

EVOLUTION OF THE BUGLE OR TRUMPET  
REMINESENCES OF A CAVALRY BUGLER OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.  
By Charles B. Jones



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The musical note I have just played on the Conch shell is probably the first musical tone ever produced by man playing on a wind instrument, for the conch, when opened at the apex, presents a beautifully proportioned wind tunnel that has never been improved upon.

When man first emerged from the primeval slime and walked upright on the tropical shores his primary concern was food and drink. Water came from the streams and rivers flowing to the sea, and the abundant marine life provided food. The conch was an easy source of food and the empty shells, quite intriguing. He held the shell to his ear and heard the roaring sound of the surf. He tried vainly to discover the place from which the sound came and in doing so must have destroyed countless numbers of shells. Eventually he ground off the point of the spiral and discovered a clear passage from point to bell. He blew through it but nothing happened.

In time he discovered that by pursing his lips and expelling the air forcibly into the passage he produced a sound pleasing to his ear. Eventually he mastered the technique and was able to duplicate the sounds I have just played for you. Actually

what happened was that he used his lips and oral cavity as a pair of vocal cords and larynx; a voice box. Some individuals practiced prodigiously and mastered this newly found art of shell blowing and there we have the worlds first bugle and the worlds first bugler.

Eventually the performers found that this new toy could be used as an instrument of communication. Sets of signals very like our present international code of dots and dashes were formulated and contact could be established with other groups over great distances by relay systems similar to the African and Indian drum relays. Occasionally strong and dominant leaders appeared and attached the buglers or horn blowers to their retinues and thus we have the first military units.

As man roamed further inland and moved to higher ground he encountered warm blooded mammals. He domesticated the ruminants and hunted down the predators, who in turn hunted men. Eventually men prevailed. The animal skins were used for clothing and shelter, the flesh for food, the bones for weapons and tools, jewelry and trinkets, so dear to the heart of the savage.

The cattle antelope and ram horns were treated in the same manner as were the conches. The animal horns were more practical than the conches as they did not shatter when dropped on stones and they were less cumbersome. They could be carried on a thong over the shoulder or around the neck. Although the tone was not so good, they were more readily available in the forest and plains countries and the conch bugle was all but forgotten except by the peoples that remained with the sea. With the slowly developing maritime peoples the conch horn remained in favor, doubling as fog horn and navigational guide for these early sailors. In some backward localities the use of conches exists until the present time.

The animal horn enjoyed a long period of usefulness in the military life of the ancients. It appears in the histories and myths of all peoples, in their arts and religions. Many references

are made in the Bible to the Rams Horn. The siege of Jerico was brought to a successful conclusion by the use of the Shofer, or the Rams horn, by the Hebrews. The attack by Gideon, in which massed bands of three hundred shofars were used to terrify and defeat the Midianites, (Judges VII-16) In the myths of Greece and Rome the conch bugle is used constantly. Neptune appears with the Trident in one hand and Blowing the winds to a fury with his conch horn held in the other. Charon, the boatman of the Styx, blows his conch bugle to guide the departed souls on their journey over the Stygean flood. And so on indefinitely. The conch bugler, the Shofar, and the trumpet all essentially military instruments are favorite subjects of artists, musicians and tellers of tales.

After the arrival of the age of metals we find bugles and trumpets of many types and materials, iron, copper, bronze and brass. They were used in the armies of all peoples. It seems significant to me that they appeared in the military establishments in all armies at about the same time; the Orientals, the Europeans, African peoples, Asians, all show in their literature, sculpture and funerary artifacts, almost identical designs, suggesting that these peoples must have circulated freely over vast distances and to have carried their lares and penates with them. The Romans produced a purely military bugle about 5 feet long, shaped like a modern saxophone, the Swiss the Alpenhorn, and in 1815 the Duke of Kent invented the modern form of the bugle.

After the decline and fall of the Roman empire the highly organized armies typical of Rome, Greece and Egypt fell from their high and efficient state and little is heard of the bugle and the trumpet until the reappearance in the middle ages in Europe of the large armies and the attendant race for power, even as we are now seeing.

The man on Horseback was supreme and the skills of the Bugler and Trumpeter were again in demand. Every event was announced by the herald or bugler and the art flourished as never before or since. It was truly the age of chivalry. A visit through Louvre in Paris or the Metropolitan or other great art galleries will impress one of the importance of the bugler or trumpeter in the military establishments of all peoples, in all periods.

Bugles are still used extensively in ceremonial military formations throughout Europe and the continent. Even tiny Monaco announces the changing of the guard with some very good and fancy bugleing. Only in the United States has the trumpet been replaced by bells, whistles and electronic devices. There are still a few buglers in the service used for specific ceremonies but by and large they are gone. Some evening on a Military reservation, should you hear the beautifully plaintive tones of taps floating through the evening air - follow the sound and you will end up in the guard or orderly room, with a phonograph record blasting through the P.A. System.

