

St. Andrew's Bridgemen

by Pat Forker, George Lavelle and Bert Lynch

1965-1972

In the spring of 1964, Father Joseph Donovan was assigned as assistant pastor at St. Andrew's Parish in Bayonne, NJ. With his appointment came changes. He

remodeled the old school building, morphing it into a youth center, made the basement pine room a place for dances and recreation, and converted the third floor into a widely used meeting place.

With the advent of Donovan and being known for having the

several times if there was interest in a St. Andrew's drum and bugle corps. The idea was finally brought up at a CYO meeting in January 1965, meeting praise and enthusiasm. Several months later, horns arrived, drum sticks were distributed and the color guard began regular practices.

Every corps needs a director -- an adult to direct traffic, put out fires and lead the troops. Ed Holmes, director beginning on day one, was a surrogate father. It's a known fact that he put plenty of his own money into the corps. He was always there, spending countless hours of time on us. He didn't have kids of his own, but took great satisfaction in the personal achievements of each and every one of us.

Several months later, the Bridgemen came to be. The name was chosen based on the Fort Lee Bridgemen, named for the George Washington Bridge. According to Donovan, who also favored the Fort Lee athletic teams, St. Andrew's would be named for the Bayonne Bridge, thus giving birth to the Bridgemen.

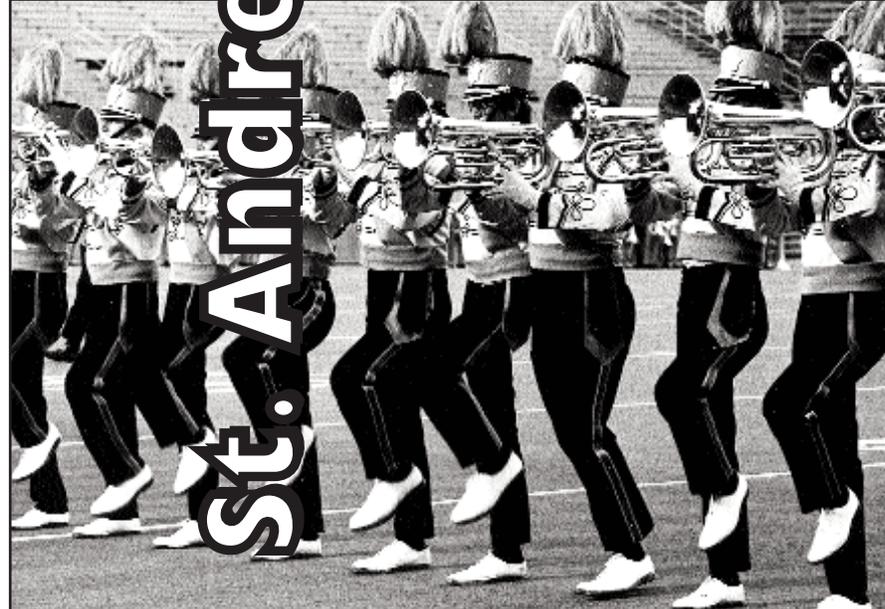
Under Holmes, interest in the corps was heightened and turnouts became so large, horns had to be shared. The first instructors were Dee Kazazian, horns; Dan Raymond, drums; and Bob Holton, color guard. Due to job conflicts, Kazazian and Raymond fell by the wayside and were replaced by Gus Wilke on horns and John Iglasies teaching the drum line. Iglasies lasted only two months before receiving an education fellowship, and he was replaced by his mentor, Bobby Thompson, in 1966.

The St. Andrew's drum corps made its first appearance at the Bayonne Memorial Day parade in 1965. The color guard marched without equipment and uniforms, but this was only the beginning.

The corps made its first field appearance marching an exhibition at a Jets intra-squad game. That day was also the first field appearance of quarterback Joe Namath.

August 1966 marked the Bridgemen's first appearance at the National Dream contest at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City. Because August was prime time for vacationing, the corps performed an exhibition with a mere 20 horns, a handful of drummers and a full color guard. Surprisingly, the performance was clean.

