

GYRO LEAD CREEK DERBY

Without the Gyro Club, there would be no Lead Creek Derby as we know it today. Although the Wallace Gyro club was installed on May 19, 1934, its pre-natal history extends back to December 9, 1933. On that date four young Wallace men and two Gyros from Spokane, Fred W. Carlson and Jim Maxwell, met to discuss formation of the Wallace Thursday Noon Club, with the idea that after this club had functioned for three months it would petition for membership in Gyro International, with Spokane as the sponsoring club. The four Wallace men present at the original meeting were J. W. Osborne, who was selected as president, Dr. Robert A. Scott, who was named secretary-treasurer, Horton E. Ostrander and Dr. E. J. Fitzgerald. A month later several other members were brought in, and the charter members were listed as these four plus James Gyde, Everett Cripe, William Rullman, O. L. Jones, Dr. Paul M. Ellis and . Jack Coulter. When the Gyro Club was installed, it was the second U. S. club in District 8. All the others were in Canada.

The minutes of that meeting report that the Thursday noon Club was "an association of young men representing various commercial and professional activities formed to create opportunities for social and business relations as well as to promote genuine friendship and to encourage the discussion of community and civic questions.

If the Gyro Club hadn't voted in September, 1934, to support the Padre Bill Jones Cigarette Fund, there may never have been a Lead Creek Derby. The Padre Bill Jones Cigarette Fund was set up in Cranbrook, B. C., to supply cigarettes to American and Canadian soldiers in service overseas, and the Cranbrook Club asked the Wallace Club to support the program.

Most of the funds for that program came from the Kootenay River Barrel Derby, sponsored by the Cranbrook Gyro Club. Horton Ostrander of the Wallace club, serving as Gyro district 8 governor in 1942, described the barrel derby at a meeting of the Wallace Gyro Club on May 14, 1942. When he had finished with his description, Dr. E. J. FitzGerald rose to suggest the Wallace Gyro Club might sponsor a Lead Creek Derby for the purpose of raising funds for the U.S.O. or some other worthy cause, giving defense bonds as prizes.

The club members favored the idea, "provided it was found to be feasible," and President E. M. Flohr named Dr. FitzGerald and O. L. Jones as a "feasibility committee." At the following meeting the club voted unanimously to sponsor such a derby, plans were hastily drawn up and it was run in June. Louis Pach of Kellogg and Fred Ong of Mullan divided the first prize and the club voted to split the net returns with one half going to prizes and the other half to the U.S.O.

The winners of the first Gyro Lead Creek Derby received their prizes from movie actress Lana Turner on June 19, 1942. A native of Wallace, she was making her first visit to Wallace since the time she left here with her family when she was 6 years old. A crowd of more than 3000 turned out for the rally for her in front of the Elks Temple. Marshall for the occasion was Alden Hull, who was in the Army. Later he was to become a member of the Wallace Gyro Club, and served as its president in 1959. Miss Turner stumbled as she called off the names of the Derby winners, and ad libbed: "I should cone hone more often." Her visit was a "sentimental one," she said, that climaxed a 2 and a 1/2 week bond selling tour, and she said she consented to make the trip only on condition that she be allowed to conclude it in Wallace.

Lana Turner, the movie queen who was born in Wallace, was here on a defense bond tour. James E. Gyde drew the ace of hearts at a Gyro club meeting and won the honor of being on her personal welcoming committee.

The club voted the following year to have another Lead Creek Derby with \$500 in war bonds as prizes and the net proceeds going to the Red Cross Surgical dressing station. F. A. Merfeld was the chairman. A later report indicated the derby grossed \$1374.30 and netted \$864.78. Gross receipts of the third derby amounted to \$1528.50 and the club, among other things contributed \$150 to the construction of a sun room at Fort George Wright in Spokane to be used by convalescent soldiers. Gyros wore shipping tags to advertise this derby.

In April, 1945, the club voted to place proceeds of the Lead Creek Derby in the Gyro Community Service Fund, which would be disbursed to worthy causes when needed.

Previous derbies had been conducted on the South Fork between Wallace and Mullan but in 1945 the club settled on a new stunt--sending a miniature PT boat between Wallace and Kellogg. Following behind the PT boat in a large boat were Belden Brewer, J. E. McKay and C. A. Magnuson, whose job it was to make sure the PT boat didn't hang up. It was a fast trip (2 hours, 34 minutes, 48.4 seconds) and a rough one, and the minutes note that the club reimbursed McKay for a pair of glasses he lost on the trip. In 1947, the club voted again to change the routine, and decided the course would be between the Golconda mill and the Two Mile bridge. A total of 6772 tickets were sold at 50 cents apiece. Proceeds jumped the following year, totaling \$7748 gross. The fastest time the derby was run was on May 16, 1948, when high water between Mullan and Wallace resulted in a time of 2 hours, 1 minutes, 37. 7 seconds. Mrs. Alex Reidinger of Osburn won the DeSoto sedan that was awarded that year as first prize. The club awarded cars instead of cash prizes for several years, and one year (1960) voted to make the first prize \$100 a month for 25 months. In 1964 the club, taking in account that silver dollars had disappeared as a medium of exchange in the West and that Wallace is known as the "Home of the Silver dollar," voted to give 1000 silver dollars as first prize.

The Gyro Club sponsors a parade and fireworks the night before the derby. The club decided the children, as well as the adults, should have fun during the Lead Creek Derby. So, the club provides a carnival for them. Free tickets are mailed to all children in East Shoshone County.

The Lead Creek Derby master list used in determining winners of the annual affair came into being in 1948 following a proposal made by Wes Lieb.

During World War II, Wallace Gyros held their meetings in various places, including the city jail. Because of rationing, restaurants were not available for such gatherings, so the club voted to hold its Thursday noon meetings in the business houses of its members. The first one to extend an invitation was City Clerk Ray Williams, a Gyro, who said the club could meet in the city jail. It did on October 29, 1942. Thereafter the club met in various business places around Wallace.

One of the major programs of the Wallace Gyro Club has been the awarding of \$300 scholarship to senior boys.

The 43rd running of the well-known Lead Creek Derby took place the year this was written in July. Over \$350,000 had been given to various civic causes in the Silver Valley over the years along with scholarships, athletic activities and donations to other charitable organizations.

This year the Wallace Gyros will hold the 70th running of the Lead Creek Derby and combine it with the Gyro District VIII convention.