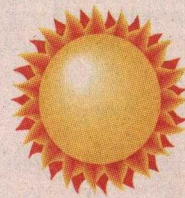


Summer's last stand?



SUNDAY hit 90 degrees in Watsonville, 84 in Santa Cruz. More of the same is expected **TODAY**.

State sizzles, thousands lose power

County clogged by cars, beachgoers

STAFF AND WIRE REPORT

SANTA CRUZ — While the rest of the state swelters through the holiday weekend, the sunny, warm weather Santa Cruzans and visitors are experiencing this weekend is just about average — if not a tad on the warm side.

High temperatures hit 90 degrees in Watsonville on Sunday and peaked at 84 in Santa Cruz, up slightly from the normal high-70s-to-low-80s. Expect more of the same today, according to National Weather Service in Monterey.

"It'll be warm. It'll be sunny," forecaster Diana Henderson said.

In other parts of the state, thousands were without power Sunday and the outages were blamed on the continuing heat wave.

The California Independent System Operator, which oversees the state's power grid, said no major shortages were expected through today. Still, it urged customers to continue conserving electricity by setting air conditioning thermostats higher and waiting to use major appliances until after dark.

Parking — not power — shortages were the real issue in Santa Cruz County this weekend, as thousands of people flocked to beaches and the Begonia Festival in Capitola to enjoy the weather and say goodbye to summer.

Police and fire officials reported few serious incidents most of the weekend



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

The Riverview Rascals' first-place 'High-Tech Safari,' which included a 13-foot-tall giraffe, thrills the crowd gathered around Soquel Creek during the 55th annual Begonia Festival Nautical Parade on Sunday.

Begonia Festival veteran wins first place in annual Nautical Parade

By **JILL KIMBALL**
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

CAPITOLA

The thousands of spectators lining the banks of Soquel Creek and peering over the Stockton Bridge and the railroad trestle were obviously worried.

Nels Westman's begonia float was making its way down Soquel Creek, and his blossom-studded giraffe, at 13 feet, appeared obviously too tall to make it under the 10-foot bridge. Little did they

See **BEGONIA** on **PAGE A12**

Human power propels the second-place 'Jungle Love' float down the creek on Sunday.



See **WEATHER** on **PAGE A12**

Begonia

Continued from Page A1

know, Westman was hidden beneath the giraffe's body and had a few tricks up his sleeve. Just before the float passed under the bridge, he discreetly lowered the giraffe's neck and the crowd burst into impressed applause.

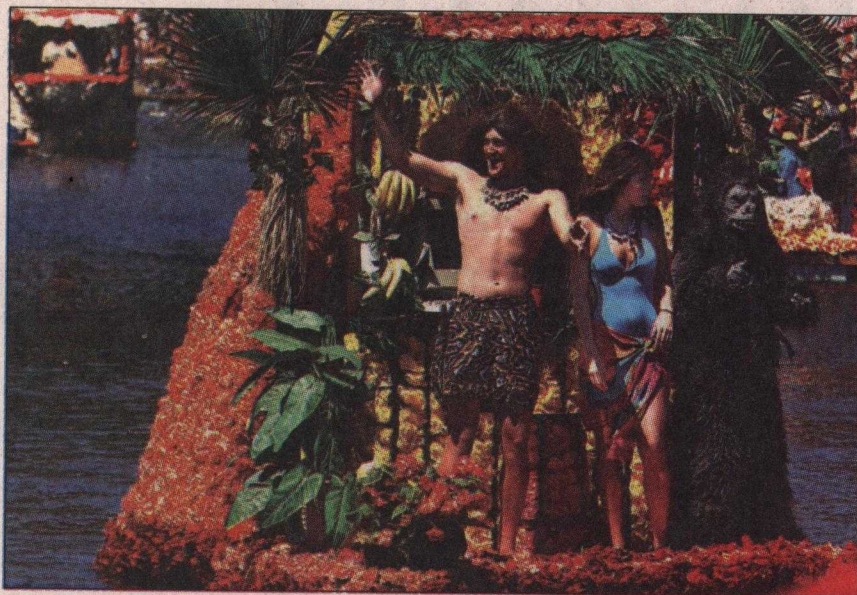
Nels Westman's giraffe-in-a-Jeep creation was one of nine floats featured in Sunday's 55th annual Nautical Parade, the highlight of the annual Capitola Begonia Festival. Capitola police and festival organizers were hard-pressed to estimate the crowd size, but the event drew thousands. Aside from the obvious traffic headaches, problems were few, police said.

