
by Tony Burke

1927-1932 --

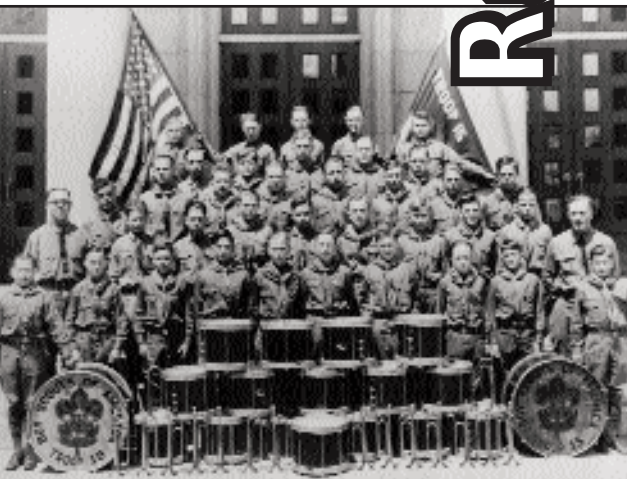
'The noisy nomads'

In the fall of 1927, a group of men from the legendary Boys of 76 joined with leaders of Scouting to start what has now become the oldest junior drum and bugle corps in the country.

The young men from Troop 15, sponsored by the Church of Atonement, earned the nickname "the noisy nomads" by practicing their drill and music in the streets of Racine. Because instruments were unavailable at first, the boys sang or hummed their music. In 1928, the Scouts marched in Racine's famous Fourth of July parade for the first time.

In 1930, the Scouts distinguished themselves and their city by winning the prestigious "Chicagoland Music Festival." The corps program grew to be so

Racine Scouts



Racine Scouts, 1927 (photo from the collection of the Racine Scouts).

successful that it became council-wide and soon was the official musical representative of Boy Scouts Region 7.

1933-1941 -- Champion of champions

In 1933, the corps attended the inaugural National Scouting Jamboree in Washington, D.C. They had the honor of leading the first parade of 20,000 scouts down Pennsylvania Avenue, in front of the White House and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Racine Scouts are the only scouting music organization to attend all the National Jamborees from inception through 1973, where they were honored guests.

Beginning in 1935 and continuing through 1941, the Scouts were undefeated in competition, winning all junior national contests they entered.

In 1938, the Scouts premiered the first single piston bugles at the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago, IL. Obviously, this opened a new field of music for the corps with the additional keys.

Throughout its history, the backbone of the corps has been and will always be the support of the parents of members. The Mothers Club was the first of many incarnations of formalized parent organizations. Another major group called the Parents Club began in 1959. Today's parents are organized through the corps' booster club.

Also in 1938, the Racine Scouts inspired a group of businessmen in Madison, WI, to form a new drum corps. By providing staff, music and general support, the Racine Scouts were proud to play a critical role in starting the Madison Scouts. The corps had its first performance on radio, playing on NBC's "Worldwide Round Up" broadcast that year.

1941-1946 -- the war years

Many alumni of the corps served their country in World War II. Some didn't come back, including Medal of Honor winner Jack Jerstad.

"Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty. On August 1, 1943, he served as pilot of the lead aircraft in his group in a daring low-level attack against enemy oil refineries and installations at Ploesti, Rumania.

"Although he had completed more than his share of missions and was no longer connected with this group, so high was his conception of duty that he volunteered to lead the formation in the correct belief that his participation would contribute materially to success in this attack. Maj. Jerstad led the formation into attack with full realization of the extreme hazards involved and despite withering fire from heavy and light antiaircraft guns.

"Three miles from the target his airplane was hit, badly damaged and set on fire. Ignoring the fact that he was flying over a field suitable for a forced landing, he kept on the course. After the bombs of his aircraft were released on the target, the fire in his ship became

so intense as to make further progress impossible and he crashed into the target area. By his voluntary acceptance of a mission he knew was extremely hazardous, and his assumption of an intrepid course of action at the risk of life over and above the call of duty, Maj. Jerstad set an example of heroism which will be an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces."

