
by Michael Boo

The Cavaliers have long been one of drum corps' most illustrious units and have been under the leadership of one person, President Don Warren (pictured at right), since the corps' founding in 1948.

Long known as the "Green Machine," the corps has of late enjoyed a renaissance as one of the top corps in the world, a distinction it enjoyed from the late 1950s through the 1960s.

Origins of the corps

As Warren Alm recounts, in the early days of the Cavaliers, the entire corps, uniforms and instruments could fit on one bus and an outing from Chicago to the Illinois State Fair in Springfield was considered a long trip. The corps originated as Boy Scout Troop 111 Drum and Bugle Corps, founded by 20-year-old scoutmaster Warren after seeing the famed Racine Scouts perform at a Boy Scout Jamboree. About 30 boys joined the parade corps the inaugural year.

Warren, barely older than many of the early members, expressed amazement that

Cavaliers



The pants and shirts were 100 percent heavy-duty wool, the shirts sealed with buttoned cuffs and pants sealed by puttees -- gaiters that covered the lower leg. Gold and white trim gave the uniform a spiffy look.

In 1950, Koz-712 got "new" uniforms, cast-offs from downtown Chicago's Gen. George Bell Post corps. The Bell corps was a national contender, placing second to St. Vincent's Cadets with a horn line of 18, a normal-sized line at the time.

There was a tight camaraderie between the members and staff of the Bell corps and the upstart Koz-712. Logan Square was connected to downtown by a quick mass transit ride, so members of Koz-712 often watched the Bell corps rehearse.

Two troop members of Koz-712 belonged to both corps and occasionally couldn't march a parade due to previous commitments with Bell. This led Warren to check out the more advanced unit and, as a result, Koz-172's first instructors with drum corps experience came from Bell, Johnny Line and Art Gariekes, a VFW National soprano champ.

Bell corps' old uniforms were Eisenhower jackets with shakos and plumes, even hotter than the previous uniforms due to the ties that went with the long-sleeved dress shirts.

The relatively cool satin blouses Bell corps bought had an influence on Warren. The electric blue blouses had a loose fit and open collar, were comfortable and shimmered under the lights.

Koz-172 learned its first field show in 1950 and desired a new name with flair. Many area corps

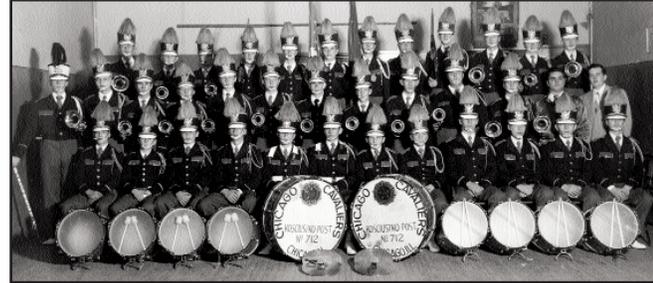
were simply referred to by their city or neighborhood: Logan Square (which later

flashy, playing recognizable music and having a name that created an image.

About that time, Cavalier Cigarettes were introduced with much fanfare (cigarettes didn't yet have a social stigma). The name conjured up a swashbuckling image that appealed to Koz-172 and the corps became known as the Chicago Cavaliers.

The corps even adopted the cigarettes' logo: a Cavalier with plumed hat, sword and cape. The "Standing Man" logo found its way onto the bass drum heads and corps stationary and can be seen today on just about everything associated with the corps.

The Chicago Cavaliers built up its treasury from parade appearance fees, contests and



Cavaliers, 1950 (photo from the collection of Don Warren).

other performances in 1950 -- enough so that the corps was able to purchase new uniforms in 1951, inspired by those of the Bell corps. The corps was to wear black pants and shakos with a big silver buckle on the white belts, with satin blouses of an undetermined color.

Dye makers had introduced a wide variety of vibrant new colors. Members of the corps gravitated to an electrifying color that looked especially sharp on satin sports jackets, a pulsating yellow-green known as chartreuse. That's right, the "Green Machine" was almost the "Chartreuse Machine." After figuring out minute uniform details, a full-color drawing was produced by the corps' resident artist, drum major Jarve Fiedler.

Marcus Rubin, the corps' uniform maker, came out to view the sketches of the final selection and to take measurements. He took one look at the choice of colors and deflated the egos of the members, saying something like, "Boys, you'll look real sharp in chartreuse, but these new colors haven't tested out yet and I guarantee you that one summer out marching around under the sun will fade that color into insignificance."

The members sat dejected, in silence. Rubin spoke up, telling them he had a Kelly green that looked great on satin, would take the dye well and wouldn't fade. Feidler redid the sketches in the new color and all agreed the uniform looked great. Thus, the Cavaliers became green.

Within a year, the chartreuse sports jackets had faded to a pale, pastel green.

With the corps' fourth uniform in four years, the Chicago Cavaliers put on the green satin blouses for the first time in the spring



The first Cavaliers in a 1948 parade (photo from the collection of Don Warren).

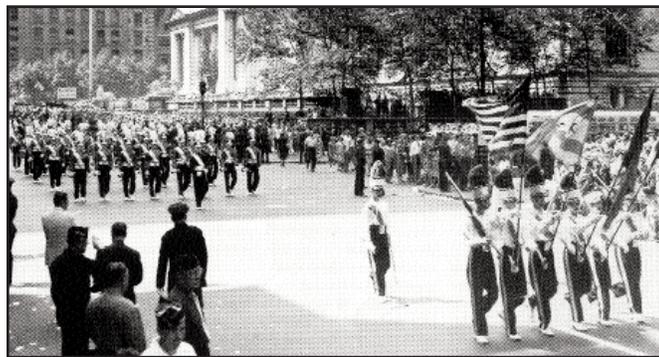
parents allowed him responsibility for their sons, especially on road trips.

Chuck McCurdy (bass horn 1955-1960) said, "We took all the crime out of the streets and put it on buses and carried it around the United States."

The corps wore a traditional khaki uniform adorned with shoulder braids and other enhancements and was largely instructed by private lesson teachers from a local music store.

The next year, the Thaddeus Kosciuszko American Legion Post of Logan Square (a Chicago northwest side Polish neighborhood) became the corps' first sponsor and the name was changed to the Kosciuszko Post No. 712 Drum & Bugle Corps, shortened by many to Koz-712.

The sponsorship allowed the corps to purchase new uniforms. There was much available in military surplus stores, with the recent end of World War II. Army issue dress pants and shirts dyed a dark midnight blue by the corps made for a low-budget uniform.



Cavaliers, 1962, marching in the American Legion Convention Parade in New York City (photo from the collection of Don Warren).

became Mel Tierney), Norwood Park (later to be known as the Imperials), Aurora and Lincoln-Fullerton. Others were known by their sponsorship: Gladstone, George Bell, Commonwealth Edison.

The cross-town Austin Grenadiers influenced the members of Koz-172 by being

of 1951. Local rivals -- the Grenadiers and Norwood Park -- had successful seasons, the latter corps placing fourth at American Legion Nationals.

By 1952, the Cavaliers had a reputation as an up-and-coming unit -- one that hadn't beaten anyone of significance, but looked good in the process. *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* first made it into the repertoire.

The corps entered 1952 with a cocky attitude that would define its existence. Members thought they would knock off rivals left and right, but they did not yet have the experience to be one of the big players.

South Milwaukee's "Spectacle of Music" was a huge early-season event. So many corps attended that there were three classes -- senior, "A" junior and "B" junior. The experienced junior corps like Norwood Park, Grenadiers, Racine Scouts, Bell Corps and show-winner Mel Tierney were in "A," and the less experienced corps like Cavaliers, Madison Scouts, Kilties and the defending Cedar Rapids Cadets were in "B."

The corps won its class and went the rest of the season placing third behind Grenadiers and Norwood Park and fourth when Mel Tierney entered the picture.

Members were depressed and spoke of not going to American Legion Nationals in New York. But after beating Grenadiers at the Iowa State Fair, the corps was revitalized with a newly-found confidence and placed seventh at American Legion Nationals -- the highest of any Midwest corps. *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* was a big hit and would become the corps' theme song.

Heading into the golden age

The 1953 season showed the Chicago Cavaliers were for real, as the corps won its first American Legion State Championship and placed eighth at American Legion Nationals. Sal Ferrera took over the horn line while still marching as a drummer, commencing his illustrious career as a brass arranger and technician. He also instilled in



Cavaliers, 1966, at American Legion Nationals (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

the corps a determination to excel, stating, "Drum corps is crazy, unless you win."

Despite winning its second state Legion title in 1954, the corps dropped to 10th at Legion Nationals due to the drum line being unable to compete with Eastern drum lines.

That changed in 1955, when Frank Arsenault moved to Chicago. He had earned a number of rudimental national championship soloist honors and was regarded as the greatest rudimental drummer of the day.

Arsenault contacted Warren one day and made himself available to the corps for the extreme sum of \$10 a night, at a time when instructors were still volunteers. Warren didn't know how he would come up with the money, but he knew he had to try.

Arsenault revolutionized the corps' drumming technique and introduced the East Coast high sticking style. The drum line helped the corps win its first VFW State title and place fifth at American Legion Nationals.

In 1956, the corps won 16 of 20 contests, was the No. 1 corps in the Midwest and took prelims over St. Vincent's at VFW Nationals.

A third place in finals brought the members back to reality.

