

# Hills parade chairman tells of festival job

By SUSAN AVERILL

"The mark of a good parade chairman," says Betty Huff, "is to create a post that others can just step into."

The Farmington Hills woman didn't quite finish molding the post as last year's Farmington Founder's Festival parade chairman, so she undertook the job again this year. The success of this year's parade was good indication that she had accomplished her goal.

Hunting a parade is hard and never-ending work which calls for meticulous attention to detail, split-second decision making and above all, a cool head.

One of the most difficult things about getting a parade underway is finding enough people to help.

"BREDGING UP BODIES is one of the hardest things. For example, on the day of the parade, you need about 30 more people to help out, but who don't have to go to any of the meetings," she says.

It might come as no surprise then, that an estimated 20 per cent of the top people involved with the parade are not Farmington area residents. Often, she says, they are people who have work connections in the area.

In one area, the parade judging, an effort is made to recruit out-of-town residents because of their relative impartiality.

"We prefer judges from other areas—it makes it a lot more fair," Mrs. Huff says. This year, four of the seven judges were from out-of-town.

A nine-year Farmington Hills resident, Mrs. Huff has been working with the Founder's Day Festival parade for five years. A Latin twirling teacher for 20 years, she started in the most natural position—as band and drill coordinator.

Three years later, in 1973, she was asked to be chairman of the following year's parade, and continued in that position this year.

Hard work and dedication have made the Farmington parade one of the best in the state, she says.

"We have worked up quite a reputation. But would be pretty hard to top Hudson's with the budget they have."

However, from the number of entries and requests for advice from other parade chairmen, Mrs. Huff says Farmington must have one of the best smaller parades in the state.

HER TWO-YEAR stint as parade chairman has earned her something of a reputation for efficiency, and many calls, seeking her advice.

"I get calls from people who say, 'I've just been elected parade chairman and I don't know how to run one. How do you do it?'" she says.

Mrs. Huff starts out by explaining to the panicky new chairman that the most important thing is a resource file. In the file are the names of all workers, staff members, clubs and contacts that have ever previously worked in and on the parade.

Applications and other forms have to be printed, after musical units have been culled from the resource file. Musical units—singers and bands—will be at a premium next year because of the bi-centennial celebration.

Farmington recently hasn't had a problem finding musical units for the Founder's Day parade, and instead has difficulty finding enough non-musical units to serve as buffers. It's a problem most other parade chairmen would give their eye teeth to have, she says.

After mailing application forms to every unit you can possibly get your hands on, then strictly by for all the flak, because the phone is going to be ringing off the hook," she said. It will continue ringing up to the night before the parade.

"NOBODY PAYS ANY attention to the deadline. I tell them they're welcome to join the parade, but the line-up is set so they'll have to be at the end of it."

Even so, she's constantly deluged with requests for a spot at the front of the parade. She has one stock answer for that.

"I tell them, 'Due to popular request, our parade has no end or middle, only a beginning.'"

A new parade chairman will have to check the layout of the town to determine the best parade route. This should be done by checking with the town police who will have to provide



Betty Huff

for detour and emergency routes from the area.

Lineup areas for parade participants should also be determined in Farmington. For example, antique cars would overheat and block the driveway of one of the lineup points. This year, Mrs. Huff eliminated the problem by having the antique cars line up at a separate point.

A chairman must also make a point of delegating jobs. Otherwise, Mrs. Huff says, he or she will end up doing it all.

"I didn't delegate a thing last year. My job this year is to try and delegate to other people. Try not to give a really new person a job they might fall through on."

The best-working parade committee should have no more than a dozen people. "You can get bogged down in meetings otherwise."

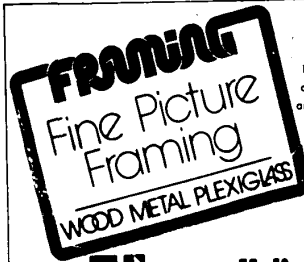
There will always be eleven-hour problems, but if properly organized the parade should run smoothly.

"If I've done my job right, that parade moves. There will be some problems. For that, the best thing you can do is make sure you have people around you who are cool under pressure, with some experience."

"Their biggest asset then is to be able to make last minute decisions very fast."

Mrs. Huff expects to work on the Founder's Day Festival parade next year, but she probably won't be chairman. It's time her family deserved a rest.

"My whole family has worked on the parade. I have three children and the youngest was at camp and came home the night before the parade, just in time to work. I have three very efficient, capable children and I'm very proud of them."



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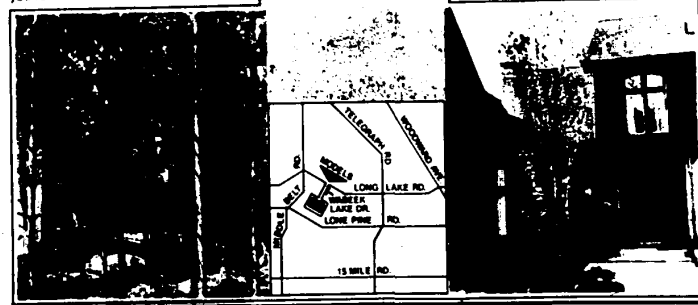
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