

THE CHAMPS

They're Out to Win Again!

HARRISBURG, PA., JULY 19, 1953



Drum Corps Puts Wormleysburg on the Nation's Map

—Photo taken in Los Angeles

They Climbed to the Top—in Cadence

By J. KENNETH BEAVER

Sunday Patriot-News Staff Writer

OLD MAN WORM of Wormleysburg would never believe it.

No one could ever have told him, seriously, that the name of the poky little residential town squeezed between the railroad and the Susquehanna River opposite Harrisburg would sometime be known from coast to coast.

Wormleysburg is not a town to toot its horn—but as classy an aggregation as you could wish has been tooting its horns for Wormleysburg the past three years and making the country take note.

That aggregation is the West Shoremen, the championship drum and bugle corps of West Shore Post 1462, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In its short history it has captured the Pennsylvania Championship and the National Championship twice each, in 1951 and 1952. This year it is defending those titles again against the cream of the crops of drum and bugle corps.

While accomplishing these feats it has entered competitions everywhere under the Pennsylvania sun, carrying off honors nearly every time. Its latest triumph in Harrisburg was the \$150 first prize in the Improved Order of Red Men parade in Harrisburg June 10.

The corps consists of 40 buglers, eight drummers, an eight-man color guard, one guidon bearer and, last but far from least, the director, John S. Kauffman, "the man who," in the estimation of every one of the corps' members.

It was Kauffman who in the short space of a year raised the West Shoremen, then called the Longshoremen, from just another street aggregation to national championship status.

Though given its start by West Short Post, VFW, which bought the corps' first uniforms, the West Shoremen have been self-supporting ever since, paying their way with winnings in various and sundry competitions, or with donations of friends.

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IN FACT, JUST LAST YEAR, after winning the State championship in the senior open class, the corps found itself without funds to journey to Los Angeles to defend its National title.

Sounding an "S.O.S." the corps sought aid from Harrisburg area residents and Harrisburgers leaped to help. There was even one night when the corps staged a parade in Downtown Harrisburg and a concert in the southwest quarter of the Square.

That's a night Director Jack Kauffman will long remember. "Anything to get a buck" was his motto, as well as the motto of his corps members. So when Harry Morton of 3008 N. Fourth St., offered \$20 to Jack if he'd push a cucumber with his nose down Market Square, all Jack asked was, "Where's the cucumber?"

He pushed it, too, and the \$20 went into the kitty. With spirit like that, the West Shoremen couldn't be stopped. They went to Los Angeles, entered the senior closed competition, instead of the senior open, and carried off the championship in ship-shape form, bringing new renown to Wormleysburg.

This year they defended their State championship on July 10 in Philadelphia—how they made out is now well known. They'll defend their National title in Milwaukee during the week of August 3.

That is, they will if they have the money for the trip.

In addition to the regular members of the corps, enumerated above, there are another 20 substitutes and equipment handlers whose pride in the outfit is not surpassed by that of any of the first line musicians, and whose job is just as exacting.

The corps practices, when competitions are nearing, on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday of each week. That's a tough grind, particularly for married men with families, the type which comprise 60 per cent. of the corps membership.

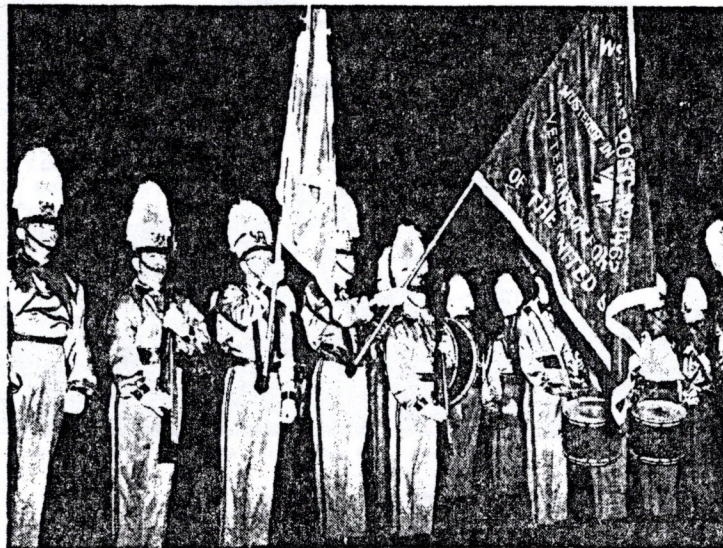
And lest anyone thinks that's all there is to it, be reminded that this is all for the fun of it. None of the men get paid for this grind, for all the marching and practicing and precision work. It's all free gratis.

