

There is a HISTORY to this show ...

PIN-A-GO-GO

By David Bucannan

Pin-a-go-go is a favorite show for northern California pinheads. Now a staple of the west coast pinball scene, its origins are shrouded in mystery. It seems to have started (like many good things) with a core group of enthusiasts who just wanted to have fun and get their pins together in the mid-1980s. The ringleader was Walt Schrinker, who invited all the pinheads he knew locally to "bring your favorite pin over to my house" in Roseville (a suburb of Sacramento). The first such gathering featured two dozen or so pins, including a Hercules (from Richard Conger) on the front lawn!

As happens with these things, "it kinda grew" over subsequent years, graduating first to a local rental hall, then to the Roseville Fairgrounds, by which time it was called Pinathon, and run by Walt, his son Jerry and Don Wright. It grew large and unwieldy (and it lost money) so the last Pinathon was in 1995. Enthusiastic attendees Mark Zahner and Don Highley asked if they could pick up the torch before it hit the ground, and it was graciously handed off, so that 1996 featured the new Pin-a-go-go, now located at the Dixon Fairgrounds, which moved it to the bay area side of Sacramento and made it that much more accessible.

True to tradition, it lost money the first two years. Luckily Richard Conger pitched in with Mark and Don in the third year, and the show actually showed a \$1500 profit! This evidently



confused the organizers, who, rather than try and decide how to divide the money, managed to locate a worthy local charity (The Boys Club and Girls Club in Dixon) and donated the money to them. Walking in with a check was a good way to start the relationship! In subsequent years, the show has delivered a steady donation.

The Boys and Girls Club have pitched in to help in a big way, furnishing bodies to sell tickets and trinkets, patrol the show floor, watch doorways, sell drinks and food — and do the cleanup. This has freed the organizers to do what they like to do most — focus on pinball!

In 2003 the show was on May 16-18. Friday is "move-in day" and this year, there were over 115 pinballs set up as of 5:00 p.m. Notable among them were a Capcom Kingpin, Monopoly, Roller Coaster Tycoon, Simpsons Pinball Party, Centaur, Blackwater 100, Black Knight, Firepower, No Good Go'fers, and*4* Spirit machines ("A

Spirit Salute"), proudly presented by Dale Luck, Dave Buchanan, Matt Christiano and Steve Charland. Spirit is a relatively rare (and fun) wide-body pin



from the Gottlieb early 80s era. By mid-day Saturday, the show floor was packed with 148 pins, with more on end at the sides of the show floor and in the parking lot, as several dozen pins changed hands ...

The show is generally anchored by



20 or more machines from Don Highley, and in years past has always featured Steve Charland's very complete Gottlieb System 80 collection ("Anything else is girly pinball"). This year, Steve was tied up and was only able to bring his Spirit and provide his usual selfless help to many pins on the floor in need of attention. Also attending and pitching in selflessly was Chris ?? from T Minus One. New this year was the presence of Bay Area Amusements, who not only manned an impressive parts booth, but brought 32 pins as well, mainly newer titles.



Steve Charland and those four Spirits.

With all cylinders clicking and paid attendance over 740 people, this year the show raised \$4700 for the Boys and Girls Club, close to last year's \$4900. Next year, the entire hall is rented, with some special events to take place in the adjacent rooms.

Pinball might have been an industry that tried its best to pry loose change from passers-by, but today it has been harnessed to do good! Pin-a-go-

go shows how a show can provide a great environment for pinball enthusiasts, while raising money for a worthy cause.

A final thank you goes to Steve Young of Pinball Resource, who once again stuffed and distributed flyers to help advertise the show. **PGJ**

Having had a number of years to refine the tradeoffs between enhancing the show experience for attendees and staying in the black, the organizers now include a silent auction for at least one pin (this year a pretty nice Pinbot raised \$700) and other pinball items, including

reproduction backlasses (donated by Greg Pruett). Show T-shirts were also designed and donated the last two years (this year's shirt was so popular it was reprinted and is available on Bay Area Amusement's website — all proceeds will go to Boys and Girls Club). Sponsors have also helped the bottom line the last two years.

Maggie The Pinball Playing Dog

by RUSS JENSEN

While strolling the aisles at the A-GO-GO show I saw a lady with a dog that reminded me of last year's show where there were several dogs and even a wolf. She told me her dog was a two year old Australian Shepherd named Maggie and asked if I would like to see her play pinball.

I told her I would love to see it and I went to the car to get my camera. They found an EM machine (the only kind Maggie would play) and also a small stool for Maggie to stand on. The game was a Williams 3 Jokers.

She started the machine and launched the ball. When the ball traveled to the bottom area of the playfield (where the lady flipped it around) Maggie started barking and batting with her paws on top of the glass. This happened with each ball.

When Maggie had finished her game, I told her owner that I would probably be writing an article for



PinGame Journal and then asked for her name. She said it was Teri Stathatos and her husband was Gary. As soon as she told me this I remembered that I had met them twice before at two separate pinball shows in the mid '90s, and that they were friends of my old pinball buddy Sam Harvey.

Not only that, but at the Wild West Pinball Fest show in Arizona in 1994 I had met them and remember their 10-week-old baby Jennifer (now 9), seeing her again a year later at a former Sacramento area pinball show, the Pinathon. Proving once again that surely is "a small pinball world."

By the way, their older daughter Jackie (now 13) was pictured a couple times in past issues of this magazine back in 1992 when she was two years old. **PGJ**



Jackie, "back in the day."