



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Westerners

Vol. 11, No. 4

Kalispell, Montana

May 16, 2024

Richard A. Hull, Editor, e-mail: richardahull@charter.net

MAY MEETING

Monday, May 20, 2024

"Northwest Montana Humor"

Presenter: Tim Christenson of Kalispell

Where: Second floor of the Northwest Montana History Museum, 124 2nd Ave. East, Kalispell

Time: Gab 'n' Greet, raffle sales and book signings start at 6:00 p.m. Soft drinks, beer and wine available.

Historic Presentation: Program begins at 7:00 p.m.

No reservations are required, but seating will be limited; so come early. Call (406)-309-0938 with any questions.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Our own **Tim Christenson** steps up this month with a different aspect of our regional history – Jokes!

The Crown of the Continent has drawn people from all over the world who came here and took up a wide variety of jobs, he explains.

Those ethnics and occupations have all contributed their unique forms of humor to our culture. Whether it was Sven & Ole "stupid" jokes, Ole & Lena's battle of the sexes, cowboys making fun of greenhorns, or lumberjacks

employing Paul Bunyan-sized hyperbole, they used laughter to liven their lives and ease their tasks, Tim notes.

Join us Monday for a light-hearted look at local humor as Tim dishes up a healthy serving of the jokes, gags, and amusing anecdotes that have characterized our corner of Montana for centuries.

About the Presenter

A preacher's kid, Tim was born and raised in Los Angeles. He spent a lot of time at church, delivered the San Pedro News Pilot around the neighborhood on his Schwinn Stingray bicycle, learned to drive in a Volkswagen bus, and surfed at Hermosa Beach.



Tim Christenson

After college he joined the Marine Corps and served as an infantry officer. He earned a masters degree at Harvard and a Fullbright Scholarship, and worked for a Senator in Washington D.C. and later for the Department of Defense on arms control talks in Europe.

In 2019 he moved his wife's childhood home in Montana. Tim is an ordained minister and serves at the St. Peter Lutheran Church in Whitefish. A long-time Westerners' member, Tim arranged the Zoom broadcasts of our meetings and most recently has been recording the meetings for on-line distribution on YouTube.

Visit our website: nwmtwesterners.com



FROM THE SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

May is here and with it graduations for higher education with elementary and high school graduations right around the corner in early June. Last week we were treated to three nights of incredible northern lights in all their brilliance.

In regard to the Westerners, we are once again having one of our own long-time members present this month with Tim Christenson bringing us the lighter side of history through western jokes. Given everything going on in the world and Montana recently, a break with a little levity is just what the doctor ordered.

On old business, I am meeting with both Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana History and Miracle of America Museum to try and lock down a date and times for a field trip in late June (primary date is Saturday, the 22nd with the alternate being Saturday the 29th). Also looking at costs for bus and lunch options.

In closing, June 4th is the primary elections for local, county, district, and statewide offices along with other issues. I encourage everyone to exercise their civic duty and vote for those individual candidates, political party, and issues you support or oppose. Absentee ballots are handy.

The Board meets from 6:00 - 6:30 p.m. before the 7 p.m. presentation at the museum. All members are welcome to attend to observe the meeting. Also, anyone interested in becoming more involved with the group is encouraged to show up early and volunteer your time and services.



Once again to volunteer or if you have any questions, recommendations, or concerns, please get in touch at 406-871-6001 or Email to: edwardjbyrne860@gmail.com.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

After spending the last month trying to find speakers for our monthly meetings, I can report success. Now all but one month is filled.

I have sympathy for Ron Beard and Kyle Stetler, who previously organized the line up. Sure bets can fall apart at the last minute, resulting in a scramble to find a replacement.

One problem is many speakers are retired, and medical issues can unexpectedly raise their head. Another is with authors, whose own rush to make publishing deadlines can squeeze their schedules.

This month we have Tim Christenson, who stepped in when our tentative schedule for spring of 2024 fell apart. Another member, Carol Buchanan, has agreed to speak at the June meeting. She has authored several fiction books on Montana's Vigilantes.

Local author Butch Larcombe was another catch. He is promoting his latest book on the history of Flathead Lake, and has signed up for July.

Doug Ammons, a popular speaker in the past, realized his goal to have the Battle of Butte ready was in trouble. But he has a backup with the story of Matting Canning and the fight for freedom of speech, and will present it in August or September.

Bob Brown, who has been in the forefront of state politics for 50 years, will talk in October about Mike Mansfield, the gentleman U.S. Senate Majority Leader from Montana.

The schedule will wrap up in November as I describe the Demersville lynchings, when two Kootenais were hung across the Flathead River from the pioneer town. The 1888 incident was just the start of a settler and tribal conflict.

In other news, the Westerners now have a YouTube channel, and will be posting our presentations on line. Look for an update on how to watch.

Visit our website: nwmtwesterners.com

TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Last month's questions about railroads came with the warning that they were tricky.

Scott Tanner and Pat Walsh were not fooled. They knew that diesel locomotives are technically diesel/electric. The diesel engine runs a generator that power electric motors attached to the wheels. The arrangement eliminates complex mechanical gearing.

And though the engineer drives the train, the conductor is actually in charge. The conductor is the foreman of what used to be a four-person crew: engineer, fireman, and the front and rear brakemen. Now there are only the conductor and engineer, who both ride in the locomotive.

The Missoulian once got all excited when it discovered there was an archaic city ordinance against setting off torpedoes in town. But in railroad terminology, torpedoes are small explosives strapped to the rails when a train unexpectedly stops on the main line. The torpedo makes a loud warning bang when run over by an approaching train.

Alimony is slang for the payment when a train crew is held too long on the other end of their run, waiting to be assigned a train to take back to their home station. I believe it is 36 hours.



This Month's Trivia Question

What unusual ranching operation was launched on Johnson Slough, at the head of Swan Lake, about 1925. The ranch had 160 fenced acres, and had a stock of 2,400, with plans to increase that number four-fold.

Submit your answers to the editor at richardahull@charter.net and we will print the names of all those who get them right.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



● June 5

The History Book Club discusses "*The Names of the Stars: A Life in the Wilds*" by Pete Fromm. 2 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

Northwest Montana Westerners' meetings are held on the third Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

Meetings begin with a Gab 'n' Greet session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. for a chance to get acquainted. Local history authors will have their books for sale.

The presentation starts at 7 p.m. and is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books are raffled off as a fund raiser. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be on sale by museum staff.

DUES REMINDER

If you have not renewed your membership for 2024, it is not too late. Please support our organization and its goals.

Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments.

NEW MEMBERS

The following have recently joined the Northwest Montana Westerners:

Tom & Sue Bradley of Renton, Wash.
Denise Jenke of Marion, Mont.

OLD TIME FLATHEAD TALES

George Houtz was an early newspaper publisher. He founded the *Flathead Herald-Journal* in 1891 in Demersville, in competition with the *Inter Lake*. When the railroad arrived in the Flathead and left Demersville to die on the vine, Houtz moved and renamed his publication the *Kalispell Journal*.

In his later years he wrote about the Valley's early days, including these two stories.

Once W. M. Noffsinger, a prominent attorney of Kalispell, now dead, was cross-examining George Stannard, pioneer Demersvillian, a witness in a case in the district court. George also has passed on. Both are remembered.

Noffsinger had a habit of trying to confuse and bewilder witnesses into making contradictory statements, which is perfectly legal.

In the case referred to, after George in response to questions, had stated his name and residence, Noffsinger asked his nativity. "I am Irish?"

Answered George. "Where were you born?"

"On the Isle of Guernsey," said George.

"Well, bumph, harumph, how could you be an Irishman, when you were born in Guernsey?" asked Noffsinger.

"Well," answered, Stannard, "if the old cat had kittens in an oven you wouldn't call them biscuits, would you?"

This stopped the clock.

BUCKED OFF BY A HORSE

During one summer of the mid nineties our elderly partner became obsessed with the idea of riding bareback throughout the valley and canvassing for subscriptions to our paper.

During his youth in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and during the Civil war, Mr. Moore had been an expert horseman, and he saw no reason why he should not again enjoy that form of locomotion and recreation, despite 30 years added to his age, and many pounds to his avoirdupois with consequent loss of agility.

So he procured himself a real presentable gelding saddle horse, supposed to be gentle and safe, and proceeded to put his ideas into effect. For a week or two he made daily trips over the roads and lanes near Kalispell, before disaster occurred.

As he was riding along a soft dirt road a few miles from town one day, his mount suddenly went crazy, for some reason or other. He reared, plunged kicked and bucked, and Colonel Moore was incontinently landed in the dust.

Just at that time W. C. Whipps and Charles Griffith, riding in a buggy, appeared on the scene. They went to Colonel Moore's assistance, raised him from the ground, brushed the dirt off him, then Whipps said: "I should think you are old enough to know better then to try to ride a horse like that!"

To which the colonel replied, "By Godfrey, I didn't know it was that kind of a horse."

This ended the horseback riding, and thereafter Colonel Moore navigated our roads behind horses instead of on them.

In the gay nineties the men and women of Kalispell were stricken with the bicycle craze, almost without exception. The time when Charles Griffith and yours truly tried to teach Colonel Moore how to

navigate the tricky wheels is well remembered.

A.M. Moore, his son, had been presented with a racing model wheel, with which he had been entering races at our little track, sometimes winning. For some breach of parental rules his father had taken the bike away from the boy, and proposed to keep it and ride it himself, with education in view.

Colonel Moore asked us to accompany him to the race track and give him a few lessons in riding. We did so.

Mounting the editor on the seat and fixing his hands to the grips, we sought to hold him up, roll him along and teach steering. Holding to the handlebars mastered, the colonel's feet just would not connect with the pedals, and sideswaying, he would fall, not always being saved from a spill in the dirt.

All through the performance the colonel kept up a stream of abuse of bicycles for a cursed useless contraption. He finally got so mad at his inability to grasp the rudiments of steering and riding, that he picked up the bike, flung it against the fence, and said, "Let the boy ride it, and I hope he breaks it into pieces, before he breaks his --- neck."

This issue of Pony Tracks is Volume 11, Number 4.

The Pony Tracks is published monthly except December and January by the
NORTHWEST MONTANA WESTERNERS

Authors of articles hold the copyright to their contributions. All other
content is copyrighted 2024 by Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners
c/o Clerk of the Posse, P.O. Box 2803, Kalispell, MT 59903

Notice to Contributors

Copy intended for this newsletter should be sent to the Editor at the e-mail address below.
Copy must be in the Editor's in-box on or before the first of the month in order to make that
month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

The next edition of Pony Tracks will be issued June 12, 2024 (or thereabouts).

richardahull@charter.net