

# America The Beautiful.com



## Parade puts Fox Cities pride, Old Glory on display

Documentary crew happily records Flag Day celebration

BY KATHY WALSH NUFER • POST-CRESCENT STAFF WRITER • JUNE 15, 2008

APPLETON — The film crew documenting small town Americana for an upcoming "See America Tour" hadn't planned to start traveling the country until July.

But the appeal of the nation's oldest Flag Day celebration and parade in America's heartland, which this year happened to be on the official Flag Day, was just too compelling.

"We had to be here," Peter Smith, president and founder of AmericaTheBeautiful.com, said Saturday while setting up a giant camera crane in front of the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

Later that camera would swing out over the pavement capturing faces in the crowd, along with marching bands, floats and flags by

the hundreds whipping in the brisk afternoon winds on College Avenue, much to the delight of thousands of spectators.

The 58th annual Appleton Flag Day Parade featured the U.S. Marines and 100 units, from the Second Marine Aircraft Wing Band and University of Wisconsin Marching Band to antique cars, bagpipers, drum and bugle corps and floats.

"This was perfect because your Flag Day celebration exemplifies everything we were looking for," said Smith, whose Web site features videos, music, photographs aimed at inspiring patriotism. "It seems like it truly embraces the patriotic spirit and we didn't want to miss it."

First-time attendees Diana Geoffrey of Kaukauna and her daughters Meredith and Elizabeth also had the thrill of running out onto the street, at Smith's request just before the parade began, shouting an Appleton welcome and waving their flags for the "See America Tour" camera.

"It's pretty exciting that they're featuring Appleton and hopefully the Fox Cities," said Diana Geoffrey, 41, enthusiastically applauding the military, the musicians and everything patriotic.

"That's so awesome that we could be on a video on the Internet," said daughter Meredith, 10, wearing a red, white and blue dress.

As for the parade itself, she said this one was pretty special — with one reservation. "I think it's great but I think it could be better if

they threw candy for the kids."

Saturday's parade was also a first for newcomer Sally Spitz, who just moved to Appleton with her husband, Willard, from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It was the first time as well for her daughter Linda Bender, who moved here two years ago from Las Vegas with her husband, Jim.

With flags in hand, the women said they could understand why someone would want to videotape something this patriotic. "It was a beautiful parade," said Linda Bender, 58. "We will be here next year, too."

Smith, whose North Carolina-based company solicits stories that illustrate American spirit and patriotism in small towns across America in hopes of "reviving" that spirit nationwide, said he and his crew have been in Appleton since Wednesday getting a feel for the community.

The crew met with the parade committee, interviewed Mayor Tim Hanna, and talked with executives at paper company Appleton about the city's paper industry history. Ellen Kort read one of her poems and talked to them about her role as the state's former poet laureate.

They also interviewed Marine Brig. Gen. Gerald Miller of Combined Locks, grand marshal of this year's Flag Day Parade. "It was quite humbling to me for such a decorated military hero to be such a regular guy, and he touched my heart when he showed his appreciation for us coming," said Smith.

Don Burich, a parade committee member and spokesman who was instrumental in getting Smith's attention, said he thought the parade was exactly what Smith and his crew were seeking.

"Their core philosophy is exactly what this parade is all about — Patriotism, Americana. It has one purpose: honor the flag," he said.

"The national awareness this event now has is amazing," Burich added. "We are fortunate this event has grown to draw a national organization like theirs to Appleton."

Harvey Samson, assistant parade chairman, agreed. "It's going to be a wonderful plug for this community and the whole area."

"It's been a wonderful experience for us to be a part of this," said Smith, whose next tour destination is Mount Rushmore for its July 3 fireworks. "This is much more than I expected," he said halfway through the parade. "For a community of this size to come together and have a celebration this big for our flag is outstanding."

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## The See America Tour 2008

has kicked off with a visit to Appleton, WI for their annual Flag Day Celebration and Parade. This amazing city exhibited Pride, Passion, Patriotism and Promise for our Great Country. Our interviews in this fine city included Poet Laureate Ellen Kort, Mayor Tim Hannah, Brigadier General Gerry Miller (Rt) and more. Keep in touch with AmericaTheBeautiful.com as the video comes to the web soon!



Post-Crescent photo by M.P. King. Staff Photographer



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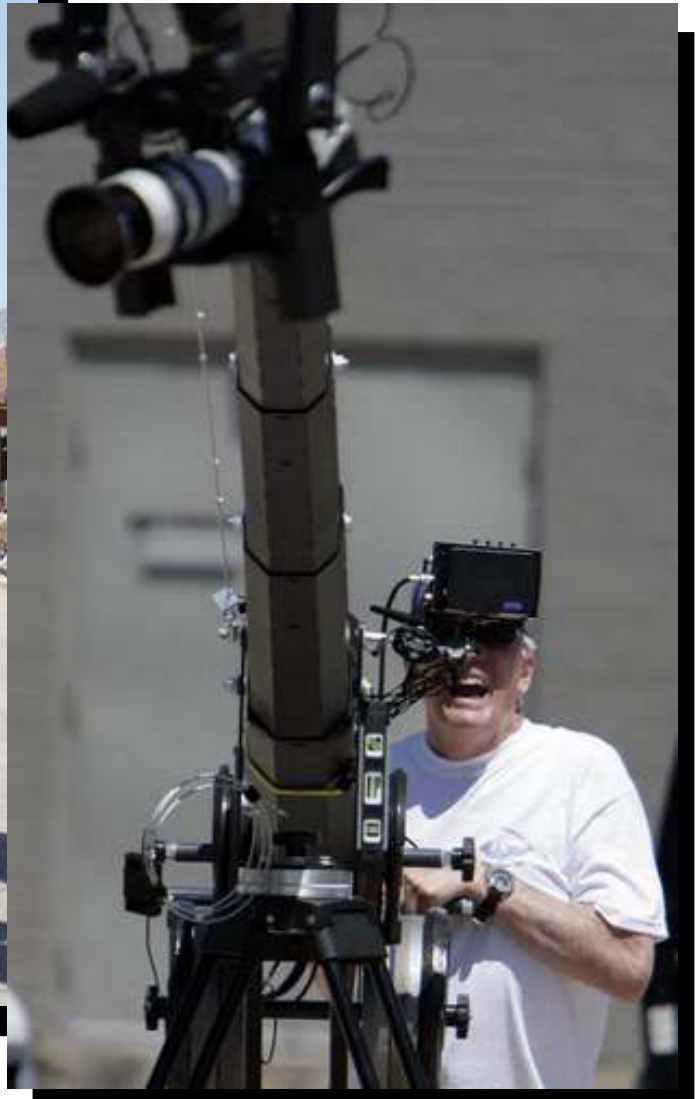
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