

THE HORSESHOE PITCHER

Official Organ of
**The National Horseshoe Pitchers Association
of America**



THE GORDON SHOE

APRIL, 1951

Vol. 3

No. 8

EDITORIAL

Most of you tournament managers by now must have their games scheduled for this season so why not send me your list of date and places of tournaments so I can list them in the "COMING EVENTS" column. And here is a suggestion that would do me, personally, a lot of good. Why not include in your prizes, a subscription or two to The Horseshoe Pitcher. Many of the horseshoe clubs and organizations did this last year and they assure me they are going to do it this year.

If the officers of our Association could see the amount of mail I received to date about the "B" tournament they are going to hold in conjunction with the World Tournament this year they would be highly gratified. My own feeling in this matter is that this is the outstanding accomplishment of the National since its inception. What a tournament this is going to be—an A? B? teen age and a Ladies tournament. This, together with a scoring device on each court is something to look forward to. To make this complete, all they need will be a good man on the "mike" such as Roy W. Smith.

EDITOR

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (N.H.P.A.)

It is the desire of the officers of our Association that all participants in the tournament this year be dressed appropriately. All participants are expected to come to the tournament with their name on their shirt and some sort of an address on the shirt that will identify the locality that they represent. In addition, all pitchers are expected to wear either white, khaki, balboa blue or faded denim trousers. Naturally, white would be more appropriate, but due to problems of laundry and the length of the tournament, white trousers are not compulsory; khaki, balboa blue or faded denim may be worn.

With the addition of a scoreboard for each court and our pitchers dressed appropriately, we will give a more interesting and colorful exhibition for the many spectators who will be in attendance. We need to add color for spectator interest.

See you in Murray.

Louis Dean

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FROM OUR SECRETARY

By Archie J. Gregson

Here is one thing that may be confusing. The new constitution, which we had printed, states: the fiscal year is from July 1 to July 1.

Please disregard that for the time being as we are still operating with fiscal year from January 1 to January 1.

There was no disposition made of the six months period when we made the change-over, so we will continue to operate as we have in the past with our year starting January 1. Your cards are printed that way.

We will take action on the change at the convention in Murray this August. I, personally, prefer the fiscal year to start in January and I would appreciate the feelings of our state secretaries as to their preference, sometime between now and convention time.

Dates have been set for the World Tournament at Murray, Utah, August 8-14 inclusive. There will be no pitching on Sunday, August 12.

Plans are for 36 in the finals for the A Division; B Division of 24 or more, a teen-age tourney and the usual ladies championship.

I hope all of you have a successful year and keep up the good work.

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TOSSING TECHNIQUE

By Roy W. Smith. Author of "Science At The Stake" and Secy.-Treas. Southern Calif. H. P. A.

A few months ago, Mr. Frank Dykes, an attorney of Phoenix, Arizona, ordered several of my instruction books, and wrote me the following letter:

"After blindly and vainly, but dilligently, practicing for years in the face of many errors, including the finger flip, wrist snap, and forearm jerk, with its consequent uncertain turn and alignment, I happened upon your book and began to really study the fundamentals. I am happy to state that, at long last, I am making some improvement. But it is difficult to overcome bad habits. In strong competition, I still lose my bearings and "blow up" some, but not like before. The importance of a beginner getting the right start cannot be over-emphasized. I am going to try to see that a beginner starts with the fundamentals as outlined in your book. Your book has been a great thing for horseshoes."

Sincerely,

Frank Dykes

1950 Maricopa County Champ

Because I appreciate nice letters like Mr. Dykes'—and I receive many of them from year to year—I am going to discuss the problems he has mentioned with the hope that the information may help others. On more than one occasion, I have discussed the subject of “wrist-snap” or “wrist-flip” with champion pitchers like Fernando Isais, the World's Champion; Guy Zimmerman, Champion of Calif.; Lowell Gray, So. Calif. Champion, and many others. At the same time, I have studied the problem very closely myself. The information I have gathered in this way, I now pass on to aid others, especially beginners.

With but few exceptions, all the champions swing their shoes backward and forward in either the vertical or a 45 degree angle to the ground. Then, after their shoes pass their legs, in their front-swings, **they use a free roll of the arm to level their shoes into release position.** Despite the erroneous descriptions of “wrist-snap” contained in some instructive pamphlets, the experts DO NOT employ “wrist-snap” to make their shoes turn. Of course, there are certain deft and delicate movements made by the wrist. But, wrist-motion and “wrist-snap” are two horses of entirely different colors. You can make a number of different motions with your wrist without “snapping” or “flipping” it. If you are inclined to doubt this, prove it to yourself in this simple manner:

When standing, let your arm hang naturally at your side. Touch your thigh with your palm. Now, swing your arm forward and up in front of your eyes—letting your palm turn upward—with a free, natural roll of your arm. **There is no “wrist-snap” involved in that motion, regardless of how fast you do it.** Your wrist merely turns with your arm, as your shoe swings into a level or release position. Otherwise, your wrist remains stiff and in its natural position. A softball pitcher uses much the same motion, except that he swings much more swiftly in order to put speed on the ball. When held and delivered correctly, the shoe—not the pitcher—does most of the work. When a player attempts to force his turn with “wrist-snap”, or “elbow-jerk”, he is like a boxer using himself for a punching bag. He wears himself down in a short time. He may easily knock himself out with a strained arm, or shoulder, and have a stiff neck for several days. Trying to pitch horseshoes like that is no fun. It's the hardest kind of work. And all for nothing.

As for “blowing-up” or becoming inflicted with “ringer-mortis”, all public performers, such as opera singers, public speakers, boxers, golfers, football players and horseshoe pitchers become prey of the pressure plague at times. Tension and “stage fright” are one and the same. I wish I had a dollar for each time pressure has caused me to lose a game. I could quit work and retire a wealthy man. Pressure is no disgrace, but it does show lack of mental conditioning. If a player has neglected his mental training, his omission instantly becomes apparent, when he goes up against strong competition. **He does not**

become tense because he is afraid. He is afraid because he becomes tense. He begins to breathe fast. His muscles become tight as fiddle strings. He loses his self-confidence and becomes rattled. A hunter with "buck fever" is a good example. He becomes "trigger happy" and blindly shoots at everything in sight. The deer is the safest creature around. Relaxation is the secret of success in all sports. Tension causes fatigue. Fatigue, in turn, causes tension.. It's a vicious cycle and absolutely fatal to any public performer.

To play well and pitch a consistent ringer percentage, a player MUST acquire the proper mental attitude, along with his physical training. That is why the champions of all sports spend more time in practicing than playing. They realize that tension robs them of co-ordination. They realize that endurance, nerve control, and the "breaks of the game" are the factors that will decide the winner. They have to keep practicing to sharpen and improve their timing. If they neglect that, they soon cease to be champions because **timing is elusive and quickly lost**. This brings up the question that many players have written and asked about. "What is timing?"

According to the dictionary, co-ordination, precision, timing, and rhythm all have about the same meaning. It is: "To arrange things (the fundamentals) in a proper and relative order; to combine for a common action or purpose; to harmonize." In short the four terms mean **the regulated movement of all the combined fundamentals in a rhythmic order, during the delivery.**

A perfect example of timing is, of course, a pendulum clock. When it is keeping good time, all its combined parts work together in perfect unison. The entire mechanism functions as one unit. Each spring, gear and balance-wheel does its precise duty. No unnecessary part is included that might create lost-motion. The pendulum swings to and fro with a steady, unbroken rhythm. Co-ordination and harmony prevail, as long as each part functions as it should. Correct time is the result. But, when one tiny part fails to perform its work, the swings of the pendulum becomes irregular or jerky. Perfect timing ceases to exist.

That is precisely what happens to the delivery of a horseshoe pitcher when he gets "ringer-mortis" or "off" his game. There are times when all pitchers, despite all their efforts, cannot relax and co-ordinate their fundamentals. When they correct one flaw, it seems to create another. The wise player has learned, through long experience, to accept his "off" days as part of the game. Those who have not learned to control their emotions, become angry and try to "fight their shoes." In other words, instead of taking time to learn exactly what is causing their trouble, they try to force their muscles to respond before they are ready. That is the greatest of all errors. It only makes matters worse by creating tension which completely destroys what co-ordination they have left.

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Archie Gregson, Secretary
Crestline, California

A lot of such trouble can be avoided if a player will take time to warm up as he should. An experienced pitcher seldom enters competition without first limbering up his muscles and "getting the feel of his shoe." Your warmup has much to do with determining how you will play. So, don't try to rush your co-ordination or timing. If you do, your control room (mind) will be quickly occupied by the personal devil of all horseshoe pitchers—Tension.

Mr. Cliff Westfall, of Illinois, wrote me about his stance. It seems that he could not line up the peg without pointing his right foot at almost right angles with his left, which was parallel with the pitcher's platform. Personally, I prefer the "square stance," as used by Fernando Isais. He places his right foot perfectly parallel with the platform, with all his weight on his right foot. His left foot is placed about 8 inches back of his right. (Not directly behind it, but like he had taken a short, natural step). His left foot is parallel with his right. He steps directly forward with his left foot. His delivery is smooth and effortless. Quite often I see him step forward and backward with each pitch, without moving his right foot from position. He does not crouch much, yet, he does not have the appearance of stiffness when delivering. As he bends slightly forward at the waist and swings his shoe backward, **he relaxes his right hip** and comes up in a beautiful follow-through with his body and arm.

Fernando has told me that he considers the stance as the most important of all the fundamentals. He practiced for months by balancing almost all of his weight on his right foot. All he uses his left foot for is to balance himself and step forward with it. Years ago, when he first started pitching, he took a long step and threw a low, fast one and one-quarter turn.

Regardless of how a player stands, he should be well-balanced before starting to deliver. Correct footwork is VERY important because **one cannot acquire control of his shoe until he first learns to control his feet.** For a smooth, well-balanced delivery, you must step with your foot that is opposite your delivery-arm. We have a few players here in So. Calif., who step with the wrong foot. They lunge after their shoe, jerk, twist and crow-hop all over the pitcher's box. They don't fall down, but they cut some of the funniest capers you ever saw in trying to stay on their feet. And they tire out pretty quickly. After one learns to control his turn and gets his distance, he should stop to realize that about 90% of his misses may be due to the careless way in which he is standing.

A player can stand too straight and stiff when delivering. The knees must bend properly. Relaxing your right hip and knee properly, and shifting your weight to your left foot, when you step, acts as a spring, thus checking your forward-swing without a sudden jolt or jar. On the

other hand, a player can crouch too much. I have seen some scrape the platform with their shoes. Too much crouch will cause you to have to lift extra body-weight, when you straighten up to release. That extra weight can cause body sway and result in poor alignment.

There is a lot to this business of pitching ringers. Don't let anyone kid you to the contrary. A horseshoe has an opening of only 3½ inches. The smallest error in tossing one 40 feet through the air can cause a miss of several inches, or several feet. And, don't forget, you have the whole, wide world around that peg to miss in! If we lived for hundreds of years, we could not learn all there is to know about the game. That's one of the things that make it so interesting. But, if you love the game and have the patience to keep trying the proper methods—as they have been developed by the champions—you CAN and you WILL improve your technique.

After studying and trying for 20 years and, despite the fact that my hair is getting white at my temples, I still keep hoping that I can chalk up an average of 75% ringers for an entire tournament. And why not? Just because there is snow on my roof is no reason for the fire to be out in my house. But, if I never realize my 75% ambition, I will still feel amply rewarded for the fun and healthful relaxation that the game has given me. Since I am 6 feet, 3½ inches tall, there must be something to the slogan, "Pitch Horseshoes and Live Long."

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HORSESHOES HOO'S HOO!

Our Second Vice President

This is the third in a series to be known as "KNOW YOUR OFFICERS. I believe that our membership at large will be interested to know the type of officers at the head of their organization.—EDITOR

Aden E. Swinehamer is our second Vice President. His wife, Gladys June, and his two children, Suzanne aged eight, and Joanne aged six,

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make up the averaged size American family. For the past ten years, he has been Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois State Horseshoe Pitchers Association. He is also President of the Aurora City Bowling Association. He is also affiliated with the Illinois State and National Purchasing Agents Association. A graduate of the East Aurora High School he also holds a degree of Cost Accounting from the Illinois University.

