

# Watsonville Band only show at White House

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**WATSONVILLE** — The Watsonville Band, an annual attraction at Watsonville's Fourth of July festivities, won't perform at the local show during this year's holiday.

Instead, the 70-member band will be in Washington, D.C., playing for — and possibly with — the president of the United States.

The marching band, composed of musicians from Santa Cruz County and two other counties, has been invited to play at the Independence Day celebration at the White House. The annual private affair will be hosted by President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who plan to invite several thousand friends, employees and fellow officials.

Notably, the Watsonville Band will be not only the featured musical performers but will be practically the only music at the gala event, said Ed Pio, who manages the band.

Traditionally, the U.S. Marine Band, which is considered "the president's own," plays for the party

every year from the second floor balcony overlooking the south lawn. But there isn't room for two bands, Pio said.

A Dixieland band composed of seven members of the Marine Band is scheduled to spell the Watsonville Band for 15 minutes during the two-hour event, he said.

White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, a former congressman whose district encompassed Watsonville, has long been a friend of the Watsonville Band, Pio said. On one of Panetta's first trips back to California after he became Chief of Staff, Pio asked if the band could play at the White House.

Panetta thought it was a good idea, Pio said. Panetta has assisted the band with several of its overseas trips, and he lobbied for its appearance at the White House Fourth of July event.

"When he talks, he talks for the president," Pio said.

Because there wasn't room for both the Marine and the Watsonville bands on the balcony, a decision had to be made about who would play.



**The Watsonville Band has toured extensively, including in Europe, Canada and Australia. They now can add the White House to the list of prestigious performances.**

"I was sweating it," said Pio.

Pio said that when Ann McCoy, head of White House Visitor Services, called to tell him the band would indeed play the White House, she said, "This is the first time anyone but the Marine Band has ever played this party."

Between 8,000 and 10,000 people — White House employees and their families and important other folk — attend the occasion, Pio said.

"From what I've been told, it's the best place in the city to see the

See BAND, page 3

# BAND

From page 1

fireworks," Pio said. "It's a half-million to three-quarter million dollar fireworks display. You know the one they do here at Granite Rock — that's a really nice display and it's \$10,000."

While in the nation's capital, the band also will take part in the Independence Day parade on Constitution Avenue prior to its performance at the White House.

It will be the only adult marching band in the parade, Pio said. Hundreds of bands auditioned for the parade, sending in tapes. The Watsonville Band sent no tapes. They were invited to play.

"You must be pretty good," McCoy told Pio.

"I told her, 'You will not be disappointed.'"

Pio said his only concern now is how best to invite President Clinton to join the band on his saxophone.

They want to play something with the president that won't require him to read notes or rehearse, Pio said.

"We'll ask him to play something like the 'Beer Barrel Polka' or 'Saints Go Marching In.' We'll ad lib," Pio said. "We wouldn't want him to be messing up the band."

The band will leave for Washington June 30, flying out of the San Jose airport. It's scheduled to return to Watsonville July 6.