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Neal Rubin:

Goodsports return to roots with fundraiser



The guys at the Detroit Goodsports Foundation dinners used to stack their plates with breaded pork chops, fried chicken and mashed potatoes.

The Polish Century Club would reverberate with laughter and the clang of arteries slamming shut.

The Goodsports were a charity from the old days and the old ways in Detroit. Some jocks and judges would get it in their heads to do something nice. They'd rope in a few saloon keepers, and money would start dropping on people who needed it.

Most of the groups that started that way sputtered out -- their intentions pure, but their lack of interest in paperwork and regulation dooming them to a few dinners and then oblivion. The Goodsports have endured for more than 40 years, a throwback looking forward to a dinner Saturday that returns them to their roots.

Norm Swanson had two young kids when his wife died in the early 1960s. He was a former University of Detroit basketball star who sold beer for Stroh's and knew pretty much everyone, and his very wide circle decided he could use a hand.

Nobody remembers how much money that first gathering raised, but jeez, it was fun, so they did it again. Speakers like Jesse Owens, Frank Gifford, George Plimpton and Sparky Anderson helped load the treasury over the years, and the Goodsports emptied it a few thousand dollars at a time when someone struck them as deserving.

The dinners petered out two years ago for lack of anyone willing to take charge. But the Goodsports will dine again at 6 p.m. Saturday in Troy -- to roast Norm Swanson.

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Tickets are \$75, and everyone is invited to St. Nicholas Banquet Center at 760 Wattles Road. For details, call Tom Fox at (248) 435-7497 or Nemo's Bar in Detroit at (313) 965-3180. Roasters include Joe Muer, George Perles and Swanson's wife of 33 years, Mary, who can attest that most of the stories he tries to deny are true.

"Those were the days of the three-martini lunches," says Swanson, 76, who retired to Florida 14 years ago. "We took full advantage."

Everyone knows better now, and you probably won't find breaded pork chops and fried chicken on the same buffet line, either. But you can't tell anybody who was there that it wasn't a heck of a time.

What a name

Same Saturday night, different cause, great name:

Katie Klipfel Kirkpatrick's fourth annual benefit for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society runs from 6 p.m. to midnight at the Knights of Columbus Hall at 12 Mile and Berkley Avenue in Berkley. Katie Klipfel Kirkpatrick is a cool name, but nope, that's not the one I mean.

A \$10 ticket to MS Walk Sit Drink Talk covers food, frivolity and entertainment, much of it from moonlighting members of a band called Free Beer. But that's not the great name, either.

Kirkpatrick, who was diagnosed with MS in 2002, calls herself the "luckiest person with MS I know." She'll be the singer, fronting a new band called

Miss Scarlet in the Hall with a Revolver. There's the name I couldn't resist.

They'll play blues, soul, funk and R&B, she says, "with a clue."

Reach Neal Rubin at (313) 222-1874 or nrubin@detnews.com.

[stick in your hat -- Tue, Apr 17, 2007 at 6:40 AM](#)

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