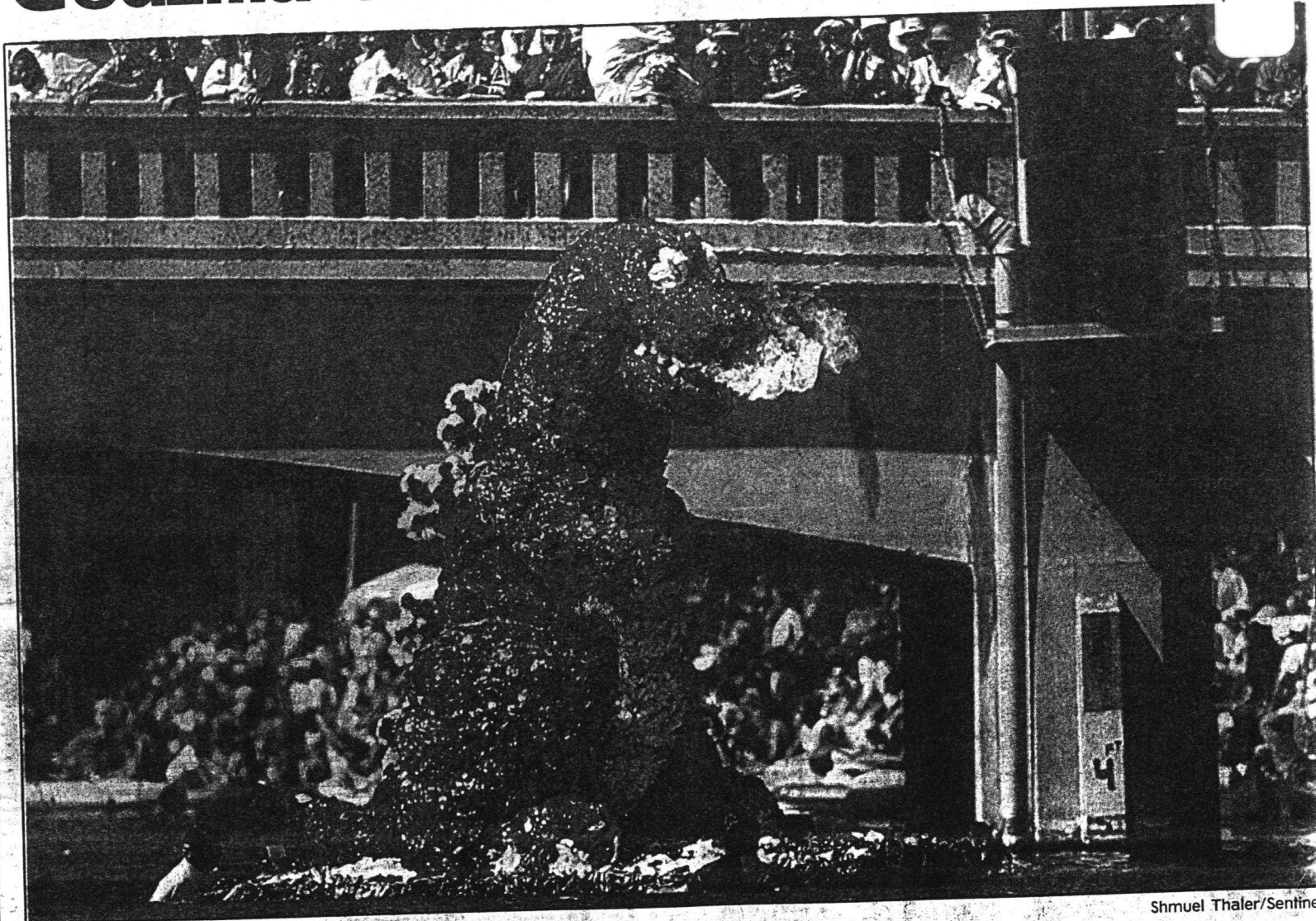


# Godzilla takes a bow



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

**CAPITOLA** — The Bozo Brigade's Godzilla float, breathing fire and bowing to clear the bridge, took the grand sweepstakes prize

in the Begonia Festival's "Calling all Creatures" nautical parade Sunday. For story, see Page A2.

# Godzilla takes a bow in Capitola

## Thousands pack Capitola Village for Begonia Fest's nautical parade

By JOHN BESSA  
Sentinel staff writer

CAPITOLA — Brian Roder had two concerns Sunday as his team's entry in the Begonia Festival — a flower-covered Godzilla — made its way down Soquel Creek in front of a crowd of thousands of onlookers:

"That Dan would drown, or that this would be the first float in 40 years to burn to the water line," Roder said.

Neither happened, and Godzilla, built and towed by Roder, Dan Beagle, and the group known as "the Bozo Brigade," went on to become the grand sweepstakes winner of the festival's nautical parade.

A large crowd — organizers estimate 8,000 to 10,000 people — packed the Capitola Village and lined the banks of the creek for the 41st running of the festival celebrating the flower it's named after.

This year's theme was "Calling All Creatures." A total of eight floats were towed by waders down the creek.

Creatures abounded in the nautical parade and the business/residential displays. Names like "Dog-a-pillar," "the Hobbits of Hobbitola," and "Creature from Soquel Lagoon," were common.

The Creature from Soquel Lagoon, a residential display put on by Candy and Carla Christensen, won first place in their division.

The flowers were arranged in the shapes of ducks, fish, a mermaid and octopus, among other things, with missing faces. The sisters left holes where the creatures' faces belong and allowed people to insert their faces in place.

They charged passers-by for pictures and will donate the proceeds — more than \$60 — to the Friends of the Santa Cruz Libraries.

Building the display took a long time, Carla Christensen said.

Like other entrants, they were up long before 8 a.m. Saturday morning to trek to the Golden State Bulb Growers in Marina to pick flowers.

The rest of the day, and part of the night, was spent mounting the begonias, she said.

"We had to crack the whip when it got around 9:30 (p.m.) to finish," she said.

The Bozo Brigade ("It's not just a name — it's a state of mind," Roder said) is no stranger to the winner's circle. In 1992's event they won first place in the group entry class of the nautical parade with a large, severed head of Bozo the Clown.

Bozo lived on in Godzilla. The brigade cannibalized the clown's wood for this year's entry. Bozo's remains remain behind some of the group member's Riverview Avenue home.

"All we had to do was buy chicken wire," Roder said.

Godzilla, clad in 10,000 very un-terrifying red, orange and yellow flowers, gave several onlookers a scare as it floated toward the bridge over

the Capitola lagoon.

The float was a few feet too tall to pass under the bridge.

The Bozo group put on faces of mock-terror as they approached the bridge.

"They did it perfect because they looked scared — like it wouldn't make it," said Carolyn Swift, one of the judges.

"Then they rotated it forward," she said.

Godzilla took a bow, at the hands of Beagle, who "ran the guts," Roder said. A boat winch righted the flowery reptile after he passed beneath the 8-foot high span.

He also moved his arms, rotated his head and shot fire out of his mouth. When the float was named winner, it danced to the beat of a Blue Oyster Cult song named after him.

Godzilla was not an easy task, said Roder, who built the 12-foot-high creature with Beagle, Kory Webb, Bill Bruce, and 40 close friends.

The group started with a small Godzilla toy. "The first thing they did was rip his legs off to see how the thing was built," Roder said.

As with other floats, passers-by were invited to add flowers Saturday night and early Sunday as last-minute touches were finished.

"I loved the crowd participation," said Janie Estep, a festival volunteer. "They let them come right in and gave them a job," she said.