

Chapter 8: 1960 – And On And On

As the Corps grew its influence was felt in more ways than on the field. Many of our people, instructors and members, were instructing other Corps. This was a common practice, not unique to us, even extending indirectly to helping ones rivals. Being the current champions, though, did increase the demand for Optimist personnel to act as teachers to others, a logical occurrence.

For instance, Eric Burton, the colour guard instructor, besides still being responsible for the Optimists guard, was also instructing four other guards. One of these was Grantham, one of our chief rivals. Also, Mike Layton, our guard captain, was the instructor of the Guelph Royales, a top Canadian Senior Corps. People from the drum line and horn line also participated in this activity. Later in the year, it reached a degree with one Corps that served to cause repercussions.



1960: casual shot of some Optimists

An interesting highlight of the off-season that had nothing to do with us occurred in February, in the New Jersey area.

There was a testimonial to Charlie Nabors, the Chief Judge of the Eastern Judges Association. He had been the chief judge when we first appeared at the Preview of Champions in Jersey City. His Drum Corps career had spanned forty-eight years. Forty-eight years! And we thought what we were Drum Corps nuts. It is noteworthy that he was head of the Eastern Judges Association. At that time, in the USA, there was more than one judging association. Canada, of course, had its own.

In the USA, we had so far encountered the N.Y. State and Eastern Judges Association. Later, we would encounter the Mid-Atlantic Association and others. Because of this situation, there were different score sheets and standards. Much of this has now disappeared due to the standardization of things under the D.C.I. banner. This is much better.

To get back to the theme of this story, (it is hard not to digress) we had quite a bit of activity to keep us occupied during the later winter and early spring period. There was, of course, the Ice Follies. It was a good opportunity to try out new music.

Canada's Marching Ambassadors, one of the better Senior Corps anywhere, annually organized a military ball. It was called, aptly enough, "The Ambassadors Ball". These affairs were grand, glittering occasions, attended by any or all Corps members who cared to come. The men wore their respective uniforms and the ladies wore evening gowns. Always colourful and well attended, they were reminiscent of military balls of a bygone era. This year, it was held at the

Tam O'Shanter Club in Scarborough. This site has long since gone, having been destroyed by fire. The balls have also gone, as have the Marching Ambassadors, and the Canadian Drum Corps scene is much the poorer for it.

A Corps Song

Around this time, it was decided to have a contest within the Corps itself, to come up with a Corps song. This would be another tool to help engender Corps spirit. Not that it was flagging. It never had. Six good entries were received and judged. Glen Durish, who lived in Windsor, Ontario, and commuted to practice weekly, a long trip, won it. His entry entitled "On, March On" was adopted as the official Corps song and was hereafter sung lustily at all contests, usually before the show.

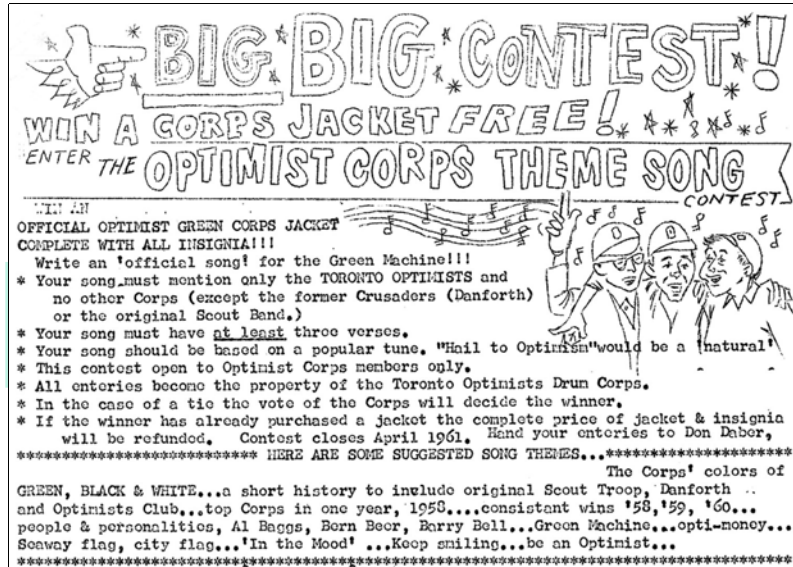
There were also other unofficial songs sung only in the confines of the bus, away from public ears. Some of there were entitled:

- "Lulu"
- "The Backseat Boys, and
- "The Ollie Miller Moses Long"

Though not suitable for public airing, they were fun, harmless, and almost equally as effective as spirit raisers.

