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[www.houstoncanoeclub.org](http://www.houstoncanoeclub.org)

HotLine 713.467.8857

Volume 42

**September/October 2004**

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Our 40th year of paddling fun

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**Program - October 13, 2004**

Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Winifred Riser (Director of Community Relations) and Trudi Smith (Director of PR and Events) will tell us about the plans for next year's regatta and festivities.

Come join us at 7 PM at Red Cross Bldg on 59 near Kirby.

Also, be sure to join us for the celebration campout this weekend!

**September and October combined**

Due to my work schedule and computer problems, September and October had to be combined. Next month we'll return to normal schedule.

**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 items (please do not embed photos in MS Word documents) to the Editor at the following address.

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Officers for 2004

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Change of Address

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Submit change of address to Marilyn Peery.

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Waterline Submissions

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Want Ad

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Wanted - Perception Torrent Kayak

Let me know if you have or know of someone who has a used Perception Torrent kayak that you (or they) are willing to sell. I need it for Scout training. I can pay around \$350. Thanks.

Dave Ramsey

979-297-8898 Send email to:

[firstbackpacker@yahoo.com](mailto:firstbackpacker@yahoo.com)

Submit content to the Newsletter Editor,  
Sherri Blifford, by the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Send electronic submissions to  
[sherrib57@hotmail.com](mailto:sherrib57@hotmail.com).

Send snail mail submissions to  
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From the Helm

by John Ohrt, Commodore

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Our club's 40th Anniversary is coming up in October. Everyone mark your trip calendars now for Saturday and Sunday October 9th & 10th to come help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Houston Canoe Club. We will be doing it the way we do best, by having fun on the water with lots of fun folks.

We are going to Lake Raven at Huntsville State Park north of Houston. If you haven't been there yet it is a beautiful lake with nice camping. I guarantee it will not rain. The plan is to start out Saturday morning with a large paddle around the lake. After lunch we will have games and events right off the shore next to our campsites. Take part all you want or just relax in your chair and visit.

Saturday evening we are having a BBQ supper in the group shelter which you can paddle over to or drive, followed up by a star-gazing paddle and a campfire. Sunday we will do some laid-back paddling. You can camp or just come up for the day. The club is reserving 10 campsites where we will pack the people in, or you can get one just for yourself by calling the park.

**HOWEVER WE NEED TO HAVE SOME IDEA WHO IS COMING.**

You will get a form in the mail. When it comes in, please fill it out, include an \$8 per person check for each person who will be at the dinner and mail it back to the PO Box ASAP. Whether you have been a member for 40 years (we do have some) or just a short time, let's all come out to the 40th celebration.

See you there.

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## Middle Fork of the Salmon River

by John Ohrt

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Inspired by Les Bechdel's HCC program and the fact that he had two cancellations on his July 5th trip Carolyn and I decided to go to Idaho and take a one week wilderness paddle on the Middle Fork of the Salmon.

The trip is 100 miles, which you cover in 5 1/2 days. The drop is 28 feet per mile and there is lots of whitewater. The trip starts up in a mountain forest and the river is cold, fast and fairly continuous for the first five miles. As it nears its confluence with the Main Salmon the flow is greater, the rapids bigger and the weather warmer. I mostly paddled a kayak but also tried out an inflatable duckie and Carolyn spent each day in the paddle raft.

The kayak allowed me to play the rapids but the duckies were a real hoot, easy to paddle and stable. We saw several black bears a few deer and lots and lots of bighorn sheep. One morning they were right in camp. We also saw osprey, eagles and grouse. A typical day started with breakfast at 7 am and getting on the water close to 9. We would have a late morning break, lunch, more paddling, another break and into camp by 5. We did side hikes to hot springs, waterfalls and indian pictographs.

The paddling was challenging but not real hard, we had a tandem canoe that never flipped and I only flipped once in 100 miles and that was doing enders in a hole. We had beautiful clear weather and daylight 'til 10. Les and the guides at Canyons have been doing this trip for twenty years and everything was super organized. The food was great. We met wonderful people from all over and getting to know them was one of the best parts of the trip. We drank a week's worth of beer and wine in three days and had to be re-supplied. One of the interesting parts of the trip was that several participants posted their photos and videos to internet photo sites so we could check them out. I strongly recommend week long wilderness trips whether you go commercial or do it yourself on the Pecos or Rio Grande. They are really special and memorable.

