

# How The International Association Of Traditional Drummers (I.A.T.D.) Came to Be

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The forming of a body of traditional drummers to establish standards for performance excellence is not a new idea. It was first conceived in response to dealing with a lack of uniformity in judging American Legion and V.F.W. drum and bugle corps contests on a national scale, which also included contests in individual drumming. "Running down" the long roll provided a good example of this need for uniformity since the two standard drum books in use in the 1920's and early 1930's were the Bruce and Emmett and the Strube books, both of which differed in their ideas as to how the long roll should be performed. Bruce and Emmett advocated that an accent be placed on the roll's second beat when starting it and called for a de-acceleration of the roll after it had reached maximum speed. Strube, on the other hand, did not advocate either of these requirements. Such discrepancies obviously could not be tolerated for long, and one of the outcomes that resulted from inconsistent scoring by the various individuals who had been judging drum and bugle corps contests and individual competitions, was that a group of drummers got together on June 20, 1933 at the American Legion National Convention in Chicago and organized a group known as The National Association of Rudimental Drummers, who in turn adopted the 26 Standard American Drum Rudiments. William F. Ludwig later recalled that the group "retained the Bruce and Emmett roll, open and closed [and] also retained lesson #25 of the Strube method. We divided the 26 rudiments into two sections by selecting, what we termed at the time, the 13 essential [rudiments] that each applicant had to play as a test for membership into the National Association of Rudimental Drummers."

A list of the 13 leading percussionists, who participated in founding the N.A.R.D., included the following:

1. J. Burns Moore – Timpanist for the New Haven, Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, prominent as a drummer and drum instructor throughout the New England States, and author of The Art of Drumming.
2. Bill Kieffer – Drummer with the U.S. Marine Band and judge in both the National Legion Individual Drumming and Drum Corps contests held in Chicago.
3. Bill Hammond – Snare drummer of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania "Symphony Orchestra, and expert rudimental instructor for all types of drummers – dance, theater, grand opera and symphony.
4. George Lawrence Stone – Instructor, teacher and composer of many instruction books such as Stick Control, snare drummer of Boston Opera and Boston Symphony Orchestras.
5. Joe Hathaway – Corps instructor and winner of the 1932 American Legion Championship in individual drumming.
6. William F. Ludwig – Former snare drummer of the Chicago Grand Opera Company and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

7. Heinie Gerlach – Four times National Champion Individual Drummer of the American Legion Contest.
8. Roy Knapp – Studio drummer of Radio Station WLS and a prominent Chicago drum instructor.
9. Bill Flowers – Expert in rudimental instruction, and winner of National and State rudimental contests.
10. Harry Thompson – Prominent Chicago drummer, instructor, arranger and composer of special drum corps music.
11. George A Robertson – Prominent theater drummer, instructor and composer.
12. Billy Miller – Prominent theater drummer of Chicago, drum teacher and composer of drum corps marches.
13. Ed Straight – Chicago's most popular theater drummer and composer of many instruction books.

It is important to note that these men and others like them believed in the traditions that had been handed down to them historically and were interested in preserving those traditions for future generations by adopting a set of standards as to what rudimental configurations were worthwhile establishing. In the last several decades, however, there have been additions to the standard drumming rudiments established by the National Association of Rudimental Drummers (N.A.R.D.). The Percussive Arts Society of America, for example, decided to expand the number of drumming rudiments to 40, by adding a number of rudiments to the original 26. They entitled their list "Percussive Arts Society International Rudiments," and among these rudiments were a number of rudiments from the Swiss "traditional" configurations such as the Single Flammed Mill stroke, the Pataflafla, the Swiss Army Triplet and the Swiss Tap Flam, which the P.A.S. called the "Inverted Flam Tap." In addition, they cast aside the designation of the "Traditional" American Rudiment known as the "Ruff," renaming it as a "Drag," and came up with new configurations such as the "Flam Drag"; the "Single Drag Tap" and the "Double Drag Tap" (both with changed basic rhythms from the N.A.R.D.'s "Traditional System"). Finally they also listed a "Single Dragadiddle." All such changes are obvious departures from the "traditional" configurations of the 26 Standard American Rudiments adopted by the N.A.R.D. in 1933. I have only one question about such motivations. What "tradition" can people ever hope to ascribe to if their course is aimed at altering or changing existing traditions? A "tradition" is what once was and was recognized as such. A "tradition" is not a subject for change. It should be accepted for what it was, has been and always should be. You cannot remold "Tradition", or you destroy it. Current day changes in Percussion-thinking should not attempt to invalidate what once was history. Do we refer to the Revolutionary War as just another war? Has the Civil War been forgotten? Should World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam and now the so-called "War Against Terror" be all lumped together as one enormous war? Obviously not. Every war has been fought for different reasons, and those different reasons do not change as time goes by. Once an event has occurred in history, it cannot be changed, added to or rewritten, although there are people who have denied the "Holocaust," or the use of the Atom Bomb as being a "war-ending necessity." Obviously, President Truman's decision in 1945 cannot be recalled, or changed later. What has been done cannot be undone. It merely becomes part of history, just as the establishing of the 26-Standard

American Rudiment System by the National Association of Rudimental Drummers in 1933.

