

Vanguard steams ahead of VK

by David Pressley

July 24, 1989—Omaha, Nebraska . . . The Santa Clara Vanguard added still another victory before a near-capacity crowd here Monday night. The Railmen partisan crowd at University of Nebraska—Omaha's Caniglia Field enthusiastically supported each of the seven competing units but were overwhelmed by the complexity of Vanguard's *Phantom of the Opera* production.

Tonight's performance was the strongest in several shows for the rapidly improving Santa Clara Vanguard. Surely each one of this corps' soloists is seriously considering a career in music. These youngsters, and the entire line for that matter, play with a degree of musical maturity that is unmatched at the junior corps level. Visually speaking, the show was breathtaking. While the guard contribution is somewhat more subtle than in past years, they are no less effective. First place, 90.30.

The Velvet Knights continue to be great fun. During their production, based primarily on Dizzy Gillespie's *Night in Tunisia*, the guard has ample opportunity to 'monkey around.' This corps plays with tremendous intensity and never has a problem generating positive crowd reaction. The Velvet Knights are, however, having trouble with the feet. Even a 'good-time' corps needs to march cleanly, and this oversight costs the Velvet Knights several points in each contest. Given time to drill, the Velvet Knights could raise themselves into a better competitive position by Kansas City. Second place, 80.80.

The Freelancers are much improved for the second consecutive season. Long-term drum corps observers have been a bit slow to respond to the John Williams' programs the past two summers. The Freelancers are once again a full corps with tremendous power, one to be taken seriously at finals. The 'standoffish' fans fortunately have the wisdom to realize this and are turning back on to the Sacramento Freelancers. Third, 77.20.

The Troopers are coming back! The Casper, WY, corps has a strong grasp of its show and is performing at a level they didn't reach until Kansas City last season. *How the West was Won* fits the corps as snugly as a new pair of gloves. The new uniforms make the corps look brighter and sharper without compromising the activity's most popular trademark image. Tonight's performance moved the Troopers past rival Florida Wave for the first time in several outings. Fourth, 71.20.

The Florida Wave continued to improve despite the corps' most ambitious and brutal tour ever. Hoping to line up against every competing corps and in front of every member of the judging community at least once before finals, the Wave has found endless 18-hour bus rides to be more frustrating than any competition. Having had more than two days of rehearsal in the same location (Cheyenne, WY) only once since June 20, the Wave has somehow managed to tighten its drill, fill the dead spots and add exciting new visuals. One highlight is the new 'parrot flags' used during the re-entry. Fifth, 71.10.

The Railmen have added a badge marking the corps' 50th anniversary to their crisp uniforms. The home fans tremendously applauded the corps as the Railmen moved through a nicely varied jazz program highlighting such popular composers as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin and Thelonios Monk. Having ended its association with the Union Pacific Railroad, the Railmen are able to experiment with more sophisticated programming. We look forward to good things from the Railmen. Sixth, 50.50.

The Quad City Knights continued improving with their high-energy rock and roll show. The corps is a bit larger and has returned its drum line to the field this season. The 'Yes' show should keep the Knights in contention for retaining associate membership.