



Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year

The Optimists Alumni Drum & Bugle Corps wish you and your families the best for the holiday season and the New Year.



The Corps performing
at the Jeju International
Wind Ensemble Festival on
Jeju island.



IN THIS ISSUE...

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| PERFORMANCES PARADES | DIRECTOR'S REPORT | 3 | WE REMEMBER: | 20 |
| Toronto 2 | Grimsby 2 | AGM REPORT | Brian Byrne, Peter Coward, | |
| Hamilton 3 | Guelph 4 | SOUTH KOREA TRIP | Fred Lombard, Tom May, | |
| Woodstock 4 | Streetsville 5 | ARTICLE - JOHN BYRNE | Ronn Prokop | |
| Brantford 5 | Caledonia 6 | END OF SEASON BBQ | and Gladys Baggs. | |
| Port Dover 6 | Kitchener 16 | SPECIAL RECOGNITION | HOW TO REACH US | 24 |
| Holiday Parades 18 | | | | |

DOWNLOAD FULL COLOUR ISSUES OF GCC FROM OUR WEBSITE: www.optimists-alumni.org

Toronto - March 29. St. Patrick's Day Parade.

This was our "return" to the Toronto St. Pat's Parade. We had stopped doing the parade in 2011 because it was too long a march for our members. We returned this year riding on a trailer. It was much easier and much more fun! Barry Woods, wearing a leprechuan costume, preceded the corps.



Old City Hall in the background.

Barry Woods.

Grimsby - April 1. Performing in exhibition at a drumline competition at Blessed Trinity High School in Grimsby.

We introduced our 2017 show at an Ontario Drumline competition in Grimsby. Time constraints made this an abbreviated show.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Corps Director, Mike Lang



WE HAVE always been performers but I believe we are more aware of our audiences now than at any point before. So whether it's parades, park and bark or staging it's all focused on getting that interaction we both are looking for. It's a direction we will continue to pursue in 2018.

Christmas and the holidays are a time to be thankful to all those who contribute so much throughout the year. The Optimists Alumni have a lot to be thankful for this year. First and foremost our members and their families. We appreciate all the extra efforts made to get out to rehearsals, performances and this year our first really international trip to South Korea. A special thanks to Doug and Yun (Go) Darwin for all the countless hours involved in planning and guiding us on our first successful overseas tour including extra travel and personal expenses to make it a reality. Thanks to our returning Drum Major Jackie Nicholls and our wonderful guest dancer Salima Ladak for enhancing our shows in South Korea.

Thanks to all of those who supported us behind the scenes such as Bob Carell (website), David Johns and Eric McConachie (photography) and our helpers on tour Deb Bruce, Deb LaPointe, Doug Nicholls, Glenda Roblin and Jim Hyslop (hope I didn't miss anybody).

To all of our former members and supporters who still stay in touch and continue to encourage our path forward. Finally to our instructional staff, Doug Darwin, Peter Jones and Dave MacKinnon for all their guidance and patience.

May the Christmas season bring you and yours all the joy and warmth you deserve. We look forward to seeing you all again in the New Year.

Annual Meeting

Our 2017 season officially ended in September with our Annual Meeting on September 24 and the election of our Board of Directors.

Our Executive for 2018

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| • Mike Lang | President |
| • Doug Darwin | Vice-President |
| • Matt Davis | Treasurer |
| • Barry Bell | Director at Large |
| • Dave Bruce | Director at Large |
| • Rick Lang | Director at Large |

PERFORMANCES (CONTINUED)

Hamilton - April 29. Performing in exhibition at a drumline competition at St Mary's High School.

Our second performance was another shortened show at a drumline competition, this time at St. Mary's High School in Hamilton.



PERFORMANCES (CONTINUED)

Guelph - May 7.

Performing in exhibition at the Ontario Drumline Championships at the University of Guelph.



L-R: Mike Lang and Drum Major Peter Jones with our Award of Recognition.

Woodstock - May 22. Victoria Day Parade

We've been in Woodstock's Victoria Day parade for many years but it's a rather long parade. How nice it is to ride a trailer instead of marching and to be able to play for the crowds as we are going UP hill!! (Breathing can be a challenge when we were marching up a hill!!)



L-R: Doug Roblin, Lorne Ferrazzutti and Judy Ferguson.



Bob Carell.



Liz Dodsworth.



L-R: Joe Gianna, Soo Lee. (walking) Dave Bruce and Keith Dearlove.



L-R: Bob Carell, Heather Hyslop and Doug Roblin.

Streetsville - June 3. The Bread and Honey Festival

This annual event has been held in Streetsville since 1973. This was the Optimists Alumni's first performance in the parade.



Top L-R: Doug Roblin, Rick Lang and Joe Gianna. Far right L-R Soo Lee, Kirstine Hyslop and Barry Bell. Bottom: Doug Darwin.

Brantford - June 3. Canada 150 Community Parade.

This parade was held in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday.



Soo Lee.

L-R: Lorne Ferrazzutti, Judy Ferguson, David Bruce, Brian Collingdon, Heather Hyslop and Joe Gianna.

Caledonia - July 1. Canada Day Parade.

It was raining when we started and cleared as the morning and we rolled on.



L-R: Walking - Keith Dearlove. On board, horns - Mike Lang, Barry Bell, Heather Hyslop, Doug Roblin, Soo Lee Rick Lang. Drums - Ric Brown.

Port Dover - July 1. Canada Day Parade.

This was our Second Canada Day Parade in Port Dover. The first time many of us arrived and found all of the streets closed for the parade. Making our way to the starting location was a challenge. This year we were smart and found a back entrance to Port Dover. It was SOOOO much easier!



