

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

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

### **THE PENDLETON RANGERS DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS**

The picture you have of the Rangers was taken in 1965, just before or just after the corps performed a full field show for some patients of the Eastern Oregon State Hospital (a place for people that had serious mental illness), The corps performed on a large baseball type field behind the hospital (it's now a state prison) and there was a small grandstand for audience viewing. It was hard to maintain composure (not laugh) during the performance when some in the audience thought the corps was playing a baseball game, and every so often you would hear shouts of "batter up!" or "play ball!"

1965 was the corps' second year of existence. It was a little smaller than the previous year, probably because it lost a little of its novelty with some of its original members, or they could have simply been intimidated by the more established and advanced corps (Columbians, Thunderbirds, Shamrocks, etc.). The corps did not compete at any competitions in 1965 but did have a full field drill and could have if they wanted to (those in charge might have been also intimidated by the well-established corps). The corps size was small, but not much smaller than any other Oregon Corps during that year (that's one of the reasons why Flamingos and Royal Lancers merged in 1965 - to make one bigger corps for the American Legion Nationals Prelims). The Rangers did get bigger in some years and in 1971 grew to almost 70 members mid-season (right in the middle of summer competition season).

The uniform the corps was wearing are the same ones used in 1964. The hats used by the color guard members were the hats the whole corps used in 1964 (a basic cowboy hat with one side ironed flat and the other side pinned to the hat using a Ranger button). The shakos were very old and were only used that one year. It was never formally told as to where they came from, other than they were from some disbanded senior corps that was located in south eastern Washington (there were over 30 drum and bugle corps in the State of Washington in the 1930s). The uniform blouses were half and half colors, and sometimes referred to as a "gaucho style." They were designed with the help of one of the corps' parents who happened to be a former army officer in the German Army during World War II (he was on the other side). New single-color blouses (red) and new shakos replaced the old style during 1966 and 1967. The corps bought new horns for that year (1965) to replace the brass single valve and no valve bugles (from the 1920s and 1930s era) used in 1964. They amounted to 10 sopranos 1 baritone and 2 bass baritones, which were chrome and had the valve/rotary functions. The average

hornline size from 1965 thru 1971 ranged between 15 to 18 horns. (FYI: The 1970 Portland Hawks only used 18 horns at the American Legion Nationals finals.)

In 1971, Rangers actually got down to 10 horn members at the competition in Pendleton, and the crowd and the town took notice how small the corps was (compared to the other corps) and things started to happen very fast soon after. By the time of the next show (last show of the season - 4 weeks later), Rangers increased in size to about 70 members (more than twice the previous size) and now had a 32-member hornline - which also included 3 mellophones 3 french horns and 3 contras (during that era, 36 to 45 horns were a large hornline anywhere). Not many drum corps ever, then or now, have accomplished something like that. The year of 1967 would be the peak year of Rangers' success. The corps did not win any titles, but did outscore all the other Oregon drum corps at one (or the other) of the two competitions the corps would attend that year.

The Rangers' membership resource pool in the early years were mostly, if not entirely, from the Pendleton area. As the years went by, new members started coming in from Athena and Hermiston, to a point where the Rangers changed their branding from "Pendleton Rangers" to "Rangers of Eastern Oregon." Note: the original Columbians had one or more members from the Hermiston area (not ex-Rangers) during the same time period also. One year an ex-Columbian, who lived in Hermiston, chose to march with the Rangers instead of the Columbians.

There were some rumors that the Rangers disbanded not from lack of membership or money, but from something else (a "letters to the editor" was sent to the local paper by the future ex-instructors that expressed some viewpoints of the corps that were not too complementary).

Rangers disbanded in 1974 (was originally formed in November of 1963). Some of the ex-Rangers then went on to march with the 1974 Columbians (who in turn folded before the 1975 season). There was a rumor that all the instruments and equipment from the disbanded Rangers were donated to the NWDCA with the idea that it would create a pool of resources that could then be then made available to new startups or existing corps going thru an expansion. But almost all northwest drum corps disappeared between the years of 1974 and 1978, with no new (or very little) startups taking place and fewer active corps left that were expanding. Most likely, all or most of the Ranger equipment was sold or donated to domestic or foreign destinations (IRS requires a disbanding non-profit to dispose of all assets).

The Ranger bugles would have become obsolete about 10 years after that time period, as the valve/rotary style was being replaced with the vertical two valve style, then came the three-valve style (it was said that those sopranos were actually G trumpets, and were not bugles made with the conical design), and then finally the transition away from bugles entirely. The valve/rotary bugles, however, still provide for a nice collector's type item to those that remember when they were used as standard equipment in drum corps at one time (mostly the over-60s crowd).

Some people in the 1965 photograph went on to march with Casper Troopers, Santa Clara Vanguard, and Racine Kilties (he's not in this picture, though). Ex-Rangers marched on DCI finalist corps in each of the first 4 DCI finals (1972 thru 1975).