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ON THE STARTING LINE  
FROM CHICAGO, SKOKIE, AND DES PLAINES, ILLINOIS ...

**THE VANGUARD!**

THE VOICE OF **THE VANGUARD**

[www.DesPlainesVanguard.com](http://www.DesPlainesVanguard.com)

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***FAREWELL TO OUR DEAR FRIEND, ED SPITLER***

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Vanguard drummer, Ed Spitler. Ed was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last May. He passed away on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Ed marched with the Vanguard from 1958 through 1961, starting on bass drum and finishing his Vanguard tenure on tenor drum. He was honored as *Vanguard of the Year* in 1959.

Linda, Ed's life partner for the last 22 years, shares....

*“Ed was not vocal about his accomplishments; therefore, his family from Chicago was very surprised at the overflow of people at his memorial as well as the many emotional comments from people both personal and professional. Ed graduated with an M.S. in Vocational Counseling from Kansas State. His professional career included being a counselor at Kansas State University, manager for Crawford Rehab, manager at Van Wagner, and being self employed. For the past seven years he was employed with the department of Labor and Industry working in Rehab, Customer Service (Mediator) OSHA, and Compliance Officer.*

*“He was past president and membership coordinator of Minnesota Association of Rehab Counselors (MRCA), one of the of co-founders of Minnesota Rehab Counselors (MARP), and past president of Minnesota Associate of Professional Employees (MAPE). He was an avid reader, and he loved teaching others how to use the computer. He enjoyed tennis, volleyball, walking, traveling, gadgets, and most of all, biking and nature.*

*“His doctors had never seen a person with a spirit such as Ed's. The common theme at his celebration of life was calmness, spirit, compassion, being a positive role model, and living life to the fullest.*

*“In addition to Linda, Ed is surveyed by his daughter, Nancy, extended family, Jody, Brenan, Stacy, Michael, Candance, mother Beatrice, sisters and spouses: Ann and Bob, Evelyn and Joe, and Liz and Jerry, many nephews, nieces, and friends.*

*“I am sure Ed would have been thrilled to have been honored in the Vanguard Newsletter. He stated his membership in the Vanguard represented a very happy time for him as well as a positive turning point for him. Thank you.”*

**Please take a moment to enjoy photos of Ed and friends from the 2004 reunion, and read what Ed meant to his Vanguard contemporaries....**



Ed is standing in the back second from right.

From Glenn Purtell –

*“I think Ed Spitler placed emphasis on what the drum and bugle corps activity was back in the 50s and 60s. We did not attract high school and college music stars as present day corps do, but we were an assembly of people from the inner city regardless of race or creed. Later in life, Ed enjoyed a successful life long job working for the State of Minnesota.”*



*Ed is in the middle with two Vanguard compatriots*

From Dave Burkett –

*“I remember Ed “Tortilla” Spitler as a hardworking, enthusiastic Vanguard. He was always upbeat, and was a friend to many. I can recall his Fidel Castro costume during our infamous Miami ’61 trip. He had a great sense of humor. He was indeed a special guy. Ed was instrumental in pleading the case for integrating the membership of the corps. I envy those of you who had a chance to talk to him at the [2004] reunion. I exchanged a few emails and shared a few memories with Ed. I’m sorry that he has left us so soon.”*

From Chip LaCasse:

*“Ed truly was a great guy and a great friend to have. We were close for only a few years back in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, but we became lifelong friends because of how Ed was. He was always dedicated and determined to be the best at any task before him. He was honored as Vanguard of the Year for his work ethic and leadership. We lost touch for over 30 years, but I was able to reconnect last year in time for the reunion, and now I feel rewarded for seeing him again. We will all miss him very much, and because of how he was, Ed will surely be taken care of by a higher power.”*



*Chip and Carol LaCasse with Ed*



Ed is on the right

Poem from Rose (Meyers) Wilson –

*Don't grieve for me, for I am free  
from all that ever troubled me.  
And for you, my friends I left behind,  
my sudden leaving seemed so unkind.  
But I could not stay another day  
to laugh, to love, to bike or play.  
Tasks left undone must stay that way:  
I found God's peace, so here I'll stay.  
If my parting has left a void,  
fill it with remembered joy.  
Of drums and marching in long parades,  
ah, yes, those were very happy days.  
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief;  
Don't lengthen it with undue grief.  
Lift up your heart and believe with me;  
God loved me so--He set me free.*

Donations may be made in Ed's name to the American Cancer Society, earmarked for Pancreatic Cancer research. In addition, the family has added the University of Minnesota Cancer Research and The Apple Valley Health Care Center Aviary Fund. Cards may be sent to Ed's loved ones in care of Linda Hofstadter, 14162 Glazier Ave., Apple Valley, MN 55124.

*(All photographs courtesy of Mike Deane.)*

**CLARIFICATION:** FYI: If you have a change of email address, you need to do two things. **One**, please email me (Cathy O'Connell Letourneau) at [vanguard\\_voice@wowway.com](mailto:vanguard_voice@wowway.com) so I can change your address for the newsletter. **Two**, please email **Jay McGuffin** at [info@desplainesvanguard.com](mailto:info@desplainesvanguard.com) to update your contact information in the website guestbook. The alumni website and *The Voice of the Vanguard* are completely separate entities. While Jay and I try to keep each other apprised of changes we learn about, it would help us both if you would contact each of us with changes. Thanks in advance for making our lives a little easier!

