



Houston Canoe Club
Waterline



www.houstoncanoecub.org :: Volume 2008 :: May

Table of Contents

Next Meeting Announcement
Last Meeting Minutes
New Members
Market Place
Saving the Wild Neches by Madeline McDowell
I Remember Rudy by Jim Barton
Rudy Memories by Various Friends
All Canoe and Kayaking Beginners and Oldies by the Matticks
Backwater Backwash by Cecilia Gill
To the Fine People at the HCC

Trip Reports:

Upcoming River Trips
Brazos River by John Rich
SPRINGS FEST and SPRINGS WEBCAM By John & Anne Olden

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 to HCC's Newsletter Editor, Cecilia Gill at whitewaterider@yahoo.com.

The Waterline is prepared by an on-line newsletter editor written by Fraser Baker, HCC's Webmaster.

Next Meeting Announcement

- When:** May 14, 2008
Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas
Directions: First driveway, North side of Bissonnet, just East of Hillcroft.
Speaker: Paul Woodcock
Speaker Bio: Long time member of HCC. Avid paddler who enjoys expedition canoe trips as often as possible.
Description: Paul Woodcock will portray his unique and eventful trip down the historic Niobrara River in Nebraska.
-

Be sure to set this date aside on your calendar, then come out to support our speaker and club.

Last Meeting Minutes

Date: May 14, 2008

Recorder:

Minutes: There was a meeting last month...

Please contact HCC's recorder, , if there are any omissions or corrections.

New Members

Member Name: No new members at this time

Membership Type: individual

Member's Family:

The HCC cordially welcomes new members to our club. New members are the life blood of the HCC, so be sure to provide opportunities for all our new members to paddle by coordinating more trips.

Market Place

Items For Sale

Item: Nothing at this time
Description:
Asking Price: \$
Contact Name:
Contact Phone:
Contact Email:
###

Items Wanted

Item: Nothing at this time
Description:
Contact Name:
Contact Phone:
Contact Email:
###

Please contact the Newsletter Editor, Cecilia Gill at whitewaterider@yahoo.com to post any items that you may have for sale or desperately need.

Saving the Wild Neches by Madeline McDowell

by

Saving the Wild Neches
By Madeline McDowell
10 April, 2008

25,000 acres of land are submerged under water. Millions of earth's creatures are instantly homeless, or, worse, drowned in the rising flood. Thousands of trees simply disappear, left to rot as they slip under the surface. This is no natural disaster. It is, according to Dallas county water developers, a desirable future for Texas wildlife. These developers would like to construct Fastrill Reservoir on the Neches River to supplement Dallas County's current supply, wiping out the area's ecosystem in an instant.

There is only one thing that could save East Texas wildlife from this fate, and that is the establishment of the North Neches River National Wildlife Refuge. This Refuge, aside from providing countless other benefits to the community, would prevent developers from swooping in on the land and destroying the natural, hardwood habitat.

Richard Donovan, 72 years old, grew up in Angelina County with two rivers as his companions, the Angelina and the Neches. With the Angelina River now inundated under the Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Donovan has devoted a great deal of his time to protecting the Neches, and much of the Big Thicket, from a similar fate.

"As a young person I could see the 'closing of the woods'," he said, "and realized that soon people would be shut out of a part of the world I had taken so for granted." After reading Professor Pete A.Y. Gunter's book, *The Big Thicket: An Ecological Reevaluation*, Donovan was galvanized into action. He has focused his efforts most recently on the protection of the Neches River, as Fastrill Reservoir poses the most imminent threat to wildlife in East Texas.

At first glance, an imminent threat to the Neches River does not seem to exist; Construction would not begin on Fastrill Reservoir until 2045, and Dallas County has no need for a new water supply until at least 2058.

The future of the Neches and surrounding land, however, is in jeopardy right now. Water developers have filed a lawsuit in order to block the establishment of the 25,000 acre North Neches River National Wildlife Refuge so that the construction of Fastrill Reservoir may proceed unimpeded in the future.

Donovan said, "It's all about money ... What the [developers are] after right now is to kill this wildlife refuge because they know...that [the Refuge is] going to pre-empt them 45 or 50 years down the road [if] they want to put their dam in that spot."

A pristine, flourishing habitat, the Big Thicket "must look much as it did when Davey Crocket and Sam Houston swam their horses across it in 1836," Donovan commented. Water developers must have a specific reason for targeting such a priceless area. And they do, simply for practical reasons.

Donovan revealed that "[it]'s a unique spot because the topography there...kind of form[s] together [so] that you can put a levy across there without too much trouble." The area has many more, relevant assets than being simply a convenient place for a reservoir, however. "It's also...unique [in its] hardwood bottomland habitat," Donovan said. And this, it seems, is the feature that more and more Americans are valuing.

"[Young] Americans...are not so interested in plywood and two-by-fours [anymore]," Donovan said, "as they are in preserving just a little bit of the natural world where they can go walk and see wildlife in its natural habitat."

Besides the obvious environmental impact, Fastrill Reservoir would harm the people of Texas directly. When the time came for construction, the State would rip the land out of the people's hands without thinking twice. Not only that, but, as

Donovan said, "You're not going to want to come in and buy any land that has the potential to someday at some point in time [be] inundated and flood[ed], so [approving the Reservoir] is just going to put a cap on the present...land value. It will never appreciate again."

In direct contrast, the establishment of the Neches Refuge would have no such repercussions. "If this refuge goes through, [land owners] don't have to sell unless they want to. The refuge will be bought from willing sellers only," Donovan said. Aside from protecting public interest, the Refuge would have countless other benefits.

