History of the State College American Legion
Drum and Bugle Corps, 1935-1953
Nittany Post #245

by
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February 2017
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The State College Junior Drum and Bugle Corps was formed in 1935 by a group of local businessmen lead by C.W. “Buck” Taylor, who operated a music store. The corps’ instructors were often drawn from music majors at Pennsylvania State College and Sgt. John Weske of the Penn State R.O.T.C. Department served as the first drill instructor. The corps’ sponsor was Nittany Post #245, and its official title was the American Legion & [Women’s] Auxiliary Junior Drum and Bugle Corps of State College, PA. Auxiliary or “sponsored corps” included both male and female marching members.

The first public appearance in State College was on Memorial Day of 1936. By the early summer, the corps was outfitted in new cadet-style uniforms. A 1936 photo of the corps in these uniforms shows 15 snare drums, 26 straight G bugles, and a drum major (Rachel Fulton). The new corps took first place in three local parade competitions. In August 1936, the corps took first place in the parade competition held at the State AL Convention in Johnstown. The corps held its first week-long camp in July 1937 as preparation for the State AL field competition. The camp was described as having “a military-like schedule of drill and exercises combined with supervised recreation activities.” The corps again took first place in the state competition. A month later the corps competed in the AL National Championship held at the Polo Grounds in New York City. The junior sponsored-division was won by the Gallitzin (PA) corps, with State College taking second place. The Convention parade that year was fifty-two blocks long and took 18 hours to complete.

In 1938, the corps won the state championship for the third year in a row. In August the corps was invited to lead the parade at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. In 1939, new uniforms were purchased and a change was made from straight bugles to valves (slides), which allowed the buglers to play soprano, tenor, and baritone parts. Tenor drums were added to the battery. The corps again won the state championship at the AL Convention in Williamsport. A trip also was made to the World’s Fair in New York City. A large turnover in personnel occurred in 1940, and the State College Corps ended up placing second in the state competition. First place that year was taken by the Bristol (PA) corps.

Given the turnover in personnel, it looked like 1941 would be another rebuilding year. The new drum majorettes were Patricia Johnson and Patricia Mitchell. Early on it was decided that if the corps won the state championship, it would attend the AL National Convention to be held in Milwaukee. The corps was undefeated in eleven local competitions, and at the PA convention in Altoona, it regained the state championship. In early September, the corps traveled by train to Milwaukee, where it was housed at the Horace Mann High School in West Allis, WI. On the day of the field competition, three buses that had been chartered to take the unit to Milwaukee did not show up at the scheduled time. All available cars near the school were commandeered to take the corps and its equipment to the competition field. On the inspection line, the corps was assessed 1.6 penalty points for travel-wrinkled uniforms.

Despite a rough start, Nittany Post #245 of State College took first place among the 17 corps in the sponsored-division, with a score of 93.2. The runner-up was McNally Post #263 of New York City with a score of 91.6. In 5th place was Logan Square Post #405 of Chicago and Racine Post #76 ended up in 7th place. The division for Sons of the American Legion (all-male corps) was won by Square Post #232 of Chicago with a score of 89.9. Commonwealth Edison (Chicago) won the senior AL title. The Convention parade lasted 12 hours. A photo of the State College Corps in the 1941 parade appears below.
Newspaper accounts from the 1941 championship season indicate there were 49 members (ages 10 to 21) in the corps, with roughly equal male and female representation. A photo of the championship corps appears in *A History of Drum & Bugle Corps*, Volume 1, page 16. The corps’ theme song was “Tell Me Why” and its motto was “All for one – One for all.” The corps’ colors were blue and orange.

National AL junior competitions were not held during 1942-1944. The State College Corps returned to state competitions in 1945. It also performed during half-times of Penn State football games. The corps returned to national competition in 1949 at the AL Convention in Philadelphia, placing fourth in the sponsored division and 12th overall. The top two corps that year would go on to dominate junior corps activity during the 1950s – Holy Name Cadets (Garfield) and St. Vincent’s Cadets. Winning its first senior AL championship in 1949 was the Raymond A. Garbarina Memorial Post of New York City (aka “Skyliners”).

The State College Corps disbanded around 1953, ending the unit’s proud and successful story.