It is appropriate that the Scouts practiced for many years at the school named in Jerstad's honor. Meanwhile the young men who stayed behind did their part by performing in many parades and exhibitions. They also supported the community and the war effort by selling war bonds. By this time, more than 3,000 young men had participated in the corps and traveled throughout the United States and Canada.

1947-1964 -- The baby boom begins

The corps traveled to Dearborn, MI, in April 1947 to honor Henry Ford and play for his funeral. Also that year, the Scouts were the first "outside" unit to participate in the

National Music Camps at Interlochen, MI. Of course, the corps attended the Boy Scouts National Jamboree. While at the jamboree, Don Warren saw the corps perform and got an idea. The result was the beginning of the Chicago Cavaliers.

The Racine Scouts had a direct influence in the creation of two of what would become powerhouse drum corps of the future. Who knows how many others can attribute their creation in some way to the Racine Scouts?

In 1949, the corps made its second worldwide broadcast on "Voice of America."

In 1953, the Scouts attended another National Jamboree in Irvine Park, CA. As a bonus, they also had the honor of playing at the opening of Disneyland. This might have been the first time Mickey Mouse conducted a live musical group of any kind! The popularity of the corps continued to grow to the point that a junior corps was formed for younger members in 1956.

In 1957, the corps found itself at the Valley Forge National Jamboree and played in Times Square. The corps also made its first live TV performance with Jimmie Dean.

In 1960, the corps attended the Boy Scouts Golden Anniversary Jamboree in Colorado Springs, CO. The following year the Scouts won the VFW State Championships as well as the Midwestern States Compact Corps Competition. Also that year the corps premiered its first of many successful competitive color guard units at the VFW State Championships.

In 1962, both the junior corps and the explorer corps won the VFW state Championships. The Explorers' color guard went on to place third at VFW Nationals in Minneapolis, MN, while the corps itself made finals.

The Explorers traveled to Seattle, WA, in 1963 where they placed third at VFW Nationals, as did the color guard. While there, they had the opportunity to make their first appearance at the Boy Scouts Order of the Arrow Convention.

1964-1968 -- 'The chrome domes'

In part because of the Explorer Scouts evolution and the many Scouting units across the country, the corps decided it was time for a new look. The Explorers created a new uniform based on the look of an 1812 Naval Ensign. With the help of Racine's In-Sink-Erator Corporation, which did the design, engineering and production, the corps had a new helmet and gained the nickname "the chrome domes."

The 1964 season was quite successful and busy for the organization. The Junior Scout corps won all but one contest that year. The Explorers attended VFW Nationals, the New York World's Fair and the World Open. The corps also attended the National Scout Jamboree at Valley Forge, PA. Once again the Explorer corps' color guard placed third at VFW Nationals while the corps itself missed the night show, placing 13th in prelims. In addition, the corps' percussion line won top drums.

In 1965, the Explorers were invited to

perform at Chicago's Civic Opera House. The corps' color guard continued to build on past successes by becoming the Midwest Color Guard Circuit Champions. The unit went on to place second at VFW Nationals in Chicago, IL, while the corps placed 17th. The corps also attended the CYO National Invitational in Boston and did quite well.

The summer of 1966 began with the corps winning the compact corps competition in Madison. The color guard repeated as champions once again in the Midwest Color Guard Circuit, defeating 98 competitors. Later in the year, the corps won both the VFW and American Legion State Championships.

The guard went on to place second again at VFW Nationals in Jersey City, NJ. The main corps returned to finals in national competition at legendary Roosevelt Stadium.

While competing against all of the top corps in the country, the Explorers placed sixth at the 1967 VFW Nationals held in New Orleans. The color guard placed second. The real reason for the color guards' fine showing in the past years was due to the teamwork of everyone under the leadership of Gary Pauly. He had been voted top commanding officer of color guards in the Midwest circuit the previous three years. Many people, after seeing the 1967 color guard in action, said they felt they were the true champions. In 1968, the corps placed in the top 10 of the country at VFW Nationals in Detroit, MI.

In 1969, the Explorer corps, following the lead of what was becoming a national scout trend, became coed. That August, the corps headed south to Atlanta, GA, for American Legion Nationals. Knowing the show would be in the South, the staff focused its attention on designing a Southern show. While traveling on the bus to prelims, James Stapelman learned the opening solo of *Dixieland*.

