

We Remember

We Remember corps members and staff of the Toronto Optimists, the Seneca Optimists and the Optimists Alumni who have passed away.



The "We Remember" Acrobat file is a work-in-progress and will be updated periodically. Names marked with an asterisk are missing either a photo, a write-up or both. If anyone has corrections, additions, information, photos, memories, etc., especially regarding those for whom I have only a name, please email them to me (Bob Carell). My email address is Bob Carell (toronto_optimist at rogers.com)

As people supply additional information, I will update this file. *(last updated on January 7, 2022)*

There are entries for the following individuals

Mr. Al Baggs	Brian Byrne	Doug Shearer	Harry Prokop	Paul Thompson	Ted Shaw
Al Lathan	Carol Ann Gun Munro	Ed Hall	Henry Beben	Penny Tudhope	Tim Burrage
Al Lavigne	Chris Taylor	Eric Burton	Ian Robertson	(Cassaday)	Tim Roussel
Al Miller	Clare Reid	Evert Botterweg	Jim Dwyer	Peter Coward	Tim Watt
Al Morrison	Clayton Keat	Florence Sciore	Jim Taylor	Ray Roussel	Tom May
Al Punkari	Colin Hedworth	Frank Rivier	John Coull	Réal Garneau (Froggy)	Vern Johansson
Al Taylor	Dave Barrett	Fred Johnson	John Diamond	Rick Cooper	Vic Sciore Jr.
Al Tierney	Dave Byrne	Fred Lombard	John Hertell	Rick Robida	Vic Sciore Sr.
Andy Henderson	Dave Hanks	Fred Shearer	John Kernahan	Rick Roussel	Vince Ferraro
Ben Burrage	*Dave Parker	Gary "Chops" Czapinski	John Konstantinou	Roman Perohanycz	Warren Mills
Bernie Beer	Dave Watt	Gary Corbett	John Peachey	Ron Chong	Wayne Dean
Bernie Thompson	Dennis Roussel	Gene Chepswick	John Van Der Flaes	Ron Cook	Wendy Paquin
Bill Jay	Derek Branton	George Wright	Karl Bossert	Ron Gault	Wilson Chung
Bill MacMillan	Diane Tenaglia	Gerrie Leebody	Larry Cheevers	Ronn "Skip" Prokop	Wolfgang Petschke
Bill Thorne	Dick Brown	Glen Durish	Len Perrin	Ross Colville	
Bill Ukas	Don Chisolm	Glenn Copp	Martin McVeigh	Sam Grosvenor	
Bob Brown	Don Daber	Gord Angus	Mike Andrews	Sandy Stoklosa (Douglas)	
Bob Cook	Doug Harrison	Gord Robinson	Mike Layton	Scott Cumming	
Bogo Avsec	Doug McPhail	Guy Vezina	Mike Tierney	Ted Key	

Recent Change History	
January 7, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added a page for Vern Johansson
December 22, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added a page for John Van Der Flaes
October 13, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added a page for Al Taylor Added a page for Bill Thorne Added a page for Chris Taylor Added a page for Glen Durish Added a page for John Coull
April 3, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added a page for John Hertell
November 27, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added pages for John Peachey and Rick Cooper
September 30, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Florence Sciore
September 15, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Tom May
April 15, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Vince Ferraro
February 10, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Eric Burton
June 7, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added entries for Don Daber, Jim Dwyer, Penny Tudhope Cassaday, Rick Roussel and Wendy Paquin
December 8, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added entry for Ron Chong
May 8, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Ray Roussel Added an entry for Ronn "Skip" Prokop
November 1, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an entry for Al Miller Changed the photos for Guy Vezina
October 20, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added entries for Dennis Roussel, George Wright and Henry Beben Updated the entry for Vic Sciore Jr Changed photos for Al Lavigne, Doug McPhail, Gerrie Leebody, Harry Prokop and Ross Colville
October 4, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added entries for Clare Reid and Rick Robida Added a write-up for Jim Taylor
November 20, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added Entries for Karl Bossert, Peter Coward and Vic Sciore Jr.
January 11, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added entries for Gerrie Leebody and Paul Thompson

Mr. Alan Baggs



Corps: Opti-Corps, the Toronto Optimists

Al Baggs was singularly responsible for the existence of the band that ultimately became the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps.

He became acquainted with the Band through his work with the Boy Scouts as the District Commissioner in charge of Badges. When Bud Parker, the founder of the Band, failed to entice the Downtown Optimist Club of Toronto into sponsoring the Band, it was "Mr." Baggs that stepped in and had them reconsider their decision.

When Bud Parker moved out of the city, it was "Mr." Baggs who took leadership of the Band and guided it through two championship seasons as Opti-Corps when they won the Canadian Novice and then the Junior "B" Championships.

It was he who had the vision, the organizational powers, and the determination that created the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps, arguably Canada's greatest Drum Corps and probably one of its greatest marching music ensembles.

Fondly and forever remembered as "Daddy" Baggs.

Al. We Remember!

Al Lathan



Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps

He belonged to the 18th and 157th Scout troop and band. As well, Al was drum major for two years. In 1956, Al also marched with the Optimists Corps as drum major. He loved camping and he was fun to be around. He worked in the printing trade. Al was a good looking guy with blonde curly hair. He developed cancer and passed away at the age of 21 in 1958 – far to soon!

Al. We Remember!

Al Lavigne



Corps: Western Tech, Toronto Optimists

Al joined the Optimist in the fall of 1957 from the Western Tech Bugle Band, making him a charter member of the “Green”. He was a staunch member of the baritone section until the fall of 1965.

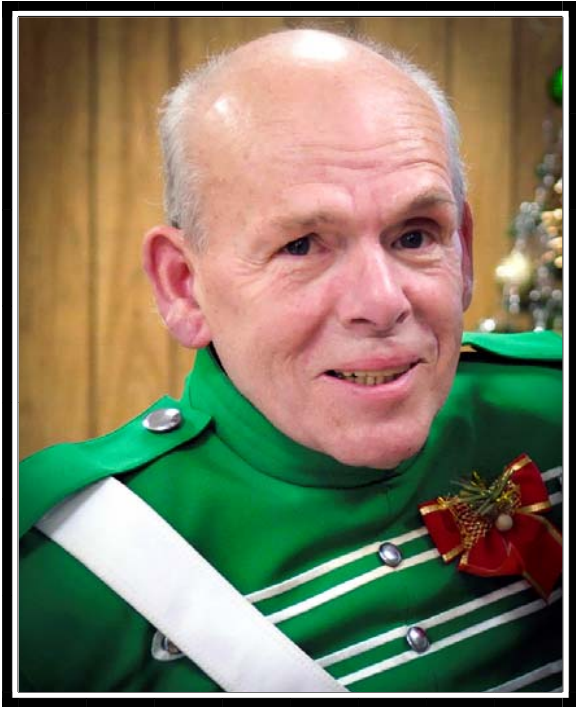
He was known as a quiet, thoughtful member of the Corps and as dependable as the day was long. Al was very, very proud of helping the Green Machine win eight straight National Championships during his tenure with the Corps.

He loved sporty, and/or powerful cars that included a big block Chevy, a Triumph TR4 and a original Mini-Cooper S, in which he liked impersonating Juan Fangio.

Al passed away in December of 2000 and those who knew him lost a generous, committed and truly decent “Champion”.

Al. We Remember!

Al Miller



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Canadian Commanders, Optimists Alumni

Al began his time in the Optimist carrying a flag before moving to rifle. At that time our rifles were chrome-plated Lee-Enfield .303s! Later a chrome plated bayonet was added. Boy, were they heavy! After aging out, Al joined the Canadian Commanders, again carrying a rifle. When he joined the Optimists Alumni he decided that he wanted to be musical and joined our cymbal line. And a fine job he did!

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him:

"I remember him picking me up for Optimists rehearsals in the early 60's; he was a dependable and enthusiastic corps member. Ole' as he was known amongst friends was funny and had a great sense of humour. There was a very serious side to Al that a lot of people did not see, life was not always easy. He was intelligent and had a variety of interest that went under the radar. The last time we spoke he told me about his cabin and how much he enjoyed being with nature. It was always good to see Al and listen to the stories and the humour he could inject into some very trying (for him) experiences. Al was extremely well liked by his peers in the drum corps world and will be missed by many. He marches on to be greeted by those who have gone before him. Peace be with you my friend. "

"Al had a great sense of humour. He had so many stories he could tell you about different people he met in his Corps years. He was a funny guy a good story teller. He did a great job while on rifle in the 60's as well as being a great cymbal player in the Optimists Alumni."

"I will miss Uncle Alex's huge heart and wonderful sense of humor. He lit up any room he entered. God bless you Uncle Alex."

"the two traits my brother struggled with was his sensitivity and his compassion. These were the two traits I respected the most in my brother."

"the world has lost a good man... a good father and a good sibling.... you asked me what your purpose in life was this last year... and you finally figured it out... giving your love and stories to the nurses in Peterborough...before that you accomplished so much... you had your land and made sure you didn't lose that... it was your life... listening to the birds and watching the big moose pass your kitchen window... miss you brother and I thank you for all you gave me .. so so much love and wisdom...you also learned to except love from me.. or anyone for that matter... you thought it mothering and babying... yes, perhaps the rubbing of the feet was much, but you loved it... ha ha — Catherin (Miller) Hufnagel"

Al. We Remember!

Al Morrison



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Jesters, Commanders, Optimists Alumni

Good old Mo started in Western Tech band. He went to Opti in 1958 as a founding member of the corps and as the soloist. After he aged out he managed to stay another year as drum major.

In 1961 the new Jesters had been formed and Mo joined as the soloist and a founding member. He could have gone to any corps in this area or any corps over the border with his talent level.

When Commanders formed in 1964 Al stayed as a founding member and, along with playing in the line, took on the additional job of horn instructor. Al was the foundation of any corps he chose to be in — solid and reliable, level-headed and resolute in his belief that every member should give his best at all times when with the corps.

Al taught the Hamilton Firefighters, Oakville-Trafalgar Patrolmen, Hamilton Conqueror and was a great fan of the N. Y. Skyliners. There are many amusing stories of situations where Al, through no fault of his own, found himself just by being with certain Senior corps members at the wrong time; but to tell these would detract from his exemplary and sterling character. He was a great guy -and I still miss him (Ed Law)

Al We Remember!

Al Punkari



Corps: Danforth Tech, Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists

Al was a charter member of the Toronto Optimists. He came to the Corps from Danforth Tech when Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti agreed to instruct what was then Opti-Corps.

He is remembered for being a very good baritone player, with a great sense of humour, gentle, and a sartorial sight to behold.

With Optimists he seemed to be joined at the hip to his good friend Ken Nakagawa and is remembered for perpetrating a tall tale on the gals from Audubon.

At our first ever field show in Batavia, New York, Audubon was one of the competing Corps, actually winning the contest. During our mingling with them, they asked questions about Canada and Canadians such as "What does your father do?" Al's quick response was that the father of Ukaluk Mukaluk (Ken Nakagawa) was a whale hunter. Forever more, Ken was affectionately known as Ukaluk Mukaluk, son of a whale hunter.

Al. We Remember!

Al Taylor



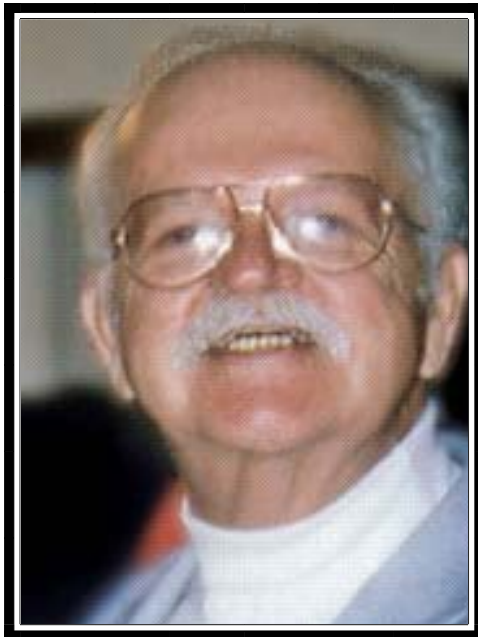
Corps: Guelph Opti-Knights, De La Salle, Oakland Crusaders, Optimists Alumni

I'm not sure if this is correct but it appears that Al probably joined Del and, later, the Oakland Crusaders with his brother Chris. In 1977 Al played contrabass with the Oakland Crusaders.

Al was one of the early members of the Optimists Alumni. He joined the alumni's excellent drumline and played quads in 2004. The corps had four quads: Al, Jim Kane, Mark Lewis and, keeping it in the family, Al's brother, Chris.

Al. We Remember!

Al Tierney



Corps: Optimists Cadets, Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

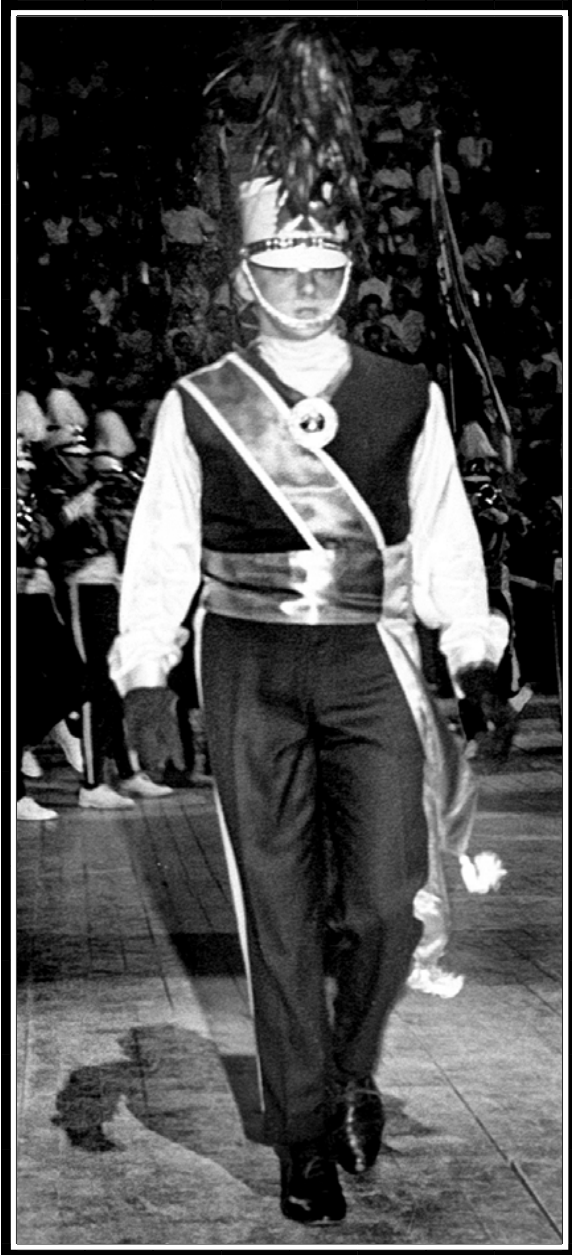
Al first came to the Optimist in 1966 when his two sons joined the corps and he quickly volunteered his time and energy in organizing the Optimists Cadets Drum Corps. This organization became critical to the future success of the Optimists, constantly supplying them with well trained, well disciplined new members.

Al wrote a series of articles on how to create a feeder Corps, and these were used for many years by other Corps as a template for developing their own similar organizations.

He became Corps Director of Optimists in 1975 and was crucially instrumental, along with Wolfgang Petschke, in merging Optimists and Princemen into the Seneca Optimists.

Al. We Remember!

Andy Henderson



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Commanders

Andy marched with the Optimists from 1959 through 1965. In 1959 and 1960 he carried a flag in the Colour Guard then, in 1961, he moved to rifle. Andy was appointed Guard Captain in 1963 and, in 1964, Andy and Vern Johansson were our Drum Majors. In 1965 Andy was our sole Drum Major. After the 1965 season Andy moved to Commanders. Andy went on to become a distinguished commercial film editor and director. Here is an Article on Andy from the March 1965 issue of Drum Corp Digest.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Andy.

"Andy was probably one of, if not the classiest Drum Major(s) I ever saw and/or marched with." — Mel Dey

"I am very, very sorry to hear this. Andy was very special to me because he took me under his wing in 1964 and made it much, much easier for me to survive in the big leagues. I will always remember him for his kindness." — Vern Johansson

"Andy was a lot of fun to be around, friendly with a great sense of humour. On the way home from a rather long Commanders trip, we made a relief stop along the side of an Interstate somewhere. Once we were back on the bus, I looked over at Andy, and he had the skull and jaw bones of a horse (he found them during the stop) which he was using like a ventriloquist, to talk to me. Totally broke everybody up!!!!!" — Mel Dey

"He was a class guy and did a fine job of majoring Commanders." — Ed Law

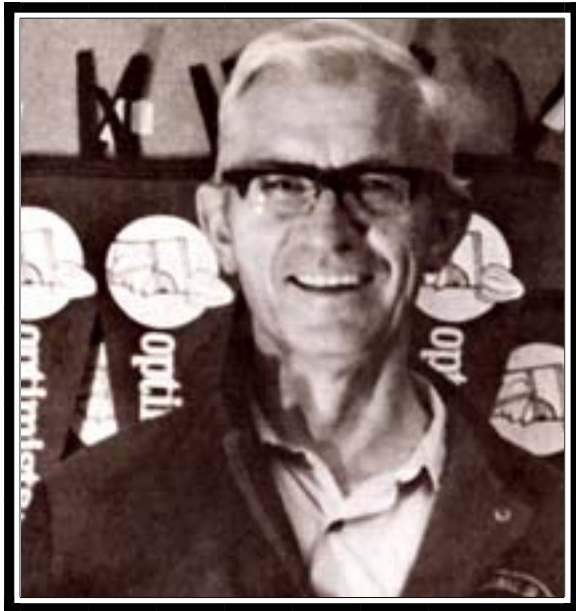
"When Andy first became Drum Major in 1964, I was his assistant, fresh from the Bantam Optimists. He took the time all through that year to help me with encouraging words and much laughter. I was also deeply in puppy love with his wife, Jackie (me and about 600 other corps guys). In 1965 I left the corps to become a drummer in a rock band. Even there, Andy encouraged me and wished me well. He was a kind man. We kept in touch off and on through the many decades since we shared the field together. He became a commercial Director and I was an advertising copywriter so we had many occasions to see each other after the corps years. We kind of fell out of touch after he moved to California but whenever he came back to Toronto to see his family, we would always try and get together for a few laughs. He was one of those people who have the ability to make you feel better just by being with them. So long, Andy." — Vern Johansson

"When he came over to Commanders as our D.M., I addressed him as A. Henderson. Andy tagged me mmmm Dey. Farewell Andy_gone too soon." — Mel Dey

"So long Hendergobble!" — Marcel Smolinski

Andy We Remember!

Ben Burrage



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Ben Burrage was the father of Tim, Sally, Dana and Kerry, who marched in the Corps, and he quickly became a favourite of every Optimist.

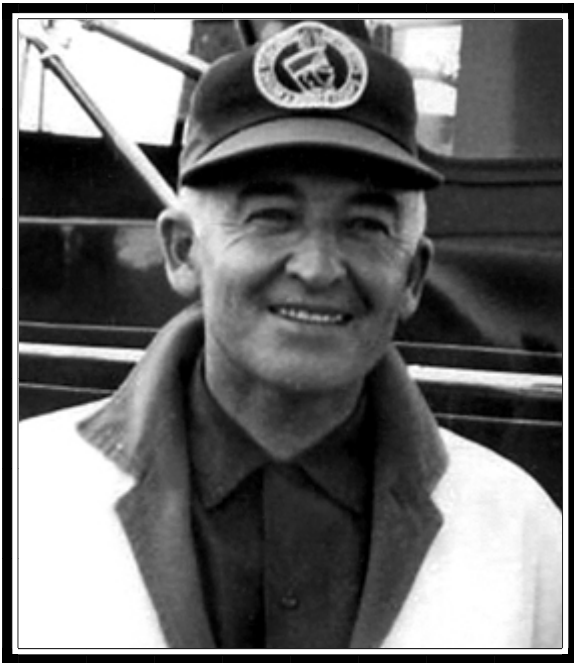
He became affectionately known as Gentle Ben and would arrive at rehearsals in his station wagon, filled with snacks and soft drinks to be sold at break time. He would take the proceeds from his little traveling variety store, and purchase things for the Corps. For example, when the Optimists Colour Guard won the National Circuit Guard Championship in 1968, Ben designed and purchased medals for each member of the Guard, honouring the occasion. In addition, he designed the harnesses used by the Corps double bass drummers. The harnesses used by today's drum lines are very similar to Ben's leading edge design. The tops of the colour guard's flag poles sometimes came flying off and he designed a new top using, of all things, stainless steel door knobs; effective and cost efficient. A mechanical design engineer by trade, Ben's contributions included the ingenious "disappearing legs" so the triple bass drummers could set their equipment down during the concert part of the show. Perhaps his most distinctive design was the expandable flag pole carried by Robert Trimble. This pole was unique in that the bottom part was square aluminum and the inner part was round so that when the "charge" was played, Rob would simply pull a cord and the pole would grow by another 6 feet. It was always impressive at shows in the States when our flag would fly well above all the other national flags.

Ben's wife, Doreen was also active in the booster club by selling, with some of the other member's Moms, all the stuff under the stands during shows. She would make little items for sale made of bits of wool in the corps' colours as well as the buttons and banners, pennants etc. Doreen succumbed to Alzheimer disease on August 3, 2001 and Ben joined her almost 6 months to the day later on February 4, 2002.

