

Chapter 2: Barry Bell's Dream

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

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

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



Barry Bell (1955)

Western Tech

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

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

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



1955: Western Tech Band

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Danforth was and remained an Air Cadet band for the year 1955, the first year of Barry Bell's control. He still had the ideas that had been born of his visit to the United States, and the following year, 1956, he proceeded to put them into effect. The school approved this development, and the band now became possessed of a dual identity. Already a Cadet Corps Band, it now proceeded to become a Drum and Bugle Corps that included marching and maneuvering among its repertoire. Such developments had long been established in the United States, where many Junior and Senior Drum and Bugle Corps existed.



1957: Danforth Tech Crusaders (CNE)

Most of them were operated under the auspices of The American Legion (AL), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Catholic Youth Organizations (CYO). Full competitions were a well-established form of activity in the regions where these units existed. In Canada, however, the evolution of a marching and maneuvering Drum and Bugle Corps was still in its infancy and Danforth, to its credit, was one of the first to go in this direction.

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

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

Lorne Ferrazzutti

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

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

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



Lorne Ferrazzutti, 1955

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

Danforth Crusaders first year in competition

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

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



1957: Colin in his Danforth Crusaders uniform

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

1957 Danforth Crusaders

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

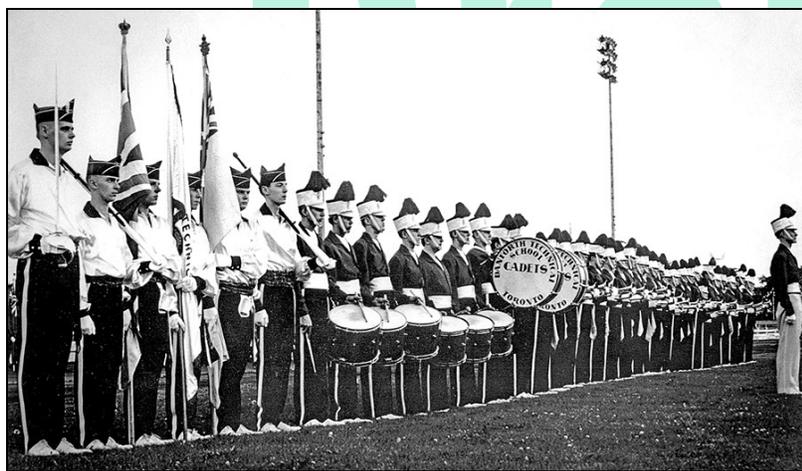


1957: Danforth Tech Crusaders (CNE)

activity was, really, still in its infancy in Canada, and in some places it wasn't looked upon with approval. It was simply tolerated.

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

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



1957: Danforth Tech Crusaders, On the Starting Line

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

The Crusaders had a decent reputation. Their full field show was rarely used at school

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

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

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

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

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



1958: Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights

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

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

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

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

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



1957: Leaside Lions Jungle Kings

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



1958: Scout House performs their famous Toy Soldier routine (Galt)

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

At the Canadian Championships, Scout House again took top honours, and with no serious rivals on the scene at the time, it appeared that this situation could continue indefinitely. Developments, however, during this year would eventually alter this picture.

With the season over, those who were now too old for Junior Drum Corps activity handed in their equipment and departed the scene. Those of us who were left relaxed and were ready to begin preparing for the next season. Then a major surprise, Barry Bell, the leader and creator of the Crusaders had become familiar with the Optimist Trumpet Band and its executive. This happened because he lived near where they conducted their outdoor rehearsals. He had become acquainted with Harry Clark and Mr. A.W. Baggs, the director. When this relationship had ripened, Mr. Baggs had let it be known that he wanted a band that could win the Canadian Junior “A” Championship within two years. He made an offer to Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti to come and take over his band, which was to be the vehicle for this endeavour. Both were interested. The offer, with a stated goal, would come with the necessary support guaranteed.

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

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

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

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

Barry & Lorne leave the Danforth Crusaders

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

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

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

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