During the winter of 1966-1967, the corps competed at standstills in Staten Island, NY, and Montvale, NJ, placing second and fourth. That winter, Bob "Jomba" O'Connor was brought in to work the drum line as only



(Top to bottom) St. Andrew's Bridgemen, 1972 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); St. Andrew's Bridgemen at a pre-contest exhibition for the 1966 National Dream at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World); St. Andrew's Bridgemen, 1971 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); St. Andrew's Bridgemen, 1972, at American Legion Nationals in Chicago, IL (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

largest dances in the area, the Catholic Youth Organization's popularity soared. Despite what he had already built, Donovan was thinking bigger. He asked

he could.

The first true competition for St. Andrew's was a Garden State Circuit contest at Kane Stadium in Secaucus, NJ. St. Andrew's took their lumps, gaining experience and a lesson in humbleness through a number of competitions and finally became worthy of competition.

The Bridgemen placed first and won several more contests that year in the Garden State, later placing third in the circuit championship contest. After some hard work and some very good arrangements by Bucky Swan, the Bridgemen won the Garden State Circuit title in 1968.

As St. Andrew's improved, their feeder corps, the St. Andrew's Kidets, did as well. The Kidets, of junior high age, were taught the basics and performed in parades. Started in 1966, the Kidets program was finally starting to pay off, furnishing the Bridgemen with trained, enthusiastic musicians.

The Bayonne corps developed a talent for a brass technique called triple tonguing. It began as a warm-up exercise, but quickly developed into a showpiece, later becoming a St. Andrew's trademark and a crowd favorite.

After winning the Garden State Circuit for the second year in a row in 1969, the corps had moved up through the ranks and began to compete on a national level.

The winter of 1970 brought Hy Dreitzer, arranger for the New York Skyliners, and lots of hard work. Dreitzer wrote difficult music. The horn line practiced several nights a week and all day Sunday under Wilke to learn to play the music.

That year St. Andrew's competed in open class, winning a few shows and marching in many parades. Being a local corps, we picked up several jobs with only a few hours notice -- especially around Election Day -- in Bayonne, Jersey City, Hoboken . . . anywhere. From Little League parades to political parades, if they had the cash, we had the shoe leather.

In 1970, St. Andrew's placed 10th at the World Open in Lynn, MA. During the 1971 season, we had a slightly smaller horn line and corps. Frank Pasillo was brought in as an assistant instructor, helping clean up the horn line. The same year, Larry Kerchner



Bridgemen, July 1976 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

was brought in to arrange for the horn line. It was the toughest season yet. Practicing four nights a week and weekends, the corps traveled farther away, competing at the U.S. Open in Marion, OH.

In 1972, St. Andrew's competed locally and toured New England. We also competed in the Midwest, visiting Ohio, Wisconsin, Chicago and Minneapolis. That same year, the Bridgemen earned a charter membership into the newly formed Drum Corps International and placed 11th at DCI Finals in Whitewater, WI. By virtue of St. Andrew's 12th place position in the prelims, they had the distinction of being the first corps to compete in a DCI Finals competition.

Corps members dubbed the summer tour of 1972 the "two weeks tour." St. Andrew's competed in American Legion and VFW Nationals, finishing up the season by winning the American Legion State Championship in Wildwood, NJ.

1973-1980

The Bridgemen enhanced their repertoire for the 1973 season by introducing their trademark opener, *William Tell Overture*, followed by *Unsquare Dance* performed in 5/3 time. *My Favorite Things*, *Free* and *Summer of '42* capped off a diverse and imaginative musical show that saw them defend their New Jersey State VFW and American Legion Championships, secure their first World Open title and earn a ninth-place finish at the DCI Finals that year, again in Whitewater, WI.

Drum corps rivalries on the field in the East were intense between the Bridgemen and the 27th Lancers, Hawthorne Muchachos, Garfield Cadets, St. Rita's Brassmen, Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights, Polish Falcons and Boston Crusaders.

