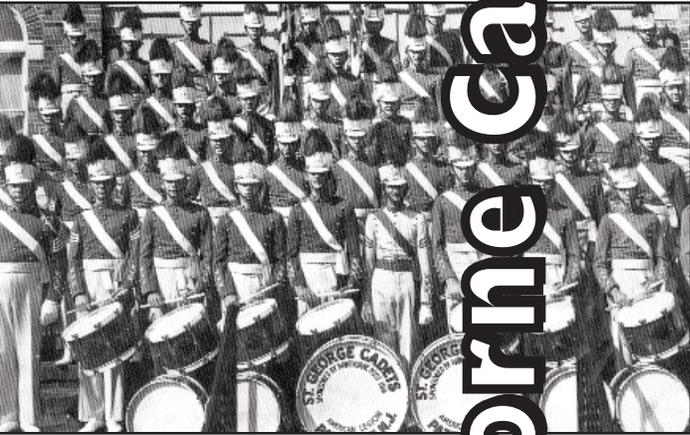

by Peter Bishop

With a population of approximately 20,000, Hawthorne, NJ, is a well-scrubbed, all-American little town in the Northeastern part of the state. It is a community of obvious and intense pride, its citizens a mixture of New York City commuters, local merchants and businessmen, tradesmen, craftsmen, housewives, teachers and students.

For the past 57 years, Hawthorne and its American Legion Post No. 199 have been home to the Hawthorne Caballeros, probably the most



famous, most popular senior drum and bugle corps in the world. Although this fame and popularity came about over the course of many years, its roots go back to the 1930s and the St. George Cadets junior corps of Paterson. It was an era dominated by literally hundreds of junior corps throughout the country that were sponsored by neighborhood Catholic churches and other organizations.

It is a safe bet that many of today's drum corps fans -- and participants as well -- are unaware of the fact that drum corps competition dates back to the end of World War I. The first American Legion National Championship contest was held in 1921.

It is difficult to comprehend in this day and age, but during the 1930s, there were as many as 60 senior corps competing in a typical preliminary contest vying for a top-10 spot in the American Legion national championship finals.

From that first championship in the early 1920s, through the mid-1960s, the American Legion was the dominant sanctioning body for drum corps competition, setting the rules and providing judges.

The Hawthorne Caballeros were officially organized on March 20, 1946, just after the end of World War II. The corps was founded

by several former members of the St. George Cadets. After the war, with memories of drum corps competition vivid in their minds and still itching to compete, Jim Costello Jr., his brother Bob, George Hayek, Joe Scarber and John McAuliffe (later to become Jim's brother-in-law), all fresh out of the Army, Navy, Coast Guard or Marine Corps, formulated plans for a new senior corps.

A little more than two months later -- Memorial Day, May 30, 1946 -- the new corps made its first appearance, still in military uniforms. From the outset, the group decided that it wanted to depart from the cadet style of uniform and traditional music. Various ideas were discussed.

According to the old adage, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." Over the years, there have been many imitators of the Hawthorne Caballeros -- corps that have copied the uniform, the music, even the name -- and in at least one case, both uniform *and* name. The fame and incredible success of the Hawthorne

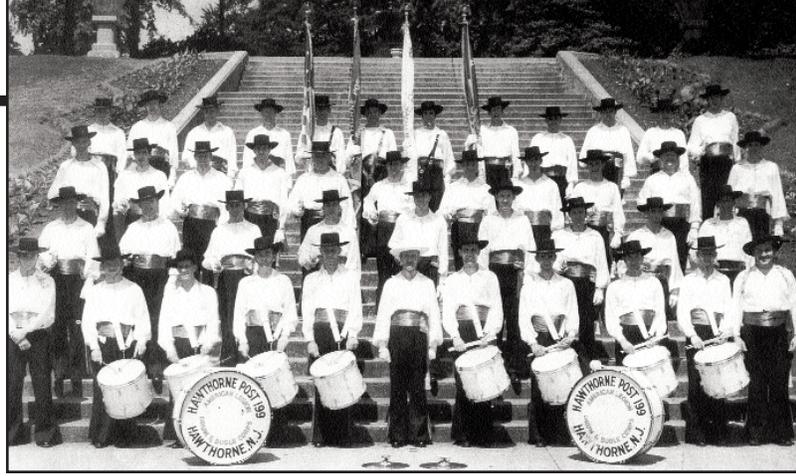
Caballeros was bound to be widely emulated, but did you know the founders of the corps patterned their unit after another corps?

Jim Costello's father, Jim Sr., had been a snare drummer with the East Orange American Legion Post No. 73 drum corps during the mid- to late-1930s. He had been impressed by the appearance of a California-based corps that East Orange competed against in several American Legion Nationals, the San Gabriel Dons of Post No. 442.

The Dons were winners of the American Legion Nationals in 1935 (their first year of competition) and again in 1937. They wore a Spanish-style uniform -- white blousy satin shirt, red satin sash, black bell-bottom pants with red pleats in the sides and topped off with a black sombrero -- quite unusual for those days. (See *photographs of the San Gabriel Dons* in "A History of Drum & Bugle Corps," Volume I, pages 11 and 233).

