



Houston Canoe Club *Waterline*



www.houstoncanoecub.org :: Volume 2010 :: May

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The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit items to HCC's Newsletter Editor, Linda Gorski at LindaGorski@cs.com.

The Waterline is prepared by an on-line newsletter editor written by Fraser Baker, HCC's Webmaster.

Next Meeting Announcement

When: May 12, 2010 @ 7:00 PM
Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas
Directions: First driveway, North side of Bissonnet, just West of Hillcroft.
Speaker: [Natalie Wiest](#)
Speaker Bio: Natalie has been paddling in the Houston area for 30 years, and she got here as fast as she could from points north and east.
Description: Our very own Natalie Wiest will show us opportunities for local paddling adventures.

From Natalie:

The attached photo was taken this spring at Choke Canyon State Park, by Winnie Shrum. Most HCCers probably haven't met my poodle dog Angel, but she got to go for a spin that day, and thankfully she wasn't interested in the row of cormorants streaming along behind us (or we'd have likely gone for a swim!). As you probably know, my most frequent paddling companion is my daughter Ellen. Of course Choke Canyon is some distance from Houston – I'm happy to paddle anywhere there is enough water to float a boat and our Houston area has lots of it.

I'm in the midst of putting together a 50 mile canoe and kayak trail for the Boy Scouts and their adventure program called SeaBASE. Those 50 miles are all in the Trinity River basin, most of the routes of which I've paddled with Dave Kitson and Joe Coker. Theoretically the scouts and I test out the first two legs of that trip this weekend; we'll see if it really comes off.

I've put a manuscript together for Texas A&M University Press that's all about the different places to paddle around Houston. That covers 1400 miles of paddling, including stretches on the Colorado, Brazos, San Jacinto and Trinity rivers and many bayous, streams, and lakes in between. Getting printable maps done has been my big challenge and longest holdup but I HOPE that will get done in 2010 and the book will finally go to the printers – and/or Internet depending on the publisher. I'll show some maps that didn't make the cut to talk about the overall area, and zero in on a few areas that club members have paddled but probably a lot of folks don't know about. I'll have a one page handout: places everyone should try; and a selection of favorites less commonly paddled.

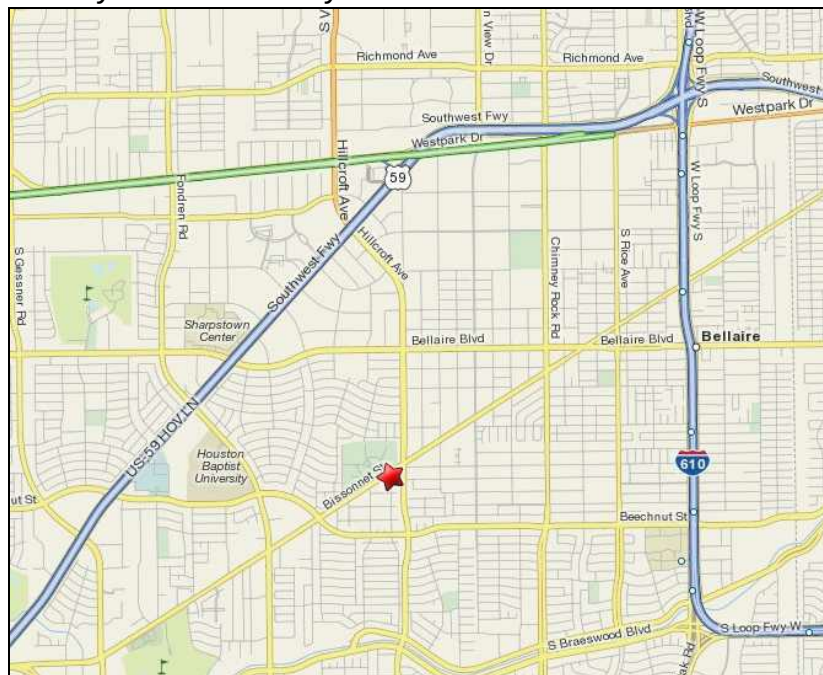
My moving keeps me continuously busy; and at the same time seems to move at a snail's pace!



Natalie, with her pooch Angel
Photo by Winnie Shrum



Map to Bayland Community Center:



Be sure to set this date aside on your calendar, then come out to support our speaker and club.

Last Meeting Minutes

Date: April 14, 2010
Recorder: John Ohrt
Minutes: HOUSTON CANOE CLUB GENERAL MEETING
Bayland Park Community Center

Commodore Bill Grimes called the meeting to order.

Officers and guests were introduced.

Bob Arthur gave a Safety Minute on throw ropes.

The program speakers were HCC members Joe Coker and Dave Kitson. Their program was on "Paddling In the Lower Trinity River Area" including Champion Lake, Pickett's Bayou, Old River, Cotton Lake, Turtle Bayou and Lake Charlotte.

Fleet Captain Donna Grimes gave the Fleet Captain's report.

John Ohrt reviewed the minutes of the March general meeting.

Bill Grimes recognized Bob Arthur who made a motion to insert the phrase "*and a minimum participation of three paddlers*" into the existing language of the Mileage Policy. This motion was seconded by Cliff Peery. Bill turned the meeting over to John Ohrt, and Linda Gorski kept the minutes. A discussion on the motion followed. A vote was held. The result was 16 Against the motion and 15 For it. The motion failed.

The meeting was adjourned .



Please contact HCC's recorder, John Ohrt, if there are any omissions or corrections.

New Members

Member Name: No new members this month
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

The HCC cordially welcomes new members to our club. New members are the life blood of the HCC, so be sure to provide opportunities for all our new members to paddle by coordinating more trips.

Market Place

Items For Sale

Item: [Sawyer Oscoda Solo 13 Canoe](#)
Description: I have more photos which I can forward to anyone interested. It is stored in my garage. It seems to be a rare, desirable boat.
[Photo 1](#)
[Photo 2](#)
Asking Price: \$750
Contact Name: Ken Proctor
Contact Phone: 281-480-1268
Contact Email: kenneth.proctor@sbcglobal.net
###

Items Wanted

Please contact the Newsletter Editor to post any items that you may have for sale or desperately need.

River Recipes - Ham and Potato Bake

by
Louis Aulbach

How often have you come to the last few days of a week long canoe expedition and have hungered for a tasty, fresh meal? After about five days, all of your ice has melted and you no longer have fresh meat or refrigerated vegetables for your recipe. However, there is a good meal that can satisfy your camping partners.

The recipe below is one of the "non-refrigerated" meals that we make on our trips. By using fresh potatoes and onion, this casserole-like dish tastes amazingly fresh.

