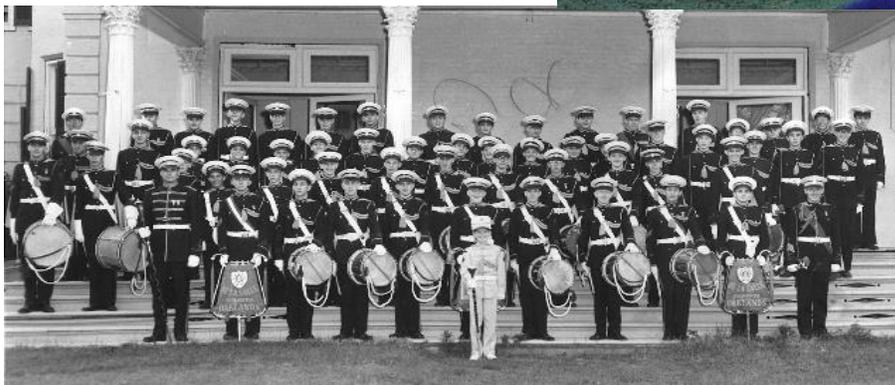




DE LA SALLE IN TRANSITION 1955 – 1960

FROM MARCHING BAND TO MODERN DRUM CORPS



CONTINUING THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

DE LA SALLE IN TRANSITION
1955 – 1960

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CONTINUING THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Brian Coleman

With:

Ken Burns

Cos Capone

Gerry Feraday

Terry Marren

Ernie Wesson

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FORWARD – AUGUST, 2011

The impetus to prepare this history derives from the “Spirit of De La Salle, Oaklands”. At ‘Del we learned primarily from the example of the Christian Brothers. Above all they taught us the vital importance of integrity and honesty. They also stressed the need to pursue excellence and to be the best we could be. When an attempt at something did not produce success, it was not condemned as a failure, nor were those who tried. On the contrary, we were given constructive feedback and encouraged to try again. We were taught that true failure lays in failing to try. We learned to keep our minds open to new ideas and better ways and to discern between novelty - change for the sake of change - and profound, fundamental change. We learned to welcome change and manage it to preserve excellence and achieve new levels of it.

**“Success is the ability to go on from one failure to another.”
Winston Churchill**

These values are transcendent. They are found in societies and cultures around the world and throughout history. They bind people together. Decades later I was reminded of them yet again when reading that the Wright Brothers worked through over 200 wing designs before they found the one that worked. Charles Darwin also reflects this spirit in his quotation: “I love fools’ experiments; I am always making them.” Being a Band member meant putting those values into practice.

At De La Salle Oaklands this spirit prevailed across all activities. A shining example is our senior football team of the 1957 season. Del was a member of a small 4-team league, and that particular year one of the other teams dropped out leaving the team with a much-reduced schedule. To add interest and challenge it was arranged for De La Salle to play the top team of the much larger Toronto Secondary School Association league. I do not remember the name of the Collegiate that Del met, but I do remember that Del won, and the score: 32 - 0! The alumni of our school include NHL stars such as Carl Brewer, Sid Smith and a classmate, NHL Hall of Fame Referee and Linesman John D’Amico. The coveted School Letter, O for Oaklands was awarded to outstanding members in all activities including the Band.



The Brothers at Oaklands that I and my fellow Band members knew were a group of about 35 or so dedicated and idealistic men. They were good teachers and good examples. They were not perfect; some had idiosyncrasies, others had warts, all were human. Regardless, they practiced and exemplified the highest levels of trust and respect for those in their care. They lived the ideals they taught and they have our deepest respect, admiration and gratitude. Today we are in a much-changed world and De La Salle Oaklands is no exception. My hope in helping to assemble this history of how the Band became a Drum Corps is to provide a record that will inspire others to keep and preserve the legacy of values that made both the Band and then the Drum Corps living examples of excellence and achievement.

Brian Coleman, De La Salle Band and then Drum Corps, 1953 - 1959

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ABOUT THE PREPARATION OF THIS HISTORY

Writing a history is not casual story telling. The effort comes with responsibilities to ensure faithfulness to facts and events, and to produce a record that has marked integrity. When discipline is applied limitations and uncertainties are openly admitted. If memories fail or conflict, or records have been lost, the historian states those facts and does not gloss over them with imaginative logic stated as fact. Material that is used to help readers bridge gaps is made clear to the reader and is introduced and couched with phrases like; “it is not at all clear but it may have been that”, “we don’t know for sure but it seems”, “so-and-so never discussed the matter so we really do not know what he / she thought”.

Completeness and scope are also critical. Completeness refers to comprehensive coverage of relevant events and changes. It ensures that there are no unexplained gaps that leave hanging questions about why they were ignored or missed. Scope requires a distinct beginning and a distinct end. The beginning can be instant as is the case with a random event like an accident, or gradual as is the case with this particular history when over a period starting as early as 1954 recognition of the need to change started to develop but only resulted in actions taken in late 1957. The distinct end in this history is defined as the point at which the transformation from Band to Drum Corps progressed to a state in which the Drum Corps was an established entity moving forward on its own powers and at the envisioned level of excellence.

That point is set as the Drum Corps’ participation in the Toronto International Competition at Varsity Stadium in September 1960.

Perhaps the best kind of resource is living memory. But even this needs to be corroborated; our own memories can and often do fool us. For this reason it is very helpful when there are memories from several members of a group that can be checked and balanced against one another for accuracy. Written records from the time period are also critical because where memories tend to fail they provide first hand observer accounts of details like dates, places and the specifics of what happened. However, written records produced after the period can be useful but only if they are well referenced and can be corroborated. Photographs are helpful too, but unless they can be dated and verified by memories or by reliable written records they can be dangerously misleading.

With this history we are fortunate to have; a group with a variety of memories from the Transition period, several reliable sources for written and recorded materials describing events and aspects of the Transition; a collection of photographs, and some sound recordings and videos to help us pull it all together. It is our sincere hope that readers will find this to be a true and faithful account of how the De La Salle Band became the De La Salle Drum Corps in the years between 1955 and 1960.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

HISTORIAN CONTRIBUTORS - (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

The following provides a brief introduction to the members of our team along with short descriptions of their roles and activities that equip them to prepare this history.

Ken Burns

Ken joined the Band in 1953 as a soprano bugler. He became a Recruit Instructor, and as a staunch member of the Band he was always reliable to attend and give his very best. Ken remained on roll with the Blue and Gold from 1953 through 1957, and with the Drum Corps through 1958 when he “aged out” of Junior Corps eligibility.

Cos Capone

Cos, short for Cosmo, joined the Blue and Gold in 1948. He ascended through the ranks to become Sergeant-Major - Drums, second only to the Drum Major. A talented composer - arranger, Cos worked creatively throughout the Transition, initially with Ernie Wesson and later with Werner Nuss. He provided percussion musical leadership for the Band and the Drum Corps and mentored a whole generation of Del drummers. Cos retired in 1964.

Brian Coleman

Brian joined the Blue and Gold in 1953 as a soprano bugler. With a grade school music background he learned quickly from leaders like John Kidner, Jim Boase and Ernie Wesson. Brian advanced to Recruit Instructor and then Corporal. As a soloist he played the Last Post at Remembrance Services. Brian left the Drum Corps in 1959 to join Canada’s Marching Ambassadors (2nd Sigs.).

Gerry Feraday

Gerry joined the Blue and Gold in 1952 as a soprano bugler. He advanced to Recruit Instructor and then Corporal. As a soloist he played the Last Post at Remembrance Services. Gerry along with Werner Nuss played seminal roles in exploring the early world of Drum Corps and bringing those influences to De La Salle. He remained with the Drum Corps as its lead soloist until he “aged out” in 1960. Today Gerry remains active with the Del Oaklands Crusader Alumni and the Brass Ensemble.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Terry Marren

Terry joined the Blue and Gold in 1952 as a tenor drummer. He advanced to Recruit Instructor and then Lance Corporal. A staunch member of the Band and Drum Corps Terry was a pillar of good performance, good example and reliability. He remained with the Drum Corps until he “aged out” in 1959.

Dan Moloney

Dan joined the Blue and Gold about 1956 as a Baritone and was a pillar of the “horn line” all through the Transition until he “aged - out” at the end of the 1963 season. Dan remained very active in Drum Corps and was an influence with the Del Oaklands Crusader Alumni and the Brass Ensemble. His written tribute to Bill Parker and his taped interview of Transition members provided important input to this history. Dan died in December 2010.

Werner Nuss

Werner joined the Blue and Gold in 1950 as a Baritone Bugler. His brightness and talents were soon recognized and he became Sergeant of his brass section. He and Gerry Feraday played seminal roles in exploring the early world of Drum Corps and bringing those influences to De La Salle. Werner also worked closely with Ernie Wesson and it was to Werner that Ernie passed the baton of Music Director in 1958. From that time until he retired in 1966 Werner provided music arrangements and leadership for the Drum Corps. Werner died in March 2011.

Ernie Wesson

Ernie joined the Blue and Gold in 1947 as a Bugler and rose steadily through the ranks. By 1953 he was Bugle Major, Music Director and Soloist (Soprano). Ernie continued in those critical leadership roles mentoring others including Werner Nuss and John Kidner. He also worked closely with Cos Capone to provide all music arrangements for the Band and the emerging Drum Corps. He played a major role in convincing the College to support the change from Marching Band to Drum Corps, and as he moved closer to starting his military career he transferred Music Director responsibilities to Werner Nuss. Ernie retired from the newly formed Drum Corps in 1958. Ernie died in August, 2012

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

RESOURCES

The following sources of public information have provided vital material for the preparation of this history: The order is alphabetical.

The De La Salle Oaklands “Oak Leaves” school paper

The De La Salle Oaklands Crusaders Alumni (DOCA) website.

The Diceman website for the names and dates of relevant contests that we attended during the Transition years.

The Drum Corps Wiki Website

The First Fifty Years 1910 - 1960 De La Salle Drum and Bugle Corps Toronto - a commemorative book published by De La Salle Oaklands

The Hawthorne Caballeros website

The New York Skyliners Alumni Website

The Osmond Post Cadets website for information for our Gallery of Idols

The Preston Scout House website

The Syracuse Brigadiers Alumni website

The Toronto Optimists Alumni Website

A Nov. 2008 recorded interview session with four members of the Transition era, two of whom are deceased, Werner Nuss and Dan Moloney.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE IMPERATIVE TO CHANGE

An organization that continues to operate successfully for many decades is one that has managed change well. Now over a century old, the De La Salle Drum Corps organization has a rich history that includes repeated episodes of reinvention that refueled its resources, fired its engines and boosted it into higher and different orbits. This is the story of reinvention that happened between 1955 and 1960 when The De La Salle Oaklands Band transformed into The De La Salle Oaklands Drum Corps, the journey of change and pioneering when it ceased to be a “street parade band” and became a competitive “show corps”.

There were several previous renewals and those accounts can be found in “The First 50 Years, 1910 - 1960”. For this particular episode we are fortunate to have the benefit of the living memories of some of the leaders and members that drove and participated in that evolution. Consequently, we are able to address a broad spectrum of relevant questions:

What were the forces that drove change? How did it get started? What happened along the way? Where did it ultimately lead?

PREAMBLE



Post WW2 Toronto was a much quieter and smaller town than it is today. Canada was still the Dominion of Canada and its flag was the Red Ensign. British traditions were dominant. In the home the radio and newspapers were the main source of news and entertainment. Movie theatres were active in every neighborhood. Television was only in its infancy, and if you could afford a set it had a tiny black and white screen and there was only a single station, WBEN from Buffalo, NY. The memories and pains of war were still sharp. Canada had been at war for almost seven years and had suffered an average of 18 war deaths per day. Many of the men that came home were physically and mentally scarred. People were trying very hard to cope and then move on.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

At De La Salle, two groups were impacted, the Cadet Corps and the Band. One disbanded and the other continued. It was related that the Cadet Corps lost support when grieving families discouraged their high school boys from military involvement; they had had enough death and war and they did not want to face the prospect of a yet a third generation preparing for more war and suffering. In 1947 after thirty-seven years the Cadet Corps disbanded. However, public feelings about the war strongly favored continuation of the Band. Those feelings included a sense of solemn celebration, an overwhelming reverence and esteem for fallen and returned soldiers, and the need for homage, remembrance, public thanksgiving and closure.

A large military band of young men in dress uniforms and gold capes helped to fill these needs.

Memory Flash - May 1947

A family affair: - My uncle, only 8 years older than me was a snare drummer in the Band at the last Cadet Inspection at Fort York Armories. I too was there, an enchanted 6-year-old spectator.



Last Post - St Michael's Cathedral

Brian Coleman & Gerv Feradav



Church Parades were frequent.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

BANDS TATTOOS

People also wanted entertainment, and bands “tattoos” were a popular attraction. A bands tattoo was, and still is an event where several bands like ours would perform at a stadium, usually marching and countermarching (reversing direction on itself). The Slow March provided a change of pace in the entertainment. In those long gone times it was truly novel to hear a military band play “pop tunes”. This happened when individual bands did a “stand still concert” facing the audience and this started to include popular pieces and some “big band” hits. There were even some solos. Again, in the tradition of British military bands performances often featured pieces that highlighted double and triple tonguing by buglers. The finale of a tattoo often included a “massed bands” performance where bands joined together to play marches they all knew in common.

WATERLOO BAND FESTIVAL 1955



The Waterloo Band Festival that started in the 1930s was an annual event steeped in British Traditions. It provided a competitive venue at which bands and soloists vied for awards.

De La Salle went to Waterloo only once, in 1955 and won two medals: a First Place in the Junior Novice Class and a Second Place for the Street Parade.



Mr. John Jackson, the Band’s Drum Major and driving force for 24 years, from 1927 - 1951 accompanied the Band on its trip to Waterloo.

Waterloo Band Festival was discontinued after 1959.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

Like a weather system the winds of change most often develop elsewhere. The histories of several American Legion (AL) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Drum Corps describe that starting in 1947 competitive drum and bugle corps shows started to gain wide popularity in the United States. After being suspended during the war years the annual national American Legion Championship competitions resumed in New York City that year and continued in many other cities into the mid 1960's. More to come on the American influence later.

During the early 1950's American trends began to influence bands in Canada. While Americans spoke of "marching and maneuvering" (M&M) Canadian counterparts still spoke of "fancy drill". Many of the American corps dressed in what were truly costumes while the Canadians continued in their military dress uniforms.

THE FORCES OF CHANGE

The first Canadian band to adopt what then seemed like a radical style was Preston Scout House from Preston, Ontario. With their harmony bugles, an "Aussie" style hat, red "tee shirts" short pants, knee stockings, white gauntlet gloves and an exaggerated style of marching they immediately caught attention wherever they performed. Their version of "March of The Wooden Soldiers" remains the classic example of early Canadian Drum Corps showmanship.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

PRESTON SCOUT HOUSE

Note England's Union Jacks carried on the right in protocol position of honor, and Canada's Red Ensign Flags carried on the subordinate left.



De La Salle Oaklands first encountered Preston Scout House at a tattoo at Toronto in the summer of 1954. They met again at the Waterloo Band Festival in 1955. Preston won the Canadian National Junior Championship and De La Salle won in the Junior Novice class.

The breezes of change had reached De La Salle;
they would soon become *STRONG WINDS*.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE EARLY 1950S SCENE

Preston's radical style was in complete harmony with the times. As the pains of war faded and people worked hard *to make them fade*, they eagerly reached for things new and novel. Cars usually painted black or in conservative tones of blue, green or maroon started to appear in brighter and brighter colors and many in sporty two-tone. Convertibles became popular and in the Toronto area the summer exodus from the city to cottage country led to the building of highways 401 and 400. Mobility had increased several folds; the tubeless (no more flats) tire was standard on cars; gas was only 25 cents a gallon and it was much easier to travel between towns. One could travel comfortably to Buffalo, NY and even to Rochester, NY and back in a day, and motels made it convenient and inexpensive to stay over. All of these things made a circuit of band shows and competitions possible. Paying audiences were readily available.



The time had arrived to put aside the annual schedule of solemn “Victorian” performances.

Being in a Drum Corps could now mean

SPORT AND FUN!