They added immeasurably to the success of the Corps.

Ben. We Remember!

Bernie Beer



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Bernie was a member of the downtown Optimist Club of Toronto when the Club agreed to sponsor the Corps. He had considerable experience in the United Kingdom, playing in several bands. It was only natural that he would have an interest in the Corps as well.

In the early days he provided practice space for the Corps. in the building in which he worked soon was travelling with the Corps to contests.

He held several positions with the Corps and was a big booster of the Corps during his association.

Bernie was elected to both the D.C.I. Hall of Fame and the D.C.A. World Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

Bernie..... We Remember!

Bernie Thompson



Corps: Toronto Optimists

- January 1, 1999

Bernie became involved with the Optimists in 1963 after his son Paul joined the Corps. During that year he drove one of the three station wagons that accompanied the Corps on its travels. In 1964 he became Equipment Manager for the Corps and continued in that capacity until the Spring of 1965 when he left to become involved with the Liberal Party of Canada in its Election Campaign.

Bernie actually had four children involved in Drum Corps. In addition to Paul, he had another son, Leo, who also marched with the Optimists as well as twin daughters, Bernadine and Bernadette who were involved with Parkdale Lionettes, St. John's Girls and Guelph Royales. His fondest memory was of serving as an unofficial 'Personal Valet' to Drum Major, Jim McKonkey and successfully compressing Jim's 40-inch waist into a 34" pant through the use of Jim's famous belt and buckle.

Bernie joined the DCAT in 1998 but unfortunately died on New Year day 1999 before he had an opportunity to perform with the choir.

Bernie..... We Remember!

Bill Jay



Corps: Danforth Tech, Optimists Bantams, Toronto Optimists, Jesters

Bill came to the Optimists from Danforth Tech. In addition to marching with Optimists and playing some of the solos, he was also the first drum major of the Optimists Bantams. After aging out of Optimists Bill moved to the Jesters.

"My first encounter with Bill occurred when I was 13 years old (the late 1950s) and he, as Drum Major, welcomed me as a member of the Toronto Optimist Novice Drum and Bugle Corps. Even then, as a young man, he was willing to give of his free time to, as he put it, "keep young lads out of jail". He was an excellent musician himself and instilled a love of the Drum Corps world in so many, that has lasted to this day. Please accept my condolences for your loss of a man who was a champion then, and for so many, was still a champion now." (Tom Menagh)

"We first met Bill at Danforth Crusaders where he played a very strong soprano horn. At the end of 1957 he moved with Lorne and myself (plus Joe Gianna, Gord O'Halloran, Ken Poole, Al Morrison, Doug McPhail, Colin Hedworth and many others) to form Optimists. Later he moved to Jesters with Lorne and I. He was an excellent person." (Barry Bell)

"I first met Bill at Danforth Tech, with the Danforth Crusaders or 330th Squadron Air Cadets. He was my section Sergeant and took me under his wing, instructing me on how to play the bugle, single valve at the time. I remember he would have me march the length of the gym were we rehearsed, holding a sustained note for the length of the gym to build up endurance, and of course he would also do it with me. Ken Poole played a Baritone and was a very good friend of his. We all moved to the Optimists with Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti in the fall of 1957 to form the 1958 Canadian Championship Corps. Bill was a very powerful horn player whom I admired. He would pick me up in his Volkswagen Beetle for practises and drive me back home. He stayed with the Optimists 'til he aged out, probably 1960 or 61. His wife Marie was right in there, at the Jarvis St. School where we used to practise, helping to serve the spaghetti dinner that my mother cooked and served to the entire corps in celebration of our first Canadian Championship victory. " (Joe Gianna)

Bill. We Remember!

Bill MacMillan



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Bill joined the Corps in 1966, using his last year of Junior eligibility from York Lions. "Nutsy" was only with us a short time, but he left a long memory behind. Bill always had a twinkle in his eye, and was a very accomplished merrymaker.

One story holds that he and Marcel Smolinski went to a party one Saturday night and there was much merrymaking. Marcel managed to snag a ride home but he'd left his motorcycle at Nutsy's with specific instructions not to attempt riding it.

Naturally, Nutsy ignored the instructions and early Sunday morning, Bill's neighbours were greeted with a full throttle wake-up call as Nutsy popped the clutch and went screeching into a tree. The motorcycle lost its front end and Nutsy almost lost an ear. Bill's life was short but filled with fun and he was honoured to capture a National title in his final year of Junior Corps.

Bill. We Remember!

Bill Thorne



Corps: 618 Air Cadet Squadron, Royal Knights, Leaside Lions, Toronto Optimists

Having marched with the band of the 618 Air Cadet Squadron, the Royal Knights and the Leaside Lions Bill was a well-seasoned corpsman when he joined the Optimists after the 1959 season. At that time there was an exodus from Leaside as Terry Sweeney, Mel Dey, Jim Stewart and Ron Cottrell joined the Optimists. Within a week or two Phil Campbell, Dave Nesbitt, Neil Ibbitson, Dave Bignell, Bill Thorne and Doug MacKenzie had also left Leaside to join Optimists.

Bill started out playing baritone before switching to the newer bass-baritones horn that Optimists had bought. Bill moved to contrabass in 1965 when Optimists got their first contrabasses. The contras were played by Bill, Dave Watt and Paul Thompson. When the corps marched onto the starting line and when we trooped the stands after performing the contras would swing their left arms and hold their contra in the hand of their outstretched right arm. It was a sight to behold! I'm sure that somewhere there is a photo of them doing that but I have never been able to find one.

In a 1963 issue of GCC Gene Chepswick wrote: "*the clearest picture of this boy I can give is of one who drives an M.G., which is red and capable of breaking mach 1. It is the oddest sight to see him barreling down the Gardiner Expressway at 100 some odd in that little red sports car, sporting a little red beanie (to match the colour of the car) and little Jeff Shimo seated on his right while directly behind is a huge horn case skillfully tied to the trunk.*"

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Bill:

"I liked Bill a lot. A fine musician and a fine friend. " (Terry Mckolskey)

"Damn. I loved Bill Thorne. " (Vern Johansson)

"Sad to lose a great guy, he always loved a good joke, it was nice to have known you! " (Frans Rood)

"He was a true Optimist." (Barry Woods)

"Bill was a great guy and was so happy when his children became involved in Drum Corps.
" (Ric Brown)

"It's a long time since I have seen or spoken to Bill but remember him as a very nice guy who had lots of talent. May he rest in peace. " (Doug MacKenzie)

Few words better sum up William Thorne's life better than those of Frank Sinatra: "I've lived a life that's full, I traveled each and every highway. And more, much more than this, I did it my way." (Bill's family)

Bill. We Remember!

Bill Ukas



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Jesters, Sky Raiders, Toronto Signals, CADRE, Canadian GAS Ensemble

1941 — 2013

Bill played tenor in the Toronto Optimists from 1959 to 1961. Prior to joining the Optimists Bill was a member of the the Highland Creek Boys Band, the 180 Mosquito Squadron and the Don Mills Sky Raiders. After aging out with Optimists he moved to Jesters where he helped out with the founding of that corps. Ed Law remembers Bill learning the entire Jester's show in a week and a half!

Many years later Bill played in the Canadian GAS ensemble, CADRE and, for a short time, he was a member of the Optimists Alumni. At the time of his passing, Bill was researching the roots of rudimental drumming and writing a book on 14th century drumming.

Bill was a tribute to both corps. He was unassuming, quiet and hard working. Once you got past the shy exterior you discovered the warm and humorous individual that was Bill Ukas. He was a good friend! – Ed Law

I remember my dad always drumming on an ironing board and marching in place for as long as I can remember. I remember when we visited him in 2010, he was very kind to his grandchildren and let them play with his drums and use the drumsticks. He was quiet and reserved even with his family but was so warm when you got him to open up. He was very knowledgeable on many subjects and I remember asking him to tell me stories about the birth and death of the sun and dinosaurs. He loved books especially science fiction and the classics and had a huge beautiful library. He always played classical music on his stereo and we spent so many hours exploring the ROM and Science Center. He was a wonderful grandfather and a great father. He was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba on June 26, 1941. He is greatly missed by his daughter Veronica and his grandchildren Yasmeen, Tamara, Jaffer, and Sammer. – Veronica (Bill's daughter)

Bill. We Remember!

Bob Brown



Corps: Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists

— March 7, 2014

Bob joined Opti-Corps in 1955 and stayed with the Optimists until he aged out in 1961.

While in the Optimists Bob played baritone. After leaving the corps he continued to satisfy his love of music by playing trombone in the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra.

In 2009 Bob once again played baritone with the Optimists, this time in the Optimists Alumni ensemble that performed at the G.A.S. (Great Alliance of Seniors) gathering in Gettysburg, PA.

Bob. We Remember!

Bob Cook



Corps: Toronto Optimists

September 22, 1941 — April 5, 2010

Bob Cook was a true, original Optimist member. The Cooks lived on Somerset Avenue, in Toronto, just one street over from Davenport Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of Delaware Ave. and Davenport Rd. So when Bob decided to join Scouts it was only natural that he joined the nearest Scout Troop, which was at Davenport Presbyterian.

When the Scout Master, “Bud” Parker, asked the boys if they wanted to start a Band, Bob was there. When the Troop moved to St Edmonds Anglican Church, next door to Davenport Presbyterian, and when they became the Davenport Trumpet Band, Opti-Corps and finally the Toronto Optimists, Bob was on the journey.

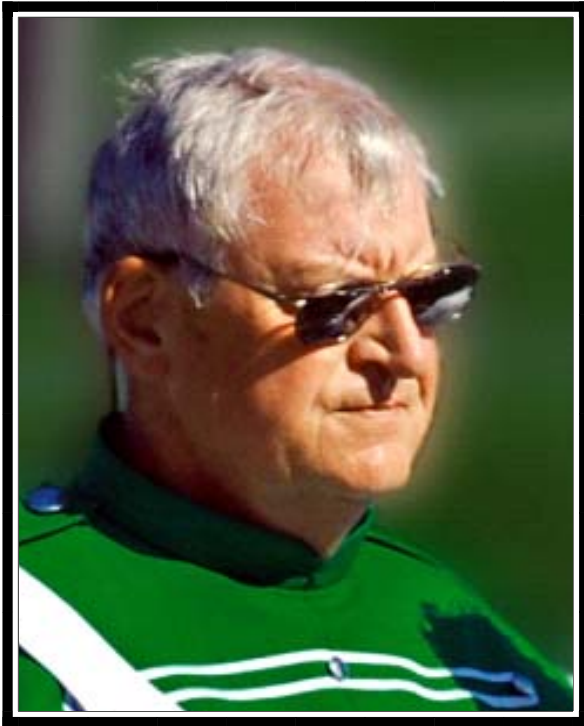
His Mom and Dad were quite active with the Scout Band, attending many events and always taking photographs. His Mom was an important part of the Women’s Auxiliary, helping with fund raising and things like sewing new scarves for the Band.

Through the journey from Scouts to Opti-Corps, Bob was in the drum line. Bob switched to the Colour Guard with Toronto Optimists and he stayed from 1958 till 1961. In 1961, he became Guard Captain and aged out at the end of the year.

Bob was pre-deceased, many years ago, by his brother Ron, the Optimists first cymbal player. Both are fondly remembered.

Bob. We Remember!

Bogo Avsec



Corps: Optimists Alumni, Toronto Signals Band

April 9, 1945 — February 16, 2012

Bogo was a kind, thoughtful man with a wonderful sense of humour. His ability to deal with adversity and truly live one day at a time was an inspiration to all who knew him.

Bogo began his musical life in Slovenia, in a marching band. Very much later in life, long after he had moved to Toronto, he joined the Toronto Signals Band. For a few years, Bogo also played with the Optimists Alumni. Often he would perform with both groups on the same day; sometimes at the same show! He continued marching with the Toronto Signals even after being diagnosed with prostate cancer, having surgery and later chemotherapy and even a knee replacement. Bogo also joined the Burlington Concert Band and continued playing with them when he became physically unable to march. He enjoyed every minute of it and the family became his cheering section!

Bogo had always wanted to attend university. Now that he has donated his body for medical research at the University of Toronto, his dream has been realized.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him.

"He always had a sense of humor and thoroughly enjoyed playing the trumpet. I'm sure God is enjoying his company and his music."

"I was lucky to have known Bogo...a kind soul. Always had a smile, joke or email to make life interesting."

"My dad was happiest playing trumpet and enjoyed the company of all of you."

Bogo We Remember!

Brian Byrne



Corps: Grantham Police Boys Band, Toronto Optimists, Optimists Alumni

January 2, 1948 — March 11, 2017

Prior to joining The Toronto Optimists Brian marched with the Grantham Police Boys Band. When Brian joined The Optimists in 1965 he played French Horn. In 1968 the corps dropped their French Horns and he played Mellophone. Brian was the first of the Byrne clan to join the Optimists. He was later joined by his brothers David, John and Peter.

When the Optimist Alumni was formed, Brian joined. Until health issues forced him to resign, he served on the Alumni Board of Directors as Treasurer. In 2005, the corps was in need of a Drum Major. Brian rose to the occasion, took conducting lessons and served as the corps' Drum Major.

Brian was a wonderful human being and the best of friends. He will be missed by all of those who knew him. Brian was pre-deceased by his brother, Dave, who played contrabass in the Optimists.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Brian.

"We were so blessed to be part of his life and he part of ours. A gentle, funny, classy, brave and loving guy." — Kathy

"Brian was one of the 1st alumni members I met when I joined the corps. He made me feel so welcome and after talking with him I almost felt like an original member from the past. He was a proud member and always had huge words of encouragement." — Mike

"Brian was a fellow that you always looked forward to talking to and being with. His unique humour and personality were a special gift." — Ted

"Brian marched in the Corps a few years after me so I really never knew him until the Alumni Corps started. The first Sunday rehearsal I attended he introduced himself and he knew my name. Brian was a super friendly guy with a great sense of humor. When the Alumni Corps did street parades there were many times that Jason and I would be yakking away, or joking around (being in the last row of horns figuring no one ahead would notice) and there was Brian driving the van right behind us, signaling that he was keeping his eye on us." — Mel

"Brian, I will sincerely miss you, you were always so pleasant and friendly with a wonderful personality. You truly were a very special person who always had a smile and something kind to say." — Karen

"Brian was a super friendly fella. He didn't pass judgment and during his time when the Corp held their practice at Royal Canadian Legion Br 344 he was so respectful of everyone. We shared many chats and laughs. Nice folk like Brian are hard to come by." — Mary

"Want your life to light up?... just have a few minutes with Brian and the world was good again. I will never forget anyone in the Byrne family. Thanks Brian for your friendship." — Jack

"Brian: I will always remember a funny line or a few laughs we shared over a drum corps story. Humour is a wonderful gift and I thank you for sharing yours with me. Every time I think of you I will smile." — Vern

"I often think of Brian's rules: If it's not nice, not true or not necessary, don't say it. I'm still trying to master that one." — Bob

Brian We Remember!

Carol Ann Gun Munro



Corps: Optimists Alumni, Oakland Crusaders, Etobicoke Lancers

June 19, 1957 — September 15, 2012

At 13 Carol joined the Etobicoke Lancers and started a 40+ year involvement in Drum & Bugle Corps. After Lancers she moved to the Oakland Crusaders where she was a key member of their outstanding drum line. When the Optimists Alumni was formed, Carol joined. She not only played bass drum but also served on our Board of Directors.

Carol was an active member of the Canadian Ski Patrol for 20 years, as well as diehard ARGO fan and season ticket holder. She even had the sweatshirts, the t-shirts and assorted buttons which, of course, she wore to every Argo game.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew her.

"I recall when the corps performed for the very first time at the DCA Alumni Spectacular, there was a live blog during the performance. The person writing about the performance, as it happened, said that we were watching the best bass drum line in Alumni Drum Corps. Carol was the main reason for that. Her quiet determination to excel became a part of each member of the corps. She will of course be missed but there will always be a little piece of her in everyone who had the pleasure of her company."

"There isn't a person alive who knew her that didn't immediately like her."

"Carol, you are the calmest, easiest going person I ever met, thanks for being a friend."

"What I remember most about you Carol Ann is your passion, compassion and that wonderful smile!"

Carol We Remember!

Chris Taylor



Corps: Guelph Opti-Knights, De La Salle, Oakland Crusaders, Anaheim Kingsmen, Guelph Royales and Optimists Alumni

September 16, 2021

Chris was a passionate drummer who always had a pair of drumsticks. He kept his passion for music throughout his life.

He began his drum corps career with the Guelph Opti-Knights then, in 1973 or 1974, he joined De La Salle. In 1975 Chris moved to California and joined the Anaheim Kingsmen. Unfortunately, Kingsmen did not field a corps that year. He marched with Oakland Crusaders in 1976 and 1977 then was Oakies' tenor instructor in 1978. In later years he marched with the Guelph Royales.

Chris was one of the very early members of the Optimists Alumni. He joined the alumni's excellent drumline and played quads in both 2003 and 2004. The corps had four quads: Chris, Jim Kane, Mark Lewis and, keeping it in the family, Chris' brother, Al.

Chris We Remember!

Clare Reid



Corps: Western Tech, Toronto Optimists and Optimists Alumni

July 14, 1935 – January 16, 2016

Clare made many friends through his lifelong love of music, serving as a bugle player and instructor with the Western Tech Trumpet Band, executive of the Toronto Optimist and Optimist Alumni Drum and Bugle Corps, and President of the Canadian Drum Corps Association. Clare was also a faithful member and executive of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 344.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him.

"Always made me feel at home and a valued member of the Optimist Alumni Corps"

"A real 'gentle-man'."

"Here's my favourite memory of Clare: In 1968 the corps was losing regularly to De La Salle. We worked and worked and worked some more and finally at the CNE show the week before nationals we were back on top. The next weekend in Kingston, we were nervous but worked hard and felt fully prepared. As I was standing at the Drum Major's retreat, I was still apprehensive about the upcoming results. Clare was right in front of me either presenting a trophy or perhaps as a judge, I can't remember. But before the scores were announced, I looked at Clare and he gave me a quick wink and I knew we would be ok. "

"Blessed with a great sense of humor and awesome personality he will be greatly missed and forever remembered."

Clare We Remember!

Clayton Keat



Corps: Toronto Optimists

1946 —1996

Clayton was introduced to the Optimists by a number of Corps members, including Ron Kaiser and Gord LeFevre, all of whom attended Riverdale Collegiate.

He started off marching in the Colour Guard. Later on he joined the horn line, playing the Euphonium. The corps finally got Contra Bases in 1965 and Clayton moved from Euphonium to Contra.

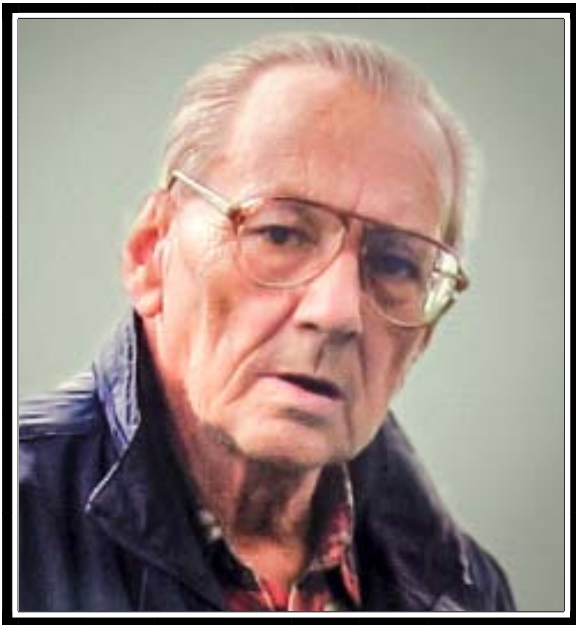
His most memorable role was during initiations as Camp “Mummy” when, wrapped in cloth a la mummy style, he managed to terrify more than one unsuspecting rookie.

On leaving Optimists, he became a drill instructor with the London Midlanders helping them become Canadian Junior “B” Champions.

Clayton died on Labour Day week-end in 1996 from injuries suffered in a serious automobile accident and is survived by his wife Stephanie (Bernie Thompson’s daughter and Paul Thompson’s sister) and their son Jason, both now residing in Hillside, New Jersey.

Clayton We Remember!

Colin Hedworth



Corps: Danforth Crusaders, Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

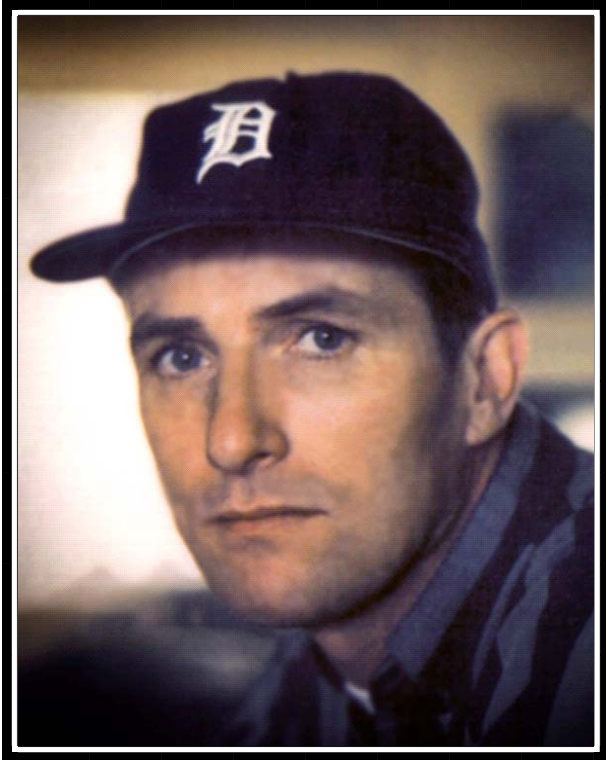
Colin began his drum corps career with the Danforth Crusaders. Together with Lorne & Barry & Joe and many others Colin moved to the newly formed Toronto Optimists. Colin stayed with the Optimists until he aged out in 1962. Many years later Colin was still helping the corps, this time by driving the equipment truck for the Seneca Optimists.