The simplicity of the preparations also makes this meal a favorite. After a long day on the river, you can produce this dinner in less than an hour. The actual time varies, depending on the skill and speed of your potato peeling assistants. If you happen to have brought along a very green avocado, that once hard vegetable would now be ripe and ready to add as a salad garnish to the meal.

I use my 10 inch dutch oven for this meal which feeds four persons. Although you can bake the casserole using the dutch oven and charcoal, it is also possible to make it as a stove top meal.

So let's begin!

Add a chopped, medium onion to the oil in your dutch oven. Dice into small pieces either a canned DAK ham or a can of Spam. I like to use Spam, especially the low sodium variety. Add to the oil and onions and sautee until the onions are soft and the Spam is slightly browned.

While the above is being done, peel the potatoes and cut them into very thin slices similar to au gratin style potatoes. Boil until done. Add potatoes to the spam and onions. Add the can of cream of mushroom soup. Add garlic powder. Add milk to provide a nice smooth sauce. I use powdered milk which requires no refrigeration -- 1/3 cup of powder in 1 cup of water equals 1 cup of milk. Add mustard and mix well.

Heat the casserole until everything is bubbly. Warm up a can of green beans for an accompanying side dish.

Spam - 1 can
milk - 1 cup
onion - 1
Cream of Mushroom soup - 1 can
potatoes - 3 or 4, depending on the size
garlic powder - 1 TBL
oil - 2 TBL
mustard - 1 TBL
green beans - 1 can
avocado - sliced lengthwise



Louis cooking on a recent river trip.



Buffalo Bayou History - Monument Circle

by
Louis Aulbach

This is another article featuring glimpses into the history of Houston as it developed along Buffalo Bayou, from Louis Aulbach's upcoming book, "Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings".



By the first decade of the twentieth century, railroads were one of the principal industries in the economy of Houston. Business transportation and personal travel into the city largely came on the railroads, and most of that traffic arrived and departed from the Southern Pacific's Grand Central Station on Washington Avenue. Much like today's airports, the train station was the hub from which visitors arrived in the city. From the station, they took taxicabs, public transportation or walked across Buffalo Bayou into the downtown district to the hotels and businesses they wished to visit. The limited access across the bayou on the bridge at Louisiana Street prompted the city to conceive of an elaborate bridge across Buffalo Bayou in order to welcome visitors to the city and to provide easy access to the business district.

Mayor Horace Baldwin Rice announced on August 30, 1912 that a reinforced concrete covering over Buffalo Bayou would be built between Louisiana Street and Franklin Avenue. The Franklin Avenue and Louisiana Street bridges would be replaced with a girder type triangular structure that occupied the space of the two bridges, and in the center would be a statue of General Sam Houston.

The bayou covering would be 200 feet at its widest point and was to have a monument to keep the traffic divided and regulated. The proposed covering over Buffalo Bayou would connect with the Houston Ice and Brewing Company covering on the north side of Franklin Avenue, and it was intended to hide the unsightly view of the bayou from strangers coming to town from the passenger station who might get the wrong impression of the City's "real waterway."

The new triangular bridge at Franklin Avenue and Louisiana Street was dedicated on February 6, 1915. The reinforced concrete bridge had an area of 44,120 square feet and it cost \$130,000. Built at grade level and "ornamented with a handsome balustrade and standing lights," it was hailed as "one of the handsomest bridges in Houston" and the "most beautiful bridge spanning the bayou."

On January 18, 1915, the City began a campaign to raise \$50,000 to erect a monument of Sam Houston in the space set aside for it. Not every person, though, liked the original idea. Mayor Ben Campbell, who succeeded Rice, favored an equestrian statue. The controversy over the center piece of the bridge persisted. As late as 1921, the traffic circle consisted of a 50 foot diameter bed of 400 English daisies planted with a large Phoenix Canariensis palm in the center.

Yet, the expanding economy of Houston in the post-WWI years brought more people to the city, and the traffic congestion near Grand Central Station continued to be a problem. On November 28, 1922, plans for a "monster bridge" over Buffalo Bayou from Smith Street to Franklin Avenue were announced at City Council. This enormous bridge would cover one city block from Grand Central Station to the

downtown district and it would relieve the traffic congestion on this side of town. The bridge was to be so expansive that the space would even provide a place for a fire station or a curb market for farmers on the bridge.

George P. Macatee of the Macatee Interests, owner of the land on the north bank, offered to donate the land for the project to cover over the bayou ravine from Smith Street to Franklin Avenue, providing that the City buy or remove the Boyle Hotel on the south bank and not improve the assets of a private landowner.

The large covered bridge was to be built in conjunction with a Buffalo Bayou bridge with a sixty foot roadway and sidewalks that would connect Congress Avenue and Smith Street to the north bank at 6th Street. Financing for the larger project, however, proved to be difficult to obtain, but nevertheless, the bridge at Smith Street was constructed. The new bridge at Smith Street was built by Charles K. Horton for a cost of \$180,000 and it opened on August 7, 1925.

The City did eventually acquire the Boyle Hotel, but it was destroyed by a fire in 1928. Additional factors, however, came into play. On May 31, 1929, Buffalo Bayou flooded to such an extent that the pavement was washed out from several downtown bridges, including the bridges at Milam Street, Smith Street, Preston Avenue and Franklin Avenue. The effects of this event may have altered the plans for the large bridge project. In any case, a more limited project was undertaken along the north bank of the bank in this location. The Franklin Avenue extension was constructed as an elevated roadway on the north bank in 1931. This road is clearly evident from the bayou today, even though it is relatively unnoticed by motorists using the streets on their way into downtown Houston.



Site of the Boyle Hotel

Photo by Louis Aulbach

All thoughts of an extensive covered concrete platform over Buffalo Bayou were dismissed after the flood of Buffalo Bayou that occurred on December 8, 1935. With water rising to levels about seven feet higher than the flood of 1929, the Capital Avenue bridge was submerged, the new Farmer's Market was flooded and damage was done to the Houston Ice and Brewing Company platform and buildings, a different approach to development of the bayou was needed.

The bayou between Smith Street and Franklin Avenue has seen little improvement in modern times, except for the landscaping on the north bank and the hike and bike trail near the normal water level. The south bank is overgrown with brush and filled with construction debris. A positive sign for the future is the construction of the new home for the Houston Ballet on Congress Avenue.

The property at the corner of Smith Street and Preston Avenue, on the diagonal from the Wortham Theater Center and just south of where an exit from I-10 enters downtown is under construction as an 115,000 square foot, six-story mid-rise that will become the Houston Ballet Center for Dance. The Ballet's new home is scheduled to open in Spring 2011. The \$53 million structure will be connected to the Wortham Theater Center by an aerial walkway angled across the intersection of Smith Street and Preston Avenue.

