

# Inaugural drum corps of the Pacific Northwest

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The Pacific Northwest has sent four drum corps to the President's Inaugural Parade on January 20. They were the Portland Police (OR), the L-K Corps (WA), the Golden Skyliners (MT) and the Black Watch (WA). We shall start with the Police.



**Portland Police Sr. D&BC (1939 - 1957)** from Portland, OR. The Police were sponsored by the City of Portland. Their members were actually policemen, unlike a PAL corps. They represented Portland in parades and local events alike. For the 1953 inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon the State of Oregon chose to send the Police drum corps.



1953 Portland Police, Portland Oregon

## BUGLE CORPS FUND 60 PCT. COMPLETED

A drive for funds to send Portland's police drum and bugle corps to the president's inaugural at Washington, D. C., January 20 is 60 per cent achieved.

That report came this morning from J. C. Merrifield, treasurer of the Oregon for Ike and Doug committee, and Milton

Rice of the United States National bank, chairman of the drive.

A minimum of \$15,000 will have to be met by Wednesday to assure the trip for the 44-man drum and bugle corps. Below is a coupon to assist in public subscription to the fund:

Here is my \$1 to help send the Portland Police Drum and Bugle corps to Ike's inauguration parade January 20.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to: Oregon for Ike and Doug committee,  
J. C. Merrifield, treasurer  
1815 Equitable Building, Portland, Or.

January 10, 1953  
"Go Fund Me"

cost of the trip was \$15,000 in 1953, which is approximately \$126,000 today (using a 3% annual inflation rate).

The controversy at the time was that Oregon was one of the few states NOT to send a float for the parade due to budgetary issues. Only the Police drum corps represented the state.

The Police traveled by train 5,600 miles round-trip over nine days. The



January 19, 1953  
Portland Police D&BC practicing in the Washington DC railyard. In the foreground, the Rangerettes from Kilgore, TX

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LONGVIEW-KELSO DRUM 'N BUGLE CORPS ON PARADE

The State of Washington in general, and the Longview-Kelso area in particular, were represented at the 40th Anniversary Inauguration by the Longview-Kelso Drum and Bugle Corps. Photo taken

during the big parade Wednesday shows the corps marching and the Capitol. The corps will be on its way home tonight after making a morning visit in Washington, DC--AP Wirephoto.

The Portland Police drum corps was disbanded in 1957 due to the members no longer being able to collect overtime for practicing or performances.

OT for drum corps? Sign me up!!

**L-K Corps (1953 - 1975)** from Longview-Kelso (L-K) WA. The Longview-Kelso (a city pair) corps started life as a Boy Scout drum corps in 1953. They were a small-town parade corps, as junior drum corps contests did not exist in the Pacific Northwest until the early 1960s. In 1962 their founder / director, Roy "Bobby" Briggs, first proffered the idea of going to an inaugural parade and had worked endlessly since then planning and executing that dream. In 1965 they made it to the inaugural parade of Lyndon B. Johnson and



Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey).  
 That train trip and parade took eleven days and 5,519 miles at the cost of \$15,000 which is worth \$88,400 today. It's unbelievable what inflation can do to your dollar. Practically nothing gets cheaper, most things cost more with time.

The L-K Corps disbanded at the end of 1975 when Bobby Briggs retired. The remains of that corps and their booster club formed the Marauders in 1978.

### Golden Skyliners (1952 – 1982) from Great Falls, MT.

The corps started life in 1952 as the American Legion Post #3 Junior D&BC of Great Falls. They won the Montana State Junior Drum & Bugle Corps title in 1953 and 1954, and again from 1956 through 1959. In 1968 they changed their name to the Golden Skyliners, but retained their classic royal blue and gold uniforms.

1965



L-K Corps, Longview-Kelso Washington 1965 Inaugural Parade

In 1973 the Skyliners were selected to represent the State of Montana in President Richard Nixon and Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C. What a fantastic opportunity to represent your state and do something for your country. The highlight of anyone's marching career, I'm sure.

Great Falls AL Post #3 - Oregon Parade  
 Later known as The Golden Skyliners

1968



This corps took advantage of modern transportation and chartered a jet and flew to Washington, D.C, for the parade. That was a five-hour flight compared to "days" spent on a train to cover the 1,800 miles one-way to D.C. The cost of their trip was \$16,866 or \$78,400 in 2025 dollars.

The Skyliners closed their doors in 1982 after 30 years of service to their community.

Del Thurber, corps director/manager, along with American Legion Post #3, kept the corps alive and vital for three decades. That is an amazing feat and a testament to their commitment to the education and betterment of kids. Del Thurber himself was the corps director from 1952 through 1976, an outstanding

1973



Golden Skyliners, Great Falls Montana 1973 Inaugural Parade

achievement.

## 1976 Black Watch in Butler PA



### Black Watch

(1971 – 1984) from Auburn, WA. The Highlanders were created by a local drum corps visionary named Dan Anderson when he was only 23- years old. They were a strong corps and went on several Eastern tours and placed well at the DCI national level. Locally, they were Washington State American Legion and

VFW Champions in 1975 and 1976.

In 1977 the Black Watch marched in Jimmy Carter and Vice President Fritz Mondale's inaugural parade in chilly 20-degree weather in kilts! They too flew in a chartered jet 2,300 miles to Washington D.C. Their trip cost \$42,000 or \$173,500 in today's dollars.

A year later in 1978, the Black Watch were DCI Class A World Champions.

When the Black Watch closed their doors in the spring of 1984, they left behind a proud legacy of being local and national champions.

### Epilogue

All four corps above have represented the Pacific Northwest well on the national stage, and we have not forgotten their accomplishments so many years ago. It's been almost half a century since a Pacific Northwest drum corps has graced an inaugural parade. Sounds like we're up to bat. Maybe we

## Black Watch, Auburn Washington 1977 Inaugural Parade



## Black Watch, Auburn Washington 1977 Inaugural Parade



could put together a unified Washington State Drum Corps for this task.

Come on, Washington corps, let's go!

Long live drum corps!  
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