

## **MOXEE HOP FESTIVAL - A BIT OF HISTORY**

In 1946, the Mayor called the business men together for the purpose of forming a Businessmen's Club. It was for developing and furthering the best interests of the city and the valley. They held dinner meetings at "Woody's Cafe" in town. After three or four meetings the project of a swimming pool was brought up by, Arthur Cain. The need and location for a city park was also decided. They felt the building of a swimming pool would be too much for just the few business people so other people in the community and various organizations were contacted. In 1947 the Moxee Commercial Club was formed and incorporated. The point of land south of Shakopee Avenue, now called Park Avenue, from Iler Street to the Rivard Road was decided on for a park. Work was started and the plot was cleared of weeds. The American Legion members, the Knights of Columbus of Moxee and the Terrace Heights Grange, offered their help. Water pipes were put in, grass and trees planted, and a nice community park has been developed.

The first officers of the Moxee Commercial Club were elected with E.L. (Bill) Duke as President, Louis Patnode, Vice President, and Floyd Jenkins, Secretary Treasurer. The trustees were Victor Belaire, Lloyd LaBree, Leonide Riel, Oscar Roy and Lester LaCaursiere.

The initial start of the pool facilities began in 1948, in the form of a bath house which was constructed with voluntary labor. Then a way to finance the pool had to be thought, up. It was decided to have a community festival in the early part of August, as most of the necessary hop=farm work was over at that time. Being such a large hop growing area, it was decided to call the affair "The Moxee Hop Festival". Jack Bledsoe was the first Hop Festival Chairman. Tickets were sold by the candidates running for the honor of being the first queen. She was chosen by the number of tickets sold. Miss Marie Bergevin was the first queen.

A very worthy prize was given to the one who had purchased the winning ticket. A parade was planned and other communities were invited to take part. A three mile parade was made up of beautiful floats. Many depicted the good old hop picking days and mode of travel. W.E. Rivard was chairman of this parade. His assistants were Kenneth Duffield, Ernest Rivard, Ted Regimbal and Ross Dwinell. The same committee continued for more than 15 years for the annual festival.

A tour of the Moxee Valley hop fields and kilns for out of town guests were arranged by Mr's. Rivard, Dwinell, Champoux, Balm, Gendron and Duffield.

Arthur Toupin, Floyd Jenkins, Arthur Cain and Joseph Durand were in charge of distinguished guests. They invited the mayors of other communities, members of legislature and

congressmen, and men outstanding in the hop industry. Some who were able to attend were Congressman Hal Holmes of Ellensburg, Senator Perry Woodall, Mayor Buck of Yakima, R. Watkins, President of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, Sheriff Lew Evans, Owen Clark Prosecutor of Yakima County, Commissioner McDonald, and Lovering President of the Yakima Chamber of Commerce. Also present was Paul T. Rowell, Assistant Manager of the U.S. Hop Growers Association from San Francisco, Bishop G. Shaughnessy of Seattle, Merlow Lesh, Manager of the Washington State Hop Producers and Lester Lacoursiere, then Mayor of Moxee. Many rode through the parade and later gave short talks at the Moxee High School Auditorium pertaining to the hop industry.

Mrs. Barbara Beane was first Queen Chairman, assisted by Mrs. Victor Belaire and Mrs. Walter Brulotte. The Queen was declared the day before the festival and kept secret until the coronation ball. The ball was held in the Moxee High School Gymnasium, where the crowning ceremony took place. A grand march was headed by the Queen and her escort, followed in line by her princesses and their escorts. A dance honoring the Royal Court closed the evening to prepare for the big-Saturday Parade. This procedure varied from year to year.

Food and game concessions were put up by the various valley organizations, under the Chairmanship of Arthur Toupin, J. Durand, A. Cain and Floyd Jenkins. Victor Belaire, O.J. Gendron and Leslie Brooks arranged the program for horse racing and the parade of horses. Lloyd LaBree, Dave Benoit and Floyd Jenkins had charge of city decorations. Hervey Brulotte and Ira Schonewell were selected to arrange the teenage baseball game.

Mrs. Arthur Toupin opened her home to the visitors to relax and more than 150 persons accepted her hospitality as they gathered to meet friends.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Rivard furnished the gladiolas which decorated the stage for the coronation and several of the floats.

What an experience was derived from the first hop festival where about 3000 people were expected. There was an estimated crowd of 8000 attending. This event proved so entertaining and successful, that one would look forward to it every year and many came from far distances to meet their friends and have a day of fun.

Jack Bledsoe and Pete Seibol had charge of the "refreshment" tent for many years. After two or three years, a carnival was added to the festivity. The representatives of the Pacific Power and Light company always took care of sufficient lighting and power for the various concessions. Lew Powers, Don Brady, and George Justice gave of their time for this purpose.

The money was made from the sale of tickets and dividing the profits from each of the concessions but this proved a little too slow to get enough money to build the pool. It would

cost at least \$50,000, as it had to meet the specification of the Washington Athletic Association, in order to qualify for competition. An insurance policy program was taken up for the purpose of adding additional funds so as to enable the club members to start to build the 75 x 30 x 40 foot pool.

After twenty three festivals and the cooperation of so many of the valley residents, many of those who had served from the very first, Mrs. Annette Pryor who had been Secretary-Treasurer for the past ten years announced that the pool was completely paid for. An outdoor kitchen and a wading pool has been built and Moxee can boast of a very nice park where many families come for a swim and picnics. OUR BIGGEST REWARD WAS TO HAVE TAKEN THE CHILDREN OUT OF THE DANGEROUS IRRIGATION CANALS.

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