

504th AIR FORCE BAND

LINEAGE

504th Air Force Band activated 21 February 1951

STATIONS

Ent AFB, CO

Truax Field, WI, on 22 October 1951

Ft. Snelling, MN, in February 1953

Grand View AFB (later Richards Gebaur AFB), MO, 12 Mar 1954-14 Apr 1959

Ent AFB, CO, on 15 April 1959

Peterson Field, CO, in April 1959

ASSIGNMENTS

ADC

128th Fighter-Interceptor Wing

Air Base Group

31st Air Division, 6 Feb 1952

Central Air Defense Force, Mar 1954

4600th Air Base Wing

4614th Support Group, 15 Feb 1960

4600th Air Base Wing, 1 Apr 1963

Military Airlift Command, 8 Oct 1979

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

In today's world of iPods, MP3s, and downloading music, it is hard to remember how important bands; big bands with woodwinds, strings, brass, and percussion were to music when NORAD took form. On April 15 1959, Colonel Barney Oldfield organized the NORAD Band: a 90-member unit drawn from US Army, US Air Force, US Navy, and Royal Canadian Air Force enlisted bandsmen. It was the only international, inter-service band ever in existence. The band premiered in Albuquerque, NM, and then set out on its first tour in the Pacific Northwest.

On the road, a NORAD Band Concert was the "Cavalcade of Music" with a focus on custom arrangements of show tunes and medleys. The band was in high demand and had appearances at the Canadian National Exhibition, the Michigan State Fair, and annual appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall. It also shot television spots on the Bell Telephone Hour and the Dinah Shore Show, culminating with an appearance on the Steve Allen Show in May 1960. In that year the American Federation of Musicians named the NORAD Band the "Honorary Best Band" at the annual Best Bands contest in Detroit.

In December 1964, Lieutenant Colonel Victor J. Molzer took over as director of the band, and in 1965. Captain Con Furey of the Canadian Armed Forces took up duties as assistant musical director. With a binational leadership, the NORAD Band continued a string of high-profile appearances for the command including Mexico City, the Hollywood Bowl, the New York's World Fair, Guatemala, EXPO 67 in Montreal. Iceland, the Mike Douglas Show, the Today Show, and the Tonight Show.

The Cavalcade also featured "The NORAD Commanders" jazz band. The Commanders' alumni list reads like a veritable "who's who" of successful musicians including Bobby Shew, Mike Whited, Bill Prince, Phil Wilson, Bobby Harriott, Warren Luening, Pete Rosa, Jerry Ash, Johnnie Zell, Richard Maloof, Kenny Kotwitz, Steve Bohannon, Jerry DeDad, Randy Aldcroft, Mike Brumbaugh, Clay Brandt, Jerry Lilledahl. Dave Wolpe, Larry Ford, Jim Straggari, Dave Edwards, Fred Hamilton, and Rick Drumm.

Off the road, the NORAD Band lived in a small barracks at Peterson Field, the airfield of Ent Air Force Base. The barracks were across from the rehearsal hall, which was conveniently located next to the NCC Club. One bandman remembered that the club allowed the band to gather there "because they were such GREAT customers!!" NORAD band members were active on the local music scene with jam sessions at the "Cellar" in Manitou Springs and the "Emporium" in Colorado Springs. The band also recorded a number of albums including Playback, About Faces, The NORAD Cavalcade of Music from Carnegie Hall, NORAD Night at Carnegie Hall, Exciting Sounds, Music from NORAD, and Ballads and Brass.

The NORAD Band was retired in 1979 as each of the component bands went back to its respective service. *The Air Force component was redesignated the 504th Air Force Band of the Golden Gate and moved to Travis Air Force Base, CA. It continues to perform as the United States Air*

Force Band of the Golden West. So the legacy of the NORAD Band, the "Cavalcade of Music," remains with us still.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources