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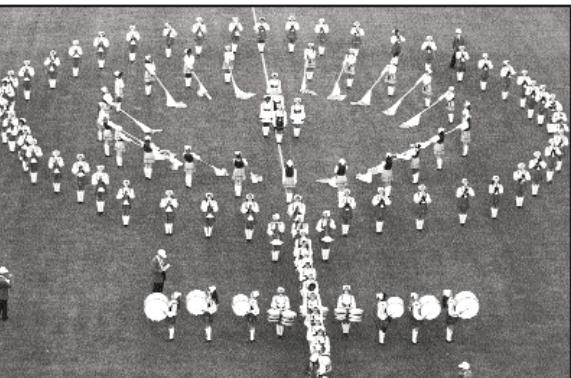
# CapitolAires

The Madison Area All-Girl Drum & Bugle Corps Association was formed in the fall of 1969. It was a time of much upheaval in the Wisconsin capital. Amid all of this, a new drum and bugle corps was formed, one that would not compete for members with the Madison Scouts, but rather, an all-female corps.

The story began at *Drums on Parade* in July 1969. Pat Barkenhagen, a fan of the Madison Scouts, was at the show. She decided that her young daughter should have a corps to march in someday. She placed a small notice in the local newspapers inviting area girls to a meeting for the purpose of organizing an all-girl corps. To the surprise of all, almost 150 girls showed up.

Dan Woolpert, who was the brass instructor for the Madison Junior Scouts, took his daughter to the meeting. It was at his daughter's urging that he became associated with the fledgling corps and was named the first director.

In the fall of 1969, a complete set of brass



The CapitolAires at Bluegrass Nationals, 1973 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

and percussion instruments were purchased and a board was in place. The uniform, which many would come to call either a "Swiss Miss" or "Heidi" look, were like the waitress uniforms of a Milwaukee restaurant.

The group was determined to provide young ladies with the same type of program as the Madison Scouts. It was felt the area was large enough to support two programs and there was no need to break the Scouts' all-male tradition by forcing young women into their organization.

With these humble beginnings began one of the most successful all-girl corps of all time. They would go on to win seven all-girl championships and many local titles, as well as the hearts of thousands.

The corps developed what they called "Images." It was how the organization,

parents and other members expected each member to act. The corps was based around this philosophy. They chose the John Denver hit *Annie's Song* as their theme song. It reflected the love the girls shared with each other and audiences they entertained throughout their history.

It was the intention of the management that it would be a locally based corps, doing mostly local parades and a few contests. The first performance came in the spring of 1970 at a parade in Sun Prairie, WI. The first field show was in July in Deerfield, WI.

While the staff seemed content to keep things on a small scale, the membership for most of the 1970s exceeded 100 and local members wanted more. More came in 1971, when they traveled to Marion, OH, for their first U.S. Open appearance. They missed finals the first year, but gained national experience. They did win their first contest that season, as well as their first title, the class C championship at the Wisconsin State Fair.

The next year they made finals in Marion, placing second to St. John's Girls. The corps also traveled to Boston for World Open and made all-girl finals, placing fourth. They competed at the first DCI Championships in Whitewater, WI, in 1972, placing 32nd.

The 1973 season saw a win at the Wisconsin VFW Championship. They then traveled to Butler, PA, for their first appearance at the American International Open, losing all-girl prelims by almost six points to the Mello-Dears. Then at finals, in one of the biggest one-day turn-arounds ever, the CapitolAires won their first national title by almost 11 points over the Mello-Dears. In just their third season as a competing corps, they reached the pinnacle of their class.

A few days later, at the U.S. Open, the corps made finals, but placed second to perhaps the greatest all-girl corps of all time, the Audubon Bon Bons. Also, at DCI that year the corps placed 33rd.

The 1974 U.S. Open was one of the greatest accomplishments for the corps. Class A and all-girl corps had combined prelims and then had separate finals. In prelims, the corps won by almost two points over the second-place Glassmen.

A technicality kept the corps from competing in both classes that night. They responded well and won the all-girl title by 18.55 points over St. John's. It was a memorable night for Wisconsin corps in general, as the Scouts won open class and the Marquis of Fond du Lac won class A.

The CapitolAires won their second American International Open title by 16.10 points over the Fire-ettes from Norwich, CT.