This year the annual Canadian Drum Corps Association convention was held at Prudhommes Motel, near the City of St. Catharines, Ontario. Usually, the whole motel and its neighbour, The Beacon, just down the road, was taken over for the weekend by Drum Corps. Apart from much partying, many things were accomplished, which was the intent in the first place. Drum, bugle and drill clinics were held with the purpose of spreading knowledge and ideas to any that were interested. This year, we provided the demonstration drum section. Lorne conducted the clinic and was well received. The six snares were used and created much interest and speculation. Also, new tenor drumsticks of unique design, created by Lorne Ferrazzutti and Eric Burton, stirred much curiosity. They became sought after by others.

Dates are very indistinct for this period, but around this time, we were involved in two events. For the first time, we sent a four-man drum squad to compete in an American individual contest, in Philadelphia, PA. The four of us, of which I was one, competed as a drum quartet, and Ronn Prokop entered the solo snare drum contest. None of us fared very well, our material and standards



1960: Competition to create a Corps Song

apparently not on par with more experienced entrants; however, it was a learning experience, and we saw what was probably a final appearance of the famous Liberty Bell Cadets, on the streets of Philadelphia. We were also entertained with first class recordings at the post home of the Archer-Epler Musketeers Senior Corps in Upper Darby, PA. That alone, was worth the trip.

The second event was our participation in a local standstill contest. This featured local Corps, and, for the first time, we used the six snares in competition. It was also the last time. Besides winning the competition, we topped the execution drum caption by two points, even though our closest competition used only two snare drums. This was a statement on the junior drum lines of the time, and a bright omen for our big line. But it would not last.

Woodstock

In May of this year, there was a long weekend called “Empire Day” weekend. This occasion was a national holiday and is still in effect, though the name has been changed to one more appropriate “Victoria Day”. We spent this interval in a fashion that was then rare but is now commonplace. A three-day camp had been arranged in the town of Woodstock, Ontario, and the purpose was to practice, preparing for our trip to New Jersey.

Woodstock is a very pleasant town, situated approximately one hundred miles west of Toronto. Its pleasant atmosphere was more than enhanced by the friendly nature of the people. For three days, as guests of the Woodstock Imperials Senior Drum and Bugle Corps, we were housed and fed by the local residents. Since most were city kids, it was a wonderful experience being out in the country for three days. Those who were there have never forgotten this occasion, and the Optimists Corps was ever grateful to the town of Woodstock.



1960: Practising for Preview of Champions

Apart from this, uppermost in our minds was the fact that this was a work weekend, to prepare for our second appearance at the “Preview of Champions” contest in Jersey City. And work we did. Three days of solid practice culminated in a street parade and exhibition. The six snares were used, as it turned out, for the last time, until big drum lines became a common thing.

A lot of things were settled at this time. One of them was the dropping of “Blue Skies”, the replacement concert number, and the re-introduction of “In The Mood”. This was the third year of its use but this was offset by a new arrangement. Also, the drum line was dropped back to its regular size. This move caused some disturbance.

The people in the snare line, themselves, had determined that the use of six snare drums in New Jersey would set us at a definite disadvantage, in that much tougher area. They approached

Lorne with this conclusion and it was decided to use only three snares. This decision forced some hard action. Only the three best, or most compatible, would be able to remain, and the other three would have to find new positions. As it turned out, one drifted away with no hard feelings as he had not been there very long anyway. A position on tenor drum had been open for a while, when one of our members married and wisely left the Corps. This spot was taken by one of the now excess snare drummers. The third man, Jim Reynolds, left the Corps, and this was unfortunate. He had been



1960: guys from Optimists & Garfield

a conscientious member from day one, being an original from Danforth Crusaders. His attendance and efforts were beyond reproach and, due to our ambitions, he became a victim of expediency. This was the one that hurt, although the general membership was unaware of it. All this maneuvering was done behind the scenes and all that we saw was the end result. As a consequence, we were all happily ready to go to New Jersey, unaware of any hard feelings, and thinking ourselves well prepared for anything they could throw us.

1960 Preview of Champions

They threw it, and we caught it, again. It was not as bad as before. Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights took top honours, with a score of 86.90 points. We were fifth, and last, scoring 80.0. In between were Chicago Cavaliers, Garfield Cadets, and St. Catherine's Queensmen. This score was a definite improvement over the previous year and served to vindicate the style and material changes that had been adopted. Also, it still showed that we were not, at this time of year, fully prepared to compete at this level. Results later in the season would bear out this observation. There were other, positive, signs.