Costello Sr. suggested that the new Hawthorne corps mimic that style. All agreed. The name "Caballeros" was adopted,

(Top) The Hawthorne Caballeros, 1949 American Legion Nationals, Philadelphia, PA (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review); (middle) the St. George Cadets, whose members formed the nucleus of the Caballeros (photo from the collection of Peter Bishop); (right) the Hawthorne Caballeros, 1968 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).



and in April 1946, sponsorship by Hawthorne Post No. 199 was secured with an initial loan of \$1,000 with which to purchase instruments and equipment.

The corps continued to appear throughout that first year in military uniforms, but in May 1947, the first anniversary of the corps' first parade, the Caballeros appeared for the first time in the uniform that was soon to become their trademark, the most widely recognized uniform in senior drum and bugle corps competition. With only minor detail changes, that same style of uniform is being worn to this day and is considered by many to be a drum corps icon.

There was a short two-year overlap in the existence of the two corps -- the San Gabriel Dons and the Hawthorne Caballeros -- one in its final days, the other just beginning to emerge. According to American Legion records, the two corps from opposite ends of the country, but with nearly identical uniforms, appeared in the same contest just one time -- the 1948 American Legion National Championships, held in Miami.

After not competing in a nationals since 1941 (because of the war, there were no American Legion conventions or championship contests between 1942 and 1945), it was the last nationals for the Dons (they finished 10th and disbanded shortly after). The Caballeros tied for fifth.

It would be interesting to know if there were any verbal exchanges between members of the two corps and whether or not those exchanges were of a friendly nature. Years later, when confronted with similar situations, the Caballeros would always take the classy stance of respectfully ignoring, or even applauding, their imitators.

As is the case with most drum corps, the first several years were rocky for the Caballeros and there were times when the future appeared uncertain at best. They competed in their first American Legion



Nationals at New York's Randalls Island Stadium on August 29, 1947, and tied for eighth place. In 1948 at Miami, they tied for fifth, but in 1949 at Philadelphia, the Caballeros were eliminated by virtue of having placed 11th in the preliminary contest. That came as a blow to the corps and they came close to disbanding.

By 1951, however, the Hawthorne Caballeros -- or the "Jersey" Caballeros as they were known in those early years -- had established themselves and, with some extra effort, wound up winning their first American Legion National Championship, held that year in Miami's Orange Bowl. After a second-place finish in 1952, they won again in 1953 and 1954.

Jim Costello, director of the corps from the beginning, was also a snare drummer until 1958, at which time he decided the job of corps director had become too demanding and merited his full attention.

In addition to the San Gabriel Dons, some of the corps the Caballeros competed against in the mid- to late-1940s included Doremus Post No. 55, Hackensack, NJ; Jersey Joes, Riverside, NJ; Yankee Rebels from Baltimore's Hamilton Post; Geneva Appleknockers, Geneva, NY; Boys of 76, Racine, WI; Connecticut Yankees, Stratford, CT; New York Skyliners; and the Syracuse Brigadiers, to name a few.

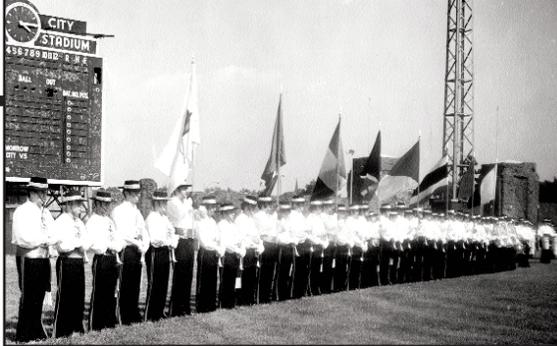
Believe it or not, there was a senior all-female corps sponsored by the Hormel meat packing company and the Spam Post No. 570, known as the Spamettes. They competed in the 1948 and 1949 American Legion Nationals, placing ninth in 1948 (over the 10th-place San Gabriel Dons), but they failed to make the 1949 finals.

In 1958, the Caballeros won their fourth Legion title at Soldier Field in Chicago,

narrowly edging the Syracuse Brigadiers, who won prelims. They went on to capture the coveted orange flag for the next six years!

This domination of senior competition earned the Caballeros the reputation of being the ultimate champion and the "corps to beat" in any contest.

Between their winning ways, their dramatic and exciting brand



Hawthorne Caballeros, July 1971, National Dream, Jersey City, NJ (photo by Bob Hunter from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

of music and the standout uniform, the corps soon became legendary.

It was in 1957 that the Caballeros introduced an off-the-line and final fanfare arrangement of *España Cani*, which immediately became so popular with drum corps audiences that it was retained indefinitely as a theme. In 2003, 46 years later, the Caballeros still play some version of the famous theme known to drum corps fans as "the rumps."

