

# Pig Roast Celebrates Silver Anniversary

By Karen Matthee

*The Times*

**W**AITSBURG - You know it's that time of year again when you hear the continual pop-pop ... pop-pop of Harleys in low gear passing through town on their way to the Fairgrounds.

Memorial Day weekend. Time for the annual Pig Roast when motorcycle riders (and not just on Harleys) come from far and wide to join in this annual three-day event that began 25 years ago in a Waitsburg backyard.

Because it is governed by the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, it is a clean and sober event, one that has long since outgrown the backyard of its original host to encompass all facilities at the fairgrounds and be embraced by the local community. And in keeping with the values of AA, no participants may be identified by name and photographs by non-AA members are prohibited.

That original host, who wishes to be called Victor, now comes each year from overseas to head up the Roast. He remembers feeding 120 individuals at his Waitsburg home in 1986, and how for the next three years the Pig Roast was held in a pasture near the Touchet River owned by Phil Monfort. When it rained, local residents brought tarps to keep participants dry.

In 1990, the Pig Roast moved to the fairgrounds and had about 200 people attend. Lions Club members cooked breakfast for two of the mornings and for the rest of the time, the group camped and cooked themselves.

Each year more and more people came. "We had a thousand several times," Victor says. "Now, it's steadied out at about 600 to 700 people."

That's a lot of people to feed - and a lot of coffee to serve, especially on this year's cool and wet Memorial Day weekend. The giant coffee urn used at the event came from a battleship and was modified for Pig Roast purposes.

"We never run out of coffee," Victor says.

But they do run out of hot chocolate. He had to reprimand the crowd on Saturday for using the children's hot chocolate powder to make "poor man's mochas." But soon after he made the announcement, several

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people came forward with donations to purchase more chocolate.

Victor admits to taking a lesson from the Lions Club on how to organize large events, and the club lends its cook shack and kitchen equipment, as well as tents and other items to the Pig Roast.

The cost for the entire weekend is \$25 and includes camping, Friday's chili dinner, Saturday's pig roast dinner, a leftovers dinner on Sunday and "all the coffee you can drink," says Victor. The \$1 charge for the all-you-can-eat pancake and sausage breakfast on Saturday and Sunday mornings is "to break even."

And if \$25 is still too much for some, "scholarships" are available to cover the weekend's costs, Victor says.

"We want people to come and bring their families," he says. "When we were out there drinking, our families suffered."

Many of the young people helping out grew up with the event. Their parents brought them and they continue to be involved.

For young children, there was a Piglet Playhouse all three days, with a schedule to rival that of the adults. On Saturday alone, children could join in calisthenics, a carnival, a Pixi Stix walk, balloon volleyball and a toy raffle.

As for the adults, there were numerous workshops and activities to choose from throughout the weekend. Dances were held Friday and Saturday nights, followed by campfire meetings at 11 p.m. Guest speakers, including Waitsburg Mayor Walt Gobel, were featured in the evenings. A Geezer Poker Run, Kid's Bike Games, a Motorcycle Rodeo and an Ice Cream Run entertained kids of all ages.

Participants this year came from the Northwest, Canada, Utah and California, as well as from overseas – and from all walks of life. Lawyers, physicians, priests, nuns, roofers, construction workers...all mingled together. AA is the equalizer, what everyone has in common. At this event in particular, where most everyone is wearing motorcycle gear, white collar is indistinguishable from blue.

About 90 percent on the people who attend help out in some way, Victor says. Fifty or so volunteers come from Waitsburg, Prescott and Dayton. And because the volunteers mostly do the same jobs every year, the event tends to fall into place without as much effort as might seem necessary to an outside observer.

The servers at Saturday's pig roast dinner, for instance, were all members of the Christian Motorcycle Riders Association.

Before food was served, both helpers and attendees in colorful tie-dye, headscarves, leather and bizarre hats stood in the long dinner line that snaked around the tents and tables and bowed their heads as they said the Serenity Prayer in unison, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

The primary purpose of the Pig Roast echoes the very mission of AA, says Victor. "It's to help other alcoholics. If I'm helping the next person, than it helps me. They say it's a selfish program. That's the AA paradox."