



History of Drill Team in New Mexico by Crystal Valdez

Precision, perfection, smiles, and choreography; this is what you think of when you hear the word Castelles. The Del Norte High School drill team has been a tradition at the castle for 32 years. During all 32 years, they have had one coach, Mrs. Jacquelyn Graham. Mrs. Graham has earned many accolades such as being inducted into the NMAA Hall of Fame, being named Who's Who Among America's Teachers, and being named Who's Who Among New Mexico Teachers along with many others. Because of Mrs. Graham's hard work and dedication, the Castelles have become the magnificent team they are today.

Around the time of the Great Depression, two women who lived hundreds of miles away from one another came up with the innovative idea of a drill team. Kay Teer, a student of Edinburg High School in 1930, was elected as cheerleader above sixty other candidates. But Kay was saddened because many of her friends did not make the squad. She knew the other girls were just as eager to support the school as she was. Being the natural born leader she was, she went to the principal of the school, Mr. C.A. Davis, and asked if there was a way the others could be on the field at half-time to help support the team. Mr. Davis was convinced. In 1936, Kay returned and taught Physical Education and coached the Red and Blue Sergeanettes, which was the name they came up with that year. The group soon became a precision dance group and received many accolades from people all around the state. They continued their traditions and still use their guidelines today.

After earning her master's degree in 1939, Kay moved to California and began her doctoral degree at the University of Southern California. But in the early forties, the principal at El Centro High School was very impressed and offered to triple her Texas salary to start a precision drill team at his school. She took the position while continuing her doctoral studies. She then started to organize a national dance/drill team competition. It was called the Miss Drill Team USA held in California. It was such a success that they continued it every year. It now involves schools not only from the US, but from foreign countries also.

The other major influence on drill teams was Gussie Nell Davis. In 1929, after acquiring a master's degree at UCLA, she was asked to instruct the pep squad at Greenville High School in Greenville Texas. During the first couple of years, she experimented with stunting and holding up signs. Soon, the girls evolved into marching and doing drill moves to music. They called themselves the Flaming Flashes, which would be later shortened to the Flashes. Shortly, they would twirl batons and perform during halftones. Gussie changed the pep squad into the famous drill team they would become.

In 1939, Dean Masters, the vice president of Kilgore College contacted Mrs. Davis and asked her to start the first drill team for the college. They decided to call the group the Rangerettes because the name of the football team was the Rangers. On September 12, 1940, the Rangerettes had their first ever performance. They had forty-eight members with five officers. The Rangerettes became very well-known and there was a great demand for their special performances ("History " n. pag.).

These women made drill team what it is today. Many changes have occurred in drill teams but Kay Crawford and Gussie Nell Davis made the first model of what a drill team should be. Drill teams are a little different today. In the early forties, the skirts had to be one inch above your knee at most, anything less was considered risque. Now, skirts are worn much shorter and some have replaced the skirts altogether with tight-fitting bodysuits. Also, the beginning drill teams only performed at halftones at

football games. Currently, drill members perform at halftones for football games, basketball games, and for competitions.

Jacquelyn Fairweather was born on April 28th, 1947 in Altadena, California. She attended Marshall Junior High in Pasadena, California where she first became interested in the pom-pom squad. She became a member of the team in 9th grade. The next year, she attended Pasadena High School and became interested in the drill team. But becoming a member was no easy task. In her freshmen year, she had to tryout in order to take a class for the drill team. Jacquelyn was one of the 476 girls that made it into that class. During her junior year, the girls would learn the routines for the year to come. At the end of the year, the coach, Mrs. Owens, held tryouts for the actual team. Out of the 476 members of the class, Mrs. Owens would only take 116 girls on the squad. That year, Jacquelyn made it on to the drill team. Mrs. Owens was a very fastidious coach, who watched the girls with binoculars from the stands during performances. If she saw a mistake, the girl was taken out of the next routine.

