



GCC

Geriatric Capsule Comments.
VOLUME 1, #1



The official publication of the Optimists Alumni Corps.

WOW! WHAT A SHOW.





HOW GOOD WAS IT?

KEVIN MATHEW.

“Well, I think it is my turn to give my personal report on this group. I have been with The Toronto Optimists for 5 months now. In that time, I have gone from hearing a group that sounded like a lopsided bunch of lead soprano players and a couple of other horn players. On May 31st, I heard a horn-line---a horn-line with 3 sections in the Sopranos, 2 sections in the Mellophones, 3 sections in the Baritones and of course, the Contras. I love the Contras.

I got 3 chills that weekend while teaching---once during a chord sequence during warm-up. The boys were listening and accomplished a balanced chord that was the prettiest thing I have heard you play. Once during the new tune “Battle Cry” and once upstairs in a room full of people who met each other 30 to 40-some years ago. I had never heard your corps song before and didn’t know you had one. I looked around to see everyone singing the song, except for a few Newbee’s (including me). I asked a few people when they had last sang this song. Except for a couple who said “4 or 5 years ago at another reunion”, most said “40 years ago.” All they needed was the first couple of words and then they remembered it like it was yesterday.

To hear people around me talking about when their next sectional is, and at whose house, it simply blew me away. I have taught for over 12 years now and have NEVER heard any of my students say those words. I see something special happening here that I have never seen happen before. A common goal to be great once more!

Well, you are on the path to greatness. All I can offer is a bit of advice:

1. Decide what you want.
2. Take action---desire is not enough.
3. Figure out what’s working for you and drop what isn’t.
4. Continually change your approach until you achieve what you want.

You can use this advice in all aspects of life. Of course there’s much more to this formula than these simple steps. But this is a great foundation from which to start. To achieve greatness requires goals and practice.

Thanks for allowing me to be part of this!”

BOB BURMAN:

“Saturday night was magical. To be able to perform again, to sing the Corps song before going on. I never thought that I’d be doing this again and still can’t believe it. Before practice on Sunday I commented to Barry Bell that it was great to see so many of the guys felt very deeply about the Optimists. Barry’s eyes welled up, he pointed to his heart and just walked away.”

MEL DAY;

“Vern, last year when you announced that there WILL be an Alumni Corps, I had my doubts. A few years back we tried to put together a parade corps but it just fizzled out after a few sessions.

The show at night was better than I ever thought it would be. The crowd was so receptive and the cheer at the end of the first number was really incredible. I looked at the people and actually saw some of them wiping away tears. This sort of choked me up and I had to look your way to avoid getting too nostalgic myself. I think everyone in the room (the Corps included) got caught up in what was happening.

The rest of the night was just as great, what with the Hall of Fame inductions, etc. Barry’s tribute to Mr. Baggs (that’s how I addressed him, “Daddy” Baggs only if he wasn’t in ear shot) and Glad Baggs there to accept. Barry having a “moment” during the introduction of the Corps was all very powerful stuff to me. I was very pleased to hear of Barry’s induction into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

One last thing: singing the Corps song before we went downstairs was a wonderful idea. I’m beginning to think; “we WILL march on forever” buddy.
Best Regards (from an old fart from the ‘60’s).”

DAVE BYRNE;

“Just a quick note to congratulate you on the terrific evening last Saturday. The sound of the Corps, after 7 rehearsals was amazing. We had a great time, as did everyone who came.”

BOB KEENAN;

“Saturday was one of the highest points of my life. We owe all of you who got this crazy dream to be 19 years old again, a huge thank you for everything you’ve done. By the way, we got a huge ovation at the St. Joe’s Classic when they introduced us (Editor’s note: Bob wore an Optimists uniform during the march past of corps from memory lane). I think the word is spreading that Green is back. Thanks again for giving us back our youth.”

CLASSIC DRUMLINE QUOTES FROM MAY 31.

