

Big Registration and loss of a Snowbird Giant



The anticipation for the Monday, January 3 “Big Registration” had been extremely high.

Would the COVID virus and its variants keep people away? Or would the fact that Florida is “open for business” draw a flock of newcomers? Early registrations had been down by about one hundred members and the board of directors have prepared for a smaller than usual group. Dues were raised to insure coverage of such things as rent, insurance, and entertainment. Would the higher fees be a factor?

As it turned out, both the optimists and the pessimists were right – and wrong!

There was no line “out the door” as in past years. No rash of registrants overwhelming the workers. There was, however, a constant and steady stream of people trickling through the Roost. Nearly 400 people registered, bringing the total number to over 500 members. Not great, but better than many had expected.

Our optimistic past president George Olson would have been pleased. Sadly, George passed away on December 23. He was elected to the board of directors in 2011, and served as club president for the 2013/2014 season. He continued to volunteer in many ways every year thereafter.



“Everyone knew George,” club secretary Cindy Varnell exclaimed. “No matter where he went, people shouted, ‘Hi George!’ He sometimes felt bad because he didn’t know who they all were, but he had such a friendly face, everyone felt like he was their friend.”

Cindy and Ray Varnell are the chairs of both the T.G.I.T. (Thank Goodness it’s Tuesday) Parties, and the Holiday Boat Parade Party, but, the batons for both events were passed on to them from George and his wife Barb. “In 2011 the board initiated the T.G.I.T. parties, and George, who was second VP at the time, became chair”, Cindy said. “He did everything from securing the place to delivering all the snacks and drinks and everything in between.” She and Ray, along with Pete and Diane Sikkenga, stepped in to help out – and all have continued to



hone the immensely popular event. “He was my mentor,” Cindy said. “He was patient and kind and very good at explaining what needed to be done and how to do it.”

George was also a member of the registration committee, the greeters committee, and the nomination committee. Is it any wonder that so many snowbirds felt a kinship with him? He, and his warm, friendly smile will be sorely missed.

A few important reminders:

Registration will take place at the Roost (Destin Community Center) on Monday, January 10, from 10 a.m. to noon.

Tuesday’s meetings (8:30 and 11:00 a.m.) will feature snowbird favorite David Hall. David is a singer whose repertoire knows no limits. He is also a master of the keyboards and an awesome guitarist.

David will also entertain us from 3 to 6 p.m. at Lulu’s, on Legendary Marina Drive, for the season’s first T.G.I.T. party. The cost is \$5 at the door. Be sure to bring your membership badge to show at the door.

The Singles Friendship Club will meet for lunch at The Surf Hut, following Tuesday’s 11:00 meeting.

The first 18-hole golf outing will be Sunday, January 16, at Regatta Bay. Contact Joe Pierce at snowbirdgolf@gmail.com for more information.

Storage lockers will be open for pick-up on Saturdays, January 8, 15, and 22, from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.

As always, check the website, “TheDestinSnowbirds.com” for more updated information.