

The Hawthorne Hawks All-Boy Drum & Bugle Corps and the formation of the Royal Legion Lancers

by Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com, specializing in PNW drum corps of the 1960s and 1970s

The following history is based on information provided to the site by Bob Chenoweth, one of the three Hawks members who formed the Lancers in 1963. We thank him for his generous donation of Portland, OR, corps history.



(Top to bottom): 1960 Seaside, OR, state American Legion Championships; 1961 Hawks; 1962 Hawks, welcoming the national president of the American Legion, outside Portland International Airport (PDX); 1964 Lancers

simultaneously.

The Lancers had few horn players and drummers in the early days, so we teamed up with Mary's Cadets Baton Corps. We would play a fanfare and maybe one or two tunes to introduce them in parades and at baton corps

Hawks in this article refers to the Portland, OR, drum corps, AKA, The Hawthorne Boosters of Portland (1959), Hawthorne Hawks All-Boy D&BC (1960-1962), Hawks of Oregon (1963) and the Portland Hawks (1964-1974). Lancers refers to the Portland Royal Legion Lancers (1963-1964), Lancer-Flamingos (1965) and the Royal Lancers (1966-1974).

Bruce Plumb was director of the Hawks from their creation in 1959 through the end of the 1963 season. He was the drill instructor and marched on the field with us boys as well. He had been a Marine drill instructor and knew his stuff. He taught us to count cadence in Japanese; "ichi, ni, san, shi." He was the glue and had the strongest vision of what the Hawks could be.

In 1963, the Hawks were one of the few corps that still had no girls. They were initially sponsored in 1959 by Portland's Hawthorn District Businessmen's Association. A businessMEN'S association not allowing girls, hmmm. Back in the day, this wasn't uncommon, unheard of now and rightfully so. In 1961 they were now sponsored by their parents club who retained the corps "All-Boy" name and composition¹.

Half of the general population were girls, girls that could play drums and horns, girls that could work flags and throw rifles, girls that the Hawks needed to grow, diversify and modernize as a drum corps. Bruce put a lot of himself into the Hawks and I know he was disappointed in the inability of the organization to change. His own daughter, who was a horn player, could not play in the very group he helped create. There were other problems as well, but this was the main issue. At the time, the Hawks organization was not ready to embrace Bruce's vision, but there was a group of us who were ready to try it, so we left the Hawks and formed our own drum corps.

In September 1963, Bruce left the Hawks, along with three of us marching members, to form the Royal Legion Lancers. We spent more than one evening around his kitchen table planning and thinking about our vision of the new corps and how to implement it.

Bruce was the Lancers' corps director, music director and drill instructor in 1963 and 1964. In 1965 he was the director when the Lancers merged with the Flamingos of Salem, OR, to form the one-year-only Flamingo-Lancers. This was a temporary merger in order to field a single, large corps for the American Legion Nationals in Portland that year. From 1966 through 1974, he was the Lancers' director and drill instructor. He wore many hats, almost always

contests. It was great fun and we were able to get both playing time and new recruits. Lots of baton twirlers joined the Lancers' color guard.

We grew fast and won our first Oregon State American Legion Junior title in 1964, beating the Hawks in the process. That was a mere 10-months after forming. We were well on our way to achieving Bruce's vision of a modern drum corps.

Throughout the next decade, the Lancers were a successful corps, touring back East (which was a big deal for a PNW corps), and winning several Oregon state championships. At one time they were Oregon's largest drum corps and in 1968, Oregon's only A-Division corps in the Northwest Drum Corps Association (NWDCA).

In 1975 the Lancers merged with the Portland Hawks to form The Third Regiment. Talk about coming full circle. Merging three with the same corps (Hawks) you left in 1963.

The Third Regiment was the last remaining drum corps in Portland when they disbanded after the 1978 season. No more local drum corps activity until the "new" Oregon Crusaders relocated from Medford, OR, to Portland in 2001.

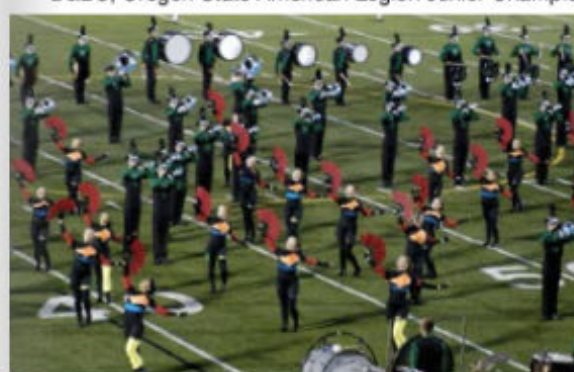
Footnotes:

1) The Hawks eventually went co-ed in 1966.
2) Baton twirling and baton corps were very popular in the 1940s through the 1960s. They performed individually and in teams at parades, fairs, festivals and half-time shows. They also had their own competitions. Quite a few early 1960s PNW drum corps and other marching units had their own baton twirler leading their group in parades and sometimes in the drum corps show itself.

3) In the PNW, mergers were generally initiated for two reasons: 1) financial distress and 2) low membership numbers. Typically, the merger immediately results in a larger corps, but then membership falls off each succeeding year to the point of unsustainability. Most mergers lasted only a year or two. The exception, and the only merger that clearly worked, was the 3rd Regiment in Portland, OR. Four seasons post-merger was longer than some corps lived their entire lives (in the 1960s) without merging.

Bruce Plumb's drum corps resumé

- 1938, Sons of the American Legion D&BC in Villa Park, IL
- Marching member - Flag and drummer (age 11)
- Prior to 1955, member, Hillsboro American Legion Senior D&BC, 3-time Oregon State American Legion Champions
- 1955 - 1959, manager, Portland Leathernecks Senior D&BC, 5-time Oregon State American Legion Champions
- 1959 - 1963, director/instructor, Portland Hawks Junior D&BC, Oregon State American Legion Junior Champions



(Top to bottom): March 1966, Lancers quartet; 1970 Hawks snares; 1970 Royal Lancers; 1974 Royal Lancers; left, 2012 Oregon Crusaders.

1960 and 1961

- 1963 - 1974, director/instructor, Portland Royal Lancers Junior D&BC, Oregon State American Legion Junior Champions in 1964, 1966 thru 1970, and 1973

This man had drum corps in his veins. Thank you, Bruce, for your untiring dedication to drum corps.

Long Live Drum Corps!

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