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HotLine 713.467.8857

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Program - May 14, 2003

Racing by Grady Hicks

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 trip reports, news worthy items and any literary musings you wish to inflict on your paddling buddies to the Editor at the following address.

sblifford@sbcglobal.net

From Dianne Wassenich of the San Marcos River Foundation:

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Dear Water Rights Group,

Yes, SB 1374, the combined "study bill" and "kill-SMRF type permits bill" is scheduled for Wednesday morning, 8 a.m., May 14. But unfortunately it may not be as simple as that. If it is not the first item heard in that meeting, it could be put off until after the House session that starts at 10 a.m. and goes on until sometime into the night. And if that runs too late, SB 1374 could be put off until Thursday morning. We have to be prepared for lots of delays, but while we are at the Capitol, we can all visit with the staff of the House Representatives, at their Capitol offices. We are hoping that we can get some info Monday on whether the bill will be one of the first heard or not, which could help us plan our week.

SB 1374 is also known as the "let water rights for consumptive purposes be issued while we study how to protect the environment" bill by some of us. This is the last chance for the public to speak on this harmful bill, so please make every effort to find one person or more within your organization who is retired, or free for those two days, to come to Austin. We can find a guest room for them in the homes of our members in San Marcos, and they can ride with us or follow us to Austin and back, if they are not familiar with the city. The traffic is awful getting to Austin during rush hour, so it might be good to come the night before, Tuesday night, and spend the night. We really need for each supporting group to be represented, and speak if possible on their own opinions on the bill.

Those groups, like the shrimpers that have to work since the season just opened, who just cannot be with us will be faxing us a letter for us to introduce when we speak to the committee. If they can find any representative to be there for them, they will do so. Please find someone among your members to who can do this hearing, and we'll help however we can. There is a cafeteria in the Capitol where you can get breakfast, lunch and dinner. Contact us for directions to the parking garage, etc.

Below are the problems with the bill that we'll explain at the hearing, let us know if you have suggestions or questions:

Texas rivers and bays are not being protected by TCEQ in its water right granting---the SMRF permit analysis by TCEQ shows that there is already not sufficient water left in the Guadalupe to keep SA Bay healthy, since so many consumptive rights have been granted. Many Texas rivers are over-appropriated already, and only have water in them because the rights are not yet fully used in the wet years past, but that is changing rapidly as more cities buy up long-unused agricultural rights. The House needs to pass strong instructions to TCEQ to protect rivers and bays while evaluating water right applications. That should be done in this bill.

There are internationally reknowned studies of estuary needs for each bay in Texas completed now with millions of dollars of Texas Legislative appropriations for that purpose, but they are not being used by TCEQ to set the amounts of water reserved in rivers to keep the bays healthy and productive. There are also now-complete Water Availability Models for each river basin, so there is no excuse to ignore these, after the Legislature has spent so much over so many years on them. But TCEQ is waiting to hear from the Legislature whether they should be doing this or not, and meanwhile more water rights are being granted, making the problem worse every year.

While the study is going on that SB 1374 proposes, it allows more consumptive water rights to be granted, which will cause a "gold rush" on water that will harm Texas bays even further, and could cause SA Bay to be lost. According to TCEQ's recent analysis

of the SMRF permit, the amount of fresh water that SA needs is seldom available. Unfairly, conservation water rights like SMRF's are not allowed to be granted in this bill, removing one of the best ways available to protect bays that SHOULD be studied if the study is actually going to be done with protection in mind.

The study can be done without passing this bill, since the Lt. Gov. or Governor can order such a study to be done if that is what they want. The purpose of this bill is obviously to stop conservation water rights. Meanwhile, many such instream water rights have been granted in the past, and it is clearly legal to grant them. This effort to make it illegal is only pointing out that the conservation permits applied for like SMRF's were done according to the current law. SMRF made it clear that they would not own or manage the right, it would belong to the state and be placed in the Water Trust. And such conservation permits like SMRF's do not interfere in any way with currently held water rights, we need to remind you. These applications like SMRF's do NOT tie up all the water in the rivers as the water hustlers like to say, they just set a minimum adequate flow level that is needed for the health of the rivers, water quality, and the livelihoods of Texans based upon those rivers and bays.

These legislators surely would not want their name to forever be on a bill that would harm rural and coastal Texas, and the Texas economy that depends on healthy adequate flows. That is what this bill will do unless it is changed. So we oppose this bill as it stands, because it is very harmful as the Senate passed it, with a one-sided moratorium on water right granting, only for conservation permits.

It will be costly to try to correct the damage that the "gold rush" of over-appropriation of water rights will do, and it will be devastating to the coastal economy based on fishing, seafood harvesting, and tourism. It will also be harmful to farmers and ranchers who depend on clean water in rivers, and to cities and industries that will no longer have adequate water in rivers to dilute their waste discharges. That will mean that they have to treat their waste with ever more expensive processes and equipment.

