

Parade...from Page 1A



Trackrock Campground won First Place in the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade on Oct. 12, taking it all the way back to 1969. Photo by Mark Smith

were part of a group of civic-minded Blairsville residents that started the Sorghum Festival back in 1969.

Initially, they held the Sorghum Festival at the Old Union County Courthouse, where they sold jars of sorghum syrup to passersby.

“We were trying to figure out a way to make money to help needy kids is what it was all about,” Junior Bridges said. “Me being a syrup maker – my dad had the syrup mill at home – Newt Miller and Davey Coker, we came up with the idea of syrup selling.”

Bridges said he, Miller and Coker rented some land from the U.S. Forest Service and grew sorghum cane and harvested it, then cooked it down and bottled it at his home with his wife’s help.

“Then we came to the square, with my wife wearing the same dress she’s wearing today, and we sold syrup right there on the square – and that’s the way it got started,” Bridges said.

Today, the Blairsville Sorghum Festival draws more than 10,000 people into Union County each second and third weekends in October, and many people, natives and visitors alike, turn out to see the annual Sorghum Festival Parade.

Curtis Colwell stood in for his father, longtime State Rep. Carlton Colwell, who was slated to be the grand marshal this year but couldn’t be there for health reasons.

In memory of former Union County Sheriff Harlan



Justin Duncan escorting a horse bearing the saddle, hat and badge of his great-grandfather, the beloved former Union County Sheriff Harlan Duncan. Photo by Mark Smith

T. Duncan, who led the parade for many, many years, his great-grandson, Justin Duncan, led a horse in the parade with Harlan’s saddle, hat and badge on the horse’s back.

Union County resident Cathy Flood was there with her husband, Ken, their daughters and sons-in-law, and their grandchildren.

“We moved here in the year 2000,” Flood said. “We’ve been here 19 years. We always sit right here at Builders FirstSource. The kids bring their bags to collect candy, and we all enjoy the parade.”

The 50th Anniversary Sorghum Festival also featured antique and vintage car contests, a vintage tractor contest and a

parade float contest.

Trackrock Campground took First Place in the float contest, Misty Mountain Inn took Second Place, and the Blairsville Dance Project took Third Place.

Tom and Anna Martin won First Place in the classic car contest with their 1966 Ford Fairlane GT. Joy and Ronnie Throop took First Place in the antique car contest with their 1931 Ford “A.” And Charles Duckworth took First Place in the vintage truck contest with his 1966 Ford pickup.

“The reason I enjoy doing this,” said longtime parade announcer and Blairsville native Libby Stevens, “is because it represents everything I grew up with – Small Town, USA.”



Misty Mountain Inn took Second Place in the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade float contest with this groovy ‘60s-inspired design. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



John Nix and the Country Cousins performed on a float of their own all throughout the 50th Anniversary Sorghum Festival Parade. Photo by Mark Smith



Don’t forget to check out the Sorghum Festival Square Dance on Saturday, Oct. 19, beginning at 8 p.m. inside the Old Middle School Gym. Photo by Lowell Nicholson