The proposed replacement of the elevated section of Congress Avenue also offers hope that the hike and bike trail along the south bank will be completed from

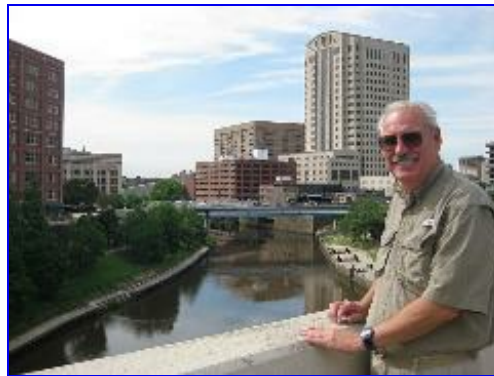
Sesquicentennial Park to Travis Street.

Where the Franklin Monument Circle once welcomed untold numbers of businessmen and visitors to downtown Houston, a new gateway to the city welcomes vehicular traffic exiting from Interstate 10. In 1999, a concrete and bronze art work by Team Hou Architects, entitled The Downtown Houston Gateway, was erected in the location of the previous entry way, and proudly calls out "Welcome to Downtown Houston."



Welcome to Downtown!

Photo by Louis Aulbach



**Author Louis Aulbach standing on
the Main Street Viaduct over
Buffalo Bayou.**

Photo by Linda Gorski



Letter from the Editor(s) - HCC Partners with Tour de Hood on Buffalo Bayou

by
Linda Gorski

This past Sunday (April 25) Louis Aulbach and his son Stephen led a group of about 15 HCC paddlers including Skip Johnson, Natalie Wiest and daughter Ellen, John Bayduss, Dave Kitson, Ann Derby, Sondra Fabian, Sandy Truxillo, Bart Truxillo, Robert and Ruth Marcom and John Ohrt on a trip along Buffalo Bayou.



Members of the Houston Canoe Club and Tour de Hood at Allen's Landing.

Photo by Linda Gorski

We were joined on this trip by another group of 15 or 20 paddlers from an organization called Tour de Hood led by Dr. Veon McReynolds, a professor at Texas Southern University here in Houston.

Paul Woodcock, Ann Derby and I met Dr. McReynolds while we were manning a community outreach booth for the Houston Canoe Club at the Buffalo Bayou Regatta in March. We invited him and his group to paddle with us and linked him up with Louis Aulbach who we knew would soon be guiding a trip on the bayou.

Dr. McReynolds, who is also an avid cyclist, founded Tour de Hood, a non-profit organization, in 2004 as way to get his neighbors out riding bikes and following a healthier lifestyle. Check out his website at www.sblhouston.com/projects/tour.html to see how this organization is changing the lives of so many people in Houston.

Tour de Hood hosts over 40 bike-a-thons annually in the Houston metropolitan area. The program provides loaner bikes, healthy snacks, water, helmets and t-shirts at no cost to participants. McReynolds has also initiated a Mend-a-Bike program which offers sessions on basic bicycle maintenance. He has gathered over 300 bikes and bike equipment for his project.

McReynolds has now extended his cycling program to include other sports including paddling. On April 25 he managed to rent or borrow enough boats, paddles and PFDs to put nearly 20 people on the Bayou. After putting in at Allen's Landing we paddled upstream for about an hour and a half to the area of Sabine Street near the Lee and Joe Jamail Skate Park and then returned to Allen's Landing... a nice morning paddle.



Check out all these boats that took part in the paddle on Buffalo Bayou on April 25!!

Photo by John Bayduss

Here's a note that Dr. McReynolds sent to me after the trip:

"Thanks so much for the nice pictures. I really appreciate the Houston Canoe Club for allowing us to participate in such a wonderful event. I did not get to hear a lot of Louis's presentation but what I heard was wonderful. I

was glad the people in my group got to see some people who really know something about paddling. I look forward to doing more things on the bayou. I would like to do much more on the bayou as it's only 10 minutes from my place. It's a good place for me to introduce people to Houston's best kept secret. It also a place that people can get great exercise and worship nature."



Stephanie Mathis and her family enjoy their first paddle on Buffalo Bayou, with Bart and Sandy Truxillo in canoe on right, and Natalie Wiest and daughter Ellen on left.

Photo by Linda Gorski

You can't imagine how excited Dr. McReynolds and the members of his group were to be on Buffalo Bayou. They thoroughly enjoyed the day and learned not only about safe paddling but about the history of their city as it developed along the Bayou thanks to a running narrative by Louis Aulbach. Many commented on the trash along the bayou and asked how they could help clean up and conserve this wonderful waterway. In addition, HCC members who were on the trip taught the new paddlers basic strokes and even some self-rescue techniques.

This whole trip made me very proud to be a member of the Houston Canoe Club. It truly was a great experience and certainly met most of the published objectives in the HCC's constitution:

1. Unite persons interested in paddle-sports;
2. Educate persons to become safe and competent paddlers;
3. Support conservation;
4. Inform the membership of issues pertaining to paddle-sports; and
5. Promote paddle-sports for the purpose of recreation and competition.

Here's something that I think we as a club can do to promote Dr. McReynolds efforts through Tour de Hood. If you have old boats, paddles or PFDs why not donate them his project? He has a place to store them, it would be a good tax deduction for you and it would bring pleasure to a whole lot of new paddlers. You can reach him at mcreynolds_vx@tsu.edu.



Louis Aulbach and Dr. Veon McReynolds after a great trip on Buffalo Bayou.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Former HCC Member inspires New Chapel at Pecan Park Retreat

by
Linda Gorski

Louis Aulbach and I had the opportunity to visit with Tom Goynes at Pecan Park Retreat today. Those who have camped at Pecan Park in the past know that it is a beautiful peaceful spot on the San Marcos River in Martindale. However, did you know he has a couple of new buildings on site? And that at least one of the new buildings was inspired and encouraged by former HCC member Rick Caywood?

Here's the story about the New Chapel from the Pecan Park Retreat website at: www.pecanparkretreat.com/San_Marcos_River_Retreat/The_New_Chapel.html

"It all started with an old wood barn that we owned that was falling apart (but full of all kinds of neat wood - cedar, old barn wood, longleaf pine - you name it). Then along came this really good deal on a 40' by 60' steel building that needed to be recycled. We bought it (it was a great price). But then we got cold feet. Did God really want us to build a Chapel? Tom's dad had died and we had this inheritance, but there were so many other things that we could have bought (like a car that ran, for instance). But then along came our buddy Rick Caywood. Rick runs a ministry called Chihuahuan Connection We support his ministry when we can. But during his visit, it was Rick who wanted to support us! He wrote out a check to us! And even though we finally persuaded him that we weren't able to accept his money it was his confidence in what we were doing that persuaded us that God did, in fact, want this building built. So we went to work. Paula put out a plea for windows and God provided.