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE CHALLENGE

The leaders at De La Salle when the Band went to Waterloo in 1955 included Norm Hutchinson - Drum Major, Ernie Wesson - Bugle Major, Cos Capone - Drum Sergeant Major, Mike Nugent - Bugle Bells Sergeant, and Werner Nuss - Bugles Sergeant. Brother Hilary was the ever-caring Band Moderator. As described in "The First 50 Years", De La Salle had established a reputation for excellence; it was an organization to be relied upon to provide the finest performance consistent with the conservative tastes and values of those times. Despite its fine reputation the demand for band appearances continued to shrink. By late 1955 the influences of the times made it imperative once again to change, and the challenge was to do it in a way that would transform the Band into a Drum Corps that would rival bands like Preston Scout House and still continue De La Salle's traditions of excellence and good taste.

EARLY STEPS - FRENCH HORNS AND THE SENIOR BAND

The Band's brass instruments - the harmony bugles, did not include an instrument counterpart of the French horn. In 1956 an early step was to

purchase four of these instruments and create parts for them in the Band's repertoire. Ernie Wesson led this pioneering effort with the help of John Kidner, Jim Nantais and others in this new section of the "horn line".

It is important to note that at that time there was no idea of being a junior or senior Drum Corps. The "senior band" was an attempt to address the realities of dwindling membership by retaining older members after they left high school. The idea was to provide more challenging and interesting material and activities. Band members were surveyed to test support for the idea of breaking trail into new territory. About 25-30 members formed what was called the "Senior Band". Ernie Wesson and Cos Capone provided brass and percussion arrangements for pieces such as "Men of Harlech" "Roses of Picardy" and a concert that started with the introduction to Tchaicovsky's 1812 Overture. There was even an attempt to mimic Preston Scout House with an arrangement of "March of the Toys". At first the Senior Band simply stayed after the regular practice but later there were a few separate practice nights.



Memory Flash

I was only about 15 and I remember feeling truly affirmed at being included in the Senior Band.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

A SPARK OF INSPIRATION

A key piece of inspiration for change occurred as early as 1956. During a taped interview in November 2008 Werner Nuss and Gerry Feraday described that they started to look outside the Band for other ways to pursue more challenging and satisfying band work. In September 1956 they attended the Toronto International Drum Corps Competition that was held at Exhibition Stadium and saw American senior Drum Corps for the first time. It changed their ideas about what a Band could and should be, and they brought those impressions back to De La Salle. Those impressions soon fired the engines of change; the idea of being a Drum Corps started to form and take hold.

COLOR GUARD:

Another step that unintentionally anticipated the changeover to Drum Corps was the addition of a color guard. There had not been a guard since the Cadet Corps ceased operation in 1947, but other bands had them and it seemed that a color guard would enhance our overall appeal. Brian Coleman, one of the Band's buglers and a Corporal, suffered an accident that made it impossible to play. In early 1957 he started a color guard for the Band. In keeping with traditions, the Guard did not wear capes and the flag bearers carried swords.

Fortuitously one of the Guard's members, Rob Quinn knew a former sergeant of the British Army Service Corps that had trained at the Brigade of Guards. He taught our guard flag protocols and the drills for handling flags and rifles.

The Color Guard was subsumed into the Drum Corps at the outset of the Transition in 1958.



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

WHERE TO FROM HERE ?

Many new areas had to be learned and assimilated into the regular operation of a Drum Corps. But, before that much groundwork was required to set targets and plans for making all the changes. Questions had to have crisp answers, but in some areas there weren't any and wouldn't be for decades: What does a marching band and its members have to learn to be able to perform a competitive M&M show? Will the Band's instruments need to be changed?; And if so, to what?; What learning, and instructive resources are available to the Band and its members?; How can we measure progress?; The school gymnasium is too small and practicing on the campus will disturb the school's neighbors, where will the Band practice its M&M show?; The Blue and Gold military uniforms are too cumbersome for competitive M&M, what will the Drum Corps

wear?; With so many additional skills requirements, how will the Drum Corps recruit and train new members in a timely manner?; A key question was, how would the Band carry on its traditions of excellence?

GETTING ANSWERS

Some questions were less demanding than others. Shifting from the spread out street parade band marching formation of 120 to tightly closed formation in fixed squads was not particularly challenging. The need to constantly maintain perfect dressing (straight alignment) was more acute but it was also a welcome part of the spirit of competition. So too were learning to count paces, memorize queues for stopping, starting, turning etc. all while playing an instrument.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

MARCHING AND MANEUVERING KNOW HOW

The expertise to produce the M&M design and instruct members on execution was another challenge that was addressed by bringing in help from outside. Mike Delaney, a former college student operated a Drill Team called The Precisionaires and looking for opportunities to perform they inquired if they could march with the Band. There was an obvious fit and Mike and his drill team came on board.

Another Toronto Band - The Leaside Lion's Jungle Kings, and sponsors of the annual Toronto International Competition, had already adopted the tighter marching formation and the American style shako, blouse, and sash uniform. In this picture

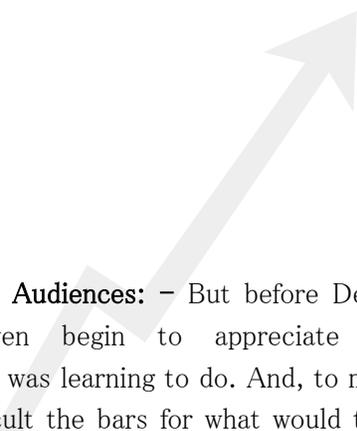


they are seen in their “on-the-line” formation, previously called a “company front”.



LEARNING AND INSPIRATION

Without diminishing the importance of M&M, the Drum Corps' most demanding challenges lay in the music and particularly in the instruments. In retrospect these aspects could have been intimidating if attempted today. Fortunately at that time, all Drum Corps faced the same issues and there existed an environment of common cause; innovations that worked were immediately recognized and adopted by others, almost always with the blessing of the originator.



More Demanding Audiences: – But before De La Salle could even begin to appreciate the innovations there was learning to do. And, to make things more difficult the bars for what would truly please an audience were steadily shifting upwards. Sound reproduction had improved dramatically and this impacted audience tastes and expectations. High Fidelity replay systems and long-playing vinyl recording discs (LPs) delivered music of all kinds into homes providing for “on demand” playback. Listening to jazz and the works of modern composers trained ears and appetites for music with more complex harmonies and even dissonance. Dynamics, the ability to alternate between loud and soft and to play crescendos and decrescendos demanded much more of band performers Melodies were carried variously by different sections of orchestras. The bars had been raised in all sectors, high school Drum Corps included.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

1957 - THE PIVOTAL YEAR

Recognition of the need to change was confirmed, explorations and learning expanded horizons, the leadership of the Band adjusted gracefully. An informal “nucleus” had formed within the Band. Its members included Ernie Wesson, Cos Capone, Werner Nuss, Gerry Feraday, Ken Burns and others including Terry Marren, Gene McCallen, Mike Nugent and Brian Coleman. Directions and plans were set; we were on the move.

Late in 1957 Norm Hutchinson stepped aside and a former Bandsman, Bill Parker became Drum Major - and Business Manager. After being in the Del Band until 1951 when he completed high school, Bill joined Canada’s top senior militia band, 2nd Signals Corps. 2nd Sigs as they were called were already well into Drum Corps competition, and Bill returned to Del with vitally important know-how and experience. Ernie Wesson describes events at the time:

“I don’t recall (exactly) how Bill Parker came to offer his services… it might have been Norm himself who suggested it, or Werner and I at a 2 Div band night. Werner and I knew him, but not all that closely and we took him at face value… we had to see what he could actually DO for us. His first job was to impress Brother Hilary who, like Norm (had reservations) about where all this was going. But Bill came through

with flying colours and we were happy, and relieved, that we had a united front to tackle the issues of instruments and uniforms. … There never was anything but full cooperation by all.”



From Left to Right: Standing - Joe Capone, Ernie Wesson, Werner Nuss, Mike Nugent, Mike Delaney. Seated - Cos Capone, Bill Parker

Another leadership change occurred - possibly in early 1958 when Brother Hilary transferred his role as Band Moderator to Brother Eugene. The Drum Corps’ shift to a heavy summer schedule was in conflict with Brother Hilary’s growing responsibilities with the De La Salle Camp at Jackson’s Point, Ontario on Lake Simcoe. Already a Camp Supervisor he would become Assistant Camp Director and eventually the Director of the camp with full responsibility for its operation. He remained active there until his 85th year.

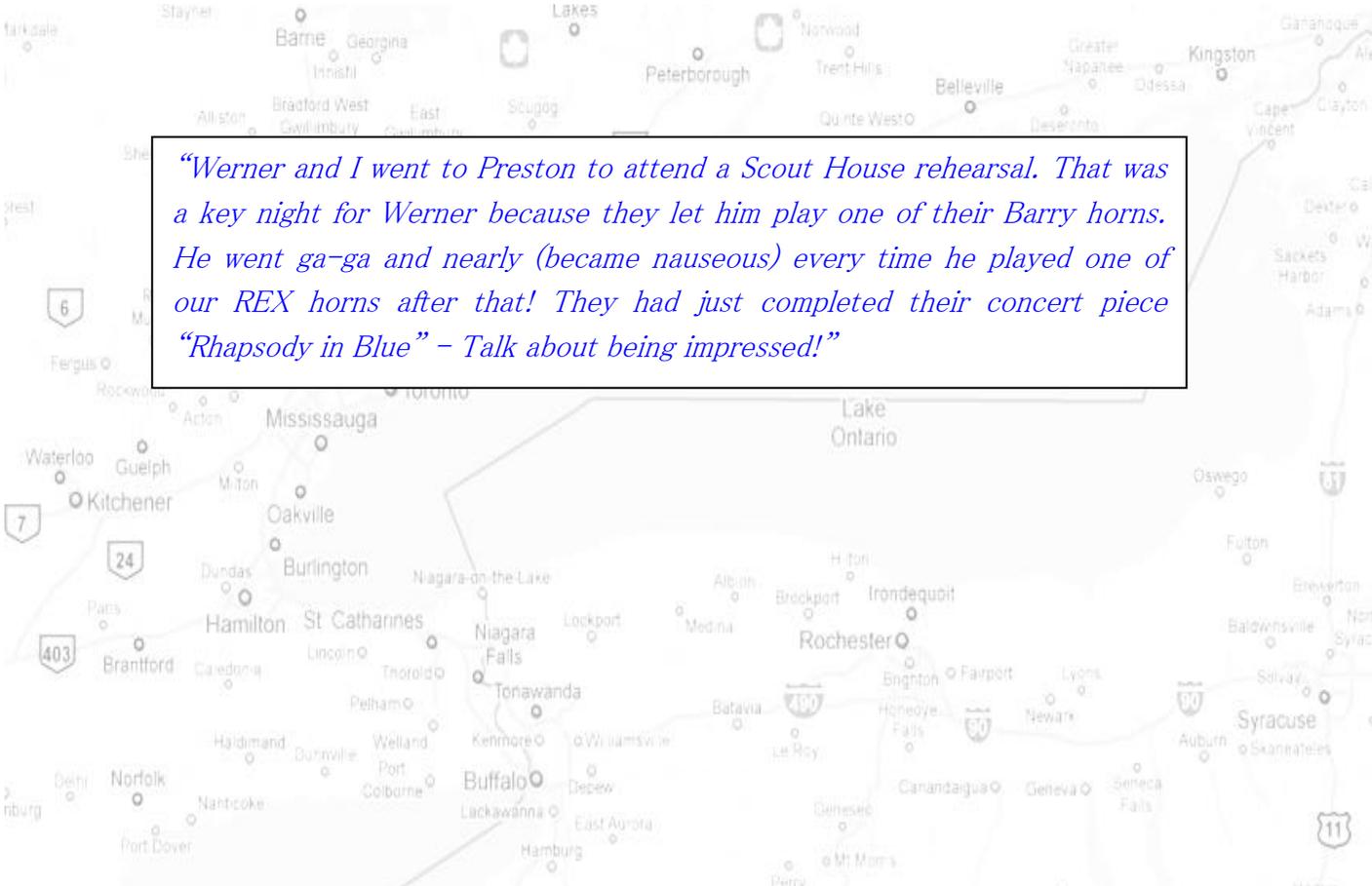
De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 – 1960

LEARNING TRIPS

Excursions took place to visit other corps and to witness major competitions. The following describe several of those adventures and the reactions to what we saw and heard.

Preston, Ontario

Ernie Wesson and Werner Nuss went to Preston Scout House to see their practice. Ernie gives this account:



“Werner and I went to Preston to attend a Scout House rehearsal. That was a key night for Werner because they let him play one of their Barry horns. He went ga-ga and nearly (became nauseous) every time he played one of our REX horns after that! They had just completed their concert piece “Rhapsody in Blue” – Talk about being impressed!”

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

New Haven, Connecticut

Werner Nuss and Gerry Feraday drove to **New Haven, Connecticut** but the name of the actual show and its dates are no longer recorded. The Connecticut Yankees of nearby Stratford probably hosted the event. However, the story of that expedition has remained alive for over 50 years. They made the trip in Werner's old faded blue Ford Prefect (with a sewing machine sized engine and little turn signals that popped out from the pillar between the doors).



Anyone who has traveled between Toronto and Connecticut can appreciate what an amazing, grueling - and ridiculous thing it was to do in the summer, in a tiny car with no air conditioning. Gerry and Werner were "extremely highly motivated".

Gerry recalls:

"We even slept in it, and once when we stopped for gas the kid asked us what kind of a sports car it was."

Gerry recalls a couple of highlights of that show:

"...but when the (Raiders) bugler hit the high G in "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" Werner and I thought it can't get any better - But then - Syracuse played Shangri La."

Tales of this adventure ignited a light for the rest of us for which we are forever indebted.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Syracuse, New York

Next on June 29th a larger group traveled to **McArthur Stadium in Syracuse, NY to see Pageant of the Drums**, hosted by The Syracuse Brigadiers. Syracuse performed in exhibition and the competing corps included Reilly Raiders from Philadelphia, Archer Epler Musketeers from Upper Darby near Philadelphia and The New York Skyliners from Manhattan.

Brian Coleman recalls:

“Showmanship and talent reigned. I was completely “blown away” by the caliber of talent I saw that night - not only the players but also the sophistication of the arrangements, the harmonies and the M & M. Highlights included Syracuse’ Indian War Dance, Phantom Regiment and their concert with Brad Longdo conducting “Shangri-la” with the “solo flourish and trill” on the last chord.”

“Archer Epler’s inspired presentation of The King and I - And the special effects: - Their arrangement of “My Lord and Master” with the melody carried by the mid range (French horns) as they marched with their backs to the audience was absolutely haunting. They also hid their “King” in the color guard to have him step forward during their concert.”

“Another amazing highlight was The Skyliners’ concert version of Harlem Nocturne - the harmonies were complex, wonderful and faithful to the original composition. They accented that with a couple of their guys mimicking the bump and grid of strippers.

Hey, What else would you expect from Manhattan ?

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Rochester, New York

At the end of July, on the 27th, the “group” traveled to **Rochester, NY to see the Tournament of Champions at Aquinas Stadium**. We saw Reilly Raiders, Syracuse Brigadiers, and for the first time, the Lt. Norman Prince Corps from Malden Massachusetts near Boston. Ken Burns gives his impressions of that show:

“We had been listening for a while and I thought Reilly and Archer Epler sounded strident to me and then Prince came off the line. Talk about balance and smoothness in a horn line – They had it for me. Body and Soul, Sweet Georgia Brown, Someday My Prince Will Come. That show, that horn line and that soloist I will never forget. To me it was the best-designed show for a corps I’ve ever heard. And think– they did it with single valve instruments! The arranger, whoever he was, hit the nail on the head. It turned me into a corps addict.”

