

Alan 'Daddy' Baggs, 77, organized drum and bugle corps for youths

By Dan Smith Toronto Star

They called him "Daddy Baggs" and sometimes chafed at the discipline he urged them to embrace, but hundreds of Toronto boys owe at least part of their adult success to Alan W. Baggs.

Mr. Baggs, 77, of Widdicombe Hill in Etobicoke, died early yesterday after a six-week battle with cancer. A former accountant at The Globe and Mail and later an office manager at Tom Kendall Oil, Mr. Baggs is best known for decades of work with youth, particularly as a driving force behind the popularity of drum and bugle corps among Metro boys.

Community service

Mr. Baggs devoted his spare time to community service of all kinds, including the Toronto Optimists. He was a lifetime member of Optimists International.

Without children of his own, however, his greatest vocation was helping young boys, beginning with the less-than-favored kids of the Davenport and Dovercourt neighborhood.

"The guys called him Daddy Baggs," Philip Tachauer, a long-time friend who worked with Mr. Baggs on many of his music projects, recalled yesterday. "Al took those kids when they were in knee pants and gave them something to do. He got them to recognize the value of discipline, to work toward a goal for themselves.

"Hundreds of kids went

Obituary



Alan Baggs: Etobicoke man, shown in younger days, organized youth drum corps.

through Al's projects. Some of those young lads are big wheels now, and you have to wonder where they would all be today without his leadership."

A former Boy Scouts of Canada district commissioner, Mr. Baggs played a pivotal role in organizing and creating some of Metro's best-known drum and bugle corps during the 1950s through to the early 1980s.

"The various corps were a big deal in those days, with many bands around Toronto and many competitions that were quite popular events," said Tachauer, who was musical director and a

fellow volunteer in a number of Mr. Baggs' bands. "The funny thing was, Al couldn't play a note of music himself.

"But he was an incredible organizer and he was the guy who raised the money and arranged the tours all over North America for these boys."

From the Davenport Boys Trumpet Band in the early days, through the 18th Toronto Boy Scouts Trumpet Band, Mr. Baggs was associated with decades of work in the area. His most notable group was the Toronto Optimist Drum and Bugle Corps, which was Canadian junior champion for 11 straight years.

Bursary established

"I remember when they marched down Bay St., ending up with a civic reception and the whole bit," said Tachauer. "Al was very proud."

He was also a key organizer of the annual Scottish World Festival at the Canadian National Exhibition, an event which drew military and other bands from around the world.

Several years ago a bursary was established in Mr. Baggs' name, to be given to hard-of-hearing youngsters. Despite his lifetime belief in music as a positive influence on young people, he had poor hearing himself and in later years wore a hearing aid.

A funeral service will be held Monday at 11 a.m., at the Yorke chapel of Turner and Porter Funeral Directors, 2357 Bloor St. W.