In 1957, the corps won both state titles and won VFW Nationals, breaking the Eastern stranglehold. Though some thought it a fluke, the balance of power was shifting toward the Midwest.

At the 1959 American Legion Nationals, the corps loaned its drums to Garfield Cadets, starting a

period of camaraderie between the two fierce competitors. (Garfield's sponsoring church had confiscated the corps' drums before the trip when the corps announced its independence.)

In 1959, despite regaining the VFW National title, many titles were lost. The corps was struggling financially and

Chicago's Own VFW Post and Kosciuszko American Legion Post, the two sponsors, were both pressed to provide adequate financial support. The outlook became gloomier when the state of Illinois banned bingo and other such fund-raising activities for non-profit groups.



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

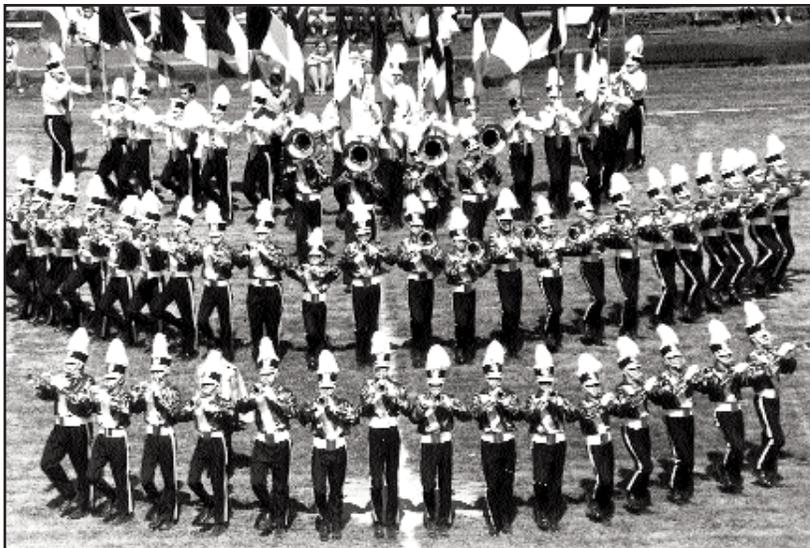
Corps turnover was larger than the earlier rates and many of the earliest members aged out. Members took matters into their own hands with "Family Fun Night," a number of money-making activities that included the opportunity to hit Warren in the face with a pie for \$1.

Although the corps didn't win a national title, it did win 17 of 21 shows. The Chicago Cavaliers also enjoyed having their own rehearsal space on the second floor above a cocktail lounge owned by Sal Ferrera's father, customized with soundproofed rooms and regarded as the first-ever corps "hall."

Two years after the Cavaliers loaned their drums to the Garfield Cadets, the members of the East Coast corps stayed in the homes of Cavaliers' members during its Midwest tour.

In 1961, the corps was comprised largely of seasoned veterans. Horn arranger Ferrera selected *The Desert Song* as the theme for the music. Len Piekarski designed the drill, which earned high scores in the marching and maneuvering and general effect captions.

Rick Wawrzniak (nicknamed Monk and Big Boo) came on board as assistant quartermaster and founded the "Boo Party," an annual event for the members that is still held at the end of each season. The party used to be funded by change contributed to



Cavaliers, July 18, 1971, at the "Danny Thomas Invitational" in Massachusetts (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

the "Boo Bucket" by members as they returned uniforms to the truck after a show.

The corps, still based in Logan Square, started its long gravitation to the northwest suburbs when VFW Post No. 3579 in Park Ridge became a sponsor, taking over from Chicago's Own Post.

The Cavaliers enjoyed an undefeated season, winning all 21 shows and topping Blessed Sacrament, St. Kevin's Emerald Knights and Garfield at VFW Nationals.

Larry McCormick, a former marching member, became a drum instructor in 1962, helping to ensure a championship-caliber drum line for the rest of the decade. Another

VFW National Championship capped a season of 22 wins and four losses.

In 1963, members were coming from as far away as Rockford, IL, and Milwaukee, WI. The age of the neighborhood corps was past.

The Spanish fanfare opener *Bully* became another corps trademark. The Cavaliers won 19 of 24 shows and another VFW National Championship -- the fifth in

seven years. At a time when the Chicago area was ascending in dominance, many national finalists from the area were now pushing the corps for regional supremacy.

Contra bases were added in 1964, a season of 22-6. The corps ended 1964 with a 101-20 record for the first five seasons of the 1960s, with three national titles and the longest undefeated streak (23 months) in modern drum corps history.

Mellophones were introduced in 1965, put to use during a return of *Bully* and the popular *Land of a Thousand Dances*. The corps could only pull off a 13-8 record for the season, largely due to other local corps being national contenders.

flooded Soldier Field, the finals competition moved indoors to the booming McCormick Place Convention Center. The Chicago Royal Airs captured the title with a swinging jazz show written and instructed by Truman Crawford.

