

2009 FCRV RETIREE RALLY AT CASA GRANDE, ARIZONA

Warm weather and clear skies greeted the 171 camping units and 10 camp pass users attending FCRV's 38th annual Retiree Rally at the Pinal County Fairgrounds , February 24 – 28 at Casa Grande, Arizona.

At Monday evening's opening ceremonies, rally chairmen, Melvin and Nancy Coy welcomed everyone and Walter Shealy offered a prayer. The colors / flags were posted and the American and Canadian anthems were sung. The Coys and 2008 International Retiree King and Queen, Mike and Judy Hiatt cut the opening ribbon. Also on stage were FCRV President, Jack Smye and his wife, Sonya. Casa Grande Mayor, Bob Jackson talked about Casa Grande's growth and invited everyone to take the 9 mile drive into town to see the new shopping and dining facilities. Fairgrounds manager, Connie Lane also welcomed FCRV. FCRV Retiree Directors, Al and Barb Jurek also said hello and encouraged everyone to participate in the many activities. A first timers meeting was held earlier for the approximately 83 new folks (many from Colorado).

John and Delores Derrick (SC '04) introduced the past International Retiree Kings and Queens attending including, Peter & Jane Brown, FL '97, Jim & Shirley Ealey, PA '98, Ralph & Betty Brunner, OH '03, Bob & Nancy Linder, MI '06, and Mike & Judy Hiatt, IA, '08. This year's three candidates for King and Queen were introduced and their resumes were presented. They are Frank & Kay Newman, MI, David & Connie Long, KS, and Billy & Penny Ramlow, FL. Not competing were Robert & Arlis Devriendt, NE.

Entertainment was provided by Indian Skies Snowbird Band who led a sing along accompanied by electronic keyboard and homemade instruments. They played a special waltz for the Kings and Queens. The group performs for donations which they then give to local children's charities.

The evening ended with ANPAC giving away a highway emergency kit and Bob and Lynda Cavers drawing several door prizes donated by local businesses.

Tuesday was Mardi Gras day at the rally. Lots of golf carts, individuals, and chapter groups, were decorated and costumed in the colors and beads of Mardi Gras for the 6 p.m. parade through the grounds. Following the parade everyone assembled in building 4 for announcements. The vendors present were introduced by FCRV Commercial Director, Paul Parsley. They included ANPAC Insurance, Beanie Haven, Davon Products, Hog On A Log, Inter-Vac Designs, K&P Enterprises, MASA, M&B Enterprises, Musical Totes, Originals By Becky, Tupperware, Windshield Chip Repair, ZRI, Howard Sticks, and Tupperware.

Winners of the Mardi Gras site decorating contest were announced. They are Most Fantastic – Jim & Barbara Galvin, Greely, CO, Fantastic – Marvin Yancey, Salt Lake

City, UT, Good – Paul & Thelma Widger, Penrose, CO, Bill Newell & Rita Bull, Colorado Springs, CO, Jim & Sharon Everett, Colorado Springs, CO, Virleen Oliver, Salt Lake City, UT, and Jack & Sonya Smye, Oakville, Ontario.

The festive evening was capped with a “second line” parade led by Gerri Dantin from Louisiana over to building 3 where FCRVers from New Orleans and friends served red beans and rice and king cake. It was a warm evening and folks enjoyed the hospitality outside.

A Wednesday highlight was the Red Hatter’s luncheon hosted by Judy Hiatt and Nancy Linder. A new twist was added as the Red Hat Romeos (husbands) did the serving. Quiznos was contracted to supply the food. A new Queen Mum was selected. She is Carolyn Hall of Salt Lake City, Utah. A King Romeo was also selected. He is Don Prater of Grandview, Texas. Cutest red hat winner was Ellen Griffin of Indiana and the most individual hat was Cathy Connelly of Iowa. The most original award went to Bill Hatfield of Michigan and Bill Ramlow of Florida won best red tie. A rose was presented to several ladies by ‘roaming troubador’ Jack Smye who sang several songs. The affair concluded with door prizes and the Red Hatters gave \$96 to the food bank.

Wednesday evening, the memorial service to honor members who passed away during the past year was conducted by Chaplains, Walter and Marilyn Shealy. The FCRV Choir, led by Jim Bob Ealey sang “Ill Fly Away” and “God Will Take Care Of You.”

Transitioning into the FCRV Variety Show, Wilma Schroedel of Texas did sign language to the words of “America The Beautiful” as sung by Jim Bob and the audience. Wilma also recounted some experiences where she was helped by FCRV members. Also performing in the talent show were Bill Summers, MI, Lorraine Ealey, PA, Bill Stirewalt, NC, Eldon & Glenda Sellers, IA, Penny Ramlow, FL, Bob Cavers, NY, Joy Searcy, TX, Herb Wilson, ON, Jim Bob Ealey, PA, and Jack Smye, ON who also served as MC.

