

Feeding a village

Heidi Rich

The July 5 boiler explosion at Argenta and Nye Halls rendered the two buildings unlivable one month before the start of the fall semester. And while the problem of where to house over a thousand new students was obvious, the damage to the Down Under Cafe (the main dining hall on campus) raised another question—how to feed them. Heidi Rich is the Marketing Director for Nevada Dining, which worked with outside vendors to create Howler Village, several furnished, climate controlled tents meant to provide students lunch and dinner for most of the fall semester before a new, semi-permanent structure is slated to take its place this November.

What happened after the explosion?

Our team was amazing in that, you know, the same day that all of that happened—I mean, obviously, we still had people to feed. We still had summer groups, summer conferences, summer school, students that were living in Argenta, and all those people needed to eat. So immediately we converted what was the Overlook Cafe into our dining hall and were able to offer food for the first responders, food for the students, and food for the summer



PHOTO: MATT BIEKER

camp and groups and conferences that had already contracted to be here with the university. So, I mean, it was within a matter of hours that we were like, “Here’s what we’re doing. Here’s how it’s going to happen, and here’s how it’s going to function for the rest of the summer.”

How did you decide on tents?

Our district manager who works here on campus, he was just immediately thinking of solutions and brought in external companies, reached out to schools that had similar disaster type scenarios or, you know, just kind of quick-fix kitchens, dining options, things like that. And so we ended up connecting with a company called Kitchens To Go, and they were able to come in and help offer some solutions both short term and then longer term. And then it was working with the university, and the university’s been amazing partners in helping to

make all of this happen and, you know, and putting up a big structure, albeit for two months.

Where are we sitting right now? How does this whole set up work?

So we are in Howler village, and Howler village is phase one of our two-phase dining solution, or temporary dining solution. So, the eatery at Overlook is operating as our primary dining hall for the next two years while Argenta is being rebuilt. Howler Village as phase one is, kind of, temporary hospitality tents. We’ve got the service tent. We’ve got the three seating, dining areas. We’ve got the patio pavilion where we’ve got games. We’ve got Connect Four, Cornhole, things like that for the students to just come out and enjoy, connect, you know, meet new people, build existing relationships—all that good stuff—and just have a good meal. Howler village will be up until, like, mid-November, and then, in the next couple of weeks, they’ll start working on the Den. And the Den will be down in the in the grass area, or the Jot Travis lawn. Right in between the Jot Travis building and Thompson. Right. That will be a semi-permanent, modular sprung structure where it’ll be all encompassing. All the tables and the chairs and the kitchen, will all be in one area.

So we’ll go from four or five good sized tents to one larger structure?

Yeah, and that’ll be like—The Overlook and the Den will be what gets us through the remainder of time until the Argenta building is rebuilt. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

The great editor

If you’re running a weekly newspaper, credibility is a real nice thing to attain. Indeed, it’s the one trait a paper *needs* to attain. And doggone it, last week we lost, in a flash, a truly valuable Minister of Cred.

Dennis Myers was my editor here for the last ... well, lots of years. I would send my column in every week (pushing my deadline to the wall more often than not, which kinda drove him occasionally cuckoo, but he was an admirably tolerant man), and there were plenty of times I’d get a reply. If he was making a correction or chiding me for some sloppy inaccuracy (and doing so in a smooth and professional way), I gotta admit the dude was correct about 99 times out of 100. Rare and memorable were the instances where I could justify my position after his initial finger-wag.

And if he had praise for a sentence, a graf or a column, it was nice. A compliment from Dennis meant something. The guy was a stone cold pro’s pro. On occasion, I would harken back to our old fart roots and Boomer cultural context, and quote good ole Perry White, the editor of The Daily Planet, that great metropolitan newspaper that was home to reporters Clark Kent, Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen. I would borrow Perry’s timelessly memorable favorite oath, and say something along the lines of, “Great Caesar’s Ghost, Myers, I’ve given you the lede of the century!” (A statement to which D.M. rarely agreed.)

So, yeah, my Perry White has departed The Daily Planet. His replacement will not be easily found. There are times when a columnist deeply appreciates his ass being

saved by his editor, and the best save Dennis ever bestowed upon me happened on the day after the Nightmare Election of 2016. That incendiary event took place on a Tuesday night, but my latest possible deadline was Tuesday morning. Feeling I simply *had* to write about the election, I said to myself, “Oh, fuck it, of course, Hillary is gonna win,” and then cranked out an excellent celebratory column, hailing Hill’s historic achievement while also declaring that the Republicans, as a party, were now Total Toast. It was good stuff. Unfortunately, by Wednesday morning, it had a slight accuracy problem.

I sent Dennis a message that accursed morning after a shitty night of sleep. “Great Caesar’s Ghost, Myers, I’m a chowderhead! And a fool!” His reply was swift. “You’ve got 20 minutes. Not 21. 20.” My reply? “I’m on it!” □



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