It was all too common to have two to

three competitions every weekend beginning Memorial Day weekend through mid-September, with parades thrown in for good measure as a required source of revenue.

The two

week tours were becoming commonplace by then, enticing the involved youth and chaperones to give up their time and vacations to travel the country by bus, sleep on gymnasium floors,

exist on meager morsels and rehearse for hours on end and enjoy every minute of the experience.

By the end of the 1973 season, many of the original members had aged out and many long-term members elected to pursue other interests. There was a change in staff as well, with those original instructors not being rehired.

This left the corps with an immediate deficit in talent that was only partially supplemented by the feeder corps additions, as well as new members that joined the ranks from other smaller competing corps in the area.

The 1974 season was not as successful as the previous two years. Despite an early season victory at the New Jersey State VFW Championships, victories that year were few and far between. The level of competitiveness was not as sharp the rest of the season, which culminated in a disappointing 26th-place finish at the 1974 DCI Prelims in Ithaca, NY.

The exodus of talent continued into the next season.

Changes in staff were continuous to the point that, at the end of the season, the corps was basically self-taught.

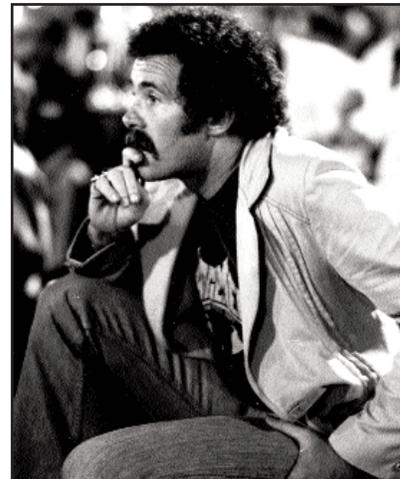
The last-place finish at the 1975 Dream contest, behind St. Ignatius All-Girls

Corps, was the nadir of the corps' existence.

The Bridgemen elected not to travel to Philadelphia to compete at the DCI Prelims. Summoning the very last vestiges of pride, the corps conducted a work weekend prior to the September New Jersey American Legion competition so as to break a score of 70.

That was the only goal accomplished for the 1975 season.

The winter of 1975-1976 was one of intense soul searching for the organization. The demographics in the drum corps activity were changing. No longer was St. Andrew's



Bobby Hoffman, the man behind the transformation from St. Andrew's Bridgemen to the unconventional and zany Bayonne Bridgemen in 1976 (photo by Joseph Zepko from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The famous "collapse" at the end of the Bridgemen's 1976 DCI Finals show (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Bridgemen, 1976, at Giants Stadium (photo by Joseph Zepko from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Parish the lifeline for new members, although the Kidets were doing their best to promote their members into the ranks. Increasingly, the corps' membership roster was becoming more reliant on new members from not only out of town, but also out of state.

Holmes and Donovan, along with the support of the Bridgemen Booster organization, decided to roll the dice and give it one more go to secure a competitive corps for 1976. It was decided that the corps would advertise in local newspapers and drum corps publications and hold an open house for prospective members.

Knowing that publicity alone would not be enough to retain those willing enough to join the effort, a change in direction, show design, uniform and attitude was required.

Behind the scenes, negotiations were underway to hire a program director that would not only change the direction and fortunes of the Bridgemen, but that of the activity itself.

And so it was that the Bridgemen entered the 1976 season resurrected, redefined and ready to challenge the many skeptics that lay in wait. Under the tutelage of Bobby Hoffman, a major overhaul was completed, discarding the cadet uniform of the past and introducing the look of the future in the guise of the long coats and felt hats with scarves.

The only commonality was that the traditional colors of black, white and gold were maintained. The winter season had yielded dividends in the form of increased interest and new recruits from the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, as well as those from as far away as Tennessee, Florida and North Carolina. Alumni pitched in by working the Friday night bingo at Charity Hall.

