

Junior Military Band Celebrates 65 Years Under Same Leadership

Now ...

When the Junior Military Band (Youngstown/Warren, Ohio) plays its 65th anniversary spring concert in April, two Wilmington Area boys will be among its members. Jeff Altman, trombone, and Shawn Reynolds, saxophone, both joined the band last fall and are eighth grade Wilmington Area students as well as members of the junior high band.

In an interview with Jeff's parents, John and Joan Altman, I sensed a feeling of pride and excitement about this organization which, under the direction of Donald "Squire" Hurrelbrink, not only attracts members from all the surrounding areas but is recognized and acclaimed around the world.

Since 1927, the Junior Military Band has been entertaining audiences both at home and abroad. Composed

by Joy Deem

of young people aged 12 through 21, the Squires (as the band is affectionately called) award-winning concert and marching band has amassed an impressive list of honors and awards including 20 national championships, 11 Canadian championships, and scores of Mid-American regional championships. In competition with more than a hundred bands from around the world, the band was awarded two gold and one silver medal at the 1985 World Music Competitions in Kerkgrade, Netherlands; it was also honored with the Most Entertaining Marching Band award at Zurich, Switzerland's Youth Music Festival.

The Junior Military Band has a vast music library ranging from the classics through recent musicals. For example, music for the spring anniversary concert will include Les Miserables, Sound of Music, and Dvorak's New World Symphony. The Squires also performs at numerous patriotic and civic functions through-

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out the year. In fact, local residents will have the opportunity to see and hear this world-renown group perform on July 10th at one of Westminster's concerts by the lake.

Major highlights, like the upcoming spring concert, include a Christmas concert at Youngstown's Powers Auditorium and the annual convocation of high school bands at YSU's Stambaugh Stadium, which the Junior Military Band hosts.

The band rehearses twice weekly on Wednesday and Sunday. According to Joan Altman, Jeff and Shawn eagerly welcome these rehearsals which they never want to miss. When you consider that the boys are putting in roughly four hours of practice a week plus their travel time, this is high praise for Hurrelbrink's direction and the wonderful experience it affords.

There is no competition within the band where chairs are determined primarily on seniority. Older members guide and look out for the younger newer ones.

Prospective members are invited to bring their instruments and sit in on a rehearsal. The band can even supply most instruments for those who own none. Currently there is a need for trombone, French horn, and clarinet players. The Altmans welcome other area students who might be interested in the band to accompany them to any of the rehearsals, particularly if transportation is a problem.

While Junior Military Band members are primarily drawn from Ohio middle schools, high schools, and colleges, Jeff and Shawn are not the first young Pennsylvanians to make this commitment. Chad Ireland of New Wilmington as well as Stacy and Veronica Eppinger of New Bedford were members roughly 15 years ago. Other Western Pennsylvanians among present and former members include

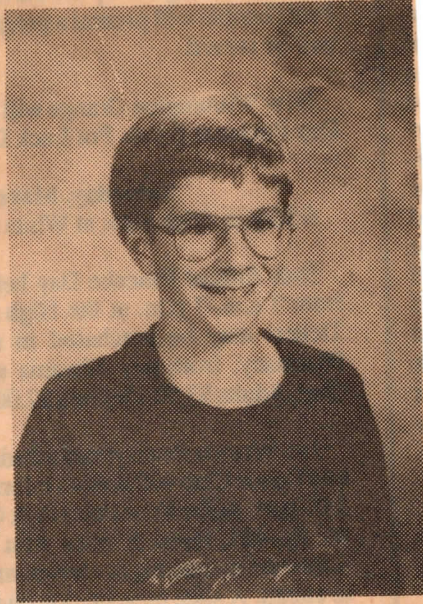
Bill Shipton of West Middlesex, Louie Eckert and Jim Redmond of Sharpsville, and Jack Anderson, Jonathan Dressel, Jack Devaney, Danny Fisher, and Robert "Chip" Williams, all of Sharon.

This year's band also includes three students visiting here from Japan who will return home in July.