The girls wore red corduroy outfits with satin lining. They also wore buck shoes, which were white on the top with red rubber soles. If the shoes got dirty, little pillows with powder in them were dabbed on the shoes to make them clean. Also, their socks had to be rolled to exactly an inch and a half. When they went to competition, they would have a forty-five minute standing inspection. This was when the judges went to each girl individually and inspected the uniform. They would get out a ruler to make sure the socks were rolled to exactly an inch and a half. The girls were not allowed to speak and they had to hold their smiles until the entire team was inspected. That year, the Pasadena drill team received third place at the competition in Corona and third place at Hawthorn, which was a parade.

Jacquelyn's inspiration for becoming a teacher was from her teacher, Mrs. Van Horn. Jacquelyn attended Pasadena city college for 2 years, all the while helping Mrs. Owens with the drill team. She then attended San Diego State. She married Frank Graham and moved to San Jose where she graduated. Her husband Frank got transferred to Albuquerque, New Mexico and settled down for good. She went to the University of New Mexico to get her MA degree. After that, she substituted for APS for three months before getting a position as the physical education teacher. She was also asked to take on the Del Norte Castelles, the dance and drill group at the time.

The Castelles at the time had pom-poms and black and white outfits. They also had captains that were in charge of the squad. In order for there to be a club or organization, there had to be a sponsor. The drill team did not have one so they used Mr. Thibbert's name in order to have the squad. Once Mrs. Graham came, things started to change. They ordered new uniforms that the squad decided on. They obtained white ruffles with blue and black trim with a blue tie in the front, a turquoise jumper, black shoes, and pig tails wrapped with a thin blue ribbon. They also had black and white pom-poms. Mrs. Graham kept the captains for one year but decided that there was no need for them. Also, the pom-poms they used the first year got left behind and the black shoes were exchanged for white. In the beginning, the team was both drill and dance. But after three years, the team became just drill. In order to show what drill was suppose to look like, Mrs. Graham had films sent to her of her old drill team in Pasadena. The girls would put the film on a projector and play the moves in slow motion in order to learn them. After a couple of years, they were able to make up their own moves.

Every year for twenty years, the Castelles participated in Christmas Parades and several State Fair Parades. In 1974, they represented New Mexico at the Cinco de Mayo Parade in Guaymas, Mexico. Then next year, they were in the Tournament of Roses Parade and also marched in the Disneyland Christmas Parade. In 1986, they were the only entire drill team invited to perform at the Closing Ceremonies of the Statue of Liberty. They were part of the 800-member drill team, which performed at Giant Stadium. They

were also selected to perform at the Dukes Stadium two times along with several other drill teams in town. They were a prelude to the performance of the Beach Boys.

In 1984, Mrs. Graham was inducted into the Let's Cheer of America Cheer/Drill Coaches Hall of Fame, of Let's Cheer Magazine. The next year she hosted the New Mexico State Cheer/Drill Competition at the UNM Arena. She has also been one of two 5-A representatives for Drill Team for New Mexico. She has served on this committee for 31 years. She also served on the Activities Committee for three years and the Executive Board for 2 years, both of which for the New Mexico Activities Association. In October of 1992, she was named APS/ Wendy's Teacher of the Month. An article and her picture appeared in the APS football program. She was named Who's Who Among America's Teachers in 1994 and was selected to Who's Who Among New Mexico Teachers in 1995 (Graham interview). During halftime at the Boys State Basketball Tournament on March 8, 1996, Mrs. Graham was inducted into the NMAA Hall of Fame. Selection to the NMAA Hall of Fame is considered the highest honor bestowed upon anyone devoted to and associated with interscholastic education (Del Norte yearbook 96).

In 1979, the Castelles did their first ever black-light performance. The assembly was held in the secondary gym. Everyone was very surprised when the Castelles strode onto the floor and the lights went out. But the black lights proved to be efficacious. Since then, the Castelles have had one black-light performance a year, usually for the winter assembly.

In 1985, Mrs. Graham teamed up with John Fannin, the band director at the time, and became the band's color guard. The girls went out with flags, one dark and light pink and the other purple. The next year, the NMAA decided that in order to win a state trophy, they would have to do two routines out of dance, drill, prop, or pom-poms. Mrs. Graham wasn't too big of a fan of dance and she disliked the idea of pom-poms. So they decided to use the flags they used while they were in color guard. They used those flags for a couple of years before switching to nicer flags. One was a dark and light shade of pink and turquoise with a silver stripe and the other is all silver.

