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The Cupcake Chug

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The Cupcake Chug

**Informant:** Becca Bowen Holt is attending Utah State University, transferring to BYU-Idaho. She attended Sky View High School in Smithfield, Utah, and played tenor and alto saxophone in the marching band. She was also the saxophone section leader and woodwind captain.

**Context:**
At the time of collection, Becca was sitting in her mother’s kitchen during a conversation about other Sky View Marching Band traditions. She and her sister Jennifer Bowen McKinney, who is more than ten years older and also played in the Sky View Marching Band, talked together about the origin of various Marching Band traditions. The origin of this particular tradition probably started around 2005 or 2006 when their sister Heidi, who is about three years younger than Jennifer, became the first Woodwind Captain at Sky View. She brought the cupcake chug to the rest of the woodwinds.

Marching band, especially high school marching bands, are a very tight-knit community. Due to the high density of LDS population in all the school districts of Cache Valley, well more than 95% of the students who participate in the Sky View marching band are LDS.

On their way to a competition, Sky View Marching Band will separate into four buses: the woodwinds, the brass, the percussion, and the color guard. Each group has their own traditions.

A woodwind captain is a student who oversees or represents all the students in the marching band who play a woodwind instrument: flute or piccolo, clarinet, and saxophone. A section leader is a student who trains and leads the students who play their same instrument, either flute and piccolo, clarinet, or saxophone. Marching Band comes from a military tradition, and involves marching while playing instruments. They can either play in parades, the activity for which marching bands are most well-known, but a marching band will also march on a football field in large formations and shapes, which can change quickly or slowly. These are called marching band shows. Competitions between marching bands begin at the High School level, and are adjudicated by professional musicians. The marching band show season begins in September and ends in late October or early November. These shows are taxing on the students’ coordination, memorization, and stamina, and require precision, a marching technique unique to marching band and very unlike military marching styles, and long hours of practice.

The students in the Sky View Marching Band grow very close together because of the uniqueness of creating beautiful, moving music together as well as moving their bodies in perfect coordination with one another. The religious culture they all share, with similar standards and similar family lifestyles, also bind them together. Every marching band has their own unique traditions to unite the band, maintain relationships and give meaning to their chosen activity, and for entertainment for all the band members.

**Text:**
So, the woodwind bus at Sky View, for every competition, woodwind captain would pass out all the cupcakes, and give a speech of some kind, usually motivating, and we would say ‘cupcake chug on three’ and everyone would yell ‘three!’, and you’d shove in your cupcake and eat it as fast as you can and it had to be totally swallowed, nothing in the mouth, and as soon as you were done you’d slap the ceiling of the bus, and winner got bragging rights

Interviewer: So, this was in, a, school bus on the way to…?

A band competition, competitions in Utah in various high schools

Texture:
As Becca told this story, she began very stiffly at first, but soon loosened up and eventually glowed at the memories of her experiences with her friends and all the hard work she did, and life lessons she learned, especially the leadership skills. When this tradition is performed, many of the kids choose not to participate in the quasi-eating contest or race, and decide to eat it slowly. Some of the students make it an opportunity for personal glory by practically swallowing their cupcake whole. Tension can almost be felt during the experience, coming off the students in waves, because each of them have developed the skills of intense focus, but the activity is also very light and fun. There is always plenty of banter and high-fiving and teasing during the activity.