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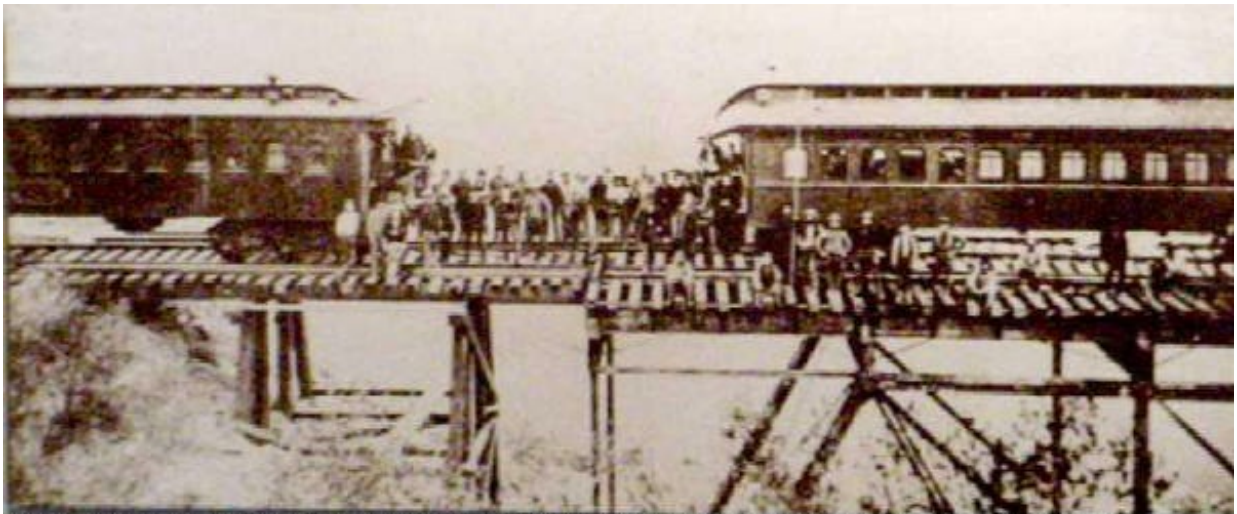
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## Briscoe's Dream

by Louis F. Aulbach and Linda C. Gorski

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Thomas Peirce, president of the GH&SA Railroad, met officials of the Southern Pacific Railroad at this point to drive a silver spike, completing the rail line from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, January 12, 1883 (Courtesy Seminole Canyon SHP).

Click on image to enlarge.

Andrew Briscoe had a dream, a dream of a railroad from Harrisburg to the Pacific Coast. Since there were no railroads in Texas at the time, a transcontinental system was a giant leap of imagination. In 1840, Briscoe wrote a paper in which he detailed his concept of the "California Railroad". He envisioned a grand route from Harrisburg, through Richmond, Fayetteville, Austin and, then, on to El Paso and San Diego, California.

That was a bold and audacious idea for Texas at the time, but, in many ways, it was typical of the optimism and vision of many of the young leaders of the nascent Republic of Texas.

Andrew Briscoe settled in Texas in 1833, at age 23, after making several trips between his home in Mississippi and Texas to assess the opportunities in the state of Coahuila y Tejas. In 1835, he received a shipment of goods and established a store in Anahuac. Almost immediately, he became involved in the unrest among the Texans there that was referred to as the Anahuac Disturbances. Having distinguished himself in the cause of revolution and having served as a Captain at the Battle of San Jacinto, Briscoe was appointed the chief justice of Harrisburg County by President Sam Houston in 1836. As the first county judge of Harris County, Briscoe set a pattern for entrepreneurial ventures that several succeeding county judges have emulated. At the end of his term of office in 1839, he returned to his interest in mercantile activities. He planned to build a railroad, the first in Texas, from the port of Harrisburg to the agricultural lands of the Brazos River. About two miles of the Harrisburg and Brazos Railroad were graded and laid with ties, but financial difficulties caused the project to be abandoned.

On January 9, 1841, the Harrisburg Rail Road and Trading Company was chartered with Briscoe as president. The railroad was to extend from Harrisburg to Richmond on the Brazos River. The company failed to build any tracks due to lack of funds and the war with Mexico.

