

## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual American Legion Armistice Day Race

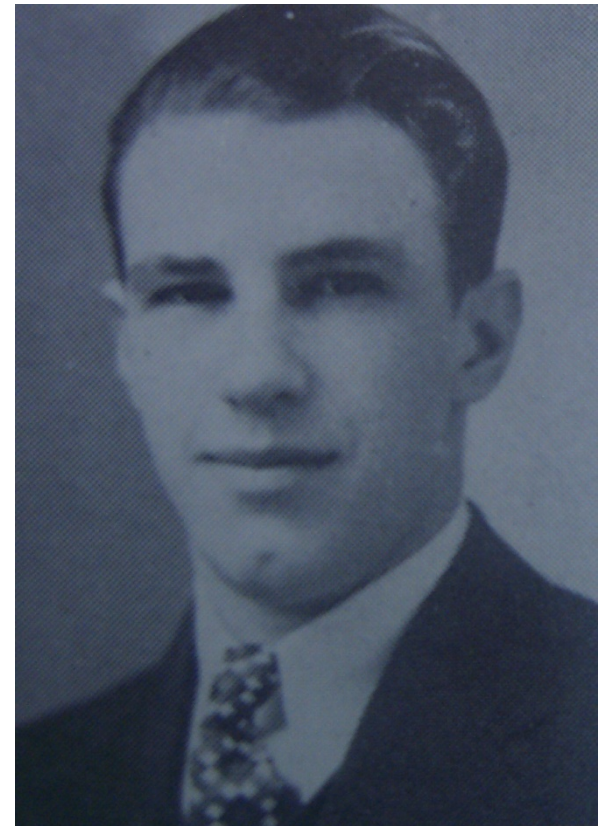
Thursday, 11 Nov 1948 at Legion Hall in Uptown Butte – Jack Pachico Memorial

Jack Pachico (pictured at right) won the second Armistice Day Race in 1935 before graduating from Butte High and entering the United States Air Force. Four years ago, Lieutenant Jack Pachico was killed in combat in Holland during World War II.

This was the first year of team oriented competition for the “large golden” Jack Pachico Cup, which was dedicated by Fred Grefig and the Butte American Legion post. Yearly team points are assigned to each of first six finishers on a 6-5-4-3-2-1 basis. The idea behind this scoring contest is that each year’s winning team keeps the trophy for one year and then returns to defend that ownership the following year.

Ultimately, each team’s goal is to retire the traveling cup to their school by scoring the largest combined amount of team points over the 11 year life of the trophy.

Why 11 years? The number 11 is symbolic in Armistice Day lore due to World War I officially ending at 11 a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month.



**The route** was also new: The 2.9 mile race started at 11 a.m. from the Legion Club and then proceeded east on Broadway to Gaylord, south to Park, west to Wyoming, south to Gold, west to Washington, North to Broadway, and then back to the starting point.

This route directed runners on a path that went around and past both high schools.

Butte High’s Lester Sodja won the race in what would ordinarily be considered a slow 2.9 mile time of 17:45. The Montana Standard analyzed Sodja’s effort saying “While the time was slower than in past years, conditions were such that the speed was considered remarkable.” The fact that the race course was new made comparisons with past times irrelevant.

Sodja led a parade of Butte High runners through the finish line to achieve a perfect winning score of 21 to 0 over Butte Central. Twenty runners entered the race.



**Team Scores:** Butte High, 21; Butte Central, 0.

**HS Boy’s 2.9 mile:** 1, Lester Sodja, BH, 17:45; 2, Franklin “Bud” Zemijak, BH; 3, Al Vivian, BH; 4, Frank Grebenc, BH; 5, Gus Nickel, BH; 6, Don Archibald, BH; no additional finishers listed.

Along with race results, The Montana Standard printed an extended, editorial comment by an unnamed author (it was likely the Standard’s do-everything, cigarette-puffing sports writer, Frank Quinn) who lamented the relative post-WWII apathy towards the local Armistice Day celebrations. Selections of the commentary follow:

“A ‘tame’ Armistice marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War I was noted in Butte Thursday. Probably the most exciting event was the annual cross-country race sponsored by Silver Bow post No. 1 of the American Legion ...

“Aside from a few aerial booms which were heard around 11 o’clock Thursday morning calling attention to the fact that Armistice Day was here again, there was little to indicate that any kind of an observance was being marked by Butte citizenry. There was no formal program by patriotic groups, or street parades or major sport events which were characteristic of the observance here years ago.

“As an afternoon sports feature, leaders in the top three football league races for public grade schoolboys, played...

“Thirty years ago, the old-time residents recall, Butte was really ‘wild’ with joy and the town grew ‘wilder’ and pandemonium increased as the day wore on. It did not cease at nightfall, but continued until daylight the following morning. Butte had never before seen a celebration like it. It has never seen one like it since. It probably never will. And what took place here was characteristic of every city and hamlet throughout the country. On that day, at least, Americans were happy in the belief that ‘that’s the last war and the world is saved for democracy’.”