

Disaster Auction Doughnuts

The first 25 years of the doughnuts

When Helen Floyd and the ladies of Riverside heard of a need in the community one way they would help with the fundraising is to make cake donuts to sell at the event. When the first Marsing Disaster Auction was held Helen and the ladies of the Riverside community were there with their donuts. Helen and her husband (Harold) would drive to Boise to buy 100 lbs of cake flour and the shortening needed, the ladies would get together to make and cut out the donuts than freeze them to be fried the day of the event. The donuts were a huge success and people from as far away as Nampa and later even Boise would call ahead to make sure they got donuts. Helen's husband Harold made a special table for the ladies that would hold all of their needed equipment, fifty years later the ladies still use that table. The auction grew and moved to the Marsing school, the donuts got more popular, the ladies needed a way to make the donuts on site, the solution, they barrowed a donut gun from the Homedale Bowling Alley and used the schools mixer but they still had to bring their own fryers from home. "One year when we went to Boise to get the flour the warehouse was closed, so we went to the Albertson's in Caldwell where Harold's brother was the manager, to see if he could help us. He told us to go back to the bakery and get the 100 lbs of flour and the shortening we needed. After that we always got the flour and shortening from Albertson's". Although the donuts were very popular and the public would have liked the ladies to increase the amount they made, they stayed at 100lbs of flour; Helen said "by the time we had finished frying that many we were ready to be done". Helen was in charge of the donut booth for 25 years until she passed the leadership to Ladonna Gibbons, one of the ladies who had been helping in the booth for many years. "That first year I was not doing donuts it was really enjoyable to be able to sit in the audience with Harold (who always sat in the front row and bid on the first item to get the auction started) and actually get to see what was happening", "when you are frying donuts all day you don't know what is going on in the rest of the auction" Helen said.

Helen supported the auction in other ways as well, during the early years of the auction, the ladies of the Riverside community also had a booth of fancy handwork, she embroidered tea towels to sell in that booth. She also cracked walnuts from the three walnut trees that grew on their property, she would pick up the walnuts and put them in the shed on trays to dry, than put them into onion sacks until a nice warm sunny day when she would go out to the shed and crack up a bunch than take them into the house where she could finish separating all of the meat from the shells as she relaxed in the evening. Each year she



would donate 5 or 6 bags to the auction "they seemed to sell well" Helen said. When asked if she had a favorite auction, Helen answered "the one in 1990 when they honored my husband (Harold) with a plaque for his many years of service to the auction". Helen will be 94 on her birthday in April, and has not been able to attend the auction for several years but she continued to send her bags of walnuts each year, until this year, "I'm sorry there will be no walnuts this year, the trees didn't produce any" she said.

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Ladonna Gibbens has been in charge of the famous “Disaster Auction Doughnuts” for the past 25 years. Ladonna remembers when the auction was held in the long building (where the Marsing City Shop building sits today) in the “uptown park” as they used to call it. Back then, the doughnut booth was located in a tent off the long building. The doughnuts were made from raised flour and the process started at the “Riverside Ladies” homes where the doughnuts were made and put into the freezer until the day of auction. The “Riverside Ladies” then brought the doughnuts and their deep fryers to prepare those “delicious doughnuts”.

Throughout the years, the recipe has remained the same except for the change from raised flour to cake flour so the ladies could make them the day of the auction. The Albertson’s in Caldwell, courtesy of Lou Floyd, took care

of procuring the flour. Jeff Percifield, Snake River Mart, now orders the cake flour out of Salt Lake City. Harold and Helen Floyd bought a used fryer so the ladies didn’t have to haul their fryers down. In 2004, another industrial fryer was added to the booth to keep the doughnuts coming. The demand has been so great that some years there has been a 2 dozen limit, so everyone has a chance to sample these “delicious doughnuts”. Throughout the years, the fryers, the mixers, the grease and the number of doughnuts served have changed, but the spirit in which they are prepared never does....

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