

# The Corps of the North, - Fairbanks, Alaska

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by Carl Latchaw, Drum Corps World staff and webmaster of Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com specializing in PNW Drum Corps of the 1960s and 1970s

The Corps of the North was the one and only drum and bugle corps from the state of Alaska in the 1960s. It was formed in June 1962 by the late Dave Shaw (right) who played baritone with the Holy Name (Garfield) Cadets of New Jersey from 1950 to 1958. In 1962 he was a member of the U.S. Army stationed in Fairbanks and that is where he formed the corps. Dave was also the drillmaster in 1962 and 1963.



The corps director from 1962 to 1964 was Ron Rizzi, a college senior majoring in education at the University of Alaska.

The corps started life as an all-boy bugle and percussion sections (no girls allowed) and an all-girl color guard. Interestingly, the color guard carried a unique set of flags. They included the U.S. flag, United Nations flag, Canadian flag, Alaskan flag, VFW flag, Corps of the North flag, Jewish flag, Christian flag, Catholic flag and the "Symbol" flag. The corps had membership age limits between 13

and 18 years old.

They did all of the standard drum corps fund-raising functions; marched in parades, played at events, sold candy bars and raffle tickets. It must've been hard being the only corps in the state as there



were no local drum corps competitions.



They toured the Seattle, WA, area in August 1963 and marched exhibition at the Renton Blue Angels' show, "The Angels Sing" on the August 25. The corps bivouacked with the Angels in Renton, WA. Great hosts those Angels.

Two days later, the North was the leading musical unit at the August 27 VFW Nationals parade in Seattle and

placed 17th in the VFW Nationals preliminary competition held in Seattle, but did not make the finals. The corps was only 14 months old at this point, so nice job!

In 1964 they were scheduled to start the season at the Seattle Thunderbirds' "Mid-Winter Competition" April 18, until the "Big One" hit.

The corps had to withdraw from all drum corps competitions in the "lower 48," including the VFW Nationals in Cleveland, OH, due to the disastrous (9.2 on the Richter scale) earthquake that struck Alaska on March 27.

Instead, they stayed home and raised money for the Alaskan disaster victims. [Well done people!] Those of us in the Seattle area



remember the quake well. It was the biggest quake recorded in North American history to that date and is the second largest recorded quake in the world behind the 1960 Chilean earthquake of 9.5 (USGS.gov).

In 1965 they continued to make local appearances and raised money to fly to VFW Nationals in Chicago, IL, in August of that year. They never made it to the VFW Nationals that year or traveled out of state again. When they did travel, they flew commercial. Muy expensive, that.

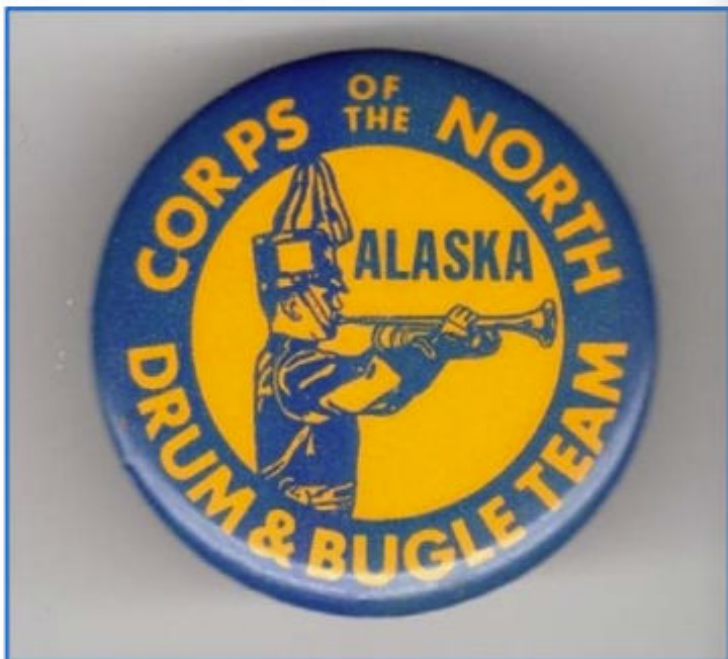
The corps' last known sighting was in a May 1966 Fairbanks parade.

Short lived, the only drum corps in the state and an honorary Pacific Northwest drum corps. What more can you ask for?

Our hats off to Dave Shaw. Never be afraid to start a drum corps people, wherever you are!

[NOTE: Dave Shaw was a marching member of the Garfield Cadets in the 1950s, formed the Corps of the North in 1962 and went on to become a preeminent drum corps publicist, writer (for *Drum Corps World* and instructor, working for the Troopers (1960s), Garfield Cadets (1970s) and DCI as their first official spokesman in 1971. He dedicated his life to drum corps and we're all richer for it.

Long Live Drum Corps! -- PacificNorthwestDrumCorps.com. ■



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**CORPS OF THE NORTH**

**CARNIVAL**

12 Noon Until 7:00

JUNE 29-30 AT THE

**TANANA VALLEY FAIRGROUNDS**

- Corps of the North Show
- Sky Divers Show—2 P.M.
- Dance to Snow's Church
- Hot Dogs
- Hamburgers
- Cotton Candy
- Chili
- Soft Drinks
- Parachute Ride
- Ferris, Kiddie Cars
- Loop O' Loop
- Flying Saucer

(1962)

