



The Story of the Due Process by Hobey Richey



First Cayuco Race Banner - 1954

The idea for an Ocean-to-Ocean Cayuco Race began in 1954 when, an employee of the Panama Canal Company, Wesley Townsend, had the great idea to take a group of Boy Explorer Scouts visit an indigenous Indian community on the Chagres River. During their visit the boys learned about native culture and how to paddle a cayuco, main method of transportation of the region. In time, the competition between them intensified that they decided to have a formal race. This was the beginning of a tradition that has lasted for more than half a century.

1975, the 22nd Annual Boy Scout Cayuco Race.

This is brief synopsis of the first year that the *Due Process* raced in the Canal Zone ocean to ocean cayuco race.

Mr. and Mrs. B. Paul and Beatriz Broussard volunteered to have their home in Balboa on Amador Road serve as headquarters for all things related to the cayuco race for Ship 8 Explorers. Their involvement and enthusiasm were evident with three of the Broussard kids, Carlos, Mary and Craig (I think Annie was too young) having their own cayuco and crew. Carlos (BHS 76) had paddled the year before with Gregg Lawrence (BHS 76), and recruited two unsuspecting novices, Jim Tompkins (BHS 75) and myself, Hobey Richey (BHS 75) to round out the crew.

The boat that Carlos had for us to practice in, and presumably race, was the Bejuco. Mr. Broussard, however, said that he had an Embera Choco Indian friend who had felled a tree and was roughing out a cayuco to his specifications. The tree was a cedro espino, harvested from an area where the Panama Canal Company had a hydrographic station on the Pequeni River where it entered Madden Lake. It was his theory that although most of the recent races had been won by crews made up of big, strong guys, a more wiry crew would be competitive if they had a long, narrow boat.

Practice in the Bejuco began in January for the March 21 race start. As February arrived with no sign of a new boat, we were prepared to race in the Bejuco. Three weeks prior to the race, however, the log (for it resembled that more than a boat) arrived at the Broussard home. Working seemingly around the clock, Mr. Broussard, with help from Carlos, Gregg, Jim, Craig and me, finished shaping the hull and sanding it to a reasonable semblance of a race boat. There was a soft section on the starboard bow that measured about 4 by 24 inches, that was removed and replaced with a similar wood to strengthen the area. In those days, the amount of patching with wood, let alone fiberglass and resin, was highly restricted and we had to have a race official confirm that the patch conformed to the rules of the day. A couple of coats of sealant, primer and green paint were applied, the seat backs, bow and stern covers and wavebreakers went in and we had our first sea trial a mere ten days before the race. The boat was much faster than the Bejuco, and it ran straight, but it was very tippy and took on water with the least bit of rocking or cross seas. Surely that is when we came up with the dual bailer system.

Mr. Broussard proudly named the boat, *Due Process*, explaining that beyond the name's legal significance; it also meant that by doing the right thing, along with hard work and perseverance, just rewards would prevail.

On the Friday of race day, March 21, 1975, we loaded the boat onto its trailer and drove across the isthmus to the Panama Canal Yacht Club for the start of the race. There was only casual interest in our new boat, but no serious concern from our competition. We started well but promptly ran into a pier piling. After regrouping, we managed to make up time on the rest of the boats and when we hit the final leg to Gatun locks, we were in third and gaining steadily on the first and second place boats.

On Saturday morning, the day seemed more like rainy season, with flat calm seas and no breeze. We had a really good start, and with the calm conditions, led all the way to the Gamboa Dredging Division.

On Sunday, we were again able to lead each leg, wire to wire, finishing at Rodman in a combined time of 5:39:36.4, breaking the old record of 5:46:000. The NIC (Atlantic side boys) and the Situation Hopeless (Gamboa boys) finished right behind us, and they too had broken the previous record.

It was a great moment and hard to say who was happier, our crew, our parents, or Mr. Broussard.

Although this story was requested for a historical perspective of the evolution of the *Due Process*, I would like to make the personal observation that the bonds developed with my crew mates, the Broussards, and the other racers, last to this day, almost 35 years later.



The Ocean-To-Ocean Cayuco Race takes place in Panama in March each year.



Diablo Rojo is a fiberglass clone of the famous *Due Process*.

Diablo Rojo is 27 feet long and weighs 330 pounds, this training boat was constructed in Rockledge Florida by Webb's Creative Lamination Works, other than hardware it is 100% fiberglass with 3 cubic feet of foam under the bow & stern cover.

Diablo Rojo was built in the winter of 2008. Its purpose is to help State-side teams get into shape for the Ocean-to-Ocean Cayuco Race in Panama.

The *Diablo Rojo* is the practice boat for two Panama Canal Museum teams, the crews of the *NIC* and the *El Machete*.

Diablo Rojo's main practice area is Sykes Creek Merritt Island Florida, a typical practice run is from state road 520 to state road 528 and back, total distance of 7 miles, the trip takes about an hour.