

Passions on Display at Trump Rally

By **Mitch Lehman** - November 6, 2020



Photo by Mitch Lehman / The Review

A South Pasadena resident organized a rally in support of President Donald Trump that attracted at least 400 supporters into town Sunday, ahead of the election on Tuesday.

About 400 supporters of Donald Trump, augmented by scores of horn-blaring automobiles that paraded continuously through the heart of South Pasadena, participated in a rally for the president and the city Police Department on Sunday afternoon, ahead of Tuesday's election.

While the action took place mostly on the corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Mission Street, enthusiasts heading to and from the gathering made it a much larger and noisier affair, drawing in shoppers and diners to the area. The throng presented a sharp contrast with other recent gatherings in South Pasadena, which since June has become accustomed to continuing demonstrations in support of Black Lives Matter and related causes at the same intersection.

The event was organized by South Pasadena resident Matt Bryant, who said the rally was about "supporting America, supporting police and supporting President Trump." Bryant said

others had estimated the crowd to have as many as 600 people, but he said, "It's not about the numbers."

"If four people came, then four people is all there would have been," he said. "It's not like I reached out and had people RSVP to say if they were going to attend. I reached out to the Pasadena and Arcadia Republican clubs and said we were going to have this event."

He described attendees as "happy warriors."

"We are like-minded people who are pro-America and pro-Trump. We represent all walks of life. There were Latinos, African-Americans, young and old," said Bryant.

The event was slated to run from 1-4 p.m. but went substantially longer, with peak participation at "3 to 3:15 p.m.," according to Bryant, who notified the Police Department of his intention to host the rally.

"I didn't want to surprise them," Bryant said.

Especially given the fact that the attendees invited guests.

"We just wanted to support the South Pasadena Police Department," Bryant said. "They have been under siege from all sides. They don't care if you are pro-Trump or anti-Trump, they have a job to do and they are going to save your life. The people of South Pasadena need to support these men and women."

Many Thin Blue Line flags — a black and white American flag with a blue stripe indicating support of police officers — were seen at the event, carried by attendees or emanating from vehicles. There also were "Betsy Ross" American flags — representing the original flag of the union — and at least one for the Three Percenters, a far-right militia group.

"Every time a police car drove by, everyone cheered," Bryant said. "It was really refreshing. Everyone was in a good mood."

SPPD Sgt. Robert Bartl, meanwhile, confirmed that an investigation was underway regarding an incident that took place at the rally and involved a makeshift concession stand peddling pro-Trump merchandise. He declined further comment, saying that a report would be forthcoming.

The weekly crime summary from SPPD indicated two assault reports from the rally had been filed: one involving someone coughing repeatedly on another person, and the other referring to an otherwise unspecified "physical altercation" following an argument.

South Pasadena resident London Lang, an organizer of the BLM movement who has helped orchestrate a presence at the corner since George Floyd died while in the custody of Minneapolis police said the throng was "intimidating."

"It was such a large crowd," said Lang, who also mentioned the two incidents of aggression.

"Everyone has the right to their opinion, but I wish they would have done it in a more peaceful manner," Lang said. "We all get under each other's skin now and then, but that doesn't mean it has to get violent."

Bryant maintained the rally was peaceful.

"I was there for almost five hours, and during that entire time I didn't see any incident or hear of any incident," Bryant said.

Results of the election involving Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden were incomplete as of the Review's press deadline on Wednesday.

Mitch Lehman

With over 22 years in publishing and a long time local, Mitch Lehman is a frequent contributor to the South Pasadena Review and Quarterly magazine. He has received two independent Pulitzer Prize nominations and in 2016, Mitch won 5 awards in the California Newspaper Publishers Association's Better Newspapers Contest.