



Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter

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

The Toronto Optimists History website celebrates:

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

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



ISSUE 15 July 2024

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PDF VERSION ON OUR WEBSITE: www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

Contribute to YOUR Newsletter

ONE of the reasons we started the newsletter was to use it as a vehicle to republish Colin's book. Now that has been accomplished, the question becomes "what's next?".

We need to decide whether to continue publishing, (each issue takes about 400 hours)! We are asking ourselves if our readers are interested in seeing the newsletter continue. And if so, what will it include?

YOUR feedback will help Dave

and I decide our next step. Since starting the TOH Newsletters, there have been memories from over 30 different sources: some from individuals, others from publications. **For a complete list, see the Content Summary at the bottom of the Newsletter page on the website.** To continue the newsletter, we need more stories! Please submit yours!! Thank you.

SEND your suggestions, stories or articles to Bob:
toronto_optimist@rogers.com



15. July 2024



14. April 2024



13. January 2024



10. April 2023



11. July 2023



12. October 2023

1. January 2021



Toronto Optimists History- Newsletter

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The Toronto Optimists History and Newsletter
The Toronto Optimists Drive & Bagpa Corps 1961 - 1975 | The Toronto Optimists History & Bagpa Corps 1971 - 1978

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WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL ISSUE of the new Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter

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



Don Dabier and Rick Cusker in the clubhouse working on an issue of OCC (1960)

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

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

ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2021

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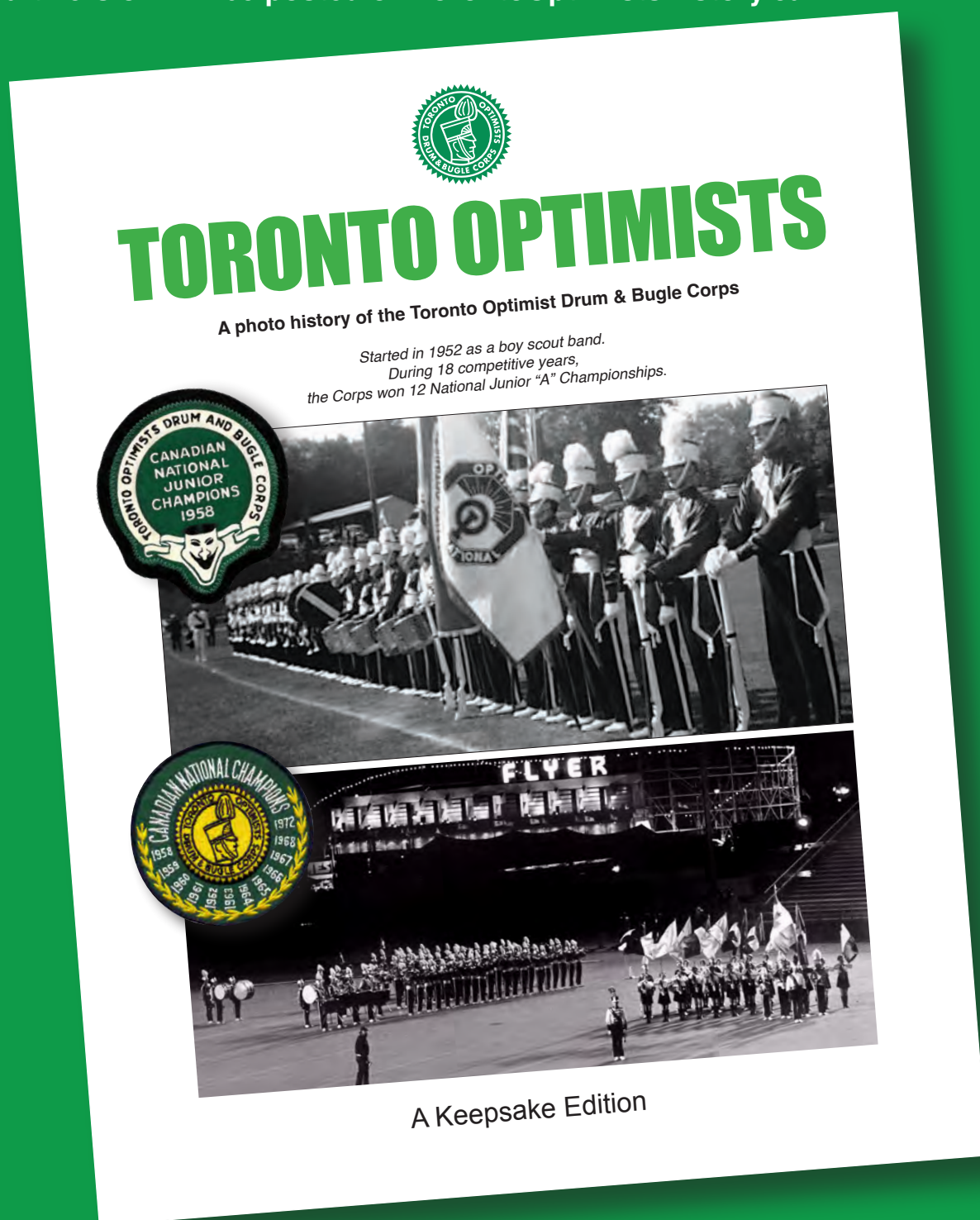


LOOK FOR A PDF VERSION ON OUR WEBSITE: www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

PHOTO HISTORY - The Toronto Optimists.

This 40 page booklet with over 100 photographs is a keepsake history from 1952 to 1978.

This is in progress. Unfortunately computer issues have delayed finalizing the booklet. It will be completed when Bob has a working computer. When ready, a draft version will be posted on TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca



VIDEO HISTORY - The Toronto Optimists.

Featuring photos from 1952 through 1978 and concert soundtrack

This video will be a companion to the Photo History Booklet.
Work on the video will continue when Bob has a new computer.
When completed, it will be available on our website:

<https://www.torontooptimistshistory.ca>





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.



Toronto Optimists on the finish line (Nationals Prelims, Varsity Stadium, 1964)

WEBSITE UPDATE:

What's new on TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

YOU HAVE probably noticed that I have not been making changes to the website nor have I been posting photos in either our **Photo Gallery** or on **Facebook** pages. After 12 years of use, my computer system has started corrupting my files and I can no longer use it.

I've spent considerable time trying (unsuccessfully) to get it working correctly. Unfortunately, an off-the shelf computer will not satisfy my needs and replacing the hardware and software will cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000. This is a major expenditure but, without it, I will not be able to continue with the **website** and **newsletter**.

Since I think that it's important to keep these alive, a new computer system will be ordered. Once I have it, it will take time install the software I need and to transfer almost 18 terabytes of data files from my offline backups to the new computer.

If all goes well, I hope that we will be back in business by the end of July, hopefully sooner.

