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Irving Dreibrodt: Built SMU's marching band

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By **JOE SIMNACHER** / The Dallas Morning News
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Irving Dingman Dreibrodt moved to Dallas in 1958 to create an attention-grabbing show band for Southern Methodist University. For the next quarter-century he directed his distinctive creation, dubbed "the Best Dressed Band in the Land."

Mr. Dreibrodt, 86, died Monday in his sleep at his Dallas home.

Services are set for 2 p.m. today at Highland Park United Methodist Church. The Mustang band will play and sing.

Mr. Dreibrodt gave his body to the Willed Body Program at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

"He was hired to produce a band that people would watch at halftime," said his daughter, Joan Anderton of Cumming, Ga.

While Mr. Dreibrodt knew the basic elements of the band he wanted – all-male, all-brass and a fast-paced performer – he faced a learning curve.

"He started with 40 members. ... He recruited out of the dorm," his daughter said.

Early editions of his Mustang marching band featured wooden pony cutouts suspended above the performer's shoulders, Mrs. Anderton said.

Mr. Dreibrodt's formula was 96 brass players and a featured majorette, who was added in 1960. The bandsmen had a rapid-fire routine, which they performed while undergoing several uniform changes throughout games.

"He said, 'You've got to grab their attention,' " she said.

The band continued to evolve, adding woodwinds and opening to women in 1973.

At SMU, Mr. Dreibrodt founded the American Drill Team School with Gussie Nell Davis, founder of

the Kilgore Rangerettes.

The school conducts clinics across the nation and holds competitions. Several of the competition awards bear his name.

"He started it, and then other schools just copied it," Mrs. Anderton said. "His was the original."

Mr. Dreibrodt was a loving family man with a good sense of humor, said another daughter, Diane Smuland of Dallas.

"He touched so many people's lives," Mrs. Smuland said. "Under his portrait at SMU it says 'builder of men.' "

Mr. Dreibrodt was active with the Texas Bandmasters, which he helped revitalize, his daughters said. He was the group's president in 1954, was named bandmaster of the year in 1961 and was inducted into the group's hall of fame in 1993. He also is in the Texas Sports and Texas Music halls of fame, his daughters said.

He also judged junior high and high school band competitions.

Born in San Antonio, Mr. Dreibrodt was a graduate of Brackenridge High School.

He received his bachelor's degree from Baylor University, where he was drum major and served as band director for six months.

Mr. Dreibrodt played the clarinet in the Army Air Forces during World War II.

He earned his master's degree from the University of Texas at Austin, his daughter said.

He was band director at Driscoll Junior High School in Corpus Christi before returning to San Antonio, where he was band director at Brackenridge High for 13 years. He then moved to Dallas.

During his last four years in San Antonio, he also was band director at Trinity University and played with the San Antonio Symphony, his daughter said.

He retired as SMU's director of bands in 1983.

He was a longtime member of Highland Park United Methodist Church and Lakewood Country Club.

In addition to Mrs. Smuland and Mrs. Anderton, Mr. Dreibrodt is survived by his wife, Camille Mason Dreibrodt of Dallas; two other daughters, Betty Ann Scoggins of Dallas and Kathy Schreur of Charlotte, N.C.; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Memorials may be made to the SMU Mustang Band, P.O. Box 750493, Dallas, TX 75275.