Many people believed Warren and Royal Airs founder and president Sie Luyre hated each other, due to the constant close competition, but the two icons had lunch with each other practically every Monday.

In 1966, the Cavaliers would have won VFW Nationals, but they lost the show on a one-point American flag penalty for a violation written into the show that was not

noticed until VFW Prelims. Though corrected before finals, the marcher responsible forgot and it was caught in finals by judge Earl Joyce, who earlier had marched with and taught the corps. The corps lost to Troopers, then went to the American Legion National Championship a week later and beat Troopers by almost five points.

Drums dominated the competition. In an era when corps were expected to repeat popular tunes from the past, *Bully* and *Land of a Thousand Dances* returned as part of the repertoire, as did the ever-present *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.

After 18 years, *Rainbow* was retired in 1967. The corps headquarters burned to the ground during the competition season, incinerating all uniforms and trophies in a fire that started elsewhere in the building. Despite the fire, the season was a success,

with the corps amassing a record of 24-2 and winning both the VFW and American Legion National titles.

A large number of former marching members were now instructors. Paul Litteau became an assistant marching instructor after working with the color guard. He shortly became a sought-after consultant. Bob Hoehn, later to work in management at Spirit of Atlanta, was joined by a long list of former marching members, including Adolph DeGrauwe, eventually the corps' director.

Another of the former marching members who became an instructor was McCormick. In a few years, he would open McCormick's Enterprises for everything marching and would be the first to introduce a complete line of marching instructional videos.

Alumnus Frank Speciale came on board to help save the corps financially. Interestingly, it would be Speciale, many years later, who would lay the groundwork for the corps' move to the northwest suburb of Rosemont.

Despite staying near the top, there was no national title in 1968. At VFW Nationals, less than two points separated the top six, four of which were from the Midwest.

The corps bounced back in 1969 with 50 percent new members and an 18-7 record,



Cavaliers, 1973, Bluegrass Nationals, Lexington, KY (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

winning both the American Legion National and VFW titles. The Cavaliers finished the 1960s with a national title in six of 10 years and nine of the prior 12 seasons, with 192 wins and only 48 losses, for a remarkable winning percentage of 80 percent.

The euphoria of the 1960s was about to meet the reality of the 1970s.

The corps enters an age of reckoning

The 1970s were changing times in drum corps and other corps adapted more easily to the new world order.

The West Coast was making inroads, much as the Midwest had done years before. Santa Clara Vanguard was still unknown to many.

After besting the Cavaliers, its members left a wrapped present for the boys in green; a noose with which the corps was to hang itself. This little act of one-

upmanship would not be forgotten.

At VFW Nationals, the corps came in third to Troopers, after being dumped to 11th place in prelims. Warren regards the inconsistencies exhibited at that show as the inspiration for the 1971 Midwest Combine.

There were inconsistencies throughout the activity: VFW required a certain number of drum beats per minute; American Legion didn't. There was no agreement on rules between the two organizations, and corps had to change their shows depending on what show they were competing in. The contest organizers kept most of the money -- the corps saw very little. And corps made no money off the recordings sold to fans.

In 1970, Warren and Troopers Director Jim Jones met by accident in a men's room in Wisconsin. Warren mentioned, "We should get together and start to work more as a team." Jones responded, "You're right. We've got the act."

From this meeting, 1971 became the year of the Midwest Combine, the precursor to DCI. The five corps of the Combine -- the



Cavaliers, 1981, at the DCI Championships in Montreal, QUE, as the hornline steps over the color guard during *Softly As I Leave You* (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Competition was fierce leading into VFW Nationals in Chicago. When a severe rainstorm

Cavaliers, 1986, at the DCI Championships in Madison, WI (photo by Orlin Wagner from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Cavaliers, 1977 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Cavaliers, Blue Stars, Madison Scouts, Troopers and Santa Clara Vanguard -- were organized by Warren and Jones to be offered as a package deal -- take all or none -- with each corps sharing the increase in pay-outs.

Some show promoters balked at the concept, but it was the only chance to get and promote the attendance of any of the corps.

At the same time, five Eastern corps formed the United Organization of Junior Corps: 27th Lancers, Garfield Cadets, Boston Crusaders, Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights and Blue Rock.

McCormick rose to influence as the corps' program coordinator, with ideas for re-establishing the corps' identity as an innovator. Those ideas would run into the established convention of the service organizations that ran the big national shows.

On the surface, the 1971 production was a typical non-theme show, comprised of a number of selections that had little, if anything, in common with one another. Music included *A Salute to the Green* (a series of Irish tunes), *Americans We*, *Eleanor Rigby*, *The Greatest Show on Earth* and a jazzy *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.