Starting fifteen years ago as a clerk in the office of the Aurora Metal Co., manufacturers of bronze castings, he has worked himself up to be the Purchasing Agent for the company. Part of his seventeen years in the horseshoe game: He won the Illinois State Championship in 1939, and in the same year at Des Moines, Iowa, he placed seventh in that World Championship with an average ringer percentage of 79.3. He also won the Mid-West Tournament at Rock Island twice and won the City and County titles for ten years in a row. Golf and Bowling are his other interests and his best season in bowling gave him an average of 195.

In 1935, he and Casey Jones barnstormed throughout the Middle-West and the Eastern States.

* * *

CALIFORNIA

By L. J. Braun

Our club, the Candlestick Cove H. C., has inaugurated a junior membership and up to this writing we have five boys under the age of fifteen who have paid their dollar for membership in the National Organization. One of our boys, David Loucks, who, by the way is the San Francisco Junior Champ, is really bearing down! He very seldom has a game below 45% and the other day he pitched a game of 80% and one of 73%. All the other boys are showing wonderful improvement, too.

We want to hold Inter-City match games so if anyone is interested, drop me a line at 425 Leland Avenue, San Francisco. We herewith challenge ANYONE!

* * *

NEW JERSEY

By Dr. Sol Berman

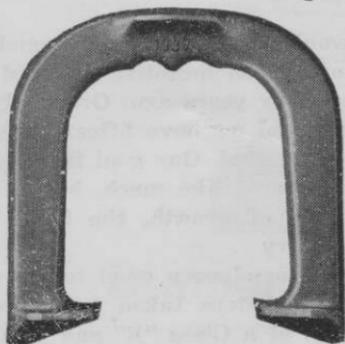
The President's message in the February issue of The Horseshoe Pitcher announcing the tentative dates for the 1951 World Tournament started us reminiscing about the 1950 contest. We had a grand time at Murray last year but we were a little disappointed by some aspects of the tourney. Many will undoubtedly be remedied this year.

For example, we traveled over 2,000 miles and did not qualify. If it were not for the fact that we were on a month long trip which included Yellowstone Park, our disappointment would have been increased manyfold. The proposed B Class tournament and the teenage contests

should influence for the affirmative those of us who were undecided whether or not to make the trip this year. Now, at last, we will play and not just throw two hundred shoes.

We thought that the greatest shortcoming of the 1950 contest was the lack of effective publicity. LIFE magazine took pictures both in Murray and at the California tournament which were never published. We wrote to LIFE but received no reply. This year the NHPA should have a publicity committee who will publicize the tournament nationally by offering a magazine such as LOOK exclusive rights to the contest if they will guarantee a one or two page spread. But even if this is impossible, the least such a committee should do is to publicize the event locally. While in Salt Lake City we visited several souvenir stores. Not only did they not have any momentos with horseshoes but the majority of store owners did not even know of the tournament. We should like to suggest that each contestant be given a souvenir pin of copper, if possible, to carry home as a remembrance of the event. While in Murray we spoke with the Ganz Copper Co. on State Street, and were informed that a suitable pin could be devised quite reasonably if ordered in large quantities. Moreover, post cards with pictures of the courts with the mountain background could be sold at the tournament and would carry word of the contest from coast to coast.

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Finally, we should like to suggest that if thirty courts are available this year, the tournament could be held in two sections comprised of the thirty odd-numbered qualifying men and the thirty even-numbered qualifiers. The top three in each group could play a round robin on the final day. This would offer a star field for the finale, good publicity and excellent spectator interest.

* * *

OREGON

By Cletus Chapelle

Since I went to the World Championships out in Utah last year and met the editor of The Horseshoe Pitcher and the National officers, I feel I actually know the men who have most to do with the popularity of our game. Anything we can read, written by fellows we know, makes very interesting reading.

Congratulations on the "Hoo's Hoo" column! Keep it going, and when you run out of officers, give us the dope on fellows like Isais, Jones, Allen, Zimmerman, etc. and let us know how they happened to get interested in pitching horseshoes.

