

DCAT Hall Of Fame 2008

Induction of Don Gill

by Wyatt Gill



Wyatt Gill
Presenter

Don Gill
Inductee

Marion Shearer
DCAT President

It is my great honour to introduce you to the first inductee into the DCAT Hall Of Fame. A lot of you in the group have known me all my life. However, this guy has REALLY known me all my life. And I cannot think of a more deserving or appropriate first selection – my Dad, Don Gill.

I think it is very safe to say that DCAT would not exist today if not for Don Gill. He and a group of about 15 guys attended a GAS reunion in May 1994 in Cambridge hosted by the Preston Scout House. From that group, I like to use the hockey analogy, the original 6 got together to form an organization that would consist of members of all the great past Drum Corps from the Toronto area. For those that are wondering, the original 6 were Tom Hamilton, Brian Hill, Dave Cook, Joe Watson, Stan Babiarz and my dad, Don Gill.

Well, the original 6 were so enthused by that trip down the 401 that they immediately started planning on how they too could form an organization. Soon after, my Dad hosted 2 meetings at his house with them. By the 3rd meeting, the foundation of the DCAT we know today was taking shape. These guys were quite ambitious, but as you know, guys really aren't the best at recording details of discussions and so my Dad "recruited" my mother, Marg Gill, to become the group's secretary and the original Board of Directors of DCAT was complete.

Now that the group had been set up, it was time to start soliciting members. The phone lines started blazing and a meeting was held at the Moose Hall on Birchmount in Scarborough. About 40 to 50 people showed up to the first meeting. It was at the second meeting at the Moose Hall, that it was announced that DCAT would be forming a Chorus. I remember my dad telling me to show up at this second meeting as I was going to be the Assistant Musical Director. Funny, how these things happen. I wasn't asked if I wanted to sing or be involved, simply told that I was not only in the Group but also teaching. But that is kind of my Dad's way. He has this way of just making decisions and that's it. No more discussion.

I recall the first rehearsal. Ted Key, the first Musical Director of DCAT, had arranged "The Old Songs". There were about 15 or so people. None of us had a clue what parts we should sing. I recall my Dad, Jim Bartholomew and myself singing the Soprano part and my mom singing Baritone... very strange.

After many reassurances by Ted that we should not worry, he could teach anyone to sing, we settled in and sure enough we could. By the second practice, we were up to 18 singers and slowly, but surely it grew.

DCAT could not keep rehearsing at the Moose Lodge as the group had no money yet, so my Dad "created" some space at his business for a rehearsal hall and we were well on our way. I'm not sure where we would be today if not for that generous donation of free space for the group.

Well, we were determined to sing at the next GAS reunion, hosted by the Caballeros in New Jersey, so we needed a name. At the next executive meeting we came up with the name for the organization – DCAT - Drum Corps Alumni of Toronto and along with Mom's Business partner and my Dad, the logo was developed for DCAT and presented to the executive and approved. We now officially had an identity.

We rehearsed at my Dad's company for a number of years and I can recall my dad organizing the entire group (probably about 25 of us) to come to his office one weekend and build our first rehearsal room. It was great. We built permanent riser seating and had an "L" shaped arrangement which made it possible for us to hear each other as we learned the songs. Of course, the best part was the beer fridge he secured for the group so that we could keep our whistles wet as we practiced. We were able to use the entire facility to rehearse in sectionals... which I'm sure was quite an experience for the night shift that was working at his office.

Soon my dad decided that hand written parts was not the way to go. He went out, bought a computer, bought some computer software, and started inputting all of the DCAT music. To this day, he is still doing this. I'm not sure if anyone realizes how many countless hours a year goes into this monumental task for DCAT alone.

Well, here we are now, 14 years, almost 15 years later. And over those 14 years, my dad has been a member of the Board of Directors of DCAT the entire time until resigning a few months ago to, ironically, work with Tony Casciato in the development of the DCAT Hall Of Fame Committee.

He has tirelessly dedicated his time, vision and energy into making DCAT not only the envy of all GAS organizations but taking the GAS organization itself to new levels. You see, if it wasn't enough that he has been sitting on the DCAT board, he has also been the Vice President of the entire GAS organization for about years as well!

Dad, your service, dedication, spirit, generosity and leadership are to be envied. And we are so thankful that you have given so much of yourself so that we can be the amazing organization that we are today.

So please, join me in congratulating my dad, Don Gill, the first inductee into the DCAT Hall Of Fame!