



Florida State University

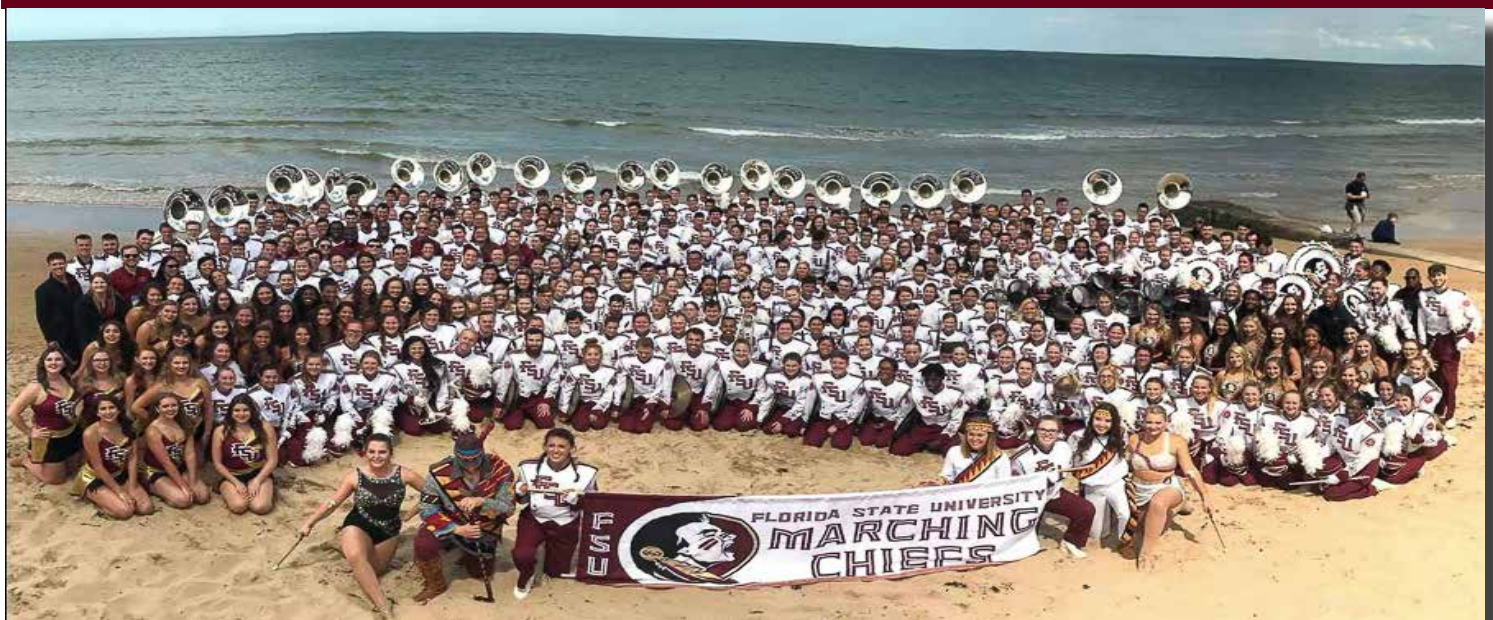
ARF News Special Feature

November 2019



FSU Marching Chiefs in France to Commemorate 75th Anniversary of D-Day

By Florence Ashby



It should be no surprise that the only U.S. collegiate band to participate in the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings would be our own Marching Chiefs! My excitement grew as my coach pulled out of Victoria Station in London en route to Paris. My first stop had been London so that I could see the musical “Hamilton”. We rolled through the Kent Countryside toward the Chunnel (an experience in itself), then from Normandy to Paris.

The venue for the initial concert was the garden of the Trocadero. With the Chiefs arranged

ready to play, the sky opened. The rain poured, and the concert began. The music sounded wonderful. The lovely uniforms were protected by transparent raincoats, so that the bright garnet colors could be seen. The majorettes twirled, while the flag corps performed their pompom routine. Our famous conductors, Doctors Patrick Dunningan and David Plack, as well as the drum majors directed the concert. Dean Patricia Flowers looked on proudly. An appreciative audience of Marching Chiefs’ alumni, parents, and College of Music personnel stood in the downpour enjoying the concert! Many photos were taken, with the Eiffel Tower in the background—just across the Seine River.



After some sightseeing adventures, the Chiefs were off to their main event—the mega celebration of the D-Day Landings at the Normandy Beaches. Many dignitaries arrived for the ceremony and the march-by, in which the Marching Chiefs took part. A wreath laying ceremony at the American Cemetery above Omaha Beach closed the activities in Normandy.





Back in Paris there was more sightseeing. I encountered some Chiefs at the Galeries Lafayette department store, identifiable by their F.S.U. tee shirts. We had a little reunion amid the latest Paris fashions! The final concert took place in the Park du André Citroën, known for its architecturally designed gardens. The park is some distance from the city center; I navigated the Paris Metro to reach the stop sharing the name of the park. In my best F.S.U. French I asked directions to the Park—and was actually understood!



A group of Chiefs went to Versailles.



On a wide plaza the Chiefs were arranged in concert formation behind an impressive banner. A short rain shower cleared the air, the sun burst forth, the concert began. In addition to our F.S.U. Chiefs' followers we had some French admirers who were aware of publicity about the concert. We had a variety of conductors, including Colonel Arnald D. Gabriel, Conductor Emeritus of the United States Air Force Band. Colonel Gabriel had been a young soldier in Europe during WWII and was reliving some memories in Normandy and Paris. When the Chiefs played the "Fight Song", the French ladies sitting with us joined in doing the Seminole Chop! The brass choir from the band stepped forth and repeated the moving concert they had played at the American Cemetery in Normandy. Of course, the final number was "The Hymn to the Garnet and the Gold". Our new French friends linked arms and swayed along with us as we sang that lovely tune. This closed a grand afternoon, after which we all came home.





Florence with the trumpet section.



Florence and the drum majors.



Florence between her new French friend and Jeannie Hautman the Mother of a flute player.