


(Top to bottom) The Reading Buccaneers on the starting line in 1965 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); at the National Dream in 1968 at Roosevelt Stadium (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Donnie Solinger); the 1998 corps at DCA prelims in Allentown, PA (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Reading Buccaneers

by Donnie Solinger

The Reading Buccaneers were organized in 1957 as a parade corps and began field competition in 1958. They won three VFW National titles in 1960, 1961 and 1962. The Bucs then won the first DCA Championship (1965) and have been DCA Champions three other times (1968, 1979 and 1980). Over the years, the Buccaneers have finished in the top three at DCA Finals 17 times.

The voyage began in the summer of 1956. Three former members of local junior corps were watching the West Reading Police Cadets practice at the Reading Airport. The men began kicking around the idea of starting a senior corps in Reading.

That winter, they recruited more like-minded people and contacted instructors and officers of the Police Cadets to get some input on forming a new corps. In the early summer of 1957, a group of 10 met in George "Fritz" Price's apartment. This meeting led to a larger group of 20 or more meeting on the steps at Reading Senior High School.

Among them was future World Drum Corps Hall of Famer and charter member Bruce Englehart. At this meeting, Roy Miller was picked to approach the officers of the Greater Reading VFW Post No. 179. Miller's proposal was well-received. They agreed to sponsor the new drum corps.

It was helpful that the majority of the prospective corps members were veterans of WWII and Korea. Uniforms were borrowed from the Ephrata American Legion Post with the understanding that the corps would march in at least three parades for the Legion. From various sources they acquired some used instruments and flags.

The name Reading Buccaneers was chosen. John Dowling agreed to write for and teach the drum line. He also wrote a fanfare for the horn line to practice. The Reading Buccaneers made their parade debut in late

August 1957 in Ashland, PA. This was the Bucs' first paid job.

The following December, the Buccaneers took their first steps toward becoming a competitive corps by hiring instructors Walt Fuller on bugles and Bill Mailing on drums.

In March 1958, Edward "Bud" Johnson was added as drill instructor and work began on the field show. By the beginning of summer, the field show was finished and polished. Letters were sent to contest sponsors. This is when fate smiled on the Buccaneers.

The Preview of Champions in Jersey City, NJ, was one of the

most prestigious early summer contests in the country. They had a last-minute cancellation by another corps and were desperate for a fifth group to fill out their line-up. They called Reading two days before the show. The Buccaneers jumped at the chance. They assembled on the starting line May 30, 1958 at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City for their first competition. The repertoire included *Navy Blue & Gold*, *Anchors Aweigh* and *Beyond the Sea*.

Their reputation spread, resulting in more contest invitations. They won their first competition on August 22, 1959 in Johnstown, PA, defeating the Gardner Guards of Tyrone, PA. By the beginning of the 1960 season, the corps was well-known. They set their sights on the VFW National title in Detroit, MI. The Bucs achieved this goal on August 24 after only three years in existence.

Raymond "Bud" Sherk was the corps' president. This job description was later changed to corps director. The show was being designed and taught by John Flowers on drums and Frank Ferraro on horns. Johnson was still doing the drill and teaching M&M in addition to performing as drum major. These three men would work together and were the creative heart of the corps all through the 1960s. All would later be elected to the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

The VFW National Champions successfully defended their title in 1961 at Miami, FL, and again in 1962, at Minneapolis, MN.

They played songs like *Tonight*, *What A Difference A Day Makes*, *Exodus*, *Maria*, *You Make Me Feel So Young* and, of course, *Beyond the Sea*. This was the last year of VFW senior competition at their convention, (the VFW continued to sponsor a junior championship until 1984), so the Bucs were the last VFW National Senior Drum & Bugle Corps Champions.

The VFW and American Legion governed competitive drum corps in those days. Each had its own ideas on how it should be done. For instance, the Legion allowed a second concert formation resulting in less time in motion, which could cause timing penalties in VFW shows. Because of the difference in rules between the two organizations, it was difficult to determine who was the best of the



best since corps could not compete in one another's national contests.