- Bob



London Midlanders (Nationals, Varsity Stadium, 1970)

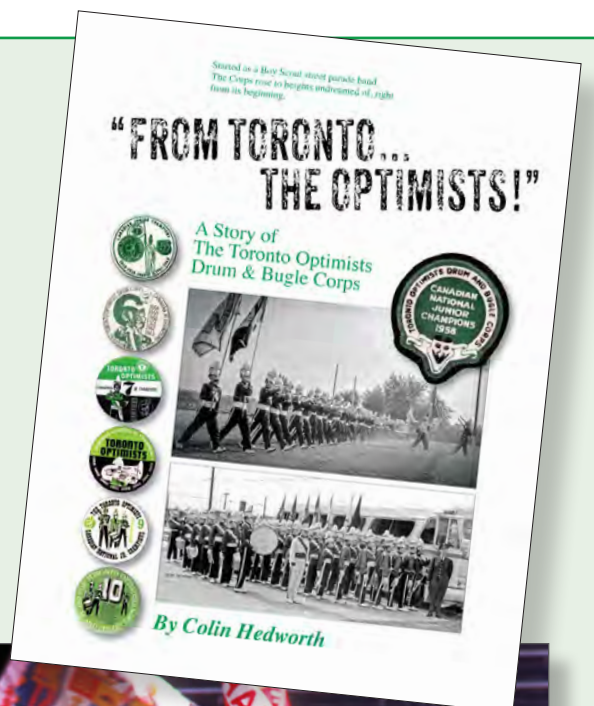
From Toronto... The Optimists

This issue of the newsletter contains the final chapter in Colin Hedworth's book "From Toronto... The Optimists!"

ONE OF the reasons we started the newsletter was to use it as a vehicle to republish Colin's book.

The chapters of the book you have been reading for the last four years have been modified from the original book. While the text remains the same, this version contains many new photos as well as improved versions of photos used in the original book

Collin's original book is out of print, however It can be viewed on the website.



Toronto Optimists (prelims to Nationals, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1964)

A Tribute to Colin Hedworth

This issue of the TOH Newsletter completes our publication of Colin's history of the Optimists. We had considered including a brief biography of Colin with the first chapter of the book; however, we decided that Colin's preference would probably have been to have us focus on the book.

Colin began his drum corps career with the Danforth Tech Crusaders. After the 1957 season, he was one of many corps members who followed Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti when they left the Danforth Crusaders to instruct a new corps, the Toronto Optimists. Colin played tenor drum with the Optimists until he aged out at the end of 1962. In late 1975, Colin returned to the Toronto Optimists as a member of their equipment department.



Colin Hedworth in Danforth uniform



Colin is the middle drummer (1958)

In January 1976, the Toronto Optimists merged with the Seneca Princemen to form the Seneca Optimists. Colin continued with the new corps as a member of their equipment department. That decision makes Colin the only person who was there at both the birth and the demise of the Toronto Optimists. Colin remained with the Seneca Optimists until the corps disbanded in 1979. Until his passing, Colin maintained an active connection with the corps and its members.



Colin (1961)

This book, "From Toronto, The Optimists", is a manifestation of Colin's love for the Optimists. He spent thousands of hours, over many years, researching the corps' history. He spent much of that time with Don Daber, who had joined the Optimists' organization in 1960 and stayed with them until the Seneca Optimists disbanded. As the longest serving Corps Director in Optimists' history, Don had considerable historical knowledge of the corps. Don also had an extensive library of drum corps publications, and he gave Colin access



*Back: Doug Coull, Tim Burrage
Front: Barry Woods, Gilles Paquin, Bob Carell, Colin Hedworth, Evert Botterweg, John Konstantinou, Chuck Sokoll (1976)*

to that material. Colin also contacted former staff and members of the Scout Band, the Optimist Trumpet Band (aka Opti-Corps), the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists. Wanting to include a variety of perspectives, Colin also spoke with former staff and corps members of many of Optimists' competitors. His goal was to gather and discuss various versions of stories to validate the veracity of the material included.



Orest Burak, Colin and Dave Bignell, (1961)

Colin passed away in July 2013. Unfortunately, he never had the opportunity to see his book published.



Colin with Lorne Ferrazzutti, Toronto Optimists' first drum instructor (Reunion, 2008)



Toronto Optimists drumline with Colin on the right end (Varsity Stadium, 1962)

Chapter 29: 1979 — TAPS

There was lots of news around this year, but most of it was about other Corps, not the Seneca Optimists.

Offensive Lions had a big recruiting campaign and were stepping up rehearsals to four a week during the winter. Gary Czapinski was writing M&M for the Cavaliers. These outside instructors came if you hired them. At \$1,000 a weekend, plus food, accommodation, etc. they did not come cheap.

Marie Grana was now with Madison Scouts. Oakland Crusaders were said to be quite strong compared to the last two winters. They still had Harry Clark on drums, with Terry Kirkpatrick. On horns they had Peter Byrne, on guard Debbie Miller. If those names seem familiar, they were. Peter Byrne and Debbie Miller used to be with the Seneca Optimists. What had happened? They had not been the first instructors to leave. Sam Kays had left the year before, and others. It was part of a slow decline, the roots of which are difficult to pinpoint.

At the end of last year, the Krescendos people had gone back to their own Corps. It had been fun for them but it was only for the summer of 1978. They reformed their own Corps. This left the Seneca Optimists where they had been at the beginning of the 1978 season, with about sixty people, all experienced and all used to top level competition. The way things looked right now, they would have to become a Junior “B” Corps to get on the field.

An alternative was to do what the Boston Crusaders had done after their decline and concentrate on having a top quality small Corps, forgetting about size. They had done this very successfully but had to accept that they would never win big shows with a small Corps. It seemed that both of these choices were not acceptable to the remnants of the Seneca Optimists. More importantly, neither was presented as a possibility that could have led to a rebuilding operation. Why was this?



Seneca Optimists (Toronto Santa Claus Parade)



A few members of the Seneca Optimists



Seneca Optimists, waiting for the parade to start

the job more than he did. It was also obvious that nobody else wanted the job. It takes a certain quality to take over an enterprise that is seemingly in decline. Ric had that quality, combined with eagerness, which makes it even harder to explain subsequent events.

All this took place at a huge meeting, held at Seneca College, and a really odd thing took place. Some people were dissatisfied with the Booster Club and its performance. Why, I don't know. The result was that the incumbent leadership was voted out; however, nobody was voted in! Probably nobody wanted in. So, on one vote, there was now no Booster Club. There had been, as we have now seen, a falling away of instructors, executive, players and, now, the Booster Club. The whole complex was coming unraveled. It was as if there was writing on the wall and everybody was reading it.

Before Christmas, Seneca Optimists had put on a terrific display in the Toronto Santa Claus parade. They were captured in a spectacular T.V. shot that gave no hint of any disturbance ahead. To anybody outside the Corps, everything must have looked very solid.

It was after this that things started to slide. One indication was the 1979

Well a lot of strange things went on during the winter that might shed some light on things. And a lot of things did not go on. First of all, the Corps got another new Corps Director, Mr. Ric Brown. He had been around a long time, beginning with the Toronto Optimists in the guard then as a bass drummer. He had stayed on during the years and ended up with the Seneca Optimists. Here, Ric served as Assistant Director, under Al Tierney. Always known for an independent mind, to quote Al Tierney, Ric was “a tower of strength”. He was also a gofer, which we all were at one time or another. On the night that Ric was formally handed the reins of control, it was obvious that nobody wanted



A few members of the Seneca Optimists

Individual and Small Group Competition. In the percussion caption, Seneca had one entry, to fifteen for Oakland. Brass saw no Seneca entries, as against nine for Oakland. Colour guard had four Seneca entries, as opposed to seven for Oakland. Other Corps had entries, but I have used the Oakland Crusader figure because these two Corps were nearly always equal in such events. Clearly something was wrong.