Centre: Yun Darwin and her volunteers prepared a lunch because of the same-day parades. Hit the spot.



Keith Dearlove entertaining kids along the parade route. This is so much fun to watch.



L-R: Doug Roblin, Soo Lee, Heather Hyslop and Rick Lang.



L-R: Barry Bell, Heather Hyslop, Doug Roblin and Soo Lee.



L-R: Drums - Ric Brown, Lorne Ferrazzutti, Judy Ferguson. Horns - Rick Lang, Bob Carell and walking, Dave Bruce.

Seoul and Jeju, South Korea. August 3 - 15

In August the Optimists Alumni Drum Corps spent two weeks performing in South Korea. You might be asking how this happened, I know that we are! How did it happen? To answer that question we have to look at our history.

(Originally published in the November, 2017 issue of Drum Corps World)

DURING A BEER tasting in the spring of 2002 a group of former Optimists were discussing the state of the world. Somebody mentioned that the 2004 G.A.S. convention (Great Alliance of Seniors, a group of drum corps veterans) would be held in Hamilton, a mere 40 miles from Toronto. The suggestion was made that we gather together a group of former members, create an alumni corps, go to Hamilton, perform at G.A.S. then disappear, never to be seen again! That was the plan. None of us expected that we would not only be active but, 15 years after our beginnings, we would be a hit! Life unfolds in strange and mysterious ways.

As with most alumni corps we started with a bang. We showed up at the 2004 G.A.S. show wearing the black pants, golf shirts and baseball hats that most corps start with. At that point we had about 50 brass and 30 percussion, All of our instruments had been borrowed, mostly from Simcoe United Alumni.

By 2007, when we performed at our first DCA Alumni show, we owned our own instruments, had purchased green, cadet style uniforms, were doing a full field drill and had added a 10 person color guard; however, we were down to 36 horns and 16 percussion. As happened so often with other Alumni Corps, attrition had set in. Losing members is not a major concern if there is a ready pool of replacements; however, in our case it would have been easier to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. By the time 2014 rolled around we performed at the DCA Alumni Spectacular with only 18 horns, 13 percussion and 4 in the color guard. Like so many other alumni corps, we were disappearing.



Optimists Alumni G.A.S. (2004)



Optimists Alumni, DCA Alumni Spectacular. (2007)

In 2015 we had a performance in May after which we decided to take a break for the summer. In September, at our annual meeting, we addressed the situation. Given our size as well as the physical limitations of some of our members it was clear that we could not continue doing a field show. Having said that, we had a core group of members who still wanted to perform. As a result, there was a reluctance to call it quits. So, what can you do with a dozen horns and 4 drums? Our solution was to reinvent ourselves.

Barry Woods, one of our members, regularly attended the Philadelphia Mummers Parade which is held each year on the first of January. Over the years he had purchased a number of Mummers' costumes. Barry also played bass drum with Prime

Time Brass who had used his costumes during Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans. This gave us a plan. We replaced our cadet uniforms with Mummers costumes, dumped all of our old music and set sail for the New World. Much to the chagrin of some former corps members we left the

world of traditional drum corps and we became entertainers. Our new path would have us play primarily New Orleans style music. We called the show "Party Gras".

All of our G bugles were sold as we moved into the world of Bb! Trumpets in Bb were "in" while our "G" sopranos were out; our "G" mellophones disappeared as we used newer ones in "F". On the bottom end the baritones and contras were replaced by a mix of Bb baritones and Euphoniums. To ensure that our 83 year old members would not be the

oldest things in the corps we added a 120 year old Eb Alto as well as a 100 year old brass sousaphone! We were on a roll.

SOUTH KOREA – SEOUL & JEJU (CONTINUED)

We worked our butts off to learn a new and challenging repertoire. Our first performance arrived and we knew from the response of the audience that the changes, especially the costume change, were a major success. With the cadet uniforms, no matter how well we played, we would be just another good band. With the Mummers costumes people took one look and immediately know that we are not your average drum corps.

In August of 2016 we competed at DCI SoundSport in Indianapolis and we brought home a Gold Medal. Both the audience and the judges loved our new incarnation. We had made a change in the right direction. This brings us back to the tour of South Korea.

DOUg DARWIN, one of our corps directors, and his wife, Yun, have music connections in South Korea, including Jeju, an island off the southern tip of South Korea. Jeju is home to the Jeju International Wind Ensemble Festival, an annual festival that is over 20 years old! In addition to Korean groups they invite musical ensembles from other countries, such as Austria, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Kazakhstan, Macau and Spain. This year the festival wanted to include a group from North America.

Yun and Doug were approached by the organizers of the Jeju festival as well as the organizers of a shorter festival in Seongnam. The organizers visited our website to listen to our music and check out photos of us. They also went to YouTube to watch videos of us performing. They decided to invite us. I am certain that it was our Mummers costumes that closed the deal.

As for the corps, our members still had to discuss the invitation. The majority of our members marched in the days before corps spent the summer touring. As an alumni corps, the farthest we had traveled was about 500 miles. Did we really want to do our first tour after we had become seniors?

Major topics of discussion were things like cost and travel (spending 15+ hours on a plane, each way). Weather was also



Optimists Alumni in our Mummers' costumes.

a concern since the festivals were in August. August temperatures are high and it rains daily so this is probably the worse month for travel to South Korea. In addition, our mummers costumes are extremely hot (remember, they were designed to be worn on January first in Philadelphia!). Other considerations that I remember were the venues in which we would be performing and scheduling.

