

CODA



The Official Newsletter Of ...

The United States Air Force Musicians' Alumni Association - Founded 1980

April - May - June, 2002

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Volume 22, Number 2

Member's Stories Are Encouraged!

Bob Basch got the message that the CODA was interested in its membership submitting stories concerning past war stories, life after separation from the Air Force, members outstanding accomplishments, etc. And that's true. The CODA is meant to be a tool for communicating the accomplishments and successes of the membership of USAF-MAA. Bob has submitted the following article which falls in the "war story" category. (Assistant Editor's Note.)

First Days of Confusion!

by Bob Basch

USAF Drum & Bugle Corps

After completing basic training at Sampson AFB in April of 1954, I was supposed to be sent to school in Texas to learn all about the new B47 radar controlled gun systems. All the basic flights were marched down to the railroad station and one by one each airman was called by name and given tickets for their trip to their newly assigned station.

After all had left, I was still there waiting to be called. I cautiously approached the sergeant at the podium and with all the respect a one striper could muster, asked if he had missed my name. He looked over his list and very quickly advised me that I had been "red lined." This was a term that had not been covered in basic training and it meant nothing to me. He advised me to go back to the barracks and check in with the CQ every morning until new orders were issued for me. I had no clue what had transpired but dutifully checked in every morning to await my fate.

Three weeks went by and as new recruits started arriving, I was suddenly a big shot with my one stripe but still all alone in the barracks.

Finally orders arrived and I was advised that I had been assigned to the USAF Band in Washington, DC. I was presented with train tickets and told that I would be

met at the train station in DC and taken to Bolling AFB. The train ride was uneventful but it put me in DC in the evening.

Upon arrival I looked through the train station for my supposed ride but found no one. There was a representative from some organization there who advised me to take a cab. It was now around nine o'clock in the evening. The cab ride got me to Bolling close to 10 p.m.

Upon arriving at the main gate, the driver asked the Air Policeman where I was supposed to go and he gave the driver directions. I had no idea where I was going. We arrived at a building. I paid the driver and went inside. There was an Airman on duty and upon looking at my orders, he assigned me to a room. There were three sets of double bunks in the room as well as some lockers. No one else was in the room. Now it was near 10:30 p.m. and I was tired. I chose one of the upper bunks and went to sleep.

Upon waking up the next morning, I immediately was in a state of panic! During basic we were always told that saluting officers was something that was looked at very seriously. If we ever did it wrong we could be severely disciplined so we did everything to avoid contact with officers.

Upon waking up I found I was surrounded by brass. I saw Captain's bars, Major's oak leaves and a few Lieutenants. They had put me in the BOQ, me a one striper just out of basic!

I hurriedly dressed and tried not to make any noise. I had my large white duffel bag with all my AF worldly possessions and proceeded to locate the correct CQ for which to report. It was a rainy morning and I was walking to the CQ with my head down to avoid the rain when I observed an officer approaching me. More panic! I have a duffel bag over my shoulder and it's raining harder now. What was I to do? As he came closer, I dropped the bag and gave him a snappy salute. I think he thought I was crazy but he returned the salute. I had

survived my first challenge. The next was to find that CQ and report to the band which I did.

The CQ gave me directions to the bus and where to get off. The barracks was the old one at the southwest end of the field. Upon finding the place, I went to the office and, remembering everything I was taught in basic training about reporting to a new commander, I entered the office, snapped to attention and in a loud voice reported in with last name first, first name, middle initial and then my AFSC. All this was accompanied with a smart salute.

With that done, I looked around and saw none other than Warrant Officer Ed Dougherty, Sergeant DeGenova and a few more band guys looking rather shocked. Mr. Dougherty told me to relax and he summoned someone to get me acclimated with supplies and a bunk. He also advised me that I was in the USAF Drum & Bugle Corps. This was a shock to me because I had never been exposed to one. I played French Horn but now was given a French Horn Bugle.

After being assigned a room and supplies, I asked what I should do next. I was told that as long as it was Friday I was free to do whatever I wanted to do and did not need to report for duty until Monday morning. I asked if I could leave town to go to home to Chicago. They said "yes" as long as I was there for roll call on Monday morning.

This was the beginning of my USAF Drum & Bugle Corps experience!

USAF Musicians' Alumni
Association

Reunion 2002

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Sacramento, California

August 7 - 10, 2002

Contact: Richard Borden (909) 242-5463
or Larry Lawrence (707) 448-5852

I Remember...

by Dick Daugherty

* Working in a Pentagon office next to the office of Project Blue Book which responded to reports of UFO's. I attended a few screenings of films submitted for evaluation. Some of them looked authentic until the film was stopped by the operator and "Revere Ware" was clearly visible on some of the "saucers."

* **Cliff Shipp's** stentorian voice proclaiming - "Oliver (**George Olivier**), if there is ever a Master's Degree awarded in the art of Cymbal playing, you will be the first recipient!" (All band directors talked that way in the 1950's and, all oboists played cymbals in the marching band.)