"Colin was a man who had fine memories of being in The Optimists. He had always been aware of what was going on in the Corps. Colin was a soft spoken kind man." – Phil

"In 1976 & '77 Colin and I drove the equipment truck for Seneca Optimists. Strange things happen when you're together almost 24 hours a day and driving thousands of miles over the course of the summer. We were constantly exhausted and suffering from lack of sleep. Why? We not only had to arrive before the corps but we also had to load the truck after the show then drive to our next competition. And we didn't get much rest while driving because the passenger's job was to make sure that the driver didn't fall asleep. I still remember the two of us driving from Rochester up to Montreal. I was driving and turned to Colin and said something like "I'm seeing creatures running across the road." Colin responded with a "me, too". I then said that they don't live on this planet! Colin said: "I'm seeing the same thing!". We pulled over at the next rest area and slept." – Bob

Colin We Remember!

Dave Barrett



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Dave helped me join in 1978. I was unable to drive to rehearsal and he would drive from Toronto to Newmarket when required and he never asked for money. To him the reward was watching the Drum Corps and me grow .He is dearly missed but I've never forgotten the unselfishness that he gave the corps. I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING SPOT may drum corps live in all of us as much as it did in Dave. (John Browning)

Dave. We Remember!

Dave Byrne



Corps: Toronto Optimists

1945–2007

Dave was one of the four Byrne brothers (Dave, Brian, John and Peter) from St Catharines who were members of the Toronto Optimists. Dave played contrabass in 1965 and 1966.

Dave. We Remember!

Dave Hanks



Corps: Danforth Crusaders, Toronto Optimists

– 2001

Dave came to the Optimists from the Danforth Crusaders. He played a soprano horn from 1958 through 1962. Subsequently, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and served with distinction until his retirement.

Even though he travelled extensively with the Air Force and was engaged in several other activities he always fondly recalled his years in the Corps. He made certain that his family was aware of his Optimist years and acquainted them with his mementos and memories.

Dave was a popular and well liked Corps member and particularly helpful to new members.

He retired to Vancouver Island after his military service and particularly enjoyed reminiscing about his “Optimist Years”. He passed away on May 16th, 2001.

Dave. We Remember!

Dave Parker



Corps: Toronto Optimists, De La Salle

1944 — March 22, 2010

Dave Parker served the Toronto Optimists Drum Corps during the 1972 and 1973 seasons as field design consultant & M&M caption head. He came to the Optimists with high credentials.... first as famed drill instructor for the De La Salle National Championship Corps of 1969 and 1970... and second as recently nominated (1971) Chief M&M Judge for the CJA (Canadian Judges Association).

In joining the Optimists Dave had to abdicate his role as Judge. He did this in the hopes of raising the calibre of yet another Canadian Corps. Indeed, with Dave's help, we did regain the National Title in 1972. Dave is remembered as "audacious inspirational, innovative, and unbelievably energetic, exuding an infectious yet crusty charisma". He returned to the judging in 1974 where he remained highly influential for another two decades. Dave displayed a generous spirit; radiating immense passion for drum corps, inspiring hope for all young performers and educators of the day.

Dave We Remember!

Dave Watt



Corps: Don Mills Sky Raiders, Toronto Optimists

Dave marched with the Don Mills Sky Raiders in 1959 and 1960. In 1961 he moved to the Optimists and stayed with us until he aged out in 1965.

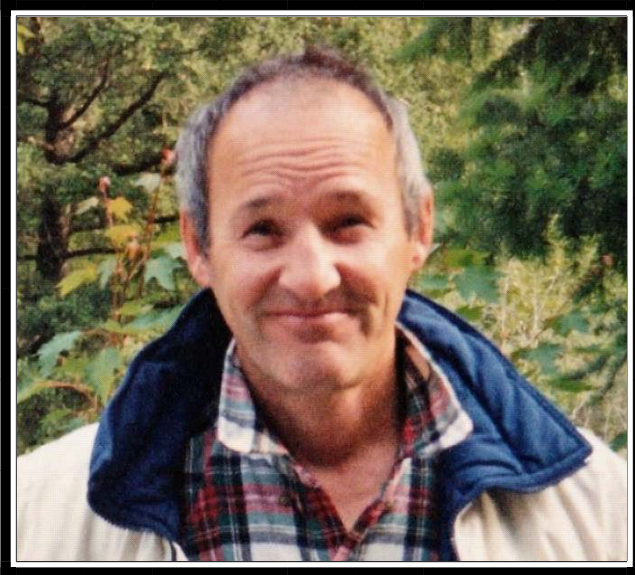
Dave started his time in the Optimists playing Baritone (or Bass-Baritone as it was then called to distinguish it from the smaller Baritones that were used in the early days). Dave played Euphonium in 1964, when Whaley Royce released the Euphonium. In 1965, when Optimists purchased their first set of matched horns, including their first Contrabasses, Dave moved to Contra.

Bill Thorne remembers the 1965 contras (Bill Thorne, Paul Thompson and Dave). When Optimists marched on the field before a show the horn players held their horn, mouthpiece up, in their right hand while they swung their left arm. The early contras were heavy and, at first, the guys carried them with both hands; however, they had a plan.

Dave, Bill and Paul embarked on an exercise problem. At the end of July, in Hamilton, they marched onto the field, just like the other horns. Their right arm, holding the vertical Contra, was extended, and they were swinging their left arm, just like everyone else. Needless to say, jaws dropped. It also enhanced Optimists reputation as a bunch of "tough guys".

Dave We Remember!

Dennis Roussel



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Den departed this beautiful earth in Vancouver after a fatal cardiac event. All who knew him will confirm he was one of the sweetest and gentlest souls they ever knew.

Den was born in Fort William (Thunder Bay), Ontario, and moved to Toronto with his family in 1960. There, he spent his early days until he moved to Vancouver with the wave of hippies, curious young people, and other searchers who arrived in Vancouver in the early 1970s. Once he reached Vancouver he knew he was home.

Although Den spent his early working life in construction and later as the building and maintenance supervisor for the Vancouver Immigrant Services Society his true avocation was mathematics, specifically geometry, which he studied and considered for decades, his final papers and writings amounting to many of thousands of pages. He is remembered to this day as the discoverer of "The Roussel Triangle", a theorem extension of the famed Morley Triangle. His triangle can be found on the internet — a fitting memorial to his fine mind.

Although he's gone he will live on in my heart for the many delightful characteristics that made him special.

I remember him as a young guy 4, 5, 6 years old and unless he was on his way to church or, later, school he would be marching around wearing a kid's carpenter belt nearly all the time, sawing, hammering and putting things together.

He never lost that interest in buildings things or understanding how things worked.

When he would visit my home in the east, within a day or two the cracked, broken, poorly fitting things in the house would be repaired. He noticed it. He repaired it. Barely a word from him.

I remember his smile. If you got a quiet smile from Den you knew you had done well.

I remember he was always glad to see you.

Den was a very able musician in his late teens and early twenties, playing first baritone horn with the Toronto Optimists from 1967-1970, and winning several awards in brass duet, trio, quartet and sextet categories.

Den was a master crossword puzzle solver. He would sit on the bench in the lane way at Mole Hill in Vancouver on nice days solving the New York Times Sunday crossword puzzle. He was very good at that.

Den seldom got angry — unless you happened to be on a road trip and you refused to stop at every historic plaque or point of interest on the route.

I remember his encyclopedic knowledge of matters that interested him. He had more than a layman's understanding of many subjects — physics, astronomy, music, electricity, literature, history, and many more. In his teens he became a Napoleon expert, citing details of early 19th century battles and intrigues.

Den was all those memories and more to me. But even more importantly he was one of my very best friends and one of the smartest people I ever knew. I'm sure Den would agree to me modifying a beautiful quote from Rabindranath Tagore's writings: "Say not in grief that he is no more, But say in thankfulness that he was." I shall miss him terribly. (Ray Roussel)

Dennis. We Remember!

Derek Branton



Corps: Cadets Feeder Corps, Toronto Optimists

Shy, quiet and dependable! Those were the attributes of Derek. He was the “steady Eddie” that all successful Drum Corps need; always there, always on time, always prepared.

He came to the Optimists from the Cadet Feeder Corps and played from 1968 through the early 1970’s.

One evening Derek decided to take a short-cut home across the railway tracks. He died long before his time!

Derek We Remember!

Diane Tenaglia



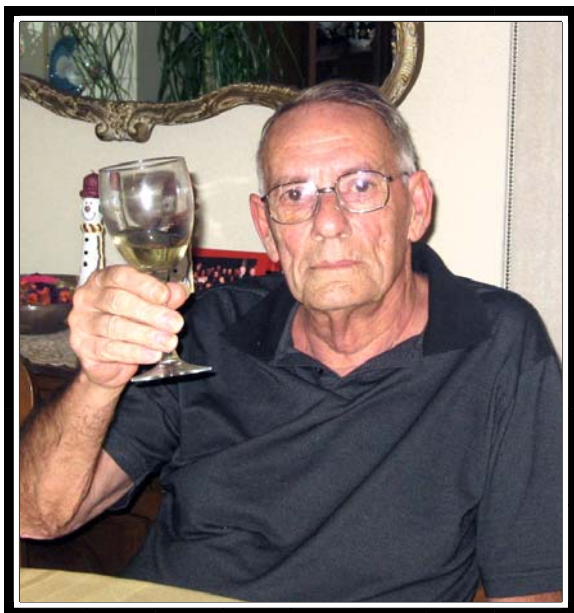
Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Diane Tenaglia marched in the Colour Guards of both the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists. In 1977 she was the Guard Captain of Seneca Optimists. Diane was known for her devilish smile but mostly for her hardcore attitude in drum corps and in life. Those who had the fortunate opportunity to connect with her on a personal level found a woman with a huge heart, a great capacity for caring and a tremendous dedication to get the job done.

May her pop thru the middle of that parachute live on.

Diane We Remember!

Dick Brown



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Optimist Lancers, Optimists Alumni, Midtowners and Golden Monarchs

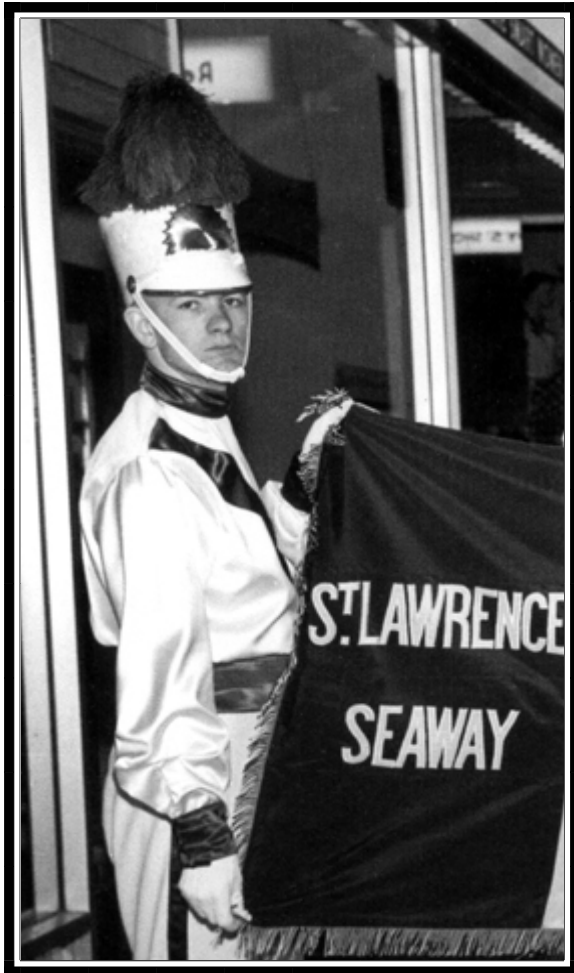
— October 25, 2010

Dick was a member of the management team of the Toronto Optimists and the Optimists Alumni Drum and Bugle Corps for many years.

He was also Assistant Director of the Midtowners and the Golden Monarchs; Founder and Director of the Lancers Drum and Bugle Corps; and, Secretary/Treasurer of the Canadian Drum Corps Association from 1964 to 1969.

Dick We Remember!

Don Chisolm



Corps: Leaside Lions, Toronto Optimists, Commanders

1937–2004

Don played for Leaside Lions in 1956 – 57, moving to the newly formed Toronto Optimists in 1958 with his friend Charlie Jensen. Don played French horn throughout the 1958 season and as he was ageing out became the Drum Major for 1959 along with Phil Hennings. In 1960 Don moved on to become the Drum Major of the Jesters later to become the Commanders. Without a doubt Don was a true showman and as a Drum Major he had a unique style that the crowds loved.



Don was a very successful commercial artist in both Toronto and Chicago – his avant-garde style was coveted by the Toronto Telegram and by the Optimist Drum Corps. Don's work can be seen in the design of the original crest used on the 1958 Corps jackets and in 1959 on the Optimist bass drum heads. Don truly was ahead of his time, and in many aspects he was his own man. Don died of cancer in 2004, he will be remembered by all who came into contact with him. A very talented fellow.

Don. We Remember!

Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists



May 2, 1929 — April 4, 2019

Here are a few words about Don's history with the Optimists together with some comments from corps members who knew Don. A link to a more extensive biography can be found on Don's "We Remember" page.

Don discovered Drum Corps and The Optimists in 1960. Over the years he served as corps photographer, publicity manager and corps director of the Optimists. He also began Green Capsule Comments, the newsletter for the Optimists. In addition to doing publicity for the Canadian and Ontario Drum Corps Associations, Don was also on the Board of Directors for these organizations. Don supplied photos and articles to various drum corps publications, designed promotional material, programmes and posters as well as designing the artwork used on record album covers for drum corps records. Needless to say, Don had a tremendous impact on both the Optimists and Drum Corps in general.

A Memorial Video for Don can be found on YouTube. It includes some biographical information as well as samples of Don's photos, examples of his artwork for corps record albums, promotional materials, corps buttons, contest adverts, etc. A multitude of examples of Don's work can be found in the Photo Gallery on the Optimists Alumni website. There is even a section on Don in the "Old Days" area of the Photo Gallery.

Below are a few comments from some of those who knew Don

"Every time I put on a corps album, I see his artwork, and think of Don and glad to have met him. He will live in our memories..." — Thom Sacco

"When I think of the Toronto Optimists, I think of Don Daber." — Jim Stevenson

"Don was brilliant, compassionate and highly organized. He was a marketing guru who individually created the visual legacy of the drum corps activity. I learnt a lot from Don." — Phil McArthur

"He had such talent...which he used positively to promote not just the Optimists, but all of our drum corps. I will never forget him, nor his wonderful contributions to our activity." — Stephen J. Cooley

"A true legend and wonderful person has left us. Thank you Don for all you did for all of us." — Ted Wilson

"We were so privileged to not only have known Don, but to have befriended him. Don was a great mentor and although he never marched with the corps he was truly a Toronto Optimist. I never heard him say an unkind word and he was for the kids in the corps. He never lost sight that this was an activity that kept so many of us off the streets and out of trouble (generally)." — Richard Bruton

"It is indeed sad that Don has moved on from this world. I first met Don my first full year with the Toronto Optimists in 1960. At that time I was in awe of his talent as a commercial artist and the many attributes he brought to the corps through his art, writing and ideas. My tenure playing in the corps lasted for 8 years and throughout that time Don came up with many inventive ideas that made belonging to the Optimists a special thing – not only the championships we won but the banquets, five year rings, twenty one club, GCC and the store on Keele Street to name a few that he was either instrumental in or partnered with others in bringing to fruition. For many of us the history of our teenage years were captured by Don on film, if it had not been for that there likely would be no record of our participation or achievements. In 1974 when I became the corps director Don was there with many suggestions and ideas that made the 1975 season most enjoyable for me and hopefully for the membership as well. Don always and only cared about the "kids". What about the kids? What about the kids? That was Don's rally cry, he really did care. It was always fun to be with Don – I never heard him speak ill of anyone or talk down to anyone. It was always fun to be with him after a rehearsal and a few libations when you knew Don would start up his Chinese Food, Chinese Food mantra. We would all wind up a Sai Woo's for you guessed it – Chinese Food. Don was kind and generous. In his later years he suffered a form of dementia that would rob not only him but his many friends of meaningful social contact. Even though he had to go through this state to where we are today, many of us continue to benefit through his meaningful work in the drum corps world and through his many photographs that are now posted on the Optimist Alumni web site. Don may have left us but his legacy lives on through the media that he loved." — Doug MacKenzie

Don. We Remember!

Doug Harrison



Corps: Toronto Optimists

1952–2004

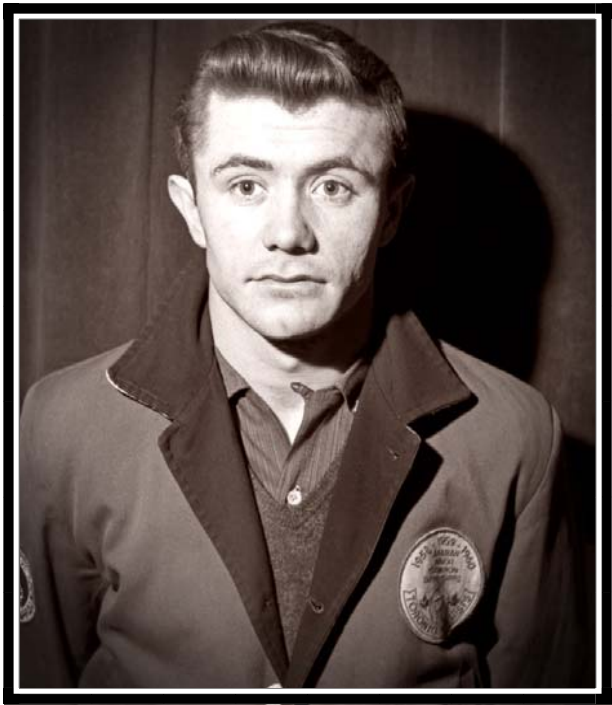
Doug, or “Harry” as he was popularly known in the Corps joined the Optimist’s Colour Guard in the spring of 1969. He moved over to the drum line in 1970 playing bass drum, that year, and then tymp in ‘71 and ‘72.

He is survived by his wife Dorothy, three children, his Mom & Dad (Roy & Joyce Harrison) and sisters Ruth & Norma who were both members of the Optimist Lancers.

One of the infamous “Snaresbrook Boys” Doug will be forever missed by his boyhood friends and fellow Corpsmen Larry Blandford, Paul Coffey, Mike Hennebury and Randy Cochrane.

Doug We Remember!

Doug McPhail



Corps: Western Tech, Toronto Optimists

Doug started in Drum Corps with Western Tech and then transferred to Danforth Tech. He, of course, was with Barry Bell and Lorne Ferrazzutti at both schools and when they left Danforth to join Optimists, Doug naturally followed.

With Optimists he played second soprano, and became known for his expertise in blowing a horn with a ton of vibrato, not of course to be copied by other Corps members.

Other members of the horn line avoided playing on his right hand side as Doug had somehow managed to learn how to play the horn out of the right side of his mouth. Those unfortunate enough to play on the right side of Doug ended up with a hearing problem early in life.

Doug went on to become a renowned drill instructor for Optimists for many years, and is fondly remembered for his talent and deep, philosophical thinking.

Doug. We Remember!

Doug Shearer



Corps: Optimist Bantams, Toronto Optimists, Optimist Lancers

December 12, 1946 — February 22, 1986

Doug joined the Bantam Optimists in 1960 where he played the tenor drum from 1960 to 1963. He graduated to the "A" Corps in 1964 and promptly switched to the horn line, playing baritone.

The Shearers had a thing about nicknames, which their fellow Corps members didn't quite understand. There is John (Mansion) Shearer, Rick (Outhouse) Shearer, and then there was Doug (Barn) Shearer.

Doug is survived by his wife and daughter, and is greatly missed by the entire family.

He marched with the Toronto Optimists from 1964 through 1968 and then went on to be the Equipment manager of the Lancers from 1969 through 1972.

Doug..... We Remember!

Ed Hall



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Ed played French Horn in the Optimists. He was instrumental in the resurgence of the Cardinal's of Scarborough from 1987 till his death. He was very active as a volunteer during that time and was much admired by the kids. A funny anecdote — he would drive 100 miles or more out of his way just to eat at his favorite restaurant near Cambridge. (Paul Thompson)

Ed. We Remember!

Eric Burton



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Jolly Jesters, Army Service Corps

Eric never marched with the corps but he was the first colour guard instructor for The Optimists. He did an excellent job of training the guard and he was held in high regard. Teaching drill was just one area of expertise. At one point Lorne had an idea for tenor drum mallets with wooden balls for heads. Eric was the one who manufactured these mallets and he and Lorne sold them to other corps. Eventually Ludwig saw the idea, liked what they saw and started manufacturing their own version of the mallets.

