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Our 40th year of paddling fun

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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.

The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit items (please do not embed photos in MS Word documents) to the Editor at the following address.

sherrib57@hotmail.com

Officers for 2004

Commodore: **John Ohrt**

713.877.1504
jcohortjr@aol.com

Vice Commodore: **Mary Zaborowski**

713.884.1925
coachz66@hotmail.com

Recorder: **Anne Olden**

713.864.0205
aolden@ix.netcom.com

Purser: **Anna King**

281-265-4155
alking@houston.rr.com

Fleet Captain: **Fraser Baker**

713.202.2503
fraser@pobox.com

Newsletter Editor: **Sherri Blifford**

713.722.9685
sherrib57@hotmail.com

Governor 1: **Ron Nunnelly**

281-334-6074
Texascanoebuilder@hotmail.com

Governor 2: **Ken Anderson**

281-856-9388
klandrsn@hal-pc.org

Governor 3: **Paul Woodcock**

713.722.4945
plwdcck@yahoo.com

Change of Address

Submit change of address to Marilyn Peery.

Email address:

mpeery@ev1.net.

Physical address:

Marilyn Peery
4119 Mischire Rd.
Houston, TX 77025

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New Members

Canoe Wanted

I am located in vidor and am in "need" of a canoe to take my family out on the lakes and creeks. I want one that I can fit at least 3 smallish persons and enough stuff for a day on the lakes or camping trip!!

thank you
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Submit content to the Newsletter Editor,
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sherrib57@hotmail.com.

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Sherri Blifford
8233 Kingsbrook Rd., #134
Houston, TX 77024

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A Pecos River Journal-10 Years Later

by Mark Andrus

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I was not on the trip that was mentioned in A Pecos River Journal June 3-12, 1994 in The Lower Pecos River by Louis Aulbach and Jack Richardson, but my sixth trip on the Pecos from Pandale down was from May 30-June 5, 2004, which was almost exactly 10 years later. I had taken three of the trips before the Lake Amistead had gone down in the mid-1990s and the other three after that. I had also been on a trip upstream from the old Highway 90 takeout upstream to camp just upstream of the railroad bridge for New Years, 2004 for 3 days. That trip was accomplished by sailing a 36-foot canoe upstream and we had to paddle it back downstream, which was harder than sailing. Another trip I had taken in 2000 involved paddling sea kayaks from the old Highway 90 takeout one mile down the Pecos and then into the Rio Grande for about 30 miles into Lake Amistead, which was quite a windy trip. The winds can be quite strong and they usually blow from the southeast, which is downstream.

The latest trip started Sunday, May 30 when we shuttled to Pandale to the put-in. There were five people and four dogs on the trip. The people were Jack Richardson, Matt (a Texas A&M student), Jay and Barbara Johnson and I. We left the river bank after 2 PM; but we still reached the Ledges campsite 11 miles downriver. We were able to paddle until about 8 PM because it did not get dark until after 9 PM. I did not stay awake much longer than that. I did not have to set up a tent the whole trip because it did not rain the whole trip, but it did get cool a couple of nights. I used a Roll a Cot. During the night, the dogs tore into a bag of gorp that I did not secure. I did not know that dogs ate gorp. The next day (Monday), we passed Everett Canyon at mile 17, but we did not stop because there was a group having a picnic. There had been a few other groups from Pandale on down. I was used to being in either the only group on the river or maybe seeing one other group the whole week during winter trips. After Everett Canyon come the dreaded flutes, which are shallow, sharp limestone ridges underwater which make it hard to pass the next 7 miles without periodically having to get out and push the boat over the ridges. The flutes were not as hard as usual because we had a good flow on the Pecos (way over 200 cfs). We stopped for the second night about 5 miles into the flutes.

The equipment I used on the trip was mostly old and low tech. I borrowed an old Old Town Discovery 174 canoe from Jack to avoid putting too much wear on my Dagger Reflection 15 or Caption. The canoe paddle I used most of the time was over 15 years old and had a heavy aluminum shaft and plastic blade. My paddling clothes included an old long sleeved shirt and some long nylon pants I had. I had a hat with a brim all the way around and which included a tie string. I wore thin gloves sometimes. All of those precautions were used to avoid sunburn. All of our cooking was done on alcohol stoves which have no moving parts to go bad.

