



Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter

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

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 INAUGURAL ISSUE of the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter.

Don Daber launched the first issue of GCC in December 1960 and, since then they were a way of keeping Optimists connected. David Johns and I decided to continue that tradition by creating The Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter for the Toronto Optimists



Don Daber and Rick Cooper in the clubhouse working on an issue of GCC (1966)

History website. The primary purpose of the website is to honour the rich history of the Toronto Optimists and The Seneca Optimists. This Newsletter will maintain that objective and will focus on the competitive years.

We felt that one way of doing this would be to use the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter to re-publish Colin Hedworth's book. "From Toronto... The Optimists!". Our goal is to split the 400 pages of the book into bite-sized chunks. As a result, each issue will contain a couple of chapters. This will help you learn about our history if you don't have a copy of the book.

ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2021

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

INTRODUCTION (continued)

In order to make this publication more interesting we have augmented the chapters with additional information. For example, in Chapter 1, Colin talks about the Optimists Club saying “no” to sponsoring the corps and Mr Baggs responding to the club with the Club, finally, agreeing to sponsor the corps. I’ve obtained copies of both letters and images of them are included at the end of Chapter 1. As you will see, Mr. Bagg’s response changed everything.

Future issues will include:

- **Looking Back** A section in which we will reprint material from past issues of Green Capsule Comments.
- **Recollections** We also hope to add a section that includes stories and recollections from members and fans. The material for this section will come from you, our readers. They can range from a paragraph or two up to a couple of pages. Please submit your memories to: toronto_optimist@rogers.com
- **We Got Around** A map showing where the corps played or competed in a given year. HOWEVER two locations will not be given. The map, together with the answer, will be found in Chapters 3 or 4 of Colin’s book in the next issue. E-mail us with your answers. The first E-mail received with the correct answers will receive an 11x14 Commemorative Corps poster celebrating the Corps and the new Toronto Optimists History website.
- **Website trivia** There will be a few trivia questions. The answers will be found on the new Toronto Optimists History website. The first to email the correct answers will receive a 11x14 in. Commemorative Corps poster. Send your answers to: toronto_optimist@rogers.com

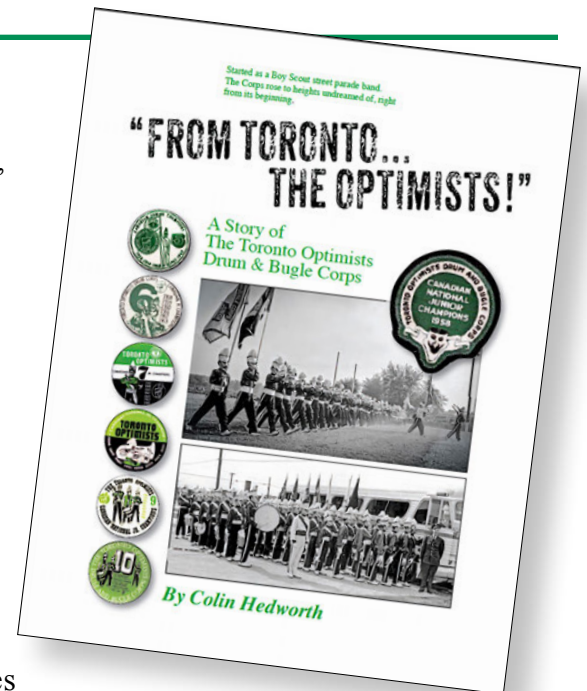
The winners of We Get Around and Trivia will be posted in the next Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter.

Due to COVID19 protocols, your poster will be printed and mailed when possible.

Contribute to our newsletter. Send your suggestions to myself or Dave - Bob: toronto_optimist@rogers.com or David: openrd2002@yahoo.ca

We plan on publishing multiple issues each year, however we have yet to decide how many.

IMPORTANT: The Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter will only be offered in Acrobat (PDF) format.



Website trivia - Issue 1

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

1. Name five of the people in the attached photo of members of the 18th Scout Troop Band.
2. Name two members of the Toronto Optimists who were featured in Whaley-Royce ads.

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



“Lullaby”

RECOLLECTIONS

I joined the corps in October or November of 1960. My experience was with the Toronto Region Trumpet Band (a boy scout parade band) and The Don Mills Skyraiders. There was minimal competition and travel.

In The Optimists there was always rivalry between corps. It's was one of the things that helped make us better. That said, there was also respect. After all, the other corps were doing exactly what we were, practicing hard and believing we could always do better.

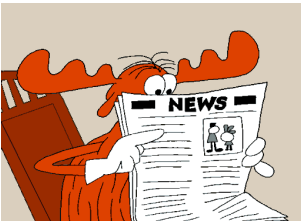
On my first trip with the Corps was mid-season, 1961. It was a typical contest weekend. We were returning to Toronto on the New York Thruway sometime after midnight. I can't remember the contest but we were pretty tired and it was quiet. Then from the back of the bus I heard a few voices da-da-ing a tune played by one of the corps we had competed against. And soon just about everyone was singing - and in harmony. It sounded beautiful. (I've always enjoyed choral music, still do). At that time I wasn't familiar with other corps repertoire but I joined in when I could.

This happed on every bus trip. As I recall, someone would say “Let's do SAC”, “Chicago” or “Garfield”. Someone started with the fist few notes of the off-the-line fanfare and soon we were all da-da-ing their show. Of course, we also did our own show with a rousing crescendo. We had to work or attend school the next morning so we would settle down and the last song was the corps song. Hummed quietly to the tune of Meadowlands. I often wished we had da-da'd our shows (and competators) on tape.

We had a healthy, competitive respect for other corps. I thank the instructors and management for that.

Submitted by David Johns

Submit your recollection to: toronto_optimist@rogers.com



Website UPDATE: What's happening with TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

IF YOU HAVE not yet visited the website I suggest that you do. I'm sure that you will enjoy what you find. The website went live on August 18th 2020 so it is still in its infancy. Each week I add new photos and additional material so, like an infant, it is growing.

At this point, my biggest project has been to compile a list of locations and scores for every contest in which the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists competed. That task has proved to be more challenging than I anticipated. The project was much easier for the Seneca Optimists since DCI keeps good records and drum corps publications did a good job of reporting scores. As a result, that portion of the project has been "completed".

While there still might be a few additions or changes, the website now contains a 15-page Acrobat file showing as many contests as I could find for each of the three years (1976 - 1978) that the Seneca Optimists competed.

THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS section of the project involves scores that go all the way to 1958 and it is very difficult to find that material. Old publications often reported information about the contest without including scores. In addition, on multiple occasions I found reports with differing results. As a result, I doubt that I will be able to gather all of that information. Still, I have managed to gather enough details to create a 57 page report and that Acrobat file is posted on the website.

The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo and navigation menu. A main banner reads "Keeping The Memories Alive!". Below this is a section titled "The Toronto Optimists Drum Corps" which includes a history overview and a list of precursor bands. A small cartoon image of the man reading the newspaper is also present.

Home page of the new Toronto Optimists History website. (Dec 2020)

Saturday July 12, 1958 Falconer, NY		3. 75.60 De La Salle Oaklands, Toronto, ON
1. 79.72 Preston Scout House Band	2. 79.47 Toronto Optimists	4. 74.30 Grantham Police Boys, St Catharines, ON
3. 78.59 Niagara Militaires (Senior Corps)	4. 76.58 Erie Continentals (Senior Corps)	5. 71.10 Port Dalhousie Guardsmen, Port Dalhousie, ON (Senior)
5. 70.02 Brockport-Batavia Cavaliers (Senior Corps)		
Monday August 4, 1958 NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario Canadian Bugle & Trumpet Band Association		Saturday September 13, 1958 GALT, Ontario CANADIAN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS Dickson Park Canadian Bugle & Trumpet Band Association
1. 73.25 Toronto Optimists, Toronto, ON	2. 71.12 Niagara Memorial Militaires, Niagara Falls, ON (Senior Corps)	Junior Class A:
3. 68.62 Grantham Police Boys, St Catharines, ON	4. 65.86 Port Dalhousie Guardsmen, Port Dalhousie, ON (Senior Corps)	1. 81.61 Toronto Optimists, Toronto, ON
		2. 80.11 Scout House Bugle Band, Preston, ON
		3. 77.09 De La Salle Oaklands, Toronto, ON
		4. 75.42 Grantham Police Boys, St Catharines, ON
		5. 73.33 Sky Raiders, Don Mills, ON
		6. 66.99 Royal Knights, Toronto, ON
Saturday August 30, 1958 C.N.E., Toronto, Ontario		Sunday September 28, 1958 BUFFALO, New York DRUMS ALONG THE NIAGARA Memorial Auditorium Indoor/Standstill
1. 83.50 Toronto Optimists, Toronto, ON	2. 78.19 Grantham Police Boys, St Catharines, ON	1. 92.32 Grey Knights, Rochester, NY
3. 77.90 De La Salle Oaklands, Toronto	4. 64.81 Royal Knights, Toronto, ON	2. 91.56 Marching Ambassadors, Toronto, ON
		3. 90.79 Toronto Optimists, Toronto, ON
		4. 89.21 Erie County Continentals, Buffalo, NY
		5. 89.12 Guelph Royalsaires, Guelph, ON
		6. 86.50 De La Salle Oaklands, Toronto, ON
Monday September 1, 1958 MERRITTON, Ontario		

Typical Scores page, 1958. Check out Falconer NY. Whew... that was close.

Here is a partial list of other material that I have posted.