Eric eventually moved to Rochester then, as he got older, to Florida.

Here are a couple of comments from some of those who knew Eric.

"Eric was a very good friend of mine having known him since the 50's. He played a tenor drum for the Army Service Corps Trumpet Band at the University Armories where I met him. He also played for the Jolly Jesters Drum and Bugle Corps. In 1958 when the Toronto Optimists were formed Eric became the Colour Guard instructor. He was well informed regarding the D.C.A. Colour Guard's protocol. He taught the guard to march, how to handle the flags and how to spin & toss the rifles. These were Army issued rifles weighing 10 pounds. Eric's passing saddens me, he will be missed." — Lorne Ferrazzutti

"Eric was the man who taught the Colour Guard in the 50's and 60's his instruction and knowledge of the rules were number one. Many Corps would ask him about Guard excellence on how to preform. He worked very hard to make the Colour Guard the best in the Drum Corps circuit. The Optimist Drum Corps won many awards for being the best Colour Guard in competition. He was a man who wanted excellence from the guys and he got it. The guys in the guard thought highly of him. He got the best show from the guys every time. He was a pleasant person. He was very proud of the Corps. I'm sure he had fond memories of the Corps. " — Phil Hennings

Eric. We Remember!

Evert Botterweg



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

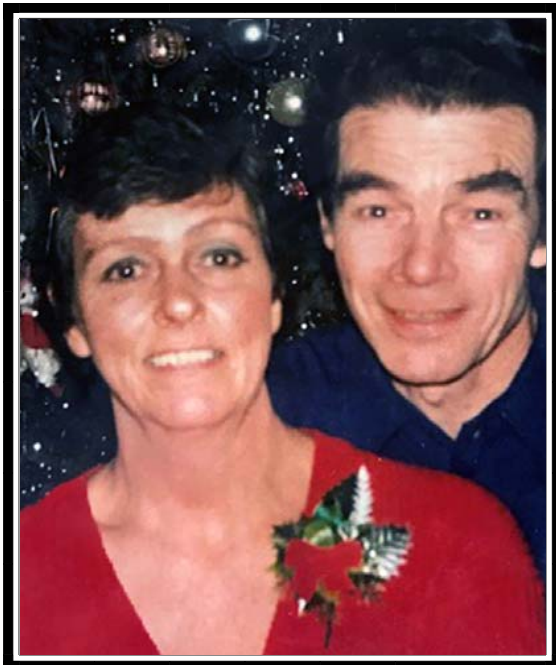
Evert was the equipment manager and truck driver for the Toronto Optimists from 1971 through 1975. When Seneca Optimists was formed in 1976, he became their equipment manager. Evert built the tallest flag pole for the Canadian flag. At any given time Mike could pull down on the cord which lifted up the pole inside.

Evert was not only a wiz at managing equipment he was also a gem of a human being. His home for the last 36 years was Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was born in Appledorn, the Netherlands. Evert was 85 years young.

"Evert and Doreen Botterweg were the kind of people every Corps should have. Responsible for one member of their household in the Corps, they became responsible for much of the Corps and its activities. Doreen, along with others, was a stalwart member of the Ladies Auxiliary. Evert's specialty became the equipment department. The Optimists has long had an equipment department, run well by good people. Under Evert Botterweg, as the Corps grew in size, the department kept pace in capacity and appropriate organization. A strapping ex-Dutch naval officer, he applied his abilities and built the Optimist equipment department into one of the best in North America. Possibly the best. This was verified by the offers from other top Corps, with commensurate salary, to go and organize the same for them. He knew all the ropes, and things only went wrong if his directions were ignored."
— from Colin Hedworth's book on the Optimists

Evert We Remember!

Florence Sciore



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Flo and Vic's connection with the corps would have begun when their son Vic joined the Optimist Cadets. Both of their daughters, Darlene and Laura, also joined the corps. The Sciore family quickly became an integral part of the Optimists family. For many years Flo and her husband Vic ran the corps' booster table. Initially it was for the Toronto Optimists then, after the merger with the Seneca Princemen, for the Seneca Optimists.

Darlene wrote: "Besides family, nothing was more important to my mom than the drum corps. She treated every member as part of our family My mom loved having all the "out of towners" at our home each weekend."

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Flo:

"Ahhh Mrs Score was such a sweetheart. She opened her home....or should I say kitchen to us Drum Corps youth back in 1978. She was a saint" (Doug Huras)

"Sorry to hear this. They were the kind of family that drum corps couldn't survive without." (Vern Johansson)

"What a woman! Their home was party central in the 70's . They made sure we were always fed and looked after especially when we drank a little too much! We had horn practices there – so patient, so tolerant! Don't know how they put up with us all. What amazing loving and caring people Mr and Mrs Score were." (Corrie Danielson)

"The ultimate Drum Corps parents. Supported everyone all the time. A big influence in my younger years. Many fond memories of her." (Kevin O'Connor)

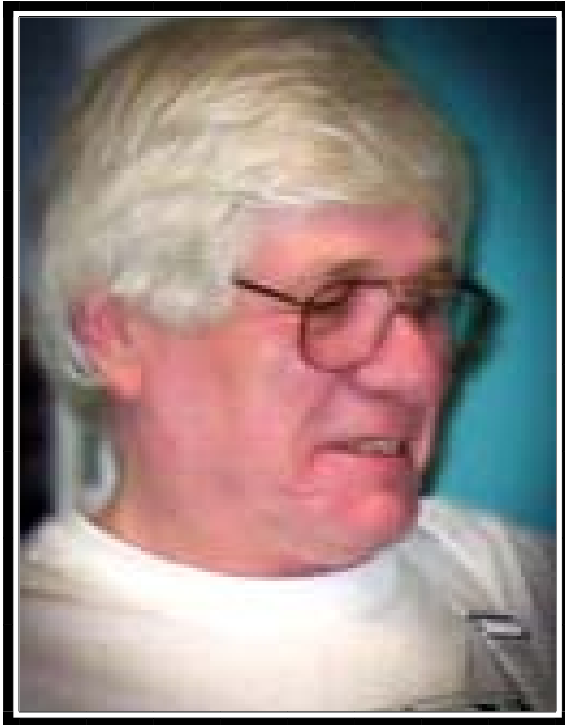
"Mrs. Sciore was one half of one of the kindest couples I have known throughout my life. When I think of her, the qualities of warmth and grace rush to mind." (Dan Martin Shimski)

"My heart is hurting, but I know she is with her two Vics. She was one of a kind and will be truly missed by so many. People like her and her husband are rare in this world." (Karinn Martel)

Flo passed away in February of 2020.

Flo We Remember!

Frank Rivier



Corps: Optimists Alumni

— January 25, 2011

Frank joined the Optimists Alumni in 2003 and remained a member until his passing. Frank loved the corps and attended many functions even though physical challenges prevented him from playing. You could always count on him to be there to cheer us on!

Frank had a strong talent for oil painting, music, and stained glass. After spending most of his career with the Halton Regional Police Force, he retired to become self-employed. He was also a member of the Halton Police Retirees Association.

Frank..... We Remember!

Fred Johnson



Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps, Optimists Bantams, Toronto Optimists

1933 — August 24, 2010

Fred was a co-founder of the Toronto Optimists and the founder of the Optimists Bantams.

Fred's connection with the Optimists began in the early 1950s with the Scout Band and he lived his Scout Promise every day of his life. He devoted his life to his family, friends and community. Fred was Scarborough Citizen of the Year 1978, Scarborough Ward 7 Councillor 1988-1997. Retired from Giffels & Associates. Drummer, HMCS York Navy Reserve Trumpet Band and ASM Toronto Region Scout Band. Despite critically injuring both legs in 1955 and instantly losing his left leg, Fred gave his all to his city.

Here are a few memories of Fred.

I have fond memories of Fred, he was always pleasant and I never saw him without a smile. His accomplishments did not surprise me as he was always one who would take on difficult duties and make them work. I had the pleasure of being in the Guard of Honour at Fred & Aileen's wedding. It was a pleasure to have known him and he will not be forgotten. (Phil Hennings)

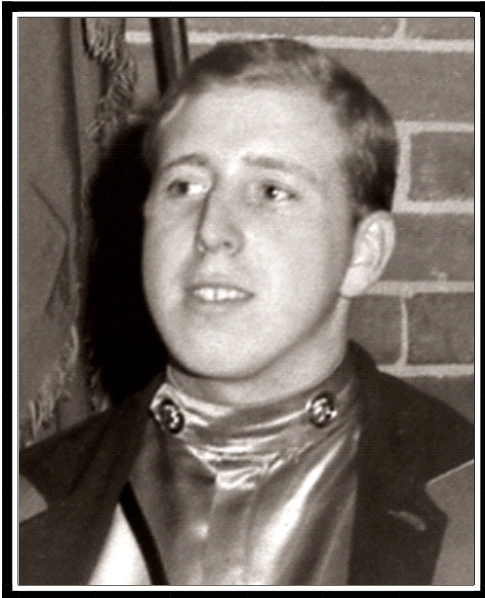
The boys in the corps loved Fred because he was always there with a smile and a helping hand. Even though he had trouble walking (he had an artificial leg) he was always on parade, carrying a water bucket and urging us on. He was the guy who gave us our nickname, The Green Giants. He also told us we'd have to work hard if we wanted to be part of the great Green Machine. (Vern Johansson)

One evening, Dave Harris and I were messing around in the lunchroom, singing Blessed Sacrament, 1961. Dave was pretending to drum and I was pretending to conduct. Fred came in and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" "Nothing", we replied. "Well, let me see that again," said Fred. Realizing that we weren't in trouble, we carried on. Fred made me Drum Major at the next rehearsal. (Vern Johansson)

He was very proud of the kids in the Bantams and we were all very glad that he was part of our lives. Anyone who ever spent even just a smidgen of time with Fred, would never forget him. I say this as a person who had not seen Fred since 1964, the year I went up to the big corps. Fred got a lot of kids ready for the big corps. He is one of the good ones who was a positive influence on the lives of many. (Vern Johansson)

Fred. We Remember!

Fred Lombard



Corps: Toronto Optimists

April 4, 1942 — August 10, 2017

When Fred came to the Optimists he joined the Colour Guard. Clearly, he must have loved colour guards because, when he passed, he was still a guard member. In Fred's case he had been a long-time member of the Ajax Branch 322 Legion Colour Guard.

In the early 60s Optimists' flag poles were two sections of 5 foot aluminum that fitted together. At the top was a 12" heavy, rounded aluminum spear point. These poles were a challenge to handle, especially when one takes into account the fact that our flags were two separate embroidered flags stitched together so that you would see the same thing on both sides. The truth is that these flags were too heavy for the poles. A "present arms" involved a quick "snap" and put real stress on the poles. I marched in the guard with Fred in 1963. He would often end the show with his flagpole almost bent in half.

Back in the day Fred's closest friend was Ian Cruickshank. They were still friends when Fred passed.

Fred. We Remember!

Fred Shearer



Corps: Toronto Optimists

October 26, 1908—October 24, 1997

Fred was associated with the Optimists both as a parent and as Equipment Manager in 1964 – 1965. He had three sons, John, Doug and Rick who marched in the Corps.

Together with his wife they became affectionately known as “Ma and Pop” Shearer and took great delight in having many of the Corps members congregate at their home on Bain Avenue in Toronto’s Cabbagetown district.

He often reminisced about the New Year’s Eve when a large number of members showed up at his home and held an impromptu midnight parade on the street. It certainly ended up as one of the most memorable New Years Eves on Bain Avenue.

Fred..... We Remember!

Gary "Chops" Czapinski



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists, and many more

In the 1970s Gary designed shows for the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists. The famous parachute of the 1977 Seneca Optimists was one of Gary's creations. The idea is said to have been inspired by Czapinski's walk through an elementary school one day where he saw students doing an exercise routine with a parachute coordinated to music. He will certainly be missed.

Gary worked with many units, among them were the

Norwood Park Imperials, Santa Clara Vanguard, Saginaw,

Madison Scouts, Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists and the Pioneer Corps. His creative show design skills, as well as his adjudication abilities have been well recognized. He earned the honor of becoming a member of the D.C.I. Hall of Fame, Class of 1999.

"RIP Gary "Chops" Czapinski. You played a very big part in our success and fame."

"He was a class act"

"A talented man,! He had the vision."

"Gary and Marie, as accomplished as they are in the drum corps world, always held a very special place in their hearts towards ALL of us Seneca Optimists members!!!"

"You were very special CHOPS!"

Gary. We Remember!

Gary Corbett



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Optimists Alumni

1944 – 2006

Gary was a soprano player who started out in the Bantam Optimists. He marched with the Bantams until 1960. In the 1961 season he moved to the "Big Corps". Gary stayed with the Optimists until he aged out at the end of 1965.

When the Optimists Alumni was formed, Gary was one of the first to pick up a horn! It had been a great many years but he got his lip back in shape and, once again, played lead. When the Alumni Corps played "The Party's Over", Gary played the solo

Gary..... We Remember!

Gene Chepswick



Corps: St Mary's, Toronto Optimists

— December 29, 2011

Gene began his drum corps career in 1961 with St Mary's Drum Corps and transferred to the Toronto Optimists in 1962. He stayed with the Optimists until he aged out in 1965.

In his first year with the Optimists Gene was a member of the Colour Guard where he carried the New York – Canadian Championship flag. He also carried a flag in Optimists' 1963 mini-corps. In 1963 Gene was appointed Colour Guard Sergeant and in 1964 and 1965 he served as our Guard Captain. Not only did he march with the corps, but Gene volunteered his services as an Associate Editor and writer for the corps newsletter, Green Capsule Comments.

Here are a couple of comments from some of those who knew him.

“I marched with Gene in the guard for two years. Boy could he strut his stuff. Made me proud to be an Optimist!”

“I remember Gene as being a classy guy. In my opinion he was one of the best colour guard Captains we had.”

Gene. We Remember!

George Wright



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Bantam Optimists, Cardinals of Precious Blood, Emerald Knights

On a fall evening in 1961, at Oak Park Junior High School in east-end Toronto, George Wright and I (Vern Johansson) joined the Bantam Optimists. I had never met George before but he made me laugh. From the Bantams, George moved up to the Junior Corps in the fall of 1963. He was an Optimist in name and attitude.

George accomplished a great deal in drum corps. He played in the much-awarded Baritone Quartet. His positive attitude was always infectious and his laughter could always be heard. George was Corpsman of the Year in 1967. In 1971, George married the love of his life, Rose Ferraro, sister of his best friend, Optimists Tenor Drummer, Vince Ferraro.

George became Corps Director of the Optimists during a very difficult period in the '70's and guided them through a thicket of problems. He was also Corps Director for Cardinals of Precious Blood and the Emerald Knights in Mississauga, which included his daughters, Lisa, Danielle and Alison. George was one of the 4 Founders of the Optimists Alumni. He was a true and loyal Optimist and loved every moment of his involvement. I will never forget him. Or his laugh.

Here are a couple of comments from some of those who knew George.

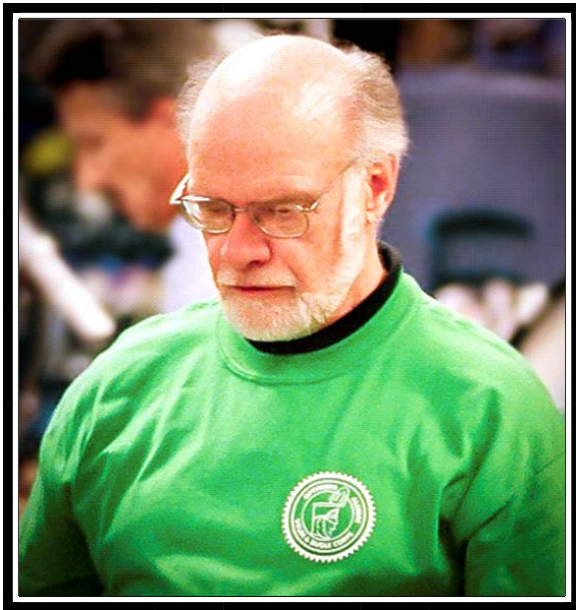
"I'll always remember you as a diminutive bundle of unbridled passion, eternal optimism, contagious humour and leadership by principle and example. The world is a slightly lesser place without you." (Greg)

"Whenever I hear the name George Wright, it brings a smile to my face! He was a very passionate and very funny guy! I will miss him a lot! "

"A very committed individual. It was both an honour and a privilege to march and work with him in The Optimists Alumni." (Bill)

George. We Remember!

Gerrie Leebody



Corps: Army Service Corps, Jolly Jesters, Ambassadors, Simcoe United Alumni and Optimists Alumni

— December 1, 2014

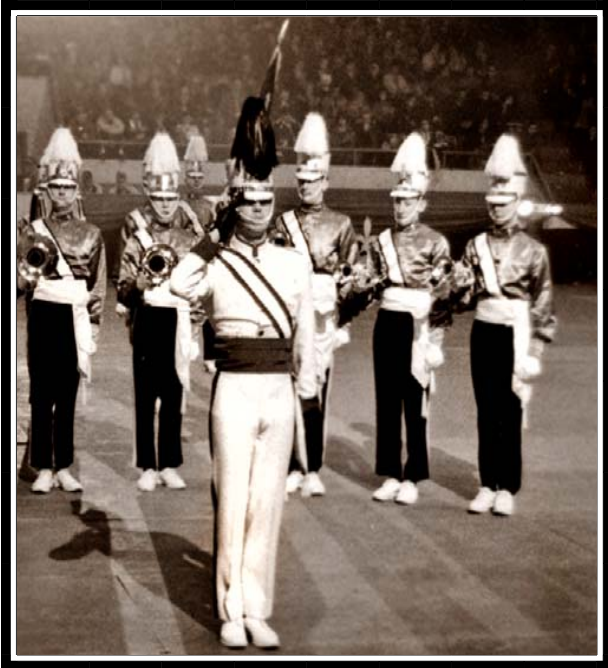
Gerrie started off drumming in the Army Service Corps after which he marched with the Jolly Jesters. In April 1959 he moved to the Ambassadors. Later on Gerrie was the drum instructor for the Arnprior Hi-Liters.

In 2006 and 2007 Gerrie played snare with the Optimists Alumni. More recently Gerrie played in the snare line of Simcoe United Alumni.

Gerrie will be missed by all who knew him.

Gerrie We Remember!

Glen Durish



Corps: Grantham Police Boys Band, Toronto Optimists

October 27, 2015

Glen came from St Catharines and marched with Grantham before joining the Optimists. During his time with the Optimists Glen played bass drum before moving to baritone. In 1963, his last year with the corps, Glen was Drum Major for Optimists' mini-corps as well as assistant Drum Major for the competitive corps.

I have vague memories of Glen having a portable chess set that he used to bring with him on corps trips. I seem to recall Glen and Doug McPhail sitting together on trips and playing chess (hey my memories of the early 1960s aren't as clear as they used to be).

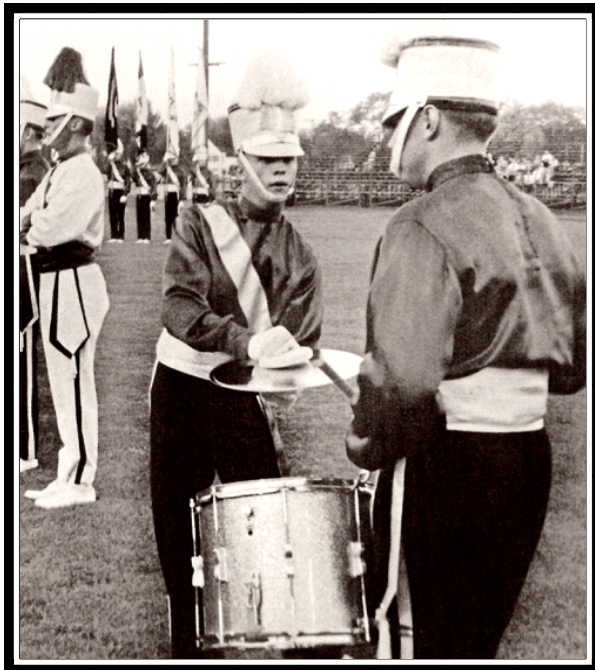
Doug MacKenzie has an interesting story about Glen. *"In early 1960 I sat beside Glendurish on a bus going somewhere for a contest. Everyone referred to Glendurish; there was never a Glen or a Durish, always Glendurish. Being rather young and naïve and not knowing him well, I wanted to know his first name; so I asked him, he said Glen and I said, Glen? Yes, he replied Glen. I sat there for a few moments, puzzled. Ok, so your first name is Glen, yes, he says. I thought for a few more moments and said, so you are Glen Glendurish. He looked at me with a rather pained expression and said Glen is my first name Durish is my second. I don't recall anyone calling him Glen or Durish even after this explanation. He was always referred to as Glendurish. I can't recall anyone I knew that was referred to by first and last name combined. Only Glendurish. RIP"*

"Glen was well-liked by his peers in the corps and seemed to be one of those guys who did everything right. He was a very good bass drummer and a good baritone player, and always well dressed. As the assistant Drum Major under Jimmy McConkey, he held his own – not a showman but a guy who had the member's respect and looked good on the field. Glen was the Drum Major for the Optimist 63 mini corps as well. He left the corps at the end of the 63 season and, to my knowledge, never returned to the drum corps scene."
– Doug MacKenzie

From the obituary for Glen: It is with sadness the family announces the passing of Glen Durish on October 27, 2015. He will reunite with his mother and father and his brothers Paul et al. He will be greatly missed by his family in St Catharines, his co-workers at Northwest Airlines, Terminal One, at Pearson airport and his many friends in Oakville. A private family service will be held in St Catharines.

