

Command Performance at Buckingham Palace

by Gordon Laird

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Glenn Startup (trumpet) and Gordon Laird (clarinet) at Buckingham Palace, 1950

We had never been away from Canada before and here we were in London,

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England! Two friends who had known each other since grade 4 and who spent many hours together.

Of all our experiences, the one which happened to Glenn and me one day in Grade 7 was to change our whole lives profoundly.

During a home room class a man was invited in to make an appeal to our class at the invitation of our teacher. He had a shock of white hair and I think he carried a trumpet under his arm.



Arthur Delamont, band leader of the famed Kitsilano Boys Band, announced to us that he was starting the Point Grey Junior High band with beginners, and if any of us were interested, we should meet him after school in the music room.

Glenn Startup and I put up our hands, and thereby sealed our fate! We did not choose our instruments, that was up to Mr. Delamont. Soon we learned to call him Mr. D, (or Dee behind his back).

Mr. D was a taskmaster verging on being a tyrant. But he introduced us to all kinds of music and also to the art of showmanship.

The Kitsilano Boys Band, which he had founded in 1928 in Vancouver, had gone on to great glory, winning trophies against adult bands in their early trips to England, 1934, 1936 and 1939. The 1939 trip had been cut short because of the outbreak of war. Glenn and I (along with 37 other boys and two chaperones) left Vancouver in May, 1950, traveled by train across Canada, playing in many small Canadian towns along the way, and boarded the H. M. S. Samaria in Quebec City.

We had already experienced our longest train trip, now we were to experience 7 days in an ocean liner.

In 1950, the Second World War was still recent, as evidenced by our ship, which was still fitted out as a troop transport. We slept in roughly-fashioned bunks right next to the metal bulkheads. In England food rationing was still in progress. The quality of the food was still "war-time" with powdered milk and eggs. Only when we traveled to Holland for a week, did we eat fresh produce: eggs, milk and

cheese.

Away from home for almost five months, Glenn and I acquired our thirst for "far away places with strange-sounding names" - something which would call us for the rest of our lives.

When we returned home the band members scattered, each to their own lives and careers. Some became lawyers and doctors, and almost every other conceivable trade and calling.

Only two became professional musicians. Many of the rest of us continued as avid amateurs. When we gathered last August for our 50th Reunion of our trip to Europe, we picked up our "horns" and played the program once again.

No, we did not perform a "Command Performance" for King George and Queen Elizabeth. But we were greeted by the Lord Mayor of London!



Bill Cave and Arthur Delamont
Greeted by the Lord Mayor of London