

Watsonville Band invited to perform at the White House

By LANE WALLACE

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville Band will perform on the White House South Lawn on the Fourth of July.

Band Manager Ed Pio, who began his effort to get the invitation two years ago, received confirmation from the White House this week.

Pio expects a full turnout of 70

to 80 band members for the trip. "Anybody who has the opportunity and doesn't go is a damn fool," Pio said.

The Watsonville Band will be playing with a military band for a

private event for White House staffers and their families. It's the first time a non-military band has been invited, Pio said.

The South Lawn affords one of the best views of the Washington

fireworks show, which draws 1.5 million people to the public areas.

If President Clinton attends, he will be invited to join the band on saxophone, Pio said.

It won't be the first time Clinton

has heard the Watsonville Band. The band played when Clinton spoke at California State University, Monterey Bay on Labor Day.

Clinton heard the band playing

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Pio wrote to Panetta in May 1995, seeking an invitation to this year's event. Pio intended it as a way to start a yearlong celebration of the band's 50th anniversary in 1997.

"Beer Barrel Polka" as he got out of his limousine, Pio said, and asked about the band.

Pio's effort to get the band to the White House began in the spring of 1995 when Clinton's chief of staff, Leon Panetta, appeared at an event in Aptos.

Pio said he was able to talk to Panetta, the former Congressman for this area "for about 20 seconds" and asked about the possibility of the band playing in Washington.

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Besides Panetta, the band's quest got a boost from Col. John Bourgeois, who heads the U.S. Marine Band, who knows Pio.

The band will have to get security clearances, but that shouldn't be difficult, Pio said. "We've already gone that route" when Clinton appeared in Monterey, he said.

The band plans to perform at least two other concerts while in the Washington area, Pio said.