Thursday afternoon was time for the annual ice cream social where ballots were collected for the king and queen election. Outgoing International Retiree King and Queen, Mike and Judy Hiatt hosted a thank you hospitality with the help of Iowa members.

Many campers including the Kentucky Colonels went out for dinner in Casa Grande Thursday afternoon. Prior to the evening entertainment more door prizes were drawn and the grand prize, a latch hook desert scene wall hanging was displayed. It was hand made by rally chairperson, Nancy Coy. Also displayed was a large mural painted by Becky Fletcher. Jack Smye introduced 21 members of the FCRV Executive Board attending the rally. Entertainment was provided by Whistle Stop, a five piece family blue grass band from Phoenix. Their state champion banjo player did some original tunes as did the talented mother and daughters. The group received a standing ovation.

Friday afternoon a general Retirees meeting was led by Al Jurek. He invited everyone to next year's rally at Ladson, South Carolina March 22-28 and to the 2011 rally in Canton, Texas March 23-29. He also thanked this year's volunteers for a successful rally. Don Plummer reported that there were 83 first timers at this year's rally. A news release was read indicating that the government stimulus sales tax rebate on RVs only applies to motorized RV's and can only be taken off the first \$49,500 of the purchase price.

The second evening meal was served Friday, catered by the Atlasta Company from Phoenix. Peter and Jane Brown were in charge of food service.

Friday evening's activity was the crowning of the new International Retiree King and Queen and the reception. John and Delores Derrick introduced the past Kings and Queens in attendance. The 2008 King and Queen, Mike and Judy Hiatt of Iowa recounted their travels from the past year in their Jeep with a tailgate tent. Of course it rained at several of their campouts. The results of the voting were: 2nd Runner-up, Frank and Kay Newman of Michigan, 1st Runner-up, Billy and Penny Ramlow, Florida, and crowned for 2009, David and Connie Long of Kansas. The Longs are profiled in the April Camping Today. Following the crowning, music was provided by Rick Moore's Sonoran Jazz Ensemble and hospitality was hosted by the YARS chapter.

Ongoing activities throughout the week also included crafts classes, seminars, exercise, group photos, Bible study, locator board, information station, insignia sales, biking, walking, commercial sales, and hospitalities. Hospitalities were presented by Michigan, Kansas, Florida, Iowa ('08 King & Queen thank you), South Carolina (2010 Retiree Rally hosts).

Saturday morning a large number of tables were filled for the chapter swap meet. Saturday afternoon was the big beanbag baseball playoff with Pennsylvania taking the championship.

Saturday evening began with the sports awards by Don and Shirl Prater. Finalists in card bingo, chicken foot, washer toss, skip-bo, hillbilly golf, bocce ball, cards, beab bag toss, and beanbag baseball are listed in a separate article along with the S.P.C. awards. Bob Linder presented the golf awards.

Earlier in the day 187 lap robes were distributed to five hospices, nursing homes, and others. John Fortune from Against Abuse, Inc. that aids domestic violence victims and children was on hand to receive some robes, many of which were hand made by FCRVers. Ashley and Gloria Taylor assisted by Barton Stehle and the YARS chapter were in charge of the project for the Retirees. They also manned the food bank which collected 446 lbs. of food and \$480 in cash. Representatives of the Casa Grande Food bank thanked FCRV from the stage.

Jim Bob Ealey was welcomed back to the rally Saturday evening after an overnight stay in the hospital due to an irregular heartbeat. He was released after some tests.

The Final door prizes were awarded including a lounge chair from Camping World which was won by Ralph and Betty Brunner, OH. The grand prize, Nancy Coy's latch hook wall hanging was won by Elton and Susan Speakman, UT. Penny Ramlow, who is taking over as rally registrar thanked Jerry and Cathy Leckrone for their 5 years as registration chairmen. The free camping for those who pre-registered at this year's rally for Ladson, SC was won by Eldon and Glenda Sellers, IA.

Rally Chairmen, Melvin and Nancy Coy of Indiana thanked all of the committee chairmen and the volunteers who did the numerous jobs. They also thanked the people who attended especially Colorado who had the largest number. The rally balance sheet is expected to end up in the black. Paul and Pat Parsley, SC were co-chairmen.

The parade was colorful and enthusiastic as always and included the states and provinces in attendance as well as International chapters such as Red Hatters, Full Timers, Kentucky Colonels, and YARS.

Prior to the parade, the colors were retired and Retiree Chaplain, Walter Shealy offered a prayer and led the singing of "God Be With You 'Til We Meet Again."