

I was a student at Belleville High School (BHS) in Belleville Michigan and a member of the band under the direction of Edward Downing from 1961 through 1965. In my senior year, I served the band as leader of rank one and as backup drum major to Glenn Curtis. In the fall of 1965 I matriculated at the University of Michigan and was accepted into the marching band after a personal tryout with the renown William D. Revelli who was in his last year as conductor. Following graduation from the University of Michigan in December of 1968 with a major in physics and minors in mathematics, and education, I worked as a teacher at BHS from 1969 through 1983.

While I was a student in the high school band, our director Edward Downing—who was a U of M alumnus—used his connections with the University of Michigan band to have the music to the fight song arranged by the UM band’s chief music arranger, Jerry Bilik. For those of you who are familiar with the Michigan Marching Band, Jerry Bilik did the arrangements for *Temptation* and *Hawaiian War Chant* so this was a big deal for a high school band to get its school song arranged by such a famous person.

When you are in the band, you seldom sing the words to the school fight song because you are always playing it but we were required to also know the words. The words to the BHS fight song in those days (as I remember them) were:

Although Yale has always favored  
The violet’s dark blue,  
And the many sons of Harvard  
To the crimson rose are true,  
We will hold our lily slender,  
Nor honor shall they lack,  
While the Tigers stand defenders  
Of the Orange and the Black.  
We will hold our lily slender,  
Nor honor shall they lack,  
While the Tigers stand defenders  
Of the Orange and the Black.

The BHS school mascot was a tiger and our colors were orange and black. Even before the Internet, it didn’t take long to discover which college played both Harvard and Yale and had a tiger as a mascot and orange and black as the school colors. When I looked up the words to the Princeton fight song, I found that they were virtually identical to ours. It was common practice in those days for high schools to use the tune of a famous college fight song, especially one that is easy to remember and play like *On Wisconsin* but it seemed exceedingly odd to me to use the same lyrics when they clearly didn’t apply to our high school.

As a teacher at BHS, I agreed to serve as a camp counselor at a summer band camp for the high school band. While the band was practicing, we counselors had plenty of free time and one day I found myself discussing the lyrics to the school song with a fellow counselor who (I recall) also served as director of the high school choir. We had revised the arrangement of the music and I thought it was time to fix the lyrics. I said that anyone could write better lyrics to a high school fight song—even someone with minimal music training like myself. I do not recall her name or the specific summer between 1970 and 1983 when this took place. She helped with the writing process and deserves some of the credit but the

lion's share of the writing and the idea to rewrite the lyrics was mine. The proposed lyrics were disseminated to the student body that school year and voted on at a school assembly. They were adopted and are:

Other schools have always cheered for,  
Their colors and the rest;  
When they meet the mighty Belleville,  
We will show them why we're best!  
Rah! Rah! Rah!  
We will back our fighting Tigers,  
And no honor shall they lack;  
As they win for Belleville High School,  
And the orange and the black!

If you would like to hear it, try this [link](#) or look it up yourself on YouTube.