

Saving parade becomes part of his day

By Robert Downes
staff writer

When Thomas B. Adams was still in high school, he remembers being paid \$3 to put on a costume and march in the J.L. Hudson's Thanksgiving Day parade in Detroit. He was part of a Buck Rogers float one year and was enlisted on another occasion to help tow a Dutch float complete with windmill ovens Woodward Avenue.

Today Adams, chairman and chief executive officer of the Campbell-Ewald advertising firm, is still helping to bring the parade downtown. He recently accepted the chairmanship of the Thanksgiving Parade Foundation board and will help drum up support for the event which has entertained children and adults for the past 65 years.

A Bloomfield Hills resident for 25 years, Adams spent his childhood in Detroit. He remembers his parents taking him to the parade from the age of five.

"We took our own children for 12 years after the war and we used to get up rain, shine or snow," he said. "The children looked forward to it like they would Christmas morning. The parade has the same kind of emotional draw and we can't let it disappear from the community."

HIS CHAIRMANSHIP of the parade's foundation board was announced by Michigan's first lady Paula Blanchard, who has made saving the beleaguered parade a personal project.

1981 was the last hurrah for J.L. Hudson's sponsorship of the parade and in 1982 Detroit Renaissance carried the

ball. But the Detroit civic organization said earlier this year that the Detroit institution might become a thing of the past because of financial problems. Blanchard vowed to lead her efforts to saving the annual event.

"I am delighted that Tom Adams would accept this challenge," Blanchard said. "He loves this parade as I do and brings great strength and leadership to the important role of chairman. Tom Adams was the unanimous choice of all the community leaders with whom I have been working to save the parade, and his acceptance of the chairmanship guarantees our success."

For his part, Adams quipped that "maybe condolences are in order" for his acceptance of the task. As chairman of one of the world's biggest advertising firms, he has his hands full already and the fund-raising effort be

has undertaken could be considered a full-time job in itself.

HE SAID THAT he decided to lend support after Blanchard came to a Renaissance Board of Directors meeting and made a plea for assistance.

"I was disappointed with the reaction of my colleagues on the board who were finding reasons to turn their backs on the parade," he said. "I made a lot of noise about it because I fervently believe that there's no way southeast Michigan could turn away on an event that's entertained so many kids."

Adams intends to seek financial support from businesses throughout the state, from community service clubs and from "even the school children of southeast Michigan who want to contribute pennies, nickels and dimes."

He noted that he'll have plenty of assistance from fellow board members who have been drawn from all walks of life, including J.L. Hudson's employees who have worked on the parade in the past.

HE'S CONFIDENT that this year's parade and many to follow will go on as scheduled.

"It's highly improbable that anything will stand in the way of the parade continuing," he said. "Unless there's an act of God that we can't prevent, the parade will go on and we'll expect to see hundreds of thousands of kids from ages 2 to 94 sitting along the route like they always have."

To paraphrase an old saying about Christmas, "Yes, Virginia, there will be a Thanksgiving Day parade this year."



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saving the parade

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