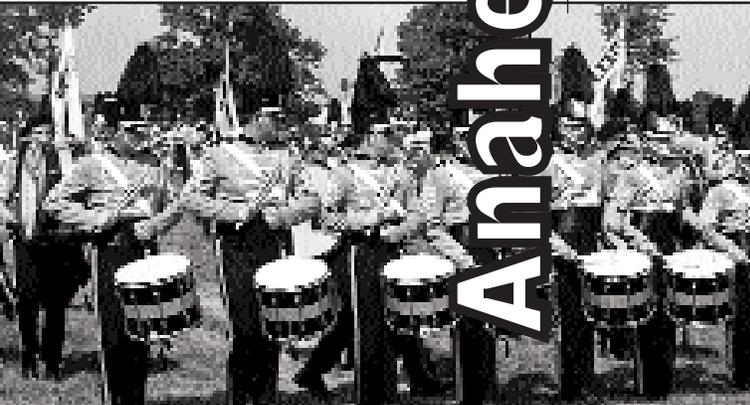

by Vince Lamb

It is fitting that this chapter on the histories of individual corps begins with the Anaheim Kingsmen. This is not only because the Anaheim Kingsmen come first alphabetically and were the first Drum Corps International Champions, but also because they were the corps that made competitive junior drum and bugle corps the coast-to-coast national activity that it is now and has been for the last 35 years.

The Anaheim Kingsmen began their existence as Boy Scout Troop 72 Drum and Bugle Corps from Anaheim, CA, in 1958, before changing their name to the Anaheim Scouts in 1963. Along with the name change, the corps switched from an all-male unit wearing Boy Scout uniforms to a co-ed unit with the male musicians wearing Explorer Scout uniforms and the all-female guard wearing Girl Scout uniforms.



The Anaheim Kingsmen, 1968, at the VFW National Prelims in Detroit, MI (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

After the 1963 season, during which they placed seventh out of 10 corps at the state American Legion Championship, the corps returned to an all-male guard, then suffered from a schism. These events were not the disasters they first seemed to be. The former female guard members formed an independent competitive guard and two groups of parents and members created two new drum corps from the original organization.

The breakaway faction founded the Velvet Knights in 1963, while the remaining Anaheim Scouts, led by Don Porter Sr., became the Anaheim Kingsmen in 1964. Consequently, the two corps were siblings and their history became one of sibling rivalry. (For more on the details of the shared early history and how the rivalry appeared from the other side, read *Charlie Groh's entertaining first-person account of the history of the Velvet Knights, which begins on page 420*).

At first, the Velvet Knights had the upper

Anaheim Kingsmen

hand in the rivalry. At the 1965 California State American Legion Championship in San Diego, VK took first place, with the Anaheim Kingsmen in sixth, 10 points behind. This early dominance faded soon thereafter, followed by five years of the Kingsmen and Velvet Knights trading victories, either at the end or beginning of the season, while the Kingsmen dominated during the bulk of the summer. This was followed by eight years of complete Kingsmen dominance.

The Kingsmen's ascendancy to the top in Southern California began with the 1966 hiring of three instructors who later rose to prominence in the activity: Pete Emmons, Richard "Rocco" Oliverio and Fred Sanford. Emmons and Sanford came from the Troopers, the first nationally prominent corps west of the Great Plains. They would later achieve fame with Santa Clara Vanguard as the drill writer and percussion caption head, respectively.

Oliverio, who was primarily a brass technician, originally came from upstate New York and has remained with the Kingsmen nearly every year they were active since 1966.

The efforts of the instructors and members paid off, as the Kingsmen began to beat the Velvet

Knights that season, beginning with a first-place finish two points ahead in Cerritos. They went on to win the California State American Legion Championship, the first of several state titles to come, including AL state titles in 1967 and 1969 and VFW state championships in 1968 and 1971.

