

# NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE



December, 2020

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**Questions? Want to contribute to the newsletter?**

Patty Geisinger at [pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net)

**Membership:** New Membership Benefits!!!

**Membership must be renewed unless you are a lifetime member! Please consider joining or renewing for 2021!** Here is the link to the website. Fill out the form and submit at your chosen level and you will be redirected to PayPal. **You will receive 2 vinyl TCKRA stickers, a 2021 TCKRA Calendar, a free parking pass for the new Fentress Amigos Beach and the TCKRA Newsletter before everyone else!** Thank you for supporting Texas paddling sports!

[Join the TCKRA now!](#)



## **About the TCKRA**

The Texas Canoe and Kayak Racing Association is a statewide club for persons interested in paddle sport racing. The primary focus of the club is USCA and ICF class marathon racing, but other disciplines of paddle sports are promoted through [TCKRA Race Calendar](#)

In 1971 a group of canoe paddlers with an interest in canoe and kayak racing joined together and formed the TCRA (which later evolved into the TCKRA). During the past years the organization has grown to one of the largest canoe and kayak clubs in the state. The club is now recognized as the voice for canoe racing in Texas and its members have gained national recognition. Each year the TCKRA participates in approximately 20 canoe races and the TCKRA also organizes and sponsors the Texas State Canoe and Kayak Racing Championship Series. These championship level race events compliment the other annual racing events by recognizing the top competitors in a variety of paddle sport disciplines and classes.

Whether you are a novice paddler, intermediate or seasoned racer, TCKRA is a great way to meet new people, improve your skills and get out on the river. Our membership spans the state and varies widely by age, gender, skill-level and boat type; even our working careers and professions. We also share a great deal in common-the competitive spirit and an enduring love of the water.

Your annual dues help fund events and activities throughout the year and around the state. By joining the TCKRA you enjoy the following benefits:

- 8 championship races, (Unlimited, Aluminum, USCA and ICF, Surfski)
- The Martindale Triathlon
- Spring and fall river cleanups
- Newsletter
- Annual banquet
- Paddling clinics – free to TCKRA members
- 2 TCKRA decals for every member
- A 2021 TCKRA wall calendar
- A 2021 TCKRA parking pass at Fentress Amigos Beach
- A TCKRA membership will give you a voice in the racing community and allow us to continue to promote canoe and kayak racing in Texas.

Our members paddle kayaks and canoes crafted from wood, plastic, aluminum, carbon and Kevlar.

## **2021 TCKRA Officers and Board of Directors**

### **Officers**

Nathan Tart (President)  
Shannon Issendorf (Vice President)  
Grady Hicks (Treasurer)  
Patty Geisinger (Secretary)

### **Board Members**

Sandy Yonley  
Kaitlin Mynar  
Holly Orr  
Jay Daniel  
Ed Jones  
David Kaiser

### **Alternates**

Brian Jones  
Morgan Kohut

## **2021 Race Calendar**

*(Editor's Note: Due to the nature of the Covid pandemic, many spring races are still unconfirmed: We will continue to update the 2021 Race Calendar as soon as information on the races becomes available.) [Upcoming Races and Event](#)*

**Jan. 23rd**– Texas Winter 100K (TWO), Town Lake to Bastrop, 5 am/7am/Sup start-Noon

**Jan. 24th**– Town Lake Series, Fiesta Gardens, Austin 9am (Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>, Feb 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>)

**Feb. 20th** – Safari Seminar, TBD

**Feb. 21st** – Racing Clinic, Fiesta Gardens, Austin 12noon-3pm

**Feb. 27th** – Spring River Clean up, San Marcos

**Mar. 6<sup>th</sup>** – Buffalo Bayou Regatta, Houston, start times and format--TBD

**Mar. 13<sup>th</sup>** – **Spring Break Open:** Fentress to Luling 90 TCKRA Season Opener, 10am

**Mar. 21<sup>st</sup>** – MAC #1 City Park to Spencer's

**Mar. 27<sup>th</sup>** – Greens Bayou Canoe and Kayak Classic, Houston

### **Letter from the Outgoing TCKRA President**

*Sandy Yonley*

Hello TCKRA members! First off, thank you for being a part of the TCKRA! Without our members, we wouldn't be a club. 2020 sure was a strange year. It was an honor to be the president and I'm proud that we were able to safely host our state championship races and the Martindale Triathlon during a pandemic. While I won't be the president in 2021, I look forward to continuing on the board to make next year a successful racing season. I'm also really excited about our board members with Nate as the President and Shannon as the Vice President! They have a lot of passion for the sport and will bring fresh energy and ideas to grow the club. Looking forward to seeing you (and taking your picture) in 2021. Hope you have a safe and healthy Christmas.

### **Letter from the Incoming TCKRA President**

*Nate Tart*

I'm honored to be part of a great organization dedicated to promoting paddle sport racing and environmental stewardship of our waterways in the State of Texas. When I moved to Texas in 2005, it took me 4 years to discover that there was a small community of folks that absolutely LOVE canoe and kayak racing. I too was hooked! Thousands of race miles later and some great friendships, I can't imagine a life without this community. I look forward to seeing familiar faces, new names, and great racing in 2021. See you on the river.

## Paddler Profile

In each edition of the newsletter, we will feature an interesting and accomplished member of the Texas Paddling Community. If you would like to nominate someone to be featured in the Paddler Profile, please email their name and contact info to [pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net)

### Grady Hicks

**What is your full name?**

**Grady-** William Grady Hicks

**Where are you from originally and where do you live now?**

**Grady -** I was born and raised in Corpus Christi, Texas. After my college adventures, I settled in Houston for the past forty-plus years.

**How and why did you get started in paddling?**

**Grady -** I first paddled in Boy Scouts. I liked it. It was a way to travel through the Nature. We paddled on the Nueces and Guadalupe rivers. My dad planted the Water Safari seed in 1963 when he told my brother Phillip and I about the race finishing in Corpus.



**How did you get started racing?**

**Grady -** The Water Safari was always in the back of my mind. I talked about it to my coworker Mark Finstad and we decided to do the Safari in 1986. We bought a Beaver canoe from Tom Goynes and started learning the rivers. After we met our goal to finish in sixty hours that first year we knew could do better. We learned the 'sit and switch' single blade technique and bought a USCA C2. We were encouraged to do other races by veterans like Frank Gray and Jim Keirnan, and we began to do

other races as part of our training plan. I joined the (then) TCRA around 1988 to connect with the racing community.

**Where do you paddle most frequently?**

**Grady -** Houston has a variety of convenient paddling options. I have always gone to Greens Bayou, a flat water stream ten minutes from my house. Upper Buffalo Bayou is a favorite as well offering more technical practice and easy enough for out and back paddles.



**What is your favorite race?**

**Grady -** For decades, the TWS was my favorite race. It has been replaced by the San Marcos Solo because it is a test of my USCA C1 skills and by the Buffalo Bayou Regatta because I paddle it in a C2 with my son Travis.





**What is the most interesting race you have done?**

**Grady** -The Yukon River Quest in 2008 was certainly exotic. The Yukon is a big fast-moving river with a 30-mile long lake and many islands. The four USCA Nationals I have participated in were quite challenging. The starts have as many as a hundred boats. No matter where you are in the field there is someone to race against. It is an excellent aspect of canoe racing that anyone can participate in the National Championships.

**What kind of boats do you paddle? What kind of paddles do you use?**

**Grady** - I paddle USCA C1 and C2 and Landick C1. I have raced the Spencer C3 and a Skip Johnson C5. I use ZRE paddles.



**What is your training regimen?**

**Grady** -I paddle three times a week. On weekday runs, I work on speed with intervals or longer sustained efforts. I work on buoy turns. The weekend paddles are longer and visit different locations. During the pandemic my son and his wife have started to paddle with me in their own Minnesota 2.

**What type of cross training do you do?**

**Grady** - At the present, my cross training is limited to hands-on maintenance of my rental real estate, and, before the pandemic, a masters swimming program through Galena Park ISD. In my younger years, I did a lot of weight training focusing on core and upper body exercises that supported paddling.

**What kind of food or supplements do you use during training and racing?**



**Grady** - When I started paddling, available sports nutrition was very limited. Early meal products would disappear after a few years, so I was always experimenting. I settled on a combination of Ensure vanilla powder and instant breakfast for flavor as my liquid meals during the TWS. Drink mixes used various combinations of Powerade and Gatorade powders and carbohydrate powders. For treats, I liked chips and cookies. When I was racing the TWS you had to haul all your food/drink with you except for water from your team captain. The rules have changed a lot!

**What are your significant accomplishments in paddling?**

**Grady** - I was the TCKRA Open champion in C1 and C2 in 1991. I won USCA C2 in the TWS six times with four different partners, Mark Finstad, Jon Nilsestuen, Cindy Meurer, and Jerry Brown. I organized and directed the Greens Bayou Canoe and Kayak Classic for nearly thirty years. It was great combination of USCA and ICF racing with the youth paddling program of Kathie Derrick. Many of those young paddlers went on to do the Safari and other races and remain active today.





### What do you enjoy most about paddling?

**Grady** - I paddle solo most of the time. There is a meditative aspect to the process that allows you to put aside your regular brain flow and focus on something else. Along with this, paddling is the entrance to a world away from the city. Here in Houston you are alone in the natural world of herons, eagles, alligators, kingfishers, gar and the rest of the changing cast in these ribbons of the wild. By visiting these places regularly, you see the ever changing face of our dynamic Earth.

### Do you have any training or racing goals for the next few years?

**Grady** - My main goals for the future are to keep paddling and racing, and to see if it is possible to regain some of my speed. I need to find out what my older body can do.

### Do you have any advice or words of wisdom for paddlers just starting out?

**Grady** - Doing a race is challenging physically and mentally. It is important to set goals that are within reach of your abilities and work hard to reach them. You may not win the race but you can make steps that will move you closer to the day when you can win. Find a group of paddlers to train with so you can push each other and share your paddling experience.



### Any final words?

**Grady** - Have fun and do your best.

Nominate someone you would like be interviewed for our Paddler profile –email [Patty-pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Patty-pattyjoeg@sbcglobal.net)

## Fall River Clean Up

Holly Orr, Tina Sackett

Thank you to the dedicated paddlers who came and volunteered at the annual TCKRA fall clean up. The day began with questionable weather, but turned out to be a beautiful, sunny day. We had 5 canoes on the water. They focused on cleaning a 9 mile section of river from Staples FM1977 to Fentress HWY 20, Luling 90 to Luling 183 in addition to a couple folks on the land who cleaned all the bridges along the way. Big shout out to Tom Goynes and the City of Luling for provide dumpsters for all the trash.



# Race Reports

## Open Water State Championship

*Sandy Yonley*

The 2020 TCKRA Open Water State Championships was held on Saturday, Oct 13th at Stewart Beach in Galveston, TX. We had 15 racers in our 3 divisions (Surfski, OC1, and SUP). The SE wind was light, with ~2ft swell, and not much chop—average conditions for Galveston. The course was out from the beach, buoy turn ~0.5mi out, then back to the beach for another buoy turn, repeating for 5 laps. The breaking waves proved to be challenging for the near-beach turnaround, which provided entertainment for spectators.



2020 TCKRA Open Water Championships Race Results

Overall Finish Position	Class Entered	First Name	Last Name	Finish Time	
1st	Men's Surfski	Tommy	Yonley	43:44	Men's Surfski Champion
2nd	Men's Surfski	Jonathan	Yonley	44:40	
3rd	Men's Surfski	Matthew	Murphy	52:36	
4th	Men's Surfski	Jonathan	Kittle	58:12	
5th	Men's Surfski	Will	Leads	54:06	
6th	Men's OC1	Jackson	Liu	56:50	Men's OC1 Champion
7th	Men's OC1	Matthew	Sandel	1:00:00	
8th	Men's Masters 50+ Surfski	Ric	Tinney	1:04:15	Men's Masters Surfski Champion
9th	Women's Masters 50+ OC1	Tina	Burgos	1:05:07	Women's OC1 Champion
10th	Men's Masters 50+ OC1	Raymond	Mercado	1:06:51	Men's Masters OC1 Champion
11th	Men's Masters 50+ OC1	Stephen	Dawson	1:08:00	
12th	Men's SUP (Prone)	Morris	Pallet	2:18:00	Men's SUP Champion
13th	Men's SUP	Mark	Deval	2:20:10	Men's Masters SUP Champion
14th	Men's SUP	CHRIS	ALMAGUER	2:43:20	
15th	Men's Masters 50+ OC1	Michael	Zhang	DNF	



*photos by Sandy Yonley*



## Downriver Unlimited State Championship

*Patty Geisinger & Sandy Yonley*

The 2020 TCKRA Downriver Unlimited State Championship that took place Saturday, Oct 10th on the San Marcos River with socially distanced competitors paddling 24 miles from Staples to Luling 90. The weather was sunny and HOT (over 90 degrees). The water level was low (150cfs in Luling). The final 3 miles of the course were full of trees. But everyone had a great time! It was great to see everyone on the river again! A relief that we could fit this championship in!



## Dickinson Bayou Brawl

*Sandy Yonley*

The 2020 Dickinson Bayou Brawl was held on Saturday, November 14th at Paul Hopkins Park in Dickinson, Texas. The weather was warm. A great time was had by all. We think the kids had the most fun of all!



### 2020 Dickinson Bayou Brawl Youth Race Results

Jr C2 Race		
Place	Racers	Finish Time
1st	Zander Lee Luke Thies	11:48
2nd	Owen Cowen Emma Thies	12:00
3rd	Ashley Hosamssooi Eden Yonley	13:06

Girls C2 Race		
Place	Racers	Finish Time
1st	Ilsa Frakes Annabelle Junior	6:07
2nd	Anyia Kittle Bella Gray	6:10
3rd	Flora Smith Jane Yonley	7:12
4th	Emma Yonley Katherine Yonley Eden Yonley	7:15
5th	Ana Doyle Kayleigh Doyle	9:33

Boys C2 Race		
Place	Racers	Finish Time
1st	Drew Yonley Shaeffer Kittle	4:28
2nd	Josiah Smith Evan Remy	5:24
3rd	Benjamin Hannamann Wyatt Frakes	5:38
4th	Elliot Remy Oliver Remy	6:17
5th	Ryan Brady Logan Harris	7:43
6th	Ian Worsham Alex Lieb	8:50
7th	Ian Gray Jaxon Doyle	10:00

War Canoe Race		
Place	Racers	
1st	Zander Lee Logan Harris Ian Gray	
2nd	Bella Gray Annabelle Junior Emma Thies	
3rd	Aria Doyle Ilsa Frakes Ashley Hosamssooi	
4th	Luke Thies Elliot Remy Oliver Remy	
5th	Ryan Brady Katherine Yonley Anyia Kittle	
6th	Drew Yonley Jaxon Doyle Flora Smith Wyatt Frakes	
7th	Jane Yonley Josiah Smith Benjamin Hannamann Shaeffer Kittle	





## 42<sup>nd</sup> Martindale Triathlon

*Patty Geisinger & Sandy Yonley*



The Halloween 42nd Annual Martindale Tri took a lot of work to pull together in the time of Covid. Planning for a gathering (even outside) of more than 100 people was a bit nerve wracking for Patty & Sandy. We appreciated the TCKRA board support and assistance. All the participants rolled with a Facebook live safety briefing that didn't work all that great. We got great feedback on some things we did which everyone liked--like the amazing Medal that Sandy created! And good ideas on how to make next year's event bigger and better!



A cool morning gave way to a lovely afternoon. Everyone finished the run before the first bike returned—that doesn't happen often.



Not returning to Spencer's for a meal and award ceremony was one loss to Covid but Sandy managed to get most everyone their correct medal and photos! Hope to see everyone back next year!



## San Marcos Dec. Solos

*Jay Daniel*

It wasn't the coldest San Marcos Solo or the wettest, but the combination of Low 40s and intermittent rain made it pretty uncomfortable. 13 paddlers and two dedicated photographers braved the weather and the relatively low water. The SMS is a staggered start based on previous best times in either the Junior Texas Water Safari or the SMS. This is normally calculated ahead of time by the race director but a computer switch has those records in disarray. The idea is to let new racers, improving racers and aging racers to have a shot at winning. The perfect scenario would be for all of the racers to round the corner at Staples at 1:00pm.





