

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

SINGLE COPY: 75 CENTS

VOLUME 104, NUMBER 9



Optima Batteries photo

While fog was lifting on Saturday morning, Shelby American, Inc. President Gary Patterson, of Las Vegas, Nevada, entertained spectators by burning out in a Shelby Mustang. After about an hour and a half delay, the fog lifted and the open road challenge course from Arnold to Dunning was deemed ready to go. There was one mechanical issue, causing another 30 minute delay, but otherwise, everything ran smoothly.

Ready. Set. Race.

Sandhills Open Road Challenge advances over 20 years

By Janet Larreau

The Sandhills Open Road Challenge Board pulled out all the stops to celebrate the 20th anniversary of an event that started out with just an idea suggested by Joe Shown at a Chamber meeting. With the backing of a majority of the community and the Custer County Supervisors, the first open road challenge - held on the Arnold-Dunning road - drew only 37 entries in 2001. In 2020, 128 cars were on the grid, coming from 22 states, including Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota, California, Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming, New Mexico, Iowa, Missouri, Texas, Michigan, Indiana, Florida, Virginia, Alabama, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, West Virginia, Idaho and Wisconsin.

“The race draws people of all different walks of life and backgrounds. It doesn’t matter

here,” said SORC Board member Skip Hecox, who introduced Shelby American, Inc., President Gary Patterson at the awards banquet held Saturday night at the city park. Patterson, of Las Vegas, Nevada, was here from the inception and was an integral part of organizing the race. In the beginning, he served as race director. Patterson had the honor of presenting the awards, but first had a few words to say to the large crowd that had gathered there for the barbecue, entertainment and to hear the results.

“Twenty years ago, 37 cars entered the race and 35 finished. We used a stopwatch for timing and we spent a lot of time in Ron Cool’s basement. It’s been remarkable. They keep coming back year after year and have become life-long friends,” said Patterson.

From the humble beginning of using a stopwatch, everything about the SORC has ad-

vanced over the past 20 years. Now, timing computers and equipment specifically designed and built for open road racing by Green Electro Sports are used.

The first year, hand-held radios were used on the course for communication that maybe reached a couple of miles at the most. Every so often, someone with a bigger radio was used as a relay person. Conners’ and Haglers’ repeaters were also used for that first couple of years. Now, 120 radios are shipped in from Denver from Radio Resource. SORC has its own antenna up on the tower on the hill. Now, volunteers can talk the entire way of the course, from town up to the north end.

Planes started circling the sky after about the second year and 11 years ago, Dan Duncan, flight paramedic for Star Care, started traveling to Arnold.

Five-point harnesses have always been used for safety, but

now, two volunteers check all driver’s belts at the start line making sure they are tight and snug.

An estimated 200 volunteers, including flaggers, timers, scorers, the tech crew, people at the Y and numerous local fire department members now man the course for Saturday’s open road race.

Behind the scenes, School

House Graphic Products students have applied the numbers and sponsor graphics and helped out in other ways from the very beginning.

“Without our volunteers, it wouldn’t happen. They are a tremendous resource for our community. We appreciate all the time you give,” said Hecox.

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Photo/Debbie Connelly

Don't Miss a Spot!

(From left) National Honor Society members Kylee Lehmkuhler, Kacee Dvorak, Bailey Schwarz, Eli Taylor and Faith Bierman give a race car a good wash job Friday morning before the annual SORC car show held that afternoon. Twenty race cars pulled up and with great community support, the kids raised \$537.00. Other NHS members not pictured who were involved were: Jadeyn Bubak, Reagan Cool, Landyn Cole and Colbi Smith. “The fire department was great about letting us hold it there and Sandhills Motors let us use their drying towels,” said sponsor Debby Moninger. Several local organizations raise money during the three days of SORC.



State Bound

Everything you would ever want to know about the freshwater drum fish can be found on local 4-Her Jayden Baker-Welch’s informational board. The board was exhibited and judged at the Custer County Fair and will now be judged at the state level. “He chose that fish because he wanted to learn more about them,” said his mom, Tonya Welch. “He catches them about every time he fishes, but his dad never keeps them, so he wanted to gather information about them and educate others about the drum and why they aren’t just a ‘trash fish.’ He is very passionate about fishing!”

Due to a delay in fair results, watch for The Sentinel’s 4-H tab insert in next week’s issue.