- Added “We Remember” pages for Flo Sciore, John Peachey, Rick Cooper and Tom May.
- Added three issues of Geriatric Capsule Comments. This was a version of GCC that was created by Vern Johansson in the early days of the alumni corps.
- Scanned and posted about a dozen issues of Green Capsule Comments from the 1960s and 1970s. I will continue to search for back issues. These will be scanned then posted.
- Created an article about Whaley-Royce (there is an extract on page 27)
- Republished some articles from old GCCs.
- Added video footage from 1955 showing the Davenport Trumpet Band which existed for a few months in 1955 after the boys in the band left scouting and before the Downtown Toronto Optimists Club began sponsoring the corps.
- Added video footage showing the 1960 Toronto Optimist being greeted at Toronto’s City Hall by Mayor Nathan Phillips

GREEN CAPSULE COMMENTS
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS
Editor, Don Daber. Editorial Offices—Suite 302, 205 Keele St., Toronto 9
VOLUME ONE, NUMBER 6 • MAY-JUNE, 1961
SPECIAL—SUMMER TRAVEL ISSUE! PART 2

JERSEY HOSPITALITY OVERWHELMING!

THE FIELD OF BATTLE—ROOSEVELT STADIUM, JERSEY CITY, N.J.

BLIND CHILDREN, GUESTS OF ST. PAT'S MEET PAVE HANKS, OF THE OPTIMIST SOPRANO LINE.

TORONTO, MAY 29 —Although not placing as high as they had hoped at THE PREVIEW OF CHAMPIONS, the Boys in Green returned home today with many pleasant memories of their 3 day trip south of the border. The Corps traveled at night and arrived in Phillipsburg, N.J. 10AM Friday where they were met by a police escort and taken directly to their billets at the Easton Hotel as guests of the Phillipsburg Centennial Committee. Later that afternoon the Committee went out of their way to provide rehearsal accommodation both outdoor and indoor in the event of rain.

The next day, after the Phillipsburg Saturday afternoon parade, The Optimists went directly to Jersey City and their accommodation at St. Patrick's Parish Hall, as guests of the Cadets. Within minutes of their arrival the complete Corps sat down to a hot beef dinner provided by the ladies of St. Pat's. During the supper hour the Optimists had the pleasure of awarding Father Gaffney, Moderator of St. Pat's, an Honorary Membership in the Optimist Corps.

Earlier that day, boys from the Garfield Cadets offered their services as guides to some of the Optimists who wanted to visit New York Saturday evening. This gesture was very much appreciated and although the time element was against us, the Optimists did see some of (Continued Page two)

FATHER GAFFNEY, THE MODERATOR OF THE ST. PATRICK'S CADETS RECEIVES AN OPTIMIST HONORARY MEMBERSHIP, WHICH INCLUDED THE COMPLETE OPTIMIST KIT.

MIDTOWN BEATS OPTIMISTS TWICE!
AN EXCLUSIVE STORY BY SADIE MAU-MAU

THE OPTIMISTS were defeated twice by last year's Junior B Champs THE MIDTOWNERS. But the defeat did not come on a field of green, but rather on a field of white. The first battle took place on Sunday, April 23rd. This event was little advertised, produced few players and even fewer supporters. However, quality was demonstrated throughout, proving that quantity is often unnecessary. At Ravina Gardens, under gruesome and somewhat baffling conditions, OPTIMISTS and MIDTOWNERS battled in the true manner of sportsmanship, and displayed to an amateur crowd that amateur (Continued Page Two...)

GCC May June 1961.

March On! ...the history of the Toronto Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Home Page Information Our History Photo Gallery

1960 Toronto Optimists: Video

Recorded at Toronto City Hall

This video footage of the 1960 Toronto Optimists was supplied to us by Mel Dey. Mel's father recorded the video. The audio track was extracted from the 1960 Nationals album.

On September 24, 1960 the Toronto Optimists were honoured by the City of Toronto and its mayor, Nathan Phillips, in recognition of the corps winning its third consecutive Canadian Nationals title. The corps marched up Bay Street and played a concert outside City Hall.

Video of the Corps at Old City Hall, 1960

green capsule comments
vol.11 no.2
Soprano's International
BUGLE CORPS MAGAZINE

GCC Vol11, Number 2.

The Toronto Optimists – What keeps us connected?

THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS trace their beginnings to the 18th Scout Troop Band which was created in 1952. The Optimists' first competition was in May 1958 with their final contest in September 1975. Even though forty-five years have passed the connections are still very much alive. Recently I've been reflecting on what it is that has kept the connections alive. Of course, there is the kinship and the sense of family that exists in all drum corps; however, I was thinking about things that were unique to The Optimists. In my opinion there are two very different threads that tie us together. One thread relates to the organization and the other to GCCs.

The most recent organizational thread in the tapestry has been the Optimists Alumni Drum Corps. The corps was created in 2002 and, while still active, it now operates as a brass and percussion ensemble. Going back a little further there was the Optimists Alumni Association, created in the late 1990s. They started bringing former corps members together through cultural activities. After all, what corps member could turn down a "beer bash" or BBQ? The Alumni Association is the organization that set the stage for the creation of the Optimists Alumni Drum Corps.

Looking back into the 1980s, the Optimists connection might have faded without the efforts of Henry Beben, Jim Patten, Phil Hennings and Ed Nanni. These guys, together with other members of the Boy Scout Band, organized the first Optimists reunion in 1983. They also organized reunions every five years for the next 25 years. The tireless efforts of these guys were critical in preserving the connections between members of the Toronto Optimists.



*Ed Nanni, Jim Patten and Henry Beben
with Phil Hennings behind.*



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



While all of the above is accurate, the story probably began many years earlier after, I believe, the 1968 season. It was at that time that the corps' sponsor, the Downtown Toronto Optimists Club, announced that they would only sponsor the corps for one more year. To keep the corps active a group of former Optimists came together to create the York-Toronto Optimists Club. The sole purpose of this club was to sponsor the drum corps. Since The Optimists were a junior corps the only former members who would have been earning any income were members of the Boy Scout Band and those who had marched with the Toronto Optimists in its earliest years. The York-Toronto Optimists Club sponsored the Toronto Optimists until they disbanded in 1975. The club was also a sponsor of the Seneca Optimists which was created in 1976 by a merger of the Toronto Optimists with the Seneca Princemen.

In case you did not know, GCCs were the official publication of the Optimists organization. They were the brainchild of Don Daber, Optimists' director of publicity and a promotional genius. Don had a clear vision of how The Optimists, and other drum corps, should be promoted. One of his first creations was "Green Capsule Comments" or, as most people referred to it, GCC. Don had a two-fold purpose for GCC:



Don Daber (Rochester, 1960)

keep corps members informed about what was happening within the corps and create a communications vehicle that could be used to promote the corps. In addition to corps members GCCs were distributed to the fans of the Toronto Optimists, to drum corps publications and to others in the greater drum corps community. GCCs quickly became the envy of every other drum corps.

VICTORY ISSUE! *CREDE QUOD HABES, ET HABES*

GREEN CAPSULE COMMENTS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS
 Editor: Don Daber, Editorial Offices - Suite 302, 205 Keele St., Toronto 9

OPTIMISTS WIN NATIONALS!
FOURTH STRAIGHT YEAR!!!

WATERLOO, Ont. Sept. 9, 1961 - An estimated crowd of 10 thousand packed Seagram Stadium here tonight for the closing events of the 1961 Canadian Drum Corps Championships.

At an electrifying retreat ceremony the results of the hotly contested battle for the Junior "A" title were announced as follows: GRANTHAM 76.95; DE LA SALLE 83.50 and OPTIMISTS 83.55. These results gave an accurate account of how close the top three Junior Corps in Canada competed on the field earlier in the evening.

In the Senior "A" Division the GUELPH ROYALAIRES held the Senior "A" title with a score of 86.35...TORONTO AMBASSADORS were second with a score of 83.275...NIAGARA third with 82.2 and JESTERS fourth with 73.3

PASSING OBSERVATIONS during the day, the "Corridor of Confusion" under the main stands as each Jr. Corps surged through the crowd trying to make the inspection line without losing part of a uniform...Sr. units fortunate to have barriers put up and inspection held under the stands...rumours flying as to why SCOUT HOUSE wasn't there...ST. JOHN'S FIRST AID the busiest spot under the stands...SUNHILL RECORDS booth selling Canadian labels 2 to 1 on Fleetwood...and completely selling out of DEL and OPTIMIST buttons...DON YEAMAN'S new Optimists' Truck-for-a-day...a conference of writers and P.R. types seen in knit little group in Confusion Corridor---BOB MANNHARDT, KEN WHITTINGTON, PAT NEWMAN, SAM BERDAN, DON DABER... Jim McConkey wowing the

The first issue of GCC was published in December of 1960. Work on this issue, as well as on all later issues, was done by Don Daber together with volunteers from the corps. For the first few years printing was done using a mimeograph machine. As a result, these issues were strictly black and white, with no grey. They were, however, printed on green paper, green being the colour of The Optimists. As technology improved so did the look of the publication. In the early days there were two versions: one for the general public as well as an "Inside the Corps" edition that was strictly for corps members. Eventually the "Inside the Corps" edition disappeared.

GCCs were published every year from 1961 until the Toronto Optimists merged with the Seneca Princemen to form the Seneca

FEATURE ARTICLE: WHAT KEEPS US CONNECTED (continued)

Optimists. The final issue of Green Capsule Comments, Volume 15, #4, was published in late 1975.

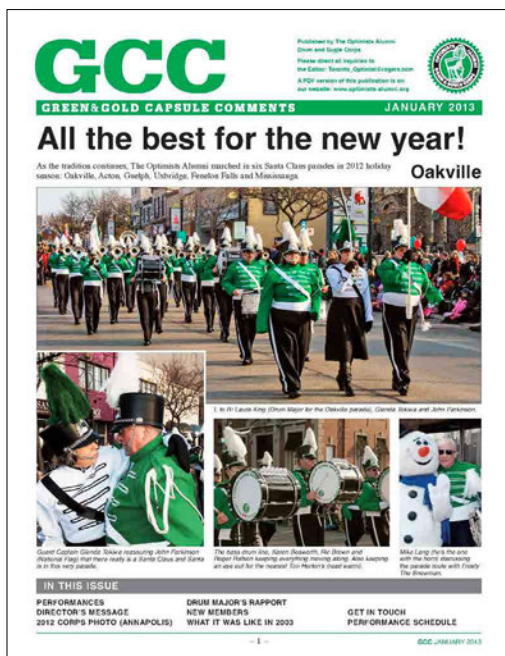
Creating a DCI calibre corps required a shift of priorities. As a result, the first issue of GCC for the Seneca Optimists was not published until 1977. While the GCC letters stayed the same the meaning changed. The Toronto Optimists colour had been Green while the Seneca Optimists was Yellow. GCC now meant “Gold Capsule Comments”! Two issues of GCC were published in 1977 with another two in 1978. The Seneca Optimists disbanded at the end of 1978 and, until 2009, GCCs were simply another piece of the corps’ history.

