



YOUNG RICK AND CASEY SHOW THEIR INTENSITY AND WINNING STYLE.



GROWN-UP RICK POWELL (FRONT) AND CASEY EICHFELD IMPRESS THE CROWD AT THE 2007 NATIONALS.

## ANNUAL FALL PENN'S CUP SERIES by Sandy Powell

Where do I start? – It was a warm September day way back in 1992, when Greg Wojcik said to me, “You know what would help your paddling skills?” and me, with all of my naiveté, said, “What?” Greg then said, “Why don’t we race at the LVCC Penn’s Cup race this Saturday and Sunday in OC-2?” Back then, it was held on the Bushkill Creek in Easton. It has since been moved to the Little Lehigh in Allentown. So off I went on a new adventure.

By the end of the weekend, I had fallen in love with slalom. I was in a canoe with Greg, but there were other classes – K-1, C-1, C-2, OC-1 etc.

I had my son Rick there, because my husband Jim had to work. Rick was three years old at the time. During our practice time on Saturday, Greg and I had endured the antics of a three-year-old in the boat as we practiced the gates. The day of the race, another boater’s wife (the boater being Mike Boyd from Conewago Canoe Club) offered to watch my son, because she also had a three-year-old there. Yippee!! Greg and I got to race without my son in the boat. I am not sure what place we finished that day– but I do know it was a weekend that has changed not only the course of my life, but my son’s and my family’s.

Let’s fast forward to 2007. It is hard to believe that it has been 15 years since Greg “popped the question” about doing a slalom race. I am still slalom racing: in OC-1 and in OC-2 with Walt Underhill from the Lehigh Valley Canoe Club. I generally do all of the Penn’s Cup races, all of which are held in

Pennsylvania, hence the name of the series. I also try to do some races in the New England Slalom Series. My love for slalom has not diminished after all these years.

My son Rick’s love for slalom was given birth at that first slalom race way back in 1992. It was nourished and developed throughout his childhood years in the Penn’s Cup series and New England Slalom Series. Today, at 18 years of age, it has literally given him the world. He has been a member of the Junior National team since age 15. At age 18, he made the Senior National team. He has raced and trained on five continents and knows people throughout the world. Racing has taught him the meaning of discipline and hard work.

Now, “How does this relate to Keystone Canoe Club members?” you might ask. Well, here is my pitch: Try slalom racing sometime. You might find that you like it, and you will meet some really nice folks along the way.

The Penn’s Cup Series runs every fall. There are six races. Some are on the east side of the state, like Allentown, Harrisburg, and York, some are in the middle, like Penn State, and some are in the western part of the state, like the middle Yough. They are very easy races, so that beginners can do them. Each race has a clinic (for free I might add) that is often taught by some of the best slalom racers in the country. To add to all of this, the races are very kid-friendly and family-oriented events. Oh, and fairly cheap, I might add! If you want more information, contact me at [powelljb@comcast.net](mailto:powelljb@comcast.net) . Happy paddling!

