

Watsonville parade better than ever

The morning sun came out, and so did the people to Watsonville's Fourth of July parade Sunday.

The approximately 10,000 people who lined Main Street at 11:30 p.m. were treated to one of the few sunny mornings in the last two weeks and a smoothly-run parade with a home-town flavor.

There was no prize money to attract big-name out of town acts,

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but the parade didn't suffer for lack of quality or quantity.

Most of the 50-odd entries were from Watsonville, with a scattering of groups from Monterey County, Santa Cruz and a couple from out of the area.

By the time the Watsonville Band put on a colorful performance near the end of the procession, the crowd (slightly larger than last year's turnout) had already seen everything one might expect in a home-town parade, and a little more.

There were roller skaters, baton twirlers, equestrian entries, politicians in cars, politicians without cars (Assemblyman Sam Farr

rode his bicycle), cars without politicians (including eight Edsels), entries from several ethnic organizations, motorized floats, horses, and three marching bands (plus the Watsonville Band.)

"We're absolutely ecstatic," said parade committee chairman Andy Gulermovich. "Everything went smoothly. There were no hitches and no complaints from anybody."

Had there been prizes, the 91-member Watsonville Band would undoubtedly have won one. Marching behind its 12 Rockettes-style dancers, the band and color guard delighted the crowd with rousing music that could be heard a block away.

"This is the best marching group we've had in five years," said band official Ed Pio.

It wasn't coincidence that the Watsonville Band was scheduled near the end of the parade and the Watsonville Summer Band (a group of school-age children) was the first entry. Summer Band director Gene Smith, assistant Kirsten Swanson and two members of the color guard were also

in the Watsonville Band. They were shuttled from the end of the parade to the beginning in time to change into different uniforms and get in the procession again.

Except for a couple of short gaps, the parade moved along at a snappy pace. There were enough acts with action to keep things from ever getting dull.

Congressman Leon Panetta, Sen. Henry Mello, Farr, and four members of the city council (Betty Murphy, Ann Soldo, Joe Marsano and Mayor Bill Johnston) rode behind Grand Marshal Dick Shaw.

They were followed by such entries as the Committee for Solidarity for El Salvador, a Santa Cruz group with more than 100 walkers, the Watsonville Area Seniors, who threw candy to thousands of little kids, and the Muskrats, a group of young men wearing baseball caps with foot-long furry bills.

Cub Scouts were easy to spot. There were four separate groups of Cubs, with about 140 boys participating.

Of the roughly 1,000 parade par-

ticipants, 400 were from the Monterey County Dance and Twirl Club, with members from high school age down to pre-schoolers who seemed more interested in watching the crowd than marching in step.

The Islam Temple Drum and Glock corps from Salinas also put on a fine show. One of the "bounciest" entries was a group of low-rider cars from the Sixty Style Club of Watsonville. Several members bounced the frames of their cars up and down, while others cruised along in autos that hugged the ground.

A bazaar in Callaghan Park after the parade attracted about 1,000 people.

Just a few hours after the parade, Gulermovich was talking enthusiastically about next year's event. "We'd like to improve the bazaar and the parade before we take on something else," he said. About eight people were instrumental in organizing this year's parade (another dozen or so helped on parade day). The Chamber of Commerce was also involved in some of the pre-parade work.

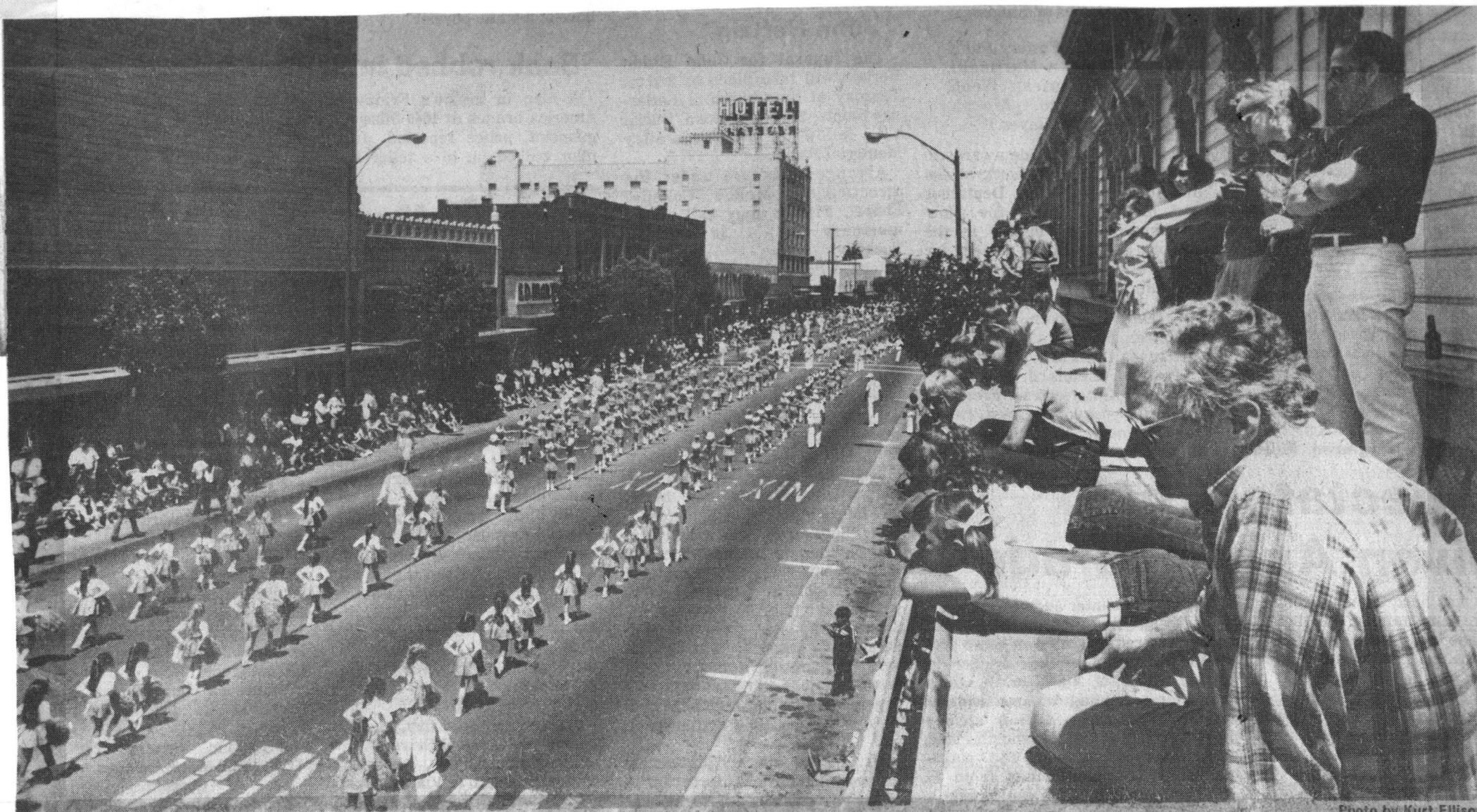


Photo by Kurt Ellison

This was view from top of Mansion House as dance and twirl club group marched by during Watsonville's parade yesterday