Optimists Alumni members David Johns and Bob Carell had marched together in the Toronto Optimists and both of them had fond memories of the old GCCs. In 2009 they decided to resurrect GCC. Officially the publication was called G&GCC (Green and

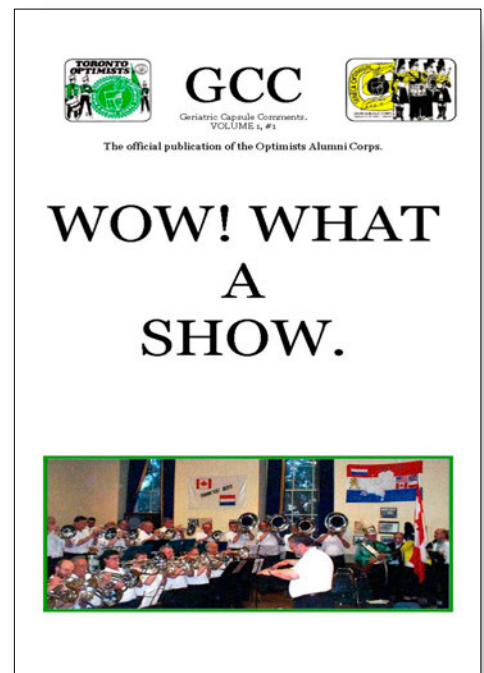
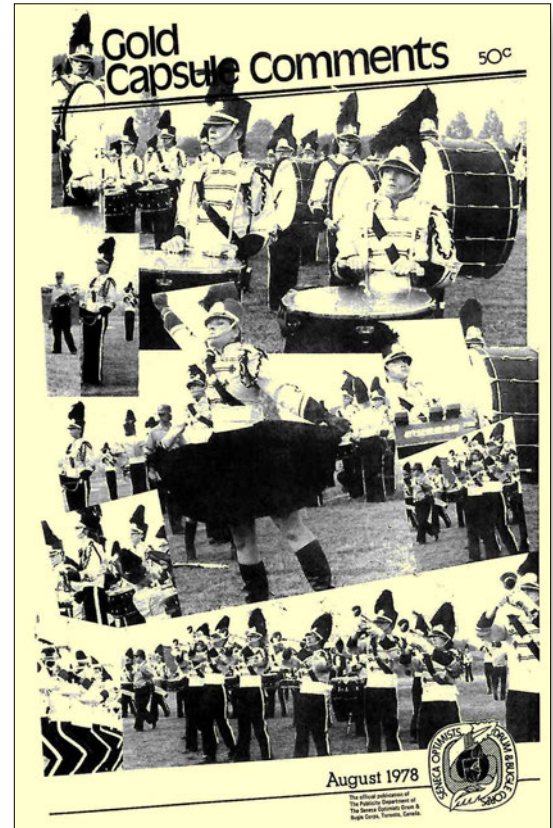
Gold Capsule Comments)

to honor both the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists. The initials, however, had always been “GCC” and, by the time the third issue was published, that is what they had become. Since most members of the Optimists Alumni were a bit “long in the tooth” the publication affectionately became known as Grey Capsule Comments. The final edition of that incarnation of GCC was published in January 2020.

Recently I discovered that there was a publication in the very early days of the Alumni Corps. The first copy that I found was titled GCC; however, its



subtitle was “Geriatric Capsule Comments”. The name was appropriate since most of the early alumni corps members had marched in the late 50s and early 60s. I’m sure that the name was carefully chosen because GCC was always the acronym for the publication! I did some checking and learned that Vern Johansson was the publisher. Vern felt that “it would be a good idea to have a record of our first performance, for posterity”. The publication, while appreciated, was short-lived. In Vern’s words “there were only 3 issues because I was burning the candle at both ends, as I was heavily involved in corps matters plus I was in rehearsals for my one-man show about Mark Twain.” When I got my hands on copies of second



Geriatric Capsule Comments

and third issues I noticed that the subtitle had been dropped and they were simply called GCCs.

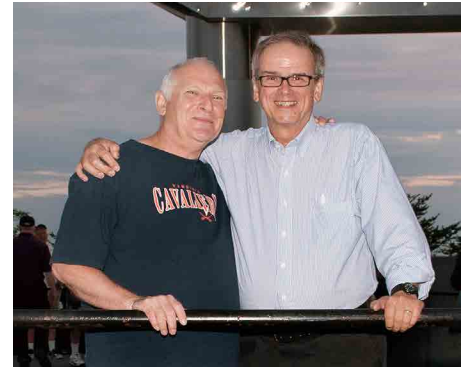
David Johns and Bob Carell are back at it again. We have begun a new publication that will focus on the competitive years. The plan is to use this newsletter to re-publish Colin Hedworth's History of the Optimists with two chapters in each issue. We will supplement this with information such as scores, reprinting articles from old GCCs, etc.

The GCC Archives section of the Toronto Optimists History website contains PDF versions of every issue of GCC published in the last 18 years. There are also some scanned versions from the 60s and 70s. I am currently searching for paper copies of old GCCs. As I obtain more back issues they will be scanned and posted.

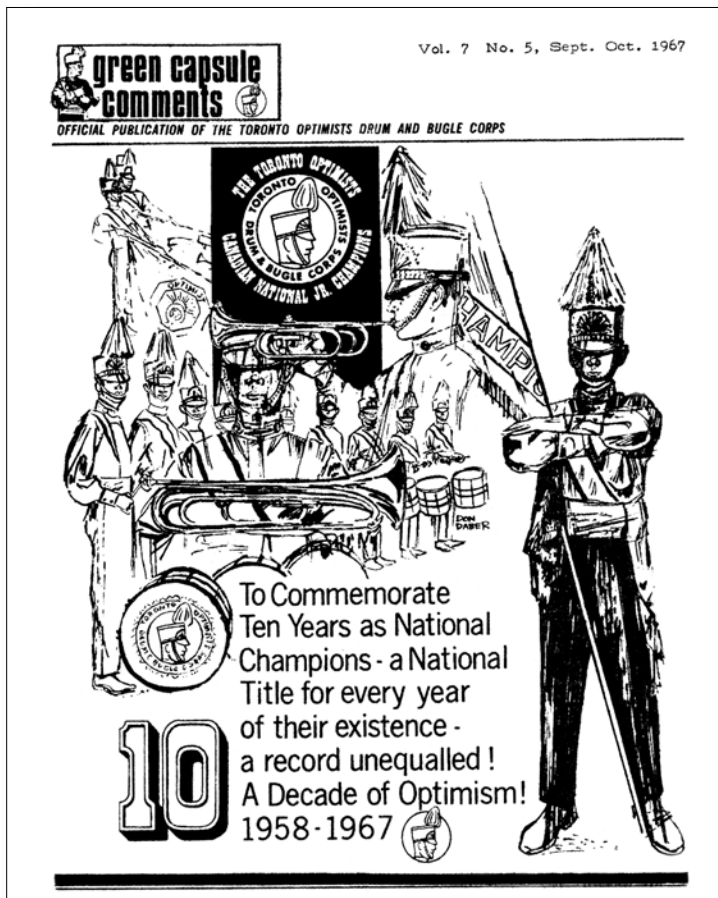
If you are interested in the Toronto Optimists – or drum corps in general – please visit the Toronto Optimists History website. In addition to a wealth of material relating to the corps' history there is a Photo Gallery that contains over 13,000 images – of the Toronto Optimists, the Seneca Optimists, the Optimists Alumni plus many other corps.

The URL for the History website is:

TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca



*Bob Carell and David Johns
Publishers of Gray Capsule Comments
and this newsletter.*



*Vern Johansson
(publisher of Geriatric Capsule Comments)*

Chapter 1: 1952 – An Inspiration

Some say that Preston Scout House was the inspiration upon which Mr. A.G. “Bud” Parker based his idea for a Boy Scout band.

Mr. Parker was the man who originally conceived the idea of forming a band for his Scout Troop. Bands of Boy Scout origin were not a novel concept. Preston Scout House, one of the most famous even during this period, had been making a name for itself for some time. Perhaps he had in mind a band that would one day be their equal.

Whatever his motives, the idea of a parade band was enthusiastically received by the boys of the 18th Toronto Boy Scout Troop. The necessary approval for the project was soon forthcoming from the Oakwood District Commissioner, Mr. A. W. Baggs.



Scout Master Bud Parker

Bud Parker and Al Baggs had no idea of what this band would become. Nor did the Scouts who gathered once a week in the halls of Davenport Presbyterian Church. The church was located in the working-class west end of Toronto, on Davenport Road near Dovercourt Road.

In line with the community-oriented policies of most churches, its facilities were available for worthwhile activities like the 18th Toronto Boy Scout Troop of which “Bud” Parker was Scoutmaster with Mr. Peter Chapman as his assistant.

Although the Scout District Office and Church approved of the band, they did not supply the instruments. Mr. Parker paid for them himself and they remained his property. The Scouts were issued straight plastic bugles with no valves, herald horns and drumsticks but no drums, just pieces of wood. Equipping a band is an expensive proposition. For complete beginners though, these instruments were no doubt adequate.



1952: 18th Scout Troop Band at Oakwood Collegiate

Practice was held in the church after regular Scout meetings. Eventually, used drums were obtained and a properly equipped band was now a reality. The drums, as was the norm then, were fitted with pigskin drum heads. Plastic heads, if they existed then, were not in general use. Pigskin heads were susceptible to climatic conditions, but, since everybody else used them, there was no disadvantage. The 18th Scout Troop Drum and Trumpet Band was now a fact. No one noticed, but Canadian Drum Corps history was about to start a new chapter.

