



# 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](mailto:Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com)

A PDF version is available on the website: [www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca](http://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca)



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# Contribute to your newsletter

Send your suggestions, stories or articles to Bob: [toronto\\_optimist@rogers.com](mailto:toronto_optimist@rogers.com) or David: [openrd2002@yahoo.ca](mailto:openrd2002@yahoo.ca)

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.



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## ISSUE 1

### JANUARY 2021

**WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL ISSUE** of the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter. Don Daber founded the first issue of COC 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.

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## ISSUE 2

### APRIL 2021

**WELCOME TO THE SECOND ISSUE** of the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter. The first issue was well received and we hope that all of you will continue to enjoy learning the history of the Toronto 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 Old Corps and the

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## ISSUE 3

### JULY 2021

**THIS IS THE THIRD ISSUE** of the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter. Your response to these newsletters has been very positive and we hope you will enjoy this one. The Optimists had won the Nationals in their first year in competition. Everyone, corp members and fans, were wondering whether the Optimists could hold on for a second year. Perhaps Second House would regain the title? Since all of this is in the past, I'm sure you already know the answer, however, you might be interested in hearing how the year unfolded. This issue includes Chapter 5 and 6 of Colin's History of 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

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## ISSUE 4

### OCTOBER 2021

**HERE THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE** FOR 2021 of the Toronto Optimists History Newsletter. Your feedback has been very positive and we hope to make these newsletters even better in 2022. The nature of life is change and that applies to drum corps. It is a cruel fate to change they become inactive. The Toronto Optimists were not able to do that. As a drum corps we had a very important role in Canadian drum corps history. We hope you will find the article to be both interesting and informative.

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## ISSUE 5

### JANUARY 2022

**THIS IS OUR FIRST ISSUE FOR 2022** and even though the New Year has already begun, we need our Best Wishes to all of our readers for a Happy and Healthy 2022! In this issue, we include Chapters 9 and 10 of Colin's History of the Optimists. The focus of these chapters is on 1961, which was a very challenging year for the corps. Members of Old Corps were called to leave when they reached one and the line of experienced members can create a major challenge for the corps. The Optimists had to deal with this situation when they had almost half of their corps away in the 1960 season. Lots of experienced players, many of whom had won with the corps since its inception, quit and new members of the corps had a lot of learning and growing - to do.

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### APRIL 2022

**SPRING HAS SPRUNG!** During the 1960s we would have been amazed by the Shell Tower at the CNE, the Ferris wheel and, perhaps, watching from the tower while watching our bats. Ah, the sweet memories of youth!

In 1961 De La Salle had, for the first time, beaten the Optimists. They did this, but not on their regular equipment. If the Optimists wanted to stay ahead of De La Salle it was clear that major changes would be required. Decisions to throw out their complete show and step into the unknown. One of those steps included new brass chairs owned by a guy named Donald Green who had formed the US Air Force Drum and Bugle Corps and it was disbanded. This was definitely a step in the right direction!

This issue includes Chapter 11 and 12 of Colin's History of the Optimists. The focus of these chapters is on the winter of 1961-62 and the Toronto Optimists very successful summer of 1962, a summer which included Optimists first victory over the Broomfield Seneca Golden Knights.

Our feature article is about another of our competitors, the Cadets LaSalle Drum Corps from Ottawa. LaSalle was a force to be reckoned with. They competed at their first Nationals in 1964 and only two years later, in the 1966 Nationals, they not only defeated De La Salle to third place but they beat Optimists in the prelims at Nationals!

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## ISSUE 7

### JULY 2022

**HERE THIS IS THE SEVENTH ISSUE** of the Toronto Optimists History Newsletter. Your feedback has been very positive and we hope to make these newsletters even better in 2022. The nature of life is change and that applies to drum corps. It is a cruel fate to change they become inactive. The Toronto Optimists were not able to do that. As a drum corps we had a very important role in Canadian drum corps history. We hope you will find the article to be both interesting and informative.

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## ISSUE 8

### OCTOBER 2022

**HERE THIS IS THE EIGHTH ISSUE** of the Toronto Optimists History Newsletter. Your feedback has been very positive and we hope to make these newsletters even better in 2022. The nature of life is change and that applies to drum corps. It is a cruel fate to change they become inactive. The Toronto Optimists were not able to do that. As a drum corps we had a very important role in Canadian drum corps history. We hope you will find the article to be both interesting and informative.

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8. October 2022





### WEBSITE ADDITIONS

Additions to both the **Main website** and the **Photo Gallery** continue to be made.

New photos are added to the gallery about twice each week.



*Durham Girls (Simcoe, 1978)*

## WEBSITE UPDATE:

### What's new on TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

**W**HILE WE CONTINUE to add new content to both the main Website and the Photo Gallery, most of our efforts go into the newsletters and the Photo Gallery. We always post Optimist-related images but we regularly include photos of other corps, often those at the Junior "B" and Junior "C" levels, to give as many people as possible a chance to see themselves when they were young. The photo of the Durham Girls in the top-right and the image of the Oshawa Rebels at the bottom left of this page fit into this category.

Recently, someone posted a YouTube video of the Toronto Optimists performing during halftime at the 1968 Grey Cup in Toronto; however, the quality of the audio was not very good. We improved the audio and added a brief intro before posting it on the website.

We hope that you are enjoying the additions to our website and are open to suggestions that you might have for additions to the website.

Checkout the new Optimists video: "1968 Grey Cup Halftime Show" on the website.

It has some rare performance footage.



*Oshawa Rebels (1978)*

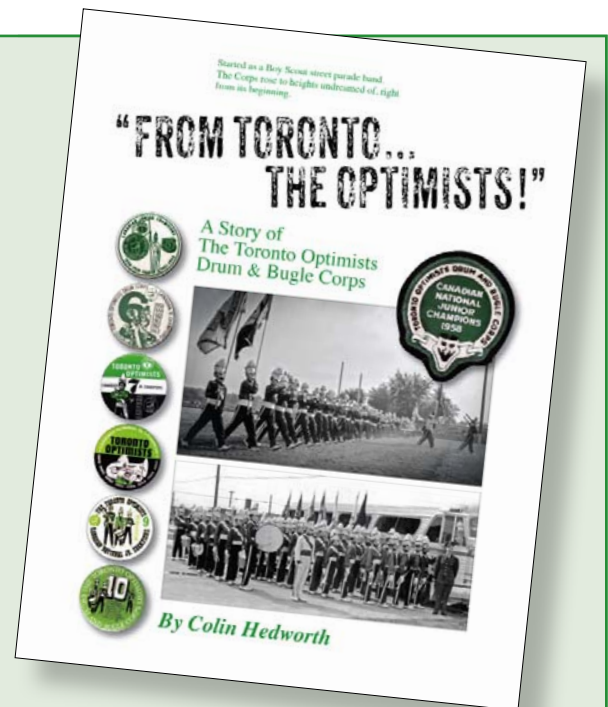
### In our next newsletter: Chapters 19 and 20

The next issue of the Newsletter (April) will include Chapters 19 and 20 from Colin Hedworth's book "From Toronto... The Optimists!".

**I**N CHAPTER 19 Colin writes about the difficulties during the winter of 1968/69 and the 1969 competitive season. While the Optimists had struggled during the summer of 1968, they had a strong corps that fought back and managed to win Nationals. In 1969, De La Salle had many experienced members while half of the Optimists were inexperienced rookies. Del started the season with a win and they never looked back; however, The Optimists were not prepared to give up, doing everything that they could to improve. Nationals arrived and, despite Optimists' valiant efforts, De La Salle won - by 1/20th of a point, the same margin by which Del lost in 1961. Even though they lost, the Optimists had done their best, coming within a hair's breadth of winning.

**C**OLIN'S TITLE for Chapter 20 is: "A New Decade, A New Beginning", and that is an apt description. The Optimists had won 11 consecutive National titles between 1958 and 1968, making them the dominant force on the Canadian drum corps scene; however, De La Salle's victory in 1969 had changed that. Del was now the top dog in Canada! And, for all of 1970, LaSalle Cadets were in second place! Never in their history had the Optimists been in third place in Canada; however, no matter how hard they tried, the Optimists stayed there all year.

**N**OT ONLY had the Optimists lost the Canadian title, but they had also lost their sponsor. Since 1955, the Downtown Toronto Optimist Club had sponsored the Optimists; however, in 1968, the club decided that they could afford to sponsor the corps for only one more year, 1969. The good news is that a bunch of guys who had aged out got together and created the York-Toronto Optimist Club which, in early 1970, assumed sponsorship of the corps. Needless to say, 1970 was a year of change!



Toronto Optimists (North American Invitational, 1970)

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



# Grantham Township Police Boy's Band

by Ron Bruce

**I**N LATE 1954, the Grantham Township Police Force founded the Band in St. Catharines, Ontario (pop. 16,000). The Chief of Police was Norman Fach. Here is a bit of the background.

In the spring of 1954, Chief Constable Norman P. Fach, of the Grantham Township Police Department, had a discussion with a citizen of Grantham Township regarding Juvenile Delinquency and ways of providing a hobby during out-of-school hours for young boys in the community. Their decision was to form a trumpet band since it would serve a three-fold purpose. It would offer an education in music

for the prospective members, cultivate a better relationship between the Police Department and the younger generation of the community, and it would be a source of entertainment to thousands of people in the immediate and outlying districts.

When asked about creating the band, Chief Fach purportedly said, "I can either chase these kids on the streets or gather them all up here and give them something constructive to do". This was one of the many reasons for creating a traditional drum corps:

give kids a positive purpose and an opportunity to work together to create something much greater than one could as an individual.



Ron Bruce (1961)



Grantham Township Police Boys Band in their brand new uniforms (May, 1955)

## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

A Drum Corps needs uniforms and instruments, and these are expensive. As a result, there is a hefty start-up cost for a new corps. The gentleman with whom the Chief had been conferring kindly offered to finance such a project, providing his name remained anonymous, and that members of the Police Department, in their off-duty hours, take over the training and counselling of the corps members. The aim was to create a Street Parade band, offering the opportunity of musical training and marching at no cost to the member.

Chief Fach accepted these terms. As a first step, they formed an advisory Board of Directors which was composed of several interested citizens of Grantham Township together with members of the Grantham Township Police Department.

The Board approached Charles Hill of St. Catharines and he agreed to accept the position of Bandmaster. Mr. Hill had been an understudy of the late John Phillip Sousa (a well-known writer and composer of music designed for military bands). Locally, Mr Hill had been associated with orchestras and trumpet bands for many years and was well known in the community as a musician capable of producing a first class trumpet band.

In October, 1954, enrolment for band members began, and shortly thereafter, approximately sixty boys ranging in ages from eleven to eighteen years began studying the rudiments of music in one of the Township Schools. Mr. Hill gave generously of his time and personally

began instructing prospective trumpeters.

The instruments used were soprano, tenor, and baritone bugle horns, as well as snare, tenor, bass drum, bells, and cymbals. Charlie was a strict disciplinarian who expected us to practice daily and know all the marches. At one rehearsal, he asked someone to stand up and play



Chief Norman P. Fach, Founder and Director of Grantham

*One of the benefits of drum corps was very well articulated by Norm Fach who was both the Police Chief of St. Catharines, Ontario and the Director of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band. He said "look I can either chase these kids on the streets or gather them all up here and give them something constructive to do".*

a line from the Sousa March. This boy could not play it. Mr. Hill said, "Hand in your horn, you are done!". This got everyone's attention. It set the tone very early on with the Corps that you HAD to practice daily and learn how to read music.

The duties of Drum Instructor were taken over by Mr. Donald Gill of St. Catharines, a qualified musician in his own right and a former member of civilian and military bands in the area. These two men were responsible for the musical

knowledge the band members attained and used successfully in the competitions and parades in which the band later participated. Unfortunately, after a short time, Mr. Hill became the victim of a serious illness which necessitated complete rest and, for this reason, he was unable to continue his active role in the organization. Since the group needed a Bandmaster, Mr. Gill agreed to take over Mr. Hill's position as Bandmaster. He did an excellent job.





## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

Instruments were purchased shortly after music studies began and, while the boys practised several hours a week during evenings, uniforms were being tailored and fitted, intricate drills were being worked out, and equipment readied in preparedness for the parades and competitions they were hoping to enter the following spring and summer. Several members of the Police Department, having had previous drum corps experience as well as military training with the armed forces, pitched in to act as assistant instructors on music and military drill. Along with Chief Fach, they worked many hours during their off duty time to make the band a success. At every function the band attended, several men from the Police Department would be in the background, lending their moral support and making sure the boys looked their best as they turned out on parade.



*Grantham in their "Bobby" helmets (East York Stadium, 1960)*

Instead of Shakos, the corps decided to use "Bobby" helmets. Many Police Departments, both in Canada and the United Kingdom, had formerly used this head dress. These police departments were contacted and many of them sold their old helmets to the corps. These used helmets were sanded and

painted white. A chrome maple leaf with beaver (the official Police Badge) was mounted on the front. The helmets stood out well in contrast to a scarlet tunic with white piping and blue trousers to match. These white "Bobby" helmets remained a signature part of the total uniform until 1964 when the corps purchased cadet style uniforms.

The result of a full winter's training was first seen at a dedication ceremony, held at the Grantham Township High School, on May 19, 1955. The band turned out, resplendent in their new uniforms. They played several selections while countermarching under the command of Drum Major John Kerr, a member of the Police Department. On this occasion, the band pennants and flags were presented to the band by visiting dignitaries of the community.

After that first parade, the Grantham Township Police Boys Band performed in a host of parades and competitions, both in Ontario and the United States. They brought home many honours not only for themselves but also for the community in which they lived. In 1956, the Grantham Township Police Boys Band competed in their first Canadian Championships held at Merriton, Ontario and became Junior "B" champions of Canada.

Grantham had the singular honour of representing Canada in both 1956 and 1957 as the only Canadian band to perform in the parade at the All American



*Grantham (All American Soap Box Derby, Akron, OH, 1957)*

## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

Soap Box Derby in Akron, Ohio, U.S.A. The band's marching and musical ability had improved a great deal since that first public appearance and everyone felt that their original purposes had been well fulfilled.

**T**HE TRANSITION to field competition began after the 1957 season when the corps moved into the Junior "A" class. In 1958, their first year in Junior "A", they appeared at the Canadian National Championships in Galt, Ontario, taking fourth place honours. This was quite an accomplishment considering that it was only their second appearance in championship competitions!

In 1959, Chief Fach hired Fred Johnson as the corps' drum instructor. Harry Hamilton would instruct brass while Vince Bruni handled Marching and Maneuvering.

The instrumentation was expanded by adding French Horns and G Basses. Fred Johnson's instructions were quite simple "Let's aim for the 1960 National Championship in Hamilton, Ont." Fred realized that, in order to achieve his goal, the corps needed more members so he insisted that, at our next rehearsal, everyone must bring in at least one new member. The Corps immediately doubled in size. The drumline now included three snares, two tenors, two bass drums and two cymbals.



*Buddy Latour (1960)*

Buddy Latour had been a bugler since joining the Corps in 1955; however, that changed five years later. Buddy had grown quite tall, making him stand out in a crowd.



*Dennis Roberts (soprano) with Rick Robida, Larry Galasso and Jack MacMullen (Windsor, 1960)*

This is perfect for a Drum Major! In 1960, Buddy Latour became the corps' new Drum Major.

Harry Hamilton created some great arrangements and the repertoire for 1960 was: "Jezebel", for the Opening Fanfare, followed by the off the line "Lover", then "Love For Sale" into "Greensleeves" and "Marie" for the Concert (featuring three of our G Basses; Richard Robida, Larry Galasso and Jack MacMullen, as soloists, with a young Dennis Roberts trying to butt in for a solo). It was one of the highlights and a great crowd pleaser. Out of concert was "In the Good Ol' Summertime" and then the colour presentation of "O God Our Help in Ages Past" featuring Ron Bruce as soloist, with a



*Grantham (Nationals, Galt, 1958)*





*Ron Bruce, Ken, George Brown, Art Ratelle, Dennis Roberts and others (1961)*

sustained high D conclusion. The exit number was “Good Night Sweetheart”, making for an all round entertaining Corps.

We spent the winter and early spring rehearsing twice a week, on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings. We were very excited about the outside drill show. These were “heady” days. We sounded so good.

The Corps uniform for parades started as a Red Tunic with Navy blue pants and black Wellington boots, white gloves and white “Bobby” helmets. The marching uniform required some modification

for field competition, but the white “Bobby” helmets remained a signature part of the total uniform until 1964.

In 1960, we were all pumped up for the Canadian National Championships at Ivor Wynne Stadium in Hamilton, Ont. The week before this championship, we had practiced every night for three hours. Our execution was nearly flawless.

We hoped to take the preliminary morning show and we were looking forward to the night’s competition. Only the evening show would stand between us and the Championships.



*Buddy Latour conducts Grantham (CNE, Toronto, 1960)*





Newspaper article about the food poisoning (1960)

**F**ATE HAD ANOTHER Plan. Off the line was great but then Corps members began falling. First was the bass drummer falling on his bass drum. Some in the Colour party also collapsed. I had to walk over my fallen comrade, John Welsh, who was carrying the National colours. We concluded the show with many more fallen comrades. The story revealed that many band members ate at restaurants in the area and then developed “food poisoning”. What could have been a glorious evening, turned into a nightmare and disappointment for the Corps.

