

American Legion Drum and Bugle Corp

Interviewed by: Lori MacDonald 01/24/2001

Transcribed by: Jennie Hakes

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Kathryn Harrison, Marcie Broman, Sarah Fossen, Alice Hanson

Note from Jennie: The American Legion Auxiliary Drum and Bugle Corps, of the Aitkin Lee Unit No. 86, of Aitkin, Minnesota was started on January 15, 1934. Their first appearance was in May 1934. My mother, Dorothy Erickson, was a member of the Corps before she married, so this was a fun tape to transcribe.

Side A

Introduction

Lori: OK. Let's start. This is another episode – a continuation – of Aitkin County Historical Society's oral history project. Today we are meeting with members of the Aitkin Legion Auxiliary Drum and Bugle Corps, and today we are meeting in the basement of the Aitkin Community Hospital, er - Riverwood Health Care Center – correction!

And visiting with us are four of the early members. Can we start from the beginning, can we go back? (to the person recording the tape)

A: Sure, we can go back.

Lori: OK. Are we OK? This is another – a continuation – of the Aitkin County Historical Society's oral history project. It's January 24, 2001, and we're meeting with members of a unique organization that brought great glory and notoriety to Aitkin, members of the Aitkin Legion Auxiliary Drum and Bugle Corp, who have been known for the last six decades for the glory that they brought to Aitkin. Today we are meeting with Alice Edquist Hanson, Sarah Lehman Fossen, Marcie Broman, Katherine Hartman Harrison. And we are privileged... we have two, I think, two charter members here. Katherine and Sarah. Correct?

K and S: Correct.

The formation of the Corps

Lori: Ok. Who would like to start out and tell us how the Corps was formed and (*unintelligible*)? Not all at once, now! Sarah?

Sarah: Well, I'll tell you how I became a member of it. Esther Hanlon, remember?

Lori: Surely.

Sarah: ...came to my house one day, and she said – you know how she was about music – she said, the Crosby ladies drum corps needs some new members. And she said, we don't seem to be able to run them up. And of course, (*unintelligible*), so then she called

on several other members of the organization, and the first thing you know, we was drumming away over in Crosby!

Lori: So you became a member of the Crosby Corps before the Aitkin Corps developed then.

Sarah: Um, hm. Yeah. They had disbanded by then, when we got organized. And we had a wonderful time.

Lori: The people who saw you had a wonderful time as well. And Katherine, you were another original member of the Corps.

Katherine: I was. I was in at the very beginning. And I joined because I had a sister, Elizabeth, that was in the Corps, too. And she had already signed up, and she talked me into coming in and being a member, too, and I was so glad I did. We had such a good time. We had so many good times. (Laughs) It's hard to remember all of them.

Lori: That started in 1934, didn't it?

Katherine: I believe so. I think it was back in '34 when it started.

Lori: So Esther Hanlon was really the initial impetus for the formation, then.

Katherine: Yes. She was at the beginning, she was the Drum Major at the beginning. And then I really don't know why she dropped out. And then Lottie (Erickson) took over.

Learning to play the instruments

Lori: Now, how did you – what was your musical background, Katherine?

Katherine: Oh, I didn't have much?

Lori: What instrument did you play?

Katherine: I played the bugle, but then Bill Lowrey was helping us with the band and with the music, when we first started. And we had to pick it up ourselves, mostly. I know that Liz (*unintelligible*) in the back yard and blow the horn so everybody could hear it! (Laughs) That's the way we practiced, though, so that's the way we learned.

Lori: Great! And Marcie, what instrument did you play?

Marcie: Ho, ho, ho. That was a funny thing. I didn't play anything! I... I finally found... I finally wound up with the, um, Joe, help me – the cymbals. I had a granddaughter came to visit and said "Here comes Marcie with the clacks!" And that was quite a thrill. I did substitute with the snare drums, I'm surprised, alongside of Sarah and Irene Seavey. They played so well, it didn't matter whether I hit the drum or not! (Laughs) And then one time, over in Isle, the bass drummer didn't get there in time, so they gave me the bass drum, and I'll never forget that, because I wasn't much taller than the bass drum! When they strapped that on me, I couldn't see where I was going!

And it was a thrill, though, and I don't think Isle cared what we were like. We performed for Fourth of July or something over there, for the... but I really was not a musician. I loved music, but I never learned to play anything... the piano a little bit. But...

Lori: So Sarah was the champion little drummer girl? What was your background, Sarah?

