

(Above) The Westshoremens at DCA Finals in 1978 at Allentown, PA (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) the Westshoremens-Bonnie Scots at 1967 DCA Finals (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); (bottom of page) the Westshoremens in 1978 at DCA Prelims in Allentown, PA (photo by Jim DeWitt from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Westshoremens



by Jeff Ream

Founded in 1946 along the banks of the Susquehanna River in Wormleysburg, PA, the corps was originally named the Longshoremens and represented VFW Post 1462 on the west shore of the river, across from Harrisburg.

The corps quickly rose to prominence the first year, placing fourth at VFW Finals in Boston, MA, continuing with VFW state titles in 1951, 1952 and 1953, and the Los Angeles, CA, VFW Nationals title in 1952. The corps also won the Pennsylvania VFW title in 1953.

However, the corps had to change its name. The Longshoremens's union had issues with the usage of that name and sued the corps for misuse. Right away the corps changed the name to the Westshoremens, to reflect the location of their post.

In 1957, they placed fourth at the VFW Finals in Miami Beach, FL.

During this same time, in Millersburg, PA, representing American Legion Post 326, the Bonnie Scots were born. Clad in red kilts and tall black plumes, this corps rose slowly, but

surely and captured the Pennsylvania state championship. In 1959, the Westshoremens merged with the Bonnie Scots. The seeds had been planted a few months earlier as membership in both corps was shrinking and, for a while, both reduced their schedules to parades only.

Both were hired to represent fire companies at a parade in Carlisle, PA, in September 1959. The night before, the decision to merge was made. At the end of the parade, the corps joined ranks and marched back to the beginning of the parade as a combined unit to announce the merger.

The decision was made to return to competition, representing both American Legion Post 232 and a new VFW home, Post 6704 from Mechanicsburg, PA. The uniforms saw the corps stay in black and blue, but with a sash of red, black and blue to allow the Bonnie Scots' tradition to carry on.

The 1960s saw not as much competitive success, though the corps did place second at the 1963 and 1966 state VFW championships. The corps joined Drum Corps Associates in 1965, although they didn't attend finals until 1967, where they placed 10th. The director through this era was T.V. O'Connell, who passed away in June 1967 while the corps was in Chambersburg, PA, preparing for a show. Bill Saltzer took over the leadership.

In 1968 and 1969, the corps placed 12th at DCA Prelims as well as placing second at the 1969 Red Carpet Association championships. In 1970, the corps placed 11th at DCA Prelims and fourth at the 1970 Red Carpet Association Finals. In 1971, the corps slipped to 15th at DCA and in 1972 they were 14th.

After the 1972 season, the corps went inactive for 1973 due to financial and membership issues.

The corps reorganized in early 1974, with Larry Hershman at the helm. The name was changed to Westshoremens, Inc., and the uniforms returned to the original look; blue satin tops, white shakos and black pants. The first show produced a low score, 37.35, in Amherst, MA, a week before finals.

At DCA prelims, the corps rose to a 41.00 and last place. In 1975, the corps placed 15th and the score jumped 22 points. In 1976, the corps rose to 11th place, good for associate status in DCA, as well as third at RCA Finals.

The 1977 season was the return to DCA Finals with a 10th-place finish. In 1978, the corps rose to ninth at DCA. The highlight of that season was a trip to New Orleans, LA, to compete at American Legion Nationals, representing the Linglestown, PA, Post 272. There, the corps competed at the Superdome and defeated Chicago Connection for the title.

For 1979, show design was improved and new uniforms were designed, all black with a powder blue sash and plume on a black Aussie hat. The season resulted in a sixth-place finish at DCA, the highest yet, and the first win in DCA competition ever! The energetic show started with *Got to Get To It* from "A Chorus Line," and added *What I did For Love*, *Granada Smoothie*, *Sing, Sing*,

Sing and *The Impossible Dream*.

The 1980 season saw more improvement and also one of the corps' funniest moments. En route to a fifth-place finish at DCA Finals, the corps was performing their closer of *The Impossible Dream*, which included a color presentation and a huge American flag to be unfurled. Underneath the flag were several drum cases filled with doves to be released.