*The food poisoning did us in for the finals. Being Chief of Police in Grantham, Norm Fach had the restaurant responsible charged to the full extent of the law. Corps and bands from that time on, were very careful about what they ate. In many cases, they brought their own source of food.*

— Jack Roberts

The Corps competed at the 1961 Canadian Nationals in Waterloo and we finished “third”.

During the 1962 and 1963 seasons, Grantham left the ranks of Junior “A” and competed in the Junior “B” class. In 1964, however, they returned to Junior “A” sporting smartly designed cadet style uniforms. Sadly, shakos replaced their signature “Bobby” helmets.

For its entire existence Grantham had been an all-boys corps. In 1964 this, too, changed as Grantham went co-ed. Former Grantham member, Jack Roberts, wrote and instructed the drill for this new incarnation of Grantham. The corps competed during both the 1964 and 1965 contest seasons.

During the summer of 1965, management of Grantham and the Denis Morris Majestics, another local corps that competed in Junior “B”, had been discussing a merger. During the retreat for the



Grantham in their Cadet Uniforms (1964 or 1965)



1965 Grape Festival competition, Grantham and Denis Morris went on retreat as one corps, playing, “You’ll Never Walk Alone”. This was the final performance for these corps. After this show, the two corps merged to create a new Junior “A” corps, the Chessmen.

### Some Interesting facts about the Corps:

- Chief Fach decided it would be a good fundraiser, to sell “wooden nickels” as souvenirs. It was very successful.
- The Corps marched twice at the Akron Ohio Soap Box Derby, in 1956 and 1957.
- Bob Luckanchoff became a St. Catharines Police officer. Bob was a lead soprano and High “G” specialist.
- In 1959, Grantham was unable to compete in the New York/Canadian Championships because a quarter of the corps was banged up from a high school football game.
- The traditional “Bobby helmet” was changed to a “Shako” when the corps got cadet-style uniforms in 1964.
- The Corps twice marched in the Indianapolis 500. Grantham was the lead band for the Indianapolis 500 prior to the race in both 1956 and 1957.
- In 1963, Ron Bruce, former Grantham soloist, won The Canadian Individual Bugling Championship, Senior Class, as a member of the Merritton Buccaneers.



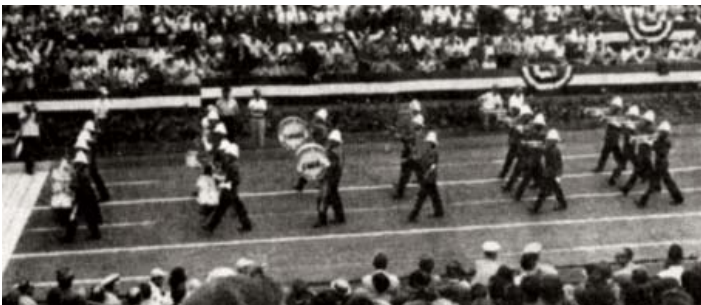
Grantham Wooden Nickels



L-R: Don Gill, Chief Fach and Charles Hill (1955)



Buddy Latour, Grantham’s Drum Major, converted an old white hearse into an equipment truck with this crest on the side



Grantham at the Soap Box Derby (Akron, OH, 1956)

## Message From The Business Manager

*(from a 1957 program)*

**T**H SIXTY-TWO members of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band made their first appearance in full dress uniform at the Grantham High School, Church Road, in May 1955. A board of Directors was formed for the purpose of managing the affairs of the band.

For the first two years it was very difficult to keep the band going and at the same time attempt to meet the many unforeseen expenses. Boys will be boys and it was, and still is, somewhat of a problem instilling in their minds that even though

they give their time they must be more careful with equipment. We are trying to teach them to be better boys and it is now very gratifying to hear the compliments we receive from citizens of both Canada and the United States.

These boys are international ambassadors of goodwill and, in my humble opinion, do more to advertise Grantham and St. Catharines district than any other medium that I have seen. This is accomplished at no cost to either Municipality.

The members of the Grantham Police Department have put thousands of off duty hours along with Bandmaster Charles Hill. Mr. Hill suffered a heart attack which forced his retirement as band master. He deserves the highest praise, as with the help he

received he was able to produce a band that were the Junior B Canadian Champions for 1956. As a result of Band Master Hill's illness, the Board of Directors appointed Don Gill as Band Master and Charles Hill as Honourary Band Master. Mr. Gill, Drum Major John Kerr, Zuliana Gambi, assisted by Dave McKnight, are responsible for the musical education of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band.

I would like to extend hearty thanks to all these instructors and the many citizens who are ardent followers and supporters of the Band. I would also like to thank the Grantham Township Area School Board for the use of Consolidated School for the Practice Hall, also the Grantham Lions Club who allow us to drill at their Sports' park.

*Norman P. Fach, Business Manager.*



*Chief Fach presents the Nationals trophy to Phil Hennings (Galt, 1958)*



## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

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*Ron Bruce playing a solo, Grantham (Windsor, 1960)*



*Grantham (Nationals, Galt, 1958)*

## **Anonymous donor gave uniforms and instruments**

*Article about the anonymous donations of uniforms and instruments to Grantham to get the corps started (1955)*

THE SIXTY-TWO-MEMBER Grantham Township Police Boys' Band, which has been outfitted with instruments and uniforms by an anonymous donor, last night received its colours in the group's first public appearance.

The dedication ceremony was held in the auditorium of the Lincoln and Welland District High School, Grantham Township, on Church Rd., and nervous tension coupled with the stuffiness in the building caused several of the youngsters in the band to pass out.

After the five flags had been presented and various dignitaries had spoken, the band, resplendent in white helmets and striking red uniforms moved outdoors to cooler air and there played several selections while counter-marching, under command of Drum Major Jack Kerr.

The colour party, under Sgt. Maj. M. J. Friesen, received the Union Jack from Lt. Col. E. Clemis, MBE, ED, former commanding officer of the 44th Field Regiment, RCA.

Victor Edwards, Grantham Township councillor, presented the Canadian Ensign to the band and Major W. T. Thompson, commanding officer of 30 Technical

Squadron, RCEME, presented the flag of the United States.

The two police pennants were presented by Ivan Buchanan, first commissioner of the Grantham police commission and Constable Jack Timlock of the Grantham township police force.

Rt. Rev. Monsignor A. E. McQuillen, Dean of Niagara, and Rev. Paul Moore, rector of St. Columba's Anglican Church, were present at the ceremony.

Col. Clemis told the large gathering that the Grantham police and especially Chief Norman P. Fach deserved a lot of credit for the work they had done in getting the band together. The boys themselves, he added, also deserved commendation for their efforts. Mr. Edwards reminded the band that they should not forget to thank the anonymous sponsor of the group who had paid for the unit's equipment. He also congratulated Chief Fach, his staff and the band members for their work.

"May you look on our police force with great pride," said Mr. Buchanan. He added his own words of praise to those of the other speakers for the efforts of the Grantham police force and the boys of the band.

### **The Band Motto**

Monsignor McQuillen centred his remarks around the band's motto, "above all else, manliness."

"Manliness is another word for virtue," he said, "and virtue is formed by the repetition of good acts. We should put manliness above all else because it implies strength of soul as well as body."

The speaker commended the action of the man responsible for outfitting the band.

"I would like to commend this man in the highest for his interest in these boys" he said.

The band was formed in August, 1954, and began practising under Bandmaster Charles Hill in November of last year. Mr. Hill is assisted by Donald Gill drum Instructor.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Drum Major Kerr led the band in three cheers for Chief Fach, Bandmaster Hill and Mr. Gill. Chief Fach was master of ceremonies for the occasion.





*Ron Bruce of the Merritton Buccaneers and his trophy for best soprano (1963)*



*Grantham (St Catharines, about 1960)  
L-R: Les Slorack, Tom May, Dave Haynes, Paul Price and Jim Robins  
Bass Drum: Rick Splonick, Drum Major: Bud LeTour*



*Grantham Off The Line (Nationals, Hamilton, 1960)*



## Denis Morris Majestics

The Denis Morris Majestics were a Junior “B” corps that was founded around 1962. Their sponsor was Denis Morris Catholic High School

in St Catharines, Ontario. At the end of the 1965 season the Majestics folded so that they could merge with Grantham to create a new Junior “A” corps, the Chessmen.



### THE MAJESTICS

DIRECTOR: Father Bochump  
HORN INSTRUCTOR: Ron Walker  
DRUM INSTRUCTOR: Dave Hayes  
DRILL INSTRUCTOR: Bill Rutherford  
DRUM CORPS MAJOR: Brian Baker  
DRUM LINE: M. Laseck, B. Grassie, L. Robbins, B. Kirkpatrick, K. Griffiths, B. Kelly, T. St. Amant.  
BASS DRUM: B. Lucy  
CYMBALS: D. Carter, S. Wronski  
HORN LINE: J. Libera, P. Hope, M. Gleason, C. Decker, C. Gicame, B. Kirkpatrick, J. Bryant, T. Molyneux, M. Guerin, B. Kernahan, B. Hillier, J. Burrows, T. Byrns, W. Wronski, L. Seo, T. Williams, M. Longpre, J. Clifford, T. Hus, D. Moccia, M. Persian, P. Mocha, D. Charlton, A. Cardin, R. Cournoyer  
COLOUR GUARD:  
CAPTAIN: Francine Moccia  
SERGEANT: Margaret Urquhart  
P. Davidson, A. Dunn, J. Bulan, V. Winstanley, S. Young, M. Carroll, P. Mayle, P. Carterright, B. Caghill, T. Kirkpatrick, J. LaSalle, C. LaSalle, H. Miller, M. Pettie, R. Grosse, K. Van Der Gulik, C. Nesbit





## The Chessmen

On September 26, 1965, St Catharines two drum corps, Grantham and the Denis Morris Majestics, joined together at the Grape Festival to create a new corps called "The Chessmen". Ron Bruce was asked to be the Horn instructor. The Drum instructor was Gary Lichti from Toronto Marching Ambassadors. The Drill and colour guard instructor was Bill Rutherford. The corps purchased their uniforms from the Phantom Regiment, in Rockford, IL (a fire had destroyed Phantom's corps hall and they were forced to sell the uniforms).

Chessmen was a founding member of the AJrC drum corps association. Sadly, they only competed for three years, folding after the 1968 season.



Program cover for Chessmen's first show (1966)



When Chessmen folded the Optimists benefited greatly.

Many Chessmen moved to the

Optimists. Names of

some of the former Chessmen that come to mind are Peter and John Byrne, Bob Beachin, Jack LaLonde, Tom Sacco and John Kernahan.

John Byrne, an original member of the Chessmen, wrote: *"The amalgamation of the two former Corps was seamless and it performed extremely well in its first year and held itself in good stead in numerous competitions including the New York / Canadian Championships held in Rochester. In its first appearance there The Chessmen almost beat St. Joes in the preliminary. It happened that it was one of those occasions when everything just seemed to click. The drill especially went well and we actually beat St. Joes in that category. Unfortunately, I think it went to our heads and we didn't perform well at all in the final evening show. At least it was fun while it lasted.*

*The Colour Guard was our main asset. Not only did the Guard dominate the winter colour guard circuit, they played a key role with the corps itself. The guard was cited in numerous completions to be outstanding! And one highlight was beating Boston Crusaders guard at a completion in Utica New York.*

*As with most drum corps the measurement of success wasn't limited only to the scores they received in competition. Drum Corps was much more than that to us. Like other Corps drum corps was about bringing a bunch of kids together and helping them develop as good people, helping them learn the value of teamwork and striving for excellence; and even more it's about having fun while you are doing it.*

*Being a member of The Chessmen was one of the greatest experiences in our lives."*

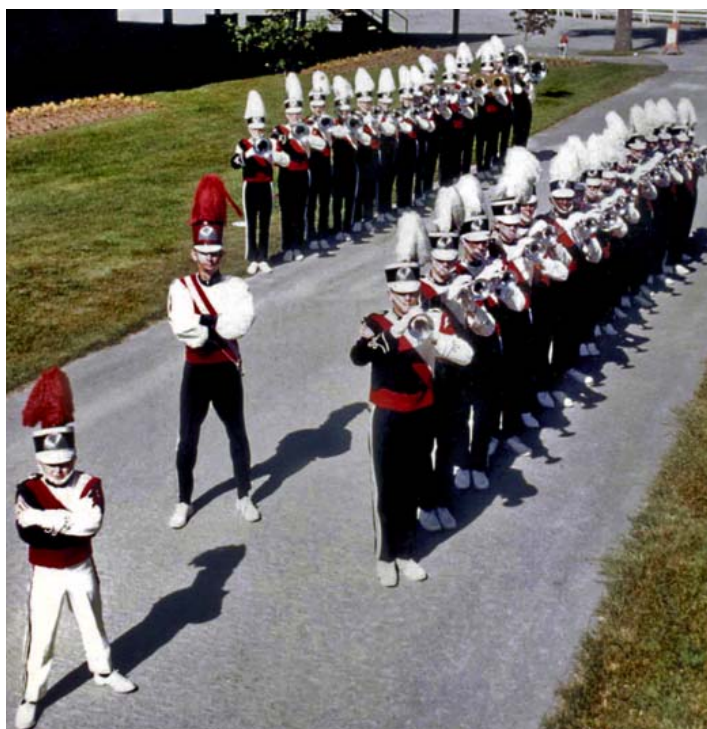




*Chessmen (1966)*



*The Byrne brothers: L-R: David, Brian, Peter and John*



*Chessmen (1966)*



## Chapter 17: The Middle Years, Part 2 – 1966 and 1967

The almost total success enjoyed by the Toronto Optimists up till now was, from their viewpoint, a wonderful situation. They would have been content to see it continue forever, which seemed not only possible but also probable at this stage of the game. All the effort, planning, and work necessary to maintain this ever growing string of successes was enjoyed, even relished, by those involved. In a nutshell, the people in the Corps would rather be where they were than anywhere else.

To other Corps in Canada, the Optimists must have seemed like an invincible machine that just kept marching on. This was how others had once seen Scout House. This is not always a healthy situation, in this or any field, because, if the Optimists were at a show, the only question was who would place second.

This was all about to change and, in the process, produce years of far more intense and exciting competition in Canada than had ever been seen before.

In saying all this, it must be said that Canadian drum corps, any of them, were still nowhere near the equal of the best U.S. Corps. However, the excitement and tension created in Canada, as the various Corps began to close the gap, would rival that of any American Legion or V.F.W. contest, including their Nationals.

The changes previously mentioned came not in or two great leaps forward, but in small, significant changes and improvements. Over time, these would add up to create the scene that we now approach.

### 1966

Let's start at the beginning of the 1966 Toronto Optimists.

It began, as so often, with change. Grantham, who had called it quits, rose yet again. Merging with Dennis Morris “Majestics” they became the “Chessmen” of St. Catharines, Ontario. They were now the only Corps in the Niagara Peninsula, which had once been a hotbed of activity. More in line with current trends, De La Salle acquired new uniforms. They really hit the right note this time, with very smart cadet-style uniforms in their



*Optimists Competitive Guard (1966)*



*De La Salle in their new uniforms (1966)*

school colours of green, red, and white. These would improve their image considerably. That they were the correct choice is proven by the fact that it was never found necessary to change them again.

Opposition from the Musicians’ Union was overcome when it was announced that the Optimists would, this year, appear at professional football games. Also, De La Salle, Royalaires, Commanders, and Scout House would do the same.

Bigger news than this for the Optimists was the fact that the Corps got its own headquarters building. Situated at 385 Keele St., in west-end Toronto, this was the first place, ever, that the Optimists could call home. It was not large enough to accommodate rehearsals, but its uses were to be very practical. One of them was to store trophies and equipment. It had been acquired by, who else, Don Daber.



*Rick Cooper, a stranger and David Johns outside Optimists' clubhouse at 385 Keele St. (1966)*

A spring concert in April was followed by a “Social Night”. The 1965 movie, a buffet and dancing was enjoyed by all. This was, of course, a very good money making enterprise.

Commanders, now an established Senior Corps, still had people in their organization that had been, or still were, part of the Optimists. Some of these were: Fred Lombard, Andy Henderson, Lorne Ferrazzutti, Vic Krukliis, Al Morrison, and Terry McKolskey.



*Don Daber inside the Clubhouse (1966)*

Al Baggs was, yet again, re-elected as Chief Judge of the judges’ chapter of the C.D.C.A. This, among other things, was a vote of confidence. It was also possible that many people in this year’s Corps would know Al Baggs in this position, but not his connection to the Optimists.

In a glimpse of things to come, it was reported that Blessed Sacrament would field a five and five drum line this year. This was still, in 1966, a novelty but would lead to the large lines of today.



In an unusual move for this Corps, the Drum Major changed again. Vern Johansson, who had been the assistant Drum Major under Andy Henderson during 1964, replaced Dave Johns.

There had been reports that the Corps was not up to par this year, based on winter concerts. This was confirmed on May 14th, in St. Catharines, when the Corps was seen to need much work, mostly on marching and maneuvering. It was a late date to be like this, but not too late to clean it up. Ivor Bramley was being missed. Future scores, however, would confirm the new instructors as good choices.

## **Optimists Beat Reigning U.S. National Champions at Shriners International**

The U.S. debut this year occurred against a field drawn from New York, Delaware, and New Jersey. No results are available. The following week, on June 15th, was the 2nd Annual Shriners’ Contest. This year it was both a senior and junior contest. In the senior division, Hawthorne Caballeros finished first. Less than three points from the top, and less than three years old, were the Commanders.

