

VENTURING MAGAZINE

99 Years (and counting) – Then and Now by Carol Wiker

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The Crossroads of America Scout Band celebrated its 99th Anniversary this year during the Scouting Anniversary month. As a part of this 99th Anniversary we kicked off the celebration of our 100th Anniversary.

The Scout Band has a long and rich history. It is the oldest Scout Band in the United States and second in tenure only to a Scout Band in England by a few months. It was started in 1917 by "Chief" Francis O. Belzer, the first Executive Officer of the Central Indiana Council (now known as the Crossroads of America Council), in an effort to maintain the interests of the older Scouts. He was a great leader with the best interests of the boys at heart.



We searched high and low for former members of the Band—especially for those of this era. We found two—the Archer brothers, Ralph and Norris. Norris still resides in Indianapolis but Ralph had moved out of state and passed away a couple months before the celebration. Norris played percussion and Ralph played Saxophone. They joined the Scout Band in 1937. He had many pleasant memories of "Chief" Belzer and his musical ways. Some of the songs are still sung today like the popular summer camp wake-up call, "Good Morning, Mr. Zip Zip Zip." And "Chief" held evening leadership briefings on the railings of his cabin, which is still standing today.

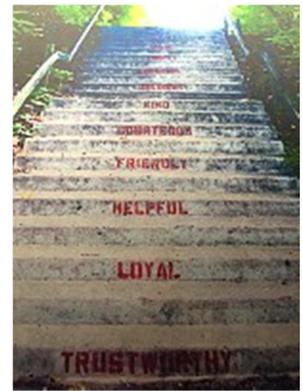
The Scout Band has changed a lot through the last 99 years. It started as a Drum Corps serving for summer camp ceremonies and Jamborees. And they wore the uniform of the early 1900's. It was a very militaristic organization with demerits for being late and absenteeism. There were different classes within the Band depending on the playing qualifications of the member. Times have changed — a lot — and for the better. The Scout Band is now a "dual membership" unit as our members are encouraged to continue their adventures in other Scouting venues. Youth members are awarded with beads and imaginary money for attending. All levels of musical qualities are accepted without audition. We were an Exploring Post for many years thereby allowing girls to join the ranks of the Scout Band. When the Venturing program began we became a Venturing Crew. Our uniforms have changed with the times although we still wear the Exploring uniform.



Crossroad of America Scout Band, est. 1917



There is a hill at Belzer Boy Scout Camp with 12 steps. It is a rather steep hill. Each step has one word on its face. Those words are: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent. Those words have been painted on those steps as long as I have been involved in Scouting and probably many years before that. Each step up that long hill gives you a chance to reflect on the word painted on its face—the words we live by—the Scout Law.



We started our Celebration with the music by our "Cool Crew" Jazz Band performing "Cupid Shuffle," "25 or 6 to 4," "Sing, Sing, Sing," "Let My People Go," "Play that Funky Music," and Scarborough Fair."

Next up was the Concert Band playing "Trumpet Fanfare," "Grand Old Flag" "Yankee Doodle" "This is My Country" Medley, "Star Spangled Banner," "Three Songs of Colonial America," "Trumpets With Attitudes," "Instant Concert," "On The Banks of the Wabash," "Happy," "On Wings of my Own," and "March On, America."



Quite a change from the previous Drum and Bugle Corps marching music, we now play music more recognizable by the youth members as well as the brand new version of Star Wars. We no longer play strictly Souza marches. Some songs have been brought in from the schools. One song was written locally for an experimental airplane convention. We still play patriotic songs as well as fun songs. One of our favorites, Instant Concert, has over 20 songs included in it. Nobody can sit still through the famous YMCA!



All the band directors and teachers of the members were invited to attend the celebration. This is a retired director from North Central. Like Matthew said last year, we all have a common bond, young and old, and that bond is music. Music is a language of its own and needs no translation.

We have been joined by a local rock band known as the Indigo from Muncie, Indiana, (which is about an hour northeast of Indianapolis). Some of them sat in with us for the concert—they will be providing missing instrumentation for the 100th Anniversary Concert next year.

So what do we have exciting planned for the next year? LOTS! There are two Annual District Leader Recognition Dinners for starters. A Merit Badge University, Carmel Marathon, Indianapolis MiniMarathon, Indy 500 Pre-Race Parade of Bands, Eagle Court of Honor, Westward Tour following Lincoln through Springfield to Mt. Rushmore, Indiana State Fair performances, Presidential Ceremony Honoring President Benjamin Harrison's birthday, Civil War Re-enactment, and Christmas at the Indiana State Museum. Performance requests are accepted throughout the year and I'm sure there will be more than this.

The week of July 2-8, 2017, will be the 100th Anniversary Celebration Tour held at Camp Belzer in Indianapolis. Activities will include community concerts, swimming, golf outings, a band museum, a

vintage campsite, an alumni dinner, group outings, campfires, video shows, dance and concert, merit badge work, music clinics. As a finale, the 100th Anniversary Concert will be performed on Friday, July 7, 2017 (rain date is Saturday July 8).

We're all looking forward to next year and want to include all former members in the festivities. If you or someone you know has ever been a member of this Scout Band please register with Wufoo on our website: www.scoutband.com.