The powerhouse Hawthorne Caballeros and New York Skyliners were Legion corps and did not compete at VFW events. Reading defeated both on August 24, 1963 at Scranton, PA, legitimately laying claim to the title of true national champion for the first time.

The National Dream contest in Jersey City, NJ, served as an unofficial championship since it was an open contest. The different rules and regulations still caused some confusion and competitive problems, which led to the formation of Drum Corps Associates in 1964. This was also the year the Bucs appeared at the first "An Evening With the Corps" concert at New York City's Carnegie Hall.

The corps had started in 1957 with the idea of playing nautical songs to go along with the name Buccaneers. They soon found, however, that they would run out of music before long and started playing a more balanced repertoire, hence the nickname "Balance in Blue."

Back then, the song list included a lot of Stan Kenton and Leonard Bernstein songs, along with their signature song, *Beyond the Sea*. *Ebb Tide* was another nautical tune often associated with the Bucs. In 1962, Ferraro wrote an arrangement of the theme song from the movie "An Affair to Remember."

Two members of the horn line, Donnie Solinger and Stan Lecatsas, composed some words to go along with the melody. It was adopted as the Buccaneers' corps song and has been sung with pride by many generations of Reading Bucs even to this day.

The 1963 season saw the DCA-affiliated Bucs in new uniforms and sounding like true champions. Among the musical selections were *Ballet in Brass*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Sing, Sing, Sing* and *Beyond the Sea*.



The Buccaneers in 1969 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Donnie Solinger).



The Buccaneers' first equipment vehicle, a 1937 LaSalle (photo from the collection of Donnie Solinger).

They had acquired the Richland American Legion as a co-sponsor. In their first bid for the World Open championship on September 15, the corps finished second to the New York Skyliners. After a disappointing 1964 season, they headed toward 1965 with new determination.

The corps won many titles that year including American Legion State, VFW State and, at the first DCA World Championship in Milford CT, the corps finished .14 ahead of the Connecticut Hurricanes, with 84.50, to become the first DCA champions. The Bucs also won high bugles, tied for high drums and Johnson won best drum major. Some of the songbook was *From This Moment On*, *El Cid*, *This Had Better Be the Night* and, you guessed it, *Beyond the Sea*.

The 1966 season was busy, with 20 contests. The corps finished with nine firsts, six seconds, four thirds and two fourths, and third at the DCA Championships in 1966 and again in 1967.

A near perfect year in 1968 had 13 firsts and two seconds, losing to the Hurricanes twice by a total of only .15. They captured DCA to become the first corps to win the DCA title twice, scoring 82.15, two points above the second-place Long Island Sunrisers.

The Bucs were voted best all-around musical repertoire, best drill -- general effect, best drum line, best color guard and best senior corps that season.

In 1969 and 1970, the corps finished fourth at the DCA Championships. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, these corps directors headed the administration: Don Walls, Bruce Young, Ned Baldinger, Roy Miller and Norman "Boo-Boo" DeTemple. DeTemple would later be elected to the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame and was "Buccaneer of the 1960s."

Johnson resigned after the 1970 season. Because of the vacant drill instructor position, the corps made an unusual offer in 1971. Any member of the corps could submit a field drill to the administration. The Bucs finished sixth that year at DCA.

The next year, "Red" Winzer was hired by Miller to take over the horn line. They finished third at DCA Championships and took high horns.

The Reading Buccaneers began

the 1973 season under the leadership of Director Willard Marcks with new sponsorship by the BPO Elks Lodge No. 115 of Reading. The Greater Reading VFW Post No. 179 had lost its building to urban renewal and was

hurting financially.

Ralph Pace was added to the staff as drill designer and instructor. The Bucs repeated high horns at DCA, added high color guard and, by finishing with an 85.80, moved up a spot to second place at Rochester, NY. The music included *Russian Sailor's Dance*, *Get It On* and Verdi's *Requiem*.

