

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).

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 Señoritas in 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.



American Legion Nationals Senior Trophy

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.



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



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

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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."