Our abbreviated, but now normal size, drum line had scored only 1.1 behind that of the Golden Knights, and 0.1 from that of the Chicago Cavaliers. This was a definite plus, as both these lines were known for their precision. Also, our public image was improved when a columnist, Jim "Ratsy" Warfle, made the following remarks in the June issue of



1960: Toronto Optimists (Preview of Champions)

“Off The Line” magazine. “Impressive drill, music as good or better than the rest of the Corps”. He also used the term “green machine”, referring to us. This colourful term had long been applied to the Chicago Cavaliers and was well known as their name. Well, now we were to hear it more often, as “Go, Go Green Machine” began to be heard at competitions. This name had first been heard at the 1959 Grey Cup parade, but now, with the wider publicity, it began to stick.

Still on the subject of names, the Corps had, by now, acquired a few unofficial ones. Within the Corps, in a humorous vein, we would sometimes refer to ourselves as “The Toronto Optimists Drum and Bungle Corps”, or “Barry Bell’s Bugged Up Bugle Band”. Heard many times, more publicly, would be “Opti-Corps” or just “Opti”. Occasionally would be heard “The Green Latrine”. Terms like these were all part of the Corps scene and were all taken with a grain of salt. Of course we also had names for other Corps. At this stage of the game, any names directed at us were somewhat flattering compared to what others would call us later.



1960: Getting ready to practice drill

When describing the past, present, and future success of the Corps, one important element must be included, musical arrangements. Music was arranged for us by a variety of people. Foremost in this category was Truman Crawford of the U.S. Air Force Drum & Bugle Corps³. The use of his musical arrangements was a strong factor in the success achieved to date. Barry Bell also did some arranging, and his work had stood the test, or we would not have scored as we had. This year, for the first time, we played a number arranged by Jack Bullock of Geneva, New York. His expertise in this department would be recognized by anyone who had ever heard his Corps, “The Appleknockers”. With probably the smallest horn line in Senior Drum Corps circles, they would always bring down the house with their classy arrangements and superb playing.



1960: Toronto Optimists leave the field (Preview of Champions)

³. Truman Crawford was with the U.S. Air Force Drum Corps from 1953 until it disbanded in 1963. In 1966, he was asked to join the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps as chief musical arranger. He stayed for the next 30 years.

This use of outside talent to help the corps to improve in the music category would later extend to the marching and maneuvering caption, writing and teaching drill patterns. Strangely, though, it did not extend to the drum line. It was not necessary, as the line constantly improved. This says something about the instruction. Not until many years later, and after great changes, was outside instruction brought in, and then the results were less than ideal.

Rehearsals were still Monday and Wednesday evenings at the school, and Sunday at the Waterfront. During the winter, Sunday rehearsals were held at the A.E. Long plant in Scarborough, the workplace of Bernie Beer. When at the waterfront, people who worked downtown would go straight from work, to secure the best of the two fields. One had fewer potholes and better grass.

The arrival of Don Daber

One night, a few of us were there early to stake our claim when we noticed someone standing nearby. He was a sandy haired young man who obviously wanted to get acquainted. We invited him over to join us, and thus began a long and fruitful career in Drum Corps.

This was Don Daber, and the Optimists Drum Corps, and Drum Corps in general, would never again be quite the same.

His purpose, he explained, was to write a freelance article on Canadian Drum Corps which, he hoped, would interest one of the major Toronto newspapers. We were immediately all for it since newspapers seldom, if ever, had any news about Drum Corps. We, of course, thought that all Corps news should be on the front pages. Don had been to Scout House and De La Salle but neither were very interested. He had found us by chance, not knowing of our existence, or that we were the current Canadian Champions.



1960: Clare Reid, Don Daber & Mike Andrews

After this meeting, it was not long before he became a full-fledged, albeit, non-playing member of the Corps. At a Sunday rehearsal a couple of weeks later, we officially drummed him into the Corps. By profession a commercial artist, by inclination a photographer, his influence soon made itself felt. Publicity in the form of drawings, paintings, and photographs soon began to appear all over the place. His instrument was the camera, his subject the Optimists Drum Corps, and later all Corps and associated activities. From here on he becomes an integral part of this story. In fact, it was not too long before it was wondered how we had ever gotten along without him. Like a piece of a puzzle, he fitted into the growing mosaic that was the Corps.