In 1974, the "Balance In Blue" put on a show with a totally new concept. They entered the field from the back instead of the traditional starting line. "Firebird Suite" was featured, along with the theme from "Shaft" and *Latin Boogaloo*. The corps finished with four firsts, seven seconds and did what no corps had been able to do in more than 25 contests, defeat the Hawthorne Caballeros. Bucs finished second at finals again and won high drums, color guard and general effect.

A third-place finish in 1975 under the leadership of Director Henry Smith and a second place in 1976

maintained the Bucs' record of always being at or near the top of the heap in DCA championship competition.

The 1976 finish was especially mystifying because, after finishing only two tenths behind Cabs in prelims, they were down 5.8 at finals. This was the corps' 20th anniversary



(Above) The Buccaneers in 1967 (photo from the collection of Donnie Solinger); (below) the corps in 1964 at the World Open (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



season.

The 1977 season marked the first one women were included in the field show. Among them were Diane Koenig, Althea Mazur and Candy Golding.

With the DCA Championship moving to Allentown, PA, the Bucs prepared for the 1977 season. Retaining the same staff, they battled to a third-place finish with the corps' highest score of 91.55.

Director Ken Honsberger had hired Gary Smith as drum instructor and Tony Yaklich assisted Winzer with the horn line. The Bucs had remained among the elite of the activity for more than 20 years.

Future Hall of Famer Yaklich took over the horn line in 1978, as Winzer became the drill instructor. Because of an unusually weak winter of recruiting and low member retention, the corps struggled to a seventh-place finish at DCA Finals. They scored 79.90. While not the lowest score the corps had ever achieved, it marked the lowest finish ever at DCA Championships and gave them renewed determination to attack the next season with all the heart and resolve they could muster.

It began with a new executive committee led by "Buccaneer of the 1980s" Ron Gehris, new uniforms, which were long blue coats (the "Blue Bananas"), new music, (*Sylvia*, *Feels So Good*, *El Gato Trieste*, *Russian Sailor's Dance*) and a new drill designer, Joe Aiello. Tragically, Aiello was killed in an auto accident and Pace was rehired to finish the year.

Because the show ran a little too long, the corps finished second at the first show by a few tenths. With timing corrected, they rolled through the season to a DCA championship while capturing high scores in horns, general effect, color guard and best drum major.

The DM was World Hall of Fame member and drum corps legend George Parks. A score of 90.50 put the corps back on top and they resolved to stay there.

Under the instruction of Yaklich, horns; Rob Muller, drums; Ralph Pace, drill design; Gehris, color guard; and Tim Ochran, marching, the corps rolled through the 1980 season undefeated until the Cabs came on strong toward the end and won three straight shows.

The show started that year with *Seahawk*, a memorable Buccaneer opener. The rest of the show was *Russian Sailor's Dance*, *Spanish Dreams*, *Sambandrea Swing*, *One Voice* and *Sylvia*. Showing the dedication the Bucs had become famous for, they pulled it together and won DCA Prelims by two points at Hershey, PA. The fired up Buccaneers gave



Tri-cornered hats were added to the uniform in the early 1970s (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

a spectacular performance and won their second straight and fourth overall DCA championship, taking high visual.

The corps set a third straight title as their goal for 1981. The entire staff and committee returned to lead the Bucs. Opening with *En Sueno*, they lost only one show, a controversial one at the Meadowlands, on the way to Philadelphia and DCA championships.

In prelims, the Bucs' score of 89.40 was only good enough for third place, three-tenths behind the Sunrisers and 4.5 behind the Hurricanes. Neither had beaten the Bucs all year long. The gap widened at finals.

The Buccaneers finished in third place with a score of 88.40. The Sunrisers were second with 89.10 and Hurricanes first with a score of 89.45.

Drum Major Parks had this to say about the corps' finish that night: "I have never felt pain so intense as when I had to stand on that box with the third-place medal around my neck, strangling me like a hangman's noose. And I have never felt pride so intense as I did when the Buccaneers left the field that evening. There



(Above left) Drum Major George Parks reacting at the end of a performance (photo Elinn Cefaratti from the collection of Drum Corps World); (above) Parks throwing a high mace (see arrow) (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

were neither tantrums nor any scenes. We congratulated the new world champion and left the field in a demonstration of style, pride and class, which is the trademark of the Reading Buccaneers."

The 1982 field show brought asymmetric drill to DCA. The staff remained basically intact and the Bucs made it their goal to bring a DCA crown home to Reading, PA, again. They played *Ballet in Brass* and *Let Me Try Again*, set to one of the most beautiful and imaginative drills the Bucs ever used. The corps finished sixth at DCA Finals in Allentown, PA, with a score of 83.15.

Pace returned as drill designer in 1983. Matt Krempasky moved to head the horn line and Robbie Robinson joined the corps as drum instructor. Although inhibited by a very weak winter, the corps once again brought itself away from predictions of disaster and produced its best performance of the year at prelims and finals of DCA in Allentown, to finish tied for fifth place with the Bushwackers with a score of 82.65.

The Bucs opened with *Russian Sailor's Dance* and *March of the Boyars*, moved into *Sunrise Lady* and exited with the lyrical *Let Me Try Again*.

The staff for 1984 was the same as 1983 except for the addition of Ken Sherry to the drum staff and Steve Brubaker taking over the drill design chores. Fielding the largest corps since 1981, the Bucs opened with *Wind Machine*, moved into *Central Park*, played the drum solo *Captain's Journey* and the concert was *Rainmaker*. They closed the show with *Someone to Light Up My Life*.

The corps went into DCA at Allentown with only a few tenths separating them from the Cabs and the world championship. At prelims, the Bucs tied the Cabs with a 91.95. The corps won high horns and high drums, but fell short of the Cabs' 92.40 to place second. Although deprived of the championship, obviously the "Blue" was back!

Determined to capture another title, the corps came out strong in 1985. They retained the staff as well as the songs *Wind Machine* and *Rainmaker*. They added the jazz arrangement *Jeanie* and the beautiful *After You* as the closer.

In spite of having one of their best shows in years, the caliber of competition was such that they didn't win a single show all year. Even another DCA Finals score in the 90s, this time a 91.90, was only good enough to give the Bucs second place. Although the corps took high horns, guard and GE, the Cabs once again slipped away by six-tenths with a 92.50.

With a varied show containing everything from jazz to big band to a moving ballad, they hit the field in 1986 with hopes of a championship season. The repertoire included *Nutville*, *Man Overboard*, *Sunrise Lady* and *After You*. The corps managed to beat the 1985 DCA Champion Cabs at Bridgeport, but in the end took fourth at finals. The Bushwackers surprised everyone by winning their first show ever, DCA Finals.

The 1987 season marked the 30th

anniversary of the corps and looked to be a promising year. Robinson and Yaklich returned. Once again using a variety of styles, the corps opened with *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, moved into *Cuban Overture* and closed with *We Are the Reason*, into *Sylvia*. The corps' drive to the top was sidetracked in the mud at Allentown's J. Birney Crum Stadium as the prelim results were used to decide the championship and finals were performed as concerts from the track surrounding the field.

This year marked the retirement of World Drum Corps Hall of Fame Drum Major George Parks. It was the end of an era in the Reading Buccaneers' history.

The corps came out in 1988 with one of its most innovative shows ever. It was built around Shostakovich's *5th Symphony* arranged by Winzer. The show was very appealing, but the scores were down because of the small size of the corps. The Bucs went on the field at DCA in Hershey, PA, with only 29 horns. The 10th place finish, while disappointing, was a tribute to the hard work and dedication of a small number of true blue



The 1979 Buccaneers on Memorial Day weekend (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Buccaneers.

Thus began what Director Grant Hill once described as "our descent into mystery." The 1989 season would conclude with another 10th-place finish. In spite of the best efforts of a dedicated staff and committee, the fortunes of the corps continued to spiral downward. In 1990, the Bucs chose the music from "Batman" as their theme. In a twist of cruel irony, one of the songs was titled *Descent into Mystery*. This would result in the corps moving up to seventh place at finals with a score of 92.20.

