

Park event fetes Cinco de Mayo and mothers

By HEIDI VAN ZANT
Times Staff Writer

MENLO PARK — Organizers expect up to 8,000 people to attend Sunday's combined celebration of Cinco de Mayo and Mother's Day at Flood Park.

"It's an event that everybody should see. You certainly do not have to be Latino," spokesman Fernando Vega said Wednesday.

There will be food booths, arts and crafts exhibits, and entertainment.

The festival runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 215 Bay Road, reached by taking Marsh Road off of Highway 101.

Hispanos Unidos, the community group sponsoring the celebration, picked Sunday so that there will be no conflicts with other Cinco de Mayo events today and Saturday.

"This will be the only game in town," Vega said.

The Spanish-language radio station KRBG of Fremont, another sponsor, has been publicizing the event.

Vega expects to draw people from the Peninsula, East Bay and San Jose.

In years past the Cinco de Mayo commemorations on the Peninsula have drawn no more than 300 people, according to Vega.

seen organized in the past 30 years," he added. "We just hope the weather is nice."

Nearly 40 vendors will set up booths in the baseball outfield at Flood Park.

There will be picnicking at adjacent tables throughout the park.

"We expect a lot of families. There will be balloons for sale for the children and flowers for the mothers," Vega said.

Raffle tickets will be sold for \$1. Prizes include a television set donated by Browning-Ferris Industries, a VCR by Maria Brandsford, and a stereo radio from Azteca Restaurant.

Information booths will distribute material on Canada College, senior services and Hispanic activities.

Local and visiting singers and dancers will perform, in addition to the Baile Folklorico group from East Palo Alto.

"It's a fantastic program," Vega promised. "It will be a day of education. (People) will see what the culture is all about."

The Cinco de Mayo celebration is costing an estimated \$15,000.

Hispanos Unidos will recoup those costs through the raffle, by renting booths and by selling beer.



Two youths perform a Mexican folk dance at Fair Oaks Community Center.

Times Photo by Mike Russell

May 5 victory united the Mexican people



Tony Gonzales

Editor's note: The author of this article, written at the request of The Times, holds a doctor's degree in philosophy and is director of bilingual education and ESL (English as a second language) services for the San Mateo County Office of Education. He also is active in the Hispanos Unidos group.

By TONY M. GONZALES

May 5, 1862, marks the day that the Mexican army, under General Zaragoza, defeated the French army at Puebla.

For 300 years Mexico was under Spanish rule and had no real military or economic strength of her own. In 1821, independence was won and the country struggled to survive as a new nation. Spain, England and France loaned large sums of money to Mexico. In 1861, Benito

Juarez became president of a country torn by wars and in economic shambles. On July 17, 1861, he suspended payments of government loans, foreign and domestic, for a period of two years to allow time to reorganize the government. This act was used as a pretext by France, England and Spain to demand immediate payment on loans by a show of military forces.

On Jan. 6, 1862, the British landed 700 marines and the French 2,500 soldiers, thus joining Spain, which had earlier landed 6,000 troops in Vera Cruz. What Spain and England did not know was that Napoleon III, ruler of France, was seeking more than a settlement of claims. His dream was an empire in Latin America with Mexico as a starting point. When they realized this, England and Spain

withdrew from Mexico. The preoccupation of the United States with her own Civil War precluded the possibility of her enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine; thus Napoleon was left free to carry out his plans. It was then that President Juarez summoned Mexico to the defense of its independence.

On the morning of May 5, 1862, the French forces swept across the rugged countryside to bombard and attack the two forts of Puebla where the Mexican forces were making their stand, but the Mexicans fought fiercely and defeated the more numerous French forces. Although the French later became successful in conquering Mexico and stayed there until 1867, this defeat showed the world that Mexico was ready to defend its freedom. The Battle of Puebla united the

Mexican people in the fight for freedom and stirred their patriotism to continue resisting the French invasion and eventually regain their independence.

May 5 is celebrated today in Mexico as the anniversary of that victorious battle over the French in 1862. It is the second most important national holiday, after Sept. 16, Independence Day. In the city of Puebla, a simulated battle is usually staged to commemorate the event. All of the important characters are portrayed and the performance is called Batalla de Cinco de Mayo. Politicians are heard giving speeches, and patriotic songs and dances are performed. It is an important holiday because it reminds the Mexican people of their first successful defense against the French.

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