Atlantic City, New Jersey

That September Gerry and Werner traveled by Bus, (no more Ford Prefect) to **Atlantic City, NJ** to see the **American Legion Nationals**. Gerry reflects:

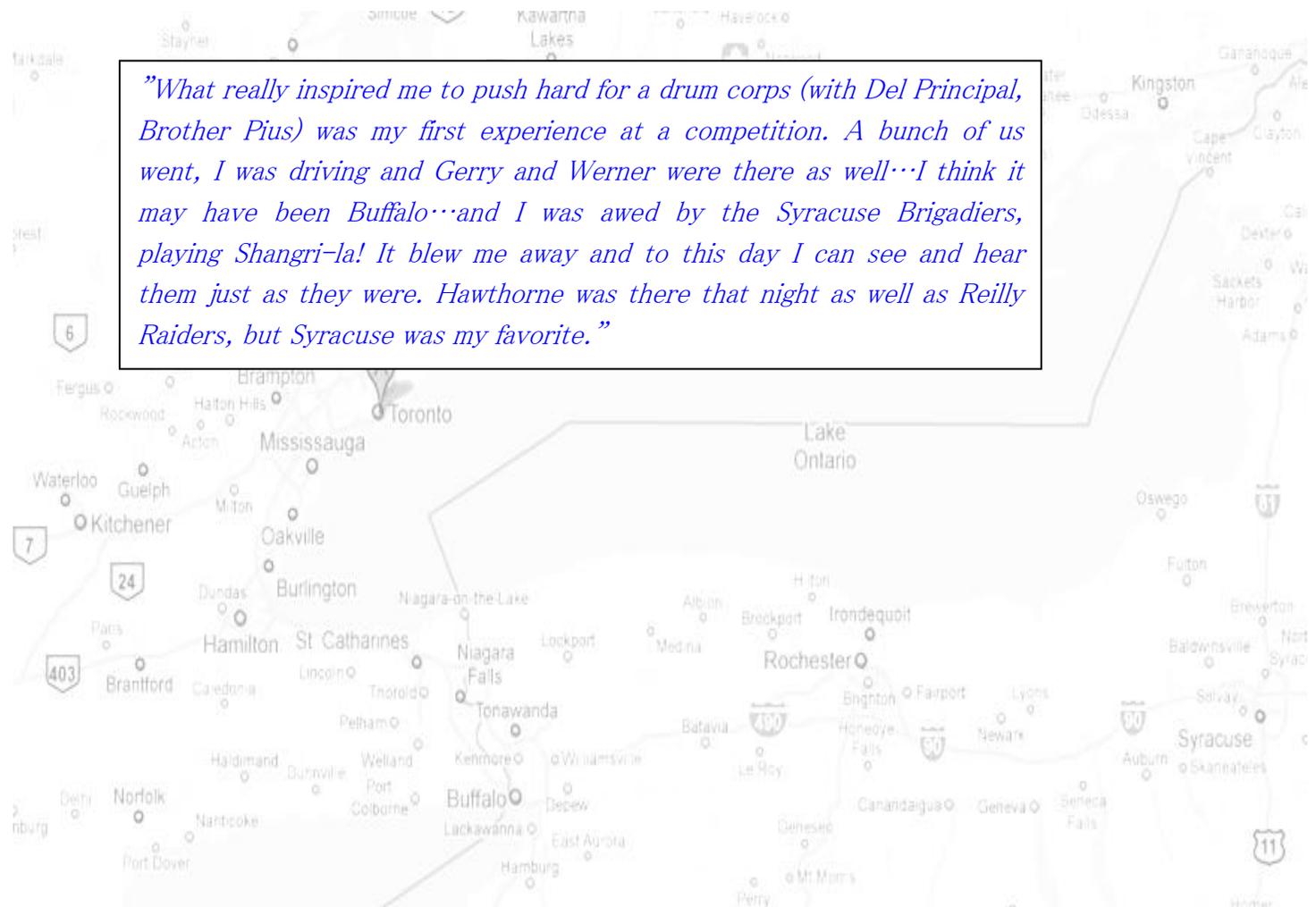
“Werner and I went to the 39th American Legion National Convention by BUS for the Junior and Senior National Championships on Sept. 14th and 15th/57 at Convention Hall in Atlantic City. The hall was a giant indoor facility and we sat fairly high up but it was perfect for drum corps especially inside and we could see the whole panorama unfold in its complete form. Our agreed two most memorable moments we’re seeing this huge all girls drum corps appear on the line (Audubon) and later play ‘Canadian Sunset’, – And surpassing this – seeing for the one and only time in our lives Skokie Indians from Skokie Illinois playing in concert ‘St Louis Blues March’ winning the competition for the second year in a row.”

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Buffalo, New York

During 1957 time for the corps was limited and Ernie Wesson connected whenever and wherever he could. By late 1957 he was finishing University and preparing to start his military career the following spring. In addition, he and Maureen Ardis were headed towards their wedding in December 1958. These are his memories about the show that happened sometime in 1957 in **Buffalo, NY** where he finally got to see The Syracuse Brigadiers:

"What really inspired me to push hard for a drum corps (with Del Principal, Brother Pius) was my first experience at a competition. A bunch of us went, I was driving and Gerry and Werner were there as well...I think it may have been Buffalo...and I was awed by the Syracuse Brigadiers, playing Shangri-la! It blew me away and to this day I can see and hear them just as they were. Hawthorne was there that night as well as Reilly Raiders, but Syracuse was my favorite."



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Batavia, New York

More exposure to the Juniors - **Going to Batavia, New York to see a Juniors competition** sponsored by St. Joseph's parish in that town that also had a junior corps. Once again, Brian Coleman's memories of that show:

"Garfield Cadets, St. Vincent's and the Audubon All Girls were there. Maybe Patterson was too. I believe Garfield were the reigning champions of the time. I also remember the robotic precision of their drill. As well, they exuded raw energy. When marking time and playing, legs were lifted so that the thighs were parallel to the ground. Garfield's concert included a rendition of "And the Angels Sing" with their soloist Don Angelica doing a great copy of Harry James' solo on his Big Band recording."

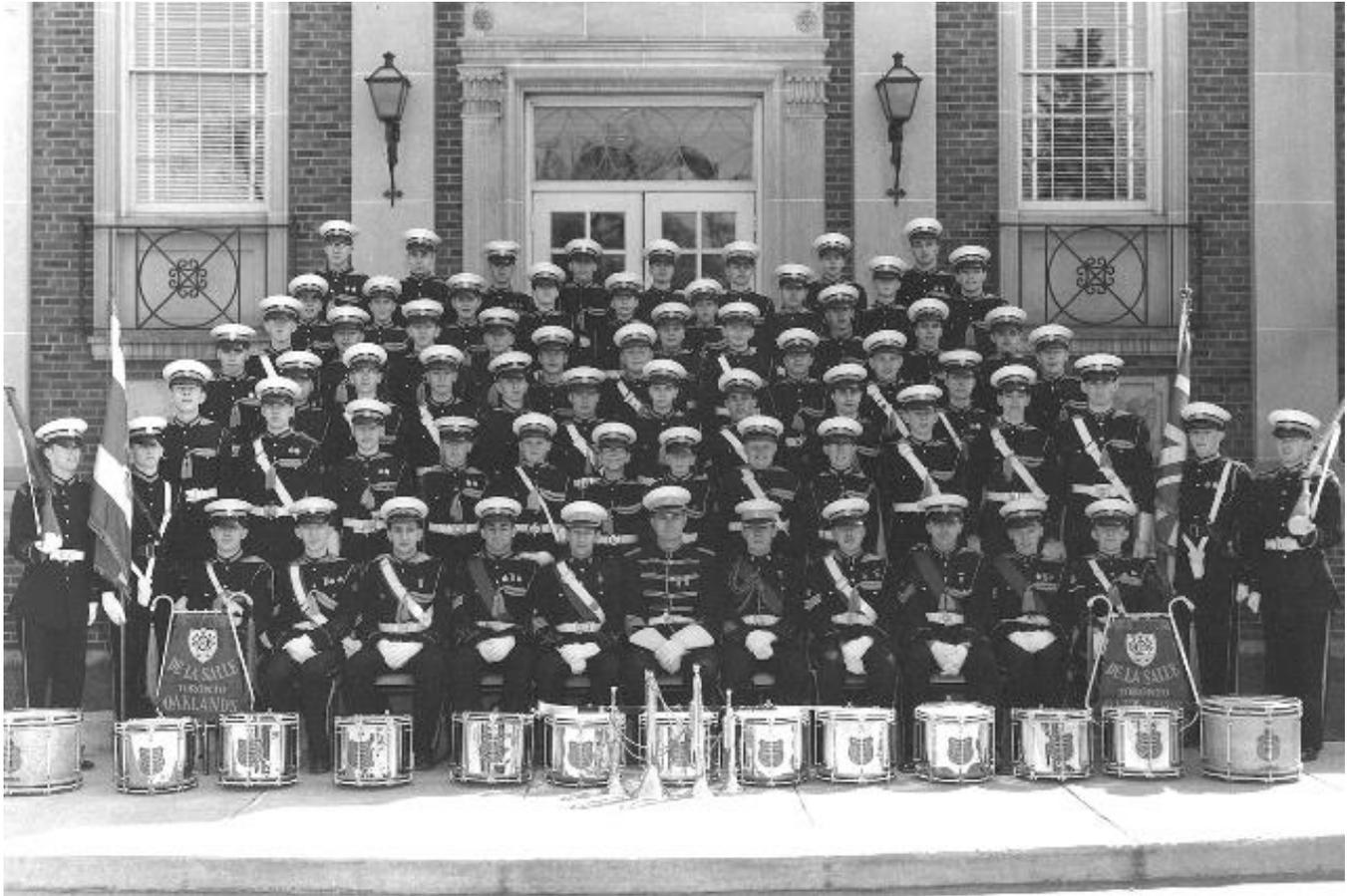
"A memory still persists and reminds me of how unique and wonderful it was and is to have Girls Corps. Audubon performed The Chalypso - a popular dance that year. Having learned and taught drill in an all-guys environment, even at the ripe old age of almost 17, I was amazed at how fluidly and coordinated the girls moved. (OK, so I was a teenager loaded with hormones - that doesn't mean I had lost my ability to discern.) Also, even though they didn't win they played extremely well and one could easily imagine them winning in another competition on another day."

"I also remember that the Corps that were not on the field sat in the stands opposite the audience. Have you noticed that New Yorkers always drink CWAFFEE? At one point a group of them cheered Garfield. The New York / New Jersey accent was strong and unmistakable - "CumWAAHN G'WAHfield".

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

LAST GLIMMER OF THE BLUE AND GOLD

- PRELIMINARY DRUM CORPS COMPETITION - NOV. 1957



THE "BLUE AND GOLD" TAKEN IN LATE SPRING OF 1957

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

As an exploratory effort the Band entered a “stand still” competition (no M&M) in Buffalo, New York against six other Drum Corps, all of them senior. The competition was titled “Drums Along The Niagara” and was held at an indoor arena. Ernie Wesson played a solo of Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White. The date was November 24th, 1957 and believe it or not Del placed 5th! We actually beat two other senior corps. Our score was 72.6 and the winning corps - Canada’s Marching Ambassadors scored 85.0. We had some distance to go but we had the score sheets with the Judges encouraging comments. Our competitors complimented us stating that they didn’t think we had a chance of finishing anywhere but last.

We were thrilled !

It should be noted that there was never any thought of becoming a Senior Drum Corps. We can only guess about the reasons for entering this particular event. What seems apparent is that it added some excitement and fun at that time, and provided some hard judging feedback to help guide us as we moved forward.

After 1957 there was no sailing back to the comfort of homeport;

WE HAD BURNED OUR SHIPS.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

ON THE HOME FRONT



We were also able to see some of the top corps at home in Toronto. The Toronto International Championship was held in Toronto each year from 1956 until at least 1962. From 1957 - 1962 it was held at Varsity Stadium on Bloor Street. The following are the corps and results for the years 1957 through 1959.

1957 - All	The Brigadiers, Syracuse, NY	90.8
	The Caballeros, Hawthorne, NJ	89.9
	Lt. Norman Prince, Malden, MA	84.8
	Canada's Marching Ambassadors, Toronto	77.9
	The Jolly Jesters, Toronto	77.0
	Preston Scout House, Preston, Ont.	76.3
	The Royalaires, Guelph, Ont.	75.6
1958 - Junior	Audubon All Girls, Audubon, NJ	87.5
	Preston Scout House, Preston, Ont.	82.8
1958 - Senior	The Brigadiers, Syracuse, NY	89.9
	Reilly Raiders, Philadelphia, PA	89.4
	Canada's Marching Ambassadors, Toronto	85.1
	The Jolly Jesters, Toronto	84.2
1959 - Junior	Audubon All Girls, Audubon, NJ	80.9
	The Toronto Optimists	79.8
1959 - Senior	Lt. Norman Prince, Malden, MA	84.7
	The Brigadiers, Syracuse, NY	83.2
	Canada's Marching Ambassadors, Toronto	81.1
	The Royalaires, Guelph, Ont.	79.6

The trips and adventures were fun. The memories and impressions are wonderful and they are entertaining to read now. But much more was happening inside our collective "group head". We were learning the heights that had to be scaled and our minds were working overtime to figure out how to scale them

LEARNING AND MORE LEARNING

The pace increased during 1958 and for many, Corps became a way of life. Brian recalls:

“Our team was very much an informal study group. In addition to the trips described above, we would go and observe the practices of other bands in Toronto. During 1956 Ernie went frequently to see The Queen’s Own Rifles at the armory on University Avenue. In 1957 after an overnight gathering at Ken Burns’ house we all went down to watch a Sunday practice at the 2nd Signals armory at Spadina and Queen. I also went a few times to see the Optimists practice at Jarvis Collegiate. Most nights during the summer season - if you were not practicing with your own corps there were always others to watch at the waterfront fields opposite the Island Ferry Docks. The

Jolly Jesters used a field further to the east along the Lakeshore in an industrial area.

Conversations from previous days would be picked up and carried on as if there had been no time in between. Listening to the recordings of the American Legion corps - over and over - made it so that we had actually memorized the complete sequence of the shows with all the effects. And, because we had seen the actual shows, listening automatically triggered visual replay in our minds. Every now and then one of us would start to hum a favorite piece and often enough others would join in - sometimes providing harmony. Newsletters were devoured on arrival.”

Our **GALLERY OF IDOLS** appears at the end of this history.

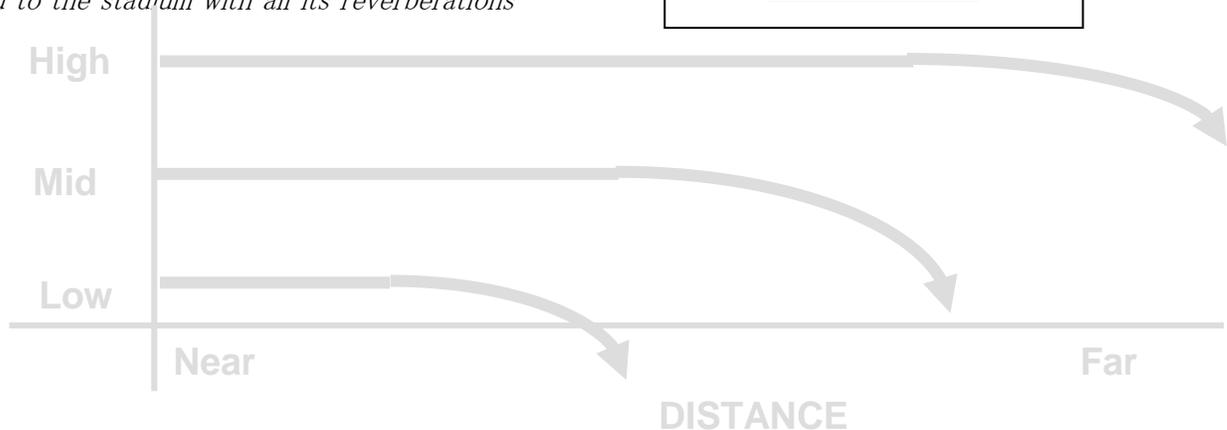
De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

ADDRESSING THE PHYSICS OF SOUND

Once we were all fired up it was time to get back down to Earth and face the hard issues of transforming to Drum Corps. Symphony orchestras have acoustically designed halls so that all the sounds and harmonies – from the loudest to the most delicate can be perceived. The objective is to please the exacting tastes of the audiophile. Outdoor pageantry as presented by Drum Corps blends both the visual and audio components of show. Movement and sound are produced simultaneously. Broadway shows and ballets are similar to Drum Corps in that they blend the visual and the audio but on a much smaller scale, and like the symphony orchestra, works are performed in specially designed theatres. *When the specially designed theatre is not an option, things must be done in reverse; the instruments and the way they are played are adjusted to the stadium with all its reverberations etc.*

High-pitched sounds naturally carry further than low – the challenge is to find the balance that gets all frequencies to audience’ ears together with all the nuances of timbre, softness, rhythm that they had come to expect. It was soon recognized that the Band’s harmony bugles, keyed in B flat, were not up to the task. No matter how well played, outdoors the instruments produced sound that was thin and “tinny”; OK for playing marches in a parade, but Not OK for playing show music in competition. Lower keyed instruments were required. Those keyed in G and D were the standard among competitive Drum Corps and all one had to do was listen to hear the difference

There is an oft-quoted adage that the bass section of an ensemble is only noticed when it is missing.



THE BRASS INSTRUMENTS

The B Flat ¹harmony bugles adopted in 1949 were slightly smaller but quite similar to those shown here. There were only three “voices”, soprano, tenor and baritone. Melody was almost exclusively performed by the soprano horns with the tenor and baritone sections playing supporting harmony. In 1956 a fourth voice was added - the French horn.



The tenor bugles, analogous to the flugal horn in the same way the soprano bugle is analogous to the trumpet, were replaced by soprano bugles. This expanded the soprano section and it was divided into 1st, 2nd, and 3rd as required by the harmonies of the music. This change would be reversed years later when mid-range instruments would restore the softer timbre of the old flugal horn and with large bells and narrower bores that pushed the sound further towards the audience.



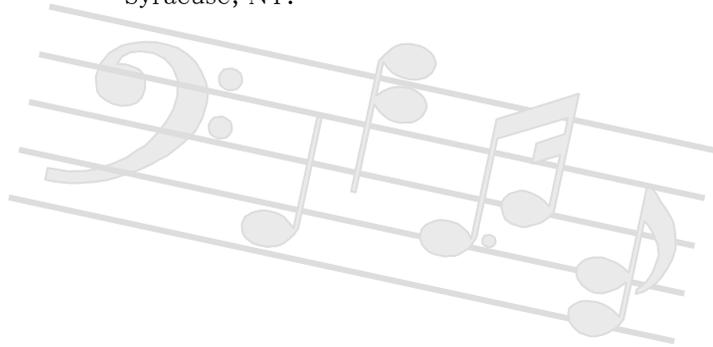
¹ While doing research for this history it was learned that the harmony bugle with the single piston valve was first developed in - Would you believe? - 1930!!.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

BASS INSTRUMENTS

In addition to lowering the keys, new kinds of brass instruments were required. Baritone horns were the only bass horns that the Band used, but they lack the depth to carry the bass frequencies to an audience a 100 yards or more away. Larger G -

Basses were added, and a few years later even much larger Contra Basses were added. When played, the Contra Bass is carried over the shoulder as illustrated here by the Brigadiers of Syracuse, NY.



Memory Flash

Listening to the Ambassadors who were practicing 2-300 yards away on the other waterfront field. They were playing “Canadian Sunset” with their 2 big Contra Basses carrying the rhythm. Their players were two big athletic fellows aptly nicknamed Steff and Moose.

In those early pioneering years innovations and experiments with the bass instruments were common. In 1959 or 60 the Hawthorne Caballeros turned the Drum Corps world on its ear by expanding their G Bass section to a dozen or more players. It was a big improvement and other corps that could afford it followed suit.

HARMONIES AND CHROMATICS

Prior to the advent of Drum Corps much of the music played by marching bugle bands centered on what could be described as extended harmonized bugle calls. The military bugle was a very limited instrument that played only some of the notes found in major chords. One could not play the simple Do-Re-Me scale on it. When adapted to become the harmony bugle a single piston valve and extra tubing were added to permit playing all the notes of the “C” major scale. However, this innovation did not allow for the playing of what we might think of as the “black keys” on the piano.



To do that the harmony bugle would have had to incorporate all the valves and tubes of the trumpet. At the time of the Transition the compromise across the Drum Corps world was to add a chromatic slide, which when extended provided the extra tubing to achieve the desired half tone shift in pitch. The evolution continued for Drum Corps instrument designs. Horns today have three valves and all the tubing necessary to play all notes and scales as seen in this illustration of the mellophone.



Ernie Wesson commenting on what this meant for music arrangers:

“Musical arranging for the hybrid valve/slide horns was difficult for the lower register but much easier in the higher register where all the notes could be achieved, but to play in that register it was easier in G/D than Bb...less room for error. Preston always amazed me with their skills on the Bb horns as did Queen’s Own (but Queen’s Own never competed).”

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE SLIDE

Scotty Chappell of the Lt. Norman Prince Drum Corps was the innovator that used an emery cloth to thin down the tubing of the tuning slide on the horn so that with lubrication it became a chromatic slide. Manufacturers like Getzen soon followed with products that featured slides with a ring attached to the underside of the slide. These early

manufactured versions of the slide were awkward to use and some individual players “rigged” their slides to make them easier to operate. Robert (“Pepe”) Notaro of the New York Skyliners was one such player that added a strip of metal to his French horn that made using the slide easier.



Note: Above information about the origin of the slide and its early use was generously provided by Ray Priester and Jim Stanko of the New York Skyliners.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF BRASS INSTRUMENTS

To entertain in an outdoor stadium a drum corps has to be a powerhouse.

Adjusting the Corps' brass instrumentation would become an on-going journey. At the time of the Transition the need for more power was recognized, however, the extent and the depth of changes required to achieve it were not. It would

be several decades before Drum Corps overall would reach true power. In addition, the evolution would produce an array of 9 brass instruments each with its particular tonal qualities and range of power, all with three valves to accommodate all scales. And, to top it off, in 2000 the instruments returned to the key of Bb, the way they used to be more than half a century earlier.



BRASS INSTRUMENT RULES, POWER AND HANDLING

Looking back one might reasonably ask, Why didn't Drum Corps in general simply adopt established instruments like the trumpet, flugal horn and so on? There were three reasons.

First, the competition rules governing the instruments only allowed a single valve; two or more were out of the question. It was only through repeated adjustment of the rules over 3-4 decades that three valve instruments became legal for competition. In an early step forward, hand operated chromatic slides were allowed and by 1960 it was allowed to have a lever operated rotary mechanism (valve) to replace the slide. Still, a second piston valve remained illegal.

The second reason was power. Several of the established instruments lacked the combination of

large bells and other features like smaller bores that are required to project sound outdoors.

And, the third and possibly the most compelling reason at the time were the physical design and handling features of those instruments. In the show environment where drill and music are combined, standard instruments like the Trombone, Tuba and Sousa Phone are cumbersome and somewhat heavy. They detract from the visual sleekness that characterizes corps' appearance and movements. And, they do not have the compact shape required to perform drill maneuvers while playing. Drum Corps associations, judging and regulatory bodies, instrument manufacturers and many Drum Corps' worked together to keep the evolution moving.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

DRUMS AND PERCUSSION



The Drum Line of a Corps is dramatically different than the drum section of Del's street parade Band. Numerically it is much smaller. Where there used to be 32 snare drums there are only 3. And, instead of 8 there are only three tenor drums. Bass drums remained at 2. As an observer I noticed

distinct changes in sound from the previous rolling rhythmic thunder to the new crisp, complex, staccato rhythms. However there was no discernible loss of power. The new instruments were and are designed to deliver a stronger output.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

MANAGING THE PERCUSSION TRANSITION

For the whole of the Transition period and thereafter until 1964, Cos Capone managed and directed the transformation of the Drum Section of the Band to the Drum Line of the Drum Corps. The following are his descriptions of what had to change and how change was accomplished.

Question: In order to transform to competitive Drum Corps did Del have to learn Swiss Rudiments and associated disciplines? Or, were they already in place, more or less?

Cos: *When we made our conversion from street band to Drum Corps, we hadn't even heard about Swiss Rudiments. This information came much later. The basic rudiments (26 in all) came from the U.S. As I recall, Swiss Rudiments were similar but with variations on the ones we were using. The sticking (left hand-right hand) varied somewhat to create some of the same effects.*

Question: With a line of only 3 snares, 3 tenors and 2 bass, did you have to “beef-up” the drumming movements to achieve volume - a) to balance with the horn line and b) sufficient to fill a stadium so the audience could hear?

Cos: *I think the effort required to execute the rudiments forced a brighter sound, not so much heavier hitting. And there was much more rhythm in these forms than in the old way which was quite limited in terms of variation. Also, the new drums provided a stronger volume.*

Question: I remember Fred Johnson at Ambassadors having the handles of pool cues turned on a lathe into very heavy snare drum sticks with tips that were almost an inch long and half-an-inch thick. Did we have to start using heavier sticks?

Cos: *No, we didn't go to that extreme. We used sticks labeled 2S and 3S. They were moderately heavier than Set Drummers used. I felt they were needed to complement the horns and they just felt better.*

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Question: About the complexity of the drum arrangements: - Did we face particular challenges to produce drum solos etc. that were - more - far more - or extremely more - complex than what we had been doing in the Band?

Cos: *Without question, the new drumming, solos and support drumming were far more challenging than the simple drumming of the old street band. If you could hear Paul Moseley and Ed Jacko today, you would be surprised at how much they improved since they moved with me to the new drumming discipline.*

Question: Dynamics - Loud - Soft - Crescendo - De-crescendo - Did any of these pose new challenges?

Cos: *Most definitely. The old way was just banging. The subtleties of music demanded dynamics.*

Question: How did we tighten up our drumming precision to meet the demands of competition?

Cos: *To begin with, we had to learn the rudiments. That was the starting point. Second, and equally important, we had to learn to read the drum music (notations). That was quite a chore. As you can imagine, at the beginning there was much resistance. However, in time, the boys came to appreciate the potential these new techniques had to offer. They eventually began to regard themselves as musicians.*

Probably the most important lesson I learned and passed on to the boys was that the drumming was not an end in itself, but was necessary in supporting the music. It was drum solos that allowed more freedom of expression. I found myself becoming more conscious of the need to support the music and began composing the percussion to do just that. (Our percussion) simply had to fit the music and not compete with it.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Question: Did the tight marching formation restrict drumming or did it provide new advantages? - Or both?

Cos: *The new forms of marching and maneuvering were a challenge and it did distract from the requirements of drumming. I note that today, drum lines are expected to maneuver to the same extent as the horns. That is truly a very difficult thing to do. I would resist it. In fact, the drum lines in such accomplished groups as the Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni definitely refuse to become gymnasts. They prefer to focus on the beauty of rhythm.*

Question: The new drums had leg rests and the drumheads were almost flush with the rims. They were easier to keep in place and compared to the old marching band drums they enabled positioning of the drumhead to almost level. Your description of adjusting to these features might provide interesting insights of what Transition meant to our drum line

Cos: *The redesign of drums to incorporate a shallower rim and leg rests was a decided improvement. ..it was apparent to me that it offered less of a distraction. The drummer did not have to maneuver the drum while at the same time producing increasingly intricate music.*

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE BELL LYRE - "GLOCKS"

Quietly in late 1958, the "Bugle Bells" otherwise known as Bell Lyre or Glockenspiels, were retired from the Drum Corps. The Bells were added sometime before the Cadet Inspection of May 1947. Ernie Wesson who joined the Band in 1947 remembers that, "The Bells were always there." The first Band to adopt the Bells in the Toronto area was the 2nd Signals Corps. They too retired their Bells during the 1950s.

Continuing research by Murt Howell uncovered the "mystery" about when the Bells were added to the Band. He found a newspaper clipping in Johnny Jackson's scrapbook that set the date as 1944.



Memory Flash

Marching in the snow and sleet at the 1954 Montreal St. Patrick's Day Parade - How most of the skin drum heads broke, and the valves in our horns froze. Somehow mine kept working - I had oiled it well - and I remember Ernie running to and fro to cobble together enough players with functioning horns to play our planned music that included "The Wearin' of the Green".

While that was going on Cos Capone and the Glock Section carried most of the load - they played on and on The Minstrel Boy.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR DE LA SALLE

In late 1957 new instruments were purchased from Whalley Royce and Company. The cost was about \$7,000.00 (about half the price of a house at that time) and was paid for through the sale of magazine subscriptions by the grade school students of the College.

Along with soprano, baritone and French horns, new G Basses were added. This new set of brass instruments featured manually operated chromatic slides.

The new drums featured the latest technological improvements with “weather-safe” plastic drumheads that were almost flush with the top of the drum cylinder.

This was a big improvement over the old drums and their high wooden rims that required players to reach down inside to the drumhead. Knee rests provided greater stability - essential during M&M. Drummers no longer had to be preoccupied with keeping the instrument in position. In addition, the new rests and slings made it possible to bring the playing surface of the drumheads closer to level - no more compensating for the almost 45 degree angle of the street parade drumheads. The “look” of the drum line became more trim and sleek. The following picture appeared in Oak Leaves.



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

NEW UNIFORMS

The color picture is of Del in the “silver shirts” uniform taken prior to the preliminaries of the Canadian National Championships at Galt, Ontario in September 1958.

It is no longer known just how this uniform was devised. Some suspect that it was done over one of the leader’s “kitchen table” and involved some of the wives, but that is only guesswork. What is known for sure is that it happened very quickly. The “boys” had to be measured and the shirts and cummerbunds ordered (or made, if it was done by a ladies group). And, the gold trim had to be replaced on the trousers and the hatbands. A clear indication of “hurry” and last minute production occurred the first time the new uniforms were worn on parade.

The event was the opening of the Don Mills Shopping Plaza at Don Mills Rd and Lawrence Ave. Skyraiders, another Toronto corps was there as well. Just as we were about to form up some of the ladies including Mrs. (Bill) Parker handed each of us in the horn line a pair of red work gloves to complete the uniform.



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

FIRST COMPETITIVE APPEARANCE AS A DRUM CORPS - JUNE 28, 1958

The Toronto Optimists hosted the Ontario Junior Championship at East York Collegiate stadium. Five Corps including Preston Scout House competed. Predictably Preston won but Del placed second followed by Grantham Police Boys Band, Leaside Lions and St. Mary's. The margin between Del and Preston was 3.25 points. We were thrilled that in such a short time we had actually fielded a Drum Corps and were relatively close to the national champions.

Memory Flash

Standing at attention on the field during the Retreat Ceremony at East York Collegiate with my kneecaps nervously popping up and down waiting for the result of the competition- to see if we had beaten Preston Scout House.

Memory Flash

Ernie's arrangements for our first show based on a theme of the four seasons: September Song, September in The Rain, Summertime, Winter Wonderland - and others that hopefully some of you can fill in. (Good thing we didn't do Skater's Waltz - otherwise the Jolly Jesters' "hit" would not have been the laugh that it was.)

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE CANADIAN JUNIOR NATIONALS AT GALT, ONTARIO - 1958

De La Salle Drum Corps' second competitive appearance was in the late summer of 1958 at the Canadian National Junior Championships held in Galt, Ontario. The Corps placed third behind the new champions, The Toronto Optimists, and the former champions, Preston Scout House.



MATURING INTO A LEADING DRUM CORPS: 1959 - 1960

During 1959 the corps started to make appearances and compete in western New York at places like Buffalo, Batavia, Rochester and Auburn. In all, the Corps competed 13 times compiling 1 First, 8 Seconds, 2 Thirds and 2 Fourths. The standings of the 1959 Canadian National Championships were the same as 1958 with Optimists taking First, Preston Second and Del Third.

1960 was far more intense with the Corps making a record 29 appearances. Competing 11 times, it achieved Four Firsts, Five Seconds and Two Thirds. At the Canadian National Championships Del placed Second behind Optimists and in so doing qualified for the Toronto International Championships at Varsity Stadium.

Thus began one of the greatest rivalries that Canadian Drum Corps would ever know ...that between The Toronto Optimists and De La Salle. The Optimists won the Canadian National Championship with De La Salle a close second or third every year up to and including 1968.

Unlike many other sporting activities, Drum Corps operates year-round and is particularly intense during the summer months leading up to the national championships held in September. The demands of this new kind of schedule require adjustments to personal and family life. The following are a few glimpses of what happens:

- Balancing study, work and personal relationships with the Corps schedules.
- So many streetcar (red rocket) rides to and from school and waterfront practices.
- Demanding practice schedules especially in the weeks leading up to the Nationals
- Long afternoons in the sun next to the members in your squad
- Feeling tired, thirsty and very hungry after a long practice - Banana cream Pie and a large milk at a restaurant on Bay Street
- Long bus rides - songs and card games
- Fighting tiredness and road monotony.
- Trying to stretch out and sleep in the overhead racks (Ouch!)
- The increasingly boring familiarity of the QEW and western stretches of the New York Thruway.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE RED, WHITE AND GREEN

A Transition “work item” that had been intentionally put off in 1958 was finally addressed in late 1959. As described in “The First 50 Years” a uniform design project was launched. Corps members submitted sketches and ideas and a committee of leaders, instructors, and corps members worked together and eventually agreed on the new design. With a white shirt and pant as base the uniform featured red and green trim and a red cape or duster to be worn at retreat ceremonies.