“Trumpet Band” was a term in common use in Canada at this time. To the Scouts in the band, the terms “Drum and Bugle Corps” and “Drum Corps”, were unknown. Such distinctions had no impact on the band members who just wanted to get on with it. Rudiments of bugling and drumming occupied their minds now. Soon the rafters of the church were resounding with what vaguely resembled music. In his project, Mr. Parker was assisted by Peter Chapman and Al Latham, the first Drum Major. Mr. Baggs was not heavily involved with the band at this time. He stayed on the fringe but his support was always there.

Guidance

In order for the band to progress and flourish, they needed proper guidance. At this time, there were other bands in the Toronto area, some of high calibre. From these came willing, experienced instructors. Without them the whole thing might have collapsed.

Bill Self and Ross Wilson of the Second Signals Trumpet Band were two of them. Don McVicar of Leaside and Rolly Formica were two more. These names were and still are well known in Toronto Drum Corps circles. Their efforts put the band on solid footing. It is interesting to speculate whether they had any idea what it would one day become.



1952: 18th Scout Troop (Oakwood Collegiate)

Under the supervision of “Bud” Parker, the band continued to learn and develop throughout 1952. Their initial purpose was to be a parade band for the Scout Troop. During the first year their appearances, usually Church parades, were minimal. Not until 1953 did they begin to appear in street parades, which began to reveal the shortcomings of this “green” outfit. They only knew one song; however, Al Latham, the Drum Major, with the wisdom of a pro, had them play it every second block. This way, it always played to fresh ears. No one was the wiser.

Their single-song repertoire consisted of “Powerhouse”, a standard march for beginners. Somewhere along the way, the intricate maneuver of the countermarch was learned, to complement the straightforward work of street parades. (A foggy memory says that it was earned one night at a parade in Waterloo, I believe, because it was necessary for participation in the street parade.) Despite the fact that this band was just supposed to be for parading, they also began to enter some competitive events. Success raised its smiling head in 1953 when the band won a prize at the annual Waterloo Band Festival. No one is sure what they won, but it was a sure sign of progress in only their second year. They paraded with Preston Scout House, a recognition of their status as an independent “Trumpet Band”. A definite sign of things to come?



1954: 18th Scout Troop Band (Waterloo)

Preston Scout House, along with Western Technical Commercial School Trumpet Band, better known as “Western Tech”, were the two best junior bands in Canada. The Waterloo Music Festival was one of their major showcases.

Although street parades, for the 18th, were still the band’s main activity, entrance into a show such as this was indicative of their desire to progress. This desire would never cease.

During this year, Mr. Baggs started paying a bit more than casual attention. This was a trend that was to augur well for the future.

1954

As time moved into 1954, the band again entered the Waterloo Festival and this time earned the silver medal for second place in the standstill contest. No one won first place, not having achieved the required score, but second was a worthy place for a unit still so young.

It was during this year, however, that the band, having a small nucleus of reasonably experienced players, became subject to player stealing, one of the major concerns of the Drum Corps.

That current year and the next, 1955, almost brought disaster to the Scout band, as they were constantly raided for players. This practice, worthy of the name piracy, went on as much then as it did in later years, and possibly today. The unit barely survived its ravages as other bands eager for success solicited members to leave their unit and transfer to another.



18th Scout Troop (Waterloo Music Festival, 1954)



1954: Pre-Optimists Scout Band

A Drum Corps great, the late Pepe Notaro, was noted for his insistence on members staying with their own Corps. Some of this passion must have existed in the 18th Scout Troop Band because they did survive. They were, after all, still small and the loss of even a few members was serious.

Aside from street parades, contests were standstill affairs. This involved standing in concert formation and playing before a panel of judges. All entrants played the same piece, and the winner was the one judged to have played it the best. This was not an interesting format. Competition was usually other Scout, Navy, or Air Cadet bands.

From these beginnings were to grow competitive Drum and Bugle Corps, adding to those already in existence. Ultimately, this would produce a flourishing movement in Canada, which continues to this day.

1955 and a sponsor

And so the band, now well established, moved into 1955, a year that would bring many changes and altered the character of the group forever.

To begin with, for reasons still not quite clear, the band moved next door and became the 157th Scout Troop Band. It may have had something to do with the fact that only one band could attend the Scout Jamboree, and the 157th was that band. This issue caused some dispute and was responsible among other things for Mr. Parker dropping out of the organization later in the year. However, the band continued its regular activities, mostly street parade work. This year was also the first year that records were kept of such things.

Out of total of thirteen parades¹, three were unpaid, five paid ten dollars, one twenty, one fifty, and one sixty, and two seventy-five. These sums seem tiny by modern standards but no doubt helped the band’s finances in 1955. The smaller amounts were church parades, and the larger ones usually for businessmen associations.

A high point of the year was marching through the town of Preston as guests of the Preston Scout House band. Despite the seeming success of the band, time caught up and forced changes, as previously noted.



1955: Opti-Corps members Bob Cook, Ron Cook, and Hector Roberts



1955: Members of Opti-Corps at the CNE

Many of the members of the band had, by this time, reached the rank of Queen Scout. This is about as high as you can go before having to leave the Scouts and go on to whatever came next. Leaving was mandatory at a certain age, similar to aging out in modern Drum Corps. Many of the boys would have to leave at the end of this year; enough that the band would virtually cease to exist. Nobody wanted this. In order to prevent it, the band would have to quit the Scout movement en masse, and this would mean finding a new sponsor.

During the year, they actually asked for a sponsor over the P.A. system at a show². This did not work, so more shrewd minds went to work on more subtle ways to acquire what was needed. Mr. Parker who was still in charge at this time and Mr. Baggs, who had become much more involved since the early days, decided to approach the Optimist Club of Toronto, to see if they could gain their support.

¹ A graphic showing these parades and payments can be found on the last page of this chapter.

² This happened at a performance at the Dufferin Race Track when the band was performing as the Davenport Trumpet Band. You can hear the announcement on the audio track from the video showing the 1955 Waterloo Band Festival.

The Optimist Club

The Optimist Club, founded in 1919, was called Optimist International, even though all its original clubs were in the United States. Its founders wanted a truly international organization, and this dream was realized in 1924 when the first Canadian branch was opened. This was the Optimist Club of Toronto, which became known as the Downtown Optimist Club. Although there are now over fifty such clubs in southern Ontario, this is the one that now commands our attention. Its motto, “Friend of the Boy”, is self-explanatory and no doubt provided the attraction for Mr. Parker and Mr. Baggs. Before sponsoring the corps, Mr Baggs was not a member of the Optimist Club; however, the Club agreed to sponsor the corps and he joined the club, eventually, becoming a lifetime member.



Optimists Club Crest

They (Mr. Parker and Mr. Baggs) attended a meeting of the club’s boys’ work committee and submitted their proposal. The offer was warmly received and was considered a very attractive project that fitted in with the club’s boys’ work. It was, however, rejected on financial and time-consuming grounds.

These reasons were given for not undertaking the sponsorship of a large project such as a boy’s band. The answer was sent in a letter to Mr. Parker, who passed it on to Mr. Baggs. Undeterred, Mr. Baggs sat down and wrote back², explaining why he thought a mistake was being made and outlined the benefits of having a band. He pointed out that too much had been made of the costs involved, kinds of uniforms, and so on. Whose band it would be and who would control it was not even discussed. Mr. Baggs wrote diplomatically, in order not to offend, and stressed the fact that he and Mr. Parker were extremely anxious that the band stays together. He suggested that, under a committee organized for the purpose and with written contracts, the control and operation of the band could be determined.

The finishing touch was added with the mention of the Madison, Wisconsin, Optimists who sponsored a band in which over one thousand boys had received musical instruction. This reference to good returns for a relatively small investment, plus the obvious lure of attendant publicity, might have been the turning point in persuading the Optimist Club to reverse its previous decision. The fact that Mr. Parker and Mr. Baggs were engaged in such

delicate, protracted negotiations that were required to produce a positive result is an indication of how important the band was now considered to be.

This all took place in May of 1955. The band, although now under the sponsorship of the Optimist Club, continued to the end of the year unchanged.

After having overseen negotiations that ensured the future of the band, Mr. Parker left the organization in early 1955. Differences over which unit would attend the jamboree and family illness contributed to this decision. It is not known if he ever saw what developed from his original initiative, but he will always be remembered as the man who started the whole thing.



Bud Parker and Al Baggs with their wives

² Copies of the two letters are reproduced at the end of this chapter.

Mr Baggs

The reins of control were now taken over by Al Baggs, the business manager. He would be the guiding force behind the development of the band for some years to come, holding the position of what would become known as the Corps Director.

Born in Toronto, Al Baggs was a clever man and will become a central part of this story. He lived at one time or another in Winnipeg, Toronto, Detroit, and Windsor. In the course of all this travelling, he had managed to become the youngest warranted scoutmaster in Canada. This helps to explain his position as a District Commissioner when the band was formed. He had worked for the Dominion Bank, the T. Eaton Company, and the Globe and Mail.

His interest were many and varied, including archery and the collection of guns and edged weapons; however, it was his connection with the Scouts that brought him into bands, and then the Drum and Bugle Corps.

Drum Corps became his overriding concern, while the scouting activity faded from his life. It was scouting's loss and Drum Corps' gain, particularly the Optimists Drum Corps.



Mr Baggs (Falconer, NY, 1960)

Opti-Corps

Right now, though, it was still a trumpet band consisting of twenty-eight boys. This small number was another reason that joining the Optimist organization was desirable. It was hoped that boys from other Optimist sponsored activities would be drawn to the band, thus increasing its size. The band consisted mostly of horn players, with some snare and tenor drummers. Now, with the sponsorship of the Optimist Club, new uniforms and instruments appeared.



Opti-Corps (Bay Street, Toronto, 1957)

The blue and gold colours of the Optimist Club were used to create uniforms. These consisted of blue pants, wedgie hats, and gold T-shirts, and later blue jackets with gold trim.

