

# Notes

"The President's Own"  
UNITED STATES  
MARINE BAND  
Colonel John R. Bourgeois, Director



October - November 1991

Published for the Friends of the Marine Band



*John Philip Sousa led the Marine Band on its first tour in 1891. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)*

## "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band Marks Tour Centennial

This year marks the 100th anniversary of a tradition initiated by the Marine Band's 17th director, John Philip Sousa. As a result of Sousa's drive and persistence, the band embarked in 1891 upon its first national concert tour. Over the past century, these tours have brought the music of "The President's Own" to people in the largest of cities and the smallest of towns across the nation.

By 1890 the Marine Band had gained tremendous popularity under Sousa's leadership. The band's reputation was also furthered by the relatively new

invention of the day, the phonograph, when the Columbia Phonograph Company chose to record the Marine Band. Within two years, over 200 different Marine Band cylinders were released.

Prior to 1891, the band could not be away from Washington for more than twenty-four hours at a time. This restriction limited out-of-town appearances to nearby cities such as Richmond, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. During these trips the band was extremely well-received as evidenced by the following reviews:

*No concert given in this city the past season has so fully come up to the expectations of the audience as did that of the Marine Band.*

*- The Pittsburgh Leader.*

*and, Mr. Sousa showed his quick musical perception and light, firm*

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leadership, and the band displayed a richness of tone and a refinement of execution combined with enormous power, that fully justified its reputation. The performance of the band, whose fine appearance was itself inspiring, made the concert altogether most pleasing. - *Philadelphia Times*, April 14, 1889.

Such enthusiastic praise strengthened Sousa's resolve to take the band on an extended concert tour. Sousa had requested permission to tour from Colonel Charles G. McCawley, eighth Commandant of the Marine Corps, but was repeatedly denied. When the Commandant became ill and was relieved of his post, Sousa approached the Acting Commandant. He suggested that Sousa go to the Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin F. Tracy, whom Sousa would describe in his memoirs as "a true friend of the band." Tracy granted his approval, but told Sousa he should seek final approval from President Benjamin Harrison.

In Sousa's autobiography, *Marching Along*, he recalls what transpired:

*My years in Washington had taught me that if you wish to see the President, see his wife first. So I asked Mrs. Harrison. She liked the idea of a tour, and promised to speak to the President about it.*

*Next morning, I was summoned to see the President. As I entered the room, he rose, shook hands cordially, and leading me to one of the windows which faced the Potomac River he said, "Mrs. Harrison tells me that you are anxious to make a tour with the band. I was thinking myself of going out of town, and" with a smile, "it would be tough on Washington if both of us were away at the same time. I have thought it over, and I believe the country would rather hear you, than see me, so you have my permission to go."*

### The First Tour

Sousa immediately began to arrange the first concert tour; a five-week trip throughout New England and the Midwest in the spring of 1891. The promotional materials for the tour explained how this new Marine Band activity had come about:

*The whole of the present administration, and especially the President and Mrs. Harrison, seem to take an unusual interest in the welfare of the band, and exhibit a pride in its well-known excellence. This warm appreciation of a deserving National institution is perhaps what has more than anything else to do with bringing about the present tour, which is regarded as an "outing" of the band for the purpose of exhibiting its real merits to the people of the Republic; and it is made with the cordial approval and good wishes of the entire administration.*

The tour, which began on April 1st, brought "The President's Own" to 32 cities and towns throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana, Kentucky, and finally Washington, D.C. on May 4th.

The band performed two different programs: one for matinees and another for evening concerts. Both included Sousa's unique blend of popular music and orchestral transcriptions, as well as his own compositions. Although the audiences clamored for Sousa's marches, he included them only as encores, offering his audiences what he called the "solid fare" of Wagner, Bizet, Verdi, Schubert, Berlioz, and others.

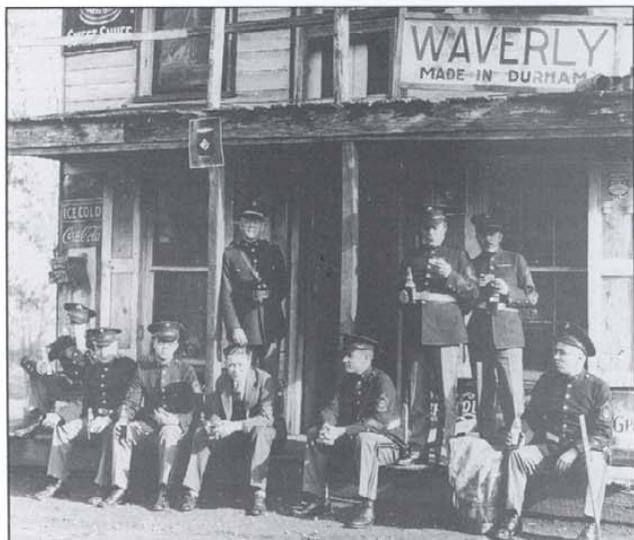
In addition to the 50 Marine Band musicians, Sousa followed the concert fashion of the time by including a civilian soloist. The 1891 tour soloist was Mlle. Maria Decca, an American-born and European trained soprano praised by the *New York Sun* in 1890 with the following: "So far, Mlle. Decca stands enormously high, so high as to be almost alone upon her pinnacle." Decca sang two solos on each tour program.

