

Started as a Boy Scout street parade band.  
The Corps rose to heights undreamed of, right  
from its beginning.

# “FROM TORONTO... THE OPTIMISTS!”

## A Story of The Toronto Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps



*By Colin Hedworth*



**“From Toronto ...  
The Optimists !”**

**The Story of a Drum Corps**

*By Colin Hedworth*  
in collaboration with  
*Don Daber*

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# Draft

*This book is dedicated to all those who were in, or were associated with, the Toronto Optimists, especially those who, for whatever reason, are not mentioned by name.*

# Version

## About the Author

Colin Hedworth was a charter member of both the Toronto Optimists, as a marching member, and the Seneca Optimists, as a member of their support staff. He played tenor drum with the Toronto Optimists until he aged out at the end of 1962. Colin joined the equipment department of the Toronto Optimists at the end of 1975. As a result, he was also there when the Seneca Optimists began. He stayed with the Seneca Optimists until the Corps folded. During the intervening years Colin maintained an active connection with the corps and its members.

This book is a manifestation of Colin's love for the Optimists. Colin spent a great deal of time, over a number of years, researching the information that has been included. In addition to the numerous hours spent talking to Don Daber Colin contacted former staff and members of the Scout Band, Opti-Corps, the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists. He also talked with staff and corps members of some of Optimists competitors. His goal was to gather and discuss various versions of stories in an attempt to validate the veracity of the material included.

Sadly, Colin passed away in July 2013 without having had the opportunity to see his book published.



2008: Colin Hedworth

## Publisher's Forward

The writer of a History has a style and purpose while the reader has expectations. Readers will often wonder why certain material was included and why other material was excluded. Sometimes there is a conscious reason; however, it's often just the way it was written. In addition, the goal of some writers is to create a historically accurate document which includes only information that can be verified as fact. Other writers have a story telling style that relies on memories.

This book is a reflection of Colin Hedworth's perspective on the Optimists and its history. Some parts of this story are based on factual information that can be verified (dates, scores, etc.). Other parts of this story rely on the memories of Colin and those with whom he spoke. Of course, each of us knows that memory can be faulty and that individuals often have different memories of the same situation. As a result it is natural that a reader might question some of what they read here.

If a reader notices factual errors in something that has been included, please let me know. Since Colin has passed away, he cannot make any changes; however, for major errors I will consider adding a footnote in the appropriate place.

In the future others may choose to retell the story in their own way. For now, this is Colin's story. We hope that you enjoy this book and the memories of friends and past experiences that might arise.

The original version of this book was handwritten by Colin and photocopied. The editor has attempted to leave Colin's words intact. He has corrected errors that were introduced in the transition from cursive to digital format, added a few footnotes and enhanced the digital version with photos.

Bob Carell, October 2014



Bob Carell (circa 1965)

**Note:** An Acrobat version of this book can be found on the Optimists Alumni website.

- ▶ Website: [www.optimists-alumni.org](http://www.optimists-alumni.org)
- ▶ Optimists Photo Gallery: [www.optimists-alumni.org/photos](http://www.optimists-alumni.org/photos)
- ▶ Colin's book: [www.optimists-alumni.org/colins\\_book.htm](http://www.optimists-alumni.org/colins_book.htm)
- ▶ Email the Editor: Bob Carell Toronto\_Optimist at rogers dot com

## Preface from Book One

This book was born in a Greek restaurant on the Danforth. Colin Hedworth, Paul Thompson and Don Daber concluded a parade corps rehearsal and, as always, the talk turned to drum corps past and present.

Daber asked, “Why not put your knowledge to work, Colin, and write about the Optimists, especially the early years when you marched?” A few days later Colin phoned and agreed.

When he completed the story of his marching years Colin went further. He borrowed the Green Capsule newsletter files, back copies of drum corps magazines, and correspondence to complete the Optimists Years and end Book One. Book Two will cover the Seneca Optimists. Photos and Graphics from the corps’ files illustrate this book. And, no, the rumour that Colin will next do the De La Salle story are not correct. My congratulations to Colin on this, the Toronto Optimists Story.

Don Daber, Toronto, May 2, 2001

## Acknowledgements from Book One

This is a list of all those who, in one way or another, contributed to this story. Without them it would not have been possible...

Mrs. G Baggs, Vince Macciocchi, Mrs. Nonie McKolskey-Ber, Bill McNabb, Ivor Bramley, Dave Hanks, Mrs. Nancy Perrin, Al Tierney, Rick Scanlan, Mrs. Bev Ransom, Don Daber, Ed Nanni, Barry Bell, Phil Hennings, Eddie Collins, Mrs. Kerry Armstrong, Lorne Ferrazzutti, Claudia Sauve-Kendal, Jim Patton, Al Miller, John Robins, Paul Thompson, Vic Krukliis, Al Morrison, Terry McKolskey.

### Publications used for research

- ▶ “Magic On The March”, Preston Scout House
- ▶ “Drum Corps World” Magazine (Current)
- ▶ “Drum Corps World” Magazine (Original)
- ▶ “Drum Corps News”
- ▶ “Drum Corps Digest”
- ▶ “Drum Corps America”
- ▶ “Eastern Review”
- ▶ “Drum Corps International” Magazine
- ▶ “Off The Line”
- ▶ “Canadian Comment”
- ▶ “Green Capsule Comments”
- ▶ “Gold Capsule Comments”

A special note of thanks to Dan Daber who endured a thousand phone calls.

Mrs. Bev Ransom who gave of her time and expertise to give this book whatever professionalism it possesses.

To Catherine, who endured.



## Introduction

This is the story of a Drum Corps, not the best, not the worst, definitely not the longest lived. Its appeal comes from the fact that its existence and performance far surpassed the expectations of its founder.

Started as a Boy Scout Street Parade Band, it rose to heights undreamed of, right from its beginning. Before its demise, this Drum Corps had set new standards and established a record that to this day remains unbroken.

This is not an exposé. In these pages you will not find who did what with or to whom. You will not find any slander or malice, other than the ramifications incurred by events as they unfolded. Other Drum Corps have been mentioned in relation to the Optimists to enable the reader to put things into perspective.

This is the story of the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps, told from the perspective of a former member. It has been told before, but not in as great detail. Personal recollections, research, and observations, combined with conversations with alumni will, hopefully, give a balanced record. If any offense is taken, it is the sole responsibility of the author.

Colin Hedworth (August 1, 2001)

*All great events have a beginning and an end.*

*Sometimes the end can be slow in coming. When it does arrive, its finality can be unnerving to those who shared its unfolding.*

*It is then that these participants begin to look back, to speculate, to wonder why and to remember how wonderful it all was.*

*The truth of this is no more evident than when those inextricably involved in the event get together and the stories begin to flow.*

*Looking back, 1952 seemed a much simpler time than today.*

*Still to those involved the events were no less exciting.*

*This is how the story began . . .*

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**Draft**

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