In 1975, the corps did the "Drums Along the Rockies" tour. They won their third consecutive American International Open title over the Ventures by 19 points. A second U.S. Open title was also achieved and, in the first DCI All-Girl Championship, the Caps placed second to a powerful St. Ignatius Girls.

The summer of 1976 would be the last under Woolpert's directorship. To top off his career, the corps once again won the U.S.

Open, but didn't attend the American International Open and placed second at DCI.

After 1976, membership numbers and quality began to decline somewhat. They did make the U.S. Open Finals in 1978 and 1979 and DCI Finals in 1978, but the glory years of winning titles were gone, for a while anyway.

The CapitolAires of the 1970s were always entertaining and competitive. Most of the shows were from Broadway shows such as "My Fair Lady" and "The Sound of Music." One of their greatest hits was an adaptation of a piece made familiar by the Scouts in the early 1960s, the hymn from *Finlandia*, which Woolpert arranged for his corps.

In 1980, the corps was in its 11th year and was under the direction of Drum Major Marcia Hanson, who later became the first female DM of the Phantom Regiment. They played the music of "Annie" for an opener and closer, along with themes from "Scheherezade" and the popular selections *Take Five*, *African Suite* and *One Fine Morn* with 65 members.

For 1981, they again marched 65 and played *Overture* from "Funny Girl," *Wacky Dust*, *Up a Lazy River*, *Simple Samba* and *Fantasy*. In 1982, marching 59 members, they played a Billy Joel medley of *Souvenir* and *The Entertainer*, Dave Brubeck's *Mexican Connection* and *Unsquare Dance*, *Since I Don't Have You* and *I Believe in Love*.

There was a uniform change away from the "alpine" look to one the staff felt would better display the girls' movements to the judges. In 1982, the corps won the last all-girl event at American International Open.

The summer of 1983 was one of rebuilding. A drastic drop in membership and a sudden change in leadership resulted in taking the year off. Fifty-two members marched many parades that season.

In 1984, "Back in Blue" was the theme for the rejuvenated corps. Sixty-one members made everyone proud of the comeback as they finished 15th at DCM prelims and earned membership. That year also saw the corps make its first effort in winter guard competition. *Alla Barocco*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, *Back in Blue* and *Sweeny Todd* made fans remember what had been and see what could be.

The 1985 season was a mellow one. Sixty-five members played *Novena*, a medley of Earth Wind and Fire tunes for concert and drum solo, and closed with *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. DCI that year was in Madison and the corps performed for a home audience. The names and faces continued to change, but the spirit and determination was always the same.

Another uniform change came in 1986. The corps played *The Trolley Song*, *Over the Rainbow*, *The Man That Got Away*, *Happy Days*, *Get Happy*, *Bei Mir Bist du Schoen* (drum solo) and *Puttin' on the Ritz*. In 1988, they played *On Broadway*, *I Hope I Get It* from "A Chorus Line," *Bali Hai* and *Almost Like Being in Love*. The corps' first motor coach was purchased to replace school buses.

The final year of the decade brought 51





The CapitolAires, 1993 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

members playing a Disney show, beginning with a medley of tunes from Disney movies such as "Song of the South," after which the ominous chords of *Toccata in D Minor* presented the "Fantasia" theme. The concert piece was from "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," followed by a drum feature using themes from the "Nutcracker Suite." The closer was a moving rendition of Schubert's *Ave Maria*.

The 1990s began a new decade with a new direction. Under the co-leadership of Allan Marty and Phil Broderick, the corps became financially stable and a new staff was hired. The basic foundation for the next few years was laid. The 1990 program consisted of Disney music. The corps placed eighth at DCM Division III and 13th at DCI in Buffalo.

Beginning in 1991, the corps did an image change, going to straight jazz. A marked improvement was noticed by audiences as the corps once again climbed the competitive ladder. The girls won their first contest in 10 years, outperforming the field in Horicon, WI.

They made finals at DCM in division III for the first time ever, raising their score from 1990 by 10 points. Later in the season, at the DCI Championships, the CapitolAires placed 10th. This led to the corps being voted "Most Improved Corps of the Year" by both DCM and DCI Division II/III for 1991.

The next year brought a new uniform of long, light purple skirts with white open jackets. The appearance made them look very feminine. The CapitolAires were transformed into a straight-ahead power corps.

