

DragonTales

Winter 2001



Volume 6 No. 1

A Publication of DragonSports USA

From the Bow of the Boat

Gloria Jones, President

2001 is here and the DragonSports USA board is focusing on its membership and club activities. The year started with the election of new officers. They will be introduced and provide reports at the **Annual All Members Business Meeting** Monday, February 12th at Old Market Pub (address provided on page 4).

Highlights of the upcoming year are:

- Continued year-round paddling opportunities at open club practice sessions and/or team rental practices. We are looking for a new boat rental scheduler to relieve Laurie Jordan. Thank you Laurie for a job well done. Interested parties should contact Nancy Cooper at cooper@spiritone.com or 503-669-8324.
- Egroup for persons interested in staying connected with DragonSports USA and it's members sign up at www.egroups.com/group/Dragonsports-U_S_A.
- **Coaches Clinic:** March 3-4, 2001 at Quest Diagnostic Lab. A two day workshop will be sponsored by the PDBA, USA, Wasabi Paddling Club, and DragonSports USA. In-depth focus on coaching for both Kaoshiung and Hong Kong style boats.
- Portland Kaoshiung Paddlers Clinic coordinated by our DSUSA founder Joel Shilling. Contact Joel Shilling at jmacshilli@aol.com for more details.
- PKSCA Dragon Boat Races June 9-10, 2001. Captains meetings are underway. Contact Mel Pittmon or Roberta Weinstein at pkscaracedirector@hotmail.com for more information.
- PDBA, USA Championship to be held Aug. 11-12 in Oakland, California. Contact Shirley Gee at sgee@worldnet.att.net for additional information. DragonSports is a member of the Pacific Dragon Boat Association, USA (PDBA, USA). We encourage other team/clubs and individuals to consider joining. Contact Jeff Campbell at Jeff@thethinker.com for more information.

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Pink Phoenix, the Beginning

Cathy Hinkley

If you are reading this DragonSports newsletter then you have probably heard the name Pink Phoenix or have seen the team on race day; no other team has pink life vests and hot pink paddles. (The coaches love the paddles because it is easy to see when the paddles are not buried). And you probably know that the team is made up entirely of breast cancer survivors. The "pink" represents breast cancer awareness. The phoenix is a mythical bird that rises from its own ashes – a triumphant symbol of rebirth and renewal, not unlike the renewed commitment to life after surviving cancer or any life threatening disease.

The team was *not* founded by a breast cancer survivor, but by Wasabi paddler Dorothy Atwood, who was inspired by a team of blind paddlers. In November 1996, with help from the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Dorothy sent out letters to all survivors who registered for that year's **Race for the Cure**® (a national fund and awareness-raising event for breast cancer). Many more women than the 25 member limit set by the Rose Festival showed up for the first meeting. Picking the 1997 team was easy – the first 25 to pay the dues became the founding members.

Now came the challenging part. None of the women had ever paddled before. They ranged in age from 29 to mid 60's and they were in different stages of physical fitness. For some it was the first form of exercise that sounded interesting enough to motivate them to get off the couch. Some saw paddling as an exercise that would prove to themselves that they still had control over their bodies and that they could conquer this disease. Some were just finishing treatment (chemotherapy and/or radiation) so their physical strength was compromised. If that wasn't enough, the various types of surgeries left some members with limited upper body movement. Lymphedema (a painful swelling of the arm after lymph node surgery when the body can't drain fluids from the arm) turned at least one potential paddler into a tiller.

But this didn't stop Dorothy. Her desire to share the sport she loves so much with Pink Phoenix, had her out several times a week from February through Race Day teaching and training this new team. From the beginning, Wasabi has been a big supporter of the Pinks

and in the second season, Connie Flesuras, Vonda Purdy-Myers, and Peggy Dibello joined Dorothy as coaches. In turn, several Pink Phoenix members help coach the Special Dragons. The following year, 1998, the team grew to two boats. At this writing there is a good chance the team could be 3 boats strong for 2001.

In the 1998 season, the Gorman Cup Race was added to the Rose Festival Dragon Boat Races. The race is named in memory of the Pink Phoenix founding captain, Michele Gorman, who died that spring. The plan was to attract other breast cancer survivor teams to Portland to try to win the trophy. Until a team comes to challenge the Pinks, the Gorman Cup is considered an exhibition race. All breast cancer survivors are invited to join in the paddling, whether they are experienced paddlers or not. Last year's caller for the Gorman Cup was Mayor Vera Katz, who had just finished treatment for breast cancer.

