

Dan Hassel

..... Peter Heed

Every once in a while, our worlds are blessed by the positive impact of the life of another – a person, who simply by the way they live and approach the challenges of life, teach us all so much, without even knowing they are having such an impact. **Dan Hassel** was such a man.

Many canoe racers relatively new to the sport may never have had the opportunity of meeting **Dan** - but those who did will never forget him.

Quiet and unassuming, **Dan Hassel** raced canoes with some of the best who ever lived during a time when racing was the domain of rugged individuals with hand-built canoes and huge paddles. An era when you were often judged by the size of the blade you could swing and the amount of time you could “put on” your competitors. In this age of tough men and tougher competition, **Dan Hassel** thrived, winning most of the greatest races against competitors like **Ralph Sawyer**, **Buzz Peterson**, **Big John Baker**, and **Claude Corbin** (yes, **Serge**’s older brother!). One of **Dan**’s favorite partners was **Gene Jensen**. Their victory in the 1973 *Classique internationale de canots* (aka *Shawinigan*) is still the stuff of legend.

Dan was without peer in the stern of a racing canoe – one of the greatest to ever pick up a paddle. He was a leader by example, a man of determination and integrity; he played it straight and with honor, but he knew how to put the hurt to everyone else when the shallow water came.

He was the first to kick your butt on the river, and the first to welcome you to the finish line (his canoe already on his car) with a warm smile, a cold beer, and a soft-spoken “Nice race, kid.”

There was no tougher competitor on the river, and no nicer man on the riverbank. **Dan** went on to design some of the most successful pro boats in racing. For most of the 80s, the “Hassel” boats dominated races in

Michigan, Minnesota, and Canada. Some of his boats are still out there – just ask **Doug Howard** or **Abby Kingman** – going strong. Yet there was so much more to **Dan Hassel**. He will always be remembered for his personal gentleness (such a contrast to **Dan** the competitor), his generosity, kindness, and good humor. As a new paddler, I remember how **Dan** always shared stories of the “old days” and taught me most of what I know about handling the stern of a race canoe – then he would delight in demonstrating at the next race how we all had so much more to learn! Most of all, **Dan** was a man of quiet courage. He battled various health issues and then cancer for many years, and he faced it all with a dignity and grace – from which we can all draw inspiration about facing life’s challenges. Canoe racing will never be quite the same without **Dan Hassel**. But his spirit lives on in all of us. So think of **Dan** at the end of your next race; give a young paddler a hand out of his or her canoe, and be sure to say, “Nice race, kid.” **Dan** wouldn’t want it any other way.

Stop Press & Short Strokes

Highlights of Selected Races in September and October

Aluminum Nationals

..... Gareth Stevens

Full report in the next issue of *Canoe News*, but the highlights are:

The winners of the 2008 *USCA Stock Aluminum Canoe Marathon Championships* held on the Colorado River in Bastrop, TX on Saturday, September 27, are:

- Men: Wade Binion (TX) & Jerry Rahburn (Belize) in 2:09:06
- Men Master: Dale Burris (AR) & Don Walls (AR) in 2:11:29

- Women: Becky Burris (AR) & Ruth Sayger (AR) in 2:26:04
- Women Master: Teddy Gray (TX) & Cindy Meurer (TX) in 2:22:58

In total 22 paddlers attended from nine states and three countries. Thanks to the *Texas Canoe Racing Association* and the *Lower Colorado River Authority* for hosting a great event. See photos, page 82.

The Triple Crown

The 75th anniversary *Classique de canots* in Québec concluded this year’s *Triple Crown* in grand style August 30-September 1 with a win for **Andy Triebold** (MI) and **Steve Lajoie** (PQ) in 12:49:53, just under 13 minutes ahead of second-placed **Marc Gillespie** (NY) and **Matt Rudnitsky** (NY) (13:02:46). **Andy** and **Steve** also won the first and second races in the series, the *General Clinton* and the *AuSable River Marathon*, putting a firm lock on the *Triple Crown Trophy* for 2008 – doubly firm when you look at the margins by which they won.

[**Andy** and **Steve**’s time at the *Clinton* was 8:08:54, with **Matt Streib** and **Steve Rankinen** second in 8:29:00 and **Marc Gillespie** and **Matt Rudnitsky** in 3rd at 8:30:58. At the *AuSable*, **Andy** and **Steve**’s time was 14:09:06, a full 24:25 ahead of **Matt Streib** & **Steve Kolonich**. Full *Triple Crown* results and reports will follow in the next *Canoe News* edition.]

Patrick Sawyer Memorial Canoe Race / 5th Annual St Joe River Marathon

September 27, 2008:
A number of course records were broken this year, in various classes, but **Patrick Sawyer**, for whom this year’s race was a memorial, still holds the course record for the fastest overall time of 59:55. The net proceeds from the race are being contributed to the Sawyer Family Fund (see page 13). Full results and report in the next issue.