

DRUM CORPS WORLD

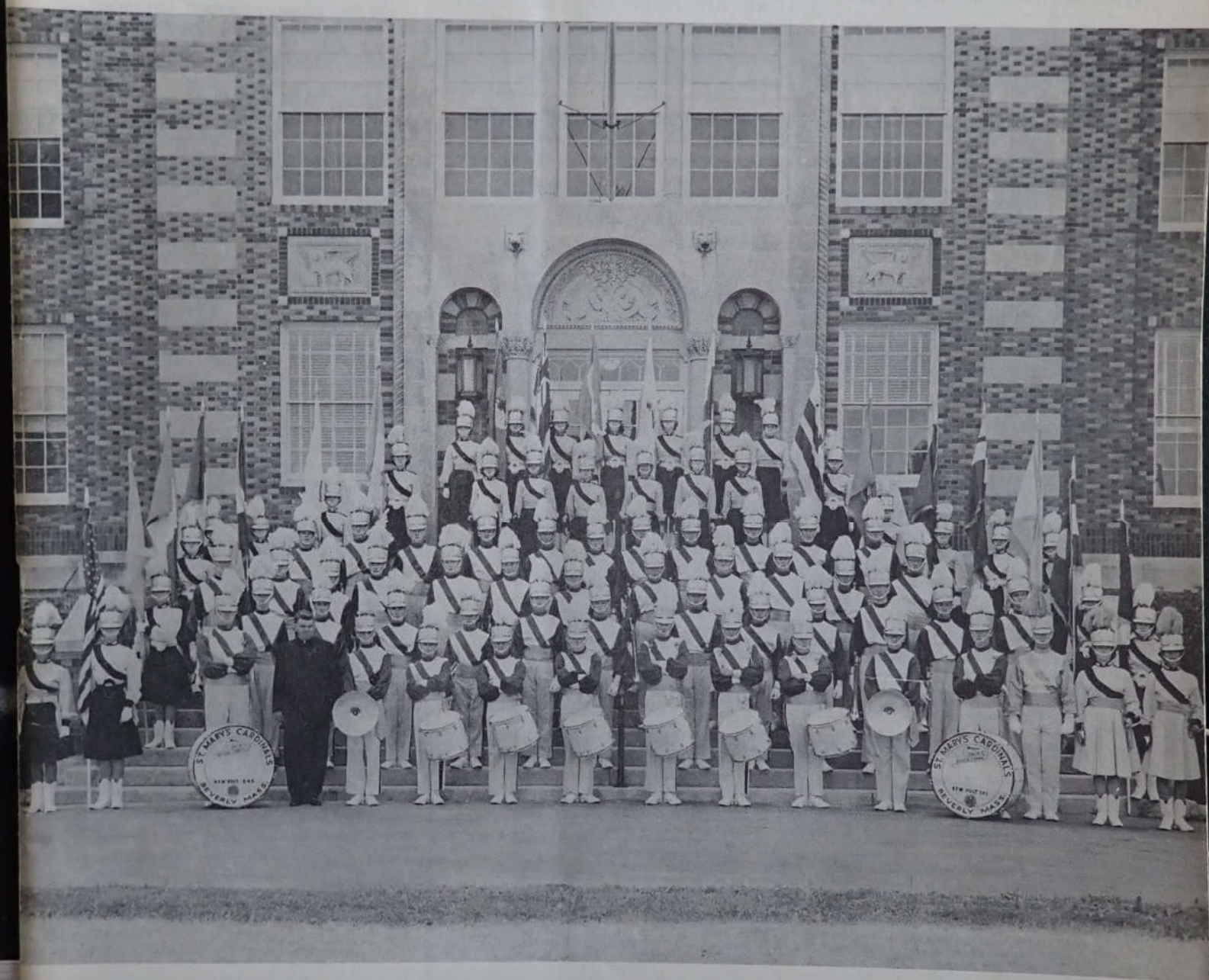
The voice of the drum corps

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by Mike Stefanowicz

The National V.F.W. Competitions came to Seattle and left the local corps members and many Seattle citizens breathless. It would take many pages to write all of the highly complimentary comments I've heard in the past few days. The adjectives ran from amazing to tremendous. To some of us one surprise was that many local people raved about all of the units, even the low scoring groups. Many had not seen an M & M show previously and were completely astonished. Many had not heard corps music played by the likes of the CAVLIERS and some thought that the boys just had to be professional musicians; kids just COULDN'T play THAT well.

Several of us who had attended other national shows wished that more major league corps would have come to town but 99.6% of the 11,000 who attended the contest were more than happy and pleased.