If that was a shock, the junior division was even more so. The Optimist Drum Corps won it! They defeated the Chicago Royal Airs who were the reigning U.S. champions, having won the 1965 American Legion, CYO and VFWs. Only one month previously, Optimists had been noted as rough. Now, in the process of winning this show, they had set a comfortable margin over local rivals. De La Salle, with their new uniforms, had made a good showing.

Another standout at this show was the size of the crowd, over 22,000, eclipsing the previous record.

Commanders were winning a lot this year, as were the Casper Troopers, on their climb to super-corpsdom. Oh, yes, the Optimists were winning too, including a six point spread over the now familiar LaSalle Cadets. July was an exciting month, leading into an even more exciting August.



*Toronto Optimists (Shriners’ Contest, 1966)*



*Chicago Royal Airs*

## **Contests in the U.S.**

July 22nd, New Haven Connecticut, a big show, with a small crowd, and the Corps placed fifth. They were five points down from first place, which was a respectable showing. St. Lucy’s won the contest, in a field that contained Blessed Sacrament and Garfield.

The next test for the Optimists was at Middleport, N.Y., against a mixed field from Canada and the United States. Second to St. Josephs of Batavia by a point, the Optimists again kept a solid five-point lead over any Canadian Corps in attendance. So, as far as Canada was concerned, it seemed that they were in a comfortable position. Nationals were only about six weeks away and they had yet to lose or even come close to losing to a Canadian Corps.

August, though, marked the beginning of events that would lead to the shattering of any illusions. Kingston, N.Y., was an invitational with an evening and an afternoon show. The evening show was set, the victor in the afternoon show would be allowed to enter it. An amazing thing happened when the afternoon victor, the P.A.L. Bridgeport Cadets, almost won the night show. The afternoon Corps were not supposed to be that good! The Optimists came fourth in the evening. They were much improved but still five points behind St. Lucy's, although managing to edge Garfield by tenths. The rest of the season was to be played out in Canada.

As far as Canada and the Optimists were concerned, the season had been a repeat of previous years.



*Toronto Optimists (Kingston, NY, 1966)*

*The woman in the centre of the photo invited the whole corps to her place for dinner!*

## **Back to Canada**

Now, in the short time left for competition, there were to be some surprises. Things would again never be quite the same.

LaSalle Cadets, still not yet great in Canada, had gone to the World Open Contest in the United States. They had won eighth place in the preliminaries and seventh in the finals. This result was a sign of things to come.



On August 27th, at Seagram Stadium, it was to happen. The show was the Ontario Championship, held by the Optimists for as long as anyone could remember. They managed to retain it yet again, by the skin of their teeth.

Continuing their surge, LaSalle Cadets placed second by a mere 0.55. By doing this, they rearranged a pattern that had been in place for years, Optimists first, De La Salle second. Now De La Salle was in third place by three points. All this was a major change in the junior scene. Both the Optimists and De La Salle had had a major shock, but neither would take it lying down. It was only three weeks until the Nationals and, for the first time in a while, there was speculation about the outcome.



*De La Salle (1966)*

## **The 1966 Nationals**

The championships were to be held on September 17th, in Montreal, Quebec. What happened that afternoon had not happened for over five years. The Optimists lost a contest in Canada to a Canadian Corps. It had not happened since 1961 and before that in 1958. It was a shock!

It had happened at the preliminaries for the championship contest. Continuing their surge, LaSalle Cadets took first with a score of 81.80 to the Optimists 81.50. De La Salle posted a 78.95 for third. Still in contention were York Lions and Sertomanaires, just tenths behind. There had never before been such a crush at the top of the junior division and it laid the basis for top-notch finals. Four Corps would be in it.

As for the Optimists, they had not faced this situation since 1961, and now, as then, there was not really time for any major changes. What, then, to do?

Although from year to year the people in the Corps changed, its character, spirit, and traditions had not. Had the Corps done the best possible show? Probably, as the Nationals were never taken lightly. It was not that the Optimists were getting worse but that other Corps were getting better.

*From someone in Chessmen*

*In the 1966 Canadian Championships in Montreal - Del and Opti were shoe ins for the night show but the York Lions, Chessmen, Sertomanaires and La Salle were battling it out for the last two spots in the finals.*

*During the prelims (I marched with the Chessmen) a helicopter hovered (at a low altitude) directly over our corps just as we were coming out of concert. They hovered for what seemed an eternity and totally messed up our cadence. Needless to say our final score reflected this incursion.*

Now was the time to draw on the much-touted spirit of this Corps, to reach down and do a bit more, a bit better. And so it was. The Corps knew what had to be done and went out and did it. Observers described the show as beautiful, super and outstanding, as the Optimists captured their ninth consecutive Canadian title. A convincing 86.0 to La Salle’s 83.65 dashed the hopes of the Ottawa based Corps.

In the senior division, the Diplomates nipped Commanders for the title by one tenth of a point. Ten points back, in fourth place, was a Corps from Montreal named Les Metropolitains.



*Toronto Optimists on retreat (Nationals, Montreal, 1966)*

The Optimists were still and, once again, the Canadian champions. They had been challenged and had overcome their challenges. The major difference between now and the past was that, from now on, the challenges would increase, not fade. This result also set the agenda for the coming year – to win number ten and make it ten in a row. This, if it could be done, would surpass any record held by an American Corps.

## **C.D.C.A.**

Around this time, something involving two solid ex-Optimists occurred. A dispute arose between the Ontario Chapter of the C.D.C.A. and the Judges Chapter. This had led to the suspension of Al Baggs and the members of the Judges Advisory Board from the Judges Association. The dispute concerned by-laws passed by the C.D.C.A. not being implemented by the judges in the time allotted. It had no reflection on the abilities or qualifications of the judges.

Bernie Beer was the Chairman of the Ontario Chapter of the C.D.C.A., the body responsible for the suspensions. Al Baggs and Bernie Beer had both, at one time, been with the Optimists. There had been friction. Al Baggs was at that time the Corps Director and, therefore, the boss. Now, in a different



*Vern receives trophy from Chief Judge, Al Baggs (Nationals, 1966)*



fashion, Bernie Beer was the boss. It would be easy to read personal animosity into this, but that is unlikely. These were sensible men who no doubt had seen such situations before and resolved them. Mr. Beer himself stated publicly that the suspensions were only due to non-compliance with the by-laws passed by the C.D.C.A. It was, after all, the ruling body.

Mr. Ian Beacock was appointed acting Chief Judge of the Ontario Chapter, to maintain continuity. Mr. Baggs was named to a committee to advise on rules and by-laws that would attempt to prevent similar situations in the future. This was the idea of Mr. Beacock. So, something constructive did come from the affair, all of which was endorsed by the National Board of Directors of the C.D.C.A. Al Baggs, though, would never again be Chief Judge.



*LaSalle's Drum Major receives trophy (Nationals, 1966)*

At the C.D.C.A. convention in Ottawa this year, the guest speaker was the Hon. Paul Martin, Canadian Minister of External Affairs, and the father of Canada's current Minister of Finance. Drum Corps kept good company!

## **Optimists Corps Banquet**

For the Optimists, the fifth annual banquet was held, again at the Royal York Hotel. They had all, so far, been victory banquets – a time to lighten up, sit back, savour the year just past, and hand out all awards and decorations.

Mr. Gord Robinson, from the Shriners, acted as emcee for this affair. He was to become a permanent part of the Optimist folklore. He introduced the guest speaker, Lord Athol Layton, himself, Imperial Potentate of the Shrine, The Boss.

Five-year rings were given to two members, Mike Thys and Joe Palanica, and then the Corps Director spoke. He reminded the Corps of its mistakes of 1966 and how to correct them for the coming year. Barry Bell, the



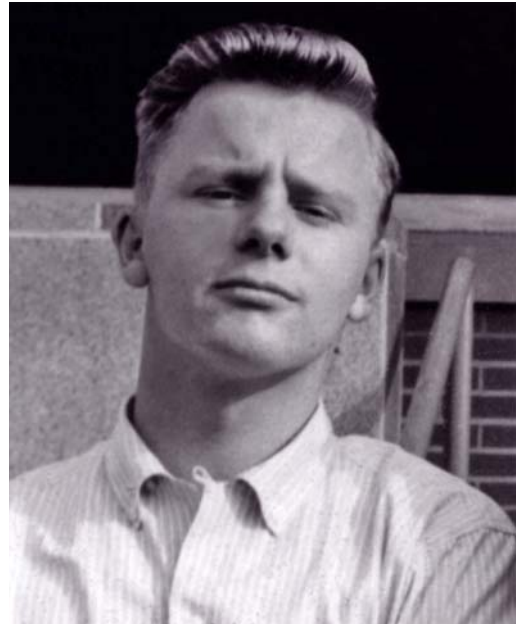
*Ron Kaiser (L) and Lorne Ferrazzutti (R)*

Music Director, then took the stand. This remarkable, self-effacing man presented each member of the bugle line with a membership certificate. A similar ritual took place for the drums, by Lorne Ferrazzutti and Ron Kaiser, and for the guard by Jack Roberts. This sort of thing had been customary for some years now and was one more of the growing number of traditions to be observed. Rookies got pins for completing their first year, and the “Rookie of the Year” was introduced. This year it was John “Scotty” McDonald. He was a snare drummer, originally from the York Lions Drum Corps. The “Rookie” business was to expand in the future, becoming almost akin to colleges or military academies.

Yet another tradition was created with the first “Corpsman of the Year” award. It was given to George Wright, section sergeant of the baritone horns. In later years he was to play a much larger note in Corps affairs, but in less happier circumstances. This award was unique because it was decided by a vote of the Corps members themselves. Vern Johansson got a Drum Major award. He had been most successful, even earning praise from outside Optimist circles.

Not over yet, the “21” year mugs were presented to Joe Palanica, Orest Burak, Bill MacMillan, Ron Kaiser, Bob Christie, and Bill Fallows. These poor unfortunates were now overage and most would have to leave the Corps.

Finally, things came to a close with the Corps song, colour slides, and an 8mm film of the Nationals preliminaries, the one they had lost. As the Corps got older, these affairs became more complex, a reflection of its success.



*George Wright, 1966 Corpsman of the year*

## **Other news**

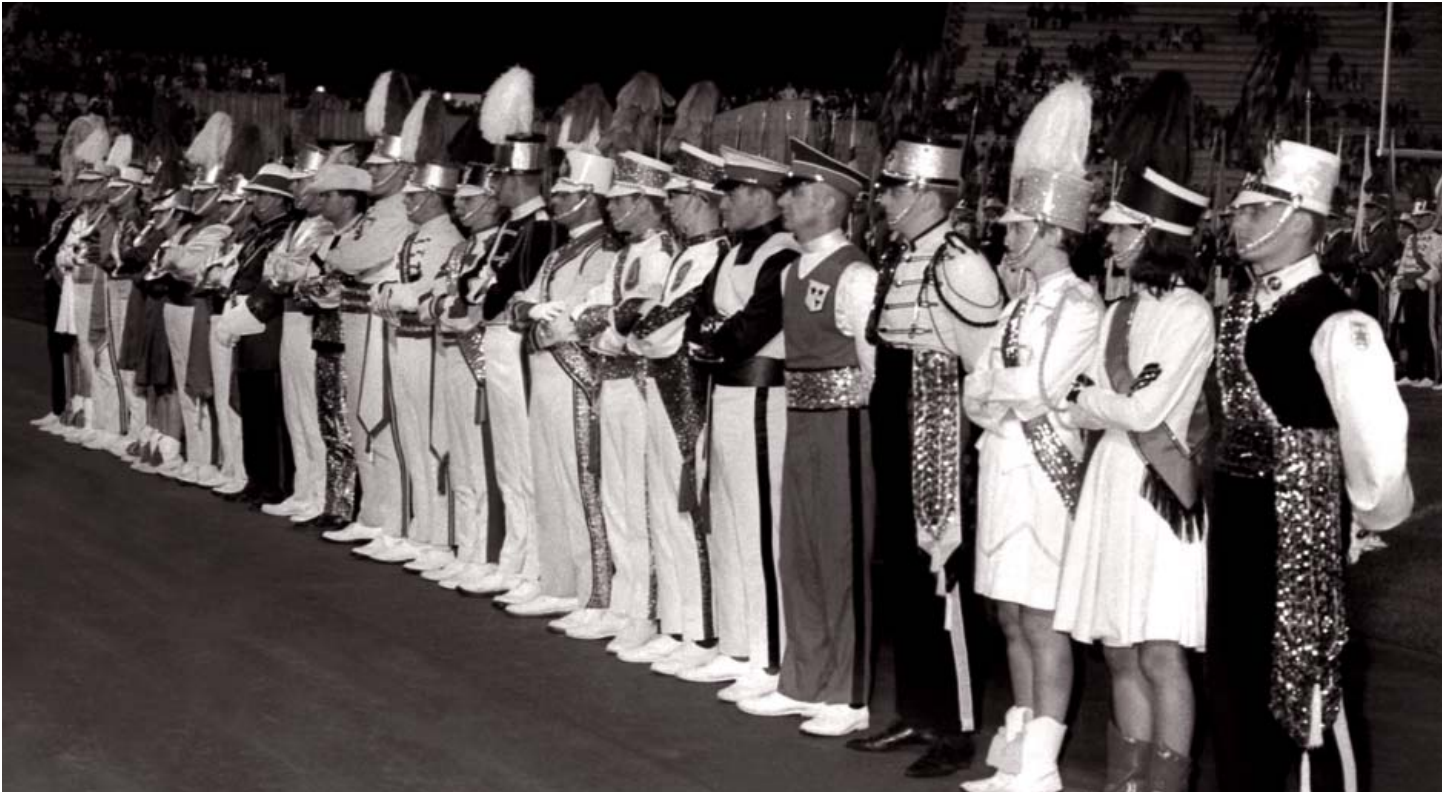
Elsewhere, Les Metropolitains of Montreal, a Senior Corps, announced that they would become a Junior Corps in 1967.

Actually, the banquet signalled more than the end of a year. It also marked the beginning of the next, as activity was virtually ceaseless in this business. Santa Claus parades were done and it was learned that the 1967 Nationals would be held in Ottawa, Canada’s capital and the home of the LaSalle Cadets. During the coming year, things were to become even more complex as the Optimists strove to maintain their position. The field of Canadian Junior Corps was becoming more crowded and, more importantly, much more competitive. Nothing could be taken for granted any more, and old patterns had been disrupted forever.



*Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1966)*





*Drum Majors on retreat (Nationals, Montreal, 1966)*

Filling another gap in their armament, De La Salle decided to allow people into the Drum Corps who did not attend the school. This had to have been a hindrance to their development, even if minor. The Optimists had never had such a restriction, anybody being allowed to join if they had proper releases. By doing this, De La Salle had opened a door that was to contribute to the exciting events that lay in the future.

A less fortunate event, but one from which the Optimists were to benefit, was the disbanding of the York Lions Drum Corps. They had been one of the finalists at last year’s Nationals. From the rubble of this fine Corps, the Optimists acquired the services of one Cliff Billington, who was to prove an asset.

Lord Athol Layton announced the line-up for this year’s Shrine Contest, and it was to be a top-notch affair.



*York Lions (1965)*

Featuring the Chicago Cavaliers, Boston Crusaders, Garfield Cadets, and Racine Kilties from the USA, it was now to become an all-junior show. From Canada, the top three would be the Optimists, LaSalle Cadets, and De La Salle. This would provide a good international competition, as well as a preview of the Canadian scene. Here, it should be noted, a lot of Corps had come and gone since 1958, but two that were still around were the Optimists and De La Salle. LaSalle Cadets were a relative newcomer, though now firmly part of the act, and had done well during their short existence as a Drum Corps. Similar to the Danforth Crusaders, one of the founding Corps of the Optimists, they had been part of the Army Cadet Corps affiliated with a school. Like Danforth, they broke with the cadets to become a Drum Corps.

Mr. Maurice Legault, who would become a legendary figure in Canadian Drum Corps, led their staff. During their third year, they blossomed, almost winning the Ontario and Canadian Championships. From now on they would remain a major factor for a long time.

Mr. Baggs, suspended earlier as a judge, now saw fit to resign, as a result of the dispute that occurred in 1966. Others went with him, so it was not really a personal thing. Most of the current members of the Optimists were likely not aware of all this, unless they were well up on all aspects of Canadian Drum Corps. What is most important, of course, is that there are contests with judges to judge them. All were wished well and afforded recognition for all that they had done.

Now, Mr. Ian Beacock became the actual Chief Judge, rather than acting in that position, and any lingering suspensions were lifted. Thus vanished the remains of a messy affair, the likes of which are sometimes inevitable.



*Maurice Legault leads the LaSalle Cadets (1966)*





*The 1966 Toronto Optimists*

## A few Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors as the summer of **1966** progressed

Contest ► Corps Name ▼	Shriners Toronto (June 17)	Leominster MA (July 11)	Sarnia (July, 16)	New Haven CT (July 22)	Pow Wow Kingston, NY (Aug 13)	Ontario Champs (Aug 27)	Canadian Nationals Ottawa (Sept 17)
Toronto Optimists	78.50	72.30	82.80	72.87	81.76	82.95	86.00
LaSalle Cadets						82.40	83.65
De La Salle	74.40		77.15			79.05	80.05
Blessed Sacrament				75.66			
Boston Crusaders		78.31					
Chicago Royal Airs	76.42						
Garfield Cadets				73.05	81.45		
St Joe's Batavia			78.40				
St Lucy's Cadets				77.75	86.10		

**For a list of scores for this or other years, go to our website:  
<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/>**

## 1967

The first Ontario Individuals were held on February 4, 1967, and the Optimists did quite well with six firsts, four on bugles and the others on drums. Possibly, a good showing was to be expected from the top local Corps, although not sweeping the field showed they held supremacy only on the field, as a unit.