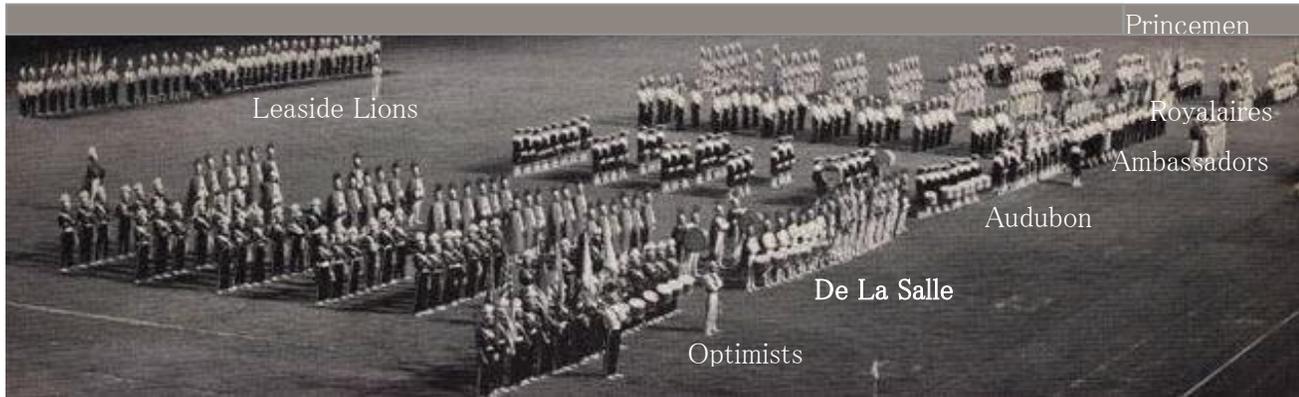
Mrs. Bill Parker, Audrey a talented dressmaker, measured all the “boys” and made the shirts and cummerbunds. The trousers and capes were made elsewhere.

This uniform was worn until the mid-1960s.



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

COMPLETION OF THE TRANSITION



1960 Toronto International - Varsity Stadium, Toronto

By the time the De La Salle Drum Corps competed at the Toronto International at Varsity Stadium in September 1960 the Transition was complete. The picture above shows Del on the same field with other top corps. Up to that time this picture was only a future vision of what we wanted to become. We had arrived, and we would move forward to even greater heights.

De La Salle became Canadian National Champions in 1969 and repeated in 1970, 1971, 1973 and 1974. Along the way De La Salle also won the Provincial Championship in 1961 and then seven straight years from 1968 through 1974. As the Oakland Crusaders, the Corps continued its championship ways winning the Canadian National Championship in 1975 and 1976 and continuing its dominance of the Ontario championship by winning in 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1980.

**THE DE LA SALLE BAND HAD BECOME A LEADING DRUM CORPS.
THE VISION OF THE PIONEERS WAS REALIZED.
THE TRANSITION WAS COMPLETE.**

Note: The photo of the Toronto International is copied from the jacket of the LP "Sounds of Canada" produced by Sunhill Records of Toronto.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE TRANSITION YEARS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

We describe that the Transition occurred between 1955 and 1960 and that the need for change was recognized as early as 1954. If we include the latter part of 1954 the Transition spans a period of six years. This period divides into early and late periods with 54, 55 and 56 as the early years and 57 through to September 1960 as the late years.

The early years were a time when the Band's popularity was in recognizable decline. Its style was becoming outdated and requests for appearances shrunk. The operation of the Band gradually shifted to a maintenance / holding mode while the Band leaders and the College searched for new directions.

The later years need little description. By the beginning of 1957 the idea of Drum Corps had taken hold among a small but powerful group of leaders and members. Activities during that year increased both support and momentum. By September the College made the key decision to buy new instruments and Drum Corps was the committed destination. By September 1960 the De La Salle Oaklands Drum Corps was a thriving reality.

During the Transition years leaders and members made significant contributions of talent, time and energy. Those contributions include the ones made during the early years when efforts required keeping the organization and membership from losing interest and falling into decline. Brother Hilary and Norm Hutchinson kept their eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel while Ernie Wesson, Cos Capone and others provided new music, introduced new French horns and even attempted to mimic Preston's "Wooden Soldiers". The combined efforts maintained the vitality of the Band and kept it in good shape.

Others made notable contributions like those of John Kidner who switched instruments from Soprano to French horn and did some work with Ernie on arrangements. John also worked with Jimmy Nantais and other members to form the new French horn brass section and become its leader. Werner Nuss, already a sergeant continued to work with Ernie on arrangements. Mike Nugent kept the Glocks section going.

Individual members made their contributions as well. An example is Bob Fradette who played Cymbals. On his own he learned how to twirl the Cymbals on strong leather straps and add flash to the Band's appearance, and he taught this to the other Cymbal players. A few others took individual lessons from professional brass teachers to improve their playing skills.

The list could go on. However, there are limitations to what can be recognized with accuracy more than five decades after the fact. In the following sections we describe the known membership of the Transition years, pay our respects to members known to be deceased, and give Tribute to the leaders and managers that guided and drove the Transition.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

ROLL CALL, IN MEMORIAM AND TRIBUTES

As agreed at the outset of this effort our historians did not intend or wish that this document would be a monument to any group or individual. Too many contributed to the Transition; it would simply be dishonest and contrary to the spirit of Del to recognize the contributions of a small group, or those of us still around to tell the story.

Accordingly we start in the Roll Call to list all those known to have participated during the Transition years 1955 - 1960. Our approach is to be as inclusive as possible; if a member is believed to have been active he is included, even if others do not have similar memory.

Next, we recognize and pay respects to deceased members in the In Memoriam listing. Members named in memoriam are those from the Roll Call who have passed on.

Memories are not perfect, neither is desired information readily available when required. While we have tried to include everyone that participated we recognize that a few may have been missed. For this we apologize and we invite corrective additions for both the Roll Call and In Memoriam listings.

Updates to the Roll Call and the In Memoriam will be posted on the DOCA website, www.delasalle-drumcorps.com as information becomes available.

The Tributes section gives due recognition to the leaders and managers that guided and drove the Transition.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

ROLL CALL - WHO WERE THERE?

The following are the names of Band / Corps members of the wider Transition era. The roll includes members from all years of the Transition including the early period starting in late 1954 through to and including 1956. While some did not remain members into the Drum Corps years of 57, 58, 59 and 60 they did contribute to the early Transition. We have favored including those who might have been there but we could not say for sure. Those marked with an asterisk are names of members of the 1958 Drum Corps as listed by Cos Capone on his DVD. We welcome corrections and additions and will post those on the DOCA website, www.delasalle-drumcorps.com. Active Dates are known for some and estimated for others.

Member	Instrument / Role	Est. Active Dates
Ardis, Jack	Snare	1953 - 1957
*Armstrong, Gary	Soprano	←1958→
*Ayley, Arthur	Soprano	1953 - 1958
*Banel, Joe	Snare / Tenor	←1958→
*Barreca, Len	Baritone	←1958→
*Bauer, John (JC)	Baritone	1953 - 1958
*Boase, Bob	Soprano	←1958→
Boase, Jim	Soprano	←1956→
Boase, Michael	Tenor Horn	←1956→
*Bowden, Anthony	Snare / Tenor	←1958→
Hilary, Brother	Band Moderator	1951 - 1958
*Buklis, John	Soprano	←1958→
*Buklis, Vince	French Horn	←1958→
Burns, Ken	Soprano	1953 - 1958
*Calderone, Larry	Snare / Tenor	←1958→
*Capone, Cos	Drum Line Director	1948 -1964
Capone, Joe	Snare, Ass't Instructor	195? - 1959
*Cobham, Bob	French Horn	←1958→
*Coleman, Brian	Soprano	1953 - 1959

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Roll Call cont' d

Member	Instrument / Role	Est. Active Dates
*Crane, Ron	Baritone	←1958→
*Crawford, Bob	Color Guard	←1958→
*Current, Bill	Color Guard	←1958→
*Delaney, Mike	M & M Director	1957 - 1965
Doncaster, Ron	Baritone	1953 - 1957
*Donovan, Dan	Glocks	1952 - 1957
Duggan, Robert	Soprano	1953 - 1957
Duke, Larry	Tenor Drum	1953 - 1957
Eatman, Steve	Soprano	1959 - 1960
Fatta, Victor	Tenor Horn	1953 - 1956
*Feraday, Gerry	Soprano	1952 - 1960
Fortin, Robert	Glocks	1952 - 1956
*Foster, John	Bass / Cymbals	←1958→
Fradette, Bob	Cymbals	1953 - 1956
*Frasca, Paul	French Horn	←1958→
*Gain, Peter	Glocks	←1958→
*Gain, Paul	Bass / Cymbals	←1958→
Garunther, Ron	Soprano	1953 - 1956
Gaughn, Richard	Baritone	1953 - 1956
Godsoe, Gerry	Tenor Drum	1953 - 1956
*Haberstroh, Bernie	Snare / Tenor	←1958→
Horan, Gerry	Tenor Horn	1954 - 1958
Hutchinson, Norm	Drum Major	1943 - 1957
Jobin, Denis	Soprano then Bass	1953 - 1958
Kelly, Paul	Baritone then Tenor Drum	1959 - 1963
*Kidner, John	French Horn	1951 - 1958
*Lawson, Rich	Color Guard	←1958→

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Roll Call cont' d

Member	Instrument / Role	Est Active Dates
*Lawson, Rob	Color Guard	←1958→
*Liotta, Vince	Glocks	←1958→
*Lovatt, Neil	French Horn	1957 - 1963?
*Marren, Terry	Snare / Tenor	1952 - 1959
Massie, James	Color Guard	1957
*McBride, Chris	French Horn	←1958→
McBride, Owen	Snare	1952 - 1956
*McCallen, Eugene	Snare / Tenor	1953 - 1959
*McGuire, Doug	Color Guard	←1958→
*McLean, Bill	Glocks	←1958→
McMenamin, Ed	Soprano	1952 - 1956
*Moloney, Dan	Baritone	1956? - 1963
Munroe, Jim	Soprano	1953 - 1957
*Murray, Paul	Soprano	1953 - 1960
*Murray, Tom	Soprano	1954 - 1961
*Nagy, Phil	Soprano	1956 →
*Nantais, Jim	French Horn	1951 - 1958
Navin, Francis	Color Guard	1957
Navin, Steven	Color Guard	1957
Napolis, Frank	Snare	←1958→
Newman, Pat	Tenor Drum	1959 →
*Nugent, Mike	Glocks	1951 - 1958
*Nuss, Werner	Music Director	1950 - 1966
O' Donohue, Jack	Snare	1953 - 1956
Olivier, Kearney	French Horn	1957 - 1962

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Roll Call cont' d

*Parker, Bill	Business Manager	1957 - 1965
*Pernu, Ted	Baritone	←1958→
Ponesse, David	Tenor Horn	1953 - 1956
Pritchard, Ted	Soprano	1953 - 1956
Quinn, Paul	Glocks	1954 - 1957
Quinn, Robin	Color Guard	1957
*Robert, Paul	Bass / Cymbals	←1958→
*Roy, Bob	French Horn	←1958→
Sanford, Bob	Soprano	1953 - 1957
*Sauve, Paul	Soprano	←1958→
*Scanlan, Rick	Soprano	1957 - 1969
Scott, Bill	Soprano	1953 - 1956
Smith, Jack	Snare	1953 - 1957
Stumpf, Bob	Baritone	←1956→
*Sullivan, Pat	Bass / Cymbals	←1958→
Sweeting, Neville	Soprano	1959 - 1960
Sweeting, Wayne	Tenor Drum	1960 →
*Wallace, Mike	Soprano	←1958→
*Walsh, John	Color Guard	←1958→
*Weatherhead, Mike	Baritone	←1958→
*Wesson, Ernie	Music Director	1947 - 1958

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

“IN MEMORIAM” - A MEMORIAL TO OUR DECEASED MEMBERS

The following “In Memoriam” pays our respects to those Transition participants that gave of their services to the Band, the Drum Corps or both and have since passed on. As with the Roll Call we have tried to be fastidious to learn of deceased members and include them in this memorial. We invite and welcome news of any we may have missed and of new deaths when they occur. The updated “In Memoriam” will be posted on the DOCA website.

Member	Instrument(s) / Role(s)	Active Dates
Ayley, Arthur	Soprano	1953 - 1958
Brother Hilary	Band Moderator	1951 - 1958
Cos Capone	Drum Line Director	1948 - 1964
Delaney, Mike	M&M Director	1957 - 1965
Duggan, Robert	Soprano	1953 - 1957
Eatman, Steve	Soprano	1959 - 1960
Fortin, Robert	Glocks	1953 - 1955
Frasca, Paul	French Horn	1957 - 1963?
Hutchinson, Norm	Drum Major, Band Master	1943 - 1957
Kelly, Paul	Baritone Horn, Tenor drum	1959 - 1963
Kidner, John	Soprano, French Horn	1951 - 1958
Lovatt, Neil	French Horn	1957 - 1963?
Moloney, Dan	Baritone	1956? - 1963
Nuss, Werner	Music Director	1950 - 1966
Parker, Bill	Business Manager	1957 - 1965
Scanlan, Rick	Soprano (Tenor Drum later)	1957 - 1969
Smith, Jack	Snare	1953 - 1956
Sweeting, Neville	Soprano	1959 - 1960
Wesson, Ernie	Music Director, Bugle Major	1947 - 1958

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

TRIBUTES

The purpose of this section is to honor those relatively few that gave much of themselves and their talents to lead, guide and drive the Transition and make it happen. While we avoid monument building it is entirely consistent with the Spirit of Del to recognize talent, accomplishment and teamwork. Written tributes appear here in alphabetical order. Due solely to the availability of information and photos, tributes vary in length.

Cos Capone (April 18, 1931 - March 3, 2015)



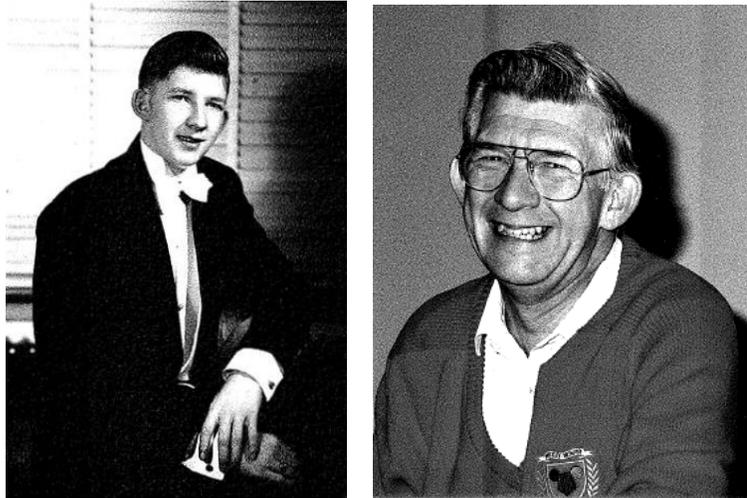
Cos was a student at Del in 1948 when he joined the Blue and Gold. He ascended through the ranks to become Sergeant-Major - Drums, second only to the Drum Major. A talented composer - arranger, Cos worked creatively throughout the Transition, initially with Ernie Wesson and later with Werner Nuss. He worked regularly to improve and extend his percussion knowledge and skills and bring those back to Del. As a leader Cos provided musical leadership for the Band and then the Drum Corps.

With a manner marked by attentive, quiet dignity, Cos mentored a whole generation of drummers. He gave the Drum Corps a legacy of excellence. Cos laid a foundation and then built upon it to produce a formidable group of talented performers. All of his “boys” were very good drummers, and some of his protégés went on to the highest levels of drum corps composing and performance. Ed Jacko went on to play with the famous Hawthorne Caballeros and is a member of that corps’ Alumni today. In the mid-1960s and independent of Del, Rick Scanlan, Paul Mosely and two other Del drummers teamed up to form a competitive quartet. They went on to win several championships including the Canadian National Title.

Cos retired in 1964. He is survived by spouse Mattie and children Jean, Michele and David.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Mike Delaney (1936 - 1995)



Like other Transition era leaders Mike was a former De La Salle student. He is pictured above formally dressed for his Del graduation. A talented and gifted individual, Mike came to Del with a scholarship, but did not join the Band during his years as a student. After graduating Mike started a precision drill team aptly named “The Precisionaires”. Looking for opportunities for his team to perform Mike approached the Band in late 1957 just at the time when the Band was switching into Drum Corps mode. There were strong mutual interests and he and several of his drill team members joined Del.