The very capable Dennis DeLucia directed the percussion section and the color guard was reborn working under Tom Pratt. The drill instructors, Greg Pych and Jim Messina, worked closely with Hoffman to bring the design on paper to fruition on the field.

Kerchner, with an influx of renewed talent, had free reign to write a score that offered imagination and modernity to the show that featured a revamped *William Tell Overture*, *NYC Medley*, *Land of Make Believe*, *One* and *What I Did For Love* from the Broadway hit "A Chorus Line."

On the first Saturday in June, at the

"Tournament of Stars," at Veterans Stadium in Bayonne, NJ, the 1976 corps made its first appearance in the new attire, entering from the rear sideline with a police escort. The hometown crowd was shocked at the sight that paraded before it. It took a while for the partisans to adjust to the new visual creation before them, but soon thereafter, it was apparent the drum corps activity itself had witnessed its own transformation.

The corps struggled at first against the solid and strong competition from its rivals during the first half of the season. By early August, they had finished ahead of several DCI finalist contenders and it wasn't until the week before finals that talk of qualifying could even be discussed.

At Franklin Field, the corps performed an energized and emotional DCI Prelims performance, which landed them in eighth place and once again restored the corps to the rank of finalist.

For those remaining DCI veterans still in the ranks from the Whitewater days, the wait in the entrance tunnel before the corps' finals appearance was nothing short of a sense of redemption. That evening, once the first glimpse of yellow appeared before the crowd, the roar of acceptance permeated the stadium and the corps responded in-kind, adding the signature "faint" to cap their sixth-place 1976 DCI Finals performance.

Unknown to the members at that time, this would be the last official performance of the St. Andrew's CYO Bridgemen, for in the upcoming months Donovan would be reassigned from St. Andrew's and be named pastor at St. John the Evangelist in



The infamous National Dream in the mud at Roosevelt Stadium, July 29, 1979 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Bergenfield, NJ.

Shortly after the announcement was made, the corps and the parish ended their affiliation. Donovan saw the corps he started return to the national competitive arena and the kids who grew up with him through the ranks of the Kidets and Bridgemen were sorry to see him depart. He had been our biggest supporter in both good times and bad.

The Bayonne Bridgemen were serious title contenders in 1977. The corps' show started off with *Chiquita Banana* drum solo, along with *Pagliacci* as the opener, complete with the operatic tragic clown in tow. Jim Brady, arguably one of the finest horn players in drum corps history, was the featured solo soprano. The Bridgemen won the World Open and DCI East titles before heading west to tour en route to DCI in Denver.

After their announced third-place prelims show, several members were singled out by DCI personnel. The members under scrutiny were declared ineligible, subjecting the corps to disqualification.

The Bridgemen sued DCI to

contest the disqualification on the grounds that there was no intent to have overage members march beyond their 21st birthday, since the corps had replacement members on tour to take the spots of those members in question on the day prior to their birthday.

A compromise was reached by which the Bridgemen were allowed to compete in the 1977 DCI Finals, but their score and placement would not be recognized in the DCI annals. Now, 25 years later, DCI included the official recording of that performance for sale, with no change in the official standings. For the record, the announced score put the Bridgemen in fourth place.

The stain of disqualification was difficult enough to bear, but it was uncertain if the Bridgemen could recover from such ignominy. The Hawthorne Muchachos could not fully recover from their disqualification in 1975 and never again approached that same level of championship contention.

Again the members went back to that endless well of inherent pride and, wanting to prove their critics wrong as well as to restore their hard-earned good name, the Bridgemen returned in 1978 and finished in fifth place, the highest placement that year for an Eastern drum corps.

Spanish Dreams was their

trademark number in the repertoire that year, along with the "Bridgemen Shuffle," a blue-cloaked rifle line and endless hyped innovations.

At the end of the 1978 season, Holmes retired as director. He had been the only director the corps had known since its founding in 1965. Although Holmes and his wife never had children of their own, he always made it clear to the members that they claimed 128 children when asked.

