The Writing of “Drum Cadence – 1962”

While attending summer session in 1962 and having some leisure time on my hands, one day over at the YMCA magazine and periodical lounge (northside glassed in rotunda) and which was just across the street from Puryear Hall where I was billeted, it occurred to me that something had to be done with how the drum section was forever confused when playing what was then *The Cadence*. We had three, yes count ‘em THREE cadence lines of eight bars, but each one had to be played TWICE. And that was the problem: Every time we started one of those three cadence lines, there was a hesitation and a kind of yelling going on trying to get everyone on the same line, playing the same thing. This had to stop. So I sat down with paper and pencil and wrote the “old” first line and immediately below that wrote out the “new” first eight bars. My reason for doing that was to accommodate the seniors (Class of ‘63) and effectively overlay the “new” atop the “old”.

That made sense to me, a junior (Class of ’64) at the time, so that memorizations by the seniors would become unnecessary. They could simply keep playing like they always had and drummers of the three lower classes could (and did) play over them. As I recall, there were really only two seniors on the drum rank anyway.

Continuing with the “new” drum cadence, line 1, I then wrote out a whole added eight bars, still remaining in overlay mode, but with a good final click for NUMBER 1 of the “new” making it a total of sixteen bars in length. Next came good old NUMBER 2 the first eight bars of which were left pretty much in place, but again followed up with an added eight bars concluding NUMBER 2 with a sensing final kick. And I did the same thing with old NUMBER 3, making it sixteen bars in length. Notice that there are no repeating, thereby eliminating the hesitation effects when moving the band through some of the more complicated drills and in parades.

After that, I devised a new Roll-Off to go with this new cadence. The Roll-Off consists of two dominating 17-stroke rolls (a reflection of the colonial “Spirit of ’76” collection of fife and drum music played for the Continental Army of the united States of America) but with one-beat syncopated three’s in-between and with a final eighth beat cymbal crash. For some reason, the cymbal crash has disappeared over the years.

The next thing I did that summer was get gut snares for all of the snare drums, installing them and placing baby diaper strips beneath the top heads of each drum. This was a trick I’d learned from the Blue Eagle Drum & Bugle Corps of the US Air Force and was a way of making the drum sound more like a crisp gun shot than a roaring indistinct clutter. After that, I met with The Colonel in the first stoop corridor of Dorm 11, just outside the door to the (then) Drum Room and erstwhile Arms Room during the spring semester; and there played solo for his approval. He was so enthusiastic about it and with a smile on his face, he asked me to draw up a one-page version for his stamp of approval.

As I recall, the whole drum section came a day or so early that September and copies of the new cadence were handed out. Learning the way of stick coordination for rolls and general snare drum playing was practiced out on the drill field behind the dorm.

The “Drum Cadence – 1962” was presented to the whole fightin’ Texas Aggie Band at our first band practice up in the Band Room on the south end of the fourth stoop on or about 8 September 1962.

-----JON B. KING, ’64