Only one problem -- the birds, being kept in the dark, refused to fly away and instead, had to be chased off the field. Chief Judge Walter Kelly chased several off by firing the timing pistol and members came back to retrieve the straggling birds so the Sunrisers could take the field.

The corps also placed fourth that summer at the American Legion nationals in Boston, MA. The show consisted of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *What I Did For Love*, *Spanish Dreams*, *Sing, Sing, Sing* and *The Impossible Dream*.

In 1981, the corps earned a sixth-place finish at DCA Finals. One early-season highlight was the corps singing *Music*, but at mid-season, the singing was removed and a reprise of *The Impossible Dream* was inserted to end the show.

For 1982, Frank Dorritie was brought in from California to write the horn book. The show was *Blues in the Night*, *Razulli*, *Icarus*, *Big Noise from Winnetka* and *All the Things You Are*. Coming out of the blocks hot and heavy, the corps walked away undefeated until late July, then continued to win several more shows. The late-surgings Sunrisers passed the corps and, while the best finish yet -- second place with a tie for high general effect -- was felt to be a disappointment.

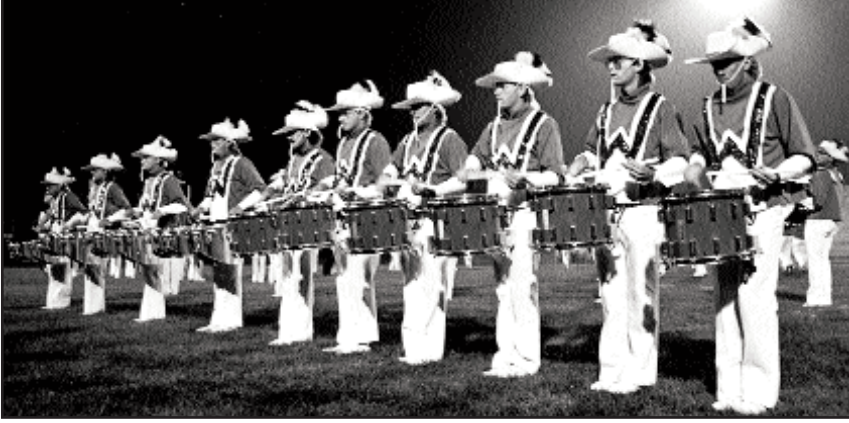
The 1983 season again featured many of the same players and a powerful corps, but fourth place at DCA Finals was the end result.

In October, it was announced that the management team was leaving and all of the equipment was sold to the California Dons junior corps. Dan Bowman took the reins as director and brought in John Chamberlin and Dick Eschenmann to help the administrative side of the house.

But things moved slowly until late June, when it was decided to field a corps at DCA Prelims. Members, in six weeks, got a show on the field, performed as best as could be expected and ended up 15th. The show consisted mainly of songs from 1982-1983.

In 1985, the corps placed 12th at DCA, falling back to 13th in 1986. They also competed in some International Corps Associates shows during this time.





Westshoremen, August 26, 1989, Carlisle, PA (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

In 1987, the corps again rose to 12th, showing signs of growth. For 1988, a larger corps, with some new staff faces, achieved that goal and placed seventh at DCA Finals. New uniforms were designed, consisting of white bib pants, which had a blue top with a white "W" cut into it. White Aussies completed the new look.

The 1989 season saw more change as the corps went to a more modern jazz approach and hired Dan DeLong as percussion caption head and John Arientano to head the brass. Mark Thurston arranged for the percussion.

To add to the uniform, blue sparkles were



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

added to the "W" outline on the uniform top. Playing *Explosion*, *Strawberry Soup* and *Spirit of St. Frederick*, the corps oozed aggressive jazz. When the dust cleared, they ended fifth, cracking a 90 for the first time in DCA. Percussion claimed high execution.

For 1990 Arientano and DeLong remained, and Rich Templin and George Thompson were brought in to run the drill and guard. Helmets replaced the Aussie hats, a touch of pink was added to the uniform top and the guard wore blue spandex with white tops. The show was titled "Suite for Jazz Orchestra" and "Gershwin: Portrait in Jazz." Throughout the season, the corps traded victories with the Caballeros and Empire Statesmen and won the Scranton regional.