The guard danced an Irish jig, but dance was not yet an accepted drum corps idiom. There was running in the flag presentation, in lieu of military bearing, straight-ahead marching. And there was a circus.

That was beyond radical for the day. How could a proud, traditional corps put a ringmaster, acrobat and clown on the field? It was sacrilege!

The circus segment of the show was a small part of the overall repertoire, but the entire presentation became known as "The Circus Show." Popular T-shirts claimed that drum corps died in 1971 . . . and Cavaliers were the corps that drove the stake through the heart.

The corps won five of the first six Combine shows. The noose was returned to SCV, but it would soon be returned to the reigning "clowns" of the activity.

After the Midwest Combine tour, the corps



Cavaliers, 1987, at the DCI Championships in Madison, WI (photo by Orlin Wagner from the collection of Drum Corps World).

went East and never placed lower than fourth. But in Boston, the corps heard something it hadn't heard for years: "In eighth place, the Cavaliers!"

Throughout the East, the men in green

were turned upside down and inside out. After being the dominant force in the activity since the 1950s, a new day was dawning and instead of being the driver, the Cavaliers became unwilling passengers.

From then to the end of the season, the corps performed for pride and fun. Then things hit rock bottom at American Legion Nationals. All the other top nationals-attending corps were at the big VFW show in Dallas, leaving only the Cavaliers to cakewalk over the Argonne Rebels, whom the corps had earlier beaten by 11 points.

But Argonne won the show.

Things had changed in the judging criteria and despite being at the forefront of the ongoing structural changes in the activity, the corps hadn't noticed some of the changes. In the past, corps such as the Cavaliers and Troopers could muscle their way to the top on execution scores alone. Now, increased points were awarded to general effect and content was introduced into the process. The judges didn't accept the corps' "Circus Show" as being GE.

Madison Scouts were performing another costumed show that year, "Alice in Wonderland." Scouts' former director Bill Howard remembers that at the 1971 VFW Nationals in Dallas, Tony Schlecta, head of the VFW, got up at the managers meeting and announced that costumes would be penalized two points each.

The directors in attendance decided it was time for the corps to take control of their own destiny. The two regional organizations demonstrated that corps could unite in a single goal. Drum Corps International was the natural extension of this idea.

Feeling the total show concept of 1971 was a mistake, the Cavaliers went back in time while other corps moved forward into the brave new world of DCI. The show design of the 1972 show was right out of the mid- to late-1960s. The corps placed ninth at the first DCI Championship, surviving only on the strength of its execution scores.

Few of the top corps went to VFW Nationals that year and the Cavaliers ended up with another VFW title, their 10th.

The summer of 1973 was a season that almost devastated the corps. According to former member Chris Hartowicz, "No one wanted to join the boring old Cavaliers; our staff just plain ran out of good ideas and couldn't keep up with a rapidly changing activity, and we couldn't even execute . . . we were just plain bad. We were in financial trouble, too. We hit bottom that year."

Many members either aged out or left after 1972. Warren entertained thoughts of shutting down the corps after the season. The show was rewritten again and again, and the corps ultimately finished 15th at DCI

Prelims. A nucleus of old members and faithful newer members wanted to come back the next year and try it again.

Some new talent arrived for the staff, like Dan Spalding, who would write the more musical percussion book. The 1974 corps was quite young, with many new members.

Early in the season, the corps was defeated by just about everyone in the Midwest, but when it came time for the big DCI show, the Cavaliers placed 10th in prelims and eighth in finals, almost on the will of the members'



Cavaliers, 1990, at the DCI Championships in Buffalo, NY (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

spirit.

The 1975 season saw the corps again place eighth. From Park Ridge for a few seasons, the corps was still pretty much a local unit. They practiced on Wednesday nights and had a weekend performance schedule that allowed members to hold summer jobs.

Spalding created an original work, *Time Odyssey 7534*, featuring an extreme amount of unusual time signatures. So, naturally, the corps impishly used it to play other corps onto the field for finales whenever the opportunity arose.

In 1976, the corps got new uniforms that made the members look more like the "Standing Man" of the corps logo. New



Cavaliers, 1991, at the DCI Championships in Dallas, TX (photo by Sid Unser from the collection of Drum Corps World).

naugahyde vests were put over the old satin shirts and floppy hats replaced the long-standing shakos. Members were allowed to let their hair grow out and grow mustaches, a departure from the staid military clean cut

look of the prior uniforms.

The show featured some of the best music heard from the corps in ages, including an opener of the vivacious *Russian Sailor's Dance*. The drum line, digging into the high sticking style popularized during the Frank Arsenault years, consistently placed among the top lines.

The corps won another VFW Nationals, topping Garfield Cadets and Bridgemen, the latter corps having unveiled its shocking yellow uniforms and insouciant competitive attitude courtesy of the mind of Bobby Hoffman. Garfield, which beat both Cavaliers and Bridgemen at VFW Prelims in New York City, would fall out of DCI Finals a week later.

