

LaCroix District served Pierce and St. Croix Counties in Wisconsin as well as School District 834 in Minnesota. One of the perennial features of the LaCroix calendar was the annual Expo, held at the Washington County Fairgrounds in Lake Elmo, Pierce County Fairgrounds in Ellsworth and the St. Croix County fairgrounds in Glenwood City in a somewhat random rotation. There was a never ending debate about the relative merits of Mother's day weekend vs. the Wisconsin fishing opener for a date.

Cub Scout Packs would set up booths in one of the display barns and Boy Scout Troops would have a display in each of their camp sites. There was always an announced theme which was sometimes followed in each display. Through the early 80's coupons were solicited from merchants throughout the District and a coupon book produced, the cover of which was a family ticket to the Expo. Scouts would sell the books in the weeks leading up to the Expo. Families would attend, but the general public was few and far between.

The culmination of the event was the chariot race late Saturday afternoon. A track was designated, sometimes on grass which resulted in fewer injuries but less traction and sometime on gravel with a higher injury rate, but better traction. The adults preferred grass, but the Scouts usually pushed for gravel. The race was held in heats, with two chariots in each race. The winners of the heats would meet until the final race determined a winner.

The rules were simple. The rider had to still be aboard at the finish line. There was no limit on pullers, but 2 big guys was generally the fastest. There were no specific design rules which lead to a great debate when a Troop arrived with a chariot car consisting of a complete plastic 55 gallon barrel. Another Troop was using a barrel with the back side cut down so the barrel was not the problem. The problem was the rider could not easily fall out. After much discussion they were given a one-time exemption and allowed to run.

For me the interesting time of day was late morning on Saturday. That was when the horses showed up and selected their rider. The winning Troop generally had two 16 or 17 year olds pulling, who had been trying to win for years and this was their last chance. They would arrive with Scout shirts straining at the seams to look over the latest crop of newly crossed over Scouts. I suspect in many cases this was the first time the young Scouts had seen these often legendary older Scouts. The young Scouts would stand in a line while the older Scouts discussed the relative merits of weight and strength. Sometimes an older Scout would stick out an arm and have the candidates try to do a chin up. Then they would disappear to practice with their selection.

I was always impressed by the way the riders were treated by the horses. Win or lose, as long as they didn't fall out they were welcomed as heroes by their horses and fellow Scouts. Loses were attributed to the horses and generally blamed on the other guys being bigger / older, but we will get them next year.

1986 Expo was held at Washington County fairgrounds and sponsored by Bayport Troop 113

Expos we replaced by Indianhead Council Scout Fairs

Written from memory by Joe Reding, Scoutmaster Bayport Troop 113 1983 – 1990 and assorted other positions since then.