

Don Daber

In 1960 Don Daber burst onto the Drum Corps scene with an explosion of creative art and single-handedly changed the way we viewed Canadian Drum Corps. Quickly his distinctive line drawings, photographs and montages appeared at the highest levels of the North America Drum Corps movement. Who can forget the record jackets, buttons, crests, souvenirs, programs, cartoons and logos?

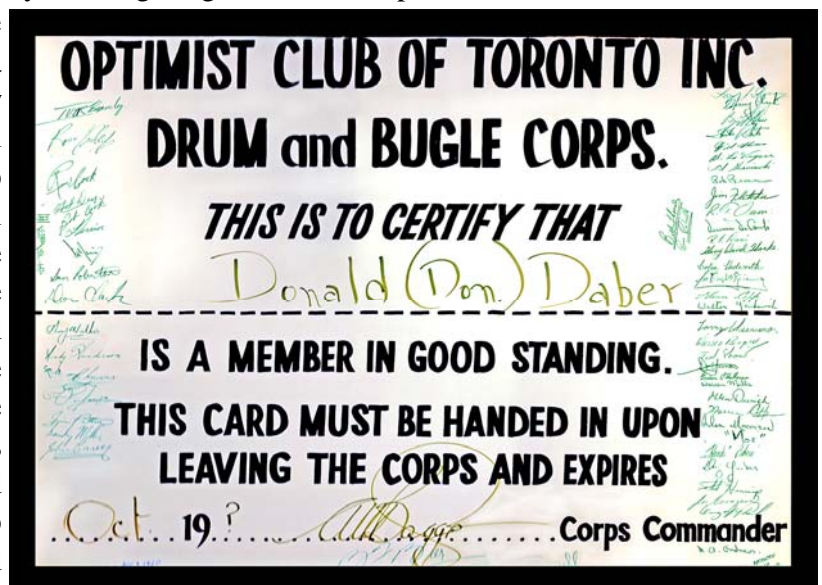
For many in the Optimists organization, the crowning achievement was Don's 1961 creation of Green Capsule Comments (GCC). (Note: in 1976, after the Seneca Optimists was created through the merger of the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Princemen, GCC was renamed Gold Capsule Comments). This innovative newsletter became the cornerstone of the Optimists' championship caliber communications and was published regularly until 1978 when the Optimists vanished from the competitive field. Gone but not forgotten.



Don Daber (1962)

Don was born in Kirkland Lake, Ontario on May 2, 1929. In 1949 he moved to Toronto to study at the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design). After graduating he began a career in graphics and photography. Don moved to Ottawa, Ontario for his first full-time job at Crawley Films where he worked as a graphic artist. In 1956, Don and a partner started their own company called Advertising Art Associates. One of their clients was The Boy Scouts Association of Canada. Don did a lot of artwork and photography for them, including comic books about Scouting adventures, work that is very similar to what he later did for The Toronto Optimists.

In 1960 Don discovered drum corps and his involvement with corps progressed at lightning speed. His first direct contact with a drum corps was at a Scout House show on May 28, 1960. Seeing this show inspired him to create a mock-up for an article on Drum Corps in hopes that it would be published in Weekend magazine, a publication which was distributed with the Saturday edition of the Toronto Telegram newspaper as well as numerous major newspapers across Canada. About a week after seeing Scout House Don happened upon De La Salle Drum Corps (they were giving an outdoor performance on their school's football field) and a couple of weeks later he was at a Toronto Optimists' practice. Within a few days of that practice Don went to a show in Kitchener, Ontario with the Optimists and the following week he joined Opti on a trip to Rochester, NY. In early July Don asked Al Baggs, Optimists' Corps Director, whether he could be the official photographer for the Optimists. Two weeks later Mr. Baggs asked Don to join them on every trip. At the beginning of August Don's connection with the Optimists was cemented when he was presented with an oversized membership card (30" x 24") for the Optimists. In addition to Mr. Baggs, the Corps Commander, the card was signed by every member of the corps!

