

Hanks, 91, takes on challenge in Oxford Cardboard Boat Race

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OXFORD — When she is not racing in the Oxford Cardboard Boat race, Jane Hanks, 91, might be found participating in covert operations or leg wrestling a general.

Hanks was the oldest participant Saturday in the 19th Oxford Cardboard Boat Race.

The former member of the Flying Tigers, a covert force of civilian pilots who flew fighter jets in China during World War II under the direction of the Chinese air force, said she planned to shoot her floating competition with a water gun but was too busy holding on to the sides of the boat.

Hanks participated in the funny race in the Ruffled 1 with Dan Cole. Cole is her neighbor and, with his wife, Libby, owns the Ruffled Duck Inn. Hanks said she has become friends with the Coles, who invited her to race.

"I got to know them, and I have a good time with them," Hanks said. "And they asked me if I would help them in the race, and I thought it would be fun, so I did."

The boat was much shakier than Hanks anticipated, but she is used to danger. She was one of two women and the only registered nurse in the Flying Tigers. And, thanks to Gen. Claire L. Chennault, who commanded the Flying Tigers, Hanks walked down the aisle on her wedding day with a black eye.

Chennault had invited Hanks and her husband to dinner at his apartment before the Hanks were married. Chennault and Jane Hanks began leg wrestling.

Chennault gave Hanks a good pull, which threw her across the room. Hanks hit her eye on the corner of a table, and got the black eye.

The Ruffled 1 did not place in the funny race. That honor went to the Gator, rowed by T.J. Yeatman. String Bean came in second, and Toadfish was third. Gator also won the kids' race.

In the fast race, Momentarily, a kayak rowed by Josh Inkell came in first. Atlantic Tractor was second, followed by Oxford Poolfish.

The United States Coast Guard boat, rowed by Matthew Barth and Fred Lutthaus, won the Battle of the Brave. Oxford Police Department was second. The Anne Arundel Sheriff's Office Wenches of the Caribbean came in third, despite tipping early.

Michele Goodman, Amy Schwaab and Athena Mears kept Wenches of the Caribbean afloat by swimming next to it, until it began falling to pieces less than halfway through the race. They still won a third-place medal because only three boats participated in the race.

Schooner's Landing won first place in the Corporate Challenge. The same boat won 10 years ago. Atlantic Tractor was second and the Cooperative Oxford Laboratory's CoLander was third.