Glen We Remember!

Glenn Copp



Corps: Toronto Optimists

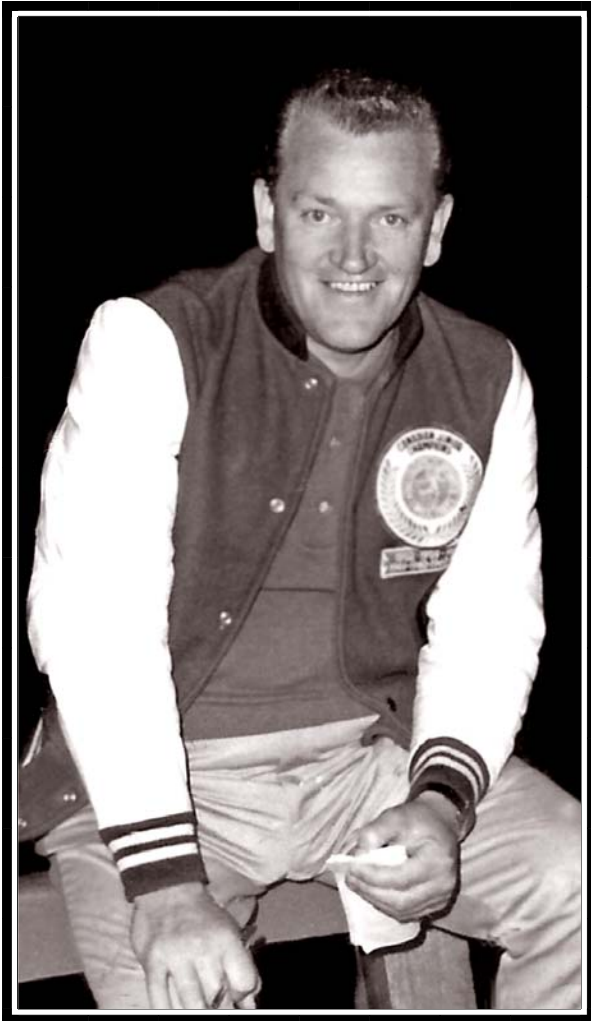
Glenn played Cymbals with the Toronto Optimists from about 1959 through 1962. He also played Cymbals in the Alumni Corps from its inception until about 2008.

Here are a couple of comments from some of those who knew him.

"Glenn was a clever guy. I recall a late night trip to New Jersey with Optimists, where he had an inflated air mattress (with sleeping bag, pillow, etc.) that he spread out in the aisle of the bus to get a good night's sleep. The rest of us were trying to sleep in the seats as best we could (a couple of guys stretched out in the overhead luggage racks). Glenn made a dramatic swan dive onto his bed, only to crash to the floor, as someone had let the air out of the mattress when he wasn't looking." — Mel Dey

Glenn We Remember!

Gord Angus



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Gord Angus was the father of Dwight Angus who marched in the corps from 1967 to 1970 inclusive.

Gord joined the Equipment Department in 1967 and became the corps Equipment Manager in 1969 and 1970. Gord spent many tireless hours dropping off and picking up equipment from repair shops while ensuring corps members always had their equipment or a suitable replacement on time.

Gord made this process look easy as it was his nature to help out wherever possible and to add value.

He was a major contributor to the corps success.

Gord. We Remember!

Gord Robinson



Corps: Toronto Optimists

While he was not “officially” on staff, Gord was a key member of the Toronto Optimists’ organization. As the Recorder for the Rameses Shrine Temple Gord was the man that offered the Shrine facilities for our use, back in 1965, when the Corps was looking for a permanent Winter home. Gord was always a welcoming host and he did everything he could to make the Corps comfortable in what we now know as the Canadian Legion.

Almost single-handedly Gord was responsible for organizing Canada’s greatest Drum Corps Spectacular, the Shrine Contest, held each June at the C.N.E. Stadium in Toronto. At last Canada got to see the best U.S Corps available competing against the best in the Canada. While it was a tremendous opportunity for both fans and players, many Optimists felt that he did it for us. This show was such a success in the Drum Corps world that it became as famous as the Dream or any other Contest one could name.

When Gord wasn’t looking after these events he was out at almost every rehearsal. Whether it was driving guys to shows, carrying water, speaking at the Corps dinners or whatever task was needed Gord was always there. For many of us who came from out of town Gord provided accommodation, meals, transport and even the odd loan, when needed. Gord’s dedication to the Corps went far beyond the day to day life of Drum Corps helping out Optimist members in every way that he could. If ever there was a true believer in the Optimist Creed it was Gord Robinson and he is missed.

Gord. We Remember!

Guy Vezina



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Guy started in the Colour Guard and in 1965 he became Guard Sergeant. In 1966, Guy became Guard Captain for his last year in Junior Corps. Guy was an incredibly popular Corpsman and well known in the back of the bus card games.

Guy was our unofficial ambassador and translator whenever we went to Quebec. He would accept our trophies and make a speech in French. He also helped the guys meet the fine ladies of Shawinigan.

Guy. We Remember!

Harry Prokop



Corps: Toronto Optimists

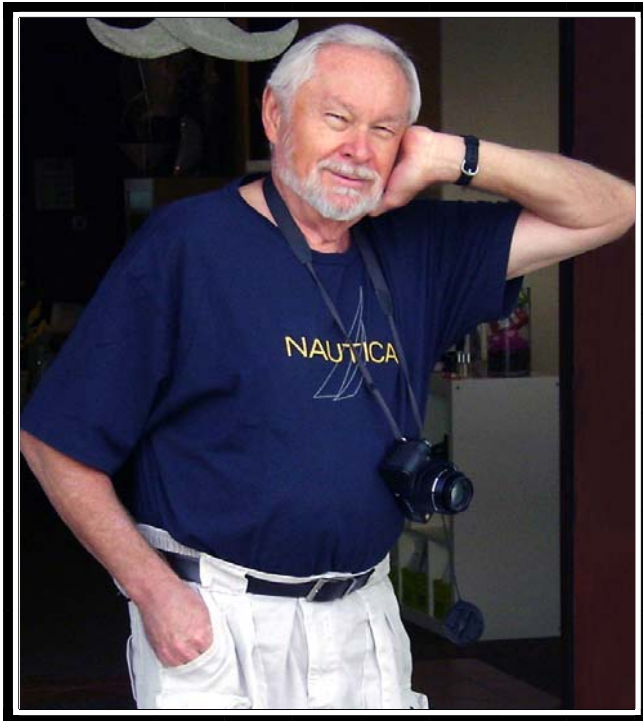
Harry was the father of Ron “Skip” Prokop who marched with the Corps in the early sixties and went on to fame with the rock band Lighthouse.

He travelled extensively with the Corps while Ron was a member, doing any and all tasks asked of him.

He was a fixture with the Corps during the early years and was as proud of it as he was of Ron. He took particular joy in the accomplishments of both.

Harry..... We Remember!

Henry "Hank" Beben



Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists and Optimists Alumni

From its beginnings as a Boy Scout Bugle Band in 1953 up until he left the Corps at the end of the 1959 season, Hank was in the horn line of the group that evolved into the "THE TORONTO OPTIMISTS".

Throughout his lifetime, Hank was fiercely proud of the successes and accomplishments of the Corps and of the friends and the associations he made. He was often heard to say that his exposure to the teamwork and discipline within the Corps was a significant factor in his development and aided in the success he achieved in the business world. And successful he was!

Over the years Hank stayed involved and was the driving force behind all five organized reunions for the Corps, he took the lead in arranging numerous group trips to Corps and Alumni shows, arranged a great number of get-togethers and gave his full support to the development and organization of The Optimists Alumni Corps. Those of us assisting in any of these endeavors soon learned that "failure was not an option".

As a friend, you knew without question that should the need arise, Hank would be there as illustrated by his long time support of fellow Optimist and friend Warren Mills during his lengthy illness. You could always count on him.

Here are a few comments from Hank's friends:

"I could count on him for advice of any kind at any time. He was a person who would listen, a man of great knowledge, a man's man. He would say friendship is something you should cherish. He was a great believer in education, a man who would read novels continually, he had a great memory and he loved to read about world wars. The Civil War was of interest to him and we visited Washington three times because of the history in that area. He thought the world of our Veterans. Sports, he loved them all. The four of us traveled to different places and always enjoyed each other's company. He was very adventurous. Loved different types of exotic foods. He was a great friend. There are many things to say about this man, a man you could count on."

"Regal Road School. Toronto. Grade 3. Such a very long time ago. But, that's how long Henry (Hank) has been in my life...as a friend that was always — always there. Through Cubs, Scouts, the Corps, he was the fulcrum upon which our little 'band of brothers' glided through our younger days. I sort of lost touch with Henry and the others when I moved to Montreal. Then one day, at a conference in Toronto that I attended, he chased me down the hall and it was as if I had never left. That was vintage Hank. Steadfast, loyal, committed to his friends just like they were family. Those were his life values along with hard work, determination and pride...all of which made him the success he was in business. Hank loved a good debate. He would instigate the wildest propositions then sit back, smile and enjoy the give and take of a great conversation. Every now and then he would flash that smile of his and you knew he was putting you on. But, who cared. They say you are blessed if you can look back on you life and know that you had the good fortune to know a few true friends. Hank was one of mine. And I thank him for that. And I will miss him."

Henry. We Remember!

Ian Robertson



Corps: Boy Scout Band, Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists

Ian was a charter member of the Optimists. He lived one street over from Davenport Presbyterian Church where the precursor band to the Optimist was formed in 1952 as the 18th Scout Troop Band.

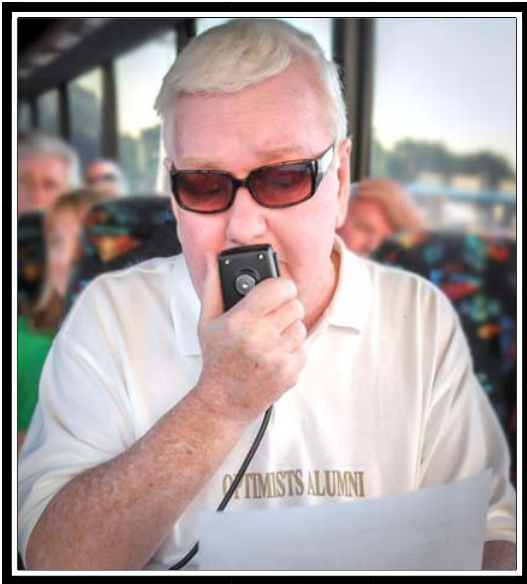
He continued on as the Band first became the 157th Scout Troop Band, then Opti-Corps and finally the Toronto Optimist Drum and Bugle Corps.

Ian marched in the Colour Guard with Optimists before joining the Royal Canadian Navy and being assigned to the aircraft carrier H.M.C.S. Bonaventure.

Unfortunately, Ian met a tragic and untimely death when he was swept off the deck of the ship, lost at sea.

Ian. We Remember!

Jim Dwyer



Corps: The Vics (Montreal), Optimists Alumni

February 20, 1935 — March 2, 2019

From 1960 through 1965 Jim marched in the drum line of the Vics, a Senior corps from Montreal (the Vics had began as the band of the Victoria Rifles of Canada, an infantry regiment from Montreal). One of Jim's friends talked about The Vics first competition against the Hawthorne Caballeros. Let's just say that it was a sobering experience.

Around 2006 Jim discovered the Optimists Alumni. Jim jumped in to help out as our Business Manager and Transport Manager, sometimes Drum Major or anything else that was needed. When health issues forced him to leave in late 2010 we were very sad to see him go. Jim brought excellence to everything he did.

Jim was the guy who got us into the Toronto St Patrick's Day parade. In fact, Jim was one of the five guys who founded the Toronto St Pat's parade back in 1988! (Actually, there had been an earlier St Pat's parade in Toronto but that parade was last held in 1878.)

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Jim.

"He was a fine gentleman who will be missed."

"I'm sad to hear this. He was a fine guy."

"Saddened to read this; got to know him, great guy, very supportive, great Irishman."

"Very sad to hear this. Jim was very involved in all the corps activities."

"I remember Jim many years ago when he was in a marching band in Montreal with my brother Earl. They were marching with their band in a parade one weekend when our family saw the band coming up the street marching and playing their instruments. There was my brother Earl marching without his drums and Jim right beside him tapping on his drum set. We had a chuckle but the band group looked so proud and smart marching in this event. "

"Jim was such a nice person and a true gentleman, his winning smile will be missed. "

Jim We Remember!

Jim Taylor



Corps: Leaside Lions, Golden Monarchs, Toronto Optimists

Jim began his drum corps career with the Leaside Lions and later with the Golden Monarchs.

When the Monarchs folded in early 1967, Jim moved to the Optimists and joined Emilio Russo and John McDonald in the snare line, replacing Ron Kaiser.

Jim immediately became known as "GRONK", a character from the 1960's TV series "It's About Time", about a prehistoric cave family. He was a cave man, and some of Jim's actions confirmed this impression.

There was a story (maybe true, maybe not) that in a disciplinary action, his Mother had confiscated his motorcycle keys. The retrieval of said keys required some physical effort. And in doing so Jim managed to break his mothers arm. I doubt that it was intentional, but only added to the Gronkish lore.

The next year, 1968, John McDonald aged out and Jim became even more crucial to the percussion section in 1969. Jim may not have been the most natural drummer, but when I played beside him in the snare line, he was the hardest working one. He had to be to play in the same line as the fellows he performed with.

Jim We Remember!

John Coull



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Scarborough Firefighters

February 7, 1951 – September 2, 2021

John marched with the Optimists in 1968 and 1969. He took a break in 1970 then joined the Scarborough Firefighters/Princemen to march with his brother Doug. He played with Firefighters in 1971 and 1972. John's brother, Doug, became a drill instructor for the Seneca Optimists while his sister, Sandy, was a member of Seneca Optimists' excellent colour guard.

John discovered a love for music and golf early on, and both passions stayed with him his whole life. In particular, it was jazz and big band that captured his heart strongest; John's "working music" at home was usually Arturo Sandoval, Maynard Ferguson, or Dizzy Gillespie, at maximum volume.

After a career with the Toronto Police Service and the Ontario Fire Marshalls office, John spent the final years of work with Origin and Cause, Inc. Always eager to solve the mystery, John's police skills and fire investigation skills kept him curious and determined, eager to apply what he knew to the pursuit of justice and answers.

"John was just a fine and talented guy. Our loss. " (Greg Oxenham)

"John was a quiet and determined guy who gave his all to our group. " (Larry Blandford)

John We Remember!

John Diamond



Corps: Toronto Optimists

John joined Optimists in 1963. He was one of those guys who always had a joke to share. John carried the Quebec flag that first year. Of course he wasn't satisfied with just carrying a flag so, while he did an excellent job on flag, he pursued one of his passions — rifle.

John started practicing rifle during that first year, and, in his second year with the corps, he joined the rifle line, tossing a real rifle — one of the chrome-plated Lee Enfield 303s that were used by Optimists. Back then the corps not only used real rifles but they also did a “duck and spin” and tossed those beasts while rather sharp bayonets were attached! (Yes, we were a crazy lot!) As the photo shows, John was quite successful (Sorry, but I couldn't find a shot of John with a bayonet on his rifle.

John. We Remember!

John Hertell



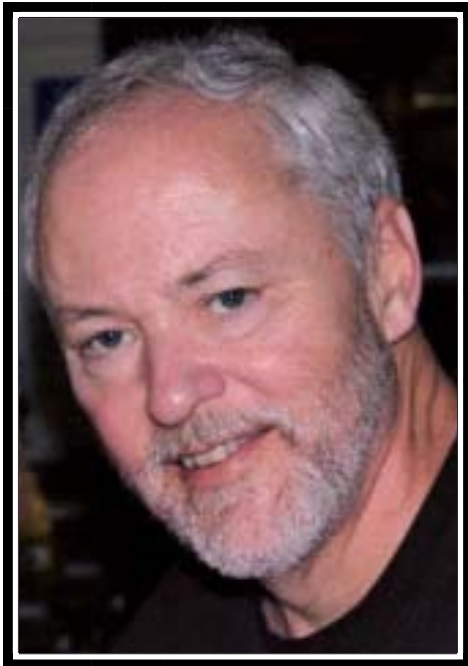
Corps: Danforth Tech Trumpet Band, Toronto Optimists

John began his drum corps career with the Western Tech Trumpet Band playing soprano in both 1956 and 1957. After the 1957 season John, together with friends Al Lavigne, Ed Shaniawski and Tom Johnson, left Western to become charter members of a brand new drum corps called the Toronto Optimists. John played soprano with the Optimists from 1958 until he aged-out in 1960.

John was one of those quiet guys who contributed largely to the first three National Championships. He was a steady influence and a reliable corpsman who is remembered as a very nice person.

John. We Remember!

John Kernahan



Corps: Toronto Optimists

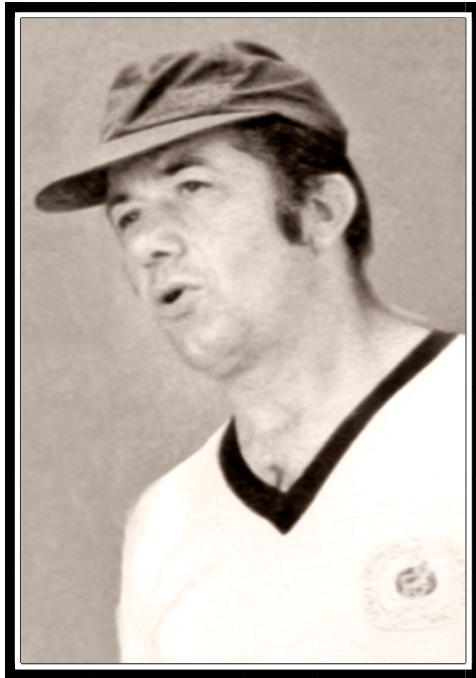
1952 – 2013

John Kernahan played for the St. Catharines Chessmen prior to his stint with the Optimists in 1969. John played second soprano for both Corps. He passed away on August 22 following a long battle with heart and kidney disease.

John served as general manager of the Niagara Parks Commission from 1998 until he retired in 2011. He is survived by his wife Allanna and sons Matthew and Daniel.

John..... We Remember!

John Konstantinou



Corps: Seneca Optimists

John was the father of Sandra Konstantinou and he loved the corps. Knowing that a corps travels on its belly and performs at its best when the bellies are full, John traveled with the corps, making sure everyone's belly was filled with good, nourishing food. This was definitely one of the reasons for Seneca's success. And I'm sure everyone remembers Konstantinou's Cafe. John passed away on November 12, 2008.

John. We Remember!

John Peachey



Corps: Burlington Teen Tour Band, Top Hat Marching Orchestra, Empire Statesmen and Optimists Alumni

John grew up around marching bands, and played the tuba. He started in the Burlington Teen Tour Band, where he met his wife Kimm. He then helped to start the Burlington Top Hat Marching Orchestra. John's son, Michael, marched with the Empire Statesmen and John joined the corps so that he and his son could march together.

John first played with the Optimists Alumni in 2012. Carrying a 30 pound contrabass on one's shoulder puts a strain on the body and, after a performance in the Fall of 2013, John came home with muscle spasms in his back. Unfortunately the problem was not the contra. John was diagnosed with cancer and given a prognosis of only six months. Bravely enduring multiple rounds of chemo and selective radiation treatments he survived more than seven years to share this time with family and friends.

John said that his big wish was to be a grandpa. John's son, Michael, and his wife, Melissa, welcomed their first child in December 2018! John's wish had come true and he had a bit of time to enjoy being a grandfather. John was well liked and respected by all of those who knew him. He will very much be missed.

John had three great loves in life, they were family, friends and music. I hope that he found all three in his time with our corps.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew John:

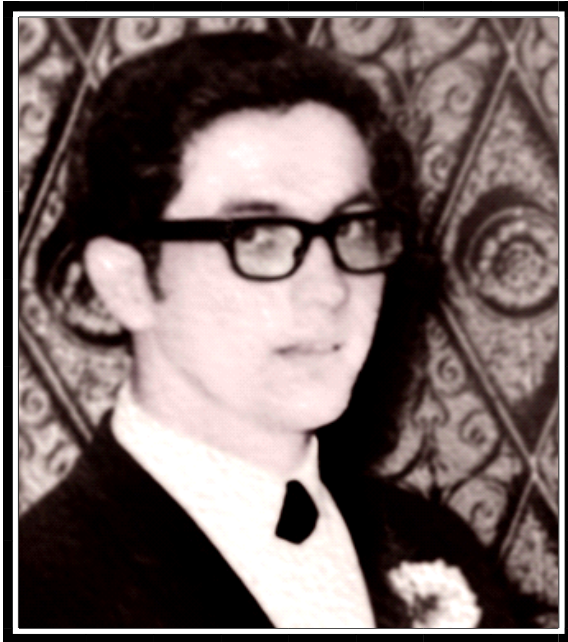
"Drum Corps has connected me with many incredible people and this man was at the top. A kind, genuine person and a true gentleman. " (Jackie Nicholls)

"John was a tremendous fan of the marching arts. His family all played in the Burlington Teen Tour Band and later he was a key contributor to the success of the Top Hat Marching Orchestra. John loved drum corps of the past and of today " (Phil McArthur)

"I had the pleasure of marching with him In Empire Statesmen, always great fun to be around. He wanted to march there with his son. John will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him." (Diane Mayes-Beauchamp)

John. We Remember!

