

Uniforms and Colors

Chapter 5 by Ron Da Silva

A drum and bugle corps' appeal is 50 percent musical and 50 percent visual. The musical half can be divided between the horn and drum lines, while the visual half, or how a corps looks, can be divided between what the corps wears (uniform and corps colors) and how they march (drill and movement).

While most people don't remember drills, everyone remembers a corps' uniform, whether in a positive or negative way.

Modern drum corps uniforms had their start in the early 1920s, just after World War I, with the drum and bugle corps of the American Legion. World War I, with its trench warfare and stalemate, produced some of the worst conditions soldiers ever had to fight in and live under.

Uniforms were mud-colored grays, drabs or khaki and usually were wet and dirty. So it's not surprising to find the veterans of that horrible war wearing some of the brightest and cleanest looking uniforms ever seen on a parade ground.

The most popular look of the 1920s was the Army officer style. This modern uniform was basically a U.S. Army version of a British officer's service dress uniform.

It consisted of a blouse (tunic) with the new open collar and turned down lapels, worn with a dress shirt and tie. Over this was worn a leather "Sam Brown" sword belt. Trousers were jodhpur-style riding breeches, cut full from the hips and close fitting from the knee. These were tucked into officer's pattern riding boots and leather leggings.

While the official American Legion headgear was the overseas cap, most Legion parade uniforms featured a chromed or nickel-plated version of the M1917 trench helmet. Both of these

forms of headgear were copies of British items issued to American troops once overseas.

This pattern all-white uniform was worn by the Boys of 76, Post No. 76 of Racine, WI. They were American Legion National Champions in 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1925.

The same uniform, but with a white helmet, was worn by the Harvey W. Seeds Post No. 29 of Miami, FL; they were the Legion's National Champion in 1927, 1928, 1930 and 1931.

These two corps not only made their style of uniform the most popular (if you wanted your drum corps or color guard to look like a national champion), but also helped make it a symbol of the American Legion as well as its drum corps.

The Commonwealth Edison Post No. 118 of Chicago, IL, also wore the same white uniform, but with white "mountie" hats. They won the Legion national title in 1936, 1940 and 1941. By that time, however, most corps, junior and senior, favored an authentic West Point Cadet style.

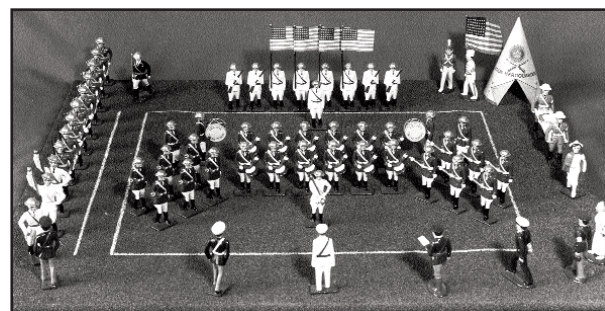
The Gray Iron Casting Co. of Mount Joy, PA, produced two versions of a toy soldier "Legion" drum major, drummer and bugler. The first version had slight bodies and is believed to have been produced in 1933. A second version, with robust bodies and bent knees, came out in the late 1930s.

Both these cast iron drum corps, as well as all of the Gray Iron Company's men, were painted khaki, except for their WWI helmets, which were painted bright silver.

The Barclay Manufacturing Co. of West New York, NJ, manufactured hollow-cast toy soldiers in lead, similar to Gray Iron. Their figures had separately cast tin helmets and, while they also painted their soldiers in khaki, they left their tiny helmets bright metal, very similar to the American Legion's real helmets.

For the 1937 American Legion National Convention in New York City, the Barclay Co. produced a larger scale marching Legionnaire and a Legionnaire color bearer with a silk U.S. flag. These figures had overseas caps and straight trousers and are known to have been produced in 13 different color combinations, from the regulation Legion blue to scarlet and cream or maroon and light gray.

It is believed these various colored uniforms represented different American Legion Posts or their color guards and drum corps. Both these companies also produced West Point Cadets painted all white with red or blue trim and cross-belts, in addition to



(Top to bottom) Boys of 76, 1922 (photo from the collection of Robert Zinko/American Legion archives); An American Legion bugler from "Ludwig Bugle Manual, circa 1930s (from the collection of Ron Da Silva); Connecticut Yankees, Stratford, CT, 1952 (Robert Zinko); Holy Name Cadets, 1958 (Walter Ermel from the collection of Ron Da Silva); (right) an original set of Gray Iron and Barclay toy soldiers from the 1930s, restored and repainted by the author (photo from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

their "Cadet Gray" versions.

Today, collectors call these soldiers "Dime Stores" because they were sold nationwide at all the major five- and ten-cent stores.

I have found old figures of drummers, buglers and flag bearers repainted in a variety of colors. These were probably on display at their posts or with their trophies. These

popular, certain corps had a look all their own. Capital Post No. 9 of Salem, OR, must have been fans of actor/director Eric Von Stroheim; photos at the time show the corps in two very Germanic-looking uniforms. One photo in which they are displaying their 1932 American Legion National Champion flag shows the corps dressed in a Prussian-style

uniforms with a peaked caps and lancer jackets over white trousers.

Another group photo showed the corps dressed in a very elaborate hussar uniform, complete with a second fur-trimmed jacket, called a pelisse, slung from their left shoulder. These were worn over riding breeches and boots.

The corps' headgear was a short shako that had a brush plume on

the right side and a busby bag on the left. In this uniform, they looked more like hussars of the Austro-Hungarian Empire than American Legionnaires.

The Green Trojan Post No. 318 of Greenburg, PA, state champions in 1933 and 1934, wore the officer-style uniform topped off with authentic Italian Bersaglieri (sharpshooters) hats in black with a hanging plume of rooster tail-feathers.

While some Legion drum corps adopted foreign-looking uniforms or headgear, all were modern, with many patterned after the dress uniforms of World War I. The once colorful and fancy uniforms worn by brass bands, Zouave drill teams, National Guard and State Militia units were now considered old-fashioned.

A new corps or a corps on a budget could wear a simple dress shirt and tie over trousers with a side stripe and top it off with an overseas cap or tin helmet and look very neat and military.

By the mid-1930s, the West Point Cadet-style uniform (*right*) was just as popular as the Army officer style. The Cadets' tarbucket shako and double cross-belts were adopted at West Point, NY, at the turn of the century to help commemorate the U.S. Military Academy's centennial in 1902.

While the uniform was very traditional, it was simpler in many details than the parade dress uniforms worn by some elite units of the State Militia and National Guard, whose uniforms were heavy, with dress cords, tassels and large fringed epaulets.

At the 1936 American Legion Nationals in

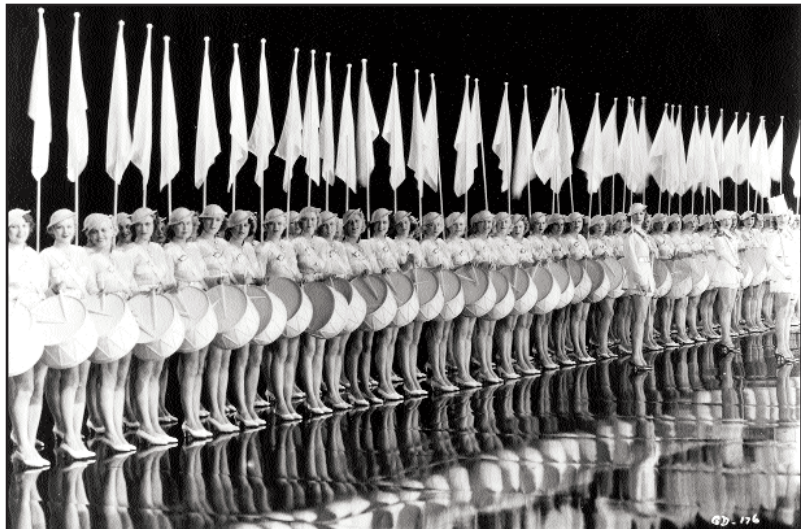
Cleveland, OH, eight of the top 12 finalists wore West Point-style uniforms, complete with tailed coats and double cross-belts.

The Stratford, CT, Post No. 42 (*see photo on previous page*) wore one of the more classic versions of the West Point uniform. It consisted of a white shako trimmed in black patent leather, white over black plumes and a black, full-dress, tailed coat with seven rows of white braid ending in trefoils and ball buttons.

Over this they wore double-cross belts and a waist belt. White trousers and shoes completed the uniform. Later known as the Connecticut Yankees, the corps would wear this uniform unchanged for more than 30 years before modifying it in the 1960s. They then did away with the double-cross belts, replacing them with a single cross belt and a red satin waist sash.

A few junior corps, like the Bronx, NY, Kingsmen and the Emerald Cadets of New Haven, CT, were still wearing cadet uniforms with double-cross belts into the mid-1960s.

The Silver Sabres of Salina, KS, wore an authentic-style West Point uniform, similar to the original Connecticut Yankee version, into the 1970s.



A scene from Busby Berkeley's "Gold Diggers of 1937" (photo from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

three-inch tall toy soldiers show how popular American Legion and VFW convention parades and contests were between the two world wars. Today, these figures are being recast or reproduced from original molds for collectors.

