



A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOCAL PARROT HEAD CLUBS

By our founder, Scott Nickerson

In early 1989, Scott Nickerson of Atlanta, Georgia decided he had met so many great people "tailgating" before Buffett concerts that he should do something to get those people together more than once a year. His idea was to create something different than a typical social club or fan club, by forming a group that would not only enjoy a wide variety of social activities but also provide volunteer support for local (and beyond) community and environmental concerns. After all, Jimmy had set the example with Save the Manatees Club, Friends of Florida, etc., so it seemed a good bet that this concept would appeal to most Parrot Heads.

After 3 months of brainstorming, and receiving blessings from Margaritaville Key West, Scott put an ad in a free, weekly entertainment newspaper in hopes of starting the first organized parrot head club. Scott figured it was hit or miss, but inquiries came pouring in. Within a month, a core consisting of Scott and two other Parrot Heads had organized the first group meeting.

On April 1, 1989 approximately 15 Parrot Heads met at Chastain Park (the site of many previous Buffett concerts in Atlanta), for the first official Parrot Head club meeting, then headed to a local patio bar for margaritas. More and more people began to flock to the club's bi-weekly happy hours, and it became obvious that the Atlanta Parrot Head Club was going to be a hit. During the next year or so, the club participated in several volunteer events with: the Red Cross, Children's Wish Foundation, S.I.D.S., UNICEF, the Atlanta Community Food Bank, Chattahoochee River Clean Up, and an "underwater monopoly" event that not only raised over seventy thousand dollars for Muscular Dystrophy, but also broke the Guinness Book record! The club has been involved in the same types of activities ever since.

A short blurb about the Atlanta Parrot Head Club appeared in the Coconut Telegraph, written by Marty Lehmann (editor). Parrot Head subscribers from everywhere began to call in to ask how to start the same kind of club in their own towns. Marty was impressed with the way the Atlanta club was running, so he asked Scott to write this "Guidelines" handbook to help start and promote consistency between clubs. Three years later, Scott was asked to handle all club-related inquiries and be consultant to all newly forming clubs.

By the end of 1992, clubs had emerged in Beaumont, Dallas, New York City, Orlando, Detroit, and New Orleans. The **First Annual Parrot Head Convention**, or "Meeting of the Minds" as it is fondly referred to, was organized by Jerry Diaz of the Beaumont club to take place in New Orleans, Louisiana, home of the newest Margaritaville Store & Cafe, in late December '92.

Approximately **80** people attended and all had a fantastic time. After all expenses were deducted from the collected registration fees, \$200 was left over and donated to New Orleans Artists Against Hunger & Homelessness. The clubs also "honored" Jimmy with the lifetime achievement "Silver Chalice" award, which can still be seen high over the register at the Margaritaville store.

Nearly a year later, a **second convention in New Orleans** was put together by Scott Nickerson and the Atlanta Club for late October '93. By this time, 19 clubs existed and more were on the way. 165 Parrot Heads attended this convention, which was highlighted by a parrot head party at Margaritaville Cafe. The party was opened by a surprise video welcome from Jimmy on the big screen over the stage, followed by Scott's Buffett Tribute band, A1A, getting the party into full swing playing everyone's favorite Buffett songs. \$400 was donated to N.O.A.A.H.H. out of the registration funds that year. During the convention, a stronger connection was made with Margaritaville by Sunshine Smith's (Jimmy's business partner) presence at our meeting. Prior to that meeting, Sunshine named Scott official liaison between the clubs and Margaritaville, Inc.

Inspired by Sunshine, the national organization, **Parrot Heads In Paradise** was established in early 1994, in essence, to provide further guidance and support to the ever-growing number of local clubs and to give the associated clubs national recognition.

In Nov., 1994, the **3rd Annual "Meeting of the Minds"**, was again held in New Orleans. By this time there were over 50 active clubs. At least 30 founders or representatives showed up to meet and discuss parrot head club achievements, and over 325 parrot heads attended this convention. **Key West, the Band**, provided their renditions of Buffett's music, and originals, for the Parrot Head party at Margaritaville Cafe.

It was evident that the conventions had roughly doubled in size each year! By the **4th Annual Convention in Nov. 1995** the number of clubs had reached 81 and a record 750 Parrot Heads attended the convention.

Over 50 clubs were represented at the Founders Breakfast. Sunshine Smith, Marty Lehmann, and Judith Ranger of Margaritaville Inc. Key West, and Bob Mercer of Margaritaville Records attended the breakfast to thank the group for their ongoing community and environmental support.

This convention was organized by a committee chaired by Monte Tolar, Houston Club leader. Monte and his committee put together a "phenomenal" weekend which included the following events: an auction of various signed Buffett memorabilia and items donated by Corona Extra that brought in over \$8000 for charity. From registration proceeds after expenses, a check was given to Sister Jane Remson at Margaritaville Cafe for New Orleans Artists Against Hunger and Homelessness for \$2500, and a check in the same amount was sent to Save the Manatee Club. Additional funds totaling \$5000 were distributed to a variety

of charities suggested by club leaders, which brought the total charitable contribution from the 4th Annual Parrot Head Convention to \$10,000.

This was highlighted by a professionally made 20 minute video produced by Mike Douglass (Mikey D.). This video opened with the annual greeting and words of appreciation from Jimmy Buffett and continued with clips of many of the clubs involved in their respective community service and environmental projects. Captain Tony Terracino was brought in for storytelling and autograph signing at the Tropical Isle and Margaritaville Cafe by Capt. Harry Fink and Sara Sunshine of the Tampa Bay Club. Key West and A1A bands were brought in to open up for Peter Mayer, Fingers Taylor, Roger Guth (all of Jimmy's band), and friends for the annual party at Margaritaville Cafe.

Scott Nickerson was given an Award of Excellence from the clubs as well as a harmonica belt signed by Jimmy Buffett and Fingers Taylor as a gift of thanks from Judith Ranger of Margaritaville Inc. and Fingers. As an extra treat, Fingers joined A1A onstage for their rendition of his song, "Some White People Can Dance".

By the end of 1995 Parrot Heads in Paradise had grown into an association of approximately 15,000 members worldwide. It was time to evolve. Early in **1996**, Scott Nickerson formed a board of directors and Parrot Heads in Paradise filed for incorporation and non-profit status with the I.R.S. By-laws were adopted to further insure the positive direction of the association. Two more successful conventions were held in New Orleans.

Then in 1998, **The Meeting of the Minds** moved to Key West, FL for the 7th Annual Convention. The November event was attended by a record 2000 Parrot Heads in Paradise club members. 80% of the 126 clubs were represented, & Parrot Heads from Canada even joined the phlock.

Over \$25,000 was raised for charity, in addition to a book collection for Wesley House and a toy collection for the Margaritaville sponsored Hurricane Relief Christmas for Keys Kids. And the **BEST** surprise of all was that it was convention "LUCKY 7"--**Jimmy Buffett** appeared at the Saturday night Parrot Head Street Festival and played for over an hour with Greg "Fingers" Taylor, Robert Greenidge and the Landsharks.

<> <> <> <><> <> <> <> <> <> <>