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WE MENTIONED the "handlers" back a little way. They're the guys who always stay in the background and worry about equipment—whether uniforms have buttons, whether shoes are properly shined, shirt collars unfrayed, plumes free and flowing.

That's as important, in close competition, as some of the precision drill work and the music abilities of the corpsmen.

A rigid inspection of the corpsmen is a part of every competition. A frayed shirt collar, too long



'PRESENT ARMS'—West Shoremen's Color Guard

hair, a mark on a horn—each of these things may cost the aggregation one-tenth of a point. When the boys are up against real hot competition—where oftentimes two or three-tenths of a point is the difference between victory or defeat, that's a big matter.

The destinies of the corps are handled by the board of directors, headed by Donald Wolfe, president. Other officers are: Herman Waltz, vice president; Kenneth Kahn, treasurer; Laurin Klinger, adjutant. Members of the board are Gene Boose, Robert Hall, Red Strife, William Radel and Jack Fraizer. Bertram Olley is post chairman for the drum corps, a sort of liaison officers between the VFW post and the corps.

But the guy who's behind it all—so far as the post

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BOOM!—'Take it easy!'

and the West Shoremen themselves are concerned, is Director Kauffman.

Kauffman is a natural musician. At the age of five he was a bugler with the Junior Navy Boys' and Girls' Drum and Bugle Corps of Reading, his home town. In 1941, at the age of 15, he directed the Greater Reading VFW Junior Corps.

After spending three and one-half years with them, he entered the U.S. Armed Forces, serving with the 8th Army Air Force in Japan and Okinawa. Leaving the service, he played with the Greater Reading VFW Senior Corps until it was disbanded. At that time he took the position of director of the Kenhorst First Company Junior Drum Corps. After two years with them he became director of the Temple Cadets of the Temple Fire Company of Temple, a Reading suburb, which he still directs.

Kauffman took over as director of the "Longshoremen," now the West Shoremen, in November, 1950. It was decided he would direct both music and drilling. With the assistance of George Price, who instructed the drummers, Kauffman has led the corps to its present pre-eminent position.

The fourth competition the corps entered after Kauffman took over won the West Shore aggregation the State VFW Open Class Senior Championship at the State Encampment in Philadelphia, Aug. 13, 1951. It was the first time they had competed for a State championship—and it all came within seven months of the advent of Kauffman.

But it wasn't only Kauffman. There are a bunch of enthusiastic musicians in the outfit, men from as far away as Elizabethtown and Hershey, others from throughout the greater Harrisburg area—towns such as Wormleysburg, Lemoyne, Camp Hill, Middletown, New Cumberland and Harrisburg itself—who put their heart and soul into turning the West Shoremen into a smart-stepping, smart-playing aggregation with the only possible payoff.

