

The Canoe Era



CULVER ACADEMIES

# The Rivalry

## Kling and Oldham

VS

## Runnels and Wilkins



## The Rivalry - Background

Beginning with the first Culver varsity canoe team in 1966, the #1 Culver boat always had a top C-2 competitor boat from the non-Culver racing community. Initially in 1966, it was Leffingwell & Ortman vs Culver's Rob Fogel & Casper Martin. Then the Ansley twins vs. Culver's Jim Etchen & Rob Mitchell in 1967. The 1967-68 season, Steve Kling and Keith Oldham were the lead Culver boat and their top competitors were Paul Runnels and Ward Wilkins from Crawfordsville, IN. The two respective C-2 teams were closely matched and their head to head races intense, competitive and exhausting. Back in those days, winning the Indiana State Championship was based on a points system usually over seven races at different locations.



### INDIANA CANOE RACING COUNCIL NEWS AND VIEWS FINAL TABULATIONS FOR 1966

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## **The Rivalry Culver's Kling & Oldham vs Runnels & Wilkins**

**Now in the third year of the Culver Canoeing program, the Canoe team had become a powerhouse in any race they entered. Many of the Culver canoers trained all year round for the races. Steve Kling and Keith Oldham had committed to a year round training program as the lead boat on the team. They were going into their senior year at Culver when the races started in June of 1967.**

**There were 7 races to determine the Indiana State Championship which becomes the United States Canoe Association in January of 1968. Culver canoers were always better prepared and stronger going into the Spring races when they would have conditioned all Winter. Local teams like Runnels & Wilkins lived in a community where they could practice all Spring and Summer on the local rivers and lakes together. Therefore, when Culver canoers went home for the summer and couldn't practice together, it gave the local canoers the advantage in the Fall Races.**