Compiled by Mark Lewis

Gord O’Halloran: “Has anyone seen my drum?”

Bob Cook: “LIDSTONE!!! @\$#&*#” (hmmm...reminds me of ’77)

Gord O’Halloran: “Has anyone seen my stand?”

Several: “The Corps has a song?”

Gord O’Halloran: “Has anyone seen my music?”

Mark Lewis: “We are Quads. Bow before us!”

Gord O’Halloran: “Has anyone seen my sticks?”

Doug Bass: “Let’s do it again.”

UP FROM THE BASEMENT

By Ted Wilson

So it's 1 p.m. on Saturday and I bring my Contra up from the basement and stand in the family room to prepare for my journey to Toronto. Spencer the wonder dog doesn't bark but he does go up to the Contra and gives it a significant once over with his nose. My other dog, Heidi, decides it is best to keep a distance and just gives it a real good stare. My wife, however, is not pleased and tells me "that THING better not mark the floor!"

So off we go to the rehearsal and the first-ever performance of the Optimists Alumni Drum & Bugle Corps. When I arrived, I was amazed to see the turnout. Everybody was there and you could see all of the guys (and one gal) were pumped up for the evening ahead.

During rehearsal it was obvious that the horns were sounding better than ever. Vern was walking around with a look in his eyes that probably hasn't been there since the last time he was about to lead the Corps onto the field for a competition where he was sure we would kick some ass like we always did when the Championship was on the line.

Later that afternoon, the drumline came downstairs to show their stuff, just like drummers always like to do. Nine snares, four tenors, four rudimental bass, two Quads. When they started to play, all of us stood in amazement at the talent we were witnessing and to a man, Goosebumps started to happen. Right then, I knew "WE'RE BACK!"

When we gathered upstairs to prepare for the show, I could see everyone really starting to get excited. Then Vern allowed us another opportunity to relive our past. We gathered in the middle of the room, put our hands on each other's shoulders and sang the Corps Song. In all my times of being an Optimist and singing that song, it never sounded so good and I don't believe it was ever sung with as much passion.

Our performance electrified the throng of people gathered to watch. It felt like we were at Nationals again, except this time, no one booed. And one person yelled out the magical slogan, "GO, GO GREEN MACHINE." For me, that was the best but as we left the room to a standing ovation I heard one guy say, in a choked up voice, "I never thought I would ever get to hear that sound again." I guess that's what this alumni thing is all about.

In 1968, as we headed to Kingston to go after our 11th consecutive National title, someone had put a sign in the bus to help motivate us. They probably had no idea how much meaning that thought would have to this very day. It went something like this: "Though we are not now that which once moved heaven and earth, that which we are, we are. One equal temper of heroic hearts. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." By the way, as a result of our performance and because my wife was there, not only can I keep my Contra upstairs, now I can even practice upstairs. Thanks guys, for getting me out of the basement.

Optimists Alumni make 1st appearance

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE WILL APPEAR, WITH PHOTOGRAPHS, IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DRUM CORPS WORLD

By: Vern Johansson

The Toronto/Seneca Optimists were last heard from 25 years ago. Now after a quarter century of silence, the Corps is making music again.

The Optimists Alumni Corps was formed 6 months ago to celebrate the existence of Canada's most successful competitive Junior Drum & Bugle Corps.

In their 20 years of existence, the Optimists captured 13 National titles (including 11 in a row from 1958 to 1968), were DCI Finalists in 1976 & '77 and captured the U.S. Open title in 1977.

The Optimists Alumni Corps recently made its first appearance to a packed house of former members and friends of the Corps. It was a beautiful evening of fun and nostalgia, which started with a BBQ and included the Corps performance, a Silent Auction fundraiser and an induction ceremony for 6 new members of the Optimists Hall of Fame.

