

# Sierra Madre City College Float Always a Highlight of Sierra Madre 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade

By Bill Coburn

People first started asking me about June 20th, "Do you know what the City College float is going to be this year?" The highly anticipated float entered in the parade by the mythical Sierra Madre City College is always the topic of conversation leading up to the parade, and for several days after, as a general rule. And inevitably, pre-parade talk turns to the subject of what each person's favorite float was. The float I heard brought up several times this year was the 1999 Float, themed "A Year in Review" in which the float lampooned several incidents that appeared in that year's headlines, from deer impaled on spiked fences, which called for a review of building regulations, to the proposed skateboard park, to citations over failure to clean up after pets at the City's dog park. Each year, the crew that builds the float puts together a float that has people talking, usually pokes fun at someone or something, and is also timely. Case in point, this year's float, dubbed All-America City College. The City of Sierra Madre was named an All-America City on June 8<sup>th</sup>, yet less than one month later, SMCC had a float that not only played off that award (a huge pedestal atop which sits a tiny trophy), but also took a shot at the recent national headlines regarding immigration policy, as City College "alumni" handed out pseudo-green cards that promised the bearer everything, while noting that it was not valid if you are a U.S. citizen.

Sierra Madre City College was founded by 10 zany madcaps from Sierra Madre. The late Hugh Warden, a local businessman and sometime character actor was president for several years, but these days leadership is as enigmatic as the college itself. According to one spokesperson "Nobody knows who's running the joint." But the joint is most definitely being run. Where is the college located? About a half block up, according to some, to others "It's upstairs over there at the vacant lot." While the college has no students, it still hands out degrees. Though the handsome, official looking degrees themselves cost nothing (SMCC is tuition-free), the frame is \$20, and you can't get the one without the other. The familiar (to parade goers) bright yellow Sierra Madre City College t-shirts are on sale at the Bottle Shop, where you can also pick up SMCC license plate frames, \$5.99 for one, or \$9.99 per pair. There's also a golf tournament to raise funds annually. Does all the money raised help pay the teacher's salaries? Not one penny. It's all donated back to the community. Over the years, the City College has donated to the City's ambulance fund, and to Sierra Madre Search and Rescue. They donated a flagpole to St. Rita's School, and installed a concrete art patio for the Kindergarten students at Sierra Madre School. They've installed lighting at Sierra Vista and Mountain Trail parks, funded a patio on the east side of City Hall and the south side of the Senior Center. With Kiwanis, they helped fund the pergola area in Memorial Park, and they are also responsible for the covered barbecue area in Sierra Vista Park (a revenue generator for the City). They've also installed barbecue sets in Memorial and Sierra Vista Parks.

And while many people are aware of the contributions made by the College to the City, SMCC is probably best known for its Marching Band and float in each year's Fourth of July parade. The band is, of course, not actually a part of the music department, as there is no music department. But each year by arrangement, SMCC is represented in the parade by a marching band, playing such fun tunes as the Mickey Mouse song, and The Yellow Rose of Texas. The floats over the years have included a parody of Seabiscuit, the movie (with Gary Stevens, the Kentucky Derby winning jockey and one of the stars of the movie, marching alongside), satirical looks at the Michael Jackson trial and a former Sierra Madre police chief, a football vs futbol float during the World Cup year of 1994, and many more. When the City celebrated the Centennial of its founding in 1981, the College's Board decided that the City College would have a float that said that it was older than the City by one year. The school's actual founding has been reported variously in local papers (including the L.A. Times) as 1979 or 1980. As you can see in the accompanying float photo retrospective, the City College float was apparently enjoying "pre-school" years as far back as 1973.



1994 - World Cup (Futbol vs. Football)



1993 - SMCC Fire Academy



1992 - Budget Cuts



1991 - ROTC at SMCC



1990 - School of Ecology



1989 - School of Fish and Games



1988 - School of Medicine



1987 - School of Law



1986 - Back to School



1982 - School of Engineering



1981 - SMCC Centennial Celebration



1980 - Oceanography Department