The only really high tech equipment I brought with me were a GPS, LED flashlights, a portable radio which had AM/FM/ shortwave, and a cell phone. The cell phone was too far away from any tower to transmit anything. I tried to find news on the shortwave, but it is mostly European news that was of no importance to me. I used the GPS to mark landmarks in the Pecos River book. The LED flashlights were good, because I did not have to take any batteries above AA in size.

The next day (Tuesday), we paddled all the way through the flutes and made our camp around mile 28. It was after the Harkell Canyon entrance but before Harkell Rapid. We did not camp in Harkell Canyon like we often do in winter, because we wanted more breezes in the summer.

On Wednesday, we explored a shelter cave around mile 31 and saw a baby owl in it. We picked up spring water at the last reliable spring along the river at mile 33. Toward the end of the day, we looked in Mulberry Cave. The entrance had some crystals in it but we saw too many spiders further in the cave and decided to go no further into it. We have often camped by Mulberry Cave in winter because it is sheltered. This time, we

went a bit further downstream to camp around mile 34.

We paddled past Lewis Canyon on Thursday. We had obtained permission to look at the petroglyphs on the plateau downstream of the canyon so we spent an hour or two looking at them. The Indians had carved designs into the rocks for several acres several thousand years ago. Our camp was right before we got to Lewis Canyon rapid at mile 39.

We had to line three rapids on Friday: Lewis Canyon, Cold Water Canyon and Painted Canyon. One consolation is we could run Waterfall Rapid which has a good 3 or 4 foot drop chute without obstructions. We had lunch at the Wier Dam and I watched as the others fished. We camped at mile 49, because we wanted to get a camp spot before we got to the lake. Another group had the same idea and they camped around the bend from us.

The last day (Saturday) turned out to be the hardest paddling day for us. We started early but paddling took most of the day. We knew we hit lake around mile 52 because all current stopped. The lake has been coming back up so that was at least a mile before the lake started six months before. However, it still was not at the full level it was in the early 1990s when the lake started at mile 48. When Lake Amistead was full, we would hire a power boat to take us in over the lake to save an extra day of paddling. Now, we have to paddle the full 60 miles to the takeout. The worst part of the trip was after we passed the railroad bridge at mile 55. We had to fight the wind all the rest of the way in to past the highway bridge and to the boat ramp near mile 60. After that, I had to walk up the steep road to get my truck from the parking lot and get it to the boat ramp.

I stayed that night in Comstock with Jack. The next day, I went by the Park Service store coming into Del Rio and bought several books about the Pecos and Big Bend region. I walked over into Ciudad Acuna and ate lunch at a good seafood restaurant. I bought a bottle of Kahlua and a straw hat. I went to visit Jay at his bed and breakfast in Del Rio. He spent a couple of hours discussing his plans in the fall to sail a canoe as far as he could go along the Texas-Mexico border with his wife, Barbara, and Jack. I was invited to go on the trip with them but I had to decline since my law practice would probably not take an absence of three months. Then I had to finish the drive home.

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Allen Parkway Place at 3333 Allen Parkway.

Click on image to enlarge.

Beyond the Adath Yeshurun Cemetery, Buffalo Bayou curves slightly to the left. The imposing new residential tower on the corner of Allen Parkway and Rochow Street with its bonnet-like structure crowning the roof line rises high above the upper contour of the south bank. At thirty stories, it would be hard to miss even if it did not have a distinctive architectural design.

This prominent corner on Allen Parkway, however, is no stranger to architectural prominence. For nearly seventy-five years, the site was occupied by the elegant Spanish-Mediterranean style buildings of the Gulf Publishing Company.

Yet, as difficult as it may be to imagine today in this traffic-congested quadrant of Houston, as late as 1917, the tract was undeveloped farm land. Spurred by the development of the River Oaks Country Club Estates, the River Oaks Subdivision of Will Hogg, Hogg's promotion of the construction of Buffalo Drive as a major thoroughfare, and the development of a crafts and manufacturing district adjacent to the roadway, local developers in the mid-1920's began to subdivide tracts along West Dallas Avenue for new residential neighborhoods.

One such developer was the Rochow family who platted the Rochow Subdivision into five tracts from West Dallas Avenue to Allen Parkway with Rochow Street along the eastern boundary.



