



Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter

This publication honours and continues the tradition started by Don Daber in 1960.
Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter is published quarterly.

The Toronto Optimists History website celebrates:

The Toronto Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps 1958 - 1975 | The Seneca Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps 1976 - 1978

Published by Bob Carell. Please direct inquiries to: Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com
A PDF version is available on the website: www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

WELCOME TO THE SECOND ISSUE of the new Toronto Optimists History – Newsletter.

Our first issue was very well received and we hope that all of you will continue to enjoy learning the history of The Toronto Optimists and later Seneca Optimists. In this edition we are publishing Chapters three and four of Colin's book. Chapter three focuses on the coming

together of members of Opti-Corps and the Danforth Crusaders to create a new corps, The Toronto Optimists. The focus of Chapter four is on The Optimists first year in competition.

This issue also contains some memories of 1957 and 1958 that were submitted by Phil Hennings. As an added feature we are reprinting an article by Colin Hedworth about the Optimists' drum line. The article, which covers the years 1957 through 1962, was originally published in a 1962 issue of GCC (Volume 2, #6).



Phil Hennings, Drum Major (1958)

ISSUE 2 APRIL 2021

In this issue

- 2 Introduction
- 3 Website trivia
- 3 Recollections
From Barry Bell
- 4 What's new on the
Toronto Optimists
History website



- 6 FEATURE ARTICLE
Optimists Drumline
from 1957 to 1962
- 11 "From Toronto...
The Optimists!"
Chapters 3 and 4
- 34 Memories:
Phil Hennings
- 37 Don Daber
Gravestone
- 38 We Remember
- 39 We Got Around
- 40 The Last Page

LOOK FOR A PDF VERSION ON OUR WEBSITE: www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

Contribute to your newsletter

Send your suggestions, stories or articles to Bob: toronto_optimist@rogers.com or David: openrd2002@yahoo.ca

Remember "Sadie Mau Mau"? Here is an opportunity for you to start a by-line article in the newsletter.

We plan on publishing four issues each year: January, April, July and October.

IMPORTANT: The Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter is only available in Acrobat (PDF) format.

We got around...

Check out page 39. EACH YEAR the corps traveled in Ontario, Quebec and the United States. Each issue of the Newsletter will have this map showing all the destinations (red dots) for a given year; however, two locations will not be named below the map.

If you are the first to correctly name the two missing locations and the month the corps was there, you will receive an 11x14 Commemorative Corps Poster celebrating the Corps and the NEW Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter.

E-mail you answers to Bob at: toronto_optimist@rogers.com



Website trivia: April - Issue 2

The answers will be found on the Toronto Optimists History website:
TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

1. Name the drum majors for the Toronto Optimists in 1960?

HINT: There was more than one.

2. In what year were the Toronto Optimists presented with the City of Toronto flag?

E-mail your answers to Bob:
toronto_optimist@rogers.com



RECOLLECTIONS

Submit your recollection to: toronto_optimist@rogers.com

Submitted by **Barry Bell**

Timing is everything... the real story of how Opti began.

Late 1957, Lorne and I had come to the realization that for lack of strong support from the school, our Danforth Crusaders were not going to achieve the success that we had hoped for.

Driving home one afternoon, passing a park, I heard drums and horns playing. Wondering who it was, I parked the car and walked into the park. Up ahead under the spreading branches of a large tree were a bunch of teen-age kids having a jam-session. Maybe three or four drums and nine or ten horns. Having fun.

I seem to remember Jim Patten, Harry Clark, Henry Beben among others. I asked if they were with a drum corps and was told they were members of Opti-Corps. They advised that they practiced at a school on Jarvis street, they had a sponsor (Optimist Club) and Al Baggs, their director was looking for instructors. I contacted Al, we had a meeting. Guess what? We both wanted the same thing – a really excellent drum corps! We had the instructors – he had the sponsor, we both had members, so the deal was made.

The important thing to ponder is this... If that group of kids had not made a racket at precisely the exact time that I had been driving within earshot... ?



*Barry Bell, Drum Major
(Canadian Nationals, 1960)*



Website UPDATE: What's happening with TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

The Toronto Optimists History website went live in August of last year and people have slowly been discovering it. The reports that I have received indicate that they are enjoying what they find, especially the new material.

> Changes

Some changes have occurred since the last issue was published.

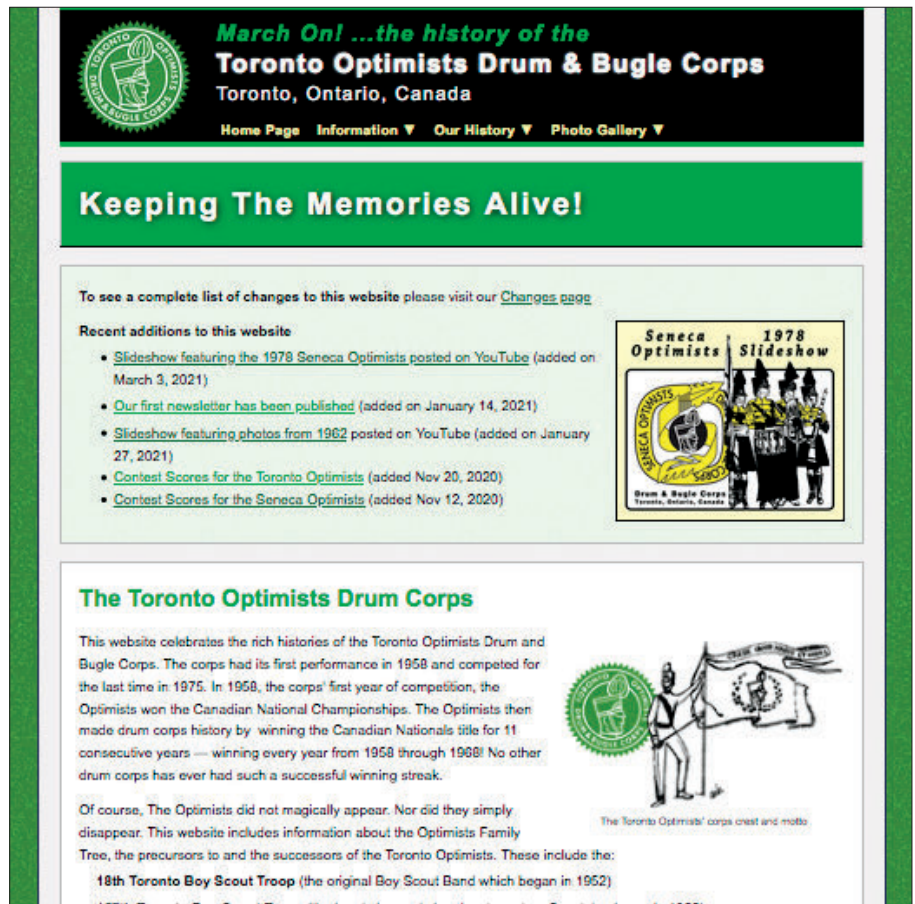
You might have noticed that I have begun moving video footage from the main website to YouTube and, perhaps, you are wondering “Why?”. This has been done to reduce hosting charges which are partially-based on the amount of information stored on a website. Videos require a lot of storage and moving these to YouTube reduces the space. We are hoping that moving video to YouTube will allow more people to discover the website.

> Video

Speaking of video, I have created two new video slide-shows for the website. The first slide show features the 1962 Toronto Optimists while the second one is for the 1978 Seneca Optimists. Each of these use images from the corresponding year. A recording of the corps at the Nationals of that year provides the soundtrack for each slide show.

> Photo Gallery - Cellphone

I have also been experimenting with ways to make the website and, especially, the Photo Gallery more accessible when using a cellphone. I have modified the code for the Photo Gallery to make it work better with cell phones. I have also added a new viewing option that is designed specifically for cell phones.



Home page of the new Toronto Optimists History website. (April 2021)



Open the photo, then tap on it for a larger image. This works on the web site as well, Click on the photo, no tapping.

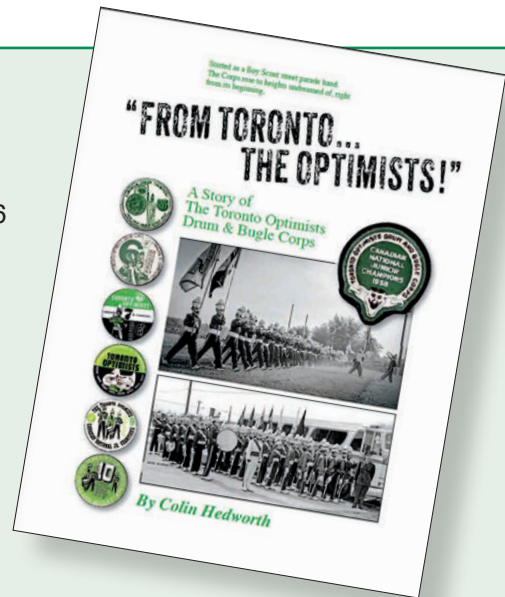
In our next newsletter: Chapters 5 and 6 (1959)

The next issue of the Newsletter (July) will include Chapters 5 and 6 from Colin Hedworth's book "From Toronto... The Optimists!".

THESE CHAPTERS focus on the development of the corps, its management and its second year in competition, including the corps' first trip to Jersey City for the Preview of Champions. The contest was held in Roosevelt Stadium, the home of two of the best competitions in that era - the Preview of Champions and the National Dream competitions. It was also situated in the hub of East Coast drum corps activities.

Being invited to either of these competitions was an acknowledgement that the Optimists were ready to compete with the top corps of the day.

Of course the Preview was not Optimists' only competition in 1959. When you read these chapters you will learn a lot more about the corps' second season in competition.



Optimists relaxing while the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights perform at the 1961 Preview of Champions (Unfortunately we could not find a photo of the corps at the 1959 Preview of Champions)

The book "From Toronto... The Optimists!" is out of print.

LOOKING BACK: The Optimists Drumline: 1957 thru 1962

By Colin Hedworth

First published in GCC, Volume 2, #6 (1962)

I imagine that the only person who really knows when it all started, is Lorne Ferrazzutti, the quietest, best and most respected drum instructor in Canada. At sometime during his life, the idea of developing a top-rated line struck him forcefully enough to make him devote much time and energy towards the achievement of this goal. Thus the story of our drum line is also the story of Lorne, his leadership, ideas and ambitions.

Originally from The Western Technical School Drum Corps, Lorne drummed with many whose names are now synonymous with Drum Corps in Canada. Before many of us present-day drum corps types evolved, Lorne had already drummed his way to the Canadian Senior Individual title, and from that point never stopped progressing in ideas or faltered in his march to perfection. The year 1956 saw him take over instruction duties with The Danforth Crusaders' line, where he started to build towards his goal of an unequalled line, anywhere. The next year, your humble author joined the ranks, and so, being able to rely on my insatiable memory, I shall continue in detail from there.

1957 Onward

The enrollment into the drum line of The Crusaders

that year ran into an enthusiastic group of about 17 young fanatics all of whom wanted to become proficient in the art of corps drumming. With the passing of time that enthusiasm dwindled proportionately, until eventually only two remained. This hardy pair were assimilated into the team, obtaining the starring roles of bass drummer and cymballer. The addition of these two filled the ranks sufficiently to produce a drum line of nine.

So stood Danforth's battery section. During the same year, 1957, The Optimist Trumpet Band had the

makings of a good drum section, and proved it by their superiority in that caption against others of their competitive class. Under the leadership of Harry Clark, they worked with a will exhibiting their capabilities to all who were interested. Danforth were not quite so successful in their field, but were very steady. During '57 they consistently placed third.

Whatever problems assailed them were not, however, to be overcome that season. At the close of Corps activities for that year, Preston Scout House still reigned as undisputed Junior "A" Champions, their closest

rival being The Leaside Jungle Kings. Dear old Danforth sighed and sang The Third Man theme.

1958 Upward

The year 1957 was at an end – and then came big news – Danforth and Optimists were to join forces in an all out bid for The Canadian Jr. "A" Championship. Speculation and opinions were the order of the day as far as drums were concerned, it would mean a brand new start and most likely an excess of drummers. Time alone would bear out expectations.



Lorne Ferrazzutti, in Jesters uniform (1962)

Danforth's lead snare drummer, Norm Cardwell, who held the Canadian Junior Individual Title, took leave of Junior Corps and joined the Jolly Jester Corps, who at that time were under the direction of Mr. Ted Reilly. From there, Norm later moved to The Guelph Royalaires, to become instructor of Canada's top senior line... becoming a competent field judge somewhere in between moves. Of the other two snares, John Lennon faded from the corp's scene, and Jim Reynolds came to the new Optimists.



