



THE WEATHER
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Mostly cloudy. C2

SUNDAY
AUGUST 11,
2019

THE NEWSPAPER OF FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

LOCAL, C10
Church celebrates end of summer with free activities for children.

SPORTS, B1
Reed Takes a Slim Lead

LOCAL, C12
Villagers' toy dog provides therapy.

NATIONAL NEWS

GOVERNMENT PLANS INQUIRIES AFTER EPSTEIN'S SUICIDE IN PRISON

Financier Jeffrey Epstein reportedly was taken off suicide watch before he killed himself Saturday while under federal custody in a New York jail. Attorney General William Barr said the FBI and Department of Justice will investigate. **A14**

NATION & WORLD REPORT



The Associated Press

Nation: A 156-year-old octagonal house in Michigan is a landmark steeped in rumors. Some residents think it was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Others talk of ghosts and spirits trapped inside. **A16**

World: Decades of uprisings, war and political turmoil have inflicted a heavy toll on Gaza's rich archaeological heritage, exposing the region's famed antiquities to plundering and destruction. **A18**

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Faces in The News
Rodrigo Duterte

The Philippine president said he plans to discuss his country's territorial disputes with China during a visit planned for this month.

World News, A17

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Woodstock Still Rocks After 50 Years

400,000 people flocked to a New York pasture for the iconic music festival in 1969.

THEY WERE THERE

Villagers who attended the Woodstock Music & Art Fair share their memories from the legendary event. **A12-13**



Illustration by Adam Rogers, Daily Sun



By **KRISTEN FIORE**
Daily Sun Senior Writer

It was billed as a music festival promising three days of peace and music. And in the late '60s — a time of great social and political turmoil — a lot of people were in need of some peace and music. Hundreds of thousands of them, in fact.

In the days leading up to Aug. 15, 1969, people started wandering onto Max Yasgur's dairy farm in Bethel, New York for the Woodstock Music & Art Fair. They would leave having become part of one of the most important events in popular music history and a cultural touchstone for a generation.

"In the '60s, in a way that has not occurred so widely since, in our culture, pop music was intensely intertwined with political and social concerns," said John Platoff, a professor of music at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. "Pop music, and perhaps especially the more folk-rock side, was the

Please See **WOODSTOCK, A6**



The Associated Press

A crowd of more than 400,000 attended the Woodstock Music & Art Fair, which was held Aug. 15-17, 1969, on a 600-acre pasture near White Lake in Bethel, New York.

COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS

Sunday Extras Inside

Grab a cup of coffee, find a comfortable seat and dive into this edition of expanded, comprehensive local coverage.



PARADE MAGAZINE
From the Beatles to Carly Simon, inside the stories behind memorable songs.



SPORTS SPOTLIGHT
A national roundup of all your favorite teams. Plus news from Golf Central. **Section B**



VILLAGES IN DEPTH
A network of clubs and classes helps residents with technology. **Section C**



PHOTOS FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS
Snapshots of friends and family having fun and marking milestones nearby. **Section D**



NEW DESTINATIONS
Travel far and wide with Villagers and others as they explore the world. **Section E**



ADDITIONAL SECTIONS
On TV this week, "Women Who Kill" on CBS All Access. Plus six pages of color comics.

LOVIN' THE LIFESTYLE

Neighborhood Roundup

Catch the fun from a recreation center near you. **D2**

Plus: Adopt a pet from an area shelter. **C12**

Plus: Musings from local poets. **D7**

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT



The Associated Press

Thousands of music fans crowd around the stage in a field in Bethel, New York, at the Woodstock Music & Art Fair on Aug. 16, 1969.

WOODSTOCK

Continued from A1

soundtrack for the counter-culture: the key elements were clothes, hair, drugs (in some cases) and music.”

So, how about all of those elements mixed into one big musical weekend?

From afar, Woodstock looked like a hilly landscape speckled with a multitude of colors, but the colors were people — enough to populate a city.

They swarmed around a makeshift wooden stage where artists like Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin and the Grateful Dead played.

That was Aug. 15 through 18, 1969, exactly 50 years ago Thursday.

Most of the people there couldn't see the performances, but they could hear the music from wherever they were, whether they were splashing in one of the lakes, sliding down the muddy hill or seeking shelter from the rain under pieces of tarp.