The coalition that is working together on this issue includes saltwater and freshwater fishermen, shrimpers, seafood harvesters, motel and restaurant owners at the coast, small businesses, riverside landowners, farmers, ranchers, birdwatchers, boaters, scientists, and conservation groups. They have diverse interests but they all know that protecting minimum adequate flows is the right thing to do, and it is urgent that it happen quickly, since it is too late already for some Texas rivers.

We will introduce any letters from groups that cannot be there at this point, and explain specifically why they could not attend, and give copies of each letter to each representative.

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Easter Paddle in the Hill Country

by Donna Grimes

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Ruth Heisenmeir takes her first plunge over Steward Falls

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Photo by Fraser Baker

Nothing is more beautiful than Texas in April. Blue bonnets, Indian Paint bushes, and primroses lined the highways as I made my way to the Guadalupe put-in at Center Point on Friday morning, April 18. There, 18 colorful boats were being unloaded. We laughed as it looked like large colored Easter eggs lined up along the banks. The Guadalupe was running a little low, 207 cfs, instead of the ideal flow of 450; however, there was enough current in the water to keep you on your toes and to keep the boats from dragging. When we reached our first ledge, a few boats decided to portage, but most ran it, with only two boats turning over.

One delightful incident was watching Victor Nieto and his twelve-year-old son progress in paddling skills as they encountered each rapid. At one particularly "hairy" turn, the best paddle stroke for the twelve-year-old Victor would be a cross bow draw, but since that is rather technical, he was told to pry. However, at the critical moment, little Vic instinctively did a perfect cross bow draw and helped turn the boat perfectly. We all clapped as we watched this "Natural." At various rapids and turns, I would look back to see a big smile on his young face. Of course, he and I ended up in a water fight. A paddle day isn't complete for me without at least one water fight!



Lori Saunders takes a cooling plunge as Ruth Heisenmeir, Joanne Johnson, and Meleson Foster wait their turn.

[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Photo by Fraser Baker

The next day, we decided to paddle the Medina even though it was only flowing at 96cfs, rather than the ideal 300. But many of our group had never been on the Medina but had heard of it and wanted to try it. Looking at the put in, I began to wonder if this was going to be a long drag, as gravel bars lined the river with few channels to float. As a precaution, I left a car at a bridge half way down the trip for a quick bail out. However, those skinny, little channels were floatable, the river twisted and turned and made each paddler practice his skills. One thing about the Medina: there is never a dull moment. If you aren't stimulated by the hairpin turns of the river, then you are looking in awe at the peaceful canopy of cypress trees that line the river. The crystal clear water allows you to watch schools of bass swim under your boat.

About four miles down from the put in is Steward Falls. With lower water levels, this small fall is a LONG drop into an aqua blue pool. As we scouted it, some of the first timers looked at the falls with trepidation and said, "NO WAY! I'm not paddling that!" However, as skilled canoeists such as Jim Barton and John Olden sailed easily and adroitly over the falls, I could see each of these hesitant paddlers thinking, "Hmmm....maybe I can do that, too."

Then, after their confidence was beginning to rise, their faithful leader (me) took my turn. After ten years of paddling over these falls and never tipping, this was the one time that I ended up face under my boat, gulping for air. Now our newbies are a little less sure. Behind me comes our Fleet captain, Fraser Baker and Janice Frels. They, too, turn their boat over. Now I have company in the wet department.



Richard Sproll and Melleson Foster negotiate through the winding Medina River
Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Fraser Baker

However, this did not totally discourage our Medina first timers. Each one ran the falls and although two of the four tipped over, the falls was the highlight of the trip. I love the look of exhilaration as they finished the falls.

Easter morning, the plans were to paddle the Guadalupe from Bergheim Campground to Edge Falls, a section filled with fun rapids and surfing waves. However, with a high prediction of thunderstorms by noon, we opted to not paddle. Some went to the San Marcos since it was closer to home and since it was further from the hill country storm center.

Yes, spring is here and there's no better way to spend it than on the water....for me....the crystal clear water of the hill country.

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Houston Canoe Club Officers and General Meeting Minutes

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Waterline Submissions

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

Send electronic submissions to
sblifford@sbcglobal.net.

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

General Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2003

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

Commodore John Ohrt presided at the meeting.

Mary Z. introduced Brian Trusty, Supervisor of Environmental Programs and Facilities at the LCRA. Brian gave an interesting presentation of the nature parks and other activities the LCRA is doing.

Fleet Captain Fraser Baker asked for reports on past trips and announced instructional paddles and upcoming planned trips.

The minutes of the March 12, 2003 meeting were accepted as written in the newsletter.

