

# Crazy Race offers a wacky time for one and all

By Greg Hudson  
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TANNERSVILLE — If anyone turned up on Main Street in Tannersville on Saturday afternoon expecting to see a traditional soap box derby, they were in for a surprise.

“This is a crazy race,” organizer Karen Terns said. “If it rolls and doesn’t have a mower, it’s allowed.”

Instead of sleek, streamlined and sharply painted racers streaking down the hill on Main Street, parents galloped down the hill pushing their kids in wheel barrows, while others raced bikes and scooters — and even skis — in the annual downhill race.

“We had a lot of entrants today,” Terns said in between two of the five different races held during the event, which featured vendors and live entertainment from the Wyld Blu band.

But some of the racers found themselves participating quite by accident. Long Island resident John Callahan was visiting Tannersville for the weekend and spent the morning hiking before coming to the village for the afternoon. Before he knew it, Callahan found himself on the docket, lined up against his wife, while the couple pushed their three children down the hill in barrels affixed to lawn mowers and rolling carts.

“My strategy the whole way down was just to not die,” an exhausted and red-faced Callahan said after the heat. “If I had known I’d have done this today, I wouldn’t have climbed a mountain this morning.”

Other entrants came prepared with themes.

“This is a Pokestop,” 10-year-old Garrett Legg said, naming his wheelbarrow racer after the popular smartphone app.

The event, which took up most of Main Street for much of the afternoon, had a carnival atmosphere that delighted kids and adults of all ages. For Massachusetts resident Reg Bacon, it was a reminder of days gone by.

“I used to spend summers here, helping out at my grandmother’s lodging house, when I was growing up in the 1950s,” said Bacon, who recently published a memoir entitled “Just a Tot in Tannersville,” a book about his childhood summers in the village, which, during the 1950s, had a “three ring circus” atmosphere.

Bacon, later a real circus man himself, took part in the festivities, acting as entertainment between the heats as he took his unicycle out of mothballs and rode it up and down Main Street, swerving almost out of control towards spectators, all as part of the show.

“The steering wheel gag is so simple, but you can do so much with it on the unicycle, pantomiming all the crazy or self-absorbed drivers that people see on the highway,” Bacon said. “I was glad to contribute a little something extra to the festival. I think the folks here enjoyed it.”



Reg Bacon of Newburyport, Mass., the author of *Just a Tot in Tannersville*, is also a retired circus/variety performer. On Saturday he revived segments of his unicycle act for Tannersville’s Crazy Race festivities. (Greg Hudson photo)

## In town to promote book, author upstages himself

Author R.W. Bacon of Newburyport, Mass., was invited to the Tannersville Crazy Race festival to promote his book published in 2011 that combined a personal memoir of the 1950s, *Just a Tot in Tannersville*, and a rigorous local history, *A Micro-History of the Tannersville Four Corners*. Then the former professional circus/variety performer, figuring he could donate some additional comic relief to the festival, tossed his unicycle and a few props in the back of the car at the last minute.

The result? By the end of the festival he was far more memorable for his comic antics on one wheel than for his book. That’s what happens when a serious historian and museum professional can also regale the public with a “Salvador Dali bicycle,” a steering wheel not connected to anything, and a rubber-faced mug capable of representing every distracted, self-absorbed, or manic motorist you’ve ever seen.

Although the book was outshined by Bacon’s real-time human energy, it still received ample notice and sales to local history enthusiasts. An illustrated lecture, reading, and walking tour at the Mountain Top Library are possible in the future.

Local history enthusiasts can still order the book online from the publisher at [www.VarietyArtsEnterprises.com](http://www.VarietyArtsEnterprises.com).