I did not attend the annual meeting last year and I would like to have some information, if it is available. Since The Horseshoe Pitcher is now the official organ of the National Association, couldn't we have published in it's pages a financial statement, the total membership figures and any other pertinent information for the readers that are unable to attend the annual meeting?

If we had such figures at hand, it would be easier to talk membership to prospective members and be more of an incentive to build up our National organization. From nothing, four years ago, Oregon built up a membership of forty-three last year and we have fifteen already this year although our season has not yet started. Our goal is at least fifty-one members for 1951. That doesn't sound like much, but if the national picture could show the same rate of growth, the horseshoe game would really get on the map in a hurry.

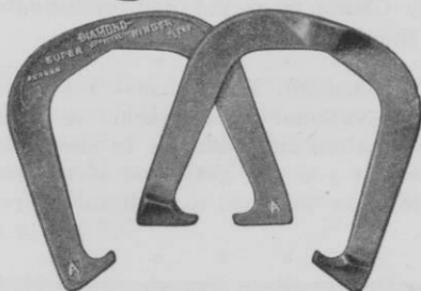
The plans for this year's tournament sound very good to me and the officers are to be complimented for the steps taken to insure a larger tournament than ever. The inclusion of a Class "B" and teenage competition is definitely a step in the right direction. As part of our State tournament last year, we had a boys tournament in which twelve boys participated. It was a very good turn out considering it was the first event of its kind in over twenty years. From now on it will be a regular part of our program.

The article in THIS WEEK magazine was very widely read and of great benefit to us. Dale Dixon certainly looked the same as at Murray last year. The boys at Murray again deserve our sincere thanks if the added courts are installed. The scoring devices will be an outstanding contribution to the spectators and will add much to the 1951 tournament.

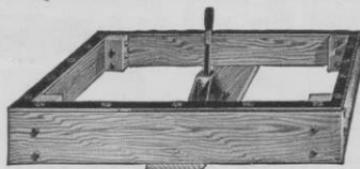
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JAKE'S JOTTINGS

EASTERN NATIONAL HORSESHOE TOURNAMENT—The 1951 Eastern National Horseshoe Tournament will be held in Clearfield, Pa., August 1st to 4th inclusive and will be one of the feature attractions of the Clearfield County Fair. Sanction has been obtained from the N. H. P. A. and plans are being made to make this one of the largest and best tournaments in the East. Besides substantial cash prizes, we intend to give at least eight one year subscriptions to The Horseshoe Pitcher. Further information regarding highways, rail and plane service to Clearfield will be published later but all inquiries will be answered by addressing R. G. Kinkead, R. D. No. 2, Clearfield, Pa.

* * *

Pat DeLeary, our Lady Champ, has a real peeve. She wants to know why the Lady Champ does not get presented with a trophy to show she really is the Champion?

* * *

Doc Berman, of Elizabeth, N. J. says—"I have about 400 feet of film taken at the 1950 National contest including excellent shots of the top four—Isais, Jones, Allen and DeLeary in slow motion so that their form can be analyzed. If you can get some of the New York boys together, I'd be glad to show this reel as well as others featuring Brady, Fileccia, etc."

* * *

Members of the Empire State Branch of the N. H. P. A. can now get their National dues cards for 1951 by sending me one dollar.

* * *

Here is another potential horseshoe pitcher. On January 2nd Ted Penridge's wife presented him with an 8 pound, 15 ounce baby boy. That weight seems to indicate he will grow as tall as his Dad.

* * *

On Friday evening, May 18th, the Woodlawn Horseshoe Club, of the Bronx, N. Y. are going to hold their annual show and dance at the Vasa Temple, 120 East 149 St. Tickets are \$1.00, tax extra. If their previous affairs of this kind are a criterion, this one should be well worth going to. They use their own talent too.

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Harry McGrail, Prop.

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* * *

Address me or The Horseshoe Pitcher at Box 22, Kingsbridge Station, New York, N. Y. When answering any of these ads please let them know where you saw it.

* * *

Remember to complain to your local postmaster if this magazine fails to reach you on time. Any delay of delivery is not on this end of the line. If you have moved, send me your new address because the P. O. Dept. does not forward this class of mail.