The sweethearts of the finals night were the SENORITAS from California. Without exception all people with whom I talked, after the show, just loved the group of girls. Surprised that girls could play drums and bugles as well as boys, these people felt that the girls should have placed higher than 8th.

Some of us chuckled at BRUCE FORD'S reaction at the finals. Bruce is owner of Ford's Drum and Music Co. and renowned concert, band, and rudimental drummer in Seattle. Bruce was persuaded to go by RITCHIE WATSON who had seen the prelims. Bruce was one of the completely surprised and amazed. After open-mouthedly watching the most wonderful TROOPERS Bruce said that NO ONE could be better than that. Then, came the Cavvies! "OK, OK, I can't believe it, but I guess it is possible". After the Cavvies concert Bruce just shook his head in wonder.

BOB OKI and 60 of the BHUD DIST BOY SCOUTS CORPS said they would like to see the show again tomorrow, and again, and again. And, they sat on the wrong side of the field but were still thrilled. The RACINE SCOUTS got an exceptionally fine hand from this group and also from the entire audience. I sold a batch of tickets to a group of Boeing Engineers with a special stipulation, a money-back guarantee if they could honestly tell me they were not surprised and impressed. NOT ONE even thought of asking for money back, but thanked me for asking them to go. In fact, all wanted to know when they could see another show like it. Am practically taking reservations for the 1966 Legion show in Portland.

Seattle's weather this year had not been the best. Evenings have been cool to cold. But when the corps came to town the clouds dispersed and wonderful sunshine plus balmy evenings came. The nite of

the finals saw one of the nicest evenings we've had all year.

The Finals Contest: In 12th place, the BLUE ANGELS of Seattle, 46.40. Lacking in horns but long on spirit. Nice selections of songs, drummers trying real hard on McCormick music but not true and sharp yet. Little ragged on drill, but a group of happy youngsters who had the honor of playing in the finals at a National contest. Plan to be up 20 points by next year, with 36 to 40 horns.

In 11th spot, The SHAMROCKS of Seattle, 55.30. The group has the potential of far better performance and in another year that potential will prevail. Nice repertoire of music, few rough spots with horns, nice horn solos, drums good but occasionally busy, little more precision will make this a hot drum line. A nice spirited group.

In 10th position, the DENVER BLUE KNIGHTS with a score of 60.05. Drill wide open and good, not too tricky, quite a smooth corps, very nice drum line which has been helped by Charlie Fisher of the AF Academy. Very good power for 20 horns, nice color guard flag work. Occasionally off in early parts of concert but finale was good. With more horns could be a very fine unit.

In 9th place the LAKEWOOD AMBASSADORS of California, 63.10. Bass and Bari horns produced a very nice sound, drums also were quite good. A different number by this group was Our Father played while the corps formed cross. Very effective, horns not true at all times. Concert little rough at start but ended nicely. Drum parts very effective. Company fronts curving several times, corps' poorest drill feature. A very promising group.

Number 8 spot, the SENORITAS of San Gabriel, Calif., 64.10. As I said before the sweethearts of the evening. Horns plenty strong, but not overpowerful. Very nice M & M, a smooth performing group. As another writer said music followed corps theme nicely. A very good drum solo which surprised many in the audience. Concert very well played most of the time. The girls executed a very fine show. Tremendous potential.

In 7th spot, TRI-CITIES COLUMBIANS of Washington, 67.45. As always this unit performed very well and considering 18 horns, have lots of power and produce fine music. Drums sounded clean but sometimes almost weak. A very nice latin concert, with good drum work. Excellent rifle twirling, but I feel along with others, that is should not be done during the fine concert. A nice show and the crowd was pleased. A 3rd national contest for the Columbians, always between 65 and 67. Group just MUST get more horns.

Number 6 position, the THUNDER-BIRDS of Seattle, 67.85. A good performance by Washington's fastest growing unit. Comments from Cavvies, Troopers, Alan Brooks, and Don Hattin were complimentary. They all said that this group has nothing to be ashamed of. Fairly strong horns but weak for 36. Fair drill with some intricate moves. Drums need more precision, drum parts little difficult, will sound better next year. Concert needs gimmick and better music. The St. Kevins

uniforms made the people look twice. Much potential in this corps with lots of work.

In the 5th spot, MILFORD SPARTANS, from New Hampshire, 68.75. For this corps I would say they have nothing to be ashamed of. A very strong horn line, produced a somewhat different sound, and a big sound. Very effective horn blasts accompanied by raising horns up and down. (Blast may be the wrong word.) Excellend G.E., good field coverage. Very nice drumming and drum parts. Terrific tenor drum job during concert. A nice corps that is going places.

