

Ferrets In Doo Dah Parade History

Learn more about ferret participation in the Doo Dah parade.

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This ferret from the Cal Poly 2002 Rose Parade float made its debut as a Ferrets Anonymous ferret in the 2002 parade.
Photo By Russ Case

Float Facts

Every year since 1997, a group from Ferrets Anonymous (FA) has been a part of the Doo Dah Parade tradition. As soon as the decision to appear in the parade was made, FA members knew they needed an eye-catching presentation. That's when the idea for a ferret float was born. The original concept was for it to be 4 feet long and last for one year. During the design process, it changed to 10 feet and then jumped to 22 feet — and it's appeared in every Doo Dah Parade since 1997.

Claudia T., president of FA, says that Alex is the creative genius behind the 22-foot ferret. He designed and put it together in his back yard, and some FA members met for several weeks to paper maché it. It's made from a wood base with chicken wire covered in paper maché. The fur coat look comes from pampas grass that is applied to its outside every year before parade day. Coat hangers that are painted black make the whiskers.

The ferret is made in three pieces — head, torso and tail — and it's transported to the parade in a pickup truck. "The hard part is storing the little guy," said Claudia. Between parades, the float has been stored in Claudia's mother's back yard (although every year she requests that it not be brought back). As of this writing, it's stored at an emergency vet's office.

This year the 22-foot ferret sustained the first serious damage since it was created.

A shoulder is no longer paper machéd together. Whether the damage happened in transport or after the parade is unknown. Previous to this, only small problems with the wheels or other minor repairs were needed after every appearance.

The 2002 appearance marked the debut of a second ferret float. This ferret was part of a large float that Cal Poly University used in the 2002 Rose Parade float. Claudia and her sister, Melinda, asked for, and were given, the ferret from this float. Alex then worked his design magic to place this ferret in a flower pot that could be wheeled down the parade route.

Action Ferrets

Floats are one eye catcher, but a dancing ferret also catches the crowd's attention every year. Bambi, a FA member, has also been with the parade since the beginning. Her first appearance was with her husband. He pretended to be a Fish and Game inspector with a net and chased her. She'd sometimes grab the net and chase him. Now divorced, Bambi dances solo down the street, leading the FA group, in her handmade ferret costume. Other FA members are convinced that Bambi's efforts are responsible for keeping the FA group in the first 30 for marching order in the parade.

As with the float, 2002 also saw the debut of another action ferret. Manda, the albino roller skating ferret, held her own with the crowds. She made finishing touches to her costume on her way to the parade.

Costumes

Claudia and a friend designed costumes that helped less-adventurous members get attention. Ferret ears fashioned from felt and attached to headbands, plus brown felt, pin-on tails quickly transform anyone into a ferret. Melinda added the idea of using makeup to create ferret faces as a finishing touch.

The Message

The presentation of ferret floats, action ferrets and people dressed as ferrets gets people to look, but it isn't effective unless onlookers know the message behind it all. Therefore, a banner proclaiming ferret freedom and signs calling for ferrets to be legalized are part of the Ferrets Anonymous parade lineup.