The team's mission is to enhance breast cancer awareness, educate and support other survivors, and to demonstrate that there is quality life after breast cancer that is both active and positive. The team serves as a support group to team members and to newly diagnosed women. They are also volunteers for many Susan G. Komen (Race for the Cure®) activities. Several members have been on the board of directors and another is the chairperson for The Race for the Cure®. The committee that is responsible for the Survivor's Luncheon (held the day before the Race for the Cure®) is made up mostly of Pink Phoenix members and if they aren't on Pink Phoenix when they join the committee they often

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Promoting fitness and friend

DragonSports USA Open Practices

Mon., Wed., and Fri. 9:00 AM
Tuesday 6:00 PM
Thursday 6:00 PM
Saturday 8:00 AM

All evening practices
should be using lights.

*Notice: Be considerate to other teams by
bringing the boats in 5 minutes before your
practice ends.*

Mail checks for dues/new memberships to:

Greta Gibbs/Attorney at Law
1100 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1200
Portland, OR 97204

Please visit our website at:
www.dragonsports.org or
check out our egroups address at:
[www.egroups.com/group/
Dragonsports-U_S_A](http://www.egroups.com/group/Dragonsports-U_S_A)

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Phone: 503-297-3264

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Phone: 503-525-6659

From the Bow... *cont. from page 1*

- DragonSports USA's Regatta Sept. 8, 2001 at Vancouver Lake in Vancouver, Washington. Contact Christina Borgens at ChristinaBorgens@techlaw.com for more details

We would like to make our services available to you and your club. Please visit our website and link to any number of individuals that can keep you informed. We challenge you to keep your teams together for the Regatta and consider going to one out of town race this year.

Help us make a difference by attending the Annual All Member Business Meeting and giving us your voice.

Chilly Christmas Caroling!

Gloria Jones

The December 11th Christmas Caroling event proved to be a chilly experience when the two brightly decorated DragonSports USA boats left the dock. We paddled out into the night for a glorious time of Christmas Caroling amongst the Christmas Ships that were headed up river to Milwaukie.

Joel Shilling on the keyboard, Leroy Santiago, and myself headed up the singing for each boat with our tillers John Myers and Bill Collet. This year we stayed very close to each other and combined our efforts in song. We also had singing challenges between the boats and I know that my boat was the best, right?

With the Christmas Ships passing by, the Portland Spirit and other pleasure boats, the snow gently falling we experienced the season in the way we and only we can out on the mighty Willamette River with our friends doing what we love.

We continued our celebration at Mazzi's with music and song from Sandy, Leroy, (my sister and brother-in-law) and myself, along with the surprise guitar talent of Joe Swaney.

If you were scheduled to come out and were unable to make it, know that you were truly missed, and really missed a great time.

A special thanks to Dewey and Trish Gault and Joel Shilling for decorating the boats.

DragonSports USA open club practices continue year-round and are a great way to relieve stress that we face on a daily basis.

Joel Shilling, DragonSports USA Founder

Shirley Ewart

Any paddler who has braved the chilling sleet of December to sing carols while paddling the Willamette knows Joel Shilling, the virtuoso of the portable piano who knows all the words in English, and often in Latin too, and whose fingers apparently stay warm while everyone else's are freezing.

Any paddler who, on a balmy day in early September, has taken part in the Vancouver Lake races has seen Joel Shilling, organizing, keeping track of results, and largely responsible for the success of DragonSports USA's own regatta. His own team, Hampton Woods knows him as Dr. Joel Shilling pathologist and medical director of Quest Diagnostic Laboratories. Some may have heard that he is a skilled woodworker responsible for hand carving the heads on several of the 6-16s. In a recent interview he told me he is also a photographer. And he skis, both cross country and downhill; truly a renaissance man, this Dr. Shilling.

Joel first got interested in dragon boating in 1989, when he noticed some signs at Woodland Park Hospital inviting hospital employees to join a newly formed dragon boat team. He remembers that at first he paddled from the second seat on the right-hand side, and then moved up to be lead stroke. In 1994, an operation for a ruptured disc forced Joel to discontinue paddling, he coached and tillered for the Hampton Woods team.

Early on, Joel realized the possibility to develop at least one world class team in Portland, but to do so the sleeker, lighter Hong Kong type boats were needed, so Joel stepped forward and with Leslie Hammond bought a used boat which he rented out to both individual teams and to DragonSports USA. By 1995 he owned four boats and these were used at the first Vancouver Lake race. In 1997, Baltimore, Maryland asked to rent eight boats, he then bought four more.

In the meantime, The Portland Dragon Boat races using the Kaohsiung boats had become an established Rose Festival event. And, largely due to the opportunity for year-round paddling in the six-sixteens, the number of teams had grown from twenty-six to over ninety.

