


by George Fennell

The Kilties owe their existence to the vision of three men: Ray Vance, John McLaren and Ed Gere. Also helping were Frederick Schulte and "Scotty" McCready.

The possibility of forming the corps was discussed as early as 1931. Legend has it that the founders were sitting around a campfire at Camp Anokijig, the YMCA's summer camp for boys, deciding what uniform the boys should wear and McCready said definitively, "Let's put 'em in kilts!" And so it was.

In the summer of 1935, a group of 20 boys formed the nucleus of the new corps; the Kilties Drum and Bugle Corps was born.

The group was made up entirely of boys from the YMCA, ranging in age from eight to 14. At first the Kilties were loaned drums and bugles from Racine's Washington Junior High School, as that drum and bugle corps had folded. Formed in 1927, the Washington Junior High School drum and bugle corps, called the Pioneers, was Racine's first junior corps.

The boys and their parents supplied their own white shirts and tams and the Kiwanis Club donated funds to complete the uniforms. As a mark of appreciation on the part of the mothers and dads, it was decided to name the group the Kiwanis Kilties. The uniforms were made by a local dressmaker who was assisted in taking measurements and other tasks by the mothers.

The uniform consisted of a white shirt, an imported sporrán and tam, and a tie, a tartan and kilt of Royal Stewart plaid -- a royal blue and black plaid interwoven on a field of striking red.

The Kiwanis Kilties made their debut in Racine's 1936 Fourth of July parade and won "Best Appearing Drum and Bugle Corps." Next up for the Kiwanis Kilties was their first performance at a drum and bugle corps show. At 7:30 PM on August 5, 1936, the Kilties performed an exhibition to open the drum and bugle corps portion of Racine's Fifth Annual Music Festival sponsored by the Racine *Journal-Times* newspaper at Horlick Athletic Field.

In the years that immediately followed, the Kiwanis Kilties did make some noteworthy appearances such as their first appearance at a Wisconsin

American Legion state convention on Monday, August 9, 1937, when

the corps marched in the Racine section of the American Legion's state convention parade in Milwaukee.

The corps' first competitive appearance was Saturday, August 21, 1937, at the Chicagoland Music Festival. The Kilties competed in the juvenile division, which was for drum and bugle corps with no members over the age of 16. The Kilties did not place in the top three; however, they were given commendation and encouragement by the judges.

In 1939, the Kilties were part of the escort for the crown prince and princess of Norway when they visited Heg Memorial Park in western Racine County.

They made their first appearance at a Wisconsin VFW state convention on June 25, 1939. This convention was held in Racine and the Kilties marched in the Saturday afternoon parade. In October 1939, the corps changed its name to the YMCA Kilties.

The Kilties then made their first appearance at a national American Legion convention on Tuesday, September 16, 1941, when they marched in the parade as part of the Wisconsin division in Milwaukee.

In the fall of 1941, the Kilties performed for the first time during halftime at a Green Bay Packers football game in Green Bay, WI.

During this era, the Kilties also performed at the Racine Belles women's professional baseball games played at Horlick Field. The movie "A League of Their Own" was a story about two sisters who played in the league on the Racine Belles baseball team.

Needing new uniforms for the 1949 season, the Kiltie Parents Club made an intensive study of the numerous plaids and came to a careful decision, deciding on the McLeod tartan. Its yellow background, in combination with black plaid and a narrow red stripe interwoven throughout, created a plaid that set it apart from most of the less spectacular tartans. The green battle jacket, new in 1948, was still worn with the new McLeod plaid uniforms.

The Kilties' first appearance in the new uniforms was at the Milwaukee Memorial Day parade on Monday, May 31, 1949.

Up to this point, the Kilties had not been a very competitive corps, but 1949 was a different story as they placed second four times and third once in the five competitions that they entered during that season.

On Saturday, August 19, 1950, in "coffee drinking weather," with temperatures in the 50s, the Kilties won the first drum and bugle corps contest in their history at the Wisconsin State Fair in West Allis.

