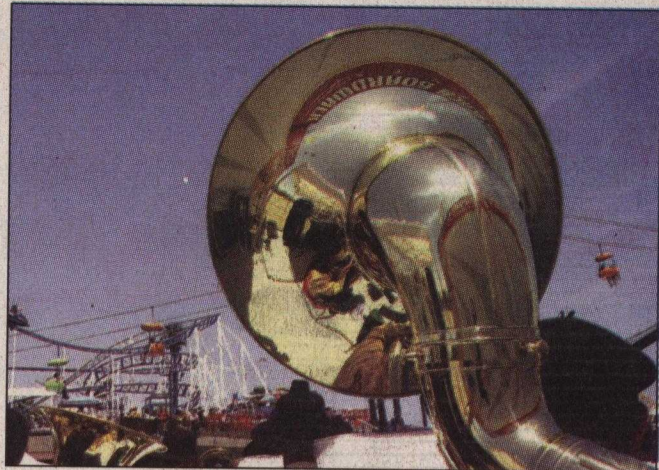


# BOARDWALK DIVES INTO SUMMER



Joel Norton, above, dives from a platform into a temporary pool Saturday at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. The Watsonville Community Band, top, plays Saturday at the Boardwalk.

Kate Falconer/Sentinel photos

Boardwalk

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## Amusement park kicks off events to celebrate centennial

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This story is part of an occasional series about the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, which celebrates its centennial this year.*

By **ROGER SIDEMAN**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Carrol Bates started working in a pizza kitchen at the Beach Boardwalk in the 1950s.

But at 83, Bates on Saturday reclined in a beach chair in the sand, watched the kind of old-fashioned entertainment — high divers plunging from a tower into a pool of water 85 feet below — that she missed over the decades while toiling away at the Santa Cruz amusement park.

“You couldn’t work at a better place,” Bates said. “You never get grouches because everyone’s here to have fun.”

Her attitude apparently runs in the family: Her mother was a cashier and her two children and three grandchildren all held jobs at the Boardwalk.

Saturday’s high dive show was a salute to beach performances of the Boardwalk’s past, a throwback to the early days at the most visited spot in Santa Cruz, which is celebrating its 100th birthday this



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Boardwalk attendees are reflected in a window Saturday.





Kate Falconer/Sentinel

Four of generations of the Olesen family are scattered around the country, but they gather every year in Santa Cruz and make it a point to go to the Beach Boardwalk.

## Boardwalk

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year.

The show, which continues with performances today, culminates with a plunge by a costumed diver who lights herself on fire before plunging into a 10-foot deep pool below. The high dive act requires the diver to avoid hitting the bottom after falling at speeds of up to 55 mph, the emcee said, fishing for gasps from the audience.

"That's like driving down the highway and coming to a halt with fewer than 10 feet to do it," he announced.

Visitors have long flocked to the sunny seaside amusement park created in 1907 by local businessman Fred W. Swanton to dance in the casino, dive in the indoor salt-water pool known as the Plunge and enjoy the beach.

This weekend's "Centennial Celebration," with shows and concerts, marks the beginning of a summer packed with free events, said Kris Reyes, spokesman for the Seaside Co., which owns the Boardwalk.

"This is really the start of our

summer season at the Boardwalk and it's going to be a memorable one because of the anniversary," Reyes said.

Special events will include the city's first summertime fireworks show since the 1970s on June 16, and a screening on the beach of the vampire flick "The Lost Boys," which was filmed at the Boardwalk 20 years ago.

Home to the famed Giant Dipper roller coaster and other iconic rides such as the Cave Train and Looft Carousel, the Boardwalk has evolved through the decades as a destination that draws an estimated 3 million people to Santa Cruz each year. A large number of Boardwalk visitors come from the San Francisco Bay Area, though the variety of foreign languages overheard Saturday included French, Hindi and German.

An annual pilgrimage to the boardwalk is the closest thing to a rite of passage for the 20 or so members of the Olesen family. The family matriarch, who died 35 years ago, vacationed here every year starting in the 1930s, enjoying a cool summertime respite from her raisin farm in Fresno. At three months old, her great-granddaughter was initiated

## Centennial events

- Today: Salute to the Centennial, featuring 'Thrilling Trampoline and High Dive Show.' Shows at noon, 2 and 4 p.m.
- June 16: Fireworks show.
- June 22-Aug. 31: Free Friday night bands on the beach.
- June 25-Aug. 28: 1907 Nights, 75-cent rides after 5 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays.
- July 8-Aug. 16: Moscow Circus, free performances twice a day, Sundays through Thursdays.
- July 25: 'Lost Boys' outdoor screening, details pending.
- Dec. 31: Centennial farewell at Coconut Grove.

Saturday, joining family members who journeyed in from around the country — and the still-operating raisin farm, too.

"This is the only place my mother ever came for vacation, so we come to honor her," said Donald Olesen, 90, of Oakland. "This has been going on for 70 years."

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