The Gulf Publishing Company building, a few months before its demolition in 2001.

Jack Yates Marker

Click on image to enlarge.

The Rochows were a third-generation, construction trades family who came to Houston about 1920 after a half century in the Midwest. Their story began when the thirty year old Carl Rochow, his wife Christina, age 32, daughter Augusta, age 6, and sons Charles, age 5, and the infant Robert immigrated from Germany in 1865. It is possible that he may have come from the village of Rochow, in modern Lithuania (pronounced "Rah'-kov"), but that is not conclusive. Ultimately, they settled in southeastern Illinois in the town of Saline Mines where Carl worked as a coal miner until at least the early 1870's. His son Otto was born there in 1867.

By 1900, Carl Rochow, now 65 years old, had established himself as a contractor in Indianapolis, Indiana. He and his wife Christina lived across the street from his son Robert and his family with whom he participated in the contractor's trade. Robert Rochow, by this time at age 36, had begun his own family. He and his wife Bertha, who had immigrated from Germany in 1885 at age 13, had two sons Carl and Max, ages 4 and 3, and an infant daughter Augusta.

Over the next decade, Robert Rochow continued in the general contracting business and, by 1910, had migrated some 80 miles west to Danville, Illinois. His father, Carl, now 75 years of age, had moved in with Robert and his family.

After the passing of the elder of the family, the Rochows sought other opportunities. They arrived in Houston around 1920 and initiated the development of the Rochow Subdivision with the construction of single family homes. The subdivision was drawn from West Dallas Avenue to Buffalo Drive (which later became Allen Parkway). The eastern boundary was a street named for themselves, Rochow Street, and the western edge of the subdivision lay east of Dunlavy Street. The subdivision was divided into five tracts, each separated by a one block street, Vick Avenue, D'Amico Avenue, Leonidas Avenue and Byrne Avenue (which now is called West Lamar Avenue). By 1924, there were five homes completed in Block 5, facing West Dallas Avenue. Four other homes were still under construction on the Byrne Avenue side of the block. Blocks 1 to 4 were, as yet, undeveloped.

The Rochow clan, headed by the patriarch Robert, positioned itself for the development of the subdivision. The three families lived along the north side of West Dallas Avenue, with Robert and son Carl living next door to each other in the 3400 block, while younger son Max and his family lived in the 3200 block near their contractor's yard, office and related buildings on the northwest corner at Rosine Street. Robert was the building contractor. Carl was a contractor and carpenter, while Max rounded out the trades as a plaster mason.

Commercial development on the site began in 1926 when Ray L. Dudley, founder of the Gulf Publishing Company, selected the 2.6 acre site on Block 1 at the northmost end of the subdivision for construction of a Spanish-Mediterranean style building. With a red tile roof, a stucco exterior, and heavy ornamentation carved from cast concrete, the structure, designed by Wyatt Hedrick of Hedrick & Gottlieb in 1927 and completed in 1928, was a prominent feature on Allen Parkway for the next seventy-five years.

While additional commercial construction was added to Block 2, such as the Parke Engraving Company Building in 1936 and various auxiliary buildings for the Gulf Publishing Company, the residential development continued as well. By 1943, the Rochow Subdivision was fully developed with approximately 46 single family homes on lots in Blocks 3, 4 and 5.

The waning years of the twentieth century brought changes to the Rochow Subdivision. The redevelopment of the areas within the Loop had gained momentum by this time, and the neighborhoods along West Dallas Avenue were no exception. By 2002, there remained only twenty-four single family homes in the subdivision. These were located on Block 5, near West Dallas Avenue, and more than half of these homes had been built since 1998. Block 3, bounded by Damico Avenue and Leonidas Avenue, is a multi-family residential property owned by the ERP Operating LTD Partnership of Chicago. Block 4, bounded by West Lamar Avenue and Leonidas Avenue, is vacant commercial

property owned by the ERP Operating LTD Partnership.