Because the early Marine Band tours were arranged and coordinated by commercial touring agencies, admission was charged. Tickets for the 1891 concert cost between 50 cents and \$1.00, depending on the quality of the seating.

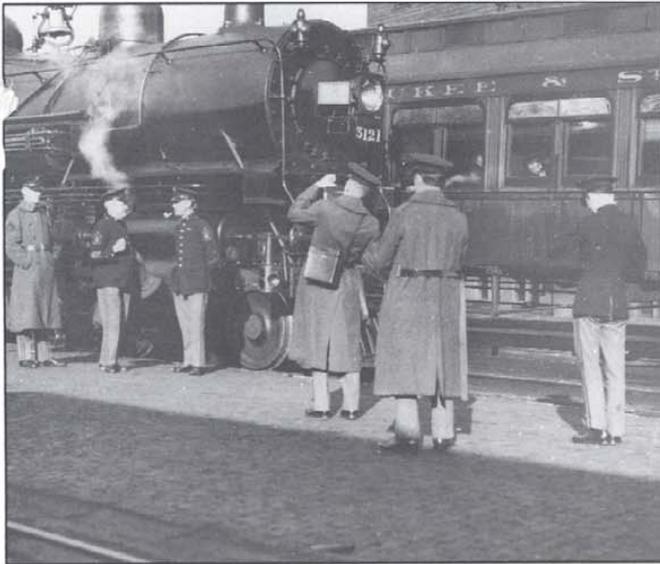
Sousa and his bandsmen apparently caused quite a sensation on tour both musically and visually. A newspaper notice of the 1891 tour gives this description:

*When the curtain rose a half hundred men were seen on stage in dress uniform of dark blue trousers, scarlet coats, liberal embellishment of silk cord,*

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Marine Bandsmen on layover enroute to Chapel Hill, N.C. during the 1929 Tour. Photograph by former band member Thaddeus Hess.



*Marine Bandsmen standing with locomotive before departing Savannah, IL during the 1925 Tour. Photo by Thaddeus Hess.*

*epaulets and gilt buckles. When conductor Sousa - a stalwart and pleasant-looking gentleman, with a large sword hitched in true military fashion to his belt, came in, there was more applause.*

Although public reaction was gratifying, the tour was overly strenuous, with the band often appearing in four different towns in two days. Sousa and his musicians lacked sufficient sleep and often only had time for makeshift meals on the run. The musicians traveled by train in heavy wool Dress Blue uniforms, riding for 10 hours or more and arriving just in time for the matinee concert. After only a few hours break, they would perform an evening concert. The next morning brought another 10-hour train trip. Although Sousa considered the tour a great success, he and his bandsmen were exhausted. Following the tour, on the advice of a Navy doctor, Sousa and his wife, Jane, took an extended European vacation.

Soon after Sousa returned from his European trip plans for a second Marine Band tour were made. The five and a half-week tour took the Marine Band through 17 states to the Pacific Coast and back, from March 21st to May 7th. During this

trans-continental trip, Sousa and the Marine Band were even more popular with the public than on the first tour.

There were few musical organizations of the Marine Band's caliber touring the United States at that time, and the band was often referred to as the National Band. The *San Francisco Argonaut* printed this review of the Marine Band during its 1892 tour

to the Pacific Coast:

*Mr. Sousa's troupe is one of which any conductor might be proud. It might be called a band of soloists. He [Sousa] has drilled his men till they have sunk their individuality in the work of playing parts of one great machine.*

### **Touring is Established**

Following the Marine Band's 1892 Pacific Coast tour, Sousa left the Marine Corps to form his own band. According to research conducted in the early 1970's by Arthur Lehman, Marine Band Principal Euphonium

1947 - 1971, the band made only four tours: 1901, 1907, 1911 and 1912, before traveling yearly between 1920 and 1931. During the Depression years of 1932 to 1934 the band did not tour, but took to the road again in 1935 and continued to tour every year until the onset of World War II in 1942. During the war, the band played many additional performances in Washington, D.C. and at the White House to boost wartime morale. The tours resumed in 1946 and the band has toured every year since.