Along with all this positive change, it was decided to move the band from mostly street parades into the Junior Novice class. A few successes, in their new class, kept morale high and whetted appetites far more. In April of 1956, at Stouffville, Ontario, the band placed third and received an award for most improved unit; but, it was the end of the year that capped it all. They returned home from Merritton,

Ontario, at the Canadian Novice Junior Champions. In one year they had risen to the top of their new class. Although no one thought of it then, this was a sign of the tenacity that was soon to make them Canadian Champions for eleven straight years.

The Drum Major was now one Phil Tachauer, who would later become active in other aspects of Drum Corps, such as judging (also snare unit sector when he he was in Signals).

Although some of the original instructors were still involved, a snare drummer and original member from the 18th Scouts named Harry Clark was now instructing and arranging. Many years later, Harry instructed both the De La Salle and the La Crosse, Wisconsin, Blue Stars. His talents were, at this time, already apparent.

The Corps, as we may now call it, having mastered the Junior Novice Division in one year, were not content to rest on their laurels. They now made a move up to the Junior “B” Division. This level entailed the use of a countermarch, a preliminary form of marching and maneuvering, used commonly by marching bands. No matter what this band did, success greeted their efforts. The enthusiasm, converted into work, brought them first prize in the Kiwanis, London, and Waterloo Music Festivals.

Along the way, having by now become a familiar sight, they picked up the name “Opti-Corps”.



1956: Junior Novice Championship Certificate

The First Annual Ontario Junior Drum and Bugle Corps Championship

During this year, the Optimist Club sponsored the first annual Ontario Junior Drum and Bugle Corps Championship. In competition were the Leaside Lions, 180th Squadron Sky Raiders, Danforth Crusaders, Preston Scout House, Western Tech, and Grantham Police Boys’ Band. This was a Junior “A” competition, under the auspices of the then aptly named, Canadian Bugle and Trumpet Band Association. No doubt, Mr. Baggs had a hand in this. For a man who would be the first to admit that he did not know one note from another, or a drum rudiment, he was gradually becoming more involved in the business end.

As for “Opti-Corps” they watched at this championship, not being in the Junior “A” Division. The next major contest, in their own class, was the Canadian Championship in Galt, Ontario. The Corps capped an already successful season by winning the Canadian Championship in its debut in Junior “B”.

They won by fifteen points, clearly indicating that the move up was legitimate. With their successes of the past two years, many of the membership had toyed with the idea of Junior “A” status. This was a big jump, like going from the minor leagues to the majors, in baseball. Though most of them were probably not aware of it, plans had been underway for sometime, to ensure that this transition took place.

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




1957: Opti-Corps at Toronto's "Old" City Hall



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

PRESIDENT
HENRY N. JORDAN
ROOM 703
36 TORONTO ST.
TORONTO 1
EM. 4-1433

"Friend of  the Boy"

THE OPTIMIST CLUB OF TORONTO
(INCORPORATED) DOWNTOWN

SECRETARY
HARRY W. JONES
15 ONTARIO ST.
TORONTO 2
EM. 3-6911

REFER ALL CORRESPONDENCE
TO THE SECRETARY

BOYS' WORK CHAIRMAN
P. J. WARDLE
773 BAYVIEW AVE.
TORONTO 17
MA. 5122

BOYS' WORK SECRETARY
C. E. SNOWDON
244 BLOOR ST. W.
TORONTO 5
WA. 2-2156

May 11th, 1955.

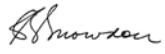
Mr. H. G. Parker,
1A Oakwood Avenue,
Toronto.

Dear Sir:

At the last meeting of our Boys' Work Committee, it was decided that our present commitments, both from the financial and time consuming angle, would not allow us, at present, to undertake such a large project as sponsoring a boys' band.

The Committee has instructed me to thank you and Mr. Baggs for attending our Boys' Work Committee meeting, and offering such an attractive project in our chosen field.

Trusting that we have caused you no inconvenience, I remain,

Optimistically yours,


C. E. Snowdon, Secretary.

CS/S/M

LUNCHEON EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 12.30 NOON, ROYAL YORK HOTEL

Letter from Optimists Club saying "No" to sponsoring a corps

Engagements	W/S	
Stet Bands	W. W. W. W.	16 ⁰⁰
"	Trinity Slonky	16 ⁰⁰
"	Stalones Band	16 ⁰⁰
"	Riverside Dist	20 ⁰⁰
"	Millwood Dist	10 ⁰⁰
"	N. W. Area	10 ⁰⁰
"	Centre Area	10 ⁰⁰
"	Alma Lyons	10 ⁰⁰
Music on the March	Duffin Race Track	10 ⁰⁰
Blue St Business Men		75 ⁰⁰
Dominion Day Parade		75 ⁰⁰
Orange Parade		60 ⁰⁰
Wood 2 Business Men		50 ⁰⁰

The above are the net engagements for which we were paid. All the song of the Stet parades were done for "free". Music on the March was a failure and it was there that we asked our the sound system for a sponsor. We have a record of our part in the above - checked symbols used all

(copy) sent to Optimist Club Secretary by A. W. Baggs

1 Heath St. E.,
Toronto, Ont.
May 16th, 1955.

Mr. P. J. Wardle,
Room 604,
80 Richmond St. W.,
TORONTO.

Dear Sir:

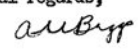
Mr. Parker has handed me your Secretary's letter in which you pointed out that the "Optimists" did not feel that they could sponsor a band at this time. I am taking it upon myself to acknowledge your letter and ask that some thought be given to reconsideration of your decision. It is my own personal opinion that you might be missing a good bet to further your Boys Work and also to promote and publicize the Optimists Club generally.

Perc, I am not criticizing your committee that was set up to look into this subject, but I do feel that somewhere along the line they "missed the boat". It appears to me that too much thought was put into how much this and that would cost, what kind of uniforms the band would wear, and so on. The important angle of whose band it was and how it could be controlled was missed altogether.

Granted, I did not have too much to say but the circumstances are a little peculiar. While I am nominally the business manager of the band, the instruments are personally owned by Mr. Parker. There might have been a feeling in your committee of it. I should imagine that this could quite easily be overcome by having some form of contract drawn up whereby that sort of thing is taken care of. Both Parker and myself are quite anxious that this band stay together and I feel quite sure, set up under a proper committee would. As well as that, we need more boys and we are quite limited in what we can draw on, whereas I am sure there would be boys in your various groups that could be channelled into the band or that would be quite anxious to get into one if they knew it existed.

Just in passing, I might mention that quite a famous Boys Trumpet Band sponsored by the "Optimists" of Madison, Wisconsin, is featured in the current issue of "Drum World" and will be visiting in Ontario this summer. The article states that since their inception over one thousand boys have received musical training. That is a project the Madison Optimists could well be proud of.

All these are just personal thoughts, Perc, but if the matter could be reconsidered, I would be very pleased to sit in again.

Best personal regards,


Mr Baggs' response to the Optimists Club

Income from parades (1955)

Chapter 2: Barry Bell’s Dream

Barry Bell started playing a plastic bugle at the age of twelve in a Boy Scout band. He attended high school at Western Tech, a most apt location for a person of his inclinations. He was soon a member of the band, coming under the influence of Mr. Don McIntyre, the director. Under Mr. McIntyre’s guidance, Barry absorbed music theory and fundamentals of drumming.

At first he was issued a soprano horn with which he persevered for three years. He then switched to a baritone. Somewhere the drumming declined in importance, although he still retained some ability, and the baritone horn took precedence. His proficiency increased to the point where he was appointed section leader. Finally, he entered and won the Canadian Individual Solo Bugling Championship. Even after graduating from school, Barry stayed with the band for another two years.

This obvious enthusiasm and background was to prove adequate preparation for what was to become his destiny. At one time during his apprenticeship, Barry visited Rochester, New York, and saw his first real Drum and Bugle Corps contest. The spectacle impressed him and whetted his appetite for more. What was lacking was a vehicle by which he could pursue this objective and incorporate his own ideas.



Barry Bell in Western Cadet uniform (1955)

Western Tech

Across town at Danforth Tech in the east-end of Toronto an ex-Western Tech administrator would provide the opportunity Barry Bell was waiting for.

Many Ontario schools had bands of some type or other. These bands varied in style from orchestral, dance, popular, to marching. The type of band often depended upon the preference of the person responsible or, if part of a study course, the type that fulfilled requirements.

Often the band was a unit of Army, Navy, or Air Cadets that was affiliated with a school. The City of Toronto had more than a few schools with such an arrangement, and the band used the



Western Tech Band (1955)

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

school facilities. Most of the members would be students at a particular school, and they would perform when asked at whatever functions necessary.

This Danforth Tech 330th Squadron Air Cadet Band was the brainchild of their principal, Mr. Dean, also known as Colonel Dean. They were an extracurricular activity of the school and operated as part of the school's Air Cadet Squadron.

Before becoming the principal of Danforth Tech, he had been a vice-principal at Western Tech, the home of one of the best junior cadet bands in Canada at this time and the place where Barry Bell first honed his skills.

Mr. Dean, much impressed by this activity, had determined that his new school would produce a band as fine as Western's. From his determination the Danforth Tech 330th Squadron Air Cadet Band was destined for change.

This band, then, was strictly an adjunct to the Air Cadet Corps and was to remain so until 1956. The initial purpose was to parade the Cadet Corps at ceremonials and regular weekly parades. The school purchased the instruments, and the uniforms were those of the Air Cadet Corps. Rehearsals were conducted during the week, after the formal Cadet parade that was a mandatory affair.

Mr. Dean's ambition to have a band equal to that of Western led him to seek out Mr. Barry Bell. A shrewd move, as Mr. Bell had come well-trained from the ranks of Western Tech.