Although Andrew Briscoe lived in one of the first two story houses in Houston, the county seat, he also owned substantial property interests in the town of Harrisburg. In 1840, he owned one town lot in Houston, but he owned 13 town lots in Harrisburg. As a merchant, he believed that commerce to and from the interior counties of Texas, was best handled through the port at Harrisburg, not Houston. His railroad was designed to bypass the town of Houston by three miles to the south. The rivalry between the two towns for commercial dominance would persist for nearly forty years until the devastating hurricanes of the late 1870's flooded the wharves at Harrisburg and forced the merchants to move their warehouses farther inland to Houston.



Perhaps discouraged by his failure to establish a successful railroad venture in Texas, Andrew Briscoe moved his family and his business operations to New Orleans in the spring of 1849. The railroad holdings and the town site of Harrisburg had been sold in 1847 to a group headed by General Sidney Sherman, and Briscoe turned his interests in New Orleans to banking and brokerage services. Tragically, on October 4, 1849, Andrew Briscoe died of bronchitis in New Orleans at age 39.

Briscoe did not live to see his dream become a reality. A good idea, however, will persist until its time comes. General Sidney Sherman and a group of investors chartered the Buffalo Bayou Brazos and Colorado Railway in 1850, and they succeeded in building the first railroad in Texas. Tracks were laid from Harrisburg to Stafford's Point in 1853. The first passengers to ride a train in Texas went three miles from Harrisburg to Thomas Point on the Buffalo Bayou Brazos and Colorado Railroad, on April 21, 1853, to a celebration featuring salutes from the Twin Sisters cannons used at Battle of San Jacinto. Regular operations of the BBB&C Railroad were inaugurated in August, 1853.

The Civil War brought financial hardships to the railroad. In 1870, Thomas Peirce acquired the BBB&C Railroad and renamed it the Galveston Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad. Peirce set his sights on extending the tracks of the GH&SA Railroad to San Antonio and beyond. He entered into an agreement with the Southern Pacific Railroad coming from the west coast, and the two railroads met on a trestle over a small ravine along the Rio Grande, about three miles west of the Pecos River in late 1882.

On January 12, 1883, Thomas Peirce emerged from his private car in the middle of the trestle where the two railroads came together. In the presence of officials of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Peirce spoke eloquently of the magnificent canyons of the Rio Grande and the superb engineering required to traverse the difficult terrain. He then drove in the last spike, a silver spike. With that, Andrew Briscoe's dream of a rail system from the port at Harrisburg to the west coast was finally a reality.

Today, you can stand in the vacant lot at the end of Magnolia Street where once stood the railroad depot at Harrisburg. Buffalo Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel are only a few blocks away. The bustle of passengers and the hustle of the loading of merchandise for shipment have long since faded away. But, the rail line is still active. You can follow the tracks down Griggs Road, to Holmes Road, to South Main Street, and on to Stafford, Richmond, San Antonio, El Paso and San Diego -- the route of Southern Pacific's famous Sunset Limited.

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Explore Russia  
by John and Anne Olden  
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HCC member Natasha Sorokina-Canada offers a unique way to experience the people, culture and history of Russia. Natasha shares her love of her country by leading small group tours. This past August we flew to Moscow, staying in an apartment as guests of a Russian family. Three of the five family members spoke English. We ate breakfasts and dinners with them, exchanging perceptions about our differing political and cultural systems, and sharing laughter over the traditional vodka toasts. Natasha arranges everything, from visas to meals, transportation and English-speaking guides. We enjoyed the hospitality of her brother and sister-in-law in Uglich, a town of 35,000. An overnight train trip took us to St. Petersburg, where we stayed in Natasha's very comfortable bed and breakfast in the heart of the historic area. Among the many sights here are the Hermitage, the Catherine Palace and Peterhof. We stayed an additional ten days to take a four day boat cruise and to explore St. Petersburg further. It was the trip of a lifetime.

To learn more about Natasha, her tours and her B&B in St. Petersburg, log on to [vologda.ru/~nata00/tours.htm](http://vologda.ru/~nata00/tours.htm)

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## Top Ten Reasons to Wear a PFD

by Sherri Blifford

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Dr. Jane Goodall wore her PFD on Buffalo Bayou and so did her famous ambassador, Mr. H.

