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FRANK A. HARROLD MEMORIAL LANCERS DRUM AND BUGLE
FOUNDER DIES AT AGE 85

Kinloch, Missouri – Individuals like Frank A. Harrold founder of Memorial Lancers Drum and Bugle Corps of St. Louis, (Kinloch, Missouri) has died. He was 85 years old of which 43 years was spend as corps director (1959-2002). He will be long remembered for his dedicated community service which resulted in hundreds of youths who lived during the segregated era of the civil rights movement being kept safe and out of trouble from the city streets so that they could become today's leading citizens.

Frank A. Harrold was a Kinloch policeman and laborer who used the money that he saved from carrying hod on his shoulder (know by some people as cement mortar or bricks in a triangle shaped wooden trough attached a pole) for the white bricklayer to lay bricks to realize a dream. From his weekly earnings, he supported his family and organized a drum and bugle corps with the students of the Memorial Tabernacle Church's Sunday School Class in 1959.

Mr Frank, as most of the children called him, never played an instrument. He said he could sing, but few of us ever heard him. As a member joining in fall 1959 like many others, Mr. Frank taught me to make the sounds on a horn, this was because he wanted to see that every member had a chance to belong. From these sounds, Mr Floyd Morris the music instructor taught me to use these sound in the form of music. In a church bus called Jesus Saves, in 1959; a brown bus, in 1966; and two grey hound buses, in 1967; we traveled from New York to New Orleans to Miami, to Dallas, TX; marching and playing music on the competition field while others marched and protested with "sit ins" at lunch counters.

On one trip to a contest in 1970 in Chicago, we even traveled in the back of a U-Haul truck. We were stopped by the Illinois Highway Patrol. I still remember the look on the patrolman's face when he raised the door and saw 50 black children seated in the dark.

Innecity drum and bugle corps from the 1950's through the 1980's gave rise to organizations that curve crime in the community. Each year an average of 200 to 300 youths (ages 10 thru 21) pass through the ranks of over a dozen African American corps like:

Carter Cadets; CMCC Warriors; Wynn Center Toppers; Riversiders; Page Park Cadets; Washington VIPs; NY Lancers; Kips Bay Boys Club; Yellow Jackets (Chicago); Joliet Kingsmen and 34 Street Warriors (Chicago); and for us Frank Harrold's, Memorial Lancers St. Louis, MO, (but we were really from Kinloch; Missouri's first historically black (Negro town).

With little funds Mr. Frank would find a way to keep the corps traveling and compeating. In 1967, he went to Illinois and purchased horns, drums, uniforms and a 50 passenger grey hound bus for the sum of \$5,000.00. These items were used by the 100 member competitive Corps throughout the 1967 season. Mr. Frank would always take the older members with him to do the Corp's business and say "babe this the way to do things."

Mr. Frank taught us discipline, punctuality, teamwork, esprit de corps, hard work and respect for flag and country. In drum corps we learned to function with one goal; to be the best we could be collectively. Frank Harrold's motto for the corps was "If every member in this drum corps was just like me what kind of drum corps would this be?"

These principles guide the lives of former corps members today who have seen many childhood friends fall by the way over the years. They did not have the same support mechanisms that I had; God, church, family, good friends and legendary Mr. Frank and the Memorial Lancer's Drum and Bugle Corps.

Before the movie Drumline and black college band, these community organizations enveloped the drumbeats, horn and field maneuvers seen today.

Also in 1967, Frank Harrold gave control of the Memorial Lancer to his teen-age staff, this Corps became the first Corps to be operated by teen-agers in the United States--black or white--to be ranked nationally. With this staff, the Corps won a state championship and ranked 20th at VFW Nationals in New Orleans, LA, although white groups placing in the top 10 were equal competitors less than seven days before the competition.

When I think about how African-American drum and bugle corps once permeated the inner city landscape, I ponder how a much loved activity in my community dried up over the years. I look at young people today and wish these young people had the same opportunities to experience the drum and bugle corps activity as we did with a person like Frank Harrold who shaped the inner city adults who marched and played with him into the people that they are today.

On a personal note, I can say this is true for me and of the members of the Memorial Lancers Drum and Bugle Corp from Kinloch, Mo.

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--Eddie Smith is a mechanical engineer working in
Baton Rouge, LA a former member of the Memorial
Lancer's teenage staff and a community volunteer.