There was renewed hope for the 1991 season. A return to the classical genre seemed appropriate. The book included *March Slav* and *Russian Easter Overture*. Sadly, when the scores were announced at DCA Finals, the Bucs scored 82.30 to finish in eighth place.

For 1992, the corps resurrected the popular *Sambandrea Swing* from their 1980 and 1981 seasons and added Tower Of Power's *You Can't Fall Up*. Although the audience appreciated the show, a strong DCA lineup that year helped to drop the corps another

notch at DCA Finals to ninth place.

The following year, the corps played an all-Tower of Power show and finished in 11th place. This was a year when DCA decreed that the top 12 corps in prelims would make finals. Consequently, the Buccaneers kept their record of making finals every year since the beginning of DCA intact. They were one of only two corps to make finals every single year. The other corps was the New York Skyliners.

The 1994 season would bring an end to that streak. Member retention was poor. For reasons still unclear, recruiting was not successful and the corps went on the field with fewer than 50 people. Many members of the staff and committee helped to fill spots in the show. Playing the music of "Hook," the corps took the field at DCA Prelims with pride and determination. But when scores were announced, the unthinkable had happened. For the first time in the 35-year history of the DCA Championships, the storied Reading Buccaneers would not compete at finals.

The struggles of the Buccaneers had been of great concern to many members of the

Buccaneer Alumni Association and the alumni corps. Hill and Alumni President Jeff Becker began getting together for lunch to iron out some misunderstandings that had developed between the two corps over the years.

An alumni contra player (yours truly) went to a January 1995 senior corps practice and offered to help "in any way I can." I was offered a spot in the horn line (at age 54). I accepted. Soon other playing members from the alumni corps joined. Among them were Jim Gruber and Joel Miller.

In May, long-time arranger and instructor Yaklich, who had been teaching the alumni horn line, was hired to take over the senior corps horn line. More alumni members soon followed. The Yaklich mystique was a brass magnet.

At DCA Championship weekend in Scranton, PA, the corps went on with 60 marching members. Sadly, the 77.50 score was only good for 11th place. For the second time in history and the second year in a row, the Bucs failed to qualify for finals. There was much disappointment, but yet a sense of resolve that the corps had survived and the foundation had been laid for a new beginning.

The Reading Buccaneers' Hall of Fame inducted its first members in 1995. The hall was

conceived and organized by long-time marching members Diane and Gary Koenig.

The 1995 season was also the first year the corps was involved with the Berks County Jazzfest. The event evolved from a three-day jazz weekend into the second largest jazz celebration in the country. It's now a two-week

extravaganza and has grown into a big fund-raiser for the corps as they are responsible for coordinating and carrying out all of the transportation, set-up and teardown, load in and load out. Members are basically roadies, stagehands and drivers. Joel and Jean Miller spearhead the effort.

The Bucs marched into 1996 with a new committee led by Gruber along with Solinger, Miller and Dan Fitzpatrick who all marched in the field show. The staff decided on a show titled "Land, Sea & Air -- The Music of John Williams." Yaklich on horns, Scott Weyman on drums and Duane DeWire on visual created the show.

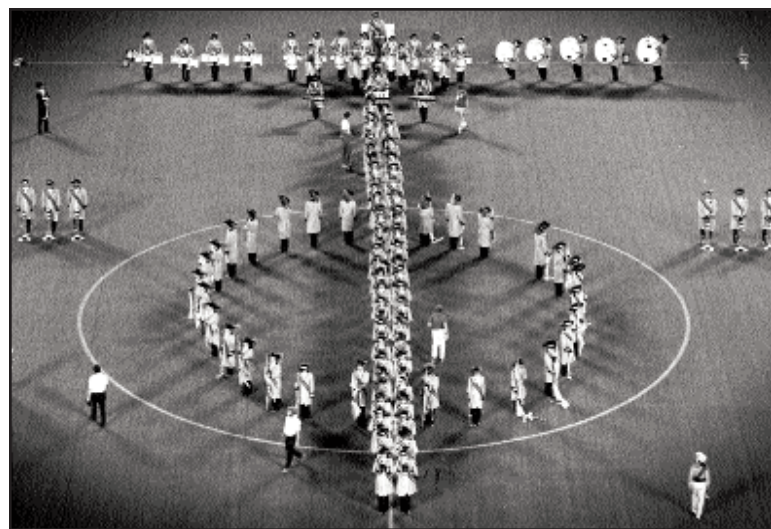
DCA Prelims at Pioneer Field in Rochester, NY, saw the corps finish 10th with a score of 81.80. A finals score of 82.40 secured their place as a DCA member corps once again. On April 20, 1996, the Buccaneers and the Buccaneer Alumni played on stage together at the Serenade in Brass at the Forum in Harrisburg, PA. It was indeed a milestone.

