

A false alarm at the starting gate Saturday launched the armada before special guest could even say hello

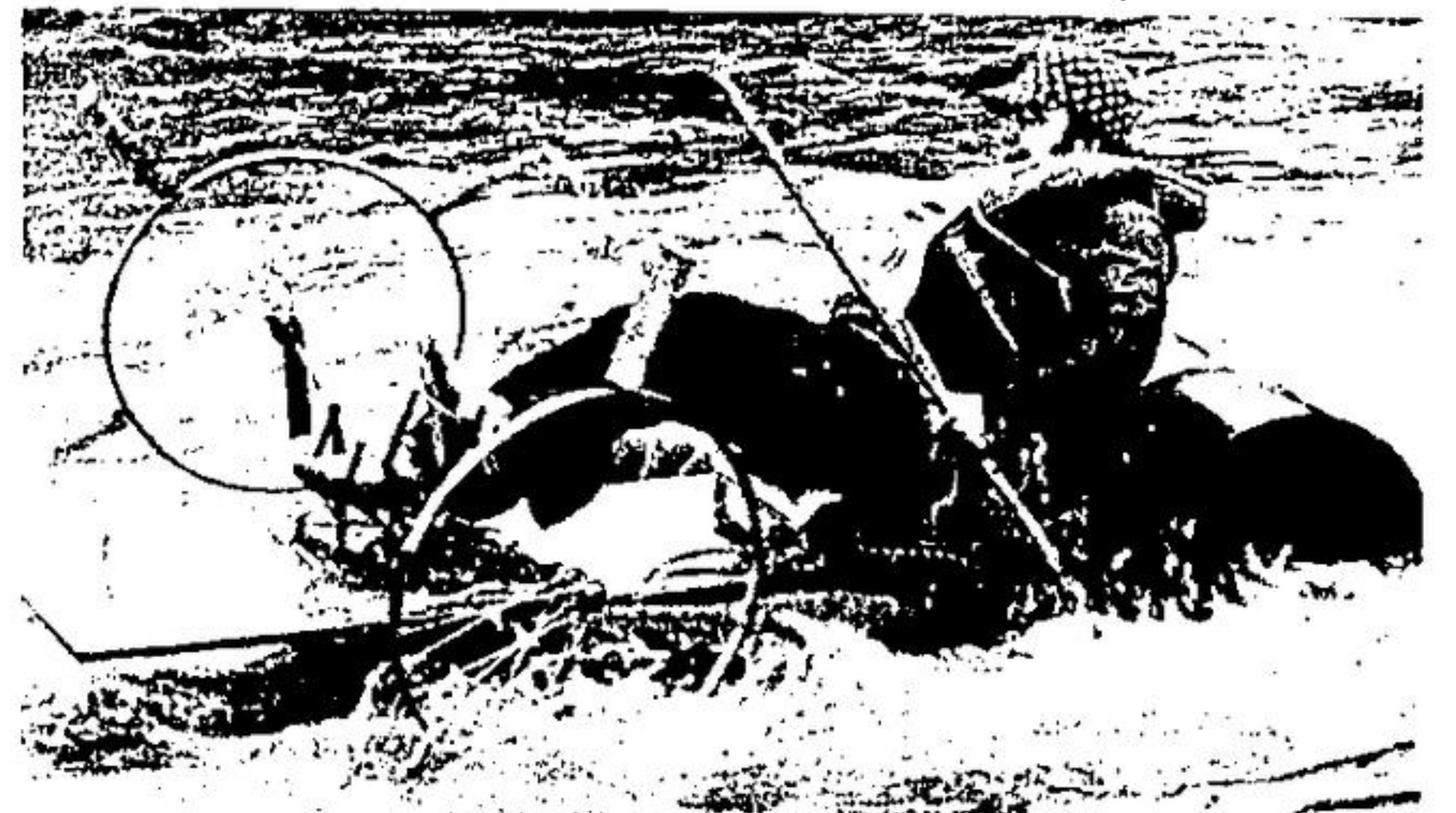
Crazy Boaters couldn't wait to get wet



Claiming to have paddled all the way from his San Clemente home on the Pacific Ocean, through the Panama Canal into the Atlantic and down the St. Lawrence River, Richard ("I'll never lie to you") Nixon - or someone like him - finally took the trip up the river so many Americans wanted him to take several years ago.



Lieutenant-Governor John Aird was just stepping up to the podium to greet the Crazy Boaters Saturday and then officially launch the armada when the already-seaborn canoes appeared 'round the bend. An impatient racer gave a premature signal and the race was unofficially but irrevocably underway. The lieutenant-governor declined urgings to try and recall the crazy men of the Credit River, but agreed to return next year a little faster on the draw with the starter's pistol.



Saturday's Crazy Boat Race between Glen Williams' Tenth Line bridge and the paper mill dam below River Road attracted the usual bizarre assortment of floating "objects d'art" including this paddle wheeler. The shallow water of the Credit, unusual for this time of year, proved less a problem than just another interesting quirk of the race. About 310 participants entered 70 crazy boats and 20 canoes for this year's event held Saturday.



In a dewy-eyed tribute to their favorite brand, this group of young adventurers (right and, in less enviable circumstances at left) set off for the bounding main aboard a canopied raft bearing facsimiles of a beer bottle to starboard and port. Accustomed as they became to the feeling of cold, chilly water, the crew members kept clambering back aboard each time the mighty raft capsized.



Rubber rafts were sleek and safe vessels of victory for the skilled, but berserk water beds on a rampage for the novices. Somehow, the two groups collided in midstream, demonstrating time and again that it's not what you know, it's how crazy you are.



