



CONVENTIONS

by Jim Parker

M. Carl Hansen has flattered me by asking me to comment about hosting a Gyro Convention by an individual Gyro club. I suppose my name came up because I have participated in hosting one District Convention and one combination International and District Convention. It must be the decision of others as to the success or failure of either, because, as a member of the host club, I was far too busy to know whether we succeeded or not.

Now for 20 comments - not necessarily in order of importance:

1. One could list a complete set of procedures to host a convention, but it would not valid. Each convention is unique, so it would be better to list guidelines. For specifics I would recommend a paper published by the Edmonton Club. It completely outlines their procedures. I would submit, however, their list, complete as it is, would apply only to their own convention.
2. There is no formula that a club can follow to insure success of a convention, but there is a basic premise. The success of a convention will depend on the participants - that is the attendees. The host can only provide the venue. The host club should be aware of the paramount importance of this and keep it in mind when making arrangements. Take advantage of your guests' input.
3. The host club must consider the resources of its location. What works in one area will not be appropriate in another. Emphasize your community's strengths and minimize its deficiencies.
4. Membership of the host club will dictate the structure of a convention organization. Some groups of people are far more structured than others. What works for one will definitely not work for another. Be aware of this, and properly use your forces to the best effect.
5. Take advantage of personal experience with Gyro conventions. You will do better if you have personal knowledge available to you. Send delegates to conventions to pick up ideas. They can learn what not to do, as well as what to do, just by being there. If your club member's convention experiences are limited, seek outside guidance.
6. Money matters are critical. Decide whether your format is economically feasible. Early budgets should be most conservative. It is far easier to expand than to cut back. There must be a balance between financial conservatism and excessive frugality. Budget carefully, and select your Finance Chairman carefully.
7. In some locations early money is required to secure locations and services. Check on this early in your plans. It is a pretty good idea to have a sufficient bankroll to take care of early expenses. The convention should cover all expenses, but delegate money will not begin to accumulate more than a few months in advance.

8. Put folks in charge who do not create controversy and who are not easily offended. Remember, after all is over, there must be good feelings within the club and among all the visitors. Recognize this. There are any number of right ways to do things. One way must prevail. There is no way to please everyone. You can be sure folks will let you know if they think they are right and you are wrong. Roll with it!
9. Define tasks and assign them to responsible people. Check on their performance regularly, but insofar as possible, do not interfere. If they fail to perform, find a diplomatic way to reassign the task. Don't wait too long to make assignments, but don't do this too early. You want to peak at the crucial time.
10. Early on, define your program. There are any number of things that need to be done long before your guests arrive. Identify them and set a time schedule to address them.
11. If your convention involves Gyro International, contact them to determine what responsibilities they assume and what they expect of you. Do the same with your Gyro District.
12. Don't over organize. Provide for some optional activities. Let the delegates have some time to themselves to take advantage of those activities. Also, leave them some time to spend with old friends and to make new friends.
13. Do your best to forecast the number of guests that will attend your convention. Many things are affected by the number, not the least of which is the financial success of your effort.
14. Be aware of District and International financial aids, financial requirements, participation in hospitality rooms, special events they might want, such as breakfast, luncheons, skits, costumes, etc., and of business meetings, dinearounds, etc. Assign someone to communicate regarding these items.
15. Establish a theme. This will give your guests a place to hang their hats. This is especially important with District Conventions.
16. Establish a publicity program. Mailings can be made through the GyroScope. District Governors can help. You will find the editors of the GyroScope will be most cooperative.
17. You will need to consider means to be in contact with your delegates via registration forms, name tags, delegate lists, programs, etc. Use them to make your guests feel they are a part of your convention.
18. Consider transportation needs both at your convention and for delegate travel to and from.
19. It goes without saying that you need to plan entertainment for your guests, both at convention events and extra to those events. Use your imagination.
20. Most important of all - make it fun - for yourselves and for your guests.