

WATSONVILLE BAND . . . A World-Class Band

BY

Edward Pio

The competition was over and six bands with members standing at attention were on the field waiting for decision of the judges. For the past two hours there had been plenty of sound, swirling colors, and cheers from the large audience...now silence. A constant stream of thoughts were going through my head during the five minute wait... "What are we doing here with no field competition experience!"... "I'm getting too old for the suspense!"... "We did alright but these other groups looked really good!"... "I'm hot and tired, let's get it over with!" With all of these thoughts, there was one that I didn't allow myself... the band winning first place in the competition. So when the announcement, "First place, Watsonville Band from Watsonville, California" came over the PA system, followed by "winning \$3500 in cash," it took five to ten seconds for any reaction. Then half of the band started jumping up and down, screaming "we're number one," most with tears streaming down their cheeks.

Then second place was awarded to the 200 piece Burlington Tour Band, from the Province of Ontario, the one that beat us in Eastern Canada in the Stampede Parade. We were back at attention but standing a little taller and radiating a pride that somehow made all of our work and effort worthwhile. The next thrill came when each band marched off with a salute to us, and we were alone on the field. With our emotions in check we marched around the field twice playing and listening to the cheers from the audience led by the over one hundred boosters accompanying us on the trip. We received two trophies, one to bring home, and the other a five foot perpetual trophy on which our name will be engraved along with the other winners in the years to come. When the picture-taking session was over so was the first Annual Calgary Stampede Band Competition. A band from Watsonville, California was leaving the country after six days of performing and two major competitive performances with several beautiful trophies and a total of \$6000 in cash awards.

This happened on the afternoon of July 13, 1982 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. How and why did the Watsonville Band go to Canada?... Who is the Watsonville Band? The Watsonville Band is an adult community marching and concert band with membership from a number of cities in Central California and a members age range from 14 to 82.

Since its first performance in the 1947 Watsonville July fourth parade, the Band has performed in hundreds of concerts and competitive parades... a total of 622 public performances including 238 competitive parades with a record of 3 third places, 13 second places and 222 first place awards. Most of the performances have been in the State of California. The first out of state appearances were in 1962 at the Seattle Worlds Fair. We won the best musical unit award in the Seafare Parade in downtown Seattle then gave several concerts at the Worlds Fair. In 1967 the Band traveled to Chicago representing all the Lions Clubs of California and Nevada in their fiftieth anniversary convention parade on Michigan Avenue. The seven hour parade had over one hundred bands from around the world and the Watsonville Band took the grand award as the best band in the parade. After four days in Chicago, the next stop was Expo 67 in Montreal, Canada, for our first international appearances. In October of 1977, the Band appeared at the Aloha Festival Parade and week-long activities in Honolulu, Hawaii. The second international trip was to Mexico City in 1979 with park concerts and a nationwide television concert. One of the highlights of this trip was our commissioning of a New York composer to write a folkloric overture which was premiered at our first performance in Mexico City then given to the people of Mexico as a gift. When we got back from our very successful trip to Mexico, the band members voted to

plan a major trip every two or three years. Under consideration was the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, the St. Paul Minnesota Winter Carnival, the Portland Rose Festival, the Calgary Stampede, and a return trip to Honolulu. The choice was narrowed to Honolulu and the Calgary Stampede, so last July during the Stampede I was sent by our board of directors to Calgary.

To my surprise I found a metropolitan city the size of San Francisco with a city-wide celebration that could be best described as a Mardi Gras... an exposition many times larger than our State Fair, in my opinion, in the category of a worlds fair... a rodeo with twice the purse of our California Rodeo... and 6 times the attendance... a celebration pulling over one million visitors from around the world. With several parades including the opening stampede day parade, the Band Competition, and the many other opportunities for us to perform, there was no question in my mind where we should go in 1982.

We submitted our performance history to the Stampede committee and two months later received a formal invitation. Our major problem was to find the necessary housing... at least 125 rooms for the band and boosters. Generally rooms are booked for the Stampede several years in advance.

