

Holly Creek regatta leaves some afloat, others capsized

Annual event raises funds for Alzheimer's Memory Walk

By GARY MASSARO

CENTENNIAL – The *Unsinkable Molly Brown* lived up to its name. But the *Julia Child* flattened like a crummy soufflé and folded like a taco.

And that was just in one heat of the Third Holly Creek Retirement Community regatta.

The contestants – staff and volunteers – were supposed to maneuver along the L-shaped pool, starting at the short end, turning left, heading to the end of the long end, touching poolside and turning around before making a return trip.

For some, it was a task just to remain upright.

There was controversy from the start. The winner, the chef's crew, was disqualified for not touching poolside at the turn. The *Pocahontas* was declared the winner, despite capsizing a few times and dunking pilot Heather Salazar, which wasn't a bad thing because it was oven hot during the event.

Too bad for the cooks, whose craft wasn't the prettiest, but was it ever water-worthy.

It was one person to a boat, using a paddle crafted of duct tape and cardboard, either in the shape resembling an oar or oven mittens. The oars didn't work so hot.

The boat construction was equally as simple, limited to cardboard, duct tape and plastic.

That should tell you how seaworthy most were.

"I think most of the boats sink," spokesman Chuck Montera said before the race July 30.

He was right.

In the first heat, the boats launched and promptly listed badly, one to starboard, the other to port, dumping both paddlers.

Fortunately, the pool at Holly Creek's maximum depth is 4 feet.

Asked if the competitors were supposed to wear life vests, cruise director April Henderson said yes.

"It's not really for safety but so we can laugh at them," said Henderson, who is Holly Creek's activities director when she's not playing cruise director.

At times, the only people not laughing were the paddlers.

The event was one in a continuing series of fundraisers leading to the Alzheimer's Memory Walk, Sept. 18, at City Park in Denver. The regatta raised \$563.

Last year, staff and volunteers, residents and relatives donated \$12,000 to the nonprofit.

It's not looking so good this year, despite lowering the goal to \$10,000, said Jenny Hite, executive assistant who is chairing the fundraising drive.

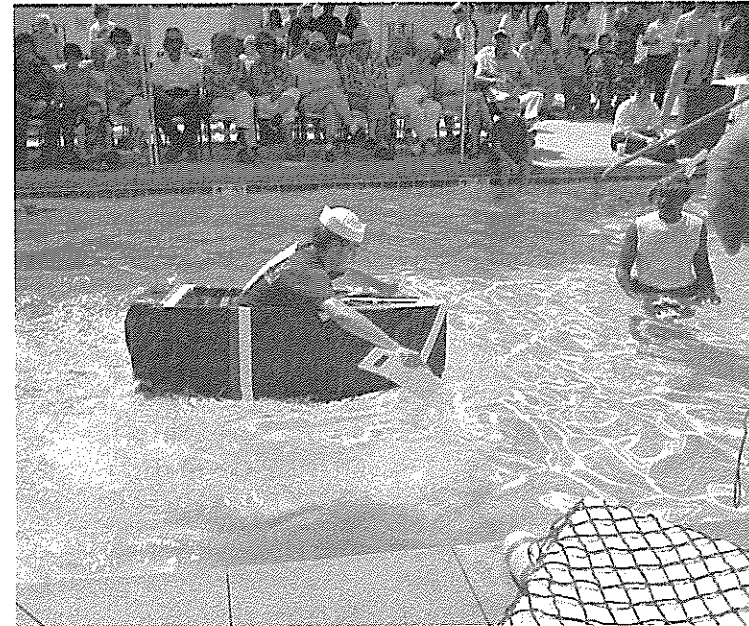
"I don't know if it's the economy taking its toll or what," Hite said.

There were 10 boats in this year's edition, which started with two in '08 and had eight last year.

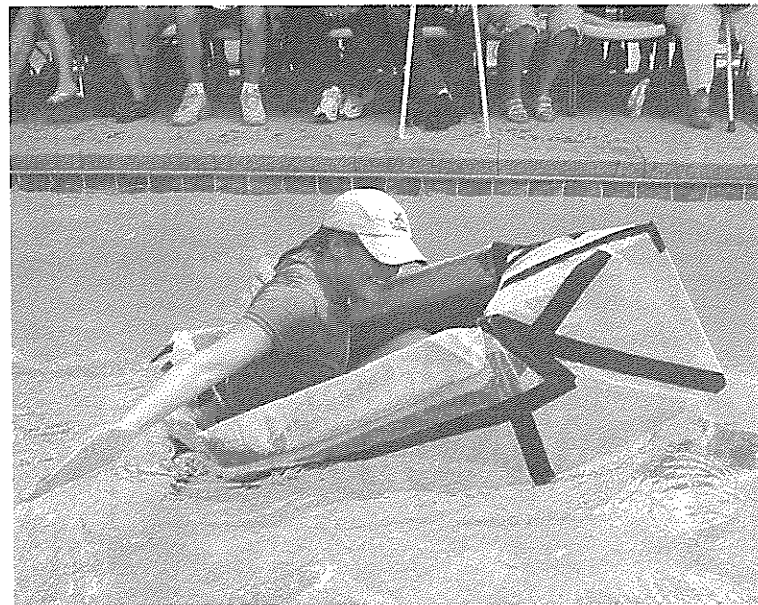
"This is my favorite event of the year," Hite said.

