



1987 Queen Diana Petoskey and her court travel Grand Parade route in official Alpenfest float. Waving at right in front of queen is Kathy Peffers; waving at left is Dawn Huff.

had them on the program."

The first parade chairman was John Kammeyer, Fritz said, and the parade was held at 8 p.m. Friday and proceeded from west to east on Main Street.

"We ran it west to east because it was late evening and the sun would be in their eyes going the other way," he said.

There was plenty of publicity for the first festival, Fritz said, because he was manager of the old Gaylord radio station WATC-AM, and Bob Benedict, chairman of the publicity committee, was publisher of the Herald Times.

"There was lots of publicity," he said.

Fritz said by the third year of the Alpine Festival, the name had been changed to Alpenfest.

"Elgas and I thought Alpine

Festival was too awkward, so we came up with Alpenfest," he said.

There was no grand parade at the first festival in 1965. Leo Strappazon, another of those early committee members, said he came up with the idea but too late for that first festival.

Strappazon said the fledgling festival grew because of the voluntary efforts of many local residents, including Harry Collins, then executive secretary of the chamber of commerce; Ed Calkins; Tripp and Fritz.

"It was a team effort as we all got together to get the merchants involved and the general public even sending 'ambassadors' with a queen to cities around the area," Strappazon said.

A trip to Wisconsin by then personnel director at U.S. Plywood, Bill Deneen, reaped varied

dividends for the community.

U.S. Plywood sent Deneen to secure an Alpine Swiss singing group and yodeler as the entertainment for that first festival.

While in Wisconsin, Deneen saw how Alpine architecture could be used to promote an area, and he toured prebuilt medical complex buildings, which would become the basis for the city's medical complex.

And on top of those far-reaching discoveries, he secured entertainment that packed the high school gym.

"It was just a roaring success," Deneen said.

Deneen credited the community efforts to keep the festival strong and vital 25 years after the idea first bore fruit.

"We never had an idea of what a positive impact all of it has had on the community," he said.

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