At the end of November of last year we received word that we could book 125 rooms in a hotel currently under construction with a scheduled completion date in the middle of May. With no other choice, except gymnasium floors and sleeping bags, we put a deposit on the rooms, with a prayer that the hotel would be open on time.

The next step was to charter an airplane. Working with our group travel specialists at the Travel Company in Sunnyvale, we were able to charter a United Airlines 'stretch' DC8 with 238 seats at a cost of \$67,000. We were now ready to offer a Calgary stampede package of six nights, seven days to our members... 138 for the performing band and 100 boosters. We would leave the San Jose Airport on Thursday July 8 and arrive home on Wednesday July 14.

The next job was developing a championship marching band... for the past four years most of the emphasis had been in concert not parade work. Our conductor of 19-years, 'Bert' Gonzalo Viales, started planning rehearsals and personnel needs. He determined that we would start marching practice the week following our spring concert series (ending April 2) and that we would have to add some parades to our summer schedule. We had a two hour marching rehearsal every Wednesday night through June with performances in Felton, Gilroy, Pleasanton, and Watsonville on the weekends. The Miss California Parade in Santa Cruz was cancelled by their committee, which left us one parade short in our plans. We called a couple of extra rehearsals including two concert rehearsals because of our concert at the Rodeo Grounds in Salinas on the night of July 3 to a crowd of over 15,000. We also had to be prepared to do a number of impromptu concerts in Calgary.

We received permission for our marching practice to be done in the residential area behind East Lake Avenue Shopping Center and on the streets around the Watsonville High School... two hour rehearsals starting at 7:30 pm. The length of march started at about one mile and gradually was extended to over three miles each night. With our average musician age at 40 years, and following a regular days work, these rehearsals required a lot of dedication and spirit. Following the Fourth of July parade in Watsonville, we decided that we still needed more polish. So the final two rehearsals were added... one on the Wednesday night before we were to leave on the trip and the other the next evening at the Hotel in Calgary.



Don Beilby is working hard on his trumpet during the homecoming parade at Ford's/Longs parking lot.



The band at the C



Jim Christmas and Eric Sumpter, Stampede in the Honorary Calgarian Pledge. From L Soldo, Ed Valencia, Bert Viales, and Ma



Boosters Jules and Florence Diccio of to do their famous German dance at the banquet.

THURSDAY, JULY 8.. Our trip started at 8:15 am as our Sunshine Charter buses pulled away from the Fords/Longs parking lot in downtown Watsonville. We stopped at 41st Avenue to pick-up the Santa Cruz area people and then proceeded to the San Jose Airport. On arrival we were assigned seats, went through the regular airport security checks even though we were a charter, boarded the 'long tube' DC8 and left the ground at 11 am. The two hour twenty minute flight was smooth and the lunch served, delicious. We landed under cloudy skies at 2:20 pm MDT and by the time we moved through customs and immigration it had started to rain. We were told that it had been raining every day for the past three weeks, but not to worry because it never rained during Stampede days... and they were right, at least through the day we left Calgary. The rain stopped by the time we reached our hotel... a Relax Inn. The outside of the hotel looked like a disaster area, mud all over, no landscaping, and sitting six stories high in an industrial park area with nothing near it for several blocks in all directions. The swimming pool and whirlpool weren't finished and the restaurant was a month away from opening. The room assignments went smoothly and within one hour everyone was unpacking in their brand new room. We had a little more than half the rooms in the hotel and most of them had never been slept in before. Our first concern was how to feed everyone, starting with dinner. I was notified by our Stampede Chaparones that buses would take us to a large shopping center six blocks away from the hotel. (Sunridge, where the band competition was held in the parking lot, a shopping center the size of Eastridge in San Jose). This worked out very well for us and when we arrived back at the hotel I found that a temporary outdoor restaurant was being set up under a canvas at the rear of the unfinished restaurant where we would be served breakfast and other meals. We started our marching rehearsal at 7:30 pm. on a large blacktop area a block from the hotel, and finished after nine... in Calgary it is still light until after 10 pm this time of the year. After a full day and with a 5:30 am. wake-up call the next morning it wasn't too hard to get everyone to bed.