Sarah: Let's see. Drumming on the kids, I guess.

Lori: Beating on the children!

Sarah: No. (Laughs) I've always been very fond of bands, and any band around, I had to go and see it.

Lori: OK.

Sarah: I loved the rhythm of it and all that.

Lori: You were in the right place, being in the drum line.

Sarah: And we had a very good teacher...

Lori: You did?

Sarah: ...for the drums. But I don't remember his name!

Lori: I think I can help you out. Oscar Riesberg.

Sarah: Could be.

Lori: He was a percussionist with the Minnesota, er, Minneapolis Symphony. And in the early articles about it, it said that Albert (Alfred) Howe did the music, and Oscar Riesberg was sort of the teacher on the drum line. Or Riesberg (pronouncing it with a long "e" this time).

Sarah: Of course, we could practice right at the meetings.

Lori: Sure. Alice, what did you play?

Alice: I played the bass drum, the bass bugle.

Lori: Oh, you did? Ok.

Alice: I had had a few piano lessons, so I could read notes. But it wasn't easy trying to get the tongue to do the right thing inside that mouthpiece. But I managed. But I played it, and of course, bass would have been behind. I was in the last row of the Bugle Corps. I didn't join until, I think it was '36.

Lori: Yeah.

Alice: Because they had stipulated that you should be an Auxiliary member to belong to the Drum and Bugle Corps and I wasn't at that time. But, ah, my husband then went into the service – I can't remember – he was drafted, of course, because he was pretty old. But then I joined the Auxiliary right away.

Lori: And became eligible.

Alice: And I was eligible and I became a member of the Drum and Bugle Corps.

The original roster

Lori: Excellent. Well, I have what used to be for many years the bible in Aitkin kitchens – the Aitkin Legion Auxiliary Drum and Bugle Corps cookbook, and it lists the original

members and officers. Can we just go through those quickly, and you could tell me what everybody played?

We have Drum Major, Esther Hanlon; President was Eulalia Moork; Secretary was Sarah... Excuse me, what did Eulalia play?

All: She played the drums.

Lori: Ok, Sarah was on drums; Treasurer was Marie Ellie (?) – what did she play?

Sarah: Oh, the bugle. And drums.

Lori: Historian was Dolly Jacobs.

Sarah: She run the drums.

Lori: The Drum Sargeant was Annie Erickson; the Bugle Sargeant was Esther Warner; Drill Sargeant was Royce Peterson; and then the charter members were: Esther Hanlon – just mentioned - , Eulalia, Sarah Fossen, Eleanor Young –

Sarah: She played drums.

Lori: Drums? Ah, Annie Erickson – drum also? Iona Mitten (?) played the drums, Dolly Jacobs - drums, Lena Woodrow – drums... we gotta get to the buglers here soon! Mabel Lowrey –

Katherine: She was a bugler.

Lori: Bugler? Ok. Georgiana Davis.

Katherine: Drums.

Lori: Esther Warner.

Katherine: She played the bugle, didn't she?

Lori: Yeah, she was a bugler. Marie Elling played...?

Sarah: Marie Elling played a horn.

Lori: She played a horn, Ok. Hazel Eggers played...?

Sarah: I don't remember. She was there such a short time.

Lori: Ok. Elizabeth and Katherine Hartman were both buglers, I know that. Irene Lowrey played...?

Sarah: She must have played the bugle, too.

Lori: Ok. Patricia Davis.

Sarah: Hm?

Lori: Patricia Davis.

Katherine: Oh, yeah, she wasn't in very long, was she?

Lori: But she's listed. Dorothy Fry?

Katherine: I think she was a bugler, too.

Lori: And Francis Nighting played...?

Katherine: Didn't Francis play the bugle, too?

Alice (?) : She wasn't there when I was.

Lori: And Lindell Getting played... what did Lindell play?

Katherine: She played the drums. She played the bass drums.

Lori: Ok. So we have two charter members here. I think that's remarkable for as many years as...

Katherine: We can contribute our good health to all the walking we did.

Practicing

Lori: Probably so! (Laughs) Katherine, before we started, you were telling Jack and I about the bonus miles that you got. About the bonus miles you hiked on practice nights.

Katherine: Oh, yes! I was telling him... we lived out on the farm. About a mile and a quarter out of Aitkin. And Elizabeth and I would walk to town, and then we would practice all night long, until it got dark, and then we'd walk back home again. And we didn't think anything of it. That was just the way we had to do it. Nobody said would you take the car, or you could have the car (laughs).