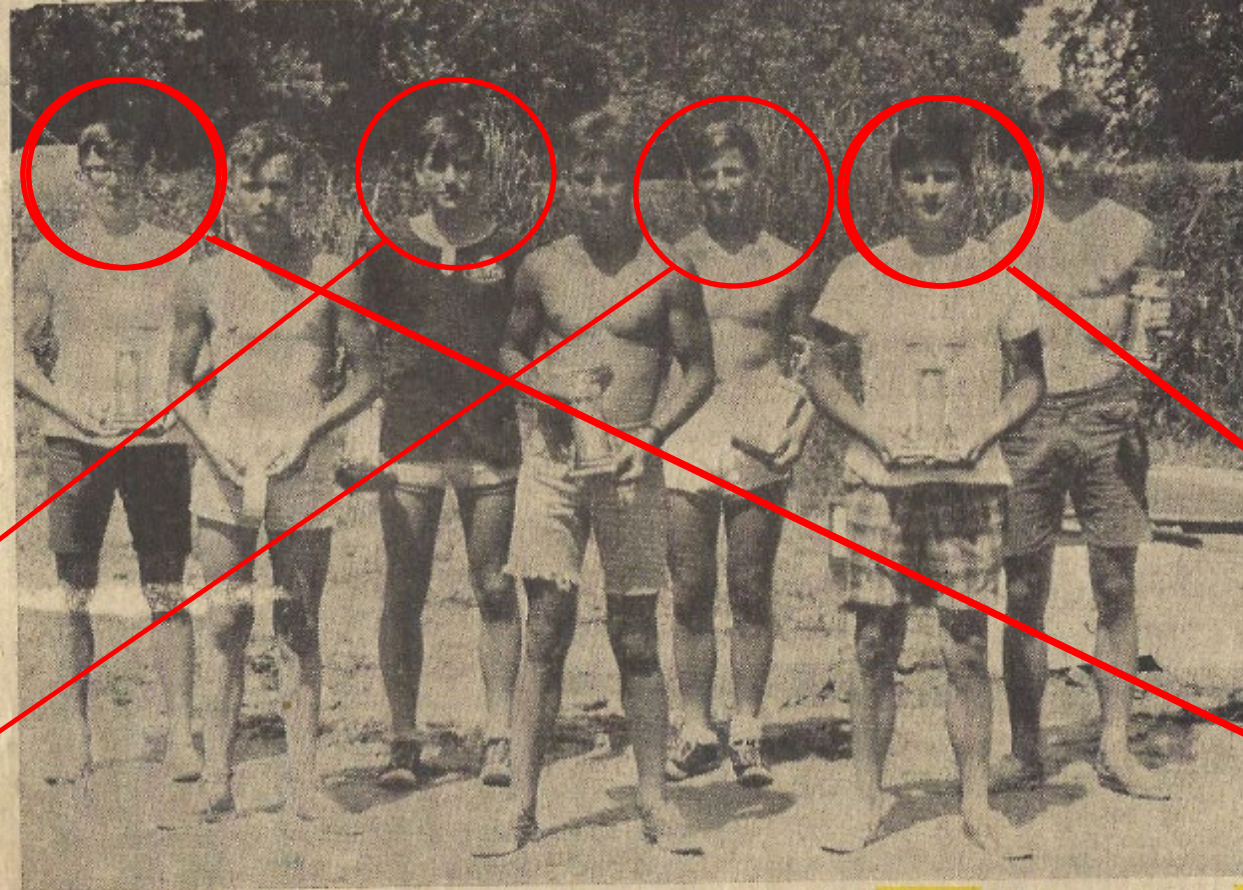
## The Plan

The roadmap to the State Championship was going to be a difficult one with 7 races. One in the Summer, two in the Fall and 4 in the Spring time. Recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, Steve Kling and Keith Oldham evaluated each race ...

June 67 - Spencer, IN	- Advantage <b>Kling and Oldham</b>
Sept 67 - Brookville, IN	- Advantage Runnels & Wilkins
Oct 67 - Indianapolis, IN	- Advantage Runnels & Wilkins
April 68 - Tippie, Culver	- Advantage <b>Kling &amp; Oldham</b>
April 68 - Crawfordsville	- Advantage Runnels & Wilkins (Home River)
May 68 - Kokomo, IN	- Advantage <b>Kling &amp; Oldham</b>
May 68 - Wabash, IN	- Advantage <b>Kling &amp; Oldham</b>







Keith Oldham

Steve Kling

Ward Wilkins

Paul Runnels

Winners in the Junior Men's Division of Saturday's canoe race are pictured above. They are, left to right, Paul Runnels, Dar-  
lington, Indiana; Terry Sintz, Brookville; Keith Oldnam, Springfield, Virginia; John Siefert, Indianapolis; Steven Kling, Wayne, Illinois; Ward Wilkins, Linden, Indiana; and Patrick Moore, Indianapolis. (World Staff Photo)





## INDIANA CANOE RACING COUNCIL NEWS AND VIEWS

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## INDIANA DOWNRIVER CRUISING CANOE RACES 1967

The seven point recognition races to be held during 1967:

Tippecanoe River *	15-16 Apr	Culver Military Academy, Culver, Ind.
Sugar Creek *	22-23 Apr	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Crawfordsville, Indiana
Wildcat Creek *	6- 7 May	Kokomo Jaycees, 1528 Meadowbrook, Kokomo, Indiana
Wabash River *	27-28 May	Izzak Walton League, Wabash Indiana
Lower White River	17 Jun	Owen County Chamber of Commerce, Spencer, Indiana
Whitewater River	23-24 Sep	Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Brookville, Indiana
Upper White River	14-15 Oct	BroadRipple Canoe Club, 6148 Guilford Ave., Indianapolis ,Indiana

\* These four races will determine the championships for 1967. The remaining three, together with next year's four spring races, will make up the championships for 1968.

## Race Schedule

The race schedule changes for the 1967-68 race season. The first race actually starts in June 67 and will end in May 68. This first race is during a time when the Winter students go home and presents a challenge for the Kling & Oldham team.





