

Preface

My Journey over the Rainbow

Whenever I attend Cavaliers auditions and rehearsals, and while I attended our camps for the last 30 years, the boys ask me to share tales from the past. “Don, tell me about the paddle,” asked a boy. Our instructors, during downtime, ask me to tell the boys some stories. I always enjoy this because it brings back memories and I get to know the boys. And the stories are funny, at least today. Some weren’t too funny when they happened—such as when the boys climbed Mt. Rushmore and I went to jail, or when the guys were having unauthorized initiations and hanging each other off the hotel roof—but how we laugh about that now.

I’d tell them about the very beginning, 1948, how I wanted our Logan Square Boy Scout troop to stick together, and so I started a drum corps. I’d tell them about me talking with Jim Jones of the Troopers about unionizing drum corps during a show in Delevan, Wisconsin, in 1970. We were standing at the urinals at the time, and that would be funny, and yet that’s really how Drum Corps International got started! Or, how we got to Rosemont, and how the generosity of one man, Mayor Donald E. Stephens, saved us. Or, how we purchased our first tour buses—and ended up pushing them all over the country! Everybody would say, “Don, you should have this down in writing. You’ve been around almost 60 years.” After awhile, I started to think seriously about it.

It took my wife to push me. Jan did two big things. First, she politely said, “You’re getting old.” Well, I brought home a newspaper somebody gave me at the Naperville show in 2004. It was a *Naperville Sun*, with an outstanding story about the show and the corps. I showed it to Jan, and she got so impressed with the article, she called the writer, Colt Foutz, who is now the author of this book. That was the second big thing she did.

I think the most fun for me was calling in groups from all the years of the corps to get together. I really had a good time being with them again,

to hear their experiences and their enthusiasm, and what they got out of the Cavaliers: fun, a challenge, camaraderie. I was happy to hear it, that the time and effort everybody put in turned out to be so successful. I would have liked to have talked to ten times the number of fellas.

As I read the book, the thrill and memories of all that transpired over these sixty years—the accomplishments, the hard times—it all came back. The thing that impresses me probably more than anything is the boys of today are no different than the boys back in the '50s when they put on our uniform. They have the same respect for our procedures and ways, the same excitement, dedication and enjoyment. They are in something they want to belong to. I am very proud that over 4,000 boys have gone through the Cavaliers. Everyone I've talked to always tells me they got a great deal out of it. And of course, I have felt very proud of coming up with the thought of unionizing drum corps, work which formulated Drum Corps International, where many more thousands of young people have participated over the last 35 years. Without the directors who stood up with me, we would have had no shot; all the directors who've come after us have made DCI what it is today.

I could not have achieved this without the support of my wife and kids. I never received a dime from drum corps, but I kept an office in our home and the phone open day and night. They sacrificed a lot, especially my wife. I want my kids to know I am more proud of them—where they have gone in life, and the nine wonderful grandchildren they have given us—than I could ever hope they would be of me.

I wouldn't have known where to begin without Colt Foutz. His interest and dedication made this happen. His writing tells it as it is, which brings our stories to life.

Sixty years is a long time, but I can't imagine walking away. Jan calls the Cavaliers "my baby," and I guess she's right. Even after two open-heart surgeries, being around the corps makes me feel young. But there wouldn't be the Cavaliers without all the dedicated people—alumni, board members, instructors, boosters, volunteers, and so many friends in the drum corps community—who keep The Green Machine rolling. I hope everyone who reads this book can appreciate why what the Cavaliers share is not just about music or marching or championships, but people. Knowing so many has made my life so special. Splooie!

Donald W. Warren ("The Old Man")