On May 16, 2001, the white stucco walls and delicate ornamentation of the Gulf Publishing Company building were torn down to make way for a luxury apartment complex. Today, Allen Parkway Place, located at 3333 Allen Parkway, offers 250 units for lease on the thirty floors of the residential development owned by Simmons Vedder and Company and designed by the architectural firm of the Steinberg Collaborative. Max P. Rochow, Jr. was born on August 12, 1923 as his father, Max, Sr., and others of the Rochow family began work on their subdivision. By the time that he had served in World War II as a 1st Lieutenant in the U. S. Army, Max saw the Rochow Subdivision flourish with commercial and residential development. Max, Jr., who passed away on August 29, 1983, found a permanent place in Houston and is buried in the Houston National Cemetery. He did not have to suffer the changes that have transformed the Rochow Subdivision.

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White Water in Kansas

by Paul Woodcock

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I had gone to Kansas to visit Mom when I saw Carol and her canoe. She had come down from Michigan to see her mom. She and her friends pick a river and run a section each weekend until they have run the whole river. We decided to canoe Eagle creek. It had been raining and it was flooded. In talking with her I had just assumed that this trip would be no challenge for her. There was a strong current running through the trees. We decided to postpone the trip for a day so the current would be a little safer. I would like to share Carol's trip report with you

For those of you who don't know, we have something called a "Bob trip" here in Michigan/Indiana that is full of unexpected (wonderful) obstacles (usually downed trees) that impede your progress down stream. I never thought in my life that I would exceed a "Bob trip", but.... I DID IT! WITHOUT BOB!

I had the most awesome canoe trip last week!!! The trip was with a friend from Texas, Paul, both of us paddling solo canoes.

Ah, yes, where were we? KANSAS, flatland! Let me mention that it had been raining daily for quite some time, and also that we had 3 inches of rain the morning before that kept us off the creek and caused me to get my Mother out of bed to see the river going through her yard! We instead paddled some of the flood waters and found what was probably Main Street of the old town that had been moved prior to the creation of the reservoir. Pretty neat, since I had heard so much about that old town. I believe that when water levels are down you used to be able to see sidewalks going off into the water. It was a grand tree lined avenue.

Went out the next day and were able to get on the creek. It started off with rapids for the first mile. They were more than I had ever done!!! And, yes, we WERE still in Kansas! The first stretch, I was in the lead and when I saw them, my heart really started pumping. OK, I was scared! I shot for the middle and when I was in them, I realized that I COULD NOT move my canoe (much) even if my life depended on it! I figured that I was going to get REALLY wet and only hoped that Paul was a better paddler than I. When my canoe caught a LOT of water from the first wave, I knew I was a goner! I thought I was sunk, but continued straight down the middle and when we got to a quiet place after the rapids, we BOTH stopped to empty the water from the canoes before continuing!

We hit a several more rough spots in that first mile, but none like the first! Paul was in the lead after that first spot and it REALLY made me nervous when he hesitated or paddled quickly to one side or the other. I was just trying to read what was coming from his reactions. The rushing water sound did not help my nervousness! It was an awesome mile.

We continued a few miles on rather slow current, GREAT time for talking and getting to know each other. You DO meet some of the best people on the water!

Stopped for lunch beside a wonderful little waterfall emptying out of a small pond into a creek that fed into the one we were on. What's life without detours a mile up that interesting feeder stream just to see what's there!? Actually, we only went a mile up the feeder, because there were rapids that were just impossible to "easily" get up so we stopped for lunch instead.

Back on the original creek, I jumped every time I ran over a fish (gar) that did not see me coming, and made a big splash in an attempt to get away from the canoe. I had forgotten how many gar there are in Kansas.

It got pretty hot in the afternoon, so I tried to get the shade whenever I could. At one point, maneuvering through some branches I put the paddle down into the water and hit something hard. I thought it was a tree branch, but when it started swimming, I realized that it was a LARGE turtle! Water much too muddy from flooding to see below surface. There were a lot of sycamore trees along the way (that's another story, I have an on going love affair with trees and water, and a stiff neck as a result!), Paul took some pics of a HUGE rookery of egret nests in a large sycamore tree. We picked up some of their

floating feathers along the banks. What an awesome place to call home, I was envious! The map showed that we had to keep going north until the creek made an abrupt turn to the south. We paddled FOREVER north, seeing lots of places that were just flood waters, so continued north. When we got to the northernmost point, there was a HUGH eddy of "green stuff" that made us feel like we were entering the twilight zone. Very strange! I forget the name of that tiny green floating plant, pretty common stuff, but never in that formation!

