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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 force upon your paddling buddies to the Editor. Electronic submissions are preferred. Please submit to the following address.

Editor: Sherri Blifford

Phone: 713.722.9685

Email: sherrib57@hotmail.com

Ron Nunnelly on Boat Building

by Sherri Blifford

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Ron Sawing the strips

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Ron Nunnelly

"If it looks right, it probably is." That's how Ron Nunnelly explains the art of building a canoe and the way he makes changes throughout the process. At the February meeting Ron brought one of his canoes and explained how he builds boats to a standing-room-only, overflow crowd.

He has built three "strippers" (the term refers to the strips of wood used for the body), using cedar and plans to build a canvas-covered one next. This is not an art form for the impatient - it takes about 200 hours to build one canoe with wood that has been seasoned for over a year.

"Well, it keeps me out of trouble", he says with a chuckle.

In the mid-1800s strippers were built in Canada at the same time as wood/canvas boats were being built in the U.S. Fiberglass boats began as strippers. They built a frame, explained Ron and then used it for a mold.



Ron and his canoes on the Sabine River Trip

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

The basic design of a cedar strip canoe is a combination of fiberglass and epoxy covering thinly cut strips of cedar. Not only are the wooden canoes beautiful, they are light (his weigh between 42 and 45 pounds), and surprisingly durable. Ron described various escapades that might have destroyed some canoes but left his with only scratches he could repair with sanding and varnish. He uses black walnut for the rails, decks, seats, and thwarts and Western red Cedar for the hull. The strips of wood are cut to a thickness of one-half inch. After soaking them, they are steamed prior to shaping. Brass tacks hold the planks in place. Then come the epoxy and fiberglass, followed by four coats of varnish.

When he began building boats, he used plywood to build two kayaks. Now he has three kayaks and three canoes he built, plus an antique canvas on wood he plans to repair someday.

Here are the photos that are not in the printed newsletter.



Edging the strips
Click on image to enlarge.
Self-portrait of the artist
using a timed exposure



Stripping the canoe
Click on image to enlarge.
Photo by Ron Nunnally



Paddling on the Sabine
Click on image to enlarge.
photo by Oscar Gonzales



Solo on the Sabine
Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Oscar Gonzales

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Houston Canoe Club Officers and General Meeting Minutes

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Officers for 2003

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Waterline Submissions

Submit content to the Newsletter Editor, Sherri Blifford, by the 18th of the month.

Send electronic submissions to sherrib57@hotmail.com.

Send snail mail submissions to Sherri Blifford
8233 Kingsbrook Rd., #134
Houston, TX 77024

Change of Address

Submit change of address to Marilyn

General Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2003

These minutes have not been approved. Any changes or amendments will be posted in next month's issue of the Waterline.

John Ohrt presided at the meeting of the membership. John thanked past officers and introduced this year's officers.

Mary Z. introduced Ron Nunnely who spoke on building and enjoying wood stripper canoes.

Guests introduced themselves and gave a brief summary of their paddling experience.

The minutes of the December meeting held at the Northwest Fitness Center at the Christmas party were read and approved.

Fraser gave the fleet captain's report on upcoming trips and asked for reports of trips taken.

Kevin gave the purser's report as follows: Operating account \$13,602.01; Rendezvous account \$6895.76; Reserve \$3160.08. Kevin reported that the Club is about "break-even" with last year's dues increase.

Bob Arthur reported on the negotiations with the ACA regarding the Rendezvous.

John reported the subcommittee formed to look into strategies for the future of the newsletter, and asked for 2 volunteers from the membership to help.

John announced the donation to the San Marcos River Foundation, and announced the upcoming dragon boat races.

Peery.

Email address:

mpeery@ev1.net.

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Marilyn Peery
4119 Mischire Rd.
Houston, TX 77025

The Club donated \$500 plus collection
from the membership to the Red Cross.

63 persons attended the meeting

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Carter
Recorder

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Neches River Canoe/Camp Experience
by Paul Woodcock and Mary Ellen Zaborowski
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Paul paddling the Neches River

Click on image to enlarge.
Photo by Fraser Baker.

On a cold January weekend, we decided to try recreating our first canoe trip on the East Texas Neches River. When we did this trip seven years ago, it was two days of pain, suffering, and exhaustion. We spent most of our time dragging a heavy 17-foot Smokercraft aluminum canoe over snake-infested log jams. We paddled many more than the thirty miles on the indicated map. However, we did not know how to maneuver the canoe in moving water and hit every low tree branch and log jam in the river. This is how we came to name this heavy canoe the "tree climber". Also, we carried an immense amount of heavy gear on that trip.

