



PROPELLED by "anything but a motor," rafts racing on Connecticut River pass Brockway Island, opposite Hamburg Cove. Cliff Packard photo

Rafts race for charity

A pair of Connecticut organizations are the beneficiaries of one of the zanier events of this season on the lower Connecticut River.

Newington Children's Hospital and the Essex Steamboat Dock Foundation are sharing equally the approximately \$170 in entry fees paid by competitors in the second annual River Raft Race from Deep River to Essex July 24. The fee was one dollar for each person aboard.

Rules for the contest were simple. The rafts had to be at

least 12 feet and not more than 36 feet long. The only mandatory equipment was one life jacket per person. A vessel could be propelled by anything except a motor.

"Anything" turned out to be feet, hands, oars, paddles, sails, bicycle drive systems and assorted gear.

Morning Star led the fleet of 20 across the line in the approximately 4-mile race in the time of one hour and 15 minutes. Patrick Quinn of Deep River was her skipper, and she was powered primarily

by a paddle wheel connected to two bicycles.

Second in fleet, with a time of one hour 27 minutes was taken by a craft whose name depended on what part of the vessel you were looking at. The name on her hull was *Virgin II*; but a name also appeared on her sail: *Nigriv II*. Her crew wore T-shirts with the latter emblazoned on them and explained that the two words shared common letters, the latter being the spelling of the former in reverse.

Third home was *River Queens*, captained by Marge Olmsted and having an all-girl crew plus Tom Hagel of Deep River, who acted as helmsman and navigator. The 12 girls all wore T-shirts with the craft's name on them, but Hagel's shirt was inscribed "Plus 1." *River Queens* was expected to have only females aboard. However, 4 days before the race, Hagel was asked to join the crew because he had been so helpful to them while they were building the raft. He was prohibited, however, from doing any propulsion work, not even being allowed to trim the sail.

The 10:30 a.m. starting time allowed the rafts to catch a fair current, and the winds were either following or negligible. All the boats except *River Queens* chose a course to pass west of Brockway Island, opting for a weaker current but a shorter distance.

The girls (and Hagel) found more help from the river east of the island, but they also encountered more chop from the wakes of passing spectator boats. They had been in third place when they arrived off the island but emerged below