First place went to Ron Henk. Fastest Time of the day and Fastest K-1 was Tommy Yonley. Fastest USCA C-1 was Kyle Mynar. Fastest Solo Unlimited was Andrew Condie. Fastest Recreational was newcomer Richard Zambrina. And last but not least, the fastest Female Paddler of the day was Kathi Keyes.



San Marcos Solo 2020

Place	Paddler	Start Time	Finish Time	Split Time	Split Rank	Boat Type or Special Recognition
1	Ron Henk	10:15 AM	12:47:26	2:32:26	6	K-1-Senior
2	Wayne Thorpe	10:15 AM	12:54:06	2:39:06	8	Unlimited-Senior
3	Kyle Mynar	10:30 AM	12:58:11	2:28:11	5	C-1
4	Richard Zambrina	10:00 AM	13:00:11	3:00:11	10	Rec
5	Tommy Yonley	10:55 AM	13:00:26	2:05:26	1	K-1
6	Jonathan Yonley	10:55 AM	13:00:32	2:05:32	2	K-1
7	Andrew Condie	10:45 AM	13:01:01	2:16:01	4	Unlimited
8	Matt Persyn	10:30 AM	13:03:14	2:33:14	7	C-2
9	Logan Mynar	10:55 AM	13:04:06	2:09:06	3	K-1
10	David Kaiser	10:15 AM	13:13:28	2:58:28	9	C-1
11	Grady Hicks	10:00 AM	13:22:38	3:22:38	11	C-1-Senior
12	Kathi Keyes	10:00 AM	13:54:21	3:54:21	12	Rec-1st Female
13	Trey Golden	10:00 AM	13:57:16	3:57:16	13	Unlimited



## A “Safari, Not Safari” Recap

By Darren Dodd photos courtesy of Jill Mulder

2020 has been a year that, I daresay, hit us all like a freight train on a greased track. We all have dealt with the ups and down of the past year in different ways. When the time came for this year’s TWS to be run, the Safari board made the best call it could in canceling this beloved event. Hundreds of teams, racers and crews had spent months in preparation for something that never came. Only it did come, quietly and without fanfare the race was run. When the decision came from the board to cancel this year’s running there was a vote that took place among the members of Team Whiskey Trip, and it took no time to decide Team Whiskey Trip would run the Texas Water Safari as a “training run”, not in defiance, but in honor of a tradition that has been held since 1963.



Our training schedule continued as normal. Wagers were being made. Times were being logged. Equipment was being gathered and wary eyes were cast to the skies. This could be one of the lowest water years in recent memory. Many asked the question - “Are they tough or just stupid?” Well, after having been a member of this fabled crew, I can give you all an answer to that question along with a recap.

Armed with the invaluable experience of James Ward and Brenda Jones, the steel trap mind of Trab Seyn, the power of Keifer Mauldin, the tiny but mighty rookie Amber Goff, my decent driving abilities, the best bank crew in the business (IMO) accompanied by Jeannette Burris, Chris and Susie Paddock as our cheering squad, and Tom Goynes supplying the national anthem, the



Whiskey Trip 6 shoved off from The River Retreat with Will Leeds and Chris Bailey as point boats at 9am sharp on September 12th. Our 2020 Safari, Not Safari was underway!

We had been blessed with rain the week prior, but the water was still incredibly low and slow, and it only took a few miles for the river to have her say on things. The game was afoot. Our training runs had been done in a second boat we dubbed "Big Nasty". She is a 250 lb beast of a battle wagon. However, we had chosen to run this in our lighter, faster race boat.



This 40 footer handled differently; it turned sharper and stabilized at different points than Big Nasty and as a result we took a few hits before we managed to get in tune. By Cottonseed the team had eased into rhythm and settled in. Our pace quickened and smoothed out despite the lack of help from the river. Staples came and went without a hitch and our spirits rose. Something was going our way after all, and by the time we hit Luling, everyone and everything was just like we wanted it. We were slightly behind on our splits and overall time, but we had been assured that if we kept pushing we would catch the wave somewhere above Hochheim. So far, our 2020 Safari had shed the bad year omen, but it wasn't done with us yet and it would rear its ugly head again before all was said and done. We would have to fight...hard and as a team, to beat it. As we arrived at Zedler dam we were greeted with cheers from our crew and Ryan and Courtney Martinez.



We were lucky enough to have them and their kids follow us all the way thru Slayden. When Palmetto swung into view, Whiskey Trip was right on track. With massive support from our bank crew we were still on track, and with a good push we could hit Hochheim by 5am, which was the goal (with quite a wager swirling around that mark!). But it would be a tough haul and 2020 had a few more tricks left. We left Palmetto feeling good about our chances and with Brenda on rudder, we managed to shave off some of the lost time. We hit Gonzo just inside our window and when we shoved off we could smell steak dinners. That smell however, was replaced by debilitating nausea and vomiting. Amber, having lost the horizon in the darkness, began to violently hurl and Keifer got a bad batch of pedialyte that sent his insides spewing out. Mile after mile we pushed through - paddle, paddle, vomit, rinse and repeat. We decided we had to stop and pulled over for an hour to give their stomachs a reprieve. Our Hochheim goal was missed, but it didn't matter - we were still headed to Seadrift as the Whiskey Trip 6. The sun rose on day 2 and so did our spirits. We were met on the banks of Cheapside by a wonderful sight. Our bank crew was chipper and had been joined by Shannon and Chris Issendorf, and John Moore. They had made the time to come out and cheer us on. Finding motivation to push and pull on the blades was getting harder and seeing members of the paddling community come and show support was an epic experience. As we launched from Cheapside, Shannon jumped into a solo boat and paddled with us, providing some much needed encouragement and conversation. At 236 she hopped out and Chris took over down to River Haven. This turned out to be an unexpected but



very welcome highlight. At Thomaston, Brian and Nate Tart informed us that if we kept our pace going as it was, we were still on track for a 48 hour finish, at the least a sub 50. Since Brian had already cashed in on the Hochheim wager, he had a sense of glee as he relayed the news. There were multiple friendly wagers going on over our overall finish time as well. 54 hours was the mark to beat. As of yet, that “wave” that we had heard so much about, had yet to appear despite our best efforts to find it. It is still under debate as to whether or not it even existed. That being said, and the belief in the wave myth bouncing in our increasingly tired and befuddled minds, we set off with our next goal in sight. All we needed was a good run to Victoria to catch that wave and then a little luck in the horseshoe that the logjams were still clear and we were in with a shout. But did I mention this is 2020? By the time we pulled into Victoria we had managed to shave off a good chunk of time and were sitting pretty.

The first night nausea was under control and although Trab and I contracted a bad case of stomach acid it was at least manageable and we were excited for what was coming up. First the short jaunt to 59 then the “Long Haul”. This run would be longer than any other year because of the lack of access to DuPont and Salt Water Barrier.



