

GALVESTON

by Leslie Guy

assistant of the Galveston Park Board, says the floats are refurbished each year, and as the theme changes, the floats are changed accordingly.

Although it was not one of the traditional Mardi Gras floats, a "Spirit of Aggieland" float was included in the procession. The students on board threw a few doubloons and beads as Aggie music played from their speakers. A cotton bale with the label "three times in a row" on top was the head of the float, and a placard sporting the latest Cotton Bowl score was displayed on front.

Immediately behind the A&M float, the Fighting Texas Aggie Band marched and played Hullabaloo, receiving many yells of approval.

The bands from Rice University, the University of Texas at Austin and 10 state high schools also livened up the crowds with their music. The presence of the Marching Owl Band (the MOB) seemed appropriate for the Italian parade.

With music of a little different flair, the Philadelphia Mummers came to Galveston for the third time to participate in the festival. Wearing costumes covered with beads, sequins and feathers, the 40-member band entertained the crowds with saxaphones, violins, drums, banjos and glockenspiels.

The Mummers' members are primarily workingmen and businessmen, such as construction workers, longshoremen, truck drivers, doctors and lawyers, who proudly perform each year in the Philadelphia Mummers' Parade on New Year's Day. Most have been marching since a very early age and their families work all year designing and making the fancy costumes.

The Mummers are not the only participants with stunning outfits, and for many people, half the fun of Mardi Gras is looking at decorative attire.

Sophomore general studies major Doug Lawson loved the costumes. He went down to Galveston to relax, be with relatives and just have a good time.

Lee said the float riders' costumes are provided by a \$50,000 donation by George and Cynthia Mitchell. She said this year's other expenses were expected to be close to \$300,000 and would be paid by grants from the Moody Foundation, various companies and the Mardi Gras Revolving Fund, consisting of bleacher ticket sales, t-shirts, posters and the admission to the events on the Strand.

Lee estimated that each visitor will spend \$150 for a hotel and food a day, which will result in about \$8 million for the island. These figures are based on the expenses and profits of last year, she said.

One vendor, David Lyons of Galveston, sold corndogs, candy, beer, beads, soda, sausage, ribs and sweatshirts at stands on the corner of Broadway and 25th Street. His business picked up at 5:30 Saturday night and he hoped to make about \$8,000 for that day.

Junior accounting major Joe Termini worked at a beer stand on the Strand during the activities Saturday after hearing about the job from a friend at A&M. On Saturday he said he was having a blast so far and saw "so many Aggies."

The stores and stands set up throughout the area were definitely doing good business as people seemed to forget about money and splurge for the day.

Earlier in the week, other exciting events were the main attraction. The Texas Opera Theater presented "Lucia Di Lammermoor" at the 1894 Opera House. Also, an

ongoing art exhibit with Italian inspired art was on display, she said.

Mardi Gras transforms the usually slow season for the Galveston

merchants into a booming time of the year. And for the spectators and participants, this is an event they hope will continue for a long time.



Photo by Lee Schexnaider

The "Spirit of Aggieland" float passes down Rosenberg Avenue in Galveston, preceding the Aggie Band.



Photo by Lee Schexnaider

Mardi Gras celebrators filled the Strand in Galveston shortly before they were moved behind fences for the parade to pass.

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