
by Paul Mordorski

They were originally known as the Indianhead Council Boy Scout Drum & Bugle Corps. The idea was the brainchild of the St. Paul Scout office, impressed by the Madison Scouts' performance at the St. Paul Winter Carnival in 1955.

Scout representatives approached the First National Bank of St. Paul to sponsor the corps, which they did throughout their existence. Shortly after, the parents auxiliary was formed and St. Paul had a fledgling Scout corps, founded in the fall of 1956.

In the spring of 1957, they performed for the first time at the annual Boy Scout exhibition in St. Paul. The uniform was whatever other Scout organization they belonged to. They went on to become a parade unit that year, playing *Aida* and *Post 1 March*.

It was an all-male Scout corps, like the Madison Scouts. When they started competing, the members stepped up and creatively arranged the music and the field shows. It was said to be the only junior corps in 1965 whose entire membership could read music.

In the early years, the Indianhead Council office

dictated rules and regulations. Every member had to be a registered Explorer Scout and purchase and maintain his own uniform. If new members came into the

shows throughout the spring. The Indianhead Council Scout Corps would go to Scout camp for a week. Instead of working on merit badges, they would practice daily for a week straight. Like all Scouts attending camp, they slept in sleeping bags on the hard ground, two to a tent.

During one of the Scout camps, a member snuck up on an unsuspecting rookie in his tent and shook maracas to make it sound like an approaching rattlesnake. The rookie ran out of his tent terrified and was fearful of snakes for the rest of the week.

Recruits came from St. Paul neighborhood schools, churches and Scout troops. There



(Above) The Indianhead Council Scouts at one of their first appearances in the 1957 Thanksgiving Day parade; (below) the 1965 St. Paul Scouts (photos from the collection of Dolores Schumi).

organization after April 1, they could not participate in spring/summer activities.

The First National Bank's involvement was led by Herb Johnson, a vice president, who eventually retired and traveled with the corps and took care of a variety of invaluable services. Johnson, who was like a grandfather to many of the boys, monitored the bank's contributions.

In the 1950s, most corps worked on field

were no "imported" members in those days. The Scouts attended the Tomahawk Scout Camp in Wisconsin and would encourage Scouts that were also musicians to join.

When celebrities came to Minnesota, the corps was often called upon to greet them. They played welcoming concerts for Steve Allen and Audrey Meadows, the Smothers Brothers and Jimmy Dean at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

St. Paul Scouts

St. Paul Scouts, 1965, on the steps of the Minnesota State Capitol Building (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World)





St. Paul Scouts, 1971 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

They appeared on *Let's Make a Deal* and *The Price is Right* game shows when they were taped in the Twin Cities. They also served as a warm-up act at the Minnesota State Fair for national performers like Ricky

started writing on his own and took over instructing the Scouts A corps (14 years and older). Early popular songs arranged included *Diana*, *El Cid* and *Intermission Riff*.

Whitlock became a judge and musical director and arranger on a national level, working with the Blue Stars, the St. Croix Rivermen and many other corps. Guetz took over the B corps (under 14 years) and



St. Paul Scouts, 1967, at the World Open (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Nelson, the Everly Brothers and Brenda Lee.

Many of the early horn line members came from the North End of St. Paul and Scout Troop 285. Some were students of Bob Guetz, a First National Bank employee and the first horn instructor. Guetz arranged and taught the music, and encouraged the boys to attempt arranging.

Probably the most prolific and talented of these arrangers was John Whitlock Jr., better known as "Corky." Together with Guetz, Whitlock wrote his first song in 1958 in high school. He became so adept at arranging, he

continued to work with youth to move up to the A corps.

The St. Paul Winter Carnival was a popular event in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The "Drums in Snowtime" drum and bugle corps show held indoors at the St. Paul Auditorium was attended by local corps like the Northern Aires, Schmidt Indians, Laidlaw Toreadors

and Gopher Elks. One year the Chicago Royal Aires attended.

For all Winter Carnival events, the Scouts wore their red woolen jackets that were protective outdoors and stifling indoors. Members of the parents auxiliary also made warmers to protect hands and help keep instruments from freezing during Winter Carnival parades, when temperatures could be 20 degrees below zero.

Since no one in the area had worked with junior drum corps, the Scouts turned to their own members to create the field drills. Mike Gordanier, who was a color guard captain and the first drum major, created the field show formations through 1964. Influenced by watching corps like St. Kevin's Emerald Knights, Gordanier worked at integrating the color guard into formations and added large company fronts.

In 1959, the Indianhead Scouts attended the Boy Scout Jamboree in Colorado Springs, CO, where they were part of a seven-train caravan of Scouts. At the event, the corps paraded past President Dwight D. Eisenhower and received his personal salute.

The Scouts first entered summer field competition on June 15, 1959 at Bangor, WI. The corps was in last place out of four. "We weren't so much nervous as we were wowed by the spectacle," Whitlock said.

