

## The Blue Rock Alumni Association: Status, Heritage, and Legacy – March 2015

READ THIS and READ IT ALL !!!

*This isn't premised with a "PLEASE"; just DO IT! And don't just skim through it. It's one of the more important communiqués we have sent over the years. This is for ALL BLUE ROCK ALUMNI.... ALL those who care.*

*If you're at all accustomed to the things I've sent out in the past, I hope you recognize that I always endeavor to make the point clear, concise, and thorough, and may sometimes try to get the point across in a story-like or conversational manner. In this case, I've stewed over the best way to say it. So rather than just list a handful of "facts", I'll put it in somewhat of a chronological order. The first part is meant to give it an historical perspective, and to say what I feel I have to say. Even though it may come across as a personal expression, it will lead from there to some new and important developments needing your attention and action. I thank you in advance for your forbearance.*

I'm looking back at the springtime of 2014 --- just a few weeks before our annual June weekend in Wildwood, and thinking about the good times we always have together, especially since a number of our members will be attending this almost-ritual event for the first time since its inception in 2005. As my mind is adrift remembering warm and breezy days at the Jersey shore, seeing the faces and hearing the voices of so many long-time friends, I smile in knowing that we'll soon be there again. And yes, as always, it will be accented with the sights, sounds, and power of Drum Corps! The heart-pounding punch, roll, and wallop of the drums --- like nothing else out there! The piercing, warming, and soaring rush of brass --- like you'll hear nowhere else! And the whirl of color offered up by the spin and snap of the Color Guard!

Ah, yes --- Drum Corps! It's what brought us together to begin with, and what keeps us coming back. That's why we're here; that --- and the memories we share, the friendship we share, and the love we share.

Aside from those fond memories and the emotion at that fleeting moment, I'm left thinking about all that is now part of time gone by. I remember moving "back East" in 1987 from Phoenix, Arizona, with wife Bobbie and son Clayton, and making our new home in Haddonfield, NJ. A year or so later, having re-connected with a lot of old Blue Rock friends, it seemed the logical course of action to establish the Blue Rock Alumni Association --- if for no other reason than to weld that re-connection, and expand it to include all those many others. One thing led to another, and in September 1989 we had a full-fledged Reunion Banquet, with a couple hundred in attendance. *(There have also been a few other notable projects and activities, which you can find in Appendix A at the end of this statement.)*

So --- in a contemplative moment, I realized I've been at this Blue Rock Alumni thing for 25 years. I certainly have no regrets. But even a "labor of love" should produce some reward, and mine is in knowing that we're

still happily together. What we had --- what Ted Sciarra and a handful of others inspired in us --- was something special --- is still something special in our lives. After all, that was the impetus for starting the Alumni Association in the first place --- to renew and secure that bond amongst us all.

But then I found myself taking a look at where I am and where I'm going. I'm fortunate to be very happy in my family life, and take pleasure in my hearth and home. I'm also thankful to my maker (and a few top-notch doctors) to be of reasonably good health, and will be exceedingly grateful for more of the same in years to come. We are all indeed fortunate if we have these basic desires in life, and to cherish all that is most important to us. Beyond this, I have often said that if I have any wealth in this world, it's a wealth of friends. And having the Blue Rock "Family" connections is a key factor in this. But even so, there are other things I want to do: perhaps to travel and see new places; to live my "second childhood" by building that HO model railroad like my dad and I use to do; to continue my life-long love of history and my Civil War activities; so many good books to read; quiet walks to take. So considering the tenure of my involvement with the Blue Rock Alumni Association along with other aspects of my life, it occurred to me that it was time for a change. Simply put --- I've carried the torch for 25 years, and it's time for someone else to carry it forward from here.

I've wanted to let you all know this since last June in Wildwood; to enlist your understanding and support, and to be sure there was continuity and sound leadership going forward. While I knew this would eventually come about, there was no real sense of urgency.

Then --- it happened! We were blind-sided by something we didn't expect, nor ever considered we would have to confront. And that, as I'm sure you have all become aware, was discovering that our "U.S. Open Championship" flag --- the first such championship from 1968 in Marion, Ohio --- was "For Sale" on "ebay"!

*How could this be?! Who could be selling it?!* The swell of concern, even outrage, was all over Facebook and in back-and-forth emails. I could go on with many details and all that has transpired. But thanks to the concerns expressed by many, and the direct action taken by Blue Rock Alums Bob McLaughlin and Jim Tarlton, "Our Flag" is in good hands, and held in safe-keeping for all time!

