

A recollection of parades past

David Ferrari will be the Grand Marshal Saturday in the Santa Cruz Fiesta parade, 11 a.m. up the Pacific Avenue Garden Mall.

Ferrari is a retired businessman (Ferrari The Florist) and a lifetime professional musician (accordion), but more than that, he was one of the movers and shakers of the Fiesta during its infant days, when the community was four-square behind it.



Dave Ferrari and Claudette Colbert in 1936.

He was chairman in 1936. It was called the "Santa Cruz Birthday Party" then, but the theme was the same.

"It was a three-day affair then. I took a month off just to get it together, walking the business districts getting the merchants to wear Spanish outfits.

"We would drive to nearby towns, even over the mountain and I would sit on the hood of the car playing the accordion, attracting attention to the Fiesta signs. We had a grand ball and a beard-growing contest with plenty of celebrities around to judge it.

"There was usually a movie being made here around fiesta time. One time Noah Berry (Wallace Berry's brother), Richard Cromwell and Henry B. Walthal were here making "Tol'able David." Walthal was then a celebrity. He was famous for playing the "Little General" in W.D. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation."

Who would be the celebrities of 1936?

It was Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray.

They were here making "Maid of Salem." Ferrari remembers that the set was up in Bonny Doon and that both stars got poison oak.

"They were wonderful. They helped judge and we got national publicity because of them. I remember they dug up the grass from the old Pogonip Golf Course to use for the Salem town square on the set, then later returned.

"Also we would take some local beauties to San Francisco for photos with Mayor Rossi. That always got us publicity.

"We always had a separate kiddies parade and we'd shut off Cooper Street and set up booths.

"There was always street dancing. But you know, people gradually lost interest. There were just too many other distractions," he said.

"Celebrations are still very big in Europe. I just returned from a trip and attended an annual five year celebration in Baden, Switzerland (yes Switzerland). It ran for 10 days; everybody was in costume; there were 76 different food concessions; I've never seen anything like it."

But Saturday Ferrari will be back at celebrating. Give him a wave.