"A refuge is sort of kind of like an incubator [for new life]," Donovan explained. "That 25,000 acres is not going to be big enough to hold all of the progeny that comes off of those birds and animals that are there." As a result, these creatures will migrate out of the Refuge, and replenish areas all over Texas. Donovan said, "It [would have] a real positive re-stocking effort, a real good benefit for wildlife habitats from miles around."

The preservation of the Big Thicket would also prove beneficial to the prevention of global warming, as hardwood is a source of carbon-sequestration. "Carbon is getting in the atmosphere and increasing global warming," Donovan said, "but trees store up carbon in their trunks, and as long as that carbon is tied up in that tree it can't get in the air that you and I are trying to breathe."

On a commercial level, the Refuge would bring a new source of income to East Texas: eco-tourism. "There are about three boat ramps that I can think right-quick of along...235 miles of the Neches," Donovan lamented. "So you can't get [on the river] and make a day trip anywhere." Under the establishment of the new Refuge, however, this could quickly be amended. "If we [were be able to] put in boat ramps and we [constructed] canoe liveries and...kayak liveries and...'bed and breakfasts,' it could be a real good source of revenue for the people of East Texas," Donovan said.

When the Wildlife Refuge was first proposed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received over 20,000 letters in support. "Never in the history of establishing refuges had [the Service] ever generated that much positive publicity from any refuge that they'd ever opened up," Donovan said. How, then, could the Refuge possibly be in so much peril?

According to Donovan, the many people who live along the Neches are "resigned to the fact that somebody else is [protecting the wildlife], someone else is taking care of it," though "a very, very small minority...would [actually] like to see the river dammed or impaired in some way."

As the old saying goes, "you won't miss the water 'til the well runs dry."

"We won't really know what we have lost 'til we have lost it," Donovan said with a sigh. "So when the Big Thicket starts drying up, you can't put [it] back [the way it was]."

This is where the public can, and should, step up. "If you sit around and wait for 'George' to do it, it's not going to get done, [but] I predicate that someday the young people are going to wake up and say 'Hey. What has happened to the natural world around us?'"

Mr. Donovan stated that "there are two ways that you can affect public policy. One is through money, and the other is through voices. And my job is to try and create voices because people like me don't have a lot of money. But if I can get [others] interested and involved, we can move mountains."

To get involved, write a letter to Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison—2284 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510-44304—to help push the establishment of the North Neches River National Wildlife Refuge toward final approval, past the greedy, grasping hands of water developers and into the realm of protection for future generations.

"My objective in life," Mr. Donovan said, "what little time I have left, is to try and preserve the...people's forest and...the people's rivers so that you...can take your

children out at night and see a firefly, or hear a bullfrog, and maybe a grub worm doing the things that grub worms do. All that's essential to the cycle of life, and if you start taking this and that away, it all starts to break down."

"These photos [below] ...show an old tram bridge crossing the Neches that was used by pine knot fired steam engines to haul virgin timber to sawmills in the very early 1900's. When these mills were finished, tens of thousands of East Texas acres were a waste land.

Photographs of the upper Neches River by Adrian Van Dellen. Used with permission.."



"...site (# 2 from Hwy 59 Bridge) of pilings is at RM 184.3 -- just 0.2 of a mile upstream from Caney Creek. Looking downstream."



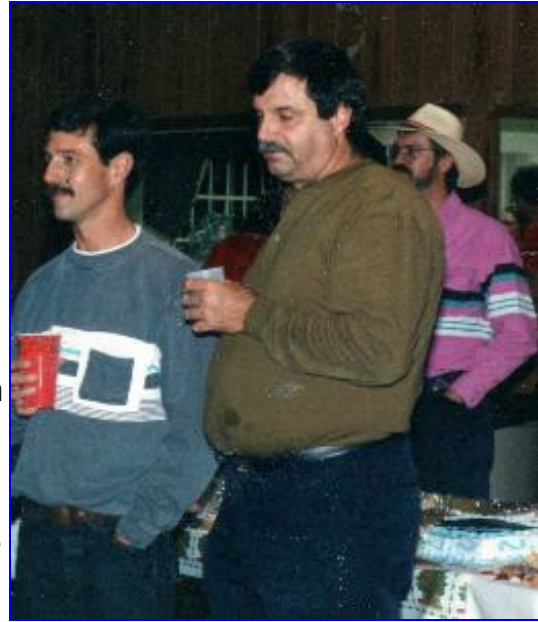
Looking here also downstream. This site is about half way between the two Bridges (Hwy 59 to 69); essentially both of the first two historic crossings were about halfway between the two modern roads, since the old piling sites are about a mile apart."

I Remember Rudy by Jim Barton

by

I Remember Rudy

Rudy and I used to work together at Southwestern Bell. We were on the same crew, went on the road together, and went skiing in his jet boat. We both enjoyed going fishing. We couldn't really take his jet boat out into the saltwater so would wade fish. As we waded fished together we used to always say, 'If only we could get to that structure over there'. So Rudy and I both bought sit on tops, and now we could just paddle out to the structure. One day Rudy said, "Hey let's take our sit on tops to the Guadalupe River." We went and had a grand time. It was at this time that Rudy joined the Houston Canoe Club.



The first big trip that Rudy and I went on was a Rio Grande river trip through Colorado canyon at Thanksgiving 1991. I had a Discovery 169 expedition canoe that my sons and I took (with our cotton t-shirts and blue jeans). This is where Rudy and I met Bill and Donna Grimes, Leonard and Martha Hoelsebosch, and a whole host of nice paddling folks. One of our first paddles with Rudy was Buffalo Bayou with me and my sons, Brent and Travis. We put in at Highway 6 and took out in downtown Houston. We thought that we would have a great day. I think it's about eighteen miles from the put in to the take out. We were out after dark and thoroughly exhausted.

We both bought white water canoes and started paddling in current. Rudy loved his gear. He had more, 'stuff' than anyone. He was very passionate about his paddling. He was happy to share his gear with anyone who needed anything. One of Rudy's biggest drives was introducing new people to paddling. He loved working with new paddlers. As time went on Rudy got more into freestyle paddling and I stayed more in white water. I'll always remember Rudy going down the river barking out instructions in his loud, booming voice. I'll always remember his smile.

I am most grateful to Rudy for introducing me and my sons to paddling.

Rudy Memories by Various Friends by



Bob Arthur:

On a big club trip on the Columbus Loop (Colorado River) some years ago, we watched a young couple (not a part of our group) with two kiddoes as they bounced bank to bank down the river. We had gotten downstream a ways ahead of them and had made a stop on an island. Sure enough, the only real obstacle was a small tree strainer on the opposite bank and sure enough, they got into it. Dumped the kids, coolers, toys, pets, etc and hung up the canoe in the strainer. A herd of club members, having been exposed to several different river rescue classes leapt into action. Corralled the kids, Mom and Dad and most of the rest of pickup load of stuff they had along. Time to rescue the canoe and there must have been 12 HCC boats and rescuers in the mix fixin to do one of those "wrap it up with ropes" type rescues. After awhile, here came Rudy. Paddled over and waded to the boat and grabbed aholt and gave it a big pull/push/jerk and out it came. Memory serving about 12 sets of throw ropes sheepishly made their way back into their bags and that part of the journey was over. But I remember Rudy, cutting to the chase and simply muscling the canoe loose from the strainer.

The years and the memories run together. Sometime in the last century, maybe the early 90's, after one of those Whiskey (Ouiska) Chitto trips, we made a swing back past an obscure outfitter over in Louisiana, Tack-a-paw I believe it was. Danny Rowzee had started this business on Toro Bayou and had a little canoe rental place and a rudimentary campground there. Longish story short, a trip was arranged to go over there and paddle that bayou and stay at Danny's place. We got that done and Danny had arranged for a crawfish boil with all of the fixins. Maybe they call it a fey-doh-doh, but what do I know, I'm from East Texas. Crawfish boil worked for me. Danny had set a canoe up on sawhorses and they would pour the crawfish, potatoes and corn in it and we gathered around and sort of "pitched til you win" on the eating part of it. Rudy was on that trip and its the first trip that I remember him on. More to that memory but some of it fades. And more as time went by and to steal a line from a song....."my oh my, how the times goes by."

Tom Goynes:

First of all, I want you to know that the whole State shares in your loss of Rudy Rivers. What a great guy! Always there to help clean rivers. Always there to help other paddlers. Always there to introduce folks to paddling. And, during the week, if you happened to need a realtor, you had a friend in the business. Once again, Rudy was there. I don't know how many houses he showed my daughter, but I think she finally wore him out. What a patient, gentle guy he was. We're all going to really miss him.

With the recent loss of Larry Wild and now the loss of Rudy, I am reminded just how short life really is. None of us really have any idea how much time we have left. It is so important that we be prepared to go, and that we live every day as if it was going to be our last. Spend as much time as you can with your friends and family. Perhaps that will mean less time in front of the TV. Get to know the Creator who put this place together and spend some time enjoying that creation. And, make sure that you save a little time to spend in maintaining that creation. Fight a rockcrusher. Keep a favorite stretch of river open and accessible. Clean up a section of river somewhere... Rudy would do it.

Coleen Connally:

Rudy was like a brother to me; I just feel a bit lost. I cannot image how Mary and his daughter are feeling now. My heart aches for them. I know Janie is with him, his Dad too now. I miss my friend so much. I had voice mail contact with him on the 15th. His last message to me was that morning around 9:30 giving me advise on my kayak. Oh, I miss knowing he is here.

Anne Derby:

I'm just shocked at this news. In all the years I've known him Rudy was always such an upbeat, positive guy who loved to share the joy he found in the paddling life with everyone he met.

Besides his being a paddling buddy, Rudy was also my realtor who helped me sell my last home and find the one I have now been in for 14 years. He was unfailingly patient and helpful during that process.

Cecilia Gill:

Once I was able to stop crying, somewhat, I brought up pics of Rudy holding my boys at the Olympic Trials. We talked about it, and Morgan said, "Mommy, stop crying, the Spirit World is a beautiful and magickal place." The wisdom of children.....

We were looking forward to the Medina River Clean Up with "Mr. Rudy" in a couple of weeks. Lonnie said that, "Mr. Rudy wants us to still go. He'll be there." I told him that Mr. Rudy wouldn't be there because he went to the Summerlands. Lonnie

smiled and giggled in his funny little way, and said, "We just won't see him," then scampered off.

I talked to a mutual friend today. Someone who might not have found out until the Medina Clean Up that Rudy was gone, otherwise. She agreed that since river clean ups were very important to Rudy, that we should go to honor his memory, if nothing else. She spoke about how it seemed to her that Rudy's ulterior underlying motive for getting new people together and to go on trips, paddling, and dutch oven cooking, not FOR the trips, paddling and dutch oven cooking, but for getting people together. He was a sort of "match maker", not in the sense of creating couples, but to create a bigger and bigger network of friends.

We all loved Rudy Rivers, and a big hole will be left in our lives with his passing. As I type this, tears run down my cheeks. I am having a hard time believing this isn't just a bad dream...

Fraser Baker:

Rudy was a great guy. He always encouraged new folks to come paddling with him and the HCC. He was generous with his equipment and he often had several newbies in tow. He was a gear head and outfitted some of the best rigged canoes around. I bought my first boat from him, the Old Town Appalacian. He was an active member of the HCC, always supporting the club and its many endeavors. A bit verbose at times and when he was Commodore I had an altercation with him when the meeting dragged on and there was barely time for me, the fleet captain, to deliver my report. We kissed and made up and there were no hard feelings, though I do regret my outburst.