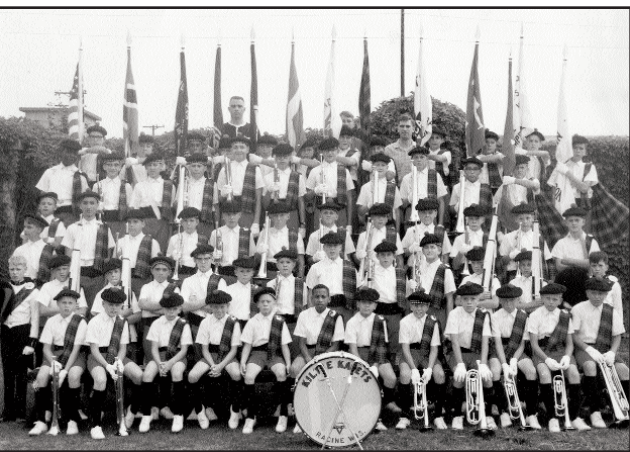
In 1951, the Kilties replaced their green uniform jackets with new red ones. The new jackets were worn for the first time at the Centennial International YMCA Convention in Cleveland, OH, from June 21-24. During the convention, the Kilties gave several concerts.

The 1951 season saw the Kilties' rise to prominence continue when they won their first VFW State Championship in Manitowoc.

The corps again won the 1952 VFW State



Kilties



(Top to bottom) The YMCA Kilties in 1936; the 1942 corps; 1948 (photos from the Racine Heritage Museum); the Kiltie Kadets in 1966 (photo from the collection of George Fennell); at the 1964 VFW National prelims in Cleveland, OH (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Championship held in Wisconsin Rapids.

On Friday, July 25, 1952, the Kilties were featured on a special television program aired over Milwaukee television Channel 3 as an advance for the South Milwaukee Spectacle of Music on Saturday. They performed their drill and the program demonstrated how judges determine scoring in drum and bugle corps competition.

In 1953, the Kilties were ready to enter national competition for the first time. It was largely due to the interest and hard work of Business Manager Joseph Teska that the Kilties went from 13th place at the 1948 Spectacle of Music in South Milwaukee to one of the top-ranking corps for the 1953 season. After 10 years as the Kilties' business manager, Teska would resign after the 1956 season.

In 1953, the Kilties placed second at South Milwaukee's Spectacle of Music in class B, for corps with less than 10 percent of their members over 18 years old, for the fourth consecutive year.

The Kilties competed for the first time in a national drum and bugle corps contest at the 1953 VFW National Championship preliminaries in Milwaukee. By virtue of their strong second-place finish, the corps was the only participating Midwest junior unit to make finals. They placed fourth in the finals. The corps also competed at the 1953 American Legion Championship in St. Louis, MO, placing sixth.

As a result of their excellent showing at the two 1953 championship events, the Kilties were invited to compete at the 1953 National Dream contest in Jersey City, NJ, and finished in fifth place.

The Kilties won the first three contests of 1954, firmly establishing themselves as the corps to beat in the Midwest. For the rest of the season in the Midwest, the corps took four more firsts, three seconds, a third and a fourth, the fourth place coming at the Spectacle of Music in South Milwaukee. Because Wisconsin's VFW State Convention was in Racine in 1954, the Kilties didn't compete, appearing only in exhibition.

Nationally, the Kilties went out East and finished in eighth place at the 1954 American Legion National Championship in Washington, D.C. The color guard also won the 1954 Legion junior color guard championship.



The Kilties at the 1968 VFW Nationals (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Wisconsin American Legion State Championship in Green Bay.

They traveled to Detroit, MI, for the 1960 VFW National Championship

where they placed 10th in prelims and ninth in finals.

During a return visit to the 1954 National Dream contest, the Kilties placed fourth at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, NJ.

For the next three years, 1955-1957, the Kilties didn't enter any national competitions and competed only in the Midwest with some success. They won both Wisconsin's VFW State Championship in Eau Claire and the American Legion State Championship in Milwaukee in 1955. In 1956, they placed second at Wisconsin's VFW State Championship in Manitowoc.

At the 1957 Wisconsin VFW State Championship held in Superior, the Kilties finished third and also placed fifth in competition at the 1957 Catholic War Veteran's national convention competition in Milwaukee.

In October 1957, it was announced that new uniforms would be made for the Kilties. They appeared for the first time in their new uniforms of Anderson plaid kilts and tartans at the Boys of 76's July 3, 1958, drum and bugle corps contest at Racine's Horlick Athletic Field. The Anderson plaid is a multi-colored plaid interwoven into a field of powder blue, with powder blue the predominant color. New jackets were also made of powder blue to match the plaid.