On Jeju there would be a parade plus about 8 or 9 scheduled performances, sometimes twice in a day. It appeared that deciding whether to accept the invitations might not be easy.

Doug and Yun had anticipated our concerns and had done an excellent job of gathering information and finding ways to take those concerns into account. For example, to simplify travel they had found a non-stop flight from Toronto to Seoul. This would decrease travel time by about 5 hours. In terms of cost for the trip, we would be responsible for our own air fare while the festivals would take care of accommodations and meals. For Seongnam we would perform a couple of times on one day; however, the Jeju Festival lasts 9 days and we would be performing in various locations on the island. That meant that a bus would be required. The festival agreed to supply a bus. What about performing in the heat and humidity? All daytime performances would be in air conditioned concert halls

while evening performances would be outside, near the water, where it would be cooler.

After the initial discussion we had a few weeks to process the information, address new concerns and get questions answered. A key issue was the closing parade on Jeju. The organizers very much wanted us to do the parade in our mummers costumes. We explained that doing so would result in numerous dead bodies along the parade route and this would not be a good thing. After much discussion it was agreed that we could do the parade in our light-weight parade outfits (Hawaiian shirts and shorts); however, we would be expected to wear the mummers for

a closing performance in the evening, after the parade. In the end everyone agreed that this was the opportunity of a lifetime. We decided to travel half way around the world to perform.



WHAT CAN I SAY about the trip? Given that our average age is probably in the high 60s I would say that it was intense. The flight was about 15 hours and we crossed the dateline so we lost a day. When we arrived the temperature was about 95F with humidity of almost 100%. This was definitely NOT Toronto weather! Some of us were wondering “Why are we doing this?”

As part of the tour we had been invited to perform at the Seongnam Music Festival (Seongnam is a “suburb” of Seoul). We arrived in Seoul but immediately got on a bus to go to Seongnam. We had a day off to recover.

On our second day we went to the performance venue, the auditorium at the Seongnam City Hall. We rehearsed two numbers with the massed bands before changing into our parade



Optimists Alumni at Seongnam City Hall.

outfits to perform in the City Hall foyer as the audience arrived. Later we went outside for a sound check then had a brief outdoor rehearsal for the evening show before returning for the massed band numbers. Since rain was a possibility we decided to do the outdoor performance in our parade outfits. After the show we packed up, hopped on the bus and headed to our hotel in downtown Seoul.

In the morning I looked out my window and saw walls of condos and apartment buildings unlike anything I had seen before. On reflection, it made sense. Let me explain. We're Canadians and our whole country is about 4,000 miles from coast to coast and covers almost 4 million square miles; however, the entire population of Canada is only about 35 million. Greater Seoul is the 4th largest city in the world with a population of about 30 million people; however, the physical area is rather small, about 400 square miles or one 10,000th the size of Canada. As with any major city, the only way to accommodate so many people is vertically.

Some of the highlights of the trip

I HAVE TO START OFF off with the Korean people. The first thing I noticed is that the people are kind, respectful and very helpful. Also, the streets of their cities were cleaner than any streets I have ever seen. It really is amazing to be in a city of 30 million and see it so spotless. I think that says a lot about the people.

On our second day in South Korea we visited the Minoo Media Art Museum in Seongnam. None of us were prepared for this experience. Instead of the staid museums to which we have become accustomed, this museum was alive in so many ways. This is really a place that cannot be described; it has to be experienced. Still, I had better try to describe some of it. As an example, there were traditional Korean scrolls as well



Optimists Alumni at the Minoo Media Art Museum (Seongnam, South Korea).

as paintings by famous artists such as Seurat, Van Gogh and Monet that were digitized; however, they were also animated. We could not only see the lilies in the pond but we could watch them move as the fish went swimming by. Or we could look at an ancient scroll and see the dragon on the scroll take flight! There was also a 30 or 40 foot section of video panels showing animated fish and other sea creatures; however, this was not something to look at but something on which to stand and move. And, if one happened to step on one of these creatures it might very well swim off or explode or who knows what. I can't think of any words that adequately describe the enjoyment that each and every one of us found in this museum.

Although we were not in competition, the Jeju Festival also has a competitive component to it. One afternoon the competitors were all under the age of 14. Our audience was composed of these young people, their families and their teachers. Everyone was eager to learn their placing. We performed in exhibition while they were waiting for their results. Jackie Nicholls, our drum major, is an elementary school music teacher and she knew how to work the crowd. The response of this group told us that we had discovered our target audience! I saw my first drum corps show in the 1950s and

SOUTH KOREA – SEOUL & JEJU (CONTINUED)

I have been performing since the 60s. This was certainly one of the most enjoyable and uplifting performances in all of those years.

Another memorable evening was in Gasan-ri Jagunae. There is a tradition on Jeju of Women Divers (Haenyeo); however, they do not dive from cliffs. Rather, they dive for various types of fish. With each dive, Haenyeo plunge up to 30 meters deep and can hold their breath for over three minutes. The average age of these divers is 75 while the oldest, still active diver is 93! These Haenyeo, who also sing and dance, opened the evening's performance. They were followed by the Palencia Conservatory Brass Ensemble (from Spain) while we were the closing act. We started playing and the Haenyeo immediately started dancing in front of us. They swarmed Keith, our sousaphone player, and they danced throughout our entire performance. I have never seen such an uninhibited, fun-loving group in my life. Dave, our photographer had trouble getting through the crowd to take photos but the attached shot will give you an idea of how it began.