It was in the late 1950s that drum corps competition seemed to come into its own. The music had become more musical, attracting more talented arrangers. This quickly becomes evident when recordings are played of the Caballeros of the earlier days compared to the late 1950s and early 1960s.

During the 1960s, some of the major corps that were competition for the Caballeros in the 1950s were coming to the end of their competing days, such as the Skokie Indians, Reilly Raiders, Lt. Norman Prince, Geneva Appleknockers and Archer-Epler Musketeers.

At the same time, other corps were prominent on the national front, including the Long Island Sunrisers, Hilton (later Rochester) Crusaders, Ballantine Brewers, Interstatesmen and the Reading Buccaneers, while the New York Skyliners, Connecticut Hurricanes and Syracuse Brigadiers continued to provide strong competition.

Of all the senior corps in existence over the past half-century, however, the Caballeros' closest geographic neighbor and friendly arch-rival, the New York Skyliners, represented the keenest and most consistent competition over the longest period of time.

The 1980s brought a new wave of competition for the Caballeros. An old corps, the Westshoremens, rose in the ranks, as did some newcomers, including the Bushwackers, Steel City Ambassadors and Empire Statesmen.

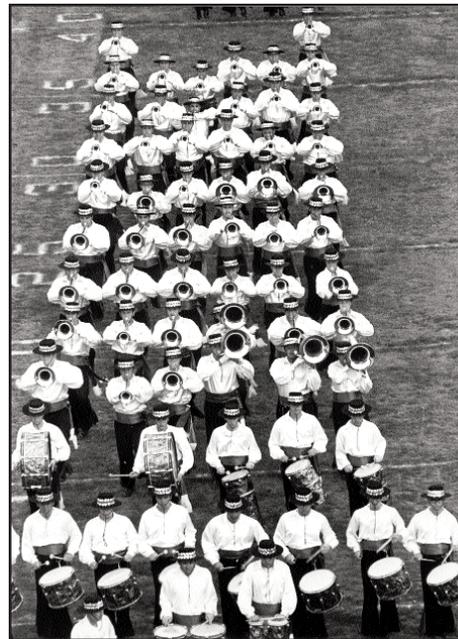
One of the greatest challenges of all drum and bugle corps in the early days was to extract as much music as possible from simple horns that had obvious limitations. In the late 1950s, bugles became available with a rotary valve, which replaced the slide, making the instruments easier to play. Also in the late 1950s, the baritone bugle was enlarged providing a more powerful and deeper tone.

In the early 1960s, two new horns were introduced -- the mellophone, which in effect replaced the French horn bugle, and the contra bass bugle, which added the conspicuously missing lower range.

The Caballeros were among the first of the senior corps to adopt these new horns, adding to their reputation of continually being on the cutting edge of drum corps competition. Even with the added horn configurations, however, the single piston valve/rotary setup was to remain the standard for another two decades before finally being replaced by two upright piston valves in the early 1980s and then three valves in the 1990s.

One of the charms of drum corps in the early days was that, while drumming was always precise and difficult, almost anyone could be taught to play a bugle. While the vast majority of today's young players are accomplished musicians, in the old days, few could even read music. They learned their parts by memorization, Xs and Os representing the fingerings of various notes.

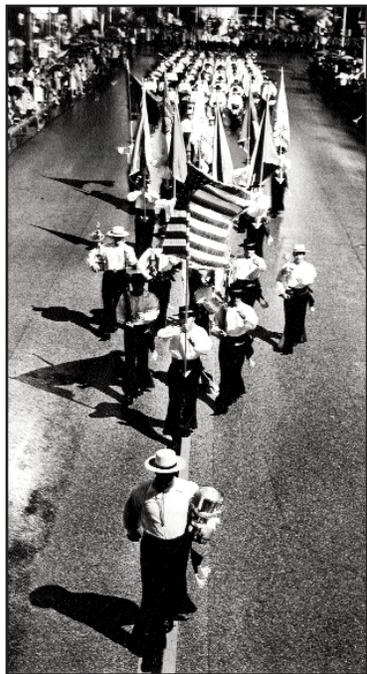
At the risk of stereotyping, it's true that this simplicity attracted a certain type of individual into senior corps -- fun-loving, beer-drinking, often a little bit crazy in the good sense. All senior corps, including the Caballeros, had a few characters, which made the whole experience all that much more enjoyable. Make no mistake about it, however, when these same guys found themselves on the starting line, they would



The Hawthorne Caballeros, 1965 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

suddenly become deadly serious, as competition was always keen.

Drum and bugle corps in the early days were looked down upon by serious musicians. The instruments were admittedly crude and often so were the players. It was analogous to the way rock and roll was viewed by those in swing bands in the 1950s. Those days of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were fun times in drum corps, the days before everything became so sophisticated and complicated, and there was a camaraderie between competing corps then that seems to have diminished to an extent these days.



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1965, American Legion Nationals parade in Miami, FL (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

Appearance-wise, however, drum and bugle corps always looked much better than marching bands. Bugles, though of various sizes, were uniform in that they were all approximately the same shape, all chrome plated (or in rare cases, brass plated) and all aimed straight ahead.

