

February 2010

Below I have listed a brief history about the Floridians Drum And Bugle Corp. I will use an outline form to help keep a chronological historic order.

\* September 1968: Floridian Drum and Bugle Corp were formed. No money, no equipment and a dream. A corporation was formed and the corp. started to build a color guard and drum section using donations from neighbors, sympathetic band directors and the community as a whole. Fund raising was the number one goal of the corp. At first it was a family run organization. Don Kneuer Sr. was the corp. director, Kevin Kneuer taught the percussion, Kathy Kneuer taught the guard and Don Kneuer Jr. taught the brass in the 1971 season before graduating from FSU in December of 1971 with BA in music education, K-12.

All the instructors volunteered their time and efforts, so all donations went to the purchase of equipment and uniforms. Janice Kneuer was a very capable of sewing uniform tops together to fit and color guard flags as well. As the demands of instruction grew, more instructors were added to teach drum corp. style marching and also volunteered their time as well. The corp. actually grew with not much money, but lots of "love" for the adventure!

\* January of 1969, the Floridian's competitive guard was in its first season at the state level in Florida and placed third in state competition in 1970. The drum line started to grow and mature and the fund raising necessary to buy bugles was well on its way. With the help of parents, there were many "tag" days, carwashes, spaghetti dinners, parades and candy sales that were too many to number.

\* The 1971 season started with the Floridians first horn line. They competed at American Legion & VFW State competitions that year, fielding 21 horns, 11 percussion and 14 guard. The Floridians went to their first National competition at the Big "D" in Dallas, Texas for the VFW contest and posted a score of 53.90 in prelims. The excitement of competing in a national competition propelled the Floridians to grow and improve in the 1972 season.

\* In the fall of 1971, the corp. started to work on their new show. Don Kneuer wrote most of the book that year with some assistance from Bob Schwartz. Repertoire: Patton Theme, Colonel Bogies March, Jesus Christ Superstar, Now Explosion, and piece from the Carpenters, "Long Ago", that featured a mellophone trio. The corp. participated in the Jr. Orange Bowl Parade and marched in the Walt Disney World Parade in January of 1972. The Floridians were the first corp. ever to march at Walt Disney World and participated in a special show that evening with many other drum and fife outfits. The temperature that night barely made it above 35 degrees!

The corp. also was sponsored by the Burger King Corporation for one year and played to several grand openings of restaurants in the area that season. The Floridians purchased a school bus and painted it white with the Burger King logo! The transmission was changed so fuel consumption and gas mileage would improve.

\* Don Kneuer Jr. had to leave for military duty in the spring of 1972 and the corp. brought in another brass instructor from the University of Miami. Jerry Peel was a part time professor at the University Of Miami School Of Music and taught band at a local Jr. High school. He worked very well with the horn line in Don's absence and continued

working with the corp. for many years. Jerry Peel was an excellent professional French horn player and played with Chuck Mangione's band later on. After four months of active duty with the Florida National Guard (13 th Army Band), Don Kneuer Jr. returned and continued to work together with Jerry.

The corp. had purchased over 35 horns, 3 new snare drums, 3 tympani, 3 different sized bass drums, new flags, ect. within a year and half's time. And also bought a Greyhound bus in the process.

In 1972 the Floridians first competition, with 33 horns 14 percussion and 15 guard, was at the State American Legion Contest where the Floridians were announced as State Champions, only to find out after the crowd left, that there was a mistake in the sheets and another corp. had won it. Of course the corp. was not very happy to say the least, but later defeated the state champion at a contest in Fort Meyers on July 22, 1972. scores: Floridians 80.95, Vanguards 77.15, Silhouettes 74.75, Stardusters 74.15. and the Knights 60.55.

The Floridians competed in another contest in Ohio before the US Open show and scored a 56.65. At US Open the corp. scored a 59.80 (1 point penalty) and came in 26 th place in "A" prelims. The Floridians also placed 22nd @ the American Legion Nationals with a score of 60.85 and finished in 18 th place at the VFW Nationals with a 68.95 in preliminaries at Minneapolis. The corps 2nd season was a success.