Mike immediately gave the corps essential talent in the critical area of marching and maneuvering (M&M). His timely arrival made it possible for the Band to move very quickly in early 1958 and field a complete M&M show in time for the Ontario Championships that June. In the years that followed, his leadership, experience and creative talent for M&M design took the Drum Corps to highest levels as a competitor.

Mike possessed an enthusiasm, a sense of humor and a tireless drive that inspired us all and served him well in his chosen career in the toy industry, where for a time he worked for Disney. Mike left the corps in 1965 but continued to work in Drum Corps with the Ambassadors and the Cardinals Junior Drum Corps. Mike died suddenly of a heart attack in 1995 and is survived by his wife Maureen and their four sons; Kyle, Ryan, Darren and Darcy.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Brother Hilary (1916 - 2006)



Brother Hilary had a long career with the Christian Brothers that started in Toronto in 1931 and spanned 70 years. After teaching assignments in Montreal, Quebec City and Silery, Quebec he joined the staff at De La Salle Oaklands in 1950 and remained until 1965. Shortly after his arrival at Del, Brother took over as Moderator of the Band. Instruments, teaching charts and uniforms were well looked after, as were the logistics of getting the Band to and from engagements. Highlights of his time with the Band include the very successful trips to Montreal in 1954 and to Waterloo in 1955. The picture above right was taken on the train while en route to Montreal for the 1954 St. Patrick's Day Parade.

It was during Brother Hilary's watch that the Transition to Drum Corps started and made significant progress. Even when it was uncertain where the Transition would lead he continued to give his unqualified and dedicated support. Facing summer schedule conflicts between that of the Drum Corps and his responsibilities at De La Salle Camp he passed the Moderator's duties to Brother Eugene in 1958.

Brother Hilary was also very active in the management and operation of the camp at Jackson's Point on Lake Simcoe. Always caring he arranged for at least two young Band members to attend the camp as "working campers" that did not have to pay fees. He was fair and fastidious in whatever he did and was well liked and regarded. Brother was just a month short of his 90th birthday when he died at La Salle Manor in Scarborough, August 20, 2006.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Norm Hutchinson (December 28, 1929 - January 10, 2002)



Norm joined the Band in 1943 while a student at De La Salle and quickly rose through the ranks from drummer to Sergeant Major. In 1952, after the retirement of Warren Leonard, Norm became Drum Major and Band Master, a position he would hold until the end of the Blue and Gold era in 1957. Norm continued the tradition of excellence in leadership passed down from leaders like Bill Jordan and Johnny Jackson. The group picture above depicts this continuity. Seated, left to right: Bill Jordan, John Jackson, Warren Leonard; Standing: Cos Capone, Norm, Mike Delaney, and Bill Parker.

One of Norm's greatest pleasures as Drum Major was to lead the Band in the Famous Toronto Santa Claus Parade where the Band was a great favorite for decades. Brother Hilary, at Norm's retirement ceremony found it difficult to put into words the admiration and gratitude we all felt for his devoted work.

While still with the Band Norm pursued a career with the family company, Hutchinson Industries in Toronto, first as a Class A mechanic, then in sales and finally in 1977 as President. During the years Norm made many other contributions to the school beyond the Band and in 2001, at a dinner marking the Brothers 150th year in Toronto, he was given an award recognizing this. Norm is survived by his wife Joan and three children Stephen, Susan and Catharine.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

John Kidner, (October 18, 1938 - September 5, 2006)



John joined the Blue and Gold in 1951. Bright and talented, he was a top student at Del. Originally he played soprano, became a recruit instructor and rose to the rank of Corporal. John loved music and did some arranging work with Ernie Wesson. In 1956 he teamed with Ernie and Jim Nantais and introduced the use of French horns to the Band. John became the Bugle Sergeant of that new brass section and continued with the Drum Corps through the Silver Shirts season of 1958.

After graduation, John articulated to become a Chartered Accountant and after 20 years he turned his hobby of Astronomy into a full time career, a business he operated with his wife Susanne. John is survived by Susanne, son Paul and daughters Jane and Andrea.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Werner Nuss (June 30, 1935 - March 1, 2011)



A brilliant student, Werner came to De La Salle in 1950 and joined the Blue and Gold as a Baritone Bugler. His intelligence and talents were soon recognized and he rose to become Sergeant of his brass section. His enthusiasm took him far and wide exploring the world of Bands/ Drum Corps and he brought these influences back to 'Del'. First locally with Ernie and later with others, and in 1957 with Gerry, into the USA including the 1957 American Legion Junior and Senior Championships in Atlantic City, New Jersey. His curiosity and the exciting possibility of learning new ways of dealing with things and ideas encouraged us to share our thoughts with him on how to make the Band/ Corps better. He worked closely with Ernie Wesson and it was to Werner that Ernie passed the baton of Music Director when he left the Corps in 1958. From then until his retirement in 1966 he provided musical arrangements and leadership to the Corps.

After graduating from University of Toronto, Werner pursued a career in Engineering. A man for all seasons, he also completed a Degree in Philosophy, was a computer whiz, an expert with a camera and of course a man of music. Werner is survived by his wife Marie and daughters Catherine, Jeannine, Stephanie and Margaret.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Bill Parker (December 16, 1931 - January 25, 2008)



Bill joined the De La Salle Band while a student at the school during the mid-1940s. In the photo above, Bill is playing a military bugle that is fitted with a “crook”, an extra loop of tubing that lowered the pitch and allowed for playing limited harmony. In 1949 when the Band acquired new harmony piston bugles, Bill began playing the Baritone Bugle and rose to the rank of Bugle Sergeant.

After graduating he joined the famed Championship Band of the 2nd Armored Divisional Signals Regiment where he again rose to the rank of Sergeant. Shortly after Bill joined, '2nd Sigs' started to compete as a Drum Corps. They became very popular and were dubbed in the press as “Canada’s Marching Ambassadors”. At a time when Drum Corps were new to Canadian audiences, Bill gained invaluable experience and knowledge on how to form and operate a Drum Corps, and he became familiar with the Drum Corps circuit and how it worked.

Bill brought this wealth of knowledge and experience with him when he returned to De La Salle as Business Manager in 1957 and played a critical role in Del’s transformation from Street Parade Band to competitive Drum Corps. For a short time Bill also took over the role of Drum Major from the recently retired Norm Hutchinson and lead the Band in street parades, a position he had to give up because of age rules when 'Del' entered the field as a Junior Drum Corps in 1958.

Bill became a corps judge in the early 1960s and rose to become Deputy Chief Judge of the Canadian Drum Corps Judges Association. Bill still maintained an active role with Del until the mid-1960s. Prior to his death in January 2008 Bill was involved with the recently formed De La Salle Alumni Stage Band. Bill is survived by his wife Audrey, daughter Cheryl and sons Bruce and Bryan.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Ernie Wesson (April 17, 1934 - August 11, 2012)



Ernie came to De La Salle as a student in 1947 and joined the Blue and Gold as a Bugler. When the Band acquired new harmony piston bugles in 1949 Ernie played the Soprano Bugle. A gifted horn player and dedicated Bandsman, Ernie rose through the ranks to become Bugle Major, Music Director and Soloist.

Ernie was a talented and enthusiastic innovator, and he constantly worked to improve the scope and quality of the horn line. He frequently attended the rehearsals of other Bands and kept Del attuned to what was happening on the broader scene. In 1956 he worked with John Kidner and introduced the French horn to the Band. In that same year he spearheaded the Senior Band effort to make the music and performance of the Band more interesting and challenging.

Recognizing the need to move forward he became a driving force to win College support and approval for the Transition to Drum Corps. This latter included the recruitment of Bill Parker to take over from the retiring Norm Hutchinson. Following that he worked closely with Cos Capone to arrange all of the music and create the new “sound” for the emerging Drum Corps in time for its 1958 debut at the Ontario Championships.

After graduating from University of Toronto in 1958 Ernie transferred his responsibilities to Werner Nuss and retired from the Drum Corps to fulfill his ROTC contract and make his career in Canada’s military. He and his wife Maureen (Ardis) are survived by their children Karen, Lori, Christopher, Lyn and Ron and ten grandchildren.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

GALLERY OF IDOLS

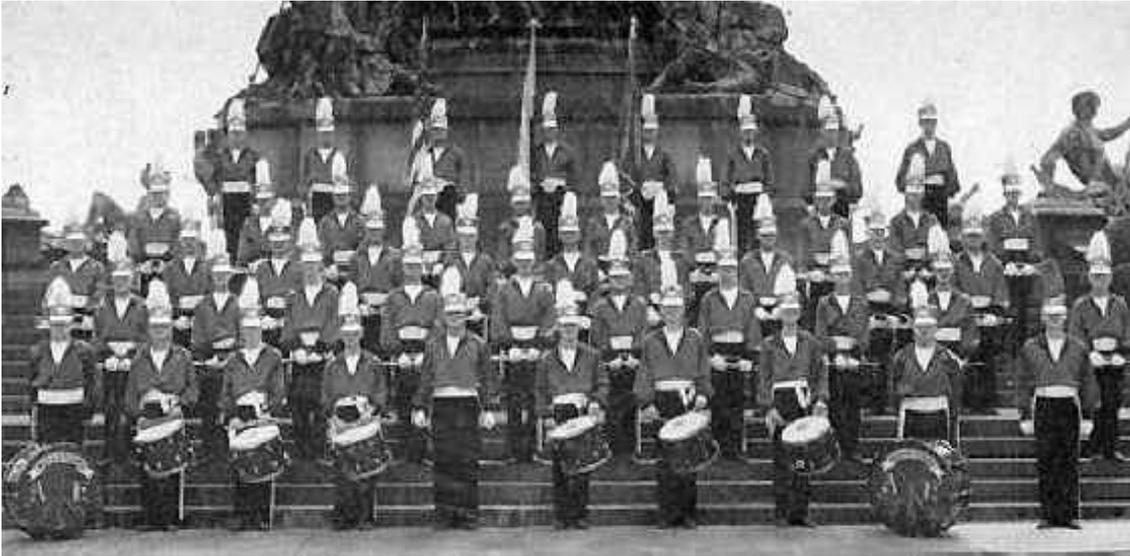
During the Transition years we acquired a whole new corps language and we embraced a new set of performance standards with idols to match. The members of others corps were doing similar to us and the terminology and idols were shared across both the local and international communities. The following describe our Drum Corps Idols of that time with some pictures. Each of us had and still has personal favorites; accordingly, the order that follows is random.

Jim Costello - a founder and driving force of The Caballeros described 1958 as one of Caballeros "best years". His remarks also tell of the Great Senior Corps of Del's Transition Years.

"Once we got ourselves through the initial growing pains of the late forties, every year was pretty much a good year, but if I had to choose five seasons that particularly stand out in my memory, I would say that the first was 1958, mainly because of the spectacular job the corps did in winning the (American) Legion Nationals at Soldier Field in Chicago. It was an extremely close contest and almost everybody thought the Syracuse Brigadiers had won, but in the end, we squeaked by to win. It was also an important year for the sport of Drum Corps competition in general, as there seemed to be a feeling that the whole thing was emerging and gaining in popularity. The contests were getting bigger and better, and the crowds were growing larger. We were always right up there, competition wise, but of course, we weren't alone. Just some of the great corps we competed against in the mid to late fifties were the New York Skyliners, the Reilly Raiders from Philadelphia, the Princemen from Malden, Massachusetts; Archer Epler from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania; the Hamilton Post from Baltimore (The Yankee Rebels), the Syracuse Brigadiers, the Skokie Indians, and many others; tremendous corps that we very much enjoyed competing with. Sadly, only a couple of those corps have survived and are still in actual competition today. Many lifelong friendships were established during that period with members, directors and instructors from other corps, and it seems to me as though the Drum Corps 'fraternity' was forged during the fifties."

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

ARCHER EPLER MUSKETEERS, UPPER DARBY, PA



In 1954 when this picture was taken The Musketeers won the VFW National Title. When we first encountered “Archie” in 1957, it was still beating Corps like the Caballeros. As one expects of Champion Corps, Archie was a leader and an innovator, particularly in music arrangements and showmanship. The following extracts from their history describe those qualities:

“When the 1950’s rolled around “Archie” was building towards its all-time peak in 1954. During that year the “Musketeers” won all contests except the first in Hershey, Pa. Among the corps’ titles that year were the Dream Contest and the first March of Champions (the corps went on to retire the huge trophy of that Baltimore contest after subsequent victories in 1955 and 1956, a feat that was never to be duplicated). The Musketeers” secured the VFW National Championship by overwhelming Reilly, by 1.70 with a score of 90.45.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Unlike the large corps of the present, that championship corps consisted of 51 marching members: 33 horns, 3 snares, 3 tenors, 2 bass drums, 1 cymbal, 8 color guard, and 1 drum major. At the time it was not realized that "Archie" had reached yet another milestone probably never to be reached by any other drum and bugle corps--winning national championships as both a junior and senior corps."

"Lee Wolf began an association with Archer-Epler that was to change the very face of Drum Corps music. Perhaps among his most daring innovations was the use of the "King and I" for the corps entire show in 1957, a show that featured Vince Deegan as a Yul Brenner look-alike. Lee's full-bodied approach to instrumentation and his introduction of Jazz ("The Dipsy Doodle") and Dixieland ("The South Rampart Street Parade") idioms have influenced and been imitated by drum and bugle corps to the present day."

"The 1959 show of Archer-Epler was probably the most influential point in changing the shape of the Drum Corps activity to a "total show" concept.. In that year the corps' simultaneously introduced a varied and popular musical program (including "The Queen of Sheeba", "The Dipsy Doodle", and "Speak Low", among other favorites), a brand new and somewhat controversial non-traditional uniform (sometimes referred to as a "maternity blouse"), a beautifully-designed drill, and the thrilling leadership of Drum-Major Jim McConkey."

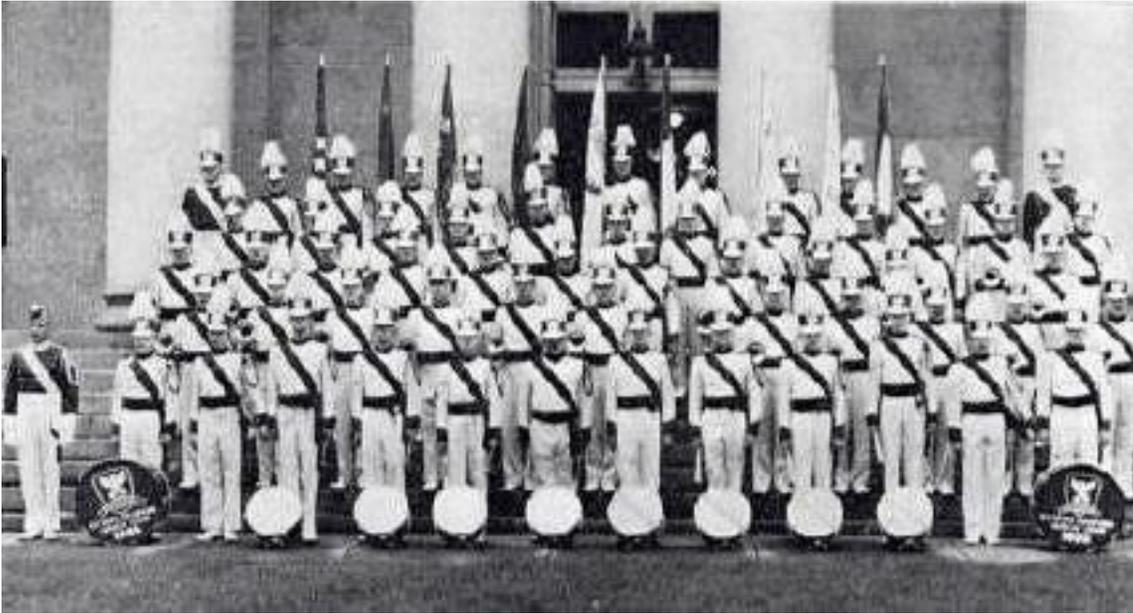
Memory Flashes:

Watching "Archie" marching along the stadium track during a retreat ceremony and being amazed at how such a small drum line could completely fill the stadium with crisp sound.