Certainly a major highlight was the response that we got from our audiences. Everywhere we performed we were very well received; however, there is one show that really stands out.

In the audience at that show were members of the Kangwon Myoungjin School Band for the Blind. While the band members could not see the Mummer's costumes they could hear our music. After our performance one member of the group was so touched by the music that they started to cry. The person wanted autographs and they still had tears in their eyes when they arrived at our dressing room. Unfortunately, by the time they were led to our dressing



Doug Darwin with member of the Kangwon Myoungjin School Band for the Blind.



School children enjoying the Optimists Alumni while they waited for the results of their competition.



Haenyeo dancing as Optimists play.

room most of us had left (the costumes are so hot that we always got out of them as quickly as possible). The good news is that some of us were still there. The photo shows the band member with Doug Darwin, who plays our drum set. We play to bring enjoyment to others; however, this one instance, to have our music touch someone so deeply, made the whole trip worthwhile.

How to choose from so many experiences. I guess that I could talk about a bunch of Canadian seniors trying to sit cross-legged on the floor for a traditional Korean meal. I won't mention the challenges that came at the end of the meal when we had to get up. Or I might say

something about sharing a hotel with a traditional band from Germany. Of course, you might have guessed that they played for us, we played for them and we played together before we got into karaoke and 4 kegs of beer. Then, again, perhaps I've said enough. "Gamsahamnida" (Thank you, in Korean).



Salima Ladak dancing with her silk flags.

DURING THE TRIP IN SOUTH KOREA



Debbie and Dave Bruce celebrate their wedding anniversary with Corps members providing music. Left with horn: Barry Bell - Father of the Bride.



Just after our afternoon performance, before the parade to the evening concert venue. The bands from Bavaria and Spain also played – lots of dancing and good cheer. We did not march due to the heat, however Barry Woods (far left) was "volunteered" to represent us in the parade.



There were many murals throughout Jeju. The city was very clean. Both pedestrian (no j-walking and wait for the light) and drivers (no speeding) obeyed the traffic laws.



The hourly changing of the guard at the National Palace in Seoul, South Korea. The National Palace Museum is also here.



On a shopping day in Seoul, Doug Darwin, Laura and Lindsay Weiler talk to two women in traditional dress greeting tourists.



Members of the Bavarian band.



Keith Dearlove enjoying a local delicacy.



Jackie Nicholls enjoying a break with some fans.



L-R: Kimiko Yamada who joined us from her home in Japan. Brian Collingdon, "Gold Mirror Man," Doug Roblin and Soo Lee.



An evening of refreshments and karaoke exchange with the band from Bavaria in a meeting room in our hotel.

1971: MY YEAR WITH THE OPTIMISTS – By John Byrne

I HAD BEEN in Drum Corps since I was about 14 or 15 years old. I had reluctantly followed in the footsteps of my older brothers, David and Brian. I say reluctantly because I hadn't had an interest in it at all. I think it was also because it was about to be the first time my life had been structured. Prior to this, I was just a kid, I could basically (within Mom & Dad's rules) go where I wanted and do what I wanted. Joining Drum Corps meant that now I had to go to practices twice a week, practice at home every day, and over the summer go to parades and completions!! It didn't sound like fun to me!!

But my Mom insisted and so I went! I got hooked almost immediately. I remember attending my first practice, when I didn't even know how to blow into a horn! The teaching part of the practice was over and the Corps proceeded to go outside and form a semi-circle. I was told to just stand in the semi-circle with the others and observe. The Corps then began to mark time (which I could do) and started running through the show. Man! What a feeling, it was awesome and cool!! Even though I wasn't playing anything, I suddenly felt a part of something bigger than me.

Fast forward 5 years and I was a seasoned pro. Two corps from St Catharines, Grantham and the Denis Morris Majestics, had amalgamated at the end of 1965 to become The Chessmen. The Chessmen performed until 1968 but folded at the end of that year and I went on with my life. I had finished college and began my career in Local Government administration and left Drum Corps behind.

That was until my brother Peter called me to see if I might be interested in playing for the Toronto Optimists in 1971. For those who may not know, the Optimists were the top Drum Corps in Canada and one of the top Corps in North America. The Optimists had won 11 Canadian Championships in a row a few years prior and it was a Corps that my brothers David and Brian had played for too. I more or less became a mid season addition to the Corps as the season had already begun when I joined.

I had no idea what a treat it would be playing for the Optimists. It was such a strong organization, there was so much talent on and off the field, great instructors, great management and a legendary history. It was a down year for them but a down year for The Optimists would be a fantastic year for anyone else. For a few years Corps had been struggling and, to cope, they had been using over age players. Optimists had complained to no avail. Finally, Opti joined in. I already knew a few of the over agers who were coming to the Optimists – people like George Wright, and Bob Burman who were great players. I decided to join them.

As soon as I stepped into the line (the horn line), I could feel that spirit of excellence that drive for perfection. As I recall there wasn't much chit chat about anything other than how to do what we were doing better. They were good, really really good!!! This was a very new experience for me.

As the season went on, the progress of the Corps was tracked inside the rear door of the equipment truck. You could clearly see that we were improving with every passing week and we were closing the gap with the first place corps, De La Salle, the arch enemy of The Optimists for many years. As good as we were getting it was clear that catching up to Del was going to be a challenge, they clearly had an edge in manpower and talent. But we soldiered on.

