

# WAITSBURG

## Pig Roast Celebrates 30 Years

### WAITSBURG WELCOMES CLEAN AND SOBER BIKERS, CAMPERS.

By Dena Wood | THE TIMES

WAITSBURG – Locals know that pink “Pig Party” signs and the rumble of motorcycle engines is as much a part of Memorial Day weekend in Waitsburg as the flags that adorn Main Street and the American Legion memorial service at the City Cemetery. Visitors and newcomers, however, often express confusion about “this pig thing.”

The Touchet River AA Roundup (better known as Woody’s World Famous Pig Roast), is an Alcoholics Anonymous clean and sober event that celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this weekend.

Attendees of the event, a three-day camp-out held at the Waitsburg Fairgrounds, are greeted at Pig Central by a big pink sign that reads, “Rule 62 Strictly Enforced.”

“Rule 62 is ‘Don’t take yourself too seriously,’” said longtime attendee, Fred. (In keeping with AA traditions, individuals may be identified by first name only.) “That’s what this is all about, to show that you can have fun and be silly without alcohol.”

This year, for the first time, Boy Scouts from Troop 332 were recruited to present the colors at Friday night’s event opening. Before they took the stage, organizer JP assured the boys, “Some of these people might seem a bit unusual, and you’ll see people dressed up in weird costumes, but they’re all really good people. There’s nothing to worry about.”

That sentiment was echoed by Waitsburg Mayor Walt Gobel who was also on hand at the opening ceremony to welcome the campers. “I love doing this,” he said. “These guys are great. Last year they didn’t like how the carpet in the Lion’s building looked so they paid to have it shampooed. This year, there was a problem with the refrigeration and they paid to have

that repaired. They always leave things better than they found them – that’s part of what they’re about. We’ve never had any trouble, that I know of, in 30 years,” Gobel added.

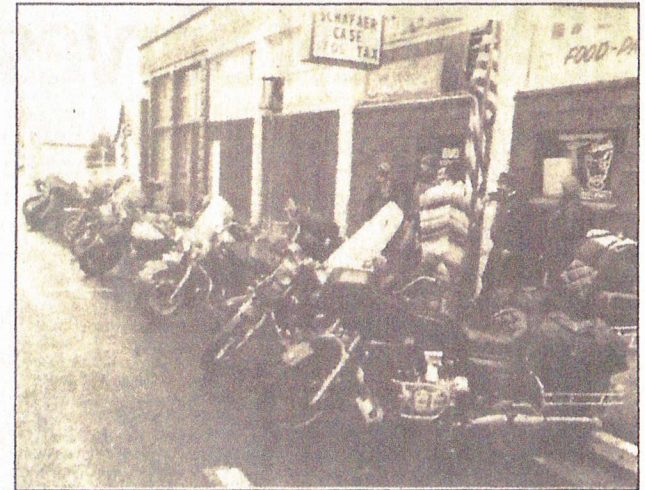
Organizer Woody, who travels to Waitsburg from his home in the Philippines each year to help with the event, held the first Pig Party in his backyard in 1985 where he fed 120 people. He recalled building a spit for the Filipino-style roast, but the rods he used cut through the pig and it fell into the fire at about 2 in the morning.

Woody said he knew there was a used car salesman in the group and suggested they ask him for advice. “Used car salesman know everything,” he said. The auto purveyor suggested using some old mattress springs as a grill and the problem was solved. “That was the best pig we ever had!” Woody said. He also commented that they quit cooking whole pigs (and switched to pork butts) 20 years ago because it was “too big a pain . . .”

For the next several years, the roast was held in a pasture along the Touchet River, owned by Phil Monfort. In 1990 the event, which gained momentum each year, moved to the Waitsburg Fairgrounds. Though numbers have decreased in recent years, it wasn’t unusual for Waitsburg’s population to double in size as over 1,000 bikers and campers from across the country and even from overseas attended the roundup.

This year’s event – possibly due to the threat of rain – saw more campers than bikers, at least on Friday night. “I think, as some of the guys have gotten older, they’ve started putting their bikes away,” said Fred. “But we’ve always been well-attended by groups like the Christian Motorcycle Association, Alkie Angels and Sober Riders.” Dozens of bikes toured Waitsburg’s Main Street Sunday afternoon as they headed to Dayton on the traditional ice cream run.

The AA-centered event is open to all and registration is only \$25. Children 10 and under are free, to encourage families to attend. The weekend includes a chili feed, entertainment, speakers, \$1 break-



Times File Photo

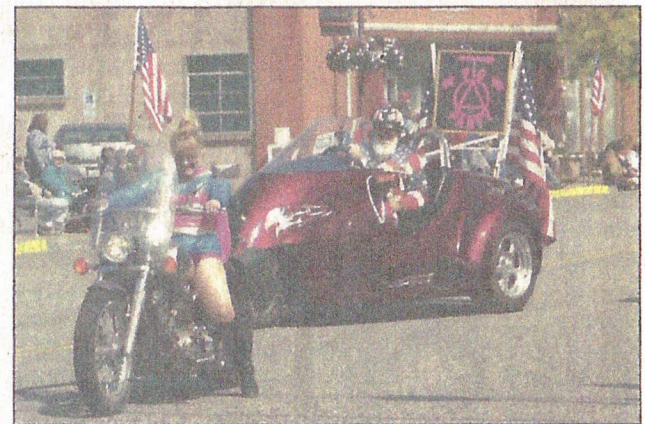


Photo by Dena Wood

Top: Bikes lined Preston Avenue during the Touchet River Roundup, 25 years ago.

Above: Representatives of Woody’s Pig Roast gave a good showing in this year’s Celebration Days parade.

fasts, a poker run, dance, campfires and, of course, the World Famous Filipino Pig Roast. In a 2010 interview with The Times, Woody shared his purpose in keeping the Pig Party going. “It’s to help other alcoholics. If I’m helping the next person, then it helps me. They say it’s a selfish program. That’s the AA paradox.” That sentiment hasn’t changed.



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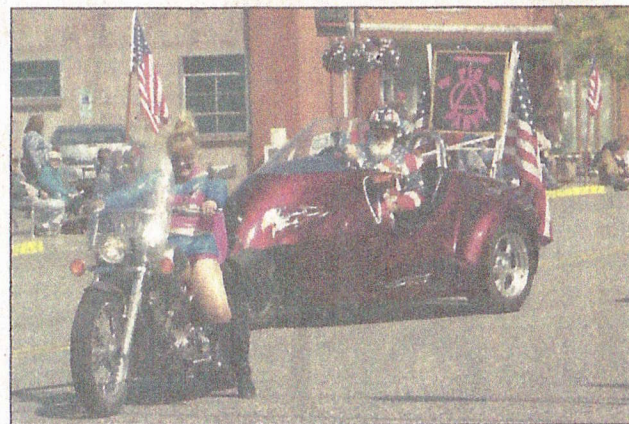


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