“It was chaos, but peaceful chaos,” said Roy Schwartz, of the Village of Summerhill. “We met people from all over the world there. The people were the most insane thing, not even the performances. It was like going to someone's house on a

Friday night and listening to music.”

By Saturday, the second day of the festival, the only way for Sullivan County health director Gerald Lieber to get in was by helicopter.

“I was overwhelmed,” said Lieber, who now lives in the Village of Chatham. “I did not anticipate this. My thoughts were, ‘I just hope we make it through this thing safely.’”

Because when Lieber, who had recently been hired into his position, gave Woodstock promoters Michael Lang, John Roberts, Joel Rosenman and Artie Kornfeld his approval to put on the festival mere weeks before it was slated to take place, he anticipated an audience of 50,000, not the estimated number of more than 400,000 that showed up.

Creedence Clearwater Revival was the first of the 33 acts that signed onto the event.

The problem wasn't finding artists willing to perform, it was finding a venue.

After several false starts, dairy farmer Yasgur agreed to rent out some of his land for the festival.

Soon after, the four promoters arrived in Lieber's office hoping for a permit to put on the event.

“We told them that as long as they complied with all the rules and regulations and

got approvals from all of the authorities — local officials, state police, the transportation department — I'd grant them the permit,” Lieber said. “They were responsible for food, water, sewage and waste disposal.”

At the time, Lieber didn't know the promoters had submitted the same proposal to several of his contemporaries — all of whom turned it down.

“Probably if I had more experience or had been smarter, I would've turned them down also,” Lieber admitted. “But being new, we reviewed the plan, told them what they had to do and I convened with all of the officials. I didn't know any better, so we went ahead and approved it the week before the festival was scheduled.”

Woodstock was officially moving forward.

Posters and radio advertisements for the event attracted youth in the region and all over the country.

It was an early media success, according to Jonathan Wynn, a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts.

“It was the thing to do,” Wynn said. “Everybody was going. The amazing thing was back then, the media landscape was quite different. People were largely listening to the radio. It was because of this

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from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Continued from Previous Page

technological advancement of FM that led to having more of this kind of music.”

Initially, an audience of 50,000 was expected, but by Aug. 13, at least that many people already were camped out at the venue, and more than 100,000 tickets had been sold, according to the History Channel’s official website.

“I was 18 and in college,” said Michelle Labott, of the Village of Pine Ridge. “I lived in the Bronx. My friends and I thought that three days of music would be fun.”

At the venue, Lieber watched as more and more people showed up, as the newly built gates were eventually knocked down and Woodstock was declared a free concert.

He was highly stressed, but pleased that everyone seemed to be on their best behavior.

“It may have been due to the music and drugs,” Lieber said. “But I think it was the nature of the youngsters. I had talked with them and they were just there to enjoy the music. They were very peaceful.”

Labott, who had used canned goods to barter for a place to sleep, was not impressed with the mud and outhouses, but enjoyed the mellow ambience even before the music started.

“People were camping, playing radios, singing and talking,” she said. “Everyone got along. There was no fighting or police. It was just total peace.”

In a time of social, political and racial divide, music brought people together.

The three days of peace and music provided by Woodstock was a juxtaposition to the political climate in the U.S. at the time — globally, the country was in the thick of the Vietnam War, but there were plenty of issues on American soil as well — the civil rights movement, the Stonewall riots, the Tate murders.

Platoff also attributes the unusually peaceful atmosphere to the nature of the people who attended the festival.

“It may be that Woodstock was exceptionally peaceful



The Associated Press

Concert goers sit on the roof of a Volkswagen bus at the Woodstock Music & Art Fair in Bethel, New York.

and mellow — despite the traffic, the huge crowds, the rain, the widespread drugs — because the attendees were a self-selected group of the more mellow, counterculture members of society,” Platoff said. “I don’t imagine a lot of the people there were guys who worked on Wall Street and just took the weekend off. My sense is that the Woodstock audience was full of people committed

to the idea of a more loving, relaxed society.”

Swami Satchidananda, a religious teacher and spiritual master, is known to have opened the festival with the words, “I am overwhelmed with joy to see the entire youth of America gathered here in the name of the fine art of music,” according to Woodstock’s official website.

But despite the peaceful

atmosphere, Woodstock was a logistical nightmare. There were thousands more people than the few outhouses and food vendors could accommodate.

It was rainy and muddy, traffic on nearby roads was at a complete standstill and people were tired and hungry after parking on the side of the road and walking to the festival from as far as 15 miles away.

For Labott, it was too much. “People were high and everyone said to be careful drinking the water because there was LSD in the water,” she said. “At one point, we asked where we could go to the bathroom, and they showed us the outhouses. I went, and it was not to be believed.”

Labott spent the night in the car of a guy that she met at the festival and when she woke up the next morning, he suggested that she just dig a hole and go to the bathroom that way.

“We looked at the sky and saw it was going to rain, and we left,” Labott said.

This was before the music had even started.

“I regret not hearing the artists, but when I saw films of the rain and the mud ... it just wasn’t for us,” Labott said. “People took baths in the lake naked. We were not that extreme.”

But many people were, including Don Kerans, of the Village of Glenbrook.

He was 23 and had recently returned from Vietnam. He was living in Westchester County at the time, so he and a few friends hopped on their motorcycles and headed to Woodstock.

They hit the standstill traffic, but were able to go around the stopped cars on their motorcycles.

“As we were pulling up, I looked over to my left and saw a girl standing there in the nude behind a bush,” Kerans said. “I said to my buddy, ‘Look over there.’ And he said, ‘What do you mean, look over there?’”

His friends gestured to the nearby lake, where everyone was running around naked. So

Kerans shrugged and joined them.

He said playing in the lake with the live music in the background was a great experience.

“I had come back from the war the year before, and then all of the sudden it was peace and love,” Kerans said. “It was kind of different.”

One of the main problems was the shortage of food.

“We had gone to a little country store on the way up,” Kerans said. “There was nothing there. It was crazy. People thought everything was necessary and cleaned the shelves out.”

In fact, food was so scarce it had to be airlifted in. About 10,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches made by the surrounding community was a bulk of it, and was the only source of nourishment for a lot of people for the remainder of the festival, according to

Smithsonian’s official website.

Richie Havens was the first artist to take the stage at about 5 p.m. Friday after scheduled opener Sweetwater couldn’t make it in time while stuck in traffic.

By 1 a.m. Saturday, the concert was still going. Joan Baez wished everyone a good morning before performing her set.

People shared food and shelter, sat around campfires, played in the lake, rolled down the muddy hill, hugged and kissed strangers and did drugs.

“I was just learning that I wanted to be an individual,” said Heide Vasko, of the Village of Charlotte, who was only 15 when she attended Woodstock. “Going to Woodstock really opened doors for me. I was able to talk to people freely. I didn’t feel shy.”

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from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT



The Associated Press

Hundreds of rock music fans jam the highway leading from Bethel, New York, on Aug. 16, 1969, as they try to leave the Woodstock Music & Art Fair.

Continued from Previous Page

At one point, an announcement was made urging people not to "take the brown acid." Various sources say that two people were born at the event, and two people died, one of a drug overdose and one in a tractor accident.

Jimi Hendrix and his band closed the show, performing at 9 a.m. Monday, according to Woodstock's official website.

It was one of the longest and most famous sets of Hendrix's career, and Hendrix is said to have looked out at the crowd and remarked, "Look, the audience is sending a lot of energy to us on stage. Let's use that and send it back to them."

Those who attended the festival weren't aware of the scale of the event at the time. "When I got back home, it was really amazing," said Charlie Sheiner, of the Village of Tall Trees. "It was front page news. Everybody was talking about it. We just thought it was a concert."

Although Woodstock was a logistical failure, it was a cultural success with a huge social and historical impact.

"It did manage to widely popularize the idea that a certain kind of communal experience might be possible at a festival, and that's something that many festivals are still trying to emulate," said William Echard, a professor of music at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario.

Mainstream music festivals of today like the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, in California, and the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, in Tennessee, are results of Woodstock's influence, but Woodstock can never truly be recreated, as displayed by the struggles of the official 50th anniversary celebration, Woodstock 50, which was canceled less than a month before it was scheduled to take place.