The Stampede Committee assigns chaperones to each band coming to Calgary. We were fortunate in getting Jim Christmas (regular job is sales manager for the Relax Inn chain of hotels) and Eric Sumpter (salesman for a liquor distributor) Both of the men met us at Canadian customs at the airport and stayed with us every waking moment until we left Calgary. Jim was so conscientious that he was held for a short time for being on the flightline without clearance when he was getting our instruments and band equipment from the airplane onto a truck, having arranged for a blanket clearance from customs.

FRIDAY, JULY 9... At 6 am. there wasn't a cloud in the sky, the temperature was about 65, and the breakfast served in the new 'outdoor' restaurant was hot and

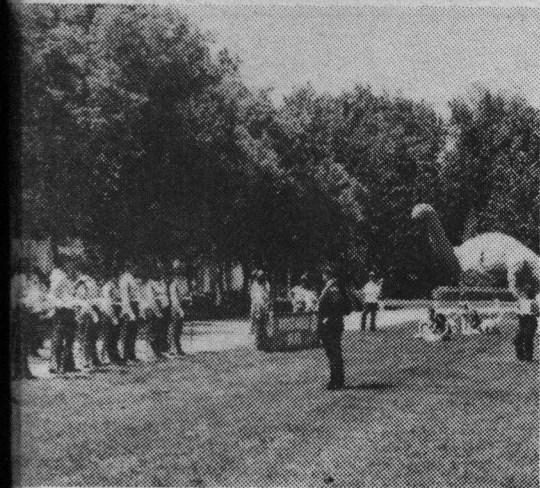
tasty. Later in the day a creative band member named the facility, Cafe D' Pio, and we all agreed to make believe that it was a sidewalk cafe in Paris. At 8 am. the buses were loaded with uniformed band members and boosters on the way to the Stampede Parade in downtown Calgary which started at 9:30 am. The performing band group consisted of fifty musicians in a five column by ten rank depth, our drum major, Ed Valencia of Watsonville, the twelve Barbara Ellen Dancers from Santa Cruz, the fifteen girl color guard carrying the historical flags of California all from Watsonville, two banner bearers, and six street directors.

At 10:30 am. we moved onto the parade route... three and one-half miles of solid people not only on the sidewalks and in bleachers but in every window of every skyscraper, parking garage and roof in the downtown area... over 350,000. The audience reaction was overwhelming. We gave the audience everything we had and then some through the entire route. Later in the day we were to find out that we had taken three prizes: First for the best band front, \$500 (our banner, color guard, & dancers) Second best in the overall band category for \$1000 and Second best in the Sweepstakes for \$1000... for a total of \$2500 cash. The band which took first in

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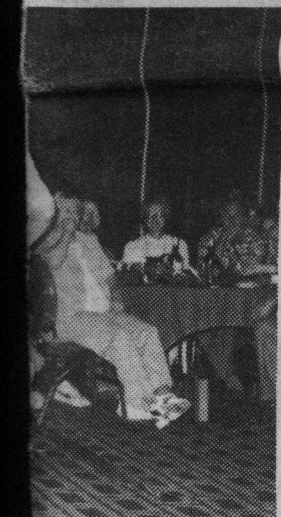
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in concert formation, performing at the Calgary Zoo.



Chaperones, lead a group to R; Edward Pio, Ann or Bill Johnston.



Watsonville get ready for the Band's Monday night

to categories was the Burlington and which we later beat in the band competition. There were thirty two bands in the parade. Following the parade we went back to the hotel where in two hours most of the landscaping around the grounds had been completed. Then we went to the stampe grounds for the afternoon evening. The Exposition is like a fair...with huge permanent buildings, the worlds largest carnival, a gambling area with over two hundred blackjack tables and on the grounds the 32,000 seat grand and race track where each afternoon a stampeed is held. Most of our group attended the evening show in front of the grandstands which opened with the famous chuckwagon races and ended with a huge show starring Jim Stafford. It was midnight by the time we all got to the hotel.

