

**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.

PENDLETON SENIOR DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS

The Pendleton Senior Corps was referred to (by townspeople) as the Pendleton Drum and Bugle Corps. Those in the junior corps (Rangers) referred to the corps as the Senior Corps. Nobody ever referenced their actual name "Cowboys" (although there was a separate organization in town, they might have been indirectly part of, and even still exists today, called The Main Street Cowboys - they were the ones who coordinated various Round Up activities such as parades, street shows, etc. for the town). Both the junior corps and the senior corps were active in Pendleton during 1964 (the only other cities in the northwest having more than one corps (at that time) were Portland and Seattle). The definition of a Senior corps during this era: must be over 21 to participate (with some exceptions). The definition of a junior corps: must be under 21 with no exceptions (not any different then present day, other than the reference to "Junior Corps" was replaced with the term "DCI Corps"). As an added note, DCA corps no longer resemble the older style Senior corps, as the vast majority of membership in the present era are represented mostly by the same age group as that of DCI corps (with fewer and fewer older members acting as an exception, rather than as the rule).

The Pendleton Senior Corps was a popular addition to parades in Pendleton, Walla Walla, and even the Tri-Cities (this was mid to later 1950s and very early 1960s - before the Columbians blossomed). Their members' average age was around mid 30s and up (a lot if not all were WWII army veterans and there might have been a few WWI and earlier war veterans in there also). The Senior Corps' uniform were red slacks and red western style shirts, white belts (military buckles) and white cowboy hats. Don't remember their shoe style. They were a standard parade style corps (there are still some of those that exist today). They had an American Flag section, sometimes a baton twirler, sometimes a glockenspiel player. Usually for the drumline, they had 3 snares, 3 tenors, 2 bass drums, and a cymbal player (this was a standard size most drum corps drumlines used everywhere then). The snare drummers had a basic knowledge of rudiments and kept things pretty simple (but were much better and more efficient than any of the high school or junior high school band drumlines in that area during those times). The (single) tenors and bass drum members all had straps attached to the bottom of their sticks (through pre-drilled holes) which they wrapped around their hands and then would twirl the sticks over their heads at certain intervals (don't have the technical name for that method, but if you watch British military band tenor drum sections on You Tube, it's basically the same as what the Senior corps did back then). The hornline size was usually

between 15 and 20 horns - give or take. They used standard single valve bugles at first and then converted to valve/rotary when it became available. Their horns were in brass, not chrome, mostly sopranos with some baritones (bass baritones when they converted to valve/rotary). Their parade bugle format had the baritone/bass baritones in front, then followed by the sopranos (Troopers used that same parade format for the bugle line in their early years: contra basses/bass baritones up front, followed by mellophones/french horns, followed by the sopranos - lead sopranos were in the very last line).

The Senior Corps main theme songs were "You're a Grand Old Flag" and "Yellow Rose of Texas." And of course, they played other charts. It appeared as if they all played the same part (melody) for all charts (probably no written score sheets and everyone learned it by rote). Note: drum corps in that era were relatively simple and inexpensive to assemble, but were highly distinguishable from the school band format (until the early 1970s, when the differences started to blur to a point where the two different formats eventually became mostly indistinguishable).

Because the senior corps was mostly made up of military veterans, they knew how to march and could outmarch all the other marching groups they were in the parade with (to be fair, the school bands only had slightly more than one week to prepare for those parades usually). The Senior Corps were not, however, a M&M corps (marching and maneuvering in a field type show). They did open up the Round Up with a kind of field show - which amounted to marching in parade formation playing their standard charts around the track, forming a concert formation in the center of the field, playing some music while standing still, then they would reform into a parade formation and play themselves off the field. In the mid 1950s, the corps was supposed to have traveled to San Francisco to perform at the halftime show for a professional football game (hosted by the SF 49ers). If that did happen, most likely (but not verifiable) they would have probably used the same type of field format in San Francisco they used when they opened the Pendleton Round Up.

There was, however, a drum corps competition that the corps did compete in at one time, and they may have had some form of a field drill. That was the Oregon American Legion State competition held in Pendleton during 1963. There were two divisions (senior and junior). Probably the last time there was a senior division at a state American Legion contest in Oregon having more than one corps. The senior division had two corps: Portland Leathernecks and the Pendleton Senior corps. The Portland Leathernecks won the senior division and the Astoria Mariners won the junior (outscored the Hawks and Flamingos).

The Pendleton Senior Corps owned what they were: a small-town parade corps. Nothing more. Had they expanded to a traveling field competitive drum corps with little to no local appearances, they would have lost their local membership base and most likely their sponsorship (the Pendleton Round Up Association). The Senior corps appeared fewer times after 1964, and some (eventually all) of their Round Up activities were taken over by the

Rangers (not sponsored by the Round Up Association, but probably received performance fees). No official reason was published as to why the Senior corps disbanded. Most likely, it was the end result of the assumption that they might have felt it was time for a younger group (the Rangers) to take over, or it was just getting past their time (age group) to do these types of things.