Other festival events included Saturday's sand castle contest and movie marathon, and Sunday's rowboat races. All events were centered around a safari theme.

Westman, a former festival committee member whose floats have graced the waters of Soquel Creek since 1978, thought up this year's float about three weeks ago in the driveway of his Riverview Avenue home with two neighboring families, the Martorellas and the Proctors. The driveway also served as a temporary workshop where Westman and his crew constructed the plywood skin of the float in modules that could easily be carried down to the creek come festival weekend.

He noted that the various mechanical stunts included in this year's construction would have extended beyond his abilities when he first began participating in the parade. After "just a year or two's experience, however, you know what you're capable of," he said. That helps, he said, especially when it comes to figuring out how many begonia blossoms will be needed.

His experience told him he would need to fill 400 cardboard flats with begonias — that's about 8,000 blossoms — to cover the surfaces of the Jeep, the giraffe and the floor of the float's 8-by-12-foot platform. Collecting the donated flowers early Saturday morning amid dense fog was Westman's favorite part of the entire weekend, he said, because "it was a lot of work picking them, but going to the gardens was very



Cherry Street Gang's float 'Tarzan and Jane at the Internet Cafe' leads off the Begonia Festival Nautical Parade down Soquel Creek on Sunday.

Shmuel Thaler/
Sentinel photos

Nautical Parade winners

FIRST PLACE: Riverview Rascals — 'High Tech Safari.'

SECOND PLACE: Tasha Silva and family — 'Jungle Love.'

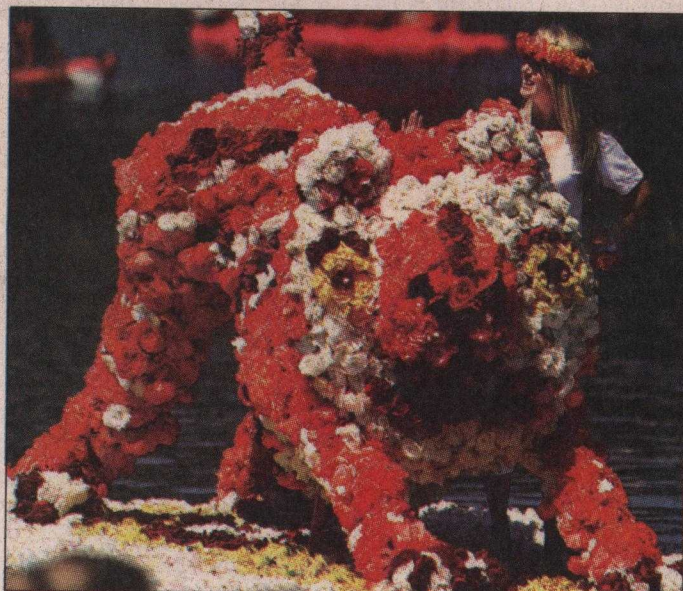
THIRD PLACE: Cherry Street Gang — 'Tarzan and Jane at the Internet Cafe.'

cool, just seeing begonias for acres and acres."

The blossoms are donated each year by Golden State Bulb Growers, a Moss Landing-based operation that just happens to sell more begonias than any other grower in the world. The company was founded in Capitola in 1920.

For the next 24 hours, more than 40 people stopped by Westman's house to help with construction. The core group of the three families, their friends "and some of the kids we threatened" tirelessly toiled in the hot sun all day Saturday, attaching blossoms to sections of chicken wire and carefully stapling each section onto the wooden structure.

By the time work commenced again at 9 a.m. the next morning, most of the float had already been completed. The morning was spent filling in holes and adding small details. Unlike other groups, who rushed to add finishing touches in the last seconds before the parade, Westman and his Riverview Ras-



Nearly 6,000 begonia blossoms were used to create 'Jungle Yoga.'

cals were ready and waiting at noon. An hour later, they freed their float from its dock and were off.

The winner was clear long before festival president Linda Banks announced it to the crowd. Many of the floats featured ingenuity, such as a functioning waterfall, a volcano whose top lowered to make its way under the bridge, and an acting scene between a boat captain and an exotic native standing amid the audience on the bridge. Judges, however, agreed Westman's float was their favorite.

"The giraffe float was the most impressive," said judge Nolan Sparks. "It was very creative and they clearly spent a lot of time on it."

The three weeks spent on the float didn't make the end of the parade at all anticlimactic to Westman.

"I love that there's all this energy and creativity and planning, and then it just gets torn apart. It seems kind of twisted to say, but I like it. The floats are like perishable art."

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