

A Look Back at One of TBA's Traditions: THE TBA BBQ

Michael Brashear

One thing that makes the TBA experience unique is our tradition of social activities associated with the convention, especially the TBA BBQ. The friendships and camaraderie developed among TBA convention attendees can last a lifetime and the BBQ is a wonderful place to make new friends and renew past acquaintances.

Looking through our archives, I found interesting information about the history of the BBQ. The following is from the 1997 "Ties" (a publication of the TBA Spouses Division). This is from an article by Sandra Valdez, who was Treasurer of the Spouse Division in 1997.

Over the years band directors' spouses became more involved with the BBQ. In 1955, the first noted BBQ was held for members and their spouses at the Lone Star Patio. Along with the dinner, there was an aquatic show by the Lone Star Aquacade. In 1956, the BBQ and dance celebration was held at La Villita. Since then, the BBQ and Dance have evolved into the biggest social event of each TBA Convention. During the early years, this event has been moved to different locations including the Lone Star Brewery, the Pearl Brewery, and La Villita. For a period of time the BBQ and Dance were split into two different functions and held in different places. In 1992, the BBQ was held at Lone Star and the dance at La Villita. The two events were combined in 1994 and once again were brought back to La Villita. The TBA Board expanded the activities to include children's games, face painting, and clowns.

Also published in the 1997 "Ties" was this remembrance by Vernon Denman titled "Early TBA BBQ." Mr. Denman was a pioneer TBA band director from the Rio Grande Valley. His recollections go back prior to 1955.

The only thing I can remember about the first BBQ is that it was held in Olmos Park in the City of Alamo Heights. It seems that there were 50 to 60 directors there and very few wives. I think we had the BBQ catered by someone in Alamo Heights and the beer was furnished by Pearl Brewery. The only thing I remember about the beer is that we ran out pretty quickly and I had to jump into my 1939 Plymouth

(on which I was two payments behind) and purchase some more. The beer was iced in a tub furnished by me and was very much appreciated.

It seems that I was put in charge of the bread, onions and pickles since I was caught doling out too much meat at the beginning of the line. The demotion was fine because it put me next to the beer. Boy, was it HOT!! I think there might have been a Dixieland band playing for a while. The band was led by a very fine jazz musician by the name of Dude Skiles. Who would have ever guessed that TBA would be as big and successful as it is today? Thanks to Pat Arsers and others through the years who devoted talent and time to make it one of the world's best musical organizations.

As noted by this history, the TBA BBQ has been an important part of our annual convention. In recent years, as the convention



center expanded and opened the Lonesome Dove Room and the Grotto area, we moved our BBQ to this location. We now offer free River Barge rides which has been a popular addition to our event. We continue children activities including face painting, balloon artists and jugglers. Even though the formal dance has gone away, our attendees are entertained by high school and professional mariachi groups as well as outstanding jazz performers. As we reunited in 2021 after missing the 2020 TBA in-person convention due to COVID, the board decided to move the annual BBQ from the end of the convention to a Welcome Back BBQ scheduled at the beginning of the convention. This proved so popular with attendees that we will continue the Welcome BBQ on Wednesday this year. Make plans to join everyone this July and help make current history at our annual BBQ!