

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

RED, WHITE AND BLUE BAYOU

July 1, 2025



Each town or city in America has its own take on Independence Day. In Brooklyn, New York, there's the famous annual hot dog eating competition, drawing thousands of spectators. The San Diego neighborhood of Ocean Beach hosts a good-natured July 4th marshmallow fight. In Marin County, the coastal California towns of Bolinas and Stinson Beach battle it out via a tug-of-war challenge. In Bar Harbor, Maine, things are a bit slower paced – in the form of lobster races. And in Mark Twain and Tom Sawyer's Hannibal, Missouri, I've witnessed – what else? – the National Fence Painting Championship.

Pacific Grove is different – and yet no different, in the sense that (like everywhere else) we put our own spin on Fourth-of-July festivities. Last year, the event at Jewell Park, made possible by PG's Chamber of Commerce and its Youth Ambassadors, touched all the bases, so to speak. No, there was no baseball game, unless you happened to catch the pickup game happening at – where else? – George Washington Park. But there was a little bit of everything you might want in an Independence Day Celebration.

The festivities began with a nod to the origins of the holiday on the steps of the Museum of Natural History. Phyllis and Mitch Davis, owners of Nest Boutique, went full dress-up – tricorn hats, breeches, waistcoats – and offered a dramatic reading of the 1,320-word Declaration of Independence. The PG tradition, brought from Philadelphia by a past president of the Rotary Club, invited audience participation. So "created equal" and "pursuit of happiness" drew cheers. "King of Britain?" Big boos.

The reading was followed by the Monterey Peninsula Voices choir singing "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful," and a medley of the Armed Forces anthems. I saw a bit of a metaphor in the two-dozen voices coming together in harmony – not so much about various states forming a union, but rather how all the tiny dots on the map (many smaller than PG) come together to form an image, a masterpiece of pointillism known as the United States.



Then the festivities began. It doesn't get much more American than a local cover band playing rock and roll. While the Rogue Roosters played their tunes, the families of this family community played in various ways - a bounce house, bubble-making toys, an oversized Connect Four game, face painting, sidewalk chalking, fire engine tours, free T-shirts, a watermelon-eating contest, and a hotdogs-and-burgers barbecue capped off by (of course) apple pie. In fact, at one point I had the distinct pleasure of standing next to a red fire engine, enjoying white vanilla ice cream atop apple pie, and listening to the band play "Blue Bayou."

So that's how the locals do it on Independence Day. And it's like no other community in America - at least, not exactly - which is how it should be. Because when all is said and done (and barbecued and sung), I would argue that this national holiday is not only an homage to America but also a celebration of each separate American community. Whether it's a massive metropolis or a serene little hamlet, each place celebrates Independence Day independently. Including America's Last Hometown.



*The Great
Tidepool*