Because of complaints that the blue jackets with the blue Anderson plaid kilts and tartans were too drab on the competition field, especially at night, the Kilties still used their old uniforms of yellow and black McLeod plaid kilts and tartans with the red jackets in many competitions in 1958 and 1959. The new uniforms were used mainly in daytime parades during 1958 and 1959.

The Kilties re-entered national competition for the first time since 1954 by attending the 1958 VFW National Championship in New York City where the corps placed 14th in prelims, not making the top 10 to advance to the finals. They then competed at the 1958 American Legion National Championship in Chicago and finished in 11th.

Organized in the fall of 1958, the Kiltie Kadets made their first marching appearance in Racine's 1959 Memorial Day parade. With boys ages 10-13 joining the Kiltie Kadets, the Kilties were able to change their age requirement from 10-18 years old to 14-21.

In 1959, the Kilties took second place at both Wisconsin VFW State in Wausau, WI, and Wisconsin American Legion State in Kenosha.

The corps competed for the American Legion National Championship at Minneapolis, MN, on August 23, 1959 and placed ninth.

In 1960, the Kilties again placed second at both the Wisconsin VFW in Madison and the

where they placed 10th in prelims and ninth in finals.

For 1960 and 1961, the Kilties wore their Anderson plaid uniforms with the matching blue jackets exclusively.

For the first time since 1956, the Kilties won a local field competition in 1961; in fact, they won seven. The corps also won first place at the Tournament of Music event at Riverview Park in Chicago. This was the most successful season since 1954.

In 1961, the Kilties placed second for the third year in a row at both Wisconsin's VFW Championship in Sheboygan and American Legion State in Waukesha.

The Kilties competed at the 1961 VFW National Championship held in Miami Beach, FL, where they placed 12th in prelims and 11th in finals. The 1961 season saw the top 12 drum corps make finals. The Kilties took first place in the 1961 VFW National Convention's parade competition.

In 1962, faced with a growing number of members, there weren't enough of the blue Anderson plaid uniforms to go around, so the color guard switched back to the old yellow and black McLeod kilts and tartans with red jackets. In 1963, for the same reasons, the drum line switched to the old red jackets, but still kept their Anderson plaid kilts and tartans. These uniform combinations created a very colorful appearance for the Kilties and they remained the same through the 1973 season.

The 1962 and 1963 seasons were similar to the 1961 season as they continued to win many local field competitions.

For 1962, the Kilties did compete at the VFW Nationals in Minneapolis, MN, placing eighth in prelims and 11th in the finals. For the second year in a row, the corps took first place in the VFW National Convention's parade competition.

The Kilties didn't attend the Wisconsin VFW State Championship in 1963, but the Kiltie Kadets did and won the junior class B division. The Kilties did, however, win the American Legion State Championship in Madison. The Kilties also did not attend any national championships in 1963.

In 1964, the corps started the competitive season on Memorial Day in Kenosha where they were in third. The Kilties then went undefeated in competition for the month of June. During July and August, the corps still remained competitive, placing fourth at the Boys of 76's contest, second at South Milwaukee's Spectacle of Music and third at the International Blue & Gold Tournament of Champions at Highland Park, IL, which were the three biggest and most important contests in the Midwest region.

After changing their concert in late



Kilties, 1970 (photo by Paul Stott from the collection of Drum Corps World).

summer from *The Sound of Music* to *The Volga Boatman*, the Kilties were now ready to take to the road in August.

In prelims for the 1964 VFW Nationals in Cleveland, OH, the Kilties solidly placed first. Then in finals, in what *Drum Corps World* magazine stated was "a shocking display of personal determination," the Kilties convincingly took top honors. The Kilties also were awarded the parade trophy for the third time in four years.

The corps then finished fourth at the New York World's Fair Contest on August 29, 1964, losing out on first place because of a one-point flag penalty. The Kilties finished seventh in the finals of the World Open at Bridgeport, CT.

In 1965, the Kilties won Wisconsin's VFW State Championship in Appleton, appeared in Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade on July 5 and again finished second at South Milwaukee's Spectacle of Music.

In prelims at the 1965 VFW National Championship in Chicago, IL, the corps placed sixth, then came back strong at finals to finish in third place.

Also at the 1965 VFW Nationals solo and ensemble competition, Brian Aller came in first place on bass bugle. Remarkably, this was Aller's sixth year in a row, winning an individual VFW national title. It may be some sort of junior corps record as he won on baritone bugle in 1960 and 1961, and from 1962 through 1965 he was first on bass bugle.

