

# *The Blackhawk 500*

The cars were  
*really rollin'*  
at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual  
*Blackhawk 500*  
Pinewood Derby  
by Roger Evans

This annual event, sponsored jointly by the Mt. Diablo Silverado Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Blackhawk Museum, began promptly on Saturday, April 21 on the Museum's Plaza with a flag ceremony by a color guard of United States Marines and a welcome by event chair Stephan Olvera. The group also was welcomed by Council Executive Al Westberg.



Moving indoors, the Pinewood Derby cars began racing down two ramps at one end of the Lower Auto Gallery while at the other end of the room other cars competed for design awards in various categories.

Pinewood Derbies have been favorite activities in Cub Scout Packs for more than 50 years. The best from throughout the Mt. Diablo Silverado Council, which includes most of Contra Costa County and much of Napa and Solano Counties, enter *The Blackhawk 500*.

This year there were about 130 cars entered in the racing events, and about 160 additional cars were entered in the

Design Competition.

The cars start as a kit consisting of a block of wood and a set of wheels. Cub Scouts, with some help from their dads, carve the wood block into race cars of their own design, but meeting exacting Pinewood Derby event specifications. They are seven inches in length and weigh no more than 5 ounces. The completed cars are delivered about a week before the event to Mt. Diablo Silverado Council headquarters in Pleasant Hill where they are weighed and impounded.

Cars entered in the Design Competition (photo below) must meet the same specifications. They are not raced but are judged on appearance and creativity in several categories.



The cars race down inclined six-lane tracks about 30 feet long. Cars move so fast, approaching 200 mph (photo top of opposite page, second from left) that the order of finish cannot be determined by eye.

Technology comes to the rescue. Each car impounded is entered into a computer program. The cars in each heat are released by a trigger mechanism at the head of the track; as the cars pass through a finish gate, their order of finish is recorded on a computer program.

In *The Blackhawk 500*, the results of each heat are instantly projected on a big television screen. The excitement among the young spectators clustered around is intense, and the cars are rotated in each heat so that *each car* is raced in *every lane*.

The race cars are grouped by Cub Scout age groups: Tiger Cubs, Wolf Cubs, Bear Cubs, and Webelos Scouts. Trophies are given to the winners in each group. Finally, the fastest cars in each group are raced against each



other to determine an overall champion. The winner this year was Tiger Cub Connor Warnock of Pack 458, whose racecar sped down the track at 199.5 mph!

Dick Griffiths and his group of Docent judges (below, from left – Ralph Cozine, Dave Selway, Ed Holloway and Fran Patterson) were busy picking winners in the Design Competition. Over 160 pinewood cars, representing unbelievably clever designs, had been entered so picking the best cars in five categories was not easy.



Jonathan Adams, a Webelos Scout from Pack 815 in Danville won the prize for *Most Futuristic* with a rocket car; Webelos Scout Matthew Ward of Pack 54 in Moraga, won *Most Artistic* with a violin-shaped car; Steven Zavanelli, a Wolf Cub from Concord's Pack 464 was selected for *Most Creative* with his mouse and cheese car; Bear Cub Jack Valentine of Concord's Pack 403 entered monkeys on a banana and was awarded *Most Extravagant*; and finally, the *Judge's Choice* prize was given to Wolf Cub Cole Barkelew of Pack 405, Pleasant Hill, for his entry based on the Disney / Pixar movie, *Cars*.

A special Design Trophy, top left, is given by the Museum to the pinewood model which most realistically replicates a car of the type which might be displayed in the Museum's galleries and embodies the concept of a "rolling sculpture." This year's winner was a model "Cobra" fabricated by Webelos Scout Parker Lothamer of Moraga's Pack 351. Parker's car was remarkably detailed and beautifully executed. Also worthy of mention was the runner-up, an exact replica of the Alfa Romeo 1900 B.A.T. 7 currently on display in the Museum. It was built by Webelos Scout Patrick Granieri of Pack 405, Pleasant Hill.

At the end of the day the Cub Scouts gathered on the Museum Mezzanine where trophies were given out by Chairman Stephan Olvera to the winners of each of the racing events and the design categories. The Blackhawk

Trophy was presented (photo above, second from right) to Parker Lothamer by Roger Evans, a Museum Docent and Scout leader who was one of the founders of *The Blackhawk 500* event, eight years ago.

An always popular activity is the "Museum Treasure Hunt" in which participants are given a sheet of clues to cars and/or artwork displayed in the galleries. Finding the objects takes youngsters to all parts of the Museum and introduces them to the exhibitions. An estimated 50 or more Cub Scouts and others entered the hunt and showed themselves to be remarkably adept at following the clues and finding the objects. Several especially enjoyed the Automotive Art exhibition, which is new this year. The Treasure Hunt was designed by Docent Roger Evans, and Docents Jeri Shaff and Sue Evans coordinated the event.

Treasure Hunt participants were asked to choose their favorite cars: first choice was the 1924 Hispano-Suiza "Tulipwood," followed by the big, 1937 Cadillac Cabriolet and the 1954 Alfa Romeo B.A.T. 7. No surprises there!

Other activities were available to the Cub Scouts: a crafts activity organized by Scouting volunteers was popular, as was a clown who formed balloons into hats and swords. Food and drinks were available in the staff parking lot.

Many Scouting and Museum volunteers contribute importantly to make *The Blackhawk 500* event run smoothly. In addition to Docents mentioned earlier, Joyce Tucker, Gary Desser, Don Dean, and Don Burns helped out as greeters. Gallery Hosts included Dennis Musante, Tom Twist, Fred Garrity, Ken Anderson, and Mike Hayward. For the first time this year, high school volunteers from the Museum's "Behind the Ropes & Under the Hoods" program helped as Auxiliary Docents. They included Kevin Heydon, Jeff Luchetti, Geoff Schoen, and Michael Manifesto. In addition to their other responsibilities, Docents Dick Griffiths and Roger Evans provided photography for the event.

Over 600 people, including Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, leaders, and parents, as well as over 100 paying visitors were at the Blackhawk Museum on April 21. They came from a wide area, and many were first-time visitors drawn by *The Blackhawk 500* event. We trust that many will return to look again at the Museum's many attractions. *The Blackhawk 500*, like most Scouting activities, is educational, but it is also "fun" for the participants and the spectators. This partnership between Scouting and the Blackhawk Museum has been very successful, and we look forward to the ninth running next year!