

# 50 years ago — a glorious Fourth

*Eight hundred muscular, bronzed soldiers and more than 100 lightning-fast, deadly vehicles sped by 5,000 spectators here Saturday morning to typify America's modern army.*

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AS THE UNITED STATES was gearing up to enter World War II and people were humming such songs as "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire" and "Blues in the Night," the people of Watsonville were very busy that July of 1941, making plans for a four-day Independence Day celebration with all the patriotic fervor they could muster.

General chairman of the affair 50 years ago was Ed Slusser of the Register-Pajaronian staff, with Joseph D'Anna, school principal, serving as parade chairman.

The celebration began on Thursday, July 3, with school children presenting the opening exercises in the Plaza, followed by stirring music from the 30-piece Federal Symphony Band.

A street carnival was held on Peck Street and a vaudeville show on Main Street, with 14 acts performing for a large

crowd. An open-air dance held at the corner of East Third (Beach) and Alexander streets featured the music of Slip Bohnett's orchestra.

Friday the Fourth saw the BIG parade down Main Street, starting at 10:30 a.m. from Hyde and Main and ending up at the high school athletic field. The parade featured floats, marching units, bands, horses, army detachments, etc. Thousands of

people watched all along the parade route, including 600 or so who sat in reserved seats in the grandstand. People in a nearby bar were surprised to see two parade participants saunter into the bar on horseback for a couple of short beers.

Following the parade, a barbecue was held at the high school athletic field. Over 300 signed in for the Old Timers' reception and reunion, some having ridden in the parade in

various horse-drawn conveyances or on horseback.

At 1 p.m. there was a national salute to the flag via radio with President Roosevelt leading the salute. People then scattered to participate in various events, including horseshoes, or to watch boxing, wrestling and/or baseball contests. During the afternoon there was also something called "Silver Quiz" at the Main Street grandstand, in which buckets of silver half-dollars were given away by radio's Professor Puzzlewit, and Jo-Jo the Clown gave away 1,000 balloons.

In the evening, a fireworks display, during which \$1,000 worth of fireworks were detonated, was staged.

The next day, Saturday, there was another parade down Main Street, this one called the "National Defense Parade," featuring 800 men and their equipment from Camp McQuaide and Fort Ord. On Sunday came the air show at Watsonville airport, which opened with a parachute jump by Whitey Homas; then Squire Hawkins and Bill Rid-enour gave an exhibiton of acrobatic precision formation flying.

Watsonville was at its best and people came from all around to join in the festivities, meet old friends and celebrate the nation's independence with four days of celebration.



Float of the Filipino Community of Watsonville in the 1941 parade.