During the early tours the band made a point of traveling to different regions of the United States, but there was no established method for accomplishing this goal. During the 1929 tour, territorial problems arose. The recently created Army and Navy bands had started to tour as well, and concert engagements began to conflict. As a result, the country was divided into three geographical areas - the West, Midwest, and the Southern and New England states - with each band touring a different area on a rotating basis. After World War II, the Department of Defense amended this plan. In order to accommodate tours by the newly-formed Air Force and Coast Guard bands, five geographic tour areas were created.

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### **Memorable Tours**

Over the past century of touring, several tours have stood out as particularly memorable.

In 1937, the band switched from train travel to chartered buses, which continues to be the band's means of conveyance. In 1938 the band missed its only tour concert appearance to date. The band was scheduled to perform in Worcester, Massachusetts, but a hurricane had flooded the Connecticut River and the band had to turn back after passing through Hartford, Connecticut. The 1957 tour was a memorable one for

the musicians because for the first time they were allowed to travel in civilian clothing. "Traveling in the Dress Blues was not only very uncomfortable, but it also created confusion among the townspeople we encountered," recalls Arthur Lehman. "We were often mistaken for a Salvation Army band, and I remember one occasion when a bandsman standing near the desk in a hotel lobby was asked to carry luggage to someone's room!" The band's longest tour was the 1970 Pacific Coast trip which covered 21 states in 12,077 miles with 131 performances in 66 days.

## Today's Tour

Today's tour schedule consists of one evening performance per day. Travel times have been greatly shortened to allow time for the musicians to get sufficient rest and to prepare for the evening performance. The band's Concert Moderator and Baritone Vocalist, Master Gunnery Sergeant Michael Ryan, a veteran of 22 tours, commented on the current touring system saying, "In the past it was an endurance contest, but now we have time to prepare properly so we can do our best for every performance."

The Marine Band tours only in the fall of the year, and rarely leaves the Washington, D.C. area at any other time due to a heavy schedule of White House commitments and ceremonial performances. The Tour

Band, which consists of the Director, Colonel John R. Bourgeois, an Assistant Director, 58 musicians, the Stage Manager and a stage crew of four, travels for seven weeks each October and November. To cover any Presidential musical requests, a "Homeguard" band stays in Washington. Just as the tour band personnel varies somewhat from year to year, so does the group which stays home.

Over the past century, the philosophy behind the Marine Band's national concert tours has remained virtually unchanged. In preparation for the 1891 tour, publicity materials were sent to the cities on the itinerary to explain why the Marine Band was embarking for the first time on such a trip.

"The President and the Secretary of the Navy have consented to give

a leave of absence to the band for a brief tour, in response to many pressing requests, and because they recognize the fact that the people throughout the country should have an opportunity to listen to the band which is maintained by their pleasure and at their expense."

One hundred years later, Colonel Bourgeois echoes this idea saying, "While Jefferson called the Marine Band "The President's Own," Sousa referred to it as "The National Band." As its leader, Sousa realized the importance of sharing this national resource with America through the initiation of the concert tour. Through the years, both the band and its repertoire have grown, but that tradition of sharing the Marine Band with people of the United States remains the same."

Article by SSgt Nancy S. Colburn

## 1991 Tour Soloists



Principal Euphoniumist Gunnery Sergeant Michael J. Colburn will perform "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" by Simone Mantia.



Trumpet players Master Gunnery Sergeant J. Carlton Rowe (left) and Staff Sergeant John R. Hagstrom will perform the Concerto Rococo for Two Trumpets by Handel.



Baritone Vocalist and Concert Moderator Master Gunnery Sergeant Michael S. Ryan will perform vocal selections from *Man of La Mancha*, "Largo al factotum" from *The Barber of Seville* and "The House I Live In" by Earl Robinson and Lewis Allan.

## Points of Interest

The Marine Band will leave Washington October 1, 1991 for the band's annual fifty-day tour through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Several band members will visit familiar sites during the 1991 tour. The following individuals lived, worked, or have relatives in or near these tour cities.

- Oct. 6 - Atlanta, GA, Euphoniumist SSgt Paul S. Kellner, Jr., a graduate of Grady High School in Atlanta and former member of the U.S. Army Ground Forces Band at Ft. McPherson. His parents reside in Stone Mountain, GA.; Trumpeter MGySgt Carlton Rowe attended Georgia State in Atlanta and his parents reside in Smyrna, GA.
- Oct. 8 - Columbus, GA, Clarinetist SSgt Charles H. Willett performed with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra in 1987.

- Oct 10 - Tuscaloosa, AL, Cornetist MSgt Roy C. Griffin, a native of Decatur, AL, performed with the Birmingham Symphony (now called the Alabama Symphony) from 1966-1974; French Hornist GySgt John P. Troxel performed with the Alabama Symphony from 1982-1984; Harpist MSgt Phyllis Mauney performed with the Alabama Symphony from 1977-1978.