*Lorne Ferrazzutti and Optimists' 1958 drum line
(in front of De La Salle)*

From the Tenor Drums, Gord O'Halloran stayed with the Line. Frank Heeney did likewise, but left after a few months, and Bill Hinde said goodbye to Corps for good. Trailing the pack to The Optimists door came Wayne Moss, a bass drummer, and yours truly, a cymbal player.

The two lines had worked together a few times during previous weeks, so faces were quite familiar to everybody. But that was all. The first official rehearsal of the new Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps was like The Canadian National Exhibition on Children's Day... bodies, bodies and more bodies. All full of ideas, theories, stories, and most important of all, an over whelming desire to defeat Scout House.

I remember very clearly how the drummers were standing in a group, waiting for Lorne to take charge and organize their part of the shambles. He came over, and there, on the spot, picked the new Line...

"Harry Clark, Snare."

"Carl Clutchey, Snare."

"I don't want to play Snare..."

"Why not?"

"Not enough time to practice..."

"Okay, Tenor."

"Jim Reynolds, Snare."

"Gord O'Halloran, Tenor."

"Colin Hedworth...tryout on Tenor."

Frank Heeney was also a tenor drummer, but was absent that evening. Wayne Moss and Hector Roberts strapped on Bass Drums while Ron Cook picked up the cymbals to continue as he had done in the previous Optimist Line.

Thus stood our Line – 2 snare, 4 tenor, 2 bass and 1 cymbal. That first night we received our Weapons of War and proceeded to learn our new roll-off... a pattern that was

to become very well known in Canada. One week after our formation, a fellow named Charlie Jentzen walked in and became our third snare drummer. Frank Heeney left after a few weeks, leaving us with a full complement of drummers.

The Work Begins

Every rehearsal now was an example of co-operation and sweat provoked by thoughts of the apparently huge goal of toppling Scout House. Although we did not even know how we stood against other Corps, Scout House were foremost in our minds. Work! Work! Work!

"Come on, Gord... You're always last... Hedworth, relax – you're too stiff!!! – Pull the pickle out Turtle" (Reynolds)

"Clutchey, quit pounding."

We had our arguments and differences of opinion as could be expected of any group, but they were smoothed out or overruled by Lorne's capable guidance.

As the months rolled on, it was quite evident that, in general, a solid team spirit prevailed over all...making molehills out of mountains. So passed the winter of '57 and spring of '58. WE thought we were pretty good and could hardly wait to test ourselves against the BEST.

May 3rd, 1958 – Our first contest and a contest against Scout House

“Drummers will have Individual Tests”. Lorne’s judgement of these tests would decide who would make the Field for this one, our first Contest as the new Optimist Corps. Each member of the Line stood up, walked to the front and played as instructed by Lorne. The end result was that Charlie did not quite make it, having difficulty with one rudiment. As it was his first year on Snare Drum, no one could downgrade him for it, having worked harder than most. He eventually made the Line at a later date.

Finally, THE DAY. Having rehearsed during the morning, the afternoon, and again just before our performance, we were up and raring to go! As we began to troop out onto the arena floor an incident occurred that almost marred our opening night. With a searing rrr-i-ppp my drum head proceeded to come apart at the seams. Observing this catastrophe, from the sidelines, Lorne moved as I had never seen him move before and had a spare drum in my hands before



Parade, (Toronto, 1958)

I knew it! I suppose tension was high all around. Now, on we went...

Rata-a-tat – thud – thud – crash – bang!! – Off we came!! Before we know it our show was over. Lovely show, boys, we thought. WHAT A POWERFUL DRUM LINE!!!! but, somehow the Judges didn't agree with us. Preston scored high drum mark and won the contest as well. Our POWERFUL Line was hit hard for lack of shading, plus the many other things that help to lose contests. Ah, well!!... back to work.

A few weeks later we traveled to Batavia, N.Y. and got a glimpse of some of the terrific lines around during those days: Audubon, Holy Name Cadets and St. Vincent's Cadets. We entered the contest with a nine man line that evening but were nowhere near a match for either line, although we did learn a great deal from our performance.

The weeks turned into months as our season rolled by. We practiced... and practiced, and practiced until we went to a small town in New York state by the name of Falconer. The contest there proved to be the turning point from which we never looked back. Although Scout House won the contest by 0.25 over The Optimists we took all execution captions, losing on G.E. (not drums). The Optimist drum line had defeated the Scout House Line!

Oh joy!!! The old bus was rocking that night!

From that date on it was The Optimists Drum Line to beat in Canada as we kept up our surge and mowed the others underfoot right to the Junior Canadian Championship title of 1958! The year was over. Fantastically successful during their first year as a Jr. “A” Corps, the Optimists Corps and their Drum Line made plans for the following year.

1959 and Upward

Charlie Jentzen now left the line and was replaced by Brian Williams a former Optimist, who had spent a couple of years in the now non-existent Skyraiders Corps. He filled out the line in a capable



Toronto Optimists drumline (Windsor, 1960)

The Canadian scene was ours that year, until Scout House made a very strong bid to regain the title they had lost the previous year. Drumming was the execution caption that we stood strongest on, although only by tenths. But the

manner, and we were all set for the '59 Season. Not too much material was changed that winter, giving us a real chance to bear down on that elusive thing called perfection; sticking, rudiments, uniformity throughout.

Lorne introduced wooden tenor drum sticks which we used that year. He liked the sound they produced, we liked using them, but I don't know if Mr. Baggs, the Corps Director approved of the way that they smashed drumheads.

Spring marched in and we marched off to The Preview Of Champions Contest in Jersey City. This was our first visit to the centre of corps activity and was both exciting and very informative to us greenhorns. As we climbed from our bus outside Roosevelt Stadium, our drummers were attracted by a line that was practicing nearby. To our ears they sounded very good, and well they might, for it was our first look at The Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights' Drum Line... famed far and wide among Corps for their excellence. Here was The Leedy Drum Ad IN PERSON!

Telling ourselves that we also were in good shape, we entered the arena and faced the biggest crowd that we had ever seen! We managed to come within three points of the best lines, Blessed Sacrament and St. Vincents. Back to work, fellows... along way to go yet.

season ended with us on top again and it appeared that the drum line would stay intact for another year. Had we been able to foresee the changes that Lorne had in

CHAMPIONS
USE
Leedy

NATIONAL PARADE DRUMS
BLESSED SACRAMENT "GOLDEN KNIGHTS"

Champions — The Blessed Sacrament "GOLDEN KNIGHTS" are proud of their LEEDY equipment — designed and built for Championship Corps.

The "GOLDEN KNIGHTS" have an impressive record—

"V.F.W. National Junior Champions 1954, 1958 & 1960	American Legion National Junior Champions 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958 & 1959." 1963
---	--

Leedy **Drums and Accessories**
CHICAGO, ILL.
QUALITY DRUMMERS INSTRUMENTS SINCE 1895

No. 3136 - 12"x15"

Leedy Drum advertisement featuring The Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights from Newark, New Jersey (1960)

mind and those that just happened by themselves, we would have doubtless have been amazed.

Nineteen sixty was to be the year of our big change in style, music and especially drumming. The changes wrought would serve to produce a line that began to stack up with the best.

During 1959 many things happened that were to influence the Optimist percussion section for the future. Midway during the season, a snare drummer for the Skyriders Corps became attached to the Optimists wagon... October, '59 saw him and his partner, Bob Anderson, obtain official releases and join up with the Green Jackets. This brought us a total of five snare drummers.

A few weeks later, in walked a short, stocky fellow, dressed in blue jeans and a red sweater, with a pair of huge drumsticks in his paw. Enter Ronn Prokop, dynamo, fireball, drummer par excellence. He soon proved his value by exhibitions of insatiable enthusiasm and boundless energy, coupled with large doses of talent. Ronn had started drumming with a Sea Cadet Corps, spent one year as a member of Scout House and finally came to roost with The Optimists. His particular qualities, plus the knowledge that Lorne implanted could not help but produce one of the best around in the arts of Drumming and Hell-raising. (Lorne's knowledge concerned only drumming.)

We had now a total of six snare drummers. The idea of using six snare drummers as a field line was now as close to fulfillment as we had ever seen it, Lorne began to bear down in earnest to see what could be produced. All tenors would work out with snares. Any who wished to try for tenor were welcome. Nothing was spared. Visitors to an Optimist rehearsal were sure to see at least 12 or 13 glassy-eyed, heavy handed pieces of human pounding

mercilessly on drums, chairs, benches, radiators, curtains, and new kids. Lorne conducted snare drum rehearsals on benches strung along the upper hall of our school, leading a group of nine. Meanwhile four or five tenor drummers, applicants from the guard, horn line, bass drum section worked on drums downstairs.

The famous old drum solos were the order of the day. Such names as "Connecticut Halftime", "Old Dan Tucker", "Army 2/4" became familiar to all. Correctness and precision were taught under Lorne's insistence. Everybody worked hard and it became quite a challenge to see if a good six man line could be produced. Acting as a further incentive to work



The image shows the cover of the April 1960 issue of "Off The Line DRUM CORPS magazine". At the top left is a cartoon mascot of a drum major in a tall hat and uniform. The title "Off The Line" is in a large, bold, serif font, with "DRUM CORPS" in a smaller, elegant script font below it, and "magazine" in a simple sans-serif font at the bottom. Below the title, the text reads "VOL II No 9 ROCHESTER, N. Y. APRIL, 1960 PRICE 25¢". The main feature is "The Optimists", with "Toronto, Ontario, Canada" and "Canadian Jr. Champions New York-Canadian Jr. Champions" listed below. At the bottom is a black and white photograph of the Optimists drumline, consisting of a long line of drummers in uniform, each with a large snare drum, standing on a stage.

Optimists "BIG" drumline (Maple Leaf Gardens, 1960)
On the cover of the April 1960 issue of "Off The Line" Drum Corps Magazine.

was the fact that if six were not used, then only three were necessary. Obviously only the three best would make it.

Spring 1960

The winter hammered on into spring, bringing forth an invitation from The Canadian Drum Corps Association for Lorne to conduct the drum clinic at the 1960 Drum

and one cymbal. The whole affair was quite successful, judging from the comments heard after the Clinic.

The first contest we entered in 1960 was a standstill affair among local Corps. Carrying six snare drums, our drum score was 1.5 above the second place Corps, who carried two snare drums. It was to be the first and last time our big line was seen the field. Two weeks later we again attended the Preview Contest in Jersey City. With a regular size line of three and three, we

attained our best results to that date... placing 1.1 behind Blessed Sacrament and 0.1 behind The Chicago Cavaliers. It was a vast improvement over the year before.

Shortly after this Contest, we lost two members of the line... Jim Reynolds career did not allow him the necessary time for the Corps and Carl Clutchey's family obligations forced his retirement from the Line. The three man snare line we fielded in Jersey stayed intact consisting of Ronn Prokop, Harry Clark, and Brian Williams. Our Tenor Line was filled out

by Bill Ukas who replaced Carl Clutchey. He learned the whole show, drumming and drill, in two weeks.

The Bass Drum Section

During 1960 Hector Roberts was still on bass drum, along with Glen Durish. Glen joined the Optimists at the end of 1958 and formerly played with the Grantham Police Corps as a tenor drummer and bass drummer. Glen held the bass drum position during 1959 and 1960 and moved into the horn line for the '61 and '62 seasons.



Toronto Optimists (Windsor, 1960)

Corps Convention to be held at Prudhommes Motel at St. Catharines The offer was accepted and this meant our line would have to be set up properly for demonstration purposes.

Putting away the snare sticks, the tenors returned to tenor drumming, having picked up valuable knowledge and experience during their detour. Those that were then displaced returned to their former positions throughout the Corps. After preparing demonstration routines, individual plus combined, we were ready to display our talents and offer information...with six snares, three tenors, two bass



L-R: Glen Durish, Glenn Copp and Hector Roberts (1961)

Our outstanding cymbal player, Glenn (Stinky) Copp also joined The Optimists in 1959, coming up from The Toronto Region Scout Band. He is one of the few who actually enjoys playing cymbals... would this be why he is one of the best in this area?

Thus did our drum line stay for the remainder of 1960, undefeated in Canada, but no closer to the top American lines. Our snare drummers, having seen back-sticking used in the United States in 1959, had learned and mastered the technique, introducing it to Canada where it is now used by almost every Corps.

1960 was our most successful year yet, it was actually rather uneventful, most of our contests being in Canada where there was no real competition. The season ended with another Canadian Championship title and a slight indication of trouble ahead as De La Salle, helped by a timing penalty we received, managed to upset us in a standstill contest held in Buffalo... the final contest of the year.