# Spencer Planning For Big Canoe Race

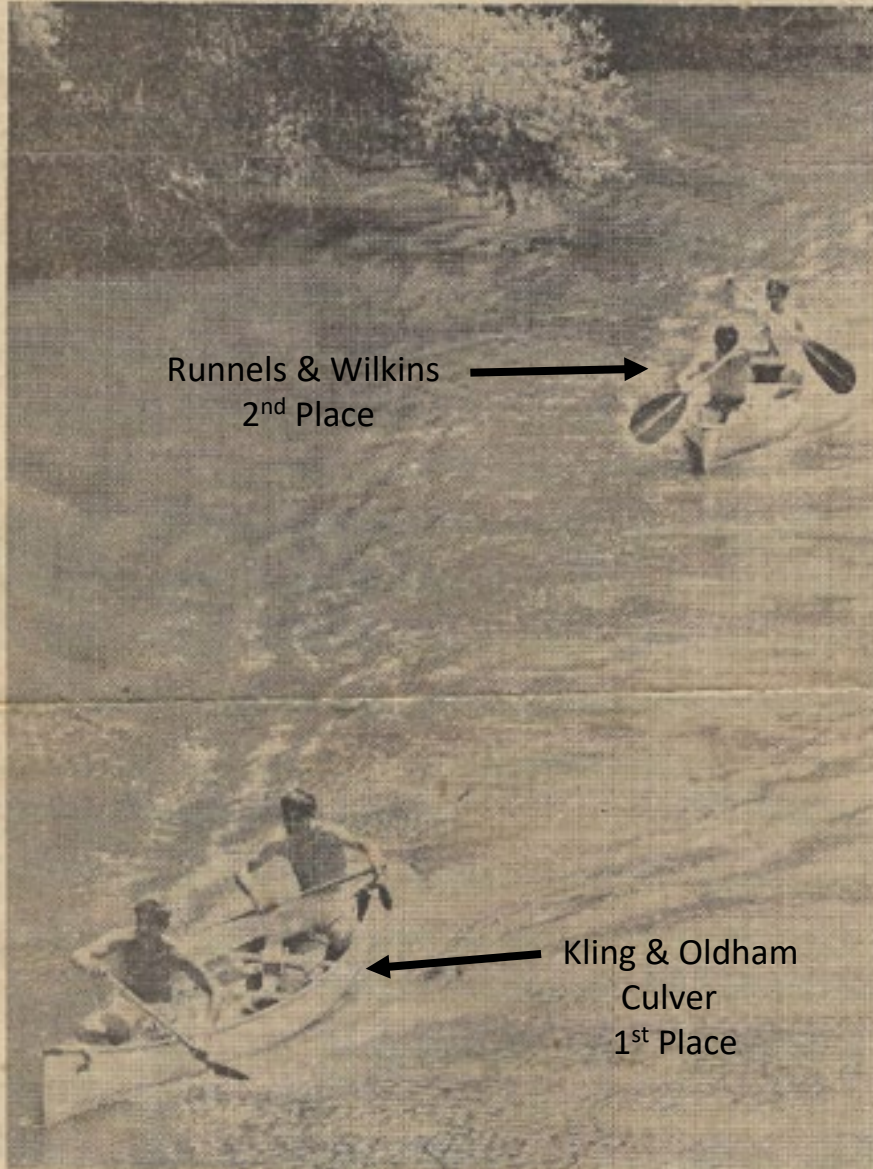
SPENCER — The scene has all the air of a European Grand Prix road race. There are multitudes of picnicking spectators at scenic points along the route to watch the racers, others gather at the starting point, while some prefer to inspect the art exhibits of the Owen County Art Guild in the Spencer square until time for the finish at Cooper's Park.

The race? No, not an automobile event. It's the annual White River Canoe Race, sponsored by the Spencer Chamber of Commerce. This June 15, the fourth annual White River junket will be held, and for canoe enthusiasts around the Midwest it is like the Indianapolis 500 is to auto race fans.

For one thing, the Spencer Chamber of Commerce race is the first race on the U.S. Canoe Racing Association season. For canoe racers around the Midwest and its fringes, it ranks as a "must" race, one they absolutely have to enter.

This is apparent from the growth of the entry list from 30 at the original race in 1945 to 70 in last year's field. Applications for entry to this year's field will be bigger and better than ever.

The major cause of the popularity of the event rests with the Spencer Chamber of Commerce and the professional and thorough way it handled all aspects of the event. But then, that's not really new when one considers the caliber of men in the Spencer Chamber.



Runnels & Wilkins  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Kling & Oldham  
Culver  
1<sup>st</sup> Place

ACTION DURING THE 1967 RACE

John Hackworthy, president of the Spencer Chamber of Commerce this year, is a good example. But then so are all his contemporaries, a fact Hackworthy is more than eager to point out. In fact, the Wisconsin native insists his role is a minor one.

The race itself starts in Paragon and runs approximately 20 miles down the White River to the finish at Cooper's Park on the southern outskirts of Spencer. On the way, canoeists paddle past the town of Gosport and through scenic McCormick's Creek State Park.

