

Sham-El-Nessim Event



May Day or May 1st is a perfect day for merriment and the EAO couldn't have picked a better day for their Sham-El-Nessim picnic. The day began at Mason Park in Irvine with a typical Sham-El-Nessim breakfast of fowl, green onions, warm pita bread and for some (not this writer) a very tasty treat of *fessikh*—salty, dried fish.

As soon as our plates were filled, our senses were filled with the lively music from the *UCSB Middle Eastern Ensemble*.

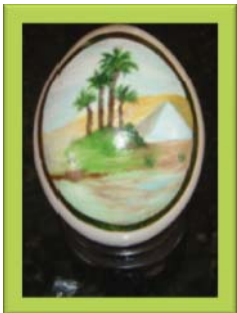
Three generations of Egyptians and Egyptian Americans tapped their toes, clapped their hands and nodded to the upbeat music of the songs they remembered from their childhood. We even had a raucous chorus of "*Mama Zamanha Gayyah*" with the picnickers singing in tune.



"Tawla Central" was a busy hub with the confident backgammon players competing for the Tawla Champion. At the adjacent picnic table were the serious chess players—they were seriously trying to have a good time, one-upping their competitors.



All too soon after breakfast---of course no one complained---we enjoyed a feast from Hatam Restaurant. Chicken, *kufta* and rice pilaf were the features of the lunch and the scrumptious baklava was the highlight.



Many groups were enjoying the company of their friends while basking in the warm sun or playing at the playground with their children. Great friends, wonderful conversation and lively music made this year's Sham-El-Nessim picnic a huge success. The live band made the day feel like the true festival that Sham-El-Nessim should be. A great joy for this writer was to see the smiles of the young and young at heart as they watched the belly dancer move to the lyrical, traditional, energetic music of the band.



Plans are being made to make next year's picnic even better. We hope to see you next year as we observe a true ancient Egyptian celebration.



--Virginia Ghoneim

We were asked to provide pictures of the auctioned/raffled eggs. Many thanks to the donors.