DAY, JULY 10...We spent the morning relaxing then at noon got into our buses, for a 1 pm concert at the Calgary Zoo. We had an audience of several hundred including our boosters for the half hour stand-up concert.

a nice surprise when the manager of the public cafeteria at the Zoo offered lunch in our group, including boosters, lunch. The Calgary Zoo reminded

me very much of the San Diego Zoo, each animal in a natural setting, and an excellent selection. Our next stop was Heritage Park, a frontier town attraction on the edge of Calgary. We gave another stand-up concert in front of an old bandshell and then were free to inspect all the buildings or take an old fashioned train ride around the grounds. We arrived back at the hotel by 6 pm. At 7:30 pm. one hundred and twenty six people left for dinner at the spectacular Calgary Tower in the downtown area. The tower is 626 feet high with a rotating dining room at the top. The rest of the group went in all directions for the evening.

SUNDAY, JULY 11...Another beautiful morning and a full day at Banff and Lake Louise ahead. We arrived at Banff, located in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, at about 11 am. After a short tour and several picture-taking stops, three of the buses headed across the valley to Timberline Lodge for lunch and the other three went to the Sulpher Springs Gondola Ride. Most



Two hundred thirty eight people wait at the front of the hotel for room assignments and keys.



The Barbara Ellen Dancers are getting ready to entertain at the Band's Monday night banquet.

people in our group took the four-persons-to-a-car ride one mile up to the top of Sulpher Mountain. At the top there is a new restaurant, viewing decks, and a herd of wild mountain sheep. The sheep will let you get close enough for pictures and range in size from lambs to a very large curly-horned rams. At Timberline Lodge, the lunch was served outdoor buffet style with our choice of four barbecue items. During lunch a Royal Canadian Montie in full uniform showed up for a picture taking session. After the first group finished lunch they headed for the gondola ride and the gondola ride people went to lunch. Then later in the afternoon all six buses headed for Lake Louise. Banff and Lake Louise rank in the top twenty tourist attractions in the world. The rugged snow

covered mountain tops along with the green forests, emerald green lakes, and rivers in the high valley, blend to make one of the most breathtaking views in the world. We arrived back at the hotel at 7 pm. to a steak barbecue dinner at the hotels, Cafe D' Pio. After dinner we enjoyed the music of our German Band and a large jam session group until 11 pm. The weather continued to be perfect and best of all, with the music of the jam session going late, we didn't have one complaint from the other guests in the hotel.

MONDAY, JULY 12...Our first performance of the day was just after 11 am. in downtown Calgary, at what is billed as a 'rope square' show. A major intersection is roped off, three bands are scheduled to perform one-half hour shows from 10 am til noon. In the middle of our performance, Watsonville Mayor Bill Johnston presented a city plaque, strawberries, and marinated artichokes, to the mayor of Calgary, and the President of the Stampede Board. Then I went to the stage to receive trophies, ribbons, and our cash awards for the Stampede Parade. There were over 1000 people in the audience plus live television. On the way back to the hotel, Jim Christmas asked if we would go by his office and do a little entertaining. Using the musicians, dancers, and color guard on our bus, we not only entertained Jim's office, but most of the other offices in the three story office building.

The afternoon was free for everyone except one of the color guard girls who had to be taken to a dentist for emergency care...she broke her last baby tooth in half while eating her steak Sunday night.

Because some of our members who had driven to Calgary were leaving on Tuesday afternoon after the band competition, we scheduled a group banquet on Monday night in the ballroom of a neighboring hotel. Two hundred fifty four persons enjoyed a roast beef buffet and great entertainment by our dancers, german band, Florence and Jules DiCicco of Watsonville, color guard rifle drill, junior and senior choirs, and a swearing in ceremony for all of us to become 'Honorary Californians,' with the appropriate certificates. The party was over at midnight.