When film director and choreographer Busby Berkeley had an all-chorus-girl drum corps and color guard in his "Gold Diggers of 1937" musical, they were wearing abbreviated all-white Legion uniforms complete with tin helmets. Their drum major, actress Joan Blondell, wore a tall shako typical of the era. Even their drill movements were taken from Legion drum corps drills of the time.

While the Army officer or Legion style was



A cartoon making fun of Boys of 76's chrome helmets, used into the 1950s by the corps (from the collection of Ron Da Silva).



The Silver Sabres, Salina, KS, at the 1968 VFW Nationals (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).



The U.S. Military Academy at West Point has a simpler, cadet-style uniform often copied by drum and bugle corps (U.N. photo by John Isaac from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

From the late 1920s through World War II and into the 1950s, U.S. Army officers did not wear the same olive-drab uniforms as enlisted men. Their service dress coats were a darker olive-drab that became a dark brown shade.

Officers' riding breeches and, later, trousers were a much lighter shade, authorized as optional for dress uniforms. These trousers, called "pinks," were popular with the officer corps and could range in color from tan to grayish beige. The term "pinks" came from the fox hunting horse set and would find its way into drum corps and band uniforms of the 1940s.



Logan Square Sons of the American Legion, Chicago, IL, 1951 at the state competition (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

The most famous West Point Cadet-style uniform worn by a drum and bugle corps was the maroon and white uniform with gold satin sash and tassels worn by the Holy Name Cadets of Garfield, NJ. The Cadets were not the first or only junior corps to wear West Point uniforms or to call themselves cadets.

It was very common for Catholic Church-sponsored junior corps to run their units as a paramilitary cadet corps with both staff and corps members wearing military rank and uniform. In the 1930s and 1940s, this was also the case with many of the junior corps sponsored by the American Legion and VFW.

While the Holy Name Cadets weren't that unique for a junior corps of the 1940s since most corps had a military image, they were a cut above -- not only for their smart appearance and military bearing, but also for their winning performances. The Cadets won many local contests and state titles and were the American Legion national champions in 1940, 1948, 1949 and 1950.

After losing the sponsorship of the Church of the Most Holy Name, the corps reorganized as the Garfield Cadets in 1958 and wore a uniform of black Aussie hats, white golf shirts, white shorts and knee socks. In 1959, the Cadets appeared at contests in their traditional maroon shakos and tall white plumes, white satin shirts and white trousers with maroon trim.

Finally, in 1960, the Cadets returned to their familiar maroon and white West Point jackets and gold sashes. The corps continued to win contests, including 10 American Legion National Championships and eight Drum Corps International World Championships, including one tie.

After being called the Cadets of Bergen County from 1989 to 1998, the corps is

known today simply as The Cadets. They are one of the most progressive and innovative corps of all time. And, while they have abandoned many of the traditional aspects of both drum corps and color guard, The Cadets still have their musicians and drum majors wearing the classic West Point-style uniforms adopted by the Holy Name Cadets in 1939.

Besides the traditional West Point styles, many corps adopted modified cadet styles from the 1940s onward. Some patterns did away with the rows of braid ending in trefoils or frogs in favor of a plain, double-breasted jacket with two rows of buttons.

Others had a turned back lapel in a contrasting color or a lancer-style breast front. Wide cross-belts and waist sashes were often integral to the jacket, being attached or permanently sewn to the garment. Various designs on collars and cuffs, as well as



Harvey Seeds Post, Miami, FL, at the 1925 American Legion convention in Omaha, NE (photo from the collection of Robert Zinko/American Legion archives).

Corps in military jackets of dark brown, maroon or hunter green worn over trousers of tan, beige or light gray became fashionable.

The Irvington, NJ, Sons of the American Legion Squadron No. 16 wore maroon cadet jackets with double cross-belts over light gray trousers. A similar uniform, but with red cadet jackets and gray trousers, was worn by the Logan Square SAL Corps of Chicago, IL.

The Bracken Cadets of Robert W. Bracken Post No. 382 of Bristol, PA, wore a cadet uniform with brown jackets trimmed in orange over tan trousers.

The American Legion senior corps of Hershey, PA, called themselves the Chocolatiers and described their cadet uniforms as having dark chocolate brown jackets and cocoa tan trousers with white and silver trim. Besides being a popular color combination for military uniforms, dark brown, tan and silver were the corporate colors of the Hershey Chocolate Co.

While subdued colors were popular during and just after World War II, brighter colored jackets over white or black trousers were just as popular.



New York Skyliners, 1994 (photo by David Rice from the collection of Drum Corps World).

emblems and shoulder sleeve patches, gave a corps a sense of identity and *esprit de corps*.

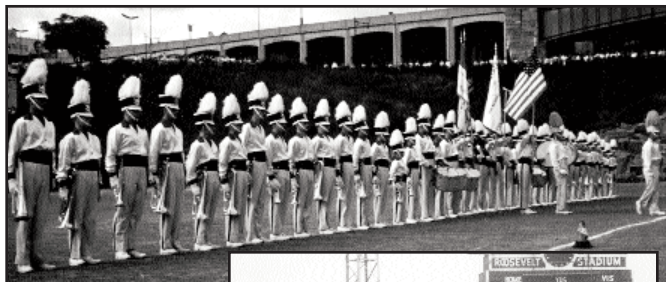
The Raymond A. Garbarina Post No. 1523 of New York City wore a classic example of a modified cadet-style uniform. Adopted in 1948, the uniform consisted of a white pearl shako with a bright red plume, a double-breasted jacket in scarlet with black cuffs and shoulder straps and black and gold braid decoration on the front as well as the collar and sleeves.

The black sash was integral to the jacket and had scarlet and black drops and tassels. A white cross-belt and white citation cords highlighted the jacket. While the cross-belt had no breastplate, the waist sash had a large round chrome plate. An American Legion insignia were affixed to the eagle on their shakos and the waist plate. A large American Legion patch was worn on the left shoulder sleeve. Trousers were black with a red stripe trimmed in gold. White shoes and gloves completed the uniform.

The same uniform, stitch for stitch, was worn by the New York state junior champions of Sheridan American Legion Post in Brooklyn, NY. Where Garbarina had scarlet and black, Sheridan had orange and dark blue (the New York City colors).

After Sheridan disbanded, their uniforms were sold to St. Joseph's Cadets, an up and coming junior corps from Newark, NJ.

The Most Precious Blood Crusaders of Boston, MA, would also copy the Garbarina



(Above) After the loss of church sponsorship, the Garfield Cadets had a different look for two seasons, 1959 (photo by Smith from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review); (right) Garfield Cadets, 1958 (photo from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).





Our Lady of Loretto, 1960, in satin blouses. In 1961, the corps got Skyliner-style jackets (photo by Ron Da Silva).

Skyliners' uniform, but in crimson and black, with black and white trimmings. Most Precious Blood would go on to become today's Boston Crusaders, who still wear a uniform similar to their original one.

Finally, in 1962, Our Lady of Loretto Knights of Brooklyn, NY, adopted cadet jackets, again identical to the Skyliners' only in bright orange and black. To help pay for these expensive uniforms, older members of the Knights formed a "Vampire Club," selling their blood to private blood banks -- so great was the appeal of this smart-looking uniform.

Coincidentally, all these corps -- the New York Skyliners, St. Joseph's Cadets, Loretto Knights and the Boston Crusaders -- were known for their powerhouse horn lines.

The last popular style of drum corps uniform inspired by a major war and its veterans was the "Ike" or Eisenhower jacket. Officially known as the wool Field Jacket M1944, it was an American copy of the British Army's wool battle dress.

American officers could wear the regulation style with fly front and buttoned cuffs, or a cut down version of their dress coat, with brass buttons and sleeve braid. This was the pattern used in drum corps and color guard uniforms.

Ike jackets were usually worn with an overseas cap or bush hat. A very neat version of this GI-style uniform was worn by both the senior and junior SAL drum corps of the Hamilton Post No. 20 from Baltimore, MD. The uniform consisted of an all-white GI overseas cap, Ike jacket and trousers with gold trim. The same uniform but with sky blue jackets was worn by the Little Flower junior corps, also from Baltimore. The Little Flowers were the Maryland State Open champion.

Ike jackets with plumed shakos were also worn, but were not as popular. The only major corps to wear that combination was the Red Jackets Senior Corps of Sharvin Post No. 397 in North Chicago, IL.

Another Chicago corps would make its first appearances in second-hand blue and red Ike jackets and shakos during the 1951 contest season. The following year they

would adopt green, black and white uniforms and would be known as the Chicago Cavaliers.

Ike jackets were usually worn with a dress shirt and tie or ascot. Some Canadian corps wore them with turtlenecks or even full sweaters. These GI jackets and overseas caps were also worn by the staffs of many corps in the post-World War II era. This was under the influence of the American Legion and VFW, when most of a corps' staff and instructors were war veterans themselves.