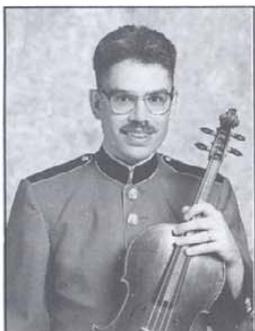
- Oct. 21 - Tallahassee, FL, Clarinetist SSgt Charles H. Willett attended Florida State Univ. and performed with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra; Trumpeter MGySgt Carlton Rowe attended Florida State University.

- Nov. 11 - Savannah, GA, Harpist MSgt Phyllis A. Mauney's parents reside in Hilton Head, SC.

- Nov. 13 - Columbia, SC, Clarinetist SSgt Fred D. Lemmons' parents reside in Aikens, SC.

## Band Member News

### New Member



Violist Staff Sergeant Mark E. Pfannschmidt of Anoka, MN graduated from the Interlochen Arts Academy in 1977. He received a bachelor's degree in music from The Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, MD and a master's degree in performance from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

### Reenlistments

Percussionist Master Gunnery Sergeant Wayne W. Webster of Baltimore, MD for 4 years. . . Violinist Gunnery Sergeant Michael H. Faulkner of Ridgewood, NJ for 4 years. . . Librarian Gunnery Sergeant Russ D. Girsberger of Spokane, WA for 2 years. . . French Hornist Staff Sergeant Michael L. Indykiewicz of Joliet, IL for 2 years. . . Bassoonist Staff Sergeant Roger C. Kantner of Elmhurst, IL for 4 years.

## Activities Update



**Keynote Address** - Marine Band Director Colonel John R. Bourgeois delivered the Keynote address to the Triennial Assembly of the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity on August 8th in New Orleans, LA.

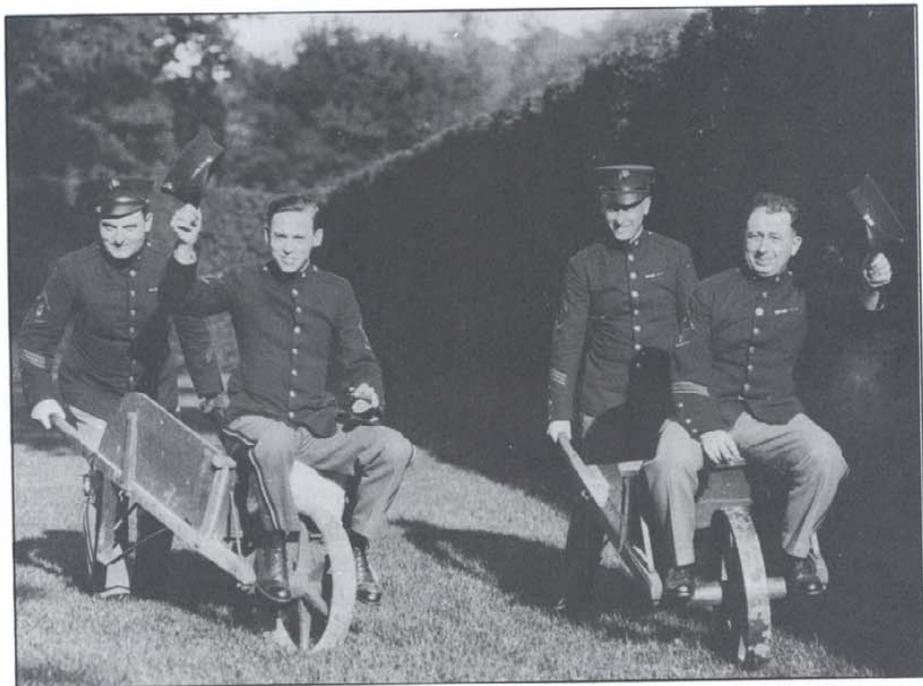
**USMC Birthday** - The Brass Choir of "The President's Own" will perform music for a service honoring the 216th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps at the Washington National Cathedral, Sunday, November 3rd. The pre-service performance will begin at 3:30 p.m. with a worship service following at 4 p.m. General Carl E. Mundy Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Captain Donald L. Krabbe, USN, Chaplain of the Marine Corps, will be among the honored guests participating in the service. The public is cordially invited to attend this free event.

**Tour Schedule Update** - Wed., Oct. 2nd, Durham, NC - the band will perform at Page Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. - Fri., Oct. 25th, New Port Richey, FL - The 8:40 p.m. performance has been cancelled.

**24-Hour Concert  
Information Line  
(202) 433 - 4011**

Photos property of U.S. Marine Band

## From Our Archives . . .



*Marine Bandsmen at Longwood Gardens, PA , (Pierre Dupont's Estate) during the 1923 tour. (left to right) Unidentified (possibly Cornelius O'Neil), Bartley Moor, Peter Hazes, Silvio Onofry. Photograph by Thaddeus Hess.*