* Being initially opposed to the concept of each band having a glee club. I was wrong, however, and used glee clubs in many situations where a band was simply impractical.

* Wandering into "red neck" bars in Iowa and Nebraska. Most of us would order the standard shot and a beer but **Danny Hamilton** would often try to confuse the bartender by ordering a "Pink Lady" or some other weird concoction.

* Waiting on a deserted WWII air strip in Holland for our plane to return after flying part of the band back to England. One of the troops broke out his horn and a music stand and proceeded to practice to kill time. That had to be a weird sight!

* Riding with Scottish TV star **Jimmy Logan** in his chauffeur driven Rolls Royce. It was small, it was uncomfortable and I was not impressed. In fact, as a result, I have never owned one!

* The officials of the An Tostal Tattoo in Dublin booking the Third Air Force Band on a commercial Aer Lingus flight to Ireland. It took well over an hour to load all our equipment aboard the plane and I had to endure the glares of the civilian passengers on board as I made my way to my seat. Needless to say, we flew on a chartered flight on our next visit.

* Going before the Master Sergeant Selection Board with a relatively short time in grade as a Technical Sergeant. I figured I had a good chance since I was a high school graduate (and Homecoming King) and had passed the warrant officer examinations. However, the kicker was the board; it was composed of the Godmother of my oldest daughter, the former acting band commander and a member of my church choir. (I made it!)

* **Herman Vincent** and I trying to direct a cab driver in Spain to **Ed and Helen D'Alfonso's** house. We used every Italian musical phrase we could think of and were about to give up when we saw **Debbie D'Alfonso**. She was only about three or four years of age at the time but spoke enough Spanish to bail us out with the fare and the tip.

* Trying to play the trumpet on the march when the Academy was located at Lowry AFB. At about 5,280 feet above sea level the air was very thin and it was hard to get enough oxygen into the lungs. But then, who likes fat air?

* **Ernie (Bill) Greer**, who, as the story goes, was challenged by a young band member to a foot race. Bill accepted the challenge and, wearing his street shoes, beat the bandsman handily. The young dude hadn't known that Bill raced in the 1936 Olympics against **Jesse Owens**.

* Traveling through the Carolinas on weekends with the **Charlie Sprouse Orchestra**. We played for dances at military clubs and also put on shows. Our show was composed of a female contortionist and two guys who put on an act dressed as women. Man, I loved Show Business!

* Occasionally using an enlisted men's latrine a few blocks from the Academy Band Hall. It was beautiful! It looked like a set from a Kohler commercial. When I made warrant, I couldn't wait to see what awaited me in the officer's latrine. I expected ceremonial trumpets when I opened the door. --- **The brooms were still in it!**

* **Bob Bunton's** conducting audition to become a band leader. I believe he was only an A/2C at the time while the rest of us were of a higher rank. I remember thinking he didn't have much chance. **He was great!**

* How boring it was in the Pentagon with much of my time spent writing letters, etc. for signatures by high Air Force officials. I used to write weird stuff to see how much I could get away with. My masterpiece was a letter the Director of Information actually signed, then reread, slashed it to ribbons with his pen, wrote caustic comments in the margin and sent it humming back through channels. I wish I had kept that letter for framing!

Treasurer Needs Help!

"I am at a loss as to how best to handle your dues!"

by John Lemelin

A notice was placed in the 2001 fourth edition and again in the 2002 first edition that dues were paid on a yearly basis beginning in January. By May 1, 2002 about half the members paid. I sent e-mails whenever possible and had to print and mail post cards all unpaid members. The high cost for this is not necessary and will eventually have to be recovered by higher annual dues.

Can you suggest a better way to handle dues other than yearly from January to December? To do it otherwise would be a bookkeeping nightmare!

Is a notice in the fourth quarter CODA sufficient - is it necessary to send additional notices by our US Postal Service at a high cost?

In the past a few dues had been paid that had not been recorded properly. I appreciate receiving check numbers and dates that were verified on my deposit slips. Our records are now set up in a data base format and are correct and much easier to maintain.

Some members have opted to pay for multiple years. Several have paid for five years so as not to be bothered every year.

Please help me out here. I still am a "good airman" and have no problem saluting and carrying out whatever the membership requires!

Spotlight On William "Red" Brower

by Harry Gleason

If there has ever been a true Renaissance man in the history of the U.S. Air Force Band, it had to be Red Brower. Born William S. in Dayton, VA in 1916, the 85 year old Brower remains to this day an individual of infinite curiosity which is coupled with the dexterity and creative abilities to bring his visions to reality.

A self taught draftsman who by 1950 had risen to Aircraft Armament Test and Research Engineer in the Navy Department working at the Washington Navy Yard, Red had been the bass soloist for several years at Eldbrook Methodist Church in DC when a new AF Lieutenant who was the Director of the Singing Sergeants, Bob Landers, became the choir director.

