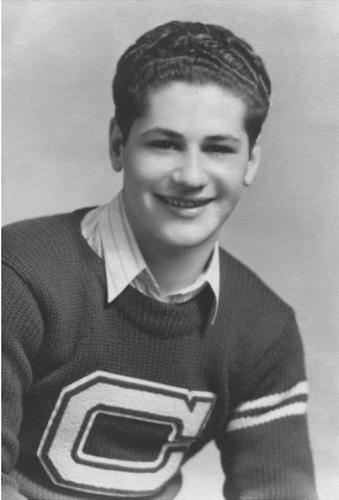


## Colonel Arnald D. Gabriel

(1925- )



Arnald D. Gabriel was born in Cortland on May 31, 1925, as the second son of Italian immigrant parents. With a goal of combining his love for music and service to his country, Arnald auditioned and was selected for the Navy Band in December 1942, while in his senior year at Cortland High School. However, when he reported to the recruiting station in June 1943, he was told his draft “bypass letter” for the Navy was invalid and “all recruits were going into the army.” After a few more twists of fate, “PFC Arnald Gabriel boarded the *Ile de France*...on April 7, 1944, with ten thousand other infantry troops.”

On D-Day, Arnald landed on Omaha Beach as part of a 3-person machine gun squad in E Company, 116th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division. Separated from his squad during landing, he teamed up with another machine gunner and proceeded to fight, remaining on the front lines 45 days before his first short break. In the chaotic year ahead, Arnald made and lost two extremely close friends, was awarded two Bronze stars for heroic actions and was promoted to E-5 (staff sergeant) for his demonstrated leadership. He remained in Europe on Occupation duty and was finally discharged on March 1, 1946.



Arnald was initially reluctant to pick up his music career; however, his high school band teacher, Professor Burton E. Stanley, would not allow him to let go of his gift and paved the way for his acceptance into Ithaca College. After college, he achieved the highest score ever on Air Force bandleaders’ exam. His first assignment following training was to Sampson Air Force Base. He developed superb habits of working with local community and youth groups, and juggling complicated managerial, scheduling and technical details of

multiple musical groups. Follow-on assignments were to Virginia, Germany, Colorado and then an incredible 21 years leading the Air Force Band in Washington, DC.

Colonel Gabriel was much more than a director. The Air Force Band Program is part of public affairs and outreach, and he filled this role superbly. The band’s overseas tours (both from Germany and Washington, DC) were lauded by US diplomats for breaking the ice during the very polarized Cold War era. In countries hostile to US policies,



his bands performed standing room only performances to multiple encores. His concerts broke new ground for both creative themes and delivery, and he brought in guest performers plus continued youth education and outreach. In 1985, the Air Force calendar told Arnald it was time to retire. He was up against two mandatory dates—30 years as a commissioned officer and 60 years of age. His non-combat honors were as significant as his combat ones, including an unprecedented three Legions of Merit, being named conductor emeritus and having the band’s rehearsal hall named “Gabriel Hall”.



However, he was not ready to actually retire and spent an additional 10 years George Mason University’s Head of Performing Arts. His civilian honors are as impressive as his military ones and include being named to the National Band Association Hall of Fame.