At Symposium 7, held on January 19th, 20th, and 21st, no one who was connected to the Seneca Optimists was

doing anything. There were just people who had been. It was as if they no longer existed. Well, of course they still existed. People were still coming to practice every week. More than enough to keep things going. The problem was, there was nothing happening to keep going. Instructors were few, absent, or non-existent. People who came out found no unified activity going on. Many people came from other Corps, either to watch, or join. Nobody took them in hand to get them enrolled; in fact, the machinery for it did not exist. So, potential recruits, interested enough to come down, were allowed to drift away. Probably to go and join another corps.

Regardless of all this, at this stage there still was a Corps; they had been booked into a lot of contests, including D.C.I. contests. It was as if a big spirit would suddenly come along and set things on the right track. That was not likely to happen, the “spirit” all having long gone. This situation was to reach absurdity before real evidence of the state of things became apparent.

As the winter wore on, things got worse. Fewer people began to come out, as enthusiasm dwindled, and what spirit there had been began to dissipate. A partial explanation of this could be that after a merger, and a temporary amalgamation, there was no spirit, or tradition, to build on. Constant mergers can dilute the identity



Seneca Optimists (Toronto Santa Claus Parade)



A few members of the Seneca Optimists (Simcoe, 1978)

of the Corps, to the point that you are not in “A” Corps or “B” Corps, but just a corps. There was no long tradition to maintain, no spirit to whip up in the name of one’s Corps. Also, there were many more things to do these days than in older days, and people were not so inclined to stay with an ineffective organization as they once might have been.

Another major factor contributing to this was that there were no local smaller Corps around to gobble up. The two big Toronto Corps had merged them out of existence.



A few corps members

All of this discussion is speculation. What was reality was that a major rebuilding job was necessary. This could take years, and even then was not a sure thing. The calibre of Drum Corps today was such that no one was going to come up and win in one year as the 1958 Toronto Optimists had done.

For such a process to take place, a dynamic personality was needed, someone with the foresight and knowledge to know what it would entail. When things go wrong like this, it is convenient to blame the one at the top, the Director. In this case, this must be looked at again.

The past versions of this Corps had more than enough people for everything. Everyone wanted a piece of it. Now, the Director was virtually alone. There was Jack Watt, the Business Manager, an Equipment Manager, and a few others like Harold Bradley and myself. None of us did much because, “It wasn’t our job”. It wasn’t, but one man could not do everything. So, eventually, things came to a head.

There had been a news conference held, at which was announced the Drum Corps International Canadian Regional Drum and Bugle Corps Championships. What that mouthful really meant was the first “D.C.I. Canada”. D.C.I. granted the O.D.C.A. a charter to run this first annual contest. The Seneca Optimists were represented at this news conference and, as if everything were all right, they were booked into it.

They were, once again, booked into D.C.I. East, at Allentown, PA, on August 10th and 11th, along with Oakland Crusaders and Offensive Lions. They now came under the listing of “Associate” Corps, a category created by D.C.I. for those who had not made it into the top twelve.

Contests in Canada, on their schedule included Ajax, Welland, Hamilton, Toronto, and the Ontario Provincial and Canadian National Championships, along with D.C.I. tours, of course. In fact, they had a schedule lined up that was the equal of the previous two years. Why! Because when these shows were booked, there was every indication that there would be a Corps on the field, and there could have been. But over the long winter months, it had been allowed to slowly dissipate, no action being taken to halt or reverse the trend. Most of the members were now more interested in playing hockey.



Hurry up and wait!

Realization of the true state of affairs began to surface. One indication was in “Corps Fax ‘79”. This publication, the brain child of Don Daber, could have been given to someone who knew nothing about Canadian Drum Corps. After reading it, they would have known all about them. How they operated, were judged, celebrated, competed, and anything else. The second half of this booklet was a directory of all Corps in Canada that had bothered to send in information, which was just about all of them, including some American ones. Each Corps had a picture and underneath it was a complete listing of its officers, instructors, and a phone number where they could be reached. You could have organized a contest with this book alone.

Under a fine picture of the Seneca Optimists on parade, the total information given was a Toronto postal box number. Under this, the barren statement, was “No information supplied at time of publication”.



Corps-Fax Entry for the Seneca Optimists



Cover of 1979 Corps-Fax

It was time for something to happen, and it did. A meeting at a private home was held in early May, where the absurdity of the whole situation was brought clearly into the open. In attendance were four or five members of the executive, waiting for the Director to take charge and chair the meeting. He began by stating how they were attempting to get the “Judy Garland” theme music for the off-the-line number. This piece, a medley actually, had been played years before by the Toronto Optimists. The absurdity was, that by this time of year, the Corps should have been outside marching and playing, polishing the show that had been learned over the winter. They were still trying to get music. There was no show. Such things were the responsibility of a Music Director, but there wasn’t one, at least not officially. Something had to give, and it did.



Waiting for the parade to start

One of the members blew up, blaming Mr. Brown for letting the Corps trickle down the drain. He accepted full responsibility and immediately stepped down. I think he was relieved. The job was beyond his scope at this time. Although no one person was totally to blame, he became the man whose name would be associated with the whole debacle. This is not absolutely true. There were many factors involved, beyond the control of any of us.

None of us would have done much better. Maybe all of us, like the members, had, after all, had enough. To Ric’s credit, he picked up the reins that no one else was willing to hold and gave it an effort. He rates an “A”, if only for that. When things had settled down, Jack Watt now became the Director. Things carried on for a while, but nothing much changed. Seneca had already pulled out of a May 12th concert because they were not ready... for anything. Ric Brown became driver on the equipment truck. He seemed a lot happier.



A few members of the Seneca Optimists

Mr. Watt, the Director, answering a request from the community services people, took on a person to work with the Corps who was serving a sentence of community work. He was about as interested in it as the Corps members themselves seemed to be, which, now, was very little. One weekend, at Seneca College, a group of the executive was inside discussing the state of things, wondering whether it was worth the trouble trying to keep anything going. A decision was reached.



Two corps members were seen walking across the large parking lot. It was a gorgeous day, with not a cloud in a clear blue sky. This was a parking lot that once was full of cars, thronged with people. In the distance sat the Corps equipment truck, alone, forlorn, still crammed with the instruments and paraphernalia of a Drum Corps.

Two of the executives walked over to meet the two members who had turned up for practice. They were the only two. Disappointment was evident on their faces when informed the Corps was now disbanded.



Here are a few additional photos







Every legend has a beginning.

*Every legend transforms itself
into a never-ending story
told time and again
by those that were part of its unfolding.*

None of us will recall how things ended.

*No, we prefer to remember how things were
when we were Optimists.*

The legend lives on... in all of us.



Epilogue

Well, there it is folks, the whole story.

Although this tale was supposed to be the story of the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps, I felt it would not be complete without the build-up from 1952 to September 1957. Likewise, with the events that took place from early 1976 to the final denouement in 1979. The Toronto Optimists marched as a unit from 1958 through 1975. Before that and after, it was not the Toronto Optimists but, I felt, essential to the story.

