



Hi there, vets: Megan Schwartz, 3, waves her flag at the passing veterans during the parade.



Parade salute: Walter Christensen, parade chairman, has salutes for the on-lookers as he rides along the parade route.

STAFF PHOTO BY ANN HEALEY



Tank in the street: Some lucky parade-goers get to ride on a U.S. Army tank as it rumbles along Grand River.



Nap time: Sandy Siporin of Farmington Hills catches a quick nap while his wife Susan watches for the start of the Memorial Day Parade.

Crowd troops out for holiday parade

By TOM BAER
STAFF WRITER

Mary Barnes and Kathy Dawson had excellent reasons for attending the Memorial Day Parade in downtown Farmington Monday morning.

"Our daughters are in the band," said Mary Barnes from her spot on a bench that looked out on Grand River Avenue, the parade route. "What a great reason, hey?"

Heather Barnes is a majorette in the North Farmington High School band, and Shannon Dawson plays the piccolo. Bands from the three Farmington public high schools marched and played Monday.

Estimates vary, but the crowd that lined both sides of Grand River from the Uptown Center to the War Memorials northwest of the Masonic Temple was seen as high as 10,000 people — and quite a few dogs.

Veteran parade watchers said this year's crowd was up from the past several Memorial Day parades. Moderate temperatures and a pleasant breeze may have brought a few more out.

They watched clowns, politicians, high school bands, Scout troops, military people (current

and former), tanks, classic cars and all the other trappings of a parade.

Some mixed business with pleasure. Vicki Barnett, a Farmington Hills resident who's running for the State Senate in the new 15th District, was seen passing out her fliers.

"We have a son, Jordan, who's marching with the Cub Scouts," Barnett said.

Michele Saxton of Farmington attended "just to get involved in the community and to bring my grandpa out. I thought she might enjoy it."

Walking the parade route was a pleasant experience for Celeste Roe and her year-old son, Justin. "We live just five minutes away, so we can walk," Roe said.

"That's what makes Farmington so nice — it's a walking town." As in all parades, politicians rode or walked the route. Two who did it on foot were Aldo Vagnoli and Cheryl Oliverio of the Farmington Hills City Council.

"Hey, I walked the whole (city council) campaign last year," said Oliverio. "This is a piece of cake."

Navy Commander Catherine Bradley, a Farmington Hills resident and Desert Storm veteran, was the parade marshal and main

speaker. She reminded a much smaller crowd at the war memorials that Memorial Day was for remembering the country's military personnel who died in battle.

"Let us remember them and remember what they gave us . . . a world where war is a chaotic and unnecessary," said Bradley, a registered nurse and associate professor of nursing at the University of Detroit Mercy.

The best adult float in the parade was judged to be Carousel Acres Petting Farm. The best youth float was made by Cub Scout Pack 162. Some other parade winners:

Best Unit — YMCA, all units.

Best Mounted Group — Golden Wings Motorcycle Club.

Best Youth Group, Boys — Cub Scout Pack 231.

Best Youth Group, Girls — Girl Scout Troop 70.

Best Marching Unit — Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 2269.

Most Outstanding Vehicle — M-1A1 tank.

Best Marching Group, Youth — Redford High School ROTC.

Lead Band — Harrison High School Marching Band.

Most Outstanding Military Unit — Redford ROTC, Legion Posts 346 and 190.

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Parade people: Downtown Farmington is full of people Monday. They await the passing of the annual Memorial Day Parade.