



Houston Canoe Club
Water Line



www.houstoncanoecub.org :: Volume 64 :: July 2007

Table of Contents

Meeting Announcement

Safety Tips

History: Buffalo Motel by Louis Aulbach

Welcome New Members

Draft HCC Budget by Ken Anderson

Backwater Backwash(report from a paddling Mom - Cecilia Gill)

Trip Reports

Hill Country at High Water by Donna Grimes

Sabine River on Memorial Day weekend by Cecilia Gill

Pecos at high water by Mark Andrus

Water Safari & group paddle by Christy Long

Lake Miller by John Rich

Sheldon Reservoir by Cindy Bartos

Paddling in Belize by Mark Andrus

Brazos River Trip by Mark Andrus



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July 11th's meeting will feature **Dr. David Flynn**, B.S., D.C. Dr. Flynn's presentation will focus on common paddling/outdoor sports injuries and their prevention. If you have any particular treatments that you'd like to know more about, please send me, Rick Brunson rvbspam-hcc@yahoo.com an email and Dr. Flynn will try work it into his presentation.

Dr. Flynn is a graduate of Penn State University and Texas Chiropractic College. He has lived in the Clear Lake area for about three years now and has been an outdoor enthusiast all his life. He enjoys kayaking in Armand Bayou and Galveston Bay.

Dr. Flynn recently moved his practice to Shapiro Chiropractic & Rehab Clinic in Sugar Land. He centers his practice on nutrition and wellness. Hopefully by following his injury prevention tips, we won't need to work on treatments! See you at the meeting!... ..Rick

meet at **7pm** on the second **Wednesday of each month** at the **Bayland Community Center**, 6400 Bissonnet Street, Houston, Texas 77074. The meeting is run by volunteers who stumble through an agenda composed of stories of recent trips, descriptions of upcoming trips, paddling related programs, paddling tips, and the introduction of visitors. Gear heads prevail and discussions about all aspects of paddling assure an all around good time. Visitors are very welcome.

The meeting begins at 7 PM at Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet, in the community building. The park is located just west of Hillcroft on Bissonnet.

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July Officer's Safety Tips Fleet Captain's tips

Bob Price



**Accidents do happen!
(And this comes from recent personal experience)**

1.) Most accidents occur on the river bank.

Always take some extra time and be certain that the river bank is not slick or the access point is not too steep. When it is, rig a safety line to assist in the ascent or descent. Make sure when descending to the river that your lower foot hold will not trap your foot. It is better to have both feet slip and fall on your tail than to spend several months recuperating from a broken leg.

2.) Consider carpooling if you normally drive alone.

It ensures you have a way to get home if something should happen. It also gives you a chance to meet other members and get to know them better. In addition the trip goes faster when you have someone to talk with.

3.) Take a basic first aid course from the Red Cross

If possible, take an advanced course in Wilderness First Aid. You may be the one who has to assist someone else. Know and recognize the signs when someone is in distress. We tend to paddle in social groups, and we need to know how to keep each other safe on the river. The more members we can get trained in the basics of safety, the safer our trips will be.



The Buffalo Motel Ushers In the Automobile Age to Houston

by Louis F. Aulbach

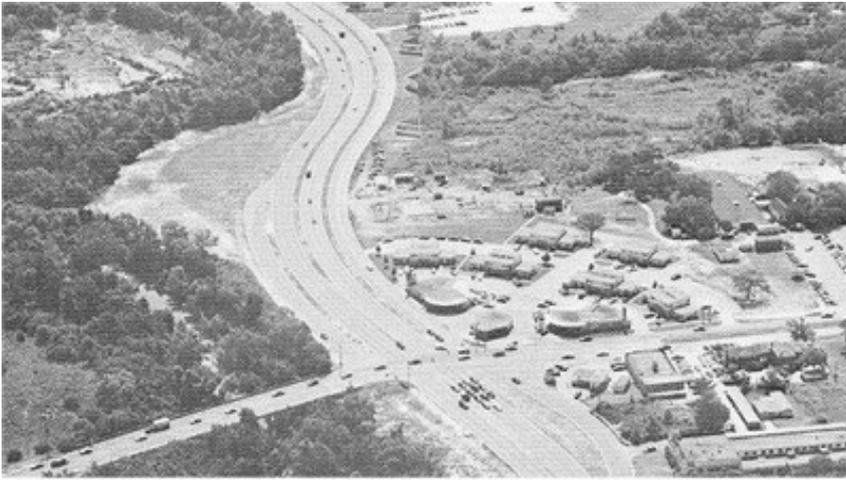
Houston began to embrace the automobile as its primary means of personal transportation as early as the late 1920's. The Depression and World War II delayed things a bit, but after the war, the local economy surged, the City's population exploded, the City expanded the local highway system and the automobile became an integral part of Houston's lifestyle.

Will Hogg spearheaded the move to suburban living with the development of River Oaks. Residents of the suburb commuted to downtown along Buffalo Drive, the City's first major parkway. The four lane roadway, which is now Allen Parkway, paralleled Buffalo Bayou's south bank from downtown to Shepherd Drive. Getting to work in your personal car was a breeze.

By 1951, a sign of things to come could be seen in the Buffalo Town House Hotel Tourist Court on the southeast corner of Waugh Drive and Buffalo Drive.

The Buffalo Motel, as it was later called, was an automobile traveler's complex that consisted of a filling station directly on the corner, a restaurant along Waugh Drive to the west and the motel lobby and dwellings along Buffalo Drive to the east. Additional townhouse residential units comprised six buildings at the rear of the property.

This configuration of lodgings, a restaurant and a service station on a prominent corner of a main thoroughfare is familiar to us today. Holiday Inn, La Quinta, Motel 6 and many other hoteliers have joined with the likes of Denny's, the Waffle House and every brand of gas station to set up along our highways and freeways. It is a scene that is common now, but in the 1950's, it was avant garde.



The Buffalo Motel occupied the southeast corner of Buffalo Drive (Allen Parkway) and Waugh Drive in the 1953 photo.

Photo courtesy TexasFreeway.com

In the early 1960's, Gus Wortham's American General Insurance Company acquired the Buffalo Motel, and construction began on the first of the five buildings of the American General Center in 1963. The office complex now occupies a prominent location among the revitalized neighborhoods and new developments along Allen Parkway. And, the automobile is still the Houston commuter's transportation of choice.



The American General Center on Allen Parkway.

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New members

Mark Boyden

mark.boyden@noise.org

wife (Carol Lewis) and two children Brian (age 19) and Gwyneth (age 6).
Gwyneth may be a grandchild?

He lives in Austin and he's been involved in paddling for a while. Mark will be joining HCC on the Pecos River trip in October. Welcome to HCC, Mark!

Address: 5900 Thomas Drive
Austin, Texas 78723-3233

Javier and Vicki Ibarra

20602 Palm Rain Court
Katy 77449
Mrsibarra@myway.com
One child, Rhys, age 17

Javier and Vicki attended the June HCC meeting and have signed up to paddle the Fourth of July Columbus Loop trip.

Welcome aboard to the Ibarra's.

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2007 - RECEIPTS LESS EXPENDITURES				GENERAL FUND		Annual	Membership	Interest	Total	Less	Remainder
NOTES	BUDGET	ACTUAL				Membership	Receipts @	Income *	Receipts	Budgeted	@ 113
						Fee	113 Members		@ 113	Expenditures	Members
				Beginning Balance, 1/1/2007	3,454.16						
	RECEIPTS			Receipts Less Expenditures To Date	90.27						
				Transfer In		25.00	2,825.00	1,092.50	3,917.50	(2,913.60)	1,003.90
A	HCC Dues (113 members @ \$25)	2,825.00	1,725.00	Transfer Out	(143.71)	20.00	2,260.00	1,092.50	3,352.50	(2,913.60)	438.90
	ACA \$10 Event Fee (Trust)		0.00			15.00	1,695.00	1,092.50	2,787.50	(2,913.60)	(126.10)
	Member ACA Dues Paid by Club (Trust)		210.00	General Fund Balance	3,400.72						
B	Roll Session (Trust)		672.80								
	Interest Income	546.25	0.00								
	Other		0.00								
	Total Receipts	3,371.25	2,607.80								
	EXPENDITURES			Beginning Balance, 1/1/2007	96.36						
				Donations	265.84						
				Received from HCC	0.00						
				Expenditures							
	ACA \$10 Event Fee (Trust)		250.00	Education and Safety Fund Balance	362.20						
	Member ACA Dues Paid by Club (Trust)		210.00								
B	Roll Sessions (Trust)		500.00								
	Paddle America Dues	200.00	0.00								
	Guest Speaker Gifts	160.00	71.43								
	Postage & PO Box	80.00	72.00								
C	HCC Events	600.00	439.45	4.75% CD @ Washington Mutual, due 10/29/08							
	Awards	115.00	0.00								
	Bayland Deposit	100.00	0.00	Beginning Balance, 1/1/2007	15,446.47						
	Business Supplies	70.00	0.00	Interest	753.72						
	Printing & Office	70.00	0.00	Transfer In *	6,799.81						
	Rental Unit	453.60	453.60	Transfer Out							
D	Education and Safety	100.00	0.00								
E	Donations & Affiliations	500.00	500.00	Balance, 4/28/2007	23,000.00						
	Supplies & Equipment	50.00	0.00								
	Trademark	35.00	0.00								
	Website	180.00	0.00	* From Closing of Money Market Acct	6,656.10						
	HCC Marketing	200.00	0.00	From General Fund	143.71						
	Other		21.05								
				Total Transferred into CD	6,799.81						
	Total Expenditures	2,913.60	2,517.53								
	Receipts Less Expenditures	457.65	90.27								

Total Cost	Budget
Per Person	
Flatwater Class	60.00
First Aid	75.00
DVD's	30.00
	210.00

NOTES

- A # Renewing and New Members Since January 1st 66
- B The roll sessions are ACA sanctioned events conducted at the Dad's Club YMCA pool at Voss Road & I-10. HCC currently partners with the Houston Association of Sea Kayakers (HASK) and the Bayou City Whitewater Club (BCWC). The cost of using the pool is shared between the partnering clubs based upon usage. Sessions are generally twice a month. Dad's Club charges \$50 per session
- C Payments to-date are for last year's Christmas Party
- D HCC received a contribution from the river-guide author Joe Butler specifically designated for promoting paddling education and safety. The club officers decided to establish a special fund for that purpose and to annually contribute a portion of the club's receipts toward that purpose.
- E Donations and Affiliations (other than ACA) From Their Websites:
- American Whitewater 75.00 American Whitewater restores rivers dewatered by hydropower dams, eliminates water degradation, improves public land management, and protects public access to rivers for responsible recreational use.
 - Galveston Bay Foundation 100.00 GBF's mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of the Galveston Bay estuarine system, and its tributaries, for present users and for posterity.
 - Citizens Environmental Coalition 75.00 An information clearinghouse and communications network for environmental issues in the Houston/Galveston area, and bring diverse groups together to build awareness and stimulate discussion about regional environmental issues.
 - Texas Rivers Protection Association 100.00 Mission is to protect the flow, water quality and natural beauty of Texas rivers; to promote the safe and wise use of Texas rivers; to develop an awareness of the rights of the public to use navigable rivers and an awareness of the rights of riparian landowners to be protected from trespass and other intrusions; to promote mutual respect between river owners and river users for each others legal rights; to foster an awareness and respect for diverse natural waterway environments; to educate its members and the public concerning conservation and preservation of Texas rivers and river users for each others legal rights; to foster an awareness and respect for diverse natural waterway environments; to educate its members and the public concerning conservation and preservation of Texas rivers and streams, and to acquire property and/or easements that provide its members, and the public, access to Texas rivers and streams. Mark Andrus and Anne Olden are board members
 - San Marcos River Foundation 75.00 Purpose is to preserve public access to the San Marcos River and protect the flow, natural beauty and purity of the river, its watershed and estuaries for future generations
 - Bayou Preservation Association 75.00 Mission is to protect and restore the richness and diversity of area water ways through activism, advocacy, collaboration, and education.
- 500.00



Welcome to "Backwater Backwash", a random and incomprehensible collection of thoughts, observances and experiences in no particular order, so that it makes absolutely no sense at all.

by Cecilia Gill

Food. Glorious food. What we plan, prepare, pack, and the tools used to cook it, eat it, and clean up afterwards.

A mother worries about how her little ones eat. So, in the beginning, I tried to create much the same foods and in the same way as I did at home. You know, Breakfast, lunch and supper. Eggs, bacon, toast, coffee, juice, then sandwiches and instant soup, then later, a salad, meat, veggie side, starch side, bread, drink, dessert. The boys refused to eat.



I tried one dish meals. Even though they were dishes the boys usually liked well enough at home, the boys refused to eat.

I let the boys pick what **THEY** wanted to eat for our next camp out. They picked hot dogs and chips with chocolate chip cookies and a soda... which is easier to deal with, anyway. Simple stuff kid's like. And yet, the boys refused to eat.

We stayed at a state park with running water and electricity. I brought along the toaster oven so that I could even cook toaster treats and corn dogs! Even so, the boys refused to eat.



Our last trip, we ate ready to eat stuff. Not MRE's, but stuff like granola bars, Vienna sausages, sandwich crackers, trail mix, and cold stuff like fresh fruits, individually packaged milk and juice and other drinks, cheese, drinkable yogurt, and anything that did not need cooking, putting on plates, or the use of utensils. We just snacked our way through the day, and did not have to pack a kitchen box at all! We didn't even mess with instant stuff, so I didn't have a stove or propane. No dishes to wash, either! It was great! And the boys ate like little pigs! Amazing...

I'm not knocking going all out and cooking up some great meals out in the great outdoors. In fact, I still plan to do that, but only sometimes. There will be trips where I don't mind at all, in fact, I'll WANT to do the elaborate meal. But I think at this point, the good ole KISS method (Keep

It Simple, Stupid!) will serve us beautifully. And besides, quite often, all the extra effort is wasted. Especially since the boys would apparently rather snack all day than eat 3 squares, anyway....

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Hill Country Water when It's UP!

By Donna Grimes

The hill country is my favorite place to paddle. Here the creeks and rivers are clear, the rapids fun, and each turn offers a new adventure. Of course, some rivers I like better than others, and my favorite is the Medina River. This is a small, twisty river with a tree canopy that expands across the river creating a water tunnel, like a lover's lane.



(the Medina River with its beautiful tree canopy)

Normally, we like to paddle these waters when the cfs is around 500, but the past few years, we have been lucky if its been 300 – often 100 and almost unpaddleable. The Medina last year was 53 cfs. Forget it!

But not this year! With good rains in the hill country, the water has risen. Before I knew it was going to be high, I posted a kid's paddle in the hill country. Bill and I like to attend the annual Kerrville Folk Festival and have always paddled during the day and listened to great music at night. This year we were having his niece (9) and nephew (8) visiting and last year took them canoeing and they LOVED it. So....why not this year.

Others responded to my posting – with kids, but then the rain started and the river rose. I cancelled out on those with kids other than the ones we had. Now, we had worked with them last year on paddling strokes – both kayak and canoe, when the water was low and they did great.

I was concern when a week before the trip, the Guadalupe was 20,000 cfs and the Medina 10,000. However, water drops quickly in the hill country and by the time we paddled on Saturday, June 2, the Guadalupe was 1,470 at Spring Branch. High....but...maybe not too bad.

On the trip we had, Bill & Donna Grimes, Avery (9) & Henry (8) Devault, Christy Long, Debbie Snow, Janice Kweic, and Louis Aulbach

Our favorite play spot (Rock Pile) was essentially washed out . We ran the kids through it in our boats first



and let them see the line, then let them take turns running the stable yak board through. What a great time! They wanted to do it time and time again.



Further down the river, we came to Travertine Falls – a favorite spot to stop and climb the falls. The size was twice normal size.



(Christy in front of Travertine Falls)



(Janice Kweic enjoys the splash from the refreshing falls)

Then the next play spot – Dog Leg. The river right drop was totally under water, but the left was fast, ending by the big rock where a large standing wave swallowed many boats.



We stopped and watched maybe twenty boats turn over there.



One even was torn in



half. (The red kayak is pushing the half of a red canoe down to the take out)

However, our two little troupers did great as they ran it first with Uncle Bill, and then several times by themselves. How proud they were of themselves.



(Avery adroitly paddles the yakboard away from the hole)

The next day was the Medina. The water was much lower – only 750 cfs compared to the Guad's 1,470 cfs. BUT...this is a very different kind of river. It has its beauty – the tree canopy and the crystal clear water and slow spots. But, it has more dangers: many narrow turns and twists with potential for boat-holding strainers. Because of this fear, we worked out an order for getting the kids down this one safely. Bill always carried one child with him and the other paddled the yak board followed by two good paddlers. Usually I lead and Christy and Debbie with their fast little kayaks follow the novice paddler.

However, best laid plans....right? Just a quarter mile down the river, Henry (8) didn't make the eddy turn tightly enough, was being pulled down into a strainer. The boat flipped, Bill and I went after him, and we ended up with two people in the water and the kayak paddle lost somewhere in the strainer. Shortly after, a wrong turn put Bill with TWO kids in his boat into a closed passage. We were lucky because the blockage could be broken down before the boat got sideways and tipped...with two kids in the water.

With the lost kayak paddle, using the yak board efficiently was jeopardized until

Christy offered her expensive graphite paddle to the kids and took their stubby



little canoe paddle.

The kids LOVED this lighter easier-to-manage paddle, but Christy suffered.

We made it to the take out.



The kids had a great time in spite of the turnover but I **will never take novices down water at this level ever again**. There could have been serious consequences and it's just not worth it. When the water is lower, I'd gladly take anyone and let them learn with the challenges presented here, but not at high water.

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Memorial Day – Sabine River Paddle By Cecilia Gill

This past Memorial Day Weekend we did our annual Sabine River Trip with the motorized 2 canoe decked and canopy-ed barge. Those who read the last "Backwater Backwash" already know about the shear pin incident, so we won't cover that part too much.



(pontooning two canoes to create a larger house boat)

It started off with Lonnie having a bit of tummy trouble before the trip. Mostly as I was packing up to go. Lonnie has a touchy tummy anyway, and anything can and will set it off. Since usually he can get tummy trouble and no one else will get sick, and since there was no fever, and since he was starting to feel better, I figured it just something he ate and that it was better for us to do the trip we planned and were all looking forward to, rather than cancel. If we had to just scoot on out of there, pack up and go home, well, we had a motor.

We camped out under the Texas Hwy 63 / La Hwy 8 bridge over the Sabine River Friday night. Lonnie started feeling better by the time we got there. If he had still been actually sick or running fever, we would have not unpacked and just gone back home in the morning. But, he was OK, eating, drinking, running around, and seemed to be fine.



first night's camping -

And no one else had any indication of being sick at that time. If I even for a minute thought that Lonnie had something that we'd all get, instead of just a reaction to something he ate, we would have stayed home. This "reaction" thing is very common for Lonnie, although he does seem to be growing out of it, thank goodness!

It was a lovely day going down the river. Even though we have a motor, we are often the last ones. Partly because we stop and play so much, and partly because we kind of hang out, waiting for any "stragglers" who bit off more than they could chew. We had a grand ole time! The boys got to play with their new big squirt guns and a few other water and beach toys.



When we got to the first sand bar to camp for the night, the group we usually hang out with had picked an area that was icky and mucky to come out of the boat there, but there were trees for shade and to tie boats up to. We decided that we'd rather be in a more sandy area, and went back a bit. Besides, we were going to anchor off and sleep on the barge. We wanted the nicer sand to play around in.



The only problem was the Boy Scouts next to us. They didn't bother me, but I think they got to Joe a little. I started teasing him, "You darn kids get out of my yard! Turn that noise down! Why,

when I was your age..." Joe was not amused.

Once we started getting situated and our elaborate supper going, the other shoe hit the fan. Morgan started getting sick. We figured that since Lonnie wasn't sick for even a whole 24 hours, that it probably wouldn't last too long. Plus, it was

getting dark. On top of that, I had everything for getting sick with us. I have a very well equipped First Aid kit, and I always have crackers and ginger ale.

In the middle of the night was my turn. Oh, boy. It was a miserable night. In the morning, Lonnie was feeling great. Joe was feeling great. In fact, Joe never got sick! Morgan was better, but still not tip top, but I couldn't move. I could barely talk. Water made me gag. No one else was as sick as I was. I was dying. We stayed put because Captain Mommy was out of commission for a while.

That was OK...Lonnie and Daddy had a great time together, playing on the big sand bar and in the kayak, while Morgan and I slept on the barge. I don't know what had us, but whatever it was it hit fast, hard, then left quickly. It was like a 12 hour bug. It didn't last long, thank goodness!



We also discovered that **Off!** in the orange can doesn't work very well. I'm not convince that they were MOSQUITO bites, because these started off as flat very red tiny dots, but whatever it was, **Off!** didn't help. I missed Lonnie's left arm, where he had actual mosquito bites to compare by. These red dots looked more like measles! But I knew they weren't, because they were only on exposed skin areas. But neither Joe nor I had them... What, we're not good enough for whatever kind of bugs bit the boys?



(check out the bug bites on Morgan's face)

Then, the rain started to come. I was feeling better by then, and helped Joe get a tarp around the canopy on the barge. Then we all got on the barge and slept through the rain. It was so pleasant, sleeping on the barge in the rain, we all slept like babies! When the rain lifted, we voted as to whether we wanted to stay put or just go straight on through to the next sand bar. We decided to go on to the next sand bar. I suppose it was probably around 4 or 5 in the afternoon when we left the first sand bar...

Between the two sand bars, alone in the middle of nowhere, is when the shear pin did its thing, and we discovered that we need to add a punch and a hammer to our tool kit. We managed anyway, and went on.

At the second sand bar, our group had already paddled out, because they all had to do things on Monday. So, we were now the only HCC people there. That was OK. We didn't mind. We're not shy..

We slept on the barge again. We decided that in the morning, instead of our usual piddling around and being the last ones out, we'd weigh anchor and beat a path down the river to the take out.... and THEN piddle around after we got unloaded and packed up. So that's what we did.



(Cecilia the captain of her family barg)

The Memorial Day Weekend Trip tends to be much smaller than the Labor Day Trip, and we didn't have the elaborate group meals, the games, the fireworks or the margarita barge. The funny thing is, even without all that, and WITH the getting sick, bug bites, rain and the shear pin incident, we had a great time and can't wait for the next trip! I'd say that says a lot for the Sabine River! So if WE can have a good time with all that going on, why weren't YOU there? See you Labor Day Weekend on the Sabine River, then!

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Pecos Trip Report-June, 2007

Mark Andrus

On Sunday, June 3, 2007, Jack Richardson and I left Comstock to go to Pandale Crossing. Just before we got there, I had to drive the pickup over a couple of inches of water running over a low water crossing. It was the first time that we had to cross water in that location, so it indicated that we would probably have higher water than usual. It was just going to be the two of us on the trip since the other people we asked had other commitments so they could not come. We took two canoes. Jack brought a Tripper XL for himself and loaned me an Old Town Discovery Scout. The put-on was the usual process of deciding what to put in the canoes and getting some organization to it. Our shuttle driver is in the foreground. We put in at the river bank instead of going to the usual place on the island which was under water.



(putting in at the Pandale Bridge)

We paddled to our usual first night spot, the Ledges, which is about 10 1/2 miles downstream. We often have to push to get there, but we were able to get there by 5PM since we had high water on the trip. The gnats were a problem, but bug spray got rid of most of them. The weather looked nice so we set up our Roll-a-Cots and did not bother with tents. Much later that night, we wished we had set up tents. A thunderstorm came up with very high winds to begin with. If we had set up tents, we would have them blown over unless they had been rocked and tied to plants well. There is almost no dirt to stake a tent along the Pecos River. Both of us gathered up our bedding and headed under an overhang. We had to wait about an hour and a half for the storm to blow over. We were finally able to get back to sleep before daybreak.

We made 20 miles the next day because the water level was good. We were able to go look in Everett Canyon and saw more water coming out of the springs than usual. We went through the Flutes in under 2 hours, because we did not have to get out to push our boats over the Flutes. Jack said the water was the

highest he had ever seen the Pecos. I checked the International Boundary Commission web site later and found the water levels converted being in the 800 cfs range for the week but we both guessed it should be higher. We saw debris several feet higher in the trees. I later found the river had briefly been in the over 5,000 cfs range during the day on May 26. It got even higher on Sunday, June 11 after we had been off the river a couple of days.

We did not set up tents that night because we were tired and we thought the rain was gone. Again, it rained late that night. We pulled up our blankets and ignored the rain. We paddled by the house on one side of the river that had a power line running across the river to reach it. Also, they built a road down the canyon walls for access. We wondered how much they had to spend to get power and road access. They ran the power line a long time ago, but now it would probably be cheaper to go off grid with solar, wind and maybe a generator.

We decided that we would go on to Lewis Canyon for the night and layover. We did set up tents since we would at least need the tents for shade during the day. We paddled in long sleeves, long pants, hats and gloves to keep off the glaring sun. It did not rain when we put up tents. Lewis Canyon had water running down the canyon and springs along the bank. We were able to bath in small pools in the area just above the drop off. The water would get warm when the sun shown



on the water.

Lewis

Canyon filled with water

There was a shower where the water dropped over the edge. One spring was to the right of where the water dropped off the canyon. That water was cool and fresh.



(cool pools to bathe in)

I went fishing with a cheap rod and reel I bought. The reel broke, so Jack showed me how to fish using a bottle to hold the line and using a thumb to release the line.



I did not catch anything, but the fish were probably there. We decided to take two layoff days back to back on that Wednesday and Thursday. We took it easy on Wednesday. We explored up the canyon on Thursday.

The whole picture with drop-off and spring

We left Lewis Canyon on Friday morning. Jack wanted to stop at Split Rock at mile 43 to camp. I told Jack that would leave us a hard 17 mile day on Saturday and we would probably have to spend an extra day if we did. We were able to get through Lewis Canyon and



Coldwater Canyon without lining because the high water covered most of the rocks. We reaching Split Rock around noon and used it as a lunch spot. We went on.

We lined Hail Mary (Painted Rock Canyon). It took a while to find a good camp spot, but we finally found one around mile 51 after we hit the lake. We did not set up tents, so it rained again late that night.

We were back on the lake at eight the next morning, but the winds still got heavy going out. We reached the boat ramp tired, but Jack said he wanted to turn around and do it again. I had already made plans to head back the next day, so we did not do it again. I stayed in Comstock that night where an even bigger thunderstorm hit the house we were staying in. I ate lunch in Ciudad Acuna on Sunday. A Texas League game (San Antonio Missions-Corpus Christi Hooks) game was going on when I passed through San Antonio, so I watched a few innings of the game. I made it home after midnight.

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Water Safari and Paddle – June 9 – 10

Trip Coordinator Christy Long

Trip destination: Saturday Texas Water Safari, San Marcos River.

Saturday 12:00 Pecan Park Retreat to Sculls crossing. Sunday
Guadalupe River, Bergheim to Edge Falls Road.

Trip Date(s): June 9 & 10, 2007

Trip Weather: Sunny, Partly Cloudy, 75° low and 90° high

Saturday, June 9 several HCC members meet at Aquarena Springs to watch the start of the Texas Water Safari. The racers were fine-tuning their equipment, checking their food supply, and securing their gear. Everyone was excited and happy and the enthusiasm was catching.

Our group walked through the boats, gear, and paddlers, asking questions about outfitting, food, and gear, and the racers are happy to explain their systems.



This boat has everything it will need for 260 miles. The only thing that can be given to the racers is water at certain supply points along the way. Note the tube from the water jugs and foam to hold jug in place.

By 8:30am, most racers had their boat in the water and were warming up for the 260-mile race. The water was higher than normal for the Texas Safari, which made things a little more dangerous. The plus side, of course, is that everyone expected a good race time.



By 8:35 Tom Goynes started delivering reminders and cautions, 8:40 taps was played, 8:45 the National Anthem is sang, 8:50 a prayer is said. 8:55 Mr Goynes explains the starting horn, and precisely at 9:00am the horn is sounded and the race begins.



We watch until all the racers were out of sight. Our next stop was Rio Vista. Boaters used all routes to get over the rapid. Some walked around, others went river left, and a few ran the shoot. What a hoot!



Racers running river left, at Rio Vista rapid on the San Marcos River.



Racer running down the middle of Rio Vista Rapid.



Most of those who didn't walk their boats around ended either tipped or swamped

Next for us, was Cotton Seed rapid. The generous landowner on river left allowed people to view the race from his beautiful property. The first racers got there about 10:20am and we saw some beautiful maneuvering down this winding rapid with big rocks as obstacles.

The Kevlar and glass boats are lightweight but crashing into rocks can be hazardous to the integrity of the hull.



Racers running Cottonseed down the middle.



Racer, solo, OC1.

Notice safety personnel on the rock and beach.



Racers lining up with the V at Cottonseed.

Check out the following websites for more information about the race and

racers. <http://www.olympiki.com/>

<http://www.luv2paddle.com>

Around 11:15am, our group headed back to Pecan Park Retreat and met up with a few others for our own three-mile trip down the San Marcos (250 cfs). We got off the river about 4 o'clock, cleaned up, and went out to dinner.



Donna,

doing a little surfing. San Marcos River.



Janis, having lots of fun. San Marcos River.



Paul, making it look easy. San Marcos River.

After dinner, we stopped at Rio Vista and watched a couple of guys, with surf boards and bogie board, surfing in the rapid. It looked like fun and they ask if we

would like to try. I changed into my paddling clothes and used the bogie board to surf on the Rio Vista wave. It was a blasted.



Christy, having fun on a boogie board. Rio Vista, San Marco River

Sunday, June 10, 2007, as the Safari racers headed south down the Guadalupe our group headed northwest, to the Bergheim (900 cfs) put in. The water was just right and we eddy hopped and ferried for the first half mile. We played at Rock Pile for a while and then headed on down. At dogleg, we ran safely to the left and got out for lunch. Then someone decided the rapid was at good level to run through the hole by the big rock. So several of our group did that for a while and still got off the river 2:00pm. I got home about 7:00pm, the same time that the first safari racers were reaching finish line in Seadrift.

Sincerely,
Christy

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Trinity River & Lake Miller Houston, Texas

May 2007

JohnRich@nww.net

The Trinity River lies east of Houston, Texas, along Interstate Highway 10, about half-way between Houston and Beaumont, at the small town of Wallisville. Lake Miller is an isolated lake about one mile in diameter, lying just northeast of I-10, off of the Trinity River. You can see Lake Miller as you go over the Interstate-10 Trinity River bridge, if you look to the northeast from the top. Lake Miller is reachable only through a narrow channel in the woods called Lake Pass, which runs between the Trinity River and Lake Charlotte.

Access to the Trinity River under I-10 is closed-off with a fence at this time, due to the construction of a new parallel bridge span.

First up for this report, are two maps of the area, and the water level report.

On the west side of the Trinity River is a "wildlife trace", with a dirt road that approaches the river at several points for boardwalk overlooks, which could be used as a put-in site. And on the east side is the Trinity River Island Recreation Area, which consists of a boat ramp, parking, and picnic areas. See the map, below. Both are free of charge. The Recreation Area has a bathroom. The dotted red line indicates my paddling path up the Trinity River.



For this trip, I chose to try the public boat ramp on the east side of the Trinity River.



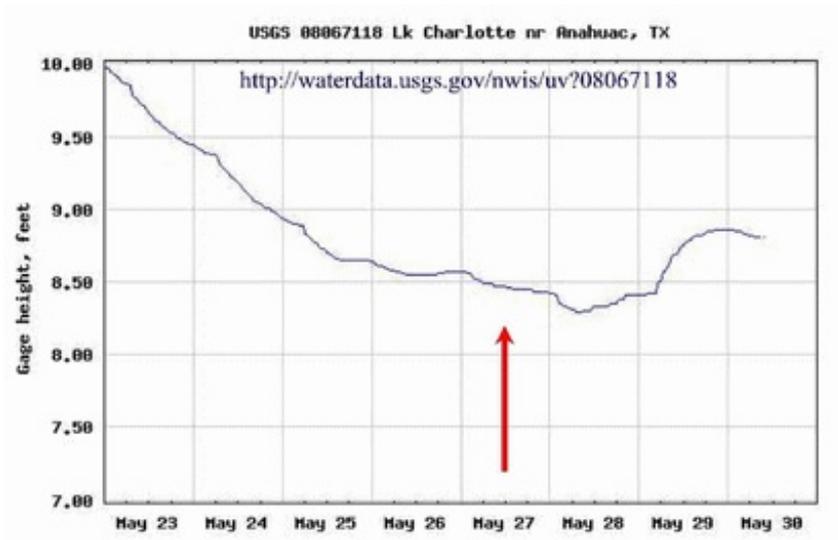
This is an island park with the Trinity River splitting around both sides of it. The east branch of the river has a dam, and the west branch contains locks. The dam and locks are apparently rarely employed, so most of the time river navigation is unfettered. The dam:



This next map is patched together with screen image prints from Topozone on the internet. It's crude, but it shows the necessary detail. The dotted red line is the course that I paddled from the Trinity River, under Interstate-10, up Lake Pass, and into Lake Miller.



The water level at the Lake Charlotte gauge this day was at about 8.5 feet. At that level, the ground alongside Lake Pass was about one foot above water, so the channel was clearly defined, and there was no confusion from having water everywhere amongst the trees, with no shoreline banks visible.



I pulled my truck up to the boat ramp area to prepare for the canoe trip. I didn't want to clog up the concrete boat ramp, which is used by the motorboat folks, so I plunked into the water alongside the parking area. There are rocks there for erosion control, so watch your footing, but that keeps you out of the mud:



The first thing you see as you push into the water and head upstream to the north, are the locks, used to move boats between different water levels when the dam is closed. Alongside the curb bumpers is a hanging chain with a sign that reads: "Pull chain to use locks". I was really, really, tempted to pull that chain and see what the Lock Tender would do with my mighty 16-foot canoe. But with my luck, he would have had no sense of humor, and he would have trapped me inside the lock for hours... As it is, you just paddle right on through unimpeded, and admire the massive engineering used to move large gates.



This is typical scenery along the Trinity River here. There is no development, and swampland on both sides, so the banks are lined with trees and it is relatively unspoiled.



I started out at 8:30 on Sunday morning, and there was little motorized traffic on the river. I encountered only three boats on the paddle up to Lake Pass. The river is several hundred yards wide at a minimum, and I hugged the shoreline to stay away from high-speed boats in the middle. I cut across the middle only to shorten corners where the river curves, and when I couldn't hear any motorboats coming.

On the map, the road to Trinity River Island is 1.7 miles. So I figure with the curves in the river, the distance to Lake Pass was about 2.5 miles. It took me several hours to cover this going upstream, and it was a long, somewhat boring, stretch. If I had to do it again, I would shorten the Trinity River distance by putting-in along the Wildlife Trace on the west bank of the Trinity, to allow more time on Lake Miller, instead of spending so much time slogging along up the Trinity.

Here's a common site along the Trinity River: petroleum pipeline crossing signs (below):

In a few cases, the shoreline is cleared of brush to make the signs obvious, like the one below, but in most instances the signs are at least partially obscured by foliage.



So, no dropping anchor or dredging from your canoes – you have been warned!

I don't know what kind of tree this was, but the purple berries enticed me to stop and get a photo:



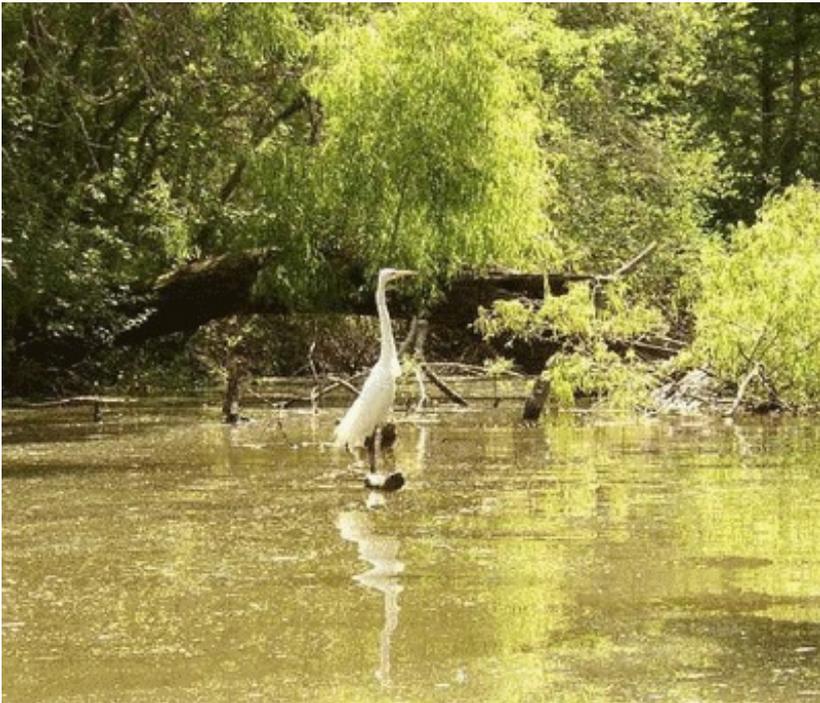
A dead catfish: My paddle blade is 8" wide, so that would make this catfish about 48" long! He was a big one.



The I-10 bridge (below): By gosh, this location was noisy. The trucks make a horrendous racket thu-thumping across the pavement and steel girders on high-pressure tires. I couldn't wait to get beyond it to peace and quiet again. But while the noise quickly diminishes, the truth is, even in Lake Miller you can almost always hear highway traffic along I-10 in the distance.



Just north of I-10, the first channel on the right is Lake Pass. Guarding the entrance was this regal-looking egret (below): I've discovered that the noise of a paddle in water frightens birds off early. So my photo technique now is to paddle-up some speed and momentum from a distance, aim carefully, and then glide silently towards your feathered foto subject. That way the birds will sit still longer, allowing you to get closer, before they become wary of your presence and fly off.



A typical scene from inside Lake Pass (below): This is the wide part, believe it or not. It grows narrower the further upstream you go, and you end up winding your way between logs and trees. I even encountered a small motorboat way up there, tied up to a tree, manned by two fishermen. I was quite surprised to find them that far up that narrow winding channel. With multiple lines in the water, they had the monopoly on any fish that would dare to swim through.



Lake Pass scenery, with cypress stubs and overhanging Spanish moss (below): There were also a few overhanging large wasp nests - don't disturb those. And if you brush through tree limbs, your boat will fill up with gangly-legged spiders. Feel free to scream like a girl.



As you go upstream through Lake Pass to Lake Miller, there are four channels branching off to the right. The first is very obvious and goes into a triangular pond that looks man-made. The next two are narrow ditches that veer off to the right. I tried paddling up those ditches looking for a shortcut to the south end of Lake Miller, but they are too narrow and clogged with logs and trees. The fourth channel is the one you want to get to Lake Miller. It's not real obvious – just water flowing through trees, and it's very narrow and winding. However, it's also very short – maybe 100 yards, and then you pop out into the open water of Lake Miller.

Typical scenery in Lake Miller:



Remember where you came out into Lake Miller, because it's hard to find on your way back. It's in the northwest corner. A good landmark is a lone short stubby cypress tree just outside the pass, which looks like a Japanese bonsai tree.

Lake Miller is about a mile in diameter. My goal this trip was to try and find the plaque honoring Mr. Miller, for whom the lake is named. The trick for that is to aim for the tallest tree you can see sticking out above all the others, on the south shoreline, just a bit west (left) of center (photo below):



Arriving at the south shoreline, you'll have to find a path through all the cypress knees, to get to land. The cypress stumps are tightly packed and randomly arranged, so finding a straight shot through them isn't easy. While most of the lake is surrounded by swamp, the south shoreline has some "high" ground, nice grass and plenty of shade. It's a great place to have a picnic lunch.

Beached on the south shore of Lake Miller:



There are plenty of beasties present here. This land has about five parallel pipelines crossing over it, running east-west with the shoreline. The ground over those buried pipelines is kept cleared of trees, which makes for open grassy strips, and grazing land for Texas longhorn cattle, which cut an imposing and intimidating figure:



Along with the big pointy-horned beasts, are a few ponds, complete with gators. This photo isn't very good, but veteran gator-watchers will recognize that sun-dappled silhouette in the water:



And if that's not enough beasties for you, there was also a family of wild pigs in the woods, which were too quick to vanish, for me to capture their family photo.

Birds seen, in descending order of frequency, were: egrets, herons, a few ducks and one ibis. Fish spotted were: mullet, gar and catfish.

The mullet are numerous in Lake Miller, and seem to take pleasure in repeatedly jumping out the water. When you spot one jumping, it's a good bet that he'll continue to do so three or four times in a straight line. So I was amused when I saw a mullet take his first jump just off my left bow, headed my way – I waited to see what would happen next. Sure enough, his second jump took him right over the bow of my boat and into the water on the other side. I could swear he winked his black eye at me as he went soaring by.

Oh, and alligators, I can't forget those. On the Trinity River I think I saw only two. But once up into Lake Pass and Lake Miller, I spotted about eight more. They mostly are lying under the surface with only the top of their head showing, and they dive under and disappear when you draw close. That actually makes me a bit nervous not knowing where they are – I would rather keep them in sight so I can avoid them. But they do a good job of getting out of your way on their own. The cutest one was about a two-footer, sunning himself on top of a log, just above the water. None were aggressive in any way, as usual. They really aren't much to worry about - just don't go dangling a stringer of fish over the side of your canoe.

Not all of the beasties live happily ever after:



I trudged around for quite a ways in three directions trying to find the Miller plaque, to no avail. I kept looking for something obvious, something on clear, high ground. But that wasn't working. I remembered reading that it was near those tall trees. The problem is that once you beach on the shoreline, you can't see the tall trees anymore – they all blend in together in the forest canopy, and there is no way to see which ones stick up higher than the others. There are a series of parallel clearings where the pipelines run through the area, but even standing on those clearings, those trees were not identifiable.



So I finally headed back to the canoe and started over again, just using dead reckoning, with the angle I remembered towards the tall trees when I first beached my canoe. And lo and behold, in less than 100 yards, I was there! While the

treetops may not be obvious, a related clue is the massive tree trunks for those large trees. So look for tree trunks that are larger than all the others. There are actually two large trees there, and one is a live oak with its characteristic multiple trunks radiating upward and outward in all directions. The location is not that far from shore, inside the shoreline band of trees before you get to the first pipeline clearing. So, if you reach a pipeline clearing, you've penetrated too far through the woods.

And if it weren't for these steel stakes driven into the ground around the plaque, below, it would be even more difficult to find the site. These stakes stick out like a sore thumb in the otherwise natural surroundings, so that's a good clue for you.



And finally, the plaque itself, inside the protective ring of stakes:



The grass had grown over top of the plaque around the edges, so I did some grooming to clean it up and clear it. And since this was Memorial Day weekend, I instantly regretted not having brought along a flag to place beside this soldier's

plaque. So if one of you reading this ever plans on going out that way, please take Mr. Miller a small flag and plant it alongside his marker. He fought in a pivotal battle for America's freedom and independence, 195 years ago.

There were also numerous beautiful flowers along this stretch of land, a sampling of which is shown below:



After spending about an hour ashore, locating the Miller plaque, and eating a leisurely picnic lunch, I pushed off into the water again. From here, I headed from the south end to the northeast corner of Lake Miller, looking for the narrow pass to Mud Lake. Despite going back and forth several times, I could find no obvious opening. That will have to wait for yet another day. Perhaps at higher water levels, you can just paddle amidst the big cypress trees to work your way through the swamp to Mud Lake.

My exploration done, I headed back through Lake Pass, down into the Trinity River, and back to the island boat ramp location. By this time, mid-afternoon, there were dozens of boats zipping back and forth on the Trinity. About 20% of them were polite enough to throttle back and reduce their wake when they spied my little canoe along the shoreline. But the large majority of them flew by at high speed without giving me a second thought. Despite that, I did not feel like their wakes presented any danger of swamping or overturning my boat – they weren't

that big. Only a couple of times did I feel it wise to turn my bow into the waves.

Here are some GPS coordinates I captured of key intersections, which can be used to help find these points amidst the clutter of flora. All of these coordinates are UTM format using datum NAD-27:

Lake Pass cutover to Miller Lake:

15R 03.32.224 E

UTM 33.03.593 N

Miller Lake exit back to Lake Pass:

15R 03.32.255 E

UTM 33.03.475 N

Miller plaque:

15R 03.32.748 E

UTM 33.02.534 N

It was a pleasant and interesting day on the water, and I escaped the thunderstorms that occurred the day before, and the day after!

=== The End ===

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Sheldon Reservoir: Quick Fix to Your Paddling Habit

by: Cindy Bartos

We hadn't been paddling for a while and were starting to get the "paddling shakes" ("grip itch"; "canoeing creeps"; you've all been there....) when we noticed Mary Z had posted a trip to Sheldon



(Mary Z and Paul

Woodcock lead the Sheldon paddle)

Reservoir for the next day – Saturday, June 2. Perfect!

Five of us: Ken Anderson, Paul Woodcock, Mary Zaborowski, John and I met at the northern end of the reservoir off Garrett Rd. at around 8:15 a.m. Much to our dismay, we quickly noticed that the lack of hard freezes in the area has allowed the vegetation to grow so thick that there would be much pulling and pushing before any paddling was to take place. We also noticed one very HUGE alligator swimming close to the shore, which prompted many stories (tales?) that involved alligators with lengths of 20 feet, 22 feet and more, which then led to the discussion of the Texas state record for alligators. Without laptops and access to Google, we could only speculate on what that might be. Talk centered around the record being about 14 feet, but those of us who have been paddling in teeny tiny boats and have come across the mighty beasts swear we have seen alligators that were as long as our 15-foot canoe.

Well, talking wasn't getting us paddling so we decided to go down to the boat ramp on the southern end just off of Pineland Rd. and put in there.



Great decision! The water here is very open and clear with only small amounts of water lilies and water hyacinths.



Not long after putting in we came across several small islands brimming with nesting and breeding herons, egrets, ibis and roseate spoonbills. We saw great blue, green, yellow-crowned, black-crowned, tricolored and little blue herons. There were several cattle, snowy and great egrets and both the white-faced and white ibis. All the birds were resplendent in their breeding plumage and didn't seem to be bothered as we paddled by at a respectable distance.



(ken Anderson checks out the birds)

And there were several more alligators!



We gave them a wide

berth and they seemed content to just let us paddle by.

We paddled almost to the northern end before we turned around and went back to the boat ramp. We were out a little over two hours, paddled about 5 ½ miles and off the water around 11:00 a.m. before it started to get too hot.



(John Bartos adds color to the scenery in his teal boat)

My point is this: Sheldon Reservoir is great place to paddle and a short drive

from Houston (30 minutes from our house). You could put in early like we did or bop over after work or later in the evening for a quick paddle near dusk and avoid the daytime heat. There are directions to Sheldon listed on the HCC website: <http://houstoncanoecub.org/>
Oh – after googling and searching we have determined that the Texas state record for an alligator is 14 feet 4 inches...

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Paddling in Belize-December 2006

Mark Andrus

I went on a cruise on the Norwegian Dream the first week of December 2006. The ship left Houston with stops in Progreso, Mexico (Merida), Cozamel, and Belize City. I used a chart going down Galveston Bay to spot my position. My sister, Lynne, had brought a VHF radio so she listened to ship to ship communications. After it got dark we figured our position as we passed by Galveston by comparing the navigation light angles to where they were located on the chart. I took the Merida city tour after we reached its port of Progreso. I went on an electric submarine as my tour in Cozamel and saw a coral reef at a 100 foot depth. There was a steep drop off the shelf to much deeper water that the submarine captain pointed out to us. Cozamel has a good museum that had exhibits on the coastal canoe traffic that the Maya had along the coast, which included a dug-out canoe.

Lynne and I took the tour in Belize that had a chance to paddle for about one hour in a creek in Belize. They had sit-on-top kayaks for us to paddle. The creek had orchids and other fauna and flora that we do not have around here. The creek was on a preserve that is about 35 miles northwest of Belize City. We were served lunch after the paddle and then we had a chance to swim in their swimming pool. The pool had a very fast water slide that went down around ten feet and the water was even warm in December.



Lynne Andrus paddling sit-on top



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Brazos River Paddle from Hidalgo Falls to Highway 105-April 2007

Mark Andrus

Jack Richardson was asked to lead a trip from Hidalgo Falls to Highway 105 for the attendees at the Hidalgo Falls festival. I drove him up there. We left Sugar Land early on Sunday morning to get there in time for the 10am trip. Jack gave a long talk on the river bank before we started about the various ways that river commerce was conducted in the 19th Century before improved roads and railroads became common. He talked about flatboats, steamboats, floating cotton bales down side creeks and other means of river commerce.

A couple of hundred yards downstream, we paddled past the remains of the lock structure that had been installed in the early part of the 20th Century. The locks had long been dreamed about as a way of getting steamboats above Hidalgo Falls whose shallowness impeded river traffic upstream for most of the year. It took a long time to get funding to built the locks. The locks were in operation for only a few years because the 1913 flood washed them away. They were never rebuilt because railroads had taken away most of the business from the steamboats. Jack remembered a time when he toured England in a canal boat. England had built an extensive system of canals in the 18th and 19th Century for boat traffic. I remembered an economic history book by North that I had read in college. The North book said that the United States would have been able to develop almost as well if there had been no railroads because canals would have been built to take most of the traffic.

The 1913 flood was the highest flood recorded on the Brazos. It was said that three rivers flowed together further downstream-the Brazos, the San Bernard and the Colorado. My grandmother remembered that her father had to walk two miles through water into Angleton to get the Christmas presents for the family.

The river on our trip in April, 2007 was no where as high as it was during the 1913 flood but it was much higher than usual.



We made fast time down the river and we could just drift along with the flow so that the trip would not end too soon. We wished we had that much water on our News Years 2006 trip from Highway 21 down to Hidalgo Falls when we could not take out at the lower takeout because it was too far away from the bank.

There was a lot of mud at the take-out because the river must have dropped a few feet from its highest point a few days before. We used ropes to pull boats up the bank. We called and got my truck and another vehicle moved down to the take-out. Jack and I rode in the cab of my truck, but the other 5 people rode in the bed. I drove slowly the 4 miles back to Hidalgo Falls. We headed back to Sugar Land soon after that and we missed most of the slalom competition.

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