



Rose Parade Media Update from Phoenix Decorating

Setting the Standard for Float Building Nov. 2007

PHOENIX FLOAT SPONSORS 2007 - 2008

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TRADER JOE'S
Getting There is ALL the Fun

WESTERN ASSET
The Circus Comes to Town

Hidden Hatches are the 'Passport' to The Heart of a Rose Parade Float

Neither rain nor heat nor darkness of sight shall stay these stalwart couriers from their appointed rounds.

The U.S. Postal workers? No – the drivers, observers, sound technicians, animators and pyrotechnicians who are at the heart of spectacular Rose Parade floats.

Tucked neatly out of sight behind small, flower-camouflaged hatches, these are the dedicated individuals who guide the gigantic entries from float barns to the formation area and then along the 5 1/2-mile parade route.

It is their job to bring the floral masterpieces to life for parade viewers around the world.

Drivers generally sit "in the belly of the beast," near the engine at the rear of the float, totally in the dark. Their only link to the rest of the world – and the parade route – is the observer peeking out a small hole at the front of the float, and constantly talking with them over a set of headphones. The conversations aren't particularly deep, but of great importance. "Slow, slower, left, a little to the right, hard right, stop," often is the extent of the observer's directions to the darkness-shrouded driver.

For the "showmen" hidden inside the float, it's not directions but timing that is at the heart of their craft. The show must go on. And on cue!

Sculpted animals must spring to animated "life" at the press of a lever; beasts and spacecraft have to roar at the touch of a button; and fireworks, streamers and confetti should blast skyward as a show reaches its climax – all at the behest of the unseen team inside the moving stage that is a Rose Parade float.

From professional sound techs, animators and pyrotechnicians who ply their craft year round to drivers and observers who are called upon for float duty once a year, dedication is the watchword.

Frank Rounds coordinates all of the personnel inside Phoenix-built floats – largest to smallest. He notes that Phoenix driver Mark Beven has been at the wheel of a float for 40 years and will guide Farmers' 55-foot tall entry; Roger Thomas will be driving in his 29th parade in the show-stopping animated Honda float; Don Harris has been inside floats, most often as an observer, for 33 years

and will again guide the Trader Joe's entry, which this year stretches 80 feet long. At the other end of the spectrum are Omar Matute and Troy Wiltshire, each in his first year, piloting ATV-mounted Port of L.A. vessels.

Be prepared to be "wow-ed" by the Phoenix floats – and impressed by the talents of each of the hidden heroes inside.



The observer is hidden within the float, using a tiny peephole to see the street and guide the driver.



Drivers generally are deep in the heart of the float near the rear, with no ability to see where the float is headed – guided only by instructions from their observers.

GOOD GRIEF! NOT 1 GREAT PUMPKIN, BUT 2 FOR MICHELLE

What do comic strip character Charlie Brown and Rose Parade float designer Michelle Lofthouse have in common?

They both believe in the "great pumpkin." However, Michelle doesn't linger in the patch for the great pumpkin to appear – she grows her own. This year, she won TWO first place awards for her truly stupendous squash.

On Oct. 20, Michelle travelled to Paso Robles to take the top award in a contest with her 1,376 lb. entry. The very next day, she loaded her pickup truck, headed to Santa Ana with another entry from her home patch in Monrovia and again took first place honors with an 861 lb. gourd.

Just wait (or is that weight?) for her 15 Rose Parade entries.

FLOAT TEST

Sat., Nov. 17 – 7 to 8 a.m., 835 S. Raymond Ave., Pasadena, CA

FLOAT DECORATION PHOTO OPS

2 LOCATIONS – 27 FLORAL UNITS – PRIME MEDIA ACCESS

Dec. 1, 8 & 15
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rose Palace
835 S. Raymond Ave.,
Pasadena, CA

Dec. 26
8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

and

Rosemont Pavilion
700 Seco St. (across from the Rose Bowl)
Pasadena, CA

Dec. 27 – 30
8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Contact: Larry Palmer at 626-793-3174 or 626-375-1025