## American Legion Nationals in Portland, Oregon -- 1970

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We've hosted a few national contests here in the Pacific Northwest. The first was the 1932 American Legion Nationals in Portland, OR, then the 1963 VFW Nationals in Seattle, WA, followed by the 1965 and 1970 Legion Nationals in Portland. Today we're going to focus on the 1970 AL Nationals, not on the show itself, but on

the contestants' demographics.

At the August 29, 1970 AL Nationals prelims there were 21 junior corps. All of them were native to the Pacific Northwest and California except for the Americanos from Appleton, WI, and the Chevaliers from Waterloo, IA. In the senior competition, all corps were from "back East" except for our local Grenadiers from Bremerton, WA. The other four senior corps were from Maryland, Florida, Minnesota and North Dakota (North Dakota is "back East-ish" to us left-coasters).

Why did the senior corps decide to travel West and the juniors

did not? Finances maybe? The cost of traveling that distance is substantial. Maybe the senior corps members had jobs that made the trip more affordable.

The prize money? Maybe the Eastern seniors came for the cash because of the dearth of local senior corps. Cash never hurts the budget. In 1970 there

was only one senior corps left in the Pacific Northwest and as it turned out, the 1970 nationals was their last hurrah. Who knows exactly why the seniors traveled all the way out here, but we're glad they did.

The only place worse than the West Coast to have a drum corps national championship is Hawaii. The 1973 Legion National Convention was held in Hawaii, but the drum corps show was canceled due to a lack of participants. Long distances to travel equals big bucks.

The Seattle Cascades tried to go to Hawaii in 1975, but not everyone could raise the cash. What do you do? Go with half a corps? The Cascades live on the West Coast and couldn't raise the cash for Hawaii, imagine trying to raise the cash from the East Coast?? [Seattle to Hawaii is 2.665 miles and New York to Seattle is





2,904 miles. That makes New York to Hawaii over 5,500 miles one way. Driving a bus is always cheaper than flying, but distance always equals money.

Was it just the 1970 AL
Nationals with this East Coast
participation issue? Here's a
list of national championships
held in the Pacific Northwest
and their non-West Coast
drum corps participants.

1932 AL Nationals in

Portland had the Birmingham Alabama AL Post in attendance. The other 11 senior corps were West Coast. This was all Legion senior posts, no junior corps.

1963 VFW Nationals in Seattle had; Cavaliers (IL), Troopers (WY), Racine Scouts

(WI), Milford Spartans (NH), Blue Knights (CO). The other seven corps were West Coasters.

1965 AL Nationals in Portland had Royal Airs (IL), Garfield Cadets (NJ), Muchachos (NJ), Argonne Rebels (KS), Cedar Rapid Cadets (IA), Grey Knight Crusaders Senior, (NY), Hawthorne Caballeros Senior (NJ), Hamm's Indians Senior (MN). Only one West Coast senior and junior corps made it to finals.

1970 AL Nationals in Portland had Americanos (WI), Chevaliers (IA), Yankee Rebels Senior (MD), Harvey Seeds Senior (L), Laidlaw Brass, Inc Senior AKA: Minnesota Brass (MN) and Wishek, AL Senios (ND).



EAST: Yankee Rebels gather the hardware with the helping hands of the Convention Director and National



WEST: Santa Clara Vanguard - the Legion's 1970 Junior National Champions - pose with the National Community

## Analysis:

Per the above data, we see that prior to 1970 we had a good showing of East Coast junior corps at our national contests. One

of the reasons for this phenomenon might be the relative absence of competitive California corps at the time (sorry guys). There was only the Velvet Knights, Richmond Hawks, Lakewood Ambassadors and Monterey Park Sefioritas in



American Legion Nationals Senior Trophy

competition from California at that time. It was literally the Wild West out here drum corps-wise and the East Coasters came and collected their due. East Coast corps captured the top three spots in both the 1963 and 1965 contests.

August 30, 1970 AL Nationals at the junior division finals, the winner was the Santa Clara Vanguard. They were in their fourth year of existence and this was their first national championship.

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(Previous page, top to bottom) Chicago Cavaliers, at Seattle Center, 1963; 1970 American Legion Nationals retreat (left to right) (MD) Yankee Rebels, unknown, (WA) Seattle Imperials, (CA) Anaheim Kingsmen, (WA) Shamrocks, (CA) Velvet Knights, unknown, (OR) Portland Hawks, (CA) Stockton Commodores, (CA) Santa Clara Vanguard, (WI) Americanos -- second corps from left is either Miami, FL, Harvey Seeds Rebels or Minnesota Brass and seventh from left is either Miami, FL, Harvey Seeds Rebels or Minnesota Brass (this page, top to bottom) American Legion 1970 medal, 1963 VFW Nationals retreat, East and West trophies, American Legion trophy "Golden Drum IV."











the Anaheim Kingsmen. In 1972 they were DCI. U.S. Open and CYO National Champions. Their

> Third place was the Velvet Knights, another strong California corps, but not of the same caliber as the Vanguard or Kingsmen. [Side note, in 1963 the Anaheim Explorer Scouts split into two corps. the Kingsmen and the Velvet Knights]

The corps cleaned up earlier in the season on their East Coast tour, collecting a bunch of firsts. In 1971 they were VFW National Champions at

Dallas, TX. In 1973 and 1974 they were DCI

Second place in the 1970 AL Nationals were

1970 East Coast tour was less fruitful than the Vanguard's, with an average show placement of

Champions.

fourth.

The ascent of these strong California corps among other, might have had something to do with the decline of East Coast corps participation. The first three spots are where all the good prize money is and that's where the California corps placed.

Since 1970, the Pacific Northwest has witnessed very few East Coast drum corps traveling out here to compete. Very few. It's a money thing; has to be. Sure, back in the day you could travel from the East Coast and hit guite a few shows heading West, but eventually you'd

hit a drum corps wasteland between Kansas and California In 1963 the Cavaliers traveled from Illinois to Seattle in

four days for the win at the Seattle VFW Nationals. In 1965 the Royal Airs and Garfield Cadets traveled from the VFW Nationals in Chicago, IL (first and nineth place, respectively) to the Legion Nationals in Portland in three days without any shows in between and placed first and second, respectively.

Those 1963 and 1965 trips to the West Coast from

Illinois contained almost half a continent with no major drum corps activity. Why make that trip of 2,000

miles if the local corps are going to soak-up all the prize money (a small amount at the time at both veterans championships) once you get there? What's the benefit?

> Our conclusion is that with the advent of competitive California corps, the East Coast guys decided there was easier money to be made closer to home. In our estimation, that was a good decision. Economics rule.

Long live drum corps! --PacificNorthwestDrumCorps.com.



VFW NATIONALS-DALLAS/COTTON BOWL

E LOVE BUG JANCLE HOOF.









(Previous page, top to bottom) Cover and three pages from the 1970 American Legion National Convention program book, judges look over scoreboard for 1970 prelims. (this page) Portland Hawks, Stockton Commodores. Mustangs, Santa Clara Vanguard in the 1970 Portland parade and playing a concert, during the American Legion convention.