It was my privilege to march with then rookies Wayne Dillon and Mark Decloux who would later become soloists for Optimists. Subsequent to that Wayne would end up becoming the horn instructor for the Garfield Cadets. They placed me in the middle of the squad to help steer me around in the drill (and possible to drown out my horn playing!!) and we got better and better. I like to think I was the one who influenced Wayne and Mark to become great horn players

I recall one specific incident that took place at an afternoon rehearsal before a show. We were going through the Off the Line, Victory at Sea. We had gone through the drill and were about to return to the starting line when Horn Instructor Paul Thompson stopped us, the first and second sopranos (there were 12 to 15 of us at the time). As the rest of the Corps sauntered back to the starting line, Thompson directed us to

The photo was taken at the 1958 Ice Capades in Toronto.



THE OPTIMIST JUNIOR DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS, known as "The Optimists," is sponsored by the Optimist Club of Toronto. They have been in operation for several years as a parade corps and in 1957 took first place in all stand-still contests. This included the Kiwanis Music Festival, the London Music Festival, Waterloo Music Festival and the Canadian championship at Galt, Ontario, Can.

This year The Optimists are moving into the M & M class with a greatly expanded

PAGE SIX

1971: MY YEAR WITH THE OPTIMISTS – By John Byrne (CONTINUED)

play several bars of the Victory at Sea. As we did the entire Corps who had been walking back to the starting line suddenly stopped in their tracks and turned to listen. I don't think they had ever heard us play alone before and they seemed struck by how good and tight we sounded. Several seasoned pros acknowledged how good we sounded.

It was only a brief moment but it was an acknowledgement from the Corps, that we did matter, that we were good and that the parts we played as first and second sopranos only made the Leads and rest of the horn line sound even better. It mattered a great deal to me.

The summer drew on and we approached we continued our rise to the top. We got to be really good and I got drawn into the intensity that is The Optimists. There was lots of hard work and lots of fun.

ONE of the highlights of that summer came when we were marching off after one retreat. We had formed up in parade formation with the mellophones right behind us. Directly behind me was Bob Burman! I remember specifically that as we started to march off the ranks closed and the bell of Burman's horn was about 2 inches from the back of my head. I remember because it was the loudest sound I have ever heard, it sounded like the horn of a Canadian Pacific freight train! It was so loud that I couldn't even remember what song we were supposed be playing! I was blowing into my horn but I couldn't hear what was coming out!! If anyone was watching close, they probably would have seen the feathers of

my plume standing straight out!' I could do nothing but just start laughing.

Finally it was the Nationals and I knew it would be my last show I ever participated in for the rest of my life and I wasn't going to be the cause of a loss. I admit it got to me. I remember being in that small gym before we performed, the lights turned low to allow us to focus on the task ahead. I remember Thompson giving one of his inimitable pep talks and then he tried to lighten the mood as it was very intense. Some of the guys who were aging out talked about what this show meant to them. I couldn't speak I was focused on hitting that field and doing the absolute best performance of my life—a perfect performance. We sang the Corps song and then marched to the field in silence.

As we stood on the line readying ourselves for the opening fanfare of Victory at Sea. I was in the zone. Every step I took and every note I played that night was the very best I had to offer in my mind I performed a perfect show.

As the final strains of San Francisco drifted off into the stadium. I knew the whole Corps put on a great performance. We didn't win, we came second. But we made it very close and Del was certainly looking over their shoulder for us. More importantly I did what I set out to do.

Postscript: I am sure my experience isn't unique to The Optimists and although the experience was only a few months, the passion for excellence lasted a lifetime and impacted everything I did in my career.

It was first public performance for the Toronto Optimists in their new, green uniforms.

CHAMPIONS TO INVADE M & M FIELD WITH EXCITING NEW SHOW



corps, new uniforms, new music, a most exciting drill and the best of instructors. The new uniform consists of emerald green blouses, black trousers with white trim, pearl shakos with green trim, chrome fittings and white plumes.

There has been a rumor around Ontario that The Optimists have combined forces with Danforth Crusaders. Such is not the case. Danforth's very capable instructors made a change to The Optimists corps and quite naturally some of the boys came with them. The present

enrollment is 51 and this includes some bandmen from several corps as well as most of the original "Opti-Corps." They will field a 44-man corps including a 7-man color guard. It is hoped that many of the corps' U.S. friends will be able to see it in action, not only in Canada, but across the Border as well, this coming season.

Anyone interested in contacting the Corps should write to Al Baggs, Corps Commander, 1 Heath St., E., Toronto, Ontario, Can.

May, 1958 — ON PARADE

End of Season Celebration - August 21. Hosted by Bernadette and Barry Woods

An end of season BBQ was hosted by Barry and Bernadette Woods. Barry, Doug and Yun are also on the Board of Northstar so this party combined Optimists Alumni members with Northstar members and their families. The Optimists, directed by Dave McKinnon, played their show. A big **Thank You** to Barry and Bernadette!



Our hosts Bernadette and Barry Woods.



L-R: Dave McKinnon, Dave Bruce, Brian Collingdon and Doug Darwin.



Salima Ladak.



Brooklyn.



L-R: Scott Woods, Sue Meyers and Matt Davis.



Dave McKinnon directing our last "non parade" performance. The shirts and shorts were our alternative performance costumes for South Korea.

END OF SEASON BBQ (CONTINUED)



L-R: Debi Lapointe, Margaret Gianna and Kirstine Hyslop.



L-R, Front: Sue Oswald, Kathleen Gander and Matt Siena. Back: Kirstine Hyslop, Jim Hyslop, Jake and Tom Oswald.



L-R: Front: Laura Weiler, Soo Lee, Liz Dodsworth and Lindsay Weiler. Back: Rick Lang, Bob Carell and Mike Lang.



