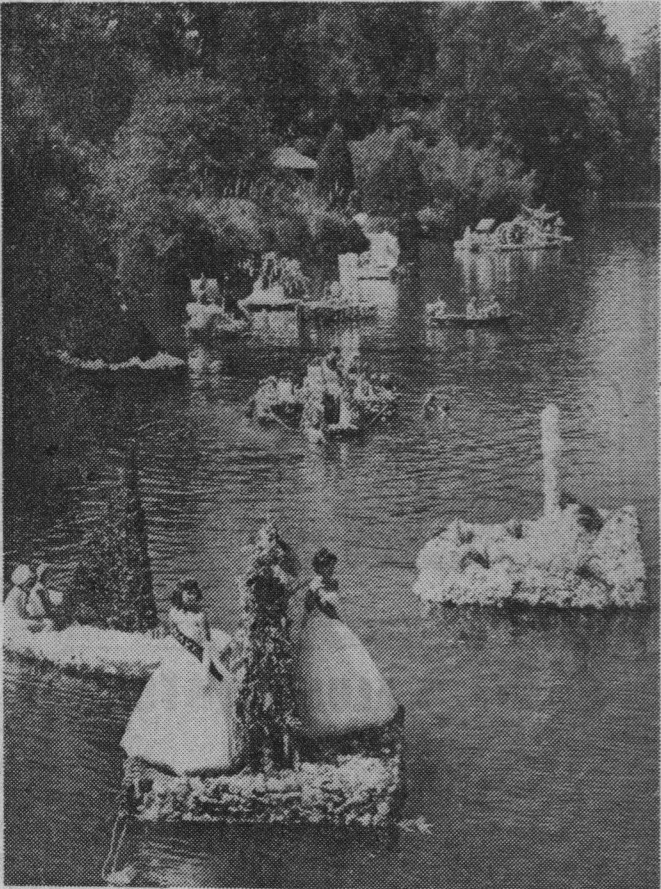# Begonia Festival Has History Behind It

In the 1950's, beauty queens were one of the main attractions in the nautical parade of the Capitola Begonia Festival. Although changing times have brought an end to the queen competition, the nautical parade of begonia-decorated floats lives on, Sunday at 2 p.m., along Soquel Creek.

It has changed with the times, but for the 23rd year in a row the Begonia Festival has come to Capitola.

The festival, which started last weekend and culminates with the traditional nautical parade at 2 p.m. on Sunday down Soquel Creek, began as an idea discussed over coffee by Helen Antonelli and Vivian Renias back in 1954.

The two women pictured the festival becoming as big as Pasadena's Rose Bowl Parade. Looking back over the festival's history, Antonelli said recently that she is disappointed the event is not as reknown as she originally envisioned.

But the event has grown since five begonia bedecked floats drifted down the creek its first year. The aura of the festival may have changed over the years, but in every year but three the creek has been crowded with floats and its banks have been crowded with spectators straining to catch a glimpse of the blossoms.

Even this year, one already hears the warning, "Get there early to get a parking place and a good spot to see the floats."

Many events such as the queen contests, the gala coronation dinners and dances, the water skiing marathons and the street dances have died out with the times, but the water festival lives on. The

woman's liberation movement or just lack of interest was the death toll for the queen contest. No one entered last year, so the contest was scratched.

In the past, however, the contest was the highlight event of the festival and was fashioned after the Miss California contest. In 1956, for instance, the prospective queens sold "popularitiy tickets" to decide who would get the crown.

The growth of the festival was shown in 1957 with 20 floats crowding the creek and the coronation dance and banquet receiving wide publicity.

The street dance was inagurated that year during calmer times. It was canceled in later years when the event became a wild malay in the city's streets.

Sights were set high in 1958 when the name of the Capitola Begonia Festival was changed to the National Begonia Festival by the Capitola Chamber of Commerce. The queen and her court were given gowns by the festival sponsors and entered in parades throughout the county.

With the festival's growth, it became more difficult to handle. In 1960, walkie-talkies were used to better coordinate the activities and light poles were erected on the river so those decorating their floats could work late into the night.

This was the year that auto-

mation came to the parade with the chamber purchasing outboard motors for the floats.

A national publicity advertising campaign was launched on the festival in 1961 to try and draw people from all over the U.S. to view the begonias. Nationally known flower experts acted as judges for that year's parade and decorations.

The parade went on dry land

No Bus Discount Photo Session This Thursday

The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District will not be issuing senior citizen-handicapped transit discount photo identification cards Thursday, because the district office will be closed for Admission Day.

However, the SCMTD camera crew will be at the Harvest Festival at Harvey West Park in Santa Cruz to issue the discount cards Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Persons 62 years or older should bring Medicare cards or other proof of age. (Driver's licenses are not accepted.)

The identification cards, good for a 10-cent fare on all district buses, are issued free of charge.

in 1963 because of problems service clubs and organizations were having in building the floats on the water and launching them without a ramp. It also was rumored that residents along the creek were complaining about the parade.

Part of the festival went to the New York World's Fair in 1964 with a shipment of 48,000 blooms sent to the Mormon Pavillion by Antonelli Brothers Begonia Farm.

Throughout the years, the Antonelli brothers have donated the blooms used in the festival. Helen Antonelli, with of one of the brothers, was an originator of the event.

Poetry Writing Workshop Slated

A poetry writing workshop is scheduled to begin Sept. 28 in the home of Barbara Hull, 112-20th Ave., Apt. 3, from 7 to 10 p.m.

Limited to 12, the 10-week course will center on the work of the participants and experiments with the creative process and imagination exercises. Miss Hull has been teaching poetry at Cabrillo College, San Jose State University and Institute Montesano in Gstaad, Switzerland, as well as UCSC. For details, call 475-2727.

Dissension hit the festival's ranks in 1965 when the chamber quit as the festival's sponsor because the event was becoming too much work. It looked for a while like the festival wouldn't survive, but the Lions Club, the Santa Cruz County Water Ski Club and a Begonia Festival Committee took over sponsorship and the festival returned to the water.

The floats have been on the creek every year since then except for 1969, when pollution problems caused the parade to return to the streets.

To emphasize how the festival branched out, by 1966 the activities included three spaghetti dinners, square dancing, trained dog demonstrations, a pancake breakfast, band concert, steak barbeque, outdoor art show and a pet parade.

Things have calmed down since then, but the streets will still be crowded this Sunday as the floats meander down Soquel Creek. Although it hasn't become another Rose Bowl Parade, the Begonia Festival remains a Capitola tradition.

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