieved before and hasn't been since. When the game

ended, Jodies and ASC fans again tore down the goalposts and loaded them onto the Jody bus.

On the return trip, Captain Latham was sitting at the front of the bus, most of the old-men behind that, and the young-men in the back. With all that we had done, it would be gross understatement to say we were in high spirits. There was a lot of good-natured horseplay between old-men and young-men, and things began to get a little rowdy. At some point, I don't know which group started it, an old-man vs. young-man situation developed in which one or more of one group would try to capture a member of the other, drag him down the aisle to friendly territory and try to pull his pants down. It began small and grew as everyone enthusiastically pitched in to support their group. People were dragged down the aisle as their comrades tried to rescue them and pull them back to safety. A good defensive tactic was to wrap a handkerchief, Jody scarf or sock around your belt buckle to make it hard to get at and unbuckle.

MG Latham's recollection is that when the team's behavior began to unnerve the bus driver he had the driver stop the bus, ordered us all off, had the driver go a mile or so up the highway and told us to get to the bus before he gave the order to restart the trip home. As he recalls, he did not give a specific time the bus would depart, but left the strong impression that anyone arriving late would be left. When the team re-boarded the bus, it had burned off enough excess energy that the rowdiness was over.

Delivery of the goalposts to ASC was the perfect ending for another fantastic, unforgettable trip.

Info from Mr. Gary C. Hitt, who participated in both these events.