

Soap Box Derby

A Family Tradition

Sort of....



This phot of “ Jack” our dad AKA John A. Blackburn was taken in 1935. Already deep into the depression the nation was looking for “Hope” Chevrolet and some local Dayton Ohio kids and dads started, the “greatest amateur racing event in the world. “. The National Soap Box Derby”.

It caught the attention of everyone especially the young boys who had already been building and racing their scooters and carts.

Racers would be scratch built by the racer “ anything with four wheels that can coast” they were gravity energy powered , no motors.

On the first race day in August 1933 460 racers showed up 362 were safe enough o roll down the hill race track. A 16 year old boy won in his “slashing yellow comet” , on three wheels. But...

The runner up was 11 year old Alice Johnson, a girl.

In 1935 they moved the event to Akron Ohio dad’s hometown. He got a sponsor gathered the parts and went racing. This is a demonstration of the resourcefulness of the greatest Generation.

The race captured national and International attention and is still being run to this day.

Design and safety standards became standardized, rules and race kits were provided to contestants and it was opened to anyone from 7-20

Dad's car as you can see was home grown and self built. This was a very significant event in his life and especially during the difficult days of the depression. He like to talk about his Soap Box Derby Days.

When I turned 10 he began to promote and make his case for me to enter the race. Not a hard sell to an already committed science and engineering "nerd". With his guidance and coaching an a crew of two brothers to help in 1958 I rolled down the hill in Los Angeles at Arroyo Seco for my moment on the track.

No I did not win but that is another story. My treasure is the time and consideration he gave to us from his experiences. The positives not the negatives. Now we pay that forward.

Gerald (Jerry) Blackburn

The Papa

Oh my racer was called, " The Red Baron"



The 2023 Soap Box Derby Race Cars