A fifth-place finish at DCI Prelims saw the drum line place a close second to the Blue Devils' line. A plunging bugle GE score in finals was coupled with the drum section leader dropping one of his sticks early in the show -- forcing him to fake playing with one stick for several minutes. The corps dropped to seventh place.

The 1977 show had major problems and much of it, including new music, was rewritten mid-season. The major saving grace was that the corps had picked up horn wunderkind Jimmy Elvord from the Madison Scouts for the season. His enthusiasm and knowledge of personal psychology kept the members focused on the goal.

On the tour to DCI, the corps was the 18th unit to break the magical 80.0 barrier. Despite a marching GE score in prelims not in the top 20, the corps made DCI Finals with room to spare. Elvord's horn line, tying for fourth place overall, took the top score in the finals brass execution sub caption. At the end, the Cavaliers finished in eighth, ahead of 10 corps that broke the 80.0 mark first.

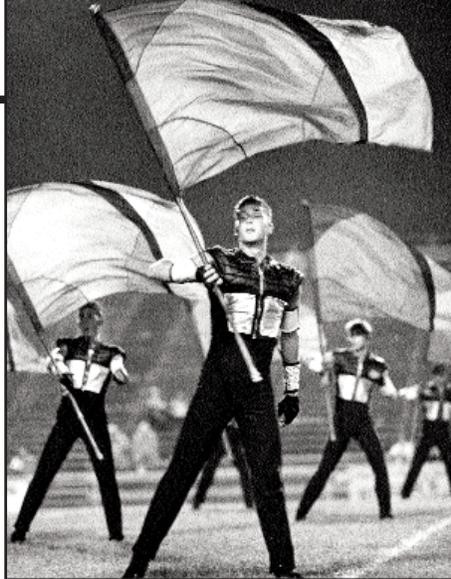
In 1978, the corps fell to 15th place at DCI. Elvord had gone back to the Madison Scouts and the Cavaliers had openings in most sections. The instructional staff was fairly homegrown and membership was hit by an above average turnover rate. It was the second time in six years that the corps would be watching a finals competition, only the second time since the early 1950s.

In 1979, the corps looked to the outside for a creative staff. Steve Brubaker, a newcomer instructor from the Cavaliers "B" corps, took over the guard and established instructors, arrangers and designers from the outside were brought in, including Cosmo "Gus" Barbaro, Gary Czapinski, Corky Fabrizio and Brian Callahan. Recent membership had drawn heavily from Adolph DeGrauwe's Cavaliers "B" corps and DeGrauwe became director of the "A" corps.

The corps hit a plateau mid-season, so drill writer Ralph Pace was brought in to give "oomph" to general effect. He helped re-energize the corps with color and emphasized Brubaker's guard, and the corps made DCI Finals in 11th place, never to be a non-finalist again.

Reinventing the image

In the 1980s, the Cavaliers created a new image as a corps at the cutting edge of



Cavaliers, August 2, 1997, at DCI East in Allentown, PA (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

symphonic masterworks and kaleidoscopic visuals. The first section to excel was Brubaker's guard, winning three consecutive Winter Guard International World Championships (1981, 1982 and 1983), at the same time the corps finished 10th, 11th and ninth places at DCI.

Selections like *Santa Esmeralda Suite*, *Sambandrea Swing* and *Softly As I Leave You* were big hits with fans and just tolerated by judges. The 1980 season ended with a post-DCI tie with the far more advanced Madison Scouts at VFW Nationals in Chicago, under circumstances that even corps loyalists considered dubious. (Scouts were sixth at DCI with an 87.05; Cavaliers were ninth with a 77.40.)

In 1981, the corps took 10th at DCI. The final week, looking for GE anywhere he could, Pace added a hesitation step-over the guard in the push during *Softly as I Leave You*.

The corps hiccuped in 1982 by taking 12th in DCI Prelims -- tenths away from being out of finals. They moved up to 11th in finals. Exciting and loud, the corps never quite got its execution together. But 1982 was most notable as the year Brubaker was allowed to try his hand at writing drill. He would go on to become one of the stars of the activity.

Something else happened to the Cavaliers in 1982 that would become the salvation of the corps. Frank Speciale, a corps alumnus and policeman with the Village of Rosemont, introduced Warren to Donald E. Stephens, mayor of Rosemont. From the initial

Cavaliers, 1995, at DCI East in Allentown, PA (photo by Ron Walloch from the collection of Drum Corps World).



meeting, the corps entered an intimate relationship with Rosemont, which sits at the entrance to Chicago's O'Hare Airport and is bursting at the seams with income-generating businesses and venues geared to both travelers and the regional populace.