The Kilties had a very slow start in 1966 and, as a result, placed fourth at Wisconsin's VFW State Championship in Janesville. The Kiltie Kadets took second in junior class B, losing only to the up and coming OLHR Queensmen of Kenosha. The Kilties came in third at the 1966 Wisconsin American Legion State Championship in Eau Claire.

The Racine corps had improved greatly prior to going out East in late August. They placed fifth at the National Dream and at the 1966 VFW Nationals, also in Jersey City, NJ, the Kilties placed eighth in both preliminary competition and in the finals.

They started out the 1967 season much better prepared than in 1966 and took first place in their first contest at the Badgerland Association's annual Summer Preview in Waukesha, WI. The Kilties won three other contests and came in second eight times during the summer of 1967, including placing second at the 1967 Wisconsin VFW State Championship in La Crosse.

The 1967 season was the first year the Kilties played Ken Norman's now-famous arrangement of *Auld Lang Syne*. It was also the first year the corps competed in Canada. The Kilties traveled to the Third Annual Shriners' International Championship in Toronto, scheduled for June 17. Rain came on the 17th, so the contest was held the next day. The Kilties placed fifth, but were so warmly received by Canadian drum corps fans that they would return to Toronto on an annual basis through the 1972 season.



The Kilties, 1972 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

At the 1967 VFW National Championship in New Orleans, LA, the Kilties placed fifth in both the prelims and the finals.

Cpl. Charles A. Johnson was killed in action in Vietnam on September 11, 1967. He had been a member of the Kilties for nine years before joining the U.S. Army. The 22-year-old soldier was a member of the 8th Infantry, 1st Cavalry Division. He is buried in Graceland Cemetery in Racine.

The Kilties hit the field in 1968 playing a brand-new set of Smith G-F bugles. Norman was now the Kilties' music arranger and he arranged all of the very appealing 1968 music with the exception of an Emil Pavlick arrangement for concert called *Ballad for Sopranos*. Pavlick retired from the Kilties at the end of the 1968 season after 16 years of service as music arranger and bugle instructor.

The Kilties started out the 1968 season with three third-place finishes in a row. Then they traveled to the Shriners' International Championship on June 15 in Toronto and continued their consistency by coming third.

In West Allis, WI, the Kilties won the 1968 Wisconsin VFW State Championship, thus ending their string of third-place finishes at four in a row. At South Milwaukee's Spectacle of Music, the corps returned to their ways by finishing third in both the prelims and the finals.

The Kilties started 1968 with a very good program and continued to make improvements throughout the season. The most noticeable change occurred when they replaced the concert number, *Ballad for Sopranos*, with Norman's masterpiece, *MacArthur's Park*, in early July.

At the 1968 VFW National Championship in Detroit, MI, the Kilties tied for fourth place with the Royal Airs in preliminary competition. The Racine corps put on an unbelievable show at finals, moving the 18,000 spectators to their feet where they stayed throughout the Kilties' entire show. The Kilties could not hear the drum major's commands because of the loudly cheering crowd. Nevertheless, the Kilties won the 1968 VFW National Championship.

Roger Zackula and his wife Eileen, a young mother-to-be, saw the Kilties' winning performance at the finals of the 1968 VFW Nationals in Detroit and they were very impressed. They were from Wichita, KS, and both were so taken by the lads in plaid that they named their newborn daughter Racine Zackula in honor of the Racine Kilties.

After severing ties with Racine's YMCA in December 1968, the corps experienced the finest season in their history in 1969. They started the summer with nine straight victories, including taking first place at the Shriners' Fifth Annual International Championship in Toronto on June 21 and at the Wisconsin VFW State Championship in Superior.

The corps' winning streak ended on July 19 at the Spectacle of Music where the jinx continued. The Kilties did take first place in prelims that Saturday morning, but were edged by the Cavaliers in the evening finals. The Kilties then finished in second, losing to the Cavaliers the next day at McHenry, IL.

The Kilties bounced back and won their next four contests, including the Illinois Association Championship August 2 at Bradley and "Little Nationals" August 8 in Delavan, WI. Then the Kilties hit another speed bump, taking second place because of a one-point penalty which caused them to finish behind the Des Plaines Vanguard at the Wisconsin State Fair Contest at West Allis on Saturday afternoon, August 9.

That same night, the Kilties came in second place again, this time losing to the Casper Troopers at the Racine Scouts' contest in Racine. The Kilties then won the Kenosha County Fair Contest the next day, which was their last contest before heading out East.