L-R: Lorne Ferrazzutti, Glenda and Doug Roblin.



L-R: Mrs Yi, Yun Darwin and Patrick Yi.



L-R: Joe Gianna, Dave Bruce, Barry Woods and Doug Darwin.



L-R: Salima Ladak, Soo Lee and her daughters, Laura and Lindsay Weiler



L-R: Martine Desaulniers, Lisa Yi, Emily, Brooklyn and Jake.



Happy Birthday wishes to Yun from Bernadette.



L-R: Margaret and Joe Gianna with Bob Carell.



Lorne Ferrazzutti and Judy Ferguson.



Soo Lee and Dave McKinnon.



Keith Dearlove and Brooklyn.



Jim Hyslop and Beckett.



L-R: Rick Lang, Doug Roblin, Soo Lee, Kristine Hyslop and Barry Wood.



L-R: Mike Lang, Dave Bruce, Matt Davis and Keith Dearlove.

Kitchener - October 9. Oktoberfest Parade.

This was last event before the Santa Claus parades began. I think that the last time we did the K-W Oktoberfest Parade was 2008. It was another parade that was too long for some of our oldish bodies. This year it was a joy. We rode in style on our trailer and played our hearts out. And the crowd was great and very appreciative. We needed some extra trumpets for this parade so Bob moved from mellophone to trumpet and John McFadden of Midlanders and DOCA joined us on trumpet.



John McFadden and Jackie Nicholls.



L-R: Matt Davis, Kirstine Hyslop, Barry Bell and Keith Dearlove.



L-R: Rabble Rousers Bob Carell John McFadden and Brian Collingdon. (They used to be such nice boys).



DCX - DRUM CORPS XPERIENCE – DON DABER



Don Daber. (1967)

DCX Museum is a new website that is dedicated to Drum Corps. It's purpose is "Celebrating, Honoring and Preserving the history of the drum and bugle corps activity around the world. This virtual museum features information on thousands of drum corps from all eras. Scores, repertoire, photos, historical narrative, and a wide range of collectibles from uniforms to bobbleheads."



1978 album cover.

photographer, publicity guru and Corps Director Don Daber. The Don Daber Gallery will include a biography and samples of his work (photos, record album art, promotional materials, etc). There will also be a link to the



Green Capsule Comments. (1972)



1968 Corps button.

DCX currently includes information on the Toronto Optimists, the Seneca Optimists and the Optimists Alumni. Soon it will include a section on former Optimists

Optimists Alumni website for those who want to look at more of Don's work.

The DCX web address is <http://www.dcxmuseum.org/>

Rochester - September 1. World Drum Corps Hall of Fame – Associate Member

Lorne Ferrazzutti inducted into the Drum Corp Hall of Fame in Rochester New York.

From the Drum Corps Planet website:

Nine individuals from the United States and Canada with a long history of drum and bugle corps activity and experience became Associate members of the World Drum Corps hall of Fame on Friday, September 1, 2017 at the Holiday Inn in Rochester New York.



1965.

Hall of Fame president and Associate Member Committee chair Bob Findley announced the names of those selected for 2017 membership. They are: Dee Darch, Christopher Feist, Lorne Ferrazzutti, Bill Flaker, Deloris Gentile, John Girardi III (deceased), Gail Langan, Frank Rogers and Stephen “Skip” Vargo.

Lorne Ferrazzutti of Burlington Ontario

When Lorne Ferrazzutti taught the Toronto Optimists drum and bugle corps, his drum lines were undefeated in every junior national championship contest from 1959 to 1966, while Optimists were sweeping to 11 consecutive national titles. During that time, he taught six Canadian individual snare drumming champions.

He was a champion snare drummer himself while performing with Toronto Jesters senior drum and bugle corps and was instrumental in the amalgamation of the Jesters and Hamilton Viscounts to form the Canadian Commanders drum and bugle corps. He has been teaching the drum line of the world famous Burlington Teen Tour Band since 1977.



Western Tech. (1955)

He is a charter member of the Toronto Optimists Alumni drum and bugle corps, missing very few practices or performances in more a decade of involvement. He began drumming in the bugle band at Western Tech High School in Toronto in the early 1950s, forming a lifelong friendship with Barry Bell, also an associate member of the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.”

This is great news for a man who has done so much for the world of drum corps in Canada. I'm proud to have been involved in his election to the Hall.

Vern Johansson

Editors note: Barry Bell was inducted in 2006.



Lorne with the Optimists drum Line. (1958)

Acton - November 19

As happened last year, there was a bit of light rain but nothing can stop the Santa Claus Parade! There were community groups and service organizations, colourful bands and performers, public and high school bands, riders on horses – all marching and singing through the middle of town.



Mike Lang "Come and join us!"



L-R: Front row: Ric Brown, Lorne Ferrazzutti and Judy Ferguson. Back row: Rick Lang and Joe Gianna.



L-R: Mike Lang, Matt Davis, Brian Collingdon beside Matt, Soo Lee and Doug Roblin.

Brampton - November 19

The Brampton Santa Claus parade is always great because the crowd is always so enthusiastic. On the other hand, it's a night parade without a lot of ambient light. Trying to get good shots of a moving target can be a challenge for our photographers.



Mike Lang.



Ric Brown "Are we there yet?"

HOLIDAY PARADES (CONTINUED)

Guelph - November 20

Once again we returned to Guelph for the Santa Claus Parade. It brings back memories of the competitive years when we would also do parades in Guelph. The crowd is great and, while waiting to step off, we got to visit with some of our friends from Toronto Signals.



