

HAPPY WANDERERS CHRISTMAS PARTY 2023

HO HO HO! We had a Merry Christmas Party. There were 53 in attendance. Two couples that paid were unable to attend (one couple was sick and Tom Glynn was kind enough to deliver them their dinners). The other is a police officer who was called to duty (and Vic and Joyce Sua were kind enough to deliver their dinners).

The festivities started with social hour at 4:00 PM and continued until 5:00 PM. Tim Egan led us in the salute to the flag and Vanda Hilmer said grace. Ed Slattery movingly spoke of how great the Happy Wanderers Camping Club is and the many friendships it has created. He went on to say how sad it was that seven members have passed away this year. He asked everyone to join him in a moment of silent prayer for our departed members: Chris Bengtsson, Mike Parker, Walt Stafford, Beverly Weiland, Tom Williams, Bernie Wright and Bill Owen (who passed away the morning of the party).

Vic Sua was the DJ for the evening. He played beautiful Christmas music during the social hour and a nice mix of music for the rest of the evening. Debbie Minzer and Judy Nadeau welcomed each guest, collected the money for dinner, and gave a ticket to each guest who brought a gift for the gift exchange.

Red's BBQ Restaurant catered 57 dinners of BBQ chicken, baby back ribs, tri-tip, side dishes of green salad, baked beans, mashed potatoes and their famous dinner rolls. Many of the campers brought fabulous desserts. The food was delicious and hot. No one went away hungry.

After dinner, while the music was still playing, Judy Nadeau and Debbie Minzer successfully sold lots of 50/50 tickets. We had three winners: John Clarkson, Bob and Evelyn Hovik, and Tom Glynn (who graciously donated his winnings back to the Camping Club). There was a drawing for the centerpieces at each table. The centerpieces were cute Santa's Britches filled with tiny bottles of liquor, Christmas candy and candy canes. The winners were pleased to take home Santa's britches. HO HO! Mike Nolan very generously donated a very expensive bottle of wine to raffle off. Vic Sua won (with his donation of \$100) and accepted the bottle with a big smile. The Donation was paid directly to the Simi Valley Elks Lodge #2492 charities.

Next was the grand gift exchange. Sally Slattery and Debbie Minzer drew the first ticket number from the basket and called out the number. The guest with that number went to the gift table and picked a gift, took it to the front table where Sally and Debbie were standing and opened the gift for everyone to see it, drew the next ticket from the basket and then returned to their seat with their gift. Then Sally called out the next number. Thereafter, everyone had the option of selecting a wrapped gift from the gift table or stealing a gift from any previously selected gift. This is when the fun began. Each gift could be stolen only once. There was much kibitzing, hardy laughter and teasing with each gift taken or stolen. Some people had their gifts stolen again and again because they chose gifts that everyone wanted to steal. If your gift was stolen, you go back and select another gift or steal one already selected. Many of the gifts were some kind of alcohol. Some were beautiful one-of-a-kind homemade items and various store gift cards and seasonal gifts.

After all the gift opening, the evening was coming to an end. Vic played "Sweet Caroline" and everyone that hadn't left was swaying and singing along at the top of their lungs and some off-key too. What a wonderful way to close a happy Christmas celebration.

We mustn't forget to thank all who made this year's Christmas Party happen: the decorators, setup and cleanup people, and Vic the Great, Great DJ as well as all those who attended to make it a memorable evening. Respectfully submitted by the hostesses for the evening: Kari Sears, Jackie Miller and Marian Corson.