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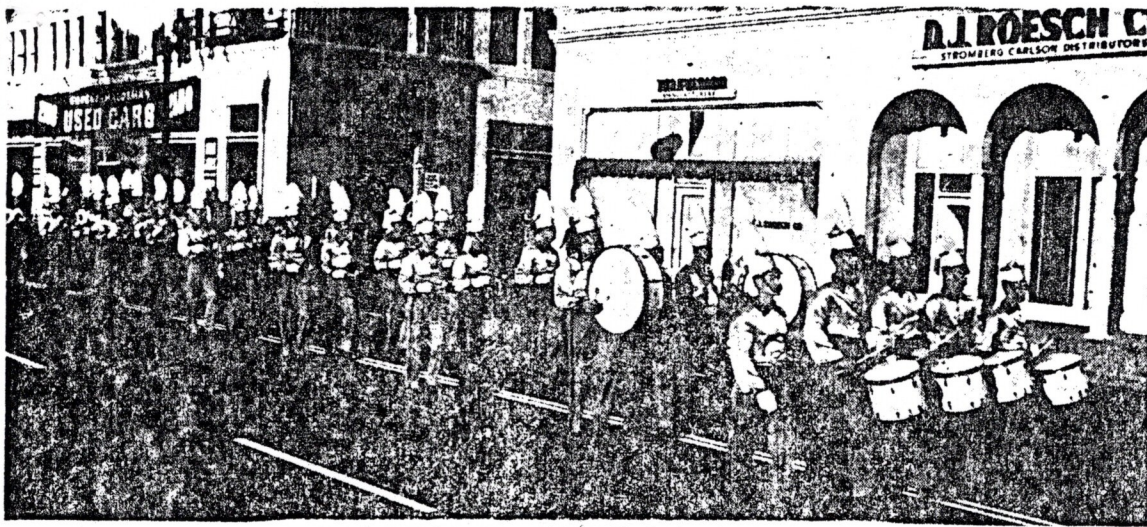
ACTUALLY, THE WEST SHOREMEN have a lengthy history behind them, but one broken up by years without an organization or years, such as the war period, when the going was rough.

Drum and bugle corps activities with the West Shore Vets date back to 1935, when a junior corps was organized by Sam Kennedy. The corps, consisting of sons and daughters of veterans, competed in State VFW competitions in 1939, '40, '41 and '42.

From 1942 to 1945, the going was rough, due to the war, and finally in 1945 the corps was forced to disband. Reorganization as a senior corps was attempted at the end of the 1946 season, with scant success. Efforts were continued through 1947, and towards the end of the 1948 season the organization was finally contrived.

By 1950 there was a successful street corps but, as one of the active supporters writes, "There is quite a difference between a street corps and a field corps."

"A street corps," this author pointed out, "is exactly what the words imply: they are limited to



SNAPPY OUTFIT SNARES MANY TITLES—In Los Angeles Competition.

street work. However, we were happy in that we were able to reorganize our corps and make it stick together so that a corps could go on the street. The hardest job was now done and the boys were the most spirited group you've ever met. Each parade came in stride and the men did a fine job in their new uniforms, playing their new musical program."

During the summer months of 1950 the corpsmen drove long distances to watch actual field contests and "were so enthused by what they saw that they decided that they were going to be a field corps."

That called for an instructor. Finding a suitable instructor was not an easy chore. In Philadelphia it would have been easier—but Wormleysburg is a far cry from Philadelphia, and who had ever heard of Wormleysburg?

But there was one man the corps members had been watching—that was Kauffman and his Temple Cadets aggregation. Finally, at the Ephrata Farmers Fair they broached the subject to Kauffman through Charles Lorenz, one of the corps' buglers. It took Kauffman a week to make up his mind to take on the Wormleysburg outfit.

Then things changed drastically. "Everything we had been doing to this point was now discarded and an entire new program was started. In addition to the new music, more men were sought and soon the ranks had swelled to nearly 35 members. The late winter months of 1950 were spent cramming with new music. Under George Price, a co-worker of Jack Kauffman, the drum section was completely revamped and a new rudimental system installed."

BY THE FIRST OF MAY the corps had spent almost 5,000 man hours preparing for their first competition—a "hair-raiser." It was the Invitational Eastern States Championship meet.

"It was about the toughest meet of the year," the corps historian writes, "and the boys stood right up to the job. They were new—they were spirited—they did a fine job, but they placed last. They had made their bid and only inexperience ranked them in the sixth position."

Despite this showing, scouts for other contests seemed to spot their potential and invitations started to roll in. Recognition spurred the men to greater efforts. Each following contest brought the score up higher and higher.

"After the first Hershey contest," the historian writes, "came the fairs of York, Hanover and Mechanicsburg. The corps was finally crawling up the ladder of success and before long the State Encampment was confronting them."