First stop on the Kilties' Eastern tour was Marion, OH, for the U.S. Open, August 15 and 16. They won prelims and then swept all captions to win finals by almost 10 points over the second-place Argonne Rebels.

The second stop was a contest at Norristown, PA, a few miles outside of Philadelphia, where the 1969 VFW National Convention was being held. On Monday night, August 18, the Kilties won that contest by more than five points over the second-place Des Plaines Vanguard.

Next was the VFW National Championship at Philadelphia with the prelims on Wednesday morning and finals Wednesday night, August 20. Even though the Kilties automatically had a spot in finals because they were defending VFW champions, they still opted to compete at prelims and finished in second behind the Cavaliers. The Racine corps, led by their outstanding horn line, edged the Cavaliers in finals to win their second VFW Championship in a row.

The corps then won a contest in Butler, PA, August 23, on their way home. The Kilties had two contests left, both on Labor Day weekend. They won the first one at Wausau, WI, on August 31 and placed second to the winning La Crosse Blue Stars on Labor Day at Janesville, WI, thus ending the greatest season in Kiltie history.

The summer of 1970 saw the Kilties produce another excellent drum corps. They repeated the previous year's win at the Shriners' International in Toronto and then, for the third year in a row, won the 1970 VFW State Championship in Green Bay.

In July, the corps placed second at the first

annual American Nationals at Northbrook, IL. The next day in Milwaukee, the Kilties placed sixth in finals at the first annual North American Nationals.

In August, they successfully defended the Illinois Association title in Bradley, IL. However, at the 1970 U.S. Open in Marion, OH, a broken drum stick kept the Kilties from repeating as champions. They received a five-tenths-point penalty for the broken drum stick, which kept them from tying the Madison Scouts for the 1970 U. S. Open title. They ended up second in the finals after placing second earlier in the day at prelims.

At the 1970 VFW National Championship in Miami, FL, the Kilties placed fifth in prelims and sixth in finals.

Some former members of the Kilties, including two of the 1935 originals, joined with active members of the Kilties to record a 16-number, 35-minute-long "Best of the Kilts" record at the David Kennedy



Kilties, 1973 DCI in Whitewater (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Sound Studio in Milwaukee on April 10, 1971. Sixty-four musicians, either active Kilties or alumni who had kept up in music, were recruited for the special record. Norman handled arranging and directing.

This group of musicians completed the 16 numbers in four Sunday night rehearsals and the numbers reflected part of the 1971 Kilties repertoire, some favorites from the past and some especially chosen for the recording.

The "Best of the Kilts" was recorded in the studio on 8-track equipment using 18 microphones. The Kilties produced and marketed this record independently.

Besides trying to produce the best-ever recording of drum corps music, the project was also intended to raise funds to aid the Kiltie financial picture. The picture was described as "extremely critical."

Along with the financial problems the corps had in 1971, they also had few returning veterans and recruiting seemed to be a problem. Rumors were spreading all over the country that the Kilties were folding.

In December 1971, Ed Porcaro was named business manager. In June, he was named director also. A former Kiltie and Boys of 76 drummer, Porcaro was a smart businessman and a strong leader. He was also a very likable guy who was an excellent recruiter.

By late spring, he had brought dissension within the corps under control with his positive attitude. He also convinced enough of-age alumni to return and recruited enough

new members so the Kilties could field a nice size corps for 1971.

Because of all the problems the corps experienced over the winter and the influx of new members just before the season was to start, the Kilties were way behind and not ready to field a corps when the first show was held at the end of May. The corps finally competed for the first time that season at the Cavaliers' contest in Park Ridge, IL, on June 12 where they placed fifth. The following weekend, the Kilties won the Northwest Festival in Milwaukee.

At the 1971 Wisconsin VFW State Championship in Kenosha, the Kilties came in third place. The corps appeared in the gigantic Schlitz Circus Parade on July 4 in Milwaukee, which was also televised.

Also on July 4, the "Best of the Kilts" record album became available. The price was \$5.95 in either mono or stereo.

On July 10, 1971, the Kilties came back in finals to win the Second Annual North American Championship in Milwaukee when earlier in the day they took third at prelims. The Kiltie Kadets won the class C competition at the North American event.

Also during July, the Kilties won competitions in Des Plaines, IL, Woodstock, IL, and the National Preview at Salamanca, NY, and they took third at South Milwaukee's Spectacle of Music.

