

Students paddle 160 lb concrete canoe to first victory

By Kris Hansen

A concrete canoe may not inspire confidence, but two UNL engineering students paddled one to victory April 29 at the annual concrete canoe races at Manhattan, Kan.

Senior Ellen Ramirez of Morrill and junior Maryann Clauss of Des Plaines, Ill., brought the 15½ foot, 160-pound canoe to a first place finish in the women's

division Saturday. The men's crew was eliminated in the semi-finals, but the faculty team placed fourth out of six.

"This turned out to be a really fun thing for everybody," said Richard Delorm, UNL assistant professor of engineering and project supervisor. "It's not exactly an economical canoe, but it's a learning experience and a challenge."

Engineering students annually design and construct a concrete canoe. The concrete mix includes insulation, steam-puffed clay, fly ash, concrete, water "and a bag or two of bean bag refills—our own brand of styrofoam," Delorm said.

"We start designing and recruiting builders and rowers in September every year. We start from scratch," Delorm said. "There are no carry-over students—just what we learned from the previous year."

UNL has been building boats for six years. "Our first one weighed 450 pounds. It floated, but it wasn't very competitive, although we did knock out some of the competition," Delorm recalled.

The next year the canoe was down to 265 pounds, with a thicker shell and broader keel. The canoe's weight dropped each year until it reached 130 pounds, Delorm

said.

"That was a short boat—only eleven feet. It was really too short. It couldn't float high enough to keep the water out, and waves kept coming over the sides and swamping it. We've had our mishaps," he said.

One of the pre-race requirements is to sink the canoe to prove it can float to the top again.

"We've had a few bad moments there, too," he said. "Once, one broke in half and sat there in the water with both ends pointing up in the air."

The boat floats because it displaces its own weight in the water, Delorm said.

"All we have to do is to make the shell so it will sink in and displace 150 pounds. Even if we used concrete full of big rock chunks, we could make it float if the shell was wide enough. Concrete is just like steel. The ocean is full of steel boats," Delorm said.

However, concrete is not practical, he said.

"It took 100 to 120 man hours to build it, and you can't sell something like that in competition with a plexi-glass canoe. It's just for the experience of learning about light-weight concrete, and for the fun of doing it," he said.

Center looks for owner of tapes about marriage

Members of the Women's Resource Center are looking for the owner of several encounter program tapes and supplemental booklets left at the center about three months ago.

Sandin Gardner, WRC staff member, estimated the tapes' value at \$300.

The encounter program, from the Human Development Institute of Bell and Howell laboratories, is described on the program box as "an experience designed to enhance and enrich the marriage relationship."

It continues to say that it is designed for "marriages with joyful and satisfied" relationships to enable an "increasing awareness of each others feelings."

Gardner said WRC staff members have no idea whom or where it came from. The encounter program arrived one day, evidently with plans to stay, Gardner said.

"We just want it to go to whomever it belongs to," Gardner said. "Or, if it really belongs to us, would someone please tell us who gave it to us?"

Gardner suggested the encounter package might have been lost in the mail and accidentally was delivered to the WRC. Gardner said claimees will be screened and must be prepared to adequately identify their property.

If no one claims the encounter program, Gardner said, the WRC may donate it to the psychology department.

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