Obviously, the goal of The International Association of Traditional Drummers is, in a sense, similar to that of the N.A.R.D.'s in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and we have formed our group with one purpose: to preserve our own country's drumming "traditions," while also respecting the "traditions" of other countries. By so doing, we can enjoy one brotherhood of drummers around the world without borrowing from their "traditions" and trying to make them part of our own. As my teacher, Norman H. Peth, has argued, "if a drumming system is considered to be 'traditional,' then it cannot contain a confusion of drumming patterns or techniques." "Traditional" drumming in the U.S. has always been drawn from the Ancient's use of a rope drum. Can you imagine playing a rope drum, which is slung over the right shoulder with the drum tilted at an angle slightly to the outside of the left knee cap, using what the moderns refer to as a "match grip?" I can't, and I also can't accept the ideas that have invaded marching & maneuvering drum corps in recent years, and also the teaching of drumming in the school systems of our nation. During the summer of 2003, I taught one of my 5 grand-daughters named Kelsey how to play by using the long-time standard "traditional" Left-Hand Grip, which has been used since the American Revolution and Civil War periods on through World Wars I and II. When Kelsey returned to school that Autumn, she applied for Band and her teacher was quite impressed with her ability. But, soon after, Kelsey was told that she was holding her sticks incorrectly, and that she had to use a "match grip." Kelsey promptly responded that she could easily adapt to using "match grip" if that's what her teacher wanted, but she then asked if her teacher could play by holding the sticks in the "traditional" way? Was my granddaughter wrong? I think not. Besides, the teacher didn't want to discuss it any further. This incident was a perfect example of why "Traditional" drumming has come under assault from teachers who simply will not respect things "Traditional." Some of the greatest names in jazz drumming used the "traditional" Left-Hand Grip. Were Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich wrong for having an interest in and respect for "traditional" drumming practices, which they even adapted to their own playing on drum sets? I think not. Also, a recent incident happened with one of the students of my friend, Marcia Fattey. Her student lost an interscholastic drumming contest, because he used the "traditional" Left-Hand Grip, and the judge had taken off points for it. The fact that Marcia has taught her students in the Hamburg, New York public school system for years in the "traditional" way, and that they play very well technically meant nothing to that judge. Her student was punished for playing "traditionally." I wish my grand-daughter Kelsey had been there to challenge him by asking if he could hold the sticks in the "traditional" way?

All of this suggests that people, who don't play in the "traditional" style of rudimental drummers, are interfering with or undermining our drumming "traditions," or pretending that they don't exist. When George Lawrence Stone played on the Snare Drum, he used the "traditional" Left-Hand Grip, and so did J. Burns Moore. These men were both fine rudimental drummers who could perform in a street parade playing "traditionally," and then turn to the xylophone or timpani using what they called a "mallet grip," which modernists have abused by calling this technique a "match grip." They respected the

“traditional” forms of rudimental drumming and understood that it was an entirely different ball game. They would be turning over in their graves to learn that modernists have lumped every type of drumming or mallet playing together in one easy solution: the “match-grip” style. Unfortunately, this approach has done much harm to the development and maintaining of the “traditional” rudimental drumming style that has been a part of America’s heritage since the days of Ashworth, Bruce & Emmett, Gardner Strube and even John Phillip Sousa, whose drummers played “traditionally” and used the “traditional” Left-Hand Grip. Who are these modernists who would apply “match grip” snare drumming to “The Stars and Stripes Forever” march? Obviously, they are people who fail to understand THE VALUE OF DRUMMING “TRADITIONS” AND THE NEED FOR THEIR PRESERVATION. I hope that such “modernists” can eventually be brought to their senses, and realize that add-ons like “match-grip” have never been part of the “traditional” rudimental snare drumming system in the United States and, I hope, never will. If the modernists succeed, then “traditional” drumming can never again be an “historical standard,” which deserves its place in history for which it had been intended. If people nowadays want to rewrite history, then they will destroy it forever. History is history and should not be changed from what it once was. Should we rebuild Egypt’s pyramids to make them look less weather-beaten and more modern appearing? I think not. As for me, I’ll stick with the “traditional” rope-tensioned snare drum. It has a rich, deep tonal quality that can be heard like distant thunder from a half-mile away during a street parade. The modern snare drums, by comparison, have a choked-up sound similar to glass marbles being poured onto a metal table-top. In concluding, let me paraphrase Patrick Henry’s famous lines: “Give me [‘tradition’] or give me [a rolling] death.”