Sagemont Baptist Church, in Pasadena, donated nearly all the windows and doors, and as you can see from the pictures, that's a lot of glass!

"We hired our old friend Jeff Wueste, who builds steel buildings, to start the process. So many friends helped: Fred Mynar, Ron Doring, Holly Orr, Simon Boaz, and then there was the Buchser family - Tim (Handwerkarts), Alisha and their six kids - Sam, Fremont, Zephania, Solomon, LillyDay and Hansel. Alisha is the daughter of George Love (our very first employee - from the early 70's). Her husband Tim is a jack of all trades (in addition to being a great carpenter, he is also an artist - check out the wood mural of the cross on the chapel wall or our campground sign, on our home page). Tim and family were passing through Texas looking for a place to spend the winter and God sent them to us.

"So, now we have a 36' by 60' building that is insulated, air-conditioned, heated with a wood-burner and capable of seating over 100 people. It has slept over 40 kids and held about 120 scouts and leaders for one of our Sunday morning services. It has been used for everything from a Catholic Mass to a



Beautiful wall of windows donated to The New Chapel.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Memorial Service. Three Rivers Community Church and El Shaday Church have met here several times. It would make a great place for your wedding, meeting, memorial service, reunion and party.

"We're still in the process of wrapping it up, we need to build some porches and do some finishing work, but it's more than able to accommodate your needs. For more info, see the Rates page and/or contact us at 512-392-6171."



Louis Aulbach left and Tom Goynes right flank the inlaid cross in The New Chapel

Photo by Linda Gorski

Again, be sure to go to the Pecan Park Retreat website at

www.pecanparkretreat.com/San_Marcos_River_Retreat/The_New_Chapel.html

and click on "slide show" to see how the building was born!



Upcoming River Trips

HCC Trips:

- Date:** Friday, April 09, 2010
Title: Springs fest
Inclusive Dates: April 9 - 11
Description: Join the Olympic Outdoor Center in San Marcos for paddling enthusiasts at Rio Vista Park in San Marcos for all or one day.
Check out details at:
Skill Level: **Blank:** Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.
Contact: Contact Ben Kavanli by phone 512- 203-0093, or by email benkvanli@yahoo.com.
###
- Date:** Saturday, April 10, 2010
Title: Race on the Brazos 2010
Inclusive Dates: April 10
Description: The Inaugural Canoe Race on the Brazos River from Rosenberg to Richmond, a distance of 7.3 miles, a two-person standard, stock canoe 14-20' min 32
Skill Level: **Blank:** Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.
Contact: Contact Andrew Bockholt, chariman by phone 281-239-2755, or by email brazosrace@gmail.com.
###
- Date:** Saturday, April 17, 2010
Title: Burnham's Ferry/Colorado River/ 175th annual
Inclusive Dates: April 17 - new day
Description: 13 miles on the Colorado River, between LaGrange & Columbus, TX. A trip to visit and possibly explore the Burnham's Ferry area where the Texas Army crossed in 1835 on or about March 17 of that year.

Car camp at the take-out if desired, with possible group feed/dutch oven cooking. A bit of star gazing, some spittin, some whittling, a bit of staring at the fire and possible general carousing. Put-in and take-out are both on private property and there are no facilities at all at the campsite, meaning its primitive. No need to haul camping gear on the river as vehicles will be left at the take-out area.

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.
Contact: Contact Bob Arthur by phone 713-416-0017, or by email rwarthur@oplink.net.

###

Date: Saturday, April 17, 2010
Title: Colorado River near Bastrop
Inclusive Dates: April 17 - 18
Description: Let's call this the Colorado spring fling. This is the same route as the freeze trip: 16 miles.
There will be a \$25.00 shuttle fee per boat and a food charge depending on how many go on the campout.
Beginning paddlers should be prepared to get wet on the rapids where they might dump.

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.

Contact: Contact Paul Woodcock by phone 713-594-9969, or by email plwdcck@yahoo.com.

###

Date: Sunday, April 25, 2010
Title: Buffalo Bayou
Inclusive Dates: April 25 - Sunday
Description: Enjoy a late Sunday morning paddle down the Buffalo Bayou with the man who is writing a book on the bayou's history: Louis Aulbach!

Skill Level: **Neophyte:** Never paddled before.

Contact: Contact Louis Aulbach by phone 713-683-8379, or by email lfa@hal-pc.org.

###

Date: Saturday, May 01, 2010
Title: ACA River Canoe/Kayak Day-Trip Leading Assessment Course at Hidalgo Falls
Inclusive Dates: 5/1 - 5/2

Description: See

Skill Level: **Blank:** Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.

Contact: Contact Ken McDowell by phone 713-432-1896, or by email komcdowell@earthlink.net.

###

Other Club Trips:

Rio Grande River - Railroad Tunnel

March 27, 2010

by
John Rich

For four days at the end of March a trio of Houston Canoe Club members; Louis Aulbach, Linda Gorski and John Rich, traveled to Comstock, Texas, to do some volunteer work for the [Shumla School](#). The event was an international conference on ancient rock art by an organization called [ARARA](#), and the Shumla School experts were arranging hikes for the attendees to see local Pecos River area cave art. Linda assisted with organization of the operations, while Louis and John served as assistant guides to help the members over the rough terrain on the hikes.

But, while we may have put down our paddles long enough to help out on land, we did have two free days on our own. And one of those free days was spent paddling from the Pecos River, to the confluence with the Rio Grande River, and then upstream to an 1880's railroad tunnel, 1500-feet long, carved out of solid rock.

There are many reasons why people paddle - scenery, wildlife, exercise and friendship are just a few. Another good reason that I really enjoy is... History! And that's what this paddle was all about. While it had all those other elements too, the main purpose was to go visit a site in a place that is accessible only by boat, in order to appreciate the amazing history of it.

The location of this historic railroad tunnel is on the side of a cliff overlooking the Rio Grande River, three miles west of the junction with the Pecos River. *(See the red star on the map to the right.)* To get there from Houston, you simply drive west on Interstate-10, and when you get to San Antonio, you continue west on Highway 90. That takes you all the way out through Del Rio and to the turn-off for the Pecos River boat ramp. The drive can be done in six hours, and Seminole Canyon State Park is only a few miles away, providing a convenient camp site.



Location within Texas

(Click on the thumbnail photos to display a full-screen version in a separate window)



Road & River map

This map (left) shows you the detail of the area, and relationship of the highway, the State Park, the rivers, and the railroad tunnel. From the Pecos River boat ramp, it is about a half-mile down to the Rio Grande, and from there about three miles "upstream" to the railroad tunnel.