Jack Dames, another Bayonne native and long-time drum corps fan, succeeded Holmes as director and served in that capacity through 1981.

The 1979 season introduced "Gene, Gene the Dancing Machine" and the "Andrews Sisters" to the field of drums and bugles. That year's tour took the corps south to Birmingham, AL, along with the vestiges of the Northern Army of the Potomac to witness a uniquely Bridgemen rendition of the "Civil War Suite," where by chance the "rebels" emerged victorious in the Heart of Dixie and the corps finished sixth.

Thunder and Blazes led the parade of circus animals onto the field in 1980. The Bridgemen wrested their fifth World Open



Bridgemen, 1979 (photo by Ed Ferguson from the collection of Drum Corps World).

title, dueling the 27th Lancers for eastern supremacy and keeping close tabs on the Blue Devils, with the Spirit of Atlanta in hot pursuit. The DCI Finals saw the top four corps separated by less than two points, the Blue Devils emerging victorious, 27th Lancers a few tenths behind in second and the Bridgemen placing third, their highest finish in DCI Finals history.

The Bridgemen drum line won its first of three successive high percussion awards that year with high hopes for things to come in 1981.

1981

After a successful third-place finish in 1980, there were high expectations for the corps in 1981. The one factor that contributed to an underachieving 1981 season can be attributed to a change in corps chemistry.

Gone were those members who had been with the corps when it was St. Andrew's. In their place were members who had come to the Bridgemen from other corps and were taught different methods than those who were familiar with the Bridgemen way.

This culture gap led to repeated internal disagreements among the members and between staff members. This had a pronounced effect on the corps and its performance on the field. Arguably more talented than the 1980 corps, it just didn't have the same Bridgemen magic of the previous four years.

The corps kept half the show from 1980 and replaced the *Civil War Suite* with "West Side Story." Inconsistent performances were common for the corps in 1981. It was at the DCI Midwest Regional in Whitewater, WI, that the corps was bested for the first time since 1976 by the Garfield Cadets. The five-tenths of a point victory emboldened the Cadets to purposely march by the Bridgemen buses and revel in delight.

This act, as well as the appearance of an impaled banana caricature on their food truck at the 1981 CYO Nationals, served to motivate the corps and enable others to resolve their differences. The Cadets did not beat the corps again that year.

The corps finished fifth in prelims at the DCI Championships held in Montreal, beating Phantom Regiment by one point. But in finals, the corps did a lackluster performance and lost to Phantom Regiment by .005.

The corps had a one-tenth of a point penalty due to a shoe coming off a member. It was a fitting way to end what had been described as a disappointing season.

The percussion section, which had been the strength of the corps throughout the whole year, had the biggest highlight of the year by winning their second high drums trophy. The drum line, which was even better than 1980, was near the top in every show it was in.

A highlight from 1981 was the corps winning its fifth World Open title. It was the corps' last title of any kind. After the year was over, Jack Dames, who became the second director in corps history, resigned.

1982

As the 1982 season came, the members who had caused some of the internal friction of the previous season were gone. The new rookies coming in were excited to be Bridgemen and understood what it took to be a member. The members' attitudes were great, with the rallying cry, "The Magic is Back." The magic was certainly back on the field.

The show, which included *Shaft*, *Sophisticated Ladies* (which is probably the most theatrical number the corps ever



Bridgemen's "Andrew's Sisters," 1979 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

did), *Black Market Juggler* (drum solo with introduction of the roto toms) and *Broadway Medley*, was a show for the members to perform and have fun. Audiences loved it.

The corps looked like it was headed toward a top-six finish as DCI Championships neared, but a so-so performance at prelims placed the corps in ninth behind the Freelancers. True to Bridgemen style, they came out in finals to give fans their money's worth, performing their best show of 1982. At the end of the show, the corps put in the Bridgemen faint, then got up and ran off the field. The place went nuts!

This great show and the percussion winning high drums for the third year in a row moved the corps up one spot to pass the Freelancers for eighth place. This was the first time since the corps became the Bananas that they were out of the top six; a six-year feat had come to an end.