1961 – The Year Of Holes

An apt name for this year, as the Corps underwent an approximate 60% turnover of playing personnel. In the drum line we lost five members. Harry Clark was overage along with Gord O'Halloran (the best tenor drummer yet known to us) and Hector Roberts. Bill

Ukas had family obligations and Glen went into the horn line. Harry, Gord, Hector and Bill are now playing in the drum line of The Jesters Corps along with Lorne.

The influx of new faces began almost immediately with the arrival of a talkative young fanatic by the name of Vic Kruklis. His only previous experience was one year drumming with Columbus, a Jr. "B" Corps, whose line had been instructed by Brian Williams. Coming into contact with Lorne was all Vic needed to really start moving, which he did with incredible speed, rising to equality with the other lineman in time for our competitive season.

Also from Columbus came one tall man known as Frank Rood. Frank donned a bass drum to become as good a cadence keeper as we have yet had. To fill out the tenor line came Dave Bignell from Leaside along with timid Orest Burack from the Optimist Bantam Corps. Although many had their doubts, it soon became evident that the tenors were not going to be outdone by the snares in holding up the reputation of the Drum Line.

Stinky stayed on the cymbals, leaving one vacant ground spot in the bass drum section. In dropped one red-headed Ivor Bramley who, in former years, had marched with the colour guard where he and his partner, Len Perrin, formed the best rifle team ever seen within a large radius of this area. By the end of 1960 both men felt the need for a change, having mastered most techniques involving rifle work. Thus did Ivor become a hard driving drum thumper, completing the quota for the drum section.

The \$15.00 Drive

From the camp of our local rivals, De La Salle, came rumours of a drum line developed well enough to give the Optimists some real competition. The arguments,

FEATURE ARTICLE: The Optimists Drumline: 1957 thru 1962 (continued)

challenges and rumours flew thick and fast creating a great deal of interest among members and supporters alike. Then the Corps was told they were booked into the Jesters 1961 Spring Standstill Contest, along with Del. Confidence oozed from both sides to the extent that a total of \$15.00 was placed by each drum line upon the outcome of the drum caption.

After collecting the \$15.00 we realized that we would not have things quite as easy this year, outpointing the boys in white by the slim margin of 2/10th of a point. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Buckling down with renewed vigor, our objective became to smash this threat to our reign. The next judgement day saw us place 1.5 up on drums... however, as the year waned, De La Salle closed the gap to come second to us by mere tenths.

Out of Canada we ventured to Rome, N.Y. where we had one of our few contests against the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights in which we managed to draw within 5/10ths of their line... the closest achieved by us in '61.

Defeat

At the end of the year the Optimists were unseated for the first time in Canada when the C.N.E. contest was won by De La Salle, who had worked very hard for

their first field victory over Optimists since both Corps were formed in '58. Del captured the drum mark with a 1/10th margin, although they had to demote a drummer to guidon, in order to execute with required precision.

This pre-National upset spread fire and brimstone among the whole of the Optimists Corps resulting in an unprecedented push to preserve our Championship status in the most sought after contest of the year

Real teamwork, plus the ability to produce under intense pressure again served us well as The Optimist Corps proved their superiority over De La Salle by cutting a large swath through the execution drum



Titusville, Pennsylvania 1961)

sheets. The Optimist Line had retained its reputation as the top Canadian Drum Section, yet to be defeated by a complete competitive unit.



Optimists (left) and De Le Salle, retreat CNE (1961)

On to 1962

During October of 1961 once more the apparition known as turnover, returned to decimate our ranks. Brian Williams left; Dave Bignell left, and Ivor took the job of Guard Captain and Drill Instructor, later in the spring.

The annual merry-go-round... new faces, new

problems, new music. Everything but new drums. Meanwhile, Dr. Ferrazzutti again assumed his role of drum surgeon, patching up his battered line and transfusing in new blood.

The beginning of 1961 had brought a cheeky, young atom bomb of a boy to the ranks of the Green Fanatics. He started drumming with the Bantam Corps taking to it with a great deal of enthusiasm. His name--Ron Kaiser, and his ambition: to play for THE Optimists snare line. Settling for nothing less, Ron practiced diligently, marching with the Corps all year in parades and retreats, picking up experience whenever possible. Before the dust had settled from Brian's departure, Ron was in there, drumming furiously to prove his worth... as well as expounding his wondrous theories on Drumming and Corps.

To fill out the tenor line a hefty blonde named Mark Wicken stepped in, applying himself to the task of equaling Orest, who by now is one of the most proficient tenor drummers to ever play in the line. Mark came to us from the Sr. "B" Champions – Port Credit Saints.

Adding his talents to the squad is Dave Johns, a refugee from the flags... comedian, and bass drummer team with veteran Frank Rood whose comments nowadays sometimes sound complimentary. Stinky is still cymbal player along with his pint-size protégé Tom Bedford. Stinky, whose second love is organizing spare bodies into squads that seem to get underfoot at most inconvenient times, is teaching Tom the tricks of his trade for the future. A skilled master and an apt pupil seem to assure the continuity of a flashy cymbal section.

1962 and the future

Our greatest field successes to date have been recorded with the group assembled this year. Having topped more than one high-rated line we scored just 2 tenths behind Blessed Sacrament's tireless perfectionists. A Canadian Line has yet to breathe our rarefied air, but doubtless challengers will arise shortly to make events interesting. The future looks bright – for the team of youth now is rampant within our ranks, only yours truly tottering away with sloped shoulder, calloused finger and hidden tear, heading for the outside world.

How is success measured? It goes beyond score sheets



Toronto Optimists drumline (Varsity Stadium, 1962)

and graphite-fingered Judges. Similar to any human aggregation problems arise with constant regularity, some seemingly insurmountable, some minor. Disappointment, defeat, setbacks of all kinds are sure to rise in one way or another only to be smashed

down with the correct formula. Unselfishness, and self sacrifice, cooperation and teamwork, plus all the other qualities induced by common sense all contribute towards achievement of an elusive goal.

Any team, especially one so necessarily perfectionist as a good drum line, cannot help but improve technically if these qualities be nurtured and developed by all concerned. So lies the success of our line. The inspiration provided by a knowing mind has been acted upon by learning minds to produce something that has created great pride among all who passed through, as ever higher degrees of perfection were attained. The tradition of trying has been firmly cemented and will doubtless be upheld in the future by those unknown stalwarts yet to take a turn.

Chapter 3: September 1957, East Meets West

Now here we were, in the gymnasium of Jarvis Vocational School, located just south of the intersection of Jarvis and Carlton streets, in the heart of Toronto. This location, the practice place of the Optimist Trumpet Band, was to be the Corps "home" for the next few years.

Jarvis Street, around the turn of the century, was the site of grand homes and one of the haunts of the elite. Over the years it had deteriorated and was now known more as Toronto's "red light" district. Our school was on the fringe of this, and on a few occasions this would lead to humorous, or pathetic, encounters. It would also generate rumours in later years that had no great basis in fact. These were to come later.

The First Meeting

Everyone who wanted to be part of the unit that was being formed stood in the gym, where things were to be sorted out. It seemed like a hundred people were there. I do not think anyone took an accurate count, as horn players lined the walls, drummers stood in the centre, and extra bodies stood wherever they could find a place. Those who had instruments held them.

One fact was obvious, with the average size of a Junior "A" Drum Corps being forty to fifty boys, in those days, not everyone here would gain a position. Competition for places would be intense, but relieved somewhat when some fell away, for a multitude of reasons.

With this gathering were included, of course, the leaders. Mr. Baggs was there. He would be the Corps Director, which entailed being responsible for the entire operation plus acting as a liaison between the Optimist Club and the Corps.

Barry Bell would be the bugle instructor, Lorne Ferrazzutti the drum instructor, and Mr. Eric Burton in charge of the colour-guard. There were no designated drill instructors.



Toronto Optimists first public performance (Ice Follies, Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, 1958)

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

In the Crusaders and the Optimist Trumpet Band, the task of writing and instructing drill had been undertaken by people who were in the band itself, or had been instructors in other captions. Barry and Lorne had performed this chore for the Crusaders. Although they, and in particular Barry, no longer had to worry about the business end of things, they would still be responsible for drill. This scheme would continue for some time, assisted by others of ability, from within the Corps itself.

Along with all of these people, there were others who came to serve in an assistant capacity of some kind. Some of their names will arise later in this story, and other will remain unsung but not intentionally forgotten. In these early rudimentary stages, along with the excitement of a new beginning, complete and accurate records were not always kept. Also, these events took place over forty years ago, and memory, a poor servant at the best of times,



Toronto Optimists at Inspection (1958)

has a tendency to fade. Everyone who was there contributed and any omission is not to detract from this.

The job of sorting people out was made easier by the fact that most people already held the instrument of their choice. Having been the cymbal player in Danforth while dabbling in drumming, I managed to procure a tenor drum. This did not mean that I would get to keep it.

Not all of the members of the Crusaders had come to this new Corps, and the total of them and the Optimist band certainly did not reach one hundred. What boosted the numbers was the fact that many came from other Corps.

When word got out that a new Corps was starting, people came from Western Tech, Leaside, Sky Raiders, St. Mary's, and other established units. In later years, this trend would continue, with people coming from out-of-town to play in the Corps. Such things are commonplace today with, often, a majority of Corps personnel coming from somewhere else. In the Canada of the 1950's, however, this phenomenon was not customary.

The advent of this situation meant that no one was automatically assured of a place in the line. It also says something about the beginnings of the Toronto Optimists.

Most of these people were experienced to some degree at what they did, having already marched and played in good quality organizations. This made it much easier to start a new band with a reasonable expectation of some success. In the case of the Optimists, although success was by no means assured, the outlook for the future was promising. In later years, others would cite this favourable situation as responsible for the rapid progress that marked the first years of the Optimists. To a certain extent, this is true. On the other hand, we were still all strangers to each other, often still with partisan mindsets. None of us had played in a top Junior "A" Corps

before and we were unaware of the effort necessary to achieve this. The executive and instructors would also be breaking new ground in their quest to attain improved status. Without their dedication and perseverance, guided by the steady leadership of Al Baggs, and mixed with the all round enthusiasm of the members, the whole thing could have collapsed. The Drum Corps scene in Canada and the United States was solidly established. Long-standing units with smooth running organizations were in control of things and to crack their charmed inner circle would be no easy feat.

By comparison, we were a diamond in the rough, still in the rudimentary stages of organization and development that would acquire sophistication as time passed.

After things were sorted out, buglers here, drummers there, guard people elsewhere, it did not take long to get started. The drums ended up in the auditorium which would become their regular practice place, as well as the main meeting room for the Corps. The horns split into their respective sections and retired to separate rooms of the school, while the colour guard commandeered the gymnasium.



Toronto Optimists (London, Ontario, 1958)

In the auditorium, the drummers, and those who would be, gathered to display their skills. It was a disparate group that individually displayed their skills, or lack of, before the discerning eye of Lorne Ferrazzutti. His job was to take this group of individuals and attempt to create uniformity.

At first, there was a surplus of drummers but, as time went by, some drifted away. It appeared that some had decided they were, after all, fed up with Drum Corps. Others felt that the new Corps would not work. None of us, at this stage, knew this either. This decreased the competition for places in the drum line. The same phenomenon occurred among the horn line and colour guard. This attrition actually helped to bring the Corps down to a manageable size. Some of those who left were very proficient and were a genuine loss. The road ahead would not always be smooth. However, the various sections began to work on their specialties and everybody was soon enthusiastically engaged.

The Instructors

Lorne worked the drums, mostly on exercises, until the music was ready. Barry, with assistance from section leaders from different parts of the horn line, worked the horns. Mr. Eric Burton, from day one, ruthlessly drilled the colour guard. More familiarly known as "Burton", Eric was the only one of the instructional staff who had not sprung from one of the founding bands.

Eric was a tenor drummer with the Jolly Jesters Senior Drum and Bugle Corps, who, in turn were the band of

the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. Above all, he was a friend of Lorne Ferrazzutti, which explains how a drummer became the Optimists first guard instructor. When Lorne told Eric that the new Corps was in need of a guard instructor, he expressed an interest in the position. Al Baggs thought he would be suitable for the job, and Burton was hired. His knowledge of colour guards was virtually non-existent, but it soon became apparent that the right man had been selected. Taking the trouble to contact the National Commander of the Ohio Chapter All-American and the guard commander of the Syracuse Brigadiers, he soon familiarized himself with all aspects of guard operations.



Lorne Ferrazzutti, Eric Burton and Mr. Baggs

Under his instruction, the Optimist guard would win trophy upon trophy and always be a credit to the Corps. Later, Burton would become chairman of the first Canadian Colour Guard Committee and, along with others, would help draw up rules for Canadian Colour Guards. He was no slouch.

