

February 2010

# La Cañada Flintridge Tournament of Roses Association NEWSLETTER

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## President's Corner

As I embark on my second year as president of LCFTRA, I find that I have been reviewing drawings of dinosaurs pursuing their family history, giant construction machines dancing above a deserted construction site, beavers busily building a float, and a family of aliens vacationing in rural America. These flights of fantasy delight the "float junkie" in me.

Mulling over the possibilities for the 2011 float reminded me of the very first art project that I can remember. Our 1930s white frame house did not have a fireplace, or consequently, a Santa-friendly chimney. As an inquiring and astute 4-year old, I asked my parents how Santa would ever make his deliveries given such a glaring omission. The only chimney in the house led directly to the furnace.

Dad solved the problem by building a fireplace out of plywood. Our three-sided fireplace was painted with bright red brickwork. The fireplace was topped with white Masonite which was a convenient place for Santa's milk and cookies, as well as providing a place for the stockings to be hung with care.

One year Dad decided that the fireplace needed a paint job. Red brick would be replaced by colorful stones. Unfortunately for my artist father, he had two young daughters who wanted to help

with the renovation and paint the stones. Dad had a unique solution. We were responsible for painting the back sides of the stones which were on the inside of the wooden fireplace. The work proceeded on the changes while my sister and I remained oblivious to the fact that no one would ever see our superbly painted stones.

As we embark on our next adventure, I want to ensure you that all the work that you do "painting our stones", inside and out, is valued and appreciated

I look forward to your help and support during 2010. If you have any ideas, please feel free to send me an e-mail at [wiedy@pacbell.net](mailto:wiedy@pacbell.net).

*Pam Wiedenbeck*  
**President**  
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## President's Corner

As we move toward a final rendering of the 2011 float, I began to muse over the source of our fascination and obsession with floats. A float as defined in *The New Oxford American Dictionary* is "a platform mounted on a truck and carrying a display in a parade".

However, before there were trucks on which to mount platforms, there were parades with displays. The Romans had parades when the conquerors returned home, as well as processions for religious festivals. This pushes the concept of parades back more than two thousand years. In ancient Egypt, more than five thousand years ago, there were processions in which the statue of the god, Amon-Re, was carried in procession through the streets of Luxor. This was definitely a display on a platform in a parade, but nary a truck was in sight.

There is ample proof of religious processions more like those of ancient Egypt throughout medieval and renaissance Europe. Indeed, some of those statues and platforms are still carried in procession today during local religious festivals.

In Japan, the Buddhist floats of Takayama are more than three hundred years old. They are lovingly preserved and carried in procession today. In fact the Ryujin Tai has a dragon mari-

onette animated by seven puppeteers manipulating 32 strings.



If you have become a connoisseur of parade floats over the years, you will recognize that the engineers have adapted each chassis to present an exceptional experience for every viewer.

As we adapt our chassis this year for the unique engineering challenges presented by our chosen concept, I challenge each of you to look deeply and see the continuity of the underlying structure both physical and emotional. For it is in preserving what works and changing what can make us better that we create lasting experiences for all of us each and every year.

*Pam Wiedenbeck*

**President**

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April 2010

## President's Corner

The first float that I ever worked on was back in the fall of 1965. As I remembered that float from Junior Year Homecoming, I was struck by how similar the process of getting a float on the street is whether it is a decorated for a 100 yard homecoming parade or is a complex piece of engineering and art for the Tournament of Roses parade.

First, we had to decide what to build - after much agony we decide on a windmill and a Dutch setting. My dad and I scrounged an old, beat-up prop windmill that had definitely seen better days, borrowed a 1949 Ford pickup truck, dug through a dusty old barn and carted the dilapidated item home where my dad spent the better part of a weekend cleaning and reinforcing the rickety structure. Then we delivered it to the "float site", the driveway of a class member.



Others were responsible for procuring a boat-sized convertible and mounting the windmill securely without damaging the car. The entire class was responsible for contributing "deco" materials. I am sure that there was not a box of pink Kleenex to be found anywhere in Roseville, Michigan. For a couple of weeks, we folded and fluffed several thousand "carnations" which were taped to the car the Thursday evening before the Homecoming Football game. As I looked at the

pictures, I realized that deco sites look remarkably the same regardless of the float being built.

I had so much fun that year that I volunteered for the job in my senior year. By now, we had decided that we were seasoned float builders and were looking for a challenge. After much discussion, we decided on a yellow submarine which was quite in vogue on the fall of 1966. Several boys whose fathers worked construction commandeered a load of corrugated cardboard which was cut and fit around



a light-weight frame secured to the target vehicle. This year the deco squads bought out the entire inventory of yellow Kleenex and the carnation factories got into full swing creating about ten thousand yellow paper flowers. Since no materials

would actually be attached to the car, we actually used quite a bit of white glue to secure the flowers to the cardboard shape.



It would be 30 years before I worked on another float down at Rosemont. For those of you with fond memories of "floating"

over the years, consider volunteering for the Association. Every hour and every dollar contributes to another success.

*Pam Wiedenbeck*  
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## President's Corner

In the fall of 1985, as Claire Slaughter was working on her third float as President and the Association was working on its 8th float, High Hopes, which would win La Cañada's first of five Animation Trophies for the 1986 parade, an interesting TV series debuted on ABC.

At first glance, MacGyver, was just another in a long series of spy dramas premiering in prime time. However, the series soon developed a cult following as its hero, Angus MacGyver, fought the forces of evil with little more than his wits and bits and pieces of apparent junk instead of a dizzying array of guns and other noisy weapons. By the time that the series ended seven years later, an entire new language had developed.

"To MacGyver" was to fix something in a resourceful and improvisational manner. A "MacGyverism" became a makeshift invention created in the heat of the moment to solve a particularly vexing problem. Workers in all walks of life were heard to murmur "What would MacGyver do?" when dealing with a situation and a problematical shortage of resources.

The business of building floats brings the world of Angus MacGyver into sharp focus. During the year, the Association struggles to raise the funds in creative ways using only the sharp wits and contacts of its members. The construction crew scratches its collective heads as they try to bring together the creative vision of the artist and designer with the hard reality of engineering. At

the float site, the shapers can be seen prowling the site sifting through odd bits of metal from years past looking for that perfect piece to fill a vexing need in a character or the pod.

During Deco Week, many heads try to figure out what to do when not enough flowers exist to fill the need or when five tiers of willing workers are required to get over 100,000 leaves on a silly paper dragon with only hours left until final judging. Often construction and deco combine in a MacGyveresque dance when not enough of the right color carnations remain to cover a xylophone key at 10 a.m. on December 31.

The crew holds its breath on the drive down Colorado hoping that all those changes to the chassis to enhance reliability hold together - at least for the duration of the parade. Having safely negotiated the parade route, the crews then have to make sure that the float performs at Post Parade - and is safely ready to negotiate the trip home with all lug nuts tightened and securely in place. Often the morning of the second day of Post Parade finds our own MacGyvers deep in the guts of the animation computer or hydraulics tuning this or fixing that with only their imaginations and the tools on hand.

So - "What would MacGyver do?" Of course he would be a volunteer on a self-built float and would be sure that he had his paper clip and duct tape in hand.

*Pam Wiedenbeck*  
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