

Houston Canoe Club

Newsletter

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San Antonio Bay Shark

by

Lewis Massingill

Before I tell you about old Canoe Club trips, I want to set the record straight about the shark. I grew up fishing in the Gulf and along the Texas Coast. I've caught at least half a dozen sharks, some over five foot. My dad would probably get mad again if he thought about me tearing up his Peen Reel. After 45 minutes with a fish on, I decided it was time to either hoist him in or break the line. Well the line did not break and I landed a shark that outweighed me. However I did tear up the reel. I have had dolphins come up beside a sunfish sail boat close enough for me to touch after sailing out through the surf at Surf Side Beach and going off shore for several miles. The point is I know the difference between dolphins and sharks.

When I paddled across San Antonio Bay around 3:00 a.m. in the 1985 Water Safari, it was a huge shark that came up beside my canoe and followed me across the bay. It was not a dolphin. The shark had to be almost as long as my canoe. I was paddling against the wind and quartering the waves. Every stroke had to be on the right side to keep the boat straight. I was grunting and splashing with every stroke to make headway against the wind. The canoe headlight was still on because I had not stopped to turn it off when I entered the bay. The water was too rough for me to get up to the bow to turn it off and I wasn't going to need it since I was only a few miles from the finish line. Broken clouds raced in front of an almost full moon making the night alternate between bright and dark. I spotted the shark's dorsal just a foot or two to the right and behind my paddle. The dorsal fin was huge. The leading edge was massive. The back rear of the fin did not attach to his back for several inches. The trailing edge of the fin was tattered and so thin you could almost see through it. He swam along side me but went a little faster.

Once he got up to where his head should have been about even with the headlight on the boat he slowed down to my speed for a while then went under. I thought about how I was grunting and splashing with each stroke of the paddle and decided maybe I should be a little smoother with my strokes. I tried to smooth out my strokes and not splash. I thought he was gone but in a minute here he came again, just like before, from behind on my right side. I thought about hitting him with my paddle. Then I remembered what happened when I hit a big alligator gar between the eyes with my paddle years before and decided I really don't want to make him mad. This time when he got even with the front of the canoe, he slowed down and just stayed there for a while, then disappeared ahead of me. I thought well this time he's gone and got sloppy with my paddling. Here he comes again from behind on my right side. I think to my self: "Lord make this shark go away and I won't do this again. Well, at least not solo. This time instead of going past me, we slowly drift apart. I realize I have gone well beyond the island where I needed to turn toward Sea Drift and had crossed the barge canal. The shark and I parted and I headed for the lighted pier in Sea Drift with the wind in my favor.

I have thought about doing the safari again. But, you know that shark has had some years to grow and there are some really big alligators out there now.



Mariscal Canyon's Abandoned Canoe, Circa 1975

by

Lewis Massingill

I remember a Thanksgiving trip to Big Bend in the early 1970's, to paddle Mariscal Canyon. I am not sure anyone on the trip had paddled it before. Joe Wolf was the trip leader. I don't remember if Joe had a partner or was paddling the Old Town fiberglass canoe solo. I think Dave Caldwell was on the trip paddling a kayak. I was paddling with my younger brother in a 32" wide, 1972 model, Moore Viper 18'-6" USCA racing canoe. There was a young newly wed couple on the trip. The husband was well over 6' tall and somewhat overweight. He was not fat just big. The wife was very physically fit, athletic and loved adventure. I believe they were into backpacking and members of the Sierra Club. They had a new Toyota 4WD Land Cruiser. I really don't know how they heard about the Canoe Club and the trip. The wife had called Joe Wolf and after a long conversation about their skills and abilities persuaded him to let them come on the canoe trip. They rented a Tejas Canoe from Wayne Walls' canoe livery. The canoe was an ABS hull, about 16' long and 36" or more wide with seats attached high enough to get your feet under easily.

We left Wednesday after work and drove all night, arriving at Big Bend Park, Thanksgiving morning. Back then, the Park rules were rather lax. I think you may have voluntarily filled out a float plan but it was not required. I don't remember. Our shuttle convoy consisted of Joe Wolf's Dodge van, the newlywed's Toyota 4wd Land Cruiser and my brother's Ford pick-up truck. We stopped at the Mariscal mine, did some sightseeing, hiked up a couple of hills, checked out the takeout at Solis and camped out

Thanksgiving night at the Talley put in. Friday morning we loaded up the canoes and put on the water before 9:00 a.m. Once all the canoes were loaded and ready to launch, my brother and I went ahead and shoved off. We just drifted, waiting for the others. The husband has trouble putting on his horse collar life jacket. His wife helps him get it on, then slips into the stern of the canoe, with the bow still on the bank. As her husband climbs into the bow, he tips the canoe and falls on his backside. The only thing he keeps dry is his feet. The wife managed to only get her feet wet. We stopped and waited for them to start off again. A minute or two after they were on the water, I heard another splash. I turned around to see their canoe turned over. As they had crossed a very light current eddy line, behind a gravel bar, in about 2' of water, they had flipped again. We turned around and went back to help.

We got them back on the water again and I plan to paddle along side to give them some pointers. Before I do, they flip again. I figure we need to do something different this time, but I have a narrow racing canoe that is much less stable than their canoe.

I tell my younger brother to put on a PFD and trade places with the wife. He refuses the PFD I throw at him but trades partners. I put the wife in the bow of my canoe. I'm surprised to find that she seems to have rather good paddling skills. As my brother and the hubby try to launch the rental canoe, they almost turn over again.

Behind me I hear my brother tell the hubby to just quit paddling. We come to a sharp narrowing turn just inside Mariscal Canyon. We pull into the eddy and beach our canoe to make sure the rental boat makes it.

As they approach, I see the hubby is sitting in the front seat with a death grip on each gunwale, the horse collar life jacket cinched up

tight. The whole canoe is shaking so violently that waves are radiating from it in all directions, like the waves in a vibrating liquid jewelry cleaner. Well, when their bow catches the eddy, they instantly flip. The newly wed falls in a few inches of water near where we are standing. The stern is out in the middle of the current and my brother, not wearing a life jacket, is swept down stream. Forty yards down stream, he bumps into a submerged boulder in the middle of the river. He is able to climb on top of it and stand up in ankle deep water to wait until I launch my canoe and pick him up. Joe Wolf, who had not stopped, gathered up the gear that floated on down stream and paddled back up stream to us.