Lori: So, where did you practice in that first winter? Did you practice...

Sarah: In the schoolhouse.

Costumes

Lori: In the schoolhouse. Ok. Now I read in the Heritage Book that the first parade was on May 8 of 1934. Can you tell me about your first costumes?

Katherine: Oh, yeah – what did we have for the first ones?

Sarah: Didn't we have black pants and white shirts?

Katherine: Yeah, they were black pants and... but I can't remember what kind of top we had.

Alice: We had some white blouses made.

Katherine: Yeah.

Lori: In the Heritage book – and this came from Lottie – this is remembering your very first time, and she said that you wore gunnysacks that had red letters...

Katherine: We did, but... do you remember those?

Sarah: No.

Katherine: I can kinda remember it, but I can't remember what...

Lori: There was a parade... that was an Aitkin parade, and you wore gunnysacks with red either feed or flour lettering on it.

Katherine: Yeah – we didn't have anything then.

Lori: Right. But by mid-summer, you'd graduated to white sweatshirts, white cotton pants and white berets when you paraded in Brainerd.

Katherine: Oh, yeah.

Sarah: Oh, those white flannel pants were something!

Lori: I bet they were.

Marcie: That was after... I didn't get in until 1935, and then we had the wool flannel pants, and silk blouses, and they were sort of an eggshell color.

Lori: I remember those well.

Marcie: And then little pillbox hats.

Traveling to parades

Lori: Well, it was always a sharp-looking contingent, I know that. So, starting in '36, then... well, actually before that, you started winning local and regional parades, I know, and then in 1936 you took the State Championship, is that correct?

Sarah: Um, hm.

Lori: That was the parade that was so long?

Katherine: In Duluth.

Lori: The four-and-a-half mile parade.

Katherine: At least four-and-a-half miles, remember that?

Marcie: Yes, I do.

Sarah: All those cobblestones...

Katherine: That was terrible. Well, then we had white pants and white shirts, satin shirts, and little top hats.

Lori: It was a sharp-looking group. Then you started winning State Championships, Legion Auxiliary Championships, and that took you where?

Katherine: That's what we wore...

Lori: But where did you go then? Did you go on to regional or national competition?

Sarah: No, we...

Katherine: We went right to national, didn't we?

Lori: Ok. Where was your first out of state trip then, to the national?

Katherine: Was it Cleveland?

Marcie: I thought it was Cleveland.

Lori: Cleveland? Backing up a little bit – when you started traveling out of the Aitkin area, how did you get to where you were going?

Alice: In a bus.

Katherine: A bus.

Lori: Did you? Did the Legion get that, or did you have to fund that? How did you finance all the traveling?

Sarah: We smiled at the bus drivers! (Laughs)

Katherine: I think the Legion financed it. I don't ever remember paying out anything.

Alice: Maybe not on a bus trip, but boy, we paid out a lot. We had bake sales, and cookie sales...

Katherine: That's true.

Alice: ... and suppers.

A family affair

Lori: So you did have to do a lot of your own financial backing. You were selling cookies and Sarah was smiling at the bus drivers. (Laughs) You know, when I'm going through the membership roster, it really was a real family act, or in Katherine and Elizabeth's case, it was a sister act. Because there was – not maybe all at the same time – but Mabel Lowrie was in, and Irene and Vernie, her two daughters were in.

Katherine: Yeah.

Lori: Let's see, who else. There was Margaret and Alice were in. Marcie and Alvina...

Marcie: No. Helen Kelley Smith – I don't know if anybody remembers, Doctor Kelley's daughter Helen – lived across the hall in our first apartment. And we got friendly. I had nothing to do. We were in two rooms with all of our furniture, so there was no, nothing you could do, so Helen came in.

She said, "I think you should belong to the Drum Corp."

"Well, I don't belong to the Legion."

"Well, we take a certain few members, so we can have a few that don't belong." Didn't have to be any connection there. So I said it was fun, so I went along with her, so she got me into it.

Lori: Good. Jo and Charlotte Dolan were another pair of sisters.

Sarah: That's right. I didn't mention them.

Lori: And Georgie Davis and Becky Davis were both in. And was Patricia their sister?

Katherine: Yeah. She had three.

Lori: So they had three from the Davis family then. I think that was really nice that there were... a kind a family affair.

Sarah: Um hm.

Lori: So Doctor Kelley with Royce was one of your drill instructors, was that right?

