
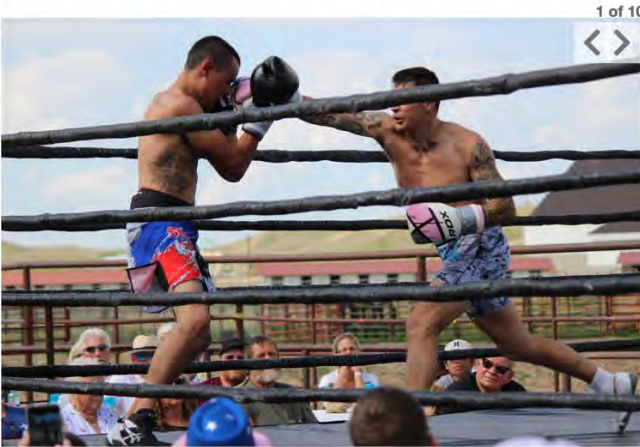


Fourth of July Dempsey Gibbons Centennial Celebration a TKO

By Jennifer Van Heel Shelby Promoter Jul 12, 2023  0



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On Tuesday, July 4, Shelby hosted what had to be one of the biggest and most well attended events ever as many made their way to celebrate the Centennial Celebration of the legendary Dempsey Gibbons boxing match.

For months the Centennial Committee, the Tavern Association, local businesses, the Chamber and many others prepared for this day and all of their efforts and hard work definitely paid off. Hundreds gathered to attend the breakfast, car show, firemen's barbecue, Champions Park dedication, the museum open house, the boxing matches, the street dance and the fireworks show.

"Thank you, Shelby and everyone who supported the event," said Centennial Committee member Tressa Keller. "The support was simply amazing and made not only the Dempsey Gibbons 100th anniversary celebration memorable, but also the 2023 Fourth of July.

The amount of volunteers who dedicated their time, talents and resources is simply inspiring. The sponsors who helped secure the events, the participants who showed up and enjoy them, it was great to see everyone ringside at all the main events!"

Almost 100 of Tommy Gibbons' descendants came to Shelby to commemorate this day in history and what a fantastic group of people!

Dr. Gerard Gibbons and his wife, Mia, were very busy, going from one event to the next, with Mia and other family members helping set up at each new location for Dr. Gibbons to sign his very popular book, *Shelby 1923: The Dempsey-Gibbons Fight For Glory and a Little Montana Town's Impossible Dream*. The book was a huge hit and if you missed the opportunity to get one while he was here it will be available for purchase on Amazon and other retailers later this summer. The kindness and appreciation shown for the town their family shares history with was amazing and appreciated, we hope they will come visit again.

The car show was a huge success, with more than 60 vehicles lining Shelby's Main Street.

Food vendors and local businesses were busy with customers as many stopped in while checking out the car show. Five trophies were awarded at the end of the show, with Bill Rogers of Shelby winning Best Truck with his 1956 GMC. Karen House of Shelby won the People's Choice with her 1970 MG and Shane Hegles of Cut Bank won Best Car with his 1950 Mercury. Judges' Choice went to Roy Nolkaper of Cut Bank and his 1952 Ford F-100 and the Taverns Choice was Warren Iverson of Shelby with his beautifully restored 1956 Ford Crown Vic.

The turnout at the Shelby Volunteer Firemen's Barbecue was also amazing with almost 800, that's right, almost 800 people attending!

"We were just shy of 800," said Chief Ron Buck. "It's the most we have ever fed, as far as we know."

The Champions Park dedication and Marias Museum of History & Art Open House were also very well attended. Many enjoyed the ice cream, cookies and displays throughout the museum and museum annex while they waited for Dr. Gibbons to arrive to speak and sign copies of his book. Dr. Gibbons was also in attendance and spoke at the Champions Park dedication where he and his family had the opportunity to take a family photo at the site dedicated to a moment in their family history.

And then there were the boxing matches at the Marias Fairgrounds. The exact number of tickets sold has not yet been determined, but the turnout was nothing short of spectacular! A shuttle bus was available for those not wanting to drive out to the event, making it easier and more accessible for all who wanted to attend. After hours of competition in the ring it was time to return to Main Street for the Street Dance and the phenomenal fireworks show put on by Rick Neva and friends from the rooftop of the Mint Bar. The sky stayed lit up for over an hour, with all enjoying what was probably the best Fourth of July fireworks show in the state.

The Dempsey Gibbons Centennial Celebration is definitely one that will be remembered for years to come. While the Dempsey Gibbons fight of 1923 went down in history as something full of scandal and bankrupting the town, the celebration of this fight in 2023 showcased the guts, grit, tenacity and dedication of a small town that got knocked down, but, like any great fighter, got back up and threw the TKO punch.