Lyle Brighton, the man in charge of the awards ceremony this year, . . . the tasks often rotate, was the originator of the canoe race.

Brighton saw the need for such a project and instigated the concept after seeing a similar race in Crawfordsville. He wrote to the Indiana Canoe Racing Association, then the only canoeist organization in the country. The sanctioning group, now the USCRA, sent back rules, regulations and specifications. . . and the project got the "Go" signal.

Hackworthy, canoe racing chairman last year, described briefly what will take place this June 15.

"Canoeists will probably start arriving at the starting point (the river bridge in Paragon) at about 8 or 8:30.

The Spencer Explorer Scouts will be there to assist the people in unloading their canoes, and getting them to the right spot.

"There are three different divisions, you see," said Hackworthy, vice president and chairman of Stello Products, Inc. "The men's senior (19 and over), men's junior (18 and below) and mixed. Divisions are run in heat races and heats start at 10 minute intervals.

"We have sent out applications for advance registrations. But we will accept late registrations. Ken Casida is head registrar this year and there will be a table for late comers and for information.

"Names of each canoeist will be drawn for heat positions. We start 'em in single lines of 6-8 across. That's about the maximum width across the river that is advisable. Each canoe also will be numbered.

"Ned Smith. . . I was in his spot last year, is our canoe race chairman. Wade Albritton is our chairman of the start, and he will be directing the canoes into a lineup.

"The draw of names should be at 10:20. The start is planned for 10:30, that's when our official starter Jerry Wer-muth, Spencer High band director, will fire the gun starting the first wave.

"The watches, all synchronized for the start, will be taken back to Spencer to the finish line at Cooper's Park. John Gillaspay, editor of the Spencer Evening World, is our finish chairman this year. Some of our JayCees will be helping him as spotters and judges.

"Julian Duling is our trophy committee chairman. The first three finishers in each division get trophies, fourth and fifth places get ribbons. This year all competitors will receive jacket patches.

"Of course, Mr. Brighton will be the emcee at the awards ceremony. Gosport's Explorer Scouts will assist canoes, that really impresses the participants."

Chuck Cooper, Owen County Conservation Officer, and members of the Owen County Citizen Band unit will be on the river at various points during the race.

Cooper, the man who makes the ultimate decision on whether the river. . . in case of high water, is safe, will be there to give safety assistance.

The CB unit will relay race information to the finish line public address system.

Applications have been sent to canoeists in St. Louis, Louisville, Knoxville, Tenn., Cincinnati, Wichita, Kans., Pittsburgh, Pa.; Madison, Wisc., Brunswick, Maine; Chicago, Orlando, Fla.; Charlottesville and Newport News, Va.; Lincoln, Neb.; and to towns all over Indiana.

The race, one of six sanctioned in the Midwest, requires standard cruising canoes of non-aluminum or fiberglass construction. Kayak type paddles aren't allowed. Each canoe has a team of two.

Basically, the White River race is an easy one as far as passage over dangerous territory is concerned. There are little or no rapids and no required portages. White River is considered a tame river normally. And high water or floods haven't been present in past races.

The big thing is endurance. Canoeists get spread out after the first few miles.

Hackworthy, who was one of several young men to receive statewide recognition as "One of Indiana's Outstanding Young Men in 1966" by the state Chamber of Commerce, has a few ideas for next year's festival.

"I'd like to see it a two day event," says Hackworthy, also an outstanding athlete in golf and football during his collegiate days at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisc.

"We could run mile-long sprint races and slaloms (around buoys) one day along with, say, the mixed division. Then we could have a girls or women's division the next day along with the junior and senior events.

"Most canoeists are also camping enthusiasts and a two day event would give them an adequate time to enjoy McCormick's Creek camping facilities, especially if they are from far away and have just taken a weekend off to come to the race."



# Third Annual Canoe Race Is Big Success



And Their Off! The photo above was taken as the first heat of Saturday's canoe race left the starting point at the Paragon Bridge. Dick

Dyar was the official starter for the event. (World Staff Photo)

Thirty-three pairs of canoe paddlers braved the blistering sun and 90-plus degree temperatures Saturday to participate in the third annual Paragon to Spencer White River Canoe Race, with the race marking its third very successful running.

Despite the hot miasable weather, the race was run without incident in the way of accidents or over-exhaustion of the contestants, and was won with fine times in all three events.