The relationship blessed the corps with a financial boost that saved the organization from shutting down.

The summer of 1983 was the corps' 35th (jade) anniversary and for it, former marching member Michael Boo was commissioned to write an original opener called *Jade*. A throwback to the days of *Bully*, the piece ultimately signified a musical end of an era for the corps.

In 1984, the combination of Strauss' *Don Juan* and Respighi's *Pines of Rome* (back for the third year) pointed the corps in a more symphonic direction. Garfield Cadets showed how a corps could turn itself around and reinvent its image, taking its second DCI Championship after not being a 1979 finalist.

It all came together in 1985, with a totally symphonic show based on Holst's "The Planets." A top-notch staff (including Brubaker, Jeff Fiedler, Tim Ochran, Jim Campbell, Bret Kuhn, Dave Dombeck, Tim Salzman and John Bell) was put together and the corps broke into the top half of the DCI finalists for the first time, placing fifth.

A massive physical conditioning program allowed the corps to become more athletic in 1986. The program edged over to contemporary wind music, a far cry from the pop idioms a few years earlier, with a vastly increased sophistication level.

Variations on a Korean Folk Song was highlighted by a crowd favorite slithering snake maneuver. After a decade and a half of being a non-contender, the corps was back in the thick of things.

The 1987 horn show proved to be quite a challenge and it kept getting watered until it practically floated away (especially the multitude of runs in Claude T. Smith's *Festival Variations*). A fifth-place finish at DCI Prelims knocked the corps out of the top three for the first time in 66 straight shows. But in finals, the corps topped Blue Devils for the first time in 15 years to place third.

In 1988, the corps was atypically young. Playing Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite," it would have to settle for fifth place, though only two points from first. The corps would return to third place in 1989 with John Rutter's *Gloria* and a score of 97.30, a record high score for the Cavaliers during the DCI years up to that point.

The most interesting thing about the show, though, was the fact that, due to the corps being unable to secure copyright permission, the entire non-Rutter middle production was gradually rewritten during the season until it became unrecognizable from the original.

Back to the top

During 1990's "Cavalier Anthems," a combination of the music of Ron Nelson and Rutter, the uniforms

became more streamlined. It was the first year the corps used three-valve sopranos, ending in second for its highest placement in DCI history.

Former drum major Jeff Fiedler became director in 1991 when DeGrauwe decided to help the corps in a different capacity. "The Cavalier Anthems: An Advent Collection" was Brubaker's geometric tour-de-force, to symphonic renditions of holiday classics. The corps was in the running for its first DCI title, but took second place at the DCI Championships to Star of Indiana by seven-tenths of a point.

The 1992 season was DCI's 20th anniversary. Jack Stamp's *Gavorkna Fanfare* and three works by Malcolm Arnold captured the spirit of the struggle for freedom throughout the world in a show titled "Revolution!"

An interesting sidebar was that the closer, *Peterloo Overture*, was written to commemorate an 1819 revolt in England that was crushed on August 15, the same date as DCI Finals. The coincidence proved fortuitous, as on that date in 1992, the Cavaliers won their first DCI Championship.

In January 1993, the corps lost Brubaker to a brain tumor. A hero to the corps, he was remembered in the theme of the corps' 1993 show, titled "Heroes -- A Symphonic Trilogy (Journey . . . Conflict . . . Triumph)." Despite traveling to California and making it out of the state undefeated, the corps finished fifth at DCI.

The 1994 show, "Rituals," was controversial for a number of visual reasons. There were several guard props that left the audience scratching their heads -- ropes representing snakes, African tribal masks, large pieces of lumber that served as modern dance partners and provocative guard costumes. Music was quite intellectual, including Revueltas' *Sensemaya* and Hindemith's *March from Symphonic Metamorphosis*. The corps finished fourth.

The corps reworked "The Planets" in 1995. *Mars* was especially barbaric and *Venus* offered some of the most mesmerizing moments to ever float across the field. A visual highlight was the rotating DNA helix during the *Mercury* drum feature, followed by *Jupiter* and a reprise of a block circle maneuver where internal movement within the circle made it appear like a rotating planet. At the end of the season, the corps won all three shows at DCI, finishing finals with a 98.30, the corps' highest score to date.

Prior to the 1996 season, the corps accepted an opportunity to perform in Japan. The summer show was "Pan American Sketches," exploring the south-of-the-border melodies and rhythms of Aaron Copland and South American composers Julian Orbón and Alberto Ginestera. Copland's *Symphony No. 3* never quite connected with the audience and the corps placed fourth at DCI.

The corps revisited "The Firebird" in 1997, using some surprising interpretive body movements to represent the birth and rebirth

of the title character.