Alice: Not Doctor Kelley. Royce was our drill instructor. He was the Army man. You learned how to march...

Lori: In something that was published it said that Doctor Kelley assisted Royce, or took over when Royce was gone.

Sarah: He probably took over when Royce was...

Katherine: Maybe one drill.

Lori: Ok. So basically, it was Royce.

Alice: It was Royce.

Lori: Ok. And Mr. Howe and Mr. Reisberg were the music instructors.

Katherine: And Bill Lowrey.

Lori: Oh, that's right.

Katherine: The band man.

Uniforms

Lori: Right. Ok. So we know you had the gunny sacks, you had the white sweatshirts and white pants, you had – that was cotton – and you had the white wool pants, the satin blouses, and you had black whipcord slacks with white shirts, and what else?

Katherine: We had those white pants with that military strap across. Remember that, with the ragtops?

Sarah: Yeah.

Lori: And you had the hula outfits.

Marcie: I remember the hula outfits, because we had to make our own skirts, remember? We had to get all those big, burlap bags from Ziske's – huge ones – and then we had to ravel them, you know. Take the... so just the strings hangin', and you'd add one on top of the other till you got a good sized skirt. And of course, that was a sad affair, because you remember Lindell got burned. Someone tossed a cigarette into the Corps and caught her skirt afire. And she died as a result of that. That was sad.

Lori: A terrible tragedy for the Corps and for the whole town.

Marcie: It was a terrible thing.

Alice: We had made those funny suits...

Lori: You really had a nice variety of parade uniforms, then. And basically everybody had to finance their own...

Katherine: We had to get our own.

Lori: At that time, Katherine, you weren't married, but the rest of you were all married and had families. This must have taken a lot out of your day, and you must have had a lot of special arrangements to be made. Because Harold would have been little at that point, wasn't he, Alice?

Alice: Yes, he was. He was three or four years old. He was three when I went back to work, and I was working when I joined the Corps.

Lori: Sarah had a family at home, and so did Marcie.

Marcie: No, I didn't have any... I didn't have a baby for seven years. So I had a lot of free time up to then.

Lori: Ok.

Marcie: And eventually I had five.

Lori: It took a lot of arranging and a lot of accommodations, I'm sure, to be able to... it was a demanding schedule, and I am sure it was...

Sarah: Well, I tell you, Kathleen left home after the first year. She wasn't gonna raise another kid! (Laughs)

Tunes

Lori: What were some of the favorite songs you played? Do you remember some of your marching tunes?

Katherine: "There's a Long, Long Trail..."

Sarah: I liked that. (she sings part of the Marine Corps song). The Marine Band.

Lori: Oh, the Marine Corps Hymn?

Sarah: Yeah.

Lori: And it said that Bill Lowrey did a lot of the music arranging, transcribing for the Corps. It said that there was one that you did especially called "The Blue and Gold," in honor of the blue and gold? Was that kind of in honor of the Legion? Knowing that those were their colors – did that have anything to do with...

Sarah: I thought maybe it was the Marine Corps Hymn.

Lori: Maybe. Perhaps. I know it said in several different things that I read, it said you played that often. And I wasn't familiar with it, so I thought maybe it was something maybe he had even composed.

Katherine: That could be. He did a lot of work on the music.

Marcie: When you play the cymbals, you don't really have music, and you don't know the name of the song, because that makes no difference! You just bang! Bang! Bang! (Laughs)

Katherine: But you gotta remember when to bang!

Marcie: Well...!

Competing outside of Minnesota

Lori: So in 1936 you went to the National Convention in Cleveland. Was that the year?

Katherine: '36.

Lori: '36. What did you do...

Katherine: It should say on that paper there.

Lori: And how about 1937? There was another trip then. Was that...

Katherine: What year did we go to Chicago?

Alice: I don't know. We went to Chicago and we went to Milwaukee.

Katherine: We went to Milwaukee, I remember.

Alice: And then we went to New York.

Katherine: New York was '39.

Lori: That was kind of a grand tour, because didn't you go through Washington, D.C., then? How did you travel? By train, bus...?

Katherine: We went by train. And on the way back, we did go over to Washington, D.C. and we stopped long enough to look around a little bit, and we paraded down Philadelphia Avenue and right up to the Capitol.

Sarah: We saw the national cemetery, too.

Lori: Arlington?

Sarah: Arlington Cemetery. We went out there.

Katherine: Yeah.