As we are gathering everything up, I find out that the newly wed wife is a good swimmer and has canoed at summer camp, but the husband has not only never been in a canoe, he does not know how to swim and is afraid of water.

The couple realizes this is not the way for him to overcome his fear of water. They decide they are not going to paddle any further and are going to walk out. They pick up their gear and start wading back up stream, leaving the canoe and paddles on the gravel bar.

I suggest to Joe that we tow the canoe on through the canyon. Joe says; I'm not going to have anything to do with it. The rest of the group paddles off leaving my brother and me standing on the gravel bar. I think about doing it myself but seeing the others paddling away, my brother and I shrug our shoulders, drag the Tejas canoe to the top of the gravel bar, throw the paddles in the canoe, get back in my canoe and paddle off. This time my brother decides the PFD is a good idea.

When we get to the tight squeeze rapid, we stop on rocks on the Texas side of the canyon wall and scout it out. The river is several feet higher than normal. There is no way we are

going to try and run it. Instead, we carry the canoes over the top of huge rocks on the left side of the canyon, float the canoes the 25' to the next big rocks and again haul the canoes up and over the top. This gets us past the tight squeeze. At this point I am really glad we did not tow that canoe behind us. After completing the portage, the swift current flushes us on through the canyon and we are out before we realize it. At the time, I did not realize the water level was so high.

When we get to the takeout there the newly weds are waiting for us. I never heard a word of complaint from them. I suspect it was because they had not been honest with Joe about their canoeing capabilities.

That red Tejas canoe sat on that gravel bar in Mariscal canyon for years and years. I thought a flood would carry it away but several years later, I paddled through Mariscal and there it was, still in the same spot just as I left it. Down stream was the big rock in the middle of the river but so far above the water level that a swimmer would never have been able to climb on top. I guess the reason a flood had not washed it away was we were there in the middle of a flood. No telling how many people paddled by that Tejas canoe. I'm not sure what became of it. Someone told me he heard a park ranger finally paddled it on through the canyon.

The one thing that went right on this trip was the couple's decision to walk out. At that high water level, I can't imagine any way we could have gotten them through the tight squeeze portage.

In retrospect, there are innumerable things that should have been done differently. The number one thing is Joe should have never let them talk their way onto the trip. My brother is lucky he did not drown from the effects of hypothermia. He said he barely had the strength to climb on that submerged rock. Now, any

time the water is cold, I wear a life jacket. I always try to make sure that the people I paddle with can not only take care of themselves but me as well. If we had rearranged the gear in the rental canoe so the hubby could have sat on the bottom of the canoe, it would not have turned over until they really got into trouble.

Fourth of July with Wesley Liles

by

Larry Wild

This tale falls under the category of "war story" and out of all of my memories of trips, Rendezvous and other assorted activities with HCC this one popped into my head first. Although this was not my first nor last adventure when canoeing, because it involved Wesley Liles the experience was memorable for me.

Wesley was a long time member of the HCC who always had a smile and was game for an exotic canoe trip. Since I was not at a loss for trips that were all that I could bite off and then some, we ended up deciding to do the West Fork of the San Jacinto River from Highway 45 to Highway 59 over the Fourth of July weekend. Although it was hot as blazes there were shade trees at the put-in with enough water to paddle comfortably. After a mile or so that changed dramatically. We found ourselves in a shadeless 100 yard wide sand desert with a small rivulet of water we were trying to paddle. Sometimes there was a puddle we could paddle but generally we carried and pushed the canoe. Wesley was getting red as a beet and I'm sure I looked the same.

The final straw came when a group of 3 and 4 wheelers arrived on the scene and began

crisscrossing the "river" ahead of us without getting their axles wet. We had completed the journey from the sublime to the ridiculous. At this point we came to the conclusion that perhaps we were in the wrong mode of transportation. After a pride-crushing hitchhike to the truck at the take-out we had completed our adventure paddle.

This trip, like all the others I've been on, was a tapestry of the people, place and time never to be repeated, only remembered. As always we had created another memory which can never be deleted.

The Loaded Truck

by

Martha Hulsebosch Williams

Leonard Hulsebosch had planned a day trip on the Pedernales in the early 1980's. I did not go on this trip. I don't know why -- just lucky, I guess. As I recall, the take out was at a city park, so possibly the trip was above Johnson City. Our son, Robert, was on the trip, and he thinks there were 9 or 10 paddlers, most in solo boats or kayaks.

They ran their shuttle and put in. There was one dam they had to portage, but no problem. They were paddling along talking and enjoying the beautiful river and scenery. They noticed the water getting more and more shallow as they paddled on. Then, they looked ahead and the water just seemed to disappear. It went underground. All they could see was a dry river bed.

What do they do now? They were miles from the take out and no telling where or if the water would resurface. They were out in the country with a lot of unoccupied land. However, there

was a house on the hill where a man and two teenage boys were working in their yard. Leonard climbed the hill to speak with the man, who did not look happy to see him. Leonard introduced himself and explained their plight. The landowner responded: "That's the trouble with you city slickers. You come on our river, trash it up, and expect us to help you out."

Leonard assured him that they were members of the Houston Canoe Club and always respected other people's property and carried our own trash out with us. After a lengthy change of words, Leonard convinced the land owner that this group of canoeists were not bad people. He pointed to the two young men and said, "Those are my boys. You can ask them if one of them will take your group to your cars. He can use my pickup, but can only make one trip. You and your canoes will have to all go in the truck. I don't want anyone waiting here or leaving your canoes here."

Miraculously, they were able to get all the canoes and kayaks in the bed of the truck by standing them on end and tying them with ropes.

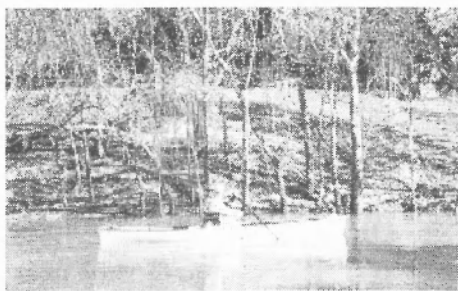
They squeezed as many paddlers in the cab as possible. The others got in the back and hung on to the canoes and ropes.

On the way to the take out, Leonard said that they'd like to pay him for taking them. The boy asked "How much is it worth to you."

Leonard replied: "A million dollars!"

They settled on \$100.00 which they managed to scrape together.

They were delivered safely to their cars, and it all ended well.



A "Story" About Leonard

by

Marilyn Peery

One day we were paddling on the Medina when we came upon a young couple in a tandem canoe. They were having a little difficulty so Leonard, always wanting to be helpful, took it upon himself to provide some instruction. I don't remember what he told them but it was becoming more of an entire lesson than just a pointer. They were much too polite to tell him to bug off, but it was becoming obvious to the rest of us that's what they were thinking. They finally lagged behind enough that he left them alone. I hope they were just a little bit wiser from his tip.

How It All Started

by

Louis F. Aulbach

In June of 1978 (or thereabouts), my good friend and bowling buddy Hank Moller called me up to tell me he had bought a canoe at a garage sale. Neither Hank nor I had much experience in canoes, but he wanted to try it out. So, we planned a trip for the upcoming Fourth of July weekend on the Colorado River.

That weekend we cut out teeth on canoeing by paddling from Bastrop to La Grange. The water was moderate and the weather was hot. Yet, we survived the 60 plus miles with little wear and tear. We thought: this canoeing is a piece of cake.

Later, in early October, Hank called me, again, because he had heard that the Guadalupe River was a great canoeing river. We packed up our gear and headed for Canyon Dam where we

camped in one of the parks near the dam. On Saturday morning, we put in below the dam. The weather quickly deteriorated and it began a cold, light drizzle. Within a few short miles we had our first experience with rapids. By noon, we had crashed and dumped three times. The clouds were ugly, and we were chilled to the bone since we had no rain gear. Cold and wet T-shirts and blue jeans are not the best river clothes.

At that point, we abandoned the canoe on the river bank and hitch-hiked on River Road to our shuttle vehicle, some 7 miles or so downstream. And, as we humbly limped back to Houston, we knew there was something more to learn about this sport of canoeing. Hank told me later that the fiberglass canoe was cracked in five places.

But, we were not going to quit! About the first of November, Hank called and told me that he heard about this group that was doing a canoe trip to the Big Bend over the Thanksgiving holidays. Was I willing to go?

Since I had been out to the Big Bend a time or two already, I thought it would be great. My love of the desert country had just begun, and the chance to see some of it from a canoe was appealing. There were about 20 boats on that trip. Since it was the days of the tandem canoes, there were about 40 HCC members to help the two new guys survive the treacherous rapids of Boquillas Canyon.

The one thing that was exceptional was the simple acceptance of new paddlers by the club members. Many of them helped me in the following years become a half way decent paddler. For that I'm profoundly grateful. It's been a good ride.

A Curmudgeon's Rendezvous History

by

Bob Arthur

Way back in November 1983, an event was held at Gaston's Resort, on the White River, in northern Arkansas. This event, styled The Solo Symposium was put on by something called "Canoe Specialist", a consortium of Phil Sigglekow's Blackhawk Canoe of Janesville, Wisconsin and Curtis Canoe from Hemlock, New York. Many luminaries from the then canoeing world were in attendance. These included the late Mike Galt of Lotus Canoes, Pat Moore of Moore Canoes, Mike Chicanowski from Wenona Canoes. The late Harry Roberts was there. He was then editor of Canoe Magazine and later with Sawyer Canoes, and still later, editor of the classic magazine, Canoesport Journal. Many others, long forgotten, were in attendance also.

As a relatively new paddler, I had taken a Red Cross basic course, and knew all there was to know about paddling....until.....until.....exposure to masters of the craft. Talk about scales being removed from eyes. It happened that weekend in Arkansas in November of 1983.

Hey, I thought, wouldn't it be a good idea for the Houston Canoe Club to do an event like that? Well, maybe. A big maybe. The officers and members supported the idea in 1984, but it didn't happen. Finally, in 1989, it did and the Houston Canoe Club's Canoe Rendezvous was born.

Invited the "masters" to teach, and they did. Invited the various manufacturers to come and display their products....and they did. Invited paddlers to come, and we did!

Charlie Wilson, now ACA president, had been doing a similar show in Illinois and he agreed to consult and help. Harry Roberts came, along with wife Molly Stark. Steve Scarborough and Annie and the little boys came with the brand new com-

pany called Dagger Canoes. Joseph Sedivic from Seda, Darrell Leighdeigh from Mohawk, Robert Harrison with Mad River, Sawyer Canoes, Tom MacKenzie from the Loon Works, Bunny Johns from the Nantahala Outdoor Center, and on and on. It worked. We came, we learned, we upgraded our equipment, we became better paddlers....and Rendezvous became the largest on-water canoe show in the nation.

Well, the rest is history, but we did the event for a bunch more years. First at Chain o' Lakes, then at Huntsville State Park and then near Sugar Land. We noticed a change in the industry though, and it seemed that what was profitable for the industry was detrimental for the sport in the long run. Our event had been about quality equipment and quality instruction, but more and more "plastic logs" began to show up and it seemed that more emphasis was placed on tonnage....or plastic by the pound than about quality. After many mergers some of the majors had even gotten out of the canoe manufacturing business entirely. And so, we played a part in the history of skillful paddling, but it seems like it was at the tail end of quality and skill.

Perhaps it'll come back.

Lower Canyons

by

Lewis Massingill

In the Mid 1970's Dave Caldwell and I ran the Lower Canyons. I think it was at Thanksgiving. On this trip, for me, the shuttle was as big an adventure as the river. Louis Aulbach's book is an excellent guide to this stretch, so I'll just fill in the adventure part. We drove out to the Dryden Mercantile Store and paid Bill Ten Eyck for permission to use the Dudley Harrison Ranch/Dryden Crossing as the

take out point. We drove out in Dave's old GMC Suburban with my 125 cc Yamaha motorcycle in the back. The bike was a street legal dirt bike. We left the store and drove to the take out. After unloading the bike out of the back of the suburban. I put on my helmet and gloves and got out two shelter halves. I rode the bike around a bit looking for a good spot to park it, then drove the bike up a side canyon or gully until I was out of sight of the river and takeout. I climbed off, turned off the gas, took off my helmet and gloves and hung them on the handlebars. I took the two shelter halves, buttoned them together and put them over the bike. I gathered up big rocks and put them on the edges of the tarp. I picked up some tumbleweed and threw that on top, then walked back to the truck. We drove the truck on down to the La Linda Bridge where we unloaded the canoe, my old Moore Viper 18' 6" racing canoe. By the time we got on the river it was after 4:00 so we did not paddle far before we camped on the Mexican side across from Black Gap Wild Life Refuge. When we got to Asa Jones Pump house a day or so later we stopped and climbed to the top. After we had been there about an hour or two and started to climb back down from the top of the canyon, we spotted more than half a dozen canoes on the river. They pulled in beside our canoe and started up the trail. The weather the first day had been nice but by this time it was overcast, cold and wet. It was not really drizzling rain; it was more like a light mist. Most of the people coming up the trail were wearing rain gear. Dave and I were both wearing wool shirts and trousers. Dave's happened to be Hager slacks. As the people came up the trail we recognized Tom Goynes and several others. When John Ohrt came up the trail and spotted Dave, he said, "You just never know when you will run into someone hanging out in their Hager slacks". We visited for a while then left. I never saw the group

again since I was making the shuttle when they got to the take out.

Several days later we came to a really wide, long rapid full of large rocks. On the left bank we saw a red Old Town Tripper Canoe and two guys carrying gear around the rapid. We pulled in beside their canoe and visited. They did not want to portage their canoe but could not figure how to run the rapid. The rocks were so close together there was no place to make an eddy turn behind then to ferry from one short channel to the other.

These guys asked us what we were going to do. We looked at the portage and the rapid and told them we would just go ahead and run it with our gear in the boat. They stood and watched in awe as we ferried over to the Mexican side and eased down a short shoot by continuously back paddling. Just before we crashed into a rock, we side slipped the stern of the canoe into an eddy and stopped. We then back ferried the stern from one rock eddy to the next until we found another short shoot. We took on a little water over the side so we stopped in an eddy while Dave bailed out a scoop or two of water. We then had to back paddle and go up stream to get to the other side of a rock that had no passage below it. After that we just kept back ferrying until we reached the open channel on the Texas side and had a wild ride to the bottom. I think those two guys are still standing on that bank scratching their heads trying to figure out how we did that. We had a lot of fun exploring side canyons and springs. Louis Aulbach's book will tell you how to find them.

We reached Dryden Crossing around 4:30 in the afternoon. After we got the canoe and gear up on high ground, the first thing I did was go look for my motorcycle. I walked up the little side canyon, to where I thought the bike should be. It was not there. My heart was in my throat.

Without that bike, I had a 20-mile hike through the desert to Dryden and another 70 miles of highway to the truck. I thought well, I will look for tracks but I could not find any. I kept walking up the gully and when I was within 20 feet of it about to trip over it, I found it. If I had hid that bike any better, I would have been in real trouble. I rolled the rocks off the army shelter halves; shook them out and there was my bright shiny Suzuki. I rode it back to where Dave was setting up the tent and covered it up again. It was too late for a shuttle and we had lots of time so we took our time and fixed a nice meal. Around 10:00 p.m. we saw a faint light swing back and forth on the Mexican side of the river. We sat there in the dark watching it as it kept getting closer. When the light was directly across the river from us, we realized it was a burro with a kerosene lantern around his neck and a rider on his back. They kept going along a trail and finally disappeared around the bend. That was the first time I had seen a burro with a headlight.

During the night the weather started getting bad again and the fog rolls in. I get up about 6:30 and the weather is cold wet and miserable. I get to make the shuttle in P-soup while Dave gets to sleep in. I put my rain gear on over my wool clothes, strap another jacket into a water proof bag on the back of the bike and take off in the dark. The fog is so thick I can barely see the width of the dirt road. If I put the bike headlight on high beam, I can't see a thing. I pray I don't take the wrong fork in one of these trails and get lost. About six to eight miles out all of a sudden there are red and blue lights flashing ahead of me in the fog. Did a spacecraft just land? As I approach I see a border patrol car sitting about twenty yards off the road. When I cut off the road and approach he turns off his lights. I drive right up to the driver's window and shut off my engine. I am sure he heard me long before I got close to him.

The border patrol agent asks me what I am doing driving across the desert in the middle of the night. I tell him exactly what we have done, where I was going and that I was paid up with Bill Ten Eyck. He asks if we have seen anyone and I tell him about the burrow with the kerosene headlight and he tells me to have a good day.

Back on the dirt road again and 19 miles later I reach Highway 90, turn left and go another mile to The Dryden Mercantile Store. It really is exactly 20 miles from the river crossing to the store. I go inside to buy some breakfast and let Bill Ten Eyck know that we have made it to the takeout. While I am there he tells me an airplane has come through town a few hours before, his landing light illuminating the center stripe of the highway as he flew under the caution traffic signal with his straight exhaust rattling every window in town.

I get back on my bike and head out. At the top of a hill, in a curve sits a huge old Stearman Biplane in a turn out. The plane is completely off the road, parked with the tail next to the fence and the propeller toward the pavement. There is an old pickup backed up to it and two guys are pouring gasoline into it. I find out this guy was flying home to see his family and got lost in the fog. He was low on gas and knew if he ever lost sight of the highway, he was going to crash into the side of a mountain so he stuck with the highway until he ran out of gas, then set her down. He is lucky he did not meet an 18 wheeler.

It was still drizzling rain but I went on. The bike was comfortable on the dirt roads but on the highway the engine ran at such a high rpm that my hands and feet were becoming numb. If I stayed at 50 miles per hour the vibration was not bad but faster than that was torture. An old Chevy came up behind me where the road had a lot of curves and kept getting closer so I

speeded up. When he got into a straight away he pulled over to pass, got right up beside me then pulled over back into my lane, running me off the road. He did not know it but he had just tossed burr rabbit into the briar patch. That bike with those knobby tires ran smooth out in the rocks and I had better traction there than on the pavement. I just kept up the same speed out on the shoulder. The bike was actually much more comfortable to ride there. After a while he sped up and left me. I thought about staying on the shoulder but was afraid I might puncture a tire. Every gas station I came to I stopped and bought gas. It was not that I needed gas it was I needed to get off of that vibrator before it shook me to death. I think I drove that bike about 170 miles.

I was really relieved when I got back to the La Linda Bridge that afternoon. By this time the sun had come out and it was hot. I opened up Dave's old truck and tried to crank it. After sitting there a week, it did not want to start. I ground and ground on that starter. It just would not start. I was afraid I would flood it but finally I pounded and pounded on the accelerator as I cranked it and it finally started. If his battery had not been new, I never would have gotten it started. I backed up the suburban to a high mound of dirt and put the bike in. The return trip to the take out in the suburban was uneventful. It was almost dark by the time I got back to Dave. I believe Dave was relieved to see me. No one else was likely to come out



Thanks for the Memories, Wesley.

by

Tom Goynes

The funniest story I know about Wesley Liles is something of which I'm not real proud, but which can't be changed. It was back in 1971, Paula and I were living together (by the way, I had been born and raised a Catholic, but wasn't a Christian at that time). Wesley musta either assumed we were married or figured we outa be. So at the first opportunity he had, at a Houston Canoe Club meeting, he announced to Commodore Paul Carr that he understood that the club had lost a member but gained a family. I was totally oblivious to his innuendo (I must have been a lot stupider back then?) but Paul knew exactly what he meant.

Paul turned red and then asked me if I wanted to explain Wesley's comment to the club. I finally realized what was being discussed, spent about a nanosecond contemplating the gravity of marriage and then introduced Paula to the club as my wife.

She was shocked, Paul was shocked, and I, from that moment on, considered myself married.

So I will always remember Wesley as the preacher who tied our knot. And he musta done something right, because we've been married now for 33 years (incidentally, we did get married officially at the first opportunity after that fateful club meeting). I'm not sure if I ever told Wesley what he did.

But I suppose he's having a good laugh about it right now.

Easter 1978 Trip to the Rio Nazas in Central Mexico

by

Lewis Massingill

Like in the movie *Deliverance*, the Mexican government was building a new dam on the Rio Nazas that would hold back so much water it would flood out the good rapids above and dry up the river below. What makes this river unique is it starts up in the mountains as a small stream, grows in size as it descends onto a high plateau and then flows out into a swamp surrounded by desert and dries up. The river literally disappears. I do not remember exactly where we put onto the river, it was somewhere above the town of Nazas, it may have been above Rodeo. Our take out was the City Park in Ttorreon. We started out high up in the mountains in a small fast flowing stream. I do not remember any serious rapids, just standing waves, swift current and some tight turns. As we went down stream in the zippy current the river kept increasing in size as small creeks continually fed in, until it became a fast flowing, really big river.

Once we go out onto the plains the current kept up but there were tiny diversion ditches everywhere feeding off onto distant farmer's fields. The trip only took two days because of the current. We put on the river Good Friday morning and traveled many miles in just a couple of hours. We had a shuttle crew consisting of Richard Miller's wife, Pat Simmons' wife and Dee Payton. We only had three or four canoes on the trip. I do not remember if John Tompkins was on this trip or not. He was always handy to have along because his personality and Spanish were so good. The ladies and Dee ran the shuttle and visited with the ex-governor's family while we paddled. If Dee Payton had not known the ex-governor and his

family, Pat Simmons would never have gotten his son into Mexico. They brought voter's registration cards and identification for themselves but none for their 12 year old son. We got to the border around mid-night and were there until after 4:30 a.m. trying to get him across the border. It took mentioning the ex-governor's name about 50 times and over \$200.00 in tips to the border guards to let him in. I was one of the first through the checkpoint and I did not provide any tips, so they searched my car very thoroughly and spread my gear everywhere. It was not a problem because I had the rest of the night to repack waiting for the Simmons to get through. I don't believe their car was ever inspected at all.

The highlights of the trip were Pat Simmons new pop-up tent. You take it out of the bag, throw it up in the air and it comes down fully set up ready to stake down. Richard Miller was my partner; we used the standard Versa Seal dry bags for our gear and used Eureka Timberline tents. The weather was beautiful the whole time we were on the river. Richard and I being in the fastest canoe (my old Moore Viper racing canoe) just naturally tended to be the lead canoe for the trip. Richard was paddling in the bow and talking away when we rounded a bend in the river and there in front of us out in the river near the left bank were five or six young ladies taking their Saturday afternoon bath and washing their hair with lots of soap. I spotted them and said very softly to Richard, "Be quiet." "Be quiet." "Be quiet Richard". "Richard! Be quiet." Richard said loudly "What? With the loud "What", the river exploded with naked young ladies running everywhere. One or two chose to stay in the water around the big Cyprus tree roots while the rest ran for the bank to hide behind the Cyprus trees. Richard said "Oh!" We paddled on by and down stream as the young ladies circled to the upstream side of the trees to stay out of our view. Pat Simmon's

young son in the bow of the next canoe to round the bend may have had his mouth open but he did not say anything and just quit paddling and drifted with the current. The young ladies had finally gotten the soap out of their eyes and were well hidden on the up stream side of the trees by this time but they were looking the wrong direction. Richard and I quit paddling and waited for the others to catch up. I said to Pat; "Well you said this trip would be educational for your son." Pat said, "I guess we won't be needing that talk about the birds and the bees now."

As we approached Torreon, the river quickly became very polluted and continued to shrink in size. By the time we reached the City Park, the River was only about 40 yards wide and shallow enough to wade. Dee Payton had called the ex-governor and his son met us at the take out. Once we loaded up the canoes, we drove to a motel, cleaned up and had a big party at a local restaurant Saturday night. On the return trip, I either purchased some dirty gasoline or one of the kids I refused to pay for trying to pump my gas gave me some dirt in my tank. My fuel filter clogged up to the point, I could not pull the hills. Once I got a new fuel filter, the car ran fine. No one in my car got sick, but I think some of the others stopped at a little roadside cafe, and all got the runs.

By now, a big dam is in the middle of this river and it would be mostly a lake outing.



How I Found the Houston Canoe Club and the Texas Water Safari

by

Lewis Massingill

Back in October of 1965, 7th Infantry Division morning band practice at Camp Casey, Korea, ended about an hour early. Band members were instructed to generally police the area. I was assigned to the day room. After the floor was swept, the trash cans empty and there were no sergeants in sight, I picked up an old Argosy magazine and thumbed through it. I spotted a picture of a couple of guys that looked like they were half dead after completing a canoe race in Texas. The story talked about the world's toughest boat race. I read most of the story before it was time for lunch. I thought to myself, it couldn't be that hard. The photographer and writer must be making it sound difficult to sell magazines. I can do that.

Then in the summer of 1966, I was reading the Angleton Times newspaper my mom was sending me in Korea. There was another picture of two guys that looked like death warmed over. These two guys were the only team to finish the Texas Water Safari paddling from San Marcos down the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers to Sea Drift then up the Intercoastal canal to Freeport. I tell myself it can't be that tough. I think I will enter that race some day.

Fast forward to 1969, the new college graduate, me, gets a job with a pension trust consulting firm, rents an apartment and, with my second pay check in the bank, goes looking for a canoe. I go to a couple of boat dealers but their canoes are out of my price range. I find an advertisement for a 15' 9" Sawyer Sport Canoe for sale and answer the add. Marie Hurd is selling a little red canoe for her brother. It is a good deal so I buy it. I had no idea how close I

was to one of the original Water Safari veterans. A couple of months later I attend the Houston Boat and Travel Show. Wandering through the Astro Hall with my dad I come to a display of canoes with literature about the Houston Canoe Club and some pictures from the Texas Water Safari. A fellow by the name of Paul Carr was manning the booth and gave me some literature about the Club. I go to the next meeting at the Park Place Police Station and join the club.

At a club meeting in 1971, I see an old neighbor by the name of W. Lee Schulz. He is a graduate of UT and a Vietnam Veteran that still had not had enough adventure. I have been paddling with a friend by the name of Bill Springer. W. Lee had been paddling in his 18' 6" Moore Viper racing canoe with Bill Hammond, another guy from my hometown of Angleton. W. Lee and Bill Hammond are planning to run the Water Safari. Bill Springer and I agree to team up with them so we can practice together and have a shuttle. None of us have ever paddled on the San Marcos River before. I take a couple of fishing rods and a tackle box with me, so I can fish along the way. Bill Springer and I are only planning to paddle for the day so we leave our car at the Fentress Bridge. W. Lee and Bill Hammond are planning to paddle both Saturday and Sunday so they leave a car at Gonzales. We have official Texas Water Safari literature and we have read it. It says the lead boats only take about three hours to get to Fentress and about 14 hours to get to Gonzales. We won't be paddling full speed so we figure it will take us longer, maybe four or five hours to get to Fentress and maybe 18 to 20 hours to get to Gonzales. We should be able to leisurely paddle down the river in about twice the race time. Right? W. Lee and Hammond bring a big wall tent and enough food for all of us and try to talk Springer and me into paddling all the way to Gonzales with them. We finally

get our canoes in the water after lunch Saturday and Lee & Hammond do everything they can to delay enough, so we will go ahead and camp overnight with them and paddle all the way to Gonzales. Never having paddled down the San Marcos we paddle right through Cotton Seed and flip my little Sawyer Sport. My tackle box and one of the rods stay in the canoe but I lose the rod and reel that my dad gave me when I was about 10 years old. Lee and Hammond fare a little better. With all the weight in their canoe, they do not turn over just swamp. Once we get everything else out of the river, I swim through Cotton Seed Rapid trying to retrieve my rod.

On my second try, Lee swims beside me as we go through the rapid and he comes up with my rod. I am glad he did because I swallowed some water on my last swim through the rapid. Now Lee and Hammond have one very wet wall tent and two large sleeping bags in their canoe that are soaking wet. Their five-pound cotton sleeping bags are now closer to thirty pounds. The tent is so heavy they can't pick it up. Worst of all their cigarettes are wet. When we get down to Martindale, W. Lee and Hammond decide to walk to the grocery store to get dry cigarettes. Springer and I wait for a while. I do a little fishing.

By this time it is after 5:00 p.m. We decide we can wait no longer and paddle off without them. It starts to get dark and neither of us has a flashlight. I brought along a carbide lantern like old time miners used. I brought it along to show the other guys what a good light it put out. Only trouble is I do not have a hat to fasten it to, or anything else for that matter. We have no idea how much further it is to Fentress so we keep on paddling. We are in daylight savings so it remains light until well after 8:00. As the sun sets, we still seem to have enough light, so we keep paddling. After a while it is so dark we can't see and kind of just feel our way down the

river. Rounding a bend in the river we come to half a dozen fishermen that have their camp and big canvas wall tents set up on a gravel bar next to the river with a Coleman lantern blazing away. We pull in between their Johnboats and ask for directions and how much further is it to Fentress. Trust me on this; don't ever ask a non-canoeist about river conditions or distances. These guys say it is not much further but we need to keep to the left because there is a big rapid if we take the right channel down stream. While we are there and I have light, I get out my little carbide lamp; fill the lower chamber with carbide and the top with water, light it and we are off. First I try to hold it in the stern with one hand while we paddle. Next I give it to Springer but there is no place to put it and he can't paddle with one hand. He tries but the lantern hits some overhanging tree branches and the light goes out. I whip out my Cricket butane lighter and we are back in business. Finally we give up on both trying to paddle and I tell Springer, just hold the lantern and I will do the paddling. We come to several gravel bars in the middle of the river and always take the left channel. One channel turns into an island and of course we take the left channel as instructed. Guess what. It is the millrace for an old broken down dam. The current picks up and we speed down the channel only to see a concrete wall dead ahead. I back paddle as hard as I can but I can't slow down. Are we about to get sucked into a generator turbine or something? Once it is too late I see the channel makes a 90-degree right turn. With only me paddling in the stern and Springer holding the light, we smash the left gunwale into the concrete and almost tip over. It's after midnight and we are still not there. I paddle about another mile and there is the Fentress Bridge. Boy did it feel great to see my gold 1970 Plymouth Barracuda parked there. I get to the bank and while Springer holds the canoe I turn on the car headlights so we can

see to get the canoe out of the river and get it loaded. I take the miner's lamp and set it on top of a roadside post. We get the canoe and gear loaded up. Springer says do you think we should wait for those two. I say: "Naaw." They have their camping gear. They are probably already camped somewhere. Lets get out of here. I turn off the headlights and go to crank the engine. I get a click and a grunt out of the starter and that is it. I have run down the battery using the headlights to load the canoe. I have not yet retrieved the carbide lamp so I just turn it around toward the river so if Lee and Hammond come by they will know we are there. I get in the back seat and lay down the best I can. It is a bit short for sleeping. Springer tries lying across the two front bucket seats.

A little after 2:00 a.m. we hear Lee and Hammond hollering. I sit up and see coming out of the darkness into the glow of the carbide lamp, two soggy wet half naked figures walking down the middle of the highway crossing the bridge. They say boy are we glad to see you. We really appreciate you waiting for us. We thought you might take off.

I said, well guess what. I would have if I could have. Where is your canoe?

Hammond said: Well we turned over a time or two in the dark. We took the right channel and as we were going over a gravel bar with the canoe full of wet gear, we hit a piece of rebar sticking up at an angle. It ripped open a long gash in the bottom of our canoe. We tried to paddle and bail but that did not work so we had to leave the canoe. We saw some lights off beyond the left bank so we waded across to an island then swam across another channel. We saw a house off in the distance and found the road so we walked down the road to see if you were still here. And here we are.

Hammond decided to build a fire because both of them were cold from their midnight

swim. He warmed up a couple of cans of beans by the fire and we all had supper. W. Lee and Hammond lay down by the fire to sleep and Springer and I go back to our cramped quarters. Just after sunrise the next morning three guys drive up to fish from under the bridge. I asked them if they have any jumper cables. They said no. I say well can I borrow your battery for a minute. They said OK. I take the battery out of my car. Next I put their battery where mine should be and started my car. Once it was running, I have Springer take the battery cables off and hold them apart while I swapped the batteries back. We thanked the fishermen and hit the road for Gonzales to pick-up W. Lee's car. Once we get back to the Fentress Bridge, we unloaded my canoe and the four of us paddled it back upstream. Sure enough there is the Moore Viper, racing canoe sitting on a gravel bar with all the gear still in it and the bottom ripped open. We put all the gear in my little Sawyer Sport, put several layers of duct tape across the ripped Viper and all paddled happily back to the Fentress Bridge. Ending our first Water Safari practice run.

W. Lee Schulz and Bill Hammond went on to enter the 1972 Texas Water Safari in their repaired Moore Viper Canoe. They switched to a smaller tent and sleeping bags wrapped in plastic for the race. Hammond wears a brand new pair of Levi jeans and 100% cotton underwear. The first night of the race, Saturday, they pitched their tent just above Ottine Dam. At the Gonzales checkpoint, they throw out their wet sleeping bags and tent. They run out of time to complete the race at noon on Wednesday, making it to Victoria City Park. Hammond comes paddling in, wearing a white bed sheet folded into a giant diaper to cover the embarrassing parts of his waist to knee diaper rash.

That year, Bill Springer decided that getting married to Lana the same weekend as the Texas Water Safari would be more fun than racing

with me, saving me from the embarrassment of my ignorance and ending our canoe partner years. Bill Hammond continued to race canoes and did well. He just stayed away from the Water Safari. W. Lee Schulz and I, on the other hand, had just gotten started with our Water Safari adventures.

Bench in Memorial Park Honors Former Houston Canoe Club Member Leonard Hulsebosch

by

Linda Gorski

Here's a quiz for you.

Question: Do you know what former President George H. Bush and former Houston Canoe Club member Leonard Hulsebosch have in common?

Answer: They are both memorialized just feet away from each other in a beautiful spot in Houston's Memorial Park.

A brass plaque on a large boulder on the banks of a stream near the Golf Center at Memorial Park honors George and Barbara Bush. Just to the left of the boulder is a wooden bench with a brass plaque honoring the memory of Leonard. HCC members Louis Aulbach and Linda Gorski found the bench one day while resting after a jog. After casually reading the plaque, Louis was astonished when he realized that he had been running past this particular bench for years, never knowing it was put there in Leonard's memory. Louis and Leonard had paddled together many times over the years, and his fondness for Leonard made this discovery especially significant.

According to Martha Williams, Leonard's widow, the bench in Memorial Park was the

brainchild of Donald Daum, daughter Claire's husband. "The bench was purchased in 1997. Donald thought that spot was particularly pretty and decided it would be a nice tribute to both their parents and Lenny, who had died in January of that year. He contacted his sisters and Claire's brothers and sister, and they all contributed their share. I had no idea they had done this," said Martha.

"One day, Claire called and invited me to go on a picnic. Several members of the Hulsebosch family joined us and we met at the bench. I had sat on the bench for several minutes before someone finally suggested I read the plaque on the bench. I was so delightfully surprised!"

Martha and Leonard were among the most active members of the Houston Canoe Club during the 1980's and early 1990's. Martha said that Leonard's entrance into canoeing started with their son Robert. "He had gone canoeing a few times with a friend. Leonard read in the paper about a ranger-led canoe trip near Beaumont and suggested: 'Why don't you take your mother on this trip. I think she would enjoy it.' So, Robert borrowed his friend's canoe and we went on the trip."

"I totally fell in love with the sport and talked about what a wonderful time I had, so, one day Robert came home with a used canoe on his car which Leonard had paid for. Leonard didn't seem too interested in it himself, but when I told Carol, son Howard's wife, about it she wanted to go with me. For several Sundays, Carol and I went to Huntsville on Sundays and had a great time paddling around."

"One Sunday, as we drove out of the driveway with canoe on top of the car, I noticed Leonard peeking through the curtains. When I arrived back home, I asked him if he would like to try canoeing and he said, 'Yes.' It just mushroomed from there. He found Buffalo Allwright, bought a

Grumman aluminum canoe from him, took a

few lessons from him, and he was on his way. We went on several trips with Buffalo and Doris Allwright, and then somewhere along the way he heard about the Houston Canoe Club. We became members and he was very enthusiastic about every aspect of canoeing.

We took a whitewater course from Don Greene, and after several trips with the club he began leading trips."

Leonard retired in 1983, and from then on his days were spent dreaming up new places to canoe. "We went somewhere every weekend. He was in on the beginning of Texas Rivers Protection Association and was always busy conjuring up ways to make money for both the TRPA and the Houston Canoe Club."

The next time you're running, or walking, in Memorial Park, pause at Leonard's Bench. I know he'd like the company of a fellow canoeist!

They Were There at the Beginning: Fred and Marie Hurd

by

Anne Olden

WITH GRATITUDE to those who came before, who organized, nurtured and supported the Club with their time, enthusiasm, inspiration and funds, and to those who have continued that tradition.

Fred and Marie Hurd are two charter members who were instrumental in the birth of the Houston Canoe Club, and who still live and paddle in the Houston area. This is a little of their story, which is so much a part of the Club's history.

You may have heard that the Houston Canoe Club grew out of Fred's participation in the first Water Safari in 1963. A number of participants in that race were from Houston, and Fred and Marie became acquainted with them. After the race - perhaps after recovering from the race is more accurate - Fred and Marie got the names of the local folks who entered the race and contacted them about forming a club. By the fall of 1964, the Club was formed.

Here are some things you might find interesting about that first race in 1963. Fred and Marie didn't even know where San Marcos was. They said all kinds of unlikely craft were launched that day, including rafts and pontoon boats. Marie recalls an older woman who was quite annoyed at her husband's attempting this solo. Marie said it wasn't too far down the river that the wife encountered her husband and crooked her finger to beckon him off the river; he complied.

Fred had never paddled either of these rivers prior to the day of the race. He had looked at the area from a plane. As a pilot for Exxon, he had access to small planes and used his flying



practice to scout for canoeing possibilities. Today we read about first descents in remote areas of distant countries, but in a way this was one, too.

Seventy people started out, not sure what lay ahead. At that time there were areas of extensive logjams that had to be portaged through undergrowth (poison ivy?!) because there were no trails, not to mention the dams that presented hazards. The equipment was much heavier than today's, and they had to carry all of their provisions, including water. In addition, Fred and his partner Sam were carrying lee boards and a sail to use on the bay section. Fred said one man started in a raft with milk jugs hung around it, the jugs holding his clothes, provisions, etc. When he came to the first portage, he couldn't lift the raft.

Fred had planned to paddle with his son Ken, but at the last minute Ken's track coach said Ken would lose his track scholarship if he participated. So Fred talked Sam Hare into being his partner, although Sam had never paddled before! Fred decided to paddle only during the day, since he had no idea what dams and other obstacles they might encounter. Life magazine had sent a photographer to catch the racers at various points, and he took a number of photos of Fred and Sam. An issue was to feature the race, including a cover photo; however, the pope died, so that became the lead story, although Fred and Sam did make it into a story.

Near the end, Sam accidentally used the last of the drinking water to rinse the dishes. Fred said they were really thirsty the last day. Both men smoked a pipe, but Fred's got lost, so they took turns smoking Sam's pipe. Sam's shoes came apart from being waterlogged; they fashioned a replacement of sorts using the tops of Fred's boots. Fred's feet became blistered

Fred had been an outdoorsman from a young

age. He grew up in the Heights, canoeing, hunting and fishing with his father and Uncle Ben. They went to what is now Armand Bayou long before it had that name. His family lived close to White Oak and Buffalo Bayous. Fred and Marie have a great old photo taken in the Heights of Fred's uncle with a bicycle pulling a canoe on a trailer.

Fred and Marie's first date was in a canoe, to go fishing. It started to rain, and Marie used a bait bucket to cover her hair so it would look good for the dance that evening. There's nothing that can dampen the love and affection they clearly still hold for each other.

Fred continued his daring outdoor adventures as he became a competitive black powder marksman, and a racer of motorcycles and power boats. He says that while it was all exciting, he most enjoyed the quiet sailing and canoeing times with Marie and their two children, Ken and Carol.

Fred was in the Marines during WWII when his son Ken was born, but Fred didn't see Kenny until he was 15 months old. When Fred came home from the war he vowed he'd never again be away from his son that long. Ken enjoyed the outdoors as much as his parents, participating in races in Dallas and Waco. Today he's a representative for several outdoor equipment and boating companies. He recently moved to Tampa with his family so he can



spend more time on his sailboat. Their daughter Carol participated in many early Club trips and now lives in California.

In the early days there weren't a lot of canoes around, and very few kayaks. Canoes were tandem; no stores stocked them. Delhomme Boats would special order a canoe from Old Town. So eventually Fred and Marie went into the business of selling quality canoes, as well as archery equipment, another of their outdoor interests.

Fred and Marie still occasionally attend a club meeting. If you see them - and you'll know them by the many folks who gather around to greet them - say thank you.



See you on down the river! Thank you to all the contributors.

-- Louis Aulbach, editor.