

Summertime Strawberries in Hollis

People

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A baby finds something he prefers to strawberries.

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"I feel like I'm in a movie," said one visitor as she walked through the summer Sunday week for the Hollis Strawberry Festival.

On the village green the town band played old favorites while families, friends and former strangers gathered together, and children played peek-a-boo around the veterans monument. It could have been a scene from Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life."

Facing the common are the Congregational Church, variety store, fire department, town library, and a few white clapboard homes. The setting is pure American, the gentle gathering of generations so calming, so reassuring that it seemed too perfect to be real.

More than 2,000 lovers of strawberry shortcake (with hard biscuits and real whipped cream) and strawberry sundaes (over Doc Davis' ice cream) came out for the 1982 strawberry celebration, sponsored annually by the Hollis Women's Club and the Hollis Band.

On Sunday morning the club's older ladies began preparing the 1,280 biscuits and 70 quarts of fresh cream that will be whipped up. Other club members prepare the more than 500 quarts of strawberries bought at the local Brookdale Fruit Farm.

Seventy-two gallons of vanilla ice cream are brought from Pepperell, Mass. ("It's Doc Davis, of course," said event co-chairman Karen Denmark. "Years ago that's where parents used to take their children on Sunday evening, as a special treat, after the farm chores were done.")

At about 11 a.m. the older residents of town wander onto the town common ("The older they are, the earlier they come," said Mrs. Denmark) and carefully place their chairs in the shade of trees that rim the triangular common. Later, the band arrives and sets up its chairs at the north point of the green, beneath the blue and white "Hollis Band" shield.

As the two o'clock serving time draws near, other residents and visitors arrive. With 90 minutes to go at least 80 people are in each of the four lines for shortcake and sundaes.

Everyone is talking to each other, there are no strangers here. At first, children cling to their parents or grandparents, ill-at-ease among all the new faces, but after the newness wears off, curiosity takes over and they start to explore and make friends. Eventually every child takes a try at walking the narrow ledge—only wide enough for a child's foot—around the Hollis monument.

The shortcake and sundae line moves along slowly, but everyone is served. The white ice cream is drenched by the red juice of the strawberries, and healthy dollops of whipped cream are available to anyone who asks for extra. Although it's the children who smear the scarlet-streaked food on their face, they aren't enjoying the grand dessert any more than the adults who talk little until they are finished eating.

The afternoon goes by too quickly, and people slowly drift away, reluctant to leave behind the peaceful serenity of a gathering for which strawberry shortcake is just an excuse.



Members of the Hollis Women's Club ladle on the strawberries and whipped cream.



Eighteen-month-old Sara Lieblich quickly dispatched the strawberry sundae held by her father, Dr. Mark Lieblich.



Clarinetist Rochelle Goren concentrates on the music. (Staff Photos by Frederick Waterman)



Melissa Goren, 4, with a Strawberry Shortcake emblem on her playsuit.



Shortcake fans of all ages lined up to pay their \$1.50 for the main attraction at the Hollis Strawberry Festival.



Waiting for leftovers, or a chance to lick an almost-empty bowl, sits this canine.