

Happy New Year!

Traditionally, this is the time to reflect on the past and make resolutions for the future.

For the Destin snowbirds, the 2017–2018 past season was extraordinary. Almost every event, from the season-opening Holiday Lighted Boat Parade and the Harbor Party Boat Cruises to the Valentine Dinner Dance, and Ladies Fashion Show were completely sold out. It was the first time since its inauguration that the T.G.I.T. parties actually had to turn people away. The



newly revised Mardi Gras Trip to New Orleans was so popular, a second bus trip had to be added. By the end of February a total of 2,183 snowbirds from all over the United States, Canada and even a few



from other countries, had registered. Nearly 30% were first-time Destin snowbirds. For those snowbirds who are new, a brief reflection back to the club's origins might explain how today's club has become so successful.



It all started back in 1973 when a retired TWA pilot from Missouri, Ivan "Red" Lyons and his wife Virginia migrated to Destin. Being social, friendly folk, they formed what was known as the Snowbird Mockingbird Club, "Mockingbird" signified the local residents who were invited to join them. The first meetings were usually weekly potlucks with card games or excursions to local events. A gathering of about 90 would meet in a room no bigger than someone's living room. Red became the club's first president

and served in that position for the next 12 years. He was responsible for drafting the first edition of the By-Laws, recruiting the first board of directors, and, in 1979, filing for incorporation status as a non-profit club. Local businesses and organizations were instrumental in helping the club build its foundation. The Destin Chamber of Commerce took over registration duties and Abbott Realty helped to locate various condominium recreation rooms and business conference centers to house the ever-growing membership. Entertainment at each meeting was provided by snowbird members. Red was an accomplished pianist and there were talented troupes with titles such as Forsberg Follies and Gold Diggers. Outings included tours to Eglin Air Force Base and to the various local schools where school children would entertain their visitors. Virginia Lyons initiated the prize committee which created a lasting relationship between many of the local businesses and their winter guests. By the mid 80's the club had grown to 1600 members and it was becoming difficult to find places that could accommodate everyone. The responsibilities of presidency were more than Red's failing health was able to handle so he decided to resign in March of 1986. (However, he remained actively involved until his death in 1994.) One of his last official acts was to develop a nominating committee that would recruit new leaders. He also expanded the five-member board to seven by adding a third vice-president position and a publicity director. It was the enlarged board (there are 10 board members today but only two VP positions.) and

the continuation of the nominating committee that have ensured the perpetuity of the club. It was, and still is the caliber of people recruited by the committee that is responsible for the club's many years of success.

That is our past. Our future depends on two simple New Year resolutions: register and volunteer. The next opportunity to register will be at the Big Registration on Thursday, January 3, from 1 to 3 p.m. Even if you have already registered, you can go to sign up for the various activities and events and meet the people who chair them. If you are unable to make it to the Big Registration, plan on attending the first meeting of the New Year on Tuesday, January 8, either at 8:30 or 11 a.m. Opportunities to register will be available from one hour to fifteen minutes before each meeting. You can easily volunteer by marking the back of your registration card, and someone will contact you. Or, you can approach any board member, including me, for information on how to become more involved. I promise you, you won't regret it.

May you enjoy good health and happiness throughout 2019 and beyond!