The field show was shaping up nicely, at an early date. This was a good thing because there were more contests lined up this year than ever before in the history of the Corps. This was one factor that made it seem less of a hobby, leaning more toward a way of life. These schedules bore little resemblance to those of the early days, and it was either go along with it or fade away. In keeping with current trends, the Corps, as planned, was to be the largest one fielded

yet with forty-two horns, five tenors and four snare drums, with bass, rudimental bass drums, and two cymbals. The guard would field sixteen members. As noted before, the new numbers and instrumentation, all over, were changing the face of Drum Corps.

There were other changes taking place this year. As in other fields, so in Drum Corps, where, it seems, change itself is the only constant.



*Toronto Optimists (1967)*

## Over the Winter

The Optimists revealed their new off the line number, “Born Free”, from the movie of the same name, at a concert in Stoney Creek, Ontario. On the basis of this show, they were again predicted to be the top Corps in 1967, despite the fact that the competition was expected to be the toughest in years. The Colour Guard was featured on the cover of Drum Corps International Magazine, no relation to the present D.C.I. organization.

On March 18, the Optimist Club hosted the first annual Colour Guard Championship won by the Aquinas guard of New York State, the Optimist guard placed sixth. Al Baggs was a judge at this affair, as he was still a member of the New York All-American Judges Chapter. In a move toward uniformity, the Canadian Judges Association adopted American Legion score sheets.



At another guard contest in Rochester, N.Y., the Optimists guard was again in sixth place, but only 3.7 points from first. These were the first Colour Guard shows that the Optimists had ever entered, and they were not experienced. Not a bad showing for beginners.

In a beneficial move, De La Salle had acquired the services of Al Morrison as a horn instructor and Vince Bruni on drill. Al Morrison had been a soloist, arranger and instructor for the Optimists and had a similar function in Commanders. Vince Bruni, of course, was one of the top drill men anywhere.

For all the great reports about this year’s Optimists, one of those amazing things that can happen from time to time happened on February 25th. At the Rochester, N.Y. “Sound Off” contest, the Optimists placed second. What made this unusual was that it was to a Canadian Corps. This was big news, and Les Metropolitains, of Montreal, Quebec, did it by six tenths of a point. As mentioned before, they were a Senior Corps. In an effort to build a better Senior Corps for 1968, they became a Junior corps for this year. No matter, they were junior now and had beaten the Optimists, only the third Canadian Corps to do this in eight years. They were, of course, immediately expected to become this year’s new Canadian Champions, but that contest was still over six months away.



*Al Morrison playing a solo (Toronto City Hall, 1960)*

Vern Johansson won the trophy as best Drum Major, being now a smooth old pro. He was, in fact, to get raves all year.



*LaSalle Cadets (1967)*

Regardless of the success of Les Metropolitains, the LaSalle Cadets were nominated as the fastest rising star in the Canadian scene. They had come a long way and they were not finished yet. Canada now had four Corps capable of contending for first place, with others not too far behind. This made for a far more exciting and tense atmosphere.

The march of events continued. In February. One of the categories won by the Optimists at the individuals had been that of bugle quartet. That was the Provincial Contest, and in March, at the National Contest, they won it again. They were now the best in the country.

During March, a new association was formed called “A Junior C” which stood for Associated Junior Corps. It consisted of three Canadian and three New York State Junior Corps. These were the Optimists, LaSalle Cadets and Chessmen, from Canada, plus the Geneva Appleknockers, Magnificent Yankees of Utica and St. Josephs of Batavia from New York State. Cliff Billington, who had come from the York Lions to the Optimists, was now the Corps Business Manager. He was also appointed National Publicity Chairman of the C.D.C.A., by the directors of that organization.



*See article about the formation of A Jr.C on Page 61*

All this, plus the number of Senior and Junior Corps now in Canada, points up the fact that we were now in what was likely the most concentrated period of Drum Corps activity ever in Canada. Add to this the current and future contests that were lined up and it becomes apparent that Canada was a major player in the Drum Corps world, certainly more so than in the past. The Drum Corps movement in Canada could, and would, claim many first, and bests.

Firsts for the Optimists in particular were: first look for an equipment truck in 1967, first added contras to the horn line in 1965, first to ever carry euphoniums on an M&M field in North America. Another, Green Capsule Comments, first published in 1960, and was now bigger and stronger than ever. It had been the first real, regular Corps publication of a specific Corps. It was also widely regarded as the best of its kind around. It was started by Don Daber and maintained by him and his ever-changing staff. He was still Director of the Optimists and his influence was paramount.

## **Optimist Cadets, the Tierneys and the Knights of Columbus**

Entering the scene this year were two men who were to exert much influence on this Corps. These were the Tierney brothers, Al and Greg. The Optimists, this season, realized that, unless people could be recruited and trained, the Corps could run into difficulty in the future. The original “Peanut Squad” had, either through negligence or lack of interest or necessity, been allowed to lapse. Now, it was decided that a feeder Corps was, again, needed and things were set in motion. Recruiting was tough and practice facilities were almost non-existent. This was not good. In fact, the whole summer was spent looking for recruits and practice facilities. It was felt that the suburbs of the city were the best place to pursue this idea, and this led to a lucky break.

Scarborough Knights of Columbus were looking for another youth activity, with baseball and hockey already well covered in the community. Like everyone, they were short of money but did possess a practice facility.



*Advert for the Optimist Cadets showing Paul McDonald,*

Optimists Drum Corps + Property Owner – \$ = Cadet Corps



A Grand Knight attended an Optimists practice and was impressed by the discipline. There was a meeting of the executive of the Optimists and the Knights of Columbus then, later, with the general membership of the Knights of Columbus. Slides of the Optimists and the 1965 movie were shown and all of the K of C men were in favour of this promotion. They could not contribute financially, but provided their clubhouse for practices and agreed to assist with the recruiting drive. On September 1st, a final decision was taken to accept this offer, and a program was developed to culminate in a recruiting day on Sept. 17th.

Handbills were distributed, much of the work being done, by the Knights as the Optimists, at this time of year, were busy with the Nationals. On the 17th, the Corps paraded from the K. of C. to a church and, there, on the steps, played to a crowd of a thousand. Slides were again shown and short speeches given by Mr. Daber and Mr. Greg Tierney, Chairman of Youth Activities for the Knights of Columbus. Applications were handed out, and by the end of the day forty-seven had been completed and returned. First rehearsal was set for September 23.

During that week, a small article in the Toronto Star brought a sudden increase in phone calls. Suddenly, the recruiting drive became not only a success but in danger of being swamped. At the first rehearsal, the original forty-seven were



*Optimist Cadets (Batavia, 1969)*

there, together with another ninety-five newcomers. Now, membership in the Optimist Cadets, as they were called, stood at 142, with the prospect of more to come as time passed. Thus, money notwithstanding, we now had “The Optimist Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps” with Mr. Al Tierney as Director and Mr. Greg Tierney as Manager. It would be a Parade Corps for boys 10-14. Both of the just mentioned men had played a large part in this activity. They would play even larger roles in the future, but this endeavour was most important for the future survival and success of the Corps. They even began their own newsletter, “Cadet Capsule”, edited by Al Tierney.

## **More on the Optimists**

Back to the early months of 1967, a reflection of the continuing cold war between the Optimists and De La Salle was a report that the word “Optimist” was not to be used at De La Salle College. Whether true or not, this was, at the time, humorous, as relations between the two Corps had been good for some time. In the future, however, things would reach new lows. Right now, it was a normal rivalry caused by a ten-year side-by-side existence of two competing units. Also, This pattern had been interrupted by the rise of LaSalle Cadets, who had usurped the position of De La Salle and threatened the Optimists.

What fun and games! And we must not forget the new junior, Les Metropolitains.

Let’s get back to the Optimist Corps itself, which is what this book is supposed to be about. The Chief Bugle Instructor was still Barry Bell. Lorne Ferrazzutti was still the Drum Instructor, and his chief assistant was Ron

## “From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth. Chapter 17. (continued)

Kaiser, who had done this job for the previous two years while still drumming in the line. A superb drummer, he would have marched in the Corps until he was ninety if he could have. He had also done some of the music writing, the first to do this since Ronn Prokop in 1962. The 1962 drum line of Ronn Prokop, Ron Kaiser, and Vic Krukliis, along with the Corps, was still talked about and would be, for a long time. They had put in many hours of extra rehearsal and had been noted among the best in North America. They was now being challenged by other Corps in Canada, hungry for success, realizing that what one Corps can do so can another. The pressure to stay on top never let up.



*Toronto Optimists rehearsing (1967)*



*Pictured above are all of the brothers in the Toronto Optimists. No, they are not all in the same family. There are COOPERS, TIERNEYS, CHRISTIES, BYRNES, TAMAKIS, SHEARERS, ROODS, ROBERTS, ROUSSELS, VILLENEUVES and JOHANSSONS.*



Before we get into the season proper, it is interesting to take note of a report that appeared around this time. It stated that the Optimists had lost only four contests in Canada in nine years. This was very complimentary but not accurate. This dates back to the end of 1958.

The four were listed as:

1961	CNE	To De La Salle
1961	Nationals Prelims	To De La Salle
1961	St. Catharines	To De La Salle
1962	Varsity Stadium, Toronto	To Garfield

These were all true. What was missing was:

1964	East York Stadium	To St. Joseph's
1965	Sarnia	To Norwood Park Imperials
1966	Montreal, National Prelims	To LaSalle Cadets

This shows that the Optimists had, in fact, lost seven, not four, contests in Canada in nine years. This, most likely, was due to someone's faulty memory, but it does not obscure the fact this was still a phenomenal achievement.

Now, after the subsidiary activities of winter and spring, the Corps arrived at the beginning of yet another season of competition. The days of preparation, change, and whatever else are now past. All depends on that



*Toronto Optimists (Leroy, N.Y., 1967)  
I do not know why the corps is not in uniform*

thirteen minutes on the field. For the Optimists, this year had more significance in that it could bring a tenth National Championship. This, if achieved, would surpass any record, anywhere, in Drum Corps. This, of course, was to be more difficult due to other Corps, now much improved, who were just as eager to win titles. Mostly, this meant

De La Salle and the LaSalle Cadets, both genuine contenders. Others were not far behind and anything could happen this year. If the Optimists, in any one year, had not improved they would have gone down fast.

## Summer of '67

So, with this in mind, let's take a trip back to June 1967 and see just what did happen over the succeeding months.

They got off on the right foot at the first “A Junior C” Contest in Batavia, New York. Winning with a score of 78.95, good for an early show, they topped the Magnificent Yankees, if only by seven-tenths. High general effect, colour guard trophies, and a standing ovation were theirs. An additional plus was the fact that this was the first time in three years that the Optimists had won in New York State. This was a good morale builder for their next outing, only one week later. It was none other than the 3rd Annual Shrine Contest, one of the biggest of the season. This year it was an all junior event and would remain so.



*Bob Burman, John McAlpine and Brian Byrne (1967)*

The contest, to a small degree, did contain some surprises. A predictable outcome was the victory of the Boston Crusaders, who were now in the realm of “super” corpsdom. There was some disagreement, though, with their four-point spread over the Chicago Cavaliers. Chicago was always good, seldom losing by such a margin.

Surprise number one was the third place finish of the Optimists. Not so much the third place, this was a good Corps, but a score that put them only 2.5 behind the Cavaliers. This also meant that they were only 6.5 behind

Boston, but, more importantly, seven points up on their closest Canadian rival, LaSalle Cadets, with De La Salle close behind. All of the Canadian entries were well received. La Salle was classed as outstanding, and De La Salle as having fielded the finest Corps in their history.



*LaSalle Cadets (Shriners Contest, CNE, Toronto, 1967)*

The Optimists, it was said, were exactly what the fans wanted. More!

With this result, the Optimists again appeared to be in a comfortable position in Canada for another successful year; however, the other Corps would not have received such compliments had they not deserved them. Nothing could be taken for granted.



At first, though, it seemed otherwise. A week later, the Corps again topped their two main local rivals by seven points. These two were less than two points apart, but seven behind the Optimists. That is, until Port Hope, only one week later. Although the Optimists still took first with 83.91, second was La Salle with 82.31, then De La Salle with 79.15. They had gone from a seven point deficit to just over a point and a half in two weeks. What an unpredictable business this was.

Al Tierney, becoming more involved, was now writing an Optimist column in Drum Corps International magazine. In a note from the past, it was learned that St. Patrick’s, the host Corps of the Optimists first visit to the New Jersey “Preview of Champions”, had disbanded. This was mainly due to the fact that their moderator, Father Gaffney, was being transferred to San Francisco. Father Gaffney was well remembered in the Optimist Corps and still is among the alumnae. Never forgotten was his unfailing help and generosity when it was needed.

When Don Mountford, a well-known figure in Canada, resigned as Canadian Editor of Drum Corps News, a good magazine, Al Tierney picked up the reins. Al’s name was appearing more and more in Drum Corps circles. The already familiar, Bernie Beer, was announced as the new Corps Coordinator for De La Salle. Although he had begun, and learned, the Corps business with the Optimists, Bern would help out anybody if he could. He would prove to be a valuable acquisition. Along with him, Del also got Dave Parker to help out Vince Bruni on drill. This Corps was really looking for success, no doubt having been stung by losses to the newcomer, LaSalle Cadets. Indeed, they were humiliated even further in Rochester on July 15, being edged by the “Chessmen” of St. Catharines. This was at the prelims of the New York – Canadian Championships. It did not happen again, but must have been a low point for them. They would not stay there.

One of the major factors helping to keep the Optimists sharp was entry into top-notch contests in the United States. One of these was the 20th Annual Garfield Invitational Championship. On their second trip to Garfield this year, the Optimists ran into some of the best. Among them, St. Lucy’s, Blessed Sacrament, St. Kevin’s, Muchachos, Buccaneers, Kingsmen.



*Toronto Optimists (1967)*

The Optimists gained a fifth place, just four points out of first. This was a far cry from earlier years in New Jersey, when the spread between first and the Optimists was seldom less than eight or nine points.

Back in Canada, things were also on the move. Les Metropolitanains of Montreal, who had beaten the Optimists in Rochester, began to appear at field shows in Ontario. Here, they were an unknown quantity and had to be regarded as a dark horse contender. A difference was that the Rochester contest was a standstill affair. On the field, things were not going as well for them, but well enough that they were still in contention.



*Doug MacKenzie plays solo in concert (East York, 1967)*

Lindsay, Ontario, on July 22, saw the LaSalle Cadets with 82.06, De La Salle with 80.50, and Les Metropolitanains with 79.36.

A week later, De La Salle upset LaSalle Cadets and then took off for the Dream Contest. Other Canadian Corps were now getting American exposure. This, in turn, helped them in their pursuit of the Optimists. Things were getting interesting.

Next, in the U.S., for the Optimists, was the first “A Junior C” Championships. The Corps really wanted this one and came off in high gear, but it was not to be. The New York State powerhouse, St. Joseph’s of Batavia won it, Magnificent Yankees were second with the Optimists, four points back, in third place. Only weeks earlier they had been closer than that to the Chicago Cavaliers.



*Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1967)*



East York Stadium saw them back in Canada, against the Chessmen of St. Catharines, and the Michael Power Knights, who were debuting in the Junior “A” Division. They scored well as did the Chessmen who were greatly improved. The Optimists, though technically good, were criticized because they seemed to lack their customary snap and enthusiasm.

After that interlude, it was off to New York City and Columbia University, for a first class contest. The Optimists put up a good show but still placed fifth in a field of five, seven points behind the winners Blessed Sacrament. At this time of year, August 18, this was a little unusual for this Corps; but as they always had, and always would, the Corps took its lumps, coming home a little wiser for the experience. Indeed, the very next day, in Kingston, New York, they again placed fifth, but this time 5.5 behind “Sac” and 1.5 behind St. Joseph’s. Still, at this time, the Canadian Champions were comparing well with their local rivals.

At the New Jersey Dream Contest, De La Salle and LaSalle Cadets finished fourth and fifth, respectively, ten and twelve points out of first place. This is exactly what the Optimists had encountered seven or eight years before.

These events were leading, of course, to the one show that, this year, was to be like no other Nationals Canada had ever seen. The Optimists had not yet lost a field show to a Canadian Corps this year. Two rivals, however, were breathing down their neck. Pressure was building to what promised to be an explosive climax. One event paving the way toward this climax was the Ontario Provincial Championship, August 26, at Seagram Stadium, Waterloo. It was considered by all to be a preview of the Canadian Championships, which were only two weeks away.

Before we look and see what happened at this contest, some explanation of events beforehand is in order. LaSalle Cadets had slowly closed the gap on the Optimists during the season, leaving De La Salle in third place. Optimists had scored a convincing victory over both Corps at the Shrine Contest, neither one coming within seven points. It was stated at the time that the Optimists should have no trouble winning the Nationals for the tenth year. That was then! This is now!



*Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1967)*

There had been a contest in Sarnia and the Optimists had won this one, as they had for the previous three years. A wide-open drill that made full use of the field, and an enthusiastic crowd, gave them a score of 83.10. In second, still under the direction of their resident genius, Maurice Legault, were the LaSalle Cadets. Their score was 82.58, barely half a point difference. Adding spice to this situation was that, for the last two years, La Salle had defeated De La Salle frequently. This year, before and at the Dream Contest, De La Salle had picked up and defeated

La Salle twice. Del had also beaten Les Metropolitains, as had La Salle, but the Metropolitains had defeated the Optimists. So now, at this late date, anything could happen. These four units were all on a collision course that would end at the 1967 Nationals. The race for the Junior Championship had tightened up and all eyes were now on the Provincial Championship. Of course, this was for Ontario and Les Metropolitains, being from Quebec, would not be at this one.

The Optimists, aware of all the factors, knew that just an ordinary show would not be good enough this time out. How much interest had been stirred by now was indicated by the size of the crowd. Ten thousand came out. Many of them possibly hoping to see the Optimists dethroned.

Rising to the occasion, the Toronto Optimists put on their best show of the year. Described as “sparkling” it earned them another Provincial title, winning with almost two and a half points over the Cadets, and more than four over De La Salle, who were now back in third place. For now, at least, the future looked a little more secure for the Optimists.



*Toronto Optimists with flags & drums in summer parade tops (1967)*

The Nationals were two weeks away and there was some heavy activity between now and then.

On August 29 was the 4th Annual C.Y.O. Invitational Championship. The Optimists had been at this one a few times before<sup>1</sup>, because they were the Canadian Champions, a title that opened a lot of doors. Because no results are readily available for this one, we shall have to pass on comment. It is enough to say that the line-up included fourteen top Junior Corps. This was just fine as a warm-up for the coming Nationals. Now, only four days later, the next major event took place. The North American Invitational Championship was held at home in Toronto. This was a top-notch junior contest featuring both American and Canadian Corps. The results were to complicate, even further, an already complicated situation.

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1 Editor’s note: It’s possible that we might had been invited but 1967 was the first year that Optimists competed in the CYO Nationals. We finished in 11th place with 74.80, 13.18 behind Boston. The top corps were: Boston Crusaders, 88.080; Cavaliers, 84.830; Blessed Sacrament, 84.760; Garfield Cadets, 81.630. At the North Americans, only one week after CYOs, we were only 4.2 behind Boston and 2.3 behind Cavaliers.



Let's have a look at the placings and scores.

Boston Crusaders	87.200
Chicago Cavaliers	85.333
St. Joseph's	83.216
Optimists	83.000
LaSalle Cadets	77.083
De La Salle	75.100
Muchachos	73.933



*LaSalle Cadets (Shriners, Toronto, 1967)*

This scorecard shows some amazing things, in light of recent events. First, it was no surprise that Boston won. They had been the talk of the Drum Corps World and had reached “Super Corpsdom”. Nor was it any surprise that Chicago was in second place, though they were not often in that position. St. Joseph's, backing up rumours of greatness, were only two points out of second.

Two tenths behind St. Joseph's were our Optimists, two points from Chicago and just over four points from Boston. The Canadian Champions received a standing ovation from the crowd. It had been one of their aims, at this show, to

close the gap between them and Boston, and they had certainly done that. By doing this, they had generated the biggest surprise of the day and opened up, again, a six-point spread from their closest Canadian rivals, LaSalle Cadets.

Not only had they maintained the winning streak over the Canadian Corps, but had

opened it up to almost what it had been at the start of the season. Yet, only a week before, this gap had only been two and a half points, and earlier, at Sarnia, only half a point. To say that this business is unpredictable is an understatement.



*Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1967)*

Now it was time for the Nationals. Unusually, this was the final event of any importance this year. Anything after this would be insignificant compared to the drama about to unfurl.

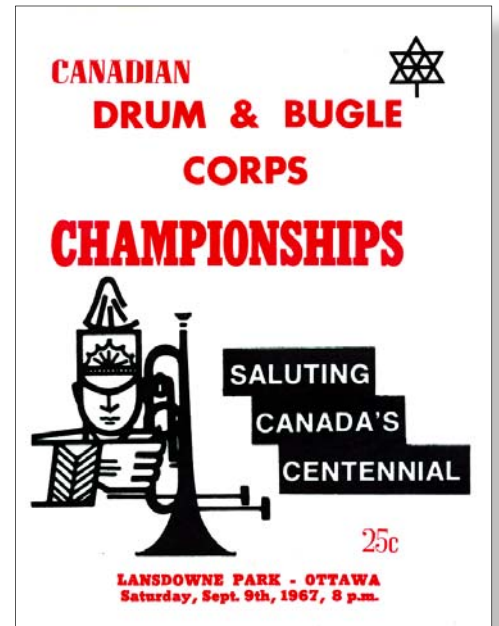
## The 1967 Canadian National Junior Championship

For the Optimists this was even more important than usual. If they could win this one, it would be the tenth consecutive National title. It was also the tenth anniversary of the winning of their first National title, in 1958. About the only Corps remaining from those days was De La Salle. Scout House was still around but were not competing. Finally, of course, the number ten has certain significance in our culture, as does seven, twelve, or thirteen. Ten is a sort of milestone used to gauge many things. If this was a milestone, of sorts, another was that this would be the most hotly contested Junior Championship in Canadian Drum Corps history. There were four genuine contenders for first place.

It had been decided, long before, that this year’s Nationals would be held in Ottawa, Ontario. This was the hometown of the La Salle Cadets, and potentially hostile territory.

The preliminaries, held earlier in the day, displayed the finest performances of seven Junior Drum Corps. There were some upsets, and these were to contribute to the excitement of the evening finals. Four of these units would reach the finals. Les Metropolitains, who had, all year, been considered a dark horse contender and had done quite well, was the first casualty.

Placing fifth, they were eliminated from further participation by the Sarnia Sertomanaires, who had always been a threat to everybody. They were in fourth place, with a score of 79.33, just over three points out of third, held by De La Salle. Del’s score was a respectable 82.466, behind second place by a mere 1.317. Defying the results of the last few contests, in second place, were the Optimists, bowing to the victors, La Salle Cadets, by a margin of 0.433. This was a repeat of last year’s events and, once more, the Optimists had their back to the wall. Extra pressure was on this Corps, due to what was at stake. For the others, it was a chance to win their first National



title and be the first to knock off the Optimists, at National finals, in the process.

For the Optimists, the pressures were the greatest, and how they responded would reveal the spirit of this Corps. They had been there before and, now, as then, were fully aware of what had to be done.

As the time slipped away, towards the night show, tension rose. It was too late to make any effective changes, though in the past this had been done.



*Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Ottawa, 1967)*



There is really only one way to beat the odds in a situation like this. Everybody has to reach down and give a little more, do a bit better. The leeway is always there, but sometimes it takes an occasion like this to find it. At times like this, the Corps is, usually, more of a unit, united and determined, than at less dramatic times.

The feeling in the Corps that night could not be described. You had to be there, in it, to feel the tension. For thirteen minutes, the rest of the world ceased to exist for those in the Corps, as all attention was focussed on the business at hand. It was a good thing the Corps could concentrate, as it must have, in order to perform well. When they stepped off the line in this do or die effort, they were booed by the partisan crowd. They were booed all through their show, and booed when they finished. This confirmed that this was hostile territory. Ottawa was the hometown of the La Salle Cadets who, it was hoped by the crowd, would be the new champions. More than just the usual reaction of a crowd rooting for the underdog, this was also because the Optimists had won for so long. Also, some envy had to be in there, with a natural desire to see the top dog bite the dust. It happens all over. Such a display, rather than distracting its object, often has the opposite effect. It can serve to encourage the unit on the field to try harder.



*John MacDonald and Gord Lefevre (Nationals, 1967)*

## **The Retreat**

The retreat ceremony is, of course, final, and nothing can be changed. In what was the toughest, but not the closest, National Championship yet, the Optimists overcame all the obstacles that day, capturing their tenth consecutive Canadian Championship.

This was a feat unprecedented in Drum Corps history and, as in 1958, it was followed by a display of uncontrolled emotion. For two years now, they had come from behind to win; this time leaving the local crowd very disappointed. It had ended up, really, as a two Corps contest.

The Optimists	86.316
La Salle Cadets	86.100
De La Salle	81.000
Sertomanaires	77.416

The ultimate victory was by a mere 0.216, and it wrapped up what had been the busiest contest season ever for the Toronto Optimist Drum and Bugle Corps. They had entered nineteen contests, won nine and lost nine. What happened to the other one is unknown. Maybe it was rained out.

Most importantly, they were still the number one Junior Corps in Canada, no matter how narrow the margin.

## “From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth. Chapter 17. (continued)

Winding down the year took the now familiar route of the banquet and awarding of honours. Rookie of the year was John Christie, Corpsman of the year, Ron Cooper, and a new one went to Robert Ledyards, Guardsman of the year. These fellows were outstanding, in an outstanding Drum Corps that had pulled off an outstanding feat. It had required the utmost effort by all and all were to be congratulated.

End of the year notes and rumours contained the stuff that helped lay the basis for future events. De La Salle, the Corps that everyone expected to upset the applegart had, seemingly, been relegated to third place. They, of course, were not satisfied with this and hired Harry Clark to help out in this direction. Harry we have met before, as an original from the Optimist trumpet band. A snare drummer, he had played for three years in the Toronto Optimists and, after that, with the Jesters Senior Corps. A better person to instruct a drum line would be hard to find, bringing with him much knowledge and experience. Teamed with Eddy Jacko, a De La Salle graduate from their early days, this was to be a formidable combination.

A final comment was the report that De La Salle were to lose very few members this year and were expected to be strong next year. Two hundred and sixty-five miles away, La Salle Cadets were said to have over sixty horns. They had merged with the Troubadours from Hull, the city across the river.



*A celebratory cake from Rood's Pastry Shop  
(Frans Rood had marched with The Optimists)*



*Someone wrote a "10" on the bass drum  
for 10 Consecutive National titles*

For the Optimists, of course, all these developments meant that next year could be even tougher than this one. Though they were still supreme in their own backyard, the days when that supremacy was easily maintained were long gone. Forever!



*LaSalle Cadets (Shriners, Toronto, 1967)*





*Toronto Optimists (Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, 1967)*

## A few Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors as the summer of **1967** progressed

Contest ► Corps Name ▼	Shriners Toronto (June 17)	Garfield (July 22)	PowWow Kingston, NY (Aug 19)	CYO Nationals Boston (Aug 29)	North American Toronto (Sept 2)	CNE Toronto (Sept 4)	Nationals Waterloo (Sept 9)
Toronto Optimists	79.81	75.10	77.51	74.80	83.00	83.35	86.316
LaSalle Cadets	71.95				77.03	78.63	86.100
De La Salle	70.18				75.10	74.41	81.066
Blessed Sacrament		79.33	83.03	84.76			
Boston Crusaders	85.28			88.08	87.02		
Chicago Cavaliers	81.65			84.33	85.30		
Garfield Cadets	76.33		80.50	81.63			
St Joe's Batavia			78.76	76.81	83.21		
St Lucy's Cadets		79.48	81.76	80.05			

**For a list of scores for this or other years, go to our website:  
<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/>**

## Chapter 18: 1968, Down But Not Out

**W**ELL, IF LAST YEAR was somewhat confusing, this year would be even more so. All the four top Canadian Juniors would be in a race for the title, a race that began at the end of last season. This group consisted of the Optimists, De La Salle, LaSalle Cadets and Les Metropolitains. Mets, as they were often known, were once again part of the quartet remaining in the junior division. Last year’s fourth place finalist at the Nationals, the Sertomanaires, were no more. They were not folding, but reorganizing, and would not be seen on the field this year.

South of the border, Drum Corps were rapidly growing in California. Corps from that region would shortly begin to have an impact on the National scene.

### News

#### De La Salle

Locally, what was to help change things, in an already changing Canada, was the acquisition by De La Salle of Terry McKolskey as their Horn Instructor. Al Morrison had been Music Director for the year 1967, and he had done an excellent job. So good, in fact, that they had wanted to retain his services. Al was also a player and instructor for the Senior Corps, Commanders. There lay the problem. Del wanted him exclusively, but he was not willing to sever his connection with the Senior Corps. Terry had been helping Al with De La Salle so, when Del and Al parted company, Terry took over. He had wanted the job, so all were happy.



*De La Salle (1968)*

Terry wanted the job because he wanted his own horn line to instruct. Terry had started in Drum Corps with the Don Mills Sky Raiders before moving to the Optimists. He had always been a worthy member; however, not being able to play as big a role as he wished, he looked elsewhere, ending up with De La Salle. Del’s horn line had always been good and it had improved under Al Morrison. Under Terry McKolskey, it would improve even more, with results that we shall soon see.



## **New C.D.C.A. Publication**

A new publication made its appearance in Canada this year. It was to be the official voice of the C.D.C.A., called “Canadian Drum and Bugle Comment”. Its staff consisted of:

Vern Johansson	Editor
Cliff Billington	Advertising
Don Daber	Art
Dick Brown, Bob Walker	Production
Frans Rood	Photos

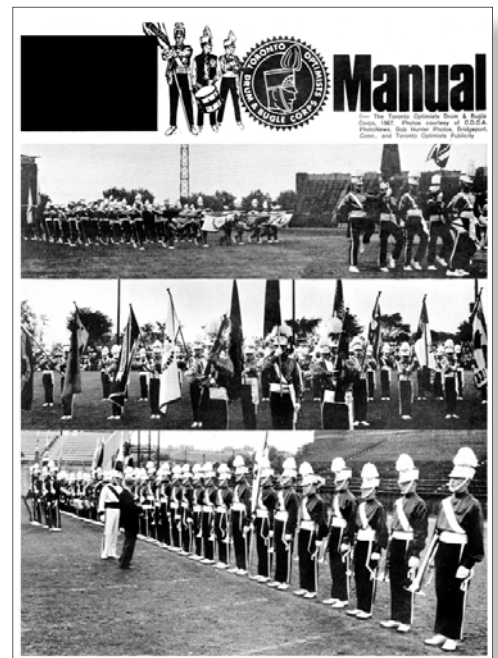
The writers were: Don Daber, Vern Johansson, Dick Brown, Clare Reid, Al Tierney and Jack Roberts. What is unusual about this list is that nearly all of these people had been, were now, or would be, associated with the Optimists. Either the Optimists had a disproportionate share of influence in the C.D.C.A. or, more likely, no one else was interested in doing the necessary work. Other Corps had just as many capable people as the Optimists, so you have to draw your own conclusions.



## **Green Capsule Comments**

“Green Capsule Comments”, the voice of the Optimists, was now in its eighth year of publication. This year there was a “special” special edition, for “inside” the Corps only. It was about the Corps manual, a virtual book of wisdom. It was a recap of all the experience and knowledge gained over the years which, hopefully, would be absorbed by the present members of the Corps.

Among other things, it outlined a code of conduct that included such things as, “be superior, but friendly”, and “always behave like gentlemen”. These were tall orders, but there was far more to this book, which is what it was, than just rules of conduct. It covered almost every aspect of the Corps and its activities that could be thought of. Whether anybody ever learned, or even read, the whole thing is debatable. Certainly, if everybody had read and followed all of its dictates, this would have been the best Corps in the world.



## **Optimist Cadets**

The Optimist Cadets, now a going concern, had one hundred and forty-three boys on the roll. At the beginning of March, they were working on their third musical number. Bugle instructors were Richard Boehnke and Paul Thompson. Drums were taught by Gord O’Halloran, Rick Splonick and Vern Johansson. Actually, they had no drums yet, but would have by March 16th.

## The Optimists

The Junior Corps, the Optimists, had taken a two-week break after the Nationals, with rehearsals resuming on October 1st. There were many new members in the line this year, a factor that, when combined with the reputed strength of the opposition, pointed to tough times ahead. Regardless, the Corps went ahead with a completely new show for 1968: The Joker, Medley on Girls Names, Ontario, Temptation, Going Out of My Head and You Only Live Twice.

These numbers would form the 1968 repertoire of the Toronto Optimists. Bugle arrangements were by Barry Bell, with percussion arranged by Ron Kaiser.

Fund raising this year was helped out by the Optimist Club, who ran a weekly bingo on Monday nights. No matter how successful the Corps was on the field, prize money alone could not cover costs, not even combined with outright grants from the Optimist Club. Fund-raising activities were as much an annual necessity as putting the Corps on the field.

This year was the forty-fourth birthday of the Optimist Club, the one that backed the Corps. On February 23rd, trophies and flags won were put on display. Two Corps members, in full uniform, were posted alongside for effect. Anyone who saw this colourful exhibition would have found it hard to believe that the Corps was really a very minor part of the club activities. This was true, proven later this year with the issuing of an Optimist Club magazine. The Corps was only given one page.

## Colour Guard Contest

Colour Guard contests were becoming a popular winter activity in Canada, as they had been for a long time in the United States, where the competition was ferocious.

During the last couple of years, the Optimists had entered some of these and, though beginners, had not fared too badly. Guard instructors for the Optimists were Ron Cooper, who was also the Captain, and Jack Roberts. Jack was also the Corps Drill Instructor, having taken over in 1965.