In 1992, the season so many had waited



The CapitolAires, 1978 (photo by Christine Garceau from the collection of Drum Corps World).

for finally arrived. The years of competitive despair were over as the corps again made DCM finals, placing second. They also made finals at a new contest, the Canadian Open, but they failed to make U.S. Open Finals.

The DCI Championships were once again in Madison. Where better for the girls to put on the show of their lives?

The performance in division III prelims

had the crowd yelling for more as they proudly marched off the field. The CapitolAires had become a DCI Division III Finalist and they did it at home. The girls did themselves proud that day, one that will be forever sketched in their memories.

After a sixth-place finish in 1992, many expected the corps to do even better in 1993. The corps promptly obliged by storming out of the gates, showing they were serious. They went undefeated for 12 straight shows.

No corps came within four points as they amazed crowds throughout the Midwest with a powerful horn line and entertaining show.

The streak ended in a downpour at De Kalb for the DCM Championships, when they placed second in prelims, one-tenth out of first. Despite what seemed to be a better performance in finals, the corps dropped to third, six-tenths down from first.

But the season wasn't over. They bounced back by winning in Greenville, MI. They got to do a victory concert that night. After a second-place finish at the Canadian Open, they won prelims at the U.S. Open.

The corps entered DCI at Jackson, MS, with a great enthusiasm. They expected to win. Blue Stars, they felt, were their only competition. They came in third in prelims, still close enough to win the championship with an excellent show. They did the excellent show, wowing the crowd with strength and poise. The CapitolAires placed third that steamy night in Jackson, but they won the hearts and acclaim of the fans.

The 1994 season was the 25th anniversary. As the year started, no one expected it to be the last for this historic corps. A history of entertainment and achievement made the year one of high expectations.

The summer began in Menasha, WI, the scene of many season-opening shows. The corps took one of its longest early season tours to celebrate the anniversary. In 12 shows, the CapitolAires finished second in their division twice and first 10 times.

They arrived back in Madison for "Drums on Parade." At the show they unveiled new uniforms one more time. They replaced the light purple skirts with dark purple and the visual effect was striking. They also finally beat Blue Stars for the first time that year.

DCM Championships were in Toledo, OH, and the corps took the long trip with great expectations of success. Unfortunately, the expectations didn't come true. The corps finished fourth in prelims and third in finals.

The corps' tour to DCI began shortly after DCM. They finished third at the North American Open, fourth at the U.S. Open and sixth at DCI Division III. It wasn't the outstanding tour they envisioned when they started, but the girls worked as hard as ever.

The corps began preparations for 1995 with high hopes of building on the previous year, but fate had a different ending in store. They lost several members who could have returned and there were problems with staff.

The Madison Junior Scouts were having similar problems. After several meetings with Scott Stewart and the Madison Drum and

Bugle Corps Association board, it was decided to try merging the CapitolAires and Madison Junior Scouts for the 1995 season. The decision was announced at the open house.

And so, Capital Sound was born. The year went very well and at the end of the season, the board of the Madison All-Girl Drum and Bugle Corps Association voted to close their books and make Capital Sound the place for young ladies to march drum corps.

It was hard to say goodbye to the traditions and history of this organization, but they didn't say goodbye; they just melded it into a new and better corps.

The CapitolAires live on in the hearts of all of their marching members, staff, parents and fans from their 25-year history of entertainment, instruction and pride.



The CapitolAires, 1990 (photo by Beth Eckert from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Shara Barlow marched with the CapitolAires 1989-1994 and with Capitol Sound 1996-1996. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater in 2000 with degrees in instrumental music and English education, then returned to earn teaching certification in learning disabilities.

After aging out, she taught the Coachmen for two years and two years with the Twilight Knights. Currently she is in her second year with the Bandettes from Sault Ste. Marie, ONT, where she works with the pit. She also teaches middle and high school students with disabilities at Project Success in Milwaukee and lives in Delawan, WI.



Allan Marty grew up in Belleville, WI. He graduated from Madison Area Technical College with an associates degree in marketing and has worked for the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau since 1975. He became involved with the CapitolAires in 1979, serving as chairman of the board and business manager. He served five years on the Madison Association board after Capital Sound was formed.



Frank Schoenbach marched in the Menominee, MI, Northernaires from 1969-1973, was in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve Bands from 1974-1996 and was a DCW writer in 1985 and 1991-1998. He served on the board of the CapitolAires 1993-1995 and has marched with Racine Kilties since 1999.