It didn't matter to the members. After all the problems the corps had in 1981, it was fun to be a member of the Bridgemen again.

The percussion line of 1982 was unbelievable. Its score at championships that year was 19.5. This tied the Hawthorne Muchachos for the highest drum score ever at a championship.

At a show in Pittsfield, MA, the drums played a one-tick show, which in the day of the tick system was unheard of. Their score that day was 19.8 out of 20. The drum line was in year three of its four-year dynasty. This line of 1982 is considered by many to be the best during this run.

1983

Many changes happened during 1983 for the corps and for drum corps in general. Bobby Hoffman, the architect of the Bananas, and longtime brass arranger Larry Kerchner, were replaced with Dave Bandy and Frank



Bridgemen 1978 (photo by Mark Boisclair from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Bridgemen, 1983 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Dorittie. The staff also wanted to change the corps on the field. The gimmicks people were so used to were replaced by a more sophisticated show.

At the same time DCI had decided to do away with the tick system. In its place was an opinionated system. Both of those decisions were fatal for the corps until midseason. At the first show in Lynn, MA, the corps scored a 47.15, which was at the time the lowest score the corps had ever received and the corps is in the history books as being the corps that had the lowest score to start the season and still make DCI Finals.

The judges did not know where to put the Bridgemen in the new system. One night they had the corps up on some corps, then down on others. This "up and down" situation was by many points.

The low point happened at the DCI Midwest Championship in Whitewater, where disaster always struck the corps. Here the corps failed to make the cut, placing 13th and losing to the Geneso Knights by two and a half points. This was the first time since 1974 the corps missed a finals show of any kind. The next night in Rockford, IL, the Bridgemen beat the Knights by four points, a 6.5 point turnaround in one night.

At midseason, with the sophisticated approach not working, the staff changed half the show by putting in some gimmicks and making the show more appealing to the audience. Also, a couple of days after the Midwest injustice, two judges talked to the corps and explained and apologized for the inconsistency of the system and promised that it would not happen again.

The members who had dealt with all of this had hearts of a champion (which most all of the Bridgemen corps had except in 1981) and kept working hard to make sure the corps would make finals.

At the DCI Championships in Miami that year, the corps did well in prelims, coming in 11th place ahead of the Sky Ryders and Crossmen, whom the corps had battled all year. In finals, they put in some more gimmicks, with the Bridgemen Bird making a return by jumping out of a big present box.

Also the snare drummers put on blindfolds and played on roto toms during the fast part of their drum solo, never missing a beat. At the end of the show there was a ripple Bridgemen faint.

The corps stayed in 11th place. Lost in the entire shuffle was the color guard's third-place finish. Led by Scott Chandler (of Blue Devil fame), the guard had its highest placement.

The percussion's quest for a fourth high drum trophy ended with a third-place finish. This was mostly due to the corps going on so early in finals; they didn't get the score they deserved.

Many believe they were the best line in the country and should have won the title. This ended a remarkable four-year domination of percussion, led by their caption head and arranger, Dennis DeLucia, and his right hand man, Bob

Dubinski. It was also supported by many other instructors and alumni who came back to help continue the dynasty.

1984

The 1984 season saw another chapter come to end. Many of the members, who had grown up in the feeder corps, the Kidets, and were from Bayonne, decided to move on to other things in their lives. This left only a handful of people from the great town of Bayonne, a complete reversal from when the corps was started and everyone was from the city.

Once again, it was decided to have the corps do a more sophisticated show instead of the gimmicks that were tried unsuccessfully in 1983. This type of production was received with more success in 1984. It included *Overture* (from "Merrily We Roll Along"), *Boogie Down*, *Aw Quitcher Moanin'* and *The Civil War Suite*, which the corps did in 1979 and 1980.

Ray Fallon, who had taught the corps in 1977 and 1978, was brought back to run the horn program. With Fallon at the helm and the talent base better than years past, the horn line became a big asset. The highlight of the season was at a show at the Meadowlands, where it won high horns for the first time since 1980, beating the Cavaliers, 27th Lancers and Crossmen.