In the number 4 position, RICHMOND HAWKS from California, 70.85. To me this was a surprise group of the evening. We saw the Hawks in Las Vegas and they were a disappointment after all the propaganda issued about them. However, this year they were NOT a disappointment, they were a treat to watch. Very, very strong 40 horns, very nice sound, very good drumming, good M & M, wide drill. Slight poor start off the line, drums lost horns once. But, after couple of minutes this corps went. Nice arm swing, dancing cymbalist very good, drums good in concert. The best gimmick of the nite occurred during the concert. One drum judge, Geati I believe, was hawking the drum line, real close. Whereupon the cymbalist started swinging those sharp edges close to the judges face - and the cymbals kept coming closer. The drum judge started backing away but the cymbals still kept coming. Finally the judge ran backwards off the field. On purpose? We weren't sure. A wonderful performance. Good job, Hawks.

In 3rd place, RA CINE SCOUTS of Wisconsin, 77.55. At this time I became more absorbed with watching and listening rather than writing notes. Thus, I have few details and lots of wonderful memories. The crowd sensed that they were not watching a more polished unit and hearing better musicians. Horns just a little weak at start and then the groups M & M began to shine. Horns played very nice music, recognizable tunes which the crowd liked. Beautiful drumming, nice arm swing, very nice concert, excellent cymbal work. Drum majors performance very good. Nice field coverage with some difficult and dangerous features. Corps split very wide in three sections, nearly 60 yards apart, but still playing together very well. A very fine performance by a very fine corps.

In 2nd position, The TROOPERS of Casper, Wyoming, 81.40. To me and probably to many others this was THE surprise group of the evening, and the year. We watched them in Denver and in Las Vegas but in Seattle we gaped at the Troopers. One word may sum up my reaction, WOW! Beautiful, beautiful M & M. Local Marines were nearly shocked at the company front for fifty yards, very well done. The bursting circle was the most elegant maneuver of the night. From our vantage 50 rows up in the stadium, the circle looked near perfect. Wagon wheels was another excellently executed move. In a previous DCW copy Jim Wade asked if the hours and hours that the Troopers spent at rehearsals were worth

(cont.)

If I would say, yes, definitely. Comments from throughout the audience were all praise, praise, praise, from phenomenal, tremendous, terrific to just great. Here again, the notebook was blank at the end of the performance. Music was well played, couple of marches surprised people, drumming was very, very good, nicely executed, horn line and drums much, much improved in past year. The Troopers are a going concern, congrats to you all.

In 1st place, once again the National Champs, CAVALIERS, 86.15. They are not called the Green Machine for nothing, quote, Jack Miller of Seattle. They have earned that title and are maintaining it. From the first note the crowd sensed championship quality. After several seconds, and on the field the crowd practically knew it. After Battle Hymn and THAT concert the crowd was positive they were watching the top unit. M & M not as smooth as the Troopers but more flash. Horns were strong, as always, and that excellent drum section, just wonderful. Drums played difficult parts, played them well, sticks higher than all other drummers, and faster. Some of us chuckled at the playing of Little Bit of Luck. With the Cavvies skill, not much luck is needed. The concert number made some local musicians drool. The drill looked more open to me from previous years, the corps looked livelier. A great corps playing wonderful music, and presenting a championship show. Our hats off and salutes to the Cavaliers.

It was a great nite for drum corps in Washington. We are sure that the young people will practice harder than ever, now that they have seen what can be done, what others are able to do and what work is required. At least two corps, Chamrocks and Thunderbirds are talking of tripping to Cleveland, and I sincerely hope they do.

The individual drum contest, juniors, saw a battle of two giants, with MITCH MARKOVICH of the Cavaliers edging DEL BLAKE of Spokane, Wash. Both young men were out to win, with probably the greater effort exerted by Blake. This was Del's final contest as a junior. Blake was the first of the two to play, he was very fast, very, very smooth, played exceptionally well with the best stick control of the day. Mitch followed and played very fast, very good high execution, excellent expression, and a fast grand finale that packed a wallop. Both boys had dinner together that nite (they are very good friends) and both admitted they were nervous about the results. We can only have one champion and Mitch again won the honor, many congratulations to you, Mitch. However, to me both of you boys are champs . . . LORIN GRINOLDS and RON FALCONBURG, both of Seattle tied for third place. These boys almost couldn't believe the announced results, but were extremely happy about them. They have worked hard and were rewarded . . . About four years ago I predicted that the above three local students of mine would

outplay me in a few years. This year they all did and now I can retire happy, mission accomplished.

In the junior percussion quartet contest the CAVALIERS drummers hurriedly assembled selections, and committed several errors. The THUNDERBIRDS quartet rehearsed their own composition for many hours for this contest and did a fine job. Thus, the Thunderbirds passed the Cavvies for the championship and received the beautiful LUDWIG trophy. Happier boys I have not seen in a long time. Third place went to the hard working SHAMROCKS who are trying some very good drum parts.