This time we invited our sidekick Dana to go with us. Because of the earlier problems, we decided to cut the trip in half and make it a private trip with just a tandem and a solo canoe. We would look at this river and plan to possibly lead a Houston canoe trip later that spring. We arrived at the put in at Highway bridge 294 and as we walked to the deep bank at the river, we spotted a young doe at the river side. She looked up at us and started to run, then stopped dead in her tracks and proceeded to jump into the river. The current was strong enough that she could not swim directly across, but drifted down river as she ferried across to the other bank. The doe quickly climbed the bank and stopped again to look at us. Then at a moment's notice she walked into the deep dark forest.

The canoes were then loaded and down the river we went. After seven years of wilderness camping, we had our day gear down to three small day packs with plenty of water. We were hoping it would make lifting the canoes over the anticipated log jams easier. We were amazed at the swiftness of the current since we thought there was no moving water in East Texas. As we approached the first tree across the water, we back-paddled to slow the canoe down and easily floated across the trunk and limbs.

The next strainer showed a very narrow passage between the roots of a tree and the bank. The narrow passage was very shallow, but the swiftness of the current easily floated us through it. Three more obstacles were challenging, yet we never had to leave our canoes. Finally we took a break on the sand banks, broke out the maps and discovered that we would be at the takeout by late afternoon.

Around the next bend we were on our way down the river, paddling between six-foot tall banks when suddenly we heard a huge splash just behind our canoe. Dan informed us quickly that a large golden beaver had jumped half way down the bank into the water. At the next two log jams we finally had to drag both canoes loaded with gear with much

effort yet easier than the first time with our knowledge of how to achieve these with expertise. As we drifted down the river, we saw a large bird flying down the river in front of us. At first we thought it might be a vulture, but it didn't seem right. It banked to the right, then flew to the left, then we saw the white feathers on its tail. We really didn't expect to see a Bald Eagle on the Neches River, yet there he was in all his splendor. That afternoon we took out at the bridge on Highway 21. Taking the back roads we ended up at Mary's place in Slocum and set up a base camp. The evening ended up with a very good hot meal and looking at forest maps trying to find a put-in/take-out for a short run the next day.

We left camp the next morning with canoes loaded ready for a good paddle, but all the roads leading to the river dead-ended into private property. Then we finally located a bridge, but decided to explore the interesting forest roads. We spent a totally enjoyable day lost on the back forest roads of the Davy Crockett National Forest that were not on any map we had.

What a difference seven years of experience paddling and camping made! This was a fantastic trip with a true wilderness feeling.

Yet down a waterway that cuts through the heart of the East Texas' piney woods and the Davy Crockett National Forest called the Neches River, this is one trip we would like to share with other members of the canoe club as a future trip.

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Freeze Trip Report

by Sherri Blifford

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Ron and Judy paddling on the Freeze Trip

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Sherri Blifford.

On Friday, January 24th, Mary Zaborowski and Paul Woodcock led the pre-freeze trip from Webberville down to Utley to join the 17th annual Freeze Trip organized by the Alamo City Rivermen. Nine of us met early that morning to paddle 14 miles and camp out on a sandbar.

It was cold.

Ah, to the river... Down the river we went.

Well, for a few minutes, anyway, before the first canoe careened into rocks, flipped and hung, suspended on them.

The water was very cold.

The rescue was both efficient and heartwarming, with lots of helping hands plucking gear out of the raging water. oh, ok, maybe not raging, but you get the drift here (sorry about the pun but after three days of puns, they're a habit).

We set up camp and some of us headed out for the shuttle while Dana Enos built a fire and Judy organized dinner. The great shuttle escapade is better shared over a campfire so you only get the condensed version here: It included flipping the second canoe with real style and an upstream paddle back to camp in the dark.



Coffee and talk with Mary Z,
Bobby Hatfield, Bruce Heiberg,
and Judy Nunnely

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Sherri Blifford

Now we're really cold.

A great bonfire and amazing food, along with really bad puns and jokes, restored spirits. No freeze-dried stuff served up in this crowd. We had steak, baked potatoes, corn on the cob, beans, and garlic bread. Mary Z - aka Mother Hen - fussed over her brood, cooking vast quantities of food and cheering them.

The official Freeze Trip started Saturday morning at the Utley bridge when 11 more HCC members joined the group, bringing our contingent up to 20. Members of clubs from Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, San Antonio came, too, for a total of 74 paddlers.

We paddled eight miles down a stunning stretch of river, edged by barren trees, and eased over some small rapids with no more mishaps. Even before the tents were all pitched, work on the great Dutch oven cooking began.



