

It's certainly a small world for PCHS Marching Band

By Deborah Young

While the Port Chester High School Marching Band enlivened the streets of Coral Gables, Fla. during the Junior Orange Bowl Parade on Dec. 31, several counties away in Orlando, Disney World characters joined hands and sang "It's a Small World After All."

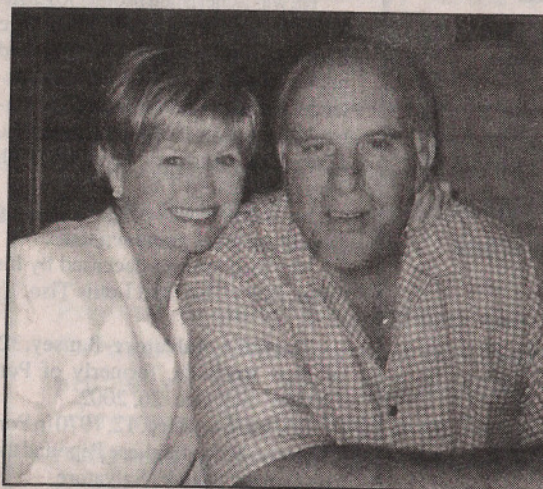
As it turns out, for Port Chesterites, it is indeed a small world.

Jill Beach, one of the two parade announcers, has a very personal connection to Port Chester. Her boyfriend grew up in the village, attended Port Chester High School, and even played in the band.

"I didn't hear it, but a couple of people said they heard an announcer say they grew up here," said Port Chester High School Band Association President Domenic Carriero. "We wanted to see if it was true."

They heard almost correctly. The connection is just one step removed.

Jill Beach, a former Miami news anchor who has been an announcer for the Junior Orange Bowl



Miami, Fla. TV personality Jill Beach with her boyfriend Stuart Meyers, who is originally from Port Chester.



Junior Orange Bowl Parade announcers Jill Beach of Jill Beach Productions and Joe Keffe, video production manager for the City of Coral Gables, are seated in the parade grandstands.

Parade for six years, said the moment she noticed Port Chester's name in the band lineup she called her boyfriend, Stuart Meyers.

"I called Stuart and said, 'Guess who is going to be in the parade?'" she said.

Although he was on business and couldn't make it to the actual procession, he was elated to hear, said Beach, who now owns an independent video production and media training company.

"He always tells people he's from Port Chester. He's very proud of his hometown," she said. "We went back there just a year ago October and he showed me the school and everything. He is a real success story."

Meyers, who grew up on Fairview Avenue as Stuart Meyeroff, graduated from Port Chester High School in 1959. He went on to the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, earned a Master's from Columbia and lived in New York City, Chicago, and Connecticut. He has worked in finance, accounting and as a top level consultant on corporate mergers and acquisitions. In 1983 he moved to

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Florida. Ten years ago, he started The Cornerstone Group—a real estate business which now owns and operates more than 13,000 apartments across the state. He has two children from previous marriages.

Meyers said his experiences in Port Chester schools gave him the foundation he needed for success in business.

"I think public high school education is a wonderful preparation for life," he said. "You meet people from a broad cross-section of life, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, religions."

Port Chester High School was and still is a perfect example of that sort of introduction into the real world, he said.

"I played drums in the band with so many different kids," said Meyers. "It was great because I was also in the orchestra."

Although he gave up drumming, his music education was not lost on him, he said. He picked up the piano later in life and still plays in his free time.

And like so many of the current Port Chester High School students who performed at the Orange Bowl, the marching band was just one of Meyer's extracur-

ricular activities.

He said he used to have to juggle hats as a drummer in the band and as a football player.

"I also played football," he said. "I was always a second or third stringer, but I liked it."

His coach, Ralph Friedgen, knew how to push them, he remembered.

"His son is now the coach of University of Maryland," he said. "I remember him running around, everyone called him little Ralphie."

Meyers participated in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade during his tenure in the PCHS band, as the group will do again in 2003. He said he can easily imagine what it must have felt like for this year's band as they strutted through the balmy streets in their red, white and navy uniforms.

"I remember performing in New York City," he said. "I'm sure a trip down to Florida, and doing that over the holiday must have been great."

The entire parade was broadcast on Coral Gables Channel 18, announced by Jill Beach and Joe Keffe. The Port Chester school district is in the process of securing a copy of the footage to broadcast on local educational access channel 74.