

## St. Paul neighbors turn back the clock



M.k. Smith, Star Tribune

Members of the Macalester College Pipe Band marched as the grand finale in St. Anthony Park's 4th of July parade. Members left to right are Mike Breidenbach, who is the director of the Pipe band, Adi King, Partrick McCormick and Ben Peterson.

**You didn't need a fancy float or big marching band to get into the St. Anthony Park July 4 parade.**

**By JEFF STRICKLER, Star Tribune**

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Norman Rockwell would have felt right at home Friday at the Fourth of July parade and celebration in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul.

Billed as "an old-fashioned 4th," it looked almost exactly the same as it did for the first such event 61 years ago -- right down to the horseshoe tournament that followed the reading of the winning entries in the sixth-graders' patriotic essay contest.

"If Rockwell had wanted to make a picture of what the Fourth of July means, he could have come here," Mayor Chris Coleman said. "This is the best of what community is all about."

The day had an intense focus on the local neighborhood. You didn't need a fancy float or big marching band to get into the parade -- in fact, that would have made you stand out - - but you did need to be part of the neighborhood.

"The thing that makes this special is the tradition of bringing the people together as a community," said Cindy Vik Trasher, one of the co-organizers. "To get into the parade, you need some connection to the community, but that's all you need. That's why you see all the different groups. Sometimes it's just a block of neighbors who get together. That's OK; everyone is welcome."

This year's parade included everything from a bagpipe band to a group of youngsters who Hula-Hooped the entire course. There were Girl, Boy and Cub Scout troops, members of the food co-op and a flotilla of wheelchairs carrying residents of the retirement home.

There were also a seemingly endless number of bicycles, tricycles and even the occasional unicycle, another tradition. Known as the Bicycle Contingent, neighborhood kids had spent hours decorating their bikes with ribbons of red, white and blue crepe paper laced through the spokes and wrapped around the frames.

"We intentionally keep this simple," said Trasher, who along with co-organizer Julie Glowka, grew up in the neighborhood. "It's a very traditional event. What you see today is almost exactly what Julie and I saw as kids."

Glowka said that the consistency helps cement ties to the neighborhood, which runs along Como Avenue between Hwy. 280 and the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota and calls itself "St. Paul's neighborly neighborhood."

"Both Cindy and I moved away when we got married, and we both ended up moving back here because this is where we wanted to be," she said.

One of the people who was back even though she had moved away was Gloria Sweet, who was attending her 20th parade and had volunteered to walk the street handing out free flags.

"I grew up in a small town, and this is just like the Fourth of Julys we used to have there," she said. "It's all about community. It's all about patriotism. And it's all about family."

David Krall has attended every year "since forever -- at least 20 years," he said.

His son, Sam, 18, used to be part of the Bicycle Contingent, "starting when he was about 5 and doing it every year until he reached the age that it wasn't considered cool anymore." But Sam still comes every year because, with so many people coming back, "it's a chance to meet up with friends he only gets to see once a year. In a way, this is like a giant reunion."

Events lasted all day, starting with 2- and 4-mile runs at 9 a.m. and ending with dancing on the basketball courts at Langford Park from 7 to 10 p.m.

Anne McKenna, a neighborhood resident, is so keen on the event that she invited 100 people and set up a series of food tables, covered them with a canopy and then covered that with mosquito netting.

"People keep coming up and asking if they can buy food," she said, admitting that the casual observer could mistake her setup for a concession stand.

She discovered the event when her husband, Pete, was in grad school.

"I had a lot of foreign friends, and I wanted to give them a taste of Americana," he said. "So I brought them here. You can't get any more Americana than this."

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