Lori: That was really an experience. I'm guessing that's probably the farthest from home that any of you had probably been at that time.

Katherine: I am sure it was the farthest I've ever been, or ever wanted to. (Laughs)

Lori: Well, you all logged a lot of travel miles, but it gave you lots of wonderful opportunities.

Sarah: Yeah, we even saw Niagara Falls.

Lori: Did you?

Sarah: Yeah.

Marcie: One trip we went by Niagara Falls – which trip was that? Which trip did we go by Niagara Falls?

Sarah: When we went east.

Marcie: Yeah. Was that the New York one?

Alice: Well, they were all east!

Sarah: (Laughs) Yeah, I think so, because you know that it was a long time, it was about 10 days, and we... I can remember Georgiana Davis wanted to go with that guide underneath the falls. Remember?

Lori: Did she do it?

Sarah: Yeah!

Lori: She did.

Sarah: She did.

Lori: Tell us about the trip to New York City.

Katherine: Well, it was a real experience, I'll tell you! We got up to New York City, and here we were little country girls, and we really had a good time. We spent a lot of time - I know a lot of 'em did - sightseeing, and seeing things. The time just flew. And it seems like we were just endless. We could march and march all day and march all night, too. I know the forty-and-eight from St. Paul used to ask us to come and parade with them at night. We'd just march around and walk around, and how we all held up, I don't know! (Laughs) But we did! We had a lot of fun!

Sarah: We even got down to Greenwich Village.

Katherine: Yeah, we went to Greenwich Village. And we were in Chinatown.

Sarah: And we saw the high-steppers at the theatre...

Alice: We saw the Empire State Building.

Sarah: ...and the Empire State Building.

Katherine: Yeah.

Lori: You covered a lot of ground. That's great.

Katherine: And I remember the one thing we saw - and gosh, I forgot which street - but we saw the Planter's Peanut sign. That was quite a thing in those days, to see that big Planter's Peanut sign. I don't even know if it's there anymore or not. (Laughs)

Lori: So that impressed you.

Katherine: I was on... I think it was 42nd Street that we were on. Yeah.

Lori: Well, that sounds like a real adventure.

Alice: We didn't do much sleeping. (Laughs)

Lori: Well, you can sleep in Aitkin. When you're in New York City you've gotta see the sights!

Katherine: And it was really something to walk along and look in all those shops and see all the things they had, you know. It was different than what we came from.

Lori: How often, just on a - it's hard to say - but on a, in an average summer, how many times would you perform? In Aitkin, and Brainerd, and the various towns around?

Sarah: Well, it varied.

Alice: Wherever they'd pay us in cash. (Laughs)

Lori: The price was right, then, huh?

Katherine: I don't know.

Lori: Not only were you winning prizes, but Lottie¹ was winning an individual award as the best drum major throughout all those years. And then she passed the baton on to Alice and to Annie². Right? Alice - weren't you a drum major at one time? So Lottie retired to raise her family, and Alice took over, and then Annie Erickson, and so the

¹ Lottie Erickson

² Annie Erickson

Corps kept changing. But it kept on marching and kept on playing. Katherine, when did you leave the Corps and why?

Katherine: I don't remember what year. It must have been right after we came back from New York. 'Cause I didn't go on any of the other trips that I can remember.

Lori: But the contingent stayed at about the same number of members, in spite of the fact that some people were coming and going and...

Katherine: Yeah. They kept retiring, and we got too few...

Marcie: We even had Ethel Hanes in there a short time.

Lori: Well, my goodness. What did she play, Sarah? Ethel Hanes.

Sarah: She tried to play the horn.

Lori: She should have had a piano. That was more her instrument. She should have had someone pushing the piano for her!

Disbanding

Lori: What... After the Aquatennial Parade, where there was a tragedy when Lindell's uniform caught fire, and she died as a result of the burns – was this kind of the beginning of the end of the Corps then?

Sarah: Um hm.

Katherine: It kind of took the heart out of everyone.

Lori: I'm sure it must have. I know it was... I was little then, but I remember what a terrible shock it was for the whole town. How did it disband? Was it just by mutual agreement, or...?

Sarah: We all agreed to it.

Alice: We just couldn't keep on. And then we sold the instruments, didn't we?

Sarah: Yeah.

Lori: And then times were changing, too. That was about at the time of the beginning of World War II, and I'm sure transportation would have been a major problem.

Katherine: Some of the girls left home and went to join the...

Lori: It was lovely parade, and you certainly marched and played long and well for those years that you did.