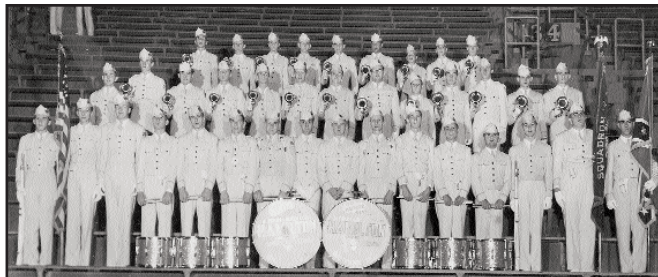
The last major competing corps to wear Ike jackets was the Madison Scouts of Wisconsin. In 1983, the

Scouts wore white brush hats and Ike jackets over dark green trousers. In 1985, they reversed the colors by wearing dark green Ike jackets over white trousers. With both uniforms they wore a mint green Army shirt with a bright red tie.

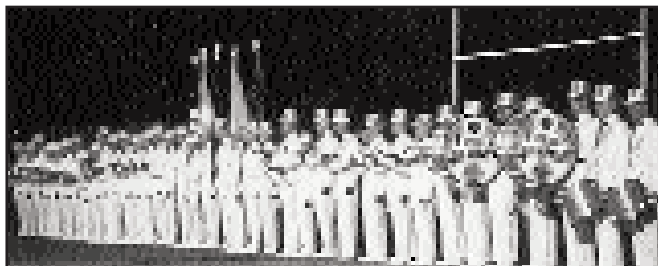
Satin shirts

While the classic West Point and modified cadet styles were the most popular for both junior and senior corps from the late 1930s to the mid-1970s, the expense of a shako and plume, cadet jacket, trousers and accessories could be cost prohibitive.

While shakos and trousers could be stock items or even military surplus, unique cadet jackets were always a custom-designed and made-to-measure item. The custom tailoring and fancy details not only made them expensive, but also difficult to replace.



(Above) Hamilton Post senior corps, Baltimore, MD, 1952 (photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Ron Da Silva); (below) Little Flowers, Baltimore, MD, 1957 (photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Ron Da Silva).



In the post-World War II era, some junior corps started wearing plain satin shirts and waist sashes with tall shakos and plumes. St. Vincent's Cadets of Bayonne, NJ, seems to have been the first corps to win a national championship in such a simple uniform. A group photo of them taken after winning the 1946 junior VFW national title shows them wearing solid kelly green shirts, gold waist sashes with two drops and tassels, a tall white



Madison Scouts, 1983 (photo by Ron Walloch from the collection of Drum Corps World)

shako and a white plume over white trousers and shoes.

Satin pullover shirts or buttoned blouses were not new. They have been in band uniform catalogs since the late 1900s as novelty styles. The wide-collared gaucho shirt or band-collared Cossack shirt were both made popular by silent film star Rudolph Valentino.

While St. Vincent's Cadets returned to wearing a military jacket in the early 1950s, two other New Jersey corps would make the gaucho shirt the thing to wear for winning drum corps in the 1950s. They were the Hawthorne Post No. 199 Caballeros, which were the senior American Legion national champions in 1951, 1953, 1954, 1958 and 1959, and the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights of Newark, NJ, who were the junior American Legion title holders in 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958 and 1959.

By the late 1950s, most junior corps and some senior corps were wearing satin shirts or blouses with contrasting colored waist sashes.

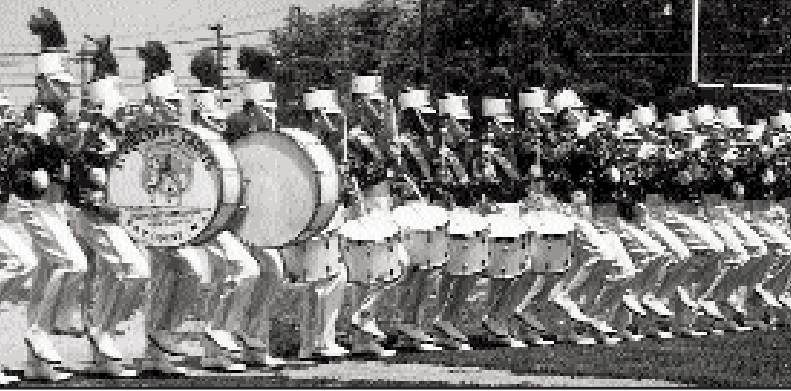
All the Philadelphia area's top corps, including Archer-Epler, Reilly Raiders, Liberty Bell and Bracken had given up their elaborate military tailed coats or tunics for pullover satin shirts. However, these were not the simple patterns worn in most of the country. These corps had shirts just as fancy as their old military coats, with contrasting colors and cuffs, braid trim, wide multi-stripped cross-bands and attached waist sashes.

In the Midwest, a few corps had split-colored shirts, divided diagonally, or had their left sleeve in a contrasting color. This was an era when bugle arrangements required only one hand on the horn, while

the left hand was swung high.

The Belleville Black Knights of Illinois always wore black uniforms with a white left sleeve -- with satin shirts in the 1950s, cadet jackets in the 1960s and with very fancy jackets and horse guard helmets in the 1970s.

With so many corps wearing satin shirts, they became known as "corps-style" blouses and took on many unique patterns and variations. Some looked like Renaissance



St. Vincent's Cadets, 1957 (photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

liveries or racing silks, others like circus costumes.

In Canada, a military-looking shirt with a high band collar was popular. The Toronto Optimists, De La Salle Oaklands and LaSalle Cadets of Ottawa all wore this military or Cossack style.

While corps-style satin shirts were popular and colorful, they required high maintenance. To look good and pass inspections, they had to be laundered and ironed after each performance. Uniform manufacturers came up with more durable materials than satin, like double-knit polyester and poly-satin.

They also introduced the shirt-jacket or military blouse, which was a corps-style shirt with the reinforced standing collar and epaulets of a cadet jacket.

By the mid-1960s, most top level junior corps were again wearing West Point or modified cadet jackets. A double cover of the October 1966 issue of the Chicago-based *Drum Corps Digest* showed 14 buglers from the top junior corps of the era. Only two of the 14 were still wearing satin shirts with shakos -- the Chicago Cavaliers and the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights.

The Boston Crusaders, St. Kevin's Emerald Knights, St. Lucy's Cadets, St. Joseph's of Batavia, Blue Rock, Chicago Royal Airs, Des Plaines Vanguard and Norwood Park Imperials were all wearing standard cadet styles.

Even the Madison Scouts and Racine



(Top) Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights; (bottom) Chicago Cavaliers, both taken in 1959 (photos by Smith from the collection of Bob BellaRosa/Eastern Review).

Scouts gave up their Explorer greens and Scout khaki for modified cadet styles. Madison wore a very military "British Riflemen" green uniform, while Racine opted for a bright royal blue jacket and white trousers with red trim.

Both uniforms featured a large "Explorer" badge. Madison

wore them on their shakos while Racine had them on the left breast of their blue jackets.

The Casper Troopers still wore U.S. Cavalry uniforms of the 1860s, but now with short, gold braided jackets and gold satin sashes similar to the Garfield Cadets. So, military or cadet styles were back in fashion.

In the 1950s and 1960s, drum corps were proud of their cadet-style uniforms and many had off-season military balls. At these events, male corps members wore their uniforms, complete with gloves. Female corps members or dates wore evening gowns or cocktail dresses.

Features in drum corps publications of the time show male corps members getting married or even buried in their uniforms. Uniformed honor guards of corps members were often used at weddings, funerals and church services.

In Wisconsin, unique and/or historical military-styled uniforms were in vogue. It seemed as if no corps in that state wanted to wear the style of another. Corps looked to history books or films for a unique look.

The Spectacle City Mariners of Milwaukee became famous for their seafaring theme, which featured the corps dressed as sailors from the War of 1812. The corps was led by a drum major, nicknamed "Captain Krunch," in a complete naval captain's uniform of that era.

The Marquis of Fond du Lac had their corps in the full dress uniforms of the French Foreign Legion, circa 1900. That uniform featured red kepis with a white haverlock, blue tunic and red trousers -- very "Beau Geste."

The Blue Stars of La Crosse wore a uniform



(Above) Madison Scouts, 1966 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); (left) Racine Scouts, 1965 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) Troopers, 1966 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

inspired by British Colonial styles. It featured a white pith helmet with a red plume worn on the side and dark blue military shirts and trousers with white cross belts and gauntlets. Their girl color guard was known by its blue short-shorts, a la Scout House, and white boots.

In the mid-1960s, the Racine Kilties combined their old scarlet, black and gold Highlander uniforms with a

newer sky blue, navy and maroon Highland uniform to outfit a much larger corps. This mix of uniforms had the horn line in sky blue tunics and blue and maroon kilts, the drum line in scarlet tunics with blue and maroon kilts and the color guard in scarlet tunics with black and gold kilts. With each section in various colors, the Kilties were nicknamed the "mad plaid."

The Racine Scouts continued to wear their chrome, Roman-type helmets with a crest of red plumes and were nicknamed the "chrome domes." The Madison Scouts replaced their rifle green cadet uniforms for actual cadet gray uniforms once worn at the U.S. Military



(Top) Marquis, Fond du Lac, WI, approximately 1974 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World); (bottom) Spectacle City Mariners, Greendale, WI, approximately 1967 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Academy at West Point before returning to actual Explorer Scout uniforms again.