The best time of the day was registered by a Senior Men's team in boat number 5, composed of Roland Muhlen and Arthur Preising, both of Cincinnati, Ohio, as they ended the 19 mile jaunt in 2 hours, 41 minutes and 37 seconds. The Muhlen-Preising team came in 2 minutes and 56 seconds faster than the second place Senior Men's team which was boat number 25, manned by Robert Ellison of Aurora, Illinois and Ronald Taylor of Batavia, Illinois.

The Junior Men's division was captured by boat number 2 with Keith Oldman of Springfield, Virginia and Steven Kling of Wayne, Illinois on the working end

of the oars. Their winning time was 2 hours, 49 minutes and 39 seconds. Both boys are 16 years old.

The winning time in the Mixed Couple competition was posted by Bonnie Cole of Cincinnati, Ohio and Thor Ronemus of Springfield, Ohio as they paddled their boat number 9 through the course in 2 hours, 53 minutes and 28 seconds.

Anyone who thinks that canoe racing is a sissy sport would soon have changed their minds by watching the contestants in Saturday's race. Not only was the weather making the going tough on the racers, the paddling of one of the 17 foot boats is a back-breaking job. But like most other sports, the people who drive miles and miles to break their skulls over a boat oar must truly love the action and competition it gives. There is no money given as prizes in these canoe races, only trophies, but that seemed to satisfy the tired winners Saturday afternoon.

The Spencer Chamber of Commerce "ran" the show again

(Continued On Page 4)



When the race was over Saturday, canoes began to cluster on the north bank of White River as their tired owners rested up from the

19 mile trip. Twenty-six of the thirty-three canoes entered in the race are pictured above. (World Staff Photo)

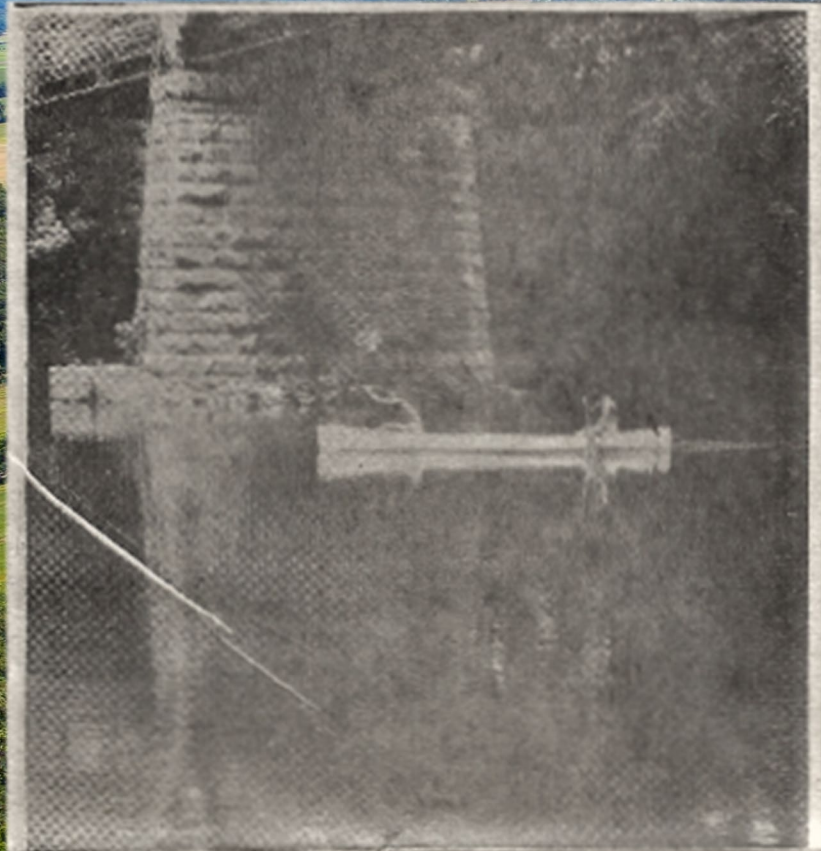
**Kling & Oldham took the initial lead and never gave it up**

**Background and History**

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Whew! The tired young men pictured above were the first to cross the finish line Saturday afternoon as they won the Junior Men's Division of the race with a total time of 2 hours 49 minutes and 39 seconds. The boys are Keith Oldham of Springfield, Virginia and Steven King of Wayne, Illinois. (World Staff Photo)

