

Taming the Wild River, Huck Finn Style

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first, and the complicated catamaran sank. But Tripp and his builders added a few wooden planks in propitious places to raise the waterline, and the venture turned successful enough to win the keg of beer.

Beer flows faster than the river, it seems, and while the celebrants ashore were whooping it up with six-packs,

many of the happy-go-lucky crews carried their own drinking supplies while they raced.

"I remember one year," said Carl Ellison, a former Mayor of Essex and a crew member this year, "when we kept a keg of beer in an outhouse on the stern of our raft. A fellow from another boat wanted to use the outhouse and came aboard. While he was in there, it fell overboard. All you could hear, though, were people yelling: 'Save the beer!'"

Beer-drinking can lead to rowdiness and rowdiness to more serious trouble, though, when a small town is overrun with racers, their families, friends and spectators. This year saw over a doubling in entries as well as problems.

"The town can't handle it any more," said Richard Riggio, First Selectman of Essex. "There's no room here for all the boats, the masses of people, and all the other things associated with the race. We're already crowded enough on Saturdays just by sightseers."

"When the race proposal comes up again, we will have to reconsider holding it in its present form," Riggio added. "And we may vote not to hold it at all."

But Burton, for one (there are about 40 committee members in all responsible for the race), is not about to let that happen. Though the post-race party on the island is one of the leading attractions, he said, the race has become too large to handle properly and puts too much pressure on the towns of Essex and Deep River.

"In our first race, we had five rafts. The next year it was 16 and the year after that 57. This year we had 110 entries, and that's enough," he said. "I'm going to propose limiting the future races to no more than 110 rafts. What with all the spectator boats and the thousands of other people trying to get from the mainland over to the island, it's become a madhouse."

It costs \$20 to enter a raft, plus \$5 for each crew member, and the proceeds go to charity, which makes it difficult for Essex Selectmen to simply order an outright halt to the popular event.

"Don't end a marvelous thing like this," said Marilyn Beard, skipperess of River Queen, "just cut it down to size. We ladies have been having a ball in this race ever since we decided we weren't going to let the men have all the fun."

Last year the women finished second, but their secret, she confided, does not lie in their strength. "It's practice and the wonder of having 12 women able to work closely together. That's what this whole river race is about — togetherness. There's nothing else in the world like it, let me tell you."



Crew of raft enjoying the spectacle and a moment of relaxation

The New York Times/Ken Lafla

Foreclosure at Candlewood Lake

FORECLOSURE proceedings have been started by Hartford Federal Savings and Loan against the Suburban Action Institute, owners of a 256-acre parcel of land on Candlewood Lake. The bank holds over \$3 million worth of mortgage loans on the property.

The Suburban Action Institute is a Manhattan-based civil rights organization that has fought what it alleges are discriminatory and restrictive housing and zoning practices in the suburban towns of Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. Its report on Connecticut came out in June.

John Grant, president of Hartford Federal Savings and Loan, which is carrying a total of \$3,485,000 worth of loans on the property, said that his attorneys had notified him that the first of the foreclosure hearings will be held in Danbury Superior Court on Aug. 22. The institute took title to the property, at \$6.5 million, in October 1977.

According to Paul Davidoff, director of the institute, the idea was "to make it into a public recreation area." The institute had hoped, he said, that the state would cooperate in the venture. However Mr. Grant says he sees no likelihood that the state will purchase the piece for park land and therefore there is a need to begin proceedings. The institute, he added, is definitely in arrears on its payments although he did not give a figure.

The state is known to have withdrawn its interest in the property because residents of Sherman and New Fairfield, where the property is located, did not want a park.

Mr. Davidoff said he was hoping, "that the state would realize this is now their last chance before a private developer moves in and buys it from the bank."

Moreover, controversy had surrounded the valuation of the property. Mr. Grant said his bank put it "at about

\$6 million. Others have appraised it closer to \$12 million." The state, he believes, is sensitive to potential criticism for overpaying.

Jim Grehan, executive director of the Housatonic Valley Regional Council of Elected Officials, says Mr. Davidoff had approached him "and also the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities to try to persuade us to purchase the land. But I do not feel anybody is really interested."

Jonathan Chew, assistant planning director for the council, suggested that an added reason might be that the property already had a "controversial name" in the area.

Human Rights Commissioner Arthur Green has ruled that there was no conflict of interest.

"We were not interested in holding it for profit or in making any money at all," Mr. Davidoff said. "At the time we considered it to be a rare opportunity to acquire a unique piece of property in the public interest."

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