The Alumni drumline set up to the buzz of the crowd and laid out a poly-rhythmic street beat to usher in the hornline. The drumline featured 10 snares, 5 tenors, 5 bass and 2 quads. The 38 horns entered under the direction of Drum Major, Vern Johansson and the corps performed 4 numbers plus an encore of material from the 1960's.

The Corps is performing a Tribute to the music of Col. Truman Crawford, who was our principle arranger through most of the 1960's.

There were many misty eyes in the crowd as the days of past glory were recalled vividly in song. One former member was overheard commenting: "There's a sound I never thought I'd hear again."

As a result of this performance, 6 more people signed on and joined us for our monthly rehearsal the next day.

Horns are instructed by Kevin Mathew, an enthusiastic young man who is well versed in the ways of modern brass technique and is patient enough to teach a bunch of old geezers. Horn instruction is also provided by Barry Bell (the man who started the Optimists in 1958) and Ray Roussel (former baritone star and corps music arranger). All of these gentlemen also play in the line. We also hope to organize guest instruction from former Optimists, Wayne Dillon and Dave MacKinnon sometime in the future.

The drum line, which is already threatening to be the best ensemble in Canada, is ably instructed by former members, Bob Cook, Doug Bass and Lorne Ferrazzutti (who was the original drum instructor of the Corps).

Corps management consists of Corps Director, Dick Brown, Business Manager, Clare Reid, Corporation manager, Henry Beben, Equipment Manager, John Gilberds, Financial Operations Manager, Brian Byrne. The founders of the Alumni Corps are Vern Johansson, Ric Brown, Mhairi Cumming and George Wright.

Upcoming performances include the Corps' 45th anniversary reunion picnic, Sunday, Sept. 14 and a feature performance at the Annual G.A.S. convention in Hamilton, Ont. May 1, 2004.

We would like to publicly acknowledge the tremendous support we have received in getting the Corps started. It just goes to prove that the drum corps activity is truly fraternal. The United Alumni Corps of Simcoe, Ontario provided us with a truckload of equipment. We also received equipment and enthusiastic encouragement from Mighty St. Joe's Alumni Corps of LeRoy, N.Y., The Lakeshore Brassmen of Port Dover, Ontario, St. John's Drum Corps of Brantford, Ont. and DCA finalists, the Kingston Grenadiers of Kingston, Ont. Without your kind support, we'd all be blowing hot air and air drumming.

The Optimists Alumni Corps is open to anyone who would like to celebrate Canadian Drum Corps of the past. We rehearse on the last Sunday of each month at the Royal Canadian Legion, 1395 Lakeshore Blvd., West, Toronto, starting at 1 p.m. During the summer we will rehearse on the Sunday before the last Sunday of each month to avoid rehearsals on long weekends. If you'd like to join in, contact Corps Director Dick Brown: rl.brown@sympatico.ca or Vern Johansson at: VERNjohansson@aol.com Or if you'd like to book the corps for a concert performance contact Business Manager, Clare Reid at: clarereid@rogers.com

The Optimists are very proud to be a part of the fastest-growing activity in the drum corps universe; Alumni Corps.

WORDS FROM THE PAST:

From time to time, we will be reprinting some of the best literature from past issues of GCC. The first reprint is in this issue. Doug McPhail's wonderful tale of Ulysses on the Line. Hope you enjoy it as much as I did in "rediscovering" this timeless classic.

UPCOMING REHEARSALS

Please note the following dates for our upcoming rehearsals. We are abandoning the last Sunday of the month due to long weekends throughout the summer. We will resume our regularly scheduled rehearsals in October.

Sunday, July 20th at the Legion, 1-5 p.m. (originally announced for July 27th. Unfortunately, the Legion is unavailable, so we're moving to the 20th).

Sunday, August 24th, at the Legion, 1-5 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 7th, at the Legion, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 13th, 1-5 p.m. (LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED BY JULY REHEARSAL)

Sunday, Sept. 14th, Performance at 45th anniversary reunion picnic.