Best memories

Lori: What were the best memories of those years? The travel, the friendships, or things you learned?

Sarah: I think the whole thing!

Katherine: The whole thing, yeah.

Marcie: It was fun going.

Lori: Well, it must have been.

Marcie: We took the bus, and...

Sarah: And we did see a lot, you know.

Lori: You certainly did!

Sarah: Different towns up on the Range and how they were...

Alice: We went to Ely one time, didn't we?

Katherine: Yeah, we did go to Ely, didn't we?

Sarah: Yeah, and we marched in...

Katherine: It must have been St. Paul.

Sarah: ... what's the first one of those big towns. Ely and then..

Lori: Hibbing and Virginia, along the Range?

Sarah: It probably was Hibbing. We had a good view through mining country.

Lori: I bet you did! And I know you marched several times in the Aquatennial. Did you march in the Winter Carnival parade in St. Paul, ever?

Katherine: I don't think we ever did.

Sarah: No.

Katherine: No, we never did.

Lori: Well, you certainly covered a lot of ground!

Katherine: Yes, we did. We covered a lot of ground. A lot of little places we went to, too, that I've kind of forgotten about, you know. We were at the Fourth of July celebration for a parade they were having and we'd go.

Sarah: Cobblestones in Duluth, though.

Lori: Those were the worst, huh?

Sarah: They were hard!

Alice: We could have gone to San Francisco, but we couldn't raise the money.

Lori: Well, considering the economic problems of those years, it's remarkable that you got as many places as you did. It really took a lot of effort by the group and by the... there must have been a lot of general community support.

Katherine: We had a lot of backing.

Lori: That's wonderful. And, I don't know if it would be possible to recreate that kind of spirit today or not.

Alice: I don't think so.

Katherine: I doubt it.

Marcie: I think you're right. If I had the strength, I'd go back! Because I know I could never do that again.

Lori: Well, you hiked a lot of miles, though. Because you were there at the outset, Sarah, and you were there when they played the last... the last note.

Sarah: Um hm.

Lori: There were several... you and Esther Hanlon, and Georgie, and Annie Erickson, and I think, Eleanor Young, were some of those that were charter members that were still there when the Corps disbanded. And that's... and that was a pretty good run.

Katherine: Yeah.

Alice: Esther Hanlon wasn't.

Sarah: Esther Hanlon quit about the middle of our...

Lori: Oh, she did. I know she wasn't the drum major, of course, but I thought she was still in the...

Sarah: She was for a while, but she quit.\

Lori: She did. Ok. Well, you involved a lot of people in a lot of ways, besides those of you that were actually in the Corps, I know there were husbands and friends that helped get you here and there, and ...

Marcie, how many years were you in?

Marcie: Just about 2 or 3, I think. We moved to Aitkin in '35, just newlyweds. Nothing to do, so I got into the Corps, with the help of Helen Kelley. And I think I was in '35, '36, and then I had two miscarriages in a row after that, and then I didn't belong anymore.

Lori: I see.

Cleveland memory – cockroaches!

Marcie: So I never got to New York. I did get to Cleveland. And Cleveland was a big city to me. And all I can remember about it was the hotel they put us in. We turned the lights on, and it was full of cockroaches! They were crawling all over the wall, and we were... I suppose about 12 or 14 of us in one room, you know. And so we got Mr. Munson, who was in charge of our money, to get the purse, and we told him we couldn't possible stay there. And of course the wild, drunk Legionnaires were climbing up the balcony to get the girls! And we were the girls! So between the cockroaches and the wild troops, we got moved to a downtown big hotel. And then we were in one great big room, and I think there must have been 15, 20 beds in there. Hot. That's the way we stayed there. And that was quite a march. That's the only big one I was to. I went to, like, Isle, and little towns around here... Wadena and some of those towns. That was fun. But that's the only big one I was to. But Duluth, I was...

Lori: Big memories, too.

Marcie: Oh, yeah. But I, I just remembered the drinking was really something. It got pretty wild at night. You know, you had to be pretty careful, or you'd be grabbed right on the street. Sometimes it was fun. Sometimes it wasn't. (Laughs)

Katherine: (Laughs)

Marcie: Depended on who did the pulling and the grabbing. There was a lot of choices.

Hotels and blisters

Lori: When you went to New York, did you have a combination like that, too, where you were in a big room, the bunch of you, or did you have individual hotel rooms?

Katherine: No, we didn't have individual rooms. We had one big room for, there were quite a few of us.

