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Shriners

Having fun helping kids

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

They are the men in the red-tassled hats. They ride motorcycles and march during parades. They sponsor circuses and carnivals to raise money.

Their may sound like a fun, carefree organization. But these men are Shriners, and they contribute thousands of dollars each year to burn treatment institutes and children's hospitals across the nation.

Activities

"We have a Hospital Benefit Day in the fall, around October, and the money we collect then goes directly to the hospitals," said Jerry Nance, immediate past president of the Brazos Valley Shriner Club.

Nance said the Shriners go out on the streets that day, "panhandling" for donations.

The Brazos Valley Shriner Club sponsors an annual fish fry and a carnival to raise money for the organization itself.

The Shriners' Mighty Thomas Carnival was held in Bryan last week, but those proceeds go to the organization and not to the hospitals.

Johnny Oates, first vice-president of the club, remembered an incident in Florida that made the Shriners more careful in publicizing their fundraising events.

"They were having a circus there, and an ad indicated that the money raised went to the hospitals and it didn't," Oates said. "Many people were upset."

Shriners now specify clearly whether the money they raise will be sent to hospitals or burn

institutes, he said.

Nineteen crippled children's hospitals and two burn institutes in the United States receive funds from the Shriners.

The hospitals closest to the local Shriners chapter are Galveston's Burn Institute and the Crippled Children Hospital in Houston's downtown medical center.

"The Burn Institute operates strictly on charitable donations," Oates said. "The Crippled Children Hospital treats children from birth to 18 years for any type of repairable illness. They don't treat kids for things like epilepsy because there is no cure."

"If anyone knows any children that need help, they should just get the word to us and we can get help to them," he said. "We just sent a child with a clubfoot to the Crippled Children Hospital to have it rebuilt."

The hospitals do not use much of the money collected on the benefit day for administration, he said.

"Ninety-eight to 99 percent goes directly to the purpose," Oates said.

The Burn Institute also treats children up to 18 years old. Many of the burn victims are there for corrective surgery, he said.

"There is no charge for the families and no restriction on who will be treated," he said. "A child is a child, regardless of birthright."

Origins

The Shriners date back to before the turn of the century, Nance said.

"Some doctors in New York wanted to have fun, but also wanted to do something good," he said. "The group has kind of evolved since then."

Oates said he believes the founders, because they were professionals, saw a need to help children and knew they needed to raise money.

The Shriners are a branch of the Masons, and as an auxiliary group, they are able to solicit donations and raise funds. The Masonic Lodge is not allowed to have fund-raising activities, Oates said.

Nance, who has been a Mason since 1981, said Masonic members must go through certain steps before being able to become a Shriner.

"A person just has to ask to be a Mason, because we don't solicit members," he said. "We're looking for good people over 21. We're still a male society, but we do

have the Eastern Stars, which are the women's groups."

Nance said the Shriners' beliefs come from the Bible. Members must only believe in a supreme being and are not required to follow a particular religion, he said.

"There are Masons all over the world," Nance said. More than 900 Masonic lodges are in the United States alone.

"We are often thought of and referred to as secretive, but we have no secrets," he said. "We have only one basic belief: An educated populace can never be dominated by a handful of people."



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Seven-year-old Adam Retburn rides the carousel at the Mighty Thomas Carnival in Bryan. Adam's mother, Sandy Sabo, works for

Texas A&M's recreation and parks department. The carnival is an annual fundraising event sponsored by the Shriners.

Show proves A&M has 'a mess of talent'

By Chuck Lovejoy

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

After Class, the act that performed last, placed first Friday

night in the MSC Variety Show, one of the first major events of Parents' Weekend.

The barbershop quartet, made up of Texas A&M students Jon Gardner, Greg Gorman, Keith Richbourg and Ritchie Thomp-

son, won a trophy and \$150 dollars for their crowd-pleasing musical/comical performance.

Taking the stage dressed as characters from the Lone Ranger series, the four musicians performed three pieces that made the 2,500-member Rudder Auditorium audience scream and applaud louder for them than for any other act in the show.

The quartet first performed the Lone Ranger theme song while one member was dressed as the Lone Ranger, one as Tonto, one as a bear (thrown in for good measure) and the fourth (clothed in silver lame) as Silver.

Following a quick costume change that took place onstage, the vocalists performed two more songs dressed in normal barbershop quartet attire.