Barry Bell traded his horn for an umbrella. Oddly, most agreed it sounded better.

Lorne Ferrazzutti and Judy Ferguson keeping warm before the parade.

Matt Davis and Kyle Howcroft.

Doug Darwin's December alter ego.

Etobicoke - December 2

It's been 10 years since we last did the Etobicoke Santa Claus Parade and we marched in that one. This year we rode and as usual the crowd was great.



L-R: Ric Brown and Lorne Ferrazzutti. L-R: Heather Hyslop and Liz Dodsworth.

A big shout out to Heather!

IN ADDITION to playing mellophone, Heather has assumed the task of making or obtaining the decorations and decorating our trailer before every parade.

Thank you, very much, Heather. You've done a great job!



Brian Byrne

January 2, 1948 –
March 11, 2017



PRIOR to joining The Toronto Optimists Brian marched with the Grantham Police Boys Band. When Brian joined The Optimists in 1965 he played French Horn. In 1968 the corps dropped their French Horns and he played Mellophone. Brian was the first of the Byrne clan to join the Optimists. He was later joined by his brothers David, John and Peter.

When the Optimist Alumni was formed, Brian joined. Until health issues forced him to resign, he served on the Alumni Board of Directors as Treasurer. In 2005, the corps was in need of a Drum Major. Brian rose to the occasion, took conducting lessons and served as the corps' Drum Major.

Brian was a wonderful human being and the best of friends. He will be missed by all of those who knew him.

Brian was pre-deceased by his brother, Dave, who played contrabass in the Optimists.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Brian.

"We were so blessed to be part of his life and he part of ours. A gentle, funny, classy, brave and loving guy." — Kathy

"Brian was one of the 1st alumni members I met when I joined the corps. He made me feel so welcome and after talking with him I almost felt like an original member from the past. He was a proud member and always had huge words of encouragement." — Mike

"Brian was a fellow that you always looked forward to talking to and being with. His unique humour and personality were a special gift." — Ted

"Brian marched in the Corps a few years after me so I really never knew him until the Alumni Corps started. The first Sunday rehearsal I attended he introduced himself and he knew my name. Brian was a super friendly guy with a great sense of humor. When the Alumni Corps did street parades there were many times that Jason and I would be yakking away, or joking around (being in the last row of horns figuring no one ahead would notice) and there was Brian driving the van right behind us, signaling that he was keeping his eye on us." — Mel

"Brian, I will sincerely miss you, you were always so pleasant and friendly with a wonderful personality. You truly were a very special person who always had a smile and something kind to say." — Karen

"Brian was a super friendly fella. He didn't pass judgment and during his time when the Corps held their practice at Royal Canadian Legion Br 344 he was so respectful of everyone. We shared many chats and laughs. Nice folk like Brian are hard to come by." — Mary

"Want your life to light up?... just have a few minutes with Brian and the world was good again. I will never forget anyone in the Byrne family. Thanks Brian for your friendship." — Jack

"Such a gentle and forgiving guy. Loved his sense of humour and low key, positive approach to life." — David

"Brian: I will always remember a funny line or a few laughs we shared over a drum corps story. Humour is a wonderful gift and I thank you for sharing yours with me. Every time I think of you I will smile." — Vern

"I often think of Brian's rules: If it's not nice, not true or not necessary, don't say it. I'm still trying to master that one." — Bob



L-R: Bob Burman, Brian Byrne and Rick Shearer. 1969.

Peter Coward

PETER Coward was one of the Senior Scouts of the 18th Toronto Scout Troup when the original Scout Band was formed and played a horn in both the Scout Band and the Opti-Corps until around 1957.

When the Band moved to the 157th Troup, Peter's father became one of its earliest horn instructors. Peter's involvement spanned all the early phases including Street Parades, Standstills, Novice and Junior B Contests for the Corps that ultimately evolved into The Optimists.

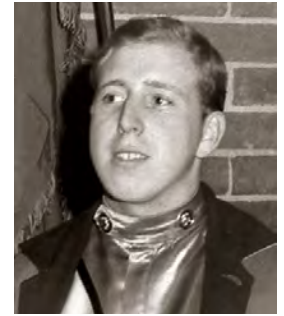


Opticorps in front of Toronto's City Hall, 1956 (now Old City Hall)

Fred Lombard

April 4, 1942 –
August 10, 2017

WHEN Fred came to the Optimists in 1961 he joined the Colour Guard. He carried the Optimists Corps flag. Clearly, he must have loved colour guards because, when he passed, he was still a guard member. In Fred's case he had been a long-time member of the Ajax Branch 322 Legion Colour Guard.



In the early 60s Optimists' flag poles were two sections of about 5 foot aluminum that fitted together. At the top was a 12" heavy, aluminum spear point. These poles were a challenge to handle, especially in high winds. They were also heavy! Our flags were two separate embroidered flags stitched together, with a fringe added, so that you would see the same thing on both sides. The truth is that these flags were too heavy for the poles. A "present arms" involved a quick "snap" and put real stress on the poles. I marched in the guard with Fred in 1963. He would often end the show with his flagpole almost bent in half.

Back in the day Fred's closest friend was Ian Cruickshank. They were still friends when Fred passed.

"I marched with Fred in the colour guard in 1961. He was so enthusiastic about the Corps and how the Guard represented the Corps. He was so proud carrying the Corps flag. Fred was a strong guy and I remember some of the bent pole performances. I'm not sure if we ever lost tenths of points for 'altered equipment'" – David



Fred in the back row, eighth from the left, with the Corps flag.