There was a brief attempt at a revival that fared no better than many other attempts by other Corps. It lasted a couple of weeks.

Many of those in the story you have just read are no longer with us. The known ones are Al Baggs, Bernie Beer, Mrs. Nonie McKolskey-Beer, Al Tierney, Gord Robinson, Doug McPhail, John Johnson, Wolfgang Petschke, Norm Cardwell and, no doubt, many among the original Optimist Club. Even some who were Corps members.

As for the rest, where are they now? All over! Most got married and settled down, building successful careers for themselves and their families. A few are still involved with Drum Corps. Some disappeared, never to be seen again.

No matter, wherever they are, they all have one thing in common. They were in the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps. They all have fond, or even sentimental, memories which help to fuel an alumni association that is still active to this day. A 45th anniversary reunion was held to honour Barry Bell, Lorne Ferrazzutti and Don Daber, three of the main stalwarts of those early years. People from all walks of life came, sharing memories, reliving past glories, rehashing old battles.

This is now where it belongs, in the realm of memory. Any tarnish will disappear, and past glories and legends will glow brighter as, for one more day, the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps takes to the field.

From Toronto... The Optimists!

It's better that way.

Colin Hedworth



Through the Years: A Photo Retrospective

David Johns and I wondered how to wrap up the publication of Colin's Book: "From Toronto... The Optimists!". Instead of more words, we decided on a photo retrospective that encompasses the time before the Toronto Optimists, the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists, formed after the Toronto Optimists disbanded. Besides the photos, we include a few bios of people who played pivotal roles in the development and success of the organization.

Important Individuals



Scout Master "Bud" Parker

"Bud" Parker was the man who originally conceived the idea of forming a band for his Scout Troop. The boys of the 18th Toronto Boy Scout Troop enthusiastically received the idea. Mr. A. W. Baggs, the Oakwood District Commissioner, granted the necessary approval for the project.

Once a week, the Scouts gathered in the halls of Davenport Presbyterian Church. Although the Scout District Office and Church approved of the band, they did not supply the instruments. Mr. Parker used his own money to pay for them and they remained his property. The band's first instruments were straight plastic bugles with no valves, herald horns and drumsticks but no drums, just pieces of wood. Equipping a band is an expensive proposition. For complete beginners, though, these instruments were, no doubt, adequate.



Mr. Al Baggs

Al Baggs was singularly responsible for the existence of the band that ultimately became the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps.

He became acquainted with the Band through his work with the Boy Scouts as the District Commissioner in charge of Badges. When Bud Parker, the founder of the Band, was unable to entice the Downtown Optimist Club of Toronto into sponsoring the Band, it was "Mr." Baggs that stepped in and had them reconsider their decision. When Bud Parker moved out of the city, it was "Mr." Baggs who took leadership of the Band and guided it through two championship seasons as Opti-Corps when they won the Canadian Novice and then the Junior "B" Championships.

It was he who had the vision, the organizational skills, and the determination that created the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps, arguably Canada's greatest Drum Corps and probably one of its greatest marching music ensembles.



Barry Bell

Barry Bell was the first Music Director and Brass Instructor of the Toronto Optimists.

Barry began his drum corps career with the Western Tech Trumpet Band. In 1955, the Danforth Tech Crusaders acquired his services. While there, Barry wore almost every hat imaginable: corps director, music director, brass instructor, drum instructor, drill instructor, drum major, etc.

At the end of the 1957 season, Barry moved to the newly formed Toronto Optimists as their Music Director and Brass Instructor. Under his guidance, the Optimists won eleven consecutive Canadian National Championships! Barry left the Optimists at the end of the 1969 season.



Lorne Ferrazzutti

Lorne Ferrazzutti was the Toronto Optimists first drum instructor.

Barry realized that he could use some help at Danforth. At the beginning of 1956, he invited his friend, Lorne, to join him at Danforth. Lorne instructed drums for the Crusaders during both the 1956 and 1957 seasons. At the end of 1957 Lorne, too, left to become the drum instructor for the Toronto Optimists.

Under Lorne's guidance, the Optimists' drumline became the best in Canada.



Don Daber

Don Daber discovered Drum Corps and The Optimists in 1960. Over the years, he served as corps' Photographer, Publicity Director and Corps Director.

In 1963 Don succeeded Mr Baggs as Corps Director of the Toronto Optimists. He eventually became Optimists' longest serving Corps Director. Don also created Green Capsule Comments, the newsletter for the Optimists.

Besides doing publicity for the Canadian and Ontario Drum Corps Associations, Don was also on the Board of Directors for these organizations. He supplied photos and articles to various drum corps publications and designed promotional material, programmes, and posters. Don also created the artwork used on the covers of many drum corps albums. Needless to say, he had a tremendous impact on both the Optimists and the greater Drum Corps activity.



Bud and Alice Parker with Gladys and Al Baggs (1954?)



Don Daber, Mr Baggs and Bud Parker (Reunion, 1969)



Lorne Ferrazzutti, Barry Bell and Mr Baggs (Rally Night, 1961)

The Scout Band



18th Troop Scout Band (Oakwood Collegiate, 1952)



Some members of the Scout Band. L-R: Bob Bond, Peter Coward, Ed Nanni, Jim Patten, Al Latham, Harry Clark, Ben Woodley (1953)



Scout Band (Waterloo, 1954)



Scout Band (Dufferin Street, north of St Clair, 1954)

The Optimist Trumpet Band (aka Opti-Corps)



L-R: John Bodkin, Bob Brown, Harry Clark, Hector Roberts, Don Yeaman, Ron Cook, ?, ?, Len Perrin. (CNE, 1955)



Mr Baggs with some members of Opti-Corps (1957)



Opti-Corps in front of a church with two instructors from 2nd Signals (Ross Wilson on the left and Bill Self on the right) the guy in the middle with glasses and white gloves is Roy Lawrence, the drum major (Islington United Church, 1955)



Optimist Trumpet Band (Toronto City Hall, 1956)

Toronto Optimists: 1958



Optimists Colour Guard (1958)



Mayor presents City of Toronto Flag to the Optimists (1958)



Toronto Optimists winning first Nationals (Galt, 1958)

Toronto Optimists: 1959



Toronto Optimists with St Lawrence Seaway Flag (1959)



Toronto Optimists (Guelph, 1959)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Galt, 1959)

Toronto Optimists: 1960



Toronto Optimists (Preview of Champions, Jersey City, 1960)



Appears to be the first recipients of Optimists' 5 year rings (1960) L-R: Phil Hennings, Bob Owen, Ian Robertson, Bob Cook, Henry Beben, Harry Clark, Jim Patten, Ron Cook, Hector Roberts, Don Yeaman, Larry Cheevers, Mike Layton

Note: Ed Nanni is missing

Toronto Optimists: 1961



Toronto Optimists (St Catharines, 1961)



Toronto Optimists (1961)



Toronto Optimists (Rome, 1961)

Toronto Optimists: 1962



Toronto Optimists, the last performance in the corps' original uniforms (Junior Int'l, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1962)



Toronto Optimists (Grey Cup Parade, Toronto, 1962)