In a short time Brower was faced with new challenges in the Air Force, which meant for him, new triumphs. The USAF Band had just completed its first major post war tour to Europe, and the instrument cases simply couldn't take the pounding. So Brower designed all new cases - and then built them. He was immediately put in charge of the band's equipment on tour, and while there were a few instances over the next 20 years when the musicians were late for or even missed a concert, the equipment was always there!

Since the loading and unloading of aircraft was a part and parcel of the band's extensive touring, Red became a loadmaster par excellence. He also managed to change the standard military foot locker into things like the conductor's tour podium, speaker cases, audio wire reels, etc.

When the band first toured Japan in 1956, Red became fascinated with Bonsai, and to this day his plants are a marvel of beauty, artistry and patience.

In the mid 50s he designed and built his family's new home on Waterway Drive in Lake Barcroft. While he went to a pre-cut homes company in Leesburg, VA (at the time, the only one in the Metro area) for his walls, the order was strictly his - "I'll take wall 'C' from your plan 14, wall 'E' from your plan 6 and so forth. After the foundation was poured (he helped) and the roof and siding were in place, Red did virtually everything else himself.

When it was time to landscape the heavily wooded lot - more creativity, Azaleas, day lilies and a naturally designed waterfall and pond of course. But he also wanted a patio and walkways which would be unique. At that time, the Washington Navy Yard was tearing down one of its' machine shops, the floor of which had been covered with wood



approximately 1 1/2" square and 6" deep.

Since it had been soaked with oil over the years, it was virtually indestructible. The oil brought out the wood grain to perfection, but the entire floor was going to be thrown away. Red "did them a favor" by hauling the blocks away, and 50 years later the patio and walkways are still in wonderful condition.

When the NCOIC of the Singing Sergeants, Ivan Genuchi, decided in 1960 to transfer to the USAF Academy Band, Red took over the job and held it until his retirement in 1971. This meant that he had the "joy" of being NCOIC when the membership increased "overnight" from 20 to 40 members in 1962 and crashed down to 13 from 40 less than two years later.

This cartoon will begin a series of drawings depicting the early successes, disappointments, and frustrations of growing with the new Air Force Academy Band as created by Trombonist Vern Beebe, an original member of the AFA Band.



Taps...

Frank Purcell

April 4, 2002

Clem Borland

Spouse of Lucky Borland

May 19, 2002

David Ludwig

May 26, 2002

While working as a stage hand at the Kennedy Center in the first years of his retirement, he met a fellow go getter, Pat Mitchell, who within a few years had formed National Scenery Studios in Newington, VA, where Red became the "Jack of all Trades."

Specializing in fabulous designs for industrial shows, Las Vegas extravaganzas and Broadway musicals, Pat would call on Red when the rest of the staff was stymied. This went from dramatic displays of vehicles - "how can we possibly keep the car rotating on the stage at that angle!" to being the only person in the company who not only knows what a peddler's cart was when one was called for in the Broadway revival of Brigadoon in the

(continued on page 4)

(Spotlight on Red Brower, Continued from page 3)

early 80s, to actually building and equipping it.

By 1995 it was time for Red's second retirement. Not long after, he and Maybelle sold their home in Falls Church. It was tough to give up the home with so many personal touches. For example, in the basement Red had constructed a gorgeous stone fireplace, with rocks from every state in the Union which he had personally collected on his travels with the Band and Singing Sergeants - and brought back in foot lockers.

But they moved to a townhouse in the retirement community in Solomons, MD where they have "the most fantastic wood shop you have ever seen."

Speaking of wood, if you want to experience Brower the artist, drop by the lobby of the Red Cross Headquarters Building at Route 50 and the Beltway in Virginia and be dazzled by his wood sculpture. While it stands six feet high, Red describes it as "18 feet of bent

wood." It's breathtaking. He also has his own kiln for his ceramics designs. The gardening bug is still with him, and now he specializes in cross pollinating and raising his own species of day lilies.

In November of 1955, several months after a successful European concert tour, newspapers throughout America, including the Washington Post, carried a publicity shot of Col. George Howard getting out of his "\$600.00 German made Isetta." It was a car which had a one cylinder engine, two front wheels and one in the rear (for steering) which weren't yet being imported into the U.S.

Even with a twinkle in his eye, to this very day Red will not discuss how the weird looking mini-vehicle showed up on Bolling. But you can bet that somehow foot lockers were involved.

***Will the next Reunion be held near
where you live?
You can make it happen!
Contact your USAFMAA officers for
more information.***

CODA is the official publication of the United States Air Force Musicians' Alumni Association and is published quarterly. E-mail address: TheCoda.2001@aol.com

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Notice

Your help is needed in locating musicians who have served in the Air Force Band Career Field for any length of time. Please make them aware of your Alumni Association, the CODA newsletter and the reunions that take place every two years. Annual dues are only \$10.00. Send to: **John Lemelin**, Treasurer, 4230 Brushridge Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918.

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