Barry accepted Mr. Dean's offer to take over the Air Cadet band. At the beginning of 1955 he was installed as administrator of the band. This year was to prove as propitious for Danforth as it was for the Optimist Trumpet Band, though in different ways. It eventually led to the demise of one unit and the growth of the other. However, not to jump the gun, the reference to Barry as the administrator of the Air Cadet band is by no means a misnomer. Besides being music director, he was also bugle instructor, drill instructor, business manager, and conductor of drumming classes. Although he may not have anticipated such a wide degree of duties when agreeing to take the job that is what he got. In this case, although providence was to cast a doubtful eye for some time, eventually it was to smile benevolently on this fledgling endeavour.



Danforth Tech Crusaders (CNE, 1957)

Danforth was and remained an Air Cadet band for the year 1955, the first year of Barry Bell's control. He still had the ideas that had been born of his visit to the United States, and the following year, 1956, he proceeded to put them into effect. The school approved this development, and the band now became possessed of a dual identity. Already a Cadet Corps Band, it now proceeded to become a Drum and Bugle Corps that included marching and maneuvering among its repertoire. Such developments had long been established in the United States, where many Junior and Senior Drum and Bugle Corps existed. Most of them were operated under the auspices of The American Legion (AL), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Catholic Youth Organizations (CYO). Full competitions were a well-established form of activity in the regions where these units existed. In Canada, however, the evolution of a marching and maneuvering Drum and Bugle Corps was still in its infancy and Danforth, to its credit, was one of the first to go in this direction.

Barry, now that the new Corps was under way, designed a modern-style Drum Corps uniform of red, black, and white, and also coined the name “The Crusaders”. So, the band was now the 330th Squadron Air Cadet Band and the Danforth Crusaders.

Although the school approved the dual activities of this unit, to the extent that they were covered in the school yearbook, the new activities did not always find favour with the Air Cadets. Danforth, however, went its merry way and put together a full-length marching and maneuvering field-show for purposes of competition. They would be competing against other units of similar disposition and proceeded to get their feet wet.



Colin Hedworth in his Danforth Tech Uniform

Lorne Ferrazzutti

For one man to do almost everything, at this more complex stage, would prove to be impractical; so Barry brought into the picture another young man by the name of Lorne Ferrazzutti, as drum instructor. This made an instructional staff of two.

Lorne came to Danforth at the beginning of 1956, and as time would prove, was the best selection that could have been made.

Another graduate from Western Tech, Lorne had started in that band at the instigation of a boyhood friend. The director, Mr. McIntyre, put him on a bass drum where he consistently frustrated the efforts of the band leader by always leading off on the wrong foot; however Lorne eventually overcame any impediments in coordination and drumming. He stayed with the band for years and rose to become a member of a championship calibre quintet. To cap this, at the time of his accession to the post of drum instructor at Danforth, Lorne was the holder of the title of the Canadian Senior Drumming Champion. Like Barry, his background and abilities were to stand him in good stead in the years to come. Lorne and Barry were to become one of the most successful teams to ever exist in Canadian Drum Corps. Under their tutelage emerged many fine drummers and buglers. Western Tech produced many people who would contribute to Drum Corps in ensuing years, and the name of Don McIntyre would be included in many histories of Canadian Drum Corps. Many years later, he was duly recognized with an award from the Ontario Drum Corps Association.



Lorne Ferrazzutti (1955)

As previously noted, Danforth was among the leaders in introducing Drum Corps to Canada. The use of the term “Drum and Bugle Corps” rather than “Trumpet Band” and the creation and performance of a full-length show, when this form of activity was in its infancy, is evidence of this.

Danforth Crusaders first year in competition

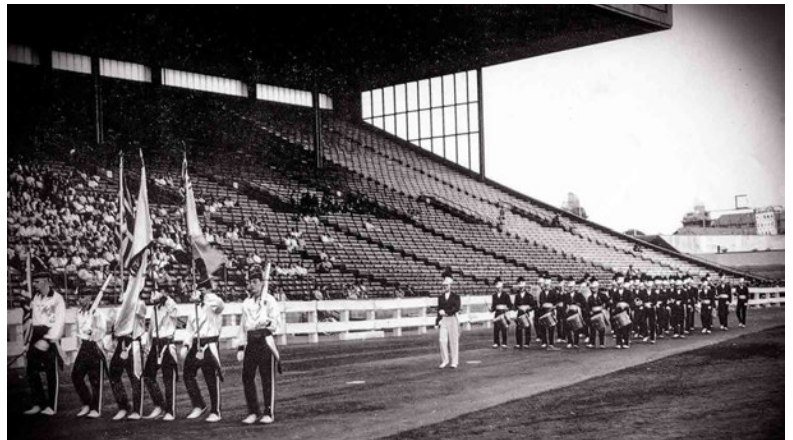
During their first year of competition, they survived but did not conquer, as had the Optimist Trumpet band. They gained experience and were preparing to continue in their new guise when, in the fall of 1956, the author of this narrative made his entry into the Drum Corps by joining their ranks. The event was not recorded, as it proved to be less than apocalyptic, but does give the next few chapters the benefit of an eyewitness.

At the beginning of Barry’s tenure, the band consisted of twenty-four boys; however, when I entered its ranks, I seem to recall more than that. The 1957 Danforth school yearbook listed thirty-nine members. Possibly, the switch to the more colourful and varied activity of Drum Corps had drawn new members to the ranks of the band. To support this theory, one of my first observations was the pronounced enthusiasm of members of the band for Drum Corps activities rather than Air Cadets. This was apparent from the sight of band members arriving at practice with cadet uniforms in bags. They would be donned for the required parade in the school gym and then put back in the bags. The remainder of rehearsal was conducted in civilian clothes. This gave an indication of where preference lay among band members.

Danforth had completed its first year of competition in third place overall, an indication that, in their league, they were not a bad Corps at all. Over them were Preston Scout House and Leaside Jungle Kings.

1957 Danforth Crusaders

Rehearsals for the coming 1957 season began in the fall, and through the winter months continued at the rate of two a week. They were well attended, but shortened somewhat by the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of the Air Cadets. Relations between the band and the cadets were less than perfect. When joining, you were directed to the cadets. If you wanted to be in the band, you had to ask where it was. It was not offered. That was my experience. This might have been because the band had ventured into the world of competitive Drum Corps. This activity was, really, still in its infancy in Canada, and in some places it wasn’t looked upon with approval. It was simply tolerated.



Danforth Tech Crusaders (CNE, 1957)

There were many fine Drum and Bugle Corps in later years that, having originated from regular or reserve force units, severed relations with the Armed Forces. This was in order to be released from restrictions that inhibited their activities.

Danforth carried on, the general membership being unaware of all this high level political passion. The music was learned over the winter months and embraced a varied and pleasing repertoire. When winter rolled into spring, outdoor drill rehearsals began. These were conducted on the school playing field during the week, and at local plaza parking lots on Sundays. During the summer, we moved to a public parking lot at Yonge St. and Lakeshore Boulevard. Apart from a few lampposts, this location was ideal, as there was ample room to perform a full field show. It was also far removed from any residential area, a factor that had been a drawback at previous outdoor locations. Most people do not appreciate being disturbed by raucous sounds (music to us) during their hours of relaxation.

Rehearsal hours were not long. Although Danforth was a respectable band, no one was pushed to achieve. There were no rigid requirements to adhere to, nor any great goals at which to aim. It was all rather easy going, if disciplined, and reflected the fact that Drum Corps in that era, was still very much a hobby.

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

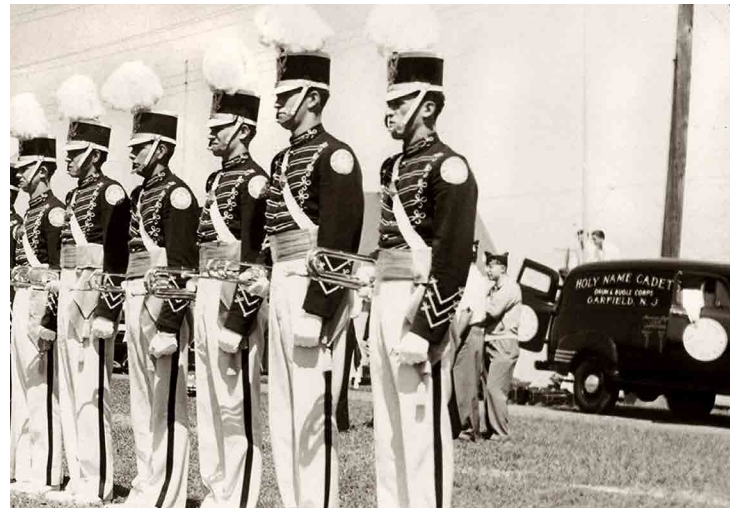
The Crusaders had a decent reputation. Their full field show was rarely used at school functions, gaining most of its exposure at exhibitions and competitions. Practices remained at three per week, and Danforth was consistently the third best Junior Corps in Canada. Not a bad record. Individual members had won first place in drumming and bugling contests, bringing credit to the band. Of these, I was not one, but admired those who were.

Having the talent and instruction that this Corps had, it seems somewhat unusual that they never managed to climb higher in the standings. That was the way it was. Besides Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti, a couple of other people merit mention in this respect.

Ted Key, a French horn player, later went on to become music director of Canada’s Marching Ambassadors, one of the better Senior Corps here, or anywhere. In addition to this, he became a major brass judge.

Norm Cardwell, at the time, holder of the Canadian Junior Drumming Championship, later became a judge, player, and instructor of the highest calibre. Although no longer with us, his overall contribution will never be forgotten. These and many other quality people were all in the Danforth Crusaders.

One ingredient that was definitely not lacking was enthusiasm. Rehearsals were still well attended, and to anyone who cared to notice, it was apparent that the people in the Corps were “all Corps”, as the saying went. During breaks and after practice, the talk was of Hawthorne, Skyliners and Reilly, or “Vinnies”, Holy Name or Blessed Sacrament. Not to forget the mighty St. Joe’s of Newark and Liberty Bell.



Holy Name Cadets

It seems odd that in a locale so remote from the heart of top Drum Corps activity there was such a strong undercurrent of interest; but there was, and this intensity was part of what carried the events of the next twenty years, especially during the initial stages.



