

Sheriff wants to ban Clampers from parade

By BOB SMITH

Does the Aptos Fourth of July Parade have the potential of turning into a riot?

The sheriff's department thinks so, according to parade co-chairwoman Glenn Specht, particularly if a certain group is allowed to participate. Mrs. Specht says the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department wants the parade sponsors, The Aptos Tuesday Evening Ladies Society, to limit participation in the community affair to those who have signed up in advance and specifically ban the E Clampus Vitas, otherwise known as "The Clampers." The committee has been negotiating with the county for the permit that allows the Society to stage the annual parade down Soquel Drive through Aptos Village

and into the Aptos Village Park on Independence Day.

The parade has traditionally been open to all comers, with anyone from a tricycle-peddling toddler up to an octogenarian welcome.

Entries were made in past years by just showing up at the starting line and following the orders of Parade Mistress Lucille Aldrich and Mrs. Specht.

But now, according to Mrs. Specht, who spoke at the Aptos Chamber of Commerce last Thursday, the sheriff's office wants to institute a formal registration system for all entrants — if you're not registered, you don't march in the parade.

"We told people we don't do parades that way," Mrs. Specht told the chamber members, saying such a require-

ment would ruin the spontaneity of the parade.

"It would change the parade that way."

Mrs. Specht said the sheriff's office is being represented in the discussions by Lt. Don Lovejoy, head of the department's reserve forces division.

She quoted him as calling the parade a "potential riot." The specific complaint from the sheriff's office, she said, is about "Clampers." The goal of the sheriff's registration edict, she charged last Thursday, is to ban the participation of the group.

They are a sometimes rowdy, occasionally undisciplined group of merrymakers, Mrs. Specht concedes, but doesn't think they are totally uncontrollable.

"Yes they drink, and yes, I got mad at their popguns last year," Mrs. Specht said. "But when I told them to put them down, they did."

"It's not that I don't realize there are potential problems, but the whole flavor of the parade is what is at stake," she adds. "I just refuse to stoop to the sheriff's level. I just don't want the Big Brother and neo-Nazi approach."

"Are they going to require us to restrict certain people?" she asked.

Lovejoy was unavailable for comment either Friday or Monday, but a departmental press spokesman said the aim is to limit the parade.

"The parade has gotten out of hand and we want to control it," the spokesman said. "The problems involved in last year's parade center around drinking, too many cars, and not enough places for people to park."

"The only riot that may happen," Mrs. Specht said, "is if they don't give us a permit."

"We have a good record to stand on. We have always paid our insurance (the liability insurance required by the county) and there have been no problems."

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