Not long after passing the "green stuff" eddy, we came upon a log jam! I had been telling Paul that I would like to see at least one tree down across the river to provide some entertainment. I KNOW what to do when there is a tree down, but I did not ask for hundreds, just ONE! We were able to paddle through with minor difficulty. The logs WERE floating, so if you paddled hard enough, you could get OVER them. I did notice just before getting through that there was stuff growing on top of the jam, it had been there for quite a while. I laughed with Paul about being careful what you wish for, you might get it!

THEN... we came up on the second log jam!!!! I could not even see clear water on the other side and NO way through it! I took the lead and headed for the flood waters and the brush to one side. It was one of those times when you paddle a stroke and then just grab the trees and brush and pull your way through. The only thing I was thinking at the time was, I am NOT turning around and going back!!!! We made it through! Paul's canoe is 16', compared to my tiny 12' toy. Well, that toy canoe can make sharp turns and get me into and out of places that no one would believe. When I finally hit clear water, I waited quite some time for Paul to show up. I had called out to him several times, but got no answer, but it really sounded like Indiana-Bob crashing through, so I knew that he was still with me and coming through.

The rest of the creek was somewhat uneventful. When we got close enough to where the creek joins the river, we could see trees/logs/trash/etc in the river's current on their journey down to join the log jam that in the morning had been about 50' from clogging the boat ramp where we had parked for take out. It was like watching a parade down Main Street. Paul guessed that the log jam would be within 10' of the ramp since we had seen it that morning. (I pulled a life jacket out of the river that was floating alongside a hugh tree). This major log jam ran from the landing down 3 miles to the reservoir. The vultures were having a heyday, not sure EXACTLY :-) why, but it was an awesome sight. Yes, we have pictures, which I will post if and when I get a copy!

When we got near the LARGE log jam, there was NO WAY to even get to the ramp, it was near being closed off! We knew that this would be no problem since the flood water would allow our canoes to get near the vehicle with no problem.

A Kansas trip I will NEVER forget, THANK YOU, PAUL, may you always one with the water.

Carol

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Danger on Buffalo Bayou

by Sherri Blifford

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Click on image to enlarge.

Spring rains and floods took their toll on Buffalo Bayou. These photos were taken at low water levels to show the size and scope of the strainers that have proliferated recently, making the bayou more dangerous than it has been in 20 years.

What would happen to an inexperienced paddler at high water when he gets trapped in a stainer like this?



Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Brad Pennington

For newcomers to the sport of paddling, strainers are formed when trees are uprooted in a storm. Trees, branches, or vines block off all or a portion of a river. The hydraulics are such that other debris is swept back into the logjam until it becomes a strainer, letting the water strain through a mass of dense branches and debris. If you get swept into one, you can drown. Even great swimmers cannot fight the current back out. Frantic swimmers get tangled in the mass and cannot surface for air.



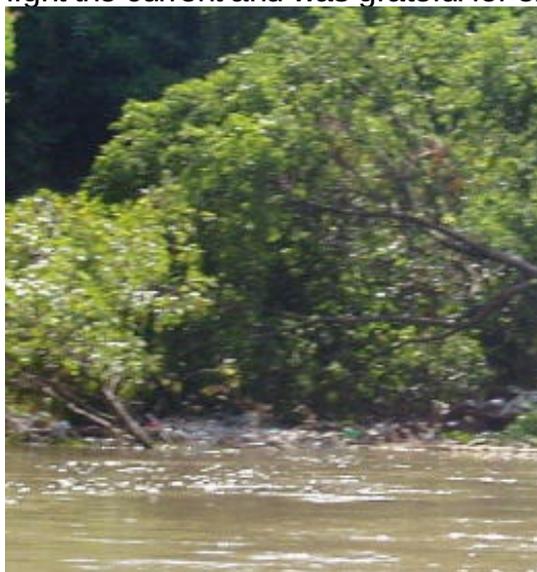
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Photo by Brad Pennington

As a Newbie, I used to wonder if older paddlers emphasized the danger to make their own feats look more macho or exciting. I'd learned to do some basic strokes and had fun in the water so it just didn't seem all that menacing.

Then came humility.

I capsized in the bayou when it was running over 2000 cfs. It was a terrifying awakening to the incredible power of water. In spite of a lot of swimming experience, I could not fight the current and was grateful for expert help. What happens to those less fortunate?