Besides *Dixie*, the repertoire included *Swanee*, *Sweet Georgia Brown* and *Onward Christian Soldiers*. The Atlanta crowd was on its feet throughout both prelims and the night show. Without a doubt, this was the best performance of the year for the Racine Scouts.

The highlight of 1970, and perhaps the entire history of the corps, was performing at halftime of a Green Bay Packers game. The corps also made a tour of New York State, visiting exotic sites such as West Point, New York City and Woodstock. The corps



Racine Scouts, 1964 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Racine Scouts, 1972 (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

attended 1971 VFW Nationals in Dallas, TX. On the way there, the corps stopped off in Kansas for Mid-American Open and came within two-tenths of a perfect marching and maneuvering score.

1972-2002 -- The DCI era

While many drum corps decided to become involved in the new Drum Corps International, the Racine Explorer Scouts chose to remain loyal to the VFW. In 1972, the corps again won VFW State and placed fifth at VFW Nationals in Minneapolis.

After performing for a Milwaukee Brewers baseball game, the Junior Scouts toured Canada. Participating in the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, the Explorer corps was the first drum and bugle corps from Racine to appear in that event.

Visiting California again in 1973, the Explorer corps performed at Disneyland for the second time. Meanwhile, the Junior Scout corps traveled to Idaho, as honored guests, to attend the Scouts National Jamboree. By 1975, the changing economy and the fact that there were so many other activities available to young people had begun to have an impact. The Explorer corps temporarily reorganized as a parade unit. Demonstrating a tenacity and absolute refusal to give up, which has become a trademark of the Racine Scouts, the Explorer corps quickly re-entered field competition in 1976.

The remainder of the 1970s and 1980s saw the Explorer corps continuing to perform nationally, but not quite maintaining the prominence of previous years. Two highlights of the 1980s were in 1987, when the Explorer corps was honored by the show sponsor in Niles, PA, by being requested to perform as "the oldest junior drum and bugle corps in the country," and in 1989, three members were selected to perform in the Drum Corps Midwest All-Star Drum Corps as part of the Fiesta Bowl activities in Arizona.

Since the late 1980s, the Junior Scout corps has been primarily a parade unit, because the focus has been placed on the Explorer corps. Simply surviving has been no simple task, as the demise of so many corps over the past few years can attest. The incredible dedication of alumni, parents and members has seen the corps through some dark hours.

In the past 75 years, the Racine Scout corps has performed for presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard M. Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, as well as high government officials and many foreign

dignitaries. Many graduates of the corps have taken their successful places in the business and industrial world. Many were (and still are) active in other marching and musical organizations, while others act as judges in different associations. And many have come back to instruct and/or manage the Racine Scouts of today.

The next 75 years -- Rebuilding a dynasty

The 1990s were a time of restructuring and planning for the future. New faces have come and gone, but one goal has remained constant: to return to the level of national leadership the Racine Scouts had previously known.

The 2002 season marked the completion of a five-year plan for strength and growth.

In 2003, based on a foundation of fiscal and philosophical strength, the Racine Scouts doubled their membership from the previous season and are embarking upon a second five-year plan for growth. By maintaining strong ties to the Racine community and developing new ties with brethren in the drum and bugle corps activity, the 21st century is a time of promise.

We look forward to having you read about how successful those plans have been in "A History of Drum & Bugle Corps, Volume 3!"



(Above) Racine Scouts, 2001 (photo by Dan Scafidi from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Tony Burke's drum corps experience began in 1967 as a French horn player for the Racine Junior Scouts. In 1970, he moved up to the Explorer corps and in 1971, he switched to contra.

Burke changed roles with the corps again in 1973 when he carried the American flag.

After aging out of the Racine Explorer Scouts in 1975, he became the director of the Racine Junior Scouts.

In 1978, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. In the early 1980s, Burke played contra for the Boys of 76, and in 1992, he played contra in the 65th anniversary Explorer Scout corps.

He joined the Kilties in 1993 and was a contra player, drum major and pit percussionist. He was president of the Racine Scouts' board of directors in 1997.