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### *Upcoming Events –*

***Last chance to see the Vanguard exhibit at the Des Plaines History Center!*** The History Center, located at 781 Pearson Street in downtown Des Plaines, will display Vanguard memorabilia **through November 11<sup>th</sup>**. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. and Sunday from 1 to 4 P.M. Admission is free, but donations are accepted and encouraged. Please support them for keeping the Vanguard name alive! Many thanks to **Jay McGuffin** and **Ray Steffens** for working with the History Center on this great display.

***Bill O'Connell's Chicago Skyliners Big Band*** appears again at Fitzgerald's in Berwyn on Sunday, **November 27<sup>th</sup>** at 6:00 PM. Be sure to listen to Bill's radio show, *New Vintage*, every Sunday from 5 to 6 PM on WDCB radio (90.9 FM). If you're out of range, check out the radio show on [www.wdcb.org](http://www.wdcb.org). Please respond to this email if you'll be at Fitzgerald's! Info on the club can be found at [www.fitzgeraldsnightclub.com](http://www.fitzgeraldsnightclub.com). Also, check out the band's website when you have a chance: [www.chicagoskylinersbigband.com](http://www.chicagoskylinersbigband.com).

## REUNION 2005

Many thanks to all the people who came out for the Vanguard mini-reunion on Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 125 Vanguard alumni and friends turned out for the event. For many, it was like old times, meeting at the Hall on a Friday night. Some things at the Hall, of course, have changed, namely the addition put on the building after we left in 1977. The overwhelming response to seeing the Big Room for the first time in at least 29 years was, “Wow! I don’t remember this room being so small! How did we all fit?” Well, somehow we did all fit; is it possible that the room looks so small because some of us are a little bigger? Hmmm....

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed eating, drinking, playing drums and horns, looking at memorabilia, watching videos, and generally having a good time visiting with good friends. One of the highlights of the evening was **Bill O’Connell’s** PowerPoint presentation, which was both informative and very entertaining.

It was also heartwarming to have as guests some people who never marched in the Vanguard but came to the reunion to visit with their Vanguard friends:

- ✓ from Regal Valiant: Barb and Bill Baur
- ✓ from Norwood Park Imperials: Bill Blomquist and Will Koenig
- ✓ from the Royal Airs: Terry Doran, Dennis (Dog) Evans, Jim Kemnitz, John LaBarbera, Judy Steinhort, and Nancy Santopadre
- ✓ from the Cavaliers: Skip Swoverland (with his wife, Kathy, who was in a baton group with **Gayle Dombroski Swanson** and **Peg Kwielford Knebl** back in “the day”!)
- ✓ from the Nisei Ambassadors: Elaine Ogi Hannigan
- ✓ from the Fox Valley Raiders and the Guardsmen: Peg Saip

***Thank you, brothers and sisters in drum corps, for riding the Vanguard wave with us that night! (And, please forgive me if I left anyone out!)***

Enjoy the photos below (courtesy of **Mike Deane**):































Cake courtesy of Gene and Mary O'Connell







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This reunion would not have been possible without the help of the following people:

- Committee members: **Bill O'Connell, Pat Rymer Sylvia, Art Marks, Don Scheibenreif, Ray Smith, Jim Grosso, Lee Romes, Sue Bodkin Wetendorf, Vi Kois Oberwise, and Cathy O'Connell Letourneau**, whose contributions to the success of the reunion are too numerous to mention here.
- DVD and electronics experts: **Sam Agnello** and Norwood Park Imperial alum (and current Royal Airs Exhibition Corps contrabass player) **Will Koenig**.
- The guests who brought goodies for the sweet table.
- Those who hung around to help clean up afterward. We were able to get out of there by 3 AM because of all your help! The union hall personnel were very pleased with how we left the place, and have told us that we are welcome back there any time.
- **Jim Grothman** who brought a whole bunch of cool drums and horns to play with.
- **Jeff Schultz** for designing the banner over the door and creating the CD inserts
- **Ray Steffens** who brought and set up Vanguard memorabilia.
- **Jay McGuffin** for promoting the reunion on the Vanguard website, and selling t-shirts.
- **Mike Deane** for taking pictures all night.
- Spouses of the committee members who put up with their significant others being tied up with the planning, in addition to pitching in themselves with the preparations!

*So, What's Next?  
Picnic? Karaoke Party? Drum Corps Show?  
Party at one of the previous Halls?*

Clearly, the success of this and the 2004 reunion indicates that we need to keep this going. Since gathering at the Hall was such a success, *how about alum from a previous generation spearheading a gathering at one of the previous Halls? Irving Park Road? Skokie?* Anyone who is interested in planning something for 2006 should reply to this email. Let's see what happens!

**CD's AVAILABLE!**

If you were unable to attend the reunion and would like a copy of *Vanguard: The Sensational 70's*, contact **Bill O'Connell** at [billbigband@aol.com](mailto:billbigband@aol.com). The CD can be purchased through Bill for \$5 each. This includes shipping. Or, just snail-mail your check, made out to Bill O'Connell, to 915 Christa Ct., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007.





*Best wishes to Mike Deane and Marcia Sky who became husband and wife on  
October 22<sup>nd</sup> –*



***Got good news? Be sure to send me updates on your life. Memories of your time in  
the Vanguard are gratefully encouraged!***

*In our next issue....*

*We'll hear about Vince Chancey and Dr. Georges Benjamin.*

***Happy Thanksgiving!***

***Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are  
consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This  
is not coincidence. ~Erma Bombeck***

**Cathy O'Connell Letourneau (Vanguard 1969-1976)**