

11TH ANNUAL SPI KITE FEST

FEBRUARY 4-6, 2011
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS



Winter storm warning, below freezing temperatures, freezing rain, high wind, highway closures, bridge closure, flights cancelled, power outages -- sounds like something that would happen in the northern states, but this was the Rio Grande Valley of Texas on February 3rd, a day before the SPI Kite Fest on South Padre Island, Texas, was to begin. Most of the people who arrived on the island before the winter blast ended up being without electricity for up to 16 hours, Thursday evening to Friday late afternoon, trying to stay warm any way they could. The others were trying to figure out how to get to the island the next day by finding flights and/or highways that weren't closed due to the ice. I've lived in the Rio Grande Valley 13 and a half years, and this is the first time we've had ice issues since I've been here. The one bridge on and off the island closed Thursday evening as the weather worsened and didn't open again until close to noon Friday.

Calls were coming in to B & S Kites to Bill and Susie Doan, the festival sponsors/hosts, with stressful and bad news all day until Chris Shultz made the magical call that brightened a very dreary day. He announced to Bill & Susie that the SPI Kite Fest had received the KTAI Kite Festival of the Year award for 2010. Soon after that call, things began to start improving. The power started coming back on throughout the island and Port Isabel, the bridge opened back up to traffic, so the indoor fly that was to take place in Port Isabel (across the bridge from the island) was actually going to take place. Calls were coming from stranded travelers all over saying how they were going to make it to the island at some point.

The indoor fly was held at the Laguna Madre Boys & Girls Club in Port Isabel. Tickets were sold to the event to donate to the club for their hospitality and use of their gym. Tickets had sold out the week before. From the looks of the audience, most everyone had made it in to the event. We had most of the same fliers from last year's event with the addition of two: Scott Weider and Lisa Willoughby. This was Lisa's first trip to South Padre Island, and actually her first time to our great state of Texas. Missing in action from the performers were John and TK Barresi who had to find an alternate route and arrived too late to participate. Thanks to Dyana



Plouf from Austin, TX, for picking them up in San Antonio and getting them there. We had two full hours of great entertainment. Dennis Smith stepped up to the plate and took over the microphone for the night and announced the event for us. The indoor fly ended with a mega fly which had the audience out flying kites made by Sis and Dick Vogel.

The weathermen had been promising all week that the weather was going to be great for the weekend, but after suffering through the winter storm, most of us were skeptical. We just knew we were going to be holding Kites on Ice on South Padre Island. There's something just not right about that. But for once, they were spot on in their predictions. We had blue skies the whole weekend, temperatures in the 60s on Saturday and 70s on Sunday, near perfect wind, and our loyal spectators came out in busses even to enjoy all the color and entertainment. If you ever want to fly for a captive audience, then we've got the crowd for you. They are what makes the SPI Kite Fest what it is, along with all of our gracious volunteers who keep coming back year after year to help keep the event running as smoothly as possible. And of course, we have lots of great kite fliers and kite wranglers doing their thing to keep the show going. As I told one of our spectators, it's like a three-ring circus. You've got the performance field with kite routines choreographed to music going all day with teams, pairs, individual, buggies, etc. You've got the iQuad field where you will see some precision flying and can visit with the fliers and ask questions. You have the single-line field with a wide variety of big, medium, and small kites. You'll see a camera flying in the sky taking shots of the day. You've got a teaching field where you can go try to fly a sport kite. There's a little something for everyone's liking.

Four kite teams performed throughout the weekend: Team SPI (South Padre Island), Austin EOL (End of the Line), iQuad, and a four-member team of which half was from the west Canadian coast and half from the





eastern USA coast. Pairs Windjunkies, Revol, Kite Kids, and Parkway South made several appearances on the performance field. Then we had several individual fliers, including some of our very own Winter Texans get out and have some fun. Bill Doan even took time out from running the festival to do some kite flying for everyone. The festival ended with a megafly of 12 quad-line fliers from the groups of Team SPI, iQuad, and Kite Kids.

If I had to choose one word to sum up the SPI Kite Fest, it would have to be fun! We all have so much fun that we really don't want it to end, and we're already counting down the days until next year's festival. K