- In 1973, the corp. suffered some setbacks and had to retool the horn line with new players. The music book was purchased from other arrangers that year, the last two songs by Scott Director: Bully, How the West was Won, Abby Road Medley, Overture To Tommy and The Way We Were. Some new instructors were brought in to go along with those who stayed on from the previous year. The corp. made plans to participate in its first appearance at DCI. The corp. did not participate in either state contest and its first show wasn't until July in Fort Meyers and North Miami. (Judges comments only).

On their first road trip, (with 30 brass, 15 percussion and 20 guard), The Floridians scored a 52.5 (3 point Pen.) @ American International, 51.35 @ Toledo By the Sea, a 47.65 @ DCI and a 70.00 @ VFW Nationals prelims. Considering the rough start to this season, the corp. continued to improve.

- 1974 was the breakout year the Floridians were looking for! With 35 horns, 14 percussion and 21 in the guard, the corp. was ready to compete on the national level in "A" class. Scott Director wrote the book for the corp.: Oklahoma Crude, Overture to Tommy, Vehicle and The Way We Were.
- Again, the corps first road trip was in August and would you believe that it would be competing for only the second show for a national preliminary entry at the US Open! The Floridians made finals in "A" competition for the first time in the corps history! With a score of 53.00, the corp. held first place the entire first day of prelims! However we knew that the heavy weights were yet to compete and that score wasn't going to hold long! We did enjoy it for a day! As the corp. was practicing, there was a glimmer of hope that the corp. might make finals. The corp. director stopped practice at about 2:00pm to make an announcement! The Floridians made their first finals by .05. WOW! However that evening the corps score fell in finals and the performance was a little flat due to nervousness! Not a bad effort for a corp. that's average age was barely fifteen!

- The Floridians also made finals at the American International Open Championships with a 50.70 and placed tenth in the finals with a 46.90. And at DCI open class, placed a 49.95 score for its second year at DCI. No one really new that the following season would appear to be a miracle in the making!
- In 1975 the Floridians at first were making progress slowly. The corp. had several practices at the University of Miami, thanks to Jerry Peel and Scott Director. In the process the corp. was able to recruit some top notch brass players and the sound was really starting to take shape. ( 37 horns ,15 percussion , and 20 in the guard ) Other practices were held at Miami Springs Sr. High and Miami Lakes Sr. that year through community school programs that Don Kneuer Jr. and corp. director, Don Sr. arranged through the Dade County school system.

An equipment truck and one more contra base was purchased. Things were beginning to take shape! The drill was written and taught by Andy and David Escher (formerly marched with the Troopers) The drill really didn't start to click until late June and many changes were being made to help enhance the music.

The first show was scheduled to take place in St. Petersburg in July. However there were no judges for the show, so the five corps that was there furnished an instructor to help judge the show. The Emerald Knights from Cedar Rapids, Iowa were in attendance along with the Floridians, Silhouettes, Devil Dogs, and the Buccaneers. This writer can't remember the scores, but the Floridians had high horns, Buccaneers had high drums and the Emerald Knights were high on marching and Maneuvering and GE.

This show really didn't help the corp. get ready for its tour coming up in early August and the director new that it wasn't going to be easy facing corps. who had as many as twenty shows under their belt. The Floridians show was still not complete a week before the tour. Extra last minute rehearsals were held to try and finish the little things that would put us over the top.

The tour would include shows in Lexington, Ky., Marion, Ohio, Butler, Pa., North Tonawanda, NY, and DCI in Philadelphia.