Those last three words, "for all time", are what brings us to why we're talking today, where we are today, and where we will go from here. The '68 US Open flag is only the beginning, and has raised many questions about other Blue Rock memorabilia; the 1971 US Open flag, the '71 CYO Nationals flag, and myriad other flags and trophies, along with uniforms, horns, drums --- and on-and-on, ad infinitum! If you're on Facebook, you have no doubt seen all the posts there, some of sincere and sensible concern, some outrageous and bitter. The obvious questions... where are these Blue Rock artifacts?; who has them?; are they safe and sound, or lost forever? I received a number of emails and phone calls from folks seeking answers, and suggesting that something had to be done --- before it's too late!

It quickly became apparent that an organized, concerted effort would have to be established to address this. Again, Bob McLaughlin and Jim Tarlton stepped up to offer help. At that point, I thought it was important to tell them of my intentions to step out of the lead role with the BR Alumni. After first letting them know, I also told a few others. As it would turn out, that handful of people has become the core team in leading this important effort. And in order to do this from a position of strength, it quickly became clear that it would be necessary to form a bona fide, legal entity, by way of a re-organized Blue Rock Alumni Association. After all, for the last 25 years it has been, technically speaking, little more than an informal alliance of friends, with no clearly defined purpose or objectives. But with the 1968 US Open flag issue bringing people to cry out, "It's OURS"!, and "WE should have it", it became clear that if we want to lay any claim to our artifacts and memorabilia, and preserve them "for all time", we need to establish what and who the "WE" is. Frankly, until now, and at this point, "WE" are in no legal position to lay claim to anything that once belonged to a drum and bugle corps that ceased to exist 40 years ago! But with a re-organized Blue Rock Alumni Association, there can be an established, legal entity, with a structure in place to deal with such issues, and to enable the "WE" and the "US" to carry on.

Not only am I confident that this will happen, but there has been further discussion about what more the Blue Rock Alumni Association can become. As noted in Bob McLaughlin's "State of the Alumni" Facebook posting and email of February 26, 2015, we have at least a start with three statements of "Purpose":

1. Family-Community-Fellowship: We consider Blue Rock a "Family" of sisters and brothers. We are also part of a larger Drum Corps "Community". And in both, it's our bonds of friendship that keep this "Fellowship" together.
2. Legacy: What we will leave to others. In material terms --- artifacts, archives, and memorabilia; to include uniforms, drums, horns, flags, trophies, photographs, film and video, news articles, program books, etc.
3. Caring: maintaining connections with all members, and offering support as we can, especially in times of special need.

So where do we go from here?... and how do we get there? First off --- understand that this communiqué cannot cover it all. Unless and until you are advised differently, the BR Website will be the place to view announcements and updates, with emails and Facebook posts directing you accordingly. In order to get the ball rolling, decide where to go and how to proceed, and keep things in their proper perspective, we have assembled a Core Team of seven people. Don't take offense that you weren't called into this. Seven is enough to get things started, and too many more than that could make it very unwieldy. Believe me --- as these efforts move forward, you will have plenty of opportunity to get involved, and your participation will in fact be essential to our success. We thought it important that this team should represent several "generations" of Blue Rock. Those "generations" would roughly cover

1959 through early 1960s, the mid-60s to 1970, and then the early 1970s. The Core Team (in alphabetical order):

- Mike Batten
- Joe Flynn
- Harry Jenkins
- Bob McLaughlin
- Chuck Quackenbush
- Steve Riccelli
- Jim Tarlton

*(For BR biographical info on these members, see Appendix B at the end of this statement.)*

In recent weeks, in addition to numerous emails and phone conversations, the Core Team has held a number of conference calls to lay out a course for action. Two major efforts have been targeted.

First - establish and re-organize the Blue Rock Alumni Association as a viable, legal entity. This may best be achieved in the form of a 501(c)(6) organization. This will be studied and evaluated by John Palm, Attorney and BR Alumnus. In whatever manor it may be structured, it will necessitate a Constitution and By-Laws, which will include provisions for electing officers. In the meantime, with my personal decision to retire from the role of President, the Core Team will appoint an Interim President and Vice-President. Details on all of this will be communicated as they develop.

Second - as brought about by the 1968 US Open flag situation, set a course of action for identifying, recovering, and cataloging Blue Rock artifacts, memorabilia, etc., in order to preserve our heritage. There is much to be considered here. Let me state very clearly.... We have NO intention, and we will NOT attempt, to take anything from anybody! If you have anything in your possession that was once connected with Blue Rock, it's yours. We have no axe to grind, nor do we care by what means you may have come by it. In fact --- we're happy that it's in the hands of someone who cares. If it holds a prominent place in your den or on a bookshelf, there it shall stay. What we want to ask, however, is that you simply tell us what you have, and perhaps allow us to get professional-quality photographs taken. Before we go any further, let's take stock of the situation....

