

Guilford beetle Snowbell second in nation

Eric O'Donovan has spent the week of March 17-April 3 at the National Dung Beetle Derby in Bakersfield, California, where his prize beetle, Snowbell, competed. This article is his story of the Competition.

Saturday, March 27: arrived in Bakersfield early this morning, and Snowbell and I spent the day completing the registration forms and recovering from the trip. Snowbell balked a little at having her picture taken for the souvenir program, but this just shows her lively spirit.

I left Snowbell to rest in our room, and spent most of the afternoon filling out forms and walking around the Derby grounds. It hasn't changed much since 1980—the old track is still there, as is the parade ground, although the judging stand is new. The souvenir tables are also still there, selling everything from gold-plated beetle stands to albums of the great dung beetles of the past half century. Snowbell is recovering nicely from her trip, and should be in fine fettle for the preliminary competition tomorrow.

Sunday, March 28: As I expected, Snowbell passed the first round with flying colors. She did not come in first, but I did not

expect her to, as a good beetle knows when to really exert herself and when to just lope along. The ones left are the ones we have to worry about—the ones that have struggled through intense training and even more intense competition.

Monday, March 29: More preliminary eliminations today. Although many of the beetles are already out of the contest, there are still hundreds of others to beat. Once again, Snowbell passed the round with ease. There were still other preliminary rounds going on after she had finished, so I took her back to our room, put her to bed after a nice hot meal, and then returned to the grounds to see how our competition was faring. There are beetles and trainers from all over the United States, from Maine to Hawaii to Florida to Alaska, and even one from Puerto Rico.

One man from Iowa has been entering beetles in the Derby for over thirty years, and his father was the trainer of Buckeye, the winner of the first annual Dung Beetle Derby of 1932. Here also are the dregs of the Derby world, the sickos and perverts who come only to see a beetle crash. Their appetite for gore has already been partially satisfied; earlier today, the beetle from Laketon,

Minnesota, one of the most prestigious Derby towns, obliterated the beetle from Harvard in a smoldering heap of legs. The trainers are heartbroken, but vow to try again. In the world of the Dung Beetle Derby, that is the only way. Here in Beetle City, we mourn our losses and go on. I should know. In 1977, Winnie, the first beetle I trained that had made it to the national competition, crashed and died on the long grueling obstacle course. He, like all the other beetles that have died during the Derby, was buried in the National Dung Beetle Cemetery, located twenty miles from Bakersfield. Following a tradition half a century old, the beetles are buried in unmarked graves. The cemetery also serves as a cow pasture, and tries to remind the spirits of the departed beetles of happier days. I visited it this afternoon, along with a busload of other mourners, and discovered that the but-tercups were starting to bloom. It is a happy place.

Tuesday, March 30: This was the day of the obstacle course, and I don't mind telling you that I was worried! I had put Snowbell through a similar course many times before, but never with other beetles. On this type of course, the beetles become

disoriented easily, and the high-speed crashed resulting from this are the most common cause of dung beetle fatalities. I am happy to report that Snowbell survived, and is now resting happily in her bed.

Wednesday, March 31: Today is a day of rest—a day to let beetles and trainers alike recover from the rapid and exhausting schedule that the Derby demands from us.

This afternoon, the trainers of the twenty finalists met for publicity photos. The local papers and television stations are covering the event, which has been made especially important by the fact that this Derby is the fiftieth anniversary of organized dung beetle racing in this country. Tomorrow, the 20 finalists will be winnowed down to five, and then the day after that the five will narrow to two. Saturday is the day of the final competition.

Thursday, April 1: Well, Snowbell is still in the game. She's a plucky little beetle, the best one that I have ever trained. The other beetles are Pinktoes, from Ashland, Oregon; Eglantine, from Portland, Maine; Bobo, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Whomper, from Troy, Kansas. They're all tough beetles, but I think Bobo's the one

to keep an eye on.

Friday, April 2: I was right—Bobo is a good beetle. But not as good as Snowbell. They're both still in the competition, but in today's race, she beat him easily. She knows that the competition is for real now, and she's exerting every ounce of her strength to beat the others. Tomorrow is the day of the big race, and she knows it. I called the vet to our room, and he gave her a gentle sedative. She calmed down, and finally fell asleep. Bobo's trainer called me on the telephone to wish Snowbell luck, and we talked for about thirty minutes. Bobo was also mega-nervous tonight, and we look forward to a good contest tomorrow.

Saturday, April 3: Well, Snowbell didn't win, but she was beaten in a good, clean race. She crossed the finish line just half a second after Bobo, making her time the fastest ever for a beetle in second place. Bobo is a good beetle, and I'm proud to have him represent our country in the International Dung Beetle Derby to be held in Algeria later this year. As for Snowbell, she will be put out to pasture, where she can spend the rest of her days giving birth to more champion beetles. And so until next year, that's all from Beetle City.

Summer School

Study in China

BY MARTHA MASSIE

Guilford College students now have an opportunity to visit mainland China. For a month (July 7 - August 7) Ted Benfey, Dana Professor of Chemistry and History of Science, will co-direct a tour which includes Peking, Xian (renowned for its archaeological artifacts), Nanjung, Shanghai, and Hanzhou (referred to by Marco Polo as "the finest and most splendid city of the world").

The summer seminar will focus on the History of Science in China. Classes in oriental history of science, Chinese culture and language, and guided tours of historically important sites will be held. The tour is sponsored by Temple University and Tianjin Normal College. Academic credit can be arranged through Temple or Dr. Benfey.

The Guilford College Community reflects the opening communication between the United States and China. Two students from mainland China, Mai Lun and Wang Yi, are presently enrolled, and several faculty members (Dorothy Borei, Martha Colley, Edward Burrows, and Lois Ann Hobbs, wife of Grimsley Hobbs, have made

recent visits to the mainland.)

The Orient is a new area of concern for many people, but Dr. Benfey has had an active interest in Chinese culture for many years. He recognized China's contributions to science and technology when he was teaching at Earlham College, and in 1970 made his first visit to Japan in order to study the history of Chinese and Japanese science.

Benfey feels that exposure to Oriental culture will change a student's attitude towards life "fundamentally and permanently." Contact with a non-Western philosophical approach to science, one which yields results applicable to universal concepts, contributes to the "totally different outlook" which a traveller may bring home as a souvenir of his visit to China.

The entire cost of the seminar is approximately \$3,700. This price includes round-trip air fare between San Francisco and China, all traveling by air, train, and bus within China, all meals and lodgings for one month, admission to historical sites, and all classes and lectures at Tianjin Normal College. For brochures and more information about this educational opportunity see Dr. Ted Benfey.



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