In an effort to improve on their general effect scores in 1997, the corps traded their traditional blue colors for red. The show opened with *The Hunt for Red October*, followed by *Meadowlands*, *Polovetsian Dances* and "Firebird Suite."

DCA Prelims in Allentown saw the corps score 85.10 for ninth place. A score of 83.40



The Bucs on July 12, 1980 at the Meadowlands (photo by Joe Zepko from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The Bucs on July 11, 1982 (photo by Ron Walloch from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The Buccaneers at DCA Prelims, August 31, 1991, in Scranton (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

at finals allowed them to maintain the ninth spot.

This year will always be remembered as the year of the bus crash. On July 19, 1997, one of the busses was involved in an accident on the way to Rochester for a show. Twenty-eight members of the corps were treated for bumps and bruises at Soldiers and Sailors Hospital in Wellsboro, PA. Most seriously injured was visual tech Mike Doherty who was hospitalized for a couple of weeks. Marching member Oliver Harris was admitted to the hospital and released the next day.

The corps was gratified by the outpouring of support from the Reading area and from all of the DCA corps. Their resolve to finish the season was evidenced by their ninth-place finish at championships.

August 15, 1998, at Sunbury, PA, the Bucs won their first show in many years. Dan Delong and his crew signed on for the season to bring the percussion program up to championship caliber. The music book will be remembered as one of the most appealing and effective ever. Titled "A Russian Celebration," it included *Festive Overture*, *Gopak* and then the stirring and dramatic *Russian Christmas Music*.

This show would put the Buccaneers back into prominence at DCA Championships in Allentown with a 93.50 for fourth in prelims and a solid fourth-place finish at finals with a score of 92.30. The percussion score of 19.6 gave the Bucs a tie with the Empire Statesmen and a share of the first-place drum trophy. The Reading Buccaneers were back!

"Winter Dreams" was to be the title of the 1999 show. Lou Tierno returned as assistant director and Solinger stayed on as historian. Erika Baradat's dedication and perseverance

as membership manager resulted in a tremendous turnout for membership day.

The Bucs sailed into the judge's evaluation show at Red Bank, NJ, June 12 and defeated the Hawthorne Caballeros for the first time since July 5, 1986. They would make it official two weeks later in Bridgeport, CT, with Bucs 73.5 and Cabs 71.0.

The show included *Russian Christmas Music*, the fourth movement of Tchaikovsky's *1st Symphony*, *The Pine Forest* ("Nutcracker Suite") and the heart-wrenching finale of *Russian Christmas Music*.

The season would see the corps consistently finish third behind Syracuse Brigadiers and Empire Statesmen. That is, until DCA Championships at Allentown. After prelims, the Bucs were in third with a 93.10 score. At finals they surprised everyone but themselves by climbing into second place by four-tenths over the Statesmen. The percussion trophy went to the Reading Buccaneers!

"Holst: The Planets" would be the theme of the 2000 show. Eric Kitchenman was brought aboard to work his visual magic along with guard guru Greg King. *Drum Corps World* writer Ace Holleran described the show: "Tricky drill moves, beautiful brass phrasing and tempo changes galore translated into a demand level that some folks can't fathom."

The drum line and pit were spectacular again. Championships in Syracuse saw the Bucs finish fourth with a score of 93.3. At finals, the corps scored 95.10 to finish third behind Brigadiers and Caballeros. Once again, Bucs' percussion brought home the first prize.