Now, you're probably wondering why I put the word "upstream" in quotes. This part of the Rio Grande can be considered part of Lake Amistad, which backs up behind a dam in Del Rio at the border with Mexico. So the Rio Grande River at this point isn't really

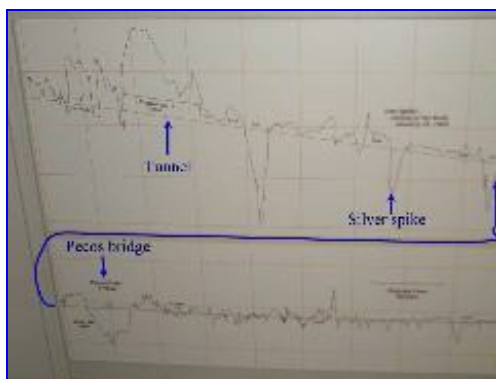
flowing, it's actually lake water. The same is true of the Pecos in this area. You have to go a dozen or so miles upstream on either before you get to naturally flowing river water. At least that's true right now, when the water level behind the dam is high. In recent years past, low water had made these parts of the rivers look much like they did historically, just like when the railroad line was built. Back then, the canyons were deeper, and the river more narrow down at the bottom of the canyon.

This terrain map (right) zooms-in to give you an idea of the topography. For orientation, the U.S. is on the right, and Mexico on the left. The Pecos flows into the Rio Grande at the bottom-right from right to left, and the Rio Grande "flows" from top-left to bottom-center. The rail line can be seen cut into the riverside cliffs on the American side. The rail line had to not only follow a precarious route along the cliffs, but also had to span all the deep canyons with bridges, and then bore through a limestone mountain that was in the way. It was the most expensive section of railroad line ever built, at the time. So why did they choose such difficult terrain to cross? For that answer, we'll need a quick history lesson.



Terrain close-up

At that time in American history, the race was on to build trans-continental railroad routes running east-and-west across America. There were two routes used: The northern route cut through the Rockies running from Missouri to northern California. They built from east to west, as well as from west to east, simultaneously. And where the two lines joined up to complete the transcontinental crossing in 1869, a gold spike was driven as the last spike to complete the rail line. Likewise, a second route was built to cross the country, running from Houston to Southern California through the desert around the southern end of the Rockies. Once again, being built from both directions at once, and reaching completion right here in Texas 14 years later.

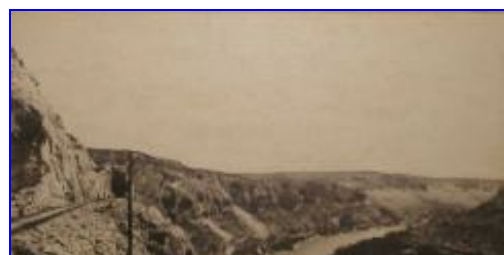


Engineering grade map

The preferred path for the southern route would have been to cross the Pecos River a few miles upstream from the Rio Grande River, where the canyons are more narrow and less deep. However, the Pecos was still a formidable obstacle: the river canyon was 321 feet deep and 2,180 feet wide. There was no bridge-building technology yet in existence at the time to span such a chasm. Their only alternative was to route the rail line south to the Rio Grande, go downhill along the side of the cliffs, cross the Pecos with a low bridge,

then climb back up the cliffs on the other side of the Pecos, back up to the top of the desert mesa.

This path required the construction of many bridges to span side canyons which entered the Rio Grande, and to obtain an acceptable grade for the rail line, it was necessary to build two railroad tunnels, each 1,500-feet long. Work on the tunnels began in December, 1881, with a 500-man crew, cutting holes in the rock



by hand with chisels and sledge hammers, inserting explosives, and blasting away the rock. Men were killed in mis-timed blasts, and were called "*tunnel unfortunates*". The workers were paid from \$2.00 - \$2.50 daily for this dangerous work. It took roughly 500 50-lb kegs of black powder per mile of rock work construction. The railroad tunnels were completed in July, 1882, becoming the first railroad tunnels ever built in Texas.



Period tunnel photo



Silver spike ceremony

The completion of this second trans-continental railroad route was celebrated with the pounding of a silver spike, to symbolize the finish of the work. The joining of the east-west tracks took place on a bridge over a canyon, just a mile east of the No. 2 railroad tunnel.

That's enough of the history lesson - now it's time to go see what the area looks like today.

The weather forecast looked good for one of our two days off from volunteer duties, so we took advantage of it for our canoe trip. The day was to start with calm winds, with higher winds in the afternoon coming from the northwest. As long as we got to the tunnel before the high winds, the wind would be at our backs on the return trip, and we wouldn't have to fight it. In this photo (right), you see our puny 15'8" tandem canoe at the boat ramp, alongside a power boat about to run up on their trailer for extraction. You can see the breadth and depth of the canyon, and in the background, the modern Highway 90 bridge across the Pecos. On the left side canyon wall you can see where the old road snaked up the side of the cliff, after crossing the river on a low bridge. The problem with those low bridges was that every time there was a large rainstorm, a gully-washer would come roaring down the canyon and wash them away.



Pecos River/Amistad Lake boat ramp



Gargoyle watches over the water

As we paddle out of the Pecos to go around the corner into the Rio Grande, a beaked gargoyle seems to hang from the rock ready to attack.

Around the corner into the Rio Grande, and three miles ahead is the tunnel mountain. This area is very popular with fishermen in high-speed boats, so we clung to the U.S. side, staying out of the center, and weaving our way through clumps of dead river cane sticking up out of the water. A border patrol



Tunnel mountain ahead

airboat buzzed by sounding like a jet airplane. None of them slowed down to show our small craft any courtesy from their wakes. Several times we turned our bow into the wakes rather than take them sideways. The rail bed is now underwater in the Pecos River area, but after about a mile of paddling, you could see it rise out of the water and begin its climb alongside the cliff. Some of it was built atop natural [talus](#), and the rest was blasted out of the side of the cliff. The further we paddled, the higher the rail bed climbed above the water. After crossing that last canyon on a bridge, the rail line actually ducked behind that finger ridge, before starting to tunnel through the mountain.



Cove at east end of tunnel

Here we are entering a watery cove at the canyon on the east end of the tunnel, to park our boat and begin our hike. The rail line goes through that cleft between the finger ridge on the left, and the cave shelter on the right. You can see a bridge footing still there, which supported the bridge structure spanning the canyon.

We huffed and puffed our way up the hillside from the cove, to arrive at the rail bed. In this photo (right) you can see the bridge footing, the narrow rail bed alongside the cliff on the other side of the canyon, and the Rio Grande below. This must have been quite an exciting train ride!