Purser Kevin Casement reported that the Club took in \$1600 and spent \$400 during March. He also reported that someone tried to cash checks on the club account, and we will not be reporting actual balances at the meeting or in the minutes.

John Ohrt reported that there will not be a Southwestern Canoe Rendezvous this year.

Mary Carter reported that the TCEQ denied the San Marcos River Foundation's application for water rights in the Guadalupe River to protect instream flows.

We support the 4x4 bill as it has been filed at the legislature.

Under new business, the club voted to subsidize the Bayou City Whitewater Club's efforts to keep the pool sessions going at the West Side Y. HCC agreed to donate up to \$120 per year if there is

a deficit. HASK will also donate to keep the sessions going.

Newsletter editor Sherri Blifford announced that the newsletter will be sent by the internet from now on. If you don't have internet access, contact Sherri and she will send a printed copy.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Mary W. Carter

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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From the Helm:

by John Ohrt, Commodore

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We are in the heart of the spring paddling season. The days are warm and long, and the nights are refreshingly cool. It is one of the best seasons to be outdoors in Texas. Unfortunately my back surgery will keep me from paddling until late June, so I can only sit on the sidelines while the rest of the club members get to go boating. I am acutely aware that I have missed, am missing, and will miss some great spring camping trips, whitewater trips, and day trips.

The Houston Canoe Club has an active, varied and comprehensive trip schedule. There is truly something for everyone and I believe that the trips are the heart of the club. We still have May and June left before the summer heat arrives in earnest, and there are plenty of good trips scheduled for those next two months. I know that it's easy to make excuses for not taking the time or making the effort, small as it is, to go on one of the club trips, I've made them myself in the past, although I never went as far as a ruptured disc before. However, I don't remember a trip where I was sorry afterwards that I did take the time and make the effort, and I don't think you will be sorry either.

The Houston Canoe Club can lead you to water, but it can't make you paddle; you have to do that yourself. So make a plan, take the time, get on out and don't pass up this beautiful season. I have to miss it, but you do not.

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From the Helm:
Spirit of the River

by Mary Ellen Zaborowski, Vice-Commodore

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"The springs and rivers, to bathe in them gives newlife, to drink from them cures every bodily ill." - Cherokee Wisdom

The rivers have more meaning to me, being of Native American Blood- Cherokee Indian. The river, or Long Man (pronounced ga nv hi dv as ga ya in Cherokee) as we call it, gives us a way of travel, replenishes our physical bodies, and purifies our spirit with the sounds of the rapids and falls. The wildlife that lives inside and along the riverbanks nourishes our bodies as we travel its moving waters. The cool waters as we drink and bathe in its streams takes care of our bodies during the hot summer months. The sound of the musical rapids keeps our attitude on a level note, yet it keeps flowing, like the blood that pumps through our veins and gives life!

"I knowevery river, stream and woods.... I have hunted and lived like my fathers before me and like them, I live happily!" -Ten Bears: Sioux

It saddens my heart when I see how we treat the waters that Mother Earth has given us. They were made pure and clean, and we, the caretakers, are now destroying their existence. What do we leave to our future grandchildren? How do we explain to them how once the rivers we paddled ran pure with lots of life and we neglected to take care of it for them? Yet, is it too late to try and help save our waterways? It takes all of us, including the government and local people, to set forth now on a voyage down the streams and rivers, to keep them moving and pure for our future generations, while on Mother Earth.

"We sang songs that carried in them melodies of all the sounds of nature, the running of waters, the sighing of winds and the calls of the animals. Teach your children." -Crow Feather - Teton Sioux

Oh, hear the river sing through its chorus of multiple rapids. Feel its pure coolness rush over our skin. Taste the life it gives our bodies. See the beauty of blue waters with an abundance of colored fish. Smell the freshness that the running water gives back to the air we breathe. Last, the Spirit of the River that restores the positive attitude to our living souls. Oh brother and sister hear me, through I'm just a lowly poor Indian, who hears the Great Spirit in the Winds, see him in the clouds, yet, feels the peace he gives in the moving pure waters of the rivers.

"The Great Spirit made these mountains and rivers for us, and all this land." -Blackfoot-Crow, 1850

Sincerely yours on the Rivers,
Me li (Mary)

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Mary Z cooking

Click on image to enlarge.

Hey Guys: Great Trip!! Sunrise was beautiful. The ride up there was beautiful with the rolling East Texas Hills. Stopped at Slocum to get only a few vehicles for the shuttle ride. Put in was a little sandy/muddy. Take-out was great with vehicles right by the water. The Neches River was "cooking" at 1000 cfs. Good moving water paddle with no problems. Found a lovely sandy beach for lunch break.