The term "brass", as was applied to the horns collectively, really meant that. They were made of brass as opposed to the chromium-coated instruments in use today. The only Canadian Corps that used chrome horns, as they were known in those days, were Preston Scott House. They had used chrome, B-flat bugles, which gave them their distinctive sound, for years.

The Uniform

The choice of uniform design and colour scheme was soon known, when one was displayed for all to see. This creation was the result of more than one mind. Lorne Ferrazzutti and Eric Burton had taken a trip to Chicago and had been in contact with the Chicago Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps, as they were then known. Eric was favourably impressed with the design of their uniform and proposed that something similar would be appropriate for the Optimists. This was accepted, and then the colour scheme was decided upon.

Barry had, from his days at Western Tech, always wished for a Corps uniform that embraced his old school colours. They were green, black, and white, which also were the colours of the Chicago Cavaliers. When the design, with the



Toronto Optimists Colour Guard (1958)

colour scheme, was shown, we were all "Corps-conscious" enough to recognize the obvious similarity to that of the Cavaliers. Chicago had worn their uniform for years and made it famous with their enviable record. The uniform that we were shown had enough differences to make it distinctive, and it was adopted with the general approval of all concerned. Whether we had a choice, or not, was never revealed.

The Corps Name

So, knowing the main colour of the uniform, it still remained for the Corps to be given a name. The rank and file passed around many flashy and obvious names. Emerald Knights and Emerald Cadets were two of them. Then, one night, it was announced that the Corps would be called "The Optimists". This name was chosen in honour of our sponsor, the Downtown Optimist Club of Toronto. In our immaturity, some of us did not think too much of the name "The Optimists"! What kind of a name was that for a Drum Corps? However, when it was looked at as the "The Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps", it did not sound too bad at all; in fact, it was not too long before anybody who would have dared to suggest changing it would have become decidedly unpopular.



Happy Music

Because the name of the Corps was associated with looking on the bright side of things, it was decided to base the theme of the show on "happy" music. Although this policy actually only lasted for about two years, during those years, this type of music would dominate the performance. For the coming season, some of the music played was:

- "When You're Smiling,"
- "Hello, Everybody, Hello"
- "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams"
- "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise"

These numbers comprised over half the show. We got down to work in the fall of 1957 and began learning the music. Early on, the ensemble sessions showed signs that something solid would emerge from the whole affair. Due to the experience in the horn line, the music started to sound recognizable almost immediately. Individuals and sections would learn their parts under the guidance of Barry and section leaders. The section leaders were responsible for their section being up to par.

At the end of the night, the entire Corps would assemble in the auditorium for ensemble practice. All sections, drums, horns, and guard would march and play through the show as far as they had learned. This would be done in a semi-circle, either standing still or marking time, dependent on how advanced the number was. This evening routine became permanent and remained our way of doing things for years.

Although Barry Bell conducted the Corps, during these sessions, he was not the person who would lead the

Corps on the field. He had performed this chore with the Crusaders, as well as all his other jobs, but here somebody else was to be selected. The position was given to one Phil Hennings, whose height, physique, and bearing made him suitable for the job.

He gradually took over the conducting of the Corps during ensemble and, by the time the season came, he had mastered the task well and was looking like he always belonged there.

Gradually, the Corps settled down and really started to become "The Optimists", rather than "Danforth Crusaders" and "Optimist Trumpet Band". There never was any friction between the two, as sometime happens during mergers. This was because everybody was very enthusiastic about Drum Corps, this one in particular. All anybody every wanted was for this Corps to be good. Anybody who joined quickly became imbued with the same spirit.



Phil Henning, Drum Major (1958)

Eventually, the green, black, and white jackets of the Toronto Optimists replaced the red, black, and white jackets of the Crusaders, and the blue and yellow of the Optimist Trumpet Band.

Enthusiasm

The genuine undercurrent of enthusiasm that pervaded the Corps was evident to anyone who cared to notice. Across the road from the school was the Atlanta Restaurant. On any rehearsal evening, it would be occupied by green jackets, often well before practice time, and long after. What they were discussing is not hard to imagine, and often instructors and executive were in attendance. This phenomenon, though doubtless not unique to the Optimists, was genuine and rubbed off onto others. It also contributed more than might be imagined, to the future success of the Corps. Enthusiasm, however it manifests itself, is a must for success in any field, and we had it in abundance.

As the year 1957 rolled into 1958, the Corps steadily improved, with the music being learned and the show and membership being finalized. The drums had worked on exercises as well as learning their music, in order to bring everybody to the necessary degree of proficiency. The horn line also followed this method.

Due to the good sense of the instructional staff, the musical arrangements when acquired were within the limitations imposed by the ability of the players. Nothing sounds worse than attempts to perform at a level beyond ones capabilities. In later years, as proficiency increased, arrangements would become more complex.

Drill

The first outdoor drill rehearsal took place at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds on the parking lot east of the Shell Tower. It was the month of March and cold enough that it was necessary to wear gloves, so drumming was not really possible at that time. Bugling was also difficult, with valves freezing and mouthpieces sticking to lips. However, these conditions were no impediment to learning drill and were common to all those who engaged in winter activities.

Nobody complained and the drill and music progressed. At the weather warmed, we all acquired that mark of Drum Corps membership, the first suntans of the year. Those in Corps would be outdoors all day, sooner than is generally normal. The little sun available would give one a tanned, wind-burned look long before the uninvolved.

First Appearance

So, of course, the time approached for the first appearance of this fledgling unit. There was to be a pre-show standstill exhibition at the famous Shipstads and Johnsons Ice Follies, held at Maple Leaf Gardens. What would prove to be the first of many unusual situations, encountered over the years, now made its appearance. We would have to march out on sheer ice and play. This problem was overcome by the wearing of oversize socks over the thick-soled white bucks that were part of the uniform. It worked well, and nobody slipped and fell, thus preserving our fragile dignity.

CANADIAN STANDSTILL CHAMPIONS TO INVAD E M & M FIELD WITH EXCITING NEW SHOW



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 standstill contests. This included the Kiwanis Music Festival, the London Music Festival, Waterloo Music Festival and the Canadian championship at Galt, Ontario, Can.

PAGE SIX

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

May, 1958 — ON PARADE

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.

ON PARADE — May, 1958

The First Competition

It was not long after this that serious business approached in the form of our first competition. This was what it was all about.

The date was May 3, 1958, the location was the University Avenue Armouries. This was the home of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps whom we have seen before as the Jolly Jesters. Most important to us was that Preston Scout House, undisputed masters of the Canadian Junior Drum Corps scene, would be there. We, as

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)



University Avenue Armouries, Toronto (site of first competition)

in 1958.

Finally, the day arrived, and an excited collection of youth was assembled on the second floor of the armouries, clad in their bright, new uniforms, spotless white bucks and instruments gleaming. I do not recall there being an inspection that evening, but for modern day types I shall elaborate.

Inspections before going on the line were an accepted part of competition. Had this show been of full length, there probably would have been one. Before entering the field of competition, the Corps would line up and each



Toronto Optimists on the field at De La Salle "Oaklands" (1958)

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

individual member was inspected from head to toe. A judge provided for the purpose did this. Tenths of a point were deducted for lack of uniformity in dress or bearing, and for lack of cleanliness or polish in uniform or instrument. The Corps would stand at attention until the procedure was complete contests could be lost on the inspection line.

Now, back to the armouries. When Scout House, who were on before us, were performing, we were instructed to take a look at them in order to see how it was done. Sure enough, the lines were ruler-straight and they sounded as good as ever. Their unique style and quality of performance was a never failing source of delight to any crowd, always evoking great applause. We did not really expect to defeat them the first time out.

Finally, it was our turn and away we went. In the armoury proper, where the show was being held, acoustics were awful. I could not understand why conditions were not perfect for a Corps show, or how anybody could understand what was being played. People lined the walls and filled the second floor balcony. One group of people, twenty to thirty, sat in a bloc together. They were all wearing identical gray jackets with a large "D" on the front. I wondered who they were. It was not long before I found out.

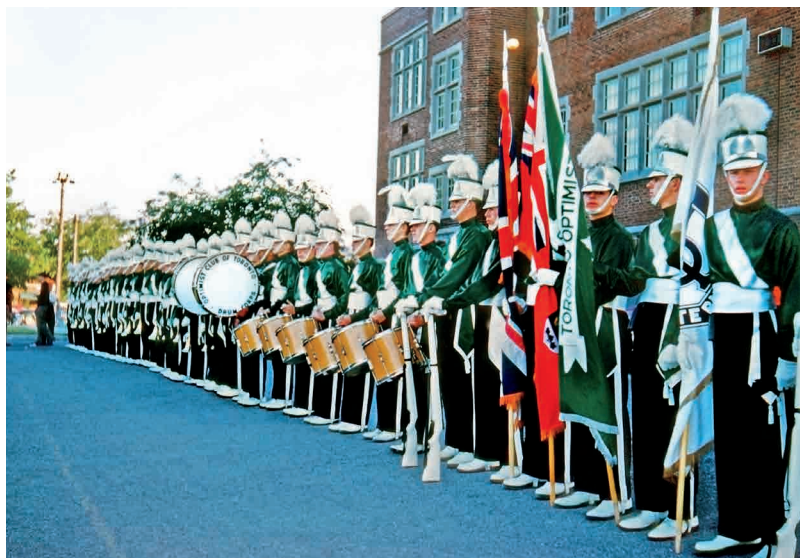


jacket with a big "D"

At last, our Drum Major signalled and the rough but powerful strains of "When You're Smiling" filled the air of the armouries. We went through the marching part of the show, then the standstill concert, and it was done. We had shown the new Corps to the public. The show, though far from perfection, was performed as well as could be expected at that early date. The receptive crowd showed its appreciation with loud and prolonged applause.

It appeared as though we had arrived. The final results, though, reflected reality, as we placed second, a full four points behind Preston Scout House. This was not, to us, a failure. We had leapfrogged over other established units who were there and were only beaten by the reigning champions.

While still on the floor, after hearing the scores, it was announced over the loudspeaker that "The Optimists", on the strength of their performance, were invited to a contest one month from that date, at Batavia, N.Y. When we heard who else was going to be there, reaction was mixed. It would be St. Vincent's Cadets of Bayonne, N.J., Audubon All Girls (the Bon Bons) of Audubon, N.J., and the Holy Name Cadets (now Cadets of Bergen County) from Garfield, N. J. These Corps were three of the best in the junior circuit, in the United States, and were names I had only heard and read about. However, Mr. Baggs told us that we would be going. We were all very excited, though mature enough Drum Corps wise to know that we had about as much chance of getting anywhere as rain has of falling upward. These three U.S. Corps were all outstanding and had been for years. The experience would prove invaluable and sobering.



Toronto Optimists (1958)

There was much work to be done.

Chapter 4: 1958 – Pressure

Completion of the second half of the drill and music now took priority. This would have been the case anyway, but the premature introduction to first class competition lent a more urgent note to the whole affair. Batavia was not to be a 7-8 minute show, but a full 13-15 minute performance. We had to learn and polish the remainder of the show as well as could be done, and do it in approximately one month.

The advent of the Batavia contest provided strong motivation to finish the learning and concentrate on polishing as quickly as possible. Without this spur to our ambitions, things might not have come together as rapidly as they did.



Toronto Optimists on the front steps of De La Salle "Oaklands" (1958)

Urgent as the situation seemed, it did not result in a great increase in rehearsal time. The Monday and Wednesday evening indoor sessions, and all day Sunday for drill and music combined, remained the norm. There were some extra rehearsals, but individual sections accounted for most of the time spent over and above regular practice. This practice, started now, was to become commonplace in the years ahead, as people strove to improve their performance. It was not demanded, or even requested by instructors or executive. Everyone just did it because they want to. It was another example of the spirit that existed in this Drum Corps.

To hold scheduled practice every night of the week and all day Saturday and Sunday was not only unheard of in those days, it would also have been impractical. There were those who would have been willing to do this, but not many. Had such a rigorous schedule been implemented, or even suggested, half of the Corps would have quit. School, full or part-time jobs, girlfriends, family, marriages, and vacations all would have been affected

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

by blanket devotion to one activity. Already, these things were disturbed by the influence of the Corps, even during these less dramatic times. Eventually, with increasingly difficult competition, the Corps would gradually increase its rehearsal time.

In those balmy days, such dedication was not generally widespread. In speaking of this, it must be said that this attitude applied only to the Corps in general. There were those who could only be described as hard core fanatics. These were the ones who lived, ate, and breathed the Corps. Nothing got between them and the Corps, and their presence would make itself felt in later years.

Meanwhile, back at the Shell Tower in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, learning the rest of the drill continued. As the weather improved, it became increasingly difficult to rehearse at this location. A popular place for the citizens of Toronto, this was a public area and could not be commandeered by anyone for private use. Also, the annual Canadian National Exhibition would have made this site unsuitable for summer long rehearsals. So, we had to find another location, and we did.

