



Mechanic Roy Kawahara, right, is the driving force beneath "Jesus, God's Gift," the float representing the Lutheran Church in the 114th Tournament of Roses Parade.



RRC's Roy Kawahara Is One of Rose Parade's 'Chosen Few'

By JENNIFER YEH

(Jan. 24, 2003) Being a part of the Tournament of Roses Parade is an opportunity that many could only dream of. But for the past four years, RRC Warranty and Equipment Mechanic Roy Kawahara has been lucky enough to be given that chance.

Kawahara is one of the chosen few who got to drive down Colorado Boulevard on New Year's morning in one of many colorful flower-decorated floats.

This year he drove a 40-foot float for the Lutheran Church titled, "Jesus, God's Gift".

"I couldn't see out, I had to have an observer tell me what to do, to go right or left, to slow down or speed up," says Kawahara.

"The seat inside the float is not the most comfortable," he says. "All I have to sit on is a piece of plywood and it gets hot in there because I have to sit next to the engine."

Kawahara learned of the opportunity when a friend of his, who also drives in the parade, told him that the Tournament of Roses was looking for extra drivers. He jumped at the opportunity.

Trained to drive floats

But, first, he had to be trained to drive the massive floats. "We had to go through test runs to make sure we were familiar with the steering and a fire drill in case the float catches on fire," he says.

Kawahara describes Rose Parade volunteering as tiring, but fun.

"The day before the parade, we have to be there at 9 o'clock in the morning to move the floats out of the garages to be judged," he says. "We have a break from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and go back to work at 7 p.m. Some of us have to stay with the floats throughout the night to make sure people don't try to take flowers."

Although the job may seem exhausting, Kawahara describes seeing people's reactions to the floats as one of the most interesting parts of the job. "If it wasn't for the people driving and observing there wouldn't be a parade."

Why does he continue to go back year after year?

"It's a world-wide parade and I'm in it," he says, proudly.

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