Joel Shilling was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. At the outbreak of World War II, his father, also a physician, joined the Navy and the family moved around a good deal, finally settling in Ashland, Ohio where Joel went to High School. He ran cross country, was an active Boy Scout,

Friendship through paddle sports

canoed, and was a camp counselor and even, for a spell, the camp cook. Later, he graduated from the University of Michigan. In 1964, after completing medical school, he was offered a position as an intern at Emmanuel Hospital, and so he came to Portland.

Joel really loves Oregon; he revels in Oregon's rain and its year-round green ambiance. Now, he can look back on the healthy state of dragon boating in the city. He feels that it is time to sell the eight dragon boats he owns, but still wants to have a part in the continued growth of the sport he has so long nurtured.

Joel is now looking to the future. All his life he has loved music. Asked for his favorite composer, he says that when he was young, it was Beethoven. Today, an accomplished pianist himself, he favors Tchaikovsky and Mozart, and in a different vein, he delights in Scott Joplin's ragtime. He hopes to open the door to the pleasures of music for his five grandchildren, and to that end has established a trust fund specifically for their musical education.

Asked what he feels should be the goals of DragonSports USA, Dr. Shilling is quick to answer. He believes that Portland should be developing teams that are highly competitive on the world scene. He would like to see all teams develop a strong sense of the need to work together as well as respect for other teams. And finally, he would like to see more people involved in dragon boat racing.

Wasabi History

Jeanne Scott

Wasabi Paddling Club did not begin with the spicy green Asian horseradish, but rather as Team Abra Kazam, the brainchild of two cousins, Vernon and Kent Lee. With eight experienced paddlers, fourteen novices and a dash of coaching from Vancouver, BC, Abra Kazam took first place in the 1992 Portland Rose Festival Dragon Boat Races Mixed Division. The following year, Team Abra Kazam changed its name to Wasabi and an open team joined the mixed team. The Wasabi dynasty was born. Wasabi traveled north for the first time that year, to compete against the powerful Canadian dragon boat crews in Vancouver, BC and earned an honorable third place in the mixed international division at the Alcan Dragon Boat Festival.

With paddling sports and women's sports in particular, growing in Portland, Wasabi welcomed the addition of a womens dragon boat crew in 1995, making Wasabi the largest paddling club in Portland. That year's Rose

Festival Dragon Boat Race spectators saw the first of two consecutive years of Wasabi sweeps in the Open, Mixed, and Womens divisions, with all three teams taking first place.

1997 saw another growth spurt and Wasabi's ranks swelled with the addition of two more teams. The first, a mixed team comprised primarily of first year paddlers, known as More Wasabi. The other team was a joint venture between Wasabi and the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Pink Phoenix, an all womens team of breast cancer survivors. Wasabi also had the opportunity to combine and work with another Portland team, Dragon's Breath International, at the Redwood Shores Dragon Boat race to win the Open division.

It was evident that Wasabi Paddling Club was too large for a small group of individuals to organize and foster properly, so in 1998, an organizational structure was developed, by-laws adopted, tax exempt status filed, and Wasabi became incorporated. Wasabi purchased its first outrigger canoe, Kai Holo, in 1998 and outrigger crews were welcomed into the club.

In 1999 Rose Festival race fans saw yet another crew added to the Wasabi roster. Wasabi Boat-4-Fun welcomed back to the club Wasabi paddlers of old who had taken time off to pursue other paddling sports. The team was headed by Vernon Lee and belied the team name when it placed third behind Wasabi's Mixed Competitive team and the Canadian National Team at the Rose Festival Dragon Boat races. In August of that year, the Mixed Competitive team traveled to Nottingham, England to represent the United States in Dragon 99 World Dragon Boat Championships. The team competed against the best national teams from around the globe placing a respectable fourth in the 250m distance, and sixth in the 500m distance. Wasabi Paddling Club had come a long way from the first international competitions in Canada to true world competition in England.

This past year has been the culmination of considerable hard work by the members of Wasabi Paddling Club. In June, 2000, Wasabi traveled to Philadelphia to compete in the National Dragon Boat Races that would decide the teams representing the United States in the World Dragon Boat Championships being held in Philadelphia in August of 2001. The most frequently asked question the first day of racing was "Who is Wasabi?" when one Wasabi crew after another placed first in their heats. The answers the second day of racing were "Wasabi. They're from Portland, Oregon." Wasabi placed three teams on the Team USA roster in June,

Seniors, Premier Mixed, and Premier Women's. In addition, due to the winning tradition of the club, Wasabi has been awarded the privilege of fielding a Junior Team to world competition when the Junior opportunities were left open after the national selection trials. This is an unprecedented accomplishment for any team or club from the Pacific Northwest. The successes that have come to this club have been won through the hard work and dedication of its members. It is Wasabi's honor to represent the United States, the Pacific Northwest and Portland in another World Dragon Boat Championship in 2001.