Another, more frivolous, part of the scene was the frequenting of two taverns by some members. The Graymar and Merchant House on Front Street, in downtown Toronto, became a sort of unofficial meeting place after practice. That some (most) were underage never seemed to bother anyone, least of all the proprietors. These establishments were directly adjacent to each other and were definitely not what would be called



1960: Toronto Optimists (Preview of Champions)

upscale; however, they had a certain air about them that suited us perfectly. Interestingly, the Graymar was reputedly the oldest hotel in Toronto, and its appearance did not belie this rumour. Also, a waiter named Frenchy Belanger worked there and would regale us with stories of his younger days. He claimed he had been a championship calibre boxer. No one took him seriously until the time his picture was spotted in the Canadian Sport Hall of Fame, at the Canadian National Exhibition. Thereafter, he was regarded with greater respect. We loved those places!

Meanwhile, back in the Corps world, there was still a full season ahead to contend with. An April issue of "Off The Line" magazine had commented on the lack of contests in Canada. This, unfortunately, was true, but we were lucky enough to face a fairly busy schedule. Socially, Phil Hennings, drum major, and Fred Johnson, a founder of the Bantam Corps, had both acquired wives. Whether these were already "Corps Girls" or not, they certainly were now. Both couples had Optimists honour guards at their weddings. Social functions were often part of corps activities.

Technically, we began to use back sticking on drums. It was a technique picked up in the United States. We were the first to use it in a field show in Canada.

Regarding the general scene in Canada, Scout House were still one of the biggest box office draws, but De La Salle were increasingly being touted as the chief contender for the championship. The end of the season would put all this speculation into place.



1960: Dave, Roman, Warren, Terry & Neil

June was not very busy, with an exhibition for a Junior "B" contest at East York stadium in Toronto. This was actually our first full show in Canada this year and a good opportunity to gauge the effect of new material on the public. Apparently, it was acceptable, even "In the Mood" was still being well received. It was the month of July that really saw the corps come into its own, the new music and drill proving their merit.

After a July 2 exhibition at the senior “Tournament of Drums” contest at Rochester’s Aquinas Stadium a columnist for “Drum Corps World” magazine wrote: “Optimists, almost whole new show, music and drills. ‘In The Mood’ back by popular demand. Wild new arrangement!”. This last statement was a half truth. Demand for it did exist and this number had become sort of a trademark, however, coincident to this was the fact that a suitable replacement had not been found.



1960: Drums practising (the author with a cigarette)

Further to this positive summary:

“Optimists driving hard, hotter than ever. Faster cadence. Horn powerful, very clean, excellent tone. Drums outstanding. Only using three snare instead of the six planned”. “Had to bolster the tenor line”, another half-truth. The tenor line had been filled, as was necessary, but only as a result of cutting the snare line for New Jersey. No matter, the end result was what counted. This attitude, when expediency overcomes all else, is a common factor in human affairs; in successful enterprises, it’s sometimes a necessity.

Finally, the guard was noticed for its new intricate rifle work, and the Corps in general for a fast, company front, duck and spin.

At this show, Al Baggs took his field test for All-American Judge in the field marching and maneuvering caption, having already passed the written test. He was already a qualified Canadian General Effect Marching and Maneuvering Judge, and now would become the first

Canadian Judge to become an All-American Judge. Not too far down the road, this situation would lead to great political uproar, as we shall see.



1960: Toronto Optimists practice “Duck & Spin” (Falconer, NY)

To vindicate all this written glory, on July 16, we again competed at Falconer, New York as the only Junior Corps in a field of seniors. We took first place by almost six points, topping all captions. Significantly, the drums scored 18.5 in execution. The drum line was really pulling its weight, a factor that before now, and later, would often prove decisive.

August 6, 1960, Back to Rochester

Back to Rochester, this time to defend our New York/Canadian Association Title. Whereas, the previous year we had barely won it over Scout House, this year rumours were confirmed when De La Salle came second to us by only four tenths. They also were using much new material, with lots of solo horn work that was a big hit with the crowd.



1960: De La Salle's Colour Guard

The Canadian Championships were just over a month away. Full attendance and extra rehearsals were the order of the day. This sense of urgency was

to pay off before then, on August 27, at the Eastern Junior Drum Pageant, at Rome, New York. As was expected, the Golden Knights won the affair, but we were only one and a half points behind them. Derision was evident when a Knight horn player kicked his horn in disgust at the close score. We were still the hicks from the boondocks. It was probably about this time that we began to often gauge our performances against those of Blessed Sacrament. They were the best, and no harm could come from aiming at them, even if one might never fulfil ones aspirations.

