

## Clifton Marches to Different Drummer on 4th

By Barbara Carton Washington Post Staff Writer  
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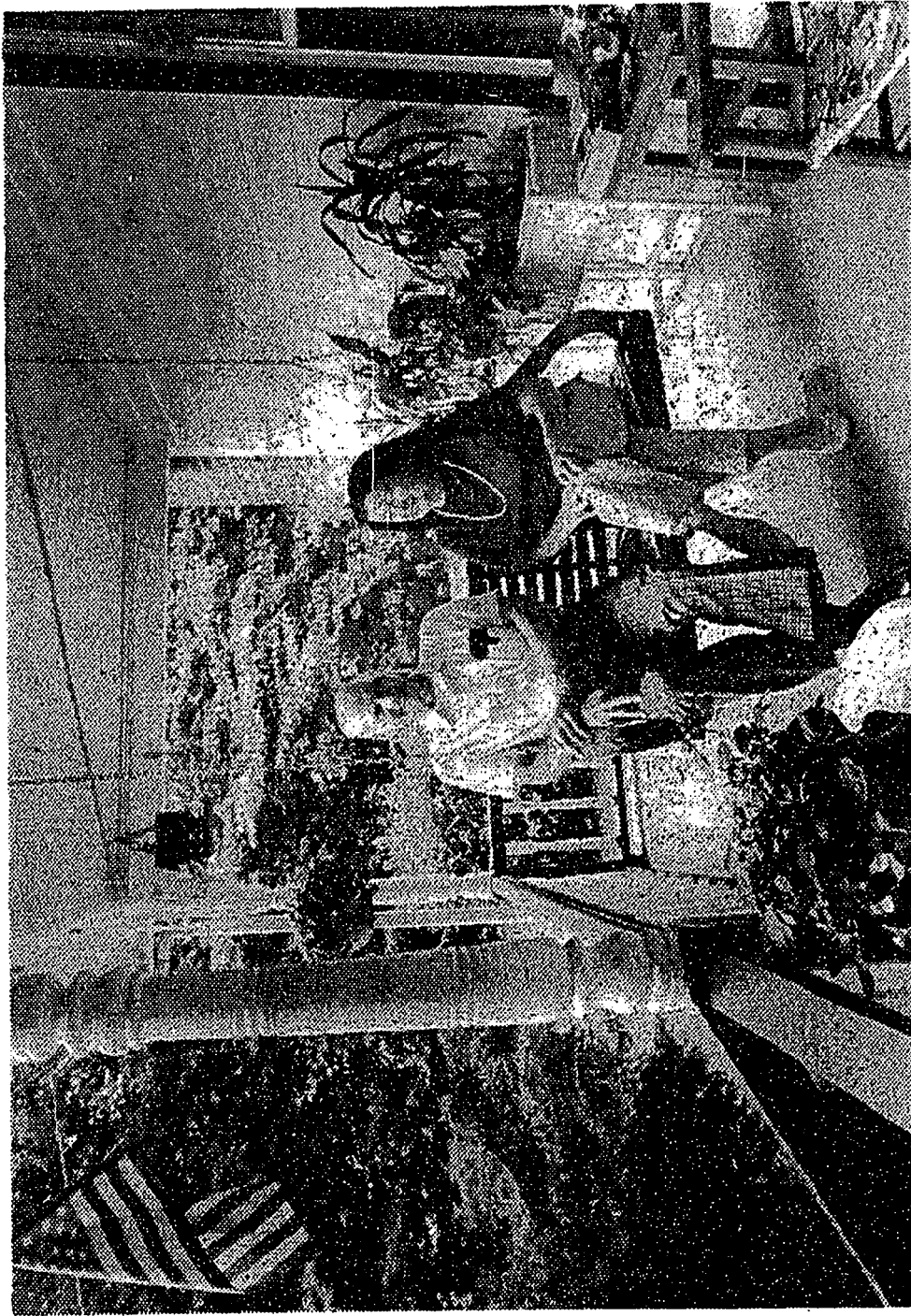
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John Mahoney, a 71-year-old retired corrections officer from Fairfax County, says he hasn't visited the District of Columbia for at least 16 years, and he has no desire to go there today—not for fireworks, not for parades, not for the Beach Boys.

His wife, Ruth, 62, who worked for years as a staff secretary on Capitol Hill, including for Lyndon B. Johnson, agrees fully. "I went to D.C. for 30 years, and as far away as I can stay from it, the better," she said. "Our Fourth of Julys are quiet, and that's why I like them."

The Mahoneys live in Clifton, the smallest town in Fairfax (population 180) and only 45 minutes from the District. It's a tidy town with clapboard houses and geranium pots—a place where 81-year-old Louise Gibson remembers when Anna Sprouse, the 62-year-old postal clerk, was born. Clifton has a general store, an empty hotel and its own brand of July 4 fun.

First, there's the three-block parade, which starts at 2 p.m. and winds from the firehouse to the ground. That will be followed "socializing in playground," according to the July 4 schedule published in the Clifton Clatter ("All news that fits, we print"). Members of Clifton's Gentleman's Club, who are known most for their civic contributions and



John and Ruth Mahoney avoid crowds and noise by staying on porch in small Fairfax County town of Clifton.

their poker-playing and chili-cooking skills, will also steam-smoke five fresh hams for the annual potluck picnic.

And, at 9 p.m., there will be

fireworks in the park, touched off by volunteers, including Mayor Wayne Nickum, who is an Internal Revenue Service agent in his other life.

People aren't talking much about the fireworks. Several years ago a newspaper touted Clifton's display, and tourists

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# A Quiet Fourth in Clifton

CLIFTON, From C6

from afar descended upon the tiny town of 68 homes, clogging roads and trampling front yards.

"This year, the Clifton Clatter is careful to note that the town's fireworks will be "non-aerial," or, in other words, purchased from ordinary roadside stands, and lacking the stratospheric pink whirls and orange spark showers of more professional displays.

"Which is just how everybody in Clifton wants the Fourth. Slow. Quiet. No crowds. No jazz concerts, hot air balloon rides or Nigerian stilt-walkers. Just an old-fashioned holiday of crepe paper and flags, family and longtime friends.

"I've never been into the city too many times," said Nellie Fairfax, who has lived 41 of her 75 years in Clifton, and who spent part of yesterday afternoon in a rocking chair on the Mahoneys' front porch. "I wouldn't know anything about get-

ting around the city. Also, I don't think it's safe to go in there."

Sprouse, the postal clerk, said she went into the District for a July 4 celebration about 10 years ago. She took a break from mail-sorting to remember the city's large crowds, traffic and parking problems. "I'm much happier out here," she said.

"Don't come asking me, because I don't want to go in no city," said Louise Gibson, who walked along Main Street in front of the Heart in Hand restaurant yesterday afternoon.

Mac Arnold, a lawyer, said he prefers to stay in Clifton because the events are family-oriented. "Also, I never liked the Beach Boys," he joked.

Insurance agency owner Rick Dygve said he used to go to the Mall when he was younger, but he has tired of traffic and noise. "And, there are a lot of people drinking," he said.

"At least, if you drink in Clifton, you can walk home."



LOUISE GIBSON  
... won't go into District

Lee Ruck, an attorney for the National Association of Counties, said there is "no way" anybody could persuade him to drive into the District for the Fourth of July. "I'm getting a little long in the tooth for 700,000 people," he said.

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