\*\* The Floridians marched their first show on tour at the Kentucky Bluegrass show in Lexington, which was a two day event. The first evening the corp. came in last place with a 46.5 and the next night, a 43.0. The corp. director was ready to pull the plug and take the corp. home. However there was a late night meeting in a motor home that changed the course of history! Don Kneuer Jr. had previously spoken with Truman Crawford right after the second show was over. Truman thought the horn line was the corps strength and suggested that we try to make changes to the show that could improve the Floridians score. He asked when our next show was and I explained that we had four days to practice before American International Open A class in Butler,Pa.. "Give it another try he said!" Follow the judge's suggestions and make the changes you need to make your show better." This act of encouragement from Truman Crawford through Don Kneuer Jr. and Jerry Peel helped forge a new direction that focused on making the changes to become more competitive! Oh yes, everyone agreed to continue on! Our next stop featured four grueling days of practice! Everyone worked very hard to improve the show!

The drill was changed from the corner entry to a straight entry from the 50 yard line and a tempo change was instituted into the first number. We had a five point penalty for the show being to short in time, so Scott Director was instructed to write a short piece for

a sextet that was played right before the exit number that featured some of our best players (Touch Me in the Morning)! Many other features were added as suggested by the judges and the show was changed and in better condition than anyone could hope for. Those practices during those four days were very intense, up to 16 hours long. Would all this work pay off?

Well the corp. competed at the American International Open, made finals and scored a 60.95 in the finals. That's right 60.95. Truman Crawford wrote on the horn sheets, "Congratulations! You did your home work!" He told me (Don Kneuer Jr.) "Tell your staff and director, a job well done!" I had spoken to Mr. Crawford when I found a huge error on the horn sheets, where they averaged only one horn score instead of two. That 50.95 score went up ten points to 60.95." "Who are these Floridians?", I heard muttered in the stands. There were a lot of surprises yet to come. Wow! A 17 point improvement in four days!

Scores: Marquis 74.95, Greece Cadets 72.50, Gauchos 69.15, Glassman 67.40, Black Knights 65.85, Royal Knights 63.75, Floridians 60.95, Fitchburg Kingsmen 53.70 and Flying Dutchman 51.50.

The Floridians went to Marion, Ohio next to participate in "A" class, where they placed 4<sup>th</sup> in prelims with a score of 61.25. The score dropped almost five points in finals (56.0), but the Floridians continued to practice and were trying to find consistency in their performance. After 6 shows, the Floridians were still a little behind.

Next came North Tonawanda, where open class and A class were all grouped together for prelims. The Floridians went on at 8:30 am in the morning after practicing the night before till 1:00 am. Every body was ready to go! Tired or not, this was It! Don Kneuer Sr and Don Kneuer Jr. watched the corp. perform from the stands. Don Sr. thought that there was not enough punch to the show that morning, but Don Jr. felt the show was smooth and clean! Guess who was right! Here it is folks! History was made! The Floridians won A class preliminaries with a score of.....69.20. They were # 1 in prelims! They beat the Greece Cadets, Charioteers, Gauchos, Glassman and many others that day. Drum Corp News reporters came running up the stadium steps and asked the corp. director, "Didn't your corp. score a 43 at Bluegrass just ten days ago! What excitement! A 25 point improvement in ten days! An impossible miracle happened that day! On the following day, Drum Corp News front page headlines read, "The Miracle Corp from Florida improved twenty five points in ten days!" Unfortunately, the copy the writer had disappeared a long time ago and I believe DCN archives might still have it today.

In finals the score dropped again with different judges and the Floridians (64.90) came in 3<sup>rd</sup> behind the Charioteers (69.0) and Greece Cadets (71.25).

The Floridians entered DCI in A class and came in third in prelims and placed third in finals as well.

Prelim scores: Greece Cadets 70.16, Charioteers 69.40, Floridians 66.30, Glassmen 63.55, Marksmen 62.40. Finals Greece Cadets 71.35, Charioteers 68.60, Floridians 64.75, Marksmen 63.35, Glassmen 63.05. The Charioteers took high brass and the Greece Cadets and Floridians tied for second place. Greece cadets took high drums and the Floridians came in a very close second.