"Entering the open class contest, the corps had to buck the Black Knights of Lock Haven, who had held the State title for about four years. Our corps battled it out on the field and the State Championship was won. What a delicious time!

"Following State came National, and the corps journeyed to New York. Lock Haven was there in full stride, fighting for the national title, which they also held. However, the spirit of the West Shoremen had rallied and they were not to be defeated, even by the Black Knights."

So came the aggregation's first State and National championships, within seven or eight months of their first competition.

That was 1951. In 1952 the West Shoremen were defending champion. At Pittsburgh, the corps won the senior open class of the State VFW drum and bugle corps competition, clearing the way for their entry into the Nationals.

The Wormleysburg outfit was competing in the State contests against the corps of Pvt. Earl E. Aurand Post, 1086, Harrisburg, which took second

place in the senior open competition. Third place went to the Bland J. Rossman Post of Lock Haven. Seventeen outfits competed in the different classes.

THEN CAME THE DRIVE for funds to carry the corps to Los Angeles—and shortly over the wires came the electrifying news: "Wormleysburg VFW Band Wins 5 of 7 Titles."

The story read: "Los Angeles The West Shoremen, Wormleysburg VFW Drum and Bugle Corps that almost didn't make the trip to enter the national competition here, ran away with five of the seven top championships here last night.

"In addition, they took second and third place in the remaining two events to emerge undisputed champions over corps from virtually every state. First, they retained their National Senior Closed Championship.

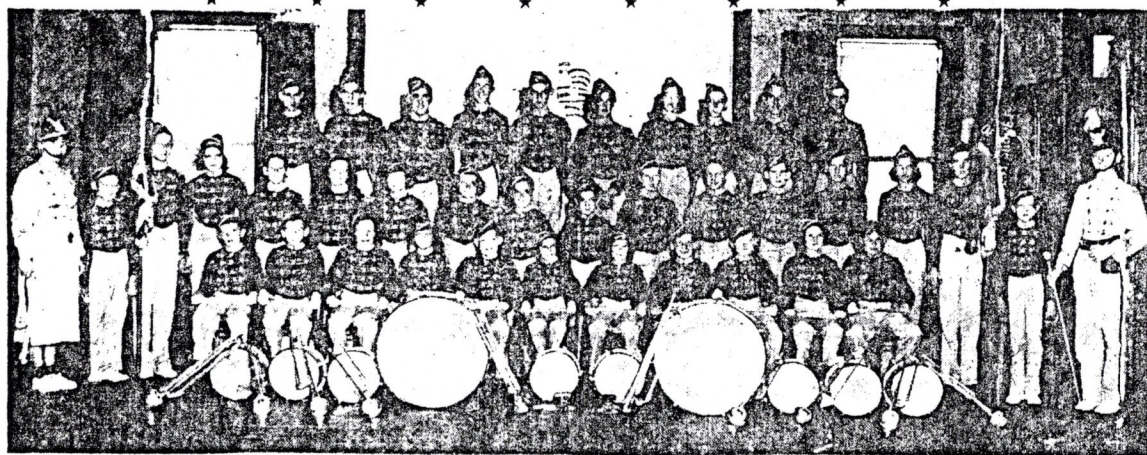
"Then their brass quartet won the National Senior Championship. Their drum quartet won the National Senior Championship. They won the individual drum National Senior Championship, the baritone individual National Senior Championship; were runners-up in the National Senior Color Guard Championship and captured third place in the only other competition, the soprano bugle individual championship.

"It was a jubilant group of Central Pennsylvanians that celebrated the unprecedented wins.

"Today, two or three events remained to be decided and all signs indicated the West Shoremen would win or place in every one.

"Deep in debt to make the trip, the corps members were pinching pennies but not talent. They were strutting with well-earned pride today."

So that's the story—and old Man Worm of Wormleysburg can feel right smart about it all—it isn't the size but the quality that counts.



'MIGHTY OAKS FROM TINY ACORNS GROW'—Original 1936 Junior Drum Corps.