Band instruments, which were originally intended to be played on a concert stage, were made of dissimilar materials and colors, and aimed in all directions -- not particularly conducive to a marching format. Trumpets, trombones and Sousaphones were aimed straight ahead, but French horns, flutes and piccolos were played to the side, clarinets downward and baritones, concert tubas and saxophones upward.

In recent years, however, several band instruments, notably tubas, baritones and French horns, have been reconfigured to look and be played like bugles.

By the early 1960s, the Hawthorne Caballeros had become the acknowledged elite of the senior drum corps world. Richard Blake's Fleetwood Records in Revere, MA, the predominant recorder and retailer of drum corps recordings at the time, featured the Caballeros on many record albums, either as the only corps or in combination with others.

Their album "Off the Line," released in 1958, featured the Caballeros on one side, with one of their most noted competitors of the 1950s, the Reilly Raiders, on the other. This album turned out to be the all-time best selling record Fleetwood ever produced.

Hawthorne's driving musical style was widely lauded during this period and, in 1956, out of this new found fame and popularity, emerged Ralph Silverbrand, the Caballeros' newly appointed drum major. Tall, trim and purposeful, he quickly became well-known, extremely popular with the fans and a true celebrity in drum corps circles.

Presiding over the corps from 1956 through 1967, Silverbrand personally led the Caballeros to nine American Legion Championships and his name soon became synonymous with the word "champion." He was one of the founders of the Hawthorne Muchachos in 1959, the Caballeros' junior corps, and he left his post as drum major of the Caballeros at the end of the 1967 season to devote his energies to the junior corps.

In similar uniforms to those of the Caballeros, the Muchachos were instantly successful, totally dominating the entry-level circuit in which they initially competed, with



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1972, at the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights' show (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

undefeated seasons their first two years out.

They eventually became members of Drum Corps International, the top junior circuit, placing as high as fourth in 1974, a true accomplishment given the intense level of competition in DCI. The Muchachos disbanded at the end of the 1978 season, but are still revered and remembered as one of the greatest junior corps of the era.

The Caballeros continued to compete for the American Legion Championship pretty much continuously through 1975. They didn't attend the 1976 contest in Seattle and there were no senior championships from 1977 through 1979.

The final *true* American Legion Championship (that is, one held in conjunction with a national convention) was held in Boston in 1980. Appropriately, it was won by the Caballeros. All told, of the 24 American Legion National Championships entered since 1947, the Caballeros won 14!

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, a growing number in the drum corps community took issue with the American Legion championship being considered the mark of the best corps. The Legion contest was just one small part of the overall convention and many didn't consider it a true championship for the reason that more years than not, the contest was held in a distant city -- generally not convenient or economically feasible for Northeast-based drum and bugle corps to attend.

The considerable expenditure in money, time and the logistics to transport and house a large corps was, for most, simply far greater than the championship was worth.

It was to the credit of Jim Costello that the Caballeros were able to attend as many

Legion championships as they did, but in actuality, the competition at these contests was not always that challenging, often drawing a few local corps, but leaving the major competition back home in the East.

In fairness to the Caballeros, they had been dominant throughout the championship seasons and likely would have won had all corps been in attendance. Still, the Legion national was recognized and acknowledged as *the* championship at the time.

In addition, the Veterans of Foreign Wars was active in drum corps competition and also maintained a contest staff similar to that of the American Legion, holding national championship contests as part of their national conventions. The VFW held contests for junior and senior corps from 1928 through 1963, then for junior corps only from 1964 through 1984.

The earlier VFW national contests were won by either the Reilly Raiders of Philadelphia, the Princemen of Malden, MA, or the Archer-Epler Musketeers of Upper Darby, PA. The 1960, 1961 and 1962 championships were won by the recently formed Reading Buccaneers. The Caballeros entered only one VFW Nationals -- the last contest held for seniors, at Seattle, WA, in 1963, which they won.

As the war years faded ever further into history and senior corps increasingly became staffed with non-veterans, there was a general feeling that the competition rules of the American Legion and VFW had become outdated, unbending and overly restrictive, therefore, not progressive. Since both organizations were obviously military-based, it was natural and understandable that any rule changes concerning format that strayed too far from military styles were not going to be acceptable.

The Caballeros, by virtue of being the Legion's perennial champion, were viewed as part of the problem. There appeared to be a general feeling of resentment toward the Legion and the Caballeros on the part of most other senior corps. Frustrations which existed from the Legion's lack of willingness to change with the times lent impetus to the growing notion that, if senior drum corps competition was to have a healthy future, it would be necessary to form a new sanctioning body. In 1965, therefore, Drum Corps Associates was formed.

The new organization was devoted exclusively to senior corps competition and was based on far more liberal rules. More important, it provided a broader eligibility base that included Canadian corps as well as literally any and all senior corps in the world that wished to compete. DCA was, and is, an organization run by drum corps people for drum corps people.