The Kingsmen became the first California junior drum corps to appear at a national championship not held west of the Rockies

when they competed in the 1967 VFW National Championship in New Orleans, placed 14th out of 26 corps in prelims. They beat the Madison Scouts, who had placed 10th in the previous year's championship.

When VFW was held the next year in Detroit, the Kingsmen returned, again

placing 14th, this time out of 44 corps, and again beat a finalist from the previous year, the Millstadt Crusaders, as well as besting the Madison Scouts a second time.

On the way to the 1968 VFW, the Kingsmen made the first of seven consecutive appearances at the CYO Nationals, placing 11th, and competed in the inaugural U.S. Open, placing fifth, ahead of

nationally known corps such as the Madison Scouts and Boston Crusaders.

The breakthrough year came in 1969, when the corps placed fourth at CYO Nationals, third at the World Open, fifth at American Legion Nationals in Atlanta and ninth at VFW Nationals in Philadelphia. The Anaheim Kingsmen had become the first California junior corps to make finals at both veterans organization's championships in the



Anaheim Kingsmen at Knotts Berry Farm, 1971 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).

same year.

On the way, they defeated such notables as Garfield Cadets, Blue Stars, Des Plaines Vanguard, Racine Scouts, St. Rita's Brassmen, 27th Lancers, St. Joseph's of Batavia and Argonne Rebels. Big Blue had arrived!

The corps suffered a slight letdown in 1970. They lost to Velvet Knights by slim margins early in the season. Then they pulled ahead of VK, only to lose the state American Legion Championship to the upstart Santa Clara Vanguard.

Kingsmen returned to CYO, tying St. Rita's Brassmen for sixth, and to the U.S. Open, where they also placed sixth. The corps passed up VFW in Miami and opted to go to the American Legion National Championship in Portland, OR, where they came in second behind Santa Clara Vanguard.

Kingsmen resumed their climb to the top with a vengeance in 1971. They decided on a more "fan-friendly" repertoire, including *Ritual Fire Dance* for concert and *Mickey*

Anaheim Kingsmen at the dedication of the relocated London Bridge in Lake Havasu, AZ, 1971 (photo from the collection of Drum Corps World).



Mouse Club March to reflect their sponsorship by Disneyland. They hired Mike Duffy to arrange the music.

By this time, Don Porter Jr. was teaching percussion and Don Hertel was writing the drill and instructing the color guard, replacing Sanford and Emmons, who both left for the Santa Clara Vanguard. Kingsmen regained the state VFW championship from the Santa Clara Vanguard.

On their first tour, they traveled to CYO Nationals, where they came in second behind Blue Rock, then to the World Open, where they defeated Blue Rock, but lost to 27th Lancers and Santa Clara Vanguard. On the second tour, the corps won their first national title at the Mid-American Open in Overland Park, KS, defeating Santa Clara Vanguard, Troopers, Blue Stars and Kilties.

At the last VFW Championship of the pre-DCI era (1971 in Dallas, TX), the Kingsmen came in fifth, losing to Santa Clara Vanguard, Blue Rock and Troopers in both prelims and finals, Argonne Rebels in prelims, and 27th Lancers in finals.

Despite the members' desire to go on to the American Legion in Houston, the corps returned home on Director Don Porter Sr.'s insistence that there was not enough money in the budget for another week of tour. One of the parents, Don Wells, offered to loan the money for the corps to travel to American Legion. Porter declined. Many members,



Anaheim Kingsmen, August 6, 1972, at Union, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

for tour.

The hard work paid off as the corps won every championship contest in which it competed. First came CYO Nationals, where Kingsmen defeated 27th Lancers by nearly three points. After pulling out of the World Open and the "Danny Thomas Invitational" to rewrite the exit and clean the drill, the corps went on to the U.S. Open, where they again defeated the 27th Lancers by nearly three points. Finally came the inaugural DCI Championship in Whitewater, WI. The Anaheim Kingsmen placed third in the scorching heat of prelims.

