

Party On Phlock...

2020 was to bring our phourth "Great Event" gathering phriends from around the country for a weekend of phun, phellowship and incredible trop rock bands. Instead 2020 brought our worlds to a screeching halt. Gatherings were cancelled, concerts were only via social media, telecommuting to work became common place as people feared being anywhere without gloves, masks, and social distancing.

Our crew had gathered to celebrate St Patrick's Day. Green feathers were afloat, along with Boat Drinks, when the news flashed like an erupting Volcano through the room. Orders had just been released to close all restaurants and bars at midnight. We sat there in disbelief, mouths agape - this could not be true! Shut down till the end of April? Why, no such thing could happen. Not here. Not in America. The land of the free and home of the brave. How could anyone have surmised we would still be restricted months later with no real end date in sight?

As the days turned into weeks, then months, we began to wonder if we would be able to gather again. And, if we did, what would it be like in this black hole called 2020? Were we just Waiting for the Next Explosion? We needed Changes in Attitudes, not just Latitudes.

Thanks to a Coconut Telegraph aka Zoom, The Hang Out Gang pushed forward with our Friday Happy Hour. Learning how to play shot games online; wait patiently for our turn to talk; setting up background beach scenes; and encouraging each other to be cautious and stay well. The virtual happy hours helped fight the overwhelming loneliness and feeling of deep isolation. Those who lived alone had a tougher go but we reached out to each other daily to stay in touch and keep focused on the days ahead when we would be free again to gather at will.

To Phlock or not to Phlock, that was the quandry faced by the Great Event committee. With the dreaded Covid, could we get enough registrations to pay our overhead? Could we raise enough money for our charity? Could we keep people safe? ... surprisingly, the answer was YES - we could, and we DID!

We had a small preview of handling a crowd at our annual charity golf tournament a couple months before the Great Event. Another struggle on saying yes to the event, but as it was outside and we exercised caution in being together. It was a marvelous success. And our charities received very nice healthy checks from the more than generous donations from the golfers and volunteers. Make no Jamaica Mistaica about it, with Love and Luck, things can turn out okay.

Our Great Event was held not on a beach, or a Lovely Cruise, but along a river at a resort beautifully designed to give the beach scene feeling. Our club pulled together a memorable weekend not only with award winning Trop Rock entertainment and a room bursting with silent auction baskets, but the

early fall weather was beach worthy. Many Parrot Heads enjoyed the beautiful pool surrounded by palm trees made of steel and chrome, with the swim up bar well attended. Music flowed as smoothly as a margarita fresh from the blender even though couple of performers were Trying to Reason with Hurricane Season. From live bands to our very cool DJ at the pool, toes were tapping, people were laughing, and dancers were...well dancing.

We had 149 registered for the event, about 40% down due to covid. And yet, we still made phabulous phunds for our 2020 charity which trains and gifts PTSD service dogs to veterans, along with a 24/7 suicide hotline - all while the staff works full time in the private sector. Talk about inspiring one to action!

The silent auction was a smashing success - with members phlocking around a bit like Strange Birds to get the very last bid on a basket! Our 50-50 raffle winner graciously donated half his winnings back to the charity. Plus several phriends gave generous cash donations. Perhaps this response was in part our usual fervor at such gatherings or maybe it was fueled by our desperate need to get out and be with others. Anyone who has been a Parrot Head for even a few months, knows these clubs thrive on being together, whether it's traveling to a beach or just sharing hugs and team drinks, we are Defying Gravity - Anything, Anytime, Anywhere.

Masks were donned and distancing was followed. Instead of our usual Cheeseburger in Paradise lunch buffet, we served hot dogs and chips in sanitary bags. Hugs were only given with permission of the recipient. A tough thing to watch as people truly struggled with holding back giving and receiving the much-needed symbolic hug of loving friendship.

While we hesitated a bit on having Trop Rock this year, we are all grateful we did as it was phabulous to Turn About in the fresh air!

Living in a world so interconnected, it was difficult to listen to news reports of horrific experiences from the Far Side Of The World. It was even more so when the numbers began to be from our own America the Beautiful. But we didn't give up - we stayed focused on the positive. We were able to gather at private homes in backyards, bag chairs appropriately distanced, well for the most part. We had Easter and Birthday Parades in our cars. We kept text chains busy with funny stories, encouraging bits of news, prayers for recovery of members who tested positive for C-19, and for those who lost family. Our hearts broke when we lost dear members who had made their last Trip Around the Sun, then swelled with joy at arrivals of babies, and finally began to knit back together. Hope appeared over the horizon like the warmth of sunrise rays. Hope we will recover. Hope we will be closer than ever. Hope we will never take our freedom and health for granted again.

It can never be said this group doesn't live up to the motto *Party with a Purpose. After all, It's always 5 o'clock Somewhere...*

----submitted by a Parrot Head Living in virtual Paradise