

# Petals rule the day at Begonia Festival

By **MARINA MALIKOFF**  
Sentinel staff writer

**CAPITOLA** — Soquel Creek burst into a riot of vivid color and slapstick comedy Sunday as a parade of floats made from begonias glided past judges and a cheering crowd during the Capitola Begonia Festival.

An estimated 7,000 people crouched along the banks of the creek, dangled their feet from the train trestle overhead, balanced in tree branches and stood on tip-toe four to five deep along the Stockton Street bridge to get an eyeful of the nautical parade flotilla, part of the annual festival now in its 45th year.

"We had a good turnout," said Capitola Mayor Bob Garcia, who was also one of three contest judges. "It was a good size that a little town like Capitola can handle. It looks like people are having a good time, and that's what we want."

The theme of this year's festival was "The Circus Comes to Capitola."

Contest winners received trophies and entries were awarded points for theme development,

originality of design, floral coverage and effective use of flowers, according to Shelly Paine, nautical parade chairman.

"It is really fun to see what each group comes up with," said Paine. "The Bozo Brigade always puts on a production."

And this year was no exception; their "Here Come the Clowns" creation landed them the grand sweepstakes prize over eight other entries.

"We began working on it about three weeks ago and worked on it four nights a week," said Bozo Brigader Dan Beagle, adding that it took about 7,000 yellow, white, red and pink begonias and seven dedicated volunteers to complete the float, the highlights of which were an overheating jalopy, a rubber chicken, a dog, about 10 mechanically challenged clowns, and some wacky theme music which punctuated their antics.

First Baptist Church took first place in the group division with their "Baptman and Friends Join the Circus" entry, where a wet suit-clad Caped Crusader jumped out of the creek and onto the float of 13,000 maroon, yellow and white begonias. After a short but

action-packed struggle, the pesky villain Poison Ivy was subdued and dumped overboard to much applause from the suspense-riddled crowd.

Plantronics won first place in the commercial division of the nautical parade for its "Pink Elephant on Parade," which took 25 people and 10,000 begonias to create. The petaled pachyderm's pink trunk sprayed a stream of water on the hooting onlookers.

There were two entries in the commercial display contest and H Diggity's unnamed entry won first place. Second place was awarded to "Begonia Mania" submitted by Country Essence Flowers.

The residential display contest, which had five entries, was dominated by winners from Gilroy Street who organized an escaped lion theme. Kathy Pratt and her creation titled "The Great Escape" was the grand sweepstakes winner.

First prize went to Larry and Lola Silvestri and "Circus Calliope," which was made from 2,000 red and yellow begonias, stood about six feet tall and depicted an old-fashioned circus pipe organ.



The Bozo Brigade atop the Grand Sweepstakes winner.

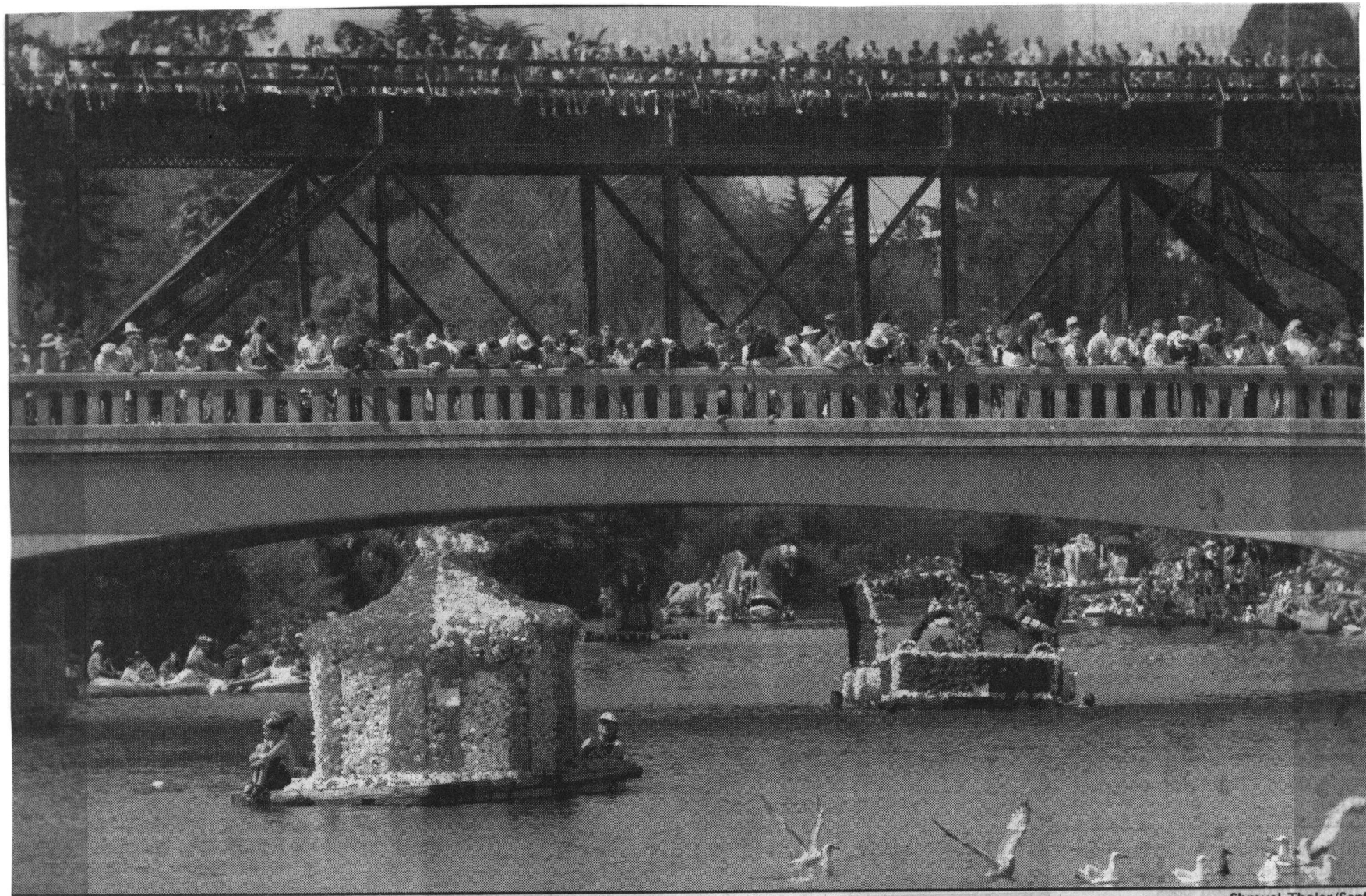
The tale of the lion on the loose began at her house with the musical Calliope playing, said Silvestri, and ended a few doors down with a circus fat lady attempting the capture the fugitive king of beasts with a net.

"We had a lot of people come by," said Lola Silvestri, who has been participating in the Begonia

Festival since 1959 and estimated that she saw between 200 and 500 people pass by her front yard today.

"We had peanuts, Cracker Jacks, balloons and clowns," said Silvestri. "It was like the whole street had gone to the circus."

The begonias were donated by Brown Family Ranch in Marina.



Shmuel Thaler/Senti

Capitola is filled to the rafters as the 45th annual Begonia Festival's nautical parade makes its way down Soquel Creek.