Alice: Dormitory style.

Katherine: Yeah. So. We used to come in after the parade, and everybody would take their shoes off and pile them in a little pile in the middle of the floor, so we had to clean our shoes. The shoestrings had to be washed. (Laughs)

Lori: Well, you always made a very impressive showing. So it must have paid off.

Marcie: Something about the shoestrings were very important to the judges. Because they would walk along, while we were at attention, and lift up the bottom of our slacks and look at our shoestrings! So every night, we washed those shoestrings. Polished them white. I don't know why the shoestrings had to be white.

Katherine: And don't forget, we took care of the blisters on our feet.

Marcie: Yeah, that's right.

Lori: I remember reading about – I think it was the Duluth parade – where Dolly Jacobs was the blister champion with 21, I think.

Katherine: (Laughs) Oh, golly.

Sarah: All the blisters on their feet. Who was it, she said. Who was it? (she didn't hear Lori)

Lori: I think Dolly Jacobs.

Sarah: Dolly Jacobs, yeah.

Katherine: She was the... she had prize blisters.

Lori: And Lottie wrote that during the years, the year she was playing the bass drum, she got a double batch. She got them both on her hands and on her feet.

Sarah: (Laughs)

Lori: She had her share, too.

Katherine: Oh, yeah.

Marcie: The girls that played the drums had quite a time because the drums hung on one side, and that leg got terribly sore. They had to keep padding that leg under the drum, I remember that. Some of the pads got lost in the parade.

Sarah: Yeah, they looked so funny.

Marcie: I played the drums a few times. I don't think I was very good. I practiced at home. Because sometimes somebody wasn't there, and I would have to switch from the cymbals to that. The cymbals were bad, because I wanted those sheepskin things to put

on there, so you could hold them better. And I didn't have them, so my knuckles, I had blisters. I didn't have 'em on my feet, but I sure got blisters on my hands.

Katherine: Yes.

Alice: You were wounded in combat, too, then.

Formations

Lori: What kind of marching formations did you do? Did you do many types of steps and formations?

Katherine: Sure we did. I don't know what you'd call them, though. Royce was pretty good at teaching us all that stuff. We formed a square one time; we kept that square. We'd go ahead, we'd go this way, we'd go this way, and this way, and always in a straight line. Always. And then he had us line up over here. And then, we'd march over here. And end up over here.

Lori: And doing all kinds of oblique moves, and...

Katherine: Oh, yeah.

Marcie: Oh, yeah. He was tough on the obliques.

Lori: That military background, I suppose, was very precise.

Katherine: I wish they had a military background with the school band. (Laughs)

Lori: I know. I know. We see them going down our street. It reminds me of the Golden Strings at the Radisson, how they just wander around. So you really had both good musical and good marching coaches, then.

Sarah: And I want to tell you something. At our exercises at this home that we do every day³, we have to do a march with our... starting with our left foot. Boy, they won't let 'em march any other way!

Lori: Well, that's good to know. Do it right, huh?

Sarah: Of course, some of those men...

Lori: Sure. Well, it doesn't take any longer to learn to do it the correct way, than it does to develop bad habits and have to unlearn them.

Sarah: So many of 'em learned to start with their right foot.

Lori: Oh, yeah. Did you ever have anyone in the Corps that just had a real hard time keeping time, and keeping in step?

Alice: (Pause) I don't remember anyone...

Lori: Everyone had good aptitude for it.

Alice: You had to have a little music in your soul.

Lori: I'm sure. (Pause)

³ Riverwood Extended Care, where Sarah lives

Bugles

Lori: Now the bugles they have now are so different. When you see the current, like Drum Corps International, these instruments are all full-valved instruments. And then, was there just one or two on the bugle? Did you...

Katherine: We didn't have any valves! None.

Lori: There was some kind of a little adjustment, if I remember.

Katherine: Well, the second ones we got, we had three valves, but the first group, you had to do it all with your tongue. Yup.

Lori: I think Sarah was smart to stay with the drums! (Laughs)

Katherine: Oh, Sarah was really our drum... really our drum leader.

Lori: That's what everyone has always said, that Sarah was the spark in the drum line.

Sarah: I loved it! I get my drumsticks out, and play in my room sometimes, and first thing you know, I get an audience! (Laughs) I got eight tapes and I play 'em. You know, marching tapes. So when... on the Fourth of July or something, I play those in my room until everybody...

