

Newsletter for

September 2013



the CRAYFISH TALE

www.trapperarne.com

The Crayfish Festival

People love festivals! There is no limit to the reasons for celebrating a festival. There are art festivals, music festivals, religious festivals and, of course, food festivals.

In Germany they celebrate with bratwurst and beer at the October Fest. In Nice, France, they celebrate the film festival. The Japanese have a fire festival and all over the world there are harvest festivals.

And in Louisiana there is the crawfish festival. Ever since the French Acadians were kicked out of Nova Scotia with some ending up in Louisiana, where they found mini lobsters in the Atchafalaya swamps, they have had crawfish festivals.

For a while Louisiana was the only place where you would find crawfish festivals in the US. But as Cajuns of Louisiana bayous spread over the US, they took their traditional crawfish festivals with them. Now you find crawfish festivals in many more states

than just down in Louisiana. We can even find them in the state of Arizona.

The first time I ran into a crawfish festival – which I incidentally usually call a ‘crayfish’ festival – was up on the Arizona Mogollon Rim above my home town of Payson. At Willow Springs Lake I ran into Romey Romero from Phoenix who with his father Rosie, had arranged a festival at this crayfish laden lake. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people congregated here to celebrate the crawfish rites of the Louisiana Cajuns. The Romero family hails from crawfish country and took this festival idea with them up into the Sonora desert of Arizona. And up among the pines of the ‘Rim’ they found a lake that reminded them of the old Cajun bayou rituals of yesteryear.

The Arizona crawfish festival was born.

Some years later I even ran into a crayfish festival inside of Phoenix itself, where large amounts of Cajun crawfish were flown in for Phoenicians who

wanted to learn what Cajuns had so much fun celebrating.

Even Trapper Arne showed up with his crayfish traps, and managed to ingest quite a few of the Procambarus Clarkii that had survived the airplane ride squeezed together in 40 lb. plastic mesh bags.

Then I heard nothing about Arizona crayfish festivals for years until the Arizona Crawfish Company made the welcome announcement that an Arizona crawfish festival was in the offing again.

Up on the Mogollon Rim, on the way to Show Low and the White Mountains, lies a small rustic community called Overgaard. Just beyond this little town you find the Bison Ranch Resort where a small herd of bison remind us of times long gone when buffalo roamed our continent while grazing the Great Plains. This recreation of an old 'wild' western town is where you can get a whiff of the old west or rent, even buy, a cabin for your own recreation.

This is where the Crayfish Festival of 2013 celebrated the crawfish. Members of the Arizona Crawfish Company had scoured the Rim Area for several days catching as many crawfish as they could find among the many rim lakes. The result brought no less than 700 pounds of local crawfish to the festival where they were expertly prepared and boiled by an experienced cooking crew.

In and around a colorful inflated 'building' you could hear several hissing

propane burners heating up the large cookers where all the crawfish and assorted vegetables were being prepared for the waiting crawfish friends.

And there was never any doubt about it, Trapper Arne would be present joining all the other crayfish friends and 15 other vendors while enjoying this typical Arizona crustacean that some call crayfish, others crawfish. Trapper Arne Sr. and Jr. had packed a truck full of crayfish traps, sale signs and other crayfish paraphernalia going up the 'Rim' to join all the other about 2000 guests and friends of the crawfish who were gathering in celebration of this tasty crustacean.

Among the traps we offered for sale at the festival were the Trappy, the Jumbo and the Trappy XL as well as the collapsible Jackpot. In addition we had a special Jumbo trap that we raffled off to one lucky visitor at our crayfish trap booth. Several of the milling festival visitors tucked a raffle ticket into the can on top of the Jumbo, and one of them was the lucky winner at the afternoon drawing.

Our vendor booth, consisting of a 12 x 12 canopy, displayed our Crayfish Trap sign as well as other displays. In the background we could see the huge inflated home for the hissing crawfish boilers with a long, long line of customers waiting to be served. A quick inspection of the plate contents verified that there was sweet corn, and potatoes as well as other tidbits

enhancing the now red shelled crawfish. All in all, about 1900 lbs. of crawfish food were served.

But there were more attractions than crayfish at this festival. If you liked Zydeco music of the Louisiana Cajun style, you would have liked James Bailey's Arizona Zydeco group that entertained during the afternoon and evening. I was particularly interested in the man rubbing the washboard, the frottoir, which was hanging around his neck. (The 'frottoir', from the French word 'frotter', meaning to rub, also called a Zydeco rub-board, designed specifically for this type of music and included with percussion instruments.)

The music pavilion was surrounded by a lush lawn where kids and grown-ups jumped on trampolines or danced. The green grass was also the location for the crayfish eating contest where a dozen people had lined up to show how fast they could eat their share of fifteen crayfish. I tried in vain to get up to that table for some video shots, but the throng of interested people was too

much for me. I was later informed that Eddie Holmes walked away with the honors of being the fastest crayfish eater at the festival.

Had I been one of the contestants, I would not have had a chance. When I eat crayfish, I take my time and savor every morsel of tail or claw meat using my Swedish crayfish knife. But it was fun watching.

Clowns on stilts were strolling round the music pavilion and next to the Trapper Arne booth was the large beer garden jam packed with hungry crayfish eaters – and beer drinkers.

Obviously a great time was had by all the masses of crayfish devouring friends and, to quote the French speaking Cajuns, this was the place to: 'Laissez les bons temps rouler'

Greetings

Trapper Arne, Sr.

For comments of the contents of these newsletters, please contact Trapper Arne Sr. at Trapperarne1@gmail.com. To change addresses or to unsubscribe, please contact Trapper Arne Jr. at TrapperArne@cox.net.

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