I had the honor to be the drum major of what was to become TGMBITHOTU during the 1971 and 1972 seasons.

A bit of background. During my first year I wore a very generic drum major’s uniform, white mostly, with a big white shako – the sort of thing you’d see at most high schools. A group of guys in the drum section, which so often got its way, thought a uniform was needed that better represented the Trojan heritage. So, during the summer of 1972, some of the drummers and I went out in search of something that looked more *Ben Hur*-like. The budget was tight. We found a fiberglass breastplate (painted silver) and matching leggings and helmet – all of it pretty ill-fitting – at a costume shop in Long Beach.

The very double-knit tunic and cape were made to order elsewhere – where I don’t recall. Everybody, from the get-go, called it “The Dress.” We looked everywhere for a sword that resembled a Roman short sword, without success. We settled on one we found in a fireplace accessories shop in Cerritos. It was meant to be a firewood poker, and was flat black iron. It looked like a short sword someone might have carried during the Crusades. But it was nice and shiny after we had it chromed.

During the first couple of pregame shows in the Coliseum I felt pretty uncomfortable and restricted in my fiberglass armor and so I simply walked out of the company fronts and out to the 50-yard line, where I turned and let the band march past me, like a wave around a piling. Not much to it, and I was all alone out there doing nothing until the band arrived. Then, once again, the drum section prevailed. Several of them offered various versions of, “Geez, do *something* out there!”

So the next game I walked out, turned toward the home side of the Coliseum and, rather rigidly, flung the little sword into the turf in front of me. I recall it as a spontaneous thought, although the idea was probably first advanced by the drum section. I didn’t kneel and really ram the sword into the ground because my outfit was so restrictive (parts of it felt as if they would fall off). It got a pretty decent crowd reaction, and the band seemed to approve, so I kept it up throughout the rest of the season.

The following year the great Ted Meyer became drum major and picked up the gesture and really made it his own – much more of an aggressive, lusty stab, much like it’s done today. I still get a huge kick out of watching the drum majors stab the field every year.