

Men Work Secretly To Build Racing Raft

By CLAUDIA VAN NES

At a secret spot along the Connecticut River, nine young men have been building a floating contraption they say will capture the trophy in the upcoming annual raft race set for July 22.

The group may be working under wraps, but it makes no secret of what is spurring it on to win the competition that began modestly enough three years ago but is now a major shore line event.

The raft builders are out to get revenge on their wives, they say.

While the men drank beer and threw together a funny-looking craft at the last minute for last year's competition, their wives worked carefully and thoroughly on the infamous "River Queen" — a raft crewed exclusively by women which came in second out of 57 entries in the 1977 race.

"We're getting them this year," Stanley Bates of Killingworth promised. This group is a serious one, members claim, and has been planning its raft since last winter.

"We have blueprints and diagrams. This is no pleasure barge. We're completely organized," said Jim Coen of Glastonbury.

The crew is composed of masons, car-

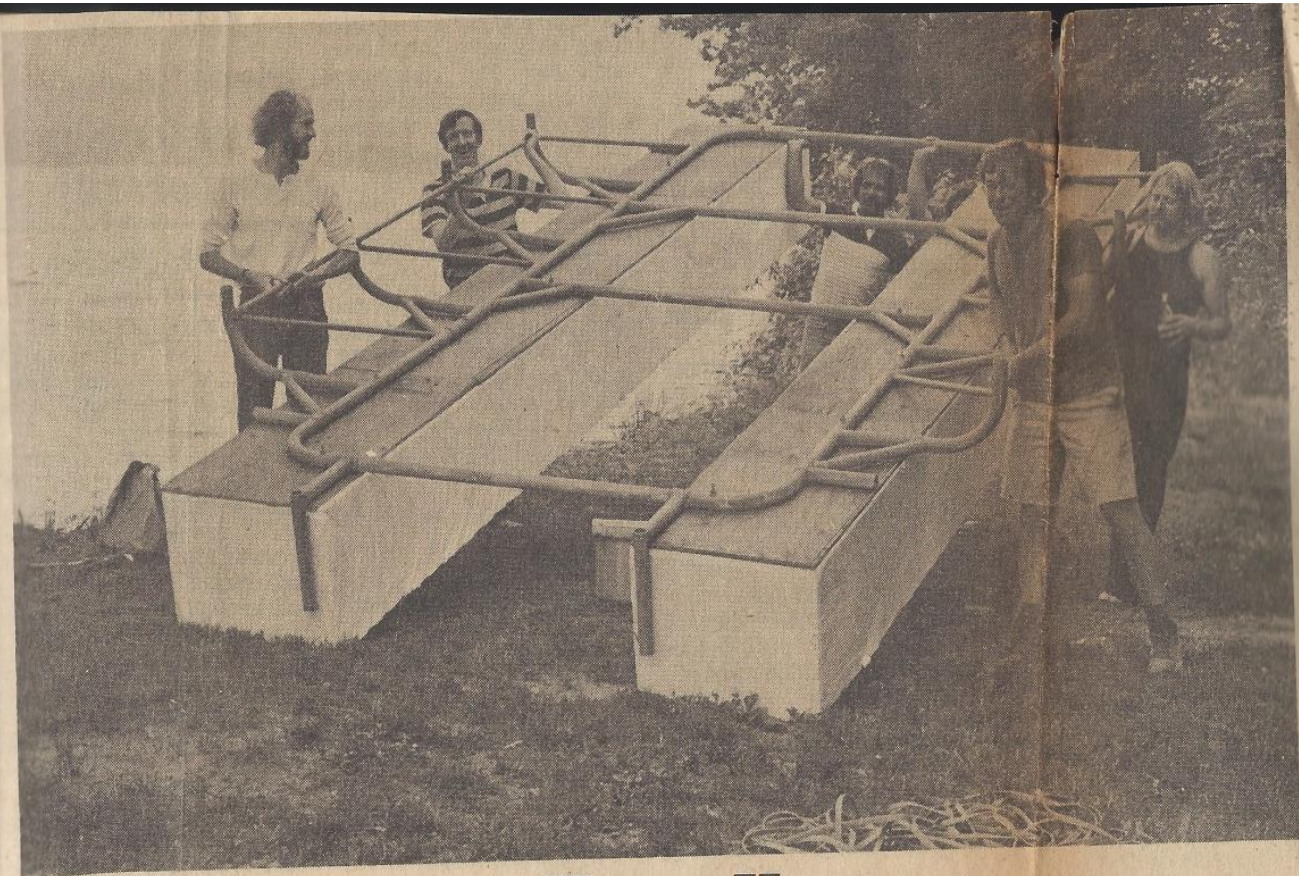
penters, one "ne'er do well college kid," a real estate agent and a lawyer. They estimate they'll spend about \$600 on their project before it's completed.

A welded aluminum frame that will hold plexiglass oars has been bolted onto plywood sheets lying on top of two solid styrofoam pontoons, and everyone involved swears it is a sure winner.

The name of the vessel is "Aqua Squatch," and the team plans to wear tee shirts sporting a picture of a mermaid stretched out provocatively on a rock.

Competition will be stiff this year because the raft committee expects at least 150 entries at the Deep River town landing. The race begins at noon and ends when the first raft reaches Knotts Island seven miles away.

There is a \$20 entry fee and an additional \$5 per person per crew payable the day of the race. July 9 is the deadline for entries which should be addressed to Box 110, Old Saybrook. Proceeds from the event go to charities, which this year include the Newington Children's Hospital, Ducks Unlimited and the Ben Haven School for Retarded Children.



Heave-Ho

These hardworking sailors have been planning since last winter to build what they say is a prizewinning raft for the annual raft race to be held on the Connecticut River July 22 (Holroyd Photo).