Because senior corps are primarily based in the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada, the DCA Championships



Hawthorne Caballeros, June 30, 1979 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

have always been held within a four-state area, convenient and economical for all to attend, thereby providing a venue for a true championship for all of senior corps.

DCA is expanding, addressing emerging senior corps in other parts of the country. Their rules have kept pace with the evolution of the sport, allowing new and different formats in drill design, marching styles, instrumentation and presentation, thereby encouraging a wider variety of expression. It is safe to say that, had it not been for DCA, senior drum and bugle corps competition might well have withered and died years ago.

The Caballeros were not charter members of DCA, which ran its first championship contest in Milford, CT, on September 11, 1965. The term "World" championship was used by DCA, first to differentiate it from the Legion's "National" designation, and second, to indicate that technically, any corps in the world could compete.

By the following year, however, the Caballeros had become members of DCA, but they continued, as did many other corps, to compete in the Legion's championship contests whenever possible. The Caballeros had won the 1966 American Legion National Championship the previous week in Washington, D.C., against several of the same corps, but placed fifth in their first DCA Finals at Bridgeport, CT.

In 1967, the Caballeros placed second in both the American Legion Finals in Boston and the DCA Championships. In 1968, the corps finished in eighth position, their lowest placement ever in DCA Finals. In 1969, after placing second at the Legion Nationals in Atlanta, they placed seventh at DCA in Rochester, NY.

Chuck Bishop, who had been the flamboyant drum major of the Hawthorne Muchachos before aging out, succeeded his mentor, Ralph Silverbrand, as drum major of the Caballeros for the 1968 and 1969 seasons, after which he entered the Marine Corps.

After so many years of incredible success, by the mid-1960s, many of the members that had been a part of those championship years began to leave the corps to attend to growing families or demanding careers and, for the most part, the 1968 and 1969 seasons were not up to the standard established in earlier years. There was concern that the corps might continue to slip, thereby losing that domination they had maintained for so long.

Over the winter of 1969-1970, however, several changes were made that promised

improvement. There were two major elements in particular, both of which had far-reaching and long-term effects and turned the Caballeros around: the acquisition of Larry Kerchner as the music arranger and instructor, and the installation of Jim Russo as the permanent drum major.

A graduate of Boston's Berklee College of Music, Kerchner brought an exciting new sound to the Caballeros, while retaining that powerful "wall of sound" that fans had long since come to love and expect from Hawthorne. A New Jersey native, Kerchner's drum corps career began when he was only 11 years old playing (and arranging) for the great junior corps Blue Rock from Wilmington, DE, and Penns Grove, NJ.

While still a student at Berklee, Kerchner was brought to Hawthorne in mid-1969 where he immediately set about putting together the program for the 1970 season. His masterful arrangements were innovative, sophisticated and so complex that it was difficult to imagine such music coming from simple one-valved bugles.

His arrangements played a large part in the Caballeros winning five DCA Championships in seven years. In addition to the Caballeros, Kerchner's arrangements have been played by some of the top-ranking DCI corps. He has also been affiliated with many of the most notable names in the music industry, garnering Grammy nominations in 1985 and 1995.

Russo, former drum major of St. Lucy's Cadets, came to Hawthorne in early 1970. He was just 21 at the time and had recently aged out of the famous junior corps. He immediately took charge of the Caballeros on the field. His enthusiasm was infectious and within months the corps was virtually reborn.

Time has an insidious way of slipping by, especially in drum corps, or so it seems. Russo has far outpaced any other DCA drum major, having been at the helm now for the past 32 years. That means that at this point in time, any playing member of the Caballeros who is under the age of 32 (which is a majority of the corps), hadn't yet been born when Russo took over as drum major.

Russo's years with the Caballeros total more than the corps' five previous drum majors combined. Like Ralph Silverbrand, over the years Russo became one of the best known personalities in senior drum corps circles. In 1993, he was deservedly inducted into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame and he has amassed literally hundreds of "Best Drum Major" trophies. Now in his 33rd season, Russo continues to lead the Caballeros in that inimitable style of showmanship for which he has become famous.

The 1970 season proved to be up and down -- more often down than up in the early going. This changed by mid-summer as the corps began to master its challenging new program. The Caballeros won the famous Dream contest in Jersey City's Roosevelt Stadium, besting their long-time rivals, the New York Skyliners.



Hawthorne Caballeros Drum Major Jim Russo, pictured here in 1996, has led the corps since 1970, after he retired from St. Lucy's (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

On Labor Day weekend, the Caballeros went on to win their first DCA Championship, held that year in Rochester, NY. As it turned out, the arrangements, instructors, staff and marching personnel put together in 1970 would prove a nearly unbeatable combination for most of the decade to come.

After a third-place finish in 1971 behind the winning Skyliners and second-place Yankee Rebels, the Caballeros went on to win the DCA Championship three years in a row -- 1972, 1973 and 1974 -- establishing a record that stood for many years.

Prophetically, it was after the 1972 win that Costello began speaking of the possibility of the Caballeros becoming a "drum corps dynasty." After finishing second in 1975, again to the Skyliners, the Caballeros won their fifth title in 1976 and set another DCA record by being the first corps ever to sweep all captions.