Listening to Archie's arrangement and performance of "Speak Low". This piece was one you would expect to find on "mood music" albums. It is rhythmic but sensitive and tender, definitely NOT what you would expect of a Drum Corps. Yet, the way Archie did it stayed true and faithful to the original - they preserved the harmonies and the essential "sexiness" that the composer Kurt Weill intended - a major accomplishment for a Corps playing piston bugles in an outdoor setting!!

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE BRIGADIERS, SYRACUSE, NY



This photograph is of The Brigadiers of 1956.

In 1954, The Boys from Syracuse, The Cortland Moose, and The Sons of American Legion Post 41 Drum Corps all merged under the name The Syracuse Brigadiers. This was the first step in their climb to international fame.

The Syracuse Brigadiers won the coveted title of New York State American Legion Champions from 1955 through 1960 and then again in 1964 and 1967. Under the sponsorship of PLAV Post 14 and American Legion Post 1677, the Syracuse Brigadiers were finalists in the American Legion National Championships every time they entered, were runners-up three times, and were international champions in 1957 and 1958.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Jim Costello - a founder and driving force of the Caballeros paid this tribute to The Brigadiers in his description of the Nationals of 1958:

“I would say that the first (best year for Caballeros) was 1958, mainly because of the spectacular job the corps did in winning the Legion Nationals at Soldier Field in Chicago. It was an extremely close contest and almost everybody thought the Syracuse Brigadiers had won, but in the end, we squeaked by to win. ...Just some of the great corps we competed against in the mid to late fifties were the New York Skyliners, the Reilly Raiders from Philadelphia, the Princemen from Malden, Massachusetts; Archer Epler from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania; the Hamilton Post from Baltimore, the Syracuse Brigadiers, the Skokie Indians, and many others; tremendous corps...”

Much has already been described about this corps’ music so there is no need for repetition here. As a “top ten” competitor - and it is probably fair to say “top five”, the corps epitomized excellence. The Brigadiers have Polish roots tied to the Polish Legion of American Veterans. The uniforms are white with red, traditional of the corps’ Polish ancestry. The leaders of that era included Vinny Ratford, Buddy Thompson and the legendary Brad Longdo who was also the Drum Major. Brad did all the corps’ musical arrangements including the piece that captured our imaginations and our hearts - Shangri-La.

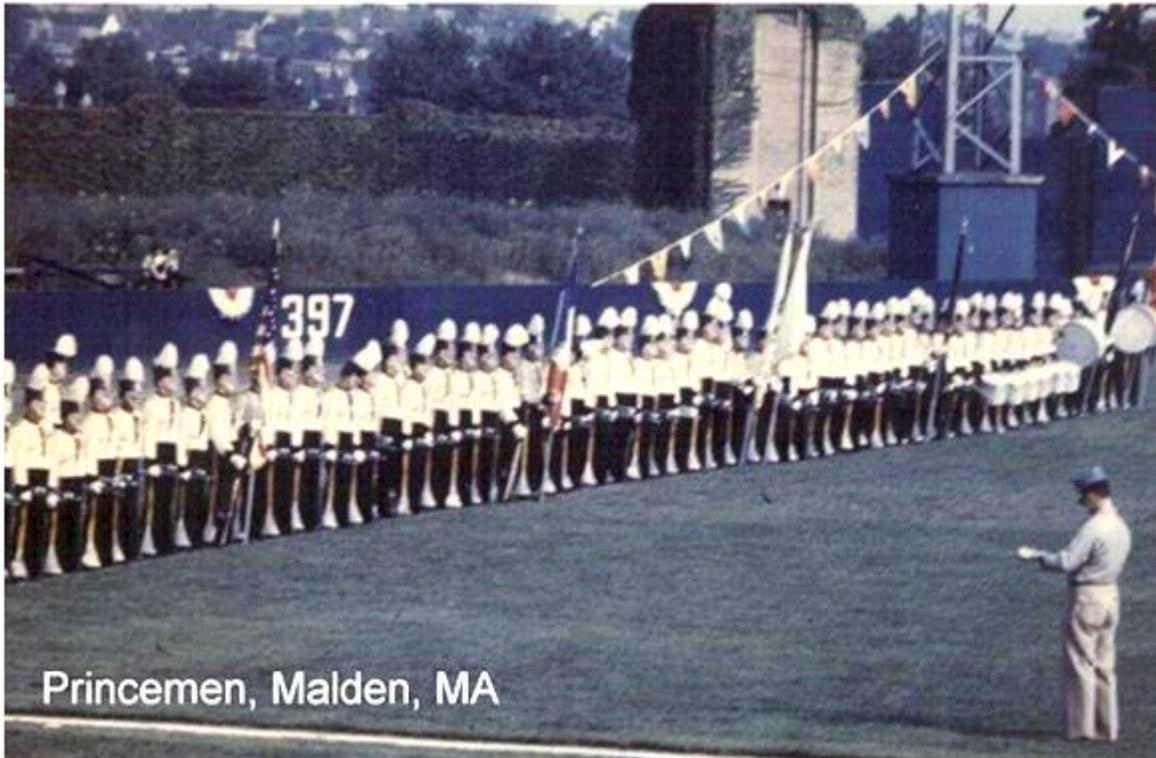
For those who might have been amused or puzzled by The Brigadiers “Indian War Dance”, it is enlightening to learn that Syracuse is located in the heart of the Iroquois, Six Nations country. The immediate vicinity is that of the Onandaga Nation, and Native American presence and culture remain to this day The Indian War Dance was a statement of respect for the culture and traditions of their immediate neighbors.

Memory Flash:

Watching The Brigadiers M&M and how seamlessly they did “pick ups” - a maneuver where a “marching squad” approaches another “marking time squad” from behind, and when they meet both step off together in a common front. They did this repeatedly without any waver or ripple in dressing. It was no wonder that they were consistently in the top ten.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

LT. NORMAN PRINCE, MALDEN, MA



De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

The Lt. Norman Prince Drum & Bugle Corps and Alumni Chorus, The Princemen, have a rich history spanning fifty-five years.

The corps traces its roots to when the Sacred Heart Crusaders, moderated by Father John J. Sheehan of the Sacred Heart Parish of Malden, Massachusetts, won the 1940 New York World's Fair National Championship. This attracted the Lt. Norman Prince Post 1506 in Boston to sponsor the Crusaders in statewide VFW competitions. Thus was born a long standing association.

Formed in 1946 by returning servicemen, The Princemen was a senior marching and maneuvering corps based in Malden, Massachusetts. They were also known as the Lt. Norman Prince and Lt. Norman Prince Renegades. The corps' colors were white, red, gold, and black. Their signature tunes were "Seems like Old Times", "Sweet Georgia Brown", "If I Loved You", "Body and Soul" and "Someday My Prince Will Come". James Murphy was their "world class" soloist. In a hair-raising maneuver, the drill team tossed actual 12-pound M1 rifles backward over the shoulder - with bayonets attached.

This dominating corps won the VFW National Championships in 1946, 48, 49, 53, and 1955, plus the Massachusetts State VFW Championships for 12 consecutive years. They also competed in DCA for three years, as well as in the Dream Contest. World Drum Corps Hall of Famer Harry Latinik was a soprano with the corps from 1948 to 1966. The Lt. Norman Prince Drum & Bugle Corps was inducted into the World Hall of Fame in 1982, an achievement reserved for very few.

²Scotty Chappell did the arrangements with the harmonies that gave Princemen their special sound. He was also the innovator that used an emery cloth to thin down the tubing of the tuning slide on the horn so that with lubrication it became a chromatic slide. Manufacturers like Getzen soon followed with products that featured slides with a ring attached to the underside of the slide.

² This information provided by Ray Priester and Jim Stanko of the New York Skyliners Alumni

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

REILLY RAIDERS, PHILADELPHIA, PA



In 1946, after World War II, the returning veterans who had been members of a long-standing junior corps in Philadelphia before the war, the A.K. Street Post decided to start a senior corps. The corps formed their own VFW post, Cpl. Frederick W. Reilly Post, #7947, Reilly Raiders. The Reilly Raiders honored the name of Cpl Frederick W. Reilly, who was a Bugler in the Street Post Junior Corps, who died in the service of his country during WW2. The motto over the door of their post home in Philadelphia read

"Through this door pass the best damn bugle corpsmen in the world".

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

In 1952 they were chartered as an American Legion Corps under the name Cpl. Frederick W. Reilly Memorial Post #656. The corps entered the 1952 Legion Contest in New York City. When the contest smoke cleared, it was the Reilly Raiders over 23 other Sr. Corps from all parts of the nation. Reilly won 7 National Dream Contests.

Defeating the best Sr. corps year after year made Reilly popular with the fans, but disliked by other corps. As Reilly's manager Jacobs once said, "Remember the New York Yankees, they had the same problem". Behind this remark is the fact that Reilly were very tough competitors; they had a strong offense. But they won on defense: **they executed so cleanly that they won by not giving up points.** I was amazed that in one show I attended their M&M only gave up 1 ½ points. They were also minimalist with a horn line of only 27.

But it wasn't all defense; Reilly were right up there on offense. Bob Adair was their soloist playing "Star Dust" and routinely hitting G above high C in "Irish Eyes". Another trademark was their rendition of "Irish Washer Woman" played while actually dancing the jig. Reilly was also innovative. An example was their use of the "Head Choppers" maneuver- they may even have invented it. To turn a "horn line front" completely around and move off in the opposite direction, every second man went forward on one knee, then those still upright turned 90° into the space. As the kneelers popped back to upright the others turned another 90° and then went down on one knee. They remained down while the original kneelers completed their turns then popped back up. Then the whole front moved off in line. The suspense was dramatic - like watching jets at an air show turning at the last instant to avoid collision.

Reilly won their first National Championship in 1950, a sentinel accomplishment, from formation to the ultimate prize in only 4 years. Two years later, under the leadership of their Hall of Fame Drum Major, "Wild Bill" Hooton, they became the only Senior Corps in the United States to hold both the VFW and American Legion Championships. They eventually won 7 National Championships and 16 Pennsylvania State titles.

From 1946 to 1959, they entered 129 contests with a phenomenal record of 90 first places, 31 second places and 8 third places. This enviable record and their competition accomplishments combined to catapult them to their highest honor, induction into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame in 1965 as the Senior Corps of the 1950's.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE SKYLINERS, MANHATTAN, NY



The New York Skyliners have won every major title available to a senior drum and bugle corps, including the DCA Championships, and the New York State and American Legion National Championships. The New York Skyliners were the 1963 World Open Champions, 1971 and 1975 DCA Champions, and most recently were the 1999 Drum Corps Associates Class A World Champions. (Note: the picture shown above is from 1972 - a color photo of the earlier years was not available at the time this history was composed.)

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

In 1946 returning veterans of WW2 who had been members of two pre-war New York junior corps formed the new corps. Before the war they had agreed that upon return they would form a senior corps and name it after the first of their members to be killed in the war. Late in the war Ray Garbarina - Gabby to his friends - was the driver of an ammunitions truck that took a direct hit during the Battle of The Bulge. Accordingly a new American Legion Post was formed - The Raymond A Garbarina Post #1523, New York City. The corps was then known as The Raymond A Garbarina Memorial Corps. Later, in 1949 the corps became known as the Garbarina Skyliners, and then later again in 1956 as "The New York Skyliners".

The corps' first appearance was an exhibition at a New York Giants football game at the Polo Grounds. They began competing the following season in 1947, winning the New York State American Legion title that year. The 1947 American Legion National Championship was held in NYC, but corps from the host city were not allowed to compete, so Garbarina had to sit it out. The 1948 Championship was held in Miami, and lack of funds prevented the corps from attending. The 1949 Nationals were held in Philadelphia, and Garbarina won their first national title. During the period from 1949 - 1951, the Garbarina Skyliners competed in 41 contests and won 38 of them. The 1949 and 1950 championships were won by the Garbarina Post corps, which in 1956 became the Skyliners.

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Hy Dreitzer and "Jumpin Joe" Genaro

It would be entirely unfair to write about the Skyliners without describing Hy Dreitzer and how he gave the corps the benefits of his unique playing and musical arranging talents. Starting as a soprano horn player in the 1930's Hy came up through Drum Corps ranks. After playing with several corps he joined Skyliners in 1952 playing soprano and French horn. His music arranging talents soon came to the fore and he became one of the premier music arrangers of that era. Naturally innovative, he was the sole brass arranger for the Skyliners for more than 30 years, year after year creating new sounds and exploring new areas. He was one of the first drum and bugle corps brass arrangers to make the shift from military music to include classical music in the field show repertoire. His arrangements include Harlem Nocturne, I'll Take Manhattan, 42nd Street and many, many others.....

Similar to other great Corp arrangers such as Lee Wolf of Archer Epler, Brad Longdo of Syracuse Brigadiers and Scotty Chappell of The Princemen, Hy had the rare ability to coax complex harmonies from a horn line of piston bugles and still remain true to original compositions.

He also taught many highly regarded junior corps, including St. Joseph's of Newark, St. Vincent's of Bayonne, St. Andrew's Bridgemen, Garfield Cadets, St. Ignatius All-Girl Corps, St. Rocco's, and St. Rita's Brassmen. He arranged music for many other corps, including Guelph Royallaires, Canada's six-time senior national champions from 1959 to 1964.

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

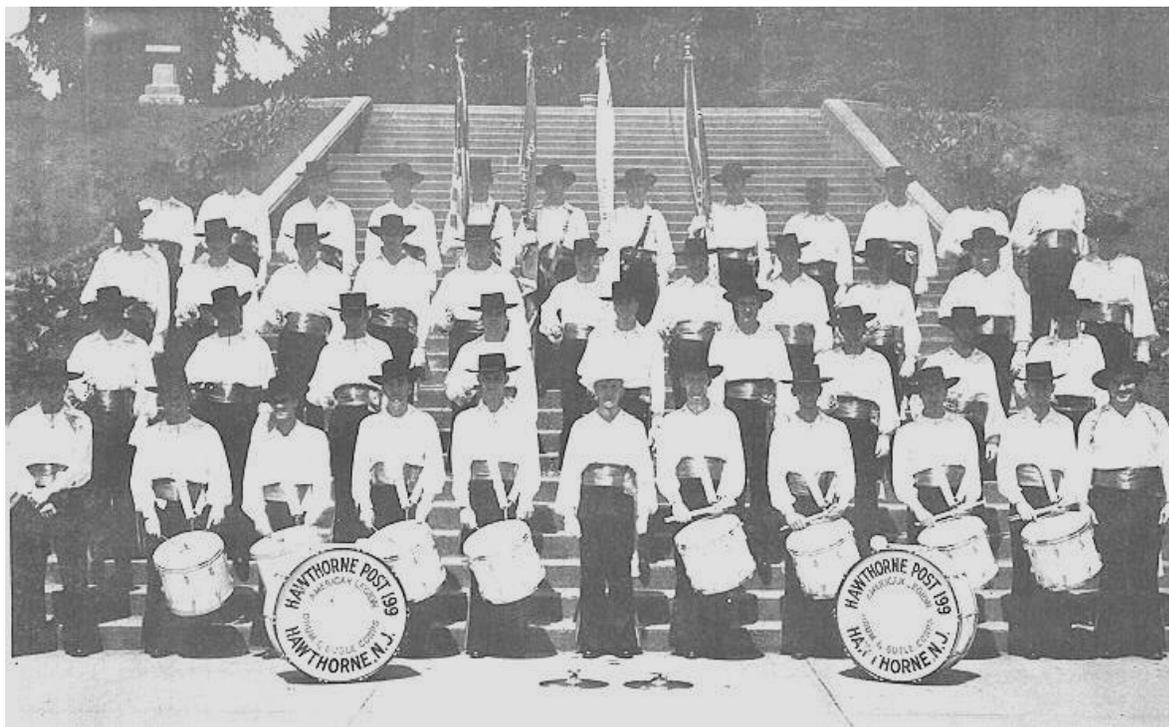
Terry Marren, one of our own De La Salle members met Hy in Montreal while working there with a militia band transitioning into a Drum Corps. The following is Terry's account of that meeting.

"I actually met Hy Dreitzer one weekend when I lived in Montreal ('60 to '63) and was working at Northern Electric. I already knew Howard Lacey, a fellow worker at Northern. ...Howard was a member of the Victoria Rifles and had been working very hard at changing the military band into "Les Vics de Montreal" drum and bugle corps. Howard was very dedicated in his efforts and at some point realized that they needed some expert help with the horn line. So, he hired Hy for a weekend.

We picked him up at Dorval airport in my '61 Falcon and drove to the Victoria Rifles armory across the street from Place Ville Marie. He worked the horn line several times over two days and you could really hear the improvement when he finished."