In referring to a discussion I had recently with Paul Mosley of C.A.D.R.E. about this subject matter, I would like to believe that there has been no organized plan by today’s drummers to destroy “traditional” drumming, since their main focus seems to be upon getting music degrees and making money. Unfortunately, too many drummers today have never been exposed to “traditional” drumming and do not have any true understanding of its artistic value, because they were never taught it in most of our high schools and not always introduced to it even in their college percussion courses, which are mainly music-degree oriented. This knowledge gap seems to have been due to being taught an orchestral percussion style of drumming only, instead of receiving additional orientation in Field Snare, Tenor and Bass drums, which had provided the marching norm from the 1920’s through the 1960’s in drum & bugle corps activities. Therefore, the value of what we are doing is not simply the preserving of drumming “tradition” but emphasizing the value of “traditional” drumming for current drummers by exposing them to it. Unfortunately, “traditional” drumming is now just outside the idiom of current day playing.

Why is “traditional” rudimental drumming still valuable today? Because it’s always fresh; it has timeless technical benefits for a drummer’s control and development, especially of the left hand, and it has great musical value in its unique technical phrasing with its rudimental constructions and accents. I.A.T.D.’s purpose is to make drummers aware that they should add the “logs” of “traditional” drumming to their developmental “fires” to fuel the growth of their drumming knowledge, especially if they have not

grown up with the “traditional” drumming system, where playing a drum solo for sheer enjoyment was accepted rather than a field drummer being regarded as just a minor cog in a musically-oriented marching performance. “Traditional” drumming was and still is an ART FORM. Therefore, drummers all need to understand that they are part of this greater “tradition,” and should expose themselves to it. (Consult J. Burns Moore’s book: The Art of Drumming (1937).

Why is the preservation of “traditional” drumming worthwhile? It is because most drummers, whether they know it or not, have developed from its roots in the past, and need to be made aware of its value, especially today. There is a “gold-mine” of rhythmic wealth just waiting to be discovered by today’s percussionists to aid them in filling in the technical (rudimental) gaps in their drumming education and/or their acquired knowledge.

In order to get our program organized and under way, a number of Master Drummers will be recognized in the United States, Canada, Scotland, Switzerland, England, Finland, Australia, Japan and in other nations around the world. They, in turn, will act as representatives for the International Association of Traditional Drummers and will be given authority as I.A.T.D. examining judges so that students they may have can be screened and tested for membership according to the “traditional” standards of their particular countries.

Finally, the Certificates to be awarded the Master Drummers will have Gold Borders, and their students and other applicants for membership, who have been approved by testing, will receive Blue Bordered Certificates. Last but not least, since the certificates awarded by the National Association of Rudimental Drummers had green borders; we thought it was appropriate that there would also be green borders on the certificates of our Honorary Charter Members, Norman H. Peth, John S. Pratt, Kenneth H. Green, Vincent J. Czepiel and Thomas M. Sorenson, and there is a reason for this, which can only be explained metaphorically. First of all it has to do with the re-establishment of the “26 STANDARD AMERICAN RUDIMENTS” Drumming “Tradition,” which was founded in 1933 by the National Association of Rudimental Drummers (N.A.R.D.). Such a rebirth can be related to the season of Spring, when the earth figuratively arises from beneath the snows of Winter (nature’s burial shroud), and explodes in a saturation of greenery through the renewal of plant life. (We understand that the cycle of the 4 Seasons does not apply as strongly to the tropical portions of our planet, but a majority of the great poets in literature lived in areas where the 4 Seasons were in evidence and those poets were the ones who established the metaphorical “traditions” in literature). So, in the poetic sense, our group, The International Association of “Traditional,” Drummers (I.A.T.D.) has in similar fashion sprung up from our Rudimental Drumming Roots, and we are determined to, not only resurrect, but also uphold the N.A.R.D.’s Rudimental Drumming “Tradition,” keeping it alive and “green.” We are not changing or rewriting “tradition,” but are giving new life to it in hopes that it will not be lost to future generations of drummers, since a wide gap has developed between our “Traditional” Rudimental Drumming Standards and today’s marching drummers. Therefore, our 5 Honorary Charter Members will be known as the “Green Five,” and we will be devoted

to preserving and expanding the “Tradition” of American Rudimental Drumming through teaching and promoting in our students a sense of pride in achievement and through the awarding of certificates for their “Traditional” Rudimental Drumming Excellence.