* * *

N.H.P.A. EMBLEMS—If I hear from enough fellows who would be interested, I can furnish N.H.P.A. shield screw back emblems. The emblems would be enameled in red, white and blue and gold plated. Those made of brass would cost you 70 cents and those made in sterling would be one buck. I will have to have orders of at least 100 each before I have them made up. JAKE.

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COMING EVENTS

April 14-15, Long Beach, Cal.—Pitchers 60 years and over.

May 5-6, Ontario, Cal.—So. Cal. Open, Class "A".

May 30, New York, N. Y.—Empire State Open, Class A, B, C.

June 9-10, Santa Monica, Cal.—So. Cal. Open, Class "B".

July 7-8, Huntington Park, Cal.—Amateur, boys under 18.

July 21-22-29, Exposition Park, Cal.—Class A Championship.

July 28, Wildwood, N. J.—Invitation Open.

August 1-4, Clearfield, Pa.—Eastern National Tournament.

August 8-14, Murray, Utah—World's Championship.

August 25-26, South Gate, Cal.—Amateur Championship

September 1-3, Long Beach, Cal.—Western Class A Open.

October 13-14, Ontario, Cal.—So. Cal Class B Championship.

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- ARKANSAS—Fair Park and Boyle Park, Little Rock.
- CALIFORNIA—Community Center, Compton; Exposition Park, Los Angeles; Union Pacific Courts, Long Beach; Mosswood Park, Oakland; Golden Gate Courts, San Francisco; Candlestick Cove, Lincoln Park, Santa Monica; Crocker-Amazon Courts, San Francisco; McNear Park, Petaluma; Ives Memorial Park, Sebastopol.
- CANADA—Dieppe Park, East York.
- CONNECTICUT—Bearsley Park, Bridgeport; Pope Park, Hartford.
- DIST. OF COL.—Commerce Courts, Washington.
- FLORIDA—South Waterfront Park, St. Petersburg.
- ILLINOIS—Welles Park, Chicago.
- INDIANA—Brookside Park, Indianapolis.
- IOWA—Birdland Park, Des Moines; Riverside Park, Ottumwa.
- KANSAS—Gage Park, Topeka.
- KENTUCKY—Shady Shores, Covington.
- MAINE—Auburn, Riverside Courts, Bangor, Bangor Club, Farmington, City Park, Hebron, Community Courts, Portland, Deering Oaks, Rumford, High School, So. Portland, Wilkinson Park.
- MARYLAND—Carroll Park, Baltimore; Magruder Park, Hyattsville.
- MASSACHUSETTS—Municipal Playgrounds, Westfield.
- MINNESOTA—Como & Elfelt, St. Paul; Soldier Memorial Field, Rochester.
- MISSOURI—Municipal Park, Carthage; Neosho, Fair Grounds, Springfield, Grant Beach Park.
- NEW HAMPSHIRE—South Playground, Portsmouth.
- NEW JERSEY—Warinanco Park, Elizabeth; Branch Brook Pk., Newark. Wildwood, Beach Park.
- NEW YORK—Central Park, Innwood Hill Park, New York City; St. Mary's Park, Williamsbridge Oval Park, Woodlawn, Van Cortlandt Park, all in the Bronx; Parade Grounds, Fort Green Park, Brooklyn; Belmont Lake State Park, Babylon, L. I., Kirk Park, Syracuse.
- OHIO—Jermain Park, Toledo; Cedar Point, Sandusky.
- OREGON—Laurelhurst Park, Portland.
- PENNSYLVANIA—District Courts, Pittsburgh; Pt. Marion, Frank Murphy's Courts; Joe Mett's Courts, Revere; Oakhurst Courts, Johnstown.
- RHODE ISLAND—Athletic Field, West Warwick; Schartner's Courts, Hamilton.
- UTAH—County Fair Grounds, Murray.
- WASHINGTON—Wright Park, Tacoma.
- WEST VIRGINIA—Bar B-Q Courts, East Nitro.
- WYOMING—Union Park, Cheyenne.

IF YOU ARE NOT LISTED HERE, GET BUSY!