

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Mardi Gras Balls in Carroll County"

Carroll County Times Article for 30 January 1994

By Jay A. Graybeal

Rex, the King of the Carnival once said, "Snatched from the dull realities of life we gather to let loose and live." Mardi Gras participants were also commanded "Behind each Mask let there be a Smile and Behind each Smile a Heart Made Glad by the Immortal Spirit of Make Believe." Such was the spirit when nearly 200 participants gathered to celebrate the First Annual Mardi Gras Ball held at the Westminster Riding Club on February 18, 1966.

The event was sponsored by the St. Mary's Guild, Church of the Ascension in Westminster. Mrs. William DeAlton White was the Honorary Chairman and her committee consisted of Mrs. Edgar G. Barnes, Mrs. Wilfred Biegert Koch, Mrs. J. Byrd Norris, Jr., Mrs. Edgar Palmer, Mrs. William B. Dulany, Mrs. William L. Tribby and Mrs. Edward O. Weant, Jr. Music was by Rivers Chambers, the buffet of turkey and crabcakes was prepared by Benny's of Westminster, costumes by Dorothy Elderdice and the decorations were by Hildegarde Fillmore Smith of New York City.

Although the event promised a mid-winter evening of fun, it was a party with a purpose. Proceeds were donated to the newly-opened Carroll County General Hospital. The sponsor's intent was to create an annual ball which would contribute funds to a different charitable cause each year.

The 1966 Ball was a social and financial success. Guests paid \$5 to attend and after paying the expenses (music \$125, rental \$50, printing \$7, food \$1.75 per person, and decorations and masks \$30), a donation of \$438.70 was made to the Hospital.

The Second Annual Ball was even more popular and elaborate. Dr. Craig N. Schmall served as Master of Ceremonies for the 1967 Ball, held as a benefit for Building Fund of the Carroll County Retarded Children's Association. Prizes were awarded by a Judging Committee consisting of Dr. Schmall, Hildegarde Smith, Mrs. Brady O. Bryson, Mrs. George A. Grier and Mr. Eltinge Reifsnider. The winners were: Most original man, William McIntyre as the "Whistling Midget" Most beautiful woman, Mrs. Richard Snader as "A Southern Belle" Handsomest man, Theodore Jump as the head of the "Adams Family" Funniest Woman, Mrs. John Lewis as a "1890 Bathing Beauty" Funniest Couple, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Pyne as "Alice in Wonderland and Rabbitt" Most authentic couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Albertson, Jr. as "Nero and wife" and finally the best couple, Mr. and Mrs. G. Herbert Rice, Jr. , "1880s." A Carroll County Times photograph of the "Most original man" showed him wearing a huge paper hat, with a face painted on his stomach and wearing a coat and tie up to his waist. The caption noted that "Mr. McIntyre was later almost demolished when someone innocently offered him a cigarette."

Subsequent ball committees adopted different themes for their evening of festivities. The Third Ball (1968) was "A Festival at Camelot," the Fourth, "Lovers Through the Ages," Fifth, "Fairy Tales," Sixth, "Vive la Bagatelle," Seventh, "Around The World In Eighty Days," Eighth, "A Night At The Opera," and the Ninth, "Under The Big Top." Organizations receiving donations during those years were the Westminster Volunteer Fire Department, The Humane Society of Carroll County, Carroll County YMCA Summer Camp, Westminster Rescue Mission, Carroll County Committee for the Day Care of Children, Carroll County Public Library and the Ninth benefitted the Westminster Municipal Playground.

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The Historical Society of Carroll County has revived the annual ball tradition with its Mardi Gras Ball to be held at Wilhelm, Ltd., on February 18. This year's theme is "Meet Me on Bourbon Street." The benefit event is being chaired by Mrs. Maryl Harshey and Mrs. Martha Hyson. Their committee includes, Lib Graybeal, Dolly Snyder, Linda Greenberg, Chris Vincent, Doris Rasche, Carroll Swam, Lester Surber, Doris Pierce, Kathy Beaver and Jake Yingling. For ticket information please call Dolly Snyder 239-7164 or Lib Graybeal 374-2863.

Photo Caption: Cover of the program for the First Annual Mardi Gras Ball held at the Westminster Riding Club on February 18, 1966.