

THE SHRIMPOREE, SPACE CENTER ROTARY'S MAJOR FUND-RAISER

President Rex Bailey, appointed an ad-hoc committee in December 1973, to study the feasibility of a shrimp boil and auction. There are very few records of this committee; however, Blastoff in Feb. 1974, lists an Angleton Shrimp Boil, which must have been part of the committee's search.

Early in 1974, the ad hoc committee stated that 199 per cent would be required from members in planning a Space Center shrimp boil. Sixteen committees were required in planning, procurement, preparation, and finally cleanup. Activities were to start two months prior to the event. Brazosport had ten years of success and a net profit of approximately \$10,000 in 1973. Galveston County Park was selected as the site; July 20, the date. Approximately 3,000 dinners were served and the net profit was \$7,000. The Emergency Corps received \$3,500 for a high-dome ambulance cover.

An undated letter is another major clue in the search for Shrimporee's beginnings:

Marvin Matthews, who is deceased and a former president of Space Center Rotary, was the founder of the Space Center Rotary Club Shrimporee and Auction. A friend of his told him about the Brazosport Rotary Fishery and Auction. Marvin got several people in the club to go down and watch their event. They were very impressed. Along with them on that trip were Al Jowid and Don Ojick. The idea for the event was proposed to the club board and approved. Marvin became chairman, Al Jowid volunteered to fry fish and Don Augic agreed to handle the auction. Those involved in the planning felt that the hard work during the event would give the members an excellent opportunity to get to know each other better whether it made an money or not. We accomplished both goals.

The auction committee did not have a lot of hope until Mr. McCree with McCree Ford heard about the event. He was a member of the Dickinson Rotary Club and he wanted to shake his club into action so he donated a used car. This woke the committee up and we learned the sky was the limit. We went to Norman Frede and Chuck Miller, and they donated used cars. Both Norman and Chuck have continued to do this every year. Their contributions have been enormous.

Another major contributor has been Heney Ellen Clark, who was Marvin Matthews's girlfriend. Since the beginning, she has called on artists and art studios with great success.

Dan Frick (?) was the chairman of the Auction Committee for several years. They Jim Hargrove took over for a few years and now Jerry Smith in his second year as chairman.

The auction items that sell are sometimes hard to understand, but some of the items that do sell well are popular dolls, stuffed animals (the larger the better), golf clubs, shotguns, cars, paintings, jewelry, video games and bicycles. Small-dollar items and gift certificates are very difficult to sell at reasonable prices, and often are not worth the time expended.

We have had several auctioneers over the years, but Harris County Commissioner Jim Fonteno has by far been the best. Judge Steven Phelps has long been Jim's assistant and has made a large contribution. The giving of their time and talent has meant a great deal to the success of the auction."

LETTER UNSIGNED

(In the club archives are a large binder full of snapshots of that first Shrimporee and a very complete record of the 1981 Shrimporee held at Galveston County Park).

Since its inauguration in 1974, Space Center Rotary has had a Shrimporee and Auction as its major fund-raiser of the year. In Sept. 1987, there was a Golf Team Championship at South Shore Harbor County Club. Since 1987, the club has sponsored the Shrimporee 5000, a 5K wheelchair race. In a later year (no year given) it was combined with a fun run. The flyer for the 17th annual Shrimporee and auction, Sept. 29, 1990, states that in the last sixteen years the club has raised in excess of \$350,000, which mainly has gone to help local charities such as Meals on Wheels, Interfaith Caring Ministries, Bridgeport, and the Ed White Youth Center, etc. Since 1990 other ideas have been tested, such as a Music Jamboree on May 21, 1994 at the Cap Landolt Pavilion at Clear Lake Park, a raffle booth at the Pasadena Fair Grounds (April 1994)?; a raffle booth and a food booth at the Lions Club Village Fair (May 7-8, 1994).