History prepared by Jon P. Nelson (Madison Scouts, 1955-1959), a resident of State College, PA since 1969. Reference materials include “Attaining the Heights: The Drum and Bugle Corps in State College” by Jeff Stengel, *Town & Gown* magazine, Aug 1972; and *Centre Daily Times* newspaper articles for Aug 25, 1941; Sep 5, 1941; Sep 8, 1941; Sep 10, 1941; Sep 11, 1941; Sep 13, 1941; Sep 16, 1941; Sep 18, 1941; Sep 19, 1941; Sep 20, 1941; Aug 9, 1949; Aug 20, 1949; Aug 25, 1949; Aug 27, 1949; Aug 28, 1949; Aug 29, 1949; and Aug 30, 1949. All photos courtesy of Robert Zinko (AL National Historian, AL archives).
1941 Corps Members -- Jack Aurand, William Adams, Edward Allen, Sheldon Baird, Leland Baughman, Donald Benner, Virginia Lou Burney, Catherine Burns, Pauline Burns, Suzanne Caveny, Harry Dailey Jr., Ann Donahoe, William Garrison, Ella-Mae Gearhart, Jenny Lou Grazier, Gerald Green, Harold Green, Mariam Green, Robert Hoenstine, Emily Jean Holmes, Robert Houck, Barbara Houtz, Patricia Johnston (drum major), Robert Johnston, Charles Kunes, Donald Lindsey, Jane Lindsey, Jack Malloy, Joseph Malloy, Jean Mingle, Robert Mingle, David Mitchell, Patricia Mitchell (drum major), Melvin Neff, Joseph Porter, Dean Ripka, Joyce Ripka, Marvin Schrack, Calvin Shawley, Marion Smith, Susan Smith, Gloria Snyder, Jane Snyder, Betty Lou Stover, Ethel Van Tine, Anne Wahl, Ruth Wilde, Robert Williams, and Virginia Yougel. The Corps Director was C.W. “Buck” Taylor.
1941 Corps and drum majorettes
the five time winners of the Penna. State title sponsored fifes, drums and bugle corps. Nittany post 242, State College, Pa. are shown here as they lined up for inspection Monday by Capt. Alfred Anderson of St. John's Military academy, Delafield, Wis. (extreme right). The Pennsylvania corps scored 93.20 points to triumph in competition held at Wauwatosa Municipal stadium. The sponsored contest was the only one in which girls were permitted.

Pioneers - American Legion
Nationals - Milwaukee, W.I.-1941

September 16th, 1941

This junior drum & bugle corps from State College is sponsored by Post#245 - Women's American Legion Auxiliary. In their very first National Contest they scored 93.20 (Only the Edison Sr. Corps was higher). Made up of some 50% females & 50% males. Check the above.
1937 Corps
1940 Corps

CORPS ALMA MATER
(True, Blue and White)
When the bugle sounds assembly
And we all fall in
We will parade and drill together
Victory again.
Chorus:
Flag we love, Blue and Gold
Floats anew-old drum corps is true
May our boys and girls be loyal
To the thought of you.
When the last of taps is sounded
Notes pass o'er the hill
Lingers long the sweetest memory
We will love you still.
Chorus:

DRILLMASTER CITATION

MEMBERSHIP
Rachel Fulton  Duane Doty
Charlotte Taylor  Charles Kunes
Lois Kreamer  Robert Zellers
Betty Jane Smith  Harold Green
Martin Knutten, Jr.  Martin Whitmyer
Jack Aurand  Leland Baughman

1940 INITIATES
Paul Grove  Pauline Burns
Kenneth Kunes  Richard Aurand
Robert Williams  William Snyder
Joseph Porter  David Doan
Marian Schrack  William Adams

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

DRILLMASTERS CITATION
Frank Gwynn  William Edwards
Frances Doan  Charles D. Dietterich
Guy Stearns  Carl Sassman
William Marshall  Pete Hoffman
John Doty  John Weske
Carlisle W. Taylor

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP — 1940 INITIATES
Robert Emery  C. E. Snyder
Danny Dever  Edna Storch
Mark McCarty  Jay Storch

* * *

CORPS CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
American Legion
Second place 1940