During this first show, an embarrassing staging dilemma was discovered with the formation for their concert selection. For Winter Carnival performances, all corps would play their concert to the end zone, where the Winter Carnival King and his court were seated. By following this rule for drum corps, the Scouts played their concert to an empty end zone. Gordanier had the corps out on the practice field early the next morning correcting this glitch.

In the early days, the corps took many train trips, including one to the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. They won the Seafair Grand Parade before some 150,000





St. Paul Scouts, 1967 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

spectators, claimed the sweepstakes at a show in suburban Lake City, WA, and went on to take the Seattle World's Fair Championship.

The 1962 season had the corps participating in national competition at VFW, which took place at stately Parade Stadium in Minneapolis. They placed 21st out of 34 corps. It was disappointing because they performed in the rain and the corps, and possibly the judges, were hindered by the elements. They placed below many corps they had previously beaten.

The Scouts won the Minnesota American Legion state title in 1963 and 1964, but they did not compete again on the national level until 1965. The First National Bank and Scout office were extremely fiscally responsible and if sponsorship wasn't guaranteed, they wouldn't go. A 1963 highlight was in Cedar Rapids, IA, where they beat the Madison Scouts for the first time.

In 1964, the corps acquired new instruments and added college students to the ranks. Another new wrinkle, recommended by the Members Advisory

Counsel and approved by the Scout office and the bank, was the name change to the St. Paul Scouts. Former member and spokesperson Gary Munkholm said they changed their name so they wouldn't have to explain where Indianhead Council is every time they appeared.

The highlight of the year was traveling by train to the New York City World's Fair.

drills and using the entire field, while Eastern corps essentially paraded front to back on the 50 yard line."

Although the World's Fair trip was a success, many members felt they should have competed at VFW Nationals, as they would have had an excellent chance of cracking the top 12. Because of financial constraints, management opted to stay home, which infuriated many of the veteran members.

An experienced, confident corps took the field in 1965, performing selections from "West Side Story," *Gypsy Sabre Dance* and *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The Scouts attended VFW Nationals in Chicago with a chance to break the top 12. Their chances seemingly increased when severe rain forced the event inside McCormick Place Convention Center and VFW officials increased the number in the night show to 15, but they finished 18th out of 54 corps.

The parent auxiliary's most creative and successful fund-raiser was their annual theatrical presentation. It was a combination of corny jokes, vaudeville-style dance and sight gags that really brought the group together. Charlotte Whitlock created these productions that had such inventive titles as *I Dig You Flower Child* or *Hippy-Hippy Hooray* and *My Son the Pony Express Rider* or *I Know What Happened to Baby Jane*. Corps members organized and played in the pit band and the Scouts usually

performed. They always had the audiences in stitches.

From 1966 through 1968, the corps was rebuilding. They traveled east for the World Open in 1967, finishing seventh out of 33 units. They also attended American Legion Nationals where they were 14th of 55.

They had a young but improved

corps in 1968, with a repertoire including *Third Man Theme*, *Lullaby of Birdland* and *Latina*. The corps intended to participate in VFW Nationals at Detroit, but an administrative problem kept them at home.

The 1969 season brought a new era for the



The St. Paul Scouts, 1967 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Eastern crowds went wild for the Scouts, as many had never seen a Midwestern corps, Whitlock recalled. "We had a well-rounded sound and entertaining music," he said. "The crowds booed their own Eastern corps that went on after us. We were doing geometric

St. Paul Scouts. Corky Whitlock moved to the senior side to instruct and march in Brass Inc. SPS turned to their next musical director, Doug Dennison, who taught the Austin Lancers for many years. Such songs as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and *Shenandoah* were popular.

Dennison also arranged the *Finale* from "Firebird Suite" as the ending fanfare, which was their signature closer through 1972. They placed fifth at World Open out of 40 corps and headed to VFW Nationals in Philadelphia, confident of making the night show. They came close, missing out at 14th out of 63 corps; seventh overall in percussion.

The following year started with promise, as the Scouts were a seasoned corps full of veterans and a solid musical ensemble. They kept the concluding three selections of the show and added *Les Preludes* into *Parada Española* as the opener.