As the season ran on to its climax, there was the C.N.E. contest to contend with before the Nationals. Because of our busy practice schedule before this, we were in good shape. Our closest rivals, De La Salle and Grantham, were defeated decisively, by six and eight points respectively. This nailed down our third C.N.E. title and led to the Canadian Championships (Nationals) at Hamilton's Civic Stadium (now Ivor Wynne Stadium) on September 10.

1960 Nationals

This was to be a landmark contest for various reasons, which revealed themselves as the day moved on. The stadium was speckled with only a few spectators for the daytime preliminaries. These few would be witness to some Canadian Drum Corps history, albeit of a sad nature.

In the junior standstill division, the scores were:

Brantford Belltones. . . . 74.5
Trafalgar Police Boys. . . 72.7
Renown Sea Cadets. . . . 72.0

Renown Sea Cadets were the band in which Ronn Prokop had began his drumming career. Of more significance was the Trafalgar Police Boys, whose existence was shortly to be an interesting addition to the Optimists' story.

The Junior "A" preliminary began at 10:30 a.m. Three of five entrants would reach the finals, along with four of seven in the senior division. A change in procedure was introduced when it was required that each Corps play only the marching portion of its show, omitting the standstill part.

The rumours heard at the onset of the year, that Scout House would only enter two contests this year, were found to be true. This, the Nationals, was the second one, the first being only one week before, in Quebec. Thus, they were largely on unknown quantity, but the results of this policy were evident that day. For the first time in as long as anyone could remember, Scout House did not make the finals. They were overshadowed by The Optimists, De La Salle, and Grantham; the two latter Corps doing it for the first time. Preston sounded very good and, as usual, had the crowd with them all the way. It was not enough, and, whatever the reasons, not competing had to have something to do with the outcome.

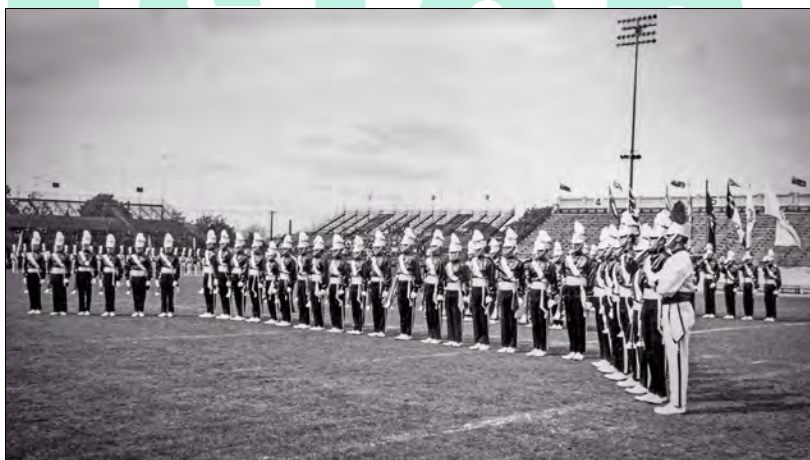
Now, for all intents and purposes, they leave our story. Although Scout House was to remain on the scene for many years, they would never again pose a serious threat to the dominance of the Canadian Drum Corps scene. They would continue as a competition and exhibition band, even pulling themselves up to third place at a Nationals in the future. Finally, after many trials and tribulations, demises and regenerations, they would disappear, probably forever, in 1983.

That September day in 1960 was Canadian Corps history, as were Scout House themselves. Their eventual disappearance left a gap never likely to be filled, let alone equalled. In the ongoing search for a Canadian identity, Scout House was a piece of Canadiana that cannot be denied and they represented Canada in unique and incomparable fashion in many places and their like would not be seen again.

Back to the more conventional Drum Corps. The fact that Scout House had declined has to be in contrast to the fact that everyone else was getting better. Our improving scores against U.S. Corps and the close challenges of our Canadian rivals stood as confirmation of this.



1960: Toronto Optimists Colour Guard (Nationals, Hamilton)