## **The First Race White River – Spencer, IN**

**The Kling & Oldham team were only a couple weeks into the Summer as the 1967-68 season started. Keith Oldham flew into Chicago and met Steve Kling to compete in this first race, which they won.**





## **The Fall Races**

**With the return to Culver in the Fall, it meant conditioning was very important to the upcoming races. With only a couple of weeks to train, it left the Kling & Oldham team at a disadvantage for these races. Race 2 ...**

**Sept 25<sup>th</sup> – Whitewater River  
Brookville, IN**

**After a staggered start, their boats never saw one another, so it was a race against the clock. This race was easily won by Runnels & Wilkins**





## Oldham and Kling Seek Canoe Title

The Culver duo of Keith Oldham and Steve Kling won the first canoe race of the 1968 season at Spencer, Ind. in July.

The team is now tied for the Indiana Junior Canoe Championship, won last year by Jim Etchen and Bob Mitchell of Culver. Their chief opposition for the state canoe crown is the Wilkins-Runnels team of Brookville, which they will face at Indianapolis Oct. 14-15.

Four Culver paddlers placed highly Sept. 24 in the first race of the fall canoe season on the 20-mile Whitewater Canal near Brookville, Ind.

Of the 30 two-man teams entered in the race, eight were from Culver. Highest Culver finishers were Keith Oldham and Steve Kling, second, and the team of Mike Thrasher and Tony Wheeler, which came in third. Coach William P. Garrison's paddlers also took fourth and sixth.

## The Fall Races

**The third race on October 15, 1967 was on the Upper White River in Indianapolis, IN. They now had 3 weeks of training together to improve. While they made significant progress, in the end, their finish was just behind the Runnels-Wilkins team.**

**The race was much closer but still weren't in good enough shape to beat the Runnels & Wilkins team. Keith Oldham actually got sick after this race from drinking the river water.**





## Culver's Tippecanoe River Race

**This race on April 16<sup>th</sup> was Culver's strength which went from Leiters Ford to Beason Park. It was a long race with mostly deep water and a real challenge to canoers. It was also dedicated to Kalman Blaho since his death in the Fall of 1966.**

**The first Spring-1968 race was critical for that year's Indiana State Championship and it was Culver's Tippecanoe River Race with the Blaho Memorial Trophy to the winners. Steve and Keith could not have been more fit or more highly motivated. It was a timed sequential start with Kling and Oldham starting after Runnels and Wilkins took off from the start line. They overtook them in the first few miles and never saw them again for the remainder of the 24 mile marathon race.**

**All the months of training were paying off now. They continued on to what was to be a sure victory as Steve and Keith were now a half mile ahead with only 1/4 of a mile to go.**



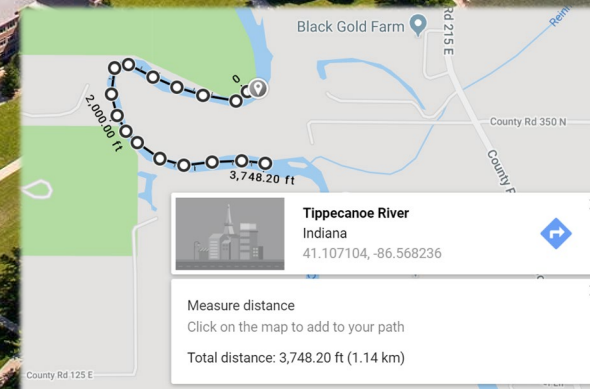


## Tippecanoe Race

The river was exceptionally high that year which created some short cuts at times. Lynn Tuttle, a Culver adversary, was sitting in a canoe upstream a mile before the finish line and waited for the Kling Oldham team to pass. The Runnels/Wilkins team being  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile behind at the time, was then directed to a flood filled path through the woods and was able to cut off the last leg of the river to win the race.