Driving around, searching, on a Sunday afternoon, we discovered two Corps-sized fields at the foot of Yonge Street, just south of Lakeshore Boulevard. These fields were ideal, being of the right size and far away from any residential area.

That afternoon we found, to our surprise, that one of them was occupied. It was another Drum Corps, and they were wearing grey and red jackets identical to those we had seen at the armouries. This, we learned, was the De La Salle Oaklands Drum and Bugle Corps. Their story as a Drum Corps was to run nearly parallel with that of the Optimists. This chance encounter would eventually develop into ferocious rivalry that lasted for twenty years, until the demise of one of them. Because their name will appear often in this narrative, a bit of background is in order.



De La Salle (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

De La Salle, or "Del" as they became more familiarly known, had begun as a school brass band in 1910. They had achieved international stature in their field and became an integral part of the extracurricular activities of De La Salle College. This is a high school, run by the Christian Brothers, a Roman Catholic religious order, now located on Farnham Avenue in Toronto.

After a suitable preparatory period, they emerged as a competitive Drum and Bugle Corps in 1958, taking almost everybody by surprise. Unheralded, except possibly in their own circle, the first inkling we had of their existence was on that Sunday afternoon when we discovered them rehearsing.

The two fields, one of which "Del" was using, were adjacent to each other. We occupied the other one, and a situation began that endured for years. Both Corps used the fields, on the same days and evenings, for a long time to come. All this was in the future. For now, the task was to concentrate on completion of our show.

Our instructors were all home grown, so to speak, and they had to learn as they went along, as did we. In order to even attempt competing at the level that would be encountered in Batavia, everyone had to give his or her utmost cooperation. Attendance at rehearsals was very good, seldom dropping below 85%, and then only for good reasons. Fellow members would prod the few lackadaisical types that did exist, in order to improve their attitude. It was not often necessary.

With Barry and Lorne, and people from the Corps itself instructing, enough results were produced so that when the time arrived to go to Batavia, we were ready to perform a full field show.

Into the Lion's Den

We were not expected to upset anybody at this show, nor did we expect to. This was the first time that a Junior "A" Canadian Corps had competed against Junior "A" American Corps, but it would not be the last.

The attitude was of light-hearted boisterousness as we headed for the competition. Bus trips were much more fun when this attitude was prevalent, and contrasted starkly with those of later years. Not too many years later, either. We arrived at Batavia, N.Y., prepared to do or die, come what may. There was nothing to lose and experience to gain.

We saw, near the contest field, St. Vincent's Cadets. They were playing a concert number, standing in a semi-circle. Listening to their rendition, someone remarked that they did not sound that good, contrary to all that we had expected. Actually, they did not, and as we found out later, they were playing part of their concert for the following year 1959. This would not be indicative of their field performance



Toronto Optimists (1958)

In the evening, watching and listening, we were rudely brought down to earth. The driving force of "Victory at Sea", into "El Capitan" was enough to dispel any notions we might have formed from their previous display.

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

St. Vincent's were still great. Then that same evening, who could but be amazed by the swinging skirts, precision horn and drum-line, and perfect company fronts of the Audubon girls. Later, the sweet tones of Don Angelica's solo work, in Holy Name's version of "And the Angels Sing", was all that was necessary to remind us of where we were. However, out we trooped to do the best we could.



Holy Name Cadets

The Corps was well received by the generous American crowd, and the score sheets, though accurately reflecting the deserved scores, were not uncomplimentary. At the end of the evening, we stood in fourth place, about thirteen, twelve, and eleven points out of first, second, and third places, respectively. Audubon girls won the show.

At another time and place, this result might have been devastating, but not then. We all knew we were out of our league that night, but what an introduction.

Things would not stay that way. Mr. Baggs, as he would do so many times in years to come when similar situations arose, addressed the Corps. His conservative appearance and restrained language always had the proper effect. Whether we had just been fairly annihilated on the field or, as in later years, had distinguished ourselves, his words always provided the tone of moderation to suit the occasion. It would not be too far wrong to say that his example set the tone for the image that became synonymous with the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps. About one thing there was no confusion, he was the boss, and anytime, as did occur, his code of conduct was broken or ignored, we would be sure to hear about it. Also, when credit was due, it was forthcoming. Al Baggs, to most of us, was the rock on which the Corps was built.

Now, after that educational foray into the upper reaches of Drum Corps, it was time to get back to basics at home. We had to prepare for the Canadian Drum Corps season. The main target was, of course, Preston Scout House, the Canadian Championship, no less. Although to some this line of thought might have appeared presumptuous for a new Corps, the results of the armoury contest had opened up that possibility. We had been a solid second and had a whole summer in which to narrow, and hopefully eclipse, that four-point margin. If the rapid progress that the Corps had made since its inception in the fall of 1957 could be maintained, this goal was attainable. Other local Corps, though not far behind and true to the name of the Corps, were encouraged to look

ahead, not back. De La Salle were, as yet, an unknown entity not having appeared on the competition field and, therefore, were not included in our calculations.

We were told that in order to defeat the champions by one point, we had to be five points better. The titleholder is often perceived to have an edge, whether it is psychological or otherwise. It was felt that a performance should leave no doubt in anyone's mind when attempting to win the title. This spur to our ambition was provided by the fertile mind of Barry Bell.

Back to Work

With the end of the school year, students could now more readily concentrate on the Corps. Rehearsals were well attended and slowly we began to polish the rough edges that had to be eliminated. Like a rough-hewn piece of wood being transformed into a fine piece of furniture, the whole unit progressed to where a much-improved product would take the field at the next competition.

At that time in Canada, competitions were few and far between. South of the boarder, the pace was far more intense, as anyone who read *Drum Corps World* or *Eastern Review* could recognize. In Canada, every contest was eagerly awaited and prepared for. Although the regularity and degree of competition contrasted poorly with



Preston Scout House Band (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

that of the United States, the intensity and excitement were easily on a par. Mixed with this, for us, was the fact that we were not in a position to lose anything. This, in contrast to later years, was an asset when going on the line. A much more relaxed attitude and feeling of, "Well, let's see how we do this time", provided a pleasant atmosphere for competition. Compared with gut-wrenching tensions of later years, it was positively idyllic. The excitement was provided by the prospect of moving ever closer to our increasingly well defined goal.

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

Preston Scout House had started the season strongly, having retained much of their show from the previous year. It was a show that contained many landmark features unique to Scout House and these were not easily discarded. They were probably close to peaking when they first appeared that year. Conversely, we were far from any peak and, therefore, improvement was easier to accomplish. There was so much imperfection. Others were, no doubt, in the same boat. Retaining one's show from the previous year, or large parts of it, was common practice much more so than today. It removed the trouble of having to learn a new show over the winter months,



Preston Scout House Band arriving for a contest

The Waterloo Band Festival was really the top event of the year in Canada. Its results were as important as the Canadian Championship. It had been a showplace for Corps for many years, and 1958 was no exception. Both Scout House and Western Tech had earned honours here, and this year the Optimists would be there for the first time. Ironically enough, Western Tech alumni led them. Although many Corps of good quality were in attendance, this narrative concerns only The Optimists and Scout House, for obvious reasons.

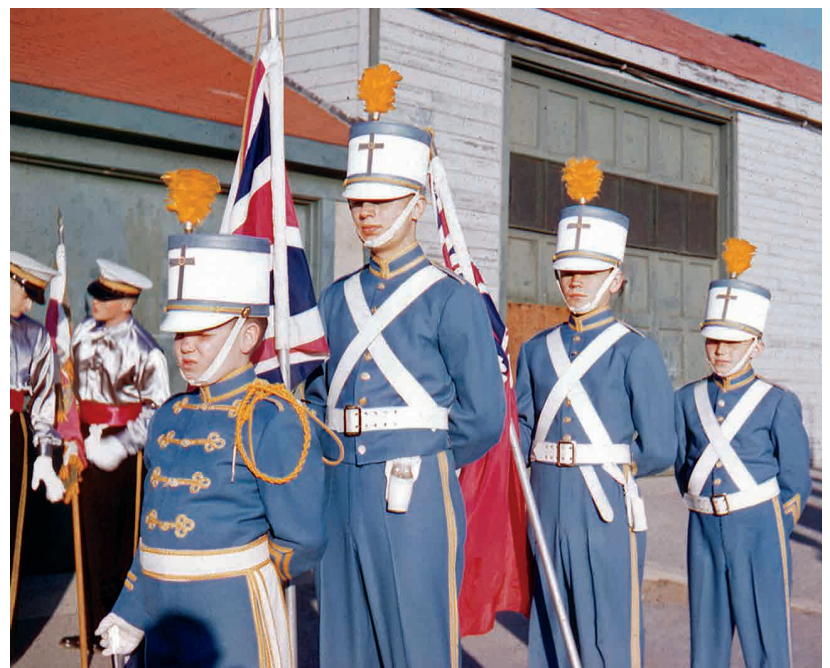
All of the Canadian Junior Corps of that era would be in attendance. This appearance was the first time that we had performed our full-length field show, in Canada, under competition conditions. All were very interested as to what the result would be.

When the smoke had cleared, and the scores announced, we stood again in second place. The major difference was that we were now only 1 1/2 points behind Preston Scout House. This was a 2 1/2 point jump from the first meeting only a few weeks before. The accelerated preparation for Batavia had made its effect felt.

and the time thus saved could be spent polishing the material to achieve ever-higher scores. We, ourselves, would often follow this method.

This being our first year the whole show was new. There was nothing to repeat. The performance had received favourable comment from both Canadian and American judges that we had encountered. With further practice to improve execution scores, there was no way to go but up.

Thus came our next trial of skill.



Guys from De La Salle (left) and St Mary's (1958)

Practices now picked up in frequency because it was realized that we had a shot at pulling off an upset. Interest was also kindled on the local Drum Corps scene in general, as the only true challenge in years for junior dominance materialized. Scout House, who had now won at Waterloo for the tenth year in a row, were clearly in our sights. Without derogating others, it must be said that they were the only ones we were much concerned with. There were, of course, other shows, competitions, and parades to be attended, which we did. Without constant activity in this endeavour, it is easy to lose any edge that has been developed.

We also ran into other Drum Corps, the most surprising being the new De La Salle Drum Corps. They first appeared in competition at the Ontario Championships, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Toronto. We were, of course, the host Corps and performed in exhibition. De La Salle, in their debut with a full field show, jumped over other well-established Corps and placed a close second to Preston Scout House. Their horns were excellent, and lo and behold, there was another major contender on the local scene.

With the Corps now gradually improving, the more evident flaws in execution that had at first been our undoing were eliminated, some totally. Attention could now be focussed on the finer points.

As an example, we can look at our company fronts, a common formation. Many hours of practice were spent not only on company fronts but on learning how to practice them. Techniques developed for executing these, and other complex formations, were retained or discarded depending on their effectiveness. This, to hearken back a bit, well reflected the school motto of Danforth Tech "Faciendo discimus", "We Learn By Doing", though I doubt if anybody related to this at the time. These months, haphazard as they were, produced results slower than if a fully experienced drill instructor were present. Yet, results were produced and the drill moved forward to a level that could only serve to improve our field scores. Likewise, the horn and drum lines. Their consistency and proficiency was steadily improving. All rehearsed enthusiastically to weed out technical flaws and to improve the ensemble effect of the entire unit.



Toronto Optimists (1958)

Falconer

As we stumbled and groped our way to an improved Corps, it came about that we were to appear at a contest in a place called Falconer, N. Y. This was one of those nice little American towns set in the rolling countryside of upper New York State. It would be a pleasant trip, as was any to the United States. Our itinerary kept us mostly in Canada, and to cross the border was always an adventure. This contest was unusual in that it was to be a mixed junior and senior show. Categories would compete against each other. This format was not uncommon in

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

those long ago days and was probably due to the fact that there were not that many Corps around in this region.

In Falconer itself, who should turn out to be in attendance but Preston Scout House. Their presence added a new dimension to the show for us. We had another chance to go against the champs, this time under the discerning eyes of the N.Y. State Judging Association. This was beneficial, as different eyes, minds, and score sheets would serve to throw light on our somewhat parochial outlook. If anyone else was aware of what was underway, I do not know, but Preston and us certainly were. Scout House was well aware of our ambitions and had been observing our progress. No one had given them a serious challenge for a long time, and it was possible that one was now taking shape.

Excitement ran high. The presence of Preston affected our attitude and nobody was prepared to perform at less than the level of perfection.