Jan and Fraser at breakfast

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Photo by Sherri Blifford

Dinner was followed by a bonfire and sparklers. The rain didn't start until we were snug in our tents.

Sunday started with great coffee, bacon, sausage, eggs, cheese, salsa, potatoes, and tortillas. Breaking camp reluctantly, we headed on down the river through some nice rapids, which everyone ran smoothly.

On the next set, the third canoe flipped. Fortunately, it was the last since there were no more dry clothes to spare.

A trip like this is one of those stellar experiences everyone should have at least once. The river and woods have a special quality in the winter. Better still, these people can make you laugh the rain and cold away. They inspire, encourage, and share. Best of all, at the end of the day, they'll raise their mugs high and toast with a cheer "To the River!"

Now here's the story you didn't see in print.



Ron and Judy
with their canoe loaded

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Photo by Sherri B

The second canoe flipped at the sandbar when Ron put one foot in it, lost his balance, and fell over the side. Not really a test of his paddling skills, it was still spectacular for the sound effects. We won't quote him.

Canoe number 3 to go was snatched out of the river by a tree from Nancy Bell and Anne

King, or at least, that's how the legend has it.

The shuttle was a Keystone Cops routine. After paddling south to the bridge, we had a caravan of five vehicles heading to Bastrop. We forgot about 5 PM traffic on a Friday. With 20 minutes between each of us, just getting across Highway 71 with no traffic light to help, we got separated.

From there, the story differs, depending on who is telling it. One person left the others and went to the park. The others waited on the highway. Lost one returned to the highway but the others had gone to Walmart (assuming all women love to shop??). We had cell phones but no numbers to call. We had 2-way radios - in the wrong cars. We all went in circles looking until dusk. Finally, we all went back to the bridge.



You just rub two sticks...
Click on image to enlarge.



More food
Click on image to enlarge.

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Lessons Learned on the Freeze Trip

by Sherri Blifford

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We won't admit exactly how we came to this great enlightenment but you can probably figure out who did what.

1. Put the flask in the dry bag, not loose in the boat. Your Absolut absolutely will sink and disappear when you flip the canoe.
 2. Pack pies in water-proof, sealed containers unless you like feeding the ducks.
 3. Dry bags are not always dry. Double-bag everything.
 4. When you hang your clothes out to dry, take them off the line before you go to sleep.
 5. Ask for directions before you head out on a shuttle.
 6. A cell phone isn't much help if no one has your number.
 7. Advice from a friend: To be a good tandem paddler, "...paddle hard and don't talk."
 8. Unlike backpacking, packing light is not the total goal (i.e, take extra clothes).
 9. Attach all baggage to the canoe with straps that unlock easily under water.
 10. Don't trust the weather forecast.
 11. Leave extra clothes and shoes in the car for the trip home so you don't have to drive home wet.
 12. Sometimes you have to get cold to appreciate warmth. A cozy sleeping bag is one of life's great pleasures.
 13. Above all else, when your things get tough, when a chapter of life closes so hard it squeezes your heart,
it is time to go to the river.
-

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New Members

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Joe Carl White
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713-522-0799
joe@joewhite.com

For Sale

QCC500 Kayak (16'10" x 23")
Red deck, white hull, Feathercraft rudder, Yakima foot
braces. Sprayskirt and cockpit cover included. Excellent
condition \$1400.00
Call Robert Scaldino: 713-557-6099

Red Dagger Impulse WW Solo Open Canoe
Very good condition. Wood rails, skid plates. Foam
saddle, thigh straps, knee pads, Voyager bags, and a
spare paddle. ALL for only \$400. Excellent beginner
boat or spare for company.
Call Ken Barnard: (713) 666-5666

Blue Dagger Honcho Kayak
Excellent condition. Ideal for larger paddlers up to about
250 pounds. Asking \$500.00.
Dan Carroll
evenings: 281-499-1438
tlcdbc@aol.com

Sea Kayak
Older model Aquaterra (now Perception) Chinook. It's a
classic boat designed by Bill Moyer. White, rear
bulkhead, front floatation bag, rubber, etc.
Chris Clodfelter
cclodfelter@appliedhydrology.com
K-Light Feathercraft Foldable Kayak
\$950.00 Purple, purchased Canoesport 1996 for
\$1800.00.
Newly refurbished for resale at Canoesport. Excellent
Condition.
Laurie Kassir 713.784.0008.
lauriekassir@yahoo.com

Phoenix Vagabond Pokeboat
Like a kayak, Kevlar, 40 lbs, natural Kevlar color,
two convertible paddles, two sets of foot braces,
two flotation bags, very stable, 16'5"L x 29"W x 15"H
Used once, excellent shape Paid: \$2,189 Asking:
\$2,000
Will deliver (if not too far from Baytown)
Call Robby Canet (281) 837-0410
(please leave a message)
pager: (713) 415-7109 (after 3:00 p.m. on weekdays)
robcanet@hotmail.com

The Buffalo Bayou Artpark
by Linda C. Gorski and Louis F. Aulbach
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The metal triangle and other still life objects lie along the hiking trail west of the Sabine Street bridge.