Click on image to enlarge.

Courtesy of the Whitewater Experience

Eventually, anyone who paddles often encounters the idiot who simply will not put on a PFD. You insist. They put it on. And refuse to fasten it. They make it a game.

"It's too uncomfortable", "It's too hot", "It doesn't look cool", "I'm a good swimmer" whines the newcomer. Weren't these the same excuses for not wearing a seat belt? They're just as silly now for the PFD.

To make your trip easier (it's just so tiresome, dragging the body back), herewith are some answers you can use.

You should wear a personal flotation device (PFD) because it can help provide:

1. Visibility so you can be found
2. A comfortable seat or pillow during breaks
3. Lightning protocol help
4. Buoyancy, so you can help others
5. Example for children and newbies
6. Rack for personal items such as whistle or knife
7. Some limited thermal control
8. Support for the head of an unconscious victim
9. Protection from blunt trauma
10. Sense of security



Click on image to enlarge.

Big Foot always wears his PFD.

How about you?

Photo courtesy of Don Greene

And did we mention that one might save your life?

If you are with an outfitter, not wearing your PFD may cost him his permit (end of trip) and, in some places, you will get a ticket (do not pass GO, do not collect \$200, it *will* cost you money). The various officials - US Coast Guard, National Park Service, and local ones - take this safety stuff seriously.

Be a grown up and buckle up.

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## Bob Foote & Karen Knight Classes

by John Ohrt

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Bob Foote & Karen Knight, two of the finest canoeists in the US, have agreed to give two separate one day classes to HCC members in October if enough people sign up soon enough.

Saturday October 23rd will be a solo canoeing class and Sunday October 24th will be a tandem class. Each is limited to 10 people per class, first come first served. The cost is \$45.00 per person per day. This is a fraction of what comparable classes would cost you in North Carolina plus having to drive 1,000 miles.

The classes will be at Oyster Creek in Sugar Land and go from 9 to 5. This is a tremendous once in a lifetime opportunity to get instruction at the highest level right here in our own backyard. This is a chance to improve your canoeing skills which can open up a wider world of possibilities for your boating. If you are interested I need to hear from you right away as Bob and Karen have to make other plans if we can't fill the classes.

I can't believe that we don't have people in the club who want to get better and paddle more interesting rivers. I have four people already, so call me at 713.877-1504 or e mail me at [jcohortjr@aol.com](mailto:jcohortjr@aol.com). These classes are targeted to HCC members, but it is not financed by HCC so we need to know asap if you are interested. In a few weeks we will open it up to paddlers from around the state and you might get left out.

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## A Newbie Journal - Some Reflections on Changes

by Sherri Blifford

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So I'm sitting in front of a slot machine in Las Vegas, amused at being in this spot. There's nothing like losing money to inspire reflections on your life choices. A casino has to be the antithesis of my lifestyle and values but here I am because my daughter wants me to try something new.

The machines have different game themes like "Antique Auction", "Wheel of Fortune", or "Ghost Mania" with graphics and sound effects to hold your interest. I've chosen one called "Wilderness". The little panes on it have tents, campfires, canoes, and critters. To win, you need three Grizzlies in a row, all growling. hmmm. The game designer clearly does not understand camping.

Beth is amused by my choice. Are canoes really all that great, Mom?

That's how we got on to the topic of life-style changes and contrasts. It wasn't all that long ago my peers and I wore prissy suits and painful high heels with silky stockings to work. Taking risk meant wearing the wrong outfit. Excitement was limited to shopping trips.

Learning how to paddle one's own canoe, literally and figuratively, is liberating.

Goodbye, stereotypes and walls; hello, outdoor adventure.

No, Beth, canoes aren't all that great in and of themselves. The canoe is just the vehicle. Sliding down a quiet river soundlessly, letting nature stroke each nerve ending is. Being mesmerized by a Blue Heron is. Stretching yourself to new limits is.

Now no one gets so much as a lifted eyebrow for wearing jeans to work any more.