Early in the evening, we filed onto the line after duly enduring inspection, nearly flawless if I remember correctly. It was one of those cool, slightly misty evenings that always seem to enhance the sound of a Corps. As the opening notes of our fanfare split the night air, and we stepped off the line, you could tell it was going to be a good one. You can feel the good ones. The whole show ran smoothly, until after the concert. Somehow, at this



Toronto Optimists on the field at De La Salle (1958)

point, the Corps and Drum Major got their signals crossed, and we made a false start out of concert formation. This, due to nervous tension more than anything else, must have cost us a couple of points. We started again, and performed the second half of the show as well as we had the first. That false start not only cost us tenths, or more, but probably the contest as well.

When the results were announced we stood in second place again, but this time by a margin of 0.25 points. Now we knew that our goal was attainable. We had to repeat this performance without any major blunders, improve upon it, and do this in Canada.

Returning home, the awareness of what we had almost accomplished at Falconer added impetus to our efforts, and we resumed the march to the seemingly elusive goal. You only got one chance at it, the Canadian Championships, and it was now only two months away. Practice time became more imperative, but would still

not compare with the time spent in modern Drum Corps. To put in the time required by today's top Corps would have been considered odd to say the least.

We carried on in the more easy going fashion of those days, cleaning up tenths here and there, sometimes visiting other Corps to observe their progress. We were not the only ones who wanted to capture the title. De La Salle was a strong Corps and capable of giving anyone a run for their money. We knew that we had the best chance of pulling off an upset and were being mostly watched by those who were interested. Preston had remarked, in a magazine column, on how we had been closing the gap, but were, of course, still behind.

The Nationals

Then, as time slipped away, came the day of the Championship contest, September 13, 1958. It was held at Dickson Park, in the town of Galt, Ontario. Today, the towns of Galt, Hespeler, and Preston have been rezoned into one community now known as Cambridge. This shows how close they were. It meant that the contest was more or less in Scout House's backyard, and this added more drama to an already pregnant situation. The weather was co-operative, and on a fine Saturday morning, we climbed aboard the bus to go where all the truth would come out in the wash.

On the bus itself, utter chaos ensued. Everybody had a ball, without a care in the world. At times, the melee got out of hand, and Mr. Bell had to enforce discipline, sometimes physically. Had he not done so, nobody would have been in any kind of shape for a contest let alone attempting to win one.

Thankfully, it was not a long trip, and we arrived at Galt still capable of functioning. We had arrived early because the junior division of the show was to be held during the afternoon. The winner in this category would give an exhibition after the senior contest, which was to be held in the evening.

Considering the importance of the occasion, the whole day was handled quite matter of factly. Despite the fact this was the one time of year that mattered more than any other, a calm businesslike attitude prevailed. The instructors and executive, including Mr. Baggs who was on hand providing stability and confidence, engendered this. In this case, we had come so close to Scout House, but in the U.S.A. Now we were attempting to do what nobody had done for years. Defeat them at a full-length field show, at the championships no less. Had we done this earlier in the season, the atmosphere surrounding the affair would not have been so electric.

Rehearsal, relaxation,
recreation.

Time to go.

On the line.

The crowd was quite large,
no doubt swelled by the
expectation of a true challenge
for the title.

Off we stepped, and, for the
next fifteen minutes, nobody



Grantham Police Boys' Band (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

thought of anything else but their part to be played. When the last note sounded across the finish line, everybody knew it had been a good one.

It was done. Nothing major had gone wrong. Marching off in single file to prolonged applause, we took positions on a nearby hill, under a tree, to watch the other Corps perform. These included Scout House, De La Salle, Grantham Police Boys Band, and others. After the whole performance was completed, the tension began to rise again as scores were tabulated. Came the moment of truth and all pretenses at relaxation were abandoned. What was done, was done, and nothing could alter it now. Apprehensively, we stood as the voice of the announcer droned over the P.A. system.

- Royal Knights 66.97
- Sky Raiders 73.33
- Grantham 75.42
- De La Salle 77.09

Then, as announcers do, the second place score was given as 80.11. A nerve-wracking pause ensued; then the words “Preston

Scout House” echoed across the park. The green-shirted group under the tree exploded in a frenzy of youthful exuberance and had to exert the utmost self-discipline in order to hear their score. It was 81.61. We had won by a margin of 1.5 points. A solid victory that had been accomplished by wins in the execution captions.

Everybody straightened up, adjusted uniforms, and formed up in single file. We marched down the hill to bask in our newly won glory, and also to endure some verbal brickbats from disgruntled rivals.

The Deed Was Done

In one year, from fresh beginnings to the 1958 Canadian Junior Champions! The repercussions were immediate. Lorne Ferrazzutti, our drum instructor, who had to work on Saturdays, was driving up to the show and heard the results on his car radio. He was as shocked as anyone. This, according to plan, was supposed to have taken two years and, even then, was not a foregone conclusion. He arrived near where people from the opposition were gathered. Some were crying, and all were downcast. Scout House was a local institution, and



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Galt, 1958)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

Canada had been their territory for years.

Eventually, as was Preston's way, the trauma would subside and give way to generous good sportsmanship. The disappointment, though, was not easy to cover. The members of the band itself, executive included, were quite philosophical about it, saying that it had to happen someday. This stance, had we but known it, was in the future to apply equally to the Optimists.

As for us, being the winners, there was still an exhibition to perform after the senior competition in the evening. This was done, performed as well as was the afternoon show, to prove that the contest result was no fake.

After the senior show, the trophies were awarded for all categories of Bands and Corps that had competed on that eventful day. As the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps was named the 1958 Junior Canadian Champions, everyone was aware that an era had ended. No one knew, as yet, that a new one was about to unfold.

When the day's proceedings had come to a close, we boarded our bus for the trip home. There had been no parties laid on in expectation of victory, as we were not really prone to overconfidence. We just went back to Toronto, now champions, enjoying a happy if uneventful bus ride. We were told that rehearsals would continue on a regular basis, as our season was not yet over.

The following week we had to do an exhibition at the International Contest in Toronto, and the week after that was the St. Catharines Grape Festival Show. This was another annual affair, and we cemented our position somewhat with another victory over Scout House. The same day, in the evening, we appeared at a standstill contest in Buffalo, N.Y. Although we placed third, behind two Senior Corps, our show, for some undefined reason, really caught on with the audience. A prolonged thunderous standing ovation was our reward, along with many shouts of “encore”. This had never happened before and the effect was to send us home tired but happy. The show provided a fitting conclusion to what had been an exciting, successful season.

That was the way it was!



Eric Burton with Optimists first Nationals's flag (1958)

Toronto Band Takes Title From Scout House

By ROY FRANCIS

(Reprinted from the Guelph Evening Reporter, September 15, 1958)

Colorful marching pageantry, borne by the rocketing blasts of bugle and trumpets, brought rounds of applause from almost 15,000 Galt district supporters at Dickson Park Saturday during the 1958 Canadian Bugle and Trumpet Band championships.

In the junior championships, a new ruler was crowned. Preston's famed Scout House Band, perennial victors, took second place to the green-clad Opti-Corps, the Toronto Optimists' Club Drum and Trumpet Corps.

Superb musical tone and astounding melody gave the senior champs, the Marching Ambassadors, a first-place edge over the Pagliacci-like Jolly Jesters and Guelph's rising Royalaires. For the girls, the Durham High School Girls' Trumpet Band met only minor obstacles in chalking up another top honor.

CROWD GROWS

Few fans were on hand in the morning, but large and satisfying turnouts featured both afternoon and evening shows. A neat 4,500 all types spun the turnstiles before 2 p.m. when the junior championship occurred, while close to 10,000 jammed the Dickson amphitheater under the floodlights.

But the big upset of the day was the Scout House defeat, by 81.61 points to 80.11.

Scout House had to cope with a well-drilled, well-tone Opti-Corps outfit that was "up" for this one. All knew it would be extremely close after watching both bands go through their 14-minute competition programs. Scout House marched and played smartly- but it wasn't to be their day.

The Ambassadors won in the 1957 championships in Galt. These experts played on their restrictive trumpets "Around the World in 80 Days" theme, which utilized a weird, picturesque color guard, dressed in national costumes of Canada, U.S., Britain, Russia, France and others, drew solid

waves of applause from the bemused listeners. They had a clear musical edge over the Jesters, 84.7 points, and the Royalaires, 83.03, with their own day's high of 87.33 points!

STREET PARADE

Red was a popular color for the bands, with most of them featuring it in their garb. When over 10,000 crowded Galt's down-town at 6.16 p.m. for the huge, 15-band street parade, excitement mounted as each went past. Many received extra loud applause, especially Scout House, Opticorps, De La Salle "Oaklands", Woodstock Imperials.

Wilf Blum's Preston outfit received some welcome salve for their loss to the Toronto Optimists. They copped the street parade award, best color party and drum major trophies.

One of the largest crowd chuckles came late in the big show when Scout House Drum Major Paul Bauer staggered away from the presentation desk under the weight of two king-size trophies. All senior bands, with the Opticorps, were lined up under the lights for the final presentations, with Toronto CBC announcer Bruce Smith being a most glib master of ceremonies:

Oppressive heat soared the thermometer to 85-90 degrees in the afternoon sun. Said chief inspecting judge Hugh McKean, of St. Catharines: "You know, the junior bands have the most trouble." We asked why. "Well, they won't eat-butterflies, you see?" In other words, nervousness and heat often bring fainting spells in junior bands, with lack of food also a big point. They gear to higher pitch than the more-experienced senior players. Only one band had actual trouble - their bus broke down and they had to hitch rides in to the city earlier.

"I'd like to congratulate the Jaycees for bringing this superlative show to Galt again," said Mayor Arthur White, welcoming the bands

at the evening show. "I must also compliment the junior winner the Optimists who have defeated our own Scout House band."

Referring to the Scout House, he added, "They're near and dear to us - and will always be champions to us. I say that without taking anything away from the new champions." He extended commendations to the many bands and individuals who devote long months to training and developing young bandmen.

Sharp at 10 a.m. the big 1958 title hunt began to unfold with the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (Ajax) scoring 76.5 points for the Junior "B" championship. They put on a good show, although they were the only entry in that division.

SENIOR CHAMPS

Senior novice champs were the Stamford Canada Guards in red and black, with blue shakos, after tallying 72.5 points. Once again, they were the only entry. A fine 80-point total was scored by Trafalgar Township's Police Boys' Band in winning the junior novice class over Brantford Bell Tones' 72 score.

Merritton Grenadiers could not make the contests in the senior "B" (Class Two) competitions, but they'd have hit a rocky road in beating Woodstock Imperials' 79 points, good enough to set them up as champs. Brantford's 56th Field Regiment Trumpet Band came in second six points back of the "B" champions.

HOT RIVALRY

Hot rivalry and competition waxed for fair at 1 p.m., when the girls Canadian championships took place, followed by the much-awaited junior contests. Petite and smart in their white and blue uniforms, the Durham girls' edged the Brantford Catholic High School Girls' Band, 72.44 points to 70.38. Parkdale Lions Club Girls' Band picked off third with 67.43 points.

A major feature of the Opti-corps' 14-minute show was their tuneful “In the Mood” rendition, which brought a liquid trumpet trio delivery that fractured the younger teenage set! Their “Red, White and Blue” effort was excellent. Their marching and drill manoeuvres were also surprisingly good. Then came the red-clad Scouts of the PSH band – a march-on that set some 3,000 young fans, many of them femmes, shrieking with uproarious welcome.

GOOD SHOWING

And the Preston gang didn't lose without a fight. Their precision, as usual, was first rate, while “I Got Rhythm” and “Hi-Lili, Hi-lo” numbers, done precisely, again brought loud cheers from their friends. They slow-marched in fine fettle, one type of drill movement the Opticorps didn't employ. As they ended shortly after the warning gun, they'd posed a mark to shoot at!

The large band of the silver-shirted De La Salle “Oaklands” performed well, both marching and playing, with their big number being Gershwin's “Summertime”. They closed off a good showing with “Sentimental Journey”.

NOVEL SHOW

Possibly the most novel appearance was supplied by the Royal Knights of Canada, who cast a comic effect with basket hats, dungarees (held up with rope) and bare tootsies! Their competition effects appropriately enough, began with “The Banana Boat Song”. They followed the cowboy-garbed Don Mills Lions' Sky Raiders and the improving Grantham Township Police Boys' Band, both of which impressed with skilled shows.

Other junior band scores were De La Salle 77.09; Grantham Boys 75.42; Sky Raiders' 73.33; Royal Knights, 66.97. The latter had many former Leaside Lions, also LL equipment.

PARADE DRAWS CROWD

First to appear, behind cars containing Mayor White and Jaycee president Dave Johnson, also South Waterloo MLA Ray Myers, came the blue

jackets of the Ajax Sea Cadets Band. In rapid order, the Durham Girls, Woodstock Imperials, Catholic Girls of Brantford, the much-applauded Scout House, Stamford Guards, the winning Optimists' Band, 56th Field Regiment, the Brantford Bell Tones, Grantham Boys and Don Mills Sky Raiders.