For the 25th Anniversary of Del Norte, it was decided to have an all staff and faculty assembly. The staff had to sign up to be in any of the following: relay races, modeling show, band, ROTC, or the Castoffs. The Castoffs were a group of 27 women who imitated a drill routine from the Castelles. Mrs. Graham organized it and helped with the routine. The ladies had a week and a half to learn the routine before the assembly. They wore a turquoise 25th Anniversary t-shirt, black shorts, white shoes and white socks. The women with long enough hair also put their hair in pigtails. The Castoffs were at the very end of the assembly and they were well anticipated. And they did not disappoint. They delivered a magnificent performance and received a standing ovation from the student body. After the performance, the staff in the Castoffs also had a greater appreciation for the Castelles and all the hard work they do.

During the past 32 years, the Castelles have never received lower than a third place trophy in the state competition. They have received three third place trophies, fifteen second place trophies, and fourteen first place trophies. Over the years, the Castelles have won the following awards at the American Dance Drill Competition: Division I and Double Division I, Best Overall Presentation, Best Overall Choreography, Best Overall Precision, Best Overall Technique, the Team Judges Award, and the Dr. Driebodt Award for Military routine.

Throughout the years, the competition for the Castelles have changed. In the 1970's when only a few drill teams were around, their main competition was the Sandia Las Toreras. Then in the 1980's, the drill team from Eldorado, La Cuadrilla, also became one of the main competitions. Later on in the 80's, the drill teams from Manzano and Cibola came onto the scene. The coach for the Sandia squad switched to teach at La Cueva where she started another drill team in the 1990's. Much of the competition has changed,

some have ceased to have a drill team, and some altered what they did and became dance. But the only one that has remained the same is the Castelles. They have made minor adjustments to the uniform such as going to a thicker ribbon, changing shoes to go with styles of the year, and in 1993, added sparkle to the uniform. The new uniform had sequins around the neckline and the bottom of the skirt and sequined cuffs were added for extra affect. In 1998, the Castelles decided the pigtails were too juvenile for the squad and thus switched for a single ponytail. But in 2001, they felt they needed the pigtails to match the mascot and switched back. The Castelles have always had such pulchritude when it comes to their uniform.

Tryouts for Castelles are held once a year in the spring. They are open to 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade students with at least a 2.0 GPA without more than one F. A clinic is held for usually two or three days before the tryouts occur. At the clinic, the current Castelles teach the girls a short routine to be judged by four to five judges. Teacher recommendations are also a large factor as to whether or not a girl will be let into Castelles.

Castelles must attend all home and away football games in town. They are also divided into groups where they attend other events such as: volleyball, boys and girls basketball, wrestling, and baseball.

During the summer, the Castelles have practices on predetermined Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:30. During the school year, the Castelles meet every morning at 7:00 AM and again during 6th period and after school until 3:00. Once State practices begin, they have Saturday practices ranging from three to four hours and Wednesday night practices for two hours.

Mrs. Graham has had over 1,350 girls over the 32 year in Castelles. A Castelle must have commitment, dedication, enthusiasm, and pride. They must display exemplary behavior at all times. Castelles is more than just a drill team; it is a family, joined together by a common bond and by love. When asked to describe Castelles in one word, Mrs. Graham did not hesitate before saying, "Love." Jacquelyn Graham is an ingenuous, sagacious woman who has made the Del Norte Castelles what they are today. This year's Coach of the Year for the New Mexico Spirit Association has been recognized for her commitment, kindness, humor, and caring to each task she undertakes. Her teams have always maintained and promoted school spirit, dedication, and sportsmanship. The proudest moment in Mrs. Graham's life was when she sent a videotape of the State Flag and Military routines to her drill team coach, Mrs. Owens. After viewing the tape, Mrs. Owens called Mrs. Graham from long distance, saying, "I loved it, you have the best drill team in the world," (Graham Interview). The Castelles have proven to be the acme of drill teams over the years.