Dressing up means clean sneakers and an ironed blouse with the jeans. Just as I thought I had it all under control, all these changes, it got complicated again. I have a date for the Houston Audubon Society Gala at the Houstonian. Pretty neat for someone who thought they just sold lovely watercolors of birds. But that means getting really dressy. Shopping takes time away from the water and packing for this weekend's campout with the club.

Guess I better sprinkle a little glitter on my sneakers.

See you Saturday on the lake.

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This year has seen a pleasant change from recent years of no rains and low rivers. We had so much water that the Water Safari was postponed twice. This has meant that there have been more opportunities to paddle and access to places too low to navigate. It has also meant that people accustomed to low, slow levels have experienced the power of pushy water. Fortunately no club member has been seriously hurt, but a few have gotten in over their heads - literally and figuratively.

On Sunday, Sept. 12, John Ohrt held a safety seminar in Memorial Park. With the able help of Bill Grimes, Louis Aulbach, and Christy Long, we learned that safety begins at home. This means making sure we understand how to interpret the internet river gauges - what does a given level mean in terms of difficulty; proper clothing and equipment for comfort and safety; a first aid kit; drinking water; and honesty about your capabilities. As Christy said, the idea is to have fun, to challenge ourselves, not to worry whether we will be hurt.

Many accidents occur while unloading boats or when getting on the water, as well as at the end of the trip when people are tired, and in a hurry to head for home. This is a time for extra care. A personal comment: the Club's canoe etiquette is outstanding. People help each other to get into and out of boats as well as helping to carry them, checking to make sure everyone has water with them, etc. This makes for a safe and enjoyable trip. We discussed avoiding that nastiest of river hazards, the strainer, how to negotiate bends in the river - swiftest current is on the outside, slower water on the inside, and dealing with holes. Another aspect of courtesy is not following too close, but also keeping other boats in sight so no one is left behind. Finally, there was discussion of what to do when (not if) you become a swimmer, or when you're trying to help a swimmer. This was followed by some throw rope practice. We all agreed we should need to practice turning over and rescues while we're on the river, before the inevitable happens.

There are several good books on river safety, including River Rescue by Les Bechtel and Slim Ray. There are also swiftwater rescue classes. What we've been reminded of this year is that we don't have to be paddling raging whitewater to have fun and to be challenged. Along with those challenges comes the responsibility to improve our safety knowledge as well as our boating skills.

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Around San Marcos  
by John and Ann Olden

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While Ivan meandered toward Houston, we enjoyed the pleasant weather in San Marcos, camping at Spencer's Shady Grove Campground. On Friday we ate lunch at the Cock House in the park near the gazebo, and visited the Merriman cabin next door. Merriman was a physician and one of the three founders of the present-day town. Aquarena Center, now owned by Texas State Univ. (formerly Southwest Texas State), has displays of archaeological finds and a small aquarium. Especially interesting is the glass-bottomed boat ride. The bubbling springs are easily seen through the clear water, along with many fish and aquatic plants. We also strolled the Wetlands Walk.

Saturday from 9-12 we helped other volunteers in the monthly (every 4th Saturday) cleanup of invasive plants in Spring Lake. Using a canoe, we pulled many buckets of water hyacinth and water lettuce. The latter is fast becoming as prolific as hydrilla and water hyacinth. The water lettuce seems to have even more roots than the water hyacinth, with a gazillion little hairs to absorb water. This is the only time the public can be on Spring Lake.

Later that day we paddled from Spencer's to the bridge just upstream of Staples Dam. The first half of the trip, at less than 300 CFS, provided a little challenge in the sharp bends and around strainers. The latter half gives plenty of forward/steering stroke practice. Altogether a pleasant getaway.

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## Benefit for Martha Williams' Son

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One of our favorite paddler/campers and long-time HCC member, Martha Williams, is going through a difficult time. Her son, Howard Hulsebosch, was paralyzed by a terrible accident in August and is in TIRR.

A benefit, sponsored by Bikers for Benefits, to help with his medical expenses will be held

Saturday, October 30th at Froggie's Saloon

Cypress N. Houston @ Huffmeister

(near 290 in Food Town Parking Lot

Poker Run at 10 am

\$5.00 barbecue plates

Silent Auction

Live bands all day

Flyers will be available on Saturday at the club anniversary party so you can post them in your neighborhood, office, or church. Let's do what we always do best and take care of each other.

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