

Early Races 2010

..... Gareth Stevens

I tip my hat here to the many races whose directors have posted to *USCA's Worldwide Paddling Event Calendar* launched last July.

More than 600 paddling events have posted their details to date. Ninety percent of posts have been races, but a growing number of river cleanups, cruises and other events have found the calendar too.

The more events that post the better it becomes for everyone.

The calendar has been receiving visits in rapidly growing numbers – even during the doldrum winter months where paddling competition life survives (mostly) in just the southern states (and south of there, out of country!) But note the great state of Washington as a north-western exception!

Here's a sampling of postings from January to March:

January

- Florida: Wakulla River Race, St Mark's
- Washington State: 2010 New Year's Challenge, Seattle
- South Africa: The Dusi
- Mexico: The Alseseca
- Belize: Boom to Manatee Lookout Race

February

- Belize: Boom to the City
- Belize: Haulover to Boom in Belize
- Florida : West Coast Championships, Clearwater
- Oklahoma: Indoor Kayak Championships, Oklahoma City
- South Africa: The Drak
- South Africa: The Blyde XFest
- Texas: Battle on the San Jacinto, Houston
- South Carolina: Winter Challenge Off Road Triathlon, Williston

March

- Arkansas: The Jungle Boater, Ozark
- Belize: La Ruta Maya
- British Columbia: Nanaimo Outrigger Race, Nanaimo
- Connecticut: Scantic Spring Splash, Enfield

- Florida: Pickle Race, Tampa
- Georgia: Lula Bridge Race, Gainesville
- Michigan: Klondike, Oscoda
- Missouri: Perche Creek Gutbuster, Columbia
- Ohio: Vermilion River Race, Birmingham
- Pennsylvania: The Red Mo, Grassflat
- South Carolina: River Quest, Beaufort
- South Carolina: Off Road Triathlon, Clemson
- Texas: Buffalo Bayou Regatta, Houston
- Washington: The Pizza & Issaquah, Redmond
- Wisconsin: The Season Opener, Madison

April

Ah, and by April the paddling competition activity ticked up a big notch throughout north America ... not enough space to cover it all here.

But early April provided one really notable event ...

The Cameron County Classic Breaks All Records – Again

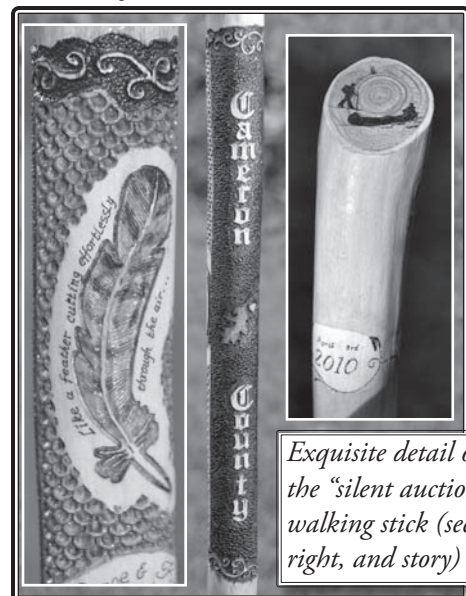
In 2009, the *35th Cameron County Canoe & Kayak Classic* broke participation records with 156 participants in weather that kept some people away (181 had pre-registered)!

The 36th annual, on April 3, blew those numbers away.

This year (Cameron County's 150th birthday) and with unbelievable weather – temps in the high 80s (someone must have stirred the folks in the Office of Global Warming) – participation rose to 311. I was there. Lucy and I drove 12 hours from Wisconsin to attend the race. I had promised to go last year when *Canoe News* published articles by **Bob Cianflone** of Maryland and **Jake Rabatin** of Ohio about scouting the course, and about the race itself (with full results printed).

I wasn't the only long distance participant: many racers drove four to ten hours to be there. All the surrounding states were represented – and beyond.

Let's put that 311 number into some perspective.



Exquisite detail on the "silent auction" walking stick (see right, and story)

In the beautiful hills of the "Pennsylvania Wilds," Cameron County, PA is not what you would call a population center. About 5200 people live there, and about 400 elk. There's no cell phone service (nice!). The race (on the *Driftwood Branch* of the *Sinnemahoning River*), starts some miles south of Emporium (pop 2200) and ends in Driftwood (pop 90). The nearest town with more than 40,000 is Altoona – 110 miles (2:40 drive time). The nearest major metro area is Pittsburgh 140 miles – a 3-4 hour drive each way.

311 participants!

Neighboring Warren County held *USCA's National Canoe & Kayak Championships* – a six day multiple race event in early August of 2009. Total participation ... 290.