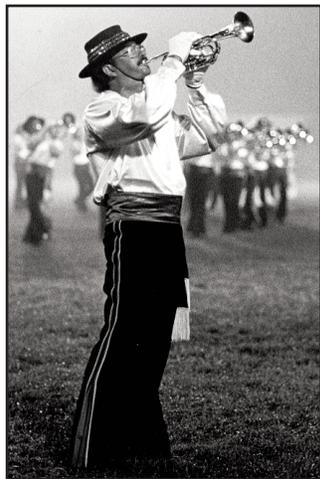
Today the DCA record book is literally dominated by Hawthorne Caballeros statistics. For example, as of 2002, of all the corps that have ever competed for the DCA Championships, they are the only one to have fielded a finalist corps for 37 consecutive years. Of those 37 entries, they have placed in the top five 34 times and in the top three 29 times.

In 1971, the first score of 90 was recorded in a DCA Finals. Since then the Caballeros have scored 90 or above in 24 championships, the last 19 consecutively, and they have scored a 95 or above nine times! All told, the Caballeros have won eight DCA World Championships. These are astounding statistics -- all records, some of which might never be broken.

In 1961, the Caballeros were the first senior corps to complete a season undefeated. That monumental feat was repeated in 1973 and, incredibly, in 1984 and 1985 they finished two undefeated seasons back to back. The most recent undefeated season was in 1995. In 1989, during DCA's 25th anniversary, fans voted the Hawthorne Caballeros their "all-time favorite drum and bugle corps."

As mentioned previously, the Caballeros have had their imitators over the years. Most of these corps were at best short-lived and local sensations, "borrowing" the uniform style or music, but never rising to national prominence.

The Rhode Island Matadors, however, were the exception. The Matadors were formed in



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1987, in Bloomfield, NJ (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

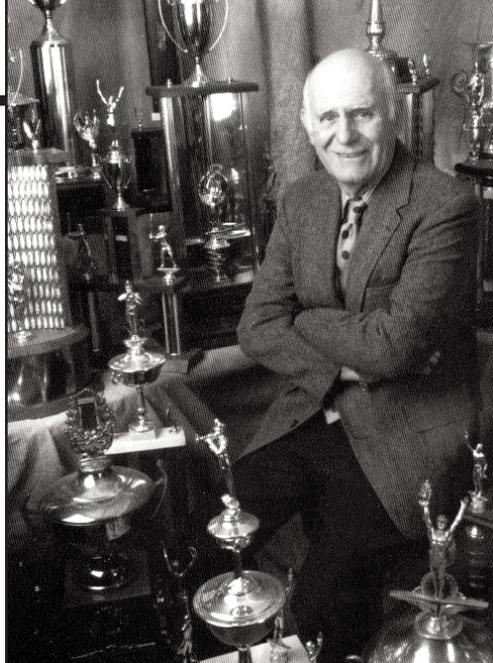
the late 1960s and emerged during the 1970s as a crowd-pleasing and very competitive corps. At one time or another, the Matadors beat every corps in DCA competition, with one exception, the Hawthorne Caballeros.

At the 2002 DCA Finals in Scranton, PA, however, an imitator finally topped the Caballeros. Presenting a smooth yet powerful program, the Inspires of Yokohama, Japan, appearing in their first DCA Championship, squeaked past their long-time idols.

As usual, the Caballeros were as gracious in defeat as they have always been in victory, joining with the Inspires in the stadium parking lot after the contest to play some music together.

The importance of James J. Costello Jr., not only to the Hawthorne Caballeros, but to the sport of drum and bugle corps competition itself, can not be overstated. His reach was long. His influence and effect were felt by everyone in drum corps to one extent or another -- by the American Legion, Drum Corps Associates, judges, contest promoters, fellow corps directors and the players themselves.

There is literally no one in the ranks of senior drum corps -- and to an extent junior drum corps as well -- that hasn't benefited in some way from Costello's efforts. No other corps in history has exhibited the consistency, the level of quality, the work ethic and the pure class of the Hawthorne Caballeros -- all largely attributable to their long-time director.



Founder/Director Jim Costello, 1996, surrounded by dozens of trophies and awards the Hawthorne Caballeros won during their first 50 years (photo from the collection of Peter Bishop).

Navy in 1942. In the Navy, he served as a fire controlman and learned the electrical trade, the skill that would be his livelihood once back in civilian life.

The founding of the Caballeros was destined to happen, but the corps' resounding success over such an incredibly long period of time required something extra -- masterful administrative skills, finely tuned instructional abilities, incredible patience, fierce tenacity, uncommon devotion and a clear and unwavering vision.

As the Caballero's director, Costello exhibited all of these qualities, in spades. In addition to being director, Costello was also the corps' drill instructor.

On the personal side, in spite of the inordinate amounts of time and energy that the corps continually demanded, Costello was a dedicated husband and father. Belying an often stern façade, he was a warm individual with a wry sense of humor who could find a pun in almost any sentence.