He swept for the Buffalo Bayou Regatta regularly and headed HCC's cleanup section on the Medina for several years.

I remember him often saying that the HCC was the best kept secret in town during his efforts to encourage its officers and members to promote the club. He clearly enjoyed the club.

He was fun to be with and we will miss his valuable contributions to the HCC

Mark Andrus:

I think about the rivers I have been on with Rudy. I remember the Boquillas trip and many others. The last time I saw Rudy was on the club Armand Bayou trip in December. The trip was a easy trip where we were looking at the birds and alligators and we all enjoyed it.

Patti Carothers;

Rudy came out to the store last week or so to pick some things up. He's been out 2-3x's this year and I've talked to him several times on the phone. I haven't seen Rudy in maybe 2 years before this year. We talked for at least a half hour, which is easy to do with Rudy. We reminisced to our younger days when we raced with

several other HCC members in the Buffalo Bayou Regatta. Rudy, Carole Penning and I all had Heritage Shearwaters 17 ft glass or kevlar SOTs. I enjoyed the talk & now I'm really glad I took the time from my always busy day to chat. I'm sure Janie McLeod was waiting with open arms to welcome him home.



All Canoe and Kayaking Beginners and Oldies by the Matticks

by

Phillip and Trisha Matticks

While you enjoy the serenity of water sports, always keep in mind, "Safety".

We have been canoeing and kayaking for over five and half years. We are like fish, canoeing, kayaking, scuba, cave diving, sailing, snorkeling. And yet, we knew we had much to learn. We look forward to all our trips, but we also knew how tired we would be after each canoe or kayak trip!

We never took a canoe or kayaking course and we came across a course being offered for only sixty dollars. This was it, we signed up immediately! Books averaged about ten dollars each. We bought two sets, but couples can share, they don't have to buy two sets.

It was a course that is affiliated with the American Canoe Association, Ms. Susan Eda, the main instructor. We were so amazed at all the information we acquired in one weekend. We did spend the Monday prior to our weekend to view videos from six pm until nine pm.

Then the weekend came, we learned sooooo much! The technique of loading and unloading your craft from a trailer or vehicle. The proper strokes to maneuver your craft, water rescue, flipping the craft and re-entry away from the shore, proper gear, more video watching, water games and much, much more.

We finished both days. Yes, very tired, but with more confidence in the water than ever before with any of our canoe and kayaking trips.

After passing our water exercises/test, we also had a written test. We were then issued a "Canoe Training-Sam Houston Area Council" patch, an American Canoe Association Certification Card for "Paddling Safety and Technical Skill Development"

and two Red Cross Certifications for "Small Craft Safety-Canoeing" and "Fundamentals of Canoeing". What little did we know before???

Human error begins when one allows their ability to learn to cease.

Remember "Safety" is the key to any sport. Enjoy the waters!

Backwater Backwash by Cecilia Gill

by

Welcome to "Backwater Backwash", a random and incomprehensible collection of thoughts, observances and experiences in no particular order, so that it makes absolutely no sense at all.

This go 'round is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, Rudy Rivers.

The very first trip I ever took down the San Marcos, Rudy was the one who invited me. The trip consisted of Rudy, Janie McCleod, and Charsey. Janie is gone, Rudy is gone, and from what I understand, so is Charsey. I guess I am the only one left who can tell that tale. It wasn't terribly exciting, but it was a fun weekend.

Janie was at my house waiting when I got there after work. We packed my stuff in her tiny car. She asked me to drive.... I remember I couldn't even get my legs in until I got the seat pushed all the way back. She and my mom were both tiny women, but I think Janie was even tinier. I remember making a lot of midget jokes to both Janie and my mom... boy they put up with a lot!

We stopped at a grocery store for a few items, and Janie got a package of Nicorette gum... and some cigarettes. I tried a piece of the gum... ech! Made me want to quit chewing gum.

After the store, we went to Rudy's house. Charsey was already there. I think Mary was going to baby sit her puppy or something, because they were setting him up with a carrier and whatnot out back. We were discussing the dog and his odd behavior. Rudy had trained dogs before, and so had I. We came to the conclusion that Charsey's dog was deaf... or possibly just the dumbest dog ever.

I met Mary that one and only time, and she was very warm and hospitable to me. His daughter was rushing off somewhere as we came in, so she just politely introduced herself, greeted us, then made her apologies as she left.

We helped Rudy pack his stuff and Charsey's stuff in her truck. Rudy had a "Rubber Duckie" blow up kayak for me to ride down the river. Janie was paddling with him, and Charsey had her kayak. I rode with Janie and Rudy rode with Charsey. It was dark by the time we got to a Boston Market restaurant where we had supper. Janie told me how Rudy didn't like her to smoke, and stepped out to the car to have a smoke. Rudy asked where Janie went, and Charsey said she thought she went out for a cigarette like it was no big deal... and here, I thought I was supposed to be "covering" for Janie. Boy, I'm not a very effective "look out"...

Anyway, we made it to Shady Grove / Spencer's and quickly set up to sleep. I remember Rudy, Janie and I each had to set up our tents and bedding, and all Charsey did was hook her fan up to the electrical outlet and said, "Good night!" and slept in the back of her truck in the camper with the fan.

In the morning, we had a quick breakfast and started getting everything ready for our trip down the river. I had only been down flat, slow, barely moving water at this point. We put in at Pecan Park and I remember floating aimlessly in that inflatable kayak having no idea what I was doing. I did manage somehow, but this was also only about my 3rd trip down a river...ANY river! I remember Rudy and Janie were in a tandem canoe, Janie at the bow. Needless to say, the boat was not trimmed properly... Rudy was barking orders at Janie, who just seemed to be taking it in stride with a little smile on her face.

