

The following history was provided by an Oregonian who marched locally from 1963 thru 1971.

We thank him for his generous donation of Pacific Northwest Drum Corps history.

UNEXPECTED COMEDY AT A DRUM CORPS COMPETITION

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Around mid to late 1960s, during a color guard competition at the Salem Optirama, the Rangers color guard went out to perform their drill for the judges. The color guard's head coverings were black berets (the corps could only afford new shakos for the bugle line and drumline that year). However, just before their performance, the girls requested to borrow the shakos from the bugle line, so they could match the look of the other color guards there. But they didn't account for one thing: the shakos and plumes were much higher on their heads than the berets were, and they had never used them before. Needless to say, as they were running thru their drill routine, more times than not, the flags caught the plumes and knocked some hats off or knocked them off center on their heads. Guard lost a lot of points for that ill-conceived notion (most of the girls were in tears at the end of the show). Was hard to watch at the time.

At another Optirama, the Flamingos full corps put in a little humor at the end of their corps performance. The format for the indoor Optirama (and the Seattle Thunderbirds indoor show, which is older than the Salem show) was to use an arena sized floor for the corps performance area. It looked like it might have been used as a hockey rink at times. Three quarters of the arena floor had tall concrete walls (probably for the hockey games) surrounding the outside of the arena floor. The starting line was on the left side, just feet away from a wall. Because the space was limited, most corps had to set up into two rows behind the starting line just after they filed through the access door at that end. Then the corps, after given the go ahead to start, would start off with their opening fanfare, then proceed with their off the line chart and drill movements to a standstill concert position in the center of the arena. After playing concert, the corps would play their final chart while performing drill movements towards the finish line on the right side, where they played their closing fanfare. After they completed their show, they would file out via an access door on the right side (of arena). It looked and acted like an outdoor field competition, but with very limited space and time to work with (it should be noted that all corps then were smaller, with the largest usually having no more than around 70 members). The corps were not judged on M&M (marching and maneuvering), but on everything else. If a corps was sloppy with drill format or presentation, they would get marked down in their GE (general effect) score. **Getting back to the Flamingos**, they just finished their final note on the finish line and were waiting for the drum major's instruction to file out of the room. The drum major was standing center left on the arena floor during this moment, and that's where he would order the corps to file out. But instead, he started jumping up and down and yelling to the corps that they were using the wrong door and they were supposed to use the original entrance door instead (or something to this nature). On hearing that, the whole corps ran in a mass mob to the other side of the arena and then out that door. Was a little off the norm for drum corps those days, but was funny to the audience after seeing something change from serious to comedic in just seconds. (Plus, it was the Flamingos' show and they would have had a little more flexibility than the other corps to do things like this.)