A good bunch to paddle with, with lots of laughter down the river. It only took a few hours to paddle this section of the river from the Cherokee Hunting Club Road to Hwy 294 (11 miles). Saturday Evening's air was filled with additional stories, laughter, and campfire.



Paul and Bobby at M & B Campground dinner

Click on image to enlarge.

We feasted on T-bone Steaks, baked potatoes, corn-on-the-cob, salad, and birthday cake for dessert.

We slipped off to sleep with the melodious sounds of the distant coyotes and the whippoorwill calling to his mate. Woke in the middle of the night to the barn owls hooting at the half moon.

Next morning after brunch, along with hazzlenut coffee, we wandered around the land with thoughts of the Columbia Shuttle pieces that had landed there. We stood there for a moment of silence for their memory.



Click on image to enlarge.

Then we packed up and headed towards the Tejas Mission in Weches, Texas and drove by the Caddo Mounds. Back into the good old Houston Traffic , where we came to end our adventure in East Texas for a good paddle/camping weekend.

The person who turned 51 years old now, feels like an 18-year-old again, with the renewed spirit the Neches River gave her.

Editor's note: I paddled 11 miles down the Neches River and stayed dry the whole trip! No disasters this time. I even learned why I keep capsizing!

Camping on Mary's land was a real treat, with all the wildflowers in bloom and piney woods to savor.

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What I Like Most about HCC - Buffalo Bayou Regatta Volunteers

by Donna Grimes

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Just before the start...

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Sherri B

Ahh! Retirement!! Time to enjoy the golden years, to lay back, relax and just "smell the roses"so....why am I so tired and so busy? Let me explain. A few years ago I retired - less money but more time to do the things I've always wanted to do. I wanted to travel, read, be with grandkids, and volunteer for worthwhile organizations.

Such an opportunity came when the Buffalo Bayou Partnership asked me to serve as the Regatta Race Director. Then the job duties started pouring in! My land! What have I gotten myself into? I can't do all this!

Then I didn't have to because of great people in Houston Canoe Club. They came to my rescue! Actually, HCC has been saving the regatta for years by serving as boat launchers, timers, sweep boats, safety boats, etc. This year, when John Bartos was not going to be able to serve as the regatta time keeper, it put the partnership in a panic. John had done it for so many years and done it well, that no one else knew how to do it! Houston Canoe Club came through with lots of helpers to make this a much safer event. I was amazed when I'd get a call and hear, "OK, Donna, when I'm finished with that duty, what else can I do?"



At the start, it was chaos...

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Sherri B

Here are the volunteers who helped:

Pre-Race Run

Anne Olden
Sherri Blifford
Donna Grimes
Marilyn Peery

Setting up Signage:

Bob Arthur
Marilyn Peery
Cliff Peery

Volunteer Table

Mary Carter

Sweep Boats

Fraser Baker
Janice Frels
Chet Tigard
Lillian Tigard
Mark Andrus
Jenny Quattlebaum



Volunteers at the finish line spot boats arriving.

Click on image to enlarge.

Photo by Sherri

Launch Help:

Bob Arthur
Don Wilson
Marilyn Peery
Fraser Baker
Janice Frels
Sherri Blifford
Gordon Gray
Chet & Lillian Tigard
Cathy Valderrama

Timers and Spotters Bill Grimes (Head Timer)

Mary Carter

Ann Derby

Sherri Blifford

Anything That Floats

Donna and Bill Grimes

Jenny Quattlebaum and JoAnn Johnson

Chet and Lillian Tigard

Safety Boats

Anne and John Olden, who rescued a boat, when the paddlers abandoned the bayou, leaving Anne and John with an extra boat and no paddlers!

Lynn and Stefan Ketcham, who had a close encounter with an alligator and who paddled the whole race!

Yes, the Houston Canoe Club made a good showing at the regatta again this year. Thanks for the help....and as soon as I recover, I'm off again - this time to Italy!

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Bridges of Buffalo Bayou
by Linda C. Gorski and Louis F. Aulbach
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If you're a Houstonian (and a canoeist, too), here's a trivia question you must know to amaze your friends and acquaintances. How many bridges span Buffalo Bayou? Take a guess...ten, twenty? Here's a hint...between Katy Flewellen Road near the Bayou's headwaters and the Sidney Sherman Bridge (610 East) there are over 40 bridges. And that's not counting the railroad bridges! That's a lot of bridges since the initial span over the bayou was built in 1843.

In the early days of Houston there were no bridges across Buffalo Bayou. Ferries were the only means of crossing from one side to the other. Passengers and commercial goods were ferried across at the foot of Main Street at Allen's Landing. Wagons crossed to the north and west of town where they forded the bayou near Washington Road.