## Background and History



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## Tippecanoe Appeal

**Bill Garrison, Culver's canoe team coach and founder of the Tippecanoe River Race, appealed the "first place" race results. Unfortunately, his appeal was denied and the Kling Oldham team finished an "official" second in the race even though they never got passed by another canoe. Additionally, they had a record time of 2 hours and 36 minutes beating Jim Etchen and Rob Mitchel's time in 1967 by slightly over 13 minutes which was the current standing record for the race. Their time was faster than even the senior men's competition. The best team doesn't always win though. It was a devastating blow to Steve and Keith for their hopes to win the Indiana State Championship and the Kalman Blaho Memorial trophy.**

**The picture to the right is Steve Kling (bow) and Keith Oldham's (stern) at the Tippecanoe finish line during their 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion reliving that moment.**



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## The 5<sup>th</sup> Race

The 5th race was April 23, 1968 on Sugar Creek in Crawfordsville, IN and only a week after the Tippecanoe Race. This was Runnels and Wilkins home race course, so Steve and Keith knew this would be a big challenge for them. But, they were more determined than ever after their Tippecanoe River race “loss”. This was a different type of race. It required significant knowledge and navigational skills of the local waters. Culver had never done very well in this race. The river was very shallow which means strength was secondary to finding the best route. Knowing where the deep water in the river was key to winning this race. This being Runnels and Wilkins home river gave them a significant advantage in knowing where the deep water was in the river. Steve and Keith lost the lead in the race and came in 1 minute and 41 seconds behind Runnels and Wilkins. That was another tough loss as that clinched the title for their opponents!!! However, Steve and Keith were still in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Indiana State Championship standings (see Vedette 4-26-68).

Kokomo Race.  
**CULVER'S STRONGEST** varsity team, Keith Oldham and Steve Kling, lost the lead in last Saturday's Sugar Creek Race by one minute, 41 seconds to the experienced team of Ward Wilkins and Paul Runnels of Crawfordsville.

The state championship is determined by the number of points earned in the canoe races. Wilkins and Runnels are in the lead, and Oldham and Kling are next. Oldham and Kling have at least one more chance to beat Wilkins and Runnels before the end of the season.





## The Final Race

The 6th race was in Kokomo and Culver always did very well in this race. It started in a dammed lake and so half the race was played to Culver's strength. Unfortunately, the race for unknown reasons was canceled.

The final race of the season was on May 26, 1968 held on the Wabash River in Wabash, IN. While Steve and Keith had no chance of winning the Indiana State Championship at this point, they were ready to do their best in the last race of the season and Culver canoeing careers. The race started out on a very disappointing note....5 of Culver's top C-2 teams started the race late and were disqualified since they were not notified of a last minute change in race start times. Despite that fact, Steve and Keith were now more than ever wanting to race their hearts out against their arch rivals, Runnels and Wilkins, one last time "for all the marbles". It was an agonizing race they managed to win. Steve and Keith came away knowing that they beat the "State Champs" and that was gratifying to them...

### Indiana State Championships - Grand Aggregate - 1967-68

#### WOMEN:

1. Barb Blose-Beth Nutty, Brookville, Ind.
2. Helen Denzel, St. Louis, Mo.
3. Matilee Christman, Des Plaines, Ill.

#### SENIOR MEN:

1. Art Preising-Rol Muhlen, Cincinnati, Ohio
2. Ron Taylor-Bob Ellison, Batavia, Ill.
3. Bob Demoret-Steve Adams, Crawfordsville and Indianapolis, Ind.

#### JUNIOR MEN:

1. Ward Wilkins-Paul Runnels, Linden and Darlington, Ind.
2. Steve Kling-Keith Oldham, Culver Military Academy
3. Mike Thrasher-Culver Military Academy.

#### MIXED DOUBLES:

1. Thor Ronemus, Springfield, Ohio
2. Beth Nutty, Brookville, Ind.
3. Helen and Gene Denzel, St. Louis, Mo.

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## A Final Note

**Steve and Keith realized that they had tough competitive races during that 1967-68 canoeing season. What they did not realize until after they graduated was that the “legend” of their competitive rivalry with Runnels and Wilkins grew in stature with future Culver Canoe Team members and served as future inspiration to them to always work hard and do their best. Nice to know that the Blaho legend of that spirit lived on!!!....**

**Steve and Keith interacted with Paul Runnels and Ward Wilkins only at races and knew them only as fierce competitors back then. Ironically, Ward Wilkins went on to be a top ranked U.S. canoer and paddling partner of Don Giacchetti (CMA '71 and Culver Canoe Team Captain) when they were at Purdue University. Don and Ward competed as the # 3 Top C-2 team in the 1972 Olympic Canoeing Trials and won several silver and bronze medals paddling as part of the USA Team in the North American Championships. They have remained lifelong friends.**





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