They entered the guard in at least four contests this year. One first ensued, but this was “unofficial”, not having a full panel of judges. Another “unofficial” saw them 3rd. With a full panel of judges, the Optimist Guard came in





fifth. Then came the 1st Annual Canadian National Guard Championship. Eleven guards were entered in this event, which played out before a full house. Many of the entrants showed their inexperience, and huge penalties were handed out all around. Partly because of this, and partly because they were no longer inexperienced, the Optimist Colour Guard won this event. Their score was 91.55, adding another star to a record already full of honours. It was the first victory for the Optimists this year; however, from here on, everything would be a tooth and nail fight to the finish.

## The 1968 Season

### The Shriners' International

An indoor show for the Optimists preceded the first big one this year, the Shriners' International Pageant. The Optimist Cadet Corps, now fully uniformed and with a repertoire of three numbers, took part in the parade that preceded the show. The Shriners' show proved to be a good one for the Optimists, but only as regards the Canadian side of it. None of the Canadian Corps, the Optimists included, were anywhere near the winning American units. Before a crowd of over twenty thousand, the show was won by the still powerful Boston Crusaders. With a score of 80.76, they just topped an also powerful Blessed Sacrament, who scored 80.20.



After that, it was another contest. Racine Kilties were third, six points back, and the three Canadian entries were behind them, all within three points of each other. On top of this trio sat the Optimists with 72.98, followed by De La Salle, at 71.93, and LaSalle Cadets with 69.96. For the Canadian Corps, none of these scores were decisive.

Anyway, the season was now underway. One week later the Optimists were unceremoniously dumped by Les Metropolitains. Again! This time by over two points, with De La Salle in third place by two points. At another show in June, the Optimists came back to defeat Les Metropolitains by over three points. As much as anything else, this shows what a ding dong year this was going to be.

### Brantford

Early in July, a contest in Brantford upset all the careful predictions. One week before this, LaSalle Cadets had clobbered Metropolitains, and thus were now considered number one Corps on the scene. They were not scheduled to be in Brantford, but somehow got themselves included. No doubt, to have another crack at their rivals. Well, they got it and more.

For the first time in seven years, De La Salle beat the Optimists at a full field show, in Canada. LaSalle Cadets were stuck in third place, three points behind the Optimists who were, themselves, one point behind Del. Del was now number one. It was that kind of year and the year was not even halfway over. What would happen next?

## **Sarnia**

A week later, in Sarnia, the scene of many an Optimist victory, three of the top four met again. De La Salle did it again, with the Optimists and La Salle second and third, respectively. Increasing their lead to almost two points, Del now had the bit between their teeth. All this was a novelty because, since the end of 1958, the Optimists had never been beaten this many times in one year.



*De La Salle (Nationals, 1968)*

Al Tierney, who was now the director of the Cadet Corps and who would have an important role in what it became, now turned his hand to writing. He published a long article in “Canadian Drum and Bugle Corps Comment” magazine, entitled “The Care and Feeding of a Bantam Corps”. He was, by now, qualified to write such a piece. It detailed the necessity for a feeder Corps as a reliable source of new members. It also described how to go about building one. He had assistants for this project but Al was the one who was mostly responsible. As well as holding the job of Cadet Director, he was also Assistant Director of the Toronto Optimists, themselves. For a man who had only been in Drum corps for a couple of years, he had come a long way.

The hectic scene that was the 1968 Canadian Drum Corps season continued. It was observed during these up again down again results that De La Salle played it very cool when they began to win. On the other hand their fans, after so many years of disappointment, went wild, finally having something to cheer about.

## **Ogdensburg**

All four contenders next met in neutral territory, Ogdensburg, N.Y. Reflecting the intensity of competition, all put on their finest shows yet, each striving to outdo the other. This sort of thing was paying untold dividends for the fans, who now were really getting their money’s worth.



*A member of the Optimist Cadets (about 1968)*



Here are the scores:

1st	De La Salle	77.450
2nd	Toronto Optimists	74.750
3rd	Les Metropolitains	71.850
4th	Cadets La Salle	71.130

The specialty awards were:

Drum Line	The Optimists
Horn Line	De La Salle
Colour Guard	LaSalle Cadets
Drum Major	Les Metropolitains



*LaSalle Cadets (1968)*

Strictly point-wise, horns and drums were the most important captions here and do provide a picture of things as they were unfolding.

In what must have seemed a pleasant respite, the Optimists had a contest in the United States, away from the Canadian circuit. Taking second by five to St. Josephs, they were ten ahead of the third place Corps, a somewhat lopsided affair.

Back in the battleground of Canada, Del triumphed for the third time this year, yet again increasing the margin of victory. Three points down from them were the unpredictable Metropolitains, with La Salle in fourth place. What a state of events now existed, and with time passing, things did not look at all good for the Optimists. Or La Salle, who usually started slowly but finished strongly. This year they had started off well but now seemed to be slipping.

## **North American Invitational**

Next loomed a major classic event. This year’s North American Invitational, on August 17th, mere weeks away from the Nationals. This contest was one of the three most important in Canada, the others being the Shrine and the Nationals. It was run by Terry McKolskey and his committee. Terry was a little guy but proving to be very big on talent and ability. Organizing an event like this is no mean feat. Terry was also Music Director for De La Salle and, with their string of successes thus far this year, that alone must have been a full-time job.

Fortunately, scores and placings are at hand, so we can see the latest results in what was the most exciting season in Canadian Junior Drum Corps in years. Here are the American scores.

1st	Casper Troopers	85.300
2nd	De Plaines Vanguard	82.583
3rd	St. Josephs	81.983

Not far back, but enough that it was almost another contest, stood our three Canadian entries.

4th	De La Salle	77.550
5th	The Optimists	76.383
6th	LaSalle Cadets	71.266

Important to us, here, is the fact that the Optimists were beginning a slow climb back towards De La Salle. The LaSalle Cadets are seen to be slipping still further behind. All were still behind the Americans, though not by as great a margin as before.

After this contest and as a result of their record, De La Salle was listed as the undisputed number one Junior Corps in Canada. Not since 1958 and Scout House had that label been on anyone but the Toronto Optimists.

Because this book is about Canada, I will make only brief comments regarding the U.S. Corps. Casper was becoming one of the best, possibly the best ever, Corps to exist. Santa Clara was part of the rise to prominence of the California Corps. St. Josephs was not only the powerhouse of New York State, they were well on their way to national prominence.



*Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)*

Canada now was the scene of three more major contests before the season was over: the Ontario Championship, the CNE Championship, and the Nationals. The Optimists currently held all of these titles.

Both La Salle and Les Metropolitains had seemed to fade towards the end of the season. This left only two Corps in the running, De La Salle and the Optimists.

## **Ontario Championships**

This was the scene as, on August 24th, the Ontario Championship rolled around.

This show was held, again, at Seagram Stadium. For the first time in seven years De La Salle won a major Canadian title! This made four in a row that the Optimists had now dropped to Del, confirming in most people's minds that there would be a new Canadian Champion this year. Besides winning this title for the first time, De La Salle was the first to beat the Optimists this many times in Canada. Ever!

## **Sarnia**

What the Optimists thought of all this is unknown but not hard to imagine. They likely assumed that if they gave up and relaxed, their time was certainly up. Not being this way inclined, they were off to Sarnia on the following weekend. Significantly, De La Salle took the entire weekend off. While the Optimists were very busy, the opposition was resting. Two days after Sarnia the CNE contest took place. This was the final contest before the Nationals, and if Del could win here, they would probably win the Nationals.



## **CNE**

A Corps like the Optimists does not go down easily. If they did, they would not have been on top as long as they were. You had to beat them, and stay beating them, because they would always come back for more.

What happened at the CNE was:

1st	The Optimists	82.36
2nd	De La Salle	81.06
3rd	LaSalle Cadets	76.95

The Optimists had rebounded from a string of losses to retain this title and open the door to, once again, winning the Nationals.

## **On to the Nationals**

The spread of 1.30 was, perhaps, not as significant as the psychology involved. If you could do it once, you could do it again. All that mattered now was the contest just one week away, the Canadian Championships. This year’s Nationals were held in Kingston, Ontario. It would be a small contest, in a small stadium with a small crowd. What it was not small in was excitement, tension, suspense, and importance.

For the Optimists, a ten-year Nationals winning streak was on the line. For De La Salle, it was the chance to be the first to break it. With La Salle five points back at the last contest, this would be a two Corps competition. It was a duel every bit as exciting as it could be, for fans and participants alike. All gave of their best. It was one of those shows that nobody in the crowd, or on the sidelines, could decide. Only the judges had that power.

Reinforcing their confidence, the Optimists had won the prelims, with Del second and La Salle third. Unexpectedly, their victory was by two points, increasing the margin of the previous week.

Of course, these were just the preliminaries, a run up to the finals, where anything can happen. The boys in green had lost the prelims for the past two years at this contest, then came back to take the finals. Now, the same thing could happen to them in reverse.

As each Corps took its position on the starting line, you could hear a pin drop, and tension hung over the field like a thick fog. Even those watching could feel it. All performed flawlessly, each leaving their fans thinking that their favourite had won. Still, this was, above all, a judges’ contest.

Here is what they came up with:

1st	The Optimists	79.133
2nd	De La Salle	78.300
3rd	LaSalle Cadets	73.666

This was not a popular decision with the crowd and much booing was heard. Never pleasant to endure, the Corps took it, most of them having heard it before.



*Toronto Optimists (Nationals, 1968)*



For an unprecedented eleven years in a row, they had won the Canadian National Drum and Bugle Corps Junior Championship.

Disappointment was plainly evident in the second place Corps but, being the outfit that they were, they would be back. Many others had disappeared over the years, but De La Salle had substance that seemed without limit. Crowd opinion aside, the contest was won, or lost, on drums. The Optimists were almost two points up on drums, while De La Salle took all other captions. It was not the first time that the Optimist's drum line had swung the balance in favour of the whole Corps. However, with Del winning all other captions, these must have been very close for an Optimist victory of 0.833. It was, then, a Corps victory.

So ended the 1968 Canadian Junior Drum Corps season.

## **A Tempest In A Teapot**

That there was an aftermath shows the nature of the interest in this contest. Surprisingly, it did not arise from either of the losing Corps, but from a neutral source. It was, also, really no more than a tempest in a teapot.

The snag was that it came from a highly placed member of the Ontario Chapter of the C.D.C.A. He was the host of a Saturday morning radio show that gave out results of Drum Corps contests.

When reporting this one, he stated that the results were received with disbelief, resulting in controversy. Such a statement implies that the results were in question, and that steps were being taken to remedy this.

First of all, the Optimists were not aware of any controversy. Had there been one, surely they would have been the first to hear about it.

Secondly, none of the other Corps in the contest lodged a protest or made the Optimists aware of any.

Finally, there was no machinery in the rules to reverse a decision of the judges. To do so would put the judges' chapter under suspicion and undermine confidence in them.



*Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)*



A letter pointing all this out was sent, by the Director and Assistant Director of the Optimists, to Bernie Beer, Chairman of the Ontario Chapter of the C.D.C.A. It was taken under advisement and that is all anybody, today, remembers about the whole affair. Were it really important, or valid, there would be accounts of action taken and people who remembered. There are none. It was just allowed to fade away. More likely, this was a display of frustrated personal opinion. Case closed. The Optimists were, and would remain, the Canadian Champions for 1968.

## **Corps Banquet**

The banquet, of course, followed, with a reminder, along with awards and presentations, that next year meant that number twelve was in the works. Already the propaganda machine was beginning to work overtime during the coming year. We will get to take note of its effects.

On November 11th, 1968, the young “A Junior C” circuit elected an executive in Rochester, N.Y. Don Daber became Recording Secretary and Public Relations Director for this organization. In addition, Don was still the Corps Director of the Toronto, Optimists. Don Daber was a glutton for work, as he still is to this day.

From the Corps, official thanks were extended to certain people in appreciation for invaluable services rendered:

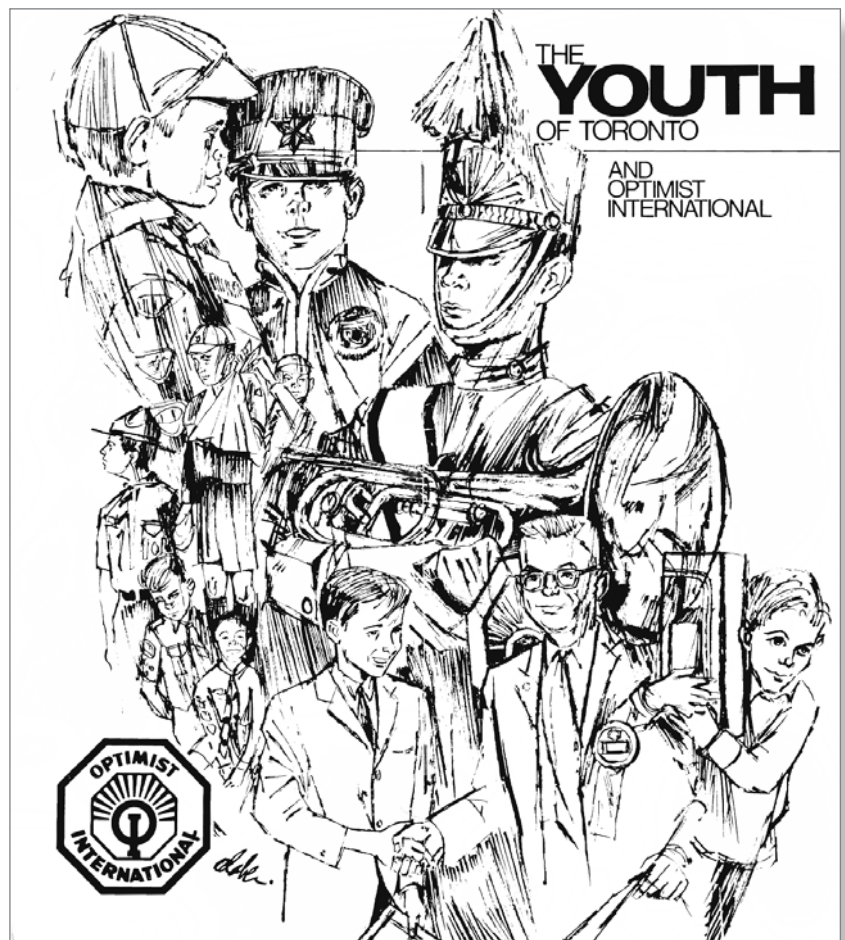
**Gord Robinson** for assistance at the individuals earlier in the year. These were not discussed in this chapter due to a lack of information.

**Mr. Greg Tierney and Mr. L. Y. Poole**, Grand Knight and executive of the Knights of Columbus, for making available facilities (K of C hall) for the Cadets.

**Mr. Ben Burrage**, for expert craftsmanship in the making of drum harnesses.

**Mr. Joe Brunelle and Corps members** for distribution of handbills.

Earlier in this chapter, mention was made of an Optimist Club magazine published this year. It was the November issue that devoted an article to the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps. This magazine covered the entire range of Optimist Club activity, continent wide. Reading this, one becomes aware of the total picture. The Optimist Club is a vast organization devoted to good works of every description. To relate the entire range of its endeavours would take not a book but a library. In this ocean of benevolence, the Corps was just a drop of water.



*Optimist International publication about the Toronto Optimists*

## **Statistics from an article about the Optimists**

It was, if worthy, an expensive drop of water. The magazine included a history of the Corps, along with some statistics. These were compiled from 1960, when complete statistics were first kept.

Here are some of them.

1. During this period, the Corps has travelled some 57,103 miles. That is, I believe, equivalent to twice around the planet.

2. They had played to approximately 1,074,300 people. This, counted before the days of computers, must have taken some effort.

3. There had been two hundred and thirty-seven appearances in the United States and Canada. Over eight years, this works out to about twenty-nine appearances per year. Not a bad total for a Canadian Corps.

4. During these events, the Optimists had won sixty-eight firsts in seventy-five Canadian contests. This is just over a ninety-percent success rate. If you pause to consider this, try to think of any other field where such a record can be shown. While there are some, these are few and far between.

5. This record included winning the Ontario Championship ten years in a row, the Canadian National Exhibition seven times, and, of course, the Canadian Championship for eleven consecutive years. South of the border, they had won the New York Canadian title four times.

The Optimist Drum Corps was now an institution in Canada, and it is not hard to see why. Whatever happened in the future, they would never be just another Drum Corps. That future was fast approaching, so let's turn the page and see what was in store for this battered, but still proud Drum Corps.



*Toronto Optimists (Grey Cup Parade, 1968)*



*Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)*





*The Toronto Optimists were the half time entertainment at the 1968 Grey Cup*

## A few Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors as the summer of **1968** progressed

Contest ► Corps Name ▼	Shriners Toronto (June 15)	Brantford ON (July 6)	Ajr.C LeRoy, NY (Aug 3)	North American Toronto (Aug 17)	CNE Toronto (Sept 2)	Nationals Toronto (Sept 7)
Toronto Optimists	72.98	76.933	79.96	76.38	82.36	79.03
LaSalle Cadets		73.566	76.40	71.27	76.95	76.67
De La Salle		77.133		77.55	80.06	78.30
Blessed Sacrament	80.20					
Boston Crusaders	80.78					
Casper Troopers				85.30		
Racine Kilties	74.38					
St Joe's Batavia			85.80	81.98		
Des Plaines Vanguard				82.53		

**For a list of scores for this or other years, go to our website:  
<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/>**

## Hyliters Drum & Bugle Corps

by Scott Horslin

**A**FTER WINNING the 1976 Jr “C” Canadian National Drum Corps Championships, the Cadet-Lancers of Toronto, faced the 1977 season, with many members having understandably moved on to the bigger Jr “A” Corps, notably the Seneca Optimists, and Oakland Crusaders.