Toronto Optimists (Metro Championships, Varsity Stadium, 1962)



Toronto Optimists on retreat after beating SAC (first time in new uniforms, Rome, NY. 1962)

Toronto Optimists: 1963



Jim McConkey conducts concert (Salamanca, NY, 1963)



Toronto Optimists mini-corps (Hull, QC, 1963)



Toronto Optimists "El Cid" trio of Jeff Shimotakahara, Joe Gianna and Jack Roberts (prelims to Nationals, Waterloo, 1963)

Toronto Optimists: 1964



Andy Henderson (L) and Vern Johansson, Toronto Optimists (Toronto Santa Parade, 1964)



Bill Holloway and Doug MacKenzie (Menominee, MI, 1964)



Toronto Optimists (prelims to Nationals, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1964)

Toronto Optimists: 1965



Bill Holloway and Barry Radford (movie shoot, Hamilton, 1965)



Toronto Optimists (Shawinigan, 1965)



Toronto Optimists (1965)

Toronto Optimists: 1966



Vern Johansson receives Nationals Trophy (Montreal, 1966)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Montreal, 1966)



Doug MacKenzie, soloist, and Vern Johansson, Drum Major (1966)



Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1966)

Toronto Optimists: 1967



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Ottawa, 1967)



Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1967)



Toronto Optimists (Sarnia, 1967)



Toronto Optimists (1967)

Toronto Optimists: 1968



Toronto Optimists (Grey Cup Parade, Toronto, 1968)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)

Toronto Optimists: 1969



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)

Toronto Optimists: 1970



Toronto Optimists (Waterloo, 1970)



Toronto Optimists (Madison, 1970)



Toronto Optimists (North American Invitational, Varsity Stadium, 1970)

Toronto Optimists: 1971



Toronto Optimists (Shriners, 1971)



Toronto Optimists (1971)



Toronto Optimists (Shriners, 1971)



Toronto Optimists (1971)

Toronto Optimists: 1972



Toronto Optimists' silks (1972)



Peter Byrne, Toronto Optimists (Nationals, CNE, 1972)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, CNE, 1972)



Toronto Optimists (1972)

Toronto Optimists: 1973



Toronto Optimists (1973)



Toronto Optimists (1973)



Toronto Optimists (1973)



Toronto Optimists (1973)



Toronto Optimists (1973)

Toronto Optimists: 1974



Toronto Optimists (CNE, 1974)



Toronto Optimists (CNE, 1974)



Toronto Optimists on retreat (1974)

Toronto Optimists: 1975



Toronto Optimists (1975)



Toronto Optimists (Brantford, 1975)



Toronto Optimists (1975)



Toronto Optimists (Brantford, 1975)



Toronto Optimists (Brantford, 1975)



Toronto Optimists (Brantford, 1975)



Seneca Optimists: 1976



Seneca Optimists (Michigan City, 1976)



Seneca Optimists (Michigan City, 1976)



Seneca Optimists (Michigan City, 1976)



Seneca Optimists (Michigan City, 1976)



Seneca Optimists (DCI, Philadelphia, 1976)



Seneca Optimists (DCI, Philadelphia, 1976)

Seneca Optimists: 1977



Seneca Optimists (DCI Finals, Boulder, 1977)



Seneca Optimists (1977)



Seneca Optimists (Colorado, 1977)



Seneca Optimists (1977)



Seneca Optimists (CYO Nationals, 1977)



Seneca Optimists (CYO Nationals, 1977)

Seneca Optimists: 1978



Seneca Optimists (DCI, Allentown, 1978)



Seneca Optimists (DCI, Allentown, 1978)



Seneca Optimists (DCI Allentown, 1978)



Seneca Optimists (DCI Allentown, 1978)

The Conqueror: Hamilton Junior Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps

SPOTLIGHT

by Roy Wilson

THE CORPS was formed in the fall of 1960, when the Hamilton Optimists Club agreed to a proposal from five former members of Preston Scout House Band to sponsor a junior drum and bugle corps in Hamilton. They were: Donn (Richard) Truman, Pete Sanderson, Dave Rafuse, Roy Wilson, Harry McCutcheon.

First practice was at Ancaster Fair Grounds. Barton Community Centre on Upper James soon became the winter practice site. The Community Centre was then located outside the urban area on Hamilton mountain, out in the country near Rymal Road. The building was torn down as retail plazas later expanded toward Mount Hope Airport.

Summer outdoor drill practices were held in Kings Forest Park, nestled below the mountain in the city's east end, which we nicknamed The Pit.

The corps name and opening fanfare came from an LP titled "Conquerors of the Ages" that Pete Sanderson picked out of the discount bin in a Hamilton mountain record store. Uniforms were designed by Donn Truman, to suggest the look of Roman soldiers.... the conquerors of an earlier age.



Roy Wilson (Winterfest, Waterloo, 1963)



Conqueror (Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1962)

Spotlight: on Conqueror Drum Corps from Hamilton (continued)

The first corps director appointed by the Optimist Club was Bill LaPenotiere, manager of the downtown Right House. Bill was also choir director of his church and occasionally conducted the horn line practices.

The lawyer who arranged contracts and payments for instructors was Lincoln Alexander, who later became Canada's first Black Member of Parliament and subsequently first Black Lieutenant Governor. He rode on the bus with us on a couple of trips to perform outside Hamilton.