Preston Avenue Bridge

The first bridge across Buffalo Bayou, known, then, as "the Long Bridge," was built at Preston Avenue in 1843 by Richard Allen, a slave owned by J. J. Cain. The bridge was 100 feet long and supported by 26 posts. As highlighted in one of our earlier articles, that first bridge across Buffalo Bayou at Preston Avenue was extremely important to the commerce of early Houston. Although most of the city's trade took place around Main Street and the shipment of goods was through Allen's Landing, the new bridge assured that high water in the bayou would not prevent products such as cotton and agricultural goods from the farms to the west arriving by wagon at Market Square.

After that first bridge over the bayou, others followed as Houston's population grew. However, by 1873 the famous Koch map still showed only three bridges over the bayou. Those bridges were located at Preston Avenue, Commerce Avenue, and Louisiana Street. By 1891, records show that the Franklin Avenue bridge had been built to connect the growing city with the north bank...and from then on the building of bridges continued at a record pace.

Angry Houstonians were responsible for the construction of at least one bridge over the bayou. It was only when the residents of the Fifth Ward twice threatened to secede from Houston was the order signed for construction of an iron drawbridge at the foot of San Jacinto Street.

Bridges were landmarks for businesses located nearby and those businesses freely used their proximity to the bridges in their advertising such as "Stanley Brickworks - located at the north end of the Long Bridge."

And speaking of businesses locating near bridges, the Magnolia Brewery at Franklin and Milam actually extended over the bayou and onto the bridge structure at one point. The old brickwork of the brewery is still visible under the bridge.

One of the more bizarre tales about bridges over the Bayou in Houston is that of the Donnellan family grave vault -- a large brick vault with a small door boarded up with timbers located in the bank of Buffalo Bayou under the Franklin Avenue bridge at Louisiana Street. According to historical records, Tim Donnellan was buried in the vault

in 1849; a brother of Thuse Donnellan who was killed by an accidental explosion of a bomb was buried in 1866, and Mrs. Emily Donnellan who died in 1867. But don't be afraid of disturbing the dead when you paddle under that bridge. All the remains of the Donnellan Grave Vault were removed in 1901 to Glenwood Cemetery.



McKee Street Bridge

By far the most artistic bridge over the Bayou is The McKee Street Bridge near James Bute Park in the Warehouse District. Built by Houston City Engineer James Gordon McKenzie in 1932, the bridge is an unusual design of a reinforced concrete girder bridge. The peculiar feature of this bridge is the girders, which rise above the roadway to form two swooping curves.

Until the 1980's, the bridge was abused through vandalism and graffiti. That was when artist Kirk Farris made it his pet project. He cleaned off the rust and urban decay, and applied the first coats of pastel paint. The flair of the bridge design has been described as representing either the waves of Buffalo Bayou below or perhaps a relative of the Loch Ness Monster, the globes on its light standards looking like multiple eyes.

The bridges of Houston owe a lot to artist Farris and photographer Paul Judice. During the time that Farris was an investigator for the Harris County Pollution Department in the 1970s he realized that the bridges over Buffalo Bayou were monuments to the culture that built them and also told the story of the bayou and of Houston. In 1980, he received a grant from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston to prepare an exhibition about the bridges over Buffalo Bayou. In 1982, Farris and Judice created the exhibition called "Bridges over Buffalo Bayou" that was displayed at the Houston Public Library's downtown branch. That was when he decided to paint the McKee Street Bridge. With approval from the City, paint donated by the Bute Paint Company (originally located in the warehouse district at one end of the bridge - the buildings of which are now trendy lofts) and lighting supplied by the local Wholesale Electric Supply Company, Farris completed revitalization of the McKee Street Bridge which remains as we see it today in all its pastel glory!

All of the bridges over Buffalo Bayou and their fascinating stories will be found in our forthcoming book. Watch for it soon!

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Seldon Lake Trip Report

by Fraser Baker

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The Sheldon Lake paddle was great. The weather was outstanding, and the scenes were spectacular. Big Al was very accomodating and we were able to get within 30 feet.

The rookery was great, and I believe that we saw over 30 species of birds.

I have accumulated all the good pics I have taken at Sheldon Lake, and they can be seen at

[Fraser's River Trips Page \(http://66.137.123.177/albums/river_trips.htm\)](http://66.137.123.177/albums/river_trips.htm).

Enjoy.

Note: Fraser has a lot of nice photos. If you click on the "more photos" link just below the revolving photos on the HCC website, you will go to his photo albums. We didn't get an Armand Bayou Cleanup Report but here is a photo from it:



Fraser and Jan at Armand Bayou

Click on image to enlarge.

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Memories of Mike Galt
By John and Cindy Bartos
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Mike Galt, left, and John Bartos, right
Click on image to enlarge.