Rich Hammond returned to the Buccaneers to head up the percussion program in 2001. Mark Metz was hired as program coordinator and Lee Umberger took over as brass caption head. Yaklich continued to write the brass arrangements.

The show, "Portraits of Bernstein," would include *On the Waterfront*, *Slava*, *Make Our Garden Grow* and *Overture* from "Candide."

The season began in Ansonia, CT, with a loss to the Caballeros. That would be the last time they would lose to the Cabs in 2001. In fact, the Bucs would win five shows during the summer including the National Dream and the Grand Prix. Their only other losses would come at the hands of the Syracuse Brigadiers in Hershey and Scranton.

DCA Championships in Syracuse would be the location of the big showdown between the two DCA giants. At prelims, the Bucs scored 95.90 to finish second, 1.25 points behind the

Brigs. They worked with a feverish determination to improve their score at finals. They gave an inspired performance.

When caption awards were announced, the Bucs were first in visual and tied for first with Brigadiers in brass and general effect. Final score, Brigs, 97.95, Bucs, 97.85. Reading's highest finals score ever would result in a second-place finish.

It was a very gratifying year for the Bucs in spite of not winning the championship. Everyone in the drum corps world knew that the Bucs were back with class and style.

The events of September 11, 2001, would be indelibly etched in the minds of all Americans and freedom loving people everywhere. The drum corps community was no different. Many 2002 shows would remember the horror and pay tribute to the victims, survivors and rescuers. Patriotism was awakened and many drum corps shows reflected this.

Reading's show was titled "Anthems of Freedom." It opened with former Marine Al Maree in uniform guarding an American flag as it was carried from back sideline to front, while the corps played *Star-Spangled Overture*, *Appalachian Spring* and *Flag of Stars* followed.

The season opened in Hershey on July 6



The Buccaneers, 1997 (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

with a third-place finish to the Brigadiers and Hawthorne Caballeros.

DCA Prelims in Scranton had the Buccaneers in third with a 94.00. They brought their score up to 95.55 at finals, but it was not enough to overtake the first-place Brigs or the Empire Statesmen. The corps' members, fans and supporters were satisfied that they had presented an entertaining and inspiring show.

The corps will return to its nautical routes for the 2003 season. The Buccaneers have added accomplished program coordinator Larry Markiewicz to the staff. Lee Umberger will write the brass charts, which will be taught by Steve Holgate and Lou Kelly.

Tim Newlin will be taking over the color guard caption. Hammond, percussion, and Eric Kitchenman, visual, will continue to work their magic in their respective fields.

The executive committee remains intact,

led by Director Jim Gruber.

The show will be titled "The Sea: Beauty, Power, Serenity & War." Selections from the movie "Hook," *Navy Hymn* and *Drunken Sailor* are among the selections being considered.

The Buccaneers have chosen for their medium the symphonic sounds of what most people categorize as "classical" music. Having found their mission in the activity, the leadership of an outstanding corps director and a superb staff, the corps has risen into the spotlight of championship contention.

They are known as a classy organization, a reputation they value and nurture. The Reading Buccaneers are currently sponsored in part by the Ray A. Master American Legion Post No. 217 of Tipton, PA. The Bucs are supported by many businesses in the Reading and Berks County area and the Buccaneer Alumni Association.

The current administration would like to express their gratitude to every individual who ever wore the blue for their time, loyalty and dedication. Thanks for sharing part of your life with us!

Buccaneer Alumni Corps

The first Buccaneer alumni association was known as the Reading Buccaneers Old-Timer's Association. Founded February 17, 1967, its first president was Bob Weidenhammer. They met regularly once a month at the VFW post and later at the 18th Ward Democratic Club.

In addition to supporting the corps by organizing trips to contests and helping at the home show, they had their own parade judging association. They had an annual picnic, organized bowling teams and golf tournaments.

All members were required to have been a marching or staff/committee member of the senior corps for at least one full year. The "Old Bucs" were very successful and had many active members. In the early 1980s, they were assimilated into the newly-formed Buccaneer Alumni Association. The "Old Bucs" were officially dissolved in 1984.