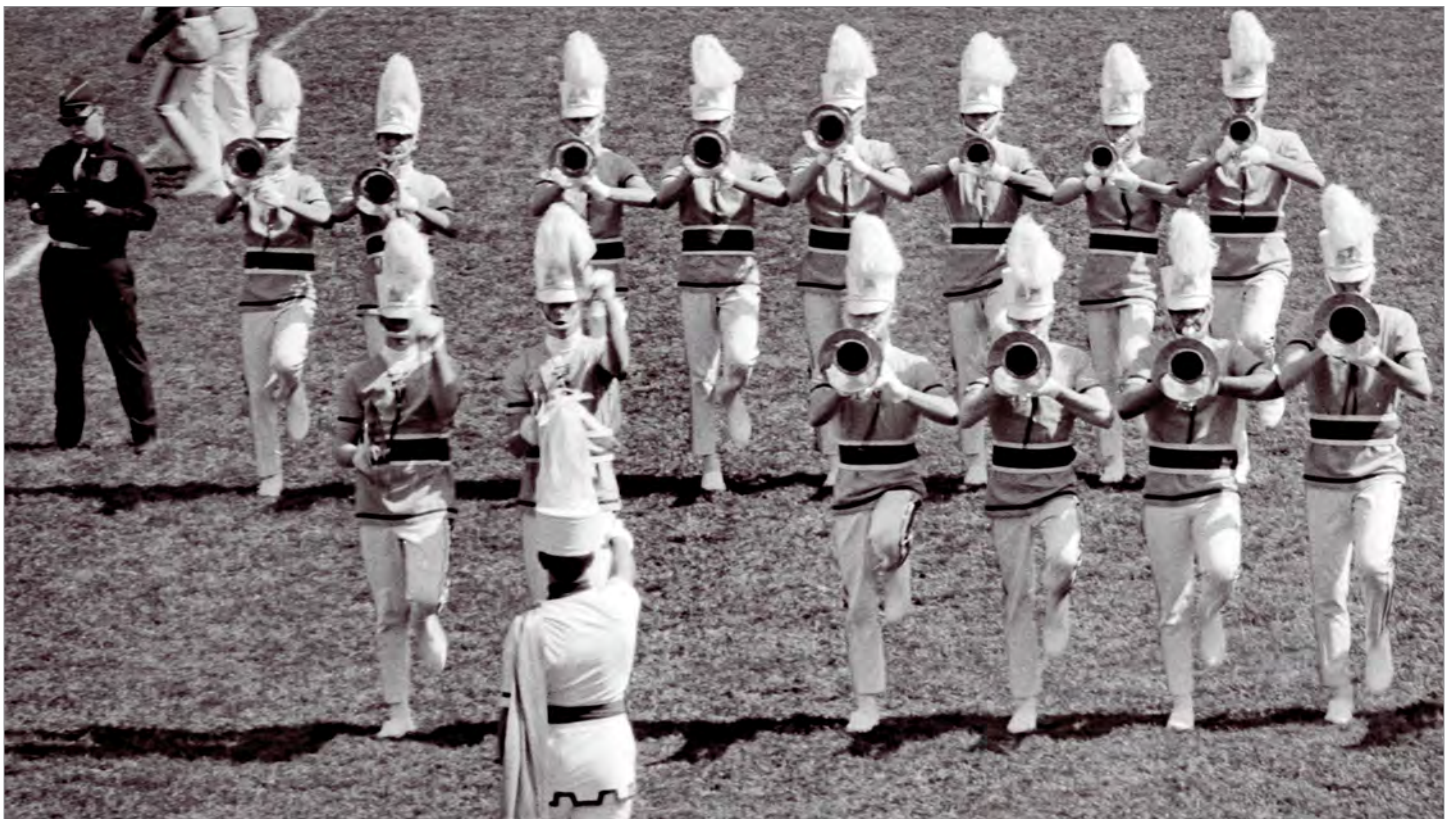
Original horn and drum instructors were members of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry drum and bugle corps, which competed as the Viscounts, a senior drum and bugle corps that later merged with the Jesters to become the Canadian Commanders. The first drill instructor was Dave Jewel, a Toronto Telegram reporter working at the newspaper's Hamilton bureau, who also marched in the colour guard of Toronto's Marching Ambassadors senior drum and bugle corps. A number of Toronto Optimists also instructed Conqueror at various times: Al Morrison and Joe Gianna on horns in different seasons, Brian Williams on drums and Jimmy McConkey, who assisted with field show and colour guard concepts and teaching.

Total budget for initial purchase of instruments was about \$4,000. Today, a single horn can cost that much.

Between 1961 and 1965, Conqueror performed stage shows, parades and field contests in Ontario, Quebec, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan.

Conqueror won the Ontario provincial Junior B championship in 1962, taking the top score in every judging caption. In 1963, Conqueror finished third behind Optimists and De La Salle in the Canadian national championships in Waterloo, knocking Preston Scout House out of the top three.

The corps disbanded in 1965.



The Conqueror (prelims to Nationals, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1964)

Spotlight: on Conqueror Drum Corps from Hamilton (continued)



Conqueror, before they got their uniforms (1961)

Note: Turtlenecks, the interim uniform in early 1961, were worn until the new 'Roman soldier' uniforms arrived.



Conqueror, before they got their uniforms (1961)



Conqueror in their new uniforms (perhaps 1962)

Spotlight: on Conqueror Drum Corps from Hamilton (continued)



Conqueror (Kitchener, 1963) No one remembers why the brass line is not wearing uniforms.

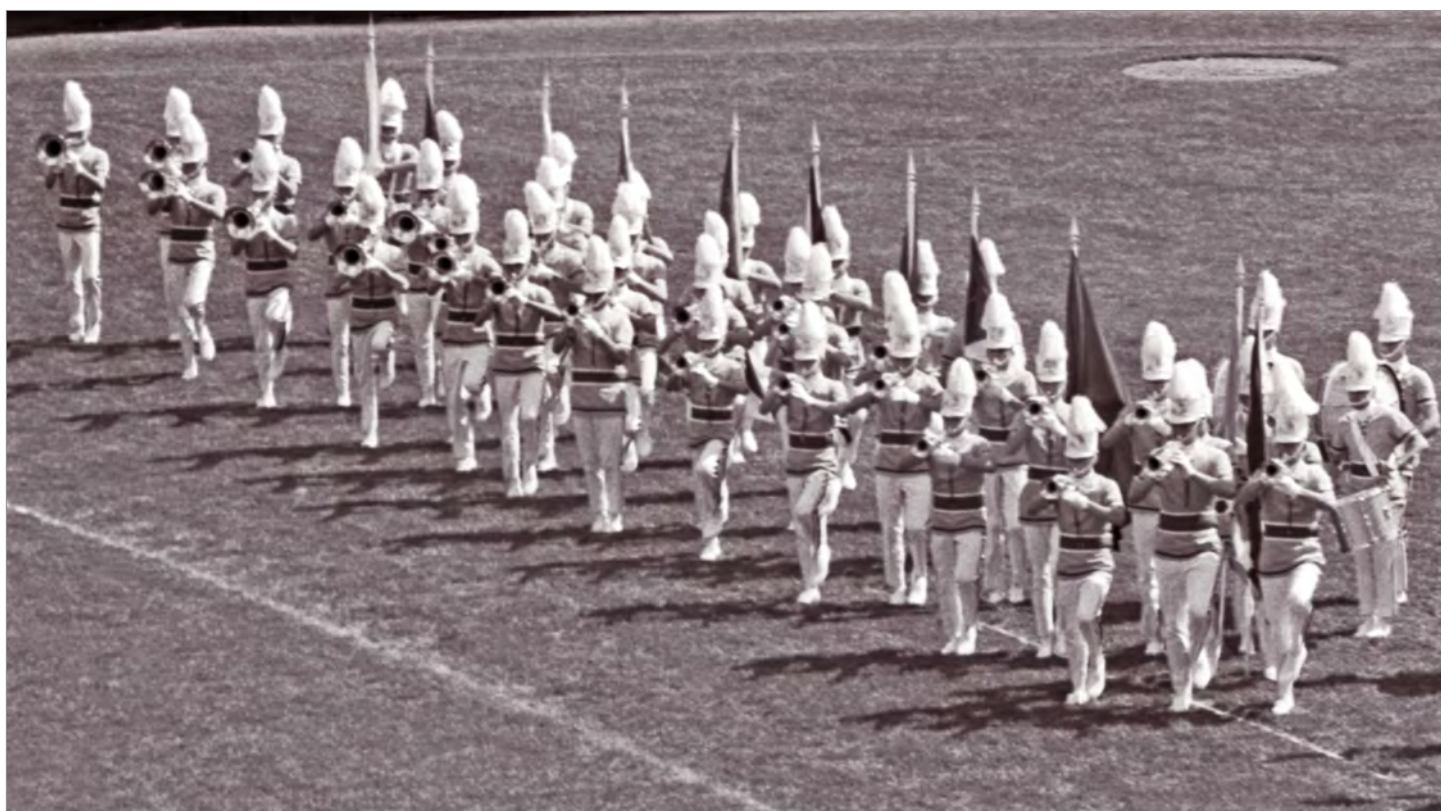


Conqueror (Kitchener, 1963) No one remembers why the brass line is not wearing uniforms.

