

PARADES!!!

It was nearly 70 degrees with beautiful blue skies as a record number of floats and walkers paraded down Emerald Coast Parkway from Main Street to Stahlman Ave. for Destin's 35th Annual Christmas Street Parade. It marked the 12th year of participation for the Destin snowbird club. Volunteer walkers had no problem finding our snowbird float in the starting line-up. As usual, it was a decked-out "Dean Harper specialty" pick-up truck.



"This year's wasn't really so special," Harper conceded. Unlike last year's vintage '54 Chevy, it was just a 2014 GMC. But it was huge. It was a proud addition to the 95 total floats that made the day such an enormous success.

"It was the largest turnout I've seen in my five to six years of chairing the event," said snowbird organizer Charles Cassell. "We ran out of candy before the end, but I observed that almost all the floats in front of us ran out too."

The decision had been made to pass out candy instead of the beads that had always been handed out in the past. The streets appeared to be much cleaner and the children seemed to be more appreciative. No doubt, the area dentists will be more appreciative as well.



Building upon the enjoyment of the Christmas Street Parade was the following day's Holiday on the Harbor Lighted Boat Parade. This was the 33rd annual boat parade for Destin and, again the 12th year of participation for the Destin Snowbirds. Well, that's not entirely true.

"We decorated our own boat for the parade about 20 years ago," said Don Cooksey. Don was snowbird president back in the 2005/2006 season, but this was back when he and his wife Carol had just joined the club. "We decorated the fishing boat, 'Sweet Jody,'" he said. There were only about four or five of us and it didn't last because it was a lot of work and the weather didn't always cooperate."



No one complained about last Sunday's weather, nor the new venue. Due to the seasonal closing of the Crab Island Cantina, the dinner party was moved to Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer.

"We've received nothing but compliments," said Cindy Varnell who, along with her husband Ray, chaired the sold-out event. "I think everyone appreciates being inside where it's comfortable. Too many remember being freezing cold last year," she said. While it wasn't cold, it was dark, and for those who wandered outside for a better view of the decorated boats, heed needed to be taken because





the viewing deck was not protected by a rail. Fortunately, no one fell into the water, but some offered to submit a request for some form of signage next year. After all, they agreed, we're snowbirds, not spring chickens.

The snowbird club will begin a two week hiatus. Many are planning to travel home or to another destination for the holidays. Some won't be back until the Big Registration on Monday, January 6, or at one of the Tuesday morning meetings, 8:30 or 11 a.m. on January 7. If that includes you, safe travels! Don't forget to check our website while you're away at www.destinsnowbirds.org.

From my home to yours, Merry Christmas, and as Tiny Tim famously uttered, "God bless us, every one!"