They then put on "the show of their lives," as Vanguard director Gail Royer put it, for finals. At retreat, a torrential downpour struck, prompting all the corps to run for the parking lot.

By the time the Anaheim Kingsmen's winning score was announced, they were back in their buses, out of earshot. Some

Troopers and Santa Clara Vanguard. The corps did not retain its CYO Nationals title, coming in third behind Blue Stars and Madison Scouts. At "Pacific Procession," the Kingsmen came in third behind Santa Clara Vanguard and Troopers and were more than nine points away from first.

Not all shows were disappointments. The Kingsmen successfully defended their U.S. Open Championship, defeating the Canadian National

co-champions, De La Salle Oaklands. This was despite a 13-point penalty for arriving late, resulting in ninth place at prelims!

They handily won "Key to the Sea" in Toledo. The corps returned to perform at the second DCI Championship in Whitewater, where they placed seventh in prelims and sixth in finals, climbing over the Muchachos. At least they had crept up a little on the Santa Clara Vanguard, with only a six-point gap between the two corps at the end.

Disappointment continued on the way home, as one of their buses was hit from behind in Cheyenne, WY. It was a total loss, but none of the members were injured. The Troopers graciously loaned the Kingsmen one of their buses to get the corps home. In return, corps members left notes of appreciation for Troopers all around the bus.

After three years of very nearly the same music and drill, Kingsmen opted for a radically new musical and visual program in 1974. Gone were *Folk Song Suite*, *El Cid*, *Ritual Fire Dance*, *Sing Sing Sing* and *Exodus*. In their places were *Mambo* from "West Side Story," *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Artistry in Rhythm* and *So Very Hard to Go*.

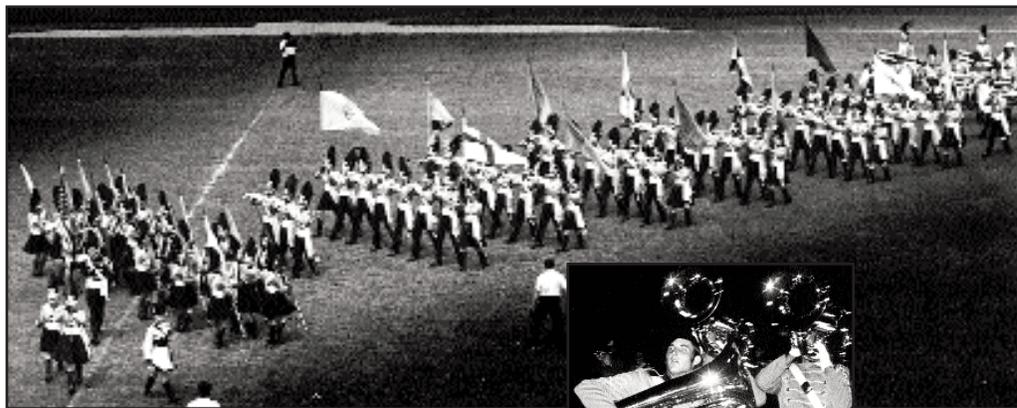
Kit Squires replaced Duffy as brass arranger and Bobby Hoffman wrote the drill. Many of the 1973 members returned, determined to improve on the previous year's results. At first, things seemed to be picking up. At "Drums Along the Rockies" in Denver, the Kingsmen came in second, only a little more than a point behind the Troopers.

At the second DCI West, at its new home in Boise, ID, first tour took a turn for the worse. Kingsmen came in third, more than seven points behind the Troopers and almost five points behind SCV.

On the way to San Jose, the equipment truck engine failed in the Nevada desert near Reno, causing instruments to be loaded onto buses and a new truck to be leased for the rest of the season. At "Pacific Procession," the Kingsmen scored seven points behind SCV and five behind Troopers. The corps had its work cut out for it.