Conclusion

Lori: Oh, that's good, though! It's sad to see the end of an era, but I guess like everything else, it had to come to an end. But you certainly did a lot of wonderful work in the years you were active.

Sarah: I think everybody that belonged will never forget it or anything about it. Because it was so much fun.

Katherine: We kind of put Aitkin on the map.

Lori: You certainly did.

Katherine: People had never heard of it. Or even heard of Minnesota!

Lori: Probably not! Whenever Georgie Davis said, when you were in New York City, she said, people just couldn't get over, she said, we all looked so sharp. And she wasn't bragging about it, but just being factual. She said, she said they couldn't seem to get over the white uniforms. She said, it just was such a contrast to the street scene there. She said, we all made a point of just always having everything immaculate, and she said, it really made an impression on the people, both, you know, the crowds that were at the parade. And she said, when would play in the hotel lobbies, and whatnot, it just really seemed to astonish people, it was such a different look than most of the corps had.

Katherine: We were called the "Minnesota (*unintelligible*)".

Lori: Oh, really.

Marcie: That was after I quit! (Laughs)

Lori: It had to have been, Marcie.

Katherine: It was just the clothes we wore.

Lori: Has anybody got any special memory that they'd like to add to what we've been talking about? Good, bad, funny? Anything.

Sarah: When we were parading in St. Cloud one time, and we turned the corner, first thing we knew the bass drummer was rolling on top of the (*unintelligible*).

Alice: Margaret did that someplace, too.

Lori: I remember Lottie told me about that. She went right over the... that was at the fairgrounds, though, I think. She hit a rut, and did a somersault over, and didn't miss a step.

Alice: She was short, too, you know.

Lori: Yeah.

Alice: Couldn't see over the dumb drum. (Laughs)

Lori: Marcie, what was your best memory of it all?

Marcie: The best memory, I think, was meeting people in Aitkin and becoming friends with all these ladies, and I've never forgot them, and I don't think they ever forgot me. We – after the Drum Corps – we were still very good friends.

Alice: Well, we lived and slept together and everything else.

Lori: Sure.

Alice: It was grand. It was wonderful.

Sarah: Just like a big family.

Lori: Yeah, right. One huge slumber party. Alice, how about you? Any special memory that stands out more than another? Or just the whole general feeling of the...

Alice: Mostly the whole general feeling. But you know I got to see Coney Island.

Lori: You did?

Alice: Um hm.

Sarah: We got to see the Statue of Liberty.

Alice: Yes, we saw the Statue of Liberty.

Lori: Yeah. It really was an opportunity. Especially in that time, when travel wasn't as common as it is now. You girls covered a lot of ground.

Katherine: I know there was – in New York – there was a Legionnaire, a huge Legionnaire, a big fellow, and he got – well, the two girls and myself, and we had somebody else, I think was with us, and he'd come and meet us after the parade and he'd show us... take us to...

Lori: You had your own private tour guide.

Katherine: A guide.

Lori: How nice!

Katherine: Yeah. It was through him that we got out to Coney Island, and we went down below in the subway, you know, and we rode along for awhile, and pretty soon here we were up outside! Elevated. On the way to Coney Island. So I guess it went down under and up over.

Lori: A real experience, then.

Sarah: Oh, there were frightening experiences. All those different things to have to pay attention to. (*unintelligible*)

Katherine: Wasn't it Cleveland where we got together with all the Drum Corps and Bugle Corps played together? We played a great... we had a big band. I think if I remember right, there were 450 people in that band. And we played. And I've never forgotten that. That was a real impressive thing.

Sarah: Boy, I'll say.

Katherine: I think we did that after all the competition. We'd all get together. And we played. That's when we played Semper Fidelis.

Sarah: Oh, I just laughed. It was fun.

Marcie: Well, it was a big thrill for small town people.

Lori: Oh. Yeah. For those of you that were taking part, it was kind of a reflective glory for everybody in town.

Marcie: And we were all liked by the town.

Lori: Oh, I'm sure you were. And to have about 3 dozen women get along as well as you all did is a remarkable accomplishment in itself. Everybody seemed to put the good of the Corps ahead of the individual – you know – individual feelings. And everybody worked together.

Katherine: That's a real accomplishment, I think.

Lori: You could tell how important it was to everyone. And how...

Sarah: ... to get along.

Lori: Yeah! How devoted they were to each other and to the overall good of the Corps. Well, has anybody got anything, any last thoughts on what they would like to add to this?

(end of side A)

End of tape – no side B