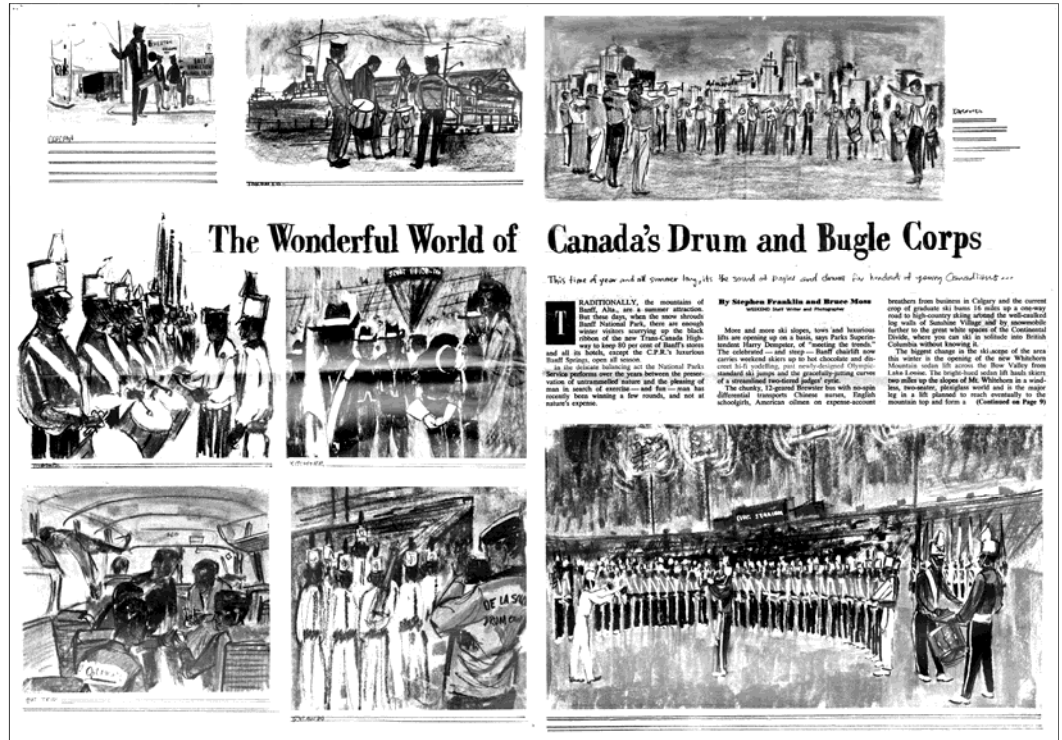


Don's BIG Membership card from 1960

Since he didn't drive no one is sure how he made it but Don also made it to Jersey City for the 1960 Dream. We do, however, know that Don was there because some of his photos from that show still exist.

Don did submit a preliminary outline of his article on drum corps to Weekend Magazine that was distributed with the Saturday edition of the Toronto Telegram. Unfortunately, they told him that they had reached their quota for "music stories" for the year; however, they did ask him to submit the concept the following year (in 1964 the Toronto Telegram published a two page spread on the Toronto Optimists). Although the Weekend Magazine article failed to materialize Don's relationship with the Optimists was very successful and continues to this day.

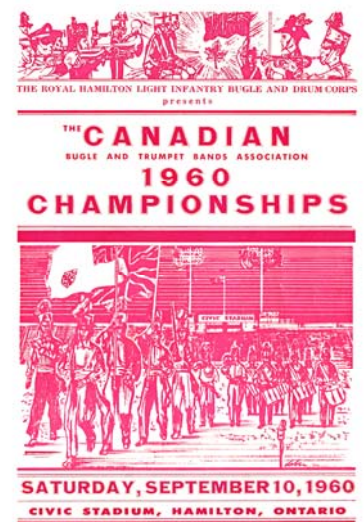
Don's connection with the greater drum corps community began in July of 1960 when he joined Al Baggs, Optimists' Corps Director, and Clare Reid, Secretary-Treasurer of what was then called the Canadian Bugle and Trumpet Band Association (in 1961 the name was changed to Canadian Drum Corps Association) to attend a CBTBA meeting. As a result of this meeting Clare Reid gave Don a contract to do the artwork and program for the upcoming Championship contest. Don also designed the cover for the record album of the 1960 Canadian Championships. For Don, a tremendous amount happened in the two months following his introduction to drum corps!



Part of Don's draft layout (no text) for the Weekend magazine article

During his years with the Optimists (Toronto Optimists and Seneca Optimists) Don was a photographer, the publicity director and the Corps Director (more than once). In fact, Don replaced Al Baggs as Optimists' Corps Director in 1963, only three years after Don had discovered drum corps. In 1961 Don created GCC, Green Capsule Comments, the newsletter of the Toronto Optimists Drum Corps. In 1976, when the Toronto Optimists and Seneca Princemen merged to form the Seneca Optimists, the newsletter kept it's letters but changed its' name to Gold Capsule Comments. Don's cartoons were often included in editions of GCC and many of Don's cartoons can be found in the pages of Steve Vicker's book "The Art of Drum Corps World". The Seneca Optimists folded after the 1978 season but Don continued taking drum corps photos into the 1990s. Since Don never did learn to drive most of these photos were taken in the Greater Toronto area.

In addition to his work with the Optimists, Don found time to work with both the Ontario and Canadian Drum Corps Associations, serving as a



Don's first programme

photographer, publicity director and board member. In his spare time Don's work was included in various drum corps publications such as Drum Corps News, Drum Corps World and Drum Corps Digest, he produced the artwork for over 20 record albums as well as designing posters and doing the program artwork for a variety of contests. A section in the Toronto Optimists History Photo Gallery is dedicated to Don (it can be found under "The Old Days"). This section contains images of some of Don's artwork as well as samples of the promotional material that he created. Many of Don's photos can be found in "The Old Days" section of the Toronto Optimists History website.

"The Old Days" section of the Toronto Optimists History website covers the years 1952 through 1978. This section contains albums for the Toronto Optimists, The Seneca Optimists, the various Optimists feeder corps (Bantam Optimists, Optimist Cadets, Optimist Lancers and Cadet Lancers) as well as numerous other corps. Don began photographing drum corps in 1960. The majority of photos in the Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists, Optimists Feeder Corps and Other Corps albums were taken by Don.

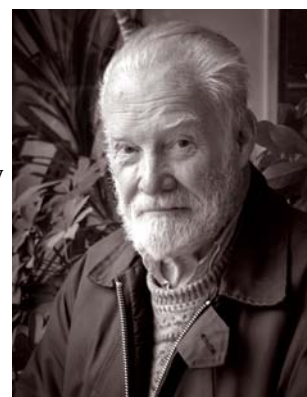
Below is an album cover for a record that was not produced as well as samples of the corps buttons created by Don.



Sample of Don's Photo News from Drum Corps News



Don's cover design for the 1963 Canadian Nationals record



Don Daber (2006)

If you wish to see more of Don's work, please visit the Toronto Optimists History website.

The URL for the main website is:

<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca>

The URL for the Toronto Optimists History Photo Gallery is:

https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/coppermine/index.php?theme=classic_history