

The History of The Yankee Doodle Band

The Early Years . . .

The band traces its origins to 1927 when a group of American Legion members formed a Drum and Bugle Corps. In 1936 several musicians had family members who played other types of wind instruments, so they decided to transform the corps into a full marching band. By May of 1936, the band paraded for the first time as a combined band, drum and bugle corps.

The band's first director had been a bandmaster in the British Army. Robert R. Winters enlisted in Scotland's Gordon Highlanders in 1901 and retired from the British Army in 1922, last serving as Bandmaster of the 2d Battalion, Queens Own Cameron Highlanders. He became bandmaster of the Yankee Doodle Band in 1936 and served as the band's director until 1946, when ill health forced him to leave the band.

Under the leadership of Mr. Winters, the strength of the band increased to 75 musicians by 1941. However, World War II reduced this number when 31 members left the band for military service. Since then, our members have served in the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf Wars and in several other military operations at home and abroad.

Since its early years the band has varied in strength but has never wavered from its dedication to preserving its musical traditions. Since 1928, the Yankee Doodle Band has performed in parades and concerts locally and throughout the United States. In recent years, the band has played in California, Texas, North Carolina, Missouri, Hawaii, Utah and Nevada.

Today . . .

There is a wide range of ages and experience in the members of the Yankee Doodle Band. Some of our members fought in World War II, while others are too young to remember the first Persian Gulf War. Some have performed with professional musical organizations, while others are students - still learning their instruments. Whatever the level of experience - each member does his or her part to add to the overall success of the organization.

Members of the band do not get paid individually. Money earned from parades and performances is used to pay for new music, uniforms, transportation and long distance trips. Our members play for fun - for the enjoyment of being a member of one of the last traditional civilian military-styled bands in the United States.

Within the band are husband-wife teams, father-daughter combinations and even a set of 90-year-old twin brothers who fought together in WWII and have been playing music together for over 60 years.

Don "Diego" Ackerman



Born in Albany and raised in rural Rensselaer County, Don spent his formidable years listening to his parent's extensive collection of 50's/60's records and banging on his father's drum set. After years of producing nothing more than an agonizing racket with some immense patience and encouragement on the part of his parents, he eventually learned how to play quite well. Soon there was music spilling from garages and basements throughout town where Don and his school mates were honing their craft, playing for hours on end, in hopes of landing that all important party or high school dance, leading to his first paying gig at the age of 13.

There was no turning back. He soon picked up the guitar, starting writing his own songs and began making the rounds at bars and coffeehouses. Shortly after recording his first demo, he decided to leave Albany and head out to Chicago. The music scene was bustling and it was there that he found his niche in Alt.Country. Delving into the roots of rock and roll, he began playing the banjo, mandolin and fiddle. It wasn't long before he was playing bars, clubs and music halls in Chicago and St. Louis with twangy-punk-garage bands Gasoline, Hudson Super Six, and Ruby Diesel. The genre wasn't mainstream by any means but it suited him just fine. After playing the first and second annual Twang Fest in St. Louis, things were looking good. But the lure of the northeast and family led him back to Albany where he soon hooked up with local cow-punk favorites the Coal Palace Kings. With CPK he was back on the drums and out on the road, making regular trips up and down the east coast, which led to a long lasting personal and professional relationship with bassist Jeff Sohn. The CPK rhythm section was soon sought out by other artists and bands such as Hayseed, Michael Eck, Tom Raider (Imagining Lennon) and Knotworking. Don's stage presence and demeanor has been likened to Levon Helm of The Band, but without the raspy voice.

Don has shared the stage with such notable acts as Charlie Daniels, Pete Best (the original Beatles drummer), The Waco Brothers, Tommy Womack, Robbie Fulks, and Eddie Angel.

He's performed on such notable stages as The Egg (Albany), Café Lena (Saratoga), Abby Pub (Chicago), Lakeside Lounge (NYC), Rodeo Bar (NYC), Andy's (Chestertown, MD), Poe's Pub (Richmond, VA), The Van Dyke (Schenectady), Maxwell's (Hoboken, NJ), Mohawk Place (Buffalo) and Isla Tequila (Isla Mujeres, Mexico)

He's played at many festivals and concert series such as Alive At Five (Albany), Empire State Plaza (Albany), Larkfest (Albany) and Twang Fest (St. Louis).

These days Don is keeping busy with a number of bands including Diego, Five O' Clock Charlie, Imagining Lennon and Knotworking.

Look for him on the world wide web:

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www.myspace.com/galbafuqua

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