

Shopping and/or Activities



I recently had the privilege of meeting Bob Perry, the general manager of Destin Commons. I asked him if the Commons had to make any special preparations for the flurry of snowbirds this time of year. He said that, except for the theater and restaurants, the snowbirds had very little effect on the retail businesses. "Years ago, we held concerts every Sunday to bring the snowbirds in," he said. "But due to factors such as the recession of 2008 and the 2010 BP oil spill, they had to be discontinued." However, plans are under way to attract the flocks back to the Commons. For example, Paula Deen will soon be opening a 300-seat Family Kitchen restaurant and retail store complex that will cover a total of 14,000 square feet. The Commons plans to add more Arts and Entertainment to their venue. Perry shared information on upcoming events such as a Chili Cook-off in late February, a Mardi Gras parade the Friday before Fat Tuesday, a Pickle Ball tournament sponsored by the Chamber in March, and a Bacon Cook-off in April. His enthusiasm was infectious, and it piqued my curiosity; where do Destin snowbirds like to shop? So I took a little survey.

Bells was probably mentioned more than any other store, but Belk's and Chico's, in Destin Commons received a fair number of votes. In fact, Jeannette Schirle of Michigan said that Belk's was her number one choice because she and her husband had their luggage stolen last year and the employees at Belk's went above and beyond all expectations to help them replace what they had lost - and at great bargain prices.



Elspeth Orr of Ontario is another Belk's fan. She likes the quality and variety they offer.

Chico's provides the apparel for the annual Ladies Fashion Show luncheon and have won over several snowbird shoppers through that endeavor. Stein Mart and Marshall's were comparatively popular but, surprisingly, the Silver Sands Outlet Mall didn't get as many votes as I had expected. Are outlet malls becoming passé?

Several snowbirds said that they just didn't have the luggage space to add newly bought items, and others said they were just too busy to shop.



Too busy? I can understand that. Here is what a snowbird's calendar might have looked like just this past



week: Saturday was the Northwest Florida State basketball games where, as invited guests, we saw the agony of the women's first defeat of the season and cheered the men on to victory. Sunday was a Nine & Wine & Whine outing at the Sandestin Baytowne Golf Course. Monday was the season's maiden voyage of the Harbor Party Boat Cruise with David Hall "rocking" the boat. Tuesday morning's

meetings also rocked, literally, especially when Todd Herendeen introduced Mike Vale from the 60's band, "Tommy James & the Shondells." Vale sang his ever-popular, "Mony Mony" to a foot-stomping, hand-clapping crowd that continued the jubilant mood over to the Tuesday afternoon T.G.I.T. party where Herendeen expanded his amazing musical genius. Wednesday's unseasonal coolness did not stop the 18-hole golfers from teeing up at Indian Bayou Golf Club. Thursday gave a little respite unless you were a euchre, pinochle or tennis player, and Friday offered a day in Biloxi or at the bowling alley.



Future weeks look to be even more engaging. This Tuesday's meeting will not only offer a sample of what we will be enjoying at the February 17 Soundsations Benefit Concert (also known as the Snowbird Concert) but the Destin snowbird crafters will also be displaying their creations at the season's second craft show. Come early to have plenty of time to shop and to register if you haven't already done so. The Singles Friendship Club will be meeting for lunch at Indian Bayou Golf and Country Club immediately after Tuesday's 11 a.m. meeting. Looking for more? You need look no further than our website at www.destinsnowbirds.org.