Tom May

Maureen Bell writes: “Tom spent his younger years as a snare drummer with Grantham in St. Catharines. He joined the Commanders when he aged out. A group of us – Tom and I, Andy and Jackie Henderson, Al and Jean Miller, Chuck and Pat Clutterbuck, John and Bev Snowball, became good friends during that time.

We had a lot of fun – it was a great time in our lives. He especially enjoyed his short time with the Optimists Alumni corps. Tom’s health declined over the past few months which he spent in a long-term care facility in North York. He leaves a daughter Regan, a son Andrew and a step-son Derek.”



Ronn “Skip” Prokop

December 13, 1943

August 31, 2017

Ronn began his drum corps career in Hamilton with a Sea Cadet band. After leaving the Sea Cadets he joined Preston Scout House and played with them for 1 year. In 1960 he joined the Optimists on snare. While drumming with the Optimists Ronn made the time to instruct the drumline of the Optimist Bantams, Toronto Optimists feeder corps. At the end of the 1963 season he left the corps to pursue a career in music, a career in which he was quite successful.

Ronn’s first post-Optimists group was the Riverside Three. Around 1964/65 he co-founded “The Paupers”, a psychedelic rock group. After the group disbanded, Prokop was an in-demand session musician for industry heavyweights including Carlos Santana, Janis Joplin and folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary.

In 1969 Ronn and Paul Hoffert formed Lighthouse, a 13 piece rock orchestra. The band earned an early celebrity admirer; Billy Bob Thornton. In the early 70s, the musician and future Oscar-winning actor was a roadie for the band when they performed in Texas. “He always remembered that moment,” Hoffert said of Thornton’s encounter with Prokop. “The reason that he did was that he just remembered how kind this guy Skip Prokop was. He was just a roadie with the venue and Skip let him play his drums and he never forgot that. He was just a kid, and this is the kind of thing Skip did all the time.”

Ronn left Lighthouse in 1973 but, when they reformed in 1992, he was back. He played with the group until 2014 when health issues forced him to stop.

“He was a very genuine person. What you saw is what you got. He didn’t suffer fools gladly but he was also a really kind person. He really had a huge heart.”

“I was in the drum line with Ronn in 1962 and folk group The Riverside Three. Ronn wrote some of the music for our group and it was a treat to watch and hear the process. However, it was plain to see our little group would be too confining for Ronn.

I was honoured one afternoon to hear him play ‘Independence’ in the basement of his family’s home in New



L-R: Les Siorack, Tom May and David Hayes. (circa 1960)

WE REMEMBER (CONTINUED)

Toronto. Independence is when a different rhythm is played with each hand and foot at the same time and blend together to form one sound. Wow! I could only stare at the floor and listen.” – David



Ronn with members of the Optimists Bantam Corps. 1963



Ronn (left) with Barry Bell. (in London, Ontario, 2011)

Mrs. Gladys Baggs

September 23, 2017

Mrs. Baggs was the wife of Al “Daddy” Baggs, the man who was responsible for the existence of the band that ultimately became the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps. As a member of the women’s auxiliary, she was a long time supporter of both the Toronto Optimists and it’s sponsor, the Optimists Club of Downtown Toronto.



Gladys “Glad” (nee Tapscott) was a wonderful person who will be missed by all who knew her.



Gladys with her husband Alan Baggs.

CORPS SCHEDULE

Please check our website for the current schedule: optimists-alumni.org

Santa Parades 2017

| | | | | |
|----------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|
| Saturday | December 2, 2017 | Etobicoke | Santa Claus Parade | 10:00 am |
|----------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|

Rehearsals 2017-18

| | | | | |
|----------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Saturday | December 16 | Kitchener | | Noon - 4:00 pm |
| Sunday | January 7, 2018 | The Legion Branch 101 – Etobicoke | | Noon - 4:00 pm |
| Saturday | January 20, 2018 | Kitchener | | Noon - 4:00 pm |

Update on our Website: Bob Carell

The website is alive and well. Photos have been viewed almost 2.2 millions times so it seems to be popular.

If you recognize someone in an old photo, know where a photo was taken, or a photo brings back memories, please feel free to share with others by leaving a comment. By the way, the new validation process has been extremely successful at eliminating spam; however, I have discovered that some people are not “following the rules”. If you want to post a comment for a photo be sure to answer the ‘skill-testing’ question. If that question is not answered an assumption is made that the comment is spam and it will not be posted. You can contact me at: Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com



GCC STAFF

Editor: Bob Carell.

Editorial Staff:

David Johns and
Eric McConachie.

Photo Credits:

Bob Carell, Don Daber,
David Johns, Eric McConachie.

Consultant: Don Daber.

A special **thank you** to
all those who contributed to this issue: Mike Lang, John Byrne
and Santa.



WEBSITE

CORRECTIONS: We tried to get everything right.
If not, please let us know: openrd2002@yahoo.ca
Thank you to all those who send photographs.

GCC is published once a year, in December.

Please submit your material to Bob Carell at:
Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com in one of the following formats:

E-mail. A Microsoft Word document, saved as “Rich Text
Format” or “text only”.

Or mail to Bob Carell:
1407 - 3050 Dufferin Street, Toronto, Ontario M6B 4G3

E-Photos should be sent to: Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com



Just off the bus to start a shopping spree in downtown Seoul.

If your photos were taken using a digital
camera, please save them to your hard
drive then email the unedited photos.

PRINTS: contact Bob Carell at:
Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com.

NOTE: The editor may need to modify
your stories for space allowances. We will
make every effort to retain the spirit and
intent of your submission.