The Kilties didn't compete at the Shriners' International Championship in Toronto in 1971, but they did place fifth at the Alhambra Invitational in Toronto. The corps then returned to Racine and won the Racine Scouts' contest.

The corps intended to go to the 1971 VFW National in Dallas, TX, but after taking fifth at the Mid-America Open in Overland Park, KS, the corps members voted to save money and turn around and go home, which is what they did.

The Kilties ended their season in a positive manner by winning the Parade of Champions contest on Labor Day, September 6, at Janesville, WI. This contest also brought to an end the career of one of the greatest drum majors ever, Scott Paulson, out front since 1963, aged out.

Paulson joined the Kiltie Kadets when he was nine years old. They tried to make a drummer out of him, but he was a good marcher so he was trained as drum major.

In 1963, he moved up to the Kilties from the Kiltie Kadets and became the drum major. He was the little shadow of the Kilties' drum major, Carl Last, who was "Showman of the Year" for 1963, his age-out year.

Paulson then became the sole drum major for the Kilties from 1964 through 1970. In 1971, Russ Epps was his co-drum major.

In 1964, Paulson was named "Drum Major of the Year" by a national committee of the VFW and was also chosen as "Showman of the Year." In 1965, he became the first drum major to ever win the "Showman of the Year" award twice. He then went on the win "Showman of the Year" again in 1966 and

1967.

Winning "Showman of the Year" four consecutive years earned Paulson entry into the Drum Corps Hall of Fame in Chicago. Then *Drum Corps America* magazine named him its "Drum Major of the Year" for 1971.

With the problems of 1971 behind them, the Kilties had a great winter of recruiting and rehearsing, which in turn led to fielding their largest corps so far in 1972.

During the season, the corps won 11 drum corps contests, including the South Milwaukee Spectacle of Music for the first time, the World Open Championship after placing third in prelims in Boston, MA, and the Danny Thomas Invitational, also in Boston.

The Kilties also placed fourth at the Shriners' International Championship in Toronto, came in second at the 1972 VFW State Championship in Appleton, sixth in prelims and fifth in finals at the North American Championship in Milwaukee, third in prelims and fourth in the finals of the U.S. Open Championship in Marion, OH, sixth in prelims and eighth in finals at the first DCI Championship in Whitewater, WI, and second in both prelims and finals at the 1972 VFW National Championship in Minneapolis, MN.

Again in 1973, the Kilties had a very enjoyable show and a very competitive drum corps, winning five contests over the course of the summer including, for the second year in a row, the South Milwaukee Spectacle of Music and the Illinois Association Championship.

The corps also took second place seven times, including the DCI Preview in Whitewater, WI, and the Bluegrass Nationals 1973 in Lexington, KY.

The Kilties finished in fourth at both the DCI Western Preview contest in De Kalb, IL, and the Big V Invitational held in Milwaukee, WI. They placed second in prelims at the U.S. Open in Marion, OH, and took fourth in the finals. At the 1973 DCI Championship in Whitewater, WI, the Kilties were sixth in prelims and fifth in finals.

The 1974 season was yet another year that saw the Kilties field a very competitive and entertaining corps. They hit the field with new uniforms in 1974. The whole corps was



Kilties, 1974 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Kilties, 1975 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

now in yellow and black McLeod plaid kilts and tartans and wore their old blue and red jackets which had been dyed black.

During the 1974 season, the Kilties placed in the top three in almost every contest they entered, including placing second at the Big V Invitational in Milwaukee, WI, taking first at Wisconsin American Legion State in Milwaukee, placing third in finals at DCI Midwest in Whitewater, third in prelims at the Bluegrass Nationals '74 in Lexington, KY (finals were rained out), second in finals at the World Open in Lowell, MA, and third at CYO Nationals in Boston.

Midway through the Kilties' performance at finals of the World Open, a malfunction occurred or someone intentionally turned on the sprinkler system, sending jets of water all over the field and drenching the corps. This happened twice during their performance. Showing excellent discipline, the Kilties continued with their performance undaunted.

At the 1974 DCI Championship in Ithaca, NY, the Kilties placed fourth in prelims and sixth in finals.

In April 1975, Porcaro said goodbye to the Kiltie organization. His business commitments required him to relocate to the Philadelphia area. He left the corps in excellent shape for the coming season. The Kilties had an almost completely new musical program and they were 130 members strong, including 60 horns, 30 percussion and 38 in the guard. The Kilties had a top-notch staff.

