

ANXIOUS AT the start, rock race competitors follow the course of their pet rocks down the shoot.

### Pet rock race

# Blair survives ransom scare to repeat as champ



CHAMP MIKE Blair displays pet rock "Roller Coaster" during trophy presentation.

Mike Blair of Estacada and pet rock "Roller Coaster" successfully defended their title as world champions in Sandy Mountain Days' pet rock race last week.

But they had to survive a ransom scare earlier in the season when Blair's black nugget was "rock-napped" and held ransom overnight for 69 cents.

"The money was placed under a downtown Estacada mailbox," Blair said. "I suspect an inside job."

The two-time world's champion faced serious competition this year in a run-off race of divisional winners.

Clark Hall of C & L Remodeling placed second to Blair with "Flash," with Norma Miller's "Baby Duck" third, Paul Helton's "White Lightning" fourth, and Sandy Fire Department's "Fire Bug" fifth.

Mark Grable won the Chamber Pot division with "George," while Dan MacDonald won the Media Medley with "Missy."

The International Challenge Cup was won by a mysterious character dressed as Big Bird and racing a pet rock named "Egg Head."

The third annual championship was visited even by Santa Claus, who surprised race fans with an early Christmas greeting and compliments to the people of Sandy on "their fine festival and festivities."

The average spectator at the Pet Rock Race in town last week may have a few questions about one of the more unusual entries.

For instance, what in blazes is a Rondy Katmai Cat? Where did it (he? she?) come from? And why was it at the Sandy Mountain Days?

Well, "Rondy" is a she, hails from Katmai National Park in Alaska, was at the festival as the official entry of the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous in the Mountain Festival

Pet Rock Race. And if you're wondering how to determine the gender of a rock, don't worry, you're not alone.

The rock's owner and trainer, Harriett Whittington, seems to have little doubt as to the sex of her pet, but admits being surprised that she came all the way to Sandy to display it.

"I promised that I'd send them a rock," Mrs. Whittington said of the festival organizers. "I never dreamed that I'd actually come down here myself."

Mrs. Whittington met with promoters of the Sandy festival at the Northwest Festival Convention in Canada this year. She attended the festival representing the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous, a large annual fete held in February. After swapping a few tricks of the festival trade, she learned of some of the unusual happenings that take place at a typical Sandy Mountain Festival.

"I've never heard of a rock race, much less a pet rock race," she said, "and the idea was very intriguing."

When Sandy City Manager Paul Helton wrote to Mrs. Whittington saying that everything was arranged for her to come down including T.V. coverage and a police escort, she had little choice but to pack her bags.

Sure enough, when she disembarked from the plane at the Portland Airport, there was a Channel 8 news camera and a police escort waiting for Rondy and her owner.

The prized rock made it unharmed to the festival, and was even on hand as a spectator at the Pet Rock Race though she didn't compete. She was just here to watch. After all, it wouldn't be ladylike for her to plummet down a board with eight other rocks, now would it?

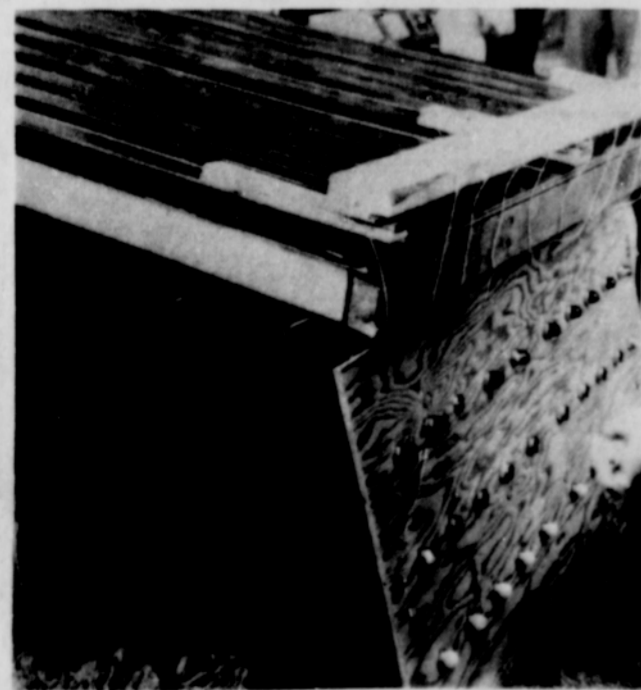
"Rondy must be treated with respect and in every way as a lady," Mrs. Whittington said. "She is not and never has been an easy pick up."



AN ALASKAN entry from the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous competed with local pet rocks this year, but found its fur coat an obstacle at the starting shoot. Rendezvous officials have invited champions from Sandy's world's championship race to compete in the Anchorage version of the race.



PLENTY OF trophies for the world's fastest pet rocks.



TIGHT RACES in previous years prompted pet rock race judges this year to install an electronic panel with lights that light up when each rock passes the finish line.



AT THE finish line, rock race judges crane their necks to determine who crossed the line first.