We would be missing our bank support, our cheerleaders until Calhoun’s RV park below the 35 bridge. By the time we reached 59 exhaustion was

starting to set in on each member and every one of us was starting to wrestle with our own personal pains and demons. It would be a long and brutal night. James had done yeoman's work in the bow to get us to 50 and it had cost him. Back pains began to increasingly get worse for him. Keifer and I rotated back up front and Brenda, with her masterful feet, took the rudder for the “Long Haul”. But it wouldn’t end up that way. A weird gremlin had attached itself to her and by half way through the run she was seeing 2 of everything. We needed to get her off the rudder but with little to no place to safely pull over without stepping in a snake's haven, she soldered on until she was seeing 3 of everything. Things became even more panicked. She was in a bad way and desperately needed to go down. The acid problem had worsened to the point that Trab was audibly suffering and we were all terrified for Brenda. Finally, as if the river had decided to have a touch of mercy, we spotted an embankment just big enough to make our switch. Moving Brenda to seat 5, we set off, chasing daylight. The next few hours would be plagued by worsening health and hallucinations so bad some of us were afraid to even mention them. Utter ridiculousness. Anguish turned to laughter and delirium tainted every sentence and decision made. Those that wondered if the hallucinations come when “safari, not safari” is run now have an answer.... Yes and with a vengeance. Just one last unknown to deal with. The horseshoe. Were the jams still clear? If so, we would have a clean shot to the bay and a great shot at a sub 50. The decision was settled on - bypass the cuts and hope all was clear. It was a gamble that would pay off big time if it went our way. At this point I’d like to say, but this is 2020 and the Guadalupe. Though nowhere near as extreme as it can be, the logjam was forming. No big deal. Except that with no scouting information and at 2 in the morning, it turned out to be much more of an obstacle. One in which, in a trial by fire, Amber was used by James in sort of a cherry picker fashion. The boom (James), holding her up by her PFD harness would swing her around while he balanced on floating logs and direct her to first one log, then another. She would hoist and move debris and logs. Finally after many profane exclamations and minor fits, the two of them had cleared the path. We saddled our

fetid, exhausted bodies back into the boat and carried on. The Salt Water Barrier was a blessed sight. Just a few more miles to the RV park. Hearing our crew at the ramp was glorious.... But I did mention this was 2020, right? You can't have "safari, not safari" without an unexpected dump, and here is where we had ours. A yard sale! In our dazed state not having secured everything, or in preparation to clear the boat of unneeded weight, mass amounts of gear was loose in the boat and was now headed to Seadrift without us! But hey, our crew had fresh hot breakfast burritos waiting so all was good. It was at this point we knew a 48 hour run was out of reach, but we did have one more goal to strive for, and a team that refused to quit. We mounted up one last time and headed for the bay. The word was the wind was coming out of the northwest. Good news! We would not have to plow through 5 foot swells and 15 knot headwinds. Exiting Traylor Cut it all looked promising. Would not even need the spray skirt. We hit the mouth and popped out into the bay. Brenda in 1, Amber in 2, me in 3, Trab in 4, James in 5 and Keifer on sticks. The plan...run down to Fosters Point, dart across to the canal then sprint across it, and head for home. That plan lasted long enough to fill the boat. After 30 minutes and a re-think, the plan changed. Because of the wind direction and having no desire to turn broadside of the growing waves, we decided to make our crossing in Mission Lake and use the wind and waves to help us run up the longer barrier islands to the point. Brenda reluctantly relinquished seat one and we plowed on. When at last the pier came into sight, we all had one final push left in the tank, but that was all. There was no finish buoy, no crowd, just our bank crew and John Moore, who had shadowed us from Cheapside. Those were our claps and cheers. They were a beautiful sight! They had done it...they got this team down the course.



At 12:31pm Monday afternoon, Team Whiskey Trip had finished the 2020 "Safari, Not Safari". The question was asked...was this team very tough or very stupid? There was no competition, plaques, patches or banquet to attend. Not even a notation in the records of our finishing. Brenda and James didn't get that Top 15 finish (yet!). We didn't get to see Brenda take a shot of whiskey. Amber didn't receive a Patch for an epic accomplishment. All that was there at the end was our loved ones, a few friends, the Finish Line sign and pride in knowing we had done what we set out to do. We had made a bond with each other through laughter, anger, misery and joy. I love each and every one of them and always will. Tough or stupid? Answer - as tough as they come! PS - to Nate and Chris; please enjoy the salads courtesy of Brian...well played gentlemen ;)

## Upcoming Races



### **Texas Winter 100K (TWO)**

January 23rd, 2022

5 am/7am/noon

*West Hansen*

<http://www.texaswinter100k.com/>

This is a perfect event for novice & competitive paddlers. It's a great opportunity for you to continue your training in the winter months. The 11th annual Texas Winter 100k will begin on Lady Bird Lake and will end in Bastrop, TX at Fisherman's Park...100k. Three starts will accommodate an adventure start at 5am, the competitive start at 7am and the SUP start at noon from the 969 bridge. Registration is open, please note that there is no race day registration. Everyone is required to attend the zoom safety briefing at 7pm on Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please see the race website for complete information.

### **Town Lake Series**

Sundays Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>, Feb 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> 2021

*John Baltzell*



15 years ago Erin Magee and I tried to come up with a list of the most common hull types raced in the state of Texas for a new race series we wanted to create. With the list in hand we calculated out each hulls theoretical hull speed and presented the first subsequent handicaps. Through the years the handicaps have evolved, based on the top times for each hull and the inclusion of new hulls into the race series. (SUP's, OC6's, and Dragon Boats to name a few) The Town Lake Series still tests your early season fitness, gives you an opportunity see and try different hulls on a venue for all paddlers in a competitive early season format. The success of the series over the years is due to the many volunteers who have contributed in so many ways to promote paddle sport in Texas. I can not name them all but I would like to



recognize a few: Erin Magee, Joy Emshoff, Bob Spain, Patty Geisinger, the countless individuals who picked up the clipboard and stop watch to time, and Brian Jones (Master of the spread sheet and the fastest person I know when it comes to posting results).



### **2021 Town Lake Race Series Schedule**

The Town Lake race series will once again be a handicapped series, 10km each race with different routes, though we will introduce different class emphases on particular dates. All hulls/classes are welcomed and will be raced each weekend. As a reminder the first class (race) starts at 10:00am registration opens at 9:00am. The race start and finish is located at the festival beach boat ramp on the east side of I-35. Numbers will be provided and there is no entry fee. In the era of Covid 19 Please wear your mask while on shore preparing your race.

Jan. 24 \*Solo unlimited/K1 (post race there will be a single and double blade Clinic offered)

Jan. 31 \*OC1/C1

Feb. 7 \*Tandem unlimited/K2/ C2

Feb. 21 \*Adult/Child Start at 9:00am, 10:00am Reg. Handicaps, Post race potluck and on the water Clinic.

Town Lake Handicaps (10km)

\*Female SUP/Rec. Solo (anything plastic) 10:00am

\*Rec. Tandem/Aluminum (First time paddler's) 10:02am

\*Female C-1/OC1 10:04am

\*Female Solo Unlimited (Safari style hull)/Male SUP14' 10:06am

\*Female C-2/Female V8 Pro 10:08am

\*Male C-1/Pro Aluminum 10:09am

\*Male OC1/Fast Sea Kayak/PRS Ski 10:10am

\*New to C2 Male 10:11am

\*Female K1 (ICF)/Mixed C2 10:12am

\*Male Solo Unlimited (Safari Style Hull) 10:16am

\*Male V8 Pro 10:18am

\*OC-2/Tandem Unlimited/Fast Male C2 10:19am

\*Male Surfski 10:20 am

\*Male K1 (ICF) 10:21am

\*K2 (ICF) / Multi-man (Safari Style Hull 3-6 man) 10:22am

See you on the Water

John

## TCKRA Stroke Clinic

Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup> Noon-3pm

The TCKRA will host a Racing Clinic on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at Fiesta Gardens Boat Ramp from Noon-3pm. Novice to expert level: Single and Double blade instruction & race hull demo. In addition to paddling instruction, the following boats will be available to demo and paddle. ICF C2, USCA C1, USCA C2, Spencer Extreme (solo), Spencer Multi-man, Aluminum, Surfski's, K1's. There will be no cost to participate in this event. **Instructors: Holly Orr, Phil Bowden, Chris Issendorf**



## TCKRA Spring Break Open

Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 10 a.m., Amigos Beach at Fentress

The TCKRA invites you to open the 2021 racing season with a 14 mile race on the San Marcos River. On March 13<sup>th</sup>, the **Spring Break Open** will start at 10:00am at Fentress Bridge and finish at Luling 90 River Trail Park. We will post driving and parking directions on our Facebook page as we get closer to the event. Race registration will be available both online and day of race. Please visit [www.tckra.org](http://www.tckra.org) to register for the race or on race day beginning at 8:30am. All Solo and Tandem hulls are welcome so BYOB (Bring your own Boat) and we'll see you on the river!

Awards will be given out to top three Female, top three Male, and top three Aluminum winners.

