

O U R   H E R I T A G E



*Honoring Those Who Have  
Dedicated Outstanding Service  
To Our Mission*



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**CLASS OF 2018**  
on the following pages.

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## David Lang

On Saturday night, August 21, 1982, David Lang, then a young 16-year-old kid, was nervously pacing back and forth underneath the back stands of Olympic Stadium in Montreal, Canada. As the finalist corps that night began assembling one by one for grand finale, that nervousness was palpable for those there with him. This 16-year-old did something that shocked the activity and made those who marched with him that much prouder of him and the corps he represented.

David Lang was announced on Finals Night as the 1982 DCI Individual & Ensemble Champion on Baritone, topping many others older and who marched in corps that were the presumptive favorites to win. David was one of the youngest I&E champions in DCI history, and one of the first from a non-Top 12 corps to win I&E on baritone. David marched a total of seven years with the Colt Cadets and the Colts before his final season in 1985.

His individual actions and overall demeanor were a great example to the corps. David never complained and he did everything asked of him. He did it with intensity and those around him realized that he was a leader by actions and not words. During the early '80s, the corps began attaining greater success and it revolved around their great baritone player. He became the new, recognized soloist for the corps, and by his final year in 1985, he had the crowd eating out his hand. He was the consummate musician, entertainer, and corps leader. David earned his third I&E Championship in 1985 and the Colts had their highest score and placement in corps history.

David continues to be a strong supporter of the Colts. He is now the band director in Independence, Iowa, has sent many members of his band to the Colts, and

often hosts the Colts and Colt Cadets during spring training and/or summer tour. David has a list of honors and awards for his contributions as an educator. One stands out: his recent honor as the Distinguished Service Award recipient by the Iowa Bandmasters Association. In receiving recognition this year, David stated that, "I knew I wanted to become a band director when I was in 8th grade. I started my musical career through the drum corps activity, followed by joining band, and was influenced greatly by my band directors and the Colts drum corps staff."

For his many individual accomplishments, leadership within the corps, continued support of the corps, and his work as an outstanding educator that has influenced the lives of hundreds of young people, we are proud to welcome David into the Colts Hall of Fame.

## Mike Lang

Not many people have a drum corps tour bus named after them — but Mike Lang does. Ask almost any percussionist who has marched with the Colts in the last 18 years and they will tell you stories about their bus — a.k.a. 'Mike'.

Mike first joined the Colts organization in the summer of 1976, when he became a member of the Colt Cadets cymbal line. He marched with the Colt Cadets for three years before moving up to the Colts in 1979 as a member of the Colts cymbal line.

Mike subsequently joined the United States Marine Corps where he proudly served from 1982 through 1994. He returned to the Colts in the summer of 2000, when he signed on as a bus driver for summer tour. He drove for the corps every summer through 2008, when he and his wife Dawn moved to Chandler, Arizona. The move took him away from

tour for several years but he found his way back to the corps in 2013 and has been on tour every day of every season since then.

Mike is now the Colts Tour Director and lead bus driver, and one of the most important people on the Colts summer tour. As our lead driver he is responsible for charting our route night after night, making sure that nobody gets lost, and planning for the efficient movement of the corps convoy (which currently totals four buses, two semis, two box trucks and two vans). He is a master planner who coordinates all travel, gets us where we need to be, and does so safely and on time.

In his spare time Mike is known to help new members and volunteers figure out which way is up, and provides a friendly shoulder when someone is having a rough day. And after the corps has pulled into a new housing site and everyone is trying to catch a couple of more hours of sleep, he will often slip onto the cook truck and get it clean and ready for the crew of volunteer cooks. Mike and Dawn still reside in Arizona, where they run a charter limousine company and are known to relax by their pool with their dog, Colonel.

For his dedication to the Colts, commitment to the safety and well-being of the members and volunteers, professionalism running our transportation program, and willingness to do whatever is needed to keep the corps running smoothly, we are proud to welcome Mike Lang into the Colts Hall of Fame.

## **Jim & Brenda Miller**

Like other parents at the time (late '70s/early '80s), Jim and Brenda Miller did the basics: made sure membership dues were paid for their three kids who were members, worked their monthly

commitment at the corps bingo hall, did their obligation in buying and selling Tombstone Pizzas, garbage bags, and more. Brenda did a stint as the President of the Colts Booster Club, Jim helped sell ads for the Music On The March program, and both were active volunteers every year, either selling brats or collecting tickets at the home show.

By 1982 an influx of members from outside of Dubuque caused a housing crunch. From 1982 through 1990, Jim and Brenda not only housed their own three kids, but at times had 10 additional members living with them when the corps was not on tour. However, their most significant contribution to the Colts was the work they did to start the Colts food program.

Up until that point, the corps primarily toured in the Midwest and there was no consistently organized food program – members often went in search of fast food when it was time to eat. Developing a consistent food program allowed the corps to travel further and to travel much more efficiently.

Jim and Brenda took the plunge and agreed to be the first full time cooks for the Colts during the summer of 1981. Jim brought some experience, having cooked at Ring's, Clarke College and other establishments in town. But that was nothing like cooking on tour! With a gutted-out Winnebago (no AC or cruise control), shelves holding roasters and kitchen supplies, and a floor dotted with coolers, they joined the corps on its first-ever extended tour: Milwaukee to Geneseo, then south into Louisiana, Houston, Austin, Dallas, Tulsa, and Kansas City, before wrapping matters up in the Chicago area for July 4th. This was followed by a second tour in late July and early August.

