

NEW ENGLAND CLUB

November 11, 2021

Dan Patch Tribute

Dan passed away on June 6th but the Board wants you to recognize a few of the things he brought to us over the past 27 years

It was in 1993 that Dan and his wife first got seriously involved with the Club and that was the year we invited the New Englanders from Kings Point to join us for a covered dish supper in our new Community Hall. About 300 people showed up with their own choice New England dishes in hand ... some 200 delicacies in all. All the dishes were opened and placed on 5 side tables. Each attendee was assigned a seat as they arrived and after they were all seated at one of the 30+ dining tables, numbers were called. Each person at the selected tables would then go over to the food tables with their empty paper plates in hand, look over what was being offered (probably looking for the dish they had brought) and in well over an hour, everyone was back at their dining table ... to eat cold food. It was a disaster.

So at the next Board meeting, Club President Lester Parkhurst suggested that the board members should cater the meal themselves. Dan Patch quickly agreed based on his 48 years of experience in the kitchen at the Keewaydin boys camp in Vermont. The only remaining questions were the menu items for this New England Dinner.

Dan proposed Baked Beans, brown bread, and ham. Other board members recalled hot dogs, potato salad and coleslaw as frequent weekend repasts when they were kids in New England along with apple pie and sharp cheddar cheese for dessert.

Now, you should know that, for the past dozen years, Dan has been responsible for compiling the number of attendees and then driving all over Hillsborough County to get the correct amount of each food item, and it all had to be done pretty much in the one day just before the dinner. He found only one store that stocked brown bread, but they never had sufficient amounts so he had to arrange for the larger quantities through them to bring in enough for our needs.

The REAL problem was the cheddar cheese. There was no sharp cheddar cheese sold anywhere in Florida so for the first few New England Club Dinners in Sun City Center, we had to order our yellow sharp cheddar cheese from Cabot, Vermont. That was fine, but it came in a 10-pound block! Now, in recent years, we can find exactly what we want in local stores in 2-pound blocks.

One of the most unique things about our ham and bean dinners is how it is served. As far as Dan could find out, our 'family style' service is unique. The food for everyone comes to the table in bowls or plates, and is passed around for each person to take what they want just as many of us do at our home dinner table.

(4 minutes)