BUGLES

A bugle is a cone-shaped brass instrument with no valves or slides. It is different than a trumpet, which has a cylindrical tube for two-thirds of its length and a flared horn for the final third. Modern trumpets also have valves that allow for a greater musical range. Natural bugles can only produce a limited number of notes based on a fundamental tone. The length of the bugle's tubing determines this tone. The standard military bugle is a coiled "G" bugle.

Since their introduction, bugles have been used to communicate commands to groups of people spread over long distances. Bugles first appeared as hunting horns in Germany. The hunt master sounded different calls to change the direction of groups of hunters toward the game they were pursuing. The sound carried long distances so that hunters did not have to see the hunt master to understand where to go or what to do.

During the War for Independence, foreign forces in the colonies introduced the bugle to North America. One of the first uses of the bugle occurred at the Battle of Harlem Heights in September, 1776. The British Army of 5,000 men had the American Army of 1,800 in full retreat when British buglers sounded the fox hunting call, "Gone Away." This was intended as an insult. Playing "Gone Away" during a foxhunt meant that the fox had "tucked his tail and run away." "Gone Away" made the American troops mad. They stopped their retreat, stood their ground and defeated the British. Harlem Heights was General Washington's first battlefield victory of the war.

By the War of 1812, the bugle had been adopted as a standard method of communication for most modern armies. The American Army used the bugle calls of the French for both infantry and cavalry units. During the Civil War a change in tactics called for extended lines of infantry in an assault. This made fifes and drums obsolete. Bugles, whose call could be heard over long distances, gradually replaced the fife and drum. The importance of the bugle during the Civil War is shown in the fact that the Union infantry adopted the bugle as its symbol.

After the Civil War, many civilian groups used the bugle to communicate. Bugles announced meal times on passenger ships. Bicycle clubs used bugles to signal directions to their members. Racetracks incorporated "First Call" and "Charge" into their operations. The invention and adoption of the radio ended the use of the bugle for other than ceremonial purposes. Today, drum and bugle corps carry on the bugle's rich tradition, while "Taps" provide an eloquent and emotional tribute at military funerals.