

The First White River Canoe Race in 1966

In 1966 I was a junior at North Little Rock High School (Arkansas) and in my younger days had been a Boy Scout and when Sea Scout Ship 107 was organized and sponsored by the North Little Rock Yacht Club I immediately became a member. The adult leader of the Ship was Mr. Jay Robison. I do not remember who the other members of the Ship were. Our uniforms were dress whites very similar to the US Navy uniforms. One of the major activities we entered was the first Explorer White River Canoe Race. The race covered 50 miles from Batesville, AR to Newport, AR with a change of crews at Oil Trough, AR. I was in the anchor crew that changed at Oil Trough and the lead off crew was more than 20 minutes ahead when they made it to the half way point. In those days we waited for all the canoes to report in to Oil Trough before we started the last leg of the race to Newport. We were still the first canoe to finish in Newport so we won the race handily.

One of the more memorable incidents that occurred during the race was that even though we knew we were winning by a large margin there was another canoe crew that was determined to beat us to the finish line and we were all paddling for what we were worth. When we would slow down to rest we would hang on to the other canoe so they couldn't forge ahead. During one of our rest periods we rounded a bend in the river and there was our skipper jumping up and down from the bank screaming at us to paddle. So paddle we did and when we made the turn into the finish line we were still neck and neck. My crewmate, was paddling from the rear of the canoe, did a little mojo on the other canoe and knocked the lead paddler out of their canoe with his paddle. No one was injured, but I am sure that would not be tolerated today. Since I was the "Bosun" or the scout leader of the Ship I was allowed to keep the trophy.