Pink Phoenix... *cont. from page 1*

are by the time of the luncheon. Pink Phoenix members help Komen with other fund raising activities and many can be found on race day volunteering at the Health Expo, working the booths, and even picking up garbage afterwards. Other pinks are involved in breast cancer studies and serve as counselors for newly diagnosed women. And in April of 2000, during a dragon boat practice, part of the team was responsible for saving a man's life when he jumped from a bridge into the Willamette River.

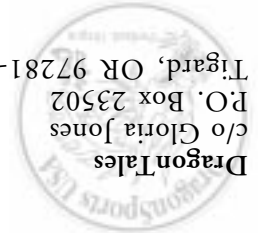
With media recognition and public visibility, Pink Phoenix hopes to provide hope to those newly diagnosed and to serve as a reminder to women to have mammograms regularly and to do self-exams. Breast cancer is not the life sentence it once was, but early detection is one key to surviving this disease. The wide range of ages among members shows that age (early 20's) is no guarantee against the disease, so women of all ages should do self exams and have anything suspicious checked out by a doctor. Men can also get breast cancer.

The cancer that brought this team together also tears them apart. Every year so far, the team has dedicated the Rose Festival Races to a team member whom cancer claimed during the year. 2000 was an especially hard year as 3 teammates died. The good side to being on such a team is that you get more reminders to enjoy life now and be grateful for every day, than most people get.

The team's mission is ever broadening and evolving. The 2001 focus will be more of a reaching out to the community with education and support. If you know of a group that would be interested in having a Pink Phoenix member do a presentation on breast cancer awareness or hope and support for those already diagnosed, please contact the team.

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February 12, 2001 All Member Meeting

Ren Adams

When: **Monday, February 12 at 6:30**

Where: **Old Market Pub
6959 SW Garden Home Road
Phone: 503-224-0450**

Why: **To review the year 2000, meet the new board, and prepare for 2001.**

Our past president, Richard Cole will give a review of the year 2000. Board members will give their (brief) annual report regarding their areas of specialty for the year. The new board will be introduced to the membership. As a special treat, at the end of the meeting, we will have a screening of the "It's a Miracle" segment that features the now-famous rescue by of the Pink Phoenix team.

We will have gear (hats, patches, shirts, etc...) available to purchase or order.

This is a once a year membership business meeting – take advantage of it and bring a friend! You'll have a good time!

Would You Like to Race In Sydney, Australia?

Shirley Ewart

The Sydney International Dragon Festival 2001 will be held on April 7-8, 2001 at the Sydney International Regatta Centre in Penrith. This was the rowing site for the 2000 Olympic Games.

Some of us are exploring the possibilities of getting together a team from Portland. Australia has a rule that mixed teams must have a minimum of 10 women. Also, they define "Masters" as over 35. So that's a possibility.

A team fare would be \$1,400 round trip Portland/Sydney. This compares very favorably with Cheaptickets quote of \$1,700. The organizers have arranged accommodation for \$45 (Australian) a night bed and breakfast. The Australian dollar is currently worth 52 cents U.S.

If you are interested in this, call Shirley Ewart at 503-684-2643 or e-mail sewart@concentric.net.

2001 Awakening the Dragon Ceremony

Come join the festivities on:

March 31st at 12:30 PM
Waterfront Park at RiverPlace

Sponsored by the Portland-Kaohsiung Sister City Assoc.

Calendar of Events

All Member Meeting Old Market Pub, Portland, OR	Feb. 12, 2001
Coaches Clinic Quest Diagnostic Lab	March 3-4, 2001
Dotting the Eye RiverPlace, Portland, OR	Mar. 31, 2001
PKSCA DB Races RiverPlace, Portland, OR	June 9-10, 2001
Alcan DB Festival Vancouver, BC, Canada	June 22-24, 2001
Alberta DB Festival Calgary, Alberta, Canada	July 21-22, 2001
Montreal Dragon Boat Festival Montreal, Quebec, Canada	July 21-22, 2001
Hawaii DB Festival Honolulu, HI	July 28-29, 2001
Long Beach Dragon Boat Festival Long Beach, CA	July 28-29, 2001
4th IDBF World DB Championships Philadelphia, PN	Aug. 1-5, 2001
5th Annual California International Dragon Boat Festival Oakland, CA	Aug. 11-12, 2001