So, in early April, Cameron County had 311 racers! How did they do this?

From my observation, it's the sum of many parts for a greater whole: a real community effort, coordinated with an enormous amount of enthusiasm, energy, and planning from **Randy Bailey**, the race director.

There was quality, with a nice local spin, in the awards (stylized engraved paddles – well designed – with wood donated by Emporium Hardwoods, laser engraving discounted by Total Engraving, and the paddles finished with varnish applied by Rick Cool of Rick's Auto - time and materials donated).



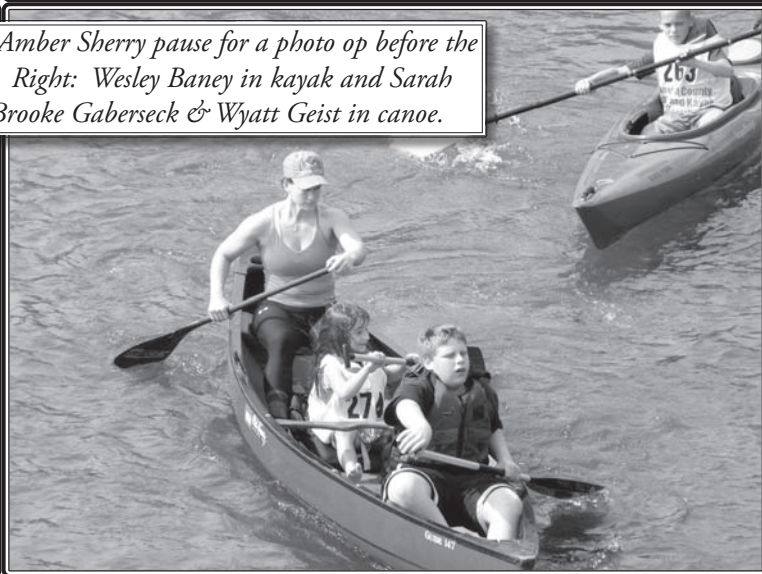
Susan Williams, who destroyed her K2 in last year's race, gets her nice new solo kayak down the river in good shape!



James Bittner (stern) with Karen Jasper and James Bittner Jr paddle past Larry Shepard and Stephanie White who went for a swim in the big swirl below that low dam which caught a number of competitors by surprise.



Left: Ken Gerg & Amber Sherry pause for a photo op before the 2-mile "kids' race." Right: Wesley Baney in kayak and Sarah Price (stern) with Brooke Gaberseck & Wyatt Geist in canoe.



The custom merchandise, hats, headbands, and heavy sweat shirts were all top quality. Well-designed t-shirts were free to racers. A local country club put on breakfast, close to the start.

A delightful line of girl scouts waited with hot cocoa and cookies for the racers as they staggered up the bank in Driftwood, and there were sandwiches and water for additional recovery.

The start was impressively well run, especially given the unexpected *very* high turnout. The shuttle (school) bus was run by **Sally Bailey**, **Randy's** mother, a sweetheart and one helluva driver – every race needs a **Randy's** mother. (Highly recommended.)

The course took us down a scenic stretch of river valley – an enjoyable challenge, especially in low water years (this was

one) to stay alert to rocks and current. Great river reading practice!

Local volunteers turned out down the river as safety crew - from many organizations: Cameron County Emergency Management Group, Mountaineer Search and Rescue, Emporium Volunteer Fire Dept & Fire Police & Ambulance Association, the Sinnemahoning Fire Dept and Ambulance Association, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources folks and State Park crew and individual volunteers

A really fun kid's event followed the main race in which marathon racers teamed up with youth in canoes, and other youth paddled K1s - two miles - as much fun, of not more, than the 12 mile race beforehand.

Local radio covered the event.

The local highway department erected those great big bulb-illuminated signs on all roads leading in: "Welcome Cameron County Classic Paddlers!"

At the spaghetti dinner/awards ceremony (at Emporium Fire House), there were raffled door prizes, and a silent auction to raise money to cover the cost of the event with a giveback (50%) to the local artists who had donated their fine work! I even bid for and won a beautifully carved walking stick and stand (for my wife, **Lucy**) by local artist **Sam Breniman** - see photos.

There were smiles on everyone's faces, the racers, the volunteers, and other locals (in restaurants, bars, cafes, gas stations) all of whom seemed to know that the event was going on, even if they were not directly involved.

Through some rapids: Cody Beer and Aaron Burnside the lead, followed by Sarah Price and Lisa Baine, then Toni and Randy Flament.



