

# Judging in the 1970s

© Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com 2021

photos and text from Carl Latchow, Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com, specializing in PNW drum corps of the 1960s and 1970s

**B**eing a Pacific Northwest drum corps means being stuck way out in the upper left-hand corner of the good old U.S. of A. Our isolation has been known to breed politics, nepotism and outright skulduggery in the local drum corps scene. But hey, what's drum corps without those?

Back in the 1970s, there used to be a theory that to get the true measure of your corps, you had to compete outside the confines of the Pacific Northwest and its home-grown, sometimes myopic judging. Many corps had employed this to some success. Some did not. [Pacific NW is loosely defined as Washington, Oregon and British Columbia, Canada for this article]

Since we live in the Northwest, our travel choices are to go East to Colorado, Utah or the East Coast, or go South to California. Going North into Canada was the same as being judged locally, so not a "true measure."

If your corps had money -- and the majority of Pacific Northwest corps did not -- you would go back East to compete (by East, I mean anything East of the Missouri river). The issue here was distance, time and MONEY. Quite a few corps that made the trek practiced deficit spending that, in my opinion, ultimately led to their demise.

The only feasible option for many corps was to go South and tour California. Competing with those corps was an eye-opener. They had their own scene going on down there. Tough corps, lots of shows, national champions, and a totally different level of judging which was what we were after. Going to California was also cheaper compared to going back East -- 2,200 miles roundtrip to California vs. 5,600 miles to the East Coast and back.

That was the quandary . . . tour the Pacific Northwest and be subjected to the vagaries of local judging or spend some coin, go play in someone else's backyard and be subjected to the vagaries of their judging.

I love drum corps (seriously)!

Please visit the Pacific Northwest Web site at [www.PNWDC.com](http://www.PNWDC.com). ■ ■ ■



(Top to bottom): a few PNW corps --1st Canadian Regiment (year unknown); Columbians (1961); Royal Lancers (1967); Black Watch (early 1970s); and Marksman (1976 or 1978)