In the early 1970s, a spin-off of the Madison Scouts became the 32nd Hussars.

Their uniform was, without a doubt, the most elaborate and authentic Napoleonic era uniform ever seen on a contest field. It consisted of a tight jacket in sky blue covered with row after row of gilt braid, royal blue trousers with a gold stripe and black shakos with large white plumes.

Authentic accessories such as girdle sashes, baldrics and cartridge pouches completed the uniform. Since the hussar is a light cavalryman, the 32nd Hussars had their drum major and regimental color guard photographed on horseback. As far as I know, the horses never marched in front of the corps.

Bush and Scout styles

Since the drum corps contest season was in the summer months, usually from Memorial Day to Labor Day, a few corps during the 1950s and 1960s adopted hot weather uniforms. These were often worn when a corps had an afternoon parade the same day as an evening contest.

Some corps simply substituted a short-sleeved cotton shirt in place of their normal military jacket or blouse. Others put together a completely new uniform, featuring a sun helmet or overseas cap, a knit polo shirt or loose bowling shirt in their corps colors and cotton pants or even Bermuda shorts.

At one very hot afternoon contest in Selden, Long Island, in 1960, St. Lucy's Cadets, Our Lady of Loretto Knights and the Audubon Bon Bons all competed in various hot weather uniforms. The judges even shed their starched khaki shirts for white T-shirts.

Some corps kept these hot weather outfits as a travel uniform. I believe both these ideas were taken from Canada's Scout House Bugle Band and the Garfield Cadets, who wore a more conservative, preppie version of Scout House's uniform during part of the 1958 and 1959 contest seasons.

Like Scout House, a few corps wore Aussie hats and shorts as their only uniforms. This was especially popular with younger or coed corps. In the mid-1960s the Connecticut Royal Lancers of Fairfield competed in many major contests wearing white military shirts with navy blue Aussie hats and Bermuda shorts. A neighboring corps, St. Ann's Loyalaires of

Bridgeport, originally wore green berets and white Ike jackets over dark green Bermudas and knee socks.

They later adopted shakos and green



Scout House, July 27, 1963, at Garfield, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

trousers similar to St. Kevin's Emerald Knights of Dorchester, MA, thereby losing their unique look.

When the St. Nicholas all-girl corps of Egg Harbor, NJ, went coed in the 1970s and renamed themselves the Victorians, they adopted dark green shirts and shorts with white brush hats and yellow neckerchiefs. As a result of keeping their old corps colors of green, gold and white, a few people thought they were a Girl Scout corps.



Sundowners All-Girl Corps, Dumont, NJ, April 21, 1972 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).



32nd Hussar, Madison, WI, 1971 (cover photo of the November 1971 issue of Drum Corps Digest from the collection of Drum Corps World).

The Sundowners, from Dumont, NJ, had their corps in complete Australian-style uniforms consisting of a khaki bush jacket, brown bush hats and brown shorts and knee socks with orange trim.

The Scout House style was copied by a few corps and trumpet bands in Quebec, most notably Les Cadets de Shawinigan. In the Midwest, the Eau Claire Boys of Wisconsin wore an all-white uniform with black trim that was similar to the white uniform worn by both Scout House's color guard and the 1958-1959 Garfield Cadets.

It should be remembered that many small and large Boy Scout drum corps could be seen in short-sleeved shirts, shorts and knee socks, which were all part of the regulation Scout summer uniform. These uniforms always looked better on a youthful corps and never took hold in the ranks of senior corps.

However, bush-style uniforms with long trousers worn by the 27th Lancers of Revere, MA, the Crossmen of Pennsylvania and the Madison Scouts.

Girls' uniforms

When the first girl drum majors, color guards and guidon sections were added to previously all-male junior corps in the 1930s, the girls' uniforms were usually the same style as the boys'. Cadet- or lancer-style tops were the norm in either a two-piece jacket and skirt or one-piece military dress. Skirts were long and worn with oxford shoes or majorette boots.

Girl drum majors sometimes wore short majorette-style skirts with high boots. Tall white rabbit or fake fur busby hats were also a popular item for girl drum majors.

Color guards were sometimes dressed in reverse colors, so a drum corps with black cadet uniforms trimmed in gold could have their girls in gold dresses trimmed in black. Skirts on female corps members usually followed the fashion of the time or military regulation for service women.

In the 1950s, when hemlines were calf length, corps skirts were calf length. In the 1960s, when skirts became knee length or shorter, so did uniform skirts.

It wasn't unusual to see inspection judges at color guard contests use a ruler or tape measure to see if uniform skirts were of proper regulation length. Contests were lost for skirts that were too short. By the 1970s mini-skirts and high boots were popular with schoolgirls, working women and drum corps color guard uniforms.

One of the most popular and lasting styles was the "Princess" dress. It was fitted from the waist up and had a standing military collar. At the waist it flared into an A-line skirt. Any design or decoration could be put on the front since the dress fastened in the back.

For years, the Boston Crusaders had their girls in red Princess dresses with a large Lion Rampant in white decorating the front.

However, most corps that had girl color guards simply had them in the same uniform as the corps proper, substituting a pleated or full skirt for trousers.

All-girl corps were another story. Many exploited their femininity with cute or sexy uniforms, while others dressed like top all-male corps, but with skirts. Cute names like the Mello-Dears, Debonnaires, Bon Bons, Sweethearts, Nee-Hi's, Stardusters or Lucky Ladies added to their appeal.

Some all-girl corps took their uniforms from majorette or drill team styles. Short skirts, short shorts, sleeveless blouses or dresses in satin and sequins were not uncommon.

In Quebec, all-girl corps took on the manner and style of the majorette corps and girl trumpet bands found in France. Wearing the shortest skirts and tallest shakos, they always attracted attention, even when just standing on the starting line.

The most famous of the all-girl corps would have to be the Audubon, NJ, Bon Bons. Originally dressed in blue, white and gold military uniforms consisting of shakos, cadet jackets and long skirts over stockings and white oxford shoes, in the mid-1950s they replaced their cadet shakos and jackets for white cowgirl hats and white satin blouses with blue silk neckerchiefs. White majorette boots had already replaced the oxford shoes.

By the 1960s, the Bon Bons had changed their medium blue skirts to baby blue and had sleeveless blouses and gloves trimmed in blue fringe and sequins. The girls beat many all-male corps long before the women's liberation movement.

Colors and standards

Originally, drum corps color guards were military regulation and were only required to carry two colors -- the flag of the United States or national color and the flag of their American Legion or VFW sponsor, guarded by two rifles. State, city, church, ethnic or corps flags could also be used.

Color guard captains or sergeants commanded the unit. Captains usually carried a 1902 U.S. Army saber and sometimes a side arm like a dummy .45 pistol. The greatest status symbols a corps' guard could carry were title flags, especially state and national championship flags.

Color guards stayed between six and 12 in number from the 1920s to the early 1960s. They usually marched as a separate unit in front of or outside the corps' formations with one exception -- the compulsory color presentation. One reason for this was the strict protocol that could get a corps severe penalties for infractions of the U.S. Flag Code.

By the mid-1960s, flag sections were getting larger, with a dozen or more flags



Audubon Bon Bons, June 14, 1969, at Harrison, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

integrated into the corps' drill patterns. In the 1940s and 1950s, junior corps that wanted to involve more girls in their corps would add guidon sections. Guidons placed between every squad of three or rank of six was the answer.

A corps with 36 musicians would have a dozen guidon girls or lancers in addition to their proper color guard of maybe six flags, four rifles and two sabers. When large flag sections became popular, corps that had guidon or lancer sections simply converted them into flag sections.

Other corps enlarged their flag lines by adding flash flags. Flash flags were regulation size -- 3.5 feet by 5 feet for juniors, 4 feet by 6 feet for seniors -- in a variety of designs in two or more of the corps' colors.

A corps with red, black and white uniforms might have a dozen red and white flags of various designs. Sometimes the flag bearers designed and even made the flags themselves. Besides the standard quartering and tricolor designs, everything from strips to polka dots could be seen in flag lines of the late 1960s.

In the early 1960s, the Garfield Cadets, who had won eight American Legion National Championships, decided that instead of carrying their one official national championship flag, they would carry facsimile flags, one for each national title they won.

The new flags were red over white, with NATIONAL CHAMPIONS in white letters on the red and the year and place they won the

title in red letters on the white. By 1965, they would carry 10 American Legion title flags in their drill.

Later, the Chicago Cavaliers would carry unofficial white, green and black VFW National Championship flags.

By the 1970s, most corps carried only flash flags in their drills, with the American flag section, or real color guard, relegated to a far right corner of the field to avoid getting flag code penalties. Now the flash or corps flags were of one design in the corps' colors. Some had the corps insignia or monogram on them; others were simple tricolor or solid color flags (usually white) with a single corps-colored regimental stripe crossing the flag at one point or another.

Stock flags were also used. The Yankee Rebels of Baltimore at times carried only Confederate battle flags in their drill, while the West Reading Buccaneers carried a set of Jolly Rogers (scull and crossbones) as their corps flag.