We first met Mike Galt at the Southwestern Canoe Rendezvous at Chain O' Lakes in 1989, but we felt that we knew him long before that. Our first canoe, by pure luck, was a Lotus Egret designed and built by Mike. Being newbies to canoeing, we did our research and really only knew that one should test paddle a boat before purchase. What we were going to deduce from this exercise, we weren't sure, but we took the Egret out to a pond to try it.

Bruce and Charles from Canoesport put it through its paces before we tried it and we were amazed by their precise and graceful moves. We decided to buy this boat and asked the guys if there was a book or anything about the type of paddling we just witnessed.

We decided to buy this boat and asked the guys if there was a book or anything about the type of paddling we just witnessed.

It turned out there was not any book but they gave us a copy of a tape of Mike Galt and Marilu Wilson paddling the Egret. To music! Wow. We were blown away and it didn't take long for us to watch the moves on the tape and go out and try to emulate them one by one. We followed up with getting old articles that Mike had written and then current articles from Canoesport Journal.



[Click on image to enlarge.](#)

Mike was one of the few great original thinkers about the theory and lifestyle of Quietwater canoeing. From the lines of his classic yacht-like hulls to his fine hand crafted woodwork his boats to this day are the pinnacle of the craft. His vision that started the solo revolution and his promotion of couples working together in tandem made real advances in our sport. With partner Marilu, they won every early Freestyle competition and they became roving ambassadors for Freestyle canoeing. Mike was very supportive of our efforts in competition and instruction. We in Houston were very lucky to have him attend several of our Rendezvous' and come to Texas several times to instruct. Our neighbors were intrigued to see a ratty old VW van parked in our driveway with beautiful canoes on top. Clearly the boats were worth more than the vehicle. His point/counterpoint discussion at the first Rendezvous with Cliff Jacobson was a classic.

Gruff but loveable was a term used to describe him, with the emphasis on gruff. We had the pleasure of sharing lots of margaritas with him while solving the problems of the world and our sport. We also spent some memorable days co-instructing with him and as blunt and brutal he could be to students; he could also cut through to really reach them. And he was usually (Mike would say always) right. Much of the finer aspects we have learned about paddling we picked up from Mike. There is a little thing about gripping a paddle that we always pass on to our students that has resulted in many "Eureka" moments.

Once while discussing the recovery of a forward stroke, Mike asked the students, "Did you ever see a blue heron fly? Watch the blue heron. You can see his wings as they come down, but you don't see them come back up. That's how quick and smooth the recovery should be on your paddle stroke back in the water as smooth as the wings of the blue heron".

Some of the memories we have of Mike are better told in person, but we will never forget him. Canoeing is better in America because of him and he will live on in that knowledge that he passed on to others. His boats are also still out there, making paddlers smile. And remember, "In the canoe dance, the bow paddler leads."

Mike Galt, gruff but loveable canoeing guru, died in Sebring, Florida April 8, 2003.

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Journal of a "Newbie"

by Sherri Blifford

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When I was asked to take this job, I tried ducking with excuses about how long it had been since I did a newsletter.

"No problem", Fraser assured me. "It's like riding a bicycle - you never forget."

That should have been sufficient warning. You see, friends, I bought a bicycle a couple of years ago and I have scars to prove that I *did too* forget. Patience, please, while I get my balance at this, too.

In my first newsletter, I laughed at my bungling ineptitude. Some folks misunderstood that as unkind to the club and its mission of safe paddling.

Let me set the record straight: Were it not for the expert paddlers on that trip, I would have been in serious trouble. They knew what to do and did it with precision that would have made a military search-and-rescue crew proud. Before I knew what was happening, they had me out of the water, salvaged my gear, and warmed me with hot tea and clothes from their own packs. Nothing ever tasted so good as Judy's amazing home-made granola bars.

Subsequent discussion brought the suggestion that I continue with a journal of the "newbie" for the benefit of other newcomers, so here we are, with regular installments as I learn.

When I first joined the club, friends asked me why anyone took lessons. Hey, you just put the paddle in the water and go, right? Wrong! You can do that on a flat lake but on moving water, you need to know some basics or you can endanger others as well as yourself. That was the message I got. One of the benefits of the club is group activities and lessons.

So I took lessons. Bear in mind that we're discussing someone who flunked out of dance classes and still stops her bike with her feet. If I could just do it on a computer... Anyway, here I was with a proper ACA-certified instructor alongside and the assistant in the stern of my canoe. They alternated barking commands at me. I could not make two strokes without criticism. It was not fun and, worse, it was not effective. I learned the words "Draw" and "Pry" but I had no concept of why except to amuse myself with perverted ways of using them on the neighbor who suggested this insane venture. Draw and quarter him, by golly. Pry the nose off his face for meddling.

In retrospect, I think I tried lessons too early. It's hard to listen when you're still scared of the way a boat wobbles.