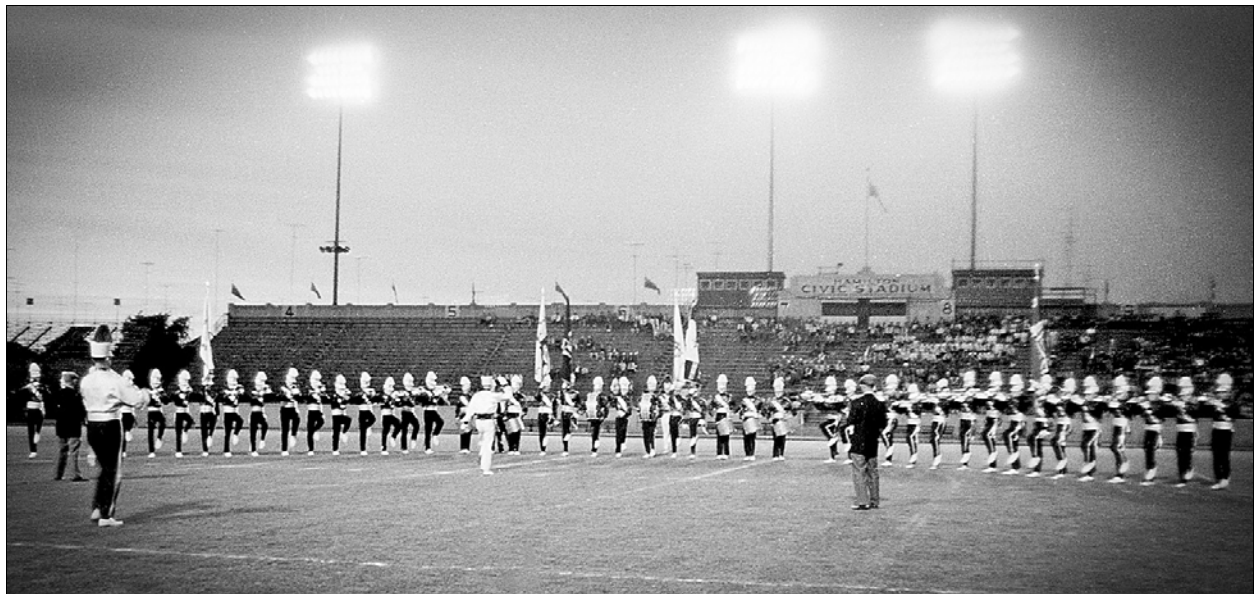
1960: Toronto Optimists at Nationals (Hamilton)

De La Salle made a tremendous impression at the preliminaries where they displayed new, white uniforms with capes of scarlet and green. These new uniforms had been introduced at the New York/Canadians in Rochester. As quoted in "Drum Corps World", along with the colour, they gave a "superb, class 'A' performance" on the field. Likewise with Grantham, whose show was noted as "inspired, sensational, horn line overshadowed Del, with crystal clear tone".



1960: De La Salle guard in their red capes (Grape Festival)

The Optimists? The rough edges on the new show had mostly disappeared, thanks to a year of dogged practice, interspersed with frequent competitions. This showed at the Nationals when others applied comments such as "very polished look, tremendous all round, fabulous sound" to the show.



1960: Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Hamilton)

Optimists, De La Salle, and Grantham made the finals, and although, for some reason, the scores were withheld, a leak occurred. We had scored 88.67 to Del's 84.0, a comfortable margin but not one to induce complacency. Everybody was genuinely sympathetic to Scout House as it was recognized that we were witnessing the end of an era.

At the night finals, there was high drama. De La Salle took high field bugles and high general effect marching and maneuvering. This was not a great surprise, as these captions were always

among their strong points. Grantham, with their first real shot at a title on the line, received a foul stroke of fortune. During their performance, seven people collapsed from food poisoning, due to having eaten beforehand in a strange restaurant. This ill luck detracted from a fine effort, but they still managed to top the general effect bugle caption. What would have happened had their misfortune not occurred is known only to the gods.

When the outcome of the day was revealed to all, the Optimists stood in first place by only two points ahead of De La Salle, and three and a half in front of Grantham. We now possessed our third consecutive National title. De La Salle had now established themselves as the main contenders for first place, a position they would seldom relinquish.

What made the biggest difference between first and second place was a large spread in the drum scores. This situation had existed since 1958, the Optimists drum line was yet to be defeated in Canada. It often was the determining factor in other contests as well, but here it really paid off. Del's drum line was good, but not quite good enough, possibly due to having a competent but part-time instructor. We had the services, full time, of one of the best. Del's horns, music, and drills were on par with anyone in Canada. If they could plug this one gap, we would have real problems. As it turned out, they could, and we did.

An interesting sidelight to this contest was that Al Baggs served as a G.E., M&M judge at the senior portion of this contest. His judging activity was eventually to culminate in his appointment as Chief Judge of the Canadian Association.