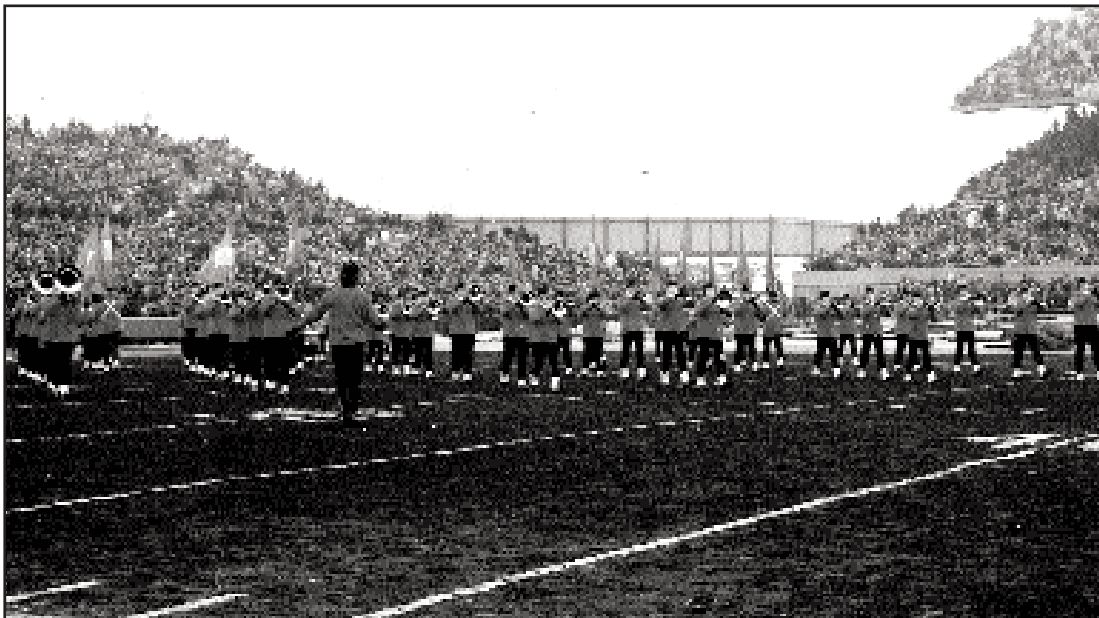
The corps competed well and was in the thick of competition, placing 10th at North American Nationals and seventh at U.S. Open in Marion, OH.

VFW Nationals was a bittersweet 14th place, as penalties kept the Scouts out of the finals. SPS was eighth place in GE and tenth in percussion at the 1970 VFW Nationals. A dejected corps went on a two-day swing aboard school buses to Wisconsin, where they referred to themselves as the Swiss Cheese Cadets because of all "holes" in formations.

This was a crushing blow to this rising corps and many experienced members aged out or didn't come back. A new corps called the Mounties was formed and Doug Dennison was lured over to be their horn instructor. Many Scouts followed.

In early practices, they had large turnouts and appeared to be on track to make a big splash. When things fizzled for the Mounties, which was a parade corps that year, most of the Scouts left.

In April 1971, the Scouts had only six horn players who had ever marched, but slowly the veterans started coming back. They struggled through Memorial Day



St. Paul Scouts, approximately 1969, performing at a winter halftime show for the Vikings (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

weekend, picked up steam in June and kept improving throughout the summer.

Many of the new members were very talented and with the return of many experienced veterans, the corps started to jell.

After finishing in seventh place at the Mid-American Open in Overland Park, KS,



St. Paul Scouts, approximately 1971 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

they headed to Dallas for VFW Nationals. The day before prelims, staff re-wrote the prelim drill, which helped them place twelfth in prelims and to be in a national finals for the first time. The Scouts moved up to eleventh place in finals (out of 35 corps), taking ninth in percussion.

The year 1972 was optimistic, forbearing and disappointing. For the unit that seemed to be primed for a breakout year, it was the beginning of the end. A superb winter and grand plans set the foundation for what could have been an even greater success than the previous year, including a three-week tour and competing at U.S. Open, American Legion, the fledgling DCI Championships and VFW Nationals in Minneapolis.

Innovative, challenging music such as classical arrangements of Grieg's *Lt. Kije Suite* was blended together with music by rock and jazz artists *Blood, Sweat and Tears*

and *Don Ellis*. An experienced horn line numbering in the high 40s performed a show with challenging tempos that made all involved optimistic.

After an uneven, high- and low-filled Memorial Day weekend that was still promising, a major dispute between staff and management caused a third of the horn line and some staff to drop out. This left a major rebuilding project to be tackled in June.

The young, smaller corps re-emerged and, although they were entertaining and competitive, they canceled out of DCI and didn't challenge for any titles.

Accomplishments included 15th out of 29 at U.S. Open and seventh at American Legion Nationals out of 47 corps, where they finished fourth in GE brass and sixth in marching.

Considering the obstacles they overcame, the Scouts' 1972 season was considered successful, but it never came close to the high expectations of the previous winter.

The season highlight came at VFW Nationals in Minneapolis. With the advent of DCI, VFW wasn't considered the national championship, but was attended by many top corps.

Marching a shortened prelim drill, the Scouts scored fourth in prelims, posting the top marching mark and edging out St. Andrew's Bridgemen, Racine Scouts and Knights of Kewanee for the first time all year -- and were eighth in finals.

The next year, more of the experienced nucleus failed to return, making it necessary to add females. For 1974, the corps changed its name to the St. Paul Drum and Bugle Corps (which became the Blue Knights in 1975).

The B corps put away the olive green Boy Scout uniforms and donned Explorer Scout uniforms as the St. Paul Scouts from 1975 to 1978. They even attended the 1977 DCI Nationals in Denver, but ceased operation after 1978. This brings the story of one of the Midwest's most active and traditional all-male corps to a close.

The St. Paul Scouts will long be remembered, not only for being the best and most successful junior corps from Minnesota, but for the spirit, determination and class with which they performed.

For a photo and bio of Paul Mordorski, turn to page 293.