Again they rehearsed 12 hours a day, seven days a week, until they left for second tour. Again, it paid off. They placed fourth at the inaugural DCI Midwest at Whitewater, three and a half points behind the Madison Scouts and only two and a half behind SCV.

The Kingsmen defended their "Key to the Sea" title against tough competition, including Madison Scouts. The corps came in second at American International and CYO to SCV and Madison Scouts, respectively.



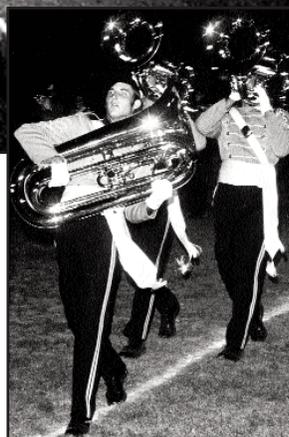
(Above) Anaheim Kingsmen, 1971, at the World Open; (right) during the "Mickey Mouse" section in 1971 (photos by Moe Knox from the collection of Drum Corps World).

instructors and parents were not pleased.

Despite the sour taste in their mouths from their finish at VFW, or perhaps even because of it, nearly all the members eligible to march in 1972 returned, resulting in a very experienced corps. Things were going well until the spring of 1972, when Porter resigned as director and the corps very nearly folded.

Wells stepped in as interim director, sharing the duties with Don Linscott. However, the corps had lost valuable time. They performed in exhibition at all of the local shows during May and June and only entered competition in mid-July, losing to Santa Clara and Blue Stars by several points.

In response, the corps held 12-hour rehearsals seven days a week until they left



never heard the announcement until years later, when a tape of the event was played for them.

The 1973 Kingsmen

experienced an 80 percent turnover, as many 1972 members aged out or decided to leave the activity at the top. Consequently, the corps suffered a letdown comparable to the one in 1970.

At the inaugural DCI Western Regional in De Kalb, IL, the Kingsmen placed fifth, seven and a half points behind the Santa Clara Vanguard. The "Big V" in Milwaukee saw the corps in sixth, almost seven points behind the



Anaheim Kingsmen, August 6, 1972, at Union, NJ (photo by Ron Da Silva from the collection of Drum Corps World).

At the World Open, the Kingsmen defeated the Kilties, who had beaten Kingsmen by one-tenth at DCI Midwest, and won the contest. It would be the last show Kingsmen would ever win as a competitive drum corps.

The corps continued on to the DCI Championships in Ithaca, NY. They came in second at prelims behind Madison Scouts and ahead of SCV. At this point, the Kingsmen had beaten every DCI corps at least once.

Despite a thrilling performance, they came in third at finals. The corps completed the season at a show the next Sunday, which the Madison Scouts won. Little did anyone know that would be the last show Kingsmen would compete in for nearly two years.

One of the side effects of Porter's resignation was that the Anaheim Kingsmen played fewer paying gigs in the community. Porter kept the corps busy at openings of shopping malls, Disneyland events, California Angels games and in local parades, all of which raised money for the organization. The Kingsmen even played for the opening of the Queen Mary in Long Beach.

While the corps continued some of these activities after Porter left, the number of paid community performances decreased as the corps emphasized being competitive on the field.

Between the decreased revenues and the increased expenses, both those expected from higher touring and those from mishaps involving the buses and trucks, the corps was unable to sustain itself financially.

In 1975, the corps' money situation caught up with it and forced the Anaheim Kingsmen off the field of competition. Members scattered to whatever corps could take them, including a few going to the Blue Devils, two following Bobby Hoffman to the Blue Stars and one joining the 27th Lancers.

The idea of the Anaheim Kingsmen refused to die, however. Oliverio revived the corps for the 1976 season. He was able to attract 12 Kingsmen from 1974, including

one who had marched in the Muchachos, and recruited 92 people new to the corps, including some veterans of other corps.