Even the Woodstock revivals that did happen for

anniversaries in 1994 and 1999, were nowhere near as successful as the original. In fact, Woodstock '99 is remembered more for reports of multiple sexual assaults and violence, not peace and love.

Woodstock was only created after a unique set of events created the perfect storm.

"There is no question that subsequent festivals tried to recapture that magical feeling, though I don't think that any of them ever did," Platoff said. "Part of what made Woodstock unique is that capitalism failed: it was, of course, planned as an event to make money, but turned into a more-or-less free concert."

Fifty years later, everyone who was there knows that Woodstock was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"I remember the concert vividly," Kerans said. "It's crazy how time just flies right by. It's hard to believe it was 50 years ago. I just keep thinking that life is like a roll of toilet paper. You get toward the end and it just goes faster and faster. Those were great times back then. We were young and could do anything."

Lieber admits that if 50 years ago, he knew what he knows now, he probably wouldn't have permitted the festival.

"But I'm glad I did, because I'm sure the people who were there have some unique memories of the event and have been telling their kids and grandkids about their adventure," Lieber said. "It was quite a historical event. From my public health point of view, it could have turned out a lot differently, but I'm glad I was part of it. There were too many kids and the weather was terrible. But the music was phenomenal."

Senior writer Kristen Fiore can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

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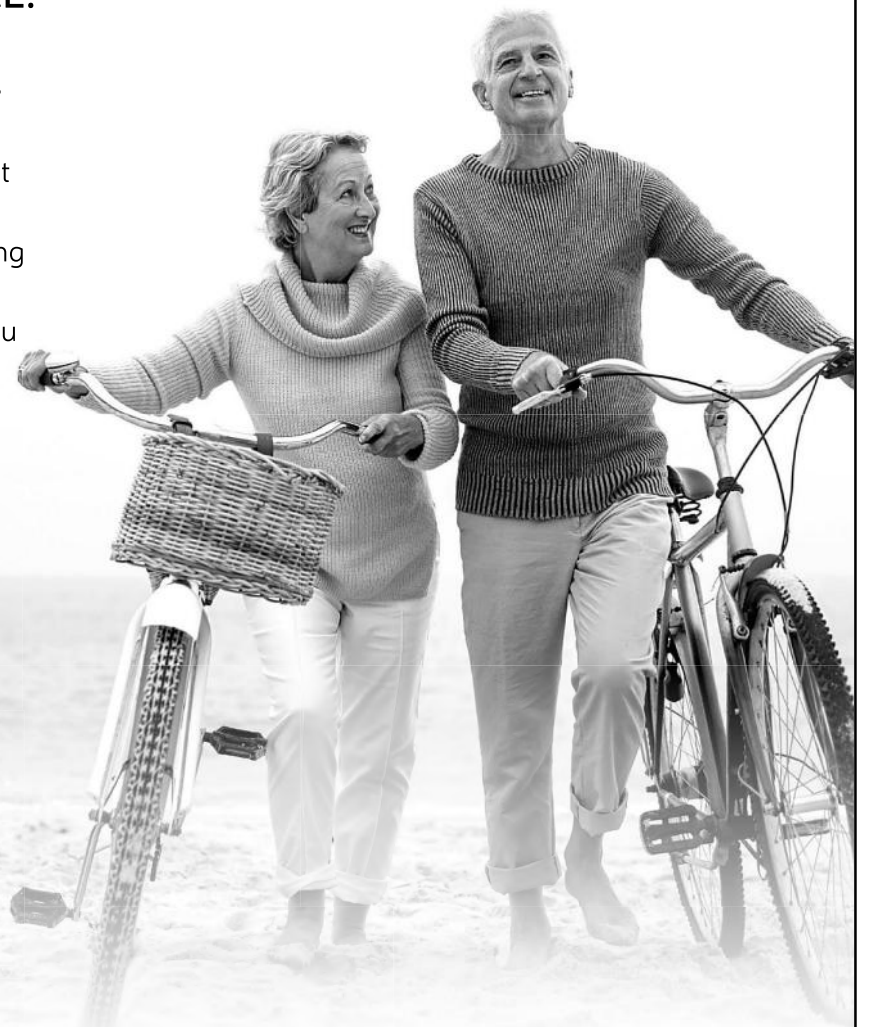
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