

RELIEF FROM THE HEAT - Crew mate helps crew mate with a bucketful of cool river water during the Connecticut River

Raft Race. Photographer Bill Plyler climbed atop the raft's "out house" to get this picture. More photos inside.

Rafters Break Record In 6th Annual Race

By Joe Levine

"I got some good news and some bad news," the overseer tells the oarsmen in the pit of the Norse slave galley. "First, the good news: the captain says that if everybody behaves himself today, there'll be an extra ration of hard-tack at dinner."

A great cheer goes up from the pit.

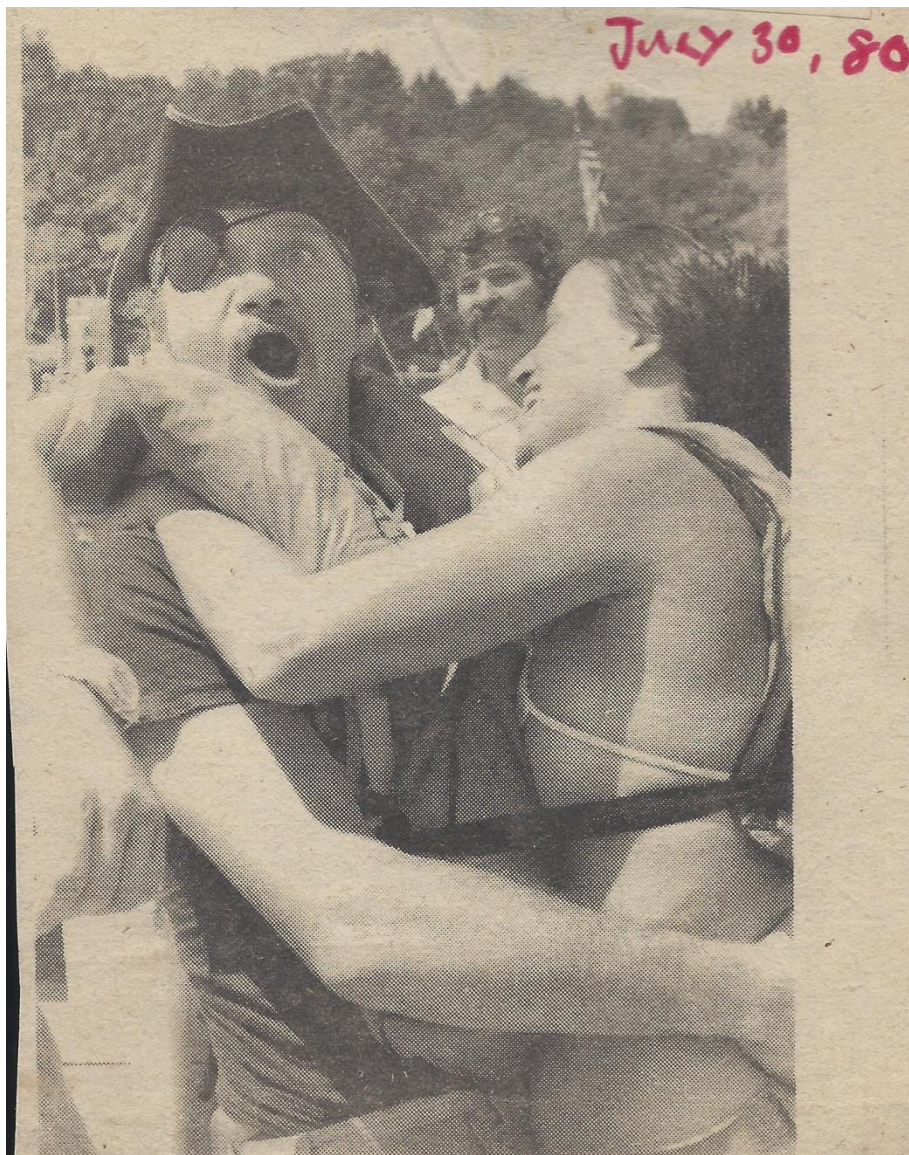
"Now the bad news," says the overseer. "The captain wants to water-ski."

The captains were water-skiing all over the place at the Sixth Annual Connecticut River Raft Race on Saturday. Strategies and scientific innovations of every kind were implemented, and these, combined with perfect weather and a stiff breeze, resulted in a new course record of 45 minutes, with nearly all of the 104 entries finishing in under two hours. It was a race featuring every imaginable jerry-built device, portable comfort, and caliber of crew member, but highlighted by general improvement over last year for nearly all the competitors.

The race kicked off at one o'clock in the afternoon from the Deep River landing, but rafts with crews of 20 and 25 people were waiting out in the middle of the river by as early as nine. The scene had the appearance of a Viking flotilla: every ten minutes or so, the crew of the Sleazy Riders or the Titanic Two or the Driving Seamen, under gaudy sail and the influence of much alcoholic fortification, would explode in a round of cheers, paddle-splashing, and vague threats to neighboring craft. Members of the raft-race committee, who had been working non-stop launching rafts since Wednesday evening, putted about in motor launches, maintaining order and ferrying raft captains to and fro for important parleys.

On shore, the preparation was intense. The crew of The Twister went through a final review of the mechanics of their raft, a slim pontooned structure which had been built only the week before. Cap-

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MAD DOG Mal Chapman had more than winning the Connecticut River Raft Race on his mind last Saturday. For complete details of the race, see page 1A of the other section. Lots more photographs appear on pages 10A, 11A and 12A. Photo by Bill Plyler