A handful, such as the drum major, Eddie Turner, left the Velvet Knights. At least two joined from the Los Angeles Chinese Imperial Dragons. Three people from the Toledo Glassmen joined the corps as "imports." One person came from a Washington corps. A veteran of the Wayne Monarchs traveled from New Jersey. Even a former member of Santa Clara Vanguard joined.

The bulk of the corps, however, consisted of local band people completely new to corps.

The 1976 program consisted mostly of the 1974 music and drill, with a medley of *Cheshire Cat Walk* and *Hill Where the Lord Hides* replacing *Symphonie Fantastique*. The corps was barely ready for its competitive debut in Thousand Oaks, CA. They came in fourth out of five corps, 26 points behind SCV and only a few points ahead of the Ventures



Anaheim Kingsmen, 1978, at DCI Midwest in Whitewater, WI (photo by Wilson Leong from the collection of Drum Corps World).

all-girl corps. Again, the corps had its work cut out for it.

The Anaheim Kingsmen revived the tradition of 12 hours a day, seven days a week rehearsals. It also revived the tradition of extreme military decorum, down to never appearing in public after a performance except in full uniform and as a complete unit, sitting down in unison, lining up equipment cases at shows and even lining up suitcases and sleeping bags on gym floors during tour. Both seemed to work.

The corps made the finals of every prelims/finals contest in which it competed, other than DCI Championships itself, including DCI Midwest, DCI North, "Key to the Sea" and the U.S. Open. By DCI Championships in Philadelphia, the Kingsmen had improved 25 points, halved the spread between it and SCV to 13 points and placed 19th, achieving associate status.

Kingsmen continued to perform months after the end of the 1976 competitive season, putting on exhibitions at Southern California band competitions well into November. These efforts didn't seem to bear fruit immediately, as the exhibition corps had 27 horns and Kingsmen still had only 27 horns performing at parades well into April 1977.

In contrast, Velvet Knights had 38 horns at the same parades and were handily defeating Kingsmen on the street. By the time field competition started, the Anaheim Kingsmen were marching 46-48 horns and they had arrangements by Wayne Downey and drill written by Mike Moxley.

They made finals at DCI East, were invited back to CYO Nationals and participated again in DCI West. They were well ahead of Velvet Knights, despite the latter's strongest corps since 1970 and late season surge, closing the gap with the Kingsmen from 13 points to six points in a week.

Kingsmen were optimistic about making DCI Finals for the first time in four years. They almost made it, jumping ahead of the Squires and North Star, who had both beaten the Kingsmen earlier in the season. However, 1977 turned out to be the year of the 13-corps finals, with Kingsmen in 14th, barely on the outside looking in.

The members and staff were heartened by the improvement between 1976 and 1977 and thrilled at the results of a management coup that threw out Oliverio in the middle of the 1977 season because of his dictatorial style and replaced him with a team of Bruce Leo as director and Jim Blaisedale as manager.

One of the side effects of this coup was the admittance of women into the horn and drum lines. The first female in the horn line during second tour of 1977 was Blaisedale's own daughter, Rita, who played soprano. Also, retention was higher, as 36 horns were performing with the exhibition corps in October. During the winter, the corps was nearly full, with up to 48 horns at rehearsals until April 1978 and a spectacular winter guard winning shows throughout California.

Things were looking great. Then the winter rains stopped, the sun came out and members quit to lounge around on the beach.

By the middle of May, the corps was down to 32 horns. To make matters worse, the corps' bingo, which had been able to sustain the corps for two years, began to falter, as players went down the road to another charity that paid higher jackpots.

Leo called a meeting at which he outlined the choices. The corps could go on a full first tour, but not go to DCI. The corps could go on a second tour, but not go on a first tour. The corps could go on a shortened first tour and a full second tour and then hope for the best with the bingo game. The members voted for the third option and Leo complied.

