

THE AL TIERNEY REPORT

A DRUM CORPS VETERAN

BILL THORNE



William J. Thorne can be found sitting in the stands of a drum corps show, generally sitting in the back row of most of the contests in Ontario, and many of the major ones in the United States. This location is just the most recent position in a history of involvement that goes back to about 1957, some 32 years.

Bill joined the 618 Squadron Air Cadets, and subsequently became a member of their band playing a baritone bugle. They practiced at the Fort York Armouries. Realizing that it was the band that held his interest, in 1958 he moved to the Royal Knights Drum Corps, which almost immediately merged into the Leaside Lions Jungle Kings, again playing baritone.

In the fall of 1959 he joined the Toronto Optimists and finished his playing career in 1965 when he aged out. He played the baritone bugle throughout his corps years during his last season switched to contra when they were added to the Optimists brass line.

In addition to being a marching member, Bill also did some arranging for the original Conqueror of Hamilton and the Marching Angels, an all-girl corps from Garna. After aging out he worked as a bugle instructor with the Optimists. He has always looked on that particular year as being the most rewarding experience he has had. In 1968 he again reverted to his first love, and played a baritone bugle with the Canadian Commanders, a senior corps of Toronto, and later Burlington, Ont.

Bill took time out to complete his education, and after receiving his degree in Engineering, decided he wanted to be a lawyer. He graduated and opened an office in Etobicoke, Ontario.

The Optimist/Seneca Optimist reunion in 1985 rekindled his interest in drum corps, and shortly thereafter he registered 2 of his 3 children with the Emerald Cadets of Mississauga. Their program at that time was not as challenging as he wanted, so in May of 1987 he transferred his children to the Cadets of Dutch Boy

in Kitchener. Here they came under the wing of Bill's former instructor with the Optimists, Barry Bell, and a former marching member with Bill, Gord O'Halloran, on percussion.

At this time his daughter, Kathy is a lead baritone player, and soloist with the Cadets. His son Andrew, plays mellophone, and his youngest son, Jeffery is a percussionist in the pit. Jeff also had a feature role as Pinocchio, in this past year's Pinocchio percussion feature with the Cadets. He also acted as assistant Drum Major with the corps. They are all looking forward to the time that they can march with their brother corps, Dutch Boy; their heroes.

Drum corps has been helpful to his children in other ways. Kathy takes music at school, and is a superior horn player. The other two are enthusiastic about music, and looking forward to the time when they can take instrumental music in school. Jeffery is into the acting and leadership roles made possible by his involvement in the drum corps activity.

Bill states that his favorite drum corps include all of the drum corps he has ever seen, the big ones, the little ones, the good ones and the bad ones. He attends all of the prelims, the "A.A760" classes, from the first to the last, enjoys the European corps, and of course the top twelve.

Bill drives his 3 children to rehearsal, as well as 3 others from Mississauga to Kitchener, a distance of about 50 miles. This starts about once a week during the winter months, up to 2, 3 and even 4 times a week as the season progresses. Also, with the Cadets on tour, he helps out where he can, washing dishes, cooking meals, helps on bugle instruction, painting trucks, repairing equipment, arranging housing and anything else as needed.

There is more than one way to support and assist your local drum corps, and Bill Thorne has obviously found many of the ways that are needed to provide a worthwhile activity for the young people of today.

COVER PHOTOS: Bill with youngest son, Jeffery at the Cabbagetown Festival in Toronto, Sept. 1989. Jeffery waves to the spectators as Pinocchio with Dutch Boy Cadets.



Jeffery Thorne conducts the Cadets at the Cabbagetown Festival parade standstill contest on-the-street.

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