Recent Facebook posts and a few emails have stirred up lots of rumors and misperceptions. There is and has been since 2009 a drum-corps-wide initiative to address the lack of a central clearing house to catalog and collect drum corps artifacts and memorabilia. The leader in this effort is a collective of drum corps organizations, individual collectors, and other concerned and knowledgeable individuals, brought together by Steve Vickers, owner / publisher of Drum Corps World, long-time newspaper and now an on-line publication. The name of this collective is "Drum Corps Experience", or DCX. Its' purpose and mission is to preserve "for all time" (there are those three words again) the multitude of drum corps artifacts and memorabilia, including uniforms, instruments, flags, recordings, films, photos, papers --- anything and everything that is part of the history of the drum and bugle corps activity. There has been talk of a national museum for displaying all of this, but for a host of reasons --- not the least of which is the

multi-millions of dollars it would take --- it is very likely that this won't happen. If you followed developments on Facebook, you undoubtedly saw Marty Broomell's post regarding the contact he made with Bob Jacobs (part of DCX and Director of Jersey Surf D&B Corps) about Blue Rock's possible participation in this. I recently had a long and positive phone conversation with Marty to fill him in on where we stand on this. As I made clear to him, I have talked about this in the last few years with Bill Ives (Archer-Epler member and keeper of the largest collection of drum corps uniforms anywhere -- bar none!), and at length recently with Steve Vickers about the DCX ideas. The Core Team has also discussed this at length, and we wanted Marty to understand that while the contact he made may have been well-intended, it was perhaps ill-timed, and disconnected from our organized team effort. That's one reason for putting this statement out there for all BR Alumni to see, and so that whatever direction we decide to take, it will be focused, and will come as part of an organized endeavor by the Blue Rock Alumni Association, and not as the result of individuals acting on their own, albeit with the best intentions. So to make it crystal clear, and despite any over-blown rumors, there is NO attempt underway to have us collect all of our artifacts and ship them off to DCI or any imagined museum; nothing could be further from the truth!

Another notion by DCX is a travelling museum --- a tractor-trailer properly fitted out to take the collection on the road. But to do this right --- just like a true museum, with proper temperature and humidity controls --- is also currently out of reach financially. Our Core Team has also considered working with local, state, and regional historical societies with museum-type locations as possibilities to preserve and display any collection of BR items that we may be able to assemble. This, too, has its complications, but is still under consideration.

Where it stands now, however, and what DCX is undertaking, is the creation of a "Virtual Museum". With the capabilities of today's internet technology, this makes a lot of sense, and is certainly achievable at relatively minimal expense. To see how DCX was going about this, Bob McLaughlin and I recently met with Bill Ives and Chris Maher. Bill has several hundred uniforms in his collection, and Chris is the photographer. They are drum corps guys just like us, and have nothing but the best intentions and sincere motivations to see that this is done and done right. Bob and I were impressed with what we saw, and left confident that the cataloging and photo-preserving effort was being handled properly and professionally. We advised the Core Team of this, recommending that our Blue Rock Heritage goals can be achieved by participating with this Virtual Museum. Moreover, Joe Flynn made a very good suggestion that we could also create a Virtual Museum via our Blue Rock Website, and do it in shared cooperation with DCX.

So how can we accomplish this? Here's where your participation is essential to our success. We need all of you to dig out whatever you have, let us know what you have, and let us photograph it. The details and logistics of pulling this off will be communicated as we go forward. Again, anything you have for this is yours, and

we only seek to take photographs. If you can't part with something even for that long, you may be able to take your own photos and send them to the Heritage Team (people yet to be named). As I'm sure you can appreciate, to produce the level of quality needed for this, an old Polaroid or Brownie Instamatic won't cut it. Information will soon be available from Bob McLaughlin, himself a skilled digital photographer, describing the criteria required to enable capturing images worthy of the "Virtual Museum". With that, anyone with a computer can take a "tour" of the museum.

Let's face it --- time is not on our side. The youngest person who was a corps member in Blue Rock's last days is now around 55 years old. And most of us are certainly older than that! So go forward another 20 or 30 years, and none among us will still be of this earth. What happens to our precious artifacts then? Unless you have descendants who care as much as do you, the memories, the meaning --- the object itself --- will likely hold no place of importance. Therefore the thrust to capture it all while we still can --- for the Blue Rock family, for the entire drum corps community, for future drum corps historians, curiosity seekers and drum corps fans --- and do so "for all time"!