Before we got to Cottonseed, I was told to catch the eddy before the dam and to go scout it out. At the time, I didn't even know who Eddy was, so I ended up just going... in that inflatable Rubber Duckie kayak. I made it, somehow. No problem.

Charsey was standing in the water when I got through Cottonseed and grabbed my boat to pull me to the edge. Then Rudy and Janie came through, Rudy barking orders at Janie the whole time, and her, just a smiling and a paddling. Of course, they were fine.

I think Rudy put me in that Rubber Duckie because he knew that little boat would essentially paddle itself and that I would be fine, even though I really didn't know how to paddle well yet.

Rudy was probably the third person I met from the Houston Canoe Club, the first and second being Mary Z and Paul Woodcock. Janie was the fourth person, I believe.

Now, don't think Rudy just grabbed some newbie and stuck them in a river, he DID teach me some skills first, and we did go down some much calmer waters first. He had more confidence in my new abilities than I did at the time.

Since then, I have learned a lot more skills, learned to combat roll, brace, and do a few tricks in a whitewater play boat, as well as gain greater and greater control of my original canoe. One thing he did teach me that all of us should carry with us is this: You are never too old to learn new tricks. You can do a lot more than you might think you can, if you just try.

I was told when Lonnie was a baby that little kids do best learning from soft spoken young women, and that a large, loud man would scare them....*ahem* Yes, Rudy was bigger than life in many ways, and even when he didn't speak he had a very large presense about him. And my boys LOVED him dearly!



When we went to the Olympic Trials, we were headed TO Rio Vista, and Rudy was heading FROM there. The boys recognized his truck and both started screaming, "Mr. Rudy! Mr. Rudy! I want my Rudy! Go get my Rudy!" I had to turn back to Pecan Park to keep from going deaf..



The man was very passionate about many things, but the thing I believe he was most passionate about was people: making new friends and introducing them to other new friends. He was a bright star in many people's lives. I was saying that with his passing, a large hole was left in many lives. Yes, it is sad that he is no longer with us. Yes, we all feel the loss. But somehow, I don't think he'd want us to concentrate on the loss, but to concentrate on

all the good things. The happy memories. The skills taught, the help offered, the teaching of new tricks...

Instead of dwelling on the sorrowful hole left behind, I think he would rather us all

revel in the fun, beauty and bright spirit; the passion for life and the joy that sharing life with others can bring.

This is a bad analogy, I know, but its the best one I can come up with: Like a brightly colored balloon filled with glitter that bursts, we don't have the balloon anymore, but look at all the pretty, shiny glitter scattered everywhere! It's on everything! That is the best way I could put it. Rudy being the balloon, and the wonderful, magical glitter being all the ways he touched everyone's lives.

Cecilia

To the Fine People at the HCC

by

Jorge I. Pereda, Jr.

This comes from the June 2006 issue of Waterline:

Jorge I. Pereda, Jr.
770 N. IH 35, Apt 911
New Braunfels, TX 78130
Friday, May 12, 2006
RE: Houston Canoe Club

To the fine people at the Houston Canoe Club,

This is the wet and disoriented fellow on the red Coleman sit-on-top you encountered last Sunday. I am not sure where to start, so I will start abruptly. Had I not met you fellows, I would have faced two options when faced with the first rapids:

First option on the menu would have been prudence. Dock and try to walk on wet clothes and sandals to any populated area, and call a taxi. Two things could have happened then. I could either have found help quick, and call it a mean, tiresome, and generally forgettable day, or I could have wandered around desperately until nightfall, at which time I would have been forced to call the police, embarrassed and dehydrated.

My second option, would have been braving the rapids by myself. Here, two other possibilities arise (staying on the boat not realistically being one of them). My ride would have been lost immediately (with my phone, water, and carkeys). With luck, I would have made it to a shore, only slightly beaten, but still water-less, car-less, and lost. The second and last possibility – well – things could really have gotten ugly.

But I found you fellows. The statistics of it are amazing. What is the probability of meeting a group of paddling instructors at the start of the very first serious rapid? Seriously, had I woken five minutes earlier or later that day, our paths would very probably not have crossed. I feel as if I had fallen off the roof of a 20-story building, and landed on a speeding trailer loaded with pillows.

No one wants to have to wonder whether that one guy they met made it, so it would be natural to take a fellow out of the water, check for a means of communication, and send him on his way after pointing him in the general direction of a road, to meditate on the consequences of irresponsibility and solokayaking.

However, you went high above and far beyond this very reasonable path.

First, the excellent fellow with the keep-your-cool nose-clip stayed behind the rest of the group to explain to me that whatever happens, I should not try to find the bottom with my feet in a current, because I risk being stuck and pulled underwater. I laugh about it now, but this is not the kind of thing one knows instinctively. He could have very well considered his part done, and proceeded to follow his team, but instead, he walked back with me to show me exactly where to ride the rapid through.

What I'm trying to say here, and I think I'm already being too wordy, is that you

could have left me marooned, but you didn't. You could have then exasperatedly made sure I traversed the rapids with no heavy risk, and try to get me to a reasonable spot in dry land ASAP. But you didn't. You took me in as a friend, and not only did Susan (and I'm sure others I didn't see while swimming), with super-natural speed rescue my kayak and loose bottle several times (and I really have no idea how they did it, so amazingly quickly), but you fellows made sure I had a killer time. As if this weren't enough, the very cool Rudy Rivers gave me instruction, encouragement, and got me back to my car several miles away! You were on a weekend trip planned specifically to have fun with experienced teammates, but you took the time to do free what I am sure some of you have charged for at one point or another. I'm pretty sure the responsibility of having a complete newbie infiltrate your group is not exactly weekend material. Yet, the very aptly named Rudy Rivers not only gave me a pretty expert and patient course on the basics of rapid navigation, but he (and the whole group, really) encouraged me to have fun, and spare the repeated damage to my dignity (ha!) no thought.