In 1975, the Kilties again had an excellent season. They almost always placed in the top three in local contests and fared very well in major competitions.

At the Big V Invitational in Milwaukee, the Racine corps came in fourth. At the



Kilties, 1976 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Spectacle of Music in South Milwaukee they finished third and at DCI Midwest in Whitewater, the corps placed fifth in prelims and fourth in the finals.

In Butler, PA, at the American International Open, the Kilties placed third in prelims and fourth in finals, followed by the World Open at Everett, MA, placing fifth in both prelims and finals. At the CYO Nationals in Newton, MA, they finished in sixth.

Then came the 1975 DCI Championships in Philadelphia, PA, where the Racine corps took eighth in prelims and seventh in finals.

In 1976, the organization experienced a very challenging year. For the first time since 1958, the Kilties failed to make finals at a national championship, placing 28th in prelims at the DCI Championships, again held in Philadelphia.

The Kilties also missed making finals at the 1976 DCI Midwest in Whitewater where they placed 13th. At the Big V Invitational in Milwaukee, they placed ninth.

The corps did manage to place fifth in prelims and take fourth in finals at the American International in Butler, PA, and 11th at CYO Nationals in Newton, MA.

The Kiltie Kadets took first place in class C at the 1976 Wisconsin VFW State Championship in Wausau.

Incredibly, the Kilties bounced back with a very competitive corps in 1977. At the Big V contest in South Milwaukee, the Kilties came in fifth and they were also fifth at DCI Midwest in Whitewater.

The Kilties did experience some success on their western tour to Denver for the DCI Championships. The corps took first in both Martin, TN, and in Oklahoma City, OK. At the DCI Championship in Denver, the corps tied the Garfield Cadets in prelims for 11th place and took 10th in finals.

For 1978, the Kiltie Kadets made their first uniform change in their 20-year history. The corps' new uniform featured a navy blue Scottish military pipe band jacket, matching

navy blue shorts and knee socks, red Fraser plaid tartan, white spats and imported tam-o'shanter.

The Kilties in 1978 retained their familiar yellow and black McLeod plaid

kilts and tartans, but changed from the black jackets to new yellow jackets which coordinated with the McLeod plaid. The jackets also featured black chest braiding, black epaulets, black gauntlet cuffs and a black crossbelt. The jackets also had red highlighting.

In the spring of 1978, the Kilties opened up their membership to allow females to join and for the last time in their history, the Kilties fielded a DCI Finalist corps.

The Kilties came in second at Wisconsin's 1978 VFW State Championship in Racine.

The corps then revised a significant portion of their drill and music after July 3. Their horn line grew from 43 to 52, a nine-man snare line replaced the cluster drums, drill changes were made to highlight the show and, to the delight of Kilties fans throughout the country, they replaced their

exit song, *Billy the Kid*, with their musical signature, *Auld Lang Syne*.

At the 1978 DCI Midwest Championship in Whitewater, the Kilties finished in 12th place at both prelims and finals. At the first Drum Corps Midwest Championship in De Kalb, IL, they took sixth in both the prelims and finals. The Racine corps placed sixth in finals at DCI North at Ypsilanti, MI, and sixth at the U.S. Open in Marion, OH.

The Racine Kilties began their



Kilties, 1978 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

18-day DCI western tour with many changes and their scores began to climb. At the 1978 DCI Championships in Denver, CO, the corps placed 12th in both prelims and finals.

In the summer of 1979, the corps never recovered from a slow start and, as a result, they were not very close to being a DCI Finalist-caliber corps.

That summer the Kilties traveled to Montreal, QUE, for a DCI invitational. Eight corps competed and the Kilties came in last. At DCI North in Ypsilanti, they placed 12th in prelims. Both the Kilties and the Kiltie Kadets competed in open class prelims at DCI Midwest in Whitewater. The Kilties took 15th while the Kiltie Kadets finished 24th, the last position.

The Kilties continued to improve both their show and their execution. This hard work paid off as the corps placed sixth in both prelims and finals at the DCM Championships.

The last field contest the Kilties would

ever win was in Indianapolis, IN, on August 4.

At the 1979 DCI Championships in Birmingham, AL, the corps finished in 32nd place in open class prelims. The Kiltie Kadets competed for their first time at a DCI Championship and placed 15th in class A prelims.

