

VFW AUXILIARY 9399

“FEATHER PARTY”

TICKLE YOUR FUNNY BONE...



Sunday, Mar. 11, 2018

5:00 – 9:00 PM

- ✓ Variety of prizes from yummy, to useful, to fun
- ✓ 3 Winners per number called
- ✓ Tons of fun for all
- ✓ Live Music

TICKETS - \$2 EACH

LIMIT ONE TICKET PER PERSON, EACH ROUND

(Read the history of Feather Parties on back)



...At the Feather Party

There was a time in the Thumb area when various organizations had Feather Parties around Thanksgiving. No, we didn't pull feathers from chickens and ducks in a process for making pillows. Nor did we call pillow fights a Feather Party. The Feather Parties were created to raise money for a church group or veteran's organization. The first Feather Party I went to was in 1948. It took place at the St. Francis Borgia Catholic Church in Pigeon.

In the 1940s, a few weeks before Thanksgiving, you would see Feather Party promotional posters in restaurants and various businesses. This was a big event! The Feather Party was a unique social gathering, centered around the game of bingo.

The hall by the Catholic Church in the 1940s was sometimes used as a roller rink and also a place for us young teenagers to learn the art of boxing. But on the night of the Feather Party, 250 people, adults and teenagers, gathered to play bingo. The prizes were turkeys, ducks and chickens, and sometimes a few geese. What better prizes could you get a few days before Thanksgiving?

I remember going up the steps to enter the hall at my first Feather Party. Just outside, by the entrance, I could see crates full of live turkeys, ducks and chickens and even more birds inside. It wasn't easy carrying on a conversation with the added sounds of the ducks and the turkeys, voicing their discomfort in the small cages.

My mother had invited me to go with her and some of her friends, probably to help them handle the birds, should they win. I think the cost of a card was 20 cents for a given number of rounds. We were also given kernels of corn to mark our cards. You had to be careful not to bump the card, as the kernels would easily leave their mark.

At 7 p.m. the Feather Party started. The emcee had helpers who were involved in turning the big drum and giving the numbers to the caller; other helpers went into the audience to check the winning cards. The first winner that night got the pick of the turkeys, probably the biggest one. They always announced what the prize would be for each round of play.

Many winners went to the cages and picked out their live turkey, duck or chicken and brought it back to the table. A small cord was placed around the bird's neck and then tied to the table leg. Can you imagine the commotion with people mumbling, the emcee calling out letters and numbers plus the sounds of 30 or 40 birds tied to table legs! It was a sight to behold!

In the 1940s, bingo parties were not regular weekly or even monthly events and that's what made Feather Parties so popular. Can you imagine, today, bringing home a live bird and chopping off its head in the backyard? The Humane Society would be on your case as quick as an email was sent to their office.

That evening, as people would come and go, it is reasonable to assume that about one-third of the people went home with a turkey, duck or chicken. I am sure this tradition is not totally forgotten. Surely, there is at least one Feather Party planned for this year in the Thumb area. Give me the good old days as That's The Way It Was at the Feather Party.

Al and Dave Eicher provide television production services to corporations, ad agencies and nonprofit organizations. They also create Michigan town histories and offer lecture services on a variety of Michigan History Events. You may contact them at 248-333-2010; email: info@program-source.com; website: www.program-source.com.