

WestCoastNewsline

JULY 14, 2006

Pomp & show mark Fremont July 4 parade



Councilmember Anu Natarajan



Sikh volunteers distributing water

SAM RAO

Fremont, Calif.

RED, white and blue were the colors of the day, as about 15,000 people of all races and ethnicities came together for the American Independence Day celebration in Irvington district here on July 4. Hundreds of people, including several hundred Indian-Americans, lined up along the Fremont Boulevard leading to the "5 corners" intersection of Irvington for the annual parade that started sharp at 10 am.

Leading the parade were the Fremont Police Department's motorcycles and the Fremont Fire Department fire engines. Then came the 'Celebrate Fremont' float, carrying a large birthday cake with '50' written on it. With an impressive line-up of 90 floats, decorated cars and marchers, the parade extended upto nearly a mile. The most dramatic entry was the 'Pirates of Emerson', the largest float in the parade with a dozen men and women dressed as pirates, complete with their huge pirate ship. Other interesting floats included a 30-foot high American flag-shaped balloon, a 50-foot high Uncle Sam balloon, a nearly 100-foot long 'Walking Flag' which was carried by more than 30 volunteers of Irvington High School, the energetic Bay Aerials gymnastic tumblers and several antique cars.

Eight 'Hometown Heroes', who were honored for their contribution to the community of Fremont, were also a part of the parade. Indian-American Amrit Paul Singh was among these awardees and was honored for his contribution during last year's Hurricane Katrina. Singh was instrumental in collecting humanitarian supplies from the Bay area Indian-American community, including major contributions from Gurdwara, Fremont Hindu temple and the Islamic mosque and drove these in

a 50-foot truck all the way to New Orleans, Louisiana. Later, he embarked on a similar trip to Pakistan during the devastating earthquake in PoK. "It was great participating in the celebrations. We wish there were more Indian-Americans celebrating the Independence Day of America for after all we are grateful to this country and we (all) live here irrespective of our immigration status," Singh later said.

Among the floats was also a large truck by the Sikh community of the Bay Area, depicting their humanitarian efforts during Katrina. Several Indian-Americans also walked behind the float, with a few kids depicting Sikh martial arts techniques. A good PR exercise was done by a dozen Sikh volunteers who distributed water during the parade. With a bevy of awards for participants and floats, the float of the Sikh community of Bay Area walked away with first prize in the Novelty (non-profit division), while the Citizens for Better Community was placed 2nd, Indo-Americans for Better Community (IndoABC) judged 3rd.

"This year is special as Fremont also celebrates 50 years of its founding. We will be celebrating once again on September 9-10 with a big party in Central Park," said Anu Natarajan, Fremont City councilmember and Co-Chair of Celebrate Fremont 50 committee. Natarajan also took part in the parade in an open convertible and later marched with Not in Our Town-Fremont, a city-based anti-hatred group.

6 Indian Americans arrested for possessing arms

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Fremont, Calif.

SIX Indian Americans were arrested from Mission Boulevard area last week for allegedly possessing deadly weapons, brandishing a weapon and felony vandalism. Media reports said the arrest came after a 16-year-old boy called emergency number 9-1-1 and reported that he was being chased down Mission Boulevard by two carloads of men with whom he apparently had a confrontation earlier that week.

The teenager told Fremont police that the men had threatened to harm him which was followed by a brief chase, in which he was nearly pushed off the road by their speeding car. Responding immediately, the Fremont Police officers detained six youth and a 17-year-old boy and recovered half-dozen weapons from the two vehicles they were driving in. The arrested include Gurpreet Singh (20), Tanveer Singh Hans (19), Sukhwinder Singh (19) and Jonathan Frakondoh (20) of San Jose and Amrit Singh (18), Nishan Singh (20) and a 17-year-old boy of Fremont. The name of the minor boy was not released to the public.

The arrested men were booked for possessing deadly weapons, and three were booked on an additional charge of brandishing a weapon. The 17-year-old has also been cited for felony vandalism and will have to appear in juvenile court, police said.



The 30-foot American flag balloon. Photos by Sam Rao

To me 4th of July means...

"...an overt acknowledgement of the essence of democracy and freedom and coming together as a community/nation to celebrate what we cherish. It also means catching up with friends that you have not had time to meet in a long time. The parades and fireworks are a way of bringing a community together irrespective of the nationality... it is America showing off its origins and much as we like to share our heritage and culture with festivals and parades, this celebrations is a way of uniting a community. I believe everyone needs to take part in it and enjoy the festivities reflecting the diversity that makes up America."

Anu Natarajan (Democrat), Councilmember, City of Fremont

"...a celebration of Freedom so as to never take it for granted, to remember the price one has to pay for freedom, and to remember the efforts of our forebearers and soldiers who give their life ever day to allow us as Americans to enjoy a sense of freedom and security. All Indian-Americans should join in the celebrations, to appreciate the freedom this country allows not only its citizens, but other immigrants as well. We need to participate to pursue the sense of solidarity with our nation, and to continue to stand for freedom all over the world."

Yogi Chugh, Member Planning Commission, City of Fremont

"...the birth of a nation, a nation that has taken me in and has given me everything I have today. I think it doesn't matter even if you're an illegal immigrant, as long as you're proud of this country...you can celebrate if you choose to."

Sesh Adivi, filmmaker

