

Adventures in Ashton Gardens

The decision was made to hold the event on the grounds of Karen Ashton's home in Orem. They not only had a large yard, but adjacent horse pastures where tents could be set up.

"I remember calling someone at the national festival office and asking them where they got those big tents," said Karen Ashton.

"Well, sweetie," she heard in response, "you don't start out in a tent; you start out under the trees."

"But I live in Utah and I don't have any trees," Karen explained. "Do you know where we can get the tents?"

The polite voice said, "Well, you'll just have to check around."

One of the committee members said she knew someone who had some tents; she would check with him.

The day before the festival three tents arrived at the Ashton home. They were heavy, an ugly mustard-color, and smelly, but they were tents. A few of the committee members and their husbands put one of them up. The wind blew it down within minutes. Not wanting to give in to a bit of gusty Utah wind, they put the tent up again, which took several minutes.

As soon as it was up, the wind flattened it again. Thinking the third time would be the charm, they once more raised the tent. This time it stayed up for about two hours before another strong gust of wind blew it down.

"I was beside myself," said Karen. "I couldn't have people in those tents. If the wind blew the tent over it would come down on the people inside and they would be injured!"

"So I came into the house. I was literally shaking, realizing that we might have several hundred or maybe even a couple thousand people at the event the next day.

"We had no tents and we could not sit the participants out in a hot Utah August sun and have them survive. We would have to hose them down before they would be okay, and they certainly were not going to enjoy the storytelling!"

"I phoned a friend of mine in Salt Lake City who's like the Dolly Levi of the world," said Karen. "If you need anything, you

"My first festival was in the Ashton's back yard! Getting to meet the family was a special aspect of the festival for me. Such health."

--Ed Stivender

"What I remember most about the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival was the feeling that I was performing in someone's backyard for their family and friends.

In fact, in 1992, the festival was in the Ashton's backyard and the audience did consist largely of their extended friends and family.

Without exception, every person I encountered was genuinely friendly and there was a warm cordiality about the whole weekend."

--Jackson Gillman