
by Doug Madar

The Charlotte Drum Corps Association was started in January 1988 by a group of drum corps enthusiasts. Meetings were held at local restaurants. The first officers of the CDCA included Bill Loelius, president; Kevin Smith, vice president; and Luann Bislecki, treasurer.

The goal was to sponsor a drum and bugle corps show to see what interest there was in the Carolinas. At the show, there was a poll done to see how many marching members were from the Charlotte area. Committee members were shocked to learn hundreds of young people from the Charlotte area were already marching in drum corps all across the country.

Our goal was to eventually start a drum corps. But the past experience of the group dictated we should be financially responsible and so we started on a course of long, slow growth. We wanted everything in place when we started.

During that first year, the organization also took on the extremely large task of organizing

Carolina Crown

The two shows, and hence the entire organization as we now know it, would never have even gotten off the ground had it not been for several board members paying the initial deposits on the show contract fees.

"Southern Gold Classic" was very poorly attended and lost money. "NightBEAT" was a success.

One of our first sponsors, the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, emerged. This was the first of many great "breaks" the organization would get over the years and the start of a fantastic partnership that continues today with Mecklenburg County Parks & Recreation headed by Crown-supporter Wayne Weston.

"NightBEAT" gave us our seed money. Many were out in the community trying to drum up support. The Queen City Optimists made a proposal. They would give us \$1,000, but we had to quit talking about starting a drum corps and just do it. The money had to be used to buy equipment.

We bought used drums from a defunct Florida drum corps, sight unseen. Ludwig refurbished them for us for nothing -- our first endorsement and our second big break.



Carolina Crown, 1994, at the DCI Championships in Foxboro, MA (photo by David Rice from the collection of Drum Corps World).

time. Remarkably, the owner of the horns trusted us. We were determined to make every payment on time and we did. It was our third break.

We were ready to go and, to be honest, our knees were knockin'. We were afraid. How would we get through the first year with an annual budget of approximately \$56,000 and 61 members?

Kevin Smith was the interim director. We told our mostly volunteer staff that we wanted readily recognizable music. To our surprise, they came up with selections from "The Music Man." We ended up 33rd in open class.

We actually should have started out in division II, but that was just our inexperience showing.

Some of the early key staffers were Don Flewell, Cecil Adderly, Bill Register, Van Matthews, Vince Thomas and Gil Doggett.

Over the next three years, Carolina Crown competed in division II/III and won the division II world championship in 1993 at the DCI Championships in Jackson, MS, with music from "La Fiesta Mexicana."

In 1994, Crown was 17th in division I and then broke into the top 12 in 1995 with the "Stormworks" production. The year after was another groundbreaking year with "Chess . . . and the Art of Strategy." Crown was 10th.

We also purchased our first "store bought" new uniforms. All uniforms for the first six



(Above) Carolina Crown, 1993, at the DCI Championships in Jackson, MS (photo by Orlin Wagner from the collection of Drum Corps World); (right) 1995, at the DCI Championships in Buffalo, NY (photo by Dan Scaifidi from the collection of Drum Corps World).

and running two drum corps shows: "Southern Gold Classic," a Drum Corps East-sanctioned event held at Davidson College, and the Drum Corps International-sanctioned "NightBEAT," held at American Legion Memorial Stadium in downtown Charlotte, its home to this day.

Now to find the horns. We heard about some two-valve bugles for sale in California. We wisely inspected them and determined they would be perfect. We offered a price with one-third down and the rest on



years were made at home by volunteers. The philosophy of long, slow growth and fiscal responsibility was working.

As we grew and prospered, we were deluged with requests from other groups and committees looking to start a drum corps. We did the best we could, trying to pass out advice.



was too much work for the amount of profit taken in, so efforts were intensified to make "NightBEAT" the biggest and the best. Hopefully more profit would follow. It did.

The Carolina Crown mission statement, "Developing lifelong excellence in young people through a superior and challenging arts education experience," permeates the entire organization. Not only is there Carolina Crown, but two drum corps shows, CrownTickets (a ticket printing service), The Crown Store (guard, band and corps equipment and supplies) and many honors band programs for middle school students in the Charlotte area.

(Above) Carolina Crown, July 9, 1999, in Buffalo, NY (photo by Richard Wersinger from the collection of Drum Corps World); (left) 1996 (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

We cannot forget the Crown Jewels program, CrownCLUB (booster club) and crownBEAT (Internet newsletter). A proud history, indeed, and only 14 years young.

Division show placements at DCI

1990/I, "The Music Man," 33; 1991/II, "Music of Prokofiev," 2; 1992/II, "Dances of Malcolm Arnold," 3; 1993/II, "La Fiesta Mexicana," 1; 1994/I "A Southwestern Impression," 17; 1995/I, "Stormworks," 11; 1996/I, "Chess . . . and the Art of Strategy," 10; 1997/I, "Postcards from Britain," 12; 1998/I, "Heroes . . . Then and Now," 11; 1999/I, "Jekyll and Hyde," 11; 2000/I, "The Mask of Zorro," 11; 2001/I, "Industry," 10; 2002/I, "Greek Mythology, Stories of Gods and Heroes," 16.



(Right) Carolina Crown, 2002, at the DCI Championships in Madison, WI (photo by Ron Walloch from the collection of Drum Corps World).

As a group, we always wanted to have the best drum corps and show possible, but we always kept to our main philosophy of long, slow, planned growth. We didn't spend money we didn't have. Director (no longer interim) Smith saw to that.

The original group to formulate the CDCA (now Carolina Crown Inc.) included Smith, Loelius, Lisa Camann, Bialicki, Tom Corkhill, Fred Pollette and Doug Madar. Some key players who came in soon after were Andy Crews (responsible for many of Crown's terrific graphics), Steve Tant and Carol and Kerry Srdar.

"NightBEAT . . . A Drum and Bugle Corps Event" also evolved into championship status. It was where the money came from to round out the year. The show proceeds were used as cash flow to keep the corps on tour.

Around 1994, the committee decided it



Doug Madar works for Paul Simon Co., a gentlemen's clothier in uptown Charlotte. He has two grown children, one was a charter member of Carolina Crown.

When he is not volunteering with Crown, Madar is active in the American Legion.

He is a charter member of the Carolina Crown board and has served on the finance committee. He is currently a Carolina Crown executive committee member. He has chaired "NightBEAT" and/or has been the board member responsible for the show's oversight since it was established in 1988. He is also a highly regarded member of the DCI Tour Event Promoters Advisory Committee, has served as its secretary and for the past two years as chairman.

Madar was honored in 2001 as a DCI Volunteer of the Year. In 2002, he continued to serve as "NightBEAT" sponsorship chair and show DCI representative.