

John Sterling Pratt, who was inducted into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame in 1990 at ceremonies in Allentown, Pennsylvania was born in Seneca Falls, N.Y. on January 13, 1931. He graduated from the town's high school, Mynderse Academy, in June 1949, having played snare drum in the school's concert and marching bands and the jazz orchestra. As a teenager, he was instructed in the art of drumming by Norman H. Peth of Seneca Falls, who now resides in Ocala, Florida. Norm inspired John and encouraged him to take up a career in music. Norm played with the drum & bugle corps of Winnek American Legion Post #396, Geneva, N.Y., and got John interested in joining the corps. John played snare drum with the "Appleknoickers" (as they were later known) and competed with them when the corps placed 6th in the finals of the American Legion National Championships at Philadelphia in the Summer of 1949. He also became a member of the National Association of Rudimental Drummers that year.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army in November of 1949 and completing basic training, Pratt attended the 3rd Armored Division's Band Training School at Fort Knox, Kentucky. While there, he passed an audition for the U.S. Military Academy Band and was subsequently assigned to West Point in August 1950. During his career as an Army Band musician, he became Rudimental Drum Instructor of Field Music and in 1959-1960 published 4 books of solo drumming with Belwin, Inc. of Rockville Centre, Long Island. The books' titles were: (1) Ancient Rudimental Snare and Bass Drum Solos (2) 14 Modern Contest Solos (3) 128 Rudimental Street Beats, and (4) 26 Standard American Drum Rudiments. Also, at that time,

5 single sheet music solos were published. They were entitled: (1) "Coordination" (2) "Flamacue Quickstep" (3) "Here's to the Ratamacue" (4) "The Little Toy Drum," and (5) "Syncopating the Single Drag."

By the time his drumming publications had appeared, Pratt had become a member of the All-American Drum & Bugle Corps and Band Association (1958), had become active as a member of the All-American Association of Contest Judges in New York State and the Metropolitan Area, and in the early 1960's was asked by the All-American Judges Association's National Commissioner, Harry Robertson, to upgrade the National Examination for judges. During this period, Pratt also wrote a series of articles on Drumming for the All-American Association's official magazine, On Parade, being the first to advocate bigger drum lines by giving execution credit for increased numbers of snares, and raising questions such as: "Should Sound Principles Be Sacrificed to Higher Scores?" He also wrote articles on Swiss Drumming and other subjects of percussion interest, which were not only published in On Parade, but in Eastern Review and Off the Line as well.

In addition, he judged numerous drum & bugle corps contests, gave a number of educational clinics on parade drumming for various groups like the New York State School Music Association, Columbia University's Summer Music Program, and the Army Bandmasters National Convention, and performed during his off-duty hours with Hudson Valley Area Bands, Drum & Bugle Corps and Fife & Drum units. Not wanting to dwell solely on musical interests, Pratt also attended college classes in the evenings during his West Point

years, graduating *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1969, the year he retired from active military service.

While still at West Point, Pratt was also actively involved in instructing drum and bugle corps such as the Rochester "Grey Knights" (1960-1961); the "Interstatesmen" from Troy, N.Y. and Pittsfield Massachusetts (1962-1966); the Kingston "Criteria" (1963-1966); the Bronx, New York "Kingsmen" (1966-1968); and the Newburgh "Ambassadors" (1968-1969). After his Army retirement in 1969 and beginning his new career as an English teacher at Hackensack High School, Pratt continued attending college during the evenings, receiving his Master of Arts in English at William Paterson College of New Jersey in 1973, where his Masters Thesis on "The Ideal and the Real in the Poetry of Keats" received a unanimous commendation from the Graduate English Department. He had also remained active musically, joining the instructional staff of the Hawthorne "Caballeros" upon the invitation of George Tuthill in the Autumn of 1972, and teaching with the "Cabs" until 1981. During his tenure, the corps won 3 National American Legion Nationals and 2 High Drumming Awards, 4 D.C.A. World Championships, and went undefeated in 1973. After leaving the "Caballeros," while he was still teaching English at Hackensack High School, Pratt took a position on the Adjunct English Faculty of Bergen Community College, Paramus, N.J. in 1981. He retired from Hackensack in January of 1995, but is still teaching at the college into the new millennium.

During his English Teaching days at Hackensack and Bergen

Community College in the 1980's, Pratt's interest in Poetry got him involved with several writing groups for which he edited and contributed poems to numerous anthologies that the groups published. He has also served as President of The Chaucer Guild, New Jersey's oldest poetry society, and as President of T.E.A.M. Writers. He has received 4 major awards for his poetry and has published over 50 poems. Furthermore, his composing of drumming materials continued unabated, and he continued playing the drum. When he joined "Duke" Terreri's New Jersey Field Music in the early 1980's, "Duke" asked him to contribute some drum solos to The Company of Fifers and Drummers Music Book, Vol.II, and 6 of Pratt's solos were published in this collection. Then, in 1985, he contributed 8 drum solos to The Solo Snare Drummer, Vol.1 (Permus, 1985), and the publisher produced another collection of his drum solos in The New Pratt Book (Permus, 1985). As of the year 2000, John S. Pratt is still playing, writing drum solos and giving clinics in support of traditional rudimental drumming. He is active with a fife and drum corps, The Ex-5th Regiment from Paterson, N.J., has written a number of new drum solos, dedicated to drummers in the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame and to drummers in other countries, and has enjoyed participating at Canadian Drum Clubs' get-togethers put on by Fred Johnson's C.A.D.R.E. (Canadian Associates Drumming Rudimental Excellence). In 1998, Mr. Pratt was honored at a clinic he gave for C.A.D.R.E. in Ottawa and was made an honorary member of the Ottawa Heritage Hands drum club.