

"I (heart) the Eggstravaganza--and the Eggstuffaganza!"

When Terry Ford emailed me, asking me to write a piece on the Eggstravaganza for the newsletter, I begged off, reminding him that I wrote a piece last year. "A piece like that needs a fresh voice, from a different angle," I emailed back.

And it does. So, taking Glenn Baum's advice, I'll write from the kitchen end instead of the balcony end--as you shall see.

What I remember is how pumped the Shellster was as she counted down the days before the big event. People were on the phone, asking how to help, asking how to donate. Plastic eggs and balloons were all over our house and my office, candy was everywhere, gospel coloring books and gospel tracts for wee people were arriving via the UPS trucks. There were emails from Terry Ford in the inbox concerning last minute details.

I spend most of my waking hours doing what I'm doing right now--banging away at a keyboard--and don't get too swept up in the projects headed up by others, but I couldn't ignore the prelude to Eggstravaganza because both of my offices--at home and at LAC--were encroached by boxes and balloons and tracts and bracelets and candy and by, well, EGGS.

Eggs were everywhere. They were like the frogs and lice of the plagues. They were in my way wherever I turned. They were of every color. Some were new. Some were re-used from last year. The pre-owned ones had to be washed and dried. Then Frankie and Eddy had to re-unite red half with red half, yellow half with yellow half. 4300 eggs start to make you silly after awhile. I started humming, "Mother and Child Re-union," an old Paul Simon song whose title, I'd read somewhere, was taken from a New York diner menu item--a dish of fried eggs with fried chicken. I couldn't get it out of my mind all week. Eggs were in my ears, eggs were in my brain. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Who cares--just get them out of my office! And out of my head!

Soon it was Tuesday--the big Prelude. Those who watch the Eggstravaganza from beginning to end know that, rightfully, it should be renamed Eggstravaganza, parts I and II.

Part I is the adult division, which has become it's own event. I hope it's OK with Terry, Shelley, Walt, and the rest of the Outreach Committee, because I am now going to forever designate the Tuesday before Egg-stravaganza as Egg-stuffaganza. In just two years, the Tuesday Eggstuffaganza has taken on mythic dimensions. This year, it looked to me like there might have been 4300 people in the Fellowship Hall, stuffing 4300 eggs.

When the big day arrived, I got my trusty camera out and started snapping away. I snapped Dick Forsey, Joel Walker, Owen Ryan Krieger--just a little guy, but a big fave of mine! I snapped Betty Lane, Debbie Kirkman, and Bonnie Buri. I snapped Glenn Baum as he snapped me. I snapped Tina Simmons, wearing a golden crown which moments before had been just a yellow balloon. I snapped Bubbles the Clown (a.k.a. Joanie) who can give a gospel message and a card trick at the same time.

Then I went down to the scene of the crime! If you think I am kidding, then look at the pictures posted on the LAC website. There you will note that the little rug rats are held back by yellow crime scene tape. I suggest that mounted police and Doug Wallace with his police dogs might be appropriate as well.

The little buggers with their little bags are all ready as Jane Ford prepares the signal. Some of them, in the front line, are crouched over as if they're in sprinters' starting blocks.

At the signal, their energy is unleashed. Then, sooner than your wide eyes can believe, it's over.

I was up in the Fellowship Hall balcony for the 2 to 4 year olds. I thought that would be the best vantage point. But after they were gone and the crew was strewing eggs for the next group, Glenn told me to go to the far end, near the kitchen, and watch from there. So when the 5 to 7 year olds came in, I perched atop a folding chair, my camera poised in the air.

But I didn't get a picture, because I was almost scared! From that angle, it was nearly menacing. (Trust me, parents, the kids are safe. It just looks like shock-and-awe!) Off goes Jane's air horn and then--I kid you not--it looks like the Day of the Lord.

You can read what it looks like in the book of Joel. That's when the Day of the Lord is described in terms of a locust plague, which denudes every leaf and blade of grass--every green thing in its path!

The next day--Sunday--I stood in that very same spot as I described the scene to the Bible class I teach. I told them that I'd been too awed to remember to start the camera. It was of biblical proportions!

My son Eddy had been awed too. He thought it would be cool to have--for the 15 to 18 year old guys--a mixed martial arts egg hunt! When I looked at him with alarm, he explained how it could be a fundraiser for REACH! "We could sell tickets, Dad." Could it be that the Eggstravaganza is getting out of hand?! You're darned right it has!

225 kids took home 4300 eggs. Furthermore, each of them brought home a little goody bag. Inside--amongst the stickers and pencils and bracelets--is the Good News about Jesus' death and resurrection, in kid-friendly format.

It started at 1:00 and was over by 3:00. By 3:45, the ever-ready and willing volunteers had the church looking as if not a soul had been there all day--as if the movie had run in reverse. The last person to leave was Paul Buri. He was working on the belt of a vacuum cleaner that had quit on him. It was dirty work.

It takes a lot of hands to plant the seed of the Good News in the soil of little hearts. But never were hands put to better use.

I could still faintly hear Paul out in the foyer as I hung the prayer vigil posters in the sanctuary. The chairs had all been re-aligned, the carpet immaculately swept. I felt happy about the day gone by, and happy to be hanging posters for tomorrow.

The eggs were all gone. Now if only I could get "Mother and Child Re-Union" out of my head!