Race Fee's: \$20/racer



## **Fireside Chats with Tom Goynes**

*Early on during the pandemic, Tom Goynes began sharing some of his Safari stories on his facebook page. With the loss of Safari this year, everyone missed out on the yearly ritual of sharing stories after the race. So with Tom's blessing, we hope to share with everyone some of his legendary Safari stories.*

"Well, as the social distancing continues, I am finding more stories I started writing years ago, and never quite finished. Here is a Texas Water Safari story regarding the 1971 race. Hope it provides some relief from the present madness."

### **The 1971 Texas Water Safari**

The Texas Water Safari is a 260 mile non-stop canoe race from San Marcos to Seadrift. It starts at 9 am on the second Saturday in June and the first canoe to reach Seadrift is the winner. You can stop and rest if ya want to, but you probably won't win. This is my story regarding the first time I won the race.

The year was 1971. It was the first year that the Safari was going to be held without the coastal portion (we were going to finish at Seadrift (260 miles nonstop from San Marcos). In those days we were required to drink river water (or find a hydrant with a working handle). Ice in the race was unheard of (in fact, I'm not sure ice had been invented yet).

I was racing with Pat Oxsheer, a Navaho Indian with a bit of a redneck streak who worked for Dow Chemical. I, meanwhile, was a college student at U of H on a mission to figure out why we were in Vietnam before I had to go there. I wore a peace symbol on my Safari outfit and my hair was shoulder length. Paula heard one fellow comment as we went by: "That fellow in the front (Oxsheer) is going to do good, but that hippie will never make it".

Our intention was to paddle the race with the biggest Sawyer single blade paddles we could find. Back in those days, paddles were about 12 inches wide and weighed a couple of pounds (and bent paddles were only just being invented by a guy from Minnesota named Gene Jensen).

A team from Michigan, Jerry Kellogg and Jack Kolka, came down to do the race and a racer from Canada came back to redeem himself after a rough Safari in 1970. Luc Robillard and Claude Coursel had had a great lead in 70 (I wanna say six hours, at one point) but they got lost in the Swinging Bridge to Tivoli triangle and got passed by the two lead Texas teams. They ended up dropping out of the race after they decided they weren't going to win enough prize money to make it worth their while (we didn't get to drink ice water back in those days, but the race paid about \$2000 for first place, plus there were always some nice prizes – like a raft trip for the winners and their wives through the Grand Canyon). Perhaps if we made the race tough again we could get some big sponsors... but I digress. Luc was back with another guy from Quebec named Dennis Thieberg (I've gotta admit that I'm not real sure about the spelling on any of these French names...).

Anyway, Pat and I loaned the Michiganders a canoe (it was a very heavy Sawyer Saber; ours just happened to be a little lighter) and we agreed to take them on some of our training runs to see the river. For some reason, I took along a couple of very beefy slalom kayak paddles on our first training run. I think my brother and I had used double paddles back in 1969 and we had the feeling that they were faster than singles (but, without gps units, how could we have known for sure?).

So we take off down the river and the Michiganders just left us in their dust. I mean they took off like a couple of scared rabbits and we couldn't do a thing about it. They were gone. Like outta sight and around the bend. How many more ways can I say it? So, we're feeling kinda low and our self esteem is suffering a major setback, so I says, "Hey Pat, what about trying out these new fangled double paddles?" And we figured, why not? We can't go any slower.

Well, amazingly enough, we started gaining on those guys. And then we caught them. And finally (and it took some doing) we passed them. I don't know who was more surprised - us or them. But it was an amazing moment in Safari history.

So, anyway, Pat and I decide that we were going to have to test those double paddles again. So we took them on the next training event. This time, not only were the Michiganders beating our arses like drums, but the Canadians, Luc and Dennis, were having a go at it as well. They were beating us, that is to say, as long as we persisted in paddling with our 12-inch wide Sawyer single paddles. But, once we got tired of being losers, we pulled out our Azzali Slalom kayak paddles and the race was on.



It was during one of our sprints on this particular training run that I got to witness what I thought at the time was a very bad display of poor sportsmanship. It seems that Luc and Dennis had “accidentally” driven the bow of their Sawyer Saber right up behind Jack Kolka and that he had hit their bow with his paddle and broken his paddle. He let out of string of Yankee curse words like I had never heard before (of course, I could barely understand Michigander talk, let alone cussing).

It was only later that I would find that Luc was somewhat famous at this little known skill of “breaking the paddle of an opponent with the bow of your canoe” trick.

By the way, I have long ago given up on changing any of the Safari rules. I now agree that racers should be able to have all the ice and water delivered into their canoe at any time, day or night; but I also think some clean underwear, at least twice during the race, would make sense.

And, while I have given up on changing the ice rule, and I don’t really expect the porta potties to be cleaned before the banquet, I would at least request that they not be cleaned next year during the banquet.

To fully appreciate this story (and, like I’ve said before, if I have already told this story during this thread, I’m sorry) you have to remember that the race started at 5 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon back in 1971. It had something to do with wanting to have a big award ceremony back in San Marcos that next weekend. I guess nobody thought about little details like, “aren’t people going to have to take the whole week off to race in this event?” Or, “how are we going to get enough volunteers to run this race if we start on a Tuesday afternoon?”

But one thing is for sure: if you start the event in the afternoon, most racers will not be getting any sleep right before the start of the race. In fact, as I recall, we had the check in and briefing that afternoon right before the gun went off.

Another thing about an afternoon start is that it means you will be running a lot of San Marcos River in the dark. Seems like it got dark on us somewhere between Staples and Fentress. I vaguely remember a really fun filled evening. Some of that is because 1971 was also one of the lowest river levels we ever had. We were constantly getting out of the canoe and walking around (in the dark) looking for the deepest water, “oh look, there’s at least an inch of water over here!” As I recall, the sun was just coming up as we paddled under the Palmetto Park Bridge.

The Michiganders and the Canadians, meanwhile, had run off and left us. I think they were an hour ahead at Luling Hwy 90. By Gonzales, I don’t think our bank crew was even telling us the amount of their lead anymore. But (and once again, my memory ain’t what it used to be) the Michiganders dropped out at Hochheim. So Oxsheer and I walked on with renewed vigor (I say that because we were actually out, walking our canoe through the shallow water below Hochheim).

I don’t remember when it got dark that second night, but I do remember waking up, swimming in the rapids between Cuero and Victoria (oh, the dangers of sleep paddling during a low water year!) and it was definitely dark.

Anyway, as much trouble as Pat and I were having, it seems that the Canadians were having an equally hard time. When we got to the Victoria Boat ramp, we were told that they had wrapped their canoe (probably in the same rapids we swam) and had lost much of their lead. They were now only a mere hour ahead.

This information brought new life to the Texas team, so we blazed down the river with our bank crew driving along those roads that wander through Victoria City Park, honking their horns and meeting us occasionally to cheer us on.

Of course, there is a down side to pushing too hard in the heat during the third day of the Big One. While we were making great time and gaining on the Canadians (in fact, according to a fisherman – always a dependable source of information during the TWS – we were only ten minutes behind the Canadians when we reached Hwy 59 Business ((once again, call me crazy, but I don’t think they had built the Bypass – what us old-timers call Loop 175 – in 1971. I think you got to see your bank crew at Hwy 59 (((downtown))) and then again at the old swinging bridge))) my partner was heading into nana land. AKA neverland. AKA the Dupont Monkey Temple.

I may have to take a break. That last sentence put my brain over the top. I have visions of Mrs. Roark, my fourth grade teacher correcting my uses of parentheses.

Let me begin this part by explaining that this article originally appeared in a canoe racing forum and the thread was one I had started in which I had proposed that contestants should be required to climb the banks

of the river to get their ice and water rather than requiring team captains to deliver such items into their canoes while they lounge about on their comfortable canoe seats.

Is that what Mrs. Roark used to call a run on sentence?

You see, in 1971, when men were men and women could only read about the exploits of the Russian Night Witches, you had to drink river water (most of us used Halazone tablets - which killed bad bacteria by creating chlorine gas). We could also "steal" water out of a hydrant. But the idea of getting ice would have been anathema. And having a hamburger delivered to your canoe at Hochheim would be unthinkable. All I was suggesting, in this thread, was that the racers should have to climb up the muddy banks, get their ice and water and then slide back down to their canoe. I felt that this bank climbing and sliding would provide some great entertainment for the "spectators". Or maybe it would actually mean that we could get some spectators in the first place.