Merging Cadet-Lancers with the Scarborough Kinsmen, to stay alive and be competitive, proved to be the answer, and hence, a new Junior Corps was born... The Hyliters.

Under continued direction from Dick Brown, other former C-L executive, and a full complement of instructional staff, The Hyliters competed with a substantial membership, and performed a repertoire, that included the Themes from Kojak, SWAT, African Symphony, and I Don’t Know How To Love Him.

There was to be no Championship this year, but The Hyliters competed in a full, entertaining, and enthusiastic season, and were in the hunt at every competition.

Once again, heading into the ’78 Season, The Hyliters faced the common drum corps threat of reduced membership (more big corps migration) and reduced operating budget.

Solutions were sought, and yet again, an amalgamation was on the horizon.



Rifles, L to R: Glenda Lister (Roblin), Jodi Gilbert (Hall), Paula Sibb, Patty Trace, Cheri Inches (Birchmount Stadium, 1977)



## Spotlight: on Hyliters Drum Corps (continued)

Ultimately, the Hyliters and the Keswick Coachmen merged. There was a wholesale executive and director change, but the 'Hyliter' name survived the rest of a tumultuous season.

As members, we were less aware of much of the background noise. We stayed focused on our music and marching programs, and competed hard at each show we entered!

Regrettably, 1978 was to be the last season for the Hyliters.

It's often said that 'young people' don't recognize the value of their youth but I would argue that most Drum Corps marchers and participants always knew how very special those drum corps years were!! What incomparable experiences we had, with friendships that remain, to this day!!



*Snare, L to R (from behind the judge): Jeff Johnson, Kevin Clancy, George Price, Kevin Lister (Birchmount Stadium, 1977)*



*Bob Brown on Tympan, Steve Webster on the Bells (Birchmount Stadium, 1977)*



## Spotlight: on Hyliters Drum Corps (continued)



L-R: the triples are Scott Horstin and Bill Brown (Birchmount Stadium, 1977)



?, Paula Sibb, Glenda Lister ((Birchmount Stadium, 1977)



? (Birchmount Stadium, 1977)



# Associated Junior Corps (AJr.C)

by Don Daber

**D**URING THE FALL months of 1966, after much thought and discussion among individual Junior Corps in the Northern New York State area, it finally happened... they moved to organize a Junior Association.

What? Another Association? Are there soon going to be more Associations than Corps? Not necessarily – and not in this instance.

About a year ago, during 1966, talk was strong that DCA was going to expand into the Junior field but nothing happened. It was a good idea and the time was ripe. Meanwhile, some of the Juniors had the idea too – St. Josephs of Batavia, Geneva Appleknockers, The Utica Yankees. Their Executive got together. They laid out a proposed plan for an Associated Junior Corps. The first wary meeting was held among an invited list of Junior Corps in St. Catharines, Ontario the morning of January 21st. The corps executive approached the meeting with caution and it did not open on an enthusiastic level.

They discussed a name, a listing of the first six members, the purposes of the Association and the structure under organization, meetings, dues, rules to eligibility, new membership, standards for contests and the flexibility of membership. After two hours the Corps executives represented did leave in a more constructive frame of mind than when they arrived and the next meeting was scheduled for a month later in Rochester on February 18th.

The second meeting opened on a higher plain, perhaps it was meeting in a private club rather than the corner of a school hall. Perhaps it was having the opportunity to think things out



*Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)*



## ASSOCIATED JUNIOR CORPS

### Founding Corps

Appleknockers, Geneva, N.Y.

Chessmen, St. Catharines, Ont.

LaSalle Cadets, Ottawa, Ont.

Magnificent Yankees, Utica, N.Y.

St. Joseph's, Batavia, N.Y.

Toronto Optimists, Toronto, Ont.

and plan items in detail. At this all-day session 12 topics were constructively covered including the finalizing of membership for 1967, the duties of each elected officer, the election of officers, dues, and the feasibility of a Championship Contest for all members in 1967. The A. Jr. C. was now an established fact.

What are the advantages of a Junior “A” Association?

The first big advantage over other Associations, and they certainly have their place, is the opportunity for corps of equal calibre to get to know each other better and work closer together on the Executive level. This is a lot easier when Corps are in one class and the Association is a small body. By agreement contests are up-graded in prize money and some of the top Juniors have a unique opportunity to work as a “team”. . . an opportunity not present in the past Internationally; except perhaps in the early days of the New York–Canadian Association.

Too often corps have been content to remain in their own camp... especially during the off-season months. All corps

have problems; want more members; want more shows; want the respect they work hard for and deserve. A small specific Association can accomplish this.

Too often Association meetings have been attended, with some corps traveling



## Creation of the “A Junior C” Association (continued)

great distances and sacrificing time and effort to get there, only to leave a few hours later with a growing sense of frustration and a “nothing accomplished” feeling. Every meeting should be constructive to a degree. It’s on the record that the second meeting of the “A. Jr. C” after an all day session, all the delegates left with a definite feeling of accomplishment.

Some definite results have taken place since. For the first time the southern-most member of the Association, the Utica Yankees Colour Guard, travelled up to Canada as guests of The Optimists at their first Guard Contest of March 18th. An “AJr.C.” Championships have been set for August 5th in LeRoy, N. Y. A definite publicity program is being developed to help member corps in membership, booster material, continued education of the public to drum corps activity, better and continued communication among the executive, more shows on both sides of the border and a greater respect for members through working together.

This is but an outline of the beginnings of The Associated Junior Corps. In future columns I will keep you informed on the continued activities of some of the top Junior Corps in New York State and Ontario .



*LaSalle Cadets (1970)*



*St Joe's (Batavia, 1969)*



*Chessmen (1966)*



*Magnificent Yankees (Niagara Falls, 1969)*



*Appleknockers Jr (Niagara Falls, 1969)*



# Chessmen's Colour Guard

By John Byrne

Colour Guards have always been an important part of what makes up a Drum Corps; however, their contribution to the Corps has often been under appreciated.

**T**HE MAJESTIC'S GUARD was arguably the best colour guard in Canada for nearly a decade. Based in St. Catharine's, the colour guard had its beginnings with The Denis Morris Majestics from Denis Morris Catholic High School in the early 1960's. It evolved into The Chessmen Colour Guard when the Majestics and the Grantham Police Boys Band amalgamated after the 1965 season.

## The Majestics Guard

Bill Rutherford was the key to the success of the Majestics and Chessmen Colour Guard. Bill took on the Instructor role at Denis Morris at a relatively young age. He didn't disclose his age to the members of the guard lest that became an issue with the guard and their parents. Suffice to say that Bill wasn't much older than the contingent of teen girls he was instructing. Bill maintained a professional demeanour and distance at all times and insisted that the Guard maintain a "lady like" demeanour themselves; no makeup, no hair curlers, no smoking and skirts only when on tour, etc. Since most of the Guard were Catholic, Bill also made sure that they were able to attend Sunday Mass if they had a performance when touring. The Guard



*Chessmen's Guard (1967)*

consisted of 11 flag bearers (including the National Colours), along with four rifle bearers and a Guard Captain.

Bill quickly earned the respect of the guard and worked them hard! Beginning with the basics, the guard spent countless hours pacing the gym floor at Denis Morris High School from end to end; striving for correct posture, equal pacing and hitting their marks together, maintaining proper fronts and flag positions and angles etc. Over time Bill would introduce them to various elements of a drill that would be used for the competitive guard circuit. The subsequent time was spent perfecting each element of the drill.

This kind of Colour Guard activity was very intense and went way beyond the role guards usually played in regular Drum Corps. In Drum Corps guards were



*John Byrne (1966)*

most often simply used as colourful accents to the corps show. On the competitive guard circuit it was much different. This kind of Colour Guard performance was much more complex, dynamic, skilled and entertaining. A typical Guard routine was approximately six to seven minutes in length and consisted of a number of key elements; an Off the Line, a Presentation of the National Colours, and various precise

## Chessmen's Colour Guard (continued)

formations and flag maneuvers. Occasionally a formal inspection, usually by a member of the Armed Forces (in the States), also took place prior to a performance. There were also certain penalties assessed for violations of protocols related to the position and acknowledgment of the National Colours as well as flags touching the floor or dropped rifles or flags.



*Chessmen Guard (1966)*

Guards also included "Rifle Bearers" whose primary role it was to guard the National Colours. Often times two of the four rifle bearers would provide their own element to add colour to the performance by twirling the rifles, tossing them into the air and catching them. This was more difficult than it sounds, as the rifle bearers had to twirl at the same rate and toss them into the air to the same height and catch them at exactly the same time. While this was going on the other two Rifle Bearers maintained their guard over the National Colours.

As you can appreciate, with all this going on within the confined space of a gymnasium floor, within the time constraints allowed, a Guard performance was a bit like a three ring circus.

Also key to the Guard's success was the participation of tenor drummer Brian "Ace" Kirkpatrick. Ace would be at every practice and developed his own repertoire of drumming to match and accent the drill. At Guard competitions would have to use a separate dressing room or washroom for changing into and out of his uniform.

### **Brian "Ace" Kirkpatrick (on rudimental bass)**

When they were ready, the Guard entered the competitive guard circuit that operated primarily in New York State. This guard circuit was primarily made up of Guards from the Western New York area



*Brian "Ace" Kirkpatrick (1966)*

High Schools like St. Thomas Aquinas (all boys) High School from the Rochester area, the Sherborne High School and Bishop Kearney High school guard where colour guard was a popular school activity along with other community based guards like The Shoreliners, The Wavettes, and the Toronto Optimists (all boys) Colour Guard and others. Invariably a rivalry developed between the top two guards Aquinas and Chessmen. The Chessmen were able to maintain a small margin of victory over the course of the season. In a way both guards pushed each other to excel.



## Chessmen's Colour Guard (continued)

In addition to their participation in the New York circuit, the Chessmen entered into competitions in the Midwest Circuit based in the Chicago area and performed brilliantly against stiff competition. The fast pace of the Chessmen guard contrasted dramatically against the much slower mid-west style. Mid-west crowds were shocked at the fast pace of the Chessmen, many believing that they wouldn't be able to maintain that through their routine. They were wrong!

Following the winter guard circuit, the Guard would join up with the rest of the Corps for the summer Drum Corps season. Bill Rutherford took on the challenge of designing and instructing the drill for the entire Corps from its first year (1966) to its dissolution in 1968. The Guard was a major help to Bill as they provided the framework of the field show and they were adept at guiding the horn and drum lines to their proper marks and formations.

Although the Corps itself had only moderate success, credit was given by judges to the general effect of the drill and the performance of the Guard. On numerous occasions the Guard was cited as the best guard in the competition as was the case in Utica New York when the Chessmen outperformed the guard of the mighty Boston Crusaders. Sharing a dressing room with Boston led to a quiet tension when it was learned that the Chessmen Guard had beaten The Crusaders.

One of the things that distinguished The Chessmen guard was that it carried distinctive 8ft tall flag



*Chessmen and Colour Guard at indoor show*

poles and full 3ft x 6ft. flags. The poles we made of fairly thick aluminum required much more effort to control than the much smaller poles and flags used by many competitors. The visual impact of the larger flags with their striking uniform red and black colour and patterned flags was amazing. Again the influence of Guard Instructor Bill Rutherford was key.



*Chessmen's Colour Guard in competition*

Apart from the Guard Competitions themselves the Guard also participated in numerous parades throughout the year, meaning that the Guard performed throughout the entire year.

## In closing

The influence of Colour Guard and Drum Corps on the young women and men that participated in it has been profound; they developed the habits of self discipline, commitment, teamwork, and a drive for excellence in all they do. These fundamental qualities benefited them long after Drum Corps, in their careers and in raising their families and life in general.

There is little doubt that the Chessmen Guard was one of the best Colour Guards in Canada and perhaps North America and that it became that way largely due to the influence of one man, Bill Rutherford. He not only brought out the best in the guard he helped them develop a passion for excellence and a pride in themselves that stayed with these young women for the rest of their lives. The Guard not only performed for themselves; they performed to their best to please Bill.

### Best rehearsal, best show

by Mike Thys

**D**URING MY TIME in the corps, most of the 60s, one of our most serious competitors was Mighty St. Joe's of Batavia, New York. We did not meet in competition very many times in any given year, but they certainly beat us more often than we beat them. We were to meet them in Sarnia on July 16, 1966 for the first time that year. They had had a very good 1965 season, coming in fifth at the 1965 VFW Nationals prelims. In the finals they slipped to eighth, just behind Boston Crusaders and Blessed Sacrament who they had beaten in prelims. In prelims they had also beaten the Kilties who ended up in third in the finals. So, a very good corps, and all indications were that the current corps was just as good. In fact, at the 1966 VFW Nationals they would be ninth. Top ten in the US defined the very best. We felt excited, and a little apprehensive but eager to compete with them again at that contest in Sarnia.

When we travelled, we always had a long rehearsal before the night show as soon as we arrived, and Sarnia was no different. We commandeered the field just behind the stadium and began to warm up for our first run-through. Just as we began to take our places on the starting line, a large group of St. Joe's corpsmen, all wearing their corps jackets, showed up to check us out. We recognized some of their soloists and other noted personalities. Not much was said on the starting line, but we had all seen them and we all seemed to stand a little straighter and taller. There was suddenly a pact, unspoken but eerily felt, that we were going to give the St. Joe's guys something to worry about. There was a definite feeling that during this rehearsal we would concentrate and

focus on doing the very best job each and every one of us could do. When we stepped off, I knew that we were about to do a spectacular run-through. At the halt for concert there was a palpable aura of pride and strength emanating from the corps towards the drum major out front, and with a slight grin he radiated it right back to us. The rest of the show was of the same calibre, and on the finish line I had that wonderful feeling that we had all been in that zone where everything went so well that at the end it was all just a blur. There were no specific memories, just an overriding feeling of accomplishment.



Mike Thys

We must have achieved our goal of intimidation because the St. Joe's contingent left the field muttering amongst themselves while we were still on the finish line. Although our night show was very good it could not quite attain the same magical plateau of the rehearsal, but we did win the contest, besting Mighty St. Joe's by over four points. Although we attained higher scores later that year, I still consider that rehearsal and then in the evening that competition to be the best ones I ever did.



Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1966)



### How Rick Roussel Became an Optimist

By Ray Roussel

**T**HE STORY BEHIND this shot (stop me if you've heard this one) is that Tim, Den and I (Ray) all marched with the Optimists that year (1968) and although we had a very difficult season we managed to win the national championship on sheer grit and determination.

Rick played snare drum with De La Salle at the time and, although De La Salle and the Optimists had been trading victories most of the year, somehow Rick agreed to a bet that if the Optimists won the championship he would quit Del and come and join us. We won. And so, being the honorable fellow that he is, Rick resigned from Del and came over the green side.

This completely staged shot was taken by Don Daber at a stadium in west Toronto where we had performed that day. Because we all look so young (unlike the grizzled old buggers we are these days)

I'll identify the culprits. That is Den placing the shako on Rick's head, Tim holds the jacket, and Ray helps support the snare drum that Rick will proudly carry for the next three years.

It may not have made much of a difference in the world of drum corps but it sure made a difference in the household peace around the Roussel house for the next year.



*The Roussel Brothers (September, 1968)  
L-R: Den, Rick, Tim and Ray*

*Sadly, all of the Roussel brothers have passed away. May they rest in peace.*



*Dennis Roussel*



*Ray Roussel*



*Rick Roussel*



*Tim Roussel*

# Looking Back at 1966

by *Brian Byrne*

**A**FTER PLAYING IN GRANTHAM for five years it was time for me to move on to the Optimists for the next four years. I joined up almost as soon as nationals were over and wore “Green” for the first time in a blizzard up in Sutton doing a Christmas Parade. What a way to begin my new career!!

It was quite apparent that when I joined that there had been quite an exodus from the 65 Corps, the old “Age Out Factor”. “Not to worry” said George Wright, “we’re the Optimists”. With a crew of stalwarts like Johansson, MacKenzie, Thompson, Kaiser et al, we got to work.

Our first show of the year was in St. Catharines (my home town) and I remember well the Corps condensing the field show into an arena size floor area. Unbeknownst to me was that the rumour mill had been working over time and that the “word on the street “ was that the Optimists were done!

Shortly after our rehearsal time a couple of friends from Grantham came up to me almost breathless to announced that they had never seen the Optimists look and sound so good – the rave reviews began coming in.

## The Shriners International

Our next big moment came about a month later at the Shrine Show and now I knew I had hit the Big Time. The mood of the Corps kind of surprised me as every one seemed pretty calm and confident but what did I know?? I was just a rookie – Mike Thys’ rookie to be accurate.

I thought we did a pretty inspired show and a couple of hours later we had beaten the Chicago Royal Airs, the 1965 VFW and American Legion National Champions. Not bad for my first competition. The rest of the year was pretty much a blur except I do

remember being billeted with Danny Panessa who was at the time Garfield’s Drum Major. A heck of a nice guy but the rest of the trip was a disaster as we got blown out of that Eastern Circuit big time. It was a long bus ride home.

In 1966 we had a lot more contests in the U.S. than we did in 1965.