He would also be the first to point out the importance of his wife, Mary, in referring to his long-time involvement with the Caballeros. To be sure, she played an essential part in the Caballeros' success, for without her unending support and encouragement, Costello could never have achieved what he did. He was a deeply religious man and, before every contest, he would gather the corps together for a silent prayer -- not necessarily to win, but for each individual to do his best.

Costello, or "Cos" as he was affectionately known, demanded a lot of himself and, in turn, he demanded the same from members in terms of rehearsal time, effort, discipline, commitment and personal conduct.

During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, prior to the opening date of the season, the corps would put in a long and exhausting weekend at Fort Dix, NJ, and in later years at West Point, NY. This was before most other corps held such concentrated practice sessions -- what are today known as

February 20, 1921, Costello grew up in a drum corps family. The love of drum and bugle corps was in his blood from an early age, if not from birth. At age 11, he joined the St. George Cadets as a snare drummer, continuing to play with that corps until he entered the

"camp" weekends.

Still talked about around the bar at Post 199, these weekends were the stuff of legend! Friday night, once the corps had arrived, settled into military accommodations and been fed, there would be a music rehearsal that would last well past midnight. Breakfast in the mess hall was at 6:00 AM, with everyone on the drill field starting line at 7:00. The day would begin with close-order drill and emphasis on marching style -- how to step off correctly, how to turn, how to stop.

It was a primer in the Costello method of marching for any new personnel and a good brush-up session for veterans. Drill rehearsal would last all day. After evening mess, there would be another music rehearsal, again until midnight or later.

Sunday was a carbon copy of Saturday, with the exception of the close-order drill segment. The weekend came to a close at 5:00 PM on Sunday afternoon after a final run-through of the routine. By then, Costello, in his trademark white baseball cap, had usually lost most or all of his voice, but to his credit, by the end of that weekend, the corps was in what most people would have considered mid-season form.

Keeping up with it all has always been a major part of the job for any DCA corps director, but Costello somehow made it appear effortless. Obviously, the sport of drum corps competition has changed greatly since 1921. (I prefer the word "sport" in reference to drum and bugle corps competition over the current and overly used word "activity" -- that being such a weak word for such an exciting, physical, colorful and highly competitive event).

Unlike other well-defined music forms -- symphony orchestras, for example, which have remained virtually unchanged (music and instrumentation) for at least two centuries -- drum corps has had to find its own way from the beginning. It has been in a state of continuous evolution and that evolution has been truly incredible -- from the first small group that identified itself as a drum and bugle corps, to what we see on the field today. And it will obviously continue to evolve.

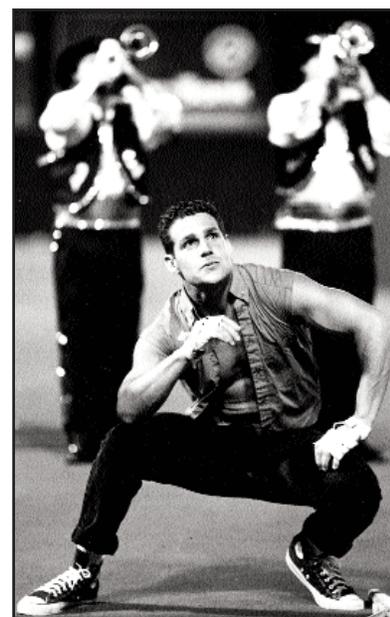
Consider the many changes in bugles over



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1991, at DCA Finals (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

From the late 1950s on, the Caballeros set a standard in senior competition that served as the benchmark for all other corps to strive, not only in high competitive levels, but in integrity and sportsmanship. Without the consistency of the Caballeros' example of how a championship corps should sound, look and act, senior drum corps competition would not be what it is today.

Born in Paterson, NJ, on



Hawthorne Caballeros, 1993 at DCA Finals (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

the years. Consider the vast changes in percussion -- from the snares, tenors and bass drums of the early days, to the multitude of instruments seen in today's pit sections. Consider the changes in format, marching styles and personnel. It has been a dramatic ride!

For Costello to have devoted 55 years -- two-thirds of his life -- to a single cause, is quite remarkable. To have met the challenges and changed with the times as he did, is truly an amazing achievement. The transition from American Legion rules and formats to those of DCA alone must have been difficult for Costello and yet it appeared seamless.

But there were many other changes. The original corps of 1946 was made up entirely of World War II veterans. As time went by, other commitments (or burnout or nagging wives) took players away, so non-veterans were eventually accepted.

Due to their military origins, senior drum corps had been organizations strictly for men from the beginning, hotbeds of good-natured humor, bawdy jokes, songs and limericks that kept everybody entertained on those long and frequent bus rides. A drum corps was a place where a guy could get with other guys on the weekends, have some laughs and blow off a little steam after the stress of the work week.

Of course, during this same period of time there were several all-female drum corps -- both junior and senior throughout the United States and Canada.

