



Perris News

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20th Annual Perris Christmas Parade

The 20th Annual Perris Christmas Parade was nothing short of gargantuan.

Dixie, a 40-year-old, 8,000-pound Asian elephant led the yearly celebration, which drew at least 3,000 people and featured more than 70 floats, marching bands, classic cars, equestrian performers and of course, Santa Claus. She made her appearance courtesy of the elephant preserve Have Trunk Will Travel located in Perris.

She made quite an entry as she ambled out of her trailer prior to the parade, drawing oohs and aahs from the kids who gathered around her. Cameras went off around her as many residents and visitors snapped Daisy's picture on the cloudy, cool morning.

Perris woman Harolyn Jones and her four nieces watched from the side of Perris Boulevard.

"I came to support Perris," she said. "This is a wonderful time of the year and we're ready for it. This parade keeps getting better and better. Perris is making a name for itself."

Jones said she has lived in Perris since 1962. The annual holiday parade is a great way to bring City residents together.

"I like the spirit of the whole thing," she said. "I like how people are working together."

City staff and volunteers worked for weeks prior to Saturday's parade to bring the event together. They coordinated the entries, arranged the judging, set up barricades along the parade route and kept things moving smoothly. Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers once again served as master of ceremonies. City Councilman Mark Yarbrough rode in the back of his race car. Mayor Daryl Busch, Councilwoman Rita Rogers and Councilwoman Joanne Evans waved to the audience while riding in classic antique cars.

Mayor Busch said the parade has evolved into more than Christmas celebration. Saturday's event included martial arts performances and precision drill teams, high-stepping horses and beauty queens. Not to mention Daisy.

"The community gives us great support and we appreciate that," Busch said. "It's a thrill to participate in this parade."

Busch rode in the parade in a 1931 Cadillac.

That wasn't the oldest vehicle rolling along.

A 1918 Ford Model-T fire truck took that distinction. Restored after sitting idle for years, the vehicle served as the hose truck for the Perris fire chief in the 1920s, said Bob Simpson, who helped restore the 90-year-old Ford. He carried the hose to fires, often meeting volunteers who arrived on horseback. The vehicle cruised on thin wheels powered by a four-cylinder, 24-horsepower engine capable of speeds of 35 to 40 mph.

"That depended if you were going up or down hill," Simpson said. "It's a part of the City's history and it's nice to be able to restore it."

About 150 students from Rob Reiner pre-school rode the parade on a float. Their theme: A Star is Born. Teacher Delia Garcia said the 3 to 5-year-olds learn that the road to success starts early and that attending classes makes them "stars" in the academic world.

"In order to graduate and gain a career, first they have to complete school," Garcia said.

She said the kids had a great time riding on the float. That theme was echoed from participants and the audience members who took part in the annual Perris Christmas Parade.

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The cool weather didn't dampen the crew from the Oasis Perris Youth Center.



Bob Simpson stands in front of the 1918 fire truck that once rolled to emergencies in City of Perris.