

Memorial Memories

by Gerry Kulick

I love a parade, especially Ferndale's Memorial Day Parade. For 12 years we have stood at our favorite spot -- Livernois and Maplehurst -- to watch assembled units fall in line and become a part of the marching whole.

Then we run down Livernois to catch the final division before it reaches Memorial Park.

A great deal of personal history is encompassed in this one decade. Our children, babes in arms, some yet unborn, have been carried, held and pushed in strollers. They have ridden in the bicycle brigade, participated in Brownie or Cub Scout contingents, marched in the band, and now watch from the sidelines.

Who can describe the thrill of watching the marching bands? Is there a finer high school unit anywhere?

One little girl in front of us turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, it makes my tummy go up and down."

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NOR was she alone -- grown men stood with tears in their eyes brusquely brushed off without comments.

For weeks preceding Memorial Day, they practice marching and neighbors await them. Surely, spring is here when bands come out to practice.

Before the high school was built, a part of every spring and fall was devoted to watching the high school band march down Withington while motorists waited or slowly drove behind. This was not the smartly attired band, but members in regular school clothes. Suddenly, from every yard, preschoolers would appear and accompany the band.

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MORE than once in previous years, we have jumped in a car to rush over and catch a rehearsal, slowly driving behind the grade school bandmen.

"Mother, you embarrass me," cries a son, still aglow

from the applause of the kindergartners following behind and the neighbors' friendly smiles and offers of treats.

All these memories are a part of the Memorial Day parade.

Lest we forget the significance of the parade, there are reminders. The veterans number grows smaller each year. Gone are some we knew only through saluting them each year... only a few remain.

A new note was added this year in the Elk's float with drawings of members' sons now in service.

The floats are solemn in nature; dignified. Mechanized units remind of a nation's might.

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BUT this parade is not a display of military strength; rather it is a community's way of saying, "We remember, but life goes on and through our youth and service organizations, we strive toward a better world."

Because of our newspaper and community contacts, we know many parade participants -- three city officials, Commissioners Henry Schiffer, William O'Donnell and "Hank" Eldridge -- a proud father driving a truckload of Brownies -- marching youth leaders -- Camp Fire girls -- fathers leading grade school bands because the regular conductor is ill -- the sister with flying habit observing her unit as she rushes down the street amid the crowds -- a young man whose date rides in a float -- the lovely queen with a personal greeting -- serious club members -- this is our community.

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NOR is all the pride felt only on the parade route. All streets leading to it are lined with cars and with people. Former residents come back, neighbors have backyard picnics. Acquaintances meet and compare family notes. Students home from college greet former teachers. This is our community.