The corps battled 27th Lancers all year as both were fighting for one of the last spots in DCI Finals. At the DCI Midwest Regional, again held in Whitewater, the corps missed the cutoff, as it had in 1983, placing 13th. The corps that knocked them out was the Velvet Knights, whose philosophy was the same as the Bridgemen: entertainment.

This year was also the first one the corps had its own food bus. It turned out to be a huge mistake; food was left out and often became rotten, leaving the corps hungry. One night on tour, the corps came in from a hard day of practice and each member was served a plate of popcorn. Not only were the members in a fight to make finals, but now they did not have food.

The organization could not replace the food that was lost due to financial troubles it was having. Other corps were helping out by sending food to the corps. It left the Bridgemen in an unstable state in the eyes of DCI.

An advertisement in *Drum Corps World* ran a few days before DCI Prelims that basically said the corps was broke. The ad read, "Don't let the curtain fall on the greatest show on earth" and depicted a banana having a curtain descend down upon

it. Some board members and other boosters who didn't want the corps to succeed put this advertisement in the paper.

When the corps reached DCI Prelims in Atlanta, they knew they couldn't give up. They did a good enough performance to get into finals, or so they thought. As the corps was getting its picture taken, the score was announced and the members realized they did not make it. Shock and disbelief came over the corps.

They ended up in 14th place, losing to the Velvet Knights, who basically now had the identity introduced by the Bridgemen, and to the Troopers. It was a sad ending to a season that the members had fought so hard to make successful. As the corps finished taking pictures, the same people who had put the article in walked by and smiled.

1985

Most of the staff from the 1984 season, including Dennis DeLucia who had been with the corps since 1976, were gone. DeLucia would later have success with many other corps, including the Star of Indiana and Crossmen. The board brought back Bobby Hoffman, hoping he would be able to create the magic again, as he had when he was with the corps from 1976-1982.

The show that year was a great one for the Bridgemen -- "Christmas in July" -- complete with a great big Christmas box under which the corps started the show, the horn line and drum line in elf outfits and the guard in Mrs. Claus outfits. They had snowball fights, Santa Claus and even Baby New Year.

After the first half of the show, the corps changed out of their getups and back into the yellow coats. The second half was *Come On Dance With Me*, followed by *Imagination*. This corps did not have the guns to pull it off. If this show would have been performed any other year, it would have succeeded. It was not to be.

This season the corps was not very competitive, finishing near the bottom at



Bridgemen, 1980 (photo by Joseph Zepko from the collection of Drum Corps World).

every show. At a competition in Waterbury, CT, the corps scored a 32.40, which is the lowest score the corps ever received. It is ironic that this was where (just the previous year) the corps won their last show ever.

The corps hit bottom at DCI East in Allentown, PA, where it had one of the greatest moments in its history in 1977 when it won the DCI East title. This year the corps had one of its worst performances ever. The corps placed 25th out of 26.

At the DCI Championships in Madison, WI, the corps placed last in open class. The board had made the wrong decision by not giving the 1984 staff another season to produce a show. The outcome might have been a lot better had the staff from 1984 returned.

After 1985, it was decided the corps would go inactive for the 1986 season.

1987

After a year's absence, the Bridgemen



Bridgemen, 1980, at DCI Finals in Montreal, QUE (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World)

started up again. With a new staff and a new financial backer, the corps set out to capture the magic it once had. The show was in two parts. The first was a recap of the Bridgemen's greatest hits; the second was *High Crime, Moziak* and *Motown*. Crowds liked the show and were very happy that the corps had reappeared.

An administration and staff meeting was held in April to decide in what division the corps would compete. The meeting decided the corps' fate. It had only 65 members and could not compete against open class corps with 128 members. The right decision would have had the corps compete in A-60 and go against corps the same size and re-establish the program instead of going against the big boys and getting slaughtered.

