

Interview with Julie Stone by Jeff Wright

When was your first introduction to the Dragon Run?

During our professional years, we didn't have much of an opportunity to participate in FODR paddles. We would always try to sign up for at least one Spring paddle and every year would be a experience with new things to see. We'd always try to share with new local friends or out-of-town guests.

Once Kearfott retired, he started getting more involved in the organization and assisting as crew. Kearfott loved just getting outside and helping folks. At that time, I believe that there were only the Spring paddles, which made for a short season.



What was it about the Dragon Run that inspired Kearfott both as founder and an active member?

Kearfott always preferred to donate and support local organizations, so he was happy to support such a worthy cause. I don't know the full history behind his getting involved with the group that purchased the land, but I did hear him talk about Jimmy Morgan, the drug store and others from that time. I always got the impression that "Morgan's" was the hub of the community and connected the medical staff with other healthcare providers in the community. I always got the impression that Jimmy Morgan was very respected, and folks would do anything he requested.

Prior to his retirement, Kearfott attended the General FODR meetings, picnics and (yes) trash pick-up days. He was very interested in land and water conservation efforts.

Looking back do you have a favorite memory of FODR?

I loved the Fall picnics and believed they were held on Big Island. We really loved getting to know Teta and listening to all her stories. She was a wonderful person to schedule as a speaker at various Women's groups and I was always amazed at how a group of "fussy" women would be enthralled with Teta's Arachnid presentation or her bird presentation with the accompanying bird calls. Such a delight!

It seemed very fitting to me that she was dubbed "Queen of the Dragon" and would wear her crown on the paddles in the later years of her involvement.

I did tell the story of the beaver dam at the panel session and my worry that the beaver would come out and bite everyone. It really was kind of a joke in our house.

My other story and somewhat disbelief were when the FODR had a new crew member with an underwater chain saw (or so I was told). Kearfott came home so delighted that this new member had this device, and it was just such a time saver for the clean-up just prior to the Spring paddle. Of course, I was not happy and reason being that Kearfott had tried to cut off his foot with a chain saw one morning many years prior while cleaning out our marsh. He was not always the handiest with these sorts of tools! Needless to say, no one got hurt that year.

Any funny stories or moments from the past?

I don't really have any funny stories, since it really was Kearfott that was involved. I know that he greatly enjoyed being a part of the FODR.

I will say we always had a "giggle" about this story, but not sure if appropriate for publication. We had good friends visit from NYC and both finance folks from Manhattan. We had booked for us all to go on a Dragon kayak and they didn't really have a full understanding what or where we were going. Of course, we met at the loading spot to leave our cars and folks were loading into the back of vans and Teta's old, covered hardtop truck body and sitting on old cushions. We took off with Teta driving and getting a little jostled about as driving thru the wooded areas. We get to the kayak area, and everyone is crawling out of the truck and the friend husband says to Kearfott "now I have a whole new appreciation for illegal immigrants trying to cross the border". We all just howled and, of course, this may not be a story one can share. These friends talked about the entire experience forever and of course greatly added to the story for other friends.

Any ideas you want to share to further protect the Dragon Run?

I don't have any great ideas. I think your continued outreach to related groups will always be key and your presentations to various community groups will continue to share the importance of this natural resource. It is wonderful additional seasons have been included paddling and started the walking trips. I'll keep closer watch on upcoming events.

Thank you for highlighting Kearfott's involvement as one of the early founding members. He would be very touched, although he seriously disliked getting any attention.