

Shooting for kids

Weekend event raises money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

By **TOM LOEWY**

The Register-Mail

Posted May 23, 2009 @ 09:47 PM

Last update May 24, 2009 @ 07:37 PM

LITTLE YORK — The people gathered in a timber-dotted, gently sloping valley outside Little York during the hottest portion of Saturday morning looked like living anachronisms.

Or extras from a John Ford western movie.

Many wore cowboy hats, big buckles and pointed-edge badges. Others chose buckskins or bandanas tied around their necks.

They assumed personas, naming themselves the likes of Bear Lee Armed and Mad Mabel. Lacey Corsette and Fancy Bob. Ole No. 7 and Blaze O. Glory.

Yet after they emerged from a cloud of black-powder smoke holding single-action revolvers, lever-action rifles or dual-hammer, sawed-off shotguns, the men and women competing in Saturday's round of the 10th annual Charity Shoot for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at the Shady Creek Shootists Club confessed to being pretty ordinary.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The annual Shoot for Charity raised \$36,783.50 for St. Jude last year and has turned close to \$130,000 over to the research hospital over the last decade.

This year's event — which concludes today — featured close to 200 competitors from states all over the country using pre-1899 manufactured or replica weapons. The folks looked the part.

"We're all dressed up here now, but go around and talk to people," said Jack Aspen. "You'll meet doctors, lawyers, retired people, a few housewives.

"Heck, I'm a computer salesman for Office Specialists on Ferris Street. I grew this goatee just for this shoot. As soon as it's over Sunday, I'm shaving it off. It's driving me crazy."

Jack Aspen's real name is Gordon Kircher, a 44-year-old who moved from Colorado to Galesburg two and a half years ago. He grew up in Louisiana no stranger to guns, then joined the military and became a cavalry scout. He's been shooting single-action guns for five or six years.

"Everybody wears late-1800s attire and takes on a persona," Kircher, a.k.a. Jack Aspen, said. "We go full tilt. We're not exactly playing cowboys and Indians and we aren't like Civil War re-enactors. We aren't recreating battles."

So what exactly are those men and women dressed like Roy Rogers and Belle Starr?

"We're not Trekkies," Kircher said. "I guess we defy one definition, except I think all of us have that western mentality, that cowboy mentality. It's about how you treat people."

According to Kircher, the members of the Shady Creek Shootists Club and those who attend the Charity Shoot are "some of the best people I've ever met."

A 35-year-old, pistol-packing, stay-at-home mom known as Tobie Tuesday agreed.

"I was a natural at this. I picked up the shooting right away," said Tobie Ballard, a.k.a. Tobie Tuesday, said. "Guns were never part of my life until I started doing this about four years ago. I like shooting as a hobby, but it's the people who keep me coming back.

"Like at this event, there are so many interesting, nice, good people. They're just down-home people."

6/22/2009

Shooting for kids - Galesburg, IL - The...

One of the Shady Creek Shootist Club founders, Dan Porter, approached Tobie Ballard and convinced her to become Tobie Tuesday.

"Dapper Dan said I had good eyesight and great reflexes and let me try it. My husband, Rod, bought me my pistols for Mother's Day and Dan set me up with the rest of it," Tobie Tuesday said. "I got my nickname and away I went. I just shoot here at the club. I have a daughter, so I don't feel like I should go around the state or anything for different shoots, but this is nice as a hobby."

Tobie said she based the last part of her persona's name on her vocation.

"I work one night a week at the Sweetwater in Little York as a bartender," she said. "I work on Tuesdays, so the name fit."

Tobie Tuesday's husband doesn't have a nickname or draw down with the old-fashioned irons.

"Rod thinks this is awesome. He's so proud of me," she said. "And he knows the people out here are great."

Bear Lee Armed, a 35-year-old from Little York, offered his take on Tobie Tuesday's prowess and the attraction to single-action shooting.

"Tobie has an unfair advantage. She can get us all drunk at the bar," Ben Pearson, a.k.a. Bear Lee Armed, said. "But she is right about the people. You won't find a better bunch of guys. I was a Civil War re-enactor for 16 years. I like this better because there's less politics. There's major internal politics in the re-enactor community."

T.A. Spurs founded the St. Jude Charity Shoot 10 years ago at his shooting club in Milan. The motivation was personal, then he learned about the shootists who started to flock to the annual event.

"When my son, Travis, was 2 years old, the doctors thought he had leukemia," Terry Spurrier, a.k.a T.A. Spurs, said. "We had no way to pay for all of it. St. Jude was going to step up and take him in.

"It turned out he had a virus that was attacking the platelets in his blood. But I never forgot what St. Jude was going to do for us."

T.A. Spurs decided he wanted to do something for the research hospital.

"We started and the first year we had 47 shooters and raised \$900," he said. "Last year, we had 163 shooters and raised close to \$37,000.

"The thing is, we only charge \$20 for entrance fees. So that tells you how generous these people are. The people who come out here and get all dressed up are pretty special people. Pretty special."

tloewy@register-mail.com

Copyright © 2009 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, [except where noted](#).