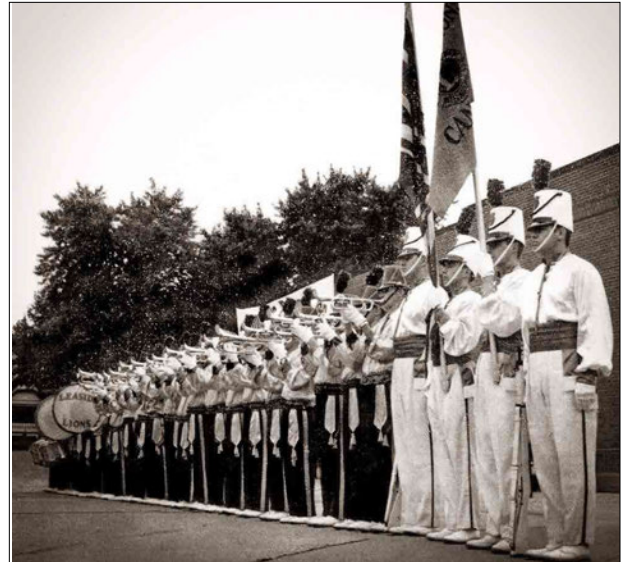
St Vincent’s Cadets, Bayonne, NJ. aka “Vinnies”

During the winter months, it became a custom to often adjourn to the Model Fish and Chip Shop on Danforth Avenue, and sit with chips and a coke until late, discussing Drum Corps. Records were eagerly sought after, those of Stetson P. Richmond and National being the best available. Although not of the quality afforded by modern technology, they were good and were traded and loaned eagerly. Also, magazines, Drum Corps World (the original one), Eastern Review, and Drum Corps News, Boston, were read in order to keep up with the latest news.

Finally came the competition season. There were not a great many of them in those days, especially when compared to the United States. New Jersey, which was a hotbed of activity, had countless Corps and weekly contests. This was one reason for the high level of performance that pervaded the area.

There were a couple of Air Cadet parades, which were compulsory, and then the Corps began to compete. These contests usually consisted of the same Corps who consistently placed in the same positions, so I will limit discussion to two events.

The first, at East York Memorial Stadium, was the first annual Ontario Junior Championships sponsored by the Optimist Club. This was where I first saw Preston Scott House. Although in 1957 they were not the reigning Canadian Champions, they were soon to re-establish themselves in that coveted position. They had not attended the 1956 Championships, and the title had been awarded to the Leaside Jungle Kings.



Leaside Lions Jungle Kings (1957)

When Scout House took to the field, to my inexperienced eyes, they seemed flawless and invincible. Never had I seen such discipline and bearing, such flash and polish. The unique style and music that composed their presentation was so different from the others in attendance that even if they had not won they would have stood out. After the show, and indeed years later, people who attended on my behalf, relatives, friends, etc. invariably remembered Scout House. Many years later, in 1977, at a contest in the U.S.A., I was working with the Seneca Optimists and when it was announced that they were from Canada a lady sitting behind me said, “Canada, that is where Scout House comes from”. That was the effect they had on people.



Preston Scout House at Nationals (Galt, 1958)

Back to 1957, East York. Scout House, led by their white clad Drum Major, Paul “Peewee” Bauer, took top honours. Second place went to Leaside Lions Jungle Kings, and good old Danforth was in its customary third place. The pattern established at this show persisted throughout the year, with minor variations in scores.

At the Canadian Championships, Scout House again took top honours, and with no

serious rivals on the scene at the time, it appeared that this situation could continue indefinitely. Developments, however, during this year would eventually alter this picture.

With the season over, those who were now too old for Junior Drum Corps activity handed in their equipment and departed the scene. Those of us who were left relaxed and were ready to begin preparing for the next season. Then a major surprise, Barry Bell, the leader and creator of the Crusaders had become familiar with the Optimist Trumpet Band and its executive. This happened because he lived near where they conducted their outdoor rehearsals. He had become acquainted with Harry Clark and Mr. A.W. Baggs, the director. When this



Lorne Ferrazzutti and Barry Bell

relationship had ripened, Mr. Baggs had let it be known that he wanted a band that could win the Canadian Junior “A” Championship within two years. He made an offer to Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti to come and take over his band, which was to be the vehicle for this endeavour. Both were interested. The offer, with a stated goal, would come with the necessary support guaranteed.

The Optimist band had not, as expected, grown much in size because of its change of sponsor. The instructors, though competent, were often from within the band itself. This is not as effective as focussed instructors. Mr. Baggs needed such instructors and more people before attempting to move into the Junior “A” division.

Barry Bell, who had guided his Corps through two competitive seasons only to see them always in third place, realized that something was lacking. It was hard to put a finger on what was exactly the problem, but it looked as if Danforth was not ever likely to make great strides. Maybe a couple of more years would have done the trick, but it was not to be.

There were also problems with the school. The move into Drum Corps had entailed more support than the school was prepared to give. Initially, they had purchased the uniforms and instruments, but support had ebbed as time passed, maybe because the band had not lived up to the expectations of its originator.

So, what the Optimist Band needed was instructors and more people, and what the Crusaders needed was a sponsor, one that was prepared to fulfill any conditions that might arise. The stage was thus set for a merger that, in a sense, was not a merger. It was more of a voluntary realignment.

Barry and Lorne leave the Danforth Crusaders

One evening in the fall of 1957, we, of the Crusaders, were asked to wait for an announcement. Eagerly curious, we waited. Barry announced that he and Lorne were going to leave Danforth to join the Optimist Trumpet Band as instructors. There was no effort to coerce or persuade people to come, as taking the members of the Crusaders was not on the agenda. It was just stated that anybody who wished to come along was welcome.



Danforth Tech Crusaders on the starting line (1957)

Some of us were familiar with the Optimist band, some not. They had not competed at our level, so we had not paid great attention to them. Myself, I thought, “The Optimist Trumpet Band”, who were they? Many of us were sorry to see what could be the end of the Danforth Crusaders. Though not a really good band, it had always been fun to be in, and many of us still went to school at Danforth Tech. Without instruction, who would run it? As it turned out, that school still had a similar organization in the 1980's.

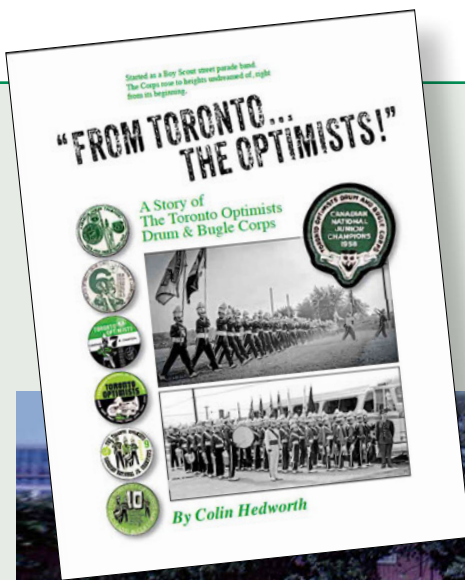
“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth (continued)

As for us, back in 1957, we were mostly desirous of still playing in a Corps and wanted to be where we could do this. Those who were interested were told to report at 7:30 p.m., on a certain Wednesday evening, to Jarvis Vocational School. This was the regular indoor practice spot of the Optimist Trumpet Band.

Most, but not all, of us light-heartedly bid the Crusaders a fond farewell and happily trooped off at the appointed hour to face whatever the future held.



Jarvis Vocational School



In our next newsletter: Chapters 3 and 4

That's when you'll find out: Why the meeting of Opti-Corps and Danforth members was so critical. The ups and downs at the first rehearsal. The hard working first year: the excitement of the first competition and the jubilation of Optimists' first National title.



The book “*From Toronto... The Optimists!*” is out of print.

Whaley-Royce: a bit of drum corps history

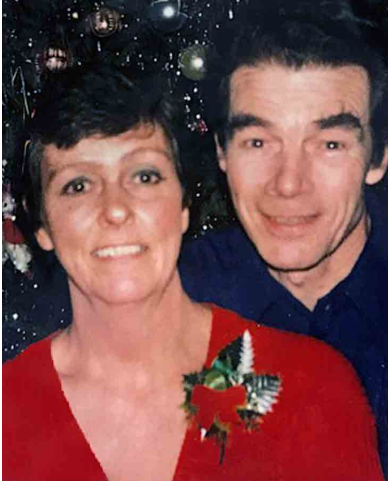
The complete article about Whaley-Royce can be found on TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

Whaley, Royce & Co. Ltd.

Toronto, Ontario

- 1888 Whaley, Royce Co. founded by Eli Whaley (1853-1920) and George C. Royce (1865-1945) in Toronto (Canadian Encyclopedia)
- 1888 they build the first cornet made in Canada in June (CE)
- 1889 establish a branch store in Winnipeg (CE)
- 1895 added flutes, piccolos, and clarinets to their manufacturing (CE)
- 1898 catalog offers the "Imperial" (high-grade own make), "Ideal" (mid-grade import) and "Sterling" (low-grade import) models of brass band instruments; #158 Yonge St; the factory was on the 4th floor of the building
- 1902 Royce leaves and Whaley becomes president & GM (CE)
- 1907 catalog shows Imperial, Ideal and Sterling brass with the last two looking like typical Bohland & Fuchs imports from Austria
- 1910 letterhead shows them at #237 Yonge St with the same band instrument offerings as in 1898
- 1920 Whaley dies and the company is purchased by Hunter, Maddock and Myhill; only brass and percussion instruments are now made (CE)
- 1955 publications are moved to another Yonge St location (CE)
- 1969 end of music publishing (CE)
- 1975 end all instrument manufacturing and the wholesale division is moved to Scarborough (CE)
- 1976 the downtown location is closed (CE)





Flo Sciore

February of 2020

Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Flo and Vic's connection with the corps began when their son Vic joined the Optimist Cadets. Both of their daughters, Darlene and Laura, also joined the corps. The Sciore family quickly became an integral part of the Optimists family. For many years Flo and her husband Vic ran the corps' booster table. Initially it was for the Toronto Optimists then, after the merger with the Seneca Princemen, for the Seneca Optimists.