Spotlight: on Conqueror Drum Corps from Hamilton (continued)



Conqueror (Nationals prelims, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1964)



Conqueror (Nationals prelims, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, 1964)

Spotlight: on Conqueror Drum Corps from Hamilton (continued)



Conqueror (Nationals Parade, Waterloo, 1961)



The Conqueror (Nationals prelims, Waterloo, 1963)

Memories from an old GD Bugle

*As told to Douglas MacKenzie
by Whaley Royce Soprano, #2222*

I'm a Whaley Royce & Company, Imperial, soprano GD bugle, serial number 2222. I came into being at the Whaley Royce factory on the third floor of 310 Yonge Street in Toronto, where all bugle manufacturing was done at the time.

Whaley & Royce started in 1888, producing brass instruments and drums. Back in my day, it was a Drum Corps mecca, selling horns, drums, trumpet music, drum corps records and magazines.

It ceased manufacturing in 1975 and is no longer in business.



Whaley Royce logo

I started as a plain brass GD bugle with a single piston valve. The tuning slide was stationary but would later be altered to be movable, creating a broader range of notes. This was accomplished by polishing and lubricating the tuning slide, much like a trombone slide, to change the pitch of the bugle. This brought broader musical possibilities.

The Toronto Optimists purchased me and my case in the late fifties. My original partner was Warren Berger; Warren had come to the Optimists after leaving his high school band/corps at Western Tech. This was in 1958 when many members of the Danforth Tech Crusaders left that school to join Opti Corps, forming The Toronto Optimists, Junior Drum and Bugle Corps sponsored by the Downtown Toronto Optimist Club.

Warren would play for the Optimists for four years, aging out in 1961. He joined the Jesters, who merged with the Hamilton Viscounts to form The Commanders, and played for several years with them until they folded. He joined the Optimist Alumni when it was formed and played there for several years.

To this day, he continues to play



Warren Berger (1960)

and contribute with the Kawartha Kavaliers. While I was in Warren's keep, we began using the slide as our music became more melodious. Together, we would win four National Championships. The first was in 1958, then in 59, 60 and 61.

Although we won Nationals, 1961 was not the best of years for me and Warren. We seemed to be on the edge all year. We had a lot of ups and downs and the music we were playing was, well, tired. As I said earlier, in the first years with Warren, he and I won four National Championships. A week before the 1961 Nationals, Warren and I lost to our major rival De La Salle. Ever the Optimist, Warren said this was a hiccup, and not to worry. We won the 1961 Nationals - Warren was right!

We would lose to De La Salle again at the Grape Festival. Warren never mentioned that. Well, I was devoted to Warren and knew things would get better. I didn't know that Warren was aging out, leaving The Toronto Optimists. When we parted company, I felt that I had lost a friend. I've always wished it could have been on a higher note!

It wasn't long before I and my case were passed on to a younger guy, Dougie MacKenzie. He and I teamed up in early 62. I was apprehensive, not

knowing how this kid and I would perform. I heard through the horn line that the kid wanted to be a French horn player, but he got me when that didn't work out. I hoped I wasn't on his rebound. Could we match the good times Warren and I had had? I wondered if he was as talented as Warren. Would he take care of me the way Warren had?

We were just getting to know each other when suddenly, I found myself back at Whaley Royce. They removed my slide which was painless, and put a new contraption on me in its stead. They called it a rotary, which acts as a second valve. I was to understand it did the same thing as the slide but with much more proficiency. It remained to be seen if the kid could master this new, so-called improvement.

I may have been premature in my judgment of the kid. As 1962 evolved, we got to know one another a bit better. The kid started taking a little better care of me. It wasn't that he hadn't before; I guess I just noticed it more now. Or it could have been that he and I had advanced to soloist stature within the Corps, which came as a complete surprise to me. I didn't think he was that good. He would make sure both my piston and rotary valves were lubricated, occasionally bathe me by flushing my tubing out with baking soda and hot water but most of all, polish me when a group of guys got together before a contest. Oh, how I loved the smell of Brasso and socializing with the other horns. The French horn the kid had been playing confided in me that he was happy to see him go back to soprano. He said the kid didn't have the talent to play French horn. By the end of 1962, I referred to him as Dougie, not the kid. We were starting to bond, and that's what they called him back then.

Dougie and I went on to win the Nationals in 62 and then again in 63 and 64.

A big change came in 1965. I was sent away to a plating company with many other bugles from the Corps. We didn't know what was happening. First,

they stripped me; this was extremely embarrassing for all the sopranos; we were all in the same room with the bigger horns, French, baritones and bass-baritones, and no privacy. Then they cleaned and buffed me all over to remove any dirt or grime, that felt good. Then, they immersed me in what they said was a solution containing chromium ions and passed an electrical current through that solution to deposit a thin layer of chromium onto the surface of my body. It was an electrifying experience that I don't want to go through again. I was washed and dried and glad to be put back in my old case with care. I wondered if I would ever see Dougie or the Optimists again.

When my case was opened there was Dougie with a big smile on his face. He picked me up and looked me over, checking my piston and rotor. His first comment was, "looks great". We were back together, and I was happy to have survived the ordeal. Sadly, I would never sniff Brasso again.

With Doug (he was now older), we had won the previous Nationals with the same mouthpiece. We had been together for a while, sharing the same case, but had not gotten to know one another as he tended to be tight-lipped. Anyway, that mouthpiece was replaced by a Parduba Double-Cup. What did you say? Yes, a Parduba 5-star Double-Cup. The Double-Cup design features two chambers, with the



Doug MacKenzie with newly-chromed #2222 (1965)

Memories From an Old GD Bugle (continued)

upper shallow cup designed for high tones and the lower cup for middle and low tones. The Double-Cup design enables greater ease of playing in the higher register, and it is possible to attain excellent control and a beautiful tone. I got all this information



Gold-plated Parduba Double-Cup

one night when we were put back in the case after a rehearsal. The Parduba, unlike his predecessor, was a real mouthpiece; he was from New York City and could go on and on about almost anything. He, the case, and I would become friends and inseparable.

We would go on to win the 65 Nationals. Then, a strange thing happened in 1966. The Parduba was removed from our case for about a week. I wasn't played during this time, and I wondered where Doug was and if he knew the Parduba was gone. Not to worry, the Parduba came back looking like a "million bucks"; by now, I knew what bucks were. It had been beautifully gold plated and had Doug's initials **J D M** engraved on it. Wow, the case and I were impressed. I heard through the horn line that the Warburton brothers, Jimmy and Terry, had done the deed, having it plated and engraved as a gift. Yes, that is the same Terry Warburton of Warburton mouthpiece fame.

We would go on to win the 66 and 67 Nationals. This marked my tenth National Championship and Doug's eighth. I heard it would be our last as Doug, like Warren before, was aging out. I wondered who would inherit me now and if I would have the same success. Whoever it would be, would they match the good times Doug and I had had? I wondered if they would be as talented as Doug and Warren. Would they take care of me the way Doug and Warren had?