John Van Der Flaes



Corps: Toronto Optimists

— October 29, 2021

John Van der Flaes passed away at the age of 76, on October 29, 2021. He had a heart attack while living with his wife in a retirement community in a resort area south of Manila.

John was a proud and devoted member of the guard in 1965, but home and school demands meant that he could not stay in the corps after that.

He maintained his interest in the Optimists throughout his life. While working to install and maintain reservations systems for many major national airlines, he lived in places as varied as Vancouver, California, Texas, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Oman, and Hong Kong.

John We Remember!

Karl Bossert



Corps: Don Mills Sky Raiders and Toronto Optimists

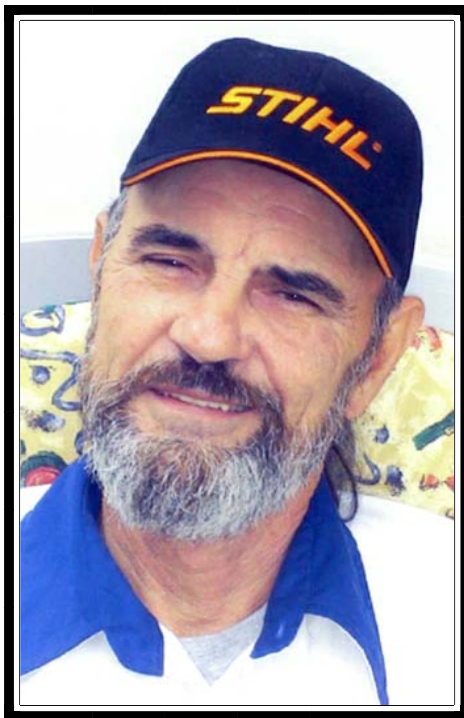
Karl began his drum corps career in the Don Mills Sky Raiders. After Sky Raiders folded in 1961 Karl and a few other former Sky Raiders (Dave Johns, Dick Ward, Dave Watt, Terry Mckolskey come to mind) moved to Optimists. He played soprano in Optimists from about 1961 through 1963 when he aged out.

Everyone liked Karl. Doug MacKenzie remembers Karl as "a guy who was full of nervous energy, he was always upbeat and a fun guy to be around. I remember when we rehearsed at the Shell Tower he and I and a group of guys would go off in his father's Falcon station wagon to the Mercury on Bay for burgers and cokes." Bill Thorne remembers that Karl "drove a large (very large) Oldsmobile which he described as a sofa on wheels. "

Karl's whole family was musical. His dad owned a music store in Willowdale and there was a music school that went with it. In their 1963 performance at the Preview of Champions Optimists discovered that their show was too long. The easiest solution was to replace the two concert numbers ("I'm in the Mood for Love" and "It Ain't Necessarily So") with one song. Karl's dad and Barry Bell created an arrangement of "Chattanooga Choo Choo", the corps learned the music and, four weeks after the Preview, Optimists performed it for the first time at a contest in Welland. The recording on the Boys In Green album was only the second public performance of the number.

Karl We Remember!

Larry Cheevers



Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps and Toronto Optimists

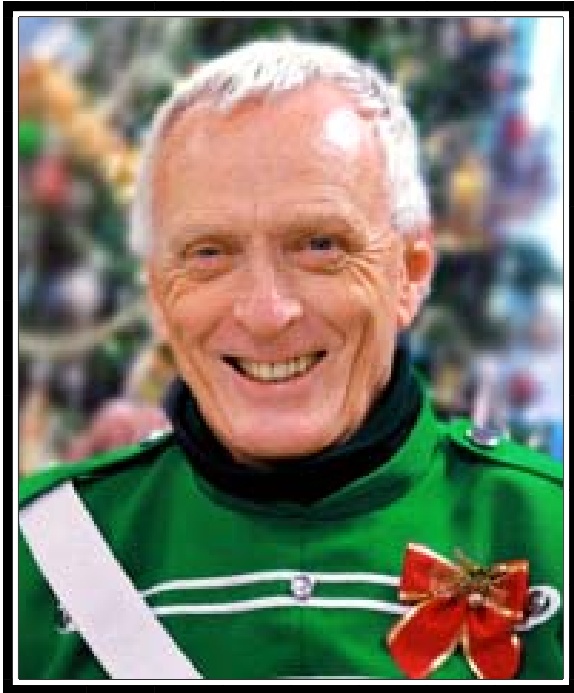
1939 — 2014

Larry was born in Toronto and moved to Willowdale in his early teens. He was actively involved as a member of the Anglican Young Peoples Association and greatly enjoyed planning their activities. Larry started out in the Scout Troop Band, moving to Opti-Corps when it began and, later, to the Toronto Optimists. Larry "aged-out" in 1960. One of his fondest memories was of his time spent in the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps from 1958 to 1960 when they were the Canadian National Junior Drum Corps Champions.

Larry always had a smile for his loved ones to match his heart of gold. He was never rushed or in a hurry (this was known as Larry time), and was always happy to share a story or a laugh.

Larry We Remember!

Len Perrin



Corps: Opti-corps, Toronto Optimists, Jesters, Commanders and Optimists Alumni

December 18, 1940 — November 4, 2011

Len was a Toronto boy who found his way into the Optimists before it was even called the Optimists! Mel remembers Len as "a sharp guy, great military bearing, hurling and flipping this 20 lb Lee Enfield rifle around". Eventually Len joined the horn line playing French horn. He worked hard and played so well that he had a solo in 1962! Like the rest of us in the competitive corps, our lives revolved around drum corps – not just ours but other corps as well. Len, Mel, Ivor and a few other guys started heading out to Oakville to help out a corps called Trafalgar. Who knew that both Len and Mel would meet their future wives in this corps! After aging out of Optimists, Len played in the Jesters, then the Commanders. In the "real" world, Len married Nancy and they had two wonderful children, Andrew and Caroline. He also worked for General Accident, volunteered for the YMCA, skied, sailed and loved the outdoors.

Following the first reunion Len was instrumental in keeping the Optimists Alumni Association going. When the Alumni corps started Len played Mellophone. Of course, before a rehearsal he'd put on music and force us to do aerobics! Len was the corps president when we got our uniforms. We rarely saw him during skiing season but, once winter passed, he was always there.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him.

"Wonderful smile, kind gentle man. I am glad I got to know him!"

"A kind and gentle man who I loved to hear laugh. Len, R.I.P. You will be missed."

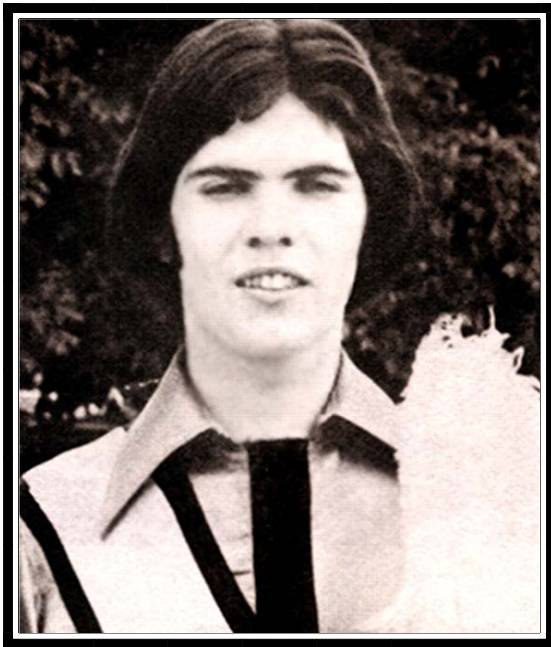
"Len you were always there for someone who was in need. You were special."

" I remember meeting Len for the first time at our very first reunion. I will always remember him as true gentleman and a good FRIEND."

Farewell my friend. Rest in peace and have fun.

Len. We Remember!

Martin McVeigh

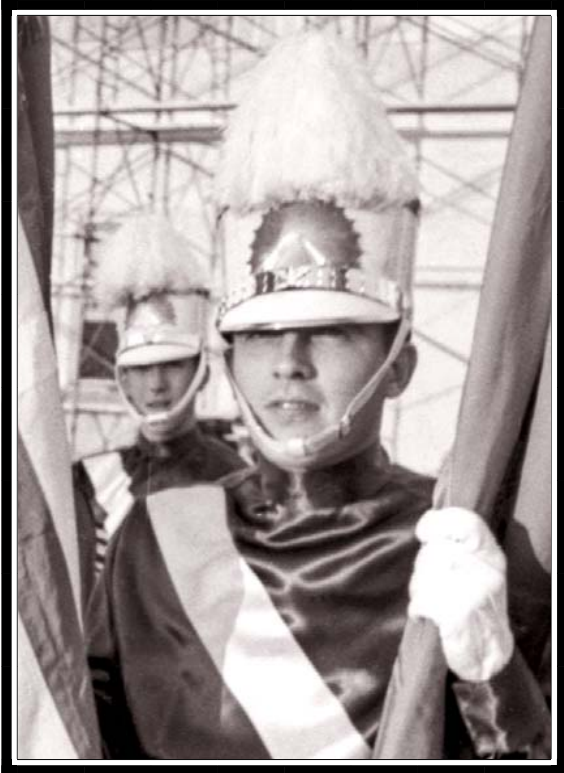


Corps: Toronto Optimists

Marty was a proud member of the Optimists. A good drummer who loved his time in the corps. He always had a smile on his face and was known for his "perfect hair" which was rarely out of place. He left a wife and two young daughters and is sorely missed by all that had the pleasure of knowing him. (Jim Kane)

Martin. We Remember!

Mike Andrews



Corps: Western Tech, Toronto Optimists

Fondly known as “Fink”, Mike came to Optimists from Western Tech and marched in the Colour Guard for several years.

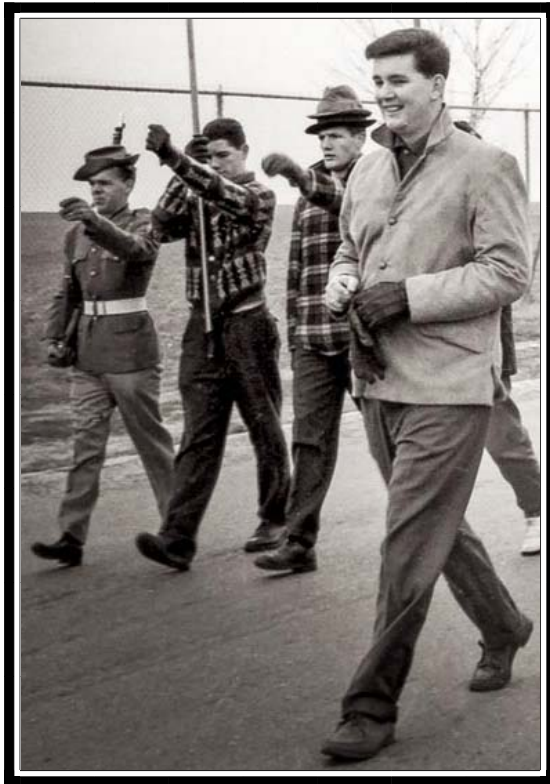
Once, asked what he played in the Corps, he quickly responded “Flag”.

He was known as a joker and once managed to connect four or five flag poles together and came marching over the hill, flying a flag that could be seen ten minutes before you could see Mike.

During his days at Western Tech, he rowed at the Argonaut Rowing Club, and while out rowing one day, discovered a body floating in the water. For years he denied that it was an ex-horn player from Optimists that couldn't play very well, and was taken to task by other Optimist members.

Mike..... We Remember!

Mike Layton



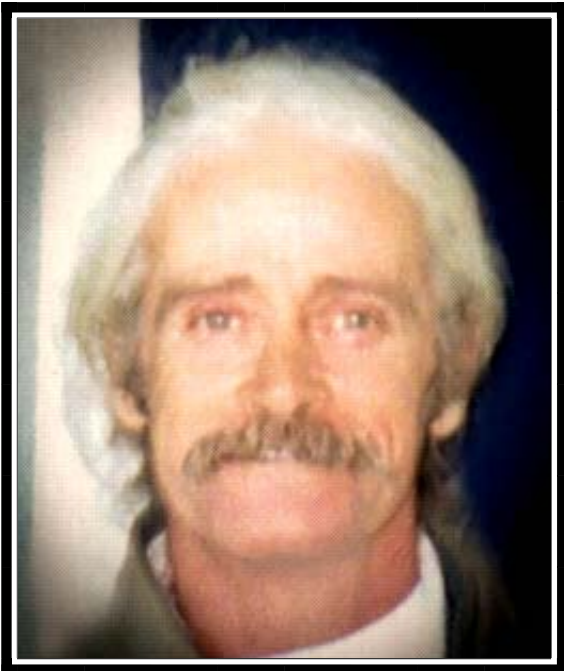
Corps: Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists, Guelph Royalaires

In 1957 Mike played tenor drum with Opti-Corps then, when Opti-Corps became the Toronto Optimists, Mike marched with them. He was Guard Captain from 1958 through 1960 then instructed the guard in 1961.

"Mike loved Drum Corps. Mike was in the Opti Corps and played a Tenor drum he graduated in 1958 as Colour Guard Captain till 1960. His heart was always with The Optimists." – Phil

Mike..... We Remember!

Mike Tierney



Corps: Toronto Optimists

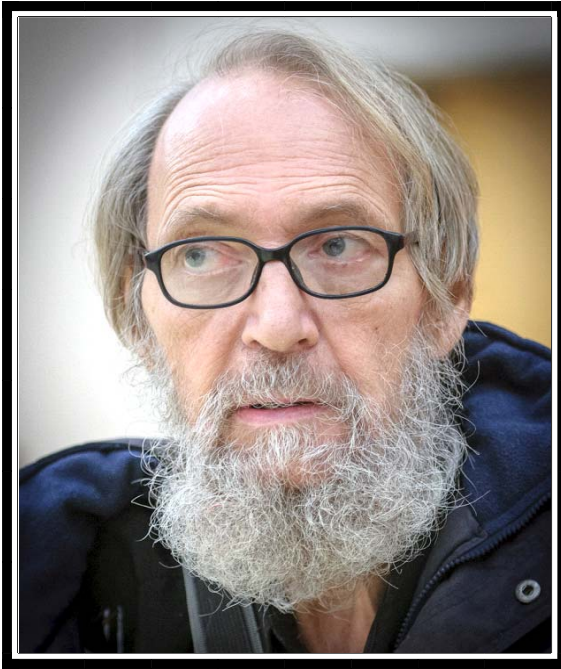
January 28, 1952 — December 8, 2008

Mike joined the Toronto Optimists when he was about 14, so probably around 1966. Sadly, he passed away from lung, liver and kidney cancer only 2 weeks after being diagnosed.

Mike played in rock bands for about 20 years, from ages 16 – 36 (which is probably why he left the drum corps). He was also a soundman as he toured with these bands on the road, all across Ontario. Mike's friends were mostly musicians and he loved to get together and jam with them whenever the opportunity arose. At his funeral several band members visited and played his flute, which was his passion. Musician friends played keyboard, organ and his flute at the service and then at the gravesite, one musician played Somewhere Over the Rainbow and another friend, Carlos played taps on his bugle as the procession was leaving the cemetery. Mike is interred in Memorial Gardens in Hamilton. (from Denise Tierney)

Mike..... We Remember!

Paul Thompson



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Optimists Alumni

February 16, 1948 — January 6, 2015

Paul began his connection with the Optimists in 1963 working with his father at the Optimists booster table. In 1964 he joined the corps playing Euphonium and, from 1965 until 1969, Paul played Contrabass. After aging out Paul continued working with the corps as an instructor and, at times, took on the role of drum major. Paul was also involved instructing the Optimist Cadets. Paul and Ray Roussel even wrote a Bugle Manual that was used, not just by the Optimists, but by a number of other corps. In addition, Paul was one of the architects of the 1972 corps which won Optimists 12th Nationals. Later on Paul instructed the Cardinals. Paul and Don Daber were two of the people who encouraged Colin Hedworth to write his history of the Optimists. When the Alumni corps began Paul was there, doing his best to help out. He assisted with the music, ran the Thursday night music rehearsals until they were cancelled, obtained the rights for us to play our music and, until health issues forced him to stop, played contrabass. Paul will be missed by all of those who knew him.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Paul.

"He had a great passion for Drum Corps and so many of us benefitted from his contributions, myself included. "

"Paul's last real marching year with Optimists was my rookie year and he played that contra solo in Let the Sunshine In. When I made it known that I was interested in being considered as Drum Major for the alumni corps, Paul encouraged me and helped me with conducting technique. A very intense guy with a huge personality. I'm going to miss him. "

"Paul was the most passionate member of the Optimists I ever met. I had the utmost admiration for him and I have many fond memories of him, especially during the 1971 season. It was a tough season to begin with but because of his inspirational leadership we were more successful than most of us dreamed we could be. "

"Whenever I've thought of Paul, over the last 40+ years, his solo in You Only Live Twice (1968) comes to my mind. Man, he could belt that out, and it was perfect every time. No matter whether it was in a parade, rehearsal, contest or an exhibition he played it exactly the same every time. Few, if any, could play that horn like he did and his work effort was beyond reproach. "

"Those on the inside knew his contribution, one that wasn't often noticed by those looking in."

"I first met Paul when he was working with Tony Capizzano to rebuild Oakland Crusaders. Not long after , with some gentle nudging from Paul and others , I was encouraged to join the Optimist Alumni Corps. Originally I played in the soprano section but with some encouragement and a helping hand from Paul , I became a valued member of the mellophone section. Thanks Paul...job well done my friend "

Paul We Remember!

Penny Cassaday (Tudhope)



Corps: Saint John's, Seneca Optimists

1957 — 2019

Penny played soprano with St. John's from 1969 through 1976. In 1977 she joined the Seneca Optimists, playing soprano.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Penny.

"I remember her from both marching with her and High school. She was always a positive role model."

"She was such a kind and fun young women."

"Very sorry to hear this news. It was a long time ago, but I still remember her big smile and dedication to drum corps and the experiences we all had, that forever bind us all together."

"I marched beside Penny for many years she was someone I truly admired and looked up to."

"Loved marching with Penny and will always remember her positive attitude and admire how she put her heart in to everything she did."

Penny..... We Remember!

Peter Coward



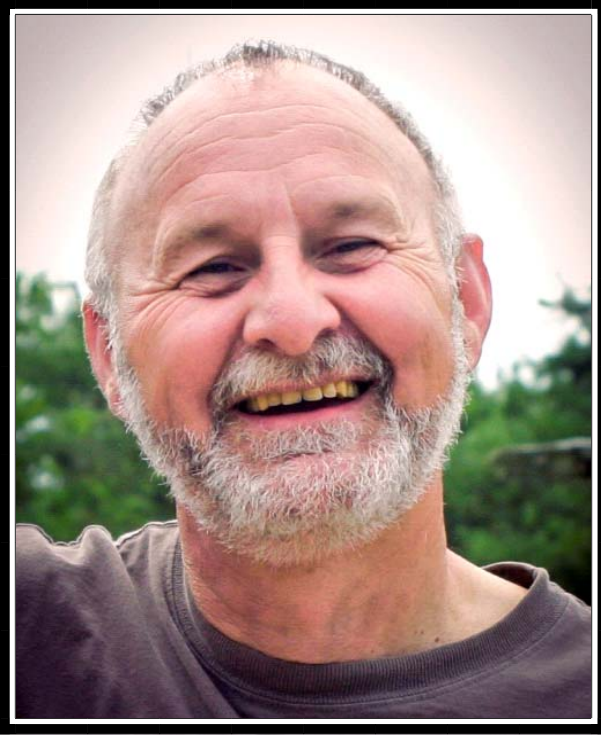
Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps

Peter Coward was one of the Senior Scouts of the 18th Toronto Scout Troup when the original Scout Band was formed and played a horn in both the Scout Band and the Opti-Corps until around 1957.

When the Band moved to the 157th Troup, Peter's father became one of its earliest horn instructors. Peter's involvement spanned all the early phases including Street Parades, Standstills, Novice and Junior B Contests for the Corps that ultimately evolved into The Optimists.

Peter We Remember!

Ray Roussel



Corps: Richmond Hilltoppers, Golden Monarchs, Toronto Optimists, Optimists Alumni

September 4, 1948 — December 15, 2017

"Ray first marched in the Richmond Hilltoppers and then moved on to the Golden Monarchs.

The first time I met him at an Optimists Drum Corps rehearsal was in late September, 1966. Ray and his brother Dennis had joined us after watching our 1966 national championship performance in Montreal. He judged that performance as the finest he had ever seen by a Canadian Drum Corps. The first clear sign of Ray's intelligence.

Ray quickly became the leader and star of the baritone section and led the way in hard work, consistent effort and desire to be the best. No one worked harder than Ray in 1969 and he was awarded Corpsman of the Year. After drum corps Ray moved west on his way to being able to "squash a beret onto my misshapen head and take over a small central American nation via military coup".....he got as far as Vancouver.

