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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Wardsboro celebrates America’s 250th birthday

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2 Vermont’s oldest continuous Fourth of July celebration  
3 goes all out for milestone anniversary

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

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5 ON SATURDAY, JULY 4, Wardsboro is hosting what has  
6 become the biggest street fair and Independence Day parade that  
7 a small town, population 800-plus, can possibly create.

8 The marvelous thing about it is that Wardsboro likely  
9 reached “peak parade” over a generation ago, and since then all  
10 the goings-on of the day, including apple pies, strawberry

11 shortcakes, and outdoor-grill chicken BBQ, are now firmly fixed  
12 as tradition.

13 To those who would like to celebrate the nation's 250th  
14 anniversary in "the most old-fashioned, most all-American  
15 hometown manner possible, this is it," according to the event's  
16 emcee, Rev. Pete Carlson (aka "Pastor Pete"), who has served the  
17 Wardsboro Yoked Parish for 26 years.

18 "This" being the town's "77th Annual," Wardsboro has,  
19 as best as can be determined, the longest continuously running  
20 Fourth of July parade in Vermont. (Yes, it ran even during the  
21 lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, when all the people stayed  
22 home and vehicles formed a parade to cruise the entire town to  
23 salute everyone standing in their front yards.)

24 \* \* \*

25 THE BIGGEST and most exciting attraction of the day starts  
26 precisely at 10 a.m., with the pealing of the steeple bell in the  
27 historic Methodist Church on Main Street. That is the signal for  
28 onlookers to freeze in place and for the parade participants to  
29 tighten up their ranks.

30 The parade gathers momentum over the South  
31 Wardsboro Road bridge until the color guard and the grand  
32 marshal's vehicle at the front of the column reach the portico on  
33 Town Hall.

34 Then everyone pauses. There, Carlson delivers an  
35 invocation, which is always a deeply inspiring patriotic moment.  
36 Herb Greene of Newfane has been invited to sing the National  
37 Anthem during the pause.

38 "Wardsboro Yoked Parish is the sponsor and coordinator  
39 of the celebration, and an army of volunteers run this event,"  
40 Carlson said. "We're a very small congregation, maybe 25  
41 members or so, and the funds raised on the Fourth are reserved to  
42 support people in the community based on urgent need."

43 Katryna Fitzpatrick of Wardsboro, the executive chair of  
44 the Wardsboro Parade Committee, has served for 11 years on the  
45 committee, her ninth as chair.

46 "I joined in 2015 after the Wardsboro Yoked Parish  
47 showed my family so much love, kindness, and support when my  
48 husband fell unexpectedly ill," Fitzpatrick said. "After receiving  
49 such compassion, I decided I wanted to be a part of this special  
50 event and help give back to others deserving of the same in my  
51 community."

52 The parade is a mix of marching groups, themed floats,  
53 the inimitable Grafton Coronet Band, a slew of incredible vintage  
54 cars, bikes and things on wheels, horseback riders, and many  
55 immaculately polished fire engines, sirens silent mostly.

56 Children standing along the route wave flags, of course,  
57 but typically they are joyously dashing for candy tossed to them  
58 by the parade participants. A panel of judges, meanwhile, is  
59 carefully eyeing the participants for awards, but more on that  
60 later.

61 \* \* \*

62 THE 2026 GRAND MASTER is Wardsboro long-time resident  
63 Jeremy Schrauf, 87. He was chosen by the Wardsboro Parade  
64 Committee because of his decades-long dedication to the  
65 community, especially the local Scout troops.

66 Schrauf will be riding at the head of the parade in the  
67 back seat of Bob and Janet LeBlond's eye-catching tomatoish-red  
68 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible.

69 "It is Matador Red," said Bob LeBlond. "I don't have a  
70 count of the number of ribbons I have won on the Fourth for my  
71 antique cars. I have always given any ribbon I was awarded to the  
72 Grand Marshall riding in my car. After all, they are the people  
73 being honored."

74 Once the parade builds up steam again, it rolls nonstop  
75 all the way to McMichael Park, barely a couple hundred yards  
76 down the street. Then the whole parade turns around and  
77 immediately comes back the same way. Therefore, the spectators  
78 get to see all of it twice. (If they marched much farther up Main  
79 Street, they would cross into Jamaica in no time.)

80           On the return, the judging will have been completed,  
81 and big ribbons that come with a year's worth of bragging rights  
82 are handed to the winners of all the best-ofs in the parade — best  
83 float, best old car and so on — and to all the honorable  
84 mentions.

85           \* \* \*

86           WELL BEFORE the church bell tolls, attractions in the street  
87 fair start opening, usually around 8:30 a.m. There is the outdoor  
88 pie tent, with all kinds of homemade fruit pies, boxed at \$20, and  
89 the strawberry shortcake table at the church vestry building for \$8  
90 per dessert.

91           To be sure, shortcake does count as breakfast and  
92 volunteers are hulling over 240 pounds of strawberries this year.  
93 At the same time, volunteer cooks in the hamburger and hot dog  
94 tent have their grills hot and ready, too.

95           The 40 booths in the street fair open at 9 a.m., and those,  
96 mostly craftspeople, are lined up side by side along Main Street  
97 all the way from the Wardsboro Country Store down to the lawn  
98 at the public library, where a huge book sale goes on all day.

99           The street fair has many tempting raffles, too, which are  
100 fundraisers for local nonprofits and organizations. Two more  
101 crowd favorites are the colorful display of new and old  
102 handmade quilts spread out across every pew in the Methodist  
103 Church and the new exhibits by the Wardsboro History Group in  
104 the History House.

105           At 11 a.m. the big tent opens for the barbecue (\$15 for a  
106 chicken quarter and \$20 for half a bird, including a variety of hot  
107 and cold sides). There are tables and chairs under the tent, plus  
108 live music nearby, making it a great spot to hang out long into the  
109 afternoon.

110           All day, there are children's activities, a petting zoo, and  
111 touch-a-truck areas for children. The action-packed Skate Jam  
112 starts at 1p.m. on the skateboard ramps and rails in McMichael  
113 Park.

114 Times have certainly changed — in the early days of  
115 Wardsboro’s Fourth of July celebrations, the sporting event was a  
116 baseball game of the old timers versus young men.

117 An insider tip: Bring your own folding chair as there is no  
118 seating at the park.

119 \* \* \*

120 PARKING FOR THE Fourth in Wardsboro is in fields on  
121 Route 100 just north and south of Main Street, beginning about  
122 7:30 a.m. A free shuttle bus from the fields is provided by the  
123 Moover. It unloads passengers at the end of South Wardsboro  
124 Road bridge, but the distances from the parking areas are  
125 walkable.

126 Parking is also available in a field on South Wardsboro  
127 Road at \$10 per carload. Be aware that the South Hill Road from  
128 Jamaica into Wardsboro will have no access to any parking areas.

129 For public safety, a short section of Route 100 is closed  
130 from about 10 to 11 a.m. as the parade passes; Main Street is  
131 blocked to traffic starting at 9 a.m. until after the parade has fully  
132 disbanded.

133 Organizers said that last-minute marchers, floats, and  
134 classic cars for the Wardsboro parade are welcome to join right  
135 up to the morning of July 4. For details on where to stage, email  
136 [WardsboroParade@gmail.com](mailto:WardsboroParade@gmail.com).

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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137 **ANITA RAFAEL** is a Wardsboro writer whose work has  
138 appeared in myriad newspapers and magazines, including this  
139 one.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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