

# Festival has had its crisis

When the old-timers get together to rehash past fall festivals, the incidents provoking the most laughter seem to be the ones which, at the moment, were crises.

Last year's rain on the Friday night of the Lions Club fish dinner does not fall into that category. That was a crisis which no one could do anything about. It is recalled as a disaster and a great disappointment—and so it will remain.



Fall Festival Manager Ed Pogo couldn't will away the rain on Friday of last year's festival. (Staff photo)

But there were others. There was the year a former chief of police closed down the Plymouth High School Rockettes' booth for gambling. There they were—left with all their prizes—the most innocent group of miscreants one could imagine.

**DURING THE FESTIVAL**, the traditional toot of the whistle on an antique threshing machine engine spreads the word that another batch of corn is steamed and ready for eating. The old steam engine is an integral part of the festival but is has caused problems.

Once a last-minute welding job was required to repair a leak in the boiler. And once it was almost closed down by the Environmental Protection Agency.

It was the year of the great ecology movement, when for the first time, many persons became aware of their environment.

The old engine was reported as a menace, polluting the air.

"It took a lot of talking before representatives of the agency were persuaded," recalls Tony Flum, manager of the festival for seven years. The steam engine was allowed to operate, but only after some anxious moments.

**THE ROTARY Club** used have a group of Detroit House of Correction inmates help cook the chickens for the Sunday barbecue. They worked on a buddy system, each Rotarian being responsible for his DeHoCo assistant.

It was a friendly arrangement; it lessened the workload for the club

members while the DeHoCo people enjoyed the freedom and the food.

Finally, it happened. One of the Rotarian buddies was missing.

A quick search showed he was nowhere in the barbecue pit area, and he wasn't in the crowd.

There was still consternation when he was spotted on the stage of the bandstand, microphone in hand.

The general reaction was, "Good grief! What will he say to a family audience?"

It turned out he was a professional night club entertainer and gave one of the best performances of the festival. With a big smile, and to a resounding ovation, he returned to barbecuing chickens.

**KELLOGG PARK** has undergone drastic improvements since the first fall festival. And those improvements caused a few crises.

First it was the grass. It was decided the new green sod would not survive the trampling of fall festival crowds.

By changing the positions of the tables and giving the lawns a good sprinkling each night, no great damage was done. Within a few weeks the grass was back in shape.

Then there were the names on the brick walks.

Persons who donated money to purchase the bricks were recognized by having their names engraved on red stone slabs. These were laid among the bricks as a lasting memorial.

Covering these names with fall festival booths was deemed almost heresy

in some quarters. There were some ruffled feelings that year.

Now that Main Street is closed for the entire festival, the booths are on streets and sidewalks are for walking—and reading.

**GROUPS HAVE REFUSED** to perform because the piano was out of tune. But they were persuaded the show must go on and none but the most discerning knew the difference.

The bright orange vests worn by the festival manager and his assistant were made by Betty Pint several years ago. The manager's vest is lettered inside and out. The inside lettering must have been because of Mrs. Pint's fine handiwork—they couldn't tell wrong side from right.

At the time it was a crisis. It wasn't discovered until the last minute and the event was under way before the sporting goods company put the printing on the right side.

**FOR ALMOST 20 years**, fall festival boards, managers, and non-profit organizations have worked together, handling the problems as they arose.

Some say the four-day wingding has outgrown itself. It is too big. It has lost the small-town atmosphere where you could go uptown and meet friends and neighbors.

It has become a super festival, attracting crowds from miles around.

But when any event provides the attractions that result in raising \$25,000 to \$35,000 for non-profit organizations, it has to be a success.

Especially when all that money comes back to the community.

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