Saturday, Sept. 20th, Performance at York Lions reunion, between 1-3 p.m. (TO BE DECIDED AT JUNE 22 REHEARSAL).

UPCOMING TUNES

Currently learning: Battle Cry of Freedom (1967)

Next up: Big Bad Bill (1965)

By the way, if anyone would like a cd of all the tunes we're playing, as the Optimists originally performed them, please see Vern.

NO, WE DON'T HAVE TO WEAR SHORTS.

Henry Beben, who has helped organize every Optimists reunion since the beginning of time, has informed us that Scout House would like to perform a number with us at our 45th anniversary reunion picnic on Sept. 14th. We have decided to play Auld Lang Syne together. The music for this arrangement is very simple and you'll find it posted on our Website:

www.optimists-alumni.org

This arrangement is also played at all G.A.S. reunions in mass brass ensemble so we can join in there as well.

CORPS DOES BOFFO BOX OFFICE.

The first performance ever by the Optimists Alumni Corps helped fuel a record attendance for our annual BBQ/Silent Auction/Hall of Fame get-together. As a result, the Corps grossed \$6,000 (expenses, etc. are being weeded out by our financial experts, Brian Byrne and George Wright.) This will allow us to purchase some much needed drum equipment (stands for all drums). We originally thought we'd have to use the funds to buy new drums but thanks to Mhairi Cumming (see below) we are now in great shape for equipment. I would like to thank EVERYONE who contributed to making this night such a success. We do have the hardest working executive in the Alumni Corps activity. Special thanks go to Henry Beben and Ron Chong who went toe-to-toe on bidding for the Truman Crawford framed poster and music, donated by Barry Bell. When the dust settled, Beben walked off with the goodies and was lighter in the bank balance by \$1,000.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH: MHAIRI CUMMING

The Corps owes Mhairi a HUGE debt of gratitude for securing us a complete set of drums. Mhairi heard that the Cardinals of Precious Blood were ready to donate their equipment to any Corps that was registered as a charitable corporation. Thanks to Henry Beben, we were well on our way to achieving that status and Mhairi worked with Henry to come up with the necessary documentation to secure this equipment for us. On Thursday, June 12th, Mhairi and Ric Brown spent the whole day picking up all this equipment and delivering it to our storeroom at the Legion. Not only did we get a whole load of snares, tenors, quads and bass drums, we got a bunch of extra drumheads, 4 tympanis, cymbals and keyboards. We also picked up an additional 13 horns! Without Mhairi's devotion to the Optimists, none of this would have happened. When you see her, please say "THANKS!"

G.A.S. ATTACK.

Our performance at the 20th anniversary of G.A.S. (Great Alliance of Seniors) has been confirmed. All events will take place at the downtown Ramada Inn, Hamilton. The Reunion starts on Friday evening, April 30th with a big beer bash. Our performance will happen on Sat. afternoon, May 1.

Tickets for the full weekend of activities are \$120.00 Cdn. Or if you'd just like to attend the beer bash & Sat. concert, the price is \$45.00. (I have enquired if performers have to pay for Sat. & have not yet received an answer. I'll keep you posted). If you'd like further information re: hotel bookings, etc. see Vern. This should be a great show. We are the featured attraction. Other alumni corps include: The Hawthorne Caballeros, Reilly Raiders, Skyliners, our very good friends, The United Alumni of Simcoe, Ont., Preston Scout House and the Audubon Bon Bons chorus. More will be added.

OPTIMISTS 45TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION PICNIC

Our next big show is at our own reunion picnic, Sunday, Sept. 14th, 12 noon until the memories run their course. It all happens at the Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Stouffville, Ont. Pack a picnic lunch, suntan lotion and your kids, grandkids, and other family members who'd enjoy seeing you strut your stuff, and prepare for a great day. The entrance fee for Corps members is \$35.00 (\$15.00 off the regular price). Please remember that proceeds from this event will come back to us. There will also be a great, nostalgic surprise gift item and an appearance by Preston Scout House Alumni Corps. For more information and updates, see Henry Beben or Joe Gianna, or Len Perrin, or Bob Brown, or Vern Johansson, or Phil Hennings or Warren Mills.

