

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2007

## Leaving Atlanta

Sixty-four degrees and sunny in Atlanta. Friendly people. Good food.

Twenty degrees and a foot of newfallen snow on the ground in Minneapolis.

Windy. Four-foot drifts.

Unfortunately, the Atlanta Market ended today, which made it hard for me to find an excuse to stay another day or two, so it's home to the snow and ice. Aside from a brief downpour Sunday morning, the weather cooperated in a big way with the Western-English Atlanta Trade Show. About 105 booths were part of the show, which would make it the industry's third largest trade show at this point behind Denver and AETA Expo.

We'll have a figure on number of buyers later from organizer Roger Tully. By any measuring stick, this would be considered a successful market. Tully has managed to successfully resurrect a show that was mired below sea level and it just keeps growing.

The successful formula? A strong tradition of a community with a trade show and a large dedicated group of people who desperately did not want to see it disappear. An organizer who knows and understands the equine trade industry, particularly reps (he's one himself). Good food WITHIN the trade show venue (now that is truly an accomplishment. An affordable venue, if not the most pretty. Free parking. Plenty of parking lot space for trailers and mobile homes. Reasonably priced hotels.

There's probably several other parts of the formula I'm forgetting at this juncture. But the one single aspect that seems to have brought success to WEA and Tully Markets is that family feeling. Yes, everyone is made to feel like family at this trade show, but over and above that, all of the trade show "staff" are members of Tully's immediate or extended family. Daughters, sons-in-laws, sisters and some who have no blood relationship but wanted to be part of the fun fill all of the key roles in this production.

They do as good a job at coordinating and hosting as any professionally paid organization. If you didn't have a good time at the Atlanta Market, it's your

fault.

I did mention the food but let me reiterate. The North Atlanta Trade Center comes complete with an in-house caterer. Saturday night, the entire shebang was treated to a Mexican buffet that rocked. Not only was the food good, it was hot and served with a smile. Sunday, the lunch entre was roast turkey. Now, this wasn't some pressed prefab turkey breast product. This was the real gobbling version. Monday? Stuffed bell peppers.

To this juncture, WEA is predominately Western in product lines. If there were some way to slap this market up alongside the AETA Expo, you would have the market everyone in the industry has dreamed of for years.

Roger said he's going to make a big push for English vendors for the fall market. Meanwhile, AETA is looking for Western vendors.

Speaking of the fall Atlanta market, we took the opportunity to announce that Tack 'n Togs Magazine would once again sponsor the Atlanta Trade Show Golf Tournament. Our staff had hosted this event for several years, but the effort became far too frustrating under the previous association that ran the trade show.

If you're a golfer and are going to be in Atlanta for market this fall, bring your golf clubs! We'll have more details on the tournament in the next few weeks.

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