[Click on image to enlarge.](#)



[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

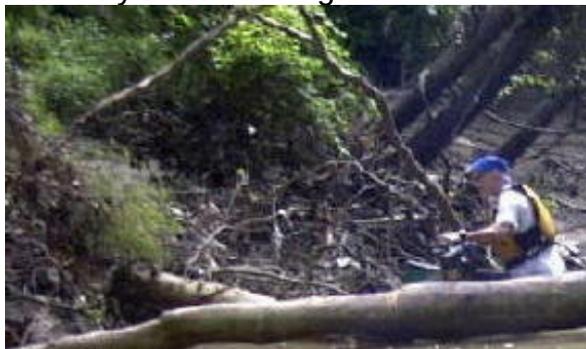


[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Don Greene voluntarily spends hours clearing strainers to make the bayou safe for paddlers.

This year it's overwhelming.

Photo by Brad Pennington



[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Brad Pennington joined Don this year, even sacrificing the chainsaw to a strainer.

Now I wonder:

What will happen to the kids who just bought a kayak and think the bayou looks like an easy place to learn paddling?

With no frothy whitecaps, it can't be too tough, can it?

If it were really dangerous, someone would clean it up or they'd post warning signs.

Wouldn't they?



[Click on image to enlarge.](#)



Click on image to enlarge.
Photo by Brad Pennington

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Adventuring from Anahuac II

by Natalie Wiest

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Greenland comes to Trinity Bay

Mimi Clifton, visiting from Louisiana, paddling Greenland style.

Click on image to enlarge.

In my never-ending quest for new sights, views, and trails on the Trinity River delta, I joined with Marilyn Kircus, Mimi Clifton and Bob C. for a trip Sunday, July 18.

As coordinated by Marilyn, the trip was intended to repeat an earlier trip we'd made, hopefully with no wrong turns this time. It would be a circular trip from Ft. Anahuac, down the Anahuac Channel, west across the bay to Long Island Bayou to the Trinity River, east on the Trinity past the Lake Anahuac dam and back down the channel to Ft. Anahuac.

Alas, gentle readers, the Trinity once again had its way with the blonde kayakers. A rare norther was making its presence felt and the heavy westerlies made our progress across the open bay waters more challenge than the three of us who had paddled 12 miles with the HASK group the day before wanted to take on. Recognizing that we were at the mouth of Southwest Pass, south of Triangle Pass, we opted for that route to paddle through the marshes, as being protected from the strong winds and likewise giving us a nice loop paddle to the Trinity River. Once again, our maps failed us. As I am typing this note, I'm looking at yet another map that inaccurately shows an open, northeasterly route to the Trinity.

Don't believe it! No such route exists. Yes, the blondes were once again lost in the swamps, the chagrined but basically good-sport brunettes, like Marilyn and myself, clawing through the mud trying to find enough water to float a kayak; sinking in to their knees in the ooze if they tried walking; hearing the sound of a motor boat whizzing along a channel we couldn't see or find; lurching at last atop huge logs with our backs to hundreds of oversized grasshoppers chewing, hopping, and well, you know, making babies in the stands of swamp lilies on slightly drier ground.



Native vegetation, a short blooming sagittaria plant,

along South West Passage, Trinity Bay

Click on image to enlarge.

Reviewing aerial photography of the area on our return, I still haven't found a definitive map I would believe or trust. As we were thrashing and mucking through the swamps the thought "dynamic systems" kept running through my head. That certainly defines the area, and explains why even a map produced a month ago could be inaccurate. That's the nature of the Trinity as it empties into the bay.

In the final assessment, it was still an excellent trip, and why would I say that or what did we see? Miles of shallow brackish and freshwater swamps, with more swamp lilies (crinum lilies) than I've ever seen before; sanderlings and black necked stilts scurrying about in shallow marshes; a flock of 30 brilliant pink roseate spoonbills on an unexpected turn of a stream; acres of seagrasses damping the waves from the West; hundreds of fish in the shallow areas - could have had a redfish with my hands in more than one location. Open bay waters, marsh streams, clear water, murky water, bay water.

What a great way to spend a day - you ought to go out and see it for yourself, but do wear your web feet.

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