As with all things, there are positives and negatives. On the positive side we had more opportunities to compete against the better American corps. The feedback on the score sheets from these contests gave us information to refine our show and make it better. On the “down” side these trips were hard on our bodies and made it more difficult to do a first rate show. Since most of our guys had summer jobs we often didn’t leave until midnight. During the 10-12 hour drive to these contests we’d try to get some sleep on the bus. Once there, we’d practice until dinner, eat and, then, do the show. If we only had one show, we’d head home; however, if we were lucky, we’d spend Saturday night on the floor in a gym, drive to the next contest on Sunday, practice until just before the show, eat, do our show and, after retreat, we’d head home. On some trips we’d arrive home just in time to go to work on Monday.



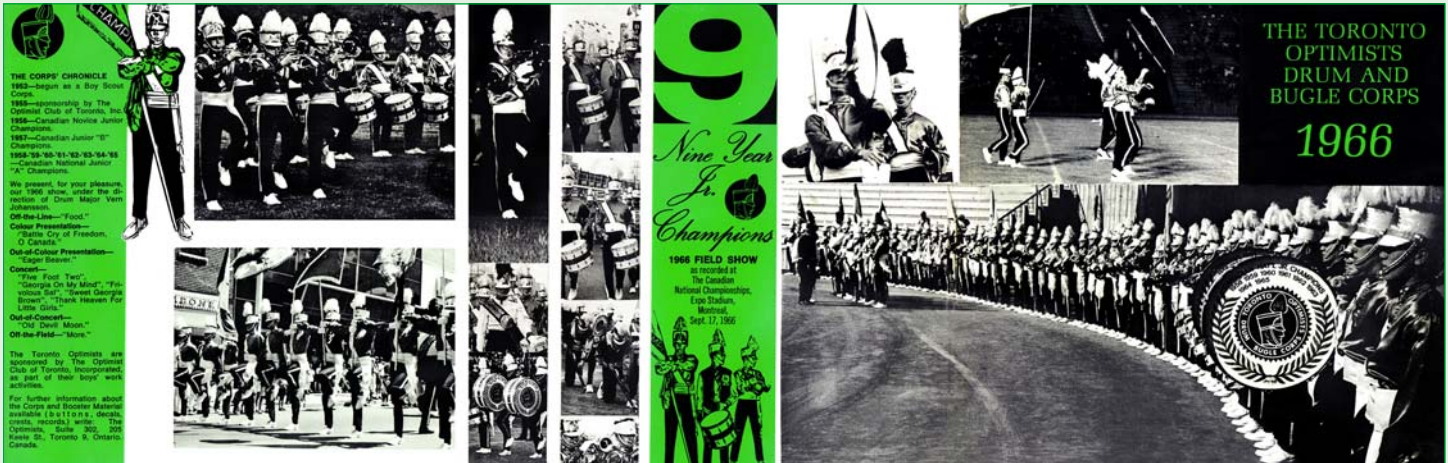
*Brian Byrne (1967)*

## Some Highlights

For a number of years we’d had a good rivalry going with St. Joe’s of Batavia. During this season we competed twice – one win for them in



## Looking Back at 1966 (continued)



Batavia and one win for us in Sarnia. There were no bragging rights for either of us that season. Of course we still felt great because Optimists hadn't beaten St. Joe's since 1963! And, at the Pow Wow in Kingston, NY we did beat Garfield.

With the season behind us it was now time for Nationals. While we did some fantastic shows over the next four years I have to admit that none was finer than Montreal in 1966. Many stories circulated for years over that one and anyone who hasn't read that story in our Corps History should read it.

Friends of mine in St. Joe's who took in the show said it was all over in about eight counts as the Corps literally did a show of a lifetime. Now

no more Rookie stuff for me – I had earned my championship and there were more to come in the ensuing years.

**(from a report by Robert Schleidt that was published in the March 1967 issue of Drum Corps Digest)**

*The Toronto Optimists, by putting on a super performance, won their ninth straight Canadian National Jr. title at the Expo. in Montreal. This was a performance that would have beaten any top corps in the U. S. and was one of the greatest shows they ever performed in their 9 years of championship. The Optimists have one of the best concerts on the field, and backed by a great drum line and a wonderful color guard that proved very popular in the states.*

*Everyone is eagerly waiting for the return of the great "Green Machine" from Toronto, Ont. The highlight of the season was their victory over the Chicago Royal Airs; and the New York State champions, Mighty St. Joe's of Batavia, N. Y.*

*Looking ahead into '67 this corps will be greater than ever proving it against Top American and Canadian Corps. Canada certainly can be proud of the Toronto Optimists to represent them as their Canadian National Jr. Champs in its Centennial year.*

### Paul Thompson Remembers

*"The pre-show warm-ups for the 1966 Nationals were held in the heart of downtown Montreal. When the brass arrived to join the drum line, we were stunned with the sight before us.*

*Opposite the drummers was a crowd mesmerized by the skills of our percussion section. Many wore tuxedos and fashionable gowns (obvious the theatre going audience). With much anticipation we joined the drummers but, to our chagrin, after a minute or so the crowd wondered off."*

# A Day in the Life of a Corps

## The Unusual Account of How a Junior Corps Primes Itself to Win the Canadian Nationals

By Douglas McPhail

*(from Canadian Drum & Bugle Corps Comment, Vol 1, No. 4)*

**M**Y ORIGINAL PLAN was just to get a ride up to Kingston and watch the 1968 Nationals like any other spectator, but it didn't work out that way. I made arrangements to go on one of The Optimists' corps buses and it was the strangest trip I have made in fourteen years in drum corps.

It started Friday night, the day before the Nationals.

It was the usual parting scene for a young junior corps. Members who had girlfriends lingered with them behind the bus, although not to talk; forgotten parents waved unnoticed goodbyes after the customary lunch bags had changed hands. And I stowed my suitcase of sandwiches carefully in the bunk (the luggage rack) of bus # 1. The buses revved and rolled out eastward and the sun dropped down behind, perhaps somewhere out past Winnipeg.

And that's when the trip began to take on it's strangeness.

These Optimists were not the boisterous six-footers who had stomped Scout House out of all events except memories. These were younger and smaller, most of them, and diligently tempered more with training than with fire. And they are a better corps.

They sat quietly, at first, like double rows of robots and read the signs which peppered the inside of the bus.

Most of them were subtle signs: "Today is Sept. 11th..." although the date of the Nationals was the 7th. A sign which had once rode home from many victories read, "Optimists are down this year..." Of course there were the arrogant signs which rivals scoff at but also post proudly on their own buses. And there was also an excerpt from a poem, which although unusual for a drum corps, did not seem out of context. It read:

*"Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in the old days  
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are."*

I knew it was from a well known poem and I made a definite note to look up its name and its ending when I got home.



Doug McPhail (1961)





## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CORPS (continued)

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On most corps trips there is a lot of smoke, some hands of poker and the guffaw-talk about exotic and delicious fantasies. But the Optimists surprised me. The conversation – at least what I heard – included arguments on how a given substance alters its dimensions at the speed of light, and speculations on the concept of infinity. They joked about contests getting so technical that eventually punch-card data of your computer-programmed show would be sent to Contest Headquarters where the chief Computer would evaluate your hornless, drumless, manless show and the season would be over in a milli-second. Some future.

But for the present we were on our way to Kingston and the headlights cut a swath of light down the dark of the 401. There was the rolling hum of the tires and the quiet talk, not the excited chatter about the most important contest of the year, only quiet talk; restrained talk. The moon was a tangerine on the right and a smaller window bounced up the windows on the left, and the night-black hills and the blinking gas stations dropped back fast to the west.



*Toronto Optimists (1968)*

It was often hard for me to realize that these guys on the bus were a drum corps, let alone The Optimists who had been beaten repeatedly by De La Salle this season, except for last week at the C.N.E. (Canadian National Exhibition) and at the Shriners' Show much earlier. And Kingston, tomorrow, would be a one-night-stand to retain the title they had held for ten years. Imagine: ten years on top, twenty-four hours to the Nationals, and no one talks about it!



*De La Salle (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)*

You could say that the older ones in the corps had never known such defeat in Canada before and refused to believe it now. Or you could say that the younger ones had been urged to retain a reputation whose origin they never knew, except from stories. Both could be true. Yet these people are too emphatic over trivia, you know there is some deep emotion held back so strongly that it hurts. And on the bus nobody asked, "What if we don't win?" They said nothing about it at all. But you could tell they were thinking.

The Optimists were more like a corps when we checked into the motel on the outskirts of Kingston. It was a new, two-story motel with

a balcony. When the corps was finally cajoled and herded into their respective rooms, I heard a loud thumping on a door. Someone was hollering, "Let me in! Let me In!" He kept shouting, insisting it was his room, and I watched until the door opened and swallowed him in. Then the hollering came from inside

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CORPS (continued)

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the room, more frenzied, and when the door reopened four skinny forms in underwear straight-armed the flailing intruder, carrying him overhead, and dumped him into another room before running back down the balcony to their own.

Even after the lights in the rooms went out, you could still smell the quick-lime, fast-dry smell of white shoe polish. There was the sound of rolls and triplets muffed on a mattress in the dark, then on a practice pad, and then on a drum.irate phone calls stopped the drumming and no doubt the manager soothed the non-corps guests. That was just before someone meticulously tuned a new head on a bass drum.

Eventually all sound softened into sleeping, silence thickened on the crickets, and when the sun rose, there were roosters. It was the morning of the day of The Nationals.

**I**T WAS A BRIGHT, crisp morning and it looked like the beginning of a good day although weather can change easily, especially in the fall. But the corps was eager. They finished breakfast quickly, started rehearsal at ten and worked on music, breaking it down bar by bar. For drill they went over and over manoeuvres, stopping at each infraction and starting over, the kind of rehearsal you expect to see much earlier in the year and which is boring to watch. It took them a long time to get right through the show. Even then the drill was just passable, hardly exciting, and a breeze pulled small gray clouds in from the west.

On the bus on the way back to the motel for a buffet lunch they were laughing and shoving as is usual with corps and it was good to see the tension lift. They talked loudly and emphatically about everything before the question came. It was a single voice and at the same time it was everyone's and everything that was never said. The voice hollered, "Shut up!" What have you got to talk about? Why aren't you thinking how rotten your drill is?" And the heavy, hurting silence dropped down on everyone like acoustic tile cubicles, one per man in double rows, and you could feel the earnest resolutions of the thinking.

The sky was gray now and there were the first signs of fall: a few dead leaves that skittered in the gutters as the bus droned by like a hearse of mourning pallbearers. The arrogant signs in the bus seemed out of place and I saw no one staring at the one that read, "Tho' much is taken, much abides..."

We saw some of Kingston on the way to the preliminaries after lunch. It was like touring a labyrinth of gray, handmade, limestone canyons. There were upright ancient houses, some restored and some crumbling their tradition into history like those corps who, after greatness, disappeared. The clouds had gathered thickly now, one large ominous gray.

The Optimists dressed into uniform and there was not much talking. They were inspected after the delinting, sewing, trimming, polishing, dusting and last-minute haircuts. A tenth was lost because a horn player's pants were too short.



*One of the many limestone houses in Kingston, Ontario.*



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CORPS (continued)

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The 'Mets' from Montreal were on the field. Looking from the school where they changed, you saw Optimists and Del and Cadets LaSalle, in that order, lined up in fronts to go on for the prelims. And when it was over, that's the way they placed: Optimists first by nearly two points.

The corps was back at the motel when they were phoned the results. They jumped a bit and rippled with exhilaration but more from relief and release than excitement. It was not the big title but it was a start.

And it was peculiar to see how the weather coincided with their mood because the sun was out by then and there were no more clouds that day.

They had a long rehearsal after supper, all through the evening and past the time when it was too dark to fully dress a front. Still it was not the warm-up and the polish before a show but the grinding stop-start breakdown, just like most of the other 39,000



LaSalle Cadets (1968)

man-hours of practice which the corps had logged this year. The drill looked better. The horns were crisp and the drums, as always, could be relied upon.

The Optimists sang on the way to the finals. They sang all corps songs: Boston, Chicago, and even some old Princemen with horn parts that go, "Lalaalaaaala lala, laala lala" and drum parts that go, "Zdm zdm zdm, zzzzmbump ziggitybiggitybum..." And when they were in uniform you could tell by their eager eyes that they were ready and that they shared a knowledge of something strong which reaffirmed, "That which we are, we are..."

They filed onto the field and the thing they knew flowed up and down the line and you could feel it sparkling under the lights. LaSalle had just come off and three of them were crying. Del watched straight-faced without a glint of rivalry. The long green line ran the gauntlet of Ambassadors and Commanders, many of them old Optimists, and the passing handshakes and the smacks and the pats were a blur of white and orange on green.

*... "And from Toronto, The Optimists!"*

The crowd cheered. And they cheered as they had not done for a long time, not like at other contests where they booed because the Optimists won too much. Now they cheered the Green to win again.

The starting front broke once, snapped straight and feet grabbed the field and held it tight. They did better than they hoped. You could not have asked for more.

When they went off, they were smiling.

The sweat was still fresh on their uniforms when the line broke back of the stadium. And they danced and hugged and jumped and cried. A drummer babbled, "It was just like being one guy out there, all of us! You could feel how smooth it was!" And there were a few, the perfectionists, who knew they each had lost a

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CORPS (continued)

tenth – a dropped rifle, a dry solo, a flammed triplet – and they did not look at each other. But the rest did not care. They, the corps, had done what they had come to do. Everyone knew it.

Even the rookies were freed from the agreement which bound each of them as a flunky to a senior until the Nationals were won. They had been good apprentices.

Instead of suspense, the retreat was more the waiting for a confirmation. And after they won their eleventh National title, The Optimists played and sang the Corps' song and their fans crowded in around them on the field.

Out of uniform they brimmed with smiling; a few let out shouts which had been so long held back... Mostly they smiled, deeply pleased and happy, looking forward to the Victory Party which all corps plan but few have earned.

And that's how they were when they won.

When I got back to Toronto, I looked up the poem which I had read so often on the Optimists bus that day. It was from Tennyson's "Ulysses". The poem ends:

*"...that which we are, we are,  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."*



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)



Doug McPhail marched with the Toronto Optimists from 1958 through 1961. In the early years he played soprano then, for 1961, he was Optimists' Assistant Drum Major.

After aging out, Doug began designing the drill for The Optimists. Doug's show designs were excellent. For example, almost 60 years later, people are still talking about Optimists 1963 show, especially the Off The Line "wedge" .

Doug was also an excellent writer who contributed many articles to GCC as well as to other publications.





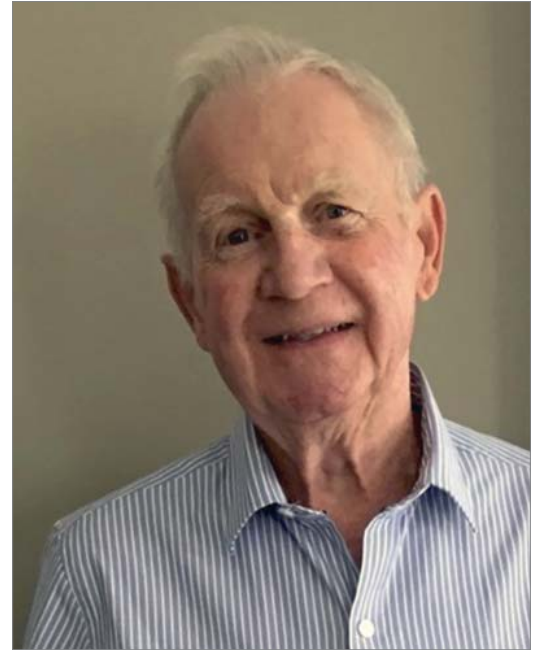
**Ken Poole**

**September 29, 1937 — December 29, 2022**

**Corps:** Danforth Crusaders, Toronto Optimists

Ken was a founding member of the Toronto Optimists. He had marched with the Danforth Crusaders before joining the Optimists in 1957. Ken played Baritone with the corps from 1958 through 1960.

Ken passed away in Mexico where he had been living. A Celebration of Ken’s Life will be held in Ontario at a later date.



***Ken . . . . . We Remember!***



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

## Marc Burns

October 16, 2022

Corps: Toronto Optimists

Marc marched in the Toronto Optimists in 1966 and 1967, playing cymbals. He was a great guy who will be missed by all who knew him.

### Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Marc:

*“I only have fond memories of Mark. We met in the 60s and had tons of laughs in the Beach, then marched together in the Optimists. We reconnected recently and had a few long distance phone conversations, for which I am now very thankful.”*

*“Crushing news. Marc was truly an exceptional human. I learned so much from him. He was such a kind soul. “*

*“Marc was always such a supportive friend, and this is a loss that will be felt by many.”*

*“Marc was a sincerely beautiful human being who always shared from an honest and positive place. “*

*“I am so deeply sad to learn of his passing. He was a huge part of my brother Dave and our family lives. My parents loved Mark like their own son. He was in my brother’s wedding party, marched with Dave in the Toronto Optimist and spent a lot of great times at my parent’s home. He was a pillar of strength, an exceptional human being and our Brother.”*

*“RIP Marc, thank you for your kindness, love and always being a supportive human being. You ran a good run my friend!. Love you forever!”*

*“Very sad to hear of this, my condolences. I feel lucky to have known Marc and witnessed the compassion he showed at every turn. He made my world better.”*

*“I will always cherish the time I was privileged to spend with Marc, a true Gentleman.”*



**Marc . . . . . We Remember!**





*Toronto Optimists (1967)*

### Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter: Staff and contributors

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**CORRECTIONS:** We tried to get everything right.

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