

## FIRST BIG EVENTS



The Destin snowbird season's first big event, The Past President's Appreciation Dinner, was held on Monday, December 6, at McGuire's Irish Pub. Traditionally, the current president chooses the venue for the event. However, back in 2015, Tom Franklin was enjoying lunch at the pub with fellow snowbird Arnie Aeschleman, when Arnie suggested that McGuire's would be a great spot. He was right, and the dinner has been held there ever since. The seven past presidents who were honored included Grace Fostmeier (2003-2004), Don Cooksey (2005-2006), Tom Franklin (2015-2016), Dean Harper (2016-2017), Charles Cassell (2017-2018),

Jackie Roberson (2018-2019), and Ted Spring (2019-2020). Grace held the place of honor as the most senior past-president in attendance. No one could believe that she was 90-something years old. Her secrets for a sharp mind and youthful spirit were highly sought after. Obviously, being involved has something to do with it. From the day Grace joined the snowbird club in the 1990's she has volunteered to serve. First, she was the chair of the Friendship Club. Next, she chaired the Registration committee. And, of course, she went on to become a board member serving as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> vice-presidents before taking the gavel as president. After her year as club leader, she went back to serving as registration chair. Grace is a perfect example of why this annual dinner means so much.



The following day, Tuesday, December 7, was the third snowbird meeting of the season. The entertainment, Jones & Company, was thought to be a newcomer. However, a little research uncovered the fact that Cheryl Jones, lead singer of the group, entertained the snowbirds back in 1998 when she was a part of the Okaloosa-Walton Community College Jazz Band. Cheryl and her band were enjoyably energizing, offering a nice mix of Motown, Holiday and even some original tunes. Cindy Varnell, chairperson for the very popular T.G.I.T. (Thank Goodness it's Tuesday) parties, wasted no

time in securing the group for a party next season.

Saturday, December 11, the snowbirds joined the city of Destin in welcoming the Holiday Season with the annual Christmas parade down Emerald Coast Parkway. More than a dozen snowbird elves walked beside Dean Harper's cheerfully decorated truck, passing out candy to the children, and answering many of the adult's questions on how to become a Destin snowbird. Chairman and past-president Charles Cassell did an awesome job in organizing the event. He was even able to secure the famously warm Florida sunshine, which was greatly appreciated by his fellow snowbirds from the north.





Sunday was another popular early-season snowbird event, the annual Lighted Boat Parade. The snowbirds congregated at Brotula's, and the consensus was unanimous that it was a huge success. The majority of snowbirds don't arrive until after the holidays, yet this event tends to nearly sell-out every year, and this COVID-sensitive season was no exception. Word is out: chairpersons Ray and Cindy Varnell know how to throw a great party.

This coming Monday, December 13, will be the last chance to register until the Big Registration on Monday, January 3, 2022. Tuesday, December 14, will be the last snowbird meeting of 2021. The entertainment finale will be Emerald Coast Community Band. Nancy Thiele will work her magic again and have us singing and dancing our way into the holiday season. Unfortunately, the usual craft show has been postponed to another meeting, but our wonderful vendors just might be able to help come up with some creative Christmas gift ideas.

After this week, the snowbird season will take a nearly three-week break for the holidays, but don't get too comfortable on your couches, the Destin snowbird fun is only just beginning.