Who drove the Winnebago? Jim did with Brenda as his co-pilot. Who did the daily

shopping? Jim and Brenda. Who cooked and served the meals each day? Jim and Brenda. Who washed the dishes? Jim and Brenda. Access to water was occasionally available by hose; however, more often, water had to be hauled from a school shower to the outside makeshift kitchen.

Brenda passed away in 1991 and Jim in October 2017. Jim was active with the Colts right up until his last months — he was even cooking burgers for the Colt Cadets after the 2017 home show.

Jim and Brenda were the pioneers in getting the Colts food program started, and running smoothly — a food program that is now recognized as one of the best in the activity. For this significant contribution to the corps, they are extremely deserving of being recognized as inductees into the Colts Hall of Fame.

## **Larry Stephens**

Leadership within drum corps depends heavily on individual members. Some fall naturally into a leadership role, and some become leaders by watching and emulating other members. Larry Stephens was one of the 'natural' leaders and was a mainstay of the Colts mellophone section from 1978 to 1980.

Larry had a year's experience marching with the Madison Scouts when he joined the Colts in 1978. Almost immediately, he was everybody's friend and utilized a great sense of humor to help lead the 'middle voice' section. Larry could easily slip into the role of section leader, and he had a relaxed style of teaching and directing sectional rehearsals. One of his contemporaries noted that with Larry there, "sectional rehearsals turned into productive learning and rehearsal sessions. We actually fixed stuff, and nobody felt singled out or made an

example. When it was time to work, he worked hard. He rarely criticized the less disciplined among us; he led by example. It was effective!"

Larry was a talented musician who found a home in 'Iowa's Corps' and became a leader with the Colts. Any drum corps in the country would have welcomed him into their brass line; the Colts were fortunate to have him as a member until he aged out in 1980. His influence on other members was profound, and helped shape the marching experience of many other members. One summed it up by saying "when I saw Larry on the field, I tried to try harder. I think a lot of us did." As a leader in the corps and an example to members across the decades, we are proud to welcome Larry into the Colts Hall of Fame.

## **Steve Suslik Wally Meissner Jane (MacFarlane) Kohl**

The Colts winter guard came out of nowhere in the spring of 1976 to capture the prestigious Midwest Color Guard Circuit Championship. This was a major title in the days the preceded Winter Guard International (WGI). They went on to win the 1976 V.F.W. Color Guard National Championship, in a season that culminated with a Bronze Medal at the DCI Color Guard Championships in Philadelphia. Tonight we honor three people who were at the heart of this run to glory: Steve Suslik, Wally Meissner and Jane (MacFarlane) Kohl.

Steve Suslik was invited to join the Colts staff in the fall of 1975 when the corps decided to enter the world of winter guard. Steve had marched and taught guard for The Cavaliers, and was initially hesitant to sign until he realized the guard had the potential to be very competitive. He came to Dubuque to

watch a rehearsal and believed the talent level in the room could be a championship contender. He signed on and started coming to Dubuque for weekend guard rehearsals from his home in the Chicago area.

The Colts guard traveled to performances each weekend in the Chicago suburbs as there was no winter guard circuit in Iowa. They would perform on Saturday, spend the night in a school or hotel, and then perform again on Sunday before returning home. Under Steve's leadership, their precision and determination led them to become a surprise contender for the 1976 Midwest Color Guard Circuit Championship. By season's end, they accomplished their goal and won the title. Following his work with the Colts, Steve went on to become a judge and worked many years in the pageantry arts.

Wally Meissner joined Steve Suslik on their trips from Chicago to work with the Colts color guard. Steve may have been more recognized as the innovator of the group, but Wally was a master technician — cleaning each of the guard elements to absolute perfection. Wally had also marched with The Cavaliers and certainly shared in creating and orchestrating a winter guard program that took the Midwest Color Guard Circuit by storm.

The two had written a wonderful color guard show that included many innovative elements. Their signature move — at a time when perfection was more highly regarded than attempt — created a wagon wheel moving across the floor with the flags circling the Color Guard Sergeant. The flawless execution of the circle, and the interval between performers as they rotated, is what made the move stand out among other groups.

Wally was a huge factor in bringing Steve's vision to reality, at a time when perfection was the hallmark of a champion.

Jane MacFarlane served as “boots on the ground” in Dubuque when Steve and Wally were in Chicago during the week — they could only make it to Dubuque on weekends. Jane had begun marching in the Colts color guard at age 15. She marched five years from 1969 to 1973, eventually becoming Color Guard Sergeant. In 1973 Jane married her high school sweetheart Jim Kohl (a member of the percussion section). Unfortunately this meant that she could no longer be a corps member as in 1973 you were not allowed to be in the corps if you were married.

While marriage ended Jane's participation as a member, she joined the teaching staff, and when the Colts winter guard program was being developed, she spearheaded a group of former members, including Betty Walbrun and Ellen Fangman, to lead Monday through Friday rehearsals. She became known for high expectations and set the bar for perfection – a bar that had a major impact on the 21 girls from Dubuque delivering near-flawless performances week after week.

Together Steve, Wally and Jane led the way to the Colts' one and only national championship. Their pursuit of perfection led an unknown group of guard girls from Iowa to one of the most cherished titles in the winter guard world. It is with great pride that we welcome them into the Colts Hall of Fame.



**Special thanks to the 2018  
Colts Hall of Fame committee:**

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Jeff MacFarlane