

Do Detroiters love the party?

By JUDITH BERNE

They keep saying that Detroit loves a good party, but I wanted to know where the party began.

Sure, there are "Welcome GOP" signs in Birmingham's shopping district, delegation parties in Bloomfield Hills and hoardes of delegates staying at Southfield and Troy hotels, but I wanted to know if nubs and bolts Detroiters know or care if "Detroit loves a good party."

So I drove down Woodward toward "the foot of Detroit" earlier this week. Restaurants and shops along Woodward from Royal Oak to the Boulevard were generally devoid of any red, white and blue designation.

There was the usual traffic congestion in Ferndale, tennis courts appeared busy at Palmer Park and luncheon crowds were thick at the Boulevard.

The Detroit Institute of Arts from the outside looked like it was anything but ready for a party — it's in the midst of re-landscaping and expansion.

FINALLY, a white and blue drape hung from a pizzeria just south of the art institute and a short block later the modest "Homemakers Pantry" boasted a green and white hand-painted sign declaring "Welcome delegate" — singular, not plural.

Well, it always takes a while to get a party going. The rows of boarded up stores until you hit downtown Detroit weren't welcoming anyone. And the area around Grand Circus Park was sparsely populated.

The, coming around the park to the Washington Boulevard trolley, a hint of the frivolity soon to hit along the riverfront began.

The yellow canopies at Kennedy Square had plenty of people beneath them as early afternoon temperatures approached 90.

A good-natured police woman directed traffic across Jefferson to the riverfront attractions — Renaissance Center, Hart Plaza, Ford Auditorium, Cobo and if you were lucky enough to beg, borrow, steal or come legitimately by the proper pass — Joe Louis Arena.

People dripping credentials were the rule. Most wore them on a chain around the neck.

I sneaked sidelong glances to see just who had limited access, full access or mere Secret Service clearance.

BUTTON, T-SHIRT and souvenir vendors were out in full force. So were ice cream, flower and fruit sellers shouting their wares.

Organ music from the vintage Mariner's Church played out Anchors Aweigh. The University of Michigan band reportedly had entertained lunch-time guests earlier in Hart Plaza.

Western hats, hats with elephant trunks and floppy ears and cameras — TV, movie and little Brownies — were everywhere.

The mood was airy and carefree. Balloons were all about. Yes, Detroit loves a good party — part of Detroit.



"Detroit loves a good party" such as this one furnished by the Salvation Army Band at the Hart Plaza — or does it? The stories at right provide differing views. (Photo by Randy Borst)

... These volunteers certainly do

By ARLENE FUNKE

Two hours before business sessions begin at Joe Louis arena, a small army of young men and women arrive for work.

There are about 240 of these folks who range in age from their mid-teens to college age. They come from all over the country, and their mission is to be at the beck and call of delegates on the convention floor.

Jeff Dixon of Canton Township and Lisa Dossette of Westland are typical of many pages in that their parents are party activists.

Lisa's dad, David, writes a newsletter for the 15th Congressional district. Jeff's father, Gary, also is active in the same district.

In addition, he is a member of a state Republican Party Committee.

"WE ESCORT people to the conference room," said Jeff, 15, who will be a junior next fall at Plymouth Salem High School.

"We get food and usually help set up the program."

Jeff said it's "like another world, like a carnival. I just like being there and meeting other pages from Oklahoma, Louisiana, Tennessee and California," he added.

'I stood in line for hours waiting to shake hands with Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy. Mrs. Reagan is real pretty (and) he seems healthy.'
— Lisa Dossette, GOP 'gofer'

An added attraction would be the parties, receptions and entertainment and waterfront activities behind the arena.

LISA, 18, AGREES that it's all pretty exciting.

"I stood in line for hours waiting to shake hands with Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy," said the Wayne Memorial High School graduate.

"Mrs. Reagan is real pretty (and) he seems healthy."

So far, neither Jeff nor Lisa is inclined toward a political career. Lisa will be taking classes in dental technology, while Jeff is interested in a corporate law career.

"I think everybody should vote," added Lisa. "They should get involved. (People) aren't any help if they don't vote."

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