And I did. I had a killer time. I had recently been brooding on the idea of buying a motorcycle for therapeutic purposes. I am convinced that adrenaline in controlled doses is not only healthy, but necessary, and my desk job has really been giving me plenty of bile, but no adrenaline. After last weekend, though, the prospect of a motorcycle seems idle.

I think I am in love with the sport, and you might be glad to hear that I have enrolled for instruction in San Marcos. I would have asked one of your gang, but I imagine you would be much more interested in instructing someone who has a remote idea of what he is doing, and I will not be that person for some time. You are an amazingly fun and good-natured group, and I am lucky to have met you for reasons that go far beyond safety.

If any of you ever has any business in or around New Braunfels, please do not hesitate to call or drop by if you need anything at all (lodging, transportation, storage, conversation, tea, or whatever else):

Well, I think that pretty much covers it. I should really work on writing shorter letters. Grateful, I remain

Sincerely,
Jorge I. Pereda, Jr.

P.S. I posted a copy of this letter to P.O. Box 925516, Houston, Texas, 77292-5516, and emailed one to Rudy Rivers.

Upcoming River Trips

HCC Trips:

Date: Monday, May 26, 2008

Title: Memorial Day - Sabine River

Inclusive Dates: May 24-26

Description: This is a float trip down the lovely, sandy Sabine River. It is a true wilderness camp-out-of-the-canoe trip. After unloading and shuttling Saturday morning, we will get on the river. We will camp on a sandy beach for the night, then Sunday morning, pack up and go further down the river to another sandy beach to camp. Monday, Memorial Day, we will go on to the take out, pack up and leave.

Some of us will camp under the Tx Hwy 63 / La Hwy 8 bridge Friday night, May 25.

Everyone who signs up who has never done this trip before will get a packet that will include maps, suggested gear and other useful information. This trip is a total of 28 miles over 3 days.

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.

Contact: Contact Cecilia Gill by phone 832-741-2713, or by email whitewaterider@yahoo.com.

###

Date: Monday, May 26, 2008

Title: HCC Memorial Day Buddy Paddle

Inclusive Dates: 5/26

Description: This Memorial Day Paddle is the ninth (minus 2 due to high water) of a very successful, well attended and enjoyable 6 mile day trip on the Colorado River near Columbus Texas. The putin, at business 71 and the Colorado River on the north side of Columbus, is only a half mile from the take out, SH90 and the Colorado River on the east side of Columbus. Plan to arrive at 8:30, prepare your boat and shuttle your car so that we might launch by 10:00.

Columbus is some 70 mile west of Houston on interstate 10.

Experienced HCC paddlers will be along to give paddling tips and to provide all sorts of information to newbies about paddling. We will paddle a few miles, stop for a break on an island, then resume for a few more miles, then stop at a beach for lunch. Be sure to bring a lunch and a desire to make new friends and renew old ones.

Watermelon and a cake will be provided. The trip will end by 2pm.

The day can be hot, so be sure to bring sunscreen, ample water and a hat. Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) are mandatory and must be worn.

This is a moving water trip, and the ability to control your boat is a prerequisite. However, if this is your first time in a paddle boat, being able to accept and follow instruction is mandatory.

This trip is an American Canoe Association (ACA) sanctioned event. As such, those who are not ACA members will be required to pay \$5.00. To expedite the sign-in procedure at the put-in, please read and complete the liability waivers located at

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.

Contact: Contact Fraser Baker by phone 713-202-2503, or by email flbaker@sbcglobal.net.

###

Date: Saturday, June 07, 2008

Title: 11th Annual Neches River Rendezvous
<http://www.visitlufkin.com/events/annual/nechesriver/>

Inclusive Dates: Jun 7

Description: The Neches River Rendezvous is a scenic 10-mile canoe trip down the Neches River. This nature tourism event is designed to promote outdoor wilderness adventure in East Texas by framing a day of paddling with the panoramic Neches River and surrounding forests. We invite you to come and enjoy the beauty, challenge, and pleasure of the Neches River!

Caution

This event is moderately strenuous. Participation in the 10-mile canoe trip may consist of, but not be limited to: climbing up and down steep slopes, potential portage around obstructions in the river, and paddling.

Temperatures are generally very warm in East Texas this time of year with highs reaching the 90°F+ mark. Please evaluate your physical condition prior to this activity and use common sense and caution while participating in this event

Skill Level: **Extreme:**

###

Other Club Trips:

Start Date: Friday, June 06, 2008
Title: The Great Castell Kayak Race
Inclusive Dates: June 6 - June 8, 2008
Description: Background Information:

It's 2008, and the The Great Castell Kayak Race wants you to come and play on the river!

This will be the 6th year of The Great Castell Kayak Race, a springtime tradition for Llano and Mason Counties. The official race will be, as always, on the first Saturday in June. The last two races had over 80 racers and attracted people from all over the world. The Race is run in appreciation of the Llano River, to raise funds for charity, to highlight the recreational possibilities of this area, and to just plain have fun!