As for the references to the porta potties in Seadrift, at the time that this thread was originally posted, there always seemed to be difficulty getting the porta potty company to clean the potties after the Shrimp Fest was over and before the Safari arrived. And, it was not uncommon for the company to show up to pump the potties as the Safari banquet was being served. Let's just say that it wasn't very appetizing.

Now, where was I? Attempting to diagram a sentence... I am absolutely certain that the porta potties should be filled with ice, at least until the banquet is over.

So anyway, it's June, 1971, I'm paddling down the Guadalupe River below Victoria in very hot conditions with absolutely no ice. The Canadian team is only about ten minutes ahead of us (at least, according to a drunken fisherman) and my partner is starting to act a little strange.

Now let me say right here that Pat Oxsheer is the reason that Goynes and Oxsheer won three Safaris (not to mention a couple more with Jim Trimble. Pat is as strong as an ox, and full of sheer brawn (puns attempted). But all of us have our limits. And, on this particular occasion, Pat had pushed a little too hard. I realized we had a problem when he started yelling at folks on the bank who weren't there. He would become quite animated, and get really angry at these scumbags. I asked him what they were doing and he said they were digging shortcuts, then letting the Canadians use said cuts, but then covering them up by the time we got there. No amount of reason would help to convince him that this wasn't happening, so I played along - hollering at the scumbags at the top of my lungs along with my partner. I have often wondered if anyone might have heard us as we slowly progressed down the creek - and what they would have thought.

Some of you guys have probably experienced the sensation, on the stretch of river above the Invista Plant (used to be the Dupont Plant), that you are going around in circles. I don't know how many times I have heard of teams getting into serious arguments regarding the direction of the flow of the river in this section. One team told me that their argument got so heated that they stopped the canoe and each man spit into the river. Unfortunately, they must have been in an eddy, because their spit went separate directions.

Another team told me that one member was so sure that they were going in circles that he insisted that he be allowed to tie his windbreaker to a tree limb. All the teams behind them wondered why there was a windbreaker tied to a tree...

Oxsheer just wanted out of the canoe. He decided that if we were just going to paddle around in circles, he might as well be resting on the bank. So we alternated, one minute cursing the shortcut digging scumbags, next minute discussing the circuitous route that we were taking.

Then, after hours of hearing from Pat that we were going the wrong way, sure enough, a sculling rig appeared up ahead rowing right toward us! Now you have to realize, that the rule about no pace boats hadn't been invented yet; so there were often friendly canoes on the river to check on a team's progress or to egg them on. And, in the sculling rig heading our direction was my brother, Jim (along with whoever owned the boat). But both Pat and I were convinced that it contained Mike Wooley and Gary Knight - the third place boat. As I recall, we stopped dead in the water and waited to be passed (always embarrassing when you get passed while going the wrong way). But no, it turns out that it wasn't Wooley and Knight. It was my bro. And he was all excited because the Canadians were just up ahead. It turns out that my bro had launched the canoe at the Swinging Bridge and headed upstream because both teams were feared to be dead (because it was taking us so long to get from Victoria to the Swinging Bridge).

Evidently, the Canadians were having as much trouble as Pat and I. So when we arrived at the "checkpoint" we were only ten minutes behind the Canadians! (I put the term "checkpoint" in quotes because in those days

a checkpoint wasn't what they are today. There was no ice. There was no Ozarka water. There was no team captain. Our bank crew did direct us to the farmhouse on the right side of the bridge, where the friendly owner was allowing folks to fill their water jugs, at least. As I recall, it was some purty strong tasting water.) What really bothered me was the fact that Pat came totally back to his senses when we pulled in for water. He was in fine form, cracking jokes and asking how the Canadians looked. I, meanwhile, was a basket case – stumbling up the bank for water and trying to convince the crowd that Oxsheer was out of his mind. Later, Paula relayed that everyone was impressed with how good Pat looked but concerned that I might not be able to finish the race.

Nonetheless, we were both in great spirits as we paddled away from the bridge, only minutes behind our archrivals from Canada. We were convinced that victory was within our grasp!

Almost immediately after leaving the checkpoint, Pat reverted to the dark side: once again, hollering at the shortcut-digging scumbags, and/or complaining about us going in circles. I thought briefly about turning the canoe around and paddling back to the swinging bridge to show the crowd that Pat was indeed mad. But I realized that he would just miraculously return to normal and I would really appear to be the fool. So I paddled on. And, let me say that Pat was paddling on as well. He just didn't like the direction we were going. I don't have any idea how long it took us to get to the railroad bridge (it usually takes about an hour for a tandem unlimited canoe, correct?). But right below the bridge, at the area where the fishing cabins start, I saw a sight that caused a combination of excitement and confusion. There, in the middle of the river was Luc, sitting in the stern of their Sawyer Saber (with the bow riding high in the air) and Denis (Luc's bowman) in one of the motorboats that normally are parked at those docks.

Denis was cranking valiantly on the outboard motor trying to get it to start. Of course, this is a highly illegal activity, for a Safari racer, at least. So, I asked them later what in the heck they were doing. Denis explained, and Luc translated:

It turns out that Luc was out of his mind, and he had no idea where the right river was, but he was sure that they were no longer on it. They had decided to fire up the motorboat and Denis (who seemed to at least have some sense of direction) would go off in search of the proper river and, once he found it, he would return, get back in the canoe, and they would leave the motorboat right where they found it.

In their confused, Canadian, Safari enriched minds, this seemed perfectly legal and understandable. And, at the time, it seemed pretty logical to me as well.

All I know is, I was so excited to see the first place team during a Safari that far down the river, that I broke out in my best French and said: "Le grande portage est treint minutes". Which, I believed (and still do) means: "The big portage is thirty minutes downstream, more or less".

They were so excited to hear a Texan speaking French that they really didn't know what to do. I heard Denis repeat my sentence several times as we paddled out of sight. I thought how sad it was for them to have led the race so long only to be passed by the superior team as they neared the finish... But then I heard them approaching and approaching fast. It was obviously time for the slalom double paddles.

We cranked them out and started paddling for all we were worth. Pat came back to life. The only problem he was having was that he thought that we were in a car race, racing against the Canadians through the streets of Paris. But as long as he was paddling hard, what did I care whether we were on the lower Guad or Paris?

Then it happened. I brought my Azzali double paddle down hard on the bow of the Canadian's canoe. I was concerned that the metal tip on the heavy-duty paddle had done some damage to their fragile craft, so I apologized. Then, wham; I hit their canoe again, this time on the other side. Once again, I said I was sorry. It seemed like it went on for some time; first hitting their canoe with my right blade, then my left. I was thinking, what kind of a klutz am I? Why do I keep hitting the bow of their canoe?

I remember later (after the race) watching Luc admire my double paddle at the finish line. He told me that he had never had so much trouble breaking a paddle in his life.

In order to understand the rest of the story (or at least, the next installment) you're going to have to hear about the Log Jam. I'm not talking about just any old log jam (even one of the fairly large ones that form occasionally in the area where the Log Jam used to be). I'm talking about the two-mile Log Jam that used to exist back when men were men and the Safari was the Safari (by the way, the Corps Of Engineers paid a lot of money – I want to say a million bucks to get that original jam removed sometime in the mid 70's). Sure,



you might point out that since we didn't have gps units we had no way of knowing that the jam was two miles long. But someone once told me that the thing was two miles long and, by gar, I'm sticking with it. The thing used to start right about where the various shortcuts head out to the right. And, it seemed to take up that whole bend of the river up to the area where Alligator Slough comes back into the river. Someone might even be so bold as to point out that we might have been able to take the 3 O'clock Cut or the Seadrift Cut and we could have avoided the whole two-mile portage in the first place. But, like I said, we didn't have gps units, and we figured that a two-mile portage was just part of it. Why would real men have wanted to eliminate something like a two-mile portage anyway?

Somehow this reminds me of the time that the Kiernan brothers (I'm pretty sure it was them) marked all the various shortcuts in the area from the railroad bridge to the Log Jam. There were all these signs that said things like: "Short Cut City" and "This is it!" (it wasn't) and "Shortcut of no return" (which possibly could have marked the right one).

