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## Queens Guard: A Rutgers Phoenix

By Michael Rutkowski UCNB'96, SCILS'96

Alumni of the Queens Guard, Rutgers' internationally acclaimed precision rifle drill team, are back "on the Banks" among a blaze of initiatives to secure and to restore its unique tradition and heritage on the University's campus.

Under the guidance of Joseph Carlani RC'84, The Queens Guard Alumni Association was recently approved as a special interest group by the Rutgers Alumni Association. Holding the first reunion in its 35-year history in the Rutgers Student Center in May, more than 75 alumni attended from 14 states. Alumni of the Queens Guard and the Scarlet Rifles, its cross-campus rival with whom it merged in 1970, enjoyed a collection of film footage of their overseas performances in Edinburgh, London, and other venues, handsomely restored and reproduced onto DVD by Victor Boruta RC'73 and broadcasted over the Red Lion Cafe's multiple display screens.



From left to right: Queens Guard Alumni Association President Joseph Carlani RC'84; Vice President John Waldinger RC'72; Treasurer Peter Matseur, CC'75; and Secretary Gary Vega.

*Photo courtesy Peter Matseur*

"We viewed our reunion as an opportunity to energize our alumni to join our efforts to rebuild the team after 12 years of dormancy, and to train current students in our unique drill technique and choreography," says Carlani, president of The Queens Guard Alumni Association. "We also established formal creation of the alumni association, which was imperative to legitimize our authority as partners with the Army/Air Force ROTC faculty leadership to reconstitute the team, as well as to secure the intellectual property rights to our newly developing web site, and to compile an audio/visual digital collection of the team's heritage with the university archives."

Martin Sobol RC'77 further stirred Carlani's long-simmering passion to restore the Queens Guard heritage after his tedious compilation of alumni email addresses for eventual use to communicate reunion plans, which finally coalesced earlier this year at reunion weekend, as well as over the summer at the home of Cliff Schumann, 1973 Air Force ROTC faculty advisor. Sobol's enthusiasm was triggered after vacationing and recollecting nostalgically with several Queens Guard alumni in southern California.

In 1957, the Queens Guard was formed by the Air Force ROTC program at Rutgers as an extracurricular activity for its cadets, which soon thereafter gained widespread recognition for its unusually precise movements and unique use of the 1903-A3 Springfield rifle, fitted with a 16-inch bayonet. Subsequently, over the next 35 years, the team dominated intercollegiate competition, winning many U.S. national championships, and traveled the world to represent the United States at more than 12 prestigious international military exhibitions, throughout Scotland, England, Wales, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Germany. Regrettably, The Queens Guard ceased as a competitive unit in 1993, due to declining recruitment, leaving the "intellectual keys" to its difficult technique and choreography among its alumni only.



Brian Mortensen RC'83 leads a line of Queens Guard members in execution of a rifle salute.

*Photo courtesy Nat Clymer RC'73*

John Waldinger RC'72, vice president of the new association, has enthusiastically stepped forward to serve as the alumni instructor and advisor to student recruits and ROTC faculty, and likewise will coordinate Queens Guard alumni to join him during their rigorous training schedule planned for this fall. "John is perfectly suited for this very important role," says Carlani, "as he smartly combines his deep passion to restore the team's heritage with patient leadership and mentoring skills."

Ultimately, Waldinger intends to revive the Queens Guard ethos of self-instruction, leadership, and administration by the most senior students on the team, as had been the case historically to ensure that initiative, accountability and "ownership" of the experience lies solely with its student members. The Queens Guard recruits from among all of the university's students, even though currently managed under the auspices of the Army ROTC program for budgeting and program purposes.

To assist the alumni efforts to recruit student candidates, to educate the university community of the team's distinctive history and to inspire continuing alumni support, Claudio Burgos RC'89 volunteered to design an official web site, which is anticipated for release in the months ahead. Burgos serves as the director and principal of his own advertising and web site design firm, located in Union, New Jersey. "Claudio's web site will be imperative to communicate and to sustain the momentum of our initiatives over the past 18 months, and should prove tremendously helpful," advises Carlani.

So as the mythical phoenix bird springs forth in rebirth from the pyre, so now the Queens Guard will soon reappear as a proud competitor, as its alumni resurrect its unique heritage on the Rutgers campus.