Bridge footing overlooking Rio Grande River



Tunnel entrance

After beating our way through the dense, thorny brush which has grown up on the rail bed, we're into the entrance!

The tunnel seems barely wide enough for a train to fit through. I suppose that as a train-rider, you didn't want to stick your arm out the window at this point. The ceiling is still dark from the exhaust soot of the coal-fired, steam-powered trains that ran this route 120 years ago. The trains had to stop every 30-miles to replenish their engine's water supply, making for slow progress by today's standards.



Inside the tunnel

We had brought along flashlights to light our way through the tunnel. It was 1,500 feet long - three-tenths of a mile, and curved with the curvature of the river, so there were

stretches that were pitch black with no light visible from the other end. You couldn't see the person walking along right beside you. The tunnel contained some animal bones, most notably a goat skull, complete with horns. The devilish sight lent a creepy feel to the darkness. The surface of the floor was covered in several inches of bat guano, but it didn't really smell bad - it was just like soft, rich soil. No bats were present hanging from the ceiling, as it was not their season here. But it was fairly obvious that they occupy this tunnel for at least part of the year.



Air shaft, from inside looking out

And here (right) you see the outside of the air shaft. The workers took advantage of a natural cave in the side of the cliff, starting the shaft from there, to save themselves some digging through solid rock.



Air shaft, from outside looking in



Bore holes for explosive powder

The explosives holes which the workers dug by hand with chisels and sledge hammers were visible everywhere. These holes were then packed with gunpowder, and a fuse lit, followed by fast scurrying to get out of the way. A chunk of rock would be blasted off to shape the tunnel or air shaft, and then the debris removed and dumped over the side of the cliff.

Another feature of this tunnel was the carving of many names and dates into the rock walls, mostly where sunlight was present at the entrances on both ends. This one reads; "J. Clark 1883", the earliest one we saw, and was done only one year after completion of the tunnel. Mr. Clark didn't plan ahead very well, and started running out of room near the end. Other names and dates covered virtually every decade since.



Carved inscription



And finally, after hiking through the darkness, and past two air shafts, we could see literally "the light at the end of the tunnel". This photo shows the west end, where the rail bed once again resumes it's course alongside the cliff.



Tunnel exit

And with that, our adventure back through time was complete. We hiked back through the tunnel to the boat, and found that the predicted high winds had in fact arrived, in full force. In our little cove the winds were blowing about 40 mph, blowing our hats off and the

boat sideways, and we feared we might be in trouble even though the winds would be at our back. But we reasoned that the wind speed was only being magnified because of the little canyon we were in, and would subside once we exited out onto open water again. Fortunately for us, that turned out to be true. Although the winds were still about 20 mph, kicking up a chop on the surface, and occasionally a set of waves would pass by that rose as high as the gunwales. But the wind was at our back as forecast, and other than the waves, did not present a problem. We returned to the boat ramp, safe and sound, following our same strategy of weaving through the reeds to stay away from the occasional speedboats.

And now for "the rest of the story". Only 10 years after completion of this rail line, a "high bridge" was built for the railroad across the Pecos River, about three miles upstream from the Rio Grande. Bridge-building technology had finally progressed to make this possible. An engineering marvel at the time, the Pecos River Viaduct, as it was called, spanned 2,180 feet and towered 321 feet above the river. For years, the metal structure ranked as the highest bridge in the United States. This bridge eliminated the need for the treacherous Rio Grande River route, so the timbers, ties, spikes and rails from that section were dismantled and removed, to be re-used on the new route. This shortened the line by a considerable amount, making the route more direct and efficient. The old rail bed has lain silent ever since, but the new route is still in active use to this day.



Pecos River Viaduct



Lampasas River

April 3, 2010

by

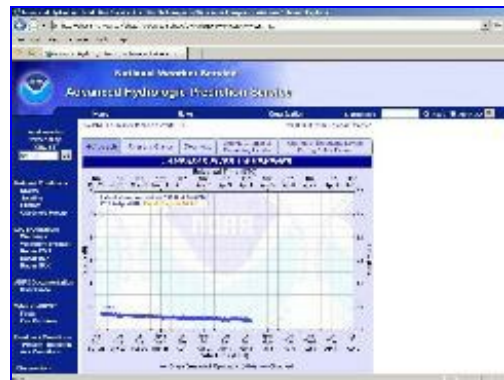
Charles Zipprian

On April 3, 2010 five members of the Houston Canoe Club and my family joined in a five hour 10-mile trip down the Lampasas River. The Lampasas River flows into Stillhouse Hollow Lake, which is a clear water lake 30 miles north of Austin and 10 miles south of Temple, Texas. Charles, Katy, and Chance Zipprian traveled from Houston. Daniel Zipprian traveled from Abilene and Matthew Zipprian hosting the group from Belton. The weather was beautiful with a nice crispness in the morning.

The closest water gauge was Lampasas River at Kempner, which read 328 CFS.

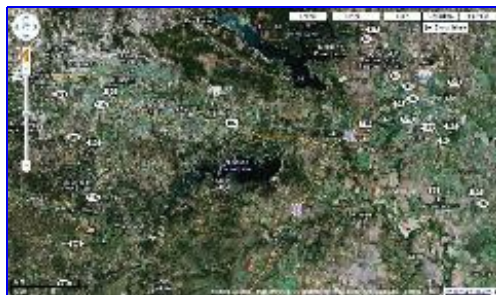


River level gauge #1



River level gauge #2

(Click on the thumbnail images to display a full-screen version in a separate window)



Lampasas River satellite map



Lampasas River terrain map

We had two vehicles to use for a shuttle. One vehicle was left at the public boat ramp on Park Rd. just north of the Stillhouse Hollow Rd Bridge on FM 3481. The putin was 10 miles west on FM 2484. As the north side was fenced off, we used the south side of the bridge crossing on Lampasas which I would rate a 4+ in difficulty due to the steepness of the terrain. Taking a little caution we slid down the kayaks and made our way to the river in less than thirty minutes.



The put-in



Chance Zipprian

The first four miles of the trip we encountered some nice moving water and five rapids the worse being a mild 1+ rating. Getting splashed in the cool morning was a nice wake up call. Around the four-mile mark the water began to slow down and the river widen. The scenery was nice with many places for some nice photos.



Dead oak place



Deadfalls

Proof that six-foot five-inch guys do fit in kayaks (right). For some reason, he chose to use the sit-on-top kayak for the rest of the trip.

We where in no hurry and let the river take us downstream, we completed the first five miles in two hours. At the five-mile mark, we came across a mud bank boat ramp. I later looked for this boat ramp and found it at the end of a short gravel road with a unique name of Gravel Crossing Road.