In addition to concerts, parades, and other performances, band activities include a 10-day band camp each summer prior to the annual tour, other day-long band camps during the year, and a military ball held in January.

Donald Hurrelbrink has directed the Junior Military Band since 1930, assisted by Jeffrey Lewis since 1988. Rounding out the concert music staff is Bill Albright, percussion. The band also supports an impressive field music staff including instructors for brass, woodwinds, and percussion, a choreographer, and a variety of drill and color guard designers and coordinators.

This year's spring concert, "The Stars and Stripes Forever--65 Years," will be held at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 4th, at Packard Music Hall, Warren, Ohio. Free tickets are available for Senior Citizen groups who wish to attend.



Jeff Altman

and performances were affected by World War II homefront conditions and morale.

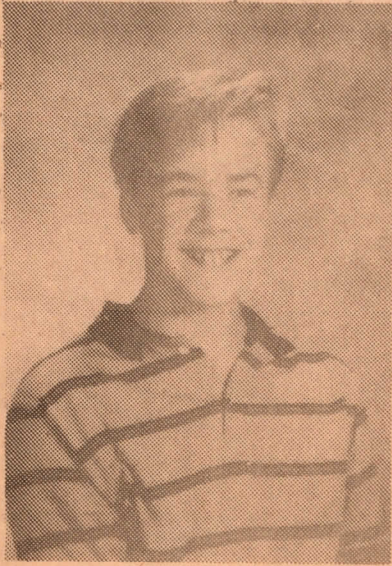
The band's size was approximately the same as today's 100-member ranks. The oldest members were 17, however, remembering that older boys were already serving in the armed forces.

Rehearsals and concerts were also affected by transportation and gas rationing restrictions. Rehearsals were held once a week on Sunday afternoon and encompassed roughly the same amount of practice time as today's twice weekly rehearsals together. It was always at least a four-hour rehearsal from 1-5 p.m. or later. Jim well remembers receiving the news of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor over the radio during that Sunday's band practice.

Most performances during this era were for parades, civic and other patriotic events. However both prior to and after the war, this predominantly marching band also attended state and national conventions and competed in Drum and Bugle Corps competitions. The conventions were suspended during the war years.

Looking through Jim's memorabilia of programs and old newspaper clippings gives one the flavor of the band during this era. There is a very impressive 10-page, 3-color program from a 1942 Presentation of the Army-Navy "E" Production Award to The Commercial Shearing and Stamping Company of Youngstown, Ohio.

"E Awards," standing for excellence and high achievement, Jim says, were all part of the factory production of war equipment efforts and a very big deal. In conferring this award, the plant also received a flag to fly, and every employee received a lapel pin symbolizing leadership on the production front. The event was attended by an impressive list of dignitaries and military officials. And the VFW Boys Band played for any local company award ceremonies.



Shawn Reynolds

Jim also has copies of programs from a 1944 July Fourth celebration and other concerts of that era as well as a 1943 Military Ball program. One 1942 clipping from the *Vindicator* announced a coast-to-coast radio hookup originating from local station WFMJ. The occasion was the 11th Annual VFW "Hello America" hour-long program from

New York, Youngstown, Washington, and Hollywood. Among the entertainers and dignitaries featured were actors James Cagney and Dennis Morgan, undersecretary of war Robert P. Patterson, and Donald Hurrelbrink's band.

The music performed, like today's, mingled the classics and popular music of the day, with particular emphasis then on patriotic selections. It was not unusual to see works of Strauss, Friml, Sousa, Verdi, and Ravel on the same program with such popular songs as "Remember Pearl Harbor," "The White Cliffs of Dover," and "God Bless America" as well as "America," "Anchors Aweigh," and "The Star Spangled Banner." To this day, the latter is played at the conclusion of every rehearsal and, I suspect, concert.

Jim's four-year membership in the band was split between his early high school and college years, due to a scholarship he received to finish high school at the Valley Forge Military Academy.

"The discipline received from this band and its music carries through life," Jim concluded. "It was an exciting and worthwhile experience."