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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

HARRY READ, Director of Information and Publications (217) 581-2820

Sept. 20, 1984

T-C /

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL-- WANTED: Eye-pleasing young ladies that are smart, dedicated, enthusiastic and can dance.

No. The above ad didn't appear in a lonely hearts column. It could, however, be a facsimile of an announcement advertising tryouts for Eastern Illinois University's popular dance troupe--the Pink Panthers.

The Pink Panthers have been an integral part of the EIU Athletic Department for the past 16 years. They have traveled around Illinois and across the Midwest promoting and supporting EIU sports teams. The girls ventured to the sunny beaches of Hawaii in January, 1983 with Eastern's basketball team and received rave reviews from the fans at the game.

"We got a standing ovation during our performances in Hawaii," states Pink Panthers coordinator Phoebe Church. "Actually, we came on for an encore after one game. It was amazing."

Being a member of the group isn't all fun and games, though. Tryouts are a four-day ordeal with 12-16 girls chosen from more than 100 candidates attempting. The hard work doesn't end there. The squad members practice one-and-one-half to two hours a day. They must develop new routines for every home football game half time show. The Pink Panthers also perform at every Eastern home basketball game.

"The girls that make the squad must dance well, look eye-pleasing in leotards, have a good GPA (grade point average) and also learn quickly," explains Church. "They must have good memories to learn all the routines."

Church often draws on old dance numbers she learned as a child and incorporates them into the routines of the Pink Panthers. She works closely with EIU's Marching Band

PINK PANTHERS
ADD 1

in putting together each show and in selecting the music that accompanies the dance routine.

"Once I know the songs we are performing to, I visualize in my mind the routines to go along with the specific numbers," said Church. "I keep playing back in my mind how the routine will look with the song. The girls contribute their ideas and then we incorporate everything into the show."

The name of the group was dubbed by a former member of the Speech department, Bill Cash. According to reports, Cash wanted to start a ladies drill team that performed in symmetry with gymnastic patterns. The squad developed out of that original concept but a name was still needed for the group. The Pantherettes and Lady Panthers were considered among others until Cash came up with the name "Pink Panthers." His source of inspiration was the popular television show of the same title along with a popular book of the time, Trail of the Pink Panther.