

# TRADITION, EARLY MORNINGS IN APTOS



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

The World's Shortest Parade, an Independence Day tradition in Aptos since 1961, fills Soquel Drive between State Park Drive and Trout Gulch Road with patriotic revelry Tuesday.

## World's Shortest Parade draws thousands

By Calvin Men

newsroom@santacruzsentinel.com  
@CalvinMenAtWork on Twitter

**APTOS** » The first signs of the World's Shortest Parade in Aptos were lawn chairs lined up on Soquel Drive on Monday night.

Longtime attendees know to stake out seats the day before or else risk not getting a front row seat to the Fourth of July

event. Scott Balkman parked his pickup overnight in a parking lot overlooking the route.

On Tuesday morning, Balkman and his grandson, Mateo Cordola, munched on donuts in the back of the pickup, sitting comfortably in the bed of the truck. Balkman and his family have attended the parade for years. The parade — with its antique cars, people walking dogs

and fire trucks — is corny, Balkman said.

"That's why everybody is here. Because it's corny in a good way," Balkman said with a smile.

Organized by the Aptos Chamber of Commerce, the parade dates to the 1960s when the parade began as a protest. Since then, it's evolved into an annual tradition that draws thousands of spectators and hundreds of participants.

An hour before the parade was

slated to begin, cars circled the parking lots looking for last minute spaces. American flags were clutched by kids who ran freely up and down the street after law officials closed off the road.

When a gap opened, people quickly swarmed to fill up the space.

Anna Cartagena, a 35-year-old Santa Cruz resident, snagged a front row spot when authorities closed a driveway.

PARADE » PAGE 5





PHOTOS BY SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Steve Fairhurst brings a prehistoric presence to the Aptos parade Tuesday.

## Parade

FROM PAGE 1

Cartagena, her husband and three daughters usually come to the event each year and have occasionally marched in it.

"It just feels like a nice family event," she said.

At 10 a.m. sharp, the Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District truck kicked off the parade, blaring its fire horn. What followed was a menagerie of marchers that included Boy Scout troops, people with dogs, marching bands, police vehicles and anyone else who wanted to participate.

As parade vehicles drove down the road, passengers would crane their heads out the window to smile and wave at the crowd.

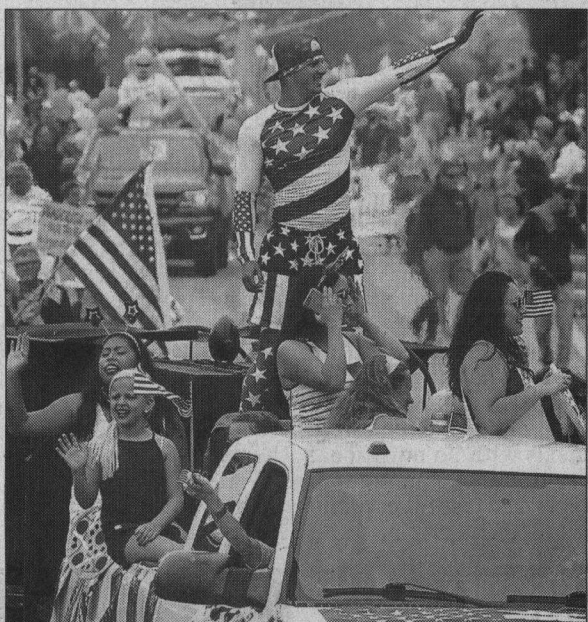
Organizers have kept a loose policy for who they let into the parade, paving the way for the event to keep its local vibe.

Pam Cole, a 59-year-old Watsonville resident, usually rides in the parade with her 26-year-old daughter's car. But the car was out of commission this year and Cole opted to sit back on the sidewalk. She didn't mind.

"We like to people watch," she said, adding that she indulged in the free pancake breakfast offered as a part of the parade. She remembers being in the parade 20



Fun judging was unanimous in rating the enjoyment level of the World's Shortest Parade.



Tuesday was a day for red-white-and-blue celebration.

years ago when her daughter was just 6.

She had one word for why she came back each year:

tradition.

"If we weren't going to be in the parade, then we came down to watch," she said.