

They Said It Couldn't Be Done, But Denver Did It

BY LOU ANN GOOD
 DENVER (Lancaster) — Critics said it couldn't be done. They said Denver was too small to have a fair, that they couldn't draw a crowd to make their efforts

worthwhile. They were wrong. This year about 23,000 people attended the fair in the little boro of Denver with its 2,500 population. "Sure," admits Randy Eshelman, president

of the Denver Fair Committee, "we have so much competition, we need to come up with original ideas to capture attention, but we did it."

They did. No doubt about that. While they attracted crowds with such novelties as a jello eating contest and a wheelbarrow race, and reduced prices for rides on family night, their most flamboyant publicity was their cow chip poker game held last Saturday.

Plots of land measuring 3x5-feet were sold for \$10 each. Eight o'clock Saturday morning, a cow was released to roam the designated area. The first plot of land to become fertilized by the cow won \$500. It took twelve minutes for the cow to do his business on the plot claimed by Margaret Gensemer of Denver. She pocketed the prize money and the fair fund got an additional \$500.

Eshelman admits that the idea for cow chip poker first came up three years ago. "We laughed and tossed it around a bit, but it took us three years to say, 'Yeah, let's go for it.'"

The community showed their enthusiasm for the sport by snapping up the shares in less than two hours after they were offered for sale.

"The lip sync talent show" is another big hit," Eshelman said. "It probably draws more people than our paid entertainment." It's a time when teens can imitate their favorite rock or contemporary singers.

Rain—that was the nightmare the fair committee was dreading. In the past, they've had more than their share of it. It seems every fair committee member has his or hers own horror story to tell. Said Phyllis Martz, publicity chairperson, "Last year, we had to call entrants at 2 a.m. to come and take their animals home. We were wearing hip boots and wading in water up to our knees to move them."

Kauffman said, "Despite putting every effort into fair preparations, weather is one thing we have no control over and it can sink the whole ship."

With trepidation the Denver faithful scanned weather reports. By Thursday, they thought they had it made. "The weather was exceeding good. We had record crowds," Eshelman reported. A spokesperson for the fire auxillary reported that they sold more food in one day than they did the whole of last year combined. She attributed the increase to the good weather.

But then Saturday came and brought a downpour. Eshelman reported, "The rain put a damper on it, but about 600 people stood in pouring rain to hear the Mudflaps on Saturday night."

As far as the livestock show, the town's sheep show has made an impressive showing. It's considered second largest in the county that holds eight fairs. "Terry Kauffman in a nutshell is what makes the sheep show successful," said Eshelman. He solicits entrants, draws up packets of information to keep everything running smoothly.

Besides all the up front duties, there are those behind the scenes duties such as putting the sheep to bed. And that's what Phyllis Martz does. "I pat their heads before turning off the lights. Each one got a personality of his own. And I get to know their names and remember the ones who return from the previ-



President of the Denver Fair Committee, Randy Eshelman, said "No one thought we could do it. No one encouraged us...It's been great seeing the fair being born and raised out of the ground to become so successful."



These cooks from the Denver Fire Company Auxillary claim, "We never burn anything. We're good cooks." From left: Pauline Long, Kathryn Sweigard, Peggy Showalter, Joan Drumhedler, Bertha Hertzog and Florence Enck.



Lee Arment prepares the open pit barbecue sandwiches that receive raves from the crowd.



Six-year-old Kate Schreiter of Litz gets a hug from a clown at the Trinity Methodist Church booth set up at the Denver Fair.



Gerald Petry, arts and crafts chairman, and Don Boyer, general concession and ag chairman, displays the "Best of the Show," a leather monopoly game.



The giant slide held fun for young and old alike.

ous year."

Diligent hands at the Fire Company Ladies' Auxillary help keep the crowds supplied with hot dogs, hamburgers and trench fries. And what do they like best about the fair? "The fun and the sun," they quip. Did they ever burn anything? "Never," they answer. "We're too good of cooks for that."

On the outskirts of the prolific food stands, the Denver Baseball Team offers open pit ham and beef sandwiches. Lee Arment, overseeing the operation said customers say things such as "I've waited all year for one of these sandwiches."

Gerald Petry who is in charge of the Arts and crafts display proudly announced, "This year was bigger and better." He thinks the department offers special attraction since many people enjoy

hobbies and like to exhibit then and explore others' workmanship.

Why do so many community people pour their efforts, talents and time into making the fair a success?

"Not for the money," Eshelman said.

He attaches it to phrases like community spirit and one event that the whole community can work together to make it a success.

He sums up the feelings of many of his coworkers: "The best thing about being involved in the fair is seeing it being born and rising out of the ground to be successful."

According to his cohorts who help make the fair successful, their efforts bring a lot of fun and laughs. And that makes it worthwhile.

Homestead Notes