Costumes as uniforms

While military uniforms of various styles and colors were the norm for most corps from the 1920s to the 1970s, unique or unusual costumes have always been a part of the drum corps scene. Corps uniformed as Spanish caballeros, buccaneers, cavaliers, cowboys or Indians, as well as classic black and white evening wear or showboat minstrels, could be seen at both local parades and national contests.

Some costumes reflected the corps' name or musical theme, while others showcased the corps' heritage or geographic location. While not military, most were still very "macho," due to the almost all-male nature of the drum corps activity.

The most popular of the non-military styles was the variety of Spanish or Latin American costumes worn by a number of corps from all parts of the country. The first American Legion national champion senior corps to wear the classic caballero costume of flat black Spanish hat, white gaucho shirt and red waist sash over black flared trousers was *not* the famous Hawthorne Caballeros of New Jersey, but rather, the men of San Gabriel Post No. 422 of California, which won the senior national title in 1935.



Muchachos, Hawthorne, NJ, July 4, 1973, at Union, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

However, after World War II, the Hawthorne Post No. 199 Caballeros would influence many corps to adopt a Spanish look or play Latin music.

The Cambridge Caballeros of Massachusetts were one of the better junior corps to imitate the Hawthorne seniors during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their uniforms were almost identical to Hawthorne's and were later sold to the New Jersey corps after the Cambridge corps disbanded.

Another New England junior corps of the mid-1960s became well-known for their authentic Mexican uniforms, which were charro (cowboy) outfits made in Monterey, Mexico. The corps, the Troubadours of Trumbull, CT, were Explorer Scouts and had important duties waived by an Act of Congress in April 1966, signed by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson. The corps was named the "Tijuana Brass" by its fans.

The most successful junior corps to do the Caballero thing was their "sons," the Hawthorne Muchachos. Originally Hawthorne Post's SAL corps, the Muchachos started out with uniforms similar to the Caballeros, but with a Mexican look.

The Muchachos had their hats trimmed in ball fringe, wore striped blankets over their left shoulders and had their rifle section



California Dons, 1984 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

wearing bandoleers full with cartridges. Later, they would modify their uniforms to a classier style, with plain black hats and black bolero vests trimmed in red and silver.

When the Muchachos recruited an all-girl color guard in 1973, I was asked to design their uniform. The staff was thinking of putting the girls in the same black boleros as the boys, but with black culottes and riding boots. Together with black hats, black gloves and black waist flag belts, it would have been a very somber uniform.

I suggested red bolero vests and red gaucho pants to set off all the black accessories. It was approved; however, the Muchachos never played the Latin song *The Lady in Red*.

While one could find drum corps with Latin names and costumes in almost any part of the country or even Canada (and good ones, like the Appleton Americanos of Wisconsin or the Rhode Island Matadors), California, with its rich Spanish Colonial and

Mexican heritage produced some of the most colorful corps in Latin costumes, from the original San Gabriel seniors of the 1930s to the San Gabriel Senioritas of the 1960s, to the beautifully dressed San Jose Raiders and Fresno's California Dons.

The second most popular costume type uniform worn by a number of good corps was the swashbuckler style. Better known as the "cavalier" style, it includes corps that call themselves cavaliers, buccaneers, musketeers, etc. These uniforms were usually a mix of standard corps-style blouses and trousers, with the addition of a cavalier hat and ostrich plume, a waistcoat or jerkin and sometimes a cape. Some drum majors and guard captains wore the full swashbuckler look, complete with baggy or tight pants tucked into turned down boots.

The West Reading, PA, Buccaneers had two early uniforms that had the look of a Hollywood buccaneer -- the first, in lavender and black worn in the 1950s, the second in baby blue and black worn in the early 1960s. Both featured a flat-topped hat that many thought looked more Pennsylvania Dutch than seafarer. Later in the 1960s, the color guard was put in nautical uniforms while the corps adopted shakos.

St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers of Bridgeport, CT, copied West Reading's uniform, but in black and gold, with a small cavalier hat. Their young drum major, Skippy, wore a complete buccaneer uniform with leather gauntlets and boots.

The Archer-Epler Musketeers of Upper Darby, PA, had their color guard wearing musketeer hats, tabards and capes in the early 1960s. These were worn over the same long red shirts and straight black trousers worn by the rest of the corps.

In the mid-1970s, the Chicago Cavaliers exchanged their black shakos and tall white plumes for large cavalier hats and covered their well-known kelly green satin shirts with letherette jerkins -- white for the horn line and color guard and black for the drum line -- while keeping the straight black trousers with white side stripes. At times, their drum major and guard captain wore cavalier capes.

One not-so-famous senior corps seems to have done the swashbuckler look the best. They were the Merriton Lions Buccaneers of Ontario. In the 1960s, they wore large black hats with a red plume, white pirate shirts with full sleeves and a lace-up front, red waistcoats, wide black waist belts with large silver buckles and black pants tucked into



Troop 12 Indians, Kingston, NY, approximately 1970 (photo by Bob Hunter from the collection of Drum Corps World).

black pirate boots with red turndowns.

Another little-known senior corps of the 1950s, the Jolly Rogers of Chattanooga, TN, wore a similar costume, but with stocking caps and white pirate shirts over red and white striped dickeys, black baggy pants and boots.

After the caballero, cavalier and buccaneer styles, costumes or uniforms of the Old

West were popular with some corps. Cowboys, Indians and U.S. Cavalry could be



(Inset) Jolly Rogers, Chattanooga, TN, 1952 (photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Bob Peters); St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers, Bridgeport, CT, July 27, 1963, at Garfield, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

seen on contest fields as well as movie screens.

An expensive set of authentic American Indian uniforms was worn by the Troop No. 12 Indians of Kingston, NY, during the 1960s and 1970s. A highlight of their field show was Native American dances and drum beatings.

Sponsored by the Theo Hamm Brewing



Like the Hamm's Indians, Sugarhouse Post, Salt Lake City, UT, had genuine Indian costumes, 1946, at the American Legion Convention in San Francisco, CA (photo from the collection of Robert Zinko/American Legion archives).

Company, Hamm's Indians of Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN, wore authentic Chippewa Indian costumes consisting of full eagle feather headdresses, head-banded neckpieces, beaded buckskin jackets, beaded gauntlets, breach cloths and buckskin trousers.

The original uniforms were hand-made by Indian women over a period of time from 1929 to 1950. In 1961, the uniforms were valued at \$1,100 each, or more than \$60,000 for the entire 55-man corps.

A few corps wore U.S. Cavalry uniforms. Most were patterned after the uniforms seen in John Ford Western films rather than

wear stores or by catalog. Thus, corps could always replace uniforms for new or growing members.

A few corps that wore Western outfits were the Pioneers of Kearny, NJ, the Oakland, NJ, Rangers, the Mavericks of Schaghticoke, NY, the Plainsmen of Emporia, KS, and the Colt .45s of Dubuque, IA. Western outfits also looked good on all-girl corps -- the Audubon Bon Bons are a good example.

Some corps wanted uniforms or costumes that were even more unique and original than the wide variety of military, cadet, Latin, cavalier and Western style. In 1970, the Tri-Town Cadets of Castile, NY, who were from farm country, had their corps dressed as farmers. Wearing straw hats, red bandanas and denim overalls, each section wore a different colored shirt.

On their flags were pictures of a barn, silo, cow, rooster, duck, etc. While they



Wranglers, Phoenix, AZ, 1977 (photo by Nancy Engelbretson from the collection of Drum Corps World).

American Citizen Club. In 1970, they produced authentic Polish-made national dress for their girl color guard.

The CapitolAires all-girl corps of Madison, WI, had a modified peasant costume that made them look like the Swiss Miss. I believe they were actually dressed as Wisconsin dairymaids.

The most unusual of the costume uniforms was the split red and white clown costumes worn by Canada's Jolly Jesters of Toronto (see pages 365 and 371 in "A History of Drum & Bugle Corps, Volume 1"). Originally an army militia drum corps for the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, the corps had rented costumes for a series of Santa Claus parades. It was so well-received that they left the Army to become a civilian senior corps with a "Big Top Circus" theme.

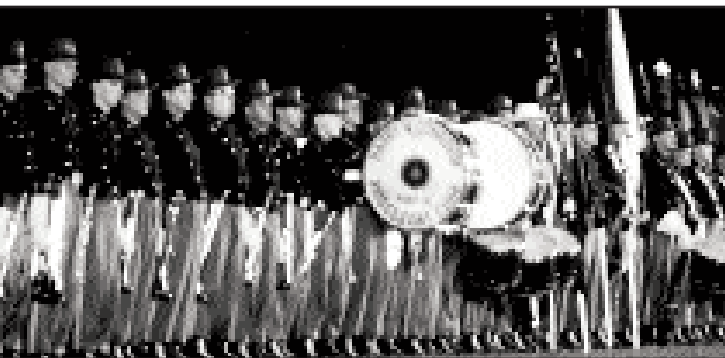
While the corps adopted the classic clown outfit with a tall cone hat in red and white with large black pompom buttons, their drum majors were dressed as a tramp clown and a court jester. Stepping off the starting line, they

would let loose multi-colored balloons.