In the tenor drum contest JOHN MATHE of Racine did a fine job, very smooth, not too fast, but execution good and clean; congratulations, champ. STEVE NELSON, Thunderbirds, played fast, less smooth at high speed than John, and played some snare drum rudiments; congrats on 2nd, Steve. HOWIE LASKY of the Cavaliers, not as smooth as above, but fine job; Congrats to you, Howie.

In the Soprano bugle caption very close between TOM STANTON, Racine, 1st place; MIKE DUFFY, Thunderbirds, 2nd; ALEX LEFFEK, Cavaliers, 3rd. All people who watched and listened to these boys had nothing but praise. Congrats to all three of you . . . French horn championship went to KEN NORMAN of Racine and TOM GRINOLDS of the Thunderbirds took 2nd. Only .5 point apart. Nice work by both boys who chummed around for few days prior to the contest, and afterward. Congratulations also to DANNY MCDONALD of Lakewood for 3rd place . . . In the Baritone horn contest BOB ROSS of the Cavaliers won the top spot. MIKE JACOBS of the Hawks won 2nd place (results studied carefully by Russ Bell) and 3rd place went to GEORGE WHITE of Portland . . . Racine was tops

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again in Bass horns, BRYAN ALLER taking the honor title. KEN STORM of the Richmond Hawks placed second, Russ Bell looking for this result, too. BOB TEMPLE of the Thunderbirds took 3rd, one point behind Ken . . . In the Brass Quartet show LAKEWOOD handily won first, followed by the THUNDERBIRDS and CAVALIERS.

I had the pleasure of meeting ALAN BROOKS of the Granite State Gossip Column. We spent couple of hours at the prelim show and lunch. Brooksie sure knows his drum corps, horn work, color guard, and drill. A very knowledgeable man. It was an education to talk with him,

and at times like these I wish we were not such a big-space country . . . Met and had nice chat with ALDEN MILLER. Man, he knows his corps work, judging and has ideas by the thousands. Alden met with managers and local corps people at Jack Miller's home, two nights. Real education nites . . . DON HATTIN of Conn. Yankee Doodlings Column and I chatted about the old days and people in corps work there. Names like Charlie Smith, Sturtze, Redican, Strauss, Yalesville, Lancraft, flowed like water. Wish we had more time . . . CRAIG MOTTAZ predicted to me that the Hawks would pass the Thunderbirds. He was so right! This was another visit that was much too short . . . RUSS BELL was beaming and flitting all around, as Russ always does. Same old guy, full of corps life. He was pleased with his corps and individuals. JOE ODAY and his wife looked like they were enjoying everything. Joe was busy recording. He brought his raincoat and the sun came out the day he arrived. Thanks, Joe.

Mr. and Mrs. LITTEAU of the Cavaliers sporting about 50,000 corps buttons on their jackets. Were interviewed by radio stations and pleased with everything. JIM JONES of the Cavvies looked a little worried at times when corps rehearsals didn't go right. No worries at the end, however. It was nice meeting this fine gentleman . . . JIM JONES of the Troopers wore some of the biggest smiles that I'd seen in years. He and KATHY just beamed after the Troopers won the Color Guard show. With that Trooper outfit anyone would smile - and smile . . . Had nice talk with TOM LARSON, drum instructor for the Racine Scouts. Asked him for any old drum parts he might throw away. We could use some of his nice drum work.

CORPS OF THE NORTH looked very nice in the parade. For a very young corps had a nice sound. The BLUE ANGELS and FRANK SOUSA met the corps when the Alaskans stepped from the airplane. The Blue Angels were the first drum corps the Northerners had ever seen. The corps had a touch of Garfield when marching . . . Disappointed that the PRESIDENTS did not complete. Horn line looked small, sounded weak compared to their Minneapolis showing . . . The MARINERS of Oregon, Seattle TORREDDORS, Portland HAWKS, and the THUNDERBIRD CADETS all made heartfelt attempts in prelims but were just outclassed, but get A's for effort and appearing.

TONY SCHLECHTA a little sour during the times that he worked like mad compiling scores. But full of smiles and fun during the trophy and medal passing out time. Very unhappy with the senior individual and quartet turnouts, and no one blames him, although some bitterness here and in California for senior corps cancellation. But Tony can cite many reasons. Thanks to Tony and JACK BRADSHAW and all who worked to organize the whole show.

All in all it was a grand week and likely will not happen here again for more than ten years. Our sincerest million thanks to all corps and people who traveled the many miles to Seattle and gave us a show to remember!!!