We wrote to each other, a lot. A letter or note or email from Ray was a glorious thing full of incomprehensible words and outrageously funny ideas. Ray was a completely self-taught man. He taught himself how to play an instrument, he taught himself how to write and arrange music and the baritone quartet he put together for individual championships in 1967, achieved new heights in small ensemble competition and was talked about for years. He taught himself how to neatly copy music and was in high demand as a copyist. He taught himself how to write by reading the dictionary and writing a journal every damn day. He taught himself about advertising and when he tired of that, he saw a need to understand computers so he taught himself the technical side of that maze, enough so that he made a living as a technical writer. To Ray, the Optimists Drum Corps was his foundation, his joy, a place from which he launched his assault on the world. There is not one human being along the way that ever had an unkind word to say about him. At every stage of his life he was happy and contented. And all who knew him, loved him. Keep on smiling Ray." —Vern Johansson

"Damn. One of the finest young men I ever knew. Ray was a joy to march beside, work with and know. I'll always remember him as a true gentleman with a sharp wit and wonderful sense of humour. A very special guy has been taken from us." — Greg Oxenham

"an icon of class, wit, and leadership" — Thom Sacco

Ray We Remember!

Réal Garneau



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Réal, or “Froggy” as he was affectionately known, arrived from Montreal in 1969. He couldn’t speak a work of English, had no money, and no place to live.

But none of that mattered very much because Real was realizing his dream by marching in the Optimists.

He played Euphonium and was fiercely proud of the Corps. He also had a “joie de vivre” that was a joy to behold.

No one could ever be around Réal and not have a good time. He always became misty-eyed whenever he put on the Corps uniform and sang the Corps song.

Réal. We Remember!

Rick Cooper



Corps: Bantam Optimists, Toronto Optimists

June 25, 1951 – October 6, 2020

Rick began the drum corps segment of his life in 1962 with the Bantam Optimists. He marched with the Bantams from 1962 until the Bantams folded in 1964. He then joined the Toronto Optimists and marched with them until the end of 1971.

Rick started on flag in the Toronto Optimists. Later he became Guard Sergeant before moving to rifle. Rick was part of the Optimists competitive colour guard and competed with the guard in 1967, 1968 and 1969. In 1967 Rick, Steve Jarvis and Bernie Roelcke competed on rifle in the Individuals. They won!

Steve Cooper remembers: "Members of the competitive colour guard in that first year were Vern, the Cooper brothers (Ron, Rick and Steve), John Rood, Bernie Roelcke, Steve Jarvis, Dave Blevins, Bill Kane and others. Jack Roberts led the idea and wrote the show. It was based on a "Chicago style" that Jack found. Unlike other guards we competed without a drummer! Unique and never copied in the Canadian and NY circuits in which we competed. We kept cadence by stamping our left foot at dramatic points. It was intimidating to other guards when we did march passes going in and out of competition. A one two three stamp.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Rick:

"He was a rock. Quiet, talented and dedicated. He was one of the last to perform with a REAL rifle and – along with the others – made a .303 dance. Proud to have known him for (sadly) only a brief time." (Greg Oxenham)

"Rick and his brothers are responsible for my entry into the Drum Corps world which became a huge part of my life." (Rick Tracey)

"A great guy who taught me the Optimist way." (Larry Blandford)

"My conscience." (Rose Wright)

Rick We Remember!

Rick Robida



Corps: Grantham Police Boys Band, Toronto Optimists, Guelph Royales, Canadian Commanders, Optimists Alumni, Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni

Rick came to the Toronto Optimists from the Grantham Police Boy's Band. In addition to Grantham Rick marched with the Toronto Optimists, the Canadian Commanders, Guelph Royales, the Optimists Alumni and the Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni. He has also served as the Corps director for the Optimists Alumni and was on the board of Drum Corps International.

Rick was a kind and gentle soul who loved the Optimists. One of the first things Rick did after becoming corps director for the Optimists Alumni was to resurrect Green Capsule Comments, the Optimists newsletter. The photo on the right shows Rick in 2013 when he marched in our Honour Guard, proudly wearing the "old" Toronto Optimists uniform.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him.

"Rick was a fine and honourable Optimist."

"It is unfortunate that we must lose a great person like Rick. A great friend and marching pal. Always greet you with open arms. A terrible loss to all who knew him."

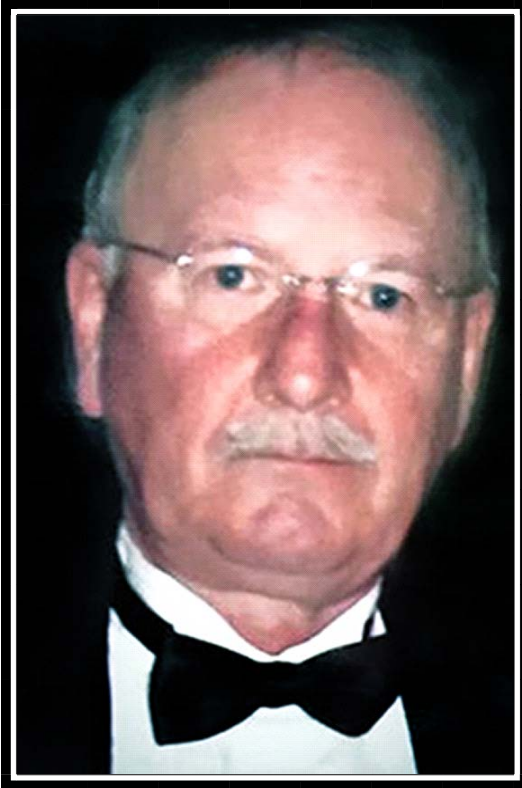
"A very committed individual. It was both an honour and a privilege to march and work with him in The Optimists Alumni."

"I know him as a kind, supportive man who knew and loved Corps."

"What a great guy Rick was. Any time I spoke with him he always asked how Gaelen was doing. I'm also grateful for his leadership in the Alumni while I was a member."

Rick We Remember!

Rick Roussel



Corps: De La Salle "Oaklands", Toronto Optimists

April 6, 1950 — April 21, 2019

Rick passed away after a brief illness with his beloved family by his side.

Rick played snare drum his entire corps career. He marched with De La Salle "Oaklands" until losing a bet with his 3 brothers (who marched with the Toronto Optimists) in 1968. Rick agreed that if the Optimists won the 1968 championship he would join his brothers. Rick marched with the Toronto Optimists for the next 3 years. Rick was an exceptional snare drummer. (Here is a link to the story about Rick joining The Optimists.)

Rick had a wonderful sense of humour. You could always count on him for a hilarious joke from his repertoire.

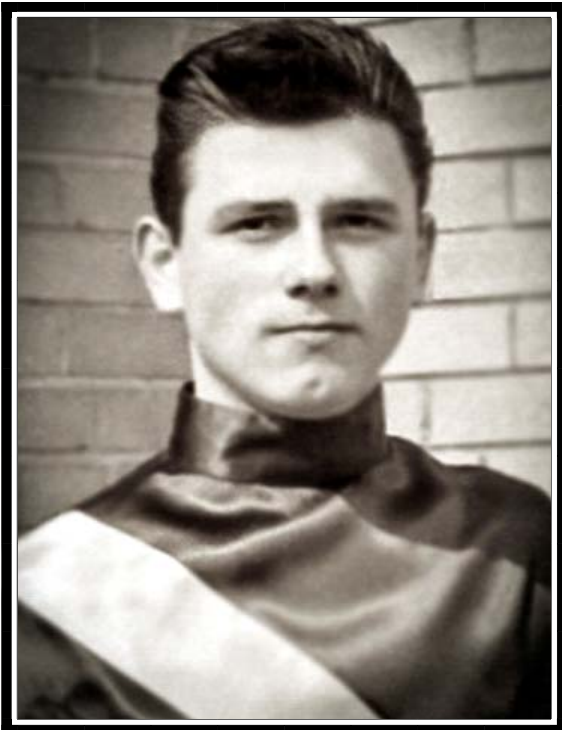
Rick's greatest joy was his family. He was a wonderful, loving father and amazing husband. Rick is missed terribly by his wife Susie, son Josh and daughter Riley. He is also missed by his sister Mary of Calgary and Lorne of Vancouver. Rick was predeceased by three of his brothers who played with the Optimists alongside him – Ray (Baritone 1967-1969), Den (Baritone 1967-1970) and Tim (Baritone 1968-1970).

We will miss the husband, father, brother and friend that Rick was to us all. We will mourn the amazing man that was taken from us too soon. We will remember Rick as the kind loving soul he was.

"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years." – Abraham Lincoln

Rick We Remember!

Roman Perohanycz



Corps: Toronto Optimists

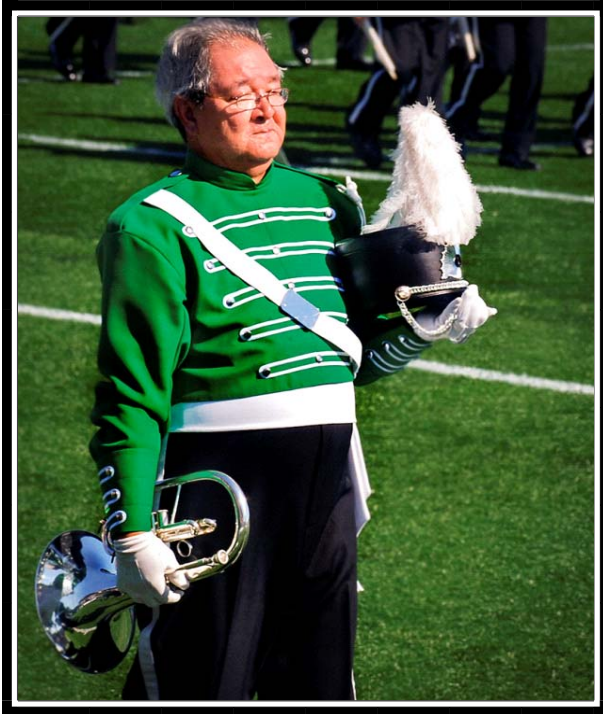
Roman was in the corps when I joined. He had a bravado, a kind of "Fonz" demeanor, that intimidated me during our winter and spring rehearsals. However at our first show I realized that he was just as nervous and excited as I was.

When talking, he was very animated — no matter what the subject. But especially about girls! Before a show he could be very intense, pacing up and down talking to no one in particular.

I remember him as easy going, happy, with a broad, radiant smile. *(David Johns)*

Roman. We Remember!

Ron Chong



Corps: Midtowners, Golden Monarchs, Toronto Optimists, Toronto Signals, Optimists Alumni

February 12, 1948 – October 28, 2018

Ron began his drum corps career marching with the Midtowners. When Midtowners reorganized into Golden Monarchs Ron marched with them for one year. At the end of the 1963 season Ron joined The Toronto Optimists playing lead Soprano. Ron "aged-out" in 1969 but he continued working with the corps by helping instruct the horn line.

From the late '90s up to about 2006 Ron played with Toronto Signals. When the Optimists Alumni was formed Ron joined them, playing with both corps for a few years. Ron left the Optimists Alumni at the end of the 2014 season to care for Josie, his wife; however, his heart was still with the corps and its members.

When the Optimists Alumni went to Indianapolis in August of 2018, Ron came along for the ride and had a wonderful time reconnecting with his friends and with Drum Corps. Shortly after we returned from Indianapolis Ron was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away about 2 months after his diagnosis.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Ron:

"Very sad news. Ron was one of 4 music instructors the Optimists had after the end of the '69 season. Ron, along with Ray Roussel, Paul Thompson and Joe Gianna were 'trying out' for the position of horn instructor that year. Paul was eventually selected but Ron and the others all stayed to help and their assistance was invaluable. Ron was passionate in everything he did but nothing more than the Toronto Optimists. A great guy."

"When I first met Ron in 69, knew he was special...learned so much from this great guy."

"This is very sad news. Ron was one of the first members I met when I joined back in the day. Great horn player and a great guy."

"We have again lost one of our "GREATS" leaving us with anguished hearts and the chore to "MARCH ON" with another large hole in the line."

"Ron, was an honour to have marched with you in the 60s and again with the alumni corps, you will be missed....!! "

"On March on, Ron...one of the kindest gentleman I have met and a talented musician! Sad to have missed a final farewell."

"Another great person has left us all too soon. Yes, we recall Ron as a passionate and talented young man with the corps. More important to some of us is how he lived, loved and was loved and, clearly, he was one of the best on OR off the field. I remember Ron from almost 50 years ago. How could you possibly forget him? He made a difference and won't be forgotten."

"Ron was a great friend to me during the five years I was with the Toronto 2nd Signals I can remember well Ron playing "The last post" at the church when the Toronto 2nd Signals marched there for the Remembrance Day Service. Condolences and prayers going out to Josie and the family. Ron you will surely be missed by all who have had the privilege to know you. "

Ron. We Remember!

Ron Cook



Corps: Scout Band, Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists

May 3, 1943—September 7, 1990

Ron was a charter member of the Optimists. He started out with the Scout Band in the early years, and then went on to Opti-Corps and finally the Green.

He was the brother of Bob Cook who marched in the Colour Guard for several years. Ron began life in the “Green” as a cymbal player and then went on to play in the horn line. Always affable and with a great smile, he was a committed member of the Corps who could always be relied on no matter what the event or task.

Ron. We Remember!

Ron Gault



Corps: Optimists Cadets 1967, Toronto Optimists 1968-70

Hailing from the Bathurst Heights area of Toronto Ron joined the Cadets in 1967. He moved up to the Optimists Colour Guard for the '68 season taking part in both the Circuit Guard and the summer season. He moved into the drumline in '69, playing cymbals, and then rudimental bass drum for the 1970 season. His Dad (Dave Gault) was a member of the Optimists Equipment Department for many years.

Ron would be remembered, by all, for the battle with the locals, in Titusville, PA, in 1970, where he received a nasty concussion as a result of a crack in the head, with a piece of pipe, from one of the aforementioned locals. After a few hours, at the hospital, he was allowed to return home with the Corps. Taking up residence in the back seat of the bus we had to wake him every hour to make sure he didn't go into a coma. Trouble always seemed to find the Optimists in Titusville!!!

After his Drum Corps career Ron moved to Tilbury, near Windsor, and for many years ran a very successful business in the Automotive Industry following, in line, with his life long love of cars and motorcycles. Tragically, Ron lost his life as a result of a Motorcycle accident on July 15, 2008 at the young age of 55. He left behind his sister Deborah Gault-Pare (former member of the Optimist Lancers) and 1 niece, 2 nephews, 5 great nephews and 1 great niece

Ron. We Remember!

Ronn “Skip” Prokop



Corps: Hamilton Sea Cadets, Preston Scout House and Toronto Optimists

December 13, 1943 — August 30, 2017

Ronn began his drum corps career in Hamilton with a Sea Cadet band. After leaving the Sea Cadets he joined Preston Scout House and played with them for 1 year. In 1960 he joined the Optimists on snare. While drumming with the Optimists Ronn made the time to instruct the drumline of the Optimist Bantams, Toronto Optimists feeder corps. At the end of the 1963 season he left the corps to pursue a career in music, a career in which he was quite successful.

Ronn's first post-Optimists group was the Riverside Three. Around 1964/65 he co-founded "The Paupers", a psychedelic rock group. After the group disbanded, Prokop was an in-demand session musician for industry heavyweights including Carlos Santana, Janis Joplin and folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary. In 1969 Ronn and Paul Hoffert formed Lighthouse, a 13 piece rock orchestra. The band earned an early celebrity admirer: Billy Bob Thornton. In the early 70s, the musician and future Oscar-winning actor was a roadie for the band when they performed in Texas. "He always remembered that moment," Hoffert said of Thornton's encounter with Prokop. "The reason that he did was that he just remembered how kind this guy Skip Prokop was. He was just a roadie with the venue and Skip let him play his drums and he never forgot that. He was just a kid, and this is the kind of thing Skip did all the time."

Ronn left Lighthouse in 1973 but, when they reformed in 1992, he was back. He played with the group until 2014 when health issues forced him to stop.

"He was a very genuine person. What you saw is what you got. He didn't suffer fools gladly but he was also a really kind person. He really had a huge heart."

Ronn. We Remember!

Ross Colville



Corps: Toronto Optimists

Ross joined the Optimist in 1959, first marching in the Colour Guard and then playing the baritone.

He left the Corps at the end of the 1962 Season and went on to build a successful management career in general insurance.

Quiet by nature, he was known as a rock solid friend, always ready to offer a helping hand.

Ross had a wonderful way of laughing at himself, particularly at his first **and last** game of In-Between, at the back of the Corps bus. In world record time, he managed to lose his entire stake on a split-hand in about ten seconds.

Ross. We Remember!

Sam Grosvenor



Corps: Optimists Lancers, Optimists Alumni

The fates were kind to both Sam and The Optimists Alumni that day in 2009 when he pulled his convertible into the driveway at The Legion to turn around. He could clearly hear the sound of our horn line rehearsing through the open door and he was immediately bitten by the drum corps bug once more. From the moment he walked in he was back and he never left again.

Sam began his drum corps life with The Etobicoke Optimists Lancers in the Fall of 1972 at the age of nine (just weeks short of their minimum age of 10). He was a proud member during those years playing Euphonium. Sam along with Baritone Kevin Casquette even went on to compete in the ODCA Individuals Competition as a duet.

Sam was, in fact, second generation drum corps. He received his introduction while watching his Dad, Jack, play contrabass with Canada's Marching Ambassadors in Toronto in the 1960s. Sam was frequently at their rehearsals long before he was old enough to join a corps himself. Sam loved drum corps with a passion, (he drove to Michigan City Indiana in the middle of the night because he was working and missed going with us on the bus). He also brought the love of his life, his daughter Shannon, along on that trip. We clearly saw how devoted a Dad he was. The final member of his immediate family who loves drum corps is Sam's Mom Fran who was introduced to us soon after at our Legends II show. Sam also has sisters Debra in Toronto, Cynthia in BC, and two half brothers, Jim in Steviac NS and Rick in BC.

So this is our salute to that "shy guy" on Third Baritone who rarely had much to say (ya right). We miss you already buddy and we will see you again so make sure you keep your chops in shape.

Sam. We Remember!

Sandy Stoklosa (Douglas)



Corps: St. John's Girls, Seneca Optimists, Bayonne Bridgemen

Sandy began her drum corps years with St. John's Girls in 1974-75 as a soprano player. She joined Seneca Optimists in 1977 becoming one of 7 girls from Brantford to make the commute, continuing with Seneca in 1978.

Sandy marched one year with Bayonne Bridgemen and then returned to Brantford to teach St. John's/Brantford Girls.

Sandy and her husband Cliff very generously opened their home to many of us who taught with her and marched in the corps.

Sandy was a dedicated marching member and instructor, never asking more from anyone than she would expect from herself. (by Kelly Pratt (Churchill) - Seneca Optimist colour guard 1978 / St. John's 1972-77).

Sandy..... We Remember!

Scott Cumming



Corps: East Scarborough Kinsmen, Toronto Optimists and Seneca Optimists

1960–1992

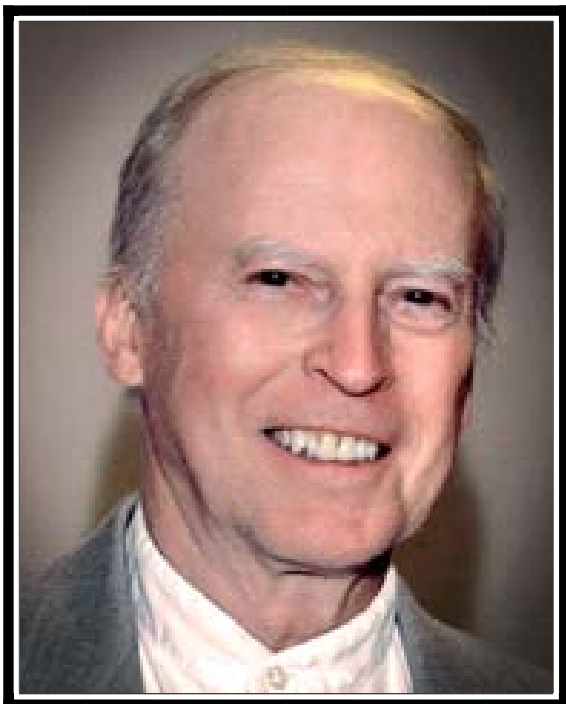
Scott started his Drum Corps career with the East Scarborough Kinsmen.

Early on, he knew that he would end up an Optimist and followed that dream in the fall of 1975.

Scott marched with the Seneca Optimists for the 1976, 1977 and 1978 seasons.

Scott. We Remember!

Ted Key



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Canada's Marching Ambassadors, DCAT

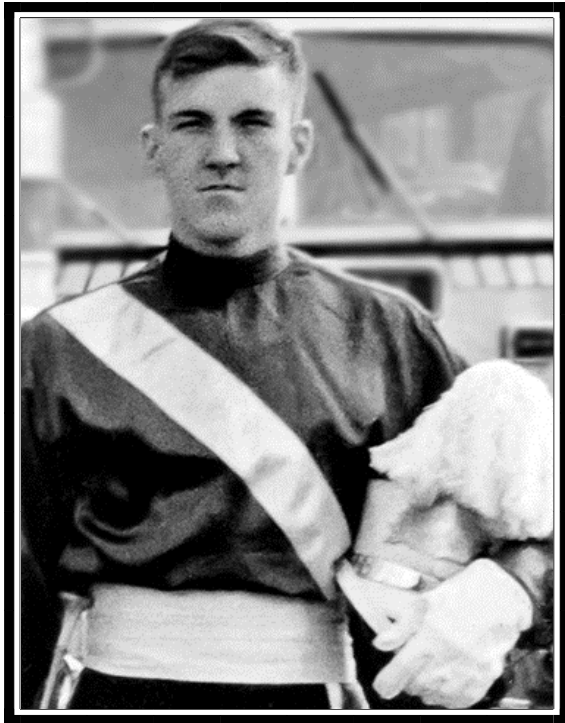
Ted was a member of the Toronto Optimists in 1958 & 1959. After aging out he joined Canada's Marching Ambassadors.