The decision was made to go open. Ego rather than reality prevailed. The attitude that the Bridgemen should not lower themselves by being anything less than an open class corps won the day. This proved be devastating. They were soundly defeated in every open competition. At DCI East, the corps finished last and at DCI Quarterfinals they were 23rd out of 24.

When you add the top 12 corps that were already in semis, the corps actually placed 35th. If the decision had been made to compete in A-60, they might have had a

chance to be champions of that level.

Due to the corps not coming out the year before and not being a DCI member corps (falling out of top 25 in 1985), the Bridgemen were forced to compete in the A-60/A-90 tour. On this tour the Bayonne corps beat groups that would wind up in the top three of A-60. This was the Bridgemen's last show performance at DCI.

The summer of 1987 was also the first one the corps had its own buses, purchased from Avant Garde. That proved to be another bad mistake. In West Virginia, one bus came out of park and rolled down a hill into a wall. The bus was totaled.

The other bus would catch fire when in park and when the gears were not shifted right to go forward. This was a regular routine. These problems contributed to the corps losing much needed practice time. This year was a very tough year on the members. What got the corps through 1987 was heart.

1988

The corps started out with better numbers than the year before, having close to 85 kids at the first camp. This did not last, as over the next few months the numbers started to dwindle and the corps started to have money problems again.

The executive director informed the staff at the end of the February camp that he would be folding the corps. The staff pleaded with him to give it one more month and give the

kids a chance to obtain the money that was needed to go on.

He gave in, and at the March camp money was brought in by the members who, with the staff, thought they had done enough to have the corps continue. It was also decided that the corps would compete in A-60, a decision that was made a year too late.

At the end of camp, the corps marched in the West Orange, NJ, St. Patrick's Day parade, where the camp was held. It was here that the Bridgemen made their last public

Bridgemen, 1977 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).



appearance, because the executive director folded the corps the next day. He just forgot to tell the members or the staff.

What a sad ending for the greatest entertaining corps of all time -- a corps that was ahead of its time and that changed drum corps for the better.

The Bridgemen will always be remembered as entertainers, innovators, a corps that just had fun and the rebels against the drum corps establishment. But most importantly, it was a corps that always had heart -- heart that started in 1965 and continued all the way to the end in 1988.

This look back at the Bridgemen is dedicated to three men whose visions helped make this a great drum corps. The first two are Edward Holmes and Father Joseph Donovan, who had a vision to start a drum corps in the St. Andrew's parish and who gave the corps its heart and soul. They also made it a family atmosphere.

The third is Bobby Hoffman, whose vision was to take the corps to absolute craziness and create a corps whose main purpose was to entertain audiences. HYPE!



Pat Forker grew up in Bayonne, NJ. He joined the St. Andrew's CYO Kidets, feeder corps to the St. Andrew's CYO Bridgemen, in 1967. In 1969, he was promoted to the Bridgemen's horn line where he played baritone through the 1973 season. He marched one show in 1974 and then returned to the ranks of the horn line with the contra bass section through the end of the 1978 season.

He is a sales account manager with Lyondell Chemical Company covering the Northeast region of the United States.

He and his wife, Jean, live in Cranford, NJ, with their daughter, Nellie.



George Lavelle marched in the St. Andrew's Kidets from 1972-1978. He then marched in the Bridgemen from 1979-1983. In 1987, he was a marching instructor. Since 1981, he has been a visual instructor/drill designer for

numerous marching bands and drum corps. He writes drill for six marching bands.

Lavelle is the founder and first director of the Raiders from Bayonne, whose philosophy in the early years was like the Bridgemen.

He is a computer operator for BMW North America. He and his wife, Teresa, have a daughter, Riley Ann, who is 14 months old.

Bert Lynch marched in St. Andrew's Bridgemen from 1965 through 1972, the New York Skyliners in 1973 and 1974 and Bayou City Blues part time from 1992 through 1999.

He now lives in Texas with his wife, Kelly. They have three children and one granddaughter.