



# **BUILDING THE GREEN MACHINE: Don Warren and Sixty Years with the World Champion Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps**

*Colt Foutz*

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Every summer, the spectacle of drum and bugle corps holds hundreds of thousands of fans in thrall. They pack stadiums from Chicago to Los Angeles, New York to Dallas, and Amsterdam to Tokyo to witness the pageantry and cutthroat competition of marching music at its highest level. *Building the Green Machine: Don Warren and Sixty Years with the World Champion Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps* is the unique story of how one man's dream launched turned a raucous gang of Chicago Boy Scouts into one of the greatest drum and bugle corps in the world.

The tale begins in the 1940s in rough-and-tumble Logan Square, Chicago, where charismatic junior scoutmaster Don Warren covets more for his buddies than the dead-end world the street had to offer. Somehow, he convinced his friends to ditch knots and camping for snare drums and horns. And so the Cavaliers were born. The blare and bombast of competitive drum corps erupted in postwar Chicago as neighborhood groups clashed for bragging rights. To become champions, the Cavaliers had to overcome raw musical talent and clumsy feet to build a brotherhood capable of repelling every outside challenge.

But drum corps is about more than a show polished to jaw-dropping perfection. It's about friendship, maturing into adulthood, and having lots of fun. It's about hours of rehearsal under an unsympathetic sun, pushing yourself beyond your limits. It's about the roar of the crowd as you strut onto the field, ready to blow your eyeballs out the bell of your horn. It's about achieving something together greater than something you could ever achieve alone. The bonds forged during cross-country bus tours—when you call a gym floor and a sleeping bag your nightly bed and sloppy Joe dished from a trailer kitchen your daily bread—last for a lifetime. Above all, drum corps is about people: parents, teachers, fans, and volunteers who keep the annual tour afloat and give of themselves so members enjoy the experience of a lifetime.

*Building the Green Machine* carries readers through the dominant ascendancy of the Cavaliers to the top of drum corps—but that is only the beginning. By the early 1970s, cigar-chomping Warren is helping found a new competitive circuit called Drum Corps International, which turned the activity into the free-wheeling sprinting artistry of today—nearly killing his beloved Cavaliers in the process.

Prepare in turns to laugh aloud and raise your hand to your mouth in shock as you ride the buses, charge onto the field, and participate in the hilarious behind-the-scene shenanigans with the cast of characters who created the world-famous Green Machine. Colt Foutz's *Building the Green Machine* delivers an unparalleled look at an American musical odyssey—a quintessential American rags-to-riches story you will never forget.

**About the Author:** In six years as a journalist in Ohio and the Chicago suburbs, Colt Foutz won fifteen state and national awards for newspaper writing. He was president of his high school marching band and studied music composition at Carnegie Mellon University, where he earned a B.A. in creative writing. Colt is the recipient of Follett and Getz fellowships in the M.F.A. writing program at Columbia College Chicago. He lives in the Chicago suburbs with his wife and son.

About the founder: Don Warren founded The Cavaliers in 1948 as a teenager, and has served as its president ever since. In 1971, Warren and four rival directors formed the Midwest Combine, which grew the next year into Drum Corps International. Warren worked as an insurance salesman for thirty-three years. He is the father of four, the grandfather of nine, and has been married to his wonderful wife for half a century. The Warrens live in Wood Dale, Illinois.

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