Still I am not too discouraged. As long as bugles are made and there are boy scouts to blow them, these scouts will grow up to be legionnaires and the sons of legionnaires, and let me say to you now that the American legion has sponsored a program for drum and bugle corps that has produced the finest, the most precise, music of this type ever known.

I do not mourn too deeply the passing of the Bugle in the service. We may still see the time when Taps will again be rendered over the graves of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington by a service bugler blowing a bugle rather than an Army Bandsman playing a cornet.

I have here a few bugles from my collection that I thought might be of interest. I should like to point out how closely the bugles of different armies resemble one another. Should you care to examine them later please do so.

This old copper bugle was made in Canada about sixty years ago and was military issue. It was picked up supposedly in Flanders and is considered a war trophy of the first world war. The assumption is that it belonged to the famous "PRINCESS PATS". The second piece, also copper, was recovered in the same region and is a French artillery piece. It is approximately the same age as the Canadian piece. This brass bugle bears the crest of the House of Hohenzollern, indicating German origin. It is in perfect condition but shows much use. The circular bugle is an Austrian piece, supposedly a hunting horn. The three U.S. trumpets are government issue and are (1) Spanish

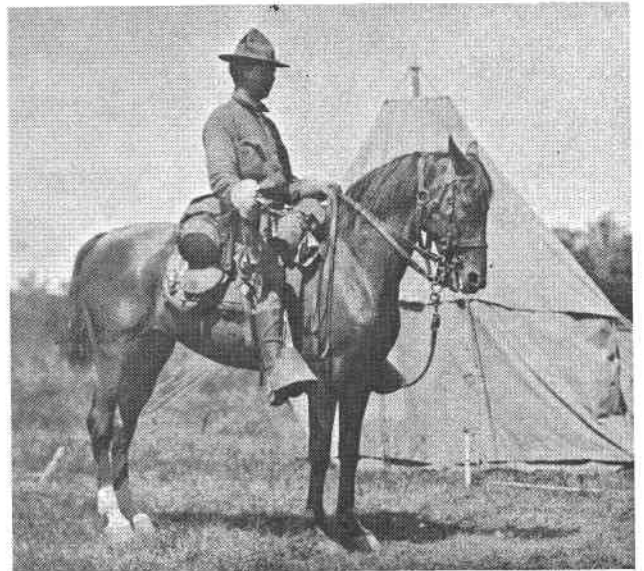
American War (2) 1st World War Infantry and (3) World War 2 issued to Coast Guard at St. Petersburg Air Base. The small Cavalry bugle was issued to me at the time I enlisted in the Cavalry in 1911. The silver trumpet that I shall use to demonstrate with was presented to me by my Commanding Officer, the late General P. Lincoln Mitchell U.S. Army on the occasion of my promotion to the rank of Chief Trumpeter, Squadron "A" First Cavalry in 1913, just fifty years ago.

A Cavalryman of the old mounted service was a more versatile soldier than his compatriot on foot. He was of necessity a skilled horseman and his training in equitation was long and arduous. In addition to mastering the rudiments of mounted drill, he learned to use his carbine, pistol and sabre without danger to himself, his horse or his neighbor. While on the subject of mounted drill, it has always seemed to me almost beyond belief how the horse cooperated with, and anticipated the demands of the rider. It is generally conceded by competent authority that horses do not think but I do say that there is ample precedent for the term "HORSE SENSE". Let me give you a few examples.

While I held the position of Chief Trumpeter, I had two horses assigned to me, one a beautiful mare named, of all things, MIKADO. The other a sorrel named KATRINA, a real rough rider. Mikado on the other hand had an easy gait, a broad back and was as easy and tracable as a well trained mount could be.



"Lady Katrina" With C. B. Jones Up



"Mikado" With C. B. Jones Up

One morning a Trooper of my home Troop "C" came to me and asked if he might borrow MIKADO in the afternoon Dress Parade. He explained that his horse had gone lame and there was nothing in the remuda available. I told him to be careful as MIKADO had not been used in ranks and was not accustomed to close order drill, also that she had a mind of her own. I thought nothing more of it and that afternoon at the appointed time I rode out to the parade ground with the C.O. After taking our position, the Major said "ADJUTANTS CALL". I accordingly sounded the signal and with that a horse and rider left the squadron and came, galloping up to us. The poor rookie fighting valiently but futilely. The horse, needless to say was Mikado, just reporting to me. She knew where she belonged and that's where she went. The Major started in on the luckless trooper but I spoke up with a "SIR, This is my mount which I loaned to the trooper and she is not accustomed to riding in ranks, etc." The major smiled and told the trooper to get back in ranks and manage his mount. Then came the order "ASSEMBLY". No sooner had I sounded the call when

back to me came MIKDO. This time the heavens fell on the poor trooper and he left the parade in disgrace. Did Mikado think that one out or did she just associate the bugle sound with her accustomed place with the staff?