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE CABALLEROS, HAWTHORNE, NJ



On March 20th, 1946, the Caballeros were officially organized by a small group of recent veterans, former members of the St. George Cadets. A primary goal of the newly formed corps was to be different from all the others. The concept of Latin, or Spanish style uniform was agreed upon and the corps appeared for the first time in the now familiar Caballero uniform competing in their first field competition in Trenton, New Jersey on July 20th, 1947.

The Caballeros musical *signature* is the short, but dramatic introduction and finale that have been played in one form or another for nearly thirty years. *Espania Cani*, played in its entirety beginning in 1957 and as an off-the-line introduction for many years thereafter, was originally arranged by Al Mura. The Corps is unquestionably the Win-ingest of Drum Corps history. By the time the American Legion Championship was discontinued in 1980, the Caballero's color guard proudly carried fifteen orange flags.

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The DCA record book is largely dominated by Caballero statistics. Examples include:

➤ **MOST:**

- Championships (8)
- Runner-up placements (10)
- Consecutive runner-up placements (4)
- Championship scores of 90 or above (17)
- Consecutive championship scores of 90 or above (12 in the last 12 years)
- High captions (26, plus two ties)

➤ **LONGEST**

- Consecutive streak of top three positions in finals (11 years: 1970-1980)
- Consecutive championship wins (1972, '73, '74)

➤ **HIGHEST** Score in a championship (97.7 in 1995)

Drum-Major Ralph Silverbrand



Memory Flashes:

Excellence in all categories including music, M&M and audience appeal are standards of the “Cabs”. One of my first experiences was being thrilled when - in the middle of their show they formed into a tight block at center-field and then proceeded to play and dance cross-foot to a Tango! They proved that Tango can be fantastic when there are more than two. Their concert of “The Peanut Vendor” with its intentional dissonance was both innovative and very entertaining.

On another occasion I attended a pre-contest rehearsal and was awed by the clean, crisp and powerful delivery of their music. The horn line was in a semi-circle and I was positioned just back of the center. Their bass and mid-range instruments played with the agility of the soprano voices and they were very powerful. The Corps was also innovative in instrumentation- in 1959 or 1960 they expanded their G Bass section to 12 or more players. This was a radical step in those times. A couple of years later I was awed again when they played the Toreador Song from Carmen. Not an easy piece, but their long established agility made it sound both wonderful and effortless.

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GALLERY OF OUR CANADIAN “NEIGHBOR” CORPS OF THE TRANSITION ERA

During the Transition period there were many local Canadian Drum Corps that were very much a part of our Transition world. They shared with us the excitement of the then new and unfolding world of “competitive Drum Corps”. Like siblings in a family we influenced and helped one another. Our history would be incomplete without acknowledging them and the magic era we shared.

PRESTON SCOUT HOUSE



This photo shows Scout House doing “Wooden Soldiers” at the National Preliminaries in Galt, 1958.

The Preston Scout House Band was formed under the leadership of Wilf Blum on October 5, 1938 after permission was received from Scout Headquarters in Ottawa to form a band as part to the scouting program of 1st Preston troop. The Band is named for the building where troop meetings and band practices were held, an unused brewery stable that they received with the original bequest of \$250 in 1938.

The Band’s first public performances began in 1940 and involved marching the WRENS of HMCS

Conestoga to church service in Galt, Ontario each Sunday. Scout House developed its distinctive knee-up marching style with shoulder-high arm swing during these weekly church parades. During this time, the Band also received early training in fancy drills by performing “Wavy Navy” in an anchor formation with the bugles forming the stem of the anchor and the drum section the hook of the anchor.

By 1949 the Band had become known as Preston’s “Famous” Scout House band. As the Band’s fame spread, it annually received invitations to play at 400-500 events throughout Canada and the United States including the Calgary Stampede and the

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena California. Many of these invitations, including the latter two had to be declined because of the costs involved. In addition, at the height of its success, the Band received up to 2,500 fan letters a week.

In 1953, the Band's uniforms were redesigned by Dr. David Ross-Robertson, changing for the traditional Scout uniform to the more famous red shirts and socks, black Aussie hat with feather and short black shorts. The corps sported an alternative all-white uniform as well. The Scouting movement did not favourably receive the new uniforms and so the Band left the Scouts and went off on its own. The Band was named Canadian Junior Drum Corps Champions in 1954, 1955 and 1957 and was Ontario Drum Corps Champions in 1957 to 1959. The Preston Scout House Band was noted as a great show band and as a great crowd pleaser.

In many ways the show put on by the Band was unique with music that included "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Love Me Tender" among many others. The Band's wooden soldier routine in which the

members marched stiff-legged as toy soldiers; the swaying march to 'High Lily'; the skipping to 'Orpheus' and the traditional 'Waltzing Matilda', their signature exit, never failed to arouse audiences.

By the early 1960's the Band began to run into difficulties in competitions. The older B-flat bugles and the Band's unconventional drill programs made it increasingly difficult to compete with newer Drum Corps which now marched at the American Drum cadence of 125 to 150 steps per minutes compared to the slower British army cadence of 96 steps per minute used by Scout House. Some members wanted the Band to move to becoming solely a performance band while others wanted to change sufficiently to allow the Band to remain competitive force. The issue was never truly resolved and in April 1967 the Band folded. (Taken from the Preston Scout House website.)

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2ND SIGNALS CORPS – CANADA’S MARCHING AMBASSADORS



In Del's days of Blue and Gold The Toronto Signals Band was then known as the Band of the 2nd Armored Divisional Signals Regiment. In modern parlance it was known as an "early adopter". This band was the first to inaugurate the one piston valve bugle and the bell lyre into the bugle band sections of those very early years. In that same tradition this band also introduced to the Canadian audience to the sound of three-part harmony in trumpet (Bugle) band music.

Many years and much iteration later the Band would become known by its current name The Toronto Signals Regiment.

During the early 1950's 2nd Sigs, as the Band was popularly called, ventured into the American style of competitive Drum Corps competition with the

marching and maneuvering (M&M) that Canadians still called "fancy drill". For those appearances the red tunic and black belt were replaced by a white satin shirt and red cummerbund. This activity was quite successful and attracted new members and leaders from Canadian junior corps. With its theme of world peace and friendship the corps' shows featured music from various countries. The opening fanfare and off-the-line was "Around the World In Eighty Days"; other pieces included "America", "Deutschland Uber Alles", "April in Paris", "Canadian Sunset" "Pomp and Circumstance" and the Japanese national anthem. Harry Hamilton, a local professional musician wrote most of the music arrangements.

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Continuing its tradition of “early adoption” the Corps was one of the first to use the Contra Bass horns. They had two instruments and I am certain

they used them in 1958 and may have done in 1957 or 1956.

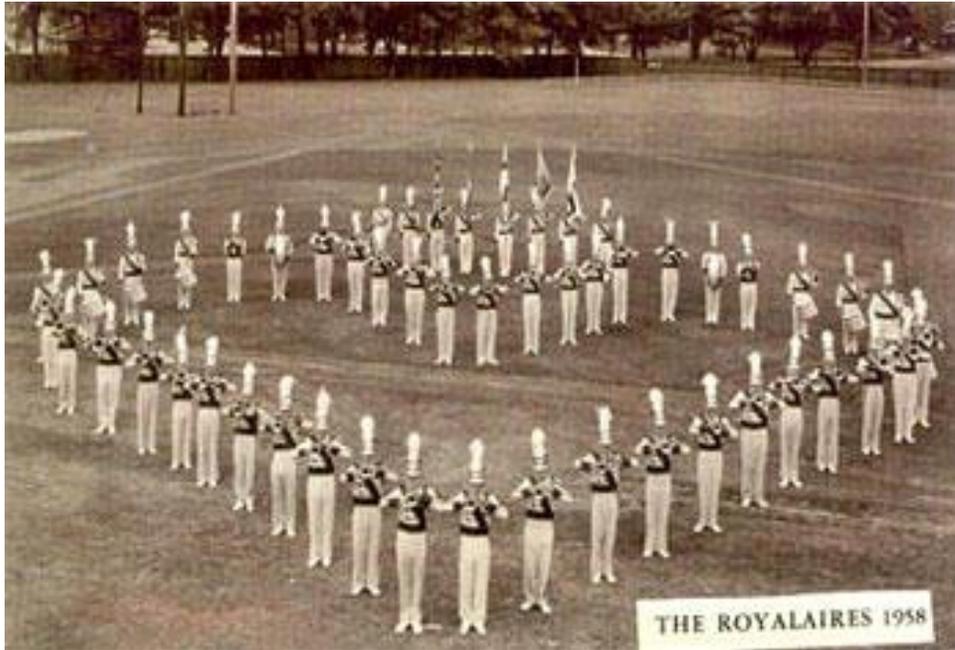


In late 1959, the corps made “Canada’s Marching Ambassadors” its official name and left the army. A few of the leaders took mortgages on their homes to buy instruments and uniforms with a shako replacing the military Busby. The new independent Drum Corps’ first appearance was at a show in June of 1960 in Kitchener, Ontario. 1960 was very busy with an extremely heavy schedule. Through keen management the corps was able to pay off all mortgages that season. In September at the Canadian Nationals the very tired corps stood second by a painfully small margin to The Royalaires. However, a couple of weeks later the corps won the Toronto International beating The Royalaires by two full points.

As with many Drum Corps, the Ambassadors went through a merger or two before ceasing operation in the 1970’s. However, several of the members returned to the militia and the Signals band. Since the integration of the Canadian Armed Forces in the early 1970’s, “Sigs” as they are affectionately known, have carried on as a voluntary organization, maintaining the rich tradition and heritage of their former members. Today they continue to march as a Duty Band to the 709 (Toronto) Communications Regiment of the Canadian Armed Forces. (Composed by Brian Coleman, member of the Ambassadors, 1959 - 1962 with excerpts from the Toronto Signals website)

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THE ROYALAIRES



The Guelph Royalaires Drum & Bugle Corps can trace its history as far back as 1932 when a group of First World War Veterans sought to increase their musical knowledge while maintaining their military training and bonds of friendship with like-minded comrades.

The corps eventually became the marching band of the Guelph-based 11th Field Regiment (RCA) etching its first accomplishments by winning the Canadian Standstill Championships three consecutive years in the early fifties - '53, '54, and '55.

In 1954, the corps opened its ranks to the community and adopted the name “The Royalaires” in honor of the Royal City of Guelph. At about the same time came the new challenges of marching and maneuvering and the corps set their sights on newer, bigger goals. In doing so, the Royalaires literally won the hearts of growing legions of fans in Canada and the United States.

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The adoption of the “Love Theme” and the acquisition of their unique cadet style cream, red, and gold uniforms, shakos with white feather plumes the Royalaires were easily recognized by their appearance, precision marching, and repertoire. Their popular “heart” drill pattern soon became their signature and they soon became known as “The Corps With the Heart”.

The Royalaires’ belief in hard work and dedication resulted in six consecutive national titles from 1959 through 1964 a feat unmatched in Senior Canadian Drum & Bugle Corps history. A string of Ontario Provincial and International Championships complemented the Royalaires achievements and popularity. Throughout these

golden years, the Royalaires were led by Drum Major Stan Biggs, who was later inducted into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

The Royalaires continued to field a competitive corps through the late ‘60’s recapturing National Championships in 1968 and 1969. As Canadian corps succumbed to the high costs of travel and new instrumentation, the Royalaires continued on through the 1970’s and ‘80’s keeping pace with the changes that drum & bugle corps were undergoing. Eventually the corps was faced with the decision to withdraw from competition in the 1990’s but continued to be a popular parade corps throughout southwestern Ontario into the new millennium. (Taken from the Royalaires website.)

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TORONTO OPTIMISTS



The Optimists actually began life as a Boy Scout band. In 1955 a Toronto District scouting commissioner by the name of Al Baggs saw the writing on the wall. Most of the scouts in the Band would be aging out of scouting. He foresaw that Drum Corps had an attractiveness to it that went beyond scouting, and he decided that the scout band needed to be reorganized with a new sponsor.

At the end of 1955, he went to the Downtown Toronto Optimists Club with a proposal. He offered to manage a new Drum Corps, which he believed would be a perfect fit for the club's objective of providing interesting activities for boys.

Citing the example of the Madison, WI, Optimists who co-sponsored a scout band in which more than 1,000 boys had received musical instruction since 1938, Al's proposal was eventually approved.

The new corps struggled along through 1956 and 57 and again Al recognized the need for change, specifically more members and more instructors. The Danforth Crusaders were already a Junior A corps. They were organized as part of the music program at Danforth Technical School and they were under the guidance of Barry Bell. Barry was a quiet, thoughtful man who was deeply in love with the idea of drum and bugle corps.

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He and his good friend Lorne Ferrazzutti, were horn and drum instructors for the Crusaders, both having arrived there from Western Technical School, where they had operated a similar program.

In 1958, the new Toronto Optimists made their first appearance at an indoor show at the University Avenue Armories in Toronto. They wore brand-new uniforms designed by Bell - green satin blouses with a white diagonal stripe, black pants with white stripe, white shoes, a cummerbund of white and green and white shakos with green trim and white plumes. By the end of the year, they were Canada's new champions, achieving in one year what they'd set out to accomplish in two.

When the Toronto Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps entered competition in 1958 a legend began. They won the Canadian Championships that year. In

fact, they won the Canadian Championships every year for the next 10 years! They were Canadian Champions for 11 consecutive years, a record that is unparalleled in Drum Corps history

During their 20 years in operation the corps traveled throughout Canada and the US, winning over 100 national and International Championships. The Toronto Optimists were the most consistently successful Drum Corps to ever represent Canada.

1975 was the last year of competition for the Toronto Optimists. In 1976 a merger between the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Princemen created the Seneca Optimists.

(Excerpted from the Toronto Optimists Alumni website.)

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

THE JOLLY JESTERS - ARMY SERVICE CORPS



This corps was organized by a group of men in the Militia and was a trumpet and marching unit for 5th Column, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. The uniform at the time was the army dress blues with white pith helmet. Because of active duty during the war years, the corps was disbanded but reformed in 1947-48 and continued to be a parade corps until entering and winning the Canadian Drum Corps Championships (Senior Novice Class) in 1952.

After attending a contest in Batavia NY in 1954 and realizing just what could be done with a Drum Corps, the director at that time, Ted Reilly, put his full effort into creating a show and in 1955 this

corps performed the first full Canadian M&M show. A slight alteration to the uniform was made in 1956 - the blue jacket being replaced by a sky blue and royal blue satin blouse. It was also this year that the corps received its first invitation to a major American contest - appearing in Albany NY and drawing tremendous applause from the audience.

Shortly after this, an invitation to participate in a four-week competition sponsored by the Toronto Argonaut Football Club was accepted. Four corps took part in this competition, each one appearing during half time ceremonies at a home football game. The Jesters came out on top of this contest. In order to avoid conflict with union and army

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960

regulations, the corps rented clown costumes for this appearance and adopted the name "The Jolly Jesters". The name and the show caught on so quickly that it was unanimously decided that the corps would appear the following year in the clown uniforms and carry on as the "Jolly Jesters".

In 1957 the corps appeared in red and white satin clown costumes, with the drum major varying his costume from that of a court jester to that of a

comical tramp. During this year the corps increased its popularity and was invited to appear in top contests throughout the United States.

The half red/half white clown suits were genius as the corps flashed red and white in sequence as they marched. They used to snap the horns up on the starting line and release colored balloons as they stepped off. Their drum line was excellent. (Excerpted from the Optimists Alumni Website.)

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LEASIDE LIONS JUNGLE KINGS



This Trumpet Band, comprised of 32 boys from 15 to 20 years of age, is under the musical direction of Mr. George Arnold. . Bob Carruthers is their capable Drum Major.

The Color Guard of five members has added finish to their spectacular drill.

Many of the boys have come up from the Leaside Lions Junior Boys' Band.

The Jungle Kings have a great record for 1956: Champions of "Music on the March", Parkdale Lions Club's great show at Maple Leaf Stadium on June 9th; Canadian Junior Champions, Class A, Fancy Drill, at Merritton, Ontario on June 30th.

They have also appeared in numerous other parades, tattoos and community activities throughout Ontario, where George Arnold's arrangement of selections from "South Pacific" has thrilled their audiences. (taken from the program for a 1957 Opti-Corps Contest)

De La Salle Drum Corps - Transition 1955 - 1960