1960: Karl Bossert, Terry McKolskey, Doug MacKenzie & Doug Yarker

Post Nationals Shows

There was still much activity in store before the season was complete. At Varsity Stadium in Toronto, we, along with Del, appeared again at the Leaside Lions International, a junior and senior contest. The Audubon Girls were again in attendance, but this time we were better prepared. Taking every caption, we won by over three points. This was also history. Not only was it the first time that we had defeated them, it was the first time that a Canadian Corps had beaten a major U.S. Corps. Some attributed this to overconfidence on the part of the visitors. Whatever the reason, it happened. De La Salle was only 0.78 behind Audubon.

Optimists took the trophy for highest score of the evening, over top U.S. and Canadian Senior Corps, as well as that for highest score for Canadian Corps. The former trophy had, until now, been won by an American Senior Corps, while the latter was regarded somewhat as a consolation prize.

Into October and the Annual St. Catharines Grape Festival parade and show. This was the one that we had so unceremoniously pulled out of the year before. This year, the show was all exhibitions, and the only contest was for the street parade. De La Salle, Optimists, and Scout House placed first, second, and third in this event.

Another step in the progress of Drum Corps in Canada was the fact that CHCH-TV of Hamilton taped this parade, and CFRB radio of Toronto began giving results of Canadian and U.S. contests. Actually, not much has, if at all, improved in this respect to this day. Only half of D.C.I. finals are shown on TV, if one lives in the right area. A true indication of where Drum Corps really stands in the scheme of things.



1960: Scout House and Optimists guys (Grape Festival)

At this time, one facet of Don Daber's influence became evident, with the appearance of "Optimists money", green dollar bills made with Optimists symbols and along with this came Corps buttons, emblems, pennants, and a record (remember those?). These were all his creations, publicity gimmicks.

Previously in this book was mentioned the fact of Drum and Bugle Corps breaking away from their service sponsors. Just before this year's Grape Festival, The Marching Ambassadors had severed their connection with the army. As a consequence, they had no instruments with which to perform, although being in attendance. Using instruments borrowed from Grantham and Guelph Royallaires, they managed to put on a commendable performance. This type of action became increasingly common as Drum Corps and army philosophies clashed.



Optimists Money

The competitive season was now almost over for this year, and on October 18 a rally night, which would become an annual event, was held. One hundred and twenty people were in attendance, including, of course, current members of the Corps. Others were new recruits, alumni, Optimist Club officials, executive, and instructors. A good time was had rehashing the past year and anticipating the one to come. There were also innovations, to add to the growing appendages that were accumulating around the Corps.

Contracts were introduced, to be signed by all members. This, no doubt, was an attempt to bind people all the more closely to the Corps. An Optimists alumna was created, and their function was social events, booster club, and fund raising activities, etc. In this capacity, we already had the Ladies Auxiliary and the Opti-Mrs., but the alumna were a welcome addition.

New recruits were now introduced all around. They numbered about thirty-five and were all hopeful of getting into the main Corps. It was concluded, amid much convivial partying, that 1960 had, to date, been the most successful year in the history of the still young “Green Machine”. They had placed first in every field contest in Canada. This was a repeat of 1959, but minus any dubious last minute cancellations.



1960: Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Hamilton)

A new executive and slate of instructors was introduced, much swollen in comparison to the original staff.

For the year ending 1960, into 1961, the officials would be:

- Corps Commander (Director) A. W. Baggs
- Assistant Corps Director. Bernie Beer
- Equipment Manager. Warren Copp
- Musical Director. Barry Bell
- Drum Instructor. Lorne Ferrazzutti
- Colour Guard Instructor. Eric Burton
- Publicity & Public Relations. . . . Don Daber
- Bugle Instructor, Drum Major. . . . Al Morrison
- Drill Instructor. Doug McPhail
- Bugle Instructor Ed Nanni
- Corps Adjutant Jim Patton
- Guard Captain Mike Layton

Contrast this total list with the beginning of 1958

- Corps Director. A. W. Baggs
- Bugle Instructor. Barry Bell
- Drum Instructor. Lorne Ferrazzutti
- Guard Instructor. Eric Burton

Just an indication of how this organization had grown in size and complexity. Many of these new people on the staff had been playing members of the Corps, and others had come from the outside.

One more show remained to be attended, and it produced an ominous blip on the horizon. On October 29, the International Standstill Contest at Buffalo, New York, was held. To our chagrin, we placed last, albeit with a 1.0 penalty for overtime. This puzzled us as we had taken pains to ensure this would not happen, but it did, and we lost.

First were Irondequoit, formerly Hilton, who we had never beaten. Niagara Militaires who we had beaten before, though not consistently, followed them in second place. Third was De La Salle, who were jubilant at having beaten us for the first time ever. We, of course, were fourth, the penalty dragging us down to eat humble pie.

