



# Essex

## Raft Race Elicits Complaints; Officials' Reports Are Good

By Tom Juergens

ESSEX - Despite complaints of rowdiness and rudeness from some Essex residents, this year's raft race crowd was handled better than last year's, according to town and law enforcement officials.

Although newspapers reported that all went well during the race, some residents told **The Gazette** this week that they thought differently. What trouble there was stemmed more from the race's spectators than its participants, said Resident State Trooper Bob Natrass, who nevertheless minimized the problems.

"What you've got is a conflict of ideals," Natrass said. "There is a young, fun-loving, beer-drinking crowd, and there's the older crowd. It's like mixing oil

and water. There's always a percentage of people that get in trouble. The more people you have, the more problems you're going to have."

In a phone call to **The Gazette**, Paul Bouchever, 72, a resident of Old Saybrook and the owner of the Ginny Bouchever store on Main Street in Essex, said the scene around the Griswold Inn around 8 p.m. after the race was "disgraceful." He said he saw fighting, men urinating on the steps of the Griswold Inn, and heard foul language. William Winterer, owner of the Griswold Inn, also wrote **The Gazette** and called this year's race "the worst one yet." (See letters to the editor on page 4-A.)

Constable Ron Krajewski, one of the 12 constables on duty during last Saturday's race, did

say "there was an hour in there when things were kind of, well, not as smooth as they had been before."

Natrass said state troopers made three arrests on the day of the race, two of which were related to assaults on peace officers.

The Department of Environmental Protection assigned six officers to the race. They made 17 arrests for boating violations.

First Selectman Richard Riggio said the race was rather well-controlled due to the effort made by all parties. The rule requiring racers to remove their rafts from the river immediately after the race was very effective, he said.

Francine Robbins, an employee at the Bouchever store, watched the race until 4:30 p.m. What she

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