French Broad River Classique Off to A Great Start

..... Tom Blue

The inaugural running of the *French Broad River Classique Canoe & Kayak Race* was a smashing success. The two-day, 34 mile event was held for the first time on April 24 and 25 in western North Carolina. Saturday's leg was 18 miles, ending at Westfeldt River Park near the Asheville/Hendersonville airport. That was also the start for Sunday's 16 mile race, and it was quite the happening place that weekend. The Obamas were vacationing in Asheville, so the racers had a good view of Air Force One parked at the airport!

The field was comprised of forty-one people, some from as far away as Florida and Wisconsin. The caliber of the racing was exceptional. Participants included a couple of *USCA* national champions, a former member of the US Olympic Whitewater Slalom Team, and winners, in their respective classes, of last year's *Yukon 1000* and *Missouri 340*. When all was said and done, however, local paddlers and race organizers **Becky** and **Andy Kluge** bested the field in their pro boat with a combined time over the two days of 3:46:52. That is a pace of nine mph! Saturday evening, racers, sponsors and volunteers gathered at the Asheville Outdoor Center for a barbeque dinner. Everyone had enjoyed the scenic beauty of the first day's stretch, which borders *Pisgah National Forest*. The second day afforded excellent views of Biltmore House (a French Renaissance-style mansion built by **George Washington Vanderbilt II** between 1889 and 1895), though the racers did not have much opportunity to enjoy those. Because of substantial rainfall Saturday evening, the river rose dramatically on Sunday and the current was really moving. There was also an 8 mile fun race on Sunday and four parent-child teams entered. Uniformly, the participants had high praise for the course and the two-day format. This will definitely become an annual event. More information about

Randy Bailey writes on the race web site:

"Paddling is a passion of mine that I wish to share with as many people as possible. Our event is for paddlers of all types and abilities to what ever level you may choose to paddle. Our goal is to provide a safe, fun, competitive, quality paddling experience for everyone to enjoy and to promote the sport of paddling."

That goal was well achieved.

The year-in year-out quality of the event has spread its own reputation by word of mouth, but **Randy** augments that with mailings, emailings, a good website plus, last year, the articles in *Canoe News* and, this year, a posting on the *Worldwide Paddling Event Calendar!* Or is it the other way round, with word of mouth augmenting all those publicity efforts? Whatever: the result was greater than the sum of the many parts, and worth the effort. Hats off to all who made it happen. Check out the full results at:

www.eteamz.com/canoeclassic.

Here are the class winners:

The Bob Umbenhauer Memorial Race
(stock aluminum canoes)

1 Rich Hall / Bruce Codington . . . 1:49:58

USCA C1

1 Gareth Stevens 1:45:41

C1 Recreational Stock (any solo stock canoe made of plastic, Royalex, fiberglass, etc)

1 Dave Haas 1:57:26

C1 - Recreational Stock Racing

1 Bob Snook 2:02:14

C2 Unlimited (3x27s, 4x32s, USCA standard - basically any "racing" C2)

1 Steve Martin / Scott Jacobs 1:42:10

C-2-Mixed (recreational-type canoes)

1 Paul Gruber / Miranda Gruber . 1:50:28

C2 Recreational Standard Short, Open
(canoes up to 16ft 6in)

1 Dan Frey / Eric Reed 2:01:25

C2 Recreational Standard Short, Master
(canoes up to 16ft 6in)

1 Ned Karger / Randy Byers 2:03:13

C-2-SS

1 Randy Flament / Toni Flament. 1:46:42

C2 Women

1 Sarah Price / Lisa Baine. 1:47:53

C4

1 James Bittner / Karen Jasper / James Bittner, Jr 1:59:08

C2 Clydesdale (big hearted paddlers. Each paddler must weigh over 200 lbs. Recreational-type canoes.)

1 Blain Kaple / Mark Sturdevant 2:04:45

C2 Adult/Junior (should be but not limited to rec-type canoes. Juniors up to 17 years.)

1 Bill Reed / Nick Reed 1:55:58

C2 Junior (up to 17 years)

1 Max Stuart / Tucker Britton . . . 2:17:17

K1 Junior (up to 17 years in any type of kayak)

1 Hunter Bardo 2:10:29

K-1-L (kayaks over 14ft)

1 Joe White 1:37:44

K-1-R (high-end racing kayaks)

1 Don McConaghy 1:43:02

K-1-SM

1 Jacob Rabatin 1:52:02

K-1-SO

1 Will Koenig 1:54:38

K-1-W (Women)

1 Chloe VanEerden 2:13:05

K-1-WM (Women Master)

1 Mary Jo Monte 1:56:29

K-1-WR (Women, high-end racing)

1 Susan Williams 1:54:10