The percussion section had one loss to its name until finals, but prelims found the

In 1992, the corps was full of talent, but show design issues landed them sixth at DCA. The 1993 season saw a smaller corps under new director Dan Rippon, as the corps stepped away from jazz to perform the music of Yanni and, despite its size, landed in sixth once again.

New staff faces included John Bugosh and Walt Street on brass, Mike Herr and Tim Newlin on visual. For 1994, with an even smaller corps and a show that left members and fans confused, the corps ended up 10th in DCA competition.

That fall, it was decided the corps was done. Finances were a mess and the corps was in the red. However, Jerry Mace said he would take over and get the corps in the title hunt. New uniforms were designed -- black shakos, black shirts and overlays, with a silver sash.

Arientano and DeLong were back for the music, Terry Martin and Newlin did the drill and guard. With a show of *Blues in the Night*, *Strawberry Soup*, *Twilight Tones* and *Suite for Jazz Orchestra*, they continued to climb the ladder and the percussion section went into finals weekend undefeated.

The corps entered finals in third, five-tenths behind the Empire Statesmen. That night the corps performed the best show in their history, leapfrogged over Empire for second and captured the percussion trophy.

They knew 1996 was the chance and plans began in October. The uniform was modified to add a new overlay, blue at the top with silver on the bottom. The dividing line was in the form of a "W." The staff was back. There was little turnover and many people tried out for the available spots.

The corps' show was based on the 50th anniversary of the corps, titled "Suite for Westshore," and featured *Granada Smoothie*, *All the Things You Are*, *Explosion*, *Marching Season*, *Carnival*, *Suite for Jazz Ending* and a reprise of *Blues in the Night*, which had

corps in fourth and finals did not change. This led to much frustration among the members and 1991 saw a smaller corps that landed in seventh place at finals.

snippets of *The Impossible Dream* thrown in.

The corps lost early-on to the Cabs and never looked back until late season. Highlights included wins at the Barnum Festival and the Hershey show and an exhibition at DCI Semifinals in Orlando, FL.

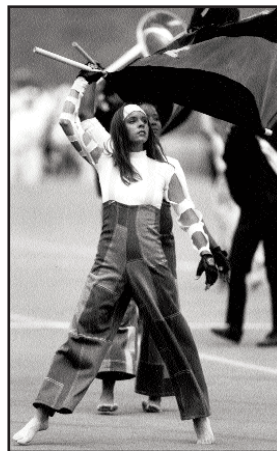
DCA Prelims found the corps in second, nine-tenths behind the Cabs. Yet, the members dug deep and managed to come out of Rochester, NY, with the world title, tying for GE and winning all percussion captions.

The off-season was rough. Many members cited burnout and retired. The management announced the formation of the Westshoremen Cadets junior corps. When membership for the junior corps was small, it was announced if you were in the senior corps and under 21, you had to do both. This led to more members, mostly under 21, leaving the corps.

To add to the problems, the corps suffered many financial setbacks, which left numerous bills unpaid. In the end, the corps placed seventh at DCA, the staff was fired and the junior corps folded.

For 1998, Ann Beck and Bill Toomey led the administration, but the corps only participated at the DCA mini corps competition. In 1999, the corps was back on the field in class A, placing fourth, where they would place again in 2000 and 2001. The 2002 season saw the corps inactive and no plans have been announced for 2003.

Thanks to Wally Ream, Rich Sennett, Steve Filipelli, Ron Allard and Chris Maher, Jodeen Popp's "Competitive Drum Corps" and especially Larry Hershman for his allowing me to borrow his Lambertton award-winning "Westshoremen-Bonnie Scots Drum and Bugle Corps" essay.



The Westshoremen at DCA in 1995 (photo by Sid Unser from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Jeff Ream, a second generation member of the Westshoremen, marched with the corps from 1989-1996.

His father marched there from 1962-1972 and again in 1977-1978, as well as with the Yankee Rebels from 1973-1976.

Jeff has taught the Reading Buccaneers, Empire Statesmen and several central Pennsylvania marching bands since 1985.

He is a sales manager for Cingular Wireless in Harrisburg, PA, where he lives.

Westshoremen at DCA Prelims in Rochester, NY, on August 31, 1996 (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

