

Blastoff October 18, 2010

Reflections on Shrimporee 37

by Jerrold Dewease

Early Sunday morning I walked through Landolt Pavilion and surrounding park area noticing how clean and quite it was with all the 600 park chairs stacked and stored. It was the beginning of a beautiful day, much like the two days before. The rented tent, 80 rented tables nearly stacked behind the pavilion, and the ice trailer were about all that remained from the two days before. Along the fence in the back was a large pile of black trash bags with 8 clear bags full of aluminum cans and plastic bottles next to them. A couple of things came to mind, one was what a herculean job the student volunteers and scouts did keeping the bags picked up and moved out; and secondly, if it were not for Courtney Lindberg's continued efforts, these recyclable items would not be here.

I thought how one day makes a difference? This time yesterday there were 1000 pounds of frozen shrimp, 350 pounds of sausage, about 50 gallons of beans, cases of soft drinks and bottled water, 2000 ears of frozen corn, wieners; and associated cooking and serving supplies such as aluminum pans, carry out containers, paper plates, aprons, towels, crab boil, sauces, bread and buns, cutlery kits, charcoal, paper plates, and chips lining the kitchen walls. The shrimp cooker, cooling table, propane tanks, utensils, trays and other associated items were brought and unloaded Friday afternoon, setup and ready to go. The ice trailer ordered by Vic Maria also came Friday with 100 forty pound sacks of ice.

Yesterday at this time, Jean Walker was lighting the charcoal for the two warming grills, Bill Lowes was setting up the two meat slicing machines, and Bill Taylor making sure the right thing was in the right place at the right time. The burners were being lit for the shrimp cooker under the auspices of Geoff Atwater and Bob Taggart who did a tremendous job of cooking during Bill Geissler's absence. Soon leaders from the CCISD and Boy Scouts arrived with dozens of volunteers. In about two hours they have transformed the pavilion into our normal Shrimporee arrangement, with 70 tables and 400 chairs set up for the eating area, ten tables for the silent auction and 200 chairs for the live auction guests. The 80 rented tables had been placed and were being covered with plastic readying them for the food preparation and sales. The big cooker and smoker rig with 1000 pounds of cooked, but frozen, brisket soon arrived and was placed by the kitchen. Rotarians, adult volunteers, student volunteers, Interactors, and Rotaractors continued to come in

Trucks and SUV's began to arrive filled with auction items. Jerry Smith and Alan Wylie strategically placed the live auction items in the exact place on and in front of the pavilion stage. Rae DeCastro set up the silent auction tables and made sure all the arrangements and baskets were just right. Signs were going up everywhere with the help of Dick Meyer, Dennis Paul, and volunteers. The Women of Rotary were bringing all kinds of sweet goodies and setting up the cotton candy and popcorn machines under the guidance of Micki Czarnik. Chief Deputy Phil Sandlin and his people begin to arrive to establish security for the area. Soon the beer kegs were located at the pavilion, kitchen, and shrimp boil area. John Branch took over the beer sales this year. Gary Johnson set up his wine sales table between the beer and the sweet table. Bottled water and soft drinks were being iced down getting ready for Rafael Lugo to start the sales; corn being cooked in a special recipe by Billy Smith; and hot dogs being readied to serve by Olive Murphy and Kathy Dooley. Three inflatables, a jumper, slide, and obstacle course, arrived for the children's activities and were located on the grassy area behind the pavilion under the watchful eyes of Marc Schneider. The shaved ice trailer arrived and was placed adjacent to the sweet tables.

At 10:30 the band began to play as food preparations began to come together at Marilyn Musial's serving lines being readied for the eleven o'clock hour. Roger Donnelly set up the raffle sales table and Alice May-Sexton started the raffle sales. Owen Morris and Art Wood set up the bidders' and VIP's registration table. At eleven guests began to arrive and the 37th Shrimporee officially began. At noon Greg Smith kicked off the silent auction with notice that the first table was closing. Then at 1 o'clock Scott Rainey started the live auction recognizing the two auctioneers, Judge Louie Ditta and Commissioner Steve Phelps. The live action continued until about 4 o'clock with a brief pause to draw for the raffle prize. Jessica McIntosh was the winner of the beautiful necklace from Lewis Jewelers. About 90 live auction items and about 25 silent auction items were auctioned off. There were several political visitors who were escorted by Kippy Caraway and Sheryl Berg. Mike Duckworth visited all the sales tables and closed out the sales with each one. Photos were taken all throughout the Shrimporee by Bob Mitchell, John Lee, Mary A. Cherry, and Peter Cronk (Pam Culpepper). Shrimporee Chair, Mike Dennard, was all over the place shoring up areas in need and Ambassador of Good Will Coney was mixing with the guests and workers.

About 4 o'clock it was all over but the cleanup. The volunteers had the area restored to the park arrangement, kitchen and serving utensils cleaned, rented tables gathered and stacked for return, and the area general cleaned up by 5. Excess food was given to Bay Area Turning Point.

Now a day later, the sound of music; the hum of guests, their family and friends laughing and talking; the auctioneer calling for bids; and the hawkers recognizing a bid are all silent; the laughter of children quiet and their running around with bright colored hair and their faces painted gone; and Scott Rainey emceeding done for another year.

But memories live on; there were things about this Shrimporee that I will remember. The food was absolutely delicious, thanks to Brian Ellis, wife Alice, and all involved in cooking and preparations; the volunteers were outstanding, thanks to Nancy Mallini and Art Oswald and all the support from the CCISD and Boy Scouts; and I saw old friends Murray Epstein, Dennis Dillon, and Earl and Terrilee Maudlin. There was also a great moment when the three of our Club members who had been district governors, Floyd Boze, Billy Weseman (wife Ann), and Suzi Howe (husband Bill) were together and Mary Alys took a picture. I enjoyed the visit with District 5890 Governor Sunny and wife Rashmi Sharma as well as Assistant District 5890 Governor Chris Schneider. It was good to see Harris County Precinct 8 Constable Bill Bailey. Although not said I suspect he was checking on his 55 gallon tea keg. The Constable loaned the use of the keg, and furnished the tea, cups and sweetener.

But perhaps most rewarding was that I saw folks just fellowshiping. For one, the kitchen work was essentially completed by 1 pm, but folks stayed on, gathered together, and just talked for a while before the final cleanup. Hopefully our club members got to know the new members better and the new members got to know the older members better. Also saw the third generation of our members there, guess they were being acclimated early to Rotary. Perhaps the most rewarding were the comments I received from one to the Scout troops leader. I was thanking them for their support and they said we will be back next year. We appreciate what you are doing demonstrating what community service is all about for the young folks. Also we like the scouts to be around these people, they are good examples for them. And what about the wonderful student volunteers, they were hard working, well behaved, and courteous, and did not hesitate to do what was asked of them. What a great bunch of young women and men. And I can't say enough about the faithful adult volunteers who come year after year. Just thanks. And thanks to our faithful members who work and make the Shrimporee what it is.

And in closing I want to express my appreciation for those of you who are getting up in age and still visit and some even work the Shrimporee. I know it is difficult to come, but you do and you are always an encouragement to the rest of us when we see you at the Shrimporee and at the Club meetings.

Well Rotarians, it was a great day. Mark on your calendars October 15, 2011, the date for Shrimporee 38. Marilyn is beginning to think about it already. However for now she is compiling the financial data on Shrimporee 37.