

Crystal Charity Ball Part I: The Facts And Setting

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When one encounters a tsunami event, one admits that an excruciatingly long blog would be worthless. Instead it would be much wiser to break up the coverage into areas of interest.

Needless to say, Saturday night's Crystal Charity Ball was such the case and SweetCharity will post accordingly. Your patience is appreciated.



First, let's tackle the facts and setting for "License To Thrill."

FACTS AND SETTING: Since 1952 Crystal Charity Ball has held the top place in the tiara of charity galas in North Texas. There are no if's, and's, or but's about it. It's the Big Mama of events earning multi-

million \$\$\$ funds for children's charities in one night. This year CCB chair **Debbie Oates** (pictured with husband **Nickey**) and her committee faced that challenge of providing a mega spectacular event that satisfied the investment of underwriters and sponsors, but also didn't cross the line of appearing to be the 21st century's Marie Antoinette court.



Arrival: It was apparent from arrival at the Hilton Anatole that the CCB ladies had checked in a “Mission: Accomplished.” Using “License to Thrill,” the gals totally redressed the entire reception area and ballroom itself. Pity the poor hotel guests, who lugged in their baggage amid the CCB gentry arriving in fur coats (pictured), colorful ball gowns, and tuxedos.

From the starting time at 7, the place was buzzing with beauties, martinis, and Bond-like fun. No, not Daniel Craig fun. He's sexy, but he's not the Bond we were dealing with. Think more vintage like Sean,

Roger, and, yes, even George. Swarthy, menacing, and stirring. As for the women, think Honor, Ursula, Shirley, and Diana. Sexy, gorgeous, and femme fatales.

Only questionable moment during this first impression was made when one photographer started handing out her business cards after shooting guests. It seemed so State Fair Midway.

(WARNING: If you haven't been to the Anatole, you're going to get lost in the following description. So, go get in the car and drive over to the Anatole, check it out, and then return to read the description. It's worth it. CCB event designer **Tom Addis**, his staff, and florist **Junior Villanueva** had been working since Monday to totally reinvent the Anatole. M would have been very pleased with their handiwork.)

Reception: As you entered the Anatole, Hunter Sullivan's big band played where normally is a check in. No, the gals decided to divide and conquer the arrivals. Two different areas were set up for guests to check in complete with computers. Ah, the first sign that CCB has used the occasion to incorporate high tech. More about that later.

Once past the check ins, guests could head in one of three directions. On the left was the well-lit silent auction area. The entire area leading to the rest of the hotel had been covered with a bigger-than-mammoth montage of Bond-isms and the Union Jack. How very British!



At the opposite end of the room was the casino with three Goldfinger gals (pictured) on pedestals. Those girls are probably still scrubbing that gilding off today.

In the center was the pit. Talk about one of the swankiest bars since the original [Cipango Club](#)! With multi-media screens displaying undersea scenes behind the barkeeps, martinis were being shaken, stirred, and served left and right. Underneath huge chandeliers were comfortably luxurious seating areas and gaming tables galore.

Throughout the room, Union Jack balloons floated continuously. They should have. You see they were attached to the lovely committee members selling raffle tickets for the Lexus.

And then there were the committee members who weren't floating. They had to hold 10-pound digital bidding computers and smile. Let's just say that by today there are many arms being soaked in Epson Salts. Holding those machines for two hours was heavy lifting. Ah, but the little gadgets expedited the bidding immensely for the silent auction.

By George, what was that? Crystal Charity had dropped the traditional paper bidding for digital! And those computers at the check! Halls of Dallas society shaking. And thank heaven! But what better time to do it. Instead of having Q come up with Bond-like gadgets, they simply had AES Auctions seamlessly ring up participation in the silent auction, casino, contribution tickets and gift/prize purchases without the usual muss and fuss.

As the clusters of tuxedos and ball gowns began to swell into a cluster busting situation, the reception ended. You didn't need a watch to know what time it was. All you had to do was watch the savvy veterans edging their clusters toward the ballroom doors as the clock got closer to 9 p.m.



The Ballroom: Promptly the doors opened to what used to be the Chantilly grand ballroom. It had been replaced by a disco with go-go dancers (pictured) prancing and dancing in their individual cubes behind the James Davis Orchestra and in two-story towers and on platforms at the corners of the dance floor.

In keeping with the James Bond techie mood, cell phone cameras (pictured)



were whipped out by guests to immortalize the moment. “Golly, they’re not gonna believe this back home!”

Those gadgets also caused a big, old whoop and holler at one point in the night. Seems Texas’ squeaking by Nebraska had just texted in.

Another feature of the ballroom was the walls that were totally swathed in white flowing material with lighting that changed colors throughout the night. The lavender made everyone seem younger, thinner, and more beautiful than ever. The lime lighting was another story. You felt like you were in shimmering lime Jello.

Then before guests could take their seats on the ballroom floor and on the terraces in the back of the room, the turntable stage in front of the orchestra wheeled around with a



white grand piano and **Sheena “For Your Eyes Only” Easton** (pictured) began singing a collection of Bond oldies but goldies. Her interaction with the crowd was limited to singing. Heck, she’s a songbird and one who likes to sing with eyes shut. She probably felt a tad bit intimidated with the Tyrannosaurus Rex-size silhouette of Bond looming behind her. Then once again the turntable rotated her out of sight for a break.

It was then time for din din and guests were not disappointed dining on roasted breast of tarte au fromage, filet of beef tenderloin, melange of breads, vahlrona chocolate tart and plate au fromage. While SweetCharity is the first to admit that serving nearly 2,000 people is quite a feat, the service was a bit uneven with white wines being served in place of an Alexander Valley 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon with the tenderloin. (Heavens, [Nancy](#), what do you think? We’re being too picky, aren’t we? Never mind.)

But all was forgiven when guests found a goodie at their place. Some found the weighty Crystal Charity Ball Book, formerly known as the

CCB Datebook. (The dates are long gone, but the 450+ pages of adorable photos of the children remain.) Others discovered a Tiffany box with playing cards. How Bond!

Unfortunately, not all got favors. It seems that in recent years, some guests have gift-lifted favors, leaving some with nothing. They probably equate it with taking hotel soaps. Perhaps that's why a dozen plain-clothed security gents were on the peripheral area during the night. Or maybe they were just there to provide an Odd Job touch.