And from the "better luck next year" department, a casual shot of Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor, John Black Aird (centre), returning to an awaiting limousine after crazy boaters jumped the gun and launched before the special guest could utter a few commemorative words. The lieutenant-governor was joined by Mayor Pete Pomeroy (left) and honor guard for the ceremony, and promised that despite the thwarted speech he will be back next year to give it another try.



A welcome stop for dry-throated Crazy Boat Race supporters Saturday was the Grog Shop in the Glen Town Hall. Sponsored by the Community Hall Committee, the Grog Shop, which served up a piping hot, secret recipe brew and doled out thick sandwiches for a modest fee, added a little Glen Williams hospitality for out-of-town visitors. Pictured (clockwise from left) are Sheila Willis, Joan Minns, Helen Palmer and Ellen Russell. Fran Brady (not pictured) was the shop's sandwich chef.

Racers tell tall tales at Acton victory dance

Continued from page A1
year, stampered 20 feet to the shoreline near the Tenth Line Bridge in Glen Williams when someone spotted rival canoes rapidly heading downriver. Having set off a half-hour earlier from Terra Cotta, the canoe class was timed to run into the confusion of the crazy boat launch. Some were a little impatient.

As soon as the odd-ball collection of huge inner-tubes, paddle-wheelers, rafts and miniature coal barges hit the water-shallow as it was—the land-lubber crowd went nuts.

Cars jammed the sides of the road between the Tenth Line bridge and the finish line at the paper mill dam on River Road above Glen Williams. Several hundred spectators, as well as dozens of journalists and television crews, craned over bridges or clung to slippery banks to watch the floating chaos.

The large crowds, drawn by warm temperatures and the peculiarity of the race (which has given the local Jaycee sponsors provincial acclaim) meant brisk business for the Glen Town Hall Committee's Grog Shop and a nearby peanut and popcorn vendor.

Although the river's unusually shallow level this season discouraged many canoeists—there were only 20 this year, about half what the race normally attracts—participants seemed to enjoy the challenge of navigating around shoals and other, suddenly grounded boats. For most, it was a one-hour trek downriver.

Perhaps because of Mr. Aird's visit, which required extra police, race organizers feel there was less "rowdiness" at this year's event. Complaints from neighbors appear to be limited to

homeowners concerned blocked driveways, while the Jaycees ensured that debris was cleared from shoreline properties.

As expected, most of the serious celebrating was saved for the victory dance

in the Acton Legion Hall that night. A sell-out crowd of 350 spend most of the time dancing or listening to some pretty tall race tales, as well as congratulating the winners of the race's eight awards.

Local skippers award winners

Continued from page A1
service organizations entered. Race chairman Jack Lee said about three or four Jaycee clubs from across the province were represented.

Three Georgetown businesses waltzed away with the E-class commercial category when the awards were presented at the victory dance Saturday night in Acton. Keith Perkins, Ray Kerton, Peter Conway and Jim McKeown skippered a craft sponsored by Georgetown Chrysler, the local Records on Wheels outlet and Kerton Painting. A consolation award went to an unknown commercial entry raced by Paul Underhill, James Taylor, Terry Miller and G. Davidson.

Although late arrivals on the river, the Saint John Ambulance entry, sirens blaring and sporting a crew of pirates, convinced judges to give it the "Best Presented" award for community service entries.

A bottomless "coal-box" shaped craft, buoyed by plastic floats attached to the gunnels, caught Lieutenant-Governor John Aird's eye early in the race. Sailed by Jim Etherington and G. Schade, the boat took the "Best Presented" prize in the individual crazy craft category. A similar prize for commercial entries went to "Kwikasair" delivery services.

The race and the ensuing dance were completely successful, Mr. Lee told The Herald Sunday, commending the efforts of fellow Jaycee members and other organizations which pitched into the event's smooth operation.

About 25 club members and a half-dozen Jayceettes manned the registration desk, rigged safely netting across the finish line at the River Road Paper Mill Dam, cleaned up debris and watched for boaters who had fallen into the river. The Jaycees were also joined by St. John's Ambulance volunteers, the Georgetown and District High School Outers Club, the Fifth Georgetown Shore Patrol Venturers, Fifth Georgetown Rovers and the Fourth Georgetown Scout troop.

Despite the premature start, which literally left Lieutenant-Governor Aird "speechless," the race ran with few hitches, Mr. Lee said. Boaters seemed more concerned about removing their craft instead of scrapping them along the riverside, which had been a problem in previous years. Police were lenient on an abundance of parking violations and there were no injuries reported.

Herald photos

While it didn't place first in any category, the old tub and the gentlemen piloting it (left) won the Crazy Craft "Best Presented" prize at the victory dance held in Acton Saturday night.



As expected, it was mayhem at the finish line as crazy boaters madly cared for position on the last leg of the trek. Whether intended as fun or not, the final climb up the muddy slope to River Road, as participants carted away their craft, provided more excellent entertainment for the hundreds of spectators who lined the shoreline and the bridge over the paper mill dam.



Ah, lazing on a Saturday afternoon...The lilting sounds of an acoustic guitar and the gentle splash of the Credit's waves against a rolling inner tube...While all around them were losing their heads (and their dignity, self-respect, running shoes, oars and raft timbers), this group of floaters coasted amiably along the shoreline.



The comedy team of Bob and Perry entertained hundreds along the Credit's shores Saturday with their impression of Laurel and Hardy trying to cheat death a scant few feet above the roaring waterfall. Buoyed up by a mechanically and financially sound raft, they made the distance with plenty of laughs to spare.



Speaking of trips down the river, "Deliverance" flatly came at the paper mill dam above Glen Williams, where weary sailors relaxed and tried to regain their "land legs". Life at sea can be tough, many armchair admirals discovered Saturday.