

The Pendleton Senior Drum and Bugle Corps

By

Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com

Specializing in PNW Drum Corps of the 1960s and 70s

The following article was provided by a site member who marched locally from 1963 thru 1971, and with the Troopers of Casper, Wyoming in 1972. We thank him for his generous donation of Pacific Northwest Drum Corps history.

Background:

Pendleton is located in the northeastern corner of Oregon and is the birthplace of the Pendleton Woolen Mills Company, famous for their wool blankets, clothing, and other products. The 1960 US Census lists the population of Pendleton as 14,434; the definition of small-town America. The Pendleton Round-up is the local rodeo which started in 1910. Since then, it has expanded from a rodeo to a fun-filled five-day festival with many divergent activities. In the 1960s, Pendleton had two drum corps; the Pendleton Sr, and the Rangers Jr. [ed]

PENDLETON SENIOR DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS

The Pendleton Senior Corps was referred to by the townspeople as the Pendleton Drum and Bugle Corps. Those in the Rangers junior corps referred to them as the "Senior Corps". Nobody ever referenced their actual name, "Cowboys". 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, both of which had enormous populations to draw members from, compared to Pendleton.

The Pendleton Senior Corps was a popular addition to parades in Pendleton, Walla Walla [WA], and even in the Tri-Cities [WA]. This was mid to later 1950s and very early 1960s - before the [Tri-City] Columbians blossomed. Pendleton Sr members' average age was around the mid-30s and up. Most, if not all were WWII army veterans. There might have been a few WWI and earlier war veterans as members also.

The Senior Corps' uniform was red slacks, red western style shirts, white belts (military buckles), and white cowboy hats. They were a standard parade-style corps. They had an American Flag section, and sometimes a baton twirler and a glockenspiel player.



1956 Pendleton Senior

The drumline typically had 3 snares, 3 tenors, 2 bass drums, and a cymbal player (this was a standard size of most local Sr drumlines of the era). The snare drummers had a basic knowledge of rudiments and kept things pretty simple. 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.

The hornline usually had between 15 and 20 horns. They used standard single valve bugles at first and then converted to valve/rotary when they 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. The 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, everyone learned it by rote.

Because the senior corps was mostly made up of military veterans, they knew how to march and could outmarch all the other marching units in a parade. As a parade corps, they did not march in field competitions; however, 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.



1960

There was one instance of the Sr corps marching a field drill in competition; that was the Oregon State American Legion competition held in Pendleton in 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 division outscoring the [Portland] Hawks and [Salem] Flamingos.

The Pendleton Senior Corps owned what they were; a small-town parade corps and nothing more. Had they expanded into 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 with the Pendleton Round Up Association.

The Senior corps appeared fewer times after 1964, and their Round Up activities were gradually taken over by the Rangers. No official reason was ever published as to why the Senior corps disbanded.



1967 Pendleton Rangers Jr D&BC

Most Pacific Northwest Senior Corps faded out in the 1950s and early 60s as the warriors of world conflicts past, handed the drum corps baton to a new generation of warriors who would do battle on the field of competition. [ed]

Long Live Drum Corps!

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