The show began and ended with no instruments or equipment, with members in a tight circle, audibly breathing as if representing the life force entering the bird. Arms flailed and bodies rose and fell in unison. It was a captivating sight, but much of the audience couldn't stifle snickers and catcalls during the maneuvers. The corps ended in seventh place, its lowest finish since the eighth-place finish in 1984.

In 1998, the corps celebrated its 50th anniversary with "Traditions for a New Era," visually showing the passing of the torch from the corps' traditional guard to the guard of the present and future. Music included an original work by Jay Kennedy, a couple of pieces by Phillip Sparke and *Machine*, a movement from a William Bolcom symphony (tied in to the corps' nickname, the "Green Machine").

The show was full of brassy fanfares and visuals that paid homage to the past and hinted at the future. The corps finished in fourth place at DCI, delighting fans that had taken a pass the year before.

The 1999 show was titled "Classical Innovations," featuring known melodies treated in a unique and fresh manner. One such work was Timothy Mahr's *Fantasia in G*, based on Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*.

The visual highlight was a movement called "the diamond cutter," a triangular block where pods of members would spin around each other in a tight circle, sequentially from front to back. The show took third place, 1.4 points behind the two California corps that tied. It was decided the corps would have to go more out on the edge to make a push for the top.

The summer of 2000 was a significant year of change for drum corps. Any-key brass instruments were allowed for the first time. Both The Cadets and Blue Devils used B-flat horns. The Cavaliers were still playing in G.

Michael Gaines' drill proved he was a force to be closely observed, creating the effect of churning turbulence and wave motion. Richard Saucedo was new as brass arranger. The corps chose Michael Daugherty's wind ensemble piece, *Niagara Falls*, for the entire show, a musical highlight being a forceful rock-out that set the blood boiling.

At the end, the corps' guard, long a highlight, finally won the DCI High Guard trophy and the corps tied The Cadets with a 97.65 for top honors at the DCI World Championships.

In 2001, The Cavaliers converted to B-flat horns and surprised fans with an all-original Saucedo symphonic jazz/rock suite, "Four Corners." Musically, it was quite subtle, and visually, it made a point of hitting all four corners of the field.

Block mutations unexpectedly shifted throughout and the unforgettable theme was hummed by fans exiting the stadium. At the end, the corps had its second straight DCI title, owning the score 98.35 by itself.

Richard Saucedo wrote another

all-original program in 2002, titled "Frameworks." Records flew out the window and for the first time since 1961 the corps went undefeated for the entire season.

Michael Gaines' drill was an essay in perfect coordination, magically highlighting every nuance in the music. The side-to-side sequential sweep in the second movement, to a cosmically layered, slowly evolving chord, was mysticism at its best. And no one will forget the "shave and a haircut, two bits" drum feature highlighted by the "fight club" dance.

At the end, a record score of 99.15 and a three-peat in the new millennium announced that the corps was in its second golden age.

Epilogue

Some 55 years after the corps was founded, The Cavaliers remain one of only two all-male corps still in existence.

From the days when a trip to downtown Springfield was considered a long trip, to now, when a tour lasts most of the DCI season and crisscrosses the country, The Cavaliers remain one of the most heralded organizations in the activity, entertaining fans and pushing the artistic envelope in new directions.

The corps sets the standard and then resets it, once again earning the nickname "The Green Machine."

Through it all, Warren remains the only president the corps has known.

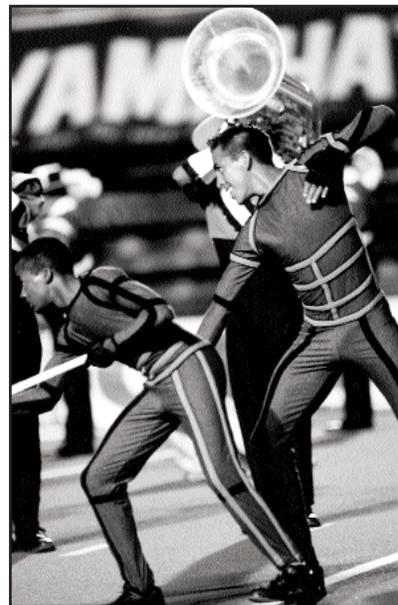
One hopes the rainbow never fades into insignificance.

Note: Much of the information in this article is based

on the memoirs of former marching members of The Cavaliers, written for the corps' 50th anniversary reunion program book by Warren Alm and Dan Horst (1950s), Ken Nolan (1960s), Chris Hartowicz and Jeff Fiedler (1970s), Scott Seal (1980s) and Keith Raimondi (1990s).

Additional material was derived from Larry McCormick's Sharper Video Productions video, "When Drum Corps Was Really Drum Corps," and the DCI video, "Brass Roots -- the First 25 Years."

For a photograph and bio of Michael Boo, see page 393.



The Cavaliers, 2002, at the DCI Championships in Madison, WI (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).