This year's Race is being run in memorial for Judith Lynn Curtis, a Mason resident, who lived strong in Mason with stage 4 cancer. She passed away on St. Paddy's Day, 2007

This Race will be very special and will be in conjunction with "Livestrong," the Lance Armstrong Foundation's Community Outreach program. All proceeds raised from this year's Race will go to benefit those who are striving to survive. The Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) is concerned with the direct needs of the cancer patient and their families. It is the dream of the Race organizers to remain part of the movement to improve the lives of those impacted by cancer and their ongoing needs. Judith had always wanted to meet Lance Armstrong; he was a hero to her

Race Information:

The Race begins at 8 AM, Saturday, June 7th at the Llano River RV Park, 37 Keller-Velino Road, Mason, Texas at the HWY 87 bridge, (866) 640-9696. The race ends at Riversounds Recording Resort in Castell, Texas, on the banks of the Llano River, www.enchantedrock.com

It is a 12 mile, survivor-style race down the wild Llano River. Great music, food and prizes after the race!

Race entry fee is \$35.00. It includes the race, a t-shirt, the concert on Saturday, free snack pack including water, and free camping at the festival (while spaces last) at the Llano River RV Park

The Llano River RV Park will accommodate plenty of parking on race day, and a welcome center will be open for the early birds.

Camping is available for tents and RVs. For a reservation in advance, you can contact them at (866) 640-9696

The Auction will be held at the Badu House, 601 Bessemer Avenue, Llano, Texas on Friday night, June 6. Tickets for the auction are \$50 per person and include dinner.

Please call 512 217 4596 for ticket information.

All proceeds of the auction benefit Lance Armstrong's Livestrong Foundation

Last-minute campsites will be available at JJ's Rockin' Ranch on the San Saba River, approximately one hour's drive from the Great Race.

Contact Jamie at JJ's for more camping information at jj@texasranchfun.com, www.texasranchfun.com, (325) 456-3860

Want to volunteer to help the boaters and organizers?

We'd love to have you!

Call 512-217-4596 for more information

The Race is on!

Contact: Contact Jerialice Arsenault by phone 512-217-4596, or by email <http://www.castelltexas.com>.

###

Brazos River by John Rich

by

The Brazos River is the longest river entirely within the state of Texas, at 700 miles long, running from far north Texas all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. On the last weekend of March, I spent two days canoeing a 20-mile section of the Brazos River, all by myself.

First up are two maps of the section I paddled, showing the canoe route, and the roads used for the truck shuttle route. The first map shows the general area, which is to the northwest of Houston, between the cities of Hempstead to the north, and San Felipe to the south. The thick blue line is the section for this trip.



The second map shows the area in more detail, including local roads. The put-in location is at the FM-159 bridge crossing, and the take-out is the FM-529 bridge crossing. The shortest shuttle route, starting at the FM-159 take-out bridge, is to take FM-159 west, turn south on 331, then turn back east

on FM-529. This is only 13-miles by road, and can be covered easily in half-an-hour. Note that the north end of route 331 is marked only as "Oil Field Road".



So, I left my vehicle parked under the FM-529 bridge, and the girlfriend ferried me and all my equipment to the FM-159 bridge. A call was made to the Waller County Sheriff to let them know my vehicle was under the bridge, and why, because some bridges have signs posted forbidding parking at night.

The Brazos serves as the county line between Waller and Austin Counties. Both of these bridge crossings have public parking underneath, and are frequented by fishermen.

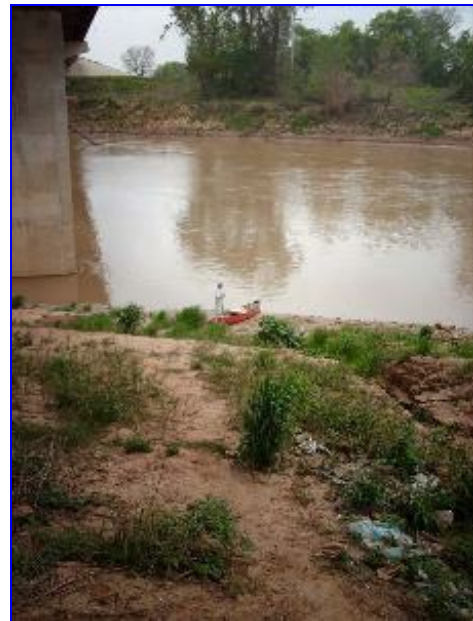
The water level (see chart below) was at 17 feet on the Hempstead gauge. At that level, there are several miles-per-hour of current so that you get a leisurely float without a lot of paddling, but it's not very fast. And there is no scraping bottom anywhere. There were almost no obstacles in the channel, except for just a couple of logs sticking up out of the water. The danger lies along the shoreline, where severe erosion has collapsed riverbanks, dumping lots of trees into the water.



The put-in site under the FM-159 bridge, east bank:

There is a mild slope here, which is fairly easy to carry a canoe down if you have two people. You can slide it across the steep parts, without any rocks to tear up the bottom.

I'm packed and ready to go, if I can just extract my feet from this shoe-sucking mud:



Muddy shoes!



Here I demonstrate how modest women in the old west used to ride canoes side-saddle, just like they did their horses...

Actually, I'm dangling my shoes in the water to wash the mud off trying to avoid getting it all inside my boat and making a mess.

The river is bounded on both sides by ranchland. So the only "wildlife" you see is the bovine variety.



Cows are humorous. They don't see many canoeists on this river. When they first spied me, the whole herd, curious, ran down to the river edge to check me out and see what I am. Might as well get a drink of water, while they're there. And then as I drew closer, they got scared, and the whole herd ran back up the bank again. Moo!



There were few obstacles in the waterway, and where there was, they were easily visible, and just as easily avoided.

At first I was surprised that riverbank erosion would have claimed this truck trailer. But with the grass growing on the bank, and the concrete pushed over the edge, I came to the conclusion that this was just an unwanted trailer that was pushed over by the landowner, hoping that the river would take his junk away for him.