My new friends kept trying to help. One invited me to practice in his beautiful canoe. He showed me how to climb into it at the dock.

"You put one knee in, hold the other side..." I repeated his instructions aloud as I put one knee in and promptly flipped the canoe upside down. He lost his watch trying to stop me (I did send him a new one with an apology). He spent hours showing me strokes I couldn't imagine ever using. He watched in horror as I rammed his lovely craft into a concrete bulkhead. He gave up and left town.

Then I paddled the Sabine with a big, happy group of over 100 canoes. All by myself in a solo canoe. 32 blissful miles. No one yelling at me. I fell in love with the river. I tried moving soundlessly through it, feeling its motion, letting it take me into another place where my weary soul could heal. Much later a real guru explained the concept of progressive spiritualism to me as the way you have to move in stages away from stress and into the calming influence of nature.

But I didn't know that then. I just knew that the canoe didn't wobble. I could make it move and control its direction. I had a broken kneecap from falling on the rocks but I didn't care. In fact, I was ecstatic!

With each club outing, the experts helped me. Recently, a kind soul pulled our canoe into an eddy and let me play with the paddle, changing the angle slightly with each stroke. As I repeated his motions, he caught me mid-stroke and explained how I would capsize us by changing the angle just a few degrees more. Voila! Suddenly I know what happened the last two times I took the plunge. Why couldn't someone have told me that a year ago? Because it wouldn't have made sense back then. Some of us learn differently.

I might be ready for lessons now.

Learning how to paddle a canoe is great fun, even when you land in cold water once in a while or, in my case, almost every time. That's not the club's fault. Getting wet is ok. Mud washes off. The feeling of mastery doesn't.

A gentle soul calls me "Ms. Muddy Knees" and I think that's cool.

Maybe it's the kid in all of us that makes us paddle.

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For Sale/Wanted

Red Prijon Sea Kayak

14 ft. 2 storage hatches, adjustable seat, rudder, used three times Paddle, PFD, two skirts, pump. Firm \$ 800.00 Call : Mary Ellen Zaborowskiat 713 884 1925

maryzabo@sbcglobal.net

2002 Competition ProExplorer

12'6", yellow, sit-on-top, dry seat, weight capacity 400 pounds, includes 4 dive straps, high back deluxe seat, center storage hatch. \$550.

riverheart@asapchoice.com

call 512-657-9168.

New Members

Lynn and Bob Ketcham

ketcham4@swbell.net

ketcham4@swbell.net

Jenny Quattlebaum

jquattlebaum@houston.rr.com

Talmadge Wright

t_wright@ureach.com

Old Town 13'8" Loon recreational kayak

Granite-colored, 3 years old, excellent condition.

Selling to purchase a "sit-on-top" kayak such as an Ocean Kayak Drifter to do more salt water fishing. I also have a canoe and my finance manager has set a limit on how many "toys" I can have at one time. I would consider a swap. I am asking \$300.00, which includes a storage cover. The new price is \$520.00. Call 281-733-0886 or 281-353-1726.

email

Phoenix Vagabond Pokeboat (for 2 people)

Like a kayak, 40-lb Kevlar. 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: \$1595

phone: (281) 837-0410 (please leave a message)

pager: (713) 415-7109 (after 3:00 PM weekdays)

e-mail: robcanet@hotmail.com

Including new members

I look at the Houston Canoe Club and I wonder where will it be in a year or even five years. We continue to attract new members but yet we don't try to keep them. There are so many little groups with their own specialty and interest that exclude the new members that in a short time the new members give up and leave the club.

When I first joined I saw a paddle that I thought I might have enjoyed but when I called the trip leader and was told "I don't know you and your paddling skills so I don't think you should go". I didn't go.

Later I went to a class with a friend and was talking to a member of the club and when I mentioned this incident the statement was "We all have groups that we know their skills and we paddle with them". It was quite awhile before I paddled with any from the HCC. I did meet up with some on other paddles put on by other clubs. From these I have made friends with a few paddlers in HCC and go on these paddles.

I know there are a lot of different types of paddling (white water, flat water, trip across much of the continent, freestyle, etc. yet this club can not be constrained to any type. We need to keep this club open to all types of paddling and all skill levels. If a new person joins the next paddle a special invitation should be extended and everyone on the paddle should be willing to help a novice. If this doesn't happen this club will fall apart. Another thing that should happen two or three times a year: we should have a gathering at some lake or river with a real good camping area where the whole club can come together to make friends and reacquaint ourselves with old friends. How this happens, where this happens, and what activities that are present at these gatherings can be decided a yearly meeting.

The one thing that is all-important is that we all make welcome all types of paddlers and all skill levels. Offer all types of paddling to all with no small groups or skill levels being excluded.