On another occasion (I think it was 1984 – the big log jam was gone by then, but there must have been a little one that made the 3 O'clock Cut worth taking) someone had marked the tree at the entrance to the cut with all kinds of fluorescent paint. I mean, they had painted the trunk and most of the limbs of this big dead tree. It showed up for a mile upriver. There was going to be no missing of the 3 O'clock Cut. We made note of the paint job on a practice run right before the big one. Then, during the race, we got to the cut and, what the heck, there was no paint! We had to stop and examine that tree. We found that someone had come along and painted flat black paint on top of all of that fluorescent paint. The moral to this story is, don't trust the paint fairies – they have been known to mislead...

So anyway, this Log Jam, this "Grande Portage" was coming up.

And another thing; on the practice run that we had made with the Canadians right before the race (on this same section of river) we had noticed that they simply picked up their empty canoe, threw it on their shoulders, and proceeded to run around the Log Jam (at the time there was a nice little road that paralleled the river). We laughed at them as we got out our "dragging straps" and proceeded to portage the Jam in the proper way. We got their attention, once they stopped running, and they asked us about these curious "dragging straps". We explained that, during the race they would be way too tired to even consider carrying their canoe on their shoulders, and that all us Texans used dragging straps to drag our canoes along the portage trail. Fortunately, they listened to us and rigged some dragging straps for the "Grande Portage". So anyway, they beat us to the take out, they drag their canoe to the road, they pull out their dragging straps and off they go, into the sunset.

Pat and I drug our boat to the road and decided that there was only one way we were going to be able to beat these guys, and that would involve putting our canoe on our shoulders and jogging to the put in. And, amazingly enough, we were able to lift the thing up and put it on our shoulders. I like to remember it as a run. But it was likely a bit slower than that. But we did pass the Yankees (are Canadians Yankees? Or are they too far North to be Yankees?). You can just imagine their surprise!

Unfortunately, our pass job didn't completely crush their spirits. In fact, as we went by we noticed them throwing out all the non-essentials (remember, this was 1971 – we hadn't invented the "no litter" rule yet). Next thing I remember is the sight of two Canadians passing two Texans at a very fast clip. In fact, you would have to say that they were running – full out – with their almost empty canoe upside down on their shoulders.

They beat us to the water and off we went. It was the beginning of our third night. Approximately 55 hours into the race, and approximately 70 hours of awake time. And we were still neck and neck, both teams bent on winning this thing.

It is probably not real easy for a current day Safari paddler (especially a fast one) to fully understand the tales of past races, with all the "out of our minds" experiences described. Seems like the best hallucinations always started for me sometime in the "40 hours of no sleep" range. Nowadays, the winners are showered and in bed by 40 hours.

But, once again, try to picture the race starting at 5 p.m. (with no sleep on the day that the race starts) and try to imagine being awake for that day plus another 60 hours (the race being longer than normal due to drought conditions). It turns out that it was a great way to make a bunch of people crazy.

As the two lead teams left the Log Jam and headed toward Tivoli, there was a sense of insanity in the air. Luc would stop paddling occasionally and announce that the race was over and that they had won. And he said it with such authority that I believed him. I suppose we realized that the only thing left for us to do was to paddle to the award ceremony so they could get the trophy. Pat was busy racing through the streets of Paris. Since he spoke mostly French, I'm not sure what Denis was thinking.

I'm not sure how we did it, but somehow Pat and I managed to pass the Canadians. And then we suffered one of the little unintended consequences of using double paddles.

If you've used double paddles for a while, you might have noticed that they tend to send more gar flying into the canoe than singles do. I'm thinking it may be the fact that the paddle blade is further out from the canoe with a double, and the gar is therefore encouraged to fly toward the canoe rather than away from it. But at any rate, it seems that I've ended up with more gar in the boat with doubles than with singles. And, on this particular occasion we ended up with a nice sized gar.

Pat hit it, and it landed somewhere near the middle of the boat, but then it flipped and flopped its way to the area just in front of my feet. I could hear its teeth snapping shut on a regular basis. It was obviously upset. This reminds me of a gar story that Butch Hodges told me once. He was driving a motorboat somewhere on the lower river when something prompted a gar to fly up and bite onto his arm. It clamped on and wouldn't let go, so he abandoned the motor and headed off toward the middle of the boat in search of a machete to use in order to dislodge the critter. This caused quite a bit of consternation among his passengers, as no one was now driving the speeding motorboat. He spent a few minutes whacking on the gar with the machete and finally was able to dislodge it.

I'm wondering if we need a whole blog on this site about gar stories... but I digress.

So anyway, I've got this angry gar, with sharp teeth, flopping around in the vicinity of my feet and I'm trying to scoop it out of the canoe with my Azalli paddle (with the metal tips) when Luc and Denis come paddling by. In desperation, I decide to try to trick them into stopping for a look (what else could I do at this point?) so I say, "Hey, you guys want to see an alligator gar?"

To which they exclaimed (in unison – one in French and one in broken English) "Alligator!!!!?" And off they went, faster than ever. It turns out that one of the things these French-Canadians feared the most about the Safari was our alligators. So my plan obviously backfired, they not only didn't want a look, they wanted to be as far downriver from us as possible.

So, there we were, in second place again. I went back to trying to scoop out the gar and Pat finally stopped paddling and asked what the heck I was doing. I explained, and he said to just slide that fish up to him. I did so, and he simply reached around behind himself (in the dark, and without even trying to look) picked up the snapping gar and threw it overboard. I was, once again, impressed with his bravery. But he told me later that he had absolutely no memory of the event happening, and doubts that he would have done such a thing.

The whole thing didn't really take that long, so I was surprised to notice that the Canadians were completely out of sight already. No sign of their lights at all. We were told later, that they turned off their lights so that we would assume they were long gone and end our futile pursuit.

There used to be this hard right turn in the river, somewhere upstream of the confluence of the San Antonio River. And there was this big Elm tree on the left bank at that turn. And the river had eroded the root system of this Elm tree to the point that it had fallen in the river. In the daylight it was no big deal; you just avoided the low hanging limbs and turned hard to the right. At night you had to have a pretty good light, and your bowman had to be willing to eat some greens. But without a light, and running at top speed – let's just say it wasn't a pretty sight.

Back upstream from the site of the accident, I could swear that I heard a couple of shouts (one in French and one in broken English). But you hear lots of strange things on that section of river. But then as we approached Big Elm and started maneuvering through the branches we saw the carnage. An overturned Saber, paddles, pfd's, and a couple of dejected looking French guys. I felt sorry for them, but Luc told me later that he was hoping that we would come a little closer as we went by so they could turn us over.

We asked if they needed any help, they said no. So we headed down the river toward Tivoli. By the way, have you ever considered that Tivoli is I lov it backward?

Have you ever had an audible hallucination? I think it was Robert Youens who talked about all the various levels of hallucinations a person can have. There's the simple 55 gallon drum that looks just like the team

that you've been chasing for days; I think that's what Robert called a level 1 hallucination. Then, when the hallucination starts talking to you, I think that's a level two. But when you start interacting with your hallucination, then you've reached the level of Nekid Man (there's a story someone should write down). While we didn't reach level three, Pat and I did have some bizarre stuff going on in the section right above Tivoli. In one instance, as we were going through some tree branches, I distinctly heard Pat's wife Barbara carrying on a conversation with Pat. There were the usual words of encouragement, the obvious question about the location of the Canadian team, and the admonition for us to pick it up!

I remember thinking how odd it was for Barbara to have found river access in this particular section of river (this was before the big subdivision had gone in on river left from the barrier to the bridge). So I asked Pat if that was Barbara he had been talking to. He assured me that it was her. Of course, it wasn't. I wonder to this day if it had been some couple out fishing in the middle of the night, or if the whole thing had been a joint hallucination (without the joint).

