

Fireworks show to be best ever

By LINDA PHILLIPS
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North Carolina is one of only 14 states in the United States which bans the sale of any and all types of fireworks.

Nonetheless, Burke Countains will not be left without the burst and bang of red, white and blue skyborne missiles to commemorate the anniversary of American independence.

Monday, on the grounds of Western Piedmont Community College, pyrotechnicians will ignite for thousands of eager spectators the third annual Fourth of July fireworks display beginning at sundown, somewhere around 9 p.m.

Quickly becoming a local tradition, this year's fireworks promise to bigger, brighter and more entertaining than ever.

Larry Clark, co-chairman of the Fourth of July Fireworks Committee, said that this year's display should be "the biggest fireworks show since Fourth of July displays were brought back to Burke County three years ago.

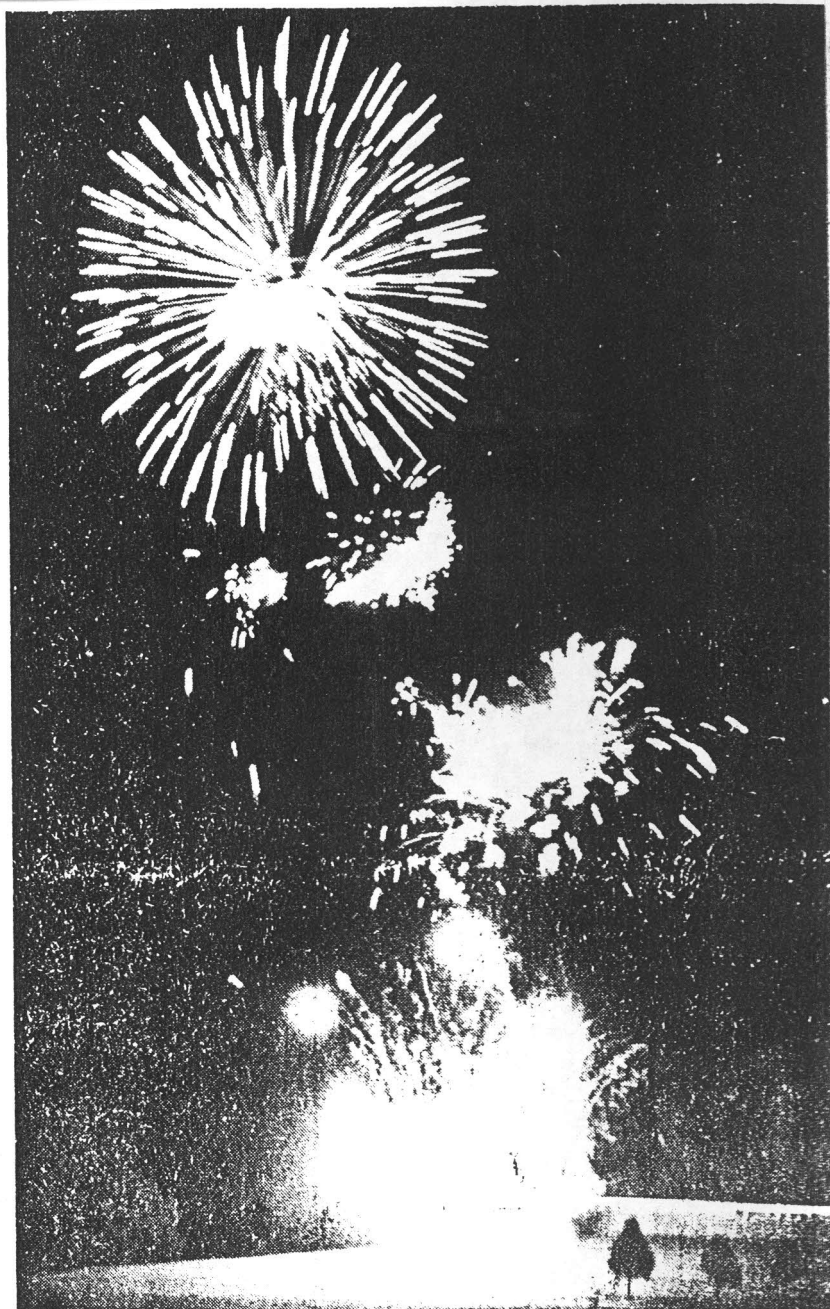
"It will also be one of the largest displays in western North Carolina," he said.

Over \$2,000 worth of colorful exploding shells have been ordered for the Monday extravaganza from a Pennsylvania company called Zambelli, the nation's largest manufacturer and exhibitor of fireworks shows, said Clark.

One main difference in the show scheduled for this year is an extensive aerial display.

"Last year's show featured a large ground display that only those close in on the campus could see," said Clark. "This year we'll have two small ground shows -- a flag and a 'good night' -- which still only the people who are close

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Explosions brightened sky over W PCC during 1982 display

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up will be able to appreciate, but the main feature will be a grand aerial display that even people at NCSD and beyond will be able to enjoy."

Larry Phelps, a local auto parts distributor, will return for a second year as the master pyrotechnician in this Fourth of July show.

He will choreograph some 300 fireworks including super fancy, oriental chrysanthemum, fancy star and super-deluxe compartmental or multi-break shells. There will also be several flights of works or series of shells which go off simultaneously.

According to Clark, Phelps' expertise has enhanced the Burke County Fourth of July show.

"Larry worked for Zambelli several years ago as a shooter and he really knows what he's doing," said Clark.

Before the big booms begin at sundown, families should bring their blankets and picnic baskets and settle into a cool grassy spot on the Western Piedmont grounds.

For those who don't want to pack a picnic, the Oak Hill Ruritans will sponsor a barbeque dinner on the grounds beginning at 6 p.m. featuring barbeque sandwiches, potato chips and soft drinks for \$2.25 a plate.

The food will be located at two sites, one near the tennis courts at the front of the campus and the other somewhere near the middle of the field, according to Ruritan club member Scott Wall.

The Oak Hill United Methodist Church will be featuring another Fourth of July favorite -- home-made ice cream. The ice cream will be sold at the same sites as the Ruritan barbeque.

To complete the festivities at Western Piedmont Monday, The Morganton Community Band, a 19-member ensemble directed by Clyde Ferguson, will perform a collection of patriotic music beginning at 7 p.m.

Clark said that the Burke County Fourth of July Committee has evolved from its humble beginnings three years ago. This year, it is an extension of the Chamber of

Commerce athletic activities committee.

"The Chamber has acted as a collecting agency for contributions for the Fourth of July fireworks," said Clark. "It's through the kind and generous contributions of citizens, businesses and industries in Burke County that we can sponsor this show."

The Fourth of July Committee has obtained permission from the Morganton Police Department, the Burke County Fire Marshall, the Burke County Sheriff's Department and the N.C. High Patrol to hold the fireworks.

The Morganton police will be coordinating the parking the Monday evening. Spectators are requested to park in the college parking lots and to follow any additional parking instructions given by the police to avoid "fender benders," said Clark.

Over 6,000 people turned out for last year's show and that many or more are expected again this year, he said.

In the event of rain, the schedule of events will be moved to Tuesday night.