

# A festive Fourth in Midcounty

As the shortest parade in the world made its way down Soquel Drive in Aptos July 4, spectators clapped and cheered the clowns, the classic cars and the callopie.

At Capitola's Jade Street Park, a relaxed crowd nibbled at picnic lunches, played games and took turns trying to dunk city officials with the toss of a softball.

And later that evening, a large crowd attended the fireworks display at the fairgrounds despite a gathering fog. Others witnessed an informal, but no less spectacular, fireworks display at the county's beaches.

All the state beaches in the county were crowded, according to Dick Menefee of the state Parks Department.

It was an altogether enjoyable holiday for Midcounty residents.

"Where else would you see an industrial truck with a volkswagon hanging from it full of rowdy people," parade spectator David Brick said from his vantage point near the Rancho del Mar shopping center.

Brick, a Santa Cruz lawyer, had brought his 2- and 5-year old sons to see the Fourth of July parade.

For 23 years anyone who wants to has paraded a few blocks through the town of Aptos on the Fourth of July, giving the parade a feeling of ridiculous spontaneity that everyone enjoys.

"We come because it's informal," Brick said. "Everyone has such nice energy."

Archie Crampton, sat waiting his turn in a green and black '31 Ford that belongs to his neighbor on Claudius Drive.

"This is really something," Crampton, 79, said. "I'm tickled to death. I had no idea it was like this."

Across from where Crampton sat, the Cabrillo Republican Women's brown pick-up truck, decorated with a profusion of flags and elephants, waited in line next to a convertible filled with bears, princesses, punks and a woman pirate.

"I wouldn't want to be in those costumes in this heat," Americanism chairman, Virginia Moore said.

Four little girls and a little boy went by dressed as Cabbage Patch Kids, behind them they drew a red wagon filled with cabbages.

The tellers from Bank of America's Aptos branch wore cardboard placards marked with the names of different credit cards.

In case anyone missed the advertising that might interrupt a parade on television, the tellers sang "Bank on the leader," and jumped up and down behind the pick-up truck they had decorated to look like an eagle.

A 1950 Willys Jeepster drew applause from the crowd as it drove by. The parade matriach,

Lucile Aldrich, who was dressed in a purple Victorian gown, stood up in the back seat waving to the crowd. With her raspy voice and her regal bearing she reminded an onlooker of Carol Channing in "Hello Dolly." ("Well my dear," she said. "I just got back from Russia last Tuesday, and with the parade today, I'm just exhausted.") The idea for the parade was born 23 years ago, when Aldrich and her Tuesday Evening Ladies Society successfully blocked construction of a cement plant in Aptos. They won their battle on June 29, 1961 and celebrated with a parade on July 4. No one had to sign up in advance then, and they don't have to now.

"The first parade nobody saw it because everybody was in it," the 65-year-old said.

"Even now, we never know until 11 o'clock if there's even going to be a parade."

The Aptos parade was the first glimpse Wendy Bowen and Maryann Duggan of Sydney, Australia have had of this particularly American phenomenon and they were impressed.

"Americans know how to enjoy themselves," said Duggan, 21, from her position on the bed of a 45 Chevy pick-up. "We don't have these (parades) in Australia; I think Americans are more patriotic."

The Australian women were

not the only foreigners in the parade. Serge De Lissert New Caledonia was riding the back of a \$10,000 '31 SL Windshield Ford. He speaks English, but he was effusive none the less.

"C'est magnifique," he said.



The 23rd annual version of the Aptos parade was open to the tall and the small as evidenced by the rather stilted entry of Anne Wedemeyer and the bang-up job done by young Ian Rydquist. Over at Jade Street Park in Capitola, Mayor Michael Routh cools his heels (far right), courtesy of a city police officer who dunked His Honor on the fourth toss at the softball dunking booth. The mayor's reaction: "That's why we only give him three bullets. You're all safe here."

Photos by Diane Varni