Although no one could see into the future, less than a year from now, three factors would combine to create what was arguably the most disputed result in Canadian Drum Corps history. These factors were the Optimists – De La Salle rivalry, the election of Al Baggs to the position of Chief Judge, and a penalty. Such things can “do one in” as Eliza Doolittle might have said before she became a lady.

Don't leave yet, were not finished.

Optimists personnel instructing other Corps

On the first page of this chapter, the fact of Optimists personnel instructing other Corps was noted. Also cited was the fact that this activity caused dissensions in another Corps, due to the intensity of involvement. This was true. It concerned one of Canada's better Senior Corps, The Jesters, formerly called Service Corps, reflecting their army origins. They were located in Toronto and, this year, our three main instructors Lorne, Barry, and Eric were also instructing them. Added to this was the fact that many ex-Optimists people continued their Drum Corps activities in The Jesters. Some friction developed between factions because in some quarters The Jesters were beginning to be regarded as a “Senior Optimists”.

They had many members of long standing; Eric Burton had been one, and a long tradition of their own. The acrimony that developed caused some of their membership to leave, some going to the Marching Ambassadors, their biggest rivals. Among certain people, there had been plans afoot to create an “Optimist League”, so to speak. This would have Optimists influence controlling the Bantam, Junior and Senior Divisions in Canadian Drum Corps. These plans never came to fruition, which was probably a good thing. Drum Corps partisanship runs deep, and this would have been too much for some people.



1960: Glenn (wheel man), Mel, Joe & Bob



1960: 12 of the 13 "Age Outs" (Ed Nanni is missing)


Altogether, at the end of this year, thirteen people left the Optimists, the largest group yet to leave en masse. Their names are now lost to posterity, but mostly it was due to overage. Still others would leave in ensuing months for a variety of reasons. There were replacements available, but those who left were experienced veterans and would be missed.

Nobody worried too much about such things. They were all part of the Corps scene, and a year-end victory dance was held, the tab being picked up by the Optimist Club. The debacle at Buffalo was forgotten, and it was announced that Al Baggs was now on the Board of Directors of the New York/Canadian Association.

To cap the year, the first issues of "Green Capsule Comments" rolled off the presses. This was the brainchild and product of that master of publicity, Don Daber, who hand-rolled the first three page editions. G.C.C., as it was known, became the official publication of the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps.

Finally, after yet another civic reception, the year was laid to rest, all successes and failures going permanently into the record books.


Only fate knew what lay in store, and it was to unerringly show its hand in the near future.



GREEN CAPSULE COMMENTS

PERSONAL COPY OF NO.
19

Inside



editors: Doug McPhail
associate editor: Don Daber
VOL. 1 NUMBER 1 second section of issue number 6
May-June 1961

an open letter to The Optimists from Barry Bell...
RE: OPERATION "INDIVIDUAL PERFECTION"

Dear Corporant
Do you want the Corps to be unbeatable this year?
Of course you do. Do you want the Corps to climb to a greater degree of perfection than ever before attained? Naturally you do. Here then is the secret to success in two words--INDIVIDUAL PERFECTION.
*Ah yes! you say, "this is something we've heard a great deal about, lately. O.K. That's fine...but what have you done about it? Have you tried to improve your ability to the stage where you can say "I'm as good as THE BEST player in ANY Corps...AND PROVE IT. This I doubt. And here's another thing...is the only way to do accomplished at Corps' rehearsal? If this is so then you can never hope to achieve a... high degree of perfection either individually or collectively.
You must identify yourselves with other phases of Show Business, for instance --an actor receives his lines, goes home and memorizes them and practices saying them...then he rehearses with the rest of the cast. He does not "waste" the time of his associates by having to be taught his lines.
In a Drum Corps a REACTICE is time utilized by one member striving for INDIVIDUAL PERFECTION...A REHEARSAL is time utilized by a GROUP striving for uniform perfection.
CONCLUSION: THE CORPS will improve tremendously if you first improve yourself to the point where you can say modestly "I AM SUPERIOR" and then be able to PROVE IT.
RESULT: Better performances by the OPTIMISTS--thus greater enjoyment for ALL!!! I have a complete and sincere faith that you will drive yourselves to this new and much needed phase of improvement, that of "INDIVIDUAL PERFECTION" with real Optimistic enthusiasm--
Let's GO you guys...

Barry

1961: Front page of May-June GCC

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1960: Al Morrison, Solo, and Optimists (Civic Reception at Toronto's City Hall)

Version