Case in point.... You may be familiar with a one Bob BellaRosa, known to many as "Da Kid". You may also recall hearing Ted Sciarra speak fondly of him. Bobby's drum corps days started in the mid-1940s in Brooklyn, NY, continued in the late 40s and early 50s in the Holy Name Cadets of Garfield, NJ, and after his return from the Army, he spent many years with the New York Skyliners. He won many Individual Contest trophies as a French Horn player, and was inducted into the Bugler's Hall of Fame. He was well known for his "Eastern Review", and "Drum Corps Heritage" publications, which he produced for many years. He was also founder and curator of what was undoubtedly the largest-ever collection of drum corps artifacts and memorabilia, with all manner of uniforms, musical instruments, trophies, and photographs, packed into his own four-story museum on Columbia Street in Brooklyn. Mr. BellaRosa died in August of 2011. His family thought they could make some good money by selling his massive collection, but in fact found no takers. So, with that --- after having spent 60 years pouring his heart and soul into it --- Bobby BellaRosa's huge collection ended up in a land-fill. Precious history --- gone forever. We can't let this happen again. Our heritage --- our passion --- is all the legacy we have to leave.

To close --- and with my stepping-aside from the helm of the Blue Rock Alumni Association --- I want you all to know.... I'm not going to disappear. I am completely in favor of our re-structuring, and of preserving our heritage in whatever forms it may take. I'll still be involved, although less actively, and available if needed as a resource going forward. I'm sure you have seen the shirts, mugs, and other items Joe Flynn has made available on our website. I recently purchased one of the new license plates, with the BR crest and space for a customized, personal message, such as the years you were a corps member. Mine says "1966 to Forever". ***You can bet on that!***

#### Appendix A: Alumni Projects & Activities

- A scholarship program for young men and women active in drum corps who were deserving of some financial assistance with their college education;
- Co-sponsoring Drum Corps shows in Delaware (remember our old "Music Festival") with the Crossmen Drum & Bugle Corps (a connection forged thanks to BR Alumnus Mike Dennis who was on the Crossmen staff at the time);
- The production of our "Blue Rock Through The Years" video (now available on DVD), which includes some historic video of the 1971 World Open courtesy of Charlie and Jackie Haas;
- A set of cassette tapes of BR music from circa 1964 through 1974 (now available on CD);
- The establishment of our Blue Rock Website, thanks to BR Alumnus Joe "Gerry" Flynn --- which if you didn't know, is the source for lots of BR things; t-shirts, coffee mugs, CDs, DVDs, etc., at [www.bluerock.us](http://www.bluerock.us) ;
- The annual Elks Weekend get-together in Wildwood every June since 2005;
- Another Reunion in 2010 as part of our annual Wildwood Weekend.

#### Appendix B: Core Team (in alphabetical order)

- Mike Batten: 1959-62, 2<sup>nd</sup> soprano; 63-68, 1<sup>st</sup> soprano; 2012-13, led the effort to place a Memorial to honor BR alums Roy Jones & Greg Papaleo who lost their lives in Viet Nam; January 2015, started the new "Blue Rock Buzz" on-line newsletter.
- Joe "Gerry" Flynn: 1964-65 BR Vanguard, baritone; 1966, BR mellophone; 64-69, 3<sup>rd</sup> baritone; 70-74, 2<sup>nd</sup> baritone; Staff Oct74-Feb75; creator and webmaster of Blue Rock website.
- Harry Jenkins: joined end of 66; bass drum line 1967; 68, French horn; 69, 2<sup>nd</sup> mellophone; 1970, 1<sup>st</sup> mellophone; 1971, 3<sup>rd</sup> soprano; Staff from Oct71-Feb75; creator/editor of "Solid Rock" Newsletter 72-74; established Blue Rock Alumni Association 1989; Alumni President 1989-2015.
- Bob McLaughlin: joined end of 1966 thru 1970 1<sup>st</sup> mellophone; instrumental in recovering our '68 US Open flag.
- Chuck Quackenbush: 1959-60 BR Midgets (prior to start of Vanguard) baritone; 1960-66, bass baritone; 67-71, contrabass; 67-68, Vanguard marching instructor; Oct72-Feb75 Staff & bus driver.
- Steve Riccelli: 1969-73, Vanguard, soprano and cymbals; 1974 BR tympani.
- Jim Tarlton: joined end of 1966, 1<sup>st</sup> baritone thru 1968; instrumental in recovering and securing our '68 US Open flag.

#### Attorney / Legal Counsel

- John Palm: joined end of 1966, 2<sup>nd</sup> soprano thru 1970; M&M instructional staff 71-73.