

Soap Box Mania Spreads Among Farmington Youth

By EMORY DANIELS

Soap Box racing is fast becoming a popular sport for Farmington boys as the mania for the event first began to spread this year.

Although only three local boys entered the recent Soap Box Derby in Detroit, nine other boys had registered for the race but were unable to finish building their cars in time.

Winners of the suburban and

city competition in Detroit will go to Akron August 18 to race in the nationals with a four year college scholarship as top prize.

One Farmington boy, Lee Sharp, finished only 33 hundredths of a second short of first place and the trip to Akron, and came even closer to winning the right to go as an observer.

Lee, 14, has been racing for four years and has one year of eligibility left to win the top honors. Also racing in the Detroit Soap Box Derby from Farmington was his brother Michael, 11, and Jim Hogan, 12. It was Michael's first year in competition and Jim's second. There were 456 cars racing in Detroit.

THE SHARPS have been the pioneers of soap box racing in Farmington. The boys' father, Harold Sharp of 31819 N. Marklawn, enjoyed the sport as a boy racing a car built with baby carriage wheels.

The elder's love for the sport led him to encourage his sons to build their own machines and the Sharp's mania for derbying entered the blood of 10 other local boys this year.

It is not surprising that the nine boys didn't finish their cars in time. Building a soap box car takes about three to four months or at best two weeks solid labor.

The cars must be built to exact specifications which are spelled out in an official derby rule book given the boys when they register at their local Chevrolet dealer. Chevrolet sponsors the race, along with the Detroit News, and provides the wheels.

The wheels must be purchased by the boys because safety demands that they be uniform and of sturdy quality.

The rule book gives instructions on building cars as well as listing specifications. The Detroit News also offers clinics in the suburbs on building soap box cars.

BUILDING their own cars is a valuable experience for the boys since it teaches them to use tools and teaches them the fundamentals of steering, braking and other operations similar to the automobile.

The cars are inspected for two hours before the derby by professional volunteers to insure they are safe and well-constructed.

The car can only weigh 250 pounds including the driver. Lee, who weighs 150, had to limit his car's weight to 120 pounds. The heavier the car the faster it goes downhill, so the drivers become very weight-conscious as the day of the derby approaches.

The car cannot be higher than 28 inches or longer than 80 inches, which doesn't leave much room for legs for the older boys five-foot seven and taller.

Because of the exact specifications, a growing boy usually will have to build a new car each year because of his physical changes.

The cars are built mostly from wood or fiberglass. Derby prizes are not only given for speed but for the best decorated, unique design, steering, and braking. Savings bonds are given for prizes with the grand winner getting a \$500 bond and the trip to Akron.

THE AVERAGE downhill speed is 22 m.p.h. but in order to win at the hill in Detroit, in the Mount Rd., Eight Mile vicinity, the contestant must average 28 seconds traveling from top to bottom of the hill. Sharp recalls that derbying was only one or two years old when he entered his first race 31 years ago. Since then, the event has become so popular it had to be moved from Rouge Park to its present location.

Pre-race preparations are centered mostly on the wheels. The drivers spend endless hours spinning and oiling the wheels to obtain maximum speed when the downhill flight begins.

Derby competition is divided into Class A and B with 11-12 year olds racing in Class B and 13-15 year olds in Class A. Once a boy reaches age 16 he can no longer race.

Mrs. Sharp, while vouching for the sport, says all parents should encourage their sons to get involved in derbying since it teaches how to follow through, lose gracefully, and cheer for a friend.

She noted that most of the boys who graduate from derbying become interested in drag racing at ages 18-20. Mrs. Sharp is also hopeful the sport will mushroom in Farmington so the suburbs can give the Detroit pros more competition next summer.



ON HONEYMOON — Mr. and Mrs. Laney Wheeler of 32711 Balmoral Knos, Farmington, spent their honeymoon in Bermuda. They are shown here on the steps of their hotel overlooking the Hamilton Harbor.

local news happenings

MR. and MRS. JAMES L. Leary of Violet St., announce the birth of a son, Mark James, born Aug. 6 in St. Mary Hospital. He weighed in at eight pounds 10 ounces. To welcome the new little brother home were four sisters: Linda, Ann, Maria and Jeanette.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Koglin of Oakland Ave., celebrated their silver wedding anniversary July 21 at a party given by their daughter, Mrs. Harold Bailey, and daughter-in-law, Mrs. John Koglin. Among those attending were former Farmington residents Mrs. and Mrs. Clarence Wyckoff from Grand Rapids, Out-of-town relatives came from Imlay City.

WELCOME to new residents Mr. and Mrs. Hal Lahey and family of Kilgore Ct. They have three daughters, Sherry, Susan, and Linda. Formerly of St. Louis, Mo., Lahey was transferred to the Detroit branch of Manufacturers Life Insurance.

Welcome to other new residents Mr. and Mrs. William A. Davis, formerly of Detroit. They are new residents of Highland Hills Estates.

Mr. and Mrs. George Maxwell of Pontiac have been on the go this summer. They recently returned home from Lake Leelanau after two weeks' vacation at their cottage. Then they drove to Port Austin for a visit with Mrs. Maxwell's sister, Mrs. Myrtle Schubel, and enjoyed a short visit with Mrs. Maxwell's daughter and son-in-law, Millie and Bob Rosenbloom, at Cass Lake.

P.S.: Mr. Maxwell will enter Ford Hospital Saturday, Aug. 17 for eye surgery.

Michael Tilley arrived home from the Azores Aug. 2 for a 28-day leave with his parents, the Bud Tilley's of Colgate St. He will fly to San Diego, Calif. when his leave is over to take 13 weeks' commando training as he has volunteered for another year of service in Vietnam. Let us all remember Mike and drop him a line from Farmington when he is in Vietnam.



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Auxiliary Compiles, Farmington Club List

Again this year the Farmington Jaycee Auxiliary is compiling a list of Farmington organizations.

New organizations and those not previously listed are asked to contact Mrs. D. Cushing, 22441 N. Stockton, Farmington, (476-3100) evenings, with information on name of organization and purpose, president's name and phone number, dates

and times of meetings. The deadline to submit information is Aug. 31. Copies of the organization listing will be placed in city and township offices, Board of Education, Board of Commerce and the Farmington Library. Additional copies will be available by request to the Board of Commerce.

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Athletics Win T-Ball Series

The season champions of the North Farmington - West Bloomfield T-Ball Little League are the Athletics of Kimberly North who won two of three in the world series playoff.

Under the coaching of Jim Demetry and Bill Helke, the Athletics compiled a 15-1 record during regular American League season play. Although the Athletics had

the best win-loss record, a playoff game was required with the Indians who were the first half-season winners.

The Athletics won the pennant by defeating the Indians in extra innings by a score of 31-23.

The champs beat the Giants, winners of the National League Pennant race, 13-12 and 16-5, losing the middle game 13-7.

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