The Floridians last performance was in open class at DCI, where they scored a 66.15. The Floridians had a very successful season, considering the disadvantage of having very few shows to participate in the state of Florida. The corps first set of judges sheets didn't

come until arriving at Bluegrass in August. It must be truly said, The Floridians may not of been the best A class corp. on the field that summer of 1975, but they were the most improved corp. and did almost the impossible ! I don't believe that feat has been repeated yet over all these years and doubt it ever will!

- The 1976 season started off with a bang! The fall of 1975, the corp. grew to 50 horns, 6 snare, three quads, five rudimental bass drums, a xylophone and four cymbal players. Things seemed to be on the way up. The Floridians wanted to compete in open class that season, but as the spring of 1976 unfolded, the corp. started to run into financial difficulty. We managed to raise funds to go on an early tour in New Jersey for two Shows in July, one of which was with the Hawthorne Caballeros.

With the help of Jeff Kevitt, the Floridians learned the warm up used by the Muchachos and one other number as well. One morning the two corps meet and warmed up together! What a sound! Over one hundred brass filled the morning air! The Garfield Cadets came running around the corner to see who it was. Another merger! No, I don't think so! But the buzz was on. The Corp scored a 56.5 one night and 53.4 in the second show. Changes were coming again, before the big tour in August.

The Floridians competed at the US Open in open class and failed to make finals there. They then traveled to participate at World Open in "A" class and just missed making finals there. 63.95 were just not high enough to get in. And then the corp. went to compete in open class at DCI and scored 60.15. The corps repertoire was A Spanish number composed by Scott Director and edited by Jeff Kevitt, Vehicle, Funeral for a Friend and the Way We Were.

\* A Special thanks for the hard work of many instructors that made the Floridians successful.

Pedro Quevado: M & M 1969-76

Jerry Peel: Brass instructor 1972-76

Don Kneuer Jr: Brass instructor /arranger 1971-76

Scott Director: percussion, arranger 1974-1976

Kevin Kneuer: percussion/ arranger 1969-76

Bob Schwartz: Brass 1971-72

David Escher : M & M 1973-76

Andy Escher : M&M, drill coordinator & design-1973-76

Janice Kneuer: Quarter master & seamstress-Uniforms 1969-1976

Donald Kneuer Sr.: Corp Director 1968-1976

Mr. Greenfield: fundraiser coordinator 1969-1973

Barry Benson: drill writer and guard instructor-1974

\* Due to financial difficulties, the corp. folded in September of 1976. A lot of great memories and efforts will be always honored and remembered by all those who participated with the Floridian Drum and Bugle corp.

Many former members marched with other corps in the 77 & 78 seasons. The Blue Devils, Santa Clara Vanguard and the Florida Wave all benefited from former Floridian members.

The equipment was sold to a group that started another corp. in Tampa ( Suncoast Sound) that eventually made DCI "A" class and open class finals during the late 70's and early 80's. The uniforms were donated to a JR High school in Denver, Colorado.

\* Today all that remains is the memories, the pictures of the past and two Olds soprano bugles that still play today! And this writer has a DVD copy of the 1975 show in color with sound. Steve Vickers of DCI was sent a copy and was quite impressed with the quality of the show!

\* Former corp. director Don Kneuer Sr. passed away on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004. His wife Janice (mom) is still living in South Florida. Kevin works for the Broward School System doing electronics, clocks and security systems. Kathy still does transcripts for hospitals at home and is a proud grandma of 3.

\* This writer just retired from teaching music in the Dade County school system after 36 years and teaches music in a local music store (brass and woodwind) part time. He also served with the 13 th Army band for 21 yrs. (72-96 three break in duty). And of course all his children were involved in music, of which two are music teachers. They both graduated from FSU, getting a BA in Music Ed. Just recently, Don Kneuer Jr. joined the American legion Band @ Pompano Bch. Fla.

And the best news of all, I'll become a grandfather in both February and April!

Donald Kneuer Jr.

Former horn instructor of the Floridian Drum and Bugle Corp (71-76)

Former member of The Old Florida Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corp (66& 67)

Former member of the Diplomats (1968) Hollywood, Florida