TUESDAY, JULY 13...At 8 am. a meeting was held with Bert Viales to go over the field show that he had planned and to make any last minute suggestions or changes. At 9:30 am. the band started it's one and only field show rehearsal in the lot across the street from the hotel. By the end of the first half hour it was obvious that everyone would rather be doing anything else other than rehearsing a field show...the first in our history. We kept at it for another hour before it started to look like the ten minute show would come together. We were using all of the music that we had memorized for our parade work, with special movement by the color guard and the dancers. We worked especially on dynamic changes in the music and performing it the best we were capable of. At 11:15 am. we finished the rehearsal. I asked Gene Smith, Color guard director, to use visualization with the color guard ...to close their eyes and imagine going through the whole show. Barbara DiNapoli was asked to do the same thing with the dancers as well as Ed Valencia, our drum major, on his part in the show. We were in uniform for the final inspection at 12:30 pm. and on the bus by 12:45 pm. heading



One of the many loadings of the band group on buses during the seven days in Calgary.

for the shopping center. When we snapped to attention the last time before entering the field, I knew that we would do our show perfectly. Win or lose that was all we could do. The rest is history!

After an hour of celebrating our victory in the shopping center with our trophies, music, and refreshments, we went back to the hotel for a whole evening of celebration. Eighty of our people left by bus to go to an Italian restaurant by the name of Marios to eat dinner and for some of our musicians to jam with Calgary's number one Jazz Band, Big Daddy and The Dixie Cats. Another eighty went to Franzels, a German Hoffbrau, with our German Band for dinner and an evening of 'beer drinking' music. The rest partied at the hotel or went off to favorite restaurants on their own.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14...After a few hours of sleep everyone was up and ready to go home. The time believe it or not ...7:30 am. There was breakfast at Cafe D' Pio...uniform and equipment. turn-in at 9:30 am. The six people too many for our charter airplane left on Republic Airlines with a layover in Las Vegas, arriving in San Jose at about the same time as us... everyone and their luggage on buses and on the way to the airport by 12:35 pm. U.S. Customs and Immigration opened at 1 pm. with an extra crew and we were all ready to board the plane by 1:20 pm...great service! After a smooth flight and another delicious meal we landed in San Jose at 3:20 pm. PDT. By the time we got our luggage snafu taken care of and left the airport it was nearly 5 pm. We stopped at 41st Avenue to let off the Santa Cruz people and to get our instruments out and be ready for our homecoming celebration at the Fords/Longs parking lot. We arrived at 6:15 pm, forty five minutes later than planned, but in time to enjoy the welcome of several hundred people and a live broadcast by Jeff Richmond on Channel 11. A perfect ending to a great trip!!

If I had to give a sweepstakes prize to one thing during the trip, it would be to the people of Calgary. They were sophisticated but warm and friendly like you would expect to find in a small town fifty years ago in the states.

We had planned to enter the Salinas Como Parade last Saturday night but too many of our key members couldn't be there for a number of reasons.

FINANCIAL

Many people continue to ask how we are able to make such a trip from a financial standpoint. Many of the band members and all of the boosters pay their entire way out-of-pocket. We have several projects to raise money to help those go who cannot afford it...our French Fried Artichoke booth at the Fly-In and Santa Cruz County Fair takes care of most of our needs. As far as uniforms, equipment, and other regular annual costs, we have a booster club whose members pay annual dues and the City of Watsonville's annual contribution of \$3,000. We have not received any money from the County of Santa Cruz for several years and have never received any money from the Santa Cruz County Cultural Council. Evidently the Cultural Council does not consider the Watsonville Band a part of the arts or culture in Santa Cruz County.

BOOSTERS

If you would like to join our booster organization the annual dues are as follows: individual or family membership, \$10; business or sustaining membership, \$25; a patron membership, \$100. All members receive newsletters several times each year, special invitations to our concerts and other performances, and invitations to go on our major trips. If you enjoy our music and our success please send a check for your dues made to the WATSONVILLE BAND, 418 Robin Drive, Aptos, Ca. 95003.

EDITORS NOTE: Edward Pio, a resident of Aptos, has been a trumpet player in the band for 34 years and the band manager for seventeen years.