

A SUNSHINY 4th

by Marilyn Litvak

High on a cliff above the thundering ocean, live strains of a well-known Sousa march summon residents to the annual Palos Verdes Estates 4th of July celebration at the Malaga Cove School's cliff-side park.

Not to be missed in the throng of young and old heading to the park, are youngsters decked out in red-white and blue outfits pedaling like-decorated bikes or being pulled in equally festive carts by a parent. They'll be participating in the morning's first event—the Children's Patriotic Bicycle Parade.

Also, to be glimpsed are people gingerly carrying home-baked apple pies—some not long out of the oven—for entry into the Best Apple Pie Contest.

Multiple picnic tables with lovely views of Santa Monica Bay and the distant mountains have been set up in the shade. Young and old are staking out claims in anticipation of lunch and family games which will follow the morning's special festivities. The numerous white folding chairs, facing the raised stage and the SousaPalooza Band, are all filled.

As the city of Palos Verdes Estates is this year celebrating its 75th anniversary, the day's events have that much more importance for its citizens.

Promptly at 10:15, the Children's Bike Parade begins with some 50 or more entries streaming by the front of the stage in time to the band's music and appreciative applause and cheering from the audience. Everyone is a winner. For the parade route will take them to the nearby school courtyard for a Magic Show by Kendrake the Magician.

Meanwhile, all seated guests in the park rise for the Presentation of Colors by 3 young members of the Redondo Union High School Marine Corps ROTC Unit marching in step to the Palooza Band's music. The audience is then asked to sit down again for this is the moment that all former and present members of our armed services are to stand and be recognized as the musical theme for their specific branch plays in the background.

This stirring moment is followed by a shared Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of our National Anthem by two amazing young women who manage to hit all the right notes.

This surely is an Old-Fashioned 4th of July.

Next up for all to recognize are various winners of annual scholastic contests and other important civic-oriented endeavors. But the most important award of the morning is the Kenneth T. Norris Heritage of Freedom Award,

And this year it's going to G.W. Bailey, aka, Lt. Provenza of the hit TV show, Major Crimes. For in addition to his acting appearances, he is Executive Director of SUNSHINE KIDS FOUNDATION, a non-profit which organizes and offers leisure activity opportunities and support to children who've been afflicted by cancer.

The organization has three offices: one here in LA; another in Houston, TX, where it all began; and a third on the East Coast in Connecticut. The organization's goal is to alleviate some of the pain and suffering of these young people—to help them experience a joyful, sunshiny part of life—if only for a day.

Service of this sort is also an important part of the American way of like. And many of us present felt very fortunate to learn about this effort.

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