The Buccaneer Alumni Association was founded in February 1981 just after the Reading Buccaneers senior corps won consecutive DCA titles in 1979 and 1980. The Buccaneer Alumni Drum & Bugle Corps was

formed in October 1986. "Buccaneer of the 1970s," Jack Wells, spearheaded the effort. They like to think they were the first alumni corps, that is, a parade corps made up of former members of a still active, competing DCA corps under a separate charter. They began their first marching



The Buccaneers Alumni at the 2002 "Serenade in Brass" in Harrisburg, PA (photo by Patrick O'Toole from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The Bucs at the 1992 DCA Championships in Scranton, PA (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

season on Memorial Day in 1987.

Their dedicated purpose is to reunite and organize all past members of the Reading Buccaneers Senior Drum and Bugle Corps in camaraderie and fellowship, to encourage the growth of the Reading Buccaneers senior corps, to engage in a separate parade corps and to perpetuate drum and bugle corps as an art form and entertainment medium.

Today there are 145 alumni association members located all across North America. Currently, 95 members participate in the alumni corps (50-plus brass, 26 percussion, 19 guard and support). They're attired in the traditional Buccaneer blue, white and black with red accent trim.

The 2003 season marks their 17th marching season. Since 1987, the alumni corps has participated in more than 240 parades and concerts. During this time, they have earned a high degree of public acceptance and recognition, due primarily to their success in maintaining the time honored tradition of Buccaneer excellence.

Many members of the senior corps play with the alumni during the winter. All are part of the Buccaneer family, which includes a brass ensemble known as Celebration Brass. They perform at many churches and rest homes throughout the year.

The motto of the Buccaneer Alumni Corps is "Champions United." The repertoire has included *Ebb Tide*, *Russian Hymn*, *Feels So Good*, *Copacabana*, *Maria*, *Tonight*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, *America the Beautiful*, *Sylvia*, *Battle*

Hymn of the Republic, *An Affair to Remember*, *Navy Hymn* and their signature tune, *Beyond the Sea*.

Current elected officers: Duane Derricott, president; Dave Santee, vice president; Mike Luckenbill, treasurer; Cicely Siegfried, secretary; and Joe Jasinski, business manager. Larry Antonini is the color guard captain. Jasinski is a charter member of the corps and alumni association and has been its only business manager.

Reading Buccaneers who are World Drum Corps Hall of Fame Members: Norman "Boo Boo" DeTemple, Bruce Englehart, Frank Ferraro, John Flowers, Edward "Bud" Johnson, George Parks, Tony Yaklich; **World Drum Corps Hall of Fame Associate Members** (2001 inductees): Jim Gruber, Diane Koenig, Gary Koenig, Donnie Solinger; (2002 inductees): Larry Antolini, Ned Baldinger, Joseph Jasinski, Willard Marcks, Cecily Siegfried, John "Skee" Derr, Candace Golding, Ron Gehris, Lou Tierno. "We're all good men . . ."



Donnie Solinger was born in Springfield, IL, and raised in Philadelphia. He played accordion in the Clifton Heights String Band at 13 years of age.

His drum corps career began in 1956 as a baritone with the West Reading Police Cadets after the family moved to Reading. In 1958, he began helping the newly-formed Reading Buccaneers in parades and exhibitions and won a spot in the drill for the 1959 season. He has served on the executive committee, as assistant director and is currently historian, a member of the support staff and an advisor to the committee.

In 1980, he became a charter member of the Buccaneers Alumni Association and has marched in the corps since its inception in 1986. He is a member of the Skyliner Alumni Association and also contra with that alumni corps. He is still part of the original "Dream Team" that brought back the "National Dream" in 1999.

Solinger is a member of the Reading Buccaneers' Hall of Fame and an associate of the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

He has been employed as a tractor-trailer driver for 32 years and also worked in auto sales. He is married, the father of three, and he has four grandchildren. He is a published author and songwriter and enjoys playing folk and bluegrass on guitar with friends.

Reading Buccaneers at the 2002 DCA Championships (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