By the mid-1960s they gave up the clown uniforms and became the Jesters. Sponsored by the Toronto police, they

acquired new uniforms similar to the Reilly Raiders of Philadelphia, but in dark blue with white and mint green trim.

When the drum corps activity broke away from the American Legion and VFW in the early 1970s, they formed their own ruling bodies such as Drum Corps Associates for senior corps and Drum Corps International



Troopers, Bridgeport, CT, mid-1950s (photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Bob Peters).

authentic 1860-1880 Army styles. The Bridgeport Troopers of Connecticut, a senior corps sponsored by the Catholic War Veterans in the 1950s, wore white Stetson hats, dark blue John Wayne shirts and yellow neckerchiefs with sky blue pants bloused over black paratrooper boots with yellow shoe laces.

A few years later, a junior corps from Glenview, IL, called Custer's Brigade, wore a similar uniform, but with Western style trucker or Western-style boots.

The best known corps to wear a U.S. Cavalry uniform is the Casper Troopers of Casper, WY. Their original uniforms had actual Civil War era insignia and hat cords, purchased from the legendary Bannerman's Army surplus store in New York City.

Over the years, the Troopers' uniforms went from chino shirts and pants to wool tunics and trousers to authentic Civil War dress jackets and sky blue trousers. Their black cowboy hats with yellow hat cords and crossed sabers and yellow neckerchiefs (which weren't popular with Civil War authentics) have become a trademark of their uniform.

I once helped the Troopers get authentic reproduction hat cords at wholesale prices and also offered to give the corps' drum major an authentic reproduction Army Colt and holster. I didn't like the post-Civil War revolver and modern holster he wore with his uniform. I was told, "Thank you, sir, but that six-gun was given to the corps by Mr. John Wayne." Well, I couldn't "out duke" the Duke, could I?

Cowboy or Western outfits were worn by a number of corps, especially young corps. Simple Western shirts and ties or fancy Roy Rogers styles could be purchased at Western

didn't play *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, their feature number was a barn dance to *Turkey in the Straw*.

The Knights of Kewanee, IL, did the Medieval Times thing by wearing costumes right out of "Ivanhoe" or "Robin Hood." Archer's caps and tabards emblazoned with large red crosses on white matched their Knights' pennant flags. They even had the corps photographed in front of a castle.

Ethnic or national dress was also used as uniforms by some corps, especially for all-girl color guards. The St. George Olympians of Springfield, MA, were sponsored by a Greek Orthodox Church. While the corps wore standard cadet uniforms in the Greek colors of blue and white, the color guard was especially colorful in Greek Evzone uniforms. The Evzones are the Greek army's national and presidential honor guard.

The Poughkeepsie Pacers of New York were sponsored by Group 368 Polish-



(Above) St. George Olympians, Springfield, MA, 1964, at the World Open (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) Pacers, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1971 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).



for junior corps. However, cadet-style uniforms were still popular and had remained the status uniform since the 1930s.

Six of DCI's original member corps wore full cadet-style uniforms. They were the Garfield Cadets, Blue Rock, Boston Crusaders, Argonne Rebels, Anaheim Kingsmen and De La Salle Oaklands. The 27th Lancers and Casper Troopers wore historic cavalry uniforms, while the Blessed Sacrament Golden Knights, Chicago Cavaliers, First Federal Blue Stars, Madison Scouts and Santa Clara Vanguard had various semi-military styles.

However, the long Vietnam War, the youth revolution and a general distrust of things military would affect the look

and military traditions of the drum and bugle corps activity. The top corps did not want to lose a contest for hair too long on male members or skirts too short on females.

At the American Legion and the VFW state and national championship contests, military inspections were held and full point penalties were given to corps whose color guards committed infractions of the National Flag Code. New rules would do away with inspections, military bearing, color presentations and national flag color guards.

Three top junior corps of the 1970s

adopted uniforms that changed the look and style of the drum corps activity.

In 1972, the Santa Clara Vanguard of California replaced their green satin shirts and pinned up their caballero hats for a totally new style of uniform. It consisted of a

large, dark green, cavalier or Aussie hat worn over a unique, full-length, scarlet tunic trimmed in dark green and white. The trousers were dark green with a double white side stripe. White gauntlets, gloves and shoes completed the uniform.

The Vanguard's all-girl color guard had the same uniform, but with dark green skirts and white majorette boots. The Vanguard's

high-collared tunic fastened on the left side with all buttons, insignia, cross stripe and waist sash sewn onto the tunic's front.

A similar uniform in all-white with green trim had been worn by the Commonwealth Edison Knights of Light senior corps in the early 1960s, but the style had not caught on.

Since the Santa Clara Vanguard was the 1971 VFW national champions and would continue on to become the DCI world champions in 1973 and 1974, other corps



Santa Clara Vanguard, Santa Clara, CA, 1973 (photo by Jane Boulen from the collection of Drum Corps World).

started to copy their style of uniform. Besides looking neat, it made quartermasters happy by doing away with separate accessories such as cross-sashes, belts or cummerbunds.

Some of the corps that adopted the

Vanguard-style tunic and hat were the Coachmen of Grand Rapids, MI; the Knights of Geneseo, IL; and the Avant Garde of Saratoga Springs, NY.

The Avant Garde wore bright lime green tunics with a double cross or "X" design in black trimmed in white. A few years later they cut their tunics down to jackets and added white cummerbunds and black shakos to their uniforms for a more conventional look.

The Vanguard uniform was copied by the Blue Eagles of Basildon, Essex, a drum and trumpet (valveless, E-flat) corps from England. Their horn line wore sky blue tunics with navy blue sashes and facings trimmed in white, while their drummers wore the opposite: navy blue tunics with sky blue facings and white trim.

All wore navy blue trousers with a double white stripe that opened at the bottom like caballero pants. Black bush hats with a full, white ostrich plume completed the Vanguard look. I was with them in London when they premiered

this uniform at the British Marching Band Championships in 1978.

Most of the 30 junior drum corps, trumpet corps and brass bands in that contest wore British styles of their armed forces or scout organizations. Therefore, when listening with the corps to the judges' tapes, we were all surprised to hear a Royal Marine warrant officer, who was judging general effect marching, comment, "Very smart uniform!" The Vanguard style uniform still had a military appeal.

The St. Andrew's Bridgemen of Bayonne, NJ, adopted a much more radical style uniform. Again, it was a simple three-piece uniform consisting of a large hat, a long coat and standard trousers. It was unlike the Vanguard's uniform, which was a modification of a bush hat and military tunic.

The Bridgemen's uniform was inspired by hip street clothes and fashions worn by funky rock musicians. It has been described as a zoot suit, a pimp suit or a show style. It was designed by the corps' director, Bobby Hoffman.

He said it cost half the price of the Bridgemen's former cadet-style uniform, as well as being more comfortable and more reflective of the corps' image as showmen and entertainers.

The hat was an oversized Fedora in black with a bright, tie-dyed scarf as a hat band. The coat was a long, banana yellow frock coat with black turn-back cuffs and a wide black collar similar to those on corps-style shirts. It zipped up the front to the collarbone so that no shirt or ascot was needed.

The only insignia was an Old English "B" on a white shield worn on the coat's

right side. The trousers were of conventional style in black with a yellow seam stripe. The shoes and the gloves were black.

The all-girl color guard had the same style coats, but in black with yellow trim. No skirts were worn since the coat came down to the knees. Originally, the girls wore black riding boots, but later they changed to black jazz or dance shoes. The Bridgemen's drum major and guard captain wore the same style uniform as the corps and the guard in all-white trimmed in yellow.

The Bridgemen were a great sounding



Blue Eagles, Basildon, Essex, England, November 25, 1978, at the British Marching Band Championships (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

Bridgemen, Bayonne, NJ, 1981, Montreal, QUE (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).



corps that played enjoyable and entertaining music, such as popular classics, show music and even circus marches. While their costumes pleased many, others hated them.

Some were shocked when the Bridgemen's girls formed a chorus line a la Bob Fosse, unzipped their long coats to reveal a dancer's costume of red leotards, black tights, bow ties and glitter.

The Santa Clara Vanguard girls had done a Russian bottle dance in their "Fiddler on the Roof" production number, but in their standard corps uniform. The Bridgemen's girls were a sign of what was to come: when scantily dressed dancing girls would eliminate the traditional military-styled



(Top) Rivermen, Stillwater, MN, 1983 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World); (above) Bushwackers, Harrison, NJ, August 14, 1982, at Bloomfield, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World); (right) Pioneer, Milwaukee, WI, 1983 (photo by Steve Linsenmayer from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) Colts, Dubuque, IA, 1981 (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).



color guards.

In an interview, Hoffman said while the corps did not wear cadet-style uniforms anymore or have inspections, they still pressed their pants and polished their shoes. While true, the male members of the Bridgemen were anything but GI. The corps permitted long hair, beards and moustaches,

so the men looked like many young men of the 1970s. Still other corps maintained a cadet image that required male members to be clean-shaven and to have short hair.

With the great popularity and success of the Bridgemen, many staffs tried to match or outdo the Bridgemen's style. Most of these hip uniforms or costumes look extremely dated now. The fact that many were worn for only a few years shows it was basically a drum corps fashion fad.