He loved music and had a long and successful career as a music teacher with the TDSB at Parkway Vocational School, Brockton High School and Danforth Technical Schools. Ted was an excellent teacher who used enthusiasm and humour to bring out the best in his students.

For many years, Ted was a member of the Canadian Judges Association. Ted was also the Musical Director for the DCAT chorus which put on many successful performances in the GTA.

Ted. We Remember!

Ted Shaw



Corps: Don Mills Skyraiders, Toronto Optimists

October 17, 1940 — July 9, 2004

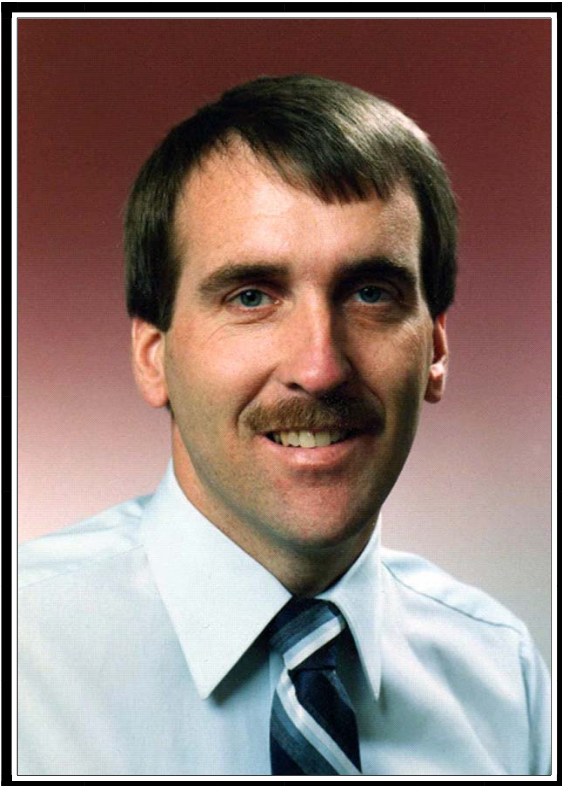
Ted began his drum corps career with the Don Mills Skyraiders then joined the Optimists in 1959. He stayed with Optimists until he aged out in 1961. The photo on the left was taken in 1961, after Ted's last performance with the Optimists at the Grape Festival in Welland.

Ted married Ann in 1962 and started their family. Working as an aviation insurance specialist for Reed Shaw & McNaught; Ted, Ann and their two children moved to Winnipeg in 1972. Ted was a Senior Vice-President with Aon Insurance working for the company for 32 years. He was a past President of the Manitoba Insurance Brokers Association. Ted fought a brave battle with cancer during his last year.

Ted played Baritone. He was known as a quiet, solid and dependable corps mate. He was a good horn player, had a wonderful sense of humour and was an all-round great guy.

Ted. We Remember!

Tim Burrage



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

I knew Tim when he was a cymbal player with the Scarborough Fire Fighters, we used to sit at the front of the bus and talk chemistry and sci. We called him the Professor. He's in that early picture of the Firefighters with their shirt and ties (he's kneeling with a horn on the left side his brother Kerry is on the other side). All he ever wanted to do was play cymbals.

He was a solid rock for our drum line in the years to come. That he ended up with the Optimist is a real surprise because of his competitive relationship with his brothers.....I considered him a friend (*by Rod Patterson*)

Tim. We Remember!

Timothy Valentine Roussel



Corps: Golden Monarchs, Scarborough Firefighters, Toronto Optimists

February 14, 1953 — September 15, 2008

Tim played baritone his entire corps career, starting with the Golden Monarchs of Toronto (1965-1966), Scarborough Firefighters (1967), and finally with the Toronto Optimists (1968-1970). He was noted for his fine playing and his assortment of rusting land cruiser vehicles, many of which allowed you to see the road passing inches below through the rusted floorboards.

He loved the corps very much in his youth. After he'd moved to British Columbia in the early seventies (a province that he truly enjoyed), he continued to ask about the corps and its activities. It was here that he found his real fulfillment and undertook his greatest personal achievements. He started a family and several businesses geared to automobile and truck salvage and recovery and prospered to the point where he spent the last ten years of his life out and about on the golf course far too often for a mere duffer, which he definitely was not. He was especially proud of his golf game and carded a round of 71 (one under par) only months before his untimely death. Other than his family, he regarded that as his greatest achievement.

He is greatly missed by his wife Denise and son Curtis, and by his sister and four brothers, three of whom played in the Optimists alongside him—Ray (Baritone 1967-1969), Rick (Snare 1969-1971), Den (Baritone 1967-1970), sister Mary of Calgary, and brother Lawrence of Vancouver.

Rest well, bro.

Tim We Remember!

Tim Watt



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Tim came from Grimsby and had marched in the Burlington Teen Tour Band where he played tuba. He joined the Optimists in 1973 and played Contra in '73, '74 and '75. In 1976 he moved to baritone. I cannot remember whether he marched in '77. He later worked with the Oakies in the '80s. I know that he died in the early '90s. Tim's brother Sean played snare and joined the corps in '75. His father Jack was involved in the management of the corps. He was a real drum corps enthusiast and loved Senior Corps like the Caballeros and Skyliners. (Richard Bruton)

Tim. We Remember!

Tom May



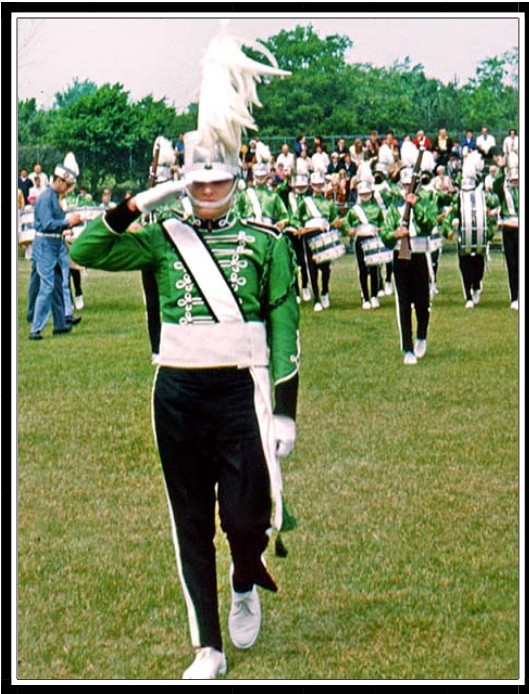
Corps: Grantham, Canadian Commanders, Optimists Alumni

– September 13, 2017

Maureen Bell wrote: "Tom spent his younger years as a snare drummer with Grantham in St. Catharines. He joined the Commanders when he aged out. A group of us — Tom and I, Andy & Jackie Henderson, Al & Jean Miller, Chuck & Pat Clutterbuck, John & Bev Snowball, became good friends during that time. We had a lot of fun – it was a great time in our lives. He especially enjoyed his short time with the Optimists Alumni corps. Tom's health declined over the past few months which he spent in a long-term care facility in North York. He leaves a daughter - Regan, a son - Andrew and a step-son - Derek."

Tom..... We Remember!

Vern Johansson



Corps: Bantam Optimists, Toronto Optimists, Optimists Alumni

– January 4, 2022

Vern began his drum corps career in 1961 as a drummer in the Bantam Optimists. Later he tried other instruments. In early 1964 the Bantams folded and Vern, together with most of the Bantam members, moved to the Toronto Optimists. During the 1964 season Andy Henderson was Drum Major while Vern became assistant drum major. Vern skipped the 1965 season to briefly explore a career as a rock musician; however, he returned as Drum Major in 1966, serving all the way through 1970.

Vern was one of the founders of the Optimists Alumni Drum Corps. He served as its first Drum Major from 2002 through 2004. He returned again for stints in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Vern.

"He will always be remembered as a class individual and a great loss to the Drum Corps community." (Rick Allen)

"He was a gentleman and a scholar. Parade Rest, Vern. Your job here is done." (Joel Alleyne)

"One of the kindest, caring people I've ever known. We've lost a true Champion. RIP Vern, you will be truly missed." (Mel Dey)

"One of the classiest gentlemen I have ever known, this is heartbreaking news." (Thom Sacco)

"May we take time to remember all the good times spent with Vern. He will live forever in our memories." (Thom Sacco)

"He is a great guy, he was always supportive around the corps, and fun to talk to." (Barry Woods)

"I'm very saddened to see this. Vern is one of the funniest men I have ever met. So caring. So giving. It would be hard to meet a nicer guy than him." (Kevin Matthew)

"Vern, you were a fantastic human being. My condolences to all that loved him. Now him and my Dad can hang out together again." Alison Wright

Vern. We Remember!

Victor Sciore (Score) Jr.



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Vic's whole family was involved in the Optimists. His parents, Vic and Flo, ran Optimists' booster table while Vic and his sisters, Darlene and Laura, became fellow corps members.

Vic started off his drum corps career in the Optimist Cadets then moved to the Toronto Optimists. In 1976, when the Toronto Optimists and Seneca Princemen joined forces to form the Seneca Optimists, Vic was there.

Vic was a great guy who will be missed by all who knew him.

Vic. We Remember!

Victor Sciore (Score) Sr.



Corps: Toronto Optimists, Seneca Optimists

Vic Sciore Sr. was a huge supporter of the corps. But more than that, he was a part of us.

Vic and his wife Flo were at almost every rehearsal. They travelled the continent with the corps. Vic designed and painted his van with the corp colours and their dog Trixie was the corps mascot.

Vic Sr. was there for us. He was as big a kid as we were. He opened his heart and home to us. Vic was a good-hearted soul who touched all those who knew him. He is missed.

Vic. We Remember!

Vince Ferraro



Corps: Toronto Optimists, St Mary's, Optimist Cadets, Cadet-Lancers

May 8, 1946 – February 25, 2020

Vince joined the Optimists drum line in 1964 and stayed until he aged out in 1968. After aging out Vince continued his corps connection as a photographer for the Canadian Drum Corps Association. You might, for instance, remember the photo of Opti's mellos on the cover of the 1969 album. That shot was taken by Vince.

In addition to his post-age out photography, Vince also taught the Optimist Cadets (perhaps Cadet Lancers) in the 70's and if I am not mistaken also taught the Emerald Knights (Mississauga?)

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew him.

"I was Vince's rookie back in 1968 Vince made my first year in Optimists easy as he was a mentor and a true friend to me I shall always have fond memories of all the good times we had..." (Ted Wilson)

"One of the greatest guys who taught me a lot about being a member of the Green Machine." (Larry Blandford)

"I still remember my time when I marched with Vince in the drum line back in the 60's Yes he was a quiet guy but he sure loved a good joke and we shared many of those." Rick Shearer)

"RIP Vince, you will be fondly remembered for your kindness as a mentor within the Drum Corps community." (Collin Victor Brookes)

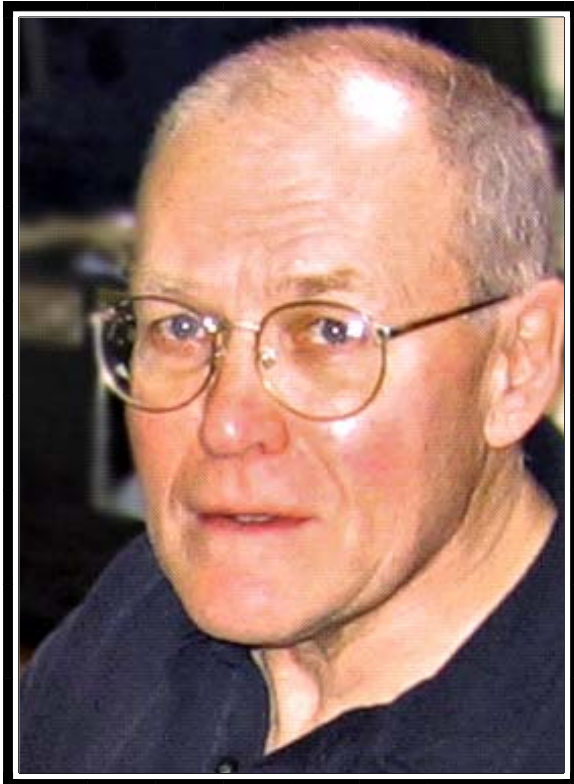
"Although soft spoken (most of the time), Vince was focused and committed. I will always hold dear the time that he instructed us in the Cadet Lancers." (Dan Martin Shimski)

"Vince taught me in the Optimist Lancers. He also recommended me for a lucrative summer job in his department at the Ministry of the Environment. In the first week, or maybe even on the first day, he suggested that I leave work to attend the funeral of Marty King, a Lancer who died from leukemia. I wasn't going to ask because I had just started, and I appreciated his kindness." (Judy Ferguson)

"Fond memories of Vince's wicked and incisive sense of humor. Yes, sarcasm was his hallmark and he and George were the best at it in the Corps. We'll all remember "Suuuure" "Beat the Weirdo" "Goat Herder" and anything FEET related. Have a blast together guys. Heaven just got a lot funnier. Thanks for the great times." (Marcel Smolinski)

Vince. We Remember!

Warren Mills



Corps: Opti-Corps, Toronto Optimists

– October 17, 2012

Warren wore the Blue of Opti-Corps, then both Greens of the Toronto Optimists. He aged out in 1962. When the Alumni Corps was formed, Warren was there, playing mellophone. Unfortunately, after a few years health issues forced him to leave the corps.

Warren and his closest friends, Henry Beben, Jim Patten and Phil Hennings, were all members of the Optimists. When Warren could no longer travel they made regular trips to Orillia to visit him. It was a friendship that lasted over fifty years!

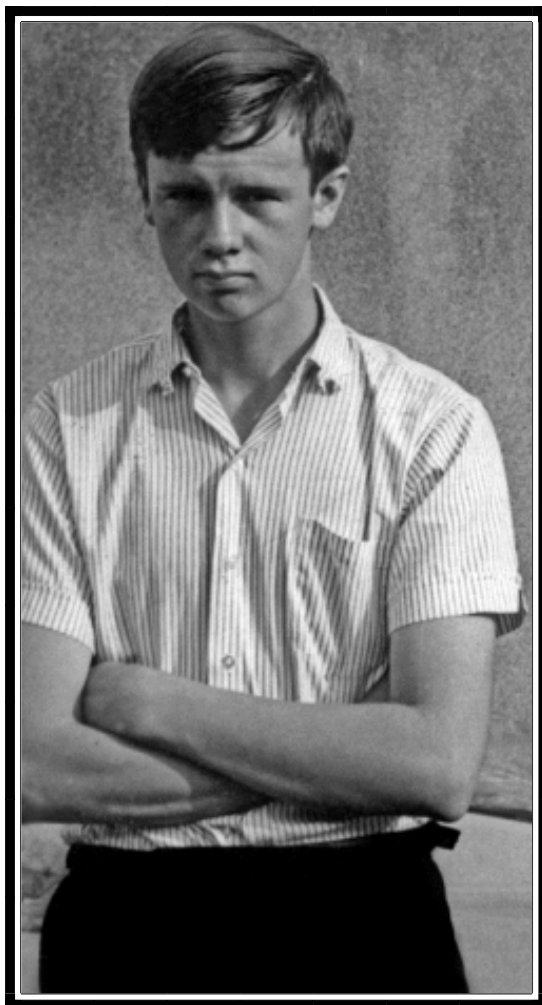
Here are a couple of comments from some of those who knew him.

"In the later years he was a man of few words but his silence said everything. We will remember him in the good and bad times of his life."

"Warren was an inspiration, a gift of sunshine, and a true blessing to all who knew him."

Warren We Remember!

Wayne Dean



Corps: Toronto Optimists

– May 11, 2010

Wayne Dean was the kind of kid that made whatever group he was in better. He was one of those people that believed actions were more important than words. He was an example of the best in all of us. Quiet. Well-prepared. Confident. Helpful.

He came to the Optimists in 1965 from the Jungles of Leaside. He marched until 1969 and both in victory and defeat he was a consummate gentleman (although he would always gladly tell you exactly how he felt about the competition).

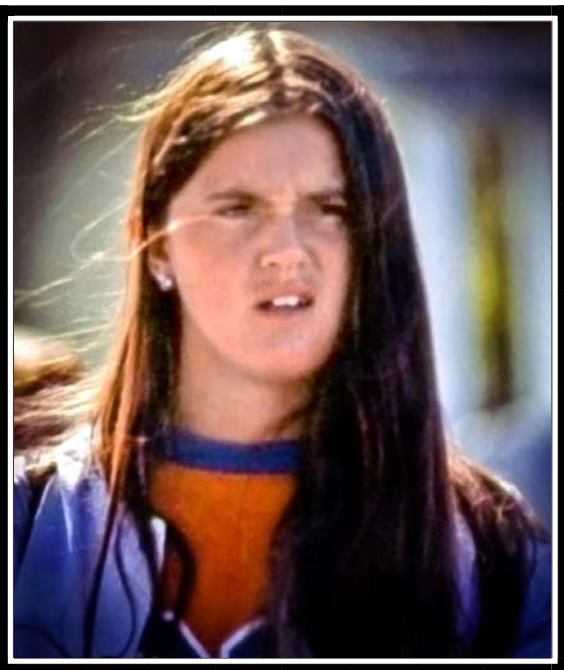
Wayne was part of the fabled Baritone Quartet which won numerous awards for performance excellence including the highest score ever awarded in the CDCA Individuals. This excellence was captured on the 1967 Championship recording of the Optimists.

Wayne became a successful businessman, husband, father and friend. He never ceased being completely proud of his accomplishments in the Green Machine.

If a drum corps was comprised of Wayne Dean clones it would be unstoppable. We remember Wayne because Wayne is quite simply, unforgettable.

Wayne. We Remember!

Wendy Paquin



Corps: St John's, Les Chatelaines, Seneca Optimists, Anaheim Kingsmen Alumni

1951 — June 23, 2019

Wendy was a member of St. John's Drum Corps from 1967 to 1972. After moving to Montreal she became an instructor for Les Chatelaines. In 1976, she moved to Toronto and began instructing the Seneca Optimists. She moved to L.A. in 1979, where she lived for 38 years and was a personal bookkeeper and massage therapist. In 2007 she fulfilled a lifetime dream of marching with the Anaheim Kingsmen Alumni Corps performing at the Rose Bowl.

Here are a few comments from some of those who knew Wendy.

"I'll always remember Wendy's energetic personality and her love of Weiner doggies."

"She will always be in my fondest memories of my time with Seneca Optimist and was grateful and blessed to have her for my colour guard instructor."

"She was in my life for a short time in 1978 but made such a difference. I will always remember her with fondness and proud to have been «Wendy's hot and juicy colour guard»."

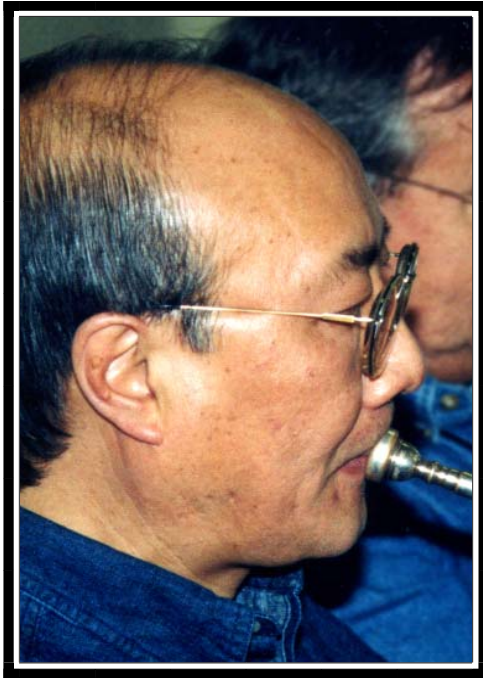
" She touched so many lives in such a positive way. The world is a slightly lesser place without Wendy. "

"Such a sad loss for everyone who knew Wendy she was a wonderful and beautiful woman inside and out "

"Never forget when she arranged to call out our commands to the colour guard in French during pass and review to mess with the girls from Phantom Regiment who were talking about us (as if behind our backs) because they thought, because we were Canadian, we only spoke French. Wendy was a gem and left us way too soon"

Wendy..... We Remember!

Wilson Chung



Corps: Toronto Optimists

October 23, 1947 – March 28, 2004

Willie was a great fan of the Toronto Optimists and always wanted to join. Finally, at the end of the 1964 season, his dream came true and he joined the “Green Machine”. In February, 1965, he was ecstatic as went with the corps to perform at the Chicago Opera House! He loved being in the corps and was devastated when, in early July, his father insisted that he leave the corps and work in the family business.

In 2003, when the Alumni Corps started up, Willie was right there. After so many years he was thankful to be given a second chance. Tragically, his time with his dream corps again was brief. He was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in March of 2004.

Willie was a friend to all who knew him.

Wilson. We Remember!

Wolfgang Petschke



Corps: Seneca Princemen, Seneca Optimists

Wolfgang was a soft-spoken man, with a passion for Drum Corps. He had become the Corps Director of the Seneca Princemen, who were the Canadian National Junior Champions in 1974.

He recognized the new reality of DCI and how difficult it was going to become to compete financially and so he entered into discussions with Al Tierney that eventually turned into the creation of the Seneca Optimists.

He was instrumental in the creation of the new uniforms for Seneca and very proud of the new organization and the smoothness with which it was achieved.

Wolfgang. We Remember!