An extra attraction was the Toronto Region Trumpet Band. This organization didn't compete, but their appearance in full Boy Scout dress brought applause from the excited watchers. De La Salle Oaklands and the Royal Knights ended the street show.

Despite their comic opera look, with red and silver clown suits and conical hats, the expert Jolly Jesters put on a well-tailored performance right from their “balloon release” of multi-coloured balloons. They played an excerpt from Leoncavallo's “Pagliacci” then “Another Show”, “Be a Clown”, “Sunny Side Up” and others. Skilled old hands with timing, they drew loud plaudits.

Opening with “Something About a Soldier”, the Port Dalhousie Guardsmen showed good quality of tone, competent drill. “British Grenadiers” and “Birth of the Blues” were other fine numbers, given by the Niagara Memorial Militaires, wearing red tunics and grenadier busbies. But the big moment was yet to come.

WIN FULL APPLAUSE

“Smooth as silk” was one description of Canada's Marching Ambassadors Drum and Trumpet Corps, the titleholders. Their big and novel color party, in United Nations' costumes, was a startling feature. These marvels in white shirts and black-white shakos opened with “Canadian Sunset”, then “America”, “Always Be an England”, “Land of Hope and Glory”, “Love Thy Neighbor” and others. One amazing effect was the unbelievable triple-tonguing of three trumpeters in the “Carnival of Venice” routine. As they finished this superb musical effort, the entire park broke into applause.

“I Could Have Danced All Night” and “Jezebel” were finely delivered

by the 48th Field Squadron R.C.E. Band, Kitchener. They performed an excellent slow march. Last to appear were the plumed, white-clad Royalaires, who were one of the best. Their march routines were first rate, their music in “Taking a Chance on Love”, “Because”, “Bluebird of Happiness” was very commendable.

As the Royalaires completed “Maple Leaf Forever” then marched across the white line ahead of the 14-minute deadline, the performance of the seniors was over. Time had to be taken while all the judges compared notes.

For the finale, the Opticorps, the Scout House Band and the Durham Girls presented a special concert. It could easily be seen how they'd been major attractions of the 1958 Canadian bands' concert. Applause was well deserved for all three.

To end the show announcer Bruce Smith called all the senior bands back, formed with their colour parties. Then the awards were given by Jaycees, local dignitaries and others.

TROPHY WINNERS

Trophy winning bands were Ambassadors, Opticorps, Durham Girls, Imperials (Senior “B”), Sea Cadets (Junior “B”), Trafalgar (Junior Novice) and Stamford (Senior Novice). Some confusion reigned in junior band trophies, with the Scout House second place award going missing for a time. Paul Bauer gained the top drum major award, while Scout House also got the street parade cup and colour party award.

Senior results, behind the Ambassadors and the Jesters, were Royalaires 83.03 points, Port Dalhousie 79.17, Niagara Militaires 77.29 and Kitchener's 48th Field Squadron 75.75.

After two years, Galt will now lose the Canadian bugle and trumpet band championships. At least, it's almost a certainty, they can't again get them next year. Yet many Galt people can't thank the Jaycee miracle that got them in 1957 and 1958. The music was a delight, the colour eye-catching, the marching a thing of splendour – in the final count, success.

**Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors
as the summer of 1958 progressed**

Contest	University Armouries (May 3)	Batavia (May 31)	East York (June 21)	Falconer NY (July 12)	Niagara Falls ON (Aug 4)	C.N.E. Toronto (Aug 30)	Merritton ON (Sept 1)	Canadian Nationals (Sept 13)
Corps Name								
Optimists	75.92	71.84	exhibition	79.47	73.25	83.50	79.60	81.61
Preston Scout House	79.75		76.42	79.72				80.11
De La Salle			73.67			77.90	75.60	77.09
Grantham Boys	67.77				68.62	78.19	74.30	75.42
Don Mills Sky Raid- ers	71.60		71.38					73.33
Royal Knights (Toronto)						64.81		66.97
Leaside Lions			67.29					
St Marys (Toronto)	58.75		55.01					
Audubon		82.01						
St Vincent's Cadets		81.82						
Holy Name Cadets		81.74						
Port Dalhousie Guardsmen (Sr.)					65.86		71.10	
Niagara Militaires (Senior)				78.59	71.12		76.60	
Erie Continentals (Senior)				76.58				
Brockport-Batavia Cavaliers (Sr)				70.02				

HISTORICAL NOTE

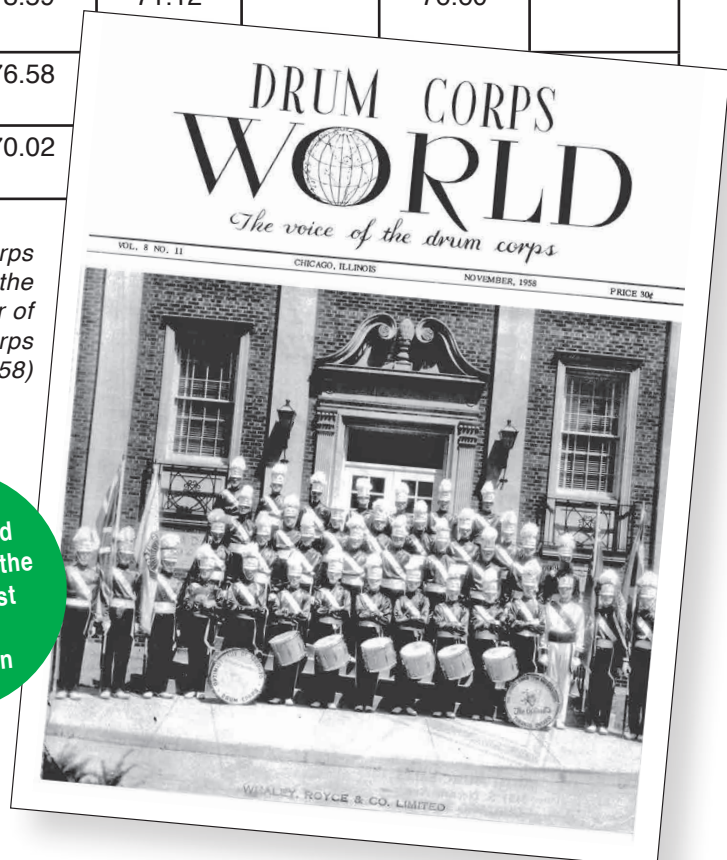
Toront Optimists first Jr. A competition.

The contest was held at the University Avenue Armouries and the corps came in second to Scout House (79.75 to Opti's 75.92)



May 3, 2021 marks the 63rd anniversary of the Optimists first Junior A competition

The Corps made the cover of Drum Corps World (1958)



Memories from Corps Members From Phil Hennings

1957

THE YEAR 1957 seemed to be going well for the Corps. We were getting more parades this year. There seemed to be more people interested in the Corps and members were in good spirits. We had help from some members of 2nd Signals band, Bill Self and Ross Wilson instructing the Drums and Horns. This year Phil Tachauer was our Drum Major, he was also from the 2nd Signals.

Al Latham and Roy Clarke were D.M. for the years of 55, 56. Many people were interested in seeing the progress of this Blue and Gold Corps, the Optimists. One thing that could improve the Corps was more playing members. I'm sure behind the scene things were going on with Mr. Baggs and the Optimist Club on how to improve the membership.

This year proved to be very good, contests were won and we were going in the right direction "UP". At the end of the year there was some talk about the next year and changes might be made. That was the case at the Fall rehearsal at the Jarvis St. School, gathering of different people in the gym, we were told that some members from the Danforth Crusaders would be trying out to be members of the Corps. The chance to increase our size with people who could already play horns and drums and march.

We got two new instructors. This was a chance that the future of this Corps. could be better. Things didn't completely work out, some of the new people decided to leave for their own reasons. This was an improvement, now for the hard work ahead. So many changes were coming with new music composed by the 2 new instructors which showed their talent. The new year would prove what hard work can achieve. So many changes like a new level "Jr. A division", new uniforms "GREEN", how exciting can it get, oh ya a new Drum Major. On to the future 1958.

1958: Drum Major

FALL OF 1957 into 1958 came with a lot of responsibility for all the Corps members. Being that we were going into the Lions Den of big time Corps. We had to learn new music and now a drill that would last between 11 to 13 minutes on the field. A lot had to be done in a short time. The first appearance was to be at the Ice Follies at Maple Leaf Gardens. This show was the opening night for the Optimist Downtown Club. The Corps came out in our new Green uniforms and played a couple of new songs. By the way we put white socks on our shoes so we wouldn't slip on the ice.



Phil Hennings (1958)

I think we were all struck with the size of this building and the crowd and all the preparation that took place to put on this show. This was my first time to play at a show in the horn line in a green uniform. We got a good ovation and we felt good that we pulled off a fine performance. About a week had gone by since we played at the Gardens and I was taken aside at one of the practices and was asked if I would be the Drum Major for the Corps. What an honor to be asked, of course I said yes and had no idea of what a responsibility I would be taking on but I will find out. Why was I picked to do this job, I don't know, some said it was because I was aging out, some of the guys had all kinds of answers that nobody would want to hear. Now to get some info on what a Drum Major should do.

Barry Bell was the guy who took me aside and explained my roll as D .M. At every practice I would direct the Corps though the music, as time went on

Memories from Corps Members (continued)

we all got in sync. Now the weather was getting a bit warmer we could go outside. The Corps sounds a lot different when outside playing, and this will give us a chance to put a drill together for the upcoming contest at the University Armories. For this show the drill will be shortened as well as playing time. I know for me, I will have the Corps in my hands for the first time in front of the public. All eyes will be upon us; we were the new guys on the block. The show was going to be on May 3rd with three other Corps. No doubt we had seen these Corps before and knew the calibre we were going up against.

For me this was the time to do things right; there was no way of hiding any mistakes. There was a pep talk and we knew we had to do our best. We were all a bit nervous. I soon discovered that I could count on the Corps to pay attention to me when I was in charge. These guys never let me down. We all had friends and family watching, this was our night.

I know we were sweating before we stepped out on the parade floor. I said lets go out and do our job the best we can. We marched on floor at the end of the parade square to line up for the start of the show I knew then that we were going to be ok. I'm so lucky to be part of this Corps. Man we looked crisp and new. I got the Corps ready and I marched out and saluted the crowd. As I got ready to start the Corps to

play, I said this was our night and we were going to be great.

The Corps did everything that was expected of them. When we were finished the crowd gave us a good hand. We marched off proud of what we had done. The tension was relieved and I knew we had done our best. To me I said to myself I did it, everything went smooth. We didn't win but we came close. This was just the beginning. Every day and every night we worked harder and harder and improved though the summer. I couldn't believe how we all jelled together.

I knew that the management was proud of how we were progressing. Each show we did through the summer was better and better. Each show had its differences, we had to contend with things like the field being bumpy, with holes and some weather conditions.

THAT WAS THE case in Galt Ontario when temps were in the high 90s for the Canadian Championships. We were advised to keep cool until it was our time to get on the starting line. I had asked the judge that was doing the inspection to make it quick because of the heat and he understood. We all got through the show without any injuries and didn't find out what the score was until later in the afternoon.

Continued next page



Phil Hennings talking to the judge about the heat (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

Memories from Corps Members (continued)

We had won the Canadian Junior Championships for 1958, I said to myself that we had won the top prize in our first year and it was time for a beer, (I was of age to drink sorry guys). I was so proud I couldn't get my shako on. Now we were going to be in the night show and we could show all the people why we won. The Trophy was something to be hold. Talk about

being first! I could not be more proud to be part of this Corps, THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS.

Thank you to our Corps members I couldn't have been there without you. This Corps marched on into history with pride.



The official 1958 Canadian Championship crest issued to all members who proudly wore it on their corps jackets.



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Galt, 1958)

The Don Daber Memorial Plaque

By Doug MacKenzie

ON MAY 2, several ex-Toronto Optimists Junior Corps members and friends from other corps intend to trek to a small cemetery to commemorate Don Daber's gravesite marker. The date has significance in as much as that was the day that Don was born. It was also the final rehearsal date before the Toronto Optimists first drum corps show on May 3, 1958, at the University Armouries in Toronto.

Don became involved with the Optimists in 1960 and remained in various positions from official photographer to publicity director to corps director. Don excelled in drum corps, in work as a commercial artist, son, friend and human.

I first met Don sixty-one years ago, and in that time, I never heard anyone speak ill of Don, nor did I ever hear Don speak negatively to someone or about someone. That says a lot about the man.