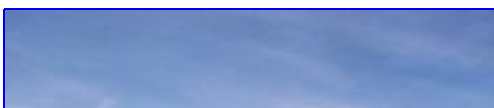
Matthew Zipprian



The Gravel Crossing Road had a very nice patch of Bluebonnets

We began to encounter motorboat traffic around the boat ramp and for the rest of the trip downstream. All of the boaters were polite and slowed down when they came close to us. Most of the motorboats were interested in seeing kayaks on the river, wondering where we started. We learned from the boaters that the river was a little higher than normal.

The remainder of the trip was in slow moving water. At about the seven-mile mark the river split forming a large wooded island. We stopped on the island for a lunch break. Daniel found the bones of a catfish head that measured twelve inches across.





Island in middle of river

After the island the river began to double in width, with several places where cliff faces tapered down to low banks of marsh grass.



Forest of willows



Daniel Zipprian

of a turkey platter.



Rock slide cliff

There were several flocks of waterfowl and cranes through this stretch of the river. We saw several dozen turtles sunning themselves on river deadfalls and stumps. The turtles ranged in size from the smallest, which was the size of a half-dollar to a monster, the size



Only picture Katy would allow me to post of her



Start of Stillhouse Hollow Lake

At the nine-mile mark the lake begins with several reminders of the trees that once grew along the riverbank. You can see many of the trees have hook lines attached to the trees. We found one line stretched thirty-feet between two trees and six inches above the water level. The last mile of the trip to the boat ramp is across open lake. While we stayed close to shore, the wind was making the water fairly choppy and all were very happy to reach the boat ramp.

Proof that Chance does paddle (right).

Overall the trip was very pleasant we plan to visit the river again. There is a six-mile section of river upstream of the put-in that we plan on visiting. Based on information from the boaters and two canoe people we met, this six-mile



section is too low to travel except for when the water is at the higher levels.



Chance Zipprian



Trash Bash - Upper Buffalo Bayou

March 27, 2010

by
Christy Long

[Buffalo Bayou Trash Bash](#)

Upper Buffalo Bayou

1.5 miles from Highway 6 to Memorial Mews

100 CFS

HCC Participants:

Bruce Heiberg - Organizer

Bob Aurthur - Organizer

Eloy Arredondo - bank

Tracy Caldwell - bank

Dutch Becker - bank

Ken Anderson - boat

Frank Ohrt - boat

Robert Killian - boat

Sam Scott - boat

Will Scott - boat

Bob Naerger - boat

Christy Long - boat

Greg Walker - boat

Beautiful day, cool, and sunny. We met at Highway 6, launched, and started picking up trash immediately. The low water gave us access to most of the river bed. We picked up three tires and about 200 pounds of trash. We could have picked up much more but we were limited by the fact we had three portages to make and we had to be at the take out by 11:00.



Put in, from left: Bob Naeger, Greg Walker, Christy Long



Put in looking downstream: Bob Naeger

(Click on the thumbnail photos to display a full-screen version.)



Greg Walker in bow and Christy Long in stern



One of the three portages we pulled our boats over.



From left: Robert Killian, Bob Naeger, Frank Ohrt

We got to the take out at 11:30, and started bringing the trash and tires up to the curb. Tracy and Dutch surprised us at the take out and helped unload trash, re-bag it, bring it to the curb, and bring the boats up the steep bank. What a help they were to us.



Christy & Dutch haul tires up the bank



Group photo: Dutch, Christy, Greg, Bob, Robert, Frank & Ken

After we finished with the trash and tires we ran shuttle, packed gear, tied the boats down, and went to the registration area where, Bruce Heiberg had many hot dogs, bags of chips, and bags of cookies waiting for us. We ate while the organizers packed up.

Another good day on the water.

Sincerely,
Christy Long



Colorado River

April 17 - 18, 2010
by
Mary Ellen Zaborowski

As the rain fell on the roof of the carport, my heart was still longing for the river!!

I knew that in a few hours, I would be "BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN" with friends who love the river as much as I do. Finally 4:30 a.m. came around, I made sure mom was watched by the caregiver, then on I-10 we go, headed to the Colorado River!! Oh the sounds of the cell phone to make sure we were all still heading to Bastrop!!

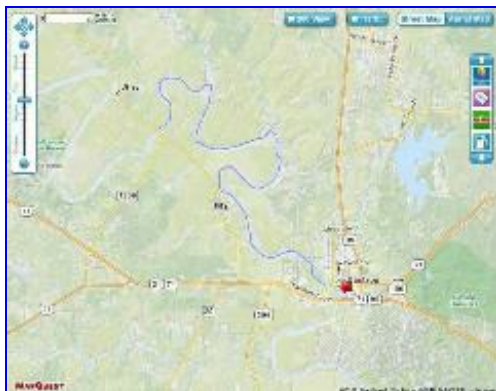
The cars and trucks passed us up with lots and lots of bicycles for the MS 150 ride to LaGrange then the next day to Austin. Excitement built as we drove through the little towns, stopping for gas in LaGrange. Then we saw the sign for the Whataburger in Bastrop!!! Lots of cars and trucks with canoes and kayaks ready for the river.

(Click on the thumbnail photos to see a full-screen version.)



Bastrop is a 2½ hour drive from Houston

After a hearty breakfast we headed towards FM 696 off of HWY 71 out of Bastrop to the Colorado River. Oh the scenery was great and the cows were low in the field... they knew rain was on the way. The bluebonnets were the bluest I've ever seen in TEXAS. The put-in was a little different, due to an RV Park that was just built. A man and his kids were fishing under the bridge, and we started to unload our gear. The water was high, yet floatable.



The outfitter we used is on highway 21 across from the Bastrop State Park. A little hard to find, yet we got there and met John Cline from [Rising Phoenix Adventures](#). There our vehicles would be safe as there is no overnight parking allowed in the park. On the shuttle we heard that the cfs on the Colorado was 1500 and rising to 1800 by noon. We would see the river rise 4-6 feet before morning.

Section paddled: Hwy 969 to Hwy 21 We loaded the boats and floated downriver and started off on our adventure. Oh my... 5-6 miles per hour and the Island was only 8 miles down the river! A few sweeps, high rolling waves around some curves, small wind gusts and dodging the logs floating down the river next to your boat. The High bluff we always passed was finally a two tone brown/tan with cactus hanging on the edge for dear life. The brave cedar tree that we had been watching for years clinging to the bluff was finally gone. We stopped at a sand and gravel bar for a half hour and saw the most dragon flies you ever saw in one place.