Ron Nunnally

Response: What should we do to remedy this? The officers wrestled with this topic and are planning some general trips to include all skill levels.

Now I think it's time to ask: **What do the members want?**

Please write to me. sblifford@sbcglobal.net

or call me: 713-722-9685

or mail me: 8233 Kingsbrook Rd #134 Houston 77024

or hand me a note at the next meeting. Fly a paper airplane at me...just no stones, please

Contact any officer (we're all listed under "officers" on the web site).

I want to hear from you. We do care.

How can we make new members feel welcome?

Do you want more general, all-skills-welcome trips?

Specific newcomer events?

Outings with some instruction?

Events that are not on the water?

Let me know. All responses will go to the officers for consideration.

Request for Donations

Dear Members:

I work for HoustonWorks USA which is a non-profit organization in Houston that provides various opportunities for youth between the ages of 14-21. Although I enjoy water sports many of our youth have not been introduced to the many different activities. I am trying to provide a trip to one of the rivers in San Marcos or New Braunfels. I have never been but I think that one of the better rivers for rafting is the Guadalupe River. I am trying to get donations that will cover the cost of renting the tubes/rafts or a different

alternative to renting them. If you have any ideas, please email me at Hicks_T@houstonworks.com.

I am trying to plan a trip for up to 50 youth for the summer, so quick response would be definitely appreciated. Thanks for your time and hope to hear some good news soon.

Sincerely,
Torrance Hicks
Youth Sports Coordinator
HoustonWorks USA
600 Jefferson, Suite 900
Houston, Texas 77002
Ph.713-654-1919 x1233
Fax 713-951-9516

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Small Notes

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Update on the Instream Bill

by John Bartos

I attended and testified at the Senate hearing April 24th on behalf of the Houston Canoe Club and GBF. SB1374 was amended and has not yet been voted on by the Senate Natural Resources Committee. It is still a bad bill that will halt water rights permits for environmental purposes. Committee staff let us know that they have heard quite a lot from people opposed to the bill. But it is Sen. Armbrister's bill and it is his committee, so I would imagine that it will come out of committee to the full Senate. Two members of the committee are from the Houston area: Mike Jackson and John Lindsay. Keep those contacts to your senators coming.

Kayak Race

The 'Free For All' race on Lake Travis, sponsored by The Jonestown Chamber to be held on May 17, at 10 AM. See the course and other information at members.aol.com/jonestownchamber. There is NO entry fee and food, beer, and bands are available at the finish line. Everyone is invited to enter. \$1,000 prize money.

New Meeting Place for TOWN

The Texas Outdoors Woman Network (TOWN) Houston chapter has changed to Fandango's, 1001 Westheimer at Briarpark in the Carillion Shopping Center in back of Outback Steak House and almost next to the Great Caruso. The next meeting is Tuesday, May 13 at 6 PM.

Texas: The State of Water - Video Documentary to Air MAY 29, 2003

Texas: the State of Water, a one-hour video documentary on water resource issues, will air the evening of Thursday, May 29 on 13 PBS television stations reaching more than 30 Texas cities.

The project is a partnership effort of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and KERA TV in Dallas, with sponsor funding from Brazos Mutual Funds and support from the Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas. It is being produced in the new high definition video format using equipment provided by KERA.

The documentary includes segments involving El Paso, Caddo Lake in East Texas, the Ogallala Aquifer in the Panhandle, the Pecos River area in West Texas, and the Colorado and Trinity River watersheds involving Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin and Houston. The program also focuses on the once mighty Rio Grande as a case study to show how if care is not taken, rivers can stop flowing. The Rio Grande has intermittently ceased flowing into the Gulf of Mexico in recent years, and today in many areas there is little or no water in the riverbed.

KUHT will broadcast Texas: the State of Water on the evening of May 29 in the Houston area from 8-9 p.m. CDT.

Geocache Update

by John Bartos

You might be interested to know that there have been some attempts and successes in finding the Miller Geocache. Read about the recent activity at http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?ID=42594

New Wildlife Trace

by Natalie Wiest

The USACE (Corps of Engineers) is dedicating a new "Wildlife Trace", which adds 22,000 additional acres to the Wallisville area natural habitat conservation. It is located just East of the Trinity River in Chambers County. May 1 was the dedication. They are opening up a 2.5 mile driving loop by the levee, with a picnic area and restroom facilities, parking at a midpoint. There are boardwalks for wildlife viewing over the marshes at two points. Hours for the park will be 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information, call the Ranger station at (409)389-2285.

Also of interest for bird-observation within easy walking distance of the road, the Trinity

River Bend Waterbird Rookery. It's the new boardwalk built just off the feeder road on this same stretch (south of I-10, east of Trinity River). It is loaded with egrets, ibises, and spoonbills this time of year.

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