In a news release dated May 15, 1980, the Kilties announced they would not field a corps in 1980 and that practices would not be held again until fall because of the economy, financial difficulties and lack of local participation.

The Kiltie Parents Club still continued to run its bingo operation, operate the Horlick Field concessions and sponsor three drum corps shows in the area. The Kilties board of directors fully intended to have the corps back in the fall.

The Kiltie Kadets, however, did field a corps and it turned out to be one of their finest groups ever. They went undefeated in Cadet Corps International competition and did very well the times they competed in class A and open class.

At the 1980 DCI Championships in Birmingham, AL, the Kiltie Kadets came in 12th at the class A/all-girl prelims. It was believed at that time to be the highest finish ever achieved by a feeder corps at the DCI Championships.

At the Cadet Corps International



Kiltie Kadets, 1977 (photo by Dennis Nichols from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Championship in Racine in 1980, the Kiltie Kadets took first place.

The Kilties were reorganized in the spring of 1981 by new director Jim Schiebenes. The Kilties marched about 70 mostly young, inexperienced members and they were never able to rise above the bottom group of corps.

Most people didn't seem to care, though; it just was nice to have the Kilties back!

At the Drum Corps Midwest Championship in De Kalb, IL, the Kilties came in 18th place at prelims. They finished in 14th place, which was last place, in open class prelims at the American International Championship in Butler, PA.

At the 1981 DCI Championship in Montreal, QUE, the Kilts finished 49th, which was last place in open class prelims.

In 1981, Racine Zackula, age 12, became the third member of her family to march



The Kilties senior corps at 1998 DCA prelims (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

with the Kilties.

The Kiltie Kadets were disbanded after the 1981 season, thus ending the Kilts' "life line" for talent.

In 1982, the Kilties were smaller than in 1981, marching only about 55 members, but they were about the same caliber, competitively, as the 1981 Kilties.

They ended up 22nd place in prelims at the 1982 DCM Championship in De Kalb, IL. The Kilties came in 35th at class A prelims in Montreal, QUE, at the 1982 DCI Championships.

Financial problems silenced the Kilties for 1983 as they decided to sit the year out. The corps couldn't continue to pay its bills and field a corps at the same time. They fully intended to field a corps again in 1984 if at all possible. The Kilties Parents Club maintained its bingo operation on the first and third Wednesdays at Memorial Hall and held other fund-raisers to pay off loans.

June 20, 1983, the Marine First National Bank of Racine filed a foreclosure action

in Racine County Circuit Court claiming the Kilties were delinquent on two loans totaling \$17,239.25. The suit was seeking the amount of the loans plus immediate possession of the inventory of uniforms and instruments, and three vehicles.



Kilties Senior, 1997 (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

"We do have a loan with the bank. I was not aware we were delinquent," Dennis Otwaska, chairman of the Kilties' board of directors said at the time. However, Marine First National Bank officials stated the foreclosure was filed to protect their interest in the loans because they were told that the corps intended to file bankruptcy.

On March 27, 1984 the Kilties announced the foreclosure action that could have cost the corps its uniforms, instruments and vehicles was dismissed after a payment schedule was agreed upon for two delinquent loans. Otwaska said the Kilts would be making a decision within a few weeks on whether to field a corps or not for 1984.

The Kilties decided to not field a corps again for the coming season.

Otwaska told the Racine *Journal Times* newspaper in an article on August 25, 1985 titled "Glory Days Long Gone For Racine's Famous Drum Corps" that as of that time the Kilties were dead. Their instruments and uniforms had been sold and if the corps were to ever get started again, it would have to be from scratch.

The Kilties junior drum and bugle corps never did field a corps again.

In 1992, a reunion was held and all past members were invited to participate in a special performance at DCI Finals in Madison, WI, on the occasion of that organization's 20th anniversary. More than 150 former members turned out, the majority in one of the corps' past uniforms. Drum Major Scott Paulson led the concert to enthusiastic

cheers from the nearly 30,000 in attendance.

Out of that reunion came a parade corps in 1993 and then a senior competitive corps that has been competing in Drum Corps Midwest shows since 1994, traveling to the DCA Championships since 1997. A title at the 1997 DCM Championships and a finalist spot in the 1998 DCA

Championships highlight a decade of keeping the Racine Kilties name alive for a new generation of fans.

For a photo and bio on George Fennell, turn to page 197.



Kilties, 2001 at DCA prelims in Syracuse, NY (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).