

Celebrants head forth on the Fourth



Spectators line the route as the World's Shortest Parade heads toward Aptos Village.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

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Aptos mishap one of day's few negatives

By STEVE PEREZ
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SANTA CRUZ — The biggest firecracker of 'em all nearly pulled a no-show on the Fourth of July.

Fog and low clouds were the order of the day near the county's beaches until the sun pushed them away by early afternoon.

But that didn't stop people from enjoying themselves at a wide range of events during the day — from the Fourth of July picnic at Wilder Ranch State Park and the World's Shortest Parade in Aptos to festivities in Watsonville.

In Aptos, thousands lined Soquel Drive in Aptos to view the parade, so named because the route is one block long. Sponsored by the Aptos Chamber of Commerce, the parade is 33 years old.

A mishap involving one of the participants slowed the proceedings, California Highway Patrol Sgt. B.J. Hall said.

Two women riding a motorcycle "popped a wheelie" but apparently lost control and ended up in the crowd, Hall said.

Hall said four spectators, two children and two adults whose names were not available, had minor leg injuries. They were taken to a local doctor's office for treatment.

The CHP will be investigating.

One of the more off-the-wall entries was a truck marked "Aptos For Corn." Those on board tossed free ears to anyone who could holler loud enough to gain their attention.

Matt Low, an Aptos resident, caught one, but was disappointed.

The shucked ear he held in his hand had a huge section that appeared to have been already eaten by someone, or something.

"I thought it would be edible," he said. "I wanted it for a barbecue."

Hank Christmann of Pasatiempo called his friends and invited them to watch the parade from the Safeway parking lot and have a bite to eat. He and his wife Margie prepared a spread of food that rivaled any seen at a 49ers tailgate party. It's been a Fourth of July

tradition for the past 10 years, he said.

"It's getting harder and harder to find a place to park," he said.

Similar events drew hundreds of people in downtown Boulder Creek and Watsonville.

Plenty of people celebrated Independence Day offshore.

Boaters left the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor by the hundreds, according to the Harbor Patrol's Tim Morley.

An estimated 100 were launched from the public ramp, while more than 200

left their slips to spend the day on the bay.

Many of them remained offshore at nightfall to watch the illegal display of fireworks on Live Oak beaches, he said.

One ocean-going holiday celebration was cut short, said Coast Guard Petty Officer Lars Hollis.

The 40-foot pleasure craft Tina Marie out of Moss Landing hit the rocks off that harbor around 11 a.m., he said.

The vessel Bayou was in the vicinity and helped tow the ship to shore as it

began taking on water, he said. No injuries were reported.

Santa Cruz city lifeguards reported relatively light crowds on the city beaches, and no serious mishaps.

"It was a lot more crowded (Sunday)," Lifeguard Andrew Ward said. "It was almost one o'clock before it got really sunny. And a lot of people also stayed home to watch the (World Cup) soccer game, pulling people away from the beach."