Click on image to enlarge.

Here's the dilemma.

You'd love to paddle Buffalo Bayou. But you don't know about put-ins, take-outs or landmarks along the way. You're concerned about the water levels and potential obstructions. You can't get anyone to run a shuttle for you. Why not do the next best thing and walk or cycle along the bayou? There's a lot to see.

One of the areas we particularly enjoy visiting is the area near Sabine Street Bridge known as the Buffalo Bayou Artpark.

For those of you who have never experienced the random art and sculpture along the bayou, you're in for an unexpected treat. Located at 500 Allen Parkway and at several other locations along the bayou, the Buffalo Bayou Artpark showcases installations from artists across the country. The Artpark attempts to merge nature and art, placing significant pieces on the edge of the Bayou, right smack dab in the middle of hectic Houston!



Does this Winnebago stroller tell us something?

Click on image to enlarge.

The Buffalo Bayou Artpark traces its history to a "spontaneous guerilla show" co-founded by Charlie Sartwelle and John Runnels about 15 years ago. Rumor has it that the International Festival did not have enough money left in its coffers at that time to fund their annual sculpture exhibition. So a group of young and innovative artists banded together to promote their own show. They chose the site along Buffalo Bayou that was historically a farmer's market known as Watermelon Flats in an area between Fire

Station No 1 and Buffalo Bayou on Bagby Street. In 1992, however, the site was occupied mainly by the homeless and had been neglected for years. That first guerilla show grew into a "happening" involving hundreds of people. From that initial event sprang the art car movement and the creation of the Buffalo Bayou Artpark.



Linda Gorski wrestles the Bayou Alligator into submission
Click on image to enlarge.

Working with the Municipal Arts Commission and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the park leases space along Buffalo Bayou from the city to use as a permanent area for site-specific projects by local artists. The Artpark has been relocated from its original location to an area east of the Sabine Street Bridge and under I-45 due to construction of the 2nd phase of Sesquicentennial Park. It also has an artist-in-residence program, which has hosted, among others, Herb Parker and Patrick Dougherty over the last few years.

Right now paddlers, cyclists and walkers are in for a real treat. According to a recent blurb in the Houston Chronicle the Buffalo Bayou Artpark is hosting a "Watermelon Flats Reunion Show" through Spring 2003. The main area of sculptures will be at the Sabine Street Bridge, but the art and sculptures extend along both sides of the Bayou.



Your guess is as good as mine.
Is it a safety razor?

Click on image to enlarge.

Much of the artwork and sculptures along the bayou changes frequently, but some of the permanent fixtures are Side.Walk.Poems by John Runnels, Bayou Alligator by Greg Bruegger, and Doors by Kathamann. The Winnebago/baby stroller, the triangle and several other pieces of sculpture grace the slopes along the bayou.

Take the kids on your walk through the Artpark. This is a great, fun way to introduce them to the joys of art and sculpture.



Doors by Kathamann adorn the banks of Buffalo Bayou
beneath the Sabine Street bridge
Click on image to enlarge.

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From the Helm
by Paul Woodcock

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Editor's note: Apologies to both Paul and John Ohrt. This column was actually written by Paul Woodcock, not John Ohrt as was stated in the printed newsletter. John's column will appear in March.



Each year the canoe club gives out awards for those members who have paddled 100 miles in that year. I would like to challenge every member to achieve this goal. One trip a month would allow you to reach this goal.

Ten years ago I remember being on Lake Texana on December 31 paddling the last eight miles to reach my 100 miles. I think the club award that year was a mouse pad with my picture on it in a canoe.

Since then I have reached this goal every year, and have received a variety of plaques, flags, statues, and hats as rewards.



The one I am most proud of is the miniature red canoe for the most miles paddled (536). My son bought me a model Woody shown in the photo at right.

Paddling all these miles comes at a price: projects unfinished, letters from the home owners association for an unmowed lawn, birthdays missed, etc. But the joy of seeing the wild life: the otters, deer, moose, elk, black fox, eagles and the peace of watching sunsets and sunrises, listening to the wind rustling the cotton wood leaves makes it all worth while. As Mary Z says, "See you all on the river."

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