Darlene wrote: "Besides family, nothing was more important to my mom than the drum corps. She treated every member as part of our family My mom loved having all the "out of towners" at our home each weekend."

A few comments from some who knew Flo:

"Ahhh Mrs Score was such a sweetheart. She opened her home... or should I say kitchen to us Drum Corps youth back in 1978. She was a saint" (Doug Huras)

"Sorry to hear this. They were the kind of family that drum corps couldn't survive without." (Vern Johansson)

"What a woman! Their home was party central in the 70's . They made sure we were always fed and looked after especially when we drank a little too much! We had horn practices there - so patient, so tolerant! Don't know how they put up with us all. What amazing loving and caring people Mr and Mrs Score were." (Corrie Danielson)

"The ultimate Drum Corps parents. Supported everyone all the time. A big influence in my younger years. Many fond memories of her." (Kevin O'Connor)

"Mrs. Sciore was one half of one of the kindest couples I have known throughout my life. When I think of her, the qualities of warmth and grace rush to mind." (Dan Martin Shimski)

"My heart is hurting, but I know she is with her two Vics. She was one of a kind and will be truly missed by so many. People like her and her husband are rare in this world." (Karinn Martel)



John Peachey

November 18, 2020

Corps: Burlington Teen Tour Band, Top Hat Marching Orchestra, Empire Statesmen, Optimists Alumni

John grew up around marching bands, and played the tuba. He started in the Burlington Teen Tour Band, where he met his wife Kimm. He then helped to start the Burlington Top Hat Marching Orchestra. John's son, Michael, marched with the Empire Statesmen and

John joined the corps so that he and his son could march together.

John first played with the Optimists Alumni in 2012. Carrying a 30 pound contrabass on one's shoulder puts a strain on the body and, after a performance in the Fall of 2013, John came home with muscle spasms in his back. Unfortunately the problem was not the contra. John was diagnosed with cancer and given a prognosis of only six months. Bravely enduring multiple rounds of chemo and selective radiation treatments he survived more than seven years to share this time with family and friends.

John said that his big wish was to be a grandpa. John's son, Michael, and his wife, Melissa, welcomed their first child in December 2018! John's wish had come true and he had a bit of time to enjoy being a grandfather. John was well liked and respected by all of those who knew him. He will very much be missed.

John had three great loves in life, they were family, friends and music. I hope that he found all three in his time with our corps.

A few comments from some who knew John

"Drum Corps has connected me with many incredible people and this man was at the top. A kind, genuine person and a true gentleman."
(Jackie Nicholls)

"John was a tremendous fan of the marching arts. His family all played in the Burlington Teen Tour Band and later he was a key contributor to the success of the Top Hat Marching Orchestra. John loved drum corps of the past and of today." (Phil McArthur)

"I had the pleasure of marching with him In Empire Statesmen, always great fun to be around. He wanted to march there with his son. John will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him." (Diane Mayes-Beauchamp)





Rick Cooper

June 25, 1951 – October 6, 2020

Corps: Bantam Optimists, Toronto Optimists

Rick began the drum corps segment of his life in 1962 with the Bantam Optimists. He marched with the Bantams from 1962 until the Bantams folded in 1964. He then joined the Toronto Optimists and marched with them until the end of 1971.

Rick started on flag in the Toronto Optimists. Later he became Guard Sergeant before moving to rifle. Rick was part of the Optimists competitive colour guard and competed with the guard in 1967, 1968 and 1969. In 1967 Rick, Steve Jarvis and Bernie Roelcke competed on rifle in the Individuals. They won!

Steve Cooper remembers: “Members of the competitive colour guard in that first year were Vern, the Cooper brothers (Ron, Rick and Steve), John Rood, Bernie Roelcke, Steve Jarvis, Dave Blevins, Bill Kane and others. Jack Roberts led the idea and wrote the show. It was based on a “Chicago style” that Jack found. Unlike other guards we competed without a drummer! Unique and never copied in the Canadian and NY circuits in which we competed We kept cadence by stamping our left foot at dramatic points. It was intimidating to other guards when we did march passes going in and out of competition. A one two three stamp.”

A few comments from some who knew Rick:

“He was a rock. Quiet, talented and dedicated. He was one of the last to perform with a REAL rifle and - along with the others – made a .303 dance. Proud to have known him for (sadly) only a brief time.” (Greg Oxenham)

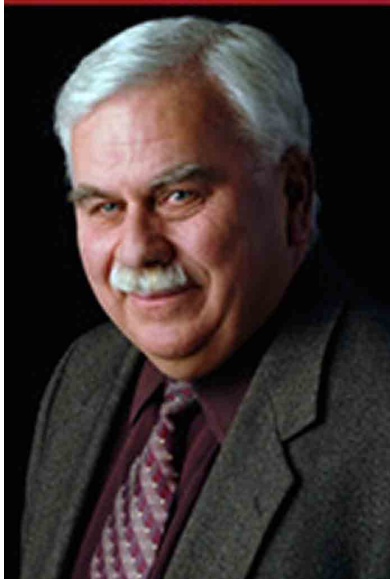
“Rick and his brothers are responsible for my entry into the Drum Corps world which became a huge part of my life.” (Rick Tracey)

“A great guy who taught me the Optimist way.” (Larry Blandford)

“My conscience.” (Rose Wright)



Rick Cooper (L) and Steve Cooper in their Bantam Optimists uniforms. (1962)



Tom May

September 13, 2017

Corps: Grantham, Canadian Commanders,
Optimists Alumni

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

Snowball, became good friends during that time. We had a lot of fun – it was a great time in our lives.

He especially enjoyed his short time with the Optimists Alumni corps. Tom’s health declined over the past few months which he spent in a long-term care facility in North York. He leaves a daughter - Regan, a son - Andrew and a step-son - Derek.”



Tom at an Optimists Alumni rehearsal.



Vince Ferraro

May 8, 1946 – February 25, 2020.

Corps: Toronto Optimists, St Mary's,
Optimist Lancers and Cadet-Lancers

Vince joined the Optimists drum line in 1964 and stayed until he aged out in 1968. After aging out Vince continued his corps connection as a photographer for the Canadian Drum Corps Association. You might, for instance, remember the photo of Opti's mellos on the cover of the 1969 album. That shot was taken by Vince.

In addition to his post-age out photography, Vince also taught the Optimist Cadets and Cadet-Lancers in the 70's and if I am not mistaken also taught the Emerald Knights (Mississauga?)

A few comments from some who knew Vince:

"I was Vince's rookie back in 1968 Vince made my first year in Optimists easy as he was a mentor and a true friend to me I shall always have fond memories of all the good times we had" (Ted Wilson)

"One of the greatest guys who taught me a lot about being a member of the Green Machine."
(Larry Blandford)

"I still remember my time when I marched with Vince in the drum line back in the 60's Yes he was a quiet guy but he sure loved a good joke and we shared many of those." (Rick Shearer)

RIP Vince, you will be fondly remembered for your kindness as a mentor within the Drum Corps community." (Collin Victor Brookes)

"Although soft spoken (most of the time), Vince was focused and committed. I will always hold dear the time that he instructed us in the Cadet Lancers." (Dan Martin Shimski)

"Vince taught me in the Optimist Lancers. He also recommended me for a lucrative summer job in his department at the Ministry of the Environment. In the first week, or maybe even on the first day, he suggested that I leave work to attend the funeral of Marty King, a Lancer who died from leukemia. I wasn't going to ask because I had just started, and I appreciated his kindness." (Judy Ferguson)

"Fond memories of Vince's wicked and incisive sense of humor. Yes, sarcasm was his hallmark and he and George were the best at it in the Corps. We'll all remember "Suuuure" "Beat the Weirdo" "Goat Herder" and anything FEET related. Have a blast together guys. Heaven just got a lot funnier. Thanks for the great times." (Marcel Smolinski)

“... and in second place...”

I'm sure you'll remember standing with the other corps during the Retreat Ceremony waiting to hear the scores. If the corps wasn't announced up to third place, the next announcement was like... hanging in space.

The scores below are from 1957. I don't know if results were announced in reverse order, even so, many band members hung in space.

FIRST ANNUAL LONDON BAND FESTIVAL	
London Ontario, Canada. June 1	
TRUMPET BANDS 1957	
Class 101 Junior Novice.	
2nd Field R.C.E. Cadets, Toronto	80.50
Class 102 Junior Open.	
Opti-corps, Toronto	88.00
R.C. Sea Cadets, Guelph	74.50
80th Squad., R.C. Air Cadets, And Waterloo	67.50
Simcoe Boy Scouts, Simcoe	67.50

CANADIAN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP							
Galt, Ontario September 7, 1957							
CONTESTANT Juniors	M. & M	Drum	Bugle	G. E.	Insp.	Pen.	Total
Scout House	28.01	21.60	22.50	12.40	4.90		89.40
Leaside Lions	27.82	18.10	21.00	11.30	5.00	83.2	83.20
Danforth Crusaders	26.78	17.90	19.90	10.50	5.00		80.08
Grantham Police Boys	24.86	15.10	20.30	9.60	5.00		74.86
180th Sky Raiders	24.97	14.60	17.00	8.90	4.90	1.10	69.27
CONTESTANT Seniors							
Ambassadors	27.26	20.50	21.40	12.10	5.00		86.26
Royales	28.55	17.90	21.10	12.20	5.00		84.75
Jolly Jesters	26.92	18.30	20.80	12.40	5.00	83.42	83.43
48th Field	26.51	18.00	19.30	10.00	5.00		78.81
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION							
Toronto, Canada September 28							

Side note, 1961: I remember being told “No matter who finished first, do-not-move-an-inch. Eyes-straight-ahead”. I saw the wisdom in this, especially when we lost. Sometimes the corps was perceived as arrogant for this approach. To me, it was what we did. Understated excellence. *David Johns*

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HOW TO REACH US

CORRECTIONS: We tried to get everything right.

If not, please let us know:

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Or mail

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E-Photos should be sent to:

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

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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.