Another example has to do with a whole troop of horses. "B." Troop of the Fifth Cavalry had a bugler named Casey. He loved his job and he loved the horses. At watering period I have seen him, together with one other trooper release all sixty-five horses from the picket line and actually drill them with bugle calls down to the river. Of course the lines were a bit ragged and uneven but Casey was in command. At recall they left off playing in the water and lined up in Troop front and on signal swung into a column of fours and back to camp. This performance got to be so popular that, on occasion, the whole squadron would break off to see Casey take his troop to water. I wouldn't attempt to explain it. I just tell you what I saw and you may draw your own conclusions.

Each Troop or Battery (Mounted) had two buglers assigned. Three or four Troops to a Squadron, to which the Chief Trumpeter was attached. All signals and routine calls were given by bugle. Due to the noise level inherent in the movement of mounted and horse drawn equipment, spoken or shouted commands were not practical and a system of arm signals were used to supplement the bugle commands. Altogether, something over one hundred calls and signals were in use and the chief bugler was responsible for the instruction of personnel in recognition and meaning of these calls.

I will play for you just a few of these calls some of which I am certain many of you will recognize.

FIRST CALL as the name indicates, the first warning of the beginning of a new day, followed by

REVEILLE which is the second routine call of the day. On the first note of Reveille, the morning gun is fired. It is followed in five minutes by

ASSEMBLY which is the signal for all formations of troops for any and all formations. The call immediately preceding it being the indication of the type of activity.

STABLES & WATER; at which time the livestock was fed, watered and groomed, night soil was removed and fresh hay distributed.

MESS CALL was always well attended. As a general rule the quality was good and the quantity adequate. The motto was Take all you want, BUT eat all you take. A breakfast normally included some sort of fruit, Ham or Bacon and eggs or steak and potatoes, lots of coffee and always hot, fresh baked bread and butter. The other meals were also comparable and, as I well remember, the amount allowed for a ration in 1912 was twenty-six cents.

SICK CALL followed by either DRILL CALL, SCHOOL etc. indicated the nature of the activity to be participated in.

RECALL announced the secession of the activity.

Of course there were many activities besides the group drills such as farriers schools where the troopers learned to apply pre-fitted shoes to their mounts. Every man carried in his saddle bags an extra set of shoes and nails for his horse. He was expected to be able to apply the shoes in the field. Then there were Artificers schools, gunnery, small Arms, sabre drill, equitation, Roman and Bareback riding, etc. ad infinitum. The Bugle signal led practically any and every move the cavalryman made. It awakened him. It put him to sleep.

Probably the most impressive of all formations were RETREAT and TO THE COLOR. All troops were assembled on the parade ground and stood at PARADE REST while retreat was being played by all trumpeters in unison. At the last note the evening gun was fired and the order was

given, ATTENTION, PRESENT ARMS. at which time "TO THE COLOR" was sounded and the flag was gently lowered, never being allowed to touch the ground. The color guard and the troops were marched off the field and the day was officially over.

At 9:45 P.M. TATTOO was sounded. This call was of German origin and is believed to have been brought to this country by the HESSIAN mercenaries used by England during the Revolution. It was called Tapfenstreich, at which time the provo guard would visit the pubs and draw a chalk line across the beer taps, removing same the next morning. This they called Taps-To, corrupted to TATTOO. And finally the last call of the day TAPS. The most musical and certainly the most beautiful call in the service.

Following are the musical scores of some of the hundred odd calls in daily use in the armed forces fifty years ago.

*Assembly of Trumpeters, or First Call*

1. 

*assembly*

2. 

*Reveille* FINO

3.   


*Retreat* ps. 3.

4. *moderato* 

*Taps (Lights Out)*

5. 

*Sick*

6. *quick* *Mess.* 

*School*

7. *quick* 

*Drill*

8. 

*Reeal*

9. *moderato* 



The Assembly of Trumpeters or First Call is the Signal for trumpeters to assemble. It precedes the Reveille Retreat and Tattoo by such interval as may be prescribed by the Commanding Officer.

The Assembly is the signal for forming the company in ranks and calling the roll.

Adjutants Call is the signal for companies and guard details to assemble on the camp or garrison parade grounds.

To Arms is the signal for men to turn out under arms, with the least practicable delay, on their company parade grounds.

Assembly, Reveille, Retreat, Tattoo, Adjutants Call, To the Color, the Flourishes, and the marches are sounded by all the trumpeters assembled. The other camp or garrison calls, as a general rule, are sounded by trumpeter of the guards or orderly trumpeters. The morning gun is fired at the first note of the Reveille. The evening gun is fired at the last note of the Retreat.

The signals for drill movements include both the preparatory commands and the commands of execution. The drill signals are taught in succession, a few at a time, until all the officers and men are thoroughly familiar with them, some drills being especially devoted to this purpose. These schools are generally conducted under the direction of the chief trumpeter.

When a command is given by the trumpet, the chief's of sub-divisions give the proper commands orally. In the evolution of large bodies of troops, the subordinate commanders cause their trumpeters to repeat the signals of the chief trumpeter, who accompanies the commanding officer.

The memorizing of these signals will be facilitated by observing that all movements to the right are on the ascending scale and the corresponding movements to the left are corresponding signals on the descending chord. The changes of gait all on the same note.