By late June 1978, the corps seemed to be recovering, with 49 horns, a full drum line and a nearly full guard for a total of 120 members leaving on tour. Despite several

days of practice in Allentown, however, the Kingsmen failed to make DCI East Finals.

They came in 12th out of 14 corps at CYO Nationals. They just missed making finals at DCI Midwest. The scores were stagnant. The corps came home and completely rewrote the drill, missing the Drum Corps West Championships in the process. The rewrite seemed to work, as the scores began to improve on the second tour, which included

were as the fictitious "Hollywood Stars" in the musical "The Lorin Solo," which was staged at Los Angeles City College during the winter and spring of 1982. The *Los Angeles Times* panned the show, but gave the corps itself a good review, commenting on its disciplined, Kabuki-like presence.

The Kingsmen returned to the field again in 1982. At their first contest, they lost to the Velvet Knights. While they were able to close within a few tenths of VK by mid-July, they were never able to beat them on the field again. The high points of the 1982 season were a finals appearance at American International Open and an exhibition at the CYO Nationals.

In 1984, they had a much fuller season than in 1983, participating in prelims for PDCA, DCI Midwest and "Key to the Sea." American International was again the high point of the season, as they made finals. They also made division II finals at DCI, where they placed eighth.

They continued on to division I preliminaries. Again, they advanced from preliminaries to quarterfinals, but placed 37th overall and advanced no further.

The 1985 edition of Kingsmen pursued a very limited touring schedule, appearing at a few DCE, DCM and DCI shows along with prelims appearances at DCI East and DCI Canada on the way to DCI, where they again advanced to quarterfinals, placing 36th overall.



Anaheim Kingsmen, approximately 1978 (photo by Michael J. Pendell from the collection of Drum Corps World).

an appearance at DCI West.

History repeated itself, as the equipment truck again broke down in the Nevada desert east of Reno and a new truck had to be rented. After a week of hard practice, the corps failed to fulfill its own expectations at DCI, scoring 75.0 and coming in 19th, again.

After prelims, an informal survey of the members showed that most were not planning on coming back the next year.

The 1978 season was not over yet. The corps performed one last time at a California Angels game in September. Then, Leo passed out in his garage and died at 31. Finally, the instructors called a rehearsal in October. At most, 20 brass players and a few drummers showed up. The instructors told the members to take the horns home and wait for a call for another rehearsal. They never called one.

The result was that a large fraction of the Anaheim Kingsmen's instruments were scattered to the four winds and the corps was unable to reform until the instruments were recovered. This did not happen until 1981, when Oliverio took control of the Anaheim Kingsmen again and tracked down the instruments.

Many of the members kept marching. The largest contingent, about 10, ended up in the Blue Devils. Other corps with former Kingsmen marching in 1979-1981 included Velvet Knights, Freelancers, San Jose Raiders, Seattle Imperials, Madison Scouts, Bridgemen and North Star.

The revived Anaheim Kingsmen's first performances



Anaheim Kingsmen, 1984 (photo by Robert B. Watson from the collection of Drum Corps World).

The Kingsmen failed to regain their associate membership at DCI in Montreal, coming in 28th. In 1983, the corps came out for a few shows early in the year, did not compete again for nearly a month and then traveled to Miami for DCI. There, they advanced from the preliminaries to the quarterfinals, but came in 33rd overall.

The Anaheim Kingsmen last came out as a competitive corps in 1986, where they just missed making the rained-out DCI East Finals and placed 30th overall at the DCI Championships in Madison.

They continued as a competitive winter color guard, making Winter Guard International Finals in 1990, 1991 and 1992,

and as an indoor competitive drum line well into the 1990s.

The Anaheim Kingsmen organization still exists under the direction of Oliverio, who continues to run a bingo game in Stanton, CA, with the avowed goal of putting a corps back on the field some day.

The author did not submit a photograph or a biography.

Anaheim Kingsmen, 1986 (photo by Robert B. Watson from the collection of Drum Corps World).