A few uniforms were based on period costume or formal wear, which could still be worn today. But most went the way of the leisure suits, flared trousers and Nehru jackets.

Some of the better looking Bridgemen-type costumes were worn by corps like the Sky Ryders of Hutchinson, KS, who wore black Bridgemen hats, black vests, white ruffled tuxedo shirts and black pants. Various colored rainbow-striped cross sashes and hat scarves highlighted this costume.

With their rainbow flags and their "Wizard of Oz" theme that featured the song *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, the look worked for these kids from Kansas.

A new senior corps that was based a few miles away from Bayonne in Harrison, NJ, also copied the Bridgemen's uniform; however, they wore long Confederate gray



coats and Charlie Daniels hats. Called the Bushwackers, the corps was originally going to have a country music theme.

The older West Reading Buccaneers also adopted the long Bridgemen coats, but in light blue and black with a red and black cross sash. They retained their black buccaneer hats, but now with a red plume.

Other corps adopted uniforms that can only be described as show-wear or theatrical costumes. The St. Croix Rivermen of Stillwater, MN, had white straw Bridgemen hats worn over a medium blue cut-away coat trimmed in silver. Completing their uniform were ruffled dress shirts, black vests and trousers.

Another corps with a riverboat-style costume was the Colts (formerly the Colt .45s) from the Mississippi River town of Dubuque, IA. Their riverboat gambler costumes, which consisted of a flat-topped, Western hat, a ruffled shirt and a Western bow tie, were designed by *Drum Corps World*

Publisher Steve Vickers in 1976. A burnt orange frock coat with black braid trim was worn over a black dress vest and trousers.

The brightest of these Rhett Butler- or Maverick-style costumes was worn by the Pioneer of Cedarburg, WI. They had white gambler hats, lemon yellow cut-away coats and vests over white trousers with shoes. A lime green silk hat band and a neck scarf highlighted this tropical looking costume.

Similar showboat styles with top hats, tailed coats and large bow ties were worn by Pacific Blue from Surrey, British Columbia, and the Pride of Cincinnati. The 1981 Spirit of Atlanta wore their light blue tailed coats over black formalwear vests and trousers, but they continued to wear their West Point shakos. The following year they returned to their military jackets with the "Trecky" looking "A" on the front.

Many of these costumes, which included all the details and accessories of true formalwear like dress shirts, ties or scarves, vests, etc., looked good and were not cheap. A few corps saved money by getting their formalwear from companies that supplied stock uniforms to hotels and restaurants, after which they would add showy accessories from dance team catalogs. Some made their own accessories from materials found in fabric and trimming shops.

While the Vanguard and Bridgemen had adopted unique uniforms that were actually quite simple, the uniform adopted by the Blue Devils of Concord, CA, was the most elaborate. In a 1975 interview, the Blue Devils' director, Jerry Seawright, said the corps was looking for a "showier" uniform, something along the lines of the Hawthorne Muchachos.

The uniform they came up with for the 1976 contest season was striking. They retained their black cadet shakos and tall white plumes, but they replaced their blue satin

shirts with a version of a U.S. Marine Corps officer's mess jacket.

A mess jacket was originally a short, high-collared military jacket that British officers wore when off duty. Worn open with a vest or cummerbund, the jacket was used for informal dining at the officer's mess. Today, it is seen only at formal occasions.

The U.S. Marine's version is very traditional, being navy blue with small gold buttons, trimmed in gilt braid and scarlet piping. A studded tuxedo shirt and scarlet cummerbund are worn over navy blue trousers with gilt and scarlet side stripes.

The Blue Devils' original version was close to the Marine's model; however, it was bright sky blue with silver and black braid and trim. A ruffled tuxedo shirt and silver cummerbund replaced the Marine's version. Black dress trousers with silver and blue side stripes and high gloss military oxfords completed this outstanding uniform.

This look became extremely popular, not only because the Blue Devils went on to win

the 1976 and 1977 DCI World Championships, but also because it combined a trim, military look with a showy or concert look. It also did not lock into a theme or musical style in the same way that Latin and Broadway styles did.

A few corps copied the Blue Devil look by simply wearing their old cadet jackets unbuttoned over a ruffled dress shirt of with a bib and a wide waist sash. Many high schools also copied the Blue Devils' uniform because it could be worn unchanged for marching band as well as for concert or stage band.

The Dagenham Crusaders of Essex, England, copied the Blue Devil uniform in all navy blue with scarlet and gold trim. The traditional uniform colors were taken from their old British military uniform. In their press releases, they never mentioned the Blue Devils, but they said their uniforms were patterned after the mess uniform of a U.S. Marine Corps officer. They also never mentioned that their American Eagle shakos were second-hand and once worn by the Blue Devils.

While Santa Clara Vanguard's and Concord Blue Devils' uniforms would become classic styles, found in most band uniform catalogs under the names VANGUARD and BLUE DEVIL styles other West Coast corps of the early 1980s would go all-out to find a unique or original look of their own.

The Seattle Imperials followed the Bridgemen's lead as entertainers by wearing blue jumpsuits and white straw hats with red and white trimmings. The jumpsuits were practical because this corps' drill never stopped moving, featuring running, jumping and dancing in a high-energy show.

The Velvet Knights of Santa Ana, CA, were a conventional junior corps until 1982, when they did away with their normal shako, blouse and cummerbund uniform in black, white and red. During that 1982 season, they challenged the Bayonne Bridgemen with a funky West Coast show titled "Hollywood Hits the Beach." The corps had a relaxed, Southern California look.

For headgear, they wore straw sun hats while their girl guard wore yellow sun visors. The corps wore burgundy, red and yellow floral print Hawaiian sport shirts over yellow T-shirts, khaki chinos and red sneakers. Starting their show seated in beach chairs on the sidelines next to a potted palm tree, their drum majors wore aqua and green Hawaiian shirts.

Over the years, the Velvet Knights wore many odd uniform combinations. They wore everything from white Panama hats, white sport jackets over yellow shirts and red pants



(Top to bottom) Pride of Cincinnati, 1982, at DCI in Montreal, QUE (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World); Garfield Cadets at DCI Miami, FL (photo by Ed Ferguson from the collection of Drum Corps World); Dagenham Crusaders, Essex, England, August 10, 1983, in Bayonne, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World); Blue Devils, 1982, at DCI in Montreal, QUE (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World).

to full dress tailed coats in white with gold fringed epaulets and red baseball caps. The

only item that remained consistent was their trademark red sneakers.

One last uniform, which stands alone for its originality, is the costume worn by Les Chatelaines from Laval, QUE. This fine all-girl corps gave up their majorette dresses for white hooded knit tops, white pants and white shoes. Over this base uniform they wore a long, sleeveless tunic with pointed shoulder wings. From the waist down it was open, like a cut-away coat.

This garment was a bright magenta with dark blue and gold trim on the front. A single, pointed, crown-like headpiece in magenta with a gold sunburst design was worn over the white hood or toque, which also covered the neck like a nun's habit.

At times, the girls wore extremely large white sun hats over their white toques. What inspired this unusual uniform? To me, it looked medieval or even Byzantine in nature. Others felt it had a modern or futuristic air, like something to be worn by a princess from a far-away planet in a "Flash Gordon" or "Star Wars" film. Whatever it was, it was unique.

With dance movement becoming more and more a part of the color guard's performances, most of the top junior corps of the 1980s wanted to demilitarize or feminize the uniforms of their all-girl guards.

One of the most attractive uniforms was designed by Michael Cesario for the 1983 Garfield Cadets. It fit the modern dance and ballet moves of the girl guard, yet it still matched the look of the corps proper. It was a romantic looking costume, in which the guard's young women all wore their hair in French braids with a white floral hairpiece worn on the left side.

The traditional maroon cadet jacket was cut down at the collar and the cuffs to reveal a white ruffled Victorian blouse worn with a white lace jabot. An off-white prairie skirt was worn over white stockings and white dance shoes. At times, the girls wore large white sun hats.

This original uniform could have been inspired by the "cantiniere" or canteen women of the French army of the 1860s and 1870s. Those military women wore feminine versions of the uniforms worn by the regiments with which they were associated. The uniform usually was a brimmed hat with plume, braided military jacket, fancy lace blouse and full skirt that matched the men's trousers. Making their dress practical for marching were lace-trimmed aprons and pantaloons tucked into boots or leggings.

Another top DCI corps that adopted a romantic looking costume for their girl guard was Santa Clara Vanguard. Their 1984 costume looked more like a French Can Can girl than that of a French female soldier. Their hats were a small, stylized version of the boys' large Aussie hats and plumes.

The dress had a red corset-like bodice over a white Victorian blouse accompanied by a

long, dark green skirt. When the split-front skirts were lifted for dance numbers, they revealed a ruffled red lining with a white ruffled trim. Under the skirts, the girls showed of black tights and red briefs.

The Blue Devils exchanged their girl guard's military uniform and black boots in 1981 for black Lycra one-piece jumpsuits with blue sequin panels and leg stripes trimmed in silver sequins. The right sleeves, collars and cuffs were white crepe and gave the impression that a blouse was worn under the jumpsuit. A small teardrop hat in blue and silver sequins with a white pouffe completed this new look.

