

Main Street, Raft Race, Democrats Are Prominent In 1977 Essex News

In June the Sanitary Waste Disposal Commission, chaired by Gifford Warner, held an informational special town meeting in the Essex Elementary school that saw only ten residents in attendance. The commission had been meeting regularly to examine various courses of action to meet the town's future waste disposal needs. No plan has been drawn up yet, but it is generally agreed that ways to extend the life of the town dump—which presently has three years left—have to be found soon.

On June 30, some 55 rafts began to paddle, sail and pedal their way from Deep River Landing down the Connecticut River toward Nott's Island off Essex as the starting gun sounded for the Third Annual (Great) Connecticut River Raft Race. Most of the contestants are still under observation.

The winner this year, as last, was the Morning Star II, an

ingenious wind and muscle-powered craft captained by Dick Harding of East Haddam. This year Morning Star added a figurehead of sorts, a papier-mache dragon with mouth ajar and illuminated by a flashing light. Prior to the race the crew of the winning raft placed a conspicuously out-of-place buffalo (a full sized stuffed one) on a knoll overlooking the landing area at Nott's Island. It was a great conversation piece.

Some rafts sank before the start, some were unable to endure the five-mile course, at least one, imported from New Jersey, raised eyebrows and was disqualified because of its manufactured rigging which is against the rules.

The day of the race, the U.S. Coast Guard tried to put an end to the event on the grounds that raft race chairman Frank Burton had not filed for a regatta permit and was liable to the tune of \$1,000. Burton was in no mood to be

intimidated, nor were the over 500 spectators and participants, and the matter was never pursued.

The race went off almost as scheduled, after one false start and enough hooting and hollering to attract coverage from every local media, the Hartford Courant, Channel 8 News, and later in the week, The New Yorker.

It appears that the raft race will persevere.

By the end of June the renovation of Town Hall was completed. Work dated back to September of '76.

In July the Republican caucus nominated Jim Bilderback to lead the party's ticket in the November election for First Selectman. Ellis Baker challenged Bilderback to a primary and the latter bowed out, giving Baker the nod. The resulting party disunity is said to have been a major factor in the

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