6 ADDED TO HALL OF FAME.

The Hall of Fame Committee was pleased to induct 6 new members into the Hall on May 31st. The scene was set by some terrific introductory remarks honoring the achievements of the 6 men. Barry Bell's remarks about Al Baggs were particularly poignant as was the presentation to Mr. Baggs' widow, Gladys. The new members for 2003 are: Mr. Al Baggs, Mr. Al Miller, Mr. Henry Beben, Mr. Ray Roussel, Mr. Mark DeCloux and Mr. Doug MacKenzie. They join Jim Patten, Don Daber, Peter Byrne, Barry Bell, Lorne Ferrazzutti, Gord O'Halloran, Ron Kaiser, Wayne Dean, Joe Gianna, Al Tierney and Randy Cochrane.

We are now accepting nominations for next year's Hall of Fame induction. If you have someone you wish to nominate, please put it in writing and give it to Vern or Ric Brown or Mhairi Cumming or George Wright.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN.

Jim Stevenson has come to us with a proposal. He'd like to organize a small corps--- approx. 12 horns and 4 or 5 drummers---to perform O'Canada at business meetings throughout the year. These meetings occur about every three months and the Corps will be paid for this task. The players will back up a singer. If you'd like to volunteer for this task see Vern or Jim Stevenson.

GCC CREDITS

Thanks go out to Laurie Brown for all the photos of our first performance. We also thank Don Daber for the inspiration all those many years ago. Editor: Vern Johansson. By the way, if you'd like to write for GCC, let me know. We welcome all new material.

QUICK BITS

Does everyone in the Corps have an Optimists ball cap? We plan on wearing these at our Sept. performance. If you need one, see Henry Beben to order...Sectional practices are a great way to keep the chops in order just ask the drumline or the Mellos or lead and 2nd and 3rd sops.... How do we get to Hamilton in 2004? Practice, practice, practice.... Have you ordered your copy of the Drum Corps Encyclopedias? This amazing project published by Drum Corps World will soon have Vol. 2 printed. That volume includes a 4-page feature on the history of the Optimists and if you order now (see attached order form) the Corps makes 10 bucks per order but hurry the offer ends early July. Just send the attached form to DCW with your payment (U.S. dollars). Make sure you use the form as it identifies us as the recipient of the 10 buck credit....Several of our new members have requested the lyrics to the Corps Song (sung to the tune Meadowlands)

*On March on,
Our battles not yet won,
We'll March and sing,
Defeat shall never come.
March on.
Pride of our nation,
Champions in competition
Arms swinging, bugles ringing, drums resounding,
Legs lifted high come swiftly pounding
Upon the ground.
The Optimists by name,
The Green Machine by fame.
Colour and splendour only adds to our endeavour,
Marching and music done in glorious fashion,
Pride and perfection is our passion.
Optimists Drum Corps,
Of thee (of thee),
We sing (we sing)
We will march on forever.*

WE'VE GOT MAIL

Hey Terry. Did Karl Bossert get in touch with you? I sent him all the info. Without getting too maudlin or gushy, I just have to say once again what an absolute pleasure it was to see you. Thank you for the gift of mouthpieces-this is most generous. Your presence at our first performing weekend contributed largely to its success....Barry Bell.

Morning Barry: I met up with Karl at my favourite beachside spot. We put away a couple of pounds of shrimp and got to know each other. It seems he drives right by my place to see his daughter so he's going to be stopping by to see the shop and of course get a personal mouthpiece fitting. I am very flattered that you think my personal presence at the rehearsal had such a positive effect on the guys. I know that I sure enjoyed it and am already looking forward to September. It was also a treat to see you playing. March on. Terry Warburton.