Doug and I had been together for six years, a very long time for me, and we had gone through a lot together. I certainly wasn't the horn I started out to be. I was apprehensive and sorry to see him and the Parduba go, but what could I do? I'm only a GD bugle. I was put in my case, waiting and waiting and waiting for a new player.

The next thing I knew, after several weeks of inactivity, my case was opened and who should be taking me out? Doug. He inserted my friend Parduba, and off we went to play with a senior corps, The Ambassadors. I was happy. I heard through the horn line that Doug had asked one Harvey Partridge, the Director of the Ambassadors, to purchase me from The Optimists. In a highly unusual transaction, Don Daber, the Director of The Optimists, had agreed. We would go on to win the 1968 Canadian Senior Nationals.

We played with the Ambassadors, and when they folded, I was given to Doug by Partridge as a parting gift. We went to The Burlington Commanders. We played with Burlington for two years, earning another National Championship. Doug decided we had had enough, and we both retired along with Parduba and the case in the Fall of 1971.



Doug playing #2222 with the Ambassadors (1968)

Memories From an Old GD Bugle (continued)

Doug and I had been together for ten years and gone through a lot, won and lost. We won ten National Championships, placed second three times in the Canadian National I & E contest, played at Maple Leaf Gardens, Kleinhans Music Hall in Buffalo, The Chicago Civic Opera House, Roosevelt Stadium, Jersey City, Boston College, Columbia University, Toronto's Varsity Stadium, CNE Stadium, and too many other venues to mention. We beat some of the best American Drum Corps and played for crowds ranging from 250 to 25,000 people. Doug was inducted into the Bugler's Hall of Fame in 2021. He showed us the medal he got, it's beautiful. He said we contributed greatly to his being honoured.

As I write this, I'm almost seventy, and Doug is seventy-seven. Occasionally, we get together; he takes me out of my case, oils my valve and rotor, and rubs me all over with a soft cloth. That makes me feel good, like the old days. It's been sixty-four years since we first met, and we've been together for sixty-two. A lot has changed in Drum Corps since then; most of us (GDs) are long gone, and most of our players are too.

Three valve B Flat horns have replaced us, and Drum Corps have amplification, singing, dancing, prancing, a babe playing the violin, and a guy on a pole playing a mic'd harmonica. I know about this because we, Parduba, the case and I overheard him on his cell phone after he returned from DCI, whatever that is. I'm glad I'm just an old, retired antique Whaley Royce & Company, Imperial, soprano GD bugle, serial number 2222.

Doug tells me that there are a lot of people who would like to "hear" the likes of me again. They say that's when Drum and Bugle Corps was Drum and Bugle Corps. I guess that's in the eye of the beholder. Doug says that's not likely to happen. We had our day, and it was all good. Let the kids have theirs. I'm happy being with Doug because of the memories and the people we got to know.

Yours truly

G. D. Bugle

Whaley Royce 2222



Whaley Royce Imperial, #2222, resting in its case

How I met Barry and Lorne

by Bob Keenan

We all seem to have great stories about Lorne and Barry, so here is one more. Back a zillion years ago, I was playing drums in the sea cadet band just across the road from the practice field near Fort York. I was the lead drummer, so I thought that moving up to Opti would be a fine thing to do.

One evening I showed up at a practice and asked to see the boss man of the drum section. I was introduced to Lorne who was kind enough to give me a try. He showed me a batch of rudiments and said to play the same. I did not know where to start and I immediately choked and sounded more like a wounded woodpecker instead of a good drummer.



Lorne Ferrazzutti (1965)

Lorne, being the fine gentleman he has always been, instead of saying that was a real mess, simply let me know that his percussion section was all selected for now and asked if I would like to play something else.

Since I had been studying brass at the Royal Conservatory, he suggested that maybe his good friend Barry might have some suggestions. That was so welcome! I got to play a flag with the Optimists for the balance of that year and then a baritone after that.



Barry Bell (1964)

It was all thanks to these two great people who knew how to guide and teach us young pups to excel beyond our means. It was totally because of them that I got to play a trumpet for the next 50 years and enjoyed every note. What else can we say except well done and Thank You.



1963 Colour Guard. (L-R): Jim Bedford, Rifle; Ron Cooper; Jack Young; Jim Nisbet; Bob Carell; John Diamond; Bob Keenan; Fred Lombard; Mike Powers; Al Peczeniuk; Ron Lombard; Emilio Russo; Tom Bedford; Chuck Clutterbuck, Rifle

Randy Richard Elbertsen

July 22, 1957 — May 22, 2024

Corps: Optimist Cadets, Toronto Optimists and De La Salle



Randy joined the Toronto Optimists in 1971 and marched with the corps until the end of 1973.

He and his brother, Rob, started their drum corps careers back in 1968, with the Optimist Cadets. In 1971, both of them moved to the Junior Corps. Their sister, Rose, joined them in 1973. She marched in the Colour Guard. After the 1973 season, all three siblings left the Optimists and joined De La Salle.

Randy was a warm, generous person who was a constant bright presence. He was a wonderful horn player and corps member.
(Calvin Johansson)



Toronto Optimists after prelims (US Open, 1973)

Brian Adam

1957 — July 12, 2024

Corps: Smith Falls Lamplighters, Kingston Grenadiers, Empire Statesmen, Seneca Optimists and Optimists Alumni.



Brian Jacques Adam of Bath, ON passed away peacefully at QHC (Quinte Health Care) in Belleville on Friday, July 12, 2024 at the age of 67. Loving husband of Holly Adam (née Baker), proud father of Jason Adam (Jordan Elsey) of Peterborough, and Lindsay Adam of Picton. Predeceased by his parents James and Jeannine Adam and brother Ross. Survived by his brother Ian Adam (Diane) of Peterborough, and sister Brenda Adam (Brian Kauk) of Ashton. Fondly remembered by his many nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

Brian's earliest passion was for drum and bugle corps, which he carried with him into his fifties, from the Smiths Falls Lamplighters to the Seneca Optimists, the Kingston Grenadiers to The Empire Statesmen in Rochester, NY, where he and brother Ian won a DCA championship in 2004, and finally to the Toronto Optimist Alumni group the following year. Brian couldn't dance or sight read worth a darn, but music followed him and his keen ears everywhere he went.

Furniture refinishing, experimenting in the kitchen, keeping sharp with the daily Wordle, and doting over family filled his sails through retirement. Above all else, Brian will always be remembered as a selfless and loving son, brother, father, uncle, husband, and friend to many from far and wide. He will be greatly missed and forever cherished.



Optimists Alumni. Brian is far right (Oshawa, 2011)



Toronto Optimists first public performance (Ice Follies, Maple Leaf Gardens, February 3, 1958)

Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter: Staff and contributors

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Photo Credits: David Johns, Don Daber, Eric McConachie, Doug Smith, Jim Patten, Phil Hennings, Peter McCusker and anonymous

Contributions From: Bob Keenan, Doug MacKenzie

HOW TO REACH US

CORRECTIONS: We tried to get everything right. If not, please let us know:
toronto_optimist@rogers.com

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Or mail: Bob Carell:
1407 - 3050 Dufferin St, Toronto, ON M6B 4G3

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