For their second number, the members each vocally impersonated a musical instrument.

The last song told the story of an auctioneer, complete with fast passages sounding like an auctioneer's call or bids.

Placing second in the show was guitarist and vocalist Hank Townsend, who performed three songs, including "It's Up to You," which he wrote. Townsend won a trophy and \$125.

In Motion, a dance team made up of Stephanie Grogan, Jana Fuhrman, Shellie Kammer and Keli Weeren, was awarded third place for their energetic routine, receiving a trophy and \$100.

A fifth member of the group, Audrey Hold, was awarded the honorary Hard Luck Award, as she sprained her ankle during dress rehearsal and was unable to compete.

The Texas A&M Reveliers, a jazz vocal group, performed the staple jazz selections "Mack the Knife" and "Just in Time."

Flamenco dancer Roxanne Cuellar performed a dance called "Triana," which was named after the famous dancer Luisa Triana.

Hal Mueller played two traditional Irish folk songs on a hammered dulcimer.



Photo by Frederick D. Joe

Eric Kornfeld, a professional comedian, served as emcee at the MSC Variety Show Saturday. Kornfeld has appeared at several comedy clubs around the country, as well as appearing on MTV and Star Search.

From pocket protectors to muscle shirts, exhibit celebrates men's fashion

NEW YORK (AP) — Macho muscle shirts clash with drippy, high-water pants at "Jocks and Nerds," a fashion exhibit that celebrates and spoofs 20th-century men.

The two stereotypes are among 12 categories being explored through May 16 in an exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Technology that shows "how men create images for themselves," said curator Richard Martin.

Mannequins are transformed into jocks, nerds, rebels, workers, cowboys, military men, hunters, sportsmen, Joe College, businessmen, men about town and dandies.

A man's clothing reflects his personality, although "perhaps not in a purely conscious way," Martin said. "Someone can be a businessman five days a week, but on Saturday he puts on his safari jacket and becomes the Ernest Hemingway of Great Neck."

"At night, he goes to a downtown club and becomes a rebel."

Or perhaps a jock — depicted here in photographs of Sylvester Stallone as "Rocky," a reclining Jim Palmer pitching Jockey underwear, and a comic book outlining Charles Atlas' rise from 97-pound-weakling to he-man.

"Jocks go in and out of favor," Martin said. "In the late 1960s and early '70s, the anti-establishment time, jocks were portrayed as dumb."

But they are always perceived as sexy. "Indeed, the classification of men's underwear into jockey and boxer shorts, both alluding to sports, seems to imply that the sanction of athletics is required for manly attire," the "Jocks and Nerds" catalog notes.

Nerds have other qualities. The exhibit, noted Martin, features "our '80s nerd, complete with white socks, high-water pants and black glasses."

"Their beautifully made clothing that really respects the history of the nerd: the pattern mix, the ungainliness, the T-shirt under the open collar of a 1950s nylon shirt in a really

icky material," he said. A nerd, he said, might wear a short-sleeve shirt under a sweater vest, making his arms too cold and his chest too hot.

"It causes a real sense of discomfort and the nerd projects that," he said.

Nerds surfaced in the 1950s — and a funny thing happened to them in recent years.

"The downtown club people suddenly started buttoning their top button and wearing high-water trousers," Martin said.

Also featured in the exhibit is a crowd of mannequins offering blasts from the past: a paisley Nehru suit; cowboy chaps made of sheepskin and skunk, on loan from the Buffalo Bill museum in Cody, Wyoming; loud pants patterned with golf tees and golf balls, once favored in Palm Beach; and a black velvet suit with bellbottom pants — donated by Martin, who says he "can't believe I wore that."

And Martin pointed out a collection of "great, bizarre ties" with pictures of hula dancers, Marilyn Monroe, cocker spaniels and horses.

"There are always some men who are quite conventional but who will buy the most extraordinary ties," he said.

The clothing was borrowed, gleaned from staffers' attics and scrounged at flea markets.

"We were real crazed flea-market shoppers," said Martin. He said he usually hates to shop but discovered he would "go wild and become the worst sort of grabby shopper" while building the collection.

"We'd get there the minute the doors opened," he said.

He said the display is believed to be the first exhibit of 20th century men's clothing.

"Most museums have collected great women's clothing but have very little concern for men's clothing," Martin said.

"It's very difficult to find historic men's clothing — men tend to wear it until it wears out."