

# under the sun

## Haw Hill Tractor Race 'Pulls' In Crowd For Winnabow VFD

BY SUSAN USHER

Some are "converts" from the world of dirt-track auto racing or 4x4 mud slings. Others come fresh from the farm or garage to the straight dirt track.

They willingly drive hundreds of miles to compete for purses that often don't meet even travel expenses and for points that translate into bonus pay at year's end.

Pullers from the Carolinas and Virginia arrived at Haw Hill Raceway north of Bolivia Saturday evening towing "tractors" of all kinds, some only vaguely resembling their farmstyle namesakes.

They were "pulling" last weekend for the Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department in the first tractor race held in Brunswick County. The pull was co-sponsored by the raceway, the East Coast Tractor Pullers' Association and the fire department. Winners in six classes divided a purse of \$7,950, while the firefighters raised money to rebuild a 1973 pumper-tanker.

They hope to sponsor "the Winnabow W-300" as an annual fundraising event at Haw Hill.

"I think we did all right," Fire Chief Robert Kye said shortly after the last event of the weekend, for two-wheel drive trucks and before receipts were counted. Like several dozen firefighters and community volunteers who worked up to and through the weekend, Kye was obviously exhausted. "I hope we can make it an annual event."

Treasurer Bill Hardee had better news the following day. While the department didn't "make a killing," about \$4,700 profit remained after paying all major bills. Proceeds from concessions, program and program ad sales would push the total higher, he said, but still short of goal.

At the pull, emcee Royce Bissette's sing-song cadences cajoled Saturday's crowd of about 2,000 into a carefree mood.

At concession stands operated by the fire department's ladies' auxiliary, hotdogs, cold soft drinks and salted popcorn moved briskly. An occasional order was temporarily abandoned as whoops from the bleachers drew patrons of all ages back to the track.

Pulling offers instant family appeal: It's simple enough for anyone to follow, yet it's a highly competitive racing sport.

Each driver pits his tractor—or truck, as the case may be—against a "sled," a weight transfer machine that handles anywhere from five tons to 24 tons. The tonnage pulled by a particular tractor depends on its class and weight.

The tractor that pulls the sled the farthest distance along a 300-foot straight dirt track without careening off-side wins. Additional pulls are held to clear up any multiple finishes.

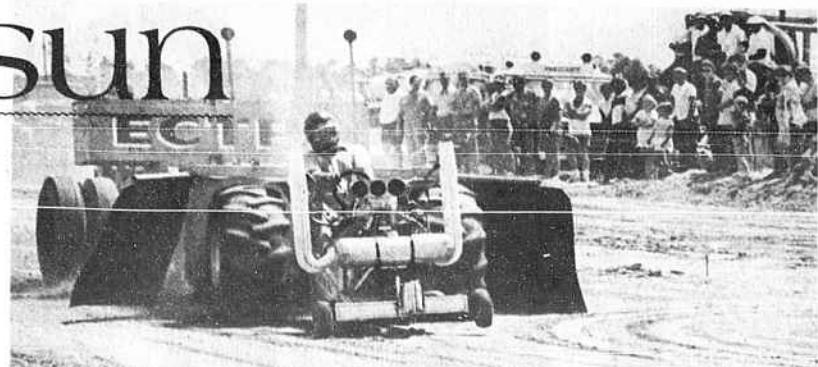
Pulling has its moments.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER  
FINISH-LINE FLAGMAN Robert Thigpen of Wallace follows the East Coast Tractor Pullers' Association circuit with his brother Jimmy of Burgaw, who competes in both minirod and four-wheel drive.



POULTRY FARMER RUSSELL HORTON of Hurdle Mills was a crowd favorite as he plowed toward the 274-foot mark atop Egg Man's Pullet, a superstock tractor.



MARVIN STONE JR. drove from Danville, Va., to put his modified tractor to the test in the first pull held in Brunswick County.



CONCESSION STAND VOLUNTEER Lois Rabon of Winnabow cuts a slice of watermelon for a racing enthusiast.

## Judge Refuses To Reduce DC-4 Defendants' Fines

BY TERRY POPE

Four Winston-Salem men who pleaded guilty in 1983 for their roles in the DC-4 drug trafficking conspiracy in Brunswick County have lost an appeal to have their \$3,000 to \$5,000 fines reduced.

Habegger filed the motions in January to have the four Winston-Salem defendants' fines remitted or reduced as well. Habegger told Judge Cornelius Monday that the four defendants' ability to pay was the same as the defendant whose fine was remitted by Judge Brannon last year.

Habegger said the four men are working minimum wage jobs in Winston-Salem and cannot afford to pay the fines.

"They all grew up in Winston-Salem, and I'd say they all live within four or five blocks of each other," Habegger said.

But District Attorney Easley said the defendants have only served six months active sentence at the most, but has yet to pay any of their \$3,000 to \$5,000 fines. He added that each defendant pleaded guilty in Nov. 1980, was sentenced in Nov. 1983, and agreed to the plea bargain agreement which specifically included fines.

"That's been five years since the airplane came in," Easley argued. "I'd like to get that money for the schools."

Under state law, fines resulting from drug operations are awarded to the local board of education in which county the incident occurred.

Since they served as the state's witnesses against the men accused of being leaders in the drug conspiracy, Easley said he recommended lighter "split sentences" for the men. Both Kevin and Reginald Witherspoon and Jerry Wallace were each given a three-year prison sentence, suspended for all but six months, and fined \$3,000. Buoy was fined \$5,000.

All four men could have been sentenced up to 90 years in prison and been fined up to \$150,000 each if convicted on all charges facing them.

In court Monday, Habegger said one of the 18 original DC-4 defendants had his fine remitted last year after Superior Court Judge Anthony Brannon ruled it was "overly burden-

"Why shouldn't they pay? Because one got out of it?" Judge Cornelius asked Habegger at one point in the motion hearing. Habegger replied that the men could not pay because of their minimum wage jobs.

In arguing against the motion, Easley also added that paying the fines is a requirement for the men to remain on their suspended sentence.

"For a five year sentence, that's only \$50 a month," Easley said. "If they're not willing to pay \$50 a month, they ought to go to jail."

Judge Cornelius ruled the fines will remain as is, unless the defendants wish to take the matter before Judge Barefoot, now resident Superior Court judge in the 5th District, which includes New Hanover and Pender counties.

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