

## Museum Around the Corner

### The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

#### Winyah Band ©

We seldom know how others see us, but once in a while we are allowed to see ourselves through the eyes of strangers. This is a letter addressed to the Honorable Sylvan L. Rosen, Mayor of the City of Georgetown of 10 April, 1959 about the award winning Winyah High School Band.

“This letter is written with a motive! I want something for someone! On 9 April at 1100 hours in the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C. I was covering the High School bands during their contest. Perhaps I should explain my position more clearly before I go on. I am a professional soldier of some seventeen years of service, I occasionally cover sports events with my camera as a hobby and periodically, when I shoot worthwhile photos, they are published in local services publications. Hence, on the above date, I was at the place mentioned in the unofficial role.

Since this type of activity was a little out of my line, I felt it would be best to gain some knowledge of the contesting bands. I began to pursue this course of action by picking out the biggest and most colorful bands and interviewing the members at random. As my information began to take shape, I found that there existed some sort of anxiety about a small band from Georgetown, S.C. Bigger, flashier bands from as far away as Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Maryland were eyeing this little 58 piece outfit from Georgetown warily and with some apprehension. Curiosity overcame me and I walked over to a corner of the Armory where a splash of red & white uniforms colored the otherwise dark and poorly illuminated area.

It was in this corner that I first met the Winyah High School Band; it was a meeting that I shall not forget. Very soon after, I engaged a group of the youngsters in conversation. I found that they were previously champions – not once but several times.

In the lobby of the Armory near the back, the boys and girls were gathering as I continued to talk and listen. I found that some were very young, others were “vets” and had been here before. There in the lobby, as I observed your children, I saw nerves being exhibited and also grit courage.

Competition out on the main floor was keen – the bigger, flashier bands were good, poised and confident. How could this little group with its contingent of very young members, many of them untried in competition, ever hope to compete against the other units present?

I talked to Miss Patsy Harrelson and to others, I went further and engaged some of the chaperons in conversation. I began to learn this wasn't just a High School band, it was more. It was a bright sparkling exhibit of community effort. I could see the years of work by parents who had loved and cherished these children as they grew up. I could see the efforts of the church where the children prayed for guidance before they went on that Armory floor, I could feel the intense desire to win if they could. I found out how these same kids had sold doughnuts for weeks to buy a bus and how they had practiced long, hard hours for this day. My thoughts were supposed to be impartial, I should be about my business interviewing and talking to other bands. Somehow this mission to photograph various bands and units was becoming indistinct, I found myself loath to go away from this little group, I wanted to stay close to them, to hope for them and so I stayed.

A few quiet words from Mr. Jacobus brought order, silence reigned for a few seconds, then his voice, low and clear, came over the heads of the band to me where I stood in the rear. ‘This is what you wanted, he said, ‘go out there and win it’.

With this simple statement the band, your band, went out on the floor. They looked wonderful in their uniforms of red & white and yet so small in the center of that huge building, how could they ever hope to challenge their competitors? Even as I watched, some unsporting cat calls and boos drifted down upon them, I worried about how this might effect the younger members like little Ricky Powers who was sporting a large shiner on the left side, and way down inside I said a tiny prayer for your band and I felt that win, lose or draw, I would write this letter to the people of Georgetown so they could know.

The remainder of the day was lost for me, for the moment the drums roared out and the music filled the acres of space in the Armory I knew for certain that I wanted to communicate to you all in Georgetown that all your hopes and all your efforts weren't in vain.

How proud I was of your children, when only halfway thru their routine they were receiving standing applause from their competition. How splendidly they wheeled and counter marched! How very much they proved they were champions!

I am a complete stranger to all of you, yet I sit and write you this. I hope not in vain. Turn your townsfolk out when these children get home, crowd around them and hug them to your hearts. Let them know how really and truly wonderful they are, please don't let them down. They did so very well for you against some terrible odds. Georgetown, open your hearts and let them know how much you love them.

As an old soldier now, and after two wars, if I were asked why I had fought, I wouldn't need to think of an answer; I would just remember those boys and girls of the Winyah High School Band. I fought for people like those kids, they are truly inspiring. God bless each one of them and each one of you. I salute you parents, teachers, churches and community.

Respectfully,  
Sgt. Raymond S. Drummond, U.S. Army  
Headquarters Company  
D.U.S. A. A.  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia"