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Volume 35

**February 2004**

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Say Happy Birthday to the club - 40 years of paddling fun  
Please renew your membership NOW. Keep this club alive.

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**Program - March 10, 2004 - 7:00 PM**

*Les Bechdel of Canyons Inc.*

Based out of McCall, Idaho, Canyons Inc. provides guided raft supported trips down the Middle Fork and Main Salmon rivers in Idaho. Les will present an informal slide show and discuss some of the human and natural history of the area. Les co-authored RIVER RESCUE, which has sold over 90,000 copies. After the slide show he will be happy to discuss river safety.

**Renew your membership now!**

We need your help. Please renew your membership for a year of great events that we are planning for this, our 40th year anniversary celebration. Renewal form at left in the contents list.

**We need your correct email address!**

Please send your current email address to Marilyn Peery now.

Email address: [mpeery@ev1.net](mailto:mpeery@ev1.net).

The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit trip reports, news worthy items and any literary musings you wish to inflict on your paddling buddies to the Editor at the following address.

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Officers for 2004

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For Sale and Wanted

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Solo Canoe Wanted

Due to a recent K-9 addition, my kayak fleet is in mothballs. I need to find a solo canoe (1 man plus 1 dog, dog refuses to paddle) to get back on the water.

Looking for a general purpose (flatwater or slow river) boat and prefer used while I figure out how to use just half of a paddle. Does anyone have a beater in the garage or know of a source in the Houston area?

Thanks for any ideas.

Talmadge Wright

[rrat03@houston.rr.com](mailto:rrat03@houston.rr.com)

For Sale: Klepper Aeries 2-person collapsible kayak, with rudder and sail package.

Made in Germany, an engineering marvel. Ash-birch frame, rubber and canvas hull. Blue and Gray. 17<sup>1</sup> long, 80 lbs. Great for someone who lives in an apartment without storage room for a hard craft. Breaks down into three bags, plus one for the sales, assembles in 15-20 minutes. Air sponsions in side panels make it almost impossible to roll over or sink. One owner, this classic model is 30 years old, but still in great shape. Has been in the Atlantic Ocean in Boothbay Harbor, ME. Many rivers and lakes in PA and WI, but no whitewater, so it's gently used. Best offer over \$400.

Contact Ron Scott,

email [rscott21@houston.rr.com](mailto:rscott21@houston.rr.com) or 281-931-3780 to see boat in Northwest Houston.

17' Merrimack Traveler for Sale

Red with simulated wooden ribs.

Fiberglass. Two sayer paddles. \$800

Also Cane folding seat for floor of canoe never used. \$100

Contact Joe French

email [jfrench1@houston.rr.com](mailto:jfrench1@houston.rr.com)

home pho 281-265-4474

work pho 281-565-1800

Mohawk Intrepid 17 for Sale

ABS, 17' 4" X 36 wide, about 75

pounds. Green, cane seats, wood

thwarts, vinyl/aluminum gunwales, S-glass skid plates bow and stern, knee pads, assorted D-rings and gunwale tie in points for flotation and gear. One owner. Bought from Tom Goynes at Goynes Canoes in ~'87-'88. Always stored under cover - in the garage the past 12 years. A few dings but never pinned or wrapped. Good basic tandem canoe - big boat - stable for fishing, canoe camping, family outings with kids and dog, but capable of class II-III whitewater in a tripping mode with good paddlers. Located in Austin. \$550.

Bill Whitaker

(W)512-804-4414

(H) 512-280-3970 [WLW@flash.net](mailto:WLW@flash.net)

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## High Water on the Pecos River

November 9-15, 2003

by Louis F. Aulbach

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Paddlers: Kevin Casement, Dana Enos, Donna Grimes, Marilyn Peery, Cliff Peery, Louis Aulbach



The rock slab campsite below the mouth of Lewis Canyon provides a dramatic perspective of the lower Pecos River. Click on image to enlarge.

On Sunday, the drive to Pandale began with cool, overcast skies and a misty drizzle. Puddles on the rock slab at the put in indicated that there had been showers earlier, but it did not rain as we loaded our canoes for a week on the Pecos. The new ramp off the west bank of the bridge made access to the river bed more convenient than the last time I was here.

The gauge reading on the internet showed that the river was at 250 cfs for the beginning of this trip. The level was dropping and it would be about 230 cfs by the end of the trip. Although there is always a certain amount of anxiety about whether the canoes will hold all the gear we have brought, everyone got their canoes loaded and we were on the water by 10:30 am.



Cliff Peery negotiates the first drop at Painted Canyon Rapid. Click on image to enlarge.

It was cool, like early November out here can be, but the temperatures were in the 50's, and there was no wind as we approached the Mile One Rapid. Two boats, Kevin and Dana, tandem, and Donna, solo, took the long channel to the right, while the other two boats, Cliff and Marilyn, tandem, and myself, solo, took the regular route down the rapid, Class II+. The rapid was hard to see from above and as soon as you approached to where it could be seen, the swift current on the left side tried to sweep you under the brush. A hard correction stroke kept you out of trouble, but then you had to negotiate the two large rocks in the lower drop.

We waited a few minutes in the pool below the rapid while the other two boats emerged from the cane enshrouded channel. The first good rapid always sets the tone for the trip. I think everyone breathe more easily as we set out across the long pool ahead.

The Mile 3 cane chutes, falling off on river left, had deep water and obscure routes. The

cane hung over the water so much that one had to duck to avoid the cane and still try to steer the canoe in the winding course. Visibility ahead was severely limited. Just go, hold the line on the "V", keep your head down and hope for the best.

We stopped for lunch on the gravel bar on river right below the Kidd house on the bluff at Mile 4. The hectic nature of "getting started" eased into a more relaxed paddle. The Mile 5 ledge rapid looked difficult at this level. Two boats lined both drops, two boats ran it. The water was more challenging and "pushier" than at the usual low water levels.

Oppenheimer Rapid, Class II, at Mile 8, usually has a rocky spine to drag over when the left channel shallows out, but at this higher level, the 40 yard rapid was runnable on the left side while making the 'jump' across the spine about 3/4 of the way down, just before the final drop, was fairly easy. Then, you had to make some quick maneuvers at the end to avoid the last rocks. All made it okay.

The river was moving well and so were the paddlers. Mile 9 Rapid, Class II, had plenty of water and was easily managed. Although the current was fast, the route through the rocks was not hindered by narrow path among the rocks and the shallow channels common in low water conditions.

The camp on the ledges at Mile 11 was reached a little after 4:00 pm and the sky cleared a little as we set up tents and tables on the high slab. It was a long first day, but we moved along well and negotiated the trickier flow conditions without incident.

Day 2 began mild, calm and still overcast. We paddled the long pools and gravel drops that are found in the next couple of miles without much trouble. The bigger flow meant less scraping, although we did bump down the riffles a couple of times. The boulder field of Mile 15 was much easier than usual since there was plenty of water to avoid the submerged rocks that make this section tricky. The final drop into the right hand chute, however, was still quite shallow and required a drag to get over it.

We stopped for lunch at Goat Spring. The spring is easy to approach and we topped off our water bottles since we feared that the springs downstream would not be as accessible. The temperature seemed to warm a little and, although it was still overcast, the wind continued to be mostly calm.

We entered the first section of the flutes and rode them out without too much trouble.

With more water in the river, the obvious routes became less visible and it was somewhat more difficult to make your way in the deep channel. A few times, we did have to drag and push to get back on track, but by following the general rule of when to stay to the right and when to move to the center, we made it through this section in fairly short order. With plenty of daylight remaining, we pulled into the Quartz Camp in Mile 21 a little before 4:00 pm and set up camp on the small rock slab there.

The morning brought a continuation of the mild weather. Temperatures were very comfortable and, though cloudy, there was little wind as we prepared to leave the flutes and enter section where the main channel runs deeper. Even on low water trips, when you drop into the fast right hand chute in Mile 23, you know the going will be easier from now on.



A stylistic atlatl petroglyph - one of the many new petroglyphs uncovered during excavations at Lewis Canyon by the Rock Art Foundation.

Click on image to enlarge.

On this third day, too, we would see the canyon walls rise and the river move deeper into the remote terrain. We also planned to stop at our first pictograph site.

As we drifted along looking for the sign of the side canyon where we wanted to stop, the higher water split the river in two channels with a brush-filled island in between. While

Kevin and Dana took the main channel on river right, I slipped slowly along in the left channel, only to surprise a huge 8 point buck who thought he was out of sight in the brush on the island while spying the passage of the tandem paddlers in the river. With an explosive leap, the buck, with pure panic in his eyes as he saw me floating up behind him, bounded across the river in a few quick jumps to escape into the cane and grasses on the left bank.

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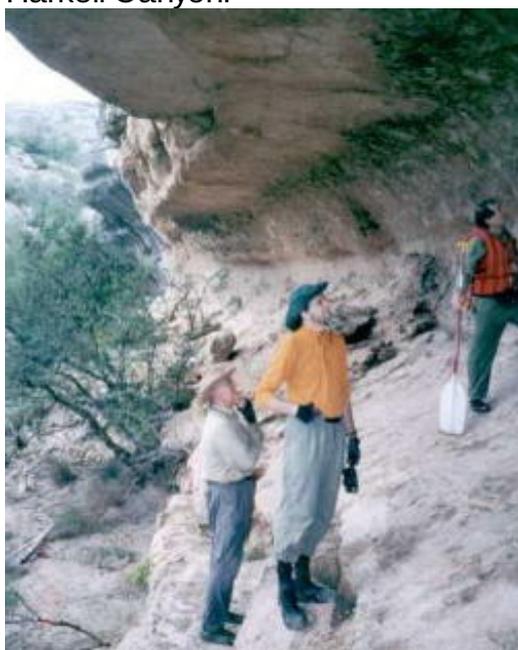
Piggy Panther

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Dana spied the jeep road before any of us. He and Kevin pulled over upstream while the rest of us pulled in downstream of the small side canyon that contains the Piggy Panther shelter. The shelter is close to the river and, though difficult to see unless you know where to look, it is a quick hike into one of the more remarkable Pecos River style sites on the river.

After a good look at the pictographs, we pulled over for lunch in the large, curving shelter at water level a short way downstream.

Within the next mile, we pulled over at the Harkell Canyon site. Although the river cane has grown thick along the banks, a cut in the cane has been made by the landowner at the precise spot in front of the shelter. Whether that was intentional or not is unknown, however, it did appear, as we fought our way through the undergrowth, that there has not been much traffic up to the pictographs. There was a good jeep road on the gravel bar along the east side of the river, and it appears that the clearing was cut in the cane to permit the rancher to put his jonboat in the deep pool at Harkell Canyon. This is a well known fishing hole and a green jonboat was tied up on the west bank at the mouth of Harkell Canyon.



Dana, Kevin, and Cliff study the pictographs at the Piggy Panther Shelter.

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Although the Harkell Canyon site is known for its red monochrome pictographs, we did notice that there was an extensive display of Pecos River style pictographs that provided a very faint backdrop canvas for the more recent art. I walked to the far upstream end of the shelter, and froze in place as Kevin, who was following me, disturbed a local resident among the rotten tree limbs in the sand. The buzz of the four foot rattler let us know to keep our distance. We did.

Back into our boats, we immediately faced the Harkell Canyon Rapid, Class II. As I dropped through the rapid first and was waiting in the pool below for the others to come through, I was surprised to see a man walking along the rock slab shelf of the west bank. When I asked him how he got down here, he showed me his arm patch and said: "Border Patrol." He was walking this section of the river looking for a group of illegal immigrants who were suspected of being in the area. Another group of agents was searching the east side of the river, but we had not seen them.

The Pecos is now in a narrower and deeper channel. The current is fast, but not difficult. After our sight-seeing on this day, we were anxious to move on downstream to camp. We came to Pin Rock Rapid, Class II, and, with more water in the river, the rapid is less challenging to run. There is plenty of water in the 'ramp' and it is easy to hang to the left-center route and avoid the pinning rock on the right.

Just below the rapid is the peculiar phenomenon of Chalk Cave, a solution cave in which the flowing water has created swirling sculptures in the soft white rock. The left bank here is a smooth rock slab and we decided to make an early camp here. As we set up tents, the sun broke through and sent bright, warming rays against the wall behind us. The welcome warmth allowed us to dry out some of our wet clothes and, well, to just relax.

The clear, starry night enticed Cliff and me to set up our sleeping bags out under the stars. However, early in the morning the fog and mist set in to bring the dawn with a heavy dew. I saw it coming about 3 am and crawled into my tent for the last few hours. Although breakfast was without showers, the misty fog kept all the gear damp as we put on the river.

Our fourth day was destined to be a busy one. As we had expected, the spring at Mile 33 was nearly inaccessible. We chopped back a large amount of dried, overhanging cane in order to get to the base where water flowed. It was hard to get a clean source and most of the water retrieved was full of sediment.

Within the next mile, we stopped at Camp Canyon to see the Lizard Man pictographs on the canyon wall. A large pool of water at the entrance to Camp Canyon made us walk a tricky path in the mud and grass for about 15 yards to get to the easy walking beyond. Kevin and Cliff sent chills up our spines as they demonstrated their rock climbing abilities to surmount the pouroff to reach the upper section of the side canyon. As we paddled on down to within a mile above Still Canyon, the canyon walls narrow to tight pinch. It is here that the Ingram Ranch constructed a weir dam across the Pecos in the 1930's in order to power a generator that supplied electricity to the ranch. The flood of 1953 took out the dam and all traces of the construction except for a section of the concreted ramp that can be seen descending down the right bank.

We stopped at Still Canyon to see the Electric Shaman site, but I was thoroughly dismayed, as I paddled into the side canyon, to find the high grasses rising out of the mud and the brush as thick as it can be. I was ready to pass on this one, but Cliff was persistent. He wedged his boat into the bank and proceeded to hack way at the tree limbs and brush. We jammed our boats together like a pontoon bridge and managed to climb out, working our way up the high, overgrown bank to the shelter above.



The recently uncovered tinaja at Lewis Canyon appears to have been the focal point of the ceremonial activities that involved petroglyphs at the site.

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

After we slipped back into our boats and dropped through Still Canyon Rapid, Class II, we pulled into a high water slough (since I don't think it is there in lower water) for lunch. The sun had burned off the mist and a warm sunny day made this lunch spot seem idyllic. Far from the usual sounds of wind and water, the chirping of birds fill the air. We could have lingered for hours, but ultimately, we set off for our camp for the day at Lewis Canyon.

Lewis Canyon is only three miles below Still Canyon and the thought of another early day was welcomed, especially now that the sun was out and the weather was warm. We pulled up to the rock ledge below Lewis Canyon and set up camp. With plenty of time before dark, we hiked up to the plateau above to see the Lewis Canyon Petroglyph Site. The site is under a conservation lease to the Rock Art Foundation which is adding protective structures to preserve the petroglyphs on the site.

Although the skies stayed mostly clear during the early evening, clouds came in during the night and a light rain fell. We awakened after the showers had past, but the rain had made the thin layer of dirt on the rock ledge where we were camped into a slippery, muddy mess.

We negotiated the Lewis Canyon Rapid, Class II, with most of us lining and working our way down to the last drop and the final chute. Donna, however, showed us that the whole rapid was runnable at this level, and she led the way.



Kevin and Donna take the first drop of Waterfall Rapid in classic form.

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

We crossed the long pool below Lewis Canyon Rapid and pulled up on river left to take a look at the powerful churning of Waterfall Rapid, Class III. I lined my boat on the right side of the rapid while Donna skillfully ran it in her solo boat. Cliff took his tandem boat down the rapid solo. Soon after that, Kevin and Donna paddled the other tandem down the rapid. These guys made it all look so easy.

This section of the Pecos is a serious pool and drop segment. Within a mile, the pool drained off through the cane to river right. A steep, rocky channel poured over a gravel

drop of about ten feet. Even at low water, this drop can be tricky, but with the larger volume, it took special care since the top of the chute was cluttered with big rocks. Fortunately, the upper lip is shallow and you can stop, step out and line up your boat to avoid hanging or pinning on the rocks.

Just below Shackelford Canyon is the Ledge Rock Rapid, Class II, which can be run by following the wave train in the right channel. Before you can catch your breath, you come to the Long Chute. The Long Chute Rapid, Class II, is a long 50 yard run of swift current and standing waves. Only one pillow rock, about half way down, can spoil your run, but it easily avoided if you pay attention.

Within another mile, Three Rock Rapid, Class II-III, offers a challenge to your paddling skills. Keep your wits about you, go with the flow and negotiate the rocks. It's an exciting run.

We paddled down to Painted Canyon for the camp that night. Because the access to the rock bank on the right is less than accessible, we unloaded the boats one at a time. When the gear was out of the boats, the boats were moved through the Painted Canyon Rapid, Class III-IV. Kevin and I lined our boats along the right bank to the eddy below the last drop. And, Cliff took his giant tandem down the same route, although he did it in a straight-forward and more conventional manner.

In the morning, we carried all the gear to the lower eddy and loaded the boats. It took about 45 minutes, but we were on the water by 9:00 am, just as we had been each morning. As we approached the weir dam, I wondered if the water, at this level, would be flowing over the dam along the full length of the dam. With some surprise, the water was still a couple inches below the top of the weir, and we had to lift our canoes over the top in order to slide them down the opposite face.

The rapids below the weir dam were interesting, as always, and with the higher water level, presented a couple difficulties. The wind had begun blowing in our face and there was a chill in the breeze. A lunch spot with a wind block and a sun exposure, no matter how small, was the order of the day.

We were in the former lake, now, and as we approached Deadman's Canyon, it was interesting to see how the river was re-establishing itself in the old channel. The sand banks have built up and have become forested with willows and other riparian species standing 30 to 40 feet tall. A couple small rapids have reappeared and the section up to Deadman's Canyon, where the current fades into the lake, is nearly unrecognizable as part of the former lake.

We reached the railroad bridge by 3:00 pm and it had been a long and tiring day. However, I felt that we needed to take advantage of the daylight and calm winds to move on beyond the treacherous, section ahead that can become a dangerous wind tunnel. Although we had planned to camp near the railroad bridge, we paddled on another hour to the grassy slopes at the end of the sheer cliffs beyond mile 58.

In the morning of day seven, we paddled the final two miles to the boat ramp. The calm and pleasant end to this remarkable trip was only topped by the delivery of our vehicle to the boat ramp just as we approached. Emilio had seen us coming as he descended the road to the ramp, and he waited for Kevin and Dana who were the first to arrive. A wonderful trip. One of the best.

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## Trip Report: Lake Stubblefield

by Jerry Williams

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December 31 - A small contingent of three hardy HCC souls braved the cold, determined to find new [for us anyway] paddling frontiers. Putting in off Roman Forest Road we began by paddling upstream on Peach Creek. There was a significant current running and after about 30 minutes of hard work we rested and enjoyed the downstream ride.

The stream is interesting, much more so than I thought it would be. Steep banks interspersed with some really nice sandbars allowed us to paddle and rest. The current was brisk and required concentration to avoid some small strainers. Lots of shallow spots make me think this is not a summertime trip when water levels are down. When making the shuttle we failed to walk down to the takeout to see what it looked like so we probably stopped a few extra times just to be sure we hadn't passed up the Lake Houston Park take-out. [They are getting up a petition to change the name - leading the pack is Peach Creek State Park- if you would like to drop by the ranger's office and sign it]. Those extra stops proved unnecessary as we eventually hit a nice footbridge over the creek that made the take-out point quite obvious. Completing the shuttle, I drove up HWY 59 and found that it crosses over Peach Creek at Patton Village. One could take the side road to a putin visible from the highway. This would probably double the trip we took [about 2.5 hours]. The condition of the creek that far up is unknown. I hope to find an exploring type to go with me sometime to find out how passable that upper section is.

January 4 arrived damp, muggy, warm, and overcast - a perfect day to paddle. About 10:30 AM, six people, set out in one canoe and four kayaks [pesky little critters, ain't they] to explore the upper Stubblefield Lake area. Putting in at the boat ramp at the park, we paddled up the west fork of the San Jac. It was a very pleasant trip until we hit our first fallen tree. All successfully managed to do the "limb"-bo rock and glide beneath the obstruction. A little further on, we all had a successful encore performance at another fallen tree. By the time we hit the third one, the channel had narrowed down to about ten feet wide and we just didn't feel like climbing out and hauling the boats over the multiple fallen trees. This is an out and back trip so we had double the opportunities to see several varieties of woodpecker and one really big red-tailed hawk. After the take-out we had a late lunch in the near-by park then headed out for Houston and the weekend was over.

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From the Helm

by John Ohrt, Commodore

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Welcome to 2004 which will hopefully be another great year of paddling; even better than 2003, which was pretty good. I'm looking forward to lots of trips, some new ones and some old favorites (we need someone to do a rain dance for the hill country). This is also the club's 40th anniversary and I'm looking forward, with your help, to celebrating it in grand style next October at Huntsville State Park. I'm looking forward to getting together with our veteran members, some of whom I haven't seen in a while, catching up and retelling old stories. I'm looking forward to meeting lots of new folks this year because that's one of the best parts of the Houston Canoe Club. In the twenty some odd years that I've been a member of HCC I don't think that I've met a group of nicer, friendlier, more helpful people than I have in and through the canoe club.

That is perhaps the finest opportunity that it offers. When I first joined I was welcomed by everyone. They were happy to have me on trips and to show me around the state of Texas canoeing. Of course I had to go on the trips.

After I had been a member for two years they even made me an officer. How's that for being friendly?

I know that for people just joining it can seem difficult to get into the flow, so to speak. I would suggest that people try to arrive early to the meetings. I try to get there about 6:30, to have time to meet folks, chat, hang out, listen, introduce yourself etc. When the meeting starts we have to move along to get finished on time. After the meetings all are encouraged to drop by the Cafe Express on Kirby just north of Richmond for a bite. That's a good place to relax and get to know folks. Myself, all of the officers, and every experienced member that I know is happy to meet and get to know new members, but we don't always recognize them so don't feel bashful about introducing yourself. Of course keep an eye on the trip schedule and go on as many as you can. Pretty soon you'll be organizing trips.

It's your club, so jump right in. like I said, I'm looking forward to a great 2004

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Canoes and seals from Houston's earliest times  
by Louis F. Aulbach and Linda Gorski

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Barge traffic at the wharf at Allen's Landing (left) with White Oak bayou entering on the right. (c. 1911)

Click on image to enlarge.

photo courtesy of TxDOT

One would think that the town that calls itself "the bayou city" would recognize the contributions of watercraft and the stream that bisects the city on its official seal. But, Houston does not.

The official seal of the City of Houston was authorized by City Council on February 17, 1840 and it was approved a week later. With a design commissioned by former mayor Francis Moore, the seal has three figures in the center: a Lone Star, a steam locomotive and a plow.

The Lone Star, of course, represents the new republic of Texas, and later, the state. The plow is a symbol of the importance of agriculture, especially cotton, to the Houston economy. The locomotive is named the "General Sherman" after General Sidney Sherman who fought at the Battle of San Jacinto and who was one of the founders of the first railroad in Texas.

The presence of the locomotive on the city seal suggests that the design of the seal was revised at some later date. The first railroad in Texas was chartered in 1850. The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad became operational in August, 1853 on a line that went from Harrisburg to Stafford.

Harrisburg? In 1840, why would the City of Houston promote the rival town of Harrisburg on its own seal?



The intense competition between Houston and Harrisburg would decline after the 1870's when a series of disasters, including fire and hurricane, devastated the shipping facilities in Harrisburg. Ultimately, the town of Harrisburg was annexed by the City of Houston in December, 1926.

Although the original seal supposedly was lost and rediscovered by Margaret Westerman in 1939, the design on the present seal probably dates from the twentieth century.

Which brings us back to the 1840 seal. What was it like? Did it have a steamer or a schooner on it? Would that not have been more appropriate at that time? Boats docked at foot of Main Street would have been a better image of the prosperity of the city. The City fathers would have been extremely prescient to have placed a locomotive on the

seal in 1840.

Actually, in a flash of whimsy, it might be nice to see a canoe on the city's seal. The earliest written accounts of Houston tell of the role played by canoes.

Dilue Rose Harris, in her memoirs recalling the days after the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836, wrote of the excitement that the proposed new town of Houston was creating among the people returning to Texas after the defeat of Santa Anna. In early June, 1836, some of the young men from the Stafford Point community (now, modern Stafford) rode over to Buffalo Bayou to check out the new town described in the circulars and handbills distributed by the Allen brothers.

What they found there became more of a joke than anything else. The town, which was difficult to locate among the pine woods, "consisted of one dugout canoe, a bottle gourd of whisky and a surveyor's chain and compass, and was inhabited by four men with an ordinary camping outfit."

That's where the story takes a ominous turn. To escape the heat and the swarms of mosquitos, the men decided to take a swim in the bayou. No sooner had they all gotten into the water, when the "water was alive with alligators." Three of the men got out on the south bank of the bayou from whence they entered, but one exited on the other side. Those on the south bank got a canoe and rescued him, bringing the separated man back to the south side.

Not only did the man face death at the jaws of the alligators, but, he told his rescuers that while he was waiting for them, a large panther was lurking nearby. The big cat ran off as the canoe approached.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Buffalo Bayou as a major shipping lane was on the decline. Ocean going vessels exchanged cargo at docks below the turning basin, and the traffic upstream to Allen's Landing was primarily that of barges. By the turn of the twentieth century, the bayou has little or no commercial traffic. It is time to return the bayou to the canoes.

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## Paddling and Touring in Russia

by Natalia Sorokina-Canada

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Click on image to enlarge.

I'm a pathological optimist.

This is why I still hope to find takers for the special trip that combines almost everything I like: history, art, culture and Russian natural wilderness. The two-week trip consists of one week sightseeing in Moscow and St. Petersburg and one week of paddling down a Russian river.

For the paddling expedition I picked Karelia, a region in the northwest of Russia, called "blue eyed" for the abundance of lakes and rivers. Convenient location of the region (overnight train from Moscow or St. Petersburg), scenery and moderate complexity of the Karelian rivers (no experience necessary for the route I've chosen, only good physical health) make the region very popular among water travelers. Complexity of the route increases gradually giving the participants time to get experience and skills to work together. Despite the fact that it is quite close to Petrozavodsk (capital of Karelia), the travelers find themselves among wild and austere surroundings, in forests abounding in mushrooms and berries. Fishing is usually good, too. With every twist and turn of the river, stunning vistas come into view, and unexpected adventures await travelers who are sure to enjoy them, even if they are quite experienced in this sort of thing. In terms of difficulty the river is suitable both for beginners and for experienced adventure-seekers. We'll paddle down the river and camp in the wilderness for 6 days enjoying fishing, picking berries and mushrooms, and enjoying campfires at night. Russian sauna and Kizhi Island in the agenda for this trip as well.



Click on image to enlarge.

Our trip through the Karelian outback, down the rapid-strewn river among virginal

forests, ends up in Petrozavodsk, where my guests will return to civilization to stay with it for a long time to come. However, after the week of adventure in Karelia, they cannot but doubt some of its values.

Those who are interested only in sightseeing tour might consider my annual two-week tour to Russia. We visit Moscow, St. Petersburg, Uglich (a small provincial town) and more. For detailed information, go to my web site [www.vologda.ru/~nata00](http://www.vologda.ru/~nata00) or contact me by e-mail [nata00@netzero.net](mailto:nata00@netzero.net)

If you'd like to explore Russia on your own you might enjoy staying in my B&B in St. Petersburg (15% discount for the members of HCC).

**Price:** under \$2900 (airfare from Houston) / land only \$1650

Group size: up to 10 people

Everything will be taken care of: all meals but two dinners in St. Petersburg, lodging, sightseeing (museum fees included), land transportation, visa arrangements. All white water and camping equipment for expedition will be provided: tents, PFD-life vests, boats - catarafts or inflatable kayak (plastic kayak or tandem canoe by request). Participants need to bring only their personal equipment (recommended list will be provided).

### **TENTATIVE ITINERARY**

**Day 01** Depart on your International flight bound to Moscow

**Day 02** Arrive Moscow. Homestays with Russian families. Light dinner.

**Day 03** Full day sightseeing tour of Moscow.

**Day 04** Today we use public transportation to get to the points of our interest. Walking tour of Kremlin. Armory Chamber. After lunch stroll at the Arbat street (Mecca for souvenirs shopping and watching people). BLD Leaving Moscow for Karelia by night train.

**Day 05** Arrival to Petrozavodsk, capital of Karelia, in the morning. Transfer to the tourist refuge.

A bus will take the group from Petrozavodsk railway station first to the lodge (20 miles from Petrozavodsk) where breakfast will be served. Participants leave their belongings that won't be needed during the trip at the lodge, put on water outfits, load traveling gears and headed to the starting point of the adventure.

Then the bus will take you from the lodge to the upper reaches of the river, and from here you will cover 65 miles down the picturesque Shuya River in five days.

**Days 06-9** Expedition down the Shuya.

We'll paddle down the river and camp in the wilderness for 6 days enjoying fishing, picking berries and mushrooms, and enjoying a campfire at night.

**Day 10.** Return to the tourist refuge. Russian sauna.

**Day 11.** Excursion to the Kizhi Island (to Kivach national reserve if weather won't permit to go to Kizhi). Transfer to the Petrozavodsk railway station. Departure for St.-Petersburg.

**Day 12** Arrive in St. Petersburg and go on a sight-seeing program in St. Petersburg. BLD

**Day 13** Tour Hermitage. BL

**Day 14** Peterhof – the palace and park ensemble with famous fountains. BL

**Day 15** The St. Isaac's Cathedral, Church of the Savior on the Blood and Yusupov palace. BLD

**Day 16** Return to the U.S.

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## Newbie Journal - Freeze Trip, Take Two

by Sherri Blifford

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Anna and Buddy King

Yes, she does have a husband.

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Last year, this column began with the Freeze Trip, held annually and aptly named by the San Antonio Rivermen. After my disastrous first real attempt at a winter river trip, I felt compelled to return to the scene of the crime this year and see if I'd really learned anything.

For starters, we didn't freeze.

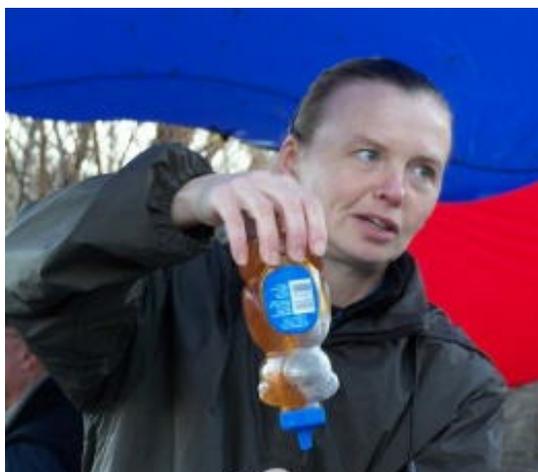
After last year's miserable cold, I put out the word: Mom doesn't want perfume or doodads that need dusting. Give me camping gear, please. My kids responded with some amusement. Beth, Keith, Andy, and Amy pooled resources to dazzle me with a huge gift certificate at REI. My sister Corky and brother-in-law Ralph sent a 10 degree sleeping bag. My Christmas stocking bulged with hand warmers, tent repair stuff, and other goodies. This time I was ready. I would not be cold again.

I had packed carefully, double-bagging my newly acquired Capilene, polypropylene, fleece, and Gore-Tex clothing.

REI could have used me for an ad.

A complete change of clothes suitable for the North Pole was compressed in a new compression sack, wrapped in a compactor trash bag, closed and packed in my new dry bag. The dry bag has shoulder straps for portaging. Another change of clothes was packed equally well.

Everything was secured in the canoe with quick-release straps. See, Paul? I did listen when you told me that as you wrestled with my crazy system last year.



Natalia Canada

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

photo by Anna King

I took lessons and practiced with a pro. Bring on the rapids.

And the weather got down to, oh, maybe,

65 degrees... not exactly freezing even by my standards.

I was grateful for a light shirt as well or it might have become the melt-down trip.

Not only did it not freeze, the rain had perfect timing, waiting until we were snug in our tents on Friday night and politely quitting in time for our morning coffee on Saturday.

When we unpacked our wet gear Saturday afternoon, it had plenty of time to dry before the rain began again.

The paddling was great, with no messy losing-dessert-in-the-river events. Two of us went swimming but it was by choice, not by accident. I admit to having help but still, what I recalled as great raging rapids were really pretty tame stuff. A few lessons and trips sure made a difference!



Martha, Mary and coffee

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

The whole trip seemed to be charmed this time. We enjoyed good talks and great food. The rain seemed to enhance rather than dampen spirits even when umbrellas came out to protect the charcoal cooking our Dutch oven dinner.

The rain quit again so we could enjoy the bonfire where Mary Z got selected by the falling paddle. We observed the tradition of burning an old paddle and letting it fall to select the honorary leader. It fell once and Mary objected so it was put upright only to fall more clearly at her feet again.

Some things you just can't fight.



Click on image to enlarge.  
photo by Anna King

On Sunday morning, it was sad to break camp and leave. The rain had stopped, the sun shone, and flocks of birds kept us company. All in all, it was a vast improvement over last year. I have to go next year.

Hey, all those nice, warm clothes are still waiting to be initiated.

The members who went on the Pre-Freeze trip included:

- Martha Williams
- David Ramsey
- Rudy Rivers
- John Marle
- Bobby Hatfield
- Bob Pearson
- Ron Nunnely
- Paul Woodcock
- Mary Zaborowski

Adding to our group on Saturday and Sunday, 4 more paddlers,

- Nancy Bell
- Natasha Canada
- Anna King and husband Buddy King.

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## What Can You Do?

by Don Greene

member, Memorial Park Conservancy

past president, Bayou Preservation Association

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Preservation...What can you do? The Ole Kingston trio said it many years ago.

They're rioting in Africa,

There's strife in Iran

There're Hurricanes in Florida

And Texas needs Rain.

Well, it will get horribly hot and dry again. And our precious rivers both flood and then need rain. Before we get around to water harvesting, we can at least, start now saving a drop at a time by xeriscaping,

Answer: a really cool catalogue from those fine folks at Wildseed Farms in Fredricksburg. Not only have they enhanced the beauty and environmental needs of your habitat, but NOW they offer a diversity of grass seeds that we can plant in the hot Houston habitat, Benefits include:

- Less mowing required
- Saves on the water bill
- Once established, does not require as much water.
- 3-5 inches tall, needs no mowing
- Does not need fertilizers that pollute our rivers
- Helps with transpiration, and water absorption, thus lessening our flooding

As we become more aware, we have a responsibility to protect what we paddle! As for preservation, let's go the next step. The Bayou Preservation Association has published a planting guide that offers tips on plants that are low maintenance and that help control erosion. Call the BPA to order one. Both the Wildseed catalogue and The Bayou Planting Guide are excellent botany textbooks and sources of how to increase your quality of life. The riparian planting guide put out by the Bayou Preservation Association is a must for anyone living on or near a bayou or anywhere in Houston. Please encourage local nurseries to offer water and bayou-friendly native plants.

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Watersmart Landscaping Workshop March 6th

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The 5th Annual Watersmart Landscaping Workshop and Plant Sale will be held Saturday, March 6th at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. If you are a homeowner, local government representative, or own or manage a business, this event is for YOU! Come learn about low maintenance, environmentally friendly landscape techniques that can provide cost savings in the long run!

Register now! Space is limited. There will be no on-site registration available. Please go to <http://www.watersmart.cc/> for event and registration information

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