That's because staff and volunteers work with residents on the boats.

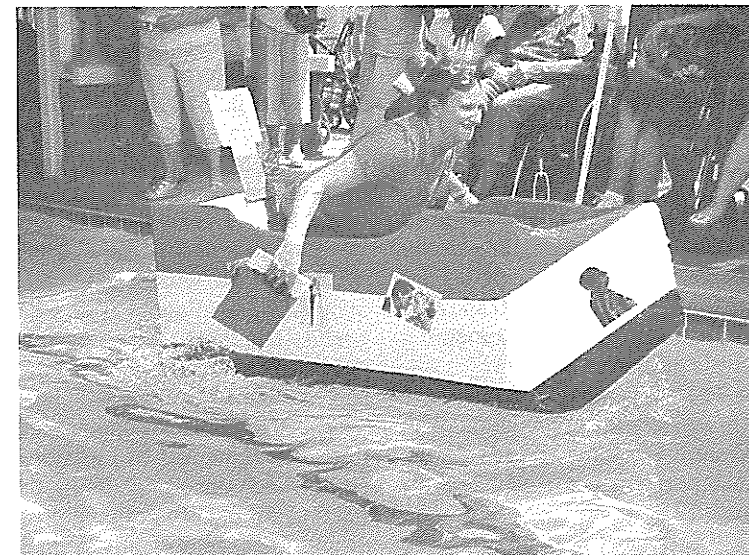
Hite's craft was designed by Dick Loughry, a retired general surgeon.



Tony Vultaggio paddles the *Caine* to victory at the Holly Creek Retirement Community regatta.



This craft made it just to the finish before filling with water and going *glug, glug, glug*.



Jenny Hite grimaces her way to second place behind the *Caine*, which blocked her twice during the regatta.

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"He did the math to figure how big the boat would have to be to hold my weight," Hite said.

Loughry was right on in the math department.

But Hite was aced out in a later race because she was blocked – twice – by Tony Vultaggio, aboard the Caine, named after the book and movie of the same name – *The Caine Mutiny*.

Caine took first place in the races, and was sponsored by resident John Nelson.

Hite was unable to make the turn and then make a clean break back to the end because the Caine hogged the sea lanes.

Hite was captain of the *To Catch a Thief* boat, named in honor of the Alfred Hitchcock film.

After the race, Tony's nephew, Denton, came by to congratulate his uncle.

"He mugged the other boater," someone said.

"I know," Denton said, giggling.

"In front of witnesses," someone said.

"I know," Denton said again, giggling again.

Still, Hite surpassed her goal, which was to "last longer than two

seconds."

Seems that last year, Hite capitalized at the start of her race and her hopes for victory sank as well.

That was sort of what happened to the Gumption, named in honor of *Forrest Gump*.

It didn't last long, stayed afloat even shorter and ended up in a limp pile at poolside.

In her first heat, Hite went head-to-head with the Julia Child, but not for long. The Julia lasted about as long as the Gumption.

Lauren Decker, 12, is a Holly Creek volunteer and West Middle School student. And she was paddling two craft, the Molly as well as the Good Ship Lollipop, which some figured would make a sucker out of its opponents.

Good thing for Lauren that the Lollipop stayed afloat, but lagged badly behind in its heat. Otherwise she might have had to race herself in another heat, which was noted by announced the Rev. Jim Kok, the chaplain of Holly Creek.

Through it all, the regatta brought a lot of smiles, more laughs to onlookers, who went through refill after refill of water in the midday sun.

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Lauren Decker in the Good Ship Lollipop led the Pocahontas and Heather Salazar, but finished last. Lauren said the hand paddles got waterlogged, making it almost impossible to finish.

Photos by Gary Massaro and Chuck Montera



Both boats in early heats rolled over, calling for a restart at the regatta July 30.