Don Daber was not only a Toronto Optimist; he was "all corps." Don worked tirelessly for the Canadian Drum Corps Association; he worked alongside Shriners Gord Robinson and Lord Athol Layton and their committee at the Rameses Shrine Temple in Toronto to promote the now-famous Shriners International Contests. Don also designed the original DCI logo that appears on the three-volume set of 1972 finals recordings.

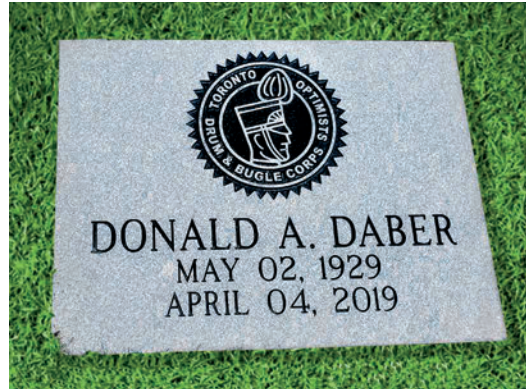
Above all, Don cared about the health and well-being of the kids. His mantra was, "what about the kids, what about the kids!"

Over the years, Don's work appeared in various drum corps publications, on record jackets, buttons, posters, cartoons and programs in Canada and the USA. It should be noted that this man was exceptional in his eagerness to help. You did not have to be a Toronto Optimist to be the recipient of Don's ideas, photos or artwork. Many corps, competitive to Don's beloved Toronto Optimists, were the recipients of his extraordinary talents and generosity.

Above all, Don cared about the health and well-being of the kids. His mantra was, "what about the kids, what about the kids!"

Although Don was a contemporary and friend to many of the great American drum corps directors of the sixty's and seventy's he was never inducted into a Hall of Fame. This should be corrected.

When we were making funeral arrangements for Don, the funeral home director suggested that given Don's advanced age and Don having no living relatives, there may not be many left of his peer group who would or could attend. When I suggested that we expected at least fifty people, the director was surprised. On two days'



notice, primarily by word of mouth, over seventy people attended. Ex-Toronto Optimists wintering in Florida even called to see if the funeral could be postponed a day so they could fly in to pay their respects. Others said they would have liked to attend if only they had known.

Many Toronto Optimists veterans still hold Don deeply in their hearts as someone who cared and left a lasting legacy to their youth. Those in attendance and many who could not be there were Don's family.

It is remarkable and a credit to Don that DCW, many Facebook sites, DCX and more continue to display his artwork and photography to this day. We were saddened by his passing and, at the same time, thankful for his kindness, talent, and the gifts he bestowed on the drum corps world. Donald A. Daber, thank you, peace be with you.

Many thanks to Doug MacKenzie who spent many hours dealing with the 'powers that be' to arrange for Don to have this gravestone.

Location: Duffin Meadows Cemetery
North, R.R.#1, 2505 Brock Rd, Pickering, ON L1V 2P8



John Hertell

**Western Tech Trumpet Band,
Toronto Optimists 1958 - 1960**

November 15, 1940 – March 5, 2021

John began his drum corps career with the Western Tech Trumpet Band playing soprano in both 1956 and 1957. After the 1957 season John, together with friends Al Lavigne and Ed Shaniawski, left Western to become charter members of a brand new drum corps called the Toronto Optimists. John played soprano with the Optimists from 1958 until he aged-out in 1960.

John was one of those quiet guys who contributed largely to the first three National Championships. He was a steady influence and a reliable corpsman who is remembered as a really nice guy.

I'm saddened to hear about John Hertell's passing. When I joined the Optimists in the fall of 1959, John had been there since the beginning in 1958, prior to that he played with Western Tech. John was a tranquil, unassuming guy affectionately referred to as Hertell The Turtle. He played soprano. His age out year was 1960, the first year I played. Doug MacKenzie



John is 3rd from the left, between Joe Gianna and Glenn Copp. (1960)

Barry Bell, in jacket, kidding around with Dave Hanks.



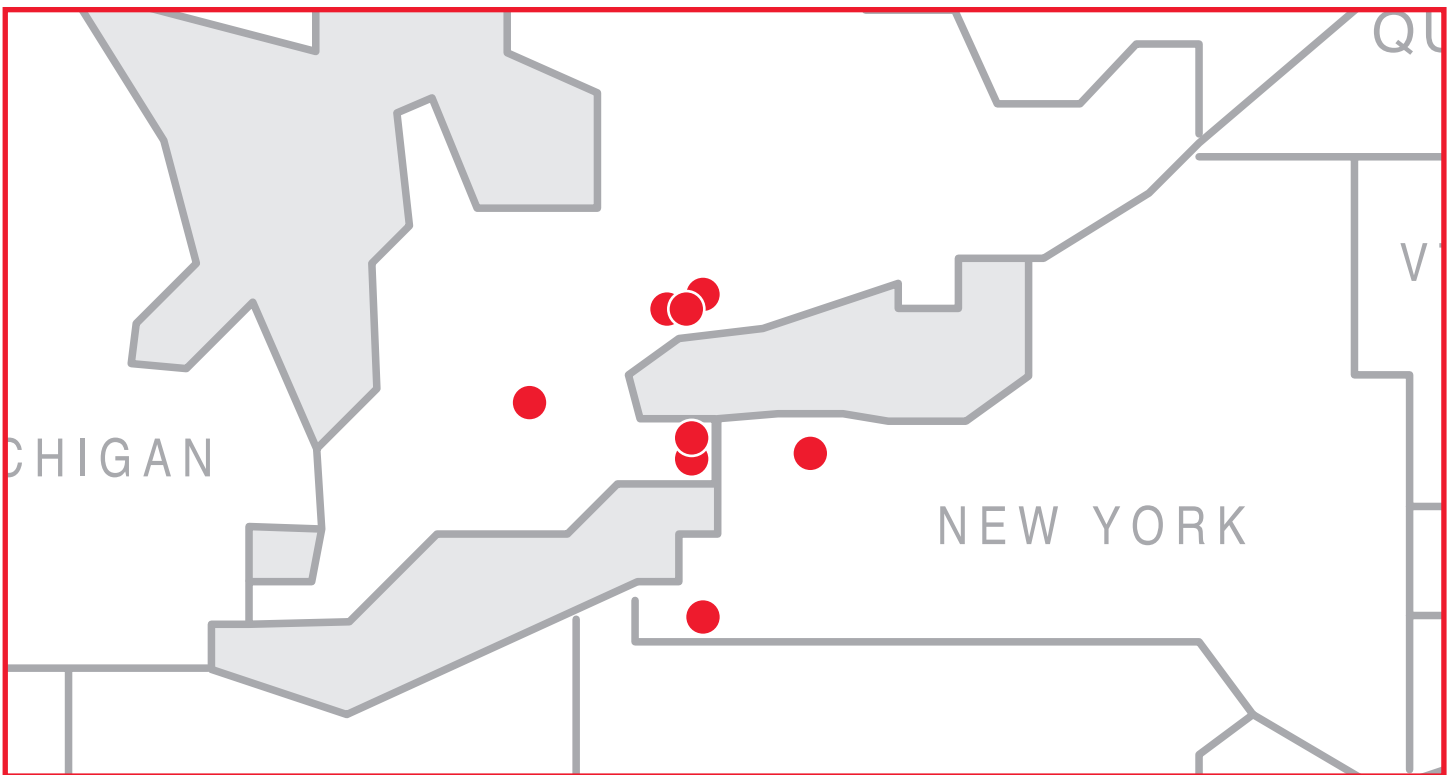
L to R: Colin Hedworth, John Hertell, unknown and possibly Al Miller. (Rochester 1960)

We got around - 1958

EACH YEAR the corps traveled in Ontario, Quebec and the United States. Each issue of the Newsletter will have this map showing all the destinations (**red dots**) for a given year. However, two locations will not be named below the map. If you are the first to correctly name the two missing locations and the month the corps was there, you will receive an 11x14 Commemorative Corps Poster celebrating the Corps and NEW Toronto Optimists History Newsletter.



E-mail you answers to David at: openrd2002@yahoo.ca



In 1958 the corps traveled to:

Toronto, Ontario - May

Niagara Falls, Ontario - August

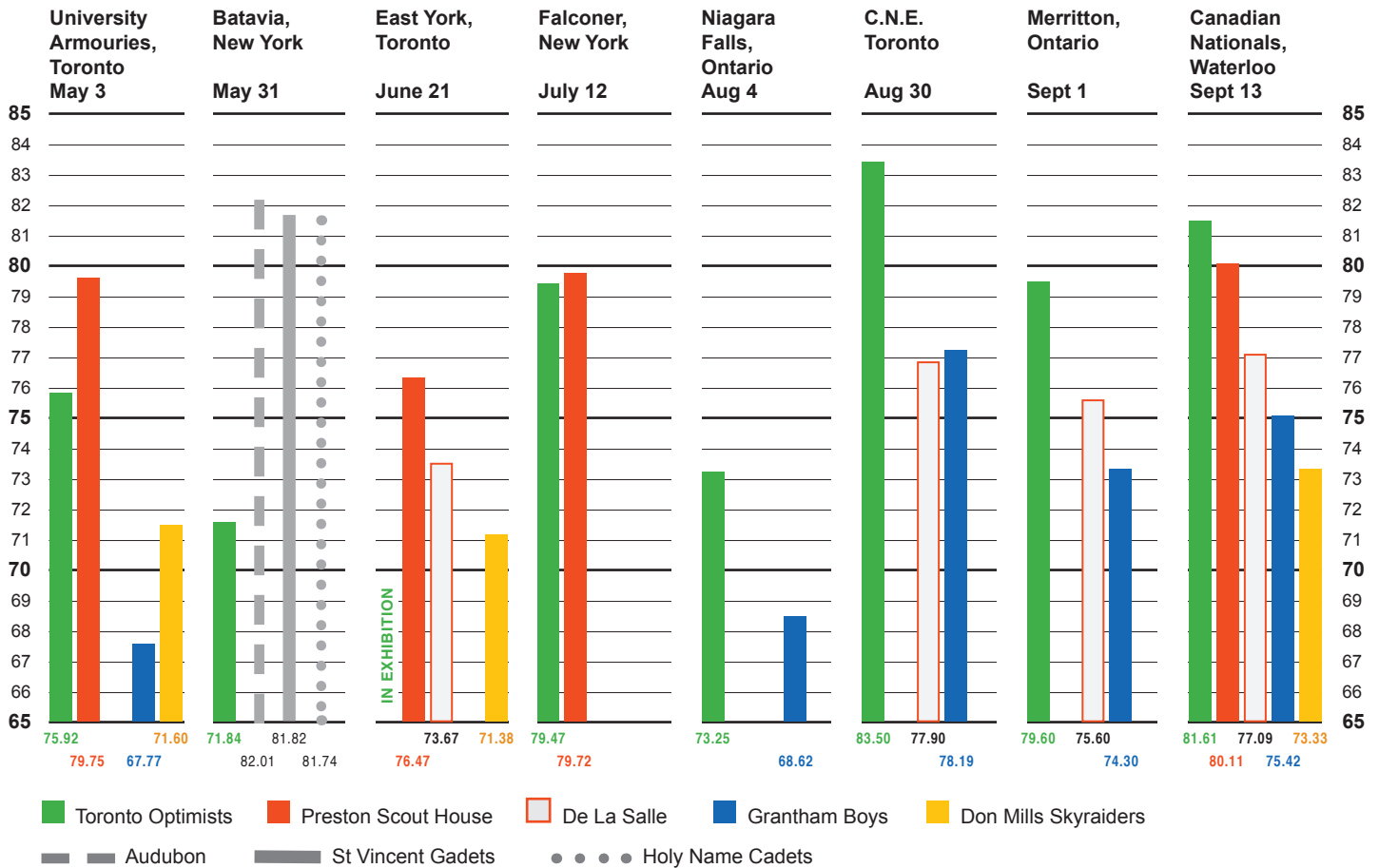
Batavia, New York - May

Toronto, Ontario - August

East York, Toronto - June

Merriton, Ontario - September

THE LAST PAGE



Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter: STAFF

Editor: Bob Carell. **Assistant editor, design and production:** David Johns.

Photo Credits: Toronto Archives and Don Daber.

Contributions From: Barry Bell, Doug MacKenzie and Phil Hennings.

HOW TO REACH US

CORRECTIONS: We tried to get everything right.

If not, please let us know:

toronto_optimist@rogers.com

Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter is published quarterly.

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: Bob Carell:

1407 - 3050 Dufferin St, Toronto, ON M6B 4G3

E-Photos should be sent to:

Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com

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

NOTE: The editor may need to modify your stories for space allowances. Every effort will be made to retain the spirit and intent of your submission.