The high bluff
Photo by Paul Woodcock



Dragonfly
Photo by Paul Woodcock



Mary Ellen Zaborowski & Paul Woodcock



Bob Pearson



Ron & Judy Nunnelly



Bobby Hatfield



**Rest stop: Dana, Mary, Bob, Ron,
Paul, Bobby, Jeff**

Yet, back into the canoes and heading for the island took only two hours. The Island is big and long enough so we still had plenty of room to camp. We met a Boy Scout leader and his son on the island scouting for next week's adventure. He had put in at a private boat ramp half way and was paddling out to Bastrop that afternoon.



Paul's island campsite

Photo by Paul Woodcock



The rain tarp

Photo by Paul Woodcock

The sun broke through the darkened clouds, and our evening was beautiful. The smell of the Dutch oven cooking, a feast of beef stew and French bread filled the Island with celebration of my birthday. Oh I almost forget the wonderful box wines we got to choose from to wash our meal down and keep our spirits high listening to the sound of thunder in the distance.



Sun breaking through clouds

Photo by Paul Woodcock



**Mary's made-from-scratch beef stew
cooked over hot coals, with buttered
& toasted french bread**



Red or Zinf?

We got all the tents up and the para-wing tarp assembled just in time for the evening rain. Talking under the tarp with good friends was a great way to end the day on the Colorado River. I watched in excitement from the tent as the streaks of lightening flashed horizontal

across the sky, followed by the loud thunder in a distance. With the sounds of rain on the tent, making wonderful outdoor music to our ears, we were warm and cozy heading off into perfect sleep, on the River.

The next morning was a great beginning to the end of a good trip. Hot coffee filled the air, with smell of bacon, hash browns, and strawberry shortcakes. Taking apart our equipment and packing the boats for a quick 1 1/2 hour paddle to Fishermans Park which was filled with birds - Kingfishers, Red Tail Hawks, Ospreys. Gar were rolling all over down the middle of the river.



Paul enjoys a strawberry shortcake breakfast



Dana slides by hanging vines

Finally we saw the bridge loaded with bicycles from the MS 150. Our outfitter picked us up to go back to get our vehicles, and showed us the back road out of Bastrop to dodge the 13,000 participants from this event. The sun was breaking though the darkened clouds again, and you could see rain in the distance.



Bicyclists clog the Highway 21 bridge next to the take-out



The birds at the take-out were horribly deformed: headless, one-legged and broken-necked!

Saying our goodbyes and "will call you", off we went towards the real world of responsibility, all too soon. Yet this weekend was well worth the time and effort it took to organize the shuttle and food/wine to make it a wonderful memory in my book of paddles.

Would like to thank the following who helped with gear, carrying the Dutch ovens, cooking, fetching and enjoyed the trip with me - John Rich, Bob Pearson, Bob Hatfield, Ron and Judy Nunnally, Dana Enos, Jeff Graves, Paul Woodcock and myself, Mary Ellen Zaborowski.



Good Friday trip on the Trinity River

by
Paul Woodcock and Mary Ellen Zaborowski

The following people got together on Good Friday to paddle the Trinity River from below the Livingston Dam to Hwy 59 boat ramp. They included Jeff Graves, Milton Robinson, Ron and Judy Nunnely, Mary Ellen Zaborowski and myself Paul Woodcock

What we paddled is what is now be to named the EAGLE RUN. Every trip we have paddled down this stretch, in any kind of weather, we've seen eagles, adult as well as immature.

At the put in, at Browders Campground and Boat Ramp at first you notice that all the gates to the dam were open, which made for a strong river flow. At the edge of the boat ramp, we noticed an egret fishing from a log and in just a few minutes he had already caught 7 small fish.



Group at the put in on the Trinity River below Livingston Dam.

Photo by Paul Woodcock



Egret fishing from a log.

Photo by Paul Woodcock

(Click on the thumbnail photos to display a full-screen version.)

The wind was getting a little stronger and naturally it had to be a headwind. All the solo canoes broke out their double bladed paddles and we started down the river. The wind made it a challenge, yet there were times the wind settled down and made it really enjoyable.

We saw another egret trying to eat a larger fish, yet he had trouble swallowing it. You could see him flapping his wings, and struggling to get it down through his greed was it's own reward. A eagle was next to a large tree branch to keep out of the strong winds. It was beautiful to see this eagle in all his glory.



Paddling on the Trinity.

Photo by Paul Woodcock



If you look hard at this picture you can see an eagle right at the top of the tree.

Photo by Paul Woodcock

We had to take a break in a cove, from the struggle of paddling in the wind.. Finally we got to the Hwy 59 boat ramp, yet it is one of the longest and steepest in TEXAS (see my first Rehab report in last month's newsletter). Last time I could not even carry my own canoe, but this time I got to carry the stern before I collapsed in exhaustion. Judy and Mary stayed with the equipment, so we could get the vehicles and go to back to Ron and Judy's house, where we spent the rest of the afternoon eating hamburgers, sausage, salad, chips and good cold drinks.

It was a challenging paddle into the wind, but in some strange way it made the trip enjoyable. Seeing the eagle at the beginning of the trip and on Good Friday with friends made the enjoyment of nature and all it's moods, for a great day!!



A River Runs Through It - Buffalo Bayou

April 25, 2010

by

John Bayduss

All great cities need a gateway to establish itself, and Houston has Buffalo Bayou.

A beautiful 53 mile watery path that feeds the insatiable appetite of a growing infant, an infant that would eventually become the fourth largest city in the United States.



Buffalo Bayou is a beautiful place to paddle on a sunny Sunday.

Photo by John Bayduss.



John Bayduss and Dave Kitson at Allen's Landing put in.

Photo by Linda Gorski

To tell the tale of how Buffalo Bayou shaped and molded the early years of Houston was Louis Aulbach. As we paddled along its mighty waters Louis gave a non-stop performance describing the importance of various landmarks: bridges, buildings and ships that once sailed her waters.

After the paddle Louis escorted many of us to the old Magnolia Brewery Building located at 715 Franklin Street.



Magnolia Brewing Company Historical Marker.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Louis Aulbach at put-in, preparing to give historic paddle on Buffalo Bayou.

Photo by Linda Gorski



A vintage platter showing the Houston Ice and Brewing Company and Magnolia Brewery in its

Thanks to owner Bart Truxillo, we were weaved a tale of how this building started as a local brewery and now is an establishment for various parties and

now is an establishment for various parties and receptions. The Magnolia Ballroom as its called now is a two-story building filled with love, laughter and thought, both past and present.

Today was a wonderful day for exploring Houston on both land and water. To do both is to enjoy the best of both worlds.

Note: To see "the rest of the story" on this Buffalo Bayou trip and lots more photos, see "Letter(s) to the Editor" in another part of this newsletter.

heyday.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Bart Truxillo shows Ann Derby and Sondra Fabian some historic photos of downtown Houston.

Photo by Linda Gorski