Minutes after talking to the imaginary Barbara, we were pulling up under the Hwy 35 bridge where the real Barbara (along with Paula – my better half – and lots of other folks) was hanging out. The crowd was mighty excited that the local boys (i.e. Texans) were finally ahead of the guys from up North. And, they obviously wanted us to get whatever we needed and get on down the creek (I wonder if part of the reason they were in such a big hurry was due to the mosquito population at that bridge). But this was where we were planning to put on our spray cover so we pulled in and drug the canoe up under the bridge.

Nowadays, most folks are smart enough to have a spray cover that can be quickly attached to the canoe – either with snaps or with Velcro, or some other mechanical means. But this was 1971. Technology wasn't what it is today. Fortunately, they had invented duct tape and black plastic – and that was the choice of materials Pat and I had made.

I vaguely remember that we had also had the foresight to cut the black plastic to shape, with the two cockpits where we wanted 'em, so all we had to do was roll out the duct tape and attach the cover to the canoe. What we hadn't planned on were some of the obvious problems like the canoe being wet and our hands being somewhat club like and unusable. We would snag the end of the tape with our teeth and begin ripping it off the roll. Of course, once we got a goodly amount of tape off the roll it would invariably get stuck together, and the whole process would have to begin again.

I remember the crowd getting more and more agitated as the evening went on. Every now and then one of the spectators would have a level one and announce that the Canadians were here at last. This announcement would generally cause either Pat or I to lose control of our duct tape and get a large batch of the stuff stuck together. I think the crowd finally decided that it was counterproductive to announce the arrival of the Canadians, so all such announcements ceased.

The whole process took over one hour (and at least one quart of blood per person for the mosquitoes). The big question was, where are the Canadians?

What kind of bay would you expect after a bone-dry river? If you answered “a rough one”, you would be correct. It was not the sort of bay on which to use a plastic cover with two cockpit holes in it. In retrospect, I'm amazed that we made it as far as we did. At the time it was pretty spooky; the high seas in the dark, the canoe slowly filling up with water with each wave, and finally, the big sink. And, just as we prepared to go down to Davy's Locker, lo and behold, the water was only three feet deep! What a pleasant surprise. We must have gone pretty much straight across to the east bank as soon as we entered Guadalupe Bay. Of course, that made for a really long bay crossing, with lots of shallow water. But this is one landlubber who will take shallow water over the deep stuff any day (especially with that kind of cover).

It was one of those occasions where you really don't know that you've actually won the race until you drag the boat out at the flagpole and there isn't another boat there. We were sure that the Canadians had beat us in the bay. But they hadn't.

It turns out that they had stopped to sleep for a few hours at the Salt Water Barrier Dam. Luc and his previous partner had slept there the year before, after they had squandered a six-hour lead. It seems that they were convinced that they were supposed to go through the Tivoli checkpoint before they passed through the Salt Water Barrier (they assumed that the Barrier had something to do with entering the bay). So they had spent hours paddling from the Barrier up to the Log Jam and back to the Barrier, until they finally called it a



night and stopped to sleep at the Dam. They tell me that there used to be a little shack there that made for some good sleeping – but I always figured it was better to just get to Seadrift and sleep there. Anyway, to make matters even more interesting, Luc and Denis also decided to enter the barge canal somewhere in the vicinity of the Boat Cut. As I understand, there is a house there, on the east side of the canal and they decided it would be a good idea to ask for directions at that house. They found the door unlocked and walked right in to use the phone. They even helped themselves to some food they found in the fridge and left some money to pay for said food on the kitchen table (I don't really think they were aware that they were breaking any Safari rules at this point – they were, quite simply, out of their minds). I don't remember who they said they called, but I wonder if the person would have been home if he or she could have really helped. I suppose it must have been kinda like a lifeline on that millionaire show. It might not be a bad idea to add such a thing to our rules (OK Fred, do you want to poll the audience or do you want to use your lifeline?).

What happened next was quite sad. They decided to walk out to the highway and ask for directions. Unfortunately, a friendly native picked them up and drove them to the seawall. Once we (by now we had had time to shower, eat and catch some sleep) saw them being driven up in a pickup truck, most of us realized that they would be disqualified. The head judge, Lawrence Hagan, was somewhere upriver, and the only other official present wasn't willing to make the final call without him. So I asked the judge that was present if I could take the Canadians back to their canoe so they could finish paddling the course. I figured it was a long shot, but they might be forgiven for hitching a ride as long as they were taken back to the point of origin. In retrospect, I must not have been thinking very clearly myself.

At any rate, Paula and I loaded Luc and Denis into her Ford Econoline van (with the curtains on the windows and the peace symbol on the back) and headed back for the house on the canal. We dropped them off, wished them luck, and then headed off to find a point where we could watch their progress in the bay (I've never found such a point, by the way). Unbeknownst to us, the owner of the house on the canal had just returned home in time to see us driving away. And he was not all that happy to find that someone had been in his house that morning (I assume the muddy footprints, the missing food, and the money sitting on the kitchen table gave it all away).

It didn't take long for the sheriff to track us down (not too many blue Ford Econolines in Seadrift in those days). Fortunately, Mr. Hagan showed up at just about the same time the sheriff did, and he vouched for us; unfortunately, he was in no mood to forgive the infractions of the Canadians (I remember, when confronted with the possible charge of breaking and entering, Denis had protested – in his broken English – “We no break nothing!”)

I suppose the moral to this story is, make sure you have a really firm grasp of not only Safari rules, but Texas law, or you might find yourself in big trouble after 70 or so hours of sleepless Safari.

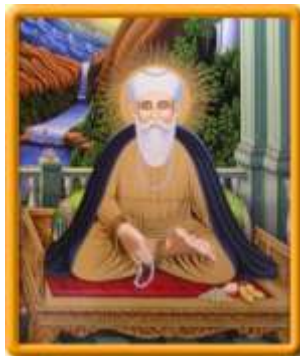
The Safari is open to anyone. You don't have to be crazy to enter. But you will probably be crazy by the finish line.

Tom



# Palmetto Hotline

*River Guru*



## Palmetto Hotline

December 2020

Greetings Inferior Racers! Another record year for the TWS, most notably of which, was my 58<sup>th</sup> straight, completely accurate prediction. Additionally, we saw record low turnout, record number of bank support for a single team and (possibly) the slowest fastest time in TWS history. I am told the whole community showed strong Facebook support from their couches.

For this lot, 2020 was not defined by masks and lockdowns. Training regimens changed significantly with racers sneaking to the water through City Park faster than an Au Sable sprinter, frequent altercations with the Mighty Morphin' San Marcos Park Rangers and the entire community has paddled from Spencer's to Staples at least forty-seven thousand times this summer. But you maintained your sanity, kept your distance (well...not the big boats...or anybody who shuttled...), got your regular dose of vitamin D and your river therapy.

Races continued, and while y'all were still much slower than I would be if I was still racing, y'all did pretty...OK. Honestly the only races that did happen this year were paddling races and thank goodness y'all didn't succumb to the urge to have virtual races. The only thing worse than that is adventure racing and I know you all thought about adventure racing after watching the Bear Grylls show (likely emboldened by the absolute rubbish paddling). But after getting lost in the cuts year after year, do y'all really think you should be navigating vast wildernesses?!?!

So the big questions we will ponder this holiday are: Who is gonna stick together next year? Will there be a record number of Novices and corresponding DNFs? Will the call for an aluminum only year be answered by the TWS Board? Will the Yonley boys beat an Unlimited (Yes/No)? Which major rule or obstacle will be removed to make the race progressively easier? How many people have found the new cut right around the Old Victoria 175 bridge?

Come February all prophecies will be revealed.

Like green shoots sprouting after a wildfire, I saw a couple novices putting in at Staples hardly able to contain their excitement. I was sitting on the bridge sippin' on Spiz and we got to talking and I'll be...they even got *me* excited about their doomed attempt at the world's toughest canoe race (although not near as hard as it used to be). Come January, Erin's gonna kick off the season with the world's wettest, coldest most boring run (The Ho Ho Heck No!) and the rumor mill will start a turnin'.

**Until then, Merry Christmas or \*Happy Holidays or Happy New Year!** (if the newsletter is delayed as it often is!)

\*for the Millennials...

*The river guru is a collective hallucination shared by the greater paddling community. The views and opinions of the Guru are not the views of the TWS or TCKRA...but we all think it's pretty darn funny.*