

Parades, Memories, and History

by Bonnie MacFarlane

I love a Parade! Memorial Day Parades, New Year's Parades, St. Patrick's Day Parades. But, probably my most memorable parade was my one in high school. I was a freshman, small in stature, and in the high school marching band. I played clarinet and was dressed in a uniform about two sizes too big for me. The colors of the uniform were purple and bright yellow. I always had great difficulty marching and playing at the same time and was probably faking many of my notes. The day of the parade was sunny and quite windy. As my hat was also too big for me, the wind blew it off right in the middle of our performance when we were standing still. A policeman rescued my hat, set it firmly on my small head and gave me a little wink.

My Dad first turned me on to Parades. He had served in WWII and liked to give homage to the other veterans. We lived in a medium size upstate New York city and the Parades were very good. We always arrived early and the old Chevy was parked a couple of blocks away. It was often windy as the city was surrounded by high hills, so Dad brought several Army blankets. We also had snacks and Kool-Aid to drink. I always loved the music by the bands, the majorettes, the costumes, the other people, and was very proud of the elderly veterans, firemen, and policemen who marched. There was a lot of excitement in the air and expectation as well. I always hated to see the parade end, but Mom always had a warm lunch waiting for us when we arrived home.

Once I moved to Boston, Massachusetts, the St. Patrick's Day Parade became my favorite. Along with New York City, Chicago, and Denver, it is one of the best of the best. Throngs of people dressed in crazy green outfits, dogs in outfits that make them look like something other than dogs, lots of beer, people, noise, and excitement. Of course, Boston is largely Irish people so the pubs and restaurants would be mobbed after the parade. We'd often meet with another young couple and drive away from the city to enjoy corned beef and cabbage, Irish folk music, and of course—green beer.

Parades, for me, are family, friends, celebration, local talent, and very American. We'll be having a celebratory Parade for Windsor Garden's 50th! I hope to see you there!