In 1968, the Long Island Sunrisers became the first DCA corps to incorporate women. It was a departure, but most other corps soon did the same. By the early 1970s, all other senior corps had gone "coed," but the Caballeros and the New York Skyliners continued to stand their ground and were the last two holdouts in DCA, striving (for old times' sake more than anything else) to keep things as they had always been.

In 1981, however, the Skyliners changed their policy and began admitting women. By the early 1980s, it was becoming more difficult to fully staff the Caballeros' color guard and, therefore, beginning in 1982 (and after some heated debates) women became eligible for membership for the first time, something corps members from the 1950s, 1960s and even the 1970s thought they would never see in Hawthorne.

These days, of course, with women comprising about half the membership of most DCA corps, this seems a non-issue, but at the time it was quite revolutionary. Female color guards have turned drum and bugle corps away from the straight lines and rigid

military ways of the past, to the multi-colored flash and flare of a Broadway production.

On January 18, 2001, at the age of 80, Jim Costello passed



Hawthorne Caballeros, 2002, DCA Prelims (photo by Alan Winslow from the collection of Drum Corps World).

away, ending an era in the drum corps world that will never be duplicated. He was admired and respected like no one else in drum corps. He was truly a giant among men and will always be loved and remembered

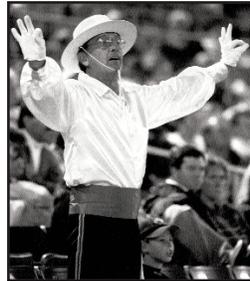
by the thousands of people that have passed through the Hawthorne ranks, as well as his many friends and associates in drum corps.

Over the years, the Caballeros have been honored and recognized in a variety of ways. In January 1953, the corps was invited to march in the inaugural parade of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1959, they traveled to Cuba as guests of the U. S. State Department, toured Havana and marched in the Mardi Gras parade.

In the late 1970s, the Caballeros were called upon to welcome Queen Elizabeth upon her arrival in the states. They have appeared several times at Carnegie Hall and in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The Caballeros have performed for the New York Giants, New York Jets and New York Yankees, as well as the Cleveland Browns, Philadelphia Eagles and Washington Redskins. In September 1976, a packed house of 78,000 saw the Caballeros perform during halftime on the opening day of Giants Stadium. The corps had played for the Giants many times previously at the Yale Bowl in New Haven, CT, and in Yankee Stadium where games were held prior to the completion of Giants Stadium.

The Caballeros were the featured half-time for several years and were always popular with Giants fans.



Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni DM Chuck Bishop, August 21, 1999 (photo by Dale Eck from the collection of Drum Corps World).

The Caballeros have benefited from an active auxiliary and have also maintained a strong alumni association for many years. An alumni chorus was formed in the 1980s and in 1994, the Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni

Drum & Bugle Corps was born. With members from 13 states and Canada, the alumni corps numbers more than 100 today.

The two corps -- alumni and competition -- coexist in a spirit of mutual support and cooperation, share rehearsal facilities and occasionally perform together when featured at the same event.

Today, the Caballeros are in the capable hands of Frank Gerris, who has been the program coordinator and a drill instructor in the corps for nearly 30 years and was with the Hawthorne Muchachos before that.

Previously, Gerris was the drum major of the Ballantine Brewers in the early- to mid-1960s. His first junior corps was Our Lady of Good Counsel in Newark, NJ, which later became the Woodsiders. He is a member of both the New Jersey and World Drum Corps Halls of Fame.

Having worked closely for many years with Costello, Gerris is eminently qualified to manage the corps. He is thoroughly and single-mindedly committed to the future of the corps and is determined to keep them at the top of their game and in the highest echelons of senior drum corps competition where they truly belong.

In 2003, the Caballeros head into their 58th consecutive season and the future appears bright. The high standards set in earlier days will continue to be achieved, possibly even surpassed. The traditions established by the legendary Jim Costello will be carried on, now and in the years to come by Frank Gerris and his staff.

In the eyes and hearts of drum and bugle corps fans everywhere, the Hawthorne Caballeros will always remain the undisputed and unexcelled champions of senior drum corps competition.



Peter Bishop's drum corps career started in 1953 at the age of 15 in a Moose Lodge parade corps in his hometown of Cortland, NY. In 1959, after a stint in the army, he joined the newly-formed Cortland

Matadors, a small M&M corps patterned after the Hawthorne Caballeros.

In the early- to mid-1960s, while an art and design student at Rochester Institute of Technology, he played one of the first contras with the Rochester Crusaders.

After graduation from RIT in 1966, he worked for General Electric's Aircraft Equipment Division in Binghamton, NY, and played with the Syracuse Brigadiers.

In early 1970, Bishop relocated to New York's lower Hudson Valley and joined the Hawthorne Caballeros, playing contra through 1977.

In 1994, he and 12 other alumni founded the Hawthorne Caballeros alumni corps and in 1998, he became their director. As he tells it: "I found a home in Hawthorne 33 years ago and have never looked back. It's an amazing organization and a great drum corps family. I'm proud and happy to be a part of it."



Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni, November 17, 2001, Boston (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).