In another location there is what looks like two large deer stands atop the riverbank. But the deer stands don't have any windows in them for shooting slots. As I drew closer, I saw a lot of debris from orange disks, identifying this as a shotgun skeet club. The deer stands are throwing sheds, which sling the clay targets into the air for shooting practice. Many of them end up down the riverbank. River scene. Threatening skies. I was rained on a few times, but had my poncho handy. There was no lightening, fortunately. But just in case, for about half-an-hour, I tied up under overhanging trees on the riverbank, and ate lunch in the rain.



I only saw one other boat the whole time, with two fishermen setting trotlines. That's just the kind of isolation I like for getting away from the big city.

There is one spot in the river where there is a slight rock ledge underwater, maybe two or three inches high. It runs across nearly the entire river, except for the far right side. As you approach this area you get excited by the sound of rushing water somewhere up ahead, making you think that you are actually approaching a rapid. But it turns out that it's just the large volume of water from nearly the entire river width going over a tiny little ledge, that generates all that noise. Shucks.

Finding a decent campsite took some searching. Due to the falling water level, many of the sand bars were actually mud bars, or a mixture of mud and gravel. Many of them would be unsuitable for camping and would be a real mess. I finally came upon one that was very decent, with only a little mud strip along the water

line, and the remainder was high and dry dirt and gravel, with plenty of driftwood for a campfire. There was even grass near the high water line, and very few cow pies. This site is called Wildcat Bend on the topo map.

Home sweet tent:



Sunset over the opposite riverbank:



I spent about half-an-hour gathering up driftwood for a campfire, and quickly thereafter had a nice fire going for entertainment. I only worried a little bit about the pack of coyotes that started yelping and howling somewhere nearby at sunset. I stared at the flickering tongues of the fire until I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer, and then retired to my tent. You get a lot of good thinking done just sitting and staring at a campfire by yourself.



The next morning, after a breakfast of ham and eggs, I got the boat packed and ready to launch again.

The outside bends in the river are all eroding, like in this photo, with the dirt caving-in and getting swept downstream. That dirt, in turn, then gets deposited on the inside curve of other bends, creating nice, wide sand/gravel/mud bars. This area of the Brazos

River is a huge oil field. You get hints of this from the map, with names like "Oil Field Road", and "Wildcat Bend". Driving through the area this fact becomes blatantly obvious. Many of the wells are shut down, but many others are still active.



This next picture took me a little while to figure out. I encountered three of these tall, thick pipes sticking up out of the river. Each one had a little spigot on top, like the one to which you attach your garden hose at home.



Consulting my topo maps, I correlated these pipes with the sites of old oil wells. Thus, I concluded that these are former oil wells that were formerly located on land alongside the river, and the river erosion has now washed away the land around them, so that they now sit inside the river itself.

So the question arises: What happens when these pipes get rusty, a logjam builds up against them in a flood, and the force of the water current snaps them off? Is oil going to come gushing up out of there to pollute the river all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico?

Here, it looks like a bomb went off and knocked all these trees over. But it's just river erosion eating the ground away underneath their roots, until they all fall over like a house of cards.



The hardest part of the whole trip was the take-out at the FM-529 bridge. Your mission, if you choose to accept it (and you must), is to haul all of your gear and this 80-lb. canoe up this 50-foot high bank, covered with mud, trash, dead catfish, a deer carcass, and broken glass. Ugh!



I actually used the old tires as a "dock" to get my gear from the boat to land. And then climbing over the trash pile provided better foot traction than the mud bank. But I had to watch out for broken glass, and oh-boy did that pile of junk stink. The boat, however, was pushed up the muddy hillside to save the hull. Two people here would have been nice, but there was just me on this trip! Why do people think that a bridge is a public dump site?

Mission accomplished! My truck was waiting for me under the bridge, unharmed. I was lucky and remembered where I stowed my keys. I loaded up the boat and gear, and headed home for a big steak.

=== The End ===



SPRINGS FEST and SPRINGS WEBCAM By John

by

The first weekend in April was the second year for this event at Rio Vista Falls Park on the San Marcos River. There were many boats to demo in the lake area above the falls, mostly kayaks of all descriptions – sea kayaks, recreational kayaks and whitewater playboats. Classes for both canoe and kayak were given, and at \$20 for two hours, these were a real bargain. A water polo course was laid out just below the River Pub, with practice on Saturday and vigorous competition on Sunday. We visited with folks from other areas in the state and talked with people knowledgeable about equipment. This was especially helpful as we eyed a used kayak that we considered buying for the challenge of trying it, after 15+ years of canoeing. And now we own the kayak!

Saturday night was a cookoff at the pavilion in the park, with delicious dishes which were judged and prizes awarded. Ben Kvanli narrated a Powerpoint presentation of how he and Michelle came to Texas and developed the Power Outdoor Olympic Center and became paddling instructors. Potential junior Olympians competed on Sunday in preparation for the Junior Olympics in Wisconsin later this summer. It was a beautiful weekend that drew experienced paddlers as well as those new to the sport.

Take a look at the Aquarena webcam which has been placed in one of the springs in Spring Lake at the headwaters of the San Marcos River. It's part of the Texas State University River Center. The main website is aquarena.txstate.edu Look for the webcam link. We've taken the glass bottom boat ride and it's fascinating. You'll see the springs bubbling up through the sandy bottom, plants, fish, etc. It's very clear

Not Found

The requested URL /waterline/2008/may/trip_4.html was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request.

*Apache/2.2.15 (CentOS) mod_ssl/2.2.15 0.9.8l DAV/2 mod_auth_passthrough/2.1
FrontPage/5.0.2.2635 Server at www.houstoncanoecub.org Port 80*