

1977 Richard J. Heakin Jr. Memorial & Pride Picnic

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Sunday June 26, 1977 saw Tucson's first Gay Pride Picnic/Heakin Memorial in the S/E corner of Himmel Park.

The event which was partially in celebration of the national Gay Pride Day that was itself in only partially part remembrance of the Stonewall Riots in 1969, but more importantly locally in Tucson to the memory of the murder of twenty one (21) year old Gay Tourist Richard 'Dickie' J. Heakin Jr. just the year before out in the dirt parking lot of the Stonewall Tavern Inn Disco located on North 1st Avenue in Tucson by a group of local high school students.

The first Heakin Memorial & Pride Picnic in Tucson brought out 61 people, seven (7) guitars (guitarists included Stephanie Bader, Deb Halstead (of the Deb & The Deltones performance group), Anne Celeste Schmitt, Scott Winslow, Derek Mc Cormack, and others along with lots of Kentucky Fried Chicken thanks to Denise Duckwiler. A couple of squirt guns brought and filled by Ricardo Lopez, Steven O’Cunnyhame, and Marc Campbell containing a mixture of 100 Proof Southern Comfort, local honey, and water for ‘medicinal use’ was enjoyed and shared that day by many.

There were a few conga drums, five (5) dogs, a two (2) foot python & a parrot at the all free Himmel Park event which was put together by the Tucson Gay Coalition and the other Gay Community Members who had the idea that day to bring along a volleyball net and ball. Speakers denounced the anti-gay atmosphere that existed around the city within many of Tucson's population, court system, the state & national politicians, along with some openly gay bashing city officials.

Some people in the crowd played live music on their guitars and other instruments including two (2) flutes, everyone was free to dance & throw Frisbees, they brought their own food, water, BBQ grills & Hibachi’s, beer or wine, cushions and blankets to lay on, and tarps for shade from the sun that day. The event was peaceful, fun, and an “Out Event” at a time when Homosexuality was still a felony in Arizona and around most of the United States. There were no security incidents at the day’s event. The crowd mostly knew each other by sight if not personally. All had a collective experience of something very important coming together that day in the park, and vowed to repeat the event again in the upcoming year.

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