While this body-hugging costume was new to drum corps color guards, it was merely a style the Blue Devils borrowed from the world of baton twirling, pep squads and dance teams, whose costume catalogs featured a wide variety of cute or sexy outfits for those activities.

The Bayonne Bridgemen, on the other hand, were now getting their dance costumes from similar catalogs of dance and recital wear. By the 1980s, dance and cheerleader-type costumes were the norm for most corps' color guards or dance auxiliaries.

Most of these costumes still matched their corps' in theme or color. However, by the late 1980s, a new trend of putting the guard or dance corps in costumes that reflected the mood of the music or the production being performed was gaining wide acceptance. This costuming had nothing to do with the corps' uniform or the corps' identity.

The concept was to put the guard in the same costumes used in theatrical productions. If a corps played music from "West Side Story," a coed guard would be dressed in a party dress or sport jacket for *A Dance at the Gym*, or T-shirt or nightgown for *Somewhere* or *Maria*.

Finally, the guard would change into Sharks and Jets satin gang jackets for *The*

Rumble and the gang fight.

This "Broadway on a football field" concept would continue into the new century. Color guards were now not only dancers, but also actors dressed in the appropriate

costumes for whatever show was being performed. While some costumes added to a corps' production value, others did not.

A mix of show costumes with color guard pikes, sabers and rifles does not always work. Also, the use of Lycra and spandex costumes did not flatter all

movement made many guards look just plain silly. In a recent "West Side Story" number, a top corps had a section of Marias marching in their nightgowns while twirling their sabers. Another corps with a Roman theme had their

young women dressed in nude colored body stockings and white chitons, as worn by the ancient goddess of the forest. These modern goddesses



(Above) Les Chatelaine All-Girls, 1981 (photo by Edotte from the collection of Drum Corps World); (left) Velvet Knights, 1982, at the DCI Championships in Montreal, QUE (photo by Art Luebke from the collection of Drum Corps World); (below) Glassmen, August 14, 1998, at the DCI Championships in Orlando, FL (photo by Dan Scafidi from the collection of Drum Corps World); (bottom) Phantom Regiment, 1992 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).



tossed dummy Springfield rifles instead of the spear or bow.

Today, traditional or military color guard uniforms have become as extinct as a dinosaur in the competitive drum corps activity. However, the uniforms worn by the drummers, buglers and drum majors have retained many of the classic styles, but with some major updating.

Michael Cesario, a professional Broadway costume designer with a drum corps background, redesigned many of the top corps' traditional uniforms. Using basic design concepts to make corps members look taller and leaner, Cesario maintained the corps' signature headgear and colors.

guard members. A number of fans and parents were also concerned with the skimpy and body-revealing costumes being worn by the guard's young women.

Satin bras and spandex pants or tights have been seen on a number of guards. A

major West Coast corps once had their guards' sexy outfits ordered from Frederick's of Hollywood. Les Etoiles of Quebec had their girls performing in white bras and skirts



Hats and plumes became taller and jackets developed broader shoulder pads or wider shoulder wings. The horizontal lines created by waist sashes or

cummerbunds were abolished or made the same color as the trousers and shoes, usually all black or all white.

New, high-waisted or high-opening jackets required higher waisted pants or bib overalls. Details on the fronts of jackets were either simplified or made more graphic in design. Wide cross sashes and panels were often made in reflective materials. Many of these modified uniforms had a marked resemblance to the uniforms seen on "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Because drum corps drills have become busy with members' feet moving in several different directions while their upper bodies are all facing the same direction or playing to



the stands, trouser strips and contrasting colored footwear have been replaced with a solid base color or value (black, gray or white) from the waist down. Fabrics also changed for easy care or freedom of movement.

The Star of Indiana experimented with almost yearly uniform changes that ran the gamut from Western ranger to British military and from ancient Roman to patriotic band or classic cadet, thereby never gaining a lasting visual identity.

Most of the top corps that wanted to adopt uniforms to the show or the music did so by rearranging their accessories or corps colors. Phantom Regiment would wear their Anglo-Indian look in all white one season, all black the next and even khaki. They wore silver cross sashes one year and imperial red capes the next. The Santa Clara Vanguard also appeared in many different color arrangements from year to year, but always in their Vanguard style hats and tunics.

Corps with a strong visual identity will wear the same uniform year after year or they might adapt minor changes over a period of years.

The Cadets still wear their traditional West Point jackets, but now they are cut so high that only five of the seven rows of braid on the front of their jackets actually show. Their plumes have changed from bird to bird, yet they remain tall and white.

The Cavaliers still look like cavaliers, having retained their kelly green, black and white color combination.

The Troopers, a tradition unto themselves, continue to look like cavalrymen out of a John Ford Western, no matter what the Civil War authentic at Fort Casper say.

Modified military styles are still worn by the Bluecoats, who actually wear blue jackets. Put together with their white cross belts, white pith helmets and white trousers, they have the look of an 1890s National Guard regiment in full summer dress.

The Pioneer have an Irish theme. Their jackets are similar to the Bluecoats, but are kelly green and black and have been worn over tan trousers with white accessories.

Similar color combinations were worn by Irish military units.

Another corps in green jackets is the Madison Scouts, whose dark green jackets recall their old green Explorer Scout uniforms of the 1950s. While we never know what costume a color guard might wear, most corps retain somewhat traditional uniforms.

Modified military styles inspired by the futuristic uniforms seen on various sci-fi TV shows and films functioned as a drum corps look of the 1990s.

The Blue Knights of Denver, CO, had Air Force Academy blue cadet jackets that were decorated on the front with a triangular arrangement of large white reflective buttons, giving them the look of Space Cadets from the TV show of the 1950s. For the 2000

season, the Blue Knights adopted a more conventional uniform in blue, black and silver.

The Glassmen have worn a number of showy uniforms, but their early 2000s uniform in black and white with metallic gold delta insignia on their jackets, shakos and gauntlets gives them a modern, yet classic, look. Their tall black plumes and shakos, together with the broad white shoulders of their jackets, give the corps an awesome look of Star Troopers.

The Blue Devils gave up their fancy mess jackets and ruffled shirts for a simple but effective uniform, consisting of a broad-shouldered royal blue jacket with a standing black collar opening up at mid chest to show a silver sequin cross sash over a black sequin vest. Plain black trousers, shoes and gloves, together with their traditional shakos and black plumes give them a formal and militaristic look. Minus their shakos, their uniform could be worn on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise.

One of the few competitive senior corps to have a militaristic look is the Connecticut Hurricanes. The uniform designed by Michael Cesario for the 1998 season looked back to the Hurricanes' 1958 Storm Trooper uniforms. Those old uniforms were entirely black and featured a German-style peaked cap and a silver lightening bolt cross sash.

White and green were added to the corps' uniforms in the 1960s and 1970s. The new

While color guards and dance troupes consistently change their costumes and props, even within a single performance, the heart and soul of a drum and bugle corps -- the drummers and buglers -- still proudly wear traditional shakos, helmets, Aussie, Spanish and cavalier hats over uniforms that show their true corps colors.

Let us hope the visual delight of sharp looking uniforms, marching to the heartbeat of a tight drum line and exciting horn line, will continue to remain drum corps fundamentals into the next millennium.



Blue Knights, 1995 (photo by Sid Unser from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Ron Da Silva graduated from the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art in 1966 with a degree in fine art and illustration. He later studied photography at the New York Institute of Photography.

As a freelance photographer in the 1960s and 1970s, he photographed street life, models, rock bands and drum and bugle corps. His photographs have been exhibited at the Newark Museum, Newark Library, New Jersey State Museum and the Morris County Museum, as well as in independent galleries and shows.

From 1976 to 1986, Da Silva worked as a senior photo technician and custom printer at CBS Television's New York headquarters. While at CBS, he studied fashion history and costume design at Parsons School of Design. Beginning in 1987, he was a photo tech and staff photographer at the United Nations, retiring in early 2003.

Besides his passion for art and photography, he is well-known for his knowledge of military history and pageantry, especially the colorful uniforms of the 18th and 19th centuries. He is a longtime member of The Company of Military Historians, The Company of Fifers & Drummers and The Corps of Drums Society in Britain.

He saw his first contest in 1953, but didn't get actively involved with a drum and bugle corps until 1958, when he joined the North Newark, NJ, Woodsiders. He designed all the Woodsiders uniforms and insignia from 1961 to 1970 and has helped many other corps procure uniforms or solve design problems.

Since 1972, he has been a staff member for Drum Corps World. He lives in Nutley, NJ.



Blue Devils, 1994 (photo by Sid Unser from the collection of Drum Corps World).

uniform brought back the black cap with a silver star pattern badge, but now it is worn over a bright green jacket and white pants. A black sequin cross sash with the Hurricanes' silver lightening bolt completed this modern, yet traditional, drum corps uniform. During the 2000 season, the Hurricanes replaced their black caps for green shakos with white plumes.

Unlike the old woolen whipcord uniforms of the past, today's drum corps uniforms are made to be comfortable, hard-wearing and washable in order to withstand the high-energy, fast-moving corps. The drum corps look still stands out among the many costumes and uniforms worn by other forms of musical pageantry.